

Gibraltar School District

Amy Conway, Superintendent
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Dear Gibraltar Families,

Educating students is our number one priority at Gibraltar Schools and when the decision is made to close school due to inclement weather, the decision is taken very seriously. As a district, we recognize that closing school can have a major impact on our families and that our preference is to always have students in school and learning.

While the decision to close school ultimately rests on myself as the Superintendent, I work closely with district administrators, local authorities, the National Weather Service, multiple neighboring school districts, and all of our municipalities to make the best informed decision possible. Gibraltar School District rests in five municipalities. This means five cities that have different types of roads and plowing procedures. District staff must review road conditions that can vary significantly based on individual city snow removal procedures, etc. There are other school districts within two of our municipalities, so I am also communicating with these districts, checking to see what information they are getting from staff and other authorities who are driving their roads.

Additionally, this decision means considering our collaboration agreements with the DCTC (Downriver Career Technical Consortium) program, made up of nine Downriver districts that all bus students to the local DCTC bus hub in Flat Rock, as well as our special education consortium (shared special education services) with four other districts. Each of these consortiums provides transportation services as far as the outer edge of the downriver area. All of these programs and partnerships that Gibraltar participates in provide educational experiences that are exceptional and inclusive for our students, and also require a lot of coordination among many districts, especially during inclement weather.

As remote learning has played an integral role in providing continuous learning for our students so far this year, some might wonder if the district is able to switch to a remote learning day at a moment's notice? Due to the last-minute nature of these calls, it would be difficult for our staff to transition to virtual instruction from a remote location. Therefore, snow days will remain the same as in years past and will not be remote learning days. If there are a significant number of inclement weather days this year, that could be revisited at a later date.

There are no set guidelines that I can share that would help parents predict our decision to close school, because no two inclement days are identical. Ideally, school is called before inclement weather hits in order to provide our families the most possible time to make adjustments to their busy schedules. As you are well aware, the weather forecast in Michigan can fluctuate by the minute and occasionally last minute cancellations are necessary or predicted storms may fizzle out or change paths. The factors that impact specific decisions are wind, ice, visibility, previous and current snow accumulation, forecast for rapid temperature changes and plowed and salted roads. When snow falls during the morning pick up or afternoon drop off, it can make travel difficult. We do recognize this and are grateful for our skillfully trained bus drivers who take it slow and steady to get our students to their destinations safely. Please keep in mind, that our student's safety is the predominant factor in this decision and that sometimes the weather does not cooperate.

Closing school is never an easy thing to do, and often, no perfect decision exists. I hope that by sharing the multiple variables that are considered when deciding to close school provides you with the most accurate information regarding the process for making this very difficult decision.

Your Partner in Education,

Amy Conway

Amy Conway
Superintendent

It is the policy of the Gibraltar School District not to discriminate on the basis of race, color, national origin, gender/sex, age, disability, height, weight or marital status in its programs, services or activities. The following people have been designated to handle inquiries regarding the discrimination policies: Inquiries related to discrimination to Ms. Amy Conway, Superintendent 19370 Vreeland Road, Woodhaven, MI 48183



Snow Days:

How they're decided in Gibraltar School District



HOW DO WE MAKE OUR DECISION?

Several factors go into making a "snow day" call, including:

- Information on current road conditions from our transportation and maintenance crews; conditions are monitored throughout the night, and again at approximately 3:30 – 4 a.m. by GSD operations personnel.
- Amount of snow and ice accumulated
- Duration and timing of the snow and/or ice event
- Temperature and wind chill (for safety of walkers and students at bus stops) We generally use a -20 wind chill for a sustained amount of time as a "cold weather closure" guide.
- School building conditions (electricity, heat, water)
- School parking lot and sidewalk conditions
- Current weather conditions, along with predicted weather, but closures cannot be determined solely on predictions.
- Will buses be operational and running on schedule?
- Consultation with weather consultants and other nearby school districts, particularly those in which we share services and programs with, including Special Education and the Downriver Career and Technical Consortium



WHO MAKES THE DECISION?

The superintendent makes the final decision, based on the above factors, recommendations from our Operations Department, information from the National Weather Service, and consultation with neighboring districts



PARENT DECISION

As a reminder, although the district does its best in this process, we know that often, no perfect decision exists. If you feel as though it is not safe for your child to attend school, please know that you always have the option of keeping your child at home.



HOW ARE PARENTS NOTIFIED?

We spread the word in several ways, as soon as the determination is made by the superintendent:

- Automated phone call (the phone number listed for parent/guardian contacts in Mi-Star)
- Email to parents/guardians (the email address listed for parent/guardian contacts in Mi-Star)
- Social media: District Facebook page, Twitter
- All local radio and TV news stations



WHEN IS THE DECISION MADE?

Sometimes, closures are determined the evening prior, while most times they're determined during the early morning hours. The calls and emails go out as soon as possible, to give families proper planning time. We do not place phone calls earlier than 5 a.m. We do not stagger calls per grade level and we realize that a 5 a.m. call is appropriate for high school students and staff, but early for elementary, which has a later start time. Thanks for your understanding.



WILL SNOW DAYS BE VIRTUAL LEARNING DAYS?

Due to the last-minute nature of these calls, it would be difficult for our staff to transition to virtual instruction from a remote location. Therefore, snow days will remain the same as in years past and will not be remote learning days. If there are a significant number of inclement weather days this year, that could be revisited at a later date.



ARE THERE SNOW DAYS BUILT INTO THE CALENDAR?

The district does not build snow days into the calendar, but the State of Michigan allows up to six days for emergency closings

PLEASE BE SURE THAT YOUR CONTACT INFORMATION IS ALWAYS CURRENT ON YOUR CHILD'S MISTAR ACCOUNT, ACCESSIBLE THROUGH [PARENT PORTAL](#).