

School Closure Guidelines

There are very limited and rare cases in which the school will be closed unexpectedly. The Superintendent will close the school if and when the safety, health, and well being of the students and staff are in jeopardy. In general, the following guidelines will guide the Superintendent's decision to close the school.

Reasons to Close School

1. No heat in building for extended period of time due to boiler issues
2. Extended periods (beyond 4 hours) with no running water.
3. Over 50% of staff and/or students are out sick or when too many teachers/staff are absent to responsibly supervise the remaining students.
4. Order and/or recommendation from State or Regional Public Health Office.
5. In event of a countywide implementation of the Pandemic Flu Protocols in which case county commissioners and school board members would meet to jointly agree to a 2-12 week extended closure of the school.
6. Severe blizzard or storm in which Public Works is unable to keep main roads plowed and ask/recommend that school be closed. In this case, all government buildings and offices would be closed as well (Courthouse and Town Hall).

Reasons and Rationale for Delayed Openings or Modified Schedules

1. Massive snow storms or blizzards may create delays but not an official closing of school
 - As Silverton does not have bus routes, there's no reason to close school due to inclement weather.
 - In case of blizzard conditions, teachers and staff actively account for all students by contacting parents to make sure absent students are at home and not en-route to school. The teachers and staff make an increased communication effort with parents throughout the day. Elementary students are released from school only when accompanied by an adult. Teachers check with HS and MS students as to their plans to get home and make phones available for students to call parents if necessary to let them know students are on the way home.
 - If necessary and if feasible, the school will use a suburban to pick up or deliver kids home in extreme weather situations.
2. In certain circumstances, schedules will be modified for classes that have been out for long fieldwork sessions that may extend up to 5-10 days or over weekends. In those cases, that particular class may have a day off from school that would be a normal school day for others.

3. There are circumstances in which students at a particular grade level are let out early or come to school later due to a specific unique schedule for that particular day. All of these situations have prior approval from the Superintendent.

Reasons Why School Will Not Be Closed

- Loss of electricity is typically not a legitimate reason to close school as all rooms have so much ambient light (even in blizzard conditions) that instruction and learning can continue. Emergency lighting in hallways work for long periods of time. The heating system can operate independently of electricity. The phone systems have a limited back up reserve system and the loss of computers for a period of time is an inconvenience, but not a reason to close school. If the loss of electricity extends into a number of days, the situation would be re-evaluated.
- Snow storms and blizzards that may seem extreme to some but are actually to be expected in the San Juans.

Repercussions and Consequences of Closing School

- Our calendar does not accommodate snow days or “emergency closure” days meaning that there is a high likelihood that we would have to reschedule make up days at the end of the year. This can quickly become problematic.
- The staff continues to get paid even when school is closed. This doesn't necessarily create complications with the salaried, contracted employees, but can lead to issues with all of the hourly and at-will employees. In theory, in the event of long-term closures, the school would bear an additional financial burden by paying employees while school is closed and then would have to continue to pay them for the additional make up days. This holds true (by law) for extended closures due to epidemics or flu outbreaks.
- In the event of long-term closures of epidemic/pandemic situations, healthy employees can be reassigned to work for other government agencies during these extreme situations but would continue to be paid by the District.

*Adopted December 2014
San Juan County School District #1 Silverton, Colorado
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