



October 2016

Dear Parents/Guardians:

The inclement weather season is near. Please prepare by noting the following Prince William County Public Schools (PWCS) inclement weather practices, and equipping yourself with the newly released 2016 MyPWCS custom mobile app.

When snow, ice, or cold causes hazardous road and walking conditions, schools may open late, end early, or even close for the entire day. Decisions are made based on countywide conditions and weather forecasts to ensure the safety of all students, staff, and residents across more than 350 square miles. This means closings can occur when conditions might not seem particularly bad in your immediate area. Conversely, schools may open when you consider local roads and sidewalks unsafe for travel. If that happens, you have the option of not sending your child(ren) to school. Students will receive an excused absence. They will not be penalized academically, but are expected to make up all assignments.

PWCS transportation teams determine travel safety by monitoring conditions and driving both major and remote roads across the county. They also consider input from police, Virginia transportation authorities, and weather forecasts before recommending a decision. Safety is always the top priority. We try to reach a decision as early as possible amid changing conditions, and strive to get the word out between 5 and 5:30 a.m. in multiple ways:

- **Online:** Check pwcs.edu and/or any school website. Weather notifications will appear in a pop-up box when sites are opened. If the site is already open, refresh your browser with “F5” to get the latest announcement. Messages will be in English with a “Weather Notice” link to translated versions;
- **Social Media:** “Like” our Facebook page at facebook.com/PWCSNews or follow us on Twitter, twitter.com/pwcsnews;
- **Local radio and TV stations:** Closing and delay information are repeated frequently;
- **PWCS-TV:** Watch Comcast channel 18 and Verizon/FiOS channel 36;
- **Phone:** Call the PWCS information line at 703.791.2776 and select option 3; and/or
- **MyPWCS Mobile App:** Get notifications directly on your handheld device. First, delete older versions, then download the free 2016 custom mobile app by searching “PWCS” on iOS and Android App stores.

For more information visit pwcs.edu. Click on “About Us,” then “Closings, Delays, and Emergencies.”

DR. STEVEN L. WALTS
Superintendent of Schools

Occasionally, delayed openings are used to allow traffic to clear or hazardous road conditions to improve before schools can open. However, if conditions worsen unexpectedly, a closing decision is still possible.

When bad weather hits or worsens after school starts, it may be necessary to close schools early. Expect announcements that “All Prince William County Public Schools will close one hour (or two hours) early today,” depending on conditions. Early closings usually mean all after-school student activities, athletic activities, GED classes, and Adult Education classes are cancelled. But exceptions can be made; please monitor your email and check your school’s website for special information.

Here are some other important things to know:

- Do not bring students to school early during a delayed opening, as staff may be late.
- Only individuals specifically designated on the Student Emergency Card (along with parents/guardians and siblings) may pick up preschool and elementary students at the bus stop. Prepare for unexpected early closings by updating school files with the names of those authorized to meet your child when you cannot. Preschool and kindergarten students will be returned to the school if no designated individual meets them at the bus stop.
- Have a plan so elementary students know what to do if they arrive home before anyone is there to meet them. Middle and high school students also need plans to ensure their safety.
- Please do not call your child’s school or PWCS offices during weather emergencies. The School Division telephone system is needed to attend to operational and emergency matters.
- PWCS staff work hard to make school grounds safe after severe weather. You can help by ensuring your neighborhood sidewalks, walking paths, and bus stops are cleared so students will have a safe place to walk and wait, and buses will have a clear route to safely pick-up and drop-off children.
- Look for enclosed special instructions concerning School Age Child Care (SACC), Next Generation, and Preschool students.

Remember, the decision to change the school schedule is never made lightly.

If you have any questions concerning these procedures, please call the principal of the school your child attends prior to the inclement weather season.

Thank you for your cooperation and ongoing support.

Sincerely,



Steven L. Walts
Superintendent of Schools

Attachment

Special Instructions for School Age Child Care (SACC) and Next Generation Parents/Guardians

- Ensure you have completed and returned the “Inclement Weather Plan Form” which indicates how your child(ren) will leave the school at dismissal when SACC and Next Generation programs do not open. All forms should be returned to the staff at their SACC or Next Generation site.
- If schools are closed for the day, SACC and Next Generation are closed as well.
- When PWCS opens two hours late, the SACC program will open two hours late.
- When schools close early, after-school SACC and Next Generation programs do not open.
- When all after-school and evening activities are cancelled, SACC and Next Generation programs close at 5 p.m.
- If you have any questions, please call the SACC and Next Generation supervisor at 703.791.8844.

Special Instructions for Preschool Parents/Guardians

When a two-hour delayed opening of school is announced, this automatically alters the preschool schedules. Parents/guardians should review the following schedule:

Two-Hour Delayed Opening

- A.M. preschool and full-day preschool students should expect their bus to arrive at the bus stop two hours later than usual.
- A.M. preschool and full-day preschool walking students should arrive at school two hours later than the regular schedule.
- Only A.M. preschool students will be dismissed one hour later than the regular schedule. Full-day preschool students will be dismissed at the regular time.
- P.M. preschool student buses will arrive one hour later than usual and will be dismissed at the regular time.

One-Hour Early Closing

A.M. preschool and full-day preschool students will be dismissed one hour earlier than the regular schedule. There will be no P.M. preschool.

Two-Hour Early Closing

A.M. preschool and full-day preschool students will be dismissed two hours earlier than the regular schedule. There will be no P.M. preschool.