

(11/22/23 District Administrator's Corner Article)

"Oh, the weather outside is frightful, but the fire is so delightful; and since we've no place to go ... let it snow, let it snow, let it snow."

Yep, snow days are inevitable in Wisconsin. As a matter of fact, they are a highly anticipated event. It is time for Old Man Glasbrenner to set his clock to 4:30 AM when there are expected weather concerns. I want to make a careful decision to keep families safe.

Decisions to delay or close school due to weather also include conversation on how we will continue to meet the annual legal requirement of minutes of instruction. This might include virtual learning or minutes added to the school day. "Each school district board shall annually schedule and hold at least 437 hours of direct pupil instruction in kindergarten, at least 1,050 hours of direct pupil instruction in grades 1 through 6, and at least 1,137 hours of direct pupil instruction in grades 7 through 12." (<https://dpi.wi.gov/cal/days-hours>)

The River Valley School District has set steps for notifying families of weather emergencies. And, as the District Administrator, I will be a part of this teamwork in the wee morning hours. Here is an outline of our process:

1. Conversations begin the night before and very early in the morning about the weather that may be coming.
2. Lamers Bus Service is included in our initial investigation of the roads. They call drivers to check road conditions.
3. Local radar is used in conjunction with the National Weather Service.
4. Phone calls are made to administrators in town, near Lone Rock, in rural Spring Green, north of Plain, over by Black Earth, and even near Dodgeville.
5. A decision is made and our communication plan is implemented.
6. If school is delayed or canceled, our phone chain alerts the administrative team, transportation team, and private schools.
7. Teaching, support, custodial, and kitchen staff are given notice.
8. Channels WKOW-TV(27), WISC-TV(3), and WMTV(15) are notified.
9. Radio stations in Richland Center (WRCO), Reedsburg (WRDB), and Dodgeville (WDMP) are notified.
10. Skylert messages and social media posts are drafted and sent.
11. In the event that the day is targeted as a "Virtual Instruction Day," lessons for students to work on may be posted on electronic portals.
12. School delays or closings are decided before 6:30 AM (RVSD Policy 722.3 Rule).

And then we wait. We wait to see if the forecast is close to correct. We wait to see if the roads will be as poor as we anticipated. We wait to see if "better safe than sorry" was the right call. (*Like I stated before, we will always try to make the decision based on what is safest.*) Nostalgically, I envision the accumulating snow creating an opportunity for families to drop the electronics, grab snow shoes, and find a place to hike and enjoy a breath of fresh Wisconsin winter air.

According to the trusted Farmer's Almanac winter predictions, Wisconsin is in for a stormy winter season filled with abundant snowfall and colder temperatures. Maybe... maybe not—we'll see.

As we approach Thanksgiving, we are thankful for all the donors to the first annual Project Lunchbox fundraiser to fund meals for students. Please consider donating to eliminate lunch debt and fight against student food insecurity. Thank you.

Sincerely,

Loren Glasbrenner, District Administrator
River Valley School District