

Decisions about delays, cancellations, and early dismissals are not made lightly. Regardless of the decision, I receive a certain number of calls expressing displeasure with the decision. When school is delayed or cancelled, I receive calls from parents who are anxious to go to work and they will complain that the roads are not so bad and school should have been held or there should not have been a delay. When delays or cancellations are not made, people call to say I should be more concerned about the safety of students.

I thought it might be helpful to explain the process I use whenever I am faced with a decision to have a delayed opening, dismiss early, or close school. At the core of the decision is whether or not students can get to and from school safely whether that is by bus or walking to and from school.

I receive a great deal of information before making a decision. I begin at 4:30 A.M. by talking to our Supervisor of Buildings & Grounds who has already spoken to the highway department. If either of these departments feels they cannot complete their work of plowing the roads and the parking lots by the start of school, we are in a situation where we will likely have a delay or closing. I am also in contact with Salter's, our transportation company, to determine if our buses can travel the roads safely. I then check with the National Weather Service website and watch several television stations for an up-to-date weather forecast very specific to our area. My next set of calls is with area superintendents. We share with each other what we are thinking of doing. We do not all do the same thing because we have different conditions in each town. In Simsbury we have a number of roads which are at higher elevation and we have a number of roads that are narrow and/or have cul-de-sacs which are very difficult to navigate in the snow and ice.

I try to make a decision between 5:15 and 5:30 AM for delayed openings and closures and by 9:30 AM for early closings. Of course there are situations in which weather stations indicate that the snow is going to begin during the school day and I am forced to make a decision before the snow actually starts. On those occasions I have to rely on the wisdom of the weather reports. I hope this information helps explain an often difficult decision making process that has student safety at its core.

If you would like to receive a text or email alert when Simsbury Public Schools are closed you can sign-up directly with either of the television stations listed below.

WFSB – Channel 3 - <http://my.textcaster.com/asa/Default.aspx?ID=c1616077-39d9-4682-b0ca-63a1ee174441>

NBC – Channel 30 - <http://my.textcaster.com/asa/Default.aspx?ID=651c5aed-b306-472c-9b67-8d79ecb9f5dc>

*Matthew Curtis*