

# SNOW.....

Living in Vermont, we know winter will inevitably show up at our front door! As the superintendent of Colchester schools, I am often thinking about the moment when I have to make the decision to have the first snow day. If you are a student you are probably thinking, "Wow! I want to call a snow day!" For the adults reading this: you know, and hopefully understand, the seriousness and difficulty that comes with making this decision.



Growing up in New York State, and living in Buffalo for eight years, I have memories of snow reaching four feet high. I would relish in that early morning call announcing school was canceled. I remember being with my friends and literally diving off my front porch and into the snow.



As a former building principal, students would ask me, "Can you cancel school tomorrow? It's going to snow, PLEASE?!" It would flurry just a bit outside during the school day and I would be asked, "We're going home early, right?" In both cases I would chuckle and say, "I don't have that much responsibility, that's the superintendent's call!" While secretly thinking how glad I was that I wasn't the one making the decision. I guess having to call a snow day slipped my mind when I accepted the position as superintendent.

So here I am, the one that gets to make the call.

Many of you may be wondering how I'll come to the decision to have a snow day. Lucky for me, it's actually a team of people who provide different pieces of information, all of which contribute to making the big decision.

First and foremost, I follow weather patterns daily, using both local and national weather reports. If a storm seems imminent, the superintendents in the Champlain Valley will start sharing their thoughts and predictions with each other. If it looks like the snow is coming, my day will begin at 4:00 am by making an early morning phone call to our Business Manager, George Trieb. We'll spend the next hour or so monitoring the weather and communicating with Colchester officials. It is only after talking with the bus company, CSD maintenance, our town road crews, and Colchester Police Department, that a decision begins to take form.

Any school superintendent will tell you that canceling or postponing school is rarely an easy call. The safety of our students is always our top concern. We must consider the condition of the roadways, potential for traffic accidents, and the temperature and wind-chill for students walking or waiting for the bus.

Once the decision for a snow day is made, we first inform our families by their preferred method of contact (phone, text, or email) using School Messenger. We then notify the local news agencies and post the closing on our district Facebook and Twitter pages. Since our first bus boards in the Islands just after 5:30 am, our goal is to have notifications out between 5:00 and 5:15 am. Of course, this is Vermont after all. There will always be an unpredictable storm that begins at 6 am once the busses are already on the roads; letting our best intended set of processes and procedures fail us due to timing.



The decision to close or delay school is not an easy call to make. No matter what the call ends up being, some folks are happy and others are frustrated. We understand that our decisions have a significant impact on families. We take this process seriously, knowing that the safety of our children is our greatest responsibility. As always, please make sure your children have dressed appropriately for cold temperatures and the quickly changing Vermont weather.

So, whether you're doing a nighttime snow dance with your pajamas on inside out, or pulling the covers over your eyes wishing for summer, I'll be here. Trying my hardest to make the best decision possible for our kids.

Amy Minor, Superintendent