

Greetings,

I would like to provide the Ardsley School District community with an update on delayed start times, early releases, closings, and after school activity cancellations. These decisions are extremely difficult and involve many competing considerations. I recognize that these decisions can be frustrating and create challenges for many of us. Please know that student and staff safety is always our primary concern.

When faced with unpredictable weather or similar situations, we take our responsibility very seriously. Our District has a contract with an Accuweather service, which gives us access to a live meteorologist and detailed weather forecasts pertaining to our District. These forecasts often change over time, so we typically monitor conditions until we feel confident enough to make a final decision. At the same time, we are mindful that many of our faculty and staff do not live locally. Whenever feasible, we try to share information as soon as possible to give our families time to confirm or adjust their own schedules.

Today, we decided to close the schools in our District because of two main factors:

- 1) extremely cold air temperatures, forecasted around 0 degrees at arrival time; and
- 2) the “feels like” (or wind chill) temperature forecast at 10 to 20 degrees below zero at arrival time (and even past a delayed start time).

Ideally, we would have made a decision to close schools last night. However, as of late last night, we were still uncertain whether the wind would subside. If the wind subsided, the “feels like” temperature would have posed less of a safety concern for our families. When we confirmed early this morning that the wind had not subsided, we made a final call to close school for the day. Although the buses themselves are equipped for extreme cold conditions, we could not take the chance of students waiting, or walking, in these elements, as frostbite can occur in a relatively short period of time.

I will also take this opportunity to share the following updates since the November 15, 2018 weather event that affected our area:

- On Tuesday night, the Board of Education is expected to approve a contract to install 25 Global Positioning System (GPS) units on all of our buses. We are expediting the installation and will share additional information with the community once the GPS units are operational.
- We have made a deliberate effort to update our student/household contact information and optimize our communication systems:
 - Approximately 12% of households in our District updated their contact information.

- We are currently pursuing a way to integrate Versatrans (our busing software) to directly link into our communication system to share accurate, real-time information with our District.
- A few members of our community have suggested including aides on all buses. We will consider this request as part of our budget and planning process for the 2019-20 school year.

Thank you for your continued patience, understanding and feedback as we continue to navigate these challenges. Please know that I take my commitment to the children, families and staff of the Ardsley School District very seriously. Please also know that I will always communicate, with honesty and transparency, about our performance under circumstances like today's, as well as the ways in which we can improve.

Respectfully,

Dr. Ryan Schoenfeld

Superintendent of Ardsley Schools