

Phone system used to contact parents when schools are closed

For the third school year, parents of Williamson County Schools students will be contacted by phone if schools are closed due to bad weather. While the local media will also broadcast closing information, parents can expect to receive a phone call at home early in the morning or during the day at work if schools have to be closed due to inclement weather. The district's phone notification system continues to be used by the school district and individual schools to notify parents of school closings and other important information.

"We hope to notify parents as early as possible if we must cancel school for the day," said Director of Schools Dr. Rebecca S. Sharber. "The positive feedback we've received from using the phone notification system to contact parents has been overwhelming. Parents appreciate the service that allows us to contact thousands of them in a matter of minutes."

Sharber said that the district will try to call by 9 p.m. if school will be cancelled the next day, but if that is not possible, the district will begin calling homes as early as 5:45 in the morning the day school is closed. Parents will only be called at the main number on file with the school in the morning or evening. If school is dismissed early for the day, parents will receive calls at all of the phone numbers on file with the school.

"It's crucial that schools have the correct contact information for each child on file, and we want to remind parents to notify the school immediately if that information ever changes," said Sharber.

In addition, school closing information will still be available on the Williamson County Schools cable access channels, Comcast 3 and Charter 96, and local radio station WAKM AM 950. School closing information can also be found on the school district web site, www.wcs.edu, by selecting School Delays/Closings on the home page, and Nashville area television stations and radio stations WSM AM 650 and FM 95, WLAC AM 1510 and Oldies 96.3 will also broadcast school closings. The same media will air early closing information as well.

The decision to close school will be made as early as possible to allow parents time to make alternate arrangements when necessary. According to Transportation Director John Hancock, spotters are located throughout the district and keep an eye on road conditions throughout the day and night, but the Director of Schools makes the final decision to close school.

"We want parents to remember that any type of inclement weather, including snow, ice and flooding, can cause us to close school," said Sharber.

Hancock said the decision to call off school is not an easy one but that the safety of the students is the deciding factor. "Our whole system is based on safely transporting each child," said Hancock. "The district has studied using alternate routes when weather conditions are not ideal, but we have found that this is not a safe option in our county."

Since Williamson is a large county with many rural roads, hazardous conditions in one part of the county may close the entire district. When schools are closed due to weather, events are automatically cancelled at the elementary and middle schools. The cancellation of high school events is determined at the school site, and individual schools will share that information with students and parents.

The district has 10 inclement weather days built into the 2007-08 calendar; any additional days missed would be rescheduled.