

# SCHOOL DISTRICT OF WHITEFISH BAY

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The Whitefish Bay School District



## December 2016 - Canceling School is based on Many Factors

Educating students in a safe, secure environment is the primary concern of every team member in the *School District of Whitefish Bay*. The two most common reasons for canceling school are excessive snow/ice and extreme cold. Obviously, both can result in dangerous circumstances for students, parents and staff, but road conditions and travel are more of a factor than temperature when determining whether or not to cancel school. The effects of the cold and wind can be countered by wearing appropriate clothing and limiting exposure. There is little or no recourse for unsafe road conditions caused by excessive ice or snow.

Among the factors that influence the decision to cancel school are weather reports, road conditions, and the ability to safely transport students to and from school. The decision typically involves consultation with a number of other entities, including neighboring school districts, the Whitefish Bay Police Department, and the Department of Public Works.

Another factor that school districts cannot ignore is the amount of instructional time scheduled during the school year. A minimum number of hours of instruction are required. If too much time is lost, districts have to reschedule days to make up for the lost time, which is often very inconvenient for families. When considering whether or not conditions merit canceling school, the preference to avoid having to schedule a make-up day(s) is of secondary importance.

The decision to cancel school is made as early as possible. The closing decision is typically made by 6:00 AM or earlier, so we can notify radio and TV stations. District Administrators do the best they can to make a timely decision with the available information. Once the decision is made, the School Messenger automated calling system is engaged and local television and radio stations are immediately notified so that parents, staff and students can plan accordingly. Some stations relay school closings in a timelier manner than others, so parents may want to check more than one station for the most up-to-date information. As the District Administrator, canceling school results in being a *hero* or a *villain* depending on each person's perspective.

The District will very likely remain open during all weather *Advisories*. The data reveals that if the District closes during weather advisories we would need to make up many days extending the school year into late June or even July (see data on next page).

Finally, the choice to cancel school is never easy and never taken lightly. **It is important to note that parents always have the right to excuse their child from school if they feel conditions are unsafe.** Always be sure to contact the school to report all absences. Please feel free to contact me if you have any questions regarding this communication.

Respectfully,

Dr. John W. Thomsen  
District Administrator

**National Oceanic and Atmosphere Administration Climate Data**  
**Observed Weather Reports**  
**Local Data Records for the Milwaukee Area**  
**January 2014-December 2014**

It would be extremely difficult to sustain school closure decisions within the **advisory level**. The recommendation is to sustain the **Warning** level to determine school closings. A **Windchill WARNING** level is a sustained wind chill of -35 or below. Snow Warnings are typically only issued for moderate to heavy snow fall - Greater than 4 inches. The following indicates the number of days each month impacted by precipitation and lower than normal temperatures.

Conditions	Number of Days				
	January 14	February 14	March 14	April 14	Dec 14
Freezing Rain	3	1	0	0	2
Light Snow below 3 in.	19	16	12	2	7
Sleet	0	1	1	2	1
Fog	15	11	13	11	15
Heavy Snow 4 or more in.	5	4	2	0	0
Snow Fall Average Depth	7 inches	10 inches	3 inches	.4	0
Average Minimum Temperature	5	9	21.2	35.7	26.4
Days Below Zero	13	8	1	0	0

**Summary of 2014:**

22 days the actual temperature fell below zero with the wind chill significantly lower.

56 days had snow falls less than 3 inches

11 days had heavy snow fall with the maximum average 10 inches

It would be extremely difficult to sustain school closure decisions within the **advisory level**.

Be Safe.