

## **November, 2008 – Update \* 94.5 FM Station See Below**

### **The School Closing Decision**

There is not a single task in our lives as school superintendents that we dislike more than deciding whether to close schools for the day, especially when it must be based on the best information we have sitting in front of us at 5:00 AM. We've been making the decision as superintendents for many years, and based upon the calls generated after making the decision, we are seldom right (routinely, about half believe we have made the right decision; the other half believe that we must be completely out of our minds). Yet, as sure as the Packers had a good start (and hopefully end) to their season, Wisconsin weather will provide us with difficult school opening decisions during the fall, winter, and/or early spring months.

So, how is the decision made prior to 5:00 AM informing as many people as possible as early as possible by television, radio, and WEB site, that school is cancelled, ensuring staff members, students, and buses are not on the road, for what students may believe is a normal school day?

- Prior to going to bed for a few hours sleep on a night prior to a prediction of a ...bad weather day, we gather as much weather-related information as possible and contact Washington County school superintendents to insure all of us can have a 4:00 AM conversation to compare information gained through contacts in the individual school districts. The following information is considered in all decisions relative to closing school because of weather:
  1. Information from the state, county and city officials focused on road conditions, along with both the short and long term weather forecasts.
  2. Information from our bus transportation directors surrounding their individual recommendations focused on sending the buses out on the roads.
  3. A conversation with our individual supervisor of building and grounds to insure the parking lots can be open for parking both during the opening and closing of the school day.

As the superintendents share the information gained with one another, every attempt is made to arrive at a joint decision, all of us moving in the same direction. Ultimately, armed with the information above, we also base our decision on the following extremely important factors:

- Temperature, including wind chill factor.
- Wind velocity impacting the blowing and drifting of snow.
- Buses running routes on a slower pace having an impact on the length of time students may be waiting at bus stops.
- Parents driving their sons/daughters to school in poor driving conditions and high school age students with little experience driving to school.
- Number of inches of projected snowfall.

Unless unusual circumstances, the Hartford Union High School District and the local K-8 districts will not implement either late starts or early dismissals for bad weather situations. Many of our bus drivers work more than one job, making them unavailable at other times. An early dismissal introduces the risk of sending a young student home to an empty house. (So, in the Hartford Area School Districts, the decision almost always boils down to start at the normal time, stay for a normal school day, or dismiss at the normal time.) We have learned that knowing students are inside, safe, warm, and learning is far better than sending them home to an empty house. However, it is important to remember that you are the parent and know what is best for your child. If you believe your child would be safer at home in poor weather conditions, your young learner's absence will be marked as excused. Likewise, if uncomfortable with the weather conditions throughout a poor weather day as you assess the weather conditions, we would encourage you to act upon that belief, communicate with your school's principal and make the necessary arrangements to pick up your child.

What may appear to be a simple decision, as you can tell, includes many components: (transportation, communications, before/after school child care in our elementary schools, the timing of the decision [involving several decision makers in neighboring school districts], road crews, bus drivers). The decisions to close school are based on the ability of the buses to safely and efficiently transport students and the ability of our student drivers to arrive safely at school.

Ultimately, the decision lies with the superintendents and it is, indeed, a difficult one, but like you, our first priority is to insure the safety of our students. Although some may choose to disagree, we will never compromise that basic principle when making the decision.

The following schools are aligned with the message **HARTFORD AREA SCHOOLS**

Hartford Union High School  
Hartford Jt#1, Rossman/Lincoln/Central  
Erin School District  
Friess Lake School District  
Herman School District #22  
Neosho Jt. #3 School District  
Richfield Jt. School District #1  
Rubicon Jt. #6 – Saylesville School  
Peace Lutheran - Hartford  
St. Kilian's School

To acquire up-to-date school closing information, please utilize the following resources:

**WTMJ – TV4; WTKM – 1540 AM & FM 104.9, WTMJ – 620 AM & WKTI – \* 94.5FM \* (New 94.5 FM won't be announcing closing until after 1/1/09)** and **www.huhs.org**

**St. Gabriel's information** is located on: **WTMJ –TV4 & FOX 6 - TV; WTKM-1540 AM & 104.9FM, WTMJ – 620 AM & WKTI – \* 94.5FM \* (New 94.5 FM won't be announcing closing until after 1/1/09).** .

Sincerely,

### **Hartford Area Superintendent**

Kieth A. Kriewaldt, Ed.D.  
Erin School District

Peace Lutheran School - Hartford

John Engstrom  
Friess Lake School District

Elliott Moeser, Ph.D.  
Richfield Jt. School District #1

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St. Kilian's Catholic School – Hartford

John Mason  
Herman School District #22

James Rice  
Neosho Public School

James A. Rademan, Principal