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As Minnesotans, we love talking about the weather and our recent snow followed by an extreme cold snap launched plenty of conversation starters. It also set in motion a series of messages from me to staff and parents announcing the delay or cancellation of school.

So far this month we have had it all: snow, dangerously low temperatures, historic wind chills and ice. With weeks left of winter I thought it would be a good time to again provide the processes we follow in determining cancellations and shed some light on whether or not we need to make-up any instruction days.

When it comes to extreme cold, we, like many districts, do not have set temperature or wind chill thresholds for closing school. Instead, we look at a number of factors such as the timing of the cold and wind, and the conditions of roads and busses. Keeping in close contact with our transportation department is always key, especially during extreme cold, to make sure our busses are able to run reliably.

Snow events are also very similar in that the timing of a storm can really affect the conditions of roads. I have a support team that includes the Director of Operations and Transportation, Jim Dellwo, along with our bus owners, and together we monitor the weather throughout the day. Then in the overnight hours, our team kicks into high gear driving the roads within the city limits, as well as the rural areas, to monitor conditions to determine if students can safely be transported to school. At the same time, our outside maintenance crews work to clear our school parking lots and sidewalks as quickly as possible to be ready for buses, cars and walkers to gain safe access to our schools.

Once a decision is made to adjust a normal school day, our staff in Communications, Kids' Company, Child Nutrition Services, Community Education, Custodians, Activities and Athletics and Administrators in all buildings and departments jump into action to ensure all stakeholders are informed and ready for the day ahead.

I, along with other Superintendents from across the Twin Cities, also participate in webinars given by the National Weather Service so that we always have the latest data regarding the timing of storms, snow totals or cold snaps to assist us with our decision-making. Superintendents from across the metro stay in communication with one another to compare road conditions and timing of any potential school changes.

If the decision is made to cancel school or have a delayed start, announcements are made generally before 6 a.m. via local media outlets and the district's communications channels (email, website, Facebook, Twitter, and our parent phone notification system, including text and voicemails). Exceptions may occur on days when weather or road conditions change rapidly during the morning hours.

When snow develops after students have already arrived to school, I believe it is usually safest to keep students on their schedules and in school. We try to avoid an early dismissal due to complications with transportation and child-care arrangements. Naturally, there are always exceptions to this, especially when there are rapidly deteriorating road conditions and visibility.

Regarding school make-up days, at this point, PLSAS does not need to add any instructional days to the school calendar. Our district is still above the State's minimum number of instructional hours, relative to the number of school days cancelled.

While it is my hope that we do not have to cancel additional school days this year, please know I will always do my very best to weigh both the safety and educational factors to make the right decisions about canceling, or issuing a late-start to school.

In the meantime, this is Minnesota. Perhaps our next weather conversation starter will involve a heat wave?