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# SRCA School Report



**January 22, 2024**

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# Weather and Schedule Changes

Typically, January weather begins to create some challenging decisions with regards to delays, early releases or school closures. With the presentation of the draft for the 24-25 academic calendar, this is a good opportunity to share the process of making the decision to change the daily schedule. The calendar development will be discussed later in the school report.

## Determining Factors

The first and primary factor for a daily schedule is the safety in traveling for staff, parents, and high school student drivers. There is no single factor that weighs heavier than another. Timing of a weather event is the second major factor and can greatly impact changes that are made. This can be a consideration when determining if traveling to campus or home at the end of the day would be safer if the time of school is changed. The final factor in making these decisions involves getting accurate information from weather forecasts and real-time data available either from personal observations or verified sources.

This is a summary of how these factors impacted decisions made on separate dates over a 2-week period beginning on January 9<sup>th</sup>

## Factors in Action

### January 9

This was the first day that was impacted by inclement weather. It is also significant to emphasize here that SRCA does not follow the decisions of Haywood County Schools (HCS). Each Public School Unit makes the decision to alter schedules independently and for this reason will take different considerations into making these decisions. January 9<sup>th</sup> represents a very stark contrast to the decision-making process and implementation.

The forecast leading into January 9<sup>th</sup> was that there would be intense rain beginning in the early morning hours into the afternoon with the potential for flooding during and after this event. In consulting with the administrative team, it was decided that the weather was going to be just as miserable for carline if it was held at regular time or with a delay. By starting on time, the bulk of instructional time could be preserved even if an early release would be needed later in the day. With all of this considered, the decision was made to begin on a regular schedule.

As the morning progressed, river gauges maintained by the National Weather Service across the county were being monitored to see when run-off would begin impacting the expected rise. By mid-morning the gauges were showing a steep rise and weather radar projected a potential break in the heavy rain in the early afternoon. With more rain anticipated in the late afternoon and evening, this was viewed as the safest window to conduct the student dismissal and then get staff home. The decision was made to dismiss at 1 pm, and this was successfully implemented by the SRCA staff.

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In contrast, HCS called a 2-hour delay on the evening of January 8<sup>th</sup>. After having the majority of students and staff on campus, the decision was announced at 9:55 to close and send everyone back into the treacherous weather and roads.

### **January 10<sup>th</sup>**

The forecast had a strong blast of arctic air moving in after the rain from the 9<sup>th</sup>. With the expected drop with moisture already on surfaces, the decision was made on the afternoon of the 9<sup>th</sup> to begin the 10<sup>th</sup> with a 2-hour delay. In checking the road conditions at 7 am on the 10<sup>th</sup>, it became clear that any of the secondary roads that had not been treated overnight would be risky due to ice until warmed by daylight. The final decision was made upon inspection of campus and finding it to be exceptionally treacherous to bring staff from the parking lots into the building. At 7:45 the communications were sent to close for the day.

### **January 16<sup>th</sup> and 17<sup>th</sup>**

Inclement weather began moving in from the west on the evening of the 15<sup>th</sup>. From reports provided by staff in the northern part of the county and those that live in Jackson County, travel for them and families in these areas would be challenging at best for the following 24 hours. The safest and most prudent decision was to close, and this decision was communicated on the evening of the 15<sup>th</sup>.

The same weather system had created extreme cold and icy conditions to start the day on the 17<sup>th</sup>. For this reason, a 2-hour delay was determined to be the safest option to allow everyone to travel to campus.

### **January 19<sup>th</sup>**

Another late arriving event made this a challenging decision. Roads in Waynesville, to the top of Balsam, and the top of Soco were all checked by 6 am and found to be safe. The decision was made to begin school on a regular schedule. Just as on the 9<sup>th</sup>, weather conditions were monitored during the day and with an increase in moisture moving in for the afternoon, it became clear that to give everyone plenty of time to travel safely home an early dismissal of 1 pm would be needed.

## **Summary**

Changing the school schedule due to weather is one of the more public decisions that generates emotions regardless of what occurs. All available information and group dynamics are considered in preserving instructional time while emphasizing the safety of our school community.

# **Academic Report**

## **Testing and Accountability Update**

Moving into the 2<sup>nd</sup> semester, there are couple of accountability measures that have been completed at the high school level along with mid-year assessments being conducted at all other levels.

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End of Course testing at the high school in English I and III, along with tests in science and social studies have come in above the state averages. Final percentages for these courses will not be complete until after the spring semester, however these results have the high school off to a solid start.

Currently, kindergarten through 3<sup>rd</sup> grade students are completing mClass assessments to determine reading growth. Preliminary results have been positive in demonstrating students demonstrating the gains on the state assessment that has been observed in daily instruction. It is worth noting that this is the first year in which the state will be incorporating outcomes from the mClass assessments into the growth formula for the school report card.

Over the next week, grades 3-8 will be administered NC Check-Ins for ELA, Math and Science in 5<sup>th</sup> and 8<sup>th</sup> grades. These assessments will allow teachers to have data needed to effectively monitor the progress of students in these content areas. According to the most recent information from DPI, these assessments will also be used to generate predictive questions for students on their EOG's in May.

## Student Attendance and Truancy

An echo effect of the post-Covid era is the lack of emphasis towards student attendance. In early December a review of student attendance indicated that over 70 students had accumulated ten or more absences. Administration in collaboration with our School Social Worker and Resource Officer reviewed the NC statutes along with how these would be managed by the judicial system at this time. With the surge in remote learning, truancy had taken a secondary place in the enforcement by the judicial system. All indications are that truancy is now a point of emphasis with truancy charges possible at absence 15.

The plan applied by SRCA was to conduct face to face meetings with all parents who were above 10 absences and make them fully aware of the law while seeking a path to resolve the attendance issues. SRCA teachers have completed all these meetings by the target date of January 18<sup>th</sup>. While these conversations can be difficult, the approach has been one of compassion to avoid significant consequences for families which has been appreciated. Just as significantly, parents have been supportive in improving the attendance of their students even with the uneven schedules due to the weather.

## Items for Board Review

### Proposed Calendar 24-25

The Academic Committee will be presenting for review the Draft Calendar for the 2024-25 school year. Two points to highlight are the inclusion of PLC early release days for the second year in a row. After surveying the staff and reviewing outcomes, these have proven to be effective days with a place in our continued academic growth as a school. Second, this calendar was developed with significant input from teachers and parents on the committee.

## Financial Update

Please refer to the SRCA Financial Report 12.2023.

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*Cover Photo:* Students from 5<sup>th</sup> and 2<sup>nd</sup> grades are collaborating in creating weather measuring instruments as a part of a shared project organized by their teachers.