

March 11, 2026

2025-26 Regional Student Advisory Committee (StAC) - Meeting 2

The Regional Student Advisory Committee (StAC) and Regional Executive Director (RED) Steve Gallagher were joined by HRCE Operations Director Kavita Khanna, Transportation Coordinator Aidan McIlveen, Communications Coordinator Kelly Connors and Communications Officer Lindsey Bunin to discuss the factors that go into weather-related school closures, delayed starts and early dismissals.

The decision to impact learning and school operations prioritizes student safety and relies on the use of meteorological data, real-time road conditions and coordination between Operations, Communications and the RED.

School Closure Decision-Making Process:

- **Data and timing:** Gathering weather data starts at 5:00 a.m. using a specialized weather service, which provides detailed forecasts, pavement temperatures and visibility thresholds.
- **Transportation and Road Assessment:** HRCE's three transportation service providers have staff on the roads as early as 4:30 a.m. to check both main and side roads, with particular attention to 'winter stops' locations that are regularly problematic during weather events. This ensures real-time road conditions are communicated for decision-making.
- **Regional variability:** Weather impacts are evaluated by geographic area and families of schools, recognizing that conditions can vary significantly across the region and decisions are made based on local safety data.
- **Delayed Start Logistics:** The team explained that delayed starts are set as a two-hour delay from each school's normal start time to accommodate the tiered bus system and ensure safe arrival, though this can result in awkward schedules and reduced instructional time for some students.
- **Communication:** The final decision is made after a 5:30 a.m. team call, with the RED bearing responsibility for the outcome, and once communicated, the decision cannot be reversed due to the early start of bus operations and the need to inform families promptly.

Exam Schedule Impacted by Weather

StAC members commented on the recent shortening of the exam period this year which was impacted by several weather-related closures/delays. The resulting challenges that surfaced were overlapping exams and reduced study time which increased the intensity experienced by high school students.

Students explored the idea of process exams and other alternative assessment methods replacing the traditional exam structure, which could eliminate the impact weather has on evaluations.



Consideration of Online Learning During Snow Days

StAC members debated the feasibility and desirability of switching to online learning during snow days, highlighting both logistical challenges and differing opinions on its educational value.

- **Technology and Access Issues:** Not all students have reliable access to technology for online learning, and significant preparation would be required to ensure equitable participation if snow days were replaced with remote instruction.
- **Student Preferences and Learning Styles:** Several students expressed a preference for in-person learning, especially for hands-on courses, and felt that online learning is less effective for certain subjects and learning needs.

Partial-Day Closures and School-Based Supports

Early dismissals and late starts remain an unpopular decision among students who commented on the disruption to their productivity and schedules. Partial closures mean students who benefit from school-based supports can still receive them, however. It was noted that this consideration provided an example of the of the many factors that influence the decisions and created a deeper understanding of the complexities involved.

StAC members shared their new appreciation for the snow day process and the considerations made during weather-related decisions to alter school operations. Many remarked that because of this in-depth look at the logistics, they now have an informed understanding of the rationale to call upon during future snow day conversations with their peers and families.
