Inclement Weather Reminder
Gill-Montague Regional School District
2026-2027



With snow in the forecast, the time seems right for a reminder about how Gill-Montague Regional handles weather-related closings and delays. All of us understand that any change in the school schedule is disruptive for everyone, and the safety of our students, staff and families is our top priority.

Here are answers to the most frequently asked questions we receive.

How do you decide? Who makes these decisions? When are decisions announced?

We make every effort to announce decisions to close schools or have a two-hour delayed opening no later than 5:45 a.m. after consultation with the town highway department, our local emergency officials, our transportation company and other area superintendents. Decisions about early dismissal are extremely rare and normally announced the previous evening.

For two hour delays, doors will open at approximately 9:45 a.m. for Great Falls Middle/Turners Falls High, 10:30 a.m. for Gill, Hillcrest and Sheffield Elementary Schools. There will be no morning pre-school.

If schools will be using a 2-hour late start or canceling altogether, the District will notify parents by approximately 5:45 a.m. on the day of the late start or cancellation, using the following tools:

- Text messages
- Voicemail messages
- E-mail messages
- Facebook @Supt Thomas GMRSD
- Channel 22 (WWLP, Chicopee/Springfield)
- WHAI Bear Country Radio 95.3FM

What about cold temperatures?

To stay consistent in cold weather decisions I use the following scale: NORA's wind chill safety chart for cold weather.

Cold Weather Advisory At -15 to -24 including windchill.
School will open as normal or delayed school opening if on the colder end of the scale with warmer temperatures expected by mid morning.

Cold Weather Warning At -25 including windchill.
That's when we would close schools or delay if conditions are to improve in the AM.

Why aren't announcements made sooner?

Many of us joke about local weather forecasters "getting it wrong," but the reality is that weather conditions can change quickly. For that reason, we sometimes wait until the early morning to make sure that what was predicted the night before is accurate. This allows us every opportunity to keep schools open (if possible) and operate on a normal schedule.

What if the snow hasn't started by the time you decide?

Sometimes the decision to delay or close school will be made prior to the beginning of a storm, maybe even the night before the storm. This decision is based on the timing of the storm and if it will impact travel to and from school; in addition to the severity of the anticipated storm.

Since weather forecasting is not an exact science, we make our decision based on the most accurate information we have at the time to ensure the safety and well-being of all students and staff. While we want students in school, every day, we also want them safe and do not want to jeopardize them, their families or other travelers when commuting to and from school.

It is also important to know that a delay can change to a cancellation based on incoming forecast information and parents should monitor the mode of communication they are using regarding these updates. Every means necessary will be utilized to keep families immediately informed regarding any and all changes to the school day.

How are breakfast, lunch, the PM Program, field trips and after-school activities affected by closings and delays?

When schools are closed, all buildings are closed, and all school activities are canceled unless otherwise announced. Administrative offices will be open but the hours may change. When there is a two-hour delayed opening, all early field trips are canceled. Afternoon field trips may still proceed as planned. If schools have a two-hour delayed opening on a day originally scheduled to be an "early release" day, school will be canceled entirely.Breakfast will not be served if school has a two-hour delayed opening and lunch will be served as usual.

What is the impact on the bus schedule when there is a delayed opening?

When schools have a two hour delayed opening, bus service also runs on a 2 hour to a 2 hour and ten minute delayed schedule (because we are not serving breakfast). For instance, if there is a two-hour delay, a bus that is normally scheduled to pick up at 7:45 a.m. will pick up at 9:45 a.m. We also want to remind families that buses may experience delays because of traffic congestion or slower travel because of road conditions that normally occur when we have inclement weather.

What happens if there is a delay on an early Release Day?

In the event that weather conditions require a 2-hour delay on a scheduled Early Release (half) day, **the early release may be cancelled.** Schools will instead remain in session for the full afternoon, following a standard 2-hour delay schedule.

- Our food service department will provide both breakfast and lunch as close to a typical daily schedule as possible.
- School buses will follow their standard afternoon routes and dismissal schedules.
- Afternoon professional development sessions originally scheduled for these days will be cancelled. While we will attempt to reschedule these sessions where possible, we will **not** add a replacement Early Release day to the school calendar later in the year.

While a 2-hour delay on an Early Release day is uncommon, we want to ensure families and staff can plan accordingly.This shift is most likely to occur when a weather decision can be made the night before. We believe this approach is preferable to adding an additional snow day to the end of the school year.

Do you understand how difficult it is to arrange childcare at the last minute?

Yes, we do! We urge families to make plans now for the care of their students when school schedules change. Families can explore options with their neighbors and network with parent group members, finding ways to create community childcare teams to support each other, or identify qualified babysitters in your neighborhood.

How do I find out if Gill-Montague Regional Schools are closed?

- Text messages
- Voicemail messages
- E-mail messages
- Facebook @Supt Thomas GMRSD
- Channel 22 (WWLP, Chicopee/Springfield)
- WHAI Bear Country Radio 95.3FM

We encourage families to make sure your school has your up-to-date email in their database, as well as your cell phone number, designated as a cell phone.

Will Gill-Montague Regional notify families if there is NO delay or closing?

No announcement is made when our schools operate on a normal schedule.

What if I decide it's not safe to go out and want to keep my student at home?

As making such weather-related decisions is far from an exact science, we appreciate your support as we always try to do what is right. We also respect your decisions as a family should you determine it best for your children to stay at home due to inclement weather. In those cases, we just ask families to please follow the normal procedures to inform schools about your student's absence; please note however, this is not considered by the State of Massachusetts as an excused absence.

2025-10-31 tnt

2026-11-16 tnt

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