



Karen Douglass, Superintendent | PO Box 850 | Stevenson, WA 98648 | PH 509.427.5674 | Fax 509.427.4028 | [www.scsd.k12.wa.us](http://www.scsd.k12.wa.us)

November 2017

Dear Guardians:

Growing up in the Columbia Gorge, I am accustomed to inclement weather, especially during the winter. I've seen the Stevenson area receive 6' of snow in early 1980 and have seen years when we just hoped for snow. Last year was relentless and I'm hopeful for something different this winter. For those of you who enjoy trivia, there were several schools that missed MORE days than us last year. There were two schools that attended beyond the 4<sup>th</sup> of July in Washington state. Let's not do that!

Before deciding to close schools, we consult with our staff members and Skamania County road crews who are out driving the streets of our communities beginning in the early hours of the morning. As needed, we would contact other agencies for additional information such as the PUD supervisor and the Sheriff's office. Our school district covers a large region with remote areas and steep terrain in places. While roads may be passable in town, conditions may be very different just a few miles away. Before we close schools, we want answers to the questions below:

- Can we ensure that buses will navigate streets safely?
- Will students be safe waiting for buses, driving or walking to school?
- What are the predicted weather conditions later in the school day so we can also ensure students a safe return home?
- If we start school late (two-hour late start), will conditions be substantially improved?
- Will we have heat and lights in our schools?
- Will opening the schools impact or hamper other agencies needing to provide essential services?

Once we do make the decision to close schools, we try a number of ways to ensure the word reaches parents, students and staff. Our first step will be to send out an automated phone message through our School Messenger system. We use electronic means to notify media outlets, which also immediately posts the information to our **new** web site: [www.scsd303.org](http://www.scsd303.org). These are the fastest and most accurate way to track school closure information. Most of the Portland television and radio stations also provide school closure lists in their reports and on their web sites as well. Reports over the TV and radio *should* identify our school district as Stevenson-Carson School District NOT Skamania (a separate school district).

**If it is necessary to open schools late, breakfast will not be served and morning pre-school classes will be canceled, and any scheduled early release will be canceled providing students as much instructional time as possible that day.**

One of the reasons we live and raise our children in the Columbia Gorge is its ever-changing climate. If we prepare and consider all the possibilities, we can ensure the safety and well-being of our students and staff during extreme weather conditions. Having made my career in this school district for 29 years – I have experienced some school closures that were “spot on” and I’ve experienced some that “missed the mark.” Trust me, I’ll likely do both as superintendent of our school district. Please know I will do my best and provide me a little understanding if I miss the mark! Thank you for your partnership in this matter.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Karen Douglass".

Karen Douglass  
Superintendent