

# Once Upon a Time There Was a Polar Vortex and Everyone Froze Because the Schools Wouldn't Close

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The Midwest has been clutched in the grip of record-breaking lows for the last month, caused by a “polar vortex.” What effects does this kind of weather bring? The horrors of frostbite-fingers, toes, nose, and ears overwhelmed by the extreme cold. Hazardous roads encrusted with black ice, waiting to send cars into the ditch and people to their deaths. The heaving, wheezing vehicles stall and jerk as they struggle to get the shivering, miserable children to....school. Why?

Thankfully, this is not the case most of the time. More often than not, schools are cancelled, and the snow day made up in June. While some kids may rather just suck it up and stick the cold out, thus retaining that one itty-bitty summer day, I think those people are stupid. Or maybe just severely misguided. Well, let *me* guide you. Deciding to close school is obviously the sensible option. That way, everyone stays safe, content and ready for school to resume.

What does the term “polar vortex” conjure in your mind? I picture an icy whirlwind of blisteringly cold winds ripping and howling their way across the country. These conditions are *clearly* not safe. It makes going outside risky and unadvisable. Should we send our children out to school in this weather? Absolutely not! It isn't just miserable, it's dangerous! The high-speed winds on any exposed skin can result in wind burn, and the frozen air could lead to frostbite. Even those are just hazards directly caused by the ungodly temperatures. What about *indirect* hazards, like black ice. Can you imagine what would happen if a bus full of kids were to hit a patch of black ice? The results could be catastrophic! I shudder just thinking of it. Clearly, extreme sub-zero temperatures are dangerous. We want school to be *safe*, don't we?

Safety aside, I wouldn't even *want* to go to school. And me saying that isn't just the teenage whine of wanting to hang out with friends in a non-educational environment. Nope! It's the “I'm-only-human” whine of “not-wanting-to-go-anywhere-because-it's-50-degrees-below-zero-and-I-

don't-want-to-freeze-my-butt-off.” Seriously, 50 below is just *way* too cold to be going anywhere. I would *much* rather go to school in June, when it's 70 degrees and sunny. Even if I spend a beautiful day inside. Most people are more productive when they're not preoccupied being cold and miserable. Almost everyone would learn more in June than in January.

Even if it *were* warmish in January, it can be difficult to concentrate. Earlier in the year you're hit almost back to back with two nice long breaks-Thanksgiving at the end of November and Christmas at the end of December. After that though, it's all school all the time until the end of the school year, with the occasional (*very* occasional) three-day-weekend thrown in there out of generosity. This does not make for a very good learning environment. The average eighth

grader's attention span is roughly that of a goldfish-practically nonexistent. When that attention span is stretched to the limit over and over for weeks on end, that limit starts to fray. Eventually, after a moderate period of deterioration, the children become a slack-jawed glassy-eyed picture of mental detachment. They can no longer learn. However, with the simple insertion of a few snow days, all of that can be avoided. After a brief reprieve, the pupils bounce back to school as their usual bright-eyed fresh-brained selves.

So you see? What is sacrificing one or two measly summer days for a few little gift-wrapped packages from the heavens-snow days. Everyone is safer, happier, and in the end, smarter too. Everybody wins when they're not killed by a polar vortex!