The next time Watauga schools are closed for snow on a Monday, Tuesday, or Wednesday, the makeup day could be the following Saturday. With schools having been closed ten days so far this year for winter weather, the options for making up additional missed time now include Saturday school as well as extending the school year and shortening spring break.

"We know that having school on Saturdays disrupts weekend schedules for students, parents, and school employees, and we want to avoid it if possible," said Superintendent Dr. David Kafitz. "However, we may need to resort to Saturday classes to reduce the risk of shortening spring break or extending the school year beyond Friday, June 7th. If Saturday school does become necessary, we will announce it a few days ahead of time so that families can plan their weekends accordingly."

Schools will open on a Saturday only if they are closed during a Monday, Tuesday, or Wednesday of the same week, and barring an extremely late spring snowstorm, the only Saturdays that might be used are March 2nd, March 16th, and April 13th. Other Saturdays are off limits because school buildings are committed to other uses or because of spring break.

If schools are closed again on a Thursday or Friday, the missed days will be made up by extending the school year up to two more days (to June 7th) and then by shortening spring break by up to two days if necessary. The possible make up days from spring break would be Friday, April 5th and Thursday, April 4th. The first three days of spring break (April 1-3) will not be used as make up days under any circumstances.

If schools are open on a Saturday, it will be an early release day, with kindergarten through eighth grade students dismissing at 12:00 p.m. and the high school at 1:00 p.m.

Pre-kindergarten classes will not meet on Saturdays. Lunch will be served in all schools and buses will run their usual routes. The afterschool program will not operate on Saturdays.

Parents of students who miss school on a Saturday may request an excused absence by providing a written note explaining why their child was absent. Decisions about approval of excused absences are at the discretion of the school principal.

Winter weather is always an issue for the school calendar in Watauga County, but the impact on school schedules varies greatly from year to year. Schools in Watauga County have been closed an average of about 14.5 days annually over the last 36 years and the number of days missed has ranged from a low of four days in 1990-91 to a high of 39 days in 1977-78.