

# Coventry schools begin on Tuesday



Lauren Knight/Daily Times

The buses are ready to pick up Coventry school students for the first day on Tuesday, Sept. 6. Due to power outages from Irene school openings were delayed.

## The delay caused a loss of five instructional days

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COVENTRY—Come Tuesday morning on Sept. 6, schools in Coventry will be ready and waiting the students' arrival.

Schools were scheduled to begin Aug. 29 but were halted when Tropical Storm Irene hit Rhode Island, causing power outages, wires down and fallen trees. As a result, Tuesday will mark the start of school for pre-kindergartners to twelfth graders.

According to Superintendent Michael Convery, there are still approximately 38,000 Coventry residents without power and at least five significant areas with severe tree and telephone pole damage.

"We couldn't get buses through with the loose lines in the road," said Convery. "Quite honestly, we didn't want kids getting hurt."

The most important factor is student safety, he said.

"One more day, at this point, isn't going to make or break us."

The schools have lost a total of five instructional days, which is an unprecedented loss before the first day of school, he said.

"I have a lot of concerns—to lose five days before even the first, I have never heard of this before," said Convery.

The school department is looking at options to compensate for the loss. Right now, Convery expects that they will tack on five extra days at the end of the year.

"Currently, that is what we'll have to do. We have to have 180 instructional days," he explained.

Convery stated that he will not make any recommendation to the school committee regarding canceling February or April vacations.

"That is one thing we will

not do," he said, stating that it would cause too many problems for too many people.

There has been discussion regarding combining the February and April vacations and instead, having one week in March. That decision, however, would minimally require a year's notice and thus the earliest the change could occur would be the 2012 to 2013 school year.

In regards to this year, Convery believes students are ready to return to school.

"I have seen a couple kids and they all seem very excited to get back," he said.

The principals are highly organized and the school department is better prepared for expected enrollment rates.

"During the extra week, we had received records on kids leaving [the district] that we didn't know about," he said. "A lot of kids who moved out have already stated in other states and we got the records requests."

Normally, the requests would come in after the first day of school and while Coventry anticipates children moving out of the district, they cannot be sure of a particular figure beforehand.

The records requests already received have enabled the district to delete those students from their classes. Across the district, grades 3, 4 and 5 still have very high enrollment rates, Convery said.

"We have not had to add another teacher yet and are currently within contractual limits," he explained.

Convery also mentioned that considering the power loss in four of the seven school buildings, the school's food distributor, Aramark, has been inspecting the food in all of the kitchens.

"There is not a concern there—any food that went without power was tossed out," said Convery.

Food at the high school remained safe as the generator powered the coolers throughout the period of power loss.

As far as concerns Convery has for the first day of school, he said that there were no more than the usual. The administration, faculty and buses are ready for Tuesday.