January 2022

Guidelines for Student Activities in Cold Weather

The definition of extreme cold can vary across different regions of the country and there are no local or national temperature standards or specific rules about when students should be kept indoors. While most students can spend short periods outdoors if they are dressed appropriately, prolonged exposure to below-freezing temperatures can lead to serious conditions such as frostbite or hypothermia.

**WCSD is recommending students remain indoors when the temperature is 20 degrees or below.** However, the decision to modify or cancel outdoor physical activities due to weather conditions is made by the principal using a safety and common-sense approach with consideration given to risk factors of the student population at each school site.

Young children, those with health conditions such as asthma, and those who are not dressed appropriately for the cold weather, are at greatest risk of health complications in cold temperatures. Environmental risk factors include air temperature, wind chill factor, relative humidity, amount of time spent outdoors, etc.

When a decision is made to allow students to participate in outdoor recess or P.E in cold weather conditions, the following preventative measures are essential to protecting their health and safety:

**Dress Warmly and Stay Dry**

* Adults and children should wear: a hat, scarf, or knit mask to cover face and mouth, mittens, water-resistant coats and boots, sleeves that are snug at the wrist, and several layers of loose clothing.

**Be Aware of the Wind Chill Factor**

* Wind chill is the temperature the body feels when the air temperature is combined with wind speed. As the speed of the wind increases, it can “carry away” heat from the body and cause skin temperature to drop to dangerously low levels, even when the weather is only cool.

**Prevention is the Key**

* Do not ignore shivering! It is the first sign that the body is losing heat and serves as a signal that the student should return indoors.
* Supervise students closely and ensure supervisory staff is trained to recognize and respond to symptoms of cold exposure, including hypothermia and frostbite.
* Check regularly on students who are known to have medical disabilities or diagnoses.

You are encouraged to communicate with parents and to remind parents to properly dress students with a heavy coat, scarves, gloves, etc., and to properly identify clothing with nametags. For more specific information regarding prevention, symptoms and first aid, for cold-related health conditions, contact your school nurse and go to these web sites:

<http://www.nlm.nih.gov/medlineplus/winterweatheremergencies.html>

<http://emergency.cdc.gov/disasters/winter/pdf/cold_guide.pdf>