



Weather Guidance for Outdoor Play

Introduction

Outdoor play has a tremendous role in a child's development. It enables children to develop curiosity about the world around them and build interpersonal skills with other children. Since outdoor play is so important, schools must provide a safe environment to play when extreme weather conditions exist.

The District of Columbia Public Schools (DCPS) protects students' safety while providing a supportive school climate that encourages fun and learning. This guidance provides schools with information about outdoor play in the midst of intense weather conditions.

Cold Weather Advisory

A cold weather advisory is announced when cold weather conditions have a high risk of bodily harm. Children should be indoors under temperatures below 32 degrees Fahrenheit including the wind chill index, which is the temperature the body feels when exposed to wind speed. Teachers should exercise caution at temperatures below 40 degrees Fahrenheit. Dangers to children under these weather conditions include frostbite and hypothermia.

Teachers will be informed by their principals when weather conditions merit a cold weather advisory. To make that determination, principals will check the National Weather Service (NWS) at <https://www.weather.gov/> for local and national weather forecasts and information on weather alerts.

Steps for Outdoor Activity in Cold Weather

Weather permitting, children may play outdoors as long as they are properly clothed. The following temperatures correspond to what children should wear at those temperatures:

- Below 60 degrees: Jacket or long sleeve recommended
- Below 50 degrees: Coat and long pants recommended
- Below 40 degrees: Gloves and hats with previously recommended gear necessary
- Below 32 degrees: Indoor recess or physical activity

In addition, children with asthma require significant attention under cold weather conditions. Schools must honor parent requests to keep students indoors for asthma or other health reasons.

Finally, teachers must be cautious of slippery playground equipment and surfaces due to freezing conditions. Children can slip and fall on icy surfaces and their skin can stick to ice and frozen objects (i.e. flagpoles).

Heat Advisory

A heat advisory is announced when warm weather conditions have a high risk of bodily harm. Children should be indoors when temperatures exceed 95 degrees Fahrenheit including the heat index, how the combination of heat and humidity feels to the body. Teachers should exercise caution at temperatures

between 85 and 95 degrees fahrenheit. Dangers to children under these weather conditions include heat exhaustion, dehydration, and heat stroke. Wearing light and breathable clothing can prevent heat related injuries outdoors.

Teachers will be informed by their principals when weather conditions merit a heat advisory. To make that determination, principals will check the National Weather Service (NWS) at <https://www.weather.gov/> for local and national weather forecasts and information on weather alerts.

Steps for Outdoor Activity in Heat

When the temperature reaches above 95 degrees fahrenheit including the heat index, children should stay inside and they must be provided with an indoor physical activity. When playing outdoors in warm weather conditions, teachers must pay attention to the following:

- Children must stay hydrated during outdoor play. This means granting frequent water breaks before, after, and during outdoor activities.
 - Avoid drinks with caffeine and large amounts of sugar.
- Children must not roughhouse.
- Closely monitor children with chronic illnesses such as asthma.
- Limit time outside, especially when UV radiation is highest (i.e. between 10:00 AM and 4:00 PM).
 - Children must apply sunscreen before playing outside.
- Check the heat of the asphalt and playground equipment.