



*Updated September 3, 2015*

## **How Hot is Too Hot? Heat Procedures for North Shore School District 112**

We have received many inquiries from parents related to how the district decides to institute an interrupted or emergency closing day due to heat. Below are answers to frequently asked questions.

### **1. How does the district ensure the comfort and safety of children when school is in session on hot and humid days?**

With the exception of Oak Terrace Elementary School and the Green Bay Early Childhood Center, buildings in North Shore School District 112 are not fully air-conditioned. During periods of extreme temperatures and humidity, district staff take precautions to ensure that children are adequately hydrated and stay as comfortable as possible. Below are guidelines that district staff follow during warm-weather conditions:

- Ensure that drinking water is readily available and that students are well hydrated
- Remind students and staff to wear lightweight, loose-fitting cotton clothing
- Prevent students from over-exerting themselves
- Keep children indoors or in shady areas during the hottest parts of the day
- Avoid taking children outdoors when temperatures are very high
- Take all necessary steps to ensure keeping classroom temperatures comfortable
- Keep windows and doors open, and have at least one fan running
- Avoid use of heat-generating equipment like Promethean boards, projection cameras, etc.
- Monitor temperature and humidity levels throughout the day in rooms expected to have high temperatures, and calculate the effective temperature (ET).
- Move students to cooler areas of the building in rooms where ET exceeds 85 and there are more than 2 hours remaining in the school day.

### **2. How does the district determine when to institute an interrupted school day or emergency school closure due to heat?**

The district refers to the NOAA [National Weather Service's Heat Index Chart](#), which provides information about the likelihood of heat disorders due to prolonged exposure to high temperatures and humidity. If the forecasts call for the outdoor heat index to be at the "danger"

level or higher, this triggers a decision to either shorten the school day, or close school. When the outdoor heat index is at this level, our indoor classrooms generally have even higher heat indexes, at what the National Weather Service has determined is the danger level. The Illinois School Code allows for the use of interrupted school days or emergency closing days for adverse weather conditions.

**3. Does the district take into consideration the difficulties that working parents face in arranging childcare when the school day is interrupted or school is closed?**

The district's first priority is to ensure the health and safety of its children, and to provide a classroom environment that is effective and conducive to learning. When the indoor temperatures rise beyond a certain level, it can cause adverse health consequences, and the learning environment is disrupted. During periods of extreme heat, the district monitors classroom temperatures and rotates children to cooler areas of the building. During the very warmest periods of the day, it becomes more difficult to maintain optimal learning conditions for all students and to ensure that children aren't exposed for a prolonged period to potentially dangerous heat conditions. The district is aware that it is difficult for families when changes are made to the school day on short notice. However, the health and safety of the children must come first.

**4. Why aren't all the buildings air-conditioned?**

With the exception of Oak Terrace, all of the district's buildings were built prior to 1961, when air-conditioning was not a standard feature. Adding air-conditioning is a costly undertaking, and many of the buildings need significant updating beyond air-conditioning. The District is examining reconfiguration plans that would upgrade schools and provide for air-conditioning in all buildings.

**5. How would interrupted days and emergency closing days impact the school calendar?**

Any unscheduled early release days will NOT affect the school calendar. These count as full school days, and the state does not require that they be made up. All emergency closing days must be made up, and the school calendar will be modified accordingly and submitted to the state for approval.

**6. How has the district handled periods of extreme heat in the past?**

The district has heat guidelines in place, which are implemented any time the outdoor temperature hits 85 degrees or higher on a school day. Based on our past experience with the difficulties of creating a safe environment conducive to learning on heat-intensive days, the district has begun using the NOAA National Weather Service heat index, which measures outdoor temperature and relative humidity, along with the district's own measures of indoor classroom temperatures.