

# MT. BLUE REGIONAL SCHOOL DISTRICT

CHESTERVILLE – FARMINGTON – INDUSTRY – NEW SHARON – NEW VINEYARD – STARKS – TEMPLE – VIENNA – WELD – WILTON

227 MAIN STREET, FARMINGTON, ME 04938

Phone (207) 778-6571 | Fax (207) 778-4160

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TO: RSU 9 Families & Staff  
FROM: Christian M. Elkington, Superintendent  
RE: 2025 Outside Recess Parameters Correction Update  
DATE: 2-11-2025

I need to take responsibility for an error that was made when updating our Outside Recess Parameters, which were shared with RSU 9 Administration last month. In sharing the reminder/update, the 2022 version of the original memo unfortunately was used instead of the one updated in 2023. In 2023 we decreased some of the temperature parameters based on a research review which showed that we could have greater outside temperature flexibility for our students. A long streak of cold temperatures brought family and staff questions to our attention and helped us find that an error was made with the update shared last month. Because of this administrators have been keeping students inside when they might have been able to go outside.

This was not a principal mistake. I identified the error late this morning when preparing responses to questions I've received. Please know the guidance has been corrected and sent to RSU 9 Administration early this afternoon. A copy is included on the 2nd page of this memo for you to review.

Some questions that have been sent to me:

- 1. Have there been changes to the guidelines for outdoor activities? If so, were changes communicated to staff and parents? If the guidelines have not changed, when were they put in place?** The guidelines were originally put in place in 2022 and updated in 2023. As described above, the 2023 guidance is what will be used. Please see page 2 of this memo for details.
- 2. What data was used to make outdoor play policy?** There are no state or federal guidelines on how wind chill or frostbite temperatures can affect school students. It is a local decision. Because there can be big differences in outdoor conditions at buildings at either end of our district we issue guidelines to be followed rather than making a decision at the district level. To make sure all schools have uniform guidance to follow, we implemented the procedure I brought from my previous district, which was developed based on research on the impact cold temperatures and wind chill have on people, taking into account the age and size of young people.
- 3. What are the current guidelines and where can parents find this information?** They are on the back of this memo.

We all agree that having students safely outside whenever possible is important! NO ARGUMENT THERE! Being outside in a great state like Maine is a gift. It is too bad that this error, which I apologize for, has caused some to question that which we all agree on. Our guidelines were sent to our district physician when some initial concerns were brought up at the end of January as the health and safety of our students is always a top priority. To that end, with the help of our district physician, in consultation with some of her colleagues, they are reviewing the latest research to determine if changes need to be made to our guidelines. Should changes be called for, updated guidance and guidelines will be distributed to both administration, staff, and families immediately.

Thanks again to everyone who has shared their concerns with us.

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**To:** RSU 9 Parents & Families  
**From:** Christian M. Elkington  
**Re:** Winter Recess and Outside Activity Expectation Reminders  
**Date:** 2-11-2025

Exercise is a key ingredient for student learning. Whenever students can get outside the better for them and the better for staff. In the winter when temperatures are much cooler, determining when it is not safe for students to go outside can be tricky and so it is a must to take proper precautions when making this decision.

The following has been set, **if students have winter wear**, for them to have either outside recess or to participate in outside activities. Please use the following guidelines when determining if it is safe to be outside for long periods of time:

Temperature/Wind Chills	Outdoor Practice
Between 50-25 degrees Fahrenheit	Regularly scheduled outdoor recess times
Between 25-15 degrees Fahrenheit	20 minute maximum recess times
Between 15-7 degrees Fahrenheit	Limited 15-minute max, may be adjusted based on principal review of full sun and <u>no wind!</u>
Below 7 degrees Fahrenheit	No outdoor recess time

**\*Recommendations for COLD:**

The temperature above reflects wind-chill temperatures! Our school administrators will use the [Beaufort Wind Scale](#) and the [NOAA Wind Chill Chart](#) when making their determination.

There are no national, state or county standards for when to not go outside for recess. It is a local decision made by the administration. We need to follow a standard and so by looking at the medical evidence the above standard was set. As a school system, there are many local factors that we need to consider around the weather and recess during colder temperatures.

When looking at setting our expectation the following information was used:

- Health recommendations from medical organizations around hypothermia & frostbite
- Children's bodies are not to be considered small adults, they are children and children's bodies don't have the same protections as adults
- Children's bodies do not make heat like adults (they need to avoid reduced circulation and shivering)
- Children's skin reacts differently than adults (reaction times outside are different and reduced)
- Conditions below 15 degrees have many factors that make it potentially dangerous for extended stays outside.