

## **Safety Considerations for Outdoor Learning**

The following considerations are designed to keep students and faculty safe and comfortable while participating in outdoor learning.

### **COMMUNICATION WITH PARENTS/GUARDIANS**

- It is important to communicate with parents/guardians about outdoor learning at your school and how they can help by sending students prepared to learn in the outdoor environment.
- Send a letter home to parents/guardians about expectations and dressing their children for outdoor learning.
- Send home an outdoor learning permission form including listing health concerns such as allergies.

### **SAFETY AND RISK MANAGEMENT**

- Survey the site daily for potential hazards. Continue to assess risks as conditions change.
- Ensure tables and chairs are secure to prevent tipping over. Facility staff should be the only ones moving tables and heavy equipment.
- Ensure extension cords are properly covered to prevent tripping.
- If the site is deemed too risky due to extreme weather such as high winds or a thunderstorm, postpone the outdoor learning experience.
- Let the office know when you are going outside. Write a note on your door letting people know where you are and how to reach you.
- Take a cell phone or 2-way radio that gives you instant communication with the office.
- Each time the group transitions from one place to another, do a head count to ensure that all of the students are accounted for. Ensure a safe path of travel.
- Observe students' interactions with each other and with the environment. Gently guide the students in managing their behavior, any risks, and interactions as required.
- Explain to students that if they find anything that may be dangerous or pose a health risk (bees, broken glass, needle, dead animal, etc.) they should leave it and immediately inform you.
- Discuss appropriate responses to mosquitos, bees, wasps, ticks, and other insects.
- Review with students not to talk to community members they don't know. If a stranger attempts to engage students in conversation, they should inform the teacher.
- Be aware of signs of heat stress and hypothermia. Schedule hydration breaks or warm-up breaks as needed.
- Be aware of any special needs of students such as allergies.

## WARMTH AND COMFORT

- Students must come prepared with weather-appropriate gear for every day they will be learning outside. Children who are not adequately dressed will not be comfortable.
- **LAYERS:** Wearing layers of clothing allows children to make adjustments as needed according to changes in weather/microclimate and activity levels.
- **FOOTWEAR:** Boots or sturdy shoes with good grips on the bottom are recommended. Footwear should be closed-toed (no sandals).
- **EXTRA SUPPLIES:** Collect extra clothing including rain coats, snow pants, winter jackets, mittens, hats and boots. Clean these supplies and keep them in a storage bin so that students who are not prepared have something appropriate to wear.
- **WHEN IT'S WARM, WEAR:** A short-sleeved, light-weight and breathable shirt.
- Durable shorts or pants.
- **WHEN IT'S COLD, WEAR:** Thermal underclothing. Choose a fabric that will wick moisture away from the skin and provide a warm, breathable layer.
- Warm, waterproof gloves or mittens that slip on and off easily.
- Warm, waterproof hat that covers the ears.
- Warm, waterproof winter jacket and snow pants.
- Wool or wool-blend socks and warm, waterproof winter boots

## SUN PROTECTION

- The peak sun hours of 10:00 am – 3:00 pm fall within the normal school day.
- Encourage students to wear protective clothing and sunscreen.
- Provide education programs to inform students, parents/guardians and staff about sun exposure.

## BACKPACK

- Everyone should carry a backpack containing:
  - Water in a spill-proof bottle and a small unbreakable cup for warm drinks.
  - A healthy, high-energy snack in a reusable container.
  - A damp, bagged towel or hand sanitizer and towel to clean their hands before snack time.
- Extra socks, shirt, gloves, and a hat.