

January, 2012

Dear Parent/Guardian:

Welcome back from winter break. We hope you and your family had an enjoyable and healthy holiday. The winter months ahead are not only a time for students to resume their studies, they are also a time when colds, flu, and other communicable diseases are at their peak. The Washoe County School District would like to partner with you to minimize the spread of common childhood illnesses and missed school days.

Here are some steps you can take to ensure your child stays healthy and learning-ready this winter season:

1. Keep immunizations up-to-date. Vaccines protect your child and the school community from serious, preventable diseases.
2. Encourage hand-washing at home. Unwashed hands are a major source of disease transmission; scrubbing hands with soap and water before eating and after use of bathroom facilities is an important way to avoid exposure to many respiratory and stomach illnesses.
3. Teach your child good health habits. Even very young children can be taught to “cough or sneeze in your sleeve!”
4. While lice are not considered a “disease,” they are a nuisance that affects up to 12 million school-aged children each year. Lice don’t hop or fly but are spread by direct head-to-head contact or by using an infested brush, hat, or hair accessory. You may want to check your child’s head periodically for lice or nits and help him/her understand that some things are not to be shared, even with a sibling or best friend.
5. Although lunchtime in the cafeteria is a chance for students to socialize with friends, it can also be an opportunity for viruses and bacteria to pass from one child to another. Discourage your child from sharing their food, beverages, and eating utensils with others.
6. And finally, please keep your sick child home. While mild illnesses are not completely preventable when hundreds of children (and their “germs”) share the same building, children with fever or signs of moderate illness should not come to school. Not only are they infectious to others but they also need the care and supervision that only a parent can provide.

The Washoe County School District is committed to maintaining a healthy school environment for all students. Our wellness and exclusion policies not only conform to accepted national standards but are designed to promote the health and well-being of all members of our school community.

If you have any questions about health issues or policies, please contact the school nurse at your child’s school or call the Student Health Services Department at 353-5966.

Thank you.