

NYCDOE DECE Weather Policy for the ECERS

The term weather permitting is used in several items in the Early Childhood Environment Rating Scale. The aim of this document is to provide clarification and guidance about when the ECERS indicates children should participate in outdoor activities. At the program's discretion, staff may properly dress children and allow outdoor play in any temperature when there is no danger associated with outdoor exposure. ECERS requires that children have free play outdoors daily, when weather conditions permit. Weather permitting/non weather permitting conditions are outlined in the chart below:

WEATHER PERMITTING (outdoor play required)	NON-WEATHER PERMITTING (outdoor play NOT required)
The effective temperature (wind-chill + actual temperature) is ≥ 26 degrees during the gross motor time on the date of the observation.	The effective temperature (wind-chill + actual temperature) is ≤ 25 degrees or less during the gross motor time on the date of the observation.
There is no active precipitation (rain or snow).	There is active precipitation (rain or snow).
There is no weather advisory (wind/heat/temperature advisory).	There is a weather advisory (wind/heat/temperature advisory).
There is no snow/ice/debris in the space children generally use.	There is snow/ice/debris in most of the outdoor space left within two business days of a major storm.

Why outdoor play is important to childhood development:

Studies conducted by the *American Academy of Pediatrics* show that as many as half of American children are not getting enough exercise.¹ Exercise is essential for children, as it produces many positive benefits, including improved mood, attention, and cognitive performance. The outdoors is the very best place for young children to exercise, as it provides a new context for learning that allows children to take appropriate risk as they practice and master emerging physical skills. While outdoors, children can fully and freely experience motor skills like running, leaping, and jumping. Playing outdoors also allows children to develop an appreciation for nature and outdoors. Most adults associate winter weather with getting colds and illnesses such as the flu. However, it is not exposure to the cold that cause these viruses. In fact, it is likely to be increased exposure to poorly ventilated indoor environments, where bacteria and viruses live. By encouraging vigorous outdoor play in winter, children gain much needed exposure to fresh air and Vitamin D, while avoiding bacteria.²

Since children need many opportunities to be active, gross motor play should occur both in the morning and afternoon so that there are no extended periods when children are only doing more sedentary activities. During any three-hour period (both in the morning and in the afternoon), offer children at least 30 minutes of access to gross motor space and equipment.

Things to consider:

- Check wind-chill temperature/how air actually feels to determine weather conditions. At right is a screenshot from weather.com that shows the difference between the “feels like” and actual temperature.
- Weather permitting policy and outdoor play impacts the requirements for various items in the ECERS scale. If children remain indoors on a day when weather conditions permit outdoor play, scores will be impacted.
- Be flexible with the schedule on non-weather permitting days, and if possible, reschedule gross motor play for a different time of the day (e.g. when it rains in the morning, allow outdoor play in the afternoon).
- On non-weather permitting days, arrange for access to a **gross motor space** (e.g. gym, multi-purpose room, classroom, etc.) with **gross motor equipment** (e.g. balls, ring toss, jump ropes, etc.) where children can freely move around, use their large muscles and engage in vigorous play.

WEDNESDAY, DECEMBER 19



10:15 AM
Sunny

35°F 0%

Feels Like: 31°F
Humidity: 49%
Wind: W 4 mph
UV Index: 1 of 10



10:30 AM
Sunny

36°F 0%

¹ American Academy of Pediatrics, Physical Activity Should be a Vital Sign of Children's Overall Health," <https://www.aap.org/en-us/about-the-aap/aap-press-room/Pages/Physical-Activity-Should-be-a-Vital-Sign-of-Children's-Overall-Health.aspx> (Accessed December 23rd, 2019)

² Anne Dodds, "Cold Weather Outdoor Play Boosts Immune System," https://www.med.upenn.edu/antibiotics/newsletters/2017_5.1_January.pdf (Accessed December 23rd, 2019).