



HOBOKEN BOARD OF EDUCATION

SPECIAL SERVICES DEPARTMENT

1100 Willow Avenue ♦ Hoboken, NJ 07030

Dear Parents/Guardians,

The nurses of the Hoboken School District have carefully reviewed the most up to date evidence-based research with regard to the management of head lice so that we can respond consistently across the school district in the best interest of our student population.

Our practices were developed as a result of the nurses' concern over the amount of misinformation in the community regarding incidence, transmission and treatment options for head lice. The nurses felt that the lack of scientific information in the community had resulted in unwarranted absences from class, unnecessary expenditure of money on products and/or services and an irrational sense of fear and anxiety in our schools and city. The practice of the Hoboken School district is grounded in scientific fact rather than fear. We have reviewed research from a number of scientific journals and have also utilized a nationally acclaimed policy and resources to serve as a basis for our district procedure.

The purpose of this letter is to introduce the district practices, to explain some procedures related to the management of head lice in the schools, and to offer some additional resources so that our school community may become better educated on this topic.

The nursing practices and protocols are as follows:

A: Exclusion. The current recommendations by leading medical experts state that students with nits (eggs) and/or live head lice should remain in school and not be immediately excluded. This is not to say that all children with identified cases of head lice will remain in school all day. Often parents will arrive quickly once informed their child has head lice. However, immediate exclusion of these students is not considered necessary, nor is banning them from their classroom or separating them from the other children.

Why is exclusion NOT recommended by medical experts?

- **Although head lice are a nuisance, they do not cause disease and do not pose a health danger to the child or to others.** Children with head lice are not sick and pose no risk of illness transmission, therefore they should not be excluded from school. There are guidelines and specific criteria that warrants school exclusion for certain symptoms, illnesses and conditions and head lice is not one of them.
- **When head lice is discovered, the child has usually had them for 3-4 weeks.** Therefore, it makes no sense to immediately exclude them from class. When the child returns to class it is with the emphasis of limiting head to head contact with other students.

- **No matter how careful staff is to protect the privacy of students, when a student leaves a class and does not return, the assumption is that the child has head lice.** This only serves to point out the child who has head lice, which may cause unnecessary embarrassment and shame to the child and family.

- **Most importantly, school is not a high risk place for getting lice!** Over the last 12 years, multiple studies have proven the school is rarely the site of lice transmission. The vast majority of cases of lice are spread by friends and family members who play or live together. In the rare case when spread of head lice has occurred at school, it is generally among very young children and was likely as a result of playing closely together in ways that result in frequent head-to-head contact.

Head lice elicit an emotional reaction. "No nit " policies were based on that reaction, not on scientific evidence of lice transmission. Scientific research has informed us that keeping students with nits (eggs) or even lice, out of school has no effect on the amount of head lice at school.

B. Dissemination of Information: As always, the Certified School Nurses of the district will work closely with parents and children providing education and emotional support. With the adoption of our policy and regulation and armed with a wealth of scientific information, we continue to turn our efforts toward more meaningful, personalized attention to the child with head lice.

If active lice or nits (eggs) are found, the parent will be confidentially notified. The school nurse will provide information to the parents about proper treatment options.

General information regarding head lice will be posted on our website and sent home in beginning of the school year along with other health related informational materials. National Association of School Nurses (NASN) recommends eliminating classroom and school wide mass notifications because the letters only serve to create unnecessary worry and anxiety. Therefore, there will be no regular mass notifications sent home when a child is identified to have head lice at school. The school will not disclose the identity of children who have head lice. The child and family have a right to privacy.

Students with lice will be checked when they return to school and as needed the nurse and the parent will devise a plan for working together to support the needs of the student. Classroom head checks will only be done at the discretion of the nurse. The School Nurse works closely with parents and staff to assess information to decide if further investigation at the school is needed. With the support of our administration and equipped with expert scientific knowledge, we look forward to continuing to serve the students and families of the Hoboken Public Schools.

Please feel free to contact your School Nurse for any questions.