

## Helpful Information Regarding Lice

### **What are head lice?**

- Lice are tiny insects that live on and crawl through the hair. They are gray, brown, or black and can be difficult to see. They do not leave the human host on their own—they must be physically dislodged. They do not infest pets, furniture, carpeting or toys. Head lice live only on the heads of their human hosts.
- Lice need human blood to survive and most will die within 24 hours if they cannot find a “meal.”
- Lice lay eggs (nits) on the hair close to the scalp. It takes about 6 days for the nits to hatch. Nits have to be on the hair near the scalp in order to hatch. Nits which have been dislodged will not hatch in the environment.
- Head lice themselves are not a health hazard or a sign of uncleanliness, and are not responsible for the spread of any disease.

### **How are head lice spread?**

- Most often, by head-to-head contact with another person who has lice.
- By wearing another person’s hat or clothing, by using another person’s comb, brush or bedding.
- More rarely, by placing clothing worn by someone who has lice in a shared clothing storage compartment, locker or a cloak room.

### **Treatment:**

- There are a wide variety of treatments and preventatives offered (see Additional Resources listed below).
- It is time-consuming, but essential, to go through your student’s wet hair, with a specially designed comb, every day to identify and remove lice or eggs.
- Lice and nits mostly love people. However, disinfect the following sources by washing and drying at high heat for 20 minutes: pillows, blankets, clothes, stuffed animals, hats, caps and other items. Or, if you put them in a sealed plastic bag for 2 weeks, the lice and eggs will die.

### **Lice Screening at School:**

- In the fall and spring the school brings in Lice Knowing You, a certified and licensed company, who will do a head check of every child at Mack. We have had great success with this early detection program in the past.
- Students are screened by BCS staff if, during the school year, there is an indications that the student might have lice/nits or if they exhibit symptoms, e.g. pattern of itching.

- BCS promptly informs specific parents/legal guardian when their child has been found to have head lice and the student is sent home. The office will inform all parents with students in the affected classroom when new cases have been confirmed.

**Additional Resources:**

- King County Health Dept.:  
<http://www.kingcounty.gov/healthservices/health/communicable/diseases/headlice.aspx>
- Centers for Disease Control and Prevention: <http://www.cdc.gov/parasites/lice/head/>
- American Academy of Pediatrics:  
<http://www.healthychildren.org/English/healthissues/conditions/from-insects-animals/pages/Signs-of-Lice.aspx>
- National Pediculosis Organization: <http://www.headlice.org>
- Lice Knowing You: <http://www.liceknowingyou.com/>