



Elementary School Air Conditioning FAQ

Why aren't all the elementary schools air-conditioned?

The initial decision to not have air conditioning in most elementary schools dates back to 1979 when the board of education made the decision to not include it in the referendum to build Clow Elementary School. From that time until 2001, there was no formal support to include the cost of air conditioning as the district built prototype elementary schools to handle the rapid increase in enrollment. The 2001 Citizens Referendum Committee recommended including air conditioning in the last two elementary schools to be built (Owen and Peterson).

How was the decision made to air-condition 19 elementary schools?

In July 2014, administrators recommended installing air conditioning units that provided cooling for 25 percent of elementary classrooms across the district. The funding source was an unanticipated \$3.7 million additional in state revenue in 2014. The district estimated it would cost \$13.6 million to fully air-condition classrooms and libraries at all 19 schools. Administrators made the recommendation to use additional funds in this manner for several reasons: The increased time for students to be in cool areas was significant for learning; the District's Heat Focus Committee, comprised of parents and staff members, recommended installing these cooling units; and with the significant increase in cool classroom space available, the district was less likely to lose state revenue from closing schools on hot days. It is anticipated an additional \$7 million is needed to complete the work.

What was the purpose of the Heat Focus Committee?

The district's Heat Focus Committee formed in September 2013 and included parents, teachers, teaching assistants, and administrators from across the district. The committee focused on investigating options, finding solutions, and making a recommendation to the Board of Education. The group's recommendations ranged from developing guidelines for handling recess and sports practices to installing ductless air conditioning units in classrooms and libraries.

How were the classrooms selected to be air-conditioned?

In consultation with an engineering firm, classrooms were selected that logically made sense in relation to the placement of roof-top condensers. Consideration was also given to the heat load classrooms carry. The work began in 2015 and has progressed in phases as funds have become available. As of 2018, 67 percent of classrooms are air conditioned. Until the project is finished, the remaining classrooms without air conditioning are paired with air conditioned rooms so students have access to cooled space on warm days.

Why did the district install ductless units in classrooms instead of central air conditioning?

The Heat Focus Committee's recommendation was to install a ductless variable refrigerant air conditioning system based on the following:

- Lower cost for installation was estimated at \$13.6M instead of \$38M for a central air conditioning.
- Less time and more flexibility for installation as the ductless system allows you to select a group of classrooms instead of having to install in all classrooms in a building for the central air

conditioning system. The large scope of work required for the central air conditioning system would only allow completion of 4 or 5 schools per summer.

The ductless units work differently than central air conditioning with the main difference being ductless units use the existing classroom unit ventilator to bring in existing hot/humid outside air into the classroom and then the air is cooled with the ceiling-mounted classroom unit. With central air conditioning units, the air is already cooled when delivered to the classroom.

Can I keep my child home?

It is ultimately the responsibility of parents and guardians to decide if conditions safely allow for their children to attend school. If school is in session and you decide to keep your child home due to weather conditions, it will count as an excused absence. In this case, you must contact the school to let them know your child will not be in attendance.