



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 partially air-condition 19 elementary schools?

In July 2014, administrators recommended installing air conditioning units that provide 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 the additional funds in this manner for several reasons: The increased time for students to be in cool areas is 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 will be less likely to lose state revenue from closing schools on hot days.

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 Phase 2 continued in the summer of 2016 and Phase 3 was done in 2017. A total of 302 elementary classrooms now have air conditioning.

Why doesn't the district add window air conditioning units to all the other classrooms?

In 2008, the district worked with an engineering consultant to examine the feasibility of adding window units to classrooms. It also worked with an environmental consultant to determine if there would be any impact to the air quality by adding portable units. The engineers recommended the typical classroom would require between three and six tons of cooling. The majority of classrooms are served by unit ventilators that bring in outside air as required by code. The environmental consultants reported that window units are very rarely found in classrooms because these types of systems decrease the air quality by not being able to supply sufficient outside air. They also expressed concern about the lack of proper air filtration. Acoustics in the classrooms could also be an issue. Portable units have a compressor that can be very loud and distracting to students. Buildings with central air-condition have compressors located in mechanical rooms or outside the building to eliminate this issue. Window air conditioners would only provide cooling to areas with exterior walls. Other interior spaces (LMC, rooms at the end of the LMC, offices, etc.) would not be cooled with this option. Window air conditioners would also not be appropriate in large spaces such as the multi-purpose room and gym.

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.

What does the district do on excessively warm days?

In 2008, district administrators drafted a High Temperature Plan to provide a plan of action for elementary schools. It includes monitoring the Effective Temperature in classrooms. With the addition of partial air conditioning, the plan now includes turning on the air conditioning when the Effective Temperature is 75 degrees or above. Principals worked with their staff to develop a schedule to rotate students through the new air-conditioned classrooms and other cooling areas when the Effective Temperature is 80 degrees or more. Principals also utilize the gym for second floor classes and move outside when appropriate. Parents can contact their school to see if the rotation schedule will be implemented or what the effective temperature is in the school.

Can I keep my child home?

If schools are not closed, 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.