



“Tools for Schools” Indoor Air Quality

A “Win-Win” Situation

JoAnn Thorstenson

The Thompson Public School system has been working on our Indoor Air Quality (IAQ) since March of 2004. As we enter our second year, we would like to inform our community of the committee’s recent successes and long term goals.

All types of schools have air quality problems. Indoor air pollution may cause eye, nose and throat irritation and may trigger allergies and asthma. Poor indoor air quality may affect everyone, but children are especially vulnerable. Air quality in schools has become a public health problem ~ one that demands attention for the health and education of our children. Failure to prevent indoor air problems can have consequences such as:



- Increasing the potential for long and short term health problems for students and staff
- Impacting the student learning environment, comfort and attendance
- Reducing performance of teachers and staff due to discomfort, sickness or absenteeism
- Accelerating deterioration and reducing efficiency of the school and equipment

Indoor air problems can be subtle and do not always produce easily recognized impacts on health, well-being or the building itself. Children may be especially susceptible to air pollution. For this and the reasons noted above, air quality in schools is of particular concern ~ proper maintenance of indoor air is more than a “quality” issue, it encompasses safety and stewardship of our investment in the students, staff and facilities.

Our approach to cleaner air in our schools is practical and low cost. We started with a checklist that all of our teachers and administrators filled out to help identify problem areas in their work areas. We then followed up with a “walk through” to further pinpoint any problems which included: general cleanliness, animals, excess moisture, thermal comfort and ventilation.

The custodial staff was able to use the information provided by these checklists and make many improvements over the past summer break. Repairs were made to many windows, the ventilation system, areas of carpeting have been removed, and ceiling tiles were replaced. When the staff returned to school in the fall, they were supplied with a universal cleaner, disinfectant and cleaning cloths. All staff members were requested to remove any unapproved cleaning agents/deodorizers, plants and unnecessary items that may hinder or block the ventilation equipment.

The IAQ program is sponsored by the US Environmental Protection Agency, the American Federation of Teachers, the Association of School Business Officials, the Council for American Private Education, the National Education Association, the National Parent Teachers Association and the American Lung Association ~ who reminds us that *“When You Can’t Breathe, Nothing Else Matters”*.

Our committee is comprised of school administrators, board of education members, teachers, school health personnel, custodial and transportation staff and parents. Meetings are held in the Middle School Media room on the second Monday of the month, at 5 pm. We invite anyone who is interested in improving the environment of our school to come and join us.

We will have a link available through the school website soon. In the meantime if you have any questions please feel free to email our School Nurse at blesniewski@thompson.ctschool.net. ***THANK YOU!***