

June 7, 2023

Dear Parents and Guardians:

We are all concerned about the air quality in our community due to smoke from the wildfires in Canada being pushed into our state. Please know that we are doing all that we can to monitor the situation and minimize the effects in our buildings. Your children's safety is our top priority.

We have been monitoring the air quality index (AQI) during the last two days as well as the projections for tonight, tomorrow, and Friday. We have also been in contact with our local health department and have received information from the New York State Education Department (NYSED).

Students and staff remain inside during the school day. This afternoon we also minimized physical exertion inside the buildings and cancelled after school activities with the AQI expected to rise this evening. The filtration systems put in place as a result of the global pandemic have allowed us to keep windows closed in order to minimize effects inside the buildings. Teaching and learning continue inside our schools.

Throughout the day today the AQI in our region ranged from 150 to 197. AQIs above 150 are considered unhealthy. Testing inside our buildings showed the AQI rating to be lower by about 50%. The AQI is expected to be similar at the start of the day tomorrow. We will continue current protocols of keeping students inside and minimizing physical exertion.

The state has provided resources for schools regarding air quality including the information here: <https://www.airnow.gov/sites/default/files/2021-03/school-outdoor%20activity%20guidance.pdf>

In addition, here are a few questions and answers provided by the NYS Department of Health:

Q: What are some air quality tips for New Yorkers?

1. Air Quality Index available at [State AQI | AirNow.gov](https://www.airnow.gov) describes our current air quality. In New York, air quality is usually less than 50. The higher the AQI, the worse the air quality.
2. When AQI is higher, adverse health effects are more likely.
3. When AQI is > (greater than) 150, avoid strenuous outdoor activities.
4. Vulnerable individuals, including children under 18, adults 65 and older, and those with cardiovascular disease (e.g., congestive heart failure, history of prior heart attack) or lung disease (e.g., asthma, chronic obstructive pulmonary disease) should avoid exposure to the outdoors where Air Quality is designated Unhealthy or worse (AQI > 150). See more information at <https://www.airnow.gov/aqi/aqi-basics/>.
5. Individuals who are pregnant may be more vulnerable and become short of breath more easily, staying indoors when AQI is >150 is advised.

Q: What are some sports and outdoor activity safety tips?

1. When AQI is > 150, outdoor physical activity should be limited or minimized, where possible.
2. It is up to local school districts to assess and adjust to the risks, but we encourage all districts to take into account the most vulnerable members of the team – including those with asthma, allergies, or other conditions that could be exacerbated by poor air quality.
3. If nothing else, take longer breaks and recognize all could be struggling for reasons beyond their control.
4. It is important to be well hydrated.
5. If possible, postpone high exertion activities both inside and outside.

continued

Q: What about masks? Are they required or recommended?

1. For those who should or want to reduce their exposure to fine particulate matter when out of doors, the masks we are all familiar with will do the job. These should be properly fitting, and the higher the quality the better, as we all know.
2. That said, those most vulnerable to this kind of pollution and fine particulate matter should not be exerting themselves outdoors, whether wearing a mask or not.

Thank you for your support and understanding as we address this issue in our school and home environments. If you have questions, please feel free to contact your school office.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Thomas J. Douglas". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a large initial "T" and "D".

Dr. Thomas J. Douglas
Superintendent of Schools