

March 25, 2019

Subject: Air Quality Update

I am writing to share with you updated guidelines for ensuring student and staff safety when air quality is poor due to wildfires. These guidelines represent a consensus of the 38 school district superintendents in Sonoma County. They were developed in consultation with the two air quality management districts that govern our county, the county's public health department, and the Sonoma County Office of Education.

Last fall, the health concerns caused by the wildfire smoke from the Camp Fire created unprecedented challenges for schools. Air quality concerns had to be balanced with the need to provide a safe space for children without childcare or good air filtration at home. School district superintendents met with the Sonoma County Office of Education and the county's public health officer to establish guidelines for school activities and possible closures. While it was important to quickly establish guidelines for the disaster at that time, school district superintendents committed to seeking out the best information possible on this complex and challenging issue. We promised to update the guidelines as needed based on new information and expert guidance.

Over the last several months, Sonoma County school districts have consulted with air quality management districts and public health experts to do just that. *As an important note, these guidelines are not mandatory. They are meant to assist schools in making these difficult decisions, but ultimately, each school and district must decide what is in the best interest of their students based on local conditions.*

Ultimately, you are the best judge of your child's safety. If you have concerns about the impact of the air quality on your child, we encourage you to consult with your doctor to see what is best for your child's health. Our schools will approve absences for anyone wishing to keep their children home because of health concerns when air quality is hazardous.

This is a complex issue and there are no easy answers. We, as school district superintendents, believe the best solution is to receive statewide guidance from experts with California's Department of Education, Environmental Protection Agency, or Air Resources Board. The Sonoma County Office of Education is actively advocating for this and provided testimony to the California Assembly Education Committee earlier this spring.

Sincerely,

Kris Menlove