

Visalia Unified School District

District Location: Visalia, California

District Type: A suburban district in an agricultural region

Student Population: 26,400+ students in K-12 grades

Number of Facilities: 37 Schools: 24 Elementary; 4 Middle; 4 High; 1 Continuation; 1 Community Day; 1 Special Day; 1 Independent Study; and 1 Adult School

Facility Age Range: 73% of schools built before 1965, with 4 schools built in the past four years

Total Facility Square Footage: 2,294,633 square feet of building space of which one-third are portable classrooms

IAQ TFS Model of Sustained Excellence Award: 2006


IAQ TFS Excellence Award: 2001



IAQ Program Snapshot

Highlights of Program

- The TFS Program began after a mold concern in the county courthouse building and after Visalia tried to *quietly* address an mold issue at one school site.
- Initially conducted a series of educational trainings for key district staff (including principals, maintenance and custodial staff). Also invited the newspaper.
- A School Site IAQ Coordinator is identified for each school. Serves as the onsite communication contact for the school and a link to the overall district program.
- Ongoing communication with staff educating about IAQ has created a proactive change in the understanding of the importance of good IAQ.
- Custodial & Maintenance staff understand that their role isn't just about cleaning: it is about creating environments that help contribute to the educational process.
- Developed a systematic approach to IAQ which emphasizes effective & open communication rather than keeping things quiet.
- Proactive communications has helped to build trust within the district and its community.



Keys to Sustaining an IAQ Program

Organization of Program


- **District IAQ Team** is centralized at the School District level includes: Assistant Superintendent of Administrative Services; Director of Risk Management; Administrative Services Director; Director of Student Services (Nursing); Maintenance Supervisor; Custodial Supervisor; Grounds Supervisor; Lead HVAC Mechanic; & Site Coordinators
- **Role of Administration:** Schools utilize existing organized forums to introduce and implement the TFS program with teachers and parents. These include School Site Councils, Site Safety Committees, PTA, etc.
- A Site IAQ Coordinator is appointed for each school. Many are Principals or Assistant Principals who serve as the contact point.
- **Project Champions:** Using repeated IAQ training sessions, we have develop several types of champions:
 - Principals recognize the importance of good IAQ.
 - Maintenance and Custodial Staff are first responders.



Keys to Sustaining an IAQ Program

Funding Over Time

- **Sources of funding:** Most funding comes from within the existing funds of Maintenance and Risk Management budgets and prioritization of Preventative Maintenance Funds.
- **How funding has changed over time:** At the beginning of the TFS program, Site IAQ priorities were established. These were then ranked on a District wide basis. Over the years, funds are used annually based on the IAQ issues which arise during a school year and district wide ranking of large preventative maintenance projects.
- **Information provided to obtain funding:** Centralized discussions and prioritization occur at the District level based on Site IAQ inspections, historical issues, and current needs. Purchasing decisions consider the impact on the IAQ of classrooms.
- **Keeping the funding going:** Ongoing open dialogue about IAQ needs among School sites, Facilities, Maintenance, Purchasing and Budgeting is essential to establish common goals and priorities in the use of available funds.



Keys to Sustaining an IAQ Program

Evaluation and Outcomes

Program goals:

- Consistently utilize a proactive systems approach in the identification of IAQ concerns and resolution to issues.
- Demonstrate importance of IAQ concerns from individuals and communicate effectively with interested stakeholders openly about IAQ issues.
- Increase the awareness of staff about the importance of good IAQ to the learning environment.
- Increase understanding of how each person can contribute or affect the IAQ of classrooms.

Evaluation process:


- Review how IAQ concerns were identified and methods used to address it.
- Review types of IAQ issues being addressed, look for patterns in concerns/issues, etc.
- Review established District wide priorities based on IAQ needs.

Type of information collected and process:

- Quantitative – Results of walkthroughs or surveys: type & numbers of IAQ issues.
- Qualitative – Pictures taken of items affecting IAQ by staff (e.g. air fresheners).

Results: The program is reviewed

- Funding priorities considering IAQ information.
- Changes are made to methods and protocols, as needed.



Keys to Sustaining an IAQ Program

Communication

Methods with various audiences

- Conduct initial and ongoing educational trainings (e.g. IAQ, Risk Communication) for key district staff (including principals, maintenance and custodial staff, teachers).
- A site coordinator for each school who serves as the onsite communication contact for the school and a link to the overall district program.
- Show concern for every issue raised, regardless of whether it is really an IAQ problem or not.

Changes over time

- Developing a proactive system to communicate openly and effectively rather than keeping things quiet. Communicate with teachers, parents, and even the newspaper – Let all know what you are doing!
- Don't take the communication process for granted – ensure to communicate with the unions and make them a part of the process.

Outcomes due to communication

- Custodial & Maintenance staff understand that their role wasn't just about cleaning and repair: it is about creating environments that helped contribute to the educational process.
- Proactive communications has helped to build trust within the district and the community to deal with issues openly.



Keys to Sustaining an IAQ Program

Active Involvement

Others involved in program (e.g. community, parents, students, etc.):


- Trainings are held and open to other Public and Educational Agencies. Stakeholders are invited to participate.
 - ✓ Specialized IAQ trainings focused on various interest groups
 - ✓ Risk Communication trainings with key staff
 - ✓ Conduct ongoing awareness and communication
- High School Students are able to become involved through coursework and student clubs

How and why they became involved:

- Schools Sites have utilized existing organizations or forums to provide for input from school stakeholders, such as School Site Councils, School Site Safety Committees, etc.
- Currently parents are not as involved as much as when the TFS program was initiated.

Involvement of non-school groups:

- County Asthma Coalition has partnered in various projects such as Air Quality Flags
- American Lung Association has partnered in specific trainings
- District Staff has served as IAQ presenters for various trainings



Keys to Sustaining an IAQ Program

Integration

Reasons your program will continue without you –

- TFS is a centralized shared responsibility among Departments of the District.
- Provide ongoing IAQ Trainings for various groups of employees.

Ways program is institutionalized (i.e., policies, obtain continuous funding, union contracts)

- **Implemented TFS program as a fundamental district policy**
 - ✓ Develop Board, Superintendent, and management support of the program as fundamental key to academic achievement of students.
 - ✓ Institute a district wide coordinated system to approach to IAQ
 - ✓ Conduct periodic reviews & implement changes in procedures and practices
 - ✓ Establish open and effective communication systems about IAQ concerns
 - ✓ Decision making about projects is inclusive of an IAQ perspective

Key elements that drove integration

- Support from top Management to flexibility implement TFS.
- Early and repeated Trainings of various groups
- Establishment of District wide Priorities and Protocols

Result of institutionalizing IAQ

TFS principles have become the fundamental core elements of district's coordinated effort and procedures to prevent and address IAQ issues in an open and direct manner.



Contact Information

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