Importance of Good Ventilation in Classrooms

The Snohomish County Health Department visits all classrooms in the county to ensure adequate ventilation. Your classroom has an HVAC system to ensure everyone gets fresh air in the learning environment. However, any mechanical system can malfunction or fail. Our job as inspectors is to make sure there is adequate ventilation through the measure of carbon dioxide (CO_2).

CO_2 is a natural part of the atmosphere. You may have heard that too much CO_2 can affect the environment. However, scientists have found too much CO_2 can also affect people indoors.

SNOHOMISH COUNTY HEALTH DEPARTMENT

Why is this important? What's in the classroom air?

- When a room has lots of people or poor ventilation, the concentration of CO_2 may get too high.
- Poor ventilation can affect student health and academic performance.
- Too much CO_2 can cause lack of focus, headaches, and other issues.

How much CO_2 is too much?

- To put a number to it, the average outdoor atmospheric level of CO_2 is around 400 ppm, or parts per million.
- Different people start to feel the effects at different CO_2 levels. Some people start to feel fatigue and other effects around 1000 ppm.

  When a classroom measurement shows CO_2 at 1000 ppm over background, we communicate the issue to the school to investigate the cause and resolve the problem.

Students who learn in environments with higher ventilation rates tend to achieve better scores on standardized tests in math and reading than students in poorly ventilated classrooms.

Questions? Email EHSchools@snoco.org

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