

Did You Know...?



Nov 2024: Thermal Comfort & Window Opening Policy *by JoAnn Inserra*

Did you know...that there is an acceptable range of temperatures that we try to achieve in each school? The range of acceptable temperature in the heating season is 68-74 degrees. Temperatures in the heating season should not go below 65 degrees according to state guidelines. As school districts become more conscious of energy conservation and cost savings, they strive for a temperature of 68 degrees during heating season and 76 degrees in cooling season. There are no guidelines or laws that set a high limit.

In some schools, the HVAC (Heating Ventilation and Air Conditioning) system is difficult to adjust and the custodians and HVAC mechanics work together with the building occupants to address their concerns. In many of the schools in the district, there is what is known as a two-pipe system; meaning the HVAC system is either in cooling mode or heating mode, but not both. Once the system is changed to the new mode for the season, there is no way to turn it back should there be an overly hot day in Oct or an overly cool day in May.

Westport Public Schools follow the procedures below for addressing thermal comfort issues:

1. Thermal comfort issues are identified by staff and reported to the Main Office of the school.
2. A custodian is dispatched to the space and three temperature readings (using an instant read thermometer) are conducted. The three readings are taken at the thermostat and two other locations in the room. Instant read thermometers have been provided to all schools for this purpose.
3. If the custodian determines that the room temperature exceeds the range of acceptability (68 to 74 degrees) by less than 4 degrees, a work order is issued.
4. If the custodian determines that the room exceeds the range of acceptability by more than 4 degrees, a telephone call is placed to the Facilities Department. A work order is issued, and an HVAC mechanic is dispatched to the site.

NOTE: We do not permit windows to be open because it affects the functioning, balancing and efficiency of the HVAC system. Also, if outdoor air comes in through an open window, it is not filtered and can bring in pollens, outdoor mold spores, etc. The various types of HVAC systems in every school have filters (which are changed regularly) that filter the outdoor air before it enters the indoor space. This is better for Indoor Air Quality (IAQ) and for health and wellness. If the air feels warm or stagnant, it should be reported, and the thermal comfort procedures above will be followed.