



Air Quality Protocol & FAQ - rev. 9/12/2022

SWSF monitors the air quality index (AQI) using EPA's AQI monitoring tools at [Fire.AirNow.gov](https://www.fire.airnow.gov)

Introduction

In today's California, large-scale fires are becoming more common. Even when fires burn hundreds of miles away, the impact on the air here in the Bay Area can be felt for days, sometimes weeks.

Parents, educators, students and community members are right to be concerned. As an independent Waldorf school that serves students preschool through twelfth grade, Summerfield Waldorf School and Farm (SWSF) serves a vital role for not only the education of our children, but ensuring their safety and security. Families depend on us to remain open as long as we are able to continue to serve and protect students. Doing so is our number one priority. We also recognize that individual parents are the best judges of the conditions under which their students should attend school when schools remain open during days with poor air quality.

Below is a summary of how we manage different levels of air quality

Green (Good – AQI 0-50)

Maintain regular school routines
Continue outdoor recess, lunch and PE

Yellow (Moderate – AQI 51-100)

Maintain regular school routines
Continue outdoor recess, lunch and PE
Monitor all children and especially children who have health conditions (such as asthma consider reducing prolonged or heavy exertion

Orange (Unhealthy for Sensitive Groups – AQI 101-150)

Cancel School



If air quality deteriorates during the school day:

- Implement “Shelter in Place” to isolate students and staff from the outdoor environment and provide greater protection from external airborne contaminants until children are picked up
- Close doors and windows and run classroom-based air purifiers (which are effective for both smoke and COVID) monitor all children and especially children who have health conditions (such as asthma), and take action if needed cancel after school activities

Please inform your child’s teacher and the Main Office staff of any significant health concerns for your child(ren), especially those who may have respiratory challenges due to allergies, asthma, recent upper respiratory infections, etc., as we will be taking extra care with these students. Please also remember that we must have an Emergency Profile Form on file for students, listing any required medication at school. Also, we request that if your student has asthma, you will complete and return the [Asthma Action Plan](#).

FAQs

SWSF has developed these Frequently Asked Questions (FAQs) to help guide a parents’ and caregivers’ understanding of our school’s response to poor air quality. SWSF reserves the right to update this FAQ and its protocol if and when necessary.

What resources does SWSF use to make decisions about air quality and our response?

SWSF, along with all schools in Sonoma County, will monitor the air quality index (AQI) using EPA’s AQI monitoring tools at [Fire.AirNow.gov](#), which aggregates data from Purpleair.com and Airnow.gov. With the advice of the County Health Department, we use this source because it is calibrated and regulated. Other popular websites are part of the “internet of things,” which are not currently calibrated or regulated, resulting in readings which the school cannot solely rely on when making decisions. This is not to say that sites such as these might not evolve into a reliable resource; it’s simply to say that they are not currently the tools the school will use. We encourage parents and community members to use [Fire.AirNow.gov](#), as well.

At what point will SWSF keep students indoors due to air quality concerns?

Using Air Quality Index (AQI) numbers from [Fire.AirNow.gov](#), we apply the recommendations from the [Air Quality and Outdoor Activity Guidance for Schools](#) to determine the appropriate activities based on the AQI.

- When air quality index levels are above 100, students will go indoors as each classroom is equipped with large capacity classroom-based air purifiers (which are effective for both smoke and COVID), windows and doors will be closed which is acceptable and the safest



option to reduce harmful exposure

- When air quality index levels reach 100-150, “Unhealthy for Sensitive Groups, we will cancel school and afterschool programs
- Field trips to indoor locations will move forward as planned. Outdoor field trips will proceed as planned when AQI levels are below 100

How does SWSF monitor students who are considered a “sensitive group?”

SWSF refers to the [Air Quality and Outdoor Activity Guidance for Schools](#) from the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) to inform our decisions for caring for students who have asthma and/or other respiratory health concerns. As always, our staff will prioritize student health needs and follow student health plans. If your child has asthma and/or other related health concerns, please make sure his/her Asthma Action Plan is updated to include responses during days with poor air quality and that the necessary medications and the requisite directions are provided to the school.

What steps can parents/caregivers take to support their child during poor air quality?

Parents are encouraged to talk to their children about air quality concerns. Being in conversation with your child helps reduce confusion. Other steps parents can take include:

If your child has asthma or related health concerns, please refer to the above “sensitive group” question.

- Remind children to drink plenty of water.
- Remind students to report symptoms including coughing, wheezing, difficulty breathing, and chest tightness. If symptoms occur, your child might need to take a break, do a less intense activity, stop all activity, go indoors, or use quick-relief medicine as prescribed. If symptoms don't improve, consult your physician.
- Rather than walking or biking to school, children should be transported via vehicle transportation.

Can parents keep their children home during periods of poor air quality and will the absence be excused?

YES, parents who wish to keep their children home and have the ability to do so are supported in making that call. The absence will be excused and students will be responsible for making up the work they miss.



Under what conditions and when will school be closed due to poor air quality?

Air Quality Index (AQI) of 100 and above SWSF will be closed for the safety of both students and staff.

Will SWSF “make up” days when school is closed due to air quality concerns?

The school will do everything possible to avoid rescheduling a “make up” day as a result of school closures. It is within the purview of the Governance Council, in consultation with the School Board, to determine whether any extra school days are necessary.

Where can parents go to find the latest information from SWSF regarding Air Quality and school closures?

SWSF sends out communications to parents and staff via email and school *Messenger*. It is essential that parents and staff update their email and phone contact information when contact information changes. Communications from the school are archived on the [SWSF Parent Portal](#), under the *Messages* icon. At times, SWSF also activates text messaging and automated robocall systems with important messages.

To whom should parents and staff direct questions or provide input regarding air quality and school closures?

School Governance Council members are ready and available to answer any questions regarding Air Quality, school protocols, and safety. Questions can be directed to gc@summerfieldwaldorf.org.

Resources:

- [EPA Air Quality Guide](#)
- [EPA Air Quality and Outdoor Activity Guidance for Schools](#)
- [California Department of Education School Air Quality Activity Recommendations](#)
- [Sonoma County Office of Education Schools Air Quality Guidance](#)