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DATE: November 4-5, 2026

TO: SJVUAPCD Governing Board

FROM: Samir Sheikh, Executive Director/APCO
Project Coordinator: Jaime Holt

RE: **ITEM NUMBER 11: EXPANDING YOUTH AND
SCHOOL OUTREACH THROUGH HEALTHY AIR
LIVING SCHOOLS**

RECOMMENDATION:

Receive an update on the District's Healthy Air Living Schools Program and provide direction on the potential Healthy Air Schools enhancements.

BACKGROUND:

Under your Board's direction, youth and school outreach continues to be a top priority for the District. The award-winning Healthy Air Living Schools Program provides school staff, students, and families throughout the San Joaquin Valley with air quality education, timely information, and practical tools to make informed decisions about outdoor activities and student health. Through a comprehensive approach to education and engagement, the program encourages participation in air quality discussions, highlights the Valley's clean-air progress and ongoing challenges, and supports other District initiatives, including the District Grants and Incentives Program and Community Air Protection Program.

Over the past several years, the program has expanded participation, strengthened engagement, and built lasting relationships with a diverse network of public and private schools across the Valley. These established relationships enable the District to quickly connect with schools and provide timely air quality information and health-protective guidance during unexpected incidents, as demonstrated during the Medline and American Tire fires this past year. Building on this foundation, District staff continue to develop Valley-specific

educational resources and explore opportunities to deepen school partnerships, increase student involvement, and reach additional youth audiences. This item updates your Board on program progress and presents potential enhancements and new outreach opportunities to broaden the reach and impact of the District's youth education efforts.

DISTRICT'S AWARD-WINNING HEALTHY AIR LIVING SCHOOLS PROGRAM:

The District's Healthy Air Living Schools Program connects schools, students, and families with practical resources to protect student health and promote cleaner air throughout the Valley. Established in 2004 as an Air Quality Flag Program, the initiative initially helped schools communicate daily air quality forecasts through colored flags displayed on campus. While this approach increased awareness, school administrators, teachers, and coaches raised concerns that forecast-based daily recommendations could unnecessarily restrict outdoor activities because they did not reflect changes in air quality throughout the day.

In response, the District partnered with UCSF-Fresno and the American Lung Association in 2008 to develop the Real-time Air Advisory Network (RAAN). By providing current air quality information, RAAN helped schools account for daily fluctuations and identify better opportunities for outdoor activities. During winter, for example, afternoon practices, recess and physical education classes may coincide with the day's best air quality. During summer, morning activities may offer better conditions before ozone levels peak in the afternoon. This approach helped schools protect student health while preserving opportunities for physical activity.

As part of its commitment to continuous improvement, the District transitioned from the Flag Program to the broader Healthy Air Living Schools Program, emphasizing more accurate, timely information and practical support for school decisions. In 2017, your Board further strengthened these efforts by bringing program administration in-house following years of collaboration with an external organization. This transition enabled District staff to develop more direct relationships with school communities, respond to local needs, and integrate the District's air quality expertise into everyday school practices.

Building on this history of collaboration and continuous improvement, the Healthy Air Living Schools Program is guided by four key goals:

1. Protect student health while supporting physical activity by equipping schools with timely air quality information and practical guidance to adjust outdoor activities as conditions change.
2. Strengthen air quality understanding among students, educators, and families through accurate, locally relevant education about air quality science, health

effects of poor air quality, and the Valley's clean-air progress and ongoing challenges.

3. Inspire students and school communities to take clean-air actions that reduce emissions and exposure through hands-on learning, leadership development, and everyday choices.
4. Build lasting school partnerships and expand access to resources by providing responsive support, engaging families, and reaching underserved communities throughout the Valley.

Together, these goals guide the District's ongoing school outreach and the development of new tools and opportunities that advance its mission to improve air quality and protect public health.

To put these goals into practice, the District provides a broad range of services, tools, and educational resources through the Healthy Air Living Schools Program. Developed and refined through ongoing collaboration with school communities, these offerings help educators make informed decisions about outdoor activities, bring air quality learning into classrooms, and connect families with information and opportunities to support cleaner air. Current program offerings include:

- **Real-time Outdoor Activity Risk (ROAR) Guidelines:** Practical, color-coded guidance to help schools adjust outdoor activities based on air quality, activity intensity, and individual student sensitivity.
- **Access to real-time air quality information:** Assistance using the District's Real-time Air Advisory Network (RAAN) and EPA's AirNow to inform school decisions regarding outdoor activity.
- **Air quality alerts and notifications:** Help connecting school staff and families with email, text, and app notifications.
- **School website air quality widgets:** Assistance incorporating localized air quality information into school websites.
- **Digital air quality display support:** Guidance on using campus computers or television monitors to display air quality information alongside outdoor activity recommendations.
- **Technical assistance for school personnel:** Support interpreting air quality information, applying ROAR guidance, and understanding the capabilities and limitations of air sensors and other monitoring tools.
- **Air quality incident communications:** Timely information and health-protective guidance during wildfires, major fires, and other unexpected air quality incidents.
- **Classroom presentations:** Age-appropriate education about air pollution sources, health effects, Valley air quality progress and challenges, and clean-air actions.
- **School and family outreach:** Participation in back-to-school events, parent coffee hours, student drop-off and pick-up activities, and other school gatherings.

- **Educational materials and classroom activities:** Ready-to-use resources tailored to different grade levels and school community needs.
- **Early-learning resources:** Toddler board books, matching games connecting everyday activities with pollution sources, and puzzles illustrating clean-air choices.
- **K–6 particulate matter experiment kits:** Multi-day, hands-on classroom activities introducing students to particulate pollution and its health effects.
- **Healthy Air Living Kids’ Calendar Contest:** An annual bilingual K–12 art competition encouraging students to illustrate clean-air messages.
- **Healthy Air Living Kids’ calendars:** Distribution of calendars featuring student artwork and clean-air education.
- **No-idling resources:** Signage, educational materials, and assistance supporting school no-idling policies and campaigns.
- **District grant information:** Outreach connecting schools, educators, and families with applicable school-focused and public incentive programs.
- **Ongoing school communications and coordination:** Regular updates, responses to school questions, and collaboration with administrators, teachers, coaches, and parents.
- **Focused outreach to underserved communities:** Targeted engagement to improve access to air quality information, educational resources, and District programs.

The Real-time Outdoor Activity Risk (ROAR) Guidelines anchor the program’s health guidance. Developed by the District in collaboration with health agencies and nonprofit partners and recognized by the California Department of Education, ROAR helps schools adjust outdoor activities based on air pollution levels, activity intensity, and individual sensitivity. Upon direction from the Governing Board and in response to the growing availability of real-time air quality information, the color-coded recommendations now support the use of both EPA’s AirNow Air Quality Index and the District’s Real-time Air Advisory Network (RAAN), giving educators and families clear guidance as conditions change. Additionally, the District supports and disseminates air quality data to inform digital campus displays and school website widgets making local air quality information readily accessible.

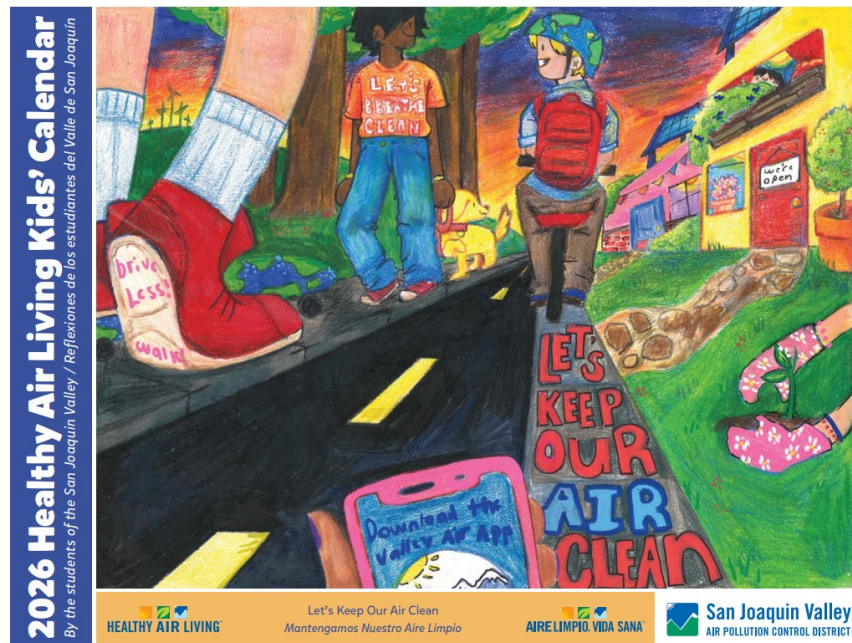
General Outdoor Activity Guidance			Outdoor Activity Guidance for Schools				
EPA NowCast AQI		AQI Health Recommendations	RAAN Level	Recess (15 min)	P.E. (1 HR)	Athletic Practice & Training (2-4 HRS)	Scheduled Sporting Events
(0-50)	Good	Enjoy outdoor activities	1	Outdoor activity OK for all.	Outdoor activity OK for all.	Outdoor activity OK for all.	Outdoor activity OK for all.
(51-100)	Moderate	If you are unusually sensitive to particle pollution, consider reducing your activity level or shorten the amount of time you are active outdoors.	2	Ensure that sensitive individuals are medically managing their condition.	Ensure that sensitive individuals are medically managing their condition.	Ensure that sensitive individuals are medically managing their condition.	Ensure that sensitive individuals are medically managing their condition.
(101-150)	Unhealthy for Sensitive Groups	People with heart or lung disease, older adults, children and teens – take any of these steps to reduce your exposure: - Choose less strenuous activities. - Shorten the amount of time you are active outdoors. - Be active outdoors when air quality is better.	3	Sensitive individuals should exercise indoors or avoid vigorous outdoor activities.	Sensitive individuals should exercise indoors or avoid vigorous outdoor activities.	Reduce vigorous exercise to 30 minutes per hour of practice time with increased rest breaks and substitutions. Ensure that sensitive individuals are medically managing their condition.	Increase rest breaks and substitutions per CIF guidelines for extreme heat. Ensure that sensitive individuals are medically managing their condition.
(151-200)	Unhealthy	Sensitive groups: Avoid long or intense outdoor activities. Consider rescheduling or moving activities indoors. Everyone else: Reduce long or intense activities. Take more breaks during outdoor activities.	4	Exercise indoors or avoid vigorous outdoor activities. Sensitive individuals should remain indoors.	Exercise indoors or limit vigorous outdoor activities to a maximum of 15 minutes. Sensitive individuals should remain indoors.	Exercise indoors or reduce vigorous exercise to 30 minutes of practice time with increased rest breaks and substitutions. Sensitive individuals should remain indoors.	Increase rest breaks and substitutions per CIF guidelines for extreme heat. Ensure that sensitive individuals are medically managing their condition.
(201-300)	Very unhealthy	Sensitive groups: Avoid all physical activity outdoors. Reschedule to a time when air quality is better or move activities indoors. Everyone else: Avoid long or intense activities. Consider rescheduling or moving activities indoors.	5	No outdoor activity. All activities should be moved indoors.	No outdoor activity. All activities should be moved indoors.	No outdoor activity. All activities should be moved indoors.	Event must be rescheduled or relocated.
(301-500)	Hazardous	Everyone: Avoid all physical activity outdoors. Sensitive groups: Remain indoors and keep activity levels low. Follow tips for keeping particle levels low indoors.					

District staff bring resources directly to school communities through classroom presentations, school events, and parent activities, with focused outreach in underserved areas. These interactions provide opportunities to answer questions, share health guidance, and connect families and educators with District grants and actions to reduce emissions around schools.

As mentioned above, age-appropriate bilingual classroom materials, hands-on activities and school signage help students understand air pollution and their role in improving air quality while educating educators and parents about steps that can be taken to protect students from poor air quality.



Over 400 Valley students entered the annual bilingual 2026 Healthy Air Living Kids' Calendar Contest. The contest further engages K–12 students by having them illustrate clean-air messages, with winning artwork shared in calendars distributed throughout the Valley. Together, these efforts help schools incorporate air quality awareness into daily decisions and extend clean-air education to families and communities.



In short, the program combines classroom learning, school partnerships, parent engagement, and access to real-time air quality information. The ROAR Guidelines, automated notifications, website widgets, and digital displays help schools translate air quality information into informed decisions about outdoor activities. Age-appropriate educational materials, hands-on experiments, and student outreach extend that learning beyond daily conditions, encouraging students and families to take an active role in improving Valley air quality.

PROGRESS REPORT ON HEALTHY AIR LIVING SCHOOLS:

Over the past 12 months, the District has continued to strengthen the Healthy Air Living Schools Program through direct outreach, practical educational resources, and ongoing support for school communities throughout the Valley. Working with administrators, teachers, parents, and students, District staff help schools incorporate air quality information into daily decisions and extend clean-air education beyond the classroom. These partnerships also provide valuable feedback to guide program improvements and identify opportunities for greater student involvement.

The following table summarizes current program participation by county:

County	# of Schools	# of HAL Schools	% of HAL Schools in county
Fresno	350	324	92.6%
Kern	238	217	91.2%
Kings	64	49	76.6%
Madera	87	65	74.7%
Merced	117	94	80.3%
San Joaquin	259	223	86.1%
Stanislaus	188	160	85.1%
Tulare	194	159	82.0%
Total	1,497	1,291	86.2%

Program reach and engagement during the reporting period include:

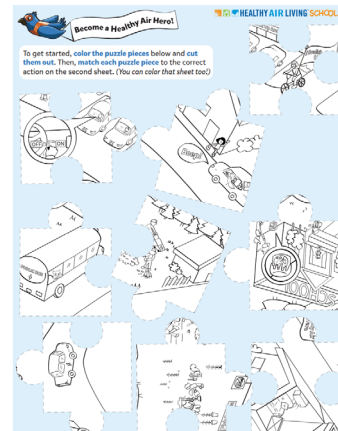
- Maintained current contact information for 2,142 school and school district personnel throughout the Valley.
- Supported 1,291 schools in actively monitoring air quality and translating air quality information into appropriate decisions about outdoor activities, including explaining how the District's RAAN information and EPA's AirNow AQI relate to the health-based recommendations in the ROAR Guidelines.
- Conducted 57 school events, classroom presentations, and parent activities during the past 12 months.
- Distributed over 13,000 Healthy Air Living Schools Kids' calendars to Valley schools.
- Distributed over 7,000 Healthy Air Living Schools Kids' Activity Books (available in both English and Spanish)
- Supported 11 additional schools in incorporating localized air quality information into school websites and on close-circuit TV at school sites bringing the total to over 100 schools.
- Sent five bimonthly Healthy Air Schools email newsletters to approximately 1,500 schools
- Emailed over 300 schools and more than 480 school contacts in response to unique air quality episodes such as during the Medline Warehouse Fire and the American Tire Fire
- Distributed over 1,350 copies of early-learning resources including toddler board books and air quality wheel-making activities
- Distributed ten hands-on activity box kits and provided support to schools using the week-long interactive experiment kits reaching over 300 students
- Provided No Idling support and signage replacement to over 285 schools and distributed over 560 signs (available in both English and Spanish)

The District's school partnerships provide an established network for delivering air quality guidance, answering questions, and supporting the use of AirNow, RAAN, and the ROAR Guidelines. These relationships also enable staff to quickly connect with schools during unexpected air quality incidents, as demonstrated during the Medline and American Tire fires over the past year.

As schools consider on-site air sensors and other environmental monitoring technologies, the District remains a resource for understanding their capabilities, limitations, and appropriate use. Ongoing coordination with educators helps promote consistent interpretation of air quality information and clear communication of recommendations to protect student health.

As an increasingly important component of HAL Schools, the District has continued to invest in supporting air quality learning through the development and distribution of age-appropriate materials and hands-on activities. Feedback from teachers and families helps District staff refine how these resources are presented and identify opportunities to make them more useful in classrooms and at home.

Resources developed through the program include toddler board books introducing basic air quality concepts, classroom activity books targeting K-6 grades, matching games connecting everyday activities with pollution sources, and puzzles illustrating clean-air actions such as carpooling and checking air quality before going outside. The program also offers a multi-day particulate matter experiment kit for K-6 students, providing an interactive introduction to air pollution science and its health effects.



These materials give educators practical ways to introduce air quality concepts, encourage student questions, and connect learning with everyday choices.

LOOKING AHEAD:

The District continually seeks opportunities to strengthen the Healthy Air Living Schools Program, expand its reach, and maximize its benefits for Valley students, schools, and families. Ongoing engagement with educators, parents, and community partners helps District staff identify ways to make air quality education more engaging, information more accessible, and school participation more meaningful. Future enhancements would build on this foundation while responding to school needs, supporting measurable outcomes, and making effective use of District resources.

As part of this effort, some key questions to consider include but are not limited to:

1. How can more hands-on experiences generate enthusiasm about air quality among students, teachers, and parents?
2. How can the District recognize and celebrate those who demonstrate clean-air leadership?
3. What additional support would help schools consistently use air quality information and adopt practices that reduce emissions and student exposure to poor air quality?
4. How can existing activities be more closely connected to sustain participation and extend the program's reach?

Potential areas for enhancement include:

- **Expanded hands-on learning and family engagement:** Build on existing classroom resources through activities such as District-hosted visits to air monitoring sites, family air quality science nights, build-your-own air purifier events, and student-led no-idling or clean transportation campaigns. These experiences could connect classroom learning with practical actions while increasing parent and teacher involvement.
- **Recognition of clean-air leadership:** Explore a Clean Air Champions recognition effort within Healthy Air Living Schools to highlight teachers, students, and school teams that demonstrate effective air quality education, student health protection, or clean-air action. Recognition could include certificates, school spotlights, opportunities to share successful practices, and Governing Board acknowledgment. Criteria could recognize sustained commitment and innovative approaches while accounting for differences in school resources.

- **Stronger integration of existing youth activities:** More closely connect the Healthy Air Living Kids' Calendar Contest with other program offerings through coordinated classroom activities, school outreach, and recognition. Building on this established competition could introduce participating teachers and students to additional resources and encourage continued involvement beyond the annual contest.
- **A potential new Healthy Air Schools Impact Grant pilot:** Explore small grants supporting educator-led, student-centered projects, with an initial concept of reaching at least one grantee in each of the District's eight counties. Teachers, after-school programs, school clubs, and other school-based youth groups could propose hands-on science activities, student-produced educational materials, family engagement events, or campaigns encouraging cleaner transportation and reduced idling. Participating students could share their work through a Student Solutions Showcase and proposed Governing Board recognition.
- **A potential Air Quality Peer Ambassador pilot:** Explore a structured opportunity for high school students to deepen their understanding of Valley air quality, develop leadership and communication skills, and educate their peers, families, and communities. An initial concept includes semester-based cohorts representing Northern, Central, and Southern Valley communities, with training, outreach activities, and a collaborative capstone project. Scholarships or other forms of recognition could be considered as part of further program development.

These concepts are presented for Board's discussion and input. Board feedback will help District staff identify priorities, assess school interest and administrative capacity, and refine potential program designs, budgets, funding sources, and measures of success. District staff would explore external funding opportunities, including the California Air Resources Board's Supplemental Environmental Project Program and other eligible grants or partnerships, to help offset costs. Any proposal requiring additional expenditure authority or other Board action would return to your Board for the necessary approvals before implementation.

As the program evolves, District staff will continue to assess its reach and effectiveness through participation data, feedback from school communities, and information about how District resources are used. These efforts will help identify opportunities to strengthen engagement, support student learning and clean-air actions, and improve access throughout the Valley. Evaluation of existing activities and potential enhancements will guide program improvements and future investments to maximize benefits for schools, students, and families.