



2006 Summary of Minnesota Public School Districts' Indoor Air Quality Management Plans

Introduction

Since 2001, the Minnesota Department of Health (MDH) has tracked school districts' progress in implementing Indoor Air Quality (IAQ) Management Plans. Surveys have been sent yearly to school districts, and the most recent surveys were completed in 2006. School staff that previously reported completion of an IAQ Management Plan were asked to verify that their plan continued to be implemented. Schools that had not previously reported completion of an IAQ Management Plan were given directions to provide specific documentation to verify completion of their plans.

Survey Content and Administration

The Minnesota Department of Education (MDE) and MDH developed the Minnesota requirements for an effective IAQ Management Plan in 2000. MDE has published these requirements in the annual health and safety policy letter ¹. The Minnesota requirements are based on the US Environmental Protection Agency's "Tools for Schools" (TfS) program, but they also include specific requirements for a written plan.

The Minnesota requirements for an IAQ Management Plan are:

1. A designated IAQ coordinator certified through a state-sponsored training program;
2. Completion of walk-through inspections for every instructional and administrative building during the past year;
3. Evaluation of classrooms using the TfS teacher's checklist or an equivalent evaluation method;
4. Evaluation of the ventilation system(s) using the TfS ventilation checklist or an equivalent evaluation method;
5. Evaluation of maintenance practices using the TfS maintenance checklist or an equivalent evaluation method; and
6. A district-specific written IAQ Management Plan that includes **all** of the following:
 - a. Identification and contact information of the IAQ coordinator,
 - b. Communication policy,
 - c. A plan to address the issues identified through the inspections and evaluations,
 - d. Operations and maintenance schedule,
 - e. At least one other policy which addresses IAQ issues specific to the school district,
 - f. School board approval,
 - g. An IAQ concern reporting and resolution process.

¹ See Attachment 99 at the end of the Health and Safety Letter (sections A-E), which is available at http://cfl.state.mn.us/mde/Accountability_Programs/Program_Finance/Facilities_Health_Safety/index.html



Findings

In 2006, surveys were received from 234 of 346 (68%) public school districts in Minnesota. This corresponds to data collected for 1522 schools and programs and 1181 school buildings. For those districts that did not return surveys, we have presumed that if they met the requirements in the past they continued to meet the requirements in 2006. Presumably they would have reported as such had they chosen to participate in the survey. The school districts' most recent survey (2001-2005) was used to determine their current status.

Since our surveys began in 2001, MDH has identified 298 districts and 1715 schools/programs that completed IAQ Management Plans consistent with the Minnesota requirements. There were 225 districts encompassing 1417 schools/programs that responded to our 2006 surveys and verified their continued implementation of a plan. In addition, the 2006 surveys identified 22 school districts encompassing 189 schools/programs that completed a plan for the first time in 2006. Figure 1 and 2 provide details of the progress to date for Minnesota public school districts.

Figure 1. Minnesota Public School IAQ Management Plan Development Progress for 2006.

Criterion	Districts		Schools/Programs		Buildings
	Current Status	%	Current Status	%	Current Status
<i>General Statistics</i>					
Statewide Total	346	100.0	2032	100.0	n/a
Survey Ever Received	341	98.6	2026	99.7	1585
Completed EPA Criteria	307	88.7	1827	89.9	1436
Completed MN Requirements	298	86.1	1715	84.4	1313
Certified IAQ Coordinator	338	97.7	1991	98.0	1562
<i>Building Assessments</i>					
Walk-through Inspection	324	93.6	1873	92.2	1475
Classroom Evaluation	324	93.6	1927	94.8	1486
Ventilation Evaluation	323	93.4	1927	94.8	1500
Maintenance Evaluation	324	93.6	1912	94.1	1493
<i>Written Plan</i>					
Some Type of a Witten Plan	337	97.4	1993	98.1	1562
IAQ Coordinator Identified	337	97.4	1993	98.1	1562
Communication Policy	333	96.2	1905	93.8	1469
Plan to Address Identified Issues	332	96.0	1899	93.5	1470
Operations & Maintenance Schedule	332	96.0	1978	97.3	1546
Other Policies	331	95.7	1963	96.6	1534
Concern Reporting/Resolution	337	97.4	1984	97.6	1551
School Board Approval	327	94.5	1882	92.6	1453

Figure 1 shows the numbers of districts, schools, and buildings that meet the EPA criteria, MN requirements, and specific IAQ Plan features. The data are cumulative reflecting schools that have demonstrated various criteria at some time since 2001.



Figure 2. Minnesota Public School and Programs Progress in the Past Six Years

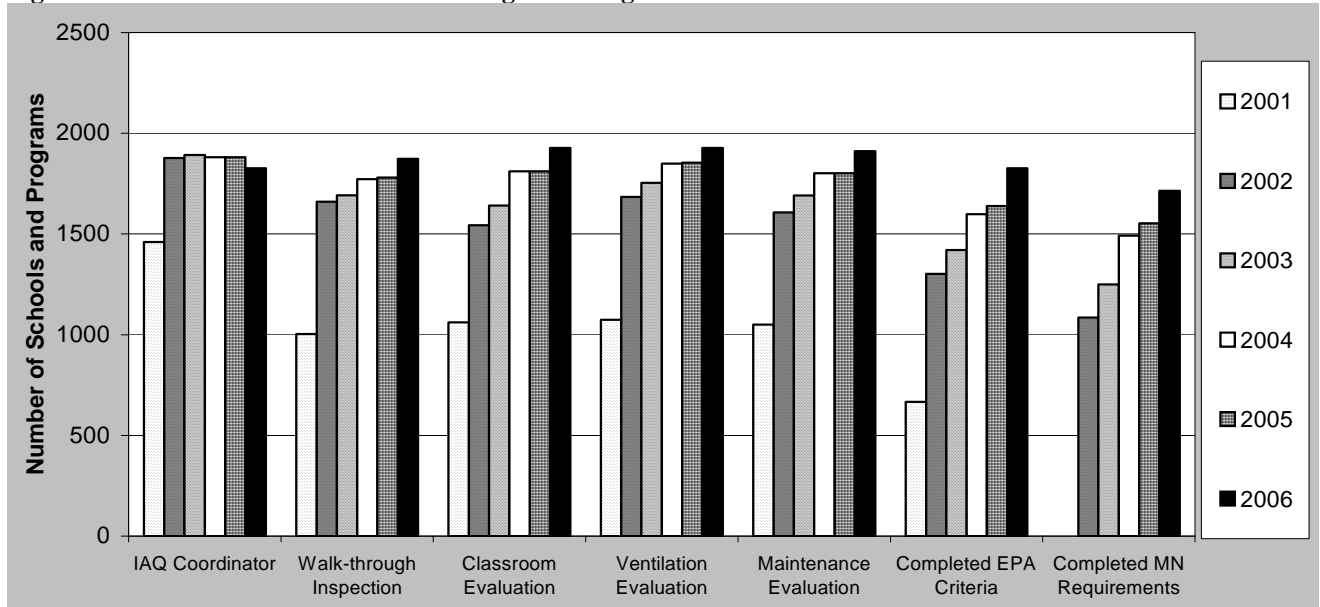


Figure 2 shows the numbers of schools and programs covered by a district-wide plan that meet specific criteria and meet overall EPA and MN compliance (since 2001).

D. Discussion

Minnesota public school districts continue to make progress in completing their IAQ Management Plans. During 2006, the percentage of school districts that met the MN requirements increased, from 79% in 2005 to 86% in 2006. In addition, we identified 189 new schools and programs that were covered by an IAQ Management Plan in 2006.

MDH's persistent efforts to survey and follow-up with school staff allowed us to identify school districts' accomplishments. Surveys were mailed to all districts, and a follow-up postcard was sent a few months later. In addition, we contacted school with letters, emails, and phone calls to clarify information submitted in the surveys. As a result of this persistent follow-up, our survey return rate increased to 68% in 2006, compared to 52% in 2005.

The progress made by school districts during 2006 is commendable. There are many reasons for the development and continued implementation of IAQ Management Plans. First, schools have come to appreciate the importance of IAQ in part due to some significant IAQ problems in the 1990s. State statute has required implementing an IAQ Management Plan since 1997. In addition, MDH and other governmental agencies have publicized the importance of school IAQ. MDH has completed dozens of trainings, presentation, on-site consultation, and other outreach and assistance efforts. These efforts continue to reinforce the importance of developing and implementing IAQ Management Plans. Also, the MDE continues to emphasize the statutory IAQ plan requirement for public schools districts as a pre-requisite for health and safety funding. MDH and MDE will continue to make developing, implementing, and sustaining school IAQ Management Plans a high priority.