

UCLA

Fact Sheets

Title

Closing the School Heat Data Gap

Permalink

<https://escholarship.org/uc/item/43449046>

Authors

Turner, V. Kelly

Engel, Ruth

Dunlap, Lauren

Publication Date

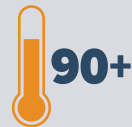
2023-10-01

Closing the School Heat Data Gap

Heat exposure is a problem for California school children — but we don't have the data to understand how big a problem.

There is no statewide data on how hot classrooms get or which rooms have cooling equipment — let alone whether it functions. The state also does not track how much shade schools have, or how often children experience heat-related illnesses.

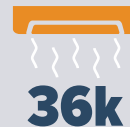
Researchers and policymakers need this data to understand and communicate the need for cooling, choose cooling interventions, and evaluate management efforts. A 2021 state auditor report noted that this data would also be useful for understanding funding needs and eligibility. And crucially, this data is essential to understand how rising temperatures increase racial and economic inequities among students.



By 2035, researchers estimate that 60% of elementary school districts in the state will see 100+ days each year over 90 F.



Research suggests that each school day over 80 F lowers test scores — particularly for Black and Hispanic students.



Nationwide, an estimated 36,000 schools need heating, ventilation, and cooling upgrades as of 2020.



As of 2019, the American Society of Civil Engineers believed that 60% of California's schools do not meet operations and maintenance standards.

WHAT CAN THE STATE DO?

Develop a method for tracking information related to heat management in schools.

- » Consider using existing systems to collect data — like the School Accountability Report Card, which already collects some information on facility conditions.
- » Work with researchers to understand what quantitative metrics are most important to measure, such as how hot the indoor and outdoor school facilities get, how many rooms have working cooling equipment, and how much of outdoor spaces are shaded.
- » Collect qualitative data from school nurses and other staff, teachers, parents, and students to understand their experiences and the needs across school districts.

Policy Action Examples

AB 384 would have required the Department of Education to study a representative sample of schools' cooling systems (2023; passed by senate and assembly; vetoed).

SB 394 would have included a survey of public school facilities to collect data on many heat-relevant metrics (2023; passed by senate and assembly; vetoed).