

VALLEY AIR NEWS

Air District funds more Clean Air Challenge programs



Teachers and students at a Clean Air Challenge workshop test the experiments that will be used in classrooms.

This month, the Air District's Governing Board approved \$30,000 to expand the reach of an educational program targeted to Valley middle schools and high schools.

The Clean Air Challenge is administered by Enterprise for Education and offered through the Air District, which provides training facilities to Valley science teachers in order to incorporate air pollution material into their classes. In addition to focusing on ground-level ozone, a significant health problem in the Valley, the program meets state science standards.

The new funding makes it possible for 25 teachers to use the curriculum in their classrooms. Valleywide, with the assistance of other sponsors, Clean Air Challenge will be offered free of charge to 68 new teachers and more than 8,000 additional students this academic year.

In the past three years, 332 teachers have adopted the program, reaching about 40,000 students each year.

Air Quality Flag Program now in 763 Valley schools and growing

The Air District is continuing a mission of educating faculty, staff, students and parents of Valley schools on air quality and protecting them from air-pollution exposure with further funding to the air quality flag program.

Since 2004, the District has partnered with the American Lung Association of California (ALAC) and Valley asthma coalitions to raise air-quality flags in schools.

To date, 763 schools throughout the Valley are participating in the flag program. The Air District hopes for eventual 100 percent participation, in turn improving student health, decreasing absenteeism and promoting scholastic achievement.

The program has been so effective at communicating important air-quality information to students that the national American Lung Association is discussing the possibility of it becoming a national outreach program of their organization.

Below is a tally of the number of schools in each county participating in the flag program:

- Kern County: 75 schools
- Tulare County: 71 schools
- Kings County: 58 schools
- Fresno County: 203 schools
- Madera County: 27 schools
- Merced County: 122 schools
- San Joaquin County: 37 schools
- Stanislaus County: 170 schools

This month, the Air District's Governing Board approved a grant of \$48,000 to the ALAC to distribute flags to 149 additional schools in Valley counties where no asthma coalition manages a flag program of its own. Those counties include San

Joaquin, Madera, Fresno, Kings, Tulare and Kern.

The Air District has provided separate grants to Merced and Stanislaus counties to fund their own, well-managed air-quality flag programs.

Each participating school receives:

- Four Air Quality Flags.
- Posters, brochures and magnets in English and Spanish.
- Educational workshops for parents, teachers and administrators.
- Daily notification of air-quality forecasts via e-mail.

The flags correspond to the colors of the Air Quality Index: a green flag indicates good air quality; a yellow flag indicates moderate air quality; orange indicates air quality is unhealthy for sensitive groups; and red indicates air quality is unhealthy for the general public.

To provide an alternative to outdoor play on poor-air quality days, the District also provides a policy and procedures that schools can follow for active indoor activities.

The Air Quality Flag Program is free to all San Joaquin Valley schools and can be accompanied by a full air-quality curriculum to further educate K-12 students on the science of air quality and its health effects.



For more information on the District's Active Indoor Recess Policy, go to: <http://www.valleyair.org/Programs/ActiveIndoorRecess/intro.htm>.