

Board of Education

Mrs. Carolyn Wilson, *President* • Ms. Lizeth Vega, *Vice President*
Dr. Joanna Dorado, *Clerk* • Mrs. Julie Moreno, *Member* • Mr. Robert Schwandt, *Member*
Allan Mucerino, *Superintendent*

MEDIA CONTACT

Saara Lampwalla, Tripepi Smith saara@tripepismith.com, (909) 272-0411

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

July 22, 2020

CONTACT: Allan Mucerino

Superintendent of Schools

2Superintendent@alvordschools.org

Alvord Unified School District Improves Indoor Air Quality to Prepare for Safe Reopening

RIVERSIDE, CA – In a move toward greater environmental sustainability and fiscal resiliency, Alvord Unified School District’s (AUSD) Board of Trustees approved a second phase of energy infrastructure improvements with a strong focus on improving indoor air quality.

“Our initial phase of improvements in 2015 helped us tackle the rising costs of utilities and relieve a portion of our deferred maintenance liability,” commented Kevin Emenaker, executive director of administrative services at the District. “Now, as we do our part to stop the spread of COVID-19, our number one priority is implementing the right equipment, technology and sanitation practices to keep our students and staff healthy when they return.”

Modernizing antiquated heating & cooling (HVAC) equipment will help ensure that clean air is supplied to the learning environment. According to the World Health Organization, the COVID-19 virus primarily spreads through small liquid particles from coughing and sneezing. AUSD’s new HVAC technology directly combats the transmission of disease by removing contaminated airborne droplets from a space. The HVAC equipment features ventilation and filtration systems that meet the Centers for Disease Controls’ health guidelines, making this possible. To take things a step further, the District also purchased air scrubbers that deactivate viruses, kill bacteria and remove other air pathogens for areas that have yet to receive new HVAC.

The improvements AUSD is making at its high school gyms will drastically improve indoor air quality in spaces that typically host large amounts of students and their families through sports and other community events. La Sierra High School and Norte Vista High School had obsolete heating-only equipment in their gyms, leaving them stuffy from a lack of cooling and poor ventilation. The new high-efficiency HVAC brings fresh air from outside into the space, filtering and conditioning it for optimal comfort.

“Although we don’t know how or when social distancing guidelines will allow us to use the gym, it’s assuring for our community to know we will be ready to safely reopen when the time comes,” shared Dr. Tania Cabeza, principal for La Sierra. “We are thankful to the Board of Trustees for making this sound investment to improve air quality in an area that needs it the most.”

Norte Vista High School shares a similar sentiment after years of receiving complaints about the gym’s lack of comfort. “The addition of air conditioning in the gym is going to make a world of a difference as we see our local climate get warmer each year,” shares Jason Marquez, principal for Norte Vista. “Through Phases I and II of our infrastructure upgrade, we have replaced nearly all HVAC with modern equipment that improves indoor air quality.”

Aside from enhancing the comfort and safety of facilities, AUSD's infrastructure update will also help relieve the District's budget. The sheer efficiency of the new equipment will cut energy and former maintenance and operations costs enough to pay for the improvements and provide positive net cash flow for the District's budget. Along with the District's HVAC upgrade, it secured new building automation systems, districtwide interior and exterior LED lighting modernizations and a carport solar shade structure at Villegas Middle School.

Rather than diving headfirst into solar, AUSD administrators made a conscious decision to do a pilot solar program at one school first. Their intent is to expand to other sites only after the performance of the first of the solar arrays are vetted. Villegas Middle School was chosen because it has some of the highest energy rates in the District. The savings generated by the new solar structure is helping to pay for the comprehensive program while supporting the Board of Trustees' vision to move toward zero net energy.

"It feels good to know we're doing all we can in a situation we don't have a lot of control over," Emenaker continued. "Beyond just responding to current safety needs for COVID-19, the work we are doing to renew our infrastructure will benefit our facilities and the health of our community for decades."

According to the District's partner, Climatec, construction is well underway and projected for completion this fall. Once complete, the infrastructure modernizations will drastically reduce the District's greenhouse gas emissions and cut electric consumption by approximately 3.9 million kilowatt hours per year—the equivalent of powering 400 Riverside homes per year.

About Alvord Unified School District

Alvord Unified School District, headquartered in Corona, CA, has 23 schools and provides world-class education to nearly 19,000 students. The District boundaries encompass the western portion of the City of Riverside, the eastern portion of the city of Corona and segments of unincorporated parts of Riverside County, namely Home Gardens. Follow AUSD on Facebook at <https://www.facebook.com/AlvordUnified/>; Twitter @AlvordUnified and YouTube (https://www.youtube.com/channel/UCfeTLpbY1tgLwut9_tmGjCw).

About Climatec

Founded in 1975, Climatec is a leading provider of turnkey implementation and funding solutions for public agencies looking to remedy aging infrastructure. Serving building owners across all public sector market segments including education, state, and local government, Climatec specializes in energy, water and operational improvements that provide significant relief for the bottom line while making buildings smarter, safer and more efficient. Visit climatec.com for more information.

###