

Name: _____

Date: _____

Is your school uncool?



A teacher and students at Washington Elementary School in Monticello, Ill., walk past a large fan used to help cool the school.

Is it too hot in your school?

When city students arrived for the first day of school under the blazing temperatures of a Midwest heat wave, staff greeted them with some unusual school supplies: water bottles, fans and wet towels to drape around their necks.

What they couldn't always offer was air conditioning.

"It's kind of hard to focus because everyone was sweating," said Deniyah Jones, a 12-year-old 7th-grader at Nash Elementary School on Chicago's West Side. The school has just a few window units for the entire fortress-like brick and stone building.

This year's late August heat exposed a tug-of-war in school districts that are under pressure to start school earlier than ever but are unable to pay to equip aging buildings with air conditioning. Parents who worry hot classrooms are a disadvantage for their kids are issuing an ultimatum: Make classes cooler or start the year later.

"Thinking about air conditioning — we can't even afford new textbooks," said Sheila Greenwood, who oversees a tiny district of 380 students about 20 miles southwest of Champaign, Ill.

Many people can recall school days spent inside ancient, brick-construction buildings that on sweltering days seemed as hot as pizza ovens. But hot classrooms are becoming a bigger

problem for schools than in years past, and increasingly, getting a "heat day" is as common for students as a "snow day."

As temperatures soared past 90 last week, some Midwest schools gave students extra water and bathroom breaks or canceled after-school activities. Districts from St. Joseph, Mo., and Frankfort, Ind., sent kids home early. In Fargo, N.D., five schools got the week off, and schools in Minneapolis closed down, too.

"I was up on the third floor and it was 93.8 degrees in the classroom and the kids hadn't been there in hours," said Matt Patton, superintendent of a one-school district in Baxter, Iowa. "You put 20 bodies in there and it will go up to at least 95 and you can imagine all the sweat on the desks and textbooks."

For years, schools have been moving to start the year in late or mid-August rather than in September, just after Labor Day, when it is typically cooler. Part of the reason is that schools need more training days for testing and new academic standards. Holiday breaks have also grown longer, and administrators say the only direction they can go is back into August.

- Posted on September 4, 2013



Taken without permission, but within fair use from:
<http://tweentribune.com/tween78/your-school-uncool>