California

Total Equipment Cost
$2.5B

Total Operating Cost
$220M

Students Affected
4,975,290

As climate change produces more extremely hot days across the country, many schools are struggling to cope with overheated classrooms and inadequate cooling systems—if they have them at all. This ongoing increase in the number of hot days during the academic year is forcing schools to install air conditioning or upgrade their equipment to a higher cooling capacity.

Hotter Days, Higher Costs: The Cooling Crisis in America's Classrooms analyzed localized heat trends during the school year from 1970 to 2025 using a widely used and publicly available ensemble of climate models. Our analysis identified a threshold of 32 days above 80 degrees Fahrenheit during the school year as the point at which air conditioning is needed, based on engineering protocols, peer-reviewed studies examining the relationship between heat and learning, and actual practice in school systems across the country. For every school district, we used climate model output to tally the number of days above the 80°F threshold during the school year in 1970 and 2025.

The result: billions of dollars in school cooling costs that are directly attributable to climate change.

THE IMPACT ON CALIFORNIA

Climate change is leading to more hot days during the school year. Using 1970 as a baseline, by 2025 this climate-driven warming will require 678 California schools to install AC at a cost of $2,415,263,000. For some schools in California that required cooling systems before 1970, the increasing number of extremely hot days has already and will continue to overwhelm the cooling capacity of these systems.

To upgrade these systems, California will need to spend $39,135,000 in 1,191 schools by 2025, impacting 1,550,960 students across 274 school districts in California. By 2025, 29% of students in 23% of schools across California will be impacted by these costs.

Once air conditioning is installed and upgraded, schools will have to spend an additional $219,563,000 every year to operate and maintain these systems, affecting 4,975,290 students.

THE IMPACT ON THE U.S.

Numerous studies have found that hot temperatures reduce a student's ability to learn.

Nationally, the bill totals over $40 billion to install or upgrade air conditioning in schools that serve a third of the country's public school students. That's equivalent to the amount that public schools spend each year on all capital improvements, according to the National Center for Education Statistics.

Who's going to pay for this? As it stands, taxpayers have been on the hook. The total bill is enormous, particularly for schools feeling the pinch from increased spending on security and health-safety measures, and burgeoning technology demands. Taxpayers, teachers, and students aren't to blame for rising temperatures. Oil and gas executives have known nearly half a century that their products were causing climate change, and intentionally misled the public about the dangers.

Schoolchildren understand that when you make a mess, it's your responsibility to clean it up. It's time to hold oil and gas executives accountable for the damage they've caused.

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See our full report for more data at coolingcrisis.org

The Cost of Cooling California's Schools

TOP 10 SCHOOL DISTRICTS, RANKED BY EQUIPMENT COST

RANK	SCHOOL DISTRICT	TOTAL EQUIPMENT	ANNUAL OPERATIONS & MAINTENANCE	# OF STUDENTS IMPACTED	INCREASE IN HEAT DAYS (TOTAL HEAT DAYS)
1	Capistrano Unified School District	$203,161,850	$6,546,934	46,692	16/43
2	San Diego City Unified School District	$185,469,923	$7,945,464	92,444	17/55
3	Sweetwater Union High School District	$162,933,840	$8,064,791	32,938	16/39
4	Fremont Unified School District	$159,132,568	$3,743,956	31,540	15/37
5	Hayward Unified School District	$99,294,326	$2,233,381	19,685	14/34
6	Chula Vista Elementary School District	$81,303,197	$1,130,078	21,321	17/40
7	Santa Maria-Bonita Elementary School District	$75,612,261	$1,197,319	16,061	10/33
8	Newport-Mesa Unified School District	$64,781,064	$2,127,537	14,478	14/41
9	Los Angeles Unified School District	$59,511,064	$12,449,111	421,645	22/88
10	New Haven Unified School District	$57,402,119	$1,552,070	11,002	17/38

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6	Hayward Unified School District	$99,294,326	$2,233,381	19,685	14/34
7	Long Beach Unified School District	$0	$2,192,457	70,507	21/77
8	Irvine Unified School District	$34,544,552	$2,132,725	35,127	25/77
9	Fremont Union High School District	$54,850,687	$2,129,089	10,965	15/48
10	Newport-Mesa Unified School District	$64,781,064	$2,127,537	14,478	14/41

Total equipment is the combined estimated HVAC installation and upgrade costs from 1970–2025.
Annual Operation & Maintenance is the estimated costs of operating and maintaining the HVAC systems.
Heat days are the number of days 80° or warmer between September 1 and June 15.
The increase in heat days was estimated between 1970–2025.

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