

School District of Lancaster, PA

Supporting a safe return to classrooms, long-term community health and successful students



Indoor air quality (IAQ) has become a top priority for education institutions that want to instill confidence in parents, students and teachers. However, the benefits of improving IAQ far exceed virus mitigation as clean air also fosters healthier, more comfortable educational environments and more [focused, successful students](#).

The School District of Lancaster, PA, experienced these benefits firsthand. Like many U.S. school districts in late 2020, the district was preparing for the safe return of students and staff to its buildings with the right combination of funding, expertise and technology. When government funding and COVID regulations made health and safety upgrades a priority, the district's leadership team turned to its longtime partner, Johnson Controls, for support.

"We've worked with Johnson Controls experts for decades to create healthy environments for students and staff, so we had the utmost confidence in their information and guidance," said Dennis LaPorte, retired director of facilities and building operations at the School District of Lancaster. "We knew we needed to innovate to bring students back safely, but we didn't know how to execute. Johnson Controls experts communicated directly with our school board to identify the right solutions for our needs."

Case study



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Clean air solutions and funding pave the way for a healthier school district

First, Johnson Controls helped the School District of Lancaster identify funding models to support its \$7.1M infrastructure project. The district secured Elementary and Secondary School Emergency Relief Fund (ESSER) grants from the Pennsylvania Department of Education and pursued cooperative purchasing agreements through Sourcwell and OMNIA Partners to address deferred maintenance.

With funding secured, Johnson Controls installed 1,500 portable HEPA filtration units, implemented Metasys® controls and integrated BERT plug load managers and existing ultraviolet-C (UV-C) lighting solutions across the district’s 22 buildings. These updates delivered improved IAQ, increased insight into occupancy data and instilled a sense of confidence about the district’s pandemic response among students, teachers and community members. The upgrades also set the School District of Lancaster on a road to sustainable, efficient operations that directly benefit the district’s budget and the environment.

Johnson Controls will continue to play a pivotal role in the district’s plan for improved IAQ through its ongoing Maintenance as a Service offering. Under this program, Johnson Controls experts will assist school district operations staff in servicing and maintaining these investments for years to come.

The most recent chapter in a storied partnership drives critical results

The School District of Lancaster’s healthy buildings initiative supports its vision for smarter, more connected educational environments. With these clean air implementations, combined with other mitigation methods, the district began to see remarkably low COVID-19 rates among its student body, reporting an average of one case per week in a population of over 11,000 with attendance reaching pre-COVID levels.

“We felt comfortable throughout the entire collaboration process, and the technology has performed beautifully,” added LaPorte. “We validated the effectiveness of these solutions through our own testing in four different buildings of varying sizes. We only had one sample come back with a positive COVID-19 result, and after some investigation we discovered it was due to an unrelated issue. Once that was fixed, we retested and achieved 100% effectiveness. Based on how these systems have performed, if COVID disappeared tomorrow, these units definitely wouldn’t.”

Thanks to thoughtful improvements, expert maintenance and creative financing, the School District of Lancaster is prioritizing the health and academic successes of its students and teachers through smart, targeted building upgrades.

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