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# **Iroquois schools install quarter-million-dollar purification system to battle COVID-19**

Valerie Myers - Erie Times-News (TNS) Jan 13, 2022 Updated Jan 13, 2022

Technology is helping to fight the spread of COVID-19 in Iroquois schools.

A purification system originally developed by NASA was installed at Iroquois Elementary School and Iroquois Junior-Senior High School just before Christmas break. The ActivePure system now in operation in the schools is designed to find and deactivate COVID-19, influenza and other viruses and pathogens, both in the air and on surfaces.

Federal COVID-19 relief funds paid the \$249,000 price tag for the system.

"What made this company stand out was that it sent an engineering company here to look at our buildings and design a system that meets our needs and keeps kids healthy," Iroquois schools Superintendent Shane Murray said. "It wasn't just, 'Here, plug this box in.' We've been working since March to get this done."

The system includes purification units in the schools' ductwork, portable plug-in units in offices and classrooms, and ceiling tile units. Room volume, the number of people generally in each room and the building age are among considerations used to determine system needs in each area, said Daniel Garstang, vice president of the operations partner program at ActivePure.

Garstang was in the school district Thursday.

"Every building has its own personality. When we walk through the premises we can determine the best product to use to have the best outcome possible. We design the solution for each space," including hallways that are not heated and cafeterias and other large areas, Garstang said.

Industrial-sized portable units will be brought to gyms and natatoriums to boost purification during basketball games, swim meets and other events.

"If more people are coming in and potentially increasing pathogen loads,

One hiccup since the system was installed was a power failure when students returned to classes after the holiday break. The purifiers operate on electricity, so the system was temporarily down.

ActivePure has been extensively tested for some years, even before the COVID-19 pandemic, Garstang said.

"It's become very popular because of confidence. We have science beyond lab testings, in real-world testings, and are getting fantastic results," he said.

Philadelphia schools have had positive results, including low COVID-19 case rates, since the system was installed, said Arnold Becker, regional representative for ActivePure.

Of 138,927 Philadelphia students and staff, 4,622, or 3.3%, tested positive for COVID-19 from Aug. 23, when staff began the 2021-22 school year, through Jan. 1, according to the Philadelphia School District's online COVID-19 tracker.

Other ActivePure clients include casinos, hotels, retail stores, nursing homes, and sports facilities, including facilities operated by Major League Baseball teams the Houston Astros and Texas Rangers, Garstang said. Locally, Community Country Day School and United Way of Erie County have purchased portable ActivePure systems.

Data shows that absenteeism has dropped dramatically where the purification system is in use, Garstang said. That data was a major reason that the Iroquois School District opted to buy the purifiers.

"It made sense for us to go with the best science available and get this," Murray said.

With the purification system, the district will be able to reduce some COVID mitigation costs, including some surface disinfection, he said.

"We'll still wipe down door handles and that kind of thing, but the bigger savings will come in reduced loss of staff and reduced loss of learning for kids," Murray said.

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## Air purification seems to be curbing infections in schools

The Daily Courier (Forest City, North Carolina)

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FOREST CITY In the covid pandemic era, Rutherford County Schools (RCS) Chief Operating Officer Brad Teague believes a combination of factors have helped the school system successfully operate in-person this school year. Vaccines, as well as face masks, and cleaning protocols have been critical.

Teague says new space-age technology has also been essential, and school leaders are pleased with the performance of air purifier systems that are now in all classroom buildings.

At a cost of approximately \$365,000, RCS contracted with Beyond by Aerus based in Greenville, South Carolina to install "ActivePure" purification systems. These systems use certified NASA technology to continuously clean and protect the air 24 hours per day.

"These systems are cutting edge," Teague said Thursday, the first day students returned to the classroom following their Christmas break. "We are very pleased."

"Company officials have stayed in touch with us. They have worked with our maintenance department, making sure they know what to do in case there are any minor issues," Teague continued. "Even our custodians have been educated on these machines."

While it is difficult to say one thing made all the difference, it is clear that actions taken by RCS leaders have yielded positive results, when it comes to keeping students and staff safe and in school.

In early September, a few weeks after the school year began, the school system was routinely recording more than 1,000 students out of school and in quarantine. In December, just before the Christmas break, there were 60 students out of school and in quarantine. Nearly 70% of these are the result of students exposed to covid outside the classroom setting.

“Our goal is to keep students and staff safe. Our goal is for the school buildings to be safe places for students and staff. We want to keep them in school,” Teague said.

“Throughout the fall, we have had far fewer kids out of school because of covid,” he continued. “Our covid protocols are effective.”

RCS officials continue to work closely with the Rutherford County Health Department (a part of Foothills Health District).

“Erin Wilson is our liaison at the health department, and she has been great to work with,” Teague said.

He concedes there isn’t one strategy that is 100% effective.

“Even with our new air purification technology, there is no guarantee that all viruses and bacteria will be destroyed,” Teague said. “But they are helping out tremendously. We couldn’t be more pleased.”

RCS officials expect to be using the Active-Pure system well into the future, once the covid pandemic is a bad memory. According to ActivePure, the technology has proven to successfully, significantly, reduce the presence of various forms of flu, E. coli, and MRSA as well as various forms of coronavirus.

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