

Hawai'i schools consider 'heat days' during scorching year

By Cathy Bussewitz
The Associated Press

HONOLULU — In her 90° classroom, Hawai'i teacher Sharon Nichols is so desperate to keep her third-graders cool that she walks around the classroom spritzing them with ice water.

Like virtually all schools in the normally temperate state, her building lacks air conditioning, and that's been fine in the past. But Nichols and other teachers in Hawai'i say it's been so hot this year that students have shown symptoms of heat exhaustion and had to go to the school nurse.

"I just worry about the kids that start looking sickly and tired in my class," Nichols said. "It's very hard to focus. I'm up here teaching, and I'm telling the kids 'Come on, wake up,' and I'm falling asleep myself."

The Hawai'i teachers union says if it's too hot to pay attention, it's too hot to go to school. Its president is calling on the state to establish "heat days" — like snow days — and cancel school when it's too stifling to learn.

The move comes during a particularly scorching year in the state. Temperatures in Honolulu reached record highs at least 25 times in the last year, according to the National Weather Service, and experts say Hawai'i's cooling trade winds have been declining for decades.

"What modulates the weather here in Hawai'i strongly is the temperature of the ocean water," said Chris Brenchley, a meteorologist with the National Weather Service. "Our surrounding ocean waters are running anywhere from two to four degrees Fahrenheit above normal."

That has led to air temperatures that are two to three degrees above normal, he said.

Unbearably hot classrooms prompted Corey Rosenlee, president of the Hawai'i State Teachers Association, to suggest the "heat days" idea. Around the country, some districts such as Denver Public Schools cancel school during extremely hot days and adjust their calendars to minimize heat in the classroom.

"My first priority is putting air condi-



tioning in our classrooms, because I do not want kids missing school because it's too hot," said Rosenlee, who described students fighting to sit near the fans when he was a classroom teacher. "You put 30 to 40 bodies in a room that are moving, and they are all little furnaces."

Nichols, who teaches at Honowai Elementary School in Waipahu, started an online fundraising campaign to get an air conditioner in her classroom.

At James Campbell High School on Oahu, where about 20 percent of the classrooms are air conditioned in a school serving more than 3,000 students, eleventh-grader Sydney May fanned herself with a vocabulary handout as a classmate rested his head on his desk in the 90° classroom. May said she worries that students in air conditioned classrooms have an advantage.

"I'm focused on how hot I am, instead of learning," May said after class. "I feel like I'm not obtaining as much information as I can."

While an official count found that 94 percent of schools in Hawai'i don't have air conditioning throughout the entire school, some schools have limited air conditioning or have added units on their own. The Hawai'i Department of Education is planning to add air conditioning to a list of priority schools, but many facilities are more than 60 years old and would need new windows and electrical upgrades to

handle the load, said Brent Suyama, a spokesman for the department. They are also conducting a heat abatement study, and have installed a photovoltaic air conditioner in one school with good results, he said.

The state's public schools utility bill costs more than \$60 million per year, and installing air conditioning at all public schools would cost an estimated \$1.7 billion while also driving up electricity costs, Suyama said.

"It's always a battle money-wise, because there's only so much money available," he said. "Every agency needs funds to get things done, and the Department of Education is just one of the departments."

The department is open to discussing what would constitute a heat day, and it would need to explore impacts like the number of instruction days required by law and union contracts, spokeswoman Donalyn Dela Cruz said in a statement.

Public schools in Hawai'i typically start

HIGH HEAT, LOW PERFORMANCE. With only open windows and fans to cool the room down, students enter their non-air-conditioned classroom at Campbell High School in Ewa, Hawai'i. Many public-school classrooms across the Island are not equipped with AC, making it difficult for both teachers and students when the temperatures are high. In Hawai'i, which has been experiencing record high temperatures, school officials are weighing whether it makes sense to have "heat days," where school is cancelled because it's simply too hot. (AP Photo/Marco Garcia) the year in late July or early August and end in late May.

At humidity levels of 60 percent, weather officials advise extreme caution when the temperature reaches 86°, meaning prolonged exposure can cause heat stroke or heat cramps, Brenchley said.

Kids are especially susceptible to heat exhaustion because of their small size, and they can experience headaches, nausea, and vomiting, said Paul Eakin, pediatric emergency doctor at Kapiolani Medical Center. "It's definitely far from ideal, and it's going to definitely affect their performance at the higher temperatures," Eakin said.

Punahou High School, the private school in Hawai'i that President Barack Obama attended, has air-conditioned classrooms. The units were purchased through fundraising, but the school's \$22,050 annual tuition pays for the operating costs, said Laurel Husain, spokeswoman for Punahou.

Back at Campbell, one teacher started a bottle recycling bin to raise money for fans for her classroom, May said.

"It's outrageous. I can't believe that we've allowed our schools to go on like this for so long," said Mike Wooten, a teacher at Campbell. "It gets up to 100° in my classroom."

Iwakuma tosses no-hitter in Seattle's 3-0 win over Orioles

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the stands and made a nifty over-the-shoulder catch for the first out.

"In that situation you're not letting it get down if you can," Seager said. "You're going to do whatever you can."

Baltimore was no-hit for the seventh time in franchise history and the first since Boston's Clay Buchholz in 2007. The best chance for the Orioles to get to Iwakuma came in the fourth inning after Manny Machado walked to lead off and Gerardo Parra chopped a grounder in the hole between first baseman Mark Trumbo and second baseman Robinson Cano. Quickly moving to his left, Cano tracked down the grounder in shallow right field and threw across his body to get Parra at first.

Iwakuma walked Chris Davis with two outs, but he struck out Jimmy Paredes to end the threat.

Iwakuma also walked Jonathan Schoop on a check-swing, full-count pitch to open the eighth inning. But after striking out Ryan Flaherty looking, Iwakuma got Caleb Joseph to ground into a double play.

After Lough fouled out to open the ninth, Machado grounded out to Seager and Parra flew out to shallow center field to end it. It was the first complete-game of

Iwakuma's career, having pitched 8 2/3 innings twice, including earlier this month against Minnesota.

"It's not just a normal loss. We're going down in the history books on the bad side of a no-hitter," Baltimore's Adam Jones said. "But tip your cap. Iwakuma threw his game."

Iwakuma missed two-and-a-half months early in the season after straining a muscle in his back and side. He's been solid since returning and there were rumblings around the trade deadline that Iwakuma might be moved.

"That's all I thought was to come back and give it all I've got every start and make up for the lost time I had in the first half," Iwakuma said.

Iwakuma didn't get a ton of offensive help, but it wasn't needed. Franklin Gutierrez had an RBI double and Cano followed with an RBI single, both with two outs, to give Seattle a 2-0 lead in the third inning off Baltimore starter Kevin Gausman (2-4).

Jackson led off the fourth with a double and scored on Jesus Sucre's RBI double, again with two outs. It was just the fifth hit of the season for Sucre, Seattle's backup catcher.

"It wasn't our tree. But it was in our kitchen."

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