

MCPS Thermostat Usage – Q & A's for the Cooling Season

It's really hot and humid. Can I have my thermostat set lower?

From spring to fall, outside temperatures and humidities can cause uncomfortable conditions indoors. Our natural inclination is to turn thermostats down to supply cooler air to occupants. Unfortunately, this can cause condensation problems in our buildings. In an effort to prevent condensation, MCPS recommends keeping thermostats set no lower than 76° F. To comply with MCPS policies and protect our buildings from costly damage, please set thermostats no lower than 76° F for cooling.



Examples of thermostats found in MCPS

Why is condensing water a problem?

Moisture promotes growth of **mold and mildew** whose spores may trigger health problems for some people. Water also destroys drywall, ceiling tiles, carpeting, and insulation, and harms electronic equipment such as computers.

How can a temperature set point cause water to condense in a building?



During most of the year outdoor air carries a large amount of water. This water can easily condense out of the air; all it takes is the right temperature, called the "dew point". During much of the year in our climate the dew point ranges between 70 to 75° F. Water condenses wherever humid air comes in contact with a surface below its dew point. Water droplets form on an ice pitcher during the summer. Basements become damp when the walls are below the dew point. Air conditioning a room much below 76° F creates the same effect! (See picture at left, and Figure 1 below).

Water Condensing on Window of Classroom

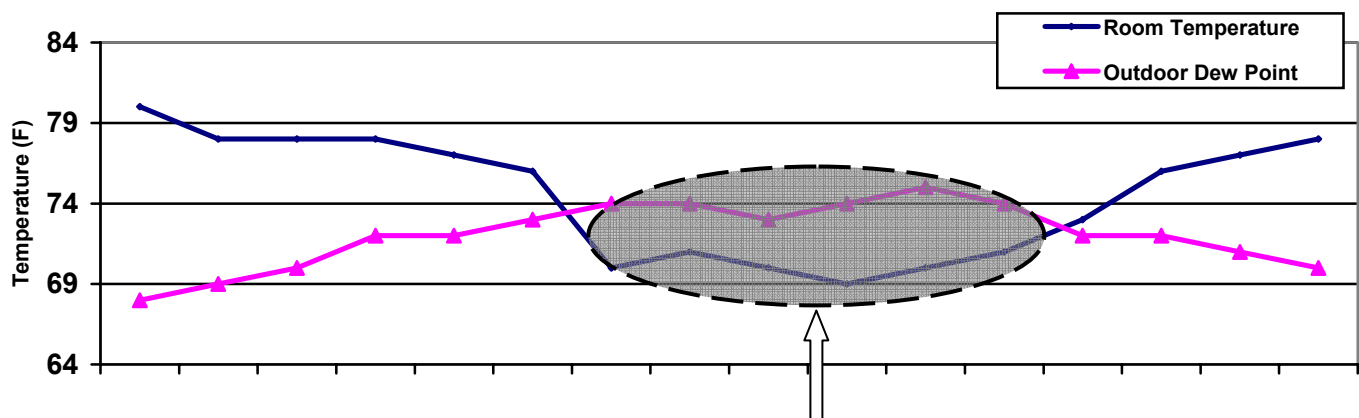
What can I do to prevent moisture problems in my school?

- Set thermostats no lower than 76° F during the cooling season. Exceptions are computer labs and media centers; set these rooms to 75° F to meet the more demanding cooling requirements.
- Do not change thermostat settings back and forth.
- Keep windows and doors closed, especially during rainy and humid weather.
- Keep the air flow to all grilles and thermostats clear of any obstructions.
- Please promptly report any moisture or mold in your room to your building service manager.

Who can I contact for more information?

Please call MCPS Environmental Services/Indoor Air Quality at 301-926-4409.

Figure 1 -- Example of a Danger Zone for Condensing Water



A Danger Zone: Room Temperature is Below Dew Point