

Turn the Key, Be Idle Free!

As teachers enter the building each morning at Soddy Daisy High School, buses are lined up, students are on board buses, and pollutants are flying. According to recent studies by the American Lung Association and the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA), Hamilton County has again developed poor air quality, and emissions from school bus idling at dropoff areas are contributing to that. Particulate matter from those emissions affects human health, emits carcinogens, wastes fuel and money, and even causes excess engine wear on the buses themselves.

The EPA has well documented the carbon monoxide, nitrogen dioxide, and hydrocarbons emitted by diesel exhaust in and around idling buses. Asthma, respiratory issues, and heart diseases are common side effects of those emissions. With buses arriving to SDHS as early as 6:10 a.m. and idling for 30 minutes each morning, dangerous fumes can affect the lungs and hearts of students and teachers in toxic ways. Entrances from parking lots, air intakes, doors, and open windows are within feet of idling buses. Time, fuel, and money are wasted as buses sit, unnecessarily running.

As a class activity for Earth Day, April 22, 2019, we collected data, made observations, and offered suggestions as to how to improve the air quality in polluted entrance areas of our school. In this report, we have submitted our data from SDHS buses, facts and myths from 23 states where idling is outlawed, and alternatives to bus idling from the EPA. Improvement can be made with a simple fix – turn the key! By simply turning engines off when idling for more than 5 minutes, we can enhance the quality of the air as we enter our building for a day of learning. We can save hundreds of dollars each year, and we can better care for the environment we all share. Imagine the improvements and savings that can occur in all Hamilton County Schools with just a turn of a key.

Respectfully submitted,
Algebra 2 Students at SDHS



