

Area school getting soundproofing funds

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A Catholic elementary school that draws students from Norridge and Harwood Heights received notification this month that it is eligible to receive sound insulation funding, according to officials from the O'Hare Noise Compatibility Commission.

St. Tarcissus, 6040 W. Ardmore, Chicago, is eligible for soundproofing funds.

"We are thrilled and keep wondering if it's real," Principal Roy Hecker said. "We applied about two-years ago. The noise was very disruptive for classroom instruction. We're not exactly sure what were going to get but the soundproofing will improve the quality of our instruction in the classroom. The noise was especially bad when the windows were open on the Ardmore Avenue side."

St. Tarcissus has four buildings and more than 370 students.

At the request of the school and the ONCC, the Chicago Department of Aviation placed noise monitors in 13 classrooms in the buildings to determine whether projected aircraft noise inside the schools would meet an eight-hour Equivalent Sound Level test result of 45 or higher, according to information provided in a press release.

That level is the minimum noise threshold the Federal Aviation Administration established for schools to qualify for sound insulation funding.

Measurements were taken in each classroom with windows open and closed.

Artificial noise broadcast through industrial speakers were used to simulate

anticipated aircraft noise expected to be present when the O'Hare Modernization Project is completed.

"Our next step is to work with St. Tarcissus on the federal grant application," Raymond Kuper, vice chair of the ONCC and chairman of the School Sound Insulation Committee was quoted saying in a released statement. "The school will hire an architect and acoustical consultant to determine the scope of the work needed for sound insulation."

The school can't start any work until it receives the funding, said Brendan McLaughlin, chairman of the ONCC.

School sound insulation improvements, may include insulated windows, additional roofing and ceiling insulation, improved doors, HVAC modifications and similar measures.

While exceeding noise monitor minimum thresholds and qualifying as eligible for funding are important steps to secure federal and city of Chicago grants for sound insulation work, the timing for completion of the actual work will depend upon availability of federal funds.

About \$323.5 million in federal and airport funds have already underwritten sound insulation for 119 schools near O'Hare, including three schools in the construction or design process.

Asked when the school will receive funding, McLaughlin, said, "We don't know in advance of their (grant) application being submitted, when they'll receive funding. It depends on the need. Schools are competing nationally for funding. It depends on how many other schools are ahead of them. I don't know if it will be this year or three years down the line."



First-grader Kirra Stopka (front) concentrates on an assignment. | SHAUNA BITTLE-FOR SUN-TIMES MEDIA



A plane passes over St. Tarcissus School on Friday. The school qualifies for noise abatement assistance due to the noise level caused by the planes. | SHAUNA BITTLE-FOR SUN-TIMES MEDIA



Principal Roy Hecker is pleased his school will get help mitigating the noise levels of overhead planes heading to and from O'Hare. | SHAUNA BITTLE-FOR SUN-TIMES MEDIA