

# NATIONAL HEALTHY SCHOOLS DAY: Take Back Your IAQ!

## TIP SHEET FOR CLASSROOM TEACHERS



Air pollution problems at work? Do you and your students sneeze, cough, feel tired or headachy<sup>i</sup> in class? The no-cost tips below can help you improve your own classroom IAQ, and quietly help you boost attendance and performance!<sup>ii</sup> Everyone will ask what you are doing right!

Why IAQ (indoor air quality)? Children breathe more air per pound of body weight than adults<sup>iii</sup>. Asthma is the leading cause of school absenteeism<sup>iv</sup>, and a leading *work-related illness* of custodians<sup>v</sup>. **Take back your IAQ using these tips:**

### Track Success

Use your Planner: mark when you take the steps below. Look the following week and month to see if attendance and achievement are improving.

### Fresh Air

- Warm stale air rises, carrying pollutants towards the ceiling. Open a window at the top, or open the transom over the door for natural air flow (close them when you leave). Or, if your school is in a humid region and/or your room has sealed windows and a ventilator, remove all plants, books, papers, and projects to make sure fresh air can get into your classroom. For storage space, add see-through, stackable storage tubs.
- Dirt, dust and grime add to indoor pollution. Leave your classroom ‘ready to clean’: chairs stacked on desks, trash picked up, surfaces cleared of projects and papers.

### Block pests

- Ban pets and food in class: they provide food and nesting for unwanted pests<sup>vi</sup>. Quick-fix: a bit of steel wool or strip of duct tape will block pest entry points or crevices; report persistent pest problems.

### Use Low-Odor Supplies

- More chemicals = more air pollution. Use water-based, unscented markers; ban dry-erase (‘huff-able’) markers. Don’t use aerosol sprays, don’t wear perfume, cologne, or perfumed hair or skin care products; avoid scented hand-sanitizers.
- The smell of clean is no smell<sup>vii</sup>. Remove plug-ins and room deodorizers which just add more chemical pollutants. For small spills, use diluted general-all purpose certified ‘green’ cleaner. Since soap and water remove most germs, minimize the use of disinfectants.

### Report little problems right away

Tiny water leaks lead to mold infestations. Get help with problems you can’t solve: broken windows, leaks, nonworking mechanical ventilation/heating, hallway noise, dim lighting, painted shut windows, and isolation of renovation fumes and dusts<sup>viii</sup>.



Tell us what you did, what kinds of attendance or other improvements you saw.

Register your activity/ tell us your success story at:  
[www.NationalHealthySchoolsDay.org](http://www.NationalHealthySchoolsDay.org)

## Resources

### **New York State United Teachers, Health & Safety Issues:**

<http://www.nysut.org/cps/rde/xchg/nysut/hs.xsl/healthandsafety.htm>

### **Healthy Schools Network, *Healthy Schools/Healthy Kids Clearinghouse* guides and reports:**

school design; green cleaning; IAQ; molds, sanitizers; renovation vs health; Health & Safety committees; daylighting; playgrounds; and more. <http://www.HealthySchools.org/clearinghouse.html>

**Green Cleaning for Healthy Schools:** industry-free training toolkit and DIY start-up instructions, tips, cost analysis, model policies: [www.CleaningforHealthySchools.org](http://www.CleaningforHealthySchools.org)

**National Healthy Schools Day**, an annual day of action and awareness every April on school environments co-sponsored with US EPA and Council of Educational Facility Planners, and many other organizations nationwide: [www.NationalHealthySchoolsDay.org](http://www.NationalHealthySchoolsDay.org)

**US EPA Indoor Air Quality Tools for Schools Program** hosted its tenth annual Symposium in January 2010. For free toolkit, tips, links to partners, see <http://www.epa.gov/iaq/schools/index.html>

## Endnotes

<sup>i</sup> EPA IAQ Tools for Schools Problem-solving Wheel- health symptoms list

<sup>ii</sup> National Academy of Sciences, National Research Council *Green Schools: Attributes for Health and Learning*, 2006; *Greening America's Schools- Costs and Benefits*, G. Kats, 2006

<sup>iii</sup> American Academy of Pediatrics' Committee on Environmental Health; US EPA; Federal Centers for Disease Control; National Institutes of Environmental Health Sciences; others.

<sup>iv</sup> CDC-DASH; US EPA-IAQTfs

<sup>v</sup> F. Reinisch, R. J. Harrison, S. Cussler, et al., "Physician Reports of Work-Related Asthma in California, 1993–1996," *American Journal of Industrial Medicine* 39, 1 (January 2001): 72–83.

<sup>vi</sup> New York State requires all schools to have Integrated Pest Management Plans and to provide Prior Notice of school pesticide use. For state by state IPM laws and tips on blocking pests, see [www.beyondpesticides.org](http://www.beyondpesticides.org) or read **Sick Schools 2009** report online at [www.healthyschools.org](http://www.healthyschools.org)

<sup>vii</sup> DIY Green Cleaning/Cleaning for Healthy Schools toolkit and poster at [www.cleaningforhealthyschools.org](http://www.cleaningforhealthyschools.org). New York, Connecticut, Illinois, Hawaii, Nevada and other states are adopting laws requiring schools to use "independent, third-party certified green" cleaning products. US EPA does not certify cleaning products.

<sup>viii</sup> New York State comprehensive school health & safety regulations require schools to have IAQ Management Plans, Preventive Maintenance Plans, and to protect occupant health in buildings under renovation.

