



HEALTHY SCHOOLS NETWORK

2011

END OF YEAR NEWS

... for children ... health ... environment ... education ... communities ... since 1995

BY THE NUMBERS:

\$76.6 billion

annual cost of environmental illness in children (Health Affairs 2011)

56 million

children in public and private schools nationwide

300%

amount kids' asthma hospitalizations can increase on return to school (NYS DoH)

40%

school nurses say they know children affected by pollution inside schools (NASN 2011)

10%

children have no health insurance (Kids Count 2011)

44%

school principals say poor conditions of schools impair learning (NCES 2010)



Smart Moms Know Best

In the past two-and-a-half years, our agencies have joined forces to provide all Americans with the best preventive medicine: a clean, healthy environment.... The best preventative medicine [is] a clean, healthy environment," write Health and Human Services Secretary Kathleen Sebelius and US EPA Administrator Lisa Jackson, both mothers. They added, "One in

every 12 Americans—and one in 10 children—suffers from asthma, which is worsened by air pollution. In total, our children's exposure to air pollution and toxic chemicals costs America more than \$75 billion every year. When our nation is working to pay the bills, we shouldn't be spending \$75 billion a year to pay for illnesses we could have prevented." USA Today Op-Ed, Oct. 17, 2011

Healthy Schools Network, founded in 1995, has shaped and won some of the nation's leading laws to prevent environmental risks to school children, and has fostered and advised state and local policy reform efforts nationwide.

WE NEED YOUR HELP NOW: Support our national agenda as the federal agencies offer state agency grants and local awards that get to the root causes of the decayed, polluted conditions that make too many schools unsafe and unhealthy for kids.

Donate Now

www.HealthySchools.org • 518-462-0632 • 202-543-7555

Coalition for Healthier Schools

...providing the platform and the forum for environmental health at school... since 2001

Why Kids Don't Count and What Federal Agencies Are Doing

by Claire Barnett, Executive Director, Healthy Schools Network and Coordinator, Coalition for Healthier Schools

Why don't kids count in Congress? They have no PAC, and they don't vote.

That's why public interest advocates must stand up for their needs. We are enormously grateful to the policy makers and agency leaders who fight hard every day for children to have healthy environments where they live, learn, and play.

Read the two news items below from EPA and Education to see how the federal agencies are harmonizing programs for schools. The Coalition's challenges are to sustain the agencies' initiatives, encourage federal and state interagency collaborations, and make sure these new efforts prioritize children as the primary and highest risk users of local schools.

EPA's Green and Healthy Schools Initiative

by Peter Grevatt, PhD, Director,
Office of Children's Health Protection



The US Environmental Protection Agency's (EPA) Office of Children's Health Protection recently launched the Clean, Green, and Healthy Schools Initiative. The goal is to promote voluntary actions that can be taken to ensure that all children have access to green and healthy schools. The initiative is led by EPA Headquarters with supporting staff in EPA's ten regional offices.

Several efforts are currently underway. On October 3, the Voluntary Guideline for Selecting Safe School Locations was released, with a series of webinars and presentations featuring presenters from EPA, the National Trust for Historic Preservation, and other national groups. The siting guideline helps local districts and communities consider environmental health issues in establishing school site selection criteria and in conducting effective environmental reviews of prospective school sites. A second set of guidelines for states, the School Environmental Health Program Guidelines, are currently in development with public comments planned for early 2012. The school environmental health program guidelines will help states, tribes, and territories provide their local school districts and others with the tools needed to implement straight-forward, practical solutions to environmental health challenges in schools. See www.epa.gov/children

ED Opens Pilot Year of Green Ribbon Schools Award

by Andrea Suarez Falken,
Special Assistant,
U.S. Department of Education



In September, Secretary of Education (ED) Arne Duncan announced in the opening of the 2011-2012 school year a new Green Ribbon Schools award program. The recognition award relates existing resources and standards that advance education, health, safety, environment, and energy officials' current goals for schools and students. Modeled after ED's Blue Ribbon Schools Program, the award will recognize achievement across three important categories: environmental impact/energy, healthy school environments, and environmental/sustainability education. Schools must be nominated by their state chief education officer.

The task today is to ensure that state education officials know about the new award and are preparing to participate by running a state selection process. ED encourages everyone committed to healthy and green schools for children, personnel, and communities to ask state education officials to participate by nominating schools to ED. The elements that the GRS award encourages schools to consider are not ornaments: energy efficient, healthy schools and environmental education are good economics, good health, and good sense. See www2.ed.gov/programs/green-ribbon-schools/index.html

New Indoor Sciences and Policies for Schools

The **International Society of Indoor Air Quality** hosted its 12th triennial conference in **Austin, TX** in June. Among those attending were EPA-award-winning school environment gurus **Brian Kasher, Charlotte-Mecklenburg Schools, NC, Jerry Lamping (ret'd), Northeast Independent School District, TX, and John Gayetzky, Association of School Business Officials - International**. Presenting the **Sick Schools 2009** report, Coalition coordinator Claire Barnett urged the research community to zero in on children's environmental vulnerabilities. That week, the **Institute of Medicine** released its new report on **Climate Change, the Indoor Environment and Health**. The report found that "poor indoor environmental quality is creating health problems today and impairs the ability of occupants to work and learn." It also noted that green buildings are not a solution, citing issues with the US Green Building Council. See iom.edu/Reports/2011/Climate-Change-the-Indoor-Environment-and-Health/Report-Brief.aspx

While in Texas, Barnett co-convened an **Austin-area Roundtable** with **Janie Fields, Children's Environmental Health Institute**, which has led to regional workshops. She then visited the Network's Gulf Coast volunteer **Nancy Swan**, who convened a workshop in **Mobile, AL** featuring a presentation by **University of Alabama's School of Nursing Ann Turner Henson**, who teaches, researches, and assists child care facilities with environmental concerns.



National Institute of Environmental Health Sciences: Top Priority on Children

Healthy Schools Network was honored to participate in the **National Institute of Environmental Health Sciences** strategic planning retreat in Raleigh, NC last summer. NIEHS, which invests in bench research and has a long history of community-based research, assembled nearly 200 thinkers and doers to brainstorm priorities. For the full report which put a top priority on children, see www.niehs.nih.gov/about/od/strategicplan/stakeholder-community-workshop. The Network also lent its support to a **US Senate briefing** for NIEHS, hosted by New York's **Senator Kirsten Gillibrand**. Speakers included our **2008 Healthy Schools Hero Frederica Perera, DrPH**, who addressed the connections between prenatal air pollution and pesticide exposure and lowered learning ability in children. Perera is the director of the Columbia University Center for Children's Environmental Health.

Mid-Atlantic Center for Children's Health and the Environment 9th Annual Conference, Philadelphia, PA, October 14, 2011

The Network's Director spent October 13-14 in Philadelphia, where she presented at the annual conference of the **Mid-Atlantic Center for Children's Health and Environment**. Along with **Jerry Roseman**, the environmental science consultant to the **Philadelphia Federation of Teachers**, she gave a lesson on "the ABCs"—asthma, bugs, chemicals, and a host of other avoidable environmental threats that plague schools. Barnett and Roseman reminded participants that just as children are not biologically little adults, schools are not simply "little offices." Schools' majority occupants, children, lack any recourse or system of preventive services.

Roseman showed pictures of moldy, pest-infested schools and posed questions he normally asks, such as *How long has this been going on?* Barnett followed by asking *And who tells parents that their children are exposed?* The conversation then focused on steps to reduce risks to health inside schools.



(l to r) Jerome Paulson, MD, Director, MACCHE, Children's National Medical Center, George Washington University; Claire Barnett; Jerry Roseman. October 14, 2011.

Coalition for Healthier Schools

Work Group on Green Cleaning and Chemical Policy Reform in Schools

National Environmental Legislators Endorse Model Green Cleaning Policy

The Work Group on Green Cleaning, convened at the Coalition's 2006 annual meeting, has won multiple battles against green washing. In 2010, it presented at the **American Public Health Association's** convention, exposing industry tactics against bills requiring states and school districts to use **third party certified green products**. The Work Group's model state bill text earned the endorsement of the **National Caucus of Environmental Legislators** – a major step that heartened **Connecticut** legislators, who stood up to industry to win an outstanding law in 2009 that is spurring **environment, health, and labor** advocates in other states. See www.CleaningforHealthySchools.org for information on green cleaning and greenwashing.

GREENWASHING—verb: the act of misleading consumers regarding the environmental practices of a company or the environmental benefits of a product or service (fibbing, no proof, and irrelevant information)

But the battles are only starting. As EPA and ED encourage green and healthy schools, industry trade associations are blanketing the agencies and schools with unproven green claims and brainstorming new ecolabels for their members. To separate real green from the greenwashing, the Work Group is urging EPA, ED and schools to rely on third party certifiers, such as **Green Seal** and **Eco-Logo**, and to visit **Consumer Reports' www.GreenerChoices.org**. EPA and ED are weakening here.

In defense of recognized product certifications, some environmentalists took on the **US Green Building Council** in a full page ad this fall objecting to its proposal to accept **uncertified (unsustainably harvested) forestry products** in green buildings. Experts in indoor environments might have done the same: the IOM report (see page 3) noted that US GBC allows buildings to earn the highest LEED certification without one credit in Indoor Environmental Equality. Further, while US GBC proposes to require green cleaning (good), the draft does not require the use of certified green products (bad).

Given the unique issues of the highly lucrative K-12 schools market, US GBC should convene a task group of child health and other experts to recommend final updated LEED school design and operations standards.

National Healthy Schools Day

For ten years parents, teachers, custodians, advocates, and agencies have promoted National Healthy Schools Day activities nationwide. Whether you are at the beginning stages of investigating school environments or have an established Indoor Air/Environmental Quality program, we invite you to host a local activity that educates others and celebrates your school's successes.

Join the celebration! Host a simple National Healthy Schools Day activity to celebrate and promote healthy indoor air and environmental quality in schools for all children, personnel and communities.

www.NationalHealthySchoolsDay.org



GREEN SQUAD: Help Your School Win a Green Ribbon Schools Award!

The Network's web site for kids is newly updated, just in time to boost ED's Green Ribbon Schools awards in 2012. (See page 2 article on GRS.)

Green Squad, a collaboration between the **Natural Resources Defense Council** and the Network, is an online curriculum showing kids how to investigate school environments, and offering tips

on problem solving. The web site covers a host of issues: diesel fumes, pesticides, toxic products, molds, asthma triggers, lead, and more. Although **Green Squad** is designed for middle schoolers, the guidance is useful for kids of all ages, including parents and teachers, even news reporters. Its library and Parent/Teacher Room

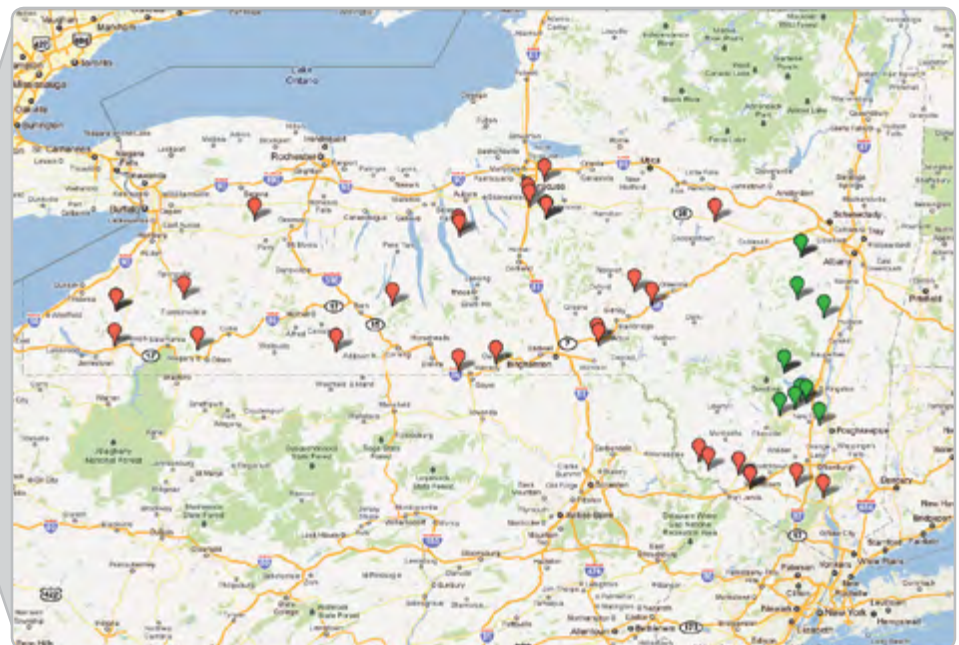


resources include detailed fact sheets and web links to other helpful websites. See healthyschools.org/kids_page.html

New York Schools and Hydrofracking

High-volume hydraulic fracturing, or hydrofracking (HF), is often used in conjunction with horizontal underground drilling and multi-well pad development to extract natural gas. The process injects high volumes of water and chemicals deep underground to force gas from rock formations, and thus raises new, potentially significant, adverse impacts not previously addressed by New York State. The map below shows the location of public schools on their own water wells in the state's **Marcellus Shale**

HF zone. Drinking water quality is one concern; others include risks to children's environmental health and learning - and to local schools - from nearby noise, air and water pollution, truck traffic, and chemical mismanagement. The Network's Masters' Intern Jimmie Covington is conducting the research. State health, not education, enforces EPA and state drinking water regulations for schools. See water.epa.gov/infrastructure/drinkingwater/schools/guidance.cfm#sdwa





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Dry Erase Markers: Hazardous For Kids

This fall, the Network’s award-winning Healthy Schools/Healthy Kids Clearinghouse welcomed another parent-friendly guide: *Markers*. Developed in response to a flood of inquiries from parents from New York, Minnesota, and California whose children have dizziness, nausea, and headaches when using dry erase markers, it offers tips for teachers, parents, and schools. With more schools installing dry erase whiteboards and inappropriately using small versions as lapboards, toxic fumes

are being inhaled by kids and teachers everywhere.

Dry erase markers are often labeled “nontoxic” by industry. Yet the volatile chemicals that make the inks evaporate quickly are hazardous. In 2003, a study of mice exposed to dry erase marker fumes for just one hour reported that the mice exhibited altered posture and gait, tremors, falling, and hyperactivity. Just what kids—and schools—need!

QUICK TIPS: Children should not use dry erase or permanent



markers, but instead use safer products, such as unscented watercolor markers or dry erase crayons. Schools must stop using individual whiteboards and must add fresh air to rooms with installed dry erase boards.

Read more at www.healthyschools.org/documents/Markers-2011.pdf

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