



Indoor Air Quality Tools for Schools Program

Indoor Air Quality (IAQ)

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NEWS AND EVENTS

- **National Asthma Forum:** Attend the [2011 Communities in Action National Asthma Forum](#) to learn best practices and strategies for managing asthma in schools. The Forum is June 9–10, 2011, in Washington, D.C. [Register today!](#)
- **Green Ribbon Awards Program for Schools:** The U.S. Department of Education, with support from the White House Council on Environmental Quality and U.S. EPA, will recognize schools for conserving energy, creating healthy learning spaces and teaching environmental literacy. The application for this [award program](#) will be released later this year.

COMMUNICATION AND COLLABORATION: TEACHERS AS IAQ CHAMPIONS

An effective approach to developing and sustaining a [comprehensive IAQ management program](#) is having the entire school community involved in the program's intent, activities, results and next steps. Engaging all members of the school community — including teachers, facilities and maintenance staff, students, administrators, nurses, and others — as participants and supporters is a first step in setting goals and taking strides to achieve them.

To create and maintain a healthy school environment, an inclusive and transparent team effort is necessary. And often, when it comes to identifying leaks in hallways or mold and moisture in the classrooms, the first to recognize IAQ issues are [teachers](#) — making them fundamental players in school IAQ management. Together, teachers and [facilities and maintenance staff](#) can work collaboratively as a team to identify and address IAQ problems by communicating with each other to take preventive measures.

When effective, two-way communication and information sharing are in place, the IAQ management plan becomes

Did You Know...

There are dynamic, innovative, green-themed curriculums available? The Green Education Foundation, along with the Center for Green Schools at the U.S. Green Building Council, has launched the [Sustainability Education Clearinghouse](#). This free online tool provides K-12 educators the ability to upload and share sustainability and green-focused lessons with one another.

Should we have our schools tested for radon? How do we keep mold from returning once it has been cleaned?

Have these and other questions answered on the Schools IAQ Connector Email Discussion List. Join today by sending a blank email message to schools_iaq_connector-subscribe@lists.epa.gov. Then check your email inbox for your confirmation and membership details.

Access Past E-Newsletters Online

Can't find a past *IAQ Tools for Schools* Connector e-newsletter in your email inbox? No problem! Wish you could read past editions? You can! Visit the e-newsletter archive to access printable versions (PDF) of all past editions on the *IAQ Tools for Schools* website.

easier and more far-reaching. Furthermore, once teachers are knowledgeable about what makes a healthy classroom environment, they become a great asset in helping to champion IAQ issues with students and parents, as well as putting good IAQ practices in place within their classrooms. Read the examples below of school districts that have made IAQ meaningful for their entire school community, including teachers, by communicating with everyone, all of the time.

Using the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention's "Asthma Friendly Schools Toolkit" as a model, [North East Independent School District \(NEISD\)](#) educated teachers and other school building occupants about the importance of IAQ. Communicating and educating building occupants about asthma gave environmental management clear meaning and importance to everyone. Teachers understood the connection between their actions and student health — becoming active stewards of their classroom environment. *"Teachers love their kids; they don't want to do anything to hurt them. Many of our teachers simply didn't know about asthma triggers. Armed with this education, they were more than willing to change their classrooms to eliminate asthma triggers."*

— Diane Rhodes, Director for Asthma Education,
NEISD, Texas

When everyone is on board and communicates similar messages on the importance of improving school IAQ, it becomes easier to share the same goals and to obtain community buy-in. This transparency ensures consistent communication around achieving goals and relaying results.

INVOLVING STUDENTS IN IAQ MANAGEMENT



Another important role that teachers play is engaging students in IAQ management.

On average, students spend 90 percent of their day indoors, which illuminates the need to make IAQ meaningful for students at your school. A key way to make students stewards of a healthy indoor environment is to integrate them into the school's IAQ management program — by educating them on the importance of IAQ and encouraging them to participate in IAQ management.

Education is a vital first step to boosting student participation and involvement in good IAQ practices. Incorporating IAQ into lesson plans is an effective way to educate and empower students — by communicating how good IAQ is crucial to their [health and productivity](#), and how making small changes can help make a big difference in terms of cleaning indoor air. Use the ideas below to integrate IAQ lesson plans into science, math, language arts and health classes.

- **Science and Math:** Engage students by conducting a classroom or school walkthrough. Track IAQ measurements, organize the collected data and graph the results. Ask students to give an oral or written presentation on their findings.
- **Language Arts:** Incorporate IAQ into writing and speaking assignments. Ask students to write articles on IAQ for a class newsletter, write and produce a play about IAQ, or write a letter to an adult on why IAQ should be addressed.

Lesson Plan Resources on Indoor Environments in Schools

- [National Education Association Health Information Network's \(NEA-HIN\) Understanding the Indoor Environment: IAQ Lesson Plans](#)
- [National Institute of Environmental Health Sciences' \(NIEHS'\) Environmental Health Perspectives \(EHP\) Science Education Program](#)
- [NIEHS' Environmental Health Science Education](#)
- [Green Education Foundation Sustainability Education Clearinghouse](#)
- [National Energy Education Development \(NEED\) Project](#)

"Teachers are essential in helping us evaluate our successes. Due to their familiarity with conditions in their classrooms, teachers are vital first lines of defense by providing immediate feedback when they notice something is amiss. As they share our commitment to improve indoor air quality, their feedback is invaluable in our effort to create healthier buildings."

— Mike Anderson, Buildings and Grounds
Manager, Bellingham Public
Schools, Washington

- **Health:** After looking at examples of advertising billboards and public service announcements, ask students to design IAQ billboards on a topic they feel the public needs to be informed on, such as asthma, radon or secondhand smoke. Display the billboards in a location where they can be viewed by their classmates.

To get an idea of how one middle school engaged students in IAQ management, read the narrative below.

Harris Middle School, San Antonio, Texas

*“As a science teacher, it is easy to fit many things regarding IAQ into my classroom. For example, **when learning about the respiratory system, students are educated on the effects of asthma as well as triggers.** Students know that it is unacceptable to spray any perfumes in my classroom as well as others. Also, we hang posters around the school reminding students to recycle, keep aerosols at home and keep the school clean. But, I took that a step further. I actually created a ‘Green Class.’ In this class, we perform classroom checks — looking for dust bunnies, stuffed animals, clutter, etc. But, their biggest contribution is starting a school garden. This class has started a school garden — incorporating health and wellness, integrated pest management (IPM) and health education.”*

HAVE YOUR QUESTIONS ANSWERED!

Is there a topic you want to see covered in an *IAQ Tools for Schools* Connector e-newsletter? Need more information or have a quick question? Do you have suggestions for a webinar, an e-newsletter feature, or are you simply curious about an IAQ topic and would like more information? If so, send us an email at IAQTfSConnector@cadmusgroup.com.

Share YOUR news and events! Send us information to share with the school IAQ community. It could be featured in the next e-newsletter. Email your news to IAQTfSConnector@cadmusgroup.com.

The *IAQ Tools for Schools* guidance is a comprehensive resource to help schools maintain a healthy environment in school buildings by identifying, correcting and preventing IAQ problems. Learn more about the *IAQ Tools for Schools* guidance at www.epa.gov/iaq/schools.