Preventing Harm to Children: The Healthy Schools Movement

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Alaska Collaborative on Health and the Environment
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Presentation Objectives

• Learn about
  – Intersection of school environments & growing children’s health issues
  – Need for removing environmental contaminants from schools
  – Incorporating child-sensitive standards into school design, construction, and siting for school facilities
  – Guidelines for purchasing housekeeping products

• Discuss
  – Benefits of public participation in the decision making process
  – Need for cross-discipline actions between health professionals, academicians, researchers, parents & education policy makers

• Understand
  – Resources available from Healthy Kids/Healthy Schools Clearinghouse
  – Coalition for Healthier Schools platform and forum for environmental health at school
• Knowing that
  – school environments can be damaging to children’s health
    • “Indoor exposures can be 100-1,000 times greater than outdoor exposures”
  – we do not know the full consequences of environmental exposures in children
  – there is no baseline research or metrics

• We have a responsibility
  – to protect children from potential exposure to harmful health risks in their schools

Institute of Medicine 2011, Climate Change, the Indoor Environment, and Health
Children’s Health

- School environment can impair children’s
  - Physical Health
  - Mood
  - Behavior
  - Development
  - Ability to learn

- Undercuts school districts’ education mission
  - attendance
  - achievement
  - productivity

Institute of Medicine 2011, Climate Change, the Indoor Environment, and Health
National Research Council, 2006, Green Schools: Attributes for Health and Learning
US EPA Updates

- **December 2007:** Congress enacted Energy Independence and Security Act (EISA)
- **October 2011:** EPA released school siting guidelines
- **February 2012:** EPA released *draft* school environmental health guidelines & RFA for state agencies
- **October 2012:** EPA to release final siting guidelines and announce state agency grant recipients

EPA Healthy School Environments, [http://www.epa.gov/schools/](http://www.epa.gov/schools/)
EPA Webinar Series [http://www.epa.gov/schools/webinars.html](http://www.epa.gov/schools/webinars.html)
Removing Environmental Contaminants

- At any time, schools could have contaminants...
  - Mold
  - PCBs
  - PBDEs
  - VOCs
  - PVCs
  - Lead
  - Mercury
  - Pesticides

- Contaminants from renovations—few states and no federal regulations for occupants during renovation
Siting, Design and Construction

• Need to *plan* for buildings to eliminate or minimize environmental health exposures
• Siting—assessments *prior to*:
  – lease
  – purchase
  – construction
  – renovation
  – closure
• Design—high performance schools
• Construction—building materials
Green Cleaning & Green Procurement

- Children exposed to cleaning products through inhalation, skin contact, and ingestion
- Cleaning products linked to asthma symptoms, eye irritation, harm to organs, etc.
- **Third-party certified** cleaning and disinfecting products are greener, healthier, effective, and affordable
  - use disinfectants cautiously
- 11 states now require or promote green cleaning in schools
## Alaska Data & Policy Profile

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Category</th>
<th>Value</th>
<th>Notes</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>No. School Buildings</td>
<td>509</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No. Students</td>
<td>132,608</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No. Minority Students</td>
<td>56,453</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No. Students in Special Education Program</td>
<td>17,760</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No. Employees in School System</td>
<td>16,853</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Percent of Youth 4-17 Ever Diagnosed with ADHD</td>
<td>7.07%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Percent of Schools with at Least One Inadequate Building Feature</td>
<td>69%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Percent of Schools with at Least One Unsatisfactory Environmental Factor</td>
<td>80%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No. Students At High Risk Daily</td>
<td>98,793</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>State Grants for Construction</td>
<td>Y</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Integrated Pest Management Program</td>
<td>N</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Indoor Air Quality Laws</td>
<td></td>
<td>Footnote 8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>State School Green Cleaning Laws</td>
<td>N</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>High Performance Green School Design</td>
<td>N</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Statewide School Infrastructure Assessment</td>
<td>N</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Percent of Children (18 or younger) Without Health Insurance</td>
<td>14.5%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Percent of Children with Asthma (under 18)</td>
<td>*</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>State Education School Facilities Office</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>State OSHA Plan</td>
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<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Cross-Agency Action

• Is what’s in place serving the needs of children at risk of exposure or with exposures?

• What is the role of NGOs in protecting children’s health in schools?

• Role of public agencies?

• Role of the public?
• New *Action Kit* and *Calendar* released in August 2012
  – “for parents, educators, and activists to use to boost federal and state and local policies to address the dark, dank, dirty conditions of too many schools, and to improve children’s health and ability to learn, as well as improve staff productivity”
Healthy Schools Network/
Healthy Kids Clearinghouse

• Guides
  – Mold in Schools
  – Asthma and the Environment: Fact Sheet for Parents and Schools
  – Guide to School Design: Healthy and High Performance Schools
  – Guide to School Renovation and Construction

• Internet Resources
  – EPA documents and materials from other organizations addressing children’s environmental health issues

Visit [www.healthyschools.org/clearinghouse.html](http://www.healthyschools.org/clearinghouse.html) for these guides and more!
What can you do?

• Form a state coalition
  – See Guiding Principles for School Environmental Quality
  – See Internet Resources for examples

• *National Healthy School Training Binder*: developed in 2003 in cooperation with national and state partners to help NGOs work effectively on school environmental health issues
Healthy Schools Network, Inc.

... for children ... health ... environment ... education ... and communities ... Since 1995 ... 

... information and education, research, advocacy, and coalition-building for parents, personnel, and organizations ...

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www.HealthySchools.org