

## Educational Materials

# Safety and Environmental Practices for the Classroom

Most people understand the importance of a healthy outdoors environment but are unaware that the indoor environment can be critical, too. Failure to keep healthy indoor environments can have consequences including greater potential for long and short-term health problems for children, teachers and staff; reduction in students' ability to learn; loss of production from teachers and staff; deterioration of buildings; and increased maintenance costs. These factors can be controlled with awareness, practices that limit pollutants, efficient ventilation and policies that promote health. The following list describes a well-managed indoor environment.

- A. When first entering a classroom, teachers should:
  - 1. Check for odors, identify sources, and report them immediately.
  - 2. Check for stains in upholstered furniture, ceiling tiles and floor covering; determine if stains are wet or have changed from the last observation; report new stains, wet stains or stains which have changed.
  - 3. Check room temperature and if excessive or uncomfortable, report immediately; do not change thermostat unless instructed to do so.
  - 4. Check room for evidence of a humidity problem. Be specific (eg curling paper, moldy books, damp walls, etc. or extreme static).
  
- B. Teachers should regularly follow these procedures:
  - 1. Check that books, boxes, furniture, etc. do not obstruct airflow.
  - 2. Make sure that exits are not blocked or obstructed.
  - 3. Food is not kept overnight, including lunch boxes
  - 4. Hold parties with food in the cafeteria to prevent soiled carpets.
  - 5. Store animal food in tight containers.
  - 6. Contact custodial staff when spills occur.
  - 7. Keep odors at a minimum; teachers should:
    - a. locate pets away from vents;
    - b. clean pet cages at least once per week;
    - c. use personal products that are unscented;
    - d. do NOT use plug-in air fresheners and aerosols as they may mask problems;
    - e. furry pets should be prohibited.
  - 8. Use exhaust fans or fume hoods with activities generating pollutants.
  - 9. Pour one quart of water down sinks, water fountains and floor drains once per week if they are used infrequently to make sure the trap stays filled to block sewer gases.
  - 12. Report light fixtures that are not intact and operating.
  - 13. Report broken windows and keep windows closed and/or locked.
  - 14. Know where fire extinguishers are located.
  - 15. Know where emergency breakers are located.

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- C. Teachers should to be aware of the risks to individuals of routinely used supplies (markers, glue, cleaning products etc.). When using these supplies ...
1. identify students with known reactions to those products;
  2. only use products approved by the school system;
  3. label all supplies accurately;
  4. store supplies properly;
  5. substitute less hazardous supplies where possible;
  6. have a cleanup procedure developed and posted;
  7. follow recommended procedures for the disposal of supplies.
  8. Air fresheners or air 'cleaners' cannot be used in the school without the approval of the HCPSS Safety and Insurance Department.
  9. Do NOT use humidifiers.
- D. Educate students on...
1. use and ventilation when handling supplies;
  2. restricting usage of scented personal products (eg. Perfume, nail polish, etc.).

***Contact the PTA Council of Howard County's  
Health & Environmental Issues Committee***

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***for further research and support.***