

School Environment Team (SET) Project

Overview

The Health & Environmental Issues Committee of the PTA Council of Howard County is committed to increased education and awareness of the impact of indoor/outdoor environments on the health and safety of school occupants. This committee was asked by the PTA Council of Howard County Maryland to design guidelines to establish a School Environmental Team Project (hereafter referred to as SET) at each public school in Howard County. The goal of the teams will be to maintain the proper environment within/around schools, enhancing the ability of students to learn, and teachers and staff to perform their jobs. The establishment of a SET Project Team at each school by its nature and scope, will enhance the quality of Howard County Department of Education facilities in the following areas: health and safety, communication, educating building users regarding the importance of indoor environments, reducing maintenance costs, and preventing adverse environmental effects. This program is designed to require minimal time investment in a simple and straightforward manner that is understandable to the lay person. Each year, prior to the first walk-through, educational material will be distributed to familiarize all users of the building with environmental practices that maximize health and safety. A walk-through would then be scheduled to allow staff the opportunity to become better educated on safe practices in school environments.

Definition: An SET Project Team is a group of people, most of whom are based in that building, who monitor and inspect the conditions and factors that affect everyone who uses the building: staff, students, and volunteers. This program is based on the recommendations of the Maryland State Department of Education and the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency.

Purpose: The purpose of the SET Project Team is to identify potential problems before they reach the level where occupants' health and safety are at risk, to provide an avenue of communication through which any concerned individual can report potential indoor environmental problems, to increase education and awareness of the importance of maintaining proper indoor environments.

Suggested Team Members:

- SET Project Team Coordinator
- Custodial Representative
- HVAC Representative/Maintenance Personnel
- Teacher Representative(s)
- School Health Assistant or School Nurse
- Food Service Representative
- Student Representative (when age appropriate)
- PTA Representative(s)
- Administrative Staff Representative
- Parent Representative

SET Project Team Coordinator – a person responsible for coordinating team efforts (scheduling meetings, gathering completed checklists, etc.) and following through until a reported problem is resolved (communicating with central office obtaining copies of maintenance records, reviewing pesticide logs, etc.)

Custodial Representative – a representative from the school custodial staff

HVAC Representative/Maintenance Personnel - a technician of the HCPSS maintenance department assigned to the building

Teacher Representative (s) –representatives as deemed necessary

School Health Assistant or School Nurse – The full-time Health Assistant; assigned Cluster Nurses should also be encouraged to participate

Food Service Representative – a member of the Food and Nutrition staff at the school

Student Representative – a member of the student body. Participation should be determined by each school's team

PTA Representative(s) - a member of the school's PTA Executive Board

Administrative Staff Representative – a person who works with and is responsible for the operation of office equipment on a routine basis

Parent Representative – a parent who has a child enrolled at the school

Task: SET Project Team members perform inspections at least once every three months and meet as a team as necessary. Each team member will have a checklist of SET issues for their area of responsibility. It is suggested that the person who works in the area be responsible for the initial walk-through. For example, the art teacher during the first scheduled walk-through would complete the art room checklist. During subsequent walk-throughs, someone would complete the checklist other than the individual who normally works in that area.

It is suggested that new schools and recently renovated schools complete a special walk-through prior to the opening of the school.

Walk-through Areas:

The following list identifies walk-through areas in all Department of Education Facilities.

- classrooms including relocatables and common areas
- non-classroom staff areas including lounges, volunteer rooms, conference rooms, etc.
- specialized classrooms including home economics, science, shop, dance classrooms, band rooms, art rooms, dark rooms, theater areas etc.
- media center
- health rooms
- gymnasium
- bathrooms and locker rooms
- auditorium
- hallways
- custodial closets and areas
- cafeteria and kitchen
- adjacent school grounds including parking lots, delivery areas, landscaping, entrances, bus-loading zones, waste disposal areas, delivery areas etc.
- HVAC systems for all campus buildings including relocatables and the areas in which they are enclosed, including the roof
- all additional out buildings

Other: The on-site **Pesticide Problem Log** and **Integrated Pest Management (IPM) Treatment Log** will be reviewed.

Recommended Additional Equipment:

Copy of SET checklists, portable thermometer and humidity gauge, flashlight, one quart container

Note: Future releases of the SET Project may expand the role of the Health Assistant (or School Nurse).