

The Facts: Our Schools Have Indoor Air Problems

The average age of the 115,000

schools in the United States is 42 years.

Fifty percent of these facilities have problems linked to poor indoor air quality,

which has an adverse affect on student health, performance and test scores.

Staff members also cite inferior indoor air quality as a major factor for low morale, poor performance, high absenteeism and health problems.



Talking Points

According to the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA):

- Before graduation, a typical child will have spent **14,000 hours** breathing school air.
- Fifty percent of schools have problems linked to poor indoor air quality.
- Some conditions, including air in the school environment, are closely associated with Sick Building Syndrome and asthma.
- **Asthma is the leading cause of school absenteeism**, accounting for 10 million missed school days each year.
- Between 1982 and 1992, U.S. asthma cases **increased by 49 percent**.
- **At least 20 percent** of students suffer from **allergies or asthma**.
- Hazardous air **adversely affects** student performance and test scores.
- **One in five** Americans spends time in schools each day.

School staff members report:

- Headaches, dizziness and nausea
- Irritation of eyes, nose or throat
- Dry cough/respiratory irritation
- Dry or itchy skin
- Concentration difficulty and/or fatigue
- Dehydration.

Source: Healthy LearningClassrooms,
www.tateaccessfloors.com/pdf/education_brochure.pdf

Produced by the IEA West Suburban Regional Office
and IEA Department of Communications

11/05

Sick Schools Are Bad for Everyone

*Learn how **YOU**
can help to “clear
the air.”* > > >

Additional information on indoor air quality can be found at the following Web sites:

www.myparentime.com/articles/articleS71.shtml
Addresses strategies to promote clean air quality in schools

<http://allergies.about.com/cs/molds/a/aa112802a.htm>
Discusses mold and its impact on school health and economic issues

www.neahin.org/programs/environmental/elireport.htm

An Environmental Law Institute report on state IAQ policies

IEA^{NEA}
www.ieanea.org

Consider the following questions and **check all that apply to you or your local:**

- Do you or your members have sinus problems that seem to erupt mostly at school?
- Do you have persistent sore throats and headaches at school on a regular basis?
- Is your building or school room stuffy or musty smelling?
- Are diesel bus fumes entering your classroom?
- Does your school or classroom contain foul odors and/or water leaks?
- Is there visible or suspected mold infestation at school?
- Does student instruction sometimes suffer because students or teachers are lethargic?
- Do your eyes burn or water when you enter certain parts of your school building?
- Do your students complain of allergic reactions when they enter your school or certain rooms at school?
- Does your building sometimes have a “toxic” smell after cleaning, shampooing carpets or pesticide use?
- Is your room or building starved for “fresh air”?

If you or your local association members checked any of these questions, your school district or building may be experiencing problems with indoor air quality (IAQ).

The IEA Indoor Air Quality Committee is committed to addressing IAQ issues through education and training and by providing resources to IEA locals and their leaders.

The IEA IAQ Committee suggests two things you can do to help yourself and your local association if you’ve checked any of the questions in the left panel:

1. Attend sessions on this topic (IAQ) at this year’s Winter Advocacy Conference (WAC) and the next Summer Leadership Academy (SLA). Please encourage your local association to send representatives to these excellent training sessions. These programs will focus on how to use bargaining and organizing to implement the “Indoor Air Quality Tools for Schools” program. More information can be found at www.ieanea.org.



2. Download or order the “Action and Resource Guide for Healthy Schools” from the Healthy Schools Campaign at www.healthyschoolscampaign.org. Additionally, order the EPA’s “Tools for Schools” kit directly from the Environmental Protection Agency www.epa.gov/iaq/schools/tools4s2.html. Use these free and excellent resources to address IAQ issues through your local association.



Additionally, contact the IAQ Committee if your local association or region would like to have its own introductory training session on IAQ.

IEA-IAQ committee members include the following individuals:

Dr. Charlotte Peterson, President,
St. Charles Education Association

Bob Ray, UniServ Director, Region 39

William Everett, Jr., Region 26

George Lambesis, Region 29

Patricia Shadwell, Region 10

Betty Wine, IEA-R

Rick Lathrop, UniServ Director, Region 53

Mary Jane Morris, UniServ Director, Region 1

Sarah Young, UniServ Director, Service Area J

Remember, IAQ is everyone’s issue. It touches the lives of all IEA members:

- teachers
- secretaries
- custodians
- higher education faculty
- assistants
- bus drivers
- all other workers and students.

It’s a health concern and a student learning issue! Our IEA local associations will do a great service for IEA members by becoming involved in IAQ.

*For more information visit our
Web site at www.ieaiaq.org.*