

Healthy Classroom Checklist

This checklist offers tips to help schools identify opportunities to “green” their buildings and classrooms. It focuses on common-sense improvements that schools can make daily to reduce environmental impacts, improve learning conditions and minimize or stop potential health problems.

This checklist is not intended to be a comprehensive list of all techniques and practices for improving the way a school operates. Each school is unique and has its own set of challenges. This checklist is to get you started in identifying the specific conditions and needs of your school.

General classroom

- Spills are cleaned promptly and all floors are kept clean and as dry as possible.
 - Classroom is kept clean and free from debris to the greatest extent practical, given the types of activities being performed.
 - Classroom is maintained to prevent the entrance or harborage of rodents, insects or other vermin.
 - Storage areas are kept free from hazards that may cause tripping, fire, explosion or harbor pests.
 - Rooms are dusted and vacuumed regularly.
 - Rooms and passageways, work areas, store rooms, and washing facilities are kept orderly, sanitary and free of clutter.
 - Trash is removed daily.
 - No food is stored or left in a classroom overnight.
 - Animal food and containers with liquids are stored in tightly sealed containers.
 - Cleaners and air fresheners are not allowed to be brought from home (for example, a teacher’s own aerosol can of desk cleaner). If used, they should be school-approved and unscented. Cleaning chemical odors or perfumes are health triggers that may cause an asthma attack.
 - Avoid items that have perfumes or strong odors. Avoid dry-erase board markers and cleaners, spray adhesives and use of room deodorizing sprays or plug-ins. Use non-toxic water based materials when ever possible. Many of these items contain volatile organic compounds (VOCs). These compounds pass off as vapor at normal room temperatures. Exposure to VOC’s may trigger asthma, allergies and other respiratory symptoms.
- Cloth covered items, such as curtains or stuffed animals, are limited in the classroom.
 - Wet materials that take more than 24 hours to dry are disposed of.
 - Good sanitation is practiced; pest problems are monitored frequently.
 - Lights are turned off in unoccupied rooms and machines are turned off during non-use hours.
 - Incandescent light bulbs are replaced with energy saving compact fluorescent light bulbs.
 - Exposure to animal allergens is limited, if an animal is in the classroom.
 - Classroom animal is kept in a cage as much as possible.
 - Animal cage is cleaned regularly.
 - Potential allergies of students are identified, if possible.
 - Windows and other indoor surfaces are kept free of condensation to prevent mold growth.
 - Classroom is kept clean and swept so shoes stay clean and dry.
 - Trash cans are placed at entrances to reduce litter. Recycle bins are placed in common locations and recycling is implemented and practiced.
 - Cubbies or student lockers are provided for storage of personal items; regular locker clean-out days are held; unwanted items are recycled or reused.
 - Snacks, meals and food storage are limited to one or two designated areas in the classroom.

Healthy classroom checklist

(Continued from front)

- Tightly sealed garbage cans and recycling bins are easy to find, at locations away from the fresh air intakes and kept clean.
- Only durable, hard surface, easy-to-clean materials are used for floors and walls.
- New or used upholstered furniture and carpeting should be limited in classrooms. New furniture may give off volatile organic compounds (VOC's), and older furniture may harbor other health triggers.
- An material safety data sheet (MSDS) should be on file for every chemical in the building. This includes common chemicals like window or glass cleaner.
- Damp-mop floors instead of dry-sweeping floors to keep dust down. Change mop bucket water frequently.
- Have a written plan for room cleaning and maintenance that protects health and environment as top priorities.

Science and Art Rooms

- Ensure that material safety data sheets (MSDSs) are accessible.
- Store chemicals by chemical families and according to manufacturers' recommendations.
- Ensure chemicals are stored in safe facilities (acid cabinets, flammables cabinets, secure and lipped shelving, no chemicals above eye level, heavy items are stored on lower shelves, etc.).
- Label all chemicals accurately with date of purchase and pertinent precautionary information.
- Ensure chemicals and art materials are handled, stored, and disposed of properly.
- Post lab rules and provide safety orientation.
- Ensure chemical spill kit and current chemical inventory list are readily accessible .
- Make sure first aid kit is adequately stocked and readily accessible.
- Separate storage areas from main classroom area and ensure they are ventilated separately.
- Ensure that fume hoods capture and exhaust particles, gases, and vapors released within them safely.

Library and Computer Rooms

- Donate used (but still operating) electronics for reuse. Used electronics allow schools, nonprofit organizations, and lower-income families to obtain equipment that they otherwise could not afford.
- Recycle unused or outdated electronics. This saves valuable metals and plastics that were mined or extracted to make the device in the first place. It also reduces the amount of energy necessary to mine new raw materials from their source.
- Turn off any unused electronics and computers. Computers have power-management features; make sure controls are set so they will go into the "sleep" mode when not in use. All computer equipment should be turned off at the end of the day and on weekends.
- If your school is purchasing new equipment, help save energy costs by using Energy Star computers, monitors, printers, fax machines, copiers and other equipment.

Waste Minimization

- Encourage practices that reduce waste paper (e.g., proofing documents on the computer screen before printing; storing final documents on disk rather than making paper copies; making two sided copies; printing letters and reports on both sides of the page; and reusing paper that is clean on one side for in-house drafts and message pads).
- Use electronic mail to send messages instead of written memos, whenever possible. Encourage employees to save e-mail documents electronically.
- Recycle items, such as paper, aluminum cans, cardboard and plastic bottles.
- Consider worm bins for indoor composting as a class project. Properly-managed worm bins are odor free.
- Save on paper by using chalkboards and overhead projectors for student worksheets, quizzes, etc.
- Have students answer questions on scrap paper.
- Set up "swap" areas in classrooms to share reusable materials.
- Encourage students to bring their lunch in reusable containers.

For information on how to conduct a more complete classroom or school assessment, refer to your Assessment Survey CD in the Green Steps Tool Kit.