

# THE HEALTHIER CLASSROOM CHECKLIST

## Environmental Health Guidance for Schools: Teachers, Students, Administration, and Parents Too!

We all want kids to have the healthiest environment possible. While we can't control everything that happens at school, we can take little steps toward safer classrooms by making some of the changes on this list.

- OPEN THE WINDOWS**  
To air out stinky classrooms, simply open windows when weather allows. Avoid using air fresheners, including aerosols, plug-ins, and scented candles. Sadly, they can contain respiratory irritants and other harmful stuff.
- BUY BETTER SCHOOL SUPPLIES**  
When back-to-school shopping avoid plastic whenever possible in everything from lunchboxes to binders; plastic can pollute indoor air and harm health. Seek out products like recycled paper and low-odor markers, especially for permanent and dry-erase markers. Better choices add up.
- CHOOSE CLASSROOM ITEMS CAREFULLY**  
Whether you're a teacher ordering in bulk or a parent purchasing wish-list items, it's easy to avoid potentially unsafe chemicals in everything from art supplies to wipes.
- PURCHASE SAFER CLEANERS**  
Many states have purchasing regulations for schools that prioritize environmentally preferable products, because conventional cleaners and disinfecting products can contain hazardous ingredients known to disrupt hormones, irritate lungs, and more. Products, including hand soap, donated by well-intentioned parents should adhere to state regulations.
- GET CLUTTER UNDER CONTROL**  
Learning how to be neat is a skill. It's also better for students as clutter can attract dust, create a home for pests, and block fresh air from flowing. Teachers can lead by example, encourage students to keep cubbies and lockers tidy, and offer safer storage solutions.
- BAN VEHICLE IDLING**  
Adopting a no-idling policy in the parking lot and pickup line is an excellent way to reduce tailpipe pollution entering the school building.

### Keep Your Eyes Peeled

Community members can help prevent small problems from becoming big problems by reporting maintenance and custodial issues promptly.

You can speak up about water leaks, stained ceilings, and condensation—which can all indicate the presence of mold—plus spills, malfunctioning ventilation equipment, evidence of pests, unusual smells or fumes, or anything else you think is a potential health concern. It takes all of us!

- GO FRAGRANCE FREE**  
Emissions from perfumes and other scented consumer products rival vehicles as a pollution source. It's hard to enforce a fragrance-free policy for students regularly wearing scented body lotions, hair products, and clothing with detergent residue, which is why reducing perfume in cleaners, hand soap, and other classroom staples is good common sense.
- BEWARE OF PESTICIDES**  
School maintenance staff typically follow state rules on pesticide and herbicide use. Hopefully, your school uses the least toxic measures to keep pests at bay. If outside products like ant traps are brought into the classroom by teachers or parents, they should also be the least toxic options.



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clean air  
FORCE