

Women, Children, & the Environment: What's Happening at Your School?

School Occupants Need Healthy Environments



Brief #7

April 23, 2015

Schools simply have not been designed, built and operated to be environmentally responsible for those occupants most vulnerable to toxic hazards.

Over 55 million children and seven million adults—20% of the U.S. population—are in schools every day.¹ Children and women of childbearing age are more vulnerable to the harmful effects of environmental contaminants. Nine of ten school occupants nationwide are women and children.

It just makes sense: our children need healthy environments, it saves money to prevent pollution instead of remediating the consequences later at enormous costs, and improved indoor air quality is good for education. Healthy indoor environments have been shown to boost attendance and achievement and help with teacher recruitment, retention and productivity.²

Some schools have taken steps to improve the quality of their indoor environment by seeking out and buying less-hazardous products to use indoors; removing water-damaged carpets; installing hard surface flooring that is easier to clean; phasing in third-party certified green cleaning products to reduce or eliminate toxic chemicals; eliminating air fresheners and room deodorizers; disposing of old, outdated and hazardous chemicals to reduce the risks of spills and injuries; keeping food and pets out of classrooms to reduce pest infestations; and decluttering classrooms to make them easier to clean at the end of the day.

[Read Full Summary.](#)

The Education Facilities Clearinghouse (EFC) is a program of The George Washington University and the Graduate School of Education and Human Development and is funded by the U.S. Department of Education.

¹ Healthy Schools Network, Inc. (2013). *Towards Healthy Schools 2015*. Albany, NY.

² "About the Guidelines." EPA. <http://www.epa.gov/schools/guidelinstools/ehguide/read/about.html#importance>.