

Eco Safe Schools

How parents and educators can help schools go green and get healthy.

Goal: To educate you on today's environmental toxins in and around schools affecting your child's health and what you can do to help your school get healthy and go green.

We, like everyone here, are concerned parents for our children's health, safety and their future. We found ourselves astonished to discover that people are sacrificing their health by the things they are bringing into their homes. We started reading labels on all products that entered our environment and asking a lot of questions. After copious amounts of research, interviews and time we found several alternatives to hidden toxins and wasteful practices.

We as parents find it easy to live consciously. Being aware of our surroundings and what we bring into our home whether it is food, clothing or furniture, we have learned to identify if it is healthy or not. We will give you lists so you can arm yourselves with this same important information.

Thank you for being open to shifting into conscious, healthy living. Your family will thank you and your children will grow up with good habits that they can pass on to their families. This workshop is made to inspire you to live a more conscious lifestyle that is healthier for you and your family as well as for the environment. Take these recommendations to heart and when purchasing new items choose wisely. Advocate for change, one step at a time.

Simple things parents and educators can do to help create a better place for children at school and at home:

- Improve Air Quality with air purifiers
- Choose food grown without pesticides
- Offer drinking water without bacteria, lead or arsenic.
- Purchase supplies that don't contain PVC or BPA
- Reducing the exposure of serious toxins with harmful health effects (pesticides, cleaning products, etc)

Facts

The EPA estimates that Indoor Air Quality is typically two to five times worse than outdoor air and can be up to 100 times more polluted. Fifty percent of schools have an indoor air quality problems. 53 million students and five million staff attend nation's schools, representing some 20% of the American population. According to the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA), half this population may be exposed to polluted indoor air, lead, asbestos, chemical fumes, pesticides, molds and other toxins, along with overcrowding and poor sanitation.

Children are absent more than 14 million school days each year due to asthma induced by poor indoor air quality. Research shows a clear link between poor indoor air quality, sick students and teachers, and poor academic and occupational performance. Green cleaning products and a good air filtration system can reduce these risks.

The scientific evidence connecting exposures to health affects is mounting. There are drastic increases in cancer, diabetes, obesity, autism, hypospadias, and asthma.

Here is a step by step guide on how to get your school Green and Healthy

Getting to School

If you live close to your school, have your child take the bus, carpool, bike or walk as often as she can to cut down on greenhouse-gas emissions from cars. If you walk or bike with your child, you'll improve your health while helping the environment. Get other families involved by organizing "Walk-or-Bike-to-School Days" once a month.

Bus

If your child rides the bus they may be exposed to toxic diesel fumes. If you do drive, don't idle. Turn off your engine while waiting for your child... Encourage others to do the same by putting up a "Turn your engine off" or "Don't idle" sign at your school's pickup spot. The exhaust pollutes the air near your child's school and can trigger asthma attacks, so any effort to cut down on fumes will help improve students' health and you'll save gas — and money.

Carpet

If the classroom has carpet, make sure that it is cleaned with non-toxic carpet shampoo and doesn't have stain-safe chemicals on it. Solution: Air Purifiers Filters cut down on dust, mold and bacteria as well as off gassing from carpets, curtains and furniture they also may contain fire retardants.

In the Cafeteria

Healthy lunches build healthy minds. Encourage your school to scrap the corn dogs, chicken nuggets and French fries in the cafeteria and buy from local, organic farmers. Urge your school to switch to reusable trays, flatware and recycled paper napkins.

The 12 most contaminated fruits and vegetables (starting with the worst):

peaches, apples, sweet bell peppers, celery, nectarines, strawberries, cherries, lettuce, grapes (imported), pears, spinach, and potatoes

The 12 least contaminated fruits and vegetables:

onions, sweet corn, asparagus, sweet peas, cabbage, broccoli, and eggplant, avocados, pineapples, mangoes, kiwi, and bananas

Food Storage

Plastic wrap used to be made from PVC, but our consumer concerns about plasticizers leaching have encouraged companies to create a plastic wrap out of a type of plastic that is thought to be safer (low density polyethylene). Glad Cling Wrap and Handi-Wrap are LDPE-based. Saran Premium Wrap, a newer version of Saran Wrap, is based on LDPE as well.

Bring your own lunch

If you're packing your child's lunch, opt for organic foods when possible and put filtered water in a stainless steel container. Use a lunch box that is not made with PVC. Pack waste-free meals by using reusable containers made from stainless steel.

Learning Garden

Create an organic learning garden at your school so that kids can see firsthand where healthy food comes from without pesticides. It doesn't have to be big — a small area will do — and kids can be involved in planting, harvesting and eating the produce. Encourage your teachers to plan lessons around it.

Compost

Organize a composting committee. This will help your school reduce its waste and provide fertilizer for the learning gardens at the same time.

Water

Urge your school to put water filters on every drinking fountain to cut the risk of lead, arsenic and bacteria often found in the water supply.

Hand Soap

Encourage your school to use castile soap, which is cheaper and gets rid of germs just as effectively as soaps with antibacterial properties do. Antibacterial soaps can be harmful because they contain a dioxin chemical called triclosan, which has been known to cause liver damage and cause resistance to antibiotics.

Cleaning products

Urge your school to use healthy cleaning products for the school. Ask your custodian what products they use. Ask them to look into green alternatives. Many schools have standards for cleaning but that shouldn't stop you from demanding your school use safe, non-toxic cleaning products.

Pesticides

Children are highly susceptible to toxic pesticides sprayed on playgrounds and athletic fields because of their high metabolisms and low body weights. There are many alternatives to pest control. Ask the grounds crew what they use for pest, weed and lawn control/fertilizers.

Supplies

Make sure when purchasing backpacks, rain jackets and binders that they don't contain harmful PVC materials or fire retardants. Chemicals like these are not good for anyone let alone children whose organs are still forming which makes them more susceptible. Most everyone carries recycled paper and notebooks now. Have your kids design their own covers.

Learning Tools and Toys

Make sure they are lead, BPA, and PVC-FREE.

Playground Equipment

According to the National Academy of Sciences, long-term exposure to arsenic increases the risk of lung, bladder, and skin cancer over a lifetime. The risk to children playing on Chromated copper arsenate (CCA-treated) playground equipment depends on the amount of available arsenic on the wood surface, how children are exposed to the arsenic (orally or through skin contact), and the length of time children spend using the equipment. Studies suggest that children may be exposed to arsenic from playing on some CCA-treated wood playground equipment. **Solution:** Opt for recycled plastic or non-treated wood play equipment and fencing. Health Risks: Creosote

Art Supplies

All art supplies should be non-toxic but they still off-gas into the child's environment. Encourage your school to buy crayons without lead in them. Soy are the best. Ask that the art supplies be stored in a closed cabinet. Resource: non-toxic art supplies approved by the Art & Creative Materials Institute (ACMI) www.acmi-net.org/index.htm

Test

There are simple tests that can be taken to ensure the safety of the children who attend school. Many illnesses can be prevented if each school was tested regularly for Radon, Mold, Lead, and Asbestos. Ask when and if they have been tested and what the results were.

Paper

Ask your school to purchase 100% recycled paper without chlorine bleach and to print lessons on both sides of the paper. Also ask for 100% recycled toilet paper, paper towels and tissues.

Lighting

Encourage your school to replace their incandescent light bulbs with energy and money saving LED Lights. These bulbs use about 75% less power than incandescent bulbs and last up to 10 times longer. We advise the schools not to use CFL's due to the fact that each bulb contains mercury. If your classroom has them, make sure your school knows what do if one breaks. Clear the room and dispose in a bag and take to the hazardous waste facility. Encourage your school to turn off the lights when they aren't being used. Use natural daylight as much as possible.

Recycling

Create paper, plastic, and aluminum recycling centers near every waste bin.

Encourage recycling through drives and by enrolling your school in a program that collects computer printer cartridges and used cell phones. Request that the school copy center and administrative offices use 100 percent recycled paper.

Conserve Water

Put a sign above every sink and water fountain to remind people to use only what they really need.

Create a Green Team

Create a Green Team at your school made up of parents, students, teachers and community members who are experts in the field of green and healthy environments. Meet after school to make plans to reduce your waste, cut down on energy, reduce the amount of toxins in the school and plant a learning garden among many ideas.

Get involved!

Email us to sign up to be a green school with Eco Kido and share your success story with us so others can learn and be successful too! We can provide support, get you started and keep you up to date on curriculum, events, tips and more!

Help do your part for your children to give them the opportunity to thrive in a healthy and safe environment! Volunteers welcome.

Michelle Bexelius
Founder - Eco Kido

michelle@ecokido.org
www.ecokido.org



www.ecokido.org

GREEN SCHOOL STEPS

Here are some steps you can bring to your school to help them create a brighter shade of green to keep you healthy and the planet happy. Check them off with pride and post in a prominent place.

- ✓ 1. Walk, bike, take the bus or carpool
2. Put a "NO IDLE ZONE" in the parking lot
3. Pack a waste-free lunch
4. Reusable trays, silverware, and napkins in the cafeteria
5. Create an organic garden
6. Teach green facts
- ✓ 7. Get involved in your community and give back
8. Compost
- ✓ 9. Recycle paper, ink, electronics, cardboard, etc.
- ✓ 10. Use recycled products like paper, paper towels, tissues, toilet paper)
11. User energy efficient appliances
12. Use LED or CFL lighting and open the windows
13. Turn off the lights and appliances when not using
14. clean the air ducts and filters regularly and use an air filter
- ✓ 15. Use stainless steel water bottles
16. Host community speakers on environmental health and energy to keep up to date on issues
17. Buy PVC-FREE school supplies (backpacks, binders, lunch boxes and jackets)
18. Use non-toxic soaps and cleaning products
19. Eat local, organic food in the cafeteria
- ✓ 20. put water filters on each water fountain and change them regularly
21. Test for Radon and Lead
- ✓ 22. Conserve water
23. Print on double sided paper
24. Don't use anti-bacterial soaps, use castile soap without harmful chemicals
- ✓ 25. Plant native plants and learn about them
- ✓ 26. Limit paper towel use (1, 2, 3 – SAVE A TREE)
- ✓ 27. Recycled play equipment
28. Electronic homework



ecokido

www.ecokido.org