

Tips for Healthier Air Quality in Classrooms

General Tips

- Learn about indoor air quality, and about how poor indoor air quality can adversely affect people's health. Refer to the *School Indoor Air Quality—Resources and Reference Materials* page for more information.
- Make sure teachers and staff know who to contact for indoor air quality concerns in the school.
- Notify maintenance staff if you detect odors or dust from locations such as shops, copy rooms, science labs, laminators, locker rooms, graphic arts, custodial supply rooms, storage areas, combustion equipment, kitchens, or bus exhaust.
- Maintain cleanable surfaces and avoid clutter. Put loose items into plastic boxes with lids that can be wet-wiped.

Specific Tips:

- All outside doors should have large walk-off mats. The mats should provide at least “four good footsteps” of distance.
- Damp-wipe dusty surfaces weekly with a micro-fiber cloth – not a feather duster.
- Don't hang items from the ceiling T bars without special clips to prevent fraying fiberglass. Remove or clean items when dusty.
- Know your school's rules regarding pets in the classroom. Pets should only visit for curriculum reasons, not be class residents.
- Remove or properly and regularly clean fleecy items that hold allergens like dust mites (i.e. old overstuffed furniture, areas throw rugs, pillows, blankets or stuffed animals).
- Use low odor or water based, unscented dry-erase board markers and cleaners.
- Do not use room deodorizing sprays, plug-ins, scented candle warmers, or potpourris. These give many students and staff headaches. Boys' bathrooms should not use urinal cakes.
- Avoid spray adhesives, contact cement, and volatile paints. Use low-toxicity water-based products.
- Avoid bringing chemicals, paints or sprays from home without first obtaining the approval of the maintenance staff. Follow your school's policy on this.
- Never use ozone-generating devices in occupied areas.
- Inventory your supplies and materials in terms of indoor air quality, consider:
 - Are they low-odor, low volatility, water based – NOT solvent based?
 - Can they create dust or other particulates?
 - Can they harbor allergens?
- If your room has carpet:
 - Whenever possible, don't allow food or beverages.
 - Vacuums should be rated as high efficiency or have high efficiency bags.
 - Assist the custodians by having students place chairs on top of the desk at day's end.
 - Carpet cleaning by hot water/steam extraction is the best method.
 - Carpet shampoos should be low-odor and low-sudsing, and all cleaner thoroughly extracted.
 - Carpet should dry thoroughly within 24 hours after cleaning.
- Immediately report water leaks, water stains, damp materials, “musty”, “moldy”, or other unusual odors.
- Your ventilation system should supply the required minimum of 15 cubic feet per minute per person of outside air whenever the school is occupied. An occupied room is considered to be receiving this minimum amount of fresh air when indoor carbon dioxide levels are at or below approximately 1000 parts per million (or no more than 700 ppm above outdoor CO₂ levels).
- Check to make sure air supply and exhaust grills are not blocked. They should be clean, dry, and free of debris.
- Do not turn off ventilators – ask maintenance staff to repair noisy units, control temperatures, and control drafts.
- Adequate fresh air should be provided and “dirty” or used air exhausted. If your classroom has no mechanical ventilation system, open windows and/or doors frequently to provide a quick “flush-out” of stale, used air.
- Monitor your windows – they should not show condensation except on the very coldest of days.