



Oregon
Environmental
Council
It's Your Oregon



Protecting the health of Oregon schoolchildren and school employees through a cost effective, common-sense approach to reducing environmental health hazards.

The Oregon Healthy Schools Act

The Oregon Healthy Schools Act will create high performing schools that reduce student and staff exposure to chemicals of concern, improve academic performance and staff productivity, integrate green building principles in the design and construction of school facilities, and reduce facility maintenance and operational costs.

OEC is currently working with an advisory committee (partners listed on back) to develop stakeholder-informed legislation, which will facilitate and require:

- the use of green cleaning products
- the use of Integrated Pest Management (IPM) techniques
- a replacement timeline for cleaning up diesel school buses
- the use of green building design and construction techniques in all new schools, remodels, and capital improvement projects

Oregon's Children Deserve Safe and Healthy Environments

Children, more so than adults, are vulnerable to and may be negatively affected by exposure to environmental hazards. Research shows that the environment also plays a key role in academic performance. During the school year, children spend 30-50% of their time in and around schools. Ensuring that schools are environmentally healthy, designed to foster academic performance, and safe is particularly important to children's health and achievement.

The EPA estimates that human exposure to indoor air pollutants is commonly two to five, and up to 100 times, higher than outdoor levels. The health threats caused by the presence of certain chemicals in the school environment result in increased costs to individual schools, cleanup expenses, decreased academic performance, and increased student absenteeism.

In 1999, the National Center for Education Statistics of the U.S. Department of Education conducted a survey that found that approximately 20% of schools had unsatisfactory indoor air/environmental quality. Common environmental contaminants that impact air

WHY TAKE ACTION?

- Asthma, which is triggered by common indoor contaminants, is the leading chronic disease cause of school absenteeism. In 2003, American school children missed 12.8 million school days due to asthma attacks.
- Pesticides commonly used in Oregon schools have been associated with cancer, hormone system damage, reproductive problems, and nervous system damage.
- Diesel exhaust is linked to asthma, cardiovascular disease, cancer, regional haze and global warming.
- Volatile organic compounds (VOC) in cleaning products can affect indoor air quality and also contribute to smog formation in outdoor air.

quality in schools include cleaning products, pesticides, mold, animal dander, formaldehyde off-gassing from furniture, and vehicle emissions. Common-sense policies relating to the operations of Oregon schools can improve air quality.

A Cost Effective Way to Enhance Student Learning

Oregon schools currently procure products on a school-by-school or even an employee-by-employee basis. Cost reductions can occur by standardizing the cleaning products used in schools.

Integrating “sustainable” or “green” building practices into the construction of state buildings is a wise financial investment, improves academic performance, and benefits the health of the environment. In one comprehensive analysis of the financial costs and benefits of green building, it was found that a minimal upfront investment of about 2% of construction costs typically yields life cycle savings of over ten times the initial investment. For example, an initial upfront investment of up to \$100,000 to incorporate green building features into a \$5 million project would result in a savings of at least \$1 million over the life of the building, assumed conservatively to be 20 years.

The financial benefits of green buildings include reduced energy use, waste disposal, and water costs, lower environmental and emissions costs, lower operations and maintenance costs, and savings from in-

creased productivity and health.

The FTEs needed for the Healthy Schools Act include 2.5 FTEs for implementation of the Integrated Pest Management policies and 1 FTE to administer and assist schools with green building requirements.

Advisory Committee Participants*

Oregon Education Association
Oregon School Employees Association
Oregon School Board Association
Oregon Department of Human Services
Oregon Sustainable Schools Initiative
American Lung Association
Oregon Asthma Program
Oregon Department of Education
Oregon School Facilities Manager Association
Green Building Services
Physicians for Social Responsibility
Portland Public Schools
Lane County School District
Salem-Kaiser School District
Metro Regional Government, Waste Reduction
Multnomah County Health Department
Upstream Public Health

**Participation in advisory committee does not necessarily indicate endorsement of final legislative concepts.*



FOR MORE INFORMATION

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