

School News & Notes

Grading The Air Quality In Schools

(NAPSA)—A student's grades might not just depend on how hard he hits the books. They may also depend on the cleanliness of the air he breathes.

Studies show that poor indoor air quality (IAQ) can affect student performance and that nearly 20 percent of the schools in the United States have problems linked to indoor air quality.

Studies have also linked poor IAQ to respiratory illnesses, allergy and asthma symptoms, headaches and fatigue—problems that can lead to student and teacher absences and productivity problems. In fact, the American Lung Association found that children in the U.S. miss more than 14 million school days each year because of asthma.

New Solutions

IAQ issues can be dealt with—if action is taken. Yet the National Center for Education Statistics reports that most districts with IAQ troubles failed to respond to early warning signs.

Fortunately, several states have proposed developing standards and guidelines for school IAQ and for inspecting schools to ensure that they meet those standards. Additionally, the Environmental Protection Agency now offers an IAQ kit to schools.

What You Can Do

Experts say teachers, parents and students can each help improve a school's air quality. They offer these tips:

- **Learn**—Educate yourself on indoor air quality issues. The EPA (www.epa.gov) and the American



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Lung Association (www.lungusa.org) are good places to start. In addition, schools can obtain the EPA's IAQ Tools for Schools, a free kit that can be used to educate staff, students and parents about the importance of good IAQ and their roles in ensuring a healthy, comfortable learning environment.

- **Teach**—Teachers may want to incorporate the topic of IAQ into lessons within a science, health or vo-tech curriculum. Advanced students looking for more-detailed information on the role air filtration plays in IAQ can visit the Resource Center at www.kcfiltration.com.

- **Act**—Parents can work with the PTA to improve school IAQ. Start by initiating a study of the school's existing IAQ. Next, work with school officials to develop a plan that will improve IAQ for the long term by upgrading the school's air filtration system and making additional improvements. Local businesses or other organizations may be open to "adopting" your school to support your IAQ program.