



HEALTHY SCHOOLS NETWORK

**Healthy Schools Network** is a national not for profit advocate for children's environmental health at school founded in 1995. Based in New York and working nationally, its model organizing and call to action have been shared with state and federal agencies and scores of NGOs to help secure reforms on core facility topics such as: child-sensitive schoolhouse siting and design, Indoor Air, safer pest control, green and healthy products, and clean drinking water. In collaboration with NGO partners, HS Network has championed new congressional authorizations and funds for EPA and for Education. The organization also provides information and referral services for parents and others concerned about exposures in schools. For more information, visit [www.HealthySchools.org](http://www.HealthySchools.org)

### **ISSUE: Children's health and the environmental conditions of our schools**

Children are not just “little adults”, and schools are not just “little offices”. Every state requires children to attend school and thus 55 million American children head off to one of our nations' 130,000 schools on most weekdays. Schools are more densely occupied and less well maintained than most offices, and it is well documented that poor physical environments in schools – noise, dirt, molds, lead in paint and water, PCBs, toxic products, and poor indoor air and lighting, as well as proximity to hazardous facilities -- will damage children's health and ability to learn. Decayed schools and their impacts on children have been ignored too long by health and education leaders.

[A recent state-by-state indicators report from Healthy Schools Network](#) led to a stunning conclusion: all U.S. schoolchildren should be considered at risk of extra health and learning problems due solely to the schools' environment - and - the lack of health services for children with suspected exposures. Last year, based on decades of published research, [the Harvard T.H. Chan School of Public Health said](#), “The evidence is unambiguous—the school building impacts student health, thinking and performance.”

Consider:

- Other than home, schools are where children spend the most waking time.
- Children are more vulnerable than adults are to environmental health threats and outnumber adults in schools by about 9 to 1.
- Schools in the poorest communities are in the worst condition.
- Schools, many in disrepair, are the second-largest category of public infrastructure in the country. The American Society of Civil Engineers awarded school infrastructure a D+ grade in 2017.

**On April 3, we celebrate the 16<sup>th</sup> annual [National Healthy Schools Day](#)** to elevate these issues in partnership with over 50 NGOs and agencies, and to thank policy leaders and school and child care staff at all levels who work every day to improve learning environments. This year, the focus is [School and Child Care Infrastructure and Lead](#). We welcome all of our new and returning partners,

including the federal Centers for Disease Control and Prevention and US EPA's Indoor Environments Division.

### **How can we make these learning environments healthier, safer places for all children?**

- **Eliminate the toxics in learning environments.** Green cleaning, safer pest control, and testing for lead at the tap, for instance, are steps to help reduce risks of exposures. Contrary to common belief, healthy products do not cost more and often save money. Share information about [green and healthy products](#) with your school or child care provider.
- **Expand public health services for children at risk and their families.** When children are at risk or exposed to environmental hazards, their families need informational support or even specialized medical advice, just as school personnel do. [Share HealthySchools/HealthyKids award-winning, user-friendly guides](#). Or, look into specialized [pediatric environmental health consultations](#).
- **Set higher expectations for learning environments.** Laws, regulations, funding and other policies at the federal, state, and local levels can be stronger. Tougher standards on eliminating lead or for better siting, design, construction, renovation, and maintenance of facilities will help protect all children from environmental hazards and promote health, attendance, and learning. [Visit EPA guidance](#) on what your state and your school could be doing.

### **What can YOU do?**

- **Be an advocate for children.**
  - **As an education leader:** [see Healthy Schools Network tips for leaders](#)
  - **As a parent:** [See Healthy Schools Network tips on what you can do](#) and consider doing what one Parent Teacher Organization did 25 years ago that launched a policy revolution for children and schools: [WCS PTO resolution on children](#).