

Health and Safety
BULLETIN
Healthy Classroom
Indoor Air Quality



Personal exposure to indoor air contaminants has been increasing for many years with potential sources coming from inside or outside of schools and buildings. If sources are not recognized and controlled, health problems can arise. Air pollutants are tiny particles in the form of dust, pollen, soot, fungal, fibres, mists, aerosols and gases. Some typical sources are: vehicle emissions, pesticides, soil gases, debris, fibres, office equipment, cleaning supplies, wet areas, new building materials, furnishings, textiles, paints and finishes, decaying food, sink drains, science chemicals, wood dust, food preparation areas, trash and compost, personal hygiene products, classroom materials, unclean storage, renovation activities, and much more. Resolving concerns of problematic indoor air quality can be very challenging.

There are some basic strategies for lowering the amount of indoor air quality contamination. The first step is to manage any sources by either removing it, substituting it or isolating it. Secondly is having adequate ventilation, either natural or mechanical that assists with the removal of unwanted air and replacing it with cleaner air. Another strategy involves controlling any unavoidable exposures (for example, limiting the use of cleaning chemicals during after-hours). A final strategy is to provide education to school occupants regarding indoor air quality, likely sources, and how to take steps to minimum personal exposure and improve the overall air quality in the school.

Here are some basic Indoor Air Quality Checks for Classrooms:

- Classroom dusting and cleaning thoroughly and regularly; arrange classroom to ease cleaners to access all areas
- Blackboards/whiteboards are kept clean; and low VOC markers are used
- Trash, recyclables and compost are removed daily
- Food not kept in classroom overnight and necessary food is in a tightly sealed container
- Watch for signs of insects or pests
- Clean spills immediately, remove any wet carpets or rugs
- Do not use tennis balls as retrofitted chair sliders; they are a prominent place for concealed mold, dust and dirt accumulation
- Keep any classroom animals, specimens in containers and cages as much as possible
- Identify and protect students with respiratory concerns as much as possible
- Run water in sinks weekly to fill drain traps and release stagnant water
- Report any water leaks, condensation, excessive humidity on surfaces
- Report any ventilation concerns, windows not operational, blocked vents, lack of airflow
- Remove worn or dirty textiles, carpets, floor or window coverings
- Minimize storage of classroom materials and avoid stacking against exterior walls
- Encourage discussions with students to raise awareness
- Minimize the use of scented personal care products, air fresheners, or other scented products.
- Develop rules about food and drink consumption in classrooms.
- Use non-toxic supplies, read labels, and learn about precautions with any products
- Follow safety, handling, and storage practices for hazardous materials and chemicals
- Minimize exposures to hazardous materials and chemicals by using exhaust fans and fume hoods

For further assistance:

Gail Sinclair, SSRSB Health & Safety Manager, Phone 902-521-0241, gsinclair@ssrsb.ca

