



Superintendent's Circular

NUMBER:
HWD-04
Version 01

HEALTHY SCHOOL ENVIRONMENT POLICY

This circular will remain in effect unless rescinded or superseded by a subsequent version.

BACKGROUND

Approximately 20% of Americans go to school every day, with many students, teachers, staff, faculty, and administrators in aging facilities with deteriorating conditions. Meanwhile, studies have shown that the condition and health of the school building and grounds directly impacts the productivity and health of its occupants. High-performance green schools with healthy indoor air quality, acoustical controls, revitalized schoolyards, and daylight produce healthier, higher-performing students. A robust amount of literature is available for identifying best practices, guidelines, and recommendations for achieving healthy school environments. — from the Lawrence Berkeley National Laboratory, to the Environmental Protection Agency, to the American Federation of Teachers Union.

In addition, the Center for Disease Controls (CDC) Whole School, Whole Community, Whole Child (WSCC) model states a healthy and safe physical school environment promotes learning by ensuring the health and safety of students and staff.

Asthma is one of the leading causes of school absenteeism, and

children with asthma are especially vulnerable in buildings that have evidence of environmental hazards that affect indoor air quality. The Federal National Heart, Lung, and Blood Institutes evidence-based guidelines for effective asthma management recommends reducing exposure to indoor environmental asthma triggers such as mold, dust mites, pests, pesticides, hazardous cleaners, and disinfectants, and exposure to environmental tobacco smoke in indoor environments.

In partnership with the Boston Healthy Homes and Schools Collaborative (BHHSC) and the Healthy School Environment Taskforce, Boston Public Schools has implemented many of these evidence-based guidelines through district policies and programs (see below). As a result of the revised District Wellness Policy, school-based Wellness Councils, which are focused on improving health and wellness of students and staff, will be more closely involved in maintaining the healthiest level of indoor air quality and environmental health of their school and school grounds by working with Facilities Management, outside partners, and the school community.

Considering that Boston Public Schools is the oldest school district in the country and home to existing buildings of all ages, it is critical that sustained resources, innovative programs, and an ongoing focus be dedicated to designing, upgrading, and maintaining our school buildings and grounds to fulfill whole-school health and wellness goals.

POLICY

The Boston Public Schools recognizes that healthy physical environments are critical to the prevention of asthma and other

chronic and infectious diseases that impact learning. The Boston Public Schools is committed to providing high-performing school buildings and grounds that are clean, in good repair, have healthy indoor air quality and water quality, sanitary and accessible bathrooms, and use resources efficiently. BPS strives to provide adequate facilities for physical activity that are accessible and culturally inclusive learning environments that positively impact the productivity, health, and wellness of all students and staff. To address environmental risk factors for chronic and infectious diseases, each school will receive an Annual Environmental Audit to evaluate health and safety conditions such as leaks, mold, pests, chemical storage, and cleanliness. The district shall maintain a Healthy Schools Taskforce (HST) to promote and raise awareness of the health of the built environment and ensure continuous improvement of BPS healthy school environment policies and programs.

District departments and all schools, through an Environmental Committee or school-based Wellness Council, will comply with existing federal and state regulations, city ordinances, and District policies related to promoting and managing healthy school environments, including but not limited to:

- Indoor air quality
- Green cleaners
- Integrated pest management
- Trash and recycling
- Infection prevention & control
- Tobacco-free environmental policy
- Environmental inspection/audit
- Student safety/health in school shops

- BPS water policy
- Laboratories and chemical Inventory "Right to Know" law
- Idling of buses and other motor vehicles on school property

Schools will regularly assess the quality and quantity of BPS facilities for active transportation, physical activity, and physical education, including schoolyards, and report maintenance needs for these facilities.

IMPLEMENTATION, MONITORING & EVALUATION GUIDELINES

The Boston Public Schools and the Boston Public Health Commission must conduct annual Environmental Inspection/Audits (audit) to evaluate the health and safety conditions of each school building and school grounds. The Facilities Management Department, in partnership with school leadership, will take action to mitigate critical issues such as unhealthy indoor air quality, signs of pests, leaks, clutter, mold, unsatisfactory chemical management, and critical health and safety repairs. In addition, the audit results, along with best practices in the *Healthy School Environment Resource Toolkit*, shall be used by school principals/heads of school and school-based Wellness Councils to develop annual environmental health priorities and goals as part of the school's Wellness Action Plan.

District departments and all schools, through an Environmental Committee or school-based Wellness Council, shall comply with existing city ordinances and District policies related to promoting and managing healthy school environments. Examples of relevant and existing healthy school environment policies, for which school-based Wellness Councils and school staff must comply, are referenced below:

Massachusetts Legislation

- [MGL c. 90, s. 16B](#) Idling of a motor vehicle engine on school property

District Circulars

- BPS Water Access Policy and FMT- 20 Drinking Water Access Circular
- FMT-07: Chemical Inventory “Right to Know” Law
- FMT-08: BPS Recycling & Zero Waste Policy
- FMT-10: Integrated Pest Management (IPM)
- FMT-11: Green Cleaners Policy
- FMT-13: Respiratory Protection Program
- FMT-14 Hearing Conservation Program
- FMT-15: Annual Environmental Inspection/Audit Program Conducted by Boston Public Schools/Boston Public Health Commission (City Ordinance 7.12.1-4)
- FMT-17 Volunteer Projects
- FMT-19 Cleaning and Disinfecting Body Fluid Spills
- FMT-18: Science Safety in Laboratories and Classrooms
- FSE-06: Student Safety / Health in School Shops, Laboratories and Classrooms
- HWD-04: Healthy School Environments Policy
- HWD-06: Tobacco-Free Environment Policy
- SHS-04: Infection Prevention and Control in School Settings
- SHS-20: Asthma in Schools

BPS Facilities Department & Boston Public Health Commission

Boston Public Schools will ensure all schools comply

with healthy school environment policies.

The Facilities Management Department and the Boston Public Health Commission will comply with City Ordinance (Boston, MA Ordinances, ch. 10 §§ 7-14.1-14.4 (1996)) by conducting annual environmental inspection/audits of each school. They will communicate a school's results to each school leader, and publish all results on the BPS website, available for review by the public.

Upon completion of the audit, Facilities Management will immediately address critical health and safety deficiencies by filing a work order with the appropriate division, and they will incorporate other needed work at the school sites into the annual budgeting process. On an ongoing basis, Facilities Management will provide technical assistance to principals/heads of school on environmental problems and other building-related issues.

School leadership and school-based Wellness Councils

School administration and staff must actively participate in ensuring the school is following district policies and proactively manage environmental health issues for the sake of their students and staff.

School principals/heads of school will be responsible for reviewing their school's annual Environmental Audit/Inspection results and other related building condition resources to develop environmental health priorities for the school.

Administrators will engage in a collaborative planning effort with their school-based Environmental Committee or Wellness Council to finalize annual environmental health priorities, goals, action steps, and evaluation efforts.

The Health and Wellness Department, in partnership with the Facilities Management Department, will annually assess all schools' Wellness Action Plans to ensure school leaders and school-based Wellness Councils are taking active steps to improve the health and cleanliness of their school building environment.

Wellness Councils will track the progress of improved school conditions and evaluate annually what efforts worked best.

Wellness Champions will participate in their school Wellness Councils.

For more information about this circular, contact:

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