

# A Green Cleaning Program Starts Here

Green Clean Schools · [greencleanschools.org](http://greencleanschools.org)

**HEALTHY SCHOOLS**  
CAMPAIGN

# 5 Steps to Green Cleaning in Schools

You're reading this right now because you care about the health of your school and community. By adopting a green cleaning program at your school, you can positively affect the health of each and every person who enters its doors.

Transitioning to a green cleaning program is a big change, but it's a change that many schools have already made—with positive results. Learn more about why green cleaning is important and how you can get started at your school.

## Why Green Cleaning?

Each school day, more than 60 million students and staff attend our nation's schools, representing 20 percent of the American population. Unfortunately, half of them are being exposed to polluted indoor air, including lead, asbestos, chemical fumes, pesticides, molds and other toxins at those schools. A green cleaning program can help reduce these harmful exposures—from reducing carbon emissions to boosting test scores, green cleaning comes with a long list of benefits.

### Green cleaning helps students stay healthy and ready to learn.

**14 million:** The number of school days students miss each year because of asthma, which is often exacerbated by poor indoor air quality. Research shows a clear link between poor indoor air quality and sick students and staff, which leads to lower academic and occupational performance.

### Green cleaning protects custodial staff.

**6%:** The percentage of school custodians injured on the job each year due to chemical exposures. Custodial staff are particularly susceptible to health problems from frequent exposure to toxic cleaning chemicals and unsafe equipment. Green cleaning products and techniques can reduce the risk of illness and injuries.

### Green cleaning increases facility lifespan.

**10-15 years:** The expected useful lifespan of school carpeting. But constant wear and improper maintenance can lead school districts to spend unnecessarily to replace carpet and other materials. Proper maintenance, safer cleaning supplies and more efficient equipment can extend the longevity and durability of building materials.

### Green cleaning preserves the environment.

**23 million:** The amount of tons of carbon emissions that could be saved if all U.S. schools started using energy efficient cleaning equipment. Green cleaning programs reduce impacts from production, use and transport of cleaning products and materials. This is an important component of any facility's environmental footprint.

### Green cleaning saves money.

**\$365,000:** The amount one school district in New York saves each year after it switched to a green cleaning program. In today's market, the cost of green cleaning products is oftentimes the same or, in some cases, even less than traditional products. And the savings really add up when switching processes and equipment improves efficiency for your cleaning staff.



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## 5 Steps to Green Cleaning in Schools

Green cleaning can be a simple solution, not one that overwhelms or bogs you down. Green cleaning is about a simple product list, simple techniques and a simple goal: cleaning for health and the environment.

This is an overview of the five simple steps that anyone can take to start or enhance a green cleaning program at their school. Each of these steps can be accessed and downloaded for free at [greencleanschools.org/steps](https://greencleanschools.org/steps).

### Step 1: Prepare Your School

Step One walks you through the essential preparations you will need to build a successful green cleaning program, such as creating a green team of school stakeholders and assessing where your school currently stands when it comes to green cleaning. This step also address ways to develop a policy and evaluate progress. Whether beginning a new green cleaning program or improving an existing one, your team should start with a careful assessment. With the appropriate information, you can identify and prioritize opportunities based on importance, cost, risk factors, potential impact and other criteria.

### Step 2: Identify Green Cleaning Products

The green cleaning product marketplace has come a long way in a short period of time. Today, there are plenty of affordable and accessible products, as well as reliable third-party certifications. This step is designed to take the guesswork out of evaluating products and to help you identify products that meet high standards for effectiveness, health and safety.

### Step 3: Introduce Green Equipment + Supplies

Today's green cleaning tools can reduce chemical use and increase productivity. Improvements in ergonomics can also help custodians avoid injuries. Green equipment can even save your school money in the long run. This step is designed to offer tips and guidance on how to make the right green equipment and supply choices for your school.

### Step 4: Adopt Green Cleaning Training + Procedures

Green cleaning procedures—the methods and practices that staff members use to clean—have three main goals: reduce general health risks, accommodate highly susceptible individuals, and reduce environmental impact. This step outlines how you can get your cleaning procedures to line up with these goals.

### Step 5: Share the Responsibility

Everyone plays a role in maintaining a healthy environment—students, teachers, administrators, custodians, and even unions and outside contractors. A successful green cleaning program promotes stewardship and demonstrates a school's commitment to reducing its environmental footprint. This step describes all of the ways that your school can share the responsibility for green cleaning with the community.

## Find Additional Resources at GreenCleanSchools.org

The new [GreenCleanSchools.org](https://greencleanschools.org) is the place for all things green cleaning. The updated and expanded content reflects current trends in cleaning and puts practical tools and resources for school decision-makers front and center.

- Check out easy-to-access [resources](#) including Five Steps to Green Cleaning in Schools, Green Cleaning in Food Service Programs, Integrated Pest Management, Disinfecting in a Green Cleaning Program and more.

- Download the full [Green Cleaning Advocacy Handbook](#).
- Learn about the [Green Clean Schools Leadership Council](#).
- Access and share [practical tools](#) to help your school go green.

You can also [sign up for the Green Clean Schools newsletter](#) and connect with on-the-ground leaders for green cleaning in schools across the nation.



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## Green Cleaning Policy

School leaders and state legislators across the nation are adopting common-sense green cleaning policies that help schools go green and stay green.

These efforts make a big difference right away by protecting the health of students and staff while minimizing the environmental impact of school cleaning. They also help schools sustain their green cleaning programs for the long term, through changes in staff training, facility improvements and updates in product availability.

Policy is a powerful tool to promote green cleaning in schools. On-the-ground leaders—school nurses, school facility staff, teachers, parents, and many others—can be some of the strongest advocates for lasting change. Currently, 10 states, and Washington, D.C., have school green cleaning policies.

Visit the [greencleanschools.org/policy](https://greencleanschools.org/policy) section of our website to learn more. There, you can find [guiding principles](#) for green clean schools policy and our time-tested [Green Cleaning Advocacy Handbook](#).

## What People Are Saying about Green Cleaning

"I saw firsthand that some of the products my custodians were using were obviously affecting their health in a negative way. After using this guide and starting a green cleaning program, I can tell you with 100 percent certainty that there is a better way."

Bill Thompson, Director of Facilities Management,  
Lockport Township High School, Lockport, IL

"A green cleaning program is critical to support the health and well-being of students, teachers and staff. After all, a building is only as green as the way it is operated and maintained."

Rachel Gutter, Senior Vice President of Knowledge,  
U.S. Green Building Council, Washington, D.C.

"A little-known fact is that school employees have high rates of work-related asthma and other respiratory disorders. Green cleaning products and practices are designed to minimize troubling exposures and reduce respiratory problems among the workforce. Green cleaning is truly a winning strategy for promoting worker and occupant health."

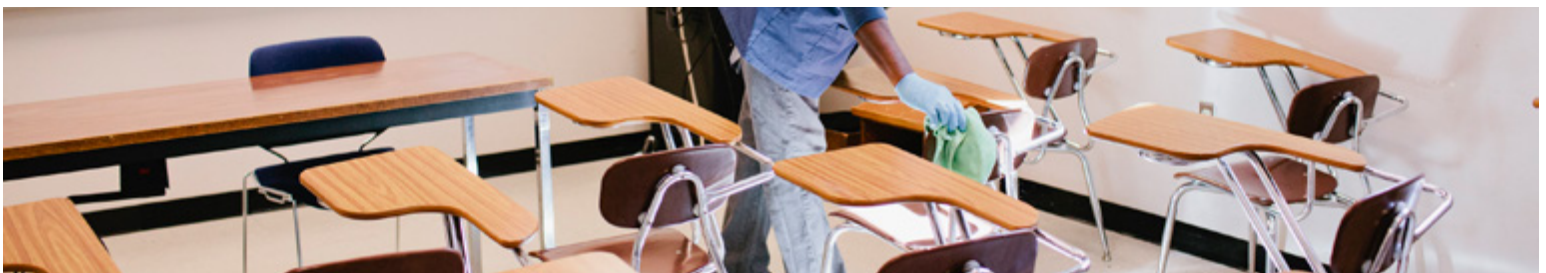
Darryl Alexander, Director of Health and Safety,  
American Federation of Teachers, Washington, D.C.

## About Healthy Schools Campaign

Healthy Schools Campaign (HSC) is a nonprofit organization dedicated to making schools healthier places where all children can learn and thrive. HSC provides leadership development and tools to school stakeholders and advocates for better access to nutritious school food, physical activity, school health resources and clean air to shape children's lifelong learning and health. For more, go to [healthyschoolscampaign.org](https://healthyschoolscampaign.org).



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