Green Clean Schools

Healthy Cleaning for Students, Staff and the Environment

GreenCleanSchools.org

Powerful New Tools + Resources for Greening Our Schools

The new 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. The site is easier to use, easier to access, and more comprehensive than ever before, with powerful tools for parents, teachers, administrators and cleaning professionals alike. Visit the site to:

- Check out easy-to-access resources including the downloadable Five Steps to Green Cleaning in Schools, Green Cleaning in Food Service Programs, Disinfecting in a Green Cleaning Program and more.
- Download the full Green Clean Schools advocacy guide.
- Learn about the new Green Clean Schools Leadership Council.
- Access, print and share practical tools to help your school go green.

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

Why Green Cleaning?

Green cleaning helps students stay healthy and ready to learn.

14,000,000 The number of school days missed each year because of asthma, which is often exacerbated by poor indoor air quality. Research shows a clear link—poor indoor air quality leads to sick students and teachers, 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. Custodial staff, especially women of child-bearing age, 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 injuries and long-term health issues.

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. This is just one example of how proper maintenance, cleaning supplies and equipment can extend the longevity and durability of building materials.

Green cleaning preserves the environment.

8.6% The percentage of poison exposures from cleaning products. Ingredients in these products permeate the environment, damaging natural resources and human health. Traditional products’ ingredients can cause cancer, reproductive disorders, respiratory illness, eye damage, and other problems.
Five Steps to Green Cleaning

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.

The most successful green cleaning programs begin by addressing the most significant or easily accessible issues. Then, they continue adding new elements and making adjustments.

Whether you’re looking into green cleaning for the very first time or upgrading your existing program, these steps are intended to simplify the process.

Step 1: Plan and Prevent
The first step to a green cleaning program isn’t about reviewing your chemicals or equipment; it’s about keeping dirt and other contaminants from entering the building in the first place. This is often a simple and inexpensive measure that can yield huge savings in time, money and effort later on down the line.

Step 2: Select Green Cleaning Products
A few years ago, green cleaning was difficult and confusing. Products were less effective, more expensive and offered spurious claims without industry standards. Today’s marketplace is different. There are plenty of affordable, accessible products and reliable third party certifications. This step is designed to take the guesswork out of evaluating products and help you identify those that meet high standards for effectiveness, health and safety.

Step 3: Introduce Green Equipment & Supplies
Equipment selection is a huge part of a green cleaning program. Today’s tools can reduce chemical use and increase productivity. Improvements in ergonomics should 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 Procedures
When we talk about procedures, we mean how your staff is cleaning the school. This could include the way they operate machinery, the method they use to scrub floors and wipe surfaces, how often they clean bathrooms and the time of day they do their heaviest chores. Green cleaning procedures have three main goals: reducing general health risks, accommodating highly susceptible individuals and reducing environmental impact. This step outlines how you can get your procedures to line up with those goals.

Step 5: Share the Responsibility
Cleanliness, health and safety are not solely the custodian’s responsibility. Everyone plays a role in maintaining a healthy environment — students, teachers, administrators, even unions and outside contractors. Green cleaning programs in schools promote stewardship and demonstrate a school’s commitment to thinking globally and acting locally. This step describes all of the ways that your school can share the responsibility for green cleaning with the community.

Stay Connected!
Visit GreenCleanSchools.org for a wealth of resources, tools and case studies of other schools going green. Then, stay informed and join the conversation online!

Newsletter
Subscribe to the Green Clean Schools newsletter at greencleanschools.org for news, resources, case studies, expert advice and more.

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How to Know If It’s Green

Green chemicals are an important part of your cleaning program. Green Clean Schools recognizes the following certifications for selecting green cleaning chemicals. For guidance on selecting green equipment, materials, paper, plastic and more, visit greencleanschools.org.

**Green Seal** is an independent nonprofit organization that certifies environmentally responsible products and services after rigorous evaluations, including on-site audits. Green Seal evaluates institutional cleaners, hand soaps, sanitary paper products, cleaning service providers and floor care products. To learn more about Green Seal, visit greenseal.org.

**Design for the Environment (DfE)** identifies cleaning products that contain the safest possible ingredients, perform well and are cost-effective. DfE’s team of EPA scientists evaluates the impact of products on both people and the environment and allows its label only on products that meet DfE’s rigorous criteria. Today, the label can be found on more than 2,700 products from dishwashing soap and laundry detergents to car and boat cleaners. DfE requires manufacturers to reach a high bar to create a truly “greener” product. The DfE’s Standard for Safer Products and Safer Ingredient Criteria can be found at epa.gov/dfe.

**The Carpet and Rug Institute (CRI)** represents carpet manufacturers in the United States. CRI’s Seal of Approval program certifies carpet cleaning systems, solutions and products as well as vacuum cleaners and extractors. Cleaning solutions must meet standards for cleaning effectiveness, pH, ingredients and more. Qualifying equipment must meet standards for soil removal, dust containment and carpet appearance without affecting the texture. Extractors must effectively remove soil and moisture without harming the carpet. For general information, visit carpet-rug.org. For research and studies, visit carpet-health.org.

**UL Environment / Ecologo** promotes global sustainability, environmental health, and safety. The voluntary certification is for products that meet rigorous environmental standards. Certified products include institutional and household cleaners, floor care products, disinfectants, hand soaps, paper products, bathroom tissue, paper napkins, facial tissue, industrial wipes, plastic trash liners, and more. Criteria include energy reduction, waste diversion, recyclability, and natural resource conservation. Beginning in 2012, EcoLogo is transitioning to the UL Environment label. Cleaning products in the U.S. that meet this standard receive UL Environment’s global certification. Products can be found at ul.com/environment.

“We have saved money by testing and comparing multiple green cleaning products. All products and procedures we implement are required to meet our standards for efficacy, efficiency and renewability at a cost effective price. New procedures and methods have achieved material and labor savings as well.”

Pat Pizzo, Director, School Facilities and Operations, East Meadow School District, Long Island, NY

“A little-known fact is that school employees have high rates of work-related asthma and other respiratory disorders. Many of these conditions are due in part to routine exposure to conventional cleaners. 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, DC

“A green cleaning program is critical to support the health and well-being of students, teachers and staff. For a school to achieve LEED for Existing Buildings: Operations + Maintenance certification, it must have a green cleaning policy in place. New buildings that achieve LEED for Schools certification should have green cleaning programs, too. After all, a building is only as green as the way it is operated and maintained.”

Rachel Gutter, Director of the Center for Green Schools, U.S. Green Building Council, Washington, DC

“I saw firsthand that some of the products my custodians were using were obviously affecting their health in a negative way. Who knows what it was doing to them, being exposed to these products day in and day out during their entire careers? It finally occurred to me that the decisions I make concerning what cleaning products I purchase might negatively affect the custodians—along with the 4,000 students who go through my school’s doors every day. Having small children myself, I decided it was my duty at least to investigate and see if there was a better 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
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National Education Association Health Information Network
National Parent Teacher Association
National School Plant Management Association
Parents for Public Schools
Service Employees International Union
School Nutrition Association
U.S. Green Building Council

Healthy Schools Campaign, an independent not-for-profit organization, is a leading authority on healthy school environments and a voice for people who care about our environment, our children and education. HSC advocates for policies and practices that allow all students, teachers and staff to learn and work in a healthy school environment.

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