



HEALTHY SCHOOLS:
PROTECTING CHILDREN WHERE
THEY LEARN

CHRONIC ABSENTEEISM SUMMIT

MS DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION
OFFICE OF COMPULSORY SCHOOL ATTENDANCE
ENFORCEMENT

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HEALTHY SCHOOLS- Protecting Children Where They Learn

“Promoting a healthy learning environment at your school reduces absenteeism, improves test scores and enhances student and staff productivity.”- U.S. Environmental Protection Agency

More than 6.5 million students nationwide were chronically absent (missed 10 percent or more of school days) in the 2013-14 academic year, according to a report released by the U.S. Department of Education’s Office for Civil Rights.

Chronically absent students included:

- 3 million high school students (18 percent)
- 3.5 million elementary school students (11 percent)

Asthma and Oral Health are two major contributors to absenteeism.

HEALTHY SCHOOLS- ORAL HEALTH

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- A full 20 percent of children age 5-11 have at least one untreated decayed tooth.
- Among school-age children, tooth decay is the most common chronic disease, five times more prevalent than asthma.
- Children age 5-17 miss nearly two million school days in a single year nationwide due to dental health-related problems.
- Children with poor oral health status are nearly three times more likely than their counterparts to miss school as a result of dental pain.

HEALTHY SCHOOLS- ASTHMA

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- Nearly one in 10 children age 4-14 are diagnosed with asthma.
- Asthma is a leading cause of school absenteeism, accounting for one-third of all days of missed instruction.
- Children with persistent asthma are more than three times as likely to have 10 or more absences than their peers. Asthma can be exacerbated by factors in the school environment, particularly issues such as mold or harsh cleaning chemicals that have an impact on indoor air quality.
- Research has shown that creating healthy indoor environments and providing adequate levels of school nursing can all but eliminate the disparity in attendance between students with asthma and their peers.



INDOOR AIR QUALITY



HEALTHY SCHOOLS- INDOOR AIR QUALITY

Triggers particularly affecting children with asthma:

- **Smoke**
- **Exposure to allergens (such as mold, dust mite, pet dander or pollen)**
- **Strong smells (harsh cleaning chemicals)**

HEALTHY SCHOOLS- INDOOR AIR QUALITY (IAQ)

“Good IAQ contributes to a favorable environment for students, performance of teachers and staff and a sense of comfort, health and well-being. These elements combine to assist a school in its core mission — educating children..”- U.S. Environmental Protection Agency

- Indoor Air Quality (IAQ) refers to the air quality in and around buildings and structures.
- Americans spend over 90 per cent of their time indoors, and poor indoor air quality (IAQ) is considered a top environmental health risk.
- Children spend 7 hours/day in school x 180 days/school year = 1260 hours per school year.

INDOOR AIR QUALITY (IAQ)-CLEAN FLOORS

Keep floors clean:

- Chemicals and allergens can accumulate in household dust
- Use a vacuum with a HEPA filter that has strong suction, rotating brushes-ensures that dust and dirt won't get blown back out in the exhaust
- Mopping picks up the dust that vacuuming leaves behind
- Put a large floor mat at every door- All sorts of chemicals are tracked on shoes. A door mat reduces the amount of dirt, pesticides, and other pollutants from getting in

INDOOR AIR QUALITY (IAQ)- HUMIDITY

Keep a healthy level of humidity:

- Keeping humidity around 30%-50% helps keep mold, dust mites and other allergens under control
- Fix leaky plumbing to prevent moisture-loving mold
- Make all schools no-smoking zones- secondhand smoke increases a child's risk of developing ear and respiratory infections, and asthma

INDOOR AIR QUALITY (IAQ)-TEST FOR RADON

Test for radon:

- Colorless, odorless gas
- Radon is a radioactive gas. It comes from the natural decay of uranium found in nearly all soils. It typically moves up through the ground and into structure through cracks and holes in the foundation.

INDOOR AIR QUALITY (IAQ)- ARTIFICIAL FRAGRANCE

Smell good naturally:

- Synthetic fragrances in laundry products and air fresheners emit dozens of different chemicals into the air.
- In one study, a plug-in air freshener was found to emit 20 different volatile organic compounds (VOCs), including seven regulated as toxic or hazardous under U.S. federal laws
- Most fragrances are derived from petroleum products, and generally haven't been tested to see if they have any significant adverse health effects in humans when they are inhaled

INDOOR AIR QUALITY (IAQ)-LEAD

Reduce Lead Risk:

- Do not scrape or sand lead-based paint.
- Clean floors, window frames, window sills and other surfaces weekly. Use a mop, sponge, or paper towel with warm water and an all-purpose cleaner. Discard sponge after use.
- Wash children's hands often, especially before eating and after playing outside.
- Lead has been banned from household paints in the United States since 1978, but can be found in other products

INDOOR AIR QUALITY (IAQ)

RECOMMENDATIONS:

- Elevate the Vital Role of the Custodian
- Certify custodians in mold, lead and asbestos inspection
- Work with parents to understand the existing chronic health conditions of children
- Educate parents on the home's indoor air quality and the impact on their children
- Partner with other organizations to conduct outreach



HEALTHY BUSES: HEALTHY KIDS

HEALTHY BUSES: HEALTHY KIDS

Diesel Emission Reduction Grant Program

- In 2009, the Air Division of MDEQ began the Mississippi Diesel Emissions Reduction Program.
- In 2018 MDEQ Awarded \$295,000 to 17 School Districts for New School Buses
- Since 2009, the MDEQ Diesel School Bus Replacement Program has awarded over \$1.08 million to 38 school districts for the purchase of 67 school buses.



Interested school districts can contact [Chuck Rainey](mailto:chuck.rainey@msdeq.gov) at [\(601\) 961-5536](tel:6019615536) for additional information and the application package.

HEALTHY BUSES: HEALTHY KIDS

Cleveland School District – \$28,640 for two buses

Greenville Public School District — \$28,640 for two buses

Lawrence County School District — \$28,640 for two buses

Alcorn School District — \$15,000 for one bus

Coahoma Early College High School — \$15,000 for one bus

Greene County School District — \$15,000 for one bus

Harrison County School District — \$15,000 for one bus

Leake County School District — \$15,000 for one bus

Lee County School District — \$15,000 for one

Long Beach School District — \$15,000 for one bus

Monroe County School District — \$15,000 for one bus

North Bolivar Consolidated School District — \$15,000 for one bus

North Pike School District — \$15,000 for one bus

Pontotoc City School District — \$15,000 for one bus

Pontotoc County School District — \$15,000 for one bus

Starkville Oktibbeha Consolidated School District — \$15,000 for one bus

West Jasper School District — \$15,000 for one bus



EDUCATING MISSISSIPPI'S CHILDREN IS TOO IMPORTANT A JOB FOR SCHOOLS TO DO BY THEMSELVES.

COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT

RECOMMENDATIONS:

- Create a COMMUNITY/SCHOOL PORTFOLIO
 - The purpose of the Community/School Portfolio is to be a repository of information that may help in coordinating efforts to address concerns, describing resources and gaps, as well as outline a preliminary plan of action for outreach.
 - Building/Property Disclosure
 - Training record of Custodial staff
 - Existing permits/Needed permits
 - Inspection Records, etc.

COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT

RECOMMENDATIONS:

- Determine COMMUNITY HOT SPOTS
 - Identify Risk in geographic areas
 - Aging Infrastructure
 - High Percentage of old houses with high potential of lead dust and lead pipes.
 - Risk is not spread equitably within a town or neighborhood
 - Is there a correlation between these community hot spots and chronic absenteeism?

COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT

RECOMMENDATIONS:

- Go beyond engaging to INFORM and engage to INVOLVE
 - INFORM-Provide information (mail outs, take home notes)
 - INVOLVE-Work directly with parents (allows for feedback, expressing of concerns and issues)
- Encourage parents to have their children tested for lead
 - In fiscal year 2017, the State of Mississippi received \$136,230 from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention for childhood lead poisoning prevention programmatic activities.
 - From 2012-2016, the program provided 88 children with a home visits and environmental assessments. Of this total, 56 children were identified with a decrease in blood lead level after the intervention. The program conducts a home visit and environmental assessment at any place the child spends at least six hours a week (primary home, Head Start or other child care facility, relative's home).



Educating Mississippi's children is too important a job for schools to do by themselves.

CONTACT INFORMATION

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