

## DoH Finds Sick Schools in New York

Although New York State has education laws that promote healthy schools by requiring Indoor Air Quality (IAQ) and Integrated Pest Management (IPM) Plans, a recent New York State Health Department survey found, “Almost all (99%) schools reported dust or reservoirs of dust in classrooms, 84% reported mold or moisture problems, 42% reported potential exposure to diesel exhaust, and 40% reported pets in at least one classroom.”

“In addition, some policies and practices designed to improve school IAQ are not being implemented in the majority of schools, including anti-idling policies to limit diesel pollution, and airing out of new carpets and use of green-rated cleaning products to limit pollution from chemical contaminants” (*Asthma and the School Environment in New York State*, 2008).

OSHA and state-funded occupational health clinics are able to assist school employees with environmental-occupational health.

Yet, schools and personnel are very reluctant to recognize that children may be affected by the same or even greater exposures in schools and child care centers (*Who's in Charge*, 2005).

**New York's children need a system of preventive environmental public health resources tailored to their needs.**

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## INTERAGENCY WORK NEEDED

Policymakers must set goals for inter-agency collaboration that protect and enhance children's environmental health at school and in child care centers. Education officials especially need to reach out to the other agencies for expert help. The isolation of educational systems from other agencies results in a lack of awareness of the newest environmental and health sciences and has limited the amount and effectiveness of state oversight.



Studies show that students who learn and play in healthy environments are sick less often, miss less seat time and fewer school days, and are more attentive. These benefits are particularly important for the highest risk, poorest children who appear to lack the buffering capacity to overcome added environmental stressors.

While schools are facing enormous pressures to improve attendance, achievement, and productivity they do not have sufficient oversight on environment.. Health, Environment, and Education agency collaborations are crucial to ensure that outside expertise is utilized to help foster healthy school environments. (*NASBE news, Commentary, January 2010*)



## HEALTHY SCHOOLS NETWORK

*... for schools that are environmentally responsible to children, to personnel, and to communities...*

## 2010 New York Legislative Program



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# Healthy Schools Network 2010 New York Legislative Program

## Health, Safety and The Environment

### We support money-saving reforms!

**Healthy and High Performance School Design Standards for All School Construction-** New York should require school siting, purchase, repair, remodeling, and construction to adhere to healthy and high performance standards based on NY CHPS (Collaborative for High Performance Schools), that “designs-in” a healthy indoor environment thus saving money.

Healthy, high performance, green schools improve energy efficiency, enhance student performance and teacher productivity, and provide a healthier environment for building occupants.



A recent cost-benefit analysis finds that **healthy indoor environments save more money and create more benefits** than energy savings (*Greening America's Schools*, Gregory Katz, [www.cap-e.com](http://www.cap-e.com), 2006).

**NY-CHPS**, developed by NYSERDA and the NYS Education Department, is the nation's best “

green” school design manual. It is now time for all children, teachers and school personnel to benefit from NY-CHPS and healthy and efficient school design.

## SCHOOL SITING REQUIREMENTS

New York State must enact legislation protecting all children in the state, including children in New York City and other urban environments, from environmental hazards resulting from **schools located on, in, or close by toxic or otherwise hazardous sites**. Currently, lack of basic regulation and oversight results in schools being built or leased in or on sites that compromise child health and learning. Hazardous sites and siting are uniquely DEC responsibilities: DEC must make information readily available, ensure that children's health is factored into decisions, and provide oversight on SEQR.

New York State must also close the NYC-School Construction Authority siting **loophole** that exempts leaseholds from environmental reviews. While this expedites construction, it is administratively far more costly to remediate buildings once opened or to close down toxic schools. Meanwhile, children, education, and taxpayers pay the price.

IS 143 in Manhattan and Olean (NY) Middle School are being monitored for outdoor air pollutants by the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA). IS 143 is a short block away from mobile sources, and Olean is within .5 mi of chemical facilities. These examples highlight the importance of New York to consider proximity to environmental hazardous sites before construction or leasing. See [www.epa.gov/schoolair](http://www.epa.gov/schoolair)

## TAX ON SUGAR DRINKS

Over the past three decades, obesity among children and adolescents has tripled. This means that our children are at greater risk for obesity related diseases than ever before. In response to this increasing problem the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) has suggested “decreasing the consumption of sugar-sweetened beverages” as a strategy for reducing and preventing overweight and obesity.



While the Sugar Sweetened Beverage (SSB) industry profits from its sales, our communities suffer. The SSB tax will not only lead to improved health for children as well as adults, but it will also provide the state with the revenue it so desperately needs to support New York State residents' health care and other health related initiatives. Taxing SSBs would lead to a decrease in consumption. This is particularly important because it is anticipated that a one cent per ounce tax will reduce SSB consumption by a minimum of 10 percent, with an even greater impact on children. Additionally, in polls conducted in New York 52% of adults supported a tax on SSBs, the number increased to 72% if the revenue from the tax was to be used to prevent obesity.

The SSB tax must be passed, the benefits for New York State's children cannot be underestimated (*Sugar-sweetened Beverage Tax Toolkit*, 2010).