

# **HEALTHY SCHOOLS TASK FORCE**

*Collaborating for Children's Environmental Health and Safety in Schools  
Is Our Mission*

## **Final Report and Recommendations**

**September, 2002**

**Convened by the  
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# HEALTHY SCHOOLS TASK FORCE

## *Collaborating for Children's Environmental Health and Safety in Schools*

### *Is Our Mission*

#### **INTRODUCTION**

Given increasing concerns about environmental contributors to rising rates of asthma, immune system dysfunctions, chemical sensitivities and learning disabilities among school age children, the Institute for Children's Environmental Health (ICEH) convened the Healthy Schools Task Force to consider how government and non-governmental organizations could work more effectively together to ensure Washington State's children have safe and healthy school environments in which to learn.

The Task Force was comprised of representatives of 14 non-governmental and governmental organizations with a broad range of perspectives and experience in relation to environmental health and safety in Washington State schools. (See Appendix for names of participants.) Though each of the organizations represented at the table have been actively engaged in the issue of environmental health and safety in schools, the group had not previously worked together in a collaborative, focused effort to identify issues and make recommendations.

Building on the previous work of the Department of Health, the Office of the Superintendent of Public Instruction, the Environmental Protection Agency (Region 10), and many other agencies, community-based organizations and individuals, the Task Force met four times (April through July 2002) with a short-term, targeted agenda.

The primary goals were to:

- Discuss system-wide approaches to address identified needs that would lead to improved environmental health and safety in schools;
- Recommend policies to support these system-wide approaches; and
- Consider which organization(s) might take responsibility for following up on the policy recommendations developed by the Task Force.

This report reflects the knowledge, commitment, and broad experience that Task Force participants brought to bear when considering how to improve the environmental health and safety of Washington's schools.

We recognize that the responsibility for improving the environment in which Washington's children learns belongs to everyone, including citizens, public interest groups, governmental agencies, lawmakers, and health professionals. We hope that our recommendations will lead to innovative, practical advances that break new ground in protecting children from environmental illness and injury in Washington schools.

## **EXECUTIVE SUMMARY**

### **Background: Children need healthy places in which to learn**

Studies have shown that a significant number of schoolchildren (and teachers) in Washington and across the country are exposed on an almost daily basis to environmental hazards including volatile organic chemicals, airborne lead and asbestos, and molds while they are at school. Some school hazards are linked to the aging of schools, to the siting of schools in close proximity to contaminated waste sites, and to the burgeoning population of school-age children that has forced financially constrained school districts to use often-unhealthy portable classrooms to increase their classroom space. Other school health and safety concerns are that some schools are designed and constructed without incorporating crucial environmental standards and design elements as well as operated for years without adequate testing and monitoring of the schools' physical systems.

In addition, children are physiologically very different from adults. Children's neurological and other biological systems are still in a state of dynamic growth. They breathe, eat and drink much more than adults in proportion to their body weight. For example, air pollution affects children more than adults because of their narrow airways, more rapid rate of respiration, and the fact that they inhale more pollutants pound per pound. This means that any hazardous environmental exposures will likely impact children's health significantly more than that of adults.

A recent study of 156 Washington and Idaho schools found that a significant number of them have ventilation deficiencies and exhaust fan failures. High carbon dioxide levels were found in 42.5 per cent of classrooms indicating faulty ventilation and 67 percent of the schools had exhaust fans that were not functioning properly. Sixty six per cent of portables tested had high carbon dioxide levels. The investigators found that carpets are widely used in schools and office equipment is often not vented to the exterior, both of which could lead to indoor air quality problems. (*School Indoor Air Quality Assessment and Program Implementation*, R. Prill, D. Blake, and D. Hales; prillr@energy.wsu.edu)

Washington students' health problems have been serious enough to cause school closures and require major renovations. The 470-student Artondale Elementary school near Gig Harbor closed in February 2002 so work crews could tackle its dust, mold, and ventilation problems. A 1998 National Institute for Occupational Safety and Health Hazard Evaluation Report stated that Cle Elum-Roslyn High School had large concentrations of mold growth in certain areas. In March 2002 Bainbridge Island's Woodard Middle School received a \$3.5 million dollar settlement from the school's builders to fix shoddy construction that resulted in a mold problem. Because mold can trigger allergy, infection, irritation, and toxicity

as well as result in significant costs, it is becoming one of the more serious health concerns Washington health department specialists have to investigate in schools each year.

The time has clearly arrived to take action to resolve and prevent environmental health problems in Washington schools so that children have a healthy place to learn now and in the future.

## **HEALTHY SCHOOLS TASK FORCE RECOMMENDATIONS**

**The following are recommendations developed by the Healthy Schools Task Force in July, 2002. These recommendations will be sent to all Task Force participants in September, 2002 as well as to other government and non-governmental organizations concerned with these issues. The expectation is that these agencies will continue to work towards the refinement and implementation of these policies.**

### **#1 Implement a state-wide work plan that addresses key issues:**

#### Assessment:

Review school health data sources and systems to identify gaps and overlaps.

#### Collaborative Education and Training:

Develop a comprehensive plan for environmental health and safety training that includes collaboration with other governmental agencies and non-governmental organizations. Education and training should be designed to address specific audiences and should employ effective teaching tools for maximum ongoing impact.

#### Funding/Resources:

Take steps to improve funding for schools, including identifying alternate funding mechanisms, prioritizing existing funds, and building partnerships with other governmental agencies.

#### Communication:

Establish effective means of regular communication with citizens, colleagues, and governmental and non-governmental agencies, including a plan for communicating about emergencies. Develop a mechanism to communicate data effectively to colleagues and others.

#### School Maintenance

Ensure that maintenance is performed in a way that minimizes risk to children and utilizes state-of-the-art, practical approaches to managing school buildings.

### Siting and Construction

Use guidelines developed for environmentally healthy siting and construction as well as a “building commissioning” method of school building design, construction, and performance evaluation. (Building Commissioning is a quality assurance process for achieving, validating and documenting that a building and its systems are planned, designed, installed, tested and capable of being operated and maintained to perform in conformity with the design intent.)

### Evaluation and Revision

Evaluate current practices, regulations, and policies to ensure they are contributing to creating a healthy and safe learning environment for students.

### Accountability

Develop a mechanism to ensure that the elements of the plan are actualized in a timely manner.

#### **Note:**

*For more detailed information about these categories and a listing of elements to consider under each of the categories above, please see the Appendices.*

**#2 Develop a timeline that includes both short-term and long-term approaches to problem-solving.**

**#3 Create a demonstration project to test, evaluate, and revise best school environmental health and safety practices in preparation for implementing them statewide.**

A demonstration project conducted in a single school district would

- Provide a setting in which to develop effective, efficient solutions to the environmental health and safety challenges that schools typically face.
- Serve as a “real-world” cornerstone for developing a statewide plan, including identifying realistic short-term and long-term goals.
- Facilitate efficient, timely evaluation and revision of practices and policies.
- Provide a cost-effective means of making change that eventually can be applied statewide.
- Provide inspiration and a model to other districts.

**#4 Establish an ongoing advisory board.**

- Ensure that membership includes a balanced representation of government and non-governmental organizations.

- Develop an operating protocol and meeting schedule that enables the advisory board to effectively advise and monitor state and local activities.

**#5 Collaborate broadly and continuously in order to spur innovation and maximize access to wisdom and experience.**

Implement a systematic means of seeking input from and participation of school personnel, community members, parents, non-governmental organizations, and governmental agencies in order to maximize access to available wisdom and experience. Actively seek out and examine advances underway in other states and consider adapting them to Washington schools.

**#6 Support the establishment of OSPI's School Environmental Health Initiative**

Marcia Riggers, Assistant Superintendent, Office of Superintendent and Public Instruction (OSPI), informed the Task Force at its third meeting that OSPI has decided to launch a School Environmental Health Initiative. The Initiative will address many of the issues and concerns identified by the Task Force.

Task Force participants expressed their support for the OSPI's School Environmental Health Initiative and encouraged OSPI to use recommendations of the Task Force, detailed above, to serve as a guide in its development. In particular, Task Force members emphasized the need for a mechanism for accountability, for example, as part of an advisory board that OSPI might establish, to ensure appropriate actions are taken in a timely manner. In addition, the Task Force agreed to send a letter both to OSPI and the Department of Health (DOH) in support of the Initiative and collaboration between OSPI and DOH. (Please see these letters in the Appendices).

***Note: The full report, including appendices, will be available on the Institute for Children's Environmental website in October, 2002: [www.iceh.org](http://www.iceh.org)***



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**APPENDICES**

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## **APPENDIX A: BACKGROUND AND GUIDING PRINCIPLES**

### **Background**

Evidence shows that children in Washington State are exposed to environmental factors at school that can and do produce illness and injuries that are preventable. These environmental factors persist for a variety of complex reasons.

Taking steps to address these environmental factors in Washington State can lead to real results. Solid examples show that improvements can be made in schools, that illness and injury can be prevented, and that the costs can go down. In addition, results show that solutions can be cheaper than continuously “patching up” ongoing problems.

The work of the Healthy Schools Task Force builds upon the work of others. For example, seven years of cooperative effort between The Department of Health (DOH) and the Office of the Superintendent of Public Instruction (OSPI) have produced the DOH-OSPI “K12 Health and Safety Guide” that identifies a comprehensive set of program areas that bear on children’s health. This guide promises to serve as an important resource for cooperative efforts in school health and safety.

In addition, last year, the Institute for Children’s Environmental Health and the EPA Region 10 co-sponsored a Healthy Schools Roundtable to help galvanize discussion and ideas from a cross-section of government and non-governmental organizations. Other organizations and individual citizens, too, have contributed greatly to advancement of the discussion. Despite these efforts, we are still far from preventing children’s environmental health and safety problems in schools.

### **Philosophy and Basic Assumptions**

The Task Force was designed to be small and targeted enough to make meaningful progress and yet inclusive enough to ensure a variety of views was represented. It was recognized that the small size of the Task Force meant that a number of influential and concerned organizations were not at the table. Given this, participants strongly agreed to engage these organizations during and at the end of the Task Force process.

The work of the Healthy Schools Task Force was based on two major assumptions:

- 1) Prevention of illness and injury to school children is a far better public health, environmental health and economic policy, than attempting to repair or heal children after the fact; and
- 2) Collaborative efforts will lead to the most effective and efficient solutions to enduring problems in environmental safety and health in schools.

## **Guiding Principles for the Healthy Schools Task Force**

Before developing its recommendations for improving the environmental health and safety of Washington's schools, the Task Force identified the characteristics its recommendations should embody.

These characteristics or "guiding principles" also could be used to shape the development of future action plans for ensuring Washington's children have healthy and safe places in which to learn.

Task Force participants adhered to the following principles in carrying its work:

- Detection of environmental health and safety risk factors in Washington State K-12 schools can lead to cost effective risk management and the prevention of illness and injury to children.
- Children in Washington State schools deserve care and protection without regard to the wealth of their parents or the wealth of the school district.
- Communication and cooperation among governmental and non-governmental organizations can lead to real progress in developing a healthier and safer school environment for children.
- People and organizations working openly and skillfully together can develop groundbreaking initiatives that lead to genuine progress, especially during periods of statewide financial difficulty.
- Respecting and working with existing organizations can help build on successful programs.
- Honesty, openness to differing points of view, and a willingness to explore possibilities will characterize the work of the Healthy Schools Task Force.
- Working beyond the limits of personal or organizational positions will be encouraged in order to foster new, innovative approaches to problems.
- Creating and maintaining a safe place for learning in public will be a key characteristic of Task Force meetings.
- Every member of the Task Force is key to its success and will be respectfully, courteously, and equally included in its activities.

As part of the Guiding Principles the Task Force agreed that any recommendations for action should:

- Be oriented toward **system-wide solutions**
- Maximize **innovative use of existing resources** while minimizing expense
- Be **applicable to all schools** regardless of wealth of district
- **Build on best practices** identified here and elsewhere
- Build-in and employ **clear, timely communication** to keep all constituencies informed

## **APPENDIX B: OPERATING PROTOCOL FOR TASK FORCE**

### **1. Participants**

The Healthy Schools Task Force is designed to be small enough to make meaningful progress and yet inclusive enough to ensure a variety of views is represented.

Participants in the Task Force were chosen because they are:

- committed to making Washington’s schools healthy and safe places for all
- knowledgeable about school-based health and safety issues
- able to work openly and respectfully with others
- able to generate innovative solutions to problems--to “think outside the box”
- able to view issues from a variety of perspectives
- able to think systemically rather than just sectorally
- experienced in using and applying regulations
- experienced in developing policies

### **2. Meetings**

#### *Frequency*

• The Task Force Planning Committee recommended the Task Force meet four times over a period of four months in order to complete its work. After that time, the Task Force the intention would be to disband or evolve into a body with a new purpose. The Task Force was invited to determine the actual frequency of meetings.

#### *Logistics*

- The Task Force Planning Committee will prepare meeting arrangements and materials.
- The Task Force Planning Committee will keep the Minutes of all meetings, including a synopsis of project progress, action taken, and action planned.

#### *Process*

- Meetings will be organized and facilitated to maximize innovative thinking.
- Participants will work to achieve consensus on issues whenever possible.
- At the close of its work, the Task Force Planning Committee will prepare a draft summary document outlining the recommendations of the Task Force, which the Task Force will review.

### **3. Media Relations and Public Statements**

In order to create a productive environment for open discussion among Task Force participants, participants will state their opinions about the Task Force to the Task Force. Any participant may speak to any media or member or the public as a representative of him or her self only.

## **APPENDIX C: PLANNING COMMITTEE AND PARTICIPANTS**

**Please note that because some representatives of the 14 invited organizations invited were not able to attend all four meetings as originally hoped, some organizations may have two or three people listed as participants, some of whom came to only one meeting to ensure someone from that organization was at the table.**

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## **APPENDIX D: OVERVIEW OF TASK FORCE MEETINGS – 2002**

The Healthy Schools Task Force met on:

- **April 30** at the Washington State PTA Office, Tacoma, WA
- **May 29** at the Washington Education Association, Federal Way, WA
- **July 9** at the Washington State Nurses Association, Seattle, WA
- **July 24** at the Washington Education Association, Federal Way, WA

**The first two meetings (April 30 and May 29)** focused on addressing fundamental questions about environmental health and safety in Washington schools. The group responded to the following questions in facilitated exercises designed to uncover ideas quickly and identify common themes:

- What is going well in terms of environmental health and safety in Washington schools?
- What could be improved in terms of environmental health and safety in Washington schools?
- What resources do we have now? What resources do we need?
- What are the data we need to prevent injury and illness in children in Washington state schools?
- What are the systems we need to prevent illness and injury in Washington state schools?

In addition, short presentations were delivered providing basic information about Washington schools, such as the number of schools, students and districts; the health of Washington's schools and students; and, the systems that play key roles in Washington schools.

**The last two meetings (July 9 and 24)** focused on discussing potential policy/action recommendations and next steps. Task Force participants individually prepared recommendations and presented them to the group for discussion. At its final meeting the Task Force consolidated its recommendations and planned next steps.

## **D.1) MINUTES: April 30, 2002**

**Time:** 1:30 - 4:30 p.m.

**Location:** Upstairs Conference Room  
Washington State PTA Office  
2003 65<sup>th</sup> W, Tacoma, WA

**Present:** Art Busch, Carol Taylor-Cann, Tom Eaton, Rich Ellis, Maryanne Guichard, Don Leaf, Maria Mason, Donna Manders, Elise Miller, Brad Owen, Maria Victoria Peeler, Marsha Riggers, Erika Schreder, Marianne Seifert, Norm Wisner

Refreshments were served from 1:00 p.m. to 1:30 p.m.

Elise Miller welcomed the group and explained the purpose of the Healthy Schools Task Force, which is to:

- build upon the past cooperative effort of Department of Health and the Office of the Superintendent of Public Instruction, the Institute for Children's Environmental Health's and EPA Region 10's Healthy Schools Roundtable (Spring, 2001), and the work of other organizations and citizens.
- discuss developing a comprehensive and collaborative plan with concrete steps to help eliminate injuries and environmental exposures that can harm children in school.
- explore possibilities for funding the plan.
- identify organization(s) that will take responsibility for implementing elements of the plan.

Elise explained that the Institute for Children's Environmental Health (ICEH) has a number of programs and is launching a national initiative on the environmental links to learning and developmental disabilities. Given this, ICEH felt it was important to follow up on the Healthy Schools Roundtable from last year, but their limited staff and funding resources means that ICEH will not be able spearhead the long term activities that may grow out of the efforts of the Healthy Schools Task Force. In the meanwhile, however, ICEH, will facilitate the exploration and development of a collaborative organization(s) to work on children's environmental health and safety in schools as part of the Task Force's goals and serve in an ongoing advisory capacity whenever possible and useful. The Planning Committee (Rich Ellis, Don Leaf, Donna Manders, Elise Miller) hopes that the Healthy Schools Task Force will meet four times between now and the end of July to carry out its work. Task Force participants will determine the actual frequency of meetings.

Elise then described background, intention, underlying philosophy, and goals for this meeting.

Each Task Force member introduced him or her self.

Don Leaf explained that each person and his or her perspective are essential to the success of the Task Force. He illustrated this by asking each person to add his or her puzzle piece to a puzzle until it was complete.

Donna Manders reviewed the agenda, the specific goals for the meeting, and went through the proposed Operating Protocol handout. The group agreed with the elements of the proposed Protocol, including some additional guiding principles presented on an overhead slide. Donna will prepare the revised draft for the next meeting.

Donna then led the group through an exercise designed to uncover ideas quickly and identify common trains of thought. She explained that a suggestion made by only one might be just as important as a suggestion made by many.

She asked the group to answer each of the following questions:

- What is going well in terms of environmental health and safety in Washington schools?
- What could be improved in terms of environmental health and safety in Washington schools?
- What resources do we have now? What resources do we need?

In groups of three, Task Force participants developed three to five responses to each of the questions and wrote them on post-its. The post-its were placed on the wall and the Task Force worked together to consolidate similar responses into groupings.

Below are listed each of the questions followed by the general categories identified by the group and then followed by the verbatim results:

**Question 1: What is going well in terms of environmental health and safety in Washington schools?**

- Comprehensive guides, reports, policies and other information are available
- Awareness of environmental health and safety issues have increased, at both the individual and general public levels
- State-level interest exists
- Collaborative communication within government and between governmental and non-governmental organizations is beginning
- Federal legislation with attached emergency funding has been helpful
- Some good policies are in place
- Action has been taken on pesticides
- Recycling practices exist

**Detailed results of Question 1 follow:**

Comprehensive guides, reports, policies and other information are available

- Resources available -materials -tools -expertise
- Policies and reports already out on children’s environmental health
- Tools for Schools have been widely circulated (just not implemented)
- Common standards—ex. K-12 School Health and Safety Guide
- Good University of Washington research

Awareness has increased, from the personal level leading to the general

- Increased health awareness community-wide
- High level of interest
- Enviro justice organizations bringing this issue to foreground
- Public + students = AWARENESS

**State-level interest exists**

Legislative interest in allocating dollars to health and safety

**Collaborative communication within government and also between governmental and non-governmental organizations is beginning**

- Agency/NGO collaboration starting
- Agency group → networking with other agencies

**Federal legislation with attached emergency funding has been helpful**

REN Grant Program

**Some good policies are in place**

- No smoking policies
- Drug and alcohol policies

**Action has been taken on pesticides**

Pesticide Spraying Notification legislation

**Recycling practices exist**

Standard operating procedure - student generated

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**Question 2: What could be improved in terms of environmental health and safety in Washington schools?**

- Need additional funding resources
- Need more coordination and collaboration (the system is in silos/disjointed)
- Need a database to identify issues and problems
- Need to raise awareness among elected officials

- Need accountability and follow-through by agencies
- Need to address school construction and maintenance
- Need more education on drug and alcohol abuse
- Need to end pesticide use
- Need better policies and to implement current policies

**Detailed results for Question 2 follow:**

**Additional resources are needed**

Sustainable sources of funding

Consistent budget

Additional resources to manage identified priorities

Coordination of existing resources: eliminate funding silos

Basic education funding:

1) Operations and Maintenance 2%

2) State REN grant program \$50 million

3) Capital reserve \$

Funding/support for:

1) Emergency school needs

2) Training/capacity for teachers, administrators and consultants to schools

3) School inspections

**More coordination and collaboration needed**

More protocols needed for communication and collaboration between agencies and others organizations

Coordinated response to issues

Communication about money

Coordination of funding sources

Clear governance system for school health needed

**Need database to identify issues and problems**

Multi-agency database for EH&S (environmental health and safety) for schools

No statewide database regarding condition of buildings

--air quality --mold --water quality --others

Annual student health survey used in some areas—could be improved and dovetailed with a larger public health tracking system for chronic disease

**Need to raise awareness among elected officials**

Need legislative mandate to prioritize children's issues across the board

Need Executive Order to spur progress

**Need accountability and follow-through**

Accountability from agencies, school districts

Implement policies that have already been passed

**Need to address school construction and maintenance**

- Design standards for new schools
- Implement health and safety issues from the ‘get-go’ in construction
- Involve community in process of design and construction
- Provide resources for school facility maintenance

**More education on drug and alcohol abuse needed**

**End pesticide use in schools (and elsewhere)**

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**Question 3a: What resources do we have?**

- Resources such as good staff and structures like Department of Health (DOH) and Office of the Superintendent of Public Instruction (OSPI)
- Programs like Rehab the Lab and Indoor Air Quality
- Unspent capital projects
- Timber-based money
- Some “Tools for Schools” money
- Minimal state-local health department money
- Unspent school district reserves
- Private foundations
- Local levies/bonds
- State and community right-to-know (though not always implemented or widespread)

**Question 3b: What resources do we need?**

- Need consistent stream of funds for health and safety issues
- Need heightened coordination of resources
- Need different system of funding for Operations and Maintenance (O&M)
- Implementation of K-12 School Health and Safety Guide
- Need Emergency Response Fund
- Need to move away from timber-based funding toward more sustainable funding (some questions around this)
- Need statewide referendum for that specific need
- Need enforcement by government agencies of existing policies
- State needs to become known to federal agencies
- Need training and technical assistance resources

+++++

**Other good models:**

Elise mentioned a few successful models for improving environmental safety and health that are underway elsewhere and showed publications produced by these. She also mentioned the efforts in California and New Jersey to enact state Executive Orders and distributed a handout containing information about them. Donna mentioned a recent article about new philanthropy, i.e., possible new



funding resources, that appeared in the April 27, 2002, issue of the *New York Times*. She promised to email the article to the group.

**Next Steps:**

The group discussed next steps. The major points made were:

- the importance of further defining the scope of the problem of environmental health and safety in Washington schools. Once the problem is more clearly defined, potential collaborative approaches to addressing it can be developed.
- a strong interest in focusing on system-wide approaches to addressing the needs identified as opposed to taking a narrower project-by-project approach.
- a strong interest in making policy recommendations as a high priority for the Task Force.

Also mentioned were the need for balance of local and state control and also the importance of acknowledging Washington's 500 non-public schools.

**Next Meeting:**

The group agreed to meet again during the morning or early afternoon on Wednesday, May 29 in the Tacoma area. The Planning Committee will find a meeting place and notify the group of the exact time and place. At this meeting, we will start with a recap of this meeting. We will then further define the problem and identifying systems that need restructuring.

The meeting adjourned at 4:30 p.m.

## **D.2) MINUTES: May 29, 2002**

**Time:** 9:00 – 12:00 a.m.

**Location:** Board Room  
Washington Education Association  
33434 8<sup>th</sup> Avenue South  
Federal Way, WA 98003

**Present:** Art Busch, John Dekker, Rich Ellis, Joan Garner, Maryanne Guichard, Melanie Luh, Don Leaf, Maria Mason, Donna Manders, Elise Miller, Ngozi Oleru, Maria Victoria Peeler, Marcia Riggers, Marianne Seifert

Refreshments were served from 8:30 a.m. to 9:00 a.m.

Elise Miller welcomed the group and explained the purpose of the Healthy Schools Task Force, which incorporates input from the first meeting of the Task Force:

- build upon the past cooperative effort of Department of Health and the Office of the Superintendent of Public Instruction, the Institute for Children's Environmental Health's and EPA Region 10's Healthy Schools Roundtable (Spring, 2001), and the work of other organizations and citizens.
- focus on system-wide approaches to addressing identified needs.
- develop policy recommendations.
- identify organization(s) that will take responsibility for following up on policy recommendations.

Elise explained that the Institute for Children's Environmental Health (ICEH) has a number of programs and is launching a national initiative on the environmental links to learning and developmental disabilities. Given this, ICEH felt it was important to follow up on the Healthy Schools Roundtable from last year, but their limited staff and funding resources means that ICEH will not be able spearhead the long term activities that may grow out of the efforts of the Healthy Schools Task Force.

In the meanwhile, however, ICEH, will facilitate the exploration and development of a collaborative organization(s) to work on children's environmental health and safety in schools as part of the Task Force's goals and serve in an ongoing advisory capacity whenever possible and useful. The Planning Committee (Rich Ellis, Don Leaf, Donna Manders, Elise Miller) hopes that the Healthy Schools Task Force will meet two more times between now and the end of July to carry out its work.

Each Task Force member introduced him or her self.

Elise reviewed the agenda and the specific goals for the meeting. Donna Manders quickly reviewed the Background and Operating Protocol, noting the additions made at the last meeting. (An updated copy was provided to each Task Force member.)

The group reviewed the minutes from the April 31 meeting and accepted them with two corrections in the spellings of names.

Elise introduced the next section of the meeting, Washington Schools: What We Know Today. She explained that basic information about Washington schools is being presented in order to provide everyone on the Task Force with background information that could be helpful in developing system-wide solutions and that will lay the groundwork for recommending specific policies.

### **Washington Schools: The Basics**

Marcia Riggers provided information about Washington schools, including a handout covering the recently awarded Emergency School Repair and Renovation Grants (“REN Grants”). There are 296 school districts in Washington; 200 of these school districts are small (less than 2000 students, K through 12), and there are about 2000 schools. She mentioned that the Office of the Superintendent of Public Instruction (OSPI) is, by mandate, focused on the academic progress of students. Washington is a “local control state,” in that individual school districts have a great deal of control over their respective systems. Communication is an ongoing challenge for the systems that work with schools in Washington. There is a great deal of data available about Washington schools, but the data has not been analyzed in a way that can help shape policy. Money is needed to analyze the data that exists. There is a great deal of need among schools for repairs, judging from the response of schools to the REN Grant opportunity. (Marcia handed out a REN Grant Fact Sheet.) Unfortunately, REN Grants were provided through a one-time federal program. Many schools may need help that did not receive REN Grant funding. A brief discussion followed.

### **What do we know about the health of Washington’s schools and students?**

Rich Ellis provided an overview of children’s health using a PowerPoint presentation, which he provided hard copies of to the group. He covered many of the causes of illness in children, rates of illness and injury, costs, and current directions of Washington agencies to address problems in schools. He mentioned that the majority (64%) of Department of Health and Human Services clients are children; listed the reasons to check schools for indoor air quality; and, showed why there are not many useful data about injury and illness in students.

### **What systems play a key role in Washington’s schools?**

John Dekker provided a handout entitled, “Safe and Healthy Learning Environments—A Systems Approach.” He discussed the typical lines of responsibility for environmental issues; described the financial resources for

facilities maintenance; costs, noting that more than \$500 has been lost/student in past decade and that 80% of operational costs are for personnel; discussed major repair and renovation, noting that the competitive system based upon building condition selects against those that take good care of their buildings; and cited the systems in need of attention now. He also discussed the unique challenges of responding to health issues in schools, such as bringing in experts and determining what is causing health problems in kids, since they spend a great deal of their time outside of school buildings.

The group took a break.

Donna then led the group through an exercise designed to uncover ideas quickly and identify common trains of thought. She asked the group to break into groups of three and answer each of the following questions:

**Based on the information we heard, what are the data we need to prevent injury and illness in children in Washington state?**

**Based on the information we heard, what are the systems we need to prevent illness and injury in Washington state?**

She then grouped the responses on the wall with the help of the Task Force. Below are listed the general categories identified by the group, followed by the verbatim responses. Three responses are listed twice because they fit in more than one category. :

#### **Need data analysis systems**

- Need data inventory

- Need adequate attribution of illness and injury with analyses, then need to prioritize and ensure accessibility

- Which systems give adequate data analysis?

- Data quality protocols need to be flexible enough so “anecdotal” information (can be included)

- Illness and injury data:

  - coordination and standardization of collected information
  - database and access

#### **Need data about children’s health**

- Need for health status of children coming into the school system

- Need for data about kids:

  - Place: home and school location

  - Illness/injury diagnosis

  - Treatment and follow-up

  - Medical records

- Data collecting and Reporting:

  - School → Ped/MD → OSPI → DOH

  - Defendable and valid

Consider growth and development issues when looking at injuries in kids  
Prevent later health problems

### **Need data about buildings**

Data—buildings

HVAC

C02

Temp.

Relative humidity

CO

VOLs

Construction/facilities

Environmental assessment

Low bid (not necessarily best bid)

### **Need to communicate with the community**

- Better communication structure and system
- Mechanism for parental and community involvement
- Need adequate attribution of illness and injury with analyses, then need to prioritize and ensure accessibility
- Illness and injury data
  - coordination and standardization of collected information
  - database and access
- Need system in place to provide accountability to the data
- Change in governmental systems/organizational culture so that they can refocus the way they do analysis, communicate, etc.

### **Need new funding systems**

State funded “REN Grants”

Construction/facilities

Environmental assessment

Low bid (not necessarily best bid)

Adequate funding

Maintenance

Trust Fund

Sustainable system

Impact fees under GMA need to be revised to require % specifically for school maintenance

Source of funding needs to be sustainable (e.g. interest-bearing trust)

Need capital replacement system

Categorical funding

School construction “reserve”

### **Next Steps: Homework**

The group briefly discussed the results of the exercise. The group suggested that each Task Force member select one to three ideas for policy recommendations, write about them, and then submit them for discussion at the next Task Force meeting.

The Planning Committee will send out the list of the policy recommendations presented to the Washington State Board of Health in March 2002, and will include instructions for the “homework” exercise.

**Next Meeting Dates:**

The group requested that we not do another “post-it exercise” and that we focus on developing recommendations during the next two meetings. The group would like to meet in the Tacoma area again during the morning of Tuesday, July 9, and during the morning of Wednesday, July 24. The Planning Committee will find meeting places for both the meetings and notify the group.

The meeting adjourned at 12:00 p.m.

### **D.3) MINUTES: July 9, 2002**

**Time:** 8:30 a.m. - 11:30 a.m

**Location:** Board Room  
Washington State Nurses Association  
575 Andover Park, Suite #101  
Seattle, WA 98188

**Present:** Meg Bushnell, John Dekker, Rich Ellis, Joan Garner, Maryanne Guichard, Don Leaf, Donna Manders, Elise Miller, Ngozi Oleru, Kathy O'Toole, Brad Owen, Maria Victoria Peeler, Marcia Riggers, Marianne Seifert

Refreshments were served from 8:00 a.m. to 8:30 a.m.

#### **Welcome and Introductions:**

Elise Miller welcomed the group and recapped the purpose of the Healthy Schools Task Force:

- build upon the past cooperative effort of Department of Health and the Office of the Superintendent of Public Instruction, the Institute for Children's Environmental Health's and EPA Region 10's Healthy Schools Roundtable (Spring, 2001), and the work of other organizations and citizens.
- focus on system-wide approaches to addressing identified needs.
- develop policy recommendations.
- identify organization(s) that will take responsibility for following up on policy recommendations.

Each Task Force member introduced him or her self and responded to the following question: "How would you like to see the world change as a result of the work of the Task Force?" The following is a summary of the comments that emerged:

- ✓ Actualize a comprehensive approach to children's environmental health in schools
- ✓ Integrate policies, regulations, budget and other initiatives by linking public health to public education
- ✓ Bring together resources, both fiscal and expertise, to assist schools to be healthy and safe
- ✓ Develop a framework to determine where best to invest funds
- ✓ Create a system of stability and sensibility around children's environmental health in schools
- ✓ Understand where the State Board of Health fits into the larger system
- ✓ Ensure children go to schools that are healthy for them so that they can focus on learning

- ✓ Determine how to take initial steps, no matter how small, toward children’s environmental safety and health in schools
- ✓ Ensure resources are allocated appropriately so kids can be healthy
- ✓ Ensure every child in Washington has the ability to go to a school with the same level of quality in terms of health and education regardless of his or her class
- ✓ Develop an action plan to identify sources of particulate matter, fumes, and other things that cause asthma in children, and then develop a plan to eliminate them
- ✓ Help young people grow up healthy in a safe community where they are not threatened by violence and do not feel pressure to use drugs of any kind.
- ✓ Create consistency in policy and funding.
- ✓ Take action now--so much investment is being lost because children are unhealthy.
- ✓ Ensure collaborative systems of competent, quality construction resulting in safe, healthy buildings are spread evenly through all school districts.
- ✓ Develop an action plan so that the aforementioned visions can become real—we know what we need to know, we just need to start!

Donna Manders briefly reviewed the agenda for the day and asked Task Force participants to review the minutes from the May 29 HSTF meeting. The minutes were accepted without changes.

### **Homework: Policy/Action Recommendations**

Donna introduced the next section of the meeting explaining that each Task Force member that submitted a “homework” policy/action recommendation would take five to seven minutes to describe his or her recommendation followed by about five minutes for questions and comments. Elise served as timekeeper. Recommendations were reviewed in alphabetical order of the writer’s last name.

Below are synopses of the recommendations and comments:

#### **John Dekker: Recommendation**

- Provide training to assist schools in assessment of facilities
- Provide funding to address identified areas of concern
- Provide expert assistance to schools when environmental health and safety concerns arise
- Provide emergency funding to address identified environmental health and safety concerns

#### **Comments:**

- Schools are one of the safer environments. Number of lives lost because of violent incidents has been halved since the early 1990’s. Public perception of safety is different from reality.
- Don’t break systems in place—use existing resources and provide additional resources to improve them



- Schools are continuously reinventing and educating themselves and kids—no Task Force can “fix it” and walk away. There will have to be consistent and ongoing work to not only make a change, but sustain it.
- Greater levels of reporting and regulation are not going to benefit kids in the long term.
- Could homeland security be a funding source? Perhaps for biological defense related to an asthma reduction system—something to discuss further.

**Joan Garner: Recommendation**

Develop an action plan that targets four areas:

1. Toxic emissions and IAQ (indoor air quality)
2. Violence/safety of students
3. Health care issues, whose origins may be in or outside of schools
4. Maintenance of equipment in buildings

We need to focus on prevention. An all-citizen interest group could help.

Action possibility: Provide proposal for draft bill to provide legislation leading to increased funding of local public health related to schools.

**Comments:**

- Need to get parents hooked: If we don't, we aren't going to be able to make changes.
- Now there is no public health safety net in schools, unlike the past when immunization programs and well-child checks happened in schools, supported by county taxes. In the 70's the mandate for local public health funding in schools dissolved.
- The legislature could solve this issue by assigning part of the motor vehicle excise tax to support public health in schools.
- A powerful partnership already exists between OSPI and DOH that we can leverage further.

**Don Leaf: Recommendation**

- OSPI and DOH should adopt a policy of using a Building Commissioning method of school building design, construction and performance evaluation after construction.
- Educate and train on this methodology by offering workshop to appropriate target groups such as Architects, Engineers, Building Officials, Environmental Health plan reviewers and others

**Comments:**

- Department of General Administration uses this process for its buildings.
- Cheap bid followed by a retrofit is a bad way to design a building. The commissioning process could be built into existing processes.
- Institutions need to make this commissioning process happen in order to stay out of trouble.
- Excellent idea—train everyone from maintenance to principals
- Adopt a policy and put it in the “green manual.” If there is a process in place, people will use it.
- Do the training for commissioning and let the idea percolate up.
- Set standards for emissions such as those developed by Labor and Industries

- This is an example of “picking the low-hanging fruit.” Prevention is less costly. Resources exist to do this. This could happen.
- Guidelines exist—we need the resources to make this a reality.

**Maria Mason: Recommendation** (Karen Ahern was to present in Maria’s absence, but Marianne Seifert briefly summed up Maria’s recommendation and others commented)

- An agency needs to back up Indoor Air Quality problems and have the personnel back up to immediately respond to them.
- Develop a chain-of-command to follow when responding to problems.
- Develop a children’s health database that is accessible to all agencies.

**Comments:**

- Establish a “School Czar” to ensure accountability.
- Fiscal resources are needed—we always come back to the financial problems schools experience and there is no willingness in the legislature to move on this. Needs to be addressed at the state level—this is not a local issue.
- A database called “Student Health Manager” is being used now in schools to track student health. Its use is voluntary. Data are not currently aggregated at the district or state levels. The software could be used in every building in the state and results could be combined for complete picture.

**Karen McDonnell: Recommendation**

- Develop procurement practices for school supplies (cleaning products, office supplies and equipment, art supplies, etc.) that select products that are less toxic alternatives. Statewide decisionmaking.
- Discontinue using lawn and grounds care chemicals during school year.
- Aspire to eliminate the use of all insecticides indoors.
- Develop a bus arrival and departure plan that does not expose children to diesel exhaust. Discontinue the use of fume-or particulate-producing activities in classrooms (i.e., felt-tip markers and white board cleaners, rubber cement, rodent or pet cages)
- Washington school staff and teachers should refrain from using scented products that might trigger symptoms in students with asthma and sensitivities.
- Train custodial staff in safer product use and maintenance in occupied areas (no aerosols, varnish, floor-stripping, painting, etc) during school year (except extended vacations).
- Prevent moisture problems that lead to mold.
- Maintenance workers need guidance about frequency of dust control practices.
- Develop statewide protocol for remodeling events during school year to minimize exposure risk. No roofing tar.
- Provide parents with at-risk or sensitive kids with suggestions for minimizing exposure risk at home.
- Make recommendations on lice control using the safest products available.

**Comments:**

- Deliver training to administrators, maintenance and janitorial staff and teachers through school safety committees in all school districts.

- Need resources to help people purchase less toxic cleaning materials.
- Rich Prill—very effective. Wouldn't develop more reading material—EPA supports Rich Prill. However, Rich Prill doesn't support any design issues.
- Educate the person doing the buying—a book on a shelf does no good. Perhaps Department of Ecology or another agency could create succinct stencils or posters to put up in every school.
- Need to go to KCDA and Boise Cascade (the companies providing supplies to most schools) and make the change to safer products there.
- Need to engage parents. Create a toolkit that can help them make some kind of assessment about materials and other environmental health issues.

### **Ngozi Oleru: Recommendation**

- Require the Education Department to ensure that all building maintenance and janitorial staff are trained/"certified" in a basic indoor air quality course that will be jointly put together by building and construction professionals, public health, regulators, educators and unions.
- Make this a yearly requirement to continue on the job--continuing education to be obtained before the start of the school year in September.

### **Comments:**

- Take one aspect of the school system such as maintenance and make sure that everyone has a basic level of understanding through continuing education.
- Strongly encourage this, but make it voluntary.
- Have idea of school safety committees mandated by legislature—how do we engage them? We can show that employee health is good for kids too.
- “Comprehensive School Health and Safety Plan”—a requirement of the legislature, just has not been implemented in most school districts.
- Require every school to have someone accountable for environmental health issues who has gone through the training.
- Steve Ashkin: American Society for Testing and Materials . May be a useful resource.
- Reminder: It could cost \$1.2 million/year to train all WA school custodians.
- Identify specific common practices and ask insurance companies if they would distribute to schools/fund dissemination.
- Focus on practices that look upstream toward prevention, not chemical by chemical.

### **Maria Victoria Peeler: Recommendation**

- Funds need to be equitably distributed to schools that happen to be in poorer neighborhoods and/or are primarily used by children of color.
- Many of these schools have the bare minimum and most likely cannot afford to be prepared for the most minimal of emergencies, upgrading of school structures that are molding and lack fresh air.
- At a minimum, these schools should be “jumped” to the top of the list for priority, critical funding from federal and state grants.

- The current funding and appropriations system needs to change.
- One example of other types of funding is the possibility of procuring homeland security funds from the EPA for building an emergency response program in schools.

**Comments:**

- Use GIS data to identify where schools are in relation to potentially toxic environmental exposures.
- Majority of schools do not have money for emergency preparedness.
- EPA community outreach conference addressed issue of anecdotal evidence—it can and should be recognized as “real data”
- Must prioritize funding needs of districts

**Marianne Seifert: Recommendation**

1. Evaluate existing policies and develop improved policies using state policy approaches framework (from Environmental Law Institute “Healthier Schools” report):
  - Traditional regulatory requirements
  - Information and training on good maintenance practices
  - School funding and financial incentives
  - Public right to know about EH & S in schools
2. Develop and seek funding for regional school environmental health and safety teams, including (but not limited to): school nurses, school facilities managers, local environmental health department staff, local health officers, construction professionals, physicians trained in environmental health and safety.
3. Set up biannual meetings of these teams with OSPI, LHJ, DOH, L&I, SBOH, EPA, WASA, WEA, and other relevant agencies and organizations to discuss system-wide ongoing and emerging environmental health and safety issues and propose solutions. Hear from different schools and agencies about how they are improving EH&S and responding to concerns and complaints: use case studies to improve policy.
4. Communicate via a e-newsletter, web site, conferences, or other methods about EH&S resources and information such as manuals, best practices, training opportunities, funding sources, web sites, organizations, conferences, information, legislation, etc.

**Comments:**

- What is the public’s role?
- Need to coordinate groups involved in school-related issues to get better system-wide approach to distribution of funding.
- Could expand Labor and Industries’ “right to know” policy to schools.
- Environmental “right to know” policies have inspired people to get things done (New York and California Proposition 65)
- Environmental Law Institute overview of state policy approaches is excellent and could be useful to this group.
-

### **Marcia Riggers: Recommendation**

Marcia said she had not had the opportunity to submit a written recommendation but wanted the HSTF to know that OSPI launched a new initiative on school environmental safety and health issues on July 1, 2002. Over the next 4 to 8 months the OSPI will convene an initiative team to begin a year-long, collaborative process regarding issues such as:

- How to systematically fit environmental safety and health policy pieces together in regards to schools
- RCW/WACs: What needs to change regarding facilities design, construction, and maintenance?
- Review resource allocation
- Collect, analyze and integrate data on health and safety in schools.

She said OSPI will soon determine who should be at the table for this process.

She also said the HSTF had served as an inspiration for this effort.

### **Comments:**

1. The Task Force asked to receive written information about the endeavor when it becomes available.

### **Next Steps**

The HSTF briefly discussed the results of the presentations and discussion. It was suggested that the recommendations fit into four general categories:

- Siting and Construction
- Maintenance
- Education
- Funding

Donna said that she would prepare a chart that shows how each recommendation fits into these categories in order to identify missing pieces and to aid discussion.

It was decided that policy recommendations would be circulated to a wider group for review following the next meeting of the Task Force. At the next and last meeting of the Task Force, the group will work on reaching consensus about which recommendations to put forward, to whom they should be sent for review and comment, and in what format the final product should be presented and to whom it should be presented. The group also will talk about directions for the future: What is the next step now that the Task Force has completed its original mission?

### **Next Meeting Date:**

The next meeting will be held from 1:30 p.m. to 4:30 p.m. at the Washington Education Association, 33434 8<sup>th</sup> Avenue South, Federal Way, WA 98003.

Snacks will be served starting at 1:00 p.m.

The meeting adjourned at 11:30 a.m.

#### **D.4) MINUTES: JULY 24, 2002**

**Time:** 1:30 p.m. - 4:30 p.m.

**Location:** Washington Education Association  
33434 8<sup>th</sup> Ave. South  
Federal Way, WA 98003

**Present:** Art Busch, John Dekker, Rich Ellis, Pam Emerson, Joan Garner, Maryanne Guichard, Don Leaf, Donna Manders, Elise Miller, Kathy O'Toole, Maria Victoria Peeler, Marcia Riggers, Marianne Seifert

Refreshments were served from 1:00 a.m. to 1:30 a.m.

#### **Welcome and Introductions:**

Elise Miller welcomed the group and recapped the purpose of the Healthy Schools Task Force:

- build upon the past cooperative effort of Department of Health and the Office of the Superintendent of Public Instruction, the Institute for Children's Environmental Health's and EPA Region 10's Healthy Schools Roundtable (Spring, 2001), and the work of other organizations and citizens.
- focus on system-wide approaches to addressing identified needs.
- develop policy recommendations.
- identify organization(s) that will take responsibility for following up on policy recommendations.

Each Task Force member introduced him or her self.

Elise Miller briefly reviewed the agenda for the day, explaining that because this is the last meeting of the Healthy Schools Task Force (HSTF), at least in its present form, the group will need to accomplish two major goals: discuss the recommendations the HSTF will forward on to others and talk about the future of the Healthy Schools Task Force.

Donna Manders asked Task Force participants to review the minutes from the July 9, 2002 HSTF meeting. Joan Garner, Maria Victoria Peeler, and Marianne Seifert suggested changes in the notes regarding their respective policy recommendations. Donna will make the changes and send out the revised minutes.

## **Next Steps: A Proposal for Issues Referral and Monitoring**

Don Leaf introduced the next section of the meeting explaining that he and Rich Ellis had developed “A Proposal for Issues Referral and Monitoring” in order to provide a framework for discussion. He reviewed the handout with the group, explaining the key elements of each section:

A) An MOU (Memorandum of Understanding) would be established between the Office of the Superintendent of Public Instruction and the Department of Health.  
B) Healthy Schools Task Force would be retained to monitor the process.  
C) The MOU would contain language acknowledging the mutual goals of DOH and OSPI and would address the following issues:

- 1) Assessment
- 2) A Collaborative Training Plan
- 3) Facilities Related Issues
- 4) Collaboration and Coordination with Other Organizations
- 5) Resources

He then asked the group for questions and comments.

## **Memorandum of Understanding**

A number of comments were made about the lack of efficacy of MOUs in bringing about action, including the observation that an MOU would not in itself be a productive step and could possibly get in the way of progress. It was agreed that actively promoting a collaborative, productive working relationship between DOH and OSPI on behalf of environmentally healthy and safe schools would be a useful step to take. It was pointed out that this is underway now and will be developed further as OSPI brings to life its coordinated initiative to address environmental health and safety in schools (School Environmental Health Initiative).

Participants of the group also highlighted the importance of including the Department of Labor and Industries (L&I) as a partner in this work. It was suggested that framing healthy schools as a “Right to Know” problem would place it in L&I’s scope of work and mission. This also could prove true in working with the Department of Ecology.

## **Demonstration Project**

It was suggested that a demonstration project—one that would test and evaluate “best school health practices” in a particular school district—would serve as an effective and “real-world” cornerstone for developing a statewide plan. A demonstration project would put “theory into practice” and help define tangible and achievable short-term (six months) and long-term (two year) goals. In addition, a project such as this would facilitate revisions and adjustments in order to establish the most useful processes and tools that could be utilized in other school districts statewide. Ultimately a demonstration project would be a cost-effective approach to making change on a large, statewide scale.

The group agreed that a demonstration project would be very helpful and could be designed to address the key issues identified by the Task Force: Education,

maintenance, siting and construction, funding communication, evaluation and review.

### **Advisory Board**

Task Force participants suggested that an advisory board to the OSPI School Environmental Health Initiative would lead to greater accountability and provide useful support and suggestions in regards to policy issues. The advisory board should include both NGOs (non-governmental organizations) and governmental organizations. The group agreed that without NGO participation this kind of advisory board would lose credibility.

A question was asked about whether it would be effective to have a free-standing advisory board, rather than one simply under OSPI's auspices, to monitor progress and ensure accountability. Though there was no final consensus, the group generally seemed to agree that, at least at this time, ensuring the effectiveness of an advisory board as part of the OSPI initiative would be a good step forward.

It was also suggested that the School Facility Health and Safety Steering Committee that Rich Ellis and other colleagues have been organizing could be briefed on a quarterly basis and serve as "a forum" for the OSPI initiative.

### **Organizing the current HSTF Recommendations**

Donna Manders pointed out that she had organized the elements of the Task Force policy recommendations into categories (education; maintenance; siting and construction; funding; communication; evaluation and review) and posted them on the window. She invited the group to add ideas to the sheets. She also prepared a list of the general characteristics of the recommendations that the HSTF will submit to DOH/OSPI. These characteristics were identified at previous meetings of the group. She will transcribe these pages and send them out with the minutes.

### **Additional comments**

Designing a system that allows administrators and other school personnel to respond quickly and effectively to problems so that trust and credibility is maintained with the community would be helpful.

Having some kind of umbrella group or point person to coordinate parallel efforts such as Rehab the Lab, OSPI's initiative, and the School Facility Health and Safety Steering Committee would be useful so that these are seen as more coherent parts of a larger goal to protect children's health and safety in schools.

### **Decision: Send a letter with recommendations and include HSTF report.**

The group agreed that the HSTF would send a letter to the secretaries of DOH and OSPI supporting the OSPI School Environmental Health Initiative.

The letter will:



- Request that the OSPI initiative develop a plan that addresses elements such as the following: Assessment; Collaborative Education/Training Plan; Funding/Resources, Communication, Evaluation and Revision.
- Recommend that OSPI address issues identified by HSTF including maintenance, siting and construction, responding to emergencies, etc.
- Suggest that plan should include short-term and long-term approaches.
- Recommend that an advisory board be established including equal representation of government and non-governmental organizations and serve in a monitoring and advisory role.
- Ask that a “demonstration project” be considered as a cost-effective, efficient means of identifying, implementing and revising best practices.
- Encourage ongoing collaboration with other governmental agencies and with NGO’s in order to ensure consolidation of effort and wisdom.
- Offer a timeline for major elements of the Initiative
- Encourage building accountability into the plan.

A report that summarizes the deliberations of the HSTF will be included with the letter. The report will contain the suggestions and key issues raised at HSTF meetings and in the policy recommendations submitted by participants.

After review by the HSTF, a draft of the letter and the report will be distributed for comment to key agencies and individuals prior to sending it to DOH and OSPI. The list of persons to review drafts will be finalized via email communication with HSTF participants.

The final version will be sent to the secretaries of DOH and OSPI. It will be “cc-ed” to other agencies, organizations, and individuals with a letter explaining that due to their scope of work they may find the HSTF recommendations of interest.

### **Timeline**

- The HSTF Planning Committee will send the first draft of the letter and report for review by the HSTF by mid-August.
- Revisions will be made in late August.
- The next draft will be sent to a wider group of people and organizations for review in early September.
- Final letter and report mailed mid-September to DOH and OSPI, with “cc’s” to a range of organizations and individuals.
- This schedule will allow the recommendations to be presented in a variety of venues, such as at the October 9 meeting of the Washington State Board of Health.

### **Adjourn**

Elise thanked Task Force participants for their excellent work and thoughtful commitment to the environmental safety and health of Washington’s schools. She noted that the Task Force adhered to its mission and goals, which it accomplished in the four meetings originally specified in its operating protocol, and that it held true to the group’s operating principles.

## **APPENDIX E. Elements of Policy/Action Recommendations**

### **Elements organized by heading based on Task Force discussions and suggestions:**

- ✓ Communication
- ✓ Education
- ✓ Funding
- ✓ Maintenance
- ✓ Siting and Construction
- ✓ Review and Evaluation

### **Communication**

- All citizen board to help guide action plan
- Coordinate to involve public in better ways
- Develop a chain of command to follow when responding to problems
- Adopt “building commissioning protocol” for Green Manual
- Establish a “school czar” to help with overall process
- Create a bus schedule plan that does not expose kids to diesel fumes
- Develop a database accessible to all agencies and others
- Use “Student Health Manager” database more broadly
- Recognize “anecdotal information” as useful data
- Collect, analyze, integrate data
- Place posters re safe buying practices in every school
- Use state-of-art-user/friendly communication tools
- Ask legislature to mandate school safety committees
- Provide information re risks to parents (environmental exposures)
- Communicate via website, conferences, about environmental health and safety resources
- Communication tool: Describe agency roles, statutory authority, responsibilities, missions
- EPA has developed a “Design Tools for Schools” website compendium of suggested/guiding protocols and procedures for new school siting, design and construction. This website is open for public comment—hopefully will be useful to WA and other states.
- Leverage power between OSPI and DOH.
- Work with KCDA and Boise Cascade to provide safer products to schools.
- Develop procurement practices—communicate them.

## **Education**

- Require every school to have someone who has gone through environmental health and safety training
- Train via school safety committees—all school districts
- Use “state of the art” user friendly education tools
- Develop basic comprehensive course for all maintenance practices
- Ensure all maintenance staff are certified in basic IAQ—yearly requirement
- Focus on practices for biggest impact (not chemical by chemical)
- Develop regional environmental health and safety teams: nurses, public health professionals, construction, physicians, etc.
- Set up bi-annual meetings for safety teams
- Create an environmental safety and health “toolkit” for parents
- Provide parents of at-risk kids suggestions for minimizing risks at home
- Train custodial staff re safer product use
- Develop procurement practices for school supplies: safe/non-toxic products
- Train personnel re dust control practices
- Educate re diesel exhaust, chemicals, procurement practices (safe), non-toxic lice control
- Provide training to assist in assessment of facilities
- Train school personnel (school board members, administration, principals, teachers, office staff, maintenance, janitorial and grounds staff) re health and safety issues and prevention and use of existing resources--Check with universities that educate teachers and school administrators to ensure that teacher and administrator training deals with school health and safety and deal with well
- Offer building commissioning workshops to architects, engineers, building officials
- Include training for maintenance people AND principals, etc. re building commissioning
- Educate/train re building commissioning approach

## **Evaluate and Review Existing Situation**

- Evaluate existing policies: regulations, maintenance practices, school funding, public “right to know”
- Review: Resource allocation, regulations, how to systematically incorporate environmental health and safety in schools

## **Funding**

- Funding for bi-annual meetings of environmental health and safety teams
- Provide emergency funding to address environmental health and safety concerns
- Provide funding to address identified areas of concern
- Prioritize funding needs of districts
- Increase funding of local public health related to schools
- Address fiscal needs at state level
- Need an agency to “back up” IAQ problems and provide personnel to address

- Distribute funds equitably: “jump up” schools that are falling apart and have little funding
- Assign motor vehicle excise tax to support healthy schools
- Categorical funding at OSPI for maintenance operations
- Funding from capital budget or safety budget at OSPI re-directed to fix “sick schools” or prevent them. (Continue “Regrant” program)
- Establish long range “Reserve Fund” for school construction using 10% set-aside.
- Build a relationship with L&I with the hope that some L&I funding might become available for school health and safety
- Change the 40% rule for facilities
- Revise “NERC” formula at OSPI
- Include school assessments for health and safety under OSPI—DOH agency agreement

### **Maintenance**

- Provide expert assistance when environmental health and safety concerns arise
- Discontinue use of products that produce dust/fumes: markers, rubber cement, pet cages, etc.
- Use safe products
- Prevent moisture problems that lead to mold
- Eliminate use of insecticides indoors
- Use building commissioning method of design, construction, performance evaluation
- “Right to know” rules have inspired other states’ actions
- Discontinue using lawn chemicals during school year
- Do maintenance when kids are not present
- Maintain buildings: equipment and IAQ

### **Siting and Construction**

- Set standards for emissions, such as L&I regs
- Use building commissioning approach
- Use GIS data to locate schools vis-à-vis toxic exposures
- Develop protocol for remodeling: Do remodeling when no kids are present (roof tar, for example)
- Use existing school funding for construction and remodeling to encourage use of best health and safety practices

## **APPENDIX F: Policy/Action Recommendation Homework**

(in alphabetical order)

### **JOHN DEKKER**

#### **Describe the problem you believe needs to be solved to ensure children's environmental health and safety in schools:**

Schools are asked to provide a wide variety of services beyond that of basic instruction. Many of our children come from homes and neighborhoods lacking in physical, emotional and environmental safety. They often experience a greater sense of physical and emotional well being as they enter the doors of their local schools. Additionally, many children receive basic nutrition and health screening in schools that simply isn't available at home. The wide range of services expected from our schools leaves resources stretched very thin.

Child mortality and violence has been reduced significantly over the past decade. This fact is easily overlooked when we witness the horrific and tragic, although isolated, episodes of violence seen in recent years. Regulations, responsibilities and resources have been mobilized to address many of the risks students once faced by large numbers of students congregating in their neighborhood schools.

While schools are subject to stringent environmental regulations to ensure student safety, they often lack funding to address the necessary staffing, training and capitol expenditures necessary to maintain facilities. This problem is compounded by the large inventory of aging facilities created to respond to a rapidly growing student population. Schools are not lacking regulations but rather funding to ensure environmental safety for their students.

#### **What are the action steps that you recommend to address this problem?**

- Provide training to assist schools in assessment of facilities
- Provide funding to address identified areas of concern
- Provide expert assistance to schools when environmental health and safety concerns arise
- Provide emergency funding to address identified environmental health and safety concerns

#### **Which constituencies need to be involved and what role should each take?**

School districts  
Educational Service Districts  
Office of Superintendent of Public Instruction  
State Legislature  
Congress  
Departments of Health, Labor and Industries, Occupational Health and Safety

Other agencies with expertise in identifying and correcting environmental concerns

**What is the proposed timeline and desired outcome?**

Given the current fiscal challenges faced by the state, a timeline is difficult to propose.

Desired outcome is a system of coordinated agencies that support:

- proper construction and maintenance of school facilities
- assessment of local environmental conditions
- the ability to respond quickly and efficiently to environmental concerns

**Describe the problem you believe needs to be solved to ensure children's environmental health and safety in schools:**

Environment free from hazards that will cause health problems for children now and in the future.

**What are the action steps that you recommend to address this problem?**

Solutions belong both at the Community level, the local level, state level and federal level.

**Which constituencies need to be involved and what role should each take?**

Same as above, parents, school employees, local communities, state legislators in each district, governor, OSPI, unions, health departments, federal legislators. I think each group should decide what their role is in making schools safe for our children.

**What is the proposed timeline and desired outcome?**

No idea for a realistic timeline, but would say two years.

## **DON LEAF**

### **Describe the problem you believe needs to be solved to ensure children's environmental health and safety in schools:**

Key systems that effect air quality or other environmental health and safety issues do not receive adequate performance testing, even when designed into the school. (a ventilation system could have adequate design but have undetected equipment or controls failure)

Sometimes key systems lack integrated review and even if constructed as designed, fail to perform adequately. (example an HVAC system intake is located near a shop exhaust discharge) (one school had its air intake grates imbedded in a busy sidewalk, inviting dirt and dust entry to system)

### **What are the action steps that you recommend to address this problem?**

OSPI and DOH should adopt a policy of using the "Building Commissioning" method of school building design, construction and performance evaluation after construction. (see page 2)

Educate and train on this methodology by education and training sessions to appropriate target groups such as Architects, Engineers, Building Officials, Environmental Health plan reviewers and others as identified later.

### **Which constituencies need to be involved and what role should each take?**

OSPI, DOH, Local Health Departments, WAMOA, and all school organizations involved in school construction.

### **What is the proposed timeline and desired outcome?**

The K-12 Environmental Health and Safety Manual is undergoing review and updating at this time. This methodology could be incorporated into the manual and would be part of the guide later this year.

The desired outcome is for school systems design to incorporate environmental health and safety considerations into each real stage of school plans formulation and execution. These include pre-design needs considerations, design, construction, acceptance and post acceptance phases.

The following **Description of the Building Commissioning Process** is taken verbatim from the Total Building Commissioning web site at:

<http://sustainable.state.fl.us/fdi/edesign/resource/totalbcx/guidemod/docs/01nov98.html>



## **Description of the Commissioning Process**

*Commissioning* is a quality process for achieving, validating and documenting that the facility and its systems are planned, designed, installed, tested and capable of being operated and maintained to perform in conformity with the design intent. The process extends through all phases of a new or renovation project, from conceptualization to occupancy and operation, with checks at each stage of the process to ensure validation of their performance to meet the owner's design requirements.

The fundamental objectives of the commissioning process are a) to create a procedure to verify and provide documentation that the performance of the facility and its systems meet the owner's requirements; b) to enhance communication by documenting data and decisions throughout all phases of the project; and c) to validate and report that building system performance meets the design intent.

The building commissioning process falls into five phases: the program phase, the design phase, the construction phase, the acceptance phase and the post-acceptance/ occupancy phase.

1. During the *facility program phase*, the functional, operational and occupant requirements of the facility are defined; construction schedules and budgets are planned; and a project management plan is developed. An initial statement of design intent and a preliminary commissioning plan are prepared during this phase.
2. During the *design phase*, the complete design of the facility including all systems is completed including the development of construction drawings and project specifications. The commissioning plan and commissioning Specifications are prepared during this phase.
3. During the *construction phase*, the facility is constructed, utility services established, and systems and equipment installed, functionally tested and operated. The commissioning plan is modified to reflect changes made to systems and equipment.
4. During the *acceptance phase*, performance testing is conducted to verify that performance of the systems meet the objectives defined in the design intent. Building system O&M documentation is reviewed and approved and maintenance staff is trained on O&M procedures.
5. During the *post-acceptance or occupancy phase*, performance testing is continued to account for dynamic changes that occur in a facility over time including seasonal variation.

## **MARIA MASON**

### **Describe the problem you believe needs to be solved to ensure children's environmental health and safety in schools:**

An agency needs to track IAQ problems and have the personnel back up to immediately respond to them. At the moment the department of health insures the health of the students but they do not have the money or the manpower to do so. At this time, no agencies are in place to insure children's environmental health in safety in school. Without data, we are unable to see the extent of the problem.

### **What are the action steps that you recommend to address this problem?**

- ~ decide which agency has the power to enforce pollicies and procedures
- ~ give that agency proper money so they are able to train, give school inspections, and follow up
- ~ have a data base that is assessable to all agencies
- ~ have agencies cooperate and use expertise and manpower when possible

### **Which constituencies need to be involved and what role should each take?**

- ~ the department of health at the state and local level
- ~ the state needs to be able to take over when the local department of health lacks expertise
- ~ someone needs to be held accountable when the problem is not solved therefore a single person needs to be assigned the position of IAQ in schools
- ~ with a data base the governor, attorney general, senators, can have easy access to the problems we have in Washington schools
- ~ to be able to keep the health of our children we may have to pass legislation to enforce policies

### **What is the proposed timeline and desired outcome?**

I would like to say that this would be in place by September the start of school. Cle Elem will be going on its ninth year. We need to make it easier for parents and teachers when they are concerned about their health.

## **KAREN McDONNELL**

**Describe the problem you believe needs to be solved to ensure children's environmental health and safety in schools and recommendations to address these problems:**

- . Develop procurement practices for school supplies (cleaning products, office supplies and equipment, art supplies, etc.) that select products that are less toxic alternatives. Statewide decision-making.
- . Discontinue using lawn and grounds care chemicals during school year. These products are tracked in after each recess by hundreds of kids, several times per day. Most commercial lawn care fertilizers contain herbicides which are terribly toxic. Mowing lawns with these chemicals on them, aerosolizes the chemicals.
- . Aspire to eliminate the use of all insecticides indoors.
- . Develop a bus arrival and departure plan that does not expose children to diesel exhaust. Currently busses line up in such a way that the exhaust from the forward vehicle blows into the next bus in line. Also, building indoor airtakes should not draw in vehicle exhaust.
- . Discontinue the use of fume-or particulate-producing activities in classrooms (i.e., felt-tip markers and white board cleaners, rubber cement, rodent or pet cages, ...)
- . Washington school staff and teachers should refrain from using scented products that might trigger symptoms in students with asthma and sensitivities.
- . Train custodial staff in safer product use and maintenance in occupied areas (no aerosols, varnish, floor-stripping, painting, etc) during school year (except extended vacations).
- . Prevent moisture problems which lead to mold.
- . Maintenance workers need guidance about frequency of dust control practices.
- . Develop statewide protocol for remodeling events during school year to minimize exposure risk. No roofing tar.
- . Provide parents with at-risk or sensitive kids with suggestions for minimizing exposure risk at home.
- . Make recommendations on lice control using the safest products available.

## **NGOZI OLERU**

### **Describe the Problem:**

A major cause of environmental health and safety problems in the school environment is a lack of understanding among building maintenance and janitorial staff about preventive maintenance and use of alternative to toxic materials. Ventilation, HVAC system maintenance, proper cleaning techniques, pest control, use of chemicals, etc. are all areas which lend themselves well to prevention. As an example, housekeeping staff who understand the dangers of toxic cleaning materials, will be more cautious about the use and storage of such materials or better yet more knowledgeable about the existence, availability and use of alternatives. Lack of awareness among these key staff in the educational system is a serious deficiency in providing a healthy learning environment for children.

### **Action Steps Needed:**

Require the Education Department to ensure that all building maintenance and janitorial staff are trained/"certified" in a basic indoor air quality course that will be jointly put together by building and construction professionals, public health, regulators, educators and unions.

Make this a yearly renewable requirement to continue on the job...continuing education to be obtained before the start of the school year in september.

### **Constituencies that should be involved:**

The Office of the Superintendent of Public Instruction should adopt as a statewide policy/ mandate and create/recommend a course that all local districts can use. Deal with any associated legislative issues including funding and public education.

Local School Districts should ensure local implementation; negotiate with unions and staff; provide the mechanism for the provision of the course; educate staff and parents on the importance of this as a preventive measure and be an advocate; course design and delivery.

Unions should be an advocate with their members, policy makers and the public and engage in the design of the course; PUBLIC HEALTH(with EPA and other GOVT Agencies).....Course design and delivery; public and policymaker education; regulator as appropriate.

Building and Construction industries should be involved in course design and delivery.

Parents: Advocacy, advocacy, advocacy.

### **Timeline**

This should become effective September 2003 for the '03 -'04 school year.

## **MARIA VICTORIA PEELER**

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### **Describe the problem you believe needs to be solved to ensure children's environmental health and safety in schools:**

Distribution of funds need to be equitable to schools that happen to be in poorer neighborhoods and/or are primarily used by children of color.

Overall, many of these schools have the bare minimum and most likely cannot afford to be prepared for the most minimal of emergencies, upgrading of school structures that are molding and lack fresh air.

### **What are the action steps that you recommend to address this problem?**

At a minimum, these schools should be "jumped" to the top of the list for priority, critical funding from federal and state grants.

The current funding and appropriations system needs change.

### **Which constituencies need to be involved and what role should each take?**

Office of the Superintendent of Public Instruction, Board of Natural Resources, Department of Health, State Board of Health, the Governor, PTA, Community Coalition for Environmental Justice, etc.

### **What is the proposed timeline and desired outcome?**

This is a long-term project. Setting up a new set of criteria, doing the research to determine where these disadvantaged schools are and which ones can benefit most from which improvements will take at least 2 years. Completing a revitalization plan another 2 to 3 years, would be my guess. Actual work, on a cycle and phases over a period of 10 to 12 years. This time line could be sped up if federal dollars from the "Homeland Security" program was provided.

For example, given that the current state of our school's emergency response system is quite concerning. We could use Homeland Security funding to create a comprehensive emergency response plan that includes baseline monitoring of the children and long term testing and tracking to ensure that if a biological or chemical attack occurs, that the symptoms can be detected immediately and action can be taken swiftly and effectively.

I cannot think of a better use for that money, and it could cover everything from building protective areas, developing standard operating procedures that would require trained personnel to multitask in emergency protection situations, and maintain multi-lingual personnel regionally connected between schools, and multiple expertise by nursing staff backed up by the nearest medical faculties and emergency rooms, fire stations, etc.

## **MARIANNE SEIFERT**

### **Describe the problem you believe needs to be solved to ensure children's environmental health and safety (EH & S) in schools:**

State school EH & S policies need to be evaluated as a system to determine if they adequately protect public health.

Interagency coordination of steps ensuring EH & S in schools: policy development, construction, maintenance, inspection, capacity building, responses to complaints and concerns.

### **What are the action steps that you recommend to address this problem?**

1. Evaluate existing policies and develop improved policies using state policy approaches framework (from Environmental Law Institute "Healthier Schools" report):

- Traditional regulatory requirements
- Information and training on good maintenance practices
- School funding and financial incentives
- Public right to know about EH & S in schools

2. Develop and seek funding for regional school environmental health and safety teams, including (but not limited to?): school nurses, school facilities managers, local environmental health department staff, local health officers, construction professionals, physicians trained in environmental health and safety.

3. Set up biannual meetings of these teams with OSPI, LHJ, DOH, L&I, SBOH, EPA, WASA, WEA, and other relevant agencies and organizations to discuss system-wide ongoing and emerging environmental health and safety issues and propose solutions. Hear from different schools and agencies about how they are improving EH&S and responding to concerns and complaints: use case studies to improve policy.

4. Communicate via a e-newsletter, web site, conferences, or other methods about EH&S resources and information such as manuals, best practices, training opportunities, funding sources, web sites, organizations, conferences, information, legislation, etc.

### **Which constituencies need to be involved and what role should each take?**

OSPI, LHJs, DOH, L&I, SBOH, EPA, WASA, WEA, ESDs, PTA, students, parents, and teachers, and other relevant agencies and organizations should be involved. Their roles should be determined by their statutory authority, missions and goals, and capacity, which should be clearly communicated to each other and additional stakeholders.

### **What is the proposed timeline and desired outcome?**

A thorough evaluation of existing policies and development of improved policies depends on the level of agency capacity and leadership within the relevant agencies and organizations.

Several interagency groups are already meeting and funding is being used to increase capacity to address school environmental health and safety issues. Regional school environmental health and safety teams can be pulled together in some areas using existing staff, but other areas may not have the resources, and may take several months or even years to obtain funding to develop the expertise and capacity needed.

Desired outcomes: improved policies, improved communication among agencies, additional agencies and organizations involved as resources, increased school district and local health department expertise, greater regional capacity to improve school EH&S, greater awareness of the physical environment's impact on the physical and social environment.

## **APPENDIX G: LETTERS TO OSPI AND DOH**

### **LETTER TO THE OFFICE OF THE SUPERINTENDENT OF PUBLIC INSTRUCTION (OSPI)**

Terry Bergeson, PhD  
Director, Office of Superintendent of Public Instruction  
Old Capitol Building  
PO Box 47200  
Olympia, WA 98504-7200

September 17, 2002

Dear Dr. Bergeson,

Please find enclosed the final report of the Healthy Schools Task Force, a coalition of governmental and non-governmental organizations convened by the Institute for Children's Environmental Health to discuss ways to ensure that Washington's children learn in healthy and safe school environments. The Task Force met four times between April and July 2002. This report summarizes the issues, concerns, and recommendations identified by the Task Force at these meetings.

We are aware of your efforts through the School Environmental Health Initiative to address many of the issues and concerns described in this report. We hope that the work of the Task Force would serve as a support and guide for the Initiative. In addition, each Task Force member has unique experience and would offer to continue in a partnership with you in ensuring that children learn in health and safe environments.

We would like to acknowledge the participation of Marcia Riggers, Assistant Superintendent, Office of Superintendent of Public Instruction, who contributed enormously to the success of the Task Force. We greatly appreciated her input and leadership.

Please let us know if we can be of assistance to you as you develop the School Environmental Health Initiative and please call if you have questions about the Healthy Schools Task Force final report.

Sincerely,

Elise Miller, M.Ed.  
Executive Director  
Institute for Children's Environmental Health



LETTER TO DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH (DOH)

Mary Selecky, Director  
Washington State Department of Health  
PO Box 47890  
Olympia, WA 98504-7890

September 17, 2002

Dear Ms. Selecky,

Please find enclosed the final report of the Healthy Schools Task Force, a coalition of governmental and non-governmental organizations convened by the Institute for Children's Environmental Health to discuss ways to ensure that Washington's children learn in healthy and safe school environments. The Task Force met four times between April and July 2002. This report summarizes the issues, concerns, and recommendations identified by the Task Force at these meetings.

We hope that the work of the Task Force will serve as a support and guide for efforts by the Department of Health to protect children's environmental health and safety in schools. We are aware of the Office of Superintendent and Public Instruction's efforts through the School Environmental Health Initiative to address many of the issues and concerns described in this report. We hope the Department of Health will actively participate in the Initiative and support its mission.

We would like to acknowledge the participation of Maryanne Guichard, Office Director, Environmental Health and Safety, who contributed enormously to the success of the Task Force. We

Please let us know if we can be of assistance to you and please call if you have questions about the Healthy Schools Task Force final report.

Sincerely,

Elise Miller, M.Ed.  
Executive Director  
Institute for Children's Environmental Health