

Where They Learn Does Matter

<http://usgbc-centraltexas.org/slider/where-we-learn-matters>

Educational studies have demonstrated how a school's physical environment can impact the comfort and health of students, and, in turn, can affect student concentration, health, attendance, and performance. The critical environmental factors that physically affect students are being identified and managed which has resulted in improved conditions inside their classrooms. Presently, many Texas school districts have developed comprehensive building programs that ensure classroom environments are conducive for teaching, learning, and positive health outcomes. The residents in these districts have supported their schools through passage of school bond projects and with their participation in activities that promote clean, green and healthy schools.

Both the research and actual case studies substantiate how improvements in a school's indoor environmental quality enhances academic performance, increases attendance, and improves health outcomes for students, faculty, and staff. Creating and maintaining healthy school buildings can achieve reductions in the airborne contaminant levels of invisible particles, irritant gases, and infectious microbes that impact student performance by up to 25%. Three recently released national reports call for the improvement in school facilities to achieve higher student success rates and greater community/neighborhood attractiveness.

On January 26th, The Healthy Schools Campaign stated in a report titled *Health in Mind, Improving Education Through Wellness*, "To truly support learning, schools must create the conditions for health. Given the strong connection between health and learning, schools must recognize health as central to their core mission of student learning. That means creating a healthier school environment, which supports students' well-being and builds a foundation for learning. In this environment, good nutrition, physical activity, basic safety, clean air and water, access to care and education about how to make healthy choices allow students to thrive. In a healthy school environment, students learn—through lessons and through example—to value their own health and wellness." <http://www.healthyschoolscampaign.org/programs/health-in-mind/>

On February 13th, The Coalition for Healthier Schools, coordinated by Healthy Schools Network, released a new report on current school environmental health policies that was titled *Toward Healthy Schools 2015: Progress on America's Environmental Health Crisis for Children*. The report cites multiple studies documenting the benefits of healthy indoor learning environments on attendance and achievement, and then presents state-level data and policy summaries. The report's primary finding is that "ALL public and private school children should be considered at elevated risk of health and learning difficulties due solely to the unexamined and/or unaddressed environmental health risks in their schools and the lack of public health services for children at risk or with suspected exposures." <http://www.healthyschools.org/HealthySchools2015.pdf>

On March 12th, The Center for Green Schools stated in a report titled *2013 State of Our Schools*, "School facilities can affect occupant health—that of both children and adults. A review of an array of studies found that air quality, acoustics, levels of thermal comfort and levels of daylight affect the stress levels, health and well-being of occupants in schools. Public health research has shown that respiratory health and air pollutants are strongly related. The understanding of the direct connection between indoor air quality and Sick Building Syndrome has also become well established." <http://centerforgreenschools.org/stateofschools>

You are encouraged to read the above reports, learn that school facilities do matter for the success of students and the community, and then work to create clean, green and healthy schools in your neighborhood. These actions will create the indoor environmental conditions that are required for successful students, schools and neighborhoods.

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