

Indoor Air Quality



Tools for Schools

How to Implement a District-Wide IAQ Tools for Schools Program

The *Indoor Air Quality Tools for Schools (IAQ TFS)* Program is a flexible, comprehensive resource for a school building's health. The district-wide approach for implementing the *IAQ TFS* Kit has become the standard for schools that are looking to initiate proactive indoor air quality (IAQ) practices in their school system. Successful programs rely on IAQ Teams that are dedicated to eliminating poor IAQ and are armed with the knowledge of IAQ issues and commonsense preventative measures. Working together, the IAQ Team will accomplish the steps needed to successfully implement the *IAQ TFS* Kit district-wide. As implementation progresses, the Team will launch their IAQ management plan, after securing buy-in from the superintendent and school board. The success of the *IAQ TFS* Program depends on motivated, dedicated people. After all, ensuring a healthy school is an investment in the students and staff. This guide can help launch a district-wide plan today!

- **Be Proactive.** Make IAQ management a priority within the school district.
- **Obtain Buy-In.** One of the initial steps is to obtain buy-in from the upper management (superintendents, school boards, chief financial officers, facility management directors, etc.) within the school district. These decision makers are key to an IAQ program being adopted district-wide.
- **Organize District-Wide.** Organize a district-wide IAQ Team. Ideally, individuals who are part of this team should be key players in the implementation of the *IAQ TFS* Program. As a prerequisite, IAQ team members should have a good understanding of IAQ problems in their district. These individuals need to know IAQ procedures and have the technical background to evaluate their facilities.
- **IAQ Coordinators.** Assign IAQ coordinators to each school in your District. They will serve as the primary contact at each school and as on-site manager for IAQ concerns.
- **Training and Education.** Conduct training and education for all your school IAQ coordinators, school faculty, and staff to familiarize them with the *IAQ TFS* Kit. A Kit should be available at each school as a reference guide. All school personnel can potentially be affected by IAQ, and they will be better advocates of promoting good IAQ if they understand the health effects associated with poor IAQ.
- **Distribute *IAQ TFS* Checklists.** Distribute checklists and establish a checklist log. Summarize completed checklist to assess status of radon, lead, and pest management programs in each school in your district.
- **Conduct School Walkthroughs.** Conduct walkthroughs at each school. The district IAQ Team should assign one or more individual(s) to assess current and potential IAQ problems in each school building, using the walkthrough checklist found in the Kit. It is recommended that other school staff participate in order to learn about the assessment of IAQ in the building. The findings will be forwarded to the district IAQ Team, which will review each school's findings and prioritize them into short-term and long-term IAQ improvement projects.

- **Prioritize IAQ Improvement Projects and Take Action.** Projects for each school should be prioritized into short-term and long-term categories based on health-related and financial considerations. After the IAQ improvement list has been finalized, the low-cost solutions should be implemented first. Many IAQ hazards can be remediated by simply educating the school staff and changing the current habits of the school occupants (i.e., explaining to the teachers that placing posters or books on unit-ventilators reduces fresh air circulation). Develop an implementation plan for long-term IAQ improvements.
- **Financing Options.** Research financing vehicles to obtain funding for the long term, more expensive IAQ improvements. There are many options available to schools and states (grants, performance contracting savings, etc.). Initiate a meeting with a financial expert and include the CFO and business officials of the school. These individuals are key to understanding the available funding options for schools. Because these key decision makers have been involved from the beginning with the implementation of an IAQ action plan, understanding potential funding mechanisms will strengthen the school's commitment to working towards the goal of improved indoor air quality.
- **Continuing Education.** Conduct refresher classes about IAQ to make sure that the staff understands how behavior can influence IAQ in a school building. Address any overall *IAQ TFS* implementation concerns that school staff and faculty may have. Let this be an opportunity where the district IAQ coordinator can address and explain all the improvements in each school.
- **Internal and External Communications Strategy.** Develop an active internal and external communications plan that will educate and raise awareness among school district employees and in the community about IAQ issues in the school/school district and the benefits of good IAQ.
- **Pro-Active IAQ Management Plan.** Develop an ongoing preventive IAQ management plan supported by district-wide decision makers. The IAQ management plan should prioritize activities and identify areas needing special funding or attention. Medical emergency response should also be addressed.
- **Establish Good IAQ Policies.** Consider district-wide policies which support good IAQ:
 - ✓ Implement integrated pest management practices.
 - ✓ Establish a "No Animals in the Classroom" protocol.
 - ✓ Secure food in the classroom in air-tight containers.
 - ✓ Direct idling motor vehicles (e.g., buses) away from air intake vents.
 - ✓ Promote good IAQ painting practices (e.g., use low volatile organic compound paints and paint when building is unoccupied).
 - ✓ Clean carpets according to manufacturer's recommendations.
- **Program Evaluation.** Review and evaluate the effects of your district-wide *IAQ TFS* Program.
- **Apply for an IAQ TFS Award.** Districts are eligible to receive a Great Start Award at the beginning stages of implementing the *IAQ TFS* Program. After showing substantial progress in the Program, districts are eligible to apply for the *IAQ TFS* Leadership Award. Finally, districts that demonstrate exemplary IAQ programs and outstanding achievements are eligible for the *IAQ TFS* Excellence Award. For further information on the Awards Program criteria and applications, see the *IAQ TFS* Web site at www.epa.gov/iaq/schools.



The Framework for Effective School IAQ Management: Six Key Drivers

