



March 2023

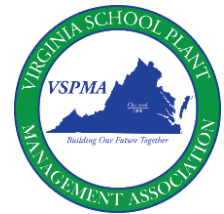
BUILDING OUR FUTURE TOGETHER

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Message from the President



Welcome to the Late Winter/Early Spring edition of the VSPMA Quarterly Newsletter!

In this edition you'll find fascinating articles from Sara Porter and Heidi Wilcox. You couldn't find two people more passionate about what they do for schools. I had a chance to see Sara and Heidi in action at last month's National School Plant Management Association (NSPMA) annual conference and I'm so glad I did – they were among the most popular presenters there!

About that conference – what a great venue for finding out what's new in the facilities industry, meeting and greeting other school facilities professionals and exploring common challenges! There were school facilities professionals from as far away as California and industry leaders from across the country. There were educational sessions on playgrounds, healthy green schools, indoor air quality, effective and safe cleaning products, managing school work orders, and a double session on school security. The number of innovative products and services demonstrated on the exhibition floor was almost overwhelming. But far and away, the most valuable aspect of the conference was the networking – meeting, learning, and sharing with others in school facility management. If you haven't been to a Virginia or a National Conference, plan to be at the next one!

Spring forward!

Debra Yap



Director Operations and Maintenance (Retired)

Alexandria City Public Schools

Simple Ways to Improve School Indoor Air Quality

By Sara Porter

Indoor air quality (IAQ) affects everything from health to concentration to test performance, and there are straightforward ways to improve it at your school even with a limited budget.

These three high-impact measures from the [Healthy Green Schools & Colleges standard](#) are good starting points.

Establish an HVAC Maintenance Plan

HVAC systems control the air exchange in the room and clean the air. Even with older systems, proper maintenance is essential to ensure the components are working optimally.

The school's maintenance plan should include regular HVAC system inspections using the EPA ventilation checklist from Tools for Schools. This includes quarterly cleaning of clean air supply diffusers, grilles, return registers, and outside air intakes to prevent contaminants from entering the system and spreading around the room, and inspections of the building automation system, dampers, actuators, and physical system components.

Assess Ventilation

The HVAC systems in schools should also meet the minimum requirements of the ANSI/ASHRAE ventilation standard for acceptable IAQ. Documenting an HVAC system's outdoor air intake flow rates is the first step toward improving ventilation if it isn't up to par.

One way to do this is to follow the ventilation guidelines in the WELL Health and Safety rating. This includes having

a qualified engineer assess the current systems and provide a report with information on how any potential HVAC system modifications would affect the supply of outdoor air as well as energy consumption, thermal comfort conditions, and maintenance processes.

If the HVAC system can't achieve adequate ventilation and air exchange for the occupancy level, providing supplemental air-cleaning systems in classrooms and other assembly areas can improve IAQ.

Choose Safer Cleaning Products

The chemicals inside cleaning products can be hazardous to humans and the environment and contribute to poor IAQ.

Chemicals commonly found in conventional cleaners have been linked to a variety of health issues including birth defects, cancer, and respiratory disease. In fact, studies have found that regular use of conventional spray cleaners is associated with a 50% increase in asthma symptoms.

Choosing products that have been independently certified for healthier, more sustainable ingredients helps protect students and staff. Certification marks from trusted nonprofits like Green Seal indicate that a cleaning product is safer for humans and the environment than conventional alternatives while also demonstrating proven performance.

The [Healthy Green Schools & Colleges standard](#) is publicly available to anyone and provides other accessible measures to help you improve health, safety, and sustainability in your district. Taking the free [Healthy Green Schools & Colleges self-assessment](#) can help you understand where your biggest-impact opportunities are. Schools that complete the self-assessment receive a report detailing these opportunities, which you can use to make the case for strategic budget allocations and investments in new tools, technologies, and products.

About the Author

Sara Porter serves a dual role as both the Vice President of External Affairs at Healthy Schools Campaign (HSC) and the director of Healthy Green Schools & Colleges, a partnership between HSC and Green Seal. Sara joined HSC in 2008 and has worked on the organization's green cleaning efforts ever since. In her role as director of Healthy Green Schools & Colleges, Sara has led the team through the designing and building of this new program from stakeholder engagement and standard development to program design and corporate fundraising. In Sara's vice president role, she leads HSC's work on school food policy and Cooking up Change, a unique program that challenges high school culinary students to create healthy, appealing school meals. Sara builds and maintains relationships with many external partners, oversees corporate fundraising and serves on the HSC management team. She received her Bachelor's degree in Political Science from DePaul University and lives in Wheaton with her husband and three children.

Going Green to Save Green



A sustainability initiative at one Colorado school district is anticipated to generate a net savings of \$20 million over 20 years while making its buildings more environmentally friendly and improving the learning environment for more than 60,000 students and staff.

Cherry Creek School District and Sourcewell awarded supplier **Johnson Controls** are embarking on the initiative expected to reduce annual carbon emissions by 25% and water usage by 1.8 billion gallons – all while creating a more improved learning environment throughout Colorado's fourth-largest school district.

"Cherry Creek Schools is dedicated to excellence in all aspects of public K-12 education," says Cherry Creek Superintendent Christopher Smith. "A key component is aligning our facility operations with our values."

Read the full article >> [johnsoncontrols.com/media-center/news/press-releases/2022/04/19/cherry-creek-school-district-and-johnson-controls-pave-the-way-for-colorados-healthy-sustainable-fut](https://www.johnsoncontrols.com/media-center/news/press-releases/2022/04/19/cherry-creek-school-district-and-johnson-controls-pave-the-way-for-colorados-healthy-sustainable-fut)

Taking Control of Infection Control

A major challenge in the facility services industry is how to handle infectious outbreaks. We have all seen news reports of this university or that district closed for cleaning and disinfecting due to absences from an infectious outbreak like Covid 19. Unfortunately, the reality is, this is a waste of time and money. You will pay extra to shut the school down and have a service come in to do a deep clean and disinfect. Instead, it's better to have correct systems in place every day so infectious outbreaks are not an issue. If they happen, the department is ready.

Identifying the Problem

Examining the age of the people using the facility, as well as the location, can help predict the type of infectious diseases to watch for. For example:

Preschool and Day Cares — The population in these facilities are infants and toddlers with some adult teachers and helpers. There is the presence of vomit, fecal matter and urine, as well as food and other soils. Pathogens are also easily spread as occupants share toys, blankets and sleeping areas. As a result, hand, foot and mouth disease, cold and flu viruses, norovirus, Covid 19 and respiratory or bronchial bacteria or viruses are easily spread.

K-12 schools — Some of the same issues seen in preschools and day cares can apply to school districts. Where differences exist are in locker rooms, showers, athletic equipment and matting, hallway lockers and more than one lunch service. Cleaning teams should watch for cold and flu, norovirus, respiratory or bronchial bacteria and viruses, Methicillin-resistant *Staphylococcus aureus* (MRSA) and Covid 19.

Protection from Pathogens

Some of the main steps to protecting facilities from an infectious outbreak include:

1. Wash your hands often and continue teaching building occupants to do the same.
2. Stay home when sick. Managers should support a culture where this is encouraged.
3. Clean and clean well.

The best protection from pathogens comes from proper and comprehensive training. Create written standard operating procedures and protocols. *And use the least toxic, high-performing chemical or equipment/technology to clean/remove soils and germs.*

Continued on next page →

4. Kill when necessary, using the best product for the job. Using the correct sanitizer or disinfectant. Not all active ingredients are created equal. Once the, one-time spray and wipe or spray and let dry or some other one-time process is done for sanitizing and disinfection, then the accumulation of soil and microbes starts again from dust, germs, droplets in the air falling on surfaces, from the HVAC system, from doors and windows being opened and people coming and going from the facility. This is why a one-time so-called deep disinfection does not work in the long run and wastes money and time. **Setting up a proactive system that is put into action daily is what is needed.**
5. Know the facility. Keep track of what types of infections happen in the facility, what time of year they occur and how long they last. Create a plan that helps relieve that burden. Work with your vendor or industry expert to identify the appropriate chemicals, equipment and technology, along with appropriate cleaning processes, to protect the facility on a daily basis from an outbreak.

Every facility needs both a cleaning and a public health, infection control or mitigation plan. Best practices are to identify the microbe of concern and use the appropriate technology or disinfectant, at the correct concentration, to kill it. It is not advised to “chemical bomb” the building to fight infections — which would cause too much exposure to the workers and pollute the indoor air. Instead, work with a distributor or industry expert to identify the appropriate disinfecting solution or technology for the job.

Pathogenic organisms are sneaky, small, and quick. They can mutate, become resistant and hibernate, and they can sneak up on us. “Chemical bombing” facilities is not the way to fix the problem. Take control, educate, train and set up processes, protocols and procedures using great chemistry, equipment and technology.

HEIDI WILCOX is an applied microbiologist, presenter, educator, and trainer in the cleaning industry. She is also the president and founder of Wilcox PH Solutions, a consultancy specializing in “cleaning and disinfecting for health.” Working in the worlds of science, engineering and commercial cleaning, Heidi examines challenges within facilities and provides solutions to streamline processes and protocols. www.wilcoxevs.com



Save the Date!

**The Virginia School Plant Management
Association**


15th Annual Conference

Improvement, Innovation, Inspiration! The Future Starts With Us



Doubletree by Hilton, Midlothian, VA

October 1 – 4, 2023



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