

HEALTH & SAFETY

A NEWSLETTER FOR NYSUT'S HEALTH AND SAFETY LEADERS

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Healthy and high performance schools for every child within this generation!

By Diane Brandli, ASID, LEED AP, Green Schools Committee Chair for the U.S. Green Building Council, New York Upstate Chapter and Sustainable Interiors Consultant

Nothing says “health and safety” like a green school. However, in today’s political climate, the word “green” has taken on a negative connotation, so many have begun to call them “healthy and high performance.” And when I say “high performance,” I’m not only talking about the building’s energy systems, but also about high performing students, staff and teachers resulting from occupying a less toxic and more humane indoor environment.

Glancing through the NYSUT *Health & Safety* newsletters of 2011, I was struck with just how serious you are about health and safety. The front page article in the winter 2012 issue, “Why should NYSUT

members care about national chemical policy reform,” goes right to the heart of what I’ve been advocating for. I’ve made a career out of designing interiors for educational facilities, and I couldn’t agree more that there needs to be serious reform of the federal chemical management system. Chemicals used in the manufacture of building and interior finish products have a significant impact on human health. Not only are adults vulnerable, but because children have a smaller body mass and all of their systems run faster than adult systems, they not only take in toxins faster, but they have less body mass to process them.

There is much more to healthy and high performance schools than building occupant health, but when this subject is raised, there’s usually an

administrator who asks, “How much will it cost?” There has been much talk about how green or “sustainable” buildings cost more, but in many cases that is not true, and if it does cost more, the return on investment is usually quickly recovered through energy savings. The more challenging metric to quantify is cost savings gained through less sick days — as well as educational gains through less sick days. While studies continue, and we see results that we would logically expect to see, the budget almost always trumps all other concerns.

Another point to be made is that there is a great deal of “greenwashing” complicating our decisions. In the supermarket you see claims like “all natural,” and products in green packaging — which mean absolutely nothing. Likewise, buildings are being maintained, remodeled and built with claims that they are green. I want them to prove it through a credible third party certification — whether it is a floor

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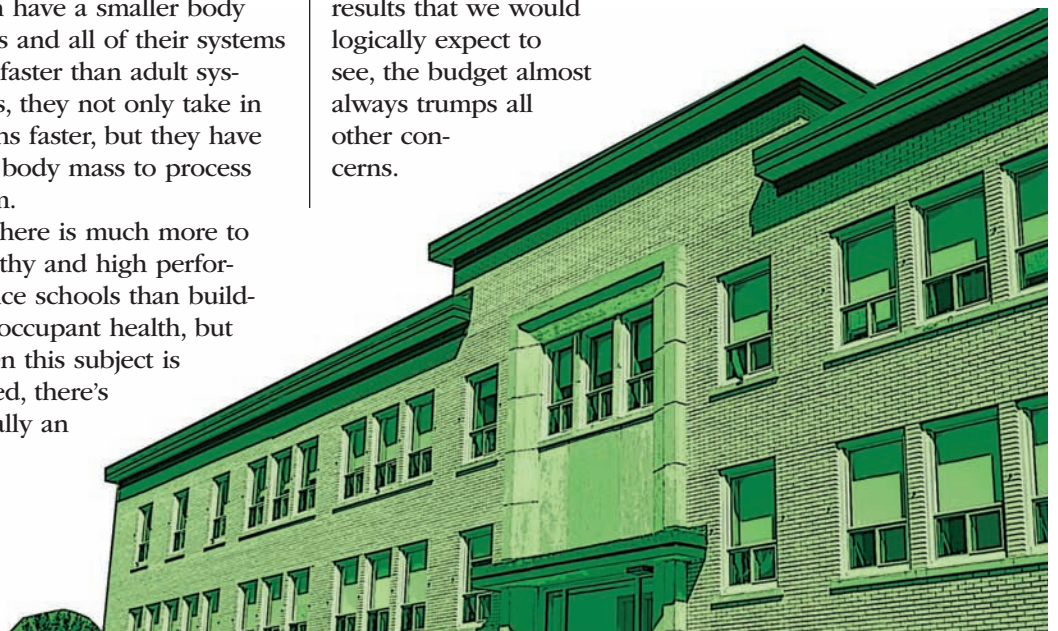
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Healthy and high performance schools

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cleaner or a building. When administrators say, "It's too expensive to certify," you need to step up and tell them why you need proof. You would not hire a teacher without proof of their ability to teach, and you should not accept a building as healthy and high performance without proof.

I'm a great believer in grassroots action and NYSUT is in a good position to drive change from the grass roots. Here are some things you can do to create a healthy and high performance school (and workplace):

- Form a school healthy and high performance team, inviting principals, teachers, parents, school board members, facilities managers, superintendents, students, community leaders, business leaders and local non-profits.
- Share the stories about the school's efforts with your community through press releases, school newsletters, school events, student video projects, etc.
- Host a healthy and high performance event at the school and invite the community for a discussion, school tour, student-led activity, etc.
- Connect with or establish a student

green group. Some of the established organizations include Earth Force, ACE Mentors, the Alliance for Climate Education, and Go Green Foundation.

- Promote the school as a teaching tool. One idea is to install signage to explain "healthy and high performance" strategies employed in your building.
- Visit www.centerforgreenschools.org/coalition-for-green-schools.aspx to connect with the Coalition for Green Schools.
- Visit www.centerforgreenschools.org for many more ways to make your school a "healthy and high performance" place to work and learn.

HEALTH & SAFETY

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WEB RESOURCES

Info on toxins in jewelry, kids' toys and more

At www.HealthyStuff.org you can find out if products such as low-cost jewelry, kids' toys and apparel contain chemicals such as heavy metals and chlorine. The website is based on research conducted by environmental health organizations and other researchers around the country. Healthystuff is the brainchild of a Michigan-based nonprofit environmental organization called The Ecology Center, which leads its research and development.

'WAVE' to prevent health care-associated infections (HAIs)

Sponsored by the Office of Healthcare Quality and the HHS Partnership for Patients, the WAVE initiative provides four free, downloadable tools as part of its campaign. WAVE is an acronym: Wash hands, Ask questions,

Vaccinate and Ensure safety. The campaign is aimed at helping family members and caregivers educate themselves about HAIs and the steps they can take to protect their loved ones.

The tools — a wallet card, brochure and two posters — are available as downloadable PDFs. www.healthcare.gov/compare/partnership-for-patients/resources/conditions.html — scroll down to the "WAVE" section.

Create a healthy indoor environment at your school

The EPA's Healthy Indoor Environments in Schools website has been updated to include interactive tools and resources to better assist users in developing and sustaining comprehensive indoor air quality (IAQ) management programs. It includes an IAQ problem solving tool and schools action kit. Visit <http://epa.gov/iaq/schools> for more information.

Smartphone app shows ingredients of Clorox products

The Clorox Ingredients Inside App and mobile website allow customers to scan a UPC code to get information about a Clorox product's ingredients. Users of the iPhone can download the app from the iPhone App Store by typing in "Clorox ingredients." It will soon be available for other mobile devices.

A new mobile website (<http://i.clx.com>), available for all mobile platforms, gives on-the-go access to Clorox's Ingredients Inside program. The app and website can be used to find ingredients of all Clorox disinfecting, cleaning or laundry products in the U.S. and Canada. Visit www.thecloroxcompany.com/products/ingredients-inside/ for more information.

OSHA revises Hazard Communication Standard

WASHINGTON — To better protect workers from hazardous chemicals, the U.S. Department of Labor's Occupational Safety and Health Administration has revised its Hazard Communication Standard (HCS), aligning it with the United Nations' global chemical labeling system. The new standard is expected to prevent an estimated 43 annual deaths and result in an estimated \$475.2 million in enhanced productivity for U.S. businesses each year.

The HCS will be fully implemented by 2016 and benefit workers by reducing confusion about chemical hazards in the workplace, facilitating safety training and improving understanding of hazards, especially for low-literacy workers. OSHA's standard will establish consistent labels and safety data sheets

for all chemicals made in the United States and imported from abroad.

The three major changes are in hazard classification, labels and safety data sheets:

■ **Hazard classification:** The definitions of hazards have been changed to provide specific criteria for classification of health and physical hazards, as well as classification of mixtures. These specific criteria will help to ensure consistent evaluations of hazardous effects across manufacturers, and labels and safety data sheets will be more accurate.

■ **Labels:** Chemical manufacturers and importers will be required to provide a label that includes a harmonized signal word, pictogram and hazard

statement for each hazard class and category. Precautionary statements must also be provided.

■ **Safety Data Sheets:** Will now have a specified 16-section format.

The revised HCS requires that workers be retrained within two years of the publication of the final rule to facilitate recognition and understanding of the new labels and safety data sheets.

For a side-by-side comparison of the current HCS and the final revised HCS, please see OSHA's hazard communication safety and health topics webpage at: www.osha.gov/dsg/hazcom/index.html which includes links to OSHA's revised HCS and guidance materials such as Q & As, OSHA fact sheet and quick cards.

LEGISLATIVE UPDATE

NYSUT's 2012 Health & Safety legislative priorities

Extreme heat

This year NYSUT's Task Force on Health and Safety has prioritized two New York bills: one establishes a maximum temperature in school and college buildings, and the other would include K-12 schools in a workplace violence prevention regulation already in effect for all other public employers in New York.

Part of the campaigns around the bills will be to solicit stories from members affected by these two issues. We know there will be resistance to any "unfunded mandate," so we need to demonstrate that these protections are very much needed for our members.

If you have been impacted by high building/room temperatures in school or a higher ed facility we want to hear from you. Let us know about health impacts to you and students as well as impacts on learning and classroom functioning, like equipment, experiments and animals.

Violence in schools

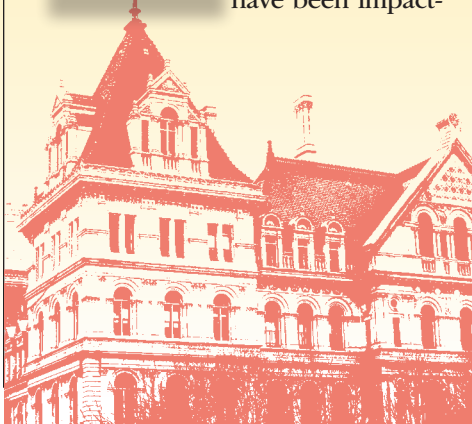
If you have been hit, kicked, bitten, threatened by a student, parent, administrator, co-worker or school visitor or have been injured from restraining a student, we want to hear from you and how the incident affected you and your co-workers.



"NYSUT members have the right to a safe working environment," said NYSUT Vice President Kathleen Donahue. "If you have been impact-

ed by violence where you work, I urge you to share your story with us so that we can collectively make a difference and let our legislators know this is not acceptable."

Send your stories to: psbands@nysutmail.org. Let us know who you are and where you are located, whether it is a specific school district or campus or *town/city/village/ZIP code (your name and exact address is optional)*. We need to be able to tell legislators what is happening in their districts to help us make the case for these bills. Also, let us know if you might be willing to testify at a hearing, visit your legislator in their local office with other NYSUT members or talk to your colleagues about participating in these advocacy efforts.



Green chemistry science education webinar

Save the date

■ **May 10, 2:30–3:30 p.m.** ■

On May 10 the New York State Department of Environmental Conservation, Beyond Benign (a 501(c)(3) not-for-profit organization) and the EPA Region 2 will share information on the best chemical management practices, principles of green chemistry and other lessons learned from work under way in New York schools. Green chemistry is the science and practice of designing chemicals, products and processes that result in the reduction or elimination of

hazardous substances; pollutants, such as greenhouse gas emissions; and waste. Green chemistry applies across the life cycle of a chemical product, including its design, manufacture and use.

The New York State Education Department will also participate and reflect upon statewide opportunities to advance green chemistry. Participants will be able to ask questions during the Q&A session.

Visit <http://epa.blbtech.com/greenchemistrywebinar/> to register for the webinar.



PVC Plastic: Unhealthy for kids and schools

■ **May 23, 4:30–5:45 p.m.** ■ **Learn what you can do to reduce exposure in a free webinar**



Healthy schools are critical to children's health. An emerging toxic plastic of concern, PVC also known as vinyl, is widespread in back-to-school supplies, office supplies

and building materials. This plastic is often filled with phthalates, chemicals harmful to children's health that have been banned in toys, but widespread in schools.

The good news is safer and affordable alternatives are available for schools and parents to use and purchase.

From the comfort of your own home/computer, learn how you can help cre-

ate healthier and safer schools for all, by joining this webinar May 23, 4:30 – 5:45 p.m.

The webinar is sponsored by New York State United Teachers, the United Federation of Teachers and the Center for Health, Environment & Justice.

Look for webinar registration info in NYSUT United and at www.nysut.org/healthandsafety.