

Integrated Pest Management in Schools: Its Role in Improving Academic Achievement



The Colorado Coalition for School IPM is an effort by Colorado State University, U.S. Environmental Protection Agency, Colorado Department of Agriculture, Colorado Department of Public Health and Environment, Colorado Department of Education, school districts, National Environmental Health Association and private pest control professionals

“As Society continues to focus on the importance of academic achievement, the physical environment of schools should be addressed as one of the critical factors that influence academic outcome.”

Sherry Everett Jones-PhD, MPH, JD; Division of Adolescent and School Health, CDC

Improving Learning Environments through Integrated Pest Management

As education funds dwindle, school administrators are challenged more than ever to deliver effective and quantitatively measurable education achievement results while continuing to provide a safe and healthy learning environment where students and staff can flourish.

“Limited resources are a reality for schools everywhere, but policies and programs related to the physical school environment may be justified, supported and funded more readily when they are a benefit to all students and school staff rather than to a smaller subset of the building occupants.”ⁱ



A child typically spends about 1300 hours in a school building each year, and teachers and other staff are there even longer,ⁱⁱ so it's important that their health and wellbeing is safeguarded while in the school environment.

Recent data indicates that much work needs to be done to adequately protect children from unnecessary pesticide exposure in the school environment. A study conducted in 538 school districts and 1,103 elementary, middle and high schools revealed that 72.3% of the districts still used widespread pesticide applications to manage pests rather than spot treatments which would reduce children's exposure to potentially harmful chemicals.ⁱⁱⁱ

In the publication *Safe and Healthy School Environments*, Frumkin states that, “A safe and healthy school environment does more than benefit student health and protects students; **it also improves academic performance** and morale while safeguarding teachers and other staff.”

The continued broad use of pesticides in schools adds unnecessary health risks for students and staff, unnecessary expenses to the maintenance of the school property and increased liability for the school district.



ⁱ Safe and Healthy School Environments; H. Frumkin, R. Geller & I.L. Rubin Eds. Oxford University Press, New York, NY 2006

ⁱⁱ Environmental Law: Fundamentals of Schools, Dr. Day, National School Board Association, 1995 Alexandria, VA

ⁱⁱⁱ School Health Policies and Program Study 2006; E. Jones, R. Axelrad, W.A. Wattingney; Healthy and Safe school Environment, Part II, physical school environment: *Journal Sch Health*, 2007; 77: p 544 - 556



Why Should IPM be Important to You?

Integrated Pest Management or IPM is designed to minimize the risk of students and staff's exposure to pesticides. IPM also reduces the risk of exposure to illnesses and diseases that may be transmitted by pests found in the school environment (e.g. flies, mice, roaches, rats).

U.S. Department of Education statistics show that more than 75% of America's schools were built before 1970. These older buildings with shifting foundations, openings around utility pipes and doors and windows, provide greater access for pests to enter the school facility.¹ Therefore, managing pests in the school environment will continue to be a demand. Why not consider the advantages of IPM?

School IPM Benefits:

- IPM practices focus on utilizing pest exclusion, non-chemical control strategies and low toxicity pesticides (only when necessary). It minimizes students exposure to pesticide products that could adversely affect students health and learning ability.
- IPM minimizes student exposure to products that could potentially impair a child's neurological functions or ability to concentrate and remain alert. Because children have different susceptibilities to chemical pesticides due to their physiological, metabolic and behavioral characteristics when compared to adults, they are at greater risk for experiencing adverse health effects when exposed to pesticides that may be used in school buildings to manage pests.
- IPM minimizes student and staff exposure to Asthma triggers from pests and pesticides. Recent studies indicate that about 1 in 10 school age children or 10% of the student population had Asthma in 2009. Approximately 14 million school days are missed every year due to Asthma.ⁱⁱ

School Administrators and others who have decision making responsibilities for pest management in and around school buildings should know that a safer option exists. Why not consider the advantages of IPM as a pest management option in your school?

¹ Lewis B. Cheney, US Department of Education, Washington, DC; National Center for Education Statistics, 2007

ⁱⁱ Asthma in the U.S. Growing Every Year, Center for Disease Control and Prevention, Atlanta, GA; May 2011

As you continue to focus on the importance of academic achievement, the physical environment of the school should be addressed as one of the critical factors that influence academic outcome!



Interested in learning more about the importance of the health, safety and environmental benefits of School IPM?

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