



**Building Success,
Leading Change:**

Stories of Healthy School Environments



AASA produces the publication *Building Success, Leading Change: Stories of Healthy School Environments* as a part of its efforts to help school leaders create and maintain healthy schools conducive to learning. *Building Success* aims to increase the awareness and understanding among school systems leaders of the importance of indoor air quality principles and risks to the school environment.

This edition highlights one urban and one rural school district. North East Independent School District in San Antonio, Texas, is a member of AASA's Urban Healthy Schools Coalition and Auburn City Schools in Auburn, Ala., is a member of AASA's Rural Healthy Schools Coalition. Each coalition is comprised of superintendents and other administrators, facilities managers/directors and school health staff.

The parallels between urban and rural environmental health issues are clear when you read *Building Success*. Strategies, plans and outcomes shared in this edition of *Building Success* allow you to apply the lessons they learned to enhance your own success.



North East ISD Asthma Blowout events that teach students and parents about asthma management and IAQ



North East Independent School District, San Antonio, Texas

United by Health

SUPERINTENDENT: RICHARD MIDDLETON • STUDENT POPULATION: 63,000
OF SCHOOL BUILDINGS: 71 • CLASSIFICATION: URBAN

Overview and Vision

North East Independent School District is the second largest school district in the San Antonio, Texas area. North East ISD has 19 exemplary schools, the most in Bexar County for the fourth year in a row.

The mission of the district is to challenge and encourage each student to achieve and demonstrate academic excellence, technical skills and responsible citizenship.

North East ISD's Department of Safe and Healthy Schools has a goal of providing children with the best possible learning environment. The department's commitment guarantees students and faculty a healthy and distraction-free atmosphere.

The district credits its success in managing indoor air quality (IAQ) and environmental health to its team approach, involving departments in which indoor air quality overlap — facilities, maintenance, engineering, and health care. Their success story proves that IAQ is a multidisciplinary issue that needs a holistic response. The district's

efforts are effectively managed and include easily implemented and affordable measures that promote and improve health.

Leading by Example

Richard A. Middleton's concern with airborne allergens and their effect on asthmatic children is his driving factor in addressing IAQ. Middleton recognized the link between the health of the students and academic performance, and took steps towards addressing both. Through the execution of the Department of Safe and Healthy Schools and sound IAQ management practices, children in North East ISD have experienced measurable health outcomes including a 0.3 percent increase in attendance from June 2007 to July 2008, and a 50 percent decrease in inhaler use due to asthma.

"NEISD expects more intellectually and in order to achieve this they must have healthy students," Middleton said. "It is education's responsibility to ensure children are able to excel. A healthy child is an effective learner."

The success of North East ISD's IAQ and asthma programs has made Middleton more demonstrable in his leadership approach. The district is a part of the community and has become a leader and model that the city and county look to for innovation and action. Says Middleton, "Education is not confined to the classroom; it includes the home and community."

"A healthy child is an effective learner."

~ Dr. Richard Middleton, Superintendent, North East ISD

Approach to Healthy School Environments

In 1996, North East ISD was one of the first school systems in the nation to use the Environmental Protection Agency's (EPA) IAQ Tools for Schools Program. Since then, the district has been following its development and participating in EPA's annual symposiums. Tools for Schools kits are also distributed throughout North East ISD's campuses via principals' meetings and leadership presentations.

The district's Department of Safe and Healthy Schools coordinates medical, educational and health issues with the building systems. This facilitates an understanding how the building systems, ventilation, and cleaning influence classroom health. The department is in the facilities division, works closely with engineers and custodial teams, and reports to a centralized associate supervisor. Funding is provided by the division of operations annual budget.

The overall IAQ approach is comprehensive, drawing from several resources for effectiveness. The department attests working collaboratively advances their approach to healthy school environments. The district uses the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention's asthma-friendly school kits to build general asthma awareness. The district's asthma coordinator and the facilities department confer regularly on IAQ issues (i.e., carpets, furniture, cleaning). Both the radon gas and lead-based paint programs were initiated by the engineering department but work accordingly with the district's comprehensive IAQ plan. The department, facilities, maintenance and nursing staff together coordinate IAQ presentations.

To be the most effective in disseminating information, the department condenses and highlights what school and administrative staff need as opposed to overloading them with resources. Only materials that are relevant at the school-level are presented to schools, while materials

that are relevant at the district-level are presented to facilities and construction departments.

To track the effectiveness of IAQ management, North East ISD uses an approach that emphasizes wellness, physical education and disease management. Having a disease management strategy humanizes their efforts, and allows for larger coverage to those affected by IAQ. Asthma sufferers are the most susceptible population, and the district monitors them as the baseline for assessing the impact of their indoor environmental health management program.

Prevention and Training

Professional development is provided to all teachers on IAQ and asthma. Classroom inspections are performed on an annual basis. Additionally, teachers, staff and the facilities team are trained on how building systems work together to create a healthy environment. Presentations on IAQ and asthma are also conducted for principals, assistant principals and administrators.

Training is provided in three phases:

- Phase 1: New employees receive orientation on safety and environmental issues.
- Phase 2: Existing employees and head custodians receive monthly IAQ updates and presentations throughout the school year. During summer school programs, the department hosts custodial meetings.
- Phase 3: Parents, students, and district professionals working in asthma are brought together twice a year to attend "Asthma Blowouts." These sessions are usually hosted with medical doctors, nurses and administrators from elementary, middle and high schools. There is also a kid zone where children receive information on asthma and allergies.

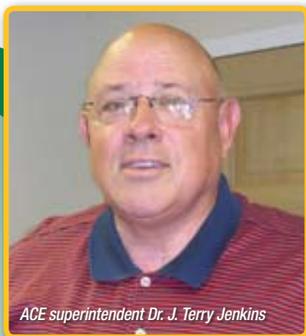


Response and Action

North East ISD has a formal IAQ complaint process. As a part of their facilities maintenance program, a computerized work order system is

in place for an investigation. After a request, the site is visited and a site survey is completed to determine the problem and the necessary solutions. If further testing is needed, then another visit is planned with specific instruments (i.e., IAQ meters, CO₂ meters, and particle counters) to identify the air contaminant. Once the analysis is complete, a decision on the proper corrective action is made and reported to the related department (i.e., engineering, construction or maintenance). Before the work order is closed, the department communicates the process and results to the principal to ensure action is taken.

The district's Department of Safe and Healthy Schools joins health and facilities under one umbrella. A facilities-only response is a case-by-case decision and once resolved is usually not revisited. However, when health effects are incorporated, there is a greater likelihood of follow-up.



ACE superintendent Dr. J. Terry Jenkins

As a result, the student body is more aware, which in turn, empowers families. And partnerships with the medical community and others have increased.

Making a Difference

Before North East ISD became pro-active, their approach to asthma and IAQ was one of avoidance. Now the district's approach is one of good asthma and IAQ management. As a result of the district's hard work, they have seen an increase in attendance and an increase in student performance and test scores. The district is dedicated to student and staff health and wellness, and has taken steps to leave a positive, lasting impact on their school system, the staff, students and the community.

In 2008, the district received EPA's National Special Achievement Award, which recognized North East ISD's commitment to improved school indoor environments that has led to tangible, sustainable indoor air quality management programs. Also, North East ISD won the 2008 EPA IAQ Tools for Schools Excellence Award.

Auburn City Schools, Auburn, Ala.

Building relationships, getting results

SUPERINTENDENT: J. TERRY JENKINS • STUDENT POPULATION: 6,000
OF SCHOOL BUILDINGS: 10 • CLASSIFICATION: RURAL

Overview and Vision

Auburn City Schools (ACS) uses partnerships with families and communities to create a challenging and diverse learning environment that encourages students to become productive members of a global society. ACS is a smaller school district uniquely located within a large college town, making its IAQ success relevant to both rural and urban districts. Its IAQ management plan is assertive in its mission to inspire all students to achieve their potential, educate all students to use and evaluate knowledge, and empower all students to be responsible, productive citizens.

ACS's Healthy Schools Management Plan exemplifies the dedication and service for a clean, well-maintained and environmentally-secure school district. The Healthy Schools Management Plan emphasizes additional efforts in creating preventative maintenance programs, purchasing programs that emphasize environmentally-friendly building materials, recycling programs, and energy management.

Leading by Example

J. Terry Jenkins views his role as a superintendent to carry out the mission of the district — to inspire, educate, and empower students to reach their full potential. Jenkins believes, "The

learning environment must be supported from an academic and an environmental perspective.” Accordingly, Jenkins provides support and resources to the operational services of the district to meet this goal. A significant portion of the capital projects budget presented to the Board of Education each year includes financial resources to carry out the intent of the Healthy Schools Management Plan. Funding for the Healthy Schools Management Plan is adequate and Jenkins ensures that line items are in the budget for purchases, retrofitting, and repairs for mechanical problems.

“The learning environment must be supported from an academic and an environmental perspective.”

~ Dr. J. Terry Jenkins, Superintendent, Auburn City Schools

On every occasion regarding IAQ and health, Jenkins is supportive of plans and makes recommendations to the board to improve indoor air quality and health. He supports expenditures to improve these objectives and is always in the loop to get problems solved quickly.

Approach to Healthy School Environments

In 2006, ACS developed its initial IAQ program using the EPA’s IAQ Tools for Schools Program. The materials were shared with administrators of the district’s 10 schools, and each school was educated on the importance of good IAQ.

In 2007, the district conducted an IAQ study. Data were collected to create response plans related to mechanical concerns, ventilation and moisture issues. In addition, ACS used the recommendations of a preventative maintenance schedule in which measures such as changing filters and checking coils were implemented.

The Healthy Schools Management Plan is the systematic organization of standard operating procedures to ensure quality indoor air, energy management, recycling and student health initiatives. While the plan was presented to the Board of Education in December 2008, the elements of the plan have been in place for several years in the district.

This plan falls under the auspices of the district’s Indoor Air Quality Committee, which includes an IAQ coordinator, environmental consultants, assistant principals, the ACS maintenance supervisor, transportation supervisor, child nutrition direc-

tor, curriculum director, and nurse administrator. The IAQ coordinator and committee respond to IAQ issues, implement the Healthy Schools Management Plan, and communicate IAQ issues to staff and other pertinent stakeholders.

The IAQ coordinator performs an annual review to make changes to the plan, and further reviews it with the IAQ team. This team review allows ACS to have a dynamic health program and is necessary as changes may occur to the building systems, components, and occupants. Its strategic feedback loop of effective communication uses the EPA’s best management practices for a plan of action.

Response and Action

ACS has established an online work order system to collect IAQ concerns. The maintenance department reviews the online work order and determines the extent of the problem. The executive director of school operations and services is designated as the IAQ coordinator, and visits the site within 24 hours unless it is an emergency, in which case, the director visits immediately. Once there, the director conducts a walk-through using the HealthySEAT and Tools for Schools guidelines. If the IAQ issue cannot be rectified with maintenance or custodial departments then environmental consultants are contacted to perform air quality testing and more in-depth analyses. Finally, the details and results of the situation are reported to the principal.



ACS Maintenance staff working on a classroom project.

Prevention and Training

District staff members use technology to access training on IAQ topics such as mold and integrated pest management that further explain school responsibility, contractor response, and custodial best management practices. During the summer, there is on-site professional development for the custodial and nutrition personnel to secure updated information on chemicals, ventilation and other IAQ issues.

The Healthy School Management Plan's triangulated approach is the foundation of Auburn City School's IAQ prevention and training initiatives.

- **Data Collection:** There are two walk-throughs per year per school using the HealthySEAT checklist. Results are shared with appropriate maintenance and school staff.
- **Air Monitoring:** Air-monitoring data provide hard facts on the air quality for proper response.
- **Random survey:** Staff members are randomly surveyed on the state of their school's IAQ and health. If a problem is detected, an appropriate response is implemented.

Making a Difference

The district uses a comprehensive strategy that expands the IAQ discussion to include recycling,

purchasing, paints, carpets and volatile organic compounds. This approach adds depth to the platform discussion of IAQ and health, and has earned Auburn City Schools EPA's Tools for Schools Great Start Award and the Tools for Schools Leadership Award. The district is also applying for the National Excellence Award citing the Healthy School Management Plan.

Overall, Auburn City Schools faculty has successfully incorporated the Healthy Schools Management Plan in its daily activities. Response is taken seriously as it builds confidence and trust with faculty and administrators when concerns are immediately addressed. The district's measure of success is a relatively quiet faculty as it relates to complaints, meaning that the plan is achieving its goals.

To access easy-to-use online resources provided by the districts highlighted in this publication, click on the graphic below.

The forms and resources available at this link are intended to be tailored by school districts for their use.



**Building Success, Leading Change:
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This CD-ROM contains easy-to-use resources provided by the districts highlighted in this publication, North East Independent School District (North East ISD) and Auburn City Schools (ACS). The forms and resources included are intended to be tailored by school districts for their use.

What School Leaders Can Do to Create Healthy School Environments

- ✓ Champion efforts to establish healthy school environments as a priority in the district.
- ✓ Use the Environmental Protection Agency's Tools for Schools program as a guide for implementing an indoor air quality management plan (available at www.epa.gov/iaq/schools/).
- ✓ Implement board-approved policies that promote healthy environments and reduce asthma triggers.
- ✓ Create an indoor air quality committee or healthy schools steering committee.
- ✓ Provide regular training for facilities, maintenance and environmental staff.
- ✓ Foster relationships with surrounding districts to aid in finding creative solutions to environmental challenges.
- ✓ Create a comprehensive communications strategy that addresses the school environment.
- ✓ Join the AASA Urban or Rural Healthy Schools Coalition to network with other school districts on environmental issues.

Resources from AASA to accomplish these action items:

- ✓ *Putting the Pieces Together: An Urban School Leader's Guide to Healthy Indoor Environments*
- ✓ "Green Schools and Indoor Air Quality--Improving Efficiency and Health."
- ✓ *Schoolhouse in the Red*
- ✓ Indoor Air Quality Resource Collection Online Toolkit
- ✓ Ask the Experts

This publication is made possible by funding from the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency through AASA's Healthy School Environments Project, and by the expertise and dedication of members of AASA's Urban and Rural Healthy Schools Coalitions. AASA is appreciative to Auburn City Schools and North East Independent School District for sharing their commitment to ensure every child has a healthy learning environment.



AASA Healthy Schools Coalitions

Urban Healthy Schools Coalition is comprised of 15 urban school districts ranging in size from 4,000 to 740,000 students. Rural Healthy Schools Coalition is comprised of 13 small rural school districts ranging in size from 325 to 7,000 students.

Members of the coalitions are superintendents, assistant superintendents and other administrators, facilities managers, directors and school health personnel. These coalitions meet annually to share resources and to discuss the unique needs of urban and rural districts and the barriers and strategies to creating and maintaining healthy school environments.

Members of this coalition have produced exceptional projects as a result of their involvement. Several member districts have received recognition from EPA for their IAQ initiatives and their commitment to the health of children and staff in their districts.

Members of the Urban Healthy Schools Coalition are:

Baltimore County Public Schools
Towson, Md.

Joe Hairston, superintendent
Student population: 108,600

Bridgeport Public Schools
Bridgeport, Conn.

John J. Ramos, superintendent
Student population: 22,710

Cedar Rapids Community Schools
Cedar Rapids, Iowa

Dave Benson, superintendent
Student population: 17,440

Charlotte-Mecklenburg Schools
Charlotte, N.C.

Peter Gorman, superintendent
Student population: 126,900

Detroit Public Schools
Detroit, Mich.

Teresa Gueyser, Acting superintendent
Student population: 156,570

East Valley School District 361
East Valley, Wash.

John Glenewinkel, superintendent
Student population: 4,520

Hartford Public School District
Hartford, Conn.

Steven J. Adamowski, superintendent
Student Population: 24,000

Los Angeles Unified School District
Los Angeles, Calif.

Ramon Cortines, superintendent
Student population: 746,830

Memphis City Schools
Memphis, Tenn.

Kriner Cash, superintendent
Student population: 123,000

Milwaukee Public Schools
Milwaukee, Wis.

William Andrekopoulos, superintendent
Student population: 95,600

Montgomery County Public Schools
Rockville, Md.

Jerry Weast, superintendent
Student population: 138,890

Nashville Metropolitan Public Schools
Nashville, Tenn.

Jesse Register, director of schools
Student population: 73,610

Philadelphia City School District
Philadelphia, Pa.

Arlene Ackerman, superintendent
Student Population: 209,500

Spokane School District 81
Spokane, Wash.

Nancy Stowell, superintendent
Student population: 31,000

North East Independent School District
San Antonio, Texas

Richard Middleton, superintendent
Student population: 62,020

Members of the Rural Healthy Schools Coalition:

School District of Alma
Alma, Wis.

Steven N. Sedlmayr, superintendent
Student population: 325

Arlington Heights School District 25
Arlington Heights, Ill.

Sarah Jerome, superintendent
Student population: 5,000

Auburn City Schools
Auburn, Ala.

J. Terry Jenkins, superintendent
Student population: 6,000

Cocke County School System
Newport, Tenn.

Manney Moore, director
Student population: 4,790

Fort Sumner Municipal Schools
Fort Sumner, N.M.

Patricia D. Miller, superintendent
Student population: 325

Hastings Public Schools
Hastings, Neb.

Craig Kautz, superintendent
Student population: 3,200

Muscatine Community School District
Muscatine, Iowa

Bill Decker, superintendent
Student population: 5,500

Roane County Schools
Kingston, Tenn.

Toni H. McGriff, director of schools
Student population: 7,500

Rossville-Alvin CUSD 7
Rossville, Ill.

Randy Hird, superintendent
Student population: 280

Tahlequah Public Schools
Tahlequah, Okla.

Shannon Goodsell, superintendent
Student population: 3,600

Unified School District 253
Emporia, Kan.

John Heim, superintendent
Student population:

Unified School District 270 Plainville
Plainville, Kan.

Beth Reust, superintendent
Student population: 390

Wooster City School District
Wooster, Ohio

Michael Tefs, superintendent
Student population: 4,300

Share Your Success Story

If you would like to share your success story or learn more about healthy school environments, contact Yasmin Bowers, project manager at ybowers@aasa.org. AASA has resources available for school districts and continues to accept applications for districts that want to join the AASA Urban or Rural Healthy Schools coalitions — www.aasa.org/ChildrensPrograms.aspx.