

GREEN CLEANING IN SCHOOLS:

SUMMARY OF SELECTED STATE AND SCHOOL DISTRICT POLICIES

Environmental Law Institute

Cleaning products are necessary to maintain a sanitary environment in schools. However, many chemicals in cleaning products may be hazardous to the environment and to the health of maintenance workers, students, and school staff. “Green cleaning” reduces environmental and health risks by selecting alternative, environmentally-sensitive products, by applying these products properly, and by implementing maintenance practices that minimize exposure to cleaning products. This report summarizes selected state laws, proposed state legislation, and school district policies that promote green cleaning in schools.

State Laws. Increased press coverage, outreach and advocacy on green cleaning practices have piqued the interest of state legislatures. Below are summaries of three state laws on the subject: **New York, Illinois, and Maine**. Other states have green cleaning laws or executive orders that apply to state buildings. While those policies may encourage school districts to adopt green cleaning practices, they do not apply directly to schools and are not covered here.

New York was the first state to enact a green cleaning law for schools in 2005, adopting the policy strategy of requiring that school districts use detailed green cleaning guidelines and standards established by the state. Illinois followed suit in 2007 with a law that also requires school districts to use green cleaning products pursuant to state guidelines. Maine took a different approach in 2007, requiring the state to publish information on green cleaning products and procedures, but declining to mandate green cleaning in schools.

Proposed State Legislation. A number of other state legislatures have been considering policies that promote green cleaning in schools. Following are descriptions of three bills that were proposed in 2007: **Connecticut, Massachusetts, and Rhode Island**. The bills would follow the approach of New York and Illinois in requiring schools to use green cleaning products. Two of the three bills would direct the state to create guidelines and specifications for schools.

School District Policies. Over the past several years, school districts have begun to change their practices to include green cleaning strategies, and some have adopted written policies that affirm this commitment. Following are summaries of the green cleaning policies of six school districts in different regions of the country. Three are large districts and three are small-medium sized: **Chicago (IL); Montgomery County (MD), Boston (MA), Bellingham (WA), Great Neck (NY) and Amity (CT)**. By adopting a written policy statement, districts can help to ensure the continuity of green cleaning practices regardless of changes in district management or administration. Numerous other school districts are taking significant steps to adopt green cleaning programs – e.g., by developing product lists, revising bid documents, holding staff training, etc. However, this summary focuses only on those districts that have formalized their program in a written policy document.

The school district policies included here vary in their level of detail. Five policies were issued by district management and affirm the district's commitment to purchase only green cleaning products and to use green cleaning practices. Three of these five policies specifically include the Green Seal program as the standard for purchasing products, while a fourth references the Green Seal and Green Choice programs. Three of these five policies also include staff training as a component of the program. The sixth policy included in this Summary was issued by the Board of Education and requires the school district to develop a green cleaning program.

Thus, the policies described below adopt some or all of the four basic elements of a green cleaning program: (1) requiring the use of green cleaning products, (2) establishing guidelines for purchasing products that reference existing third-party standards, (3) identifying green cleaning practices, and (4) providing staff training. The following descriptions are provided to help states and school districts understand the current state of green cleaning policy as they develop their own approaches to implementing healthier, more environmentally sound practices.

I. ENACTED STATE LAWS

► NEW YORK

N.Y. Green Cleaning Products Law

Citation:

16 N.Y. EDUC. § 409-i (2005)

Available at:

https://www.ogs.state.ny.us/purchase/spg/pdfdocs/SEL409-1_SFL163-b.pdf

Effective Date:

September 1, 2005

Summary:

The state is required to establish guidelines for environmentally-sensitive cleaning and maintenance products to use in elementary and secondary school facilities, and schools are required to use these guidelines.

Key Provisions:

Requirements for Using Green Cleaning Products. The law requires elementary and secondary schools to identify and procure environmentally-sensitive cleaning and maintenance products that are available in the form, function, and utility generally used in elementary and secondary school facilities. Schools are required to follow guidelines, specifications, and sample product lists developed by the state for purchasing these products. The law allows schools to deplete existing cleaning and maintenance supply stores purchased prior to the effective date of the law. (See. §§ 409-i(2), (5)).

Guidelines and Specifications. Under the law, the commissioner of the Office of General Services (OGS), in consultation with the state environment, health and labor agencies, is required to establish and periodically amend guidelines and specifications for environmentally-sensitive cleaning and maintenance products for use in elementary and secondary school facilities. For the purpose of developing appropriate criteria for these guidelines and specifications, agencies must review and evaluate existing research regarding the products, and provide public notice and an opportunity to comment on the

proposed guidelines. The law also requires the state to prepare and disseminate a sample list of products that meet such guidelines. (See § 409-i(2)). (A description of the Guidelines developed under the law is provided below.)

Assistance to Schools. In addition to disseminating the guidelines and specifications, the state general services agency is required to provide assistance and guidance to elementary and secondary schools in carrying out the requirements of this section. (See § 409-i(3)).

Evaluation. The law requires that the NY State Department of Education issue a report, by June 1, 2007, analyzing the impact of its green cleaning guidelines and specifications on the purchasing, procurement and use of environmentally-sensitive cleaning and maintenance products by elementary and secondary schools. (See § 409-i(5)).

Related Legislation:

On June 30, 2007, a related state finance law took effect, requiring the state Office of General Services to maintain a list of contractors that produce, manufacture, or offer for sale the environmentally-sensitive cleaning and maintenance products used by elementary and secondary schools in accordance with the state's guidance. (See 56 N.Y. STATE FIN. § 163-b (2007)).

Administrative Guidelines Implementing NY Green Cleaning Products Law

Citation:

Office of General Services, New York State, "Guidelines and Specifications for the Procurement and Use of Environmentally Sensitive Cleaning and Maintenance Products for Public and Nonpublic Elementary and Secondary Schools in New York" [hereinafter OGS Guidelines] (2006). (28-page document)
Available at: <http://www.ogs.state.ny.us/bldgadmin/environmental/>

Effective Date:

The OGS Guidelines were released on August 4, 2006. Revisions were made on August 28, 2006, and March 27, 2007.

Summary:

The OGS Guidelines implement New York State's green cleaning products law by establishing product standards and identifying best cleaning management practices. The OGS Guidelines also contain a detailed review of the definitions, characteristics, and categories of green cleaning products.

Key Provisions:

Product Selection/Specifications. The OGS Guidelines address five categories of cleaning products – cleaning products (general purpose cleaners, bathroom cleaners, carpet cleaners, and glass cleaners), hand soaps, floor finish products, floor finish stripper products and vacuum cleaners. For each of these areas, the Guidelines provide a list of products that schools must choose from. In listing these products, OGS has incorporated certain existing standards and certification programs – e.g., Green Seal, Inc., the Environmental Choice Program, and the Carpet and Rug Institute. Vendors and manufacturers may apply to have their products included in the state list, provided that the products are verified by a qualified third-party organization as meeting the standards. (See OGS Guidelines, at 20-22).

Best Cleaning and Management Practices. The OGS Guidelines encourage schools to use best cleaning and management practices to reduce risk of harm to human health and the environment. The Guidelines list 15 areas of best practices, including: reducing the need to clean with preventative measures, minimizing use of scented products, using cold water, vacuuming carpets frequently and maintaining vacuum cleaners and filters regularly, conducting further research on new cleaning technologies and equipment, providing faculty with access to general green cleaning product, and evaluating the procurement and use of sanitary paper products. Training is also emphasized as important for ensuring an effective green cleaning program. (OGS Guidelines, at 11-19).

Training and Technical Assistance. The Guidelines affirm the state's intent to contract with a consulting company to provide schools with training and technical assistance. These services might include computerized space analysis and equipment audit, evaluation of staff size, customized training programs, or development of cleaning evaluation programs. (See OGS Guidelines, at 19).

► ILLINOIS

Citation:

H.B. 895, 95th Gen. Assem., Reg. Sess. (Ill. 2007). (Green Cleaning Schools Act)

Available at:

<http://www.ilga.gov/legislation/fulltext.asp?DocName=&SessionId=51&GA=95&DocTypeId=HB&DocNum=895&GAID=9&LegID=28319&SpecSess=&Session=>

Effective Date:

August 13, 2007

Summary:

The law requires the state to establish and amend annually guidelines for environmentally-sensitive cleaning and maintenance products for schools. It requires schools to develop a green cleaning policy and to purchase and use such products.

Key Provisions:

Requirements for Using Green Cleaning Products. The law requires all elementary and secondary schools to establish a green cleaning policy and to purchase and use environmentally-sensitive cleaning products, pursuant to guidelines and specifications established under the law. The requirement applies to all elementary and secondary public schools and all elementary and secondary non-public schools with 50 or more students. A school may deplete its existing cleaning and maintenance supply stocks and implement the new requirements in the procurement cycle for the following school year. (See H.B. 895, at § 10.)

Exceptions. The law provides an exception if it would not be economically feasible for the school district to implement the green cleaning requirements. According to the law, it would not be economically feasible to implement the requirements if that would result in an increase in the school's cleaning costs. If adopting a green cleaning policy is not economically feasible, the school must provide annual written notification of this to the Illinois Green Government Coordinating Council (IGGCC), on a form provided by the IGGCC. (See H.B. 895, § 10.)

Guidelines and Specifications. The IGGCC, in consultation with other state agencies and non-governmental stakeholders, must establish and amend annually guidelines and specifications for environmentally-sensitive cleaning and maintenance products for use in school facilities. The law directs the IGGCC to provide multiple avenues by which cleaning products may be determined to be environmentally sensitive under the guidelines. Guidelines and specifications must be completed within 180 days after the effective date of the law and posted on the IGGCC's website. (See H.B. 895, at § 15.)

Training/Technical Assistance. Regional offices of education and the IGGCC are required to distribute the state's green cleaning guidelines to schools and to provide assistance to schools to carry out the law's requirements. (See H.B. 895, at §20.)

► **MAINE**

Citation:

2007 Me. Resolves Ch. 32

Available at: <http://janus.state.me.us/legis/LawMakerWeb/billtextsearch.asp>

Effective Date:

May 18, 2007

Summary:

The law requires the state to develop a list of safe alternatives to chemicals in cleaning agents and pesticides used in schools, to distribute the list to schools, and to make the list publicly available.

Key Provisions:

Requirements for Using Green Cleaning Products. The law does not require school districts to use green cleaning products. It requires the state to “promot[e] the implementation of green cleaning programs in schools.” The law also requires the state to recognize school green cleaning programs by compiling and maintaining a list of school administrative units that have committed to using those cleaning products and disinfectants that are included in lists developed by the state. The list is to be made available to the public. (See §§ 1, 3).

Guidelines and Specifications. The state Department of Education, in consultation with the state Departments of Environmental Protection and Agriculture, is required to compile a list of cleaning products that have been certified as meeting health-based criteria for safety and efficacy by a third-party, independent agency such as Green Seal, Inc., or that have been listed by the state Department of Administrative and Financial Services as environmentally-preferred janitorial products. The Department of Education is also required to distribute an updated list yearly to every school administrative unit in the state. The Department of Education is also directed to compile a list of disinfectants that have been evaluated using criteria established by the Division of Purchases or other acceptable criteria for environmentally preferred janitorial products and registered by the Board of Pesticides Control, and to distribute this list yearly to schools in the state. Finally, the Department of Education is required to develop recommendations for cleaning *procedures* that will reduce the use of toxic chemicals and improve indoor air quality, while meeting performance standards for cleanliness. The Department of Education must also distribute these recommendations to schools in the state. (See § 1).

II. PROPOSED (UNENACTED) STATE LEGISLATION - 2007

► MASSACHUSETTS

Citation:

S.B. 2204, 185th Gen. Ct. (Mass. 2007). (Healthy Cleaning Products Act)
Available at: <http://www.mass.gov/legis/bills/senate/185/st02/st02204.htm>

Summary:

This proposed bill would require the state to prepare a list of healthy cleaning products and would prohibit using any products not on the list in schools, hospitals, health care facilities, day care centers, public buildings, or public housing.

Key Provisions:

Requirements for Using Green Cleaning Products. The bill would prohibit the use of any cleaning product not contained in the Commissioner's list of healthy cleaning products, in any school, hospital, health care facility, day care center, public building, or public housing. (See § 5S(d)).

Guidelines and Specifications. The bill would require the state Commissioner of the Department of Health to prepare and release to the public a list of healthy cleaning products that are determined to be environmentally preferable products by the Massachusetts Operational Services Division and that do not contain asthma-causing agents (asthmagens). (See § 5S(e)).

Exceptions. The bill would allow an individual who works or occupies a regulated building to request (and the facility to utilize) an alternative material if the individual experiences adverse health effects from allergic or hypersensitivity reactions due to exposure to a listed product. (See § 5S(i)).

Training. The bill would require the Commissioner to establish a training program for all cleaning personnel on the use and disposal of listed cleaning products at day care centers, schools, hospitals, health care facilities, public buildings, and public housing. The Commissioner would also be directed to field test the healthy cleaning products and the proposed training guidelines to confirm the safety and effectiveness of products included in the healthy cleaning products list. (See § 5S(f)).

The bill would further require the Commissioner to establish a grant program to fund the training of cleaning personnel on the use of healthy cleaning products. (See § 5S(g)).

Penalties. The bill would establish monetary fines for any facility manager or owner who uses a cleaning product in violation of this law, as well as any person who sells or distributes a cleaning product in violation of the law. (See § 5S(k)).

► RHODE ISLAND

Citation:

H.B. 5178, 2007-2008 Leg., Jan Sess. (R.I. 2007).

Summary:

This proposed bill would require all elementary and secondary schools to use environmentally sensitive cleaning and maintenance products. It would require the state to establish guidelines, specifications, and a sample list of environmentally sensitive cleaning products.

Key Provisions:

Requirements for Using Green Cleaning Products. All elementary and secondary schools would be required to use environmentally sensitive cleaning and maintenance products that minimize adverse impacts on children's health, safety, and the environment. Schools would be required to notify staff of and to comply with the guidelines and specifications established by the state. (See §§ 1(a), (c)).

Guidelines and Specifications. The bill would require the state Commissioner of Education to establish guidelines and specifications for the purchase and use of environmentally sensitive cleaning and maintenance products in elementary and secondary schools. The Commissioner, in consultation with the director of the Department of Environmental Management, would also be required to prepare a sample list of environmentally sensitive cleaning and maintenance products that meets these guidelines and specifications. (See § 1(b)).

Training/Technical Assistance. The Commissioner of Education would be required to disseminate the guidelines, specifications, and sample list of approved products and to provide assistance and guidance to schools in carrying out the requirements of this bill. (See § 1(c)).

► CONNECTICUT

Citation:

H.B. 7096, Gen. Assem., Jan. Sess. (Conn. 2007).

Available at: <http://www.cteic.org/legislationhousebills/hb7096.html>

Summary:

This bill would require the state Commissioner of Public Health, in consultation with the commissioners of environmental protection and education, to adopt regulations that require environmentally sensitive cleaning and maintenance products to be used in public and private preschools and schools. (See H.B. 7096, *supra*, at § 2). No further details on this requirement are provided in the legislation. The bill also addresses pesticide applications in schools.

III. SCHOOL DISTRICT POLICIES ON GREEN CLEANING PRODUCTS

► CHICAGO PUBLIC SCHOOLS

School District Statistics: 421,000 students, 623 schools

Citation:

Chicago Public Schools Board of Education, Chicago Public Schools Policy Manual § 410.8 - *Green Cleaning Policy* (2005) (one-page document)

Available at: <http://policy.cps.k12.il.us/documents/410.8.pdf>. (1-page document)

Effective Date:

September 28, 2005

Summary:

This policy directs the school district to promote a Healthy and High Performing Cleaning program to encourage schools and central office departments to incorporate green cleaning principles. The policy does not establish requirements or prohibitions on using specific products or practices, but rather calls on the district's Department of Operations and Department of Special Services to provide assistance to schools in adopting green cleaning practices. The policy calls on the district to develop a green cleaning program that is based on criteria established by the city of Chicago, ASTM and the U.S. Green Building Council.

► MONTGOMERY COUNTY (MD) PUBLIC SCHOOLS

School District Statistics: 138,500 students and 200 schools

Citation:

Montgomery County Public Schools, "Healthy, High Performance Cleaning Program" (2006) (20-page document)

Available at:

<http://www.mcps.k12.md.us/departments/schoolplantops/PDF/HHPCPlan.pdf>

Effective Date:

September 2006

Summary:

The Healthy, High Performance Cleaning Program (HHCP) plan establishes the district's commitment to purchasing and using "cleaning and grounds care products and methods that reduce adverse impacts on public health and the environment." The policy provides a statement of purpose for the district's green cleaning policy, as well as contractual and procedural requirements, performance standards, and products specifications.

Key Provisions:

Requirements for Using Green Cleaning Products. The policy requires that all cleaning products used in the school meet the green cleaning standards established by the district. Prior to their use, all products must be evaluated and approved by the district. (See HHCP at 9, 11).

Guidelines and Specifications. The policy requires that all cleaning products meet the Green Seal GS-37 standard for cleaners, as well as Green Seal standards for paper products. Products must either have Green Seal certification, or provide testing

documentation by a third-party demonstrating that the product meets Green Seal standards. The policy also establishes a list of prohibited cleaning chemicals, and a list of chemicals whose use should be minimized. The policy provides additional criteria for selecting products, which includes issues such as labeling, corrosivity, and combustibility, aerosol application. The policy also provides a list of recommended products that meet the district's standards. (See HHCP, at 11-12).

Best Practices for Cleaning and Maintenance. The district's policy sets forth cleaning practices and principles that the district will employ. The policy lists numerous practices, which are grouped into several categories: (1) storage requirements for cleaning products, (2) reducing chemical use, (3) product dilution, (4) reducing dust and dirt, (5) reducing microbial growth, (5) restroom cleaning, (6) food preparation and eating areas, (7) cleaning frequency and checklists, and (8) disposal of cleaning products. (See HHCP, at 5-8). The policy also lists separate practices applicable to grounds care.

Technical Assistance /Training. The HCCP states that training will be provided to all cleaning staff and provides an outline of the minimum elements of the training. The policy also states that training for proper use of specific products should be provided through the product manufacturer or distributor, if offered. Procurement training is also to be offered to those responsible for purchasing products. (See HHCP, at 13).

► **BOSTON (MA) PUBLIC SCHOOL DISTRICT**

School District Statistics: 57,000 students and 144 schools

Citation:

Boston Public Schools, Superintendent's Circular #FMT-12: *Green Cleaners Policy* (2007). (2-page document)

Effective Date:

April 3, 2007

Summary:

The Green Cleaners Policy establishes the Boston Public Schools' commitment to purchasing green cleaning products, implementing best practices and training staff.

Key Provisions:

Requirements for Using Green Cleaning Products. According to this policy, Boston Public Schools will procure and use only green cleaning products that meet district standards.

Guidelines and Specifications. Pursuant to the policy, the district will purchase and provide only "green" or environmentally-friendly cleaning products. The policy requires vendors to prove that their products meet the Green Seal, Inc., GS-37 standard. [These products also fall within the state's Environmentally Preferable Products Procurement Program.] The policy also provides that all disinfectants must be EPA-registered disinfectants. (See p. 1).

Best Practices for Cleaning and Management. Under the policy, the district will implement cleaning practices that maintain a healthy, safe, and clean learning and work environment, including scheduling floor stripping and waxing during non-occupied hours;

burnishing floor surfaces wherever possible; and restricting the use of disinfectants to cleaning potential food-contact surfaces and sewage/waste cleanup. (See p. 1).

Technical Assistance/Training. The policy commits the district to training and updating custodial staff on the policy, including training on hazard communications, worker safety, and product/equipment use. (See p.2).

► **BELLINGHAM (WA) SCHOOL DISTRICT**

School District Statistics: 10,500 students and 21 schools

Citation:

Bellingham School District, Green Cleaning Policy (1-page document)

Effective Date:

2003-2004 school year

Summary:

The policy states the district's commitment to purchasing and using only green cleaning products.

Key Provisions:

Requirements for Using Green Cleaning Products. According to this policy the Bellingham School District will procure and use only green cleaning products that meet the Green Seal standards. The policy further prohibits district employees from bringing or using chemicals in schools unless they are first reviewed and approved by the district as meeting the Green Seal standards.

Guidelines and Specifications. The policy states that the district has developed a guideline for purchasing and using cleaning and maintenance products that meet or exceed the Green Seal standards.

Best Practices for Cleaning and Maintenance. The policy directs school custodians and maintenance employees to follow good work practices, including specifically: regular filter changes and monitoring of all air handling equipment, damp dusting techniques, and use of only HEPA filtered vacuum cleaners. The policy also notes that the district will use micro-fiber dust cloths and three-step walk-off mats.

► **GREAT NECK (NY) PUBLIC SCHOOLS**

School District Statistics: 5,700 students and 10 schools

Citation:

Great Neck Public Schools Policy No. 8116, "Petrochemical-Based Product Use" (1-page document)

Available at: <http://www.greatneck.k12.ny.us/> ("Policies")

Effective Date:

March 1, 2004

Summary:

The policy states the district's commitment to exclude the use of any petrochemical-based product and to purchase products that are third-party certified wherever possible.

Key Provisions:

Requirements for Using Green Cleaning Products. According to this policy, Great Neck Public Schools will exclude the use of petrochemical-based products, including cleaning products. Wherever possible, the district will purchase bio-based alternatives and products containing minimal volatile organic compounds.

Guidelines and Specifications. The policy states that wherever possible, any product purchased and used in the district must be third-party certified for its “environmental efficacy and its impact on indoor air quality and overall indoor environment, especially as it may affect children.” The policy cites Green Seal and Environmental Choice as examples of acceptable certification programs. Where no third-party documentation or certification exists for a type of product, the district’s safety office must approve products prior to their use.

► **AMITY (CT) REGIONAL SCHOOL DISTRICT NO. 5**

School District Statistics: 2,500 students and 4 schools.

Citation:

Memorandum to Staff from the Director of Facilities, “Green Cleaning Initiative and Tools for Schools,” (Jan. 11, 2007)

Available at: <http://pollutionfreeschools.org/docs/AmityGreenCleanInitiativeMemo.pdf>.
(2-page document)

Effective Date:

January 11, 2007

Summary:

This policy memorandum announces that the district is introducing a Green Cleaning program, including the purchase of new cleaning equipment and safe chemicals and the provision of in-depth training to custodial staff. The memo also requests that staff and faculty observe a variety of behavioral practices, including proper trash disposal; using only cleaning supplies provided by the school district; eliminating the use of room deodorizers, strong perfumes, and live plants; and reporting potential maintenance problems immediately.