



Environmental Conditions in Schools and Their Impact on Health and Learning

As students and staff return from holiday break, education facilities across the United States are resuming full daily use. For millions of people, school buildings are where a large part of each day is spent. How those buildings perform affects comfort, health, and learning, even when concerns are not immediately visible.

Many educational facilities operate within buildings constructed decades ago. Aging systems, deferred maintenance, and competing priorities shape how indoor conditions are managed long-term. Decisions about where to focus maintenance and investment directly influence the environments students and staff experience each day.

Research on U.S. school buildings shows wide variation in indoor conditions, particularly ventilation and air quality. Reviewing environmental conditions at this time provides measured data that reflects actual performance and supports targeted improvements.

How Does the Academic Calendar Drive Maintenance Planning?

This point in the school year often aligns with maintenance planning tied to academic calendars.

“Decisions about where to focus maintenance and investment directly influence the environments students and staff experience each day, making current environmental information critical to long-term planning.”

Facilities teams review environmental conditions as buildings return to full daily use, including materials affected by planned work, drinking water performance at active fixtures, and indoor air quality once classrooms and shared spaces are fully occupied. For those managing older buildings, current environmental information supports better planning and helps reduce the risk of operational disruption.



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Environmental Conditions Managed in Day-to-Day Operations

Environmental considerations are part of routine facilities management. They surface during scheduled maintenance, system upgrades, and renovation work, often while buildings remain occupied. Common conditions include:

- Asbestos-containing materials in flooring, insulation, fireproofing, and mechanical areas.
- Lead exposure risks associated with older paint, plumbing components, and fixtures.
- Indoor air quality factors influenced by ventilation design, moisture conditions, and occupant density.

Challenges are more likely to appear when work begins or when systems are modified without current environmental information to guide decisions. When these conditions are identified and managed early, facilities teams can address them methodically.

The Role of Early Environmental Assessment

Industrial hygiene and environmental assessments give facilities teams reliable, project-ready information before questions escalate or schedules are affected. Rather than reacting to complaints or stopping work midstream, education facilities can plan maintenance and renovations with clearer expectations.

These assessments help facilities teams understand existing conditions, confirm where controls are needed, and determine how work can proceed safely in occupied buildings. Common assessment areas include indoor air quality, asbestos and lead, moisture, and drinking water quality. Together, these evaluations help managers determine where action is required and how to sequence work without disrupting classrooms.

How Intertek Supports Education Facilities Nationwide

Intertek works with education facilities throughout the United States to deliver industrial hygiene and environmental services that reflect real operating conditions. Facilities teams partner with us to evaluate conditions before maintenance begins, monitor occupied buildings during construction, and maintain consistent documentation across campuses.

We support early childhood centers, K-12 schools, colleges, and universities nationwide. Our accredited laboratories and field specialists provide the measured data that facilities teams use to plan work and prioritize upgrades.

AIA-Approved Course for Architects

Intertek offers an **The American Institute of Architects (AIA)**-approved continuing education course titled *Creating Safer Learning Environments: Industrial Hygiene Solutions for Educational Facilities*. The course provides one learning unit with Health, Safety, and Welfare (HSW) credit. *[Click here to take the course.](#)*

Additional Resources

For more information on industrial hygiene services for schools in the United States, click [here](#). The Intertek PSI brochure, which outlines environmental and industrial hygiene services for U.S. K-12 and higher education facilities, is available for download on the same page.

LinkedIn Insights (Issue 002)



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