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U.S. EPA visits City Terrace Drive School, praises LAUSD for good classroom indoor air quality, Children's Health Month

LOS ANGELES - In celebration of Children's Health Month, the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency today praised the Los Angeles Unified School District for its commitment to good indoor air quality and the EPA's Tools for Schools program, both of which are essential for healthy children.

"October, Children's Health Month, reminds us that classroom air quality free of mold and pollutants is essential for children's well being, learning and development," said Wayne Natri, Regional Administrator, US EPA, Region 9. "Although children are 30% of the world's population, they are 100% of our future."

During a tour of City Terrace School, 4350 City Terrace Drive, Principal Christopher Ortiz explained how the EPA's Tools for Schools Program taught his staff how to improve the air quality inside their school by not blocking air ducts, reducing indoor environmental asthma triggers, minimizing pets and immediately reporting water intrusion which might lead to mold growth.

The Los Angeles Unified School District has been a strong advocate for Tools for Schools. Region 9's Indoor Environments Team has provided a small grant to the LAUSD School Nursing Program to teach school nurses about the program and to recruit them as Indoor Air Coordinators, i.e. the person who is knowledgeable about the program at each school and will teach the staff about it. So far, the Nursing Program has implemented Tools for Schools in about 150 schools.

The EPA has designed the Healthy School Environments Assessment Tool (HealthySEAT) to help schools manage their environmental, health, and safety concerns. HealthySEAT is intended to identify and prevent environmental health, and safety problems. HealthySEAT is designed to be used by school districts and the tool can be customized to address site specific concerns such as potential exposure to asbestos, lead, school bus emissions, and pesticides.

The EPA's Indoor Air Quality Tools for Schools is a voluntary and commonsense program to improve air quality within schools. Using easy to follow checklists, teachers, district maintenance staff, and other school-site staff learn about the simple things they can do to prevent problems and resolve problems as they develop. We know that indoor air pollution can be 2-5 times and often 100 times higher than outdoor air pollution.

Additionally, the LAUSD Environmental Health and Safety Program has assisted EPA in developing the Healthy School Environments Assessment Tool software (Healthy SEAT) which is based on LAUSD's original computer database for tracking environmental compliance issues. The EPA now distributes this software free to schools throughout the nation.

The EPA's Tools for Schools also emphasizes to district maintenance staff the need for assuring that

ventilation systems provide the proper amount of outside air exchange and to promptly address reports of odors, water intrusion or reports of occupant symptoms. Open communication and education is the key to a healthful school environment.

EPA has a number of other programs and initiatives dedicated to protecting our children. During Children's Health Month, the EPA website will be featuring a number of these programs and some educational tools.

For more information on Children's Health Month, please visit:
<http://yosemite.epa.gov/ochp/ochpweb.nsf/content/chm.htm>

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