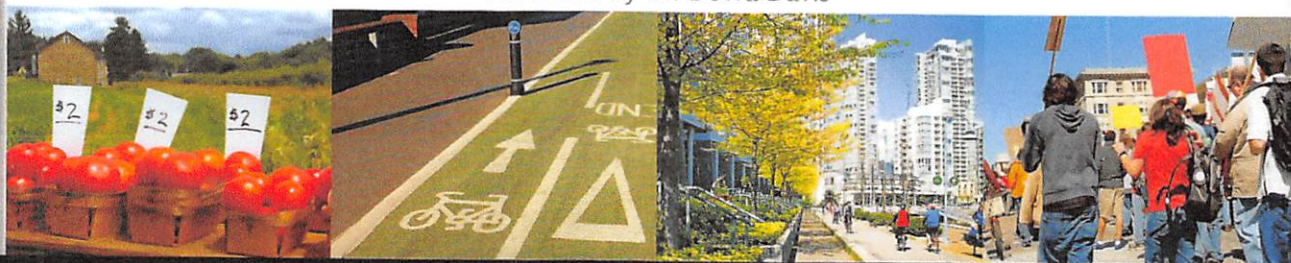


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Foreword by Dr. Devra Davis



The Solutions Project

# CANCER

101 SOLUTIONS  
TO A PREVENTABLE EPIDEMIC



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Take Action for  
Healthy Schools

Just how quickly kids get exposed to toxins in school became clear when the ABC Television show *Good Morning America* conducted an experiment in a classroom at P.S. 8 in New York City in October 2005.

First, we applied Glo-Germ, a non-toxic powder only visible under ultra-violet light, in areas where pesticides are most likely to be sprayed or settle, like baseboards, windowsills and desktops. Then we invited the kids to play. After only 20 minutes, we showed them the stunning results. Using UV light, we found traces of Glo-Germ all over their clothes, hands and faces.<sup>2</sup>

How to know if your school has  
environmental problems

- The building is new or newly renovated, and smells like paint, varnish or glue.
- The building is fully carpeted.
- Your child goes to school healthy, but comes home ill, cranky or exhausted.
- Your child comes home with odors clinging to his or her clothing.
- Building maintenance and repair costs are often cut at budget time.
- Fumes are seeping into the building.
- The building and grounds are routinely treated with pesticide sprays.
- Construction work is messy, and debris surrounds the school.

Studies show that one-half of our nation's schools have problems linked to indoor air quality. Students, teachers and staff are at greater risk because of the hours spent in school facilities and because children are especially susceptible to pollutants.

— Environmental Protection Agency (EPA).<sup>1</sup>

Cleaning up schools is critical to good health. More than 50 million students and 5 million teachers and support staff in the US are exposed daily to radon, asbestos, chemical fumes, pesticides, molds, lead and other toxins.<sup>3</sup> These are just a handful of many health-threatening problems found in and around our children's schools.

In addition to cancer, there are a host of environmentally linked health and learning woes facing today's students — asthma, attention deficit disorders, autism, allergies, and so on. The good news is that, when risks associated with cancer are addressed, the triggers for many other disorders are also reduced or eliminated.

Here are some of the cancer prevention actions that all schools should act on:

- Reduce diesel bus emissions, e.g., siting of drop-off areas, unnecessary idling.
- Eliminate toxic products used for cleaning and maintenance.
- Eliminate toxic art supplies.
- Stop all pesticide use, indoors and out.
- Protect against radon.
- Eliminate asbestos.
- Phase out the use of polyvinyl chloride (PVC).
- Improve indoor air quality. Eliminate chemical off-gassing from carpets, paints, flooring, cabinets, etc.
- Eliminate chromium copper arsenate from wooden playground equipment.
- Eliminate electromagnetic radiation from the siting of radio or cell towers at schools.
- Control dust (the purveyor of many toxic substances).



- Avoid proximity to dirty industries, toxic waste sites and nuclear facilities.

This last concern is different. What can parents do when a school or playground has been sited near a major pollution source? The best strategy is to avoid such insanity in the first place; therefore, an active interest in school siting ought to be a top priority for parents and child advocates — see the report *School Location Matters: Preventing School Siting Disasters*.<sup>4</sup>

All parents should be concerned about the state of their children's school. The Healthy Schools Network recommends these steps to organize a Healthy School action group:

- Ask your school or parent group to learn more about making your school a healthier place for all children.
- If they are too busy, create your own group.
- Commit to investigate a few simple but important issues.
- Ask others to join you. Investigate together and share information regularly.
- Create fact sheets that your group supports.
- Test your facts: visit your school principal or superintendent together and ask questions; review the fact sheet after your visit and edit if necessary.
- Pick your issues to work on (our priority here is cancer, so we suggest the cancer prevention issues listed above).

- The ABCs of Healthy Schools: [www.childproofing.org/ABC.pdf](http://www.childproofing.org/ABC.pdf)
- Active & Safe Routes to School and International Walk to School Week: [www.goforgreen.ca/asrts](http://www.goforgreen.ca/asrts)
- Back to School Environmental Checklist: [www.besafenet.com/checklist.pdf](http://www.besafenet.com/checklist.pdf)
- Beyond Pesticides School Publications and Reports: [www.beyondpesticides.org/schools/publications](http://www.beyondpesticides.org/schools/publications)
- Childproofing Our Communities: [www.childproofing.org](http://www.childproofing.org)
- Citizens for a Safe Learning Environment (Canada): [www.chebucto.ns.ca/Education/CASLE](http://www.chebucto.ns.ca/Education/CASLE)
- Clean School Bus USA: [www.epa.gov/cleanschoolbus](http://www.epa.gov/cleanschoolbus)
- Community Organizing for Environmental Health: [www.eco-act.org/programs.html](http://www.eco-act.org/programs.html)
- The Edible Schoolyard: [www.edibleschoolyard.org](http://www.edibleschoolyard.org)
- Electric and Magnetic Fields: [www.cehn.org/cehn/resourceguide/emfs.html](http://www.cehn.org/cehn/resourceguide/emfs.html)
- Generation Green's School & Playground: [www.generationgreen.org](http://www.generationgreen.org)
- Green Flag Program: [www.greenflagschools.org](http://www.greenflagschools.org)
- The Green Schools Initiative: [www.greenschools.net](http://www.greenschools.net)
- Healthy Schools Network: [www.healthyschools.org](http://www.healthyschools.org)
- Illinois Healthy Schools Campaign: [www.healthyschoolscampaign.org](http://www.healthyschoolscampaign.org)
- Indoor Air Quality Design Tools for Schools: [www.epa.gov/iaq/schooldesign/](http://www.epa.gov/iaq/schooldesign/)
- Site Selection, National Clearinghouse for Educational Facilities: [www.edfacilities.org/rl/site\\_selection.cfm](http://www.edfacilities.org/rl/site_selection.cfm)

- Communicate as a group: create your own name and letterhead to establish a higher profile.
- Write letters; keep copies; track responses; see change happen.
- Celebrate with your school when you succeed in making positive changes.

## About the Authors

**L**iz Armstrong co-wrote *Whitewash* (HarperCollins, 1992), which focused on the problems of chlorine bleached paper products. She is principal author of *Everyday Carcinogens: Stopping Cancer Before It Starts* (background paper for the 1999 McMaster Conference: [www.stop-cancer.org](http://www.stop-cancer.org)). She was co-founder of both the Women's Environmental Health Network and the Breast Cancer Prevention Coalition and is Co-Chair of Prevent Cancer Now. She lives in Erin, Ontario.



Guy Dauncey is an author, speaker and organizer who works to develop a positive vision of a sustainable future and to translate that vision into action. He is author of *Stormy Weather: 101 Solutions to Global Climate Change* (New Society Publishers, 2001) and other titles, and publisher of *EcoNews*, a monthly newsletter that serves the vision of a sustainable Vancouver Island. He is founder and series editor of The Solutions Project, President of the BC Sustainable Energy Association and Co-Chair with Liz of Prevent Cancer Now. He lives in Victoria, British Columbia. His website is [www.earthfuture.com](http://www.earthfuture.com).



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