

WORK, HEALTH AND ENVIRONMENT SERIES  
Series Editors: Charles Levenstein, Robert Forrant and John Wooding

# THE TOXIC SCHOOLHOUSE



Edited by  
**Madeleine Kangsen Scammell**  
and **Charles Levenstein**



BAYWOOD PUBLISHING COMPANY, INC.  
Amityville, New York

Copyright © 2014 by Baywood Publishing Company, Inc., Amityville, New York

All rights reserved. No part of this book may be reproduced or utilized in any form or by any means, electronic or mechanical, including photo-copying, recording, or by any information storage or retrieval system, without permission in writing from the publisher. Printed in the United States of America on acid-free recycled paper.

**Baywood Publishing Company, Inc.**

26 Austin Avenue

PO Box 337

Amityville, NY 11701

(800) 638-7819

E-mail: baywood@baywood.com

Web site: baywood.com

*We dedicate this book to*

*Malala Yousafzai*

*for her work to ensure that education  
is a basic human right.*

Library of Congress Catalog Number: 2013027281

ISBN: 978-0-89503-851-7 (paper)

ISBN: 978-0-89503-852-4 (e-pub)

ISBN: 978-0-89503-853-1 (e-pdf)

<http://dx.doi.org/10.2190/TTS>

**Library of Congress Cataloging-in-Publication Data**

The toxic schoolhouse / edited by Madeleine Kangsen Scammell, Charles Levenstein ; series editors, Charles Levenstein, Robert Farrant, and John Wooding.

p. ; cm. -- (Work, health, and environment series)

Includes bibliographical references and index.

ISBN 978-0-89503-851-7 (paper) -- ISBN 978-0-89503-852-4 (e-pub) -- ISBN 978-0-89503-853-1 (e-pdf)

I. Scammell, Madeleine Kangsen, editor of compilation. II. Levenstein, Charles, editor of compilation. III. Series : Work, health, and environment series.

[DNLM : 1. Environmental Exposure--prevention & control--Canada. 2. Environmental Exposure--prevention & control--United States. 3. Schools--Canada. 4. Schools--United States. 5. Environmental Health--Canada. 6. Environmental Health--United States. 7. Environmental Pollutants--Canada. 8. Environmental Pollutants--United States. 9. Safety Management--Canada. 10. Safety Management--United States. WA 799]

HQ770.7

363.11'9371--dc23

2013027281

# Table of Contents

Preface . . . . .	vi
Acknowledgments . . . . .	ix
Introduction . . . . .	1

## PART I The Problem

<b>Chapter 1. Who's in Charge of Children's Environmental Health at School?</b> . . . . .	5
<i>Jerome Paulson and Claire Barnett</i>	
<b>Chapter 2. Who's Sick at School: Linking Poor School Conditions and Health Disparities for Boston's Children</b> . . . . .	25
<i>Tolle Graham, Jean Zotter, and Marlene Camacho</i>	
June 2012 Update on <i>Who's Sick at School</i> Report . . . . .	35
<i>Tolle Graham, Jean Zotter, and Marlene Camacho</i>	
<b>Chapter 3. Failing Our Children: Lead in U.S. School Drinking Water</b> . . . . .	41
<i>Yanna Lambrinidou, Simoni Triantafyllidou, and Marc Edwards</i>	
<b>Chapter 4. PCBs in School—Persistent Chemicals, Persistent Problems</b> . . . . .	65
<i>Robert F. Herrick</i>	
Update on PCBs in School . . . . .	76
<i>Robert F. Herrick</i>	
<b>Chapter 5. Healthy School Siting and Planning Policies: Linking Public Health, Education, and the Environment</b> . . . . .	79
<i>Alison K. Cohen</i>	

## PART II Organizing for Change

<b>Chapter 6. "Serving Two Masters"—An Interview with School Teacher and Union Organizer Debra Askwith</b> . . . . .	105
<i>Madeleine Kangsen Scammell and Ema Rodrigues</i>	



<b>Chapter 7.</b> “We Can’t Give Up, It’s Too Important”—Health and Safety Stories from Canadian and U.S. Schools . . . . .	119
<i>Dorothy Wigmore</i>	
<b>Chapter 8.</b> New Jersey’s Union-Centered Healthy Schools Work . . . . .	133
<i>Eileen Senn</i>	
<b>Chapter 9.</b> Negotiating Indoor Air—Case Report on Negotiation of Teachers’ Union, School Board on Air Contaminants . . . . .	145
<i>Sarah Gibson and Charles Levenstein</i>	
<b>Chapter 10.</b> School Custodians and Green Cleaners: Labor-Environment Coalitions and Toxics Reduction . . . . .	151
<i>Laura Senier, Brian Mayer, Phil Brown, and Rachel Morello-Frosch</i>	

### PART III Advances in Policy

<b>Chapter 11.</b> Integrated Pest Management Policies in America’s Schools: Is Federal Legislation Needed? . . . . .	177
<i>Andrea Kidd Taylor, Kyle Esdaille, and Jennifer Ames</i>	
<b>Chapter 12.</b> Reducing Asthma Triggers in Schools: Recommendations for Effective Policies, Regulations, and Legislation . . . . .	189
<i>Joan N. Parker</i>	
<b>Chapter 13.</b> Building the New Schoolhouse: The Massachusetts School Building Authority . . . . .	209
<i>Jennifer Ames and Charles Levenstein</i>	
<b>Contributors</b> . . . . .	225
<b>Index</b> . . . . .	231

## Preface

In the Baywood series *Work, Health, and Environment*, the conjunction of topics is deliberate and critical. We begin at the point of production—even in the volumes that address environmental issues—because that is where things get made, workers labor, and raw materials are fashioned into products. It is also where things get stored or moved, analyzed or processed, computerized or tracked. In addition, it is where the folks who do the work are exposed to a growing litany of harmful things or are placed in harm’s way. The focus on the point of production provides a framework for understanding the contradictions of the modern political economy.

Despite claims to a post-industrial society, work remains essential to all our lives. While work brings income and meaning, it also brings danger and threats to health. The point of production, where goods and services are produced, is also the source of environmental contamination and pollution. Thus, work, health, and environment are intimately linked.

Work organizations, systems of management, indeed the idea of the “market” itself, have a profound impact on the handling of hazardous materials and processes. The existence or absence of decent and safe work is a key determinant of the health of the individual and the community: what we make goes into the world, sometimes improving it, but too often threatening the environment and the lives of people across the globe.

We began this series to bring together some of the best thinking and research from academics, activists, and professionals, all of whom understand the intersection between work and health and environmental degradation, and all of whom think something should be done to improve the situation.

The works in this series stress the political and social struggles surrounding the fight for safer work and protection of the environment, and the local and global struggle for a sustainable world. The books document the horrors of cotton dust, the appalling and dangerous conditions in the oil industry, the unsafe ways in which toys and sneakers are produced, the struggles to link unions and communities to fight corporate pollution, and the dangers posed by the petrochemical industry, both here and abroad. The books speak directly about the contradictory effects of the point of production for the health of workers, community, and the environment. In all these works, the authors keep the politics front and foremost. What has emerged, as this series has grown, is a body of scholarship uniquely focused and highly integrated around themes and problems absolutely critical to our own and our children’s future.

## CHAPTER 7

---

# **“We Can’t Give Up, It’s Too Important”— Health and Safety Stories from Canadian and U.S. Schools**

*Dorothy Wigmore*

Schools are supposed to be places where children learn and thrive; not where they, teachers, and other staff get sick. The hazards are many, but recognition of those hazards is hard to come by in schools in Canada and the United States. The result can be an uphill fight for school-based organizations and unions. In this chapter, representatives of four such groups, two each from Canada and the United States, discuss the hazards and their effects. They have many—often unrecognized—successes and related lessons to share. These include taking comprehensive approaches, looking for broad sweeps and entrees, using building sciences and strategies of solid information, acting with respect and with persistence, including students and parents, going for green cleaners, and using participatory methods. The representatives of each group build on these to discuss what else needs to be done. The ideas are underpinned by the creativity, dedication, and persistence evident in their work to date.

Known endocrine disruptors, mutagens, carcinogens, and neurotoxicants are commonplace product ingredients, often used without attention to preventing harm or exposure. Biological substances, such as molds, contribute to indoor air quality problems. Tuberculosis, influenza, or other communicable diseases are almost always present. Sick people often are expected to work. Whether a nuisance or a serious issue, these chemical and biological hazards are a frequent source of discomfort and ill health in schools.

Growing use of computers and electronic procedures brings ergonomic problems and raises questions about electromagnetic radiation. Stressors are ubiquitous, ranging from physical and verbal violence, bullying, and harassment to having a lot of responsibilities with little or no control. Workload and expectations are high, but respect often is missing.

The hazards are many, but the dead bodies are few and far between. Most of those affected “just” get sick or hurt. They are part of a largely female workforce that frequently puts others’ needs ahead of its own. Is this what we expect in schools? Is this the environment where we expect our children to flourish and learn and the staff to be healthy, helpful, and dedicated?

There is a growing movement to recognize and deal with school-based occupational and environmental health and safety hazards: That is the message from representatives of four organizations in Canada and the United States. Driven by concerns for the health of children and school-based staff, they are bringing these issues into the public light with a range of goals and using a variety of strategies. Their work offers examples of practical experiences, innovative strategies, and successes that often go unrecognized.

Interviews conducted in 2009 with these representatives focused on the following questions: What are school-based hazards, and why do they matter? How do school-based hazards compare with those in other workplaces? What solutions and strategies have been used to prevent or reduce harm from the hazards? What are the lessons for researchers and activists? What else needs to be done? Respondents included: Darryl Alexander, Health and Safety Program Director for the American Federation of Teachers (AFT) in Washington, DC; Mae Burrows, then Executive Director of Toxic Free Canada (TFC), formerly the Labour Environmental Alliance Society or LEAS in Vancouver, BC; Karen Robinson, President of Canadians for A Safe Learning Environment (CASLE) in Halifax, NS; and Tolle Graham, the Healthy Schools Coordinator with the Massachusetts Coalition for Occupational Safety and Health (MassCOSH), in Boston.

### WHAT ARE THE HEALTH AND SAFETY ISSUES?

Many schools have the full gamut of hazards named above. “They are very complex industries with all sorts of hazards that are related to the work people do,” says Alexander. The AFT’s 1.4 million-plus members include teachers and paraprofessionals—bus drivers, teaching assistants/aides, security personnel, and administrative staff. “By and large, the hazards are not recognized. It was the same for health care and hospitals in the 1970s,” Alexander says. Recognized or not, she has more than enough work on her plate these days. It includes H1N1 flu and tuberculosis (schools are the number one setting for community outbreaks

in the United States), many indoor air issues, “green” cleaning products, high rates of work-related asthma,<sup>1</sup> ergonomics, and stress.

Toxic Free Canada’s Mae Burrows has her own list of school-based hazards. The Vancouver-based alliance of environmental and labor groups concentrates on chemical hazards and preventing cancer in workplace and community settings. In schools, this includes preventing exposures to asbestos in the buildings; mercury in thermometers; and pesticides and cleaning products as well as chemicals found in labs, auto shops, and art rooms.<sup>2</sup> Their inspections also include “hot spots of dirty electricity”—how computer labs are configured and what protections are in place. Back-to-back arrangements create a really “hot” room while computers set along the walls reduce exposure to EMF (electromagnetic-frequency radiation), says Burrows.

At the opposite end of the country, Canadians for A Safe Learning Environment has tackled school-based health and safety issues by focusing on building science and the products and practices used in schools. Started in 1994 with a small group of Halifax teachers and parents whose children’s health was affected by school conditions, they also pay most attention to chemical, biological, and communicable hazards.

The group of volunteers has worked on everything from carpets (there are almost none in Nova Scotia schools now), scent-free policies, and cleaning products to pesticides and low-emission building materials. “We partnered with the Occupational Health & Safety Division of the (provincial) Department of Labour right from the beginning. Around 1997, we added the Department of Education, and worked side by side on extremely positive things for Nova Scotia schools,” says Karen Robinson. “We worked on not only improving the status of the cleaning, maintenance, and classroom products used in existing schools, but also the way renovations are done and the way schools are built.” The group also works on acoustic health, playground safety, day lighting, and electromagnetic radiation.<sup>3</sup>

More than 1,000 kilometers to the south, the Massachusetts Committee on Occupational Safety and Health has had a Healthy Schools Initiative (HSI)<sup>4</sup> for about 10 years. The committee works in the Boston area, takes on state-wide

<sup>1</sup> Schools are one of the top three sectors reporting work-related asthma to the Massachusetts Department of Public Health.

<sup>2</sup> TFC’s activities are described on its current website—[www.tfc.ca](http://www.tfc.ca)—and its older site, [www.leas.ca](http://www.leas.ca) (from when it was called the Labour and Environmental Alliance Society). The “School Toxins Checklist” is at <http://leas.ca/UserFiles/File/Toxic%20Free%20Schools%20Audit%20Checklist.doc>

<sup>3</sup> CASLE’s website ([www.casle.ca](http://www.casle.ca)) provides a lot of information about its experiences, as well as documents it has produced or with which it is associated.

<sup>4</sup> The HSI, its activities, and documents are described on MassCOSH’s website at <http://www.masscosh.org/what-we-do/initiatives/healthy-schools-initiative>



policy initiatives, coordinates the Massachusetts Healthy School Network, and is involved in national activities through the Coalition for Healthier Schools and the Childproofing our Communities Campaign with the Center for Health, Environment, and Justice in Falls Church, Virginia.

As the HSI coordinator, Graham describes what she sees and hears about as “layers of hazards.” Many are related to design and maintenance of buildings—bad ventilation, materials that give off volatile organic compounds (VOCs), carpeting versus hard surfaces, molds, dirt, pests, and overuse of cleaners. Some are “traditional hazards that plague buildings, such as asbestos, lead in window frames and paints, and PCBs in window caulking. Other hazards are inherited when schools are built on contaminated sites,” she says.

### WHY ARE SCHOOL HAZARDS IMPORTANT?

All the women interviewed are emphatic that school-based health and safety and environmental hazards are important. Graham’s response was typical:

Short-term, because we always say teachers can’t teach and kids can’t learn if they can’t breathe. Long-term, it’s a workplace, for children and adults, and there are long-term consequences of being exposed to hazards in schools, hazards like asbestos, endocrine disruptor chemicals, off-gasses, building materials.

“It’s also important because we do see cancer clusters, for example, in teaching and custodial populations,” Burrows said. “We want to prevent cancer and take an approach about the timing of the dose (e.g., for neurotoxins and endocrine disruptors), especially for young children and teenagers, because of their critical developmental times.”

### WHAT’S DIFFERENT ABOUT SCHOOLS? WHAT’S THE SAME AS OTHER WORKPLACES?

Schools are workplaces, but are they different from other job settings? Yes and no, these women say. For example, location makes a difference. Canada’s labor and occupational health and safety (OHS) laws treat school workers like others. Unions represent and bargain for all public-school-based employees in the country. Whatever their positions, they have the same health and safety rights to know about workplace hazards, participate in joint health and safety committees (except in Alberta, which does not require these committees), and the right to refuse work that is unhealthy or unsafe (the specifics depend on the province’s law<sup>5</sup>).

<sup>5</sup>The Canadian Centre for Occupational Health and Safety has links to all the country’s OHS laws at <http://www.ccohs.ca/oshanswers/information/govt.html>

In the United States, however, school-based workers may not have the right to organize or negotiate collectively. The federal Occupational Safety and Health Act (OSHA) applies only to public sector employees in 26 states; others have very limited OSHA coverage. U.S. OSHA laws do not include the right to refuse unsafe or unhealthy work, and few require joint committees.

Another difference between schools and other workplaces is that some of the problems in schools have no geographic or legal boundaries. “The biggest one is that we’re dealing with the developing bodies of children,” Robinson says. “From a health point of view, it’s essential we get this right. It’s important they graduate with their diplomas and their health intact. . . . It’s the whole fabric of our future.”

For Burrows, children’s presence also is important in another way. “Kids have a sort of a second-hand exposure. It’s the same in hospitals. Those who are second-hand-exposed think they do not have a right to participate in how the exposure is eliminated or mediated.”

Robinson sees commonalities, too:

There are exposures for employees. People that work in those environments have rights to demand substitutions for those exposures. Like those working in other kinds of caring professions, school staff members usually don’t think of themselves very much as workers. So, often they don’t have the same orientation to asserting their health and safety rights or asserting good health and safety practices. I’ve been on five joint health and safety committees. On each one, the teacher representatives must be reminded they are there to protect staff. They learn that they can protect children, too, by shielding themselves first and protecting the children second-hand.

There’s also little helpful research in the sector, Alexander points out:

Schools are supposed to be the safest places in our community, for our kids. With few exceptions, no one has thought to look at them in a really comprehensive fashion. No one wants to think about the hazards. Like the violence in schools, bus drivers get beat up at a very high rate. Special education teachers—parents beat them up and so do the kids; nobody looks at it as work-related.

Graham’s experience with schools also is different from traditional COSH (community-based committees for occupational safety and health) work in the United States. “The labor-management health and safety model is not usually part of the school culture, especially if the unions are not really active. Even the Environmental Protection Agency’s useful Tools for Schools Program has a hard time competing with the ever-increasing educational demands on teachers and administrators.” (It emphasizes a multi-stakeholder team approach to improving schools’ environmental conditions.) These kinds of differences

between schools and other workplaces led HSI to work with community coalitions, health centers, parent-teacher associations, and asthma groups, as well as unions.<sup>6</sup> Graham notes, “It definitely broadens who we work with and changes some of the strategies, such as focusing more on environmental health rather than solely taking a hazards-based approach.”

### HOW DO THEY DO IT? WHAT ARE THE LESSONS?

The four organizations from two countries involve the full range of school staff, from bus drivers and maintenance workers to special education assistants and teachers. Three include parents in different ways; the AFT recognizes their importance but is not yet working frequently with them. All work in coalitions, with allies and/or in partnerships, and deal with building design and product uses. The union has ergonomics and work-related stressors high on its list of key issues, while the others recognize the importance of these hazards but have different mandates and/or specialties and experiences.

#### Comprehensive Approaches Work

A good example of HSI’s strategies comes from its work about pests, such as mice, in Boston schools. In 2000, Massachusetts passed the Children and Family Protection Act. It requires schools to use integrated pest management (IPM) and to file their IPM plans. “There are templates to help, but no real enforcement, other help,” Graham explains. “We found out most Boston schools hadn’t filed a plan, and because we’re focused on asthma, we knew it was a huge issue.” Through the Boston Urban Asthma Coalition (BUAC), the HSI worked with parents of children with asthma who did a lot in their own homes. Dealing with asthma triggers in homes—particularly rodents—can be quite overwhelming for residents, says Graham, especially when costly interventions are required. When she brought BUAC’s attention to the presence of mice, cockroaches, and rats in Boston public schools, the two organizations jointly challenged the school department at a public hearing about not obeying the law. “We rustled some feathers,” says Graham. Eventually the department agreed to work with HSI on a Healthy Schools Task Force.

“The result was that we met lot of goals about maintaining schools properly,” explains Graham. “Much about IPM is fixing leaky pipes, making sure windows close properly, fixing door sweeps to reduce cracks. We could talk about keeping buildings in good repair while explaining they couldn’t use poisons anymore to kill the mice. We got schools to develop very good criteria for pest management contractors so everyone’s at the same level.”

<sup>6</sup>The Massachusetts Teachers Association (MTA), part of the National Education Association, does a lot of work with MassCOSH. See their respective websites for details.

The IPM project also made connections with families around their home and school environments and helped those involved better understand the many layers of roles and responsibilities involved. For example, the “blame game” points at kids’ snacks or the clutter in elementary classes as the source of problems with mice, Graham says. “We’ve looked around and saw leaks under every door in the school and a leak in the sink under Ms. So-and-so’s room, so we could talk about needing a more comprehensive look at IPM. We’ve broadened it to talk about breathing health and improving school maintenance.”

#### Look for Broad Sweeps and Entrées

Looking for the broadest “hit” from a specific situation is a common HSI strategy. CASLE also goes for broad sweeps. Paying attention to building design, the group has had a huge effect in Nova Scotia and, to a lesser extent, across Canada. A 1997 meeting with provincial government departments that had a role in protecting children’s health and safety at school was critical. “We gave examples about how the system was failing and invited them to discuss how to avoid kids slipping through the cracks. We credit that positive problem-solving approach, with respect, as the main reason that so much good has happened,” Robinson says. That “good” includes CASLE’s:

- Healthy Schools Design and Construction (2002) being integrated into the Design Requirements Manual for construction of all new public buildings in the province, including schools, hospitals and prisons;
- recommendations for full ventilation systems (i.e., 100% fresh air delivery) being adopted for all new public schools; and
- role that facilitated replacement of cleaning materials and art supplies containing toxic ingredients with healthier alternatives, reduced use of pesticides in and around schools, and reduced use of chromated copper arsenate (CCA) pressure-treated wood in playgrounds and new school construction.

Their entrée often is asthma and respiratory illnesses, “because that is something people can identify with quickly, the numbers affected are so great, and we can have a lot of spillover effects,” Robinson says. Despite CASLE’s close ties with the Environmental Health Association of Nova Scotia (EHANS), the group does not make environmental sensitivities or illness (EI) the main rationale for its arguments. “When we started, it wasn’t seen as being real,” she explained:

The politics of improving buildings are very difficult. Those people get harmed in their workplace because others don’t believe it’s real, and employers are afraid of workers’ comp issues. But they get the spin-off benefits of changes we recommend. Schools now do a lot to accommodate children with EI, but staff has a harder time. Salary insurance for sick teachers and workers comp cases still are not easy to win.



## Use Building Sciences

From its experiences, CASLE developed a “new” approach to school-based hazards. “The old method was to complain, and then prove it. Health officials come in to test air or people and then say there’s no proof the building is a problem or that people are sick because of it. They walk away and people are seen as second-class citizens for having complained, being sick.” Now the provincial education department and CASLE focus on what is known about building science. They use clues from reported symptoms, health concerns, and building science to diagnose the problem. “When we work to make the building better, the health problems resolve.” Functioning joint health and safety committees, sometimes called JOSH committees, also make a difference, Robinson says. “It’s key for us to have the JOSH involved.”

## Solid Information, Respect, and Persistence are Key Strategies

CASLE’s successes have refined its strategies. “Our three tools are solid information, respect for all those we work with (even those we perceive are hurting children, no one does that on purpose), and the third is persistence—we work in another way when we run up against walls.”

## Participatory Action Research Works

Involving members in activities is important for the teacher’s union. “I’m very proud of work we did with Robin Gillespie in New Mexico with paraprofessionals who do special ed work with student handling. These paras have all kinds of ergonomic hazards,” Alexander says.

She and Gillespie designed a program to give two days of training to about 24 special ed paras. “They went back and essentially became researchers.” The AFT members collected surveys from co-workers in more than 15 school locations. Alexander and Gillespie used the results to write a report presented to the school district, with recommendations about next steps to improve ergonomic conditions for these workers.

“It was really powerful, and we plan to build on it in Albuquerque and, hopefully, across the United States. A Supreme Court decision says districts must provide adequate education for all children. We want to be sure that that ‘adequate education’ also includes safe, ergonomic environments for staff,” says Alexander.

The union also has developed a unique six-session workshop about work-related stress that is being refined after two pilots. Union members are trained to deliver the sessions; they work with local leaders to identify six to 10 people in their school who might be interested in the topic. They use a learner-based popular education approach that integrates the participants’ experiences with a framework of OHS principles, information about the hazard, and examples of

how others have dealt with it. The result includes drawings of stress-free schools (Figure 1), body and workplace maps to make visible the symptoms and hazards, and recommendations to local union leaders about one or two priority stressors to tackle and strategies to go with them.<sup>7</sup>

Like the ergonomics project, it has taught Alexander a number of things:

I learned that it’s good working cooperatively with workers as partners for research and making plans for redesign of a workplace. You can’t make a lot of assumptions that you know what’s best for workers going into a situation where they live the exposures every day. I love participatory research; it’s a powerful tool. It works very well hand-in-hand with basic training.<sup>8</sup>

## Use Right-To-Know Laws

Cleaning products are becoming a common target for school OHS activities. For example, TFC staff worked with custodial staff and joint health and safety committees in several Vancouver-area school districts, encouraging them to look more critically at product material safety data sheets (MSDSs) required under the 1988 right-to-know law called the Workplace Hazardous Materials Information System (WHMIS). “Even with really good committees and really good districts, that wasn’t being done in 2000,” Burrows says. Using work with the provincial building authority, its CancerSmart Consumer Guide<sup>9</sup> and the Cleaners, Toxins and the Ecosystem Project,<sup>10</sup> TFC developed a list of chemicals that should and can be replaced, particularly in cleaning products. They use it with joint health and safety committees, parents’ groups, students, and school boards.

“At the beginning, it was custodians taking the booklet [about cleaners] to their joint committee and asking them to go through products for these chemicals, saying ‘We don’t want to use them.’ We learned that people didn’t know what their exposures were,” Burrows says. “They are very focused and committed to getting substitutions when they realised what their exposures were.

<sup>7</sup>The five-step framework, mapping instructions, and “solutions chart” are similar to materials the author published in a project for the Manitoba Workers’ Compensation Board. *Seeing the Workplace with New Eyes: A Self-Help Guide for Workplace Safety and Health Committees and Workplace Safety and Health Representatives* can be found at <http://www.wigmorising.ca> or <http://www.mgeu.ca/news-and-multimedia/news/read/article/95/seeing-the-workplace-with-new-eyes>

<sup>8</sup>For other examples of participatory action research, see the special issue of *New Solutions*, 15:1 (2005) on the topic.

<sup>9</sup>The third edition of the 52-page booklet, featured on the CBC TV documentary “Chasing the Cancer Answer” is available on-line at <http://leas.ca/CancerSmart-3-The-Consumer-Guide.htm>

<sup>10</sup>For information about the project, a copy of the *Cleaners and Toxins Guide*, and other presentation materials, see <http://leas.ca/Cleaners-and-Toxins.htm>

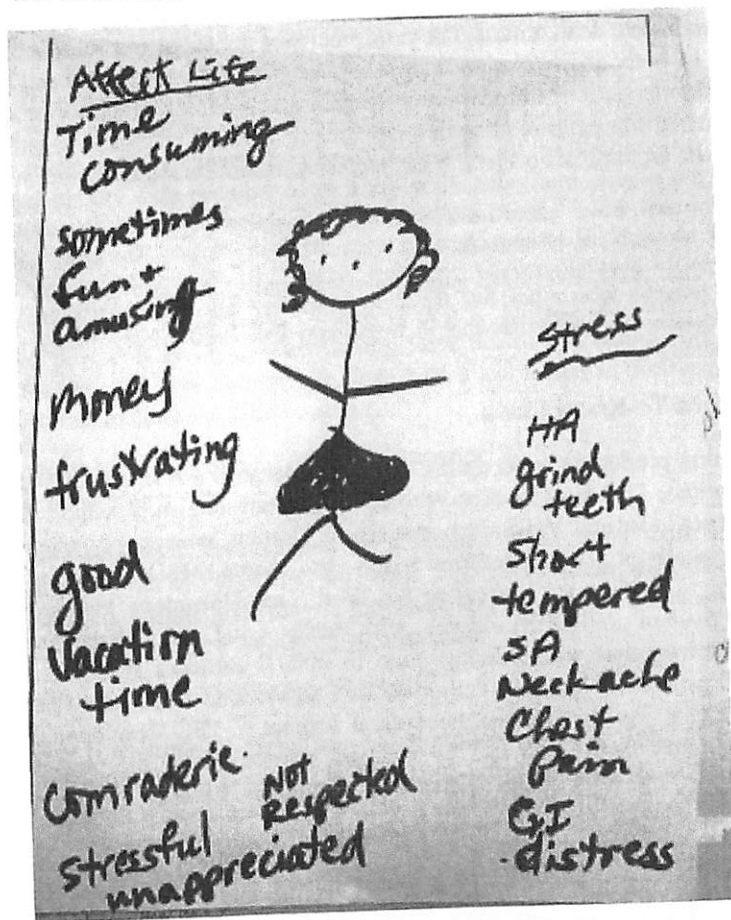


Figure 1. This was drawn by an AFT member at a pilot of the union's workshop, "Beyond Stress Management." Participants were asked to answer the question: How does stress affect your life? The list is typical of stressors that affect school-based workers.

They exert their rights under the law and force a substitution or elimination of something."

"We also learned that cost-comparative and efficient alternatives are available," Burrows adds. "In the districts, people would bring substances to the meetings, then purchasing would meet suppliers and say they had to find alternatives or lose the contract. We also taught people how to read the sheets and research the chemical so they could look for themselves."

### Figure Out How to Include Students

But students often don't have a right to know.<sup>11</sup> That "birthed" TFC's students' environmental bill of rights. Following work with students and parents groups, the alliance also got a supportive resolution in 2006 from the British Columbia Confederation of Parent Advisory Councils, calling on school districts to look at all their chemical products for carcinogens, reproductive toxins, and endocrine disruptors and to replace them with non-toxic and "environmentally safe" products. The alliance developed a learning resource for teachers that has six modules designed to fit the BC Ministry of Education curriculum for several courses in grades 8 through 12.<sup>12</sup>

### Push for "Green" Cleaners

While U.S. school employees may not have the same legal rights as Canadian workers, MassCOSH, the AFT, and others working in the field take a similar approach to push for certified "green" cleaners that do not contain asthmagens or other ingredients causing respiratory reactions. The "Cleaning for Healthy Schools Toolkit" is one example of their efforts. MassCOSH is leading campaigns for a "Safer Cleaning Program" in schools, hospitals, and state buildings, along with requirements that new schools and renovations use the healthiest building materials.

"Green cleaning seems to be a very good and effective approach to reducing chemical exposures for kids and custodial maintenance workers," Alexander says. "A lot of our members are proposing policy changes to their school districts for green cleaning and looking at it as a collective bargaining issue." It's part of the union's growing involvement in things "green." It joined the Blue-Green Alliance in July, 2009, shortly after publishing *Building Minds, Minding Buildings*.<sup>13</sup>

### WHAT ELSE NEEDS TO BE DONE?

The successes are impressive but there still is much to do in both countries. Good policies and practices can be lost if they aren't integrated into the law and/or union contracts. The "players" need training about the hazards and building science. Differences between "green" and "healthy" must be reconciled. "To me, it's just such a huge topic and one that deserves a lot more research, a lot

<sup>11</sup> Section 13 of the Nova Scotia health and safety law says that people in the workplace must receive every precaution that is reasonable. The government Department of Occupational Health and Safety has interpreted this to include students. Manitoba's Workplace Safety and Health Act has similar provisions.

<sup>12</sup> For all these school-related documents, see <http://leas.ca/Toxic-Free-Schools.htm>

<sup>13</sup> See the document and related materials at <http://www.aft.org/issues/healthsafety/buildingminds>

more intervention research and better policies and regulations. I've done it for almost 20 years now and I feel like I've just scratched the surface," Alexander says. "We need national comprehensive standards about where schools are sited, how you build the school, and how you operate and maintain a school for health, safety, and security."

Robinson agrees. "People have learned and changed how they do things, but there is no regulation to force it on the school and departmental level. All we've gained can be put at risk." Standards about healthy buildings "also need to include ergonomics, stress reduction, lighting, etc. . . . We developed IAQ [indoor air quality] regs for Nova Scotia's public buildings in the late 1990s. They got watered down and watered down by government and industry and never passed. Maybe now's the time to try again."

To solidify already-advanced practices, by 2012, Robinson and CASLE started working with the Department of Education on a new project. Together, they are developing an on-line training module for school administrators and units to include in the curriculum. (CASLE's website already has the organization's *School administrator's guide to a healthy school*.) "There are so many potential issues over which administrators have control rather than building operators," Robinson says. "It also is becoming essential for citizens to finish school knowing how to make healthy choices for their lives, homes, and future work environments."

"I think we need to really work to figure out how to carve out that place for environmental health and safety as something that all schools have a system for managing. We talk about a health and safety management plan for industrial settings, but not in schools," says Graham. "We also need more support from the federal government. Citing guidelines would be great, as would strengthening green building standards, tying funds coming to states to green building standards. Otherwise, it's likely that if school boards are given money to renovate schools, they may do it the old crappy, unhealthy way. We want to make sure those standards are really in place."

But there is confusion between "green" and "healthy" buildings. "One of our challenges is meshing 'green' with 'healthy,'" says CASLE's Robinson. "We're having a lot of success in Nova Scotia in educating green building folks about what's healthy. . . . We talk about the need to use the precautionary principle." By 2012, Robinson is encouraged by developments integrating green and healthy. For example, all new schools must have operable windows, and scent-free/chemical reduction programs in materials choices are still a priority. "It's still easy for companies to claim their products are 'green' if they do something as simple as use recycled materials in their containers," Robinson says. "The products can still contain questionable ingredients. Or, carpeting may become a more attractive option because of new low-emission, low-pile, modular 'green' carpets, when these features may not be enough. For health reasons, carpets must be as easy to clean, and be kept as clean, as hard surface floors.

This remains difficult to do inexpensively." Alexander also links "greenwashing" and standards. "Things can be 'green' because they're energy-efficient. . . . I definitely want energy-efficient buildings but I want them tied to a standard about healthy buildings."

Whether or not there are official standards or good practices, school staff need training. Administrators should be educated about the built environment "so that they can be good informed custodians of school buildings and buses and equipment," says Alexander. TFC wants more real-life, experienced-based training with MSDSs and inventories of toxic exposures in schools, so that there can be work about substitutes.

In the United States, taking school-related hazards seriously also means extending OSHA coverage to school-based workers. Alexander is not optimistic this will happen. "Some of my colleagues are patronizing, because we don't have dead bodies to show; we just have hurt bodies. I don't have big expectations of those running OSHA or those in Congress that these workers deserve OSHA coverage."

All these activities have a price, Robinson reflected. "It's been hard, hard work. Change takes hard work, and we were a part of that. It takes commitment. It takes networking and building credibility, being persistent and stubborn. Whatever we've contributed is added to what others have done. Everyone who's worked on making schools healthy places has sacrificed a lot, but it's worthwhile. We can't give up; it's too important." This statement echoes the words of the song "Rise as One," by Seattle-based Joe Jencks, which chronicles a successful school workers' strike:

And we will never give up, we will never give in  
 And we'll never, ever go away  
 We will build a brand new future for our daughters and our sons  
 We will work 'til all workers rise as one

—Joe Jencks

©2002 Joe Jencks Turtle Bear Music<sup>14</sup>

<sup>14</sup> The full lyrics are available online at <http://www.joejencks.com/index.php?page=songes>



- [Askwith, Debra]  
 Freedom of Information Act requests, 110  
 interview with, 105–117  
 Massachusetts Public Record Law requests, 110  
 Massachusetts Teachers Association (MTA), 108–109  
 mold, efforts to eradicate, 114  
 National Education Association (NEA) internship, 105, 115–116  
 Office of Civil Rights (OCR), 110  
 OSHA (Occupational Safety and Health Administration), 114–115  
 parents, work with, 112  
 Pioneer Valley Asthma Coalition, 106–107, 112–113  
 school nurses, education by, 112–113  
 Springfield Board of Health, 116–117  
 Springfield Education Association, 106, 111  
 Springfield Environmental Initiative, 106–107, 113  
 student illnesses, 112–113  
 teacher illnesses, 113  
 union organizing, 105–117  
 UniServe Directors, 108–109, 115
- Assessing and Controlling Occupational Health Risks to Immigrants in Somerville, 169–170
- Association of Occupational and Environmental Clinics (AOEC), 23
- asthma  
 Black and Latino children, 30  
 childhood, 4, 29–30, 32–33, 35, 37n5, 124, 153, 156, 177, 189  
 green cleaners and, 38, 40  
 mold, 31–33  
 overview, 30–31  
 pest infestations, 31–33  
 Pioneer Valley Asthma Coalition, 39, 106–107, 112–113  
 rates of, 29–32, 37n5  
 recommendations, 33–35  
 triggers, 32–33, 89, 153, 165, 177  
*See also* Boston Urban Asthma Coalition (BUAC); Indoor air quality
- Baldwin School District (Long Island, NY), 147  
 Baltimore City Public Schools (BCPS), 57  
 Barnett, Claire, 3, 9–28, 209–210, 223  
 BCPS (Baltimore City Public Schools), 57  
 Belmont Learning Complex (Los Angeles), 90–91  
 Berkshire Community College (Massachusetts), 73  
 Berkshire (Massachusetts) Community College, PCBs in, 73  
 Beverley Hills High School, 91  
 Beyond Pesticides (BP), 19, 180, 182  
 BHHSC (Boston Healthy Homes and Schools Collaborative), 39–40  
 Blacks. *See* Communities of color  
 Blue-Green Alliance (AFT), 129  
 Blue-green alliances, 134, 152, 155–156, 158, 166–167, 170  
 Boards of education, state and local, 15–16
- Boston  
 Brazilian housecleaners, 170  
 City Council, 153  
 Green Cleaners Project, 151–173  
 Parent-Teacher Association (PTA), 217  
 PBCs in buildings, 68  
 Public Health Commission, 33, 38, 153, 155  
 school and health advocacy, 155–157  
 Vietnamese workers, deaths of, 168–169
- Boston Healthy Homes and Schools Collaborative (BHHSC), 39–40
- Boston Public Schools (BPS)  
 condition of, 29–40  
 Department of Facilities Management, 155  
 environmental assessments, 153  
 environmental inspections, 31–33  
 Green Cleaners Project, 151  
 lead in drinking water, 55
- Boston Urban Asthma Coalition (BUAC)  
 asthma in schools, 29, 33–39, 124  
 Green Cleaners Project, 151, 155, 157–158, 161, 163–165, 167  
 Healthy Schools Committee, 35–36, 38–39
- Bottom up planning, 147–148  
 BP (Beyond Pesticides), 19, 180, 182  
 BPS. *See* Boston Public Schools (BPS)  
 Brazilian housecleaners, 170  
 British Columbia Confederation of Parent Advisory Councils, 129  
 Brockton, MA, 212  
 Brown, Phil, 151–173  
 Brownfields, 2–3, 82–85, 151  
 remediation, 86–88  
 Brown University Superfund Research Program Community Outreach Core, 87  
*Brown v. Board of Education*, 96  
 BUAC. *See* Boston Urban Asthma Coalition (BUAC)  
*Building Healthy, High Performance Schools: A Review of Selected State and Local Initiatives* (Environmental Law Institute), 190–191  
*Building Minds, Minding Buildings* (AFT), 129  
 Buildings. *See* School buildings  
 Burke, Nia, 35  
 Burlington, Massachusetts Health Department, 197  
 Burrows, Mae, 120–121, 123, 127–128
- Cahill, Tim, 212–214
- California  
 Californians for School Facilities, 80  
 Collaborative for High Performance Schools, 199  
 General Industry Safety Orders, 194  
 Healthy Schools Act, 178  
 HVAC systems, 192  
 Los Angeles Unified School District (LAUSD), 41–43, 55, 90–91, 96  
 Parent Teacher Association (PTA), 178  
 Safe Schools, 184  
 School Integrated Pest Management Program, 197  
*Williams v. State of California*, 94–97
- Camacho, Marlene, 29–40
- Camden Education Association (CEA), New Jersey, 141
- Canada  
 occupational health and safety (OHS) laws, 122  
 school-based organizations, 119  
 Toxic Free Canada (TFC), 127–129, 131  
 unions, 119, 122
- Canadians for A Safe Learning Environment (CASLE), 120–121  
 building design and science, 121–122, 125–126  
*School administrator's guide to a healthy school*, 130
- Cancer, 67, 90–91, 121–122, 127  
 CancerSmart Consumer Guide, 127  
 Carbon dioxide levels, 18, 89, 137  
 Carnevale schools (Providence, RI), 91  
 Carpets, 122, 130, 195, 197  
 CASLE. *See* Canadians for A Safe Learning Environment (CASLE)
- Caucasians, 145  
 Caulk, PCBs in, 65–73, 76–77  
 CDC. *See* Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC)
- Celluci, Paul, 212
- Center for Construction Research and Training, 72
- Center for Environmental Health, 184
- Center for Green Schools, 98
- Center for Health, Environment & Justice, 84–85, 122
- Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), 9, 15, 19, 210  
 blood lead levels (BLLs), 51–52  
 Environmental Health Tracking Program, 22  
 National Institutes of Health, 24  
 Center to Protect Workers' Rights (CPWR), 72
- Child Proofing Our Communities Campaign (CPOC), 84–85, 122
- Children  
 asthma, 4, 29–30, 32–33, 35, 37n5, 124, 153, 156, 177, 189  
 health, differences from adults, 20–22  
 illnesses, 19, 112–113, 151  
 learning disabilities, 151  
 vulnerable population, 9–10, 88–89, 97



- /sical school environment]  
 ublic health professionals and, 79–80,  
   88–92, 96–98  
 akeholders, 80–81  
 lands Education Association (PEA),  
   141  
 eer Valley Asthma Coalition, 39,  
   106–107, 112–113  
 ifield, Massachusetts, 2  
 nging materials as source of lead, 48,  
   51, 53–54  
 /chlorinated biphenyls. *See* PCBs  
 essa, Joan, 138  
 erty, 82–83, 87, 94, 97, 153  
 ell, Joyce, 134  
 utionary principle, 153–155,  
   157–158, 163–167, 170  
 a, E., 67  
 ect COBWEB (Collaboration for a  
   Better Work Environment for  
   Brazilians), 169–170  
 idence, Rhode Island, 86–88, 97  
 idence Preservation Society,  
   88  
 ic Employees Occupational Safety  
   and Health (PEOSH)  
 AQ standard, 139, 142  
 pections, 142  
 ulatory compliance, 134  
 andards, 136  
 ic health policies, 45, 58, 79–80,  
   88–92, 96–98  
 ulti-disciplinary studies, 170–171  
  
 on, 10–11, 14–15  
 ilding America's Schools, 80  
 ord keeping, 149, 180  
 ulation  
 Ivocacy for, New Jersey, 138–140  
 inking water, lead in, 41, 45–51  
 vironmental health, 15–17  
 oor air quality, 190–204  
 assachusetts, 154–155  
 assachusetts School Building  
   Authority (MSBA), 35, 209, 211,  
   215–216, 219–222  
  
 [Regulation]  
   Occupational Safety and Health  
     Administration (OSHA), 9, 16  
   pesticides, 197  
   Rules and Regulations for School  
     Health Programs (Rhode Island),  
     195, 197  
   ventilation, 191–195  
 Rehabilitation Act, Section 504, 21  
 Respiratory illnesses, 125, 145–146, 190,  
   196  
 Rhode Island  
   chemical hygiene plan, 198  
   Department of Environmental  
     Management (DEM), 87  
   Legal Services, 87  
   oversight, 202  
   Rules and Regulations for School  
     Health Programs, 195, 197  
   Sustainable Schools Summit, 85  
 Right-to-know laws, 127–129, 196, 198  
 Robinson, Karen, 120–121, 123,  
   125–126, 130–131  
 Rodrigues, Ema, 105–117  
 Romney, Mitt, 212–213, 221  
 Ropars, John, 135–136, 142  
 Rosenthal, Linda, 71  
  
 Safe Drinking Water Act (SDWA) of  
   1974, 45–48, 50  
 Safer Cleaning Products Bill, 155  
 “Safer Cleaning Program” (MassCOSH),  
   129  
 San Francisco, PCBs in, 77  
 Sarbanes, Paul, 50  
 Scammell, Madeleine Kangsen,  
   105–117  
 School administrators, 57, 91, 109–110,  
   130–131, 203  
   green cleaners, 151–152, 158, 160,  
   162–164, 166–167  
   pest control, 177, 179–180, 183–184  
*School administrator's guide to a healthy  
   school* (CASLE), 130  
 School Building Advisory Board, 214,  
   221

- School buildings  
   building-related illness, 17  
   condition of, 11–15, 209–210  
   construction and renovation, 2, 93–94,  
     198–199, 204, 218–219  
   contamination from disasters, 19–20  
   design and science, 121–122,  
     125–126  
   financial aspects, 184, 210, 212–213,  
     221–223  
   green building design, 84, 130  
   legislation, 80–81, 212–213, 220–222  
   materials, 197  
   prioritizing problems, 215–217  
   sick building syndrome, 17  
 School custodians  
   custodial unions, 160–163, 166,  
     168  
   exposure to hazardous products, 164  
   organizing, 4, 152  
   training in use of cleaning products,  
     159–160, 162, 165, 195  
 School drinking water. *See* Lead in school  
   drinking water  
 School Health Policies and Program  
   Study, 18  
 School nurses, 23, 112–113  
 School siting, 2, 11, 82–92, 151  
*Schools of Ground Zero* (Bartlett and  
   Petarca), 20  
 Science Lab Task Force, 219  
 SDWA (Safe Drinking Water Act) of  
   1974, 45–48, 50  
 Seattle Public Schools (SPS), 57–58  
 Senior, Laura, 4, 151–173  
 Senn, Eileen, 4, 133–143  
 September 11, 2001 terrorist attacks,  
   19–20  
 Sheet Metal and Air Conditioning  
   Contractors National Association  
   (SMACNA), 201, 204  
   *IAQ Guidelines for Occupied Buildings  
     under Construction*, 199  
 Shendell, D. G., 15  
 Shober, Marilyn, 140  
 Sick building syndrome, 17  
 Simmons, Vires, 141  
  
 SMACNA. *See* Sheet Metal and Air  
   Conditioning Contractors National  
   Association (SMACNA)  
 Smart Growth planning (Maryland),  
   83–84  
 Social justice, 94–96, 107–108, 156, 170  
 South Dakota, school construction funds,  
   220  
 Special education paraprofessionals, 126  
 Springfield, MA, 105–117  
   Board of Health, 116–117  
   Springfield Education Association,  
     106, 111  
   Springfield Environmental Initiative,  
     106–107, 113  
 Springfield Middle School (Providence,  
   RI), 86–87, 91  
 Statement of Interest (SOI), 215–217, 221  
 Steinhauer, Wendell, 135  
 Stoller, Kenneth S., 69  
 Stone, Jackie, 141  
 Stress, work-related, 126–128  
 Student achievement, 81, 90, 92–96  
 Sullivan, Patrick, 106  
 Sweden, PCBs in, 66–67  
 Szegda, Kathleen, 106–107  
  
 Taylor, Andrea Kidd, 4, 177–187  
 Teachers, 3  
   American Federation of Teachers  
     (AFT), 80, 120, 126, 129, 184  
   asthma rates, 189  
   Boston Parent-Teacher Association  
     (PTA), 217  
   California Parent Teacher Association  
     (PTA), 178  
   health issues, 113  
   labor unions, 3  
   Massachusetts Teachers Association  
     (MTA), 2, 72, 105–106, 108–109,  
     124n6, 147, 217  
   National Science Teacher Association,  
     219  
   quality of schools and satisfaction, 93  
   Westborough Teachers Association  
     (WTA) union, 146–149

# NEWS RELEASE

**ANNOUNCING...**

## THE TOXIC SCHOOLHOUSE

**EDITORS**

*Madeleine Kangsen Scammell*

*Charles Levenstein*

**WORK, HEALTH AND ENVIRONMENT SERIES**

*Series Editors: Charles Levenstein, Robert Forrant and John Wooding*

*The Toxic Schoolhouse* is a collection of articles on chemical hazards endangering students, teachers, and staff in the education system of the United States and Canada. Some of the articles were originally published in a special issue of *New Solutions: A Journal of Occupational and Environmental Policy*, but all have been updated and several new articles have been added. The book is organized in three sections. The first describes problems ranging from the failures of coordination, monitoring, and siting of school buildings to the hazards of exposure to toxic substances, including lead and PCBs. The second section captures the voices of activists seeking change and describes community and union organizing efforts to improve school conditions. The third section covers policy "solutions." The authors include academics, union staff and rank-and-file activists, parent organization leaders, and public health professionals.

### **Intended Audience**

Teachers, parents of school-age children, school administrators, teachers union activists, health and safety advocates, environmentalists, public health practitioners and activists, students in environmental and occupational health (in the United States and elsewhere)

### **— FORMAT AND ORDERING INFORMATION —**

6" × 9", 258 Pages, Paper / ePUB / ePDF  
Paper ISBN 978-0-89503-851-7, \$49.95\*  
ePUB ISBN 978-0-89503-852-4, \$39.95  
ePDF ISBN 978-0-89503-853-1, \$39.95  
Print + eBook \$54.95

\*\$7.00 postage and handling required in U.S.; please inquire for rates outside U.S.

*Please direct orders and inquiries to:*

**BAYWOOD PUBLISHING COMPANY, INC.**

26 Austin Avenue, PO Box 337, Amityville, New York 11701  
phone (631) 691-1270 • fax (631) 691-1770 • toll-free orderline (800) 638-7819  
e-mail baywood@baywood.com • website <http://baywood.com>



## OF RELATED INTEREST...



### NEW SOLUTIONS

A Journal of Environmental and Occupational Health Policy

Editor: Craig Slatin

At the intersection of health, work, and the environment stands *New Solutions*—the only journal that attempts to both define the issues and offer perspectives for change. *New Solutions'* voice is progressive, experienced, challenging. The quarterly's contributors are scientists and policy-makers in academia and government, unionists on the shop floor, environmentalists in their many habitats, and activists on the streets, all well placed to see what works and what doesn't in policy for sustainable development. Walk their paths through the thicket of global problems in articles and commentary you won't find elsewhere.

Published per volume, 4 issues yearly. Print ISSN 1048-2911; Online ISSN 1541-3772.  
Institutional Rates: Print + Online \$318.00; Online Only \$302.00  
Individual Rates: Print + Online \$120.00; Online Only \$114.00

## ORDER FORM

Qty.	Title	Price	Postage*	Total

Name/Title \_\_\_\_\_

Institution \_\_\_\_\_

Address \_\_\_\_\_

City/State/Province \_\_\_\_\_

Country/Postal Code \_\_\_\_\_

Please charge:  VISA  MasterCard  AMEX  Discover  Check -or-  Money Order enclosed

Acc't. # \_\_\_\_\_ Exp Date \_\_\_\_\_

Signature \_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_

### Format Information and Terms

6" x 9", Paper / ePUB / ePDF, 258 Pages  
Paper ISBN 978-0-89503-851-7, \$49.95\*  
ePUB ISBN 978-0-89503-852-4, \$39.95  
ePDF ISBN 978-0-89503-853-1, \$39.95  
Print + eBook \$54.95

\*Postage required; please refer to schedule below. Prepayment in U.S. dollars, drawn on a U.S. bank required. Prices subject to change without notice.  
Printed in U.S.A.

### \*Book Postage Schedule

Type of Service	Single Copy	Add'l. Copies
<b>Domestic</b> Priority Ground	\$ 7.00	\$ 2.00 ea.
Overnight Express	22.50	5.00 ea.
<b>Canada</b>	14.00	4.00 ea.
<b>Foreign</b> Global Priority	29.00	15.00 ea.

Please direct orders and inquiries to:

BAYWOOD PUBLISHING COMPANY, INC.  
26 Austin Ave., PO Box 337, Amityville, NY 11701  
phone (631) 691-1270 • fax (631) 691-1770  
toll-free orderline (800) 638-7819  
baywood@baywood.com  
http://baywood.com

WORK, HEALTH AND ENVIRONMENT SERIES  
Series Editors: Charles Levenstein, Robert Farrant and John Wooding

# THE TOXIC SCHOOLHOUSE



Edited by  
**Madeleine Kangsen Scammell  
and Charles Levenstein**



BAYWOOD PUBLISHING COMPANY, INC.  
Amityville, New York



## ABOUT THE BOOK

*The Toxic Schoolhouse* is a collection of articles on chemical hazards endangering students, teachers, and staff in the education system of the United States and Canada. Some of the articles were originally published in a special issue of *New Solutions: A Journal of Environmental and Occupational Health Policy*, but all have been updated and several new articles have been added. The book is organized in three sections. The first describes problems ranging from the failures of coordination, monitoring, and siting of school buildings to the hazards of exposure to toxic substances, including lead and PCBs. The second section captures the voices of activists seeking change and describes community and union organizing efforts to improve school conditions. The third section covers policy “solutions.” The authors include academics, union staff and rank-and-file activists, parent organization leaders, and public health professionals.

## IN PRAISE OF...

*The Toxic Schoolhouse* is a deeply informative collection that should be a valuable resource for all those concerned about the health of children, teachers, custodians, and other school staff. The chapters highlight exposures from tainted water, toxic building materials, and inadequate heating and ventilation systems and their effects on the health of those exposed. Examples of effective organizing throughout North America to improve conditions and forge protective new policies offer a hopeful way forward.

— Richard W. Clapp  
Professor Emeritus, Boston University School of Public Health

*The Toxic Schoolhouse* adds to Scammell and Levenstein’s 2010 special issue of *New Solutions*, with updates to some of the articles as well as additional articles. This valuable look at environmental and occupational health in school buildings elucidates the problems, provides examples of how we can organize to change these conditions, and explores policy options. Lead paint, PCBs, poor indoor air quality, toxic cleaning chemicals, pesticide exposures, and asbestos—all plague children and teachers in U.S. schools. No emphasis on standardized testing and tying teacher evaluations to students’ scores is going to change these conditions. Making schools healthy and safe, however, is likely to go a long way toward bringing about the education outcomes our nation seeks. This book is a critical read for all who want to understand how to improve U.S. schools.

— Craig Slatin, ScD, MPH  
Professor, Department of Community Health and Sustainability  
University of Massachusetts Lowell  
Editor, *New Solutions*

As a former school committee member, as an elected official, and as a parent, I feel that this book raises issues that everyone who cares about public education in the United States should carefully consider.

— E. Denise Simmons  
Vice Mayor, Cambridge, MA

## ABOUT THE EDITORS

CHARLES LEVENSTEIN, PhD, MSc, is an economist and policy analyst. He is professor emeritus in the Department of Work Environment at the University of Massachusetts–Lowell, having retired from teaching in 2003, an adjunct professor of occupational health at Tufts University School of Medicine, and one of the leading researchers on social factors in occupational and environmental health. For several years he was co-director of the Organized Labor and Tobacco Control Consortium, funded by the American Legacy Foundation at Dana Farber Cancer Institute, and later became a consultant to Dr. Edith Balbach’s NCI-funded research on tobacco industry relations with trade unions. He has served as a member and chair of the environmental health and safety committee of the Massachusetts Teachers Association. Levenstein has engaged in intervention research in immigrant communities and in the economic evaluation of occupational health and safety interventions. Until recently, he chaired the advisory committee for the United Steel Workers federally funded health and safety projects; he continues to chair the advisory board of the New England Consortium, a NIEHS-funded collaboration of health and safety advocacy groups, trade unions, and academics. In his most recent edited book, *At the Point of Production*, he explores industrial relations systems analysis as an approach to understanding social factors in occupational and environmental health. In *The Cotton Dust Papers* (2002; with Greg deLaurier and Mary Lee Dunn) he examines the 50-year struggle for recognition of byssinosis (“brown lung”) in the United States. Levenstein served on the IOM/NAS Committee on Health and Safety Needs of Older Workers. He is editor emeritus of *New Solutions*, a quarterly peer-reviewed journal on occupational and environmental health policy, and is coeditor of Baywood’s Work, Health and Environment Series. Levenstein is a recipient of the American Public Health Association’s award for lifetime contribution to occupational health.

MADELEINE KANGSEN SCAMMELL, DSc, is an assistant professor of environmental health at the Boston University School of Public Health. She leads the Community Engagement and Research Translation Cores of the Boston University Superfund Research Program. Her research interests include developing new analytic methods to study environmental health and cumulative burden, incorporating qualitative social sciences, measurement theory, and data representations through lattice structures. She serves on the Board of Health of the City of Chelsea and is a member of the board of directors of the Science and Environmental Health Network.

## IN PRAISE OF... (Continued from left)

This is an issue important to us all, and I learned this the hard way, as I confronted its particulars over the years. Children and their teachers spend a lot of time within the school’s immediate environment—and are mostly mindless of it, except for basic neatness and prettification. But it’s more than that. Thanks to the editors and authors of this collection for bringing the point home so effectively.

— Deborah Meier  
Senior Scholar, NYU Steinhardt School of Culture,  
Education, and Human Development



b

# baywood

PUBLISHING COMPANY, INCORPORATED

26 Austin Avenue • PO Box 337 • Amityville, New York 11701 • phone (631) 691-1270 • fax (631) 691-1770  
e-mail: baywood@baywood.com • web site: <http://baywood.com>

January 28, 2014

Karen Robinson  
President and CEO  
Canadians for A Safe Learning Environment (CASLE)  
287 Lacewood Drive, Unit 103, Suite 178  
Halifax, Nova Scotia  
CANADA B3M 3Y7

Dear Karen:

It was a pleasure speaking with you.

---

Price and format information for *The Toxic Schoolhouse* is as follows:

Title: *The Toxic Schoolhouse* edited by Madeline Kangsen Scammell and Charles Levenstein  
ISBN (Paper): 978-0-89503-851-7 Price: \$49.95 plus \$7.00 p/h U.S.  
ePUB ISBN: 978-0-89503-852-4 Price: \$39.95 plus \$7.00 p/h U.S.  
ePDF ISBN: 978-0-89503-853-1 Price: \$39.95 plus \$7.00 p/h U.S.  
\* Please inquire for rates outside the U.S.

Format: 6" x 9", 258 pages, Copyright 2014  
Publisher: Baywood Publishing Company, Amityville, NY  
Website: <http://baywood.com>

We believe you and your readership will find this timely new work to be of significant value. Please notify us at [baywood@baywood.com](mailto:baywood@baywood.com) if you post a review/or listing of this title.

Sincerely,



Julie Krempa  
Publicity Dept.

RK:jk  
enc.