

# Green Guidance

A look at the green cleaning for schools guidelines in Missouri, Illinois, and New York.

By Mark Bishop

In January 2009, the state of Missouri joined states around the nation in encouraging healthier cleaning in schools by releasing specific green cleaning guidelines.

Establishing these guidelines is important because providing a clear definition of what exactly “green” is goes a long way toward helping schools protect the health of their students and staff. Many school officials who’d like to bring the benefits of green cleaning to their schools hesitate because they don’t know how to sort through the many products in the marketplace and make an informed decision regarding how their school or school district will define green cleaning. In an ever-changing marketplace with new innovations and competing environmental claims, it’s increasingly important for states to step forward and provide supervision.

At the Healthy Schools Campaign (HSC), we are working with advocates from around the nation to promote state-level policy that requires green cleaning in schools and provides clear, practical guidance to school administrators on making the policy a reality at a school level.

I’m proud that the HSC was able to play a key role in creating

the Missouri legislation that called for the state to create its guidelines. As I review the Missouri guidelines, I see that Missouri leaders based their work closely on the efforts that the HSC and our allies made in developing guidelines for the state of Illinois when a law was passed requiring green cleaning in all of that state’s schools. Illinois leaders, in turn, benefited from the lessons that New York leaders learned while developing and implementing a state green cleaning requirement for New York schools.

## Compared & Contrasted

The Missouri and Illinois guidelines are very similar, with the bulk of the recommendations including existing third-party programs, such as Green Seal™, EcoLogo™, and the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency’s Design for the Environment program.

The biggest difference between the two states’ guidelines is that Missouri’s are recommendations rather than requirements.

Another significant difference is the way the Missouri guidelines treat powered cleaning equipment; changes were made to the Missouri ground rules to reflect a marketplace where more energy-effi-

cient and water-efficient equipment is being introduced.

While the Missouri and Illinois documents are very similar, the Illinois guidelines differ in some ways from their predecessor: the New York guidelines. How do the green standards used in Illinois and New York compare with each other? The checklist below provides an overview of the standards used in both states, and of how they integrate existing third-party certifications.

Purchasing Requirements	New York	Illinois
<b>Cleaning Supplies</b>	✓	✓
Green Seal	✓	✓
Environmental Choice	✓	✓
Design for the Environment		✓
Alternative Qualifications	✓	✓
Floor Care Requirements	✓	
<b>Green Equipment</b>	✓	
Green Label (vacuums)	✓	
<b>Paper Products</b>		✓
Green Seal		✓
EcoLogo		✓
EPA Comprehensive Procurement Guidelines		✓
<b>Exemption Clause</b>		✓

Despite their differences, Missouri, Illinois, and New York’s guidelines share two very important characteristics. First of all, they include provisions for periodic review and updates so that they will continue to reflect the current marketplace and the most relevant available technologies and products. Second, the simple existence of guidelines provides clarification for school leaders on what green products are appropriate for use in schools.

These parameters provide much-needed support for school leaders who want to use the best possible practices to keep their buildings clean and, more importantly, their students and staff healthy. **17**



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