

Advocating for Healthy Schools: *the Boston Urban Asthma Coalition's Healthy Schools Platform*

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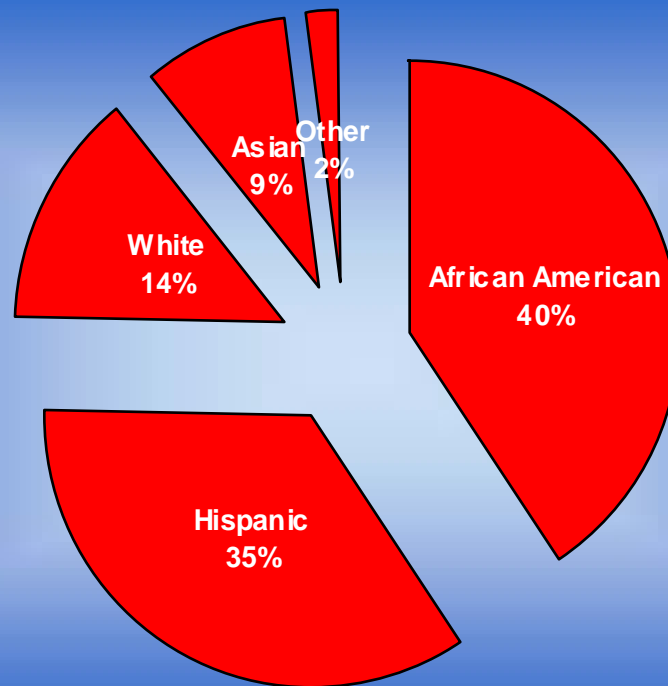
“We know what the problem is and we have the findings, so why does it take so long to get repairs done? It should be about the health of our children, yet why does it take so long? The money should be in the budget to fix our schools.”

- Mary White, BUAC Parent Leader, parent of two BPS students, on fixing our school buildings

Boston Public Schools

- 144 schools; 56,190 students
- 71% qualify for free or reduced school meals
- Asthma rate 7%
 - ✓ Range: 0% - 27%
- Teacher's 2nd highest occupational asthma rate in MA

Student Body by Race



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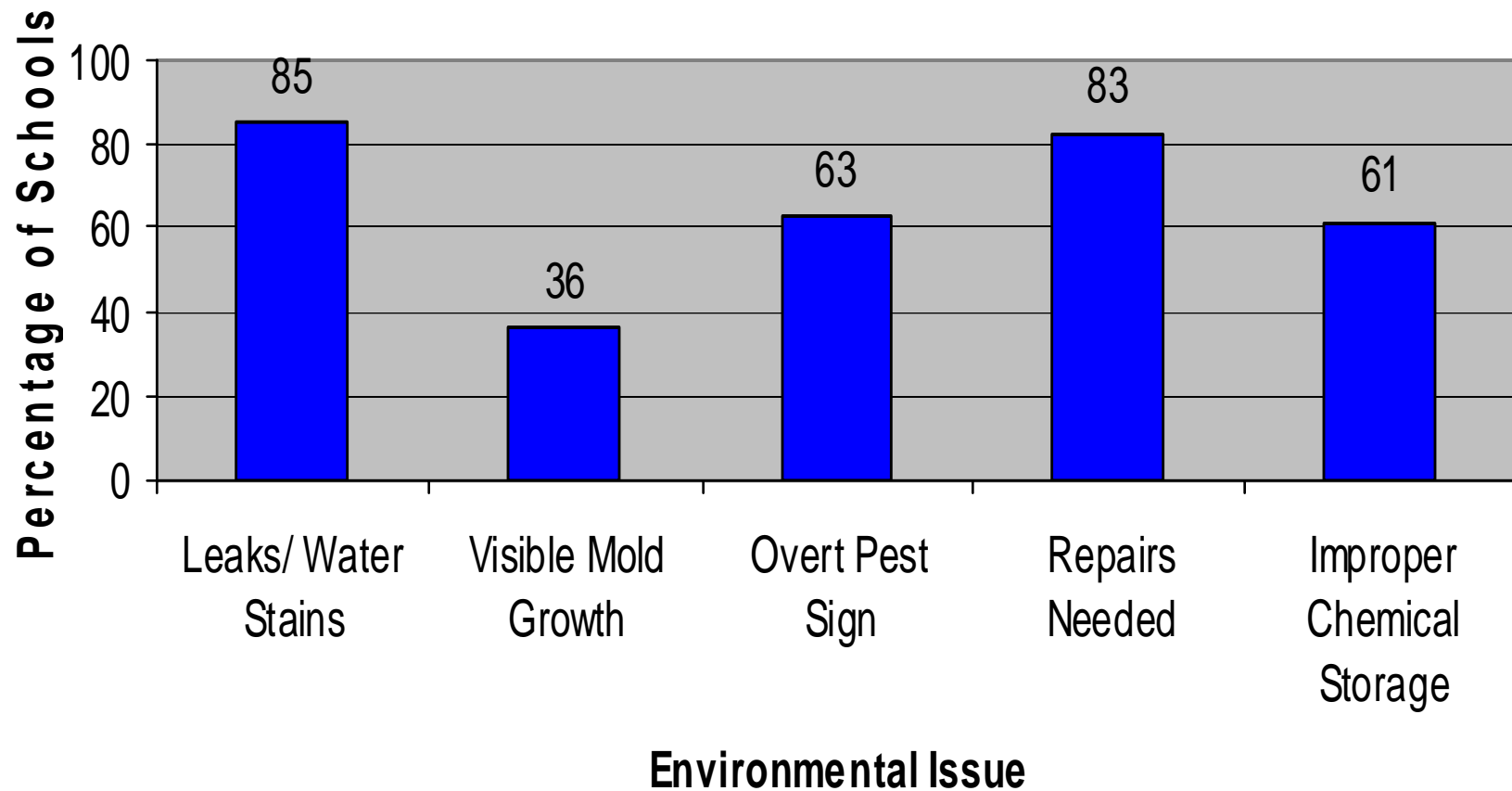
Asthma in Boston

- Child asthma rate
- Hospitalization
 - ✓ ↑ state average
 - ✓ ↓ 44% since 1994
 - ✓ Health disparities have not changed at all!

“I got adult onset of asthma, I believe, from working in a sick school building with a roof that was leaking and mold all over. I went on daily medication to deal with my breathing problems. Now, three years away from that building and working in another school, I no longer need my asthma meds. School buildings that are not maintained are a health problem for students and staff.”

-Sue Trotz, Boston School Guidance Councilor

Percentage of Boston Public Schools with Environmental Issues, 2004-2005



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BUAC's report

Who's Sick at School: Linking Environmental Conditions and Health Disparities for Boston's Children

- Findings
 - ✓ Higher asthma in schools with IAQ problems
 - ✓ Cause unclear
 - ✓ Schools with problems have vulnerable populations

“One of the major concerns at the Curley is that the building needs to be pointed. We have been on a list for 4 years and the project always gets postponed. We have water that makes its way into the building causing leaks, paint to flake and fall on students and teachers, and dust to cover the radiators. As a result many of our students with asthma are affected--so many have poor attendance because they are out a lot and as a result their grades suffer.”

*-Geraldo Martinez, Principal
Mary E. Curley Middle School*

Top ten schools: Ranked by percentage of rooms with environmental problems

Leaks			Pests			Mold		
Top 10 Schools with Problem	Percentage of Rooms with Problem	Asthma %	Top 10 Schools with Problem	Percentage of Rooms with Problem	Asthma %	Top 10 Schools with Problem	Percentage of Rooms with Problem	Asthma %
1. Harvard/ Kent*	62.5	12.25	1. James Curley	60.7	10.69	1. Quincy Upper 3*	38.5	n/a
2. Mary Curley *	58.0	11.66	2. Health Careers Academy	56.3	5.31	2. West Roxbury High	28.3	n/a
3. Lewis	54.2	n/a	3. Hennigan	50.0	9.51	3. Quincy Upper 2	17.6	n/a
4. Ohrenberger	53.3	n/a	4. Harbor Elementary	48.6	12.45	4. Excel High	8.2	n/a
5. Condon	46.0	15.54	5. Dearborn	41.1	16.29	5. Clap Elementary	7.7	7.35
6. Cleveland	41.3	14.34	6. Mary Curley	40.6	11.66	6. Fenway High	7.1	n/a
7. Mattahunt	39.2	3.71	7. Taylor	40.0	5.31	7. Beethoven	6.8	3.18
8. Agassiz*	39.0	11.29	8. Quincy Upper 3	38.5	n/a	8. Harvard/ Kent	6.3	12.25
9. McKay	38.2	6.00	9. Carter Development Center	35.0	n/a	9. Agassiz	5.2	11.29
10. Tynan	37.2	10.70	10. Hale	33.3	10.61	10. Grew	5.1	7.84

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BUAC Healthy Schools Committee

- Chair, Tolle Graham of MassCOSH
- Parents
 - ✓ BUAC Strengthening Voices Project
- Community Partners
- Boston Teachers Union
- Custodial Union
- City Councilor Chuck Turner

BUAC School Platform

- Process 2002:
 - ✓ 1 planning year
 - ✓ 8 “town hall” meetings
 - ✓ Parent input key
 - ✓ Open forum without fear of retaliation
- Focus:
 - ✓ Community platform – own identity
 - ✓ Open communication with city partners
 - ✓ Tightrope: activism and collaboration

Platform Demands

1. Comply with 1996 city inspection ordinance
2. Support environmental committees
3. Comply with state IPM law
4. Use safer cleaning products and decent equipment
5. Retrofit School Buses
6. Have a nurse in every school
7. Participate in Community/City Taskforce
8. Prioritize repairs for health
9. Conduct independent report on school conditions and cost

Action	Progress
1. Comply with 1996 city inspection ordinance	👍 Won in 2003
2. Comply with state IPM law	👍 0 – 144 2006
3. Use safer cleaning products and decent equipment	👍 Won 2005
4. Support environmental committees	👏 On-going; + 10
5. Retrofit School Buses	👏 on-going 2004, 214 + so far

Action	Progress
6. Have a nurse in every school	✋ Fought cutbacks
7. Participate in Community/City Taskforce	👍 On-going 2003; BUAC co-chairs
8. Prioritize repairs for health	✍ On-going; biggest challenge
9. Conduct independent report on school conditions and cost	👍 Completed 2006

Looking Ahead

- Embed environmental health in infrastructure of school system
 - ✓ Environmental Health Index
 - ✓ Wellness Policies
 - ✓ Whole School Improvement Plans
 - ✓ Essential Principles

National Link

- MA Healthy Schools Network
- BUAC expanding statewide
- National Healthy Schools Network

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Keys to Success

- Keep community identity
- Provide open forum with no retaliation
- Maintain respect of city
- Challenge city but also advocate for resources
- Have city council ally

Resources

- www.buac.org
- www.masscosh.org
- www.turi.org
- www.healthyschools.org

“It’s imperative that we get funding to fix our schools immediately. We need to do something about the leaks and the mice. Students and teachers are getting sick.”

-Nia Burke

Physical Education Teacher

Boston Teachers Union

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