

# NEWARK PUBLIC SCHOOLS

## *Proactive IAQ Management Accelerated Through Empowering Education*

As the record-holder for the most school facilities over 100 years old, Newark Public Schools (Newark) faced a challenge when in 2004, New Jersey enacted new school IAQ regulations. Facilities Management Executive Director Steve Morlino formed an IAQ Team to establish a comprehensive IAQ management plan that would go beyond minimums set by state regulations and establish Newark as a national model for facilities management. With superintendent and administrative staff approval, and participation from the entire school community, Newark implemented a proactive, results-oriented program. Thorough program organization, staff training and collaboration with community members helped Newark achieve its goal of IAQ excellence. Today, the district is a national model for IAQ management, school operation and community relationship-building.

**Organize for Success — Create Champions:** Newark convened an Educational Summit for Facilities Management staff to learn the new state IAQ regulations and share specific goals for IAQ excellence and the actions necessary to achieve them. By bringing everyone together to learn why the program was important and what it would accomplish, Newark created champions with a commitment to the IAQ program and its goals.

**Assess Your Environments Continuously — Use Technology:** To streamline its operations district-wide, Newark uses SchoolDude, a suite of online operations management tools that help coordinate routine maintenance, schedule proactive IAQ actions and manage responses to potential problems. All facilities staff speak the same language and use

the same tools to track their work, which saves time and energy.

### **COMMUNICATE WITH EVERYONE, ALL THE TIME: Communicate Results**

“We’re passionate about what we do. We want to share the message, ‘If Newark can do it, anybody can.’”

– Steve Morlino, Executive Director, Facilities Management

**Plan Your Short and Long-Term Activities — Work in Stages:** Newark organizes its activities into phases with defined measures of success and starts with small tasks to build momentum to support bigger goals. For example, when Newark transitioned to green cleaning, they first educated occupants and custodians about the new products and the reasons for the switch. After a trial period, they asked for feedback. If anyone had reservations, Facilities Management listened and found an alternative. This “educate, test, listen and refine” approach to IAQ management engaged the entire school community and built trust and support for the IAQ program.

**Act to Address Structural, Institutional and Behavioral Issues — Educate Staff About IAQ to Change Behavior:** Facilities Management worked with Health Services on their common goal to reduce environmental asthma triggers. Together, they teamed with the Pediatric/Adult Asthma Coalition of New Jersey (PACNJ) to educate nurses, principals and teachers about the relationship between IAQ and asthma. New awareness led to asthma-friendly and IAQ-friendly policies and institutional culture changes, which resulted in every school in the district meriting an Asthma-Friendly School Award from PACNJ. “We call nurses our ‘first line of defense.’ When someone comes to them with a health complaint that could be related to IAQ, they call us immediately to give us a heads-up... and explain the medical side of the story. Our partnership is indispensable because they help us understand the complete IAQ picture.”

– Warren Williams, Senior Engineer in Charge

**Communicate with Everyone, All the Time — Communicate Results:** When Newark won the EPA IAQ Tools for Schools National Excellence Award, the ASBO Facilities Masters Awards and other accolades, they publicized their accomplishments through local newspapers, on the district’s cable television channel, the district website and in a parent e-newsletter. By broadcasting their success, Newark ensured everyone in the school community knew how important and how effective their work is to school health.

## PROGRAM RESULTS

*Newark tracks complaints submitted through an online form and monitors trends in student attendance.*

- ▲ Observed decrease in missed school days since IAQ program implementation and asthma-friendly policy changes.
- ▲ Switched all chemical cleaning products to green alternatives.
- ▲ Experienced fewer and less severe IAQ problems.
- ▲ Only school district to win the Facilities Masters Award from the Association of School Business Officials International (ASBO) for four consecutive years.
- ▲ Achieved widespread community buy-in and support through a commitment to transparency and honesty.
- ▲ Continued positive environmental changes by installing solar panels on five facilities — reducing the district’s carbon footprint by 400 tons of carbon dioxide.