Step 1: Plan and Prevent

Five Steps to Green Cleaning in Schools

GreenCleanSchools.org
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The first step to a green cleaning program isn’t about reviewing your chemicals or equipment; it’s about keeping dirt out of your school. Most successful green cleaning plans aim to prevent dirt and other contaminants from entering the building in the first place. This is often a simple and inexpensive measure that can yield huge savings in time, money and effort later on down the line.

Entryway Mats
Most of the dirt inside a building is tracked in on shoes. The best way to prevent dirt from entering the building is to place mats at all building entrances to reduce the amount of dirt that enters the building by up to 85 percent. Entry mat systems are a critical step in reducing the amount of soil as well as other pollutants, such as pesticides, that would otherwise be tracked inside on shoes. These mats are also a cost-saving measure, as they reduce the amount of cleaning product and staff time needed to clean the rest of the building.

Structural Improvements
Prevention can also include more complex solutions, such as adding breezeways or covered entrances. Any opportunity to create spaces for people to walk through before entering the building itself will help reduce the amount of dirt and soil entering the building, too. Many green cleaning programs begin with proposed repairs to building structures that will help prevent the spread of dirt and contaminants, such as repairing holes, upgrading carpeting or sealing entryways and windows.

Controlling Indoor Air Quality
Prevention is also about controlling air quality. School custodians should understand indoor air quality problems and seek to eliminate potential sources of contamination as best they can. This includes paying close attention to cleaning chemicals and flooring and how they affect air quality.

Infection Control
Prevention also refers to limiting the spread of illness and infection. The first priority of infection control is to promote hygiene best practices and educate students and staff on how they can help prevent outbreaks. Secondly, a thorough green cleaning program executed by trained cleaning crews should mitigate potential outbreaks every day. Finally, a proper disinfection strategy aimed at high-risk areas should ensure that schools can stay healthy and open for classes, even during periods of extra concern.