

School Supply List

Guidance for Healthy Classrooms



School supply list items can have an impact on the health and safety of students in the classroom. Commonly used supplies can contain chemicals that trigger asthma and allergies in students. Below are options for safe supply list choices that will help to provide a healthier classroom environment. Be aware that some schools or districts have established additional policies and may prohibit certain classroom supplies. *Always* consult with your school or district to ensure compliance with internal policies.

Supply List Item	Recommended	Not Recommended
Cleaning wipes or baby wipes	Fragrance-free baby wipes, alcohol wipes, paper towels with soap and water or micro-fiber cloths.	Disinfectant wipes, scented baby wipes. Disinfectant wipes contain hazardous chemicals and cannot be used by students. Fragrances can trigger asthma and allergies.
Cleaners	Students: See “Recommended” above. Teachers: Only use school or district-approved or provided cleaners.* Green cleaners from EPA’s Safer Choice list are recommended.**	Standard household cleaners containing harsh chemicals. Many common cleaning products contain hazardous chemicals and cannot be used by students.
Hand sanitizers	Handwashing is the best practice. If approved by school/district policy: alcohol-based sanitizer with at least 60% alcohol, fragrance-free and dye-free.	Fragranced, non-alcohol-based sanitizers with < 60% alcohol. Hand sanitizers are not effective against all viruses and bacteria and can irritate sensitive skin. Fragrances can trigger asthma and allergies.
Dry-erase markers	Low-odor, “AP certified non-toxic” markers, and dry-erase crayons.	Standard dry erase markers not labeled as low-odor. Standard dry erase markers can contain hazardous solvents, low-odor have less solvents, and dry-erase crayons have none.
Markers	Water-based and fragrance-free pens and markers.	Permanent markers and scented felt pens. Permanent markers can contain solvents and felt pens can contain fragrances, which can trigger asthma and allergies.
Room air fresheners	Provide increased fresh air and fans.	Any type of room fragrance such as essential oils, plug-ins, solids, and potpourri. Fragrances can trigger asthma and allergies and plug-in devices can be fire hazards.

*Classroom Cleaning Tips for Teachers: www.doh.wa.gov/CommunityandEnvironment/Schools/EnvironmentalHealth/ClassroomCleaning
 **EPA’s Safer Choice: www.epa.gov/saferchoice

Health and Safety Concerns with Some Common School Supply List Items

Disinfectant wipes

- Disinfectant wipes (such as Lysol, Clorox, Great Value) are labeled “Keep out of reach of children” and contain quaternary ammonia and fragrance chemicals that are associated with adverse health effects, including triggering asthma.
- Disinfectant wipes should only be used by adults while wearing personal protective equipment (such as gloves).
- If teachers request surface wipes on the school supply list, fragrance-free baby wipes are a good alternative.

Scented baby wipes

- Scented baby wipes contain fragrance chemicals that can trigger or aggravate allergy and asthma symptoms in students.
- Fragrance-free baby wipes should be specified on the school supply list.

DID YOU KNOW?
Fragrance-free products have no scent added while unscented products can have chemicals added to mask the original scent!

Hand sanitizers

- Handwashing with plain soap and water is recommended by the U.S. Center for Disease Control and Prevention as the most effective method of cleaning hands. Handwashing removes dirt and contaminants that are not removed by sanitizers. Some common viruses such as norovirus are not inactivated by hand sanitizers and the alcohol content must be at least 60% to be effective against other microbes.
- Children with sensitive skin conditions may be adversely affected from the use of hand sanitizers.
- If sanitizers are approved for the supply list by school or district policy, the request should specify a minimum 60% alcohol content, dye-free and fragrance-free.
- When used in the classroom, there should be only one sanitizer bottle available for use by students at any one time. Additional bottles should be stored in a manner that is inaccessible to students.

Dry-erase markers

- Traditional dry erase markers can contain a chemical solvent xylene, which can cause headaches and breathing difficulties.
- The school supply list should specify low-odor and AP certified non-toxic dry-erase markers or crayons. Dry-erase crayons are the best choice when children work on individual white boards.

Permanent and scented markers

- “Scented” markers and felt pens contain fragrance chemicals that can trigger asthma and allergies.
- Permanent markers contain solvents that can cause adverse health effects.
- To avoid triggering or contributing to student allergy/asthma symptoms, the school supply list should specify fragrance-free water-based markers.

Room air fresheners

- Air fresheners contain fragrance chemicals that can trigger allergy and asthma symptoms in students. Electric plug-in fresheners can be a fire hazard.
- Essential oils can cause sensitization and asthma in sensitive students.
- Air fresheners shouldn’t be included on the school supply list. Increased fresh air flow, the use of fans and other means should be used to address classroom indoor air quality issues. See *Healthy Air Quality in Schools – Tips for Administrators, Custodians, and Teachers*: www.doh.wa.gov/CommunityandEnvironment/Schools/EnvironmentalHealth/AirQuality.

Cleaners

- Teachers can rely on basic cleaning to remove dirt and germs in the classroom. Read more about *Classroom Cleaning – Tips for Teachers*: www.doh.wa.gov/CommunityandEnvironment/Schools/EnvironmentalHealth/ClassroomCleaning.
- Only school or district-supplied or approved cleaning products should be used by staff. Green cleaning products are recommended. One source of green cleaner information is the Environmental Protection Agency’s Safer Choice website, www.epa.gov/saferchoice.
- Many common cleaning products have ingredients that can harm health, especially the lungs. If students are helping clean, they should only use fragrance-free baby wipes, alcohol wipes, paper towels with soap and water or micro-fiber cloths.
- A Safety Data Sheet (SDS) must be available for any cleaner used in the school. If cleaning products are donated by parents, then SDS’ could be difficult to obtain.

Developed in partnership with the Spokane Regional Health District’s School Health and Safety Program and School Advisory Committee.
For people with disabilities, this document is available upon request in other formats. Call 1-800-525-0127 (TDD/TTY call 711).