



Region 3: The Mid-Atlantic States

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EPA Funding Helps Baltimore City Schools Reduce Air Pollution

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Contact Information: Donna Heron 215-814-5113 / heron.donna@epa.gov

PHILADELPHIA (June 4, 2008) – Starting next year, students who attend Baltimore City Public Schools will be breathing cleaner air, thanks to two grants from the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency. The grants will help the school system to both reduce pollution in diesel-powered school buses, and set up an indoor air quality program in 190 of its school buildings.

Today at the Garrison Middle School in Baltimore, Donald S. Welsh, EPA's mid-Atlantic regional administrator, awarded two grants totaling \$163,600 to the Baltimore City Public School System.

"We couldn't be more pleased about the opportunity to work with Baltimore City Schools to reduce school bus emissions and improve the indoor environments in their school facilities," said Welsh. "Breathing harmful pollutants, whether it's diesel exhaust or mold can be dangerous, especially for children with asthma. EPA is working with the Baltimore City Public School System to upgrade their buses and buildings so students can breathe cleaner air and live healthier lives," he added.

One grant -- \$68,600 from the Clean School Bus USA program -- will be used to retrofit 19 of its school buses with EPA-verified pollution control technologies.

A second grant -- \$95,000 from the EPA Tools for Schools program -- will be used to develop a proactive plan to analyze the current condition of the indoor environment in 190 school buildings. The program will also provide training for district staff on indoor air topics, and assist the district maintain its buildings with an emphasis on providing a healthy environment for learning and teaching. Personnel at various levels will be trained to identify, recognize and develop solutions to reduce exposure of indoor pollutants to all building occupants.

"With the help of the EPA, we will be using the latest technologies and best practices to provide safer and cleaner learning environments for our students. A healthy environment is vitally important to learning," said Dr. Andres A. Alonso, CEO of Baltimore City Public Schools. "We hope our effort to be good stewards of the environment will serve as an example for our students and will benefit the entire community."

In April 2003, EPA launched its Clean School Bus USA program to help reduce children's exposure to diesel exhaust. The particles in diesel exhaust can penetrate deep into the lungs and pose health risks including aggravating asthma symptoms. Children are especially vulnerable to the effects of diesel emissions and air pollution because their respiratory systems are still developing and they have a faster breathing rate.

EPA developed the Indoor Air Quality Tools for Schools Program to reduce exposures to indoor environmental contaminants in schools through the voluntary adoption of sound indoor air quality management practices. The Tools for Schools Program is a comprehensive resource to help schools

maintain a healthy environment in school buildings by identifying, correcting, and preventing indoor air quality problems. Poor indoor air quality can impact the comfort and health of students and staff, which, in turn, can affect concentration, attendance, and student performance. In addition, if schools fail to respond promptly to poor indoor air quality, students and staff are at an increased risk of short-term health problems, such as fatigue and nausea, as well as long-term problems like asthma.

For more information on the agency's Clean School Bus USA and Tools for Schools programs including current available funding for clean diesel projects, visit <http://www.epa.gov>.

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