

IMPACT OF
THE SCHOOL
ENVIRONMENT
ON STUDENT
ACHIEVEMENT



**EDUCATION
WATCH**

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BACKGROUND

In 2013, OSSTF/FEESO began a research project that examined the relationship between school cleanliness/maintenance and student performance. The long held belief has been that the cleanliness and level of maintenance that a school building experiences has a direct correlation to student achievement. The focus of our study was to look at recent research. Therefore, all research cited in our study was from 1993 to 2013.

The resulting School Environment Impact Research Study concludes that learning environments that are clean and well-maintained lead to higher levels of student achievement.



RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

Our study cited 33 different research studies, most of which were from the United States. While there were very few Canadian research studies that compared school maintenance and cleanliness to levels of student achievement, there was a high level of consistency in conclusions among all of the reports cited.

Many of the research studies used similar instruments to measure levels of school environment. These include the Commonwealth Assessment of Physical Environment (CAPE) and the more recently utilized Total Learning Environment Assessment (TLEA). Both of these instruments were used widely, which provided a strong basis for comparison between different studies. Other instruments were also cited in our study. Elementary, middle and high schools were all studied.

IN REVIEWING ALL OF THE 33 RESEARCH REPORTS IN OUR STUDY, THERE WERE A NUMBER OF CONSISTENT FINDINGS:

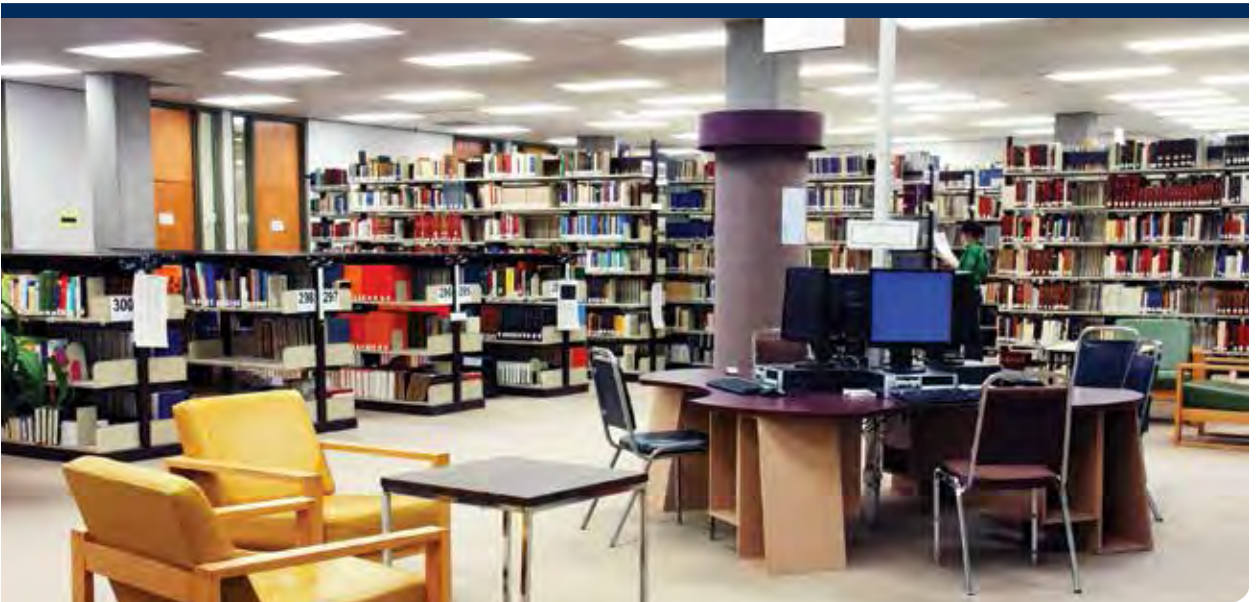
A CLEAN SCHOOL IS STRONGLY CORRELATED TO HIGHER LEVELS OF STUDENT ACHIEVEMENT

This conclusion cut across all age groups and school types. Factors, such as mopping, sweeping, and garbage pickup and graffiti cleanup, were studied using the various instruments. In addition, students, staff and administrators were also surveyed in a number of these studies about their feelings when it comes to school cleanliness. Standardized test results were also used to correlate cleanliness of schools to student achievement. All showed strong correlations.

A WELL MAINTAINED AND/OR RENOVATED SCHOOL IS CORRELATED WITH HIGHER LEVELS OF STUDENT ACHIEVEMENT

It is not necessarily the age of a school building, but how well maintained it is that correlated strongly with student achievement results. In one study in particular, when a student body moved from a poorly maintained building to a new building, pass rates in the school's four annual standardized tests increased from 48 per cent (at previous school) to 65 per cent at the new school within four years after moving.

However, age of the school was not seen as a significant factor. It was the level of maintenance and renovation conducted at schools that showed more significant results. The studies showed that the better the level of maintenance of a school, the higher the level of overall student achievement.





CONCLUSIONS

WHAT HAPPENS IF THERE ARE CUTS TO BUDGETS FOR ROUTINE SCHOOL CLEANING, MAINTENANCE AND REPAIRS?

- A decline in overall student achievement
- A decline in the morale of students and staff
- An increase in levels of illness in students and staff
- An increase in long term costs to school boards and educational institutions.

For the full version of our School Environment Impact Research Study, please visit www.osstf.on.ca/en-CA/publications/research-studies/school-environment

RECOMMENDATIONS

- **WORK WITH EDUCATION WORKERS' FEDERATIONS** TO FIND BETTER WAYS TO ADDRESS CLEANING AND MAINTENANCE ISSUES IN SCHOOLS.
- **DEDICATE APPROPRIATE FUNDING AND RESOURCES** TO IMPROVE ROUTINE CLEANING, MAINTENANCE, REPAIRS AND RENOVATIONS TO SCHOOLS ACROSS THE PROVINCE.
- **CREATE A NEW PROVINCIAL STANDARD** FOR SCHOOL BUILDING CONDITION WITH INPUT FROM EDUCATION STAKEHOLDERS.
- **ENSURE THAT ANNUAL FACILITIES FUNDING REFLECTS THE TRUE COSTS OF OPERATION**, INCLUDING AN ACCOUNTING FOR INFLATIONARY INCREASES IN HYDRO RATES, WATER USAGE, CONSUMABLE SUPPLIES AND INSURANCE PREMIUMS.

For more information please call
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