



# Eco-Healthy School Manual







The Renaissance School of Arts and Sciences is committed to being a healthy environment for children to learn and thrive. We recognize creating safe, non-toxic environments helps enhance learning opportunities, aids concentration and focus, and reduces absenteeism for all members of our learning community.

The Renaissance School's commitment to creating a healthy school environment is reflected in our policies and practices summarized in this manual. We also have an active parent committee – the Green Team – that works closely with our school community to continue to improve our school environment.

The Renaissance School of Arts and Sciences is located in Southwest Portland. Before we selected the property, we tested and determined safe indoor air quality. Before moving in, we renovated the 'Glass Castle' building and made important decisions about the building materials including: zero VOC paints, non-toxic finishes, and a new HVAC system with particulate filters to improve indoor air quality.

We have developed comprehensive policies and practices to improve indoor air quality, reduce exposure to toxins, encourage healthy food habits and reduce waste. We ask all of our families, faculty and cleaning and maintenance crew to review and commit to the following policies and practices.



## Air Quality

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We maintain healthy air quality by managing temperature, controlling humidity and dust inside the school, and reducing exposure to other air contaminants outdoors.

- We keep indoor temperatures ranging from 64-68 degrees and humidity at 30-50% to maintain indoor air quality healthy.
- Renaissance School has a 'no-idling' policy to protect young lungs. When families drop off or pick up their children, we ask that they turn their cars off to reduce pollution around the school.
- We encourage our families to carpool and commute together to minimize the number of car trips daily to school. We believe this also fosters a deeper sense of community.
- We regularly change the filters on HVAC system and clean the air supply diffusers, return registers, and outside air intakes. We also maintain adequate ventilation with fans or open windows
- We keep classroom windows closed and children inside during time of high vehicular traffic, or when the smog level is high.
- We do not use scented or unscented candles during school, including paraffin candles, because they may emit lead and soot. For special events outside of the school day, candles must be 100% unscented beeswax or vegetable-based wax with cotton wicks.
- We do not use manufactured air fresheners. We will only use air fresheners or purifiers approved by the Environmental Working Group.
- Our school environment uses potted plants to help improve indoor air quality. Plants like spider plants (formaldehyde), gerber daisies (benzene), and golden pothos (formaldehyde) help clean indoor air.
- We do not permit smoking anywhere on the premises or in sight of children.

## Reduce Exposure to Toxins

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We know that toxic chemicals can have serious and long-term impacts on children's health and development. The Renaissance School is committed to creating a non-toxic environment for our children.

- The Renaissance School has a "no shoes" policy to minimize tracking of contaminants inside the school environment. Each child keeps a pair of slippers at the school. Individual cubbies are provided to store shoes during the day.
- We use biodegradable, non-toxic cleaning products and least-toxic disinfecting and sanitizing products. Specifically, we use products that are certified by Green Seal or Eco-Logo because these products have the fewest or no carcinogens, asthmagens, hormone disruptors, and neurotoxins in them. We store cleaning products where children cannot access them unless directed. Our children form cleaning 'clans' and use safe cleaning products. They always wash their hands after their cleaning duty.
- We do not use anti-bacterial soap or any soaps containing triclosan. Triclosan has been shown to interfere with hormones and could make antibiotics less effective, and is also toxic to aquatic life when it washes into rivers and streams. We also use soaps that are free of fragrances and free of parabens, which mimics hormones. We encourage our children to wash their hands frequently with soap and water.
- We use non-toxic art supplies approved by the Art and Creative Materials Institute (ACMI). [Look for ACMI non-toxic seals: AP, AP New, AP + PC, CL, CP, HL/CR, HL/NT at [www.acminet.org](http://www.acminet.org)]. When non-toxic supplies aren't available, we ensure adult supervision and ensure that the products are used with adequate ventilation and protection.
- We generally do not use aerosol sprays, and look for safer alternatives. If special projects require the use of aerosols, we use them outdoors.
- We use non-toxic techniques both inside and outside the facility to prevent and control insects and weeds. If a serious threat remains



and pesticide application is the only viable option, parents are notified in advance and a licensed professional applies the least toxic, effective product at a time when children will not be exposed to the application area for at least 24 hours.

- When using a microwave, we never heat children's food in plastic containers, plastic wrap or plastic bags. We ask our families not to send their children's food in plastic containers.
- We use only zero or low-VOC household paints and do not paint the building when children are present.
- We securely store and recycle all used batteries and fluorescent and compact fluorescent light (CFL) bulbs, and properly dispose them. If a CFL were to break, we follow the protocol outlined by EPA starting by (1) clearing out the room of children and pets; (2) allowing the room to air out for 5-10 minutes; (3) turning off the HVAC system; (4) not vacuuming the broken glass; (5) scooping up glass fragments and powder with cardboard and picking up glass with tape, putting all of the materials in a sealed plastic bag; (6) dispose of materials in sealed container; (7) continue to air out area for a couple of hours with HVAC system off.
- We avoid carpeting, but use area rugs instead. We clean these area rugs twice yearly using biodegradable cleaners.
- We have tested for radon, lead and asbestos, and the school's facilities do not present any risk to children's health from exposures to these chemicals.

## *Healthy Eating and Living*

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The Renaissance School is committed to fostering healthy eating habits at a young age and encourages active lifestyles for young children to develop healthy living habits that create the energy necessary to study and learn.

- We follow a low-sugar, healthy food policy. We discourage families from sending children to school with sugar, junk food and highly processed food in lunches, including candy, cookies, chips, and

sweets. We encourage families to send healthy, well-balanced lunches and snacks so that children have the energy they need to learn throughout the day.

- We purchase organic fruits and vegetables and other foods, when available, and generally provide healthy food and treats for our children at school functions.
- We thoroughly wash all fruits and vegetables to avoid possible exposure to pesticides, and we take the opportunity to educate children about the importance of doing so.
- We encourage our children to be active and integrate physical activities in our school curriculum, including dance, and outdoor playtime.
- We encourage our children to drink lots of water by offering water at snack time, lunch, and after physical activities.
- We keep the school's refrigerator at or below 41 degrees.

## *Reduce Waste and Recycling*

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Our school recognizes the importance of reducing waste, reusing materials, and recycling.

- We recycle all paper, cardboard, glass, aluminum, and plastic bottles.
- As a school we are committed to reducing plastic waste and pollution of our oceans. To minimize waste, we do not use plastic water bottles, but ask families to send a safe, reusable water bottle for their children for daily and field trip use. For school events, we use pitchers for water and drinks, and compostable cups.
- We re-use materials and ask our families to bring certain needed recycled materials to the school for our projects.
- We keep our garbage covered at all times to avoid attracting pests and to minimize odors.



*Embracing childhood...transforming learning,  
leadership, and civic engagement...for a lifetime.*

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