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UNITED STATES ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION AGENCY  
WASHINGTON, D.C. 20460

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OFFICE OF  
AIR AND RADIATION

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Chair, Children's Health Protection Advisory Committee  
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Dear Dr. Reigart:

Thank you for your letter of May 2, 2002. I want to begin by thanking you and the members of the Committee for your commitment to children's health, your invaluable advice, and for helping the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) as we continue to improve and diversify our children's health protection programs. I also want to extend my heartfelt appreciation to you personally for your service as Chair of the Committee over the past several years. Your dedication, as well as your continuing involvement in the Committee, is deeply appreciated.

I want to assure you that children's health is a priority of the Administration and of EPA. Among children's health issues, we are committed to environmental health and safety in schools, and we continue to communicate that commitment both within and outside the Agency. I spend quite a bit of time visiting schools and working with organizations to promote school asthma programs, improvements in indoor air quality (IAQ), increased energy efficiency, and other school environmental issues. The dedication and commitment of the school staff and the inquisitiveness and interest of the students are always gratifying.

I fully agree that it is imperative that all federal agencies work together and in close collaboration to coordinate and leverage existing programs and resources. The President's Task Force on Environmental Health Risks and Safety Risks to Children provides an appropriate forum to facilitate increased coordination and collaboration among the federal community. As you point out, we need to acknowledge and address gaps in science and policy and to this end we are working closely with the Departments of Education, Health and Human Services, Energy, and others to identify needs and opportunities to improve children's health in our nation's schools. The Schools Workgroup of the Task Force is currently developing an inventory of federal programs related to the issue of school environmental health. The primary goal of the

inventory is to inform the development of a strategic plan that will provide recommendations for increasing the effectiveness of federal school environmental health programs. The inventory will also be incorporated into a publicly accessible electronic database of school environmental health activities.

Within EPA, we are undertaking a number of activities which support the recommendations from Children's Health Protection Advisory Committee (CHPAC). We are in the process of developing a new web portal site on healthy school environments that will allow the public to find and access EPA and other agencies' web-based resources more efficiently. We expect to have the new site up and running before the beginning of the new school year. I agree that it is important for EPA to continue to improve coordination across its school programs to better serve the school community.

We are also working to better document the effectiveness of the IAQ Tools for Schools program through a survey that is now being administered by chronicling the reductions in IAQ-related complaints, in absenteeism, and in costs which many schools are experiencing as they implement the program. We are also supporting pilot studies which are attempting to scientifically evaluate the effectiveness of IAQ management programs such as Tools for Schools, and will continue to explore those opportunities.

With respect to your recommendation to expand best practices guidance, I am also pleased to report that we have just released for public review a new draft guidance on school design. The IAQ Design Tools for Schools web page complements the existing Tools for Schools program, encourages schools to use high performance building goals, includes factors to consider in the siting of school facilities, stresses the importance of building commissioning, and provides guidance on a host of other issues related to the indoor environment. The draft guidance is available for public review and comment until July 19, 2002, on the world wide web at: <http://www.epa.gov/iaq/schooldesign/start.html>. We also agree that better environmental health assessment tools for schools would be extremely useful, and we are now looking at several promising efforts by school districts to better integrate environmental issues into their health and safety programs.

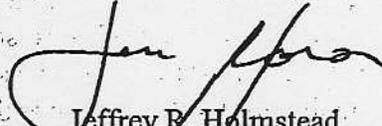
With respect to research activities, I agree that the Science to Achieve Results (STAR) program would be an excellent vehicle for supporting extramural research on children's health in schools. In fact, the STAR Program has already supported environmental research in schools. In 1997, the Program funded a school-based study of complex environmental exposures in children at the University of Minnesota. This study used outdoor, in-home, in-school, personal, and human tissue monitoring to quantify exposures among children in two low-income, racially diverse schools in Minneapolis. EPA's Office of Research and Development (ORD) and Office of Children's Health Protection have already begun discussing the role the STAR Program should play in research related to children's health and the school environment.

In addition to providing extramural funding for research, ORD's National Exposure Research Laboratory (NERL) has conducted research on environmental exposures in day care centers. The Children's Total Exposure to Persistent Pollutants (CTEPP) study investigated the exposures that occur in daycare centers for approximately 300 children in North Carolina and Ohio. Scientists at NERL are also cooperating with the Department of Housing and Urban Development on the design of a national survey of environmental exposures in day care centers.

One of EPA's highest priorities is protecting children from unnecessary exposure to pesticides that are used in their schools to control pests. EPA is encouraging school officials to adopt Integrated Pest Management (IPM) practices to reduce children's exposure to pesticides. EPA is helping schools understand and implement IPM through the distribution of printed publications, awarding grants to start IPM programs, offering workshops and courses, and providing guidance and assistance through the Tools for Schools Program as well as partnerships with universities and national associations.

I hope that you find this brief update on several of EPA's efforts aimed at addressing school environmental health helpful. As you correctly point out, school and environmental health issues are complex, and we welcome your continued advice and support as we work through these issues. In closing, I wish to thank you again for all that you and the other members of the Children's Health Protection Advisory Committee do to promote the health and well-being of America's school children.

Sincerely,



Jeffrey R. Holmstead  
Assistant Administrator