



# School Pesticide Monitor

A Bi-Monthly Bulletin on Pesticides and Alternatives  
Beyond Pesticides, 701 E Street SE, Suite 200, Washington, DC 20003  
info@beyondpesticides.org ■ www.beyondpesticides.org

Vol. 14 No. 4 2014

## School's Back in Session, Leave the Toxins Behind!

It's back to school time again, which for many of our readers and parents across the country means the unnerving possibility of hazardous pesticide exposure at school from well-intentioned but misguided attempts to create a germ and pest-free environment. Because children face unique hazards from pesticide exposure due to their small size and developing organ systems, using toxic chemicals to get rid of pests and germs harms students much more than it helps.

Fortunately, parents and teachers have many options for safer techniques and strategies to implement pest manage-

ment programs at schools without relying on these toxic chemicals. Schools can also further their students' education beyond the lessons of the text book by providing habitat for wildlife and growing organic food in a school garden.

Beyond Pesticides has put together this back-to-school list of programs and steps you can take to ensure that you are sending your kids back to a healthier and safer environment. By following these steps and going organic, your child's school can become a model for communities across the nation.

### Fight Germs Without Triclosan

Given the generated extensive documentation of the potential adverse health effects—including asthma, cancer and learning disabilities—triclosan has no place in the classroom. Fortunately, it's easy to avoid triclosan. Read the product label, whether it's a backpack, school supplies, soap or sanitizer for any label statement that says "antibacterial," or "antimicrobial protection." Tell your principal that you are concerned about the use of antibacterial soap and its impact on the health of the students and staff. Ask that the school order regular soap

...continued on reverse

### Get Organized and Improve Your School's Pest Management Program

Whether you're a parent, community activist, landscaper, school administrator or employee, use these steps to help successfully eliminate harmful pesticides from your local school.

- 1. Identify the school's pest management policy.** You may be surprised to learn that your school is already making strides to prevent pesticide use in your school district, or that there are state or local policies in place that help safeguard your child from pesticides. Contact the appropriate school personnel to find out if and how applicable policies are being implemented by identifying what pest management controls the school is using, the pesticides used, and the notification program.
- 2. Educate yourself and evaluate the program.** Use Beyond Pesticides' resources to learn about toxic chemical use and arm yourself with information about alternatives.
- 3. Organize the school community.** Identify and contact friends and neighbors, teachers, staff, individuals and organizations who care about pesticide use at your school. It's much easier to change policies with allies! Once you have a core group of individuals, develop and present a proposed policy for the school district to adopt.
- 4. Work with school decision-makers.** Contact appropriate school officials and ask for endorsement of the proposed policy. It's important that your organic pest management program include a written policy adopted by the school district's board to ensure that the program is institutionalized and will continue to flourish years after key organizers leave the district.
- 5. Become a watchdog and establish an integrated or organic pest management committee.** Make sure the school district is on track to improve its practices. Creating a committee to oversee the program helps ensure that the program is successfully implemented.

## **Leave the Toxins Behind**

*...continued from reverse*

from its usual janitorial product supplier and that all cleansers and sanitizers used by the school be triclosan-free.

Be sure your child's school does not use antibacterial soaps, as regular soap and water is just as effective at getting rid of bacteria. Materials on the health impacts of triclosan are available at <http://bit.ly/BPTriclosan>.

### **Feed Children Organic Food**

The American Academy of Pediatricians has stated that foods without pesticide residues are significant for children. If you are unable to eat all organic, purchase organic varieties of the foods you and your kids eat most often. For information on how to eat feed your family organic affordably, download Beyond Pesticides' handy bi-fold brochure: <http://bit.ly/BPOrganicBudget>. To learn more about why eating organic is the right choice, see [www.eatingwithaconscience.org](http://www.eatingwithaconscience.org).

It's easiest to go organic when you grow organic. School gardens and other farm-to-school programs teach children where food comes from and establish healthy relationships with food and the natural world. See <http://bit.ly/BPGrowOrganic> for more information.

### **Care About Kids**

Citing significant risks to children, EPA announced in early 2013 that it would cancel the registration of 12 rodenticide products by Reckitt Benckiser LLC, the manufacturer of d-CON. The company announced that it will stop production of these rodenticides by the end of this year; however, retailers will be allowed to continue to sell these dangerous products until supplies are exhausted, despite health risks. Because these products can still be found on the shelves of Walmart and several other national retailers, Beyond Pesticides has urged major retailers to stop

selling these highly toxic rodenticides. Be sure that your school does not use these harmful products by utilizing alternative measures to prevent rodent problems, including sealing gaps around the doors by replacing worn thresholds and weather stripping, and installing door sweeps, as well as caulking openings around water pipes, electric wires, cables, and vents. There are also many bait traps on the market that do not utilize toxic chemicals. For more information, go to <http://bit.ly/CareAboutKids>.

### **BEE Protective**

Pollinators are very important to our ecosystem and agriculture. However, many pollinators, like honey bees, bumble bees, birds, and butterflies, are declining due to loss of habitat, widespread use of toxic pesticides, parasites, and disease. You and your school can play a part to help these important creatures by (1) not using toxic pesticides, (2) planting pollinator habitat, and (3) educating your friends and family.

Have your school pass a resolution to ban neonicotinoid pesticides that are toxic to honey bees and other pollinators. Vermont Law School recently passed a resolution to go neonicotinoid-free, and you can see our model resolution can be obtained online at [www.BEEprotective.org](http://www.BEEprotective.org). If your school has pollinator-friendly habitat, you can also pledge your school as pollinator-friendly on our website and indicate how many acres (or fraction of an acre) your school has.

### **Build Biodiversity: from the School Grounds to the Classroom**

Biodiversity helps bees and other pollinators; diverse plants produce a supply of nectar throughout the growing season, and biodiversity of soil organisms promotes healthy plants that grow well without poisons. Protect biodiversity through organic turf, playing fields and landscape policies. Encourage your school to plant pollinator-attractive

plants in its garden as part of its biology class. If your school does not have a garden, request one be integrated into the curriculum. Wildflowers, native plant and grass species should be encouraged on school grounds. See our BEE Protective Habitat Guide, <http://bit.ly/BeePHabitatGuide>, for more information on attractive flowers. Also see our Do-It-Yourself Biodiversity factsheet, <http://bit.ly/DIYbiodiversity>, and <http://bit.ly/PollinatorLandscapes> for resources on how you can help build biodiversity.

### **Healthy Turf = Healthy Kids**

Many school schools around the country are realizing that a well-defined integrated or organic pest management program is one of the best ways to eliminate children's exposure to pesticides in school buildings, and organic turf management, similarly, eliminates hazards on playing fields and playgrounds. A good program will have strictly defined processes of prevention, monitoring and control, as well as record keeping, which offers the opportunity to eliminate harmful pesticides in schools, where only the least toxic option is used.

Improving a school's pest management program requires perseverance, as administrators and grounds staff may be uninformed. One major selling point is that, when it comes to playing fields, organic turf management systems cost as much as 25% less than chemical-intensive systems. Learn more about the 30 of the most commonly used chemicals on athletic fields that can cause numerous health risks to children, including glyphosate (Roundup) and 2,4-D at <http://www.beyondpesticides.org/lawn/factsheets/30health.pdf>. Resources on how to manage school fields organically can be found at <http://bit.ly/OrganicLawns>.

For more information on how you can ensure a healthy school year for your child and community, go to <http://bit.ly/BPSchools>.