

School Supply List Guidance for Healthy Classrooms

School supply list items can have an impact on the health and safety of students in the classroom. Commonly used supplies can contain chemicals that trigger asthma and allergies in students. Below are options for safe supply list choices that will help to provide a healthier classroom environment. Be aware that some schools or districts have established additional policies and may prohibit certain classroom supplies. *Always consult with your school or district to ensure compliance with internal policies.*

Supply List Item	Recommended	Not Recommended (Concerns)
Cleaning wipes or baby wipes	Fragrance-free baby wipes, alcohol wipes, paper towels with soap and water or micro-fiber cloths	Disinfectant wipes, scented baby wipes (Disinfectant wipes contain hazardous chemicals and cannot be used by students ; fragrances can trigger asthma and allergies)
Cleaners	STUDENTS: see “Recommended” above TEACHERS: only use school or district-approved or provided cleaners¹ Green cleaners from the <i>Safer Choice</i> * list are recommended	Standard household cleaners containing harsh chemicals (Many common cleaning products contain hazardous chemicals and cannot be used by students)
Hand sanitizers	Handwashing is the best practice; If approved by school/district policy: alcohol-based sanitizer with minimum 60% alcohol, fragrance-free and dye-free	Fragranced, non-alcohol-based sanitizers with < 60% alcohol (Hand sanitizers are not effective against all viruses and bacteria; can irritate sensitive skin; fragrances can trigger asthma and allergies)
Dry erase markers	Low-odor “AP certified non-toxic” Crayon white board markers	Standard dry erase markers not labeled as low-odor (Standard dry erase markers can contain hazardous solvents, low-odor have less solvents, crayon white board markers have none)
Markers	Water-based and fragrance-free pens and markers	Permanent markers and scented felt pens (Permanent markers can contain solvents; felt pens can contain fragrances, which can trigger asthma and allergies)
Room air fresheners	Provide increased fresh air and fans	Any type of room fragrance (essential oils, plug-ins, solids, candles, potpourri, etc.) (Fragrances can trigger asthma and allergies; plug-in devices can be fire hazards)

¹See *Classroom Cleaning – Tips for Teachers*: <http://www.doh.wa.gov/CommunityandEnvironment/Schools/EnvironmentalHealth/ClassroomCleaning>

**Safer Choice* – EPA website <https://www.epa.gov/saferchoice>

What are some of the health and safety issues with common school supply list items?

Disinfectant wipes:

- Disinfectant wipes (e.g., Lysol, Clorox and Great Value) are labeled “Keep out of reach of children” and contain quaternary ammonia and fragrance chemicals that are associated with adverse health effects, including triggering asthma.
- Disinfectant wipes should only be used by adults while wearing personal protective equipment (e.g. gloves).
- If teachers request surface wipes on the *School Supply List*, **fragrance-free baby wipes** are a good alternative.

Scented baby wipes:

- Scented baby wipes contain fragrance chemicals that can trigger or aggravate allergy and asthma symptoms in students.
- **Fragrance-free baby wipes** should be specified on the *School Supply List*.

DID YOU KNOW?

Fragrance-free products have no scent added while unscented products can have chemicals added to mask the original scent!

Hand sanitizers:

- Handwashing with plain soap and water is recommended by the U.S. Center for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) as the most effective method of cleaning hands. Handwashing removes dirt and contaminants that are not removed by sanitizers. Some common viruses such as norovirus are not inactivated by hand sanitizers and the alcohol content must be **at least 60% to be effective against other microbes**.
- Children with sensitive skin conditions may be adversely affected from the use of hand sanitizers.
- If sanitizers are approved for the supply list by school or district policy, the request should specify a **minimum 60% alcohol content, dye-free and fragrance-free**.
- When used in the classroom, there should be only one sanitizer bottle available for use by students at any one time. Additional bottles should be stored in a manner that is **inaccessible to students**.

Dry erase markers:

- Traditional dry erase markers can contain a chemical solvent xylene, which can cause headaches and breathing difficulties.
- *School Supply List* should specify **low-odor** and **AP certified non-toxic dry erase markers or crayon white board markers**.

Permanent and scented markers:

- “Scented” markers and felt pens contain fragrance chemicals that can trigger asthma and allergies.
- Permanent markers contain solvents that can cause adverse health effects.
- To avoid triggering or contributing to student allergy/asthma symptoms, the *School Supply List* should specify **fragrance-free water-based markers**.

Room air fresheners:

- Air fresheners contain fragrance chemicals that can trigger allergy and asthma symptoms in students. Electric plug-in fresheners can be a fire hazard.
- Essential oils can cause sensitization and asthma in sensitive students.
- Air fresheners should **not be included** on the *School Supply List*. Increased fresh air flow, the use of fans and other means should be used to address classroom indoor air quality issues. See *Healthy Air Quality in Schools – Tips for Administrators, Custodians, and Teachers*: <http://www.doh.wa.gov/CommunityandEnvironment/Schools/EnvironmentalHealth/AirQuality>

Cleaners:

- Teachers can rely on basic cleaning to remove dirt and germs in the classroom. Read more about cleaning by downloading *Classroom Cleaning – Tips for Teachers*: <http://www.doh.wa.gov/CommunityandEnvironment/Schools/EnvironmentalHealth/ClassroomCleaning>
- Only school or district-supplied or approved cleaning products should be used by staff. **Green cleaning products** are recommended. One source of green cleaner information is the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) **Safer Choice*** website <https://www.epa.gov/saferchoice>.
- Many common cleaning products have ingredients that can harm health, especially the lungs. If students are helping clean, they should only use fragrance-free baby wipes, alcohol wipes, paper towels with soap and water or micro-fiber cloths.
- A Safety Data Sheet (SDS) must be available for any cleaner used in the school. If cleaning products are donated by parents, then SDS’ could be difficult to obtain.

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