

Custodians Organize for Safer Cleaners

A Success Story

In 2005, custodians in four Boston Public Schools tried something new. They used “green” cleaning products instead of cleansers with hazardous ingredients. They hoped that if their experiment with green cleaners was a success, then all the schools could switch to green cleaning products.

“Custodians care about the health of children and teachers, and about their own health and safety,” said Michael Lafferty, a representative of the School Custodial Union. “We hope that we can have green cleaners in all public school buildings.”

In 2006, Boston Public Schools announced that it would start buying only green cleaning products. The custodians’ project was a success!



This article was adapted by Cynthia Peters from <www.masscosh.org>. Photo (by Ethan Contini-Field) is of Albeiro Salazar, the custodian at a building in Cambridge, MA.

Working Together

Talk about a time you have worked together with others. When does it make sense to work with others? When does it make sense to work alone?

Four organizations worked together to make this project a success. They included:

1. MA Coalition for Occupational Safety & Health
2. Boston Urban Asthma Coalition
3. Boston Custodial Union
4. Boston Public Schools

If you want to get green cleaners in your city’s schools, who could you contact? List some organizations in your area.

Find out what you can do to make schools healthier for kids and workers. Visit <www.healthyschools.org>.

For change to take place, you need the important players on board. For this story: who took action? _____

who decided? _____

who paid? _____

who won? _____

Pick another issue from the magazine or from your community, and answer the above questions.