**Classroom Air Purifiers for Utah’s School Children**

**is Now an Urgent Necessity**

**Air purifiers can help keep schools open**

**and students**, **teachers and school staff safe**

For $30 million to $40 million, we could purchase air purifiers for every classroom in the state, and with it achieve a rare win/win/win/win: cleaner air for those most in need, improved public education, a more intelligent next generation, and better control of the pandemic. For such little money a public policy that protects our children and helps them achieve their maximum potential should be a “no brainer.”

Because of COVID It is now even more important that we look for all other means to protect students, school teachers, principals, janitors and other support staff if we are to keep schools open. Those other efforts should include air purifiers in all school classrooms.

**Removing air pollution, even from relatively clean baselines, decreases the rate of poor outcomes from viral and bacterial infections, including COVID**. Specifically, air pollution increases the rate of transmission, hospitalization, and death from COVID. Moreover, air pollution contributes to all chronic conditions like diabetes that make COVID more dangerous.

Cleaner air would help protect students and teachers, make our schools safer, allow more schools to stay open, and contribute to getting control of the pandemic in the rest of the community.

“It is undeniable now that the climate crisis is rapidly forcing us into a new era of greater air pollution from a longer and more intense wildfire season, to higher levels of ozone,” said Dr. Brian Moench, UPHE President. **“One of the most important investments we can make is to protect our school age children with cleaner air. We have entered an age where room air purifiers are not a luxury but an absolute necessity.”**

 "It is our job to make sure our children have a safe environment to learn and for teachers to teach. **One critical element of safety is clean air. Air purifiers in the school will provide an additional layer of protection, we need the stage legislature to put money toward a air purifier in every classroom in Utah,**" said Jonny Vasic, Executive Director of UPHE.

More excellent reasons for air purifiers:

Two years ago, Utah Physicians for a Healthy Environment (UPHE) called on the legislature to invest in individual room air purifiers for all the state’s school classrooms. Our request was born of hundreds of studies that reveal air pollution is toxic to the brain. In fact, pollution nanoparticles can penetrate the brain itself. Not only does the research show that air pollution impairs brain function and learning among school children and all other age groups, it shows that the affect can be almost immediate. The air pollution that children breathe on the way to school impairs their test performance in school on the very same day of the exposure. Other research showed the flip side of that coin; that removing pollution in classrooms through air purifiers, even when the pollution levels were well below the EPA’s standards, [resulted in improved performance](https://edworkingpapers.org/sites/default/files/Gilraine_AirFilters_0.pdf), even more than standard interventions such as reducing class size by 30%, and “high dose” tutoring.

Air purifiers will also decrease transmission rates of other infectious diseases like influenza and the common cold, and episodes of other respiratory diseases like asthma, that will improve attendance rates for students and teachers alike.

Classroom air purifiers for school children are also an important investment in their overall long-term health. Cleaner air during childhood will decrease the risks of multiple pollution related diseases later on in life, like heart disease, lung disease, Alzheimer’s and cancer.

**UPHE urges the legislature to immediately begin the process of purchasing air purifiers for statewide installation**.

"It is an unfortunate reality that we have irrevocably altered the natural environment in ways that will result in poor air quality on a permanent basis. Sadly, it seems that wildfires, inversions, PM 2.5 and ozone will be a part of our vernacular forever**. At the very least we can provide our children with clean air to breathe while they’re in school,"**said Dr. Tom Nelsen Board Member UPHE

**"All children benefit from a healthy learning environment including clean air to breathe.** By providing the funding to put air purification systems in our schools state lawmakers will be making an investment in the future of Utah that will pay huge dividends." Dr. Courtney Henley Board Member UPHE

**“Schoolroom air purifiers are a win-win proposition,”** says Dr. Richard Kanner, Board Member UPHE. “They protect students from the many adverse health effects caused by air pollution and we get a ‘bonus’ as a reduction in particulate pollution means a reduction in the spread of the corona virus in a mostly unvaccinated population.  Parents benefit as there is a reduced risk of their children bringing home the infecting virus.”

**"Children deserve safe and healthy schools where they spend many of their waking hours.** The Harvard School of Public Health has recommended highly efficient filters in the school's circulated air AND classroom air filters.  This can help children lower their exposure to air pollution as well as respiratory viruses.  We owe it to our kids," said Dr. Kirtly Jones, Board Member UPHE.

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*Utah Physicians for a Healthy Environment was formed in 2007 during one of Utah's worse inversions.  The organization consists of approximately 400 medical professionals within Utah, and another 4,000 supporting members of the public.  UPHE**is dedicated to protecting the health and well being of the citizens of Utah by promoting science- based health education and interventions that result in progressive and measurable improvements to the environment and our health. UPHE can be found at*[*www.uphe.org*](http://www.uphe.org/)*or on Facebook.*