



Why should schools care about air pollution?

Most schools and childcare centers in urban areas are near major roads and sometimes industrial pollution sources. Whilst not always visible, the air in and around schools contains pollutants that can be damaging to children. UNICEF and the WHO cite research that shows young lungs are particularly susceptible to air pollution; exposure in childhood can lead to permanent respiratory health issues such as asthma and lung cancer.^{1,2} As a result, the United States Environmental Protection Agency and the British Lung Foundation have issued guidance to schools to raise awareness of the risks and to recommend ways to manage the problem.

Why monitor air pollution at schools?

It is often said you can't manage what you don't measure. Schools may choose to get air quality information from government-operated monitoring stations. But these stations can be many miles away, unrepresentative of local pollution sources and micro-climate effects, and do not report minute by minute changes in air pollution. Forward-thinking schools see air pollution monitoring as an opportunity to educate and protect.

Educate

- Brings STEM and environmental issues into the curriculum
- Gets children hands on with scientific equipment (OK maybe not the little ones!)
- Encourages time in the outdoors gathering measurements
- Teaches the basics of working with and interpreting data

Protect

- Children spend up to 50% of their waking time at school or in childcare
- Parents are increasingly concerned about pollution exposure during school hours
- Monitoring can be a management tool e.g. adjusting outdoor exercise on high pollution days
- Assures parents that something is being done, reflecting well on school administrators

