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Cleaning Up the Cleaning Industry: A Green Schools Highlight

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This spring, the National Building Museum is debuting the first-ever museum exhibition dedicated to the greening of American schools. Featuring over 40 exemplary projects from new construction to rehabs to modular classrooms, the exhibition surveys the extraordinary breadth of green school design in the United States through sample building materials, photographs, video, and green products. It explores the multiple facets of green schools, from their architectural form and physical systems, to the impact the buildings have on the health and well-being of the children and adults who occupy them. Green Schools remains on view through January 5, 2014. Plan your visit at <http://go.nbm.org/green-schools>. In connection with the Green Schools exhibition, National Building Museum curator Sarah Leavitt is interviewing the individuals—from staff, to teachers, to students—who are making schools greener.

Jeff Hawkins is the director of custodial services for the Provo City School District in Provo, Utah. He spoke with [Green Schools](#) co-curator Sarah Leavitt about his award-winning work at Dixon Middle School for which he and his team recently received the Best Cleaning Industry Environmental Program Award.

Sarah Leavitt (SL): Tell me a little about where the idea came from to revamp the cleaning procedures at your school. What was the first step?

Jeff Hawkins (JH): In early 2010 I was working as head custodian at an elementary school. Our facilities and maintenance director and district superintendent asked if I would be interested in helping overhaul the custodial department, using a new cleaning program called ManageMen's (OS1). We started with an 80-year-old building that was arguably the oldest and dirtiest building in our district...Dixon Middle School.

SL: Talk a little bit about the process in terms of the training of the personnel.

JH: New custodians were hired and intensively trained. We instituted a color coded product grouping, a new inventory system and a new product ordering system.

Training is a significant part of our cleaning program now. As an administrator of the program, I am required to attend a minimum of 32 hours of in-service training per year. All of the custodial employees in the building are required to attend 16 hours of training prior to being hired and are involved in ongoing weekly training meetings.

SL: What were some of the changes instituted with the new program?

JH: We use PortionPac cleaning chemicals that are all color-coded so that our cleaning workers can easily identify the chemicals they are working with. The chemicals are highly concentrated and pre-measured to eliminate waste. 100 percent of our daily cleaning chemicals are GS-37-Green Seal Certified and our disinfectant is EPA registered. We have installed new soap and hand sanitizer dispensers throughout the school, using Wausau's Optisource hand washing soap which is Green Seal certified. We use Unger two chamber mop buckets that separate clean water and cleaning solution from used recovered mop water. Red restroom buckets and microfiber flat mops and cloths are designated to only be used in the cleaning of restroom floors and yellow ones are used for cleaning hallways or stairs to eliminate cross contamination. Unger microfiber cloths are highly durable and are laundered daily.

We replaced all of the vacuums in the school with ProTeam SuperCoach Backpack Vacuums that use a four-filter filtration system, which effectively removes 99.9 percent of all lung-damaging particles of one micron or larger. The vacuum is CRI Green Label Certified, and has significantly reduced the amount of dust in the building. Many of our occupants swear that they no longer suffer from allergy and asthma symptoms like they used to!

SL: How school-wide is this initiative?

JH: In attempt to involve everyone in our new cleaning program, we held a town-hall style meeting at the school to educate the staff and other stakeholders about the changes in our custodial program. PTA, community council members, and the general public were invited to attend.

SL: Are you done now—or is this an evolving project?

JH: Prior to the implementation of the (OS1) program at our school we had little or no tracking of anything within our cleaning program. Now we track chemical usage, training of our employees, complaints and concerns from the occupants of the building, expenditures, condition of the equipment we are using. This is a much-needed improvement to our cleaning program as it allows us to see what we are doing well and what we need to improve on.

I placed a display board outside of my office with information about our cleaning program to help educate our students and the general public about our efforts to clean up the school.

In 2011, ManageMen conducted a cleaning performance audit of Dixon Middle School. Our score improved from a dismal 6 percent (April 2010) to an impressive 80 percent (May 2011). This significant improvement in our cleaning program at Dixon qualified us for recognition as a (OS1) Green Certified Organization at a national awards banquet held in Salt Lake City, Utah in July of 2011.

SL: Sounds like a great program! Thanks for sharing your story with us.

JH: I'm proud of what we've done at Dixon—we went from a building that had no rules, standards, guidelines, or concerns for our environmental impact to a world class cleaning operation that prides itself for the environmentally responsible way in which we are conducting business.

The superintendent and our school board have unanimously decided to move the new cleaning program in to more of our schools. We are optimistic that we can duplicate the success of the program in these buildings and eventually throughout Provo City School District.

Learn more about the Museum's exhibition, [Green Schools](#).

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- 1 Sarah Leavitt made 1 contribution in the last 6 months



[Sarah Leavitt](#)

Curator

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