

School Environmental Health & Safety: Draft SBOH Rule & PHSKC Program



Briefing Plan:

1. Background
2. State Board of Health (SBOH)'s Draft School EHS Rule
3. PHSKC's New School Environmental Health Program
4. Now What?
5. Questions

School & Health



Children and youth spend approximately **1,300 hours** in school each year. [1]



School environment can influence the **physical, mental, and cognitive health**; and **academic performance** of students. [2]



School environments can pose risks related to chemicals, ventilation, indoor air quality, injuries, noise, pests, etc. [2,3]



Climate change impacts, such as extreme heat and wildfire smoke, also affect a child's health. [3]

[1] Sparks S. (2019, September 17). [U.S. Teachers and Students Are Tops for Time Spent in School](#). EducationWeek.

[2] Harvard T.H. Chan School of Public Health. (2021). [Foundations for Student Success: How School Buildings Influence Student Health, Thinking and Performance](#).

[3] US EPA. (2023, April). [Climate Change and Children's Health and Well-Being in the United States](#).



King County K-12 Schools



285,000+



Students in KC public schools, making up 1/4 of all WA enrollment

~750



K-12 schools
In King County

500 public schools
250 private schools

19 Public School Districts
in King County



URBAN
Highest with
51,000 students



SUBURBAN



RURAL
Smallest with
52 students



Half



of Washington's
private schools
are in King County with
40,000 students

More Racially & Linguistically Diverse Students
in King County Public Schools (compared to WA State as a whole)

64%

Non-White or
Multi-Racial

19%

English Language
Learners (ELL)



What we heard from some King County School District staff....



Inadequate funding: facility operations, maintenance, improvements; unable to pass bonds; new “unfunded mandates”; little staff time for grant applications



Staffing constraints: limited capacity & training to address EHS, often wears multiple hats



Facility improvements: deferred maintenance, short work windows, priorities include HVACs, playgrounds, roofing, lighting, security, asbestos.



Climate change priorities: balance energy efficiency with building health & safety (extreme heat, smoke); climate adaptation planning for schools

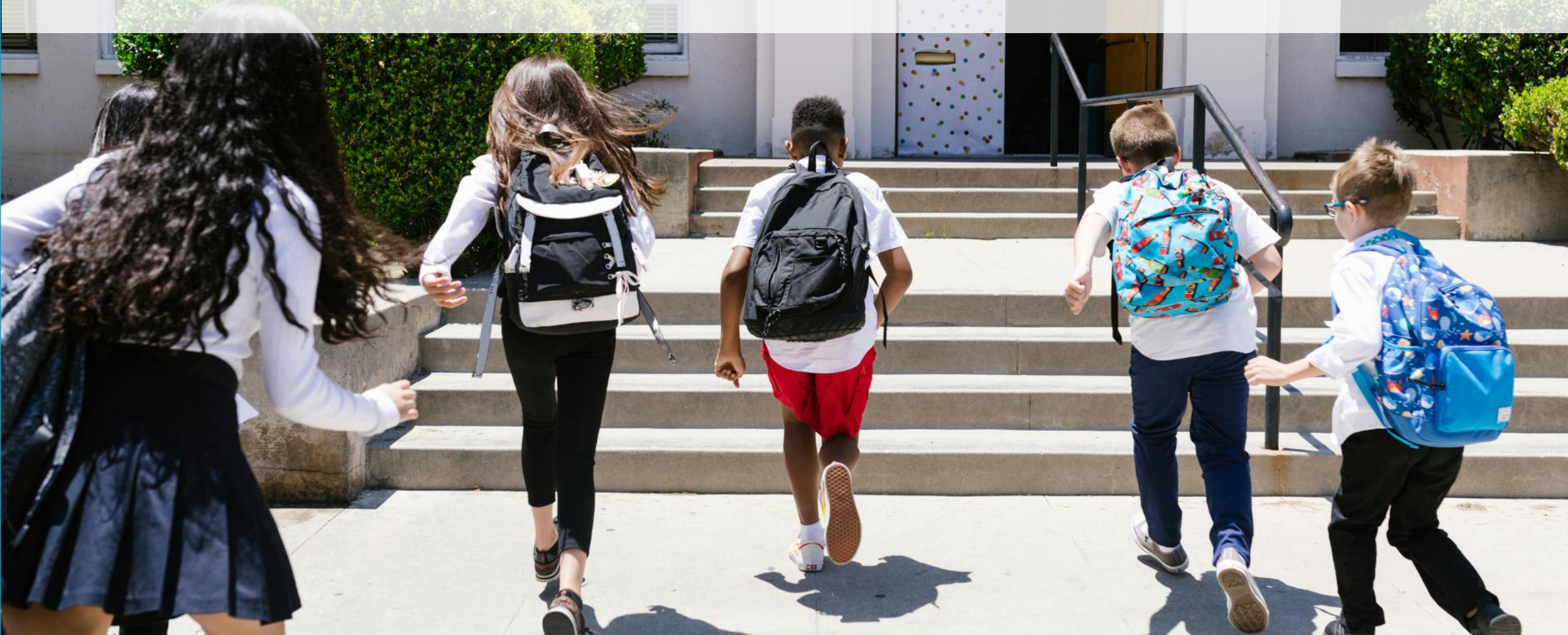


It feels like more and more is landing in the school system, but we need funding to go along with that.



We all wear so many hats. So, to be an expert in so many different areas is definitely a challenge.

State's Draft School Environmental Health & Safety Rule



School Rule History

1960: Chapter 248-64 WAC: Primary and Secondary schools established.

1971: Chapter 248-64 WAC repealed; recodified as Chapter 246-366 WAC.

1990s: Chapter 246-366 WAC last updated.

2004: State WA Board of Health began update of school environmental health rules.

2009: An Operating Budget (2009 ESHB 1244) proviso prevented the implementation of new school rules without funding from the Legislature. The Board adopted Chapter 246-366A WAC and delayed the effective date.

2024: Legislature directed Board to review Chapter 246-366 WAC and Chapter 246-366A WAC for updates. Board convened the Technical Advisory Committee.

2025: Technical Advisory Committee completed rule review and finalized recommendations. Board repealed 246-366A, adopted committee recommendations, and sent final report to the Governor and Legislature.

State Board of Health Charge 2024 ESSB 5950 §222(159)

August 2024—Convened a multi-disciplinary Technical Advisory Committee (TAC) to:

- Review chapters 246-366 and 246-366A WAC
- Draft a new school environmental health and safety rule
- Complete fiscal analysis
- Develop implementation recommendations
- Submit these products and an Environmental Justice Assessment to the Governor and Legislature by June 30, 2025

TAC GOAL: Develop minimum standards for schools to protect student health and safety.

Community Engagement

Listening Sessions 2024-2025

Yakima, Olympia,
Spokane, Tri-Cities,
Vancouver, Auburn

Tribal Outreach

29 Tribes

12 Tribal educational /
community organizations

Listening session

Community Outreach

Latino, BIPOC, LGBTQ+,
Disability, and
community-based
organizations

Three Virtual Listening Sessions

Morning & Evening

Nine Educational Districts

24 School Districts

Flyers to families of
198,232 students

364 schools
contacted

Summary of Proposed Changes from Chapter 246-366 WAC

NO CHANGE

- Noise
- Lighting
- Severability
- Appeals

UPDATED

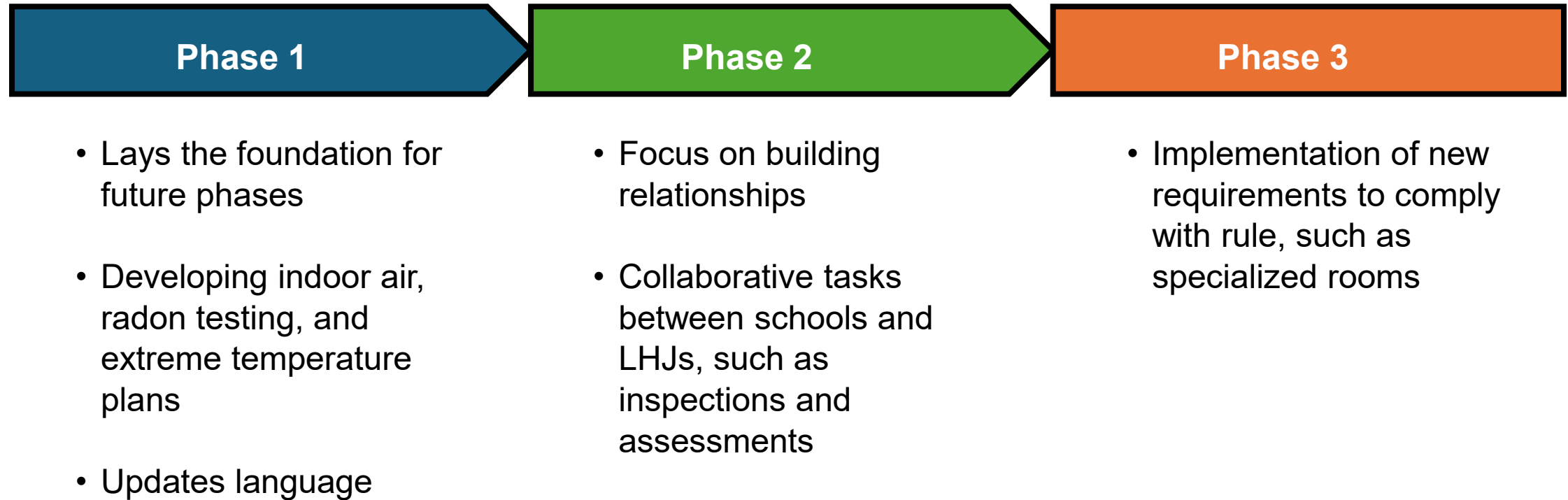
- Definitions
- Guidance
- Site Assessments
- Construction Plan Review
- Routine Inspection
- General Building Health & Safety
- Showers and Restrooms

NEW

- Indoor Air Quality
- Ventilation
- Imminent Health Hazards
- Playgrounds
- Specialized Rooms



Three-Phase Implementation



Potential King County Board of Health adoption of updated State of Washington School Rule



PHSKC School Environmental Health Program



Technical Advisory Committee Discussion and Concerns

- Funding-model barriers, levy dependence, and school-type differences
- Schools (public and private) and health agencies experience funding and capacity challenges in meeting state mandates
- Workforce capacity and funding stability
- Small-school burdens and capacity constraints
- Lead in drinking water
- Gaps and emerging school models

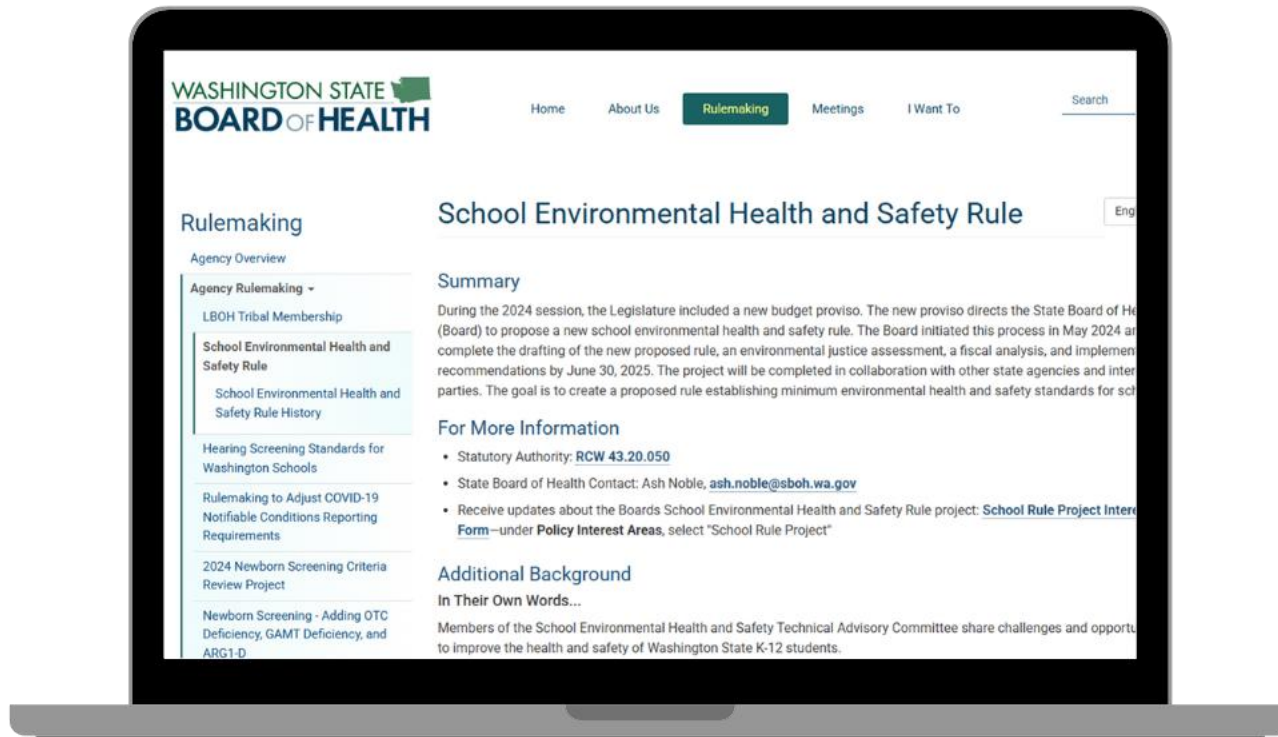
Now What?

- June 2025 – State Board of Health (SBOH) voted to repeal chapter 246-366A WAC, the repeal was effective September 1, 2025
- SBOH wants to continue to work with interested parties to share information about the work we've done and ways to move forward
- Schools and local health have real funding needs
- If the Legislature lifts the proviso in 2026, the SBOH could begin the Phase 1 rulemaking as early as summer 2026
- When state adopts new rule, PHSKC will come back to KCBOH to adopt
- PHSKC will explore revenue models with partners

If the legislature does not lift the proviso...

the existing 60-year-old rule continues.

SBOH Online Resource



[School Environmental Health and Safety Rule | SBOH](#)

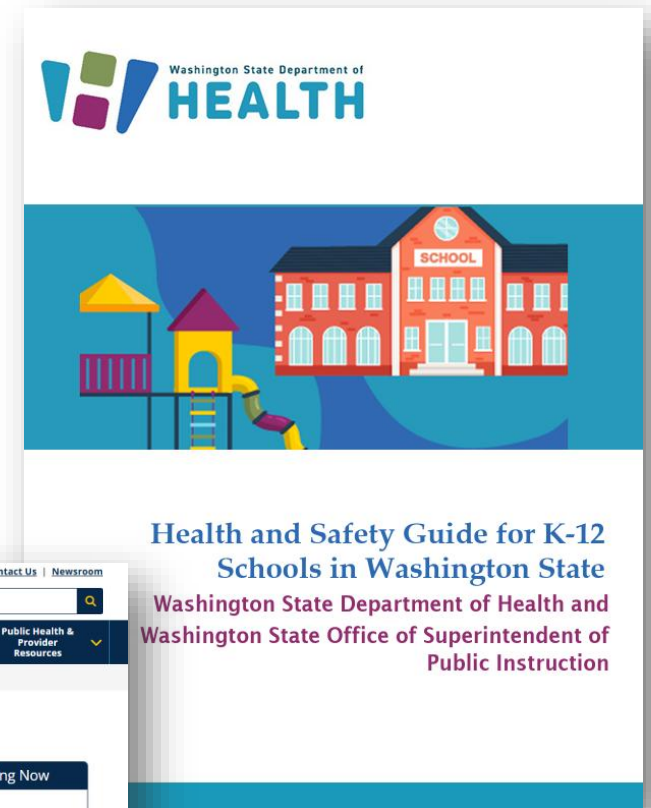
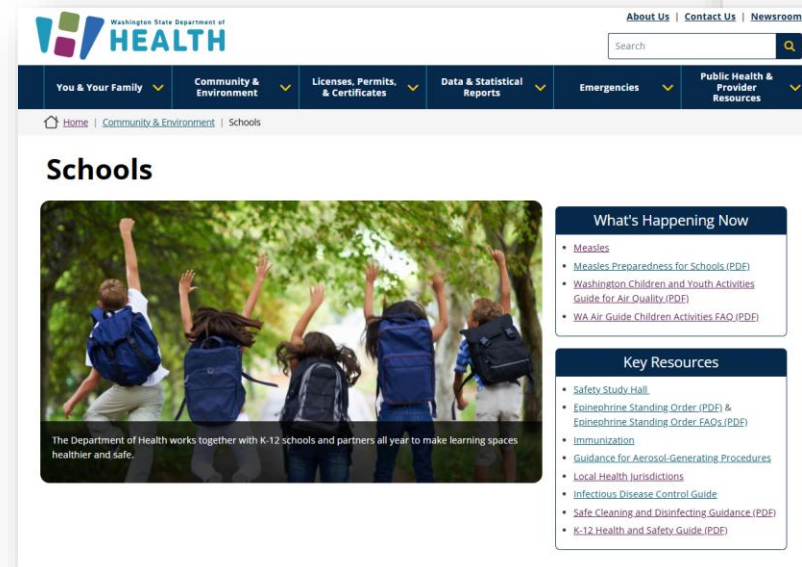


Other Resources

- The DOH-OSPI K-12 Guide
- DOH School EH&S webpage
 - Guidance
 - Technical assistance
 - Plan templates coming
- King County School EHS Program
www.kingcounty.gov/school-ehs
 - Guidance and technical assistance
- Partners are your best resource!
Remember to reach out.



<https://doh.wa.gov/schoolenvironment>





Questions?

Contact:

KCBOHAdmin@kingcounty.gov

Photo credit: RDNA, Pexels