



MADE TO MEASURE

Four steps to verify and validate school cleaning programs

by David L. Smith

It's no secret that COVID-19 poses a challenge for educational facility managers when it comes to keeping buildings and surfaces properly disinfected. From kindergarten to universities, schools are high-traffic areas with a lot of ground for cleaning teams to cover. With expectations around cleaning and disinfecting dramatically increasing, facility managers sometimes feel like they're playing catch-up. In the last year, many facilities have shifted their focus from cleaning (mostly) for appearance to cleaning to ensure health and safety.

As schools begin reopening, the question is: how can we help them stay that way? The answer is simple — a consistent, effective, measurable cleaning program. Follow these four steps to design a cleaning program that will help ensure cleaning effectiveness and efficiency while verifying and validating result.

Step 1: Standardize cleaning and disinfecting procedures

Proper core fundamental cleaning is essential to keeping spaces safe. As school boards prepare to meet the challenge of COVID-19 in an ever-changing environment, several cleaning trends have emerged, and the core fundamentals are still the most critical piece of an effective cleaning program.

By standardizing cleaning procedures, you can ensure cleaning and disinfecting is completed regularly and consistently. When developing a cleaning protocol, assess your facility's unique needs and develop strategies that are clear and consistent to tackle them. In many cases, this involves identifying high-touch surfaces and developing a schedule to disinfect them a couple times a day without putting students at risk.

Additionally, cleaning is only effective if it is being done properly. Once cleaning procedures have been established, ensure all staff are trained on proper cleaning protocols and tools to maximize effectiveness.

Step 2: Choose the right tools

Choosing the right tools for the job is essential to proper cleaning and disinfecting. Two of the most commonly mis-used cleaning tools are disinfectants and microfibre cloths.

When choosing a disinfectant, it's important to consider the dwell time, kill claims, and instructions for application:

- Dwell time is the amount of time a disinfectant must be left wet on a surface to kill

surface bacteria and viruses. It is ideal to choose a disinfectant that will give a broad spectrum kill in 1-2 minutes of dwell time and to always use disinfectants according to the manufacturer label.

- A disinfectant's kill claim will tell you which bacteria it is effective against. Not all disinfectants are formulated to kill the same viruses and bacteria. When choosing a disinfectant for your facility, consider which viruses pose a risk to your facility, such as COVID-19 and norovirus.
- Following a disinfectant's application instructions are crucial to its overall effectiveness. Once you have chosen a disinfectant with an appropriate dwell time and kill claim, ensure you are applying disinfectant with an appropriate tool based on the product. For example, disinfectants used in an electrostatic sprayer system must be approved for use as an electrostatic disinfectant by Health Canada. It's important to read the manufacturer label and verify the product is approved for use in this manner.

Microfibre cloths are a great cleaning tool when used properly. Follow these tips to get the most out of your microfibre cloths:

- When purchasing a microfibre cloth for your facility, consider its lifespan to help determine which is best for your facility. Some cloths may be designed to last a couple hundred washes whereas some could be designed to withstand over 1000.
- It's critical that microfibre cloths are cleaned daily with a gentle cleaning solution to help extend their lifespan. Do not use bleach or fabric softener on microfibre cloths.
- When stocking microfibre cloths, it's ideal to have three sets: one in use, one for back-up and one that's being laundered to ensure you are ready to tackle cleaning challenge as they arise.

Step 3: Use digital cleaning program management to verify compliance and validate results

Digital cleaning program management software help to optimize cleaning re-

sources improve results. These systems keep a log of cleaning activities in real-time to ensure that proper cleaning is being done and have powerful reporting tools to help refine resource allocation and task scheduling to improve cleaning program performance and efficiency.

Digital cleaning program management systems help facility managers:

- Verify that cleaning activities are completed as scheduled
- Identify missed cleanings
- Immediately uncover and manage training issues
- Quickly and easily prepare detailed reporting without having to sift through paper cleaning logs
- Validate adherence to cleaning protocols.

Software features and capabilities vary — some, such as the WandaNEXT software by Visionstate, include task lists, compliance reporting, scheduling heat maps, space utilization metrics and more.

Step 4: Don't forget about hand hygiene!

Proper hand hygiene is one of the most effective ways to limit the spread of viruses and bacteria. Unfortunately, up to 95% of people wash their hands incorrectly, and often not at all.

In school settings, it's crucial that have a hand hygiene program that not only educates students about the importance of hand washing, but also includes a strategy to ensure soaps, sanitizers and paper towels are continuously well stocked. Handwashing communications should be posted frequently throughout buildings/campuses, and inside restrooms. Hand hygiene supply dispensing formats should be selected based on traffic volume for specific rooms, with ultra-high-capacity units placed strategically to reduce refilling requirements and ensure critical supplies are available so that everyone using the facilities can help to maintain health and hygiene. /

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