

RESOLUTION – 2013-2
Creating Greener and Healthier NYC Schools:
Phasing Out Toxic PVC Plastic and Phthalates in New York City School
Building Materials and Office Supplies

Whereas, according to the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA), studies show that one-half of our nation's 115,000 schools have problems with indoor air quality; and

Whereas, Polyvinyl Chloride (PVC or vinyl) is a plastic of concern that is widespread in school and office supplies and building materials purchased by schools in New York City. This may include office supplies such as 3-ring binders and computers, and building materials such as flooring, roofing, carpeting and wall coverings; and

Whereas, these PVC materials and products commonly contain toxic additives that may be released into the school environment, posing hazards to students', teachers', and workers' health. These include phthalates, lead, cadmium and organotins; and

Whereas, school-aged children are uniquely vulnerable to harm from toxic chemicals, such as those released by PVC during its lifecycle including vinyl chloride, ethylene dichloride, phthalates, lead, mercury and dioxin; and

Whereas, a 2012 report found that one in eight New York City children have been diagnosed with asthma, worse than the national rate which is approximately one in ten. School-based asthma prevalence in New York City among children 4-5 years old in 1999 was twice as high among children in low income areas than among children residing in high income areas; and

Whereas, a number of independent peer-reviewed studies have found a correlation between phthalates emitted from PVC building products, including flooring, and asthma in children and adults; and

Whereas, more than 90 percent of all phthalates are used in PVC products such as flooring including many found in New York City schools and phthalates have been found in indoor air and dust, and in human urine, blood and breast milk; and

Whereas, some phthalates such as DEHP have been linked to reproductive problems, including shorter pregnancy duration and premature breast development in girls and sperm damage and impaired reproductive development in boys and phthalates are highest in children, ages 6 to 11, and in women; and

Whereas, the NYC DOE has begun to take steps to phase out PCB's in NYC school lighting, yet phthalates are being used in new PVC school building materials and products, which pose similar hazards to PCBs; and

Whereas, PVC flooring often requires the use of toxic cleaners to keep it durable and shiny, which contributes to poor indoor air quality in schools. This wax and strip maintenance has long been a source of health concern due to the toxic VOC's used in these maintenance products; and

Whereas, PVC products and building materials can release dioxin into the environment during both the manufacture and disposal of these PVC materials, dioxin being a potent cancer-causing agent and it considered to be a “human carcinogen” by the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services National Toxicology Program and dioxin also causes a wide range of non-cancer effects including reproductive, developmental, immunological, and endocrine effects in both animals and humans; and

Whereas, in response to PVC’s hazardous lifecycle, major corporations are phasing out PVC in favor of safer alternatives; companies, including Target, Sears Holdings, Wal-Mart, Nike, Apple, Microsoft and many others, have taken significant steps to reduce or phase out PVC, and more than 100 hospitals and health care providers have pledged to reduce or phase out PVC and/or phthalates; and

Whereas, safer and cost-effective alternatives to PVC are readily available for NYC schools. For example, according to an analysis by researchers at Tufts University, cork, and linoleum are cheaper than PVC flooring over its lifecycle; and

Whereas, Leading environmental, public health, labor, and community organizations across NYC and NYS support reducing the use of PVC in schools, including the NYS PTA, United Federation of Teachers (UFT), NYS United Teachers (NYSUT), Learning Disabilities Association of NYS, Uniformed Firefighters Association of Greater New York, Urban Green Council (USGBC) - Green Schools Committee, Sustainable South Bronx, Make the Road NY, Environmental Advocates of NY, NYPIRG, Sierra Club, and American Public Health Association (APHA); and

Whereas, NYC Local Laws 86, 118 and 120 provide a legislative framework for reducing the use and purchase of hazardous chemicals and materials such as PVC and phthalates in NYC buildings such as schools;

Whereas, NYC government agencies have already begun to reduce the purchase of PVC in office supplies, electronics, and carpeting; and

Whereas, NYC is spending over \$11 billion in building and renovating NYC schools in the coming years as part of the capital plan, and PVC is likely to be used in many of those building materials; now therefore be it

RESOLVED, Community District Education Council 26 urges the New York City Department of Education (DOE) and NYC School Construction Authority (SCA) to reduce and phase out the use and purchase of building materials and office supplies that contain PVC and phthalates, where safer and cost effective alternatives are available.

RESOLVED, Community District Education Council 26 urges the NYC School Construction Authority (SCA) to update its building specifications and Green Schools Guide and develop specific criteria for reducing and eliminating the use of PVC and phthalates in school building materials such as flooring, where safer and cost-effective alternatives are available.

RESOLVED, Community District Education Council 26 urges the New York City Department of Education (DOE) to develop new procurement guidelines to reduce and phase out the purchase of products containing PVC and phthalates, where safer and cost effective alternatives are available.

RESOLVED, Community District Education Council 26 urges the NYC Council and Mayor to develop and enact legislation to reduce the use and purchase of PVC in school building materials and office supplies where safer and cost-effective alternatives are available.

RESOLVED, Community District Education Council 26 urges the New York City Department of Education and the NYC School Construction Authority (SCA) to educate teachers, parents and community members about how to identify PVC in “Back to School” products, and how to purchase PVC-free school supplies where safer and cost-effective alternatives are available.

APPROVED UNANIMOUSLY by roll call vote of all members present: 7 **YES**; 0 **NO**
PASSED and ADOPTED this 29th Day of August 2013.

Jaime Alvarez-Isasi _____ *yes* _____

Ricky Chan _____ *absent* _____

Alan Ong _____ *yes* _____

Jaya Patil _____ *yes* _____

Anastasio Politidis _____ *absent* _____

Leslie Rubenstein _____ *yes* _____

Jeannette Segal _____ *yes* _____

Susan Shiroma _____ *yes* _____

Lucy Vieco _____ *yes* _____