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'Voices of Experience'; A National Report

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The condition of schools has always been of major concern, however, the focal point of that concern is rarely environmental conditions. Improving technology and increasing test scores is at the forefront at the expense of environmental aspects. This is often to the detriment of children's health and well being.

Healthy Schools Network (HSN) is a non-profit organization concerned with ameliorating the environmental hazards posed by many schools in the US. Their mission is to ensure that schools are environmentally responsible to their, students, personnel and community. HSN sponsors National Healthy Schools Day (NHSD) to unite advocates. The modus operandi for NHSD 2006 is a national report entitled "Voices of Experience". This compilation of personal stories expresses public health issues with school conditions nationally and provides the opportunity for parents and others advocating change to share the lessons they have learned through their personal experiences.

Data was collected for schools in each of the 50 states and a template for the format of the report was created. Conference calls were conducted to gather valuable input from HSN's national partners who participate in NHSD events. Interviews were conducted to determine which contributors were willing to have their story published. Information obtained was condensed into concise "blurbs" and formatted to fit the template. Lessons learned and lessons lost were also extracted from the interviews.

Eliminating environmental hazards in schools is a huge task, however, meaningful steps like those undertaken by HSN have been the catalyst for change.