In an effort to keep up with the No Child Left Behind Act, school officials are constantly reevaluating their curriculums and contemplating new and innovative ways to encourage learning and improve performance on standardized tests. In the era of the almighty test score, it is easy for school officials to stray away from the basics. However, in a recent report released by the Environmental Law Institute, getting back to the basics might be just the answer for which school officials are looking. Tobie Bernstein, Environmental Law Institute, School Indoor Air Quality: State Policy Strategies for Maintaining Healthy Learning Environments (2009), available at http://www.elistore.org/reports_detail.asp?ID=11357.
The report, released in September, states that there is a direct correlation between school indoor air quality and student productivity. Specifically, the report identified three major areas of concern, which include "ventilation, moisture control and the control of other pollutant sources." In an effort to improve air quality in school districts nationwide, the report explores four different strategies for state policymakers to consider.

First, the report suggests tackling the problem of poor air quality through state health laws. Specifically, the report recommends the adoption of inspection laws to identify and correct the following problems in public schools: roofs and gutters, water intrusion, water damage/moisture control, HVAC systems, pest infestation control, animals in classrooms, chemicals, carpeting and temperature/humidity control.

Second, the report discusses the use of state labor laws to regulate air quality in schools. The report suggests the implementation of an OSHA-type law at the state level to ensure the safety of public workplaces, including public schools. The benefit of this strategy, as pointed out in the report, is that the state will qualify for federal funding as long as the state's standards meet basic federal requirements.

Third, the report focuses on state education laws as a source for addressing air quality problems. This strategy also involves a rigorous inspection process; however, unlike state health laws, education laws will require school districts to perform their own inspections. The inspections will focus on roofing, building structural elements, plumbing, heating and cooling, and ventilation.

Finally, the report suggests that local school districts should "develop and implement their own Indoor Air Quality Management Program." This strategy is similar to the previous policy approach, and it also includes the development of an internal reporting system to oversee inspections and entertain complaints and suggestions from parents.

As the report indicates, implementing these policies at the state level will improve air quality in school buildings, thereby improving the health of students and staff. This, in turn, will undoubtedly increase productivity and enhance student performance across the board.