

**Excerpt from NYSED's Office of Facilities Planning
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Upholstered Furniture:

We have recently been receiving inquiries regarding the use of upholstered furniture within classrooms and other student occupied areas. Though there are no formal rules or laws within the SED Manual of Planning Standards or the New York State Uniform Fire and Prevention and Building Code, the following guideline was adapted by the Board of Regents in 1994.

GUIDING PRINCIPLES FOR IMPROVING THE ENVIRONMENTAL QUALITY OF SCHOOLS

Although focused on teaching and learning, education must also address the need to maintain a safe, secure, and healthy school environment. The capacity of children to learn is impeded if their school environment contains elements which are hazardous to their health. The State Education Department and educators throughout the State of New York have a responsibility to assure the school community and the public that, based on the best available knowledge, school buildings are safe, healthy, clean and in good repair.

In December 1994, the New York State Board of Regents adopted the following guiding principles developed by the Regents Advisory Committee on Environmental Quality in Schools:

1. Every child has a right to an environmentally safe and healthy learning environment which is clean and in good repair.
2. Every child, parent, and school employee has a "right to know" about environmental health issues and hazards in their school environment.
3. School officials and appropriate public agencies should be held accountable for environmental safe and healthy school facilities.
4. Schools should serve as role models for environmentally responsible behavior.
5. Federal, State, local, and private sector entities should work together to ensure that resources are used effectively and efficiently to address environmental health and safety concerns.

The **SED strongly recommends against the using of upholstered furniture or carpeting brought in from staff or student homes.** There becomes an issue of air quality and contamination. This could, also, become a problem with new furniture and carpeting installed within a classroom. With porous surfaces there is no control as to the contamination that may be present in or on such items. Dust mites are a common problem found in carpeting and upholstered furniture. This would require frequent vacuuming with a HEPA filter vacuum to control the growths. Also, upholstered furniture tends to "grab on" anything it comes in contact with. Meaning any contamination on children's or staff's clothing could possibly be left behind. This could include allergy producing contaminants. Depending on air quality in the areas of use, mold could also become a problem. Mold could reside in the furniture or carpet and not be detected for a period of time due to the pile of the carpet or the fabric of the furniture. In the mean time, staff and students come in contact with the contaminants.