



Healthy Environments Advance Learning (HEAL) Ambassadors Learning Cohort: Fact Sheet

What is HEAL?

HEAL is a two-year project, funded by the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA), to build the knowledge and capacity to improve school environments for students in districts that are most burdened by asthma, extreme heat, and COVID-19. HEAL is a project of Health Resources in Action and the Massachusetts Asthma Action Partnership, funded by the Environmental Protection Agency's Office of Children's Environmental Health. HEAL is created in partnership with the Metropolitan Area Planning Council (MAPC).

HEAL Purpose: School Environments, Health, and Academic Achievement

Some of the benefits of a healthy school environment can include:

- Better attendance,
- Improved academic performance,
- Improved focus and physical stamina,
- Enhanced student and staff productivity,
- Fewer restrictions on participation in physical activities, and
- Fewer symptoms and medical emergencies for asthma.

HEAL aims to foster knowledge and build capacity to improve environmental health conditions within MA schools where students are most burdened by asthma, COVID-19, and extreme heat. HEAL is using, and enhancing, MAAP's [Clearing the Air Toolkit](#) as a basis for the project.

What does HEAL's Learning Cohort entail?

HEAL will provide five to seven districts with high burden of pediatric asthma rates and asthma inequities **a mini-grant of \$5000 - \$7000, training, technical assistance (TA), and peer learning support during the 2023-2024 academic year** to plan and/or pilot one short-term action/policy to address environmental health conditions in one or more district school. In addition to the stipend given to plan these practices and/or policies, our team will provide a **Certificate of Completion** for school staff who complete educational learning modules and cohort activities and hopes to be able to provide **Continuing Nursing Credits**.

What could implementing these actions/policies look like for participating school districts?

- Organizing a de-clutter day,
- Developing a policy around extreme heat,
- Longer-term research to support an application for federal and/or state funding to improve indoor air quality,
- *Or more!* The choice will be made by the project participants from your district/school.

- **The funding** may be used as stipends for participants, food for meetings/events, research, and/or supplies to support a policy (e.g., air conditioners for cool rooms).

The following districts are invited to apply:

Boston, Brockton, Chelsea, Holyoke, Lawrence, Lowell, Lynn, New Bedford, Southbridge, Springfield, and Worcester.

Award period:

- September 2023-June 2024 school year (projects to be completed by December 2024).
- Districts will be notified in early June 2023 if they have been selected to participate.

What is required of districts participating in the HEAL Learning Cohort during the 2023-2024 school year?

Each district must assign two to five participants to the HEAL Learning Cohort, one of which must be their Head of School Health or Wellness. This group will be the “Lead” for their district, will be able to access one-on-one technical assistance, and be asked to:

- Watch assigned recorded educational learning modules,
- Attend 4 - 6 Learning Cohort Sessions, held virtually between October 2023 and May 2024 with participants from the other districts, and
- Engage with their district’s School Wellness Committee and/or organize a committee to:
 - Possibly lead an environmental walk-through of a district school,
 - Discuss, develop, and/or build on at least one district policy and/or activity that involves environmental health in the district,
 - Create plan by end of 2023-2024 school year, implement by end of 2024, and
 - Participate in 1 on-site meeting or training in your district with the HEAL staff.

Next steps for interested districts:

- If you’d like to set up a time to discuss this opportunity with our team, please sign up for a time to meet with us, and we’ll follow up with you directly: [Click here to schedule a Meeting with HEAL team.](#)
- To apply to become a participating school district in the HEAL Learning Cohort, please click [APPLY HERE.](#)

HEAL hopes to continue to support schools and we are seeking additional funding support for schools so that they can identify their next steps in improving the conditions of their buildings and access funding opportunities to implement them, as well as to provide more significant funding for planning.