

MANAGING ASTHMA IN NEW MEXICO SCHOOLS

VIII. THE TEACHING STAFF

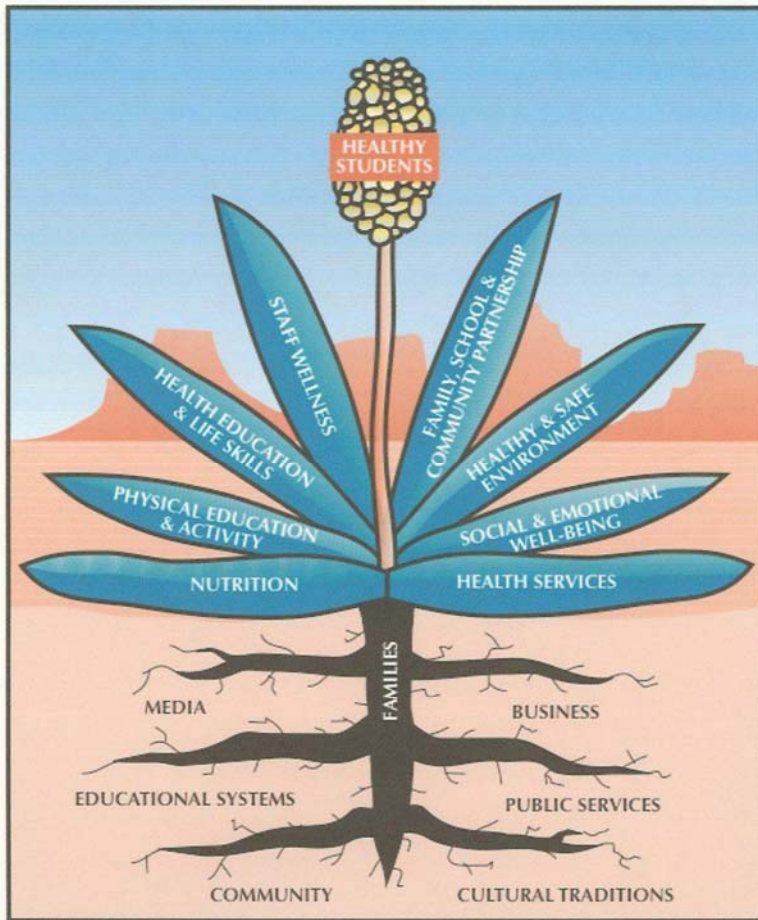


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Teaching Staff Responsibilities

Important Points

Teachers should identify students with asthma and allergies at the start of the school year.

Students with asthma should be encouraged to participate fully in all school opportunities.

The classroom should be free of potential asthma “triggers.”

Sensitivity to the needs of students with asthma and food allergies is essential.

Remember to use the school nurse as a resource to learn more about asthma and its management, especially the school’s asthma emergency plan.

Considering the number of hours students with asthma will spend in the school environment, every member of the teaching staff has a role in helping and supporting these students. Recognizing and being sensitive to their needs will go a long way in ensuring that students with asthma fit into the school environment. When they are encouraged and feel comfortable about having their needs met, students will be more likely to attend school and be better achievers.

As the school year begins it is important to know which students have been diagnosed with asthma and allergies and what triggers are likely to start an asthma episode. The school nurse can provide the appropriate information. Potential classroom triggers can include chalk dust, pets, mold, fragrances, cold air, and stress to name a few. Because it is possible for an episode to occur anywhere (classroom, playing field, cafeteria, school bus, field trip), it is essential for every staff member to be able to identify the onset of asthma symptoms and be prepared to help the student. The school nurse is an excellent resource for helping with classroom trigger identification and asthma management. Everyone shares a major responsibility in asthma management and should know what to do in the event of an emergency.

In addition to being knowledgeable about asthma and its management, the teaching staff has a responsibility to be sensitive to the special needs of students with asthma. Some students may already have an individualized education plan (IEP) or a 504 plan. Every student with asthma deserves:

- encouragement to participate in all school classes and activities (assigning a “buddy” may help promote participation)
- the opportunity to carry and self-administer medications when the ability has been demonstrated
- a plan for making up missed schoolwork agreed upon by the student and parents and established at the start of the school year
- educated and understanding classmates
- assistance in being independent in asthma management.

The teaching staff will need to think and plan ahead for activities such as field trips, science classes, and parties to allow students with asthma to participate. They must not be made to feel different or responsible for making classmates miss out on opportunities.

Because teaching staff members spend a considerable amount of time with students, they are in an ideal situation to recognize when a student’s asthma symptoms are worsening. They may even be the first to identify a student with undiagnosed asthma due to repeated coughing in the classroom or outdoors. It is very important to report symptoms or symptom changes to the school nurse and parents. This information is extremely helpful in better management of asthma.

Food allergies can be life threatening.

Untreated food allergies have caused death.

Ensuring that the classroom is an asthma friendly environment also requires some thought and planning, as well as cooperation from the custodial staff. Rooms must be kept as dust free and clean as possible. Bookshelves, rugs, lamps, stuffed furniture and toys, chalkboards, erasers, windowsills, and pets can be sources of dust and dander. Odors from paints, markers, perfumes, sprays, scented candles, smoke, and cleaning supplies need to be avoided. Mold can develop from over-watered plants, leaks, or any source of standing water. During heavy pollen seasons, opening windows for fresh air may be problematic. Classrooms need to be fun, interesting places to learn not sterile, lifeless environments. Achieving an appropriate balance is far from easy and will require cooperation from students, staff, and parents.

Additionally, teaching staff members need to be aware of **food allergies** and the problems associated with them. Research suggests that children with asthma are at a greater risk for severe allergic reactions to foods. The eight foods that account for 90% of allergic reactions are **peanuts, eggs, fish, milk, wheat, soy, tree nuts (walnuts and pecans), and shellfish**. Classroom parties, field trips, and the celebration of special events, such as birthdays and holidays, will require planning to avoid an allergy episode. Again, the school nurse can provide information on students with food allergies and the precautions that need to be taken.

Recognizing the signs and symptoms of a severe food allergy is essential. These include:

- itching and swelling of the lips, tongue, or lining of the mouth
- itching and/or a sense of tightness in the throat
- shortness of breath and wheezing
- hoarseness and a hacking cough
- hives or an itchy rash
- facial swelling or swelling in the limbs (arms and legs)
- nausea, vomiting, diarrhea, or stomach cramps
- rapid pulse and fainting
- anxiety and restlessness.

These symptoms can appear suddenly, advance rapidly, and become life threatening. Immediate action is required. The school nurse should be called to assess the situation, administer emergency medication if it is available, and assist in making any decision to call 911.

If a student seems to be using asthma or allergies as an excuse, it should be determined if an avoidance pattern exists. It is not a good idea to insist a student "tough it out" as this can lead to increased stress and a possible increase in symptoms. It may be reassuring to assign the student a "buddy," who is ready and willing to help. If an avoidance pattern is emerging, discuss the circumstances with the school nurse. Peak flow measurements are a tool the nurse may use to assess respiratory status and determine if better asthma management is needed. A student/parent/teacher/nurse conference can help address the student's behavior patterns and encourage participation. The goal is to have every student with asthma participating fully in the opportunities school provides.

Tips For The Classroom Teacher

Be aware of students in the classroom with asthma.

Know the early warning signs of an asthma episode.

Get information on managing asthma in the classroom from the school nurse and understand the steps to take in case of an asthma episode.

Obtain a copy of the *Asthma Action Plan* for each student with asthma.

Know the possible side effects of asthma medications and how they may impact student performance. Refer any problems to school and nurse and parents. Common side effects that need to be reported include: nervousness, nausea, jitteriness, hyperactivity, and drowsiness.

Understand that a student with asthma may feel:

- drowsy or tired

- different from other students

- anxious about access to medication

- embarrassed and/or withdrawn if an asthma episode disrupts school activities.

Help students feel comfortable by recognizing these feelings.

Maintain confidentiality.

Educate classmates about asthma so they can be more understanding.

Encourage the student with asthma to participate fully in physical activities.

Allow a student to engage in less vigorous activity if asthma precludes full participation.

Develop a clear procedure with the student and parent for handling schoolwork missed due to asthma.

Determine a plan for any accommodations needed for class field trips.

(Adapted from Managing Asthma in Connecticut Schools)

Allergy-Proofing the Classroom

Teaching Equipment

- Clean chalkboards when students are not in the classroom. Clean erasers outside.
- Paints and markers often have strong fumes. Replace tops when not in use or use unscented markers.
- Stuffed animals and toys should be made of synthetic material, washed several times a year, and stored in plastic containers.
- Avoid classroom pets whose feathers and fur leave dander in the classroom air.

Furniture

- Dust bookshelves and other horizontal surfaces weekly when students are not in classroom.
- Lamps should have plain, rather than pleated shades that can trap dust.
- Sofas or stuffed chairs should be vacuumed weekly.
- Wipe up any spills immediately and dry surface well.
- Avoid scented candles.

Windows

- Check the pollen count before opening windows.
- Keep windows closed during windy, dusty weather.

Teachers and Staff

- Avoid perfumes, scented talcum powder, and hair sprays.
- Do not smoke in the school environment.
- Remember that smoking residue remains on clothing and in hair.

Classroom Cleaning Supplies

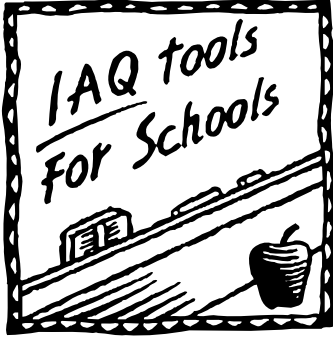
- Keep all cleaning products out of the reach of students.
- Be certain cleaning products are recapped and stored properly.
- Avoid aerosol sprays when students are in the classroom.

Natural Cleaning Agents

- White or apple cider vinegar removes mold, mineral deposits, and crayon marks.
- Baking soda is a good general cleaner and is a rug and refrigerator deodorizer.
- Club soda is a good spot remover.
- Clorox bleach solution is a viricide, mold remover, and cleaning agent.
- Use liquid (mild or unscented) rather than bar soap.

(Adapted from Managing Asthma in Connecticut Schools)

Teacher's Classroom Checklist



Name: _____
 School: _____
 Room or Area: _____ Date Completed: _____
 Signature: _____

Assess the status of the following:

1. GENERAL CLEANLINESS

- | | Yes | No | N/A |
|--|--------------------------|--------------------------|--------------------------|
| 1a. Assure rooms are dusted and vacuumed regularly..... | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 1b. Assure rooms are free of clutter..... | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 1c. Assure that trash is removed daily..... | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 1d. Assure that no food is stored in classroom overnight..... | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 1e. Assure that animal food is stored in tightly sealed containers..... | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 1f. Assure room is free of pests and vermin..... | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 1g. Used unscented, school-approved cleaners and air fresheners, if any, in rooms..... | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |

2. ANIMALS IN THE CLASSROOM

- | | | | |
|--|--------------------------|--------------------------|--------------------------|
| 2a. Minimized exposure to animal allergens..... | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 2b. Assure that animals are kept in cages (as much as possible)..... | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 2c. Assure that cages are cleaned regularly..... | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 2d. Placed animal cages away from supply and return vents..... | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 2e. Consulted school nurse about student allergies or sensitivities (privacy laws may limit the information that health officials can disclose)..... | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 2f. Identified potential allergies of students..... | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 2g. Moved sensitive students away from animals and habitats..... | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |

3. DRAIN TRAPS IN THE CLASSROOM

- | | | | |
|---|--------------------------|--------------------------|--------------------------|
| 3a. Assure that water is poured down floor drains once per week (approx. 1 quart of water)..... | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 3b. Assure that water is run in sinks at least once per week (about 2 cups of water)..... | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 3c. Assure that toilets are flushed once each week, especially if not used regularly..... | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |

4. EXCESS MOISTURE IN CLASSROOMS

- | | | | |
|---|--------------------------|--------------------------|--------------------------|
| 4a. Assure that condensate is wiped from windows, windowsills, and window frames..... | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 4b. Assure that cold water pipes are free of condensate..... | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 4c. Assure that indoor surfaces of exterior walls are free of condensate..... | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 4d. Assure areas around and under classroom sinks are free of leaks..... | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 4e. Assure classroom lavatories are free of leaks..... | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 4f. Assure ceiling tiles and walls are free of leaks (discoloration may indicate periodic leaks)..... | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 4g. Assure that spills are cleaned promptly..... | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |

Instructions

1. Read the *IAQ Backgrounder* and the Background Information for this checklist.
2. Keep the Background Information and make a copy of the checklist for future reference.
3. Complete the Checklist.
 - Check the “yes,” “no,” or “not applicable” box beside each item. (A “no” response requires further attention.)
 - Make comments in the “Notes” section as necessary.
4. Return the checklist portion of this document to the IAQ Coordinator.

5. THERMAL COMFORT

- | | Yes | No | N/A |
|--|--------------------------|--------------------------|--------------------------|
| 5a. Assure moderate temperature (should generally be 72°F–76°F) | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 5b. Assure there are no signs of draftiness | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 5c. Assure that students are not seated in direct sunlight | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 5d. Assure that indoor humidity is maintained at acceptable levels (between 30 and 60 percent) | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |

6. VENTILATION

- | | | | |
|---|--------------------------|--------------------------|--------------------------|
| 6a. Located unit ventilator | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 6b. Located air supply and return vents | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 6c. Assure air is flowing from supply vent..... | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 6d. Assure the air supply pathway is not obstructed..... | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 6e. Assure there are no vehicle exhaust, kitchen/food, and chemical odors in the classroom | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 6f. Assure there are no signs of mold or mildew (refer to Appendix H of the <i>IAQ Reference Guide</i>) | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 6g. Determined operability of windows..... | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |

7. EDUCATIONAL SUPPLIES (Art, Science, Industrial/Vocational)

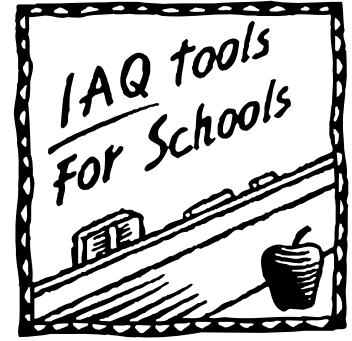
- | | | | |
|---|--------------------------|--------------------------|--------------------------|
| 7a. Reviewed supplies and their labels | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 7b. Assure that Material Safety Data Sheets are accessible..... | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 7c. Developed and implemented spill clean-up procedures..... | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 7d. Labeled all chemicals accurately with date of receipt/preparation and pertinent precautionary information | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 7e. Assure that supplies are stored according to manufacturers' recommendations | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 7f. Understood and followed recommended procedures for disposal of used substances | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 7g. Assure that compressed gas cylinders are stored securely | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 7h. Separated storage areas from main classroom area and ensured they are ventilated separately | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 7i. Used diluted substances rather than concentrates, wherever possible | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 7j. Minimized exposure to hazardous materials (i.e., used non-hazardous materials and pre-mixed products)..... | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 7k. Assure that fume hoods capture respirable particles, gases, and vapors released within them | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |

8. LOCAL EXHAUST FANS

- | | | | |
|--|--------------------------|--------------------------|--------------------------|
| 8a. Identified major pollutant-generating activities, if any | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 8b. Located exhaust fan(s), if any | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 8c. Determined that fans operate | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 8d. Assure that adjacent rooms or halls are free of odor..... | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |

9. LOCKER ROOM

- | | | | |
|---|--------------------------|--------------------------|--------------------------|
| 9a. Assure locker room and showers are cleaned regularly and properly..... | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 9b. Checked that soiled clothes are removed regularly..... | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 9c. Assure that wet towels are removed from locker room | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 9d. Assure that there is water in the drain trap..... | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 9e. Verified that the local exhaust fan is functioning properly and used consistently | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |



Resources for New Mexico Teachers

New Mexico

New Mexico Chapter of the American Lung Association

www.lungusa2.org/airzonanewmexico

7001 Menaul Blvd.NE, Suite 1A, Albuquerque, NM 87110

A is for Asthma - pre-school video

Open Airways - 6 lessons for grades 3-5

Best of Superstuff - 6-8 yrs.

Not on Tobacco (NOT) - 10 session curriculum for teens

New Mexico Department of Health – Asthma in the Schools Program

Gerri. Jaramillo@state.nm.us

Julianne.Vollmer@state.nm.us

National

Asthma and Allergy Foundation of America

www.aafa.org

Power Breathing - variety of instructional modalities for teens

American Academy of Allergy, Asthma, and Immunology

www.aaaai.org

American Academy of Pediatrics

www.aap.org

American Lung Association

www.lungusa.org

Centers for Disease Control and Prevention - National Center for Environmental Health

www.cdc.gov/nceh/asthma

Food Allergy and Anaphylaxis Network

www.foodallergy.org

11781 Lee Jackson Hwy., Suite 160, Fairfax. VA 22033-3309

Alexander, The Elephant Who couldn't Eat Peanuts

It Only Takes One Bite

Indoor Air Quality Information Clearinghouse - U.S.Environmental Protection Agency

www.epa.gov/iaq

National Asthma Education and Prevention - National Heart, Lung, and Blood Institute Program

www.nhlbi.nih.gov

Asthma Awareness: Curriculum for Elementary Classroom (K-6)

School Asthma Allergy Information Resource

www.schoolasthmaallergy.com

Just for Teachers, Kids Corner, and Teen Corners

Resources for Teachers and Students

Food Allergies

Alexander, The Elephant Who Couldn't Eat Peanuts from the Food Allergy Network
4744 Holly Wood Ave., Fairfax, VA 22030
video about food allergies for elementary age students

Allie the Allergic Elephant: A Children's Story of Peanut Allergies by Maggie Nichols
ages 5-9, story of an elephant who learns to say "no thank you" to peanuts
has website

Taking Food Allergies to School by Ellen Weiner
ages 9-12, a boy learns the ways that food allergies affect his body
has allergy quiz and allergy-free pizza recipe

The Peanut Butter Jam by Elizabeth Sussman Nassau
ages 6-9, describes how a young boy takes control of his peanut allergy

The Peanut Pickle by Jessica Ureel
ages, 6-10, describes how a young boy takes control of his peanut allergy

Elementary School

Asthma Detectives by Carol Shenise from Glaxo Smith Kline.
ages 7-11, story for parents to read to children with activity sheets

Brianna Breathes Easy by Virginia Kroll
ages 6-9, a story about a young girl who learns she has asthma and how to control it

Sportercise! by Kim Gosselin
ages 6-9, despite having asthma a boy learns to participate on a sports team

Taking Asthma to School by Kim Gosselin
ages 6-9, by a child with asthma, includes "Asthma Kids Quiz" and tips
for teachers

The ABC's of Asthma by Kim Gosselin
ages 5-7, easy ABC book with basic information about asthma

The Lion Who Had Asthma by Jonathan London
ages 5-7, colorful text for young children with asthma

Zoey and the Zones by Shawn R. McCormick
ages 6-10, story of a car with asthma that learns to manage his symptoms. Excellent
source of information. Also addresses consequence of child stopping medications. It also
has a companion parent workbook and a website

Zoallergy by Kim Gosselin
ages 6-9, story of trip to allergist and then to zoo

Middle School

The Babysitter's Club by Ann Martin
ages 11-15, girl rushed to hospital because of an asthma episode while babysitting

Breathe Easy: Young People's Guide to Asthma, 2nd edition by Jonathan Weiss
ages 10-15, advice from a 13 year boy to other young people

Jackie Joyner-Kersey: Champion Athlete
ages 13-17, story of an athlete's career while coping with asthma

Relieve the Squeeze: How to Take Control of Your Asthma by Peggy Strauss
ages 10-15, basic information with advice to take control by knowing triggers
has companion video

Parents

Help Your Child Gain Control Over Asthma
CDC and EPA
EPA # 402-F-04-021
Can be ordered in Spanish and English from EPA
Written at an easy to read level for adults

Kids Breathe Free: A Parent's Guide for Treating Children with Asthma by Pritchett and Hull
Associates, Inc., ages 5-9. Simple text with cartoons for parents to share with children.

Web Sites

Allie the Allergic Elephant
www.allericchild.com

Asthma and Allergy Foundation of America
www.aafa.org
Power Breathing – a variety of instructional modalities for teens

Environmental Kids Club
www.epa.gov/kids

Fankids
www.fankids.org
(2 web sites, one for young children and one for teens)

Kids Corner
www.schoolasthma.com
Includes: interactive games, downloadable coloring book, how to use an inhaler

Kids with Food Allergies, Inc
www.kidswithfoodallergies.org

National Heart, Lung, and Blood Institute
www.niehs.nih.gov/kids/asthma.htm
Includes: Kids' Pages with dust games and Air: Your World Indoors

National Jewish Center

www.njc.org/disease-info/disease/asthma/kids/wizard-index.aspx

Asthma Wizard

Playtime

www.aanma.org/playtime

Teen's Corner

www.schoolasthma.com

Includes: peak flow meter diary, Asthma Buster's Club, tobacco free information

Zoey and the Zones

www.zoeyzones.com

See General Resources for additional information and resources available in Spanish.