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*Resource Center for IPM Certification in Agriculture and Communities*

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE: Nov. 6, 2004

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**Monroe County Community Schools Corporation  
Awarded IPM STAR Certification: Ninth in the Nation  
to Earn Honor**

IPM STAR signifies excellence in managing pests and pesticide hazards

BLOOMINGTON, Indiana – Monroe County Community Schools Corporation (MCCSC) has earned IPM STAR status, becoming only the ninth school district in the nation to achieve this distinction. The award will be presented at a meeting of the Board of Education on Tuesday, November 9 in Bloomington.

Integrated Pest Management, or IPM, is an approach that relies on long-term, preventative techniques as the first line of defense against pests. The IPM STAR program is voluntary and includes a rigorous on-site evaluation, a comprehensive set of reports and recommendations, and a concerted effort by school administrators, staff and contractors to meet high standards for effective, least-risk pest management.

IPM STAR certification is awarded by the IPM Institute of North America, in partnership with the US EPA Pesticide Environmental Stewardship Program.

School systems typically deal with a variety of pests, including insects, rodents and weeds. Rather than scheduling a “program” of regular pesticide applications, IPM practitioners monitor conditions carefully, using sticky traps and other means to spot pest problems early. They act to correct conditions such as poor sanitation, leaky pipes or broken window screens that might encourage pest problems.

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MCCSC was first introduced to IPM in 1994 by Dr. Marc Lame, a former cotton IPM Extension agent. At the time, Lame was a new professor at Indiana University in the School of Public and Environmental Affairs (SPEA). Lame persuaded Jerry Jochim, with 11 years experience in custodial management and now IPM Coordinator for the district, and John Carter, Director of Planning, to be trained in IPM. Carter was particularly interested to see if an IPM approach might help resolve absenteeism with one pupil who would be out sick for 3-4 days after any pesticide treatment at his school.

Lame's IPM philosophy boils down to "do what you're doing now, just think pests." Custodians learn how to defeat ants, rodents and cockroaches by denying food, water and shelter. They make sure food crumbs are removed at the end of the day, mops are hung "head up" to dry quickly and cluttered areas are cleaned out and organized. Maintenance crews are taught to correct absent or broken door seals. This improves energy conservation and keeps pests out at the same time. Kitchen staff and faculty learn to store edibles in pest-proof containers rather than cardboard boxes, which are ideal "condominiums" for cockroaches.

Contractors supplying pest control or landscape services are expected to become educators and diagnosticians, rather than pesticide applicators arriving on a regular schedule and routinely treating for pests that may or may not be present. They can help identify problems and recommend long term, non-chemical solutions such as annual overseeding, aeration and proper irrigation for turf.

At MCCSC, pest problems are reported to Jochim via monthly log sheets submitted by custodians at each school facility. A pest sighting log is used to track any evidence of pests detected by building staff. A monitoring log is used to record captures on sticky traps placed in strategic areas, such as kitchens, food storage or locker rooms. A maintenance log sheet has check boxes to note "conducive conditions" for pests, such as broken windows, floor tile or clutter. Jochim screens these reports and follows up with action when needed.

Jochim also responds to phone calls for urgent issues, such as ants in a classroom. Rather than race over to the site with the sprayer, which might have been the response "in the old days," Jochim talks through the problem, making sure that any food source has been identified and removed and that "pheromone" or scent trails laid down by the ants to recruit other ants to the food source have also been cleaned up.

"Inspect, detect, correct," has become Jochim's mantra to custodians. By looking for and repairing cracks in concrete, baseboards, wallboards or underneath chalkboards, pest problems can be avoided. Concrete patch or silicon gel sealants become the tools of the trade rather than the pesticide sprayer.

Other non-chemical approaches have included trapping and removal of groundhogs, snap traps and glue boards for rodents, a "bat net" on the end of an extensible pole and commercial scale garbage disposals in school kitchens to keep food waste out of dumpsters where it can attract yellowjackets, flies and rodents.

Carter and Jochim proved to be very successful guinea pigs for the IPM approach. The duo carefully documented a 50% reduction in pest control costs and a 90% reduction in both pesticide applications and pest problems. The initial collaboration has now become a road show, creating new partnerships with school administrators and IPM experts in Alabama, Arizona, California, Florida, Ohio, Indiana and the Navajo Indian Reservation. These extended partnerships have delivered benefits to more than 1 million students - well beyond the 20 school facilities and 10,000 students in the MCCSC system. The "Monroe Model" as it is now called, is a full blown IPM implementation program with 22 steps that guarantees fewest pest problems and pesticide applications.

MCCSC's IPM program has won more awards than any other in the US, including recognition from the Indiana Governor's office, US EPA, the Indiana Department of Environmental Management, Indiana University's School of Public Health and Environmental Affairs and the School IPM Technical Resource Center based at Purdue University.

The School IPM Technical Resource Center was created in 2000 to support adoption of IPM by school systems and childcare providers in the Upper Midwest. Center staff have trained school personnel and pest management service providers, and recently activated a new childcare IPM educational network. "We identified a number of agencies in our region that already provide nutrition, safety and other training to childcare providers," reports Al Fournier, the Center's coordinator. "We're making efficient use of these existing resources by training and supporting their trainers in IPM." The Center can be accessed through their website at [www.entm.purdue.edu/schoolipm](http://www.entm.purdue.edu/schoolipm) or via toll-free hotline at 877 668-8476.

IPM STAR was initiated by the IPM Institute with funding from the US Environmental Protection Agency and the National Foundation for IPM Education. The IPM Institute is an independent non-profit organization based in Madison, Wisconsin. The Institute works to increase awareness and adoption of IPM in agriculture and communities. Visit the Institute's website at [www.ipminstitute.org](http://www.ipminstitute.org) for more information.

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