Background:
The Northeast CEA Team was chosen as one of the fourteen NEA-sponsored teams to attend the 2003 IAQ Tools for Schools National Symposium, October 25-28 in Washington, D.C. As a condition for attending, Team Leader Diane Ethier had to sign a State Team Commitment Agreement to:

♦ improve the IAQ in schools through implementation of IAQ Tools for Schools (TfS) or other comparable IAQ management plans. This includes, but is not limited to, conducting at least one awareness building presentation, workshop, or training in our school, school district, local association and/or state association.
♦ participate in Symposium follow-up procedures consisting of bi-monthly conference calls and short monthly email progress updates.

Also, as CEA President, Rosemary Coyle signed an agreement to fully support the Northeast CEA Team’s commitment to improving the IAQ in their schools and of their participation in Symposium follow-up procedures.

As part of the application process to attend the National TfS Symposium, the Northeast CEA Team had to describe its commitment to implementing the IAQ TfS Kit and Program in schools or school districts. The Team response to this was “The new CT IAQ in Schools law mandates an IAQ management plan for all schools. We want TfS to be implemented in all 12 school districts covered by the UniServ rep on our Team and eventually in the 13 other districts covered by his office mate. The Team Leader/TfS mentor and trainer will work with all school districts involved to get IAQ issues resolved and TfS implemented.” The application also asked if the Team was willing to conduct at least one awareness building activity (workshop, presentation, training) to your school, school district or local association, and if so, to provide examples. The Team response was “The Team Leader will conduct TfS training workshops in all 12 school districts covered by our UniServ rep/Team member that do not presently have TfS. All Team members will assist in setting up training sessions. TfS will be promoted at all County Council meetings attended by Team members.”

One of the questions on the individual part of the application asked the team member to describe his/her commitment and passion to address IAQ issues. Several Northeast CEA team members responded as follows:

♦ “(A high student asthma rate and an inordinate number of teachers reporting IAQ-related illnesses) should not be happening in a state that is #1 in many educational areas. There is a new IAQ in Schools law in CT, now it is time to educate parents and teachers on what is in the law and to get them to demand TfS in all schools.”
♦ “We need to address the continuing IAQ problems in our school districts. I want to be instrumental in knowing specific mandates as advocated in TfS.”
♦ “CT’s new IAQ in Schools law will create a greater awareness of air quality problems our members and their students face each day. NEA’s foresight in this area will be helpful for our locals in Northeast CT.”
Facts:

68% of the schools in CT report IAQ problems. The lists of school districts in Uniserv Units 9 and 18 follow. Those with known IAQ problems are in bold print.

Unit 9: Bolton, Brooklyn, Canterbury, Coventry, Hampton, Killingly, Plainfield, Pomfret, Putnam, Scotland, Sterling, Windham, and Region #11
Unit 18: Ashford, Chaplin, Columbia, Eastford, Mansfield, Thompson, Tolland, Union, Willington, Woodstock, Woodstock Academy, and Region #19

Other UniServ Units are experiencing the same high numbers of IAQ problems in districts.

Administrators who have complete control over what is discussed and the solutions to problems that arise chair most Health and Safety Committees and/or Tools for Schools Teams in school districts. Locals need to be more pro-actively involved in the resolution of IAQ issues.

An individual teacher who confronts his/her BOE or administration about IAQ problems and the related health issues is often subjected to intimidation, harassment and ridicule. Locals should be addressing the issue and not individual members.

Not all UniServ reps are well trained in IAQ problems and their consequences, Tools for Schools, the new CT IAQ in Schools law and the legal issues involved in these three topics.

Members of CEA-R could be trained as Tools for Schools Trainers for the CT School Indoor Environment Resource Team (CSIERT).

Proposal:

A CEA/NEA Pilot Program, the UniServ IAQ AREA (Awareness/ Response/ Education/ Action) Team should be established in UniServ Units 9 and 18 this year and extended to the other UniServ Units in the future. The Team would consist of at least the two UniServ reps and an experienced IAQ/TfS mentor and trainer. The purpose of this IAQ Team would be to promote policies that prevent future IAQ problems from developing (A), respond to IAQ issues in individual schools (R), educate members of locals on IAQ issues and TfS (E) and develop a plan of action to solve IAQ problems (A). To accomplish these goals, the IAQ AREA Team would work in conjunction with CEA Affiliate Services, NEA HIN, NEA’s Healthy Schools Caucus, CEA-R and CSIERT.

In order to be successful the IAQ AREA Team must be involved in outreach to three major groups: CEA-R, the locals in the UniServ Units and all other CEA UniServ reps. Members of CEA-R must be recruited as TfS Trainers for CSIERT through meetings or newsletters. All UniServ reps must be thoroughly trained or re-trained in IAQ issues, TfS, the new CT IAQ in Schools law, whistleblower protection, Worker’s Comp issues, ADA and civil rights issues. This could be accomplished through in-service workshops conducted by CSIERT and the CEA Legal Department. UniServ reps could also be invited to attend TfS training sessions in school districts that their units cover.

The bulk of the work done by the IAQ AREA Team will be done in the locals. The following is a list of possible outreach activities to locals by the IAQ AREA Team. For all locals:

♦ Educate members of locals on IAQ/TfS by attending Executive Board meetings and County Council meetings and by writing articles for UniServ
newsletters and the CEA Advisor. These meetings and articles can also be used to recruit trainers for CSIERT.

♦ Help to start up IAQ Committees in all locals. These committees would act as the voice for individual teachers with IAQ problems and health issues related to them and as a watchdog to make sure the CT IAQ in Schools law is being followed in each school district.

♦ Do presentations to the Executive Boards and/or regional meetings on the new CT IAQ in Schools law, whistleblower protection, modular classroom issues, issues related to new construction or renovations, etc.

♦ Have an IAQ section on the CEA website to deal with the same issues listed above.

For locals without TfS:

♦ Do presentation on TfS to the Executive Board.

♦ Arrange for initial CSIERT presentation to administration and BOE.

♦ If TfS okayed, arrange for CSIERT Trainings Sessions I and II and be part of both sessions.

♦ If TfS not okayed, work with local IAQ committee on getting IAQ issues resolved.

For locals with TfS:

♦ Develop and provide refresher TfS Training Sessions.

♦ Work with local IAQ Committee.

Funding needs: To be determined.