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National acoustical standards in schools urged;

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A coalition of speech and audiology professionals are raising their voices in an effort to help dial down excessive background noise and improve poor acoustics in Canadian classrooms.

Concerned About Classrooms Coalition, which also comprises teachers and organizations focused on hearing health, is seeking to enhance the learning environment of students and vocal health of teachers across the country.

The group is calling on Ottawa to show leadership by urging the provinces and territories to implement acoustical standards for Canadian schools.

The Acoustical Society of America has developed a classroom acoustic standard that sets specific criteria for maximum background noise and reverberation time in an unoccupied classroom, said Linda Walsh, president of the Canadian Association of Speech-Language Pathologists and Audiologists. The coalition believes Canada should follow suit to implement a similar set of standards.

Results from a Canadian Language and Literacy Research Network study show that one in six words is not understood by the average Grade 1 student due to excessive background noise and poor acoustics in the Canadian classroom.

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