

How APPA Scoring Works

The APPA scoring system is focused on providing guidelines for desired cleanliness standards that an organization has for their facility.

There are 5 levels to APPA scoring, ranging from Level 1 (the highest / cleanest) to Level 5 (the lowest / most unclean). The official descriptions of each rating are as follows:

1

Orderly Spotlessness: This level signifies the highest standard of cleanliness. Surfaces are free of dirt, dust, and debris, with an overall pristine appearance.

2

Ordinary Tidiness: While not as impeccable as Level 1, Level 2 indicates a well-maintained environment with minor signs of dust or dirt, which are promptly addressed through routine cleaning.

3

Casual Inattention: At this level, cleanliness standards may vary slightly. Some areas may exhibit dust or dirt accumulation, but overall, the facility is reasonably clean and presentable.

4

Moderate Dinginess: Facilities classified at Level 4 show noticeable signs of neglect. Dust, dirt, and stains are more prevalent, requiring thorough cleaning and restoration efforts.

5

Unkempt Neglect: This level represents the lowest standard of cleanliness, where surfaces are significantly soiled, damaged, or neglected. Immediate action is needed to address sanitation issues.


✦✦ **Key Point:** While Level 1 is usually reserved for Class A office space. In education, APPA Level 2 is the standard. When determining an APPA rating, we traditionally see a combination of Level 2 and Level 3 across buildings.

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Staffing by APPA Level

Based on a designated level of cleaning quality, APPA research also provides recommendations on staffing levels needed to achieve specific quality levels. Below you'll find a chart on square footage per custodian by desired level:

APPA Level	Sq. Footage per Custodian
Level 1: Orderly Spotlessness	8,500
Level 2: Ordinary Tidiness	16,700
Level 3: Casual Inattention	26,500
Level 4: Moderate Dinginess	39,500
Level 5: Unkempt Neglect	45,600

 **Real-World Data:** In 2022, the Council of the Great City Schools shared data from their member schools. Square footage per custodian varied from 28,460 SF on the high end to 20,524 SF on the low end.

They also saw an range of \$1.10 - \$2.38 per square foot with a median of \$1.81. The factors used to get these numbers included cost of labor, collective bargaining agreements, cost of supplies and materials, and size of school.

Solutions For Managing Short-Staffed Teams

I'm Short Staffed—What Now? The realities of many educational institutions are shrinking budgets, labor shortages, and short-staffed teams, making Level 2 APPA benchmarks a sometimes aspirational goal at best.

However, forward-thinking institutions are using digital technologies to provide better real-time data to expand their teams and improve their operations while working with limited resources. Some of these technologies include:

Daily Cleaning Task Validation: Organizations are implementing digital apps to track everyday tasks from custodians. This builds a culture of transparency, and organizations who've implemented this have seen overwhelming success, often upwards of a 25% increase in APPA scoring.

Team Performance Metrics: Like any team, setting goals and measuring performance is critical to meeting organizational goals. With real-time data on each custodian's performance, organizations are able to reward and retain top performers and while identifying training opportunities for lower performing teams and team members.

Monthly Quality Tracking: While full scale APPA inspections are typically annual, many organizations use lighter weight quality inspections by managers to evaluate ongoing cleaning quality and provide detailed feedback to employees.