



PHILADELPHIA
FEDERATION of TEACHERS

January 16, 2020

Dear McClure Staff:

Late last evening, PFT HW Environmental Science Director Jerry Roseman learned that asbestos air samples collected by School District consultants on Tuesday afternoon in the City Year room were elevated with alarming levels of airborne asbestos detected. Likely leading to this situation was an egregious breach of the best practice protocols that, to this point, he had reason to believe were well underway at McClure Elementary School during their asbestos remediation.

It is unclear when this violation occurred, but we were informed last evening that an attic considered to be asbestos contaminated had not been sealed off. In an abatement and remediation process, one of the fundamental components of a best practice approach involves sealing off affected areas. Asbestos removal and decontamination of this area, had it remained properly sealed, was part of the initial plan developed jointly with the Federation, and this area would have been appropriately slated for summer remediation efforts, a next step that was part of a jointly developed longer range plan for the school.

Unconscionably, the sealing and isolation of the contaminated attic had been breached at some point, and District and Contractors whose job it is to ensure these steps take place as outlined, failed to notice. Because the attic area was unsealed, the adjacent mechanical space and the City Year classroom area was thus exposed. The mechanical space contains a vent which leads to a third floor staircase and nearby occupied classrooms.

The District, in another breach of agreed upon protocol, failed to notify us of this discovery, and we were only informed after a round of testing, conducted on Tuesday yielded elevated asbestos levels in the aforementioned City Year classroom. This is entirely unacceptable and brings the entire process that has unfolded at McClure into question.

Upon notification late last evening about the elevated sample results, our environmental scientist immediately reported to the school and assisted District personnel in preparing the second round of testing conducted from about 10 pm last night– 1 am this morning. Overnight test results were negative and indicative that the additional exposure that took place due to the District's breach of protocol is likely isolated. However, significant scientific questions remain, and there is also a very real issue of trust that has been, yet again, breached within the McClure community and in fact with Federation leadership.

It is truly devastating to learn that additional asbestos exposure took place because the District once again failed to follow basic protocols. Throughout the remediation project at McClure, Jerry Roseman and our team have been involved in the plan development, including side by side sampling. Unfortunately, the District shirked their responsibility to even seal off an area scheduled for later remediation.

I am grateful for your tremendous advocacy. And once again, I am angered that the District has failed to uphold its responsibility to ensure the safety of our educators and the young people they serve. As I shared on Monday, I have instructed our attorneys to pursue legal action to address the myriad issues that have arisen as our facilities crisis continues. The situation at McClure is a sobering example of the fact that even small steps towards progress can be quickly reversed with inaction and negligence on the District's part.

I will be onsite this morning so that we can meet to discuss next steps.

In Solidarity,

Jerry T. Jordan, President