



DANIEL SQUADRON
SENATOR, 25TH DISTRICT

THE SENATE
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April 25, 2012

Chancellor Dennis Walcott
Department of Education
Tweed Courthouse
52 Chambers Street
New York, NY 10007

Dear Chancellor Walcott:

P.S. 29, located at 425 Henry Street in Brooklyn, is currently undergoing an \$8.9 million flood elimination, roofing, and exterior masonry project. There are grave concerns about the renovation work that is currently taking place at the school and its potential impact on students and staff.

In advance of the PTA meeting tomorrow night, it is critical the following issues are addressed:

- **Air quality/testing:** It is my understanding that the mortar work ("raking") that commenced on April 16th has resulted in large amounts of dust that were found in classrooms, on the exterior of building window sills, and on the playground. Has this dust been tested, and if so, what were the results of the tests? Is indoor air quality being monitored? If so, how and how frequently? In an April 19th email sent to my office by the Department of Education (DOE) in response to an inquiry regarding safety at the school, DOE stated: "the School Construction Authority (SCA) have instructed the contractor that they are to cover the air conditioners every evening, clean up any debris and uncover the A/Cs so the school can use them the next day. In addition, the contractor will be checking the rooms for any dust and, if there is any dust seen, they will have a crew available to clean if necessary." Checking rooms visually for signs of dust does not seem to be sufficient to the scope of work and potential risk present in this case.
- **Communication:** According to parents, at a two week look-ahead meeting on April 18th with the SCA, the contractor, and parent and staff representatives, SCA did not mention that they were going to begin asbestos abatement on Monday, April 23rd. Further to this point, in the April 19th email referenced above, DOE stated: "as per the SCA, this project (...) includes roof, masonry and flood elimination." Asbestos abatement, similarly, is not mentioned. Why was public posting of the asbestos abatement work not provided seven days in advance, as required under the NYC Department of Environmental Protection's Asbestos Rules and Regulations, and why was no mention made of scheduled abatement by either SCA and DOE in communications with the community the week prior to the scheduled April 23rd abatement? What is the procedure moving forward to ensure sufficient communication?
- **Asbestos abatement:** In addition to the raking work and resultant air quality issues, SCA has added asbestos removal to the scope of work and attempted to start work with insufficient notice. On a work site where environmental controls seem insufficient to the task of monitoring air quality caused by mortar removal, asbestos abatement should certainly not be undertaken.

Given that the health of children is at stake, I request that you postpone any further asbestos abatement and raking work until the end of the school year.

Thank you for your consideration of these concerns. As always, you may contact me at squadron@nysenate.gov or 212-298-5565, or my Brooklyn Office Director, Belinda Cape, at 718-802-3818.

I look forward to your response.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "Daniel Squadron", with a long horizontal flourish extending to the right.

Daniel Squadron
State Senator

cc: Kathleen Grimm, Deputy Chancellor, Division of Operations, Department of Education
Lorraine Grillo, President and CEO, School Construction Authority