



# PHILADELPHIA *FEDERATION of TEACHERS*

Via Electronic Transmission

October 15, 2021

Dear Dr. Hite:

I am writing to outline a number of persistent and urgent facilities issues that need immediate attention. These are conditions that we have repeatedly shared with District officials. Throughout this communication, I provide a host of examples of ongoing issues at a number of schools. These issues are not stand alone issues, and in fact are representative of concerns we are seeing District-wide. I provide them as examples to demonstrate the scope of our concerns as well as specific instances where the District's process of addressing these urgent issues is failing. All photos are directly from our Healthy Schools Tracker App, to which the District has direct access and has made multiple commitments regarding responses.

**Before providing specific situations, I want to lay out the overarching concerns I have:**

First, it remains unacceptable that Jerry Roseman does not have regular access to buildings. In a meeting with members of your team on September 20, 2021, I raised concerns regarding the removal of Jerry Roseman from Frankford High School. Larisa Shambaugh informed me that she would provide the District's proposed protocols for Mr. Roseman's access to buildings. I have not yet received the proposal, and wish to be clear that I will object to any proposal that does not allow him similar access as he has had for close to forty years.

Second, the response time to submissions on the Healthy Schools App is unacceptable. As you will see in several examples below, problems that we have deemed Immediate (needing response within 24 hours) or Urgent (needing response within 3 days) are left to languish sometimes for years. This is absolutely disgraceful. Further, with your commitment to the community that the District would put "eyes" on suspected damaged asbestos within 24 hours of reporting, it is especially confounding to me the amount of time that these conditions are allowed to persist. There are, as of 10/14/21, twenty-three (23) schools with more than ten (10) outstanding problems. Many of these problems are marked as immediate, urgent, or important. A full list of those schools, and incomplete problems is attached.

Third, the District refuses to implement protocols that have either been in practice for years or protocols that have been agreed upon, or protocols that we have outlined that are best practices. Attached to this letter are six such documents: the lead paint and plaster procedures and lead clean-up protocols; the asbestos best practices; the jointly developed asbestos assessment policies; our summary of the mold remediation procedures based on previously implemented practices; and the Healthy Schools App

protocols. At this current juncture, zero of these documents are being implemented with fidelity, and students and staff are more vulnerable to toxins as a result.

These issues encompass an ongoing litany of concerns I have with the District's approach to the facilities crisis. I recognize the ongoing funding needs-- and that is exactly why this Union has taken the leading role in advocating for funding at every level of government in any form possible to address these concerns. However, as you will note in a number of the examples below, poor planning and execution have exacerbated problems.

I hope the information below will serve as instructive examples of the work that needs to take place and the urgent course corrections that must be implemented.

### **School Examples and Courses of Action**

#### **Richard Wright School**

Over the course of several years, staff at Richard Wright have submitted dozens of concerns regarding broken asbestos floor tiles, and often report back that despite the District's marking the issues "complete" on the Healthy Schools App, the tiles are in fact not fixed.

The tiles at Wright must be addressed using the jointly developed PFT-SDP asbestos assessment protocol document, attached for your reference. A number of the submissions on the App would fall under categories in need of swift remediation--certainly not allowed to persist for years. Below you will find a particularly concerning situation in room 203.



The photo pictures removed asbestos tiles, leaving behind asbestos mastic. The mastic, now damaged by water intrusion from a faulty HVAC unit, presents a particular danger. This problem was first submitted in May of 2019, with notes from District officials (via the App) that work orders have been in place since 2018. Now, the water damage has increased the environmental hazard from the asbestos significantly. This is a problem that could have been relatively straightforward to address, but unfortunately was not, and now presents a much more significant concern. Room 203 is but one example at Richard Wright of incomplete work to address damaged asbestos tiles.

***Richard Wright Course of Action: The tile work at Richard Wright must be immediately addressed, and damaged asbestos must be addressed according to the asbestos best practices. Particular attention must be paid to the water damaged mastic in room 203.***

### **Furness High School**

Through our Healthy Schools Tracker App, we have received ninety-nine (99) submissions from Furness, with sixty-four (64) problems unresolved. Further, of those 99 submissions, thirty (30) have been marked as “urgent” or “immediate.” These conditions include lead, asbestos, water damage, and unsanitary conditions.

It is unconscionable that, despite ongoing efforts to remediate these toxic hazards, the students and staff have been left without appropriate solutions to the massive issues in their buildings. From the lead dust particles to possible asbestos, the impacts of these conditions are very serious.

We have toured Furness multiple times, shared our concerns repeatedly, and yet the issues persist. It is absolutely imperative that a full and thorough joint PFT-SDP assessment take place and that a true plan for remediation is implemented swiftly.

Below are several examples of absolutely disgraceful conditions and their current status:



**Left: Room 317**

Submitted: May 15, 2019  
 Last District Update: August 19, 2019- *Source under investigation, will have a update by Friday 8/23/19*



**Right: Room 320**

Submitted: April 30, 2021  
 Last District Update: June 9, 2021- *All paint and plaster issues are currently being checked by maintenance personnel on the best way to address this situation*



**Left: IMC/Library**

Submitted: April 30, 2021  
 Last District Update: June 9, 2021- *All paint and plaster issues are currently being checked by maintenance personnel on the best way to address this situation*



**Right: Room 106**

Submitted: Repeatedly over the course of years. First report 9/4/2019. Last submission from April 2021, with note: Twice fixed, paint flakes and turns into dust when the window is open.  
 Last District Update-1: September 27, 2019: *Work order created for Painters*  
 Last District Update-2: June 9, 2021: *All paint and plaster issues are currently being checked by maintenance personnel on the best way to address this situation*

## The U School

Conditions in this building are absolutely disgraceful, and the District's recent public claim of having no record of any concerns in the building is reprehensible. Through our Healthy Schools Tracker App, we have received, and in turn submitted to the District, forty (40) submissions. Of those submissions, twenty (20) have been marked as "urgent" or "immediate," and yet have been allowed to languish by the District for, in some cases, more than three (3) years.

The conditions in this building present concerns including asbestos, lead, mold, and other respiratory hazards. Despite the persistent reporting of these issues, and repeated follow up by the PFT, very little has been done to address these issues in any sort of comprehensive manner. The approach, which appears to be currently employed, of plastering over damage is wholly insufficient. The damage pictured in the App submissions is indicative of incredibly long term deterioration that has been allowed to persist without systemic remediation. The damage pictured includes several emergency situations, including exposed and damaged asbestos, flaking lead paint, particulate matter coating floors and windowsills, and moisture damage.

Much of the water damage might be attributable to roofing system deficiency and deterioration (FCI is 89.73% = extremely deteriorated) and/or possible other sources. The school was inspected in August of 2015 - 6+ years ago, without underlying repair and improvement.

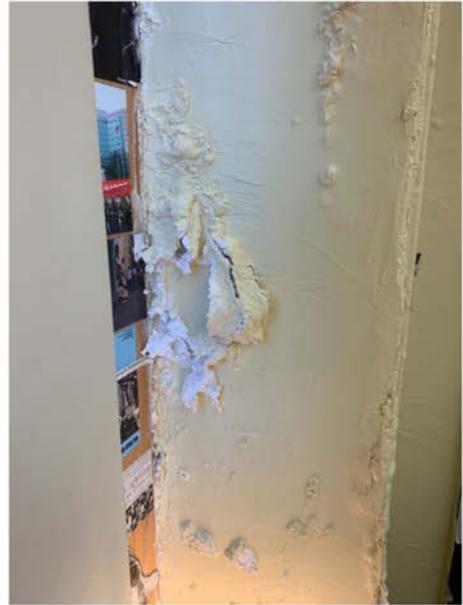
A number of more recent submissions of issues at the U School were marked on October 13, 2021 as having work orders created for plasterers and electricians: *Plasterers and the electricians are here at the U school also looking into the job and repairing it.*

The work will be critical, but it cannot be done as one-off jobs. A joint review and remediation plan is imperative. Without truly addressing the source of the issues (likely the deteriorated roof), any work completed will not be sustained.

Several of the older problems from U School are pictured below and exemplify the building-wide issues that should have triggered an immediate and joint assessment and remediation plan years ago.



**Left: Room 304**  
Submitted: October 7, 2019  
Last update from District:  
October 27, 2019- Work  
order created for plasterers



**Right: Room 305**  
Submitted: October 7, 2019  
Last District Update: October 28,  
2019- Work order created for  
plasterers



**Left: Room 300**  
Submitted: October 2, 2019  
Last District Update:  
December 3, 2019- Work  
order created for plasterers



**Right: 3rd Floor Hallway**  
Submitted: October 1, 2019  
Last District Update:  
October 23, 2019- Work  
order created for  
plasterers

*Course of action for The U School and Furness High School: The examples at both The U School and Furness High School are emblematic of the urgent need for the implementation of joint inspections with the Federation and the District, along with the implementation of our agreed upon and past practices for asbestos, lead, and mold remediation. A comprehensive and jointly developed remediation plan must be implemented for both buildings. Those documents are included for your reference.*

**Baldi Middle School:** The ongoing mold issue at Baldi is particularly concerning, and we believe that it is likely present at a number of schools throughout the District. Despite recent repeated and thorough communications from the PFT to the District regarding our concerns at Baldi and elsewhere, and our proposed joint course of action, we have received no response other than minimal information via the App. Jerry Roseman has written a number of times to ensure that the previously in place mold protocols, including a joint assessment and plan for remediation, would be implemented, and he has been ignored. Those protocols are attached, and should be implemented.

The situation at Baldi is very serious and requires the isolation of areas that have not yet been remediated. An extensive joint inspection must occur. Despite District App reports that a walkthrough took place on September 23, 2021 and that a remediation plan is in place, we have zero understanding of the scale, scope, or source of the problem.

As such, we cannot trust that the remediation plan is comprehensive and will actually address the scope of the issue. Time and again, we have seen issues reoccur because of refusal to implement a plan addressing the underlying sources of issues. At Baldi, and all other schools facing similar issues, we must know whether the mold growth is due to deterioration of insulation, lack of insulation, or another cause. And this cannot be based on an assessment of one area over a damaged ceiling tile. Without a comprehensive remediation plan, this problem will persist.



**Above:** Outside Cafeteria Submitted: September 27, 2021  
Last District Update: October 13, 2021-  
Tile has been cut to remove mold, light is supported by rest of tile, if remaining tile is removed light will have to be disconnected

**Right: Orange Hallway**

Submitted: September 22, 2021

District Update-1: September 23, 2021- Steve Link just visited Baldi and walked the building with the BE. He identified the ceiling tile that was noted in the PFT app. This one ceiling tile will be sprayed with BNC 15 and then disposed. There may be an issue with a leaking pipe above this spot because there is water seeping through the insulation. A w/o for plumbing will be issued to investigate.. there is a lot of valves being replaced by maintenance and thus a lot of missing ceiling tiles throughout the space. The ceiling tiles will be replaced once the lines are reinstated.

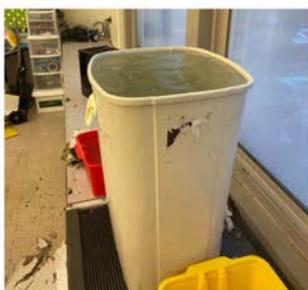
District Update-2: October 1, 2021-  
Insulation contractor scheduled to have insulation replaced on many pipes that are sweating. Will start on Monday 10/4. Expected completion date is 10/13.



**Ben Franklin Elementary School:** We are equally concerned about recent reports of unremediated mold at Ben Franklin Elementary School. I draw your attention to a report received on October 8, 2021 of an urgent and persistent problem in Room 113, where the submitter noted: *The air conditioner system has not worked since school started. I have had extreme water drainage from the ceiling, requiring multiple buckets that have gotten filled to the top and overflowed. Drenched Ceiling tiles have fallen down.*



**Ben Franklin Elementary School  
Room 113**



The member notes that despite repeated clean-ups, the problem persists. There are a number of other mold concerns submitted at the school. This issue, pictured above, represents mold, asbestos, and lead concerns and rings alarms about possible school-wide contamination.

***Course of Action for Baldi, Franklin Elementary: As with Baldi Middle School, as with Frankford High School, as with Gompers Elementary School, and as with any location where mold is suspected or present, it is incumbent upon the District to engage in a good-faith partnership with the PFT to jointly assess and plan for remediation.***

### **Overall concerns:**

Again, I am reiterating our call to address the concerns outlined at the start of this letter, including but not limited to the following:

- Immediate access to buildings for Jerry Roseman and members of his team
- Addressing the chronic lapses in responses and remediation plans on the Healthy Schools Tracker App
- Utilizing, with fidelity, the policies and procedures outlined in the attached documents: asbestos best practices, jointly developed asbestos assessment procedures, mold remediation procedures, and the paint and plaster protocols, and Healthy Schools Tracker App protocols

- Implementing the recommended course of action outlined above for specific schools and situations, while noting that these situations exemplify district-wide concerns, and similar courses of action must take place anywhere problems are identified.

The issues I have outlined here have real, documented impacts on the health and safety of our students and staff.

Our team remains committed to ensuring that each and every student and staff member in our District has access to safe, healthy schools in which to learn. The issues I have outlined above are critical.

I want to highlight, as well, that in each of these schools, and in many others, a robust, coordinated and collaborative inspection, assessment and solution development process involving District managers and PFT, must immediately be put in place to effectively address environmental hazards and facility condition deficiencies.

It is deeply disturbing that our repeated efforts to work towards what should be this collective goal are ignored or rebuked. The protocols and practices outlined in the attached documents must be followed. While we continue our efforts to bring much needed resources to the District, the District must work on these desperately needed shifts in operational practices in order to keep our children and staff safe.

Sincerely,



Jerry T. Jordan

*Attachments*