

Dear Dr. Hite and the Philadelphia School Board,

We, the undersigned members of the Franklin Learning Center staff and community, are hurt and outraged (though not surprised) by the recent finding of dangerous asbestos in our school ventilation system. The district's current plan to remove this asbestos and resume classes by January 2nd only addresses a small portion of the dangerous conditions at FLC. Given the other findings of the recent inspections, it is unacceptable and irresponsible to resume classes before the entire building is safe.

Our students and staff work hard every day to make FLC the award-winning school it is, but due to the negligence of the school district, we are paying for it with our health. We have seen staff and students develop new cases of asthma, allergies, breast cancer, lymphoma, brain tumors, and autoimmune disorders at elevated rates. The toxic conditions at our school, though repeatedly ignored by the school district, are no mystery to those of us who endure them each day.

Yet, the district cannot claim that these results are a surprise. The FLC community has been speaking out against these conditions for decades. In the 90's, FLC students walked out in protest over asbestos in the building. For decades, staff have reported concerns with due diligence. These reports were overwhelmingly unanswered. In the fall of 2018, we finally received a full walkthrough, during which district officials acknowledged debris being blown into classrooms by the ventilation system and serious water damage with flaking paint due to the leaking roof. No major repairs came as a result of this inspection.

It took another full year of staff reports and another round of walkthroughs in December of 2019 for the district to inspect the ventilation system. On the afternoon of December 17th, students were sent home with a letter reporting the presence of hazardous asbestos in an air shaft. This letter, however, did not inform parents of the egregious amount of dust and debris within the ventilation system, which the inspector estimated has not been properly cleaned in as many as 60 years. The district told staff that they plan to remove the asbestos over the holiday break, but will wait to clean out the ventilation system until the summer. This proposal would have students and staff continuing to breathe 60 years of toxic buildup for the next 6 months. The letter also makes no mention of the extensive water damage, mold, and flaking lead paint in the auditorium and classrooms on the 3rd and 4th floors as a result of our leaking roof. The asbestos is only one part of our school's toxic crisis, and the district's current plan would have staff and students walking back into dangerous conditions on January 2nd.

In the interest of the health and safety of our students and staff, we demand that, before classes resume at Franklin Learning Center, the district:

1. Fully test the ventilation debris being blown into classrooms by the heating system, and publish the reports to staff and families at least 24 hours before the reopening of the building;
2. Fully abate all damaged asbestos in the building;
3. Fully clean the ventilation system of dust and debris after decades of neglect;
4. Institute a district-wide policy for regularly inspecting and cleaning HVAC systems in all schools, so that other schools do not experience the dangers of this neglect;
5. Repair the roof of all leaks and repair the massive water damage, flaking lead paint, and mold growth on 3rd & 4th floor classrooms;
6. Repair the leaking roof of the auditorium, causing flaking flame retardant plaster and dust, as well as the leaking steam vents, causing mold in the backstage area;
7. Remediate flaking lead paint on the walls and ceiling of the gymnasium, which is currently closed due to unsafe lead dust;
8. Place a substitute building engineer in the building to address needed minor repairs before they become hazardous to staff and student safety;
9. Expand the building conditions town hall to accommodate all families and staff. The proposal to hold a meeting at FLC 8:30 on January 2nd after classes have begun is unacceptable. Parents and staff have a right to know the full results of the tests and repairs before returning to a potentially dangerous building. This meeting must be vigorously publicized, open to all families and staff, and held at a confirmed safe location before classes resume.

We call on the district to do the right thing by pledging to make these changes and repairs before sending staff or students back into a dangerous building. In the event that these repairs require displacing students and staff after the holiday break, the district must handle that process transparently and democratically, involving the community in the decision-making process.

Signatures:

Louis Fantini, English Teacher
Donna Basslet-Hart, English Teacher
Michelle Frank, Music Teacher
Devonia Mourning, Physics/Math Teacher
Kelsey Dietrick, Special Education Teacher
Hemant Mishra, Math Teacher
Amit Patel, Math Teacher
William Mirsky, ESL Teacher
Krysten Lopez, ESL teacher
Paul Zwolak, ESL Teacher
Theresa Higgins, English and ESL teacher
Brian Kelly, Health/Phys. Ed. Teacher
James Arleth, Computer Science Teacher
Hee Young Yim, Art Teacher
Renee Roettenbacher, Spanish teacher
Theole Feuillet, Science Teacher
Frances_Peagler, Science Teacher
Damon Bennett / ESL teacher
Clare Luebbert, ESL/Social Studies Teacher
Kimberly Musallam, Social Studies Teacher
Christina Xiao Whitt, Art Educator
Heidi Kern, English/Spanish Teacher
Christine Garvey, English Teacher
Connie Baker Health and Physical
Education Teacher
Lidia Udowenko BCA Spanish
Creshon Little, School Nurse

Jason Kwon, Mathematics Teacher
Ben Moueddene, World Language Teacher
Megan Condit-Shaw, School Counselor
Mohamed Camara, Social Studies Teacher
Colin Sharp, Music Teacher
Ana Cobani, Science Teacher
Colin Chrestay, English Teacher
Amy Lee, History Teacher
Cristian Sulea, Math Teacher
Asmaro Gist, School Counselor
Susan Alston, English/History Teacher
Donna Hudson, Secretary
Jennifer Basham-Jones, English Teacher
Matthew Socci, Special Education Teacher
Fevian Awad, Science Teacher
Cathy Fox, Math Teacher
Hung Phan, Math Teacher
Mohamed Ouldbabaali, Math Teacher
Doree' Kendricks, History Teacher
Colleen Krakauskas Dean of Students,
History Teacher
Thomas Magliaro, History Teacher
Michael Gardner, Business Administration
Teacher
Anna Hatzianeou, English Teacher
Honey Polis-Bodine, Medical Assisting
Teacher