NYC 9/11 Public Portal Document

DAILY NEWS, WEDNESDAY, NOVEMBER 7, 2001

Dust stirs up HS health fears

'Unacceptable' levels at Stuy

By MICHAEL O. ALLEN and JOE WILLIAMS
DAILY NEWS STAFF WRITERS

Environmental tests found "unacceptable" levels of dust inside Stuyvesant High School from the World Trade Center excavation that could pose a danger to students and staff.

Experts enlisted by parents said potentially dangerous dust continues to creep into the school, which reopened four weeks ago.

"The dust levels in the school are unacceptable and represent a potential health concern. This is of particular concern because the composition of the dust and potential health effects is not completely known," Howard Bader, president of H.A. Bader Consultants, wrote in the Oct. 25 letter to the Stuyvesant Parents Association.

Stuyvesant, six blocks from the Trade Center ruins at Chambers and West Sts., was evacuated after the Sept. 11 attack. It reopened Oct. 9 after a $1 million cleanup and extensive environmental testing.

Despite assurances from federal and city officials that the air is clean, parents worry the elite school is not safe. Students have complained of headaches, nosebleeds, coughs and other ailments.

Bader said he believes the dust is likely entering the building through heating, ventilation and air-conditioning units.

Though the tests varied widely, those taken inside the school found unacceptable levels of airborne dust on seven of 12 test dates between Oct. 9 and 24. Outdoor readings reached unacceptable levels six times.

'Depends on ... the wind'

Bader called for improvements in the ventilation system and more frequent cleanings in and around the school.

"The [air-quality] situation has not improved," Marilena Christodoulou, president of the Stuyvesant Parents Association, said yesterday. "It basically depends on the direction of the wind."

David Klasfeld, the Board of Education's deputy chancellor for operations, said that some days dust levels are higher than officials would like, but the situation only becomes dangerous with long-term exposure at those levels.

"Our experts advise us that Stuyvesant is and remains a safe place for children to go to school," Klasfeld said.

Regular testing for asbestos, PCBs, fiberglass and other harmful materials have consistently shown safe levels at the school, Klasfeld said. The board is awaiting results of additional tests performed by city disease experts investigating the cause of the students' illnesses.

Stuyvesant was the first of several downtown schools to reopen, and parents and staff from other displaced schools have closely monitored the situation there.

But many parents say they have concerns about sending their children to the school.

"To me it's a no-brainer: Move the kids," said Maureen Gotimer of Maspeth, Queens, whose daughter has been sick since she returned to the building last month.

CITY_21MC100_011832616

NYC-WTC_000414645