NYC 9/11 Public Portal Document

NEW YORK POST, SATURDAY, NOVEMBER 10, 2001

SCHOOL SICKENS ME: TEACH

By CARL CAMPANILE
Education Reporter

A veteran Stuyvesant HS teacher has stayed away from his beloved school near ground zero for all but three days since it reopened Oct. 9, complaining foul air in and around the building has made him ill.

"The air in the school smelled terrible. I'm refusing to go to Stuyvesant because it's a health problem for me," said 30-year math instructor Mark Bodenheimer.

EXCLUSIVE

Bodenheimer said he got a sore throat and headaches on the few days he did return to the school on the west end of Chambers Street, where it was once in the shadow of the World Trade Center.

"This is not fun for me. I'm not teaching my classes," Bodenheimer told The Post.

"I'm worried about the kids ... I don't think it's safe down there."

Bodenheimer said he doesn't have asthma, allergies or any other serious medical condition, but he believes the air quality in ground zero made him sick.

He said his throat hurt so much during one of his rare appearances in class "that I couldn't talk in more than a whisper."

"I'm lucky I have a wife who works and is supportive of me. There are people who aren't that lucky," Bodenheimer.

Bodenheimer is one of several teachers who have been absent since the Sept. 11 attacks, school sources said.

"I'm very concerned. There are a couple of teachers who are staying out for health reasons," said Marilena Christodoulou, president of the Stuyvesant Parents Association.

"It bothers me from an educational standpoint. But that's secondary. The most important thing is their health."

Schools Chancellor Harold Levy's office insists Stuyvesant is not a health hazard, despite the fires still smoldering nearby in the Twin Towers wreckage.

"It's a safe workplace. I would have no problem sending my kid to the school there," said Bernard Orlan, the Board of Education's director of environmental health and safety.

"There is no imminent hazard to cause a reaction like that to anyone in the school."

But Orlan said officials still take nothing for granted — and he noted that more than 100 air-quality readings are taken inside Stuyvesant each day.

So far, the tests haven't found anything alarming. But a consultant for the parents group complained about some high readings of dust particles, and Orlan admitted that people with health problems can suffer by being near the ground zero fire.

City health officials are taking another look at the air tests to see if something is amiss. And Board of Education and city health officials are reviewing student attendance and health records to detect any pattern.

Court ruling on pay a big boost for pensions

City teachers can fatten their pensions by working in summer school and after-school programs, a mid-level appeals court ruled yesterday.

The four-member Appellate Division in Manhattan ruled the Board of Education cannot exclude "per session" income, work performed outside regular school hours, from a teacher's pension.

United Federation of Teachers President Randi Weingarten hailed the decision, complaining that the city was shafting teachers.

"This type of pay is considered part of pensions for teachers throughout the state and for all other workers in the city," Weingarten said.

"The ruling is a great victory for our educators who do additional work coaching, teaching, counseling and skill-building before and after school, on weekends and during the summer."

Board of Ed spokeswoman Margie Feinberg said the city is studying whether to appeal the case to the Court of Appeals, the state's highest tribunal.

If the decision stands, it could cost the city a bundle. The board paid out $232 million in "per session" pay to teachers in 1999, the most recent figure available. *Carl Campanile*

CITY_21MC100_0118332775

NYC-WTC_000414780