

February 2nd, 2024

Dear PPS Leadership,

Last night the Creston community received an email from PPS stating that our CRIS rooms had tested for unsafe levels of fungal spores. This determination came yesterday, even though CRIS staff have been sharing concerns for months of being adversely impacted by the conditions in their rooms. They were told they needed to open their windows and wait for it to dry out. The email states that the rooms were tested in December, but fails to point out that they were tested with windows wide open and all air purifiers turned up to max level, conditions under which it would be impossible to teach.

Please understand that the affected areas are learning environments for the most vulnerable students we at Creston serve: reading intervention students and our Deaf and Hard of Hearing program, which is at the heart of our Creston school community. This critical issue, and the immediate remedy, is an opportunity for Portland Public Schools' to fight for educational equity for all learners, especially Black, Brown, Indigenous students with learning differences.

In addition, work orders were put in as early as July of 2023 to address the problem when it was first noticed, but these requests were not followed up on in a way that resulted in the cause being determined. Then, CRIS staff reached out multiple times, as early as December, to share that their health and the health of their students was being compromised, with no corrective action coming from PPS. And to make matters even worse, none of the CRIS staff received the community email last night which means that they were hearing from non-CRIS staff about the air quality test results. This despite having a meeting with administration after school yesterday where the results were not shared.

The email also stated that the two rooms adjacent to the cafeteria are not currently being used. This is not true. Our reading specialist still operates out of that room, despite moving her small groups to the cafeteria so the kids wouldn't be impacted by the conditions in her room. And our social worker still uses that space as her central work location. Just because the CRIS rooms were tested in December under extremely favorable and fabricated conditions, does not mean that these other spaces have been deemed safe.

The email states, "We will share a timeline for repairs and further testing with you early next week." This is unacceptable. PPS has already failed to keep our most vulnerable students safe by failing to adequately consider the requests for mitigation made by both custodial and teaching staff. Please do not repeat this error by delaying testing of the other nearby spaces. We would like to ask you to elevate this to top priority and have these rooms tested and the results out to the community by Sunday evening, so families can make informed decisions about whether they feel it is safe to send their children to school.

Lastly, please assure us that all members of our staff and community will receive communications moving forward.

Thank you,

Pamela Taylor - CRIS Teacher  
Julie Toone-CRIS Teacher  
Heidi Regelein - CRIS SLP

Laurel Smith - CRIS SLP  
Alyssa Vavrusa-CRIS Teacher  
Lauren Fuentes- Kindergarten  
Melissa Standley - 1st Grade  
Arica Starlinger - 1st Grade  
Amber Hilbourne - 2nd grade  
Stephanie Pearl - 2nd grade  
Zachary Rodecap - 3rd grade  
Toby Pierce - 3rd grade  
Jessica Bostick - 4th grade  
Kate McCartney - 4th grade  
David Scholten - 5th grade  
Betsy Dekker- 5th grade  
Jackie Hellis - Librarian  
Matthew Marchyok, Instructional Coach  
Kendra Coleman - ESL  
Kate Mackaness, Reading Specialist  
Michael Rittman - Physical Education  
Sorcha Laurence - School Health Assistant  
Grace Le Chevallier- School Psychologist  
Collin Freitag - Night Custodian  
Tyrone Collins - Night Custodian  
Jenna Charton - Creston PTA President