



Superintendent's Update

1 message

Thomas Scarice <do_not_reply@westportps.org>
 Reply-To: Thomas Scarice <do_not_reply@westportps.org>

Wed, Jan 31, 2024 at 6:00 PM

Good afternoon,

I would like to provide some updates to the Long Lots School community regarding current efforts to address the facility.

As the LLS community knows, there is a recommendation for a new construction. In the interim, the district is appropriately maintaining the facility until the opening of the new school.

Recent History (July 2021)

In July 2021, concerns were raised about elevated humidity levels in the building that could potentially lead to an increased risk of indoor mold germination. At that time, an indoor air assessment (22 interior and 6 exterior spaces) was performed by industrial hygienist consultant, Langan CT, Inc., and found that the indoor air at LLS (i.e. the air that individuals breathe in) all fell within the normal ranges when tested for fungal spores and particles with the exception of two locations, the auditorium and basement Room 9. These two locations demonstrated slightly elevated levels of Aspergillus/Penicillium when compared to outdoor air.

In response, a plan was put into place for our consulting industrial hygienists to identify the source of Aspergillus spores in the auditorium and Room 9, and to direct any necessary cleaning. These areas were taken offline and cleaning protocols were implemented.

The auditorium was retested and cleared. However, it was determined that the source of elevated spore counts in basement Room 9 emanated from a doorway leading to an underground utility crawl space that traces along the building. Consequently, it was decided that Room 9 would remain permanently offline.

Ongoing Prevention and Maintenance

As a result of this history, certain protocols and practices were put into place.

There will be at least two more school years in the current facility even if a new construction is approved and funded this spring. As I've stated publicly, the building is in need of being replaced. There are leaks that our facilities team works to immediately repair. The heat and A/C systems periodically need repairs. These maintenance needs are attended to in order to keep LLS safe and dry.

Here are some of the measures we take to maintain appropriate indoor air standards:

- **Regular Indoor Air Quality (IAQ) Testing**
 - Testing conducted every April, August and November.
 - The most recent testing (Nov 2023) was clean.
 - All spore counts in the building are lower than spore counts outside.
 - The spore types in the building are no different than the spore types outside.
 - If issues arise, the area is cleaned and retested.
 - Regular IAQ testing is NOT recommended by the CT Department of Public Health, but as a precaution, we adopted this protocol until a new building is completed. (https://resources.finalsite.net/images/v1649440369/westport/kxlttn5egioxspf76nmj/ieq_testing_should_not_be_the_first_move_6-10.pdf)
- **Consulting Industrial Hygienist**
 - The district uses Langan, CT (<https://www.langan.com/>).
 - Langan is available for on-demand consultation and they perform our IAQ testing.
- **Optimize HVAC System**
 - The current HVAC system is optimized and monitored by our Facilities Department to maintain appropriate temperatures and relative humidity levels.

- **Tools For Schools (TFS) Program** (<https://www.westportps.org/district/tools-for-schools>)
 - TFS is a collaborative committee of faculty, administrators and parents who help implement an IAQ management program.
 - A binder is maintained for all IAQ incidents and available for public inspection.
 - The TFS team conducts building walk-throughs in the event of an IAQ incident or report.
- **Regular Repairs**
 - Repairs are made when reported by our Facilities Department.
 - For example, ceiling tiles were recently replaced as a result of a report of visible water stains. The area was inspected to insure any active water incursion was corrected.
 - Records of all work orders are maintained.
- **Temperature/Relative Humidity(RH) Sensors**
 - 16 Temp/RH sensors are spread out across the building.
 - Any deviation from temperature or relative humidity norms initiates a notification to our Facilities Department.
- **Commercial Dehumidifiers**
 - The district leases 14 large commercial dehumidifier units that are placed throughout the building as relative humidity factors dictate.
 - There are currently no relative humidity levels of concern in the building. These conditions fluctuate and are impacted more in the late summer/early fall months.
- **Radon Testing**
 - Testing is done every 5 years by law.
 - The last test was done in 2021 and no issues were detected.
- **“SNAP” Data**
 - SNAP is our secure school nurse software suite that tracks student health.
 - This data is tracked for any student health patterns related to IAQ.

Current Status

Following the recently reported water incursions and reports, our facilities team and members of the TFS team conducted walk-throughs of the building. Repairs are being made to seal up areas where water incurred during recent storms.

However, an area of concern was identified. An alert was tripped in the basement that notified our facilities team.

A steam condensate return pump in a small contained maintenance service closet (dimensions: 4ft X 5ft) in the basement failed, causing moisture in the closet. The unit was repaired in three days. Due to the moisture incursion, the room was tested.

The testing found “*occasional*” counts of Cladosporium, Penicillium/Aspergillus, Unknown Hyphae and Ascospore spores on the service closet plaster ceiling. Additionally, “*numerous*” counts of Penicillium/Aspergillus spores were found on the service room door facing surface.

The hygienist interprets “*occasional*” counts as no evidence of mold growth, while “*numerous*” counts are indicative of strong evidence of mold growth. Additionally, due to the moisture, some tiles on the floor buckled and need to be replaced. There is asbestos in those tiles and in the adhesive mastic that needs to be abated.

When we find mold we follow EPA protocols for “Mold Removal in Schools and Commercial Buildings” and remediate (<https://www.epa.gov/sites/default/files/2014-08/documents/moldremediation.pdf>).

Next Steps

After consultation with our industrial hygienists, it has been recommended to immediately clean the areas of mold in the closet and abate the asbestos during the February break when the building is not occupied.

Our Facilities Department has since removed the service closet door and covered the doorway opening with plastic sheeting while placing the service closet under negative air pressure for containment. We have been assured that the asbestos tile is undisturbed and does not pose any health concerns. Abatement and material haul away will occur in the lower level restricted to a lower level exit door.

As a precaution, three rooms (115, 130, 205) will be retested for IAQ levels. There is no indication based on the evidence that any of these rooms warrant further intervention. Finally, LLS Principal, Kim Ambrosio, will reconvene the Tools For Schools team to review all of this material on February 12 so that the building level team is apprised.

Based on our fall IAQ testing, walk-throughs of the facility and consultation with our industrial hygienists, we have been assured that this is the appropriate protocol in response to this report. Again, this is a small maintenance service closet in the basement and not accessible to students or staff.

Additional Information

CDC Information

According to the CDC, Aspergillus/Penicillium is a common mold that lives indoors and outdoors, and since most people breathe in fungal spores every day, *"It's probably impossible to completely avoid breathing in some Aspergillus spores. For people with healthy immune systems, breathing in Aspergillus isn't harmful."* (<https://www.cdc.gov/fungal/diseases/aspergillosis/causes.html>)

However, to be clear, this information is not intended to minimize any compromises in indoor air quality. In fact, for some individuals with allergies to mold, such compromised indoor air could lead to health problems. If we find mold, we follow EPA protocols for "Mold Removal in Schools and Commercial Buildings" and remediate.

Beyond that, our standards for the quality of indoor air necessitate that any instances that affect indoor air quality are addressed immediately by following proper procedures based on the individual incident. We proactively work to prevent recurrences with the measures listed above. For mold to grow, there needs to be moisture and a food source (i.e. paper, cardboard, etc.). Once again, if we find mold, we remediate using appropriate procedures for the specific incident, clean and work to prevent further occurrences by determining and fixing the moisture source.

CT Dept of Public Health

Indoor Air Quality Testing Fact Sheet: https://resources.finalsite.net/images/v1649440369/westport/kxltn5egioxspfp76nmj/ieq_testing_should_not_be_the_first_move_6-10.pdf

If you have any questions I encourage you to contact our Long Lots School Principal, Mrs. Kim Ambrosio.

Sincerely,

Thomas Scarice
Superintendent of Schools

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