

To the members of the Springfield Board of Education,

We are writing this letter to inform you of a facilities issue that staff and students are facing at Elizabeth Page Elementary School. Page is one of only two elementary schools in the district that has a Gymcafetorium; one space that is used as a Gym, Cafeteria, and Auditorium. This multi-use space has always caused scheduling difficulties, but this year the task has become even more cumbersome.

Elementary specials (P.E., Library, and Music) are 45 minutes long this year. Scheduling 45 minute PE classes makes it impossible for all grades to use the Gymcafetorium for PE classes as it is used for breakfast and lunch daily. The current solution to this problem is two grade levels have to have P.E. outside every day, all year long.

This means all 113 students in 3rd grade, 2nd grade, and the 1st/2nd blend will not have P.E. in the Gym for the current school year, and it may fall on other grades in the future. Those students will not be able to use the same equipment other students in the school get to use because it is not made for outside conditions. There are no basketball hoops under the covered area, which is the designated area for outdoor PE, so those students will not be able to access basketball hoops when the basketball unit is being taught. They have the challenge of staying focused when P.E. is taking place at the same time as recess. There are no spots on the ground to designate where students should stand during warm-ups and instruction and there are no lines to mark the boundaries for games. Those students have to face the elements; smoke from wildfires, the heat of September, May, and June, the freezing temperatures of winter, and the rain throughout the year. The blacktop is uneven which creates large puddles on the surface. The drain does not work properly which creates such a large puddle it has been named "Page Lake." On Friday March 1st, 2024, Page Lake was 5 3/4" deep. Our PE teacher and students frequently have to enter the water to retrieve equipment which has blown, rolled, or bounced away.

After students return to their classrooms, their teachers report difficulty concentrating on core curricular subjects such as reading and math because they are wet and cold. Their shoes, socks, and sometimes pants are soaked.

When outside conditions are unsafe for students, P.E. is moved into the classroom. As you can imagine, P.E. in the classroom creates another set of problems including safety concerns, lack of adequate space, inability to use equipment, and forced relocation of the classroom teacher during their dedicated prep time.

This situation is inequitable for students within our own school. It is also inequitable across the district compared to elementary schools that have a gym and a cafeteria. When this issue was brought to district leadership as a work place review, a few accommodations were suggested. It was recommended that the principal submit a capital improvement request to have the area resurfaced in the future. A work order was submitted in October for spots and lines to be painted, but nothing has been done. Another accommodation suggested was to have the custodians use a leaf blower and squeegee to remove the puddles from under the covered structure. These accommodations do not solve the problem.

The best, although costly, solution would be to build an additional space on Page school grounds that can be used as a gym or a cafeteria. Our staff was happy to see the Board of Education approved funding for athletic turf field conversion. The reason cited for the conversion is because of "the deterioration of the grass fields." At 71 years old, Page Elementary has faced much deterioration. The district anticipates the new fields will generate income. Adding an additional building space to Page would also provide the potential for rental income. Funding for the new fields is coming from existing district resources. Do those existing district resources cover athletic spaces at all levels across the district?

We would like to invite you to visit Page Elementary to witness firsthand the state of our facility and to talk with our PE teacher and other staff about the challenges we face.

Thank you for all the ways you support Springfield Public Schools.

Sincerely,

Page Elementary Teachers



Taken on 10/3/23. There had been no rain for 4 days





Taken 10/9 at 12:19 pm. The covered area had been totally dry an hour before at 11:20 am. This is not a standing puddle but a stream or water moving down the slope of the blacktop.



This was the puddle I discovered when I walked out to teach today. Taken at 10:43 am on 10/16.





This was taken at 10:47 am on Monday January 8th, 2024. This shows the glass left after our custodian Mike had cleaned up approximately 2 cups of glass which had been broken over the weekend. Update: as of Wednesday January 10 at 11:30, there is still glass around the area from this incident.







Taken 1/12/24 at 8:45 am. That is glass from a broken Bacardi Pineapple rum bottle which was shattered, mostly under the covered area but of course some was on the playground side. The custodian and I together spent 15 minutes sweeping up broken glass and my students were still finding pieces at 12:23 in the afternoon.





Taken 3/01/24 at 10:41 am. Shows the extent of the puddle into which the PE equipment blows, rolls, or is thrown.



Taken 10:42 am on 3/01/24. Shows how far the puddle extends under the covered area.





Taken 3/1/24 at 12:42 pm. Shows how deep the puddle is. Please note it completely covers my feet, extending up my ankles over the top of my shoes. After I returned to the building, I measured how high the water was on my legs; it measured 5.75".







Taken at 2:31 and 2:32 pm, respectively. There are no basketball hoops under the cover, which is the only space I have for outdoor PE (other than the field, which would be totally unacceptable for a basketball unit). In order to have the 2nd and 3rd grade students be able to learn to shoot a basketball, I placed stickers ar 8' off the ground on each of the I-beams supporting the structures. This way the students will at least have a target to shoot at, though it pales in comparison to actual hoops.