



CITY OF LOWELL, MASSACHUSETTS

HEALTH DEPARTMENT

January 22, 2024

Mr. Liam Skinner  
Superintendent, Lowell Public Schools  
155 Merrimack St.  
Lowell, MA 01852

Dear Superintendent Skinner;

The Board of Health at their January 10, 2024 meeting had the opportunity to review the Massachusetts Department of Public Health, Bureau of Climate and Environmental Health (BCEH), Indoor Air Quality Program report. This report was regarding the Indoor Air Quality Assessment inspection held at the Pawtucketville Memorial Elementary School on November 28, 2023. The Board was encouraged that there were repairs to the HVAC system being implemented but noted that BCEH included within the report two lists of "Best Practices" recommendations to be done in the short-term and long-term beginning on page 17.

The Board of Health recommends the Lowell School Committee Health & Wellness subcommittee incorporate these "Best Practices" into the LPS Health & Wellness policy system-wide to improve the air quality in all schools, as these recommendations will need compliance not only from custodial staff, but administrative/teaching staff and students.

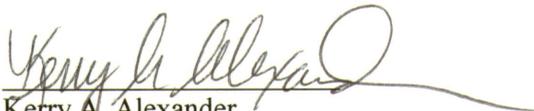
Items that all School Department staff should be aware of and participate in maintaining compliance with under the LPS Health & Wellness policy are inclusive but not limited to:

1. Ensuring univents are not blocked by furniture and other items on top or in front (#4 pg.17);
2. Closing classroom doors for more effective operation of exhaust vents/air exchange (#5 pg. 17);
3. During temperate weather conditions, tightly close windows at the end of the day (#8 pg. 17), as well as keeping windows closed when air conditioning is operating or during extreme cold (pg.7);
4. Pulling furniture 1-2 inches away from walls and removing impermeable wall coverings such as laminated posters (#19 pg. 18);
5. Keep aquariums, terrariums and other similar items be kept clean to prevent odors/microbial growth (#32 pg. 19). Aquariums, terrariums, plants, and other sources of odors should be kept away from the airstream of univents and other ventilation equipment (pg. 13);
6. Keep indoor plants in good condition, avoid overwatering, and keep them away from univents and other sources of airflow (#33 pg. 19);
7. Avoid using latex-containing tennis balls as chair or table glides. Replace with latex-free glides or other materials (pg. 14 and #36 pg. 20). The Board notes that this also assists the schools to lower allergen levels reducing possible trigger items that can cause allergic reactions in sensitive individuals and should also include scented air fresheners and other items;
8. Keep any kiln areas clean, free of items, and keep students and staff away when the kiln is in operation (#37 pg. 20);
9. Ensure sinks and other plumbing fixtures in classrooms are wetted periodically to prevent dry traps and porous materials are not stored under any sinks (pg.13);
10. Keep food in tightly closed pest-proof containers and keep food preparation equipment clean and free of spills and crumbs (pg. 15 and #40 pg. 20). The Board would ask this be required in both classrooms and cafeterias to assist with rodent control under the State Sanitary Code;

11. Store area rugs rolled up and off the floor in a dry area during summer break (#42 pg. 20). Used area rugs should not be brought into the school from outside, as these may be contaminated with allergens such as pet dander and insects such as carpet moths, bedbugs, cockroaches, etc. (pg. 15);
12. When school is closed, avoid storage of large amounts of porous materials over the summer; take all porous items such as area rugs, boxes, and decorative items, off the floors before the end of the school year; store items in water resistant totes or store in a climate-controlled area until autumn (#16,17,18 pg. 18);
13. Consider including a IAQ component in the school's Wellness Advisory Committee program with an IAQ plan with an IAQ liaison/teacher representative, a member of maintenance/facilities and a member of administration that conduct regular walk-throughs to identify on-going and/or potential environmental issues (#45 pg. 20);
14. Utilize the US EPA's (2000) "Tools for Schools" as an instrument for maintaining a good IAQ environment (#46 pg. 20);
15. Limit use of hand sanitizers, cleaners, dry erase materials, scented products/air fresheners to reduce irritants to sensitive individuals (pg.14);
16. Use laminators and plastic sealing units in areas with good ventilation (pg. 14).

The Board of Health is aware that the Lowell Public Schools Facilities Division and the City of Lowell Public Works Department meet regularly to review ongoing repairs/maintenance requirements of the public schools. The Board recommends that these "Best Practices" short and long-term recommendations, along with any school based IAQ suggestions, be reviewed with DPW and a plan be developed to address these recommendations district-wide.

Sincerely,



Kerry A. Alexander  
Secretary, Board of Health

Cc: Lowell School Committee  
Daniel Rourke, Mayor, School Committee Chair  
Dr. James Hall, COO, LPS  
Rick Underwood, LPS Facilities Manager  
Thomas A. Golden, City Manager  
Paul St. Cyr, Asst. City Manager/DPW Commissioner