



January 22, 2019

Dear WTPS Staff and Families,

I am writing you today to inform you of concerns regarding rubberized flooring in some of our school buildings.

In 1997 the district erected additions to four elementary schools (Bells, Birches, Wedgwood, and Whitman). In addition, Bunker Hill Middle School (BHMS) was constructed at that time. Each of these projects included gymnasiums, as well as an adaptive physical education classroom at BHMS. Rubberized flooring was installed in each of these five facilities.

In 2017 one of the gym floors was in need of repair. The settling of the foundation caused a bubbling of the rubberized gym floor on the surface. A contractor was hired to repair the floor. Part of the repair process included taking a cut sample of the floor to be tested to determine the chemical compound of the floor. This was done to ensure the proper disposal of any parts of the floor being discarded. It was discovered at this time that the floor contained mercury.

In 1997, and for many years prior, mercury was a popular additive used by contractors to quicken the curing time of the rubberized floors. We learned that because it was an additive, the presence of mercury was not required to be listed in the manufacturing specifications of the floor, referred to as the Material Safety Data Sheets (MSDS). Additional rubberized floors were installed in the district in 2005 and 2006, well after the year 2000 when the federal government prohibited mercury as a curing agent.

Upon learning of the presence of mercury, the district ordered air-quality testing during the summer of 2017, prior to the start of the school year. The air samples came back indicating there are little to no mercury vapor emissions from our floors. I have attached the air-quality results for these gyms, including a recent test for BHMS from earlier this month. These results have been reviewed and accepted by our air-quality contractor, Coastal Environmental, our district engineer from Remington and Vernick, and the New Jersey Department of Health.

However, we want to alleviate fear and ensure that our gyms are safe for our children, our staff, and our community. Therefore, we have ordered additional testing to be completed as recommended by the New Jersey Work Environment Council (NJWEC), the Healthy Schools Now Coalition (HSN), and the New Jersey Education Association (NJEA). This test will be a representative number of full-day, breathing

zone samples which will be collected and analyzed by an accredited laboratory using NIOSH Method 6009. This test will be conducted in all five schools.

These tests will be commencing over the next several weeks. We will promptly report out our findings when results are finalized. Based on our preliminary testing, our gyms will remain open. I am very confident that this additional round of testing will confirm that our floors are safe.

In addition to these measures, I will be forming a committee which will include school personnel, community members, Board of Education members, our engineers, and the municipality to review findings and discuss plans of actions going forward. These plans would include ongoing testing and a potential plan for remediation, if necessary.

Please know that I very much understand the fear that can be associated with these concerns. Like you, I have raised my family in Washington Township. My children (all four of them) have played in all of these gyms while attending school and have participated in Parks and Recreation activities. My hope is that this letter will dispel misinformation and alleviate fear associated with the safety of these floors. I am committed to ensuring these floors remain safe for our community to use and taking whatever steps are necessary to do that.

In the meantime, please do not hesitate to contact my office if you have additional questions or concerns. I am always happy to speak with you.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Joseph N. Bollendorf", with a long horizontal flourish extending to the right.

Joseph N. Bollendorf, Superintendent