



FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

About Environmental Conditions at Glenwood MS

August 18, 2015

This document provides details about actions taken and answers to frequently asked questions about the environmental conditions at Glenwood Middle School.

Is Glenwood Middle School a safe place to send my child to school?

Yes, Glenwood Middle School is and has been a safe place to send your child to school. Over the past several years, HCPSS has relied upon air quality monitoring conducted by Aria Environmental Inc. (Aria), one of the leading air quality consulting firms in the nation. HCPSS followed recommendations made by Aria and also expedited installation of a new HVAC system to resolve the higher than normal humidity levels in the affected part of the building. This installation was completed on August 15, 2015, prior to staff returning to school. The new HVAC system is operational, and humidity levels in the building are within the normal range.

Why was the HVAC system replaced?

After following all of the recommendations made by Aria, HCPSS ultimately concluded that the HVAC system needed to be replaced. Other actions had not succeeded in fully controlling the humidity levels. The \$3 million investment in the new HVAC system was initially scheduled for 2017, subject to the availability of funds. The project was moved forward and completed in August 2015.

What led to the investigation of mold in Glenwood Middle School in August 2013?

HCPSS consistently monitors air quality in all of our buildings. In August 2013, concerns about higher than normal humidity levels and the presence of mold in several classrooms throughout the building led to HCPSS contracting Aria for further investigation.

Where did the experts look for mold?

The HVAC ductwork, suspended ceilings, furniture, and carpeting throughout the building were inspected for mold.

Were inspections done behind walls?

Aria advised HCPSS that mold cannot develop or be hidden in concrete walls, such as those at Glenwood Middle School. Thus, those inspections were unnecessary. In general, mold can grow behind walls only in places where moisture could be trapped – behind drywall, wallpaper, etc. All exterior walls at the school are constructed of brick or concrete, and contain holes to wick moisture out of the building.

What was found as a result of this investigation?

Aria Environmental completed an indoor environmental quality investigation in the reported areas. Mold had grown in several classrooms in the 6th and 7th grade wings, vocal music, home economics, and reading rooms. Aria found that mold growth appeared to have resulted from high humidity due to a summertime failure of a chiller in the HVAC system, combined with extended periods of extreme heat and unusually heavy rainfall.

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What actions were taken to remediate the mold and reduce the likelihood of new mold growth?

Areas where mold was present were cleaned by a professional services contractor in addition to the routine cleaning by custodians. Exhaust fans were taken out of service to reduce negative pressure in the building. In addition, the faulty chiller system was repaired.

Was the mold found in the summer of 2013 effectively remediated?

According to the summary report provided by Aria on April 8, 2015, the recommended actions appear to have reduced spore counts over the one-year monitoring period since the initial complaint, and no visible mold or mildew-type odors were detectable in the areas assessed.

The Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) asserts that mold spores will not grow if a moisture problem in the building has been resolved. Given previous actions taken, followed by the HVAC system upgrade, HCPSS is confident the moisture problem at Glenwood Middle School has been fully resolved.

Were there environmental concerns at Glenwood Middle School prior to 2013?

HCPSS investigated several environmental concerns between 2010 and 2013.

In April 2010, HCPSS received a complaint centered on the seventh grade wing, and in particular in room 29. Aria Environmental responded and discovered saturated insulation above the suspended ceiling tile in room 29, resulting from a roof leak. An abatement firm completed the removal of all fiberglass batting insulation, fiberglass pipe insulation and suspended ceiling tile in that classroom.

Concerns in the fall of 2011 led to an investigation by Aria in two adjacent rooms located in the 8th grade wing, classroom 8 and faculty room 6. Odors consistent with mold and mildew were detected in the building by the inspector but no evidence of mold growth was discovered.

In February 2012, it was reported that the humidity was high in the classroom wings. The school underwent recommissioning in 2012 to ensure that all HVAC equipment was operating as designed to maintain proper humidity levels. Aria environmental performed air monitoring at the school. Their results show a great deal of variability in the building and with sampling data depending on the season.

HCPSS has taken action to control relative humidity and reduce potential for mold growth. These actions appeared to reduce spore counts over the one year monitoring period. No mold or mildew type odors were detectable in the areas assessed.

How is mold remediated?

According to the EPA, it is impossible to eliminate all mold and mold spores in the indoor environment. However, indoor mold growth can be controlled by controlling moisture.

The purpose of mold remediation is to remove the mold to prevent human exposure and damage to building materials and furnishings. There are no standards or certification required for mold cleaning/remediation. It is commonly accepted that remediation depends primarily on sanitizing affected areas.

What action should be taken if mold is discovered in the future?

HCPSS will continue to follow the recommended actions of environmental consultants and the EPA's recommended guidance, and sustain the air quality monitoring programs we have always had in place.

How will HCPSS communicate to parents and staff the outcome of the final series of air quality tests and the ultimate effectiveness of the mold remediation efforts?

HCPSS will communicate these results to the Glenwood Middle School community via email and on the school's website.