

Connetquot Teachers Association

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Loretta Powell, President

Monday, March 10, 2008

<NAME OMITTED>
Connetquot Board of Education
780 Ocean Avenue
Bohemia, New York 11716

Dear <NAME OMITTED>,

It was with chagrin that we read your response to our letter of February 4, 2008, dated February 12, 2008. Your comments appear to show much confusion concerning the past issues of health and safety in the Connetquot CSD of Islip.

While you accurately indicate that the Health and Safety Committee was started in the 2006-2007 school year, you fail to address the fact that the committee was mandated by the State to start during the 1999-2000 school year. This committee never met with the knowledge or inclusion of the Association prior to February, 2007. It was at the insistence of the Association that the Committee was finally officially constituted in February, 2007. The Association's insistence was due to the fact that we had received many complaints from our members concerning issues of health and safety in Connetquot's school buildings that remained unresolved and that there was no Health and Safety Committee extant.

The Association, as the representative of the professional teaching staff, has and continues to have, a legal and moral obligation to protect the health and safety of its members and coincidentally the students and other staff members. Our insistence on the creation of the Health and Safety Committee was based on our understanding of the laws and regulations of New York State and a genuine desire to provide an official avenue for all staff to address their concerns about health and safety within their school buildings. It was because of the failure of the Administration to address many teacher concerns in a timely manner, **despite several promises to do so**, that gave rise to our letter of February 4, 2008. It is of interest that you did not address this concern in your response, but instead only complained about our representative for expressing such concern.

The "red sheet" system you refer to in your letter requires that the complaining party receive a written response from the District concerning the measure taken or how the complaints were addressed. Our teachers are not receiving responses from the District. They and we have little faith in a system that does not work as promised.

A major concern of the Association has been the malfunctioning of the chemical waste tank at the Connetquot High School. Raw chemicals have been leaking into classrooms on many occasions. This problem has gone on for years, not months. The Association has been told on many occasions that the problem was addressed and corrected. This is not the fact.

Last year, this continuing problem was again brought to the attention of the District by a NYCOSH inspection report dated, January 3, 2007. This report received by the Association was immediately shared with the District. While this report discussed many areas of concern for the health and safety of the students and staff, specifically, this report included statements that rooms 122 and 101 had many overflows into areas occupied by teachers and students and these overflows represented a toxic hazard. It went on further to state that "the monitoring equipment located in room 117 was not working and apparently had never been functional." It also noted that staff had not been trained in the operation of the monitoring equipment and procedures required to prevent further overflows.

Recently, the DEC inspected the chemistry lab again and discovered that the chemical waste tank was still not functioning properly. Basically the DEC reiterated the NYCOSH report. The District had a year to address this serious problem and did not do so. In fact, the District has been informed that it will be cited for continuing violations. In your letter you state, "We would never permit them (children) or their teachers to enter or remain in an unsafe or unhealthy environment." Is that not what the District has done by failing to address these serious concerns in an effective manner?

There have been two documented chemical overflows since the end of the holiday recess in January. Is it unreasonable that the Association has little confidence in the assurances of the District concerning health and safety issues? This health and safety problem is only one of many that we could discuss here.

Concerning the participation of the Association at Health and Safety Committee meetings we reserve the right to appoint our member independently. While you may not agree with the Association's representative to the Health and Safety Committee, it is highly improper for you to request from the Association President that the Association member be replaced. The Association has full faith in our representative and has no intention of replacing him.

Based upon the actions or inactions of the District in the past, is it unreasonable for the Association to insist that the minutes of the Health and Safety Committee accurately reflect what was discussed at meetings and not be sanitized for political purposes? Is it unreasonable to hold an Administration accountable for promises and statements made during the meetings that have gone unfulfilled? Our representative will continue to endeavor to ensure that the minutes are accurate. It is only through accuracy and follow through that the Health and Safety Committee will gain credibility.

We wrote to the Board to inform them of these problems. Our intention was to have the problem addressed in a timely manner. Your response seems to say that you are not being accurately informed. We again urge you to investigate our concerns.

Sincerely,



Loretta Powell
President

c. B. Lindell
D. Sposato
S. Lockwood
CTA BOD
Board of Education
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