

April 22, 2008

Dear Eckstein staff, students and families:

I am writing to provide an update on the condition of the ceiling in the boy's locker room, which was constructed in 1948, to let you know about the additional steps taken during this past week, and to explain what is planned.

In summary, the boy's and girl's locker room ceilings must both be reconstructed; we have inspected ceilings in three other areas; and have plans to conduct further inspections. Safety of staff and students is our first priority, and our facilities department has given top priority to this situation. More details are provided below.

On the evening of Thursday, April 10 the ceiling in the boy's locker room collapsed. I immediately called our facilities staff, and they responded right away. The facilities department asked an expert firm, Stemper Architects, which has expertise in structural architecture, to examine and inspect the construction of the ceiling in the boy's locker room and to advise on any further steps.

On April 15 Scott Stemper conducted an initial inspection. He found that the nails that supported the diamond mesh metal lath were the wrong type and were undersized.

On Friday, April 18, Stemper Architects erected scaffolding so that they could inspect the ceiling more closely. They found several issues. As far as we know, all of these conditions have been present since the original construction in 1948. The method used to construct the ceiling in the boy's locker room is "direct attachment." This means that plaster is attached directly to the rafters. Stemper Architects found three issues:

- There should be two nails affixed at each point where the rafters intersect with the firing strips – there is only one.
- The nails used are too small for this situation, both in length and in diameter.
- The weight of the plaster ceiling was inadequately supported by the improper nail size.

Given the condition of the boy's locker-room ceiling, facilities directed that additional inspections be done to determine if similar construction methods were used in other parts of our building. Preparatory work was done over the weekend, and on Monday April 21 Stemper Architects inspected the girl's locker room ceiling, a counseling room on the second floor (room 214), and the auditorium ceiling. They found that:

- The girl's locker room ceiling is constructed in a manner identical to the boy's locker room ceiling.
- The counseling room and auditorium are constructed differently and appear to be structurally sound.

Next steps we will take:

- The boy's and girl's locker room ceilings must be reconstructed and so are closed for safety reasons. We will schedule this work as soon as possible. Meantime, our Physical Education staff will modify the curriculum to accommodate students not being able to suit-up. Students will store their PE shoes in their academic lockers.
- SPS facilities and Stemper Architects will study the original drawings for Eckstein to determine if there are any other indicators of "direct attachment." If so, they will inspect these within the next week.

We will provide updates as soon as new information is available. Meantime, please don't hesitate to call me at (206) 252-5015 if you have any questions.

Sincerely,

Kim Whitworth, Principal