



# Montclair Public Schools

## Montclair High School – Compromised Staircases Ten Most Frequently Asked Questions (FAQs)

September 15, 2018

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**Question #1:** *Why are all four (4) staircases in the original portion of the Main Building unavailable for use when only one staircase was compromised?*

**Answer #1:** Due to the one compromised staircase in the original portion of the Main Building, the Superintendent requested that each of the remaining staircases in the original portion of the Main Building be assessed. At that time, it was determined that the staircases could not be cleared for use. Therefore, it was determined that none of the four staircases in the main building should be used. To promote safety, all staircases in both the original portion of the Main Building, remodeled portion of the Main Building and the Annex Building were assessed and cleared for use.

**Question #2:** *Why are so many classrooms (31 in total) unavailable?*

**Answer #2:** The four (4) staircases in the original Main Building are the only way to access the 3<sup>rd</sup> floor and the 2<sup>nd</sup> floor on the original side of the Main Building. Accordingly, the 31 rooms in question are in these designated areas.

**Question #3:** *Why didn't the District know to repair the stairs this summer?*

**Answer #3:** An evaluation of staircases is not a part of the facilities checklist nor are building structural analysis completed as a normal part of *any school district's* annual facilities and maintenance checks. Given what transpired on September 7<sup>th</sup>, the Superintendent requested a structural analysis of each staircase at Montclair High School, a structural analysis of the High School and a structural analysis of all schools. This work is not typical work. The District engineer and architects will discuss the plan to remediate the 4 staircases in the original Main Building, the structural analysis at Montclair High School and the structural analysis for each school in the district on Monday, September 17<sup>th</sup>.

**Question #4:** *Why didn't the District inform the community that there was an issue with the 4 staircases in the original portion of the Main Building?*

**Answer #4:** Although it was unknown to the current administration and Board of Education, there was a repair done on this same staircase in winter/spring of 2016. However, it was determined at that time that the compromised staircase would be sufficient if repaired. The stairs were repaired.

**Question #5:** *Why haven't I heard of any discussion regarding temporary classrooms (i.e., modular classrooms or portables)?*

**Answer #5:** The Superintendent researched temporary classrooms and, this *may* be an option. However, an informed decision requires an analysis of the timeline to remediate the compromised staircases before determining if temporary classrooms are viable. Remember,

we must get the potential location assessed to determine how many temporary classrooms could be stored at that particular area, as well as whether there is sufficient access to electricity and plumbing (the Annex parking lot and other locations in close proximity are being explored). Please remember we must promote time on task so the farther we place temporary classrooms the more travel time between classes.

**Question #6:** *Is there asbestos in the area under repair?*

**Answer #6:** The District hired an environmental engineer to test for asbestos prior to the demolition of the compromised staircase. There was no asbestos present. Prior to any demolition, it is standard practice to test for asbestos when you are working in a dated building. We will continue to follow the standard protocol for this work.

**Question #7:** *Why were there so many emergency drills? Is the modified facilities utilization plan safe?*

**Answer #7:** Given the modified facilities utilization plan, the District wants to ensure all students and staff are aware of where to exit in case of an emergency. Accordingly, we had two drills on Friday, September 14, 2018. The first drill was under 5 minutes, but it was not smooth. The second drill was under 5 minutes, but it was smooth and orderly. We will continue to test our modified facilities utilization plan. And, yes, the Montclair Fire Department will make unscheduled visits to test our modified facilities utilization plan. We are thankful for this unexpected test because we need to be absolutely certain that we can exit the building(s) in case of emergency. The rumors of “what if we fail” should not be entertained. We do not intend to “fail” a relocation drill. It is important to note our local emergency units are there to support us and help us improve our processes. If there are enhancement recommendations, we will fully receive those recommendations and be sure to employ them during the next drill.

Prior to reopening school on Thursday, September 13, 2018, we reviewed our modified facilities utilization plan with our Fire Inspector. He was present on September 13, 2018, and he will be returning at an unannounced time in the near future to assess our ability to exit the building in a safe and orderly fashion. Equally as important, lock-down drills in non-traditional learning environments will occur (i.e., LGI and Café).

**Question #8:** *Students cannot focus in the large learning environments. What are the plans for the school to address?*

**Answer #8:** We created the modified utilization plan without the benefit of our amazing educators. After debriefing and reviewing our master schedule, we identified available rooms in the Annex during various periods so we will relocate students from the auditorium and the Little Theater to classrooms for Monday, September 17, 2018. Students and parents/guardians should check Genesis prior to the start of school on Monday.

Also, we will work on a rotational schedule so no one particular classroom is forced to use the same large learning environment. Furthermore, we will work on a “testing room.” If a teacher needs to give a test, we will work to secure a more ideal testing environment.

**Question #9:** *What do I do if my child has her/his/their laptop in the locker (2<sup>nd</sup> or 3<sup>rd</sup> floor)?*

**Answer #9:** Students should inform his/her/their assigned Administrator. Lists are being created (i.e., student name, locker number and item). At select times, only specific personnel will travel to the affected areas to retrieve very critical items only. Regrettably, binders and books cannot be retrieved at this time.

**Question #10:** *I have a question. Whom should I contact?*

**Answer #10:** You can always contact your child's administrator with questions you may have. The school staff should always be contacted first because they are closest to the work. Also, you can check the Superintendent's Collaboration and Communication Website at <http://www.montclair.k12.nj.us/district/superintendent/collaborations-and-communications/>. Lastly, if you are still in need of assistance, you can always email the Superintendent at [kjohnson@montclair.k12.nj.us](mailto:kjohnson@montclair.k12.nj.us). She will personally respond to all emails within 24 hours.

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