

# Congdon School teacher details rodent infestation, severe mold and bats at school

New Bedford City Councilor Joe Lopes submitted a copy of an email and pictures to the City Council from Christine Pereira-Vasquez, a teacher at Congdon School regarding the condition, health and environmental dangers at the Congdon School:

Dear City Council:

It was with great dismay that I read about your decision to “nix” plans to build a new school for the J.B. Congdon and the DeValles Elementary Schools. As a life-long resident and “NorthEnd” of New Bedford, as well as NBPS teacher at the Congdon School for close to thirty years, I can truly say you have made a “mistake” on this one. I understand your concern for the northend schools, but the condition, health, and environmental dangers at our two schools far supersedes anything that the north-end schools are experiencing.

Although I cannot speak for the condition of DeValles- although I hear that it may, in fact, be worse than Congdon, I can give you first hand information of what students and staff face every day here at Congdon. I, for example, am unable to keep any posters up on certain walls of my room because of the water that drips down when it rains. I have used buckets in my shared closet to catch the water as it drops from ceiling to floor. I am not alone in this. I need to cover

my shelves, books, and other materials near these walls as they not only get wet from time to time, but the paint curls and peels because of the moisture. This leads to the paint “bubbling” on the walls and then crumbling over everything, leaving a big mess to clean. We are constantly breathing this “dust” in the air as well as the musty smells from the dirt-floor basement that enters through our vents.



I have had very “hairy”, black mold grow in a shared closet. The principal at the time, was “afraid they would close the school down” so did nothing about it for two years. When it got so bad and he could no longer ignore it, a custodian came in to scrape and clean it with bleach, never following the proper protocol in securing the area and cleaning black mold, putting all children and staff at risk for the spreading of spores. I had a child that year in remission from leukemia. I was truly petrified for her wellbeing. We had a teacher test positive for mold who became ill from it, and there are many of us that suffer

chronic sinus, throat, and cough related conditions. Whether this was related to the incident or not, I can't say. But mold and mildew in the air exist. What is this doing to the children whose immune systems and bodies are developing? The school is a giant health hazard.



We also have an infestation of rodents. It is rampant in our school. We are not able to leave food-based materials (pasta, fish crackers for graphing, etc.) unless in plastic or glass containers- in our shelves or closets as they are eaten through by the mice and/or rats. Their droppings are everywhere- on floors, in cabinets, behind shelves. Again, we are all breathing this in on a daily basis. As if this is not enough, we have had issues with bats on the third floor. I believe DeValles has its problems with birds and their droppings.



We also have run out of space at Congdon. We are utilizing old storage rooms for small group space- no windows or ventilation, some with cement walls. The nurse shares space with the school secretary in the main office and our specialists use the auditorium stage for their space. We need a new school!

– Christine Pereira-Vasquez, a teacher at Congdon School  
April 13, 2019