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Subject: Ventilation of Our Schools (COVID-19 Pandemic)
Reference: Guidance for School Systems for the Operation of Central and non-Central Ventilation Systems during the COVID-19 Pandemic (State of Connecticut, Department of Public Health. June 22, 2020)

(This Memorandum incorporates excerpts from the above noted reference material and comment from the author.)

Improving ventilation in school buildings is just one part of system of procedures that will safeguard the health and safety students, teachers, and school staff during the COVID-19 pandemic. While improving ventilation is not necessarily the most effective tool for reducing transmission of the virus, some studies suggest that adjustments and attention to proper ventilation can reduce the viable virus load in indoor spaces.

The State's guidance provides actions schools should take to ensure that their ventilation systems are performing optimally. The goal is not for schools to invest in costly upgrades and add-ons to existing mechanical systems. Rather, schools should understand what their current mechanical systems are capable of and how they can adjust the function of those systems to optimize their capabilities.

The Reference material categorizes activities into those recommended to be performed before schools open and those to be performed after schools open. The Berlin Public Schools (BPS), through the Town's Facility Department and the BPS Custodial Department, will be managing, monitoring and performing various activities noted in the guidance material. However since every school facility is somewhat different due to the age of construction and the type of HVAC systems and infrastructure incorporated, our related activities will be confined to those appropriate to our individual facilities. Where possible and practical, we plan to follow the recommendations offered by the State Department of Health, including:

- Flush the air inside the building for a minimum of two (2) hours prior to occupancy and one (1) hour after occupancy (after the night-shift custodians leave), with the dampers open as fully as possible (i.e. to maximize fresh air intake) during this flushing period.
- Operate all ventilation systems at full capacity for one (1) week prior to the reopening of school buildings.
- Keep the ventilation system running during all hours that the building is occupied.
- Keep bathroom exhaust systems running all day, every day (24 hours a day/7 days a week).
- Develop a specific plan for performing routine inspections and maintenance of mechanical systems, as specified in the commissioning process.
- At a minimum, where temperature allows and no other means of ventilation is available, windows should be opened to allow for some minimum level of fresh air exchange into occupied spaces.

- Window air conditioning units should be adjusted to maximize fresh air intake into the system. Air conditioner blower fans should be set on low speed and pointed away from room occupants to the extent possible.
- In addition, we do not recommend separate, free-standing air cleaner or HEPA filter units for individual classrooms. These units are highly variable in their effectiveness in larger open spaces such as classrooms and in general, any effect on indoor air quality is likely insignificant and greatly outweighed by the additional costs to school systems.

The State does also recommend that the District consider Commissioning the building mechanical systems in all school facilities by using a mechanical engineering firm to evaluate, adjust and balance the ventilation systems. The District has recently engaged Friar Associates, Inc. to perform a Facilities Condition Study of our five schools. This study will address the condition of the existing mechanical systems and provide recommendations for update and improvement, if necessary. His report is expected to be completed and submitted for review in late August.