



# Smithtown Central School District

26 New York Avenue, Smithtown, New York 11787

---

**Mark Secaur, Ed.D.**  
Superintendent of Schools  
(631) 382-2006

February 17, 2023

Dear Smithtown School Community,

The Smithtown Central School District is proud of its efforts to create a safe and healthy school environment for its students and the staff who serve them. A recently released news report highlighted concerns that had been raised several years ago by current and former staff members at Smithtown High School West and included information associated with a student health related incident that occurred in recent weeks. We have great empathy whenever a student or staff member has a health concern and we understand and accept our responsibility to provide our students and staff with a safe school environment. **This letter will outline the great lengths the School District has gone through to address these concerns when they were previously raised, and explain how after the comprehensive testing performed by various entities, it has been determined that there is no health risk to our school community. These agencies also agreed that there was no need for the district to conduct additional testing or take further action.**

When the School District was made aware of the concerns of current and former staff members, we sought the expertise from several external sources in order to investigate and identify any possible building-based issues that may have been a contributing factor to a staff member's reported illness. These resources included the following entities:

- J.C. Broderick & Associates, an environmental/construction consulting and testing company
- Eastern Suffolk BOCES Regional Occupational Safety & Health (ROSH) Program
- Suffolk County Department of Health Services (SCDHS) Office of Pollution Control
- New York State Department of Health (NYSDOH), Bureau of Environmental & Occupational Epidemiology
- Enviroscience Consultants, an environmental consulting firm
- New York Committee for Occupational Safety and Health (NYCOSH), a membership organization of workers, unions, community-based organizations, workers' rights activists, and health and safety professionals.
- National Institute for Occupational Safety and Health (NIOSH), a federal research agency focused on the study of worker safety and health, and empowering employers and workers to create safe and healthy workplaces.

**Each of these entities played a role in our inquiry as to whether or not there was a health hazard present at Smithtown High School West and their collective expertise determined that there was not a risk to the health of the students and staff.**

The inquiry focused on both the state of the building as well as the health of the staff members (current and former) who reported illnesses at High School West. To this end, during the 2020-2021 school year, the National Institute for Occupational Safety and Health (NIOSH) conducted a health hazard evaluation (HHE) at High School West which was designed to help employees, unions and employers learn whether health hazards are present at their workplace and recommend ways to reduce hazards and prevent work related illnesses. The objectives of the NIOSH HHE were to “review results of indoor and outdoor environmental sampling performed by J.C. Broderick and Associates, Inc. and to evaluate employee work and medical histories to determine if there was evidence that potential workplace exposures have contributed to employee health concerns.” NIOSH’s investigation included an Environmental Records Assessment that found no evidence that High School West property or adjacent property had ever housed an industrial facility. Their report stated that “...there is no reason to believe that historic land use is exposing employees to an unknown hazard.” Their investigation also found no hazardous waste sites under investigation or remediation within the High School West zip code.

NIOSH’s report stated “None of the environmental testing revealed potential harmful exposures. When exhausting known options for potential exposures, the consultants and school district asked affected individuals about what they or their doctors believe might be causing the symptoms. To the best of our knowledge and based on discussions with employees, school district representatives, union representatives, and consultants, we have not identified a potential source of exposure within the school environment that fits the three components of an occupational exposure assessment described earlier (source, pathway, and exposure level).” NIOSH further indicated that although the School District would be willing to consider additional testing, they did not believe that any further testing was necessary.

In addition to the NIOSH findings, the New York State Department of Health (NYSDOH) found that the School District’s environmental testing went well beyond what would be expected or even recommended by the NYSDOH, and that there was no indication of environmental concerns directly attributed to High School West based on analysis of the testing processes, results and other pertinent information.

Throughout this process, the School District worked collaboratively with the Smithtown Teachers Association, New York State United Teachers, and the Smithtown School Employees Association. This collaboration was central to our efforts to be transparent and communicative with the staff members who raised concerns. To that end, the NIOSH report was immediately shared with all staff members at High School West and remains available to them at this time. Laura Spencer, President of the Smithtown Teachers Association stated “The District worked collaboratively with us to fully investigate the concerns of our staff in an effort to find if there was anything of concern.”

The news report also covered a few recent incidents where students became ill during a Health Class lesson. **It's important to note that the concerns related to staff illnesses and the recent incidents of student illness are unrelated and completely different situations.** Immediately after the initial incident on January 9, 2023, the district engaged the Senior Safety Officer from Eastern Suffolk BOCES to inspect the classroom, both during the day of the initial incident and once again after school. These inspections checked for any sources of contaminants that might have impacted the quality of the air and found none. Additionally, he verified that only School District approved housekeeping products were used during routine cleaning and the HVAC system was operating properly. His inspection was performed as per United States EPA guidance for public schools and did not indicate any sources of contamination that might be a health and safety concern. After consultation with the school nurse, it was determined that there did not appear to be an environmental concern in the classroom which would be reasonably correlated to the most recent incident. In addition, another student became ill the following week which prompted a third inspection of the site yielding the same results; that there were no environmental concerns which would affect the health and safety of the students and staff. There have been no incidents since and the building administration notified the school community of these incidents and the district's response.

The health and safety of our students and staff is our highest priority, and with this in mind and as stated above, the School District went to great lengths to seek answers as to whether or not the High School West building posed a health risk. We are very happy to report that it does not.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Mark Secaur". The signature is written in a cursive style with a large initial "M".

Dr. Mark Secaur  
Superintendent of Schools