

'Long way to go' on PCBs in schools

BY BILL EGBERT
DAILY NEWS STAFF WRITER

Wednesday, April 30th 2008, 4:00 AM

Education Department officials unveiled a new policy to address the problem of PCBs in school caulking at City Council hearings on the issue Tuesday, but conceded that they had a long way to go for a full solution.

Shortly after the Daily News broke the story of illegal levels of PCBs in school caulking, the department formalized a protocol for monthly inspections in all school buildings, requiring custodians to report any cracks or damages they find. "It's certainly more vigilant guidelines than we had before," [Deputy Chancellor Kathleen Grimm](#) told members of the Education, Environmental Protection and Oversight committees at emergency joint hearings at City Hall yesterday.

The new policy is similar to inspections called for by [Environmental Protection Committee Chairman James Gennaro](#) the day after the story broke. While he was pleased to see the Education Department take heed, Gennaro said he was disappointed the city still has no plan to test caulk for PCBs or to remove the illegal caulk already found.

Oversight Committee Chairman [Eric Gioia](#) agreed, likening the department's resistance to testing to "a sick guy who's afraid to go to the doctor because he doesn't want to find out how sick he is."

Earlier, a representative from the [Environmental Protection Agency](#), [George Pavlou](#), confirmed that the city is obligated to remove caulk with PCB levels like that The News discovered."

[Randi Weingarten](#), president of the [United Federation of Teachers](#), presented a plan for dealing with the problem, including incorporating the cost of PCB-caulk removal into the capital plan. Many parents from the schools tested by The News also testified about their concerns and complained about what they saw as stonewalling by the Education Department.

wegbert@nydailynews.com