

PCBs found at two more city schools

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Pace for News

PCBs were found at Public School 199 in the upper West Side of Manhattan.



Bales for News

Dan Lefkowitz, head of Westchester County Task Force on PCB's in Schools, talks to a concerned parent after a PCB meeting in PS 199.

The city has found PCBs in the soil of two public schools that exceeds federally acceptable levels, new data show.

One is [Public School 199](#) on the upper West Side of [Manhattan](#), where consultants hired by the Education Department found PCBs in air and swipe samples. The other was Intermediate School 181 near [Co-op City](#) in the [Bronx](#).

At PS 199, a city-hired consultant found higher-than-acceptable levels of PCBs in three of eight soil samples taken from the east side of the school.

At IS 181, the consultant found higher levels of PCB levels in four of eight soil samples taken from the north side of the school, the data show. Last night, the department said areas where tainted soil was discovered would be fenced off to keep students safe.

"We've been cordoning off areas where results showed elevated levels," said Education Department spokeswoman [Margie Feinberg](#). "Our plan of action is to ensure that students do not have access to the soil in question and then to remediate based upon further testing and analysis."

Feinberg promised the toxic materials would be removed "at all the sites. We've only just now finished putting up the fencing."

It's not clear why the PCBs were present in the soil, although experts say that PCBs found in window caulking can leach out into the surrounding environment.

It's also possible there was toxicity at the site before the schools were built. Available state environmental records show no toxic remediation or spill cleanup at either site back to 1978, but PS 199 was built in 1963 and IS 181 was built in 1972, school records state.

The department tested the soil at eight schools in all, including six where independent tests commissioned by the Daily News found unacceptable levels of PCB in the window or door caulking. The News reported the findings Monday.

At a meeting with parents at PS 199 Monday night, School Construction Authority [Manhattan Project](#) Manager Joseph Bova admitted The News prompted the city to test for PCBs, which is not part of the authority's standard policy.

"We sampled for only one reason," Bova told the crowd, "in response to the Daily News allegation that the school was unsafe."

Education officials said their policy was not to seek out and remove PCB caulking in the 266 schools where it's suspected of lurking. They say it's harmless if left alone, and only to remove it if a school is renovated.

"I believe the unacceptably high levels existing in the caulking itself is cause enough for the [Department of Education](#) to rethink its policy to 'leave it alone,'" Assemblyman [Linda Rosenthal \(D-Manhattan\)](#) wrote.