



RIDGEWOOD PUBLIC SCHOOLS

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Superintendent of Schools
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January 24, 2020

Dear Parents/Guardians and Ridgewood Public Schools Community,

On the evening of Wednesday, January 22, an informational meeting regarding planned soil remediation activities at Orchard Elementary School was held to provide the public with a historical perspective of this property, explain the details of the remediation plan, and answer questions and concerns. Joining me at that meeting were David Terry, Licensed Site Remediation Professional (LSRP), Matt Ayers, LSRP, Dr. Wayne Yankus, School Physician, and Antoinette Kelly, Business Administrator. In response to the questions and concerns posed at that meeting, I am taking a series of immediate actions.

After careful consideration of all reports, past public notices and meetings, recommendations from experts, and questions raised by parents, I am closing the field and other grassy areas at Orchard Elementary School as a precautionary measure. While the experts we have consulted on this issue have not recommended closing the field, I am doing so in the best interest of the children and to alleviate concerns of our community. The field and other grassy areas will be closed effective immediately. These areas will remain closed to the public until the completion of the remediation project when final testing of the site definitively concludes that the property meets the residential standards of the New Jersey Department of Environmental Protection. Furthermore, we are installing a fence around the perimeter of the field and other grassy areas today. For the remainder of the school year, students at Orchard will continue to have access to the mulched playground area and the blacktop for outdoor recess. All Orchard scheduled outdoor activities will be modified in accordance.

A second measure being taken is to promptly post signs on the property, notifying the public of the contaminated soil and upcoming remediation project. We expect to post the signs on the site next week. We have also contacted the Village and the youth sports groups concerning this closure. In an effort to provide the community with information during each stage of the remediation process, a public information page has been added to the district website. There you will find the initial Public Notice of the Remediation Plan to the Orchard community, the two presentations from Wednesday night's public meeting, and the webcast of that meeting. This page will be updated regularly to keep the public informed as we proceed.

As I stated on Wednesday evening, my job is to analyze a situation to the best of my ability and to keep us moving forward. I have listened carefully and responded deliberately to ensure that we put the well-being of the students first. Please be assured that I intend to conclusively resolve this matter and restore your sense of security about the condition of the Orchard Elementary School property.

Sincerely yours,

Daniel Fishbein, Ed.D.
Superintendent of Schools

- c Ridgewood Board of Education
- Nancy Bigos, Director of Parks and Recreation, Village of Ridgewood
- Youth Sports Group