

Good evening, members of the City Council.

My name is **Rachel Hellman**, and I am currently in my 19th year teaching kindergarten at **Meadow Hall Elementary School**. I am here tonight because, while I love my students and am dedicated to our community, the systemic building issues at Meadow Hall have reached a point where they are actively hindering our ability to provide a safe, healthy, and functional learning environment.

Plumbing Failures and Student Well-being

While the building faces numerous issues, I want to focus specifically on the plumbing crisis. In kindergarten, we are fortunate to have bathrooms in classrooms; however, the state of the pipes has turned a basic necessity into a source of anxiety.

- **Distressing Environments:** Students are **frightened** to use the facilities because of the aggressive, loud noises the pipes make. Flushing in my classroom causes such a violent noise in the adjacent room that students express genuine fear. A boys' bathroom near the library makes the same disruptive, loud noises. This is not just a nuisance; it is an unhealthy environment for **all students**.
- **Accessibility Issues:** Earlier this year, a student of mine left recess to find a restroom. After encountering two separate hallway bathrooms, locked because they were **unserviceable due to ongoing plumbing issues**, he had a bathroom accident. Our students deserve better than to be failed by their own school building.

Water Quality and Flooding

For years, in-classroom water fountains were a vital resource for keeping students hydrated without interrupting instruction. That is no longer our reality.

- **Non-functional Fountains:** After a leak flooded **my** classroom last year, the county's solution was to shut the water off. My students must now trek to the end of the hallway to fill their bottles.
- **Water Safety:** Other staff members have reported classroom water appearing brown or yellow, raising serious concerns about the safety of the water our children are consuming.

A Pattern of Displacement and Damage

The instability of our infrastructure has led to catastrophic events that disrupt the educational process for weeks at a time.

- **The Ceiling Flood:** Two years ago, a sudden flood of boiling water from the ceiling destroyed hundreds of dollars of materials. A class of five-year-olds had to be relocated for days.
- **The December 9th Flood:** But more recently, on **December 9**, a major flood on our lower level displaced our fourth grade and 4th/5th-grade autism class for two weeks.
- **Operational Disruption:** In turn, this disrupted daily school operations as those displaced classes were shifted to occupy the wellness room, the media center, and the math intervention room—forcing the staff and students in those locations to relocate as well. Library classes were in classrooms, which interrupted teacher planning time and prevented students from checking out books.
- **Impact on PE:** We are still unable to use the gym. While **contractors are replacing the entire gym floor for the second time in four years**, PE is being held in standard classrooms. These rooms do not allow for the proper physical movement students need and simultaneously disrupt planning time.

Conclusion: Patches are Not Solutions

The most frustrating aspect is that this pipe is a known issue. The pipe that burst is the **same pipe** that also burst four years ago. It was patched then, and we were told it would burst again. It did. Now, we have been told the same thing once more.

Classes may be back in their rooms, but the damage remains. Materials are gone, and students are now expected to learn while sitting on cold, hard floors because their rugs were destroyed.

We are not asking for luxury; we are asking for a building that functions. We are asking for pipes that don't burst, water that isn't brown, and bathrooms that don't frighten our students.

Thank you for your time and for your attention to the needs of the Meadow Hall community.

