

Feds: Toxins not risky in schools

By Demetria Irwin
Special to Sentinel-Voice
NEW YORK (NNPA) —

Many parents are aware of the health risks posed by lead paint, but there is another toxin pervading New York City public schools. Prompted by a *Daily News* investigation, the Department of Education conducted tests in several schools to determine the level of polychlorinated biphenyls (PCBs) and found the chemical at high levels. But Department of Education officials insist that there is no danger as long as the PCB-laced materials are left untouched.

PCBs are toxins usually found in window and door caulking in buildings constructed or renovated in the 1960s and 1970s. The U.S. Congress banned the domestic production of PCBs in 1977 due to the increasing number of scientific studies that showed decreased cognitive ability in children exposed to the chemicals, cancer, asthma, rashes and other negative health effects. In 1976, New York State Department of Environmental Conservation banned all fishing in the Upper Hudson

River because of the health risk posed by consuming fish that had been contaminated by 1.3 million pounds of PCBs dumped into the river by General Electric from 1947 well into the 1970s.

This very same toxin is in the caulking of 266 schools throughout the five boroughs. Six of the nine schools tested by the *Daily News* tested positive for PCBs at concentrations that far exceed federal regulations. However, the presence of PCBs does not mean the toxins have actually been released into the air and, hence, have affected students.

In fact, according to the Department of Education testing, only one of those schools (P.S. 199 on the Upper West Side) tested positive for PCB leakage into the air. The contaminated area, the cafeteria, was closed off for use and cleaned.

Other schools in the study that exceeded federal guidelines for PCB concentration included P.S. 30 in East Harlem, P.S. 86 in Queens, and Bronx schools P.S. 160, I.S. 131 and P.S. 178.

Demetria Irwin writes for the *Amsterdam News*.

Alcohol

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— Colt 45 Malt Liquor accounted for nearly one-third of Black youth exposure to radio advertising and along with Hennessy Cognac, which most disproportionately exposed Black youth compared to all youth.

Television

— 72 percent of alcohol advertising spending on Black Entertainment Television (BET) targeted 10 programs more likely to be seen by youth;

— Advertisers spent approximately \$4.8 million to place ads on all 15 programs most popular with Black youth.

Eddie Mclay, director of information for the National Council on Alcoholism and Other Drug Addictions—Bay Area, told *The Final Call* the battle to end underage drinking means targeting alcohol companies and distributors, which are both well-rooted in America's political arena. Liquor stores, restaurants and bars must be held accountable for their roles in youth drinking, he said.

A majority of the ads, especially those during sporting events, target young adults ages 18-24, use sex as an angle, and promote binge drinking, said Mclay.

Part of National Council on Alcoholism's work is to implore adults not to buy alcohol for their children, nieces, nephews, cousins or neighbors, he continued. While the council still uses education as a method of prevention, it has gained more success through "environmental prevention," which is campaigning for liquor stores to place advertisements on doors, windows and walls over five feet high and out of face view of children.

"You can educate the kids but if they are still seeing these advertisements as the cool way of being, it's easier for them to blow off adults and say 'it's my life.' But if they don't have this stuff in their face all the time then it's less likely they'd go ahead and do it," Mclay added.

Last March, Kenneth Moritsugu, then-acting U.S. Surgeon General, issued a Call to Action to Prevent and Reduce the enduring national problem of underage drinking, primarily because of the potential long-term negative impact to the adolescent brain.

Charlene Muhammad writes for the *Final Call*.

Gap

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"White students can be hippies, have long hair, dress differently and still go on to become president, while Black students who wear baggy pants and have long hair will find their social security numbers in a database," explained report co-author Gilman Whiting, assistant professor of African American and Diaspora studies at Vanderbilt, to *The Final Call*.

"Acting Black is not about acquiescing to Whites, but rebelling. It's more indicative of their thought pattern. It's their way of rebelling to the White power struggle by their dress, music and language. However, it's looked at as negative aspects of Black life by Whites. It's an outlaw culture."

According to a 2004 document by the National Education Association 90 percent of public school teachers are White, 40 percent of public schools have no teachers of color.

The new report encourages teachers to be as quick to recommend Black students to gifted and talented programs as they are to recommend special education.

The researchers surveyed 166 Black fifth-through 12th-graders identified as gifted in two Ohio school districts.

They described "acting White" as speaking properly, being smart or too smart, doing well in school, taking advanced courses, being stuck up, and not acting your race. Terms used to describe "acting Black" were having a "don't care" attitude, being laid back, being dumb or uneducated and pretending not to be smart.

The authors also found that while Black students agree that hard work in school leads to success, they do not necessarily believe that this holds true for Black people.

"This doubt and second-guessing may result in the child

believing that an education benefits or pays off for some groups, but not others, namely Blacks," the authors wrote. "Some of these students, specifically if discouraged, believe that hard work is a waste of time and energy given the reality of social injustices."

Without saying the words these students see the dual reality of Black life in America: More educated Blacks than ever, more unemployed than and under employed Blacks than Whites, more educational opportunities and more Black men going to jail.

"Our children are taught every day that they can't do the work in school. Public schools are warehouses for our children," said Lateefah Muhammad, an education consultant in Fredericksburg, Va.

"Acting Black is a mind-set today. The AP classes and gifted programs are the public school systems last attempt to keep their children preserved to rule this global society. We are assessing programs that are not designed for us to achieve. There is a systems gap in America. If we just focus on the Black gap we miss the American education gap with the rest of the world which is greater," she said.

What can educators and parents do to help Black children?

"There must be aggressive and proactive leadership by educators in diversifying the teaching force. We have to hold teachers responsible for where they refer Black students," said Dr. Ford. "Peer pressure is real for all students. They are called nerds, sissies and more. The difference is that Black students take it to heart...The achievement gap is real, the achievement gap is complex, the achievement gap is stubborn; we—educators and families—must be just as stubborn and diligent in our efforts to eliminate the gap."

Nisa Islam Muhammad writes for the *Final Call*.

Your Horoscope Says... May 1-7

ARIES

You can be discreet and cut down on some of the envious comments you are attracting. Or you can continue to flaunt it since you've got it. Your choice this week! Watch for a pleasant change in a romantic partner's attitude.

Soul Affirmation: The winner is me. I smile for the cameras.

Lucky Numbers: 3, 39, 41

TAURUS

Take advantage of bursts of energy all week. Body and mind are in sync. Don't take things too personally this week, you might get your feelings hurt. If you do, night time is a great time to make-up. Make the call.

Soul Affirmation: My hunches are right more often than not this week.

Lucky Numbers: 16, 26, 29

GEMINI

Lucky! Your natural ability to shine is magnified this week. You'll be garnering positive attention on a project you recently completed. Bask in the glow of public admiration! Be daring. You'll find much support for the things you want to do.

Soul Affirmation: This week I forgive myself for everything that has happened.

Lucky Numbers: 12, 13, 28

CANCER

A celebration is in store and you are the guest of honor! You've achieved something wonderful and you need to take some time to enjoy it. Let yourself enjoy the applause then move onward and upward.

Soul Affirmation: I entertain wild ideas about making money this week.

Lucky Numbers: 9, 12, 36

LEO

Let someone else make a few decisions this week. Take a backseat and enjoy the respite from doing all the driving. You'll enjoy the ride more this week if you just admire the view as it goes by.

Soul Affirmation: I enjoy living in my dream.

Lucky Numbers: 18, 30, 43

VIRGO

Sometimes you imagine that everyone needs to hear your sensible opinions on all matters of significance. And other weeks you know that you are wise and generous enough to listen to others as they share their good ideas. This week is a week for listening. You'll learn much.

Soul Affirmation: I listen with an open heart.

Lucky Numbers: 5, 39, 43

LIBRA

Anybody may occasionally have a week when their energy feels low. Your natural good health will see you through a possible down time if you just go with the flow and let yourself relax. Rest if you have the chance and you'll feel like your wonderful self in no time flat!

Soul Affirmation: I calm my emotions by forgetting about the past.

Lucky Numbers: 12, 41, 45

SCORPIO

You are the center of attention this week. And while you'll be very busy, you'll love every moment. Enjoy your time in the spotlight! You may want to indulge yourself with some emotional theatrics this week.

Soul Affirmation: All vibes are good for me this week!

Lucky Numbers: 3, 12, 39

SAGITTARIUS

Stay flexible this week, especially where a partner is concerned. While they may be moody, there's no need for you to join them in their attitude unless you really, really want to! Stay positive and go with the good vibrations that surround you.

Soul Affirmation: I exercise to lower tension this week.

Lucky Numbers: 31, 48, 52

CAPRICORN

Ding-dong! Destiny is at the door. Let it in and enjoy the change of pace. You'll be happy to make a few adjustments for this most welcome guest. Follow through on instincts and hunches!

Soul Affirmation: My spirit makes all things new.

Lucky Numbers: 8, 41, 50

AQUARIUS

Stay on course with your current decisions and dreams. You may doubt your progress this week, but you really are moving toward a better tomorrow with your determined attitude. Keep your emotions under control this week for sure.

Soul Affirmation: I enlarge my happiness by forgetting about myself this week.

Lucky Numbers: 23, 28, 31

PISCES

You feel great! Your shining spirit attracts many seekers this week so let your best wisest self answer questions that are put to you by those who want advice. You'll smooth over a sticky situation at work with ease.

Soul Affirmation: Distant love is sometimes sweeter.

Lucky Numbers: 1, 22, 37