

## 10-10 Ben Franklin-SLA Relocation Letter

To the Staff, Students and Families of Benjamin Franklin High School and Science Leadership Academy:

I want to once again offer my sincerest apology for significantly underestimating the challenge of maintaining a healthy school environment at the Ben Franklin-SLA campus while conducting major construction on multiple floors during the school day. You have missed instructional time, and endured major disruptions in your personal lives. No apology can undo that.

What I can do is begin the steady work of regaining your trust. That starts today with some important updates regarding environmental safety and the temporary relocation of your schools.

One hundred and two areas of the BF-SLA campus were tested by both the District and the PFT. Except for the boiler room area, all results have come back favorable. That means they are below threshold levels as identified by the City Health Department. The boiler area, which is not accessible to students and non-custodial staff, did test higher than normal. Asbestos abatement work there has already begun. Previous asbestos abatement had also occurred in the commons area of SLA and basement classroom areas for Ben Franklin. Tests have indicated these spaces are cleared for reoccupancy. Continued inspection will occur over the next week to address any other issues that may be identified. In addition, test results have been posted on our website and are available [here](#).

My commitment to you is that the new shared campus will not re-open until all major construction is complete, environmental testing has been conducted and the building has been approved for reoccupancy. Once the campus has re-opened, any post-construction follow-up activities such as electrical service adjustments, classroom equipment installations and locksmith services will be performed during evening hours.

Members of both school communities have made clear what they need to make their temporary school sites work. I have listened. A Task Force of teachers, staff, students, parents, principals from both schools and District leaders worked tirelessly over several days this week reviewing new relocation site options that better meet the unique needs of each school. The group unanimously recommended that:

- Ben Franklin students and staff relocate to 926 W. Sedgley Avenue, the former site for Khepera Charter School. The site was selected due to its close proximity to the current school building, easy access to the Broad Street Line and its ability to house the entire school community in one location. School here will resume on Monday, October 14.
- Science Leadership Academy pursue a Center City campus model, using classrooms at 440 N. Broad St. and Rodeph Shalom at 615 N. Broad St., due to the close proximity to the Broad Street Line and current internship sites for students. The transition to Rodeph Shalom will begin this week, with the goal of all students and staff being fully relocated by Monday, October 21.

This morning I approved their recommendations. To members of this Task Force I say thank you for your hard work, your resilience and most importantly for your courageous advocacy on behalf of students.

As a School District, it is clear that we must engage in a deeper and more meaningful conversation about the presence of lead and asbestos in our buildings and what we can do together to better support the safety of our students and staff. We must also have candid conversations about the capacity of our existing resources. We will continue to make a difference with the resources we have, but it's not enough. I look forward to working together to advocate for more resources to support safe and healthy schools in every neighborhood. You deserve no less.

Sincerely,

William R. Hite, Jr., Ed.D.  
Superintendent  
The School District of Philadelphia