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PARENTS SAY STUDENTS BECOME ILL AFTER CLEANING DESKS TO PREVENT MRSA

By: staff
Some Craig County High School students told to clean their desks after each class to prevent staph infections got sick from the cleaning solution, parents reported.

One mother reported her son had an asthma attack and others said they had breathing problems and headaches earlier this week after a school administration directive to wipe down desks with a disinfectant to prevent MRSA infections.

MRSA stands for methiellin-resistant staphylococcus aureus, and is a naturally occurring germ humans have in their nasal passages and on their skin. It can be dangerous, though, if it gets into the bloodstream through a cut or sore.

Bedford County schools were closed for 36 hours last week after a Staunton River High School student died of complications from the germ.

School systems around the state went into alert mode. A number of nearby school systems had custodial staffs or outside firms sanitize buildings and often-touched surfaces such as desks, restrooms and locker rooms.

School Superintendent Dr. Kitty Rodgers sent parents and guardians a letter dated Oct. 18, reassuring them no cases of MRSA had been found in Craig County school children, and explaining how to prevent its spread through good hygiene such as hand-washing and not sharing towels.

A second letter to the county's teachers and staff directed them to encourage students to wash their hands with soap after lunch, using restrooms, physical education class and recess, using the computer lab, going to the library and after classroom activities where students share materials.

The same letter asks teachers to observe students in their class who might have open wounds or sores, and if those are draining or contain pus, to refer students immediately to the school nurse.

Although in the letter to parents and guardians, Rodgers says school bus seats, restrooms, computer labs and athletic locker rooms, among others, will be cleaned, it does not say students would be asked to disinfect their desks.

The mother of student Josh Looney reported he had an asthma attack and his eyes swelled from what she said was a 9 parts water, 1 part bleach solution.

Rodgers denied the cleaning agent was bleach and said instead, it was a lemon-scented substance, but Looney's mother said new high school principal Ronnie Gordon told her it was bleach. Calls from the newspaper to the principal went unreturned before the deadline for the Oct. 31 newspaper.

Another parent said her son's new shirt was bleached after he sat in a still-wet desk.

The school nurse said no students were sent to her who became ill after the elementary school, middle school and high school began disinfecting desks and common areas. Nurse Trena Boudreaux also said it was school staff and not students who used a bleach solution between classes.

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