

My name is Amy Laura Cahn. I am a staff attorney with the Public Interest Law Center of Philadelphia. During the 2013-2014 school year, the Law Center worked with advocacy organizations to launch the Philly Complaints Project, providing an opportunity for parents, caregivers, students, and teachers to register their concerns about conditions of Philadelphia District schools with the Pennsylvania Secretary of Education. We collected about 825 allegations of curriculum deficiencies occurring within the District and forwarded them to the Secretary. Many of the allegations were submitted through myphillyschools.com, a web site set up by Parents United for Public Education and other groups and elected officials

Most of these allegations highlight instructional deprivations that result from school closures, layoffs, and consolidations of classrooms. The allegations cover a wide range of topics and tell a host of stories:

- Of elementary schools without a single guidance counselor, physical education teacher, art teacher, or nurse;
- Of high schools failing to offer four years of any foreign language;
- Of the decline in educational quality because students feel unsafe in school due to a decrease in staffing;
- Of physical conditions, particularly unsanitary toilet conditions, that interfere with a child's capacity to learn.
- Of students missing school because, without guidance counselors, the only solution to bullying is all youth involved in a conflict home;
- Of teachers offering students extra credit for bringing in reams of paper because there are just no supplies; and
- Of teachers who can barely interact with individual students and review classroom work because the classrooms are so overcrowded that there is no room to walk between desks.

Even though Pennsylvania law unambiguously obligates the Secretary of Education to investigate allegations of curriculum deficiencies, the Pennsylvania Department of Education has declined to conduct any meaningful investigation, let alone to take corrective action. At the start of the new school year, we will be re-launching myphillyschools.com as a mechanism for parents, caregivers, teachers, and students to document the crisis conditions with which

Philadelphia's young people are forced to live. It is critical that people throughout the city, state, and nation understand the everyday reality that underfunding has created for Philadelphia public school students and their families.