

*The following is an email from Dr. John Ramos to the CHS community:.*

Columbia High School Families and Staff:

***We are suspending the use of the Columbia High School pool, effective immediately. We cannot use the pool in its current state without compromising the safety of our students and staff.***

As you know, in 2013 SOMSD did a partial repair of the most egregious structural problems with the pool to gain a few extra years of life out of the space.

This Spring, we noticed excessive humidity in the pool area, and condensation on the underside of the pool itself. At the recommendation of our architectural consultants, EI Associates, we decided to do what is called “destructive testing” to analyze what is happening within the structure, which is not externally visible. This work was conducted over the summer and included taking core samples from the pool walls and deck and analyzing the samples, as well as using ground-penetrating radar to assess the rebar for possible corrosion.

In a meeting this morning, EI Associates shared the testing results and indicated that the pool structure is not stable. They informed us that there is no way to predict when or if failure would happen, but that if failure does happen, it would be catastrophic if the pool is filled with water at the time, and even more so if there are any students or staff in the area.

We have taken immediate action to protect the safety of our students and staff, ensure the swim team will be supported in the absence of our own pool space, and provide alternative programming to our Freshmen who were scheduled to take Swimming this year. Specifically:

- Safety/Facilities
  - The pool is currently empty of water.
  - We are restricting all access to the area.
- Athletics/Swim Team
  - Athletics Director Larry Busichio is working to secure an alternate location in which the swim team can practice and host meets.

- Physical Education for Freshmen:
- Students scheduled for swimming in the first quarter will have a fitness course instead.
- Students scheduled for swimming in the other 3 quarters will be scheduled into a different PE rotation (this may be fitness, but the decision will be made after we have reviewed all possible spaces and available staffing)

In the long term, the Administration and the Board of Education need to decide the future of the current pool space. Once we determine our plan for this space, it will take a minimum of three years to either rebuild the pool, or to convert the space to a different use. This includes time for design, obtaining requisite approvals, securing funding, and construction. We will keep the community informed of the conversation as we move forward.

Sincerely,

John J. Ramos, Sr., Ed.D.

Superintendent

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