ELECTRIC FOLDING PARTITIONS TRAINING

By, Partition Safety
ELECTRIC FOLDING PARTITIONS
TRAINING COURSE OUTLINE

I. HISTORY
A. March 1991 - 9 yr old LI girl - caught in pocket (spring-loaded safety feature)
B. April 1991, the SED issued guidelines which would make the operation of folding partitions safer
C. January 2001 - 12 yr old Ithaca boy - crushed between door and wall
D. August 2002 Education Law ß409-d - 1992 - changed to ß409-f

II. MANDATES
A. June 1, 2003 deadline for the compliance with the safety requirements.
B. Signage Location (at all electric operating stations)
C. Training (establish procedure for training all persons who operate Partitions)
D. 2004, Inspections (Operable Partitions are to be included fire safety report)

III. OPERATING PROCEDURES
A. Established - written and posted
B. Training (Hands on Starting, Stopping and Reversing)
C. Record keeping

IV. REVIEW SAFETY EQUIPMENT

V. QUESTIONS / COMMENTS
I. HISTORY

A. In March 1991, a 9 year old girl was fatally injured by an electrically operated moving gym partition when she was caught in the pocket of the returning door.

B. In April 1991, the SED issued guidelines which listed the kinds and types of equipment and features which would make the operation of folding partitions safer. Guidelines for new operable partition installations were also distributed. The SED advised boards of education to evaluate their existing operable partition installations and take whatever action they deemed necessary. They did not, however, mandate specific hardware or installations.

C. In June 1992, New York State Education Law was amended by adding a new section 3409-d (later changed to 3409-f) requiring educational institutions with electrically operated partitions, doors, or room dividers, to post safety procedures established for the operation of such equipment.

D. In January 2001, a 12 year-old Ithaca boy was trapped between a folding gymnasium partition and a wall. The sliding doors were motor driven and were activated by a teacher to divide the gym into two rooms. His death prompted a review of electrically-operated folding partitions and bleachers. This was not the first time there was an accident involving such equipment.

News article from the Ithaca Times

At 9:25am on Monday, January 29th, 2001 a Boynton Middle School physical education teacher dismissed her students from the gym for their next class period. Two hours later, 12 year old Rashad Galen Richardson was dead, crushed against the wall by a motorized room divider.

Since then, nothing in televised news, or in print journalism, has made sense of the twenty minutes between 9:25am and 9:45am, when 911 received an emergency call from Boynton. On Tuesday it was reported that Rashad was in gym class, and that his teacher could not hear his screams above the noise from the other students in class. On Wednesday, it was reported that an unnamed gym teacher had turned the key to operate the room divider, and then walked away from the moving wall, thinking that the room was empty.

Had the gym been empty, or full? Had the wall malfunctioned? Had the safety mechanism been tampered with? If the coach had already left the room, how did the divider continue to move?

On Thursday, District Attorney George Dentes announced that his office had reviewed the case, and found no grounds for criminal prosecution. "In our office, we don't discuss investigations where people are not charged," said Dentes. "I don't want to get into the facts of it. From our point of view, it's obviously serious, because somebody died."

On Friday, trying to clarify earlier errors, a press release from the Sheriff's office reported that the wall had been fully functioning an hour after the accident. In response to criticism that their investigation had been incomplete, they released a sworn statement by the still-unnamed gym teacher, taken shortly after the accident, explaining how she had circumvented the safety mechanism. "I went to the control box with the dividing wall," she said. "[Name withheld] had a class next period, so I put the key into the control box to close the divider and separate the gym into two halves. I flopped the keys over so the wall would continue to close and went out into the hall to supervise the students. When I had put the key into the control box there were no students left in the gym. When I was in the hall, I had dismissed my students and there were other students coming in for their next period. At that point a student called me running out of the room and yelled to get the nurse because there was someone stuck in the divider."

By Sunday, when the community gathered at Beverly J. Martin Elementary School for a "Celebration of Life", the gym teacher's name had been released: Jane Bryant, who hasn't returned since the accident. "To Rashad's smile, which was constant, contagious, and could light up a room, we give thanks," said Marcia Fort, director of GIAC. "For Rashad's ability to have fun, be a joker, and occasionally be mischievous, we give thanks."

"He was intelligent, intense, determined, focused and passionate," said John Fredeborn, Rashad's basketball coach at BJM.

"He was a thoughtful, intelligent young man, who cared about his family, friends and school," said Craig Evans, principal of Boynton Middle School.
In a press conference held late Tuesday afternoon, Ithaca City School District Superintendent Judith Pastel summarized the facts of her investigation, explaining that "As the door was moving, Rashad entered the gym. It is unclear where he came from, he may have come from the boy's locker room. There were two other students with him. He crossed the gym to get a late pass. He turned around to cross the gym; as he was crossing and the door was closing and time was going by, he became trapped by the door. The two adults in the office heard a yell, entered that side of the gym and went to free Rashad from the wall."

According to Pastel, there are no written directions instructing teachers how to operate the wall. "We can't locate them," she said, "so they don't exist." The school intends to change its safety procedures, changing the locks on its room dividers, and issuing new keys. The new guidelines state that there must be two staff members present to activate the sliding movement of the wall, one to turn the key and another to stand at the opposite side of the gym where the wall opens or closes.

The district is also planning to make physical changes to the walls, either installing infrared detectors along the ceilings, or adding a second key switch on the opposite side of the wall.

Although the district's investigation is still unfinished, Pastel said "We basically have all the facts. It's just pulling in some loose threads."

Lauren Kelly Goldstein
Section 155.25 Safety requirements for electrically operated partitions

(a) Purpose. The purpose of this subdivision is to establish standards pursuant to Education Law, section 409-f, relating to the construction, maintenance and operation of electrically operated partitions located in classrooms or other facilities used by students in public and nonpublic schools or educational institutions within the State.

(b) Definitions. As used in this section, electrically operated partition means any partition, room divider, curtain or other similar device which is controlled through the operation of an electrical motor.

(c) Minimum construction, maintenance and operation standards for electrically operated partitions. Except as provided in paragraph (4) of this subdivision, commencing December 31, 2002, the board of education, trustees, principal or other person in charge of every public or private school or educational institution within the State, wherein classrooms or other facilities used by students are found to have electrically operated partitions, shall ensure that:

(1) every electrically operated partition is equipped with two key-operated, tamper-proof, constant pressure control stations that are wired in series, remotely located at opposite ends and opposite sides of, and in view of, the partition, and which are designed and constructed so as to require simultaneous activation of both control stations to operate the partition;

(2) the electric device controlling the operation of the partition is capable of being reversed at any point in the extend or stack travel cycle; and

(3) device(s) are provided for all partitions that will stop the forward or backward motion of the partition and stop the stacking motion of the partition when a body or object passes between the leading panel of such partition and a wall or other termination point, or when a body or object is in the stacking area of such partition;

(4) a board of education, trustees, principal or other person in charge of a public or private school or educational institution within the State shall be excused from compliance with the provisions of this subdivision for the period December 31, 2002 through June 1, 2003, upon submission to the commissioner of a written certification, in a form prescribed by the commissioner, certifying that such school or institution is unable to fully comply with the provisions of Education Law, section 409-f, as amended by chapter 217 of the Laws of 2001, and that such school or institution shall follow the procedures set forth in paragraph (d)(5) of this section until such time as compliance is achieved.
(d) Safety requirements and operation guidelines for electrically operated partitions. The board of education, trustees, principal or other person in charge of every public and private school or educational institution within the State shall ensure that:

(1) appropriate and conspicuous notice regarding the safe and proper operation and supervision of the electrical device operating such partition shall be posted in the immediate vicinity of each operating mechanism, on both sides of the separation and adjacent to the operating mechanism;

(2) a procedure is established for the notification of all school employees and all other persons who regularly make use of the area where such device is located of the safe and proper procedure for the operation of the mechanism. Staff shall be apprised of safety features and trained in the safe operation of the partition. In addition, such training shall include discussion of past accidents and the potential and possibility of serious injury or death, and information regarding the administrative and civil penalties and accountability for non-compliance with legal requirements, including the penalties for disabling safety equipment required pursuant to Education Law, section 409- f. Records shall be maintained regarding the training provided;

(3) students shall not be permitted to operate such partition. Any students present while the partition is being operated shall be under the direct supervision of trained staff and shall be required to stand away from and not be allowed to cross the path of the moving partition;

(4) safety features shall not be tampered with, overridden or by-passed. All equipment must be maintained in accordance with the manufacturer's instructions, including the manufacturer's recommended service interval, and records of such maintenance shall be permanently retained at the district or private school. All equipment shall be installed in a fail-safe manner such that the failure of any safety device shall render the electrically operated partition inoperable until such device is repaired; and

(5) until such time as the safety devices required pursuant to subdivision (c) of this section are installed and functioning in an electrically operated partition, the following additional procedures shall be followed with respect to the operation of such partition:

(i) the partition shall not be operated during normal school hours;
(ii) the partition shall not be operated when there are students or other individuals, other than the required operators, present in the space being divided;
(iii) the partition shall be operated only by individuals who are properly trained in the safe operation of the partition; and
(iv) appropriate signage stating the requirements in subparagraphs (i) through (iii) of this paragraph shall be posted adjacent to each partition operating station.
II. MANDATES

A. Notice regarding June 1, 2003 deadline for the compliance with the safety requirements for electrically operated partitions. Those partitions that are currently electrically operated and will not meet the safety requirements by the June 1, 2003 deadline must be rendered inoperable after that date. The partitions must not be operated and power to the motors must be locked out until such time the partitions comply with the additional safety requirements.

B. Signs explaining the safe and proper operation and supervision of the partition door must be conspicuously posted. The notice must be posted at all electric operating stations next to the operating mechanism. All staff should be advised of the location of the notice and requirements for it to be maintained. The sign should be reflective of current procedures and part of the training program.

Since all equipment must be maintained in accordance with manufacturer's instructions, staff should periodically inspect the operating area to be sure that the notice is still in place and the system is working properly. Staff should report any irregularities or problems with the equipment immediately.

SED recommended the following signage be posted by electrically-powered partitions:

**Caution**

**Electrically-Powered Partition**

*Only appropriately trained staff may operate this partition.*

*Control stations must be attended by staff members while the partition is in motion.*

*Staff members must stand on opposite sides of the opening or closing partition.*

*Students must stay away from the partition when in motion.*
**TRAINING**

Only trained and authorized school personnel may operate any electrically-powered partitions. Whenever any new school employees are hired who may operate this equipment, they must receive this training prior to operation of the equipment.

Staff should be apprised of safety features and trained in the safe operation of movable partitions, doors, and other such equipment. Training must include hands-on experience in starting, stopping, and reversing direction of partition travel. Emphasis should be placed on speed of stopping and on problems encountered if the partition jams.

Operators should follow the established and posted procedures. Students must be under direct staff supervision while the partitions are being operated. Students/room occupants should be warned to stand away from and not be allowed to cross between adjacent rooms while the partition is in motion. Remember, safety features must never be tampered with or overridden.

The safety of students is all our concern, and their safety near such equipment must be foremost whenever the equipment is operated. Students should also be instructed in safe behavior around such equipment including staying away from the partition when it is in motion. Students must never be allowed to operate or be given keys to electric folding partitions.

All problems with this equipment should always be reported **immediately** to the building custodian or the maintenance office. Post a sign over the key switch stating that the equipment is inoperable to inform others until the repair can be conducted.

Although there is a section of the Education Law to guide us, it is up to all of us to ensure the safety of our students by following the established procedures.
OPERATING PROCEDURES
ELECTRIC FOLDING PARTITIONS

All operators of this folding door must be trained in its safe operation and familiar with these procedures. Only authorized personnel are to operate this equipment. At no time may students operate or be given keys to electric folding partitions. Do not operate equipment if pathway is not clear.

1. Before operation, check the door pocket to be certain that it is clear of persons and obstacles visually. Inspect behind the partition including areas inside the partition enclosure box or cubby. Closure doors, if any, must be in proper position before operation.

2. Ensure that all students within the area are under supervision. Direct students to stand back at least 10 feet and do not allow crossing between adjacent rooms while the partition is in motion.

3. When extending or retracting the partition a staff member must be stationed on both sides of the partition. All students must be in sight of the operator(s).

4. The switch operator(s) must be at the control switch at all times while the partition is in motion. NEVER leave this equipment unattended while it is in motion! At no time shall the operator wedge the control switch with keys or other weights to counter a constant pressure spring.

5. When the door is full extended or retracted, the switch operator must remove the key from the switch cylinder. At no time shall keys be left in the switch when the unit is unattended or not in operation.

6. Closure doors, if any, must be in proper position before the operator leaves the room.

7. Report any problems with this equipment immediately to your building custodian or the maintenance office. Post a notice that the equipment is inoperable to inform others until the repair can be conducted.
## ELECTRIC FOLDING PARTITIONS
### TRAINING RECORD

District: ______________________

School: ______________________

Address: ______________________

By signing below you acknowledge that you have been properly trained in the safe operation of electric folding partitions and you agree to follow the operating procedures as described in Education Law sections 101, 207, 305, 409-f and 3602 and Chapter 217 of the Laws of 2001, part 155,155.25, effective August 29, 2002.

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