

## METRO

**\$83 million suit says school made girls ill**

**By CAM SIMPSON**  
FEDERAL COURT REPORTER

Parents of two girls are seeking \$83.65 million from a suburban school district, saying an elementary school with allegedly "horrendous" environmental conditions sickened the girls when they attended classes there last year.

Moimir and Janna Andrejevic sued Wheaton-Warrenville School District 200 and several school officials individually in U.S. District Court in Chicago Monday, alleging that the district operates a "sick school."

They want Warrenville's Johnson Elementary School closed, though they did not ask for emergency action. They also want a judge to give the suit class-action

status.

An attorney for the district called the 86-page lawsuit a joke. "Parents need to know the school is completely safe—they should have no fear at all of sending their children there," said Lawrence Weiner, a Chicago attorney representing the district.

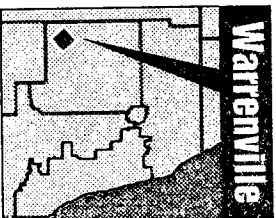
Second-grader Helen Andrejevic came home from Johnson Elementary last Sept. 4 complaining that she couldn't breathe, her father, Moimir, said

Monday. It was the day before Helen's 8th birthday. Two days later, she was in intensive care at a local hospital because of a severe

asthma attack, the suit says.

"I was so scared because I saw how scared the doctors were; the doctors were in a panic," said Moimir Andrejevic. The couple's other daughter, Katherine, then in kindergarten, suffered a sinus infection, the suit says. The family moved to San Diego last year.

The Andrejevics allege that mold and excessive levels of carbon monoxide existed in the school. They also said the building had poor ventilation. The school doesn't deny there were problems. It spent \$600,000 to tear out carpeting and make other changes,



Weiner said.

But Thomas Zimmerman Jr., an attorney for the family, says the district was negligent. He alleged that about 122 other students, along with teachers, experienced similar problems.

Weiner, the district's attorney, said Zimmerman is lumping together "every kid who went to the school nurse with a runny nose, sore throat and itchy eyes" last year.

"No one is understating the fact that this young student had a severe asthma attack that resulted in her hospitalization for three days, but what caused that attack remains to be seen," he said. "So should we pay \$83.65 million for an asthma attack?"