



Office of Communications
FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Contact: Lee Whack
(215) 313-8849
lwhack@philasd.org

November 15, 2016

**SCHOOL DISTRICT ACCELERATES ITS WATER TESTING PROGRAM
TO BE COMPLETED BY JUNE 2017**

In addition, announces an expansion of its program to incorporate more water outlets

Philadelphia – Today the School District of Philadelphia announced that it was accelerating its lead water testing program and would finish completely in June of 2017, six months earlier than planned. The District also announced results in the final 18 schools in its Phase I testing schedule – 98% of the water outlets in the latest 18 schools pass the stricter water safety guidelines rate set by the district in the summer.

“We have developed a comprehensive Water Program that focuses on providing safe, accessible and appealing water for students in every school. Testing for lead concentration, installing hydration stations and promoting education on healthy lifestyles continue to remain key aspects of our plan,” said District Chief Operating Officer Fran Burns. “As part of that commitment we are not only dramatically accelerating our water testing timeline but expanding our lead water testing to add additional outlets throughout schools including nurse’s offices and cold water kitchen sinks.”

The District’s newly announced plan includes:

- All drinking water outlets will be tested by June 2017.
- Outlets above the Action Level of 15 ppb will be either replaced with new drinking water units or removed from service permanently.
- There will be a minimum of one drinking water fountain per 100 students per floor of every school.
- All drinking water outlets will be upgraded to newer, hydration stations, over time.
- There will be an effort to replace signs above sinks to encourage hand-washing and to direct children to drink water from fountains.
- Expanding testing to additional outlets in schools, including nurse’s offices and cold water kitchen sinks.

As part of its lead water testing program the district implemented a more stringent water safety retesting threshold of 15 parts per billion (ppb), which is below the national EPA measurement of 20 ppb. 92% of water outlets passed successfully in the 676 water outlets tested in 40 schools as part of the district’s Phase I lead water testing program. Any water outlet above the threshold is shut off within 24 hours. A plan to repair/replace the outlet and retest the outlet is then put in place. No water outlet will be reopened until it meets the below 15 ppb standard.

-continued-



Office of Communications

Currently there are no Federal or EPA regulations for retesting drinking water. As part of this retesting plan the school district will begin a 4-year cycle of retesting all drinking water outlets in the district. In August as part of the School District's first-ever sustainability plan, GreenFutures, the District began a year long \$1 million initiative to install three hydration stations in every school by the end of the 2016-2017 school year. To date over 300 hydration stations have been installed in schools across the district.

Parents receive a letter notifying them of specific school results on a water outlet by water outlet basis. More detailed information on the school test results will be posted on the School District's website at www.philasd.org/waterresults.

This retesting program is intended to build upon the School District's Safe Drinking Water Program which tested all sources of potable water in 293 buildings between the years 2000 and 2010. Nearly 30,000 drinking water outlets were tested and all tested outlets that remain in service produced results that were below the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency's action level for lead in water of 20 parts per billion (ppb) and were safe for drinking. At the conclusion of the program all school buildings received final test reports indicating the findings for each potable water outlet and its compliance with USEPA and Philadelphia Department of Public Health guidelines.

The District's water testing program is based on national models and when the district began the program in August schools were randomly chosen based on meeting the following criteria:

- Schools located in areas where children have the highest blood lead levels
- Buildings built before and not renovated after January 1991
- Geographical and learning network location
- The age of the students (with priority given to elementary schools and pre-K)
- The high schools where students and/or principal asked to have water tested

In May, the School District formed a Safe Drinking Water Technical Advisory Committee to provide guidance on a retesting approach. Committee members included experts from the Philadelphia Water Department, USEPA, PDPH, and the Philadelphia Federation of Teachers Union Health & Welfare Fund. The committee assisted in developing the District retesting approach and protocol. The water sample collection, testing, analysis, and chain-of-custody protocol will be conducted by an independent state certified analytical laboratory.

###