



**Office of Communications**  
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**SCHOOL DISTRICT EXPANDS DRINKING WATER  
RE-TESTING PROGRAM TO EVERY SCHOOL**

*In August the District instituted a stronger water safety threshold of 15 PPB*

**Philadelphia** – In August, in response to recent public health concerns about lead in water nationally, The School District of Philadelphia began a water quality re-testing project in 40 schools due to a national public health concern on drinking water. This was designed to test for lead concentration in drinking water to ensure compliance with the current U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (USEPA) and Philadelphia Department of Public Health (PDPH) guidelines. Today the School District announced expanding testing to every school in the district in an expedited process over the next 18 months as well as providing results of 22 schools tested to date.

“In August we instituted a stronger water safety retesting threshold of 15 parts per billion (ppb), which is below the national EPA measurement of 20 ppb. During our re-testing of a sample of schools if a water fountain did not pass our stricter standard that specific water outlet was shut down within 24 hours of the result, per our plan”, said District Chief Operating Officer Fran Burns.

“We have developed a 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 are key aspects of our plan. Today we are announcing that over the next 18 months the District will re-test every drinking water outlet in every school.”

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.

The district has so far tested 26 of the 40 schools it had scheduled to test this year, with results for 22 of the 26 schools to date. 86% of water outlets passed the stricter water safety guidelines and those that failed were shut off within 24 hours of the test result. A plan to repair the outlets and retest them has been put in place and no water outlet will be reopened until it meets the below 15 ppb standard.

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 200 hydration stations have been installed in 64 schools.



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Parents will receive a letter notifying them of specific school results water outlet by water outlet. More detailed information on the school test results will be posted on the School District's website at [www.philasd.org/waterresults](http://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 PDPH lead guidelines.

The district's water testing program is based on national models and when the district began the program in August schools were chosen were based 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.

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