

3.31.17 Newark Drinking Water Update

Over the last year, the district has made an extensive effort to remediate lead in the water across our schools to ensure the health and safety of our students, faculty and staff. We are reaching out today to share important updates about work that has been completed, and our plans to bring schools that are currently using bottled water back online to city drinking water in the coming months.

Since learning about elevated lead levels last year, Newark Public Schools has worked aggressively to resolve this issue. Some of this work included:

- **Testing over 8,500 water sources** across all Newark Public School buildings (all schools).
- **Turning off over 400 drinking water sources** where there were elevated levels of lead detected and placing signage anywhere a non-drinking water source was elevated.
- **Spending nearly \$1 million** to ensure these tests were collected quickly and accurately and appropriate immediate action was taken.
- **Offering hundreds of free blood lead level tests to those families who desired it.** (Note: Of about 500 students tested at Newark sites, just 1 was found to be above action level of 10 micrograms per deciliter, as reported by [NY Times](#))

These actions last spring helped us accomplish our number one objective: to ensure that all NPS students have access to safe and clean drinking water.

Our staff has worked in close coordination with industry experts over the last year to put new systems in place and make sure water sources can be brought safely back online. **We are happy to report that we will begin a process to bring drinking water at all of our schools back online in a phased approach.** In fact, drinking water fountains will be fully operational in nine schools at the end of spring break, with the remaining schools being phased in over the late spring and summer. This phased approach will make sure that our facilities and plumbing staff can give each school the attention they need as each drinking source is turned back on.

When we bring each of these schools back online, families can be confident that we have taken the following steps to ensure our students and staff will only have access to safe drinking water:

- ✓ **We have conducted a comprehensive review of all available data** for the school to determine causes of elevated lead levels and identified a comprehensive plan for remediation at all drinking water fountains.
- ✓ **We have remediated all water fountains with elevated levels of lead** by replacing pipes, fixtures, or other necessary actions to get to the root cause of the issue.
- ✓ **We have re-sampled the water fountain to ensure that the remediation worked.** Each water fountain is only cleared to move forward if re-tests come in below the recommended action level. If test comes back above the recommended action level, plumbers continue remediation.

- ✓ **We have placed state-of-the-art filters on the water fountain.** These filters shut off if they **reach their capacity and will be managed and monitored by outside experts to guard against oversight.**
- ✓ **We have placed clear signage stating “DO NOT DRINK. USE FOR HANDWASHING ONLY” at all sinks and water sources that are either not filtered or intended for consumption.** It is important to note that lead in water is only damaging to children through chronic consumption or drinking.

As plans move forward, we will continue to provide all available information publicly at our **Drinking Water Resources page** at <http://www.nps.k12.nj.us/drinking-water-resources/>. There will be a report on each school being brought back online that shows the level of lead detected in the drinking sources, as well as a summary report for each group of schools when their phase is initiated.

As always, if you have any questions or concerns, you can **call us directly at 973-733-7333**. Thank you for your continued patience and cooperation as we work to resolve this important issue as quickly and carefully as possible.

Thank you,
Newark Public Schools