

**Screening Water Update in DPSCD Schools
Frequent Asked Questions (FAQ)
September 2018**

Detroit Public Schools Community District committed to proactively test all water outlets for lead and copper at every school. In the spring, Superintendent Nikolai Vitti initiated the districtwide water testing at all DPSCD school buildings to ensure the safety of students and employees.

At the end of August, initial results were returned for 24 schools. Higher than acceptable copper and/or lead levels were identified in 16 of the 24 schools at one or more water sources. The District immediately turned off the drinking water at these schools and water coolers were provided to each building based on the number of students and staff at each school.

In addition, due to the ratio of schools with elevated copper and/or lead levels compared to those without, even with no evidence that there are elevated levels of copper and/or lead in other schools where we are awaiting test results, to demonstrate an abundance of caution and concern for the safety of our students and employees, the District turned off all drinking water in all schools until a deeper and broader analysis can be conducted to determine long-term solutions.

All students and employees will have access to water coolers. District leaders actively engaged the media about this decision and notified internal stakeholders via a districtwide email, and families were notified through an automated message and a backpack letter home on the first day of school.

Below is a series of frequently asked questions and answers about the water issue to assist the community to better understand our decision to turn off drinking water in our schools.

IS DPSCD LEGALLY MANDATED TO CONDUCT THESE TESTS?

- No. The testing of water in schools is not required at the federal, state, or city level. This was a proactive, child-centric decision based on previous and isolated water testing that revealed water sources that produced elevated levels of copper and/or lead.

HOW MANY SCHOOLS ARE BEING TESTED?

- 106 schools
- All Elementary-Middle and High Schools
- All Adult Ed Centers
- All Career Technical Centers

WHAT TESTING PROTOCOL IS BEING UTILIZED?

- U. S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) Procedures indicate that higher than acceptable levels of lead or copper include:
 - \geq 15 parts per billion (ppb) for Lead
 - \geq 1,300 parts per billion (ppb) for Copper
- All samples are being analyzed at an accredited, third party drinking water laboratory.

WHO IS CONDUCTING THE TESTING?

- DPSCD has contracted with ATC Group, a licensed environmental consulting firm.

WHERE ARE WATER SAMPLES BEING COLLECTED IN THE SCHOOLS?

- Samples are being collected from all water outlets, including water fountains, bathroom and kitchen sinks.
 - It is important to note that our cafeteria food is prepared off-site. The majority of food is brought in “heat-and-serve” from our production kitchen.

CAN WATER STILL BE USED FOR HANDWASHING?

Yes. Sinks that are used to wash hands will still be functional unless high levels of copper and/or lead were detected. All drinking water outlets will be disabled. Signs will be placed over the hand washing sinks reminding users not to drink the water.

CAN STUDENTS PLAYING SPORTS STILL SHOWER?

Yes. Showers are still in use.

WILL TOILETS STILL BE USED?

Yes.

WHAT SHOULD A PARENT CONCERNED ABOUT THEIR CHILD BEING EXPOSED TO LEAD DO FOR ASSISTANCE?

The District does not have evidence of any negative health impact to children or staff due to the potential exposure to elevated levels of lead and/or copper. Please do the following if you have any medical concerns or questions:

- Contact your child’s pediatrician
- Contact the Detroit Health Department
- Contact the United Way for Southeastern Michigan’s 211 help line

WHAT IS THE CAUSE OF THE ELEVATED LEVELS OF COPPER AND/OR LEAD?

We have not identified a definitive cause at this point. Some suggest outdated plumbing in older schools led to copper and/or lead build up in pipes. Others suggest that the water fountain and sinks fixtures are outdated, which leads to copper and/or lead build up. The other possibility is that certain water sources that are not often used and therefore not frequently flushed out could have caused a build up of copper and/or lead. The elevated levels were found at new and older schools and within various water sources, from water fountains to sinks. This is why we suspended drinking water in all schools until answers to these questions are provided.

WHERE CAN WE FIND MY SCHOOL’S WATER TEST RESULTS?

Test results can be found on the District’s website at: detroitk12.org/content/drinking-water.

HOW LONG ARE THE SCHOOLS EXPECTED TO USE WATER COOLERS?

The District will continue to provide water coolers to all schools until a solution can be implemented at your child’s school to ensure the safety of students and staff.

WHAT IS THE HISTORY OF WATER TESTED IN THE DISTRICT?

In 2016, DPS tested the drinking water in all district schools. At that time, (3) three samples from each building were taken and analyzed for high levels of copper and/or lead. DPS worked in collaboration with the Detroit Health Department and the Mayor’s office, which provided a grant to conduct the testing. That testing cycle identified 20 schools with 2 or more high elevations of copper and/or lead levels.

DPS shut off those drinking water sources temporarily, the outlets were retested, as was the main water source and flush, and 10 schools came back with elevated levels. DPS then installed a DiHydro filtration systems in these 10 schools. In schools with only one source of concern, that source was turned off permanently.

When Superintendent Vitti was made aware of the DiHydro system when he arrived as superintendent in 2017, he instructed all water to be shut off in those 10 schools and water coolers were provided to all schools. The rationale behind that decision was rooted in the fact that at any moment a student could be exposed to elevated levels if the filtration system was not working or the water was not frequently used at isolated water sources.

In the spring of 2018, the 10 schools that were not treated were retested. 8 of 10 schools had elevated levels of copper and/or lead. Superintendent Vitti instructed the water to be shut off. Water coolers were provided. At this point, the district initiated water testing at all water sources in all schools.

Before the District shut off all drinking water in all schools, 34 schools were using water coolers due to results indicating elevated levels of copper and/or lead at one or more water sources.

DO OTHER CITY SCHOOLS TEST FOR WATER AND TO WHAT EXTENT IS THE TESTING?

As a traditional public school district we do not have jurisdiction over city charter schools and do not know of their water testing procedures. However, we have learned that the 2016 water testing did not include all water sources at schools. Although testing some sources was a step in the right direction, all sources were not tested. This means that other water sources could have higher levels of copper and/or lead that were not detected. This is why parents should advocate that all schools and all water sources be tested for copper and/or lead.

WHAT IS THE COST FOR PROVIDING WATER TO ALL SCHOOLS?

It will cost approximately \$200,000 for the first few months of the school year but we plan to post an RFP to have vendors compete for a larger and more comprehensive contract to provide drinking water. The District is currently providing water coolers through Absopure after engaging companies last year for a water cooler solution. To ensure financial stability, the District established a 10% reserve and a contingency to address unexpected challenges such as this.

HOW LONG WILL DRINKING WATER BE TURNED OFF AND WHAT ARE THE NEXT STEPS?

Drinking water will be turned off until we can ensure it is safe at all sources. We are bringing together engineering and water experts to determine a long-term solution. However, it is likely that this solution entails establishing a select group of new water sources in every school with strong cooling and filtration systems, regular testing, and updated piping.

IS THE DISTRICT ACCEPTING DONATIONS?

Yes. The best way to support the District is to provide water bottles to high schools, which need more water due to having more students and students using water for athletics. Please reach out directly to our high school principals. The District's contact for large-scale water donations is:

Toria Ward-Gilkey

Email: toria.ward-gilkey@detroitk12.org

Cell Phone: 313-460-3852