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PUBLIC SCHOOLS

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# Water Quality Update & Continuing Efforts

**Darienne B. Driver, Ed.D., Superintendent of Schools**

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# 2016 Water Testing Results and Conclusions

**94%** of all drinking fountains tested below the EPA standard of 15ppb (parts per billion).

**33%** of the drinking fountains tested indicate they are already at 1 ppb or less.

Water from all active MPS drinking fountains meets Environmental Protection Agency's (EPA) standards.

MPS has over 3,000 drinking fountains:

- 183 had levels above EPA standards; 122 have been replaced, retested, and placed back into service.
- The only water fountains in service are those that are below the EPA guidance of 15 ppb.

MPS is the only entity that has performed a proactive water-quality program.



# A Review of the Timeline and Process

- March 2016, the Department of Facilities and Maintenance Services (FMS) suggested a thorough and proactive process to reassure families that water in MPS buildings was safe for consumption.
- April 2016, the FMS team worked with the Milwaukee Health Department (MHD) to develop and finalize the water sampling plan and asked that MHD serve as the external validation consultant.
- From June 2016-September 2016:
  - Staff drew over 12,000 water samples from district buildings and independent labs performed the tests.
  - FMS staff reviewed the test results, and when any result was greater than the EPA standard of 15 parts per billion (ppb), they completely shut off the source of water and replaced the suspected piping component.
  - After replacing the component, staff took additional samples and sent to the labs for testing. Once test results were received and validated to be below the EPA standard, the fixture was put back in service. If tests had elevated levels, FMS staff worked to determine additional plumbing components that needed replacement.
  - No fixture was placed back in service until the tests results were under the EPA standards.

# A Review of the Timeline and Process

- August 2016-October 2016, MPS provided a variety of updates to the community.
  - To the Mayor the City of Milwaukee to relay information to the Water Commons group.
  - A supplementary parent and student update on our testing effort for those returning to MPS schools.
  - MPS staff answered multiple requests from Milwaukee's major news outlets in regards to the project's progress and approximate timetable to release results.
  - District staff attended the City of Milwaukee's Water Quality Task Force hearing to discuss results and efforts to-date, along with the overall scope of the project. The district was commended by the Task Force for its proactive efforts as the only school district and entity in the state of Wisconsin performing this level of due diligence on water quality.
- December 2016, the Milwaukee Health Department notified the district that the validation of all testing was complete and MPS could finalize the process for releasing all test results publicly.
- MPS released all test results on an interactive website and provided parents and students with a final progress letter.

# Maintaining Our Leadership Position

Phase 2: District goal is to implement a program focused on further reducing lead levels in an effort to exceed the EPA standard, coupled with a clear messaging protocol - which no entity within the United States could claim today.

The team has identified a three-year program that will require funding of \$1,000,000 per year to install filters on all 3,000 drinking fountains, with an emphasis on having at least one filter installed at every school by the start of the 2017-2018 school year.

Why 3 years?

- The only drinking fountains in service are those that are below the EPA guidance of 15 ppb, and 33% of all drinking fountains tested at 1 ppb or lower. This is a program to go above and beyond the EPA standard.
- Insufficient number of FMS staff to complete work in-house or to administratively oversee and coordinate this volume of contractor work.
- Significant amount of new construction work (\$1.5 billion) in SE WI – no mechanical plumbing firms would entertain a bid with this magnitude and time constraints.

Funding is included in the proposed FY18 budget to complete year one of the 3-year program. United Way is also interested in assisting our strategies to augment the funding for this initiative.

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