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Superintendent of Schools

Board of Directors  
Andrea Downs  
Damian Greene  
Dr. Julie Hadden  
Linda Racicot  
Shawn Nowlin

October 16, 2018

Dear South Whidbey School Community:

In 2017, the Legislature directed the Washington State Department of Health to test for lead in drinking water in public schools in an effort to reduce children's overall exposure to lead in the environment. As part of our commitment to ensuring the health of our students and staff is protected, we recently volunteered to participate in this program. Prior to this, in 2016, shortly after the Flint Michigan water quality issues surfaced, the district did random water testing in all of the Maxwelton sites. Of the ten samples taken at that time, the results for lead ranged from ND (not detected) to .006 mg/L.

### **What did we learn?**

On October 10, 2018, we sampled sixty-two (62) fixtures at South Whidbey Elementary School North Campus. This represents every fixture that provides drinking water to students or staff, or is used to prepare food. The testing was done prior to the school day before students were in the building *and water had been sitting in fixtures overnight. The first water out of the fixture is tested.*

Results show that seven (7) water samples at South Whidbey Elementary School North Campus had lead levels above the EPA's action level for lead, which is 20 parts per billion (ppb).

### **What are we doing?**

- Immediately after being notified of the results, we took each fixture out of service. The lead detected in our system is not from the well source, but comes from the distribution system. Fixtures are the most common source and the most easily addressed. All fixtures where the lead level tested above or near the 20 ppb will be replaced in the very near future.
- We are working closely with Department of Health to develop a permanent remediation plan.
- We will be replacing all the fixtures which tested near or above EPA's action level.
- We will re-test as needed to verify the mitigation efforts were effective.

### **Why is lead a problem?**

Children are exposed to lead from a variety of sources in their environments. Exposure sources include dust from old, deteriorating lead paint, contaminated soil, take-home exposures from parents who work

in certain industries, and many others. Each of these sources contribute to the amount of lead in the bodies of children.

It is important to reduce exposure from every source as much as possible. Children six years old and younger are the most susceptible to the effects of lead. Their growing bodies absorb more lead than adults and their brains and nervous systems are more sensitive to the damaging effects of lead. Even at very low levels of exposure to lead, children may experience effects including lower IQ levels, reduced attention span, hyperactivity, poor classroom performance, or other harmful physical and behavioral effects.

**How can I learn more?** Water testing results will be available at the district office and on our website [www.sw.wednet.edu](http://www.sw.wednet.edu). If you are concerned that your child has been exposed to lead for any reason ask your healthcare provider about having them screened for lead.

Sincerely,

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