

Drinking Water Access Policy for the Boston Public Schools

The availability of free, safe water for all students and staff in the Boston Public Schools is integral to the mission of the district in supporting healthy habits. All students must have access to water throughout the school day, at no cost. Not only is this the BPS policy, but it is a state law. In addition, federal law requires that water must be available at no cost during meal times wherever meals are served. This policy applies to all BPS schools.

The Boston Public Schools will at all times maintain Superintendent's Circular FMT-20 governing the preservation of clean and safe drinking water throughout and within each school community across the Boston Public Schools.

BPS will implement a transparent plan that ensures the ongoing assessment of the quality of drinking water and reporting of the status of water access. Superintendent's Circular FMT-20 will provide comprehensive guidelines for testing drinking water in schools. **All water sources used for drinking and food preparation will be tested annually** by using a set of strict testing protocols defined within Superintendent's Circular FMT-20. This testing protocol does not include bathroom and classroom sinks which should not be used for drinking. Boston Public Schools will adopt the standard for lead and copper levels in drinking water in schools and early education and care programs recommended by the Department of Environmental Protection (DEP) and/or the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA), whichever is more stringent. If either the federal or state standard is changed, BPS will adopt the more stringent standard ("BPS-adopted standard"). After every three years of data and implementation, BPS will revisit the testing protocols. Boston Public Schools will also contract with or hire a qualified contractor to oversee the testing protocols and reporting, communications, and infrastructure roll out when necessary.

BPS will immediately deactivate any online drinking water or food preparation units within the building whenever said units are found to have levels of lead in **drinking water that** exceed the BPS-adopted standard, will provide access to bottled water as needed, and will execute the water quality testing protocols within Superintendent's Circular FMT-20.

BPS will immediately implement a comprehensive communication protocol to notify families and staff in cases where elevated lead levels are discovered.

BPS will make all water quality data publicly available through the website page: bostonpublicschools.org/water and through annual notices home to families in multiple languages. BPS will also incorporate water quality testing results into the annual environmental inspections evaluation.

To ensure ongoing access to water, BPS will implement standard operating procedures for the routine cleaning and maintenance of all drinking water infrastructure, both for “**online**” and “**offline**” schools, including drinking fountains and bottled water dispensers with cups. In addition, School Wellness Councils will be required to create a water access goal and action steps as a part of their annual Wellness Action Plan.

BPS will educate, promote and communicate the importance and benefits of drinking water and all aspects of this policy to school leaders, staff, and families. Students will annually learn about the importance, benefits, and access to drinking water, through a required health and physical education curriculum.

BPS will report on the Water Access Policy implementation to School Committee on an annual basis.