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School Water quality now meets and exceeds standards

Drinking water quality at Seattle Public Schools continues to improve, reflecting the District's commitment to student health and safety. The first annual report for the Drinking Water Quality Program, released today, shows 93 percent of water sources in the 31 schools tested this year pass all requirements set forth in the Drinking Water Policy, up from 60 percent in 2004.

Replacement of water pipelines to improve water quality continues. In summer 2007, Rainier Beach high school received a partial water line replacement.

"Four years ago, the levels of lead found in school pipes were at unacceptable levels," said Fred Stephens, director of facilities for Seattle Public Schools. "As a result, the District chose to adopt water quality standards that are the strongest across the country and were more stringent than those recommended by the Environmental Protection Agency. This report shows marked improvement over the past four years. Today, we are meeting and exceeding our standards."

The Water Quality Policy was adopted by the Seattle School Board in 2004 in response to parent concerns about water quality in the schools. It prescribes periodic testing of each drinking water source in each school and other buildings operated by the District, coupled with reporting of results and remediation. The Board Policy sets criteria requiring that bottled water be provided, if necessary, to ensure that students and staff have ready access to drinking water.

Lead levels are the most important of the criteria tested. The School Board set the maximum allowable level for lead at 10 parts per billion (ppb), which is one-half the allowable level set by the US Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) for schools. Tests are also conducted of all drinking water sources for cadmium and copper.

Each school is tested at least every 3 years.

Future Annual Reports for the Drinking Water Quality Program will be issued each summer. All results are available on the District's Web site. For each building they include a summary of current status, test results from prior to 2004 and results of tests since 2004.

The complete report describes the status of the program through June 20, 2008, and is available at www.seattleschools.org/area/ehs/annualReport/2007-2008/AnnualReport.pdf.