



Some Boston school water fountains get special filters after lead concerns

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DAVID L. RYAN/GLOBE STAFF

A water cooler in a classroom at the Mary Curley K-8 school in Jamaica Plain.

By [Matt Rocheleau](#)

GLOBE STAFF JUNE 02, 2017

Boston Public School officials say drinking fountains that had been shut down because of concerns about high lead levels have been reactivated at four school buildings, after the installation of special filters.

The fountains have passed at least three consecutive rounds of testing for both lead and copper, they said.

The early success of the filter rollout is a welcome sign as the district [seeks to address](#) lead concerns at dozens of school buildings. It might also serve as a model for other schools, including [hundreds statewide](#), that are working to remove lead and copper from drinking water sources.

Previous efforts to fix drinking fountains at six Boston school buildings by repairing and upgrading plumbing [failed](#) when tests on some of them showed high lead levels after the work was finished.



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The buildings where filters were installed were: Josiah Quincy Elementary in Chinatown; Sarah Greenwood K-8 in Dorchester; Eliot K-8 Upper in the North End; and Another Course to College in Hyde Park.

Officials said filters are being installed at Boston Green Academy in Brighton and Boston Latin School in the Fenway, and plans call for them to be added at more schools in the coming months. The number will depend on how additional testing goes and on budget factors.

“BPS believes that the availability of free, safe water for all students and staff is integral to the district’s mission of supporting healthy habits,” BPS spokesman Daniel O’Brien said in a statement.

The district expects to spend about \$41,000 this fiscal year on new filters and fountain systems with filters. The cost can range from \$1,000 to \$5,000 per fountain.

Most city schools have used bottled water for drinking for nearly three decades, after testing in the 1980s found high lead levels.

As of mid-May, only 28 of more than 130 school buildings citywide had fountains in use, officials said.

Boston officials’ long-term goal is to restore drinking fountains for use at all schools citywide by 2025, if not sooner.

Testing last spring and summer, performed in the wake of the water crisis in Flint, Mich., turned up lead levels above regulatory standards at [several schools](#) where fountains were in use, prompting the district to shut down fountains and supply bottled water instead.

At four Boston schools where repairs failed, children might have drunk water tainted with lead after the fountains were [mistakenly turned on](#) before water testing was complete. That error prompted the school department to place two facilities employees on [administrative leave](#).

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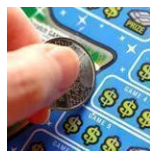
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