Dear Hidden River Middle School staff and families,

As part of the state's efforts to protect the health of all children, a new law (RCW 43.70.830 and RCW 28A.210.410) was enacted in 2021. This law addresses concerns about lead in school drinking water as part of a broader effort to reduce children's overall exposure to lead in the environment. Once the law was passed, the state legislature directed the Washington State Department of Health (DOH) to create protocols and procedures for testing school drinking water.

The law requires school drinking water to be tested every five years for lead in all public schools with buildings built or plumbing replaced before 2016. Testing for the presence and level of lead in drinking water must be conducted by the DOH or a school contractor **before June 30, 2026**. To meet this requirement, the Monroe School District arranged testing with the DOH, which was conducted in two phases at Hidden River Middle School, one in May 2023 and one in June 2023.

What We Have Learned

On May 4, 2023, DOH staff sampled 58 fixtures at Hidden River Middle School and the remaining 10 on June 7, 2023. This number of fixtures represents those that students have access to where it is reasonably foreseeable that the water may be used for drinking or food preparation. Monroe School District received the first set of DOH test results on May 25, 2023 and the second set on July 13, 2023. The test results show three water samples had lead levels above five ppb. Lead levels above five ppb require a school remediation plan and those that exceed 15 ppb must be shut off until a lead mitigation measure is implemented.

What We're Doing

- Fixtures with results above 5 ppb have been taken out of service. Two of these rooms, including the choral room, are not accessed by students.
- We are replacing the fixtures above 5 ppb and will keep these fixtures out of service until the DOH can conduct post-remediation follow-up testing.

Why Lead is a Concern

Children are exposed to lead from a variety of environmental sources. Each exposure contributes to the amount of lead in a child's body. Some common exposure sources include:

- Dust from old, deteriorating lead paint.
- Contaminated soil.
- Lead dust tracked into the home from external sources, such as parents and regular visitors who work in certain industries where lead is present.

While the likelihood of school drinking water **alone** causing an elevated blood lead level is very low, 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, children may experience effects, such as lower IQ levels, reduced attention span, hyperactivity, poor classroom performance, or other harmful physical and behavioral effects. Children over the age of eight are less susceptible to the impacts of lead exposure. Children who have been exposed to lead may not look or act sick.

Additional information about lead exposure, as well as how to prevent lead exposure, is available at doh.wa.gov/lead. You can also reach out to the DOH Childhood Blood Lead Program at 800-909-9898 or lead@doh.wa.gov for more information. If you are concerned that your child has been exposed to lead for any reason, ask your healthcare provider about having them tested for lead.

Where to Learn More

Lead test results are available at the district office and **on our website**. For more information about water quality in our schools, please contact Adam Denney, MSD Director of Facilities, at denneya@monroe.wednet.edu or (360) 804-2679.