August 28, 2026

Dear families and staff of Rochester Middle School,

As of 2021, Washington state law (RCW 28A.210.410 and RCW 43.70.830) requires drinking water in all K–12 public schools built, or with all plumbing replaced, before 2016 be tested for lead. The purpose of lead testing is to identify drinking water outlets that are potential sources of lead exposure. It is natural for lead to accumulate in **older** or **infrequently** used drinking water outlets. These outlets are identified through testing so they can be shut off or replaced to reduce exposure to lead from school drinking water.

What We've Learned

On June 10, 2026, sixty-four (64) drinking water outlets at RMS were sampled. Water from outlets used for drinking or food preparation was tested for lead by a state-accredited laboratory. Those samples were analyzed in mid-June, and we were notified July 16th, 2026, that the test results showed eighteen (18) outlets with elevated lead levels. Per RCW 28A.210.410, an elevated lead level means a lead concentration in drinking water that exceeds five parts per billion (ppb).

What We're Doing

Immediately upon receiving test results, water to outlets with elevated lead levels at or above 16ppb were shut off and signs posted explaining why the faucet was shut off. At RMS, this was five (5) outlets. The outlets will remain shut off until new fixtures are installed and a test is conducted.

The other thirteen (13) outlets at RMS tested in the range where an immediate shutoff was required. They all tested in the range that we could do retesting after cleaning and flushing the outlet. Rather than do that, the district has decided to replace the thirteen (13) and then go through the testing process once they have been replaced. These outlets have been flushed over the last several days.

The district is working closely with the Washington State Department of Health (DOH) to develop a remediation plan for reducing lead levels in drinking water. The plan can be found on the district website (link)

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. 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.

Where to Learn More

Lead test results are available at the district office and on our website (link). For more information about water quality in our schools, please contact Ed Dowell at edowell@rochester.wednet.edu or jblack@rochester.wednet.edu 360-273-9242. 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.