



# San Ysidro School District

*Quality education and opportunity  
for all students to succeed*

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**Julio Fonseca, Ed.D.**  
Superintendent

January 26, 2017

Dear San Ysidro School District Family,

Student safety is always at the forefront of everything we do – a secure learning environment is integral to ensuring our children achieve at the highest levels. With this in mind, we want to share some information about how we are addressing recent water quality concerns at La Mirada Elementary and confirming the safety of water provided at all schools in the District.

In October, school staff noticed discolored water from faucets while a company was pressurizing them to test for leaks. Discolored water has not been noticed by or reported to the District in the past. We immediately shut off all water to the school and provided bottled water to students and staff and hired a professional environmental firm to conduct water quality testing. Results showed that one faucet had slightly elevated levels of lead, copper and bacteria, while another had slightly elevated levels of copper. Water quality reports from the Otay Water District indicate this is not a source water issue, meaning that the water that is delivered to the school does not have elevated lead, copper or bacteria, but rather that it was added to the water from the aging faucets. We promptly replaced the two faucets with elevated results, and completed additional sampling of all faucets and fountains at La Mirada. We received the results of the more recent sampling on January 23, 2017 and these showed slightly elevated levels of lead at eight more fountains within the school, and the presence of bacteria at two sinks and a fountain. Based on these results, we will take the opportunity to replace all faucets and fountains at La Mirada as soon as possible, with a target of Mid-February for completion. In the meantime we have and will continue to provide bottled water at La Mirada until all faucets and fountains have been replaced. Due to the immediate response at La Mirada, the District believes that no student, teacher or staff member used the affected faucets after the discoloration was noticed. Similarly, we are not aware of any complaints of illness or other symptoms stemming from discolored water at La Mirada.

Just like school districts across the country, we're dealing with aging infrastructure. The presence of lead in the plumbing systems, faucets, and fountains is not entirely uncommon in older buildings. In fact, on January 17, 2017, the State of California announced a new initiative that will provide assistance to schools that request it in order to carry out voluntary sampling of this type. The District is in fact going beyond the level of sampling and response that program recommends.

In advance of that program and in an abundance of caution, the District has already begun taking the proactive steps to conduct its own water quality sampling and replace all fixtures at La Mirada and at two other schools in the District that have not yet been retrofitted with modernized plumbing – Smythe

4350 Otay Mesa Road, San Ysidro, CA 92173-1685 \* (619) 428-4476 Ext.3004 \* Fax (619) 428-9355 \* E-mail: [arturo.macias@sysd.k12.ca.us](mailto:arturo.macias@sysd.k12.ca.us)

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Elementary and San Ysidro Middle School. The faucets at both schools are being surveyed now, with a plan to complete replacement of faucets and fountains by summer 2017 in any event. Pending results of the sampling activity at Smythe and SYMS, the District has taken the proactive step of closing fountains in those schools and providing bottled drinking water. The remaining schools in the District were either built or renovated with modern, lead and copper free plumbing fixtures.

As a precaution, the District is also sampling water at all schools to provide an added assurance to our community. We will report the results of this sampling activity as it is completed. In the event that this sampling shows exceedances of the applicable water quality requirements for any faucets or fountains at other schools, the District will take steps to remove and replace those faucets and provide bottled water in the interim.

The San Ysidro School District takes student and staff safety concerns very seriously. We are thankful to our community for providing critical bond funding that helps us maintain safe learning environments, so that we can achieve our ultimate goal of ensuring our children are prepared for the next steps of their education. We will continue to communicate with you on this issue.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Julio Fonseca', with a long horizontal line extending to the right.

Julio Fonseca, Ed.D.  
Superintendent