

Communicating about **SCHOOL DRINKING WATER ISSUES**



A resource created collaboratively by



Michigan Association of
Superintendents & Administrators



SCHOOL DRINKING WATER ISSUES

A Toolkit for Michigan's Public School Leaders



“The state is conducting a statewide study of PFAS levels in groundwater, which is believed to be the first of its kind in the nation that is this widespread and robust.”

*-Governor Snyder's Deputy Press Secretary Tanya Baker
Great Lakes Now, Detroit Public Television, July 31, 2018*

As you are aware, school drinking water issues can be very complicated. Each situation is different. Always consider your school's policies, codes of conduct, local community needs, and your local climate as you address each instance. You may wish to contact your school district's legal counsel for advice.

This toolkit was prepared by:

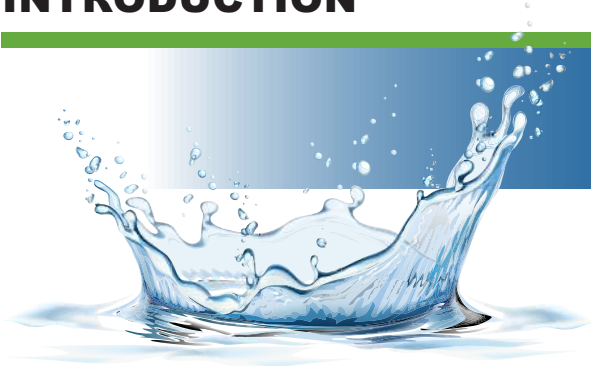
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INTRODUCTION



A Toolkit for Michigan's Public School Leaders

Public Relations is a comprehensive, planned, two-way communication process that helps build mutual understanding and support between an organization and its publics. The Public Relations process involves four steps: Research, Planning, Implementation, and Evaluation (known as RPIE):

1. **Research:** *Identify the issue and gather relevant information--through your own investigation/first-hand experience and/or that which is reported by others.*
2. **Planning:** *Use your research to develop a communication plan and messages; use identified tools to communicate with your target publics/audiences.*
3. **Implementation:** *Follow the steps in your communication plan to manage the information/seek input.*
4. **Evaluation:** *Examine your communication efforts to determine if communication goals were met. Use evaluation results to modify your communication plan, if needed.*

This communication toolkit is organized according to the RPIE (Research, Planning, Implementation, and Evaluation) Process.

Recent concerns about possible contaminants in drinking water have resulted in a statewide water testing initiative in Michigan. While it began with PFAS (Perfluoroalkyl and polyfluoroalkyl substances and related chemicals that have been used in firefighting foams, as well as in commercial household products and manufacturing facilities), this testing has shown that some districts have other contaminants present in their drinking water.

Whether or not your school's drinking water tests positive for PFAS or contaminants, it will be essential for you to effectively communicate with your staff, students, parents and community about your district's water quality. This toolkit is designed to help you communicate about your school's drinking water.

WATER TESTING BACKGROUND

Step 1: Research

STEP 1) RESEARCH: IDENTIFY THE ISSUE AND GATHER RELEVANT INFORMATION--THROUGH YOUR OWN INVESTIGATION/FIRST-HAND EXPERIENCE AND/OR THAT WHICH IS REPORTED BY OTHERS.

Water Testing Background Summary

- Since May, Michigan's PFAS Action Response Team has been testing community water supplies and school wells based on a list of 11,300 sites in Michigan where contaminants collectively known as PFAS could be found in materials or waste.
- Results are posted on the PFAs response website.
- Testing is expected to be completed by the end of the year (at which time water supplies for 75 percent of Michigan's population will have been tested).

Source: [PFAS Response Website](https://www.michigan.gov/pfasresponse/) (https://www.michigan.gov/pfasresponse/)

Taking Action to Protect the Public's Water

Perfluoroalkyl and polyfluoroalkyl substances (PFAS), such as perfluorooctanoic acid (PFOA) and perfluorooctanesulfonic acid (PFOS), are part of a group of chemicals used globally during the past century in manufacturing, firefighting and thousands of common household and other consumer products. In recent years, experts have become increasingly concerned by the potential effects of high concentrations of PFAS on human health. Although there is more to learn about PFAS and human health, the State of Michigan takes this issue seriously and is one of the first states in the nation to establish a clean-up standard for PFAS in groundwater used for drinking water.

Launched in 2017, the Michigan PFAS Action Response Team (MPART) is the first multi-agency action team of its kind in the nation. Agencies representing health, environment and other branches of state government have joined together to investigate sources and locations of PFAS contamination in the state, take action to protect people's drinking water, and keep the public informed as we learn more about this nationally emerging contaminant.*

Testing and Treatment

The State of Michigan is working proactively to identify locations where PFAS may be present as a contaminant. The Michigan Department of Environmental Quality (MDEQ) is conducting testing in drinking water, groundwater, lakes and streams, soils, sediments, wastewater, and the PFAS foam that can accumulate at lakes and rivers. MDEQ is also partnering with the Michigan Department of Health & Human Services (MDHHS), and the Michigan Department of Natural Resources (MDNR) to test fish and wildlife; MDHHS works with local health departments to issue any necessary health advisories.

For additional information, reference the Frequently Asked Questions or visit the News and Education page of the [PFAS Response Website](https://www.michigan.gov/pfasresponse/) (https://www.michigan.gov/pfasresponse/).

If you have additional questions or concerns regarding testing and/or treatment of PFAS, you may contact your local health department, or call the MDEQ Environmental Assistance Center at 1-800-662-9278.

**MPART is led by the Office of the Attorney General and includes representatives from the Michigan Departments of Environmental Quality; Health and Human Services; Military and Veterans Affairs; and Agriculture and Rural Development. Additionally, MPART receives support from the Michigan Departments of State Police; Natural Resources; Technology, Management and Budget; Treasury; Licensing and Regulatory Affairs; and Education. It also coordinates with the National Guard Bureau, U.S. Department of Defense, and local health departments and government agencies, according to the MPART website.*

QUESTIONS TO CONSIDER



Step 1: Research continued...

Items/Questions to Consider in your Research

Items you may want to obtain and consider, as well as questions you may want to ask in your research:

- Obtain copies of any and all communication from:
 - [Michigan Department of Environmental Quality](https://www.michigan.gov/deq/) (MDEQ)
(<https://www.michigan.gov/deq/>)
 - [Michigan Department of Health and Human Services](https://www.michigan.gov/mdhhs/) (MDHHS)
(<https://www.michigan.gov/mdhhs/>)
 - Your local health department and other involved parties
- Draw your facts directly from them.
- Monitor social media chatter.
- Make sure the School Communication Professional is part of the leadership group handling this issue.
- Review the Toolkit resources (see page 7).
- Brainstorm questions to ask about where water is used.

(Note: This is a sample list. It is NOT all-inclusive and will vary by school and district.)

For example:

Consider the water sources for:

- all active school buildings and educational sites
- all athletic fields (drinking and irrigation)
- all gardens (irrigation)
- before or after-school programs, preschool programs
- extra-curricular and athletic concessions
- bus garage, staff lounges, meeting rooms
- all other buildings/facilities/programs owned/operated by the district
- all other shared, shared-time or dual enrollment programs
- all cooperatively run programs like special education (on or off school sites)

Where is food prepared/grown?

- In your buildings or at a central commissary and delivered?
- Is the central commissary affected?
- Is additional food prep done at individual schools?
- Do you have farm-to-school programs with foods irrigated by local water sources?

RESOURCES

Step 1: Research continued...

Websites and Other Online Resources to Consider in your Research

Michigan Department of Environmental Quality (MDEQ) [PFAS Response Website](https://www.michigan.gov/pfasresponse/)

(<https://www.michigan.gov/pfasresponse/>)

and [Toolkit for Schools](https://www.michigan.gov/pfasresponse/0,9038,7-365-86513_86548_86555---,00.html)

(https://www.michigan.gov/pfasresponse/0,9038,7-365-86513_86548_86555---,00.html)

Michigan League of Conservation Voters [PFAS Resource Center](https://michiganlcv.org/pfas/)

(<https://michiganlcv.org/pfas/>)

[PFAS in your Drinking Water Fact Sheet](https://www.michigan.gov/documents/pfasresponse/PFAS_in_Drinking_Water_624844_7.pdf)

(https://www.michigan.gov/documents/pfasresponse/PFAS_in_Drinking_Water_624844_7.pdf)

[Interim PFAS Guidance for Clinicians](https://www.michigan.gov/documents/pfasresponse/pfas_clinician_fact_sheet_508-Updated_May_2018_629231_7.pdf)

(https://www.michigan.gov/documents/pfasresponse/pfas_clinician_fact_sheet_508-Updated_May_2018_629231_7.pdf)

[Agency for Toxic Substances and Disease Registry PFAS FAQs](https://www.atsdr.cdc.gov/pfc/docs/pfas_fact_sheet.pdf)

(https://www.atsdr.cdc.gov/pfc/docs/pfas_fact_sheet.pdf)

[Talking to Your Doctor about Exposure to PFAS](https://www.atsdr.cdc.gov/pfc/docs/Talking_to_Doctor.pdf)

(https://www.atsdr.cdc.gov/pfc/docs/Talking_to_Doctor.pdf)

[Environmental Protection Agency Fact Sheet](https://www.epa.gov/sites/production/files/2016-05/documents/drinkingwaterhealthadvisories_pfoa_pfos_5_19_16_final_1.pdf)

(https://www.epa.gov/sites/production/files/2016-05/documents/drinkingwaterhealthadvisories_pfoa_pfos_5_19_16_final_1.pdf)

Kent County Health Department video: [PFAS FAQ with Medical Director Dr. Mark Hall](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=N1MkpRugsh8&feature=youtu.be)

(<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=N1MkpRugsh8&feature=youtu.be>)

COMMUNICATION PLAN GUIDE

Step 2: Planning



STEP 2) PLANNING: USE YOUR RESEARCH TO DEVELOP A COMMUNICATION PLAN AND MESSAGES; USE IDENTIFIED TOOLS TO COMMUNICATE WITH YOUR TARGET PUBLICS/AUDIENCES.

Basic Communication Planning Guide

Ask your school communicator to help develop a Drinking Water Communication Plan. If your district does not have a school communicator on staff, you may consider contacting your ISD/RESA or the [Michigan School Public Relations Association](http://www.mspra.org) (www.mspra.org) for assistance.

If you are responsible for school communication, you can use this guide to assist with your two-way communication via the development of common key messages, communication strategies, and a communication plan targeted at essential audiences (e.g. staff, students, parents, community). The resulting communication may be achieved via individuals or teams, using a variety of communication tools.

The following steps will help you produce a focused, deliberate and impactful communication plan. (See next page for sample template. Numbers correspond to this planning guide.)

1. Identify/define project or issue.
 - What's the purpose?
 - What are the goals and objectives of sharing information about this program/project/issue?
 - What action do we want the audience(s) to take?
2. Identify target audiences.
 - Who really needs to know about this? (Who cares?)
3. Identify communication needs.
 - What does the audience need to know about this program/project/issue?
 - What will get them excited/make them care?
4. Identify information (re)sources.
 - Who has the information that you need to share?
 - Who understands this program/project/issue best?
5. Identify most effective communication tools.
 - How do each of the audiences prefer to receive information?
 - You can list several methods per audience. (e.g. email, voicemail or text message, notification system, social media, district website or app, meetings, announcements, fliers, newsletters, news releases, etc.).
6. Develop key messages.
 - Develop overall key messages.
 - Tailor messages for each of the tools you use.
 - Different tools necessitate varying levels of detail.
 - Not all messages may be shared with every audience, but be consistent with basic messages.
7. Assign tasks and develop timeline.
 - Who is going to do what, when?
 - Record it in a Communication Plan.
 - Use a different page for each audience.
8. Implement plan.
 - Work the plan; do the work!
 - What other resources are needed?
9. Evaluate.
 - What worked?
 - What didn't work?
 - What would you do differently?
10. Revise plan.
 - Use what you've learned to revise your communication plan for the next time.

COMMUNICATION PLAN TEMPLATE

Step 2: Planning continued...

_____ Communication Plan Date _____ Page _____

Audience (2*): _____

Goal(s)/Objective(s) (1*): _____

Key Message(s) (3, 6*): _____

| Communication Tools/Activity: (5*) | Responsible Person(s): (7*) | Timeline/ Deadline: (7*) | Resources Needed: (4, 8*) | Evaluate: (9, 10*) |
|------------------------------------|-----------------------------|--------------------------|---------------------------|--------------------|
| | | | | |
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| | | | | |

*Numbers correspond to 10 steps in "Basic Communication Planning Guide."
 Planning tool courtesy of Michigan School Public Relations Association (MSPRA) members.

MESSAGE POINTS-ADDRESSING THE AUDIENCE

Step 2: Planning continued...



Whether or not your school's drinking water has tested positive for PFAS or other contaminants, it will be essential for you to communicate with your staff, students, parents and community about your district's water quality. Here are the top points to consider when addressing your audiences.

Expressions of Compassion and Concern

- We hear your concerns about the safety of the drinking water at our local schools and we understand those concerns.
- The health and safety of our students and staff are our top priorities.
- This is a complicated topic because the science on PFAS (pee-fahs) is still evolving, and also because most people don't know what PFAS are.
- The Michigan Department of Environmental Quality (MDEQ) has produced easy-to-understand fact sheets about PFAS that clearly explain what it is and the main sources of exposure. You are encouraged to read that information, which can be found on [MDEQ's website](http://www.michigan.gov/PFASresponse). (<http://www.michigan.gov/PFASresponse>)
- We are compiling information that's important for you to know and will share it [in a letter/email/ on our website].
- We are staying in contact with our local health officials to monitor the situation and any changes. We encourage you to do the same.
- We will be forthcoming and transparent throughout this entire process.

MESSAGE POINTS-ACTION STEPS

Step 2: Planning continued...

Action Steps Being Taken

- We are in communication with our local health department, the Michigan Department of Environmental Quality and the Michigan Department of Health and Human Services.
- As educators, we do not have the level of expertise necessary to make judgments on acceptable levels of PFAS in our water supply, and that's why we are relying on the professionals who are experts in this subject matter.
- We are fully prepared to provide other water sources based on the water testing results and the direction of government officials.
- What we do know is that the science on PFAS is still evolving, and that a limit of 70 ppt is considered safe by the experts.
- A part per trillion is equal to one drop of water in 20 olympic-size swimming pools.
- The water at our schools [is being tested/was tested/is scheduled to be tested].
- While we are waiting for those results, we are researching possible next steps in case action is needed.
- [Share possible remediation tactics if information is available.]
- When the test results come back, we will share them with staff, students, parents and the community.
- Again, we will be forthcoming and transparent throughout this whole process.

USING YOUR DISTRICT WEBSITE

Step 3: Implementation



STEP 3) IMPLEMENTATION: FOLLOW THE STEPS IN YOUR COMMUNICATION PLAN TO MANAGE THE INFORMATION/SEEK INPUT.

So you've had your water tested and there is an issue. Now what?

It's time to follow your communication plan.

- Communicate with your audiences.
- Work closely with the MDEQ and the Public Health Department.
- Contact your attorney.
- Communicate with your board and staff.
- Communicate with your students/parents/community.
- Communicate with the media.
- Use this toolkit.
- Reach out to MASA and/or MSPRA for help.

COMMUNICATE WITH YOUR AUDIENCE

Step 3: Implementation continued...

Consider posting these items on your website:

- News release
- Community notification letter
- Letter from MDEQ
- Actual test results
- Link to PFAS website
- FAQs developed for your district's situation that can be added to over time

SAMPLE: LETTER TO PARENTS-LOWELL AREA SCHOOLS

Step 3: Implementation continued...



LOWELL AREA SCHOOLS

300 High Street
Lowell, Michigan 49331

Phone: 616.987.2500
Fax: 616.987.2511
www.lowellschools.com

August 15, 2018

Dear Lowell Parents:

The Michigan Department of Environmental Quality (MDEQ) has begun a statewide initiative to test drinking water from all schools that use well water and community water supplies. The test is looking for a group of manmade chemicals called per- and polyfluoroalkyl substances (PFAS). MDEQ is taking this precautionary step of testing these drinking water sources to determine if public health actions are needed.

It is not uncommon to find low levels of PFAS in drinking water supplies, as PFAS can be found in fire-fighting foams, stain repellants, nonstick cookware, waterproof clothing, food wrappers, and many other household products. They do not break down in the environment and move easily in water.

The U.S. Environmental Protection Agency's (EPA) acceptable limit for PFAS in drinking water, perfluorooctanoic acid (PFOA) and perfluorooctane sulfonate (PFOS) was set at 70 parts per trillion (ppt, equal to 70 ng/L) for PFOA and PFOS combined, or individually if only one is present. Accordingly, the State of Michigan is using 70 ppt for decision making purposes.

Alto Elementary was tested by AECOM, MDEQ's contractor. The results show that of the PFOA and PFOS tested, PFOA and PFOS were not detected, but total tested PFAS measured 23 parts per trillion. The level is below the EPA's lifetime health advisory (LHA) level of 70 parts per trillion.

If you have additional questions or would like to see the test results regarding PFAS, I would encourage you to go to the Michigan PFAS Action Response Team website or to the Kent County Health Department website. Even though the test results are below federal limits, we will continue to work with MDEQ and the Health Department to ensure our water is safe for staff and students. Lowell Area Schools is committed to providing quality drinking water.

Educationally,

Greg Pratt
Superintendent

Step 3: Implementation continued...

Central Montcalm Public School Board of Education

1480 S. Sheridan Rd./P.O. Box 9 Stanton, Michigan 48888
Phone: (989) 831-2000 Fax: (989) 831-2010
www.central-montcalm.org

August 23, 2018

RE: Per- and Polyfluoroalkyl Substances (PFAS)

Dear Parent and/or Guardian:

I want to update you on the results we received from the Michigan Department of Environmental Quality (MDEQ) on our HS/MS drinking water. The MDEQ has begun a statewide initiative to test drinking water from all schools that use well water and community water supplies. The test is looking for a group of manmade chemicals called per-and polyfluoroalkyl substances (PFAS). MDEQ is taking this precautionary step of testing these drinking water sources to determine if public health actions are needed.

It is not uncommon to find low levels of PFAS in drinking water supplies, as PFAS can be found in fire-fighting foams, stain repellants, nonstick cookware, waterproof clothing, food wrappers, and many other household products. They do not break down in the environment and move easily into water.

The EPA set a LHA level for two PFAS in drinking water, perfluorooctanoic acid (PFOA) and perfluorooctane sulfonate (PFOS). The LHA level is 70 parts per trillion (ppt, equal to 70 ng/L) for PFOA and PFOS combined, or individually if only one is present. The EPA has not set health advisory levels for other PFAS compounds. The State of Michigan is using 70 ppt for decision making purposes.

Central Montcalm was tested by AECOM, MDEQ's contractor. The test results can be found on the Michigan PFAS Action Response Team website, www.michigan.gov/pfasresponse. The results show that of the PFOA and PFOS tested, 19 were found in the water. The level is well below the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency's (EPA) lifetime health advisory (LHA). Central Montcalm Elementary is on a municipal water supply and the Upper Elementary is on a different well. Both are being tested as well. Once we have results, we will release them to families.

Central Montcalm is committed to providing our students and staff with quality drinking water. We are working closely with MDEQ to maintain the quality of your water.

For health related questions, contact the Michigan Department of Health and Human Services (MDHHS) at 1-800-648-6942 or visit one of the websites below. For information on PFAS including possible health outcomes, visit these websites:

- State of Michigan PFAS Action Response Team (MPART) website serving as the main resource for public information on PFAS contamination in Michigan www.michigan.gov/pfasresponse
- Agency for Toxic Substances and Disease Registry (ASTDR) website including health information, exposure, and links to additional resources www.atsdr.cdc.gov/pfas
- United States Environmental Protection Agency (U.S. EPA) website including basic information, U.S. EPA actions, and links to informational resources www.epa.gov/pfas

Sincerely,

Amy Meinhardt
Superintendent

SAMPLE: LETTER TO PARENTS-EIGHTCAP

Step 3: Implementation continued...



904 Oak Drive
Greenville, MI
48838
P: 616.754.9315
TTY: 711
F: 616.754.9310
www.eightcap.org

August 6, 2018

RE: Per- and Polyfluoroalkyl Substances (PFAS), EightCAP Ionia County Outreach Office

Dear Community Member:

The Michigan Department of Environmental Quality (MDEQ) has begun a statewide initiative to test drinking water from all schools that use well water and community water supplies. According to the MDEQ, the purpose of the test is to detect a group of manmade chemicals called per- and polyfluoroalkyl substances (PFAS). MDEQ is taking this precautionary step of testing these drinking water sources to determine if public health actions are needed. EightCAP participated in this initiative which included having water samples tested from the well at its Ionia County Outreach Office (5827 Orleans Road in Orleans). This facility houses the agency's Orleans Head Start Center, program intake offices, meeting facilities, and other staff offices.

The U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) set a lifetime health advisory (LHA) level for two PFAS in drinking water, perfluorooctanoic acid (PFOA) and perfluorooctane sulfonate (PFOS). The LHA level is 70 parts per trillion (ppt, equal to 70 nanograms/Liter) for PFOA and PFOS combined, or individually if only one is present. The EPA has not set health advisory levels for other PFAS compounds. The State of Michigan is using 70 ppt for decision-making purposes.

The water supply at EightCAP's Ionia County Outreach Office was tested by AECOM, MDEQ's contractor. The test results can be found on the Michigan PFAS Action Response Team website, www.michigan.gov/pfasresponse. The results are also posted at the Ionia County Outreach Office and on the EightCAP website, www.8cap.org. EightCAP received the test results on August 3, 2018. Among other things, the results show that:

- no detectable levels of PFOA nor PFOS were found in the water;
- a PFAS compound, PFBS, was found in the water at a level of 180 ppt;
- a PFAS compound, PFHxA, was found in the water at a level of 2 ppt; and,
- the combined level of PFAS compounds in the water supply at this facility is 182 ppt.

The EPA has not set LHA levels for PFBS nor for PFHxA. EightCAP is working with the MPART and the Ionia County Health Department to address the presence of these compounds in its Orleans facility's water supply. EightCAP will provide bottled water for drinking and cooking immediately, will work with water treatment professionals to discuss long-term measures to reduce the levels in the water supply, and other measures as more information becomes available about these compounds. In addition to a second test to verify the initial results, the agency will also continue to monitor the levels on at least a quarterly basis and cooperate with the MDEQ with regard to additional water testing and the MPART investigation. EightCAP is committed to providing our clients, students, and staff with quality drinking water, and is working closely with MDEQ and the Ionia County Health Department to do so.

Individuals concerned about exposure to PFAS should contact the Michigan Department of Health and Human Services' Toxicology Hotline at 800-648-6942. Anyone seeking direct one-on-one assistance or referral to the Michigan Department of Environmental Quality network of technical staff should call 800-662-9278 from 8:00 a.m. to 4:30 p.m., Monday - Friday. You can also send an email to deq-assist@michigan.gov.

For information on PFOS, PFOA, and other PFAS, including possible health outcomes, the MDEQ is directing individuals to the following websites:

- State of Michigan PFAS Action Response Team (MPART) website serving as the main resource for public information on PFAS contamination in Michigan: www.michigan.gov/pfasresponse
- United States Environmental Protection Agency (USEPA) website including basic information, USEPA actions, and links to informational resources: www.epa.gov/pfas
- Agency for Toxic Substances and Disease Registry (ATSDR) website including health information, exposure, and links to additional resources: www.atsdr.cdc.gov/pfas

Sincerely,

Daniel Petersen
President, EightCAP

SAMPLE: LETTER TO PARENTS-TRI COUNTY AREA SCHOOLS

Step 3: Implementation continued...



TRI COUNTY AREA SCHOOLS
Educational Service Center

August 3, 2018

ALLEN CUMINGS, SUPERINTENDENT OF SCHOOLS

Dear Parents and Community,

In keeping with our commitment of open communication, I want to inform you of a recent issue involving our middle school. With safe drinking water in the news these days, we are committed as a district to provide our students and staff with a positive and safe environment.

The Michigan Department of Environmental Quality (MDEQ) has begun a statewide initiative to test drinking water from schools using well water and community water supplies to determine if public health action is needed. The test identifies manmade chemicals called per-and polyfluoroalkyl substances (PFAS). Since PFAS break down slowly and move easily into water, it is not uncommon to find low levels of PFAS in drinking water. They are also found in stain repellants, nonstick cookware, waterproof clothing, food wrappers, and other household products.

The U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) has suggested limits for two PFAS in drinking water, perfluorooctanoic acid (PFOA) and perfluorooctane sulfonate (PFOS). The EPA has not set health advisory levels for other PFAS compounds. All Tri County Area Schools are being tested by AECOM, the MDEQ's contractor.

On August 2, 2018, the district received results showing that the Middle School tested at 62 parts per trillion (ppt). This is slightly below the EPA required limits for PFOA and PFOS of 70 parts per trillion. PFAS were not detected at Tri County High School. The elementary schools are on municipal water and are being tested and we will release the results once they are received.

Tri County Area Schools is committed to providing our students, staff and community with quality drinking water. We are working closely with MDEQ and will investigate the source of the PFAS issue at the Middle School. Even though the test results at the Tri County Middle School are below federal limits, Tri County Area Schools is taking the following measures to ensure safe drinking water:

1. Providing bottled water for drinking and meal preparation (drinking fountains will not be available for use)
2. Retaining an independent Environmental Engineering firm
3. Working with the MDEQ to identify a plan with a timeline to address this issue
4. Working with MDEQ to evaluate alternative water sources
5. Cooperating with the MDEQ with regard to additional water testing and its investigation

We will keep you updated as we work with MDEQ to resolve this issue. Our priority is the health and safety of our students, staff and community. A frequently asked question document will be provided in the coming weeks. We are looking forward to a great 2018-19 school year; if you have any questions or concerns, please don't hesitate to contact our central office. Thank you for your continued support and partnership!

Sincerely,

Allen Cumings
Superintendent

SAMPLE: LETTER TO PARENTS-REETHS PUFFER

Step 3: Implementation continued...

REETHS-PUFFER SCHOOLS
991 W. Giles Road, Muskegon, MI 49445
Phone: (231) 719-3101 - Facsimile: (231) 744-9497



August 17, 2018

Dear Reeths-Puffer Parents and Staff,

If you follow the news, you are aware of PFAS being found in drinking water across the state. This summer the Michigan Department of Environmental Quality (MDEQ) began testing at schools that rely on well water. This testing is being done across our state and is focused on finding manmade chemicals called per- and polyfluoroalkyl substances, also known as PFAS.

It is not uncommon to find low levels of PFAS in drinking water supplies, as PFAS can be found in fire-fighting foams, stain repellants, nonstick cookware, waterproof clothing, food wrappers, carpet, and many other household products. They are a problem because they do not break down in the environment and move easily in water.

Both the MDEQ and the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency's (EPA) have set the acceptable limit for PFAS in drinking water, perfluorooctanoic acid (PFOA) and perfluorooctane sulfonate (PFOS) as 70 parts per trillion for PFOA and PFOS combined. A part per trillion is equal to one drop of water in 20 Olympic-size swimming pools.

All three school buildings that rely on well water have been tested. PFAS were only detected at Twin Lake Elementary and measured 14 parts per trillion. This level is well below the EPA's advisory level of 70 parts per trillion.

This means that according to EPA and MDEQ standards, Twin Lake Elementary School's water source is acceptable for drinking and for all other uses. With that being said, water monitoring will continue.

If you have additional questions, or would like to see the test results regarding PFAS, please go to the Michigan PFAS Response website at www.michigan.gov/pfasresponse. There you will find answers to common questions and results from other parts of the state. The results from our district are scheduled to be posted on August 22 to the above website.

If you have any questions about this, feel free to give me a call. We are looking forward to welcoming our students and staff back to our buildings for another great school year!

Sincerely,

Steve Edwards
Superintendent, Reeths-Puffer Schools

SAMPLE: EMAIL TO PARENTS-TRI COUNTY AREA SCHOOLS

Step 3: Implementation continued...



TRI COUNTY AREA SCHOOLS
Educational Service Center

ALLEN CUMINGS, SUPERINTENDENT OF SCHOOLS

(Follow-up email after August 3, 2018 letter)

Dear Parents and Community,

I first want to thank you for your help in a great start to the school year. We had tremendous turnout at open house for each school and the transportation department. The early communication we received from parents helped create a smoother start to the school year. We also appreciate your feedback on some of the ways we can improve for the future. Thank you for the two way communication and the positive start to our school year.

We want to share that we have received the PFAS testing results from both Sand Lake and Howard City. Both cities had no detection of PFAS in their water systems. We appreciate the city informing us of these results and are pleased to share the water in both buildings is safe for consumption.

The district is continuing to work with Mid Michigan Department of Health, Department of Environmental Quality, and Prein and Newhof on solutions for the Middle School well water. We are working on a few concepts such as, a new and deeper well at the Middle School, connecting the Middle School to the soccer field well, or creating a central water system for both the High School and Middle School. Our goal is to find a positive and long term solution to the water issue. We will continue to keep you updated as we make progress toward a final solution.

We appreciate the community working with us to help Educate, Encourage and Empower each child. Go Vikings!!

Have a great weekend,

AI

SAMPLE: NEWS RELEASE-TRI COUNTY AREA SCHOOLS



Step 3: Implementation continued...



TRI COUNTY AREA SCHOOLS
Educational Service Center

August 3, 2018 - Press Release

ALLEN CUMINGS, SUPERINTENDENT OF SCHOOLS

While participating with an initiative sponsored by the Michigan Department of Environmental Quality (MDEQ), Tri County Area Schools received water test results on August 2, 2018, that indicated the Middle School water sources had tested positive for perfluorooctanoic acid (PFOA) and perfluorooctane sulfonate (PFOS). The results showed that the Middle School tested at 62 parts per trillion (ppt), slightly below the EPA required limits for PFOA and PFOS of 70 parts per trillion. PFAS were not detected at Tri County High School. The elementary schools are on municipal water and are currently being tested. District officials noted that the results will be released as soon as they are received.

“Tri County Area Schools is committed to providing our students, staff and community with quality drinking water,” said Superintendent Al Cumings. “We are working closely with MDEQ and are taking immediate steps to provide bottled water while investigating the source of the PFAS issue.”

Cumings went on to say that even though the test results at the Tri County Middle School are below federal limits, the district is taking the following measures to ensure safe drinking water is available:

1. Providing bottled water for drinking and meal preparation (immediately drinking fountains will not be available for use)
2. Retaining an independent Environmental Engineering firm
3. Working with the MDEQ to identify a plan with a timeline to address this issue
4. Working with MDEQ to evaluate alternative water sources
5. Cooperating with the MDEQ with regard to additional water testing and its investigation

District officials noted that with safe drinking water an issue of concern across the state, they had been cooperating on an initiative with the Michigan Department of Environmental Quality (MDEQ) to test drinking water from schools using well water and community water supplies. The initiative is designed to determine if public health action is needed.

The testing process identifies man-made chemicals called per- and polyfluoroalkyl substances (PFAS). Since PFAS break down slowly and move easily into water, it is not uncommon to find low levels of PFAS in drinking water. They are also found in stain repellants, nonstick cookware, waterproof clothing, food wrappers, and other household products.

The U.S. Environmental Protection Agency's (EPA) has suggested limits for two PFAS in drinking water, perfluorooctanoic acid (PFOA) and perfluorooctane sulfonate (PFOS). The EPA has not set health advisory levels for other PFAS compounds. All Tri County Area Schools are being tested by AECOM, the MDEQ's contractor.

“We will keep our community updated as we work with MDEQ to resolve this issue. Look for a Frequently Asked Questions document soon to come,” said Superintendent Cumings. “The health and safety of our students and staff members remains our number one priority.”

“We are looking forward to a great 2018-19 school year,” said Cumings, “I want to express my thanks to the many parents and community members who continue to express support for our district and work hard on behalf of our students. Together we are educating, encouraging and empowering our students.”

Community members and parents are advised to contact the District's central office if there are questions and concerns on this issue or related to issues around the start of school year.

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SAMPLE: NEWS RELEASE-EIGHTCAP

Step 3: Implementation continued...

Contact: Dan Petersen, President
Telephone: (616) 754-9315 x.3336
E-mail: danielp@8cap.org
Website: www.8cap.org
FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
August 6, 2018



PFAS Compounds Detected at EightCAP's Orleans Facility

ORLEANS – EightCAP, Inc. participated in the Michigan PFAS Action Response Team's (MPART) initiative to proactively test certain water supplies for PFAS contamination. On August 3, MPART shared the test results from water samples taken from the well-supplied water at EightCAP's Ionia County Outreach Office (5827 Orleans Rd in Orleans) with agency officials.

The results indicated that PFAS compounds were present. The facility houses the agency's Orleans Head Start Center, program intake offices, meeting facilities, and other staff offices. The results showed no detectable levels of the compounds PFOS and PFOA, the two types of PFAS compounds for which the United States Environmental Protection Agency has established a non-regulatory Lifetime Health Advisory (LHA) levels. However, two PFAS compounds were detected: PFBS at 180ppt, and PFHxA at 2ppt. According to the MDEQ, the USEPA has not set LHA levels for these compounds because not enough is known about them.

"EightCAP is working closely with state and local officials to take immediate steps to eliminate consumption of well water at the facility and to provide notification to the public," said EightCAP President Dan Petersen. "The notice that EightCAP has received from the state, along with the summary report, have been posted on the EightCAP website, www.8cap.org. EightCAP is committed to providing all staff, clients, and visitors with quality drinking water."

EightCAP is working with the MPART and the Ionia County Health Department to address the presence of these compounds in its Orleans facility's water supply. EightCAP will provide bottled water for drinking and cooking immediately, will work with water treatment professionals to discuss long-term measures to reduce the levels in the water supply, and other measures as more information becomes available about these compounds. In addition to a second test to verify the initial results, the agency will also continue to monitor the levels on at least a quarterly basis and cooperate with the MDEQ with regard to additional water testing and the MPART investigation.

Individuals concerned about exposure to PFAS should contact the Michigan Department of Health and Human Services' Toxicology Hotline at 800-648-6942. Anyone seeking direct one-on-one assistance or referral to the Michigan Department of Environmental Quality network of technical staff should call 800-662-9278 from 8:00 a.m. to 4:30 p.m., Monday - Friday. You can also send an email to deq-assist@michigan.gov.

For information on PFOS, PFOA, and other PFAS, including possible health outcomes, the MDEQ is directing individuals to the following websites:

- State of Michigan PFAS Action Response Team (MPART) website serving as the main resource for public information on PFAS contamination in Michigan: www.michigan.gov/pfasresponse
- United States Environmental Protection Agency (USEPA) website including basic information, USEPA actions, and links to informational resources: www.epa.gov/pfas
- Agency for Toxic Substances and Disease Registry (ATSDR) website including health information, exposure, and links to additional resources: www.atsdr.cdc.gov/pfas

###

SAMPLE: GLOSSARY-LOWELL SCHOOLS

Step 3: Implementation continued...



Lowell Area Schools
300 High Street Lowell, MI 49331
(616) 987-2500 fax: (616) 987-2511

Glossary

PFAS: Perfluoroalkyl and polyfluoroalkyl substances (PFAS) are a family of over 3,000 man-made chemicals used to make products resistant to heat, oil, stains, grease, and water. Due to their unique properties, PFAS are used in many industrial and consumer products. PFAS have been used to make non-stick surfaces on cookware and waterproof coatings for textiles and paper products. They are a key ingredient in many products that must flow freely, including paints, cleaning liquids, and fire-fighting foams. PFAS have been used in hundreds of ways across almost all industrial sectors, some of which are listed in the following table:

Common Uses of PFAS

| Consumer Products | Industrial Uses |
|--|---|
| Cookware (Teflon®, Nonstick) | Engineering Coatings |
| Food Containers | Medical Devices |
| Personal Care Products (Shampoo, Dental Floss) | Fire-Fighting Foam |
| Cosmetics (Nail Polish, Eye Makeup) | Insect Baits |
| Paints and Varnishes | Printer and Copy Machine Parts |
| Stain Resistant Chemicals (Scotchguard®) | Oil Production |
| Water Resistant Apparel (Gore-Tex®) | Textiles, Upholstery, Apparel and Carpets |
| Cleaning Products | Paper and Packaging |
| Electronics | Rubber and Plastics |

PFOA and PFOS: Perfluorooctanoic acid (PFOA) and perfluorooctanoic sulfonate (PFOS) are the two most common PFAS chemicals found in environmental samples. These two PFAS chemicals have the most available information in the literature regarding toxicity.

PFHxS and PFBS: Perfluorohexane sulfonate (PFHxS) and perfluorobutane sulfonate (PFBS) are the two PFAS chemicals that were detected in the Alto Elementary Water supply.

Lifetime Health Advisories (LHA): The United States Environmental Protection Agency (USEPA) establishes Lifetime Health Advisories (LHA) which are non-enforceable guidelines used to provide technical guidance to state agencies and other public health officials who have the primary responsibility for overseeing drinking water systems. The LHA is an estimate of the daily exposure of the chemical in water by the human population (including sensitive subgroups, such as infants) that is likely to be without an appreciable risk of harmful effects during a lifetime.

Step 3: Implementation continued...

Glossary continued...

The USEPA has established an LHA of 70 parts per trillion (ppt) for two PFAS chemicals, PFOA and PFOS. The LHA of 70 ppt is for combined PFOA + PFOS. In other words, you would add the concentrations of PFOA and PFOS in your water sample and compare the PFOA and PFOS combined concentration to the LHA of 70 ppt. The USEPA has not established LHA for any other PFAS chemicals, including the two PFAS chemicals (PFHxS and PFBS) detected in the Alto Elementary Water supply.

Minimal Risk Level (MRL): The Agency for Toxic Substances and Disease Registry [(ATSDR – which is a branch of the Centers for Disease Control (CDC))] establishes Minimal Risk Levels (MRL). MRLs are an estimate of the amount of a chemical a person can eat, drink or breathe each day without a detectable risk to health. MRLs are intended to serve as a screening tool to help public health officials determine areas and populations potentially at risk for health effects from exposure to a particular chemical.

The ATSDR uses the MRLs to establish Environmental Media Evaluation Guides (EMEGs) that are used by public health professionals as a screening tool to identify areas and populations potentially at risk from exposure to a particular chemical. They do not define regulatory action by ATSDR, nor for other agencies. When health assessors find human exposures are occurring at higher than the set EMEG, it means that they may want to look more closely at the human exposures. It does not mean that people will become sick from those exposures.

The ATSDR has established EMEGs for four different PFAS chemicals in drinking water. These EMEGs are as follows:

| | | |
|---------------|-----------------|-----------------|
| PFOA: | Child – 21 ppt | Adult – 78 ppt |
| PFOS: | Child – 14 ppt | Adult – 52 ppt |
| PFHxS: | Child – 140 ppt | Adult – 520 ppt |
| PFNA: | Child – 21 ppt | Adult – 78 ppt |

As you know, of these four PFAS chemicals, only PFHxS was detected in the Alto Elementary water sample at a concentration of 21 ppt, well below the EMEG of 140 ppt.

SAMPLE: FAQ-TRI COUNTY AREA SCHOOLS



Step 3: Implementation continued...



TRI COUNTY AREA SCHOOLS
Educational Service Center

ALLEN CUMINGS, SUPERINTENDENT OF SCHOOLS

PFAS- Frequently Asked Questions

1. Why was Tri County Middle school tested for the PFAS?

The State of Michigan has made it a priority to test all schools for PFAS. Since Montcalm County is near the Kent County issue, it became a priority to test those schools first. Tri County is one of the first districts that is being tested by the DEQ.

2. Are other school buildings being tested?

All buildings on a well or municipal water are being tested. The High School test results showed no trace of PFAS. The elementary school results have not yet been received; they will be provided to our parents, staff and community upon receipt.

3. Given the fact that the High School and Middle School are very near each other, why did the Middle School test positive and the High School show no detection?

The current assumption on why the test results were so different is that the Middle School well is only 80ft deep, whereas the High School well is 265ft deep. With the knowledge that the deeper well had no detection of PFAS, the district is looking to see if drilling a deeper well at the Middle School may be a viable solution.

4. Can we just pump water from the High School to the Middle School?

We are looking to see if this is a short term solution. We need to confirm that the well pumps have the capacity to provide a good water flow to both buildings while still meeting the requirements to run the fire suppression system.

5. What is Tri County doing to provide clean water at the middle school?

Water cooler stations have been set up around the Middle School. Students are encouraged to bring a water bottle and they may fill it up at the water cooler stations. We are working on other short and long term plans with the Mid Michigan Health Department, the DEQ, and an Environmental Engineer retained by the District.

6. Can the water be used for food preparation?

No. The water cannot be used for food preparation, and we will provide bottled water for the kitchen. We may also make some adjustments to the menu and purchase prewashed fruits and vegetables.

7. Can the water in the Middle School be used to wash hands?

Yes. Students can wash their hands and use the locker room showers. PFAS is not absorbed in the body through skin contact. Students should not drink the water or use it to brush their teeth.

8. Is the football field and concession stand affected?

Yes. The football field and the concession stand are connected to the Middle School well. We will be providing water cooler stations for practices and will provide a water cooler for the concession stand.

Step 3: Implementation continued...

PFAS- Frequently Asked Questions continued...

9. Where is the PFAS coming from?

At this point, the source of the PFAS is unknown and the DEQ is investigating this issue. The early indication is that it is not from the Pierson landfill, which we are told involved a different PFAS chemical.

10. What is the plan for a long term solution?

A long term solution could be to create a single source water system for the High School and Middle School. Water could then be pumped from the wells into a filtration system and then to the school buildings. The goal would be to eliminate PFAS, improve the quality of the water, and reduce the amount of wells and filtration systems to maintain, while also providing a better flow rate for each building. The current bond proposal includes a single source water system in the design.

11. Are the tests affecting the start of school?

The Tri County Area Schools are scheduled to open as planned; our dedicated staff are prepared to provide an education of excellence to all of our students. We are excited to welcome everyone back from a deserved summer break, and look forward to seeing you on August 22nd!

SAMPLE: BLOGS-ROCKFORD PUBLIC SCHOOLS



Step 3: Implementation continued...



Rockford Public Schools

Quality Community – Quality Schools
Together Building a Tradition of Excellence

Series of blog posts from Rockford Public Schools

[Posted to Rockford Public Schools Website:](http://www.rockfordschools.org/2017/10/12/potential-water-issue-at-east-rms/)

<http://www.rockfordschools.org/2017/10/12/potential-water-issue-at-east-rms/>

October 12, 2017 – Late Wednesday afternoon, I was notified by the DEQ, the Kent County Health Department, and Wolverine Worldwide that a disposal area containing leather and rubber scraps has been located between 9 and 10 Mile Roads, approximately 1/2 mile northeast of East Rockford Middle School.

My immediate concern is the safety of students and staff at East RMS. Therefore, out of an abundance of caution, all drinking fountains will be disabled and Wolverine will provide bottled water to the school starting Thursday morning for consumption and cooking, and will do so until we know the status of our well water.

Wolverine and the DEQ took water samples from our well yesterday, and the results are being expedited and expected to be available within two weeks. As soon as those are provided to me, I will communicate them to you.

Please be assured that until we receive the test results, only bottled water will be used for consumption and cooking at the school. I have been assured that this only affects the use of water for consumption and not by contact.

Again, once we receive the results about the quality of the water, I will promptly provide those to you.

Thank you,

Michael S. Shibler
Superintendent of Schools

October 13, 2017 – As you know, we are awaiting test results for water at East Rockford Middle School in follow-up to the location of a Wolverine dump site near that school. Bottled water will continue to be provided as long as necessary, and I will share the results with you once they become available to me.

The ongoing situation in our community has understandably heightened awareness and worries among residents about the quality of water. I, too, am concerned not only about what we know, but what we may not know. Therefore, I am working with the MDEQ to test the water at our remaining schools that use well water. Those schools are Cannonsburg, Crestwood, and Lakes Elementary Schools. We will have samples taken and submitted for testing as soon as possible and will let you know those results, as well as the results of the East RMS water test. (*Note, there is no indication that there is a problem with water at these schools necessitating bottled water. We are testing the water supply to be proactive.)

Our remaining nine schools are supplied municipal water through either Plainfield Township or the City of Rockford, who both conduct regular testing of their water supplies. Our schools using municipal water are Belmont, Meadow Ridge Parkside, Roguewood, and Valley View Elementary Schools; North Rockford Middle School; the Rockford Freshman Center and Rockford High School; and River Valley Academy. We have every reason to believe that those water supplies are safe since they are managed and tested by their respective municipalities.

Again, this has been very unsettling for all of us and I want to assure you that I will continue to advocate for the safety of your children in this and all matters.

Thank you for your patience and we will send information to you as soon as possible.

Dr. Michael Shibler
Superintendent of Schools

Step 3: Implementation continued...

Series of blog posts from Rockford Public Schools continued...

October 20, 2017 – As communicated last week, I requested the MDEQ test the well water at Cannonsburg, Crestwood, and Lakes Elementary Schools as a precautionary measure because of the recent concerns regarding the quality of well water in several areas within our school district.

Test samples were taken this morning and are being sent to a laboratory for evaluation. We are told we will receive the results in a couple of weeks. As soon as I receive those findings, I will promptly communicate them.

We greatly appreciate everyone's patience while the Michigan Department of Environmental Quality, the Kent County Health Department, and Rockford Public Schools continue to work together to ensure the safety of staff and students.

Sincerely,

Dr. Michael Shibler
Superintendent of Schools

[Posted to Rockford Public Schools Website:](http://www.rockfordschools.org/2017/10/12/potential-water-issue-at-east-rms/)

<http://www.rockfordschools.org/2017/10/12/potential-water-issue-at-east-rms/>

October 25, 2017 – [Wolverine Worldwide Announces Safe Water Results for East Rockford Middle School](http://www.rockfordschools.org/wp-content/uploads/2017/10/Wolverine-Press-Release-Oct-25-2017.pdf)
(<http://www.rockfordschools.org/wp-content/uploads/2017/10/Wolverine-Press-Release-Oct-25-2017.pdf>)

October 25, 2017 – I have received the analytical report from Rose & Westra, the company assigned to have the water quality tested at East Rockford Middle School. I am happy to report that there were [no PFAS detected in the water at ERMS](http://www.rockfordschools.org/wp-content/uploads/2017/10/Water-Results-Email.pdf) (<http://www.rockfordschools.org/wp-content/uploads/2017/10/Water-Results-Email.pdf>). This is great news!

Beginning Wednesday morning, the water at ERMS will be reinstated and there will be no need to continue the use of bottled water.

As a precautionary measure, we have had samples of water from Cannonsburg, Crestwood, and Lakes elementary schools sent in for testing. The reason being, like ERMS, those three schools also use wells for water. I will notify you as soon as I receive those test results.

Thank you.

Sincerely,
Dr. Michael Shibler



Step 3: Implementation continued...

Series of blog posts from Rockford Public Schools continued...

[Posted to Rockford Public Schools Website:](http://www.rockfordschools.org/2017/10/12/potential-water-issue-at-east-rms/)

<http://www.rockfordschools.org/2017/10/12/potential-water-issue-at-east-rms/>
November 15, 2017

Dear RPS families, community, and staff:

This morning, in a meeting with officials from the Michigan Department of Environmental Quality (DEQ) and the Kent County Health Department (KCHD), I received Per- and Polyfluoroalkyl Substances (PFAS) – water quality testing results for the well water samples from Cannonsburg, Crestwood, and Lakes Elementary Schools. I have been advised that there is no public health risk. The MDHHS (Michigan Department of Health and Human Services) “concludes that no apparent public health hazard exists and no immediate additional work is needed at these locations.” Also the DEQ concluded that there are no known or suspected PFAS sources in the area surrounding Cannonsburg, Crestwood, and Lakes Elementary Schools. The testing was done out of an abundance of caution.

The instrumentation used to test our samples is extremely sensitive and, because the equipment is so sensitive, it can detect trace levels of the PFOA and PFOS compounds.

The levels at Cannonsburg, Crestwood, Lakes Elementary Schools ranged from 0.891 ppt through 1.25 ppt, well below the levels established by the Environmental Protection Agency Life Time Health Advisory Level of 70 ppt.

Again, we requested these samples as a precautionary measure and are informing you of the results. We will voluntarily test our wells annually and publish the results on our website.

If you have questions or concerns about the water issue in general, you may wish to attend a town hall meeting hosted by the Kent County Health Department on Wednesday, November 29 at 6 p.m. at the Rockford Freshman Center. Officials from several agencies will be available prior to and during the meeting starting at 4:30 p.m. to address specific concerns. Arrangements are pending to provide a live feed of the meeting, and information will be posted on the KCHD website.

As always, please let me know if you have any questions. I wish you and your family a Happy Thanksgiving.

Dr. Mike Shibler
Superintendent of Schools

WORKING WITH KEY AUDIENCES

Step 4: Evaluation

STEP 4) EVALUATION: EXAMINE YOUR COMMUNICATION EFFORTS TO DETERMINE IF COMMUNICATION GOALS WERE MET. USE EVALUATION RESULTS TO MODIFY YOUR COMMUNICATION PLAN, IF NEEDED.

Determine if your message is being received and understood

- Check with staff members to confirm they are receiving and understanding messages.
- Check with Parent Teacher Association (PTA)/Parent Teacher Organization (PTO). Were communications clear? Are there additional concerns?
- Check with resident groups.
- Monitor what is being said on social media.
- Look to see if media stories were published. Were comments made?
- Ask what staff members are hearing from parents. How many phone calls are being received?
- Check with parents of students with special needs.
- Check with parents of student athletes.

THE IMPORTANCE OF COMMUNICATION-SUPERINTENDENT REFLECTIONS

Step 4: Evaluation



Special thanks to the schools who responded to our calls for help creating this toolkit to benefit others in the state. Most have experienced minimal questions or feedback from their communities because of their proactive communication strategies. All were open to sharing their experiences and advice with us. Here are a few additional tips:

From Daniel Petersen, President
[EightCAP, Inc.](http://www.8cap.org)
(<https://www.8cap.org/>)
(616) 754-9315 ext. 3336
danielp@8cap.org



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48838
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TTY: 711
F: 616.754.9310
www.eightcap.org

“If a school site in a rural area is experiencing issues with its water (or a number of other community development issues), consider contacting the Great Lakes Rural Community Assistance Program-[RCAP](http://www.greatlakesrcap.org) (<http://www.greatlakesrcap.org/>). EightCAP reached out to them and – even though they are based in Ohio – they met with EightCAP in person in Michigan and will assist in evaluating proposals from water treatment companies to help evaluate the types of systems that the companies propose to treat the water.”

“The best way to approach the release of water results is to explain to staff and parents what you know and to be completely transparent with the results. Get ahead of the media and tell your parents first. Once the state notified EightCAP of the results, we made our board members aware, met with staff, and released a statement to the press - in that order - within the next business day. We also drafted and mailed a notification letter to all households who may have had a member use the building within the last three years.”

“Stay in touch with your local health department as they are an extra eye to evaluate the types of systems to resolve the problem and serve as a liaison with the state.”

Step 4: Evaluation continued...



TRI COUNTY AREA SCHOOLS Educational Service Center

ALLEN CUMINGS, SUPERINTENDENT OF SCHOOLS

From Allen Cumings, Superintendent
[Tri County Schools](http://www.tricountyschools.com/)
(<https://www.tricountyschools.com/>)
(616) 636-5454
acumings@tricountyschools.com

“When we received the call we immediately called our attorney and communicated as quickly as possible (within a day) with our staff, parents, and community. We believe this is one reason we have had no negative feedback.”

“Since we learned prior to school starting, we right away turned off all the drinking fountains and put water coolers in place. Our local health department delivered a skid of water and has assisted with funding our water coolers for a limited time. We checked into what water sources were irrigating our athletic fields. In addition, we hired a civil and environmental engineering firm and are working closely with MDEQ to figure out how to solve our problem. We learned our middle school well is 80 feet deep (62 ppt) and our high school (no detect) well is 260 feet deep. These buildings are on the same campus. As we continue our work toward a solution, we are committed to following up with communications as we have promised.”

“My advice to other schools as they work through these issues is to advocate for your community and follow up. Feel free to contact me if you have questions or need help.”

From Mike Shibler, Superintendent
[Rockford Public Schools](http://www.rockfordschools.org/)
(<http://www.rockfordschools.org/>)
(616) 863-6557
mshibler@rockfordschools.org



Rockford Public Schools

Quality Community – Quality Schools
Together Building a Tradition of Excellence

“The key priority for superintendents to be proactive in their communication with their constituents and community. You can’t wait for the local health department and the state agencies to decide what you need to communicate. You cannot hide or not disclose issues that affect the health and wellbeing of your community’s children. Even if you do not have complete facts, communicate the testing and then communicate the results, because if the results find tainted water, the question of the superintendent will be ‘when did you know? How long have you withheld this information?’ They won’t ask that of the health department. They won’t ask that of state agencies. They will ask that of you. Get in front of it. Be transparent. You’ll be rewarded for that honesty and transparency.”

Note: The districts we spoke with chose not to include social media as a primary communication tool when discussing this issue.



Michigan Association of
Superintendents & Administrators

