



PRESS RELEASE

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State Superintendent Tours San Ysidro School, Hails District as Model for Management of Water Quality Issue

SAN YSIDRO – State Superintendent of Public Instruction Tom Torlakson on June 1 pledged to use San Ysidro School District's resolution of a campus water quality issue as a model for other California districts and offered state support for the District's safety efforts.

Torlakson toured La Mirada Elementary, where the District in October discovered that water from a drinking fountain and a sink showed elevated levels of lead, copper and bacteria. District leaders immediately shut off water to the school and provided bottled water to staff and students while voluntarily developing a plan to test water at all schools.

The District replaced faucets and fountains where test results indicated water quality issues, and retested the new fixtures before allowing students to access them.

"I hope no other district has to face drinking water problems. Unfortunately, because of aging infrastructure at our schools, some districts may confront similar problems," said Torlakson. "During my visit, I was pleased to learn how San Ysidro handled this problem, which can be a model for other districts. It is so important that all of us in education be vigilant about providing a safe environment for our students, including clean, safe drinking water."

Torlakson discussed developing an official protocol that uses San Ysidro as a model for how school districts respond to harmful materials detected in their water systems. He also shared with San Ysidro leaders some state funding sources the District could access to support its safety efforts.

"I am grateful to have the leadership and support of Superintendent Torlakson," San Ysidro School District Superintendent Julio Fonseca said. "Finding a solution to this problem has not been easy, but it helps to know that we are not alone, and that our experience can help inform the discussion on a larger, statewide level. Ultimately, what we are doing is ensuring our students are safe so we can focus on our mission to provide the best learning opportunities possible."

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Swift action by the San Ysidro School District also garnered the attention of Assemblywoman Lorena Gonzalez Fletcher, who drafted Assembly Bill 746 which requires all California K-12 schools to test for lead contamination. A representative from Gonzalez Fletcher's office also toured La Mirada Elementary and met with District officials on June 1.

San Ysidro School District Board of Education President Rosaleah Pallasigue praised the District's partners for quickly lending a hand during the situation, including those who donated bottled water and contributed ideas for finding a solution.

"This is a tight-knit community that supports one another, and this is a District that is wholeheartedly focused on the well-being and safety of our children," she said. "As a parent of children in our schools, I know the safety of my kids comes first, no matter which school they're attending."

PHOTO CAPTIONS:

PHOTO1: California State Superintendent Tom Torlakson, center, speaks with La Mirada Elementary Principal, left, and San Ysidro School District Superintendent Julio Fonseca, right, during a tour of the campus on June 1.

PHOTO2: From left, San Ysidro School District Board of Education President Rosaleah Pallasigue, State Superintendent Tom Torlakson, Board Member Antonio Martinez and Superintendent Julio Fonseca met for a roundtable discussion on June 1 to discuss school water quality issues.

PHOTO3: From left, San Ysidro School District Board Member Rodolfo Linares, State Superintendent Tom Torlakson, San Ysidro School District Superintendent Julio Fonseca, Board Member Marcos Diaz, Board Vice President Irene Lopez and La Mirada Elementary Principal Luis Ramos toured La Mirada Elementary on June 1.

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