



Healthy Kids
Collaborative



WALHDAB
Public Health in Action



WAND
Wisconsin Academy of Nutrition and Dietetics



TO: Members of the Wisconsin State Legislature
DATE: March 20, 2019
RE: 2019 Budget— Water Filling Stations in Schools

Everyone, no matter where they live, should have access to safe drinking water. Please ensure children have access to clean drinking water by including water filling stations in new school construction and major renovations. Please also create a grant program to help schools purchase water filling stations, invest a minimum for \$500,000 over the biennium.

Water plays an important role in maintaining a child's overall health. Drinking water supports children's muscles, joints, and tissues; improves their digestive system; and keeps their growing bodies hydrated. Adequate water intake can positively impact children's cognitive performance, particularly short-term memory. Drinking water can also improve children's fine motor skills and visual attention, which helps with learning activities such as reading. Drinking water can help people maintain a healthier weight, and children who drink fluoridated water instead of sugary drinks have a reduced risk of dental caries.

Unfortunately, many children don't drink enough water. In 2009-2012, a national survey of children ages 6-19 found that more than half (54.5 percent) of U.S. children and adolescents were inadequately hydrated. Younger children are less likely to drink enough water compared to older children. Additionally, a national study of more than 11,000 high school students found that those who drink less water tended to drink less milk, eat less fruits and vegetables, drink more sugary beverages, eat more fast food, and get less physical activity.

Multiple studies have shown increased water consumption after the installation of water filling stations. One study found when schools provide free water by a non-fountain source, the percentage of students who drank water doubled. Another study of New York public schools found students nearly tripled the amount of water they took after water dispensers were installed in the cafeteria, and they continued to choose water the following school year. Installing drinking water dispensers in schools was also associated with a decline in the likelihood of being overweight.

With increasing concerns about the safety of water in communities, it's important we don't forget about our schools. More and more entities— hospitals, corporations, local government, etc.— are installing water filling stations. They should be a priority in our schools also, not only because of the health benefit, but also because of water safety concerns.

Please invest in safe, clean drinking water in schools. Please create a grant program to help schools purchase water filling stations, and ensure all new construction schools or major renovations include water filling stations.

If you have any questions, please contact Nicole Hudzinski with the American Heart Association at nicole.hudzinski@heart.org or 608-225-4042.