

SB 1413 (Leno) - WATER ACCESS IN SCHOOLS Fact Sheet

Proposal:

SB 1413 requires school districts to make free, fresh drinking water available in school food service areas by January 1st, 2012.

Background:

Some barriers have been identified that inhibit students' access at schools to the healthiest of beverages: water. Last Legislative Session, Senator Mark Leno authored AB 2704, which was approved by the Legislature and vetoed by Governor Schwarzenegger. However, ever growing evidence of poor access to free, fresh water in schools and high rates of obesity necessitate state action to promote student water consumption highlight the need for the statewide policy fix provided by SB 1413.

Many California schools currently do not provide water in food service areas, where students eat their meals. Studies show that water consumption and adequate hydration in schools can help fight obesity and can even improve cognitive function and student academic performance. California organizations, such as California Food Policy Advocates, The California Endowment, California Center for Public Health Advocacy, and Children's Hospital Oakland, have convened policy forums as recently as September 2009 to discuss the need for policy solutions and have called for state action in California to increase access to water in schools.

Considerable work has been undertaken to survey student access to fresh water in schools, why some access maybe limited, the health benefits of water consumption and best practices. These findings underscore the need for SB 1413:

Water access in schools:

- In 2009, California Project LEAN, a program of the California Department of Public Health (CDPH), partnered with the California Department of Education (CDE) on a survey that included questions on access to water in public schools. The online survey was sent to school food service directors through CDE and the California School Nutrition Association. There were 234 respondents representing 24% of California districts; 55% of responding districts had a minimum of 50% of their students eligible for free/reduced priced meals. Nearly 40% of survey respondents reported *not* offering free drinking water in food service areas.
- Schools are only required to have one drinking fountain for the first 150 students and one per every 300 thereafter,¹ but there is no requirement for water to be in food service areas.
- There are currently misperceptions over whether or not offering free water conflicts with National School Lunch Program regulations or beverage contracts, even though these do not restrict a school's ability to offer students free water. This misperception currently may prevent schools from providing free water in their food service areas².

Water Consumption and Health:

- Dehydration is associated with impaired cognitive function and can adversely affect memory, reasoning, hand-eye coordination, alertness, attention, perception, and language skills, all of which may inhibit academic success³.
- Experts also note that inadequate hydration can leave students at risk of experiencing headaches and digestive problems which affect their health and well-being⁴.
- A study conducted by the University of Leeds in the United Kingdom showed that children's ability to do arithmetic was impaired if they were 1% to 2% dehydrated – not even enough for them to feel thirsty⁵.
- The Children's Hospital Oakland Research Institute recently reported that a significant number of children begin their school day in a mild state of dehydration⁶.
- Research indicates that increasing student water consumption may be an effective tool to reduce their risk of being obese or overweight.⁷
- Replacing sugar-sweetened beverages with water has also been associated with decreased energy intake and weight loss in adults⁸.

Success Stories:

- Many schools have already started providing water to all their students. The El Monte Union High School District, with 85% of its students qualifying for free and reduced price meals, provides 8-ounce bottled water as part of its meal service⁹.
- The Berkeley Unified School District reports "minimal" costs to daily fill up 5-gallon containers of water and provide cups, adding that the time commitment is less than five minutes per day and has resulted in "enormous" student water consumption¹⁰.
- The provision of free water in the Los Angeles Unified School District costs the district approximately \$1.20 per student per year, which includes the cost of lead tests, water filters, 5-gallon dispensers, and cups¹¹.
- The Folsom-Cordova and Hayward Unified school districts have also installed filtered "hydration stations" in cafeterias at a cost of \$2,000-\$3,000 per site¹².
- In 2008, New York City passed an Executive Order requiring that water be available at all meals within one year.

Support:

Governor Arnold Schwarzenegger (Sponsor)

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¹ “K-12 Toilet Requirement Summary”. CA Department of Education. Available at <http://www.cde.ca.gov/LS/fa/sf/toiletrequire.asp>.

² Chandran, Kumar. Improving Water Consumption in Schools: Challenges, Promising Practices, and Next Steps. Available at http://cfpa.net/water/water_issue_brief.pdf.

³ D’Anci, KE, Constant F, Rosenberg, IH. Hydration and cognitive function in children. *Nutrition Reviews*, 2006; 64: 457-464.

⁴ Expert Group on Hydration. A report on best practice for hydration in schools. Available at: <http://www.montgomeryspring.co.uk/pdf-downloads/Drinking-in-Schools.pdf>

⁵ University of Leeds.

⁶ Stookey J. Presentation. Oakland, CA. September 14, 2009.

⁷ Muckelbauer R. et al. “Promotion and Provision of Drinking Water in Schools for Overweight Prevention: Randomized, Controlled Cluster Trial”. *Pediatrics*. Vol. 123, No. 4, April 2009.

⁸ Wang YC et al. “Impact of Change in Sweetened Caloric Beverage Consumption on Energy Intake Among Children and Adolescents”. *Archives of Pediatrics and Adolescent Medicine*. Vol. 163, No. 4, April 2009.

⁹ Sayer, S., personal communication, 12/11/2009

¹⁰ Chandran, Kumar. Improving Water Consumption in Schools: Challenges, Promising Practices, and Next Steps. Available at http://cfpa.net/water/water_issue_brief.pdf.

¹¹ Ibid.

¹² Scheider, A., personal communication, 2009