

Appendix 4: Strategies to Overcome Potential Challenges

Stakeholders may express concerns about increasing access to drinking water in schools. Below are examples of some common concerns and suggestions to prevent and address these concerns.

Students' consumption of milk will decrease during school meals.

Although there has not been a lot of research on this particular issue, unpublished research demonstrates that milk consumption is not significantly decreased when drinking water is made available to students in the cafeteria. Water is not a replacement for milk at meals, but rather an additional beverage that is available to students.

Providing cups at water access points will increase littering in the school.

Providing cups at water access points has been shown to increase the amount of water that students consume.²¹ However, there is a concern students will not properly dispose of the cups after they drink from them. One way to prevent littering is to ensure that trash or recycling receptacles are available near all water access points. In addition, policies and practices encouraging students to bring their own reusable water bottles to schools can help to reduce the need for disposable cups.

Concern that tap water is not safe.

Most tap water in the United States is assured by the United States Environmental Protection Agency standards and regulations to be clean and safe for drinking.²⁸ However, in some cases, tap water may not be safe to drink because of unsafe plumbing systems or contaminated water sources. It is important to have drinking water tested so that water quality problems are addressed when they exist. If water quality problems cannot be fixed, then schools should use alternate methods of providing drinking water to students, including installing point-of-use filtration systems that are certified to remove contaminants, or purchasing drinking water for students and staff. It is a good idea to regularly communicate drinking water testing results and actions to students, parents, and the community. Schools may consider starting a campaign to actively promote water quality or work with local organizations on a community-wide tap water promotion campaign. (See [pages 29–30](#) for ideas about water promotion campaigns.)

Students do not like the taste of the local tap water.

Even though most tap water is safe to drink, the taste of the water varies depending on the source. Filtering water and chilling the water are two strategies that may improve the taste.

More classroom disruptions will occur because of water spills.

Although very little research has been done on this particular issue, schools can require that all water bottles must be capped when in the classroom, or kept on the floor to prevent water from spilling on desks.

Misuse of reusable water bottles (e.g., putting other beverages besides water in the water bottle).

Schools concerned about the contents of the reusable water bottle can require students to use clear (i.e., see-through) reusable bottles.