

## DDEL would like to hear your VOICE!

If you are interested in contributing to future newsletters please consider the following categories:

“Voices from the Classroom” featuring an innovative strategy, approach, activity, or accomplishment conducted in a classroom serving exceptional learners who are culturally and linguistically diverse.

“Voices from the Field” featuring programs, research studies, organizations, or opportunities involving exceptional learners who are culturally and linguistically diverse and/or those who are serving this population.

“Research Spotlight” featuring studies related to CLD learners.

“Voices from the Community” featuring the perspectives of families, advocates, and community members.

Please email a summary of up to 500 words, indicating one of the above categories to newsletter co-editors, Donna Y. Ford and Mildred Boveda: [mbove001@fiu.edu](mailto:mbove001@fiu.edu)

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## President’s Message

If you are reading this issue of VOICES, you are a person of privilege. You are literate; you can see these words and access technology that allows you to consume this material. You are a member of a professional organization which likely means you are a working member of the profession or, at the very least, have the means to pay the membership dues. I know “privilege” is a term that evokes discomfort for many people, but it is important for each of us to understand the privileges we benefit from in order to best advocate for those who may not enjoy the same privileged status.



Therefore, I am going to use my privilege as President of DDEL and the platform of VOICES to encourage you, DDEL members, to become engaged. Voice concerns you have about policy and services for children and youth from diverse and/or disenfranchised backgrounds. As your elected representative, I will spend most of my time at this year’s annual convention representing the concerns and values of DDEL in CEC leadership meetings (i.e., Interdivisional Caucus, Representative Assembly, and Program Advisory Committee). In order to do this well, I want to hear from you. Please consider exercising your privilege by submitting any concerns you would like for me to share with CEC and/or DDEL leadership to [Kelly.carrero@tamuc.edu](mailto:Kelly.carrero@tamuc.edu). I encourage you to engage in the national dialogue and serve our organization. For members who will attend this year’s convention, please consider

- (a) attending the DDEL General Business Meeting and our reception (we will have desserts!);
- (b) signing up to represent DDEL at our booth in the Expo Hall (<http://bit.ly/1UyQceB>);
- (c) checking out the subcommittee meetings to see how to get plugged in;
- (d) attending at least one DDEL session.

For members who will not attend this year’s convention, you can still get actively engaged. All DDEL members are encouraged to:

- (a) get connected to DDEL EC members and find a way to share your thoughts and concerns;
- (b) write a piece for this newsletter—we want to hear your VOICE!
- (c) respond to DDEL calls for action (over the next two years, DDEL will heavily participate in the national dialogue about the upcoming reauthorization of IDEA—your experiences and concerns are CRITICAL to moving policy in the direction that best serves our children and families).

On behalf of the professionals who advocate for children and youth with exceptionalities from diverse backgrounds, I ask you to exercise your privilege, use your platform, and speak your VOICE.

Peace and Fire,

Kelly M. Carrero, Ph.D., BCBA

**A MESSAGE FROM YOUR DDEL VOICES NEWSLETTER CO-EDITORS**

**Mildred Boveda and Donna Y. Ford**

When responding to the recent stories featured in the United States’ news cycle, activists and social theorists are increasingly calling into question whether environmental racism—the systemic and disproportionate exposure of black, brown, and native communities to environmentally hazardous and toxic agents—is the root of the crises. Those engaged in dialogues about the water contamination in Flint, Michigan, traces of lead found in New Jersey’s Newark Public Schools water fountains, and the well-documented consequences of fracking on Native American lands are also highlighting the trend of racially, ethnically, and linguistically diverse communities who are especially vulnerable to the “unintended consequences” of poor policy decisions. As a result, community members are holding government officials accountable for the gross negligence that has disproportionately effected low-income communities and people of color.

quarterly announcements, this issue of VOICES includes five articles that explore the intersections of environmental hazards, special education, and academic outcomes for students exposed to toxins. These articles provide practical tips for parents, school personnel, and community members and include information about how to recognize and respond to signs of exposure. As Lisbon and Sorrell warn (page 9), it is naive to think that only “minorities of lower socioeconomic status or recent immigrants” are at risk of these harmful environmental effects; everyone must be wary, vigilant, and active in combatting these dangers.

Recognizing that more people are accessing news sources from social media than ever before, we would like to highlight cultural memes and hashtags that explore environmental injustices. Below are images that poignantly contextualize the concerns explored by the featured authors. We hope that after reading this newsletter, you will be better informed about the crises and better equipped to continue the dialogue with your students, colleagues, and local community members.

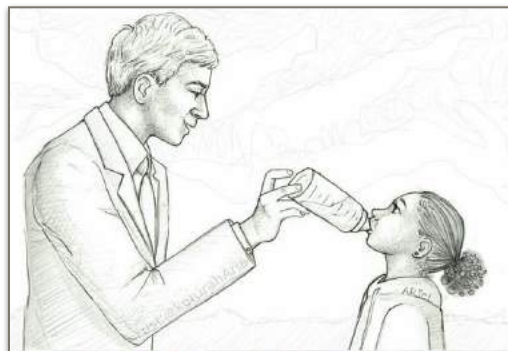
In addition to DDEL’s customary legislative updates and



Navajo Youth Raising Awareness about fracking <http://bit.ly/1VoT9V4>



Viral Political Cartoon by Matt Wuerker <http://usuncut.com/tag/matt-wuerker/>



People who "don't see color" are not allowing themselves to see the whole picture. Twitter handle: [@keturahAriel](https://twitter.com/keturahAriel)

**Hashtags to Follow**

- #EnvironmentalJustice
- #environmentalracism
- #helpflint
- #FlintWaterCrisis
- #keepitintheground
- #fracking
- #WorldWaterDay
- #JusticeForFlint
- #waterjustice

**DDEL's Mission:**

To improve, through professional excellence and advocacy, the education and quality of life for individuals with exceptionalities from diverse racial, ethnic, cultural, and linguistic communities.

**DDEL's Vision:**

DDEL is an education organization renowned for its leadership in advancing knowledge and practice, and shaping policy to enhance the quality of life for diverse individuals with exceptionalities. DDEL's commitment to forging partnerships results in solutions to persistent and emerging barriers to social justice. DDEL is recognized globally for its expertise and advocacy.

**Core Values**

Diversity, Social Justice and Equity  
Inclusiveness  
Advocacy

Inquiry leading to the development of practices that attend to unique learner characteristics

**STAY Connected!**



Have you visited our website lately?

Do you want to learn more about how to get involved with DDEL?

Keep connected with the latest news from DDEL by visiting  
<http://community.cec.sped.org/ddel/home/>

Also, check us out on social media!

<https://www.facebook.com/DDEL.CEC>



If you have any suggestions, please  
contact our webmaster:

Ramon Goings

[ramongoings@gmail.com](mailto:ramongoings@gmail.com)



For information about registration and lodging  
for the 2016 CEC Annual Convention follow:

<http://www.ceconvention.org> & the **#CEC16** hashtag on social media

**DDEL CONVENTION HIGHLIGHTS**

CEC 2016 Convention and Expo St. Louis, MO

Meeting/social event	Date	Location	Time
DDEL All Subcommittee Meetings	4/14/2016	Majestic C	9:30 - 11:30 AM
DDEL Executive Board Meeting	4/14/2016	Majestic C	1:30 - 5:30 PM
DDEL Social	4/14/2016	Majestic C	7:00 - 9:00 PM
DDEL Writing for Multiple Voices	4/15/2016	Parkview	10:00 - 11:00 AM
DDEL General Business Meeting	4/15/2016	Parkview	3:30 - 5:30 PM
DDEL Student Research Showcase	4/16/2016	Majestic A/B	10:00 AM - 12:00 PM

**DDEL STUDENT RESEARCH FORUM POSTER SESSION**

The annual CEC 2016 Convention Student Research Forum (SRF) session will take place Saturday, April 16 at the Marriott, Majestic Room A/B, 10:00 AM-12:00 PM. DDEL's former Student Representative and SRF Chair Ramon Goings and the current Student Representative Robai Werunga would like to invite you to the poster session and to provide presenters with feedback. Congratulations to the presenters who will discuss a diverse set of topics!

Presenter(s)	University	Title of Presentation
Hyejung Kim	University of Wisconsin-Madison	Race Differences in Predictors of Postsecondary Education Enrollment among Adolescents with Autism
Adulmajeed Alshammari Tanyathorn Hauwadhanasuk	Saint Louis University	Leading Diversity to Create Inclusive Classroom
Ameen Alhaznawi Abdullah Alanazi	Concordia University Chicago	Comparison Between Legislative Regulations for Students with Disabilities in the United States and Saudi Arabia: A Review of Literature
Tanyathorn Hauwadhanasuk Yahya Alshehri Aeshah Alshehri Nikki L. Murdick	Saint Louis University	Comparison of Special Education Services for Students in Saudi Arabia and Thailand
Ali Alasmari	Ohio State University	Examining Deaf and Hard of Hearing Students' Engagement with Reading Comprehension Strategies in Elementary School
Jackie Koerner	Saint Louis University	Perceptions of Students with Disabilities Regarding Persisting Through Higher Education
Robai Warunga	University of North Carolina - Charlotte	Blending Cultural Responsiveness and SWPBS to Teach Classroom Expectations
Tosha Owens	University of North Carolina - Charlotte	Exploring Parents' Perception of Classroom Expectations for Building Cultural Responsiveness
Gliset Colón	University at Buffalo	Effects of PALS on Reading Skills of Middle School ELLs With and Without Disabilities
Kia Myrick McDaniel	Bowie State University	Beyond Compliance: Supporting English Learners with Special Needs

**CAN CORNER: LEGISLATIVE UPDATE - MARCH, 2016**

Greetings!

I hope all is well with you as spring is coming and the weather is warming up. One of the most important bits of information coming out of Washington this month, is the announcement that the U.S. Department of Education took a crucial step toward addressing widespread disparities in the treatment of students of color with disabilities, proposing a new rule to improve equity in the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA). The nation's special education law, the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA), aims to guarantee fairness in the identification, placement, and discipline of students with disabilities. Yet disparities persist. Students of color remain more likely to be identified as having a disability and face harsher discipline than their white classmates. The Notice of Proposed Rulemaking (NPRM) was issued to address this problem. There is a 75-day comment period where you can log in and make a real contribution to this action. The comment period is open until May 16, 2016. See link below for a copy of the unofficial copy of the NPRM and a press release. I urge all members of DDEL to let your voice be heard in this critical action.



For more information, follow this link: <https://www.federalregister.gov/articles/2016/03/02/2016-03938/assistance-to-states-for-the-education-of-children-with-disabilities-preschool-grants-for-children>

Remember, your voice counts! You can familiarize yourself with all of the current policies and issues at: <http://cecblog.typepad.com/policy/>. Once you know the issues, you can contact your member of Congress through this website: <http://capwiz.com/cek/home/>. Let your voice be heard!

Thank you all!  
Your DDEL CAN representative,  
Donna Sayman  
[donna.sayman@wichita.edu](mailto:donna.sayman@wichita.edu)

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**MEMBERSHIP FEEDBACK ON PROPOSED LEGISLATION**

Please review the following proposed legislation and tell us your thoughts:  
<http://r.usa.gov/rLBzO9H>

President Kelly Carrero will discuss this legislation at the upcoming general meeting and would like to get feedback from membership so that the DDEL Executive Committee can draft a formal comment (due by May 16th, 2016).

You may e-mail your thoughts to  
[kelly.carrero@tamuc.edu](mailto:kelly.carrero@tamuc.edu).

VOICES FROM THE COMMUNITY

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**Families Speak Up:  
Education and Empowerment in the Face of Environmental Racism and Injustice**

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Belmont University

Dr. Martin Luther King (1963) said, “Injustice anywhere is a threat to justice everywhere.” This concept speaks volumes as we reflect upon and move towards action with regard to the recent water poisoning in Flint, Michigan. This community, already marginalized by poverty and systemic racism, recently felt the impact of *environmental racism*. One of the most profound results of this tragedy is the Lead Poisoning that has permeated the community through the tainted drinking water. Through this horrific experience, it is essential for families to become knowledgeable and empowered toward action in an effort to protect their children and advocate for social change with and for their community.

As we know from other measures of child and family well-being, young children are disproportionately impacted by many social problems and ills that plague our society. As stated in Shamus’s article in the Detroit Free Press, (2016), Young children with lead poisoning may fail to meet developmental milestones or lose the ability to do things they once were able to do. Other children may have a delayed response and show lead exposure through behavioral problems or attention deficit disorder as they get older (Bhambhani, 2016). It’s important to remember that lead poisoning is caused by sources beyond drinking water. Lead can also be found in soil, battery, pipes, pottery, and some cosmetics. Older homes are among the biggest sources. If you’re living in poor-quality, older housing sources, and the paint isn’t in good repair, that has always been the biggest source of lead exposure for kids (Swindell, 2016). While the suffering is deep and complex, gaining knowledge from a trusted source and working collectively to demand change is imperative for families. Here are some action steps that families can take:

- Young children should always be tested for lead at ages 1 and 2 during pediatrician or clinic visits. Additional tests within 20-30 days after exposure to lead should also occur.
- Ensure a healthy diet, which prevents lead from metabolizing. A low-fat diet high in calcium, iron and Vitamin C is essential (Swindell, 2016).
- Removing shoes at the door seems like a small practice, but it prevents tainted particles from entering the home and being ingested by children (CDC).
- If you see paint chips or dust in windowsills or on floors because of peeling paint, clean these areas regularly with a wet mop (CDC).
- Start with your local water supplier -- some will come to your home and test for free. If that's not an option, you can buy a lead testing kit from home improvement stores to collect the testing samples and send for results (LaMotte, 2016).
- Talk to a public health educator within your county/city health department about testing paint and dust in your home for lead if you live in a home built before 1978 (CDC). This service is typically free. These individuals are a great resource to families as they have free information and programs that educate the community about lead poisoning.
- Work alongside county or city department of health officials to address this public health concern and educate other families through early childhood organizations such as Head Start or your local public school. Early education programs can intervene and help address early concerns for children.

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Families, you are the first and most important educator and activist for your children. Your collective vision and voice can address this significant concern and promote healthier outcomes for our children's future.

### **Sources**

Centers for Disease Control (CDC) (nd). Blood Lead Levels in Children Fact Sheet PDF. Retrieved from [http://www.cdc.gov/nceh/lead/ACCLPP/Lead\\_Levels\\_in\\_Children\\_Fact\\_Sheet.pdf](http://www.cdc.gov/nceh/lead/ACCLPP/Lead_Levels_in_Children_Fact_Sheet.pdf)

King Jr., M.L. (1963). Letters from a Birmingham Jail.

LaMotte, S. (2016). How to test for lead in your home water supply. Retrieved from: <http://www.cnn.com/2016/01/21/health/lead-testing-home-drinking-water/>

Shamus, K.J. (2016). What every parent needs to know about lead poisoning. Detroit Free Press. Retrieved from: <http://www.freep.com/story/life/family/kristen-jordan-shamus/2016/02/13/what-every-parent-needs-know-lead-poisoning/80000814/>

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### SOCIAL MEDIA AND MEMES HIGHLIGHT THE TRAVESTY IN FLINT, MI



<http://knowyourmeme.com/memes/events/flint-water-crisis>

<http://www.kappit.com/tag/flint-meme/2/>



<http://thebea.st/209Jr2g>

VOICES FROM THE CLASSROOM

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**Killing Me Silently: Childhood Lead Poisoning and its Educational Implications**

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The Flint, Michigan Water Crisis is more than a health crisis, it is an educational crisis as well. While health professionals are rightfully concerned and frantic about the health implications of the Flint water crisis, too few are talking about the educational implications, particularly as it relates to early childhood education. Unfortunately, children especially those living in poverty will have medical needs that lead to long-term educational needs. In a city where 56% of the population is African American and 41.6% are poor, advocates believe Flint residents are victims of “environmental racism” –that is, race and poverty factored into how Flint citizens were not adequately protected and how its water became contaminated with lead, making the tap water undrinkable.

In light of what many believe is an inexcusable, egregious and health rights violation, I assert in this essay that this is indeed an educational crisis and yet another example of the continued onslaught of institutional and environmental racism, notwithstanding discrimination, experienced by our most vulnerable citizens - children. To begin to address the short- and long-term effects of this water crisis from an educational standpoint, I raise the question, “*what do early childhood (EC) teachers need to know about the effects of lead poisoning on children birth to age eight?*” What follows are five key considerations for EC-teachers to know and address in their work:

1. Prior to the Flint water crisis, many children were born healthy and now have educational and health challenges. Thus, trying to understand a child’s development without consideration of their context is beyond irresponsible. Educators must seek additional training and support to advocate for their students.
2. The effects of lead on young brains are ‘untreatable’ and ‘irreversible’ notes the World Health Organization in a recent special report on childhood and lead poisoning (WHO, 2010). Thus, education combined with a myriad of supports are essential. This necessitates having wrap-around services (e.g., nurses, counselors, social workers) in early childhood programs and classrooms.
3. Populations with widespread exposure to lead will result in a substantial increase in the number of children with diminished intelligence and mental retardation a term now replaced with *intellectual disability*. It is important to remember that the children under our charge were not born with such challenges. Their lowered IQ scores must not be used as an excuse or reason to justify low expectations and to deny access to academic rigor.
4. The effects of lead on large populations can be slow to manifest. Some children may be “asymptomatic now” (showing no signs of elevated blood levels), but this does not mean they will not face problems later. Know where your children have lived and currently live in order to understand that lead exposure may be present.
5. Foods that are high in calcium (milk and cheese), iron (beans, eggs), and vitamin C (fruits and fruit juices) can help protect and mitigate the effects of lead in the body. Breakfast and lunch programs must be revamped to counter, as much as possible, the effects of lead poisoning.

If there was ever a time to *invest* in our children, especially those living in poverty, it is now. This investment begins with EC-teachers becoming researchers to find out as much as possible about the short- and long-term effects of exposure to lead in order to know what signs to look for in young children. Assessments for children 0 to 3 and beyond must be immediate and ongoing to carefully evaluate for developmental delays resulting from lead exposure.

As the title of the essay suggests, lead leaves its mark quietly, with virtually an invisible trail. When a child shows signs of a learning disability, intellectual delay, and/or emotional and behavioral issues, the presence of lead in the bloodstream cannot be denied.

**Reference**

World Health Organization (2010). *Childhood lead poisoning*. Geneva, Switzerland: WHO Press.



**Environmental Racism and a People Under Siege: We Trusted the Water**

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School Psychologist and Licensed  
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In 2013, the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) reported that four million households with children were exposed to high levels of lead. Lead poisoning is very dangerous because it impacts the developing brains of children. Given the narrative that those at-risk for lead poisoning and other exposures to toxins are predominately minorities of lower socio-economic status or recent immigrants, some professionals may underestimate the dangers of lead poisoning (CDC, 2013). However, the recent Flint water crisis demonstrated how lead poisoning is a threat to entire communities and can no longer be ignored by educators, including school psychologists.

**The Long- and Short-Term Implications of Heavy Metal Exposure on Children**

The effects of lead poisoning are deceptive because this type of poisoning impacts every individual differently. Some fetuses exposed to lead in utero may suffer from low birth weight. As these children develop, they may experience severe delays in brain and organ development. Medically, delays may cause breathing difficulties including asthma. Educationally, those impacted may have delayed language or speech articulation, behavior problems, or attention deficit hyperactivity disorder (ADHD; Mt. Washington Pediatric Medical Center, 2015). For those with less severe effects, students may experience low test scores based on difficulties in reading and math skills (Peeples, 2013). Long-term implications include the emergence of cancer in childhood or adulthood (Landrigan et al., 2002).

In addition to lead, mercury exposure also impacts normal child development (Palmer et al., 2006). This is especially concerning for parents. Therefore, it is important that parents work closely with their child's pediatrician to learn more about its harmful effects. For parents with children in special education, ask questions of school personnel regarding the educational implications of lead exposure on academic and/or behavioral productivity. Being informed is one key to securing your child's academic future.

**Ring the Alarm: Next Steps for Educators**

Educators should know that lead and mercury exposure is not limited to minority or lower income individuals. For example, educators must know that lead exposure can come from the water pipes of older homes or the ingested paint chips of homes built before 1978. However, there are many other ways children can be exposed to lead including, toys or candy imported internationally or artificial turf used to train school aged football or soccer players. In recent years, water sources in Washington, D.C. and Flint, Michigan have tested high for dangerous levels of lead due to corroded city pipes or lack of water treatment. The CDC assisted Washington, D.C. with addressing their lead problem in 2004 by repairing pipes. The implications of the Flint, Michigan crisis are still unknown (CDC, 2013).

Treatment varies based on the individual. The body can heal itself in mild or moderate cases of lead exposure if the affected individual moves or ceases exposure to the poisoning agent. In severe cases, the individual can take chelation therapy or EDTA therapy to help the lead bind to the medication for natural excretion (Mayo Clinic, 2015). Clearly, knowledge is power. If parents do not know that their child has been exposed, they cannot take measures to acquire treatment. A universal screening system for all toddlers and children, given by a medical professional is needed to help identify exposure to lead (CDC, 2013). Unfortunately, this universal screening is not available everywhere. In 2015, Maryland announced that they will expand their lead screening for 2-year olds, which

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is a step in the right direction (Cara, 2015). Educators should be vigilant in encouraging their state law makers to expand lead screening procedures to help all children who might be affected.

### **You're on Deck: Lead Exposure and the Role of the School Psychologist**

Lead exposure has long-term effects on learning and should be monitored until age 21 (Zhang et al., 2013). There is no question that school districts will see spikes in referrals for special education services. School psychologists must ask the question whether a child has been assessed for lead exposure when school concerns arise and when test scores are low. This includes encouraging parents to have their child assessed for possible lead exposure will help school based personnel better understand the child's academic and behavioral potentials. There should be a comprehensive evaluation rather than a rush to label, especially for special education services. Developmental delay, emotional and behavioral disorders, and intellectual disabilities will need more scrutiny with lead exposure and poisoning. Test scores will require even more contextual interpretations, along with relevant interventions. We all must work together to save our children.

### **References**

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**ENVIRONMENTAL RACISM:  
TIPS AND STRATEGIES FOR SOCIAL WORKERS**

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Environmental racism is the placement of lower-income or racial minority communities in proximity of environmentally hazardous or degraded environments, such as toxic waste, pollution, and urban decay. Children of color and those living below the poverty line are more likely to be at higher risk of coming in contact with hazardous pollution that compromises their learning and overall development. According to the National Institute of Environmental Health Sciences, children receive proportionately larger doses of environmental toxicants than adults, and because their organs and tissues are rapidly developing, this makes them particularly vulnerable to chemical insults (Learn more: <http://t.usa.gov/tUeZmwX>). Children of color who live in poor areas are more likely to attend schools filled with asbestos, live in homes with peeling lead paint, and play in parks that are contaminated. They can be exposed to lead in dust, soil, air, food, and drinking water, as in the case of Flint.

The notion and problems of environmental racism are by no means new. More than 20 years ago, social justice workers exposed the environmental racism that is overwhelmingly present in low-income African American, Latino, and Native American communities. Since then, national and city governments have done more to clean up toxic environments in these communities. But it is neither enough nor just. Most recently is Flint, Michigan being exposed for lead in its water (and allegedly intentionally poisoning millions of the city's population to save money); the nation is more aware of the seriousness of the lead problem in this country (See this [New York Times](#) story). In Flint, it is estimated that nearly 8,000 children under the age of six may have been exposed to unsafe levels of lead.

According to the Environmental Protection Agency, "EPA has set the maximum contaminant level goal for lead in drinking water at zero because lead is a toxic metal that can be harmful to human health even at low exposure levels. Lead is persistent, and it can bio-accumulate in the body over time" (EPA, 2016). EPA estimates that drinking water can make up 20 percent or more of a person's total exposure to lead. Below are a few more possible symptoms and outcomes of lead exposure. Lead can

- decrease a child's Intelligence Quotient (IQ)
- retard overall cognitive functioning and physical development
- increase undesirable and anti-social behavior (note: There is a link between criminality and lead exposure)
- contribute to hearing problems
- create a deficiency of red blood cells (i.e., anemia)
- reduce growth of the unborn fetus
- cause premature birth in pregnant women

Working alongside school administrators, teachers, and informing school psychologists and evaluation specialists about the common environmental risks in local community, school social workers must be among the biggest advocates for environmental justice. Social workers must also be aware of the signs and symptoms of children who may have been exposed to toxicants. What do social workers need to know about lead? First of all, social workers need to understand that lead poisoning is irreversible and carries long-term consequences. Second, lead is known to be a potent neurotoxin and there is no safe level of lead when it come to children. Third, Young children, fetuses, and infants are the most vulnerable to lead because the physical and behavioral effects of this toxin occur at lower exposure levels in children than in adults.

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It is important to recognize that social workers can help alleviate some of the effects of lead poisoning. Early childhood education and proper nutrition helps mitigate lead exposure. The following are more practice-related actions that social workers can take to support families and educators.

- (1) If a child lives or attends school in a house or community where lead exposure is possible, parents and caregivers should be encouraged to visit their pediatrician and be tested for lead. While prevention is not always possible, this can help families, schools, and work environments reduce exposure to lead, because simply avoiding exposure to lead can be enough to reduce blood lead levels.
- (2) Encourage parents and caregivers to keep their homes clean and dust free in order to reduce even more complications from lead.
- (3) Work with political and business leaders to provide affordable or free of cost water filters and bottled water.
- (4) Work closely with educators to assist in helping children who may be showing signs of lead exposure, especially those children who may be showing signs of behavioral and/or learning problems.

The impact that social workers can have in addressing environment racism of all kinds increases when social workers become knowledgeable about environmental racism and professionally advocate for environmental justice. Teachers and families need the support and cannot bear this burden alone. It our our duty to be informed and involved.

### References

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**DROWNING IN INJUSTICE:**

**When the Healthiest Natural Resource Endangers the Promise for Students of Color**

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*“Just Give me a Cool Drink of Water for I Diiiiie”*, wrote the late great Dr. Maya Angelou. And, just like her volume of poetry focused on African American’s experiences of survival, so shall this commentary focus on the survival of the children of Flint. Who would have thought the mere act of consuming one of the world’s natural resources would prove to be deadly? Who would imagine that the Earth’s natural resource would or could be utilized as a weapon against a marginalized community of color?

The travesty of the Flint water crisis and the effects of lead poisoning on elementary school aged children are great considering that many studies have shown that this overexposure, and ultimate poisoning, leads to decreased intelligence, learning disabilities, anemia, convulsion, hypertension, kidney disease and cancer. Data from the Center for Disease Control (CDC) show that 6% of all children ages 1-2 years and 11% of black (non-Hispanic) children ages 1-5 years have blood lead levels in the toxic range (Raymond, Wheeler, & Brown, 2014). Nevertheless, even when exposed to small amounts of lead levels, children may appear inattentive, hyperactive and irritable. Families who live and are educated in urban areas where they are environmentally assaulted face social, emotional, and educational challenges. Because some of the symptoms and evident effects of lead poisoning appear slowly, over time, and are often irreversible, educators and school leaders are at a disadvantage when having to meet the many needs of children overexposed to lead with fewer resources. The challenge of securing early service or experienced teachers who are trained and equipped to meet the needs of children exposed to lead, in addition to recruiting the best teaching talent experienced with culturally responsive pedagogy to serve students in underserved schooling environments persists.

What is most disturbing about the water contamination in Flint and the lead poisoning crisis occurring in other racially segregated urban communities is that this phenomenon is not new (Maas, Patch, Morgan, & Pandolfo, 2005). Lead poisoning and environmental hazards imposed disproportionately upon people of color has been a pressing issue which has greatly gone ignored until Flint made the country pay attention to this negligent, racist and classist occurrence. John Lewis, Democratic Representative for Georgia's 5th congressional district sponsored the Environmental Justice Act of 1992. Children born the year that bill died in the 102<sup>nd</sup> congress would now be 24 years old adults possibly living with the undiagnosed effects of lead poisoning. Children who are disproportionately affected by lead poisoning mirrors the statistics on classification of special education, underachievement, juvenile delinquency, the school to prison pipeline, and mass incarceration.

School leaders must take their leadership charge seriously as they support educators, families, and students affected by this tragedy and other forms of environmental injustice. Here are some suggestions for school leaders to support their students and families:

- Provide on-going professional development for teachers and para-professionals on how to identify behaviors associated with over-exposure to lead
- Partner with local health and community partners that will commit to educating families remaining current with health screenings
- Invite guest speakers to PAC (Parent Advisory Council) in order to educate and support families
- Provide support systems (e.g., connections to counselors, social works, nurses, etc.) that will encourage and connect parents/families with education and available resources
- Ensure that support staff (e.g., nurses, social workers, counselors) are certified and up to date with current health care issues and needs; this provides wrap around services for students and families

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**Request for Participation in Research Project  
Intersectionality of Disability and Diversity**



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A group of professors from Coastal Carolina University (Conway, SC), Eastern Kentucky University (Richmond, KY), John Hopkins University (Baltimore, MD) and The University of Texas at Tyler (Tyler, TX) are conducting research on diversity. This questionnaire is anonymous: your answers will be considered as a whole (including all respondents) and will be analyzed for research purposes.

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