

Senul Wickramaratna ~ Project Reflection

My topic is lead-exposure in school drinking water, a problem that is affecting young students ages 6 and younger the most, impacting academic performance and causing many serious health issues that could even result in death. Many school districts have alarming levels of lead in their school drinking water going unnoticed. To bring light to this situation, my infographic's target audience is officials - including K-12 legislature and school boards - as well as parents, and students. Through this infographic I am attempting to raise awareness in students and parents, while encouraging officials to start taking action.

While living in one of the wealthiest nations and one of the states with a highest household income, I never thought access to safe drinking water in schools would be a challenge. When I came across the WTN data describing the statistics on the extent of lead contamination and its harmful effects on cognitive development and behavior especially among young students, I was surprised, leading me to continue with the topic.

My curiosity to find solution options to this critical issue led to my research of WTN's data on lead exposure in drinking water based on Washington school districts. I combined this data with WA State Fiscal Information on budgeting so I could make connections between the two datasets, analyze data, and draw my conclusions.

My analysis shows that uneven school funding prevents equitable budgeting, leaving smaller school districts with inadequate resources. As a result, disparities emerge in detecting and addressing lead exposure in drinking water. Enrollment based funding and contingency budgets would help these schools provide safer drinking water while having the resources to respond against any situation of lead exposure.

By raising awareness and promoting community engagement, we can stand for policies that prioritize equitable funding to provide a basic need for the schooling community - safe drinking water. Addressing lead exposure not only improves students' health but also enhances their academic performance and overall quality of life both in and out of school creating a positive change in the community.

While creating this infographic, I faced several challenges, including multiple revisions to improve on readability, aesthetics, and clarity. Additionally, I had difficulties in making complex information easy to understand without oversimplifying. My parents provided helpful feedback on the design and readability of my infographic, helping me make it clearer and more appealing visually.

Finally, I did not use AI tools to complete this project. All ideas and writing were through WTN data and other research.