

Watertown Public Schools Wellness Policy & Guidelines

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Watertown Public Schools Wellness Policy

Preamble

Research shows that two components, good nutrition and physical activity before, during and after the school day, are strongly correlated with positive student outcomes. For example, student participation in the U.S. Department of Agriculture's (USDA) School Breakfast Program is associated with higher grades and standardized test scores, lower absenteeism and better performance on cognitive tasks.^{1,2,3,4,5,6,7} Conversely, less-than-adequate consumption of specific foods including fruits, vegetables and dairy products, is associated with lower grades among students.^{8,9,10} In addition, students who are physically active through active transport to and from school, recess, physical activity breaks, high-quality physical education and extracurricular activities – do better academically.^{11,12,13,14} Finally, there is evidence that adequate hydration is associated with better cognitive performance.¹⁵

Policy

Watertown Public School District is committed to the optimal development of every student. The District believes that for students to have the opportunity to achieve personal, academic, developmental and social success, we need to provide positive, safe and health-promoting learning environments at every level, in every setting, throughout the school year.

Watertown Public Schools endeavors to ensure environments and opportunities for all students to practice healthy eating and physical activity behaviors throughout the school day while minimizing commercial distractions. To that end we strive to ensure:

- Students receive quality nutrition education that helps them develop lifelong healthy eating behaviors;
- Students in the District have access to healthy foods throughout the school day – both through reimbursable school meals and other foods available throughout the school campus– in accordance with Federal and state nutrition standards;
- We encourage students to be physically active before, during and after school including weekends;
- Schools engage in nutrition and physical activity promotion and other activities that promote student wellness;
- School staff are encouraged to practice healthy nutrition and physical activity behaviors in and out of school;
- The community is engaged in supporting the work of the District in creating continuity between school and other settings for students and staff to practice lifelong healthy habits; and
- The District coordinates the wellness policy with other aspects of school management, including the District's School Improvement Plan, when appropriate.

This policy applies to all students, staff and schools in the District.

GUIDELINES

I. School Wellness Committee (SWC)

Committee Role and Membership

The District will convene a representative district wellness committee that meets at least four times per year to establish goals for and oversee school health and safety policies and programs, including development, implementation and periodic review and recommended update of this district-level wellness policy (heretofore referred as “wellness policy”).

The wellness committee membership will represent all school levels (elementary and secondary schools) and include (to the extent possible), but not be limited to: parents and caregivers; students; representatives (e.g., school food service director); physical education teachers; health education teachers; school health professionals, school administrators; and the general public. To the extent possible, the wellness committee will include representatives from each school building and reflect the diversity of the community.

Leadership

The Superintendent or designee(s) will convene the wellness committee and facilitate development of and updates to the wellness policy, and will ensure each school’s compliance with the policy.

The designated official for oversight is the Chair of the Wellness Committee.

The name(s), title(s), and contact information of these individuals are listed on the WPS website.

II. Wellness Policy Guidelines for Implementation, Monitoring, Accountability and Community Engagement

Implementation Plan

The District will develop and maintain a plan for implementation to manage and coordinate the execution of this wellness policy. The plan delineates roles, responsibilities, actions and timelines specific to each school; and includes information about who will be responsible to make what change, by how much, where and when; as well as specific goals and objectives for nutrition standards for all foods and beverages available on the school campus, food and beverage marketing, nutrition promotion and education, physical activity, physical education and other school-based activities that promote student wellness.

This wellness policy can be found at:

<https://docs.google.com/a/watertown.k12.ma.us/viewer?a=v&pid=sites&srcid=d2F0ZXJ0b3duLm5xMi5tYS51c3x3cHN8Z3g6MjIwZWMyYmU5M2E5YzZM3NQ>

Recordkeeping

The District will retain records to document compliance with the requirements of the wellness policy at the Central Office. Documentation maintained in this location will include but will not be limited to:

- The written wellness policy;
- Documentation demonstrating that the policy has been made available to the public;
- Documentation of efforts to review and update the Local Schools Wellness Policy; including an indication of who is involved in the update and methods the district uses to make stakeholders aware of their ability to participate on the wellness committee;
- Documentation to demonstrate compliance with the annual public notification requirements;
- The most recent assessment on the implementation of the local school wellness policy;
- Documentation demonstrating the most recent assessment on the implementation of the Local School Wellness Policy has been made available to the public.

Triennial Progress Assessments

At least once every three years, the District will evaluate compliance with the wellness policy to assess the implementation of the policy and include:

- The extent to which schools under the jurisdiction of the District are in compliance with the wellness policy;
- The extent to which the District's wellness policy compares to the Alliance for a Healthier Generation's model wellness policy; and

The position/person responsible for managing the triennial assessment is the Chair of the Wellness Committee.

The wellness committee, in collaboration with individual schools, will monitor schools' compliance with this wellness policy.

The District will actively notify households/families of the availability of the triennial progress report.

Community Involvement, Outreach and Communications

The District is committed to being responsive to community input, which begins with awareness of the wellness policy. The District will actively communicate ways in which representatives of wellness committee and others can participate in the development, implementation and periodic review and update of the wellness policy through a variety of means appropriate for that district. The District will also inform parents of the improvements that have been made to school meals and compliance with school meal standards, availability of child nutrition programs and how to apply, and a description of and compliance with Smart Snacks in School nutrition standards. The District will use electronic mechanisms, such as email or displaying notices on the district's website, as well as non-electronic mechanisms, such as newsletters, presentations to parents, or sending information home to parents, to ensure that all families are actively notified of the content of, implementation of, and updates to the wellness policy, as well as how to get involved and support the policy. The District will ensure that communications are culturally and linguistically appropriate to the community, and accomplished through means similar to other ways that the district and individual schools are communicating important school information with parents.

III. Nutrition

School Meals

Our school district is committed to serving healthy meals to children, with plenty of fruits, vegetables, whole grains, and fat-free and low-fat milk; that are moderate in sodium, low in saturated fat, and have zero grams *trans* fat per serving (nutrition label or manufacturer's specification); and to meeting the nutrition needs of school children within their calorie requirements. The school meal programs aim to improve the diet and health of school children, help mitigate childhood obesity, model healthy eating to support the development of lifelong healthy eating patterns and support healthy choices while accommodating cultural food preferences and special dietary needs.

All schools within the District participate in USDA child nutrition programs, including the National School Lunch Program (NSLP), and the School Breakfast Program (SBP). The District also operates additional nutrition-related programs and activities including cooking classes, school gardens, farm to school, and fuel up to play 60. All schools within the District are committed to offering school meals through the NSLP and SBP programs, and other applicable Federal child nutrition programs, that:

- Are accessible to all students;
- Are appealing and attractive to children;
- Are served in clean and pleasant settings;
- Meet or exceed current nutrition requirements established by local, state, and Federal statutes and regulations. (The District offers reimbursable school meals that meet [USDA nutrition standards](#).)

Staff Qualifications and Professional Development

All school nutrition program directors, managers and staff will meet or exceed hiring and annual continuing education/training requirements in the [USDA professional standards for child nutrition professionals](#). These school nutrition personnel will refer to [USDA's Professional Standards for School Nutrition Standards website](#) to search for training that meets their learning needs.

Water

To promote hydration, free, safe, unflavored drinking water will be available to all students throughout the school day* and throughout every school campus* ("school campus" and "school day" are defined in the glossary). The District will make drinking water available where school meals are served during meal times.

- Students will be allowed to bring and carry (approved) water bottles filled with only water with them throughout the day.

Competitive Foods and Beverages

The District is committed to ensuring that all foods and beverages available to students on the school campus* during the school day* support healthy eating. The foods and beverages sold and served outside of the school meal programs (e.g., "competitive" foods and beverages) will meet the MA Competitive Foods CMR 102.5 and/or the USDA Smart Snacks in School nutrition

standards, at a minimum. Smart Snacks aim to improve student health and well-being, increase consumption of healthful foods during the school day and create an environment that reinforces the development of healthy eating habits. A summary of the standards and information, as well as a Guide to Smart Snacks in Schools are available at:

<http://www.fns.usda.gov/healthierschoolday/tools-schools-smart-snacks>. The Alliance for a Healthier Generation provides a set of tools to assist with implementation of Smart Snacks available at www.foodplanner.healthiergeneration.org.

In instances where the Mass CMR 102.5 Competitive Foods Law is more stringent than the federal standard, the state law will be followed.

To support healthy food choices and improve student health and well-being, all foods and beverages outside the reimbursable school meal programs that are sold to students on the school campus during the school day will meet or exceed the USDA Smart Snacks nutrition standards *or, when the state policy is stronger, will meet or exceed state nutrition standards*. These standards will apply in all locations and through all services where foods and beverages are sold, which may include, but are not limited to, à la carte options in cafeterias, vending machines, school stores and snack or food carts.

Celebrations and Rewards

All foods offered on the school campus during the school day will meet or exceed the USDA Smart Snacks in School nutrition standards *or, when the state policy is stronger, will meet or exceed state nutrition standards*.

Fundraising

Foods and beverages that meet or exceed the USDA Smart Snacks in Schools nutrition standards may be sold through fundraisers on the school campus during the school day. The District will make available to parents and teachers a list of healthy fundraising ideas [*examples from the [Alliance for a Healthier Generation](#) and the [USDA](#)*].

Nutrition Promotion

Nutrition promotion and education positively influence lifelong eating behaviors by using evidence-based techniques and nutrition messages, and by creating food environments that encourage healthy nutrition choices and encourage participation in school meal programs. Students and staff will receive consistent nutrition messages throughout schools, classrooms, gymnasiums, and cafeterias. Nutrition promotion also includes marketing and advertising nutritious foods and beverages to students and is most effective when implemented consistently through a comprehensive and multi-channel approach by school staff, teachers, parents, students and the community.

The District will promote healthy food and beverage choices for all students throughout the school campus, as well as encourage participation in school meal programs. This promotion will occur through at least:

- Implementing evidence-based healthy food promotion techniques through the school meal programs using [Smarter Lunchroom techniques](#); and

- Ensuring 100% of foods and beverages promoted to students meet the USDA Smart Snacks in School nutrition standards. Additional promotion techniques that the District and individual schools may use are available at <http://www.foodplanner.healthiergeneration.org/>.

Food and Beverage Marketing in Schools

The District is committed to providing a school environment that ensures opportunities for all students to practice healthy eating and physical activity behaviors throughout the school day while minimizing commercial distractions. The District strives to teach students how to make informed choices about nutrition, health and physical activity. These efforts will be weakened if students are subjected to advertising on District property that contains messages inconsistent with the health information the District is imparting through nutrition education and health promotion efforts. It is the intent of the District to protect and promote student's health by permitting advertising and marketing for only those foods and beverages that are permitted to be sold on the school campus, consistent with the District's wellness policy.

As the District/school nutrition services/Athletics Department reviews existing contracts and considers new contracts, equipment and product purchasing (and replacement) decisions should reflect the applicable marketing guidelines established by the District wellness policy.

IV. Physical Activity

Physical Activity - The WPS recognizes the Center for Disease Control (CDC) recommendations for 60 minutes physical activity for children daily. WPS will teach the importance of physical activity and a healthy lifestyle beyond the school environment. Specific actions will take into account the health needs of all children without discrimination or isolation of any child. Schools will ensure that these varied physical activity opportunities are in addition to, and not as a substitute for, physical education.

Physical activity during the school day (including but not limited to recess, classroom physical activity breaks or physical education) will not be withheld as punishment for any reason. This does not include participation on sports teams that have specific academic requirements. To the extent practicable, the District will ensure that its grounds and facilities are safe and that equipment is available to students to be active.

Physical Education

The District will provide students with physical education, using an age-appropriate, sequential physical education curriculum consistent with national and state standards for physical education. The District will require that all students K-12 receive physical education every year. At the elementary level, all students receive physical education 2 times per week (at least 40 minutes), Middle School students receive physical education 3 times per week (AB schedule) and High School students receive physical education via semester scheduling 6 of 7 day cycle. All students will be provided equal opportunity to participate in physical education classes. The District will make appropriate accommodations to allow for equitable participation for all students and will adapt physical education classes and equipment as necessary.

Recess (Elementary) All elementary schools will offer at least **20 minutes of recess** on all days during the school year. This policy may be waived on early dismissal or late arrival days. If recess is offered before lunch, schools will have appropriate hand-washing facilities and/or hand-sanitizing mechanisms located just inside/outside the cafeteria to ensure proper hygiene prior to eating and students are required to use these mechanisms before eating. Hand-washing time, as well as time to put away coats/hats/gloves, will be built into the recess transition period/timeframe before students enter the cafeteria.

Outdoor recess will be offered when weather is feasible for outdoor play. In the event that the school or district must conduct **indoor recess**, teachers and staff will follow the indoor recess guidelines that promote physical activity for students, to the extent practicable. Recess will complement, not substitute, physical education class. Recess monitors or teachers will encourage students to be active, and will serve as role models by being physically active alongside the students whenever feasible.

Before and After School Activities

The District offers opportunities for students to participate in physical activity either before and/or after the school day (or both) through a variety of methods. The District will encourage students to be physically active before and after school.

V. Other Activities that Promote Student Wellness

The District seeks to integrate wellness activities across the entire school setting, not just in the cafeteria, other food and beverage venues and physical activity facilities. The District pursues ways to coordinate and integrate other initiatives related to physical activity, physical education, nutrition and other wellness components so all efforts are complementary, not duplicative, and work towards the same set of goals and objectives promoting student well-being, optimal development and strong educational outcomes.

Schools in the District are encouraged to include content across curricular areas that promote student health, such as teaching nutrition concepts in mathematics, with consultation provided by either the school or the District's curriculum experts.

All efforts related to obtaining federal, state or association recognition for efforts, or grants/funding opportunities for healthy school environments will be coordinated with and complementary of the wellness policy, including but not limited to ensuring the involvement of the wellness committee/SWC.

Community Health Promotion and Family Engagement

The District will promote to parents/caregivers, families, and the general community the benefits of and approaches for healthy eating and physical activity throughout the school year. Families will be informed and invited to participate in school-sponsored activities and will receive information about health promotion efforts.

Social and Emotional Wellness

Developing social and emotional competence is a vital part of being able to function effectively in life as a student, employee, and citizen. Opportunities to develop and strengthen social and emotional learning skills have shown positive effects.

Studies demonstrate that social and emotional learning (SEL), is tied to better academic performance, higher college retention rates, increased employment rates and wages, and better overall health and well-being, including a lower risk of substance abuse, obesity, and criminal activity.¹⁶

The District will operationalize and integrate social emotional learning in all schools, using grade-level appropriate methods. This integration with academic learning will help students cultivate social and emotional strategies and skills such as: self-management, persistence, empathy, and good decision-making.

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- ¹⁶ http://www.renniecenter.org/sites/default/files/2017-01/Social%20and%20Emotional%20Learning%20-%20Opportunities%20for%20MA%2C%20Lessons%20for%20the%20Nation_1.pdf