

WELLNESS PROGRAM

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I. Philosophy and Commitment

Sarasota County Schools believes that children and youth who begin each day as healthy individuals can learn more effectively and are more likely to complete their formal education. Sarasota County Schools is committed to providing school environments that promote and protect children's health, well-being, and ability to learn by supporting healthy eating and physical activity. All students in the Sarasota County School District shall possess the knowledge and skills necessary to make nutritious food choices and to enjoy physical activity choices for a lifetime.

The School Board adopts this Wellness Policy establishing guidelines and goals for nutrition, physical activity, student wellness, and a plan for implementation. This plan is designed to effectively utilize school and community resources and to equitably serve the wellness needs of students.

This policy serves as a tool for establishing healthy school nutrition environments in the Sarasota County School District. This policy establishes guidelines and techniques for promoting a well-rounded approach to health, nutrition, and overall student wellness that is sensitive to individual and community needs.

II. Rationale

The link between nutrition, physical activity, and learning is well documented. Healthy eating and activity patterns are essential for students to achieve their full academic potential, full physical and mental growth, and lifelong health and well-being. According to the School Health Guidelines to Promote Healthy Eating and Physical Activity published by the Center for the Disease Control, healthy eating and physical activity, essential for healthy weight, are also linked to reduced risk for many chronic diseases, including Type 2 diabetes mellitus, heart disease, and cancer (School Health Guidelines, 5). Schools have a responsibility to help students learn, establish, and maintain lifelong, healthy eating and activity patterns. Well-planned and effectively implemented school nutrition and fitness programs have been shown to enhance students' overall health, as well as their behavior and academic achievement in school (Association between School Based Physical Activity, 8-9). Staff wellness is also an integral part of a healthy school environment, since school staff can serve as daily role models for healthy behaviors.

Sarasota County Schools acknowledge that:

- A. Children need access to healthful foods and opportunities to be physically active in order to grow, learn, and thrive.
- B. Good health fosters student attendance and education.

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- C. Obesity rates have doubled in children and tripled in adolescents over the last two decades, and physical inactivity and excessive calorie intake are the predominant causes of obesity (School Health Guidelines, 5).
- D. Heart disease, cancer, stroke and diabetes are responsible for two-thirds of deaths in the United States, and major risk factors for those diseases, which include unhealthy eating habits, physical inactivity and obesity, often are established in childhood.
- E. School districts around the country are facing significant fiscal and scheduling constraints.
- F. Community participation is essential to the development and implementation of successful school wellness policies.

Therefore, it is the commitment of Sarasota County that:

- G. The school district will engage students, parents, teachers, food service professionals, health professionals, and other interested community members in developing, implementing, monitoring, and reviewing district-wide nutrition and physical activity policies. All students in grades K-12 will have opportunities, support, and encouragement to be physically active on a regular basis.
- H. Foods and beverages sold or served at school will meet the nutrition recommendations of the U.S. Dietary Guidelines for Americans.
- I. Qualified child nutrition professionals will provide students with access to a variety of affordable, nutritious, and appealing foods that meet the health and nutrition needs of students; will accommodate the religious, ethnic, and cultural diversity of the student body in meal planning; and will provide clean, safe, and pleasant settings and adequate time for students to eat.
- J. All schools in our district will participate in the School Breakfast Program and the National School Lunch Program, and qualifying schools will participate in the After-School Snacks Program and the Summer Food Service Program.
- K. Schools will provide nutrition education and physical education to foster lifelong habits of healthy eating and physical activity, and will establish linkages between health education and school meal programs.

III. Nutrition Education

- A. Nutrition education is provided to students through a planned, sequential curriculum via a variety of outlets including classroom, cafeteria, and after school programs.

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- B. Nutrition education involves the sharing of information with families and the community through menus, newsletters, the Food and Nutrition Services website, parent meetings and other—district-wide wellness activities. Information will also be shared via social media.
- IV. Nutrition Guidelines for All Foods on Campus
- A. Food choices reflect good nutrition, appropriate food choices, and food safety for students and staff contributing to the development of overall health and well-being.
 - B. All foods and beverages sold or served on campus, including the sales of competitive foods, vending machine food options, and foods of minimal nutritional value shall comply with nutrition standards and requirements established by federal, state, and local laws/regulations.
 - C. Guidelines for reimbursable school meals are not less restrictive than regulations and guidelines issued by the United States Department of Agriculture (USDA).
 - D. School meals are made accessible to all students through a variety of meal delivery strategies and time periods.
 - E. Eligible students are encouraged to participate in the free and reduced-price meal program and provided appropriate materials to apply for such benefits.
 - F. Summer nutrition programs are offered and remain consistent with Florida Statutes and standards established by the United States Department of Agriculture.
 - G. Guidelines are established and provided to all school-sites for snacks and other foods used for celebrations, school sponsored events and fundraising activities.
 - H. Low-fat and fat-free milk, a variety of fruits and vegetables and whole grain products are emphasized in menu development.
 - I. Fresh foods are emphasized through the utilization of agriculture programs, including Farm to School, and the Fresh Fruit and Vegetable Program.
- V. Physical Activity
- A. Physical education programs are taught by certified physical education teachers who emphasize physical fitness and healthy lifestyles.
 - B. Physical education curriculum incorporates the following:

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1. Promotion of positive attitudes toward wellness and physical activity
 2. Safety guidelines
 3. Responsible behavior in physical activity settings
 4. Appreciation for a variety of physical activities
 5. Understanding of the relationship between physical activity and wellness
 6. Personal physical fitness goal setting
- C. Opportunities for physical activity may be scheduled before, during and after the school day to provide opportunities for participation by all students.
- D. Schools encourage families and the community to promote and participate in programs which support physical activity, such as Health Fairs, the "Walking School Bus," mile clubs, and school sponsored runs.
- E. Physical activity participation is not used as a punishment or reward.
- F. Adequate equipment is available for all students, regardless of disabilities or impairments, to participate in physical education.
- VI. Other School-Based Activities
- A. Local Wellness Policy goals are considered in planning school-based activities.
 - B. After-school programs encourage healthy snacking and physical activity.
 - C. Facilities are made available to the community to promote wellness related activities (in compliance with School Board Rule 9.30).
 - D. Collaboration with community agencies and organizations to promote wellness activities in the community is encouraged.
 - E. Opportunities for students, staff, and the community focused on wellness are demonstrated by offering health focused activities and events on school campuses which may include health screenings, run clubs and field days.
- VII. Wellness Implementation Strategy
- A. A Wellness Contact(s) at each school site is/are designated to assist with the implementation of the Local Wellness Policy.
 - B. A Wellness Steering Committee is established and consists of representatives from the School Health Advisory Committee and the Nutrition Review Committee.

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- C. The Wellness Steering Committee conducts on-going assessments of current nutrition guidelines and activities, nutrition education, physical activity, involvement of students, and other wellness related topics.
- D. The Wellness Steering Committee works with staff to provide a comprehensive wellness program based on the adopted goals and results of the initial assessment. The program will be continuously evaluated and updated.
- E. The Wellness Program shall meet the requirements of the National School Lunch Act, the Child Nutrition Act of 1966, revised 2004, and the Healthy Hunger Free Kids act of 2010.
- F. The Wellness Program will adhere to the "Sarasota County Schools Wellness Procedures Manual."

VIII. Implementation

- 1. Prepare and submit an annual report to the School Board regarding progress toward implementation of the school wellness policy and recommendations for revisions to the policy, as necessary.
- 2. Conduct a review of the progress toward school wellness policy goals each year to identify areas for improvement.
- 3. The Nutrition Review Subcommittee will meet as needed to meet the United States Department of Agriculture (USDA) guidelines.

References:

- 1. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. *School Health Guidelines to Promote Healthy Eating and Physical Activity*: MMWR 2011; 60 (No. RR-5):5, 11-12
- 2. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. *The association between school based physical activity, including physical education, and academic performance*. Atlanta, GA: U.S. Department of Health and Human Services; 2010. (8-9)

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STATUTORY AUTHORITY: 1001.41, 1001.42, F.S.

LAW(S) IMPLEMENTED: CHILD NUTRITION ACT OF 1966 (42 USC 1771 et seq.)
NATIONAL SCHOOL LUNCH ACT (42 USC 1751 et seq.)
RICHARD B. RUSSELL NATIONAL SCHOOL LUNCH ACT,
P.L. 108 265, SECTION 204
570.981, 570.982, 1001.43, 1003.42, 1003.453, 1003.455, 1003.46, F.S.

**STATE DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE
AND CONSUMER SERVICES RULE(S):** 5P-1.001, 5P-1.002, 5P-1.003

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FORMERLY: NEW

NOTES: