

WELLNESS POLICY WORCESTER PUBLIC SCHOOLS

PREAMBLE

It is the intent of the Worcester Public Schools Wellness Policy to enable students to become independent and self-directed learners, responsible for meeting their own health and nutritional needs as developmentally appropriate. It is the goal of the wellness policy to promote the students' physical, emotional and social well being through the coordinated efforts of all departments and services offered in the Worcester Public Schools.

Assessments/Baseline Data:

National statistics show that 15.3% of students age 6 to 11 are overweight; and 15% of this same age group are at risk of being overweight.

Given that obesity has become a major concern nationwide, the WPS is committed to providing safe school environments that promote children's health and well being and ability to learn by supporting healthy eating and physical activity. Therefore, it is the policy of the Worcester Public Schools that:

- The school district will continue to engage students, parents, teachers, food service professionals and other interested community members in developing, implementing, monitoring and reviewing district-wide nutrition and physical activity policies.
- Students in grades K-12 will have opportunities, support and encouragement to be physically active on a regular basis.
- Foods and beverages sold at school, to students in the cafeteria, will meet the nutrition recommendations of the *U.S. Dietary Guidelines for Americans*.
- Qualified child nutrition professionals will assist school administrators to provide students with access to a variety of affordable, nutritious and appealing foods that meet their health and nutrition needs; 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.
- Schools will provide nutrition education and physical education to promote lifelong habits of healthy eating and physical activity and will establish linkages between health education, school meal programs and related community services.
- Students and staff will benefit from a coordinated program of accessible health and counseling services.

The Worcester Public Schools will work with our existing health advisory council to develop, implement, monitor, review, and as necessary, revise school health, nutrition and physical activity policies. The advisory council will also serve as a resource to school sites for implementing these policies.

I. School Health Advisory Council

Members of the School Health Advisory Council include:

- Manager of Student and Staff Support Services
- Member of Worcester School Committee
- Coordinator of Nursing Services
- Director of Health Education and Safe Schools/Healthy Students
- Coordinator of Counseling, Psychology and Community Outreach
- Director of School Nutrition
- Director of Physical Education and Athletics
- Executive Assistant to the Superintendent on School Safety
- High School Principals
- Middle School Principals
- Elementary School Principals
- High School Students
- Parents/Guardians
- Private/Parochial School Nurse Liaison
- Worcester Public School's Pediatrician Consultant
- City of Worcester Commissioner of Public Health
- City of Worcester EMS Deputy Chief Paramedic
- Representative: Great Brook Valley Health Center
- Representative: Family Health Center
- Representative: UMass/Memorial Hospital
- Representative: Y.O.U., Inc.
- Representatives: Youth-serving Agencies
- Representatives: Family Organizations

II. Nutritional Quality of Foods and Beverages Sold and Served on Campus

School Meals

Meals served through the National School Lunch and Breakfast Programs will follow the nutritional parameters of Nutrient Standard Menu Planning whereas minimum levels are met for calories, protein, calcium, iron, vitamin A, vitamin C and maximum levels for total fat do not exceed 30% and saturated fat does not exceed 10%.

School principals will consult with the School Nutrition Office concerning lunch scheduling in order to cooperatively establish the required number of serving outlets ensuring all students have comfortable access to school meals.

The school cafeteria serving space(s) will focus on marketing the reimbursable meal and other "whole-food" commodities such as milk, fresh fruit, and vegetables.

The School Nutrition Program will purchase locally grown fruits and vegetables in season and continue to work with the Department of Agriculture to secure and develop availability.

Foods Sold and Served on Campus

Consistent with local, state and federal guidelines, unauthorized food sales will not occur in the cafeteria and/or in competition with reimbursable meals offered through the National School Breakfast and Lunch Program.

III. Nutrition and Physical Activity Promotion and Food Marketing

Nutrition Education and Promotion. The Worcester Public School District aims to teach, encourage, and support its students to develop healthy eating habits. Schools will provide nutrition education and engage in nutrition promotion that:

- is offered at each grade level as part of a sequential, comprehensive, standards-based program designed to provide students with the knowledge and skills necessary to promote and protect their health;
- is part of, not only health education classes, but also classroom instruction in subjects such as science, language arts, and family and consumer science;
- includes enjoyable, developmentally-appropriate, culturally-relevant, participatory activities, such as contests, promotions, taste testing, farm visits, and school gardens;
- promotes fruits, vegetables, whole grain products, low-fat and fat-free dairy products, healthy food preparation methods, and health-enhancing nutrition practices;
- emphasizes caloric balance between food intake and energy expenditure (physical activity/exercise);
- links with school meal programs, other school foods, and nutrition-related community services;
- teaches media literacy with an emphasis on food marketing; and
- includes training for teachers and other staff.

Communications with Parents. Schools will encourage parents to provide healthy meals and snacks and refrain from including beverages and foods that do not meet the above nutrition standards.

The district/school will provide information about physical education and other school-based physical activity opportunities before, during, and after the school day; and support parents' efforts to provide their children with opportunities to be physically active outside of school through distribution of information regarding services available from youth serving agencies.

Food Marketing in Schools. School-based advertising will be consistent with nutrition education and health policy. In-school advertising of brands promoting predominantly low-nutrition foods and beverages is discouraged. The promotion of healthy foods, including beverages, fruits, vegetables, whole grains, and low-fat dairy products is encouraged.

Staff Wellness. All staff are members of the Wellness Corporation (www.wellnesscorp.com), an Employee Assistance Company, which has nurses available to coach and educate individuals regarding wellness and prevention.

IV. Physical Activity Opportunities and Physical Education

- Physical education is offered to students K – 12, including students with disabilities, special health care needs, and in alternative educational settings.
- Students will receive regularly scheduled physical education instruction which meets the Massachusetts state guidelines.
- Certified physical education teachers will teach physical education classes.
- Elementary school students will have supervised recess, preferably outdoors, one or more times daily where moderate to vigorous physical activity will be encouraged.
- Students are given opportunities for physical activity through a range of before- and/or after-school programs including, but not limited to, intramurals, interscholastic athletics, and physical activity clubs (i.e. Fit Math. walking clubs, etc.)
- After-school enrichment programs and child care programs will be encouraged to provide appropriate space, equipment, and activities that support daily periods of moderate to vigorous physical activity for all participants.

V. Health/Safety Services as Related to Physical Activity and Nutrition

A coordinated program of accessible health services will be provided to students and staff through collaboration with various departments within the school system and outside agencies, as applicable. The program will include communicable disease prevention, immunizations, health assessments and screenings, counseling, community health referrals, immunizations, first aid and emergency care.

When a student has an Individual Health Care Plan in place, and the parents/guardians have given consent, the school nurse will provide the education and training on a need to know basis to all involved staff, including coaches and physical education staff, in order to keep the child safe at school. The school nurse will act as the resource person for questions relating to a student's asthma, allergies, diabetes, nutritional needs, or any other complex medical issue that may arise in a school setting. The school nurse will work with individual students to instruct them on which steps to take in relation to their health concern, before engaging in any physical activity. The WPS Department of Nursing will continue to work with our physician consultant and other allied health organizations on issues relating to students' Body Mass Index (BMI) and childhood obesity.

School staff will be encouraged to share personal health conditions/concerns with the school nurse, who will maintain that information in a confidential file.

Life Threatening Allergies: The WPS nurses will provide life-threatening allergy (LTA) awareness education and Epi-pen training as needed for WPS employees based on the Department of Public Health (DPH) and Department of Education (DOE) recommendations including but not limited to:

- the significance of life threatening allergies (LTA) and a discussion on the most
- common food, stinging insect, latex, and medication allergies;
- how to create a safe environment for students with LTAs;
- when necessary, a table in the cafeteria or a student's classroom will be identified as a peanut-free or a food specific-free zone;
- each school should implement a "NO FOOD OR UTENSIL" sharing practice, as needed, with focus on the elementary level;
- cafeteria employees will receive training from the school nurse as to what precautions are necessary to ensure the safety of student/staff from the cross contamination of food or utensils;
- for their child's safety, parents will be encouraged to send in their own snacks for school;
- the signs and symptoms of anaphylaxis;
- what an Epi-pen is and how to use it; and
- how to activate the Emergency Response System, i.e., nurse and 911 EMS, to deal with an **actual, suspected, or potential** anaphylactic reaction.

Asthma: The school nurse will also provide education and instruction to all staff involved with students, on a need to know basis:

- guidelines established for students to self carry and administer their own inhaler, with parent/physician permission, and cleared by the school nurse. A medication plan will be developed and in place for the student. The school nurse will instruct the student and staff on recognizing the signs and symptoms of an asthma attack;
- what is a rescue inhaler vs. nebulizer treatment
- activate the Emergency Response System when a student is still having difficulty breathing after using his/her inhaler or nebulizer treatment.

Diabetes: The school nurse will provide education and instruction to all staff on a need to know basis, to keep the student safe in the school setting:

- guidelines established for students to carry, test and administer their own insulin with parent/physician permission and cleared by the school nurse. A medication plan will be developed in place for the student;
- the school nurse will educate and instruct the student and staff on the signs and symptoms of low blood sugar and the necessary treatment established by the student's physician;
- the school nurse will consult with School Nutrition regarding the dietary and carbohydrate needs of the student;
- activate the Emergency Response System when the student is still not responding to treatment.

Counseling Services Related to Healthy Habits/Nutrition

In both elementary and secondary schools, our Counseling and Psychological Services staff members provide supportive services to address identified social, emotional and adjustment needs of students in cooperation with their parents or guardians.

With regard to this policy: on the elementary level, School Adjustment Counselors and School Psychologists work closely with administrators, teachers and school nurses when children develop feeding or nutrition problems that may be related to their emotional health. In our middle and high schools, every student is assigned to a guidance counselor who is knowledgeable about the developmental needs of adolescents regarding possible issues of poor nutrition as a result of emotional needs. The guidance counselors will refer parents and students to the school nurse and school adjustment counselor or school psychologist for assistance in determining an appropriate course of action when needs are identified. This support staff may assist families to access community-based services through a school-based health center or other local providers of behavioral health services when such ongoing support appears necessary to intervene for a student with unhealthy eating behaviors. Disorders of feeding and eating may include:

- Anorexia nervosa: a child or adolescent severely restricts their eating over an extended time period due to a fear of gaining weight and to an extent that jeopardizes their health; they may also exercise excessively
- Bulimia nervosa: a child or adolescent may eat, in some cases may eat excessively (binge eating) and follows eating with induced vomiting or the misuse of laxatives, diuretics or enemas; a second subtype of bulimic eating pattern does not self-induce vomiting, but relies on excessive fasting and exercise on an intermittent basis
- Feeding issues secondary to global hypersensitivity or developmental delay: counselors may work with parents, school staff and specialists to develop feeding behavior support plans that enable the intake of adequate nutrition to support good health.

VI. Monitoring

The Superintendent will meet annually, each spring, with the School Health Advisory Council to review and recommend revisions to the Wellness Policy as needed. In each school the principal, or his/her designee, will assure compliance with the policy. The office of Student and Staff Support Services will develop an annual report summarizing district wide activities for implementing the Wellness Policy. The report will be submitted to the School Committee on Program Development.