

Local Wellness Policy
District of Columbia Board of Education
for
District of Columbia Public Schools
May 2006

Background

The U.S. Congress established a requirement in the Child Nutrition and Women, Infants and Children (WIC) Reauthorization Act of 2004, that **all school districts with a federally funded school meal program draft a local school wellness policy** by the start of the 2006-2007 school year.

The law requires that these policies must, at a minimum, (1) include goals for nutrition education, physical activity, and other school-based activities that promote student wellness, (2) establish nutrition guidelines for all foods available on each school campus during the school day with the objectives of promoting student health and reducing childhood obesity, (3) provide assurance that those guidelines for reimbursable school meals shall not be less restrictive than regulations and guidance applicable to school meals issued by the Secretary of Agriculture, (4) establish a plan for measuring the implementation of the local wellness policy, including designation of one or more persons with operational responsibility for ensuring that the schools meet the wellness policy; and (5) involve parents, students, and representatives of the school food authority, school board, school administrators, and the public, in the development of the school wellness policy.

The District of Columbia Board of Education will use the above requirements as a baseline and expand the policy to cover additional student wellness areas. The wellness policy will cover the following:

1. Include goals for nutrition education, physical activity, and other school-based activities that promote student wellness.
2. Establish nutrition guidelines for all foods available on campus during the school day with the objectives of promoting student health and reducing childhood obesity.
3. Include safeguards to ensure access for all children to healthy foods and to fight hunger and nutrient deficiencies.
4. Provide assurance that those guidelines for reimbursable school meals shall not be less restrictive than regulations and guidance issued by the Secretary of Agriculture.
5. Promote student wellness by implementing Coordinated School Health Program components.
6. Establish a plan for measuring the impact and implementation of the local wellness policy, including designation of one or more persons with operational responsibility for ensuring that the schools meet the wellness policy.
7. Involve parents, students, and representatives of the school food authority, school board, school administrators, and the public, in development of the local Wellness Policy.

Vision/Statement of Responsibility

The District of Columbia Board of Education recognizes that nutrition education, food served in schools, and physical activity each affect student wellness. The Board also recognizes the important connection between a healthy diet and a student's ability to learn effectively and achieve high standards in school.

The Board of Education recognizes that it is the District's role, as part of the larger community, to model and actively practice, through policies and procedures, the promotion of family health, physical activity, and good nutrition.

The Board of Education further recognizes that the sharing and enjoyment of food and participation in physical activities are fundamental experiences for all District residents and are primary ways to nurture and celebrate our cultural diversity. These fundamental human experiences are vital bridges for building friendships, forming inter-generational bonds, and strengthening communities.

The Board of Education recognizes the research and studies that show the direct link between nutritional intake and academic performance, as well as between physical activity and academic achievement.

Preamble

Whereas, a healthy diet increases a student's ability to learn effectively and achieve high standards in school;

Whereas, each day, students and their parents trust that the foods offered at school are nutritious and safe, and that the Board of Education is responsible for ensuring the safety of foods provided at school;

Whereas, nationally, obesity rates have tripled in children and tripled in adolescents over the last two decades, and physical inactivity and excessive calorie intake are the predominant causes of obesity;

Whereas, heart disease, cancer, stroke, and diabetes are responsible for two-thirds of deaths in the United States, and major risk factors for those diseases, including unhealthy eating habits, physical inactivity, and obesity, often are established in childhood;

Whereas, in the District of Columbia 14 percent of high school students are overweight and 17 percent are at risk for becoming overweight;

Whereas, in the District of Columbia 79 percent of high school students eat fewer than five servings of fruits and vegetables per day;

Whereas, in the District of Columbia 56 percent of high school students do not participate in

sufficient vigorous physical activity and 81 percent of high school students do not attend daily physical education classes;

Whereas, community participation is essential to the development and implementation of successful school wellness policies;

Thus, the Board of Education 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. Therefore, it is the policy of the Board of Education that:

1. All students in grades Pre K-12 will have opportunities, support, and encouragement to be physically active on a regular basis.
2. Foods and beverages sold or served at school will meet the nutrition recommendations of the *U.S. Dietary Guidelines for Americans*.
3. The Board of Education will ensure that no student in District of Columbia Schools goes hungry during the school day.
4. The Board of Education 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.
5. 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.
6. To the maximum extent practicable, all schools in our district will participate in available federal school meal programs (including the School Breakfast Program, National School Lunch Program [including after-school snacks], Summer Food Service Program, Fruit and Vegetable Snack Program, and Child and Adult Care Food Program [including suppers, if applicable]).
7. 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, and with related community services.

Section 1: Ensuring Quality Nutrition Education, Health Education and Physical Education.

The District of Columbia Board of Education aims to provide age-appropriate and culturally sensitive instruction in nutrition, health and physical education that help students develop the knowledge, attitudes, and skills to enjoy healthy eating habits and a physically active lifestyle.

Health and Nutrition Education

All schools (and providers of nutrition education in schools, such as Team Nutrition hosted by Houston and Associates, Children's National Medical Center, and the

Department of Health Food Stamp Nutrition Education Program) will provide nutrition education that:

- is offered at each grade level, K-8, 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 required as part of health education for the Carnegie Unit (one half of a semester) for senior high school students.
- Integrated into other content areas such as math, science, language arts, social sciences, and elective subjects. Resources will be disseminated to teachers and other staff;
- 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, parents and community partners.

Physical Activity

The District of Columbia Board of Education acknowledges the positive benefits of physical activity for student health and academic achievement. Recognizing that physical education is a crucial and integral part of a child's education, the district will provide opportunities to ensure that students engage in healthful levels of vigorous physical activity to promote and develop the student's physical, mental, emotional, and social well-being. Besides promoting high levels of personal achievement and a positive self-image, physical education activities should teach students how to cooperate in the achievement of common goals.

The components of the district's physical education program shall include a variety of kinesthetic activities, including team, individual, and cooperative sports and physical activities, as well as aesthetic movement forms, such as dance, yoga or the martial arts.

Students shall be 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. The Board of Education will ensure that:

- Recess time will be required daily, at least 20 minutes;
- Teachers and other school and community personnel will not use physical activity

(e.g., running laps, pushups) or withhold opportunities for physical activity (e.g., recess, physical education) as punishment;

- Health and physical education is required for K-8 students, 45 minutes, 2 days per week; and the District will work toward the national standard of 3 days per week.
- Physical Education is required for high school students for a semester and a half as required as part of the Carnegie Unit for graduation;
- Physical education teachers shall develop and implement a curriculum that connects and demonstrates the interrelationship between physical activity, good nutrition, and health;
- The Board of Education shall enhance the quality of physical education curricula and increase training of physical education teachers through site-based and district-wide staff development;
- An appropriate alternative activity to physical education shall be provided for students with a physical disability that may restrict excessive physical exertion;
- Physical education staff shall appropriately limit the amount or type of physical exercise required of students during air pollution episodes, inclement weather conditions.
- Integrated into other content areas such as math, science, language arts, social sciences, and elective subjects. Resources will be disseminated to teachers and other staff;

Additional programs that the Board of Education may utilize to supplement resources may be: Physical Energizers, HOPSPORTS, Inc., Action for Healthy Kids – National Football League (AFHK-NFL) Recharge Program; Passport to Play; Balance First; USTA/WTN Tennis Association; USFSA Ice Skating/Ft. Dupont; Bicycle Association; and Kaleidoscope.

Section 2: Establishing Nutritional Guidelines for All Foods Served and Sold on Campus During the School Day.

A component of the educational mission of the D.C. Board of Education is teaching students to establish and maintain life-long healthy eating habits. This mission shall be accomplished, in part, through selling and serving healthful food in the schools. The Board of Education will ensure that:

Free and Reduced-Price Meals

- All qualified students will become eligible for free lunch, through frequent checking and coordination with the Department of Human Service Income Maintenance Administration and agencies serving homeless and run-a-way youth;
- Maximum participation in the school meal program will be achieved by developing a coordinated, comprehensive outreach and promotion plan, and by putting systems in place that ensure the elimination of the stigma of accepting “free” lunch (such as an electronic usage system);
- Schools will provide students with at least 20 minutes to eat after sitting down for breakfast and 30-45 minutes after sitting down for lunch;

Breakfast

- Schools will continue to operate a Universal “Free for All” School Breakfast Program in the cafeteria;
- The Division of Food and Nutrition Services will encourage Breakfast in the Classroom programs for principals interested;
- Schools will market the Universal “Free for All” School Breakfast program through take home flyers, school and district newsletters, home mailings, etc.

Nutritional Quality of School Meals

- The nutritional value of the food served will improve upon USDA standards through provision of nutritious, fresh, tasty food that reflects community and cultural diversity;
- All milk sold and served through school meals will be either low-fat (1%) or fat free milk or nutritionally-equivalent non-dairy alternatives (to be defined by USDA);
- The District will move toward more whole grains

In-School and After School Snacks

Snacks served during the school day or in after-school care or enrichment programs will make a positive contribution to children’s diets and health, with an emphasis on serving fruits and vegetables as the primary snacks and water as the primary beverage. Schools will assess if and when to offer snacks based on timing of school meals, children’s nutritional needs, children’s ages, and other considerations. The district will disseminate a list of healthful snack items to teachers, after-school program personnel, and parents.

The Board of Education will provide snacks through after-school programs and will apply for reimbursements through the National School Lunch Program operated by the State Education Office.

D.C. Free Summer Meals Program

The Board of Education will sponsor the D.C. Free Summer meals Program operated by the State Education Office for at least six weeks between the last day of the academic school year and the first day of the following school year, and preferably throughout the entire summer vacation for D.C. Public Schools and any interested community-based organization.

School Stores

There will be no food sold or served in school stores.

¹ As recommended by the *Dietary Guidelines for Americans 2005*.

Foods and Beverages Sold Individually in Vending Machines, Snacks, and Fundraisers

- Elementary schools shall not have vending machines or school stores accessible by students;
- Vending machines, a la carte, fundraisers, and school stores shall only offer approved items, as cited by the DCPS/D.C. Action for Healthy Kids Healthy Vending Policy outlined below;
- Draft food and beverage vending contracts shall be made available to the public for inspection and comments before being signed by the Board of Education and neither the Board of Education nor individual schools may sign exclusive contracts, or contracts with confidential clauses, with soft drink, fast food, or snack food companies.
- All beverages and snacks authorized for sale in vending machines and fundraisers available to students shall meet the nutritional standards listed below.
 - (1) The following beverages may be sold at schools:
 - (A) Fruit-based drinks that contain 100 percent fruit juice and that do not contain additional caloric sweeteners;
 - (B) Water or seltzer water; and
 - (C) Low-fat or fat-free milk, including, but not limited to, chocolate milk, soy milk, rice milk, and other similar dairy or nondairy calcium-fortified milks.
 - (2) The following beverages shall not be provided or sold:
 - (A) Soft drinks, sports drinks, punches, and iced teas;
 - (B) Fruit-based drinks that contain less than 100 percent real fruit juice or that contain additional caloric sweeteners; and
 - (C) Drinks containing caffeine, excluding low-fat or fat-free chocolate milk.
 - (3) All snacks, sweets, or side dishes sold or served on the school site outside of the federal school meal program shall meet all of the following standards:
 - (A) Have 35 percent or less of its total calories from fat;
 - (B) Have 10 percent or less of its total calories from saturated plus trans fat;
 - (C) Have 35 percent or less of its weight from sugars, excluding sugars occurring naturally in fruits, vegetables, and dairy ingredients; and
 - (D) Have no more than 230 mg of sodium per serving for chips, cereals, crackers, French fries, baked goods, and other snack items; contain no more than 480 mg of sodium per serving for pastas, meats, and soups; and will contain no more than 600 mg of sodium for pizza, sandwiches, and main dishes.
 - (E) Limit portion sizes of foods and beverages sold individually to those listed below:
 - One and one-quarter ounces for chips, crackers, popcorn, cereal, trail mix, nuts, seeds, dried fruit, or jerky;
 - One ounce for cookies;
 - Two ounces for cereal bars, granola bars, pastries, muffins, doughnuts, bagels, and other bakery items;
 - Four fluid ounces for frozen desserts, including, but not limited to, low-fat or fat-free ice cream;

- Eight ounces for non-frozen yogurt;
 - Twelve fluid ounces for beverages, excluding water; and
- Fruits and non-fried vegetables are exempt from portion-size limits.
- (4) Fruits and vegetables shall be offered for sale at any location on the school site where foods are sold. Such items could include, but are not limited to, fresh fruits and vegetables; 100% fruit or vegetable juice; cooked, dried, or canned fruits (canned in fruit juice or light syrup); and cooked, dried, or canned vegetables (that meet the above fat and sodium guidelines).²

Foods and Beverages Sold in A La Carte Lines

- All beverages and snacks authorized for sale in a la carte lines available to students shall meet the nutritional standards listed below.
- (1) The following beverages may be sold a la carte:
- (A) Fruit-based drinks that contain 100 percent fruit juice and that do not contain additional caloric sweeteners;
 - (B) Water or seltzer water; and
 - (C) Low-fat or fat-free milk, including, but not limited to, chocolate milk, soy milk, rice milk, and other similar dairy or nondairy calcium-fortified milks.
- (2) The following beverages shall not be provided or sold:
- (A) Soft drinks, sports drinks, punches, and iced teas; and
 - (B) Fruit-based drinks that contain less than 100 percent real fruit juice or that contain additional caloric sweeteners; and
 - (C) Whole or reduced-fat milk, including as milk served with hot beverages.
- (3) All snacks, sweets, or side dishes sold or served a la carte shall meet all of the following standards:
- (A) Have 35 percent or less of its total calories from fat;
 - (B) Have 10 percent or less of its total calories from saturated plus trans fat;
 - (C) Have 35 percent or less of its weight from sugars, excluding sugars occurring naturally in fruits, vegetables, and dairy ingredients; and
 - (D) Shall work toward having no more 600 mg of sodium for a la carte items.
 - (E) Limit portion sizes of foods and beverages sold through a la carte to those listed below:
 - One and one-quarter ounces for chips, crackers, popcorn, cereal, trail mix, nuts, seeds, dried fruit, or jerky;
 - One ounce for cookies;
 - Two ounces for cereal bars, granola bars, pastries, muffins, doughnuts, bagels, and other bakery items;
 - Four fluid ounces for frozen desserts, including, but not limited to, low-fat or fat-free ice cream;
 - Eight ounces for non-frozen yogurt;

² Schools that have vending machines are encouraged to include refrigerated snack vending machines, which can accommodate fruits, vegetables, yogurts, and other perishable items.

- Twelve fluid ounces for beverages, excluding water; and

The portion size of a la carte entrees and side dishes, including potatoes, will not be greater than the size of comparable portions offered as part of school meals. Fruits and non-fried vegetables are exempt from portion-size limits.

Food Marketing in Schools

School-based marketing will be consistent with nutrition education and health promotion. As such, schools will limit food and beverage marketing to the promotion of foods and beverages that meet the nutrition standards for meals or for foods and beverages sold individually (above).³ School-based marketing of brands promoting predominantly low-nutrition foods and beverages⁴ is prohibited. The promotion of healthy foods, including fruits, vegetables, whole grains, and low-fat dairy products is encouraged.

Examples of marketing techniques include the following: logos and brand names on/in vending machines, books or curricula, textbook covers, school supplies, scoreboards, school structures, and sports equipment; educational incentive programs that provide food as a reward; programs that provide schools with supplies when families buy low-nutrition food products; in-school television, such as Channel One; free samples or coupons; and food sales through fundraising activities.

Marketing activities that promote healthful behaviors (and are therefore allowable) include: vending machine covers promoting water; pricing structures that promote healthy options in a la carte lines or vending machines; sales of fruit for fundraisers; and coupons for discount gym memberships.⁴

Rewards

Schools, community-based organizations and other partners will not use foods or beverages, especially those that do not meet the nutrition standards for foods and beverages sold individually (above), as rewards for academic performance or good behavior,⁵ and will not withhold food or beverages (including food served through school meals) as a punishment.

Celebrations

Schools should limit celebrations that involve food during the school day to no more than one party per class per month. Each party should include no more than one food or beverage that does not meet nutrition standards for foods and beverages sold individually (above). The district will disseminate a list of healthy party ideas to parents and teachers.

³ Advertising of low-nutrition foods and beverages is permitted in supplementary classroom and library materials, such as newspapers, magazines, the Internet, and similar media, when such materials are used in a class lesson or activity, or as a research tool.

⁴ Schools should not permit general brand marketing for food brands under which more than half of the foods or beverages do not meet the nutrition standards for foods sold individually or the meals are not consistent with school meal nutrition standards.

⁵ Unless this practice is allowed by a student's individual education plan (IEP).

Section 3: Assure that guidelines for school meals are not less restrictive than those set at the federal level by the Secretary of Agriculture.

The Director of Food and Nutrition Services will review this policy and ensure that the policies are not less restrictive than those set by the Secretary of Agriculture or state law.

Section 4: Establish a plan for measuring the impact and implementation of the local wellness policy.

The D.C. Board of Education shall develop a steering committee for the development and monitoring of the wellness policy; and this committee shall also be responsible for evaluation of the policy annually.

The State Education Office will also monitor the status of Local Wellness Policies while conducting reviews and site visits for LEAs.

Section 5: Community Involvement

The D.C. Board of Education may develop a plan for community involvement or use the input and feedback from the D.C. Action for Healthy Kids Parent and Community Forums conducted during the winter and early spring of 2006.

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Complimentary technical assistance for this policy was provided by District of Columbia Action for Healthy Kids. For additional information, please call Kimberly Perry at 202-986-2200 ext. 3023 or Joy Johanson at 202-332-9110 ext. 351.

Sources:

Model Language used from:

1. The Center for Ecoliteracy in collaboration with Slow Food USA and Chez Panisse Foundation
2. National Alliance for Nutrition and Activity
3. District of Columbia Action for Healthy Kids
 - a. 2005 Work plan
 - b. Healthy Vending Policy
4. Food Research and Action Center