

MSB Wellness Policy

4.12.2021

I Purpose:

The purpose of this policy is to provide a school environment and campus that supports the nutritional, educational and physical needs of students.

II Introduction

The Maryland School for the Blind (MSB) administration understands that promoting health and wellness for students and staff contributes to a positive learning environment, as well as encouraging life-long healthy habits.

The School also recognizes that afterschool settings such as extended day programming, athletic programs and recreational activities provide critical opportunities to teach and reinforce healthy habits; therefore, this policy applies to the academic day as well as the extended day and residential components of MSB.

III Wellness Committee

The School will establish and maintain a Wellness Committee whose function – as delegated by the Superintendent - is to monitor compliance with the Wellness Policy, determine annual school-wide goals related to the policy (herein referred to as the Wellness Plan), and perform a triennial assessment of the Wellness Policy. The Committee will also maintain responsibility for updating and revising the policy as necessary. The Committee will be diverse in its composition and consist, minimally, of representatives from the following groups: School leadership, parents, students, education, nutrition service, physical education, health or related services, dietary, residential services, and local community. The Committee meets quarterly.

IV Accountability

Annually, the Wellness Committee (hereafter referred to as the Committee) will develop a Wellness Plan; i.e., an action plan for implementation of the goals determined by the Committee. The plan will outline who is responsible for overseeing each component, as well as actions and a timeline for completion of activities and goals.

Triennial Assessment

Every three years, the Committee will assess the Wellness Policy by measuring the extent to which the policy meets the requirements of the Final Rule, the extent to which MSB is complying with the Policy and the progress made in attaining the goals of the Policy. This assessment is referred to as the Triennial Assessment.

The Well Sat 3.0 Assessment Tool will be used to perform an annual school-level health and wellness assessment. This assessment will be completed by the Nutrition Service Manager by July 15 of each year.

Documentation

The School will document the impact of the Wellness Plan as measured against annual metrics. This documentation will be made available to the public through the School's website.

Notification to the Public

Annually, MSB will disseminate the Wellness Policy through the Parent & Student Handbook and post it on the MSB website.

Annually, MSB will update parents and the public on Wellness Policy implementation status, revisions to the policy, contact information for questions, involvement and or feedback. This notification will be posted on the School's website:

V Nutrition Services

School Meals:

MSB participates in the National School Lunch Program (NSLP) and School Breakfast Program (SBP) and provides meals that meet the nutrition standards within each.

Additionally, MSB ensures the following:

- Offering a variety of foods and beverages that are appealing and attractive to students
- Offering all menu items in textures required by students; i.e., ground, pureed, etc.
- Ensuring that eating environments are clean and welcoming
- Providing adequate time to complete meals. Specifically, students will be allowed at least 10 minutes to eat breakfast, at least 20 minutes to eat lunch and at least 30 minutes to eat dinner. Time is counted from the time the student has received his meal and is seated.
- Prohibiting the use of food as a reward unless specifically identified in a student Behavior Plan
- Prohibiting the withholding of foods as a punishment
- Ensuring that menus are reviewed by a Registered Dietician or another certified nutrition professional
- Posting menus, complete with nutritional information, on the School's website
- Ensuring that students are served lunch at a reasonable and appropriate time of day (and that there is at least 3 hours between start of breakfast and start of lunch and 4 hours between start of lunch and start of dinner, for residential students)
- Encouraging staff to model healthy eating behaviors

- Implementing farm-to-school activities, such as incorporating local or regional foods into school meal programs, featuring seasonal local/regional produce items on the daily menu, and supporting school gardens or field trips to local farms.
- Promoting healthy food and beverage choices by displaying whole fruit options in attractive bowls or baskets, giving descriptive names to all available vegetable options, incorporating all meal components into served and grab-and-go meals, promoting daily menu on morning announcements, encouraging students to try new items and presenting all foods in a positive and enticing way.
- Conducting annual student surveys and taste testing opportunities for purposes of informing menu development.

Water:

MSB encourages students to drink water throughout the day. Students may bring and carry water bottles filled with only water before, during and after the school day across the school campus. If students do not bring water with them, it will be available to them as per below.

MSB requires that:

- Free, safe and unflavored drinking water is available to students during the school day, during after school activities and in the evening and overnight, for residential students.
- Water cups or bottles are available in dining areas across campus
- All water sources and containers (drinking fountains, water coolers) are maintained regularly to ensure adherence to health and safety standards.

Competitive Foods and Beverages:

For purposes of this policy, the school day is defined as the midnight before to 30 minutes after the end of the school day. Extended school day is defined as 30 minutes after the end of the school-sponsored activity. This includes our extended day program - Extended Learning in Expanded Core Curriculum Topics (ELECCT) - as well as athletic and recreational activities.

MSB requires that:

- Food or beverages will not be sold to students during the school day or during the extended school day for any reason.
- MSB requires that all foods and beverages served and offered but not sold during the school day and during the extended school day, on the school campus, outside of the school meal program will, at a minimum, meet Smart Snacks standards.
- MSB Nutrition Services will make available to staff in the After School and Recreation Programs a list of foods and beverages that meet Smart Snacks standards
- Classroom parties that involve food are prohibited.
- Parties in student residences that involve food are held to the standard of Smart Snacks

Fundraising:

MSB requires that fundraising during the school day and during the extended school day, including during out-of-school time and before and after school, sell only non-food items or foods and beverages that meet or exceed Smart Snacks. MSB encourages schools to use fundraisers that promote physical activities.

To qualify as Smart Snack, a snack or entree must;

- Be a grain product that contains 50% or more whole grains by weight (have a whole grain as the first ingredient), or
- Have as the first ingredient a fruit, vegetable, dairy product or protein food, or
- Be a combination food that contains at least ¼ cup of fruit and/or vegetable, and
- Meet the following minimum standards for calories, sodium, sugar and fats:

Nutrient	Snack	Entree
Calories	200 calories or less	350 calories or less
Sodium	200 mg or less	480 mg or less
Total Fat	35% of calories or less	35% of calories or less
Saturated Fat	Less than 10% of calories	Less than 10% of calories
Trans Fat	0 g	0 g
Sugar	35% by weight or less	35% by weight or less

Students Requiring Foods Outside of the School-Offered Meals

Students who require a special diet for medical reasons must have on file in the main kitchen and in the health center an order from the student’s doctor specifying the details of the diet order. Examples of medical reasons for a special diet include, but are not limited to, food allergies and food management and/or swallowing concerns. Note: A Speech Language Pathologist (SLP) may write a temporary order to change food texture from high to low texture. An MSB SLP, however, cannot write an order to change texture from low to high.

Students who require a special diet for nutritional purposes; e.g., need for increased or decreased calories and/or supplemental nutrition, must have on file in the main kitchen and in the health center an order from either the student’s doctor, a nutritionist, or dietician specifying the details of the diet order.

Students who require a special diet for religious or cultural reasons must have on file in the main kitchen and in the health center a request from a parent or guardian. The request must be detailed to include foods the student can and cannot have.

Students who require a special diet for reasons not represented above must have on file in the main kitchen and in the health center an order from a health care professional in the area of expertise represented by the student's need. For example, a student who has extreme food selectivity as a result, perhaps, of autism-related sensitivities may have a written order from a Psychologist allowing alternative food options. Students with special diets related to extreme food selectivity must have foods from the menu available to them on at least a periodic basis.

All diet orders must be reviewed and re-submitted at least annually, by the health professional represented by the need or by the parent in the case of religious and cultural needs. Orders for special diets related to medical or nutritional needs are a part of MSB's annual requirements for return to school and as such are expected to be submitted prior to the student being cleared for return. Diets specific to religious or cultural needs as well as those related to food selectivity will be honored through Sept of the school year following the school year in which they were written. By Oct 1, the order or request must be updated or re-written by the appropriate party as described above.

Student Instruction as it Relates to Food

Through the Expanded Core Curriculum (ECC) and/or the Unique Learning System (ULS) Curriculum, some students are engaged in food-related instruction. The instruction may include everything from simple to full meal preparation and/or exposure to foods from a wide variety of cultures. To the extent reasonable, instruction in these areas will include healthy ingredients and components that meet the Smart Snacks standards; however, MSB recognizes that in some situations, this may not be possible.

Full meals being prepared by students or staff – even for instructional purposes – must be approved by a Dietician or Nutrition Service Manager at least 2 weeks in advance of the activity.

Nutrition Education

MSB will teach, model, encourage and support healthy eating and physical activity among students. MSB will provide nutrition and physical activity education integrated into other subjects, as part of health education and/or offered as stand-alone classes at each grade level.

MSB will ensure that:

- Nutrition and physical activity education are taught using evidence-based curricula that are aligned with the National Health Education Standards and address the essential healthy eating and physical activity topics (Appendix A). MSB uses the BCPS curriculum for health and PE or the alternate standards through MSDE.
- Nutrition and physical activity education include developmentally appropriate, culturally relevant and participatory activities.

- Teachers and other staff are provided with training on nutrition and physical activities
- Nutrition Service staff receive training on the National School Breakfast and Lunch Programs, Smart Snacks and safe food handling techniques/ServSafe.

Nutrition Promotion and Marketing

MSB will promote healthy food and beverage choices for all students across the school day and extended school day and will encourage participation in school meal programs. MSB will promote healthy nutrition practices by demonstrating proper portion sizes, providing education on healthy food choices, publicizing the breakfast/lunch/dinner menu, and using posters or other media throughout the school, cafeteria, gymnasium, and dormitories that promote healthy eating and lifestyles.

MSB will only market foods or beverages that adhere to the nutritional guidelines of SBP, NSLP and Smart Snacks Standards.

VI Physical Activity Opportunities

MSB requires that all students receive education on the benefits of physical activity in conjunction with health and nutrition education.

MSB prohibits the use or withholding of physical activity, including recess, as a punishment during the school day and during the extended school day.

In addition to a variety of after-school physical activity opportunities on and off campus, MSB is a member of the Eastern Athletic Association for the Blind (EAAB), participating in and hosting athletic competitions for MSB students and for students from other schools for the blind on the east coast.

Classroom Physical Activity

MSB requires:

- Classroom physical activity be integrated into planned academic instruction to reinforce academic concepts and to reinforce skills learned in physical education
- Students be provided with physical activity breaks
- Classroom physical activity not be withheld from or required of students as a disciplinary approach
- Daily Recess: All elementary students are offered 20 or more minutes of recess on all days during the school year which will complement, not substitute for, physical education class. The exclusion of students from recess for disciplinary reasons or academic performance in the classroom is prohibited.

VI Other Activities that Promote Student Wellness

MSB will integrate health and wellness into other curriculum areas, such as teaching nutrition concepts in mathematics or making healthy purchases on community-based lessons.

All school-sponsored events, whether before, during or after school, will adhere to Wellness Policy guidelines and will include physical activity and healthy eating opportunities when appropriate.

MSB requires that all school and after school staff model healthy eating and physical activity behaviors by not consuming personal food or beverages in front of students that would not meet the requirements of the Wellness Policy, and by participating in physical activities along with students.

Annual Wellness Plan Goals: 2021-2022*

Goal 1: Nutrition Promotion

By May 31, 2022, students will increase consumption of drinking water by 40%.

Goal 2: Nutrition Education

At least twice per month, Nutrition Service will present to students during lunchtime specifically-featured fresh fruits and vegetables that are from local farms.

Goal 3: Physical Activity

By October 2021, each classroom and student residence schedule will reflect at least one intentional daily movement time when students will be encouraged to get up and/or move their body.

Goal 4: Other Activities that Promote Student Wellness

By November 30, 2021, all Student Service Staff will receive training on MSB Wellness Policy.

*Full Wellness Plan will be posted to MSB website by July 1 of each year.

Contact information:

For details regarding the Wellness Policy or Wellness Plan or to be considered for our Wellness Committee, please contact:

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