

**WELLNESS THROUGH NUTRITION
AND PHYSICAL ACTIVITY**

Effective: December 12, 2024

I. Implementation Procedures Statement

Coordinated school health is a systematic approach to improving students' health and well-being so they can participate and succeed in school. Developing habits for healthy eating and regular physical activity can have a lifelong positive impact on students' health. A coordinated approach calls for the Board of Education, Superintendent, and Howard County Public School System (HCPSS) employees to work together, engage families and communities, and commit to consistent modeling of healthy behaviors to ensure access to affordable, nutritious food. Attention to the physical, social, emotional, and mental health of our student body involves the entire community, including students, parents, counselors, teachers, health professionals, community organizations, administrators, and more.

In order to successfully implement this policy, HCPSS is committed to engaging and educating the community, HCPSS employees, and students of the importance of health and well-being to academic achievement.

II. Health and Nutrition Education

- A. Students in prekindergarten-grade 12 will receive health education in multiple formats with opportunities to acquire the knowledge, attitudes, and skills necessary for making health-promoting decisions, achieving health literacy, adopting health-enhancing behaviors, and promoting healthy lifestyles.
- B. The health education curriculum will include nutrition education for students in prekindergarten–grade 8 and in the required high school health education courses. Nutrition education will provide students with developmentally appropriate, culturally relevant, participatory activities to develop student understanding of the food system and to experience a variety of tastes.
 - 1. At the elementary level, the health education curriculum will be taught by the classroom teacher as one of the five content areas in the elementary curricular program.
 - 2. At the middle school level, the health education curriculum will be taught every day for one quarter, or in a schedule with a comparable number of hours.

3. At the high school level, the health education curriculum will be taught for one semester during the 9th grade year and one semester during the 10th, 11th or 12th grade year, to meet high school graduation requirements.
 4. Health education will be taught by a qualified and certified health education teacher.
 5. Nutrition education, which also includes food literacy, will develop student understanding of the food system and aid students in experiencing different tastes through programs such as: school gardens, visiting local farms, Days of Taste or similar programs, Department of Agriculture Robinson Nature Center, community college curriculum, and others.
 6. The cafeteria will be utilized as a learning environment to reinforce nutrition education.
- C. Nutrition education will be included in the essential objectives in appropriate elective courses such as Family and Consumer Sciences, Health Education, and Physical Education.
- D. HCPSS school-based employees will be encouraged to teach nutrition education through content integration in curricular areas such as science, mathematics, and social studies. HCPSS will provide resources to all teachers on how to integrate nutrition education into the curriculum.
- E. HCPSS school-based employees will collaborate with other programs and offices such as the Gifted and Talented Program, and Student Services to deliver nutrition education through classroom, small group, and individual activities.
- F. Nutrition information and resources will be provided to families through newsletters, publications, health fairs, the HCPSS website, and other means.

III. Physical Education and Physical Activity

- A. Physical Education
1. Students at all grade levels will have access to the physical education curriculum.
 2. HCPSS will implement a physical education curriculum for students in prekindergarten-grade 8.
 - a. The elementary school schedule will reflect an average of 90 minutes of physical education per week.
 - b. The middle school master schedule will reflect 50 minutes of physical education daily for a minimum of two quarters annually.

- c. HCPSS may not:
 - i. Authorize a student to substitute other activities for a standards-based physical education program for graduation credits, such as but not limited to interscholastic sports, community-based sports, physical therapy, Junior Reserve Officer Training Corps (JROTC), or marching band.
 - ii. Waive the standards-based physical education requirement needed to meet graduation requirements.
 - iii. Excuse students from the standards-based physical education program to participate in content area classes or to complete classwork assignments in other content areas; or
 - iv. Withhold students from the standards-based physical education program as a punishment, unless the student is also removed from the regular classroom setting as part of an in-school suspension or similar disciplinary intervention.
3. In grades 9-12, students will receive one-half credit of physical education instruction, the Lifetime Fitness course, to meet graduation requirements. In addition, HCPSS will offer a variety of physical education electives.
4. Physical education will be taught by a qualified and certified physical education teacher. Should that teacher be absent, physical education class will be taught by a substitute teacher.
5. Physical education teachers will receive appropriate professional development on an ongoing basis.
6. HCPSS will assess and, if necessary and to the extent possible, make needed improvements to make it safer and easier for students to walk and bike to school. When appropriate, the HCPSS will work together with local government and/or community partners to support those efforts.

B. Physical Activity

With the goal of limiting extended periods of inactivity and to promote learning, HCPSS school-based employees will receive resources, guidance, and professional development on ways to incorporate physical activity within the school day.

1. Recess
 - a. Each elementary school will provide a 30 minute daily recess, preferably outdoors, during which schools should encourage moderate to vigorous physical activity through the provision of adequate space and equipment. Exceptions may be made by the principal for circumstances such as shortened days, special events, and altered schedules.

- b. Recess must be adequately and appropriately staffed and supervised.
- c. At the middle school level, time permitting, schools will provide students with daily opportunity for supervised physical activity.
- d. Schools will implement recess guidelines for outside recess.

2. Other Physical Activity During School

- a. All HCPSS school-based employees will be encouraged to incorporate physical activity breaks whenever possible into classroom instruction.
- b. HCPSS will provide training that encourages physical activity to aid teachers in implementing physical activity breaks.
- c. School Wellness Teams will proactively communicate with parents/guardians about the importance of physical activity.

3. Extracurricular and Intramural Programs

- a. Each middle school will provide an intramural program that offers all students an opportunity to participate in sports, games, and/or dance activities that focus on cardiovascular fitness, muscular strength, endurance and flexibility.
- b. Each high school will provide a comprehensive interscholastic athletic program under Policy 9080 Interscholastic Athletic Program.

IV. Facilities and Equipment

- A. When schools are built or renovated, the design of gymnasium facilities will consider the Physical Education Facilities Guidelines issued by the Maryland State Department of Education (MSDE).
- B. HCPSS will review its permitting and actual space usage each year to ensure maximum use of school facilities during and after school in accordance with Policy 10020 Use of School Facilities.

V. Nutrition Services; Foods and Beverages

These procedures apply to all foods and beverages made available to students during the school day including but not limited to:

- School Meals Program
- A la carte and snack/dessert items
- Vending machines
- Classroom lessons
- Beverage contracts
- School stores
- Food brought from home for classes or groups of students
- School parties/celebrations

Foods and beverages covered by this policy will comply with the current U.S. Dietary Guidelines for Americans and federal, State, and local laws, including safety and sanitation standards set by the Health Department Hazard Analysis and Critical Control Point (HACCP) plans and guidelines.

- A. Safety and Security Issues Related to Foods and Beverages
1. Howard County Health Department Regulations (referenced via the Howard County Code) require that food served to the public must be prepared in a licensed facility. The license for the HCPSS School Food and Nutrition Service is not transferable to outside caterers or groups applying for use of the facilities.
 2. For the safety and security of the food and facility, access to the food service facilities is limited to HCPSS Food and Nutrition Service employees.
 3. The preparation of foods and beverages during the school day by any group or organization other than the HCPSS School Food and Nutrition Service Office is prohibited, except that students may prepare foods and beverages in accordance with the provisions of Section V.A.4. of these procedures.
 4. Classroom activities that involve cooking are not permitted, except as defined in the curriculum for Family and Consumer Science, Academic Life Skills (ALS), and when indicated in a student's Individualized Educational Program (IEP). Any of these activities will not include hazardous foods. Examples of potentially hazardous foods that are excluded from classroom activities include foods made with poultry, meats, fish, rice, eggs, seafood, mayonnaise, dairy products, casseroles, and sauces containing meat.
 5. Schools will provide students the opportunity to wash their hands before and after eating meals or snacks.
 6. Principals and teachers will request that parents and other individuals avoid bringing foods to school that might cause a food allergic student to have an allergic reaction. (See HCPSS Guidelines for Management of Students with Severe Food Allergies.)
 7. Except as provided in Sections V.A.4. and V.E.2., no foods or beverages are to be sold or given without charge to any students in a school from 12:01 a.m. until after the end of the last lunch period except through HCPSS School Food and Nutrition Service.
 8. For health and safety reasons, parents/visitors are only permitted to bring in food that is intended to be consumed by their individual student.

9. For health and safety reasons, students are only permitted to bring in food for their own personal consumption given concerns about allergies and other restrictions on some children's diets.

B. Student Rewards

Foods and beverages will not be given as a reward to students or withheld as a punishment, except as provided in a student's IEP or Section 504 Plan. Coupons for food items that are to be consumed off school campus may be given. Outside partners providing coupons are encouraged to offer healthy and nutrient-dense food choices (i.e. those that include fruits and vegetables, whole grains, and/or low-fat dairy and foods that limit the sodium, fat, sugar and calories per serving). Informational resources on the Institute of Medicine (IOM) Nutrition Standards and the use of those standards, will be provided by HCPSS Food and Nutrition Service employees to external partners.

Opportunities to engage in additional play and other physical activities may be used as a reward.

C. School Meals Program

1. HCPSS School Food and Nutrition Service will provide approved school lunches each day that school is in session.
2. School meals will meet nutrition standards established by the National School Lunch and School Breakfast Programs. Information on these programs and standards will be available on the HCPSS Food and Nutrition Service website.
3. Schools may utilize electronic identification and payment systems; provide meals at no charge to all children, regardless of income; promote the availability of school meals to all students; and/or use nontraditional methods for serving school meals.
4. Daily food choices offered to students will include multiple entrees, fresh unlimited salad bars, trays of fruits and vegetables, whole grain breads and rolls, and flavored and unflavored fat-free or 1% milk. Although students are free to choose the foods they want for lunch, at least one of their choices will be a fruit or vegetable.
5. Main course food items offered as alternatives to or in addition to the reimbursable meal will be offered in reasonable portion sizes that are consistent with the USDA for Child Nutrition Programs.
6. HCPSS Food and Nutrition Service will provide appropriate food substitutions for students who require dietary accommodations because of a disability that is documented under a Section 504 plan.

7. The School Breakfast Program will be available to all students every weekday morning that school is in session. Exceptions may be made by the school principal on delayed opening days. No advance registration is necessary, students can attend every day or only occasionally, and the meals will be based on the nutrition recommendations set forth in the U.S. Dietary Guidelines for Americans. The School Breakfast Program models include but are not limited to: Traditional Breakfast, Breakfast in the Classroom, Grab and Go Breakfast, and/or Breakfast after First Period.
8. Morning bus routes will be scheduled to allow students to arrive in time for breakfast.
9. HCPSS will proactively promote the school breakfast program to students and parents to encourage greater participation.
10. Students are prohibited from leaving the school campus for lunch.
11. School-based administration will make every effort to schedule lunch periods at appropriate times.
12. Students will be given adequate time to eat. Meal schedules will provide students with at least ten (10) minutes to eat after sitting down for breakfast and twenty (20) minutes after sitting down for lunch. Exceptions may be made by the school principal on delayed opening days by allowing lunch periods to be compressed and by not offering the breakfast program since lunch periods may start as soon as the students arrive at school.
13. Schools will not schedule tutoring, club, or organizational meetings or activities during mealtimes, unless students may eat during such activities.
14. HCPSS School Food and Nutrition Service will incorporate produce from local farms as much as possible and when in season and available.
15. Schools will make nutritional information available to students to make informed decisions. Healthier choices, such as salads and fruit, will be prominently displayed in cafeterias and competitively priced.
16. Students will be provided a pleasant environment in which to eat school meals. Appropriate supervision will be provided in the cafeteria and rules for safe behavior will be consistently enforced.
17. Qualified nutrition professionals will administer the school meal programs.
18. All HCPSS Food and Nutrition Service employees will meet hiring standards and annual continuing education/training requirements as per the USDA Professional Standards for School Nutrition Professionals.

19. Professional development in the area of food and nutrition will be provided annually for food service managers, HCPSS employees, and school-based administrators.
20. HCPSS will provide periodic food promotions at each school level to encourage taste testing of healthy new foods being introduced on the menu.
21. Students and families will have the opportunity to provide input on local, cultural and ethnic favorites, and the input will be considered in development of the school meals programs.

D. Beverages

1. Students will have access to drinking water that is safe and clean throughout the school day, and free of charge in the school cafeteria, classrooms, hallways, gymnasiums, play yards, and athletic fields.
2. The Superintendent/designee will set and maintain hygiene standards for drinking fountains, water coolers, hydration stations, water jets, and other methods of delivering drinking water.
3. High school students may purchase unflavored, unfortified, non-carbonated water from vending machines operated by HCPSS Food and Nutrition Service during the school day.

E. Other Foods and Beverages

1. A la carte and snack/dessert items sold by HCPSS Food and Nutrition Service will meet or exceed the USDA Smart Snacks in Schools nutrition standards. HCPSS will follow the IOM Nutrition Standards.
2. All foods and beverages must be caffeine-free except for trace amounts of naturally occurring caffeine substances.
3. A principal may permit food and/or beverages in conjunction with a special celebration no more than twelve times per year after the end of the last lunch period. Such events may not replace the food service provided that day by HCPSS Food and Nutrition Service. The foods and beverages served will be prepared commercially in licensed facilities. Schools are encouraged to develop alternatives to the use of food for celebrations.

The single exception is that an annual celebration in each school is permitted without time constraint once per year.

4. All foods and beverages sold in high school vending machines that are accessible to students will meet or exceed the USDA Smart Snacks in Schools nutrition standards. HCPSS will follow the IOM Nutrition Standards.

F. Vending Machines Accessible After the School Day

1. Foods and beverages sold after the end of the school day through vending machines in schools are permitted only at the high school level and will meet IOM Nutrition Standards.
2. All vending machines accessible to students, except those operated by HCPSS School Food and Nutrition Service, will have and use a timing device to automatically prohibit access to the vending machines during the school day.

G. Food and Beverage Advertising and Marketing During the School Day

The following criteria include any written, graphic, or oral advertising or marketing of a food or beverage product during the school day on any HCPSS school property.

1. Allowed Advertising/Marketing

HCPSS permits advertising/marketing of food or beverage products on school property during the school day if:

- a. The food or beverage products meet the standards of this policy and are consistent with law, or
- b. The foods or beverages are on clothing or personal items worn or used by students, parents, or staff, or
- c. The foods or beverages are on products or on the packaging of products brought from home for personal consumption on school property, or
- d. The food or beverage products are used for educational purposes in the classroom.

2. Advertising/Marketing That is Not Allowed

If not meeting the criteria in Section V.G.1. above, written, graphic, or oral advertising, or marketing of food or beverage products will not be permitted on school property during the school day on:

- a. School equipment such as marquees, message boards, scoreboards, or backboards
- b. Cups used for beverage dispensing
- c. Tray liners
- d. Menu boards, coolers
- e. Trash cans and food service equipment
- f. Vending machines
- g. Posters, book covers, assignment books or school supplies
- h. School publications or mailings
- i. Free product samples or taste tests

- j. Coupons of a product
- k. Fundraising and corporate incentive programs.

3. Phase-In

Items on semi-permanent school property, (e.g. scoreboards) do not need to be immediately removed or replaced.

If these items are replaced or updated over time, guidelines in Sections V.G.1. and V.G.2. above will be followed.

VI. District-Level Implementation

The Superintendent/designee will oversee school implementation and compliance with this policy including:

- A. Provide assistance and support to schools with implementation of the policy and improve programming functions.
- B. Ensure schools are offered support services through various departments including HCPSS Food and Nutrition Service and Health and Physical Education, to ensure the full implementation of this policy.
- C. Establish a process to gather regular reporting and feedback from individual schools, community partners, students, and parents on the implementation of the policy.
- D. Conduct periodic evaluations and report on systemwide and individual schools' compliance with the policy.
- E. Conduct periodic, systemwide review and assessment of this policy and other related Board policies on their effectiveness and, based on this assessment, propose policy revisions.
- F. Assess Policy 9090 Wellness Through Nutrition and Physical Activity once every three (3) years on the extent to which schools in the system are in compliance with the policy, the extent to which the policy compares to model wellness policies, and the progress made in attaining the goals of this policy.

VII. School-Level Implementation

- A. Each school principal will ensure that a School Wellness Team is formed annually to spearhead health and wellness initiatives at the school that are in compliance with this policy. The principal will establish a system to annually identify School Wellness Team members which may include parents, teachers of physical education, classroom teachers, school nurses/assistants, students, school-based administrators, and community health and wellness partners.

- B. Each school principal will annually designate a HCPSS school-based employee to serve as the School Wellness Champion who will:
 - 1. Lead and coordinate their school's efforts to increase healthy eating and physical activity for students.
 - 2. Serve as the liaison for their respective school's policy implementation and reporting.
 - 3. Establish and lead a School Wellness Team that develops goals, strategies, and initiatives for student health, wellness, and physical activity during the school year.
- C. Each school principal will provide annual updates to the Superintendent/designee regarding the school's health and wellness initiatives and the school's implementation of this policy.

VIII. Employee Health and Wellness

- A. HCPSS will support employee wellness by providing opportunities for their employees to improve their overall health by offering resources, programming, services and support for HCPSS employees to seek healthy lifestyle choices that enhance their physical, emotional, mental, and social well-being. These efforts will assist HCPSS employees to make informed lifestyle choices in an effort to improve their health status, and provide them with a greater understanding of the system's overall coordinated school and workplace health approach.
- B. All HCPSS employees will be encouraged to promote a healthy school environment by modeling healthy behaviors throughout the school day and at school-sponsored meetings and events. This includes engaging in physical activity when possible and consuming foods in front of students that meet the competitive food nutritional standards.
- C. When feasible, HCPSS will offer professional learning opportunities and resources for their employees to increase knowledge and skills about promoting healthy behaviors in the classroom, the workplace, and their personal lives. Professional learning will help HCPSS employees understand the connections between academics and health and the ways in which health and wellness are integrated into ongoing improvement plans/efforts.

IX. Family/Community Collaboration

- A. HCPSS will partner with the Howard County School Health Council (COMAR 13A.05.05) and other agencies to support the implementation of coordinated and comprehensive school health practices.

- B. Parents and members of the community have the opportunity to be involved in implementation of this policy through:
 - 1. Howard County School Health Council: Parents and members of the community may serve on the School Health Council and/or its subcommittee.
 - 2. School Wellness Teams: Parents and community health and wellness partners will be invited to participate in school-level School Wellness Teams.
 - 3. Boosters and PTA Council of Howard County (PTACHC): The Superintendent/designee will work with schools and community organizations such as the Boosters and PTACHC.
- C. Parents will receive educational resources and encouragement to help their children implement physical activity.
- D. Families will be informed of school activities that encourage healthy eating and physical activity.

X. Recordkeeping

HCPSS participates in the USDA Child Nutrition Programs and is required to undergo an administrative review every three years. As part of the administrative review, the State Agency must assess the HCPSS's compliance with the Local School Wellness Policy Final Rule.

HCPSS will retain records documenting compliance with the requirements of this policy, which will include:

- A. The written HCPSS Policy 9090 Wellness Through Nutrition and Physical Education.
- B. Documentation demonstrating that HCPSS has informed the public, on an annual basis, about the contents of this policy and any updates to the policy.
- C. Documentation of efforts to review and update HCPSS Policy 9090 Wellness Through Nutrition and Physical Education, including who is involved in the review and methods used by HCPSS to inform the public of their ability to participate in the review.
- D. Documentation demonstrating the most recent assessment on the implementation of HCPSS Policy 9090 Wellness Through Nutrition and Physical Activity and notification of the assessment results to the public.

XI. Definitions

Within the context of these implementation procedures, the following definitions apply:

- A. Healthy and Nutrient-Dense Food – Foods that provide substantial amounts of vitamins and minerals while limiting the amount of sugar, fat, salt, and calories per serving such as fruits, vegetables, whole grains, and low-fat dairy products.
- B. Rewards – Incentives offered to students in recognition of good behavior or performance whether offered before, during or after school. Includes individual rewards from teachers or other HCPSS school-based employees, as well as small or large group events rewarding attendance, academic achievement, etc.

XII. Monitoring

Policy 9090 implementation procedures will be overseen by the Division of Operations.

XIII. History¹

ADOPTED: March 23, 2006
REVIEWED: January 17, 2024
MODIFIED: May 19, 2015
September 17, 2015
June 8, 2017
August 18, 2020
December 12, 2024
REVISED: June 14, 2007
July 1, 2007
May 13, 2010
April 10, 2014
January 13, 2022
EFFECTIVE: December 12, 2024

¹ Key: *Adopted*-Original date the Board took action to approve a policy; *Reviewed*-The date the status of a policy was assessed by the Superintendent's Standing Policy Group; *Modified*-The date the Board took action to alter a policy that based on the recommendation of the Superintendent/designee did not require a comprehensive examination; *Revised*-The date the Board took action on a that policy based on the recommendation of the Superintendent/designee needed a comprehensive examination; *Effective*-The date a policy is implemented throughout the HCPSS, typically July 1 following Board action.