

WELLNESS GUIDELINES

Easton Public Schools recognize that the physical, emotional, and social well-being of our children has a direct influence on their ability to be successful students. Through a coordinated student health and wellness program, we strive to optimize student academic performance potential. This includes providing a healthy and safe learning environment, school nurse services, nutritious school meals, health and physical education, and other opportunities for physical activity. Health and Wellness education is best learned, like other subjects, through repeated, consistent messages. To achieve this goal, it is the policy of Easton Public Schools that the nutrition and wellness education offered in the classroom is reinforced outside of the classroom as well. It is our goal to provide our students with the knowledge and tools they need to make good decisions regarding their health throughout their lives.

Foods and beverages sold or served at school will meet the nutritional recommendations of the nutrition standards of the National School Lunch Program and School Breakfast Program, the U.S. Dietary Guidelines for Americans 2010 and MGL 105CMR225.000, Nutrition Standards for Competitive Food and Beverages in Public Schools, as required by the Commonwealth of Massachusetts. All food service equipment and facilities will meet applicable local and state standards for safe food preparation and handling, sanitation, and workplace safety. In addition, all students in grades preK-12 should have opportunities, support, and encouragement to be physically active on a regular basis.

Furthermore, it is our expectation that specific actions and decisions will take into account the health needs and well-being of all children without discrimination or isolation of any child. We believe that education and open communication are vital for the creation of an environment with reduced risks for all students and their families. In order to assist children in assuming more individual responsibility for healthy decisions as they grow, it is the policy of the Easton Public Schools that the guidelines reflect student development as our children advance from the primary grades through secondary school. In addition, all Easton public schools will implement and comply with the Easton Public Schools' Life Threatening Allergy Policy.

The goal of the School Wellness Policy Overview is to teach, encourage, and support healthy eating by students by using the following strategies and guidelines:

Implementation and Communication

I. Reporting and Communication

- A. The different school buildings (K-2, 3-5, middle and high school) will be encouraged to establish their own individual Wellness Committee to best facilitate the development, implementation, and oversight of developmentally appropriate wellness programs. The composition of the smaller (K-2, 3-5, middle and high school) Wellness Committees should be similar to that of the Local Wellness Committee and, in particular, should include the school nurse who is a primary resource for wellness data.
- B. One member from each smaller building-level Wellness Committee will represent his/her school(s) as a member of the Easton Public Schools Local Wellness Committee.
- C. The Wellness Committee will meet at least four times a year and official minutes of each meeting will be kept and posted on the EPS Health and Wellness Council page.
- D. The Superintendent or designee shall ensure compliance with established district wide wellness policy. In each school, the building administrator or designee shall ensure compliance.
- E. The district's Wellness Policy is accessible to the public via the District's Web Page. Every three years, members of the Wellness Committee will assess the implementation of the Wellness Policy using the WellSAT:3.0 tool or other equivalent assessment. The report will include an assessment on compliance, the extent to which our wellness policy compares to model wellness policies, as recognized by the state, and progress made in achieving the annual goals set by the Wellness Committee.
- F. Data collected regarding the nutrition, physical activity and health of our student population as a whole (not of individual students) will be collected. This data will be used to assess the success of health initiatives, student interest, and areas for improvement as we strive to improve the health of our students and community. No attempts will be made to single out individual students, but rather data will be recorded regarding topics such as student participation in extracurricular activities, as well as that mandated by the Department of Public Health, such as Body Mass Index, hearing and vision screenings, scoliosis screenings and other health initiatives.
- G. Based on the results of the assessment, the district's Wellness Policy will be reviewed by the School Committee every three years.

- H. At least one staff member from each school should serve on the District Wellness Committee and ensure that there is ongoing communication at the building level.
- I. Wellness information regarding nutrition (school lunch program menus and nutrition content, the healthy "A-Snack List" and other relevant information), opportunities for physical activity (organized sports and other venues), and other wellness outreach programs (anti-bullying and others) will be available to families and the community on the Easton Public School Website or by other means. This information will be reviewed, updated and expanded as needed.
- J. Communication may also be provided at PTA meetings, back-to-school night and other venues as appropriate.

School Meal Programming

II. School Breakfast and Lunch Program

- A. Meals served through the National School Lunch Program and School Breakfast Program will:
 - be appealing and attractive to children;
 - provide free potable water during meals
 - be served in clean and pleasant settings;
 - meet, at a minimum, nutrition requirements established by local, state, and federal statutes and regulations; as documented

National School Lunch Program (NSLP) & School Breakfast Program (SBG):

<https://www.fns.usda.gov/cn/nutrition-standards-school-meals>
<https://www.govinfo.gov/content/pkg/FR-2012-01-26/pdf/2012-1010.pdf>

Smart Snacks In Schools:

<https://www.fns.usda.gov/cn/fr-072916d>

Massachusetts School Nutrition Standards for Competitive Foods and Beverages:

- B. The school district will send home information regarding income eligibility for the School Breakfast Program and National School Lunch Program. Information packets will be distributed at the beginning of the year and as students enroll.
- C. **Breakfast.** To ensure that all children have breakfast, either at home or at school, in order to meet their nutritional needs and enhance their ability to learn:
- Schools will operate the School Breakfast Program.
 - The district and schools will, to the extent possible, arrange bus schedules and utilize methods to serve school breakfasts that encourage participation.
 - Schools that serve breakfast to students will notify parents and students of the availability of the School Breakfast Program.
 - Schools will encourage parents to provide a healthy breakfast for their children through their newsletter.
- D. **Free and Reduced-priced Meals.** Schools will make every effort to eliminate any social stigma attached to, and prevent the overt identification of, students who are eligible for free and reduced-price school meals. Employees will be aware that it is against the law to make others in the cafeteria aware of the eligibility status of children for free, reduced-price, or “paid” meals. Toward this end, schools may utilize electronic identification and payment systems; provide meals to all children, regardless of income; promote the availability of school meals to all students; and/or use nontraditional methods for providing school meals, articles, take-home materials, or other means.
- E. Students will have access to hand washing or hand sanitizing before and after meals, in accordance with the Life Threatening Allergy Policy.
- F. The district will provide adequate lunchtime, as recommended by the National Association of State Boards of Education, for students to enjoy eating meals and socializing. Lunch will be scheduled as near the middle of the day as possible.
- G. Recess for elementary grades will be scheduled before lunch when feasible so that children will come to lunch less distracted and ready to eat.

- H. The families, educators, food service staff, school nurse and licensed health care personnel will collaborate to develop and implement plans to meet the needs of students with special nutritional concerns (i.e. diabetes, food allergies)
- I. **Qualifications of School Food Service Staff.** Qualified nutrition professionals will administer the school meal programs. As part of the school district's responsibility to operate a food service program, the schools will provide continuing professional development for all nutrition professionals in schools. Easton's Food Service Staff will adhere to the Healthy Hunger-Free Kids Act of 2010 standards for professional development in addition to local and state requirements.

Competitive Food and Beverage Standards

III. Other Foods in the School and Classroom

- A. Competitive Foods are defined as foods and beverages provided in:
- School cafeterias are offered as a la carte items
 - School buildings, including classrooms and hallways
 - School stores
 - School snack bars
 - Vending machines, including those in non-student areas
 - Concession stands
 - Booster sales
 - Fundraising activities
 - School-sponsored or school-related events
 - Any other location on school property
- B. Foods and beverages sold individually will comply with the Massachusetts Nutrition Standards for Food and Beverages and USDA Smart Snacks, whichever is more restrictive. The school day is defined as midnight to 30 minutes after the final bell of the school day.
- C. Compliance to the competitive foods guidelines is the responsibility of the building administrators.
- D. The use of food items as part of a student incentive or reward program is not allowed except when the food items are included as part of a student's Individual Educational Plan or are directed by a licensed care professional.

- E. Curriculum and Classroom Instruction: Food products may be used to enhance classroom instruction when there is a clear or specific connection to the curriculum. Approval must be obtained from the Department Head (when applicable), individual School Administrator, and Health Services through school approved request form Food in the Curriculum at least one month prior to the activity.
- F. Due to the increase in medical conditions with diagnoses to food intake and the increase in the variety of foods with the potential for an allergic response, student based food activities that occur during the school day will no longer include any foods or food products. Student birthday celebrations, holiday celebrations, and end of the year celebrations will no longer include food. The district will disseminate a list of alternative recommendations to parents and teachers.
- G. School principals or administrators may decide to exempt a limited number of school-wide/grade-wide celebrations from the nutritional guidelines due to practical considerations (for example offering foods for a cookout) or tradition (an ice cream social). It is expected that healthy choices will be offered alongside the exempted foods and that these exempted celebrations be limited to no more than three per academic school year. Per contract with the food service provider, food will be provided if available from the vendor. (Food Service Director)
- H. Gum and hard candies may be allowed during MCAS and other standardized testing as allowed by teachers or administrators. Gum in particular has been shown to decrease stress, increase attention and improve test performance.
- I. All snacks and competitive foods under the control of the school department are to meet the standards set by the General Nutrition Standards for Public Schools; 105 CMR 225.000.
- J. For safety and health reasons all groups, clubs and associations who wish to use the food preparation areas must hire and adhere to the instructions of a food service employee with regards to all aspects of food preparation, service, storage and facility clean up.
- K. Parents/Guardians are encouraged to send healthy snacks for their children (i.e. the A+ snack list).

- L. There will be no sharing of food by children at any time of the school day or on the school bus.
- M. According to applicable guidelines, plain, potable water is to be available to all students during school meals and throughout the day at no cost.
- N. Students may not have food delivered to the schools (i.e. pizza or other "fast food").

Food Literacy and Nutrition Education

The Easton Public School District aims to teach, encourage, and support healthy eating by students. Schools should provide nutrition education and engage in nutrition promotion that follow national and state standards:

IV. Nutrition Education and Promotion

- A. 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.
- B. Includes Health units on Nutrition, Safety, Disease Prevention and Growth & Development.
- C. Is integrated as part of not only health education classes, but also classroom instruction in subjects such as math, science, language arts, social sciences and elective subjects.
- D. Includes enjoyable, developmentally appropriate, culturally relevant, participatory activities at each grade level.
- E. Promotes fruits, vegetables, whole grain products, low-fat and fat-free dairy products, healthy food preparation methods, and health enhancing nutrition practices.
- F. Emphasizes caloric balance between food intake and energy expenditure (physical activity and exercise).
- G. Links with school meal programs, other school foods, and nutrition related community services.

- H. Teaches media literacy with an emphasis on food marketing.
- I. Includes training for teachers and other staff.
- J. Promote food literacy. Food literacy can be culturally responsive and help combine health, the environment, and social justice.

<https://mafoodsystem.org/wp-content/uploads/2022/04/Food-Literacy-in-MA-2022.pdf>

Physical Activity and Education

V. Physical Education and Activity

- A. School-wide wellness activities shall be aligned with healthy school goals incorporated in each school's School Improvement Plan.
- B. Physical Education classes will be consistent with the Massachusetts State Frameworks for Physical Education and the National Standards that define what students should know and be able to do, emphasizing knowledge, skills, and personal goal-setting for a lifetime of physical activity.
- C. Physical Education will be offered at all levels and recess will be offered in grades K-5 recognizing the need for regular physical activity.
- D. Physical education classes will be taught by state-certified instructors in an environment where students learn, practice, and are assessed on developmentally appropriate motor skills and knowledge.
- E. Physical education will include the instruction of individual activities as well as competitive and non-competitive team sports to encourage life-long physical activity.
- F. Opportunities for physical activity such as recess and physical education should not be withheld as a form of discipline. Physical activities such as running laps and doing push-ups will not be used as a form of punishment.
- G. Students will be given opportunities for physical activity through a range of before and after-school activities including intramurals, interscholastic athletics, and other physical activity clubs.
- H. Integrate movement breaks, recess, and cross-curricular lessons that incorporate movement.

Cultural Proficiency

VI. Cultural Proficiency

- A. The District recognizes that Culturally and Linguistically Sustaining Practices (CLSP) help to create a safe, healthy and welcoming environment that supports all students' social, emotional, physical and academic learning as well as their health and wellness.
- B. Schools will follow other cultural proficiency related policies, including those regarding race, ethnicity, immigration status, religion, language, gender, sexual orientation, gender identity, and disabilities and policies that promote family and student engagement. The work of creating a culturally proficient District requires the participation of departments and staff across the District and requires engagement in interdepartmental collaboration.
- C. The District will support the development of staff and administrators' competencies to build cultural proficiency in schools, classrooms and central office departments. Schools shall collectively assess their organizational structure, policies and school-wide practices for bias(es) as well as examine their physical environment, classroom curricula, instructional materials and wellness promotions.
- D. Cultural Proficiency related policies include those regarding race, ethnicity, religion, language, gender, sexual orientation, gender identity, and disabilities and policies that promote family and student engagement. The work of creating a culturally proficient District requires the participation of departments and staff across the District and requires engagement in interdepartmental collaboration.

Social Emotional Learning

VII. Social Emotional Learning

- A. Schools will continue to foster a school culture of overall acceptance and respect for differences. The schools will continue to create an environment

where it is safe to talk about differences and ask for help. It is important for all stakeholders in the Easton Public Schools that mental health issues be destigmatized, whether individuals have clinical diagnoses or are struggling with personal or family stresses or other social-emotional issues.

- B. Schools will continue to provide age-appropriate social and emotional literacy and education. The schools are committed to teaching effective strategies and practices to support mental health, resilience and well-being throughout all grades, including skills that promote healthy behaviors in relation to nutrition, exercise, interpersonal relationships, stress management, mindfulness, injury prevention and substance abuse.
- C. Schools will continue to raise awareness among students, parents, school staff, coaches and other members of the community about the signs and symptoms of mental health, social-emotional issues, and substance abuse, keeping in mind that many behavioral and academic struggles are often manifestations of compromised mental health or personal and family stresses. The schools will continue to provide training on how to reach out to students and help them access support and treatment services. It is important that all school staff are trained on emergency procedures, including when to report concerns to administration and support staff.
- D. Schools will continue to ensure that in-school support services (including counselors, psychologists, and nursing staff) are accessible to all students presenting with social, emotional, mental health and substance abuse issues for screening, referral and ongoing counseling in school as needed. Trained licensed clinical staff will be available to respond to social service and psychiatric emergencies during school hours.
- E. Schools will continue to promote well-being and balance by addressing the policies and practices around the intersection of academic expectations/achievement and student mental health.

Staff Wellbeing

District and food service staff and faculty are encouraged to become full partners in the district's wellness goals.

VII. Staff Wellbeing

- A. Nutrition and physical activity educational opportunities will be provided to all district and food service staff as resources allow. These opportunities will address diverse topics related to healthy lifestyles, nutrition and physical activity, and may be provided in the form of educational and informational materials, presentations or workshops
- B. School staff are encouraged to model healthy eating, physical activity and other elements of a healthy lifestyle.

Wellness Committee

VIII. The Easton Wellness Committee

- A. The committee shall consist of, but is not limited to, at least one member from the following groups: the school committee, school administration, school health professionals, educators, school food authorities, parents and students.
- B. In addition, the committee shall encourage participation/input from other parents, students, school food authorities, school board members, school administrators, physical education instructors, school health professionals, and the public in the development and periodic review /update of the wellness policy.

Evaluation

The wellness committee will assess all education curricula and materials pertaining to wellness for accuracy, completeness, balance and consistency with the state and district's educational goals and standards. Wellness program coordinators shall be responsible for devising a plan for implementation and evaluation of the district wellness policy and are charged with operational responsibility for ensuring that schools meet the goals of the district wellness policy. Wellness program coordinators will report to the School Committee annually.

Addendum:

Massachusetts Nutrition Standards for Competitive Food and Beverages in Public Schools can be found at:

<https://www.mass.gov/doc/105-cmr-225-nutrition-standards-for-competitive-foods-and-beverages-in-public-schools/download>

The "A-Snack List" can be found at: www.johnstalkerinstitute.org/alist
Massachusetts Nutrition Evaluation Tool to evaluate whether a food meets the Competitive
Foods nutritional requirements can be found at:
MassNETS - John C. Stalker Institute of Food and Nutrition

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