

In reviewing compliance of the current wellness policy throughout the district, the most direct way seemed to be to review the policy line-by-line and to provide comments, feedback and / or suggestions (in dark blue font) regarding current levels of participation, etc. – Kristen Smith, RD Consultant

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I. PURPOSE

The purpose of this policy is to assure a school environment that promotes and protects students' health, well-being, and ability to learn by supporting healthy eating and physical activity. The Hastings Public School District encourages and promotes life-long healthy eating and physical activity. The definition of "school day" shall be the length of the teacher contract day at each building.

II. GENERAL STATEMENT OF POLICY

- A. The school board recognizes that nutrition education and physical education are essential components of the educational process and that good health fosters student attendance and education.
- B. The school environment should promote and protect students' health, well-being, and ability to learn by encouraging healthy eating and physical activity.
- C. The school district encourages the involvement of students, parents, teachers, food service staff, and other interested persons in implementing, monitoring, and reviewing school district nutrition and physical activity policies.
- D. Children need access to healthy foods and opportunities to be physically active in order to grow, learn, and thrive.
- E. All students in grades K-12 will have opportunities, support, and encouragement to be physically active on a regular basis.
- F. Qualified food service personnel will provide students with access to a variety of affordable, nutritious, and appealing foods that meet the health and nutrition needs of students; try to 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.

Input from April Belcher (AB):

April Bechel, Director of Food & Nutrition Services, is a Registered and Licensed Dietitian who is also certified as a School Nutrition Specialist (SNS). She and her staff all receive continual trainings throughout the year on areas such as ServSafe fundamentals, meal pattern regulations, upcoming regulations / guidelines, on-the-job training, etc.

The Hastings community includes children and families with diverse backgrounds and the meals and food items are chosen to represent several ethnic and cultural regions (dishes may be "American", Mexican,

Chinese, Indian, etc.). Religious and / or cultural preferences are also honored (e.g., pork dishes may be replaced with turkey or other modifications) and vegetarian meal patterns are also offered.

III. GUIDELINES

A. Foods and Beverage

1. All foods and beverages made available on campus (including concessions and a la carte cafeteria items) will be consistent with the current USDA Dietary Guidelines for Americans.

Input from AB: All foods and beverages available on campus meet current USDA Dietary Guidelines for Americans and the offerings provided will be adjusted as new regulations are presented.

2. Food service personnel will take every measure to ensure that student access to foods and beverages meet or exceed all federal, state, and local laws and guidelines.

Input from AB: All food service personnel follow all local, state and federal laws and guidelines pertaining to the production and serving of food to students. Food service personnel also receive additional trainings to ensure that they are informed with upcoming changes to regulations and guidelines that impact what and how foods are provided and sold to students.

3. Food service personnel shall adhere to all federal, state, and local food safety and security guidelines.

Input from AB: All federal, state and local food safety and security guidelines are followed and internal inspections ensure compliance.

4. The school district 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.

Input from AB: Parents request yearly approval for free- or reduced-price meal participation prior to the start of the school year and receive written approval from the food service staff (and additional detail regarding whether meals will be free, reduced or if ineligible for participation, based on federal income guidelines). Food service staff members are instructed to never discuss free or reduced meal status with other staff or with students. Often, students (especially elementary age) are unaware of their financial status for meals, unless their parents or guardians choose to discuss it with them. The school cafeteria cash registers / software program (Horizon Computer Systems) are now synced with each student's financial account so that as the student checks out after going through the lunch line, they either enter a PIN or tell their name (in the elementary schools) and quickly move through the line. A student's financial status (free, reduced or full-price) is only visible to the food service staff, which helps to keep this information confidential. The school principal is the only staff member who can share free-, reduced- or full-price meal status. One potential area for

improvement is in regards to low balance notifications for students. Currently, if a student's balance is running low, they are given a verbal reminder to have parents put more money in their account. The goal is to implement a phone call system to alert parents to low balances rather than to involve the students directly.

Input from KS: I observed lunch periods at the elementary and middle school and watched as the kids went through the cafeteria and checked out. As an observer, it was very difficult to determine which students were on free- or reduced-price vs. full price lunch. In a daily and typical lunch period, the food service staff has done a thorough job to keep financial information private, thus keeping potential stigma to a minimum.

Input from staff (via Survey Monkey of 99 staff, teachers): When asked how the school / school district helps to reduce social stigma associated with free and reduced-price meal participation, several staff members were unsure while others noted that the free and reduced price meal participation was kept confidential and / or private. Several staff noted that they do not notice any stigma with this program and that the district has overall done a good job to ensure that this continues.

5. The school district will provide students access to hand washing or hand sanitizing before they eat meals or snacks.

At the elementary school level, teachers and staff are responsible for bathroom / hand-washing breaks prior to lunch.

6. The school district will make every effort to provide students with sufficient time to eat after sitting down for school meals and will schedule meal periods at appropriate times during the school day.

School schedules allow for 15-20 minutes for meals for meal times. Processes are streamlined to get and keep students moving quickly through the lunch lines to allow for the greatest amount of actual meal time.

7. The school district will discourage tutoring, club, or organizational meetings or activities during mealtimes, unless students may eat during such activities.

It is widely accepted throughout the district that no tutoring, club or organizational meetings / activities fall during mealtimes. In the rare chance that this happens, students are allowed to eat during the activity.

B. School Food Service Program / Personnel

1. The school district will provide healthy and safe school meal programs that strictly comply with all federal, state, and local statutes and regulations.

Input from AB: The meals and foods provided comply with federal, state and local statutes and regulations.

2. The school district shall designate an appropriate person to be responsible for the school district's food service program, whose duties shall include the creation of nutrition guidelines and procedures for the selection of foods and beverages made available on campus to ensure food and beverage choices are consistent with current USDA Dietary Guidelines for Americans.

April Bechel, as Director of Food & Nutrition Services, is accountable for the school district's food service program and all of the accompanying responsibilities.

3. As part of the school district's responsibility to operate a food service program, the school district will provide continuing professional development for all food service personnel in schools.

Input from AB: Funding and time are allocated each year for food service personnel to attend trainings, professional development and also to receive on the job training.

C. Nutrition Education and Promotion

1. The school district will encourage and support healthy eating by students and engage in nutrition promotion that is:
 - a. offered as part of a comprehensive program designed to provide students with the knowledge and skills necessary to promote and protect their health;

Input from Lisa Grundstrom (LG), Director of Teaching and Learning: "There are units at each grade level in Elementary, as well as in the health classes in MS and HS that relate to making healthy choices with regards to food, behavior, and safety."

- b. part of health education classes as well as classroom instruction in subjects such as math, science, language arts, social sciences, and elective subjects, where appropriate; and

Input from LG: We reviewed all of the health standards last year, and are working to integrate them into content areas as much as possible.

- c. enjoyable, developmentally appropriate, culturally relevant, and includes participatory activities, such as contests, promotions, taste testing, and field trips.

Input from LG: I am not aware of any contests or promotions relating to nutrition education.

2. The school district will encourage all students to make age appropriate, healthy selections of foods and beverages, including those sold individually outside the reimbursable school meal programs, such as through a la carte [snack] lines, vending machines, fundraising events, concession stands, and student stores.

Input from staff (via Survey Monkey of 99 staff, teachers): 62 staff out of 99 answered a question regarding how they encourage students to make healthy food choices and many said that they had several conversations regarding smarter food choices, tying nutrition and food choices back to the function of the body, modeling healthy choices, etc. Many staff also noted minimal or no discussion around food choices in the classroom.

3. Schools will use a variety of rewards for academic performance and good behavior including healthy food choices, theatre tickets, school spirit apparel, and other items (unless food is specifically allowed by a student's individual education plan or behavior intervention plan).

Input from staff (via Survey Monkey of 99 staff, teachers): 63 staff out of 99 answered a question about what ways do they offer rewards to students. Several mentioned gift-like treats (pencils, stickers, etc) while other included time with the teacher, parties, special clothing days and extra outdoor time. Some teachers did note using candy or "treats" as rewards.

When asked how often food or reward is used as a reward, 30% of participants said never but 55.71% replied occasionally. And when asked what kinds of foods / beverages are typically used as rewards, the primary answers were candy (like Starbust, Skittles), popcorn, juice boxes, and others noted bringing home baked treats or candy from home. This is an area that likely will require some additional communication with teachers and staff to help find ways to encourage and motivate without provision of foods and beverages that do not meet the nutritional standards required of all foods provided to children in the school day. In a follow-up question, nearly 40% of the respondents did note that non-food rewards are given "most of the time" and about 30% stated "occasionally."

According to the teachers and staff, the most successful non-food rewards include lunch with a teacher, stickers, extra recess or computer time, dress up days, free time, praise, extra credit, etc.

4. Food or beverage will not be withheld from students as punishment.

It is widely accepted that food or beverage should never be withheld from students as a form of punishment.

D. Physical Activity

1. Students need opportunities for physical activity and to fully embrace regular physical activity as a personal behavior. Toward that end, health education will reinforce the knowledge and self-management skills needed to maintain a healthy lifestyle and reduce sedentary activities such as watching television;

Input from LG: "All elementary and Middle School students have physical education every other day. High Schoolers are required to have 4 credits of PE, which is called Human Performance. The focus of the physical education curriculum is on maintaining a healthy lifestyle by enjoying physical activity. Students are exposed

to a wide variety of physical activities to encourage all students to find activities that are enjoyable. In addition, elementary students have recess scheduled before lunch every day, so that all students participate in recess. For more information about the physical education curriculum, I encourage you to contact the PE teachers.”

2. Opportunities for physical activity will be incorporated into other subject lessons, where appropriate; and

Input from LG: Students are provided with “Jammin’ minutes” to be used in their classrooms. In addition, many teachers were trained in yoga strategies to use in the classroom.

Input from staff (via Survey Monkey of 99 staff, teachers): When asked how teachers / staff encourage increased physical activity, 65 out of the 99 staff responded and with a variety of examples from earning extra recess time, to discussing the importance and benefits of physical activity, incorporating “brain breaks” throughout the day, etc.

3. Classroom teachers will provide short physical activity breaks between lessons or classes, as appropriate.

Input from LG: Elementary classroom teachers bring students outside for a second recess several times each week. Middle and High school students have a break between classes every hour – and teachers often provide additional breaks within the classrooms, and can bring students outside as the weather permits.

Input from staff (via Survey Monkey of 99 staff, teachers): 65 out of 99 teachers responded to how they encourage increased physical activity with many ways to increase movement – stretching activities, “brain breaks”, classroom yoga, etc. while some staff did note that it “really isn’t a big part or an easy part of our academic curriculum” suggesting that incorporating activity can be challenging.

- a. Communications with Parents

- i. The school district recognizes that parents and guardians have a primary and fundamental role in promoting and protecting their children’s health and well-being.

Staff realizes the role of parents and guardians in the child’s health and tries to support this role.

- ii. The school district will support parents’ efforts to provide a healthy diet and daily physical activity for their children.
- iii. The school district encourages parents to pack healthy lunches and snacks and refrain from including beverages and foods without nutritional value.

Input from staff (via Survey Monkey of 99 teachers, staff): When asked how the district encourages parents to pack healthy lunches / snacks, there was a wide range of answers. Several staff and teachers responded with “Unsure” or “I know” whereas others noted that snack lists had been sent home to parents and were also posted on the website or in newsletter and to participate in the school lunch program (which meets national nutritional guidelines and criteria).

- iv. The school district will provide information about physical education and other school-based physical activity opportunities and will support parents’ efforts to provide their children with opportunities to be physically active outside of school.

4. IMPLEMENTATION AND MONITORING

- a. The wellness policy will be implemented throughout the school district.
- b. School food service staff, at the school or district level, will ensure compliance within the school’s food service areas and will report to the food service program administrator, the building principal, or the superintendent’s designee, as appropriate.

The Wellness Committee and RD Consultant and Director of Food and Nutrition Services will work together to assess compliance in the coming years.

- c. The school district’s food service program administrator will provide an annual report to the superintendent setting forth the nutrition guidelines and procedures for food served as part of the school food service program.

Input from KS: Currently, there does not appear to be an annual report to the superintendent regarding wellness policy, nutrition guidelines, etc.

- d. The superintendent or designee will ensure compliance with the wellness policy and will provide an annual report of the school district’s compliance with the policy to the school board.

Input from Tim Collins, Superintendent: “The Hastings School District is making efforts to fully implement the policy, at the same time as making changes to the policy and the intent of the policy.”