

Triennial Assessment Report: April 2025 Triennial Assessment (5/2025)

District: NORTH CANAAN

Introduction

Our school Comparison to Federal Requirements and Best Practices

This year's triennial assessment showed that while our district continues to meet some of the federal requirements outlined in the USDA Final Rule for Local School Wellness Policies, we have not made consistent progress across all areas. Our overall score decreased compared to our previous assessment, indicating the need to revisit our policies and re-engage stakeholders in implementation efforts. While we continue to provide federally compliant school meals and opportunities for physical activity, we recognize gaps in areas such as nutrition education integration, staff wellness promotion, and ongoing policy monitoring.

Comparison to Previous Assessment(s)

Compared to our last triennial assessment, our score has decreased. This decline reflects challenges in sustaining wellness initiatives, particularly in ensuring that wellness practices are embedded into daily routines and supported by all staff. It also points to the need for stronger accountability and more frequent progress monitoring. We view this assessment not as a setback, but as a valuable opportunity to refocus and strengthen our approach.

Assessment Process and Stakeholder Involvement

Our school completed the triennial assessment using the WellSAT tool. The process was led by the School Wellness Committee, which includes the principal, school nurse, food service director, a classroom teacher, and a parent representative. The final report will be presented to the Board of Education next school year and shared with the school community to support transparency and future planning.

Strong Policies and Aligned Practices

Federal Requirements in This Section

This section addresses key federal requirements outlined in the USDA Final Rule for Local School Wellness Policies, including:

Ensuring that nutrition guidelines for all foods and beverages sold or served on campus during the school day align with federal standards, including the Smart Snacks in School regulations.

Providing access to school meals that meet USDA nutrition standards.

Guaranteeing that all students have access to nutritious food, with no discrimination or restriction based on ability to pay.

Performance and Improvement

We are proud to report that we scored perfectly in this section. Our kitchen manager has worked closely with EdAdvance to ensure that all food served in our school meets or exceeds federal nutrition standards. This partnership has strengthened our meal program and helped us ensure that every student is served food that is fully compliant and approved.

Although this section was strong in our previous assessment, our most recent results reflect even more consistent implementation. Improvements include:

Regular menu reviews and updates to stay aligned with the latest USDA requirements.

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Enhanced collaboration between food service staff and EdAdvance to verify product compliance.

Changes in Item Placement from Previous Assessment








While the core requirements have remained the same, we noted that some elements previously included under broader categories—such as general school nutrition or food service operations—are now more explicitly grouped under compliance with federal nutrition standards. This clearer categorization helped us more accurately reflect our strengths in this area during this assessment cycle.

		Policy Score	Practice Score	
FR2	Do your National School Lunch Program meals (and, if applicable, School Breakfast Program meals) meet all federal standards for meal patterns, nutrient levels, and calorie requirements for the grade levels served?	2	2	☆
FR3	Does your school take steps to protect the privacy of students who qualify for free or reduced-price meals?	2	2	☆
FR5	Do all school nutrition program directors, managers, and staff meet or exceed the annual continuing education/training hours required by the USDA's Professional Standards requirements?	2	2	☆
FR6	Do all competitive foods and beverages sold to students during the school day meet or exceed the USDA's nutrition standards, commonly called Smart Snacks?	2	2	☆
FR7	Do all a la carte foods and beverages sold in the cafeteria meet Smart Snacks standards?	2	2	☆
FR10	Are there fundraisers that sell foods or beverages to be consumed during the school day? If yes, do the foods and beverages sold meet Smart Snacks standards?	2	2	☆

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FR15	How is the wellness policy made available to the public?	2	2	☆
FR16	Is wellness policy implementation evaluated every three years?	2	2	☆
NES1	Does the district offer breakfast every day to all students?	2	2	☆
NES3	Does your school or district provide information to families about eligibility for free or reduced-price meals?	2	2	☆
NES4	Does your school use strategies to maximize participation in the school breakfast program and/or school lunch program?	2	2	☆
NES11	Do all foods or beverages SERVED (not sold) to students after the school day on school grounds (including aftercare, clubs, and afterschool programming) meet federal nutrition standards (e.g., CACFP or Smart Snacks)?	2	2	☆
NES14	Do students have consistent and easy access to free drinking water throughout the school day?	2	2	☆
NE1	Are skills-based, behavior-focused, and interactive/participatory methods used in nutrition education to develop student skills?	2	2	☆
NE5	Is nutrition education integrated into other subjects beyond health education?	2	2	☆
PEPA2	Does the district have a written physical education curriculum that is aligned with national and/or state standards?	2	2	☆
PEPA8	Is ongoing professional development offered every year for PE teachers that is relevant and specific to physical education?	2	2	☆
PEPA10	What percentage of students do you estimate do not take PE each year due to substitutions?	2	2	☆

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PEPA12	 Are there opportunities for all students to engage in physical activity before and after school?	2	2	
PEPA13	Is there daily recess for all grades in elementary school?	2	2	
PEPA15	Does the district have "joint-use" or "shared-use" agreements?	2	2	
PEPA19	Do teachers ever withhold physical activity as a classroom management tool?	2	2	
EW2	Are school staff encouraged to model healthy eating and physical activity behaviors in front of students?	2	2	
IC1	Is there an active district-level wellness committee?	2	2	


Create Practice Implementation Plan

This section of the policy is around nutrition education, food served in classrooms and employee and community wellness.

I have brought this information to the Health and Safety Committee and we are working on revising parts of the policy. The policy changes that are directly related to classrooms will be relayed at the start of the 2025-26 school year.









The Health and Safety committee will revise the policy to be presented to the BOE.

We will have a revised policy in place to start the 2025-2026 school year. We will use the WellSAT questions to assess our implementation.

		Policy Score	Practice Score	
FR1	Does the district have specific goals for nutrition education designed to promote student wellness?	2	1	

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FR11	Does your district regulate foods and beverages served at class parties and other school celebrations in elementary schools?	1	0	
FR14	Is there an official who is responsible for the implementation and compliance with the wellness policy at the building level for each school?	2	1	
NE2	Do all elementary school students receive sequential and comprehensive nutrition education?	2	1	
NE3	Do all middle school students receive sequential and comprehensive nutrition education?	2	1	
PEPA11	 Are there opportunities for families and community members to engage in physical activity at school?	2	0	
EW1	 Are there strategies used by the school to support employee wellness?	2	1	

Update Policies

Which federal requirements are in this section? Are there any other items in this section that are a priority for your district/school/institution?

This section includes federal requirements related to physical education (PE), such as:

Providing all students with the opportunity to participate in regular physical education.

Ensuring that PE is age-appropriate, sequential, and taught by qualified staff.

Promoting physical activity throughout the school day, including before and after school.

While many of these requirements are not explicitly included in our current wellness policy, we are proud to say that most of these practices are consistently implemented in daily school operations. A priority for our school moving forward is to ensure that our written policy accurately reflects what we are already doing in practice.

Who will be responsible for updating your policy language?

The Health and Safety Team will take the lead in updating the policy language to align with federal requirements and reflect our current practices.

What will be the timeline for your policy updates?










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Policy revisions will be completed over the summer, with the goal of having updated wellness policies ready for implementation at the start of the next school year.








If any of these practices were only partially implemented (received a score of '1' on the WellSAT assessment of practices), how do you plan to improve implementation of these practices?

In cases where we received a score of '1'—indicating that the practice is partially implemented—our focus will be on formalizing those practices in policy and providing documentation and staff training to ensure consistency and accountability. We will also use the updated policy as a reference point to guide continued implementation and periodic internal reviews.

		Policy Score	Practice Score	
FR4	Is free (i.e., no cost to students) drinking water available to students during meals?	1	2	
FR12	Is there food or beverage marketing on the school campus during the school day? If yes, do the marketed items meet Smart Snacks criteria?	1	2	
FR17	What is included in the triennial assessment report to the public?	1	2	
NES2	Does your school take steps to address feeding students with unpaid meal balances without stigmatizing them?	0	2	
NES5	Are marketing strategies used to promote healthy food and beverage choices in school?	1	2	
NES6	Do students have at least 10 minutes to eat breakfast and at least 20 minutes to eat lunch, counting from the time they are seated?	1	2	
NE6	Do school nutrition services staff members use the following methods to collaborate with teachers to reinforce nutrition education lessons taught in the classroom?	1	2	
NE7	 Does nutrition education address agriculture and the food system?	0	2	

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PEPA1	 Does the district have a written physical education curriculum that is implemented consistently for every grade?	1	2	
PEPA3	How does your physical education program promote a physically active lifestyle?	0	2	
PEPA7	Are all physical education classes taught by state certified/licensed teachers who are endorsed to teach physical education?	1	2	
PEPA9	What percentage of students do you estimate do not take PE each year due to exemptions?	0	2	
PEPA18	Do teachers ever use physical activity as a punishment?	0	2	
IC2	Is there an active school-level wellness committee?	1	2	

Opportunities for Growth

Which federal requirements are in this section? Are there any other items in this section that are a priority for your district/school/institution?

This section includes federal requirements related to policy revision and Smart Snacks.

While many of these requirements are not explicitly included in our current wellness policy, we are proud to say that most of these practices are consistently implemented in daily school operations. A priority for our school moving forward is to ensure that our written policy accurately reflects what we are already doing in practice.

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		Policy Score	Practice Score	
FR13	Which groups are represented on the district-level wellness committee?	1	1	
FR18	Has the wellness policy been revised based on the previous triennial assessment?	1	1	
NES7	 In your district, is it a priority to procure locally produced foods for school meals?	0	1	
NES8	Do you know where to access the USDA Smart Snacks nutrition standards to check and see if an item can be sold in school during the school day?	1	1	
NES9	Are you familiar with any state laws allowing exemptions for school-sponsored fundraisers during which foods and beverages do not have to meet Smart Snacks?	1	1	
NES13	Do teachers or school staff give students food as a reward?	1	1	
PEPA4	How many minutes per week of PE does each grade in elementary school receive?	0	1	
PEPA5	How many minutes per week of PE does each grade in middle school receive?	0	1	
PEPA14	 Do teachers provide regular physical activity breaks for students in the classroom?	0	1	

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PEPA16	What proportion of students walk or bike to school?	0	1	
PEPA17	 Are teachers encouraged to use physical activity as a reward for students?	1	1	

Conclusion

In conclusion, while our assessment identified several areas for improvement, much of what contributed to lower scores was related to gaps in our written policy, rather than deficiencies in actual practice. In many cases, we are already implementing the recommended practices, but they are not clearly documented in our wellness policy. Additionally, ongoing regional work around health and nutrition curriculum is expected to enhance and support our current nutrition education efforts, further strengthening our overall wellness program.

Key



Strong Policies and Aligned Practices - District has a strong policy and is fully implementing practices that align with the policy



Create Practice Implementation Plan - District has a strong or weak policy, but practice implementation is either absent or limited



Update Policies Update Policies - District is fully implementing a practice but there is no or only weak language in the written policy, or the district is partially implementing practices and there is no language in the policy



Opportunities for Growth - District has either not addressed the topic in policy or practice; or has only addressed the topic in a very limited way

For more resources, visit: wellsat.org/resources

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