

8.62 – Wellness Policy

Wellness

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Alexander City Schools (hereto referred to as the District) is committed to the optimal development of every student. The District believes that for students to have the opportunity to achieve personal, academic, developmental, and social success, we need to create positive, safe, and health-promoting learning environments at every level, in every setting, throughout the school year.

Research shows that two components, good nutrition, and physical activity before, during and after the school day, are strongly correlated with positive student outcomes. For example, student participation in the U.S. Department of Agriculture's (USDA) School Breakfast Program is associated with higher grades and standardized test scores, lower absenteeism and better performance on cognitive tasks.^{i,ii,iii,iv,v,vi,vii} Conversely, less-than-adequate consumption of specific foods including fruits, vegetables and dairy products, is associated with lower grades among students.^{viii,ix,x} In addition, students who are physically active through active transport to and from school, recess, physical activity breaks, high-quality physical education and extracurricular activities – do better academically.^{xi,xii,xiii,xiv} Finally, there is evidence that adequate hydration is associated with better cognitive performance.^{15,16,17}

This policy outlines the District's approach to ensuring environments and opportunities for all students to practice healthy eating and physical activity behaviors throughout the school day while minimizing commercial distractions. Specifically, this policy establishes goals and procedures to ensure that:

- Students in the District have access to healthy foods throughout the school day – both through reimbursable school meals and other foods available throughout the school campus– in accordance with Federal and state nutrition standards.
- Students receive quality nutrition education that helps them develop lifelong healthy eating behaviors.
- Students have opportunities to be physically active before, during and after school.
- Schools engage in nutrition and physical activity promotion and other activities that promote student wellness.
- School staff are encouraged and supported to practice healthy nutrition and physical activity behaviors in and out of school.
- The community is engaged in supporting the work of the District in creating continuity between school and other settings for students and staff to practice lifelong healthy habits; and
- The District establishes and maintains an infrastructure for management, oversight, implementation, communication about and monitoring of the policy and its established goals and objectives.

This policy applies to all students, staff, and schools in the District. Specific measurable goals and outcomes are identified within each section below

I. School Wellness Committee

Committee Role and Membership

The District will convene a representative district wellness committee (hereto referred to as the DWC) that meets one every three years and as needed in-between to establish goals for and oversee school health and safety policies and programs, including development, implementation and periodic review and update of this district-level wellness policy (heretofore referred as “wellness policy”).

The DWC membership will represent all school levels (elementary and secondary schools) and include (to the extent possible), but not be limited to: parents and caregivers; students; representatives of the school nutrition program; physical education teachers; health education teachers; school health professionals; school administrators; health professionals; and the general public.

Leadership

The Director of Child Nutrition will convene the DWC and facilitate development of and updates to the wellness policy and will ensure each school’s compliance with the policy. The names, titles, and contact of the DWC members are:

Name	Title / Relationship to the School or District	Email address	Role on Committee
Donette Worthy	Director of Child Nutrition	donette.worthy@acsk12.net	Chair DWC
Amanda Reaves	Parent	amanda.reaves@acsk12.net	DWC Member
Dr. Katy Conradson	Director of Elementary Education	katy.conradson@acsk12.net	DWC Member
Debbie Sraggins	CNP Manager	dsraggins@acsk12.net	DWC Member
Ashley Thornton	Teacher	athornton@acsk12.net	DWC Member
Stephanie Brooks	Principal	stephanie.brooks@acsk12.net	DWC Member
Dr. Brandon Gilliland	Assistant Principal	brandon.gilliland@acsk12.net	DWC Member
Albert Drakeford	Assistant Principal	albert.drakeford@acsk12.net	DWC Member
Dr. Chante Ruffin	Pediatrician/Mother	chante.ruffin@acsk12.net	DWC Member
Charity Spann	School Nurse/Head Nurse	cspann@acsk12.net	DWC Member

Each school will designate a school wellness policy coordinator, who will ensure compliance with the policy. Refer to Appendix A for a list of school-level wellness policy coordinators.

II. Wellness Policy Implementation, Monitoring, Accountability and Community Engagement

Implementation Plan

The District will develop and maintain a plan for implementation to manage and coordinate the execution of this wellness policy. The plan delineates roles, responsibilities, actions and timelines specific to each school; and includes information about who will be responsible to make what change, by how much, where and when; as well as specific goals and objectives for nutrition standards for all foods and beverages available on the school campus, food and beverage marketing, nutrition promotion and education, physical activity, physical education and other school-based activities that promote student wellness. It is recommended that the school use the Healthy Schools Program online tools to complete a school-level assessment based on the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention's School Health Index, create an action plan that fosters implementation and generate an annual progress report.

Recordkeeping

The District will retain records to document compliance with the requirements of the wellness policy within the Child Nutrition Department located at the District's Central Office. Documentation maintained in this location will include but will not be limited to:

- The written wellness policy.
- Documentation demonstrating that the policy has been made available to the public.
- Documentation of efforts to review and update the Local Schools Wellness Policy; including an indication of who is involved in the update and methods the district uses to make stakeholders aware of their ability to participate on the DWC.
- Documentation to demonstrate compliance with the annual public notification requirements.
- The most recent assessment on the implementation of the local school wellness policy.
- Documentation demonstrating the most recent assessment on the implementation of the Local School Wellness Policy has been made available to the public.

Annual Notification of Policy

The District will actively inform families and the public each year of basic information about this policy, including its content, any updates to the policy and implementation status. The District will make this information available via the district website. The District will provide as much information as possible about the school nutrition environment. This will include a summary of the District's events or activities related to wellness policy implementation. Annually, the District will also publicize the name and contact information of the District's leader and coordinating the committee, as well as information on how the public can get involved with the school wellness committee.

Triennial Progress Assessments

At least once every three years, the District will evaluate compliance with the wellness policy to assess the implementation of the policy and include:

- The extent to which schools under the jurisdiction of the District are in compliance with the wellness policy;
- The extent to which the District's wellness policy compares to the Alliance for a Healthier Generation's model wellness policy; and
- A description of the progress made in attaining the goals of the District's wellness policy.

Revisions and Updating the Policy

The DWC will update or modify the wellness policy based on the results of the annual School Health Index and triennial assessments and/or as District priorities change; community needs change; wellness goals are met; new health science, information, and technology emerges; and new Federal or state guidance or standards are issued.

Community Involvement, Outreach and Communications

The District is committed to being responsive to community input, which begins with awareness of the wellness policy. The District will actively communicate ways in which representatives of DWC and others can participate in the development, implementation and periodic review and update of the wellness policy through a variety of means appropriate for that district. The District will also inform parents of the improvements that have been made to school meals and compliance with school meal standards, availability of child nutrition programs and how to apply, and a description of and compliance with Smart Snacks in School nutrition standards. The District will use electronic mechanisms, such as email or displaying notices on the district's website, as well as non-electronic mechanisms, such as newsletters, presentations to parents, or sending information home to parents, to ensure that all families are actively notified of the content of, implementation of, and updates to the wellness policy, as well as how to get involved and support the policy. The District will ensure that communications are culturally and linguistically appropriate to the community, and accomplished through means similar to other ways that the district and individual schools are communicating important school information with parents.

The District will actively notify the public about the content of or any updates to the wellness policy annually, at a minimum. The District will also use these mechanisms to inform the community about the availability of the annual and triennial reports.

III. Nutrition

School Meals

Our school district is committed to serving healthy meals to children, with plenty of fruits, vegetables, whole grains, and fat-free and low-fat milk; that are moderate in sodium, low in saturated fat, and have zero grams *trans*-fat per serving (nutrition label or manufacturer's specification); and to meeting the nutrition needs of school children within their calorie requirements. The school meal programs aim to improve the diet and health of school children, help mitigate childhood obesity, model healthy eating to support the development of lifelong healthy eating patterns and support healthy choices while accommodating cultural food preferences and special dietary needs.

All schools within the District participate in USDA child nutrition programs, including the National School Lunch Program (NSLP), the School Breakfast Program (SBP). Select individual schools also operate additional nutrition-related programs and activities including *Farm to School programs, school gardens, Breakfast in the Classroom, Mobile Breakfast carts, Grab 'n' Go Breakfast and FFVP*. All schools within the District are committed to offering school meals through the NSLP and SBP programs, and other applicable Federal child nutrition programs, that:

- Are accessible to all students.
- Are appealing and attractive to children;
- Are served in clean and pleasant settings.
- Meet or exceed current nutrition requirements established by local, state, and Federal statutes and regulations. (The District offers reimbursable school meals that meet [USDA nutrition standards](#).)
- Menus will be posted on the District website or individual school websites.
- School meals are administered by a team of child nutrition professionals.

- The District child nutrition program will accommodate students with special dietary needs.
- Students will be allowed at least 10 minutes to eat breakfast and at least 20 minutes to eat lunch, counting from the time they have received their meal and are seated.
- Students are served lunch at a reasonable and appropriate time of day.
- Participation in Federal child nutrition programs will be promoted among students and families to help ensure that families know what programs are available in their children's school.

Staff Qualifications and Professional Development

All school nutrition program directors, managers and staff will meet or exceed hiring and annual continuing education/training requirements in the [USDA professional standards for child nutrition professionals](#).

Water

To promote hydration, free, safe, unflavored drinking water will be available to all students throughout the school day* and throughout every school campus* ("school campus" and "school day" are defined in the glossary). The District will make drinking water available where school meals are served during mealtimes. In addition, students will be allowed to bring and carry (approved) water bottles filled with only water with them throughout the day. This includes allowing students to have approved water bottles in the classroom at their desk.

Competitive Foods and Beverages

The District is committed to ensuring that all foods and beverages available to students on the school campus* during the school day* support healthy eating. The foods and beverages sold and served outside of the school meal programs (e.g., "competitive" foods and beverages) will meet the USDA Smart Snacks in School nutrition standards, at a minimum. Smart Snacks aim to improve student health and well-being, increase consumption of healthful foods during the school day and create an environment that reinforces the development of healthy eating habits.

To support healthy food choices and improve student health and well-being, all foods and beverages outside the reimbursable school meal programs that are sold to students on the school campus during the school day* will meet or exceed the USDA Smart Snacks nutrition standards. These standards will apply in all locations and through all services where foods and beverages are sold, which may include, but are not limited to, à la carte options in cafeterias, vending machines, school stores and snack or food carts.

Celebrations and Rewards

All foods offered on the school campus will meet or exceed the USDA Smart Snacks in School nutrition standards including through:

1. Celebrations and parties. The district will provide a list of healthy party ideas to parents and teachers, including non-food celebration ideas. Healthy party ideas are available from the [Alliance for a Healthier Generation](#) and from the USDA. Each classroom will be *encouraged* to limit class parties that do not meet the Smart Snacks in School nutrition standards to no more than 2 per school year. Celebrations that are tied into the curriculum will not count towards these exempt allowances.
2. Classroom snacks brought by parents. The District will provide to parents a [list of suggested foods and beverages that meet Smart Snacks](#) nutrition standards.
3. Rewards and incentives. The District will provide teachers and other relevant school staff a list of alternative ways to reward children. Teachers will be encouraged to not use foods and beverages as a reward and will not be allowed to be withheld as punishment for any reason, such as for performance or behavior.

Fundraising

Foods and beverages that meet or exceed the USDA Smart Snacks in Schools nutrition standards may be sold through fundraisers on the school campus* during the school day*. The District will make available to parents and teachers a list of healthy fundraising ideas [examples from the [Alliance for a Healthier Generation](#) and the [USDA](#)].

At no time may fundraisers compete with the National School Breakfast and National School Lunch Program as reinstated in the Memorandum issued June 17th, 2015 by State Superintendent of Education, Thomas R. Bice. Therefore, **food-related fundraisers are not to take place one (1) hour before or one (1) hour after meal service has ended per meal service schedule for all grades at the school.**

Exempt fundraisers involve food items that do not meet the Smart Snack nutrition standards during school hours. Fundraiser requests should be submitted and listed on or before July 1 and the second half of the school year should be provided to the principal by organizations on or before January 1st. Exempt fundraisers may not be sold one (1) hour before meal periods, during meal periods and one (1) hour after meal periods.

The DWC will encourage the use of non-food fundraisers and those promoting physical activity (such as walk-a-thons, jump rope for heart, fun runs, 5K, hoops for heart, dodgeball tournament, penny drops, hat day, etc).

Field Trips

All schools within the District will offer each student a reimbursable meal for all field trip events. Students are not required to purchase a reimbursable meal from the district however students will be offered a reimbursable meal.

Nutrition Promotion

Nutrition promotion and education positively influence lifelong eating behaviors by using evidence-based techniques and nutrition messages, and by creating food environments that encourage healthy nutrition choices and encourage participation in school meal programs. Students and staff will receive consistent nutrition messages throughout schools, classrooms, gymnasiums, and cafeterias. Nutrition promotion also includes marketing and advertising nutritious foods and beverages to students and is most effective when implemented consistently through a comprehensive and multi-channel approach by school staff, teachers, parents, students and the community.

The District will promote healthy food and beverage choices for all students throughout the school campus, as well as encourage participation in school meal programs. This promotion will occur through at least:

- Implementing evidence-based healthy food promotion techniques through the school meal programs using Smarter Lunchroom techniques; and
- Promoting foods and beverages that meet the USDA Smart Snacks in School nutrition standards. Additional promotion techniques that the District and individual schools may use are available at www.healthiergeneration.org/smartsnacks.

Nutrition Education

The District will teach, model, encourage and support healthy eating by all students. Schools will provide nutrition education and engage in nutrition promotion that:

- Is designed to provide students with the knowledge and skills necessary to promote and protect their health.
- Is part of not only health education classes, but also integrated into other classroom instruction through subjects such as math, science, language arts, social sciences, and elective subjects.
- Includes enjoyable, developmentally appropriate, culturally relevant, and participatory activities, such as cooking demonstrations or lessons, promotions, taste-testing, farm visits and school gardens.
- Promotes fruits, vegetables, whole-grain products, low-fat and fat-free dairy products, and healthy food preparation methods.
- Emphasizes caloric balance between food intake and energy expenditure (promotes physical activity/exercise).
- Links with school meal programs, cafeteria nutrition promotion activities, school gardens, Farm to School programs, other school foods and nutrition-related community services.
- Teaches media literacy with an emphasis on food and beverage marketing; and
- Includes nutrition education training for teachers and other staff.
- In elementary schools, nutrition education will be offered at each grade level as part of a sequential, comprehensive, standards-based health education curriculum that meets state and national standards (meets Healthy Schools Program Silver/Gold-level criteria. An example is the HEAL of Alabama curriculum).

Outside Meals from vendors or restaurants

Meals from non-school foodservice vendors are allowed. However, if a parent/guardian brings a meal from an outside source, it must be placed in a sack without the logo of the restaurant or vendor. ACS staff members must abide by the same guidelines. Sacks will be available at the front office to assist with this effort.

Food and Beverage Marketing in Schools

The District is committed to providing a school environment that ensures opportunities for all students to practice healthy eating and physical activity behaviors throughout the school day while minimizing commercial distractions. The District strives to teach students how to make informed choices about nutrition, health, and physical activity. These efforts will be weakened if students are subjected to advertising on District property that contains messages inconsistent with the health information the District is imparting through nutrition education and health promotion efforts. It is the intent of the District to protect and promote student's health by permitting advertising and marketing for only those foods and beverages that are permitted to be sold on the school campus, consistent with the District's wellness policy.

IV. Physical Activity

Children and adolescents are encouraged to participate in at least 60 minutes of physical activity every day. A substantial percentage of students' physical activity can be provided through a comprehensive school physical activity program (CSPAP). A CSPAP reflects strong coordination and synergy across all the components: quality physical education as the foundation; physical activity before, during and after school; staff involvement and family and community engagement; the district is committed to providing these opportunities. Schools will ensure that these varied physical activity opportunities are in addition to, and not as a substitute for, physical education (addressed in "Physical Education" subsection). All schools in the district will be encouraged to participate in Active Schools (www.activeschoolsUS.org) to successfully address all CSPAP areas.

Physical activity during the school day (including but not limited to recess, classroom physical activity breaks or physical education) **will not be withheld** as punishment for any reason. This does not include participation in sports teams that have specific academic requirements. The district will provide teachers and other school staff with a [list of ideas](#) for alternative ways to discipline students.

To the extent practicable, the District will ensure that its grounds and facilities are safe and that equipment is available to students to be active.

Physical Education

The District will provide students with physical education, using an age-appropriate, sequential physical education curriculum consistent with national and state standards for physical education. The physical education curriculum will promote the benefits of a physically active lifestyle and will help students develop skills to engage in lifelong healthy habits, as well as incorporate essential health education concepts (discussed in the “*Essential Physical Activity Topics in Health Education*” subsection).

All students will be provided with an equal opportunity to participate in physical education classes. The District will make appropriate accommodations to allow for equitable participation for all students and will adapt physical education classes and equipment as necessary.

All District **elementary students (K-5)** in each grade will receive physical education for at least 150-225 minutes per week throughout the school year.

All District **middle school students (6-8)** in each grade will receive physical education for at least 225-250 minutes per week throughout the school year.

All District **high school students (9-12)** are required to take the equivalent of one academic year of physical education.

The District physical education program will promote student physical fitness through individualized fitness and activity assessments (via the Alabama Fitness Assessment and will use criterion-based reporting for each student.

All physical education teachers in the District will be encouraged to participate in at least a once-a-year professional development in education.

Essential Physical Activity Topics in Health Education

The District will aim to include in the health education curriculum the following essential topics on physical activity: when health education is taught or semesters when a student is enrolled in health or physical education.

- The physical, psychological, or social benefits of physical activity
- How physical activity can contribute to a healthy weight.
- How physical activity can contribute to the academic learning process.
- How an inactive lifestyle contributes to chronic disease.
- Health-related fitness, that is, cardiovascular endurance, muscular endurance, muscular strength, flexibility, and body composition.
- Differences between physical activity, exercise, and fitness
- Phases of an exercise session, that is, warm up, workout and cool down.
- Overcoming barriers to physical activity
- Decreasing sedentary activities, such as TV watching
- Opportunities for physical activity in the community
- Preventing injury during physical activity
- Weather-related safety, for example, avoiding heat stroke, hypothermia and sunburn while being physically active.

- How much physical activity is enough, that is, determining frequency, intensity, time, and type of physical activity.
- Developing an individualized physical activity and fitness plan
- Monitoring progress toward reaching goals in an individualized physical activity plan.
- Dangers of using performance-enhancing drugs, such as steroids
- Social influences on physical activity, including media, family, peers, and culture.
- How to find valid information or services related to physical activity and fitness.
- How to influence, support, or advocate for others to engage in physical activity
- How to resist peer pressure that discourages physical activity.

Recess (Elementary)

All elementary schools will offer at least 75 minutes per week of recess during the school year. This policy may be waived on early dismissal or late arrival days. If a student is losing recess because of a consequence, then it cannot mean being inactive. Consider assigning alternate recess movements like walking the track, or doing a routine (jumping jacks, jog-on-the spot). Recess will complement, not substitute, physical education class. Recess can include Physical Activity Breaks during and between classroom time.

Outdoor recess should be offered when the weather is feasible for outdoor play.

In the event that the school or district must conduct indoor recess, teachers and staff will follow the indoor recess guidelines that promote physical activity for students, to the extent practicable. Each school will maintain and enforce its own indoor recess guidelines.

Recess will complement, not substitute, physical education class. Recess monitors or teachers will encourage students to be active and will serve as role models by being physically active alongside the students whenever feasible.

Physical Activity Breaks (Elementary and Secondary)

The District recognizes that students are more attentive and ready to learn if provided with periodic breaks when they can be physically active or stretch. Thus, students should be offered periodic opportunities to be active or to stretch throughout the day on all or most days during a typical school week. The District recommends teachers provide short (3-5-minute) physical activity breaks to students during and between classroom time at least three days per week. These physical activity breaks will complement, not substitute, for physical education class, recess, and class transition periods. Resources and links to resources are available through USDA, The Alliance for a Healthier Generation and Brain Brakes (examples: www.gonoodles.com).

The District will provide resources and links to resources, tools, and technology with ideas for classroom physical activity breaks. Resources and ideas are available through [USDA](#).

Active Academics

Teachers will be encouraged to incorporate movement and kinesthetic learning approaches into “core” subject instruction when possible (e.g., science, math, language arts, social studies, and others) and do their part to limit sedentary behavior during the school day.

The District will support classroom teachers incorporating physical activity and employing kinesthetic learning approaches into core subjects by providing annual professional development opportunities and resources, including information on leading activities, activity options, as well as making available background material on the connections between learning and movement.

Teachers will serve as role models by being physically active alongside the students whenever feasible.

Before and After School Activities

The District encourages schools to offer opportunities for students to participate in physical activity either before and/or after the school day through a variety of methods such as clubs, physical activity in aftercare, intramurals, or varsity sports.

Active Transport

The District will support active transport to and from school where possible, such as walking or biking. The District will encourage schools to engage in the following activities:

- Designate safe or preferred routes to school.
- Promote activities such as participation in International Walk to School Week, National Walk and Bike to School Week
- Instruction on walking/bicycling safety provided to students.
- Crossing guards are used.
- Safety patrols may be used at schools.
- Promote safe routes program to students, staff, and parents via newsletters, websites, local newspaper.
- Use crosswalks on streets leading to schools.

V. Other Activities that Promote Student Wellness

The District will encourage wellness activities across the entire school setting. The District will coordinate and integrate other initiatives related to physical activity, physical education, nutrition, and other wellness components so all efforts are complementary, not duplicative, and work towards the same set of goals and objectives promoting student well-being, optimal development and strong educational outcomes.

Schools in the District are encouraged to coordinate content across curricular areas that promote student health, such as teaching nutrition concepts in mathematics, with consultation provided by either the school or the District's curriculum experts.

All efforts related to obtaining federal, state or association recognition for efforts, or grants/funding opportunities for healthy school environments will be coordinated with and complementary of the wellness policy, including but not limited to ensuring the involvement of the DWC.

All school-sponsored events will adhere to the wellness policy guidelines.

Community Partnerships

The District will develop, enhance, or continue relationships with community partners (i.e. hospitals, universities/colleges, local businesses, etc.) in support of this wellness policy's implementation.

Community Health Promotion and Family Engagement

The District will promote to parents/caregivers, families, and the general community the benefits of and approaches for healthy eating and physical activity throughout the school year. Families will be informed and invited to participate in school-sponsored activities and will receive information about health promotion efforts.

Staff Wellness and Health Promotion

The District promotes staff member participation in health promotion programs and will support programs for staff members on healthy eating/weight management that are accessible and free or low-cost (example: gym membership).

Schools in the District will be encouraged to implement strategies to support staff in actively promoting and modeling healthy eating and physical activity behaviors. Examples of strategies schools will use, as well as specific actions staff members can take, include:

- Pedometer Challenges/Wellness Wednesdays/Healthy Challenges
- Blue Cross Blue Shield of Alabama, “Be Healthy” website.
- Participation in the PEEHIP “Team up for Wellness” Health Screens and Wellness Program
- Promoting Healthy Eating options in the Employee Break Room / Teacher’s Lounge

Professional Learning

When feasible, the District will offer annual professional learning opportunities and resources for staff to increase knowledge and skills about promoting healthy behaviors in the classroom and school (e.g., increasing the use of kinesthetic teaching approaches or incorporating nutrition lessons into math class).

Glossary:

Extended School Day – the time during, before and after school that includes activities such as clubs, intramural sports, band and choir practice, drama rehearsals and more.

School Campus - areas that are owned or leased by the school and used at any time for school-related activities, including on the outside of the school building, school buses or other vehicles used to transport students, athletic fields, and stadiums (e.g., on scoreboards, coolers, cups, and water bottles), or parking lots.

School Day – the time between midnight the night before to 30 minutes after the end of the instructional day.

Triennial – recurring every three years.

ⁱ Bradley, B, Green, AC. Do Health and Education Agencies in the United States Share Responsibility for Academic Achievement and Health? A Review of 25 years of Evidence About the Relationship of Adolescents’ Academic Achievement and Health Behaviors, *Journal of Adolescent Health*. 2013; 52(5):523–532.

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- ¹⁵ Change Lab Solutions. (2014). *District Policy Restricting the Advertising of Food and Beverages Not Permitted to be Sold on School Grounds*. Retrieved from <http://changelabsolutions.org/publications/district-policy-school-food-ads>

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