

Alexander City Public Schools Health and Wellness Policy

It is the policy of the Alexander City School System to promote actions that create a healthy and safe environment for all students, faculty, staff and citizens. The Alexander City School System is committed to taking the necessary precautions that will enable all users of our schools to learn, teach, and visit in our schools.

It is the goal of the Alexander City School System to promote the students' physical, emotional, and social well-being through a coordinated school health program. This program includes providing a healthy environment, school nurse services, nutritious school meals, health education and opportunities for physical activity. It is the intent of the Health and Wellness Policy to enable students to become independent and self-directed learners by taking the initiative to meet their own health and nutritional needs as developmentally appropriate.

Furthermore, it is our expectation that specific actions will take into account the health needs and well-being of all children without discrimination or isolation of any child. It is the Alexander City School Systems' belief that education and open and informative communication are vital for the creation of an environment with reduced risk for all students and their families. In order to assist children to assume more individual responsibility for maintaining their safety as they grow, it is the policy of the Alexander City School System that the Health and Wellness Policy guidelines reflect student development in Kindergarten through the 12th grade.

ALEXANDER CITY SCHOOL SYSTEM WELLNESS POLICY

Local School Wellness Policy Guide for Development

The wellness policy requirement was established by the Child Nutrition and Special Supplemental Nutrition Program for Women, Infants, and Children (WIC) Reauthorization Act of 2004 and further strengthened by the Healthy, Hunger-Free Kids Act of 2010 (HHFKA). It requires each LEA participating in the National School Lunch Program and/or School Breakfast Program to develop a wellness policy. On July 29, 2016, the USDA Food and Nutrition Service (FNS) finalized regulations to create a framework and guidelines for written wellness policies established by LEAs. The final rule requires LEAs to begin developing a revised local school wellness policy during School Year 2016-2017. LEAs must fully comply with the requirements of the final rule by June 30, 2017. The final rule requires State agencies to assess compliance with the wellness policy requirements as a part of the general areas of the administrative review every 3 years.

With this new requirement, the U.S. Congress recognizes that schools play a critical role in creating a healthy environment for the prevention of childhood obesity and for combating problems, like Type 2 diabetes, that are associated with poor nutrition and physical inactivity. This law places the responsibility of developing a school wellness policy at the local level, so the individual needs of each school can be addressed most effectively.

The following minimum requirements are established by the federal legislation. Schools may choose to include additional features or to integrate a school wellness policy with other ongoing programs. The legislation requires:

- **Goals for nutrition education, physical activity, and other school-based activities that are designed to promote student wellness in a manner that the local education agency determines is appropriate;**
- **Nutrition guidelines selected by the local educational agency for all foods available on each school campus under the local educational agency during the school day with the objectives of promotion student health and reducing childhood obesity;**
- **Assurances that guidelines for reimbursable school meals are not less restrictive than the regulations issued by the USDA;**
- **Ways of measuring how well the school wellness policy is being implemented, including designation of one or more persons at each school with operational responsibility for ensuring that the school is meeting the policy;**
- **Involvement of parents, students, representatives of the school food authority, the school board and school administrators, and the public, in developing the wellness policy.**

To assist schools in complying with these new requirements, a three-step approach to developing an effective local school wellness policy, along with sample language for a policy has been developed. The Local School Wellness Policy *Guide for Development* includes all the minimum requirements necessary to comply with the federal law, as well as existing Alabama statutes and standards. It also offers additional policy options that schools are encouraged to utilize in developing their specific goals.

Three Steps to an Effective School Wellness Policy

This three-step process is designed to meet the federal requirements for a school wellness policy - and to support student health and student achievement in Alabama schools.

Step 1: Gather input and assess current situation.

At a minimum, the 2004 federal legislation requires that parents, students, representatives of the school food authority, the school board and school administrators, and the public, be involved in developing a local wellness policy. Input can be coordinated through an existing school committee, like a Health Committee, or School Health Council.

The Office of Healthy Schools encourages and supports the establishment of School Health Councils (SHC). These councils are one of the most efficient and effective ways to gather the necessary local input for a school wellness policy, as well as to address the overall health issues within a local school. A SHC can also play a leadership role in determining the goals for a school wellness policy and in the successful implementation of the policy once it is developed.

Local stakeholders can be invited to join School Health Councils -to provide necessary resources and assist schools in developing appropriate, science-based wellness policies. Example of potential stakeholders include:

- **Health care providers**, especially pediatricians, dietitians, public health professionals, dentists, and orthodontists
- **Hospitals and public health departments**, especially those with pediatric services and diabetes clinics
- **Non-profit health organizations**, like the American Cancer Society, American Diabetes Association, and American Heart Association
- **Physical activity groups**, like YMCA/YWCA, youth sports leagues, and commercial fitness centers
- **Community youth organizations**, like Boys and Girls Clubs, Boy/Girls Scouts of America, and faith-based groups for young people
- **University departments and other government agencies**, esp. those involved in nutrition, physical activity, and education (e.g., Cooperative Extension Service)

Before establishing the required goals and guidelines, schools are encouraged to gather baseline information and determine what changes are appropriate for their local situation. This assessment can be done using tools developed especially for schools, including:

- **Alabama School Nutrition and Physical Activity Environment Assessment**
- **CDC's School Health Index**
- **USDA's Changing the Scene**

Step 2: Develop and approve a School Wellness Policy.

Once local input has been gathered, schools can develop goals and guidelines to address their specific situation. For assistance in drafting an effective policy, schools may utilize the following guide and sample language provided along with other resources as needed.

Goals and guidelines can be developed to best fit the needs and concerns of each local school - and they may be adapted over time. As the initial goals are met, new nutrition and physical activity goals can be

chosen by School Health Council with community input. Guidelines for food in schools may also be strengthened over time -if a step-wise or gradual approach is most appropriate in a local school.

Additional guidance from U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) and sample wellness policies from around the U.S. is available at:

<https://www.fns.usda.gov/school-meals/local-school-wellness-policy>

Once a local school wellness policy has been developed, school board approval must be obtained using all appropriate and legal timelines and procedures.

Step 3: Implement and evaluate a School Wellness Policy.

Approving a School Wellness Policy is just the first step toward creating an environment that supports student health and achievement. The federal legislation requires a plan for measuring the implementation of the policy, including the designation of one or more persons with responsibility for ensuring that the school meets the local wellness policy.

A School Health Council (SHC) can also be useful in the implementation and evaluation process. In order to insure a smooth and consistent implementation of a locally approved policy, a SHC can help to educate the school and community about the requirements for a policy - and its importance for children in Alabama schools. They can also be involved in measuring progress towards local goals related to nutrition, physical activity, and student wellness.

Alexander City School System Wellness Policy

Rationale:

The link between nutrition, physical activity, and learning is well documented. Healthy eating and activity patterns are essential for students to achieve their full academic potential, full physical and mental growth, and lifelong health and well-being. Healthy eating and physical activity, essential for a healthy weight, are also linked to reduced risk for many chronic diseases, like Type 2 diabetes. Schools have a responsibility to help students learn, establish, and maintain lifelong, healthy eating and activity patterns. Well-planned and effectively implemented school nutrition and fitness programs have been shown to enhance students' overall health, as well as their behavior and academic achievement in school. Staff wellness also is an integral part of a healthy school environment, since school staff can be daily role models for healthy behaviors.

Goal:

All students in Alexander City School System shall possess the knowledge and skills necessary to make nutritious food choices and enjoyable physical activity choices for a lifetime. All staff in the Alexander City School System are encouraged to model healthful eating and physical activity as a valuable part of daily life.

To meet this goal, the Alexander City School System adopts this school wellness policy with the following commitments to nutrition, physical activity, comprehensive health education, marketing, and implementation. This policy is designed to effectively utilize school and community resources and to equitably serve the needs and interests of all students and staff, taking into consideration differences in culture.

Commitment to Nutrition

Minimum requirements

The Alexander City School System will:

- Offer a school lunch program with menus that meet the meal patterns and nutrition standards established by the U.S. Department of Agriculture and the Alabama Department of Education, Office of Child Nutrition Programs.
- Offer school breakfast and snack programs (where approved and applicable) with menus that meet the meal patterns and nutrition standards established by the U. S. Department of Agriculture and the Alabama Department of Education, Office of Child Nutrition Programs.
- Encourage school staff and families to participate in school meal programs.
- Operate all Child Nutrition Programs with school foodservice staff who are properly qualified according to current professional standards and/or policy established by the Alabama Board of Education.
- Establish food safety as a key component of all school food operations and ensure that the food service permit is current for the Food Service school site.
- Follow the Alabama Board of Education policies on competitive foods and extra food sales standards and/or policy as established by the Alabama Board of Education Policy.

- Establish guidelines for all foods available on the school campus during the school day to meet YSDA Smart Snack requirements and with the objective of promoting student health and reducing childhood obesity.

Optional policy statements (adopt as appropriate for local school goals)

The Alexander City School System will:

- Provide adequate time for students to eat and enjoy school meals (a minimum of 15-20 minutes at breakfast and 18-25 minutes at lunch).
- Encourage students to make food choices based on the 2005 Dietary Guidelines for Americans, by emphasizing menu options that feature baked (rather than fried foods), whole grains, fresh fruits and vegetables, and reduced-fat dairy products.
- Establish a cafeteria environment conducive to a positive dining experience, with socializing among students and between students and adults; with supervision of eating areas by adults who model proper conduct and voice level; and with adults who model healthy habits by eating with the students.
- Make school meals accessible to all students with a variety of delivery strategies, such as breakfast in the classroom, grab-and-go lunches, or alternate eating sites.
- Add nutritious and appealing options (such as fruits, vegetables, nuts, trail mix, beef jerky, reduced-fat milk, reduced fat-yogurt, reduced-fat cheese, 100% juice, and water) whenever foods/beverages are sold or otherwise offered at school, including vending machines, school stores, concessions stands at sporting and academic events, parties, celebrations, social events, and other school functions.
- Eliminate use of foods as rewards for student accomplishment and the withholding of food as punishment (e.g., restricting a child's selection of flavored milk at mealtime due to behavior problems).
- Encourage all school-based organizations to use services, contests, non-food items, and/or healthful foods for fundraising programs. The sale of candy as a fund-raiser is strongly discouraged (or prohibited).
- Provide nutrition information for parents, including nutrition analysis of school meals and resources to help parents to improve food that they serve at home.

Commitment to Physical Activity

Minimum requirements

The Alexander City School System will:

- Provide physical education for all students (In accordance the Alabama Public Schools Accountability Standards).
- Offer a planned sequential program of physical education instruction incorporating individual and group activities, which are student centered and taught in a positive, encouraging and/or supportive environment.

Optional policy statements (adopt as appropriate (or local school goals))

The Alexander City School System will:

- Schedule recess or physical education before lunch times (where appropriate and applicable) in order to increase food consumed, decrease plate waste, and improve cafeteria behavior.
- Incorporate 5- to 10-minute physical activity sessions (where appropriate and applicable) in classrooms to teach subject areas and to make transitions between different lessons (e.g., TakeTen, Mind, Body, Me Wellness Program, etc.).
- Participate in a yearly fitness test for students (e.g., Fitness Gram, President's Challenge to Physical Fitness, etc.).
- Establish or enhance physical activity opportunities (like walking clubs or fitness challenges) for staff and/or parents.
- Provide staff-monitored recreational activities that promote moderate physical activity during all outdoor and/or indoor recess times.
- Encourage active transportation to/from schools by assessing the safest routes for students to walk or bike to school, and by installing bike racks at school buildings.
- Collaborate with local recreational departments and youth fitness programs to promote participation in lifelong physical activities.
- Create wider opportunities for students to voluntarily participate in before and after-school physical activity programs like intramurals, clubs, and at the secondary level, interscholastic athletics.

Commitment to Comprehensive Health Education

Minimum requirements

The Alexander City School System will:

- Provide ½ Carnegie unit of comprehensive health education for graduation.
- Implement the 2006 Alabama Comprehensive Health Framework for grades 9-12.

Optional policy statements (adopt as appropriate for local school goals)

The Alexander City School System will:

- Offer comprehensive health education in grades K-8.
- Implement the nutrition strand of 2006 Alabama Comprehensive Health Framework.
- Emphasize the disease and prevention strand in the 2006 Alabama Comprehensive Health Framework.
- Participate in USDA nutrition programs such as *Team Nutrition Schools* and the *Healthier US School Challenge*. The school will conduct nutrition education activities and promotions that involve students, parents, and the community. The school team responsible for planning nutrition activities will include school foodservice staff, school nurses, health and PE teachers, coaches, and additional staff, as appropriate.

Commitment to Marketing a Healthy School Environment

Optional policy statements (adopt as appropriate for local school goals)

The Alexander City School System will:

- Provide positive, motivating messages, both verbal and non-verbal, about healthy lifestyle practices throughout the school setting. All school personnel will help reinforce these positive messages.
- Involve students in planning for a healthy school environment. Students will be asked for input and feedback through the use of student surveys, and attention will be given to their comments.
- Promote healthful eating, physical activity, and healthy lifestyles to students, parents, teachers, administrators, and the community at school events (e.g., school registration, parent-teacher conferences, PTO meetings, open houses, health fairs, teacher in-services, and other events).
- Eliminate advertising and other materials on the school campus that promote foods of minimal nutrition value.
- Work with local media, like newspaper, TV and radio, to inform the community about the health problems facing Alabama children, as well as the need for and benefits of healthy school environments.

Commitment to Implementation

Minimum requirements

The Alexander City School System will:

- Establish a plan for implementation of the school wellness policy.
- Designate one or more persons to insure that the school wellness policy is implemented as written.

Optional policy statements (adopt as appropriate for local school goals)

The Alexander City School System will:

- Establish and support a School Health Council (SHC) that addresses all aspects of a coordinated school health program, including a school wellness policy.
- Conduct a review of the progress toward school wellness policy goals each year to identify areas for improvement.
- Prepare and submit a yearly report to the school board regarding the progress toward implementation of the school wellness policy and recommendations for any revisions to the policy as necessary.

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*(1) mail: U.S. Department of Agriculture
Office of the Assistant Secretary for Civil Rights
1400 Independence Avenue, SW
Washington, D.C. 20250-9410; or*

(2) fax: (202) 690-7442; or

(3) email: program.intake@usda.gov.

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Appendix A: Nutrition Guidelines

GOAL:

The goal of establishing guidelines for all foods and beverages served or sold during the school day (outside of Child Nutrition Programs that follow USDA guidelines) is to improve the nutritional intake of Alabama children. This can be done with a combination of two strategies.

1. **Adding more nutrient-rich, appealing options** whenever foods and beverages are sold (or otherwise offered), including vending machines, school stores, parties, celebrations, social events, concessions stands at sporting and academic events, , and other school functions. Possible options include fruits and vegetables (fresh, canned, and dried); nuts, seeds, and trail mix; beef jerky and peanut butter; reduced-fat dairy products (milk, cheese, yogurt, frozen yogurt, and smoothies); 100% juice, and water.
2. **Limiting intake of discretionary calories** (in the venues described above). These are calories from fat and added sugar that provide few if any important nutrients (like protein, vitamins, minerals, fiber, etc.). As described in the 2005 Dietary Guidelines for Americans, discretionary calories **include intrinsic fats in the basic food groups** (like the fat in whole milk versus low-fat milk), **most solid fats** (like butter and margarine), and all added sugars. Limiting intake of discretionary calories can be done both by limiting portion size of and access to regular soft drinks, sweetened tea, candy, cookies, and high-fat snacks (regular potato chips, com chips, crackers, sausage sticks, etc.).

MARKETING:

The goal of improving nutritional intake can also be accomplished by applying basic marketing strategies to sales of healthful options. Schools can consider the four P's when establishing guidelines for foods and beverages served or sold during the school day:

- **Product:** Vendors and companies have increasing numbers of products available - many with a more healthful profile than traditional snack foods and beverages.
- **Placement:** The sales of more nutrient-rich foods and beverages can be increased by placing them in "prime" locations -like at students' eye level in a vending machine.
- **Price:** Another way to increase the sales of healthful items is to offer them at a lower cost. For example, water can be sold for \$.25 to .50 less than regular soft drinks.
- **Promotion:** There are many creative ways to promote healthy options -like offering samples of new healthful products or giving discount coupons during the introductory period.

ALEXANDER CITY SCHOOLS SYSTEM-WIDE WELLNESS COMMITTEE

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