



# School Wellness Councils and Policies



Creating Healthy Schools  
and Communities



Center for Health Equity

## Form a School Wellness Council that is interested in improving the health and well-being of students and the school community.

The School Wellness Council can be a separate group or part of your School Leadership Team. School Wellness Councils create the wellness policy. They also let the community know what the school is doing to improve the health and wellness of its students. Your School Wellness Council can include:

- Administrators (principal, assistant principal)
- Parent coordinators
- SchoolFood manager
- Teachers, school nurses and support staff members
- Champions (people with expertise or interest in fitness, nutrition or wellness)
- Parents, family and guardians
- Students

## Create a wellness policy to help your school community lead a more active, healthier life.

A school wellness policy is a detailed plan for how a school will support healthy eating and active living for students, staff members and families. It includes goals and strategies that will guide a school's efforts to create a healthy environment. To make your school's wellness policy clear and easy to follow, ask yourself these questions:

- What is the target date for each goal?
- Who should be involved?
- How will you measure success?

**H**ealthy eating, regular physical activity and physical education (PE) improve student academic achievement. They also improve attention span, classroom behavior and attendance.

# Five Steps to Creating a School Wellness Policy in Your School:

1. Schedule monthly school wellness council meetings, or include wellness topics in current meetings, to identify wellness goals and focus areas (see examples below).
2. Draft a wellness policy that combines current and new wellness strategies into a single document.
3. Have the School Leadership Team review and approve the wellness policy.
4. Share the wellness policy with staff, students and families through memos, meetings, handbooks, newsletters and/or posters.
5. Every year, evaluate how well the wellness policy is being followed and update the goals and focus areas.

Healthy Eating Focus Areas	Policy Examples
 <b>School Meals</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Encourage student participation in school breakfast and lunch by offering Breakfast in the Classroom or Grab &amp; Go.</li> <li>• Give students at least 20 minutes to eat lunch.</li> <li>• Serve plain (unflavored) 1% or skim milk, <i>not</i> chocolate milk.</li> <li>• Serve only beverages and competitive foods that meet the NYC Department of Education’s SchoolFood guidelines for all events sponsored or supported by the school.</li> </ul>
 <b>Water</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Make drinking water free and accessible in the lunchroom and throughout the school.</li> </ul>
 <b>Garden</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Establish rules for how and when the garden is used.</li> <li>• Make garden education part of the curriculum.</li> </ul>
 <b>Healthy Snacks</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Sell only fruits, vegetables, whole grain products, low-fat dairy and lean protein foods as snacks.</li> <li>• Send a flyer home to parents at the start of every school year informing them of the snack policy.</li> </ul>
 <b>Celebrations, Rewards and Fundraising</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Do not offer food as a reward or punishment.</li> <li>• Limit or ban celebrations with unhealthy foods.</li> <li>• Sell only healthy foods or non-food items (such as plants, gym memberships or student art) at fundraisers.</li> </ul>

Physical Activity Focus Areas	Policy Examples
 <b>Physical Education (PE)</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Ensure student participation in active PE for at least 120 minutes per week.</li> <li>• Guarantee PE instruction by a licensed or certified physical educator who receives ongoing training and professional development.</li> </ul>
 <b>Physical Activity</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Ensure that all teachers are trained in Move-to-Improve (MTI) and lead at least one MTI activity in the classroom every day.</li> <li>• Do not withhold physical activity and PE as punishment.</li> </ul>
 <b>Recess (Elementary Grades)</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Provide at least 20 minutes of active recess a day.</li> <li>• Establish an active recess plan to ensure physical activity when recess is indoors.</li> </ul>
 <b>Safe Routes to School</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Promote safe active transportation to and from school by providing bike racks and creating a safe route to school with the help of parent volunteers.</li> </ul>

For more information and resources,  
including a School Wellness Policy template,  
contact [healthyschools@health.nyc.gov](mailto:healthyschools@health.nyc.gov) or  
visit [nyc.gov/health](https://nyc.gov/health) and search “**healthy schools.**”



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