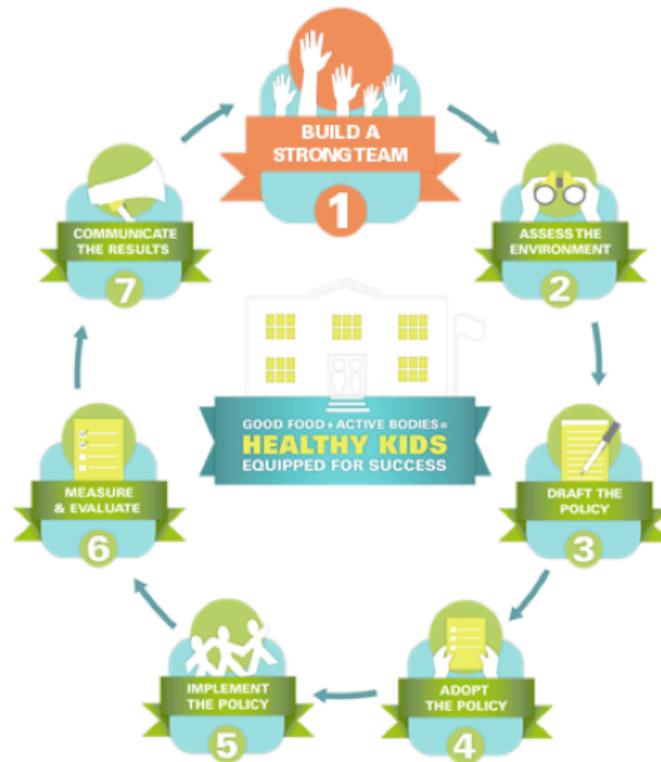


Steps to Build a Wellness Policy

You have put time, energy, and effort into helping your school be a healthier environment for kids to learn and grow with the **Building Health Communities Program!**



Now, let's make sure these great changes and programs stick. One way is to turn these healthy practices into district policies. **Local wellness policy** is required in every district or local education agency that participates in the National School Lunch Program or other federal Child Nutrition programs for all schools under its jurisdiction. (USDA)

Local wellness policies are an important tool for parents, local educational agencies (LEAs) and school districts in promoting student wellness, preventing and reducing childhood overweight, and providing assurance that school meal nutrition guidelines meet the minimum federal school meal standards.

STEP 1: BUILD A STRONG TEAM

Enhancing the membership in the wellness team is the first step in developing and revising a local wellness policy. A diverse group of people, representing the different facets of your district, will build support from the start.

Objectives

- Engage a diverse group of people to serve on the team.
- The Healthy, Hunger-Free Kids Act of 2010, requires local educational agencies (school districts) to permit teachers of physical education and school health professionals, as well as parents, students, and representatives of the school food authority, the school board, school administrators, and the public to participate in the development, periodic review, and updates of wellness policies.
- The Superintendent and/or School Board will decide/designate who will serve on the team. Consider your committee membership, and propose making some adjustments if it doesn't reflect a diversity of interests.

Consider these questions:

- Is the community represented on the committee?
- Are parents involved?
- Does the team reflect all of the constituencies who are impacted by and have input into the outcome of the policy?
- Are students involved?
 - Consider the Student Leadership Team or Student Council
- Are there representatives included on the team that have recognized expertise and knowledge about nutrition, physical fitness, and student health and wellness?
- Who is the designee for the district wellness committee or school health council? Do they have the authority to implement and enforce the policy?
- Who else needs to be part of the process?

STEP 2: ASSESS THE ENVIRONMENT

Once your wellness team is formed, you will need to determine what aspects of your district's current policies and practices concerning nutrition, physical activity, and nutrition education are working, and what needs to be improved.

This is one of the most important steps to help you develop and implement a policy that will fit your district's needs. The goal is to understand what you need to do, why you need to make revisions, and how to update the policy effectively.

Objectives:

The Wellness Team will determine the degree of their district's current wellness policy and assess its impact and necessary changes.

When gathering assessment data, consider what will be useful for policy impact and outcome assessment in your school and your district. This baseline data will be vital to monitor trends and changes in attitude and behaviors. Have your team assess the district's needs by completing a needs assessment checklist. This will help you evaluate various elements of your school or district's performance and develop action plans for each area of concern.

As you accumulate your findings, it's important to prioritize and translate them into a plan of action. A practical action plan includes who is responsible for each step, and target completion dates. This action plan will be the pillar of your implementation process, which will be discussed further in step 5. Surveys of parent groups, teachers, staff and students about current practices, foods available at school, and the perception of the environment and policy will also be helpful.

Questions for Consideration

- Can you use the School Wellness Investigation information from the Fuel Up to Play 60 team?
- Has your district surveyed the nutrition and physical activity environment?

STEP 3: DRAFT THE POLICY

Review your Local Wellness Policy to see if it meets the requirements of the Healthy, Hunger-Free Kids Act. Policies reflect the "rules" governing the implementation of the school district processes, and this is where the district goals and expectations will be stated. The corresponding procedures outline all the details for the implementation of policy.

Objectives

Create a policy document that spells out what you want to accomplish regarding district wide wellness practices. Avoid vague language when writing the Wellness Policy and corresponding procedure, the statements in the policy should be specific.

- For example, if using the term "healthy foods", define what "healthy" means. Instead of using words like "recommend," "encourage" or "promote" that don't really require schools to implement these changes, use words like "will", "shall", "must" and "require" that ensure school compliance.

The policy that is written will provide specific guidance toward implementing strategies to achieve the district's mission and/or control behaviors of the district (including students, staff and parents). Your district wellness committee needs to consider the outcomes of policy actions.

Policy actions can occur at different levels. It is helpful to think about where the action is occurring, and then what this means to the level where policy is implemented.

Here are some examples of nutrition policy at different levels.

Federal Level (includes USDA, US Department of Education)

- Adopt nutrition standards* for all federal child nutrition programs
- Adopt nutrition standards* for all snacks and beverages sold/served outside of federal child nutrition programs

State Legislatures and Departments of Education/Health

- Adopt state nutrition standards* for all foods sold/served outside of federal child nutrition programs

Local School Boards and State Departments of Education

- Develop school district policies (including wellness policies for districts participating in federal child nutrition programs) and related regulations that include district/campus wide nutrition standards* for foods sold/served outside of the federal programs
- Implement nutrition standards* that are aligned with guidance on optimal nutrition

It is also vital to review your policy for compliance with the Healthy, Hunger-Free Kids Act. This federal act stipulates that all schools participating in the National School Lunch Program or other child nutrition programs establish a school district wellness policy.

At a minimum, the district wellness policy must address the following areas:

- Goals for nutrition promotion and education, physical activity, and other school-based activities that promote student wellness
- Nutrition guidelines to promote student health and reduce childhood obesity for all foods available in each school district.
- Permit and encourage parents, students, representatives of the school food authority, physical education teachers, school health professionals, the school board, school administrators and the general public to participate in the development, implementation, and review and update of the local wellness policy.
- Inform and update the public (including parents, students and others in the community) about the content and implementation of the local wellness policies.
- Measure the local school wellness policy periodically on the extent to which schools are in compliance, the extent to which the local school wellness policy compares to model wellness policies, and the progress made in attaining the goals of the policy. These assessments should be made available to the public.

When drafting or revising a policy, and particularly when working to get it adopted by the School Board, the school wellness team needs to make sure that key audiences within the community embrace, support and are enthusiastic about key policy highlights. Build the awareness and support of the policy during the drafting process, and reach out to the following groups for feedback and critical information. Have team members look at their district wellness policy. Depending on each team member's district position, ask his or her thoughts:

- **School Board**
- **Parents**
- **School Administrators and Staff**
- **Teachers and School Staff**
- **Community Groups**
- **Students**
- **Food Service Vendors and staff**
- **The Public and the Media**

Questions for Consideration:

- What is the policy writing process in your district? Is there a preferred format?
- Who can the committee enlist for administrative help in drafting a policy?
- Are there any board committees that should review and approve draft policies, procedures and changes to programming?
- What federal and state regulations are necessary to meet or exceed with district policy?
- Is the policy clearly written and unfamiliar terms defined?

STEP 4: ADOPT THE POLICY

After the team drafted or revised the policy and worked to gain support of key stakeholders, the next step is getting the school board or other governing body to approve it.

Objectives

- Educate the School Board and Administration on the Healthy Hunger Free Kids Act, the local school wellness policy requirements, your draft local wellness policy, and the connections between healthy students and academic performance.
- Ask the district and school administration to commit to the vision of a healthy school environment.
- Take the time to fully address the School Board's issues and concerns about the policy. Collaborate with other members of the school community (e.g., the PTA, local wellness centers, area dietitians) to support and leverage your efforts.

Keep in mind that at the state and local levels, school governance has at least three layers of oversight, and your policy needs to be aligned with all three layers.

Questions for Consideration:

- What is the policy adoption process in your district?
- What is the timeline to get the policy reviewed and on the board's agenda?
- What is the plan for policy enforcement? How are other policies enforced?
- Does the district wellness policy impact other policies?
- Are there any costs related to the policy being adopted?
- What are the benefits to adopting this policy (as presented to the board)?

STEP 5: IMPLEMENT THE POLICY

The Healthy Hunger Free Kids Act requires that districts develop a plan for **measuring the implementation of the policy**, which includes designating one or more persons with responsibility for ensuring that the school meets federal requirements.

Adoption of the policy and corresponding procedures (step 4 of the Wellness Policy Tool) does not guarantee the policy will be carried out and enforced. Once the policy has been adopted, the district and each school must put the policy and procedures into action to truly impact school wellness practices.

Objectives

- The policy is a means to an end: what you are actually trying to achieve are healthier, happier children, equipped with an understanding of nutrition and life-long habits of healthy living.
- Think about the policy specifying the **WHAT** of your work. The corresponding written procedure will provide the details (the **WHAT, WHERE, and WHY**), and the action plan previously developed in Step 2 will specify the **WHO** and **WHEN** and **HOW**.
- Use the existing Healthy Kids Club and Student Leadership Team, along with school health councils, parent groups, students and district staff to share ideas for consideration in the action planning process.
- Rather than trying to implement every idea, the wellness committee and school health councils should prioritize implementation activities. Choose two or three to tackle in the school year, with plans to evaluate and add new goals in the following year based on outcomes.
- Key information, such as legislation changes or district level data (such as school meal participation data, attendance reports, school nurse visits and environmental survey data) can drive prioritization decisions.
- The implementation step may include policy from federal, state and local levels.

Steps for Implementing the Wellness Policy

- If not already done in step 2, develop or update the action plan to reflect the policy goals.
- Establish a realistic time frame for the implementation of the plan. The wellness policy can be a phased-in approach and does not have to be implemented all at once.
- Specify an individual or individuals who will be responsible for evaluating and enforcing guidelines.
- Find and share resources on school wellness activities for school staff, students and the local community, so they will understand and support upcoming changes.
- To identify areas for improvement, determine the indicators that will be used to accurately evaluate the implementation progress.
- Use your action plan to specify what data will be collected and used to assess progress.
- Conduct a review of the progress toward school wellness policy goals in order to identify areas for improvement (step 6).

- Prepare and submit a yearly report to the School Board regarding the progress toward implementation of the school wellness policy and recommendations for any necessary revisions to the policy (step 7).

Questions for Consideration:

- Does your district have an action plan for wellness policy implementation?
- How are parents, students, school administration/staff and the community involved in the implementation of local wellness policy at the district and at the school levels?
- What are the district wellness goals for the next year?
- Who is responsible for wellness activities? Policy enforcement? Communication to staff, parents and students?
- What are three things the district wellness committee wishes to accomplish over the next year?
- Are school improvement or other quality improvement plans used in your district? Do any wellness goals overlap with these plans?

STEP 6: MEASURE, EVALUATE & SUSTAIN THE EFFORT

How will your district know that the wellness policy is making a difference? Are you doing what you planned to do in your action plan? Once the implementation of policy is underway, it is important to begin monitoring the process and measuring the outcomes.

Objectives

Monitoring results is an ongoing process and will help indicate areas where the policy and/or procedure may need to be reviewed or changes made in the implementation process.

Measuring Impact

- Measuring impacts, such as changes to the health of kids, should not be expected within a short time frame.
- **The goals prioritized in step 4** will guide you in this step.
 - Look at short-term outcomes such as changes in school practices, programs, and in staff and student behavior in schools within the first few years -- followed by longer-term impacts, such as changes outside of the school or in kids' health status, approximately 4-5 years after the implementation of the policy.
- Some possible methods to assist you in gathering data to measure the impact of your wellness policy include:
 - Get feedback from students, parents, administrators, school staff and community concerning policy (surveys, discussion groups, anecdotal conversations).
 - Track educational or financial impacts on students through a review of the school's nutrition program, student store or vending programs (baseline data is important).
 - Track changes to nutrition education, physical activity (daily opportunities for PA or promotion of regular events that support increased PA) or nutritional quality of foods available to students as a result of the policy (fundraising, celebrations, etc).
 - Track changes made to the school environment to better promote academic learning and development of healthy habits (water stations, removal of unhealthy vending items, and more PE).
 - Record the number and type of individuals reached through these program changes for further assessment.

Steps for Evaluating the Wellness Policy

- Review data and information already collected, such as student meal participation data, attendance and surveys.
- Establish indicators or outcomes in your action plan that will measure implementation of the local wellness policy; this may require some revisions to your action plan or the addition of SMART objectives. Consider data already being collected, and the use of a standardized review process, such as a state or national level award, to set benchmarks for review.
- Confirm that one or more designated person(s) has(have) the authority to ensure that the school is meeting the policy, collect data and enforce the policy.

- Periodically review how well the policy is being managed and enforced in each school and the district as a whole.
- Share the policy and procedures with the school staff, students, parents and community. Document areas of exemplary actions as well as areas concern.
- Make note of any recommended updates or amendments to the policy and procedure throughout the year.
- Document any financial impact to the school foodservice program, school stores, vending machine/concessions and other programs that sell food on school grounds (per your policy specifications).
- Use evaluation results to build sustainability.
- Take the time to measure and analyze outcomes. Does the outcome relate to the measure? Are there any unintended consequences?
- Assess student, parent, teacher and administration satisfaction with the new policies. Be sure to document any feedback from these stakeholders.
- Capture success stories and share with others.

Questions for Consideration:

- What are you measuring?
- Does your wellness plan include SMART objectives?
- Can you list three ways your school/district has been working to meet local wellness policy goals and if the work has been successful?
- What was accomplished last year?
- How many schools, students, staff, parents, etc. participated in events and programs?
- Did you do what you planned to do?
- How often does the wellness committee review the policy and plan?
- What changed in the past year in your district?

STEP 7: SHARE YOUR SUCCESS!

Under the Healthy, Hunger Free Kids Act, school districts are required to not only have wellness policies in place but to also inform and update the public (including parents, students and others in the community) about the content and implementation of their wellness policy. Additionally, districts are required to measure periodically and make available to the public an assessment on the implementation of the wellness policy.

Proactive communication will inform, educate and build support for district wellness efforts. This includes the extent to which schools are in compliance, the extent to which the district policy compares to model policy and to describe the progress made in attaining the goals of the district policy.

Objectives

- Consider the messaging options in your district already - district and school websites, newsletters, parent communications, staff emails and public events.
- All of these are suitable ways to share wellness messages and implementation progress.
- Remember to save copies of all communications and document the audience reached.

Communication methods include:

- District and school websites
- District communications, such as automated telephone calls, emails and texts
- Parent group presentations and information in emails to parents
- A table with information at back to school meetings and parent conferences, open houses, parent nights, sports/athletic code meetings and registration events
- Information sent home with district/school meal menus
- Information sent home with snack, party and classroom volunteer lists
- Staff meeting presentations and emails
- Principal/school newsletters
- Student handouts
- Parent mailings (consider a postcard with the website for more information)
- Posters at school
- Student announcements at school
- Student handbooks
- Local newspaper, television and media outlets

Questions for Consideration:

- How can you tell your district's story?
- What can you tell parents/community members/students/staff/local media about your district's health/nutrition/physical activity and school environment?
- What did the wellness committee work on last year?
- What can you tell others about the wellness policy implementation.

RESOURCES

Helpful Resources for Step 1

- CDC Youth Risk Behavior Surveillance - United States, 2011 report: <http://www.cdc.gov/mmwr/pdf/ss/ss6104.pdf>
- CDC School Health Policies and Practices: <http://www.cdc.gov/HealthyYouth/shpps/index.htm>
- USDA Examples: Local Wellness Policies: <http://teammnutrition.usda.gov/healthy/wellnesspolicy.html>
- Section 204 of the Child Nutrition and WIC Reauthorization Act of 2010, the Healthy Hunger Free Kids Act http://www.fns.usda.gov/cnd/governance/legislation/cnr_2010.htm
- Congressional Research Service Child Nutrition and WIC Reauthorization: <http://www.cnpp.usda.gov/dgas2010-policydocument.htm>
- Issues and Legislation in the 111th Congress <http://www.naccho.org/advocacy/upload/CRS-Child-nutrition.pdf>
- FRAC wellness Guide http://frac.org/wp-content/uploads/2009/09/wellness_guide2006.pdf
- Dietary Guidelines for Americans, 2010 <http://www.dietaryguidelines.gov>
- CDC wellness policy resources page <http://www.cdc.gov/healthyyouth/npao/wellness.htm>
- NASBE state wellness policy database: http://nasbe.org/healthy_schools/hs/ And to view by state: http://nasbe.org/healthy_schools/hs/map.php
- State policy examples for nutrition and physical activity: http://class.cancer.gov/map_pe.aspx
- Changing the Scene (USDA) <http://www.fns.usda.gov/tn/Resources/changing.html>
- USDA Implementation Guidance Memo http://www.fns.usda.gov/cnd/Governance/Policy-Memos/2011/SP42-2011_os.pdf
- USDA wellness policy information <http://www.fns.usda.gov/cga/pressreleases/2011/0296.htm>
- USDA wellness policy requirements <http://www.fns.usda.gov/tn/healthy/lwpoverview.pdf>

Helpful Resources for Step 2

- Michigan Healthy School Assessment Tool (HSAT) <http://www.actionforhealthykids.org/assets/clubs/mi1-hsat.pdf>
- School Health Index from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention http://apps.nccd.cdc.gov/DASH_SHI/default/Login.aspx
- Changing the Scene Improvement Checklist <http://www.fns.usda.gov/tn/Resources/support.pdf>
- Healthier US School Challenge www.fns.usda.gov/tn/healthierus/index.html
- AFHK Wellness Policy Fundamentals - Key Considerations as You Develop Your Local Wellness Policy Action Plan and Goals - [AFHKwellness_policy_fundamentals.pdf](http://www.afhk.org/afhkwellness_policy_fundamentals.pdf)

Helpful Resources for Step 3

- Specific requirements for local schools wellness policies as outlined in the Healthy Hunger Free Kids Act <http://www.fns.usda.gov/tn/healthy/wellnesspolicy.html>.
- Student Wellness: A Healthy Food and Fitness Policy Resource Guide (California http://www.csba.org/EducationIssues/EducationIssues/ChildrensHealth/~media/Files/EducationIssues/ChildrensHealth/LEAN_physicalactivity.ashx
- CDC Healthy Youth Wellness Policy <http://www.cdc.gov/healthyyouth/MIH/index.htm> and <http://www.cdc.gov/HealthyYouth/keystrategies/pdf/make-a-difference.pdf>
- CDC's School Health Policy and Practices Study <http://www.cdc.gov/HealthyYouth/shpps/index.htm>
- CDC's School Health Guidelines to Promote Healthy Eating and Physical Activity <http://www.cdc.gov/healthyyouth/npao/strategies.htm>
- Colorado Wellness Policy Toolkit <http://www.cde.state.co.us/cdenutritran/download/pdf/lwpccomparisonchart.pdf>
- Washington Wellness Tool Kit <http://www.k12.wa.us/ChildNutrition/SchoolWellness/>
- State School Healthy Policy Database http://nasbe.org/healthy_schools/hs/map.php
- CLASS State level Health Policy Information http://class.cancer.gov/map_pe.aspx
- Action for Healthy Kids Parent Leadership Resources <http://www.actionforhealthykids.org/assets/parent-toolkit/PLS-Webinar-Resources.pdf>
- What states and communities can do to support the Healthy Hunger Free Kids Act (ChangeLab Solutions) <http://changelabsolutions.org/publications/healthy-hunger-free-kids-act>
- Food for Thought: Why Child Nutrition Programs deserve school board attention (National School Board Association) <http://www.asbj.com/MainMenuCategory/Archive/2008/June/0608PDFS/FoodforThought.pdf>
- Parent Engagement: Strategies for Involving Parents in School Health http://www.cdc.gov/healthyyouth/AdolescentHealth/pdf/parent_engagement_strategies.pdf
- School Wellness Policy Evaluation Tool (WellSAT policy language evaluation) <http://www.yaleruddcenter.org/resources/upload/docs/what/communities/SchoolWellnessPolicyEvaluationTool.pdf>
- WellSat Policy Assessment Tool <http://wellsat.org/>

Helpful Resources for Step 4

- Engaging School Leaders as Partners in Creating Healthy Schools <http://www.actionforhealthykids.org/schools/resources/files/engagingschoolleaders.pdf>

- From the Top Down: Engaging School Leaders in Creating a Healthier, More Physically Active School Environment <http://www.actionforhealthykids.org/for-schools/resources/files/engagingschoolleaderstopdown.pdf>
- How to Engage State Agencies and School Boards in Wellness Policy Changes recommended in the Healthy Hunger Free Kids Act (ChangeLab Solutions) <http://changelabsolutions.org/publications/healthy-hunger-free-kids-act>
- How to Enforce a Wellness Policy: A Guide for Parents and Community Advocates from the American Dietetic Association http://www.eatrightnj.org/UserFiles/File/toolkit/SchoolHealthPDFs/EnforceWellnessPly_FactSheet.pdf

Helpful Resources for Step 5

- Colorado Wellness Policy Toolkit <http://www.cde.state.co.us/cdenutritran/download/pdf/lwpccomparisonchart.pdf>
- Washington Wellness Tool Kit <http://www.k12.wa.us/ChildNutrition/SchoolWellness/>
- Giving Kids the Voice of Authority: Engaging Students in the Fight Against Childhood Obesity <http://www.actionforhealthykids.org/for-schools/resources/files/givingkidsavoice.pdf>
- Principals' Wellness Policy Implementation Manual <http://www.dakmed.org/uploads/resources/168/principals-implementation-toolkit.pdf>
- Words or Reality: Are School District Wellness Policies Implemented? A Systematic Review of the Literature <https://docs.google.com/viewer?a=v&pid=sites&srcid=ZGVmYXVsdGRvbWFpbnxoZWVsdGh5c2Nob29sZW52aXJvbm1lbnR8Z3g6MTc5ZGVjNjM3OWFhOTAzNg>

Helpful Resources for Step 6

- Centers for Disease Control and Prevention http://apps.nccd.cdc.gov/DASH_SHI/default/Login.aspx
- UC Davis Wellness Policy Assessment <http://cns.ucdavis.edu/resources/wellness/index.cfm>
- Healthier US School Challenge www.fns.usda.gov/tn/healthierus/index.html
- School Wellness Policy Evaluation Tool (WellSAT policy language evaluation) <http://www.yaleruddcenter.org/resources/upload/docs/what/communities/SchoolWellnessPolicyEvaluationTool.pdf>

Helpful Resources for Step 7

- Healthier US School Challenge <http://www.fns.usda.gov/tn/healthierus/index.html>
- Examples of Communications http://www.moreland.org/student_well.html
- USDA wellness policy information <http://www.fns.usda.gov/cga/pressreleases/2011/0296.htm>
- USDA wellness policy requirements <http://www.fns.usda.gov/tn/healthy/lwpooverview.pdf>