

LOCAL WELLNESS POLICIES JUST THE FACTS

The U.S. Department of Agriculture recently updated the local school wellness policy (LWP) requirements that went into effect in July 2017 (beginning school year 2017-2018). The LWP is designed to align with the updated nutrition standards for school meals, snacks, and beverages, and to address nutrition education, marketing of unhealthy food and beverages, physical activity, physical education, recess, and other school nutrition and physical activity practices and policies, including school parties and rewards.

The following data was collected during the school year 2014-2015 (most recent and comprehensive data available) and provides a baseline as school districts work to update their policies.¹

97% of school districts have a local wellness policy

HOWEVER

only 57% of district policies included all required components

NUTRITION EDUCATION

School districts were already setting goals for nutrition education, but now goals should be based on evidence-based strategies.

92%
of school districts had strong nutrition education goals



No school district
set a minimum number of classes or hours for nutrition education
(which is recommended but not required)

PHYSICAL ACTIVITY AND PHYSICAL EDUCATION

School districts have been setting goals for physical activity, but now goals should to be based on evidence-based strategies and should support physical education as the cornerstone of the [Comprehensive School Physical Activity Program](#) (CSPAP).

Districts with policies addressing time for physical activity

- 19% elementary school
- 10% middle school
- 6% high school



Districts with policies requiring the nationally recommended amount of physical education

(≥150 mins/week for elementary school;
≥ 225 mins/week for middle and high school)

- 5% elementary school
- 2% middle school
- 1% high school



Fewer than
1 out of 4
district policies
required recess
for elementary school
students on a daily basis

Only
1 out of 5
district policies
prohibited using physical
activity as punishment

SAFE ROUTES TO SCHOOL

Safe Routes to School programs facilitate physical activity by supporting and encouraging students to walk and bike to school.



Only
18% of district policies
included a policy
on safe routes to
school

SCHOOL MEALS, SNACKS, AND BEVERAGES

Given recent updates to national school nutrition standards for school meals as well as snacks and beverages (Smart Snacks), most school districts will likely need to realign their LWP with the updated standards.

- 89% of districts required that school meal nutrition guidelines meet federal standards.
- 89% of districts included sodium-reduction guidelines.
- 89% of districts included whole-grain-rich standard.
— 0% of districts included whole-grain-rich exemptions.
- 90% of districts limited flavored milk to nonfat only (consistent with the federal standard).



Only 36% of district policies were consistent with or used Smart Snacks standards for snacks and beverages

FUNDRAISERS

Many schools are reconsidering selling low-nutrition foods to raise money, since there are many profitable healthy or non-food alternatives.

3 out of 4 district policies addressed school fundraisers during the day. (Regardless of whether the district's state allows exemptions, a district can adopt a zero unhealthy fundraiser policy.)



FOOD REWARDS

Rewarding children in the classroom need not involve candy and other foods that can undermine their diets and health and can reinforce unhealthful eating habits. A wide variety of alternative rewards can be used to provide positive reinforcement for children's behavior and academic performance.



1 out of **10**
prohibited using
food as a reward
for good behavior
or performance

CLASSROOM PARTIES

From birthday parties to holiday celebrations, school parties often include unhealthy foods and beverages and occur frequently enough to contribute to unhealthy eating habits. Shifting the focus of school parties from unhealthy food to healthy fun can help cultivate healthier relationships with food and eating patterns.

39% of district policies
did not address
classroom parties



WATER

Although required in national school nutrition standards, **only 27% of district policies included language that drinking water be available for free in the food service area during mealtimes.**

MARKETING

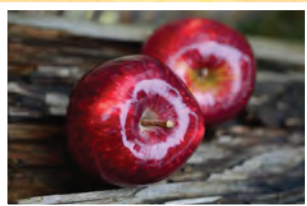
Under the new LWP standards, school districts need to address marketing of unhealthy foods and beverages in the school space.

Only **14%** of district policies limit unhealthy food and beverage marketing (foods that do not meet Smart Snacks standards)



STAFF WELLNESS

Supporting the wellbeing of school employees helps staff foster healthy modeling behaviors for students and supports the health of staff.



While not required in the district policy, more than **1 out of 4** district policies addressed the creation of staff wellness programs.

STAKEHOLDER PARTICIPATION

At least eight stakeholders (parents, students, food service personnel, district administrators, school administrators, the public, physical education teachers, and school health professionals) must now be involved in the development, implementation, review, and update of local wellness policies.

Only **8%** of district policies required involvement of all eight stakeholders



ACCOUNTABILITY/TRANSPARENCY

School districts must regularly share with parents and the public progress on their LWP toward improving children's nutrition and physical activity.



Only **5%** of district policies required that their LWP be posted online

IN ADDITION TO PUBLICLY REPORTING ON PROGRESS, DISTRICTS ALSO COULD REPORT:

- School meal participation data 
- Nutritional quality of school foods 
- Physical Education/Physical Activity 

<https://schoolwellness.voicesforhealthykids.org/>
<http://www.schoolwellnesspolicies.org/>

For more information, please email nutritionpolicy@cspinet.org.

¹Piekarz-Porter E, Schermbeck RM, Leider J, Young SK, Chiqui JF. Working on Wellness: How Aligned Are District Wellness Policies with the Soon-to-Be Implemented Federal Wellness Policy Requirements? Chicago, IL: National Wellness Policy Study, Institute for Health Research and Policy, University of Illinois at Chicago, 2017, www.go.uic.edu/NWPSproducts.