

WELLNESS POLICY

01-2010

St. Mary's School for the Deaf is committed to providing a school environment that promotes and protects children's health, well-being, and the ability to learn by fostering healthy eating and physical activity. The School has established a Wellness Committee to develop the School's proposed local Wellness Policy, making such policy recommendations for review and adoption by the Board of Trustees. The School's Wellness Committee includes, but is not limited to, representatives from each of the following groups:

- a) Parents
- b) Students
- c) School's Food Service Program
- d) School's Board of Trustees
- e) School Administrators

The School's Wellness Committee will assess current activities, programs and policies available in the School; identify specific areas of need within the School; develop the policy; and provide mechanisms for implementation, evaluation, revision, and updating of the policy. The Wellness Committee is established to represent the local community's perspective in developing the Wellness Policy for the school.

Goals to Promote Student Wellness

Taking into account the parameters of the School (academic programs, annual budget, staffing issues, and available facilities) as well as the community in which the School is located (the general economy; socioeconomic status; local tax bases; social, cultural, and religious influences; geography; and legal, political, and social institutions) the Wellness Committee recommends the following School goals relating to nutrition education, physical activity, and other school-based activities:

Nutrition Education:

The School will provide nutrition education to facilitate the voluntary adoption of healthy eating habits and other nutrition-related behaviors conducive to health and well-being by establishing the following standards for:

- a) Classroom teaching: The School will teach Health Standards. These standards whenever possible will be integrated into other areas of the curriculum. A committee of teachers and administrators will periodically review health standards and provide new emphasis on nutrition, healthy body image, weight management, and eating disorders.
- b) Education, marketing and promotion links outside the classroom: The School will have an integrated school, parent, and community approach that establishes a collaborative partnership within the larger school community to enhance the health and well-being of the students.

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- c) Fundraising activities: It is encouraged that all foods made available on the School campuses will comply and meet the current USDA Dietary Guidelines for Americans and that fundraising activities support more healthy, balanced eating habits. The School understands that the transition into healthier choices requires time and the Wellness Committee will monitor this transition on an annual basis.
- d) Teacher training: The School will provide the necessary training to the staff responsible for nutrition education. Every effort will be made to provide wellness activities at staff development days to further enhance the health and wellness of staff.

Physical Activity:

The School will provide opportunities for every student to develop the knowledge and skills for specific physical activities, to maintain physical fitness, to regularly participate in physical activity, and to understand the short-term and long-term benefits of a physically active and healthy lifestyle.

The Wellness Committee has determined that the following standards are necessary to achieve this goal:

- a) Physical education graduation requirements:
 - 2 credits (one-half credit per year in Grades 9 – 12).
- b) Physical education class requirements:
 - At least two class periods per six day cycle (Grades K – 5).
 - Three class periods per six day cycle (Grades 6 – 12).
- c) Staff training / certification or physical education:
 - Ongoing professional development for Physical Education teachers will occur through conferences and coaching classes. Professional growth for all teachers will be encouraged through staff development and education in the areas of nutrition and physical activity.
- d) Physical activity outside physical education classes:
 - Every effort will be made by classroom teachers to engage students in physical activity whenever possible throughout the day. For example, the goal could be to receive fifteen minutes of physical activity every two hours.

Other School-based Activities:

The School wishes to establish a school environment that presents consistent wellness messages and is conducive to healthy eating and physical activity for all. In order to present a coordinated school approach where School decision-making related to nutrition and physical activity encompasses all aspects of the School, the Wellness Committee has determined that the following standards are necessary to achieve this goal:

- a) Federal School Meal Programs:
 - The School will participate to the maximum extent practicable in available Federal School Meal Programs (School Breakfast Program, National School Lunch Program).

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- b) Access to school nutrition programs:
 - The School ensures that all eligible children have access to free/reduced price meals in a non-stigmatizing manner by using a computerized point of sale system for the purchase of meals. The School provides meal options that are culturally sensitive and address specific dietary needs.
- c) Meal environment:
 - To the extent practicable, the meal timing and scheduling encourages participation in school nutrition programs. The physical environment of meal serving areas will be conducive to proper eating habits.
- d) Community access to School facilities for physical activities:
 - The School provides facility access to students, families, staff, and the community for physical activity.
- e) Community involvement:
 - The School encourages the involvement of family and/or community members in wellness planning beyond the required participation on the Wellness Committee. The School publicizes the Wellness Policy in the annual Parent Handbook and website.
- f) Sustainable food practices:
 - The School encourages environmentally-friendly practices relating to food service in the School and the use of locally grown and seasonal foods.

Assurance

Guidelines for reimbursable school meals shall not be less restrictive than applicable federal regulations and guidance issued pursuant to the Child Nutrition Act and the Richard B. Russell National School Lunch Act, as those regulations and guidance apply to schools.

Implementation and Evaluation of the Wellness Policy

The School will ensure school and community awareness of this policy through various means such as publication on School website and handbook. Further, professional development activities for staff and student awareness training will be provided, as appropriate, on the goals of the School's wellness program, including activities/programs for the development of healthy eating habits and the incorporation of physical activity as part of a comprehensive healthy lifestyle.

The School shall establish an implementation and evaluation plan for the Wellness Policy in order to monitor the effectiveness of the policy and the possible need for further modification over time. Accordingly, the Superintendent shall designate one or more staff members within the School to have operational responsibility for ensuring that the School meets the goals and mandates of its local Wellness Policy. Designated staff members may include, but are not limited to, the following personnel:

- a) Administrators
- b) School health personnel including the school nurse and the health and/or physical education teachers

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These designated staff members shall periodically report to the Superintendent on the School's compliance with the Wellness Policy and the Superintendent shall inform the Board of Trustees of such findings. The Superintendent/designee shall prepare a summary report on School-wide compliance with the School's Wellness Policy based on input from designated staff members. That report will be provided to the Board of Trustees and also distributed to the Wellness Committee, Parent-Teacher Organization, Principal, and School Health Services personnel. The report shall also be available to community residents upon request.

These designated school officials will also serve as a liaison with community agencies in providing outside resources to help in the development of nutrition education programs and physical activities.

Evaluation and feedback from interested parties, including an assessment of student, parent, teacher, and administration satisfaction with the Wellness Policy, is essential to the School's evaluation program. Further, the School shall document the financial impact, if any, to the school food service program, school stores, or vending machine revenues based on the implementation of the Wellness Policy.

The School will provide nutrition education and physical education, with an emphasis on establishing lifelong habits of healthy eating and physical activity, and will establish linkages between health education and school meal programs, and with related community services. Communication with and training for teachers, parents, students, and food service personnel will be an integral part of the School's implementation plan.

To the extent practicable, students and parents shall be involved in the development of strategies designed to promote healthy food choices in the school environment; and the school cafeteria will provide a variety of nutritionally sound meal and beverage choices. The School will encourage students' active, age appropriate participation in decisions regarding healthy lifestyles and choices. Positive reinforcement such as letters of recognition and acknowledgment will be utilized as a means to encourage healthy eating patterns among the student population. In addition, the School will share information about the nutritional content of meals with parents and students; such information may be made available on menus, a website, or such other "point-of-purchase" materials.

Assessments of the School's Wellness Policy and implementation efforts may be repeated on an annual basis, but it is recommended that such assessment occur no later than every three (3) years to help review policy compliance, assess progress, and determine areas in need of improvement. The School will, as necessary, revise the Wellness Policy and develop work plans to facilitate its implementation.