

**Reading Public Schools
Student Nutrition and Physical Activity Policy**

Policy Intent/Rationale

The Reading Public Schools promote healthy schools by supporting wellness, good nutrition, regular physical activity, and positive dietary and lifestyle practices as part of the total learning environment. Our schools contribute to the basic health status of children by facilitating learning through the support and promotion of good nutrition and physical activity. Improved health optimizes student performance potential and ensures that children need to be healthy to learn and learn to be healthy. The following information builds a rationale for the development of this policy:

- Children need access to healthful foods and opportunities to be physically active in order to grow, learn, and thrive.
- Good health fosters student attendance and education.
- Obesity rates have doubled in children and tripled in adolescents over the last two decades, and physical inactivity and excessive calorie intake are the predominant causes of obesity.
- Heart disease, cancer, stroke, and diabetes are responsible for two-thirds of deaths in the United States, and major risk factors for those diseases, including unhealthy eating habits, physical inactivity, and obesity, often are established in childhood.

To support wellness, good nutrition, and regular physical activity, the Reading Public Schools will do the following:

- 1) **Empower each school's School Council to be the school's School Health Council and, as such, the Council will develop, implement, monitor, review, and, as necessary, revise school nutrition and physical activity guidelines.**

The councils also will serve as resources to school sites for implementing these policies. A school health council consists of a group of individuals representing the school and community, and should include parents, students, PTO representative, school cafeteria employees, community members, school administrators, teachers, health professionals, and members of the public. The school district will engage all stakeholders in developing, implementing, monitoring, and reviewing district-wide nutrition and physical activity policies. Nutrition lessons will be developed under the leadership of the Director of Nurses and will be taught by the school nurses to grade levels assigned. Nutrition lessons will be included in the curriculum at the grades with specific health curriculum (grades 8, 9 and 11).

- 2) **Provide a comprehensive learning environment for developing and practicing lifelong wellness behaviors.**

The entire school environment, not just the classroom, shall be aligned with healthy school goals to positively influence a student's understanding, beliefs and habits as they relate to good nutrition and regular physical activity. A healthy school environment should not be sacrificed because of a dependence on revenue from high-added fat, high-added sugar and low-nutrient foods to support school programs. Schools will provide nutrition education and physical education to foster lifelong habits of healthy eating and physical activity, and will establish linkages between health education and school meal programs, and with related community services.

3) Support and promote proper dietary habits contributing to students' health status and academic performance.

To the extent possible, all foods available on school grounds and at school-sponsored activities during the instructional day should meet or exceed the nutritional guidelines set forth by the United States Department of Agriculture (USDA) and State of Massachusetts. In addition, all schools in our district will participate in available federal school meal programs. Emphasis should be placed on foods that are nutrient dense per calorie. To ensure high-quality, nutritious meals, foods should be served with consideration toward variety, appeal, taste, safety and packaging. Students will have access to a variety of affordable, nutritious, and appealing foods that meet the health and nutrition needs of students, as well as, provide a clean, safe, pleasant setting and adequate time for students to eat. These foods should also comply with the District Food Allergy Guidelines that have been established by the Reading Public Schools.

4) Provide opportunities for students to engage in physical activity.

A quality physical education program is an essential component for all students to learn about and participate in physical activity. Physical activity will include regular instructional physical education as well as co-curricular activities and recess, when developmentally appropriate. All students in Grades K-12 will have opportunities, support, and encouragement to be physically active on a regular basis.

5) Commit to improving academic performance for all students.

Educators, health and nutrition staff, administrators, parents, and community members must consider the critical role student health plays in academic stamina and performance and adapt the school environment to ensure students' basic nourishment and activity needs are met.

6) Create a monitoring and accountability system.

To ensure that the wellness policy is enacted, there will be an assessment system created to monitor progress. This will include:

- A monitoring system that ensures that the district is in compliance with the federal mandates at both the district and individual school level.
- An annual report, conducted by the district health-wellness committee, that informs the district and the community stakeholders of program progress.
- Discussions with the School site councils or designee(s) about ways to promote the wellness policy in their buildings.

Adopted by the Reading School Committee on July 31, 2006

Revised and Approved by the Reading School Committee on May 28, 2013

Reading Public School Wellness Guidelines on Physical Activity and Nutrition

Preamble

Whereas, children need access to healthful foods and opportunities to be physically active in order to grow, learn, and thrive;

Whereas, good health fosters student attendance and education;

Whereas, obesity rates have doubled in children and tripled in adolescents over the last two decades, and physical inactivity and excessive calorie intake are the predominant causes of obesity;

Whereas, heart disease, cancer, stroke, and diabetes are responsible for two-thirds of deaths in the United States, and major risk factors for those diseases, including unhealthy eating habits, physical inactivity, and obesity, often are established in childhood;

Whereas, 33% of high school students do not participate in sufficient vigorous physical activity and 72% of high school students do not attend daily physical education classes;

Whereas, only 2% of children (2 to 19 years) eat a healthy diet consistent with the five main recommendations from the USDA's MY PLATE;

Whereas, nationally, the items most commonly sold from school vending machines, school stores, and snack bars include low-nutrition foods and beverages, such as soda, sports drinks, imitation fruit juices, chips, candy, cookies, and snack cakes;

Whereas, school districts around the country are facing significant fiscal and scheduling constraints; and

Whereas, community participation is essential to the development and implementation of successful school wellness policies;

Thus, the Reading Public Schools is committed to providing school environments that promote and protect children's health, well-being, and ability to learn by supporting healthy eating and physical activity. Therefore, it is the policy of the Reading Public Schools that:

- The school district will engage students, parents, teachers, food service professionals, health professionals, and other interested community members in developing, implementing, monitoring, and reviewing district-wide nutrition and physical activity policies.
- All students in grades K-12 will have opportunities, support, and encouragement to be physically active on a regular basis.
- Foods and beverages sold or served at school will meet the nutrition recommendations of the *U.S. Dietary Guidelines for Americans*, United States Department of Agriculture (USDA) and State of Massachusetts.
- Qualified child nutrition professionals will provide students with access to a variety of affordable, nutritious, and appealing foods that meet the health and nutrition needs of students; will accommodate the religious, ethnic, and cultural diversity of the student body in meal planning; and will provide clean, safe, and pleasant settings and adequate time for students to eat.

- To the maximum extent practicable, all schools in our district will participate in available federal school meal programs (including the National School Lunch Program)
- Schools will provide nutrition education and physical education to foster lifelong habits of healthy eating and physical activity, and will establish linkages between health education and school meal programs, and with related community services.

TO ACHIEVE THESE GOALS:

I. School Health Councils

The school district and/or individual schools within the district will create, strengthen, or work within existing school health councils to develop, implement, monitor, review, and, as necessary, revise school nutrition and physical activity policies. The councils also will serve as resources to school sites for implementing those policies. It is recommended that members of the school health council should include parent, students, school administrators, teachers, health professionals, and members of the public.

II. Nutritional Quality of Foods and Beverages Sold and Served on Campus

A. School Meals

Meals served through the National School Lunch Programs will:

- be appealing and attractive to children;
- be served in clean and pleasant settings;
- meet, at a minimum, nutrition requirements established by local, state, and federal statutes and regulations;

Schools should engage students and parents, through taste-tests of new entrees and surveys, in selecting foods sold through the school meal programs in order to identify new, healthful, and appealing food choices. In addition, schools should share information about the nutritional content of meals with parents and students. Such information could be made available on menus, a website, on cafeteria menu boards, placards, or other point-of-purchase materials.

B. Free and Reduced-priced Meals. Schools will make every effort to eliminate any social stigma attached to, and prevent the overt identification of, students who are eligible for free and reduced-price school meals¹. Toward this end, schools may utilize electronic identification and payment systems; provide meals at no charge to all children, regardless of income; promote the availability of school meals to all students; and/or use nontraditional methods for serving school meals.

C. Meal Times and Scheduling. Schools:

- will provide students with at least 10 minutes to eat after sitting down for breakfast and 20 minutes after sitting down for lunch;

¹ It is against the law to make others in the cafeteria aware of the eligibility status of children for free, reduced-price, or "paid" meals.

- should schedule meal periods at appropriate times, e.g., lunch should be scheduled between 10:30 a.m. and 1 p.m.;
- should not schedule tutoring, club, or organizational meetings or activities during mealtimes, unless students may eat during such activities;
- will attempt to schedule lunch periods to follow recess periods (in elementary schools);
- will provide students access to hand washing or hand sanitizing before they eat meals or snacks; and
- should take reasonable steps to accommodate the tooth-brushing regimens of students with special oral health needs (e.g., orthodontia or high tooth decay risk).
- Dining facilities will comply with the district food allergy guidelines.

E. Qualifications of School Food Service Staff. Qualified nutrition professionals will administer the school meal programs. As part of the school district’s responsibility to operate a food service program, we will provide continuing professional development for all nutrition professionals in schools. Staff development programs should include appropriate certification and/or training programs for child nutrition directors, school nutrition managers, and cafeteria workers, according to their levels of responsibility.²

F. Sharing of Foods and Beverages. Schools should discourage students from sharing their foods or beverages with one another during meal or snack times, given concerns about food allergies and other restrictions or special dietary needs. The Reading Public Schools will continue to implement the District Food Allergy Guidelines

G. Foods and Beverages Sold Individually-All School Levels (i.e., foods sold outside of reimbursable school meals, such as through vending machines, cafeteria a la carte [snack] lines, fundraisers, school stores, etc.)

The school food service program will and provide all food and beverage sales to students. Food should be sold as balanced meals. If available, foods and beverages sold individually should be limited to low-fat and non-fat milk, fruits, and non-fried vegetables. All foods should comply with the nutritional guidelines set forth by the United States Department of Agriculture (USDA) and State of Massachusetts.

the *A-List* (See Appendix) The *Massachusetts for Healthy Kids* makes the following recommendation:

Recommendation

- Eliminate, during the school day, foods that are sold outside of the school meals program that do not meet a la carte standards. The school day begins with the arrival of the first child at school and ends after the last scheduled instructional period.
- If the school offers a morning or afternoon break/snack, individual items sold should meet the standards for a la carte foods. The school snack or break should occur at least 1.5 hours before the lunch meal.

H. Fundraising Activities. To support children’s health and school nutrition-education efforts, school fundraising activities during the school day will not involve food or will use only foods that meet the above

² School nutrition staff development programs are available through the USDA, School Nutrition Association, and National Food Service Management Institute.

nutrition and portion size standards for foods and beverages sold individually. Schools will encourage fundraising activities that promote physical activity. The school district will make available a list of ideas for acceptable fundraising activities.

I. Snacks. Snacks served during the school day or in before/after-school care or enrichment programs will follow the above nutrition guidelines, with an emphasis on serving fruits and vegetables as the primary snacks and water as the primary beverage.

J. Rewards. Schools will not use foods or beverages, especially those that do not meet the nutrition standards for foods and beverages sold individually (above), as rewards for academic performance or good behavior,³ and will not withhold food or beverages (including food served through school meals) as a punishment.

K. Celebrations. Schools should limit celebrations that involve food during the school day to no more than one party per class per month. All food served at these celebrations must comply with the guidelines in Section I (Snacks) as well as the Allergy Guidelines. Classroom pizza parties are included as celebrations. Pizza should be ordered through Food Services in order to follow the district allergy guidelines.

L. School-sponsored Events (such as, but not limited to, athletic events, dances, or performances). Foods and beverages offered or sold at school-sponsored events outside the school day will be strongly encouraged to meet the nutrition standards for meals or for foods and beverages sold individually (above).

III. Nutrition and Physical Activity Promotion

A. Nutrition Education and Promotion. The Reading Public Schools aims to teach, encourage, and support healthy eating by students. Schools should strive to provide nutrition education and engage in nutrition promotion that:

- is offered at each grade level as part of a sequential, comprehensive, standards-based program designed to provide students with the knowledge and skills necessary to promote and protect their health;
- is part of not only health education classes, but also classroom instruction in subjects such as math, science, language arts, social sciences, and elective subjects;
- promotes fruits, vegetables, whole grain products, low-fat and fat-free dairy products, healthy food preparation methods, and health-enhancing nutrition practices;
- emphasizes caloric balance between food intake and energy expenditure (physical activity/exercise);
- links with school meal programs, other school foods, and nutrition-related community services;
- teaches media literacy with an emphasis on food marketing; and
- includes training for teachers and other staff.

B. Integrating Physical Activity into the Classroom Setting. To the extent possible, for students to receive the nationally-recommended amount of daily physical activity (*i.e.*, at least 60 minutes per day) and for students to fully embrace regular physical activity as a personal behavior, students need opportunities for physical activity beyond physical education class. Toward that end:

³ Unless this practice is allowed by a student's individual education plan (IEP).

- classroom health education will complement physical education by reinforcing the knowledge and self-management skills needed to maintain a physically-active lifestyle and to reduce time spent on sedentary activities, such as watching television;
- opportunities for physical activity will be investigated to be incorporated into other subject lessons; and
- classroom teachers will strive to provide short physical activity breaks between lessons or classes, as appropriate.

C. Communications with Parents. The district/school will support parents' efforts to provide a healthy diet and daily physical activity for their children. The district/school will offer healthy eating seminars for parents, send home nutrition information, post nutrition tips on school websites, and provide nutrient analyses of school menus. Schools should encourage parents to pack healthy lunches and snacks and to refrain from including beverages and foods that do not meet the above nutrition standards for individual foods and beverages. The district/school will provide parents a list of foods that meet the district's snack standards and ideas for healthy celebrations/parties, rewards, and fundraising activities. In addition, the district/school will provide opportunities for parents to share their healthy food practices with others in the school community.

The district/school will provide information about physical education and other school-based physical activity opportunities before, during, and after the school day; and support parents' efforts to provide their children with opportunities to be physically active outside of school. Such supports will include sharing information about physical activity and physical education through a website, newsletter, or other take-home materials, special events, or physical education homework.

D. Staff Wellness. The Reading Public Schools highly values the health and well-being of every staff member and will plan and implement activities and policies that support personal efforts by staff to maintain a healthy lifestyle. Each district/school should establish and maintain a staff wellness committee composed of at least one staff member, school health council member, local hospital representative, dietitian or other health professional, recreation program representative, union representative, and employee benefits specialist. (The staff wellness committee could be a subcommittee of the school health council.) The committee should develop, promote, and oversee a multifaceted plan to promote staff health and wellness. The plan should be based on input solicited from school staff and should outline ways to encourage healthy eating, physical activity, and other elements of a healthy lifestyle among school staff. The staff wellness committee should distribute its plan to the school health council annually.

IV. Physical Activity Opportunities and Physical Education

A. Daily Physical Education (P.E.) K-12. To the extent possible, all students in grades K-12, including students with disabilities, special health-care needs, and in alternative educational settings, will strive to receive daily physical education (or its equivalent of 60 minutes/week for elementary school students and 100 minutes/week for middle and high school students) for the entire school year. All physical education will be taught by a certified physical education teacher. Student involvement in other activities involving physical activity (*e.g.*, interscholastic or intramural sports) will not be substituted for meeting the physical education requirement. Students will spend at least 50 percent of physical education class time participating in moderate to vigorous physical activity.

B. Daily Recess. All elementary school students will strive to have at least 20 minutes a day of supervised recess, preferably outdoors, during which schools should encourage moderate to vigorous physical activity verbally and through the provision of space and equipment.

Schools should discourage extended periods (*i.e.*, periods of two or more hours) of inactivity. When activities, such as mandatory school-wide testing, make it necessary for students to remain indoors for long periods of

time, schools should give students periodic breaks during which they are encouraged to stand and be moderately active.

C. Physical Activity Opportunities Before and After School. All elementary, middle, and high schools will offer extracurricular physical activity programs, such as physical activity clubs or intramural programs. All high schools, and middle schools as appropriate, will offer interscholastic sports programs. Schools will offer a range of activities that meet the needs, interests, and abilities of all students, including boys, girls, students with disabilities, and students with special health-care needs.

After-school child care and enrichment programs, if applicable, will provide and encourage – verbally and through the provision of space, equipment, and activities – daily periods of moderate to vigorous physical activity for all participants. Students are encouraged to walk and bike to school safely, when appropriate.

D. Physical Activity and Punishment. Teachers and other school and community personnel will not use physical activity (e.g., running laps, pushups) or withhold opportunities for physical activity (e.g., recess, physical education) as punishment.