

# **Medford Public School District: Wellness Policy**

*In the Child Nutrition and WIC Reauthorization Act of 2004, the U.S. Congress established a new requirement that all school districts with a federally funded school meals program develop and implement wellness policies that address nutrition and physical activity by the start of the 2006-2007 school year.*

## **Medford Public School Mission Statement**

**The Medford Public Schools is a caring educational partnership of school, family and community designed to ensure that all students are afforded a *safe and healthy learning environment* in which they develop the knowledge, skills and attitudes to reach their full academic and personal potential. This partnership is dedicated to providing all students with a 21<sup>st</sup> century education that will enable them to be life-long learners and contributors to a diverse and rapidly changing world.**

### **I. POLICY INTRODUCTION**

#### **Wellness Mission Statement**

The Medford Public School District (MPS) is dedicated to providing a comprehensive plan to ensure the health and well-being of its students. MPS strives for academic excellence, and in doing so believe that students must have a healthy and balanced lifestyle that incorporates nutrition and physical activity into their daily lives. The Medford Public School District hopes to achieve this mission through the guidelines set forth by this Wellness Policy and with the combined efforts of students, faculty, and community members in promoting an increased awareness and practice of lifelong healthy behaviors.

### **II. HEALTH OVERVIEW**

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;
- The leading cause of death in Medford is heart disease;
- Only 2% of children nationwide (2 to 19 years) eat a healthy diet consistent with the five main recommendations from the Food Guide Pyramid;

- 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;
- Medford Public School fourth grade students have a combined percentage of at risk and overweight of 45-50 percent;
- One in every five children suffers from some sort of emotional or behavioral illness, nearly triple the level of twenty years ago;
- Children need access to healthful foods and opportunities to be physically active in order to grow, learn, and thrive;
- Twenty percent of American children suffer from a diagnosable mental illness during a given year;
- Good health fosters student attendance and education;
- Family and community participation is essential to the development and implementation of successful school wellness policies;

Thus, the Medford School District 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 Medford School District 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 PreK-12 will have opportunities, support, and encouragement to be physically active on a regular basis.
- Foods and beverages sold or served at school and at school sponsored events will meet the nutrition recommendations of the current *U.S. Dietary Guidelines for Americans*.
- The food service department 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 clear, safe and pleasant settings and adequate time for students to eat.
- All eligible schools in our district will strive to participate, when available, in federal school meal programs (including the School Breakfast Program, National

School Lunch Program (including after-school snacks), Summer Food Service Program, Fruit and Vegetable Snack Program, and Child and Adult Care Food Program (including suppers).

- Schools will provide nutrition education and physical education to foster lifelong habits of health eating and physical activity, and will establish linkages between health education and school meal programs, and with related community services.
- The Medford School system will support all students' social and emotional health.

### **III. POLICY METHODOLOGY**

Nearly a third of our nation's children and adolescents are overweight or at risk of becoming overweight. Children's lack of physical activity and poor nutritional habits that contribute to their overweight status often compromise their ability to attain optimal academic achievement. The social and psychological problems associated with being overweight contribute to a decrease in their performance within the classroom. The development of the Medford's Public School District's Wellness Policy and the implementation of health related initiatives is an attempt to alleviate health related burdens and increase the attainment of lifelong health for the Medford community. The model of the Medford School District's policy is consistent with both the Coordinated School Health Model and the Massachusetts Health Curriculum Frameworks

#### **Wellness Policy Model for the Medford Public Schools:**

1. Comprehensive School Health Education
2. Physical Education/Physical Activity
3. Nutrition Services
4. School Health Services
5. Counseling and Psychological Services
6. Healthy School Environment
7. Health Promotion for Staff
8. Family/Community Involvement
9. Policy Implementation & Measurement of Progress

The Wellness Policy (within the body of this text) is organized based on the above framework and is supplemented with a spreadsheet to provide readers with an overview of the current and prospective programs for Medford Schools.

In developing the MPS Wellness Policy much consideration has been made to address the unique circumstances, challenges and opportunities of the Medford community. In doing so a comprehensive wellness committee has been formulated to include: school administrators and faculty, students, parents, and healthcare providers (i.e. pediatricians, nurses).

In order to implement our policy in a cohesive way as well as to assess ongoing progress in attaining our goals we have organized policy implementation in phases I-IV. Our

progress in completing each phase will be assessed on an annual basis. Our goal is that the District reach Phase IV for all nine elements within a five year period. Please note the following:

- The Wellness Policy in its *current* iteration is based on current needs, legislation and community concerns. Our overall goal is to stay current with any changing wellness needs which may call for edits or modification of one or more indicators on the flowchart.
- Although it is our intent to complete each phase on the timetable we have established our progress in attaining our set goals is subject to levels of funding that may vary from year to year.

The district is currently either in Phase I or Phase II for each of the nine components. Although a phase may be assessed as completed, it is the intent that the work done during any one phase be continued and sustained as part of the subsequent phase.

Please note that the MPS already has policies in place that support the principles of the Wellness Policy. A list of these policies is attached.

#### **IV. GOALS, OBJECTIVES & MEANS OF ASSESSMENT**

##### ***A. Comprehensive School Health Education***

###### **GOALS:**

1. Review health curriculum annually to ensure its efficacy in meeting the health needs of MPS students with emphasis on nutrition and physical activity.
2. Increase parental awareness and involvement in all health education activities.
3. Promote an interdisciplinary approach to health education by incorporating health as a theme in all curriculum areas and integrating with physical education.

###### **OBJECTIVES:**

1. Review current data, (i.e. surveys, BMIs) conduct focus groups, surveys, and interviews to determine student needs.
2. Utilize web page, newspaper articles, Parent Information Center, public meetings/forums, newsletters, and curriculum materials to keep parents informed. Provide opportunities for parents/guardians to become familiar with health curriculum.
3. Present health initiatives to community groups such as Chamber of Commerce, PTOs.
4. Provide faculty with information/resources regarding health curriculum to encourage follow-through across the curriculum. Conduct whole school activities (i.e., healthy snack month) to maintain the healthy community theme.

**ASSESSMENT:**

1. Monitor changes in student/school data over time, (BMIs, fights in school, absences).
2. Conduct exit surveys upon completion of Second Step curriculum at middle school level.
3. Continue to conduct parent, student and faculty surveys.
4. Interview staff and students for input and satisfaction re: activities, events, and needs.

***B. Physical Education/Physical Activity***

**GOALS:**

1. Promote physical education (PE) at each grade level and integrate with health education.
2. Promote physical activity across the curriculum – 30 minutes per day.
3. Seek additional outside funding to support physical activity initiatives, such as grants and other resources.

**OBJECTIVES:**

1. Provide resources for teachers to promote PE across the curriculum.
2. Develop intramural programs.
3. Offer additional options for physical activity such as hip-hop, aerobic classes, fitness centers, step dancing, walk-challenges.
4. Explore diverse cultural options such as salsa dancing.
5. Support walk to school initiatives.
6. Write grants to supplement physical activity initiatives.

**ASSESSMENT:**

1. Conduct participation surveys and review data annually.
2. Institute sign-in sheets at fitness centers to assess usage.
3. Monitor increased funding for programs.
4. Design and implement classroom charts to document increased physical activity.

***C. Nutrition Services***

**GOALS:**

1. Promote healthier food choices in school, at home, and for recreation.
2. Reduce BMI by 10% for those with a BMI over 85% over a three year period.
3. Promote and share knowledge of nutritional information for each food product sold in school.

**OBJECTIVES:**

1. Move towards full implementation of “An Act To Promote Proper School Nutrition”:

All foods available to students in the Medford Public School District will comply with the nutritional guidelines set forth by the 2005 “Act to Promote Proper School Nutrition” within Massachusetts Public Schools. A complete overview of the act can be viewed online at <http://www.mass.gov/legis/bills/house/ht01/ht01457.htm>. This includes food sold in vending machines, a la carte (individually purchased food items), student run stores, fundraisers and school-sponsored functions, consistent with Medford Public Schools policies. The Superintendent of schools must approve all fundraising activities.

**Beverages**- In elementary, middle and high schools, only the following types of beverages shall be sold:

- At least fifty-percent fruit juices or fruit-based drinks that have no added natural or artificial sweeteners in not more than 12 ounce containers;
- Drinking water, in any size container; and
- Low fat and non-fat milk, including but not limited to low-fat and non-fat chocolate milk, soymilk and/or rice milk and other similar nondairy milk, in not more than 10 ounce containers. Soy and rice drinks must be calcium and vitamin fortified and contain no more than 30 grams total sugars.

**Foods**- In elementary, middle and high schools, only the following types of food shall be sold:

- 1-3 ounces of food per package with not more than 30 percent of its total calories per package shall be from fat or 7 grams maximum per package. This requirement does not apply to the sale of nuts or seeds.
- 1-3 ounces of food per package with not more than 10 percent of its total calories per package or 2 grams maximum per package shall be from saturated fat plus trans fat; and
- 1-3 ounces of food per package with not more than 35 percent of its weight from sugars, excluding sugars occurring naturally in fruits, vegetables, and dairy ingredients.

Food items not prepackaged with nutritional information by the distributor shall be required to have nutritional information (calories, percentage of calories from fat, percentage of calories from saturated fat, cholesterol, protein, carbohydrate, fiber, calcium, iron, vitamin A and vitamin C) available to students, either on display, in a binder or within information packets held by food service staff for requests by students.

Elementary, middle and high schools may permit the sale of food items that do not comply with the above section as part of a school fundraising event if the sale of those items by pupils of the school takes place off school premises. All fundraising activities are subject to both Principal and Superintendent approval.

2. Provide a “binder” for each school with nutritional information on school foods. Link it to MPS website.
3. Ensure that special occasion food events meet food guidelines as set, Management of Life Threatening Allergy guidelines and receive Principal approval.
4. Develop partnerships with culinary arts program, local supermarkets, farmers’ markets, and restaurants.
5. Provide education for all MPS students, families and community.
6. Involve students in developing healthy meal choices for school lunches.

**ASSESSMENT:**

1. Measure sales of healthier choice products.
2. Survey students for their suggestions and comments.
3. Conduct focus groups among staff and students.
4. Review BMI data annually.

***D. School Health Services***

**GOALS:**

1. Continue to provide health services to students and staff with Registered, DOE certified nurses.
2. Conduct annual reviews of health services’ policies.
3. Provide classroom health instruction as appropriate.
4. Computerize health records throughout the MPS system.
5. Increase community awareness regarding at risk of overweight and overweight.

**OBJECTIVES:**

1. Increase nursing staff to provide increased services for alternative programs through grant/alternative funding sources.
2. Update, review, and develop new policies as the health needs of the school community demand.
3. Provide professional development for nursing staff on topics for classroom health education.
4. Continue professional development on computer software and set timeline for 100% implementation in year 5.
5. Conduct BMIs on Grade 4 students and send reports to each parent.

**ASSESSMENT:**

1. Monitor staffing patterns and trends yearly.
2. Review state policy guidelines and attend Department of Public Health meetings to determine current health services trends and guidelines.

3. Survey staff for health topics taught in the classroom each year.
4. Conduct quarterly reviews of computer software usage.
5. Review BMI data yearly.

## ***E. Counseling and Psychological Services***

### **GOALS:**

1. Continue to provide current levels of counseling and psychological services at all levels and increase school-based services whenever possible.
2. Promote Social/Emotional Learning (SEL) throughout the district.
3. Identify barriers to learning and engage schools, homes, and community in the process to remove these barriers.

### **OBJECTIVES:**

1. Continue to write grants/explore outside funding sources to increase services.
2. Provide professional development opportunities to staff and administration regarding Second Step Curriculum and SEL.
3. Expand the SEED grant measures to all schools.
4. Conduct community forums and parent/guardian/child events teaching pro-social behavior.
5. Enlist outside organizations, agencies, and civic groups to support social emotional learning.

### **ASSESSMENT:**

1. Annual review of existing services.
2. Review of professional development courses offered.
3. Teacher, parent, and community surveys.

## ***F. Healthy School Environment***

### **GOALS:**

1. Continue existing maintenance plan and projected improvement plans.
2. Monitor the Wellness Policy and adjust based on the needs of the Medford Public School District.
3. Monitor and improve emergency preparedness in all buildings.

### **OBJECTIVES:**

1. Conduct annual review of maintenance programs and progress.
2. School Health Advisory Council conducts periodic needs assessments in collaboration with community agencies/organizations.

3. Continue collaborations with outside agencies/organizations such as Medford Police, Attorney General's Office, and Medford Health Matters.
4. MPS will actively work with local Board of Health and state Department of Public Health to develop and refine emergency plans.
5. Conduct periodic emergency drills in all buildings.

**ASSESSMENT:**

1. Annual school committee report of maintenance.
2. Review data of needs assessment and review of refinements made to Wellness Policy.
3. Review data of incidents such as: drugs, alcohol, bullying, police reports, number of mediations and referrals, etc.

***G. Health Promotion for Staff***

**GOALS:**

1. Provide professional development workshops and courses that demonstrate ways in which staff and students can achieve a healthy lifestyle.
2. Offer professional development workshops and courses on various student health issues, acute and chronic.
3. Assess the health needs of Medford Public Schools staff and students on an ongoing basis.

**OBJECTIVES:**

1. Design and deliver workshops for staff in strategies to deal with physical and emotional stress, nutrition, diet and exercise.
2. Provide professional development topics that address common student health needs in the classroom, including but not limited to:
  - Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder/ADHD
  - Seizure Training
  - Cardio Pulmonary Resuscitation
  - Automatic External Defibrillation
  - Crisis Prevention Intervention
  - Alcohol and Drug Use
3. Ensure that administrators receive professional development opportunities to lead and support staff in health initiatives.
4. Develop programs to meet changing needs as necessary.

**ASSESSMENT:**

1. Medford Public Schools will develop surveys, questionnaires, and evaluations to establish current and future needs of the students and staff.
2. Data on number of staff completing workshops.

3. Anecdotal reporting on staff and teacher ability to handle health and safety issues.
4. Measurement of number of staff reporting incidents.

## **H. *Family/Community Involvement***

### **GOALS:**

1. Increase parent programs for school-aged children through the *Homefront Initiative*.
2. Increase communication with the community regarding school-based wellness initiatives.
3. Increase community collaborations to achieve an integrated approach to wellness for the school district.

### **OBJECTIVES:**

1. Provide parents with yearly programs reflecting the wellness initiatives in school.
2. Provide families and community with a wellness guide of programs/curriculum offered in the Medford Public Schools.
3. Support and collaborate on community wellness initiatives such as walk to school programs and health fairs.
4. Increase use of web pages, develop public service announcements for broadcast, provide written publications such as the *Educator*, and promote initiatives in school monthly newsletters.
5. Identify additional agencies/organizations to enhance and expand wellness programs.

### **ASSESSMENT:**

1. Review parent programs and evaluations of the programs.
2. Determine number of “hits” on web page, review attendance numbers at programs.
3. Survey local organizations and collaborators.

## **V. POLICY IMPLEMENTATION & MEASUREMENT OF PROGRESS**

- Oversight of the Wellness Policy is the responsibility of the Superintendent of Schools or his/her designee in collaboration with building principals.
- The School Health Advisory Council will convene periodically to discuss and assess school related health issues and determine that the District is meeting the goals of the Wellness Policy.
- It is the responsibility of the building Principal each year to ensure that faculty and staff are aware of the existence and content of the Wellness Policy.