

Boston Public Schools Draft District Wellness Policy

Background

Understanding that physical and mental health, emotional well-being, and positive development are inextricably linked with academic success, Boston Public Schools (BPS) Superintendent Dr. Carol R. Johnson has worked to transform the district's capacity to meet the health needs of Boston children. Improving overall student health is a key factor in reaching the ambitious academic targets set forth in the Superintendent's Acceleration Agenda. Beyond the academic imperative however, school, civic and community leaders have a responsibility to help Boston's children overcome health barriers that may prevent them from successfully meeting the challenges of reaching adulthood and assuming their roles as the eventual leaders and stewards of our community. Our vision for the BPS graduate in the five-year "Acceleration Agenda" challenges us to develop young people who are more than scholars. It calls for graduates who are healthy in both mind and body, prepared to make wise choices to ensure their own physical, mental, and emotional well-being.

To create a healthy school environment where the healthy choice is the easy choice, we have developed this policy regarding wellness initiatives in Boston Public Schools. If approved, this policy will take effect September 1, 2013.

First passed on June 30, 2006, the District Wellness Policy was implemented on September 2006. It was updated during the 2012-2013 school year, taking into consideration the needs and perspectives expressed by members of the Boston School community,¹ and responding to both the Healthy, Hunger-Free Kids Act² and Massachusetts Standards for School Wellness Advisory Committees.³ This document is intended to assist Administrators and Wellness Council Members in implementing these guidelines in their schools.

This District Wellness Policy reflects the comprehensive approach stated in the District's Strategic Plan for Health and Wellness, *Healthy Connections: Strengthening Coordination and Capacity in the Boston Public Schools to Advance Student Health and Wellness*, and brings together content areas recommended in the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention's Coordinated School Health Model. A subcommittee of the District Wellness Council formed into seven work groups, representing these topic areas:

- Cultural Proficiency
- School Food and Nutrition Promotion
- Comprehensive Physical Activity
- Comprehensive Health Education
- Healthy School Environment
- Health Services
- Safe and Supportive Schools
- Staff Wellness

These work groups consulted the perspectives of the Boston School community as well as evidence-based national recommendations, and wrote specific policy language and

¹ Please see <http://www.bpshealthandwellness.org/healthy-school-environment/policies-to-support-a-healthy-school-environment/draft-wellness-policy/> for the *BPS Wellness Policy Revision Process Community Discussions Summary Report*

² PUBLIC LAW 111-296—DEC. 13, 2010

³ MGL 105 CMR 215

implementation guidelines that reference other relevant District policies and further develop policy language regarding wellness for all students. This comprehensive approach seeks to advance Boston Public School's strategic aims to: improve coordination across programs and departments; improve and integrate data collection; establish guidelines for accountability appropriate to the group's location within the organization; support building noncompeting partnerships internally and externally; and build sustainability.

Policy

The Boston Public Schools (BPS) aims to actively promote the health and wellness of **all students** to advance both their healthy development and readiness to learn. Student wellness is a core value of the Boston Public School District.

This policy is inclusive of all students, staff and families. This includes but is not limited to individuals' identities that are related to culture, race, ethnicity, sexual orientation, gender, and ability.

A Wellness Council shall be established and/or maintained both for the district and for each school. These councils shall consist of members who are representative and inclusive of the Boston school community. They shall recommend, review, and implement school district policies addressing wellness-related issues that affect student health.

All Boston Public Schools shall establish and/or maintain a school-based Wellness Council. School-based Wellness Councils shall act as a shared leadership team to implement wellness-related district policies; assess the wellness of the school environment; and create and implement an annual Action Plan as a part of the Whole School Improvement Plan. School-based Wellness Councils shall annually communicate wellness-related policies so that all staff, parents and students are aware of and follow policy guidelines.

The Boston Public School District shall maintain a Superintendent-Appointed Wellness Council. This advisory group shall recommend, review and advise on implementation of school district policies that address student wellness. The Boston Public Schools shall take a comprehensive approach to reviewing and incorporating changes in policy, curriculum, and operating procedures to promote healthy lifestyles and sustainable wellness practices for all students and staff. The District Wellness Council shall seek ongoing feedback from the Boston school community. This Boston Public Schools Wellness Policy shall be reviewed once yearly the Boston Public Schools (BPS) District Wellness Council.

Cultural Proficiency

School Wellness Councils shall examine their school's learning environment and organizational traditions to identify inclusive practices and opportunities to celebrate diverse cultures and identities. This includes the physical environment, the academic environment, classroom curriculum, and promotional materials.

Cultural Proficiency-related policies include those regarding racial, ethnic, gender, sexual orientation, gender identity, disabilities, and policies that promote family and student engagement.

School Food and Nutrition Promotion

The Boston Public Schools supports lifelong healthy eating habits for all students and staff, and is committed to addressing the increasing rates of diet-related health consequences among these groups. BPS shall promote healthy lifestyles and appropriate nutritional practices for all students. Components of this approach include:

- Constantly reviewing and assessing the food available in school meals to ensure safety, quality, visual appeal, cultural proficiency and accessibility, and that it is consistent with recommendations from the Dietary Guidelines for Americans and USDA School Meals Initiative for Healthy Children in nutritional content
- Identifying opportunities to teach healthy eating habits in health education, physical education, integrated into the Common Core, and through cafeteria, and other school-wide promotions;
- Identifying opportunities to provide support to all students around appropriate nutritional practices for meals and snacks;
- Identifying opportunities to support teachers, school staff, and parents around modeling healthy eating habits and the appropriate nutritional standards and encouraging non-food alternatives for school fundraisers, student rewards and reinforcement, school parties, and classroom celebrations;
- Promoting health and nutrition messages that encourage the consumption of fruits and vegetables, whole grains, healthy fats, low-fat dairy products, and water and other messages consistent with research-based findings that indicate a positive impact on health;
- Establishing policy guidelines for food and beverage sales within school environments that meet or exceed those required by federal, state, and local laws and regulations.

For school meals, competitive foods & beverages, and all foods sold or provided outside of the school meals program, schools shall follow standards outlined in federal, state, and local policies; and at a minimum follow Bronze status standards for the Alliance for a Healthier Generation, and work toward Bronze status standards for the Healthier US School Challenge.⁴ School Food and Nutrition Promotion-related policies shall be followed by all Boston Public Schools.

Boston Public schools shall undertake a constant review of school food and the food environment to ensure safety, quality, visual appeal, and cultural accessibility. Boston Public School shall reduce material used for packaging, sourcing recyclable or compostable materials when possible and working to promote best practices around recycling and composting

Comprehensive Physical Activity and Physical Education

The Boston Public Schools is committed to a district-wide, strategic effort to increase all students' physical activity and fitness by bringing *more* physical education and physical

⁴ Alliance for a Healthier Generation Standards: https://schools.healthiergeneration.org/_asset/1062yk/Healthy-Schools-Program-Framework.pdf

Healthier US School Challenge Standards: <http://www.fns.usda.gov/hussc>

activity to schools; improving the *quality* of physical education and recess and increasing the *equity* of physical activity programs and resources across our schools.

Numerous studies indicate that regularly engaging in moderate-to-vigorous exercise contributes to overall physical and mental health and that nurturing an exercise habit among children lays the foundation for lifelong fitness. Research also shows that increased physical activity increases children's cognitive function, ability to concentrate in class, and academic performance. Thus, as a part of a strategic effort to improve academic performance, BPS recognizes and promotes the benefits of a Comprehensive Physical Activity Program, where quality physical education is the cornerstone and additional physical activity is integrated throughout the school day and into before and after school programs.

The Boston Public Schools is committed to a strong athletics program that offers a variety of programs and is accessible to all students. Athletics participation can contribute to student fitness, wellness, character development and a lifelong commitment to a physically active lifestyle. Additionally, by establishing a safe, supportive and engaging school environment, athletic programs encourage school connectedness and create a climate where healthy competition and support fill the school with spirit and a sense of community. Research shows that healthy children are better learners and connected students are more likely to stay in school. In this way, athletics contributes to the academic success of students.

In accordance with state law, all schools must provide all students in all grades with opportunities for physical activity. Schools should aim to offer at least 150 minutes of in-school physical activity weekly in grades PreK-8, including required physical education, movement breaks, recess, or lessons involving movement. In grades PreK-8, students are expected to have daily recess.

All schools must offer standards-based physical education (PE) for all students in all grades. Schools are required to offer at least 45 minutes of weekly PE in grades PreK-8 and at least one semester of PE per grade in grades 9-12. We recommend that schools provide at least 80 minutes of weekly PE in grades PreK-8. In order to help schools work toward this recommendation, Boston Public Schools will develop an implementation plan with input from current principals and headmasters. This implementation plan will be shared with the School Committee.

Activities will be inclusive to meet the needs, interests, abilities and cultural diversity of all students, including students of all gender identities, students with disabilities and students with special healthcare needs.

Extended day programs and out of school time, which includes before and after school programs, are expected to offer an array of physical activity opportunities to ensure all students are able to participate.

Comprehensive Health Education

The Boston Public Schools requires Comprehensive pre-K through grade 12 Health Education that is medically-accurate, age and developmentally appropriate, culturally inclusive, and implemented in safe and supportive learning environments where **ALL** students feel valued. All Boston Public Schools shall take a skills-based approach to

teach comprehensive health education that addresses a variety of topics, such as tobacco, alcohol, and drug abuse, healthy eating/nutrition, mental and emotional health, personal health and wellness, physical activity, safety and injury prevention, violence prevention, and comprehensive sexual health education that is LGBTQ inclusive. It shall promote healthy lifestyle habits, healthy relationships and health literacy for all students. Health education curricula will align with the BPS Health Education Frameworks which integrate the Massachusetts Comprehensive Health Curriculum Framework and National Health Education Standards, as well as the National Sexuality Education Standards. It will be implemented by qualified and trained teachers.

All schools will follow relevant promotion and graduation requirements that include: Health education, inclusive of HIV education in grade 4; two semester of health education in grades 6 to 8 taught by a certified health teacher; and one semester course of health education in total in grades 9 to 12 taught by a certified health teacher. In addition, health education will be integrated into the Common Core curricula where possible.

Healthy School Environment

The Boston Public Schools is committed to providing high-performing school buildings and grounds that are in good repair, have superior indoor air quality, are clean, use resources efficiently, provide opportunities for physical activity, and provide accessible and culturally inclusive learning environments that positively impact the productivity, health, and wellness of all students and staff. To meet these standards, the Boston Public Schools shall maintain a Healthy Schools Taskforce (HST) to promote and raise awareness of the health of the built environment and ensure continuous improvement of BPS healthy school environment policies and programs.

District departments and all schools, through an Environmental Committee or school-based Wellness Council, shall comply with existing city ordinances and District policies related to promoting and managing healthy school environments, including but not limited to Green Cleaners, Integrated Pest Management, Recycling, Infection Prevention & Control, Tobacco Free Environmental Policy, Environmental Inspection/Audit, Student Safety/Health in School Shops, Water Policy, and Laboratories and Chemical Inventory "Right to Know" Law.

Schools shall regularly assess the quality and quantity of BPS facilities for physical activity and physical education, including schoolyards, and report maintenance needs for these facilities.

Safe and Supportive Schools

The Boston Public Schools shall create a safe and supportive school environment for **all students** that is culturally proficient, engaging, and inclusive, provides skills-based education to promote healthy relationships, and provides access to support services. All Boston Public School students will value healthy relationships and environments, possess the necessary knowledge and skills to use safe health practices, and access resources and services to support their health. Prevention and intervention-based work will address and integrate social health, emotional health, mental health, behavioral health, physical health, suicide prevention, safe inclusive climates for LGBTQ students, violence prevention, including intimate partner violence, sexual harassment & assault

prevention, bullying & cyber bullying prevention, emergency preparedness, school safety, substance use, and pregnant & parenting students. These efforts will create a safe and supportive learning environment that optimizes academic outcomes for all students. Boston Public Schools shall put in place systems that align to the district-accepted framework to ensure that all students have access to key resources and services that support health in a safe and supportive environment.

Schools shall implement the Comprehensive Behavioral Health Model (CBHM) to equip all students with the skills, and provide supports and services needed to address the multitude of challenges they face in our schools and communities. It provides a system-wide approach to promote positive behavioral health and reduce barriers to learning for optimal academic success for all students, based on tiered interventions and data to determine effectiveness. CBHM incorporates the six elements of the Safe and Supportive Schools Framework, including:

- Leadership
- Professional development
- Academic and non-academic strategies
- Access to resources and services
- Policies and protocols
- Collaborations with families.

In addition, schools shall follow the code of conduct and related policies. Schools shall also promote healthy relationships and follow policies related to sexual harassment, discrimination, and assault.

Health Services

School-based health care removes the health obstacles to learning by ensuring access and/or referral to primary health care services, managing chronic disease conditions during school hours, providing emergency care for illness or injury, identifying communicable diseases, and enacting practices and systems to ensure that all students have access to key resources and services that are developmentally appropriate and support sexual and reproductive health in a safe and supportive environment. BPS High Schools shall provide access to condoms, with appropriate health education and counseling services, for students. Condoms will be accessible from community health service partners, the Boston Public Health Commission (BPHC) or, when neither community health service partners nor BPHC staff are available, from appropriate school staff. Schools will adhere to Massachusetts state confidentiality laws. Boston Public Schools encourages communication and involvement with family regarding health services, and parents and legal guardians may exempt their children from receiving condoms by notifying the school when they complete the family information forms at the beginning of the school year.

Staff Wellness

The Boston Public Schools care about the well-being of staff members and understand the influence that staff actions have on all student health behaviors. All staff shall promote a school environment supportive of healthy behaviors. Adults are encouraged to model healthy behaviors, especially on school property and at school-sponsored meetings and events. Schools are encouraged to support staff wellness initiatives.