

Student Wellness Policy

Statement of Purpose:

The Catholic Schools Office of the Diocese of Erie, Pennsylvania, recognizes that student wellness and proper nutrition are related to students' physical well-being, growth, development, and readiness to learn. The Catholic Schools Office is committed to providing a school environment that promotes student wellness, proper nutrition, nutrition education, and regular physical activity as part of the total learning experience. In a healthy school environment, students will learn about and participate in positive dietary and lifestyle practices that can improve student achievement and their overall well-being.

Authority P.L. 108-265 Sec 204:

To ensure the health and well-being of all students, the Catholic Schools Office establishes that the Catholic schools shall provide to students:

- a comprehensive nutrition program consistent with federal and state requirements (Nutritional Standards for Competitive Foods in Pennsylvania Schools, www.pde.state.pa.us/food_nutrition)
- access at reasonable cost to foods and beverages that meet established nutritional guidelines
- physical education courses and opportunities for developmentally appropriate physical activity during the school day
- curriculum and programs for grades K-12 that are designed to educate students about proper nutrition and lifelong physical activity, in accordance with curriculum regulations and academic standards

Delegation of Responsibility:

The Vicar for Education and the Associate Vicar for Education shall be responsible to monitor diocesan schools, programs, and curriculum to ensure compliance with this policy, related policies and established guidelines or administrative regulations.

Each building principal or designee shall report to the Vicar and Associate Vicar regarding compliance in his/her school. This report shall be made every five years in concurrence with the School Meals Initiative Review.

Staff members responsible for programs related to student wellness shall report to the building principal regarding the status of such programs. These staff members shall be designated by the building principal and, where possible, have experience in the field of nutrition or consult with a nutritionist.

The building principal shall annually report to the Catholic Schools Office on the individual schools' compliance with law and policies related to student wellness. This report, to be made on the designated form provided by the Catholic Schools Office, will include any information obtained from the designated staff members, such as:

- assessment of school environment regarding student wellness issues
- evaluation of food services program (SMI Review)
- review of all foods and beverages sold in schools by principal or principal's designee(s)
- listing of activities and programs conducted to promote nutrition and physical activity
- recommendations for policy and/or program revisions
- suggestions for improvement in specific areas

P.L. 108-265 Sec 204:

An assurance that district guidelines for reimbursable meals are not less restrictive than regulations and guidelines issued for schools in accordance with federal law shall be provided annually by the cafeteria manager or designee on each building level. This assurance shall be provided to the building principal.

Guidelines:

The Catholic Schools Office shall convene a Wellness Committee comprised of at least one of each of the following: diocesan administrator, Catholic Schools Office director, food service representative, student, parent/guardian, member of the public, teacher, representative of local or county agency. Other individuals may be invited to participate by the Catholic Schools Office. Members of the Wellness Committee shall serve a five-year term beginning with the implementation of the Wellness Policy on July 1, 2006. This committee is to include the members of the committee that wrote the original wellness document.

The Wellness Committee:

- shall serve as an advisory committee regarding student health issues and shall be responsible for developing a Student Wellness Policy that complies with the law and submit verification to the Catholic Schools Office.
- may examine related research and laws, assess student needs and the current school environment, review existing CSO policies and administrative regulations, and raise awareness about student health issues.
- may make policy recommendations to the CSO related to other health issues necessary to promote student wellness.
- may survey parents/guardians, and/or students; conduct community forums or focus groups; collaborate with appropriate community agencies and organizations; and engage in similar activities.
- shall provide periodic reports to the Vicar and Associate Vicar regarding the status of its work. In addition, the Associate Vicar shall serve as an active member of the committee.

Nutrition Education:

The goal of nutrition education is to teach, encourage, and support healthy eating by students. Promoting student health and nutrition enhances readiness for learning and increases student achievement. Nutrition education:

- will be provided within the sequential, comprehensive health education program in accordance with the diocesan curriculum documents, which align with both national and state standards
- shall provide all students with the knowledge and skills needed to lead healthy lives
- shall be age-appropriate
- shall be behavior focused
- shall be integrated into other subject areas
- shall be linked with physical activity
- shall extend beyond the school environment by engaging families and communities

The staff responsible for providing nutrition information shall:

- be properly trained and prepared
- participate in appropriate professional development
- disseminate nutrition messages through the schools, classrooms, cafeterias, and homes

The diocesan staff shall:

- cooperate with agencies and community organizations to provide opportunities for nutrition-related student projects and activities
- provide appropriate professional development opportunities for educators
- disseminate nutrition messages through the diocese, schools, community, and media

Physical Activity:

Diocesan schools shall strive to provide opportunities for developmentally appropriate physical activity during the school day for all students. Schools shall determine how they will contribute to the effort to provide students with opportunities to accumulate at least sixty minutes of age-appropriate physical activity on all or most days of the week, including ongoing encouragement and information sent to students' homes. That time will include physical activity outside the school environment, such as outdoor play at home, sports, etc. Schools shall provide:

- opportunities for students to participate daily in a variety of age-appropriate physical activities which meet the needs and interests of students, in addition to physical education. These may include:
 - recess
 - before-and-after school
 - lunch
 - clubs
 - intramurals
 - interscholastic athletics
- a physical and social environment that encourages safe and enjoyable activity
- physical activity breaks for elementary school students during classroom hours

- developmentally appropriate physical activity in after-school programs
- access to physical activity facilities after school hours where possible
- parents with guidelines and communication

Schools shall not permit:

- the use of physical activity as a form of punishment
- extended periods of student inactivity, i.e., two hours or more
- withholding physical education or recess from students as a consequence for behavior

Physical Education:

Physical education instruction shall promote lifelong physical activity and provide instruction in skills and knowledge necessary for lifelong participation. Physical education classes shall:

- be the means through which all students learn, practice, and are assessed on developmentally appropriate skills and knowledge for lifelong physical activity
- focus on providing students the skills, knowledge, and confidence to participate in lifelong physical activity
- comprise a varied and comprehensive curriculum
- be based upon the sequential physical education program which is part of the diocesan curriculum guidelines and is in alignment with national and state standards
- provide adequate planned instruction to meet the requirements of the physical education and health objectives
- involve students in moderate to vigorous activities during as much time as possible in the physical education class
- accommodate documented medical conditions and disabilities
- include safe and adequate equipment, facilities, and resources

- be taught by qualified professionals who have been provided with appropriate professional development opportunities
- have a student-teacher ratio comparable to other classes

Other School-Based Activities:

The diocese shall:

- utilize available funding and outside programs to enhance student wellness
- provide appropriate training to all staff on the Wellness Policy
- support the efforts of parents/guardians to provide a healthy diet and daily physical activity for children by communicating relevant information
- encourage administrators, teachers, food service personnel, students, parents/guardians, and community members to serve as positive role models through school-based programs, communications, and outreach efforts

Schools shall provide:

- adequate space for eating and serving schools meals
- a clean and safe meal environment
- adequate time for students to eat; minimum guidelines are 10 minutes for breakfast if applicable and 20 minutes for lunch
- access to drinking water during meal periods and throughout the school day, either from school water fountains or bottled water provided by students
- facilities for handwashing or sanitizing before meals and snacks
- nutrition professionals to administer the meals program
- access to the food service operation only by authorized staff
- a menu and/or nutrition content of school meals to parents or students upon request

Schools shall:

- consider the goals of the Wellness Policy in planning school-based activities
- never use food as a punishment
- minimize the use of food as a reward or component of a school celebration, and then only with due consideration of nutrition and student wellness
- make every effort to select fundraising projects supportive of healthy eating and student wellness

Nutrition Guidelines:

All foods available in diocesan schools during the school day shall be offered to students with consideration for promoting student health and reducing childhood obesity.

Foods provided through the National School Lunch or School Breakfast Programs shall comply with federal nutrition standards under the School Meals Initiative.

“Competitive foods” are defined as foods offered at school other than through the national School Lunch or School Breakfast Programs. These include: a la carte foods, snacks, and beverages; vending food, snacks, and beverages; school store food, snacks, and beverages; fundraisers; classroom parties; holiday celebrations; and food from home. See www.pde.state.pa.us/food_nutrition.

Competitive foods available to students in diocesan schools shall comply with the Nutritional Standards for Competitive Foods in Pennsylvania Schools. The nutritional standards shall be implemented as a three year plan.

Safe Routes to School:

Each diocesan school shall, to the extent possible, assess and implement improvements to make walking and biking to school safer and easier for students.

Schools shall cooperate with local municipalities, public safety agencies, police departments, and community organizations to develop and maintain safe routes to school.