

The New York City Department of Education Wellness Policies on Physical Activity and Nutrition

June 2010

INTRODUCTION

Childhood obesity is epidemic throughout the United States, with rates tripling over the past 30 years. New York City is home to an even higher proportion of obese and overweight children than other parts of the country. The importance of this issue cannot be overstated. Childhood obesity has both immediate and long-term health effects. Childhood obesity increases the likelihood of adult obesity, which is associated with heart disease and cancer. Current research also reveals that higher levels of fitness are associated with better academic performance. To read the most recent New York City public school research on childhood obesity and its consequences, go to <http://www.nyc.gov/html/doh/downloads/pdf/survey/survey-2009fitnessgram.pdf>.

Public concern about the impact of childhood obesity has risen significantly since DOE published its first Wellness Policies on Physical Activity and Nutrition in 2006. This 2010 update raises the bar for New York City public schools. The policies also align with the Obama administration's goal of ending the childhood obesity epidemic within a generation.

Our broad-based approach to wellness includes commonsense strategies, such as making healthier foods available in our schools while increasing opportunities for students to be physically active. Through these efforts, we aim to help students to make healthier choices today and to develop healthy habits that will last a lifetime. We encourage all school community members to review these policies and begin a serious consideration of how wellness can be integrated into daily teaching and learning, as well as extending to students' lives outside school.

First Lady Michelle Obama, who launched the national Let's Move campaign to address childhood obesity, sets expectations this way: "Ultimately, it's going to take all of us—businesses and non-profits; community centers and health centers; teachers and faith leaders; coaches and parents... all working together to help families make commonsense changes so our kids can get, and stay, healthy." The Department of Education invites parents, educators, and community leaders to help make that vision a reality for the 1.1 million children who attend City schools.

BACKGROUND

In the Child Nutrition and WIC Reauthorization Act of 2004, the U.S. Congress established a requirement for school districts that participate in federally funded school meal program(s) to develop and implement a wellness policy. The wellness policy must include goals for nutrition education and physical activity, along with guidelines to promote student health and reduce childhood obesity.

This document outlines the New York City Department of Education's (DOE) wellness policy. This policy is designed to promote the health and well-being of students, while taking into account competing priorities and the availability of funds. The DOE engaged—and continues to engage—students, parents, teachers, food service professionals, health professionals, and other interested community members in policy development and review.

PREAMBLE

The New York City Department of Education 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, DOE will:

- Support all schools in providing opportunities for physical activity and encouraging all students to be physically active on a regular basis.
- Ensure that food and beverages sold or served at school meet the nutrition recommendations of the *U.S. Dietary Guidelines for Americans*.
- Ensure that school meals provide students with access to a variety of affordable, nutritious, and appealing foods that meet their health and nutritional needs.
- Participate in available 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]).
- Provide nutrition education and physical education to foster life-long habits of healthy eating and physical activity. Establish linkages between health education and school meal programs, and related community service agencies.

SPECIFIC POLICIES

1. School Wellness Councils

DOE encourages schools to develop or work with existing school wellness councils to monitor school nutrition and physical activity policies and practices. Councils may include parents, students, representatives of the school food program, school administrators, teachers, health professionals, and members of the public (including cooperating community-based organizations). The council's role is advisory; final responsibility for implementation rests with the principal.

2. Nutritional Quality of SchoolFood Meals

SchoolFood Meals Served in Accordance with the National School Meals Programs

Meals served by SchoolFood through the National School Breakfast (NSB), Lunch (NSL), After-School Snack, and Supper programs will:

- Meet, local, State, and federal requirements for reimbursement.
- Restrict the fat content of meals as follows:
 - Total fat will be limited to 30 percent of the total calories over the course of the week.
 - Saturated fat will be limited to 10 percent of the total calories over the course of the week.
 - Partially hydrogenated oils will be limited in accordance with current dietary guidelines.
- Provide limited amounts of sodium and cholesterol.
- Provide restricted amounts of high fructose corn syrup, with a goal of eliminating high fructose corn syrup from all products.
- Offer and promote the consumption of fresh fruit and a variety of vegetables daily.
- Offer and promote the inclusion of plant-based entrees.
- Offer three varieties of reduced-fat milk:
 - Low-fat (1%),
 - Fat-free, and
 - Fat-free chocolate milk.

Exception: Some special populations (*i.e.* special education) may receive whole milk.

The nutritional content of daily menu items and snacks is available on the SchoolFood website, <http://www.opt-osfns.org/osfns>.

Program Services

Breakfast - To meet students' nutritional needs and stress the benefits of a healthy breakfast, SchoolFood encourages students to participate in the School Breakfast program.

- Breakfast will continue to be offered at no charge to all NYC public school students.
- A "Grab-and-Go" or breakfast in the classroom option is available to schools seeking alternate ways to provide students with a healthy meal to begin the school day.

Lunch - SchoolFood offers students a varied lunch menu designed to meet nutritional standards.

- SchoolFood works to develop new, healthy items for use in menus.

Menus - New foods and menu items are evaluated to identify healthful and appealing choices by:

- Evaluating items in the SchoolFood test kitchen before use in schools.
- Testing items in selected schools and obtaining feedback from student customers before marketing the product more widely.
- Reviewing likes and dislikes of students based on production records.

Monthly menus are posted in the school dining room and on the SchoolFood website, <http://www.opt-osfns.org/osfns>.

Foods and Beverages Sold / Served Outside the NSB and NSL Programs (Vending Machines, A La Carte Snacks, School Stores, School-Based Kitchens etc.)

Effective in February 2010, only foods and beverages that meet the Department of Education SchoolFood guidelines may be offered for sale during school hours. The SchoolFood list will not include items prohibited by federal and/or State law.

Information on SchoolFood-approved snack products, ingredients, portion sizes, and other information are available on the SchoolFood website, <http://www.opt-osfns.org/osfns>.

Standards for Areas Accessible to School Children

Elementary and Middle School

Machine Locations	Permitted Products	Calorie Limit	Serving Size Limit
Student-Accessible Areas	Water	N/A	None
	Low-calorie drinks without artificial flavors or colors	10 calories per 8 oz.	None

High School

Machine Locations	Permitted Products	Calorie Limit	Serving Size Limit
Student-Accessible Areas	Water	N/A	None
	Low-calorie drinks without artificial flavors or colors	25 calories per 8 oz.	None

NOTE: Caffeinated beverages will be allowed in High Schools. Carbonated beverages will be allowed in High Schools and Middle Schools (includes 6-8th and 6-12th grade schools). Carbonated and caffeinated products are not allowed in Elementary Schools (includes K-5th, K-8th and K-12 schools). Aerated (carbonated) beverages can be sold if on the USDA exemption list for carbonated beverages for use in School Meal Programs. The link below lists all beverages which are currently on this list. If a manufacturer believes their product meets the USDA qualifications, they are urged to contact the USDA to be added to this exemption list.
<http://portal.nysed.gov/portal/page/pref/CNKC/IntDocs/Exemptions%20Under%20the%20Competitive%20Food%20Regulation%20List.pdf>

Standards for Areas Not Accessible to School Children (i.e., Teacher Lounges and Administrative Offices)

Beverage vending machines in administrative offices and teacher-accessible areas (e.g., teachers' lounge and other spaces to which students do not have access) shall comply with the Citywide standards for beverage vending machines for adults, which may be updated from time to time by the City in its sole discretion.

Guidelines for the Sale of Food and Snack Items

SchoolFood's goal is to encourage students to develop healthy eating habits by reducing or eliminating the total fat, saturated fat, transfat, cholesterol, and sodium content of snack items. Many popular snack items have been reformulated to meet enhanced nutritional standards.

The Chancellor's Regulation on Competitive Foods (CR A-812) is available at:
<http://schools.nyc.gov/NR/ronlyres/381F4607-7841-4D28-B7D5-0F30DDB77DFA/78296/A812FINAL.pdf>

Approved Items - Only approved foods may be offered for sale to students through vending machines, school stores, and/or school fundraising activities *during non-meal hours* from the beginning of the school day through 6:00 PM, weekdays, with one exception that is limited to PA/PTA fundraising (Chancellor's Regulation A-812, Section I, Paragraph "H"). *Student fundraising sales* of approved items will be allowed throughout the school day outside of the cafeteria (Chancellor's Regulation A-812, Section I, Paragraph "G"). Approved beverages may be sold all day.

Note: Snack vending machines may not be used in any schools serving grade levels pre-kindergarten ("PK") through five (5).

Effective February 2010 the nutritional standards for approved snacks and beverages are as follows:

- The maximum level of fat is 35 percent of total calories (nuts and nut butters are exempt)
- Less than 10 percent of calories from saturated fat
- 0.5 grams of transfat or less
- Less than 35% of calories from sugar (fruit products with no added sugar are exempt)
- Less than 200 total calories
- Sodium content may not exceed 200 mg per portion

- Grain-based products must contain at least 2 grams of fiber per serving
- Combination products of dried fruit and nuts are exempt from the total fat standard

New items can be proposed for inclusion on the approved snack list by contacting SchoolFood , Food Support Unit, NYC Department of Education, Attn: Ms. Lorraine Burke, 44-36 Vernon Blvd – Room 413, L.I.C., NYC 11101/ telephone: 718-707-4249 email: Lburke@schools.nyc.gov.

Prohibited Items - The following items may not be offered for sale to students through vending machines, school stores, student fundraising, and/or other school fundraising activities from the beginning of the school day through 6:00 PM weekdays:

- Chewing gum
- Candy (including hard candy, jellies, gums, marshmallow candy, fondant, licorice, spun candy, and candy coated popcorn)
- Water ices which do not contain fruit or fruit juices
- Artificial sweeteners

A list of snacks that meet NYC Department of Education criteria is available on the SchoolFood website, <http://www.opt-osfns.org/osfns>. See Chancellor's Regulation A-812 for further information.

3. Nutrition Education and Promotion

SchoolFood will work within all NYC Public Schools to develop and maintain effective SchoolFood Partnerships with members of the school community. In Partnership meetings SchoolFood will discuss nutrition-related topics and the food service program at the school. They will provide information on any aspect of the SchoolFood program upon request. SchoolFood will encourage principals to invite students from various classes, the principal or a designee, the parent coordinator, the school nurse, and the SchoolFood manager to participate in Partnership meetings. Partnership members will work together to foster communication between SchoolFood and the school community.

Wellness councils will work with SchoolFood Partnerships to promote and monitor nutritional and physical activity policies and programs in their respective schools. These groups will serve as a resource to the school administration in implementing those policies.

The Office of Fitness and Health Education will complement these efforts by addressing nutrition education in professional development trainings for the Department's recommended comprehensive health education curricula, *HealthTeacher* (for grades K-5) and *HealthSmart* (for grades 6-12).

Communications with Parents

The DOE encourages schools to support parents' efforts to provide a healthy diet and daily physical activity for their children. Schools may offer healthy-eating seminars for parents, send home nutrition information, post nutrition tips on school websites, and provide nutrient analyses of school menus. Schools may 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 school

may provide parents with a list of foods that meet the DOE's snack standards and ideas for healthy celebrations/parties, rewards, and fundraising activities. In addition, the school may provide opportunities for parents to share their healthy food practices with others in the school community.

Food as Reward

Teachers should not use foods or beverages, especially those that do not meet SchoolFood nutrition standards (described above), as rewards for academic performance or good behavior.

4. Physical Activity Opportunities and Physical Education

Daily Physical Education K-12

DOE encourages principals to provide daily physical education (or an alternate schedule that meets New York State requirements) to students in grades K-12, including students with disabilities and/or special health-care needs and those in alternative educational settings. As of 2007-2008, meeting the NYSED requirements for physical education is part of the Principal's Compliance Checklist. To the extent possible, physical education will be taught by a certified physical education teacher or a teacher specializing in physical education. Students should spend at least 50 percent of physical education class time participating in moderate to vigorous physical activity.

Curriculum – The DOE is committed to the use of a health-related fitness curriculum, such as *Physical Best*, in all of its schools.

Assessment - DOE has adopted NYC FITNESSGRAM (based on the Cooper Institute's FITNESSGRAM) as its standard method of assessing students' health-related fitness. All schools are expected to incorporate NYC FITNESSGRAM into their physical education program. As of 2007-2008, participation in NYC FITNESSGRAM is part of the Principal's Compliance Checklist.

Students and parents receive printed reports of student performance on NYC FITNESSGRAM.

Physical Activity

Integrating Physical Activity into the Classroom Setting - For students to receive the nationally-recommended 60 minutes of physical activity per day, they need opportunities for physical activity beyond physical education class. Toward that end principals are encouraged to:

- Provide classroom health education that complements 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.
- Provide opportunities for physical activity as part of other subject lessons.
- Have classroom teachers provide short physical activity breaks between lessons or classes, as appropriate.

The Office of Fitness and Health Education provides ongoing professional development opportunities to train classroom teachers to incorporate physical activity into daily instruction.

Daily Recess - In addition to physical education classroom time, DOE encourages principals to provide elementary school students with at least 20 minutes a day of supervised recess, preferably outdoors, during which time staff encourage moderate to vigorous physical activity and provide appropriate space and equipment. DOE policy states that outdoor play is permitted regardless of temperature so long as weather conditions are appropriate.

Physical Activity Opportunities Before and After School – The DOE encourages all elementary, middle, and high schools to offer extracurricular physical activity programs, such as physical activity clubs and intramural programs. All high schools and middle schools are also encouraged to offer interscholastic sports programs. The DOE recommends that schools 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 should encourage daily periods of moderate to vigorous physical activity for all participants to the extent possible.

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

Use of School Facilities Outside of School Hours

Principals are encouraged to allow school spaces and facilities to be available for school-sponsored activities that promote fitness for its students during non-school hours. As circumstances permit, DOE will encourage schools to make these spaces and facilities available to community agencies and organizations offering physical activity and nutrition programs and willing to pay for pass-through custodial and safety costs. School policies concerning safety will apply at all times. Compliance with Chancellor's Regulation D-180 on "Extended Use of School Buildings" is required.

Communications with Parents

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

5. Staff Wellness

The DOE encourages its staff to maintain a healthy lifestyle. Each principal is encouraged to work with a group of staff to develop, promote, and oversee a multi-faceted plan to promote staff health and wellness. The plan should outline ways to encourage healthy eating, physical activity, and other elements of a healthy lifestyle.

6. Monitoring and Policy Review

In each school, the principal or designee will ensure compliance with this wellness policy as well as Chancellor's Regulation A-812 and will report on the school's compliance to the appropriate DOE manager. In addition, SchoolFood and The Office of Fitness and Health Education will provide the following services:

- SchoolFood will work with the local health department, community advocacy organizations, and the educational community to assess and promote student acceptance of the NSB and NSL programs.
- SchoolFood will continue to use USDA-approved software to monitor compliance of cycle menus and snack programs with federal, State, and local nutritional policies and standards.
- Menu items will be randomly collected, analyzed, and evaluated for compliance with SchoolFood specifications.
- SchoolFood will continue to participate in the School Meals Initiative at least once every five years or as dictated by the NY State Education Department.
- The DOE Central Office of Fitness and Health Education, in conjunction with the Office of Compliance Services, will track participation in activities recommended under fitness and physical education guidelines and will provide a report on schools' participation to the Chancellor and the Panel for Educational Policy. The Central Office of Fitness and Health Education will provide additional technical assistance and support for schools on increasing their level of participation in activities recommended under fitness and physical education guidelines.

Policy Review

During the 2010-2011 school year, the DOE will develop a detailed report of its existing nutrition and physical activity programs. Data from this report will be used to recommend changes in wellness policies and will serve as a baseline for future efforts. These reports will be triennial and will permit reassessment of the value of existing policies and highlight areas where additional implementation efforts are needed.

Inquiries

Inquiries pertaining to the Wellness Policy should be addressed to:

Office of School Health
2 Lafayette Street, 22nd Floor CN-25
New York, NY 10007
212-442-3357 (telephone)
212-513-0207 (fax)

Wellness@schools.nyc.gov