



WELLNESS COMMITTEES FAQ

What is a School Wellness Committee?

A school wellness committee is essentially an advisory group concerned with the health and wellbeing of students and staff.

District vs Staff wellness committee?

The district wellness committee will provide input to the district wellness program coordinator(s) for compliance and assessment of the district wellness policy ADF goals and objectives. It helps to ensure that the district level wellness policies are implemented at the building level and throughout the district.

The staff wellness committee collectively provides input solicited from district staff on ways to encourage healthy eating, physical activity, and other elements of a healthy lifestyle with an emphasis on staff wellness. The staff wellness committee serves as a sub-committee of the district wellness committee.

Who should serve on the committees?

We would like the district committee to include parents, students, representatives of the school food services, teachers of physical education, school health professionals, a school board representative, school staff, community members, and others committed and interested in making the school environment healthier for both students and staff.

We would like the staff sub-committee to include one staff member from each building, a health professional, nutrition specialist, school benefits specialist, and other appropriate personnel.

What are the Roles and Responsibilities of the Wellness Committees?

The school wellness committee is an action-oriented group that makes the implementation of the district wellness policy and other health-related priorities possible.

The wellness committees will:

- Support the school in developing a healthier school environment.

- Assist with policy development or revision to support a healthy school environment.
- Promote parent, community, and professional involvement in developing a healthier school environment.
- Advocate for school health programs and policies within the broader school community.
- Assist in planning and implementation of programs for students and staff.
- Evaluate program and policy efforts.
- Provide feedback to the district regularly regarding progress on the implementation of the local wellness policy.

The wellness committees will address:

- Nutrition education and promotion activities.
- Physical activity opportunities.
- Nutrition standards for all foods and beverages available on each school campus during the school day that meet or exceed the USDA's requirements for school meals and competitive foods and beverages.
- Marketing and advertising of only those foods and beverages that meet the USDA Smart Snacks in School nutrition standards on school campus.
- Other school-based activities that promote student and/or staff wellness.
- Review and update of the wellness policy.
- Periodic measurement of school compliance with the wellness policy.

Why focus on wellness?

- More than 1 in 3 youth are overweight or obese.
- 17% (12.5 million) of the nation's children and adolescents are obese, according to the most recent data from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention.
- Childhood obesity has more than doubled in children and quadrupled in adolescents in the past 30 years.
- The percentage of children aged 6–11 years in the United States who were obese increased from 7% in 1980 to nearly 18% in 2012. Similarly, the percentage of adolescents aged 12–19 years who were obese increased from 5% to nearly 21% over the same period.
- If we don't reverse this epidemic, the current generation of young people could live sicker and die younger than their parents.
- Because of the size and accessibility of the school community, schools play a particularly critical role by establishing a safe and supportive environment with policies and practices that support healthy behaviors
- Schools provide opportunities for students to learn about and practice healthy eating and physical activity behaviors
- Poor nutrition and lack of physical activity are linked with health problems and increased school absences.
- The American Medical Association recognizes obesity as a disease.

- Studies show that students with better nutrition have better attention spans and better class participation
- Proper nutrition improves academic, behavioral and emotional functioning and leads to increased math grades, lowered absenteeism and improved behavior.
- Higher levels of physical activity can relate to higher self-esteem and lower levels of anxiety and stress as well as impact cognitive skills, enhanced concentration and attention and academic behavior—all of which are associated with improved academic performance.
- Studies show positive associations between physical education and indicators of academic performance.
- Studies show positive associations between recess and indicators of cognitive skills, attitudes and academic behavior.
- Health education research shows promise of having a positive impact on academic achievement as it has on health outcomes of students.
- Research demonstrates a positive association between healthy behaviors and academic grades.
- Employees who eat healthy are 25% more likely to have higher job performance.
- Employees who exercise for at least 30 minutes, three times a week, are 15% more likely to have higher job performance.
- Healthy employees take fewer sick days.
- Absenteeism is 27% lower for those workers who eat healthy and regularly exercise.
- Overweight employees cost their employers \$73.1 billion a year and file twice the number of workers' compensation claims.
- Employees are 10% more engaged when provided healthy food options.
- Healthy employees reduce healthcare costs.

Making Decisions

Committee members will collaborate to identify wellness obstacles and possible solutions. Recommendations will be taken to school district administrators and ultimately be approved by the Board of Education.

Sources:

1. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention
2. Journal of the American Medical Association 2014; 311(8):806-814.
3. National Center for Health Statistics
4. SWC Toolkit
5. U.S. Department of Health and Human Services
6. Zane Benefits