

PROPOSED REVISION: PUBLIC SCHOOLS OF BROOKLINE WELLNESS POLICY
FIRST READ: December 14, 2023
SECOND READ AND POSSIBLE VOTE: January 18, 2024

SECTION A
FOUNDATIONS AND BASIC COMMITMENTS

9. Wellness Policy (Voted: 9/28/06, #06-88; 12/7/17, #17-102; 6/19/18, #18-60
(Note: policy was moved from PSB Policy Manual Section E: Support Services to Section A: Foundations and Basic Commitments 6/19/18)

Introduction

In 2010, Congress passed the [Healthy, Hunger-Free Kids Act](#) (Sec. 204 of Public Law 111-296) and added new provisions related to implementation, evaluation, and public reporting on progress for local school wellness policies.

Purpose

The Public Schools of Brookline (PSB) is committed to providing school environments that promote and protect children's health, well-being, and ability to learn by supporting wellness, good nutrition, and regular physical activity as part of the total learning environment. PSB supports a healthy environment where children learn about and participate in healthy decision-making. To support these goals, the following core values guide this policy and its corresponding implementation and procedures:

Goals

Cultivate a School Culture That Values Wellness – the physical and mental health of all its students and their communities – by offering thoughtful, inclusive, and appropriate support and instruction in all schools.

Provide comprehensive wellness education including but not limited to mental and physical health, nutrition and food literacy, physical activity and physical education, allergy and public health concerns, the impact of social media on mental health, healthy relationships, substance use, peer pressure, body image, and eating disorders. At its very core, comprehensive school health education is about keeping students healthy now and in the future, reinforcing positive healthy behaviors throughout the school day, and making it clear that good health and learning go hand in hand.

Recognize and accept differences due to mental and physical health or disability, culture, race, religion, language, national origin, gender, gender identity, sexual orientation, or socio-economic status by providing space for public learning, conversation, and discussion.

Membership

The PSB School Wellness Committee seeks to have representation from:

- School Administration
- School Guidance and Clinical Services
- School Health Services (including school physician consultant)
- Nutritional and Food Services
- School Wellness and Health Education Services
- Community Agencies (Brookline Department of Public Health and Human Services; Brookline Substance Use and Violence Prevention Program, B-PEN/B-CASA and Town Meeting Members)
- Parents/Caregivers
- School Committee
- Students

I. FOOD SERVICE PROGRAM OPERATIONS

A. Financial Management

1. In the Public Schools of Brookline, every school will operate a food service program to ensure that all students have affordable access to the varied and nutritious foods they need to stay healthy and achieve their academic potential.
2. The management of food sales on school grounds will be under the management of the school food service program (except food sold as part of a fundraising activity after the end of the school day).
3. Brookline High School's Career and Technology Education department offers a Culinary Pathway in food preparation and restaurant management. The courses in this pathway offer students the opportunity to explore and develop careers in the nation's largest industry in the BHS state-of-the-art student-run restaurant, Tappan Green. Meals served in the Tappan Green restaurant will be served to adult staff and students enrolled in the program as part of recipe development or testing
4. The food service program will aim to be financially self-supporting. However, budget neutrality or profit generation must not take precedence over the nutritional needs of the students. If subsidy of the food service fund is needed, it should not be from the sale of foods that have minimal nutritional value and/or compete nutritionally with program meals. Conversely, when the program runs a profit, those funds should be re-invested in the program in the form of higher quality food options.

B. Program Requirement

1. PSB is committed to offering school meals through the National School Lunch Program (NSLP), School Breakfast Program (SBP), Summer Food Service Program and other supplemental programs. The district operates additional available nutrition

related programs and activities including the Farm to School, school gardens, etc. that: provide a stigma-free meal environment where all students are provided fresh, nutritious, enjoyable food for growth and learning.

2. The PSB provides school food environments in which every food option meets or exceeds USDA guidelines.
3. The school food service program will operate in accordance with the Healthy, Hunger-Free Kids Act of 2010 as amended and applicable laws and regulations of the Commonwealth of Massachusetts. Schools will offer varied and nutritious food choices that are consistent with the federal government's Dietary Guidelines for Americans.
4. Menus should be planned with input from students, family members, and other school personnel considering students' cultural norms and preferences. Procedures shall be in place for providing families with readily accessible information about the ingredients and nutritional value of the food served, to include making that information available online.
5. Address needs of students who have life-threatening food allergies through the management guidelines. It is our goal to continue to offer 50 % of all meals served in each school to be plant-based, and locally sourced foods every day to students.
6. Accommodate special dietary needs and offer foods that permit individual choice.
7. Strive to reflect the ethnic and cultural preferences represented.
8. Free and reduced priced meals will be served and sold in a manner indistinguishable by students or staff from the regularly priced meal.
9. PSB will meet or exceed the best administrative practices for enrollment, participation, and payment of food, including:
 - Ensuring compliance with the direct certification process for those students who are automatically-eligible.
 - On a regular basis, checking and coordinating with county social services and similar public benefit administering agencies to ensure that every eligible child is enrolled in free/reduced price meal programs.
 - A coordinated, comprehensive outreach and promotion plan directed at both students and families, including a language access component to ensure language-appropriate documents, and highlighting access options for students with disabilities.
 - Implementing and maintaining pin numbers or similar payment systems in place that eliminates the stigma of accepting "free/reduced" lunch.

C. Staff Qualification and Professional Development

1. Public Schools of Brookline will employ a Director of Food Services who is qualified, certified and/or credentialed, according to the USDA professional standards for School Nutrition professionals.
2. The district will employ food service staff that are trained according to the recommendations of the Director of Food Services, and which meet the USDA Guidelines for staff training.
3. The Food Service Director is encouraged to inform and collaborate with classroom teachers about the school nutrition-food service environment and nutrition education.

D. Food Safety

1. All food service managers and cooks/chefs will have a current ServSafe Certification.
2. All staff will complete professional development as outlined by the Food Service Director and follow the USDA guidelines for staff training.
3. Maintain a system that allows food service staff to accurately identify food allergies at the point of service.

E. The Food Service Environment

The PSB provides school food environments in which every food option meets or exceeds USDA guidelines. The PSB will provide choices which support good health, academic achievement, physical activity, and individual choice. In providing foods that promote good health, pleasure in eating, and reinforce important health education objectives, the PSB will allow for a diversity in family resources, food knowledge, exposure, cultures, and food practices. PSB will provide all students with access to potable water during mealtimes.

F. Student Access and Participation in Meal Program

1. The PSB is committed to provide a stigma-free meal environment where all students are provided fresh, nutritious foods that support physical growth and learning.
2. Massachusetts has permanently passed the Universal Free Meals program for all schools. PSB will continue to collect Free and Reduced meal applications which allows for additional benefits to qualified students and families, such as Pandemic-Electronic Benefits Transfer (P-EBT).
3. PSB will meet or exceed best administrative practices for enrollment, participation, and payment of food, including:

- Developing a coordinated, comprehensive outreach and promotion plan directed at both students and families, including a language access component to ensure language-appropriate documents, and highlighting access options for students with disabilities.
- Implementing and maintaining pin numbers or similar payment systems in place that accurately tracks the student's meals for maximum state and federal reimbursement.
- Strive for at least 20 minutes of time to eat *after food is served*. This will allow enough time for students to get their lunch and eat it.
- Accommodate special dietary needs and offer foods that permit individual choice and food preferences.
- Striving to reflect the ethnic and cultural preferences represented within our diverse community.
- Provide all students access to a healthy breakfast during the school day incorporating Breakfast After the Bell Program.
- Implement and adhere to the PSB Sustainability Policy (voted 10/27/22 #22-87)
- Provide adequate communication about the program through various methods including social media, etc.

G. Nutrition

The PSB adheres to the following School Meal Content Guidelines:

1. Meet and when possible, exceed, the [Nutrition Standards in the National School Lunch and Breakfast Programs](#) and the [Massachusetts and USDA Competitive Foods and Beverage Nutrition Standards](#) [load](#) by taking advantage of exemptions for unprocessed fruits and vegetables. To the extent that current nutrition science indicates a higher standard is the better practice, the higher standard should be applied. The PSB endeavors to use organic food that is sourced locally and regionally when available.
2. The Nutrition Standards in the National School Lunch and Breakfast program (7 CFR Parts 210 and 220) require the availability of fruits, vegetables, whole grains, and fat free and low-fat fluid milk in school meals, and requires that the levels of sodium and saturated fat meet the nutritional needs of school children within their calorie requirements. These improvements to the school meal program, largely based on recommendations made by the Institute of Medicine of the National Academies, are expected to enhance the diet and health of school children, and help mitigate the childhood obesity trend.
3. Trans fats are not permitted.
4. Serves real, minimally processed food without additives when budgetarily possible and available.
5. Fresh and freshly-prepared food options should be available to every student at every meal.

6. Makes ingredient, nutrition, and allergy information for all foods and beverages, except for fresh fruits and vegetables and other whole foods, readily available to students before purchasing meals, and to families through linqconnect.com in advance of the school day.

H. Competitive Food and Beverages in School

The nutrition standards for foods and beverages sold during the school day are outlined below. Foods and beverages must comply with State Standards: Massachusetts or Federal Standards: [USDA Smart Snacks in School Standards](#) whichever standard is stricter.

Snacks offered or sold to students as part of the food service program or through vending machines will comply with Smart Snacks or Massachusetts Department of Public Health (DPH) snack standards per regulations [7 CFR 210.11 105 CMR 225](#). Snacks sold through vending machines shall not compete with meals offered by the school food service program and must comply with Massachusetts standards at all times.

Fundraisers should promote physical activity and health enhancing eating habits. The sale of items during the school day must meet the guidance provided by [Massachusetts Smart snack](#) for school nutrition. The school day is defined as the midnight before to 30 minutes after the end of the school day.

Food fundraisers or food sold on behalf of the schools will also feature whole or minimally processed high nutrient foods, such as fruits and vegetables, and be consistent with the standards and objectives of the Wellness Policy while being in accordance with National School Lunch Program and School Breakfast Program: Nutrition Standards for All Foods Sold in School as Required by the Healthy, Hunger Free Kids Act of 2010 (7 CFR Parts 210 and 220).

I. Food at School Events, Field Trips, Celebrations, and Fundraisers

- PSB will refer and adhere to Life threatening Allergies (LTA) guidelines when planning food related functions during the school day.
- Given the implicit school endorsement, foods offered at any school events (including testing days, student assemblies, assemblies for parents/caregivers, curricular plans, etc.) will be wholesome, nutritious, clearly marked for the nine common allergens (peanut, tree nut, milk, soy, egg, wheat, sesame, fish, and shellfish), and meet or exceed the district's nutrition standards for food in school set forth above.
- Non-food related fundraising alternatives such as walk- or read-a-thons, jump roping, fun runs, or programming competitions, will be promoted.

- Lunch time meetings will not be used. Tutoring, clubs, and meetings may take place during lunch time if students are provided with the opportunity to get lunch.

J. Competitive Foods and Beverages & Food Marketing

Foods should compare favorably with meal program offerings and meet or exceed the same standards set forth above. These standards apply in all locations where food and beverages are offered or sold in schools: cafeterias, restaurants, student run culinary programs, cafes, vending machines, stores, and snack or other food carts.

- Only foods that meet or exceed district standards may be marketed or promoted to students.
- PSB will prioritize marketing whole or minimally processed foods to students.
- Fruit and non-fried vegetables will be offered for sale wherever food is sold.
- Only Office of Administration and Finance approved brand names, trademarks, or logos from companies that offer only product lines (both in and outside of schools) that are consistent with the Wellness Policy nutrition guidelines will appear in schools, during school activities, or in school materials, including, but not limited to curriculum or educational materials, food and beverage containers, menus, school publications, posters, electronic media, or vending machines.
- Ensure the safety and inclusion of students with food allergies and other special health concerns by following the PSB Management Guidelines for Students who have Life-Threatening Allergies.

II. NUTRITION EDUCATION

The PSB will aim to provide nutrition, health, and food literacy education to students at every grade level as part of a sequential, comprehensive, standards-based health education curriculum and/or as embedding in multi-disciplinary units that meets state and national standards. [The 2023 MA Comprehensive Health and Physical Education frameworks will serve as a guide.](#)

Curriculum will be selected, developed, and coordinated so that both dedicated health and nutrition units as well as other classroom and non-classroom settings (lunchroom, recess, special events) are used in concert to further this goal.

Appropriately, the district will take steps to ensure trained and dually licensed physical and health educators will be identified and tasked with this coordination with appropriate content area partners. The PreK-12 coordinator of Physical Education and Health will partner with

appropriate content coordinators to prepare materials, conduct, or arrange for outreach and training, and provide technical assistance.

Consistent with the values set forth in this policy, the PSB will:

1. Provide a food-positive school food environment, in which real and wholesome food is freshly prepared from whole or minimally processed ingredients to maximize naturally occurring nutrients and good taste while minimizing unnecessary additives and waste, whether in a meal program or any other school setting.
2. Teach students to be critical, astute consumers who know how to navigate both their food environment and their health support system, seek out current science, and modify their behavior to cultivate good health.
3. Teach students about the benefits of eating plant-based foods for human health, disease risk reduction, environmental sustainability, and animal welfare. Students will learn how to structure a healthy plant-based meal, and to identify nutritious plant-based foods that can be important aspects of plant-based eating. Students will learn about the benefits of plant-based eating through positive messaging surrounding plant-based foods.
4. Teach students about the benefits of eating fiber-rich proteins and minimally processed foods. The district will prioritize serving high-fiber proteins as well as minimally processed foods.
5. Teach food literacy in the classroom, in experiential learning settings like school gardens and teaching kitchens, in the cafeteria, and in other food settings; practice what is preached in nutrition education; and ensure that adult's model good choices throughout schools. Promote fruits, vegetables, whole-grain products, lower fat, nutritionally rich products from all food groups, and healthy food preparation.
6. Link with school meals program, cafeteria nutrition promotion activities, school gardens, Farm to School programs, other school foods and nutrition-related community services.
7. Include enjoyable, developmentally-appropriate, culturally-relevant and participatory activities, such as cooking demonstrations or lessons, promotions, taste-testing, farm visits and school gardens.

III. HEALTH EDUCATION, PHYSICAL EDUCATION, AND PHYSICAL ACTIVITY

The Public Schools of Brookline will provide a range of physical activity opportunities to all students, including regular physical education, daily recess, and physical activity breaks, before and after school activities, intramural/extramural sports, interscholastic sports, active academics as well as comprehensive health education.

Teachers and other school personnel will not use physical activity (*e.g.*, running laps, push-ups) or withhold opportunities for physical education or physical activity (*e.g.*, recess) consequently. The denial of recess will not be used as punishment/discipline unless the student's removal from recess has been determined as appropriate by the school principal or designee and communicated with the parents/caregivers.

A. Physical Education

All PSB students grades K-12, including students with disabilities, special health-care needs, and in in-district alternative educational settings, receive physical education each year. BHS students must earn wellness credits each year to meet graduation requirements.

K-8 Physical Education classes will occur twice per week for a minimum 40 minutes per class.

- Physical education will be taught by highly qualified specialists certified to teach physical education and/or wellness education. All physical education teachers will regularly participate in professional development activities to effectively deliver the physical education program.
- Teachers will provide a comfortable and safe learning environment. Physical education equipment will be age and developmentally appropriate. Age, ability, and developmentally appropriate modifications will be made to accommodate the needs of all students. Students will spend at least 70 percent of physical education class time participating in moderate to vigorous physical activity.
- Physical education classrooms (whether inside or outside) will receive priority when shared facilities present a conflict.

B. Health Education

PSB is committed to providing a school environment that promotes overall student wellness (physical, emotional, intellectual, and social) The PSB aims to implement a K-12 comprehensive health education program to meet state and national requirements and the nutrition education goals outlined above. In addition to the Introduction to Adolescence (ITA) unit taught by homeroom teachers in Grade 5, health education is offered to students in grades 7 through 9. PSB recognizes the need for implementing a comprehensive program in the elementary grades. Sixth grade has been identified as the next priority for health education.

- The health education program will utilize a skills-based approach designed to provide students with opportunities to develop and maintain the knowledge, skills, attitudes, and behaviors necessary to be healthy and physically active for a lifetime.
- The health education curricula will be aligned with the state and National Health Education Standards and the [MA DESE Frameworks](#). The PSB Health education will be taught by a highly qualified specialist certified to teach health and/or wellness education (which includes physical education).

C. Daily Recess

All children in grades kindergarten through five attending public schools shall receive 140 minutes of supervised, safe, and unstructured free-play recess each week, preferably outdoors, weather permitting dependent at the discretion of the school principal. Should the outdoor temperature fall below 20 degrees, recess shall occur indoors.

All children in grades 6 through 8 will receive at least 90 minutes of supervised, safe, and unstructured free-play recess each week, preferably outdoors, weather permitting, at the discretion of the school principal. Should the outdoor temperature fall below 20 degrees, recess shall occur indoors.

As used herein, the term “free play” means an unstructured environment, but which is supervised by appropriate school personnel or staff.

D. Integrating Movement throughout the School Day

The PSB will promote practices to understand that short exercise bursts create increased brain activity, resulting in students who are more focused and ready to learn. Classroom teachers will be provided with resources for increasing student heart rates periodically throughout the school day.

- Students in grades 5-8 will have access to intramural and extramural sports programs. High school students will have access to intramural physical activity programs as well as interscholastic sports programs.
- All schools will offer a range of activities that meet the needs, interests, and abilities of students, inclusive of genders, students with disabilities, and students with special health-care needs.

IV. SOCIAL AND EMOTIONAL HEALTH AND WELLBEING

The Public Schools of Brookline is committed to promoting the social and emotional development and wellbeing of all students. Brookline will provide a comprehensive, multi-tiered approach to social-emotional health and wellbeing that is designed to promote development of social-emotional skills, support engagement in healthy behavior, and discourage risk-taking behavior. Brookline’s commitment to addressing student social-emotional development and wellness has six objectives:

1. Create a safe, supportive, and affirming classroom and school culture for all students. This work includes an intentional focus on promoting strong school belonging, supporting the development of healthy and positive relationships for students and staff, using inclusive language that reflects authentic respect for differences, and having ongoing conversations on how to effectively support individuals with mental health diagnoses and substance use

issues and related needs, while encouraging a substance free school community.

2. Provide students with explicit instruction related to social-emotional learning and mental health. This work includes providing students with ongoing instruction to promote development of skills related to self-awareness, self-management, social awareness, forming healthy relationships, and making responsible decisions.

Additionally, students will be taught strategies to actively promote their wellness and mental health, including skills that promote healthy behaviors in relation to nutrition, exercise, healthy activities, interpersonal relationships, use of social media and technology, stress management, mindfulness, injury prevention, and not using substances (alcohol, marijuana, pills, tobacco) to manage or avoid uncomfortable feelings.

Students will be actively taught health skills that align with the [National Standards](#). (Decision-Making, Analyzing Influences, Accessing Valid and Reliable Information, Interpersonal Communication, Goal Setting, Advocacy and Practicing health enhancing behaviors that promote risk reduction.) This skills-based approach will provide students with the opportunity to apply content knowledge.

3. Raise awareness among students, caregivers, schools' staff, coaches, and other members of the community about the signs and symptoms of mental health diagnoses, social-emotional challenges, and substance use, keeping in mind that many behavioral and academic struggles are often manifestations of compromised mental health or personal or family stresses.

Provide ongoing training to school professionals on how to reach out to students and their families in an affirming and culturally responsive way and help them access support and treatment services. Ensure that all school staff are trained on emergency procedures, including when and how to report concerns to administration and support staff. Provide staff training in appropriate safety procedures that include, but are not limited to, contacting parents/caregivers, Staff Crisis Manual, Policies, Crisis Teams, Mandatory Reporting Responsibilities, Harassment and bullying, Life Threatening Allergies, Blood-borne Pathogens; Work with staff, students, and the community agencies to maintain a school environment that is free of vaping, tobacco and cannabis (smoking and edibles), alcohol, and other drugs; Provide literature for students that encourage the goals of these policies. Students perceived to be under influence are innocent until proven guilty or until students admit to being under the influence of illegal substances.

4. Ensure that in-school support services (including guidance, social workers, adjustment counselors, psychologists, and/or nursing staff) are accessible to all students presenting with social, emotional, mental health, and substance use issues. These school-based services include screening for mental health and substance use issues, referrals for community-based mental health and substance use supports, school-based individual or group counseling, providing psychoeducation around mental health and substance use, and support substance use cessation. Students, staff, and caregivers will be aware of resources within the school and how to access them.

Trained licensed clinical staff will be available to respond to social service and psychiatric emergencies during school hours. We will endeavor to train all staff and administrators on how to respond to students and families who are perceived to be using illegal substances. Each school will have a written emergency response plan that addresses both medical and behavioral health crises to reduce the incident of life-threatening medical emergencies and behavioral health crises and to promote efficient and appropriate responses to such emergencies.

5. Provide specialized and targeted support and interventions for all students struggling with social and emotional issues to support their academic engagement and development.
6. Promote wellbeing by supporting policies and practices that support a healthy balance between academic expectations/achievement and student mental health, and practices that encourage the development of healthy identities that support healthy decision-making. PSB will collaborate with community and school-based wellness initiatives.

V. WELLNESS POLICY IMPLEMENTATION ACTION PLAN

LEGAL AUTHORITIES: 7 CFR Parts 210 and 210; 105 CMR 225.

Evaluation and Measurement of the Implementation of the Wellness Policy.

The PSB Wellness Committee will update and make modifications to the Wellness Policy based on the results of the annual review and triennial assessments and/or as local priorities change, community needs change, wellness goals are met, new health information and/or technology emerges, and new federal or state guidance or standards are issued. The Wellness Policy will be assessed as indicated at least every three years following the triennial assessment.

Triennial Progress Assessments

The PSB will assess the PSB Wellness Policy to measure its compliance at least once every three years. This assessment will measure the implementation of our local school Wellness Policy, and include:

- The extent to which the PSB is in compliance with the local school Wellness Policy.
- The extent to which the PSB Wellness Policy compares to model local schools' wellness policies
- A description of the progress made in attaining the goals of the local school wellness.

Policy

PSB will ensure that the Wellness Policy and most recent triennial assessment are available to the public. PSB will also actively notify the school community annually about any updates made to the Wellness Policy and the availability of the triennial assessment results.

Goals

- PSB will ensure the most updated version of the Wellness Policy and triennial assessments are available on the school website for the public to view.
- PSB will present Wellness Policy updates, as applicable, during meetings with Parent Teacher Organizations, the School Committee, the Superintendent, health and wellness committee, and other interested groups or stakeholders.
- Wellness updates will be provided to students, parents/caregivers, and staff (through the PSB website and announcements in school newsletters, for example) to ensure that the community is informed and that the public is engaged.
- The school district will make available to parents/caregivers a complete copy of the PSB Wellness Policy at the beginning of the school year.
- Principals or vice-principals will ensure that each school complies with the Wellness Policy at their individual schools.
- PSB is committed to being responsive to community involvement and input, which begins with awareness of the Wellness Policy. PSB will actively communicate ways in which parents/caregivers, students, physical education teachers, school health professionals, the school committee, school administrators, food and nutrition professionals, and the public can participate in the development, implementation, and annual review of the PSB Wellness Policy.
- PSB will consider student needs in planning for a healthy nutrition environment. Students will be asked for input and feedback using surveys, and attention will be given to their comments.
- A team of district and community representatives will be established to support the food service director and teachers in implementing local purchasing and other farm to school activities on an ongoing basis. Stakeholders and community members will be offered the opportunity to provide feedback.
- The activities of the Wellness Policy will align with Goal 6 of the Strategic Plan, which reads as follows:
 - **Ethic of Wellness** For our students and the world around them to thrive, our schools must contribute to an ethic of wellness. PSB will attend to the social and emotional development of its students, so that they may flourish personally, build positive relationships, and contribute to a more caring and just world. PSB will also teach and adopt sustainable practices, inspiring and empowering students to be good stewards of the Earth.

Resources

The following resources were used in the development of the PSB Wellness Policy:

- Massachusetts Comprehensive Health and Physical Education Frameworks, 2023
- Massachusetts Nutrition Standards for Competitive Foods and Beverages in Public Schools
- United States Department of Agriculture Food and Nutrition Service: Team Nutrition
- DESE *Massachusetts School Wellness Coaching Program: Perfecting Policy*
- Centers for Disease Control and Prevention
- Massachusetts Coordinated School Health Program
- Center for Disease Control and Prevention - Smart Snacks <https://www.cdc.gov>