



Book	Regulations
Section	JL - Student Wellness
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Policy Cross Reference: [JLC](#), [GBGC](#), [JHH](#), [JHI](#), [GBK](#).

The St. Mary's County School Health Council will function in an advisory capacity to the Board of Education with regard to Wellness Policy implementation and compliance. The School Health Council represents a partnership between the public schools, the St. Mary's County Health Department, community agencies, and the general public. St. Mary's County Public Schools (SMCPS) will actively inform families and the public annually about the Wellness Policy, including its content, any updates to the policy, and its implementation status. This information will be available via the SMCPS website, the St. Mary's County School Health Council website, news releases, and/or district-wide communications.

The Board of Education will be provided an annual update on the policy and its implementation. At least once every three years, SMCPS will evaluate the system-wide implementation of the policy in order to assess adherence to the policy at the school level. During this evaluation, comparisons will be made to current model wellness policies. The School Health Council will update or modify the wellness policy based on the results of an annual Wellness Policy Implementation Survey, the triennial assessment, and/or as District priorities change.

The following leadership roles have responsibility for overseeing policy compliance: School Health Council Chair(s), Supervisor of Elementary Science and Health, Supervisor of Secondary Science and Health, and the Director of Food & Nutrition Services.

I. HEALTH EDUCATION

Instruction in Comprehensive Health Education is aligned to the Maryland Framework for Health Education which encompasses the following areas: Mental and Emotional Health; Alcohol, Tobacco, and Other Drugs; Personal and Consumer Health; Family Life and Human Sexuality; Safety and Injury Prevention; Nutrition and Fitness; and Disease Prevention and Control.

SMCPS will teach, model, encourage, and support healthy eating by all students. Schools will provide nutrition education and engage in nutrition promotion that is designed to provide students with the knowledge and skills necessary to promote and protect their health, emphasize caloric balance between food intake and energy expenditure, link with school meal programs, cafeteria nutrition promotion activities, Farm to School programs, other school foods and nutrition-related community services, and teach media literacy with an emphasis on food and beverage marketing.

All elementary school students in each grade will receive a unit of Health Education. All middle school students will receive health education on an A/B schedule for one marking period over the course of the school year. All high school students will be required to complete the half credit graduation requirement (semester course). All health education classes are taught by certified teachers.

Delivery of the Health Education curriculum will be assessed through standardized county assessments and on-site teacher observations and evaluations.

II. FOOD AND NUTRITION SERVICES

The Department of Food and Nutrition Services offers a healthy school nutrition environment that will provide students and their families with opportunities to learn and practice healthy eating through available foods and beverages, nutrition education, messages about food in the cafeteria, and through the Department of Food and Nutrition website. Students may have access to food and beverages in a variety of locations at the school including the cafeteria, vending machines, grab and go kiosks, "Breakfast in the Classroom," school stores, classroom parties, classroom rewards, school celebrations, and fundraisers.

The Department of Food and Nutrition Services provides meals that meet state and federal nutrition standards for the National School Lunch and Breakfast Programs, accommodate the health and nutrition needs of all students, and help ensure that foods and beverages sold outside of the school meal programs (all competitive foods) meet Maryland and United States Department of Agriculture's guidelines for Smart Snacks in School nutrition standards. School Nutrition professionals should meet minimum education requirements and receive annual professional development and training to ensure that they have the knowledge and skills to provide these services. All school community members will support and encourage a healthy school environment by marketing and promoting healthier foods and beverages, encouraging participation in the school meals program which includes school breakfast, school lunch, and after school snack program. All students will have access to free drinking water throughout the school day. Studies have shown that healthy eating habits improve learning outcomes and help ensure that students can reach their potential.

A. School Meals

The Department of Food and Nutrition Services is committed to serving healthy meals to students, with plenty of fresh fruits, vegetables, whole grains, and fat-free and low-fat flavored and unflavored milk. Our entrees are moderate in sodium, low in saturated fat, and have zero grams of trans-fat per serving. Our meals meet the nutrition needs of our students based on calorie requirements per age group. The Department of Food and Nutrition Services aims to improve the diet and health of our students by providing students with ways to establish and maintain lifelong healthy eating patterns and healthy lifestyle choices. Students with medically documented special diets will be accommodated to support healthy eating patterns.

All schools within the SMCPS participate in the USDA child nutrition programs, including the National School Lunch Program (NSLP) and the School Breakfast Program (SBP). The Department of Food and Nutrition Services operates additional programs in various schools: the Maryland Meals for Achievement (MMFA) Breakfast Program, Summer Food Service Program (SFSP), After School Snack Program, Grab and Go Breakfast, High School Breakfast and Lunch Kiosks, and Farm to School. All schools within SMCPS are committed to offering school meals through the NSLP and SBP programs, and other applicable Federal child nutrition programs, that:

- are accessible to all students;
- are appealing and attractive to students;
- are served in clean and pleasant settings;
- meet or exceed current nutrition requirements established by United States Department of Agriculture (USDA) Dietary Guidelines for Americans;
- promote healthy food and beverage choices, including Smarter Lunchroom techniques; and
- are consistent with applicable requirements set forth under § 210.10 and § 220.8 for meal requirements for lunch and after-school snacks, and meal requirements for breakfast.

B. School Meal Promotion

- Menus are posted on the Department of Food and Nutrition Services website www.smcps.org/dss/food-services through the Nutrislice program <https://smcps.nutrislice.com>.
- Nutrislice provides nutrition facts for daily menu offerings at www.smcps.org/dss/food-services.
- Students will be allowed at least 10 minutes to eat breakfast and 20 minutes to eat lunch, counting from the time they have received their meal and are seated.
- Students are served lunch no earlier than 10 a.m. and no later than 2 p.m. on a regularly scheduled days and early dismissal days.

C. Encouraging School Meal Consumption

- School campuses will be closed campuses to encourage students to consume lunch at school and to provide a safe school environment.
- Students will be allowed to wash their hands before eating lunch to promote healthy habits.
- School sites will participate in Farm to School activities to encourage school meal consumption by students.

D. Staff Qualifications and Professional Development

All school nutrition program directors, managers, and staff will meet or exceed hiring and annual continuing education/training requirements in the USDA professional standards for child nutrition professionals. Annual training will be provided through back to school in-service sessions, mid-year professional development, training modules, manager meetings, Culinary Boot Camp, Maryland State Department of Education (MSDE) training, and the ServSafe food safety training course. All cafeteria managers and food service workers will participate in training that focuses on nutrition, food preparation and Smarter Lunchroom Techniques, food safety and sanitation, customer service, and education of meal patterns.

E. Water

Student nutritional health will include the promotion of hydration. SMCPs will provide access to free, safe, and unflavored drinking water to students throughout their school day. SMCPs will make drinking water available where school meals are served during mealtime.

- Water cups and jugs will be provided by the Department of Food and Nutrition Services when water fountains cannot be placed in the school cafeteria.
- Students will be allowed to bring and carry (approved) water bottles containing only water throughout the school day.
- Students will have water available for a la carte purchase in the school cafeteria.

F. Competitive Foods and Beverages (foods sold to students) Maryland Nutrition Standards for all Foods Sold in Schools

Food sold to students on school premises during school hours (12:01 a.m. through 30 minutes after the end of the school day) through vending machines, school stores, fundraisers, and other sales will meet or exceed Federal Smart Snack Guidelines.

Vending Machines:

The site administrators or designee shall ensure that food sales by school-related groups and the use of vending machines are in compliance with state and federal law (Maryland Nutrition Standards for All Foods Sold in Schools) and do not impair student participation in the school food service program.

- Vending machines can remain on at all times, but must comply with Maryland Nutrition Standards for All Foods Sold in Schools.
- Vending machines located in the teacher's lounge are not accessible to students and are exempt.
- Food and Nutrition Services Coordinators will monitor compliance of vending machines in student accessible areas during school site visits and report findings to the Director of Food and Nutrition Services, Principal, and vending companies. Machines will be monitored for compliance of goods being sold and timer compliance if machines contain items that are not in compliance with Maryland Nutrition Standards for all Foods Sold in Schools.

Food Used as Incentives and Promotional Activities:

- Schools are expected to consider student wellness and student allergies when planning incentive and promotional activities. Foods that support healthy options should be promoted. Fresh fruits and vegetables, whole grains, dairy products, and water are healthier options that should be promoted during school activities involving staff, students and community.
- Schools may not withhold food as a punishment, including food served through the school food program.
- Food and Nutrition Services will provide on their Food and Nutrition Services website www.smcps.org/dss/food-services the Maryland Nutrition Standards for All Foods Sold in School. A list of all snacks provided to students for a la carte purchases may be viewed at the Food and Nutrition Services office upon request.
- It is recommended that foods served in classroom parties, as classroom rewards, and school celebrations should meet or exceed the Maryland Nutrition Standards for All Foods Sold in Schools and Federal Smart Snack Guidelines.

G. Fundraising

Foods and beverages that meet or exceed the Maryland Nutrition Standards for All Foods Sold in Schools and Federal Smart Snack Guidelines may be sold through fundraisers on the school campus during the school day.

H. Nutrition Promotion

The Department of Food and Nutrition Services will promote healthy eating habits and healthy food and beverage choices for all students throughout the school campus, as well as encourage participation in school meal programs. This promotion and guidance to our students will be done through cafeteria staff, cafeteria signage, Smarter Lunchroom Techniques, Food and Nutrition Services social media Twitter feed (SMCPs Food Nutrition @SMCPs_Food), the Department of Food and Nutrition Services website (www.smcps.org/dss/food-services), and school-based nutrition education. Students will receive consistent nutrition messages throughout the cafeteria, at the school kiosks, and through school-based nutrition education curriculum. Students will be engaged in nutrition promotion through school based menu surveys, product taste testing, a student advisory annual meeting, participation and promotion in the National School Lunch Week and School Breakfast Week activities.

I. Food and Beverage Marketing in Schools

The Department of Food and Nutrition Services is committed to providing a school environment that ensures opportunities for all students to practice healthy eating throughout the school day while minimizing commercial distractions. The Department of Food and Nutrition Services strives to teach students how to make informed choices about nutrition and health. These efforts are weakened when students are subjected to advertising on school property that contains messages inconsistent with the health information the Department of Food and Nutrition Services is trying to impart through nutrition education and health promotion efforts. Any food or beverages marketed or promoted to students on school property during the school day will meet or exceed the Maryland Nutrition Standards for All Foods Sold in School and Federal Smart Snack Guidelines.

Food and beverage marketing is defined as "commercial advertising and corporate promotions in schools." Food and beverage marketing includes oral, written, or graphic statements promoting the sale of a food or beverage product made by the producer, manufacturer, seller or any other entity with a commercial interest in the product. This term includes, but is not limited to the following:

- displays, such as on vending machine exteriors;

- corporate brand, logo, name or trademark on school equipment, such as marquees, message boards, scoreboards or backboards;
- free product samples, taste tests or coupons of a product, or free samples displaying advertising of a product;
- advertisements in school publications or school mailings;
- brand names, trademarks, logos or tags, except when placed on a physically present food or beverage product or its container; and
- newly purchased equipment will be free of corporate brand, logo, name or trademark.

J. Food Safety and Security

For the safety and security of the Department of Food Nutrition Service facilities, access to the food service facilities is limited to authorized personnel. To help protect the health and safety of the students and staff in our schools, the following procedures are implemented:

- All foods made available on school campus are purchased through approved vendors only.
- Sanitation and safety procedures shall comply with COMAR Food Service Facilities and be inspected by St. Mary's County Health Department several times a year. Hazard Analysis and Critical Control Points (HACCP) plans and guidelines shall be implemented to prevent foodborne illness.
- The St. Mary's County Health Department regulations require that food served to the public must be prepared in a licensed facility. The license for the Department of Food and Nutrition Services is not transferable to outside caterers or groups applying for use of the facility.
- Any outside group who desires using the school cafeteria for food preparation or use of the food service equipment must request "Usage of School Facilities" by going to (www.smcps.org/fs/usage-of-school-facilities) School Dude (school staff) or Community Reservation Service (community request) at least two weeks prior to the event. A food service manager or food service worker must be present and their time compensated.
- No outside food, raw meat, or food products may be stored or left in the cafeteria equipment, freezers or refrigerators.

K. Meal Benefit Application for Free and Reduced-Price School Meals

- Meal Benefit Applications are sent home with every student at the beginning of the school year. The Meal Benefit Application may also be accessed on the Department of Food and Nutrition Services Website (www.smcps.org/dss/food-services).
- Parents or guardians may submit forms throughout the school year.
- SMCPs does a direct certification import into the point of sale system.
- Students are not overtly identified at the point of sale.
- Meal Benefit status information for students may only be shared with SMCPs Administrators, Principals and Assistant Principals, Parent Liaisons, and Pupil Service Workers.
- Incomplete forms are returned to the school site for follow-up information with the families.
- Meal Benefit Applications are available in English and Spanish on the Department of Food and Nutrition Services website.

III. SOCIAL AND EMOTIONAL SCHOOL CLIMATE

The Department of Student Services coordinates prevention and intervention programs and services to support schools, students, and parents by addressing the cognitive, behavioral, social, emotional, safety, and alternative education needs of all students to maximize student achievement. These services are provided through the coordination of programs that provide students with the necessary skills for healthy relationships and the promotion of a positive learning environment. The following programs will be implemented and measured through an annual Wellness Policy Implementation Survey:

- Multi-tiered Systems of Support (MTSS)
- Student Attendance Monitoring
- Bullying Prevention Program (grades 3-7)

IV. PHYSICAL ENVIRONMENT

Various departments within the Division of Supporting Services support the provision of a safe and healthy physical school environment. SMCPs school sites are designed and maintained to minimize health and safety hazards, with all outdoor and indoor spaces, buildings, equipment, facilities and resources being suitable for learning objectives. Furniture, equipment, resources, and materials of instruction must be safe, clean, well-maintained, and support the flexibility of the school system's educational programming and experiences. The physical environment of schools also encompasses well-maintained and safe lighting levels, indoor air quality, comfortable temperatures, and compliance with all local, state, and federal health and safety guidelines and standards. The following are examples of services provided by the Division of Supporting Services in support of a healthy physical environment:

- The Building Modification Request process is utilized at all school sites to ensure that any changes to the physical environment meet legal requirements and maintain a safe environment.
- Facilities are inspected and systems are tested according to legal requirements and industry standards.
- Concerns about the safety of the physical environment are brought to the attention of appropriate personnel through existing processes such as the maintenance work order system, air quality review committees, operations staff reporting, and other reporting systems.
- New construction is compliant with all requirements for safe physical environments. Plans are reviewed by the Public School Construction Program.

V. HEALTH SERVICES

A health care delivery system supports academic success by providing a broad scope of health services from licensed health care providers to improve the physical health of students. The school nurses will:

- refer students to appropriate community agencies for medical care and health insurance;
- refer students to primary care health service providers for chronic disease/illness, acute illness/injury and communicable disease treatment as needed;
- provide health education and counseling to promote a healthy community;
- provide vision and hearing screenings, referrals and follow-up care as needed; and
- provide medications and treatments for chronic disease and emergency care as authorized by a physician/prescriber.

VI. COMMUNITY INVOLVEMENT

Schools will develop effective wellness programs by actively inviting local community organizations and businesses to become partners during the planning and implementation stages. Each school will organize a wellness committee and designate a person or persons to chair the committee. Schools will:

- invite representatives from local community organizations and businesses to join school-based School Improvement Teams;
- invite representatives from local community organizations and businesses to attend the quarterly meetings of the St. Mary's County School Health Council;
- invite members of the local community to serve on local School Wellness Committees;
- invite members of the local community to liaise with school Parent Teacher Associations (PTA);
- use school websites to promote and announce dates and times of all wellness functions and meetings; and
- use approved social media (e.g. Twitter, Facebook) to announce and promote wellness based meetings and activities.

VII. FAMILY ENGAGEMENT

To align with the Maryland Framework for Family Engagement requirements as it relates to student wellness, schools will adopt the mindset that when schools, families, and community groups work together to support student learning, children tend to do better in school, stay in school longer, and like school. To engage families in school-based and community-based wellness activities, schools are encouraged to:

- invite families to join local PTA and PTA-sponsored or organized events;
- invite families to join school-based wellness committees;
- invite families to help organize Family Fitness nights/Health Fairs;
- consider healthy fundraisers;
- organize fitness events such as annual 5K events;
- organize parent workshops on the benefits of wellness and how it works to encourage student learning;
- develop partnership schools where families are seen as partners in improving wellness outcomes;
- connect wellness activities to student learning; and
- actively involved families in decisions on school improvement which includes the physical, mental, and social well-being of all students.

VIII. PHYSICAL EDUCATION AND PHYSICAL ACTIVITY

A. Physical Education

Instruction in Physical Education is aligned to the Maryland Framework for Physical Education which encompasses the following areas: demonstrate competency in a variety of motor skills and movement patterns; apply knowledge of concepts, principles, strategies, and tactics related to movement and performance; demonstrate the knowledge and skills to achieve and maintain a health-enhancing level of physical activity and fitness; exhibit responsible personal and social behavior that respects self and others; and, recognize the value of physical activity for health, enjoyment, challenge, self-expression and social interaction.

SMCPS will provide students with physical education, using an age-appropriate, sequential physical education curriculum consistent with national and state standards for physical education. The physical education curriculum will promote the benefits of a physically active lifestyle and will help students develop skills to engage in lifelong healthy habits, as well as incorporate essential health education concepts. Students shall be supported in setting, and encouraged to meet, personal fitness goals that result in the improvement, achievement, and/or maintenance of a health enhancing level of physical fitness. All students will be provided equal opportunity to participate in physical education classes. SMCPS will make appropriate accommodations to allow for equitable participation for all students and will adapt physical education classes and equipment as necessary.

All elementary school students in each grade will receive physical education for at least 135 minutes per two-week period throughout the school year. All middle school students will receive physical education on an A/B schedule for three marking periods over the course of the school year. All high school students will be required to complete the half-credit graduation requirement (semester course) and be provided an opportunity to select additional physical education courses as electives. All physical education classes are taught by certified teachers.

B. Physical Activity

Physical activity during the school day (including but not limited to recess, classroom physical activity breaks, or physical education) will not be withheld as punishment for any reason. SMCPS will provide teachers and other school staff with a list of ideas for alternative ways to discipline students.

C. Recess

All elementary schools will offer at least 20 minutes of recess on all days during the school year. Middle schools are encouraged to offer at least 15 minutes of recess on all days during the school year. This policy may be waived on early dismissal or late arrival days. If recess is offered before lunch, schools will have appropriate hand-washing facilities and/or hand-sanitizing mechanisms located just inside/outside the cafeteria to ensure proper hygiene prior to eating and students are required to use these mechanisms before eating. Hand-washing time, as well as time to put away coats/hats/gloves, will be built into the recess transition period/time frame before students enter the cafeteria.

Outdoor recess will be offered when weather and conditions are feasible for outdoor play. In the event that the school or district must conduct indoor recess, teachers and staff will follow the indoor recess guidelines that promote physical activity for students, to the extent practicable. Recess will complement, not substitute, physical education class.

D. Classroom Physical Activity Breaks (Elementary and Secondary)

SMCPS recognizes that students are more attentive and ready to learn if provided with periodic breaks when they can be physically active or stretch. Thus, students will be offered periodic opportunities to be active or to stretch throughout the day on all or most days during a typical school week. SMCPS recommends teachers provide short physical activity breaks to students during and between classroom time when possible. These physical activity breaks will complement, not substitute, physical education class, recess, and class transition periods. SMCPS will provide resources and links to resources, tools, and technology with ideas for classroom physical activity breaks. Resources and ideas are available through the USDA and the Alliance for a Healthier Generation (AFHG).

E. Before and After School Activities

SMCPS offers opportunities for students to participate in physical activity either before and/or after the school day (or both) through a variety of methods. These activities may include clubs, intramurals, field trips and interscholastic athletics.

IX. COUNSELING AND PSYCHOLOGICAL

Psychological and school counseling services will be provided to improve a students' mental, emotional, and social health. These services will be provided through a K through 12 School Counseling Program and School Psychology Program. Specifically these programs will:

- provide social skill instruction through small group and classroom lessons in grades K-5;
- provide bullying prevention instruction in grades 3-7;
- perform individual student risk assessment and intervention in grades K-12; and
- conduct individual and small group counseling to address identified needs in grades K-12.

Employee Wellness. Please see Policy [GBGC](#) for information on employee wellness.