

Triennial Assessment Report: Triannual Assessment (3/2025)

District: GROTON

Introduction

The Groton School District, in compliance with the United States Department of Agriculture (USDA) regulations for the National School Lunch Program (NSLP), has conducted a triennial assessment of its Local School Wellness Policy. This assessment was carried out by the Wellness Committee, which includes a diverse group of stakeholders from the Groton community. The assessment utilized the WellSAT (Wellness School Assessment Tool), developed by the University of Connecticut's Rudd Center for Food Policy and Health, to evaluate the comprehensiveness and strength of the district's wellness policy.

Key Findings

The WellSAT assessment compared Groton's policy to a model policy, identifying key strengths and areas for improvement. The findings are summarized as follows:

Strengths:

Strong alignment with USDA guidelines for nutrition standards in school meals.

Clear language supporting physical education and activity requirements.

Effective policies promoting nutrition education and student wellness programs.

Areas for Growth:

Enhancing policy language to ensure stronger accountability and implementation measures.

Expanding strategies to promote healthier food options outside of school meals (e.g., vending machines, fundraisers, and classroom celebrations).

Strengthening community engagement efforts to support student health and wellness initiatives.

Strong Policies and Aligned Practices

Areas of Success

The Groton School District has made significant progress in promoting student wellness through a variety of successful initiatives. The district has effectively implemented USDA nutrition standards, ensuring that all school meals are both nutritious and appealing to students. The incorporation of fresh, locally sourced ingredients into meal offerings has improved overall meal quality and increased student participation in school meal programs. Additionally, the district has prioritized physical activity by maintaining structured physical education classes and integrating movement-based learning strategies into the classroom.

Beyond nutrition and physical activity, the district has also fostered a culture of wellness through robust nutrition education programs. These programs provide students with the knowledge and skills necessary to make healthy choices both in and out of school. School staff and administration have worked diligently to create an environment where wellness is a priority, encouraging students to develop lifelong healthy habits.

The district has also demonstrated success in collaborating with parents and community organizations to support wellness initiatives. Through regular wellness committee meetings and outreach events, stakeholders have been engaged in discussions about school health policies and have contributed valuable insights to enhance wellness programs. This commitment to collaboration has strengthened the district's ability to meet


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its wellness goals and create a healthier school environment for all students.

		Policy Score	Practice Score	
FR1	Does the district have specific goals for nutrition education designed to promote student wellness?	2	2	☆
FR2	Do your National School Lunch Program meals (and, if applicable, School Breakfast Program meals) meet all federal standards for meal patterns, nutrient levels, and calorie requirements for the grade levels served?	2	2	☆
FR3	Does your school take steps to protect the privacy of students who qualify for free or reduced-price meals?	2	2	☆
FR4	Is free (i.e., no cost to students) drinking water available to students during meals?	2	2	☆
FR5	Do all school nutrition program directors, managers, and staff meet or exceed the annual continuing education/training hours required by the USDA's Professional Standards requirements?	2	2	☆
FR6	Do all competitive foods and beverages sold to students during the school day meet or exceed the USDA's nutrition standards, commonly called Smart Snacks?	2	2	☆
FR7	Do all a la carte foods and beverages sold in the cafeteria meet Smart Snacks standards?	2	2	☆
FR8	Do all foods and beverages sold in vending machines meet Smart Snack standards?	2	2	☆
FR9	Do all foods and beverages sold in school stores during the school day meet Smart Snack standards?	2	2	☆
NES1	Does the district offer breakfast every day to all students?	2	2	☆

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NES2	Does your school take steps to address feeding students with unpaid meal balances without stigmatizing them?	2	2	☆
NES11	Do all foods or beverages SERVED (not sold) to students after the school day on school grounds (including aftercare, clubs, and afterschool programming) meet federal nutrition standards (e.g., CACFP or Smart Snacks)?	2	2	☆
NE4	Do all high school students receive sequential and comprehensive nutrition education?	2	2	☆
PEPA2	Does the district have a written physical education curriculum that is aligned with national and/or state standards?	2	2	☆
PEPA7	Are all physical education classes taught by state certified/licensed teachers who are endorsed to teach physical education?	2	2	☆
PEPA8	Is ongoing professional development offered every year for PE teachers that is relevant and specific to physical education?	2	2	☆
PEPA13	Is there daily recess for all grades in elementary school?	2	2	☆
PEPA17	 Are teachers encouraged to use physical activity as a reward for students?	2	2	☆
PEPA18	Do teachers ever use physical activity as a punishment?	2	2	☆
PEPA19	Do teachers ever withhold physical activity as a classroom management tool?	2	2	☆
IC1	Is there an active district-level wellness committee?	2	2	☆

Create Practice Implementation Plan

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To ensure full compliance with all elements of the Local School Wellness Policy (LSWP), the Groton School District will establish a structured implementation plan that includes clear objectives, accountability measures, and continuous evaluation. The district will take the following steps:

Establish Clear Responsibilities: Assign wellness policy oversight to a designated wellness coordinator who will work closely with school administrators, food service personnel, physical education staff, and community partners to ensure all policy elements are implemented effectively.

Develop Detailed Action Plans: Each school within the district will create an individualized wellness action plan that outlines specific strategies to meet policy requirements. These plans will include timelines, responsible parties, and measurable goals to track progress.



Enhance Staff Training and Professional Development: Staff members involved in nutrition education, food services, and physical education will receive ongoing training to align with best practices and policy expectations. Training sessions will focus on USDA guidelines, student engagement strategies, and effective implementation of wellness initiatives.

Increase Stakeholder Engagement: The district will continue to engage students, parents, and community members through wellness committee meetings, surveys, and outreach programs to encourage participation and input in wellness activities.

Implement Monitoring and Evaluation Systems: A structured monitoring system will be established to regularly assess compliance with the LSWP. Schools will conduct self-assessments, and the district's wellness committee will perform annual reviews to identify successes and areas for improvement.








Strengthen Communication and Awareness: The district will develop communication strategies, such as newsletters, social media updates, and school website postings, to keep all stakeholders informed about wellness policy updates, progress, and upcoming initiatives.

Adjust and Improve Based on Feedback: The district will use data collected from assessments and stakeholder feedback to make necessary adjustments to the wellness policy, ensuring it remains relevant, effective, and aligned with evolving best practices.

		Policy Score	Practice Score	
FR11	Does your district regulate foods and beverages served at class parties and other school celebrations in elementary schools?	2	1	
FR12	Is there food or beverage marketing on the school campus during the school day? If yes, do the marketed items meet Smart Snacks criteria?	2	1	

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FR18	Has the wellness policy been revised based on the previous triennial assessment?	1	0	
NES6	Do students have at least 10 minutes to eat breakfast and at least 20 minutes to eat lunch, counting from the time they are seated?	2	1	
NES13	Do teachers or school staff give students food as a reward?	1	0	
PEPA4	How many minutes per week of PE does each grade in elementary school receive?	2	0	
PEPA6	How many minutes per week of PE does each grade in high school receive?	2	1	
PEPA14	 Do teachers provide regular physical activity breaks for students in the classroom?	2	1	

Update Policies

Policy Updates for Compliance and Enhancement

To align with federal regulations and ensure comprehensive wellness initiatives, the Groton School District will update its Local School Wellness Policy to include all required elements. These updates will address:

Stronger Language for Policy Enforcement: The revised policy will incorporate more explicit language outlining enforcement measures, ensuring accountability at all school levels.

Updated Nutrition Guidelines: The policy will reflect the latest USDA nutrition standards, including meal pattern requirements and standards for competitive foods sold on campus.

Expanded Physical Activity Requirements: The updated policy will further emphasize the importance of daily physical activity, incorporating recommendations for recess, classroom movement breaks, and extracurricular fitness opportunities.

Wellness Promotion and Marketing: The policy will outline specific guidelines for promoting healthy choices within the school environment, including restrictions on marketing unhealthy foods and beverages to students.












Stakeholder Engagement and Reporting: The policy will include provisions for increased transparency and

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stakeholder involvement, ensuring regular updates on wellness initiatives and policy progress.

Mental Health and Emotional Well-Being: Recognizing the importance of a holistic approach to wellness, the updated policy will include strategies to support students' mental health through social-emotional learning programs, counseling services, and mindfulness initiatives.

		Policy Score	Practice Score	
FR13	Which groups are represented on the district-level wellness committee?	1	2	
FR15	How is the wellness policy made available to the public?	1	2	
FR16	Is wellness policy implementation evaluated every three years?	1	2	
FR17	What is included in the triennial assessment report to the public?	1	2	
NES3	Does your school or district provide information to families about eligibility for free or reduced-price meals?	1	2	
NES4	Does your school use strategies to maximize participation in the school breakfast program and/or school lunch program?	0	2	
NES5	Are marketing strategies used to promote healthy food and beverage choices in school?	1	2	
NES7	 In your district, is it a priority to procure locally produced foods for school meals?	1	2	
NES8	Do you know where to access the USDA Smart Snacks nutrition standards to check and see if an item can be sold in school during the school day?	1	2	
NES10	Are foods or beverages containing caffeine sold at the high school level?	0	2	

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NES12	Do all foods or beverages SOLD (not served) to students after the school day on school grounds (including aftercare, clubs, and afterschool programming) meet federal nutrition standards (e.g., CACFP or Smart Snacks)?	1	2	
NES14	Do students have consistent and easy access to free drinking water throughout the school day?	1	2	
NE2	Do all elementary school students receive sequential and comprehensive nutrition education?	1	2	
NE3	Do all middle school students receive sequential and comprehensive nutrition education?	1	2	
PEPA1	 Does the district have a written physical education curriculum that is implemented consistently for every grade?	1	2	
PEPA3	How does your physical education program promote a physically active lifestyle?	1	2	
PEPA9	What percentage of students do you estimate do not take PE each year due to exemptions?	1	2	
PEPA10	What percentage of students do you estimate do not take PE each year due to substitutions?	1	2	
PEPA15	Does the district have "joint-use" or "shared-use" agreements?	1	2	
EW1	 Are there strategies used by the school to support employee wellness?	0	2	
IC2	Is there an active school-level wellness committee?	1	2	

Opportunities for Growth

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Based on the assessment results, the Wellness Committee has developed an action plan to improve the Local School Wellness Policy. The proposed steps include:

Revising policy language to enhance enforceability and specificity in wellness goals.

Increasing outreach efforts to involve parents, students, and community members in wellness initiatives.







Implementing additional training for staff on best practices in school nutrition and wellness promotion.

Establishing a monitoring system to track progress and ensure continued compliance with USDA regulations.

		Policy Score	Practice Score	
FR10	Are there fundraisers that sell foods or beverages to be consumed during the school day? If yes, do the foods and beverages sold meet Smart Snacks standards?	1	1	
FR14	Is there an official who is responsible for the implementation and compliance with the wellness policy at the building level for each school?	1	1	
NE1	Are skills-based, behavior-focused, and interactive/participatory methods used in nutrition education to develop student skills?	1	1	
NE5	Is nutrition education integrated into other subjects beyond health education?	1	1	
NE6	Do school nutrition services staff members use the following methods to collaborate with teachers to reinforce nutrition education lessons taught in the classroom?	1	1	
NE7	 Does nutrition education address agriculture and the food system?	0	1	
PEPA5	How many minutes per week of PE does each grade in middle school receive?	1	1	

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PEPA11	 Are there opportunities for families and community members to engage in physical activity at school?	1	1	
PEPA12	 Are there opportunities for all students to engage in physical activity before and after school?	1	1	
PEPA16	What proportion of students walk or bike to school?	1	1	
EW2	Are school staff encouraged to model healthy eating and physical activity behaviors in front of students?	0	1	

Conclusion

The Groton School District, in compliance with the United States Department of Agriculture (USDA) regulations for the National School Lunch Program (NSLP), has conducted a triennial assessment of its Local School Wellness Policy. This assessment was carried out by the Wellness Committee, which includes a diverse group of stakeholders from the Groton community. The assessment utilized the WellSAT (Wellness School Assessment Tool), developed by the University of Connecticut's Rudd Center for Food Policy and Health, to evaluate the comprehensiveness and strength of the district's wellness policy.

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Key



Strong Policies and Aligned Practices - District has a strong policy and is fully implementing practices that align with the policy



Create Practice Implementation Plan - District has a strong or weak policy, but practice implementation is either absent or limited



Update Policies Update Policies - District is fully implementing a practice but there is no or only weak language in the written policy, or the district is partially implementing practices and there is no language in the policy



Opportunities for Growth - District has either not addressed the topic in policy or practice; or has only addressed the topic in a very limited way

For more resources, visit: wellsat.org/resources