

Triennial Assessment Report: Triennial Wellness Assessment - Tacoma (6/2025)

District: TACOMA

Introduction

The local school wellness policy triennial assessment is a federally mandated review conducted every three years to evaluate the implementation and effectiveness of a school's wellness policies. It ensures schools are meeting the requirements of the policy and making progress toward promoting student health and well-being. The assessment includes measuring compliance, progress, and comparing to model wellness policies.

In Spring 2025, Tacoma Public Schools used the WellSAT Questionnaire to survey principals, district-level officials and nutrition services leadership to assess district policy and practices. Scores from questions directed to principals represent an aggregate of survey results from elementary, middle and high school principals across the school district. The district will also review the individual school results as part of future policy and implementation improvements.

Strong Policies and Aligned Practices

Areas where the district is strong in both policy and practice includes providing a breakfast and lunch program as well as physical education curriculum that adhere to federally required standards.

		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	☆
FR16	Is wellness policy implementation evaluated every three years?	2	2	☆
FR17	What is included in the triennial assessment report to the public?	2	2	☆

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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?	2	2	☆
PEPA1	✍️ Does the district have a written physical education curriculum that is implemented consistently for every grade?	2	2	☆
PEPA2	Does the district have a written physical education curriculum that is aligned with national and/or state standards?	2	2	☆
PEPA3	How does your physical education program promote a physically active lifestyle?	2	2	☆
PEPA7	Are all physical education classes taught by state certified/licensed teachers who are endorsed to teach physical education?	2	2	☆
PEPA12	✍️ Are there opportunities for all students to engage in physical activity before and after school?	2	2	☆

Create Practice Implementation Plan

While the district policy and practice are strong in meeting most federal requirements, the district has identified opportunity to improve outreach and oversight related to how individual schools implement Smart Snack requirements. The district is also working to formalize its wellness committee actions and processes.

The district's plan starts with forming a district wellness committee to review policy updates and make recommendations for improving implementation related to Smart Snack compliance. This will be a cross-departmental effort over the 2025-26 school year involving district nutrition, instruction, CTE, and building leadership representation.

	Policy Score	Practice Score	
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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	1	
FR7	Do all a la carte foods and beverages sold in the cafeteria meet Smart Snacks standards?	2	1	
FR9	Do all foods and beverages sold in school stores during the school day meet Smart Snack standards?	2	0	
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?	2	1	
FR11	Does your district regulate foods and beverages served at class parties and other school celebrations in elementary schools?	1	0	
FR13	Which groups are represented on the district-level wellness committee?	2	0	
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	0	
FR15	How is the wellness policy made available to the public?	2	1	
FR18	Has the wellness policy been revised based on the previous triennial assessment?	2	1	
PEPA4	How many minutes per week of PE does each grade in elementary school receive?	1	0	
PEPA6	How many minutes per week of PE does each grade in high school receive?	1	0	

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Update Policies

While our policies largely address all federal requirements, the district has identified policy areas that need to be refined or updated in order reflect the current nutrition environment and programs.

This effort will be in two phases:

- 1) updating policies related to federal requirements by September 2025, then
- 2) a more comprehensive review over the 2025-26 school year involving a cross-departmental effort that will include district nutrition, instruction, CTE, and building leadership representation.

		Policy Score	Practice Score	
FR4	Is free (i.e., no cost to students) drinking water available to students during meals?	0	2	
NES1	Does the district offer breakfast every day to all students?	0	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	
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?	1	2	
NES10	Are foods or beverages containing caffeine sold at the high school level?	0	2	
NES14	Do students have consistent and easy access to free drinking water throughout the school day?	0	2	

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PEPA8	Is ongoing professional development offered every year for PE teachers that is relevant and specific to physical education?	1	2	
PEPA9	What percentage of students do you estimate do not take PE each year due to exemptions?	1	2	
PEPA13	Is there daily recess for all grades in elementary school?	1	2	
PEPA15	Does the district have "joint-use" or "shared-use" agreements?	1	2	
PEPA18	Do teachers ever use physical activity as a punishment?	1	2	
PEPA19	Do teachers ever withhold physical activity as a classroom management tool?	1	2	
EW1	 Are there strategies used by the school to support employee wellness?	0	2	

Opportunities for Growth

While district policies largely address all federal requirements, we have identified two areas of opportunity for refinement of policy and/or implementation, including continuing education hours and the wellness policy.

It is also recognized that while some schools incorporate substantive nutrition education into their curriculum, it is not consistent across schools and is not at this time reflected in district policy. Physical activity and wellness committee policy and practice are also areas to consider improvements.

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	Policy Score	Practice Score	
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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?	0	1	
NES5	Are marketing strategies used to promote healthy food and beverage choices in school?	0	1	
NES7	 In your district, is it a priority to procure locally produced foods for school meals?	0	1	
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)?	0	1	
NES13	Do teachers or school staff give students food as a reward?	0	0	
NE1	Are skills-based, behavior-focused, and interactive/participatory methods used in nutrition education to develop student skills?	0	1	
NE2	Do all elementary school students receive sequential and comprehensive nutrition education?	0	1	
NE3	Do all middle school students receive sequential and comprehensive nutrition education?	0	1	
NE4	Do all high school students receive sequential and comprehensive nutrition education?	0	1	
NE5	Is nutrition education integrated into other subjects beyond health education?	0	1	
NE7	 Does nutrition education address agriculture and the food system?	0	1	

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PEPA5	How many minutes per week of PE does each grade in middle school receive?	1	1	
PEPA10	What percentage of students do you estimate do not take PE each year due to substitutions?	1	1	
PEPA11	 Are there opportunities for families and community members to engage in physical activity at school?	0	0	
PEPA14	 Do teachers provide regular physical activity breaks for students in the classroom?	1	1	
PEPA16	What proportion of students walk or bike to school?	0	1	
PEPA17	 Are teachers encouraged to use physical activity as a reward for students?	1	1	
EW2	Are school staff encouraged to model healthy eating and physical activity behaviors in front of students?	0	1	
IC1	Is there an active district-level wellness committee?	0	0	
IC2	Is there an active school-level wellness committee?	0	0	

Conclusion

Tacoma Public Schools' 2025 Triennial Assessment providing the following key findings:

Strengths:

- Strong alignment with federal standards for school breakfast and lunch programs
- Comprehensive physical education curriculum

Areas for improvement:

- Inconsistent implementation of Smart Snack standards across schools
- Need for formalization of wellness committee actions

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- Gaps in policy regarding continuing education hours, nutrition education across schools, and physical activity and wellness committee policy and practices

Improvement Plan (2025-26 school year)

In addition to updating policy related to federal requirements by Fall 2025, the district will form a District Wellness Committee to review and recommend policy updates and implementation. This committee will initially include cross-departmental representation (nutrition, CTE, instruction and building leadership) to:

- 1) review and update wellness policies,
- 2) improve Smart Snack compliance,
- 3) address inconsistencies in nutrition education,
- 4) enhance wellness committee practices, and
- 5) make recommendations for committee work and participation moving forward.

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

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