

Triennial Assessment Report: Waterbury Public Schools Triennial Assessment 2025 (3/2025)

District: WATERBURY

Introduction

Every three years, Waterbury Public Schools (WPS) conducts a comprehensive, multi-phase self-evaluation of its Local School Wellness Policy (LSWP), examining both the policy and its practices, as well as their collective impact on student well-being and school climate. This federally guided triennial assessment is a foundational pillar in our district's ongoing commitment to fostering a culture of health, wellness, and academic readiness for every student.

In June 2025, WPS successfully concluded the latest triennial assessment through district-wide collaboration. The process was led by the District School Health and Wellness Advisory Committee (SHAWAC), with representation from the Board of Education, district administration, food services, health and physical education, school nursing, public health leadership, educators, and parents. Grounded in the belief that student success is deeply tied to a safe, supportive, and health-promoting school environment, this committee continues to lead efforts in shaping equitable and sustainable wellness practices throughout the district. Importantly, we recognize that broad-based collaboration is essential in a district as large and diverse as Waterbury. School-level administrators further contributed to the assessment through targeted surveys designed to reflect school-based practices and highlight strengths and opportunities for growth.

We are proud to report that Waterbury Public Schools meets or exceeds federal wellness policy requirements and aligns with many best practices recommended nationally. Compared to our previous triennial assessment in June 2022, we have made measurable, system-wide progress toward the goals set three years ago. Building on that progress, we have outlined new strategic priorities that will guide our next phase of implementation and ensure continued growth in the health and well-being of our students, staff, and school communities.

Strong Policies and Aligned Practices

WPS demonstrated excellence in many federally required areas:

Specific district goals focus on promoting nutrition education and student wellness.

Free drinking water is consistently available to students during meals and throughout the school day.

All cafeteria a la carte items and vending machine offerings of food and beverages for consumption during the school day meet USDA Smart Snacks standards and Healthy Food Certification (HFC).

Nutrition Environment and Services:

Breakfast is offered daily to all students.

Student participation in school meals is strong, supported by a diverse menu that includes multiple second choices, salad bars, and vegetarian options.

Free drinking water is readily accessible throughout the school day.

Nutrition Education:

Instruction uses skills-based, interactive, and behavior-focused methods.

All middle school students receive comprehensive, sequential nutrition education.

Enhancements since June 2022: Nutrition Education, Environment & Services:

Nutrition education to address agriculture and the food system through participatory activities, such as farm visits and greenhouses:

Wilby High School: agricultural and video production students visited Chanticleer Acres in Litchfield, Urban Fresh Gardens in Waterbury, CT

Washington Elementary School: students visited Oak Ridge Dairy in Ellington, CT

A Registered Dietitian presented to Crosby High School's Foundations of Health Class.

**Triennial Assessment Report: Waterbury Public Schools Triennial
Assessment 2025 (3/2025)
District: WATERBURY**

The Food Service Department created a more consistent dining experience across the district by utilizing our central kitchen for pre-plated meals, with a consistent effort made to improve meal quality and support uniform meal offerings and production.

The Food Service Department procured locally made yogurt from Arethusa Farm, served it to all grade levels throughout Spring 2025, and displayed an educational handout highlighting the nutritional benefits of dairy.

The Food Service Department procured locally grown Fuji apples from Drazen Orchards, served them during CT Grown for CT Kids Week in October 2024, and displayed a supplemental educational handout.

National Nutrition Month 2025: a variety of fresh fruit was served each Wednesday with breakfast, along with educational snacks and a custom edition of a digital magazine highlighting each fruit

The Food Service Department established four salad bars in the 2024-2025 school year (Waterbury Arts Magnet School, Gilmartin Elementary School, North End Middle School, Kennedy High School) to increase student choice, engagement, and exposure to a variety of fresh fruits, vegetables, and proteins.

Physical Education (PE) & Physical Activity (PA):

A standards-aligned physical education (PE) curriculum is implemented across all grade levels.

Physical Education PK-12 is taught by certified teachers, who receive annual, specialized training.

Less than 5% of students are exempt or substitute out of PE.

All elementary students receive at least 20 minutes of daily recess.

Joint-use agreements allow community access to school facilities outside school hours.

Teachers use physical activity as a reward.

Enhancements since June 2022:

The Health and Physical Education course requirements for high school graduation increased from 1.0 credits in Physical Education to 1.0 credits in Health Education, in addition to 1.0 credits in Physical Education.

The PK-12 Health Education Curriculum has been completely revised to embed Skills-Based Health instruction designed to maximize student engagement through skills practice and project learning.

The PK-12 Physical Education Curriculum has been substantially revised to embed alternatives to sport instruction designed to maximize student engagement by offering lifetime recreation activities and levels of student choice aligned with their current movement identity.

Fitness Centers at all five high schools and all three comprehensive middle schools have been completely renovated and outfitted with updated equipment to provide students and staff with opportunities to access physical conditioning resources.

Elementary Unified Sports has been introduced at four elementary schools this year to provide opportunities for students with special needs to partner with their non-disabled peers and compete in sports activities designed to foster collaboration and a sense of community.

All 19 elementary school Physical Education programs were completely upgraded with new and/or updated instructional equipment in 2023 and 2024.

Two new intra-district high school sports programs were introduced in 2023 to increase opportunities for students to participate after school; 4 separate high schools launched boys’ volleyball and girls’ soccer programs, which will now be entering their third year.

Integration & Coordination:

A district-level wellness committee met monthly during the 2024-2025 school year to guide and support wellness initiatives.

Our LSWP remains accessible to the public via the Waterbury Public Schools website.

	Policy	Practice	
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**Triennial Assessment Report: Waterbury Public Schools Triennial
Assessment 2025 (3/2025)
District: WATERBURY**

		Score	Score	
FR1	Does the district have specific goals for nutrition education designed to promote student wellness?	2	2	☆
FR4	Is free (i.e., no cost to students) drinking water available to students during meals?	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	☆
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	2	☆
FR15	How is the wellness policy made available to the public?	2	2	☆
NES1	Does the district offer breakfast every day to all students?	2	2	☆
NES4	Does your school use strategies to maximize participation in the school breakfast program and/or school lunch program?	2	2	☆
NES14	Do students have consistent and easy access to free drinking water throughout the school day?	2	2	☆
NE1	Are skills-based, behavior-focused, and interactive/participatory methods used in nutrition education to develop student skills?	2	2	☆
NE3	Do all middle school students receive sequential and comprehensive nutrition education?	2	2	☆

**Triennial Assessment Report: Waterbury Public Schools Triennial
Assessment 2025 (3/2025)
District: WATERBURY**

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	
PEPA8	Is ongoing professional development offered every year for PE teachers that is relevant and specific to physical education?	2	2	
PEPA9	What percentage of students do you estimate do not take PE each year due to exemptions?	2	2	
PEPA10	What percentage of students do you estimate do not take PE each year due to substitutions?	2	2	
PEPA13	Is there daily recess for all grades in elementary school?	2	2	
PEPA15	Does the district have "joint-use" or "shared-use" agreements?	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	
IC1	Is there an active district-level wellness committee?	2	2	

Triennial Assessment Report: Waterbury Public Schools Triennial Assessment 2025 (3/2025)

District: WATERBURY

Create Practice Implementation Plan

Despite many areas of strength, the assessment identified critical gaps where practice has not yet caught up to policy or where policy is needed to support existing practices.

Key Focus Areas for Practice Implementation:

Institute intentional and consistent collaboration with school administrators to elevate the status of nutrition education and physical activity within the academic framework. While core academic achievement remains a central focus, wellness education must be recognized as equally essential, not ancillary, to student success. Prioritizing these areas with the same urgency and justification as traditional academics will require a cultural shift, supported by leadership, that reflects the critical role of health in learning, behavior, and long-term outcomes.

Implement comprehensive nutrition education in grades PK–5.

Implement substance abuse prevention, sex education, including HIV/AIDS prevention, and comprehensive nutrition education in Grades 11 and 12.

Integrate nutrition education into the curriculum for core academic subjects across all levels.

Establish communication and collaboration between school nutrition services staff members and classroom teachers to reinforce nutrition education lessons taught in the classroom.

Expand physical education time in elementary, middle, and high schools to align with national recommendations.

Increase physical activity opportunities before and after school, as well as for families and community members.

Reduce the number of already isolated incidents of using food-based classroom rewards and withholding physical activity as a form of discipline.

Develop standardized building-level protocols to ensure that school celebrations, store sales, classroom food practices, and fundraising activities comply with Smart Snacks and our Local School Wellness Policy (LSWP).

Continue coordinating with the transportation company to optimize scheduling and staffing, ensuring students have adequate seat time during meal periods.

Provide nutrition education to families through newsletters, handouts, and flyers to support a healthy lifestyle outside of school.

Recruit and support active school-level wellness committees in all schools.

Support staff wellness and encourage staff to model a healthy lifestyle to students.

The SHAWAC will develop a practice implementation plan to address these priorities. Work will begin in Summer 2025, with the goal of full district-wide implementation by the 2026–2027 school year. Progress will be assessed through surveys administered to administrators, staff, students, and families in May 2027.

		Policy Score	Practice Score	
FR9	Do all foods and beverages sold in school stores during the school day meet Smart Snack standards?	2	1	

**Triennial Assessment Report: Waterbury Public Schools Triennial
Assessment 2025 (3/2025)
District: WATERBURY**

FR11	Does your district regulate foods and beverages served at class parties and other school celebrations in elementary schools?	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?	2	0	
NE2	Do all elementary school students receive sequential and comprehensive nutrition education?	2	0	
NE4	Do all high school students receive sequential and comprehensive nutrition education?	2	1	
NE5	Is nutrition education integrated into other subjects beyond health education?	2	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?	2	1	
NE7	 Does nutrition education address agriculture and the food system?	1	0	
PEPA4	How many minutes per week of PE does each grade in elementary school receive?	1	0	
PEPA5	How many minutes per week of PE does each grade in middle school receive?	1	0	

Triennial Assessment Report: Waterbury Public Schools Triennial Assessment 2025 (3/2025)
District: WATERBURY

PEPA6	How many minutes per week of PE does each grade in high school receive?	1	0	
PEPA11	 Are there opportunities for families and community members to engage in physical activity at school?	2	1	
PEPA12	 Are there opportunities for all students to engage in physical activity before and after school?	2	1	
PEPA19	Do teachers ever withhold physical activity as a classroom management tool?	2	1	
EW2	Are school staff encouraged to model healthy eating and physical activity behaviors in front of students?	2	1	

Update Policies

The assessment also revealed areas where practices are being fully or partially implemented, but the district wellness policy lacks the language to support them. The following federal requirements will be addressed in a comprehensive update to our LSWP in Fall 2025, with subsequent submission for the Board of Education for approval and adoption thereafter.

Assure compliance and reference to updated USDA nutrition standards for reimbursable school meals, consistent with those set forth under 210.10.

Clarify the USDA requirements for training and continuing education that are being met.

Address how relevant stakeholders are provided an opportunity to participate in the development, implementation, periodic review, and updates of the LSWP.

Identify the officials responsible for compliance with all components of the LSWP in each school.

Conduct an ongoing assessment of the district's implementation of the LSWP at least every three years.

Address the availability of triennial assessment results available to the public, with specifications as to what will be included in this report.

Clarify requirements for foods and beverages sold in school-sponsored fundraisers and school stores.

Prohibit the sale of foods or beverages containing caffeine at all grade levels during the school day.

Members of the School Health and Wellness Advisory Committee will oversee the policy revision process.

Further collaboration with the University of Connecticut Rudd Center, the Connecticut State Department of Education (CSDE), and the Connecticut Association of Boards of Education (CABE) will ensure that all policy updates are crafted in an actionable and sustainable manner.

**Triennial Assessment Report: Waterbury Public Schools Triennial
Assessment 2025 (3/2025)
District: WATERBURY**

		Policy Score	Practice Score	
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?	1	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?	1	2	
FR13	Which groups are represented on the district-level wellness committee?	1	2	
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	2	
FR16	Is wellness policy implementation evaluated every three years?	1	2	
FR17	What is included in the triennial assessment report to the public?	0	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	
NES9	Are you familiar with any state laws allowing exemptions for school-sponsored fundraisers during which foods and beverages do not have to meet Smart Snacks?	1	2	
NES10	Are foods or beverages containing caffeine sold at the high school level?	0	2	

Triennial Assessment Report: Waterbury Public Schools Triennial Assessment 2025 (3/2025)
District: WATERBURY

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	2	
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Opportunities for Growth

In addition to the areas of growth identified above, there are also areas where WPS has only minimally addressed federally required wellness topics in its policies or practices. These include:

The sale of competitive foods and beverages to students during the school day, according to the district's nutrition standards

Consistency between food and beverages marketed on school campuses and Smart Snacks standards

Other priorities for our district, in addition to those that are federally required above, include:

Procurement of locally produced foods for school meal services

The sale of foods or beverages to students after the school day on school grounds, including aftercare, afterschool programming, clubs, games, and fundraisers, must comply with Smart Snacks standards.

Regular physical activity breaks for students in the classroom

Strategies to support employee wellness

Active school-level wellness committees

Implementation plans for these efforts will commence during the 2025–2026 school year and be fully implemented during the 2026–2027 school year. Survey-based assessments will advise future improvements.

		Policy Score	Practice Score	
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?	1	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?	0	1	
FR18	Has the wellness policy been revised based on the previous triennial assessment?	0	0	
NES5	Are marketing strategies used to promote healthy food and beverage choices in school?	1	1	

Triennial Assessment Report: Waterbury Public Schools Triennial Assessment 2025 (3/2025)

District: WATERBURY

NES7	 In your district, is it a priority to procure locally produced foods for school meals?	0	1	
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)?	0	1	
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?	1	1	
EW1	 Are there strategies used by the school to support employee wellness?	1	1	
IC2	Is there an active school-level wellness committee?	0	0	

Conclusion

WPS has made meaningful progress in advancing school wellness through strong nutrition services, modernized equipment and facilities, and curriculum enhancements. Yet, to fully realize the impact of these strides, consistent improvement is still needed in classroom practices and through continued district-wide efforts.

As we look ahead to the coming school year, we are committed to aligning daily school practices with our policy vision, expanding access to physical activity and health education, and supporting families, staff, and students in living well in and out of school. Together, our continued collaboration will inform our next triennial assessment in 2028 and build a learning environment where every Waterbury student has the foundation to thrive in a culture of wellness, achievement, and lifelong well-being.

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

Triennial Assessment Report: Waterbury Public Schools Triennial Assessment 2025 (3/2025) District: WATERBURY



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

Triennial Assessment Report: Waterbury Public Schools Triennial Assessment 2025 (3/2025)

District: WATERBURY

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