

**Triennial Assessment Report: East Lyme Public Schools WellSat 2025  
(2/2025)  
District: EAST LYME**

**Introduction**

As part of our commitment to fostering healthy school environments, East Lyme Public Schools (ELPS) conducts a triennial wellness policy assessment to evaluate how our policies and practices support student health and well-being. This review, guided by the WellSAT (Wellness School Assessment Tool), helps ensure that our district is aligned with federal requirements and national best practices related to nutrition, physical activity, and wellness promotion. The assessment was completed by the East Lyme Public School's Assistant Superintendent, Director of Food Services, and Assistant Food Service Director with oversight provided by the East Lyme Public Schools wellness committee.

The results of this assessment help us identify areas of strength and opportunities for continued improvement, ensuring transparency and community engagement in our wellness initiatives. The 2025 assessment showed that ELPS continues to make significant progress in aligning its practices with both federal requirements and evidence-based best practices in school wellness:

Strong Alignment was noted in areas such as compliance with USDA Smart Snack standards, the presence of district-level wellness leadership, and the implementation of comprehensive school meal programs.

Areas for Growth remain in fully documenting and strengthening our written policies. Many practices have outpaced the strength of our written policies, which presents an opportunity to update policy language to better reflect the strong implementation already in place.

Compared to our last triennial review, the 2025 results reflect notable gains in: implementation of nutrition education K-12 and working towards a more inclusive committee representation.

**Strong Policies and Aligned Practices**

East Lyme Public Schools has consistently demonstrated strong alignment between practice and policy in all federally required wellness components.

Following our last triennial assessment, one key focus area identified for improvement was FR1: Specific Goals for Nutrition Education to Support Student Wellness. Over the past three years, the district has taken the following targeted actions to strengthen this area:

- 1. Established student focus groups at the elementary, middle, and high school levels to gather input on nutrition education and use student voice to inform program enhancements.
- 2. Partnered with health and physical education teachers across all grade levels to clearly define nutrition education goals, ensuring vertical alignment and consistency with state standards.
- 3. Collaborated with the food service department to promote healthy decision-making through initiatives such as "Crunch Days" and opportunities to try new foods from school gardens and local sources.

|  |                     |                       |  |
|--|---------------------|-----------------------|--|
|  | <b>Policy Score</b> | <b>Practice Score</b> |  |
|--|---------------------|-----------------------|--|

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|             |                                                                                                                                                                                                                       |          |          |   |
|-------------|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|----------|----------|---|
| <b>FR1</b>  | Does the district have specific goals for nutrition education designed to promote student wellness?                                                                                                                   | <b>2</b> | <b>2</b> | ☆ |
| <b>FR2</b>  | 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? | <b>2</b> | <b>2</b> | ☆ |
| <b>FR6</b>  | 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?                                                            | <b>2</b> | <b>2</b> | ☆ |
| <b>FR7</b>  | Do all a la carte foods and beverages sold in the cafeteria meet Smart Snacks standards?                                                                                                                              | <b>2</b> | <b>2</b> | ☆ |
| <b>FR8</b>  | Do all foods and beverages sold in vending machines meet Smart Snack standards?                                                                                                                                       | <b>2</b> | <b>2</b> | ☆ |
| <b>FR10</b> | 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?                                                         | <b>2</b> | <b>2</b> | ☆ |
| <b>FR13</b> | Which groups are represented on the district-level wellness committee?                                                                                                                                                | <b>2</b> | <b>2</b> | ☆ |
| <b>FR14</b> | Is there an official who is responsible for the implementation and compliance with the wellness policy at the building level for each school?                                                                         | <b>2</b> | <b>2</b> | ☆ |
| <b>FR16</b> | Is wellness policy implementation evaluated every three years?                                                                                                                                                        | <b>2</b> | <b>2</b> | ☆ |
| <b>FR18</b> | Has the wellness policy been revised based on the previous triennial assessment?                                                                                                                                      | <b>2</b> | <b>2</b> | ☆ |
| <b>NES4</b> | Does your school use strategies to maximize participation in the school breakfast program and/or school lunch program?                                                                                                | <b>2</b> | <b>2</b> | ☆ |

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|               |                                                                                                                                                                     |          |          |   |
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| <b>NES5</b>   | Are marketing strategies used to promote healthy food and beverage choices in school?                                                                               | <b>2</b> | <b>2</b> | ☆ |
| <b>NES9</b>   | 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?        | <b>2</b> | <b>2</b> | ☆ |
| <b>NE1</b>    | Are skills-based, behavior-focused, and interactive/ participatory methods used in nutrition education to develop student skills?                                   | <b>2</b> | <b>2</b> | ☆ |
| <b>NE6</b>    | Do school nutrition services staff members use the following methods to collaborate with teachers to reinforce nutrition education lessons taught in the classroom? | <b>2</b> | <b>2</b> | ☆ |
| <b>PEPA13</b> | Is there daily recess for all grades in elementary school?                                                                                                          | <b>2</b> | <b>2</b> | ☆ |

**Create Practice Implementation Plan**

FR11: We have strengthened the wellness policy by incorporating clearer language that sets explicit expectations for the types of foods allowed during classroom celebrations and parties in elementary schools.

EW1: We are using data from our district's culture and climate surveys, along with input from our district and school-based culture and climate committees, to identify actionable next steps to support employee wellness. Both the district and individual schools have developed improvement plans in this area, which are available on our website.

EW2: Our current policy prohibits marketing in schools that does not align with federal and state nutrition standards. Looking ahead, we are considering ways to further engage our health and physical education teachers in modeling healthy behaviors. Additionally, we are exploring opportunities for students and staff to collaborate on wellness signage and initiatives that promote and reinforce healthy habits.

|  |                     |                       |  |
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| <b>FR11</b> | Does your district regulate foods and beverages served at class parties and other school celebrations in elementary schools?                            | <b>1</b> | <b>0</b> |  |
| <b>EW1</b>  |  Are there strategies used by the school to support employee wellness? | <b>2</b> | <b>1</b> |  |
| <b>EW2</b>  | Are school staff encouraged to model healthy eating and physical activity behaviors in front of students?                                               | <b>2</b> | <b>0</b> |  |

**Update Policies**

Policy updates based on the most recent assessment have been completed by the Wellness Committee and submitted to the Board of Education Policy Subcommittee for approval. We anticipate that the updated policy will be in place by the start of the 2025–2026 school year. At this time, based on our strong practice scores, we do not have any immediate plans for additional practice improvements in this area.

|             |                                                                                                                                                                                          | <b>Policy Score</b> | <b>Practice Score</b> |                                                                                       |
|-------------|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|---------------------|-----------------------|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| <b>FR3</b>  | Does your school take steps to protect the privacy of students who qualify for free or reduced-price meals?                                                                              | <b>1</b>            | <b>2</b>              |  |
| <b>FR4</b>  | Is free (i.e., no cost to students) drinking water available to students during meals?                                                                                                   | <b>1</b>            | <b>2</b>              |  |
| <b>FR5</b>  | 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? | <b>0</b>            | <b>2</b>              |  |
| <b>FR12</b> | Is there food or beverage marketing on the school campus during the school day? If yes, do the marketed items meet Smart Snacks criteria?                                                | <b>1</b>            | <b>2</b>              |  |

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|              |                                                                                                                                                                                                                          |          |          |                                                                                       |
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| <b>FR15</b>  | How is the wellness policy made available to the public?                                                                                                                                                                 | <b>1</b> | <b>2</b> |    |
| <b>FR17</b>  | What is included in the triennial assessment report to the public?                                                                                                                                                       | <b>1</b> | <b>2</b> |    |
| <b>NES1</b>  | Does the district offer breakfast every day to all students?                                                                                                                                                             | <b>1</b> | <b>2</b> |    |
| <b>NES2</b>  | Does your school take steps to address feeding students with unpaid meal balances without stigmatizing them?                                                                                                             | <b>0</b> | <b>2</b> |    |
| <b>NES3</b>  | Does your school or district provide information to families about eligibility for free or reduced-price meals?                                                                                                          | <b>0</b> | <b>2</b> |    |
| <b>NES8</b>  | 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?                                                                           | <b>1</b> | <b>2</b> |  |
| <b>NES10</b> | Are foods or beverages containing caffeine sold at the high school level?                                                                                                                                                | <b>1</b> | <b>2</b> |  |
| <b>NES11</b> | 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)? | <b>0</b> | <b>2</b> |  |
| <b>NES14</b> | Do students have consistent and easy access to free drinking water throughout the school day?                                                                                                                            | <b>0</b> | <b>2</b> |  |
| <b>NE3</b>   | Do all middle school students receive sequential and comprehensive nutrition education?                                                                                                                                  | <b>1</b> | <b>2</b> |  |
| <b>PEPA1</b> |  Does the district have a written physical education curriculum that is implemented consistently for every grade?                     | <b>1</b> | <b>2</b> |  |

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| <b>PEPA2</b>  | Does the district have a written physical education curriculum that is aligned with national and/or state standards?         | <b>0</b> | <b>2</b> |    |
| <b>PEPA7</b>  | Are all physical education classes taught by state certified/licensed teachers who are endorsed to teach physical education? | <b>0</b> | <b>2</b> |    |
| <b>PEPA8</b>  | Is ongoing professional development offered every year for PE teachers that is relevant and specific to physical education?  | <b>0</b> | <b>2</b> |    |
| <b>PEPA9</b>  | What percentage of students do you estimate do not take PE each year due to exemptions?                                      | <b>0</b> | <b>2</b> |    |
| <b>PEPA10</b> | What percentage of students do you estimate do not take PE each year due to substitutions?                                   | <b>0</b> | <b>2</b> |   |
| <b>PEPA15</b> | Does the district have "joint-use" or "shared-use" agreements?                                                               | <b>1</b> | <b>2</b> |  |
| <b>PEPA18</b> | Do teachers ever use physical activity as a punishment?                                                                      | <b>0</b> | <b>2</b> |  |
| <b>PEPA19</b> | Do teachers ever withhold physical activity as a classroom management tool?                                                  | <b>1</b> | <b>2</b> |  |
| <b>IC1</b>    | Is there an active district-level wellness committee?                                                                        | <b>1</b> | <b>2</b> |  |

### Opportunities for Growth

NE2: This remains an ongoing area of focus. We will continue to collaborate with our elementary, middle, and high school curriculum fellows to ensure that our nutrition education programming is fully aligned with state standards.

PEPA11: We are partnering with our Youth and Family Services Director to identify additional opportunities for families to participate in physical activities before and after school.

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|              |                                                                                                                                                                          | <b>Policy<br/>Score</b> | <b>Practice<br/>Score</b> |                                                                                       |
|--------------|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-------------------------|---------------------------|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| <b>NES6</b>  | 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?                                      | <b>1</b>                | <b>1</b>                  |    |
| <b>NES7</b>  |  In your district, is it a priority to procure locally produced foods for school meals? | <b>1</b>                | <b>1</b>                  |    |
| <b>NES13</b> | Do teachers or school staff give students food as a reward?                                                                                                              | <b>1</b>                | <b>1</b>                  |    |
| <b>NE2</b>   | Do all elementary school students receive sequential and comprehensive nutrition education?                                                                              | <b>1</b>                | <b>1</b>                  |    |
| <b>NE4</b>   | Do all high school students receive sequential and comprehensive nutrition education?                                                                                    | <b>1</b>                | <b>1</b>                  |  |
| <b>NE5</b>   | Is nutrition education integrated into other subjects beyond health education?                                                                                           | <b>1</b>                | <b>1</b>                  |  |
| <b>NE7</b>   |  Does nutrition education address agriculture and the food system?                    | <b>0</b>                | <b>1</b>                  |  |
| <b>PEPA3</b> | How does your physical education program promote a physically active lifestyle?                                                                                          | <b>1</b>                | <b>1</b>                  |  |
| <b>PEPA4</b> | How many minutes per week of PE does each grade in elementary school receive?                                                                                            | <b>0</b>                | <b>0</b>                  |  |
| <b>PEPA5</b> | How many minutes per week of PE does each grade in middle school receive?                                                                                                | <b>0</b>                | <b>0</b>                  |  |

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|---------------|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|----------|----------|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| <b>PEPA6</b>  | How many minutes per week of PE does each grade in high school receive?                                                                                                                | <b>0</b> | <b>0</b> |    |
| <b>PEPA11</b> |  Are there opportunities for families and community members to engage in physical activity at school? | <b>1</b> | <b>1</b> |    |
| <b>PEPA12</b> |  Are there opportunities for all students to engage in physical activity before and after school?     | <b>1</b> | <b>1</b> |    |
| <b>PEPA14</b> |  Do teachers provide regular physical activity breaks for students in the classroom?                  | <b>1</b> | <b>1</b> |    |
| <b>PEPA17</b> |  Are teachers encouraged to use physical activity as a reward for students?                          | <b>1</b> | <b>1</b> |   |
| <b>IC2</b>    | Is there an active school-level wellness committee?                                                                                                                                    | <b>0</b> | <b>0</b> |  |

## Conclusion

Overall, East Lyme Public Schools has established strong wellness practices, with a few key areas identified as priorities for continued growth. Our policy language has been updated to more accurately reflect the high level of implementation already in place.

## 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

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**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](https://wellsat.org/resources)

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