MERSD SCHOOL DISTRICT WELLNESS POLICY

The Manchester Essex Regional School District is committed to providing a learning environment that promotes and protects student nutritional, physical, social, and emotional health. The Manchester Essex Regional School Committee recognizes the importance of student well-being for student achievement as well as the importance of a comprehensive district wellness program. Therefore, the school district will provide developmentally appropriate and sequential physical, health, nutrition, and social emotional education as well as opportunities for physical activity.

Wellness Advisory Committee

The school district will establish a Wellness Advisory Committee to annually review and, as necessary, recommend revisions to the school administration and School Committee for the district wellness policy. This committee consists of a group representing the school and community including parents/guardians, students, community members, local health agency representatives, School Committee members, school/district administrators, and staff from health, PE, nutrition, and counseling roles. One MERSD staff member of the Wellness Advisory Committee shall serve as a liaison between the committee, the Superintendent, and the School Committee.

The committee shall meet at least four times a year. The committee may set goals for itself, aligned with the
MERSD Vision of the Graduate and the MERSD Strategic Plan. The committee may report about the progress toward those goals to the Superintendent and School Committee on a regular basis.

Physical Activity

Students will be given opportunities for physical activity during the school day through physical education (PE) classes, daily recess opportunities for elementary and middle school students, and the integration of physical activity into the academic curriculum where appropriate.

The district will:

- Encourage activity-promoting programs outside of the school day including, but not limited to, intramurals, interscholastic athletics, clubs, Parks & Rec, YMCA, etc.
- Reinforce the importance of physical activity and the health risks associated with a sedentary lifestyle.
- Work with the community to create ways for students to walk, bike, rollerblade or skateboard safely to and from school.
- Encourage parents and guardians to support their children's participation in physical activity, to be physically active role models, and to include physical activity in family events.

Physical & Wellness Education

The district will provide a sequential elementary and secondary Physical Education program and Health/Wellness Education that emphasizes knowledge and skills that are consistent with the Massachusetts State Curriculum Frameworks for Comprehensive Health and Physical Education K-12.

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The district will:

- Train staff primarily responsible for Physical Education and Wellness Education and have them regularly participate in Professional Development activities to effectively deliver quality experiences.
- Ensure Physical Education is taught as a required subject for all students grades 1-8 and in alignment with MERSD graduation requirements for grades 9-12.
- Engage family members as a critical part of the team responsible for teaching children about physical education, health, and wellness.

Healthy School Environment

Manchester Essex Regional Schools will maintain a safe and healthy school environment that promotes social, emotional, mental, and physical health.

The district will:

- Provide access to support from school adjustment counselors and/or school counselors, available for students preK-12. Counselors will work in collaboration with teachers to promote social and emotional competencies to promote lifelong wellness practices for students and the larger school community.
- Provide access to school nursing to provide preventative care and intervention strategies aligned with the MA School Health Services and MA Department of Public Health policy.
- Promote well-maintained surroundings that support a culture of caring, respect, and responsibility.
- Identify and recommend opportunities and resources that support school staff as they model healthy wellness practices within the district.

Nutrition Guidelines

Manchester Essex Regional Schools are committed to providing students with healthy, nutritious meals each day so they can focus on school work, while also maintaining the financial integrity of meal programs.* School meals are available free of charge to all students at schools participating in the National School Lunch Program.

The district will:

- Provide appropriate time for students to eat meals in safe and clean lunchroom facilities.
- Display materials supporting nutrition education in the school cafeteria with coordination between the food service staff and other school personnel, including teachers.
- Integrate nutrition into the health education or core curricula (e.g., math, science, language arts). Students receive nutrition education that teaches the skills they need to adopt and maintain healthy eating behaviors.
- Provide access to free, potable drinking water in each cafeteria during meal times and throughout the school day.
- Offer a variety of nutritious, affordable, and appealing foods that accommodate the health and nutrition needs of all students.

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- Comply with federal and state nutrition standards regulations for competitive foods and beverages sold in schools. Food or beverages provided as part of the National School Breakfast Program or the National School Lunch Program shall comply with federal guidelines and are consistent with National School Nutrition Standards. Guidelines for school meals will not be less restrictive than regulations and guidance issued by the Secretary of Agriculture pursuant to law.
- Ensure all children who participate in subsidized food programs are able to obtain food in a non-stigmatizing manner.**
- Consider and implement environmentally-friendly practices such as the use of locally grown and seasonal foods, school gardens, and non-disposable tableware where appropriate.
- Ensure all food and nutrition services staff members complete annual training in accordance with USDA Professional Standards.

**All schools will be reimbursed for meals served under NSLP and SBP at the free rate, with the state of MA providing funding to supplement federal reimbursements.*

***Families can access directions and applications for Free & Reduced on the district's website and hard copies are available at each school.*

Evaluation

The Wellness Advisory Committee will oversee the implementation of the District Wellness Policy. The Principal(s) in each building will be responsible for the day-to-day implementation of the Wellness Policy. The evaluation of the Wellness Policy will be reported to the Superintendent of Schools and the School Committee.

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