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STUDENTS
Series 5000
Policy #5033.1.1

SCHOOL WELLNESS POLICY
(Student Nutrition and Physical Activity)

Purpose and Goals

The EASTCONN Board of Directors (the "Board") recognizes the link between health and academic achievement and the importance of creating a healthy school environment. The purpose of this School Wellness Policy is to articulate the actions EASTCONN (the "district") is taking to comply with the USDA regulations following the 2010 Healthy Hunger-Free Kids Act. This policy is designed to help us meet our district goals to support the diet quality, physical fitness, and overall health of our students and staff.

Nutrition Environment and Services

The district will provide breakfast and lunch each day in all schools through the USDA School Breakfast Program and the National School Lunch Program. These meal programs are operated in full compliance with the USDA's regulations (https://www.fns.usda.gov/school-meals/nutrition-standards). In accordance with federal regulations, free drinking water will be available to students in every cafeteria during mealtimes. All food and nutrition services staff shall receive annual training consistent with current USDA Professional Standards (https://www.gpo.gov/fdsys/pkg/FR-2015-03-02/pdf/2015-04234.pdf).

Free and reduced-price meals. We work to ensure that families of students who qualify for free or reduced-price meals complete the necessary state application so the students can receive these meals. We do this by sending the application home to all families at the beginning of the school year and providing the application on the district website. Students pay for meals and snacks using an electronic ID. One benefit of this system is that it protects the privacy of students who are receiving a free or reduced-price meal.

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Unpaid meal debt. We work directly with parents and guardians to resolve unpaid meal debt, including helping them determine if they qualify for free or reduced priced meals. We are careful not to stigmatize or involve the student when there are unpaid meal balances; we do not identify these students at school, and we continue to provide standard reimbursable meals.

Promoting meal participation. We are proud of the nutritious meals we provide, and we will take the following steps to encourage participation:

a. We will conduct annual surveys of students and families to learn about their food preferences, including cultural and ethnic favorites
b. We will conduct taste tests of new recipes to gather feedback prior to adding them to the menu
c. We will prominently display unflavored milk and fresh produce in the cafeteria line to encourage students to select them as part of their school meal.
d. We will schedule the day to include at least 20 minutes of seated time for students to eat lunch. in the cafeteria.
e. We will open the cafeteria to students 20 minutes before the first bell so that students who arrive early will have at least 10 minutes to sit and eat breakfast. Students who do not arrive in time to eat in the cafeteria will be offered a grab-and-go breakfast that can be eaten in class.
f. We aim to not schedule tutoring, club, or organizational meetings during the lunch period. If there is a lunchtime meeting, students are given time to first get their school lunch and consume it during the meeting.

Farm to School Connections. The district values our relationships with local farms and producers and strives to build these connections and support our local economy.

a. We will prioritize including locally grown and locally produced foods in our school meals and will promote these foods with taste tests and signage about the farm.
b. Students will receive education about agriculture and the food system through hands-on learning experiences. Examples include a school garden club; using the garden as a teaching tool; and having students visit local

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farms and see where some of the foods in their school meals are grown.

Food and beverages outside of the federal meal programs. The district recognizes that at times, food and beverages are available for students outside of the federal meal programs. We aim to limit these occasions; however, when they do take place, the following policies apply:

a. *During the school day.* We will ensure that all a la carte foods and beverages sold to students on the school campus meet the USDA Smart Snack nutrition standards which can be found at this website: https://www.fns.usda.gov/tn/guide-smart-snacks-school. These standards apply to all food and beverages sold a la carte in the cafeteria; vending machines; and school stores. Fundraisers for food to be consumed during the school days are also required to meet Smart Snacks standards, with no exceptions. We will prohibit the sale of foods or beverages that contain caffeine. We also prohibit teachers or staff from using food as a reward in classrooms to encourage student achievement or desirable behavior, unless required in an IEP. We will maintain water fountains and bottle filling stations in each building so that free water is always available throughout the school day for students and staff.

b. *After the school day*. We will require all foods and beverages served or sold to students in aftercare meet federal nutrition standards. This policy applies to all afterschool programs, including those overseen by outside parties (e.g., the YMCA; Boy or Girl Scouts).

Commercial food marketing. The district recognizes that children are targeted with many types of commercial marketing, including for food and beverages. We aim to provide a commercial-free zone in our school buildings. Food and beverage logos and branding are not permitted on any type of equipment or school property, including vending machines; display racks; scoreboards; textbooks, or educational materials (unless required for educational purposes). The only exception is food and beverage logos and branding that appear on the package of a product that meets USDA meal or Smart Snack standards.

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Celebrations. The district recognizes the importance of celebrations and special events. Class celebrations for birthdays, holidays, and other events will feature fun activities, with outdoor activities specifically encouraged. Celebrations may also feature special meals or snacks that have been prepared by the school food service to meet all federal standards. These celebration meals or snacks may be eaten outside or in the classroom. Students are permitted to bring in their own meals and snacks for their own consumption, but due to concerns about food safety and food allergies, food may not be shared between students.

Nutrition Education

The district recognizes the importance of nutrition education to provide students with the knowledge and skills necessary to lead a healthy life. Thus, we require sequential and comprehensive nutrition education to promote student wellness that is behavior focused, interactive, and participatory. Our curriculum includes nutrition education for students in including elementary, middle, and high school.

We believe that nutrition education can also be integrated into other parts of the school day. Instructional staff shall integrate nutrition into other subjects and work with the school meal program staff to integrate nutrition education into the larger school environment. For example, instructional staff can use the cafeteria as a learning lab by reinforcing nutrition lessons from the classroom with the foods available in the cafeteria. School gardens can also be used to support academic instruction in science.

Physical Education

The district utilizes a comprehensive, standards-based physical education curriculum that identifies the progression of skill development in grades K-12. The curriculum shall:

A. Align with established state physical education standards
B. Undergo a formally established periodic review cycle consistent with other academic subjects
C. Foster lifelong habits of physical activity for all students
D. Provide elementary school students 150 minutes of physical education every week throughout the school year

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E. Provide middle and high school students 225 minutes of physical education every week throughout the school year

Physical education for all grade levels shall be taught by teachers who are certified to teach physical education. The district shall provide all physical education teachers with annual professional development opportunities that are focused on physical education and physical activity competencies aligned with the established curriculum. Relatedly, the district shall provide professional development opportunities for all instructors on how to incorporate physical activity in the school day.

We believe that it is important for all students to participate in the district's comprehensive physical education program. As such, schools are not allowed to offer students *exemptions* from required physical education class time because of their enrollment in other courses or vocational training. This does not include exemptions due to disability, religious, or medical reasons. Additionally, there will be no *substitutions* allowed for physical education requirements. For example, students may not use activities like JROTC or school sports as substitutes for physical education time.

Physical Activity

The district is committed to promoting an active lifestyle for students, staff, and community members. As part of this commitment, schools are required to develop a comprehensive school physical activity program (CSPAP) that address family and community engagement and provide a wide variety of offerings. Specific initiatives to champion physical activity include:

a. Schools shall provide physical activity opportunities before and after school for students in all grade levels. This can include physical activity clubs, intramurals, and other activities.
b. All elementary schools shall provide at least 20 minutes of recess time daily to all students.
c. Schools shall provide students in all grade levels at least one physical activity break for every 60 minutes of academic instruction daily.
d. Schools will develop joint-use agreements with community partners in order to provide expanded physical activity opportunities for students and community members.

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e. Schools shall partner with local government and community-based agencies to support active transport to school and implement a comprehensive active transport program (i.e., Safe Routes to School Program).

Staff are strongly encouraged to use physical activity as a *reward* whenever feasible. For example, teachers may offer extra recess time to incentivize good behavior. However, physical activity may not be assigned to students as a *consequence* of poor behavior or *punishment* for any reason. For example, students may not be singled out to run extra laps or other physical activities as a behavioral consequence. Additionally, recess, PE, or other physical activities will not be withheld from students as a *punishment* for any reason.

Employee Wellness

The district will provide a comprehensive program promoting health and wellness for all employees. Specific strategies to support employee wellness include offering physical activity classes to staff; making physical activity equipment available for staff to use before and after the school day; and providing free water and healthy snacks in all employee break rooms. Additionally, to foster a comprehensive, community-focused approach to wellness, staff will be encouraged to model healthy eating and physical activity behaviors.

Coordination of Wellness Activities

The district will convene and maintain an active district-level wellness committee that meets quarterly. The wellness committee will be led by the Executive Director or designee, who will be responsible for ensuring that the wellness policy is clearly communicated to all school personnel, students, parents, and community members. The policy will be posted on the district website, and each school's website.

The district will also support active school-level wellness teams in each school building. These teams will be led by the school principal or designee. These teams will ensure that all school staff, students, and parents are aware of and understand the wellness policy. These teams are responsible for reporting compliance or non-compliance to the district committee once a semester. School building teams will meet at least twice a year.

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A letter will be sent to the school community via email and will be posted in a central area in all school buildings inviting them to join the wellness committee. Parents, students, representatives of the school food authority, PE teachers, school health professionals, the board, school administrators, and the public may be included in the development, implementation, review and update of the wellness policy.

Triennial Assessment

Every three years, the district wellness committee, supervised by the Executive Director or designee, will conduct a comprehensive assessment of the wellness policy and practices in the district. This process will include the following elements:

a. The current district policy will be compared to a model wellness policy using the WellSAT Policy tool (www.wellsat.org).
b. The level of compliance with the policy will be assessed in each school by the school-level teams, supervised by the principal, using the WellSAT Practice tool (www.wellsat.org).
c. The district committee will write a report that describes the district's progress to date in attaining its wellness goals.
d. This report will be shared with the school community through the districts newsletter and placed on the district website. This report will also be maintained by the school food authority to share during the state administrative review.
e. Based on the findings, the district's committee will suggest any needed updates to the policy to the Board and will create any needed implementation plans to ensure compliance with all elements of this policy.

Adopted: November 18, 2025
Revised:
Replaces: #6017.10.1

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