# Student Wellness in Manitou Springs School District 14

*Building Healthy Bodies, Nurturing Active Minds, and Fostering Community*

Dear Parents, Guardians, and Manitou Springs Community Members,

At Manitou Springs School District 14, we know that healthy children are better prepared to learn, grow, and thrive. Proper nutrition, regular physical activity, and social-emotional well-being are fundamental components of academic success and lifelong health.

In accordance with federal regulations under the Healthy, Hunger-Free Kids Act and Colorado Department of Education standards, our district continuously develops, implements, and evaluates our District Wellness Policy (ADF-R). This letter provides an overview of our wellness guidelines, the steps we take to ensure a healthy school environment, and ways you can partner with us.

## Our Whole Child Approach to Wellness

MSSD 14 utilizes the Whole School, Whole Community, Whole Child (WSCC) model to create a comprehensive culture of well-being across all schools. Our goals encompass four key focus areas:

- **Nutritious School Meals & Equal Access:** Serving fresh, appealing, and nutritionally balanced breakfasts and lunches that meet or exceed federal USDA standards. Through Colorado's Healthy School Meals for All initiative, breakfast and lunch are accessible to all enrolled students.
- **Physical Activity & Movement Safeguards:** Providing daily physical opportunities through physical education classes, brain energizers, structured activity breaks, and outdoor recess.
- **Health & Experiential Education:** Integrating age-appropriate nutrition and wellness concepts into K-12 curricula, farm-to-school learning, and outdoor activities.

- **Safe & Supportive School Environment:** Protecting instructional mealtime, ensuring access to free drinking water, and enforcing non-punitive physical activity policies.

## Key Highlights of District Policy ADF-R

Our Board-approved Local Wellness Policy (ADF-R) establishes clear, actionable guidelines for staff, students, and families:

### 1. School Meals and Cafeteria Environment

- **Meal Time Protections:** Schools work to ensure students have adequate time to sit and eat—striving for at least 10 minutes for breakfast and 20 minutes for lunch after being seated.
- **Confidentiality & Access:** All students receive meals in a respectful environment that protects family confidentiality.
- **Free Water Access:** Free, clean drinking water is accessible to all students throughout the school day and during meal times.

### 2. Physical Activity & Recess Guidelines

- **No Physical Activity Withholding:** Physical activity—including recess, physical education classes, and activity breaks—is never withheld as a disciplinary action or to complete unfinished schoolwork.
- **Daily Outdoor Recess:** Elementary students receive daily supervised outdoor recess equipped with age-appropriate physical play tools.
- **Elementary Requirement:** In compliance with Colorado law (C.R.S. 22-32-136.5), elementary students receive an average of 30 minutes of physical activity per school day.

### 3. Nutrition Standards for Foods Sold Outside School Meals

All foods and beverages sold outside the federally reimbursed meal program (including à la carte sales, vending machines, school stores, and fundraisers) must comply with USDA **Smart Snacks in School** guidelines and the **Colorado Competitive Food Service Policy**:

- **Competitive Food Time Restrictions:** Competitive foods and food-based fundraisers may not be sold 30 minutes before through 30 minutes after scheduled meal services in areas accessible to students.
- **Healthy Beverages:** Mechanically vended drinks offered at the high school level must adhere to the Colorado Healthy Beverages Policy.

### 4. Classroom Celebrations, Rewards, and Fundraisers

- **Non-Food Rewards:** Teachers and staff are encouraged to use physical activity (e.g., extra recess or walking breaks) or educational privileges as incentives rather than food or candy.
- **Healthy Celebrations:** Parents and staff are asked to contribute healthy foods, fresh fruits, or non-food items for classroom parties and events.
- **Exempt Fundraisers:** Under Colorado policy, each school building is allowed up to three exempt food fundraisers per year, provided they do not run during meal service windows. Non-food fundraisers (e.g., fun runs, flower sales) are strongly encouraged.

## Summary of Standards & Local Implementation

| Focus Area | Colorado & Federal Requirement | MSSD 14 Implementation |
|---|---|---|
| **School Breakfast & Lunch** | Compliance with USDA meal patterns (7 CFR 210/220). Free meals under Proposition FF. | Balanced, freshly prepared meals served daily to all students at zero cost. |
| **Smart Snacks Standards** | Specific limits on calories, sodium, fat, and sugar for all items sold. | All campus vending and à la carte offerings meet USDA Smart Snacks nutrition limits. |

| Focus Area | Colorado & Federal Requirement | MSSD 14 Implementation |
|---|---|---|
| **Physical Activity** | C.R.S. 22-32-136.5: Min. 600 min/month for elementary. | Daily physical education, recess, brain breaks, and active after-school programs. |
| **Recess Protections** | Best practices in student health and physical well-being. | Recess and physical activity are **never** withheld for behavior or missing work. |
| **Outdoor & Experiential Learning** | Integration of hands-on health and wellness initiatives. | Partnership with Flying Pig Farm, school gardens, and outdoor learning spaces. |

## Monitoring and Continuous Improvement

To ensure our policies lead to real-world practices, our district utilizes the **Colorado Healthy Schools Smart Source** assessment tool every two years to evaluate school health policies and environments. In addition, the district undergoes a formal **Triennial Assessment** and state Administrative Review to maintain high compliance standards.

Recent assessment results show high performance in our Local Wellness Policy adoption, physical activity standards, and school health services. We continuously use this data to identify priority areas and refine our health strategies.

## Get Involved: Partners for a Healthy Community

Wellness is a collaborative effort involving students, parents, school staff, and local organizations. Our district wellness advisory group, Partners for a Healthy Community (PHC), meets regularly to review policies, discuss student health needs, and implement wellness initiatives across all schools.

We welcome parents, caregivers, and community members to join our wellness committee meetings and contribute ideas.

### How You Can Support Student Wellness:

1. **Encourage Healthy Habits:** Talk with your child about making nutritious choices in the cafeteria and staying active daily.
2. **Provide Healthy Snacks:** When sending snacks or birthday treats to school, choose nutrient-rich options like fresh fruit, vegetables, whole grains, or non-food items.
3. **Attend PHC Meetings:** Join our monthly wellness meetings to share your voice and shape school health policies.

## Contact & Resources

For questions regarding our District Wellness Policy, school nutrition programs, or how to join the Partners for a Healthy Community team, please reach out to:

- **Nutrition Services Department:** Paula Faucette | Director of Nutrition Services | MSSD 14
- **District Wellness Contact:** Angela Gieck | District Wellness Liaison
- **District Website:** Visit our Wellness page on the Manitou Springs School District website to view the full Board Policy (ADF-R), Smart Source assessment summaries, and upcoming meeting schedules.

Thank you for your partnership in nourishing and empowering our students!

Sincerely,

**Paula Faucette**
Director of Nutrition Services
Manitou Springs School District 14
Healthy Food, Happy Students