

School Wellness Policy and Practice

BACKGROUND:

The Child Nutrition and Women Infants and Children ACT is federal legislation that covers such programs as The National School Lunch Program and School Breakfast Program, Summer Food Service Program, and Special Supplemental Nutrition Program for Women, Infants, and Children (WIC). This legislation is reauthorized every 5 years, with the next cycle coming up in 2009.

In the 2004 reauthorization, the U.S. Congress established a new requirement that all school districts with a federally funded school meals program develop and implement wellness policies that address nutrition and physical activity by the start of the 2006-2007 school year (Section 204).

Funding: Wellness Policies are not government funded, however there are grants available from various entities (see resources).

FEDERAL MANDATE:

Section 2507 of the Act directs local educational agencies to establish a school wellness policy to promote the health of students and address the growing problem of childhood obesity. These policies should:

- (1) include goals for nutrition education, physical activity, and other school-based activities;
- (2) include nutrition guidelines for all foods available on each school campus during the school day with the objectives of promoting student health and reducing childhood obesity;
- (3) provide an assurance that guidelines for reimbursable meals will at least reflect the minimum standards established by the USDA;
- (4) establish a plan for measuring implementation of the local wellness policy; and
- (5) involve a variety of community members in the development of the school wellness policy.

Local:

New York City: New York City Department of Education's Wellness Policy is designed to promote the health and well-being of students, while taking into account competing priorities and the availability of funds. DOE engaged students, parents, teachers, food service professionals, health professionals, and other interested community members in policy development and review.

<http://www.nyc.gov/html/doh/downloads/pdf/cdp/cdp-pan-programs-schoolwellness-policy.pdf>

Some NYC Schools with Wellness Policies by Geography¹

Northern & Central Brooklyn: PS 81, PS 123

East and Central Harlem: PS 242, Central Park East II

West Harlem: PS 180

South Bronx: PS 3, PS 140

¹¹ These schools are members of the School Wellness Council Project run by New York City Department of Health and Mental Hygiene and Food Change. It is therefore only a small set of NYC schools with Wellness Policies.

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SPARK! (Sport, Play and Active Recreation for Kids!) SPARK is a nationally recognized program that provides skills for teachers to incorporate physical activity into childhood education. SPARK conducts physical activities schools in New York City, including: PS 149, PS 185, and more. <http://www.sparkpe.org>

New York Coalition for Healthy School Food: New York Coalition for Healthy School Foods works to promote optional plant-based entrees, healthy snack foods, farm to school programs, and nutrition education to encourage healthier choices. <http://www.healthylunches.org/index.htm>

RESOURCES

FUNDING: http://www.fns.usda.gov/tn/Healthy/wellnesspolicy_funding.html

The Healthy Youth Funding Database, maintained by the Center for Disease Control (CDC), lists grants and funding sources for promoting the 8 components of the coordinated school health approach.

SchoolGrants is a website dedicated to updating PK-12 schools on grant opportunities and providing technical support for grant writing. The site lists sources from government agencies and foundations as well as state-specific funds.

The Center for Health and Health Care in Schools maintains a "grant alerts" page that provides resources on numerous health-focused grants for schools.

The National Association for Sport and Physical Education (NASPE) maintains a website of grant sources to fund physical activity-related projects.

MODEL WELLNESS POLICIES:

Many organizations have developed Model Wellness Policies. Here are two:

National Alliance for Nutrition & Activity: Provides a comprehensive set of model nutrition and physical activity policies based on nutrition science, public health research, and existing practices from exemplary states and local school districts around the country.

<http://www.schoolwellnesspolicies.org/index.html>

Center of Ecoliteracy: The Center for Ecoliteracy, in collaboration with Slow Food USA and the Chez Panisse Foundation, has prepared this downloadable Model Wellness Policy Guide. The Guide provides language and instructions for drafting a Wellness Policy that places health at the center of the academic curriculum. http://www.ecoliteracy.org/programs/wellness_policy.html

TOOLS:

Guide: The Food and Nutrition Services of the U.S. Department of Agriculture provides a step by step guide for creating and implementing a Local Wellness Policy

http://www.fns.usda.gov/tn/Healthy/wellnesspolicy_steps.html

Promotion: Wellness in the School is a grass roots NYC based organization that promotes children's environmental health, nutrition and fitness within public schools. They are beginning to develop wellness policies with their participating schools. <http://www.wellnessintheschools.org/>