

Boston Public Schools District Wellness Policy Overview

Boston Public Schools (BPS) passed a District Wellness Policy in 2006. Federal and state law requires BPS to revise the Wellness Policy this school year. We began our revision process during the spring of 2012. BPS established a superintendent-appointed District Wellness Council, who has led the Wellness Policy revision. This Council consists of community partners, students, parents, and leaders in BPS. In addition to the council, BPS has gotten input and feedback from over 250 community members, including: local and national experts, community partners, teachers, principals, families, and students. This revision is a reflection of the input and feedback we've received from our community.

Tell me about the revised Wellness Policy.

The District Wellness Policy is written for school administrators and staff, to support them in their work to make the healthy choice the easy choice in school. It requires that every school, and the District, form or maintain a Wellness Council. This Council is a group of members from the school community that recommend policy and systems change to improve school health.

School-based Wellness Councils must, annually:

- Convene at least 4 times per year
- Review wellness-related policies in 8 topic areas
- Complete an assessment of their school health environment
- Write an action plan for the school year based on the assessment
- Implement the action plan

District Wellness Council must, annually:

- Review wellness-related policies
- Assess how schools are implementing the Wellness Policy
- Write and action plan for the school year
- Implement the action plan
- Report progress and school compliance

Which health topics are included in the Wellness Policy?

- Cultural Proficiency
- School Food and Nutrition Promotion
- Comprehensive Physical Activity and Physical Education
- Comprehensive Health Education
- Healthy School Environment
- Health Services
- Safe and Supportive Schools
- Staff Wellness

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Cultural Proficiency defines the term “all students” as those who attend a Boston Public School, and include but are not limited to students with identities related to gender, culture, race, ethnicity, sexual orientation, gender identity, and ability. The policy requires schools to assess their learning environment to identify inclusive practices and opportunities to celebrate diverse cultures and identities for all students.

School Food and Nutrition Promotion identifies an approach to school food that at a minimum follows national, state, and local policies, along with the Alliance for a Healthier Generation Bronze Standards. This includes but is not limited to food sold or provided during meal times, and during classroom celebrations, fundraisers, and rewards. Schools are required to review school food and environment to ensure safety, quality, visual appeal, and cultural accessibility.

Comprehensive Physical Activity and Physical Education states that all schools should provide all students in all grades opportunities for physical activity, with 150 weekly minutes of physical activity in grades prek-8. Daily recess is expected for grades prek-8. Schools must provide at least 45 minutes per week of standards-based physical education in grades preK-8 and one semester per grade for all students in grades 9-12, taught by a licensed PE teacher. It is recommended in grades prek-8 for schools to provide at least 80 minutes of weekly PE.

Comprehensive Health Education requires comprehensive preK-12 health education and provides an inclusive definition that encompasses nutrition education, comprehensive sexuality education, violence prevention and substance use prevention. In reference to existing district policies, this section requires Health/HIV education in grade 4; two semesters of health education in grades 6 to 8 taught by a licensed health teacher; and a one semester course of health education in grades 9 to 12 taught by a certified health teacher. Health education will be integrated into the Common Core curricula where possible.

Healthy School Environment requires the school Environmental Committee or school-based Wellness Council to implement existing city ordinances and District policies related to promoting and managing healthy school environments, including but not limited to, Green Cleaners, Integrated Pest Management, Recycling, Infection Prevention & Control, Tobacco Free Environmental Policy, Environmental Inspection/Audit, Student Safety/Health in School Shops, Laboratories and Chemical Inventory “Right to Know” Law. It requires schools to establish an assessment and maintenance system for facilities for physical activity, including schoolyards.

Safe and Supportive Schools requires schools to create a safe and supportive environment for all students that is culturally proficient, engaging, and inclusive; provides skills-based education to promote healthy relationships; and provides access to support services. The policy requires schools to use the Comprehensive Behavioral Health Model, and to implement policies including but are not limited to: code of conduct, sexual harassment, discrimination, and bullying.

Health Services provides a comprehensive definition of school-based healthcare. In high schools, condoms will be accessible from community health service partners, the Boston Public Health Commission (BPHC) or, when neither community health service partners nor BPHC staff is available, from appropriate school staff. Boston Public School encourages communication and involvement with family. Appropriate health education and counseling will be provided, and parents will be able to exempt their children from receiving condoms.

Staff Wellness recommends that all staff promote a healthy school environment and encourages staff to model healthy behaviors.