

III. Policy Development

Districts may already have a number of policies in place related to student health, nutrition and physical activity. These may or may not have been developed in a comprehensive manner based on relevant research and putting the needs of children and youth first. It is recommended that districts take a hard look at their existing policies, using the material in this chapter as a starting point, to ensure that district policies are up to date and reflect the board's and community's priority on student health and wellness.

The urgency of adopting a comprehensive approach to improving student health has been increased by a requirement under Section 204 of the Federal Child Nutrition and WIC Reauthorization Act of 2004 that school boards establish local wellness policies by the beginning of the 2006-07 school year. The district is required to include parents, students, school food service professionals, school administrators, board members and members of the public in the development of the policy. At a minimum, the policy must address:

- goals for nutrition education and physical activity that promote wellness in a manner that the district determines is appropriate;
- nutrition guidelines for all food sold on campus during the day, in efforts to promote health and reduce childhood obesity;
- assurance that nutrition guidelines for school meals will not be less restrictive than federal policy; and
- a plan for measuring the effectiveness of the wellness policy, including the designation of at least one person to oversee the activities and ensure that schools meet the local wellness policy.

The information below, and throughout this guide, can assist the board and its stakeholders in the review of these issues and the development of appropriate policy.

THE BOARD'S ROLE IN POLICY

One of the board's most effective tools for establishing its expectations and holding the system accountable is by setting policy. School boards adopt policies to ensure that actions taken by district staff support the district vision for

student learning. Policies are also adopted to communicate the expectations of the board and community regarding the overall climate in schools throughout the district.

Boards want to help, reach out, fix, anticipate and respond to issues present in the school community. To accomplish these goals, it is important to utilize a system that provides equal access, stability and democracy and recognizes the collective nature of a working board's legal authority and responsibility.

There are many reasons that it is important to work through policies:

- Voting on a policy provides clear direction to the superintendent. Board members may not all agree, but the policy development and adoption process ensures a majority of the board comes to agreement, making it possible to provide coherent rather than fragmented policy messages to the staff.
- By creating policies, boards can initiate action or respond to district stakeholders in an appropriate and systematic way.
- A policy manual provides a structural framework to guide and organize the district, and helps clarify district philosophy as well as the roles and responsibilities of the board, the superintendent and staff.
- Policy development, adoption and evaluation are the mechanisms by which district operations remain stable through changes in board members, superintendent or staff.
- Development of sound policies through an effective process increases public confidence by showing that the district is being governed and operated with a focus on student learning, within the parameters of law, and in accordance with sound business practices.
- Policies help ensure decisions are made thoughtfully, while keeping in mind the larger policy direction of the district. This process can help districts avoid setting a precedent with individual decisions which may be hastily made without taking into consideration the long-term implications.

The public entrusts school boards with responsibility for making sure the community's public schools do the best

possible job of providing a quality education. Setting policy direction and parameters can be done only by locally elected school boards, that are vested with the authority to make decisions in the public policy arena on behalf of the community.

The policies that are in a district policy manual are often developed and recommended to the board based on a directive from the board or superintendent, a mandate from a new law or a change in existing law. While district staff usually drafts the policy language, the board has the responsibility first to ensure the language clearly reflects the board's policy intent and then to adopt the policy.

Subsequently, the superintendent or assigned staff member drafts administrative regulations based on the policy. The superintendent knows the specific practical and enforceable steps that are needed to make the policy succeed. Regulations and policies are often adopted at the same time or located together so it is clear what actions will result from the adoption of the policy.

POLICY DEVELOPMENT PROCESS

The following Nutrition Policy Development Worksheet and Physical Activity Policy Development Worksheet provide a guide for school boards, superintendents, district staff and others to develop and review related board policies and administrative regulations.

Part I of each worksheet introduces the policy topic and provides a series of questions designed to facilitate the board's discussion and to develop an understanding of this issue and its relationship with student learning and achievement.

Part II uses a series of questions to help boards, administrators, staff and others assess existing board policies and administrative regulations related to nutrition and physical activity in order to determine the need for the development or revision of current policies or regulations.

Part III suggests a policy development process to help school boards, administrators, staff and others determine the necessary actions and responsibilities for collecting data and for making recommendations on the relevant board policies and administrative regulations.

Part IV provides a format for completing policy revisions and developing new board policies and administrative regulations.

A **Workplan and Timeline** form is also provided to assist in the planning of the policy work and to establish deadlines.

The policy review and development process described in this section is resource intensive. As such, it provides the greatest opportunity for a full understanding of the issue and its impact on student learning. However, it is recognized that it is very unlikely that any two districts will follow the same policy development process. What is important is for districts to find what works for them, and then to proceed accordingly.

NUTRITION POLICY DEVELOPMENT WORKSHEET

Part I: Initial Discussion of Topic

Relationship to student learning: The following questions are intended to focus your district's discussion on the relationship between nutrition and student learning.

1. Why is nutrition important to student learning?

2. What does your governance team see as the relationship between nutrition and student learning in your district?

3. How will policies on nutrition contribute to improved student learning?

Policy topic components: Below are the basic components that a board should understand and/or address in policy on student nutrition. Some components are directly related to student learning, and others reflect legal compliance issues that are also important to include in policy or administrative regulations. Component statements are not intended to be policy language. Each component statement is a key concept related to the topic, but not the policy language itself. Each component is intended to frame an issue or identify concerns and interests that your board would want to address in a policy on this topic. Under each component statement are questions that may help guide the board’s discussion of the component.

1. The board recognizes that proper nutrition is necessary for maximizing the opportunity for a child to learn.

- What does research show about the relationship between nutrition and student learning?

- What are your community’s and board’s expectations with regard to the nutritional value of all foods available on school grounds?

- Do the nutritional needs of children differ by student age group?

2. The district’s curriculum includes nutrition education at all grade levels.

- What are the district’s goals for nutrition education?

- What is currently taught in each grade level?

➤ What do your district collective bargaining agreements say about nutrition education/food service?

➤ How can the district ensure that other food sales do not impair student participation in the district's food service program?

4. Other food sales in district schools (e.g., fundraisers, vending machines) encourage healthy eating habits.

➤ What are the legal requirements regarding food and beverage sales for fundraisers and/or vending machines?

➤ Has the district established nutrition guidelines for all food sold on campus during the day? Do these guidelines promote student health?

➤ What are the community's and board's expectations regarding: (a) the availability of soda on campus? (b) the use of "junk foods" for fundraisers? Do these expectations vary depending on the age or grade level of students, or should they be consistent?

➤ By what process are specific food items approved for sale in fundraisers or vending machines?

➤ Does the district have contractual obligations that need to be taken into consideration (e.g., contracts with beverage companies)?

➤ What resources are generated by existing arrangements for competitive food/beverage sales? What percentage of the district's budget consists of private-sector contributions, specifically commercial activities pertaining to non-nutritious foods and beverages? What does research show about student purchases of healthier foods and beverages when these items are made available?

5. Advertisements and other commercial messages at schools do not undermine the district’s efforts to promote healthy eating habits.

➤ What does research show about the susceptibility of children and youth to commercial persuasion?

➤ Do existing business partnerships or contracts require the district to advertise as a condition for receiving funds, products, materials or equipment?

➤ What criteria should be established regarding the content of advertisements aimed at students? Should the board ban or place any restrictions on advertisements of foods and beverages of minimal nutritional value (e.g., soft drinks, foods high in fat or sugar)? Should the criteria/restrictions vary depending on the grade levels of the students in the school?

➤ What is the district’s current process for reviewing and approving specific requests for advertisements or other commercial activities? To what extent should individual school sites be allowed to make their own decisions regarding commercial activities? Under what circumstances, if any, should the superintendent’s or board’s approval be required?

➤ Do advertisements in schools imply an endorsement of the product by the district? What steps can be taken to clarify that the district is not endorsing a product?

➤ Does the district’s educational program include instruction in media literacy which helps students to become critically aware consumers?

6. The district shall regularly evaluate the effectiveness of its nutrition policies and programs.

➤ Who has the superintendent assigned to oversee the implementation of the district’s wellness policy?

➤ What indicators will be used to measure the effectiveness of the district’s nutrition policies and programs?

➤ What type of reports does the board expect to receive, and how often?

7. What criteria will the governance team use to determine whether this policy achieves the desired results?

8. What provisions does the draft policy include for periodic review and evaluation?

Note: Following adoption of the policy by the board, the superintendent should develop a plan for communicating the policy to interested parties, as well as a plan to implement the policy. The plan could include agreement on the goals, community outreach, key messages to be communicated, the individuals, groups and media organizations to receive the communication, and, when appropriate, strategies that tailor the messages for each of these groups so people receive the information of most use to them. Once a policy has been adopted, it is the board's responsibility to support it by providing the necessary funding when a budget is adopted, considering the policy implications of collective bargaining decisions, and modeling the behavior called for in policy.

NUTRITION POLICY WORKPLAN AND TIMELINE

Activity	Person Responsible	Deadline
Part I: Introduction of topic and initial board discussion of broad issues		
Part II: Assessment of existing policy		
Part III: Data collection and analysis		
Professional staff analysis and recommendation		
District and community input		
Part IV: Board content directions		
Drafting of recommended policy		
Legal review		
First reading: board initial opportunity for public input		
Drafting of revised policy, if necessary		
Legal review of revised policy		
Second reading and adoption		
Communication of new policy		
Specifically: (list)		
Implementation by superintendent and staff		
Review and evaluation		
Modify policy based on review and evaluation		

PHYSICAL ACTIVITY POLICY DEVELOPMENT WORKSHEET

Part I: Initial Discussion of Topic

Relationship to student learning: The following questions are intended to focus your district’s discussions on the relationship between physical activity and student learning.

1. Why is physical activity important to student learning?

2. What does your governance team see as the relationship between physical activity and student learning in your district?

3. How will policies on physical activity contribute to improved student learning?

Policy topic components: The following are the basic components that a board should understand and/or address in policy on physical activity. Some components are directly related to student learning, and others reflect legal compliance issues that are also important to include in policies or regulations. Component statements are not intended to be policy language. Each component statement is a key

concept related to the topic, but not the policy language itself. Each component is intended to frame an issue or identify concerns and interests that your board would want to address in a policy on this topic. Under each component statement are questions that may help guide the board’s discussion of the component.

1. The board recognizes that physical activity is necessary for maximizing the opportunity for a child to learn.

➤ What does research show about the relationship between physical activity, health and student learning?

➤ What are your community’s and board’s expectations with regard to the schools’ responsibility to provide and promote physical activity?

➤ What are the district’s goals for physical activity?

➤ Are different strategies for promoting physical activity needed based on students’ ages, gender, socioeconomic status or availability of community resources?

➤ How will the district measure the impact of the physical activity program on student learning?

2. The district's curriculum includes physical education at all grade levels.

➤ What types of physical education are currently taught at each grade level? Do the students find it enjoyable? What does research show are the components of a successful physical education program?

➤ Is the district's curriculum aligned to the state's framework for physical education?

➤ How much time is spent on physical education at each grade level? Does this meet legal requirements? Is it sufficient? What percentage of class time are students spending on physical activity?

➤ Are the physical activities age and culturally appropriate?

➤ Do marching band classes and similar activities satisfy physical education requirements of the district? Should substitutions for physical education be permitted?

➤ Are some students temporarily or permanently excluded from physical education? Who and why?

➤ Are appropriate alternative activities provided for students with a physical disability that may restrict excessive physical exertion?

➤ What are the qualifications of staff teaching physical education? What is the student/teacher ratio? Is this adequate?

➤ How is students' physical performance assessed and graded? How are these evaluations, plus the results of the annual physical performance testing designated by the State Board of Education, used in program planning and in assisting individual students?

➤ Is the physical education curriculum linked to the district's nutrition and/or health curriculum to provide a comprehensive, coordinated approach to physical fitness topics?

➤ Do playgrounds, sports fields and other facilities for physical activities meet or exceed recommended safety standards?

3. Interscholastic athletic programs, if any, are integrated with the educational program and promote physical fitness and good sportsmanship.

➤ What are the legal requirements and California Interscholastic Federation principles and rules applicable to interscholastic athletic programs? Is the district’s program consistent with those laws, principles and rules?

➤ How is eligibility for participation in interscholastic athletic programs determined? Are requirements for academic eligibility the same as for other extracurricular/co-curricular activities?

➤ Is the district’s program free from discrimination? Does it provide equivalent opportunities for both males and females? What does “gender equity” mean in terms of athletic programs?

➤ What are the qualifications of coaches in the district?

➤ What provisions are necessary to maximize the health and safety of student athletes? Is protective equipment available as necessary?

4. The district engages in a collaborative effort to promote students’ physical activity beyond the school day.

➤ To what extent is physical activity incorporated into any district-operated, after-school programs or child care programs?

➤ What opportunities are available for schools to promote parent and community involvement in reducing children’s sedentary behavior, such as by reducing television viewing? How are parents involved in the physical education programs offered at the various school sites?

➤ Is the district currently involved in local partnerships working to provide opportunities for physical activity for children and youth in the community? What other local agencies, organizations, businesses or community leaders might be approached to initiate or expand collaboratives focused on children’s health and fitness?

➤ What types of state and/or federal resources are available? In which federal and/or state programs does the district current participate?

Part III: Policy Development Process

As part of the policy development process, your governance team should determine the data needed to effectively address this policy topic. This includes determining where the data may be available, the appropriate allocation of resources for data collection and analysis, and the assignment of responsibility for data collection, analysis and recommendations. The process also should include opportunities for input from affected parties in the district and the community.

1. What data do you need in order to develop policy related to physical activity?

a. Internal data sources:

b. External data sources:

2. Who beyond the governance team should be involved in the policy development process (e.g., physical education and health teachers, health department, public health and health care professionals, parents, students, county/city parks and recreation representatives, other interested community members)?

3. What are the recommendations from the stakeholders listed above?

4. What are the recommendations of staff, based on an analysis of the data?

Part IV: Board Policy Content Directions

Content directions: Your board should identify the content components of new or revised policy based on the discussion, assessment, analysis and input in Parts I through III and a review of the following questions.

1. Which of the policy components listed in Part I and those recommended by key stakeholders (identified in Part III) does the board want included in a new or revised policy?

2. Does the assessment of existing policy completed in Part II identify any additional content components the board wants in new or revised policy?

3. Has the board identified any content in existing policy that should not be included in new or revised policy?

4. Do the data and input developed in Part III reveal any additional (or new) content components the board wants in new or revised policy?

Review of draft policy: After the board has completed the process described above, the superintendent, policy committee and/or other appropriate designees should prepare a draft policy, arrange for legal review of the policy, and bring it to the board for consideration at a public board meeting. The following questions should be used to guide the board’s review of draft policy. If any significant revisions are required, some or all of the questions in Parts I through IV may need to be revisited before the policy is formally adopted.

5. Does the draft policy accurately reflect the board's intent? In what ways, if any, should the policy be revised to better communicate the board's direction?

6. Does public or staff input add any new issues that need to be addressed?

7. What criteria will the governance team use to determine whether this policy achieves the desired results?

8. What provisions does the draft policy include for periodic review and evaluation?

Note: Following adoption of the policy by the board, the superintendent should develop a plan for communicating the policy to interested parties, as well as a plan to implement the policy. The plan could include agreement on the goals; community outreach; key messages to be communicated; the individuals, groups and media organizations to receive the communication; and, when appropriate, strategies that tailor the messages to each of these groups so people receive the information of most use to them.

Once a policy has been adopted, it's the board's responsibility to support it by providing the necessary funding when a budget is adopted, considering the policy implications of collective bargaining decisions, and modeling the behavior called for in the policy.

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