

A. Wellness Policies

Background: In June 2004, the Child Nutrition and WIC Reauthorization Act was signed into law making it mandatory for all local education agencies participating in the Federal School Meal Programs to create a Local Wellness Policy. In passing this legislation, Congress recognized the vital role that schools can play in ensuring the health and wellness of their students.

The wellness policies are mandated to include goals for physical activity. The local school wellness policies are an important opportunity to develop and implement goals and objectives that support Safe Routes to School and the positive impact that regular physical activity has on student health, especially addressing childhood obesity, and on academic performance.

Adding these policies as appropriate to your local wellness policy recognizes that schools have a responsibility to help students and staff establish and maintain lifelong habits of being physically active. According to the U.S. Surgeon General, regular physical activity is one of the most important things people can do to maintain and improve their physical health, mental health, and overall well-being. Regular physical activity reduces the risk of premature death in general and of heart disease, high blood pressure, colon cancer, and diabetes in particular. Promoting a physically active lifestyle among young people is important because:

- through its effects on mental health, physical activity can help increase students' capacity for learning;
- physical activity has substantial health benefits for children and adolescents, including favorable effects on endurance capacity, muscular strength, body weight, and blood pressure; and
- positive experiences with physical activity at a young age help lay the basis for being regularly active throughout life.

Below are model goals and objectives that you can consider for addition to your wellness policy as it fits local needs.

A broad goal overall supporting regular physical activity:

A1. Every student shall receive physical education to develop the knowledge and skills necessary to perform a variety of everyday physical activities including by walking or biking when practical and safe, maintain physical fitness, regularly participate in physical activity, understand the short- and long-term benefits of physical activity, and value and enjoy physical activity as an ongoing part of a healthful lifestyle. Staff members are encouraged to participate in and model physical activity as a valuable part of daily life.

Comment: Use this goal or a portion of it to add to or augment an overall objective to encourage regular physical activity on the part of students.

A2. [School District] encourages staff, parents and students to walk and bike to school where safe routes are available in order to maintain a healthy level of regular physical activity.

A3. [School District] recognizes that there are positive health and academic benefits to students who walk and bike to school or otherwise participate in physical activity before school starts and will promote this through Safe Routes to School.

Comment: Adopt one or both of these goals or combine them as it fits local needs to promote walking and biking as part of promoting regular physical activity. Physical activity that is part of a routine activity and not an additional organized activity is more likely to become part of a student's everyday life.

B. Transportation Policies

Background: School districts in the state of Idaho have transportation policies that detail when students will be bused, regulate student behavior on buses and identify hazards that may preclude students from walking and biking safely and necessitate safety or hazard busing.

The local school transportation policies are another important opportunity to develop and implement goals and objectives that support and encourage active transportation (i.e. walking and biking) whenever possible. In addition to the important health benefits of regular physical activity as outlined above, encouraging walking and biking can lower transportation costs for both the school district and ' families.

Below are model goals and objectives that you can consider for addition to your wellness policy as it fits local needs and interest.

A broad goal overall supporting establishing safe routes:

B1. [School District] supports active transportation by students when it is safe and will assess safety hazards to walking and biking to school and, if necessary and to the extent possible, identify and support needed improvements to make it safer and easier for students to walk and bike to school. When appropriate, the district will work with local municipality and public works, transportation agencies, public health, public safety, and/or police departments in those efforts.

Comment: *This goal establishes that the school district supports active transportation and actions that identify and fix barriers to safe walking and biking.*

B2. [School District] will work with school board members, parents, students, staff and local planning, public works and police personnel to implement a "Safe Routes to School" program in support of walking/biking to school that includes activities that encourage walking and biking and educates students on safe walking and biking conduct.

B3. [School District] will assess the travel behavior of students through regular surveys and tallies of student mode choice to identify trends and potential barriers to walking and biking and to develop data for use in planning for improvements.

B4. [School District] will assist parents and look for partners, i.e. senior groups, in organizing adult supervision of walking and biking to school where needed in order to make it safer, such as a Walking School Bus or Corner Captains.

B5. [School District] will consider providing crossing guards or other ongoing safety measures where needed to ensure safety for students.

Comment: *These goals offer support for education and non-infrastructure strategies that encourage active transportation by the students. Use one or more of them as appropriate to provide support for the activities of the school district in regards to active transportation.*

Resources

Safe Routes to School National Partnership, Wellness Policies: (accessed January 2013)
<http://www.saferoutespartnership.org/state/bestpractices/wellnesspolicies>

Model School Wellness Policies, The National Alliance for Nutrition and Activity: (accessed January 2013)
<http://www.schoolwellnesspolicies.org/>

Fit Healthy and Ready to Learn, Policies to Encourage Physical Activity: (accessed January 2013)
http://www.saferoutespartnership.org/sites/default/files/pdf/FHRTL_Physical_Activity.pdf

If you would like to complete a Health Index Assessment of your school there is an free online tool developed by CDC at: (accessed January 2013) <http://www.cdc.gov/HealthyYouth/SHI/>