

NORWALK PUBLIC SCHOOLS

School District Profile

School District: Norwalk Public Schools

Grades: K-12

Enrollment: 10,835

Number of Schools: 19

Education Reference Group (ERG): H

Team Leader: Leah H. Turner, RN, MSN
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School Health Team in Place before Pilot Project: No

School Health Team Members: School board member, school nurse, school food service, parent representative, health educator, physical education teacher, local health department representative and chef

Other People Who Should Have Been Included on the School Health Team:

Administrator in charge of physical education and health curriculums and elementary school principal

Policy Adoption:

The policies were adopted by the Board of Education on May 3, 2005.

Number of Times School Health Team Met: 9

Length of Each Meeting: 1¼-1½ hours

Continuation of School Health Team after Pilot Completion:

The superintendent has not requested that the School Health Team continue.

Process for Identifying and Prioritizing Program Improvement Needs:

1. The committee used the *School Health Index* in the six pilot schools to identify the needs of the district. We also conducted a vending machine survey to gather baseline data on the number of machines and the types of foods that were currently offered.
2. The committee went through the publication *Fit, Healthy and Ready to Learn*. We specifically used the *Physical Activity* and *Healthy Eating* chapters page-by-page.
3. We discussed the applicability to our district and used it as a template.
4. We were practical, focusing on items that didn't increase costs; for example, recess before lunch, integrating health and nutrition into the current curriculum and preserving current levels of physical education.

Steps Used for Policy Development and Adoption:

1. The committee developed draft policies.
2. The draft policies were presented to the Policy Committee of the Board of Education. The Team Leader (TL) and the School Health Coordinator (SHC) clarified specific clauses and answered questions.
3. The TL and/or SHC met with high school, middle school and elementary school principals and the superintendent to gain their support.
4. The TL and SHC went before the board of education twice. The first time the final draft was on the agenda for Report and Discussion. The second time (a month later) the policies were voted on and adopted.

Challenges to the Policy Development Process:

- Gaining global awareness of district staff members who needed to be asked for input in order to draft successful policies.
- Learning the timing of the board of education's work schedule.
- Identifying resistance among key players and learning how to change challenges into opportunities.
- Lack of a professional nutrition resource person within the district.

Successes with the Policy Development Process:

- Adoption of proposed policies by the Board of Education.
- Enrolling nine schools as Team Nutrition Schools (<http://teamnutrition.usda.gov/team.html>).
- Receiving valuable input from committee members and becoming a working committee.
- Establishing new relationships between school health and the board of education and the PTO Council.

Critical Resources Needed to Ensure Success with Policy Development:

- Team members committed to the project.
- A district that supports the necessity for change.
- Funding for travel, resources and staff time.
- PowerPoint presentations with current student health and achievement statistics as tools for educating parents and administrators.

Characteristics Important to an Effective, Productive and Successful School Health Team:

- Committee members who are interested in changing policy.
- Members who are committed, passionate and willing to work toward a common goal.
- Having a consistent time and place to meet.

Activities Conducted as a Result of Work on the School Nutrition Policies Project:

- Conducted a districtwide Body Mass Index (BMI) study of kindergarten and sixth grade students to ascertain obesity levels.
- Obtained Pedometer Grant to buy 150 pedometers for students.
- Increased PTO involvement, including presentations to PTO Council, distribution of handouts on fundraising and healthy celebrations, and showing excerpts of "SuperSize Me" film.
- Interviewed by news media and received publicity for the policies in local papers.

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- Presented healthy eating information to English as a second language (ESL) parents.
- Presented at statewide forum on obesity.
- Attended *Health Education Assessment Program* (HEAP) training.
- Presented policy development process and results in a poster presentation at the National Association of School Nurses annual conference in Washington, D.C. (June 2005). Received poster presentation award for the category of "Policy Change."

Strategies for Promoting Adoption and Districtwide Support of the Policies:

- Meetings with school staff members, board of education and parents.
- Mailings and newsletters for parents.
- Staff e-mails and newsletter.
- School district website.
- Newspaper articles to promote awareness to the community.
- Topic-related posters purchased and distributed to all schools in the district.

Strategies for District Implementation of the Policies:

- The new policies are included in the school district Policies and Procedures Manual and implemented by administrators.
- Distributed booklet *Promoting Healthy Eating & Physical Activity* to school administration, PTO Council, school nurses and central office administration.

Methods for Evaluating Success of District Implementation of the Policies:

- A majority of elementary schools have successfully implemented recess before lunch.
- The contents of vending machines have only nutritious choices.
- A majority of schools have established school-based committees to set nutritional standards for school-sponsored events.
- Curriculum supervisors state that nutrition, health and physical education revisions have been completed.
- The PTOs or principals state that their schools have adopted healthy celebrations, healthy fundraising and/or healthy rewards practices.
- The food service achieves gold or silver status from the U.S. Department of Agriculture's HealthierUS School Challenge (<http://www.fns.usda.gov/tn/HealthierUS/index.html>).
- Food is offered as a reward less often.
- Physical activity is not used as a punishment.

Recommendations for Success with the Policy Development Process:

- Find people you can work with.
- Set realistic goals.
- Gain an understanding of the local process for policy development.
- Foster a supportive environment at the board level and at the school level.

Policies

Norwalk Public Schools Healthy Eating Policy

Adopted May 3, 2005

The Board of Education intends that all students possess the knowledge and skills necessary to make nutritious and enjoyable food choices for a lifetime.

Therefore, it is desired that the schools provide:

- A food service program that employs well-prepared staff who efficiently serve appealing choices of nutritious foods.
- Pleasant eating areas for students with adequate time for unhurried eating.
- A sequential program of nutrition instruction that is integrated within a comprehensive school health education curriculum and coordinated with the food service program; that is taught by well-prepared and supported staff members; and that is aimed at influencing students' knowledge, attitudes and eating habits.
- During each school day the school food service program shall offer breakfast and lunch. Snacks for students in organized after-school education or enrichment programs shall be offered to the extent possible.

In addition, the Board of Education intends that students have limited opportunities to drink beverages of minimal nutritional value or eat snacks high in fat, sodium and added sugars during school hours.

Therefore, there shall be:

- No beverage (with the exception of water) or snack vending available to elementary or middle school students.
- Vending available to high school students which is limited to nutritious drinks and snacks.

It is desired that the administration make use of in-service training sessions for both certified and noncertified staff members to achieve the goals of this policy, and that full cooperation with community agencies be given whenever such cooperation can be advantageous to the students.

Legal Reference: Connecticut State Statutes:
House Bill No. 5344 Childhood Nutrition in Schools.
Sec. 10-215b-1; Sec. 10-215b-23 (Competitive Foods)
National School Lunch Reauthorization Act of 2004

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Regulations:

1. Offer all full-day students a daily lunch period of not less than 30 minutes.
2. Elementary schools shall schedule recess before lunch.
3. Nutrition education topics shall be integrated within the sequential, comprehensive health education program taught at every grade level, prekindergarten through twelfth.
4. The nutrition education program shall focus on students' eating behaviors, be based on theories and methods proven effective by published research, and be consistent with the state's and district's health education standards.
5. The district shall make efforts to ensure that families are aware of need-based programs for free or reduced-price meals and that eligible families are encouraged to apply.
6. Procedures shall be in place for providing lunch debit cards to all secondary school students.
7. Schools shall offer varied and nutritious food and beverage choices that are consistent with the federal government's Dietary Guidelines for Americans. This includes but is not limited to:
 - low-fat milk
 - 100 percent fruit juices
 - water
 - low-fat dairy products
 - fresh or dried fruit
8. Food and beverages sold in vending machines shall not be available to students during school hours (with the exception of water and milk products). Food and beverages sold in school stores shall not compete during breakfast and lunch hours. Profits generated from vending machine sales or school stores during nonrestricted hours will accrue to the student organizations approved by the appropriate school-based committee.
9. Competitive foods sold in vending machines shall be limited to:
 - low-fat milk
 - 100 percent fruit juices
 - water
 - low-fat dairy products
 - fresh or dried fruit
 - sport drinks that contain no more than 100 calories
 - snack foods items that have no more than 200 calories per portion
10. Food or beverages sold or served on school grounds or school-sponsored events shall meet nutritional standards set by a school-based committee/school health council. This includes:
 - food and beverage choices at snack bars, school stores and concession stands.
 - food and beverages sold as part of school-sponsored fundraising activities.
 - refreshments served at parties, celebrations and meetings.

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Physical Activity Policy*

Adopted May 3, 2005

The Board of Education intends that every student be physically educated – that is, shall develop the knowledge and skills necessary to perform a variety of physical activities, understand the short- and long-term benefits of physical activity and value and enjoy physical activity as an ongoing part of a healthful lifestyle.

Therefore, it is desired that:

- Every student in grades kindergarten through 8 participates in physical education for the entire school year, and high school students participate at least eight quarters out of 16. Participation shall include students with disabling conditions and those in alternative education programs.
- The teaching and physical education staffs shall not order performance of physical activity as a form of discipline or punishment.
- Exemptions from physical education courses shall not be permitted on the basis of participation on an athletic team.
- Schools endeavor to provide every secondary school student with opportunities to voluntarily participate in intramural programs, physical activity clubs and/or interscholastic athletics. Equal opportunity on the basis of gender shall permeate all aspects of program design and implementation.
- School authorities develop schedules that provide time within every school day for preschool, kindergarten and elementary school students to enjoy supervised recess. Staff members shall not deny participation in recess or other physical activity as a form of discipline or punishment, nor should they cancel it for instructional time.

In addition, the Board of Education intends that injuries and illnesses related to physical activity be the joint responsibility of everyone: district and school leaders, school staff members, students and their families.

Therefore, the district shall:

- Establish rules and procedures concerning safety, infection control, provision of first aid, and the reporting of injuries and illnesses to students' families and appropriate school and community authorities.

It is desired that the administration make use of in-service training sessions for both certified and noncertified staff members to achieve the goals of this policy, and that full cooperation with community agencies be given whenever such cooperation can be advantageous to the students.

Legal Reference: Connecticut General Statutes
House Bill No. 5344

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Regulations:

1. Students in the elementary grades shall participate in physical education for at least 60 minutes during each school week/cycle; students in middle schools at least 40 minutes every other day; and high school students 44 minutes every other day for each of eight quarters.
2. Elementary schools shall schedule recess before lunch.
3. The physical education program shall devote at least 50 percent of class time to actual physical activity in each week/cycle, with as much time as possible spent in moderate to vigorous physical activity.
4. The benefits of being physically active shall be linked with instruction about human growth, development, and physiology in science classes (secondary level) and with instruction about personal health behaviors in health education class (both levels).
5. Middle schools shall offer intramural/interscholastic physical activity programs that feature a broad range of competitive and cooperative activities.
6. High schools shall offer interscholastic athletic programs that adhere to rules and regulations of FCIAC. All coaches shall comply with the policies, regulations, rules and enforcement measures codified in a regularly updated coaches' handbook.
7. Exemptions from physical education courses shall not be permitted on the basis of participation on an athletic team, community recreation program, ROTC, marching band, or other school or community activity
8. Qualified staff members who may or may not be certified teachers, shall supervise all intramural programs, physical activity clubs, and athletic teams.

Glossary of Terms

Interscholastic athletics refers to organized individual and team sports that involve more than one school.

Intramural refers to physical activity programs that provide opportunities for all students to participate in sport, fitness and recreational activities within their own school.

Moderate physical activity refers to activities that are equivalent in intensity to brisk walking.

Physical education refers to a planned, sequential program of curricula and instruction that helps students develop the knowledge, attitudes, motor skills, self-management skills and confidence needed to adopt and maintain physically active lifestyles.

Qualified staff members refers to persons that shall satisfactorily complete courses or other professional development programs that address child and adolescent physical development; sports-related injury prevention and safety guidelines; infection control procedures; first aid and cardiopulmonary resuscitation techniques; promotion of healthy student behaviors; safe and unsafe methods for youth weight management and conditioning; and how to provide students with experiences that emphasize enjoyment, sportspersonship, skill development, confidence building and self-knowledge.

Recess refers to regularly scheduled periods within the school day for unstructured physical activity and play.

Vigorous physical activity refers to exertion that makes a person sweat and breathe hard, such as basketball, soccer, running, swimming laps, fast bicycling, fast dancing and similar aerobic activities.