

The Pennsylvania School for the Deaf Wellness Program



Pennsylvania School for the Deaf

Mission

The Pennsylvania School for the Deaf educates students to succeed by recognizing and developing individual strengths, building confidence, collaborating with families and communities in a nurturing, dynamic, and language-rich environment steeped in cultural awareness of Deaf, Hearing, and worldwide diversity.

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Introduction

Obesity rates in the United States have risen significantly, particularly among young people. The Centers for Disease Control (CDC) reports that children who were overweight by age 8 were more severely obese as adults.

- The prevalence of overweight among children aged 6-11 years has more than doubled in the past 20 years and among adolescents 12-19 has more than tripled.
- Nearly 80% of young people do not eat the recommended number of servings of fruits and vegetables.
- Type-2 diabetes has become more prevalent among children and adolescents as rates of overweight and obesity rise.

Participation in physical activity declines as children get older. During the past 20 years the percentage of young people who are overweight has tripled as a result of significantly reduced physical inactivity.

Health and physical education provide students with the knowledge and skills that will enable them to achieve and maintain a physically active and healthful life, not only during their time in school but for a lifetime. Health and physical education are integral components of a balanced educational program. Children who are healthy and physically active increase their chances of achieving their highest academic potential and are better able to handle the demands of today's hectic schedules.

PSD's Wellness Goals

The Pennsylvania School for the Deaf (PSD) is committed to providing a school environment that enhances learning and development of lifelong wellness practices of each student, and providing guidance in the areas of nutrition, health, physical activity and safety, as well as positive social/emotional growth. Specific goals include:

- Child nutrition programs will comply with federal, state and local requirements. Child nutrition programs are accessible to all children.
- Nutrition education is provided and promoted through Health Education and Food Service.
- Planned instruction for Health & Physical Education aligns with Pennsylvania's academic standards.
- School-based activities are consistent with the school wellness policy.
- Students are encouraged to engage in physical activity daily (i.e. Physical Education, recess, athletics, intramurals, co & extra-curricular activities).
- PSD promotes the healthy and positive social-emotional development of all students.

- Well-informed decision making skills are integrated throughout wellness education.
- Appropriate professional development for staff will be provided.
- PSD operates an economically sustainable meal program that provides a healthy nutritious breakfast and lunch to students so that students are prepared to learn and reach their fullest potential.

Nutrition Education

At PSD, building nutrition knowledge and skills helps children make healthy eating and physical activity choices. To make a difference, nutrition education for children should be appropriate for the students' ages, reflect their cultures, and provide opportunities for them to practice skills and have fun. Health enhancing nutrition education promotes fruits, vegetables, whole grain products, low-fat and fat-free products, reduced sugar and salt intake and healthy food preparation.

- Health education shall continue to be formally taught beginning in 1st grade and will be aligned with the Pennsylvania Core Standards and other best practices in the field.
- Nutrition education shall include age and developmentally appropriate information and shall be infused into other core curriculum areas such as math, science, social studies and language arts as applicable.
 - At the Early Childhood and Early Elementary school level, Health Education, including nutrition education, is taught by the classroom teacher.
 - From mid-Elementary through the High School level Health Education classes shall continue to be taught by certified Health Education teachers as a separate course.
 - High School students are required to complete 1.5 Physical Education/Health Credits for graduation. PSD requires at least one full semester of Health Education. Healthy decision making skills are reinforced every year through advisory periods with trained counselors.
 - High School Health Education course work includes Nutrition Education, Human Sexuality, and Drug/Alcohol Education.

Physical Education and Activities

PSD's Physical Education Program is designed to stress physical fitness and encourage healthy, active lifestyles. The Physical Education program consists of physical activities of at least moderate intensity and for a duration that is sufficient to provide a significant health benefit to students, subject to the differing abilities of students.

- Physical education/activity is provided every day for students.
- Physical activity is integrated across curricula and throughout the school day. Movement can be made a part of health, science, math, social studies and language arts.
- Physical Education promotes an environment where students learn, practice and are assessed on developmentally appropriate motor skills, social skills and knowledge.
- Planned instruction is designed to meet the needs of all children (athletic and non-athletic), feature cooperative as well as competitive activities, and focus on understanding and ownership of personal fitness and wellness for life.
- Activities include self-management, movement, cooperation, fair play and social skills.
- State-certified Physical Education instructors teach Physical Education.
- Physical education classes have an appropriate student/teacher ratio.
- A daily supervised recess period is provided in early childhood, elementary, and middle school, and is not withheld as punishment.
- At the High School level, 1.5 credits of Physical Education/Health are required for high school graduation and includes at least two semesters of fitness (1.0 credit) as well as Elective Fitness courses.
- Students are supported in setting and meeting personal fitness goals that result in the achievement and maintenance of a health enhancing level of physical fitness.
- The Physical Education program is adapted for students who are unable to participate in the regular activities.
- Safe and adequate equipment, facilities and resources are provided.
- PSD's Physical Education planned instruction aligns with the Pennsylvania Core Standards.

Other School-Based Activities

- After-School programs that encourage physical activity, making healthy nutritional choices and promote healthy habits and decision making are provided.
- The goals outlined by the Wellness policy will be considered in planning all school-based activities (such as school events, field trips, dances and assemblies).
- Support for the health of all students is demonstrated by hosting health fairs, health screenings, and helping to enroll eligible children in state health insurance programs.

- A physical and social environment that encourages safe and enjoyable activities for all students is provided.
- Physical activities are not used as a form of punishment

Quality School Meals

Healthy school meals provide energy and nutrients children need for sound minds and bodies. Studies confirm what parents and teachers have said for years – children who are not well nourished have difficulty learning. The variety of healthy foods offered in school meal programs allows children to learn to enjoy different foods, develop healthy eating patterns, and reduce the onset of childhood obesity.

- PSD will follow the guidelines set forth by the National School Lunch and Breakfast Program when offering breakfast and lunch.
- School food service staff is properly qualified according to current professional standards and participate in professional development activities.
- Food safety and sanitation is a key part of the school food service operation.
- Menus meet the nutritional standards established by the U.S. Department of Agriculture, conforming to appropriate menu planning principles, and featuring a variety of healthy choices that are tasty, attractive, the best possible quality, and are served at the proper temperature.
- All foods made available on campus during the school day comply with the current USDA Dietary Guidelines for Americans.
- Students will be given the opportunity to provide input on local, cultural and ethnic favorite foods.
- The school is a safe, comfortable, pleasing environment, with ample time and space for eating meals.
- Menus are made available to students, families and staff (menu board, emails, notices)

Other Healthy Environment Guidelines

Academic performance and quality of life issues are affected by the choices available the guidance provided in the school environment. Healthy practices support student physical growth, brain development, resistance to disease, emotional stability and the ability to learn.

- Nutrition guidelines require that the use of products that are high in fiber, low in added fats, sugar and sodium, and served in appropriate portion sizes are consistent with USDA standards.
 - Guidelines for school operated vending machines (as outlined in the National School Lunch Act - Competitive Foods Rules) are followed. PSD's vending machines where student meals are served or eaten are off limits during school hours for elementary students and do not contain carbonated beverages.

- Foods and beverages made available on campus including vending, concessions, student stores, parties and fundraising during the school day are consistent with the current state and federal law.
- There will be no withholding of food and/or physical activity as punishment.
- Healthy guidelines are used when considering food as incentive.
- Students will not be involved in the sale of candy, cookies, and sweets during the school day for any fundraising activity.
- Parents and staff are strongly encouraged to provide any party snack items consistent with the goals of the wellness policy and held during or after the lunch hour.
- Operational drinking fountains are available for students to get water at meals and throughout the day.
- School personnel will assist all students in developing the healthy practice of cleansing hands before eating.
- PSD encourages appropriate socializing among students, and between students and adults. Adults will properly supervise dining rooms and serve as role models to students by demonstrating proper conduct and communication.
- PSD's nutritional program ensures that all students have affordable access to the varied and nutritious foods that they need to stay healthy and learn well.
- Students are encouraged to start each day with a healthy breakfast.
- PSD strives to increase participation in the federally funded child nutrition programs (i.e. school lunch, school breakfast, after-school snack and summer foodservice programs).
- All food service staff are properly qualified according to current professional standards and regularly participate in professional development activities.
- All foods made available on campus comply with the state and local food safety regulations.
- Opportunities for the staff to be physically active are encouraged.
- Access to the food service operations are limited to food service staff and authorized personnel for safety and security.
- PSD actively teaches students anti-bullying and safe school behaviors and promotes a non-stigmatizing atmosphere for all.
- PSD uses positive behavior support practices.
- PSD provides safe and adequate facilities that encourage physical activity.
- One of the most pressing issues schools face is the increased number of students with food allergies. PSD's nursing staff work closely with families, students and faculty to proactively manage each student's special food allergy needs.
- Competitive foods are defined as any food or beverage offered or sold to students at school in competition with reimbursable meals served through the National School Lunch or School Breakfast programs during the school day
- All competitive foods available to students at PSD will comply with current federal standards for competitive foods and the Nutrition Standards for Competitive Foods in PA Schools.

School- Based Wellness Committee

With the purposes of monitoring the implementation of this policy, evaluating policy progress, and revising the policy as necessary, a school-wide wellness committee will be established and meet a minimum of two times annually. The school-based wellness committee shall be composed of at least 1 certificated and 1 non-certificated school member, 1 school administrator, 1 health professional and shall include student and parent input.

Evaluation and Implementation

- PSD's Wellness Program and School Improvement Plans should align in the areas of student health and fitness, including physical fitness, parental information on student health and fitness, and are consistent with the Mission of the School.
- PSD's Wellness Committee will conduct a review once a year to identify any areas for improvement. They will report their findings to the Head of School with recommendations for improvement.
- The Head of School or designee shall be responsible to monitor the school, programs and curriculum to ensure compliance with this policy, related policies and established guidelines or administrative regulations
- Staff members responsible for programs related to student wellness shall report to the Head of School or designee regarding the status of these programs
- PSD shall inform and update the public, including parents/guardians, students, and others in the community, about the contents and implementation of this policy

Drug and Alcohol Education and Support Services

The use and abuse of tobacco, alcohol and other drugs by youth in our Commonwealth continues to pose one of the most serious problems facing educators, parents and communities. Section 1547 of the PA School Codes, enacted as Act 211 of 1990, requires school districts to implement a comprehensive tobacco, alcohol and other drugs program including instruction in the classroom.

Section 1547 requires each public school student to receive instruction in alcohol, chemical and tobacco abuse in every grade from kindergarten to grade 12. The law requires that the instruction be age appropriate, sequential, discourage use of tobacco, alcohol and other drugs, and communicate that the use of illicit drugs and the improper use of legally obtained drugs is wrong. The law does not require local schools to set up an independent course of study but rather to integrate the instruction in health or other appropriate courses of study. Section 1547 calls upon the schools to reach out to parents and the community, to prevent and deal with the problems which arise from the use and abuse of tobacco, alcohol and other drugs.

- PSD's Student Development Team (SDT) has trained counseling professionals who work with students in all departments to provide drug and alcohol guidance.
- SDT counselors collaborate with families and/or community agencies to help students make healthy drug/alcohol decisions.
- Elementary – High School Student Handbooks address drug and alcohol guidelines.