

Wellness Policy

The Public Schools of Brookline (PSB) is committed to providing school environments that promote and protect children's health, well-being, and ability to learn by supporting wellness, good nutrition and regular physical activity as part of the total learning environment. The PSB supports a healthy environment where children learn about and participate in positive dietary and lifestyle practices. In an effort to support these goals, the following *core values* guide this policy and its corresponding implementation and procedures:

Cultivate a School Culture That Values Wellness – physical and mental health of all its students and their communities – by offering thoughtful, inclusive, and appropriate support and instruction throughout all schools.

Provide Comprehensive health education including but not limited to mental and physical health, nutrition and food literacy, physical activity, allergy and public health concerns, alcohol and other substance abuse, peer pressure, body image, and eating disorders. At its very core, comprehensive school health education is about keeping students healthy now and in the future, reinforcing positive healthy behaviors throughout the school day, and making it clear that good health and learning go hand in hand.

Destigmatize Differences due to mental and physical health or disability, culture, race, religion, language, national origin, gender, gender identity, sexual orientation, or socio-economic status through providing space for public learning, conversation, and discussion.

I. Food Available in School

The PSB addresses guidelines for students who have life threatening food allergies within the management guidelines for students who have life-threatening allergies.

The PSB provides school food environments in which every food option meets or exceeds USDA guidelines. The PSB will provide choices which support good health, academic achievement, physical activity, and individual choice. In providing foods that promote good health, pleasure in eating and reinforce important health education objectives, the PSB will allow for a diversity in family resources, food knowledge, exposure, cultures, and food practices.

Student Access and Participation in Meal Programs

1. The PSB is committed to provide a stigma-free meal environment where all students are provided fresh, nutritious foods that support physical growth and learning. Specifically, free and reduced priced meals will be served and sold in a manner indistinguishable by students or staff from the regularly priced meals.
2. PSB will meet or exceed best administrative practices for enrollment, participation, and payment of food, including:
 - a. Ensuring that the direct certification process is being complied with for automatically eligible students;

- b. On a regular basis checking and coordinating with county social services and similar public benefit administering agencies to ensure that every eligible child is enrolled in free/reduced price meal programs;
- c. Developing a coordinated, comprehensive outreach and promotion plan directed at both students and families, including a language access component to ensure language-appropriate documents and highlighting access options for students with disabilities.
- d. Implementing and maintaining a card-swipe or similar payment system in place that eliminates the stigma of accepting “free/reduced” lunch.
- e. Ensuring at least 20 minutes of time to eat *after food is served*, as feasible. This will allow enough time for students to get their lunch and eat it. Students need to socialize while eating, and if forced to choose due to shortness of time will usually respond to social prompts to talk rather than eat. Accommodate special dietary needs and offer foods that permit individual choice.
- f. Striving to reflect the ethnic and cultural preferences represented within our diverse community.

School Meal Content Guidelines

The PSB adheres to the following School Meal Content Guidelines

- a. Meet and, when possible, exceeds the Nutrition Standards in the National School Lunch and Breakfast Programs <https://www.gpo.gov/fdsys/pkg/FR-2012-01-26/pdf/2012-1010.pdf> and the Massachusetts and USDA Competitive Foods and Beverage Nutrition Standards <http://www.mass.gov/eohhs/gov/departments/dph/programs/community-health/mass-in-motion/school/nutrition-regs/> taking advantage of exemptions for unprocessed fruits and vegetables. To the extent that current nutrition science indicates a higher standard is the better practice, the higher standard should be applied. The PSB endeavors to use organic food that is sourced locally and regionally when available.
 - i. Under the Nutrition Standards in the National School Lunch and Breakfast program (7 CFR Parts 210 and 220) guidelines;
 - 1. This rule requires most schools to increase the availability of fruits, vegetables, whole grains, and fat free and low-fat fluid milk in school meals; reduce the levels of sodium and saturated fat and meet the nutritional needs of school children within their calorie requirements. These improvements to the school meal programs, largely based on recommendations made by the Institute of Medicine of the National Academies, are expected to enhance the diet and health of school children, and help mitigate the childhood obesity trend.
 - 2. Trans fats are not permitted.
- b. Serves real, minimally processed food without additives when budgetarily possible and available. Fresh and freshly prepared food options should be available to every student at every meal.

- c. Makes ingredient, nutrition and allergy information for all foods and beverages, except for fresh fruits and vegetables and other whole foods, readily available to students before purchasing meals, and to families in advance of the school day.

Snacks offered or sold to students as part of the food service program or through vending machines will comply with Smart Snacks or Massachusetts DESE snack standards per regulations 7 CFR 210.11 105 CMR 225.000. Snacks sold through vending machines shall not compete with meals offered by the school food service program.

Fundraisers that involve food sales must comply with 7 CFR 210.11(a) and also meet the [Massachusetts and USDA Competitive Foods and Beverage Nutrition Standards](#) and guidance provided by [MA Dept of Health and Human Services](#) for school nutrition. When occurring before the school day begins, these fundraisers must end 30 minutes prior to the start of school. When occurring after the school day, these fundraisers must start no less than 30 minutes after the school day ends.

Food at School Events, Field Trips, Celebrations, and Fundraisers

- a. Given the implicit school endorsement, foods offered at any school events (including testing days, assemblies, etc.) will be wholesome, nutritious, clearly marked for the eight (8) common allergens (peanut, tree nut, milk, soy, egg, wheat, fish, and shellfish), and meet or exceed the district's nutrition standards for food in school set forth above.
- b. Food fundraisers or food sold on behalf of the schools will also feature whole or minimally processed high nutrient foods, such as fruits, and vegetables, and be consistent with the standards and objectives of the wellness policy while being in accordance with National School Lunch Program and School Breakfast Program: Nutrition Standards for All Foods Sold in School as Required by the Healthy, Hunger Free Kids Act of 2010 (7 CFR Parts 210 and 220).
- c. Non-food related fundraising alternatives such as walk- or read-a-thons, jump roping, fun runs, or programming competitions, should be promoted.
- d. Lunch time meetings will not be used as a consequence. Tutoring, clubs, and meetings may take place during lunch time if students are provided with the opportunity to get lunch.

Competitive Foods and Beverages & Food Marketing

- a. Foods should compare favorably with meal program offerings, and meet or exceed the same standards set forth above.
- b. These standards apply in all locations where food and beverages are offered or sold in schools: cafeterias, restaurants, student run culinary program, cafes, vending machines, stores, and snack or other food carts.
- c. Only foods that meet or exceed district standards may be marketed or promoted to students.
- d. PSB will prioritize marketing whole or minimally processed foods to students.
- e. Fruit and non-fried vegetables will be offered for sale wherever food is sold.
- f. Only Office of Administration and Finance approved brand names, trademarks, or logos from companies that offer only product lines (both in and outside of

schools) consistent with the Wellness Policy nutrition guidelines will appear in schools, during school activities, or in school materials, including, but not limited to curriculum or educational materials, food and beverage containers, menus, school publications, posters, electronic media, or vending machines.

Ensure the safety and inclusion of students with food allergies and other special health concerns by following the PSB Management Guidelines for Students who have Life-Threatening Allergies.

II. Nutrition Education

The PSB will aim to provide nutrition, health and food literacy education to students at every grade level as part of a sequential, comprehensive, standards-based health education curriculum and/or as embedding in multi-disciplinary units that meets state and national standards. Curriculum will be selected, developed and coordinated so that both dedicated health and nutrition units as well as other classroom and non-classroom settings are used in concert to further this goal. Appropriately, the district will take steps to ensure trained and dually licensed physical and health educators will be identified and tasked with this coordination with appropriate content area partners. The K-12 coordinator of Physical Education and Health will partner with appropriate content coordinators to prepare materials, conduct or arrange for outreach and trainings, and providing technical support and resources to teachers.

Consistent with the values set forth in this policy, the PSB will:

1. **Providing a food-positive school food environment**, in which real food is freshly prepared from whole or minimally processed ingredients to maximize naturally occurring nutrients and good taste while minimizing unnecessary additives and waste, whether in a meal program or any other school setting.
2. **Teaching students to be critical, astute consumers** who know how to navigate both their food environment and their health support system, seek out current science, and modify their behavior to cultivate good health.
3. **Teaching food literacy** in the classroom, in experiential learning settings like school gardens and teaching kitchens, in the cafeteria, and in other food settings; practice what is preached in nutrition education; and ensure that adults model good choices throughout schools.
4. **Provide a range of wholesome, nutritious, and delicious breakfast, lunch, snack and special event foods to all students.** Holding its food service program to the Nutrition Standards in the National School Lunch and Breakfast Programs <https://www.gpo.gov/fdsys/pkg/FR-2012-01-26/pdf/2012-1010.pdf> and the Massachusetts and USDA Competitive Foods and Beverage Nutrition Standards <http://www.mass.gov/eohhs/gov/departments/dph/programs/community-health/mass-in-motion/school/nutrition> regs/ the PSB will ensure that its foods are equally accessible to all students irrespective of ability to pay; consistent with the health, ethnic, and cultural needs of the internal school community; and contribute to the health of the greater community by supporting a healthy, sustainable, and fair local and regional food system.

III. Health Education, Physical Education and Physical Activity

The Public Schools of Brookline will provide a range of physical activity opportunities to all students, including regular physical education, daily recess and physical activity breaks, before and after school activities, active academics as well as comprehensive health education.

Teachers and other school personnel will not use physical activity (*e.g.*, running laps, push-ups) or withhold opportunities for physical education or physical activity (*e.g.*, recess,) as consequence. The denial of recess will not be used as punishment/discipline unless the student's removal from recess has been determined as appropriate by the school principal and communicated with the parent.

1. Physical Education

- a. All PSB students grades K-12, including students with disabilities, special health-care needs, and in in-district alternative educational settings, receive physical education each year. In grades 9-12 this requirement may be met through the After-School Contract for Health and Fitness.
- b. All physical education will be taught by teachers meeting DESE licensure requirements. Age, ability, and developmentally appropriate modifications will be made to accommodate the needs of all students. Students will spend at least 70 percent of physical education class time participating in moderate to vigorous physical activity.
- c. Teachers will provide a comfortable and safe learning environment. Physical education equipment will be age and developmentally appropriate.

2. Daily Recess

- a. In accordance with proposed Massachusetts H 235(1) All children in grades kindergarten through five attending public schools shall receive one hundred forty minutes of supervised, safe, and unstructured free-play recess each week, preferably outdoors, weather permitting dependent at the discretion of the school principal. Should the outdoor temperature fall below 20 degrees, recess shall occur indoors.
- b. All children in grades 6 through 8 will receive at least 90 minutes of supervised, safe, and unstructured free-play recess each week, preferably outdoors, weather permitting dependent at the discretion of the school principal. Should the outdoor temperature fall below 20 degrees, recess shall occur indoors.
 - i. As used herein, the term "free play" means an unstructured environment, but which is supervised by appropriate school personnel or staff.

3. Integrating Movement Throughout the School Day

- a. The PSB will continue to train teachers in current practices to understand that short exercise bursts create increased brain activity, resulting in students who are more focused and ready to learn. Classroom teachers will be provided with resources for increasing student heart rates periodically throughout the school day.

- b. Students in grades 5-8 will have access to extramural sports programs. High school students will have access to intramural physical activity programs as well as interscholastic sports programs.
- c. All schools will offer a range of activities that meet the needs, interests, and abilities of students, inclusive of genders, students with disabilities, and students with special health-care needs.

4. Health Education

- a. PSB are committed to providing a school environment that promotes students' physical, emotional, intellectual, and social well-being.
- b. The health education program will utilize a skills-based approach designed to provide students with opportunities to develop and maintain the knowledge, skills, attitudes, and behaviors necessary to be healthy and physically active for a lifetime. The health education curricula will be aligned with the state and National Health Education Standards. The PSB Health education shall be taught by teachers meeting DESE licensure requirements. Currently, the health curriculum is taught in grades 7-9. The PSB aims to start a specific health education program beginning in grade 6.

IV. Social and Emotional Health and Wellbeing

The Public Schools of Brookline is committed to promoting the social and emotional well-being of all students. Brookline's commitment to addressing student mental health has six objectives:

1. Foster a school **culture of overall acceptance and respect** for differences. De-stigmatize mental health issues, whether referring to individuals with clinical diagnoses (such as anxiety or bipolar disorder) or those struggling with personal or family stresses or other social/emotional issues. Create an environment in which it is safe and acceptable to talk about differences and ask for help.
2. **Provide age-appropriate social and emotional literacy and education.** Teach effective strategies and practices to support mental health, resilience and well-being throughout all grades, including skills that promote healthy behaviors in relation to nutrition, exercise, interpersonal relationships, stress management, mindfulness, injury prevention and substance abuse.
3. **Raise awareness among students, parents, schools staff, coaches and other members of the community** about the signs and symptoms of mental health, social/emotional issues, and substance abuse, keeping in mind that many behavioral and academic struggles, are often manifestations of compromised mental health or personal or family and stresses. Provide training on how to reach out to students and help them access support and treatment services. Ensure that all school staff are trained on emergency procedures, including when to report concerns to administration and support staff.

4. **Ensure that in-school support services** (including guidance, social workers, adjustment counselors, psychologists, and/or nursing staff) are accessible to all students presenting with social, emotional, mental health and substance abuse issues for screening, referral and ongoing counseling in school counseling as needed. Trained licensed clinical staff will be available to respond to social service and psychiatric emergencies during school hours.
5. **Provide specialized instructional programs** for all students struggling with social and emotional issues to achieve academically to the best of their abilities.
6. **Promote wellbeing and balance** by addressing the policies and practices around the intersection of academic expectations/achievement and student mental health.

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