



# Mount Carmel Area School District

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## **Student Nutrition/Wellness Policy**

*Adopted 7/21/05*

*1<sup>st</sup> Revisions adopted 2/20/06*

*2<sup>nd</sup> Revisions adopted 4/17/06*

*Effective date 7/1/06*

### **Purpose**

**Believing** that proper nutrition, diet and physical activity play an important role in the physical health, mental health, and overall well being of each student, the MOUNT CARMEL AREA SCHOOL DISTRICT is dedicated to providing an environment in which students can learn to make the choices which will enable them not only to achieve their greatest academic potential, but also to build a foundation of healthy behaviors that will continue throughout their lifetime.

Through a five-pronged approach including – 1. Commitment to Nutrition and Physical Activity, 2. Wholesome School Meals and Snacks, 3. Cafeteria Policies, 4. Health/Nutrition and Physical Education, 5. Implementation and Monitoring, the MOUNT CARMEL AREA SCHOOL DISTRICT will aid students in establishing a healthy diet and encourage lifetime physical activity.

### **Goals for Physical Activity**

**Quality** physical education instruction that promotes lifelong physical activity and provides instruction in the skills and knowledge necessary for lifelong participation shall be provided through the physical education curriculum. Students shall participate in physical education classes one period in every six day cycle in the elementary school and twice during the six day cycle in the high school.

**Curriculum** components will be aligned with the State Board of Education curriculum regulations and Health, Safety and Physical Education academic standards. Physical education teachers will be required to include appropriate standards to implement a varied and comprehensive curriculum.

**Student** participation in physical activity shall be provided through age-appropriate physical activities such as recess, intramurals, and interscholastic athletics. In addition to planned physical

education. Progress will be tracked through a local assessment system as part of the physical education curriculum requirements.

## **Goals for Nutrition Education**

**Student** health and nutrition shall be promoted through the Physical Education and Health curriculum. The goal of nutrition education is to teach, encourage and support healthy eating by all students. The district shall provide instruction aligned to the Pennsylvania Academic Standards in Health, Home Economics and Physical Education.

**Nutrition** education shall be integrated into other subjects to complement but not replace academic standards based on nutrition education. Nutrition education lessons shall be age-appropriate. School food service and nutrition education shall cooperate to create an ongoing learning environment.

**Nutrition** curriculum shall be highlighted in the school cafeteria and lunch menu. Consistent nutrition messages shall be disseminated throughout the district, schools, classrooms, cafeterias, homes, community and media.

## **Goals for Other School Based Activities**

**Students** shall be provided adequate time to eat: ten (10) minutes sit down time for breakfast; twenty (20) minutes sit down time for lunch in a clean safe meal environment. Student schedules shall reflect adequate time allotted for breakfast and lunch. Cafeteria facilities shall be closely monitored during meal time for safety.

**Access** to the food service operation shall be limited to authorized staff. All staff and school community members shall be adequately informed of the rules and regulations regarding access to the food service operation.

**Students** and parents/guardians shall be involved in menu selections. Student and community representatives shall be included on the Wellness and Advisory Council.

## **Commitment to Nutrition and Physical Activity**

**Pursuant** to the findings of national studies by leading universities and the Center for Disease Control and Prevention, childhood and adolescent obesity have nearly tripled in the last two decades and is still on the rise. Nearly nine million children are now considered obese, the highest number in history. Outside of the home, school is the critical link in providing information on health and nutrition to its students. With this in mind, and the knowledge that proper nutrition is a key element in good health, readiness to learn, and attendance, the MOUNT CARMEL AREA SCHOOL DISTRICT is partnering with federal, state and local agencies to provide its students with the tools necessary to fight this alarming trend. By taking part in numerous nutrition programs, conferences, and actively pursuing wellness and nutrition grants through agencies that include, but are not limited to, the Pennsylvania Department of Education,

PA Advocate for Nutrition and Activity, the Dairy Council, and Action for Healthy Kids, we are well aimed for reaching our goals.

The school district's Wellness and Advisory Council is comprised of members from the school's administration, food service management company, school board, student body, community leaders, health teachers, coaches, school nurses, classroom teachers, parents and the PTA. With monthly meetings this diverse group is focusing on assessing the school's menu planning, eating environment, and the health and physical education programs to develop a shared vision and action plan to achieve its goals. A student group, the Youth Advisory Council (YAC), helps plan special event days for the cafeteria, and works with the food service director giving feedback on the school meal program. Youth Advisory Councils are set up on both an elementary and a high school level. Councils meet monthly. YAC meeting minutes from each month are presented at the following month's Wellness Committee meeting. YAC activities include food service surveys, menu planning and taste testing.

THE MOUNT CARMEL AREA SCHOOL DISTRICT will contribute to providing children to accumulate at least 60 minutes and up to several hours, of age-appropriate physical activity on all, or most days of the week through numerous intramural, freshman, junior varsity, and varsity sports offerings for girls and boys at the secondary level. Sports include: golf, swimming, track, cross-country, football, baseball, softball, volleyball, basketball, soccer, wrestling, powder-puff football and cheerleading. There are no assessments for students to participate in these sports. Funding is provided by the school budget and fundraising activities making all sports available to all students regardless of income. Summer sports camps are also available to students in the high school and elementary level but with a nominal fee. At the elementary level wrestling, swimming, and intramural basketball are offered for young students. Numerous local community organizations offer sports such as football, baseball, softball, swimming, basketball and soccer on the elementary level and utilize the school facilities. In-school swimming instruction is also given each year for one week to each elementary school student grades 1-6.

THE MOUNT CARMEL AREA SCHOOL DISTRICT also provides access to safe weight lifting and aerobic facilities within the high school and community for our young people to engage in enjoyable physical activity. The Mt. Carmel Fitness Center on Oak Street in Mt. Carmel and The Star Physical Therapy and Fitness Center on Park Avenue in Marion Heights are two community centers that have partnered with the school district for use by students and faculty offering free or reduced rates.

Administrators, faculty and staff are also encouraged to live more healthy lifestyles with school-based wellness programs such as team based weight loss programs, water aerobics, gym memberships, wellness newsletter, and flu shots (when available). They are also encouraged to give positive reinforcement, directions or guidance to students wishing to make healthy lifestyle changes. A school overweight support group, Students Helping All Physically Excel (SHAPE), has been established for students and is facilitated by teachers.

A daily recess period is given at the elementary level. This unstructured recess for individual and group play is not to be denied as punishment for classroom behavior problems unless all

other options have been exercised. A physical and social environment that encourages safe and enjoyable activity for all students is provided.

## **Wholesome School Meals and Snacks**

**Breakfast**, lunch, snack-time milk for Pre-K and Kindergarten students, Headstart meals and snacks and a Summer Foods program are available through a well-planned and well-informed food service management company (FSMC). The food service management company's on-site director works closely with school administration and the other members of the Wellness Advisory Council to ensure healthy, nutritious, food choices are always available and for prudent development of menus, implementation of nutritional standards, and nutrition education. With their "lower-fat cycle menu" they guarantee less than 30% of a meal's total calories come from fat, and that daily offerings include several fresh fruits and vegetables, low fat salad dressings, and low fat yogurts and snack foods. Whole grains are offered at breakfast and lunch. Menu items are including leaner meats, reduced sodium foods, less added sugars and more complex carbohydrates. Beverages available include bottled water, skim milk, 1% milk, low calorie iced tea, and 100% fruit juices. Over 50% of the potato products served in the cafeteria are baked, and not fried, thus reducing the fat and all chicken products have no trans-fat. The FSMC ensures all meals meet USDA nutrition standards and provide sufficient choices including new foods and healthier preparations of commonly eaten items. Recipes are regularly adjusted to improve nutritional value and healthy snack choices are available as ala-carte items. Portion sizes of foods offered in the cafeteria are predetermined by the National Lunch Guidelines and are designed to meet 1/3 of the Recommended Daily Allowances for school age children. The offer vs. served system requires that three or more components of the school lunch be selected to meet the nutritional guidelines for children. Lunch is measured in combination with particular emphasis placed on vitamin C, calcium, vitamin A and D. Lunches are not super sized. Menus are reviewed by the Wellness Advisory Council and the Superintendent of Schools to insure quality, variety and nutrition standards. Decisions regarding the sale of foods in addition to the National School Lunch Program meals will be based on nutritional goals, and not profit making. Student input for favorite cultural, local and ethnic foods is encouraged. Nutrition analysis of school meals is available to parents and students upon request. All food items sold individually or through vending (excluding those sold as part of the NSL or NSB programs: will have no more than 35% of its calories from fat (excluding nuts, seeds, peanut butter, and other nut buttes); will not have sugar as the first ingredient; provide minimal trans fatty acids; packages will be single serve; will not include foods of minimal nutritional value according to Federal National School Lunch Guidelines; and will strive to include items that contain greater than 2 grams of fiber per serving.

Vending machines are not accessible to elementary students at any time of the day. At the high school machines are turned off during meal times and are only available during study halls and after school hours. Lower fat and lower calorie options are also available such as pretzels, popcorn, baked snack foods, fruit snacks and low fat crackers for more healthful vending choices. Snack items that have been determined to be lower in fat, by the manufacturer, are easily recognized in the machines by their merchandizing. Vending items will have no more than 35% of its calories from fat (excluding nuts, seeds, peanut butter, and other nut butters). Items

will not have sugar as the first ingredient. They will provide minimal trans fatty acids and strive to include items that contain greater than 2 grams of fiber per serving. All packages will be single serve. Vending items available will not include any foods of minimal nutritional value according to Federal National School Lunch Guidelines.

Drinking fountains are well maintained and easily accessible throughout the high school and elementary school at all meal periods and throughout the day. A ten-minute snack break is also offered at the elementary school up to grade 3. Snack break is optional after that point. Students are not allowed to bring in candy or soda and are encouraged to bring in healthy items. Those bringing in healthy items are given positive verbal reinforcement by their teachers. The school market offers fruits and vegetables as snacks for elementary students via a nutrition grant.

## **Cafeteria Policies**

**Touch–n-serve** terminals in the lunchrooms do not identify students by free, reduced or paid lunch status. This system eliminates the possibility of embarrassment associated with being single out in separate lines or with distinctive lunch tickets or tokens. THE MOUNT CARMEL AREA SCHOOL DISTRICT and its food service management company are dedicated to promoting maximum participation in the National School Lunch, Breakfast and Summer Foods programs. Students are given adequate time for meals and encouraged to wash hands before eating. Students are provided with 10 minutes of sit down time for breakfast and 20 of sit down time for lunch. Elementary school teachers allow students to make up work if their breakfast time interferes with the beginning lesson.

High school and elementary cafeterias have and will continue to meet all federal/state sanitation guidelines in the food preparation and eating areas. Food service handlers are well trained to maintain hygienic guidelines and standards, and shall receive ongoing and continuing professional development appropriate with their job responsibilities. Cafeterias are well lit and aesthetically pleasing to the eye making for a pleasant mealtime experience. Throughout the school year, various types of signage are posted in serving lines and cafeteria, promoting exercise and healthy eating. Adequate space is given for eating and serving of meals. Monitors are on hand to see that conversational noise is kept at a reasonable level and students are well behaved during mealtime. Students are not required to eat all of the food they are served but are encouraged to try new foods through various nutrition activities.

## **Health/Nutrition and Physical Education**

**Health** education is provided sequentially from elementary through secondary school. Nutrition education is provided within the comprehensive health education program as established by the State Board of Education Curriculum Regulations and the Academic Standards for Health, Safety and Physical Education, and the Family & Consumer Sciences as per Academic Standards/Curriculum Regulations 4.21, 4.22, 4.23, 4.27, 4.12, and 4.52. At the high school level healthy eating behaviors, proper diet and use of the newest food pyramid are

taught along with the dangers of unhealthy practices such as fasting, dietary supplements, purging, laxative use, fad diets, athletic ability enhancers, alcohol and tobacco use. Interactive and skills based nutrition education lessons and activities are age appropriate to provide students with the knowledge and skills to lead healthy lives at all stages of their development. Consistent nutrition messages will be provided throughout the school, classrooms, and cafeterias. Teachers are encouraged to integrate nutrition education into core curriculum areas such as math, science, social studies, and language arts as applicable. Nutrition education will be offered in the lunchroom, hallways and classrooms with coordination between food service staff and teachers via displays, posters and nutritional signage. The FSMC director will provide additional nutritional education to elementary students through classroom and lunchroom activities. The director sends nutritional information to parents relevant to their children's nutrition education topic recipes, fact sheets, etc). Nutrition education also will extend beyond the school environment by sharing information with families and communities through PTA newsletters, Parent Educator workshops, employee wellness newsletters (*A Better You* – a publication of Sun Home Health Services) and through Body Mass Index (BMI) measurements. School nurses measure BMI for all students. The BMI is an indicator of body fat determined by comparing weight with height and age. These results will be shared with the student's parents with accompanying explanatory material.

Physical Education will be the environment through which all children learn, practice and are assessed on the developmentally appropriate skills and knowledge necessary for participation in lifelong, health-enhancing physical activity. The Physical Education program will incorporate the National Association for Sport and Physical Education appropriate practices and the Centers for Disease Control guidelines. Instruction will be provided by certified Health and Physical Education teachers and will have a teacher/student ratio comparable with classes in other subject areas.

Elementary students receive 40 minutes of gym class per 6 day cycle. At the secondary level it is given twice during the 6 day cycle. Students are required to take physical education from kindergarten through 11<sup>th</sup> grade. Six credits are required for graduation. Although some competitive games are played, more often than not, instructors are offering activities that emphasize personal fitness and individual aerobic conditioning. High school gym classes can include activities such as rock climbing, volleyball, basketball, swimming, archery, golf, tennis. Students are moderately to vigorously active as much time as possible within the class (or as active as medical documentation or disability will allow). Physical activity shall not be used as a form of punishment.

## **Implementation and Monitoring**

**Innovative** school programs made available through various nutrition and wellness grants will continue to create opportunities to implement healthy eating initiatives. Reinforcement by administration, faculty and food staff workers will foster the positive healthy eating programs. Regular updates by the FSMC director and Wellness Advisory Council to the Superintendent of Schools will give feedback as to the status of each health, wellness and nutrition program in place, as well as, dictate new directions for policy and procedures. In service training will be provided to all staff on components of the Student Nutrition/Wellness Policy. Monitoring and

evaluating of results and the reporting of program outcomes shall be ongoing and discussed at each Wellness Advisory Council meeting. The Superintendent of Schools, on a case-by-case, basis shall handle lack of adherence to any of provision of the policy accordingly. The Wellness Policy and Nutrition Guidelines adhere to the *Nutrition Guidelines for Competitive Foods in Pennsylvania Schools*.