

NUTRITION AND WELLNESS POLICY GOALS

Nutrition Education

A healthy school nutrition environment gives students consistent, reliable health information and ample opportunity to use it. A healthy school nutrition environment includes:

- A commitment to nutrition and physical activity
- Quality school meals
- Other healthful food options
- Pleasant eating experiences
- Nutrition education
- Marketing healthful foods and beverages

The Superintendent is encouraged to inform the Arlington community at large of the nutrition and wellness goals and activities of the schools. The town leadership and community organizations are encouraged to voluntarily adopt a similar program of changes to provide a consistent message and improve the overall wellness environment for the children of Arlington.

The Arlington Public Schools will seek to achieve the following goals:

- provide integrated classroom instruction in nutrition K-10, including nutritional knowledge, the benefits of healthy eating, essential nutrients, nutritional deficiencies, the use and misuse of dietary supplements, safe food preparation, handling and storage, and food allergies; nutrition-related skills, including, but not limited to, planning a healthy meal, understanding and using food labels, accessing and critically evaluating nutrition information, misinformation and commercial food advertising; how to assess and manage one's personal eating habits, set goals for improvement and achieve those goals; and how to communicate, make healthy decisions and advocate for developing lifelong healthy habits.
- provide ongoing professional development to staff responsible to teach nutrition including teachers, coaches, counselors, nurses, and food service staff. Information will be shared on food choices, supplements, diets, and food allergies.
- promote healthy nutrition through signage, leaflets, and positive advertising in cafeterias.
- encourage healthy food choices and prohibit the advertisement of unhealthy food choices.

Physical Activity

Research indicates that physical activity has a positive impact on academic performance including improved concentration and memory, improved mathematics, reading and writing test scores, reduced stress, and reduced disruptive behavior. Physical Education provides opportunities for all students to develop the knowledge and skills for specific physical activities, to maintain physical fitness, to regularly participate in physical activity, to understand the short and long term benefits of a physically active lifestyle, and to plan for lifelong activity.

A comprehensive physical activity program encompasses opportunities for students to be physically active, including: physical education, recess, walk-to-school programs, after-school physical activity programs, and physical activity breaks within regular classrooms.

The Arlington Public Schools will seek to achieve the following goals:

- require regularly scheduled physical education in all grades for all students K-10 and offer and encourage regularly scheduled physical education for grades 11 and 12.
- assure that no less than 50% of the time scheduled in physical education class shall be moderate to vigorous activity as recommended by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention.
- assure that physical educators participate in professional development related to their teaching assignments.
- assure that physical education classes are safe, developmentally appropriate, sequential, inclusive, and are based on national and state standards for fitness and health.
- promote a healthy physically active lifestyle by including 10 minutes of recess on days when students do not attend physical education, at the elementary level, when feasible.
- promote a healthy physically active lifestyle by encouraging schools to offer and post physical activity and athletic programs available throughout the community.
- permit high school students to have access to outdoor space adjoining or near the cafeteria at the end of their lunch period, where feasible.
- Work with families and the larger community to increase physical activity so that students can meet the guidelines, recommended by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, of 150 minutes per week for grades K-5, and 225 minutes per week for grades 6-12.
- Consider time for physical activity to be a priority in a child's day, just as time for academic study is a priority.

Health Education

Evidence indicates that comprehensive health education programs have a positive impact on health behaviors of students, including mental health, which can lead to better school performance. (Hawkins, et al., 1999; Murphy et al., 1996; Lindmark et al., 1996; Simun, 1996; Botvin et al., 1997) Some students who have participated in school health education programs, compared to similar students who have not participated in such programs have increased cognitive development and awareness, better school attendance, higher graduation rates, increased goal setting and better application of decision-making skills. (U.S. Senate, 1993; Pitway Charitable Foundation, 1992; Mahai, 1991; Executive summary of the Health Protection Fund, October 1999) Substance use, violence, teen pregnancy, emotional factors, sedentary living, obesity, and stress are all related to diminished school performance. Physical activity, good nutrition, a safe and inclusive environment, mental health and prevention of depression, stress management, hygiene, and rest are important factors in enhancing students' academic performance. These studies suggest that if students are not in good health, they will not be able to learn and achieve at their highest potential.

Comprehensive health education addresses the knowledge and skills for both reducing risk behaviors and increasing actions that increase wellness.

The Arlington Public Schools will seek to achieve the following goals:

- provide a comprehensive and sequential Health Education program in grades k-10 and offer and encourage in grades 11-12, consistent with the Massachusetts Health Frameworks.
- provide teachers responsible for Health Education with professional development on health curriculum, teaching social competence, and cultural inclusion.
- research based health curricula will be incorporated.
- ensure that classroom instruction in health will engage students in active learning, including opportunities to practice skills across the curriculum.

Nutrition Standards for All Foods Available on School Campus during the School Day

The Arlington Public Schools support the *Dietary Guidelines for Americans*. These guidelines stress variety and moderation in food choices. They encourage increased consumption of fruits and vegetables, fish, whole grains, and low-fat milk and dairy products, within the context of an overall diet that is moderate in total calories. They recommend choosing a diet with lower amounts of added sugar, saturated fat and *trans* fat, and salt. The 2005 revision of the *Guidelines* also promotes physical activity.

The Federal Government has rules for meals served through the National School Lunch Program and School Breakfast Program. The standards in this wellness policy ensure that “competitive foods,” which are foods and beverages outside of the federal programs, do not undermine the policy’s other advances in the school nutrition environment.

The Arlington Public Schools will seek to achieve the following goals:

- ensure that the school breakfast and lunch programs meet or exceed all dietary guidelines for the National School Lunch and Breakfast Programs.
- minimize the risk of exposure to food allergens that pose a threat to students, educate the community about allergies, and maintain and regularly update a system-wide protocol for responding to the needs of students with allergies.
- encourage the Food Service Director to seek to offer attractive appetizing healthy meals that are low in sugar, saturated fat, *trans* fat, and salt, and high in fruits, low-fat dairy, vegetables and whole grains.
- for all foods and beverages sold or provided on school property, other than the school breakfast and lunch programs, direct principals to work with school councils, school food service, teachers, and parents to encourage food and beverage choices that conform to the “Massachusetts A La Carte Food & Beverage Standards to Promote a Healthier School Environment.”¹ Manufactured foods that meet this standard are listed on the convenient “Acceptable List” from the John C. Stalker Institute of Food and Nutrition at Framingham State University.²
- assure that food service employees participate in annual professional development on allergies, choking, universal precautions, and hygiene and safety related to food service. A plan will be developed and implemented to certify all food service staff.
- direct principals to ensure that there is sufficient time allotted to school lunch for both eating and social interaction.
- encourage portion sizes appropriate for all age groups, including young elementary school students.
- designate a healthy snack time each day, K-5.
- encourage the use of non-food rewards for accomplishments.

References

General references:

- (1) American Dietetic Association, Society for Nutrition Education, and American School Food Service Association. 2003. “Nutrition services: an essential component of comprehensive health programs.” *Journal of the American Dietetic Association* 103:505-514.
- (2) U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, Office of the Surgeon General. 2001. *The Surgeon General’s Call to Action to Prevent and Decrease Overweight and Obesity*. Available at <http://www.surgeongeneral.gov/topics/obesity/> (accessed May, 2006). Washington, DC: U.S. Government Printing Office.
- (3) Food and Nutrition Board, Institute of Medicine, the National Academies. 2005. *Preventing Childhood Obesity: Health in the Balance*. Jeffrey P.Koplan, Catharyn T.Liverman, Vivica I. Kraak, editors. Available at <http://fermat.nap.edu/catalog/11015.html> (accessed May, 2006). Washington, DC: The National Academies Press.
- (4) Pollitt E, Leibel RL, Greenfield D. Brief fasting, stress, and cognition in children. *American Journal of Clinical Nutrition* 1981;34:1526–33.
- (5) Center on Hunger, Poverty, and Nutrition Policy. Statement on the Link between Nutrition and Cognitive Development in Children. Medford, MA: Tufts University School of Nutrition, 1995.
- (6) Meyers AF et al. School breakfast program and school performance. *American Journal of Diseases of Children* 1989;143:1234–9.
- (7) U.S. Department of Health and Human Services. Guidelines for school health programs to promote lifelong healthy eating. *Morbidity and Mortality Weekly Report Recommendations and Report* 1996 Jun 14; 45:RR-9;
- (8) Barnard, A. Study links school breakfast, results. *Boston Globe* 2000 Nov 29;
- Minnesota Department of Children Families and Learning. School breakfast programs energizing the classroom 1998;
- (9) Murphy, J.M. et al. Effects of a universally free, in-classroom school breakfast program: results from the Maryland Meals for Achievement Evaluation. Initial Report 1999 May 4;
- NASPE, Executive Summary, Shape of the Nation 2001;

¹ http://www.maclearinghouse.com/PDFs/Health&Wellness/MA_Food_Standards.pdf

² <http://www.johnstalkerinstitute.org/vending%20project/healthysnacks.htm>

Revised: September 26, 2006