



# **D.C. Public Schools Local Wellness Policy**

***Progress To Date and Moving Forward  
Executive Summary***

April 2009



As part of the 2004 Child Nutrition and WIC Reauthorization Act, all schools participating in the National School Lunch Program were required to adopt a Local Wellness Policy (LWP) by 2006.<sup>1</sup> This requirement came about due to increasing awareness at the Congressional level that schools play a critical role in promoting student health, preventing childhood obesity, and combating problems associated with poor nutrition and physical inactivity. An LWP is developed at the local level to address individual needs, but must set goals for school-based nutrition education and physical activity, as well as nutrition guidelines for foods available on campus during the school day.

In 2006, D.C. Public Schools (DCPS) Office of Teaching and Learning, Department of Health and Physical Education led a collaborative partnership with D.C. Action for Healthy Kids and D.C. Hunger Solutions to draft DCPS' LWP. Experts consider the policy one of the strongest in the country, and the District has taken many important steps to move forward with implementation. A Director of Health and Wellness has been appointed to the Chancellor's Office, providing centralized coordination of school-based health programs, and a health and physical education teacher or physical activity program has been placed in nearly every school.

To document these important steps and monitor further Local Wellness Policy implementation, Office of the State Superintendent of Education (OSSE), Wellness and Nutrition Services, and DCPS have created a Wellness Policy workgroup of state agency representatives, school officials, and community partners. In late fall of 2008, the monitoring subcommittee, composed of D.C. Hunger Solutions, OSSE, DCPS, Chartwells/Thompson, D.C. Action for Healthy Kids, Center for Science in the Public Interest, and the National School Board Association, convened to develop a strategy to monitor implementation of the LWP.

This "Local Wellness Policy Progress Update" provides a point-by-point analysis of LWP progress to-date and key steps to move forward on

implementation. The text of the LWP is included in the report, with a progress chart to accompany each provision. The subcommittee hopes that this report can help highlight for school administrators, principals, teachers, families, students, and community members what steps have been taken to promote student wellness and how each group can contribute to further implementation of the policy.

While every effort was made to capture DCPS LWP implementation progress to-date, the subcommittee recognizes that gaps may exist and as such, this update is a work in progress. Please contact Srinidhi Vijaykumar at 202-986-2200, ext. 3023 if you have additional progress to report.

---

<sup>1</sup> The Child Nutrition and WIC Reauthorization Act of 2004, Public Law 108-265, Title II, Section 204. Available at:

[http://www.fns.usda.gov/cnd/governance/Legislation/Historical/PL\\_108-265.pdf](http://www.fns.usda.gov/cnd/governance/Legislation/Historical/PL_108-265.pdf)

# Highlights

## Health and Physical Education

### Progress To Date:

- D.C. Public Schools (DCPS) has placed a Health and Physical Education (HPE) teacher and/or physical activity program in more than 99 percent of schools
- DCPS is implementing the OSSE-adopted Health Education and Physical Education Standards that specify the concepts and skills that students are to know and be able to do in each grade level up to high school
- DCPS, Office of Teaching and Learning, Department of Health and Physical Education, has created Pacing Guidelines for Elementary, Middle, and Secondary Schools. The guidelines provide teachers with a timeline to teach content standards, as well as teaching strategies and resources.

### Key Steps Forward:

- Partnering with the Chancellor's Office to ensure structural elements are in-place to comply with the Wellness Policy -- for example, ensuring scheduling slots and sufficient staff time are available for HPE courses to be offered at least 45 minutes, 2 days per week (and working towards the national standard of 3 days per week)
- Creating a comprehensive HPE curriculum to provide lesson plans and materials for teachers

### How To Get Involved:

- ✓ **Principals:** Support your HPE teacher to bring more health and physical activity to your school through integration in other subject areas and through special events and projects
- ✓ **Parents:** Check out OSSE's "A Parent's Guide to the Health and Physical Education Standards" for tips on what you can do to help your students maintain optimal health
- ✓ **Students:** Talk with peers, teachers, and school administrators on why you think health and physical education is important for students; write articles for your school newspaper / newsletter; help organize a before or afterschool physical activity group (basketball, jump roping, etc)
- ✓ **Community Members, Parents, and Students:** Advocate for greater funding to support HPE staff time and for more time slots for HPE curriculum. For more information, contact Victoria Wells at the American Cancer Society (202-483-2600, ext.164)

# Highlights

## Food at School

### Progress To Date:

- All DCPS schools continue to operate a Universal "Free for All" School Breakfast Program
- Almost 80 percent of schools are participating in the afterschool snack program
- More students are qualifying for free lunch through improved data matching between the food stamp office and DCPS (all students whose families receive food stamps, or who are homeless or runaway, should be automatically certified for free meals)
- DCPS' new food service management company, Chartwells/Thompson, has taken key steps to improve nutrition in school meals, including reducing the fat content in milk and re-opening kitchens in secondary schools to offer freshly-cooked options
- Vending machines available to students largely comply with the Healthy Vending Policy (about 95 percent of items). Products such as sodas and sports drinks have been eliminated. Items offered include baked chips, pretzels, low-fat ginger snaps, and 100 Calorie Packs of thin crisp cookies and crackers

### Key Steps Forward:

- Encouraging schools to boost breakfast participation by implementing alternative service models such as breakfast-in-the-classroom

- Partnering with the Chancellor's Office to ensure monthly checking with the food stamp office to certify students eligible for free meals
- Integrating information about school meal offerings into classroom nutrition education so students understand how to make healthy choices in the school cafeteria; promoting items of higher nutritional value particularly in secondary schools, where students have more options

### How To Get Involved

- ✓ **Principals:** Consider serving breakfast in the classroom, or using another alternative model, to ensure that more students start the day with a morning meal. Contact D.C. Hunger Solutions to learn more at 202-986-2200, ext. 3023
- ✓ **Parents:** Complete your school meal application to find out if your student qualifies for free lunch and to help your school draw down more federal funding
- ✓ **Students:** Start the day off right with a FREE healthy school breakfast
- ✓ **Community Members, Parents, and Students:** Report progress and/or concerns with school meals, vending machines, or a la carte sales to Chartwells/Thompson (whitney.bateson@compass-usa.com) or D.C. Hunger Solutions (202-986-2200, ext. 3023)