

**AMHERST PUBLIC SCHOOLS, PELHAM ELEMENTARY SCHOOL,
AND AMHERST-PELHAM REGIONAL DISTRICT POLICY MANUAL**

Policy ADFA: Wellness (Elementary Schools)

The Amherst, Pelham, and Amherst-Pelham Regional School Districts (the Districts) are committed to providing a school environment that promotes wellness for its students in a variety of areas. The Districts recognize that good health and safety fosters consistent attendance, increased attentiveness and higher academic achievement. The expectation of the School Committee is for the Superintendent, in conjunction with the Wellness Committee, to establish necessary guidelines to address wellness issues and to ensure that this policy is implemented with fidelity.

To incorporate a variety of perspectives and to have broad-based participation in promoting wellness, the Districts seek to engage students, parents/guardians, staff, food service professionals, health professionals, and other interested community members in developing, implementing, monitoring, and reviewing district-wide guidelines regarding Nutrition/Food, Physical Activity, and Health. Whenever possible, Districts staff members are encouraged to promote partnerships to enhance wellness-related activities as informed by wellness guidelines. This includes partnerships for health education resources, school meal programs, local growers and suppliers, and other related community services. At the site-level, the Principal is responsible for ensuring that all school-based activities are in compliance with the Wellness Policy through implementation of the district guidelines. Information about food items served by the Districts shall be made readily available to parents/guardians and information about particular ingredients will be available upon request. Questions about the food served by the Districts will be directed to the Food Service Director.

Areas of Focus

Nutrition/Food

The Districts support the concept that healthy foods contribute to healthy students. Therefore, the Districts shall provide students receiving school meals with access to a variety of nutritious, appealing, and fresh foods that meet or exceed the documented health and nutritional needs of students as referenced by federal and state governments and independent sources with nutritional expertise. All meals and beverages made available during the regular school day or during school-sponsored programming shall meet or exceed the Massachusetts Department of Elementary and Secondary Education's Nutrition Standards and U.S. Dietary Guidelines. The Districts shall participate in the school meals programs including but not limited to the federal School Breakfast Program, National School Lunch Program, the Fresh Fruit and Vegetable Program, and the Massachusetts Farm to School Project.

Whenever possible, preference will be given to foods that are locally grown and processed (canned or frozen) within 50 miles of Amherst, Massachusetts and secondarily within the state of Massachusetts for all meals and snacks provided by the Districts. Likewise, preference will be given to serving fresh foods or freshly cooked food over canned or preserved foods. The Districts will strive to eliminate foods from all meals that contain food coloring, modified food starch (or similar product by other name), as well as sweetened beverages and pre-fried foods. Water will be made available to students throughout the day.

*Staff in the Districts shall refrain from using food as a reward or punishment and shall, whenever possible, recognize celebrations such as birthdays using alternatives to food. Ideas for celebrations will be developed and shared to assist classroom teachers and families. Students will be provided with adequate time to eat and meals will be served at reasonably appropriate times in the school schedule. Meals and snacks will be served in clean, safe and pleasant settings, and meals should have serving sizes that are age-appropriate. The Superintendent, or his or her designee, will develop guidelines that will help to promote these practices in each building.

Physical Activity

The Districts support the idea that students' educational experience is enhanced by a combination of sufficient physical activities during the school day. Therefore, the Districts will provide regular and frequent opportunities and supports for PreK-12 students to be physically active and to achieve recommended physical fitness standards set by NASPE. Recess, in-class activities, and physical education will be offered to students in grades Pre-K to 6th grade and frequent, scheduled opportunities for physical movement and physical education will be offered to students in grades 7-12. Suggestions of how to incorporate movement and physical activity into the classroom and school day experiences for students will be offered to teachers and administrators. These opportunities are designed to promote patterns of meaningful physical activity that connect to students' lives and to foster long-term personal patterns for lifelong activity.

In grades K-6, recess shall be offered at least once a day, with preference for additional activity for all. Recess shall include both structured and unstructured play. While safety will be paramount, enabling a range of activities, especially student-driven activities, will be encouraged. Physical activity in the classroom is encouraged and may include organized

breaks from instruction, integral components of curriculum or activities based on individual needs of students for movement.

The Districts believe that physical activity is an integral part of a child's day. Physical education will be an integral component of the curriculum for all students within the Districts, with a focus on developing lifelong patterns of physical activity.

Health education should be a component of the K-12 curriculum for all students in the Districts. The curriculum will be aligned with the Massachusetts Comprehensive Health Frameworks and will focus on building an understanding of healthy living habits.

Wellness Committee

To ensure that all elements of the District's Wellness Policy are planned for, implemented, and monitored, the Districts will establish and maintain a Wellness Committee. This committee, in conjunction with the Superintendent, shall ensure that all schools are in compliance with federal and state requirements, and with the requirements set forth by this policy. The Committee shall be comprised of the Director of Student Services, a School Nurse, a Principal, and at least three community members or parent/guardians. The Committee shall meet at least twice during the school year. The Wellness Committee will review the Districts' wellness guidelines every two years and make recommendations for any changes to the Superintendent. A mid-year Wellness report addressing each element of the Wellness Policy shall be submitted to the Superintendent and the School Committee by January of each year.

One section of the Wellness Policy addresses the use of food or beverages in classrooms:

"Staff in the Districts shall refrain from using food as a reward or punishment and shall, whenever possible, recognize celebrations such as birthdays using alternatives to food. Ideas for celebrations will be developed and shared to assist classroom teachers and families."

The Wellness committee hopes that this progressive change will

- have a positive impact on your child's nutrition, safety, and overall health
- support the classroom lessons on health and nutrition
- protect those students with food allergies
- eliminate the financial burden associated with providing birthday treats
- adhere to food sanitation and safety measures
- and promote healthy eating habits

Food, beverages and candy are commonly used in the classroom setting to celebrate birthdays and as an incentive or to reward good behavior and academic performance. Rewarding students with candy, food and beverages of little nutritional value undermines the teaching and modeling of behaviors that promote student wellness. According to the Wellness Policy changes, teachers are now recommended to use reward incentives other than food, candy and beverages, except if it is waived in a student's Individual Education Plan.

Benefits of Healthy Celebrations: Healthy Kids Learn Better: Schools need to ensure a healthy environment.

Research shows that behavior and good learning are linked to good nutrition.

Provides Consistent Messages: Healthy celebrations in the classroom promotes positive lifestyle choices and supports lessons on good nutrition. Nutrition and health lessons are meaningless if they are contradicted on a regular basis with celebrations and rewards that include foods that are often high in fat and sugar.

Promotes a Healthy School Environment: Schools can help students establish healthy eating habits. Food is essential for good health and it is important that students eat regular meals. Rewarding students with food teaches children to eat when they are not hungry and may contribute to the development of eating disorders. Food preferences can change when certain types of food are offered as rewards. Often reward food does not have nutritional value.

Creates A More Equitable Classroom: Eliminating the need for families to buy celebratory food reduces the financial pressure and stress on all families. There are all kinds of ways children can be recognized and celebrated without buying food and gifts for school.

Protects Children with Food Allergies: Schools can protect food allergic children and provide a more inclusive school experience by using non-food celebrations.

Our staff will work together to develop non-food classroom and birthday celebration ideas.