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**Southern Westchester BOCES District Wellness Plan
2024-2027**

Table of Contents

<u>Preamble</u>	3
<u>School Wellness Committee</u>	4
<u>Wellness Plan Implementation, Monitoring, Accountability, and Community Engagement</u>	4
<u>Nutrition</u>	7
<u>Physical Activity</u>	12
<u>Other Activities that Promote Student Wellness</u>	13
<u>Glossary and References</u>	15

Refer to: Board of Education Policy 5661: Wellness

2024 - 2027 Southern Westchester BOCES Wellness Plan

Preamble:

Southern Westchester BOCES, which will also be referred to as “**SWBOCES**” and also as “the district,” is committed to the optimal development of every student. The district believes that for students to have the opportunity to achieve personal, academic, developmental, and social success, we need to create positive, safe and health-promoting learning environments at the K - 12 level, in each of these settings, throughout the school year.

The New York State Education Department requires schools participating in the National School Lunch or Breakfast Program to develop wellness policies to meet the unique needs of their school as established by the Child Nutrition Act of 2004 and the Healthy, Hunger-Free Kids Act of 2010.

Accordingly, the SWBOCES Wellness Plan is focused on student wellness. The District-Wide Wellness Committee will have a subcommittee to support staff wellness.

Research shows that two components, good nutrition, and physical activity before, during and after the school day, are strongly correlated with positive student outcomes. For example, student participation in the U.S. Department of Agriculture’s (USDA) School Breakfast Program is associated with higher grades and standardized test scores, lower absenteeism, and better performance on cognitive tasks. Conversely, less-than-adequate consumption of specific foods including fruits, vegetables, and dairy products, is associated with lower grades among students. In addition, students who are physically active through active transport to and from school, recess, physical activity breaks, high-quality physical education, and extracurricular activities – do better academically. Finally, there is evidence that adequate hydration is associated with better cognitive performance.

This plan outlines the district’s approach to ensuring environments and opportunities for all students to practice healthy eating and physical activity behaviors throughout the school day while minimizing commercial distractions. Specifically, this plan establishes goals and procedures to ensure that:

- Students in the district have access to healthy foods throughout the school day – both through reimbursable school meals and other foods available throughout the school campus in accordance with Federal and state nutrition standards
- Students receive quality nutrition education that helps them develop lifelong healthy eating behaviors
- Students have opportunities to be physically active during the school day

- Schools engage in nutrition and physical activity promotion and other activities that promote student wellness
- School staff are encouraged and supported to practice healthy nutrition and physical activity behaviors in and out of school
- The community is engaged in supporting the work of the district in creating continuity between school and other settings for students and staff to practice lifelong healthy habits
- The district establishes and maintains an infrastructure for management, oversight, implementation, communication about and monitoring of the plan and its established goals and objectives.

This plan applies to all school-aged students in the district and all schools in the district. Specific measurable goals and outcomes are identified within each section below. The district will coordinate the wellness plan with other aspects of school management, including the District's Professional Development and School Counseling Plans, when appropriate.

District-Wide Wellness Committee:

SWBOCES will convene a representative District-Wide Wellness Committee (hereto referred to as the DWC) that meets at least two times per year to establish goals for and oversee school health and safety procedures and programs, including development, implementation and periodic review and update of this district-level wellness plan.

The DWC membership will represent all school levels (elementary and secondary schools) and include, to the extent possible, but not be limited to parents and caregivers; students; administrators, representatives of the school nutrition program, physical education teachers, health education teachers, school nurses, teachers, clinicians, related service providers, and school board members. When possible, membership will also include Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program Education coordinators (SNAP-EDEDSNAP-Ed). To the extent possible, the DWC will include representatives from each school building and position and reflect the diversity of the community.

Leadership:

The Assistant Superintendent for Educational Services will be the designated *School Wellness Plan Coordinator* and will ensure compliance with the plan.

Wellness Plan Implementation, Monitoring, and Community Engagement:

This plan delineates roles, responsibilities, actions and timelines specific to each school; and includes information about who will be responsible to make changes, by how much, where and when; as well as specific goals and objectives for nutrition standards for all foods and beverages available on the school campus, food and beverage marketing, nutrition promotion and education, physical activity, physical education and other school-based activities that promote student wellness. The district will complete an annual school-level assessment using the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention's School Health Index, [SHI | School Health Index | Healthy Schools | CDC](#) to create an action plan that fosters implementation and generate an annual progress report.

This wellness plan and the progress reports can be found at:
<http://www.swboces.org/publicinfo>.

Recordkeeping:

SWBOCES will retain records to document compliance with the requirements of the wellness plan at 17 Berkley Drive Rye Brook, NY and on the district's central computer network. Documentation maintained in this location will include but will not be limited to:

- The written wellness plan
- Documentation demonstrating that the plan has been made available to the public
- Documentation of efforts to review and update the Local Schools Wellness Plan, including an indication of who is involved in the update and methods the district uses to make stakeholders aware of their ability to participate on the DWC
- Documentation to demonstrate compliance with the annual public notification requirements
- The most recent assessment on the implementation of the local school wellness plan

Annual Notification of Plan:

The district will actively inform families and the public each year of basic information about this plan, including its content, any updates to the plan and implementation status. The district will make this information available via the district website and/or district-wide communications including the letter sent to parents prior to the start of the school year. The district will provide as much information as possible about the school nutrition environment. This will include a summary of the district's events or activities related to wellness plan implementation. Annually, the District will also publicize the name and contact information of the school official leading and coordinating the

committee, as well as information on how the public can get involved with the school wellness committee.

Triennial Assessment:

At least once every three years, the district will evaluate compliance with the wellness plan to assess the implementation of the plan and include:

- The extent to which schools under the jurisdiction of the district are in compliance with the wellness plan;
- A description of the progress made in attaining the goals of the District's wellness plan.
- The person responsible for managing the triennial assessment shall be the Assistant Superintendent for Educational Services: 914-937-3820

Revisions and Updating the Plan:

The DWC will update or modify the wellness plan based on the results of the annual school-level assessment using the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention's School Health Index, [SHI | School Health Index | Healthy Schools | CDC](#) and triennial assessments and/or as district priorities change; community needs change; wellness goals are met; new health science, information, and technology emerges; and new Federal or state guidance or standards are issued. The wellness plan will be assessed and updated at least every three years, following the triennial assessment.

Community Involvement, Outreach and Communications:

SWBOCES is committed to being responsive to community input. The district will actively communicate ways in which representatives of DWC and others can participate in the development, implementation and periodic review and update of the wellness plan through a variety of means appropriate for SWBOCES. The district will also inform parents of the improvements that have been made to school meals and compliance with school meal standards, availability of child nutrition programs and how to apply, and a description of and compliance with Smart Snacks in School nutrition standards. The district will use electronic mechanisms, such as email or displaying notices on the district's website, as well as non-electronic mechanisms, such as newsletters, presentations to parents, or sending information home to parents, to ensure that all families are actively notified of the content of, implementation of, and updates to, the wellness plan as well as how to get involved and support the plan. The district will ensure that communications are culturally and linguistically appropriate to the

community, and accomplished through means similar to other ways that the district and individual schools are communicating important school information with parents.

SWBOCES will annually notify the public about the content of, or any updates to, the wellness plan. The district will also use these mechanisms to inform the community about the availability of annual and triennial reports.

Nutrition:

School Meals:

SWBOCES is committed to serving healthy meals to children, with plenty of fruits, vegetables, whole grains, fat-free and low-fat milk that are moderate in sodium, low in saturated fat, and have zero grams trans-fat per serving (nutrition label or manufacturer's specification); and to meeting the nutrition needs of school children within their calorie requirements. The school meal programs aim to improve the diet and health of school children, help mitigate childhood obesity, model healthy eating to support the development of lifelong healthy eating patterns and support healthy choices while accommodating cultural food preferences and special dietary needs.

The district participates in USDA child nutrition programs, including the National School Lunch Program (NSLP) and the School Breakfast Program (SBP). These programs will be accessible to all students and:

- Will be appealing and attractive to children
- Shall be served in clean and pleasant settings
- Will meet or exceed current nutrition requirements established by local, state, and Federal statutes and regulations. (The district offers reimbursable school meals that meet USDA nutrition standards.)
- Will promote healthy food and beverage choices using as many [Smarter Lunchroom techniques](#) as possible, wherever possible. These techniques include the following:
 - Whole fruit options
 - Sliced or cut fruit daily, displayed in a location in the line of sight and reach of students.
 - Daily vegetable options bundled into all grab-and-go meals available to students.
 - All staff members, especially those serving, have been trained to politely prompt students to select and consume the daily vegetable options with their meal.
 - White milk is placed in front of other beverages in all coolers.
 - Alternative entrée options (salad bar, yogurt parfaits, etc.) are highlighted on posters or signs within all service and dining areas.
 - Reimbursable meals can be created in any service area available to students (salad bars, snack rooms, etc.).

- Student surveys and taste testing opportunities are used to inform menu development, dining space decor and promotional ideas.
- Student artwork is displayed in the service and/or dining areas.
- Daily announcements are used to promote and market menu options.
- Menus will be posted on the district website or individual school websites.
- Menus will be reviewed by a Registered Dietitian.
- School meals are administered by a team of child nutrition professionals.
- The district's child nutrition program will accommodate students with special dietary needs.
- Students will be allowed at least 20 minutes to eat breakfast and at least 20 minutes to eat lunch.
- Students are served lunch at a reasonable and appropriate time of day.
- Lunch will follow the recess period whenever possible to better support learning and healthy eating.
- Participation in Federal child nutrition programs will be promoted among students and families
- When possible, the district will implement at least four of the following five Farm to School activities:
 - Local and/or regional products are incorporated into the school meal program;
 - Messages about agriculture and nutrition are reinforced throughout the learning environment;
 - School hosts a school garden;
 - School hosts field trips to local farms; and
 - School utilizes promotions or special events, such as tastings, that highlight the local/ regional products.

Staff Qualifications and Professional Development:

All school nutrition staff members will meet or exceed hiring and annual continuing education/training requirements in the [USDA professional standards for child nutrition professionals](#). School nutrition personnel will refer to [USDA's Professional Standards for School Nutrition Standards website](#) for training opportunities.

Water:

To promote hydration, free, safe, unflavored drinking water will be available to all students throughout the school day and throughout every school campus. The district will make drinking water available where school meals are served during mealtimes.

- Water cups/jugs will be available in the cafeteria if a drinking fountain is not present.
- All water sources and containers will be maintained on a regular basis to ensure good hygiene and health and safety standards. Such sources and containers may include drinking fountains, hydration stations, water jets and other methods for delivering drinking water.

- Students will be encouraged to bring and carry water bottles filled with water with them throughout the day.

Competitive Foods and Beverages:

SWBOCES is committed to ensuring that all foods and beverages available to students during school support healthy eating. The foods and beverages sold and served outside of the school meal programs will meet the USDA Smart Snacks in School nutrition standards. Smart Snacks aim to improve student health and well-being, increase consumption of healthy foods during the school day and create an environment that reinforces the development of healthy eating habits. A summary of the standards and information, as well as a Guide to Smart Snacks in Schools are available at: <http://www.fns.usda.gov/healthierschoolday/tools-schools-smart-snacks>.

The *Alliance for a Healthier Generation* is a resource used in the endeavor to provide Smart Snacks: www.foodplanner.healthiergeneration.org.

To support healthy food choices and improve student health and well-being, all foods and beverages outside the reimbursable school meal programs that are sold to students on the school campus during the school day will meet or exceed the USDA Smart Snacks nutrition standards. These standards will apply in all locations and through all services where foods and beverages are sold, which may include, but are not limited to, à la carte options in cafeterias, vending machines, school stores and snack or food carts.

Celebrations and Rewards:

SWBOCES is working toward having all foods offered during school meet or exceed the USDA Smart Snacks in School nutrition standards, including through:

1. **Celebrations and parties:** The district will provide a list of healthy party ideas to teachers, including non-food celebration ideas. Healthy party ideas are available from the *Alliance for a Healthier Generation* and from the *USDA*.
2. **Outside food for celebrations:** Must be in compliance with individual student health requirements and approved in consultation with school nurses
3. **Rewards and incentives:** Some school buildings utilize the PBIS (Positive Behavioral Intervention and Supports) System, which emphasizes “schoolwide systems of support that include proactive strategies for defining, teaching, and supporting appropriate student behaviors to create positive school environments.” Staff members endeavor to provide alternatives to food as a reward. At times, physical activity may be used as a reward. Edible reinforcers may also be used to assist in

shaping positive behavior, in conjunction with the Applied Behavior Analysis (ABA) methodology.

Foods and beverages will not be withheld as punishment for any reason, such as for performance or behavior. Additionally, physical activity will not be used as a punishment.

Nutrition Promotion:

Nutrition promotion and education positively influence lifelong eating behaviors by using evidence-based techniques and nutrition messages, and by creating food environments that encourage healthy nutrition choices and participation in school meal programs. Students and staff will receive consistent nutrition messages throughout schools, classrooms, gymnasiums, and cafeterias.

SWBOCES will promote healthy food and beverage choices for all students throughout the school campus, as well as encourage participation in school meal programs. This promotion will occur through at least:

- Implementing evidence-based healthy food promotion techniques through the school meal programs using [Smarter Lunchroom techniques](#); and
- Ensuring 100% of foods and beverages promoted to students meet the *USDA Smart Snacks in School* nutrition standards. Additional promotion techniques that may be used are available at <http://www.foodplanner.healthiergeneration.org/>.

Nutrition Education:

SWBOCES will teach, model, encourage and support healthy eating by all students at all grade levels. Schools will provide nutrition education and engage in nutrition promotion that:

- Is designed to provide students with the knowledge and skills necessary to promote and protect their health
- Is part of not only health education classes, but also integrated into other classroom instruction through subjects such as math, science, language arts, social sciences and elective subjects
- Includes enjoyable, developmentally appropriate, culturally-relevant and participatory activities, such as cooking demonstrations or lessons, promotions, taste-testing, farm visits and school gardens
- Promotes fruits, vegetables, whole-grain products, low-fat and fat-free dairy products and healthy food preparation methods

- Emphasizes caloric balance between food intake and energy expenditure and promotes physical activity and exercise
- Links with school meal programs, cafeteria nutrition promotion activities, school gardens, and Farm to School programs
- Teaches media literacy with an emphasis on food and beverage marketing
- Includes nutrition education training for teachers and other staff

Essential Healthy Eating Topics in Health Education:

SWBOCES includes in the health education curriculum at least 12 of the following essential topics on healthy eating:

- Relationship between healthy eating and personal health and disease prevention
- Food guidance from [MyPlate](#)
- Reading and using FDA's nutrition fact labels
- Eating a variety of foods every day
- Balancing food intake and physical activity
- Eating more fruits, vegetables and whole grain products
- Choosing foods that are low in fat, saturated fat, and cholesterol and do not contain trans-fat
- Choosing foods and beverages with little added sugars
- Eating more calcium-rich foods
- Preparing healthy meals and snacks
- Risks of unhealthy weight control practices
- Accepting body size differences
- Food safety
- Importance of water consumption
- Importance of eating breakfast
- Making healthy choices when eating at restaurants
- Eating disorders
- [The Dietary Guidelines for Americans](#)
- Reducing sodium intake
- Social influences on healthy eating, including media, family, peers and culture
- How to find valid information or services related to nutrition and dietary behavior
- How to develop a plan and track progress toward achieving a personal goal to eat healthfully
- Resisting peer pressure related to unhealthy dietary behavior
- Influencing, supporting, or advocating for others' healthy dietary behavior

Physical Activity:

- Children and adolescents should participate in at least 60 minutes of physical activity every day.
- Physical activity during the school day, including but not limited to recess, classroom stationary physical activity breaks or physical education, will not be withheld as punishment for any students.
- To the extent practicable, the District will ensure that its grounds and facilities are safe and that equipment is available to students to be active.

Physical Education:

- SWBOCES will provide students with physical education instruction, using an age-appropriate, sequential physical education curriculum consistent with national and state standards for physical education.
- Physical education for all students will be provided by a certified teacher.
- The district will provide all Physical Education teachers with annual Professional Development opportunities that are focused on physical education/physical activity topics and competencies specifically for physical education teachers.
- The physical education curriculum will promote the benefits of a physically active lifestyle and will help students develop skills to engage in lifelong healthy habits, as well as incorporate essential health education concepts. The curriculum will support the essential components of physical education.
- All students will be provided with an equal opportunity to participate in physical education classes. The district will make appropriate accommodations to allow for equitable participation for all students and will adapt physical education classes and equipment as necessary.
- Elementary aged students will receive physical education for at least 120 minutes per cycle throughout the school year.
- Secondary aged students will be provided at least one half credit of Physical Education each year.
- The SWBOCES physical education program will promote student physical fitness through individualized fitness and activity assessments and will use criterion-based reporting for each student.
- School staff members shall be encouraged to model healthy eating and physical activity behaviors.

Essential Physical Activity Topics in Health Education:

Health education will be offered in all grades, including the requirement that state-assessed middle and high school students pass a health education course.

A minimum of 12 the following essential topics on physical activity will be included in health education classes:

- The physical, psychological, or social benefits of physical activity
- How physical activity can contribute to a healthy weight
- How physical activity can contribute to the academic learning process
- How an inactive lifestyle contributes to chronic disease
- Health-related fitness, that is, cardiovascular endurance, muscular endurance, muscular strength, flexibility, and body composition
- Differences between physical activity, exercise, and fitness
- Phases of an exercise session, that is, warm up, workout and cool down
- Overcoming barriers to physical activity
- Decreasing sedentary activities, such as TV watching
- Opportunities for physical activity in the community
- Preventing injury during physical activity
- Weather-related safety, for example, avoiding heat stroke, hypothermia and sunburn while being physically active
- How much physical activity is enough, that is, determining frequency, intensity, time and type of physical activity
- Developing an individualized physical activity and fitness plan
- Monitoring progress toward reaching goals in an individualized physical activity plan
- Dangers of using performance-enhancing drugs, such as steroids
- Social influences on physical activity, including media, family, peers and culture
- How to find valid information or services related to physical activity and fitness
- How to influence, support, or advocate for others to engage in physical activity
- How to resist peer pressure that discourages physical activity.

Recess:

- All schools will offer at least 20 minutes of recess on all days during the school year. If recess is offered before lunch, schools will have appropriate hand-washing facilities and/or hand-sanitizing mechanisms located just inside/outside the cafeteria to ensure proper hygiene prior to eating. Time for handwashing will be allowed before students enter the cafeteria. The administration believes that

recess and other opportunities for physical activity are an essential part of the school day.

- Outdoor recess when the weather conditions permit.
- If the school or district must conduct indoor recess, teachers and staff will follow the indoor recess guidelines that promote physical activity for students, to the extent practicable.
- Recess will complement, not substitute, physical education class. Recess monitors or teachers will encourage students to be active and will serve as role models by being physically active alongside the students whenever feasible.

Classroom Physical Activity Breaks:

- SWBOCES recognizes that students are more attentive and ready to learn if provided with periodic breaks where they can be physically active or stretch. Thus, students will be offered periodic opportunities to be active or to stretch throughout the school day. The district recommends teachers provide short (3-5-minute) stationary physical activity breaks to students during and between class times. These physical activity breaks will complement, not substitute, for physical education class, recess, and class transition periods.
- The district will provide resources and links to resources, tools, and technology with ideas for classroom physical activity breaks. Resources and ideas are available through [USDA](#) and the [Alliance for a Healthier Generation](#).

Active Academics:

- Teachers will incorporate movement and kinesthetic learning approaches into instruction when possible and will endeavor to limit sedentary behavior during the school day.
- SWBOCES will support classroom teachers incorporating physical activity and employing kinesthetic learning approaches into core subjects by providing annual professional development opportunities and resources, including information on leading activities, activity options, as well as making available background material on the connections between learning and movement.

Other Activities that Promote Student Wellness:

SWBOCES will integrate wellness activities across the entire school setting, not just in the cafeteria, other food and beverage venues and physical activity facilities. The district will coordinate and integrate other initiatives related to physical activity, physical education, nutrition, and other wellness components so all efforts are complementary, not duplicative, and work towards the same set of goals and objectives promoting student well-being, optimal development and strong educational outcomes.

Schools are encouraged to coordinate content across curricular areas that promote student health, such as teaching nutrition concepts in different subject areas.

All efforts related to obtaining federal, state or association recognition for efforts, or grant funding opportunities for healthy school environments will be coordinated with and complementary of the wellness plan, including but not limited to ensuring the involvement of the DWC.

All school-sponsored events will adhere to the wellness plan guidelines. All school-sponsored wellness events will include physical activity and healthy eating opportunities when appropriate.

Community Partnerships:

SWBOCES will continue endeavors to enhance and develop relationships with community partners (e.g., hospitals, universities/colleges, local businesses, SNAP-Ed providers and coordinators) in support of this wellness plan's implementation. Existing and new community partnerships and sponsorships will be evaluated to ensure that they are consistent with the wellness plan and its goals.

Community Health Promotion and Family Engagement:

SWBOCES will promote to parents, caregivers, families, and the general community the benefits of and approaches for healthy eating and physical activity throughout the school year. Families will be informed and invited to participate in school-sponsored activities and will receive information about health promotion efforts.

As described in the "Community Involvement, Outreach, and Communications" subsection, the District will use electronic mechanisms as well as non-electronic mechanisms, to ensure that all families are actively notified of opportunities to participate in school-sponsored activities and receive information about health promotion efforts.

Staff Wellness and Health Promotion:

The DWC will have a staff wellness subcommittee that focuses on staff wellness issues, identifies and disseminates wellness resources and performs other functions that support staff wellness in coordination with human resources staff.

Schools will strive to implement strategies to support staff in actively promoting and modeling healthy eating and physical activity behaviors. SWBOCES supports staff participation in health promotion programs and will support programs for staff members on healthy eating, weight management and physical activity that are accessible and free or low-cost.

Professional Learning:

When feasible, SWBOCES will offer annual professional learning opportunities and resources for staff to increase knowledge and skills about promoting healthy behaviors in the classroom and school.