



HIGHER GROUND ACADEMY DISTRICT • BOARD POLICY

Wellness Policy

Local Wellness Plan (LWP) • Rooted In Community. Shaping Tomorrow.

Purpose

Higher Ground Academy (hereto referred to as the District) will maintain a focus on health equity and will work to ensure that all students and staff across the district have equitable access to health and wellness efforts.

General Policy Statement

The district recognizes that out- of- school time settings, such as academic enrichment, special programs, and extracurricular activities provide critical opportunities to teach and reinforce health habits. As such the district will promote the use of the National Afterschool Association Eating and Physical Activity (HEPA) Standards.

Higher Ground Academy District requires that each school within the district establish an ongoing School Wellness Committee* (SWC) that supports Local Wellness Plan* (LWP) implementation as well as LWP monitoring and reporting to the DWC. Schools can refer to the School Wellness Committee Toolkit for guidance.

- Higher Ground Academy District will develop and annually update an action plan for the execution of this LWP. The plan will outline who is responsible for overseeing each component, as well as actions and a timeline for the completion of activities and goals.
- Higher Ground Academy District will recommend that schools use the Healthy Schools Program Assessment or the School Health Index to complete an annual school-level health and wellness assessment. The district ensures that the LWP aligns with the Alliance for a Healthier Generation's Model Wellness Policy.
- Higher Ground Academy District will require that all efforts related to obtaining federal, state or association recognition of and/or funding for healthy school environments be coordinated with and complementary of this LWP, including but not limited to ensuring the involvement of the DWC.
- Higher Ground Academy District will document the impact of the LWP on behavioral and educational outcomes, (e.g., student and employee attendance or office discipline referrals) and will make this information available to the public via the district website hgacademy.org.



School Wellness Committee Members

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Nutrition Servicers

The district/schools will:

- Offer a variety of foods and beverages that are appealing and attractive to children
- Ensure that eating settings are clean and inviting
- Provide adequate time to eat school meals, meaning that students will be allowed at least 10 minutes to eat breakfast and at least 20 minutes to eat lunch, counting from the time they have received their meal and are seated.
- Establish practices related to feeding students with unpaid meal balances that do not embarrass children or increase social stigma related to being of low-income
- Prohibit the use of food as a reward or the withholding of foods as a punishment
- Ensure that menus are created/reviewed by a registered dietitian or another certified nutrition professional
- Post menus on the district website and/or individual school websites and include nutrient
- Content and ingredients
- Ensure that students are served lunch at a reasonable and appropriate time of day
- Ensure that lunch follows the recess period to better support learning and healthy eating
- Promote participation in child nutrition programs among students and caregivers to ensure that caregivers know which programs are available in their district and have access to those programs
- Encourage staff to model healthy eating behaviors by implementing the following:



- Higher ground academy district allows only healthy foods and beverages in the premises where students are allowed such as the cafeteria, classrooms, hallways and offices. Foods and beverages must meet the requirements of the USDA and the MDE guidelines.
 - Implement the following farm-to-school activities:
 - Incorporating local or regional foods into school meal programs
 - Hosting promotions or special events, such as tastings, that highlight the local/ regional foods
 - Reinforcing messages about agriculture and nutrition throughout the learning environment
 - Supporting schools in hosting school gardens and field trips to local farms
 - Promote healthy food and beverage choices using the following marketing and merchandising techniques:
 - Displaying whole fruit options in attractive bowls or baskets (instead of chaffing dishes or hotel pans).
 - Making sliced or cut fruit available daily.
 - Displaying daily fruit options in the line of sight and reach of students.
 - Giving creative or descriptive names to all available vegetable options.
 - Bundling daily vegetable options into all grab-and-go meals available to students.
 - Training all staff members, especially those serving, to politely prompt students to select and consume the daily vegetable options with their meal.
 - Placing white milk in front of other beverages in all coolers.
 - Highlighting alternative entrée options (e.g., salad bar or yogurt parfaits) on posters or signs within all service and dining areas.
 - Allowing students to create reimbursable meals in any service area available to them (e.g., salad bars or grab-and-go lines)
- model local school wellness policy 13
- water access to safe, free drinking water helps to increase students' overall water consumption, maintain hydration and reduce energy intake when substituted for sugar-sweetened beverages. In addition, adequate hydration may improve cognitive function among children and adolescents, which is important for learning.⁸ In order to be compliant with the USDA final rule, free, safe, unflavored drinking water will be available to all students during mealtimes where school meals are served. In order to be compliant with the USDA final rule, the district will ensure that all foods and beverages sold to students on the school campus during the school day support healthy eating, including those provided outside of the school meal programs. All foods and beverages sold outside of the school meal programs, during the school day will, at a minimum, meet smart snacks. 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, vending machines, school stores and snack or food carts, as well as any food-based fundraising meant for consumption during the school day. The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention's (CDC) increasing access to water in school's toolkit can be used by school health councils, nutrition services providers, principals, teachers, caregivers and other school staff who are interested in increasing access to drinking water.



Water

Higher Ground Academy district requires that:

- Free, safe and unflavored drinking water is available to students during the school day and during the extended school day* (including during out-of-school time/and before and after school),
- Water cups/jugs are available in the cafeteria if a drinking fountain is not present
- Students can bring and carry approved water bottles filled with only water before, during and after the school day across the school campus
- All water sources and containers (e.g., drinking fountains, water jugs, hydration stations and water jets) will be maintained regularly to ensure adherence to health and safety standards
- Conducting student surveys and taste testing opportunities and using them to inform menu development, dining space décor and promotional ideas.

Competitive Foods and Beverages

Higher ground academy district requires that all foods and beverages sold outside of the school meal programs during the school day and during the extended school day (including during out-of-school time/and before and after school) will, at a minimum, meet smart snacks.

Celebrations and Rewards

Higher ground academy district requires that all foods and beverages served and offered on the school campus outside of the school meal programs during the school day and during the extended school day (including during out-of-school time/and before and after school) will, at a minimum, meet smart snacks. The district will make available for caregivers and all school and school-based on site teaching staff:

- A list of healthy and non-food party ideas.
- A list of foods and beverages that meet smart snacks.
- A list of healthy and non-food rewards.

Fundraising

Higher ground academy district requires that fundraising, including activities such as donation nights at restaurants, cookie dough, candy and pizza sales and market days during the school day and during the extended school day (including during out-of-school time/and before and after school) sell only non-food items or foods and beverages that meet or exceed smart snacks.

Higher ground academy district encourages schools to use fundraisers that promote physical activity (e.g., walk-a-thons, jump rope for heart or fun runs).

Higher ground academy district will make available to caregivers and all school and school-based OST staff a list of healthy fundraising ideas.



Nutrition Education

Higher ground academy will teach, model, encourage and support healthy eating and physical activity among students. Higher ground academy will provide nutrition and physical activity education integrated into other subjects, as part of health education and/or offer standalone classes at each grade level. Higher ground academy district will ensure that:

- Nutrition and physical activity education are taught using evidence-based curricula that are aligned with the national health education standards and address the essential healthy eating and physical activity topics (APPENDIX B)
- The curricula used are consistent with the CDC'S characteristics of an effective health Education curriculum
- The curricula used are designed to provide students with the knowledge and skills necessary to promote and protect their health
- Nutrition and physical activity education are integrated into classroom subjects such as math, science, language arts, social studies and art, and are also included as part of health education classes and elective subjects
- Nutrition and physical activity education include developmentally appropriate, culturally relevant and participatory activities
- Higher Ground Academy does not utilize activities or materials that are the product of a food, beverage or dietary supplement company
- Teachers and other staff are provided with training on nutrition and physical activity education.
- Food service staff and PE teachers collaborate with classroom teachers and other school staff to provide nutrition and physical activity education throughout the school campus

Nutrition Promotion

Higher ground academy district will promote healthy food and beverage choices for all students across the school campuses during the school day and during the extended school day (including during out-of-school time/and before and after school) and will encourage participation in school meal programs. The district will ensure the promotion of healthy food and beverage choices through:

- School announcements, newsletters and website postings
- Implementation of the evidence-based marketing and merchandising techniques (see school meals section of this document)

Food and Beverage Marketing

All foods and beverages marketed or promoted to students on higher ground academy campus during the school day and during the extended school day (including during out-of-school time/and before and after school) will meet or exceed smart snacks. The marketing of products that do not meet smart snacks, in any and all of the following ways, is prohibited:



- Brand names, trademarks, logos or tags, including on cups used for beverage dispensing; menu boards; coolers; trash cans; vending machines and other foodservice equipment; posters; book covers; pupil assignment books or school supplies; uniforms; school buses and other vehicles; athletic fields or school equipment, such as marquees; message boards; scoreboards and backboards displayed distributed, offered or sold by the district
- Advertisements in school publications and school mailings; during broadcasts on school radio stations and in-school television; through digital media, such as computer screensavers; school-operated or school-sponsored websites and servers; or through the school public announcement system
- Free samples, taste tests or coupons for products
- Educational incentive programs (such as contests that use foods or beverages as a reward) including the promotion of programs that provide schools with supplies or funds when caregivers or participants purchase specific food products.

Physical Activity Opportunities

Higher ground academy district requires that all students receive education on the benefits of physical activity in conjunction with health (including nutrition) education. Higher ground academy district prohibits the use or withholding of physical activity (including recess) as a punishment during the school day and during the extended school day (including during out-of-school time/and before and after school). Adjustments will be made accordingly during times when certain grades are not assigned physical education classes. Higher ground academy district will provide resources and training to school and on site teaching staff on appropriate ways to discipline students. Higher ground academy district requires that physical activity opportunities be adapted in order to make them accessible to students with disabilities.

Classroom Physical Activity

Classroom physical activity is defined as any physical activity done in the classroom. Classroom physical activity can take place at any time and occur in one or several brief periods of time during the school day. Classroom physical activity should be offered in addition to physical education and recess and at all school levels (elementary, middle and high school). The two primary approaches for classroom physical activity are:

- Physical activity integrated into planned academic instruction
- Physical activity outside of planned academic instruction

CLASSROOM PHYSICAL ACTIVITY CAN BENEFIT STUDENTS BY:

- Improving their concentration and ability to stay on-task in the classroom
- Reducing disruptive behavior, such as fidgeting, in the classroom
- Improving their motivation and engagement in the learning process
- Helping to improve their academic performance (higher grades and test scores)



- Increasing their amount of daily physical activity.

HIGHER GROUND ACADEMY DISTRICT REQUIRES THAT:

- Classroom physical activity be incorporated into planning throughout the school day and the
- Extended school day
- Classroom physical activity be integrated into planned academic instruction to reinforce academic concepts and to reinforce skills learned in physical education
- Physical activity be provided in the classroom outside of planned instruction (physical activity breaks)
- Classroom physical activity be offered in addition to physical education and recess at all school levels
- Barriers to classroom physical activity, such as lack of equipment or available space, are minimized
- Schools do not utilize activities or materials that are the product of a food, beverage or dietary supplement company
- Classroom physical activity not be withheld from or required of students as a disciplinary approach
- Classroom teachers receive resources and annual training on promoting physical activity and integrating physical activity in the classroom.

Daily Recess

Recess is a scheduled time that provides an essential break from demanding cognitive tasks. Recess provides time to move, play, problem solve and socialize. Increased attention span and academic performance can result after recess, and recess helps children to learn social skills that may not be achieved in a structured classroom environment. Recess is offered in kindergarten through 5th grade and although these physical activity periods may not always be called recess in secondary schools, they serve the same purpose—to provide student-selected opportunities to engage in physical activity and take a break from academic work during the school day.

- Higher ground academy district will ensure that all elementary schools will offer 15 or more minutes of recess on all days during the school year which will complement, not substitute for, physical education class and will:
- Provide schools and students with adequate spaces, facilities, equipment and supplies for recess
- Ensure that spaces and facilities for recess meet or exceed recommended safety standards
- Prohibit the exclusion of students from recess for disciplinary reasons or academic performance in the classroom
- Provide staff members who lead or supervise recess with ongoing professional development
- Provide strategic inclusion and oversight of opportunities for students with special needs or disabilities to participate
- Assess the accessibility of playgrounds and outdoor play areas and make changes to improve access
- Provide equipment to allow for inclusion of students with disabilities into activities



Before and After School Activities

Physical activity before and after school can increase the amount of physical activity that students engage in. Physical activity before and after school includes walking or biking to and from school programs, physical activity clubs, intramural programs (sports organized by the school or community in which any child can participate), interscholastic sports (competitive sports between schools) and physical activity in before and after-school programs. Encouraging students to be physically active before and after school helps them identify activities they enjoy and might engage in long term.

Higher ground academy district will offer opportunities for all students to participate in physical activity before and/or after the school day through a variety of methods including:

- Physical activity clubs
- Physical activity breaks in aftercare
- Intramurals or interscholastic sports

Support for and Promotion of Active Transportation

Walking and bicycling to school can be an important part of enabling students to accumulate the physical activity they need each day.

Higher ground academy district will provide strong support for walking, bicycling and other forms of active transportation for students and staff to and from school through a combination of education, encouragement, enforcement and engineering activities. The district will encourage students, caregivers and staff to walk and bicycle to and from school and is committed to putting in safeguards to provide safe walking and bicycling access in school vicinities.

Higher ground academy district will at minimum support active transportation in the following ways:

- Communicating broadly their support for walking and bicycling to school; publicizing tools and resources for active transportation on their website and through new student communications including student/caregiver handbooks and other communication materials
- Promoting participation in international walk to school day and national bike to school day and other active transportation promoting activities
- Providing prominent and secure storage facilities for bicycles and other transportation modes, such as skateboards and scooters (e.g., sheltered bicycle parking, shed, cage or fenced area)
- Providing instruction on walking/bicycling safety to students
- Improving safe access to school entrances for students arriving on foot or by bicycle by ensuring designated routes on driveways, through parking lots and to bicycle parking, and by prioritizing sidewalks and crosswalks as well as separating modes of arrival to school.

In addition, higher ground academy district will support active transportation in at least four of the following ways:



- Providing bicycling skills instruction to students
- Promoting safe routes to school programs to students, staff and caregivers via newsletters, websites and/or the local newspaper
- Designating a safe route to school coordinator to lead district safe routes to school activities and support school activities
- Ensuring that the school transportation department includes walking and bicycling to school as part of school transportation responsibilities.
- Ensuring provision of one or more crossing guards for every school
- Working with local jurisdictions to encourage installation of high visibility crosswalks and other infrastructure to improve walking and bicycling safety on streets leading to schools
- Conducting walking and bicycling safety audits of the routes to each school and sharing that information with local jurisdictions
- Providing outreach and adaptive safe routes to school programming for students with disabilities
- Creating monthly or weekly walk and bicycle to school days (e.g., walking Wednesdays)
- Promoting walking school buses and bicycle trains
- Designating safe or preferred routes to school
- Creating and distributing maps of the active school environment (e.g., sidewalks, crosswalks, roads, pathways and bike racks)
- Engaging in tracking, evaluation and reporting of student travel methods (e.g., walking, bicycling, school bus, carpool and private vehicle) and utilizing this data for continuous improvement.

SECTION**Other Activities That Promote Student Wellness**

Higher Ground Academy will integrate health and wellness into other curriculum areas, such as teaching nutrition concepts in mathematics, with consultation provided by either the school or the district curriculum experts. The district will coordinate and integrate wellness activities, so all efforts are complementary rather than duplicative and work towards the same set of goals and objectives. These initiatives will be culturally inclusive, accessible to all students and staff across the district and age-appropriate. All school-sponsored events, whether before, during or after school, will adhere to the LWP guidelines and will include physical activity and healthy eating opportunities when appropriate. Higher Ground Academy requires that all school and school-based on site teaching staff will model healthy eating and physical activity behaviors by not bringing in/or consuming personal food or beverages in front of students that would not meet the requirements of this LWP, and by participating in physical activities along with students.



Implementing

Higher Ground Academy District will implement the updated policy upon the SWC and District Board. Higher Ground Academy District will review and update the policy, as needed, utilizing the WellSat scoring system.

Forward Goals

Higher Ground Academy District will work on ensuring:

1. The nutrition and health units have been added to the curriculum. Professional Development will be provided as needed for staff and students and data will be collected to monitor the implementation.