

Lowell Public Schools Health and Wellness Policy

Vision

The Lowell Public School District is committed to providing school environments that promote student health, well-being and achievement through the ongoing development of a comprehensive wellness policy. The district recognizes that schools play a critical role in promoting the health and safety of all learners as well as helping students establish lifelong health behavior patterns. Research shows a link between the health outcomes of young people and their academic success. We believe that in order to have a positive impact on the health outcomes of young people, school personnel, together with students, families and members of the greater Lowell community must work together through a collaborative approach. The district aspires to develop an expanded model of school health and wellness based on the *Whole School, Whole Community, Whole Child* model which expands on the Center for Disease Control and Prevention’s Coordinated School Health approach and is combined with the whole child framework and state standards.

WHOLE SCHOOL, WHOLE COMMUNITY, WHOLE CHILD



Policy Guidelines

The Lowell Public School District takes a comprehensive approach to wellness with consideration to all components in the health and wellness continuum including health education, physical education and activity, nutrition, health services, counseling, social and emotional climate, physical environment, employee wellness, family engagement and community involvement.

The Lowell Public Schools shall maintain a Superintendent appointed Wellness Committee established and maintained at the district level. The committee shall consist of members who are representative and inclusive of the Lowell Public Schools and greater Lowell community. Said committee shall recommend, review and provide oversight of the policy implementation addressing wellness-related issues that affect student health. The committee shall review data and seek ongoing feedback annually from all members of the Lowell Public School community in collaboration with community representatives. All members shall participate in the ongoing assessment and revision of the policy to actively promote the health and wellness of all students and advance their readiness to learn. The Health and Wellness Committee shall create an annual Action Plan as part of the District's Improvement Plan. Said plan shall be communicated so that all students, families and staff are aware of and follow policy guidelines.

District Health and Wellness Committee

The committee shall:

- Follow by-laws that are aligned with Massachusetts Standards for School Wellness Advisory Committees;
- Annually review, and if required, recommend district-wide policies/revisions to promote student wellness;
- Annually set committee goals and objectives as part of an action plan;
- Annually report progress on committee goals, objectives, policies, monitoring and evaluation of Health and Wellness Policy implementation;
- Convene at least quarterly each school year;
- Provide oversight of the implementation of district-level policies related to wellness;
- Annually review district policies related to wellness and if applicable, apply strategies to implement these policies;
- Assist in assessment of the schools' wellness status including the exact timeline and process for completing the selected assessments including the following surveys and audits to assess the district's wellness status:
 - Monthly Quality Assurance Inspections for Food Safety
 - Annual City Inspections
 - School Health Index Profiles from the Center for Disease Control and Prevention
 - District data such as the Youth Risk Behavior Survey and/or Communities that Care Survey
 - Other District Identified Priorities;
- Create and implement a Health and Wellness Action Plan each year including timelines, processes, goals and school-based activities designed to promote student and staff wellness based on the results of the district's annual assessments;

- Include representative membership from:
 - Assistant Superintendent for Student Support Services
 - District Student Support Services Department
 - Curriculum Department
 - Food and Nutrition Department
 - Operations and Maintenance Department
 - School Administration
 - School Committee
 - Teachers (Physical Education and Health Education)
 - Public Health Department School Physician
 - School Nurse and Other School-Based Health Care Professionals
 - Parents
 - Students
 - Community Partners

Monitoring and Evaluation

The Lowell Public Schools Health and Wellness Committee, in collaboration with appropriate district departments, shall provide oversight of schools, including after school programs, to support policy compliance. Specific components of the policy shall be monitored, evaluated and supported by the district departments that currently oversee the various aspects of the plan. The District Health and Wellness Committee will develop an evaluation plan to further measure compliance including providing avenues for feedback from the school community.

The District Wellness Committee on an annual basis shall provide to the Superintendent, School Committee and the public a copy of an annual report that includes progress toward actions steps from the previous year, identification of work still needed to be done as well as goals and objectives for the coming year. Wellness Action Plans and the associated assessment will be made public.

Cultural Proficiency

The District Wellness Committee shall provide guidance to the district administration on the examination of school learning environments and organizational traditions to identify inclusive practices and opportunities that celebrate diverse cultures and identities. This includes the physical environment, the academic environment, classroom curriculum and promotional materials. Cultural proficiency includes guidelines regarding race, ethnicity, gender, sexual orientation, gender identity, disabilities and guidelines that promote family and student engagement.

School Food and Nutrition Promotion and Services

The Lowell Public Schools supports lifelong healthy eating habits for all students, families and staff and is committed to addressing the increasing rates of diet-related health consequences for all members of the school community. The district shall promote healthy lifestyles and appropriate nutritional practices for all students. Components of this approach include:

- Reviewing and assessing the food available in school meals to ensure safety, quality, visual appeal, cultural proficiency and accessibility and ensuring that it is consistent with

recommendations from the Dietary Guidelines for Americans and USDA School Meals Initiative for Healthy Children in nutritional content;

- Identifying opportunities to teach healthy eating habits in health and physical education classes, as well as through cafeteria and other school-wide promotions;
- Identifying opportunities to provide support to all students around appropriate nutritional practices for meals and snacks;
- Identifying opportunities to support school staff and parents around modeling healthy eating habits including appropriate nutritional standards and encouraging non-food alternatives for school fundraisers, student rewards and reinforcement, school parties and classroom celebrations;
- Promoting health and nutrition messaging that encourages the consumption of fruits and vegetables, whole grains, healthy fats, low-fat dairy products and water and other messages consistent with research-based findings that indicate positive impact on health; and
- Establishing policy guidelines for food and beverage sales within school environments that meet or exceed those required by federal, state and local laws and regulations.

Comprehensive Physical Education and Physical Activity

The Lowell Public School District is committed to a district-wide, strategic effort to increase all students' physical activity and fitness. The district strives to incorporate physical education and physical activity in schools, improve the quality of physical education and recess as well as increase the equity of physical activity programs and resources across schools.

Regularly engaging in moderate-to-vigorous exercise contributes to overall physical and mental health. Nurturing an exercise habit amongst children provides the foundation for lifelong fitness. Increased physical activity improves cognitive function, concentration and academic performance. Thus, as a part of a strategic effort to improve academic performance, the district recognizes and promotes the benefits of a Comprehensive Physical Activity Program, where quality physical education is the cornerstone and additional physical activity is integrated throughout the school day and into before and after school programs.

All schools shall provide all students across all grades with opportunities for physical activity and standards-based physical education in accordance with Massachusetts Law MGL Chapter 71, Section 3 which requires physical education and affords schools the authority to determine the hours of instruction for physical education. To that end, all schools shall offer in-school physical activity weekly in grades Pre-K through grade 8. Said activity shall include physical education, movement breaks, recess, lessons involving movement and before and after school activities. In grades Pre-K through grade 8, students shall have daily recess. In grades 9 through 12, students shall receive at least one semester of physical education per grade. Physical education activities shall be inclusive to meet the needs, interests, abilities and cultural diversity of all students, including students of all gender identities, students with disabilities and students with special health care needs.

Extended day programs and out of school time, which includes before and after school programs, shall offer an array of physical activity opportunities to ensure all students are able to participate.

The Lowell Public School's athletic mission is to provide multiple educational athletic opportunities for students including intermural and interscholastic opportunities. We believe that participation in educational athletics provides students with a sense of connectedness to school, supports learning and develops citizenship.

The district is committed to a strong athletics program that offers a variety of programs and is accessible to all students. Athletics participation contributes to student fitness, wellness, character development and a lifelong commitment to a physically active lifestyle. Additionally, by establishing a safe, supportive and engaging school environment, athletic programs encourage school connectedness and create a climate where healthy competition and support fill the school with spirit and a sense of community. Research demonstrates that healthy children are better learners and connected students are more likely to stay in school.

Comprehensive Health Education

The Lowell Public School District shall provide Pre-K through grade 12 Health Education that is age and developmentally appropriate, culturally inclusive and implemented in safe and supportive learning environments that value all students. Lowell Public Schools shall take a skills-based approach to teach health education that addresses content aligned with state standards including drug use and abuse, healthy eating/nutrition, mental and emotional health, personal health and wellness, physical activity, safety and injury prevention, violence prevention, and comprehensive sexual health education that is LGBTQ inclusive. It shall promote healthy lifestyle habits, healthy relationships and health literacy for all students.

Healthy Physical School Environment

The Lowell Public Schools is committed to providing high-performing and safe school buildings. The physical environment standards include grounds that are clean and in good repair, buildings with adequate ventilation systems and the efficient use of resources that positively impact the health and wellness of all students.

The Lowell Public Schools in collaboration with the City of Lowell shall ensure that all schools and departments comply with existing City of Lowell ordinances and Lowell Public School policies related to promoting and managing healthy school environments.

The District's Maintenance and Operations Department shall work with the following divisions in the City's Department of Public Works: Streets, Water, and Lands and Buildings as well as Inspectional Services relative to annual inspections. Additionally, the school department shall work in collaboration with the City of Lowell Fire and Health Departments for safety and health related inspections and guidance.

In order to further enhance school environments, the district complies with Green Cleaners, Integrated Pest Management, Recycling, Infection Prevention and Control, Tobacco Free Environmental Policy and Laboratories and Chemical Inventories (Right to Know Law). A regular schedule of inspections for alarms, fire extinguishers and elevators shall be established and updated annually.

Schools shall regularly assess the quality and quantity of Lowell Public School facilities for access to physical activity and physical education, including school yards. All maintenance needs for said facilities are to be reported to the Lowell Public School Maintenance and Operations Department.

Safe and Supportive Schools/Social and Emotional Climate

The Lowell Public Schools shall create a safe and supportive school environment for all students that is culturally proficient, engaging and inclusive. District and school-based support staff including guidance counselors and social workers shall work with school teams to provide tiered supports for students, families and staff including skill-based education to promote social and emotional learning, healthy relationships and access to support services.

The Lowell Public Schools shall provide supports to help all students' value healthy relationships and environments, possess the necessary knowledge and skills to use safe health practices and access resources and services to support their own health. Prevention and intervention-based work shall address and integrate social, emotional, behavioral and physical health, suicide prevention, safe inclusive climates for all students, violence prevention, sexual harassment and assault prevention, bullying prevention, school safety, substance use prevention and pregnant/parenting students education and supports. These efforts will afford all students equal access and create a safe and supportive learning environment that optimizes academic outcomes for all students. The district shall put in place systems to ensure that all students have access to resources and services that support health in a safe and supportive environment.

Schools shall implement evidence-based programs and/or curricula to equip all students with the skills, supports and services needed to address the multitude of challenges they face in our schools and community. Schools shall provide wrap-around systems of support including community linkages to promote positive behavioral health and reduce barriers to learning for optimal academic success for all students, based on tiered interventions and data to determine effectiveness. In addition, schools shall follow the code of conduct and related policies relative to safe and supportive learning environments. Schools shall also promote healthy relationships and follow policies related to the prevention of bullying, sexual harassment, discrimination and assault.

Health Services

School-based health services are provided by nurses through the City of Lowell Health Department. School-based health care removes the health obstacles to learning by ensuring access and/or referral to primary health care services, managing chronic disease conditions during school hours, providing emergency care for illness or injury, identifying communicable diseases and enacting practices and systems to ensure that all students have access to key resources and services that are developmentally appropriate and support sexual and reproductive health in a safe and supportive environment. Lowell High School shall provide access to condoms for students through the Lowell Community Health Center School-Based Clinic including appropriate health education and counseling services. Parents and legal guardians shall have an opt-out option for their child receiving condoms via completion of the exemption form found in the Lowell High School Student Handbook and notification of the school of the exemption as indicated on the form.

The district offers the following mandated screening programs and parents/guardians are notified of any problems that necessitate a medical follow up:

- **Vision:** The year of school entry, K-5, grade 7 and 9.
- **Hearing:** The year of school entry, K-3, grade 7 and 9.
- **Postural Screening:** The State of Massachusetts mandates that all students in grades 5 through 9 be screened for scoliosis.
- **Heights and Weights:** Grades 1, 4, 7 and 10 to calculate BMI. Information is kept confidential and the school nurse sends a letter to notify the parent of the result.

Immunization/Lab Test Requirements: School Immunization Law, Chapter 76, Section 15 of the General Laws of the State of Massachusetts requires that all immunizations must be up to date for children to attend school according to the Massachusetts Department of Public Health regulations. Massachusetts General Law allows for the school district to exclude any child from school whose immunizations are not up to date. Entry and documentation requirements are listed in the Parent and Student Handbooks as well as on the Lowell Public School website.

Employee Wellness

The Lowell Public School District cares about the well-being of staff members and understands the influence that staff actions have on the health behaviors of all students. All staff shall promote a school environment supportive of healthy behaviors. Adults shall model healthy behaviors, especially on school property and at school-sponsored meetings and events. The District Wellness Committee shall work with schools to encourage support of staff wellness initiatives.

Family Engagement

The Lowell Public School District values family partnerships and encourages parents to actively participate in all aspects of their child's learning. All schools shall strive to:

- Invite families to participate in decision making and goal setting for their child;
- Engage families in two-way communication;
- Engage families in ways that are truly reciprocal;
- Provide learning activities for the home, school and in the community;
- Invite families to participate in program-level decisions and wider advocacy efforts; and
- Implement a system to support family engagement.

Community Involvement

The Lowell Public School District values and promotes community partnerships to enhance the overall health and wellness opportunities provided for students, families and staff. To that end, the Health and Wellness Committee shall continue to grow community participation to expand both the committee's membership as well as the programs and services afforded all students, families and staff in the Lowell Public Schools.