

Yeshiva Gedolah Rabbinical Institute of New England
School Wellness Policy
Updated March 2025**INTRODUCTION**

YBDS is fortunate to be able to support our community's wellness needs in a variety of ways, including providing daily breakfast, lunch, and snacks for all of our students through federal and state school nutrition programs. As a requirement for participation in these programs, YBDS is required to establish policies and practices for school wellness in its School Wellness Policy. A triennial assessment of the School Wellness Policy is required, and the pages that follow include further details of our policies and practices.

Partnering with the University of Connecticut's Rudd Center of Food Policy & Obesity, the Connecticut State Department of Education provided tools for YBDS to assess its written policies and implemented practices. We examined the strengths and weaknesses of both our written policies and our implemented practices by comparing our scores on each of the assessment tools. We have updated our School Wellness Policy, and we will continue to examine how our implemented practices can best promote health and wellness.

Whereas, children need access to healthful foods and opportunities to be physically active in order to grow, learn, and thrive;

Whereas, good health fosters student attendance and education;

Whereas, obesity rates have doubled in children and tripled in adolescents over the last two decades, and physical inactivity and excessive calorie intake are the predominant causes of obesity;

Whereas, heart disease, cancer, stroke, and diabetes are responsible for two-thirds of deaths in the United States, and major risk factors for those diseases, including unhealthy eating habits, physical inactivity, and obesity, often are established in childhood;

Whereas, 33% of high school students do not participate in sufficient vigorous physical activity and 72% of high school students do not attend daily physical education classes;

Whereas, only 2% of children (2 to 19 years) eat a healthy diet consistent with the five main recommendations from the Food Guide Pyramid;

Whereas, nationally, the items most commonly sold from school vending machines, school stores, and snack bars include low-nutrition foods and beverages, such as soda, sports drinks, imitation fruit juices, chips, candy, cookies, and snack cakes;

Whereas, school districts around the country are facing significant fiscal and scheduling constraints; and

Whereas, community participation is essential to the development and implementation of successful school wellness policies;

Thus, YBDS is committed to providing school environments that promote and protect children's health, well-being, and ability to learn by supporting healthy eating and physical activity. Therefore, it is the policy of YBDS that:

- The school has engaged students, parents, teachers, food service professionals, health professionals, and other interested community members in developing, implementing, monitoring, and reviewing district-wide nutrition and physical activity policies.
- All students in YBDS have opportunities, support, and encouragement to be physically active on a regular basis.
- Foods and beverages sold or served at school meet the nutrition recommendations of the *U.S. Dietary Guidelines for Americans*.
- Qualified child nutrition professionals provide students with access to a variety of affordable, nutritious, and appealing foods that meet the health and nutrition needs of students; accommodate the religious, ethnic, and cultural diversity of the student body in meal planning; and provide clean, safe, and pleasant settings and adequate time for students to eat.
- To the maximum extent practicable, our schools participates in available federal school meal programs (including the School Breakfast Program, National School Lunch Program [including after-school snacks], Summer Food Service Program.
- Schools provide nutrition education and physical education to foster lifelong habits of healthy eating and physical activity, and will establish linkages between health education and school meal programs, and with related community services.

TO ACHIEVE THESE POLICY GOALS:

I. School Health Council

YBDS school health council developed, implemented, will monitor, review, and, as necessary, revise school nutrition and physical activity policies. The council consists of a group of individuals representing the school and community, and includes parents, students, representatives of the school food authority, members of the school board, school administrators, teachers, health professionals, and members of the public.

A letter will be sent to the community via email, inviting members of the community to join the wellness committee.

Chaya Malka shall be responsible for ensuring that the wellness policy is implemented throughout district schools.

The advisory council shall conduct a quantitative assessment of policy implementation every three years using the Wellness School Assessment Tool – Practice.

A copy of the wellness policy is posted on the school website.

The triennial progress report will be posted on the school website. The report will include an assessment on compliance, the extent to which our wellness policy compares to model wellness policies, and progress made in achieving goals.

Every three years, the wellness committee will review the latest national recommendations pertaining to school health and will update the wellness policy accordingly.

II. Nutritional Quality of Foods and Beverages Sold and Served on Campus

School Meals

- Meals served through the National School Lunch and Breakfast Programs are appealing and attractive to children;
- Meals served through the National School Lunch and Breakfast Programs are served in clean and pleasant settings;

- Meals served through the National School Lunch and Breakfast Programs meet, at a minimum, nutrition requirements established by local, state, and federal statutes and regulations;
- Meals served through the National School Lunch and Breakfast Programs ensure compliance with standards for meal patterns, nutrient levels, and calorie requirements for the ages/grade levels served, as specified in 7 CFR 210.10 or 220.8, as applicable
- Meals served through the National School Lunch and Breakfast Programs offer a variety of fruits and vegetables;
- Meals served through the National School Lunch and Breakfast Programs serve only low-fat (1%) and fat-free milk and nutritionally-equivalent non-dairy alternatives (to be defined by USDA); and
- Meals served through the National School Lunch and Breakfast Programs ensure that grains are whole grain.
- All schools provide breakfast through the USDA School Breakfast Program.

Water

- YBDS makes free water available to all students throughout the day; students are encouraged to bring reusable bottles, there are cups available as well.
- Free water is available in the cafeteria during meal times.
- Students are allowed to bring in bottled water from home.

Student Privacy

- YBDS operates the School Breakfast Program and the National School Lunch Program at no cost to any student.
- There is no issue of any child being singled out as receiving free or reduced meals since all children are fed at no cost to them.
- YBDS has implemented plans to protect student privacy through serving meals to all children at no cost to them.
- All parents and students are notified of these programs. Breakfast and lunch is given to all students.
- YBDS provides students with at least 10 minutes to eat after sitting down for breakfast and 20 minutes after sitting down for lunch;
- YBDS does not schedule tutoring, club, or organizational meetings or activities during mealtimes, unless students may eat during such activities;
- YBDS provides students access to hand washing or hand sanitizing before they eat meals or snacks;

Qualifications of School Food Service Staff

- USDA professional standards for State and Local Nutrition programs are followed to ensure that professional development in the area of food and nutrition is provided for food service directors, manager and staff. New and current food service directors must have at least 12 hours; new and current managers must have at least 10 hours; new and current staff must have at least 6 hours.
- Qualified nutrition professionals will administer the school meal programs. As part of the school district's responsibility to operate a food service program, we will provide continuing professional development for all nutrition professionals in schools. Staff development programs should include appropriate certification and/or training programs for child nutrition directors, school nutrition managers, and cafeteria workers, according to their levels of responsibility.

Snacks

- Only bottled water, 100% fruit juice, or unsweetened seltzer are sold via vending machines to students.
- Vending machines are off during meal times, only Smart Snack approved items are sold when the machines are open.
- There are no competitive foods sold a la carte in the cafeteria during the school day.
- Snacks served during the school day or in after-school enrichment programs will make a positive contribution to children's diets and health, with an emphasis on serving fruits and vegetables as the primary snacks and water as the primary beverage. Schools will assess if and when to offer snacks based on timing of school meals, children's nutritional needs, children's ages, and other considerations.
- All food items served or offered for sale to students during the school day will meet all federal, state and local standards for all nutrient and competitive food guidelines.
- No competitive foods or beverages may be sold during school meals.
- There will be no food-related fundraisers held during the school day.
- We will regulate all food and beverages served during classroom activities.
- We will follow the Smart Snacks in School standards, for all food and beverages sold to students on school campus during the school day.
- All fundraisers held during the school day must meet Smart Snacks. There are no exemptions.
- Snacks are served via the Child and Adult Care Food Program and meet the requirements of that program.

- All snacks sold to students during after school programs will meet the same nutrition standards as foods sold during the school day.
- Schools will not use food or beverages as rewards for academic, classroom or sports performances.

Caffeine

- Only water, seltzer, milk and 100% juice shall be sold to students during the school day.

III. Nutrition and Physical Activity Promotion and Food Marketing

Nutrition Education and Promotion

YBDS aims to teach, encourage, and support healthy eating by students. As such, we will make every effort to provide nutrition education and engage in nutrition promotion that:

- is offered at each elementary and middle school grade level 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 classroom instruction in subjects such as math, science, language arts, and social sciences;
- Nutrition lessons will be designed for integration into the curriculum and the health education program;
- Nutrition education will be integrated into the broader curriculum, where appropriate;
- promotes fruits, vegetables, whole grain products, low-fat and fat-free dairy products, healthy food preparation methods, and health-enhancing nutrition practices;

Food Marketing in Schools

YBDS does not promote any particular products, brands or companies. Marketing and promotion of food or beverage products at school, or in any aspect of school operations, must meet relevant state and/or federal nutrition guidelines.

Local Foods

Schools are encouraged to source fresh fruits and vegetables from local farmers where practical.

Employee Wellness

- Free water and healthy snacks are available in the staff break rooms
- School staff members are encouraged to model healthy eating and physical activity behaviors

IV. Physical Activity Opportunities

YBDS discourages extended periods (*i.e.*, periods of two or more hours) of inactivity. When activities, such as mandatory school-wide testing, make it necessary for students to remain indoors for long periods of time, students are given periodic breaks during which they are encouraged to stand and be moderately active.

Physical Activity Opportunities

All students will receive regular physical education for the entire school year. Students will spend at least 50 percent of physical education class time participating in moderate to vigorous physical activity.

All students will have at least 35 minutes a day of supervised recess, preferably outdoors, during which moderate to vigorous physical activity is encouraged verbally and through the provision of space and equipment.

YBDS offers extracurricular physical activity programs, and offers a range of activities that meet the needs, interests, and abilities of all students, including students with disabilities, and students with special health-care needs.

After-school child care and enrichment programs will provide and encourage – verbally and through the provision of space, equipment, and activities – daily periods of moderate to vigorous physical activity for all participants.

Integrating Physical Activity into the Classroom Setting

For students to receive the nationally-recommended amount of daily physical activity (*i.e.*, at least 60 minutes per day) and for students to fully embrace regular physical activity as a personal behavior, students need opportunities for physical activity beyond physical education class. Toward that end:

- opportunities for physical activity will be incorporated into other subject lessons; and
- classroom teachers will provide short physical activity breaks between lessons or classes, as appropriate.
- All schools are required to schedule 40 minutes of recess daily for every class in the school master schedule.

- Schools promote walking and biking, wearing a helmet, to school.
 - Food rewards are prohibited, and teachers are provided with a list of alternative ideas. We strongly recommend staff use physical activity as a reward when feasible.
 - Physical activity may not be assigned to students as a consequence of poor behavior or punishment for any reason.
 - Recess, PE or other physical activities will not be withheld from students as a punishment for poor behavior or incomplete class work.
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