

Policy Component: Measurement and Evaluation

Goal

School districts will develop a plan for measuring implementation of the local district nutrition and physical activity policies, including designation of one or more persons with operational responsibility for ensuring that schools are addressing the policy.

Rationale

In order for policies to be successful, school districts must establish a plan for measuring implementation and sustaining local efforts, including evaluation, feedback and documentation based on sound evidence.

Policy Recommendations

Policies for Measurement and Evaluation will address the following areas:

- Monitoring
- Policy Review

Specific guidance regarding the implementation of each policy recommendation for Measurement and Evaluation follows under *Implementation Guidance*, after this section. Resources to assist with the implementation of each policy recommendation are found in *Resources* at the end of this section.

*This section provides **recommendations** (not requirements) for policy language for Measurement and Evaluation. This language represents recommended best practice for developing school nutrition and physical activity policies. School districts may choose to use the policy recommendations as written or revise them as needed to meet local needs and reflect community priorities. When developing nutrition and physical activity policies, districts will need to take into account their unique circumstances, challenges, opportunities and available resources. Policies should meet local needs and be adapted to the health concerns, food preferences and dietary practices of different ethnic groups.*

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Policy Recommendations

Monitoring

The superintendent or designee shall ensure compliance with established districtwide nutrition and physical activity policies. In each school, the principal or designee shall ensure compliance with those policies in his or her school and shall report on the school's compliance to the school district superintendent or designee. School food service staff members, at the school or district level, shall ensure compliance with nutrition policies within school food service areas and shall report on this matter to the superintendent (or if done at the school level, to the school principal).

Policy Review

Districts shall identify a strategy and schedule to help review policy compliance, assess progress and determine areas in need of improvement. As part of that process, the school district shall review nutrition and physical activity policies; new research and evidence on health trends and effective programs; provision of an environment that supports healthy eating and physical activity; and nutrition and physical education policies and program elements. The district and individual schools within the district shall, as necessary, revise the nutrition and physical activity policies and develop work plans to facilitate their implementation.



Implementation Guidance

Monitoring and Policy Review

Evaluation is critically important to education decision makers in a number of ways. It helps them to:

- develop well-designed policies and programs;
- ensure accountability to funding agencies;
- weigh and compare various solutions to identified problems;
- determine whether to support or oppose particular programs or policies;
- justify decisions to the general public, the legislature and the news media;
- build consensus among people with different political views; and
- make incremental improvements in policies and programs on a continuous basis.

*The USDA School Wellness Policy regulations require that districts **establish a plan for measuring implementation of the local wellness policy**, including the designation of one or more persons within the local education agency or at each school, as appropriate, charged with ensuring that the school meets the local wellness policy.*

A good evaluation plan does not need to be intimidating, extensive and resource intensive or put undue burdens on school district staff members. Its critical function is to answer some basic questions that are very important to policymakers, school administrators, families and the general public, including:

- What changes in nutrition education, physical activity, the nutritional quality of foods available to students, and other aspects covered by the policy occurred in each school as a result of the district policy? For example:
 - ♦ Did the number of students participating in nutrition education change?
 - ♦ Did the students have a different number of minutes of physical activity?
 - ♦ Did any schools change available food options?
 - ♦ Did participation in the School Breakfast Program or National School Lunch Program change?
- Did the policy and implementation address the issues identified in the needs assessment? For example:
 - ♦ Is it making a difference? If so, how?
 - ♦ What's working?
 - ♦ What's not working?
- How can the impact of the policy be increased to enhance its effect on student health and academic learning?

The types of evaluation methods used will be locally determined by school districts based on the components of their local nutrition and physical activity policies. Evaluation can include descriptions of any relevant changes in nutrition and physical activity in the district using a variety of methods, such as student, staff and parent surveys and collection of quantitative data regarding school nutrition and physical activity programs and practices. Policy evaluation can include assessment of the level of satisfaction with policy implementation, qualitative and quantitative analysis of any

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changes produced, and assessment of the consequences and impact. Information on the specific evaluation strategies used by Connecticut's 10 pilot districts is found in *Section 9 – School Nutrition Policies Pilots*.

Several types of evaluation are relevant to school nutrition and physical activity, including process evaluation and outcome-based evaluation.

- **Process evaluation** assesses whether a *program* was implemented and operated as intended. It also addresses the questions of “why” and “why not.” Process evaluation indicators include contrasting actual and planned performance. Student and family satisfaction surveys are examples of process evaluation. School districts can use process evaluation to identify whether their nutrition and physical activity policies are being implemented as planned.
- **Outcome-based evaluation** assesses the *results or impact* of a program on the participants, e.g., students' health status, absenteeism and dropout rates. Outcome evaluations depend on the stage of development of the program, and can be short-term, intermediate and long-term. Outcome evaluations represent a change that occurs as a result of the program and may include changes in the following outcomes:
 - ♦ knowledge
 - ♦ attitudes and beliefs
 - ♦ behavior
 - ♦ skills
 - ♦ risk or protective behaviors
 - ♦ life condition
 - ♦ environment (including public and private policies, formal and informal enforcement of regulations, and influence of social norms and other societal forces)

Outcome-based evaluation is a systematic way to determine if a project has achieved its goals. This approach helps organizations establish clear program benefits (outcomes), identify ways to measure the program benefits (indicators), and clarify the intended beneficiaries of the program.

Indicators

Evaluation requires the gathering of evidence or *indicators*. Indicators are specific, observable and measurable characteristics or conditions that indicate that a specific change has taken place. Indicators can be developed for activities (process indicators) and/or for outcomes (outcome indicators). Districts should choose indicators that relate to the local policy statements. Some examples of indicators are found in the chart on the next page.

School districts are encouraged to use outcome-based evaluation procedures to justify changes based on documented outcomes. Outcome-based evaluation helps school district staff members be better positioned to request and receive funding because the benefits and impact of the program can be described in very specific terms by identifying what the program will do for participants. It also helps school district staff members better communicate the benefits they intend to deliver to program participants.

However, districts should be aware that changes in outcome-based indicators take time; it can be many years before improvement occurs. It is important to note that the absence of change in outcome-based indicators does *not* necessarily indicate that a program or policy is unsuccessful.

Evaluation Indicators

Process Evaluation

- Number of students reached/impacted
- Number of teachers and other school staff members reached/impacted
- Economic status and racial/ethnic background of students reached/impacted
- Quality of services
- Cost of implementation
- Revenues generated from healthy foods sold at school
- Changes in health and physical education curriculums
- Changes in amount of time spent on physical education and recess
- Changes in before- and after-school physical activity opportunities
- Staffing for services or programs
- Meal participation rates for school breakfast and lunch
- Number/percent of foods that meet nutrition standards
- Number of people reached through education efforts
- Number of activities/meetings/events
- Number of classes/training sessions/workshops conducted

Outcome-Based Evaluation

- Student fitness tests (e.g., percent of students passing all four Connecticut Physical Fitness Assessments, percent of students passing the national Physical Best Challenge)
- Student Body Mass Index (BMI)
- Changes in student food choices (e.g., increased consumption of fruits and vegetables)
- Children's nutrition status (e.g., prevalence of health conditions such as obesity, tooth decay, iron-deficiency anemia, diabetes)

Adapted with permission from *Fit, Healthy and Ready to Learn*, National Association of State Boards of Education, 2000, and *Introduction to Program Evaluation for Public Health Programs: A Self-Study Guide*, Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, 2005. <http://www.cdc.gov/eval/evalguide.pdf>

Evaluation Partnerships

Districts may consider partnering with local hospitals, universities, health departments and other institutions for help with the evaluation process. Evaluations with outside providers must be conducted in a way that is in compliance with state and federal confidentiality laws, such as the Family Education Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA) and other state statutes.

Implementation Guidance

Revising School Wellness Policy Language

The policy process is ongoing – it does not end with the development of the policy document. It is important for districts to regularly review policy compliance, assess progress and determine areas in need of improvement. The results of these local evaluation efforts will often necessitate review and revision of existing policy language.

A policy that met the district's needs several years ago may no longer be relevant today. Policy revisions may be necessary to respond to:

- new research and evidence on health trends and effective programs;
- new national and state standards and guidelines regarding nutrition and physical activity;
- new local data regarding student health and achievement issues;
- new state and federal initiatives and legislation;
- local evaluation data regarding the effectiveness of policy implementation;
- changing district priorities; and
- other local, state and federal issues.



Districts may also want to use the results of policy content evaluation tools, such as the *SDE School Wellness Policy Report*, to assist in identifying those policy areas in need of improvement. (For additional information, see *School Wellness Policy Report* on the next page.)

Policy revisions will follow a similar process as outlined in *Section 2 – Steps for Creating Local Policy*. The School Health Team will need to make recommendations for revised policy language based on the issues noted above and local needs assessment data. The review process provides a good opportunity to revisit the School Health Index, prioritize district needs and develop an action plan (see *Step 4: Prioritize Needs and Develop an Action Plan* on page 30). Keep in mind the importance of communicating potential policy changes to the school community, including the rationale for any changes and a plan for implementation and evaluation of the revised policy.

School Wellness Policy Report

During the 2007-08 school year, the Connecticut State Department of Education conducted a review of district school wellness policies using a school wellness policy assessment tool developed in partnership with the Rudd Center for Food Policy and Obesity at Yale University. Based on this review, each district received a *School Wellness Policy Report*, which includes three components:

1. *School Wellness Policy Report* – an overall summary of the district's scores, state averages and District Reference Group (DRG)* averages for seven school wellness policy categories: Nutrition Education; School Meals; Other School Food and Beverages; Physical Education; Physical Activity; Communication and Promotion; and Evaluation.*

Note: These categories correspond to the six policy categories in the Action Guide. Scores for the category of Nutrition Standards for School Foods and Beverages were

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divided into two groups: 1) school meals; and 2) other foods and beverages.

2. *School Wellness Policy Rating Sheet* – the actual district coding for the 96 policy items that determine the scores for each of the seven policy categories.
3. *School Wellness Policy Report Comments Section* (if applicable) – a review of the district’s policy language for consistency with all applicable federal and state requirements, including suggestions for revising noncompliant language.

The district scores contained in the *School Wellness Policy Report* address the comprehensiveness and strength of each policy area. The *comprehensiveness* score refers to the proportion of items within each policy area that are simply mentioned by the district’s school wellness policy. The *strength* score refers to the proportion of items within each policy area that are addressed with specific and directive language. Weak statements are hard to enforce because they are vague and/or only recommended. They often use words such as *may, can, could, should, might, encourage, suggest, urge, some, partial, make an effort* and *try*. Strong statements include a concept followed by specific plans or strategies for implementation and wording that indicates action is required, such as *shall, will, must, have to, insist, require, all, total, comply* and *enforce*. Information on the scoring methodology is provided in the *Coding Tool for Connecticut School Wellness Policies*, available at http://www.sde.ct.gov/sde/lib/sde/PDF/DEPS/Student/NutritionEd/SWP/SW_CodingTool.pdf.

District scores are based on the *actual content* of the school wellness policy that each district submitted to the SDE, including regulations, action plans and any other policy documents. The report does not address *implementation* of the district’s school wellness policy. Evaluation of policy implementation should be done locally by the school district, as defined by the evaluation component of the district’s school wellness policy.

The SDE encourages districts to use the *School Wellness Policy Report* to help continue the work of the local school wellness team in implementing, promoting and evaluating the local school wellness policy. Districts can also use the *School Wellness Policy Rating Sheet* and *Coding Tool for Connecticut School Wellness Policies* to conduct a self-evaluation of any revised policies. All documents are available online at <http://www.sde.ct.gov/sde/cwp/view.asp?a=2626&q=320754#SW>.

* District Reference Group (DRG) is a classification system in which districts that have public school students with similar socioeconomic status and need are grouped together. DRGs are based on the following seven variables: income, education, occupation, family structure, poverty, home language and district enrollment. Charter schools, Connecticut Technical High Schools, and regional educational service centers are not given DRGs. http://www.csde.state.ct.us/public/cedar/databulletins/db_drg_06_2006.pdf.

References

Child Nutrition and WIC Reauthorization Act of 2004 (Public Law 108-265):

http://www.fns.usda.gov/cnd/Governance/Legislation/Historical/PL_108-265.pdf

Fit, Healthy and Ready to Learn: A School Health Policy Guide. Part I: Physical Activity, Healthy Eating and Tobacco-Use Prevention, National Association of State Boards of Education, March 2000:

<http://www.nasbe.org/healthyschools/fithealthy.html>

Framework for Program Evaluation in Public Health, Centers for Disease Control and Prevention.

MMWR 1999; 48(No. RR-11): <http://www.cdc.gov/eval/framework.htm>

Introduction to Program Evaluation for Public Health Programs: A Self-Study Guide, Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, 2005:

<http://www.cdc.gov/eval/evalguide.pdf>

The Local Process: How to Create and Implement a Local Wellness Policy, U.S. Department of Agriculture, Team Nutrition Website:

http://www.fns.usda.gov/tn/Healthy/wellnesspolicy_steps.html

Resources

Resources are listed by main category. Many resources contain information on multiple content areas. For additional resources, consult each policy component section of the *Action Guide*.

Evaluation

Click on the SDE's [Healthy School Environment Resource List](#), then click on *Evaluation* under *School Policies to Promote Healthy Lifestyles* to access resources on this topic.

Surveys

Healthy School Nutrition Environment: Results of a Nationwide Survey of School Personnel, National Food Service Management Institute, 2003. <http://nfsmi-web01.nfsmi.olemiss.edu/documentLibraryFiles/PDF/20080221034152.pdf>

High School Foodservice Survey: A Continues Improvement Tool, National Food Service Management Institute, 1997. <http://www.nfsmi.org/documentLibraryFiles/PDF/20080313013118.pdf>

Report on the Analysis of the NFSMI School Foodservice Survey Data: 2003 Update, National Food Service Management Institute, 2004. <http://nfsmi-web01.nfsmi.olemiss.edu/documentLibraryFiles/PDF/20080225035612.pdf>

Report on the Development of a Parent Foodservice Survey for Young Children, National Food Service Management Institute, 2005. <http://nfsmi-web01.nfsmi.olemiss.edu/documentLibraryFiles/PDF/20080225040004.pdf>

Report on The Parent School Foodservice Survey, National Food Service Management Institute, 2001. <http://nfsmi-web01.nfsmi.olemiss.edu/documentLibraryFiles/PDF/20080225040231.pdf>

Report on Teacher/Administration School Food Service Survey, National Food Service Management Institute, 2002. <http://nfsmi-web01.nfsmi.olemiss.edu/documentLibraryFiles/PDF/20080225035045.pdf>

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Additional resources can be found in the SDE's *Healthy School Environment Resource List* (http://www.sde.ct.gov/sde/lib/sde/PDF/DEPS/Nutrition/hse_resource_list.pdf) and *Nutrition-Related Resources* (http://www.sde.ct.gov/sde/lib/sde/PDF/DEPS/Nutrition/nutrition_resources.pdf). These lists are updated regularly.