

Wellness Advisory Committee

Recommendations to the Superintendent and
Report to the Student Achievement committee of the School Board

June 29, 2011

“The link between nutrition, physical education and academic achievement is strong. Poor nutrition and hunger interfere with cognitive function. Research on the benefits of school breakfast programs found improvement in students’ ability to concentrate in the classroom and increases in test scores. Physical education has also been linked to improved academic performance. Results of physical fitness testing showed that higher levels of fitness were associated with higher achievement in mathematics and reading. The motor learning that occurs in a quality physical education program can support reading readiness, increased cognitive responses and attention span.”

—3.60.062-AD Student Wellness through Nutrition and Physical Activity

I. Introduction

Wellness supports healthy and equitable communities. It creates the foundation for academic success, and in doing so, wellness is integral in advancing the District’s mission of achievement for all students irrespective of race, income, language, disability, or other factors.

The Wellness Advisory Committee (“WAC”) was created in 2006 by Board Policy 3.60.060-P. Appointed by the Superintendent, members represent teachers, staff, parents, Portland-area businesses, health care organizations, government agencies, and community partners. This school year, the WAC focused its work in three specific areas:

- A. **Communications:** Provide communications guidance on policy awareness, compliance, and wellness-related matters.
- B. **Survey Review:** Assess the results of the 2010 School Wellness Survey.
- C. **School-based Wellness Committees:** Evaluate the state of school-based wellness committees and initiatives and make recommendations for improvements.

II. Communications

District-wide communication of the Wellness Policy is essential to full policy implementation.

The Communications subcommittee advised the Wellness Policy Coordinator on content matters related to the District “Wellness” webpage. The webpage promotes awareness and highlights best practices proven to be successful in the District. It also provides wellness recommendations and resources for use in the school community.

IV. School-based Wellness Committees

The Wellness Policy requires principals to take a leadership role in school-based wellness.

Schools were polled to identify those with wellness committees. This telephone survey revealed that 14% of schools had a coordinated wellness program. It is a hopeful sign that many schools seek more information on the Wellness Policy and have expressed interest in receiving greater support in starting a wellness committee.

III. Survey Review

The Wellness Policy requires the District to conduct a bi-annual school survey.

Two surveys have been conducted to assess school-level policy implementation. The 2008 survey had a 70% response rate; the 2010 response rate dropped to 56%. With low response rates, it is impossible to track issues over time or draw conclusions about District-wide wellness activities. If survey completion were enforced, it would serve both as a valuable tool for monitoring District-wide wellness practices and providing information to schools and District leadership.

V. Conclusion and Recommendations to the Board

Access to Wellness Policy information and resources has increased throughout the District; however, many schools do not comply with Wellness Policy guidelines.

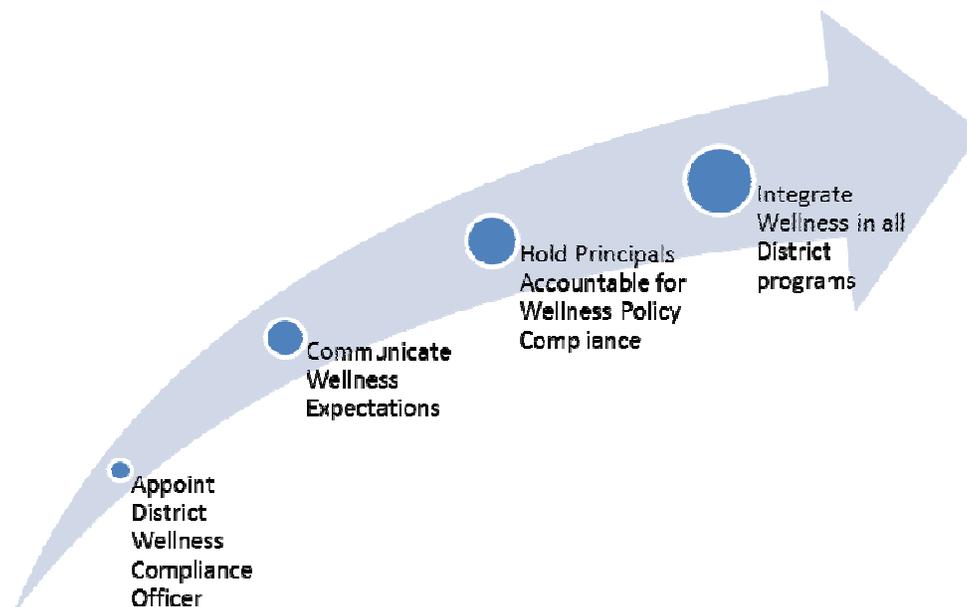
School wellness committees are an instrumental and sustainable way to fully implement the wellness initiatives passed by the Board in 2006. Principals should be supported and held accountable in establishing these school wellness committees.

It is also incumbent upon the District to prioritize managing survey distribution, completion, analysis and data reporting. For this reason, District-wide accountability is essential to help all schools meet the wellness goals outlined in the Wellness Policy.

The WAC recommends

- Re-instating the PE and Health TOSA positions to support teachers;
- Maintaining the Wellness Policy Coordinator position beyond the expiration of the Healthy Active Schools Grant;
- Ensuring that school and District systems are harmonized to foster health-promoting environments (e.g., including school wellness initiatives required by the PPS Wellness Policy and Administrative Directive in the School Improvement Plans);
- Integrating wellness communications and practices in all District programs, trainings and events (e.g., offering healthy meals and snacks for staff trainings or including educational programming on health disparities as part of the “Focus on Diversity Film and Lectures Series”);
- Enforcing the policy requirement for establishing school-based wellness committees and survey completion, and providing support to principals in policy compliance (e.g., training for principals in wellness policy, accountability for healthy fundraisers);

Implementing the recommendations of the Wellness Advisory Committee will improve the health and well-being of all students, build a stronger, healthier learning community, and lead to improved academic performance and student achievement.



Respectfully submitted,

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