



SCHOOL WELLNESS WORKS!

From Policy to Action: A Guide for Developing Effective School Wellness Policies and Practices

Minnesota Department of
Education



MDH Minnesota
Department of Health

Let's Make Wellness Work for all Schools



Thank you for your commitment to ensuring Minnesota schools provide quality wellness policies and programs to help students become healthier focused learners. In 2010, the Healthy, Hunger-Free Kids Act (HHFKA) was enacted to improve child nutrition. Since then, research has shown that HHFKA has positively impacted the nutritional quality of school meals and that comprehensive district wellness policies are making a difference in children's health. A University of Minnesota study is showing that when schools have policies and practices that emphasize healthy food and restrict junk food and sugary drinks, students benefit by:

- Drinking less soda and sports drinks.
- Eating more fruits and vegetables.
- Weighing less.

Through the Minnesota Team Nutrition grant provided by the U.S. Department of Agriculture, training and technical assistance is made available for school nutrition professionals to both strengthen district wellness policies and build broad support for creating healthy school environments. The School Wellness Works! toolkit supports these efforts by outlining the essential steps for developing a robust wellness policy and highlighting effective wellness policy tactics from schools across Minnesota.

Schools continue to be a primary place for students to learn and practice healthy eating and physical activity. The focus on the school setting is also part of a larger effort by the Minnesota Department of Health through the Statewide Health Improvement Program (SHIP) to improve the health of all Minnesotans by making the places where they study, work, live and play more conducive to supporting healthy lifestyles.

We invite you to join this ongoing effort to provide Minnesota's children and families with the supports they need to thrive and succeed in life.

Best of health,

Brenda Cassellius

Brenda Cassellius, EdD
Commissioner of Education
Minnesota Department of Education

Edward E. Ehlinger

Edward Ehlinger, MD, MSPH
Commissioner of Health
Minnesota Department of Health

“There is no more important work—as parents and as a society—than helping our young people succeed. And the twin priorities that are the foundation of their success, their health and their education, are inextricably linked.”

—Deputy Secretary Mary K. Wakefield, PhD, RN, U.S. Health and Human Services

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University of Minnesota

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Glossary of Terms

Local Education Agency (LEA): A public board of education or other public or private nonprofit authority with legal rights from the state to have administrative control of schools.

Smart Snacks in School Standard: A 2014 federal law that places nutritional standards on all foods and beverages sold during the school day such as foods sold a la carte, in school stores, and vending machines.

School Campus: All areas of the property under the jurisdiction of the school that are accessible to students during the school day.

School Day: The period from the midnight before to 30 minutes after the end of the official school day.

School Nutrition Administrative Review: A review conducted by MDE of each school food authority at least once during a three-year review cycle. The scope of the review focuses on several topics including the certification and benefit issuance process; meal counting and claiming; meal pattern requirements; wellness policies and additional topics.

Statewide Health Improvement Program (SHIP): A Minnesota legislative initiative focused on systems change through policy and environmental strategies that support healthy eating, physical activity, and tobacco-free living. SHIP helps make the healthier choice the easier choice in communities, schools, work sites and health care settings.



Triennial Assessment: An internal review of a school's wellness policy and related activities to assess progress on meeting goals and outline steps for areas needing improvement. It is required by the USDA that the internal assessment be completed at least once every three years. The assessment is usually undertaken by members of the school's wellness committee.

Wellness Committee: General term for the group of individuals who work on improving wellness policies and practices for the district and schools. Other terms include school health team, school health council, or school health advisory group.

Wellness Policy: A local school wellness policy is an official document that guides a local educational agency's (LEA) efforts to establish a school environment that promotes healthy behaviors among students and staff.

“ The change from before to now is awesome. Now there's lots of variety and more colorful, fresh fruits and vegetables—all three in one day! And more kids are eating at school instead of leaving campus to eat. The school even surveyed kids asking what they'd like and will try to add these to the school lunch menu. ”

—CARSON, GRADE 11 STUDENT, NEW YORK MILLS HIGH SCHOOL, NEW YORK MILLS ISD #553



Wellness Policies Work: The Impact

STRENGTHEN AND EXPAND WELLNESS EFFORTS

The School Wellness Works! toolkit provides guidance and resources to help schools move from policy to action to ensure student health continues to be a top priority for schools. Many resources and tips are noted to help develop, refine, implement and monitor the wellness policy and related activities. The toolkit is designed to assist those with responsibilities for policy implementation including, but not limited to:

- District administrators and staff.
- School administrators and staff.
- Local public health representatives working with districts or schools.



PUBLIC HEALTH PARTNERSHIPS

Staff from local public health agencies across the state can often provide technical assistance and guidance to school wellness committees. Contact your local SHIP representative to see how they might be able to help your wellness efforts.

STUDENT HEALTH AND ACADEMIC ACHIEVEMENT

Local school wellness policies play an important role in preventing and reducing childhood obesity. Policies provide assurances that school meals and other foods meet minimum federal nutrition guidelines as well as increasing opportunities for students' physical activity. Research shows that when children eat nutritious foods and are physically active they have better academic outcomes such as:

- Fewer behavioral problems.
- Increased attendance.
- Higher grades and test scores.
- Increased graduation rates.¹

To learn more about the links between health and academic achievement, visit the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention – Health & Academics. http://www.cdc.gov/healthyschools/health_and_academics/index.htm

¹ Center for Disease Control. Health and Academic Achievement. National Center for Chronic Disease Prevention and Health Population, Division of Population Health.

THE WHOLE CHILD

Taking a comprehensive approach to addressing student health and wellness can have far reaching benefits for students, the school community and broader community. Considering the needs of the "whole child" when establishing the wellness policy can integrate disparate district efforts ultimately focused on the same goal: successful students. To maximize the impact of your wellness policy, involve representatives overseeing the spectrum of student needs across district specialty areas as illustrated in the following diagram.

For more information on the benefits of an integrated whole-child model, read *Whole School, Whole Community, Whole Child*. <http://www.ascd.org/ASCD/pdf/siteASCD/publications/wholechild/wsc-a-collaborative-approach.pdf>



Source: *Whole School, Whole Community, Whole Child: A Collaborative Approach to Learning and Health*, ASCD, Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, 2014.

STAFF WELLNESS

Many district wellness policies also address staff wellness. School staff who model healthy behaviors have a positive impact on students and can become champions for healthy behaviors in the classroom. Consider integrating language about employee wellness programs into the district wellness policy and work with the wellness committee to determine goals, objectives and activities to meet staff needs and interests.

FUNDING OPPORTUNITIES

While districts and schools may fund wellness activities directly, looking for outside funding opportunities to support the implementation of certain wellness programs can jump start efforts to scale programs or pilot new wellness activities. Funding can be found from community organizations, foundations, private businesses, local health partnerships, and state and national grants. Look for funding opportunities that are aligned to your goals and objectives. The USDA provides a clearinghouse of grant opportunities and resources related to child nutrition and physical activity. <http://healthymeals.nal.usda.gov/local-wellness-policy-resources/school-nutrition-environment-and-wellness-resources/grantsfunding>

“When people hear ‘wellness,’ they think of exercise or food. We take a broader approach of whole-school wellness: If you have a positive attitude and feel good about yourself, the rest comes with it.”

— TRACI OLSON
WELLNESS COORDINATOR,
EARLY CHILDHOOD SPECIAL EDUCATION
LAKEVIEW PUBLIC SCHOOLS



LAKEVIEW TIP: Staff involvement

Develop a calendar with themes for each month filled with daily wellness activities. For example, February is Heart Health month so Lakeview scheduled blood pressure screenings and blood draws, providing the health results to staff. At the end of each month, staff receive a short survey to track personal goal setting and participation. The names of survey respondents go into a monthly drawing to win free, nutritious cafeteria food. To pick a health theme, check out the list of **National Health Observances**. <https://healthfinder.gov/NHO/nhoyear.aspx?year=2016>

Wellness Policies Work: The Research



Researchers at the University of Minnesota have been studying the association between school wellness policy and practice with student diet, activity and weight. The research shows how strong wellness policies yield positive outcomes.¹

The involvement of family and community members has a positive impact on student wellness.² When a school's health council has a diverse membership, schools are more likely to:

- Stock vending machines with less junk food.
- Offer more fruits and vegetables.
- Price healthy snacks competitively.
- Provide more intramural sports opportunities for students.
- Require physical activity in grades 6-12.

Schools with strong, customized policies **have 30% less junk food available**³ and **more students who eat vegetables daily.**⁴

When a school's wellness policies and practices that specifically emphasize healthy food and restrict junk food and sugary drinks students:

- Drink less soda and sports drinks^{5,6}
- Eat more fruits and vegetables⁶
- Weigh slightly less^{5,7}
- Are no more likely to use unhealthy weight control behaviors⁸

When wellness policies require a class that teach individualized physical activity plans, students report being active for 30 minutes more often.⁹



¹ School Obesity-related Policy Evaluation (ScOPE) study research findings available at <http://z.umn.edu/scope>

² Kehm R, Davey CS, Nanney MS. The role of family and community involvement in the development and implementation of school nutrition and physical activity policy. *J Sch Health*. 2015 Feb;85(2):90-9

³ Larson N, Davey C, Hoffman P, Kubik M, Nanney MS. District wellness policies and school-level practices in Minnesota, USA. *Public Health Nutr*. 2016;19(1):26-35

⁴ Hoffman PK, Davey CS, Larson N, Grannon KY, Hanson C, Nanney MS. School district wellness policy quality and weight-related outcomes among high school students in Minnesota. *Health Educ Res*. 2016 Apr;31(2):234-46.

⁵ Nanney, MS, MacLehose R, Kubik MY, Davey C, O'Connell M, Grannon K, Nelson T. School obesity-related policies and student outcomes: A longitudinal cohort study. *Am J Prev Med*, in press. Published online June 16, 2016 at doi:10.1016/j.amepre.2016.05.008

⁶ Nanney MS, MacLehose R, Kubik MY, Davey CS, Coombes B, Nelson TF. Recommended school policies are associated with student sugary drink and fruit and vegetable intake. *Prev Med* Volume 62, May 2014, 179-181

⁷ Kubik MY, Davey C, Nanney MS. Association Between Student Body Mass Index and Access to Sports Drinks in Minnesota Secondary Schools, 2012-2013. *Prev Chronic Dis* 2015 Nov;12:150273

⁸ Larson N, Davey CS, Caspi CE, Kubik MY, Nanney MS. School-based obesity prevention policies and practices and weight-control behaviors among adolescent boys and girls. *J Acad Nutr Diet*. Under review.

⁹ Hearst M, Wang Q, Grannon KY, Nanney MS. School physical activity policy is associated with student physical activity outcomes. *Health Behav Policy Rev*. Under review.



School Wellness Policy Requirements

With the Child Nutrition and Women, Infants and Children (WIC) Reauthorization Act of 2004, educational entities participating in the National School Lunch Program were required to establish local school wellness policies starting in school year 2006-07. The 2004 act was strengthened under the **Healthy, Hunger-Free Kids Act of 2010** that determines policies for the U.S. Department of Agriculture's (USDA) child nutrition programs.

The 2010 legislation emphasized ongoing policy implementation and assessment, as well as the expansion of collaborators participating in the wellness policy development to foster broad-based support.

The Local School Wellness Policy final rule was published in July 2016. These regulations strengthen the ability of a local educational agency to create a school nutrition environment that promotes students' health, well-being, and ability to learn.

Federal Legislation:

Local School Wellness Policy Implementation under the Healthy, Hunger-Free Kids Act of 2010 [FNS-2014-0010]

<https://www.federalregister.gov/articles/2016/07/29/2016-17230/local-school-wellness-policy-implementation-under-the-healthy-hunger-free-kids-act-of-2010>

POLICY REQUIREMENT AREAS

A local school wellness policy is an official document that guides a local educational agency's (LEA) efforts to establish a school environment that promotes healthy behaviors among students and staff. The development of the wellness policy is left to each school district so their unique needs can be considered, though the policy must address all requirements outlined in the Healthy, Hunger-Free Kids Act of 2010 <http://www.fns.usda.gov/school-meals/healthy-hunger-free-kids-act>.

School wellness policies must include language that addresses the following:

1. WELLNESS POLICY CONTENT

- **Specific goals** for nutrition promotion and education, physical activity, and other school-based activities that promote student wellness.
- **Guidelines** for all foods and beverages sold to students during the school day on the school campus that are consistent with Federal regulations for school meal nutrition standards and the Smart Snacks in School nutrition standards.
- **Local guidelines** for all foods and beverages provided, but not sold, to students during the school day, including school celebrations, classroom parties, and food incentives.
- **Policies for marketing** of food and beverages that are consistent with the Smart Snacks in School nutrition standards.
- **Summary** of public involvement, public updates and evaluation plan.
- **Responsible school official(s)** to ensure compliance of the local wellness policy.

2. PUBLIC INVOLVEMENT

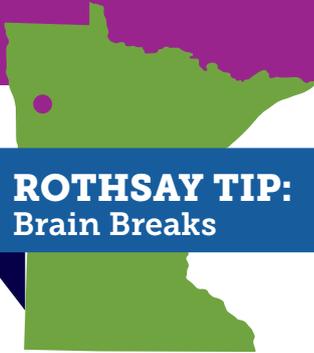
- **Permit parents, students, representatives** of the school food authority, teachers of physical education, school health professionals, school board, administrators and the general public to participate in the wellness policy process.
- **Inform the public** of the wellness policy on an annual basis, including any updates.

3. TRIENNIAL ASSESSMENTS

- **At least once every three years**, LEAs must assess the implementation of the local school wellness policy, and make results available to the public. The assessment must include:
 - Compliance with the wellness policy;
 - The extent to which the local wellness policy compares to model wellness policies;
 - A description of the progress made in attaining goals of the local wellness policy.
- **Make appropriate updates or modifications** to the local school wellness policy, based on the assessment.

4. RECORDKEEPING

- **Maintain** the following documentation at a minimum:
 - A copy of the written local school wellness policy;
 - Documentation demonstrating how the policy and assessments are made available to the public;
 - Documentation of efforts to provide annual updates to the local wellness policy including who was involved in the process and how stakeholders were permitted to participate;
 - The most recent triennial assessment of implementation of the policy.



ROTHSAY TIP:
Brain Breaks

SHIP staff brought in a teacher from outside the district to model different active classroom strategies like Brain Breaks where students stand and move while learning. Now, every day at 10 a.m. teachers do two-minute Brain Breaks and are more in tune with when a break can get students back on task. Now students not only ask for the breaks, they come up with their own Brain Breaks.

“ It’s imperative to bring in outside stakeholders to help with implementing the wellness policy, especially in a small district where resources are limited. SHIP staff play a key role on our wellness committee. They provided us with the expertise we needed to get the policy off the ground and ongoing support to keep the momentum going. ”

— STACI ALLMARAS
PRINCIPAL
ROTHSAY SCHOOL DISTRICT



COMPLIANCE WITH REQUIREMENTS

The USDA final rule requires the Minnesota Department of Education (MDE) to assess compliance with the wellness policy requirements as a part of the USDA's School Nutrition Program Administrative Reviews that occur every three years. As a part of the review process, MDE staff conduct a school site visit and each LEA should be prepared to answer the following questions:

- Does your school have a wellness policy? If so, does the policy include the required components?
- Is the school wellness policy posted on the school website (public schools only)?
- How does the public know about the school wellness policy?
- Who is the designated leader of the wellness policy team?
- What efforts are made to review and update the wellness policy?
- Do you have a copy of the most recent assessment of the school wellness policy?
- Who is involved in reviewing and updating the school wellness policy?
- How are potential stakeholders made aware of their ability to participate in the development, review, updates and implementation of the school wellness policy?
- What is the process by which the public is made aware of the results of the most recent assessment of the wellness policy?

DOCUMENTATION

As noted on page 11, LEAs are required to keep specific documentation related to their local wellness policy. In addition to the required documents, supporting documentation may also include:

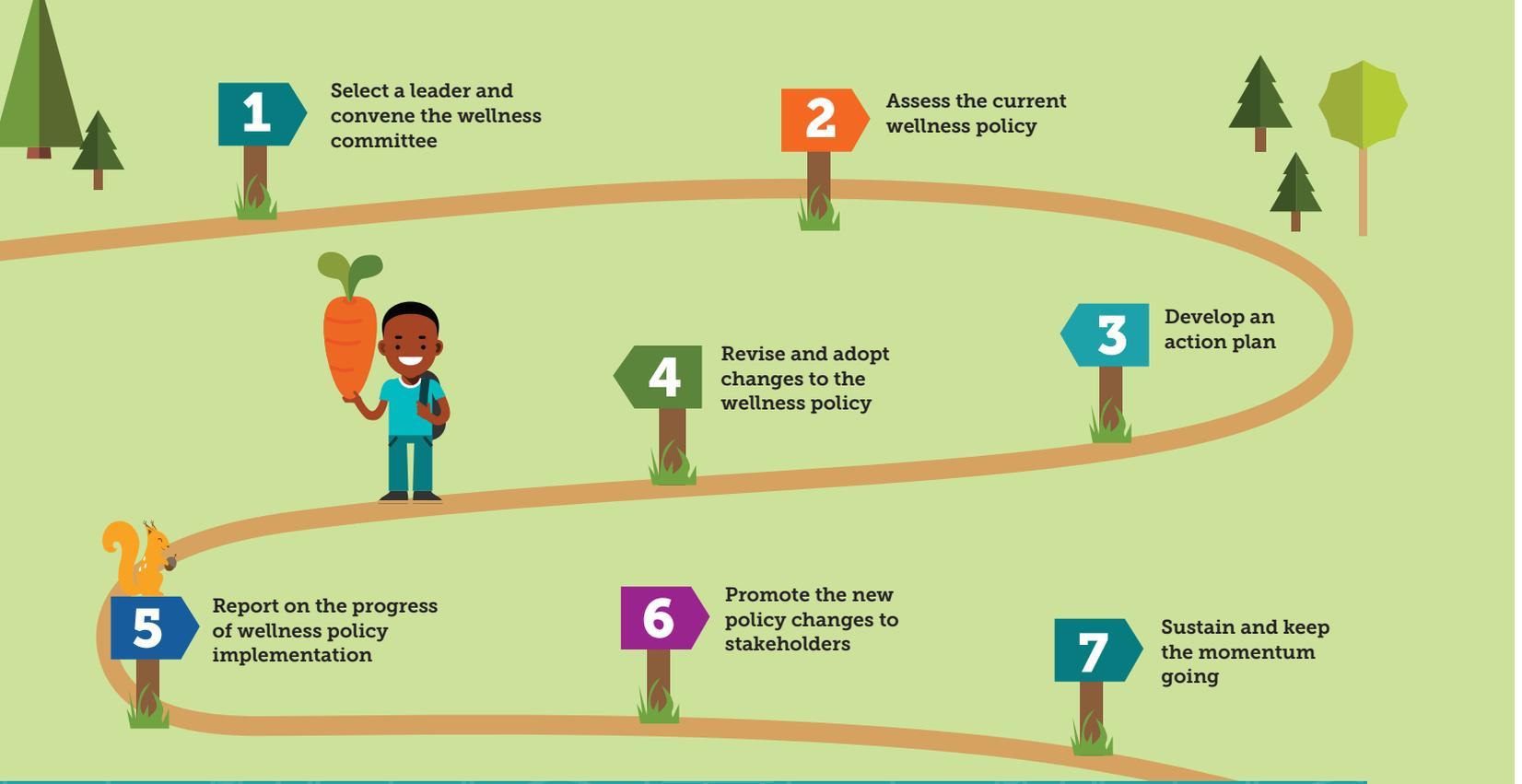
- School wellness policy implementation or action plan.
- Agendas and attendance sheets from wellness committee meetings.
- District emails pertaining to participation in wellness committee meetings.
- Copies of materials disseminated to the wellness committee and/or the public.
- Community flyers or invitations to stakeholders for related wellness events or committee meetings.

RESOURCES: POLICY IMPLEMENTATION

USDA Local Wellness Policies: Policy requirements, technical assistance and resources. <http://www.fns.usda.gov/tn/local-school-wellness-policy>

Minnesota Department of Education: Policy requirements and resources. <http://education.state.mn.us/MDE/dse/FNS/SNP/gen/well/>

Putting Local School Wellness Policies into Action: Learn how eleven schools across the country have successfully implemented wellness policy content areas. <http://www.cdc.gov/healthyschools/npao/pdf/SchoolWellnessInAction.pdf>



Seven Steps to Implementation: Tips and Resources

The following steps will help your school comply with the federal regulations while developing an effective policy that meets local district needs.

1. Select a leader and convene the wellness committee

Determine who has the authority to lead the wellness policy work in the district. Selecting the right person to lead the work will ensure federal requirements are met and follow through happens for policy meetings, assessments and reports. This person will also be responsible for convening the wellness committee.

“As with any district policy, you need to review it with those who are responsible for overseeing the implementation. I went to the school administrators first because principals know where the hurdles would be for implementation. Then you embed the policy into your annual back-to-school communications just like your crisis plan and attendance policy.”

—TIM COLLINS, SUPERINTENDENT, HASTINGS SCHOOL DISTRICT

COMMITTEE MEMBERS

Building a strong wellness committee is critical to developing and revising a school wellness policy. The wellness committee should include broad stakeholder representation from both inside and outside the district such as:

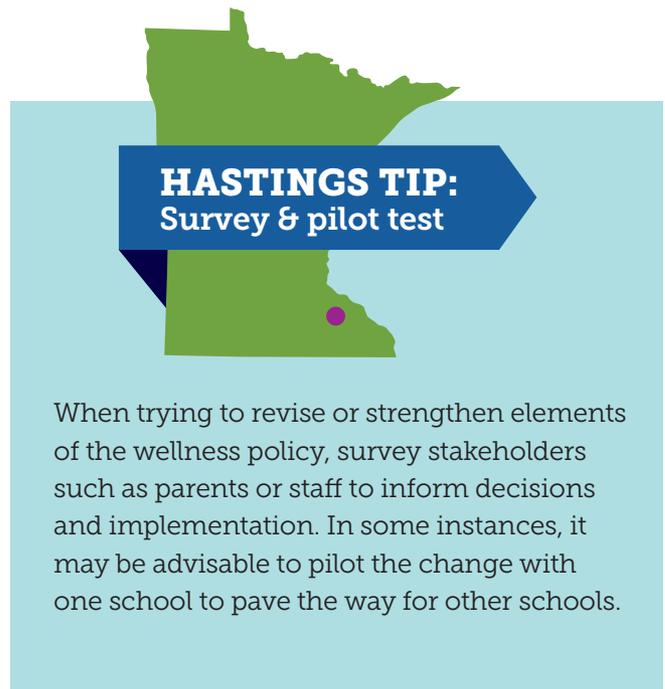
- Students
- Parents
- Teachers, especially from physical education, health, and family and consumer sciences
- School food service director/staff
- School nurse(s)
- School custodians and maintenance staff
- Transportation staff
- School administrators
- School board members
- School-wide organizations such as student clubs
- Local public health agency representatives
- Community members and partners engaged in health promotion activities
- Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program Education (SNAP-ED) Coordinators.

TIP COMMITTEE MEETINGS

Strive for a minimum of four wellness committee meetings annually and keep a membership list with contact information to maintain communications between meetings.

TIP PARENT INVOLVEMENT

Parents can make excellent wellness advocates. Consider involving parents to generate ideas, volunteer their time, and help expand wellness school programs and related events. Tips for involving parents are available through the CDC. http://www.cdc.gov/healthyschools/parent_engagement/parent_engagement.htm



HASTINGS TIP:
Survey & pilot test

When trying to revise or strengthen elements of the wellness policy, survey stakeholders such as parents or staff to inform decisions and implementation. In some instances, it may be advisable to pilot the change with one school to pave the way for other schools.

RESOURCES: WELLNESS COMMITTEES

Alliance for a Healthier Generation's School Wellness Committee Toolkit: Successful wellness committees, meeting agenda templates and meeting checklists. https://schools.healthiergeneration.org/_asset/wwj4dq/SchoolWellnessCouncilToolkit.pdf

Minnesota Department of Education - School Wellness: Tools and templates to assist wellness committees. <http://education.state.mn.us/MDE/dse/FNS/SNP/gen/well/>

Public Health Law Center, Promoting School Wellness in Minnesota Schools: Creating and Sustaining a School Health Council: Suggested language for addressing wellness committee roles and responsibilities in a district wellness policy. <http://publichealthlawcenter.org/sites/default/files/resources/Creating%20and%20Sustaining%20a%20School%20Health%20Council.pdf>

Wisconsin Wellness: Putting Policy into Practice: Creating and maintaining a strong local wellness policy, webinar, handouts and templates. <http://dpi.wi.gov/school-nutrition/wellness-policy/toolkit>

2. Assess the current wellness policy

Review your policy to ensure each of the law's requirement areas are included or if they need to be added. Here are some questions to get you started:

- Is our wellness policy clear about what action or changes are expected?
- Do we need to write objectives for each goal?
- Do we need to conduct an assessment to determine the current status of the goal areas' progress?
- What baseline data/benchmarks do we already have?
- Which assessment tool should we use?
- What additional information do we need to measure our progress?
- What are our key messages to the school community?

ASSESSMENT TOOLS

Provided below are assessment tools that are available to guide the wellness committee's review of the policies and practices.

1. School Health Index (SHI) assesses school site environments through an online tool or printable version. <http://www.cdc.gov/healthyschools/shi/index.htm>

Developed by the CDC, SHI features modules structured around the CDC's eight-component model of coordinated school health. Schools can use the SHI to improve their health and safety policies and programs, and has two activities for school teams to complete the: 1) Self-Assessment Process, and; 2) Planning for Improvement Process. The activities help to:

- Identify strengths and weaknesses of health and safety policies and programs.
- Develop an action plan for improving student health that can be incorporated into the school improvement plan.
- Engage teachers, parents, students and the community in promoting health-enhancing behaviors.

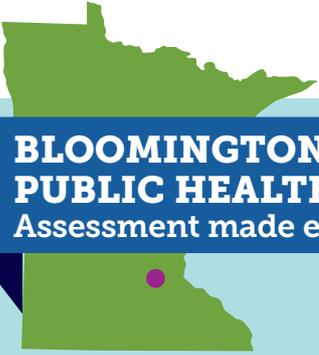
The strength of the SHI process comes from having individuals with different roles at the school come together and plan ways to improve their school's policies and programs. There is no "passing grade" on the SHI; rather, the SHI score helps schools identify strengths and weaknesses to develop an action plan for improving health-related measures.

2. Wellness School Assessment Tool (WellSAT 2.0) assesses the strength and comprehensiveness of a written local wellness policy. <http://www.wellsat.org>

School districts are provided with feedback on their policy and resources to help improve specific areas. Schools receive scores related to the comprehensiveness and strength of 78 policy items categorized into six assessment areas while receiving total scores for strength and comprehensiveness.

Comparing Assessment Tools

School Health Index (SHI)	School Health Index (SHI)	WellsAT 2.0
<p>Full version</p> <p>Center for Disease Control and Prevention http://www.cdc.gov/healthyschools/shi/index.htm</p> <p>A school health assessment planning tool that helps to identify strengths and weaknesses of school health policies and programs and provide direction for school health improvement in the following areas:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Physical activity and physical education • Nutrition • Tobacco use prevention • Asthma • Unintentional injury and violence prevention (safety) • Sexual health, including HIV, other STDs, and pregnancy prevention <p>Approximately 6 hours</p> <p>8 modules:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. School Health and Safety Policies and Environment 2. Health Education 3. Physical Education and Other Physical Activity Programs 4. Nutrition Services 5. Health Services 6. Counseling, Psychological, and Social Services 7. Health Promotion for Staff 8. Family and Community Involvement 	<p>Condensed versions (two options):</p> <p>Alliance for a Healthier Generation https://schools.healthiergeneration.org/dashboard/about_assessment/</p> <p>OR</p> <p>Action for Healthy Kids http://www.actionforhealthykids.org/tools-for-schools</p> <p>A condensed school health assessment planning tool based off of CDC's SHI that helps to identify strengths and weaknesses of school health policies and programs targeting:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Physical activity and physical education • Nutrition <p>Approximately 2 hours</p> <p>6 required (2 optional) modules:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. School Health and Safety Policies and Environment 2. Health Education 3. Physical Education and Other Physical Activity Programs 4. Nutrition Services 5. Health Services* 6. Counseling, Psychological, and Social Services* 7. Health Promotion for Staff 8. Family and Community Involvement <p>*Optional modules</p> <p>Note: Some questions within the required modules are also optional.</p>	<p>Full Version</p> <p>Rudd Center http://wellsat.org/default.aspx</p> <p>Assesses the quality of school district's written local wellness policy in areas of strength and comprehensiveness.</p> <p>Approximately 1 hour</p> <p>6 Policy areas:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Nutrition Education 2. Standards for USDA Child Nutrition Programs and School Meals 3. Nutrition Standards for Competitive and Other Foods and Beverages 4. Physical Education and Activity 5. Wellness Promotion and Marketing 6. Implementation, Evaluation and Communication



**BLOOMINGTON
PUBLIC HEALTH TIP:**
Assessment made easy

Partner with your local public health agency to get technical assistance to guide you through the assessment process, identify areas for improvements, and provide recommendations.

“Implementation and monitoring are always the biggest challenge. To make the work manageable, schools should start with an easy win by focusing on one action item, especially one that will be simple to implement and can ensure success.”

**— DEBORAH MILLER
COMMUNITY HEALTH SPECIALIST
BLOOMINGTON PUBLIC HEALTH
SERVING BLOOMINGTON, EDINA
AND RICHFIELD**



3. Develop an action plan

With the assessment results in hand, the next step is to develop an action plan to make the changes needed to the policy and implementation strategies. In the action plan, identify the goals the wellness committee will prioritize in the coming year and be sure to consider all areas such as nutrition guidelines for school meals and snacks, physical fitness opportunities, and related school activities.



SMART OBJECTIVES

When developing your wellness action plan, ensure your activities are grounded in your goals by developing SMART objectives:

- **Specific:** Identify the exact area to improve.
- **Measurable:** Quantify the progress.
- **Attainable:** Determine what is achievable.
- **Realistic:** Consider your resources and determine what can reasonably be accomplished.
- **Time bound:** Identify deadlines for goals and related tactics.

The CDC has tips for developing SMART goals. <http://www.cdc.gov/healthyouth/evaluation/pdf/brief3b.pdf>



DATA SOURCES

Most likely, your district already has several data sources that can

be used to identify priority areas and evaluate action plans. Talk to administrators and staff responsible for district or school data to see what information is available that you can use and build on.

In addition, the Minnesota Student Survey (MSS) is a rich data resource that can be leveraged for your wellness efforts. The MSS is conducted every three years and asks young people health and safety questions about their activities, opinions, behaviors and experiences, including questions on healthy eating and physical activity. <http://education.state.mn.us/MDE/dse/health/mss/>

ACTION PLANNING

Below are suggested categories and questions you can use to organize your action plan and outline priority areas. Prioritizing a few action steps each year will make the work manageable and can provide small successes that can energize the work long term. After completing the action plan, evaluate what additional resources, if any, will be needed for each action step.

- **Objective:** What do we want to accomplish?
- **Action Steps:** What activities need to happen?
- **Person Responsible:** Who will ensure the activity is completed?
- **Timeline:** Start and completion dates.
- **Measurement:** How is progress measured?
- **Stakeholders:** Who needs to be involved?

“ Make sure the policy meets the needs of your district because one size doesn't fit all. To ensure the policy will make an impact, keep it realistic. Then add initiatives as you gain more knowledge and create greater buy in among stakeholders. ”

— ANNETTE HENDRICKX DEROUIN, DIRECTOR OF FOOD AND NUTRITION SERVICES, WILLMAR PUBLIC SCHOOLS



INCLUDE FARM TO SCHOOL ACTIVITIES IN YOUR ACTION PLAN

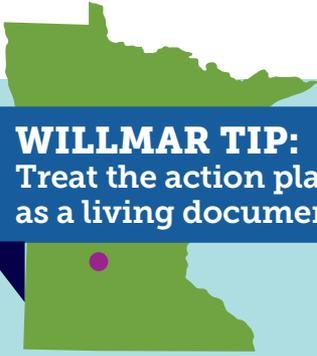
“ As schools look at expanding their wellness activities to include Farm to School practices, they should consider the three core elements that can be incorporated into their policy: Procurement of local foods for meals and snacks; agriculture education in the classroom; and school gardens. With 268 Minnesota school districts participating in farm to school activities, there are models everywhere for schools interested in implementing farm to school. ”

— STEPHANIE HEIM, MINNESOTA STATE LEAD FOR THE NATIONAL FARM TO SCHOOL NETWORK,
UNIVERSITY OF MINNESOTA EXTENSION



FARM TO SCHOOL TIP: EXERCISE YOUR BUYING POWER

With procurement, so often school food service don't realize the influence and buying power they have as customers. If they want to purchase more Minnesota grown and raised foods, they just need to ask their vendors. <http://www.publichealthlawcenter.org/sites/default/files/resources/ship-fs2-schoolwellnesssamplepolicylanguage-2011FarmtoSchool.pdf>



WILLMAR TIP:
Treat the action plan
as a living document

Think of your action plan as a living document and use it as a working tool that serves as a touch point for wellness committee meetings. The action plan provides a way for us to report on successes and future focus areas, as well as preparing for the state review and meeting federal requirements.



RESOURCES: ACTION PLANS

Alliance for a Healthier Generation - Action Plan: For schools that have completed the Alliance for a Healthier Generation assessment, an action plan can be developed based on the results. https://schools.healthiergeneration.org/dashboard/about_action_plan/

USDA's School Nutrition Environment and Wellness Resources: An array of resources for developing and strengthening wellness policies, success stories, best practices, funding and trainings. <http://healthymeals.nal.usda.gov/school-wellness-resources-2>

Resource to Sustain and Strengthen Local Wellness Initiatives. A guide containing step-by-step instructions for conducting an evaluation, writing action plans, making sense of the results, and communicating the findings to stakeholders. <http://www.nfsmi.org/documentlibraryfiles/PDF/20130228111227.pdf>

4. Revise and adopt changes to the wellness policy

The assessment process may reveal that the wellness policy and/or procedures need to be updated to ensure changes will be codified and related practices implemented. Review sample policies for examples of the language your district might consider adopting.

POLICY REVISION APPROVAL PROCESS

Understanding your district's approval process for policy revisions is important when determining your timeline for making changes. Talk with administrators and find out what steps need to be followed in order to have the school board, or other relevant groups, review and approve policy changes.

When making revisions, the wellness committee should identify which changes are procedural and which will affect the policy language. Procedures describe how the policy will be fulfilled and guide staff in the implementation, monitoring and enforcement. Policies are written principles that state the school districts' commitment to a healthy school environment.



THE RIGHT WORDS MATTER

Consider using strong words in your policy such as require, prohibit, must, or all. Avoid using statements that are vague and difficult to enforce, such as encourage, suggest and urge.

SAMPLE POLICY LANGUAGE

Using a model school wellness policy template is a good place to start. Adding and tailoring information specific to your district's wellness goals and priorities will help create a relevant policy that meets the particular needs of your school.

- The Minnesota School Boards Association (MSBA) has a model school wellness policy that is available for members to use as a guide when developing their individual school wellness policy (login is required). <http://www.mnmsba.org/>
- The Alliance for a Healthier Generation developed a model wellness policy to help schools revise their wellness policies and meet the new regulations. https://www.healthiergeneration.org/take_action/schools/wellness_councils__policies/wellness_policies/

RESOURCES: REVISE AND ADOPT

Promoting Health in Minnesota Schools - School Wellness Policies: Developed by the Public Health Law Center, this series of sample school wellness policies adhere to the Minnesota School Boards Association's model school wellness policy. <http://publichealthlawcenter.org/resources/promoting-health-minnesota-schools-school-wellness-policies>

CDC Local Wellness Policy Briefs and Resources: A series of briefs highlights opportunities to support wellness policies through evidence-based strategies and tips to strengthen wellness policy components. <http://www.cdc.gov/healthyschools/npao/wellness.htm>



5. Report on the progress of wellness policy implementation

The best way to determine if you are meeting all the wellness requirements and making progress on your goals is to conduct an evaluation. LEAs are **required to complete a triennial assessment** of their wellness policy.

Triennial Assessments

LEAs may use a variety of methods to assess federal compliance and determine progress toward their goals and objectives. If an LEA has already developed an action plan with measurable objectives and benchmarks, the evaluation process will be easier. LEAs must measure and report on the following components:

- Compliance with the wellness policy.
- How the wellness policy compares to model wellness policies.
- Progress made in attaining the goals of the wellness policy.

The assessment must be conducted a minimum of once every three years. However, LEAs can assess their policy more frequently, if they wish. The results of the assessment must be made available to the public.



Outreach and Promotion

In addition to the triennial assessment, consider assessing progress and conducting outreach on a more frequent basis as well.

- Provide updates to the public about school wellness events or activities.
- Include information, on a regular basis, on how individuals and the public can get involved.
- Provide updates on each school's progress in meeting wellness policy goals.

GETTING READY FOR THE SCHOOL NUTRITION ADMINISTRATIVE REVIEW

Remember to have a copy of the most recent assessment of the school wellness policy available during your School Nutrition Program's Administrative Review. <http://education.state.mn.us/MDE/dse/FNS/SNP/conn/rev/>

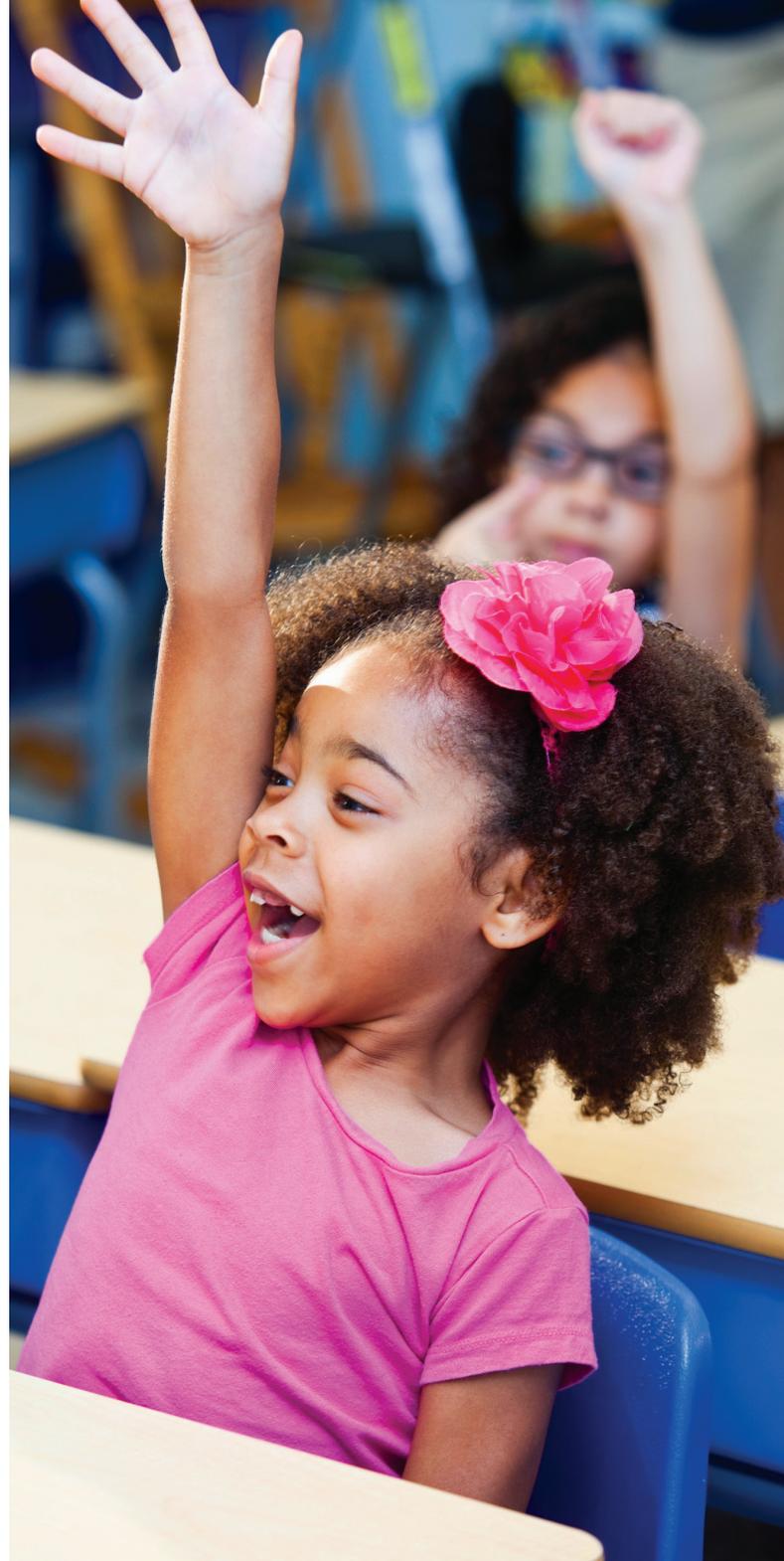
RESOURCES: REPORTING

MDE report templates will help you get started on reporting school progress reports. <http://education.state.mn.us/MDE/dse/FNS/SNP/gen/well/>

6. Promote the new policy changes to stakeholders

With the policy approved and adopted, communicating the new policy revisions to stakeholders is critical to ensure policy becomes practice. Here are some ideas on how to communicate the policy changes to staff, students, families and community:

- Establish a **school wellness webpage** on the district website to provide a go-to page for the wellness policy, frequently asked questions, handouts and calendar of events related to the wellness policy and activities.
- Include an article on the policy revisions in **district and school newsletters**; include a link to the school wellness website for more information.
- Feature **success stories** on how the wellness policy is positively impacting students and staff on district and school websites on an ongoing basis; promote the stories through district and school websites, newsletters and social media.
- Feature health and wellness successes and events on **social media** to broaden and increase awareness.
- Celebrate successes, big and small, and hold a **special event** to recognize school champions such as students, families and staff who have gone the extra mile to make wellness a priority; invite wellness committee members and give them a round of applause.
- Send a **press release** to local media outlets outlining the changes to the policy and to promote related activities and events.



RESOURCES: PROMOTE

Team Nutrition Popular Events Booklet: Filled with ideas for fun ways to promote nutrition and physical activity at elementary and middle schools. <http://www.fns.usda.gov/team-nutrition-popular-events-idea-booklet>

Institute for Child Nutrition - Communication Tools for School Nutrition Programs: Includes templates for newsletter articles and press releases, tips on working with the media, and tips on garnering support from school boards, administrators and the community. <http://theicn.org/ResourceOverview.aspx?ID=249>

7. Sustain and keep the momentum going

In order to continue the momentum on your wellness policy activities, be sure the wellness committee has a plan to sustain the work. Here are some questions to get you started:

- How does a wellness policy fit into the other policies at the schools?
- Is current wellness policy information included in the student and parent handbooks?
- Who will share information about wellness programs and events with families, staff and school partners?



RECORD OF CONTINUOUS IMPROVEMENT

Many Minnesota schools submit a Record of Continuous Improvement. If your school is submitting one, consider embedding student wellness goals as part of your school improvement plan. <http://education.state.mn.us/MDE/dse/cimp/>

RESOURCES: SUSTAIN

MDE's Division of School Support: Provides information and resources on continuous improvement. <http://education.state.mn.us/MDE/dse/cimp/>.

Going beyond the School Wellness Policy: Learn how to embed wellness efforts throughout all school policies. <http://www.publichealthlawcenter.org/sites/default/files/resources/fs.beyond.school.wellness.policies.2015.pdf>

WADENA DEER-CREEK TIP: Applying to awards and challenges to advance the work

Based on applying for the HealthierUs School Challenge, we realized that just changing the order of the foods in the lunch line can help students make the healthier choice. For instance, putting the fruits and veggies in the lunch line before the entrees and placing the skim milk first followed by the 1% milk then the chocolate skim milk.

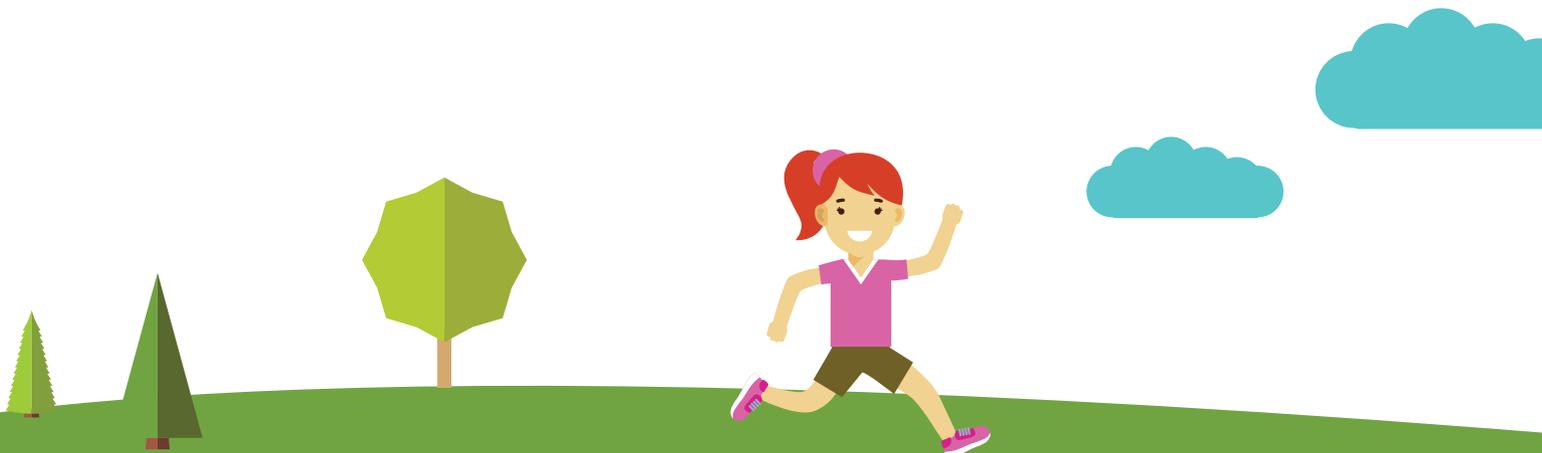
“ We applied and won the HealthierUS School Challenge in 2015. It's been a great way to make us more aware of what we're doing to make our schools healthier and how to promote healthy behaviors. ”

— SANDIE RENTZ
DIRECTOR, FOOD NUTRITION SERVICES
WADENA DEER-CREEK PUBLIC SCHOOLS

KEEP THE MOMENTUM GOING!

Is your school in a position to go above and beyond the requirements? Listed below are programs, toolkits, and award recognitions that can help your school get your wellness activities to the next level.

- ✔ **Action for Healthy Kids – Tools for Schools** provides resources for implementing school wellness programs; hosting events and engaging volunteers; grant opportunities, policy assessment tool; and guidance for applying to the HealthierUS School Challenge award. <http://www.actionforhealthykids.org/tools-for-schools>
- ✔ **Alliance for a Healthier Generation – Healthy Schools Program** is an evidence-based initiative to assist schools in creating and sustaining healthy environments where students can learn better and flourish. <https://schools.healthiergeneration.org>
- ✔ **Fuel Up to Play 60** is an in-school nutrition and physical activity program launched by the National Dairy Council and NFL in collaboration with the USDA to help encourage today's youth to lead healthier lives. <https://www.fueluptoplay60.com/>
- ✔ **HealthierUS School Challenge: Smarter Lunchrooms** is a voluntary certification initiative recognizing schools enrolled in Team Nutrition that have created healthier school environments by promoting of nutrition and physical activity. <http://www.fns.usda.gov/hussc/healthierus-school-challenge-smarter-lunchrooms>
- ✔ **Let's Move Active Schools** is a collaborative of health, education and private sector organizations striving to bring 60 minutes of physical activity and the many benefits of being active to every child across the country. <http://www.letsmoveschools.org/>
- ✔ **Minnesota Food Charter Schools Leader Guide:** Steps for educational decision makers to provide healthy foods in educational settings and build healthy food skills among young people. http://mnfoodcharter.com/wp-content/uploads/2014/10/MFC_SchoolsLeaderGuide_D10_FINAL.pdf
- ✔ **Moving Matters – A School Implementation Toolkit:** A guide developed by the Minnesota Departments of Education and Health to provide school leaders and staff with effective strategies to increase students' physical activity during and outside the school day. <http://education.state.mn.us/MDE/dse/health/act/>
- ✔ **Recess Moves:** A Toolkit for Quality Recess provides examples of quality recess practices and policies to encourage all students to increase their activity levels and build social skills, thereby decreasing behavioral issues and potentially increasing academic performance. <http://education.state.mn.us/MDE/dse/health/act/>





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