

Connecticut Technical Education and Career System (CTECS)

Wellness

Introduction

It is the policy of the Connecticut Technical Education and Career System (CTECS) to promote the health and well-being of students by supporting wellness, good nutrition, and regular physical activity as part of the total learning environment.

In furtherance of this policy, CTECS has created a Wellness Advisory Committee (WAC) to review any available state or federal guidance on wellness issues and to assist in formulating recommendations for specific goals and guidelines aimed at promoting lifelong wellness practices among students. This WAC Committee meets annually to review and update the Wellness Policy, along with a triennial assessment of the policy, which requires approval from CTECS. The WAC members consist of at least one consultant for the following areas: school nutrition, school nurse, health and physical education, legal department, and administrator from the school building level, and may also involve Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) coordinators or educators. The WAC will be involved in the development and implementation of the policy.

CTECS has established an ongoing school-building-level Nutrition Advisory Council (NAC) led by a school wellness policy coordinator at each school. This NAC council meets twice annually to review building issues and recommendations for the WAC to consider during the annual review of the Wellness policy. School site NAC members should involve parents, students, representatives from the school food authority (i.e., any private company employed to provide food services), teachers of physical education, school health professionals, school administrators, and members of the public.

The Nutrition and School Meals (NSM) office will ensure compliance with the policy during routine reviews and target deadlines for submission of such NAC meeting minutes, as well as a representative of the NSM office in attendance during at least one of the NAC meetings for each school.

Legal Reference

Connecticut General Statutes:

§ 10-16b Prescribed Courses of Study

§ 10-215f Certification that food meets nutrition standards

§ 10-221o Lunch periods. Recess

§ 10-221p Boards to make available for purchase nutritious and low-fat foods

§ 10-221q Sale of beverages

§ 10-215d Regulations re nutrition standards for school breakfasts and lunches. Facilitation of purchases from local farmers

§ 10-21i Red Ribbon Pass Program

Federal Law:

42 U.S.C. § 1751 Congressional declaration of policy

42 U.S.C. § 1758 Program requirements

42 U.S.C. § 1758b Local school wellness policy

42 U.S.C. § 1766 Child and adult care food program

20 U.S.C. § 7118 Activities to support safe and healthy students

7 C.F.R. § 210.10 Meal requirements for lunches and requirements for afterschool snacks

7 C.F.R. § 210.11 Competitive food service and standards

7 C.F.R. § 210.31 Local school wellness policy

7 C.F.R. § 220.8 Meal requirements for breakfasts

Goals and Guidelines

CTECS recognizes that schools contribute to the health of children by facilitating learning through the support and promotion of good nutrition and physical activity, which helps to optimize student performance and ensure that every student succeeds. Accordingly, CTECS supports a healthy environment where children learn and participate in positive dietary and lifestyle practices. Indeed, CTECS believes that educators, administrators, parents, health practitioners and members of the school community should consider the critical role student health plays in academic stamina, performance and adaptation to the school environment to ensure students' nutritional and physical activity needs are met. To that end, CTECS, following consultation with the WAC Committee, adopts the following goals and guidelines in order to promote student wellness:

To provide a comprehensive learning environment for the development and continued practice of lifelong wellness behaviors.

To achieve this end, the school environment, not just the classroom, shall provide clear and consistent messaging that reinforces and positively influences a student's understanding, beliefs and habits as they relate to good nutrition and regular physical activity. Nutrition and education shall be integrated within the health education program and across other content areas including but not limited to science, language arts, family and consumer science, and cooking, where feasible. Nutrition education shall be supported and supplemented whenever possible by the school health and school-based health center programs. Further, nutrition education shall be standards-based using the Connecticut State

Department of Education's Healthy and Balanced Living Curriculum Framework at all grade levels and consistent with the State of Connecticut's health education standards/guidelines/framework and the Connecticut State Department of Education's Guidelines for a Coordinated Approach to School Health. Nutrition education shall also be based on current science, research and national guidelines, including the use of U.S. Department of Agriculture Team Nutrition materials, MyPlate, and the most current Dietary Guidelines for Americans. Educational materials shall be free of brands and illustrations of unhealthful foods.

Nutrition education shall be designed to help students learn: nutritional knowledge, including but not limited to, the benefits of healthy eating, essential nutrients, nutritional deficiencies, principles of healthy weight management, the use and misuse of dietary supplements, and safe food preparation, handling and storage; nutrition-related skills, including but not limited to, education about agriculture and the food system through specific activities, planning healthy meals, understanding and using food labels, and critically evaluating nutritional information, misinformation, and commercial food advertising; and self-evaluation skills, including, but not limited to, assessing one's personal eating habits, setting goals for improving eating habits, and achieving such goals. Cafeterias shall serve as an additional source of nutrition education, using posters and signage free of brands and illustrations of unhealthful foods, to promote good nutrition and food choices. Faculty and staff are encouraged to serve as role models for students by demonstrating that healthy eating and physical activity are a valuable part of daily life.

To work collaboratively to support and promote proper dietary habits contributing to students' wellness, academic performance, and demonstrate a commitment to improving student nutrition.

CTECS recognizes that healthy eating patterns are essential for students to reach/achieve their academic potential, full physical and mental growth, and life-long health and well-being. The link between nutrition and learning is well-documented. Further, healthy eating is demonstrably linked to reduced risk of morbidity and mortality as well as the development of many chronic diseases in adults.

CTECS shall encourage students and staff members to establish and maintain lifelong, healthy eating patterns. Well-planned and well-implemented school nutrition programs have been shown to positively influence students' eating habits. To that end, school breakfast and lunch programs compliant with all federal and state laws and regulations shall be available at all schools. CTECS Nutrition and School Meals program purchases and promotes regionally grown foods, as it is an integral part of their food service contracts. School meals will include fresh, regionally-grown foods in school meals from farms engaged in sustainable practices when possible, and these foods will be promoted within the school's cafeteria.

In accordance with state law, a minimum of twenty minutes shall be allowed for lunch, and ten minutes for breakfast. In addition, students shall be provided with a clean, pleasant, and safe environment for eating meals, which will include convenient access to handwashing facilities as well as safe, free drinking water, which is available for self-service in all cafeterias. Drinking water fountains are made available to students and staff throughout the school day. Students are also allowed to bring in bottled water from home as an option.

Further, CTECS does not allow the use of food as part of a student incentive program, unless as identified in a student's IEP. Non-food alternatives are strongly encouraged for classroom celebrations. Should a classroom celebration use food items, adherence to the guidance from the Connecticut Nutrition Standards is strongly encouraged. CTECS must comply with the Smart Snacks standards for

foods and beverages and the stricter provisions of state statutes and regulations, as well as the state competitive foods regulations. Connecticut Nutrition Standards are fully implemented, as is the use of healthy snacks such as those following the Connecticut Nutrition Standards, limiting portion size, total fat, saturated fat, and grams of added sugar. Wherever possible, nutritional information shall be made available to faculty and staff members through a variety of means including in-service training, publications, and curriculum which will include, but not be limited to, alternative birthday celebrations, activities to increase physical activity in the classroom, healthy snacks, alternative non-food reward options, and alternatives to withholding physical activities or the same meal options as every other student as a consequence for student actions. Parents shall be encouraged to supply their child(ren) with naturally nutrient-rich foods and beverages such as fruits, vegetables, whole grains, low-fat dairy, lean meats, legumes, nuts, and seeds. Lastly, CTECS supports and shall promote the opportunity for students to participate in their local towns' Summer Food Service programs, where they may receive two nutritionally balanced meals per day during the summer recess.

Information related to the program may be disseminated by the school website, newspapers, nurse newsletters, publications, open houses, speakers through the PTO, and health fairs.

Students whose accounts have a negative meal balance or are unable to pay for meals will at no point be substituted with an alternate meal or denied a reimbursable meal that is offered on any given day, which overtly identifies the students' financial needs or places a stigma on the student. This is to include students who qualify for free and reduced-priced meals as well.

Please reference the [CTECS Student/Parent Handbook](#) for further details.

Nutrition information for meals and á la carte items sold by the school cafeteria is available through the school's Head Cook, School Nurse, or through the CTECS School Nutrition Office. CTECS follows the State of Connecticut Department of Education (CSDE) Nutrition Standards (CNS). [CSDE List of Acceptable Foods and Beverages](#) includes brand-specific lists of commercial food products that comply with the [CNS](#) and commercial beverages that comply with the beverage requirements of Section 10 -221q of the Connecticut General Statutes (C.G.S.). These foods and beverages also meet the USDA's Smart Snacks nutrition standards.

The NSM office ensures compliance through regular site visits and program evaluations. As part of the acceptable food and beverages. CTECS also prohibits the sale of foods and beverages to students containing caffeine (with the exception of naturally occurring caffeine) within our buildings.

To provide opportunities for students to engage in physical activity.

Physical Education

CTECS takes a holistic approach towards increasing the health of students by concentrating on the physical, mental, and emotional health of each student. In furtherance of this goal, a quality physical education program is an essential component for all students to learn about and participate in physical activity as taught by a Connecticut-certified teacher who is endorsed to teach both Health Education and Physical Education. The physical activity goal of CTECS is to keep the students in all grade levels physically active in order to help increase their overall level of health and well-being. Thus, CTECS shall provide all Health Education and Physical Education teachers with annual professional development opportunities that are focused on developmentally appropriate physical education/physical activity topics and competencies specifically for physical education teachers. As a result, physical activities shall be provided to all students throughout the school day and integrated across the curricula when possible.

CTECS' Physical Education curriculum is based on the Connecticut State Department of Education's

Healthy and Balanced Living Curriculum Framework and is a graduation-required yearly course for CTECS students in grades 9-12. The Physical Education curriculum shall develop the psychomotor, cognitive, and affective domains of all students within CTECS, grades 9 through 12, inclusive. Students will develop their psychomotor domain through instruction and practice of the skills necessary to be competent in a variety of physical activities. Psychomotor assessments will be completed during each unit to measure the competency of students. The cognitive domain of the students will be developed through problem-solving activities, individually as well as group instruction, and the assessment of skills. Students shall be given written assessments to ensure understanding of skills and knowledge. In order to develop their effective domain, students will be encouraged by their teachers and classmates to succeed and to view physical activity as pleasurable. Teachers may assess the accomplishment of this domain through observation and classroom discussions. Teachers shall be offered in-service training in order to increase their knowledge in the area of physical education.

In accordance with C.G.S. 10-221a (e) A student who presents a certificate from a physician or advanced practice registered nurse stating that, in the opinion of the physician or advanced practice registered nurse, participation in physical education is medically contraindicated because of the physical condition of such student, shall be excused from the physical education requirement, provided the credit for physical education may be fulfilled by an elective. All CTECS students exempted under this statute will be reviewed annually, with documentation provided each school year until said student graduates. Generally, class size will be structured to ensure appropriate instruction and feedback opportunities. Lessons shall be designed to provide a developmentally appropriate scope and sequence for all activities, and modifications shall be made to include all students. Rules for physical activities may be modified in order to prevent injuries based on class size, the ability of students, or the condition of a facility. Students shall be encouraged to assist one another in order to create an emotionally safe environment. Physical education instruction and activity shall be integrated into the school day as follows:

- Grades 9 through 12 shall participate in up to 235 minutes of instruction yearly (¼ credit or ½ credit course).
- The high school physical education curriculum shall allow students to choose the activities they participate in, with a focus on fitness and lifetime activities.
- During fitness activities, students shall engage for the majority of the class in vigorous physical activity.
- As required by state statute, all students in grades 10 shall participate in the Connecticut State Fitness Test in order to measure their level of fitness in the areas of flexibility, cardiovascular endurance, and muscular strength and endurance.
- The end-of-course assessments for grades 9-12 are based upon scientifically research-based assessment tools, including FitnessGram, ActivityGram, and PE Metrics.

Other Opportunities for Physical Education

Extracurricular Activities: Students are encouraged to participate in physical activities outside of school and are made aware, through instruction or assignments, as to where and when they can get involved in these activities. Extracurricular activities for the students may offer intramural sports, including tennis, badminton, volleyball, and fitness activities such as weights and outdoor activities throughout the year.

School/Community Collaboration: CTECS shall work with the local sending towns and other community organizations to coordinate and enhance the opportunities available to students and staff members for

physical activity during their out-of-school time. Students and staff are encouraged to participate in physical activities outside of school and are made aware through instruction or assignments as to where and when they can get involved in these activities. Intramural activities may not be substituted for physical education.

To encourage and promote increased consumption of nutrient-dense foods and beverages.

CTECS believes that the nutrition and food services operation is an essential educational support activity. In accordance with federal law, CTECS' National School Lunch Program ("NSLP") and the School Breakfast Program ("SBP") shall be nonprofit and aim to be financially self-sufficient. CTECS' After School Snack Program shall comply with all the requirements for program operation. Further, all reimbursable school meals (i.e., free and reduced lunches) shall meet the program requirements and nutrition standards established by the U.S. Department of Agriculture, NSLP, SBP, and all applicable state statutes and regulations applicable to school meals. Feedback from food service staff and consumers (i.e., students, staff, and parents) shall be considered in the planning of appealing, varied, nutritious, high-quality meals that encourage increased participation in the reimbursable breakfast and lunch programs offered and discourage the purchase of á la carte and vended foods.

All non-reimbursable food items and beverages (i.e., á la carte sales) sold on school premises must meet the Connecticut Nutrition Standards and/or all applicable state statutes and regulations. This requirement applies to the sale of food and beverages at all activities on school grounds, whether sponsored by the school or an outside group. Food items that do not meet Connecticut Nutrition Standards and/or beverages that do not meet the requirements of applicable state statute may only be sold to students at the location of an event that occurs after the school day or on the weekend, provided the sale is not from a vending machine or a school store. However, CTECS believes a healthy school environment shall not be sacrificed because of a dependence on revenue from high-added fat, high-added sugar, and low-nutrient foods to support school programs.

Accordingly, the sale of non-food items is strongly encouraged to be used for fundraising projects. Where food items are sold for such projects, nutrient-rich food items are encouraged. Further, all fundraising projects involving the sale of food to students on school premises must follow the Connecticut Nutrition Standards and beverage requirements of the state statute at all times, unless they are sold to students at the location of an event that occurs after the school day or on the weekends, provided the sale is not from a vending machine or a school store. Similarly, organizations such as PFO may not be in line with the CTECS Wellness Policy; however, they must adhere to the operations as outlined herein while on school grounds and school-sanctioned functions during the school day. Concessions at events that occur after the school day or on the weekends shall offer water, and a minimum of, but not limited to, one fruit and/or vegetable option for purchase. It is recommended that these healthier choices be marketed and sold at a lower profit margin to encourage student selection. The display and advertising of foods with minimal nutritional value is strongly discouraged.

Foods items and beverages shall be served with consideration toward variety, appeal, taste, safety and packaging with an emphasis on nutrient-rich items such as fresh fruits; vegetables; whole grains; low fat dairy (i.e., 1% low-fat milk or less); lean meats; legumes; nuts and seeds, while limiting levels of cholesterol, fat, saturated fat, trans fat, sodium and added sugars. Food or beverage marketing on school grounds during school hours shall only be permitted for foods and beverages that may be sold on the school campus during the school day, and that comply with the Connecticut Nutrition Standards and all applicable state laws and regulations.

Food marketing includes oral, written or graphic statements made for the purpose of promoting the sale

of a food or beverage, product made by the producer, manufacturer, seller or any other entity with a commercial interest in the product and includes the marketing of food or beverages on the exterior of vending machines, through posters, menu boards, coolers, trash cans and other food service equipment, as well as cups used for beverage dispensing. School publications and media outlets require the approval of the school's principal in order to attempt to limit advertising of unhealthy products in school publications and school media prior to publication, to include printed material as well as the school's websites.

Promote professional growth and development of food service management and cafeteria staff.

CTECS shall encourage food service management and cafeteria staff to actively participate in nutrition professional organizations and partake in activities, based upon current nutrition science and national health recommendations, which promote professional growth and development. CTECS' food service director and cafeteria Head Cooks shall, at a minimum, be certified in food safety and sanitation. In addition, all cafeteria staff shall be formally trained in Hazard Analysis and Critical Control Points (HACCP), food safety and sanitation requirements, and preparation of a variety of nutritious foods. Further, all foods served shall meet or exceed the minimum nutrition standards set by the U.S. Department of Agriculture for NSLP and SBP, as well as applicable state statutes. Foods purchased and/or prepared by food service management shall promote good health and nutrition by utilizing low-fat methods allowing for maximum nutrient retention, such as baking and steaming.

Food services personnel shall also provide families with the ability to monitor their children's food purchases at all grade levels. Nutrition information for school breakfast and lunch menu items are available through the parent LINQ Connect app, and shall be available upon request of the Food Service Program. Nutrition information for à la carte, vended items, and items sold by the school stores, all meeting the Connecticut Nutrition Standards, shall be accessible on the Food Service Program's website, if possible. Wherever possible, other nutritional information shall be provided to parents on healthy snacks, breakfast and lunch ideas, non-food birthday celebration ideas, nutritional needs of children, healthy portion sizes, food label reading guidelines, and fun activities to encourage physical activity outside of school.

Measuring the Implementation of Wellness Policy

Oversight of the Wellness Policy

Pursuant to this policy, CTECS' Executive Director shall designate the Superintendent or designee to be responsible for the implementation and oversight of the wellness program. The Superintendent or designee will be responsible for ensuring that the goals and guidelines relating to nutrition promotion and education, physical activity, school-based wellness activities, and nutritional value of school-provided food and beverages are met, that there is compliance with the wellness policy, and that all school policies and school-based activities are consistent with the wellness policy.

Triennial Assessment

At least every three years, CTECS will measure and make available to the public an assessment of the implementation of the wellness policy. In this triennial assessment, CTECS will indicate the extent to which schools comply with the wellness policy and how CTECS' wellness policy compares with model school wellness policies. In addition, the triennial assessment will describe the progress made in

attaining the goals of the wellness policy and will provide the basis for appropriate updates or modifications to the wellness policy.

Informing and Updating the Public

In accordance with federal law and applicable regulations, CTECS will inform and update the public (including parents, students, and others in the community) about the content and implementation of its wellness policy as well as the results of the triennial assessment. The results of the triennial assessment will be made available in an accessible and easily understood manner. CTECS will make its wellness policy and any updates to the policy available to the public on an annual basis.

Recordkeeping

CTECS will retain records to document compliance with the local school wellness policy requirements. CTECS shall retain the Wellness Policy, documentation demonstrating compliance with community involvement requirements, documentation of the triennial assessment, and documentation to demonstrate compliance with public notification requirements.

Michael Crocco, Superintendent

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