



MATER ACADEMY

ALMA MATER STUDIORUM

MATER ACADEMY, INC.

Wellness Policy
2024-2025

Preamble

Mater Academy, Inc. believes that for students to have the opportunity to achieve personal, academic, developmental, and social success, schools need to create a positive, safe, and health-promoting learning environment. We believe that children need access to nutritious, healthy foods combined with opportunities to be physically active in order to learn and to thrive.

Research shows that good nutrition and physical activity before, during, and after the school day are strongly correlated with positive student outcomes. Good nutrition is a crucial factor in influencing the way students feel in and out of school. A healthy balanced diet combined with physical activity can influence the development, management and prevention of numerous mental health conditions including depression. Thus, this **School Food Authority (SFA)** is committed to providing school environments that promote and protect children's physical and mental health, well-being, and ability to learn by promoting healthy eating habits and physical activity.

This Wellness Policy outlines our approach to ensuring a school environments and opportunities for all students to practice healthy eating and physical activity behaviors throughout the school day. Specifically, this policy establishes goals and procedures to ensure that:

- The school climate encourages healthy eating and physical activity among all students and staff members and is accepting of diverse abilities;
- Students have access to healthy foods and physical activity opportunities throughout the school day;
- Students have access to healthy foods/snacks which are in accordance with federal and state nutrition standards;
- Students have access to safe spaces, facilities, and equipment promoting healthy eating and physical activity;
- Students feel encouraged and supported to practice healthy nutrition and physical activity behaviors in and out of school; and
- School stakeholders are engaged in supporting the school in creating continuity between school and other settings for students and staff to practice lifelong healthy habits;

Mater Academy, Inc., hereinafter referred to as SPONSOR, will review and consider evidence-based strategies and techniques in establishing goals for nutrition promotion and education, physical activity and other school-based activities that promote student wellness to include, at a minimum, a review of Smarter Lunchroom tools and techniques.

I. Nutrition

Nutrition Goals

SPONSOR is committed to serving healthy meals to children, with plenty of fruits, vegetables, whole grains, and fat-free and low-fat milk; moderate in sodium, and low in saturated fat.

- 1) The school meal program aims to:
 - a. improve the diet and health of school children;
 - b. help mitigate childhood obesity;
 - c. model healthy eating to support the development of lifelong healthy eating patterns;
 - d. support healthy choices while accommodating cultural food preferences and special dietary needs.
- 2) Nutrition guidelines will require the use of products that are high in fiber, low in added fats, sugar, and sodium, and served in appropriate portion sizes consistent with USDA standards;
- 3) All other foods and beverages sold during the school day will meet USDA nutrition standards.

Nutrition Standards for All Foods Available on School Campus During the School Day

SPONSOR is committed to offering school meals through the National School Lunch Program (NSLP) and School Breakfast Program (SBP).

School meals provided through the National School Lunch Program (NSLP) and School Breakfast Program (SBP) will:

- 1) Be accessible to all students;
- 2) Be appealing and attractive to children;
- 3) Be served in clean and pleasant settings;
- 4) Meet or exceed current nutrition requirements established by local, state, and Federal statutes and regulations;
- 5) Offer a variety of milk, including no more than 1% fat content;
- 6) Comply with the current USDA Dietary Guidelines for Americans;
- 7) Be baked, not fried;
- 8) Include fresh fruits and vegetables; and
- 9) Include whole grain products.

Nutrition services policies and guidelines for reimbursable meals shall not be less restrictive than federal and state regulations require.

Foods Items Sold on Campus

- 1) All foods and beverages sold outside of the reimbursable meals will meet Smart Snacks in School nutrition standards. These competitive food items will meet general nutritional guidelines:
 - a) Be a grain product that contains 50 percent or more whole grains by weight or have a whole grain as the first ingredient; or
 - b) Have as the first ingredient one of the non-grain major food groups: fruits, vegetables, dairy, or protein foods (meat, beans, poultry, seafood, eggs, nuts, seeds, etc.); or
 - c) Be a combination food that contains $\frac{1}{4}$ cup of fruit and/or vegetable.
 - d) If water is the first ingredient, the second ingredient must be one of the above.
- 2) The use of food and physical activity as punishment is prohibited.
- 3) Schools will provide a list of ideas for healthy celebrations/parties, rewards, and fundraising activities, upon request.

Fundraising and Marketing

- 1) Fundraising efforts will be supportive of healthy eating by complying with all applicable regulations and nutrition standards for competitive foods while also emphasizing the sale of nonfood items.
- 2) No fundraisers that include the sale of food items will occur until thirty (30) minutes after the conclusion of the last designated meal service period.
- 3) In-school food and beverage marketing will meet competitive food (Smart Snack) standards.
- 4) Schools will encourage marketing activities that promote healthful behaviors.
- 5) The SFA's Nutrition Departments' purchasing decisions will reflect the marketing guidelines described above.

Vending Machines

- 1) If there are any vending machines available to students during the school day, these will meet USDA Smart Snacks standards and nutrition standards.
- 2) For elementary and middle school students: foods and beverages will be caffeine-free except for trace amounts of naturally occurring caffeine substances. Food and beverages for high school students may contain caffeine.

II. Nutrition Education and Promotion

The school's wellness committee will review and consider evidence-based strategies in establishing goals for nutrition education and promotion, physical activity and other-school based activities that promote student wellness. These strategies at minimum include Smarter Lunchroom tools and techniques.

Nutrition Education and Promotion Goals

- 1) Nutrition benchmarks included in the Physical Education Standards will be taught during physical education classes and will be integrated into other subject areas, as appropriate.
- 2) Nutrition education will be taught in the classroom as well as in the dining room.
- 3) The following essential topics on healthy eating will be included in nutrition education:
 - The relationship between healthy eating and personal health and disease prevention
 - Social influences on healthy eating, including media, family, peers, and culture
 - Choosing foods low in fat, saturated fat, and cholesterol and do not contain trans fat
 - Choosing foods and beverages with little added sugars
 - Eating a variety of foods every day
 - Eating more fruits, vegetables, and whole grain products
 - Eating more calcium-rich foods
 - Reducing sodium intake
 - Importance of water consumption
 - Importance of eating breakfast
 - Reading and using USDA's food labels
 - Balancing food intake and physical activity
- 4) Classroom lectures, activities and student participation will be encouraged in nutrition and health classes.
- 5) Staff will teach, model, encourage and support healthy eating.
- 6) Staff responsible for nutrition education will be adequately prepared and participate regularly in professional development activities to effectively deliver an accurate nutrition education program as planned. Preparation and professional development activities will provide basic knowledge of nutrition combined with skill practice in program-specific activities and instructional techniques and strategies designed to promote healthy eating habits.
- 7) Parents will be encouraged to follow this Wellness Policy as guidance to providing a healthy diet and daily physical activity for their children. The school will post nutrition information on the website and encourage parents to pack healthy lunches and snacks.
- 8) The schools will use Smarter Lunchroom tools and strategies to promote and reinforce healthy eating in the school environment. Such strategies include but are not limited to:

- a. Providing a monthly menu to all students, families, teachers, and administrators;
- b. Displaying posters of healthy foods;
- c. Offering a variety of fruit, including fresh fruit;
- d. Offering at least two types of vegetables daily, whenever possible.

III. Physical Activity

Physical Activity Goals

SPONSOR will offer a comprehensive, school-based physical activity program that includes physical education classes, recess, and classroom-based physical activity and extra-curricular physical activities.

- a) The physical education program will require students in grades K–12 to participate in daily physical education that uses a planned and sequential curriculum and instructional practices that are consistent with national or state standards for physical education.
- b) The use of Instructional strategies in physical education that enhance students' behavioral skills, confidence in their abilities, and desire to adopt and maintain a physically active lifestyle.
- c) The schools will encourage walk and bicycle to school and out-of-school time physical activities.
- d) The schools will provide other physical activity programs to meet the needs and interests of all students

For students to receive the nationally recommended amount of daily physical activity and for students to fully embrace regular physical activity as a personal behavior, students will be provided with different opportunities for physical activity. The school will:

- (a) Discourage sedentary activities, such as watching television; playing computer games, etc.;
- (b) Provide opportunities for physical activity to be incorporated into other subject lessons;
- (c) Encourage classroom teachers to provide short physical activity breaks between lessons or classes, as appropriate;
- (d) Promote school-based health & wellness activities for students; and,
- (e) Provide information about wellness resources and services to assist in identifying and supporting the health, safety and well-being of students and staff.

Elementary

Participation in physical activity on a regular basis. Students will participate in moderate to vigorous physical activity on a daily basis. Students will receive formal physical education courses taught by a state-certified instructor. Students in grades K-5 will receive 150 minutes of physical education each week taught by a certified-instructor (A minimum of 30 consecutive minutes is required on any day that physical education is provided).

1) Participation in several physical activity programs throughout the school year for all elementary school students. Programs Activities include:

- Recess
- Jump Rope for Heart
- Field Day
- Fitness Gram
- School Sports Program
- Red Ribbon / Drug Free activities
- Walk-A-thons
- After school sports clubs (basketball, flag football, soccer, etc.)

Secondary

Physical Education instruction shall be provided for Secondary students through formal physical education courses, taught by a state-certified instructor. Such instruction may also be provided through integration into other courses, regularly scheduled intramural activities, and/or regularly scheduled school-wide activities.

2) Participation in several physical activity programs throughout the school year for all secondary students. Program activities include:

- Jump Rope for Heart
- Field Day
- Fitness Gram
- School Sports Program
- Red Ribbon / Drug Free activities
- Walk-A-thons
- School-wide afterschool sports program (soccer, basketball, cross country, etc.)
- Fitness Clubs
- Dance Teams and Step Clubs

IV. Health Education and Life Skills

Healthy living skills will be taught as part of the regular instructional program and provide the opportunity for all students to understand and practice concepts and skills related to health promotion and disease prevention.

- (a) The school(s) will provide for an interdisciplinary, sequential skill-based health education program based upon state standards and benchmarks.
- (b) Students will have access to valid and useful health information and health promotion products and services.
- (c) Students will have the opportunity to practice behaviors that enhance health and/or reduce health risks during the school day.
- (d) Students shall be taught communication, goal setting and decision-making skills that enhance personal, family and community health.

V. Goals for Other School-Based Activities Designed to Promote Student Wellness

SPONSOR will integrate wellness activities across the school settings to promote increased participation in school-based nutrition programs by making the participation a high priority. The school will make every effort to eliminate any social stigma attached to, and prevent the overt identification of, students who are eligible for free and reduced-price meals.

The school will:

- (a) Promote the availability of the same meals to all students;
- (b) Establish mealtimes consistent with Federal Regulations;
- (c) Prohibit the withholding of food as punishment;
- (d) Follow drug, alcohol, and tobacco free policies;
- (e) Maximize the reduction of waste by reducing, reusing, and recycling; and,
- (f) Encourage employees to engage in daily physical activity during the workday, such as walking around the school building either inside or outside, as part of work breaks and/or lunch periods, before or after work hours
- (g) Ensure that students have access to needed health, mental health, and social services.

School Personnel and Professional Development

This SFA will:

- a) Employ physical education teachers, health education teachers, and nutrition services staff members who are certified and appropriately prepared to deliver quality instruction, programs, and practices.

- b) Provide professional development opportunities for Physical Education, Health Education, Nutrition Services, Mental Health, Social Services, and for staff members who supervise recess, and cafeteria time.
- c) Provide annual professional development opportunities for school health, mental health, and social services staff members, and staff members who lead or supervise out-of-school time programs, recess, and cafeteria time.

School personnel serve as nutrition educators and role models for healthy lifestyles. School(s) will be expected to model healthy eating by offering healthier choices at school meetings.

School personnel will:

- (a) Encourage students to interact with family members on assignments & projects; and
- (b) Create an environment where students, parents/guardian and staff members are accepted, respected, and valued for their personal integrity.

VI. Goals for Measurement and Evaluation

The Principal, or designee, will monitor compliance with the established wellness policy by convening the Healthy School Team (HST) on an annual basis. School Nutrition staff will monitor compliance with nutrition policies within the school food service area and will report on this matter to the HST. In accordance with the NSLP guidelines, breakfast and lunch menus will be reviewed regularly to ensure USDA meal pattern compliance.

The HST will ensure compliance with the policy, report on the school's compliance and recommend revisions as necessary to the **SPONSOR'S** Wellness Committee. Every three years, the Wellness Committee will conduct an assessment and make recommendations to the Governing Board at a scheduled governing board meeting.

Triennial Assessment – **SPONSOR** will assess the local school wellness policy to measure wellness policy compliance once every three years. This assessment will measure the implementation of the local school wellness policy, and include:

The wellness committee will make appropriate updates and modifications to the policy based on the results from the triennial assessment to include:

- 1) The extent to which the **SPONSOR** follows school wellness policy;
- 2) The extent to which the wellness policy compares to model local school wellness policies; and
- 3) A description of the progress made in attaining the goals of the school wellness policy.

All stakeholders (e.g., parents, students, representatives of the school food authority, teachers of physical education, school health professionals, the school board, school administrators and the general public) will be provided an opportunity to participate in the development, implementation and periodic review and update of the wellness policy.

Updates will be included based on the results of the annual and triennial reviews and as needs arise. The evaluation process will address necessary changes to nutrition education, physical activity, other school-based activities, and changes to the nutritional quality of foods available to students that have occurred as a result of the wellness policy and as a result of new information, new standards, or new guidance.

The evaluation process will answer questions relating to whether the goals stated in the policy have been met. Basic questions that are important to all stakeholders will be addressed in the evaluation process. For example:

- 1) Did the school change to healthier food options?
- 2) Did participation in the Breakfast and/or Lunch Program change?
- 3) Did the school promote good eating habits and healthy food options?
- 4) Did the school provide students with opportunities to participate in a variety of physical activities?
- 5) Did the students have a different number of minutes of physical activity?
- 6) Did the school conduct student taste testing introducing healthier food items?

VII. Public Communication

SPONSOR will ensure that the wellness policy is always available to the public. **SPONSOR** will also notify households on an annual basis about any updates made to the wellness policy and the availability of the triennial assessment results, as well as provide information to the community about the school nutrition environment via the school website.

The SFA will:

- 1) Ensure the most updated version of the wellness policy is available on the school website for the public to view;

- 2) Present wellness policy updates, as applicable, during meetings with the school board, health and wellness committee; Parent groups; and other interested groups or stakeholders;
- 3) Provide Wellness updates to students, parents, and staff, as applicable, in the form of handouts, school websites, articles, school newsletters, to ensure that the community is informed, and that public input is encouraged.

VIII. Community Involvement

The **SPONSOR** is committed to being responsive to community input, which begins with awareness of the wellness policy.

- 1) The schools will actively communicate ways in which parents, students, representatives of the school food authority, teachers of physical education, school health professionals, the school board, school administrators, representatives from the local agriculture community, food and nutrition professionals and the public can participate in the development, implementation and annual review of the local school wellness policy through a variety of means to ensure that all families are actively notified of any updates to the wellness policy, as well as how to get involved and support the policy.

Schools will use:

- electronic mechanisms, such as email or displaying notices on websites;
- non-electronic mechanisms, such as newsletters, presentations to parents or sending information home to parents; and
- Students surveys for menu development.

IX. Record Keeping

Records to document compliance with the requirements of the local school wellness policy will include, but not limited to the following:

- 1) The written local school wellness policy & activity sheet;
- 2) Documentation demonstrating compliance with requirements to make the local school wellness policy available to the public; and
- 3) Documentation of the triennial assessment of the local school wellness policy.