

## **Northshore Education Consortium Wellness Policy (Updated February 2026)**

### **105 CMR 215**

#### **Introduction**

Northshore Education Consortium (NEC) is committed to the healthy development of every student. We believe that for students to achieve personal, academic, developmental and social success, we need to create positive, safe, inclusive, and health-promoting environments at every level throughout the school year. We understand that good nutrition, physical activity, and social-emotional learning are critical components of any school and are strongly correlated with positive outcomes for all students with or without disabilities.

Given the unique needs of a Collaborative, the fact that all of our students have special needs, and the fact that our students come from over 30 school districts, certain aspects of our policy differ from those recommended for a typical district.

#### **Implementation and Communication**

1. NEC will have a wellness committee that includes the Executive Director, School Nutrition Program Coordinator, Director of Nursing, Clinical Director, and representatives from each NEC School, **as well as a student and a parent or community representative.**
2. The wellness committee will meet four times a year.
3. The Director of Nursing and the Principal and Program Nurses at each school will be responsible for assuring implementation of the Wellness Policy.
4. At least once every three years, the District will evaluate compliance with the wellness policy to assess the implementation of the policy. The policy will be updated and amended as appropriate, and at least every three years.
5. The policy will be available on the NEC website and referenced in Student and Parent Handbooks, which are culturally and linguistically appropriate and translated when necessary.

#### **School Meal Programming**

NEC is committed to serving healthy meals to children, with plenty of fruits, vegetables, whole grains, and fat-free and low-fat milk; that are moderate in sodium, low in saturated fat, and have zero grams *trans*-fat per serving (nutrition label or manufacturer's specification); and to meeting the nutrition needs of school children within their calorie requirements. The school meal programs aim to improve the diet and health of school children, help mitigate childhood obesity, model healthy eating to support the development of lifelong healthy eating patterns and support healthy choices while accommodating cultural food preferences and special dietary needs.

All NEC schools educating students in grades preK-12 participate in the National School Lunch and Breakfast programs through a contract with the Beverly Public Schools. All students

receive breakfast and lunch free of charge. All special dietary needs are accommodated. At Topsfield Vocational High School, the culinary program provides nutritionally appropriate meals to all students free of charge.

All schools within NEC are committed to offering school meals that

- Are accessible to all students;
- Are appealing and attractive to children;
- Are served in clean and pleasant settings;
- Meet or exceed current nutrition requirements established by local, state, and Federal statutes and regulations.
- Promote healthy food and beverage choices

To promote hydration, free, safe, unflavored drinking water will be available to all students throughout the school day. NEC will make drinking water available where school meals are served during mealtimes.

All staff involved with the school breakfast and lunch program receive the required professional development.

Families are informed about meal programs and choices at the school level and are provided with opportunities for providing feedback.

All students have adequate time to eat their lunch, taking into account their ages and abilities.

Several programs supplement meals provided through the Beverly contract with local or regional foods, or with school gardens.

### **Competitive Foods and Beverages**

NEC is committed to ensuring that all foods and beverages available to students on the school campus during the school day support healthy eating. The foods and beverages sold and served outside of the school meal programs (e.g., “competitive” foods and beverages) will meet the USDA Smart Snacks in School nutrition standards. These standards will apply in all locations and through all services where foods and beverages are sold, which may include, but are not limited to, à la carte options in cafeterias, vending machines, school stores and snack or food carts.

These standards will apply to celebrations, awards, and fundraising activities.

Food is never used at NEC as a reward or withheld as a punishment.

### **Nutrition and Food System Education**

NEC will promote healthy food and beverage choices for all students throughout the school campus, as well as encourage participation in school meal programs.

NEC will teach, model, encourage and support healthy eating by all students. Schools will provide developmentally appropriate nutrition education. Given the special needs of NEC students, nutrition and food education is adapted in accordance with state frameworks and student IEPs. Whenever possible this includes hands-on learning opportunities.

### **Physical Activity and Education**

All students at NEC will participate in physical activity as is appropriate for their age, developmental level, and level of physical ability. This will take place through PE classes, classroom activities, structured recess, electives and enrichment activities, and/or physical therapy.

### **Staff Wellness**

1. The physical and mental wellness of employees is a high priority for NEC.
2. PD time is devoted to wellness, resources are regularly disseminated, and NEC maintains access to an EAP for employees seeking additional support.
3. Each school has appropriate spaces for staff lunch and breaks.
4. Each school has appropriate spaces for lactation/breastfeeding.

### **Social Emotional Climate and Caregiver Engagement**

1. NEC clinical and nursing staff regularly provide families with information about community based support. This information is provided in a culturally competent manner and is translated into the primary language of families.
2. Social Emotional Learning curriculum is fully integrated into the special education programs at all NEC schools.
3. NEC has extensive community collaborations and regularly provides information to families about local resources, frequently providing referral information related to food, housing, basic needs, mental, or physical health resources.