



St. Mary's Home Wellness Policy

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Preamble

St. Mary's Home (hereto referred to as St. Mary's) is committed to the optimal development of every student. St. Mary's believes that for students to have the opportunity to achieve personal, academic, developmental, and social success, we need to create positive, safe, and health-promoting learning environments at every level, in every setting, throughout the school year.

Research shows that two components, good nutrition and physical activity before, during, and after the school day, are strongly correlated with positive student outcomes. For example, student participation in the U.S. Department of Agriculture's (USDA) School Breakfast Program is associated with higher grades and standardized test scores, lower absenteeism, and better performance on cognitive tasks.^{1,2,3,4,5,6,7} Conversely, less-than-adequate consumption of specific foods including fruits, vegetables, and dairy products, is associated with lower grades among students.^{8,9,10} In addition, students who are physically active through active transport to and from school, recess, physical activity breaks, high-quality physical education, and extracurricular activities – do better academically.^{11,12,13,14}

This policy outlines St. Mary's approach to ensuring environments and opportunities for all students to practice healthy eating and physical activity behaviors throughout the school day while minimizing commercial distractions. Specifically, this policy establishes goals and procedures to ensure that:

- Students at St. Mary's have access to healthy foods throughout the school day—both through reimbursable school meals and other foods available throughout the school campus—in accordance with Federal and state nutrition standards;
- Students receive quality nutrition education that helps them develop lifelong healthy eating behaviors;
- Students have opportunities to be physically active before, during, and after school;
- St. Mary's engages in nutrition and physical activity promotion and other activities that promote student wellness;
- School staff are encouraged and supported to practice healthy nutrition and physical activity behaviors in and out of school;
- The community is engaged in supporting the work of St. Mary's in creating continuity between school and other settings for students and staff to practice lifelong healthy habits; and
- St. Mary's establishes and maintains an infrastructure for management, oversight, implementation, communication about, and monitoring of the policy and its established goals and objectives.

This policy applies to all students and staff at St. Mary's.

I. School Wellness Quality Assurance Committee

Committee Role and Membership

St. Mary's will convene a representative wellness committee that meets as needed to establish goals for and oversee school health and safety policies and programs, including development, implementation, and periodic review and update of this wellness policy (heretofore referred as "wellness policy").

The committee membership will represent all school levels and include (to the extent possible), but not be limited to: parents, guardians, caregivers, students, representatives of the school nutrition program, physical education teachers, classroom teachers; health services staff (i.e. nurses, physicians, dentists, and other allied health personnel who provide services), and mental health and social services staff (i.e. psychologists and social workers); school administrators (ex. principal), and the general public. To the extent possible, the committee will reflect the diversity of the community.

Leadership

The committee will convene and facilitate development of and updates to the wellness policy and will ensure the school's compliance with the policy. The names, titles, and contact information of these individuals are:

Name	Title	Email address
Joseph Toland, MD	Medical Director	northshorepediatricsva@gmail.com
Richard Taylor, MD, PT	PT Director	rtaylor@smhdc.org
H. Wayne Jones	CEO	wjones@smhdc.org
Lynn Earle, MPH, RDN	Nutrition Services Director	learle@smhdc.org
Melissa Evans, LPN	Nurse	mevans@smhdc.org
Nicole Jones, CTRS	Recreation Therapy Director	njones@smhdc.org
Susan Albert, MEd	School Principal	albert.susan@secep.net
James Gunther	PE Teacher	jgunthe@nps.k12.va.us
Patrick White	Food Production Manager	pwhite@smhdc.org
Michelle Depelteau	HR Director	mdepelteau@smhdc.org

II. Wellness Policy Implementation, Monitoring, Accountability, and Community Engagement

Implementation Plan

St. Mary's will develop and maintain a plan for implementation to manage and coordinate the execution of this wellness policy. The plan delineates roles, responsibilities, actions, and timelines, and includes information about who will be responsible to make what change, by how much, where, and when, as well as specific goals and objectives for nutrition standards for all foods and beverages available on the school campus, food and beverage marketing, nutrition promotion and education, physical activity, physical education, and other school-based activities that promote student wellness. St. Mary's will use the "Healthy Schools Program" online tools to complete a school level assessment based on the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention's School Health Index, create an action plan that fosters implementation, and generate an annual progress report.

This wellness policy and the progress reports can be found at: saintmaryshome.org.

Recordkeeping

St. Mary's will retain records to document compliance with the requirements of the wellness policy at St. Mary's Home in the office of the Nutrition Services Director. Documentation maintained in this location will include, but will not be limited to:

- The written wellness policy;
- Documentation demonstrating compliance with community involvement requirements, including (1) Efforts to actively solicit committee membership from the required stakeholder groups; and (2) These groups' participation in the development, implementation, and periodic review and update of the wellness policy;
- Documentation of annual policy progress reports;
- Documentation of the triennial assessment* of the policy;
- Documentation demonstrating compliance with public notification requirements, including: (1) Methods by which the wellness policy, annual progress reports, and triennial assessments are made available to the public; and (2) Efforts to actively notify families about the availability of wellness policy.

Annual Progress Reports

St. Mary's will compile and publish an annual report to share basic information about the wellness policy and report on its progress in meeting wellness goals. This annual report will be published around the same time each year in July. This report will include, but is not limited to:

- The website address for the wellness policy and/or how the public can receive/access a copy of the wellness policy;
- A description of St. Mary's progress in meeting the wellness policy goals;
- A summary of St. Mary's events or activities related to wellness policy implementation;
- The name, position title, and contact information of the designated St. Mary's policy leader(s) identified in Section I; and
- Information on how individuals and the public can get involved with the committee.

The annual report will be available in English.

St. Mary's will actively notify households/families of the availability of the annual report.

The committee will establish and monitor goals and objectives for the St. Mary's for each of the content-specific components listed in Sections III-V of this policy.

Triennial Progress Assessments

At least once every three years, St. Mary's will evaluate compliance with the wellness policy to assess the implementation of the policy and include:

- The extent to which St. Mary's is in compliance with the wellness policy;
- The extent to which St. Mary's wellness policy compares to the Alliance for a Healthier Generation's model wellness policy; and
- A description of the progress made in attaining the goals of St. Mary's wellness policy.

The positions/persons responsible for managing the triennial assessment and contact information are Lynn Earle, MPH, RDN, Nutrition Services Director (learle@smhdc.org) and Susan Albert, MEd, Principle for REACH Program (albert.susan@secep.net).

The committee will monitor St. Mary's compliance with this wellness policy.

St. Mary's will actively notify households/families of the availability of the triennial progress report.

Revisions and Updating the Policy

The committee will update or modify the wellness policy based on the results of the annual progress reports and triennial assessments, and/or as District priorities change; community needs change; wellness goals are met; new health science, information, and technology emerges; and new Federal or state guidance or standards are issued. **The wellness policy will be assessed and updated as indicated at least every three years, following the triennial assessment.**

Community Involvement, Outreach, and Communications

St. Mary's is committed to being responsive to community input, which begins with awareness of the wellness policy. St. Mary's will actively communicate ways in which representatives of committee and others can participate in the development, implementation, and periodic review and update of the wellness policy through a variety of means appropriate for St. Mary's. St. Mary's will also inform parents of the improvements that have been made to school meals and compliance with school meal standards and availability of child nutrition programs and how to apply. St. Mary's will use electronic mechanisms, such as email or displaying notices on St. Mary's website, as well as non-electronic mechanisms, such as newsletters, presentations to parents, or sending information home to parents, to ensure that all families are actively notified of the content of, implementation of, and updates to the wellness policy, as well as how to get involved and support the policy. St. Mary's will ensure that communications are culturally and linguistically appropriate to the community, and accomplished through means similar to other ways that St. Mary's and individual schools are communicating other important school information with parents.

St. Mary's will actively notify the public about the content of or any updates to the wellness policy annually, at a minimum. St. Mary's will also use these mechanisms to inform the community about the availability of the annual and triennial reports.

III. Nutrition

School Meals

More than half of the students at St. Mary's have their nutritional needs met via tube feeding. Each student has a Physician's order, based on a Registered Dietitian Nutritionist's recommendation, that specifies the parameters of the tube feedings. Those who cannot ingest the types and quantities of food to meet all of their needs are also given nutritional supplements, as needed.

St. Mary's is committed to serving healthy meals to the children who do get their nutritional needs met orally, with plenty of fruits, vegetables, whole grains, and fat-free and low-fat milk; moderate in sodium, low in saturated fat, and zero grams *trans* fat per serving (nutrition label or manufacturer's specification); and to meet 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.

St. Mary's participates in USDA child nutrition programs, including the National School Lunch Program (NSLP) and the School Breakfast Program (SBP). St. Mary's is committed to offering school meals through the NSLP and SBP programs 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. (St. Mary's offers reimbursable school meals that meet USDA nutrition standards.)
- Promote healthy food and beverage choices using some of the following "Smarter Lunchroom techniques":

(St. Mary's does not have a "lunchroom." All meals are offered in the classroom or in the living areas.)

- Sliced, cut, finely chopped or pureed fruit is available daily
- All available vegetable options have been given creative or descriptive names
- All staff members, especially those serving, have been trained to politely prompt students to select and consume the daily vegetable options with their meal
- Non-fat white milk is the default beverages served with meals;
- Menus will be created/reviewed by a Registered Dietitian Nutritionist or other certified nutrition professional;
- School meals are administered by a child nutrition professional;
- St. Mary's child nutrition program will accommodate students with special dietary needs;
- Students will be allowed at least 30 minutes to eat/be fed breakfast and lunch, counting from the time they have received their meal and are seated. Students are served lunch at a reasonable and appropriate time of day;
- Participation in Federal child nutrition programs will be promoted among students and families to help ensure that families know what programs are available in their children's school.

Staff Qualifications and Professional Development

The St. Mary's nutrition services directors, manager, and staff will meet or exceed hiring and annual continuing education/training requirements in the USDA professional standards for child nutrition professionals. These school nutrition personnel will refer to "USDA's Professional Standards for School Nutrition Standards" website to search for training that meets their learning needs.

Water

To promote hydration, free, safe, unflavored drinking water will be available to all students throughout the school day* and throughout the school campus* (“school campus” and “school day” are defined in the glossary). St. Mary’s will make drinking water available where school meals are served during mealtimes. In addition, students will be allowed to bring and carry (approved) water bottles filled with only water with them throughout the day.

- Water cups will be available if a drinking fountain is not present.
- All water sources and containers will be maintained on a regular basis to ensure good hygiene standards. Such sources and containers may include drinking fountains, water jugs, hydration stations, water jets, and other methods for delivering drinking water.

Competitive Foods and Beverages

St. Mary’s is committed to ensuring that all foods and beverages available to students on the school campus *during the school day* support healthy eating. Foods and beverages are not sold to students on the St. Mary’s campus.

Celebrations and Rewards

St. Mary’s strongly encourages that foods offered on the school campus will meet or exceed the USDA Smart Snacks in School nutrition standards, including through:

1. Celebrations and parties.
Examples of ideas include that do not include food:
 - a. Party favors (bouncy balls, matchbox cars, erasers, tops, magnifying glasses, notepads, balloons, whistles, bubbles, etc.).
 - b. Come into the classroom and read a book to the class.
 - c. Buy something for the classroom (books, games, music, class pet such as fish or turtle, plant, etc.).
 - d. Send in supplies and directions for a craft for the kids to do instead of eating a snack. It is a bonus if the parent comes in to help with the craft (health conditions permitting).
 - e. Arrange for the kids to play a game instead of eating a snack.
 - f. Arrange a treasure hunt around the classroom for the kids. There can be a special treat (see a or c for ideas) at the end. A theme that ties into what they are learning in class can be used.
 - g. Ask the teacher if you can have a dance party with favorite music. Invite nurses, DSPs, recreational therapists, physical therapists, and even the principle.
2. Classroom snacks brought by parents.
Acceptable choices could include seasonal fresh fruit or vegetables, processed to acceptable textures for each individual, with yogurt, vegetable- or fruit-based sauces; non- or low-fat cheese with whole grain rich crackers, processed to acceptable textures for each individual; or low or non-caloric beverages, thickened to acceptable density for each individual.
3. Rewards and incentives. Foods and beverages will not be used as a reward, or withheld as punishment for any reason, such as for performance or behavior. Positive reinforcement such as verbal praise, charts with stickers and other such choices will be used instead.

Fundraising

Food and/or beverage fundraisers are not allowed on the school campus during the school day. Students and staff at St. Mary’s are not directly involved in fundraising efforts.

Nutrition Promotion

Nutrition promotion and education positively influences lifelong eating behaviors by using evidence-based techniques and nutrition messages, and by creating food environments that encourage healthy nutrition choices and encourage participation in school meal programs. Students and staff will receive consistent nutrition messages throughout the building including classrooms, living quarters, and common spaces. Nutrition promotion is most effective when implemented consistently through a comprehensive and multi-channel approach by school staff and teachers, parents, students, and the community.

St. Mary's will promote healthy food and beverage choices for all students who are fed orally, throughout the school campus, as well as encourage participation in school meal programs. This promotion will occur through at least:

- Implementing evidence-based healthy food promotion techniques through the school meal programs using Smarter Lunchroom techniques; and
- Promoting foods and beverages that meet the USDA Smart Snacks in School nutrition standards. Additional possible promotion techniques that St. Mary's and individual schools may use are available at www.healthiergeneration.org/smartsnacks.

Nutrition Education

St. Mary's aims to teach, model, encourage, and support healthy eating by students. Teachers and their assistants will provide nutrition education and engage in nutrition promotion, relevant to the needs and abilities of the students, that:

- is designed to provide students with the knowledge and skills necessary to promote
- and protect their health;
- is part of not only health education classes, but also integrated into other classroom instruction through subjects such as math, science, language arts, social sciences, and elective subjects;
- include enjoyable, developmentally-appropriate, culturally-relevant, and participatory activities, such as cooking demonstrations or lessons, promotions, taste-testing, farm visits, and school gardens;
- promote fruits, vegetables, whole-grain products, low-fat and fat-free dairy products, and healthy food preparation methods;
- emphasize caloric balance between food intake and energy expenditure (promotes physical activity/exercise);
- link with school meal programs, nutrition promotion activities, school gardens, Farm to School programs, other school foods, and nutrition-related community services;
- teach media literacy with an emphasis on food and beverage marketing; and
- include nutrition education training for teachers and other staff.

Essential Healthy Eating Topics in Health Education

As appropriate, St. Mary's will include in the health education curriculum the following essential topics on healthy eating:

- Categorizing food items by food group
- Life cycle of plants
- Predators and prey
- Picnic: healthy foods one might bring
- Living things: what they eat to survive
- Plant vs animal
- Where to store food: refrigerator vs pantry vs freezer
- Study of body function



Food and Beverage Marketing in Schools

St. Mary's is committed to providing a school environment that ensures opportunities for all students to practice healthy eating and physical activity behaviors throughout the school day while minimizing commercial distractions. St. Mary's strives to teach students how to make informed choices about nutrition, health, and physical activity. These efforts will be weakened if students are subjected to advertising on St. Mary's property that contains messages inconsistent with the health information St. Mary's is imparting through nutrition education and health promotion efforts. It is the intent of St. Mary's to protect and promote student's health by not permitting advertising and marketing on the school campus.

IV. Physical Activity

St. Mary's is a home for profoundly disabled individuals, many of whom have very limited voluntary movement. All students participate, if able, in adaptive physical education and recreational therapy that involves physical activity. Most students also have orders for ongoing physical therapy. Physical therapy includes using adaptive cycling, standers, walkers, swimming/water activity, and active and passive range of motion. St. Mary's is committed to providing these opportunities as they are applicable to our students. St. Mary's will ensure that these varied opportunities are in addition to, and not as a substitute for, physical education (addressed in "Physical Education" subsection).

Physical activity during the school day (including but not limited to recess, physical activity breaks, or physical education) **will not be withheld** as punishment for any reason. Upon request, St. Mary's will provide teachers and other school staff with a list of ideas for alternative ways to discipline students.

To the extent practicable, St. Mary's will ensure that its grounds and facilities are safe, and that equipment is available to students to be active. St. Mary's will conduct necessary inspections and repairs.

- Because St. Mary's is a residential facility, indoor and outdoor physical activity facilities will be open to students, their families, and the community outside of school hours.
- St. Mary's will ensure that inventories of physical activity supplies are known and, when necessary, will work with community partners to ensure sufficient quantities of equipment are available to encourage activity for as many students as possible.

Physical Education

St. Mary's will provide students with adaptive physical education, using an age-appropriate, sequential physical education curriculum consistent with national and state standards for physical education. The physical education curriculum will promote the benefits of a physically active lifestyle and will help students develop skills to engage in lifelong healthy habits, as well as incorporate essential health education concepts (discussed in the "*Essential Physical Activity Topics in Health Education*" subsection).

All students will be provided equal opportunity to participate in physical education classes within the medically prescribed limits of individual care plans and grade level appropriateness. St. Mary's will make appropriate accommodations to allow for equitable participation for all students and will adapt physical education classes and equipment as necessary.

St. Mary's physical education program will promote student physical fitness through individualized adaptive activity.

Essential Physical Activity Topics in Health Education

As appropriate, St. Mary's will include in the health education curriculum the following essential topics on physical activity:

- "Me Moves" – Yoga/Relaxation
- Stop, Breath, Think – Meditation/Reflective thinking
- Would you Rather? Question/Answer with exercise to perform for answers
- Yoga – Basic movements and breathing

Recess (Elementary) and Physical Activity Breaks (Elementary and Secondary)

St. Mary's is a home for profoundly disabled children and adolescents, many of whom have very limited voluntary movement. Students are provided positioning changes, physical therapy, and passive and active range of motion throughout the school day. Due to the special needs of this population, formal recess/activity breaks are not a part of the daily curriculum. However, St. Mary's recognizes that students are more attentive and ready to learn if provided with periodic opportunities to be physically active or stretch. Thus, students will be offered those opportunities throughout the day on all or most days during a typical school week, based on the need of each individual student and his or her ability.

Upon request, St. Mary's will provide resources and links to resources, tools, and technology with ideas for physical activity breaks. Resources and ideas are available through USDA and the Alliance for a Healthier Generation.

Active Academics

Teachers will incorporate movement and kinesthetic learning approaches into "core" subject instruction when possible (e.g., science, math, language arts, social studies, and others) and do their part to limit sedentary behavior during the school day.

St. Mary's will support classroom teachers, as appropriate, incorporating physical activity and employing kinesthetic learning approaches into core subjects by providing annual professional development opportunities and resources, including information on leading activities, activity options, as well as making available background material on the connections between learning and movement.

Teachers will serve as role models by being physically active alongside the students whenever feasible.

Before and After School Activities

St. Mary's offers opportunities for students to participate in physical activity before, and/or after the school day (or both) through a variety of methods. St. Mary's will encourage students to be physically active before and after school by:

- Participating in recreational activities that encourage movement within each student's physical limitations;
- Receiving medically prescribed physical therapy on an ongoing basis;
- Participating in community sports as physically able.

Active Transport

St. Mary's is a residential facility that houses a school. Students are encouraged to travel to and from classrooms as independently as they are able within the limits of their disabilities.

V. Other Activities that Promote Student Wellness

St. Mary's will integrate wellness activities across the entire school setting, not just in food and beverage venues, and physical activity facilities. St. Mary's will coordinate and integrate other initiatives related to physical activity, physical education, nutrition, and other wellness components so all efforts are complementary, not duplicative, and work towards the same set of goals and objectives promoting student well-being, optimal development, and strong educational outcomes.

St. Mary's is encouraged to coordinate content across curricular areas that promote student health, such as teaching nutrition concepts in mathematics, with consultation provided by either the school or St. Mary's curriculum experts.

All efforts related to obtaining federal, state, or association recognition for efforts, or grants/funding opportunities for healthy school environments will be coordinated with and complementary of the wellness policy, including ensuring the involvement of the committee.

All school-sponsored events will adhere to the wellness policy. All school-sponsored wellness events will include physical activity opportunities as appropriate.

Community Partnerships

St. Mary's will promote relationships with community partners (i.e., hospitals, universities/colleges, local businesses, etc.) in support of this wellness policy's implementation. Existing and new community partnerships and sponsorships will be evaluated to ensure that they are consistent with the wellness policy and its goals.

Community Health Promotion and Engagement

St. Mary's will promote to parents/caregivers, families, and the general community the benefits of and approaches for healthy eating and physical activity throughout the school year. Families will be informed and invited to participate in school-sponsored activities and will receive information about health promotion efforts.

As described in the "Community Involvement, Outreach, and Communications" subsection, St. Mary's will use electronic mechanisms (such as email or displaying notices on St. Mary's website), as well as non-electronic mechanisms, (such as newsletters, presentations to parents, or sending information home to parents), to ensure that all families are actively notified of opportunities to participate in school-sponsored activities and receive information about health promotion efforts.

Staff Wellness and Health Promotion

The committee will also focus on staff wellness issues, identify and disseminate wellness resources, and perform other functions that support staff wellness in coordination with human resources staff.

St. Mary's will implement strategies to support staff in actively promoting and modeling healthy eating and physical activity behaviors. St. Mary's promotes staff member participation in health promotion programs and will support programs for staff members on healthy eating/weight management that are accessible and free or low-cost.

Professional Learning

When feasible, St. Mary's will offer annual professional learning opportunities and resources for staff to increase knowledge and skills about promoting healthy behaviors. Professional learning will help staff understand the connections between academics and health and the ways in which health and wellness are integrated into ongoing district reform or academic improvement plans/efforts.

Glossary:

Extended School Day - time during before and after school activities that includes clubs, intramural sports, band and choir practice, drama rehearsals, etc.

School Campus - areas that are owned or leased by the school and used at any time for school-related activities such as the school building or on the school campus, including on the outside of the school building, school buses or other vehicles used to transport students, athletic fields, and stadiums (e.g., on scoreboards, coolers, cups, and water bottles), or parking lots.

School Day - midnight the night before to 30 minutes after the end of the instructional day.

Triennial – recurring every three years.

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