

2022 - 2023

# Wellness Committee



# Background of the Local Wellness Policy to Support School Wellness

Since 2004, state education agencies have required school districts to create a local wellness policy (LWP) and form district wellness committees, known as a “School Health Advisory Council” (SHAC). Over the past several years, school districts across the nation have revised LWPs to meet the minimum federal standards under the final rule of the Healthy, Hunger-Free Kids Act of 2010. Local board of education agencies have approved the mandated revisions and SHACs are requiring or highly encouraging that each school within the district establishes an ongoing school wellness committee that convenes to review school-level issues, in coordination with the SHAC.

With this in mind, North Penn SD has established sub-committees from the District Wellness Committee to convene, implement subject-based wellness efforts to comply with LWPs. Convening a wellness sub-committee is the best way to bring district staff, families, students and community members together to address pressing student health issues.

The Wellness Sub-Committees are also a way to ensure that district level wellness policies are implemented in specific subject areas. In addition, these committees represent the unique perspective of the community throughout our district. This enables the health priorities and activities put in place to truly reflect the needs and interests of our district.



# Vision & Mission



## Mission

The mission of the North Penn School District Wellness Committee is to promote health, well-being and the ability to succeed in a healthy environment by supporting students and staff: physically, mentally/emotionally, socially and intellectually.

## Vision

The District Wellness Committee works collaboratively with community resources, parents/guardians, students and staff to educate, encourage healthy choices and implement wellness initiatives by providing information, activities and services designed to support lifelong wellness.



# District Level vs. Sub Committees



## District Committee

A District-Level Council, sometimes referred to as the School Health Advisory Council (SHAC), is comprised of district, school and community members who meet at least four times per year to establish district goals and to oversee school health and safety policies and programs, including development, implementation, evaluation and updates of the district-level wellness policy.

## Sub Committees

A Sub Committee focuses on the needs of the student, staff and community partners in a specific subject area. The sub committee is comprised of school staff, students, families and community stakeholders.



# Wellness Subcommittees



## Employee Wellness

Fostering employees' physical, mental/emotional, social and intellectual health promotes staff well being, and by doing so, helps to support students' health and academic success. Healthy employees—including teachers, administrators, transportation, nutrition services, facilities and support staff—serve as powerful role models for students and encourages lifelong wellness.



## Social and Emotional Climate

The social and emotional climate of a school can impact student engagement in school activities; relationships with other students, staff, family, and community; and academic performance. A positive social and emotional climate is conducive to effective teaching and learning. Such climates promote health, growth, and development by providing a safe and supportive learning environment.



## Health Education, Physical Education, Physical Activity

Health education consists of learning experiences that provide the skills students need to make quality health decisions. Health education helps students acquire the knowledge, attitudes, and skills they need for making health-promoting decisions, achieving health literacy, adopting health-enhancing behaviors, and promoting the health of others.

Schools can create an environment that offers many opportunities for students to be physically active throughout their daily lives. A comprehensive school physical activity program includes physical education, physical activity during school, physical activity before and after school, staff involvement, and family and community engagement.



## Nutrition Environment & Services

The school nutrition environment provides students with opportunities to learn about and practice healthy eating through available foods and beverages, nutrition education, and messages about food in the cafeteria and throughout the school campus. Healthy eating has been linked in studies to improved learning outcomes and helps ensure that students are able to reach their full potential.

# Start Up

## Who Should Join The Wellness Committee



Groups with 6-12 active members are often the most effective. As you consider the following members, determine what size committee you will need to be effective. If you have a large group of people, think about a steering committee structure that includes subcommittees.

Role	Description
Administration	Administrative support is instrumental to ongoing efforts to improve school health and to support engagement with the Wellness Committee. A building administrator should be included and informed about planning activities. They can also help identify how wellness can be intergrated into other school committee initiatives.
School Staff	All teachers at your school have a stake in the development of healthy students and staff. Teacher involvement is critical because they spend the most time with the students, can influence the learning environment, and serve as role models. Teachers should be included and informed to support health and wellness activities. They can also support the implementation process to improve the development of the whole child. Maintenance, custodial and transportation staff are also valuable members to ensure students are safe and supported within the physical environment at school and in route to school. Maintenance and custodial staff preserve the school facilities to ensure they are in good working condition and provide adequate air quality.
Health & Physical Education Teachers	Health and physical education teachers are known as the physical activity and healthy eating champions in schools. They provide curricular support to improve student health as well as engage staff in wellness activities. Their involvement is critical to lead the implementation process and support professional development to facilitate physical activity and practices to improve student health.
School Nurse	The school nurse is known as the school health “specialist” that provides comprehensive health services to students. They can serve as a team member in providing preventive services, early identification of problems, interventions, and referrals to foster health and educational success.
Food Service Staff	The food service director and cafeteria staff are key players in helping the school wellness committee understand federal and state requirements and making important changes to the food and beverage offerings in your school. They also play a critical role in implementing healthy eating programs and managing the food serving process to ensure a clean, safe and healthy eating environment.
Parents & Families	Parent and family involvement is critical to ensure school wellness efforts will reach beyond the school. Parent and family members serve as natural advocates for students and can support spreading the word to other parents and help gain support for school wellness efforts. Their involvement also fosters partnerships among schools, family and community groups.
Student	Many of the changes that will be implemented to improve school health and wellness will directly impact students. Involving them in decision-making is critical to gain support, limit resistance and make programs and practices more successful.
Counselor	The school counselor provides counseling and services to support the whole child. School counselors play a critical role to provide input and resources to build a healthy social-emotional climate to support student health and academic achievement.
Community Members	Community members derive from various backgrounds. They may have concerns that the school wellness committee may not have considered and resources that can be leveraged to support wellness priorities for students and staff. Health care professionals, such as a local physician or hospital staff, can provide general information about health-related issues that are affecting students within the community. They can also provide resources and/or services to support improving student health.

# Considerations for Sub Committee Members

## **Represent the diversity of your community.**

It is important to include the whole school community in your efforts to improve healthy eating and physical activity. As you invite members to your sub committee, consider the diversity of your student population.

## **Invite people with a deep understanding of the culture, norms and dynamics of your community.**

As you reach out into your community to invite business leaders, youth serving organizations and others, be sure to extend invitations to those that seem to truly understand the community surrounding your school. Also consider those who have extensive networks and connections in the community.

## **Engage people with a passion for kids and health.**

At some point in your planning and implementation, you will need committee members who can be strong advocates for the changes you are making in your school. This work is sometimes met with resistance and barriers. Committee members with a commitment to healthy eating and physical activity will overcome these challenges.

## **Involve people who can commit the time.**

Many school staff members and community members are asked to sit on multiple committees. Be clear about how much time the wellness committee meetings and activities will take. Time is often seen as the biggest barrier to getting things accomplished. Think about reaching out to those that other committees may not have thought to include.

## **Involve key players/influencers in the school and community.**

Reach out to those in your school community that have the greatest ability to network and persuade others. Parents, staff members and community members all have people whose opinions and actions they trust. This role will be essential as you begin to implement your action plan.

## **Elevate the voices of people that are least powerful as well as the most powerful.**

Your wellness committee should be truly representative of your school community in all aspects. Think about those whose voices are not usually heard and include them. Be sure to use facilitation techniques that will allow the least powerful to feel they have power and influence within your committee.

## **Involve skeptics as well as believers.**

It is important to hear voices from a variety of perspectives. If you know that you want to make changes in competitive foods/vending options, it can be extremely helpful to have the marketing teacher or student.



## Tips for Involving Students and Families

Students are often interested in making their schools and communities healthier. Because many of the changes the committees may be implementing directly impact students, gaining their input and support will ultimately enable change to be better understood, accepted and happen more quickly. Students are often the best advocates for healthy schools—they are able and articulate spokespeople with school decision makers and community members.

### Tips for Student Participation

If you decide to invite students to participate on your wellness sub committee, here are some helpful tips to ensure that student participation is productive and successful:

1. Be clear about roles and expectations
2. Create more than one student position
3. Provide skill-building opportunities with youth committee members beyond the wellness sub committee meetings
4. Prioritize students in your action plan
5. Invite your student member to cultivate leadership in their peers

With or without student participation on the wellness sub committees, encourage students to create their own committee to expand student input about healthy changes on the school campus. The status of wellness policy implementation should be communicated annually through district newsletters, district websites, and on social media. Student's input on wellness activities throughout should also be included. To ensure effective school and community engagement check out the **Wellness Policy Communication Checklist**.

### Tips for Family Participation

The wellness sub committees and the priorities its members set should represent the interests and needs of the entire school as well as the communities that the school encompasses. The NP District Wellness Committee recognizes the importance of representation of family members on your sub committee.

In addition to having valuable insights and perceptions of the school within its community, family members reflect the diversity of your community in a number of ways. However, it can be a challenge to reach out to families and keep them coming to meetings.

Try these tips:

1. Promote the meeting dates and times widely and in advance
2. Share a survey with parent committees, such as PTA or PTO groups
3. Make sure the communication is representative of the diverse school community
4. Host a meeting at a later time for more parents to participate in one or more meetings a year

# How to Keep a Committee Active and Effective

## Meeting and Time Commitment

Studies indicate that regular meetings and focused agendas enable groups to stay engaged, excited and effective. Once membership is determined, the wellness sub committee should meet at least four times during the school year. As a group, the wellness sub committee will determine roles such as facilitator, and record keeper. These roles, once assigned, may involve a greater time commitment. The committee can also consider rotating responsibilities.

## A Shared Vision and Mission

- Spend the time at the beginning to define a collective vision and mission for your work. Each wellness sub committee member brings a unique perspective and interest to shared efforts. Facilitate a process that allows members to share their views and find common ground and goals. This focus on commonalities will give the group its vision and mission.
- Keep the priorities developed in your action plan connected to those interests that individuals shared that may be more specific to their roles and experiences. This will keep members engaged in the work because they will see the relevance to their own priorities.

## Consistent Decision Making

- Once a decision process has been discussed and agreed upon as a group, consistently apply the established process.
- Be clear about decisions as they are made by utilizing an agenda format that captures decisions and next steps. Clarity about this will help all members stay informed about what the committee is doing and avoid continually going back over discussions when agreement has already been reached.

## Effective Meetings

- Utilize your action plan to create agendas and keep the group focused on the actions you have identified as part of your mission.
- Divide duties and action items so that all members feel utilized and part of the group.
- Refer to the meeting checklist in this guide to ensure that your meetings run smoothly and are productive.

## Celebrations of Success

Celebrating success is a critical part of team building and group process. Wellness sub committee members will appreciate being recognized for individual accomplishments or achievements. Take the time in meetings to thank and acknowledge members who have helped your committee meet milestones or goals.

## Support for Success

Here are additional tips that can help make your wellness sub committee more effective and successful:

- Garner administrative support—get one on the team! Share goals and progress to align with school vision
- Dedicated meeting time
- Provide opportunities for committee members to contribute to the group in ways that are small and large
- Get the entire district involved in some way by using multiple communication strategies, such as staff meetings, parent/student newsletters, website or social media outlets
- Divide the team into task teams
- Set smaller, achievable goals that can be completed in a month or two to give the committee success
- Share your progress and success with others

# Communication Strategies

## Keeping Wellness Sub Committee Members Informed

With a variety of communication tools available, it should be easy to keep sub committee members informed and connected. However, people have a wide continuum of access to and comfort with technology so you will likely need to utilize various methods of communication. Think ahead about what type of information you will need to communicate between and prior to meetings. As you recruit and bring your members together, be sure to collect contact information along with preferences on how members would like to stay informed. **A wellness sub committee roster** is included in this toolkit in the appendix.

The sub committee roster also provides an opportunity for members to grant permission to share their information with other members. Ensure that if you break into subgroups that those groups also have a communication plan.

## Communication Ideas

- Agendas
- Meeting minutes/notes
- Surveys
- Subcommittee reports (if your group breaks into task groups)
- Calendar of meeting dates
- Notification of health-related community/school events





# Healthy Committee Six-Step Process

The six-step process is a circular journey where committees continuously take a status check, work on making improvements, learn from successes and challenges, and keep pushing the needle forward. When committees repeat the cycle each year, their healthy changes become embedded in the culture of the school and efforts to become a healthy district are sustained.



# Implementation

**Step 1:** Join one of the North Penn Wellness Sub committees.

**Step 2:** Prepare in advance for the meeting by:

- o Identifying an initial meeting date and time that would be feasible for people you are interested in inviting.
- o Review the **Leaders Guide**
- o Utilizing the **Wellness Sub Committee Sample Meeting Agenda and Committee Roster**

**Step 3:** Review the **Assessment Guide**. This document will provide guidance on who the best person is to answer the questions, identify evidence needed, and provide an award level to celebrate success.

**Step 4:** Collect and review data and/or complete a needs assessment to determine the committee's next steps.

**Step 5:** Complete an action plan—creating an action plan allows wellness committees to assign tasks and follow a plan. Your action plan should be a living document that reflects your current priorities and capacity. Big changes become much more manageable when you consider the smaller steps that lead you to your goal. It is recommended to pick one to three goals to work on each year, with the option of adding more later.

When selecting action items to include in the plan, think about selecting criteria action items that are **important, feasible, and sustainable to achieve to support reach and impact**

**o Important:** Think about how important it is to achieve a healthy school environment.

**o Feasible:** Are there resources available to make this a reality? Do we have the right sub committee members on board and available?

**o Sustainable:** How can something take hold in the short term and last beyond initial implementation?

By prioritizing with these principles in mind, your sub committee will be on the path to creating a purposeful action plan that helps achieve your district's wellness vision.

**o Using Your Action Plan as a Meeting Agenda:** The action plan can be used as a meeting agenda to discuss action items, resources needed, timelines, and who will take the lead for implementation.

**o Track Progress to Measure Success:** Once an action plan item has been implemented it is important to make the change on the Assessment to reflect progress. This change will support tracking progress to measure success over time.

**o Connect with Experts:** Work with the District Wellness Committee to create and cultivate relationships with community experts to share in a Experts Contact List

**Step 6: Celebrate Success**—Share progress with the school community to celebrate small or big achievements.