



Embracing Wellness in the Syracuse City School District

Onondaga County Health Department, Syracuse, NY September 2017

Schools

Eating Healthy / Moving More / Learning More = Academic Success

The Syracuse City School District (SCSD) and the Onondaga County Health Department (OCHD) are collaborating on a five-year grant initiative through the New York State Department of Health, “Creating Healthy Schools and Communities (CHSC) in Onondaga County.” The goal of the SCSD and OCHD collaboration is to foster academic achievement through healthy eating and physical activity in the school environment. There is significant evidence that academic achievement is directly related to healthy eating and physical activity. The school is an ideal environment to address public health concerns such as enhanced nutrition education, increased physical activity, and other health-related initiatives. The SCSD has a student population where 41.5% are overweight or obese. In addition, 84% of the student population is eligible for free or reduced-price lunch. These rates combined with many other social factors have led to an increased effort to work closely with the district leadership to revise the existing wellness policy and bring enhancements to the school environment.

The SCSD wellness committee was re-established in the fall of 2015 and had its first meeting on February 10, 2016. This committee has representation from SCSD administration (Director of Food and Nutrition Services; Administrator for Health, Physical Education and Athletics; and both the Medical Director and the Supervisor for Health Services), Onondaga County Health Department staff from the CHSC program, SUNY Upstate Medical University, and multiple local community organizations. A policy subcommittee was formed to include members of the district wellness committee that were involved with the development of the original wellness policy, as well as, other district wellness committee members. The subcommittee met several times. They reviewed the existing policy and made several recommendations for revisions based on a model policy developed by the Alliance for a Healthier Generation, U.S. Department of Agriculture’s (USDA) Summary of the Final Rule, and input from SCSD administrative staff. These revisions were necessary to best align the SCSD wellness policy with the requirements in the new Federal Rule. In August 2016, the policy subcommittee submitted a revised and enhanced draft policy that was thorough, realistic, and one that would make a positive and healthy impact on students of the SCSD.



Creating Healthy Schools and Communities

The Superintendent of the SCSD, Jaime Alicea, presented the revised Wellness Policy to the SCSD Board of Education at the Education Work Session on October 26, 2016. The revised Wellness Policy received final approval and was formally adopted by the Board of Education on November 9, 2016.

In support of the subcommittee's efforts, several activities took place to support and highlight the proposed revised changes to the policy. These activities began in the first year of the grant and many continued through the second year of the grant. They have included:

- Training on Professional Development (PD) days with school building physical education, health, and family and consumer science teachers: linking wellness policies to academic achievement, overview of the USDA's Final Rule, Comprehensive School Physical Activity Programs (CSPAP), Yoga and Mindfulness, and conducting yoga in the classroom
- Coordination of a PD training on healthier food for all food service personnel
- Conducting an in-service training for all district nursing personnel on the importance of daily physical activity and healthy eating as they relate to academic achievement
- Providing technical assistance with the development and implementation of mini-grants funded through Action for Healthy Kids to six school buildings and awarding mini-grants through OCHD to enhance opportunities for increased physical activity
- Creation of recess bags containing physical activity equipment for students to use during recess at several elementary school buildings, supporting the procurement of a new playground at one of the school buildings, and providing physical activity equipment to classroom teachers
- Development of a wall mural that is fixed on the wall in every school building cafeteria throughout the district that highlights the new wellness policy

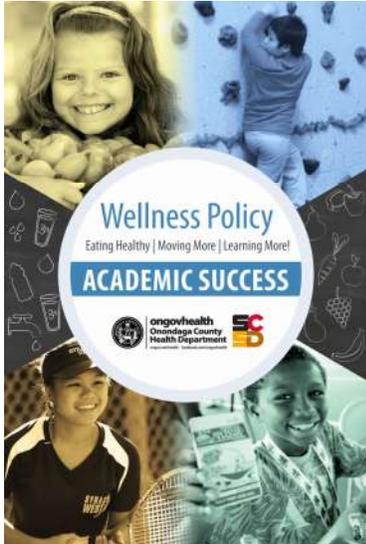


This mural is displayed on the wall in every school cafeteria throughout the Syracuse City School District.

OCHD's CHSC Program continues to work with the SCSD to provide guidance and engage in strategies to develop plans for implementing the revised Wellness Policy in each of the buildings throughout the district. A 24" x 36" wall mural highlighting the Wellness Policy was developed in collaboration with the SCSD's Communications Department. The mural is displayed on the wall in the entryway to every school building throughout the district as a strategy to bring attention to the SCSD's ongoing commitment to wellness as a means of achieving academic success. In addition, the CHSC School Team presented "Making the Grade with Wellness Policy," the required policy training developed by the Alliance for a Healthier Generation, at the SCSD's Summer Summit on August 23, 2017. This workshop was very interactive and participants

learned to differentiate between regular snacks and "Smart Snacks" as well as the drinks that are allowed at each of the building levels.

The workshop was very well received and was presented again at the first Professional Development Day held on August 31st for the health, physical education, and family and consumer science teachers throughout the district. A total of 65 staff participated in this training day. The murals, along with these training sessions,



This mural is displayed on the wall in every school building throughout the SCSD

provide a platform to bring the district's newly revised and adopted wellness policy to the forefront with district staff at the beginning of the school year.

The best part of the workshop was "having so much muscle behind what I have been pushing".
Comment from a SCSD classroom teacher that participated in the SCSD Summer Summit presentation: Making the Grade with Wellness Policy.

Efforts continue as we develop and implement strategies to raise awareness about the wellness policy and work with individual school buildings to adopt sustainable changes that are aligned with the revised wellness policy. Future plans include, but are not limited to, assisting with the development of active school building wellness teams, providing additional mini-grants for increased physical activity, training for classroom teachers on ways to incorporate physical activity into the classroom, and other sustainable strategies.

SCSD Professional Development



Determining what items meet Smart Snack Guidelines



Spider Web Activity to build buy-in for collaboration to educate a healthy child

Learn more about the Onondaga County Health Department's Healthy Communities Initiatives and the partnership between the Syracuse City School District and the CHSC Initiative

www.healthyliving.ongov.net

