

Somerset Public Schools & Somerset Berkley Regional School District Wellness Policy

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Background

Understanding that physical and mental health, emotional well-being, and positive development are inextricably linked with academic success, Somerset and Somerset Berkley Regional School Districts have worked to transform the districts' capacity to meet the health needs of the Somerset and Somerset Berkley communities. Improving overall student health is a key factor in reaching the ambitious academic targets set forth in our Strategic Plan. Beyond the academic imperative however, school, civic and community leaders have a responsibility to help Somerset and Berkley's children overcome health barriers that may prevent them from successfully meeting the challenges of reaching adulthood and assuming their roles as the eventual leaders and stewards of our community. Our Vision of the Graduate challenges us to develop young people who are more than scholars. It calls for graduates who are healthy in both mind and body, prepared to make wise choices to ensure their own physical, mental, and emotional well-being.

To create a healthy school environment where the healthy choice is the easy choice, we have developed this policy regarding wellness initiatives in SPS and SBR. This policy will take effect August 30, 2021.

Policy

Somerset Public School District (SPS) and Somerset Berkley Regional School District (SBR) aim to actively promote the social, emotional and physical health and wellness of all students to advance both their healthy development and readiness to learn. Student and staff wellness is a core value of both school districts. SPS and SBR strive to be one of the healthiest school districts in the country. SPS and SBR will ensure that the healthy choice is the easy choice and that students learn the skills and knowledge needed to make those choices. SPS and SBR are committed to implementing a [Whole School Whole Community Whole Child \(WSCC\)](#) approach to wellness, as recommended by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) and ASCD (Association of Supervisors and Curriculum Development). As a part of this approach, SPS and SBR will meet the health and wellness needs of all students through prevention, intervention and intensive response. As a result, all SPS and SBR students will be challenged, supported, engaged, safe and healthy.

The District Wellness Policy is intended to link new and existing wellness-related policies and convey a framework for creating safe, healthy and welcoming school environments. SPS and SBR shall take a comprehensive approach to reviewing and incorporating changes in policy, curriculum, and operating procedures to promote healthy lifestyles and sustainable wellness practices for all students and staff. The work of implementing this policy relies on the work and collaboration of instructional, operational, clinical and administrative staff at schools and central office. SPS and SBR shall develop the capacity of schools to implement the policy and improve the quality and equity of programs, services, and supports. This policy is inclusive of all students, staff, and families.

A. District Wellness Council

The Somerset Public School District and the Somerset Berkley Regional School District shall maintain a District Wellness Council. [The Superintendent shall appoint members, including a District Wellness Council Chairperson\(s\) to serve as a liaison between the District Wellness Council and the Superintendent, and ensure the active functioning of the Council.](#) This advisory group will develop, recommend, review and advise on implementation of school district policies that address student and staff wellness. The District Wellness Policy shall be reviewed once yearly by the District Wellness Council and considered for updates based on regulations, research-based best practices, input from schools and the community, and model school wellness policies. The District Wellness Council shall seek ongoing feedback from SPS and SBR community stakeholders. Additionally, the District Wellness Council will develop an annual Wellness Action Plan with SMART goals for the coming school year.

The District Wellness Council will be comprised of District Wellness Council (DWC) Working Groups to include the various portions of the District Wellness Policy and the District Wellness Plan including, but not limited to:

- Cultural Proficiency
- School Food and Nutrition Promotion

- Comprehensive Physical Activity and Physical Education
- Comprehensive Health Education
- Healthy School Environment
- SEL Safe & Supportive Schools
- Health Services
- Staff Wellness

The District Wellness Council and DWC Working Groups shall include at a minimum representatives from a wide range of school health and health-related disciplines, including school nurses, school nutrition and physical activity staff, community agencies serving youth, parents, students, and the school committee. Appointees to the maximum extent possible shall reflect the cultural, linguistic and ethnic composition of the community. To the extent feasible, appointees shall include representatives of local boards of health, school physicians and local health care providers, such as hospitals and primary care providers. The District Wellness Council will implement a plan for involving and engaging all of these stakeholders. The District Wellness Council shall meet at least four times a year. Committee reports, as well as minutes of the meetings, including the names of attendees, shall be maintained and shall be provided to the Department of Public Health or the Department of Elementary and Secondary Education upon request.

1.) Stakeholder Participation in the District Wellness Council & DWC Working Groups / Informing and Updating the Public

The Districts will develop a district-level communication strategy and communication guidance for schools to increase awareness of the policy and its importance for creating a safe, healthy, and welcoming school.

- a. The following are responsibilities for informing stakeholders about the policy:
 1. SPS and SBR will post the District Wellness Policy on the SPS and SBR websites.
 2. Schools will share a link to the District Wellness Policy on their school’s website.
 3. SPS and SBR shall notify families and the public via a School Committee Meeting about the content of the District Wellness Plan and any updates to the District Wellness Policy on an annual basis.
 4. SPS and SBR will ensure that the District Wellness Policy and any public announcement related to the policy are available in the languages that represent the school community.

- b. The following are responsibilities for informing stakeholders about the District Wellness Council and DWC Working Groups.
 1. SPS and SBR will make available to the public and school community, on the SPS and SBR websites members of the District Wellness Council and DWC Working Groups.
 2. SPS and SBR will post the District Wellness Action Plan SMART Goals on the SPS and SBR websites each school year.

3. SPS and SBR will provide an annual update to School Committees, families and the public via a School Committee Meeting about each DWC Working Group's progress toward the District Wellness Action Plan SMART Goals.

c. The following are responsibilities for engaging stakeholders:

1. The District Wellness Council will encourage diverse membership on councils and working groups, attendance at meetings, and participation of all SPS and SBR stakeholders by connecting with School Council, Student Council, PTOs, and School Committees.
2. SPS and SBR will share information on the District website about how the public can get involved with the District Wellness Council and DWC Working Groups.
3. SPS and SBR will develop methods to educate students about wellness policies and ways they can be involved in the District Wellness Council when developmentally appropriate.

2.) Monitoring, Assessment and Reporting

The Somerset Public Schools and Somerset Berkley Regional School District Wellness Council Working Groups will monitor progress toward meeting annual SMART Goals. The District Wellness Council Chairperson will provide an annual update to School Committees, families and the public via a School Committee Meeting about each DWC Working Group's progress toward the District Wellness Action Plan SMART Goals.

3.) Wellness Policy Leadership

School principals are responsible for ensuring their school complies with the Wellness Policy. At the district level, the Superintendent or his designees are responsible for overseeing monitoring, reporting, and communication of the SPS and SBR Wellness Policy and responsible for supporting implementation and monitoring of specific components of the policy.

B. Cultural Proficiency

Somerset Public School District and Somerset Berkley Regional School District are committed to creating culturally proficient districts that embraces at its fundamental core the culturally sustaining and affirming beliefs and practices that honor differences, while mitigating the effects of concentrated poverty and institutional racism, in the effort to eliminate gaps and promote health and wellness for all. The districts are committed to providing authentic learning opportunities for every child in every classroom in every school to ensure they develop into healthy, engaged, self-determined, and independent learners that are college and career ready. Cultural Proficiency is an approach that raises awareness of individual and institutional culture and bias, encourages cultural learning and relationship building in order to respect, celebrate and build on cultural strengths and diversity. Cultural diversity includes but is not limited to group and/or individual identities based on race, ethnicity, nationality, immigration status, religion, language, gender, sexual orientation, gender identity, ability, social class, and home life or family structure. Cultural Proficiency should be integrated into the implementation of other areas of the District Wellness Policy, and is called out here to establish specific actions to be taken by the districts and the schools.

The districts will support the development of staff and administrators' competencies to build cultural proficiency in classrooms, schools, and school & district leadership. Schools shall collectively assess their organizational structure, policies and school-wide practices for bias(es) as well as examine their physical environment, classroom curricula, instructional materials and wellness promotions. Schools will use this assessment to inform their annual District Wellness Action Plan. The District and the schools shall include student, family and community participation in decision-making bodies and create structures for feedback from students, families and communities and increased engagement of all families in wellness-related policies and committees. This includes recognizing specific barriers faced by families of English Learners and English Learners with disabilities by targeting outreach to these groups and using the Translation and Interpretation Unit to translate family-focused communications and to provide interpretation as requested during meetings. The work of creating culturally proficient districts requires the participation of schools, departments, and employees across the District and requires engagement in interdepartmental collaboration.

C. School Food & Nutrition Promotion

1. Nutrition Education

The Food Services Department (FSD) will teach, model, encourage, and support healthy eating for all students as well as a variety of health topics that are most relevant to our SPS and SBRHS students. The district will provide nutrition education and engage in nutritional promotion which is aligned to the national and state standards for students at all levels. This will be done by:

- a. Providing knowledge and skills to students necessary to promote and protect their health.
- b. Providing enjoyable, developmentally-appropriate, culturally-relevant, and participatory activities such as cooking demonstrations, taste testing, farm visits, school gardens; Farm to School programs, and nutrition related community services.
- c. SPS and SBRHS food service program will encourage and support healthy eating choices for all students by providing education on food served by consistent nutrition messages throughout the district.
- d. Adequate and ongoing professional development training for all food service staff each year.

2. Nutrition Guidelines for Schools Meals

- a. SPS / SBRHS school meal programs shall comply with all federal, state and local requirements and are accessible to all students. All schools within the districts participate in the USDA child nutrition programs including National School Lunch Program (NSLP), Seamless Summer Option (SSO) and School Breakfast Program (SBP). Our school meal programs aim to improve the health of school children, combat childhood obesity and model healthy eating, while accommodating cultural food preferences and special dietary needs.
- b. Food Safety and Security Guidelines shall be adhered to for all foods served in schools. All school nutrition program directors, managers and staff will meet or exceed hiring and annual training requirements per USDA professional standards for child nutrition professionals.
- c. Encourage students to participate in breakfast, lunch, and afterschool meals programs and avoid stigmatizing children who participate.
- d. Provide food with “clean” labels that are free of unwanted ingredients including, trans fats, high fructose corn syrup, artificial colors, artificial sweeteners, additives, and artificial preservatives.
- e. The Child Nutrition Program school meals program, an essential educational support activity, shall aim to be financially self-supporting.
- f. Water: To promote hydration, free, portable water will be made available (water fountains) to all students throughout the school day and throughout every school. The district will make drinking water available where school meals are served during mealtimes.

3. Nutrition Standards for Competitive Foods

The district is committed to ensuring that all food and beverages available to students in schools, during the school day, and extended school day, support and encourage healthy eating. Food and beverages sold outside of school meal programs, shall meet or exceed USDA Smart Snack and Massachusetts School Nutrition Standards for Competitive Foods and Beverages.

4. Celebrations and Rewards During the School Day

Using food as a reward or as an incentive is prohibited, unless a student's IEP specifically indicates using food as a part of a behavior modification protocol. Due to the increasing number of students with life-threatening food allergies, staff and students will not share foods. Schools should not celebrate individual birthday celebrations with food. The use of non-food celebrations/recognitions for birthdays is permitted. For other classroom celebrations, parents are prohibited from sending snacks to be shared by the entire classroom.

6. Food and Beverage Marketing in Schools

The School District is committed to providing a healthy school environment, which provides the opportunity for students to learn how to make informed choices about nutrition, health and physical activity. Any foods and beverages marketed or promoted to students in schools during the school day will also meet or exceed USDA Smart Snacks and Massachusetts School Nutrition Standards for Competitive Foods and Beverages. Food and beverage marketing is defined as advertising and other promotions in schools. This can include forms of communication such as oral, written, or graphic statements, all of which promote the sale of food or beverage products made by a producer, manufacturer, seller or other entity with a commercial interest in the product.

7. Food Safety

- a. Ensure kitchen facilities (both prep and satellite locations) are inspected twice a year by the Inspectional Services Division (Local- Health Department).
- b. FSD will implement a Hazard Analysis and Control Points Plan that provides regulations in following safety procedures for food recalls, emergency preparedness to avoid foodborne illnesses, and the spread of infectious diseases.
- c. Ensure all lead employees are allergy awareness certified and Serve Safe Certified

D. Comprehensive Physical Activity and Physical Education

Somerset Public Schools and Somerset Berkley Regional School District are committed to a district-wide, strategic effort to increase all students' physical activity and fitness by bringing more physical education and physical activity to schools; improving the quality of physical education and recess, and increasing the equity of physical activity programs and resources across our schools. Activities will be inclusive to meet the needs, interests, abilities and cultural diversity of all students, including students of all gender identities, students with disabilities, and students with special healthcare needs.

Numerous studies indicate that regularly engaging in moderate-to-vigorous exercise contributes to overall physical and mental health and that nurturing an exercise habit among children lays the foundation for lifelong fitness. Research also shows that increased physical activity increases children's cognitive function, ability to concentrate in class, and academic performance. Thus, as a part of a strategic effort to improve academic performance, SPS and SBR recognize and promote the benefits of a [Comprehensive Physical Activity Program](#), where quality physical education is the cornerstone and additional physical activity is integrated throughout the school day, into before and after school programs, staff wellness and family engagement activities.

SPS and SBR are committed to a strong athletics program that offers a variety of programs and is accessible to all students. Athletics participation can contribute to student fitness, wellness, character development and a lifelong commitment to a physically active lifestyle. Research shows that healthy children are better learners and connected students are more likely to stay in school. In this way, athletics contributes to the academic success of students. Additionally, by establishing a safe, supportive and engaging school environment, athletic programs encourage school connectedness and create a climate where healthy competition and support fill the school with spirit and a sense of community.

In accordance with state law, all schools must provide all students in all grades with opportunities for physical activity. Schools must offer at least 120 minutes of in-school physical activity weekly in grades PreK-5, including required physical education, movement breaks, recess, or lessons involving movement structured to support moderate-to-vigorous physical activity. In grades PreK-5, students are expected to have at least 15 minutes of daily recess.

All schools must offer standards-based physical education (PE) for all students in all grades. Schools are required to offer at least 45 minutes of weekly PE in grades PreK-6 and at least one semester (equivalent of a half school year) of PE each year in grades 9-12. We recommend that schools provide an average of 80 minutes of weekly PE in grades 6-8.

Extended day programs and out of school time, which includes before and after school programs, are expected to offer an array of physical activity opportunities to ensure all students are able to participate. Schools shall offer opportunities for students to participate in physical activity before and/or after the school day, including extended day time, through a variety of

methods including physical activity clubs, physical activity in before/after school programs, intramurals and interscholastic sports.

Reference: <https://www.shapeamerica.org/cspap/what.aspx>

E. Comprehensive Health Education

Somerset Public Schools and Somerset Berkley Regional School District provide comprehensive Pre-K through grade 12 health education that is medically accurate, age and developmentally appropriate, culturally and linguistically sustaining, and implemented in a safe and supportive learning environment where all students feel valued. All schools must take a skills-based approach to teach comprehensive health education addressing a variety of topics, such as tobacco, vaping, alcohol, and drug abuse, healthy eating and nutrition, mental and emotional health, personal health and wellness, physical activity, safety and injury prevention, violence prevention, and comprehensive sexual health education that is [LGBTQIA](#) inclusive. Comprehensive health education curriculum shall be modified as needed for students with disabilities and students who are English learners. It shall promote healthy lifestyle habits, healthy relationships and health literacy for all students. Health education curricula will align with the Massachusetts Comprehensive Health Curriculum Framework and National Health Education Standards, as well as the National Sexuality Education Standards. Qualified and trained teachers will implement the curricula.

All schools will follow relevant promotion and graduation requirements that include: Health education that includes at minimum the Healthy and Safe Body Unit in elementary school; two semesters of health education in grades 6 to 8 taught by a licensed health education teacher; and a one semester course of health education in total in grades 9 to 12 taught by a licensed health education teacher. In addition to these course requirements, health education topics will be integrated into other subject areas where possible, so as to reinforce their importance, provide additional skill practice, and demonstrate the connections of health concepts to many other content areas.

F. Healthy School Environment

Somerset Public School District and Somerset Berkley Regional School District recognize that healthy physical environments are critical to the prevention of asthma and other chronic and infectious diseases that impact learning. SPS and SBR are committed to providing high-performing school buildings and grounds that are clean, in good repair, have healthy indoor air quality and water quality, sanitary and accessible bathrooms, and use resources efficiently. SPS and SBR strive to provide adequate facilities for physical activity that are accessible and culturally-inclusive learning environments that positively impact productivity, health, and wellness of all students and staff. To address environmental risk factors for chronic and infectious disease, each school will receive an annual building inspection to evaluate health and safety conditions such as leaks, mold, pests, chemical storage and cleanliness. The Superintendent will convene the District Health & Safety Committee as needed to promote and raise awareness of the health of the building environment and to recommend environmental guidelines and programs to ensure continuous improvement. District departments and all schools shall comply with existing federal and state regulations, town ordinances and District policies related to promoting and managing healthy school environments, including but not limited to:

- Green Cleaners
- Integrated Pest Management
- Trash and Recycling
- Infection Prevention & Control
- Tobacco Free Environmental Policy
- Environmental Inspection/Audit
- Student Safety/Health in School Shops
- Consult with the Somerset Water Department for monitoring and regular reporting
- Laboratories and Chemical Inventory “Right to Know” Law
- Idling of buses and other motor vehicles on school property

Schools shall regularly assess the quality and quantity of SPS and SBR facilities including, but not limited to areas for bus/parent-pickup and traffic flow, physical activity, physical education, and schoolyards, and report maintenance needs for these facilities.

G. Safe and SEL Supportive Schools

Somerset Public School District and Somerset Berkley Regional School District shall create and maintain a safe and supportive school environment for all students that is culturally proficient, engaging, equitable, and inclusive providing skills-based education to promote healthy relationships and social emotions development as well as support services. Prevention, promotion and intervention-based work will address and integrate social emotional health and behavioral health. SPS and SBR will continue to foster a variety of integrated community partnerships to maximize support to students, families and schools. Partnerships in this area include allied city and state agencies, universities, hospitals and other community based organizations. Schools will better meet the needs of students by creating safe and inclusive climates that are responsive to all forms of bullying and violence including bias-based conduct, suicide, intimate partner violence, sexual harassment, and assault. We will continue screening and promotion efforts, including mental health and substance use screening tools. Special attention will be given to vulnerable student populations, including but not limited to LGBTQIA students, immigrant students, students with disabilities, ELL students and ELL students with disabilities, expectant and parenting students, court-involved students, students experiencing homelessness, and students experiencing trauma. These efforts will create a safe and supportive learning environment that optimizes academic outcomes for all students. Implementation of these efforts requires school psychologists, social workers, school adjustment counselors, building-level administrators, guidance counselors, school nurses, community partners, trained classroom teachers, and support staff working together on an effective student support team. SPS and SBR shall develop and implement a plan for K-12 SEL standards.

SPS and SBR shall put in place systems that align to the district-accepted Multi-tiered System of Supports (MTSS) framework to ensure that all students have access to key resources and services in a safe and supportive environment. Schools shall adopt a MTSS Framework to support the development of a continuum of behavioral health supports and interventions falling across three tiers: *Tier 1*: Prevention and promotion, *Tier 2*: At-risk interventions and services and *Tier 3*: Intensive interventions and services. Embedded into MTSS is the use of positive behavioral interventions and supports as well as social emotional learning instruction designed to create safe and supportive school climates and build the skills of staff and students. The Comprehensive Behavioral Health Model (CBHM) is an example of an evidence-based MTSS-Behavioral framework designed to meet the behavioral health needs of students and includes evidence-based practices interventions and data to determine effectiveness. CBHM is used in SPS and SBR schools and will be made available to all schools. CBHM has been proven to promote positive behavioral health and reduce barriers to learning for students in participating schools. MTSS framework, including CBHM, incorporates the following key elements:

- Assessment including universal social emotional and behavioral health screening (i.e. DESSA, Ruler Program, etc.)
- Instruction including social emotional learning curriculum and delivery of services (i.e. Responsive Classroom)
- Data-based decision making

- Building staff leadership and capacity (i.e. DESSA Assessment Training, Responsive Classroom Training, Mental Health First Aid Training, etc.)
- Effective district and school structures and procedures (e.g. student support teams MTSS, support services, Mental Health First Aid Training, etc.)

In addition, schools shall follow all SPS and SBR policies that address specific areas of school safety and climate including the Code of Conduct and other related policies such as those related to crisis management, sexual harassment, discrimination, and assault.

H. Health Services

Somerset Public School District's and Somerset Berkley Regional School District's Health Services support students to be healthy, engaged, safe, and academically challenged by providing high quality, cost-effective in-school health care. SPS and SBR nurses are responsible for evaluating and managing the health needs of all students. That includes the following:

- Case management students with special health needs, including chronic or acute illnesses
- Monitoring and administering medications and medical procedures as prescribed by a student's primary care provider or medical specialist
- Providing first aid and emergency care
- Screening students for height, weight, Body Mass Index, vision, hearing, scoliosis, substance use (screening, brief intervention and referral to treatment)
- Managing student medical records and immunization records
- Managing the control of communicable diseases
- Coordinating safety protocols for students with food allergies (seating)
- Working with other school-based groups to provide safe and healthy environments

In addition, school nurses engage in one-on-one education, small group health counseling, wellness promotion, and preventive services as part of the provision of care coordination services. SPS and SBR school nurses ensure access and/or referrals to the medical home or private health care provider. Where lawful, SPS and SBR encourage positive communication and involvement with family regarding health services. Health Services actively collaborates with school and community support services to increase the ability of students and families to adapt to health and social stressors, such as chronic health conditions, adverse childhood experiences (ACE) and other social, emotional and economic determinants of health. SPS and SBR Health Services are committed to building partnerships with city agencies, medical providers, and community partners to leverage additional resources and health services.

I. Staff Wellness

Somerset Public School District and Somerset Berkley Regional School District care about the well-being of staff members and understand the influence that staff actions have on all student health behaviors. All staff shall promote a school environment supportive of healthy behaviors. Adults are encouraged to model healthy behaviors, especially on school property and at school-sponsored meetings and events. SPS and SBR are encouraged to support staff wellness initiatives.

The Staff Wellness Working Group will meet regularly to establish ongoing health and wellness opportunities for staff throughout both districts using research-based practices based on.

Physical activities may include, but are not limited to:

- Group Fitness before or after school (Yoga, Boot Camp, Walking Group, Running Group, Cycling Group, Martial Arts, Pilates, Greater Fall River Fitness Challenge, etc.)
- Healthy weight management groups (i.e. Weight Watchers, Biggest Loser competition, weight loss plan book club, etc.)
- Group Meditation before or after school
- Weekly pickup games (basketball, volleyball, ultimate frisbee, etc.)

The Staff Wellness Working Group will work collaboratively with the SPS and SBR Human Resources Coordinator to share additional employee benefits that will support the physical and social-emotional health of our staff including, but not limited to:

- Fitness membership benefit
- Employee Assistance Program (EAP)
- Health Insurance benefits included in plans
- [Greater Fall River Partners for a Healthier Community](#)