WEST TALLAHATCHIE SCHOOL DISTRICT

SCHOOL WELLNESS HANDBOOK

2025-2026

Board Approval Date: August 12, 2025

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In alignment with Standard 37.2 of the 2007 Mississippi Public School Accountability Standards and the Child Nutrition and WIC Reauthorization Act of 2004 (Public Law 108-265), the West Tallahatchie School District has adopted and implemented a comprehensive local school wellness policy.

This policy reflects the district's ongoing commitment to promoting the physical, emotional, and academic well-being of all students. It ensures that our schools provide a supportive environment where students learn and practice lifelong healthy habits through nutritious meals, physical activity, and health-focused educational programs.

The purpose of this School Wellness Plan is to serve as a practical guide for implementing and improving local wellness policies. This document incorporates state requirements, USDA guidelines (current as of June 2013), and best practices drawn from successful school wellness programs across Mississippi and the United States.

Introduction

The connection between student health and academic performance is well-documented. Proper nutrition and regular physical activity are foundational for students to reach their full potential, not only academically, but also physically, mentally, and emotionally.

Students who are tired, hungry, sick, affected by substance abuse, or fearful due to an unsafe school environment are less likely to thrive. Today's youth face an array of challenges that threaten both their health and their ability to learn, including poor nutrition, lack of physical activity, substance abuse, depression, teen pregnancy, obesity, bullying, and school violence.

A coordinated approach to school health addresses these concerns in a proactive and unified way. This approach brings together families, schools, and communities to improve student health outcomes and strengthen academic achievement.

Goal: All students in the West Tallahatchie School District will develop the knowledge and skills necessary to make informed, healthy choices that promote lifelong wellness. Staff members are encouraged to model healthy eating patterns and incorporate physical activity into their daily lives.

Rationale and Goals

The West Tallahatchie School District will:

- Provide school lunch and breakfast programs that meet USDA and Mississippi Child Nutrition Program standards.

- Promote participation in school meal programs to students, families, and staff.
- Prioritize food safety and ensure current food service permits for all sites.
- Set guidelines for all campus food to promote student health and reduce obesity.
- Follow State Board policies for competitive foods and extra food sales.
- Employ trained and qualified foodservice staff.
- Include district goals for nutrition education, physical activity, and student wellness in all planning.
- Implement the Mississippi Healthy Students Act nutrition standards, which include healthy food preparation, appropriate serving times, and marketing of healthy options.

Commitment to Nutrition

- Encourage students to make food choices aligned with the Healthy, Hunger-Free Kids Act and ChooseMyPlate.gov.
- Create a positive dining experience with appropriate supervision and adult modeling.
- Replace deep-fat fryers with combination steamers.
- Schedule recess before lunch to improve behavior and food intake.
- Use varied meal service strategies such as grab-and-go or classroom breakfast.
- Provide parents with nutrition information and resources.
- Add healthy options at vending areas, events, and celebrations.
- Avoid using food as a reward or punishment, and avoid physical activity as punishment.
- Encourage healthy, non-food-based fundraising programs.

Local School Wellness Goals

- Implement HACCP-based food safety programs for school meals.
- Ensure current food service permits and food safety training for all nutrition staff.
- Distribute the wellness policy to all staff, including food safety procedures.
- Provide adequate handwashing facilities wherever food is handled or served.

Commitment to Food Safe Schools

- Provide 150 minutes per week of physical activity-based instruction for grades K–8.
- Follow state PE regulations under the Mississippi Healthy Students Act.
- Administer annual fitness testing for all students, including required testing for 5th grade and high school students during their PE Carnegie unit.
- Schedule recess before lunch for better behavior and food intake.
- Include physical activity breaks in classroom instruction.
- Offer before- and after-school activity programs.
- Encourage staff and parent participation in wellness activities.

- Support active transportation by installing bike racks and mapping safe routes.

Commitment to Physical Activity / Physical Education

- Provide ½ Carnegie unit of health education for high school graduation.
- Deliver 45 minutes per week of health education for grades K–8, using the Mississippi Contemporary Health Curriculum.
- Implement sex-related education under MS Code 37-13-171 with evidence-based abstinence or abstinence-plus instruction.

Commitment to Comprehensive Health Education

- Maintain unobstructed exits, visible signage, and properly stored chemicals.
- Ensure playground safety and proper HVAC system maintenance.
- Conduct monthly emergency drills and implement anti-bullying policies.
- Eliminate the use of extension cords as permanent power sources.
- Comply with MS State Fire Code and safety regulations for all facilities.

Commitment to a Healthy School Environment

- Perform quarterly bus inspections and ensure cleanliness and maintenance.
- Require CDL and valid bus driver certification.
- Maintain MVRs and in-service training documentation.
- Conduct biannual bus evacuation drills.

Commitment to Transportation Safety

- Ensure nurses follow the 2013 Mississippi School Nurse Procedures.
- Train staff on asthma signs and symptoms per SB 2393.
- Maintain asthma care plans for diagnosed students.
- Require nurses to attend at least one MDE-sponsored training per year.
- Promote healthy lifestyles at PTA meetings, open houses, and health fairs.

Commitment to Quality Health Services

- Follow Licensure Guidelines 451 for hiring support staff.
- Provide a full-time guidance counselor at the high school and access to support services for elementary students.
- Ensure counselors hold master’s degrees or valid emergency certifications.

- Require adherence to ASCA ethical standards.
- Deliver comprehensive services including crisis counseling, referrals, testing, and educational guidance.
- Train staff on suicide prevention under SB 2770.

Commitment to Counseling, Psychological and Social Services

- Involve parents and community members in the School Health Council.
- Invite families to eat at school and participate in school events.
- Offer training and resources on parenting, nutrition, and family health.
- Encourage family-led physical activities and fitness events.
- Share updates through newsletters and sponsor family engagement events like Family Fitness Night.

Commitment to Family and Community Involvement

- Promote WebMD wellness benefits in the state health insurance plan.
- Support staff wellness through flyers, incentives, EAPs, and fitness programs.
- Encourage after-school physical activity opportunities for staff.
- Offer healthy beverage choices in staff lounges; eliminate sodas.

Commitment to Implementing a Quality Staff Wellness Program

- Use PA systems, websites, social media, and newsletters to promote wellness.
- Partner with local media to share success stories.
- Feature new healthy menu items regularly and promote during National School Lunch Week.

Commitment to Marketing a Healthy School Environment

- Develop a clear implementation plan.
- Designate responsible staff to ensure compliance.
- Maintain an active School Health Council per MS Code 37-13-134.
- Submit an annual wellness report to the school board.

Commitment to Wellness Policy Implementation

By Federal law and U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) policy, this institution does not discriminate based on race, color, national origin, sex, age, or disability.

To file a complaint of discrimination, write to:
USDA Director, Office of Civil Rights, Room 326-W, Whitten Building,
1400 Independence Avenue, SW, Washington, D.C. 20250-9410
Phone: (202) 720-5964 (voice and TDD)

USDA is an equal opportunity provider and employer.

Non-Discrimination Notice

- Students may only purchase individual meal components (except milk) if the full meal unit is purchased during meal services.
- Whole grains, fruits, vegetables, and reduced-fat dairy are the preferred choices at all school events.
- Principals may approve limited exceptions that must be documented in the annual council report.
- Only reduced-fat milk, water, and 100% juice (no sweeteners) may be sold during the instructional day.
- Vending machines, snack bars, and fundraising must include healthy options and limit access for lower grades.

Nutrition Standards for Vending and Meal Component Policy

- Comply with Mississippi's phased beverage restrictions.
- Eliminate all carbonated soft drink sales during the school day.
- Phase I (2007–2009): Only water, milk (up to 16 oz), and 100% juice allowed.
- Phase II (post-2009): Water (up to 20 oz), milk and juice (up to 12 oz); calorie limits apply.
- 50% of beverage options in vending machines must be water.
- Vending machine faceplates must display water, milk, juice, or active youth images.

Beverage Standards and Vending Regulations

To align fundraising practices with wellness goals, schools are encouraged to avoid candy and sugary items and instead sell:

Healthy food items:
- Fresh and exotic fruit (e.g., citrus cases)
- Produce (e.g., potatoes, onions)
- Trail mix, nuts, popcorn

Non-food alternatives:
- Gift wrap, candles, seeds, coupon books
- Spirit items, magazines, plants, raffles

Event-based fundraisers:
- Car washes, walk-a-thons, family game nights
- "Hire-a-Student" day, talent shows, auctions
- 3-on-3 basketball tournaments

These options encourage student involvement, physical activity, and community engagement while supporting school financial needs.

Healthy Fundraising

Signature Page

Approved by the West Tallahatchie School District Board of Education

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Superintendent of Schools

_____
Board President

Date: _____