**Wellness Policy Annual Report Update: 2018-19 School Year**

## Prepared by the New York City Department of Education’s Office of School Wellness Programs

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# As stated in the [New York City Department of Education Wellness Policy (open external link)](https://infohub.nyced.org/in-our-schools/policies/doe-wellness-policy), the District Wellness Advisory Council compiles and publishes an annual report to share basic information about the wellness policy, and report on the DOE’s overall progress with implementing wellness goals. The DOE Wellness Policy is available to the public on the DOE’s InfoHub, accessible at <https://infohub.nyced.org/in-our-schools/policies/doe-wellness-policy>.

# Introduction

When students learn about their bodies, nurture their minds, and develop the skills to take care of themselves and others, they are better prepared to succeed in school and in life. That’s why, in New York City schools, we invest in and promote strong physical and health education instruction, free nutritious meals, and opportunities for students to practice healthy behaviors before, during, and after school. The DOE outlines expectations for schools in the [NYC DOE’s Wellness Policy (open external link)](https://infohub.nyced.org/reports-and-policies/policies/doe-wellness-policy).

The DOE Wellness Policy describes laws and recommendations that make up our approach to physical and health education, food and nutrition, physical activity, school wellness councils, and other wellness-related areas. Based on the national [Whole School, Whole Community, Whole Child (open external link)](https://www.cdc.gov/healthyyouth/wscc/model.htm) model for addressing health, wellness, and student achievement, the DOE Wellness Policy shows schools and communities important opportunities for staff, caregivers, and organizations to collaborate around and make connections with the two instructional areas of the model: Physical Education (PE) and Health Education. By approaching student wellness from an instructional, skills-building lens, it is easy to see how opportunities, programs, and services can more purposefully support what students learn in standards-based PE and Health Education class. Connecting what students learn with what they experience in the school environment helps staff focus on consistent messaging that can empower students to make good choices.

The DOE Wellness Policy outlines the role of the District Wellness Advisory Council, which meets quarterly to recommend, review, and support the implementation of Citywide policies and practices addressing wellness-related issues. Part of the Council’s responsibility is to review district-level PE and Health Education initiatives and information from the previous year and offer recommendations that might enhance implementation in schools. The District Wellness Advisory Council’s sponsoring DOE office, the Office of School Wellness Programs, with contributions from the Office of Food and Nutrition Services, are the Central-level reporting offices under the DOE Wellness Policy and prepare the annual update once data from the previous year is available.

District Wellness Advisory Council work will resume fully in the 2021-2022 school year. Previous recommendations are available in the [2017-2018 report (open external link)](https://infohub.nyced.org/reports/students-and-schools/wellness-policy-annual-report).

# Impact of COVID-19 on 2019-2020 Activities

The closing of New York City schools in March 2020 and New York State’s subsequent shutdown in the face of the COVID-19 pandemic disrupted the functions and work of the District Wellness Advisory Council in Spring 2020. The combination of rapidly changing circumstances, redeployed Central staff, and reduced resources produced an interruption in the compilation and review of 2018-2019 school year data. At the same time, the District Wellness Advisory Council was in the midst of re-assessing its own structure and composition with an eye toward assembling a more inclusive and representative Council.

# Physical Education Update

Physical education (PE) is a required academic subject that teaches participation in lifelong, health-enhancing physical activity. In PE, students learn to work as a team, develop healthy personal fitness habits, and set fitness goals now and throughout their lives. City Council Local Law 102, enacted in 2015, requires the Department of Education of the New York City School District to submit to the New York City Council an annual report concerning Physical Education for the prior school year. See the [Physical Education Report for 2018-2019 (open external link)](https://infohub.nyced.org/reports/government-reports/physical-education-reporting). The report includes average frequency and total minutes per week of PE, per grade, at the school, district, borough, and Citywide levels to ensure schools are meeting State PE regulations. The report also includes the number of licensed PE teachers, class ratios, and designated PE instructional space.

In 2018-2019, NYC schools continue to show gains in the numbers and percentages of students receiving PE that meets State requirements as a result of the Citywide [PE Works Initiative (open external link)](https://infohub.nyced.org/reports/academics/annual-pe-works-reports/pe-works-year-4-report), a multi-year initiative to improve PE in New York City schools. The school system can now report for the first time ever that:

* Nearly every elementary school has a certified PE teacher
* The vast majority of elementary schools are trained to provide Move-to-Improve, a classroom-based activity program, in their classrooms
* 78.9% of elementary students are meeting PE time requirements

Overall, in 2018-2019 schools reported that 84.7% of K-12 students Citywide received the required amount of PE instruction, compared to 53.3% of students in 2015-2016, the PE Works pilot year. In 2015-2016, only one in four elementary school students received the required amount of PE, with staffing reports and pilot year needs assessments suggesting that even fewer students received it prior to 2015. To learn more, see:

* [Physical Education Report for 2018-2019 (open external link)](https://infohub.nyced.org/reports/government-reports/physical-education-reporting)
* [PE Works Year 4 Report (open external link)](https://infohub.nyced.org/reports/academics/annual-pe-works-reports/pe-works-year-4-report) (2018-2019)
* [PE Works Stories of Change (open external link)](https://infohub.nyced.org/reports/academics/annual-pe-works-reports)

# Comprehensive Health Education Update

Health Education provides students with the skills to navigate growing up, and the tools to care for themselves and others throughout their lives, while contributing to a positive school environment. Quality Health Education can change perspectives, transform behaviors, and help students learn and mature. It builds a foundation for lifelong learning, cooperation, and participation in families, communities, and our society. It also creates opportunities to engage families in supporting their child’s development and provides school communities with a way to establish a school culture that supports student well-being.

City Council Local Laws 14 and 15, enacted in 2016, require that the Department of Education of the New York City School District submit to NYC City Council an annual report concerning health education for the prior school year. See the [Health Education reports for 2018-2019 (open external link)](https://infohub.nyced.org/reports/government-reports/health-data). The reports include Health Education compliance and instructor data, disaggregated by community school district, City Council district, and each individual school.

The 2018-2019 data show how much critical work is required in NYC schools and, consistent with national data, reflect that Health Education has not been an area of focus for many decades. Quality health education requires teachers who are trained and supported in order to provide students with medically accurate, inclusive, and developmentally appropriate instruction. Yet teachers assigned to health classes may not have adequate preparation or guidance. Students’ opportunities to learn critical Health Education skills vary considerably from school to school. For example, in 2018-2019:

* While a majority of high school students are scheduled and receive a graduation credit for the half-semester course, more than half of NYC students in grades 6-8 finished middle school without having comprehensive Health Education instruction.
* There were just 160 licensed health instructors in New York City, and very few teachers assigned to teach health attended professional learning.

As a result of this data, in alignment with previous recommendations from the District Wellness Advisory Council ([see the 2017-2018 Wellness Policy Annual Report [open external link]](https://infohub.nyced.org/reports/students-and-schools/wellness-policy-annual-report)), the [Sexual Health Education Task Force (open external link)](https://www1.nyc.gov/site/genderequity/health/sexual-health-ed-task-force.page), and others, in May 2018, the Chancellor announced [Health Ed Works (open external link)](https://infohub.nyced.org/reports/academics/health-ed-works/health-ed-works-year-1-report). The goal of this multiyear initiative to ensure that more New York City students receive comprehensive Health Education that meets New York State Education Department requirements and helps them develop the skills to make healthy decisions and avoid high-risk behaviors throughout their lives. In the 2018-2019 school year, staff in the DOE’s Office of School Wellness Programs completed more than one thousand needs assessments and began to provide targeted resources to address key components of quality Health Education, including staffing, scheduling, and instructional quality, in a cohort of 250 schools. To learn more, see:

* [Health Education Data 2018-19 and Health Education Instructor Data 2018-19 (open external link)](https://infohub.nyced.org/reports/government-reports/physical-education-reporting)
* [Health Ed Works Year 1 Report (open external link)](https://infohub.nyced.org/reports/academics/health-ed-works/health-ed-works-year-1-report) (2018-19)

# School Food and Nutrition Information

The New York City Department of Education offers free breakfast and lunch to all NYC public school students and strives to provide nutrient-rich options that students of all ages and backgrounds will enjoy. Meals meet high nutrition standards, accessible on the [Menu Nutrition Information page of the DOE website (open external link](https://www.schools.nyc.gov/school-life/food/menu-nutrition-information)), that meet and often exceed United States Department of Agriculture standards for school meals, an essential part of fulfilling the DOE School Wellness Policy. The DOE does not use food additives such as artificial colors or flavors, non-nutritious sweeteners, or preservatives. Additionally, we restrict high fructose corn syrup when we can. Our menus and water services are created to make sure that students get the nutrients they need to think clearly and concentrate on learning. Publicly available, monthly menus offer a variety of healthy, great-tasting, and creative food choices. The DOE continues to adhere to competitive food and beverage guidelines referenced in the DOE Wellness Policy and detailed in the [Chancellor’s Regulation on Competitive Foods (CR A-812) (open external link)](https://www.schools.nyc.gov/docs/default-source/default-document-library/a-812-2-25-2010-final-remediated-wcag2-0).

The DOE’s Office of Food and Nutrition Services operates quarterly meeting to develop, maintain, and help connect members of the school, nutrition, food justice, food access, and sustainability communities. Just as the Wellness Policy encourages schools to foster food service outreach and collaboration with instructional and environmental staff through School Wellness Councils, the Office of Food and Nutrition Services seeks that same Whole Child, Whole School, Whole Community approach with New York City’s strong food community. See additional important information about Office of Food and Nutrition Services [on the Food page of the DOE website (open external link).](https://www.schools.nyc.gov/school-life/food) Also, Local Law 215 requires DOE to create a report on meals served by DOE to students in school, including breakfast served before school, breakfast served after the school day begins, lunch, afterschool snacks and afterschool suppers. To learn more, see:

* [School Food Report, Fiscal Year 2019 (open external link)](https://infohub.nyced.org/reports/government-reports/school-food-reports)