Helix Community Schools

School Wellness Policy

2026-2027

Helix Network of Educational Choices
Helix Community Schools
Wellness Policy

Preamble

Helix Community Schools (hereto referred to as the District) is committed to the optimal development of every student. The District believes that for students to have the opportunity to achieve personal, academic, developmental and social success, we need to create positive, safe and health-promoting learning environments throughout the school year.

This policy outlines the District's approach to ensuring environments and opportunities for all students to practice healthy eating and physical activity behaviors throughout the school day while minimizing commercial distractions. Specifically, this policy establishes goals and procedures to ensure that:

- Students in the District have access to healthy foods throughout the school day – both through reimbursable school meals and other foods available throughout the school campus– in accordance with Federal and state nutrition standards;
- Students receive nutrition education that helps them develop lifelong healthy eating behaviors;
- Students have opportunities to be physically active before, during and after school;
- Schools engage in nutrition and physical activity promotion and other activities that promote student wellness;
- School staff are encouraged practice healthy nutrition and physical activity behaviors in and out of school;
- The community is engaged in supporting the work of the District in creating continuity between school and other settings for students and staff to practice lifelong healthy habits; and
- The District establishes and maintains an infrastructure for management, oversight, implementation, communication about and monitoring of the policy and its established goals and objectives.

This policy applies to all students, staff and schools in the District. Specific measurable goals and outcomes are identified within each section below.

I. School Wellness Committee

Committee Role and Membership

The District will convene a representative district wellness committee (hereto referred to as the DWC or work within an existing school health committee) that meets at least two times per year to establish goals for and oversee school health and safety policies and programs, including development, implementation and periodic review and update of this district-level wellness policy (heretofore referred as "wellness policy").

The DWC membership will represent all school levels and include (to the extent possible), but not be limited to: parents and caregivers; students; representatives of the school nutrition program (e.g., school nutrition director); physical education teachers; health education teachers; school health professionals (e.g., health education teachers, school health services staff [e.g., nurses,

health educators, and other allied health personnel who provide school health services], and mental

health and social services staff [e.g., school counselors, psychologists, social workers, or psychiatrists]; school administrators (e.g.., superintendent, principal, vice principal), school board members; health professionals (e.g., dietitians, doctors, nurses, dentists); and the general public. To the extent possible, the DWC will include representatives from each school building and reflect the diversity of the community.

Leadership
The Superintendent or designee(s) will convene the DWC and facilitate development of and updates to the wellness policy, and will ensure each school's compliance with the policy.

Name	Title / Relationship to the School or District	Email address	Role on Committee
Coran Lands	Regional Manager, SLA	Coran.lands@slamgmt.com	FSMC Rep
Beatrice Howard-Lavigne	Parent, Staff		Parent
Kendell C	Student		Student
Mariah T.	Student		Student
Tressella Thomas	Administrator, SFA	t.thomas@helixcommunityschools.org	SFA Leadership, Operations
Brandi Barber	Parent, FSMC	helixcafe@helixcommunityschools.org	Parent, FSMC
Pamela James	FSMC Kitchen Manager	helixcafe@helixcommunityschools.org	FSMC Kitchen Manager
Charles Natt	Director of Culture, SFA (Helix)	c.natt@helixcommunityschools.org	SFA Faculty
Jerrod Webb	SFA Staff		SFA Staff

II. Wellness Policy Implementation, Monitoring, Accountability and Community Engagement

Implementation Plan
The District will develop and maintain a plan for implementation to manage and coordinate the execution of this wellness policy. The plan delineates roles, responsibilities, actions and timelines specific to each school; and includes information about who will be responsible to make what change, by how much, where and when; as well as specific goals and objectives for nutrition standards for all foods and beverages available on the school campus, food and beverage marketing, nutrition promotion and education, physical activity, physical education and other school-based activities that promote student wellness.

This wellness policy and assessments can be found at: http://helixcommunityschools.org/

Recordkeeping
The District will retain records to document compliance with the requirements of the wellness policy at Mentorship STEAM Academy. Documentation maintained in this location will include but will not be limited to:

- The written wellness policy;
- Documentation demonstrating that the policy has been made available to the public;
- Documentation of efforts to review and update the Local Schools Wellness Policy; including an indication of who is involved in the update and methods the district uses to make stakeholders aware of their ability to participate on the DWC;
- Documentation to demonstrate compliance with the annual public notification requirements;
- The most recent assessment on the implementation of the local school wellness policy;
- Documentation demonstrating the most recent assessment on the implementation of the Local School Wellness Policy has been made available to the public.

Annual Notification of Policy
The District will actively inform families and the public each year of basic information about this policy, including its content, any updates to the policy and implementation status. The District will make this information available via the district website and/or district-wide communications. The District will provide as much information as possible about the school nutrition environment. Annually, the District will also publicize the name and contact information of the District/school officials leading and coordinating the committee, as well as information on how the public can get involved with the school wellness committee.

Triennial Progress Assessments
At least once every three years, the District will evaluate compliance with the wellness policy to assess the implementation of the policy and include:

- The extent to which schools under the jurisdiction of the District are in compliance with the wellness policy;
- The extent to which the District's wellness policy compares to the Alliance for a Healthier Generation's model wellness policy; and
- A description of the progress made in attaining the goals of the District's wellness policy.

The DWC, in collaboration with individual schools, will monitor schools' compliance with this wellness policy.

The District will actively notify households/families of the availability of the triennial progress report.

Revisions and Updating the Policy
The DWC will update or modify the wellness policy based on the results of the annual School Health Index and triennial assessments and/or as District priorities change; community needs change; wellness goals are met; new health science, information, and technology emerges; and new Federal or state guidance or standards are issued. The wellness policy will be assessed and updated as indicated at least every three years, following the triennial assessment.

Community Involvement, Outreach and Communications

The District is committed to being responsive to community input, which begins with awareness of the wellness policy. The District will communicate ways in which representatives of DWC and others can participate in the development, implementation and periodic review and update of the wellness policy through a variety of means appropriate for that district. The District will also inform parents of the improvements that have been made to school meals and compliance with school meal standards, availability of child nutrition programs and how to apply. The District will use electronic mechanisms, such as email or displaying notices on the district's website, as well as non-electronic mechanisms, such as newsletters, to ensure that all families are actively notified of the content of, implementation of, and updates to the wellness policy, as well as how to get involved and support the policy. The District will ensure that communications are culturally and linguistically appropriate to the community, and accomplished through means similar to other ways that the district and individual schools are communicating important school information with parents.

The District will actively notify the public about the content of or any updates to the wellness policy annually, at a minimum. The District will also use these mechanisms to inform the community about the availability of the annual and triennial reports.

III. Nutrition

School Meals

Helix Community Schools is committed to serving healthy meals to children, with plenty of fruits, vegetables, whole grains, and fat-free and low-fat milk; that are moderate in sodium, low in saturated fat, and have zero grams trans fat per serving (nutrition label or manufacturer's specification); and to meeting the nutrition needs of school children within their calorie requirements.

All schools within the District participate in USDA child nutrition programs, including the National School Lunch Program (NSLP), the School Breakfast Program (SBP), Supper programs, or others. All schools within the District are committed to offering school meals through the applicable Federal child nutrition programs, that:

- Are accessible to all students;
- Meet or exceed current nutrition requirements established by local, state, and Federal statutes and regulations. (The District offers reimbursable school meals that meet USDA nutrition standards.)
- Promote healthy food and beverage choices

Staff Qualifications and Professional Development

All school nutrition program directors, managers and staff will meet or exceed hiring and annual continuing education/training requirements in the USDA professional standards for child nutrition professionals. These school nutrition personnel will refer to USDA's Professional Standards for School Nutrition Standards website to search for training that meets their learning needs.

Water

To promote hydration, free, safe, unflavored drinking water will be available to all students throughout the school day* and throughout every school campus* ("school campus" and "school day" are defined in the glossary). The District will make drinking water available where school meals are served during mealtimes.

Competitive Foods and Beverages

The District is committed to ensuring that all foods and beverages available to students on the school campus* during the school day* support healthy eating. The foods and beverages sold and served outside of the school meal programs (e.g., "competitive" foods and beverages) will meet the USDA Smart Snacks in School nutrition standards, at a minimum. https://www.fns.usda.gov/sites/default/files/cn/allfoods-flyer.pdf

Smart Snacks aim to improve student health and well-being, increase consumption of healthful foods during the school day and create an environment that reinforces the development of healthy eating habits. To support healthy food choices and improve student health and well-being, all foods and beverages outside the reimbursable school meal programs that are sold to students on the school campus during the school day will meet the USDA Smart Snacks nutrition standards. These standards will apply in all locations and through all services where foods and beverages are sold, which may include, but are not limited to, à la carte options in cafeterias, vending machines, school stores and snack or food carts.

Celebrations and Rewards

It is the goal that all foods offered on the school campus should meet the USDA Smart Snacks in School nutrition standards, including:

1. Celebrations and parties.
2. Classroom snacks brought by parents.
3. Rewards and incentives.

Foods and beverages will not be withheld as punishment for any reason, such as for performance or behavior.

Fundraising

Foods and beverages that meet the USDA Smart Snacks in Schools nutrition standards may be sold through fundraisers on the school campus* during the school day*.

Nutrition Promotion

Nutrition promotion and education positively influence lifelong eating behaviors by using evidence-based techniques and nutrition messages, and by creating food environments that encourage healthy nutrition choices and encourage participation in school meal programs. Students and staff will receive consistent nutrition messages throughout schools, classrooms, gymnasiums, and cafeterias. Nutrition promotion also includes marketing and advertising nutritious foods and beverages to students and is most effective when implemented consistently through a comprehensive and multi-channel approach by school staff, teachers, parents, students and the community.

The District will promote healthy food and beverage choices for all students throughout the school campus, as well as encourage participation in school meal programs.

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Nutrition Education

The District will teach, model, encourage and support healthy eating by all students. Schools will provide nutrition education and engage in nutrition promotion that:

- Is designed to provide students with the knowledge and skills necessary to promote and protect their health;
- Is part of not only health education classes, but also integrated into other classroom instruction through subjects; and,
- Promotes fruits, vegetables, whole-grain products, low-fat and fat-free dairy products and healthy food preparation methods;

Food and Beverage Marketing in Schools

The District is committed to providing a school environment that ensures opportunities for all students to practice healthy eating and physical activity behaviors throughout the school day while minimizing commercial distractions. The District strives to teach students how to make informed choices about nutrition, health and physical activity. These efforts will be weakened if students are subjected to advertising on District property that contains messages inconsistent with the health information the District is imparting through nutrition education and health promotion efforts. It is the intent of the District to protect and promote student's health by permitting advertising and marketing for only those foods and beverages that are permitted to be sold on the school campus, consistent with the District's wellness policy.

Any foods and beverages marketed or promoted to students on the school campus* during the school day* will meet the USDA Smart Snacks in School nutrition standards.

Food and beverage marketing is defined as advertising and other promotions in schools. This term includes, but is not limited to the following:

- Brand names, trademarks, logos or tags, except when placed on a physically present food or beverage product or its container.
- Displays, such as on vending machine exteriors
- Corporate brand, logo, name or trademark on school equipment, such as marquees, message boards, scoreboards or backboards (Note: immediate replacement of these items are not required; however, districts will replace or update scoreboards or other durable equipment when existing contracts are up for renewal or to the extent that is in financially possible over time so that items are in compliance with the marketing policy.)
- Corporate brand, logo, name or trademark on cups used for beverage dispensing, menu boards, coolers, trash cans and other food service equipment; as well as on posters, book covers, pupil assignment books or school supplies displayed, distributed, offered or sold by the District.

IV. Physical Activity

Children and adolescents should participate in physical activity every day. Schools will ensure that varied physical activity opportunities are in addition to, and not as a substitute for, physical education. Physical activity during the school day (including but not limited to recess, classroom physical activity breaks or physical education) will not be withheld as punishment for any reason.

Physical Education
The District will provide students with physical education, using an age-appropriate, sequential physical education curriculum consistent with state standards for physical education. All students will be provided equal opportunity to participate in physical education classes.

Recess:
Outdoor recess will be offered when weather is feasible for outdoor play. Recess will complement, not substitute, physical education class. The District recognizes that students are more attentive and ready to learn if provided with periodic breaks when they can be physically active or stretch. Thus, students will be offered periodic opportunities to be active throughout the day on all or most days during a typical school week.

Before and After School Activities
The District offers opportunities for students to participate in physical activity after the school day through a variety of methods. The District will encourage students to be physically active before and after school.

V. Other Activities that Promote Student Wellness

Community Health Promotion and Family Engagement
The District will promote to parents/caregivers, families, and the general community the benefits of and approaches for healthy eating and physical activity throughout the school year. Families will be informed and invited to participate in school-sponsored activities and will receive information about health promotion efforts.

As described in the “Community Involvement, Outreach, and Communications” subsection, the District will use electronic mechanisms (e.g., email or displaying notices on the district’s website), as well as non-electronic mechanisms, (e.g., newsletters, presentations to parents or sending information home to parents), to ensure that all families are actively notified of opportunities to participate in school-sponsored activities and receive information about health promotion efforts.

(Note: Our District Wellness Policy is adapted from the Alliance for a Healthier Generation Model Wellness Policy, reflecting the 9/2016 USDA Final Rule.)

Glossary:

Extended School Day – the time during, before and afterschool that includes activities such as clubs, intramural sports, band and choir practice, drama rehearsals and more.

School Campus - areas that are owned or leased by the school and used at any time for school-related activities, including on the outside of the school building, school buses or other vehicles used to transport students, athletic fields and stadiums (e.g., on scoreboards, coolers, cups, and water bottles), or parking lots.

School Day – the time between midnight the night before to 30 minutes after the end of the instructional day.

Triennial – recurring every three years.

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   1400 Independence Avenue, SW
   Washington, D.C. 20250-9410;
2. fax: (202) 690-7442; or
3. email: program.intake@usda.gov.

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