



School Wellness Policy: Building a Water in Schools Legacy

Wellness policies are written documents outlining a school's goals and commitments related to student health and wellbeing. All schools participating in the child nutrition programs are required by law to implement a school wellness policy.

Strong water policies include language about:

- How, where and when free drinking water will be provided during the school day
- How and when drinking water sources will be maintained
- When and how water quality will be tested
- How safe tap water will be promoted

The United States Department of Agriculture (USDA) is a federal government agency that sets rules and determines funding for child nutrition programs, like the National School Lunch Program. The USDA is working on new rules for local school wellness policies. The USDA recommendations for school wellness policies include language about where and when free drinking water will be provided during the school day and about the maintenance of drinking water sources. When the new rules are issued, schools will need to revise their wellness policies. So, now is an ideal time to examine water-related language in your local school wellness policy.

Having language in the wellness policy that encourages drinking water signals the school's commitment to improving access to free, safe drinking water for a long time. A policy ensures that even with changes in principals or other school administrators, the water program will remain.



This graphic illustrates several components of model school wellness policy language related to drinking water access in the school food service area. Schools should use similar principles to also provide and promote the intake of clean, safe, and appealing water at all times during the day and at before- and after-school activities in other locations throughout the school.

It is important to have language in your school wellness policy that improves access to safe, appealing, and free drinking water throughout the school day.

Model School Wellness Policy Language for Drinking Water Access

This model policy provides language that your school can include in its wellness policy to make sure that safe and appealing water is available throughout the school day and that drinking water sources are regularly maintained. The intent of this model policy is to provide language for the provision of drinking water in schools that aligns with best practice recommendations. It is the “ideal” drinking water policy.* So, it is okay if you cannot include all the language in your school wellness policy at this time.

*For an annotated copy of the model wellness policy with examples of how to implement the policy recommendations, see <http://bit.ly/1M6vAqC>

You can add the following language to your school wellness policies:

Water Access



- The school district shall provide all students and staff with easy access to clean, safe, and appealing drinking water free of charge at every school campus.
- Potable drinking water will be readily available at all times during the day and at before- and after-school activities in the food service and eating areas, common areas, gyms, outdoor physical activity spaces, classrooms, and faculty lounges.

Water Delivery Options



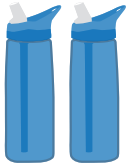
- The school district shall consider the installation of water delivery options that dispense clear, chilled, good-tasting drinking water that is free of odors.
- In the event that there is construction of a new school campus, renovation of a school building, or substantial repairs or upgrades of existing drinking fountains, the school district shall consider non-traditional fountain water delivery options that appeal to students and that include, but are not limited to, tap water dispensers, bottleless water coolers, and fountains with a bottle-filler.

Safety and Quality



- The school district shall conduct water quality tests of all drinking water outlets in each district facility, especially those that provide water for drinking, cooking, and preparing foods and beverages.
- The frequency and type of water quality testing shall be done in accordance with federal safe drinking water laws, state requirements, and the Environmental Protection Agency guidelines.
- The school district shall make available the water quality testing schedule, test results, and any remediation plans to staff, students and parents in an easily accessible format that parents with limited English proficiency or literacy can understand.
- The school district shall service all water delivery options and replace units and water filters in accordance with manufacturer guidance and industry standards.
- Maintenance will be provided as needed or on a regularly scheduled basis (e.g., as part of facility maintenance schedule).
- All water delivery options (e.g., pitchers, bottleless coolers, fountains with a bottle-filler) should be cleaned on a daily basis.

Reusable Bottles and Cups



- Students will be permitted to carry reusable water bottles while at school for the specific use of drinking water only.
- Each student must have his/her own water bottle that is clearly labeled with his/her name.
- Students are allowed to take their reusable water bottles into the classroom except into the computer or science labs.
- Reusable or single-use cups will be provided next to water sources.
- Misuse of bottles will be subject to disciplinary action.

Promotion, Marketing and Celebrations



- The school district will actively promote water consumption throughout the school day and at before- and after-school activities. Promotional activities might include announcements, posters and signage, contests, and multimedia campaigns (e.g., videos, songs, social media, etc).
- The school district will encourage all school administrators, teachers, and building staff to be role models by drinking water around students.
- The school district will encourage that drinking water, preferably tap water, be served at all school or school-sponsored events, meetings, or parties (e.g., birthday or holiday celebrations in the classroom).

Education



- [Designated School Official] will review formal curriculum to ensure educational information relating to drinking water is consistent and up-to-date.
- As appropriate, teachers will include information about drinking water in their lesson plans. Lessons will incorporate information about the health and learning-related benefits of drinking adequate levels of water regularly throughout the school day.

Monitoring and Evaluation



- The school district will periodically monitor the implementation of this drinking water policy in its effort to create an environment that supports opportunities for improving water access and water consumption.
- Annually, the school district or individual school sites will assess whether schools are meeting the drinking water policy requirements, especially in regards to the water access, safety and quality, and water delivery options guidelines.
- To ensure continuing progress, the school district or individual school sites will evaluate implementation efforts and their impact on students and staff.