

Triennial Assessment Report: Portland Public Schools 5_2025 (4/2025)

District: PORTLAND

Introduction

Every three years, Portland Public Schools conducts a Triennial Wellness Assessment to evaluate how well our district's wellness policies and practices align with federal requirements and national best practices. This process ensures that we are supporting the health and well-being of all students, staff, and families through strong policies and meaningful actions.

Overall, the results of this year's assessment show that Portland Public Schools has made substantial progress in aligning our practices with federal standards. In many areas, we not only meet but exceed the minimum requirements set by the USDA and other federal agencies. We have particularly strong practices in the areas of school meals compliance, access to free drinking water, physical education programming, and the implementation and evaluation of our district wellness policy.

The assessment also identified several opportunities for growth, especially around updating our formal policies to better reflect practices that are already in place. Additionally, areas such as promoting healthy food choices, expanding nutrition education, and creating more opportunities for family and community engagement in physical activity were highlighted as priorities for future improvement.

The triennial assessment was conducted during the spring of 2025. The process involved district and school administrators, food services staff, physical education staff, and members of the district wellness committee. Using the WellSAT 3.0 and WellSAT Practice assessment tools, the team evaluated both the written policy language and the day-to-day implementation of wellness practices across our schools.

We are proud of the progress we have made and are committed to building on this foundation to create even healthier learning environments for every student.

Strong Policies and Aligned Practices

Portland Public Schools is proud to highlight several areas where our district has strong policies and is fully implementing aligned practices to support student wellness.

Among the federal requirements in this category, we are meeting and exceeding expectations in the following areas:

- Professional Standards for School Nutrition Staff (FR5): All school nutrition program directors, managers, and staff meet or exceed the USDA's required annual continuing education and training hours.
- Smart Snack Compliance (FR6, FR9, FR12): All competitive foods and beverages sold during the school day, including those sold in vending machines and school stores, meet the USDA's Smart Snack nutrition standards.

Implementation and Evaluation of the Wellness Policy (FR16–FR18): The district evaluates our wellness policy every three years, makes the results publicly available, and revises the policy based on findings from the triennial assessment.

In addition to these federally mandated areas, we are achieving strong policy-practice alignment in key wellness priorities:

- Protecting student privacy in the free and reduced-price meal program (FR3 – practice fully in place, although formal policy updates are still needed)
- Ensuring daily recess for all elementary students (PEPA13)

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- Providing physical education (PE) across all grade levels (PEPA4–PEPA6) with instruction delivered by state-certified PE teachers (PEPA7)
- Prohibiting the use of physical activity as punishment or withholding physical activity for classroom management purposes (PEPA18–PEPA19)

Since our last triennial assessment, we have made noticeable improvements in aligning both policy and practice, especially in areas like Smart Snacks compliance and wellness policy evaluation. These improvements stem from collaborative efforts between district administrators, food services, and building-level leadership to strengthen implementation systems and review policy language to ensure it reflects our current practices.



Overall, these successes demonstrate Portland Public Schools' ongoing commitment to creating healthy, supportive environments that help every student thrive.

		Policy Score	Practice Score	
FR1	Does the district have specific goals for nutrition education designed to promote student wellness?	2	2	★
FR5	Do all school nutrition program directors, managers, and staff meet or exceed the annual continuing education/training hours required by the USDA's Professional Standards requirements?	2	2	★
FR6	Do all competitive foods and beverages sold to students during the school day meet or exceed the USDA's nutrition standards, commonly called Smart Snacks?	2	2	★
FR9	Do all foods and beverages sold in school stores during the school day meet Smart Snack standards?	2	2	★
FR12	Is there food or beverage marketing on the school campus during the school day? If yes, do the marketed items meet Smart Snacks criteria?	2	2	★
FR14	Is there an official who is responsible for the implementation and compliance with the wellness policy at the building level for each school?	2	2	★

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FR16	Is wellness policy implementation evaluated every three years?	2	2	☆
FR17	What is included in the triennial assessment report to the public?	2	2	☆
FR18	Has the wellness policy been revised based on the previous triennial assessment?	2	2	☆
NES1	Does the district offer breakfast every day to all students?	2	2	☆
NES2	Does your school take steps to address feeding students with unpaid meal balances without stigmatizing them?	2	2	☆
NES9	Are you familiar with any state laws allowing exemptions for school-sponsored fundraisers during which foods and beverages do not have to meet Smart Snacks?	2	2	☆
NES10	Are foods or beverages containing caffeine sold at the high school level?	2	2	☆
NES11	Do all foods or beverages SERVED (not sold) to students after the school day on school grounds (including aftercare, clubs, and afterschool programming) meet federal nutrition standards (e.g., CACFP or Smart Snacks)?	2	2	☆
NES14	Do students have consistent and easy access to free drinking water throughout the school day?	2	2	☆
NE2	Do all elementary school students receive sequential and comprehensive nutrition education?	2	2	☆
NE3	Do all middle school students receive sequential and comprehensive nutrition education?	2	2	☆
NE4	Do all high school students receive sequential and comprehensive nutrition education?	2	2	☆

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PEPA1	 Does the district have a written physical education curriculum that is implemented consistently for every grade?	2	2	☆
PEPA2	Does the district have a written physical education curriculum that is aligned with national and/or state standards?	2	2	☆
PEPA4	How many minutes per week of PE does each grade in elementary school receive?	2	2	☆
PEPA5	How many minutes per week of PE does each grade in middle school receive?	2	2	☆
PEPA6	How many minutes per week of PE does each grade in high school receive?	2	2	☆
PEPA7	Are all physical education classes taught by state certified/licensed teachers who are endorsed to teach physical education?	2	2	☆
PEPA13	Is there daily recess for all grades in elementary school?	2	2	☆
PEPA15	Does the district have "joint-use" or "shared-use" agreements?	2	2	☆
PEPA18	Do teachers ever use physical activity as a punishment?	2	2	☆
PEPA19	Do teachers ever withhold physical activity as a classroom management tool?	2	2	☆
EW1	 Are there strategies used by the school to support employee wellness?	2	2	☆

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Create Practice Implementation Plan

The triennial assessment identified several areas where Portland Public Schools has either strong or developing wellness policies in place but where practice implementation remains limited or inconsistent. To move toward full compliance with the Local School Wellness Policy (LSWP) requirements, the district will develop targeted practice implementation plans to close these gaps.

The following areas tied to federal requirements were identified as needing improved implementation:

- Marketing of Healthy Food and Beverage Choices (NES5)
- Participation Strategies for School Meals (NES4)
- Promotion of Local Food Procurement (NES7)
- Providing Adequate Meal Time for Students (NES6 – while lunch is compliant, breakfast time may be inconsistent across schools)
- Use of Food as a Reward (NES13 – while policy is strong, inconsistent practices persist at the classroom level)
- Nutrition Education Practices (NE1, NE5, NE6) – Though policies are in place, practices like participatory learning methods, interdisciplinary instruction, and collaboration between teachers and nutrition services need strengthening.

To address these areas, the district will:

- Develop building-level guidelines for food marketing, local food procurement, and nutrition education integration.
- Provide professional development for school staff and classroom teachers on implementing healthy behavior modeling and avoiding food rewards.
- Review cafeteria scheduling to ensure all students have adequate time to eat meals, especially breakfast.
- Strengthen collaboration between nutrition services and instructional staff to support integrated, participatory nutrition education practices.

The District Wellness Committee, in collaboration with:

- School administrators
- Food services staff
- Curriculum and instruction leaders
- PE/Health educators
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will lead the development and oversight of these implementation plans.

- By June 30, 2025 – Draft implementation plans completed by each stakeholder group.
- By September 15, 2025 – Plans finalized and shared with all school principals and relevant staff.
- Fall 2025 – Spring 2026 – Implementation in all schools.
- May 2026 – Mid-cycle progress check and staff feedback survey to assess implementation fidelity.
- Spring 2027 – Formal review of implementation effectiveness as part of the next wellness committee evaluation cycle.

This structured, collaborative approach will ensure that all practices required by the wellness policy are not only written into policy but consistently reflected in daily school operations.

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		Policy Score	Practice Score	
FR15	How is the wellness policy made available to the public?	2	1	
NES13	Do teachers or school staff give students food as a reward?	2	1	
NE1	Are skills-based, behavior-focused, and interactive/participatory methods used in nutrition education to develop student skills?	2	1	
NE5	Is nutrition education integrated into other subjects beyond health education?	2	1	
NE6	Do school nutrition services staff members use the following methods to collaborate with teachers to reinforce nutrition education lessons taught in the classroom?	2	1	
PEPA16	What proportion of students walk or bike to school?	2	1	
PEPA17	 Are teachers encouraged to use physical activity as a reward for students?	2	1	
EW2	Are school staff encouraged to model healthy eating and physical activity behaviors in front of students?	2	1	

Update Policies

The triennial assessment highlighted several areas where Portland Public Schools is implementing strong or developing wellness practices, but where our written policy language is either weak or missing altogether. To ensure full alignment with federal requirements and to better reflect our current district practices, we will update our Local School Wellness Policy (LSWP) accordingly.

The following federally required areas are being successfully implemented in practice but lack clear or sufficient policy language:

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- Protecting the privacy of students who qualify for free or reduced-price meals (FR3)
- Regulating foods and beverages served at classroom parties and celebrations in elementary schools (FR11)
- Availability of free drinking water during meals (FR4)
- Smart Snack compliance for a la carte and vending machine items (FR7, FR8)
- Fundraisers during the school day meeting Smart Snack standards (FR10)

Additional areas that are not federally required but are priorities for Portland Public Schools include:

- Encouraging healthy food and beverage marketing (NES5)
- Procurement of locally produced foods (NES7)
- Staff modeling of healthy behaviors (EW2)
- Opportunities for family and community physical activity (PEPA11)
- School-level and district-level wellness committee expectations and structure (IC1, IC2)

To ensure our policy reflects both federal compliance and our district priorities, we will:

- Review and revise the LSWP language using the WellSAT Policy Scorecard as a guide to strengthen and expand language in all areas flagged.
- Incorporate specific, actionable language regarding food privacy, celebrations, Smart Snack standards, and community engagement.
- Ensure alignment with Connecticut state wellness policy guidance and model language when appropriate.
- The District Wellness Committee, in collaboration with the Assistant Superintendent, school nurses, food services director, and curriculum leads, will be responsible for drafting updated policy language.
- The Board of Education Policy Subcommittee will review and approve final revisions.











Timeline:

- Policy revision draft completed by August 2025
- BOE review and adoption by October 2025
- Updated policy published and shared with staff and families by November 2025
- For items where practices were only partially implemented (e.g., FR7, FR10, EW2), targeted staff training and building-level protocols will be introduced concurrently with policy updates to ensure consistent implementation.

By updating our wellness policy to better reflect our strengths and priorities, we will create a more transparent, inclusive, and health-promoting environment for all members of the Portland school community.








	Policy Score	Practice Score	
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FR2	Do your National School Lunch Program meals (and, if applicable, School Breakfast Program meals) meet all federal standards for meal patterns, nutrient levels, and calorie requirements for the grade levels served?	1	2	
FR3	Does your school take steps to protect the privacy of students who qualify for free or reduced-price meals?	0	2	
FR4	Is free (i.e., no cost to students) drinking water available to students during meals?	1	2	
FR7	Do all a la carte foods and beverages sold in the cafeteria meet Smart Snacks standards?	1	2	
FR8	Do all foods and beverages sold in vending machines meet Smart Snack standards?	1	2	
FR10	Are there fundraisers that sell foods or beverages to be consumed during the school day? If yes, do the foods and beverages sold meet Smart Snacks standards?	1	2	
FR11	Does your district regulate foods and beverages served at class parties and other school celebrations in elementary schools?	0	2	
NES6	Do students have at least 10 minutes to eat breakfast and at least 20 minutes to eat lunch, counting from the time they are seated?	1	2	
NES12	Do all foods or beverages SOLD (not served) to students after the school day on school grounds (including aftercare, clubs, and afterschool programming) meet federal nutrition standards (e.g., CACFP or Smart Snacks)?	1	2	
PEPA3	How does your physical education program promote a physically active lifestyle?	1	2	

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PEPA8	Is ongoing professional development offered every year for PE teachers that is relevant and specific to physical education?	0	2	
PEPA9	What percentage of students do you estimate do not take PE each year due to exemptions?	0	2	
PEPA10	What percentage of students do you estimate do not take PE each year due to substitutions?	0	2	
PEPA14	 Do teachers provide regular physical activity breaks for students in the classroom?	1	2	
IC1	Is there an active district-level wellness committee?	0	2	
IC2	Is there an active school-level wellness committee?	1	2	

Opportunities for Growth

The triennial assessment identified several areas where Portland Public Schools has limited or no policy or practice in place. These represent key opportunities for growth, allowing the district to strengthen its wellness initiatives and ensure full alignment with federal requirements and national best practices.

The following areas are federally required but have either no policy or limited practice in place:

- Family outreach about eligibility for free or reduced-price meals (NES3)
- Strategies to promote participation in school breakfast and lunch programs (NES4)
- Regulation of foods served at class parties and celebrations in elementary schools (FR11 – no policy, practice only)
- Promotion of healthy food choices via marketing strategies (NES5)
- Integration of nutrition education into non-health subjects (NE5)
- Use of interactive/participatory nutrition education methods (NE1)
- Nutrition education collaboration between teachers and food service staff (NE6)
- Addressing agriculture and the food system in education (NE7)

While not federally required, the following are priorities for Portland Public Schools based on our commitment to comprehensive wellness:

- Before and after school physical activity opportunities (PEPA12)
- Family and community engagement in physical activity (PEPA11)
- Support for walking or biking to school (PEPA16)

To improve practices in these areas, the district will:

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- Develop a multi-pronged outreach strategy to improve communication with families about free/reduced lunch eligibility, leveraging digital communication, school newsletters, and community events.
- Launch pilot programs to expand before/after school physical activity opportunities at two schools during the 2025–2026 school year.
- Incorporate agriculture and food systems into science and environmental studies curriculum units.
- Provide professional development for teachers on participatory nutrition education strategies and interdisciplinary integration.





Roles and Responsibilities

- The District Wellness Committee will oversee both the practice implementation plans and policy updates.
- Food Services, Curriculum & Instruction, and building leaders will collaborate on specific action steps in their respective areas.

Timeline










- By August 2025: Draft practice improvement plans and policy updates complete.
- By October 2025: Policy language updated and submitted to the Board of Education for approval.
- Fall 2025 – Spring 2026: Begin rollout of new practices and professional development.
- May 2026: Conduct interim review to assess progress and gather feedback from staff.
- Spring 2027: Evaluate implementation success during the next internal wellness review.

These opportunities for growth reflect our district's ongoing commitment to creating healthier school environments and ensuring every student has the knowledge, environment, and support to make lifelong healthy choices.

		Policy Score	Practice Score	
FR13	Which groups are represented on the district-level wellness committee?	1	1	
NES3	Does your school or district provide information to families about eligibility for free or reduced-price meals?	0	1	
NES4	Does your school use strategies to maximize participation in the school breakfast program and/or school lunch program?	0	1	
NES5	Are marketing strategies used to promote healthy food and beverage choices in school?	1	1	

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NES7	 In your district, is it a priority to procure locally produced foods for school meals?	0	1	
NES8	Do you know where to access the USDA Smart Snacks nutrition standards to check and see if an item can be sold in school during the school day?	1	1	
NE7	 Does nutrition education address agriculture and the food system?	0	1	
PEPA11	 Are there opportunities for families and community members to engage in physical activity at school?	1	1	
PEPA12	 Are there opportunities for all students to engage in physical activity before and after school?	0	1	

Conclusion


Portland Public Schools remains committed to supporting the health and well-being of every student. Our 2025 Triennial Wellness Assessment shows that we are meeting or exceeding many federal requirements, particularly in areas like school meals, physical education, and access to water. We're proud of the strong policies and practices we've implemented to create healthy school environments.

The assessment also helped us identify areas where we can do more—especially when it comes to improving classroom practices, updating our written policy to match what's already happening in our schools, and expanding efforts around nutrition education, healthy food marketing, and physical activity before and after school.

Over the coming year, we will strengthen our wellness policy, improve practices where needed, and involve students, families, and staff in our planning. By doing so, we will continue building a culture of wellness that supports the success of every child in Portland.

We thank our community for your partnership and ongoing support as we work toward healthier schools for all.

Key

 **Strong Policies and Aligned Practices** - District has a strong policy and is fully implementing practices that align with the policy

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Create Practice Implementation Plan - District has a strong or weak policy, but practice implementation is either absent or limited



Update Policies Update Policies - District is fully implementing a practice but there is no or only weak language in the written policy, or the district is partially implementing practices and there is no language in the policy



Opportunities for Growth - District has either not addressed the topic in policy or practice; or has only addressed the topic in a very limited way

For more resources, visit: wellsat.org/resources