

Health, Wellness, Safety

Wellness Policy

Revised 9.22

Children need access to healthful foods and opportunities to be physically active in order to grow, learn, and thrive. It has been proven that good health fosters student attendance and education.

St. Mary's Catholic School is committed to providing a school environment that promotes and protects children's health, well-being, and ability to learn by supporting healthy eating and physical activity. Therefore, it is the policy of St. Mary's Catholic School to:

- Engage students, parents, teachers, and lunch providers in implementing, monitoring, and reviewing school nutrition and physical activity efforts.
- All students in grades PK-8 will have opportunities, support, and encouragement to be physically active on a daily basis.
- Foods and beverages served at school will meet the nutrition recommendations of the *U.S. Dietary Guidelines for Americans*.
- Qualified child nutrition professionals will provide students with access to a variety of affordable, nutritious, and appealing foods that meet the health and nutrition needs of students and will provide a clean and safe environment with adequate time for students to eat.
- St. Mary's Catholic School will participate in the available federal school meal program, National School Lunch Program.
- St. Mary's Catholic School will provide nutrition education and physical education to foster lifelong habits of healthy eating and physical activity.

To Achieve these policies and goals, St. Mary's School is committed to:

Quality Foods and Beverages Served at School

- Meals served through the National School Lunch Program will be appealing and attractive to our students, be served in a clean and safe setting, and meet all nutritional requirements established by local, state and federal guidelines. Meals will feature a variety of fruits and vegetables, and milk will be offered daily.
- The school food service program will approve and provide all food and beverages to students in our elementary school. Lunch will be served as balanced meals. Optional lunch add-on items will be available as extra main dishes.
- We discourage students from sharing their foods or beverages with one another during meal snack times, given concerns about allergies and other restrictions on some children's diets.

- Snacks served in the classroom or at Extension will make a positive contribution to children's diets and health, with an emphasis on serving yogurt, cheese, fruits and vegetables as the primary snacks and water as the primary beverage.
- We will limit celebrations involving food during the school day to no more than two times per month (monthly birthday celebrations and holiday festivities). No more than one food and/or beverage that does not meet nutrition standards will be served.
- We will make every effort to eliminate any social stigma attached to, and prevent the overt identification of, students who are eligible for free and reduced-price school meals. Toward this end, we utilize electronic identification and payment systems; provide meals at no charge to all children, regardless of income when possible and promote the availability of school meals to all students.
- We will provide students with at least 20 minutes of free time/recess either before or after lunch, scheduled at appropriate times for elementary and middle school students to maximize activity choices outdoors.
 - We will not schedule tutoring, club, or organizational meetings or activities during mealtimes, unless students may eat during such activities.
 - We will provide students access to hand washing or hand sanitizing before they eat meals or snacks; and will take reasonable steps to accommodate the tooth-brushing regimens of students with special oral health needs (*e.g.*, orthodontia or high tooth decay risk).

Qualified School Food Service Staff

Qualified nutrition professionals will administer the school meal programs. As part of our responsibility to operate a food service program, we will assure continuing professional development for all nutrition professionals. Staff development programs will include appropriate certification and/or training programs for child nutrition directors, and cafeteria workers, according to their levels of responsibility.

Physical Activity Promotion

For students to receive the nationally-recommended amount of daily physical activity (*i.e.*, at least 60 minutes per day) and for students to fully embrace regular physical activity as a personal behavior, students need opportunities for physical activity beyond physical education class. Opportunities for physical activity will be incorporated into other subject lessons; and classroom teachers will provide short physical activity breaks between lessons or classes, as appropriate.

- Each student will have the opportunity to access much needed physical activity by daily mid-day recess of 20 minutes or more. Preschool, primary and intermediate students will be offered additional age appropriate recess time.
- All students in preschool-eighth grade will receive physical education classes that adhere to Diocese of Grand Rapids Physical Education curriculum standards once per week.
- All students eligible to participate in athletics at St. Mary's or in partnership with

Spring Lake Public Schools will be encouraged to do so and will be afforded necessary flexibility to fully engage.

- School facilities will be made available for students athletic pursuits whenever possible.
- The Extension Program will provide and encourage – verbally and through the provision of space, equipment, and activities – daily periods of moderate to vigorous physical activity for all participants.
- Teachers and other school and community personnel will not use physical activity (*e.g.*, running laps, pushups) or excessively withhold opportunities for physical activity (*e.g.*, recess, physical education) as punishment.