Triennial Assessment Report: UCPS SNS 2025 (6/2025)
District: UNION COUNTY PUBLIC SCHOOLS

Introduction

Overall, the UCPS Wellness Policy has increased in both strength and comprehensiveness since the last Triennial Assessment three years ago. Our policy and practice both remain strong with a number of criteria that got high scores in both areas. The comparison of policy and practice has shown two criteria that need to be added to our Wellness Policy and two criteria that are included in our policy but need to be revised in practice within the next three years.

Strong Policies and Aligned Practices

UCPS has 11 items that are both strong in policy and in practice throughout our schools. The policy and practices that we are strongest in include the representation of different groups in the Wellness Committee, the regular evaluation of the implementation of the Wellness Policy, and the complete reporting of the triennial assessments of the policy. Other strong items include the consistent and easy access of students to free drinking water, the presence of specific goals for nutrition education to promote student wellness, the use of participatory skill-based methods in nutrition education, the promotion of a physically active lifestyle in physical education programs and the lack of use of physical activity as punishment. Finally, the district is strong in its policy regarding marketing of food that does not meet Smart Snacks criteria as well as in the implementation of that policy.

		Policy Score	Practice Score	
FR1	Does the district have specific goals for nutrition education designed to promote student wellness?	**2**	**2**	☆
FR4	Is free (i.e., no cost to students) drinking water available to students during meals?	**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**	☆
FR13	Which groups are represented on the district-level wellness committee?	**2**	**2**	☆
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**	☆

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
NES14	Do students have consistent and easy access to free drinking water throughout the school day?	**2**	**2**	☆
NE1	Are skills-based, behavior-focused, and interactive/ participatory methods used in nutrition education to develop student skills?	**2**	**2**	☆
PEPA3	How does your physical education program promote a physically active lifestyle?	**2**	**2**	☆
PEPA18	Do teachers ever use physical activity as a punishment?	**2**	**2**	☆
IC1	Is there an active district-level wellness committee?	**2**	**2**	☆

Create Practice Implementation Plan

Our district has 11 items that are strong or somewhat strong in policy, but not as strong in practice. Three of those concern physical education, a number concern the service or sale of non-Smart Snacks foods or beverages during the school day, in vending machines, school stores or during fundraisers, and two items concern the publishing and implementation of the Wellness Policy and compliance with it. Of all of these, the type of foods/beverages served/sold in school stores or during fundraisers need to be addressed and corrected before the next assessment to avoid receiving a finding. The Wellness Committee will need to create a practice implementation plan for this item to be put into action within the next three years, and to be reevaluated during the next assessment.

		Policy Score	Practice Score	
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**	**1**	🤲
FR7	Do all a la carte foods and beverages sold in the cafeteria meet Smart Snacks standards?	**2**	**1**	🤲

FR8	Do all foods and beverages sold in vending machines meet Smart Snack standards?	**2**	**1**	🤝
FR9	Do all foods and beverages sold in school stores during the school day meet Smart Snack standards?	**2**	**0**	🤝
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?	**2**	**0**	🤝
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**	**1**	🤝
FR15	How is the wellness policy made available to the public?	**2**	**1**	🤝
PEPA1	🏃 Does the district have a written physical education curriculum that is implemented consistently for every grade?	**1**	**0**	🤝
PEPA2	Does the district have a written physical education curriculum that is aligned with national and/or state standards?	**2**	**0**	🤝
PEPA4	How many minutes per week of PE does each grade in elementary school receive?	**2**	**0**	🤝
PEPA19	Do teachers ever withhold physical activity as a classroom management tool?	**2**	**1**	🤝

Update Policies

18 items scored strong in practice, but not as strong in policy for our district. Among these, our district currently strongly puts into practice the federal standards for NLSP and NSBP and the USDA Professional Standards for continuing education/training hours, even though these are not strongly included in the policy. The district also scored strongly in practice for the protection of the privacy of student's meal status and the avoidance of stigmatization of students with unpaid meal balances, the provision of information on eligibility for free or reduced meals, and the prioritizing of locally produced food procurement. Finally, many of these

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strong practice items concerned nutrition education, physical education, recess, and employee and community wellness. Our Wellness Committee could evaluate if the Wellness Policy needs to be updated to reflect the strong practice of wellness in our district. One item for which our district score highly in practice needs to be added to the policy in order to avoid receiving a finding in the next Triennial Assessment: the protection of the privacy of students who qualify for free and reduced-price meals. This can easily be done by the Wellness Committee over the next three years.

		Policy Score	Practice Score	
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**	📝
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?	**1**	**2**	📝
NES2	Does your school take steps to address feeding students with unpaid meal balances without stigmatizing them?	**0**	**2**	📝
NES3	Does your school or district provide information to families about eligibility for free or reduced-price meals?	**0**	**2**	📝
NES4	Does your school use strategies to maximize participation in the school breakfast program and/or school lunch program?	**0**	**2**	📝
NES7	💧 In your district, is it a priority to procure locally produced foods for school meals?	**0**	**2**	📝

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**	**2**	📋
NE2	Do all elementary school students receive sequential and comprehensive nutrition education?	**1**	**2**	📋
NE3	Do all middle school students receive sequential and comprehensive nutrition education?	**1**	**2**	📋
PEPA7	Are all physical education classes taught by state certified/licensed teachers who are endorsed to teach physical education?	**0**	**2**	📋
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**	📋
PEPA13	Is there daily recess for all grades in elementary school?	**0**	**2**	📋
PEPA15	Does the district have "joint-use" or "shared-use" agreements?	**0**	**2**	📋
PEPA17	🏃 Are teachers encouraged to use physical activity as a reward for students?	**0**	**2**	📋
EW1	🏃 Are there strategies used by the school to support employee wellness?	**1**	**2**	📋

Opportunities for Growth

UCPS has 21 items which showed opportunity for growth. These include items that have not been addressed in policy or practice, such as the use marketing strategies to promote healthy food/beverage choices in school, the sale of caffeinated beverages at the high school level, the sale or service of non-Smart Snack

foods/beverages on school grounds after the school day, the use of food as rewards in classes, the time allotted to PE per week in high schools, the availability of schools to families and community for physical activity, the opportunity for students to walk or bike to school and the existence of school-level wellness committees. Other items have only been addressed in a limited way. Of these items, one item needs to be corrected before the next Triennial Assessment in order to avoid receiving a finding: the lack of mention in the policy of regulation of foods and beverages served at class parties and other school celebrations in elementary schools. The Wellness Committee will need to add wording regarding this item to the Wellness Policy within the next three years.

		Policy Score	Practice Score	
FR11	Does your district regulate foods and beverages served at class parties and other school celebrations in elementary schools?	0	1	
FR18	Has the wellness policy been revised based on the previous triennial assessment?	1	1	
NES1	Does the district offer breakfast every day to all students?	1	1	
NES5	Are marketing strategies used to promote healthy food and beverage choices in school?	0	0	
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	1	
NES10	Are foods or beverages containing caffeine sold at the high school level?	0	0	
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)?	0	0	
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)?	0	0	

NES13	Do teachers or school staff give students food as a reward?	**0**	**0**	
NE4	Do all high school students receive sequential and comprehensive nutrition education?	**1**	**1**	
NE5	Is nutrition education integrated into other subjects beyond health education?	**1**	**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?	**1**	**1**	
NE7	Does nutrition education address agriculture and the food system?	**0**	**1**	
PEPA5	How many minutes per week of PE does each grade in middle school receive?	**1**	**1**	
PEPA6	How many minutes per week of PE does each grade in high school receive?	**0**	**0**	
PEPA11	Are there opportunities for families and community members to engage in physical activity at school?	**0**	**0**	
PEPA12	Are there opportunities for all students to engage in physical activity before and after school?	**0**	**1**	
PEPA14	Do teachers provide regular physical activity breaks for students in the classroom?	**0**	**1**	
PEPA16	What proportion of students walk or bike to school?	**0**	**0**	

EW2	Are school staff encouraged to model healthy eating and physical activity behaviors in front of students?	**1**	**1**	📈
IC2	Is there an active school-level wellness committee?	**0**	**0**	📈

Key

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

⚗️ **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

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