



Thomas County Schools Wellness Regulation

Preamble

Thomas County Schools is committed to creating a positive, safe, and health-promoting learning environment for every student throughout the school year. Good nutrition, physical activity, and adequate hydration are three important components strongly correlated with positive student outcomes. This regulation outlines Thomas County School Systems approach to ensuring environments and opportunities for all students to practice healthy eating and physical activity behaviors throughout the school day. Specifically, this regulation establishes goals and procedures to ensure that:

- Students receive quality nutrition education that helps them develop lifelong healthy eating behaviors.
- Schools engage in nutrition and physical activity promotion and other activities that promote student wellness.
- The community is engaged in supporting the work of our school system in creating continuity between school and other settings for students and staff to practice lifelong healthy habits.
- The school system establishes and maintains an infrastructure for management, oversight, implementation, communication about and monitoring of the regulation and its established goals and objectives.
- 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;
- All schools in our system will participate in USDA child nutrition programs.
- The school system is committed to implementing a Farm to School initiative focused on serving locally grown foods as defined by the School Nutrition Program. This effort will be supported with nutrition education in the schools.

I. Nutritional Quality of Foods and Beverages Sold and Served on Campus

School Meals

Our school system is committed to serving healthy meals to students that adhere to the USDA guideline requirements. The school meal programs aim to improve the diet and health of school children, help mitigate childhood obesity, model healthy eating to support the development of lifelong healthy eating patterns and support healthy choices while accommodating cultural food preferences and special dietary needs. All schools



within Thomas county are committed to offering school meals through the National School Lunch Program (NSLP), School Breakfast Program (SBP), and other applicable Federal child nutrition programs, that:

- Are accessible to all students;
- Are appealing and attractive to children while being served in clean and pleasant settings;
- Meet, at a minimum, nutrition requirements established by local, state, and federal statutes and regulations;
- Encourage the consumption of foods as recommended by the Healthy Hunger Free Kids Act of 2010 (HHFKA) which encourages increasing consumption of a variety of fruits, vegetables, whole grains and low fat/fat free dairy products.
- Students are served lunch at a reasonable and appropriate time of day.
- Participation in federal child nutrition programs will be promoted among students and families to help ensure that families know what programs are available in their children's school.
- The school system will implement at least four of the following Farm to School activities:
 - Local and/or regional products are incorporated into the school meal program;
 - Messages about agriculture and nutrition are reinforced throughout the learning environment;
 - One of more school hosts a school garden;
 - One or more school hosts field trips to local farms; and
 - One or more school utilizes promotions or special events, such as tastings, that highlight the local/regional products.

Free and Reduced – Priced Meals

Schools will provide breakfast and lunch meals to all students at no charge in compliance with Community Eligibility Program (CEP) guidelines.

Meal Times and Scheduling

- Schools will provide students with adequate time to eat lunch;
- Schools will schedule meal periods at appropriate times depending on class schedules, number of students and other influencing factors. Lunch should be scheduled for thirty minutes between the hours of 10:00 a.m. and 2:00 p.m.
- Schools will not schedule tutoring, club, or organizational meetings or activities during mealtimes, unless students may eat school meals during such activities;
- Schools will provide students access to hand washing before they eat meals or snacks.



Qualification of School Nutrition Staff

Qualified nutrition professionals will manage and administer the School Nutrition Program. Continuing professional development should be provided for all nutrition professionals. Staff development programs should include appropriate certification and/or training programs for District School Nutrition Director, managers, and school nutrition assistants according to their level of responsibility.

II. Foods and Beverages Sold Individually (i.e., foods sold outside of reimbursable school meals, such as through vending machines, cafeteria a la carte items, fundraisers, school stores, etc.)

Elementary School

Foods and beverages sold to students individually outside the reimbursable school meals programs (including fundraising activities) during the school day will meet the Federal Smart Snacks regulations.

Middle and High School

All foods and beverages sold to students individually outside the reimbursable school meals programs (including those sold through vending machines, student stores, and/or fundraising activities) during the school day will meet the Federal Smart Snack regulations.

Classroom and School Parties and Celebrations

School administrators shall determine ways to highlight seasonal events and birthdays in a way that is age appropriate and provides equal opportunity for each student involved. When food and beverages are provided during such activities, the provision of healthy food and beverage choices are recommended.

Fundraising Activities

School fundraising shall be encouraged to offer healthy food choices or non-food items. (i.e., healthy food choices: fruit baskets, fruit smoothie mix, whole wheat pasta and sauce kits, or non-food items: coupon books, gift wrap, cookbooks, etc.) Thomas County Schools require that all food fundraising sold during the school day (Midnight to 30 minutes after school dismissal), must meet the fundraising requirements of the Smart Snack regulation set forth by the Healthy Hunger Free Kids Act (HHFKA) of 2010. **As such, marketing and advertising of only those foods and beverages that meet the Smart Snacks in School nutrition standards is permissible.** However, in recognition of the tradition of school fundraisers, the HHFKA provides flexibility for special exemptions for the purpose of conducting infrequent school-sponsored fundraisers during which foods that do not meet the nutrition standards for Smart Snacks may be sold. The GaDOE guidelines mirror those set forth by the HHFKA and allow for fundraiser exemptions.



Concessions after school hours which provide food and beverages during optional school events, talent shows, and parent engagement events are exempt from the guidelines contained herein, but are also encouraged to offer healthy choices.

Snacks

Snacks provided by the School Nutrition Department served during the school day or in after-school care or enrichment programs must meet the Smart Snack regulations. Schools will assess if and when to offer snacks based on timing of school meals, children's nutritional needs, children's ages, and other considerations.

Drinking Water Availability

All school meal periods must offer access to drinking water for students during meal times. Students are allowed to go to the drinking fountain either in or near the cafeteria during meal times. Water cups should be available in the cafeteria if a drinking fountain is not present.

III. Nutrition and Physical Activity Promotion and Food

Thomas County Schools aim to teach, model, encourage, and support healthy eating by all students. Our school system will promote healthy food and beverage choices for all students throughout the school campus, as well as encourage participation in school meal programs. 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 such as math, science, language arts, social sciences and elective subjects;
- Includes enjoyable, developmentally-appropriate, culturally-relevant and participatory activities, such as cooking demonstrations or lessons, promotions, taste-testing, farm visits and school gardens;
- Promotes fruits, vegetables, whole-grain products, low-fat and fat-free dairy products and healthy food preparation methods;
- Emphasizes caloric balance between food intake and energy expenditure (promotes physical activity/exercise);
- Links with school meal programs, cafeteria nutrition promotion activities, school gardens, Farm to School programs, other school foods and nutrition-related community services;



- Integrates physical activity into the classroom to support student achievement.

IV. Physical Activity and Education

Compliance with State Requirements

The Thomas County School System shall meet or exceed the requirements for physical education as determined by the Georgia Department of Education. All physical education courses will be taught by a certified physical education teacher. It is encouraged that opportunities for physical activity not be withheld as punishment.

Recess

All elementary schools will offer recess everyday during the school year, preferably outdoors, during which students are encouraged to participate in moderate to vigorous physical activity. Recess will complement, not replace, physical education class. Recess monitors or teachers will encourage students to be active, and will serve as role models by being physically active alongside the students whenever feasible. It is encouraged that opportunities for physical activity not be withheld as punishment.

Extended periods of inactivity among students, in relation to the age of the school population, is discouraged. When school day structures make it necessary for students to remain indoors for long periods of time, schools should give students periodic breaks during which they are encouraged to be moderately active.

Active Academics

Teachers will incorporate movement and kinesthetic learning approaches into “core” subject instruction when possible (e.g., science, math, language arts, social studies and others) and do their part to limit sedentary behavior during the school day. Teachers will serve as role models by being physically active alongside the students whenever feasible.

Physical Activity Opportunities Before and After School

To the extent that staffing and other resources permit, schools shall offer extracurricular physical activity programs such as sports, clubs, and intramural programs.

V. Other Opportunities that Promote Wellness

Staff Wellness

Thomas County School System highly values the health and wellbeing of every staff member and will plan and implement activities and policies that support personal efforts by staff to maintain a healthy lifestyle. Such activities may include employee wellness promotion activities and employee health fairs.



School Health Clinic

Thomas County School System, in partnership with Primary Care of Southwest Georgia, Inc., provides medical services for all students, faculty and staff through a school-based health center. Services include but are not limited to; primary care health and wellness checks, minor injury treatment, immunizations, nutrition education, and chronic condition management.

Community Partnerships

Thomas County School System will continue the relationships with community partners (e.g., hospitals, universities/colleges, local businesses, SNAP-Education providers and coordinators, etc.) in support of this wellness regulation's implementation along with Live Better, the Archbold-led community collaborative that is focused on improving the overall health of the citizens of Thomas County, with a primary focus on reducing obesity.

Live Better's support of Thomas County Schools includes, but is not limited to, providing K-5 nutrition education resources, wellness programming, events related to nutrition and/or physical activity promotion. Live Better will continue to work closely with the school superintendent, health and wellness coordinator, and school nutrition director to offer support and resources that aid in the implementation of the school wellness regulation and align with measurable Live Better goals for the K-5 population.

Community Health Promotion and Family Engagement

Schools 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.

VI. Regulation Compliance

Implementation and Monitoring

The superintendent or designee will ensure the compliance and implementation with this wellness regulation throughout the district. School principals shall be responsible for communicating the contents of this regulation as well as implementing this regulation in their respective schools. Principals shall report on their compliance as directed by the superintendent.

The School Nutrition Director for Thomas County Schools shall be responsible for the nutritional component of this regulation and shall be the functional expert in school nutrition matters, ensure compliance with nutrition staff and oversee the daily operation of the District's School Nutrition Program.



Regulation Review

Assessments will be repeated every three years in order to review regulation compliance, assess progress, and determine areas in need of improvement. As a part of the review, the district will review its nutrition and physical activity policies; provision of an environment that supports healthy eating and physical activity; nutrition and physical education policies and program elements. The district and individual schools within the district will, as necessary, review and make recommendations to the Superintendent or designee on necessary revisions that need to be made to the wellness policy and regulation.