

School Health Evidence-Based Actions



WHOLE SCHOOL, WHOLE COMMUNITY, WHOLE CHILD

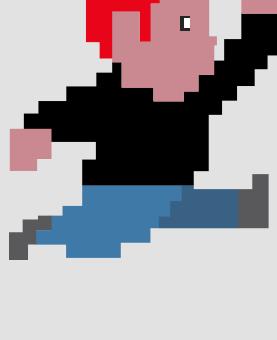
COMPONENTS AND OUTCOMES ON

ACADEMIC SUCCESS

A symbiotic relationship exists between health and academic performance.

Research shows that by improving health, there are positive outcomes that enhance learning to achieve academic success.

HEALTH EDUCATION



Increased Grades



Increased Test Scores



Improved Student Behavior



Decreased Absenteeism



Decreased Dropout Rates

PHYSICAL EDUCATION AND PHYSICAL ACTIVITY

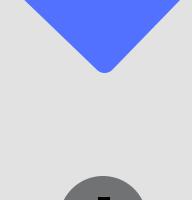


Cognitive Performance

Grades

Grade Point Averages

Standardized Test Scores



Disciplinary Problems

Absenteeism

Dropout Rates

Improved classroom and social behaviors

NUTRITION ENVIRONMENT AND SERVICES



Grades and standardized test scores

Better cognitive functioning due to increased nutrient consumption

Absenteeism

PHYSICAL ENVIRONMENT

Academic achievement and absenteeism ↗ when students feel safe

Absenteeism ↘ when indoor air quality is not triggered for asthma or allergies

COUNSELING, PSYCHOLOGICAL, AND SOCIAL SERVICES



Attendance

Student Behavior

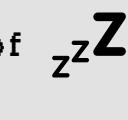
Test Scores and GPA



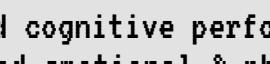
Classroom Behavior



Suspension Rates



HEALTH SERVICES



Unaddressed health needs affect academic success:

- Lack of Reduced cognitive performance
Impaired emotional & physical health
- Problems Literacy and reading test scores
- Smoking, drug use, early intercourse, and engaging in violence Lower grades and educational attainment
- Obese or overweight Increased absenteeism
test scores ↘
- Diabetes Attention and test scores ↘
- Poor health Increased absenteeism
- Asthma Lower cognitive performance
Increased school absenteeism
- Dropout rates

- Better social skills
 - Graduate high school
 - Improved classroom behavior



Smoke  • Be emotionally distressed

- Drink 
 - Be physically inactive 



SITIVE school culture and climate-
tional learning is linked to the fo-

Student Gains Reduced Risks

Social and emotion

Conduct/disciplinar

- Positive classroom behavior ➤ Violent behavior
 - 11 percentile-point gains on standardized achievement tests ➤ Emotional distress
 - Sense of belonging, connection & engagement with school ➤

.....

with their health needs.

Community involvement is associated with increased/improved:

-  • Grades

- Attendance
- behavior

- addition, service learning opportunities and civic engagement associated with:

 - Improved school related behaviors
 - Increased academic achievement

-  school suspension rates

- ## **EMPLOYEE WELLNESS**

Employee wellness programs contribute toward creating a culture of health and can support student health and learning by:



Support Student Health

- Improving their morale, productivity and classroom effectiveness and reducing absenteeism.

- NAME** _____ **STUDENT NUMBER** _____



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Abstract

The New Jersey Department of Health, along with the three state grantees of the Whole School, Whole Community, Whole Child (WSCC) School Health NJ Project compiled this document of evidence-based actions. Many of these actions were adapted from Sustainable Jersey for Schools (SJS). Sustainable Jersey for Schools is a certification program for New Jersey public schools that want to go green, conserve resources and take steps to create a brighter future. Schools that decide to register with SJS may be eligible to receive points toward their certification for completing many of these actions. The intent of this document is to provide schools and community leaders with resources where they can find evidence-based actions to improve health and wellness in schools.

Access to Healthy Drinking Water in Schools

The goal of the Access to Healthy Drinking Water in Schools action is to ensure that clean and healthy drinking water is available to all students during the school day and to promote water as the primary hydration option. The requirements set forth in the Healthy, Hunger-free Kids Act of 2010 mandates that schools participating in the National School Lunch Program and the School Breakfast Program must also provide free drinking water to students where these meals are served. In addition to these requirements, this action seeks to promote a variety of strategies that schools can use to ensure that drinking water is available to all students and that there are systems in place to evaluate the current water-supply and take any necessary steps toward improving infrastructure, water provision, and education. This process is adapted from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) guidance document: [Increasing Access to Drinking Water in Schools.](#)

Why is it important?

Drinking water can contribute to good health, and schools are in a unique situation to promote the healthy consumption of water as part of smarter dietary choices. Students spend a significant portion of their day at school and it is important for them to have safe, free drinking water as an alternative to sweetened beverages. Unfortunately, many students do not have access to clean drinking water in schools, either due to contaminated sources and pipes, lack of working drinking fountains, or inadequate opportunities to go get a drink of water.

The consumption of water within schools may be equally limited by a lack of education or understanding on the part of the students, in that the benefits of water have not been stressed, or that the unhealthy options are made to look more appealing. Improving both the perception of benefits to drinking water and increasing the availability of healthy drinking water to students will improve student health and encourage future healthy decisions.

Who should lead and be involved with this action?

This action will be completed at the individual school level. However, district personnel may be involved in different components of the overall initiative. Within the school, the Health and Wellness Team or equivalent body should be tasked with evaluating the current availability and safety of the water within the school, as well as drafting a plan for improving access to safe drinking water for students. It may be necessary to contact the municipal water utility or an independent contractor who is capable of testing the water running through the school's pipes and ensuring that it safe for the students and staff that use it every day. Teachers, staff and students will be essential in both coming up with solutions to any identified issues, as well as implementing successful education efforts to promote the water consumption.

Timeframe

This action includes multiple steps and could take up to several months.

Project Costs and Resource Needs

The resources needed to complete this action will vary depending on the state of clean water availability in the school. There is no federal law or regulation requiring testing of drinking water in schools, except for schools that have their own water supply (or well). A school connected to an individual or private well is classified as a non-transient non-community water system if the well serves at least twenty-five of the same people over a period of six months during the year. These water systems are regulated under the Safe Drinking Water Act (SDWA) and are required to complete regular water testing for all regulated contaminants.

The cost associated with the testing of the water source, as well as at outlets throughout the school, will vary based on the size of the school. A school district may be able to collaborate with its water utility to conduct the water testing under its contracts with state certified drinking water laboratories. Once the safety of the water source and the pipes has been determined, future evaluations may not be needed as frequently.

Depending on the results of water testing remediation measures may be required. The extent of the repairs or remediation will depend on the concentration of lead found in the water samples and the results of any subsequent water quality tests. If the pipes carrying the water have excessive lead, it may be in the best interest of the school to replace the pipes which is an expensive process. In another situation, purchasing water filters may be the most appropriate response and is less costly than others.

What to do, and how to do it ("How to")

This section provides guidance and recommendations for implementing the action. A school district or school does not need to follow this guidance exactly as long as it meets the requirements for earning points for this action.

1. Evaluate Existing Drinking Water Resources. As a starting point, a review of water quality and accessibility in the school should be completed. This includes an evaluation of current drinking water policies and practices (click [here](#) for an assessment template), and the current condition of the water supply, water carrying pipes, and water dispensaries (water fountains, tap water sinks). Under regulations set by the EPA, if the water contains a level of lead greater than 20 parts per billion (ppb), action must be taken to correct this. The EPA has [a Three T's Program \(Training, Testing, and Telling\)](#) for Reducing Lead in Drinking Water in Schools: Revised Technical Guidance.

Creation of a plumbing profile of the school is a necessity for the testing process and will require documentation as to how water enters and flows through the school. The following steps would then be required:

- a) Identity all water taps in the school.

- b) Prioritize those water taps used for drinking or food preparation purposes such as kitchen sinks, drinking fountains (bubblers and water coolers), classroom combination sinks and drinking fountains, nurses' room sink, etc.
- c) Identify those taps not typically used for consumption such as bathroom sinks or showers (these sources may be used to fill up a large water cooler for outside school activities.)
- d) Finally, list the taps where there would be the least probability of consumption such as custodian or utility sinks.

All inside water taps in the school should eventually be tested, but priority must be given to taps that are used or may be used for consumption or food preparation. The service line must also be sampled for lead concentration (See Section 4.4- Three T's Program). If any first draw tap sample exceeds the 20 ppb lead value, follow up flushed sampling will then be required at that tap's location. This is Step 2 sampling, also in Section 4.4. The monitoring protocol for lead is described in Sections 3 and 4 of the Three T's Program .

Attention to sample size (volume of water sample to be collected) and adherence to the timeframes and procedures for the collection of initial first draw tap samples and follow up flushed samples is critical. These lead samples must be analyzed by a certified drinking water laboratory with a method approved by the EPA for lead analysis in drinking water. If follow up water sample results exceed the 20 ug/L limit for lead, action to reduce the lead levels such as installation of point of use treatment would be necessary. Section 5 in the Three T's Program addresses the various options for reducing the lead levels in the drinking water. A schedule for maintenance of the treatment in addition to monitoring of the drinking water taps through water testing should be added to the School Water Access Plan.

2. Develop School Water Access Plan (SWAP). Using the results of the evaluation, the Health and Wellness Team, in coordination with school administration, should develop a plan that identifies feasible solutions to the issues identified. The purpose of the SWAP is to:

- Identify strengths and opportunities for improvement in providing access to and consumption of drinking water.
- Develop a list of recommended actions to address both policy and practical concerns to limited water supply.
- Rank the list so that top priorities are addressed first.
- Based on results of follow-up flush sampling, if the lead concentration exceeds 20 ug/L, actions for reducing the lead in the water must be taken. Point of use treatment, such as filters, may be installed at those locations. Other water quality parameters may be required to determine the best course of action for remediation. Other options for reducing lead in the drinking water such as replacement of pipes, faucets or other upstream components may be considered. Testing for lead at those taps with point of use treatment should be conducted about every 90 days to ensure that the lead is being removed from the drinking water. Maintenance of the treatment (example: replacement of filters) will be required and

should be considered in cost analysis. If there was minimal lead or other particulates, then consider requiring testing in 3-5 years. However, if testing revealed unhealthy levels of particulates, add more stringent annual water testing plans, at least until levels return to a consistently safe level.

3. Implement the SWAP. Once the plan has been developed and approved by school administration, implementation should begin. Key considerations for this stage of the action include:

- Seek opportunities for funding. Certain costs for improving water access during meals and throughout the school day can be incorporated into the annual budget. For that which cannot be covered, consider school food service funds, federal, state, or municipal funding, foundation grants, PTA, or partnership with private industry. Also, research opportunities for assistance from the local water utility, state and local health agencies, and certified water testing laboratories.
- Gather partners to support effort. Partner with water utility, school facilities operators and school maintenance staff to develop and implement a plan.
- Select a water delivery method. Review the available budget and decide which implementation works best given the context of the school. Appendix B may provide insight in deciding which water delivery method would be effective. Schools are discouraged from using disposable water bottles as a solution because this it is not a sustainable practice and may end up being more expensive in the long-term than a more structural strategy.
- Identify personnel needs and training. Identify whether additional staff time or training is necessary to implement the proposed solutions. Further strategies for this section of the action can be found on the CDC website. (See resources)

4. Develop Water Promotion Strategies. One of the most important aspects of implementing a Water Access Plan is ensuring that the response from students will mirror the effort that went into making the water available. It is important to develop strategies for communicating what changes are happening within the school and why students should care. This can primarily be done by notifying all students of what was done by the school to make the water more accessible. If the pipes were replaced, the school can emphasize that fresher water will be available, and if new water access stations, water fountains, or water bottle refill stations are installed, the school can advertise new opportunities to refuel around the school. Schools should consider focusing advertising or awareness around water access points or in the school cafeteria where water is most consumed. The key messages may include the quality and safety of the water, the health benefits of water, the cost-savings of drinking water, and the environmental benefits of tap water over disposable water bottles.

5. Evaluate the Success of the Water Access Plan. After the School Water Access Plan has been implemented, it is important to record results and evaluate how successful the changes to policy and practice have been. When evaluating success keep in mind the extent to which a policy/program has been implemented as intended, and whether or not the desired outcome was achieved. In order to do this, questioning students'

perceptions of water availability and preferences may be useful. Consider tracking the purchase of water and other beverages to explore any practical effects on water preference.

What to submit to show completion of this action

The following documentation must be submitted to verify that the following requirements have been met:

- 1. Description of Implementation.** Provide a short summary (300 words or less) of what is being done to provide students and staff with access to healthy water in the school.
- 2. School Drinking Water Needs Assessment.** Submit an assessment of the school's current drinking water policies and practices (click [here](#) for a sample template).
- 3. Water Testing Results.** Upload the laboratory reports for all of the water tests conducted at the school and the sampling information collected at each sampling point. This information would include the name of the sample collector, the date and time of sample collection, the location sampled, the amount collected and other pertinent information and is usually called a chain of custody report. The testing must have been conducted within three years of implementing this action.
- 4. School Water Access Plan (SWAP).** Submit a copy of the SWAP that addresses the concerns identified in the evaluation of school water resources. This should include what issues were identified and what strategies will be implemented to address them. Please note that if water sample results unsatisfactory, steps to reduce the lead levels such as installation of point of use treatment would be necessary. A schedule for maintenance of the treatment in addition to monitoring of the drinking water taps through water testing should be addressed in the SWAP.
- 5. Water Promotion Strategies.** Submit samples of materials used to promote and educate students on healthy drink choices and water consumption in the school.
- 6. Success Story.** Write a success story using 1 digital photo (obtain photo release) and methods by which it will be shared; provide hard copy, website or link.

Approved actions will expire three years from the date the water testing was conducted, if the testing results did not require any remediation efforts to address water quality issues. If the testing results revealed water quality issues, a description of the remediation action(s) and verification of water testing results post-remediation are required.

Spotlight: What New Jersey schools are doing

Blairstown Elementary, Blairstown Township School District

The Green Team completed a needs assessment to determine the school drinking water needs. A committee was formed within the Green Team to evaluate the results of the needs assessment, review the results of water testing, and formulate a plan for promoting water consumption. To view how Blairstown Elementary met the requirements for this action click [here](#).

Metuchen High School, Metuchen School District

Completing the Safe Drinking Water Evaluation helped the Green Team identify several points of improvement, namely repairing certain water fountains, requesting funds for another bottle filling station, and ramping up the "Drink More Water" campaign. To view how Metuchen High School met the requirements for this action click [here](#).

Rockaway Valley School, Boonton Township Public School District

Access to healthy drinking water is important at Rockaway Valley School. All faucets and bubblers are tested annually and any problems are remediated as necessary. To view how Rockaway Valley School met the requirements for this action click [here](#).

Resources

[CDC](#). Rethink Your Drink

[CDC](#). Water Access in Schools

[CDC](#). Water and Nutrition

[New Jersey Department of Environmental Protection \(NJDEP\)](#). Drinking Water Watch (Drinking Water Watch enables users to view drinking water information for NJ water systems)

[NJDEP](#). Standards for Safe Drinking Water in New Jersey (pamphlet).

[United States Department of Agriculture, Food and Nutrition Service](#). Water Availability During NSLP Meal Service.

[United States Environmental Protection Agency \(EPA\)](#). Drinking Water Best Management Practices for Schools and Child Care Facilities Served by Municipal Water Systems.

This action was adapted from Sustainable Jersey for Schools (SJS). [Sustainable Jersey for Schools](#) (SJS) is a certification program for New Jersey public schools that want to go green, conserve resources and take steps to create a brighter future, one school at a time. Schools that decide to register with Sustainable Jersey for Schools, may be eligible to receive points toward their certification for completing this action.

Adopt Practices and Policies for Healthy Food Choices Beyond the Cafeteria

The school environment plays a fundamental role in shaping lifelong healthy behaviors and can have a powerful influence on students' eating habits. The goal of this action is to promote healthy eating by encouraging districts to adopt policies and/or practices that increase the availability of healthy food choices **beyond what is required by federal and state regulations.**

Why is it important?

Seventeen percent of the nation's children and adolescents are currently obese. The obesity rate has doubled for children and quadrupled for adolescents since the mid-1980s. If this pattern is not reversed, this generation of children could lead sicker, shorter lives than their parents' generation (Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, 2014). Schools are in a unique position to influence eating habits and can be instrumental in reversing this trend. Overall, healthy eating has been correlated to increases in academic test scores, and better class participation (National Center for Health Statistics, 2011).

The U.S. Department of Agriculture Food and Nutrition Service (USDA) sets nutrition standards for the National School Lunch and School Breakfast Programs. USDA regulations cover all foods sold at school during the school day. The new Smart Snacks in School regulation applies to food sold a la carte in the cafeteria, in school stores and vending machines, and through in-school fundraisers. However, there are no standards for food and beverages served free-of-charge (i.e., during school celebrations), sold after school, off-campus, or on weekends (i.e. at school plays or sporting events), or fundraisers selling food not intended for consumption in schools (i.e., cookie dough or frozen pizza sales). Districts and schools committed to establishing and reinforcing lifelong healthy eating habits should use these opportunities to promote healthy food choices.

Who should lead and be involved with this action?

Champions for healthy eating initiatives can be anyone from a school nurse, physical education teacher, foodservice manager, school principal, or a school board member to groups of concerned parents, the PTO/PTAs and/or students passionate about the topic. While the champion can bring attention to the issue, the Health and Wellness Team should be the lead in this effort and engage others (teachers, booster clubs, school organizations, student clubs) in the planning and implementation of this action.

Timeframe

The time needed to complete this action depends on the existing level of awareness and support for health and wellness in the school community. District policy development and adoption involves a formal process that, at minimum, could take several months to finalize language and include on board meeting agendas to gain approval.

School level practices may take less time to implement than district policies if school staff, administration and families have been involved and feel part of the decision-making process. Conversely, if those being impacted are not involved with providing input about school level changes to be implemented, opposition may end up involving district administration and the school board and subsequently delay implementation.

Project costs and resource needs

The only costs associated with making healthy choices a standard practice for all school activities that involve food are staff and volunteer resources needed to educate the school community on the benefits of this effort. Extensive free resources are available to help develop and implement comprehensive district policies and school practices. See the Resources section of this action for more detail.

What to do, and how to do it ("How to")

This section provides guidance and recommendations for implementing the action. A school does not need to follow this guidance exactly as long as it meets the requirements for completing this action.

It is important to realize that the entire food environment of the school matters: everyone in the school community needs to give students the same message about healthy eating through their words and actions. For example, it is inconsistent to prohibit food service providers from selling candy and soda at lunch but then allow parents to bring them in for school celebrations or sell them at a basketball game. In addition, offering less-nutritious food items in any circumstance contradicts nutrition messages taught in the classroom.

The goal is to establish a healthy school nutrition environment as the “norm”. Taking positive steps to implement district policies or school practices that support student health is a public demonstration of the school's commitment to promoting healthy behaviors among students, families, and the community at large. A useful starting point for improving school nutrition is to assess the current nutrition environment by identifying strengths and weaknesses. This will help the team develop an action plan and the rationale behind it.

Key areas of focus may include:

- **Food Sales at Activities and Events Outside the School Day:** A variety of foods are typically sold at sporting events, performances, and other school-related events in the evenings and on weekends to raise money for student or parent organizations. Common offerings include soft drinks, baked goods, salty snacks, candy, and fried foods. Increasing the variety of nutritious choices and decreasing the number of "empty calorie" items will make students more likely to choose nutrient-rich foods. Initially, those in charge of deciding what to sell may be reluctant to change citing uncertainty about students accepting new foods, increased costs, and reduced profits. However, finding ways to engage

the school community can be key to successfully upgrading the nutritional value of products sold. Schools can provide students with opportunities to taste test new food offerings, or invite a mix of school, parent, and community officials to participate in the decision-making process. In addition, research studies show that integrating healthy options can be done without a significant negative financial impact.

- **Celebrations During the School Day:** Promoting healthy options during meal or snack times while allowing unhealthy options during celebrations can confuse youth. Celebrations should be associated with healthy habits and activities rather than unhealthy options and consumption. Requiring foods such as juice, water, cheese trays, and fresh fruit and vegetable trays at classroom parties and prohibiting things like soft drinks and chips will not detract from the celebration. Another option is to mandate that all foods for celebrations be prepared by the school food service. This approach addresses concerns over food safety because of student allergies as well as over which foods are being consumed. Alternatively, non-food celebrations should be explored such as special kickball games, dance parties, or extra active recess time, etc.
- **Fundraisers:** One study on school fundraising found that 80% of clubs, teams, and parent organizations used food as a fundraising method. More alarming is that 76% sold chocolate, 67% sold baked goods, and 63% sold candy. The Center for Science in the Public Interest has an extensive toolkit on how school fundraising can be made healthy. They advise avoiding fundraisers centered on candy and baked goods and advocate non-food sales and others based on physical activity, such as walk-a-thons. For example, the School Wellness Council at Millville Senior High School in Plainfield, NJ decided to improve employee wellness with a healthy cookbook while raising money for student scholarships. Students helped provide the artwork for the cookbook. The cookbook was such a hit that they do it every year, with recipes that are more appealing to their student population.

If fundraising is focused around foods, that food should meet nutritional standards. In order to implement changes regarding fundraisers it is important to talk with PTO/PTA/PTSA representatives, the principal, coaches, school and booster clubs, out-of-school time site/program staff, parents, and food service staff about healthier fundraising options. Engage students to research and develop healthy, profitable fundraising ideas and work closely with vendors to find creative ways to sell healthier food and beverage items. One creative approach successfully used in schools across the country is "farmraisers." Farmraisers are like a traditional school fundraiser, but they offer delicious, healthy farm products for sale to school communities. Children will go home with simple brochures detailing the available farm products for sale. Farmers get a good price for their quality products and potential new customers for their farm business. Schools add a markup that meets their fundraising goals.

- **Using Food as a Reward:** Food is often offered as an incentive or reward to students. Examples include a pizza party for the class that has the best attendance, or a piece of

candy for a correct answer. Using food as a reward can contribute to the development of unhealthy habits that stick with children for life. Experts caution that food, even healthy foods, should never be used as a reward or reinforcement for students because it tempts students to over consume food and may result in children tying food to emotions, such as feelings of accomplishment. The options for non-food rewards are limited only by imagination, time, and resources. Matching the reward with the action is an appropriate place to start. For example: Students who complete reading assignments can be rewarded with a book, magazine, or word-play activity book; students who complete a class project can receive an appropriate non-food incentive; classes who behave well can be given extra time to play outside.

Successful strategies to promote healthy food choices will vary based on the dynamics of a district/school. Listed below are a broad range of evidence-informed strategies that can be used to effectively implement healthy food choices throughout the school environment.

Engage Students: Many schools have engaged students through taste-testing sessions to gauge acceptance of new products and to solicit feedback for successful planning. When students are asked to give feedback they feel that people are listening and care about their opinions. Students can also be part of the process through student-led marketing campaigns to promote healthier options such as the use of contests, coupons, or limited time offers. These approaches add excitement to eating healthfully while also educating students on the importance of nutrition and healthy living. It is also a way to put students in charge of sending the message to their peers that eating healthy is the thing to do.

- **Expand Nutrition Education:** Nutrition education is one of the most important aspects of changing the culture of the school community to embrace healthy food options. It can be integrated into academic subjects or can be incorporated into after school athletics programs to reinforce how healthy eating affects athletic performance.
- **Encourage Staff to Lead by Example:** School staff can be a critical element in a school's transition to healthier food choices by modeling healthy behaviors and reinforcing what is taught in the classroom.
- **Timing Matters:** Major changes to food policies and practices seem better received at the beginning of the school year while changes implemented during the middle of the school year seem to invite opposition.
- **Use an Incremental Approach:** Many schools found that making incremental changes over time increases student acceptance by giving them time to adjust their tastes and resulted in smoother transitions and less pushback. For example, a school could start by offering healthier food items as options and then transition to requiring that all food options meet the nutrition recommendations.

- **Involve Parents:** Educate parents about nutrition beyond the school day. Healthy options at home reinforces the changes at school and vice versa.
- **Marketing:** Get the Message Out: Districts and schools need communicate and to get the message out to staff, students and parents about healthy eating and provide a sound rationale for implementing new food policies or practices.

What to submit to show completion of this action

The documentation below must be submitted to verify that the following requirements have been met:

1. Description of Implementation.
 - a. School level - Provide a summary of the school practices in place to promote and reinforce the importance of healthy food choices **beyond what is required by federal and state law or regulation** during the last 12 months, partners involved, reports/evaluations, etc. These practices require that healthy options are offered whenever food is provided or sold in connection with school activities or events and/or discouraging the promotion, sale, or distribution of unhealthy food and beverages in the school or by school-related organizations (i.e. PTA, Booster Clubs, etc.) Nutrition education and awareness efforts by themselves do not qualify for completion of this action. The goal is to change the type of food being offered or sold in connection with school events or activities that is not currently regulated.
 - b. District level – The district is required to have a Local Wellness Policy that advances the integration of healthy food choices sold or provided at activities and events outside the school day, offered at in-school celebrations and fundraisers conducted by school-related organizations. The policy is required to identify standards for these healthy foods.
2. Provide copies of student and parent outreach materials used to share information about the district policy adoption or school healthy food practices in place during the last 12 months. Materials can include articles, website postings, newsletters or information sent home to parents.
3. Write a success story using 1 digital photo (obtain photo release) and methods by which it will be shared; provide hard copy, website or link.

Spotlight: What New Jersey schools are doing

Bergenfield High School, Bergenfield Public Schools

Bergenfield Board of Education has adopted and implemented the comprehensive Wellness Policy which endeavors to create and promote healthy choices by our students in their

personal, academic, developmental, and social spheres. The policy outlines the District's approach to ensuring environments and opportunities for all students to practice healthy eating and physical activities throughout the school day. To view Bergenfield High School's approved submission click [here](#).

Montclair Public Schools

Montclair parents worked with school administrators, teachers, and the Partners for Health Foundation to come up with [The Montclair Food Guide Fuel for School](#). The guide provides options for snacks, parties, and events at school. Their "commonsense" approach sets down a 70/30 guideline: 70% of the snacks coming from a healthy-choice selection and 30% from less nutritious choices, including sweets. School snack choices are grouped into three categories based on their relative nutritional value: Green Light, Yellow Light, and Red Light. - Fresh fruits and vegetables, whole grain items, low-fat dairy and non-soda beverages occupy the "Green Light" category and can be offered to students freely. - Processed fruits with some added sugar; products without whole grain but with added sugar such as pretzels, crackers and cookies; and flavored milk and yogurt products are in a "Yellow Light" category that are to be offered sparingly. - Candies, cakes, and other food items with refined sweeteners; trans fats; hydrogenated oils; high fructose corn syrup; and artificial colors and flavorings are in a "Red Light" category that should be avoided if possible.

Parents are allowed to bring in cupcakes and candy, provided they are part of a larger selection of items, with 70% of those snack choices coming from the "Green Light" list. They believe this system teaches moderation and encourages youngsters to make the correct food choices and provides relief for some parents because it takes the pressure off of parents who worry about what to bring in for their child's birthday.

Resources

The [New Jersey Action for Healthy Kids Team](#) is committed to engaging the many representatives from statewide organizations and agencies around promoting healthy eating and active living for all New Jersey youth.

The Alliance for Healthier Generation's [Healthy Schools Program](#) takes a comprehensive approach to helping schools create healthier environments by increasing physical activity and healthy eating for students and staff. Tools include: the [Smart Snacks in School](#) guidelines; [fundraising resources](#) without selling unhealthy foods; and, ideas for [school celebrations](#) without the cupcakes and sweet treats, plus sample letters to communicate the changes to parents.

[Bridging the Gap](#) is a nationally-recognized research program. The goal is to improve the understanding of how policies and environmental factors affect diet, physical activity, and obesity among youth, as well as youth tobacco use. Resources include: [Local School Wellness Policies: Where Do They Stand and What Can You Do?](#), [Creating Supportive School Nutrition Environments](#); and, [Marketing and Promotion of Foods and Beverages at School](#).

[Centers for Disease Control and Prevention \(CDC\)](#) Adolescent and School Health: CDC provides evidence-based guidance for schools on how to implement policies and practices that effectively promote healthy choices and behaviors among youth.

The [Chef Ann Foundation's](#): vision is to help schools take action so that every child has daily access to fresh, healthy food. This vision is achieved by actively supporting school districts through grant programs and by providing tested tools for school food change.

[New Jersey School Boards Association \(NJSBA\)](#) offers Policy Services which include model district sample policies required by law or that are state monitored as well as samples to support sustainability initiatives that are not required by law. Policy services also help board members and administrators to develop customized policy language. Contact your administration or local board members for access.

Rutgers Cooperative Extension: The Department of Family and Community Health Sciences ([FCHS](#)), a community-based nutrition, health promotion, and family wellness outreach component of Rutgers Cooperative Extension, provides workshops and on-line resources to educate and support families, worksites, schools, and communities to create healthier lifestyles: [Conducting Taste-Testing Activities in Schools](#): A Guide for Teachers and Administrators; [Creating a Taste-Testing Event](#): A Resource for School Nutrition Professionals; and, [School and Family Partnerships Promote School Wellness](#).

US Department of Agriculture [Tools for Schools](#): Tools for Schools offers topic-specific policy and resource materials to assist schools in meeting nutrition standards. Refer to the latest regulations, find free nutrition education curricula, or get ideas for adding tasty, kid-friendly foods to enhance your school meals program. Resources include: [Smart Snacks in School Fundraisers](#); [Smart Snacks in Schools Standards](#); [Smart Snacks in Schools Summary and Exemptions](#); and, [Smart Snacks Tools](#).

[Eat. Play. Live...Better](#), The Montclair Food Guide, Fuel for School.

The Center for Science in the Public Interest: [Fundraising Toolkit](#).

Valley Food & Farm, [FarmRaiser Tools](#).

Create an Inclusive Environment Where All Can Thrive

This action recognizes schools that have implemented efforts to identify, understand, and address the needs of students and parents/guardians who may feel isolated in their current school environment. The ultimate goal is to develop a school climate and culture where all members of the school community feel safe, connected, and where all voices are heard and valued.

Why is it important?

Every New Jersey school community should strive to provide strong and concrete support for all constituents, including those of all different gender identities and expressions, sexual orientations, religions, ethnicity, disability status, English language proficiency, or other characteristic that could lead to them feeling isolated. It is important because in order for everyone to feel safe and supported in school, the culture and climate of the school needs to be inclusive and attuned to the needs of all. All learning and academic performance is impacted by the relative presence or absence of such support. An even more compelling reason to address this issue is the alarming rate of suicide attempts and suicides in adolescents. [According to the Center for Disease Control](#), one in 12 have attempted suicide and one in six high school students report having seriously considered suicide. There is also a growing body of research showing a relationship between bullying and victimization, which happens more frequently to students in vulnerable groups, and the rate of suicide and suicidal ideation.

Unfortunately, there are certain groups of students and parents in New Jersey school communities today who are feeling isolated and/or vulnerable. While there are some groups who are consistently more vulnerable across many school communities, who these groups are in any individual school can vary depending on the demographics of the school and the wider school community. Because of this reality, it is imperative for schools who choose to take on this action to do a comprehensive assessment to identify their vulnerable populations without relying on assumptions and generalities. Further, there are complex dynamics at play in this work. Students and their parents may share a characteristic(s) that make them vulnerable (e.g., socio-economic status), but there also may be divergences where students are vulnerable for different reasons than that of their parents (e.g., students/special education; parents/non-English speakers), and other possible permutations. It is also important for this action that school staff receive professional development around how to create an inclusive environment in their school. The additional benefit of this professional development is the creation of an inclusive climate for staff as well as for students and their parents.

Who should lead and be involved with this action?

Ensuring that the school environment is supportive of all students and parents requires that everyone in the school community is properly educated in the importance of individual differences including: Administrators, the Guidance department, Student Support Services; faculty/staff; students; parents; and the greater school community.

In many schools, there are site-based management teams or other advisory groups that could/should also be involved in ensuring that the school environment is inclusive to all. An obvious contender for this effort is the state-mandated School Safety and Climate Team. There are also community resources including organizations devoted to the advocacy of various groups that could/should play a part in creating a supportive climate for all. Schools should partner with appropriate groups.

Timeframe

Begin this process by undertaking a systematic school effort to identify groups of students and parents who may feel isolated and the supports that may or not be in-place for those groups. The overall action may require a shifting of cultural norms in the school/district. If this is the case, this would be a long-term objective. Many schools are already addressing aspects of this action and for them, the timeline may be shorter. Schools should consider taking immediate steps toward addressing this action as appropriate to the situation.

Project Costs and Resources Needed

The primary cost of this action essentially is staff time and funds for professional development (PD) and training. There may be additional costs related to the need to address facilities and/or provide opportunities that fill an existing gap in services to these populations.

What to Do and How to Do It

This section provides guidance and recommendations for implementing the action. A school does not need to follow this guidance exactly as long as it meets the requirements for this action.

1. Find a home within the school for this effort – ideally as part of the school climate team.
2. Obtain approval and endorsement from school and district leadership as needed.
3. Conduct an inventory of activities, programs and practices including identifying what students are being served and what students are underserved (identifying the gaps).
4. Look at school collected data to help identify possibly hidden groups of isolated students and/or parents
5. Conduct focus groups with students (and parents if appropriate) to further clarify the needs of identified groups of students (parents) and what type of support students (parents) would appreciate and benefit from.
6. Create a comprehensive plan for addressing the gaps/needs identified during the inventory and focus groups.
7. Secure any funds required for Professional Development and trainings

Students (and parents, when appropriate) should be involved and engaged in all phases of this effort. Schools may wish to partner with outside advocacy organizations, community

organizations and agencies which can be an effective approach to providing additional supports and resources when and where appropriate.

Administration, faculty and staff should be made aware of the results of this effort and be sensitive to concerns and needs of these students and parents when planning school programs ranging from assemblies to student activities. (For example: providing an alternate place/activity during lunch period for students who may be fasting for religious reasons.) In addition, it may be necessary to review and revise school/district policies and Code of Conduct as needed to ensure all students are safe and well supported in school. Likewise, building regulations, practices and access to facilities should reflect the rights and needs of all students and staff.

This action requires that schools implement improvement plans that are comprehensive, school-wide, linked to relevant school policy changes, and that are widely communicated to the school community. While some schools have taken steps to support vulnerable groups by creating student clubs/organizations such as a Gay Straight Alliance (or similar) Club, this is not sufficient to address the requirements of this action. Another example is some schools have an event(s) welcoming immigrant students and families into the school community. Again, this is helpful, but not sufficient to meet the requirements of this action. Establishing and formalizing a communication channel with these families and students, discussing with them what they would find helpful and identifying areas of potential concern, matching students with buddies, creating a club or other vehicle to ensure student's voices are heard and their needs met in the school setting represents a more comprehensive approach to addressing the vulnerabilities of this population.

What to submit to show completion of this action

Schools need to proactively seek to understand their school population better and implement approaches to reach out and engage vulnerable groups in a systemic and sustainable way.

The following documentation must be submitted to verify that action requirements have been met:

1. Description of Implementation. Submit a short summary (300 words or less) of the efforts the school has undertaken to create an inclusive environment where all can thrive including how the target groups of students and parents were identified and activities or initiatives were undertaken to address their unique needs.
2. Description of the staff PD and documentation of attendance.
3. Submit samples of materials related to the specific initiatives. This could include flyers promoting school-wide events, student-led club activities, outreach efforts, staff training, changes to school practices or policies, etc.
4. Success Story. Write a success story using 1 digital photo (obtain photo release) and methods by which the success story will be shared: provide print copy, website or link.

Spotlights: What NJ Schools are Doing

Barclay School, Cherry Hill School District

At Barclay ECC, our program consists of two classroom models; general education and self-contained. The self-contained classroom consists of students who all have an IEP and are here from 9-2:30pm. In the past, those in the self-contained were not always given an opportunity to interact with their general education peers. We felt that this was a disservice to our students and enacted a more favorable approach. We did a complete revision of our schedules so that our speech therapists, general education, and self-contained schedules were in alignment for the inclusion times. In September 2017, letters were distributed to parents of general education students asking for volunteers to become "buddies." By the third week of September, Speech Therapists brought the volunteer "buddies" to the self-contained classrooms for an introductory visit. Once implementation began, all professional staff were asked to look for signs of stress within any of the students and to report any issues that may have a negative impact. In the past, we have hosted events/parties that were gender specific (i.e. "Mother's Day Tea", "Game Night with Dad"). Our school no longer holds such events: all events are gender neutral. Additionally, our school now offers assisted drop off for parents who may find it difficult to walk their children into our building. For a complete description, click [here](#).

Burnett Middle School, Township of Union Public Schools. View this video:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=9V0qLbgLSYw>

Becoming a UCS has changed the lives of students, the school and the community. It's not hard to feel lost in a big school, especially for a middle school student. But students at Burnett Middle School, the largest and most diverse of the ten schools in the Township of Union Public School District, have the secret to making a big school a warm and welcoming school--become a Unified Champion School.

With over 1,000 students and 90 educators, Burnett is one of the largest middle schools with the most diverse student body in the entire state of New Jersey. And included within these students with many unique differences is a group of about 20 students with different abilities in a multiple disabilities class. Wanting to ensure students were involved and part of the school community and not seen as "those kids" in "that class", a teacher decided to change up the Special Olympics Club she inherited from a volunteer/fundraising club to a Unified Champion School. To ensure she had the support and resources needed to implement the three UCS components, she brought her Principal, Special Services team, Guidance, Physical Education department and Athletic Director together as the UCS School Leadership Team.

The difference between the Special Olympics Club and the Unified Club is that you are bringing the special education and general education students together to build relationships and spread awareness that it is ok to be different. When starting the club, the main goal was inclusion, to have every student feel part of the school community. It started by simply inviting a few kids into the classroom once a week, then students started meeting

once a month after school and soon, there were over 100 kids wanting to hang out with the special education students during homeroom and join them for lunch and during other parts of the day.

In four years, the Unified Club has grown from 20 general education students to 150, with more wanting to join. The UCS program now includes daily homeroom meetings, where groups of 25 general education students rotate into the special education classroom to socialize, plan activities and develop their skills as inclusive leaders and ambassadors for inclusion in their school. Unified Club members also meet weekly afterschool for social and Unified sports activities including basketball, Wii sports, bowling, football, volleyball and yoga, and once a month in their Unified PE class. The club's leadership committee organizes the social and Unified sports activities and attends two annual Youth Summits sponsored by Special Olympics New Jersey. Other students are engaged in helping and participating. Throughout the year, the students have fun, but also volunteer and fundraise for important causes in events like the Unified Hoops for Heart fundraiser, where students where 5 Unified teams played basketball and raised \$400.

Each year the Unified Club organizes a Respect/ Spirit Week, an assembly and culminating event, allows the whole school to engage in the message of inclusion. For example: students created lesson plans for homeroom teachers to teach mini lessons about different disabilities, they made posters and created morning announcements for their themed spirit weeks' days. "Camo Day, so we can all blend together in spreading awareness that it is ok to be different." Play Unified provides guest speakers and athletes that can speak to your school to help kick off the spirit week and help spread awareness. Three years later, our students were making their own videos and running the assembly themselves. Students will step up when giving the opportunity to make a difference. Allow all your students to have input and give your ideas. Take pictures, invite the media, get the school photography club involved, invite the ROTC, get as many school clubs involved in your plan so that everyone can have a part in this unified program.

UCS provided our school not just financial support but moral support as we have progressed through implementing this inclusive program within our district. Participating in the UCS programs like the Rutgers Unified Game Day and Youth Summits provided our students the opportunity to see that there was more to life. It allows them to be a part of something bigger. These are life changing experiences both students with and without disabilities. For more information

Montville Township High School, Montville Township Public Schools

Montville Township High School's Gay Straight Alliance provides a supportive, inclusive environment for students, and a safe space to ask questions and share experiences. Topics of discussion at Gay-Straight Alliance meetings have included practicing means of self-advocacy at school, at home, and in the world, sharing experiences of encountering bias and lack of understanding, discussing current events relevant to students' experiences as part of the LGBT+ community, and sponsoring observances (including Ally Week and Day

of Silence). Overall, the Gay-Straight Alliance provides students with a sense of belonging and connectedness – both to each other, and to the school community.

LGBT+ youth need support from faculty, staff, students, and administration as a foundational piece of their future success, both academically and personally. Being a part of the Gay-Straight Alliance helps students to combat internalized homophobia and transphobia, helping to create a more positive self-image. The Gay-Straight Alliance contributes to creating positive school climate, showing that schools can be a part of social change by ensuring that LGBT+ students' feeling safe and protected is a critical priority for all facets of the school community. This is because doing so models for other students that LGBT+ classmates are their peers, worthy of respect and acceptance.

Words from students themselves illustrate the value of their involvement in the GSA . One student shared that, "GSA is important to me because we can learn from each other about what it means to be happy about ourselves." Another student said that, "GSA means a lot to me because it is important to recognize the anxiety and fear that LGBT kids live with." Other responses include that time spent with the GSA felt like a "relief" and that it can serve as a means to "bring important issues to light."

Protecting LGBT+ students is a way to protect all students because it gives us an opportunity to model humanity, empathy, fairness, and tolerance to the community as a whole – a mission that the Gay-Straight Alliance shares and promotes at Montville Township High School. Now, more than ever, schools and communities must reaffirm their commitment to tolerance and inclusion, especially for LGBT+ students.

Resources

[Social Emotional Learning Alliance for New Jersey](#)

A nonprofit alliance offering convenings, shared SEL resources, shared capacity-building resources and technical assistance.

Association for Supervision & Curriculum Development, [Creating an Inclusive School, 2nd Edition](#) (ISBN-10: 1416600493, ISBN-13: 9781416600497)

Minnesota Department of Education, [A Toolkit for Ensuring Safe and Supportive Schools for Transgender and Gender Nonconforming Students](#), September 25, 2017

Special Olympics, New Jersey, [Creating a Unified Club](#)

U.S. Department of Education, [English Learner Tool Kit for State and Local Education Agencies](#), November 2016

[Muslim Schoolchildren Bullied by Fellow Students, Code Switch Race and Identity, Remixed](#), NPR, March 29.2017

[Growing Up in a Time of Fear: Confronting Stereotyped About Muslims and Countering Xenophobia, The Learning Network, Teaching and Learning with the New York Times,](#)
December 17, 2015

U. S. Department of Justice, [Twenty Plus Things Schools Can Do to Respond to or](#)

This action was adapted from Sustainable Jersey for Schools (SJS). [Sustainable Jersey for Schools](#) is a certification program for New Jersey public schools that want to go green, conserve resources and take steps to create a brighter future, one school at a time. Schools that decide to register with SJS, may be eligible to receive points toward their certification for completing this action.

Conduct a School Culture and Climate Needs Assessment

A positive school culture and climate is integral to students' academic success and their social, emotional, and physical well-being. Doing a comprehensive school culture and climate assessment is the critical first step in school improvement efforts. There are two components to the assessment:

1. an inventory of **all** the school's programs and practices aimed at improving school culture and climate as well as students' health and social-emotional and character development; and,
2. a survey of student, staff, and parent perceptions of school culture and climate
AND/OR
conduct focus groups with students, staff, administrators, parents, and the school community.

The inventory provides opportunities to see how well the school is addressing culture and climate through programming, where there are gaps and overlaps in program offerings, how culturally appropriate and sensitive the programs and practices are to diverse students, and which students are or are not being engaged in the efforts. From here, the school can address how to better support underserved populations and discuss what might be added to engage more students, as well as celebrate the most successful and robust activities already addressing students' social-emotional learning and overall climate and health of the school.

Next, the school can conduct a survey of student, staff, and parent perceptions of school culture and climate. To complement the survey results, schools could also collect qualitative data by conducting focus groups. Focus groups add depth to the survey responses and are helpful to identifying the root causes of problems to help the school test assumptions about strategies for change.

Why is it important?

School culture and climate is an integral part of the overall school environment. Not only do students learn best when they are in a positive and supportive school environment, but they also develop health-promoting social-emotional skills and a positive attitude toward themselves and others. A positive school environment has core elements of education for sustainability such as an intentional focus on developing students' sense of individual responsibility to self and others and their understanding that each individual is part of interdependent social and natural systems. However, the process of creating a sustainable positive school climate must begin with understanding a school's present strengths and areas for improvement that comes from completing a comprehensive school needs assessment.

Who Should Lead and Be Involved in this Action?

The concept behind this action is to be inclusive in involving sectors of the wider school community in looking at and responding to the variety of data gathered from the program

inventory, the climate survey results, and the focus group dialogues. The improvement effort itself should have central administration and Board of Education approval since it will involve a financial commitment – at least in terms of release time for the groups/teams to meet.

Ideally, a cross-functional school team should select the survey instrument and develop the process for administering it. Since schools are already mandated to have a School Safety and Climate Team comprised of administrators, faculty, staff, and parents, many schools choose to use this existing team and invite community members to participate. Once the data is collected and analyzed, the school team should review and discuss the data to identify strengths and opportunities for improvement based on the survey results (the perceptions of school community). The team should then decide how to share this information with the staff, students, parents, and members of the broader school community.

An important decision here is how to involve students in the process. Student voice and student engagement is very important. Students may be involved in various ways – as a part of the main team or focus groups where appropriate, or the school can create a separate student climate team with broad student representation. Schools will have to decide on the make-up of their teams and focus groups. For any of the parts of this action, a school/district may decide to work with an external entity to facilitate the process.

Timeframe

The timeframe for this action will vary as the school/district leadership. First, the project team needs to complete the program inventory. Next, it has to decide on whether to conduct a survey or focus groups or do both. The School Safety and Climate Team should be responsible for determining the actual time line for this action. This action typically takes 3-6 months to complete.

Project Costs and Resource Needs

Coverage for teachers and staff to attend team meetings will need to be agreed on and be supported by the school and district. There may also be some costs for the formal assessment instrument and subsequent data analysis as well as copying, printing, etc. In some cases, additional resource materials may need to be purchased or created. Cost for the school culture and climate assessment varies greatly depending on the choice of survey instrument, who and how the data will be analyzed, and whether the school chooses to bring in an external consultant.

What to do, and how to do it (“How to”)

A school needs to first complete the Program Inventory because it provides the foundation for the qualitative and quantitative assessments that follow. The next step is to decide on whether to conduct a survey, focus groups or to do both.

1. School Culture and Climate Program Inventory

The inventory helps a school identify what they already have in-place (programs, resources, supports, activities, clubs) regarding culture, climate, physical and mental health, social and emotional learning and character development. Ideally this exercise is led by the School Safety and Climate Team and involves the entire faculty/staff to obtain a complete and comprehensive view.

The Team first needs to determine an efficient way to collect and organize data. The [School Culture and Climate Initiative](#) has a sample Program Inventory Worksheet (Click [here](#)) that schools can use to develop a list of in-school and after-school programs, including curricula, health initiatives, cultural events, clubs, assemblies, workshops and anything else that addresses social emotional learning, school culture, climate, physical or mental health. Examples may include particular units of study, activities such as a Gay-Straight Alliance, events celebrating various cultures, parent engagement programming, and anti-bullying efforts among others.

The results of the inventory should be discussed as a team with representatives of the student body, administration and staff. The discussion should aim to identify any duplicated efforts, programming that may seem outdated or underutilized, missed opportunities or gaps in programming, as well as identify groups of students who are and who are not benefiting from the programming. Further, it is important to note any other observations made through the exercise including connections of the programming to the school’s core values and mission.

2. School Culture and Climate Survey

There are three recommended survey instruments that can be used in NJ:

- a. [New Jersey School Climate Survey](#), NJ Department of Education
- b. Climate Survey, [National School Climate Center](#), [Measuring School Climate](#)
- c. [School Culture and Climate Initiative Survey](#), *a Partnership of United Way of Northern New Jersey and College of Saint Elizabeth. Contact: liz.warner@unitedwaynnj.org*

The School Safety and Climate Team should review these instruments and select the one that best aligns with its objectives. Once the tool is selected, the Team needs to decide whether it wants to involve an outside organization in the assessment process and then gain support from central office administration and the board of education to commence with the survey.

As part of the planning process, the details regarding survey administration and the analysis of survey responses needs to be addressed. The data analysis could be done internally or externally. Data analysis may likely involve several rounds of data review/conversations and follow-up. The survey data must be disaggregated by key demographic indicators of students, staff, and parent samples as pre-determined by the

team. Examples of demographic indicators are gender, grade, and ethnicity for students; gender, professional position, ethnicity for staff.

During the data review process, the team will identify strengths and opportunities from the data and have conversations as to next steps. An outside organization, if utilized, may provide support and external validation of this process. Once the team has completed its review and analysis of the data it should create a communication plan to share the results of the survey with the various school community constituents. It is recommended that overall school climate strengths and opportunities for improvement be shared to collectively identify trends, brainstorm ideas for improvement actions, and agree on next steps.

School Culture and Climate Focus Groups

After the quantitative analysis is complete schools may choose to engage focus groups of key stakeholders to gain a deeper understanding from the school community about trends, issues, questions, and opportunities that emerged. The School Safety and Climate Team needs to:

- a. look at existing data from the quantitative survey as well as from other school data sources (New Jersey State School Report Cards, for example);
- b. develop a set of questions that can lead to deeper insight of strengths/opportunities/issues surfaced from these data; and,
- c. solicit input from students, faculty, parents, and other relevant community members, allowing for a meaningful dialogue between a skilled facilitator and thoughtfully-chosen participants representing various sectors of the school community. The number of the participants should be limited so that the group is of a manageable size, yet diverse enough to provide feedback from the broader population.

As part of the focus group planning effort, the Team needs to identify an external group to facilitate the focus group and agree on the protocols to be used. Facilitators should be properly trained and experienced in leading focus groups and be impartial to the discussion content. The groups should be carefully planned to maximize the value derived from them. This includes using a structured and vetted discussion guide, advanced scheduling of the location and room, selecting and confirming participants, designating scribes, time keepers, etc., and preparing minutes or summaries of the group findings. (See Resources section on conducting focus groups)

Once the data collection and analysis is complete, the Team needs to identify a list of strengths and opportunities which emerged from the analysis and develop an action plan listing next steps. This information should then be shared within the school community to garner support for moving forward.

What to submit to show completion of this action

The following documentation must be submitted to verify that the action requirements have been met.

1. Description of Implementation. This is a summary of your assessment process and how the results and action plans were shared with the school community.
2. A copy of the completed School Culture and Climate Program Inventory.
3. A summary of the School Culture and Climate survey. Explain how the survey was administered including when, how, to whom it was distributed, % of target audiences completing it, and how the data analysis was completed. Show documentation regarding how information about the survey was communicated to the school community. See Resources below for links to survey instruments

AND/OR

A summary of the School Culture and Climate Focus Groups discussion. Summarize the number, how participants were recruited, the ultimate composition of the groups, when they were held, and who facilitated them. Show documentation regarding how information about the focus groups was communicated to the school community. (i.e. a copy of the invitation letter/email)

4. A copy of the action plan developed from the assessment. Indicate the status (completion date, in progress, not yet met) of each activity.
5. Success Story. Write a success story using 1 digital photo (obtain photo release) and methods by which the success story will be shared; provide print copy, website or link.

Spotlight: What NJ Schools are Doing

All New Jersey schools are required to assess their school culture and climate annually to be in compliance with the Anti-bullying Bill of Rights. However, the law does not mandate how the assessment must be done or who should be involved in the process. The action described here is a more robust school culture and climate assessment than the law requires. Schools engaging in this action move beyond mere compliance by analyzing perceptions of the school culture and climate among all key stakeholders- students, staff and parents through a survey instrument and/or focus groups, engaging all key stakeholders in the data analysis and review process, as well as in determining the resulting actions to be taken by the school in its improvement process.

There are many examples of schools throughout the state that have engaged in an assessment process that has led to significant improvements in overall culture and climate. These examples may be found in the work of the New Jersey Alliance for Social Emotional and Character Development (NJASECD), the School Culture and Climate Initiative, a partnership of United Way and College of Saint Elizabeth, and Campaign Connect. All of these organizations use an assessment instrument and a data analysis protocol.

James F. Cooper Elementary School, Cherry Hill School District

At the start of the 2017-18 school year, the climate and culture surveys were conducted with all students, staff, and parents. We have examined feedback from the school climate surveys and informal feedback from parents to evaluate our climate and culture needs.

Information has been gathered and shared at faculty and PTA meetings regarding our current status. The school climate survey helped our teachers to understand student perceptions with regard to the adults in the building. To view a description and advertisement of the James F. Cooper Elementary School surveys click [here](#).

Riverview Elementary School, Denville School District

Riverview Elementary School in Denville, New Jersey decided to collaboratively focus on school culture and climate. In 2015, they became involved with the School Culture and Climate Initiative and surveyed their school community using a process resembling the action described here.

The positive change that emerged from the assessment was due to the engagement of staff and students looking at the data survey results and identifying several short- and long-term goals to improve the school. Goals included whole school social emotional learning, environment and sustainability and staff and student morale and engagement.

The key to their success was learning to collaborate and use the results of the assessment to shift their school's culture.

Lawrence Public School District, Lawrence Township

Lawrence Public School District is the first K-12 National District of Character in the state of New Jersey. All of the district's seven schools have been recognized as New Jersey Schools of Character. In order to gain this recognition, each school engaged in a self-assessment process that is based on Character.org's Eleven Principles of Effective Character Education. The schools used the results of this evaluation to plan and implement improvements in various aspects of the schools' culture and climate.

Character education is a unifying factor across the district schools. The district philosophy is that meaningful education reform should include a full range of social skills and moral competencies in order for students to build healthy relationships and be positive contributors to the community. The improvement efforts in Lawrence have led to a decrease in discipline referrals and an increase in academic progress and student attendance.

These positive gains have occurred across all schools in the district and provided an example of how objectively looking for improvement opportunities can make a difference in school culture and climate.

Lincoln Park Middle School, Lincoln Park School District

Lincoln Park Middle School in Lincoln Park, New Jersey worked with the School Culture and Climate Initiative to assess the school culture and climate in 2012. They surveyed all staff and faculty and all 400 fifth through eighth grade students. Based on the survey data, the students decided to create more opportunities for students in different grades to interact. These efforts were very much student-led. "Students initiated team-building

activities that involve mixed grades. Now, we've found that students respect each other more because they know each other" says principal, Michael Meyer. Now, when a fifth-grade student at Lincoln Park Middle School walks down the hallway, chances are he or she will feel comfortable to say hello to a passing eighth grader – and probably by name. And this seemingly simple change has positively affected the school's climate."

New Brunswick Middle School, New Brunswick Public Schools

New Brunswick Middle School used the NJDOE survey and produced a very useful data analysis using the templates. Staff report: "Since the inception of our character education initiative, we have regularly assessed the students and the staff on their perceptions of the school climate. These assessments are given annually at the end of the school year. We used the same survey for the first three years of implementing our character education and in spring 2015 we transitioned to using a district-wide one. Although different, both assessments include questions on student respect, friendship, belonging, students shaping their environment, support for staff, student approval, student perceptions of the utility of learning, teacher approval, and student pride. The data was analyzed and results used to plan for the future, focusing on constantly improving the culture and climate of the school. All data collected is analyzed by the SOCC committee and/or the LCCA committee, and the committees use the information to plan future LCCA lessons, content area lessons, as well as activities for staff and students. Lessons and activities are created with the focus on continuously improving the culture and climate of New Brunswick Middle School."

Merriam Avenue School, Newton Public Schools

Merriam Avenue School in Newton, NJ also used the NJDOE survey. Staff report: "Our School Safety/Climate Team meets bimonthly and is comprised of various stakeholders and includes administrators, counselors, a parent outreach coordinator, classroom teachers, a parent, a paraprofessional, and a school security guard who is retired from law enforcement. One of the primary roles of the team is to develop, implement, and assess ongoing initiatives within the school to improve and maintain positive school climate. The team uses data from school climate surveys, pre- and post- tests, discipline referrals, and reported incidents of Harassment, Intimidation, and Bullying (HIB) to guide decision-making. In addition, administrators use data derived from teacher evaluations to assess the progress of our Responsive Classroom initiative. Second Step portfolios collected from students help our school counselor assess student progress in the areas of skills for learning, empathy, emotion management, and problem solving. Character education initiatives are reported to multiple stakeholders. Reports are regularly submitted to our district character education director and our building principal, both of whom submit reports to our board of education. The superintendent of schools shares all reports with our local community via our website. Our school utilizes the New Jersey School Climate Survey (NJSCS) to compile feedback from our staff, parents, and students on their perceptions of our school climate. It is also important to note that all public schools in New Jersey get graded on their efforts to implement the Anti-Bullying Bill of Rights Act. Our School Safety Team is responsible for completing the School Self-Assessment for

Determining Grades under the ABR. Each year, our team uses the results to guide school-wide program planning, implementation, and evaluation.”

Resources

[Social Emotional Learning Alliance for New Jersey](#) is a nonprofit alliance offering convenings, shared SEL resources, shared capacity-building resources and technical assistance.

Qualitative Analysis - Focus Groups and Culture and Climate Teams

Although focus groups must be thoughtfully planned and run, most school communities can successfully complete this action. Note that some culture & climate service providers will implement focus groups for their partnering schools, while other service providers offer tools and support to build the capacity of school stakeholders to facilitate and analyze their own focus group initiative. Two examples of New Jersey resources that are already supporting schools in this action are as follows:

- *Campaign Connect*, a NJ climate & culture initiative implemented by Center for Supportive Schools. This initiative includes tools and technical assistance to plan, organize, and facilitate and collect data from school focus groups. *Campaign Connect* provides participating schools with a protocol to analyze the focus group data. This is only one aspect of a complete cycle of data analysis and action to support school improvement. However, documents supporting focus groups can be obtained at no cost. Contact Kristina Knight: kknight@supportiveschools.org
- *School Culture & Climate Initiative* provides a comprehensive approach and in addition to providing an assessment tool (for students, staff and parents) that disaggregates by gender, grade, ethnicity, and position in school as part of a complete cycle of continuous school improvement, the Initiative also uses focus groups. Consultants collect and analyze survey and focus group data from participating schools, and through a variety of exercises and school-wide assessments, support schools in developing and implementing improvement plans that engage the entire school community. *Contact information:* liz.warner@unitedwaynnj.org

The following information is about using protocols and asking appropriate questions to understand the data that is provided to the focus group or Culture and Climate Team.

Allen, David. *The Facilitator's Book of Questions: Tools for Looking Together at Student and Teacher Work*, Teachers College Press; Second Printing edition (April 1, 2004).
ISBN-10: 0807744689; ISBN-13: 978-0807744680

The following book on protocols is an essential tool for facilitators of groups working together to examine student and teacher work. A follow-up to *Looking Together at Student Work and Assessing Student Learning*, this resource considers the purposes for engaging in

collaborative review and provides some of the most effective strategies for successful collaboration. A professional learning community (PLC) is a small group of teachers or administrators that meets regularly and works between meetings to accomplish shared goals. PLCs are vehicles for connecting teacher practice and student outcomes, improving both.

Easton, Lois Brown. *Protocols for Professional Learning (The Professional Learning Community Series) (PLC)*, Association for Supervision & Curriculum Development (April 15, 2009). ISBN-10: 1416608370; ISBN-13: 978-1416608370

Other Resources

McDonald, Joseph P. *The Power of Protocols: An Educator's Guide to Better Practice, Second Edition 2nd Edition* by Joseph P. McDonald, Publisher: Teachers College Press; 2 edition (April 1, 2007). ISBN-10: 0807747696; ISBN-13: 978-0807747698

Novick, B, Kress, Jeffrey S, Elias, Maurice J. *Building Learning Communities with Character: How to Integrate Academic, Social, and Emotional Learning*, ASCD. ISBN-10: 0-87120-665-X

The [Foundation for Educational Administration \(FEA\)](#) is the professional development organization of the New Jersey Principals & Supervisors Association. It offers many training programs and activities that impact directly upon a school's climate and culture.

This action was adapted from Sustainable Jersey for Schools (SJS). [Sustainable Jersey for Schools](#) is a certification program for New Jersey public schools that want to go green, conserve resources and take steps to create a brighter future, one school at a time. Schools that decide to register with SJS, may be eligible to receive points toward their certification for completing this action.

Develop a Safe Routes to School District Policy

Safe Routes to School (SRTS) is a nationwide movement aimed at encouraging elementary and middle school students to walk or bicycle to school. The goal of New Jersey's Safe Routes to School initiative is to get students walking and bicycling to school where it is safe and to make it safe where it is not.

Why is it important?

Increasing childhood obesity rates, combined with the fact that students tend to participate in less physical activity as they move into adolescence, have helped draw the attention of policymakers to the benefits of "active commuting"—that is, pedestrian and other active modes of transportation such as walking, biking, rollerblading, scootering, and skateboarding. The U.S. Surgeon General has recommended routine walking and biking as part of an active lifestyle that is associated with decreased risks for heart disease, diabetes, hypertension, and colon cancer, as well as an increased sense of well-being.

In the past several decades, the percentage of trips made by walking has declined among U.S. children and adults. To some extent this decline is due to increased distances between homes and schools; however, children who live close to school are often driven to school or bused by the district due to safety concerns.

In the early 2000s, policies against walking or bicycling to school were among the top five barriers to walking to and from school. Active commuting can be either encouraged or discouraged by the "built environment," including manmade factors such as school location, street layout, presence of sidewalks, intersection design, zoning, and housing developments, or the lack of attention to developing and implementing policies and procedures that accommodate walking and biking to school. Schools and communities need to work together to identify and fix practical barriers that interfere with students and staff members actively commuting to school.

A school district policy can set the goals, assign authority, and establish expectations district-wide, thereby laying the groundwork for active and safe behaviors. By proactively adopting policies that encourage safe walking and biking to school where appropriate, districts can support daily physical activity for students and staff and reduce the negative impacts of roadway congestion and greenhouse gas emissions.

Who should lead and be involved with this action?

This action will involve the Board of Education, Superintendent, school transportation coordinator and Safe Routes to School (SRTS) champions within the community. School boards set and establish policies and superintendents administer the policies. Superintendents also serve as the chief advisor to the school board and are consulted for background information, suggestions, and recommendations before board decisions are made.

SRTS champions could be school administrators (principal, transportation coordinator, teacher, or school nurse), elected officials (mayor, council member), municipal staff (police officer, municipal engineer), parents or PTO/PTA members, or members of a neighborhood association, environmental group, or community group. The SRTS champions raise awareness of the need for a policy and provide both the superintendent and the board members with information on the benefits of walking and bicycling to and from school. It is important for the SRTS champions to work with the superintendent and the board policy subcommittee to ensure the policy is placed on a meeting agenda for discussion and adoption, and to follow up after subsequent board meetings.

Timeframe

Passing a school board policy could take three months or more depending on the level of support the policy has from school administrators and board members. Once a policy is developed, it must be approved by the school board at an open public meeting. Most districts require that a new policy receive two readings at two separate board meetings and an opportunity for public comment. Board meetings are generally held monthly or twice monthly during the school year; however, this may vary by school district.

Project costs and resource needs

The cost to adopt a Safe Routes to School policy is directly related to the amount of staff and volunteer time needed to:

- Build awareness and allies in the school community regarding the need for the policy.
- Develop the policy through a collaborative process that involves district administration, school staff, parents, non-profit organizations, community members, and other interested parties.
- Shepherd the policy through the board committee review process and place on a board meeting agenda.
- Distribute the policy to the district's schools with guidance on implementation and compliance.

What to do, and how to do it ("How to")

This section provides guidance and recommendations for implementing the action. A school does not need to follow this guidance exactly as long as it meets the requirements for earning points for this action.

The list of resources at the end of this document highlights a number of tools that provide valuable guidance on policy development. A key resource is the National Association of State Boards of Education's [Fit, Healthy and Ready to Learn: A School Health Policy Guide](#). The following overview is adapted from *Chapter B: The Art of Policymaking*.

The policy development process will vary based on the local environment and the level of awareness and support a proposed policy has from school board members, administration,

school staff, parents, and the community at large. The six common tasks involved in shepherding a policy development process are listed below:

1. Lay the Groundwork. The benefits of developing a Safe Routes to School district policy may be self-evident to the majority of stakeholders, but it is important to support the effort with data specific to the school district. This information will also be helpful in clarifying the objective of the proposed policy and determining if the existing Wellness Policy should be expanded or updated, vs. creating a new Active Transportation Policy. Do the necessary background research and be sure to identify any financial, contractual, and scheduling implications for the policy options.
2. Build Awareness and Support. The most important step in crafting any school policy is to enlist widespread support for its goals and strategies, particularly from the superintendent and other administrators who will need to steer the policy through the Board of Education review and adoption process. The National Center for Safe Routes to School recommends building awareness and allies among others in your school community and identifying the pertinent administrators, both at the school and district levels, before presenting the need for a new policy or an amendment to an existing one. Enlist school staff (physical education teachers, school nurses), district transportation coordinators, members of the PTA/PTO, community green teams, and bicycle and pedestrian advocates to support the effort. Safe Routes to School Regional Coordinators at Transportation Management Associations (TMA) throughout the state can provide free technical assistance to develop an action plan to move the initiative forward. To identify the appropriate TMA contact, [click here for more information](#).
3. Anticipate, respond to, and involve critics. Inviting selected opponents into the policymaking process can have positive results. Their constructive criticism could strengthen the proposed policy and they might even be persuaded by the evidence presented to support the effort. Apply communications strategies as needed to increase public awareness of the proposed policy.
4. Draft the Policy: Drafting a policy is likely to be an iterative process, as the details of the policy are worked out and the input and concerns of the various stakeholders are addressed. Draft the policy language, drawing on the information gathered and the values and experiences of committee members. Some guiding principles are as follows:
 - Use language that is simple, clear, specific, and accurate; avoid education, health, and legal jargon.
 - Be concise and brief.
 - Include a rationale for the policy; describe the benefits of adopting it.
 - Build in accountability—cite who will be held responsible for doing what and describe mechanisms for doing it.
 - Ensure that the policy provides practical guidance to school staff members about how to address specific issues.
 - Include provisions for policy evaluation and periodic review.

The Safe Routes to School National Partnership and ChangeLab Solutions have developed an interactive [Safe Routes to School Policy Workbook tool](#) that can be utilized by school boards and advocates to create and customize policies that support active transportation and Safe Routes to School programs.

At a minimum, the policy language should include:

- A description of the benefits of walking and bicycling to school.
- A list of conditions explaining the rules and expectations of the student, parent/guardian.
- A commitment to collaborate with municipal, county, or state transportation, land-use planning, law enforcement, and other community agencies to plan, construct, and encourage the use of safe, accessible, and convenient pedestrian and bicycle routes to school.

The rules and expectations of the student, parent/guardian, and school should be described in detail, usually in a list of conditions. For example, a bicycling policy can include information about helmet use, rules of the road, bicycle maintenance, and bicycle parking and storage. It is always a good idea to include a disclaimer in the policy that states that walking or bicycling is an "assumption of responsibility by students and their parents – a responsibility in the care of property, in the observation of safety rules, and in the display of courtesy and consideration towards others." This will not completely absolve the school district from all liability, but it can offer some legal protection. Allow time for committee members to share the draft policies with their constituencies, gather reactions, and report back to the full committee.

5. Adopt the Policy: After working with the school board policy committee, present the final draft to the full school board, along with useful background information—but keep the amount of reading material to a minimum. Encourage the policy's supporters to attend relevant meetings to show their support. Be prepared to respond to last-minute questions that may arise.

6. Implement the Policy: Adopting sound policy is just a start. A new policy is more likely to be smoothly implemented and consistently enforced if it receives strong administrative support and if all staff members are oriented to the policy and the rationale behind it. The policy should be made available on the school district's website and distributed every year to staff, students, and parents/guardians in a Student Handbook and/or parent information materials. Efforts should be made to connect with key stakeholders such as municipal staff, the community green team or other organizations committed to promoting walking and biking in the community, and local law enforcement. Safe Routes to School Regional Coordinators at Transportation Management Associations (TMA) throughout the state can assist with policy implementation. To identify the appropriate TMA contact, [click here for more information](#).

Real change will occur when municipal government, the school district, local non-profits, and volunteers work together to make a community more walkable and bike friendly. Municipal and school district green teams that work together to implement Safe Routes to Schools initiatives can each earn points toward certification.

What to submit to show completion of this action

A school district's Board of Education must adopt a Safe Routes to School (SRTS) policy by incorporating SRTS as a component into an overarching Local Wellness Policy or through a specific Active Transportation Policy. This policy includes a commitment to collaborate with municipal, county or state transportation, land-use planning, law enforcement, and other agencies to plan, construct, and encourages the use of safe, accessible, and convenient walking and bicycling routes to school.

The following documentation must be submitted to verify that action requirements have been met:

1. Description of Implementation. Provide a short summary (300 words or less) of anticipated or actual efforts to promote the policy such as postings on the district website; inclusion of the policy in the student handbook; internal correspondences; information provided to staff, students and parents; program overviews/data, etc.; what/who it applies to, and the anticipated or date of adoption by the school board.
2. A copy of the draft or dated copy of the adopted policy.
3. Success Story. Write a success story using 1 digital photo (obtain photo release) and methods by which the success story will be shared; provide print copy, website or link.

Spotlight: What New Jersey schools are doing

Brigantine Public School District

Brigantine Public School District is committed to providing a school environment that promotes and protects student health, well-being, and ability to learn by supporting healthy eating and physical activity. The School District adopted a School Wellness Policy that includes both nutrition and physical activity policies. The district established School Wellness Councils (consisting of school and community representatives) as resources to develop, implement, monitor and review school nutrition and physical activity policies, and serve as resources for implementing the policies. The School Wellness Policy section about physical activity includes support for Safe Routes to School, daily recess requirements, physical activity opportunities before and after school, and making school facilities available outside of school hours. View the [Brigantine School Wellness Policy](#) on the NJ SRTS website.

Camden City Board of Education

The Camden City Board of Education recognized that students need access to healthy foods and opportunities to be physically active in order to grow, learn, and thrive. In response to the national obesity epidemic, the Camden City Public School District is committed to providing school environments that promote and protect children's health, well-being, and

ability to learn by supporting healthy eating and physical activity. View the [Camden City School Wellness Policy](#) on the NJ SRTS website and [School Wellness Regulation](#).

Resources

Active Living Research: Active Living Research offers a range of tools and resources to help practitioners, policy-makers, and advocates create more activity-friendly environments.

<http://activelivingresearch.org/>

[ChangeLab Solutions](#) provides community-based solutions for America's most common and preventable diseases like cancer, heart disease, diabetes, obesity, and asthma. Our solutions promote the common good by making healthier choices easier for everyone.

The [Interactive Safe Routes to School Policy Workbook](#) can be utilized by school boards and advocates to create and customize policies that support active transportation and SRTS programs.

[National School Boards Association](#): Working with and through our state associations, NSBA advocates for equity and excellence in public education through school board leadership. [Fit, Healthy, and Ready to Learn: A School Health Policy Guide](#)

[National Center for Safe Routes to School](#) assists states and communities in enabling and encouraging children to safely walk and bicycle to school. The Center serves as the information clearinghouse for the federal SRTS program. The organization also provides technical support and resources.

[NJ Safe Routes to School Resource Center](#) at the Alan M. Voorhees Transportation Center, Rutgers University, the NJ Department of Transportation and the National Policy and Legal Analysis Network to Prevent Childhood Obesity (NPLAN) created model policies to address walking and bicycling to school. The model "Walking to School Policy" and "Bicycling to School Policy" are available and can be modified by schools and school districts.

[NJ Safe Routes to Schools Regional Coordinators](#): Coordinators are available through the eight NJ Transportation Management Associations and are ready, willing, and able to offer free advice and technical assistance in kicking off SRTS programs throughout NJ.

[NJ School Boards Association's SRTS Webinar-District Policy](#). The goal of NJ's SRTS initiative is to get students walking and bicycling to school where it is safe and to make it safe where it is not. Learn more about SRTS and how the school board can adopt a SRTS policy.

[Safe Routes to School National Partnership](#) is a network of hundreds of organizations, government agencies, and professional groups working to set goals, share best practices,

leverage infrastructure and program funding, and advance policy change to help agencies that implement Safe Routes to School programs.

This action was adapted from Sustainable Jersey for Schools (SJS). [Sustainable Jersey for Schools](#) is a certification program for New Jersey public schools that want to go green, conserve resources and take steps to create a brighter future, one school at a time. Schools that decide to register with SJS, may be eligible to receive points toward their certification for completing this action.

Develop a School Travel Plan for Walking and Biking

A Safe Routes to School (SRTS) Travel Plan maps out how to improve pedestrian and bicycle travel to and from school in order to increase the number of students who walk and bike to school and to improve safety. The plan enables the community to identify some short-term improvements in neighborhood accessibility as well as to establish long-term goals.

Why is it important?

Daily physical exercise is an important way to maintain a healthy lifestyle. Active modes of transportation to school such as walking, bicycling, scootering, skateboarding and any other mode of transportation that requires physical exertion are great ways to meet daily activity recommendations for children. Encouraging parents, students and school staff to leave their cars at home and participate in active transportation to school is a productive way to improve health at schools and contribute to student achievement. Developing a School Travel Plan is an important step toward encouraging active transportation to school.

There are many benefits of developing a School Travel Plan. They include

- identifying safer routes for students to walk and bicycle
- highlighting improvements and changes needed to routes to increase the number of students walking and bicycling to school
- creating and strengthening partnerships between the school and the community
- generating ideas and actions on how to make walking and bicycling to school more appealing modes of transportation
- building community and school excitement and involvement that contributes to successful SRTS programs and events
- completing a School Travel Plan, which contributes to achieving silver level Safe Routes to School Recognition
- making your application for a SRTS grant more competitive by demonstrating a connection between goals, actions and targets

Who should lead and be involved with this action?

A SRTS subcommittee of the Health and Wellness Team with the goal of increasing the number of students walking and bicycling to school should be involved in creating School Travel Plans. The team leader will collect the assessments, summarize the results and plan the next steps. The person who leads these efforts might be the:

- Regional SRTS Regional Coordinator
- Principal or other school administrator
- Teachers, school staff, or school board member
- PTO/PTA representative
- local bike/pedestrian advocate

Other recommended members of the School Travel Plan team could include: parents,

students, school district transportation supervisor/coordinator, local municipal officials, municipal engineers/planners, law enforcement officers, crossing guards, local businesses, county representatives, local bike/pedestrian advocates or engaged community members from health and wellness organizations, members of sustainable green teams, and/or neighborhood associations or groups.

Timeframe

The time needed to complete this action will vary depending on the extent and complexity of the School Travel Plan. A simple travel plan could take a month or two while a more comprehensive travel plan with recommendations and guidelines could take six months to a year. The complexity of the School Travel Plan will be determined in part by the school population and need. For instance, if only a small percentage of the school population can feasibly walk or bike to school, it may not require the type of in-depth plan needed for a school whose entire student population can walk or bike.

Project costs and resource needs

Project resources will depend on school needs. Free technical assistance from the [Safe Routes to School Regional Coordinators](#) is available to assist a school in developing a School Travel Plan. Community volunteers also save on costs.

What to do, and how to do it ("How to")

This section provides guidance and recommendations for implementing the action. A school does not need to follow this guidance exactly as long as it meets the requirements for earning points for this action.

Schools and communities who have participated in safety programs such as pedestrian and bicycle safety lesson plans can prepare and educate students on important tips and strategies for safe walking and bicycling to school. The foundational knowledge of safety programs that students receive will enable them to contribute to and utilize school travel plans.

A SRTS Travel Plan maps out how to improve pedestrian and bicycle travel to and from school in order to increase the number of students who walk and bike to school, and to improve safety. A school travel plan identifies:

- (1) where students currently walk and bike
- (2) where students would walk and bike if they could
- (3) what changes need to be made so that students can and will walk and bike to school.

Walk and Bike Assessments are tools to help schools, parents, students, and community members identify barriers that make it unsafe or difficult for students to walk or bike to school. The results of the assessments are the first steps in drafting a School Travel Plan. These assessments evaluate the sidewalk, road and neighborhood conditions around the school, to identify key safety improvements that can make walking and bicycling a safer and easier way to get to school. A School Travel Plan will enable the community to

implement some short-term improvements in neighborhood accessibility and identity long-term goals.

To develop your School Travel Plan, the six elements described below need to be completed in this checklist ([PDF version](#)):

1. School Description and Work Group/Partnerships. Required information about the school includes name of the school, address, county, grades serviced, and number of students attending. Additional information such as a description of the school (e.g., magnet school) and any special needs is helpful to include. Click for a [sample form of a School Description](#).

A work team is needed (see above: Who should lead and be involved with this action?) to complete a School Travel Plan. If needed, [click here to find your Safe Routes Regional Coordinator](#) to assist you in identifying an appropriate leader. A roster of team members' names, titles, affiliated organizations, roles/responsibilities, contact information, and availability should be kept. Click for a [sample form of Working Groups/Partnerships](#).

2. Maps of your School Site and Neighborhood. Prior to completing walking and bicycling assessments, it is important to obtain two maps of the school neighborhood that will be evaluated: a school neighborhood map and a school site map.

The [School Neighborhood Map Generator](#) includes the location of the school, the school district, and the surrounding roads and paths including the names and locations of roads within a two-mile radius of the school as well as student home locations. The [School Site Map Generator](#) contains the school entrances, sidewalks and bike paths on campus, intersections with crossing guards, drop off/pick up zones for parents and school buses and adjoining roads with configurations (e.g., four lanes with a median).

3. [Walk and Bike Assessments](#) help the team identify barriers that may make it difficult or dangerous for students to walk or bike to school. These assessments evaluate the sidewalk, road and neighborhood conditions around the school, and will identify key safety improvements that can make walking and bicycling a safer and easier way to get to school. Once the team is assembled and a route is mapped to follow, schedule a date and time to perform the assessment, preferably Tuesdays through Thursdays (average school days) during the times when students are traveling to school. Bring copies of the assessment tools, copies of the map and a camera to take pictures of problems and issues.

The results of these assessments help describe the existing conditions around your school, the first step in drafting a [School Travel Plan](#). They will identify potential problems that exist for students who already walk or bike to school and barriers that prevent others from walking or biking. The assessments can also suggest ideas for potential improvements you may propose in a School Travel Plan. Completing another assessment after your School Travel Plan has been implemented can also help to monitor the School Travel Plan's progress.

3. After completing the Walk/Bike Assessments, parents and community members should complete the [Walk/Bike Barriers and Opportunities](#) template. This helps the team identify the barriers and opportunities of walking and biking to school, such as conditions of sidewalks and bike lanes or shoulders, the existence and/or condition of crosswalks and curb ramps, traffic concerns, school policies, and parent attitudes and concerns. This will help uncover areas that need focus and attention.

4. [Goals and Actions](#). The best way for a school to encourage more students to walk and bike to school is where it is safe to do so and to improve the areas where it is not safe. This addresses the 5 E's of a SRTS program: a) Education; b) Encouragement; c) Enforcement; d) Engineering; and, e) Evaluation.

Goals should be tailored to your school's situation and needs. They should be long-term and contain specific targets as well as actions that can be taken to achieve them. Using the framework of goal, target and action helps to focus your efforts.

- Goals are statements about what you want to achieve, e.g., "All students will have the opportunity to safely walk and bike to school"
- Targets are milestones to help achieve goals., e.g., "Repair sidewalks by a certain date."

Actions are the steps to be taken, input that will be needed, and assignment of responsibilities for achieving targets, e.g., "Meet with municipal officials to discuss sidewalk improvements needed."

The [Goals and Action Plan Template](#) may be helpful in organizing the goals and process of your School Travel Plan. When developing a School Travel Plan, make sure to clearly define and identify the following:

- The party responsible for each action
- Prioritization of projects
- A timeline for completion for each action
- Projects and programs already in progress
- Resources that might be needed (i.e. funding, staff, volunteers, etc)
- Potential funding sources

6. [Evaluation](#). Evaluating the progress of your School Travel Plan enables an understanding of what works and helps to ensure the success of future investments in time and money. Since implementation of the plan may be long-term, tracking progress provides benchmarks and rationale for continued investment. Ideally, evaluations should be completed each year while walking and bicycling the routes in order to check the quality of the surrounding neighborhood's infrastructure. Measurements might include: periodic walk and bike assessments, [student travel mode tallies](#), [parent surveys](#), and evaluation of walk and bike events.

The success of the School Travel Plan can be evaluated using qualitative metrics such as:

- activity of the school transportation committee
- school policy changes that support walking and bicycling
- integration of active transportation into the school curriculum

- participation in walk and bike to school days
- involvement of parents in walking and bicycling activities
- coordination with local governments and organizations to promote active transportation.

If goals are not achieved, be sure to reevaluate and make changes to achieve your objectives in the future. School Travel Plans are a "living" document and should be updated since information can change from one school year to the next.

What to submit to show completion of this action

The following documentation must be submitted to verify that the action requirements have been met:

1. Description of Implementation. Provide a short narrative (300 words or less) of the planning process and the anticipated impact on the school community.
2. Submit a copy of the complete School Travel Plan. The plan must address the six elements: (1) school description and work group/partnerships; (2) maps of the school neighborhood and school site; (3) walk/bike assessments; (4) walk/bike barriers and opportunities; (5) goals and actions to increase walking and biking to school; and (6) a strategy for evaluating progress. The School Travel Plan should include supporting maps, pictures and images.
3. Write a Success Story using 1 digital photo (obtain photo release) and methods by which the success story will be shared; provide print copy, website or link.

Spotlight: What New Jersey Schools are doing

Many [School Travel Plans](#) have been developed throughout NJ. They can be either be simple or complex, depending on the size of the school, area to be evaluated, and scope of barriers and opportunities identified.

Hampton Borough: Hampton Public School (Hunterdon County)

Hampton Public School's first School Travel Plan dates back to the 2007-2008 school year, when it was created in large part by HART Commuter Information Services (HART). Since then, Hampton Public School has been working with HART on updating the preexisting plan. Hampton Public School's new principal and school secretary have been updating student population numbers and editing where students reside. HART has also been working with a school crossing guard. Through the help of a new administrator and school champion/Board of Education member, Hampton Public School conducted a walk audit of Hampton Borough. Fourth, fifth, and sixth grade students took notes of both positive and negative aspects of their town which will be attached to the updated travel plans. [Click here to view the Hampton Public School Travel Plan.](#)

Egg Harbor City: Charles L Spragg Elementary and Egg Harbor Community School (Atlantic County)

Cross County Connection Transportation Management Association assisted the community of Egg Harbor City with implementing and documenting a School Travel Plan for two schools. These plans are comprehensive, containing maps, photos, graphs, and charts. In 2012, the completed School Travel Plan created through the partnership between Egg

Harbor City and Cross County Connection contributed to the city receiving a NJ Safe Routes to School infrastructure grant. [Click here to view Egg Harbor City School Travel Plan.](#)

Trenton: Hedgepeth-Williams Middle School and Paul Robeson Elementary School (Mercer County)

Greater Mercer Transportation Management Association assisted Trenton with a walkability assessment and documentation of a School Travel Plan for Hedgepeth-Williams Middle School and Paul Robeson Elementary School. This is an example of a simple yet comprehensive travel plan using Google maps, basic spreadsheets, and numerous photos taken during the assessment to illustrate conditions. [Click here to view Trenton Hedgepeth-Williams Middle School Travel Plan.](#)

Resources

New Jersey's eight [Transportation Management Associations](#) (TMAs) are non-profit organizations that work with businesses, commuters, county and local governments, and state agencies to implement programs that reduce traffic congestion and improve air quality.

[NJ School Boards Association's SRTS Webinar-District Policy](#). The goal of NJ's Safe Routes to School (SRTS) initiative is to get students walking and bicycling to school where it is safe and to make it safe, where it is not.

The [New Jersey Safe Routes to School Resource Center](#) assists public officials, transportation and health professionals, and the general public in creating a safer and more accessible walking and bicycling environment through primary research, education, and dissemination of information about the best practices in policy and design.

This action was adapted from Sustainable Jersey for Schools (SJS). [Sustainable Jersey for Schools](#) is a certification program for New Jersey public schools that want to go green, conserve resources and take steps to create a brighter future, one school at a time. Schools that decide to register with SJS, may be eligible to receive points toward their certification for completing this action.

Earn an Asthma Friendly School Award

The goal of the Asthma Friendly Schools action is to encourage school staff and administrators to receive the proper annual training on asthma management in the school setting, including awareness of indoor air quality issues. A critical component of this education is to promote school-wide collaboration to reduce asthma triggers throughout the school. A school must first register for the program with [Pediatric/Adult Asthma Coalition of New Jersey \(PACNJ\)](#).

Why is it important?

Healthy school environments are highly important to students' overall health and academic success. Problems related to indoor air quality such as toxic building materials, chemicals, or mold can negatively affect children's health and, therefore, their ability to consistently attend school and learn; poor air quality can also negatively affect the health of faculty and staff. This action focuses on that essential first step of raising awareness of asthma-related issues in the school. While there are state mandates that faculty must be presented with asthma education opportunities annually (N.J.S.A. 18A:40-12.9), this action recognizes that the continued efforts to enhance the quality of education for students and faculty who face the challenges of asthma are highly valuable.

Who should lead and be involved with this action?

The steps needed to complete the Pediatric/Adult Asthma Coalition of New Jersey's Asthma Friendly Schools program primarily involve actions taken by the school nurses.

Timeframe

There are six steps to the Asthma Friendly Schools program, and they can be completed within a few weeks to a few months. The Pediatric/Adult Asthma Coalition of New Jersey website program for the Asthma Friendly Schools Award keeps track of the progress made and alerts the school nurse when she/he has completed all of the requirements.

Project Costs and Resource Needs

Staff time to complete the required training is the largest cost component of this action. The Pediatric/Adult Asthma Coalition of New Jersey provides all of the resource materials on its website free of charge.

What to do, and how to do it ("How to")

The Pediatric/Adult Asthma Coalition of New Jersey (PACNJ) provides detailed guidance on how to complete the six steps required to receive its [Asthma Friendly Schools Award](#). Schools must first register to participate on the website and track their progress in completing the required steps. An outline of the steps is provided below. Although some of these steps involve complying with existing New Jersey laws or regulations for which

Sustainable Jersey does not award points, the spirit of this action is to recognize the comprehensive effort the school has undertaken to address a critical health concern.

To achieve the [PACNJ Asthma-Friendly School Award](#), the following six steps are required:

1. Asthma Management in the Classroom. Each school nurse must conduct the one-hour PACNJ faculty in-service PowerPoint program: "[Asthma Management in the Classroom: What Teachers Need to Know](#)".
2. Asthma Basics for School Nurses. Each school nurse must view two videos to successfully complete this step of the program: "Asthma Basics for School Nurses" and "Gadgets and Gizmos for Asthma Control." These videos deal with basic asthma care and demonstrations on the use and care of medication, inhalers, and the peak flow meter. The videos and more details about this step are found [here](#).
3. NJ Department of Environmental Protection (NJDEP) "No Idling Pledge." The school superintendent must sign the NJDEP "[No Idling Pledge](#)" for the school district. Click [here](#) for more information.
4. School Nurse Asthma Treatment Plan Training. Each school nurse must view the one-hour PACNJ PowerPoint program, "[Asthma Treatment Plan: NJ School Nurses Leading the Way](#)," and take an online quiz to certify that training has been completed. The quiz is available to those who have registered for the Award and are signed in on the PACNJ website.

NJ Public Employees Occupational Safety and Health Program Free Training. The school nurse and at least one of the facilities staff who is responsible for indoor air quality must attend the New Jersey Department of Health Public Employees Occupational Safety and Health Program's Indoor Air Quality Training for School Nurses and Designated Persons. Click [here](#) for more information and to pre-register for the free course. In addition to attending the program, each school must establish an Indoor Air Quality team. This team should be responsible for promoting and ensuring the air quality of the school. The team must have at least three members to qualify under the PACNJ requirements.

Have a Nebulizer in the School. As mandated by New Jersey State Statute NJS A:40 12.7, every school is required to have a nebulizer. All training material is available at the PACNJ website.

What to submit to show completion of this action

The documentation below must be submitted to verify that the action requirements have been met:

1. Description of Implementation. Provide a short summary (300 words or less) of the school's Asthma Friendly Schools initiative and the impact it has on the school community.
2. Pediatric/Adult Asthma Coalition of New Jersey Certification. The school must provide a copy of a current Asthma Friendly Schools Award certificate issued by the Pediatric/Adult Asthma Coalition of New Jersey. The Asthma Friendly Schools Award must be renewed every three years.
3. Success Story. Write a success story using 1 digital photo (obtain photo release) and methods by which the success story will be shared; provide print copy, website or link.

Spotlight: What New Jersey Schools are Doing

Holland Township Elementary School, Holland Township School District. Complications related to asthma can lead to increased missed school days, decrease student productivity, and increased health office visits. Managing asthma in school aged children is a joint effort between the student's family, physician, and the school. Staff have been educated about asthma, at a staff in service, and know which students in the school have this condition. To view a description, click [here](#).

[A list of schools that have achieved the Asthma Friendly Schools Award can be found on PACNJ's website, or by clicking here.](#)

Resources

[Asthma Friendly Schools Award Toolkit: Pediatric/Adult Asthma Coalition of New Jersey](#)

[Asthma Friendly Schools Award Requirements: Pediatric/Adult Asthma Coalition of New Jersey](#)

[New Jersey Indoor Air Quality Standard: New Jersey Department of Health, Public Employees Occupational Safety and Health Program \(NJPESOSH\)](#)

[Pediatric/Adult Asthma Coalition of New Jersey](#): Educational resources including websites and printable handouts.

[Transportation Idling Resources: New Jersey Department of Environmental Protection](#)

Health Education

Actions	Resources	What to Submit to Verify Action Requirements are Met
<p>Provide Youth Training and Peer-led Health Education</p> <p>Two health teachers will serve as advisors to a cadre of up to 8 sophomore and/or junior students that, having completed the 2020 five (5) day Lindsey Meyer Teen Institute (LMTI) Summer Leadership Conference, will be peer educators to at least 200 middle school students, freshman and/or sophomores on one of the following topics:</p> <p>Self- esteem, body image and eating disorders OR Stress, anxiety, feeling depressed and appropriate, effective coping OR Alcohol, tobacco, other drugs OR Bullying or other acts of violence and aggression</p>	<p>Effective Programs to Reduce Youth Risk Behaviors</p> <p>Lindsey Meyer Teen Institute Summer Leadership Conference (cost per student; adult advisor required)</p> <p>Gay, Lesbian and Straight Education Network (GLSEN)</p>	<p>Student and advisor's attendance at summer LMTI Summer Leadership Conference.</p> <p>10 question pre- and 3-6 month post-tests of LMTI peer educators on selected topic.</p> <p>LMTI guidelines met: Monthly Action Group Reports, Action Plan, Informational Charts and End of Year Report.</p> <p>Summary of 10 question survey results of students educated by LMTI peer educators: # students, changes in knowledge, attitude, feedback on presentation.</p>
<p>Use the Health Education Curriculum Analysis Tool (HECAT)</p> <p>Using the Centers for Disease Control (CDC) Health Education Curriculum Analysis Tool (HECAT), evaluate the health curriculum to enhance, develop or select a new health curriculum.</p>	<p>HECAT</p>	<p>Write a success story using 1 digital photo (obtain photo release) and methods by which it will be shared; provide hard copy, website or link.</p>
<p>Purchase and Use Ripple Effects, an evidence-based health education software program, for students.</p> <p>Using a student interest survey and/or other school-based data or information, purchase appropriate Ripple Effects software program(s) for middle or high school students</p>	<p>HECAT-FAQ</p> <p>NJDOE Comprehensive Health & PE Model Curriculum</p>	<p>Description of HECAT analysis outcome.</p> <p>Write a success story using 1 digital photo (obtain photo release) and</p>

<p>based on their needs and/or interests; implement and evaluate to determine its impact in addressing identified areas of interest, risk and/or concern.</p>	<p><u>Ripple Effects</u> software; licensing & software costs; unlimited technical support by phone/email.</p>	<p>methods by which it will be shared; provide hard copy, website or link.</p> <p># and % student responses and summary of student interest survey results.</p> <p># and % student responses and summary of student feedback and receptivity to use of software.</p> <p>Write a success story using 1 digital photo (obtain photo release) and methods by which it will be shared; provide hard copy, website or link.</p>
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Health Services

Actions	Resources	What to Submit to Verify Action Requirements are Met
<p>Develop (Yr 1) a Protocol for the Health Management of Students with a Chronic Health Condition.</p> <p>Led by the school nurse in consultation with the school physician and a health care provider with expertise in the chronic health condition being addressed, develop a protocol/process that meets the care management needs of students with a chronic health condition or who are medically fragile including but not limited to: asthma, food allergies, diabetes, overweight/obesity, seizure disorders, HIV/AIDS, Lymes disease, Juvenile arthritis, sickle cell or other chronic condition that is contributing to a student's chronic absenteeism.</p> <p>The protocol needs to identify and track the following indicators: days absent, health physical within the past 12 months, insurance coverage and follow-up if none, and referrals made and to what type of provider.</p> <p>Create a process to ensure that the group of targeted students have insurance.</p> <p>As appropriately indicated, assess, provide counseling and/or referrals to medical home providers and/or health and social service agency providers and develop an individualized health plan for each student.</p> <p>Develop a protocol that ensures a communication feedback loop between</p>	<p>CDC, Adolescent and School Health</p> <p>American Diabetes Association</p> <p>Ensuring a Safe and Healthy Environment: Food Allergies/School Health</p> <p>Food Allergy Research and Education (FARE)</p>	<p># of students w/ identified chronic health condition during school year (SY) while developing protocol. Of this group of students:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • total # days absent during one (1) SY, pre-protocol implementation • # students who had a health physical (annual sports physicals are excluded) in the past 12 months • # students w/o insurance • # students subsequently enrolled. <p>Copy of written procedure and evidence of an individualized health plan for each student.</p> <p>If engaged, describe the role of school physician.</p> <p>Write a success story using 1 digital photo (obtain photo release) and methods by which the success story will be shared; provide print copy, website or link.</p>

<p>the school nurse and the medical home provider and/or health and social service agencies for continuity of care management. When feasible, consult with and engage the school physician.</p> <p>Pilot (Yr 2) a Protocol for the Health Management of Students with a Chronic Health Condition.</p> <p>This action requires having developed a protocol (see above).</p> <p>Implement and evaluate a pilot using the processes and protocol developed to address the care management needs of students with a chronic health condition.</p> <p>Conduct CPR Certification and Training.</p> <p>Purchase needed equipment and supplies such as adult and baby Annies, Automated External Defibrillator (AED).</p> <p>To meet the requirements of Janet's law which states there should be at least "five (5) trained people per school building," recruit, train, and certify at least 10 school or district staff by conducting one (1) or more CPR training(s)</p>		<p>At end of SY after protocol implemented among the group of students identified above, track the following information:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • total # days absent • # students who had a health physical in the past 12 months • # students w/o insurance • # students subsequently enrolled. <p>Describe challenges, lessons learned, other considerations.</p> <p>Write a success story using 1 digital photo (obtain photo release) and methods by which it will be shared; provide hard copy, website or link.</p> <p>Copy of all CPR certifications.</p> <p>Date, content outline, and attendance sheet.</p> <p>Ensuring a Safe and Healthy</p> <p>Write a success story</p>
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	<p>Environment: Food Allergies/School Health</p> <p>Food Allergy Research and Education (FARE)</p> <p>American Heart Association</p>	<p>using 1 digital photo (obtain photo release) and methods by which it will be shared; provide hard copy, website or link.</p>
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Implement Pedestrian and Bicycle Safety and Promotion Initiatives

Daily physical activity is important to maintaining a healthy lifestyle. Active modes of transportation such as walking, bicycling, scootering, and skateboarding to school are great ways for youth to meet their daily recommended amount of physical activity of 60 minutes per day. Through education and promotion, bicycle and pedestrian programs (safety education and walk/bike to school events) not only reinforce critical safety skills for students, but also provide fun ways to get students and parents excited about walking and bicycling. Similarly, implementing best practices to facilitate walking and biking to school or undertaking infrastructure improvements to make the school grounds or adjacent area safer are critical to fostering a culture that reinforces the important role of active transportation in everyday life.

Why is it important?

Obesity is a growing concern throughout the country. A primary cause of obesity is linked to a sedentary lifestyle. Teaching students about healthy living that includes an active lifestyle is very important. The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention reports that students who walk or bike to school are more alert, come to class ready to learn, and achieve higher test scores.

Pedestrian and bicycle safety and promotion activities can benefit everyone by

- encouraging and promoting healthy lifestyles
- strengthening the community and neighborhoods through increased involvement and interaction
- raising environmental awareness: walking and bicycling results in fewer motor vehicles on the streets, resulting in less air pollution and traffic congestion
- fostering safer streets by focusing on improvements to sidewalk and street conditions and increasing security
- learning essential pedestrian and bicycling skills that can be used throughout life.

Who should lead and be involved with this action?

A strong leader such as an administrator, teacher, parent, or local advocate can lead and help implement programs within the school. Important team members include: the principal or other school administrator, PE and other teachers, school staff, the Board of Education, PTO/PTA, crossing guards, local police, students, local advocates, community-based nonprofits, neighborhood groups and alliances and, the Safe Routes to School (SRTS) Regional Coordinator at the [Transportation Management Associations \(TMAs\)](#).

Timeframe

The timeframe for this action can vary dramatically depending on the initiatives undertaken. Safety education programs and walk and bike to school events could take from two to four months to organize and implement, depending upon the content, goals, and

structure of the program/event. Implementing active transportation best practices could take longer, depending on the research and planning involved. Infrastructure improvements for walking and bicycling safety take the most time, since they most likely will involve capital expenses and coordination with the municipal, county, or state government units.

Project costs and resource needs

Project costs and resource needs can vary dramatically depending on the initiatives undertaken. [Safe Routes to School Regional Coordinators](#) are available to assist schools with undertaking a wide range of initiatives, from implementing safety education programs and walk and bike to school events, to providing technical support for grant applications relating to larger infrastructure projects.

What to do and how to do it ("How to")

This section provides guidance and recommendations for implementing the action. A school district or school does not need to follow this guidance exactly, as long as it meets the requirements for earning points for this action.

Pedestrian and Bicycle Safety Education Programs: Educating students on pedestrian and bicycle safety can be an important part of a school's curriculum. Below are some steps for implementing these programs.

1. Identify topics for presentations.

Schools may have different needs when promoting pedestrian and bicycle safety. For example, a school located near a train crossing may want to spend more time on railroad crossing safety in addition to general pedestrian safety. Focusing on bicycle safety as a part of the program can encourage children to ride bikes safely to school and around their community. Presentations can be delivered to a large group of students through an assembly or in a classroom setting. Some topics for presentation may include:

- general pedestrian safety (i.e., crossing the street, traffic signals)
- bicycle safety (i.e., bicycle handling skills, importance of helmets, safety skills)
- safety at railroad crossings (i.e., not trespassing on railroad right-of-way)
- interacting with school and transit buses (i.e., how to cross to bus stops, on-board behavior)
- personal safety (i.e., strategies for dealing with gangs, what to do if approached by a stranger).

2. Utilize classroom materials.

[Safe Routes Philly](#) has a comprehensive pedestrian and bicycle safety curriculum for elementary school students. They offer free materials to schools, organizations, and individuals interested in promoting pedestrian and bicycle safety. The [New Jersey Safe Routes to School website](#) has pedestrian and bicycle safety lesson plans for students in grades K-8.

3. Organize and conduct presentations.

A [Safe Routes to School Regional Coordinator](#) is available to present pedestrian and bicycle safety education programs in your school.

4. Tie into curricula.

Subjects such as math and geography can include exercises and lessons that build off of bicycle and pedestrian activities. These may include mapmaking, graphing and tracking miles walked or biked.

5. Conduct Walk and Bike to School Events. These are not only fun ways to get students and parents excited about walking and biking, but they also enable students to learn the benefits of walking and biking to school and to begin fostering a culture of active transportation. Some examples of walk and bike events include

- [Walking School Bus](#): Adults supervise groups of children as they walk designated routes to school and pick up kids along the way.
- [Walk and Bike to School Day](#): This event encourages students and parents to walk or bike to school. It can be annual, seasonal, monthly or weekly depending on community interests and resources.
- [Bike Train](#): A group of children bike to school together accompanied by a parent or adult.
- [Bike Rodeo](#): A fun event that provides children with a basic understanding of effective bicycling through stations that teach bicycling skills, bike safety, and rules of the road.
- [Campus Walks/Walk at School](#): If conditions are unsafe for walking to school, campus walks or a walk at school event like a walk-a-thon can be held. Classes can also walk together to local events and venues (fire department, police, local theaters, etc.) during the school day.
- [Walkability Audits](#): Can be conducted with students and community members to determine how safe it is to walk or bike to school.
- [Golden Sneaker Award Program](#): Implement a competition to determine which classes walk the most based on the number of days walked, distance, or steps (using pedometers). This program encourages healthy and active lifestyles and fosters teamwork among children while still having fun.

A [Walk and Bike Event Check List \(PDF\)](#) can help with planning. Below are some simple steps to keep in mind when planning walk and bike events:

1. Decide on the type of event. Make sure it is compatible with your community and available resources. Determine whether or not you want to host additional activities during your event or leading up to it.
2. Pick a date. Decide when to hold your event. Begin planning two to four months prior to the event date: check for scheduling conflicts and develop a schedule.
3. Form a team. Determine job functions and how many volunteers will be needed, e.g., will you need crossing guards? [Build Your Safe Routes Team](#) has information on recruiting volunteers to help with your walk and bike to school event.

4. Reach out to local businesses. Determine if they would be interested in sponsoring the event or supplying food/small rewards to the participants at the end of their walk.
 5. Identify responsibilities. Assign tasks and get commitments to participate and volunteer.
 6. Plan for contingencies. Have backup plans in place: for instance, strategies for inclement weather. Some schools provide promotional ponchos for rainy walks; others postpone to a back-up date; other events occur rain or shine.
- 7 Contact your [SRTS Regional Coordinator](#) and local police department for assistance.
- 8 Publicize, promote and advertise your events. Invite the media, local officials, and school administrators/staff.
9. Document the event and start planning the next one! Record how many people attended, your successes and any improvements or suggestions that are made. Take plenty of photos.

Active Transportation Best Practices. Schools can encourage and promote active transportation (walking, bicycling, scootering, skateboarding, etc.) and SRTS by implementing these best practices:

1. **Bicycle Parking and Storage:** Providing adequate bike racks at the schools for children to lock their bikes and allowing students to store other active transportation modes like scooters, skateboards, and rollerblades in a safe, locked facility during the school day encourages students to use many active forms of transportation to school.
2. **Remote Drop-off/Pick-up Locations:** Designating a location away from and off of the school grounds ("Kiss and Go") for parents to park their cars and walk their kids to school alleviates traffic congestion, increases safety, and provides some physical activity for both students and their parents. Here are some steps to establishing remote drop-off locations at your school:
 - Work with teachers, parents, school administrators, the police department, and community partners to identify locations. Possible spots might include a library, park, grocery store, or church.
 - Pick a location that is within walking distance of school, is safe, and is accessible. Ensure that you are not just moving traffic from the school to another location by organizing several different drop-off locations.
 - Check the route to make sure it is safe and accessible; one way to check is to conduct a walk or bike audit.
 - Identify volunteers (parents, teachers, adult chaperones) that will meet the children at the drop-off location and walk them to the school if needed. Ask local law enforcement to assist with training volunteers in pedestrian safety.

- Notify the school community including parents, teachers, and other adult participants of the new drop-off locations and provide maps.
- Kick-off the new drop-off location with a fun organized group walk (potentially on a walk or bike to school day).

3. Staggered Dismissal: Staggering student dismissal times can help alleviate traffic and increase the safety of the students. Allow students who walk, bike, or use other active transportation modes to be dismissed first, this not only rewards those students who choose active transportation but also allows them to leave the school grounds more safely, before motor vehicles and bus traffic begins. Staggered dismissal times require coordination with administration and may impact teacher contractual stipulations.

4. Safe Routes to Bus Stops: Evaluate and map routes that are safe for children to walk to bus stops. A SRTS Regional Coordinator can help with establishing walking routes to bus stops and to school.

5. Walking club for staff/rewarding staff that walk or bike to school: Teachers and staff are obvious role models for their students: those who walk and bike to school not only display healthy habits for students but also contribute to their own health and well-being. Establishing walking and bicycling clubs for staff and rewarding staff who participate in active travel (through, i.e., acknowledgement or certificate) can encourage more walking and bicycling for teachers, staff, and students.

Infrastructure Improvements for Walking and Bicycling Safety. Improvements to the physical environment such as installing and fixing sidewalks, stripping crosswalks, and installing signs and signals make walking and bicycling safer, easier, and more accessible for students, parents and community members to walk and bike near the schools. The [NJ Safe Routes to School Resource Center](#) has information on [estimating improvement costs](#). Grant funding is also available for infrastructure improvements at the [NJ Safe Routes to School Resource Center website](#).

What to submit to show completion of this action

The following documentation must be submitted to verify the action requirements are met:

1. Description of Implementation. Describe (300 words or less) the planning and implementation of the Pedestrian & Bicycle Safety and Promotion Initiative.
2. Provide a short summary of **at least two** pedestrian and/or bicycle safety education programs or walk and bike to school events that have taken place. The summary needs to include: the date and location, number of participants, and relevant materials such as safety presentations/lessons, pictures, or materials/ correspondence used to publicize the program or event.
3. Provide documentation (internal memos, reports, information provided to students, staff or parents, pictures, etc.) that **one active transportation best practice** was implemented at the school

OR

Provide documentation (project-related specifications, contracts, correspondence, before-/after pictures of the improvement) that **one infrastructure improvement** was initiated/completed to improve pedestrian and/or bicycling safety on or adjacent to school grounds.

4. Success Story. Write a success story using 1 digital photo (obtain photo release) and methods by which the success story will be shared; provide print copy, website or link.

Spotlight: What New Jersey Schools are Doing

Lebanon Borough's Pedestrian and Bicycle Safety Programs

With help from one of the school champions for Lebanon Borough School, the Safe Routes to School Regional Coordinator from HART Transportation Management Association conducted a bike and scooter rodeo and held four safety presentations during the 2013-2014 school year. A bike/scooter rodeo instructed students on the importance of wearing a properly fitted helmet, taught them rules to follow on their travel to school, and assessed the students' bike/scooter handling ability. The rodeos were held after school and took place on Lebanon Borough School's back parking lot. The school also invited HART to present bicycle and pedestrian safety lessons to K-6th grade students during a gym period. All presentations reinforced how to safely walk to school and provided students with information about the benefits of walking to school.

Jersey City Golden Sneaker Award

Cornelia Bradford Elementary School's second grade class in Jersey City won the Golden Sneaker Award for having the highest number of steps recorded on their pedometers during the competition. Hudson Transportation Management Association's Safe Routes to School Regional Coordinator worked closely with Cornelia Bradford Elementary to award them the Golden Sneaker Trophy, which is proudly displayed at the school. The Coordinator helped facilitate the program to promote and encourage students to maintain active, healthy lifestyles through fun and a little competition.

Walking School Bus in Maplewood

Tuscan Elementary School started their first walking school bus, spearheaded by two parents with the help of Meadowlink Transportation Management Association's Safe Routes to School Regional Coordinator. By focusing on the benefits of walking to school for students and parents, parents were inspired and motivated to coordinate a walking school bus. A team was assembled; walking maps, guidelines, and safety procedures were prepared; a tracking system was implemented; and the walking school bus program launched with great success. Parents, students, school staff and community members supported the walking school bus with enthusiasm and excitement.

Resources

Find [New Jersey Safe Routes to School Regional Coordinators](#) at your local TMA. These individuals provide expertise and guidance regarding your SRTS program and organizing

and implementing a bicycle and pedestrian safety program, as well as walk and bike events for your school and community.

The [New Jersey Safe Routes to School Resource Center](#) assists public officials, transportation and health professionals, and the general public in creating a safer and more accessible walking and bicycling environment through primary research, education, and dissemination of information about best practices in policy and design.

New Jersey's eight [Transportation Management Associations](#) are nonprofit organizations that work with businesses, commuters, county and local governments, and state agencies to implement programs that reduce traffic congestion and improve air quality.

The [National Center for Safe Routes to School](#) assists states and communities in enabling and encouraging students to safely walk and bicycle to school. The Center serves as the information clearinghouse for the federal SRTS program. The organization also provides technical support and resources and coordinates online registration efforts for U.S. Walk to School Day and facilitates worldwide promotion and participation.

[The Walking School Bus Program: A Primer and First Steps](#) online training seeks to highlight important planning tips and strategies for planning a walking school bus program. Participants will gain an understanding of how to prepare, build momentum, and launch a walking school bus program, including identifying community partners, and securing program funding.

Integrate Breakfast After the Bell into the School Schedule

The Federal School Breakfast Program offers children a nutritious breakfast at school so they can start their day right. Children from families with incomes at or below 130% of the poverty level are eligible for free meals. Those with incomes between 130% and 185% of the poverty level are eligible for reduced price meals. The goal of the New Jersey Food for Thought School Breakfast Campaign as well as the Breakfast After the Bell action is to increase the number of children eating a healthy breakfast on school days by improving the effectiveness of school breakfast programs.

On May 30, 2018, Governor Phil Murphy signed the New Jersey Breakfast After the Bell law. This law, effective September 2019, mandates schools, in high-poverty districts (defined as having 70% or more of the student population eligible for free and reduced-cost lunch), to serve breakfast after school begins. An estimated 500 schools educating nearly 308,000 students will be required to serve breakfast “after the bell”, according to an analysis by Advocates for Children of New Jersey.

Many students, eligible for free or reduced-price breakfast do not arrive at school early enough to receive breakfast when it's offered before the start of school. Breakfast After the Bell offers breakfast when the greatest percentage of students will benefit: in the classroom, after the bell has rung. This model significantly improves participation rates, positively impacting both student achievement and health.

A successful Breakfast After the Bell program only takes about 10 minutes to carry out. Breakfast can be served and eaten during morning activities such as announcements, attendance, homeroom, turning in homework, and individual or out-loud reading, so that no instructional time is lost. Teachers that have participated in classroom breakfast programs have reported that it is a successful transitional activity, and some have even hypothesized that they actually gained instructional time due to fewer nurse visits, and less tardiness and absenteeism.

Why is it important?

New Jersey school district leaders serving Breakfast After the Bell echo the research on the widespread benefits for students and school staff of a healthy breakfast: more productive instructional time because students are focused and ready to learn; better academic performance and higher standardized test scores; less absenteeism, fewer classroom disruptions due to disciplinary issues and fewer visits to the school nurse. When students' are hungry, they may struggle to focus on the reading assignment or to solve math problems. School administrators also routinely report that the logistical challenges such as clean-up and lost instructional time, often cited as barriers, are easily overcome.

In 2011, prior to the launch of the [Food for Thought: NJ School Breakfast Campaign](#), NJ ranked 46th in the nation for school breakfast participation. It has moved up the ranks to

19th place in the 2015-16 school year. However, only slightly more than half of New Jersey's eligible children ate breakfast at school, compared to 85% that are eligible to participate.

Who should lead and be involved with this action?

This action may be led by either the school district or a school. Depending on the school district, the implementation of this action can involve district and/or school administration, food service staff, teachers, and custodial staff.

Timeline

The implementation of a Breakfast After the Bell program can take up to a few months or more, depending on the initial level of support for the initiative and the scope of the program.

Project costs and resource needs

New Jersey school districts may qualify for school breakfast [grants and resources](#) through the Advocates for the Children of New Jersey and various other organizations to implement effective school breakfast programs. Districts with high concentrations of eligible children are usually able to cover the cost of providing breakfast to more students since federal meal reimbursements increase while operating costs remain relatively stable.

To help school officials and decision makers determine the costs and feasibility of Breakfast After the Bell, No Kid Hungry has developed an interactive [Breakfast in the Classroom Calculator](#). This interactive calculator shows users their annual estimated costs, reimbursements, and increases in student participation for the meal programs.

Beginning in the 2014-2015 school year, all schools nationwide that meet the 40% student threshold for free and reduced-lunch, are eligible to participate in the [Community Eligibility Provision](#) (CEP) of the Healthy, Hunger-Free Kids Act of 2010. CEP completely eliminates paper applications for low income districts and schools.

What to do, and how to do it ("How to")

This section provides guidance and recommendations for implementing the action. A district or school does not need to follow this guidance exactly as long as it meets the requirements that verify completion of this action.

Breakfast After the Bell programs have been implemented in a variety of ways. A school or district should evaluate the service delivery methods below to identify which option is most effective for its operating environment:

- Breakfast in the Classroom: The most common implementation is having breakfast delivered to each classroom after the school day begins. Because breakfast is served outside of the cafeteria, it is important to ensure that the meals are easy to clean up.

In addition, schools should adopt classroom clean-up procedures to avoid attracting insects and rodents in the classroom.

- Grab and Go Breakfast: Students pick up bagged or boxed breakfasts in designated areas and are allowed to eat them in the classroom.
- Second Chance Breakfast: Often, teenagers are not hungry when they arrive at school. Sometime before lunch, though, their stomachs start to rumble. Serving breakfast after first period allows students to eat when they are hungry. Students are offered meals, often Grab-and-Go style, either between classes or during a "nutrition break" that occurs later in the morning.

The USDA provides a comprehensive toolkit to help schools implement Breakfast After the Bell. *Energize Your Day with School Breakfast* is a collection of digital resources that can be used. The *Discover School Breakfast Toolkit* is designed to help with: increasing access to the School Breakfast Program; determining the type of service delivery method best suited to their needs; and, developing an effective marketing plan. Each provides guidance on the three key phases of implementing a Breakfast After the Bell program:

1. Getting Started with School Breakfast initially involves:

- collecting information to explore the best service delivery method for your school
- assessing the pros and cons of various service delivery options
- identifying interested school staff, students, parents and community members.

2. Implementing the Program includes answering the practical questions of how to plan, budget, and implement. This includes:

- developing a timeline-based implementation plan
- reaching out to students, parents, and school staff to determine the best service delivery method
- brainstorming the ways the School Breakfast Program can be integrated into the bigger picture of improving the school's health and nutrition environment
- identifying and preparing for potential barriers to providing cost-effective and accessible breakfast service
- planning healthy menus that appeal to students and well-suited to your service delivery method
- developing a budget to ensure the program is cost-effective and sustainable
- presenting your school breakfast proposal to school administration
- evaluating the outcomes of your breakfast program.

3. Marketing the Program: Once the implementation plan is developed and a service delivery method is chosen, it's critical to garner buy-in from key stakeholders and engage students to regularly participate. This requires:

- developing a marketing plan with effective communication strategies to build enthusiasm and support for the program
- reaching out to school staff and administration whose support is critical to program success
- advertising the program to students, parents and the community.

What to submit to show completion of this action

The following documentation must be submitted to verify the action requirements are met.

1. Description of Implementation. Submit a short summary (300 words or less) of the Breakfast After the Bell program, including when the program was implemented, what has been accomplished and the impact it has had on students and the school community. (Note: Implementing Breakfast After the Bell requires that students do not miss class time to eat breakfast).

2. Supporting Documentation. Provide evidence (memos notifying school staff of the changes, information provided to students and parents about the program, etc.) that the Breakfast After the Bell program is in place.

3. Documentation of Impact. Obtain program participation rates in the Food Service Director's Report or equivalent report from the current school year.

4. Success story. Write a success story using 1 digital photo (obtain photo release) and methods by which the success story will be shared; provide print copy, website or link.

Spotlight: What New Jersey Schools are Doing

Edison Township Public Schools

In 2012, Dr. Richard O'Malley, Superintendent of Schools, sat down with his cabinet of principals and supervisors and explained his vision for the district to them. After seeing a report by Advocates for Children, Dr. O'Malley realized that "we were underserving a lot of kids, and that Edison had a lot of students that could benefit from the 'Breakfast After the Bell' program. Edison is a large suburban district with 25% of its students eligible for free and reduced priced meals. Before the district began serving Breakfast After the Bell, only 400 students ate breakfast daily. Now Edison serves breakfast to over 4,000 students every day."

Serving breakfast right after school starts significantly increases student participation. However, many school officials cite cost, clean-up, and lost instructional time as obstacles

to serving Breakfast After the Bell. Consequently, many schools continue to serve breakfast before school, when most students have not yet arrived. This has kept New Jersey nearly last in the nation for its low participation in the federal School Breakfast Program. "Most of the challenges are myths, and it's all about getting beyond the myth and getting to the reality," O'Malley said.

The program has paid for itself, according to O'Malley. Students who are not eligible for free meals pay \$1.00 for breakfast. Since the federal meal reimbursements for eligible students have increased, the district has incurred no additional costs.

Breakfast has been seamlessly incorporated into instructional time. "They're working, practicing their letters, coloring or cutting, something simple for them to do while eating breakfast," said first grade teacher, Danielle Rispoli. "After breakfast, they're more focused, more alert, able to concentrate longer. It even helps their classroom behavior."

"You can eat and learn," O'Malley added. "It's OK to have milk when you're doing math."

Rosemary Schutz, an Edison principal, has also seen the benefits of Breakfast After the Bell. "So now we know all the kids are nourished and ready to start their day," Schutz said. I wish I would be able to speak with other principals. If they could see how it works here, it's no real extra work and truly a benefit to all the children."

George L. Catrambone Elementary School, Long Branch School District

Free Breakfast is offered to all students at the George L. Catrambone School daily. At GLC, students are able to enter their class at the start of the day and can choose a free balanced, healthy Breakfast at their desks. All Kindergarten through Second Grade students are offered breakfast after the bell daily and eat in their classrooms. Third through Fifth grade students are able to eat in the cafeteria each morning and it is continued after the bell until all students have been offered breakfast. Students arriving after the bell are able to pick up a breakfast to go and bring it back to the classroom so that they are able to eat a nutritious meal without missing any class time.

New Brunswick

The New Brunswick School District is in the process of implementing the Breakfast After the Bell Program throughout the district.

Before 9 a.m. each day, Breakfast After the Bell provides a free, healthy breakfast to all students, regardless of economic income. Meals are distributed to each classroom at the beginning of every school day, where students eat together at their desks for the first few minutes of class.

"Breakfast is truly the most important meal of the day, especially for young students," Mayor James Cahill said. "Through this program, we ensure that all students are given the tools they need to ensure proper learning, which includes a full stomach and a focused mind. No longer will any of our young students struggle to learn while dealing with hunger."

Breakfast After the Bell is funded through the Federal School Lunch program and overseen by the school district's Dining Services department. It is the product of collaboration between the City of New Brunswick and New Brunswick Public Schools with the support of the New Brunswick Community Food Alliance.

Resources

[Breakfast After the Bell Nutrition Program Implementation Guide](#): the Colorado Department of Education (some laws and cost analyses may be specific to Colorado).

See [advocacy tools](#) such as sample letters to school officials or letters to the editor.

Nutrition and Physical Activity

Component	Actions	Resources	What to Submit to Verify Action Requirements are Met
Physical Education & Activity	<p>Conduct the <i>Presidential Youth Fitness Program (PYFP)</i> using Fitnessgram.</p> <p>Conduct the PYFP to assess and provide instruction to students on lifelong health related fitness skills and develop individualized fitness plans using the Healthy Fitness Zone (HFZ) reports. Schools are required to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a) Ensure that PE teachers are trained on the Fitnessgram assessment tool (≥ 6 hours of PD). b) Assess a minimum of one grade level in the first year of implementation. c) Assess students twice per school year. d) Enter fitness scores of tested students into web-based FG program. e) Send Fitnessgram reports to students and parents (i.e. hard copy 	<p>PYFP</p> <p>Active Schools</p> <p>Fitnessgram</p> <p>NJ AHPERD Resources</p>	<p>a) Total # PE teachers in the school;</p> <p>provide copies of Certificates of Attendance w/ # PD hrs on Fitnessgram .</p> <p>b) # and % of total student population assessed using Fitnessgram.</p> <p>c) % students in HFZ.</p> <p>d) # and % students and parents given HFZ report.</p> <p>e) Identify remedial opportunities for students who do not meet HFZ requirements; # participating students</p> <p>f) Write a success story using 1-2 digital photos (obtain photo release) and methods by which it will be shared; provide hard copy, website or link.</p>

	<p>and/or email version) for all students tested.</p> <p>f) Provide remedial opportunities for students who do not meet criteria of HFZ.</p> <p>Use the PECAT (Physical Education Curriculum Analysis Tool) Using the Centers for Disease Control (CDC) PECAT, enhance, develop or select a high quality, well designed PE curriculum to increase students' time engaged in moderate to vigorous physical activity (MVPA) to at least 50% of class time.</p> <p>Practices and/or activities that increase MVPA include but are not limited to: starting class with instant activity; replacing lower level activities (e.g., softball) with activities that are more active (e.g., aerobic dance, aerobic games, jump rope); purchasing equipment to minimize student wait time; adding fitness and</p>	<p>PECAT</p> <p>NJ DOE Physical Education</p>	<p>a) Online PECAT overall score results and the improvement plan (download the PDF created by the online tool).</p> <p>b) Total # PE teachers in the school; # and % PE teachers that received ≥ 6 PD hours on effective practices for quality PE, including practices to increase MVPA; provide copies of Certificates of Attendance w/ #hrs.</p> <p>c) # and % of students, pre-/post-(after new or enhanced curriculum and practices implemented) engaged in MVPA for at least 50% of class time.</p> <p>d) Identify ≥ 5</p>
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	circuit training stations to lesson plans.		practices and/or activities regularly implemented for increasing MVPA. e) Write a success story using 1 digital photo (obtain photo release) and methods by which it will be shared; provide hard copy, website or link.
Nutrition Services	<p>Conduct <i>Cooking Matters for Kids and for Teens</i></p> <p>SNAP-Ed nutrition educators work directly with SNAP-eligible schools ($\geq 50\%$ free/reduced lunch) to teach these courses in the school or in an after-school setting. The course offers students, in grades 6-12, a six-week hands-on cooking experience. The nutrition educator can work together with members of the school community in supporting school wellness policies by offering training and technical assistance tips to achieve positive policy changes.</p>	<p>Juliet.Jones@doh.nj.gov</p> <p>CDC, Salad Bars to Schools</p> <p>Lets Move Salad Bars to Schools</p> <p>The Lunch Box – Healthy Tools to Help All Schools</p>	<p>Complete pre- and post-tests</p> <p>Write a success story using 1 digital photo (obtain photo release) of three implemented practices and methods by which it will be shared; provide hard copy, website or link.</p> <p>Identify pro's (such as dual use as a breakfast kiosk) and challenges.</p> <p>Calculate a one (1) week average in each of 3 months of the estimated # fruit and/or vegetable servings provided by the salad bar.</p> <p># and % student</p>

	Implement <i>Lets Move Salad Bars to Schools</i>		<p>respondents and summarized results of student survey/feedback on salad bar.</p> <p>photo each (obtain photo release) and methods by which it will be shared; provide hard copy, website or link.</p>
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Plan and Develop (Yr 1) / Implement and Evaluate (Yr 2) a Comprehensive Staff Wellness Program

A school staff wellness program is a well-planned, comprehensive program for all employees designed to enrich their physical, mental, emotional, and occupational well-being. The goal is to make the work environment supportive of positive health behaviors and thereby help prevent chronic diseases and promote improved well-being for all employees.

Why is it important?

Healthy employees are a critical component of a thriving school. The economic, social, and personal benefits of promoting health in the workplace are clear. A healthy workplace leads to employees who are more satisfied with their jobs and are higher performers. They are absent fewer days and more likely to stay in their positions. Healthy employees provide the continuity and stability that is essential for educational success. Research shows employee health and wellness programs contribute to workplace excellence and job satisfaction in three major ways:

1. Improving employee performance. As part of employee compensation and the benefits package, supportive health and wellness programs can provide support and help with recruitment and retention of school staff in the schools. Research shows that by creating a culture of health and increasing healthy behaviors, such as being more physically active eating healthier and/or managing stress, wellness programs can increase employees' ability to focus, reduce absenteeism, improve employee morale, improve health behaviors that combat chronic diseases and creates higher levels of general well-being among employees.
2. Reducing organizational costs. The adoption of healthy behaviors has been shown to reduce the risks of developing disabling or life-threatening diseases and their associated costs. Moreover, by reducing rates of workplace injuries, wellness programs also reduce Worker's Compensation claims. Wellness programs have been shown to reduce employee medical costs which can allow for sustainable health care coverage.
3. Creating good places to work. By making the healthy choice the easy choice, wellness programs can create a culture of health and deliver a wide range of benefits to employees including:
 - A safer, more supportive work environment
 - Improved health, increased well-being, self-image, and self-esteem
 - Improved coping skills with stress or other factors affecting health
 - Reduced out-of-pocket expenses (example: reduced premiums, deductibles and co-payments) for physician office visits, medications, procedures or hospitalizations related to acute or chronic illness
 - Improved job satisfaction

Furthermore, teachers and other school employees are role models for students. School employees who are interested in their own health are more likely to promote healthy behaviors and practices to students, who are then more likely to engage in health-promoting activities themselves.

Who should lead and be involved with this action?

The following four groups are essential for establishing, implementing, and sustaining effective school staff wellness programs:

- Decision makers who approve policies and provide administrative support
- School district personnel who implement the wellness programs
- Employees who will benefit from the wellness programs
- Community stakeholders who work to improve health such as officials in public health and voluntary agencies and health care providers, as well as parents

Timeframe

The amount of time needed to develop and implement a school staff wellness program will vary by district and/or school. Key factors will include:

- Whether there is an existing wellness team dedicated to addressing health issues
- How much administrative support, community support, and employee interest already exists
- What resources are available such as facilities, time and personnel.

If the foundations of a program are not already in place, it may make sense to spend an initial school year building the program and plan for the official launch of the program at the start of the following school year. Rolling out the program in the beginning of the school year will allow sufficient time to gain momentum prior to summer break.

Project costs and resource needs

Implementing a school employee wellness program requires a variety of resources, such as qualified personnel to oversee and offer programs, space to conduct programs, equipment and supplies to carry out activities, and information about specific issues. Many resources might already be available in the school district or community. Drawing on employee talents, skills, and expertise has a couple of advantages: 1) Employees understand the education environment and the needs of their colleagues; and, 2) As members of the school community, they are likely to be trusted by program participants. The district's health insurance carrier may have significant resources and incentives that could be incorporated into a successful program. Most districts already have partnerships with community agencies and organizations that can contribute staff or other resources. Potential community partners can include local health departments, hospitals, and established health organizations like the American Cancer Society, YMCAs, and local businesses.

There are many potential funding options for a school staff wellness program. A program may charge registration fees to off-set some of the costs. A small fee also may reduce

attrition. District revenues are another option, as savings are accrued by improved health of district staff reduces insurance coverage costs and by reduced teacher and staff absences requiring substitutes. Another option is to seek federal, state, and/or private funding. Some districts obtain state or federal grants that support school employee wellness as part of a larger program. Private funding sources include foundations, corporations, hospitals, voluntary agencies, and community groups. Private sources typically have specific criteria for their funding, such as geographic location, populations targeted, and issues addressed (e.g., education, disease prevention, and health services).

What to do, and how to do it ("How to")

This section provides guidance and recommendations for implementing the action.

The five components of a comprehensive school staff wellness program:

- a) Health-related programs including health promotion materials, newsletters, sessions at staff development events, etc.
- b) Health-related policies including written health and wellness policies, dedicated staff and employees to plan programs, administration involved in planning and supporting program implementation, and encouraging employee access and program utilization.
- c) Health benefits that look at such aspects as preventive health services, employee assistance programs, occupational health and safety programs or flexible spending accounts, etc.
- d) Environmental supports such as walking and/or running groups, exercise or fitness classes, an on-site workout room and access to showers and locker rooms; bike racks or storage, healthy food options, etc.
- e) Comprehensive workplace health programs with community linkages to conduct screening programs for: blood pressure, diabetes, stress, BMI, cholesterol, Health Risk Appraisal, etc.

Setting up a successful school wellness program is more than just offering a yoga class after school or healthy snacks in the break room. It requires buy-in from school leadership and careful planning based on local needs and priorities. See the resources section for a variety of useful resources that can help your school/district through each step of the process.

Four overarching strategies that should be kept in mind when establishing a school employee wellness program include:

1. Integrate into the Whole School, Whole Community, Whole Child (WSCC) model. The WSCC model creates health-promoting school environments for students and their families as well as employees of school/district.
2. Tailor your school wellness program to the health needs of the employees.

Traditionally, staff wellness programs offer choices from an array of activities. While this approach exposes employees to engage in physical activity opportunities, it tends to attract staff who, more than likely, already practice healthy behaviors. A "population health management" approach uses annual individual health risk appraisals as a basis for designing targeted health-promoting activities. This approach aims to attract employees who are "at-risk" and less likely to be participating in health-promoting activities. For example, employees in smoking cessation programs or programs for employees with high cholesterol may be rewarded with an incentive for their participation.

3. Start small and build a foundation. Existing school staff wellness programs vary in scope and size. Some districts conduct health risk assessments and offer health risk reduction interventions that target identified personal health risks. Others organize activities such as walking programs, health fairs, access to fitness centers, nutrition management, and stress management. The decision to offer these activities is generally based on a survey of potential participants' interests and motivation, the availability of facilities or resources, and the interests and skills of the coordinator and other support staff. Starting small can provide the foundation for evolution to a more ambitious, comprehensive, results-oriented program.

4. Gather support from a cross-section of the school community. Health educators, the school nurse, school psychologists, social workers, and counselors, and nutrition services staff already realize the importance of promoting health to school employees. Other potential supporters may include the school district's chief financial officer, the HR administrator, the risk benefit officer, the employee assistance program manager and elected officials of the bargaining units for employee groups.

Outlined below is a suggested process for establishing a school staff wellness program. Some districts may need to start at Step 1, while others may have already completed some of the initial steps.

1. Obtain Administrative Support. The primary mission of any school district is to educate its students to ensure academic success to ultimately become productive members of society. So, the first question to answer is "How will a school staff wellness program help our district achieve its primary mission?".

A school staff wellness program needs the support of the superintendent and school board at the district level, and the principal and vice-principal(s) at the school level to be successful and sustainable. Decision makers in school systems require data to make their decisions about policies and programs. Data such as the cost of employee absences or "interest" surveys help make the case for a school employee wellness program.

2. Identify a Leader. A health educator, nurse, psychologist, counselor, or other member of the school staff, with a commitment to health, are great candidates to lead a school staff wellness program. Staff wellness programs are sometimes insufficiently planned, implemented or evaluated because this work is an add-on responsibility for a staff member with limited time. Research shows that school staff wellness programs are more likely to be sustained if leaders are paid an additional stipend for their extra responsibilities or if these responsibilities are incorporated into their job description.

3. Organize a Team. It may be possible for the existing H&W Team to take on school staff wellness program. If the Team is unable to expand their activities, a sub-committee can be convened. The core H&W Team may want to designate a representative for the staff wellness sub-committee. Additional members, who bring diverse skills and interests and are willing to take responsibility for carrying out tasks are needed such as individuals who can influence policy, PE teachers, food service, maintenance staff, school administrators and community resource providers. Once established, a district might decide to develop policies that specify the process for becoming a committee member.

The group should meet regularly to plan, develop, review, and evaluate activities. Primary responsibilities include:

- Informing school employees about program plans and obtaining feedback
- Sharing concerns and providing positive and negative feedback from the school employees
- Assisting with assessing needs and mapping resources
- Coordinating school employee wellness activities with student health-promotion activities
- Advocating for and participating in activities
- Assisting with setting priorities for program offerings and expenditures
- Ensuring that activities are aligned with the district's policies and norms

A useful resource for developing and implementing a school staff wellness program is the [Eat Smart, Move More NC!](#), NC Health Smart School Worksite Wellness Toolkit.

This is a comprehensive guide with ready-to-use materials. The Toolkit consists of five workbooks and provides step-by-step instructions for developing and planning a wellness program that supports healthy eating, physical activity, tobacco cessation and stress management.

4. Gather and Analyze Data

A needs assessment provides key data to garner support for and plan a program. Data about school employee wellness programs are gathered to:

- Determine baseline health-related costs and risks to justify investment in the program, and to demonstrate progress and cost savings after implementation
- Assess the status of school employee wellness activities
- Identify the interests of school employees

The data collected at the outset will provide a baseline for monitoring, evaluating, and adapting the program over time. Collecting data periodically can help make program changes that address changing employee interests and needs. School officials have reported that, after completing CDC's SHI assessment tool, schools often decide to focus on developing or enhancing a school staff wellness program either because they consider it a strategy for generating employee buy-in or because this component is, oftentimes, the least developed.

Using an employee survey to initiate a wellness program can stimulate awareness of and interest in health promotion, give employees a sense of ownership, and ensure that activities are responsive to the needs and concerns of staff. An employee survey can identify areas of employee interest, assess health behaviors, and ascertain levels of readiness. See the "Resources" section at the end of this action.

Some districts conduct health screenings for high cholesterol, high blood pressure, and tobacco use to determine the proportion of employees with health risk and then target the most common risks. In all cases, the confidentiality of employee responses must be ensured.

5. Develop a Plan

Implementing a comprehensive school staff wellness program can be demanding but empirical evidence suggests that the rewards far outweigh the challenges. A well-developed plan provides a blueprint for program activities, develops ownership and investment of those participating in the process, and demonstrates to the school board, administrators, and taxpayers that the desired outcomes justify the use of resources. The plan needs to clearly spell out the why, how, when, and by whom activities will be accomplished. Lastly, the plan needs to link the staff wellness program to the district's mission of educating its students and addressing the health concerns and needs of staff.

Based on the employee survey results, establish a yearly cycle of activities. Plan a kickoff event that is easy to implement and provides school-/district-wide visibility at little or no cost such as: a month-long walking program, a presentation on nutrition and fitness related to stress, or a staff development day that features a health-related session. When possible, organize activities around national health observances or school events.

6. Implement the Plan

An endorsement by the superintendent or other key administrator and/or bargaining unit leadership is a powerful strategy for promoting participation in the staff wellness program. Additional strategies to raise awareness include: posters, newsletters, payroll stuffers,

e-mail and website postings, announcements at union and employee meetings, and one-to-one contact. Be aware that it might take a while for program participation to grow. As it does, expand the scope of activities and recruit volunteers to assist with events.

7. Evaluate and Adapt the Program

Evaluation starts when the program is established, with needs assessments and surveys that provide a baseline for measuring progress. Evaluation can help to identify needed changes, find out how well objectives are being met, determine the effects of the program, and identify ways to improve it. The [Alliance for a Healthier Generation](#) (AHG) Healthy Schools Program has Employee Wellness as 1 of 7 focus areas. A sample evaluation can be found on their website.

Outcome evaluations measure a program's effectiveness and impact. Employees who improve their behaviors related to tobacco use, food choices and physical activity reduce their health risks. Improvements in body composition, blood pressure, cholesterol, and glucose are just a few of the risk factors that can improve with a staff employee wellness program.

In an environment of tight budgets, evaluating the fiscal impact of a school staff wellness program may provide administrators with the information they need to justify wellness efforts. A school staff program that can show a positive return on investment will likely be sustained. The best financial outcomes data should be presented in a manner that compares the total costs of the program with the total financial benefits (the amount of money saved from reduced health care costs and absenteeism) of the program. This is called a cost-to-benefit ratio.

8. Sustain the Program

- Invite administrators to attend school staff wellness meetings
- Develop clear procedures for communication
- Through appropriate channels, meet with the school board at least once a year
- Make recommendations to the school board about staff wellness policies
- Revise or update policies as the program evolves
- Evaluate the program regularly and keep policymakers informed
- Develop a visual record of the program

Health promotion in schools holds the promise of an even greater impact than health promotion at other worksites. School districts are often one of the largest employers in the community and their staff has the potential to affect the academic achievement and wellbeing of even larger numbers of students every day. A school staff wellness program, as an integral and equal component of the WSCC model, can be critical to maintaining a healthy, optimistic environment where students and staff thrive.

What to submit to show completion of this action

The documentation below must be submitted to verify that the following requirements have been met:

1. A comprehensive school staff wellness program plan. Provide a copy of the program plan that addresses each of the following five categories:

- Health related programs
- Health related policies
- Health benefits
- Environmental supports
- Comprehensive workplace health programs with community linkages

2. Success Story. Write a success story using 1 digital photo (obtain photo release) and methods by which the success story will be shared; provide print copy, website or link.

Spotlight: What a New Jersey School Has Done

Cape May City Elementary School, Cape May City School District

The staff at our school enjoys the benefit of an administration that strongly encourages health and wellness. Our chief school administrator initiated "Stop, Smile and Move", where both students and staff are asked to get up and move around for a few minutes at different times during the week. She also encourages staff to sign out during free periods to walk, run, exercise or use the indoor fitness trail, and has incorporated movement activities into staff meetings and in-services.

Resources

Directors of Health Promotion and Education, *School Employee Wellness: A Guide for Protecting the Assets of Our Nation's Schools*. The purpose of this staff wellness guide is to: 1) promote its benefits; 2) provide a model for establishing, implementing, and sustaining a program; and (3) supply practical tools and resources that support implementation efforts.

[California Department of Public Health](#), Worksite Program California Fit Business Kit

These tools and resources are designed to help develop and implement a workplace culture that supports healthy eating and physical activity. This Kit contains 13 components, all of which have been evaluated and designed to be easily implemented at any worksite. The tools can be used individually or as part of a comprehensive worksite wellness program.

[Centers for Disease Control and Prevention](#), Healthier Worksit Initiative. As part the Healthier Worksit Initiative, CDC has assembled comprehensive toolkits in 5 categories: General Workforce Health Promotion, Nutritious Eating, Physical Activity, Preventive Health Screenings, and Healthy Choices. They contain customizable turn-key materials to help plan, implement and evaluate their staff wellness programs.

[Monmouth Conservation Foundation](#). Offers donation-based Forest Therapy Walks and Yoga Hikes. A custom outing can be scheduled for your staff.

[New Jersey Blue Cross Blue Shield](#), NJWELL. NJWELL's mission is to cultivate healthy lifestyle choices among its members, reduce health risk factors and improve well-being. It includes a new way to improve health and get rewarded for it. CaféWell is a groundbreaking Health Optimization Platform™ designed to help manage stress, nutrition, weight loss and more.

[Centers for Disease Control and Prevention](#), LEAN Works! – A Workplace Obesity Prevention Program.

[Kaiser Permanente Thriving Schools](#), School Wellness Benefits.

[Michigan Department of Education](#), School Staff Wellness Challenges and Recognition Ideas.

[National Association of Chronic Disease Directors](#), Healthy School, Staff and Students: A Guide to Improving School Employee Wellness.

[Oregon Education Association Trust](#), Blueprint for School Employee Wellness.

[RMC Health](#) Staff Wellness in the School.

Plan & Implement a Comprehensive School Physical Activity Program (CSPAP)

A Comprehensive School Physical Activity Program (CSPAP) is a multi-component approach by which school districts and schools use a variety of opportunities for students to be physically active before, during, and after school. This gives students the chance to meet the nationally-recommended 60 minutes or more of physical activity each day and to develop the knowledge, skills, and confidence to be physically active for life. CSPAP is most successfully implemented when staff, families and community members are involved and engaged right from the start of planning.

Schools can choose to adopt one of the many best practice or evidenced-based programs or use available resources to develop their own school-developed initiative. Best practice programs that include a physical activity component include: The [Alliance for Healthier Generation](#)'s Healthy Schools Program; [Healthy U; Fuel up To Play 60](#); or, [Action for Healthy Kids](#). Activities related to walking and biking to school are addressed in the actions: Safe Routes to School (SRTS) District Policy, School Travel Plan for Walking and Biking, and Pedestrian and Bicycle Safety and Promotion Initiatives. Each of these programs incorporates a variety of approaches to integrate physical activity before, during or after the school day beyond physical education classes and recess.

Why is it important?

Physical activity is an essential tool for preventing and treating childhood obesity and its related adverse health conditions including Type 2 diabetes, high blood pressure, and high blood cholesterol. Also, an increasing body of scientific evidence suggests that healthier students are better learners and that physical activity can improve student academic achievement (e.g., classroom participation, grades, standardized test scores), as well as other factors that influence academic success in school (e.g., attention span, classroom behavior, attendance) (Basch, 2010; USDHHS, 2010; Hillman, et al., 2009; Trudeau & Shephard, 2008; Active Living Research, 2007). The U.S. Department of Health and Human Services (HHS), as well as other leading public health, medical, and educational organizations and researchers, recommend that children and adolescents should be physically active at least sixty minutes daily.

Since school is where most children spend the majority of their time outside the home, it is critical that schools take an active role in influencing children's health through increased physical activity. Leading national public health, medical, and government organizations and agencies have called on schools to adopt strategies to help children participate in high-quality physical education and other physical activity opportunities before, during and after school, and to serve as the cornerstone in collaborative partnerships with communities to promote physical activity (USDHHS, 1996; Strong, et al., 2005; Pate, et al., 2006; U.S. White House Task Force on Obesity, 2010; Glickman, et al., 2012 NASBE, 2009; NSBA, 2012; NEA 2010; NASPE, 2009; ASCD, 2011).

Physical activity programs in schools can help all children — regardless of ability or developmental level — meet the national recommendations by providing students with opportunities to:

- learn the skills that they need to become competent movers
- view physical activity as important and enjoyable
- become confident in participating in physical activity
- discover physical activities that cultivate the habits that lead to being active throughout life

Therefore, successful efforts at the school level will not only enhance student achievement but will also prevent chronic diseases related to obesity.

Who should lead and be involved with this action?

This action should be driven by a Health and Wellness Team that includes the school principal, physical education/health teachers, food service director or cafeteria manager, classroom teachers, parent coordinator or PTO leader, parents, school nurse, guidance counselor, and local community organizations and/or businesses.

Timeframe

If your school already has a focus on promoting physical activity, you have already taken a step toward establishing a CSPAP. Time may also be needed to garner the administrative and community support to not only implement, but also to sustain, the program.

Project costs and resource needs

Establishing a CSPAP may require reallocating resources within the school. A variety of federal and state programs and other resources are available at no cost or through grant funding. See “Resources” at the end of this action.

What to do, and how to do it ("How to")

This section provides guidance and recommendations for implementing the action. A school/district does not need to follow this guidance exactly as long as it meets the requirements for this action.

A CSPAP provides opportunities for students to meet the recommended sixty minutes of daily physical activity and to develop the knowledge, skills, and confidence to be physically active throughout life. These school-based opportunities include the foundation of a high-quality physical education program, with a variety of physical activities before, during and after the school day. Important considerations for implementing a CSPAP include:

- Convening school administrators and staff, and engage student leaders, to develop goals for students and staff.
- Using available programs and resources such as indoor/outdoor space, pre-existing programs, and community resources to develop and implement strategies to meet your goals.
- Providing opportunities to train staff implementing the physical activity programs.
- Evaluating the program annually to identify areas in which the school is doing well as well as areas in need of improvement.

Examples of Physical Activity During the School Day

Elementary	Secondary
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Start the day with a school-wide morning activity via classroom media. • Provide opportunities for daily walks. • Participate in teacher-led games or rhythmic experiences. • Engage in brief (3-5 minutes) active transitional activities between classroom tasks. • Integrate movement into academic content. • Provide daily recess for at least 20 minutes. • Host school-wide special events (e.g., walking programs, physical activity-oriented fundraisers, field days). 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Start the day with a school-wide morning activity via classroom media. • Extend lunch time to allow for "drop in" physical activity session organized in the gym and/or outdoors. • Form physical activity clubs that meet during scheduled club meeting days. • Provide the option to walk during lunch and study hall time. • Integrate physical activity into academics. • Host school-wide special events (e.g., walking programs, physical activity-oriented fundraisers, wellness fairs, field days). • Provide opportunities for intramural sport activities during lunchtime.

Examples of Physical Activity Opportunities Before and After School

Elementary	Secondary
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Walk and/or bike to school • Intramural activities and sports • Physical activity clubs • Youth sports • Traditional daycare/after-school programs • Informal recreation or play on school grounds. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Walk and/or bike to school • Intramural activities and sports • Running, fitness or other physical activity clubs • Access to school gym and/or exercise equipment

Source: Comprehensive School Physical Activity Programs: Helping All Students Achieve 60 Minutes of Physical Activity Each Day, 2013, American Alliance for Health, Physical Education, Recreation and Dance, www.aahperd.org 1900 Association Drive • Reston, VA 20191

A wide variety of activities that stimulate student interest should be offered to reach the greatest number of students. Encouraging and engaging family and community members to participate in physical activity extends the impact of the school-based program by fostering the development of a lifetime physical activity habit.

What to submit to show completion of this action

Schools are required to implement a CSPAP for this action. The following documentation must be submitted to verify that the action requirements have been met:

1. Description of Implementation –Provide a brief (300 words or less) overview of what your school has done to increase the amount of time students are engaged in physical activity before, during and after the school day.

2. Submit a detailed description of the activities undertaken to increase opportunities for students to engage in physical activity before, during, and after the school day. Describe each initiative (including staff training, where applicable); student recruitment and external communications with students, staff and parents; levels of student participation; and program impact.

OR

If your school is participating in one of the best practice programs identified, provide a participation agreement, program accomplishments, and letters of recognition or awards earned in the program.

3. Success Story. Write a success story using 1 digital photo (obtain photo release) and methods by which the success story will be shared; provide print copy, website or link.

Spotlight: What New Jersey schools are doing

Dickerson Elementary School, Chester School District

Yoga 4 Classrooms is an evidence-based yoga and mindfulness program for school that promotes social, emotional and physical wellness, learning readiness and positive school climate. By providing training and resources to support sustainable, school implementation, the company empowers schools to meet improvement goals while preparing students for a lifetime of success.

Resources - Programs

[Alliance for Healthier Generation](#)'s Healthy Schools Program takes a comprehensive approach to help schools create healthier environments by increasing physical activity and healthy eating for students and staff. View the [New Jersey State Profile](#) and [Success Stories](#)

[Build Our Kids Success](#) is a free, before-school program that gives kids a body and brain boost that will set them up for a day of learning.

[Mighty Milers](#) is a free running program for kids of all fitness levels, from pre-kindergarten through eighth grade. It's designed to get kids moving and prevent obesity and illness.

Reports and Policy Guidance

[Active Education](#): Physical Education, Physical Activity and Academic Performance. Active Living Research

Active Living Research: [School Policies](#) on Physical Education and Physical Activity.

Active Living Research: [Policies and Standards](#) for Promoting Physical Activity in After-School Programs.

American Academy of Pediatrics: Policy Statement: [The Crucial Role of Recess in School](#).

American Alliance for Health, Physical Education, Recreation and Dance: [Position Statement Recess](#) for Elementary School Students.

American Alliance for Health, Physical Education, Recreation and Dance: [Comprehensive School Physical Activity Programs](#): Helping All Students Achieve 60 Minutes of Physical Activity Each Day.

Bridging the Gap Research: [School district wellness policy](#)-related reports and materials.

Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, [School Health Index: A Self-Assessment and Planning Guide](#)

[Fit, Healthy, and Ready to Learn](#): A School Health Policy Guide: Chapter D: Policies to Promote Physical Activity and Physical Education.

Institute of Medicine: Educating the Student Body: [Taking Physical Activity and Physical Education to School](#).

International Play Association: [Promoting Recess](#).

Shape America, [Comprehensive School Physical Activity Programs](#)

[The School Wellness Policy Evaluation Tool](#)

U.S. Department of Health and Human Services: [Physical Activity Guidelines](#) for Americans
Midcourse Report: Strategies to Increase Physical Activity among Youth.

Plan and Maintain or Expand an Edible School Garden

School gardens provide a wide range of benefits to both the student gardeners and the broader school community. For students, school gardens serve as living classrooms that teach lessons as simple as "where our food comes from" to complex lessons on ecology, resource management, nutrition and healthy lifestyles. The goal of this action is to encourage and support the creation and maintenance of school gardens. The garden needs to have been active during the current or previous season and include plantings that produce fruits, vegetables and/or herbs that could be consumed by students. The garden must be utilized to teach environmental and/or nutrition education involving students interacting with the garden for learning activities during the school year.

Why is it important?

School gardens present a myriad of benefits to students and staff alike. For example, students have the opportunity to: learn and polish core academic skills in an informal setting that welcomes all students; acquire and improve 21st century skills ranging from problem-based learning, teamwork, critical thinking, and global citizenship skills; and build valuable health and wellness skills in a hands-on fashion.

As far back as 1998, in their groundbreaking report "Closing the Achievement Gap: Using the Environment as an Integrating Context for Learning," Lieberman and Hoody found, *inter alia*, the following observed benefits of using the environment as a context for school learning:

- Better performance on standardized measures of academic achievement in reading, writing, math, science and social studies
- Reduced discipline and classroom management problems
- Increased engagement and enthusiasm for learning
- Greater pride and ownership in accomplishments

Using the garden as a learning tool supports a wide range of core curriculum standards ranging from biological science, nutrition, math, life cycles, weather, properties of matter, financial literacy, along with 21st Century Skills.

Additionally, exposure to fresh vegetables and fruits from the garden can positively impact student health and wellness. Much research has shown the value of a diet rich in vegetables and fruits, and particularly in locally-produced vegetables and fruits. The involvement of students in growing their own food, and opportunities to taste and prepare dishes with the food they have grown, makes students more likely to continue to choose and eat such healthy foods in the school cafeteria and at home.

Who should lead and be involved with your school garden?

To carry out this action, it is important that school administrators and staff are committed to supporting the school garden(s). Leadership may come from the school principal or teachers, but a team approach both inside and outside the school is recommended.

Buildings and Grounds staff can assist with identifying the site, as well as some maintenance. In addition, parents should be involved. Student involvement either through classroom instruction, an after-school club, green team or volunteering, is crucial. Potential outside community partners include the municipal green team, Public Works Department, Parks and Recreation Commission, Community Health Educators, or Senior Center members.

Community nonprofit organizations, such as local garden clubs or Master Gardeners, the Rutgers Cooperative Extension Service, and the Natural Resources Conservation Service may also volunteer their expertise to assist with planning and designing the garden. In addition, area businesses, local nurseries and landscaping companies, national and local home improvement stores, and even area restaurants are all good partners to be considered when creating a group of stakeholders for the garden.

Timeframe

Starting a school garden takes due diligence, planning and implementation, and can take months to a year to coordinate before the actual planting begins.

Project costs and resource needs

School garden costs may include:

- Salary for a part time garden manager (could also be a volunteer position)
- Gardening tools (shovels, gloves, watering cans etc.)
- Labor and materials to establish garden beds and install fencing and water lines if needed; Staff or volunteers to provide gardening educational programs
- Insurance

Total costs can range between a few hundred dollars to \$15,000 for infrastructure intensive school gardens. These costs can be significantly reduced through donations of equipment and materials, volunteer labor, and partnerships with community organizations to help manage the gardens.

What to do, and how to do it ("How to")

This section provides guidance and recommendations for implementing the action. A school/district does not need to follow this guidance exactly. A useful reference for this action is "[Getting Started: A Guide for Creating School Gardens as Outdoor Classrooms](#)".

Much of the guidance in this section & excerpted from this excellent guide. When planning a school garden, consider the following:

Garden Purpose

Before undertaking a school garden, think about the purpose of the garden. Consider what classes will be using the garden initially, what subjects will be taught in the garden; envision the expansion of more classes being taught in the future, and what would be needed to successfully have the space for different types of learning to take place. Be sure to consider the teachers' and students' roles, the physical structures that will be needed, and the necessary procedures for successful interactions.

It is important to have supportive administrators who can help to raise funds, provide release time for teachers, and be advocates for the garden project. At most schools, a "steering committee" composed of a core group of teachers, often with the principal, parents, and students will work to plan what the garden will look like, how it will be utilized, identify what materials and resources are needed, and what tasks must be accomplished. It is also important to have the school facilities manager or custodial staff involved in the initial garden siting discussions as they are knowledgeable on issues like access to water, electric and other grounds maintenance issues. Once the garden is in place, this steering committee will oversee development and maintenance, evaluate successes, troubleshoot, and organize volunteers and community support. The committee should define its role and meet on a regular basis.

The more students are involved in planning and building their garden, the greater sense of ownership they will feel. Involve them in designing a garden plan, measuring and staking out garden beds, making garden signs, constructing a solar greenhouse, and/or analyzing soil for pH and nutrient content.

Connecting to the Classroom

The school garden provides many opportunities to extend learning outside of the classroom. Students can apply the knowledge and skills they have learned in one subject area to the work they are doing with their garden: for example, in analyzing garden data, students will be applying math skills. Students can also study environmental and agricultural issues such as sustainability and planetary health lessons on composting, multispecies cropping, and cover crops as they are tied to soil health.

Garden Coordinator

It is helpful to have someone to coordinate the daily details. This may be a part-time aide, a parent volunteer, or even a teacher with time officially allotted to garden responsibilities.

Volunteers

Volunteers are a major part of successful garden programs. Once volunteers are recruited, the next task is to organize them. Ideally, organizing the school garden volunteers will be a task for a volunteer support committee. It can make recruiting, organizing, training, and scheduling volunteers one of its tasks. Volunteers may come and go: for example, parents

move with their children to different schools. It is important to have a mix of volunteers from different roles so that when people leave, there are others to fill the void.

Community Involvement

Establish a community support system to assist in coordinating such activities as soliciting donations, asking for volunteers, and developing greater community awareness. When asking for community support, be sure to make it clear why the class (or school) is involving the community and how they plan to do it. Offer an orientation so volunteers can contribute to what the school needs.

What about the summer and holidays?

It is recommended that the school garden is maintained during the summer and holidays. This way, teachers and students will return to a bountiful fall harvest of crops, as well as plenty of weeds for the compost pile. Garden maintenance, especially during summer, can be a challenge, but many schools have come up with creative solutions. The first of two popular ideas is to have a summer program using the garden and/or family gardening. Some schools coordinate a science program as part of summer school; others let city recreation programs use the garden for an environmental education summer camp. At other schools, students and their families can water and maintain the school garden for a week at a time in exchange for harvesting the wonderful summer crops and sharing in the adventure of gardening.

Plant fast-growing crops such as lettuce, radishes, carrots, and broccoli in early spring so that students can harvest them before school is out, and slow-growing crops such as pumpkins, corn, and tomatoes in late spring so that students can harvest them in the fall.

School Garden Checklist

This list provides a short summary of the steps detailed extensively in "[Getting Started: A Guide for Creating School Gardens as Outdoor Classrooms](#)"

1. Plan the Garden
 - Create a sub-group of the H&W Team and also reach out to garden experts to assist with site evaluation.
 - Select a garden site with at least six hours of sunlight, access to water, and visibility from classrooms.
 - Plan and design the outdoor classroom, indicating the location of the garden bed areas, the tool shed/storage area, the compost area, the outdoor instruction area, the greenhouse/cold frame area, and the water system.
 - Determine the need for fencing to manage wildlife impacts on the garden from raccoons, groundhogs, and deer or to discourage vandalism from the garden.
 - Do a preliminary soil test to assess soil fertility and to identify potential soil contamination issues. Rutgers Cooperative Extension provides low cost soil

testing and will help explain the test results. If soil contamination is a concern or a documented problem, self-contained growing boxes or raised beds filled with "clean" planting off site soil should be used.

- Identify a garden water source. Options include the installation of a water outlet/faucet for a garden hose or identify locations for the installation of rain barrels to capture and store rainwater from the school roof to use in the garden. Create an initial garden design, supply list and construction budget as well as a budget for the ongoing garden costs.
- Raise funds to support the garden construction
- Select garden coordinator to lead the garden construction & ongoing maintenance

2. Purchase Tools and Materials

- Order seeds, tools, watering cans, hoses or irrigation systems
- Purchase compost and soil
- Create a supply-ordering system
- Buy materials for raised beds if needed

3. Build the Garden

- Organize a school community work day
- Cultivate soil; add soil amendments as needed
- Stake garden beds or build raised beds and fill with compost and clean soil
- Plant seeds in containers or purchase transplants
- Establish a compost pile
- Build benches for outdoor classroom areas

4. Maintain the Garden

- Cultivate garden beds
- Protect garden from pests and harsh weather
- Add soil amendments based on results of soil fertility test results
- Plant and transplant
- Maintain compost area
- Water plants as needed
- Prune plants
- Weed and mulch beds, garden paths and garden perimeter
- Harvest crops and incorporate food to utilize for taste tests in class or cafeteria
- Plant cover crops

5. Manage the Garden

- Schedule class use of the outdoor classroom
- Post garden maintenance tasks in outdoor area
- Develop a work schedule for volunteers
- Plan a holiday and summer maintenance program

What to submit to show completion of this action

The following documentation must be submitted to verify that action requirements have been met:

1. Description of Implementation. The school garden must be currently active or have been active during the most recent growing season. Submit a brief narrative (300 words or less) describing your school garden initiative including the history, location, contents, and how the garden is used to teach environmental and/or nutrition education.
2. Provide samples of the school garden program materials. This can include a picture with a caption, project newsletter articles, end of growing season reports, and materials used for recruiting participants or volunteers to assist with the garden or other items that would be useful to share with other schools that are starting gardens.
3. Provide samples of school garden related educational program materials. Examples include school lesson plans or events that illustrate how the garden is integrated into student learning activities related to environmental awareness and nutrition.
4. Success Story. Write a success story using 1 digital photo (obtain photo release) and methods by which the success story will be shared; provide print copy, website or link.

Spotlight: What New Jersey Schools are doing

William J. McGinn Elementary School, Scotch Plains: Recipient of the 2013 "Overall Winning Garden" Award from NJ Farm to School Network

The William J. McGinn School serves kindergarten, lower and upper elementary students. In 2013, the kindergarten developed a garden center in their classroom where they grew and studied plants and shared their findings with second grade buddies. The pairs also jointly planted corn kernels in translucent containers, which they transplanted to the garden. First grade developed a picture map of the vegetables grown in the garden after researching the beds and studying map characteristics. Second grade wrote letters to pen pals across the district regarding what they had planted, and gave them a tour when they visited in the spring. Third grade developed global cookbooks based on how different cultures use the foods we grow and provided copies to the local libraries. Fourth grade wrote persuasive letters about the benefits of the vegetables they grew to seventh-grade peer leaders who then visited the garden to get an informative tour with poster presentations from the fourth-graders.

Haddonfield School District

Students in the Haddonfield School District enjoy the fruits of their labor... literally. Haddonfield has a fully operational school garden in one elementary school and they are getting ready to break ground on two others. The schools also offer salads bars where students can eat food right out of their garden. The district does tastings with the children to encourage them to try new food; Items they taste-tested in 2014 include mashed sweet potatoes, eggplant sticks, and purple cauliflower. To further students' understanding of

agriculture, the district invited Farmer John from Ambrogi Produce to speak to the elementary school children about farm to school and what it means to them.

Merriam Avenue School, Newton

Working with Transition Newton, garden boxes were created to grow vegetables for the students in the school. Transition Newton is a grassroots organization in Newton and surrounding area concerned about the effects of climate change, peak oil and economic instability. The organization worked closely with a parent liaison at Merriam Avenue School to incorporate the garden into various academics including social studies, health and science. Children learned what types of vegetables are native to Newton, what kind of nutrients were in the vegetables, and cultivated seeds in the classroom to be transplanted to the garden.

Since the growing season begins toward the end of the school year and actual harvesting often happened over the summer months when students were on vacation, the natural next step was to make some of the boxes "cold frames" so that things could be grown during the school year. Plexi-glass covers for the frames were built and winter crops were planted. In December, kale from the garden was harvested and a kale party was enjoyed by the second grade.

The garden project has expanded to include a hydroponic system to increase the yield and variety of what they were currently growing. Produce from the garden is given to families within the school community who were experiencing food insecurity.

Princeton Township School District

The school gardens are supported by the [Princeton School Garden Cooperative](#), a group of individuals who believe in garden-based education and in reconnecting students to the earth's bounty in the garden, the classroom, and the cafeteria. The group's goal was to create edible gardens at every K-12 Princeton Public School, and to share ideas and lesson plans with anyone and everyone so they can grow edible teaching gardens at their schools, community centers, and even their own homes. Princeton now has outdoor garden classrooms in every public elementary school! The Cooperative works with teachers, principals, parent volunteers, and students at each of these schools to design, plant, water, weed, and nurture the gardens into being. Over the last decade, the elementary school gardens in Princeton Public Schools have grown and blossomed into fully integrated garden education programs. The 2014-2015 school year is the 3rd year in which each school has had a dedicated garden expert helping lead the program and each child in each school will have sustained garden experiences over the course of the school year. The more the gardens are used, the more they demonstrate their phenomenal educational richness.

Resources

[Eco Literacy](#), "Getting Started: A Guide for Creating School Gardens as Outdoor Classrooms": This excellent guide was the primary resource for the "What to Do and How

"to Do It" section of this action. It covers the basics of getting a school garden started; has ideas for fundraising and managing volunteers, and much more. There is also an [Instructional Video Series](#).

[Garden Club of New Jersey](#): Working through its 5000 members and 8 District groups the Garden Clubs of NJ support a range of gardening programs including EcoTot: Junior & High School Gardening; environmental programs; scholarships for teachers & students; conservation projects; and garden programs for the physically handicapped. Local clubs can be a tremendous asset for school and community gardening projects.

[Kids Gardening](#) (National Gardening Association): This site provides resources on school gardens, including curricula, funding resources and family gardening activities. It features teacher links, lesson and activity ideas, how-to guides, classroom projects, and Professional development opportunities.

[Monmouth Conservation Foundation](#): "Kids for Conservation" program has free classroom resources, free on-site presentations at your school, and resources for the purchase of tower gardens. Open to schools in Monmouth County.

[NJ Agricultural Society](#): The mission of the NJ Agricultural Society is to provide New Jersey elementary schools with financial, educational, and agricultural resources to create a school garden that is used as a living-learning laboratory. NJ Agricultural Society offers curriculum resources, training opportunities, and grants for teachers and schools to start school gardens through their Learning through Gardening program. The Teacher Toolbox includes lesson plans on basic gardening, gardening across the curriculum, nutrition and weather.

[NJDA Farm to School Program](#): The New Jersey Department of Agriculture's Farm to School program assists schools throughout New Jersey in sourcing more than 100 types of Jersey Fresh produce grown here in the Garden State. Opportunities exist for NJ farmers to provide agricultural products to school food service departments throughout the growing season. The object of serving healthy meals in school cafeterias is to improve student nutrition, provide health and nutrition education opportunities that will last a lifetime, as well as support local farmers. Additionally, the farm to school program includes schools garden activities which help teach students where food comes from by growing it themselves.

NJ Department of Environmental Protection's [State Environmental Education Directory \(SEEDS\)](#): This website provides links on the following topics: general Information about creating and using outdoor classrooms; wildlife; plants; water; fertilizers/pesticides; other services; examples of NJ school based outdoor classroom websites as well as outdoor programs in other states, and information about schoolyard habitat workshops.

[New Jersey School Boards Association \(NJSBA\)](#) offers Policy Services which have district sample policies and NJSBA developed samples to support sustainability initiatives that are not required by law and an option for the school district. We have model policy samples for topics required by law or state monitored. Policy services are also available to help board members and administrators develop customized policy language to meet your needs. These resources are available to NJSBA members only (public school district staff and board members). All public and charter schools in New Jersey are dues paying members for these services; please contact your administration or local board members for access.

[Northeast Organic Farming Association of New Jersey](#): The Northeast Organic Farming Association of New Jersey is a nonprofit organization that holds educational conferences, farm tours, and workshops, and provides education to farmers, gardeners, consumers, and land care professionals. The website also contains list of Community Supported Agricultural farms offering weekly food shares and the location of certified organic farms in New Jersey and eastern Pennsylvania.

[Rutgers Master Gardener Program](#): Master Gardeners are trained volunteers that help with Rutgers New Jersey Agricultural Experiment Station Cooperative Extension by delivering horticulture programs and information to the general public.

[Rutgers Cooperative Extension](#): There are [County Office locations](#) in each New Jersey county provide free technical assistance and resources on gardening, landscaping, nutrition and a wide range of farming and water resource issues. Rutgers also has a "[Learning through the Garden](#)" factsheet

[Grow Healthy Team Nutrition](#): This program that joins families, schools, child care centers, preschool sites, and the community together so they can make wellness and learning top properties. The site features nutrition webinars and, resources for teachers, food service staff, families and kids.

[Rutgers Soil Testing Lab](#): The Soil Testing Laboratory is a part of Rutgers New Jersey Agricultural Experiment Station (NJAES). Located on the G. H. Cook Campus, the Soil Testing Laboratory is a service unit that offers chemical and mechanical analyses of soils for the residents of New Jersey and for Rutgers University researchers. School and community garden sites should be tested prior to the establishment of the garden location.

[United States Department of Agriculture](#), Natural Resources Conservation Service: This organization provides free technical assistance, information and [educational resources](#) for teachers that can help communities evaluate and plan for the management of their soil, water, and other natural resources.

Starting a Garden

[Green Education Foundation \(GEF\)](#): GEF is a national non-profit organization committed to creating a sustainable future through education. GEF offers free programs that provide [curricula](#) and hands-on activities to inspire K-12 students and teachers to think holistically about global sustainability concerns and solutions. The Green Thumb Challenge promotes youth gardening by providing grants, resources on planning, building and planting your garden, and standards-based lessons and activities that integrate the school garden.

[Mother Earth News](#) provides plant and seed planting dates for the different regions in NJ.

[Rutgers Fact Sheet on Starting a Vegetable Garden](#) provides planting dates, plant spacing and average harvest or crop yields.

Curriculum

[From Our Farms](#), from Rutgers Cooperative Extension Gloucester County is a fun-filled project that teaches children and their families about the importance of good nutrition, the value of local agriculture and the role farms play in enriching our communities and the environment.

[Garden-Enhanced Nutrition Education](#), from the California Healthy School Environment, has training resources, videos, power point presentations, school food recipes, garden enhanced nutrition education and guidance on preparing and service school garden grown produce in the cafeteria.

[Garden State on Your Plate](#) helps children understand the source and deliciousness of the food on their plates in New Jersey. The step by step guide to bring, chefs, farmers and delicious, farm-fresh food to schools.

[NJ Agricultural Society Teacher Toolbox](#) includes lesson plans on basic gardening, gardening across the curriculum, nutrition and weather.

[Ag in the Classroom and Curriculum for Agricultural Science Education](#) are available from NJDA and focus on the changing the culture of agriculture programs.

[Princeton School Garden Cooperative](#), Helping Children and Gardens Grow all over Town! Garden planning for all grades and lesson plans linked to the New Jersey State Standards for K-5 by Dorothy Mullen

[The Edible Schoolyard Network](#) connects educators around the world to build and share a K-12 edible education curriculum.

Promote NJ Locally Grown Foods

Across the country, an increasing number of schools and districts are implementing farm to school initiatives to improve the health of children and communities. The goal of this action is to support the farm to school movement by encouraging schools to source more foods locally and provide complementary educational activities to students that emphasize food, farming, and nutrition.

Why is it important?

This nationwide movement to enrich children's bodies and minds while supporting local economies is often referred to as "farm to school." The term encompasses efforts that bring local or regionally-produced foods into school cafeterias; hands-on learning activities such as school gardening, farm visits, and culinary classes; and the integration of food related education into the regular, standards-based classroom curriculum. Farm to school ingredients can span the school meal tray and include everything from fresh fruit and vegetables to turkey in the sandwiches, and cheese in the quesadillas. When districts and schools procure local foods, it not only provides a source of fresh food for students, it also creates economic opportunities for all types of local and regional food producers and businesses, including farmers, processors, manufacturers, and distributors.

According to USDA's [Farm to School Census](#), in the 2015 school year, 42% of districts surveyed by USDA, participate in farm to school activities. Through these efforts, schools continue to enhance the health of the school food environment, meet the new meal standards, and demonstrate the role local food can play in school meals.

Overall, investments in farm to school activities are a "win-win" opportunity for schools, local economies, and the environment in the following ways:

- Public Health: Farm to school activities provide healthy food options and food-based education to influence healthy eating behaviors and healthy lifestyles in children. These activities also educate and engage parents, thereby reinforcing healthy family eating and food-purchasing behaviors.
- Community Economic Development: Farm to school provides economic development opportunities to farmers, laborers, distributors, processors, cooks and foodservice staff, as well as others who support the local food system. Beyond this, farm to school may also specifically benefit those who have historically lacked equal access to the traditional food system.
- Education: A child's health impacts his or her readiness to learn while they are at school. School environments that include education about healthy eating at school and at home are needed for children to develop to their full potential. Farm to school initiatives increase student access to healthy foods in the physical school

environment, and promote educational activities that engage children and families in learning about and developing healthy eating habits. Farm to school curriculum and experiential activities are also a platform to teach core content areas such as science, math and language arts through lessons on food and the food system.

- Environmental Quality: Farm to school activities support environmentally sound, sustainable and socially just approaches to food production, processing, packaging, transportation and marketing.

Who should lead and be involved with this action?

There are multiple players and participants involved in the development and implementation of farm to school activities both within and beyond the school district. School board members and administrative staff set the guidelines for supporting farm to school activities. The overall effort should be coordinated by the district or Health and Wellness Team. Foodservice staff work with food producers, processors and distributors to supply the local foods featured in the cafeteria or classroom for taste tests. Teachers conduct curricular activities to connect the core elements of farm to school in all subject areas. Teachers also serve as role models for healthy behaviors. Parents and caregivers reinforce the farm to school message in the home environment. Community organizations and individuals (i.e., chefs, farmers' market managers, master gardeners, and nutrition educators) volunteer to support implementation of activities in the school.

Timeframe

The time needed to implement local food purchasing initiatives will vary based on several factors, including the time of year, existing food service contracts, and the level of support for the initiative. Since different products are available at different times of the year, it is helpful to plan in advance which local food items will be available and served in which months. One resource is the New Jersey Department of Agriculture's [Seasonality Chart](#) to learn what grows in New Jersey and when it is available.

Project Costs and Resource Needs

A goal of local purchasing initiatives is to cover the cost of any additional administrative, labor, and equipment costs through increased meals participation and the competitive pricing of local products. The cost of an individual school or district's program is influenced by a variety of factors, including the scope of the program, the geographic area and the food available in that region, and the procurement method.

Resources are available to support schools in implementing local food procurement efforts. The New Jersey Department of Agriculture's [Jersey Fresh Farm to School](#) program provides a wealth of information for schools, students, parents, state agencies, other nonprofits, farmers, produce distributors, and communities to change the food system choices in New Jersey schools through school garden education promotion and local purchasing. It hosts

conferences, workshops, webinars and online networking opportunities for those interested in making these positive changes through collaboration.

The [National Farm to School Network](#) identifies a variety of organizations, programs, and ideas that can help fund farm to school initiatives, including:

- government funding (federal, state or county/municipal)
- foundations (private family, corporate or community)
- business sponsorships (local, regional, or national)
- fundraising events

The [USDA](#) has grants and loans to assist eligible entities in implementing Farm to School programs that improve access to local foods in eligible schools. On an annual basis, the USDA awards up to \$5 million in competitive grants for training, supporting operations, planning, purchasing equipment, developing school gardens, developing partnerships, and implementing farm to school programs.

What to do, and how to do it ("How to")

This section provides guidance and recommendations for implementing the action. A school does not need to follow this guidance exactly as long as it provides evidence of meeting the requirements.

The USDA also has a Growing Your Farm to School Program Toolkit filled with tips and examples, insights from others, and lists of resources for further information. The toolkit recommends the following steps to grow an existing program or to get one started.

1. Health and Wellness Team. To implement farm to school initiatives, efforts should be coordinated through this Team. Additional representatives such as local food producers or Master Gardeners, the school nurse, the facilities manager, and/or a representative of the PTO/PTA have additional expertise to contribute.
2. Establish a Realistic Goal. Experts recommend starting small and attaining small successes and then building up from these smaller "wins."
3. Define and Find Local Foods. Serving local foods through school meal programs is often a central component of farm to school initiatives. First, go to [Jersey Fresh](#) for a county-by-county breakdown of what foods are grown, harvested, raised, caught, and processed and when they are available. Then, schools/districts can determine which local foods are already being purchased or what is locally available to purchase. The website also has a search feature to locate farmers growing commodities and specialty crops, or producing value-added products featuring NJ grown crops.

Buy Local Foods: A helpful resource is the USDA's [Procuring Local Foods for Child Nutrition Programs](#). The goal of this guide is to illustrate the many opportunities schools have to buy local products. It includes many details vital to a successful, open, fair, and competitive process.

Start with purchasing local fruits and vegetables, milk and eggs. Purchase local fruits or vegetables that can be used in their whole form, or that can be easily processed by kitchen staff. For example, farmers like to sell small apples to schools, since they often do not have good markets for small apples. Frozen fruit can be used for yogurt parfaits or defrosted and served on the salad bar. Other items that can be served or prepared whole include strawberries, sweet peas, pears, and potatoes. Some products that can be easily processed are tomatoes, cucumbers, and broccoli. It works well to start small—one product each month—or only during the high harvest season.

Keep in mind that when local foods are procured using federal meal program funds, purchases must be in accordance with federal regulations.

4. Menu Planning. Local foods can be incorporated into existing menus, or new recipes can be introduced that feature local foods. Taste testing and special promotions are ways to engage students and staff in trying the new foods.
5. Food Safety. Maintaining food safety is essential to every school meal program. Food coming from local farms can be as safe, or even safer, than foods coming through conventional channels. Nevertheless, local purchasing may present some new food safety questions and require new protocols for washing, handling, and storing food.
6. Promote the Program. The key to getting financial buy-in and in-kind support for a farm to school program is clearly communicating the school's goals, achievements, and needs. Consider the various audiences (including students, parents, teachers, administrators, community members, food producers, and the media) and think about what messages to convey to them and the best means to reach that audience. Focus on the positive aspects of the project and celebrate success, big and small.
7. Link with School Gardens. School gardens can contribute to a farm to school effort by providing additional fresh produce to serve in the cafeteria, as a snack and/or to enrich related educational programs through hands-on activities. See the School Garden action for more information.

8. Education and Curriculum Integration. There are myriad educational resources available to help integrate food, agriculture, and nutrition-focused lessons into the classroom and/or part of extracurricular activities. For example, the [Edible Schoolyard Project](#) connects 5,513 programs in the US and offers a variety of resources.
9. Evaluate Efforts. Establishing a framework to properly evaluate the farm to school program is a key part of planning. Evaluation findings help document what works, improve the program, and demonstrate success.
10. Sustain the Program. The sustainability of the farm to school program should be considered throughout the planning process. As the program expands, a plan for sustaining financial resources, in-kind donations, and policy support ensures that the program becomes integrated into the district's food service operations.

These steps may appear daunting but many farm to school programs begin with small activities that generate interest and engage the community. The programs listed below can be used as a springboard for a new farm to school initiative.

[Jersey Fresh Farm to School Week](#) (last week in September): The New Jersey Department of Agriculture (NJDA) Jersey Fresh Farm to School program sponsors Jersey Fresh Farm to School Week. During this week the state's agricultural industry is promoted and children/their families are encouraged to increase their consumption of fresh produce.

[National Farm to School Month](#) (October): During this month, the importance of farm to school programs for improving child nutrition, supporting local economies, and educating students about the origins of food is promoted.

[Jersey Fresh Farm to School Recognition and Award Program](#): This Program recognizes schools and farmers who work together to ensure students have access to healthy Jersey Fresh fruits and vegetables in their school cafeterias. There are many benefits to the schools and farms to participate in the recognition program. Schools get the opportunity to expand their farm to school efforts, highlight Jersey Fresh produce in their meals, and to educate students about good nutrition and the New Jersey Agricultural industry. Schools and farmers will receive a Jersey Fresh Farm to School promotional materials kit, including a display banner that informs students and the community of their participation in the program. Applications are due annually in May for programs launching September of the following school year.

[Fresh Fruit and Vegetable Program](#) (FFVP): This federally-assisted program provides free fresh fruits and vegetables to students in participating elementary schools that have 50% or more of their students eligible for free- or reduced- price meals. The goal of the FFVP is

to improve a student's diet and create healthier eating habits. Schools must attempt to purchase locally-grown fruits and vegetables.

What to submit to show completion of this action

A school or district (all schools must be involved in a district effort) must demonstrate that steps have been taken toward procuring, promoting, and serving local foods in the cafeteria or as a snack. This can be accomplished by documenting participation in existing programs for the current school year such as Jersey Fresh Farm to School Week **and** the National Farm to School Month **or** the Jersey Fresh Farm to School Recognition Program; purchasing local foods through the USDA Fresh Fruit and Vegetable Program; or pursuing other strategies to procure and promote locally grown foods.

The documentation below must be submitted to verify that the following requirements have been met:

1. Description of Implementation. Provide a short summary (300 words or less) of what the school or district is doing to source foods locally and provide complementary educational activities that emphasize food, farming, and nutrition.
2. Participation in Farm to School Programs. Provide documentation verifying successful participation in the Jersey Fresh Farm to School Week and the National Farm to School Month; the Jersey Fresh Farm to School Recognition Program; or the Fresh Fruit and Vegetable Program in the last twelve months.

OR

Provide documentation that locally-sourced food was served as part of the school menu at least **five times** in the last 12 months including during the current school year and promoted the local food aspect in the school community. This should include copies of the menus that incorporated the local food, the amounts purchased from a local source, and promotional or educational materials (i.e., pictures, flyers, copies of web postings, nutrition lessons, etc.).

3. Write a success story using 1 digital photo (obtain photo release) and methods by which the success story will be shared; provide print copy, website or link.

Spotlight: What New Jersey schools are doing

Anthony V. Ceres Elementary School, Perth Amboy

At Ceres Elementary School in Perth Amboy, Jersey Fresh fruits and vegetables are highlighted in the school's Fresh Fruit and Vegetable Program, and the students grow a school garden. New Jersey Secretary of Agriculture Douglas H. Fisher celebrated the fourth-annual Jersey Fresh Farm to School Week with a visit to Ceres Elementary; while at Ceres School, Fisher visited third- and fourth-grade classes where the children sampled green grapes; mini sweet yellow, red, and orange peppers; broccoli; and Italian prune plums as part of the Fresh Fruit and Vegetable Program, a federally-assisted program administered by the New Jersey Department of Agriculture to provide healthier food choices, expand the

variety of fruits and vegetables children experience, and increase children's fruit and vegetable consumption.

Resources

The vision for [Food Corps](#) is to recruit young adults for a yearlong term of public service in school food systems. Once stationed, Food Corps members will build Farm to School supply chains, expand food system and nutrition education programs, and build and tend school food gardens. New Jersey currently has ten Food Corps service members serving in Passaic County, Newark, New Brunswick, Trenton, Camden, and Salem and Gloucester counties.

[Northeast Organic Farming Association of NJ](#): Provides a searchable database of sustainably-produced food in and around NJ. The annual Farm and Food Guide provides listings of sustainable and organic farms, restaurants, and markets in NJ.

ChangeLab Solutions, Establishing a Farm-to-School Program: [A Model School Board Resolution](#)

Ecotrust, Farm to Preschool: [Getting Started with Local Foods Purchasing](#)

US Department of Agriculture, 10 Facts about Local Food in School Cafeterias
https://www.fns.usda.gov/sites/default/files/F2S_10_facts.pdf

Psychological, Counseling, & Social Services

Action	Resources	What to Submit to Verify Action Requirements are Met
<p><i>Creating Opportunities for Personal Empowerment (COPE)</i></p> <p>Train a minimum of two staff (Health Education teachers, School Based Youth Service Program (SBYSP) staff, and/or school nurse) to implement the COPE program, a 15-session evidence-based, healthy lifestyle intervention program.</p> <p>Implement and evaluate the COPE program with a minimum of 50 high school students.</p>	<p>COPE is integrated into a required health class and incorporates cognitive-behavioral skills-building (coping techniques, social functioning skills and problem solving). COPE students scored higher averages on social skills scale, scored higher grades in the health course integrating COPE, reported lower use of alcohol and higher levels of physical activity (measured by pedometers) and students with high depression scores showed significantly lower scores after COPE.</p> <p>Contact: Dr. Bernadette Melnyk, PhD, RN, Ohio State University, Melnyk.15@osu.edu Training costs involved.</p>	<p>#, type of staff trained; certificates of training.</p> <p># high school student participants.</p> <p>Summary of pre-versus post-results using COPE evaluation tools.</p> <p>Write a success story using 1 digital photo (obtain photo release) and methods by which it will be shared; provide hard copy, website or link.</p>
<p><i>Implement the Teen Outreach Program (TOP)</i></p> <p>TOP, an evidence-based positive youth development and risk behavior reduction program, empowers 6th through 12th grade teens with the tools and opportunities to build a foundation of healthy behaviors and life skills that help them avoid or minimize risky behaviors. These skills are developed through an interactive curriculum facilitated by adult trainers within a safe and supportive youth environment.</p> <p>The curriculum is complemented by a community service learning (CSL) opportunity that provides</p>	<p>Wyman Center</p> <p>Jennie Blakney, MA.Ed jennie.blakney@doh.nj.gov</p>	<p>#, types of staff trained; certificates of training.</p> <p># middle-/high-school student participants.</p> <p>Summary of pre- and post-results using TOP evaluation tools.</p> <p>Write a success story using 1 digital photo (obtain photo release) and methods by which it will be shared; provide hard copy, website or link.</p>

<p>teens the chance to apply and use the social and emotional skills they've learned. TOP can stand-alone or be embedded into other programs. It can be offered in- or after-school or through community-based organizations. The majority of TOP programs in New Jersey are implemented during the school day.</p> <p>A minimum of two staff (Health Education teachers, SBYSP staff, and/or other) need to be trained to implement and evaluate TOP with a minimum of 50 middle- or high- school students.</p> <p>Initiate Change and Build Linkages Between Mental Health Promotion & Chronic Disease Prevention.</p> <p>Create a sub-committee of the Health and Wellness Team with required representation from: health care (preventing and/or treating one or more of these chronic health conditions: asthma, diabetes, overweight), a community-based mental health organization, a SBYSP staff , the school nurse or physician and other individuals, as interested or appropriate.</p> <p>During the SY, the sub-committee is required to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a) meet six to eight (6-8) times. b) review "Recommendations for first steps", pg15 of NACDD resource article and select at least four (4) steps (excluding the 1st two bullets) to implement as discussion topics for the sub-committee meetings. c) conduct one focus group (n=12-15) with parents (coordinate with the PTA/PTO) and teachers. 	<p><u>Integrating Mental Health into Chronic Disease Prevention for Youth: An Opportunity for Change</u></p>	<p>a) Maintain attendance, agenda and meeting minutes.</p> <p>b) List 4 steps to implement.</p> <p>c,d,e) Summary of results that include: # teachers, parents, and student focus group participants and staff for professional development and summary of responses to discussion questions.</p> <p>f) "Next Steps" Plan.</p> <p>Write a success story using 1 digital photo (obtain photo release) and methods by which it will be shared; provide hard copy, website or link.</p>
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d) conduct one focus group (n=12-15) with students using an existing youth advisory/leadership group to lead the focus group with a committee member advisor. e) conduct one (1) professional development for school staff. f) identify "Next Steps" to ensure continuity of this action.		
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Sustain a Comprehensive School Physical Activity Program (CSPAP) Through Policy

New Jersey state law (N.J.S.A.18A:35) requires that all students in grades one through twelve participate in at least two-and-a-half hours of health, safety, and physical education in each school week and the Core Curriculum Content Standards for Health and Physical Education provide a foundation for a Comprehensive School Physical Activity Program (CSPAP). However, more is needed to foster lifelong physical activity habits and improve the health of young people. In addition to high-quality physical education, taught by certified physical education teachers, there are multiple opportunities before, during and after the school day to enable young people to achieve the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services' recommended sixty minutes of physical activity per day.

The Healthy, Hunger-Free Kids Act of 2010 requires every school district that participates in federal school meals programs to have a local wellness policy that includes goals for physical activity. This action requires a school district to develop AND adopt evidence-based policies that promote a CSPAP. This can be accomplished through an overarching, integrated Local Wellness Policy or specific policies on recess, physical activity breaks, before and after school programs, and/or allowing the use of school facilities outside school hours by community groups who can offer for physical activity and nutrition programs. Policies related to walking and biking to school are covered in the Safe Routes to School (SRTS) District Policy action.

Why is it important?

The U.S. Department of Health and Human Services' 2008 Physical Activity Guidelines for Americans recommends that children and adolescents participate in 60 minutes or more of moderate to vigorous physical activity per day. Given the amount of time this population group spends in school, the National Academies' Institute of Medicine recommends that all schools aim to provide students with at least half of the recommended 60 minutes of moderate-to-vigorous physical activity every school day. Additionally, the National Association of State Boards of Education's [*Fit, Healthy and Ready to Learn: A School Health Policy Guide*](#) cites research highlighting that:

- more physical activity opportunities help students: concentrate better, improve their cognitive function, and positively impacts their academic performance.
- the health benefits of lifelong physical activity will help contain increasing health care costs.
- establishing SRTS enables students to walk and bike to and from school and reduces unnecessary road trips, energy consumption, and air pollution emissions.
- enjoyable physical activity opportunities after school promotes positive social skills and reduces opportunities for students to engage in undesirable behaviors.

Establishing official statements at the district level that identify what should be done, why it should be done, and who is responsible for doing it will:

- provide evidence of leadership, commitment, and support for school health, including physical activity from school boards.
- drive positive changes in physical activity programs.
- sustain and expand physical activity programs or activities.
- establish accountability by identifying who is responsible for physical activity programs and policies.
- establish performance measures.

Who should lead and be involved with this action?

Identify and involve key stakeholders including the Health and Wellness Team or similar team from the beginning of the policy process. Key stakeholders in district policy process include board members with an interest in this area, district and school administration, knowledgeable and passionate school staff (i.e. school nurses, physical education teachers, others), PTOs or PTAs, parents, booster clubs, and students. Also consider representatives from local health departments, health-care providers, recreation committees, sports organizations, local community organizations, and businesses.

Timeframe

The amount of time needed to develop and implement effective policies supporting comprehensive physical activity initiatives depend, in large part, on the availability of administrators, school staff and volunteers. There is a wealth of free information, resources, and technical support listed under “Resources” to help, and, depending on the level of support, policies could be developed and approved within a few months.

Project costs and resource needs

The incremental cost to develop school policies to promote physical activity is very small. Free resources are available including technical support from industry associations, government agencies and non-profit organizations. Additionally, a variety of federal, state, and other grants focus on addressing obesity and chronic disease in the school setting.

What to do, and how to do it ("How to")

This section provides guidance and recommendations for implementing the action. A school district does not need to follow this guidance exactly, as long as it meets the requirements for this action.

The list of resources at the end of this document highlights a number of tools that provide valuable guidance on policy development. Particularly useful is the CDC's [School Health Index: A Self-Assessment and Planning Guide](#), which enables schools to identify the strengths and weaknesses of their current policies and practices and develop a practical improvement plan. Another key resource is the National Association of State Boards of Education's *Fit, Healthy and Ready to Learn: A School Health Policy Guide*. The following

summarizes more detailed guidance that can be found in *Chapter B: The Art of Policymaking*.

The policy development process will vary based on the local environment and the level of awareness and support a proposed policy has from school board members, administration, school staff, parents and the community at large. The five common tasks involved in shepherding a policy development process are listed below:

1. Lay the Groundwork. Although the benefits of developing policies to promote physical activity in the schools may be self-evident, it is important to include data specific to the school district. This information may also help clarify the rationale of the proposed policy and/or determine if the existing Local Wellness Policy should be expanded or updated vs. creating new policies focused on specific strategies. Do the necessary background research and brainstorm several policy options that could be pursued. Communicate regularly with the district superintendent and school principal about ongoing research, discussions as well as financial, contractual, or scheduling implications for the policy options.

To meet the action submission standards, the district needs to increase physical activity opportunities for students using **at least two** of the following strategies in a policy:

- Recess. The district or school must provide a daily recess period of not less than twenty minutes for kindergarten through fifth grade students. Recess would not directly precede or follow a physical education class, could not be used as a replacement for physical education class, or be withheld as punishment for any reason.
- Physical Activity Breaks. Teachers should periodically conduct three to five minute "physical activity breaks" or "brain energizers" and incorporate physical activity into academic lessons to help improve student performance and on-task behavior.
- Before and After School Programs. Each school must offer a minimum of two types of extracurricular programs that provide students with opportunities for physical activity beyond school hours:
 - Before- and after-school student care programs for children that incorporate physical activity as a major component of the daily schedule;
 - Intramural sports, which are organized sports that often emphasize fun as well as competition and involve students from the school of all skill levels who may not want to be in an interscholastic sport;
 - Physical activity clubs that allow students to pursue specific interests or explore new activities.

- Use of School Facilities Outside School Hours. The district allows for the joint use of school facilities by community recreation programs offered by municipal or parks and recreation commissions, outside agencies or youth-serving organizations on evenings, weekends, and during breaks in the school calendar. The district may charge for the use of facilities but no more than the incremental costs associated with the intended use (i.e. maintenance costs, incremental insurance coverage, etc.)

2. Build Awareness and Support. The most important step in crafting any school health policy is to enlist widespread buy-in, acceptance, and support for the policy's goals and strategies, particularly from:

- school administrators who need to shepherd the policy through the BOE review and adoption process.
- school staff, parents, students, and others who can actively participate in developing, revising, or reviewing the proposed policy.
- critics whose constructive criticism could ultimately strengthen the proposed policy. They may even be persuaded by the discussion to support the policy.
- those who will be affected by the policy or who are expected to implement it.
- the greater school community. Use communications strategies, as appropriate, to increase public awareness of the proposed policy.

3. Draft the Policy. Draft the policy language, drawing on the information gathered by the team/committee members and the input and concerns of stakeholders. Some guiding principles are:

- use language that is simple, clear, specific, and accurate; avoid education, health, and legal jargon.
- be concise and brief.
- include a rationale for the policy; describe the benefits of adopting it.
- build in accountability—cite who will be held responsible for doing what and describe mechanisms for doing it.
- ensure that the policy provides practical guidance to school staff members about how to address specific issues.
- include provisions for policy evaluation and periodic review.

Allow time for committee members to share the draft policies with their constituencies, gather reactions, and report back to the full committee.

4. Adopt the Policy. Present the final draft to the school board policy committee or the full school board, along with useful and concise background information. Encourage the policy's supporters to attend relevant meetings and be prepared to respond to questions.

5. Administer the Policy. The Health and Wellness Team or other representative committee is a logical choice for administering and evaluating the impact of a new policy. The committee can meet regularly to assess needs; consider and respond to student, family, or community suggestions and concerns; discuss implementation progress and challenges; and, oversee evaluation.

To be impactful, either the policy itself or administrative directives need to:

- clearly state who is responsible for ensuring that the spirit and provisions of the policy are implemented
- identify the mechanisms for enforcement and accountability
- orient all school staff to the policy and the rationale behind it.

What to submit for completion of this action

The Board of Education must adopt a policy or policies that address **at least two** of the following strategies to increase opportunities for students to engage in physical activity: 1) recess, 2) physical activity breaks, 3) before-and after-school programs, or 4) use of school facilities outside school hours. This can be accomplished by incorporating each strategy into an overarching, integrated school district local wellness policy or through a specific policy. **Policies are required to exceed the minimum standards set by state law or regulation.**

The following documentation must be submitted to verify that action requirements have been met:

1. Description of Implementation. Provide a short summary (300 words or less) of the policy or policies implemented including when it was approved, what/who it applies to, and the status of implementation efforts.
2. Submit a dated copy of the policy or policies adopted by the school board.
3. When the policy has been in effect for more than six months, submit evidence (internal correspondences, information provided to staff, students and parents; program overviews/data, etc.) of policy implementation.
4. Success Story. Write a success story using 1 digital photo (obtain photo release) and methods by which the success story will be shared; provide print copy, website or link.

Spotlight: What New Jersey schools are doing

Jackson School District

The Jackson School district believes that it is extremely important to encourage physical activity. This is evident in the attached policies. From the encouragement of the use of our

playgrounds and facilities to our physical education policy, Jackson is dedicated to our students and cares greatly about their physical health. At the Elementary School level, all of our schools provide a minimum of 20 minutes of recess per day. This is mandatory in every building and cannot be used as a punishment or disciplinary measure. During the school day, all of our teachers take activity breaks in addition to recess. These breaks come in many forms. Some teacher use programs like Go Noodle and many even practice Yoga Calm! Whatever the form, our students are extremely active in the learning process! Our Middle and High School gymnasiums and fields are always being used by both the students and the community. To view a complete description of Jackson School District's policy to promote physical Activity click [here](#).

Resources - Reports and Policy Guidance

Active Living Research, [Active Education](#): Physical Education, Physical Activity and Academic Performance.

Active Living Research: [Policies and Standards](#) for Promoting Physical Activity in After-School Programs.

Active Living Research: [School Policies](#) on Physical Education and Physical Activity.

American Academy of Pediatrics Policy Statement: [The Crucial Role of Recess in School](#).

American Alliance for Health, Physical Education, Recreation and Dance: [Position Statement](#) Recess for Elementary School Students.

American Alliance for Health, Physical Education, Recreation and Dance, [Comprehensive School Physical Activity Programs](#): Helping All Students Achieve 60 Minutes of Physical Activity Each Day.

Bridging the Gap Research: [School district wellness policy](#)-related reports and materials.

International Play Association: [Promoting Recess](#).

[New Jersey School Boards Association](#) (NJSBA) offers Policy Services which have district sample and model policies as well as policy services to help board members and administrators develop customized policy language. These resources are available to NJSBA members only (public school district staff and board members). Contact your administration or local board members for access.

Safe Routes to School National Partnership: [Shared Use Clearinghouse](#).

Shape America, [Comprehensive School Physical Activity Programs](#)

[The School Wellness Policy Evaluation Tool](#)

U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, Physical Activity Guidelines for Americans
Midcourse Report: [Strategies to Increase Physical Activity Among Youth.](#)

Programs

[Action for Healthy Kids](#) is the nation's leading non-profit and volunteer network partnering with schools to improve nutrition and physical activity to help our kids learn to eat right, be active every day, and ready to learn.

The [Alliance for Healthier Generation](#)'s Healthy Schools Program takes a comprehensive approach to helping schools create healthier environments by increasing physical activity and healthy eating for students and staff.

[Build Our Kids Success](#) is a free before-school program that gives kids a body and brain boost that will set them up for a day of learning.

[Fuel up To Play 60](#) is a program founded by the National Dairy Council and the NFL, in collaboration with USDA that empowers students to take charge in making small, everyday changes at school. Students can will prizes, such as an NFL visit or Super Bowl tickets, for choosing good-for-you foods and getting active for at least 60 minutes every day.

[Healthy U](#) is an obesity prevention program that provides schools with resources and technical support to help increase physical activity and healthy eating.

[Mighty Milers](#) is a free running program for kids of all fitness levels from pre-kindergarten through eighth grade. It's designed to get kids moving and prevent obesity and illness.

**WHOLE SCHOOL, WHOLE COMMUNITY, WHOLE CHILD (WSCC)
SCHOOL HEALTH NJ PROJECT
BUILDING AND SUSTAINING HEALTHY SCHOOLS FOR ALL STUDENTS**

EVIDENCE-BASED/-INFORMED PRACTICES, ACTIONS, PROGRAMS

*Evidence of reducing chronic absenteeism.

Getting students to "show up" is the most significant action to take for school improvement.

WSCC Components

Health Education

1. Provide Youth Training and Peer-led Health Education.
2. Use the Health Education Curriculum Analysis Tool (HECAT) to enhance, develop or select a new health curriculum.
3. Purchase and Use *Ripple Effects*, an evidence-based health education software program for students.

Physical Education and Activity

1. Plan & Implement a Comprehensive School Physical Activity Program (CSPAP).
2. Sustain a CSPSP Through Policy.
3. Use the Physical Education Curriculum Analysis Tool (PECAT) to enhance, develop or select a high quality, well-designed PE curriculum that increases moderate to vigorous physical activity (MVPA) to at least 50% of class time.
4. Conduct the *Presidential Youth Fitness Program* (PYFP) using Fitnessgram.
5. Implement Pedestrian and Bicycle Safety and Promotion Initiatives.
6. Develop a School Travel Plan (for Walking and Biking).
7. Develop a Safe Routes to School (SRTS) District Policy.

Nutrition Services

1. *Integrate Breakfast After the Bell into the School Schedule.
2. Adopt Practices and Policies for Healthy Food Choices Beyond the Cafeteria.
3. Plan and Maintain or Expand an Edible School Garden.
4. Implement *Let's Move Salad Bars to Schools*.
5. Promote NJ Locally Grown Foods.
6. Conduct *Cooking Matters for Teens*, curriculum for 6th-12th grade. (Schools are required to have ≥50% of student population eligible for free or reduced lunch.)

Health Services

1. *Develop (Yr 1) a Protocol for the Health Management of Students with a Chronic Health Condition.
2. *Pilot (Yr 2) a Protocol for the Health Management of Students with a Chronic Health Condition.
3. Conduct CPR Certification and Training.

Psychological and Counseling Services

1. *Creating Opportunities for Personal Empowerment (COPE).*
2. Implement the *Teen Outreach Program (TOP)*.
3. *Initiate Change and Build Linkages Between Mental Health Promotion & Chronic Disease Prevention.

School Culture and Climate

1. Create an Inclusive Environment Where All Can Thrive.
2. *Conduct a School Climate and Culture Needs Assessment.

Physical Environment

1. Earn an *Asthma Friendly Schools Award*.
2. Plan and Maintain a Meditation Garden (see Edible School Garden).
3. Access Healthy Drinking Water.

Staff Wellness

1. Plan and Develop (Yr 1) a Comprehensive Staff Wellness Program.
2. Implement and Evaluate (Yr 2) a Comprehensive Staff Wellness Program.

Family Engagement & Community Involvement

1. Conduct:
 - a. *Parents as Champions (PAC) for Healthy Schools*, a 15-hour training curriculum.
 - b. *Teen Speak* – a curriculum to strengthen parent-youth communication.
2. Sustain an Edible School Garden with Family and Community Engagement.
3. Develop and Implement a Community Service Learning Opportunity for Students.
4. Plan and Implement a CSPAP with Staff, Family and Community Engagement.