

School District Updates Wellness Policy

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Rice Lake Area School District will see some changes this school year relating to food and beverages sold or provided to students on school campus during school hours. **Why these changes?** The USDA issued requirements for all school districts that participate in federally-subsidized school meal programs to update their School Wellness Policies with the goal of promoting student wellness, preventing childhood obesity and ensuring school meals meet minimal nutritional standards. Likely, few would disagree with these goals. Research supports a positive link between nutrition, physical activity and school performance; healthier students are better learners. School are in a position to help students develop healthy eating and physical activity habits in the environment where most of their day is spent.

School Wellness Policies are required to include: (1) Specific goals for nutrition promotion, physical activity, and school-based activities that promote student wellness; (2) Standards and nutrition guidelines for all foods and beverages sold to students on school campus during the school day; (3) Standards for all foods and beverages provided, but not sold, to students during the school day (class parties, rewards, etc); (4) Guidelines for food marketing; (5) A plan for school (student/staff) and community involvement in Wellness Policy implementation and revision; (6) A plan for measuring and reporting the implementation of the policy and progress toward goals to the public; (7) Identification of a specific school official responsible for the oversight of the Wellness Policy. The RLASD draft policy is located on the district website under the Parents tab.

What are the biggest changes? (1) Foods/beverages (other than water) provided to students for celebrations, class parties/activities must be a whole fruit or vegetable or be commercially prepared and have a manufacturer's label with a full list of ingredients; (2) Homemade foods are no longer allowed due to food safety and allergen concerns. Yes, sweet treats such as cupcakes or cookies can still be brought to school, but must meet the manufacturer's food label requirement; (3) Students may drink water throughout the school day, in areas allowed, from clear or colored water bottles with secure caps; (4) When in the presence of students, staff will model healthy behaviors by only consuming foods and beverages that meet Wellness Policy Guidelines (water, low-fat milk or 100% juice). Staff may drink other beverages (coffee, tea, soda, etc.) in the presence of students only if drinking from a container that prevents promotion of beverages not permitted to students during the school day. Staff may consume foods or beverages of their choice when students are not present; (5) Physical activity will be promoted. Physical activity (recess, phy ed.) will not be withheld or delayed for make-up or completion of homework. In addition, if a student is not able, for various reasons, to participate in physical activity with their peers, an alternate physical activity will be provided for the student during the same school day. The RLASD will annually report progress toward policy goals, ensuring the school district is doing its part to support student health and well-being.