

## **St Malachy School Wellness Policy 2023-2024**

St. Malachy School is committed to providing a learning environment that supports and promotes wellness, good nutrition, and an active lifestyle and recognizes the positive relationship between good nutrition, physical activity and the capacity of students to develop and learn. This policy is aligned with Illinois State school guidelines and adheres to the Diocese of Peoria's school wellness policies/guidelines.

### **Rationale**

Childhood obesity is one of our nation's leading health threats. Today, nearly 1 in 3 youth are already overweight or obese. According to the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), 1 in 3 individuals born in the year 2000 will develop type 2 diabetes. If we don't reverse this epidemic, the current generation of young could live sicker and die younger than their parents.

Therefore, it is important that we, at St. Malachy set a good example for our student body and allow all of them to have the appropriate opportunities to develop into health young adults. We feel the following statistics and statements help define the need for our policy:

- Students need access to healthful foods and opportunities to be physically active in order to grow, learn, and thrive;
- Good health fosters student attendance and education;
- Obesity rates have doubled in children and tripled in adolescents over the last two decades, and physical inactivity and excessive calorie intake are the predominant causes of obesity;
- Heart disease, cancer, stroke, and diabetes are responsible for two-thirds of deaths in the United States, and major risk factors for those diseases, including unhealthy eating habits, physical inactivity, and obesity, often are established in childhood and teen-age years;
- Only 2% of children (2 to 19 years) eat a healthy diet consistent with the five main recommendations from the Food Guide Pyramid;
- Community and family participation is essential to the development and implementation of successful school wellness policies;

### **Goals**

St. Malachy School is committed to providing a school environment that promote and protect student's health, well-being, and ability to learn by supporting healthy eating and physical activity. Therefore, it is the policy of St. Malachy School that:

- The school will engage students, parents, teachers, food service professionals, health professionals, and other interested community members in developing, implementing,

monitoring, and reviewing nutrition and physical activity policies.

- All students in grades Pre-K-8 will have opportunities, support, and encouragement to be physically active on a regular basis.
- Qualified food service professionals will provide students with access to a variety of affordable, nutritious, and appealing foods that meet the current nutrition requirements and regulations of the current Dietary Guidelines for Americans and the National School Lunch Program; will accommodate the religious, ethnic, and cultural diversity of the student body in meal planning; and will provide clean, safe, and pleasant settings and adequate time for students to eat.
- The school will provide nutrition education and physical education to foster lifelong habits of healthy eating and physical activity, and will establish linkages between health education and school meal programs, and with related community services.

### **Steps to achieve these goals:**

#### **I. School Wellness Committee**

The school will create, strengthen, or work within the existing School Wellness Committee to develop, implement, monitor, review, and, as necessary, revise school nutrition and physical activity policies. The School Wellness Committee consists of a group of individuals representing the school and community, and should include parents, students, and representatives of the school food authority, school administrator, and teachers.

#### **II. Nutritional Quality of Foods and Beverages Sold and Served on School Grounds**

##### **St. Malachy School Meals**

Meals served through the National School Lunch Program will:

- be appealing and attractive to students;
- be served in clean and pleasant settings;
- meet, at a minimum, nutrition requirements established by local, state, and federal statutes and regulations;
- offer a variety of fruits and vegetables;
- serve only low-fat (1%) and fat-free milk<sup>3</sup> and nutritionally-equivalent non-dairy alternatives (to be defined by USDA); and
- ensure that half of the served grains are whole grain.

St. Malachy School will attempt to engage students and parents, through taste-tests of new entrees and/or surveys, in selecting foods sold through the school meal programs in order to identify new, healthful, and appealing food choices. In addition, St. Malachy School will periodically share information about the nutritional content of meals with parents and students. Such information would be made available in the health education curriculum, on menus, a website, on cafeteria menu boards, placards, or other point-of-purchase materials.

## **Free and Reduced-priced Meals**

St. Malachy School will make every effort to eliminate any social stigma attached to, and prevent the overt identification of, students who are eligible for free and reduced-price school meals. Withholding food for non-payment is not allowed; these students will receive an alternate menu.

## **Meal Times and Scheduling**

St. Malachy School:

- will provide students with at least 20 minutes for lunch
- should schedule meal periods at appropriate times, *e.g.*, lunch should be scheduled between 11 a.m. and 1 p.m.
- will allow staff to eat during the regularly scheduled meal serving time periods
- will not allow students be in the food serving areas unless they are assigned to be a student worker with defined duties as assigned by the Cafeteria Manager. (Students are not assigned work duties in lieu of eating lunch)
- will not schedule tutoring, club, or organizational meetings or activities during mealtimes, unless students may eat during such activities;
- will provide students access to hand washing or hand sanitizing before they eat meals or snacks
- will take reasonable steps to accommodate the tooth-brushing regimens of students with special oral health needs (*e.g.*, orthodontia or high tooth decay risk)

## **Qualifications of School Food Service Staff**

Qualified food service professionals will administer the St. Malachy School meal programs. As part of the school's responsibility to operate a food service program, we will provide continuing professional development for all nutrition professionals in the school.

## **Sharing Foods/Beverages**

St. Malachy School will discourage students from sharing their foods or beverages with one another during meal or snack times, given concerns about allergies and other restrictions on some children's diets.

## **Allergies**

Parents/guardians are expected to inform the School Nurse or the Principal in writing of any food allergies/limitations an individual student may have on an annual basis.

This information is expected to be written on an

Emergency Card completed by each parent/guardian at the time of enrollment each school year.

If a student has a specific food limitation that limits the student from participating in the regular school lunch menu, the parent/ guardian is to meet with the Principal

and Cafeteria Manager to determine how the school and family can collaboratively work together to meet the students food needs during the school day. If a student has a specific food allergy that is severe the parent/guardian is to provide the Principal with a written medical statement signed by the attending physician.

### **Fundraising Activities**

To support children's health and school nutrition-education efforts, St. Malachy School fundraising activities will allow for no more than nine (9) exempted fundraising days per year. In addition, the school does not sell food that does not meet the nutrition requirements and regulations of the current Dietary Guidelines for Americans and the National School Lunch Program, thirty (30) before or after school.

### **Snacks**

Snacks served during the school day or in after-school care or enrichment programs will make a positive contribution to children's diets and health. Schools will assess if and when to offer snacks based on timing of school meals, children's nutritional needs, children's ages, and other considerations. St. Malachy School will disseminate a list of healthful snack items to teachers, after-school program personnel, and parents.

### **Rewards**

St. Malachy School will attempt to not use foods or beverages, especially those that do not meet the nutrition standards for foods and beverages as rewards for academic performance or good behavior, and will not withhold food or beverages (including food served through school meals) as a punishment.

### **Celebrations**

St. Malachy School will attempt to limit celebrations that involve food during the school day to no more than one party per class per month. Each party should limit the amount of food or beverage that does not meet nutrition standards for foods and beverages sold individually. St. Malachy School will disseminate a list of healthy party ideas to parents and teachers.

## **III. Nutrition and Physical Activity Promotion**

### **Nutrition Education and Promotion**

St. Malachy School goals will be to teach, encourage, and support healthy eating to students. The school will provide nutrition education and engage in nutrition promotion that:

- is offered at each grade level as part of a sequential, comprehensive, standards-based program designed to provide students with the knowledge and skills necessary to promote

- and protect their health;
- is part of not only health education classes, but also classroom instruction in subjects such as math, science, language arts, social sciences, and enrichment subjects;
- includes enjoyable, developmentally-appropriate, culturally-relevant, participatory activities, such as contests, promotions, taste testing, farm visits, and school gardens;
- promotes fruits, vegetables, whole grain products, low-fat and fat-free dairy products, healthy food preparation methods, and health-enhancing nutrition practices;
- emphasizes caloric balance between food intake and energy expenditure (physical activity/exercise);
- links with school meal programs, other school foods, and nutrition-related community services;
- teaches media literacy with an emphasis on food marketing; and
- Includes training for teachers and other staff.

### **Integrating Physical Activity into the Classroom Setting**

For students to receive the nationally-recommended amount of daily physical activity and for students to fully embrace regular physical activity as a personal behavior, students need opportunities for physical activity beyond physical education class. Toward that end:

- classroom health education will complement physical education by reinforcing the knowledge and self-management skills needed to maintain a physically-active lifestyle and to reduce time spent on sedentary activities, such as watching television;
- opportunities for physical activity will be incorporated into other subject lessons; and
- classroom teachers will provide short physical activity breaks between lessons or classes, as appropriate.

### **Communications with Parents**

St. Malachy School will support parents' efforts to provide a healthy diet and daily physical activity for their children. The school will encourage parents to pack healthy lunches and snacks and to refrain from including beverages and foods that do not meet the above nutrition standards for individual foods and beverages. The school will attempt to provide parents a list of foods that meet the school's snack standards and ideas for healthy celebrations/parties, rewards, and fundraising activities. In addition, the school will provide opportunities for parents to share their healthy food practices with others in the school community.

St. Malachy School will provide information about physical education and other school-based physical activity opportunities before, during, and after the school day; and support parents' efforts to provide their children with opportunities to be physically active outside of school. Such supports will include sharing information about physical activity and physical education through a website, newsletter, or other take-home materials, special events, or physical education homework.

## **IV. Physical Activity Opportunities and Physical Education**

### **Physical Education**

Students in Pre-school will receive Physical Education class for 30 minutes twice a week. Kindergarten through Fifth grades will receive Physical Education class for 30 minutes three times a week. Sixth through Eighth grades will receive 40 minutes of Physical Education twice a week. Student involvement in other activities involving physical activity (e.g., extra-curricular sports) will not be substituted for meeting the physical education requirement. Students will spend at least 75 percent of physical education class time participating in moderate to vigorous physical activity.

St. Malachy School will discourage extended periods (*i.e.*, periods of two or more hours) of inactivity. When activities, such as mandatory school-wide testing, make it necessary for students to remain indoors for long periods of time, St. Malachy School should give students periodic breaks during which they are encouraged to stand and be moderately active. In addition, supervised recess will be provided for all students daily.

**Exemptions:** Parents/guardians are expected to inform the School Secretary or the Principal in writing of any food limitations or physical activity/exercise limitations that an individual student may have on an annual basis. If a student has a specific medical condition that limits a student's opportunity to participate in required physical activities the parent/guardian is to provide the School Secretary or the Principal with a written medical statement signed by the attending physician.

### **Physical Activity Opportunities Before & After School**

St. Malachy School will offer extracurricular physical activity programs, such as physical activity clubs or IESA sports programs. The school will offer a range of activities that meet the needs, interests, and abilities of all students.

After-care programs will provide and encourage – verbally and through the provision of space, equipment, and activities – daily periods of moderate to vigorous physical activity for all participants.

### **Physical Activity and Punishment**

Teachers and other school and community personnel will not use physical activity (e.g., running laps, pushups) or withhold opportunities for physical activity (e.g., recess, physical education) as punishment.

## **V. Monitoring and Policy Review**

### **Monitoring**

School food service staff at St. Malachy School will ensure compliance with nutrition policies within school food service areas and will report on this matter to the Principal.

The Wellness Committee will develop annual summaries on school-wide compliance with the school's established nutrition and physical activity wellness policies, based on input from stakeholders within the school and outside of the school.

### **Policy Review**

Assessments will be repeated every three years to help review policy compliance, assess progress, and determine areas in need of improvement. As part of that review, the St. Malachy Wellness Committee will review our nutrition and physical activity policies; provision of an environment that supports healthy eating and physical activity; and nutrition and physical education policies and program elements. St. Malachy School, will, as necessary, revise the wellness policies and develop work plans to facilitate their implementation.