

Book	Policy Manual
Section	8000 Operations
Title	WELLNESS
Code	po8510
Status	Active
Legal	42 U.S.C. 1751 et seq. 42 U.S.C. 1771 et seq. F.S. 595.405 F.S. 1001.41 F.S. 1001.42 F.S. 1001.43 F.S. 1003.453 F.S. 1003.455 F.A.C. 5P-2.002 7 C.F.R. 210.11
Adopted	July 31, 2025

8510 - **WELLNESS**

As required by law, the Governing Board establishes the following wellness policy for the School as a part of a comprehensive wellness initiative.

The Board recognizes that good nutrition and regular physical activity affect the health and well-being of the School's students. Furthermore, research supports that there is a positive correlation between a student's health and well-being and his/her ability to learn. Schools can play an important role in the developmental process by which students establish their health and nutrition habits by providing nutritious meals and snacks through the schools' meal programs by supporting the development of good eating habits in a healthy school meal environment and by promoting increased physical activity in and out of school.

However, school alone cannot manage students healthy behaviors and habits with regard to eating and exercise. School personnel, parents, and the public at large must be involved in a community-wide effort to promote, support, and model healthy behaviors and habits with respect to eating and exercise.

The Board sets the following goals to enable students to establish lifelong skills and attitudes that promote good health, healthy nutrition, and physical activity habits.

A. Regarding nutrition education:

1. Nutrition education shall be included in the health curriculum so that instruction is sequential and standards-based and provides students with the knowledge, attitudes, and skills necessary to lead healthy lives.
2. Nutrition education standards and benchmarks shall be age-appropriate and culturally relevant.
3. Nutrition education posters, such as the Food Pyramid Guide, will be displayed in the cafeteria.
4. Nutrition education standards and benchmarks promote the benefits of a balanced diet that includes fruits, vegetables, whole grain products, and low-fat and fat-free dairy products.

B. With regard to physical activity:

1. Physical Education

- a. A sequential, comprehensive physical education program shall be provided for students in K-12 in accordance with the physical education academic content standards and benchmarks adopted by the State.
- b. Teachers properly certificated/licensed in the subject area of physical education shall provide all instruction in physical education.

2. Physical Activity

- a. Physical activity should not be employed as a form of discipline or punishment.
- b. All students in grades K- 5 may be provided with a daily recess period at least twenty (20) minutes in duration. Recess shall not be used as a reward or punishment.

C. With regard to other school-based activities:

Free drinking water shall be available to students during designated meal times and may be available throughout the school day.

1. The schools shall schedule mealtimes so there is minimum disruption by bus schedules, recess, and other special programs or events.
2. Schools may limit the number of celebrations involving serving food during the school day to no more than one (1) party per grade per month.
3. An organized wellness program shall be available to all staff.
4. Schools in our system utilize electronic identification and payment systems, therefore, eliminating any stigma or identification of students eligible to receive free and/or reduced meals.

D. With regard to nutrition promotion, the School shall make sure any foods and beverages marketed or promoted to students on the school campus, during the school day, meets or exceeds the USDA Smart Snacks in School nutrition standards.

Additionally, the School shall:

1. encourage students to increase their consumption of healthful foods during the school day;
2. create an environment that reinforces the development of healthy eating habits, including offering the following healthy foods that comply with the USDA Dietary Guidelines for Americans and the USDA Smart Snacks in School nutrition standards:
 - a. a variety of fresh produce to include those prepared without added fats, sugars, refined sugars, and sodium;
 - b. a variety of vegetables daily to include specific subgroups as defined by dark green, red/orange, legumes, and starchy;
 - c. whole grain products – half of all grains need to be whole grain-rich upon initial implementation and all grains must be whole grain-rich within two (2) years of implementation;
 - d. fluid milk that is fat-free (unflavored and flavored) and low-fat (unflavored);
 - e. meals designed to meet specific calorie ranges for age/grade groups;
 - f. eliminate trans-fat from school meals;
 - g. require students to select a fruit or vegetable as part of a complete reimbursable meal;

- h. provide opportunities for students to develop the knowledge and skills for consuming healthful foods.
- E. All foods and beverages sold to students as fund-raisers outside of the school meals program during the regular and extended school day for consumption on the school campus shall meet the USDA Competitive Food regulations, the Alliance for A Healthier Generation's Competitive Foods and Beverages Guidelines, and the USDA Smart Snacks in School nutrition standards.
- F. Rewarding children in the classroom should not involve candy and other foods that can undermine children's diets and health and reinforce unhealthy eating habits. A wide variety of alternative rewards can be used to provide positive reinforcement for children's behavior and academic performance.

Furthermore, with the objectives of enhancing student health and well-being, and reducing childhood obesity, the following guidelines are established:

- A. In accordance with Policy 8500, entitled *Food Service*, the food service program shall comply with Federal and State regulations pertaining to the selection, preparation, consumption, and disposal of food and beverages as well as to the fiscal management of the program.
- B. The sale of foods of minimal nutritional value in the food service area during the lunch period is **prohibited**.
- C. As set forth in Policy 8531, entitled *Free and Reduced Price Meals*, the guidelines for reimbursable school meals are not less restrictive than the guidelines issued by the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA).
- D. All foods and beverages sold to students on the school campus during the school day outside of reimbursable school meals are considered "competitive foods" and must comply with the nutrition standards for competitive food as defined and required in 7 C.F.R. 210.11. Competitive foods include items sold a la carte in the cafeteria, from vending machines, school stores, snack bars, and for in-school fundraisers. For the purposes of competitive food standards implementation, "school campus" refers to all areas of the property under the jurisdiction of the school that are accessible to students during the school day. "School day" refers to the period from midnight before to thirty (30) minutes after the end of the official school day.
- E. Unless sold by the Food Service Program, competitive food items sold to students during the school day shall not consist of ready-to-eat combination foods of meat or meat alternate and grain products as defined in 7 C.F.R. 210.11 and incorporated in F.A.C. 5P-2.002.
- F. Competitive food and beverage standards may be exempted for the purpose of conducting in-frequent school-sponsored fundraisers up to five (5) days per school year in elementary schools, ten (10) days per school year in middle and combination schools, and fifteen (15) days per school year in high schools. Each school is responsible for maintaining records documenting the occurrence of any exempted school-sponsored fundraisers to demonstrate compliance with this policy.
- G. No school-sponsored fundraisers, which include the sale of food items, will be permitted to occur until thirty (30) minutes after the conclusion of the last designated meal service period.
- H. All foods offered on the school campus during the school day shall comply with the current USDA Dietary Guidelines for Americans, including competitive foods that are available to students a la carte in the dining area, as classroom snacks, or from vending machines, for classroom parties, or at holiday celebrations.
- I. The food service program will provide all students affordable access to the varied and nutritious foods they need to be healthy and to learn well regardless of unpaid meal balances.
- J. All food items and beverages available for sale to students for consumption on campus between midnight and thirty (30) minutes after the close of the regular school day shall comply with the current USDA Dietary Guidelines for Americans, including, but not limited to, competitive foods that are available to students a la carte in the dining area, as well as food items and beverages from vending machines, from school stores, or as fund-raisers by student clubs and organizations, parent groups, or boosters clubs.
- K. All foods available to students in the dining area during school food service hours shall comply with the current USDA Dietary Guidelines for Americans, including competitive foods available to student a la carte or from vending machines.
- L. The school food service program may involve students, parents, staff, school officials in the selection of competitive food items to be sold in the schools.
- M. All food service personnel shall receive pre-service training in food service operations.

The Board designates the Director of Operations as the individual charged with operational responsibility for measuring and evaluating the School's implementation and progress under this policy. The Director of Education shall develop administrative procedures necessary to implement this policy.

The Director of Education shall appoint the School wellness committee that meets periodically and includes parents, students, representatives of the school food authority, educational staff (including health and physical education teachers), mental health and social services staff, school health professionals, members of the public, and school administrators to oversee the development, implementation, evaluation, and periodic update, if necessary, of the wellness policy. School-level health advisory teams may assist in the planning and implementation of these Wellness initiatives.

The Director of Education may report to the Board on the work of the wellness committee, including their assessment of the environment in the School, their evaluation of wellness policy implementation School-wide, and the areas for improvement, if any, that the committee identified. The committee shall also report on the status of compliance by individual schools and progress made in attaining goals established in the policy.

The Director of Education shall also be responsible for informing the public, including parents, students, and community members, on the content and implementation of this policy. In order to inform the public, the Director of Education shall have the wellness policy available for review and post the wellness policy on the School's website, including the assessment of the implementation of the policy prepared by the School.

The School shall assess this policy at least once every three (3) years on the extent to which schools in the School are in compliance with School policy, the extent to which the School policy compares to model wellness policies, and the progress made in attaining the goals of this policy. The assessment shall be made available to the public

- A. in the parent and staff handbooks.
- B. in the School Annual Report to the public.
- C. on the School's website.
- D. on each individual school's website.

Effective 8/1/25

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VCS Wellness Policy Implementation Procedures

Wellness Policy Implementation Procedures
(Aligned with Board Policy 8510)

I. Philosophy

The Villages Charter School (VCS) believes that healthy students learn better and are more likely to succeed academically. We are committed to a holistic wellness approach that includes nutrition, physical fitness, and health education.

To reflect our charter status, all previous references to “the district” have been updated to “The Villages Charter School” or “VCS.”

II. Purpose

The purpose of this document is to outline the procedures and practices used by VCS to implement and support the requirements of the School Wellness Policy (Board Policy 8510).

These procedures reinforce the school’s commitment to promoting student health, wellness, nutrition education, and physical activity while remaining compliant with federal and state regulations.

III. Wellness Steering Committee

The Wellness Steering Committee is responsible for developing, implementing, and evaluating wellness initiatives across the school.

Committee Membership (Updated Roster):

- **Administration: Dr. Randy McDaniel (Director of Education) and Mr. Rob Grant (VHS Principal)**
- **Board Member: Devon Wiechens**
- **Parent Representative: Jennifer Chandler**
- **Food & Nutrition Services: Jason Poplaski, Christa Bell, and Joseph Hornstein**
- **Health & Operations: Janey Powell (Nurse) and Tara Milow (Operations)**
- **Physical Education: Heather Tomassian, August Keller, and Kenna Newcomb**
- **Students: Alexa Taylor & Olivia Wetzel**

Committee Responsibilities:

- **Review wellness initiatives**
- **Evaluate policy implementation**
- **Recommend improvements**
- **Prepare required wellness assessments**

Meeting Frequency:

- **Committee conducts a review on a three-year cycle**
- **Building Administrators are responsible for ongoing compliance**
- **Committee reports effectiveness to the School Board**

IV. Nutrition Education & Guidelines

Nutrition Education:

- **Health curriculum instruction and integration of nutrition concepts into classroom learning**
- **Educational materials promoting healthy food choices**
- **Reinforcement of healthy eating habits across programs and school initiatives**

Healthy Celebrations & Class Parties:

- **Guidance and resources provided for healthy celebration ideas**
- **Celebrations involving food must not compete with meal service**
- **Food for class parties must be scheduled at least one hour before or after breakfast/lunch**
- **Frequency of food-based celebrations should be limited**

Food Rewards:

- **Discouraged as a primary classroom incentive**
- **Alternatives include: extra activity time, positive recognition, classroom privileges, non-food incentives**

Competitive Foods & Fundraisers:

- **All foods sold outside reimbursable meals during the school day must meet USDA Smart Snacks standards**
- **Culinary program sales during the school day are included**
- **Approved exempt fundraisers are allowed on a limited number of days per year, coordinated by the school administration**

V. Physical Education & Physical Activity

Elementary (K-5):

- **150 minutes per week of physical education taught by certified PE teachers and delivered in 30-minute blocks 5 days a week. Elementary daily recess of 30 minutes.**

Middle School (Grades 6-8):

- **Equivalent of one class period per day for one semester per year**

Behavior Management:

- **Physical activity (e.g., walking laps) shall not be used as punishment**
- **Recess shall not be withheld as a disciplinary measure**

General:

- **Physical education provided by certified instructors, aligned with state academic standards**
 - **Opportunities for recess or physical activity provided when appropriate**
 - **Physical activity will not be used as a disciplinary tool**
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VI. Health Education

Curriculum:

- **VCS utilizes a variety of campus-wide, state-aligned resources to support mental and emotional health instruction. These include Navigate360 Compass, Resiliency Florida, and other approved resiliency-based programs. Together, these platforms provide a comprehensive framework for promoting student well-being and supporting social-emotional development across all grade levels.**

Wellness:

- **VHS & VCMS hold a Wellness Week, featuring mental health peer mentors and resiliency activities**

- In addition to classroom instruction, VCS implements school-wide initiatives designed to promote student wellness and healthy decision-making. These include annual events such as Wellness Week, Peer Mentor, and Red Ribbon Week, which provide students with opportunities to engage in activities focused on mental health awareness, substance abuse prevention, and overall well-being. VCS is committed to fostering a supportive environment that promotes the social, emotional, and physical health of all students.
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VII. Healthy School Environment

Drinking Water:

- Free water is available during meal periods and throughout the school day when possible

Meal Scheduling:

- Meal periods are scheduled to minimize conflicts with academic programming and student activities
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VIII. Classroom Celebrations & Events

- Guidance provided for healthy celebration ideas
 - Food-based celebrations limited in frequency
 - Celebrations scheduled to avoid conflicts with meal programs
 - Food items should support healthy choices whenever possible
 - Parents may provide food for occasional celebrations
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IX. Food Fundraisers

- **All food sold during the school day must meet USDA Smart Snacks standards**
 - **Limited exempt fundraiser days permitted and monitored by administrators**
 - **Ensures compliance with state requirements**
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X. Public Access to the Wellness Policy

- **School Wellness Policy is publicly accessible via:**
 - **School website (Food Service Website)**
 - **Annual school report**
 - **Parent and staff handbooks**
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XI. Wellness Policy Assessment

- **Conducted at least once every three years**
- **Assessment includes:**
 - **Compliance with the policy**
 - **Progress toward wellness goals**
- **Results will be shared with the school community**