



# ST. MARY'S SPRINGS

## Academy

### **St. Mary's Springs Academy Triennial Wellness Policy Assessment Report School Year 2025-2026**

#### **Introduction**

St. Mary's Springs Academy has completed its triennial assessment of the Local School Wellness Policy (LSWP) using the WellSAT tools, as required by the USDA's Final Rule under the Healthy, Hunger-Free Kids Act of 2010. This assessment evaluates the strength of our written policy against best practices and measures the alignment of our actual practices with that policy. The results highlight areas of success, as well as opportunities to enhance the promotion of student health, nutrition, and physical activity. This report summarizes our findings across key sections and outlines steps for ongoing improvement.

#### **Strong Policies and Aligned Practices**

In several areas, St. Mary's Springs Academy demonstrates strong policy language that is fully supported by consistent implementation, ensuring compliance and positive outcomes for student wellness. These include:

- Specific goals for nutrition education to promote student wellness (FR1).
- Meeting federal standards for National School Lunch Program (and School Breakfast Program, if applicable) meals in terms of patterns, nutrient levels, and calorie requirements (FR2).
- Compliance of all competitive foods and beverages sold during the school day with USDA Smart Snacks standards (FR6).
- Compliance of a la carte foods and beverages in the cafeteria with Smart Snacks (FR7).
- Compliance of foods and beverages in vending machines with Smart Snacks (FR8).
- Compliance of marketed foods and beverages on campus with Smart Snacks (FR12).
- Knowledge of where to access USDA Smart Snacks standards (NES8).
- Certification of physical education teachers by state-licensed/endorsed professionals (PEPA7).
- An active district-level wellness committee (IC1).

These aligned areas reflect our commitment to federal requirements and best practices, contributing to a supportive environment for healthy eating and activity. We plan to maintain these strengths through annual reviews and staff training.

## Create Practice Implementation Plan

There are instances where our policy includes strong or moderate language, but implementation is limited or absent. This indicates a need for targeted action plans to bridge the gap. Key items include:

- Fundraisers selling foods or beverages during the school day not meeting Smart Snacks (FR10, Policy 2/Practice 0).
- Regulation of foods and beverages at class parties and celebrations in elementary schools (FR11, Policy 1/Practice 0).
- Marketing strategies to promote healthy food and beverage choices (NES5, Policy 1/Practice 0).
- Collaboration between school nutrition staff and teachers to reinforce nutrition lessons (NE6, Policy 1/Practice 0).
- Strategies to support employee wellness (EW1, Policy 2/Practice 1).

To address these, we will develop implementation plans, such as training sessions for staff to help ensure that practice approximates the school's policy.

## Update Policies

In these areas, our practices exceed the language in the written policy, showing effective on-the-ground efforts that should be formalized in policy updates for sustainability and compliance. This includes:

- Protecting privacy of students qualifying for free/reduced-price meals (FR3, Policy 0/Practice 2).
- Availability of free drinking water during meals (FR4, Policy 0/Practice 2).
- Meeting USDA Professional Standards for school nutrition staff training (FR5, Policy 0/Practice 2).
- Making the wellness policy available to the public (FR15, Policy 0/Practice 2).
- Addressing unpaid meal balances without stigmatizing students (NES2, Policy 0/Practice 2).
- Providing information to families about free/reduced-price meal eligibility (NES3, Policy 0/Practice 2).
- Ensuring adequate time for meals (at least 10 minutes for breakfast, 20 for lunch) (NES6, Policy 0/Practice 2).
- Prioritizing locally produced foods for meals (NES7, Policy 0/Practice 1).
- Foods/beverages served after school meeting federal standards (NES11, Policy 0/Practice 1).
- Access to free drinking water throughout the day (NES14, Policy 0/Practice 2).
- Sequential nutrition education for elementary students (NE2, Policy 1/Practice 2).
- Sequential nutrition education for middle school students (NE3, Policy 1/Practice 2).
- Integration of nutrition education into other subjects (NE5, Policy 1/Practice 2).
- Addressing agriculture and the food system in nutrition education (NE7, Policy 0/Practice 1).
- Consistent physical education curriculum across grades (PEPA1, Policy 1/Practice 2).
- Alignment of physical education curriculum with national/state standards (PEPA2, Policy 0/Practice 2).
- Promotion of physically active lifestyles in physical education (PEPA3, Policy 0/Practice 2).
- Low exemptions from physical education (PEPA9, Policy 0/Practice NA – noting effective practice where applicable).
- Low substitutions for physical education (PEPA10, Policy 0/Practice 2).
- Opportunities for families/community to engage in physical activity at school (PEPA11, Policy 0/Practice 1).

- Opportunities for students to engage in physical activity before/after school (PEPA12, Policy 0/Practice 1).
- Daily recess in elementary schools (PEPA13, Policy 0/Practice 2).
- Classroom physical activity breaks (PEPA14, Policy 0/Practice 2).
- Joint-use or shared-use agreements (PEPA15, Policy 0/Practice 2).
- Encouraging physical activity as a reward (PEPA17, Policy 0/Practice 1).
- Avoiding physical activity as punishment (PEPA18, Policy 0/Practice 2).

We will consider revising the policy to incorporate stronger language reflecting these practices, with updates proposed to the wellness committee.

## **Opportunities for Growth**

Several topics are addressed in a limited way or not at all in both policy and practice, representing key areas for development to advance overall wellness goals. These include:

- Representation on the district-level wellness committee (FR13, Policy 1/Practice 1).
- Official responsible for wellness policy implementation at the building level (FR14, Policy 0/Practice 1).
- Triennial evaluation of wellness policy implementation (FR16, Policy 1/Practice 1).
- Content of the triennial assessment report to the public (FR17, Policy 0/Practice 0).
- Wellness policy revision based on prior assessment (FR18, Policy 1/Practice NA).
- Strategies to maximize participation in breakfast/lunch programs (NES4, Policy 1/Practice 1).
- Familiarity with state laws on fundraiser exemptions (NES9, Policy 1/Practice 1).
- Sale of caffeine-containing foods/beverages at high school (NES10, Policy 0/Practice 0).
- Foods/beverages sold after school meeting federal standards (NES12, Policy 0/Practice 0).
- Use of food as a reward by teachers/staff (NES13, Policy 0/Practice 0).
- Skills-based methods in nutrition education (NE1, Policy 1/Practice 1).
- Sequential nutrition education for high school students (NE4, Policy 1/Practice 1).
- Minutes per week of physical education in elementary (PEPA4, Policy 0/Practice 0), middle (PEPA5, Policy 0/Practice 0), and high school (PEPA6, Policy 0/Practice 0).
- Annual professional development for physical education teachers (PEPA8, Policy 0/Practice 1).
- Proportion of students walking/biking to school (PEPA16, Policy 0/Practice 0).
- Withholding physical activity as a classroom management tool (PEPA19, Policy 0/Practice 0).
- Encouraging staff to model healthy behaviors (EW2, Policy 1/Practice 0).

To capitalize on these opportunities, the wellness committee will give these areas consideration when discussing policy revisions and implementation practices.

## **Comparison with Prior Assessments**

This is the first comprehensive triennial assessment conducted under the current WellSAT framework for St. Mary's Springs Academy, as prior evaluations were not documented in this format. As such, direct comparisons are not available. However, anecdotal feedback from the wellness committee suggests improvements in practice alignment since the policy's last review, particularly in nutrition standards compliance. Future assessments will enable quantitative tracking of progress toward our goals.

## **Conclusion**

Overall, St. Mary's Springs Academy is making meaningful strides in wellness, with strong alignment in core federal nutrition areas. By addressing implementation gaps, updating policy language, and pursuing growth opportunities, we aim to continuously improve our efforts toward a healthier school environment. The wellness committee will lead annual progress checks, with the next triennial assessment scheduled for December 2028. We welcome input from families and the community to refine these efforts.