

VISTA CHARTER PUBLIC SCHOOLS

601 North Fairview Street
Santa Ana, CA 92703
T: (714) 881-7407 | F: (714) 988-2747
www.vistacharterpublicschools.org

Collin Felch, Ed.D., Superintendent
Karen Amaya, Assistant Superintendent



Vista Charter Public Schools Wellness Policy

Purpose

Vista Charter Public Schools (herein referred to as the “VCPS”) is committed to the optimal development of every student. VCPS believes that for students to have the opportunity to achieve personal, academic, developmental and social success, we need to create positive, safe and health-promoting learning environments at every level, in every setting, throughout the school year.

Research shows that two components, good nutrition and physical activity before, during and after the school day, are strongly correlated with positive student outcomes. For example, student participation in the U.S. Department of Agriculture’s (USDA) School Breakfast Program is associated with higher grades and standardized test scores, lower absenteeism and better performance on cognitive tasks. Conversely, less-than-adequate consumption of specific foods including fruits, vegetables and dairy products, is associated with lower grades among students. In addition, students who are physically active through active transport to and from school, recess, physical activity breaks, high-quality physical education and extracurricular activities – do better academically. Finally, there is evidence that adequate hydration is associated with better cognitive performance.

This policy outlines VCPS’ approach to ensuring environments and opportunities for all students to practice healthy eating and physical activity behaviors throughout the school day while minimizing commercial distractions.

School Health Council/Wellness Committee

Committee Role and Membership

The designated official for oversight of the Local School Wellness Policy is the Food Services Director for Vista Charter Public Schools. He or she will ensure compliance with the policy throughout all school sites.

The Food Services Director shall encourage parents/guardians, students, food service employees, physical education teachers, school health professionals, Board members, school administrators, and members of the public to participate in the development, implementation, and periodic review and update of the district’s student wellness policy. (42 USC 1758b).

To fulfill this requirement, the Food Services Director designee may appoint a school health council or other school committee whose membership shall include representatives of these groups. He/she also may invite participation of other groups or individuals, such as health educators, curriculum directors, counselors, before- and after-school program staff, health practitioners, and/or others interested in school health issues.

The school health council/committee shall advise the district on health-related issues, activities, policies, and programs. At the discretion of the Superintendent or designee, the duties of the council/committee may also include the planning, implementation, and evaluation of activities to promote health within the school or community. As necessary, the Committee Membership log will be updated to reflect members’ names, titles, email address and role.

The committee will meet a minimum of four times per year.

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Notification

VCPS is committed to being responsive to community input, which begins with awareness of the Policy. VCPS will actively communicate ways in which representatives of School Health Council/Wellness Committee/the Charter School and others can participate in the development, implementation and periodic review and update of this Policy through a variety of means. VCPS will also inform parents of the improvements that have been made to school meals and compliance with school meal standards, availability of child nutrition programs and how to apply, and a description of and compliance with Smart Snacks in Charter School nutrition standards.

VCPS will use electronic mechanisms, such as email or displaying notices on the Charter Schools' websites, as well as non-electronic mechanisms, such as newsletters, presentations to parents, or sending information home to parents, to ensure that all families are actively notified of the content of, implementation of, and updates to this Policy, as well as how to get involved and support the Policy. The Charter School will ensure that communications are culturally and linguistically appropriate to the community and accomplished through means similar to other ways that other local schools are communicating important school information with parents.

The Charter School will actively notify the public about the content of, the implementation of, and any updates to the Policy annually, at a minimum Charter School will also use these mechanisms to inform the community about the availability of the annual and triennial reports.

Goals for Nutrition, Physical Education, Activity and Other Wellness Activities

The Board shall adopt goals for nutrition promotion and education, physical activity, and other school-based activities that promote student wellness. Vista Charter Public Schools' (VCPS) nutrition education and physical education programs shall be based on research, consistent with state curriculum frameworks and content standards, and designed to build the skills and knowledge students need to maintain a healthy lifestyle.

Nutrition Education

The nutrition education program shall include information about the benefits of healthy eating for learning, disease prevention, and oral health. Nutrition education shall be integrated into the core curriculum, as well as before- and after-school programs, summer learning, and school garden programs.

VCPS nutrition education shall:

- **Focus on Behavior & Interactive Learning:** Teach skills that are behavior-focused, interactive, and participatory (e.g., media literacy, meal planning, and hands-on preparation).
- **Connect with the Food Environment:** Link classroom lessons directly to cafeteria offerings, school gardens, and farm-to-school initiatives.
- **Address Food Systems:** Incorporate age-appropriate instruction on agriculture, local food systems, and environmental sustainability.

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Physical Education and Physical Activity

All students shall be provided opportunities to be physically active on a regular basis through physical education (PE), recess, athletics, intramurals, active transport (walk/bike to school), and classroom physical activity breaks.

- **Curriculum & Standards:** PE instruction shall follow a sequential, standards-based curriculum aligned with California Physical Education Model Content Standards and SHAPE America guidelines to promote lifelong physical activity.
- **Instructional Minutes:** VCPS shall provide PE instruction meeting or exceeding California state minimums:
 - **Elementary (Grades 1–6):** A minimum of 200 minutes every 10 school days.
 - **Middle & High School (Grades 7–12):** A minimum of 400 minutes every 10 school days.
- **Staff Qualifications & Training:** PE shall be taught by credentialed teachers or qualified instructors who receive ongoing professional development in physical education strategies and adaptive PE techniques.
- **Exemptions & Athletics:** High school students participating in interscholastic athletics or other district-approved physical activities may apply for a PE exemption in accordance with California Education Code and VCPS policy.
- **Recess & Activity Breaks:** All elementary schools shall provide at least 20 minutes of daily unstructured recess, weather permitting. Teachers are encouraged to incorporate short physical activity breaks into classroom instruction.
- **After-School Programs:** Before- and after-school programs shall integrate opportunities for daily moderate-to-vigorous physical activity.
- **Physical Activity as Reward or Punishment:** Physical activity (e.g., running laps, push-ups) shall not be used as punishment. Additionally, daily recess or physical activity time shall not be withheld as a disciplinary measure.

Measurable Policy Goals

To fulfill federal and state requirements, VCPS establishes the following measurable goals across its elementary, middle, and high school campuses:

- **Goal 1: Nutrition Education & Promotion**
 - *Goal:* During each school year, all VCPS campuses will provide at least one interactive, behavior-focused nutrition education activity per semester integrated into the curriculum or health education program.
- **Goal 2: Physical Activity**
 - *Goal:* All VCPS school campuses will integrate structured physical activity opportunities into the regular school day either during recess or lunch breaks, or during designated time outside of physical education instruction.

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- **Goal 3: Other School-Based Wellness Activities**

- *Goal:* All VCPS school campuses across all grade levels will promote students' mental and emotional well-being by implementing the Way of Council circle curriculum to build empathy, foster healthy communication, and utilize restorative practices for conflict resolution.

Staff Development

Professional development shall be regularly offered to health education and physical education teachers, coaches, activity supervisors, and food services staff to support the execution of this policy.

Nutrition Guidelines for Foods Available at School

For all foods available on each campus during the school day, VCPS shall adopt nutritional guidelines which are consistent with 42 USC 1773 and 1779 and federal regulations and which support the objectives of promoting student health and reducing childhood obesity. (42 USC 1758b)

To maximize VCPS' ability to provide nutritious meals and snacks, all schools in VCPS shall participate in available federal school nutrition programs, including the National School Lunch and School Breakfast Programs and after-school snack programs, to the extent possible. When approved by the California Department of Education, Charter School may sponsor a summer meal program.

Increase participation

To maximize student access and participation in school meal programs, schools shall implement strategies such as breakfast in the classroom, grab-and-go options, and promotional campaigns to raise awareness of available meal services among families.

Seat Time

Schools shall ensure students are provided adequate time to eat after receiving their meal—at least 20 minutes for lunch and 10 minutes for breakfast—in a safe, clean, and comfortable environment.

Drinking Water

All schools shall provide access to free, potable water during mealtimes in the food service area in accordance with Education Code 38086 and 42 USC 1758, and shall encourage students' consumption of water by educating them about the health benefits of water and serving water in an appealing manner.

In addition to mealtimes, free, potable drinking water shall be available and accessible to all students throughout the entire school day at all school sites (e.g., via hydration stations, water fountains, and allowed refillable water bottles in classrooms).

Smart Snacks Guidelines

Smart Snacks standards apply to all foods and beverages sold outside the federally regulated child nutrition programs. To qualify, item criteria must meet:

- **General Standard:** Be a grain product that contains 50% or more whole grains by weight, OR have as the first ingredient a fruit, vegetable, dairy product, or protein food, OR be a combination food containing at least 1/4 cup of fruit and/or vegetable.
- **Nutritional Limits:**

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- **Calories:** $\leq 200 \text{ kcal}$ for snacks; $\leq 350 \text{ kcal}$ for entrée items.
- **Sodium:** $\leq 200 \text{ mg}$ for snacks; $\leq 480 \text{ mg}$ for entrée items.
- **Fat:** Total fat $\leq 35\%$ of calories; Saturated fat $\leq 10\%$ of calories; Zero trans fat (0 g).
- **Sugar:** Total sugar $\leq 35\%$ of weight.

Food and Beverages Sold to students during school day

All foods and beverages sold to students, including those sold outside the school's food services program, shall meet the Smart Snacks in School nutrition standards and should support the health curriculum and promote optimal health. Foods and beverages provided through student stores, vending machines, or other venues shall meet or exceed the Smart Snacks in School nutrition standards as well state and federal nutritional standards.

Beverages containing caffeine will not be sold to high school students.

Food and Beverages Sold to students outside school day

Foods and beverages sold to students outside the official school day (such as during field trips or after-school events) are strongly encouraged to align with USDA Smart Snacks standards to maintain a consistent health message.

Food and Beverages Served to students outside school day

All snacks served to students in after-school programs must meet the USDA Smart Snacks nutrition requirements.

School and Class Parties

Class parties, celebrations, and events involving food are permitted, provided they occur after the last scheduled lunch period so as not to compete with the National School Lunch Program (NSLP).

To support VCPS' health and wellness goals without restricting family participation, the following guidelines apply:

- **Celebrations and Parties:** VCPS will provide a list of healthy party ideas to parents and teachers, including non-food celebration ideas. School staff, parents, guardians, and volunteers are strongly encouraged to select foods and beverages that meet or exceed Smart Snacks nutrition standards or USDA meal pattern guidelines for class celebrations. Staff and families can access healthy party and non-food ideas through the [Alliance for a Healthier Generation Healthy Celebrations Guide](#).
- **Classroom Snacks:** School staff shall remind parents, guardians, and volunteers to support VCPS' nutrition education program by considering nutritional quality when selecting snacks to donate for occasional class parties. VCPS will provide parents with a recommended list of foods and beverages that align with Smart Snacks nutrition standards.
- **Rewards and Incentives:** VCPS strongly encourages teachers and relevant staff to utilize non-food rewards, privileges, or activity-based incentives rather than food. VCPS will provide staff with resources and alternative reward ideas, such as those available on the [Alliance for a Healthier Generation Non-Food Rewards List](#). Foods and beverages shall not be withheld as a punishment for any reason.

Food as Reward

Principals shall encourage school staff to avoid the use of non-nutritious foods as a reward for students' academic performance, accomplishments, or classroom behavior.

Fundraisers

Food and beverage fundraisers held on campus during the school day—defined as midnight before through 30 minutes after the end of the official school day—are permitted only if all items sold meet USDA Smart Snacks in

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School nutrition standards and California Education Code regulations. No non-compliant food or beverage sales are permitted on school grounds during the school day.

In accordance with California state law, allowable food sales must also comply with the following campus-specific rules:

- **Elementary Schools:** Food and beverage sales are strictly limited. Any permitted fundraiser must occur after the end of the last lunch period and meet all Smart Snacks standards.
- **Middle Schools & High Schools:** Organizations may conduct compliant food or beverage fundraisers during the school day, provided the sales do not conflict with the National School Lunch or Breakfast Programs, occur only after the last lunch period, and meet all state and federal competitive food regulations.

Fundraisers held at least 30 minutes after school ends or those selling items for off-campus use (e.g., popcorn catalogs or pre-ordered cookie dough) are exempt from Smart Snack requirements. However, principals will encourage groups to prioritize non-food items (e.g., book fairs, apparel, fun runs) or healthy options. Ideas and guidance are available through the Alliance for a Healthier Generation's *Healthy Fundraising Solutions*.

Marketing

To reinforce VCPS' nutrition education program, the Board prohibits the marketing and advertising of foods and beverages that do not meet USDA Smart Snacks in School standards. This prohibition applies to signage, vending machine fronts, logos, scoreboards, school supplies, advertisements in school publications, coupon or incentive programs, free giveaways, or other promotion methods on school grounds.

Conversely, VCPS shall actively promote healthy foods and beverages throughout the school environment. Marketing and promotional efforts will emphasize nutritious choices through strategies such as:

- **Cafeteria & Campus Signage:** Displaying vibrant posters, posters promoting fresh fruits and vegetables, and educational displays near service lines to encourage healthy selections.
- **Positive Nudging:** Designating healthy food choices with attractive naming, prominent placement, and visual callouts on cafeteria menu boards and ordering platforms.
- **Student-Led & Community Promotion:** Partnering with student groups, nutrition educators, and school communications (e.g., newsletters, morning announcements, school websites) to highlight seasonal produce, local farm-to-school initiatives, and balanced meal options.
- **Incentives & Campaigns:** Utilizing non-food rewards, taste-testing events, and healthy eating campaigns to introduce and normalize new nutritious options among students.

Meal Program Staff Development

All school nutrition program directors, managers, and staff will meet hiring and annual continuing education/training requirements in the USDA Professional Standards for Child Nutrition Professionals. These school nutrition personnel will refer to the USDA's Professional Standards for School nutrition website to search for training that meets their learning needs.

Employee Wellness

School staff members shall be encouraged to model healthy eating and physical activity behaviors. To support this, VCPS encourages each school site to establish localized employee wellness practices. Each school may develop and implement strategies tailored to their staff's needs, which may include:

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- **Healthy Environment and Modeling:** Promoting nutritious food options during staff gatherings and encouraging positive wellness habits in the presence of students.
- **Physical Activity Opportunities:** Supporting access to school-based fitness resources, walking groups, or voluntary physical activity initiatives outside of instructional hours.
- **Wellness Communication and Engagement:** Sharing health tips, organizing voluntary wellness challenges, or designating a staff wellness liaison to share district resources

Community Engagement and Student Health Services

- **Parent and Community Communication:** The Food Service Director (or designee) shall regularly inform parents, guardians, and the school community about health information and updates to the VCPS wellness policy. Communication may occur via newsletters, handouts, family meetings, web sites, and other school communications. Outreach efforts shall emphasize the direct connection between student health, well-being, and academic success.
- **Health Services & Referrals:** To support comprehensive health services, VCPS may provide access to health services on or near school campuses and offer referrals to community health resources.
- **Safe Environment & Weight Bias Protection:** VCPS is committed to maintaining a safe, supportive environment that fosters physical and mental health. Bullying and harassment of any student—specifically including bullying based on weight, body size, or health condition—is strictly prohibited.

Triennial Assessment

At least once every three years, the Food Services Director (or designee) shall assess the implementation and effectiveness of the Vista Charter Public Schools (VCPS) Local School Wellness Policy (42 U.S.C. 1758b). The triennial assessment shall evaluate:

- The extent to which VCPS schools are in compliance with this wellness policy.
- The extent to which this policy compares to model wellness policies (utilizing tools such as the WellSAT 3.0 / WellSAT i assessment tool).
- A description of the progress made in attaining the goals of the wellness policy.

Assessment Indicators

The Board and the Food Services Director shall establish key indicators to measure implementation and effectiveness. These indicators may include:

1. Alignment of nutrition, physical education, and health education curricula with state academic content standards.
2. Nutritional analysis of school meals and snacks served, based on menu samples and production records.
3. Student participation rates in school meal programs (National School Lunch and Breakfast Programs).
4. Compliance of all competitive foods, beverages, fundraisers, and marketing on campus with Smart Snacks standards.
5. Student results on the California Physical Fitness Test (FitnessGram) at applicable grade levels.
6. Verification of required physical education instructional minutes offered per grade span.
7. Documentation of opportunities provided for physical activity outside of physical education classes (e.g., recess, physical activity breaks, after-school programs).

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8. Participation rates and descriptions of other school-based wellness activities.

Stakeholder Feedback & Reporting

The Food Services Director shall invite ongoing feedback on school wellness activities from food service personnel, school administrators, teachers, parents/guardians, students, before- and after-school staff, and the community. As feasible, assessment reports may compare multi-year trends, county/state benchmarks, or correlations with academic and student engagement indicators.

The results of the Triennial Assessment shall be submitted to the Board for evaluation, policy updates, and resource allocation. Additionally, the final assessment report and the current wellness policy will be made publicly available by posting on the VCPS website and shared through regular parent communications.

USDA Nondiscrimination Statement

In accordance with Federal civil rights law and U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) civil rights regulations and policies, the USDA, its Agencies, offices, and employees, and institutions participating in or administering USDA programs are prohibited from discriminating based on race, color, national origin, religion, sex, disability, age, marital status, family/parental status, income derived from a public assistance program, political beliefs, or reprisal or retaliation for prior civil rights activity, in any program or activity conducted or funded by USDA (not all bases apply to all programs). Remedies and complaint filing deadlines vary by program or incident.

Persons with disabilities who require alternative means of communication for program information (e.g., Braille, large print, audiotape, American Sign Language, etc.) should contact the State or local Agency that administers the program or contact USDA through the Telecommunications Relay Service at 711 (voice and TTY). Additionally, program information may be made available in languages other than English.

To file a program discrimination complaint, a Complainant should complete a Form AD-3027, USDA Program Discrimination Complaint Form which can be obtained online at: <https://www.usda.gov/sites/default/files/documents/ad-3027.pdf>, from any USDA office, by calling (866) 632-9992, or by writing a letter addressed to USDA. The letter must contain the complainant's name, address, telephone number, and a written description of the alleged discriminatory action in sufficient detail to inform the Assistant Secretary for Civil Rights (ASCR) about the nature and date of an alleged civil rights violation. The completed AD-3027 form or letter must be submitted to USDA by:

1. **mail:**

U.S. Department of Agriculture
Office of the Assistant Secretary for Civil
Rights 1400 Independence Avenue, SW
Washington, D.C. 20250-9410; or

2. **fax:**

(833) 256-1665 or (202) 690-7442; or

3. **email:**

progam.intake@usda.gov