

# **Sisters Academy of Baltimore**

## **Wellness Policy**

### **Rationale**

Sisters Academy recognizes the important connection between student health and wellness and the student's ability to learn and achieve high standards related to both academics and behavior.

Sisters Academy recognizes its role and responsibility to educate, model, and practice healthy choices in physical activity and good nutrition for its students and their families.

The goal of Sisters Academy is that our graduates will be "well-educated, self-assured, spiritual and committed young women who are so needed in our community, our nation, and our world. They will be leaders who make a difference." In order to achieve this goal, students at Sisters Academy receive "an integrated, quality education that addresses their intellectual, spiritual, and physical growth and development, leading to acceptance into quality high schools, which will be followed by enlightened life choices." (*Sisters Academy of Baltimore, Statement of Purpose*)

### **Section 1: Nutrition Education**

#### **Education**

The aim of nutrition education is to help students adopt healthy eating behaviors. Nutrition education occurs in the classroom as well as in the larger school community.

All students take two classes weekly entitled "Life Skills" and "Care of Self and Others (CSO)." The classes are scheduled for two 30-45 minute sessions per week for each of the four grades and are taught for the duration of the school year by qualified teaching and counseling professionals with prior experience at the middle school level. In these courses, students study psycho-social issues such as peer relationships, health, nutrition, anger management, conflict resolution, familial problems, and sexuality. Health and nutrition education is part of the curriculum at each of the four grade levels and is integrated into other areas of the curriculum, such as science and physical education. In addition, nutrition education is an integral component of the school breakfast and lunch program as students make selections of fruits and vegetables, whole grain products, and low-fat products to eat. Students also learn about healthy food preparation methods.

#### **Training**

All food service personnel receive pre-service training in food service operations.

#### **Nutrition Education Goals**

- Supplement the existing PE curriculum to include cardiovascular health and other PE-related topics
- Introduce a separate health class to complement the existing rich offerings of the Life Skills and CSO learning components; each trimester will target a specific area related to wellness - health, nutrition, and sexuality
- Include a curriculum component in science, math, and/or health that includes a focus on reading/evaluating nutrition labels.

## **Section 2: Guidelines and Standards - School Meal Program**

### **Free and Reduced Lunch Eligibility**

In an average year, approximately 90% of SAB students qualify for free or reduced meals (breakfast, lunch, and snack), but Sisters Academy has opted to provide all meals free of charge to 100% of our students. All families complete an annual MSDE income survey which determines free and reduced lunch eligibility.

### **Food Distribution Company**

All school meals and afterschool snacks are provided through an outside approved vendor and well recognized food service contractor. All food service providers comply with the National School Lunch Breakfast, and Afterschool Snack standards for meal patterns, nutrient levels, and calorie requirements as specified by USDA nutrition standards. All contractual food service providers must also voluntarily meet high standards of transparency, accountability, and performance. One of our recent vendors, Revolution Foods, was named for the third time in 2021 on the Fast Company's Annual List of the World's Most Innovative Companies as a leading provider of healthy community and school meals.

All vendors must additionally support an *eating clean* mission by ensuring that foods served include:

- Dairy products that are rBST free
- Whole grains (from brown rice to whole-grain rich unbleached flour)
- USDA high-grade quality meat (never mechanically separated)
- Local vegetable options by region
- Fresh whole fruit (with seasonal highlights)

All students at Sisters Academy of Baltimore participate in the Food Service program. Students are not permitted to bring any food items or drinks other than water from home.

After obtaining their food selections, students are provided with 20-30 minutes each day to sit and leisurely enjoy their breakfast and lunch. All students have access to free drinking water through touchless hydration stations located throughout the building to ensure students and staff can remain hydrated with filtered water.

Sisters Academy of Baltimore does not offer a-la-carte sales of food or snacks on campus, nor does Sisters Academy hold fundraising activities that include food. All foods served as part of the breakfast, lunch, and snack food service programs are provided by a single vendor/food contractor.

### **Food Outside the Cafeteria**

All school-based activities will be consistent with the school's wellness policy goals; thus, food served outside the cafeteria will meet the same nutritional standards as the school meals.

- Foods are not used as a behavior management technique by offering it as a reward or withholding it as a punishment.

- The staff is encouraged to model healthy eating by offering healthy choices at meetings and lunch.
- Food and beverages provided at school events and celebrations will meet high nutritional standards and include healthy food choices.
- Soda, other sweet drinks, and candy are not allowed at Sisters Academy.

### **Guidelines and Standards: On-going Goals**

- Seek the expertise of the staff from our food vendors to our health and PE teachers to educate students about healthy eating and food preparation
- Ensure the adequate number of hours for training food service personnel
- Change our cafeteria environment into a 'dining room' to encourage a calm and peaceful eating experience for our students
- Expand course offerings in the school extended day program that involve topics such as gardening, healthy eating, and cooking clubs.

## **Section 3: Programs to Promote Wellness**

### **Physical Education**

The aim of **physical education** is to help students develop a physically active lifestyle. Physical education develops physical competence, physical fitness, personal responsibility, and the enjoyment of physical activity so students can be physically active throughout their lifetimes.

Unless otherwise exempted for injury, no substitutions exist for the physical education requirement. All students participate in a structured physical education program throughout the school year. This program is aligned with the standards of the State of Maryland. Each student has physical education for two 42-minute periods per week. In addition, students have a recess period of 20-30 minutes each day and have opportunities to develop their skills in after-school team sports and sports-related clubs. Students also have opportunities to participate in other after-school movement activities such as dance and yoga.

### **Social-Emotional Well-Being**

SAB has a full-time guidance counselor on staff who meets with the girls weekly in their CSO class, in targeted small group sessions, and on an individual basis as needed. Students and faculty receive training in areas that include but are not limited to suicide prevention and wellness issues related to diversity, equity, and inclusion (DEI).

### **Outward Bound - Knott Foundation Collaboration**

Annually during the fall and late spring/summer trimesters, Sisters Academy students in Grades 5, 6, 7, and 8 participate in Outward Bound programs. The summer programs are generally one week in length for 2 hours per day. The autumn programs consisted of an ongoing values/outdoor adventure curriculum aligned with the school's CSO program. Typically, Outward Bound instructors plan a curriculum based on a wilderness expedition theme, but in the virtual environment, the program directors saw the opportunity to present a program designed to reinforce and enhance foundational skills related to healthy living, resilience, confidence, and intentionality with regard to school and family relationships and responsibilities. Programs are centered on developing strong connections (student to student, and teacher to student) in order to facilitate increased understanding and productive problem solving within the school environment.

### **Other School-Based Activities**

Other school-based activities include an outdoor educational program, summer sports camp, cooking, and a return post-COVID to field trips including but not limited to hospitals, senior residences, and local farms. The aim of these special activities is to broaden the students' experiences related to health and wellness. For instance, our students participate in a one-week sports camp in the summer and experience swimming and a variety of other sports, such as badminton, tennis, field hockey, volleyball, and basketball.

### **Programs to Promote Wellness Goals**

- Create a yearly theme related to wellness that is a focus throughout the year in morning gatherings, assemblies, classes, and potentially a "Wellness Day"
- Encourage the incorporation of health and wellness topics into other areas of the curriculum; i.e language arts (utilizing non-fiction selections on health and wellness) and religion (God calls us to tend to our individual health and well-being)
- Call on the nurse to include weekly health tips, meals, and suggestions in the "Weekly Wrap" and establish faculty health incentive programs and activities
- Attend field trips to sites such as Genesee Valley Outdoor Learning Center
- Create the opportunity for before school physical activities and more after school physical activities
- Reimplement hearing and vision check-ups for each student

## **Section 4: Ongoing Health and Wellness Enhancements in Response to COVID-19 Pandemic**

### **Adjunct Faculty**

Our Health Suite is designated for the school nurse(s) who is on campus daily for morning check-ins and who follows up with families on such issues as immunizations, causes for absences, and health-related issues that arise during the school day.

SAB also has a full-time custodian on the staff who ensures the cleanliness and welcoming appearance of the school, in particular bathrooms, classrooms, and lunch room are cleaned and maintained to COVID-19 standards.

### **COVID-19 Recovery and Reopening Plan 2020-2021**

(document found at <https://sistersacademyofbaltimore.org>)

The Sisters Academy Recovery and Reopening Plan details a variety of risk mitigation methods that have been established to prepare for the return to on-campus, in-person learning which includes but is not limited to daily on-campus health screenings for all students, staff, and visitors and hand-washing and hygiene training.

The Recovery and Reopening Plan was developed with guidance and resources from local, state, and national officials including government and healthcare professionals, counselors, educators, school leaders, and experts in various applicable fields. Critical feedback provided from questionnaires completed by parents/guardians and faculty/staff also significantly informs the wellness plan and stresses a balanced consideration of both the educational risks and the health risks that might be faced as a community of teachers and learners during COVID-19 or other like health crises.

### **Wellness Supporting Facilities**

- Modified classroom and dining area layouts to address social distancing recommendations
- School signage related to health, food service, and safety protocols
- Enhanced cleaning and disinfecting protocols using EPA-approved products, to include sanitizing common areas between meals and classes
- Health suite and isolation area
- Socially distanced play areas for Four Square, Kickball, and Hopscotch

### **Wellness related Equipment**

- Touchless hydration stations located throughout the building to ensure students and staff can remain hydrated with filtered water
- Personal protective equipment including mask, gloves, and plexiglass protective barriers
- Automatic hand soap and paper towel dispensers
- Hand sanitizing stations placed around the building

## **Section 5: Communication and Program Review**

### **Accountability**

The Principal is charged with the responsibility to ensure that the Wellness Policy is implemented yearly. The Principal will collaborate with and seek input from the Health and Safety Team (including members of the administrative, life skills, physical education, counseling and nursing staff) to assess the policy and its effectiveness.

### **Stakeholder Communication**

Sisters Academy seeks to inform, educate, and communicate with school stakeholders about health and wellness policies on a regular basis. Means of communication include but are not limited to the “Weekly Wrap” family newsletter, quarterly reports, and sponsor and alumni publications. The school website and social media formats that are in use include the Sisters Academy website and Facebook and Instagram pages. Policies are published in faculty and family handbooks which are available to all stakeholders.

### **Ongoing Communication and Program Review Goals**

- Continue to refine the Wellness Policy each school year with the goal to establish a working committee strictly focused on wellness and overall health
- Strive to increase participation among stakeholders including faculty members, student body, parent community, alumni membership, and Board of Directors
- Regularly share our **Wellness Plan and Wellness Assessments** with stakeholders
- Invite community members in wellness-related professions (such as nutritionists, doctors, nurses, physical therapists, self-defense instructors) to conduct workshops and activities with our students and faculty.
- Complete an annual survey of students and staff and share results with them on our website
- Increase building signage and visual reminders throughout the school which promote wellness, health, and proper nutrition

### **Date of MSDE Triennial Assessment: May 3, 2021**

- Revised & Compiled by: Principal, Jeanne Dolamore, and Teacher Representative, Elizabeth Nash
- Approved by: President, Sister Delia Dowling, SSND
- Date of MSDE Approval: May 11, 2021