

May 24, 2006

As you know, both the Federal government and the State of Indiana have required the formation of a Wellness Policy for schools. As you are also aware, the Office of Catholic Education has assumed the responsibility for the creation of this policy for our schools as a whole.

In order to achieve this objective, individuals from diverse backgrounds were brought together to contribute within their areas of expertise to the finished product. Elementary and secondary faculty members, school administrators, food service personnel, a pediatrician, a college professor, and school nurses were among the occupations represented by Task Force members, resulting in a well rounded policy. I am grateful for their commitment.

This policy is a dynamic document. It is not intended to achieve total compliance during the first year but it provides the basis for actions to be taken by individual schools on an on-going basis.

Please note that each school is responsible for the designation of a specific individual to be responsible for the implementation of the policy, and each school is to establish a committee of representatives from the school community, especially parents, to determine ways in which goals may be met. The committee will then examine their individual school situation and begin to initiate changes.

A method for assessing the implementation of the policy will be developed, to be completed annually and forwarded to the Archdiocesan Education Commission each April in order to monitor compliance.

Additionally, the Task Force will make various tools available, such as resources and websites containing additional information about wellness as it concerns our students. A Wellness Policy tab has been established on our web site for this purpose.

Please read the policy carefully and begin to take the necessary steps before the opening of school in August.

This topic will also be on the agenda for the Administrator's Conference in Nashville.

Sincerely,



## The Archdiocese of Indianapolis School Wellness Policy

### **Rationale**

Whereas, we, the Church in central and southern Indiana, called to faith and salvation in Jesus Christ in the Roman Catholic tradition, strive to live the Gospel. (Archdiocese of Indianapolis Mission Statement)

Whereas, we hold a sacred trust to educate and form the whole person—mind, body, and spirit; (NCEA statement on accountability and assessment in Catholic Education.)

Whereas, obesity rates have doubled in preschoolers and adolescents and more than tripled for children ages 6-11; (Ogden, C.L.; Flegel, K.M. et. al. Prevalence and trends in overweight among US children and adolescents, 1999-2000. JAMA,. 2002;288(14):1728-1732)

Whereas, the State of Indiana was ranked third in the nation in 2001, in percentage of childhood obesity; (Centers for Disease Control and Prevention)

Whereas, this increase in childhood obesity is now being accompanied by a rapid increase in Type II Diabetes in children and adolescents. (IDOH, The Burden of Diabetes in Indiana 2004)

Whereas, the probability of childhood overweight persisting into adulthood increases from approximately 20% at 4 years of age, to between 40% and 80% by adolescence; (Guo, S.S., Chumlea, W.C.; Tracking of body mass index in children in relation to overweight in adulthood. Am J Clin Nutr., 1999;70 (suppl):145S-148S)

Whereas, “Some observers have noted a worrisome correlation between weight problems and poor academic achievement;” (Childhood Obesity, Vol 6, No 1, Spring 2006)

Whereas, “controlling...calorie intake is key to fighting the growing obesity problem among youths. Children...are expending far fewer calories through exercise than previous generations, while consuming more empty calories;” (Walsh, Dr. M.N., Indpls. Star, May 4, 2006)

Whereas Section 204 of Federal Public Law 108-265—June 30, 2004 (see <http://teamnutrition.usda.gov/Healthy/108-265.pdf> ) requires the creation and implementation of school wellness policies, and;

Whereas, the Indiana Act #111, enacted by the General Assembly signed into law, March 15, 2006, (see <http://www.in.gov/apps/lisa/session/billwatch/billinfo>) requires non-public accredited schools to limit vending machine content and contains a requirement for daily physical activity;

Whereas, the Archdiocese of Indianapolis is committed to supporting school environments that promote and protect the health, well-being and ability of students to learn by supporting access to healthy foods, nutrition education, and participation in physical activity;

**Therefore,**

The Archdiocese of Indianapolis shall adopt and promulgate an Archdiocesan Wellness Policy for its schools that takes into account the recommendations made by the Wellness Policy Task Force, whose members addressed the areas of health education, nutrition and physical activity, in relation to the current laws and research.

**Policy**

**It is the policy of the Archdiocese of Indianapolis that:**

Whenever available, schools will participate in federal school meal and milk programs.

Foods and beverages sold or served at school will meet the current nutrition recommendations of the *U.S. Dietary Guidelines for Americans*. (This document may be accessed at <http://www.healthierus.gov/dietaryguidelines> )

All students in grades PreK-12 will have increased opportunities, and encouragement to be physically active on a regular basis.

Schools will integrate nutrition education into all curriculum areas.

Each of the schools within the Archdiocese of Indianapolis will actively engage their school community in following steps that will enable school-wide wellness.

Each school administrator, in compliance with the aforementioned federal and state laws, will designate at least one individual on the faculty or staff to spearhead this effort in conjunction with the existing School Commission/Board, to implement, monitor, review, and revise school nutrition and physical activity programs.

The school commission/board may assist in the accomplishment of this goal by appointing a subcommittee.

Such a subcommittee would consist of individuals representing the school and community, parents, students, representatives of the school food authority, teachers, health professionals, and the public.

Each school will submit an annual report to the Archdiocesan Education Commission (AEC), by April 1 of each year, listing its responses to the wellness policy requirements.

## **Rules of Administration**

### **I. Health and Nutrition Education**

- Health education is offered through grade nine, as part of the State of Indiana standards-based curriculum, designed to provide students with the knowledge and skills necessary to promote and protect their health.
- After grade nine, high schools are expected to offer students continuing nutrition and wellness education as electives, or in other curricular areas..
- Health education may include enjoyable, developmentally appropriate, culturally relevant participatory activities, such as contests, promotions, taste testing, farm visits and school gardens.
- Health education will promote fruits, vegetables, whole grain products, low-fat and fat-free dairy products, healthy food preparation methods, and health-enhancing nutrition practices.
- Emphasis will be placed on caloric balance between food intake and energy expenditure (physical activity/exercise).
- Health education will include the study of food advertising, including marketing goals versus nutritional truth.
- Each school will support parental efforts to provide a healthy diet and daily physical activity for their children by communicating with the home, and sharing the growing knowledge regarding health and nutrition.
- Parents will be encouraged to obtain BMI (Body Mass Index) information during the child's annual physical examination. Optimally, blood pressure checks should be performed on all students on an annual basis (In buildings utilizing the position of school nurse, these activities may already be in place).
- The school lunch room will serve as a focus to support the integration of nutrition education with healthy lifestyle choices. Schools are encouraged to display the nutritional value of food, as well as promotional materials to reinforce good health.
- Training and other educational information will be offered to teachers and parents in order that they become more aware, and informed concerning wellness topics

## II. School Nutrition

- School meals will:

be appealing and attractive to children.

be served in clean and pleasant settings.

serve only low fat milk and nutritionally-equivalent non-dairy alternatives, i.e. natural fruit juice.

meet, at a minimum, nutrition requirements established by local, state and federal statutes and regulations.

offer a variety of fresh fruits and vegetables as often as possible.

introduce whole grain bread, brown rice, oatmeal, etc. whenever possible.

- Schools offering breakfast will, to the extent possible, arrange student arrival schedules and utilize methods to encourage participation.
- Schools that serve breakfast to students will frequently notify parents and students of the availability of the School Breakfast Program.
- Schools are encouraged to provide students with at least ten minutes to eat after sitting down for breakfast and 20 minutes after sitting down for lunch.
- Schools will schedule meal periods at appropriate times, i.e. lunch will be scheduled between 11: 00 a.m. and 1:00 p.m.
- Elementary schools are encouraged to schedule lunch periods to follow recess periods. Research has shown that recess before lunch is beneficial because students may take more time to eat and finish their meal.
- Schools will refrain from scheduling tutoring, club, or organizational meetings or activities during meal times, unless students may eat school lunch during such activities.
- According to state law, beginning in July, 2006, at least 35% of the food and beverage items available for sale at a school, or on school grounds, must qualify as “better choice” foods, or beverages. In September, 2007, this percentage increases to 50%. *However, the Archdiocese encourages schools to go beyond these minimums.* Food items and beverage items that meet all of the qualifying standards which are considered better food and beverage choices may be found in the body of the state law. (Bill 111 may be accessed at <http://www.in.gov/apps/lisa/session/billwatch/billinfo> )

- Portion sizes of foods and beverages sold individually should adhere to those limits listed below, and progress toward these guidelines must be made by June 2007.

A food item available for sale at a school, or on school grounds may not exceed the following portion limits if the food item contains more than 210 calories:

1. In the case of potato chips, crackers, popcorn, cereal, trail mixes, nuts, seeds, dried fruit, and jerky, 1.75 ounces.
  2. In the case of cookies and cereal bars, 2 ounces.
  3. In the case of bakery items, including pastries, muffins, and donuts, 2 ounces.
  4. In the case of frozen desserts, including ice cream, 3 fluid ounces.
  5. In the case of nonfrozen yogurt, 8 ounces.
  6. In the case of entrée items and side dish items, including French fries and onion rings, the food item available for sale may not exceed the portion of the same entrée item or side dish item that is served as part of the school lunch program or school breakfast program.
  7. A beverage item available for sale at a school or on school grounds may not exceed 20 ounces.
- In order to support children's health and school nutrition educational efforts, every attempt will be made to replace school fundraising activities which involve food, with alternative choices.
  - A positive contribution to children's diets and health is made by serving fruits and vegetables as the primary snacks with water as the primary beverage.
  - If eligible, schools that provide snacks through after school programs should pursue reimbursement through the National School Lunch Program.
  - School food service personnel will participate in training, provided by the state, county, or local educational agency, on a regular basis.
  - Every effort will be made to educate parents and students concerning healthy choices for lunches brought from home:

Parents and students will be encouraged to include fresh fruits and other healthy items, rather than packaged chips, etc.

Soft drinks may not be brought to school.

- Elementary students are not to have access to vending machines at any time during the school day.
- “Fast food” meals brought in to the schools will occur no more than once per month. The foods chosen for these meals must be low in fat, sugar, and sodium. Whole grain products should be chosen when available.
- In light of the information available regarding childhood nutrition, schools will discontinue the practice of using candy, soft drinks, or food snacks as rewards for academic performance, or good behavior.
- Food or beverages, including food served through the school meals, will never be withheld from students as a disciplinary measure.
- Schools will limit celebrations that involve food during the school day to no more than one party per class per month, encouraging healthy food choices and other means of celebrating, (i.e. games)..

### III. Physical Activity

In order for students to meet the nationally recommended amount of daily physical activity of 60 minutes, the school will aim to provide at least 30 minutes per day, including but not limited to, classroom movement activities, physical education class, recess and extracurricular activities.

- If not already accomplished, every school will move toward the employment of a licensed physical education instructor.
- Classroom education will complement physical education classes by reinforcing the knowledge and skills needed to maintain an active lifestyle and to reduce time spent in sedentary activities.
- Regular classroom teachers will make adaptations which will allow students to experience an increased healthy physical environment by examining the school day for opportunities for increased physical movement; i.e., during class transition times and other previously unrecognized chances to implement beneficial activities.
- High schools will examine opportunities to offer physical activities to all students (i.e. open gym, intramurals, physical activity clubs, access to the weight room, Yoga, dancing, etc.)
- Elementary and high schools will examine the possibility of holding an “open gym” time before the school day begins which would include both the use of the available equipment and adequate adult supervision.
- The development and implementation of interscholastic, extracurricular and intramural programs will be undertaken to the advantage of students.
- All schools are encouraged to take part in the President’s Fitness Challenge or other fitness assessment.
- Schools will encourage fundraising activities that promote physical activity, (i.e. Walk-a-thons, Jump Rope for Heart, etc.)
- Walking or biking to school in order to promote physical activity will be encouraged if it is safe.
- Volunteers involved in any type of physical activity with students will be trained in order to provide optimum safety.
- Those in charge will plan recess activities each day for all elementary school students; (i.e., games, and/or equipment for student use such as jump ropes, balls, etc.)

- Students will not be kept from participation in physical education classes for academic, or disciplinary reasons.
- No child may miss more than half the recess period.

### Conclusion

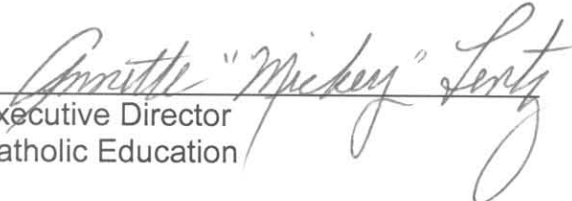
The purpose of this policy is to provide a framework for our Catholic schools to address a growing national concern--the health and future wellbeing of children--since a school represents one of the venues that can provide positive changes in a child's environment and knowledge base.

The framework provides a structure for each school in the Archdiocese of Indianapolis to increase students' and parents' knowledge of the effects of diet and exercise on health. Actions to be focused upon are decreasing the intake of sugar/fat, increasing the consumption of fruits and vegetables, whole grains and increasing daily opportunities for physical activity.

The ideal is to incorporate the spirit of this policy into the fabric of the school community by reflecting on how to be a part of the solution for the health challenge faced by our young people today.

The school principal is required to keep the Archdiocesan Wellness Policy available for review by interested parties at any time.

The Wellness Policy Task Force will provide ongoing information and research on health, nutrition and physical activity which will be made available on the Archdiocesan website for the use of all schools.

  
Executive Director  
Catholic Education

  
Archdiocesan Education Commission