Wellness Policy

Revised 7/1/26

Purpose: To influence students' eating behaviors that result in lifelong healthy food habits. To promote student wellness by preventing and reducing childhood obesity and providing assurance that school meal nutrition guidelines meet the federal school meals standards, including Smart Snacks.

Scope: This policy applies to all students, teachers and staff.

Introduction:

Sussex Montessori School is committed to optimal development of every student. We believe 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. This policy outlines our school's 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. Specifically, this policy establishes goals and procedures to ensure that:

- Students at Sussex Montessori have access to healthy foods throughout the school day---both through reimbursable school meals and other foods available throughout the school campus—in accordance with Federal and state nutrition standards;
- Students receive quality nutrition education that helps them develop lifelong healthy eating behaviors;
- Students will have opportunities to be physically active before, during, and after school;
- School engages in nutrition and physical activity promotion and other activities that promote student wellness;
- School staff are encouraged and supported to practice healthy nutrition and physical activity behaviors in and out of school;
- The community is engaged in supporting the work of Sussex Montessori in creating continuity between school and other settings for students and staff to practice lifelong healthy habits.

Public Law 108-265 Section 204 indicates that school wellness policies must include the following areas:

- Goals for nutrition education, physical activity and other school-based activities
- Nutrition guidelines for all foods sold in school

- Assurance that all school meals meet current USDA regulations
- A plan for monitoring the implementation of the Wellness Policy
- Involvement of parents, students, school administrators, teachers, nurses, school board and community

This policy applies to all students, staff and Parent Teacher Organization (PTO).

Wellness Policy Committee

The Head of School or designee(s) will convene the Sussex Montessori Wellness Committee and facilitate the development and updates to the Wellness Policy and will ensure that the school is in compliance with the policy. This committee will convene 4 times per year to review the proper implementation of the wellness policy. The committee will monitor the implementation of this policy and make recommendations as needed.

The Wellness Committee will include:

- Head of School
- School Nurse
- Physical Education Teacher
- One faculty member
- Parent Representative
- One Board Member
- One Community Member if feasible

Contact information for the Head of School:
Siza Mtimbiri, siza.mtimbiri@sussexms.k12.de.us, 1.302.404.5367

Wellness Policy Implementation, Monitoring, Accountability and Community Engagement

Sussex Montessori will have a Wellness Policy Coordinator (to be elected by the Wellness Committee) to assist in the implementation, coordination and evaluation of the Wellness Policy by:

- Ensuring that the instruction and services associated with the Wellness Policy are mutually reinforcing and present consistent messages.
- Facilitating collaboration among administrative and instructional staff.
- Assisting with the integration, management, and supervision of the Wellness Policy.
- Providing or arranging for necessary technical assistance.
- Facilitating collaboration between the school and other agencies and organizations in the community who have an interest in the health and well-being of children and their families.

Recordkeeping

Sussex Montessori will retain records to document compliance with the requirements of the wellness policy at the Nurse's office. This will include but will not be limited to:

- Written Wellness Policy
- Documentation demonstrating that the policy has been made available to the public
- Documentation of efforts to review and update Sussex Montessori Wellness Policy, including an indication of who is involved in the update and methods used to make stakeholders aware of their ability to participate on the wellness policy
- Documentation to demonstrate compliance with the annual public notification requirements
- Most recent assessment on the implementation of the local school Wellness Policy
- Documentation demonstrating the most recent assessment on the implementation of Sussex Montessori Wellness Policy has been made available to the public

Annual Notification of Policy

Sussex Montessori will actively inform board members, families and the public each year of basic information about this policy, including its content, any updates to the policy and implementation status. Sussex Montessori will make this information available on the school website. The school will provide as much information as possible about the school nutrition environment. This will include a summary of events or activities related to Wellness Policy implementation.

Triennial Progress Assessments

At least once every three years, Sussex Montessori will evaluate compliance with the Wellness Policy to assess the implementation of the policy and include:

- The extent to which Sussex Montessori is in compliance with the Wellness Policy
- A description of the progress made in attaining the goals of Sussex Montessori Wellness Policy
- Sussex Montessori will notify households/families of the availability of the triennial progress report.

Revisions and Updating the Policy

Sussex Montessori will update or modify the Wellness Policy based on the results of the annual and triennial review and/or based on school priorities; community needs change; wellness goals; and when new Federal or state guidance or standards are issued. The Wellness Policy will be assessed and updated as indicated at least every three years, following the triennial assessment.

Community Involvement, Outreach and Communications

Sussex Montessori is committed to being responsive to community input, which begins with awareness of the Wellness Policy. Sussex Montessori will communicate ways in which representatives of the wellness committee or others can get involved in the development, implementation and periodic review and update of the Wellness Policy. Sussex Montessori will 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. Sussex Montessori will use electronic email or other electronic methods, will display notices on school's

website, as well as non-electronic methods, such as newsletters, presentations to parents, or sending information home to parents, to ensure that all families are notified of the content of, implementation of, and updates to the Wellness Policy, as well as how to get involved to support the policy.

NUTRITION-School Meals

Sussex Montessori is committed to serving healthy meals to children, with plenty of fruits, vegetables, whole grains, and fat-free and low-fat milk; moderated in sodium, low in saturated fat, and zero grams trans-fat per serving (nutrition label or manufacturer's specification); and to meet nutritional needs of school children within their caloric requirements. The school meal programs aim to improve the diet and health of our school children, help mitigate childhood obesity model healthy eating to support the development of lifelong healthy eating patterns and support healthy choices while accommodating cultural food preferences and special dietary needs. We offer school meals that:

- Are accessible to students
- Are served in clean and pleasant settings
- Meet or exceed current nutritional requirements established by local, state and federal statutes and regulations. (https://www.doe.k12.de.us/Page/2789)
- Accommodate students with special dietary needs documented by a physician
- Sussex Montessori will implement at least four (of the following five) Farm to School Activities:
    - Messages about agriculture and nutrition are reinforced throughout the learning environment
    - School hosts field trips to local farms.
    - Sussex Montessori will utilize promotions or special events, such as tastings that highlight local/regional products and/or when applicable from our own gardens
    - At times available local agricultural products are incorporated into school meal program or classroom health activities that promote nutritional education.
    - Host class gardens.
- Promote healthy food and beverage choices as they apply to our Montessori setting by following Smarter Lunchroom techniques:
    - Sliced or cut fruit is available daily or as often as possible
    - A daily vegetable and fruit option is bundled into all grab and go meals available to students (Packaged and delivered foods to classroom)
    - Student surveys and taste testing opportunities are used to inform menu development.
    - Students are allowed at least 10 minutes or more to eat breakfast and at least 20 minutes to eat lunch, starting when they receive their meal and sit.
    - Students are served lunch at a reasonable time of the day.
    - White milk is promoted over other beverages.
    - Menus are posted on the Sussex Montessori website.

Water

To promote hydration, free, safe, unflavored drinking water will be available to all students throughout the day. This includes being available at mealtimes. In addition, students will be allowed to bring and carry (approved) water bottles filled with only water with them throughout the day.

- Water fountains and/or sinks are found in each classroom.
- All water sources and containers will be maintained on a regular basis to ensure good hygiene standards. Such sources include drinking fountains, water jets, sinks, and pitchers served in classrooms.

Celebrations and Rewards

All foods offered on the school campus intended for child related activities are to meet or exceed the USDA Smart Snacks in School nutritional standard, including:

1. Celebrations and parties: Sussex Montessori will provide a list of healthy party ideas to teachers, including non-food celebration ideas. (From the Alliance for a Healthier Generation and USDA)
2. Classroom snacks brought in by parents (A list of foods and beverages that meet Smart Snack nutrition standards).
3. Sussex Montessori will provide teachers, parents and other relevant school staff a list of other ways to reward children.

Nutrition Education

Sussex Montessori will teach, model, encourage and support healthy eating by all students. Montessori values educational efforts in both the classroom and through hands on manipulation of material, life practice skills, field trips and excursions, curriculum related outings such as gardening, games and song. Sussex Montessori will provide nutritional education and engage in nutritional promotion that:

- Is designed to provide students with the knowledge and skills necessary to promote and protect their health;
- Is part of not only health education classes, but also integrated into other classroom instruction through subjects such as math, science, language arts, social studies, life practice and specials;
- Emphasizes caloric balance between food intake and energy expenditure;
- Includes enjoyable, developmentally appropriate, culturally relevant, and participatory activities, such as cooking demonstrations or lessons, taste-testing, farm visits, and school gardens;
- Teach media literacy with an emphasis on food and beverage marketing;
- Include nutrition education training for teachers and other staff

Essential Healthy Eating Topics in Health Education

Sussex Montessori will include in its health education curriculum the following essential topics on healthy eating: (https://www.doe.k12.de.us/domain/149)

- The relationship between healthy eating and personal health and disease prevention
- Food guidance from My Plate Reading and using USDA's food labels
- Eating a variety of foods every day
- Balancing food intake with physical activity
- Eating more fruits, vegetables, and whole grain products
- Choosing foods and beverages with little added sugars
- Choosing foods that are low in fat, saturated fat, and cholesterol and do not contain trans fat
- Eating more calcium rich foods
- Preparing healthy meals and snacks
- Risks of unhealthy weight control practices
- Accepting body size differences
- Food safety
- Importance of water consumption
- Importance of eating breakfast
- Making healthy choices when eating at restaurants
- Eating disorders
- The Dietary Guidelines for Americans
- Reducing sodium intake
- Social influences on healthy eating, including media, family, peers, and culture
- How to find valid information or services related to nutrition and dietary behavior
- How to develop a plan and track progress toward achieving a personal goal to eat healthfully
- Resisting peer pressure related to unhealthy dietary behavior
- Influencing, supporting, or advocating for others' healthy dietary behavior

Physical Activity

Children and adolescents should participate in 60 minutes of physical activity every day. A substantial percentage of this can be obtained through school-based physical activity programs that include: physical education, recess, classroom-based physical activity, walking to school, and out of school time activities that Sussex Montessori is committed to providing. Physical activity such as recess or physical education will not be withheld as punishment for any reason.

Sussex Montessori is committed to ensuring (to the best of our ability) that its grounds and facilities are safe, and that equipment is available to encourage students to be active. Necessary inspections and repairs will be completed when necessary.

Physical Education

Sussex Montessori will provide students with physical education. An age-appropriate, sequential physical education curriculum will be used and will be consistent with national and state standards for physical education. The physical education curriculum will promote the benefits of

a physically active lifestyle and will help students develop skills to engage lifelong healthy habits, as well as incorporate essential health education concepts. All students will be provided equal opportunity to participate in physical education classes. Sussex Montessori will make appropriate accommodations to allow for equitable participation for all students and will adapt physical education classes and equipment as necessary. Individualized fitness and activity assessments via FitnessGram will use criterion-based recording for students.

Essential Physical Activity Topics in Health Education

Sussex Montessori will include in the health education curriculum the following essential topics on physical activity when health education is taught and/or when classroom topics are relevant. Montessori curriculum develops a multitude of activities that are added to the classroom experience that strengthen the Body-Kinesthetic union. Physical activity topics discussed within the classroom are then also followed up by experiences such as field trips, curriculum outings, outdoor play, games, performing arts; drama, dancing and role play; athletic games and musical concerts. Specific topics below will be introduced in these manners within and outside of the classroom:

- The physical, psychological, or social benefits of physical activity
    - Sportsmanship and winning and losing
- How physical activity can contribute to a healthy weight.
- How physical activity can contribute to the academic learning process.
- How inactive lifestyle contributes to chronic disease.
- Differences between physical activity, exercise, and fitness.
- Phases of exercise session: warm up, workout, warm down.
- Overcoming barriers to physical activity
- Health related fitness: cardiovascular endurance, muscular endurance, muscular strength, flexibility, and body composition.
- They physical, psychological, or social benefits to physical activity.
- Opportunities for physical activity in the community.
- Decreasing sedentary activities such as video games and TV.
- Preventing injury during physical activity.
- Weather related safety: sunburn, avoiding heat stroke, hypothermia.
- How much physical activity is enough, that is, determining frequency, intensity, time, and type of physical activity.
- Developing an individualized physical activity and fitness plan.
- Monitoring progress toward reaching goals in an individualized physical activity plan.
- Dangers of using performance enhancing drugs, such as steroids
- Social influences on physical activity, including media, family, peers, and culture.
- How to find valid information or services related to physical activity and fitness.

Recess

All elementary grades will offer at least 20 minutes of recess on all or most days during the school year (two-20- minute recesses are offered for students in grades K-3). Sussex Montessori recognizes the need for elementary students to engage in active movement during the academic day. This policy may be waived; however, on early dismissal or late arrival days. If recess is offered prior to lunch, hand-washing time as well as time to put away coats/hats/scarves must be allotted and be built into the recess transition period timeframe prior to eating. Sinks are available to the students to use prior to eating lunch and/or snacks.

Outdoor recess (open air) will be offered when weather is feasible for outdoor play. Students will be allowed outside play except when temperatures are below school set temperatures including wind chill factors, and storms. In the event that the school must conduct indoor recess, teachers and staff will follow the indoor recess guidelines that promote physical activity for students to the extent practicable.
Recess is to complement, not substitute, physical education class.

Classroom Physical Activity Breaks

Sussex Montessori recognizes that students are more attentive and ready to learn if provided with periodic breaks. Opportunities to be active or to stretch throughout the day are offered to students often and as needed. This is included in stretching opportunities, yoga within the classrooms, and movement about the building.

Active Academics

Within the Montessori ideals, it is common that teachers will incorporate movement and kinesthetic learning approaches into "core" subject instruction when applicable. Walking to field trips for example is also encouraged when able to do so. Sussex Montessori staff does their part to limit sedentary behaviors during the day when applicable. Sussex Montessori supports classroom teachers incorporating physical activity and employing kinesthetic learning approaches into core subjects and supplies resources, opportunities, and material needed in order to make the connection between learning and movement. Teachers and staff members will serve as role models by being physically active alongside the students whenever feasible.

Staff Wellness and Health Promotion

Sussex Montessori will implement strategies to support staff in actively promoting and modeling healthy eating and physical activity behaviors. Sussex Montessori promotes staff member participation in health promotion programs and will support programs for staff members on healthy eating/weight management that are accessible and free or low-cost.

Professional Development

When feasible, Sussex Montessori will offer annual professional learning opportunities and resources for staff to increase knowledge and skills about promoting healthy behaviors in the classroom and school (such as increasing the use of kinesthetic teaching approaches or

including nutrition lessons into math class). The concrete Montessori classroom already focuses and encompasses the idea and value of varied learning and bodily kinesthetic intelligence. Our staff is excited to continue professional learning that helps develop understanding the connections between academics and health and the ways in which health and wellness are integrated into ongoing school reform and academic improvements and efforts.