

Mercedes Independent School District Student Nutrition/Wellness Plan

Purpose and Goal:

The link between nutrition and learning is well documented. Healthy eating patterns are essential for students to achieve their full academic potential, full physical and mental growth, and lifelong health and well-being. Healthy eating is demonstrably linked to reduced risk for mortality and development of many chronic diseases as adults. Schools have a responsibility to help students and staff establish and maintain lifelong, healthy eating patterns. Well-planned and well-implemented school nutrition programs have been shown to positively influence students' eating habits.

All students shall possess the knowledge and skills necessary to make nutritious and enjoyable food choices for a lifetime. In addition, staff are encouraged to model healthy eating and physical activity as a valuable part of daily life. The Mercedes Independent School District shall prepare, adopt, and implement a comprehensive plan to encourage healthy eating and physical activity. This plan shall make effective use of school and community resources and equitably serve the needs and interests of all students and staff, taking into consideration differences in cultural norms.

Component 1: A Commitment to Nutrition and Physical Activity

- A. The Mercedes Independent School District Board of Trustees shall appoint a School Health Advisory Committee (SHAC). One of its missions shall be to address nutrition and physical activity issues and will develop, implement, and evaluate guidelines that support a healthy school nutrition environment. This committee shall offer revisions to these guidelines annually or more often if necessary.
- B. Principals will address concerns such as kinds of foods available on their campus, sufficient mealtime, nutrition education, and physical activity.
- C. Nutrition education shall be integrated across the curriculum and physical activity will be encouraged daily.
- D. The school food service staff will participate in making decisions and guidelines that will affect the school nutrition environment.

Component 2: Quality School Meals

- A. The Mercedes Independent School District will offer breakfast, lunch, and after school snack programs and will participate in a district-wide universal feeding program providing meals at no charge to all students. Students and staff are highly encouraged to promote and participate in these programs.
- B. School foodservice staff that is properly qualified according to current professional standards and regularly participates in professional development activities will administer the Child Nutrition Programs.

- C. Food safety will be a key part of the school foodservice operation.
- D. Menus will meet the nutrition standards established by the U.S. Department of Agriculture and the Texas Department of Agriculture, conforming to good menu planning principles, and featuring a variety of healthy choices that are tasty, attractive, of excellent quality, and are served at the proper temperature.
- E. Students will be given the opportunity to provide input on local, cultural, and ethnic favorites of the students.
- F. School personnel, along with parents, will encourage students to choose and consume full meals. Positive nutrition statements will be provided to students on a daily basis.

Component 3: Other Healthy Food Options

- A. The SHAC will develop and recommend to the administration guidelines on nutrition standards for food and beverages offered through parties, celebrations, social events, and any school functions (including concession stands at sporting and academic events). See Attachment A.
- B. Students in possession of foods or beverages of minimal nutritional value will be asked to surrender such items to school staff members, who in turn will follow campus procedures as to disposal or return of them. See Attachment B.
- C. No foods or beverages other than those provided through the school food service department may be made available to elementary school students at anytime. Elementary classrooms may serve one nutritious snack per day in the morning or afternoon (not during lunchtime) under the teacher's guidance. The snack may be provided by the school food service, the teacher, parents or other groups and should be at no cost to the students. At the teacher's option, parents may chose to use this snack time to provide healthy treats for birthday parties and other celebrations. With the exception of classroom birthday parties, alternative meals (pizza, BBQ, sandwiches, etc.) may not be provided to students in competition with meals made available by the school food service. It is recommended such parties be scheduled after the end of the lunch period for the class so that these celebrations will not replace a nutritious lunch. Foods and beverages other than those provided through the school food service department may not be available to junior high students until the end of the regular school day, and may not be available to high school students until the end of the last lunch period. See Attachment A for serving size restrictions.
- D. School staff shall not use food as a reward for student accomplishment. The withholding of food as punishment for students is prohibited. For example, restricting a child's selection of flavored milk at mealtime due to misbehavior in the classroom.
- E. The school district will provide nutritional information to parents that will encourage parents to provide safe and nutritious foods for their children.
- F. Organizations shall only use non-food items or foods designed for delivery and consumption after school hours as fund-raisers. For example, barbecue plate sales after school hours would be acceptable. The sale of individually wrapped candy (i.e. candy bars) as a fund-raiser is prohibited; however, packaged candy gift items are allowed provided they are only part of a fund-raising project that includes other gift items (i.e. nuts, candles, jewelry) as well.

Component 4: Pleasant Eating Experiences

- A. Facility design will be given priority in renovations and new construction.
- B. Drinking fountains will be available for students to get water at meals and throughout the day.
- C. A short snack-free recess for elementary campuses is encouraged to be scheduled sometime before lunch so that children will come to lunch less distracted and ready to eat.
- D. School personnel will assist all students in developing the healthy practice of washing hands before eating.
- E. School personnel will schedule enough time so students do not have to spend too much time waiting in line.
- F. Schools should not schedule tutoring, pep rallies, assemblies, club/organization meetings, and other activities during meal times.
- G. Adequate time to eat in a pleasant dining environment should be provided. The minimum eating time for each child after being served will be 10 minutes for breakfast and 20 minutes for lunch.
- H. Schools will encourage socializing among students, and between students and adults. Adults will properly supervise dining rooms and serve as role models to students by demonstrating proper conduct and voice level, and by eating with the students. Parents are highly encouraged to dine with students in the cafeteria.
- I. Creative, innovative methods will be used to keep noise levels appropriate.

Component 5: Nutrition Education

- A. Mercedes Independent School District will follow health education curriculum standards and guidelines as stated by the Texas Education Agency. Schools will link nutrition education activities with the coordinated school health program.
- B. Students in pre-kindergarten through grade 12 will receive nutrition education that is interactive and teaches the skills they need to adopt healthy eating behaviors. Teachers are encouraged to integrate nutrition education into core curriculum areas such as math, science, social studies, and language arts as applicable.
- C. Nutrition education will be offered in the school dining room and in the classroom, with coordination between school foodservice staff and teachers. Teachers can display posters, videos, websites, etc. on nutrition topics.
- D. Mercedes ISD campuses will participate in USDA nutrition programs such as “Team Nutrition” and conduct nutrition education activities and promotions that involve students, parents, and the community. The school nutrition team responsible for these activities will be composed of Child Nutrition Services staff, Student Services staff, school nurses, health teachers, and physical education coaches.

Component 6: Marketing

- A. Students will receive positive, motivating messages, both verbal and non-verbal, about healthy eating and physical activity throughout the school setting. All school personnel will help reinforce these positive messages.
- B. Schools will consider student need in planning for a healthy school nutrition environment. Students will be asked for input and feedback through the use of student surveys, and attention will be given to their comments.
- C. Schools will promote healthy food choices and will not allow advertising that promotes less nutritious food choices.
- D. Healthy eating and physical activity will be actively promoted to students, parents, teachers, administrators, and the community at registration, PTO meetings, Open Houses, Health Fairs, teacher in-services, etc.
- E. Schools will work with a variety of media to spread the word to the community about a healthy school nutrition environment, such as local newspaper and television stations.

Component 7: Implementation

- A. The SHAC shall be composed of parents and school district staff. Each campus principal shall select three parents and one staff member, such as teacher, nurse, counselor, CNS manager, or administrator to represent the campus. Permanent members of the committee shall include the Student Services Coordinator, Athletic Director, and the Food Service Director.
- B. The SHAC members from each campus will conduct a review of their respective campuses in the Fall semester of each year to identify areas for improvement. These groups will report their findings to the campus principal and develop with him/her a plan of action for improvement.
- C. The SHAC will assign campus groups, excluding classroom teachers, to do peer reviews of another campus in the Spring semester of each year.
- D. The SHAC will hear reports from each campus group after each review period. Before the end of each school year the committee will recommend to the Superintendent any revisions to the Student Nutrition/Wellness Plan it deems necessary.
- E. The SHAC, via the Food Service Director, will report quarterly to the Superintendent the progress of the committee and the status of compliance by the campuses.

Attachment A

Mercedes Independent School District Student Nutrition/Wellness Plan Guidelines for Food and Beverages Offered to Students at School & School Functions

All foods and beverages, other than school meals, made available to students during allowable times must meet the following maximum portion size and nutrition standards.

Food Items:	Elementary Schools	Middle Schools	High Schools
Chips (regular)	1 oz.	1 oz.	1.25 oz.
Baked Chips, Crackers, popcorn, Trail mix, seeds, Dried fruit, jerky, Pretzels.	1.5 oz.	1.5 oz.	1.5 oz.
Cookies/cereal bars	2 oz.	2 oz.	2 oz.
Baked Goods (Pastry/muffin, cake portions & cupcakes)	3 oz.	3 oz.	3 oz.
Frozen Desserts, Ice cream	3 oz.	3 oz.	4 oz.
Yogurt	8 oz.	8 oz.	8 oz.
Whole Milk	8 oz.	8 oz.	8 oz.
Reduced fat milk	8 oz.	16 oz.	16 oz.
Beverages other than Milk or FMNV (water exempt)	12 oz.	12 oz.	12 oz.
Fruit Drinks/slushes (50% juice minimum)	6 oz.	12 oz.	12 oz.
All other food/beverages	No more than 9 grams of fat per package. (except nuts & seeds) and no more than 35% by weight or 15 grams per serving of added sugar.		

At any school function (parties*, celebrations, receptions, festivals, sporting events, etc.) healthy food choice options should be available to students. Some suggested foods are listed below to include on refreshment tables, price lists, etc.

Raw vegetable sticks/slices with low-fat dressing or yogurt dip
Fresh fruit and 100% fruit juices
Frozen fruit juice pops
Dried fruits (raisins, banana chips, etc.)
Trail Mix (dried fruits and nuts)
Dry roasted peanuts, tree nuts, and soy nuts (not coconut or palm nuts)
Low-fat meats and cheese sandwiches (use low-fat mayonnaise in chicken/tuna salads)
Party Mix (variety of cereals, nuts, pretzels, etc.)
Low-sodium crackers
Baked corn chips & fat-free potato chips with salsa and low-fat dips (Ranch, French Onion, bean, etc.)
Low-fat muffins, granola bars, cookies, and *cakes & cupcakes*
Angel food and sponge cakes
Flavored yogurt & fruit parfaits
Jello and low-fat pudding cups
Low-fat ice creams, frozen yogurts, sherbets
Low-fat and skim milk products
Pure ice cold water

Foods to Avoid – Consume only occasionally (recommended no more than once per month)

Carbonated and caffeinated beverages (soft drinks, tea, & coffee)
High sugar content candies and desserts
High fat foods (fried foods like french fries, fatty meats, most cheeses, buttery popcorn)
High sodium foods (luncheon meats, cheeses, chips, salty popcorn, pickles)

- In selecting food items to offer keep in mind the numerous students and adults who are on special diets and their consumption of sugar, fat, sodium, etc. is restricted.
- The use of foods of minimal nutritional value (See Attachment B) as learning incentives should not be practiced, and healthy food choices or non-food items should be substituted.
- Organizations operating concessions at school functions should include at least some healthy food choices in their offerings. It is recommended that groups market these healthy options at a lower profit margin to encourage selection by students.

*Birthday Parties- Refer to Component 3 Item C- It is recommended that such parties be scheduled after lunch and food items provided be limited to only pizza or sandwiches and cake or cupcakes. “Goodie” bags are not recommended.

***** - Approved Times for the Availability of Foods and Beverages Other than School Meal**

Elementary Schools – no access any time

Junior High Schools – after the end of the regular school day

High Schools – after the end of the last lunch period

Attachment B

Mercedes Independent School District Student Nutrition/Wellness Plan Foods of Minimal Nutritional Value

Students may not be in possession of any of the foods or beverages listed below at school except during times approved by this policy. *

- Soda Water – any carbonated beverage (even water). No product shall be excluded from this definition because it contains discrete nutrients added to the food such as vitamins, minerals and protein.
- Water Ices – any frozen, sweetened water such as “...sicles” and flavored ice with the exception of products that contain fruit or fruit juice.
- Chewing Gum – any flavored products from natural or synthetic gums and other ingredients that form an insoluble mass for chewing.
- All Candies – any processed foods made predominantly from sweeteners or artificial sweeteners with a variety of other ingredients, including powdered drink mix (i.e., Kool-Aid).
- Certain Chips and Snack Foods – any portions larger than or nutritional content other than those indicated on Attachment A.

Due to their high sodium and fat content, traditional popcorn and pickles may be sold only one day per month. Low-fat popcorn would be acceptable for sale more often.

Any of the above items that are found in the possession of any student during unapproved times will be collected.

*** - Approved Times for the Availability of Foods of Minimal Nutritional Value**

Elementary Schools – no access any time

Junior High Schools – after the end of the regular school day

High Schools – after the end of the last lunch period

Exemption:

Three days will be exempt from the inaccessibility of the Foods of Minimal Nutritional Value listed above. These items may not be made available during meal times in the areas where school meals are being served and/or consumed. The designated days will be:

For Grades Pre-K – 4th Grade:

- * The last day before Christmas Holidays
- * The last day of school before Easter Holidays
- * The last day of school

For Grades 5th – 12th Grades:

- * The last day before Christmas Holidays
- * Valentines Day or the Friday before if it falls on a weekend
- * The last day of school