



## **St. Catherine of Siena Early Childhood Education Center School Wellness Policy**

### **Policy Intent/Rationale:**

St. Catherine ECEC promotes healthy schools by supporting wellness, good nutrition, and regular physical activity as part of the total learning environment. The school supports a healthy environment where children learn and participate in positive dietary and lifestyle practices. Schools contribute to the basic health status of children by facilitating learning through the support and promotion of good nutrition and physical activity. Improved health optimizes student performance potential in the classroom.

### **School Nutrition and Physical Activity Goals:**

#### **Goal 1: Provide a comprehensive learning environment for developing and practicing lifelong wellness behaviors.**

The school environment, not just the classroom, shall be aligned with healthy school goals to positively influence a student's understanding, beliefs, and habits as they relate to good nutrition and regular physical activity. A healthy school environment should not be sacrificed because of a dependence on revenue generated from high-added fat, high-added sugar, and low nutrient foods to support school programs.

#### **Goal 2: Support and promote proper dietary habits contributing to students' health status and academic performance.**

All food available on school grounds and at school-sponsored activities during the instructional day should meet State of Ohio nutritional standards. Emphasis should be placed on foods that are nutrient dense per calorie. To ensure high quality, nutritious meals, foods should be served with consideration toward variety, appeal, taste, safety, and packaging.

#### **Goal 3: Provide opportunities for students to engage in physical activity.**

A quality physical education program is an essential component for all students to learn about and participate in physical activity. Physical activity should be included in a school's daily education program. Physical activity should include regular instructional physical education, in accordance with the State of Ohio and NASPE (National Association of Sports and Physical Education) standards as well as recess activities.

#### **Goal 4: St. Catherine ECEC is committed to improving academic performance.**

Educators, administrators, parents, health practitioners, and communities must consider the critical role student health plays in academic stamina and performance and adapt the school environment to ensure students' basic nourishment and activity needs are met, St. Catherine ECEC is committed to promoting an understanding of the benefits to school environments where nutritious foods are provided and where students have an opportunity for physical activity. Research has demonstrated a positive relationship between good nutrition, physical activity, and capacity of students to develop and learn. St. Catherine ECEC will support this research in their commitment to implement this 2021-2022 school year Wellness Policy.

## **I. School Meals**

Our school is committed to serving healthy meals to children, with plenty of fruits, vegetables, whole grains, and fat-free and low-fat milk; that are moderate in sodium, low in saturated fat, and have zero grams *trans*-fat per serving (nutrition label or manufacturer's specification). The school meal programs aim to improve the diet and health of school children, help mitigate childhood obesity, model healthy eating to support the development of lifelong healthy eating patterns and support healthy choices.

Our school is committed to offering school meals through the ODE NSLP that:

- Are accessible to all students;
- Are appealing and attractive to children;
- Are served in clean and pleasant settings;
- Meet or exceed current nutrition requirements established by local, state, and Federal statutes and regulations. (St. Catherine ECEC offers reimbursable school meals that meet or exceed USDA nutrition standards.) Items that do not meet these standards will not be incorporated in the school menus.

A cafeteria environment that provides students with a relaxed, enjoyable climate shall be maintained where the students have adequate space to eat and clean, pleasant surroundings, adequate time to eat lunch (20 minutes after sitting) and a convenient access to hand washing facilities before meals.

St. Catherine ECEC will ensure that students qualifying for free or reduced priced meals are not overtly identified in any way and will avoid stigmatizing students who are not able to pay for their meal.

### **Water**

To promote hydration, free, safe, unflavored drinking water will be available to all students throughout the school day. Free, safe, unflavored drinking water in pitchers and cups will be available where school meals are served during mealtimes. Students will be allowed to bring and carry water bottles, filled with only water, with them throughout the day.

### **Qualifications of School Food Service Staff**

All school nutrition program directors, managers, and staff will meet or exceed hiring and annual continuing education/ training requirements in the USDA professional standards for child nutrition professionals. The school nutrition personnel will refer to USDA's Professional Standards for School Nutrition Standards website to search for training that meets their learning needs.

### **Competitive Foods and Beverages and Fundraising**

In an effort to support the consumption of nutrient dense foods in the school setting and to support healthy food choices and improve student health and well-being, St. Catherine ECEC does not sell any competitive foods or beverages during the school day.

All fund raising projects are encouraged to follow the USDA and Ohio Department of Education Nutrition Standards (ODENS). There are no bake sales or candy fund raising during school hours.

## **Celebrations and Rewards**

1. Celebrations and parties. St. Catherine ECEC will provide a list of healthy party ideas to parents and teachers, including non-food celebration ideas.
2. Classroom snacks brought by parents. Parents will provide snack for students twice a year from a list of healthy snack options. The school will encourage parents to provide “healthy” snacks for any classroom activities and parties, healthy snacks will meet the USDA standards. A list of ideas for “healthy” snacks and treats may be provided to parents in the forms of handouts, emails, articles, the weekly newsletter, and through any other appropriate means available for reaching parents. In the case that the snack provided is not healthy then the program will provide an alternative.
3. Rewards and incentives. St. Catherine ECEC discourages food to be used as a reward and will provide teachers and other relevant school staff a list of alternative ways to reward children. Food is not allowed to be given or withheld as a punishment, such as for performance or behavior. All fund raising projects are encouraged to follow the USDA and Ohio Department of Education Nutrition Standards (ODENS). There are no bake sales or candy fund raising during school hours.

## **Nutrition Promotion**

Nutrition promotion and education positively influence lifelong eating behaviors by using evidence-based techniques and nutrition messages, and by creating food environments that encourage healthy nutrition choices and encourage participation in school meal programs. Students and staff will receive consistent nutrition messages throughout school, classrooms, gymnasium, and cafeteria. Nutrition promotion also includes marketing and advertising nutritious foods and beverages to students and is most effective when implemented consistently through a comprehensive and multi-channel approach by school staff, teachers, parents, students and the community.

St. Catherine ECEC will promote healthy food and beverage choices for all students throughout the school. Only posters and or fliers that promote healthy eating habits and physical activity will be posted in the cafeteria.

## **Nutrition Education**

St. Catherine ECEC takes a comprehensive curricular approach to nutrition. The health benefits of good nutrition should be emphasized and themes should include but are not limited to:

- Sources and variety of foods
- Healthy snacks and healthy diet
- Identification and limitation of foods low in nutrient density

The Toledo Diocesan School Curriculum Guidelines and St. Catherine ECEC curriculum provides nutrition education to help students learn proper nutrition to encourage a healthy lifestyle. The USDA and ODENS reinforce nutrition to encourage to help students practice these themes in a supportive school environment. Nutrition education is sequential and aligned with the Ohio’s Early Learning and Development Standards.

St. Catherine ECEC will teach, model, encourage and support healthy eating by all students. The school will provide nutrition education and engage in nutrition promotion that:

- Is designed to provide students with the knowledge and skills necessary to promote and protect their health;
- Includes enjoyable, developmentally-appropriate, culturally-relevant and participatory activities,
- Is integrated into the broader curriculum, where applicable

Nutrition education of parents is encouraged and may be provided in the form of handouts, emails, articles and information provided in the weekly newsletter that focus on nutritional value and healthy lifestyles, and through any other appropriate means available for reaching parents.

Nutrition and physical activity education opportunities will be offered to all school staff. These educational activities may include, but are not limited to, the distribution of educational and informational materials that focus on nutritional value and healthy lifestyles, health assessments, fitness activities and other appropriate nutrition and physical activity-related topics.

## **II. Student Physical Activity**

St. Catherine ECEC shall provide physical activity and physical education opportunities, aligned with the Ohio's Early Learning and Development Standards. Physical Education shall provide students with the knowledge and skills to lead a physically active lifestyle. These Standards describe the development of health practices that become part of children's daily routines and healthy habits such as nutrition and self-help. These skills and behaviors play an important role in children's physical well-being and set children on a path leading toward a healthy lifestyle.

St. Catherine ECEC shall utilize the following implementation strategies:

- Physical education classes and opportunities will be available for all students.
- Physical activity opportunities will be offered daily during school recess and once a week in the form of physical education class.
- Teachers should provide physical activity breaks in the classroom throughout each day whenever possible
- Encourage fitness at a preschool level.
  - a.) Children should accumulate at least 60 minutes and up to several hours of age appropriate physical activity on all or most of the days of the week. St. Catherine ECEC offers physical Education class once a week and recess once a day.
  - b.) Children should participate in several bouts of physical activity lasting 15 minutes or more each day. St. Catherine ECEC students participate in daily recess for at least 20 minutes per day.
  - c.) Children should participate each day in a variety of age-appropriate physical activities designed to achieve optimal health, wellness, or fitness.
  - d.) Teachers should provide physical activity breaks throughout the day whenever possible

## **Physical Education**

St. Catherine ECEC will provide students with physical education, using an age-appropriate, sequential physical education curriculum 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 in lifelong healthy habits, Physical Education will follow the content standards established by the State of Ohio and be recorded as a part of the Early Learning Assessment and content will include movement, body awareness, physical activity, nutrition, personal and social responsibility.

### **III.) Other School Base Activities**

Support the health of all students is demonstrated through the annual vision screenings St. Catherine ECEC conducts.

### **IV.) Wellness Promotion and Marketing**

- A.)** The staff and teachers at St. Catherine ECEC shall be encouraged to model healthy eating/drinking behaviors and physical activity.
- B.)** Requiring or withholding physical activity are not to be used as a punishment.
- C.)** School based marketing will be consistent with Smart Snacks standards. Only items that promote healthy eating habits and physical activity will be posted on school property, in educational material, school publications and media, and cafeteria.

### **V) Implementation, Evaluation, and Communication**

- A.)** The Preschool Director and Food Service Supervisor will be accountable for ensuring compliance of wellness policies within the school
- B.)** St. Catherine ECEC will develop a Wellness Council and include representatives from all stakeholder groups (staff, teachers, administration, parents, community)
- C.)** On a triennial basis, St. Catherine ECEC will use an evidence based assessment tool to evaluate the implementation of the policy and wellness goals.
- D.)** On a triennial basis, the assessment on compliance/implementation will be posted on the St. Catherine ECEC website for the community and the public to view.
- E.)** Upon completion of the triennial assessment, the Wellness Council will determine if the Wellness Policy requires an update based on current regulations, standards and best practices.
- F.)** St. Catherine ECEC will use a variety of methods (e.g., website, email, newsletters, parent meetings) to engage families and the public in wellness activities, inviting them to participate in the Wellness Council.