



ACTION FOR HEALTHY KIDS

CASE STUDY

IMPROVING LOCAL SCHOOL WELLNESS POLICY

How The School District of Palm Beach County Puts Its Wellness Promotion Policy into Action

Introduction

Local School Wellness Policies are critical in creating school environments that promote students' health, well-being, and ability to learn. School districts face the challenge of not only crafting a strong and comprehensive written policy but also supporting schools in effectively implementing that policy. To support school districts in improving their Local School Wellness Policies, Action for Healthy Kids (AFHK) works with districts to conduct wellness policy reviews and offers coaching and technical assistance to facilitate policy and practice changes.

To evaluate Local School Wellness Policy, AFHK uses the WellSAT (Wellness School Assessment Tool), which provides a quantitative score for wellness policy strength (how strongly content is stated) and comprehensiveness (the extent to which content is covered). The WellSAT 3.0 measures six policy components: 1) Nutrition Education, 2) Standards for USDA Child Nutrition Programs and School Meals, 3)

Nutrition Standards for Competitive and Other Foods and Beverages, 4) Physical Education and Physical Activity, 5) Wellness Promotion and Marketing, and 6) Implementation, Evaluation and Communication.

This case study uses an analysis of WellSAT scores and the perspectives of district staff to examine wellness policy changes in *The School District Palm Beach County* (SDPBC) between 2019 to 2023. By prioritizing data-driven feedback, collaboration, and small steps, SDPBC has been successful in improving its written Wellness Promotion Policy and putting policy into practice to impact student wellness. This case study highlights SDPBC Wellness Promotion policy and practices changes, focusing on specific impacts seen in nutrition education.

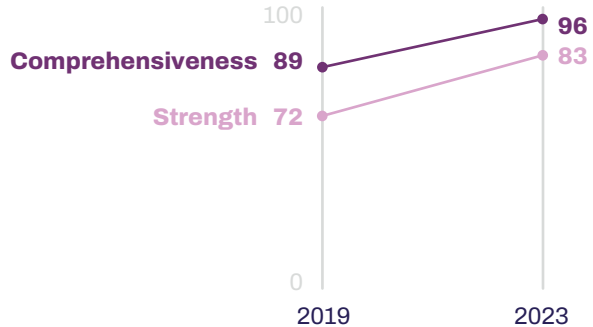
Results

Overall Wellness Policy Improvements

Action for Healthy Kids partnered with SDPBC to assess their written Wellness Promotion Policy in 2019 and 2023 using the WellSAT.

Results indicate that across this 4-year period, SDPBC increased their written Wellness Promotion Policy strength by 15% and comprehensiveness by 8%.

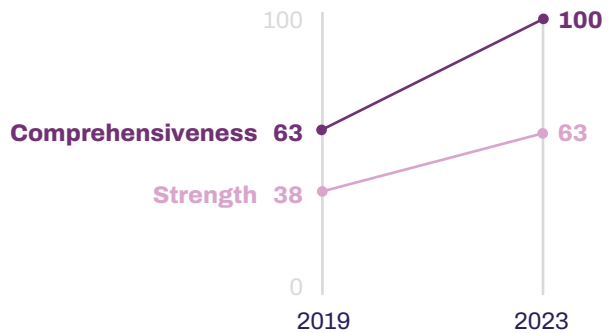
Between 2019 and 2023, SDPBC WellSAT scores improved in both **comprehensiveness** and **strength** categories.



Spotlight on Nutrition Education

SDPBC is committed to seeing their Local School Wellness Policy implemented in meaningful ways that impact student wellness. Looking at the district's WellSAT scores for the nutrition education component specifically, **SDPBC increased the strength of their Nutrition Education Policy by 66% and increased the comprehensiveness of their Nutrition Education policy by 59% between 2019 and 2023.** SDPBC knew from their 2019 WellSAT scores that Nutrition Education was an area of “low-hanging fruit” for improvement. So, when the opportunity presented itself, they were able to take strategic steps to improve policy language and make health education a high school elective in their district.

Between 2019 and 2023, SDPBC improved Nutrition Education scores in both **comprehensiveness** and **strength** categories.



Our Wellness Policy is strong because of the cross-departmental collaboration to develop it and the passion to keep it updated... positively impacting our schools and our kids.

~ ALLISON MONBLEAU, SCHOOL FOOD SERVICE DIRECTOR

Lessons Learned: Data-Driven Feedback, Collaboration, and Baby Steps



Data-Driven Feedback

SDPBC routinely utilizes tools like the WellSAT and leans on outside perspectives from organizations like Action for Healthy Kids to get feedback on their Wellness Promotion Policy. They use the data and feedback they gather to implement continuous improvement in policy and practice. SDPBC Manager of Wellness Promotion, Paula Triana, says, “*We want feedback from organizations that are working with other districts...we bring it back and we analyze it... (we) discuss each opportunity.*”



Collaboration

SDPBC is intentional in collaborating with other districts and ensuring all voices in their district are at the table when making changes to their Wellness Promotion Policy. They participate in [Action for Healthy Kids’ National School District Wellness Coalition](#), where they have benefited from networking, learning from colleagues and peers across the country, and the sharing of best practices and language around policy.

SDPBC has also implemented multiple methods of fostering collaboration around Wellness Promotion Policy within their community. From a public Wellness Promotion Task Force to an internal Wellness Promotion Collaboration Team, SDPBC has centered collaboration and the breaking down of silos to ensure expert input on Wellness Promotion Policy and broad buy-in that allows for smoother implementation. School Food Service Director Allison Monbleau says, “*That’s really our one of our huge strengths here...each person (on the Wellness Promotion Collaboration Team) has their finger on the pulse of their specific area of expertise.*” Allison specifies that it was helpful to create buy-in by using the Whole School, Whole Community, Whole Child (WSCC) model to help everyone on the collaboration team see how they fit into the bigger picture of district wellness, ensuring that each person understands the area they represent is, “*a key component of making sure that our students and staff are healthy throughout the district.*”



Baby Steps

SDPBC highlights the importance of starting small. The changes in nutrition education policy and practice were a multi-year process, during which they created district-wide buy-in, gathered principal feedback, and finally provided instruction materials, resources, and tools for teachers and students. District Administrator Eric Stern says, “*It seems like it happened quickly, but it took quite a few years to get something even as small as (nutrition education implemented), but (it’s) monumental to us (that) it could be implemented in our district.*”



If districts really want to move the needle, as we did here, you have to let everybody come to the table and be a part of the buy-in from the beginning.

~ ERIC STERN, DISTRICT ADMINISTRATOR

It really has been a journey of a lot of ups and downs, a lot of breaking silos, a lot of saying, ‘we’re in this together.’

~ PAULA TRIANA, MANAGER OF WELLNESS PROMOTION

Kids need health
Health needs action
Action needs you



Learn More About the National School Wellness Coalition and Using the WellSAT in your District

To find out more about using the WellSAT to evaluate your Local School Wellness Policy or to learn from other districts working to improve school wellness in the Action for Healthy Kids' National School District Wellness Coalition, visit our [website](#) or email districtwellnesscoalition@actionforhealthykids.org.