

Wellness Policy

Villa Marie School Assessment & 2023-24 School Year Wellness Policy

Assessment on file at NDE

Assessment June 2023

Villa Marie School takes pride in supporting the needs of the whole child to ensure that all our children are safe, supported, engaged, and challenged each day.

Research indicates that initiative focused on improving aspects of students' well-being in school – such as addressing childhood obesity, preventing bullying, supporting students' health, and restricting schools' use of exclusionary discipline – have been found to be successful in improving student success, and academic excellence. We have assessed our wellness policy as part of the USDA requirements, and are in the process of updating our current policy. A copy of the current policy, with revisions noted in red, is attached.

Below are the results of our assessment.

School Wellness Policy Assessment Survey Results

The following sections will be added to the Villa Marie School Wellness Policy as per USDA requirements:

“Professional Standards – 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. These school nutrition personnel will refer to the Nebraska Department of Education Nutrition Services website for training. All families are provided information regarding the school meals programs when they enroll and at the beginning of each school year in order to ensure all families are aware of the program. The School takes steps to protect the privacy of students who qualify for free or reduced meals, as well as the status of meal accounts. No child is turned away from receiving meals at the School.

The School assures compliance with USDA nutrition standards for reimbursable school meals.”

“Qualifications for physical education teachers for grades K-12. Teachers at the School have received decrees as Elementary School/Special Ed teachers, which includes teaching physical education. When opportunity arises, P.E. teachers would attend professional development workshops.”

“Recordkeeping: Personal goals are set for each student based on his/her abilities and where they can improve.”

“Family and community engagement in physical activity consists of activities, such as “Homer’s Heroes”, UNL track sessions for middle school students, and the Summer Baseball League sponsored by the Optimist Club. Information is sent home so parents can do the activities with their child.”

Under Nutrition Guidelines:

“Selection of School Meals: School meals shall at a minimum meet nutrition requirements established by state and federal law. Emphasis is to be on menu planning principles that offer healthy food choices, including lean meats and fresh fruits and vegetables. Food is purchased from local grocery stores and Farmers Markets, as much as possible and feasible.

Teaching Students About Nutrition: The Food Service Manager explains to students the importance of healthy balanced meals, encourages and reminds students to eat from each of the food groups.

After School Day Snacks and Meals: The School addresses nutrition standards for all foods and beverages provided to students before and after the school day.”

Vending Machines and Food Purchases: No vending machines are provided at the School; no extra snacks, food or beverages are sold at the School; and no fundraisers with food are held at the School.”

If you have any questions, please contact Sr. Jeanette Rerucha, Principal, at
or Sheila Linder at

Wellness Policy – 2023-24 School Year

Villa Marie School (the School) is dedicated to promoting, encouraging and educating students and staff on being healthy physically, intellectually, emotionally, and socially. We will follow this mission by encouraging healthy eating and physical fitness.

We have students who have sensory issues and dietary dislikes. The Villa Marie staff will accommodate as necessary and encourage students to try different foods. We do not force students to eat every part of the meal, but we do encourage and educate them on the importance of having a balanced meal.

Professional Standards

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. These school nutrition personnel will refer to the Nebraska Department of Education Nutrition Services website for training.

All families are provided information and forms regarding the National School Lunch Program when they enroll and at the beginning of each school year in order to ensure all families are aware of the program. The School takes steps to protect the privacy of students who qualify for free or reduced meals, as well as the status of meal accounts. No child is turned away from receiving meals at the School.

The School assures compliance with USDA nutrition standards for reimbursable school meals.

Goals:

1. Encourage healthy eating
2. Develop healthy meals
3. Encourage students to try new foods and seasonings
4. Encourage physical fitness and teach the value of healthy living

The Wellness Committee or designee shall establish such further goals as are determined appropriate to meet the stated mission.

Nutrition and Education: The goal is to implement a curriculum that meets or exceeds the health and nutrition education objectives established by the Nebraska Department of Education. The following are additional goals and actions to achieve such goals.

1. Breakfast

1. All students are eligible to participate in the Federal School Breakfast Program.
2. Fruit is provided at breakfast every day.

3. Milk and water are provided for each student.

2. **Lunch**

1. All students are eligible to participate in the Federal Hot Lunch Program.
2. Fruits and vegetables are available every day.
3. Milk and water are provided for each student.

3. **Snacks**

1. We are incorporating healthy snacks for the students.
2. Fruits and vegetables are available every day.
- 3.

4. **Evening Meal**

1. Since we are a boarding school, we provide all boarders with a healthy evening meal.
2. Milk is provided for each student.

5. **Cooking Class**

Students will be instructed to:

1. Understand that an excess of sugars and fat in anyone's diet can result in more calories than the body can burn, and consequently the possibility of obesity and related diseases
2. Develop healthy meals
3. Try new foods and seasonings
4. Check nutritional labels
5. Set the table for the evening meal
6. Read through a regular recipe
7. Learn cooking vocabulary
8. Identify kitchen items
9. Identify ingredients
10. Read and use measurements in fractions
11. Use proper sanitation and hygiene (hand-washing, etc.)
12. Cooperate and follow instructions
13. Clean and put things away after cooking
14. Practice safety while cooking

1. **Science/Health Class**

All students are provided nutrition education that includes:

1. Learning the food plate

2. Food sampling projects
3. Proper nutrition
7. **Display Nutrition Education Materials:** The lunchroom and other school areas shall display posters or other communications that promote healthy choices suitable to the ages of students served. Educators are encouraged to incorporate such communications in their classrooms as well.

TO ACHIEVE THESE POLICY GOALS:

Wellness Team

The School will create, strengthen, or work within the existing wellness team to develop, implement, monitor, review, and, as necessary, revise school nutrition and physical activity policies. The team will also serve as a resource for implementing these policies. The wellness team consists of a group of individuals representing the school and community that should include parents, students, representatives of the school food authority, members of the Advisory Board, school administrators, teachers, health professionals, and members of the public.

Physical Activity to Promote Student Wellness:

1. **Curriculum:** P.E. is scheduled for every school day for all students. Health and physical education will be integrated into other subjects to complement, but not replace, the health and physical education curriculum provided in accordance with NDE Rule 14. Educators are to incorporate physical activity promotion and non-sedentary lifestyles in all subject areas as appropriate. E. class includes:
 1. Running, jumping, jump rope, catching, throwing, swinging, kicking, dancing, etc.
 2. Various sports (kickball, softball, soccer, basketball, track and field, tennis, etc.).
1. **Qualifications for physical education teachers for grades K-12.** Teachers at the School have received decrees as Elementary School/Special Ed teachers, which includes teaching physical education. When opportunity arises, P.E. teachers would attend professional development workshops.
3. **Physical Activity during the School Day:** All students have the opportunity for two (2) recesses daily, outside if weather permits or inside during inclement weather. Students have access to slides, swings, running track, basketball equipment (hoops, balls), and other sports and recreational equipment during recess and after school. Teachers are also encouraged to include a routine of short physical activities during the day to promote healthy bodies and minds.
4. **Running Club:** The Running Club is scheduled every school day before the school day starts. It consists of two or three groups, with each group having two or more adults.

Students run/walk one to two miles each week with their group. During inclement weather the students walk laps inside.

5. **Recordkeeping:** Personal goals are set for each student based on his/her abilities and where they can improve.
6. Family and community engagement in physical activity consists of activities, such as “Homer’s Heroes”, UNL track sessions for middle school students, and the Summer Baseball League sponsored by the Optimist Club. Information is sent home so parents can do the activities with their child.
7. **Physical Activity Health Events:** Educators are encouraged to search for and take advantage of events that promote physical activity education. Activities may include:
 1. Health fairs
 2. Traveling health exhibits
 3. Field trips to physical activity centers
 4. Physical activity speakers (school assemblies or class speakers representing sports figures, medical people, etc.)
8. **Other School-based activities** designed to promote wellness
 1. **Special Olympics**
 1. Practice for sports
 2. Bowling practice first semester—15 games total
 - Basketball practice once a week from October – March
 1. Track and field practice from March through the end of the school year
 1. **Field Trips**
 1. Walking (walking trail just down the road usually 1-2 miles)
 2. Running
 - All of our current annual field trips incorporate walking and physical activity, e.g., State Fair, Vala’s Pumpkin Patch, zoo.
 1. **Growing vegetables and other plants – Villa Marie Garden**
 1. Students help plant seeds in the raised garden beds in the spring, and harvest vegetables in the fall. This is usually done after school by the boarders, but could be incorporated into the science or health curriculum.
 2. Students help weed, water, and mulch the butterfly garden and other flowerbeds.
 1. **Daily chores** (Because we are a boarding school, chores are built into our day.)

- 1. Sweeping and putting dust in the pan
 - 2. Vacuuming
 - Mopping
 - 1. Loading recyclables
 - 2. Crushing pop cans
 - 3. Taking care of the trash (collecting it, tying the bag, lifting dumpster lid)
 - Dishes
 - Folding laundry
 - 1. Cleaning room/making bed
 - 2. Raking leaves
 - 3. Scooping snow
 - 1. **Volunteer work**
 - 1. Roadside cleanup (about 3-4 mile stretch both sides of the road)
 - 2. Prepare and serve meals at Matt Talbot Kitchen
 - Setting up for parties at the school (moving chairs and heavy tables)
 - 1. Cleaning up a local park
 - 2. Visiting care facility (singing and reading to the residents)
9. **Community Resources:** The administration will endeavor to coordinate the school wellness program efforts with those available from medical, public health and other community organizations.

Nutrition Guidelines: School Breakfast and Lunch Programs will be offered which meet or exceed the requirements of federal and state law and regulatory authorities.

- 1. **Conditions for school meals:** Students will be provided time to eat, up to 30 minutes. Meal schedules will be determined by the Principal and Food Service Manager in conjunction with Food & Nutrition Services.
- 2. **Selection of School Meals:** School meals shall, at a minimum, meet nutrition requirements established by state and federal law. Emphasis is to be on menu planning principles that offer healthy food choices, including lean meats and fresh fruits and vegetables. Food is purchased from local grocery stores and Farmers Markets, as much as possible and feasible.
- 3. **Teaching Students About Nutrition:** The Food Service Manager explains to students the importance of healthy balanced meals, encourages and reminds students to eat from each of the food groups.

4. **After School Day Snacks and Meals:** The School addresses nutrition standards for all foods and beverages provided to students before and after the school day,
5. **Vending Machines and Food Purchases:** No vending machines are provided at the School; no extra snacks, food or beverages are sold at the School; and no fundraisers with food are held at the School.
6. **Water:** Students have access to free water all day. Water is available free of charge at all school meals. Educators may encourage students to bring water bottles to classes.

Classroom Celebrations:

1. Parents and Staff are encouraged to find non-food or healthy food alternatives.
2. Food or non-food items for any classroom celebrations must take appropriate precautionary measures related to food allergy concerns.
3. The School regulates food and beverages for all students that are served at class parties and other school celebrations.

Plan for Measuring Implementation and Designation of Responsible Persons: The Principal or the Principal's designee is charged with operational responsibility for ensuring that the school meets the Wellness Policy. The Principal or designee shall measure implementation of the Wellness Policy by conducting periodic reviews or receiving periodic reports, and reporting the progress to the Wellness Committee each year at their annual meeting. The Wellness Policy will be reviewed at least every three years by the Wellness Committee.

Policy adopted: 9/14/23