RIVER OAK CHARTER SCHOOL'S WELLNESS POLICY

Introduction

River Oak Charter School is committed to the optimal physical and academic development of every student. For students to achieve personal, academic, developmental and social success, we must create positive, safe and health-promoting learning environments at every level, in every setting, throughout the school year. River Oak Charter School will align health and wellness efforts with other school improvement endeavors to ensure the optimal health and academic success of all students.

River Oak Charter School recognizes the link between student health and learning and provides a comprehensive program promoting healthy eating and physical activity. The Wellness Policy was adopted/approved by our Charter Council. Research shows that proper nutrition and physical activity before, during and after the school day are strongly correlated with positive academic outcomes. For example, student participation in the School Breakfast Program is associated with higher grades and standardized test scores, lower absenteeism and better performance on cognitive tasks. Conversely, less-than-adequate consumption of specific foods including fruits, vegetables and dairy products is associated with lower grades. Participation in active transportation to and from school (e.g., walking and bicycling), recess, physical activity breaks, physical education and extracurricular activities involving physical activity results in better academic outcomes for students. Finally, there is evidence that adequate hydration is associated with better cognitive performance.

This Local School Wellness Policy (LSWP) outlines River Oak Charter's approach to ensuring that the school environment provides opportunities for all students to practice

healthy eating and physical activity behaviors throughout the school day. This policy applies to all students and staff. Specific measurable goals and outcomes are identified within each section. An emphasis is placed on teaching personal responsibility for one's health, respect for and promotion of the health of others, the process of growth and development, and informed use of health related information, products, and services.

River Oak Charter School understands that resources are not equally distributed. As such, River Oak Charter School will maintain a focus on health equity and will work to ensure that all students and staff have equitable access to health and wellness efforts.

Wellness Committee

Purpose of the Committee

River Oak Charter School will convene a representative Wellness Committee that meets at least four times per year to establish goals for and oversee school health and safety policies and programs – including the development, implementation and periodic review and update of this LSWP.

Committee Membership

The Wellness Committee will include representatives from the school community and will reflect the diversity of the community. The Wellness Committee may include, but is not limited to:

- Administrators
- Parents, guardians, and caregivers of students
- Nutrition and Food Service Director
- Physical and health education teachers
- Specialized instructional support personnel (e.g., school counselors, psychologists or social workers)
- School board members
- Community health professionals
- After-school Coordinator
- General public
- Community stakeholders

Accountability

Triennial Assessments
At least once every three years, River Oak Charter will assess the LSWP by measuring:

- The extent to which the LSWP meets the requirements of the USDA final rule
- The extent to which River Oak Charter School is complying with the LSWP
- The progress made in attaining the goals of the LSWP

Documentation
In order to be compliant with the USDA final rule, River Oak Charter School will retain records to document the presence of and compliance with the LSWP, including but not limited to:

- The current and previous board-approved LSWP
- Documentation demonstrating that the LSWP has been made available to the public
- Documentation of the most recent assessments of implementation
- Documentation of efforts to review and update the LSWP, including who was involved, and how River Oak Charter School made stakeholders aware of their ability to participate

Policy Updates
The Wellness Committee will update the LSWP based upon:

- The results of the Triennial Assessment
- School priorities
- Community needs
- The results of school health assessments
- Implementation progress
- Emerging scientific information
- New federal or state regulations or guidance

Notification to the Public
River Oak Charter School will actively inform caregivers and the public each year of basic information about the LSWP, including but not limited to:

- Its content and any updates
- Implementation status

- An explanation of why updates were made, who was involved and how stakeholders were made aware of their ability to participate
- The effective dates of any policy changes
- The names and contact information of school officials leading and coordinating the Wellness Committee
- Information on how the public can get involved with the Wellness Committee
- Mechanisms for the public to provide feedback and comments

River Oak Charter School will ensure that communications are culturally and linguistically appropriate to the community and will use communication methods that are appropriate to ensure that all caregivers have access to the information. River Oak Charter School will keep persons with disabilities or those that represent the interests of those with disabilities involved in all aspects including LSWP updates and assessments. River Oak Charter School will use multiple methods to distribute this information to the community, including but not limited to:

- Electronic mechanisms (e.g., email)
- Displaying notices on the school website
- Non-electronic mechanisms (e.g., newsletters)
- Sending information home to caregivers

Public Involvement

River Oak Charter School is committed to ensuring that the community is aware of and involved in the development and implementation of the LSWP. The school will actively communicate the ways in which the community can participate in the development, implementation and periodic review and update of the LSWP.

IV. Nutrition Services

School Meals

Children consume as many as half of their daily calories at school. Schools play an important role in offering meals with vital nutrients while shaping students' eating habits. Students who participate in the school meal programs have access to nutritious foods and beverages to support their growth, development and academic performance.

The USDA Child Nutrition Programs aim to improve the health of students, help mitigate hunger and obesity and model healthy eating by providing meals that are low in fat and sodium, and abundant in fruits, vegetables and whole grains. These programs support the development of lifelong healthy eating patterns while accommodating cultural food preferences and special dietary needs.

River Oak Charter School participates in the National School Lunch Program (NSLP) and School Breakfast Program (SBP) and will provide meals that meet the nutrition standards for school meals by including:

- Fruits and vegetables, including a variety of fruits and vegetables that meet the required vegetable subgroups (dark green, red and orange, dry beans, and peas and legumes)
- Grains (whole grain-rich)
- Meats and meat alternates
- Fat-free and low-fat milk
- Access to free drinking water

In addition:

- School meals will be accessible to all students, and River Oak Charter School will accommodate special dietary needs and food allergies as required by federal regulations
- School meals will be administered by a team of qualified nutrition professionals who meet or exceed the hiring and annual continuing education/training requirements of the USDA Professional Standards for Child Nutrition Professionals
- All students receive free meals

River Oak Charter School will:

- Offer a variety of foods and beverages that are appealing and attractive to students
- Ensure that eating settings are clean and inviting
- Provide adequate time to eat school meals, meaning that students will be allowed at least 10 minutes to eat breakfast and at least 20 minutes to eat lunch
- Prohibit the use of food as a reward or the withholding of foods as a punishment
- Ensure that menus are created/reviewed by Food Service Director
- Post menus on the school website and make nutrient content and ingredients available upon request
- Ensure that students are served lunch at a reasonable and appropriate time of day
- Promote participation in child nutrition programs among students and caregivers to ensure that caregivers know which programs are available
- Encourage staff to model healthy eating behaviors
- Implement the following farm-to-school activities:
    - incorporating local or regional foods into school meal programs
    - hosting promotions or special events, such as tastings, that highlight the local/ regional foods

    - reinforcing messages about agriculture and nutrition throughout the learning environment
    - supporting schools in hosting school gardens and field trips to local farms
- Promote healthy food and beverage choices using the following marketing and merchandising techniques:
    - when possible display whole fruit options in attractive bowls or baskets
    - making sliced or cut fruit available daily
    - displaying daily fruit options in the line of sight and reach of students
    - bundling daily vegetable options into all grab-and-go meals available to students
    - training all staff members, especially those serving, to politely prompt students to select and consume the daily vegetable options with their meal
    - highlighting alternative entrée options (e.g., salad bar or yogurt parfaits) on posters or signs within all service and dining areas
    - allowing students to create reimbursable meals in any service area available to them (e.g., salad bars or grab-and-go lines)
    - conducting student surveys and taste testing opportunities and using them to inform menu
    - involve students in creating informational artwork
    - using daily announcements to promote and market menu options

<u>Water</u>

Access to safe, free drinking water helps to increase students' overall water consumption and maintain hydration. In addition, adequate hydration may improve cognitive function among children and adolescents, which is important for learning. In order to be compliant with the USDA final rule, free, safe, unflavored drinking water will be available to all students during mealtimes where school meals are served.

River Oak Charter School will:

- Provide free, safe and unflavored drinking water to students during the school day and during the extended school day (including during out-of-school time/and before and after school),
- Students can bring and carry water bottles filled before, during and after the school day across the school campus
- All water sources and containers (e.g., drinking fountains, water jugs, hydration stations and water jets) will be maintained regularly to ensure adherence to health and safety standards