

Leveraging Your School Wellness Policy for Positive Restroom Changes

A collaboration between the American Restroom Association and Project CLEAN



Background

A Federal law, originated in 2004, and then supplanted by a later version in 2010, requires every school district (that feeds children lunch) must establish a local school wellness policy. Regulations were published in 2016 and local educational agencies (that is, school districts), were required to have revised policies in place by June 30, 2017.

The policies must include goals for nutrition, physical activity, and “other school-based activities.” The general public is permitted to be involved with policy improvements and communication. An official must ensure compliance at each school.

The local school wellness policy and implementation by schools and districts affect how kids, and possibly staff, eat, exercise, and do “other school-based activities.” This last goal can include better restrooms when you get buy-in from policy makers, educators, and students.

What follows is a basic example of how to find where your school wellness language is incorporated in district policies. Policies which you can then leverage for improvements in school restrooms and rules related to restroom usage.

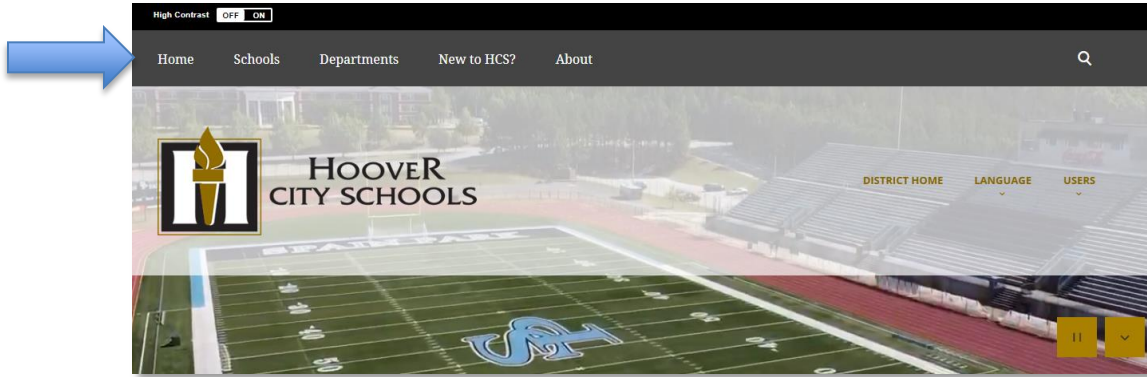
How to Find a District’s Wellness Policy

Reminder: this guide is an example; each district has different web page design, and it will differ per district. However, each district must publish these policies.

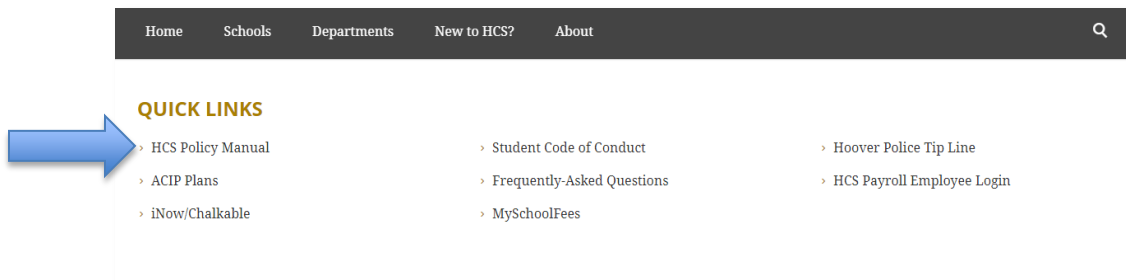
Step 1: Go to your district’s web page. For this example, we are using Hoover City Schools, Alabama. (hoovercityschools.net)

Step 2: Click “Home” at the top of the page. (Your district’s page may say “District,” “Board,” “Administration,” or “Nutrition”).

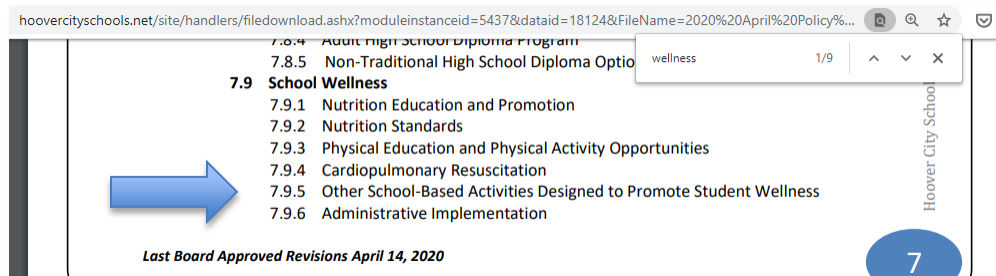
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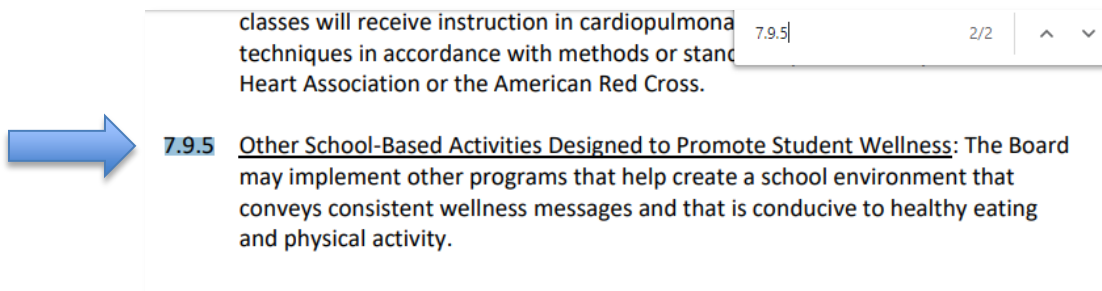
Step 3: Scroll down to “Quick Links” and click “HCS Policy Manual.”



Step 4: The Hoover City School District Policy Manual is a .pdf document, go to your “Find” command and type in “wellness.” (Your policy manual may be in a webpage format and may have its own search capability.) For this example, there will be 9 matches, including the main reference “School Wellness” at 7.9.



Step 5: Find “7.9.5” and go to the first reference in “Contents.” Then scroll down in the body of the Manual to 7.9.5 in the text.

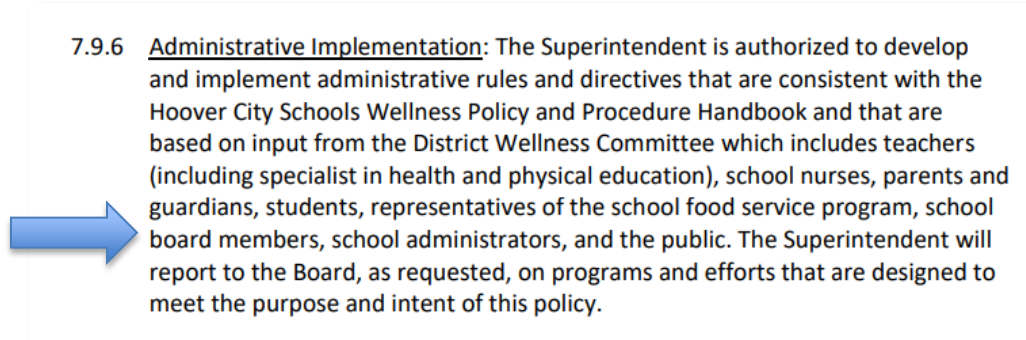


classes will receive instruction in cardiopulmonary techniques in accordance with methods or standards of the American Heart Association or the American Red Cross.

7.9.5 Other School-Based Activities Designed to Promote Student Wellness: The Board may implement other programs that help create a school environment that conveys consistent wellness messages and that is conducive to healthy eating and physical activity.

Step 6: Evaluate the language in light of regulations referenced in “background” above. The Hoover City policy states that other programs can be created (and therefore funded) that convey “consistent wellness messages.”

We encourage the addition of the following sentence: “Schools shall provide, safe, clean, and hygienic student restrooms, to foster personal responsibility” into these policies.



7.9.6 Administrative Implementation: The Superintendent is authorized to develop and implement administrative rules and directives that are consistent with the Hoover City Schools Wellness Policy and Procedure Handbook and that are based on input from the District Wellness Committee which includes teachers (including specialist in health and physical education), school nurses, parents and guardians, students, representatives of the school food service program, school board members, school administrators, and the public. The Superintendent will report to the Board, as requested, on programs and efforts that are designed to meet the purpose and intent of this policy.

Your research may also uncover supporting policies, as seen in this example, like item 7.9.6. These statements can also be used to improve the participation of all stakeholders in wellness and by extension restroom programs.

By necessity, programs that address exercise and eating should also include “elimination.” Those programs should require restrooms that are clean, accessible, and safe. They should also require that restrooms be well-stocked with appropriate consumables: soap, paper towels, and other hygiene products. The advent of COVID-19 puts these concerns at the forefront of student wellness.

Step 7: Use the published staff directory to identify the name of the district wellness official and to inquire about how restrooms are being included in the wellness and school improvement activities of your district.

Step 8: Tell us how you’ve done! Email getinfo@americanrestroom.net. We’re compiling a list of success stories and best practices relative to school wellness grassroots efforts. Let us highlight your success.

For more information

www.americanrestroom.org.

American Restroom Association
P.O. Box 21237
Catonsville, MD 21228

800-247-3864
getinfo@americanrestroom.net

www.projectclean.us

Project CLEAN
P.O. Box 125
Decatur, GA 30031

404-694-2905
keating.projectclean@gmail.com