

PLC CHARTER SCHOOLS
Arts Academy at Estrella Mountain
2504 S. 91st Ave
Tolleson, AZ 85353
623-474-2120

School Wellness Policy

Date Created: August 15th, 2017

Updated: July 16, 2026

PLC Charter Schools Acknowledgement

PLC Charter Schools recognizes the importance of providing students with adequate, nutritious food to support their growth, learning, and health. It also acknowledges research showing a positive link between proper nutrition and learning, which leads to better academic outcomes.

Summary of Policy and Overall Goals

PLC Charter Schools is committed to providing a school environment that enhances learning and development of lifelong wellness practices. It is the goal of PLC Charter Schools to provide each student access to enjoyable and nutritious meals each day school is in session. School leaders shall prepare, adopt, and implement a comprehensive plan to encourage healthy choices.

To accomplish these goals PLC Charter Schools will provide;

1. A food service program that employs well-prepared staff who efficiently serve appealing choices of nutritional foods.
2. Pleasant and clean eating areas for students and staff with adequate time for unhurried eating.
3. Services to ensure that students and staff with nutrition related health problems are treated appropriately and have a plan of action available if counseling or medical treatment is needed.
4. Create and distribute information to families, students, and staff about the importance of having a great relationship with food, and when possible feature different foods or recipes to highlight a variety of nutritious options.
5. Safe drinking water and convenient access to facilities for hand washing during all meal times.
6. A Child Nutrition Program that complies with federal, state, and local requirements.
7. A Child Nutrition Program that is accessible to all children.
8. Guidance to students for patterns of meaningful physical activity outside of physical education.

Additional Goals to adopt for a healthier community

- All school-based activities must be consistent with local wellness policy goals.
- All foods and beverages made available to the entire student body during the school day are consistent with the current Dietary Guidelines for Americans.
- All foods made available to the entire student body adhere to food safety guidelines.
- The wellness policy will be implemented, monitored, and held to accountability.

PLC Charter Schools and its community will to the best of their ability create an environment that is supportive of healthy eating and physical activity by participating in programs that promote and reinforce health and healthy choices.

- PLC Charter Schools and its community are committed to positively influencing students' eating behaviors by providing age-appropriate education that reflects students' cultures. This education will be integrated into both classrooms and cafeterias, offering opportunities for students to practice skills and enjoy learning about nutrition.
- All employees of PLC Charter Schools will support the implementation of the Local Wellness Policy to enhance the well-being of our students and community.
- PLC Charter Schools will strive to employ a Food Service Director who is properly qualified, certified, and credentialed according to current professional standards set by the Arizona Department of Education and the United States Department of Agriculture. The Director will be equipped and capable of effectively managing a school food service department, fulfilling all state and national training requirements set forth by the U.S. Government and the United States Department of Agriculture. Additionally, all cafeteria staff will receive appropriate training to maintain safe, orderly, and pleasant eating environments.

Physical Activity Standards

- Offer areas where physical activity can be practiced before, during, and after school.
- To the extent practicable, schools ensure that their grounds and facilities are safe and that equipment is available to all students to be active.
- Physical Education classes given to elementary grades will receive at least 80-149 minutes of physical activity per week.
- Middle school grades are offered physical education classes as either mandatory or as an elective.
- Students receive formal, age-appropriate physical education, consistent with national and state standards for physical education for all students enrolled at all PLC Charter Schools.
- Physical education program promotes student physical fitness through individualized fitness and activity assessments.
- During physical education classes, all students are moderately to vigorously active for at least 50% of the class time.
- Professional development is available to physical education teachers at least once per year.
- Physical education classes are taught by individuals with the appropriate certifications.
- Recess is a compliment to, not a substitute for, physical education class.
- Recess is offered outdoors when weather is feasible; gyms are open during heat advisories.
- Students are offered opportunities to stretch in the classroom if needed or throughout the day on all or most days during a typical school week.
- Teachers serve as role models by being physically active alongside students whenever possible and/or encouraging students to do so.

Nutrition Standards

School Meals

The Food and Nutrition Program at PLC Charter Schools is dedicated to enhancing the diet and health of our students. Our goals include reducing childhood obesity, promoting lifelong healthy eating habits, and encouraging healthy food choices. We also prioritize accommodating cultural food preferences and special dietary needs to ensure that all students can enjoy nutritious meals.

- PLC Charter Schools will participate in the following programs:
 - National School Lunch Program (NSLP)
 - School Breakfast Program (SBP)
 - Afterschool Care Snack Program (ASCSP), if applicable
 - Child and Adult Care Food Program (CACFP), if applicable
- All meals will meet the USDA guidelines for NSLP, SBP, ASCSP, and CACFP.
- Free, potable water will be available to all students during meal periods.
- Afterschool snacks will be offered for students engaged in extended school day activities, promoting the health and well-being of children and youth in our communities.
- To qualify for the Afterschool Care Snack Program (ASCSP), the program must meet specific guidelines to be approved for afterschool snacks. Ultimately, the program must receive approval from the Food Service Director to ensure compliance with all necessary requirements. The criteria for approval will be outlined in detail below. Programs must be;
 - Operated by PLC Charter Schools
 - Must be open to ALL students
 - Provide regularly scheduled activities in an organized, structured and supervised environment. These activities must include educational or enrichment activities.
 - Under no circumstances can athletic programs participating in competitive interscholastic sports be approved as afterschool care programs.
 - Eligible programs must be open to all students and must not limit membership for reasons other than space or security, considerations, or where applicable, licensing requirements.

Meals offered through the National School Lunch Program (NSLP), School Breakfast Program (SBP), and Child and Adult Care Food Program (CACFP) shall be:

- Accessible to all students
- Appealing to students
- Served in clean and pleasant settings
- Designed to meet or exceed current nutrition requirements established by local, state, and federal regulations
- Offered in a variety of culturally relevant options
- Accompanied by nutrition education when possible to promote healthy choices
- Provided in appropriate portion sizes to meet the needs of different age groups
- Regularly evaluated to ensure satisfaction and effectiveness

PLC Charter Schools will utilize the following Smarter Lunchroom guides;

1. At least two kinds of fruit are offered daily
2. Sliced or cut fruit is offered when available or in season
3. At least two kinds of vegetables are offered and available on all service lines
4. Both hot and cold vegetables are offered throughout the week
5. A low fat dip, such as ranch or hummus, is offered with cut, raw vegetables
6. White milk is offered in all beverage coolers as well as a second option of flavored milk
7. Attractive, healthful food posters/flyers are displayed in dining and service areas
8. The daily menu is readable from 5 feet away when approaching the service area
9. Cafeteria staff smile and greet students upon entering the service line and throughout meal service
10. A monthly menu is provided to students, families, teachers, and administrators

Competitive Foods and Beverages

In accordance with federal regulations established by the Healthy, Hunger-Free Kids Act of 2010, all foods and beverages sold in schools must comply with the USDA's Smart Snacks in Schools guidelines. These guidelines aim to ensure that competitive foods and beverages promote the health and well-being of students by setting specific nutritional standards. By limiting calories, sugars, fats, and sodium, these regulations play a crucial role in fostering healthier eating habits within the school environment.

These standards apply to all foods sold during the school day, including:

- All school cafeterias
- A la carte offerings in the food service program
- Any food or beverage sold to students on campus from midnight the night before until 30 minutes after the official end of the school day, including items sold in school stores

By adhering to these guidelines, PLC Charter Schools aim to foster a healthier school environment that supports students' nutritional needs and promotes lifelong healthy eating habits.

It is important for all staff and students to follow these rules:

No outside food items, such as candies, chips, or sodas, shall be sold to students by teachers or by students to other students or staff. It is the duty of teachers and staff to enforce this rule if they see students selling snacks; it must be addressed.

Fast Food and Food Delivery Policy

To promote a healthy school environment and support the nutritional well-being of our students, the following policies regarding fast food and food deliveries are established:

1. **No Student Food Deliveries:** Students are not allowed to order or receive food deliveries from outside sources at any time during the school day. This policy helps to ensure that all students have access to nutritious meals that align with our wellness goals.
2. **Support for Food Service Programs:** Allowing fast food and outside deliveries creates competition for our food service program and diverts funding away from our nutrition initiatives. By limiting these options, we can better support our in-house food service and ensure that our students receive high-quality, nutritious meals.
3. **Allergen Awareness:** Fast food and outside food deliveries pose potential allergen risks to other students. Our program and staff are trained to be aware of all allergens in food provided to students, and we prioritize the safety and well-being of every child.

These measures are critical for encouraging healthier eating habits and maintaining a focus on the nutritional standards established by our wellness policy.

Celebrations and In-School Rewards

In our commitment to providing a healthy school environment, any food or beverage served to students during the school day on school grounds must meet the USDA's Smart Snacks in Schools guidelines. This policy applies to all celebrations, events, and rewards that involve students from multiple classrooms or a larger segment of the student body. **All class celebrations that include food must take place after lunch.**

These guidelines apply to the following scenarios;

- **Classroom parties** – defined as a celebration that occurs within a given classroom and limited to only those students enrolled in that one classroom – are not subject to the nutrition standards. Examples of classroom parties are holiday parties and birthday parties that occur in the classroom limited only to those enrolled students. However, PLC Charter Schools encourages common-sense foods that are healthier and lower in fat, saturated fat, sugar, and sodium. **All class celebrations that include food must take place after lunch.**

- **School-Sponsored Events**-such as field days, spirit days, pep rallies, must follow the Smart Snack Guidelines if the events are during the school day. You may contact the Food Service Director for more information about meal details for school-sponsored events.
- **Classroom snacks provided by parents/staff**- With permission from the teacher and/or principal, classroom snacks or treats may be brought in for special occasions. PLC Charter Schools strongly encourages healthy snack options, emphasizing the importance of nutritious choices that support student well-being. To ensure safety and quality, all food brought onto school campus must originate from commercial grocery or food service stores. Homemade items or snacks prepared in non-commercial kitchens are not permitted. Parents and guardians are encouraged to collaborate with teachers to select snacks that align with our wellness policy and adhere to any specific dietary restrictions or allergies present in the classroom
- **Using food as an incentive**- Food and/or candy should not be used as a reward in the classroom. Instead, other methods should be utilized to demonstrate recognition, as offering food can create unhealthy habits.
- **Student Council Elections**-Offering candy or food to influence votes in student council elections is discouraged, as it takes away from the focus on candidates' qualifications and ideas. Students should be encouraged to vote based on merit rather than incentives.

All food brought onto campus for classroom celebrations must originate from a commercial grocery or food service store or other commercial kitchen that is certified to comply with Maricopa County Environmental Services regulations

Food Fundraising Policy

Fundraisers and competitive foods are permitted at PLC Charter Schools as long as appropriate foods are sold. All foods and beverages advertised on school campus during the school day must meet the USDA's Smart Snacks in Schools guidelines. This includes not only the food items sold but also any promotional materials and equipment used within the school environment. Specifically, all advertisements displayed on marquees, message boards, menu boards, and posters, as well as items such as cups used for beverage dispensing, water bottles, utensils, and other food service equipment, must comply with these nutritional standards.

Fundraisers that do not need to meet the Smart Snacks guidelines are allowed but are limited to three times per school year. All fundraisers must submit a form detailing the items being sold and the purpose of the fundraising efforts. Additionally, all fundraisers must be verified to meet nutritional guidelines and the wellness policy by a representative of the food service department who has knowledge of the wellness policy.

By adhering to these guidelines, we aim to support the health and well-being of our students while promoting healthy fundraising practices.

- All fundraisers held during the school day on the school campus (the period from the midnight before to 30 minutes after the end of the official school day) are required to meet the nutrition standards or obtain a waiver from the Arizona Department of Education. The waiver will be submitted by Food Services Director. The only exception would be selling food items that are clearly not intended to be eaten immediately (i.e. frozen cookie dough). The sale of food items that meet the Smart Snacks in Schools Standards are not limited in any way. The standards do not apply during non-school hours, on weekends and at off-campus fundraising events.

Arizona Healthy Schools Act *Updated July, 2026*

The Arizona Healthy Schools Act A.R.S. 15-242.01 prohibits schools from serving, selling, or allowing a third party to sell ultra-processed food on the school campus during the regular school day. The ultra-processed foods also include beverages. Please review the updates below regarding foods brought onto campus:

Classroom Parties and Birthday Treats

- **State Additive Ban:** Under the **Arizona Healthy Schools Act**, schools are prohibited from *serving* or *selling* foods containing specific harmful chemical additives and artificial dyes. Even for single-classroom parties, **any shared treats or birthday snacks must be completely free of the following ingredients:**
 - **Banned Dyes:** Red 3, Red 40, Yellow 5, Yellow 6, Blue 1, Blue 2, and Green 3.
 - **Banned Additives:** Potassium bromate, Propylparaben, Titanium dioxide, and Brominated vegetable oil (BVO).
- **Pre-Approval:** Please check labels carefully before purchasing shared items, or coordinate with Food & Nutrition Services to verify that a snack is compliant before bringing it to school.

Personal Student Lunches and Snacks

- **No Restrictions on Individual Lunches:** Please note that these regulations only apply to shared foods, school stores, rewards, and celebrations.
- Parents and guardians retain full control over what they pack for their *individual* child's personal lunch or daily snack.

Food Program Quality Standards

- 1•** The Food Service Director shall ensure that all meals offered through the food and nutrition program comply with the legal requirements for participation in the National School Lunch Program, the School Breakfast Program, and, if applicable, the Child and Adult Care Food Program (CACFP).
 - Nutrient-rich foods, including fruits, vegetables, low-fat dairy products, and whole grain items, shall be made available wherever and whenever food is sold or offered within the school during the regular school day.
 - A variety of nutritious options, including ethnic and culturally relevant dishes, will be provided at all sites to ensure a broad range of healthy choices.
 - **The Food Service Director shall ensure that all food sales conducted by school-related groups comply with state and federal laws and do not interfere with student participation in the schools food service program.**
 - All food and beverages sold or served on school grounds or at school-sponsored events during the regular school day must adhere to the Dietary Guidelines for Americans and comply with the USDA's Smart Snacks in School standards, as well as any other applicable nutrition standards. This includes the following programs:
 1. À la carte offerings within the food service program.
 2. Fundraisers and competitive food sales, provided that appropriate and compliant foods are sold during breakfast or lunch meal times.
 3. Fundraiser foods shall not be sold during active breakfast or lunch meal times as to not compete with the food service department meals.
 - When food is included in the recognition of academic performance, such as pizza parties, it should be used to celebrate the achievement as a whole, not as a direct reward for individual students.
 - **Foods of minimal nutritional value are not to be served or sold to students on campus at any time, starting from midnight before the school day begins until thirty minutes after the final school bell.**
- 2•** During each school day, the food service program shall offer lunch in accordance with the nutritional guidelines of the USDA National School Lunch Program. PLC Charter Schools will encourage all students to participate in this meal opportunity. Special efforts will be made to ensure that families are aware of need-based programs for free or reduced-price meals and that eligible families are encouraged to apply. The program will maintain the confidentiality of students and families applying for or receiving free or reduced-price meals.
- 3•** The school food service program shall operate in accordance with the National School Lunch Act, the Child Nutrition Act of 1996 (as amended), and all applicable state and federal laws and regulations, including those of the state of Arizona. Schools shall offer a variety of nutritious food choices that are consistent with the federal Dietary Guidelines for Americans. Additionally, an interactive online menu with pictures and detailed nutrient content will be made available for parents to view. The Food and Nutrition Services program at PLC Charter Schools shall monitor the nutrient breakdown of their menus.
- 4•** All food service personnel must hold a state-issued training certificate or a food handler's card, as required by the Arizona Department of Health Services. This ensures that the food service staff is equipped with the necessary knowledge and skills to maintain food safety and hygiene standards, ultimately supporting the health and well-being of the students.

School Wellness Committee

Committee Role and Membership

PLC Charter Schools will convene a representative local wellness committee tasked with establishing goals and overseeing school health and safety policies and programs. This committee will be responsible for the development, implementation, and periodic review and update of the wellness policy to ensure its effectiveness and alignment with current health standards.

The School Wellness Committee will strive to meet a minimum of once every quarter throughout the school year.

Dates of upcoming meetings, meeting agendas, and meeting minutes will be posted on the district's website and/or presented in a parent communication portal. This ensures transparency and keeps the community informed about the activities and decisions of the School Wellness Committee.

The School Wellness Committee will represent all school levels and will include, to the extent possible, a diverse group of members, including:

- Physical education teachers
- Health education teachers
- Representatives from the school nutrition program (e.g., school nutrition director, nutritionist, cafeteria manager)
- School health professionals (e.g., school health services staff)
- School administrators (e.g., superintendent, principal, vice principal)
- School board members
- Health professionals (e.g., dietitians, nurses)
- School volunteers
- Parents and caregivers

When possible, membership will also include coordinators from the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program Education (SNAP-Ed). The committee will strive to reflect the diversity of the community to ensure that a variety of perspectives and needs are represented.

PLC Charter Schools has designated one or more school officials who have the authority and responsibility to ensure each school complies with the local wellness policy.

The designated official for convening the wellness committee is Lorena Lopez, Food Service Director. The individuals responsible for informing the public about the wellness policy are Lorena Lopez, Food Service Director, Melissa Campbell, Office Manager, and Tracy Prouty, Event and Communications Coordinator.

The designated officials for oversight of implementation at each school are:

- Kim Steele, CEO
- Davina Maes, School Principal
- Lorena Lopez, Food Service Director
- Melissa Campbell- Office Manager

Triennial Progress Assessments and Implementation of the Wellness Policy

- At least once every three years, PLC Charter Schools will conduct an assessment of its wellness policy. This assessment will evaluate compliance with the wellness policy and assess progress toward achieving the goals outlined in the School Wellness Policy. Additionally, the USDA requires the District to compare its policy to the Alliance for a Healthier Generation's model wellness policy.
- The District will assess compliance and progress of the local wellness policy at least once every three years. School representatives will monitor and gather data using the district's assessment tool and report their findings to the Nutritionist, who is ultimately responsible for managing the triennial assessment.
- The individuals responsible for this assessment include school representatives at the ground level and the Food Service Director, who will compile data from all schools and compare it to the policy and tracking tool/assessment.
- Each school representative will periodically utilize the school assessment tool, alongside the School Health Index, as a guideline to document activities at each school site and track progress toward wellness goals.
- The district wellness policy is available to the public at all times via the school website. PLC Charter Schools will also make the Triennial Assessment available on the district website, allowing for transparency and community engagement.
- PLC Charter Schools will assess how its wellness policy compares to model wellness policies. Once school representatives have submitted their findings, the Food Service Director will track progress based on the initial tracking tool. The committee will collaboratively determine which areas are working well, what needs improvement, and how to continue achieving goals.
- The committee has agreed to update or modify the wellness policy when district priorities change, community needs evolve, wellness goals are met, new health science information emerges, and/or new state or federal guidance or standards are issued.
- Revisions and Updating the Policy: PLC Charter Schools will update or modify the wellness policy as appropriate.
- Notification of Wellness Policy, Policy Updates, and Triennial Assessment: The District will inform families and the public each year of any updates to the wellness policy and will report on their compliance with the written wellness policy every three years.

Additional information regarding the wellness policy can be obtained by contacting Lorena Lopez, Food Service Director, at 623-474-2120 or via email at llopez@plccs.org. You can also check our school website at **www.plcaaem.org**

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