

St. James Catholic School

Local School Wellness Policy

Crete, Nebraska

Adopted: 5-26-26

Last Reviewed: 5-26-26

Next Triennial Assessment Due: June 2029

*Developed in compliance with the Healthy, Hunger-Free Kids Act of 2010
and the USDA Final Rule on Local School Wellness Policy Implementation (7 CFR 210.31)*

Mission Statement and Purpose

St. James Catholic School is committed to the spiritual, intellectual, social, emotional, and physical development of every student. Rooted in the Catholic tradition of caring for the whole person, body and soul, we recognize that healthy nutrition and regular physical activity are essential to learning and to honoring the gift of life God has given us.

St. James Catholic School's Local School Wellness Policy provides the framework for promoting student wellness and preventing childhood obesity. The policy requires that all foods served to students meet established healthy nutrition standards, ensures nutrition education for all students, and guarantees daily opportunities for physical education and physical activity during the school day. Together, these elements support and reinforce healthy lifestyles.

This policy is written to comply with Section 204 of the Healthy, Hunger-Free Kids Act of 2010 (Public Law 111-296), the USDA Final Rule on Local School Wellness Policy Implementation (7 CFR 210.31), and the Nebraska Department of Education School Wellness Policy requirements. St. James Catholic School participates in the National School Lunch Program administered by the United States Department of Agriculture.

Section 1: Wellness Committee, Stakeholder Engagement, and Leadership

Establishment of a St. James Wellness Committee

St. James Catholic School shall establish and maintain an ongoing School Wellness Committee. The Committee shall meet a minimum of once an academic quarter to develop, implement, monitor, review, and revise this Wellness Policy.

The Committee will be made up of following persons:

- Parent or guardian of a currently enrolled student(s)
- Representative of the School Lunch Program
- The physical education teacher
- Teacher(s) of St. James School
- Member(s) of the Parish (General Public)
- School administrators, including the Principal and Pastor

Designated Wellness Policy Leader

A staff member of St. James Catholic School shall serve as the designated official responsible for ensuring that the school complies with all components of this Local School Wellness Policy. They may

delegate specific responsibilities to designees but retains overall accountability. The Policy Leaders contact information shall be posted on the school website alongside this Wellness Policy.

The Policy Leader, shall:

- Convene and chair the School Wellness Committee
- Coordinate the triennial assessment described in Section 9
- Ensure the Wellness Policy is posted publicly and updated annually
- Serve as the point of contact for questions, comments, and concerns about the policy

Classroom-Level and Building-Level Implementation

As St. James Catholic School operates as a single school building, the School Wellness Committee serves both as the building-level wellness committee and the policy-level wellness committee. The Committee shall develop annual action plans identifying specific implementation steps at the classroom and school-building level and shall report progress at each quarterly meeting.

Section 2: Goals for Nutrition Promotion and Education

Specific Nutrition Education Goals

St. James Catholic School has established the following specific goal for nutrition education and nutrition promotion, designed to promote student wellness:

- St. James school will include opportunities for students to learn about agriculture, the local food system, where food comes from, and participate in field trips that align with these topics within their nutrition education program.
- St. James school will work to build a Farm to School program. We will start with procuring fresh local produce and explore options to see if obtaining local meat is attainable for the school. If it is St. James school will create a program for obtaining local meat as well as produce for students.
- St. James school will increase their student and family involvement in physical activity opportunities. St. James school will provide family fitness challenges at a minimum of once a quarter and provide a family fitness night a minimum of once a school year.

Sequential and Comprehensive Nutrition Education

All students at St. James Catholic School shall receive sequential and comprehensive nutrition education at every grade level. Nutrition topics shall be integrated within the comprehensive health education curriculum, taught annually at each grade level, and aligned with the Nebraska Health Education Standards adopted by the Nebraska Department of Education.

Skill-Based, Interactive, and Behavior-Focused Instruction

Nutrition education at St. James Catholic School shall be behavior-focused, interactive, and participatory. Instruction shall include hands-on learning activities and shall require students to develop specific skills, including but not limited to:

- Reading and interpreting Nutrition Facts labels and ingredient lists
- Planning a balanced meal using MyPlate and Dietary Guidelines for Americans
- Recognizing portion sizes and serving sizes
- Critically evaluating food and beverage advertising and marketing
- Preparing simple, healthy snacks and meals (age-appropriate)
- Identifying fruits, vegetables, whole grains, lean proteins, and low-fat dairy
- Understanding the relationship between food choices, physical activity, and overall health

Integration with the School Food Environment

Nutrition education shall be intentionally linked with the school food environment in concrete, ongoing ways. The classroom teacher, the food service staff, and the Wellness Committee shall collaborate to:

- Use the school cafeteria as a learning laboratory where students apply concepts taught in nutrition lessons
- We will explore the option of establishing and maintain a school garden that will be used as a teaching tool for nutrition, science, and religion classes
- Coordinate cafeteria menu offerings with nutrition lesson topics (for example, featuring a "vegetable of the month" that is also covered in classroom lessons)
- Conduct taste tests of new healthy menu items

Agriculture and the Food System

Students shall receive education about agriculture and the food system through specific, scheduled activities, including:

- Maintenance and use of the St. James school garden as part of the academic curriculum once it is established
- Annual field trips, where feasible, to local farms, orchards, dairies, or food producers
- Classroom visits from local farmers, ranchers, and food service professionals
- Lessons that trace foods served in the cafeteria from farm to plate, with emphasis on Nebraska agriculture

Section 3: Standards for All Foods and Beverages Sold During the School Day

Reimbursable School Meals

All meals served through the St. James Catholic School food service program shall comply with the National School Lunch Program and School Breakfast Program meal pattern requirements, nutrient levels, and calorie requirements for the ages and grade levels served, as specified in 7 CFR 210.10 and 7 CFR 220.8.

Guidelines for reimbursable school meals shall not be less restrictive than regulations and guidance issued by the Secretary of Agriculture pursuant to Sections 9(f)(1) and 17(a) of the Richard B. Russell National School Lunch Act and Section 4(b) of the Child Nutrition Act. Current USDA meal pattern requirements may be accessed at:

<https://www.fns.usda.gov/cn/fr-072916c>

All Foods and Beverages Sold to Students During the School Day

It is the policy of St. James Catholic School that we don't sell any food or beverages outside of the school lunches.

If that should change, we will assure all foods and beverages sold to students during the school day on any property under the jurisdiction of the school shall meet the U.S. Department of Agriculture's Smart Snacks in School nutrition standards established under 7 CFR 210.11. For the purposes of this policy, the "school day" begins at midnight prior to the school day and continues until thirty (30) minutes after the end of the official school day.

This requirement applies to all venues where food or beverages may be sold to students during the school day, including, but not limited to:

- À la carte items sold in the cafeteria
- Vending machines accessible to students
- School stores, snack bars, and concession sales
- Fundraisers, school events, and any other school-sponsored sales

The complete USDA Smart Snacks in School nutrition standards are available at:

<https://www.fns.usda.gov/cn/tools-schools-focusing-smart-snacks>

A Smart Snacks Product Calculator is also provided by the Alliance for a Healthier Generation:

<https://foodplanner.healthiergeneration.org/calculator/>

Fundraising During the School Day

All fundraisers involving the sale of food or beverages to students during the school day must comply with USDA Smart Snacks in School nutrition standards. St. James Catholic School does not authorize any exempt fundraisers; zero (0) Smart Snacks fundraiser exemptions are permitted under this policy. Fundraisers selling non-compliant foods or beverages may take place only outside of the school day (i.e., beginning at least 30 minutes after the end of the official school day) or at off-campus locations.

Foods and Beverages Containing Caffeine

Consistent with USDA Smart Snacks standards, no foods or beverages containing caffeine (other than trace amounts of naturally occurring caffeine substances) shall be sold to students at St. James Catholic School during the school day.

Section 4: Standards for Foods and Beverages Provided But Not Sold

Classroom Celebrations, Birthdays, and School Parties

To support the health of every child and to align classroom culture with the school's broader wellness goals, classroom celebrations at St. James Catholic School shall focus on activities, recognition, and community rather than on food. We will encourage families to bring non-food items into the classroom for birthdays or routine celebrations.

Students shall be recognized on their birthdays by being given special privileges, such as serving as line leader or teacher's helper, wearing a birthday crown or sash, choosing a special classroom activity, or receiving a birthday blessing from the class. This approach also supports children with food allergies and medical dietary restrictions.

Holiday parties and other school-wide celebrations, where any food is served, shall include only foods and beverages that meet USDA Smart Snacks nutrition standards. Teachers shall communicate this expectation to families at the beginning of each school year and shall provide a list of allowable food options upon request. Our list of USDA Smart Snacks recommended list can be located in the extra pages of this policy as well as on the school website.

Foods Served in Aftercare and After-School Programs

All foods and beverages served (not sold) to students participating in aftercare, clubs, athletics, or after-school programming on St. James Catholic School grounds, whether operated by the school or by an outside party, shall meet federal nutrition standards. Snacks served in any after-school program operating under the Child and Adult Care Food Program (CACFP) shall meet CACFP meal pattern requirements; snacks served outside of CACFP shall meet USDA Smart Snacks in School nutrition standards.

Foods Sold in Aftercare and After-School Programs

All foods and beverages sold to students participating in aftercare, clubs, athletics, or after-school programming on St. James Catholic School grounds, whether operated by the school or by an outside party, shall meet USDA Smart Snacks in School nutrition standards.

Food Shall Not Be Used as a Reward

Teachers and staff at St. James Catholic School are should not use food or beverages as a reward or incentive for academic performance, classroom behavior, or any other purpose. This applies to all foods and beverages, including those that would otherwise meet Smart Snacks standards. The only exception is when food is specifically required as part of an Individualized Academic Plan (IAP), Individualized Education Plan (IEP), 504 Plan, or documented medical or behavioral plan developed in consultation with parents and qualified professionals.

Teachers shall be provided with a list of alternatives, non-food reward ideas, including but not limited to: stickers, pencils, extra recess minutes, choosing a class activity, leading the line, classroom helper privileges, and recognition certificates.

Food and Beverage Marketing

At this time St. James Catholic School does not allow any food or beverage marketing on campus.

If this should change, we will follow the following policy:

Any food or beverage marketing that occurs on the St. James Catholic School campus during the school day shall be limited exclusively to those foods and beverages that meet USDA Smart Snacks in School nutrition standards under 7 CFR 210.11. "Marketing" includes, but is not limited to: oral, written, or graphic advertising; the names, logos, trademarks, brands, spokespersons, or characters of products; and product placement on any property or facility owned or leased by St. James Catholic School.

This marketing restriction applies to all areas of the school campus during the school day, including but not limited to:

- Signs, scoreboards, sports equipment, and bulletin boards
- Curricula, textbooks, websites used for educational purposes, and other educational materials, both printed and electronic
- Vending machine exteriors, cups, food display racks, coolers, and trash receptacles
- Advertisements in school publications, on school websites, or in school-sponsored electronic communications
- Announcements on the public address system or in classrooms
- School buses, parking areas, and exterior school grounds

Section 6: Nutrition Environment and Services

School Breakfast Program and School Lunch Program

St. James Catholic School does not provide breakfast through the USDA School Breakfast Program (7 CFR Part 220).

We do provide lunch through the National School Lunch Program (7 CFR Part 210) on every regular school day. The school shall promote participation in the program through the methods described below.

Strategies to Increase Participation in School Meal Programs

St. James Catholic School shall implement the following specific strategies to encourage student participation in school meal programs:

- Students shall have regular, structured opportunities to provide input on menu items, including taste tests and student menu feedback surveys.
- The food service program shall offer periodic taste tests of new healthy menu items, with student feedback used to inform future menu planning
- Students shall be encouraged to suggest cultural, regional, and family-favorite items appropriate for inclusion on the menu
- Tutoring, club meetings, organizational meetings, and other activities shall not be scheduled during students' assigned lunch periods unless students are permitted to bring their school lunch to the meeting

Eligibility for Free and Reduced-Price Meals

St. James Catholic School shall provide every family, at the beginning of each school year, with information on how to apply for free or reduced-price school meals. Applications shall be sent home to all enrolled families during the first week of school and shall also be available on the school website and in the school office throughout the school year in English and Spanish. Information about the application process shall also be included in the family handbook and in back-to-school communications.

Protection of Student Privacy

St. James Catholic School shall take affirmative steps to protect the privacy of students who qualify for free or reduced-price meals, in accordance with the National School Lunch Act and USDA guidance. Specifically:

- The cafeteria shall operate on a cashless system in which every student, regardless of payment type or meal eligibility status, uses an individual account or barcode at the point of service

- No student's eligibility status shall be visible to other students, teachers, parents, or any unauthorized person at any point in the certification, notification, or meal-service process
- Different serving lines, special hand stamps, marked tickets, or any other practice that could identify a student's free or reduced-price meal status is prohibited

Feeding Children with Unpaid Meal Balances

St. James Catholic School shall ensure that no child goes hungry because of an inability to pay or an unpaid meal balance. Specifically:

- Every student shall be served a regular reimbursable meal regardless of whether the student has money to pay or owes money on a meal account
- School staff shall not throw away, withhold, or substitute a child's meal because of an unpaid balance
- It is prohibited to shame, stigmatize, or single out any student with an unpaid meal balance, including by announcing the student's name, using hand stamps, requiring a different serving line, or sending home clearly marked notices of unpaid balances
- School staff shall communicate directly and confidentially with the parent or guardian of any student with an unpaid meal balance, and shall also use that communication as an opportunity to share information about applying for free or reduced-price meals when applicable.

Time to Eat ("Seat Time")

After obtaining their food, students shall have at least twenty (20) minutes of seated time to eat lunch. School schedules and cafeteria service procedures shall be designed to support these minimum seated eating time requirements.

Marketing of Healthy Choices

St. James Catholic School shall use marketing techniques inside the cafeteria and throughout the school building to promote healthy food and beverage choices. The healthiest options, including fresh fruits, vegetables, salads, low-fat dairy, and water, shall be prominently displayed and attractively presented in the cafeteria. Signage, posters, and other promotional materials promoting healthy choices shall be displayed in the cafeteria and other appropriate locations throughout the school.

Local Foods and Farm to School

Whenever possible and practicable, school meals shall include fresh, locally grown, and locally sourced foods purchased from Nebraska farms and producers. The food service program shall:

- Purchase locally grown produce, dairy, and other foods from Nebraska producers when available, seasonal, and cost-effective

- St. James will be starting our farm to school program with procuring donations for local produce. St. James will be exploring feasibility of also having meat donated by local farmers or ranchers.
- Promote locally sourced foods to students through signage, menu labels, classroom announcements, and educational materials in the cafeteria
- Regularly conduct taste tests featuring locally grown products to introduce students to seasonal Nebraska foods
- Coordinate with the school garden program to feature student-grown produce in the cafeteria when feasible

Free Drinking Water

Free, safe, and fresh drinking water shall be available to all students and staff at no charge throughout the entire school day. To meet this requirement:

- Water fountains, filling stations, or water dispensers shall be available and accessible in the cafeteria during all lunch service times for student self-service
- Water fountains shall be located throughout the school building and shall be maintained in clean, working order
- Students shall be permitted to bring refillable water bottles from home and to keep them in the classroom during the school day

Professional Standards for Food Service Staff

All St. James Catholic School food and nutrition services staff shall meet the hiring requirements and annual continuing education and training requirements set forth in the USDA Professional Standards for School Nutrition Programs (7 CFR 210.30). At a minimum:

- New and current food service directors shall complete at least twelve (12) hours of annual continuing education and training
- New and current food service managers shall complete at least ten (10) hours of annual continuing education and training
- New and current food service staff shall complete at least six (6) hours of annual continuing education and training

Training topics shall align with USDA Professional Standards core areas, and training records shall be maintained. Additional information is available at:

<https://professionalstandards.fns.usda.gov/>

Section 7: Physical Education and Physical Activity

Written, Standards-Based Physical Education Curriculum

St. James Catholic School shall use the Catholic Dioceses of Lincoln's written, comprehensive, standards-based physical education curriculum for every grade level served by the school. The curriculum identifies the progression of skill development across grade levels.

The written physical education curriculum shall be aligned with the Nebraska Physical Education Standards adopted by the Nebraska Department of Education and with the SHAPE America National Standards and Grade-Level Outcomes for K-12 Physical Education.

Goals of Physical Education

Physical education at St. James Catholic School shall provide every student with the knowledge, skills, attitudes, and confidence needed to adopt and maintain a physically active lifestyle for life. Physical education programming shall:

- Teach lifetime physical activities and skills that students can apply throughout adulthood
- Develop personal fitness through age-appropriate cardiovascular, muscular strength, flexibility, and motor skill activities
- Include opportunities for student self-assessment of fitness components

Minutes of Physical Education Instruction

All elementary students at St. James Catholic School shall receive at least one hundred fifty (150) minutes of physical activity per week including physical education classes and recesses.

Qualifications of Physical Education Teachers

Physical education at St. James Catholic School shall be taught by a teacher who holds a current Nebraska teaching certificate with an endorsement in physical education or its equivalent when possible.

If a certified Physical Education Teacher cannot be hired the administration team will find a suitable candidate and provide them with additional training in the area of physical education.

Professional Development for Physical Education Teachers

St. James Catholic School shall provide all physical education teachers with annual professional development opportunities specifically focused on physical education and physical activity content, pedagogy, and standards. Professional development may include workshops, conferences, online coursework, or in-service training, and shall be funded by the school as part of its annual professional development budget.

If the teacher holds a certificate in physical education or equivalent they will be required to complete 3 hours of training annually.

If the teacher does not hold certification they will be required to complete 9 hours of training annually.

No Exemptions or Substitutions for Physical Education

Students at St. James Catholic School shall not be exempted from required physical education class time or credit for the purpose of taking other courses, vocational training, or any other academic activity. This does not apply to exemptions documented for disability, medical, or religious reasons.

Likewise, no substitutions shall be allowed for the physical education time requirement. Participation in school sports, recess, or community athletic activities shall not be substituted for required physical education instruction.

Recess for All Elementary Students

All elementary students at St. James Catholic School shall be provided with at minimum of twenty (20) minutes of active daily recess, scheduled into every classroom's daily timetable. Recess shall not be scheduled at the same time as physical education class; recess is a complement to, not a substitute for, physical education.

Outdoor recess shall be the default when weather and air quality permit. Indoor recess plans shall provide for active movement when outdoor recess is not possible.

When air quality is 101-149 students shouldn't be outside for longer than 15 minutes. If air quality is over 150 students will not be allowed outside any outdoor activities are to be cancelled until air quality improves.

Physical Activity Breaks During the School Day

In addition to physical education and recess, teachers shall provide students with physical activity breaks during the academic school day. Each classroom shall provide at least one (1) physical activity break for every sixty (60) minutes of academic instruction. Activity breaks may include stretching, movement songs, classroom yoga, brain-break activities, or other developmentally appropriate movement opportunities.

Before- and After-School Physical Activity Opportunities

St. James Catholic School allows students free play time outside before school. St. James provides information for students to be able to sign up and attend physical activity opportunities like sports through Crete Park and Rec as well as Crete Public Schools.

Family and Community Engagement in Physical Activity

St. James Catholic School shall develop a comprehensive school physical activity program that includes specific opportunities for family and community engagement, with a wide variety of offerings. The school will have quarterly family fitness challenges for all students and staff. The school will also have at least once a school year a family activity night.

Joint-Use and Shared-Use Agreements

St. James Catholic School shall enter into joint-use or shared-use agreements with the parish, with local community partners, and with the City of Crete as appropriate, in order to expand physical activity opportunities for all students and community members. Such agreements shall provide for community use of school facilities outside of the school day, and for school use of community facilities (parks, fields, recreation centers) during and outside of the school day, with appropriate liability protections and scheduling arrangements.

Active Transport to School (Safe Routes to School)

St. James Catholic School supports active transport to and from school for students who live within a safe walking or biking distance. The school will be working to partner with the City of Crete, local law enforcement, and community-based organizations to create a Safe Routes to School framework for St. James school. Components may include identification of safe walking and biking routes, adult crossing-guard support, walking school bus programs, bike-rack availability, and education for students and families on pedestrian and bicycle safety.

Physical Activity as a Reward

Food rewards are discouraged at St. James Catholic School (see Section 4.4). In place of food rewards, teachers and staff are strongly encouraged to use physical activity as a reward when feasible. Examples include extra recess time, a class movement break, a walk outdoors, or a class fitness game.

Physical Activity Shall Not Be Used as Punishment

Physical activity shall not be assigned to students as a consequence of poor behavior or as punishment for any reason. Students may not be singled out to run extra laps, perform additional push-ups, or engage in any other physical activity not assigned to the entire class as part of regular instruction, as a behavioral consequence.

Physical Activity Shall Not Be Withheld as Punishment

Recess, physical education, and other physical activity opportunities shall not be withheld from students as a punishment for poor behavior or as a consequence for incomplete classwork. Teachers shall use alternative behavior management strategies that do not deprive students of physical activity. Movement and play are essential components of the school day and of student well-being.

Section 8: Employee Wellness

Strategies to Support Employee Wellness

St. James Catholic School recognizes that the wellness of its faculty, staff, and administrators directly supports the wellness of its students. The school shall implement specific strategies to support employee wellness, including:

- Free, safe drinking water shall be available
- School gymnasium and playground shall be available for use by staff before or after school hours for physical activity
- Staff shall be invited to participate in or lead physical activity opportunities throughout the school day, such as walking groups, classroom movement breaks, and family fitness events
- The Wellness Committee shall include attention to staff wellness in its annual planning

Staff Modeling of Healthy Behaviors

School staff at St. James Catholic School shall be encouraged to model healthy eating and physical activity behaviors in the presence of students. Administrators shall communicate this expectation to all staff at the beginning of each school year and shall provide ongoing support and resources to help staff fulfill it.

Section 9: Implementation, Monitoring, Public Awareness, and Assessment

Public Awareness and Annual Notification

St. James Catholic School shall make this Wellness Policy and all updates to the policy available to the public on an annual basis, at a minimum. The Wellness Policy shall be:

- Posted on the St. James Catholic School website in a prominent, easily located place
- Distributed to all faculty, staff, parents, and students at the beginning of each school year
- Referenced in the family handbook and in back-to-school communications
- Promoted to parishioners through the parish bulletin and parish website

The school shall also publicly announce, at least annually, opportunities for parents, students, school staff, and community members to participate in the development, implementation, review, and update of the Wellness Policy, along with the contact information of the Principal and the designated wellness policy leader.

Triennial Assessment of Implementation

At least once every three (3) years, the St. James Wellness Committee shall conduct a formal assessment of the school's compliance with this Wellness Policy. The assessment shall be conducted using a recognized national tool such as the WellSAT 3.0 (Wellness School Assessment Tool) developed by the UConn Rudd Center for Food Policy and Health, or the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention's School Health Index.

Content of the Triennial Assessment Report

The triennial assessment report shall, at a minimum, include all three (3) of the following elements:

- The extent to which the school is in compliance with this Local School Wellness Policy
- The extent to which this Local School Wellness Policy compares to model local school wellness policies, including the comparison to the WellSAT 3.0 or other recognized model
- A description of the progress made by the school in attaining the goals set forth in this Local School Wellness Policy

The completed triennial assessment report shall be posted on the St. James Catholic School website and shall be made available in printed form upon request.

Policy Review and Updates

Following each triennial assessment, the Wellness Committee shall review the latest national and state recommendations and shall update this Wellness Policy as appropriate. The Committee shall also conduct an annual review during the school year to identify any items requiring interim updates. Policy updates shall be brought to the school administration for approval and shall then be communicated to all stakeholders through the channels described in Section 9.1.

Section 10: Recordkeeping

St. James Catholic School shall retain records to document compliance with the requirements of this Local School Wellness Policy. At a minimum, records shall include:

- The most current Local School Wellness Policy
- Documentation demonstrating that the policy has been made available to the public, including how the public is notified annually of the opportunity to participate

- Documentation of the triennial assessment of the policy for each school, including the assessment report and the date(s) on which it was made available to the public
- Documentation of efforts to review and update the policy, including who participated in the review and how stakeholders were made aware of their opportunity to participate

Adoption and Signatures

This Local School Wellness Policy has been adopted by St. James Catholic School, Crete, Nebraska, and is effective as of the date indicated below. The policy shall remain in effect until amended or replaced by action of the school administration in accordance with the procedures set forth in Section 9.4.

<u>Sister Mary Alma, C.K.</u> Principal, St. James Catholic School	<u>5-26-26</u> Date
<u>F. Clark Sotby</u> Pastor, St. James Parish	<u>5-26-26</u> Date
<u>Alycia E. Bates</u> Wellness Committee Chair	<u>5-26-26</u> Date