



Howard Street Charter School Wellness Policy

Introduction:

The Howard Street Charter School Board recognizes that childhood obesity has become an epidemic in Oregon as well as throughout the nation. Research indicates that obesity and many diseases associated with obesity are largely preventable through diet and regular physical activity. Additional research indicated that healthy eating patterns and increased physical activity are essential for students to achieve their academic potential, full physical and mental growth and lifelong health and well-being.

Howard Street believes in the overall wellness of people and takes into account the many dimensions of health that this involves. Physical, mental, emotional and social wellness are considered in all of our programs and is a key part of the Howard Street Charter Wellness Policy as well as its mission and vision.

We know that improved wellness leads to better student academic performance, lowers absence rates, increases classroom engagement and leads to a healthier adult lifestyle.

Physical wellness:

Howard Street is committed to providing physical education and health all three years of middle school. Physical wellness includes providing opportunities, support and encouragement to be physically active on a regular basis. We also recognize that these opportunities can and should take many forms. At present this includes but is not limited to:

- required fitness/dance classes (6th graders all year, 7th/8th grade a semester each)
 - At least 50% of fitness class will be physical activity
 - New dance studio renovated and opened Fall 2022 with specialized dance floor, mirrors creating a more professional dance/fitness environment
- access to outside play area after lunch - 20 mins daily
- advisory lessons encouraging less screen time and digital citizenship
- yoga instruction at all three levels
- cross country team (our first official, competing sports team)

- walk to our field trips at Bush Park or in downtown Salem (Choir at the Capitol, Passion Projects at Mission Mill)
- Part of the National School Breakfast and Lunch program by partnering with Fresh-n-Local Foods
- Healthy breakfast and lunch options with fruits and vegetables prepared in house daily
- We never turn away a hungry child regardless of breakfast/lunch balance and ask that all students eat lunch
- We do not sell snacks or have vending machines. Classroom rewards are encouraged to NOT be food related.
- If food will be present in a classroom for academic or celebration reasons, teachers must provide two weeks' notice to parents and meet the food needs of all students so all are included
- Baking as an Enrichment Academy offering in the Winter and Cooking with our Chef as an Enrichment Academy spring offering

Mental wellness:

Howard Street is committed to providing a safe and healthy environment for the middle school student. This includes assigning each student an adult advisor who works to advocate for the needs of his/her advisees. Advisories will meet weekly to assist students and build positive rapport. Positive adult/student relationships combined with a smaller, more personalized environment can positively lead to a less stressful middle school experience.

However, we recognize that stress is a part of life and helping students deal with stress in a positive way is important to the Howard Street way. Setting personal goals and how to reach them, teaching students how to give and receive warm/cool feedback, placing students in charge of conferences through a student-led model and our EMBER habits of mind are our ways to try and assist students with mental wellness.

Those with more extensive needs for supports can also connect with our community partner, Stronger Oregon, for out of school therapy and counseling. We also often offer group therapy on anxiety or building friendship skills with a Stronger Oregon therapist on our early release Wednesdays on-site as part of our Enrichment Academy.

Social/Emotional Wellness:

Howard Street recognizes that the middle school youth are at a critical stage of social/emotional growth. We work hard to establish a safe learning environment for all students. We use project-based learning and proficiency-based assessment to encourage a growth mindset and work with each grade to build community agreements. These agreements focus on how we will treat each other (EMBER focus) and how to respectfully disagree. Students are taught to advocate for their needs and are encouraged to be an individual. Our curricular framework

(Einstein, Ellington, Esperanza) focuses on the diversity of people and how to see things from multiple perspectives.

- Cooperative learning is a regular component of all classes
- Advisory encourages multi-grade cooperation with team building activities like Egg Drop, advisory competitions
- Community building is a key component of success for each grade - EMBER is used as our community agreements and focus to build healthy habits in all areas
- Teachers meet weekly on Wednesdays to support professional learning and how to best teach and support all students
- Enrichment Academy clubs encourage community involvement like Japanese taught by college students from Willamette and Tokyo Universities or Unarmed Theatre Combat by the Fake Fighting Club

Nutrition and School Meals:

In 2013, Howard Street chose to become its own National School Lunch Provider (NSLP) and School Breakfast Provider (SBP) in part to meet its wellness goals. By contracting with Salem's Fresh n Local Foods, Howard Street is able to offer meals that:

- Feature fresh and often local fruits and vegetables
- Entrees that were voted on and appeal to students while still meeting the NSLP requirements
- Identify general health needs like gluten-free, contains dairy or vegetarian on our menus for informed choices
- Include healthy eating ideas and information about local businesses that contribute to Fresh N Local produce and meals
- Have nutritional and health information on file for easy access and information
- Provide local control over time and delivery of meals
- Provide a safe, clean cooking environment where students can see meals being prepared
- Are served by knowledgeable and caring staff who believe in the Howard Street mission and vision

Students at Howard Street have access to free and/or reduced meals via the ODE application and eligibility guidelines; we now participate in Extended Income Guidelines for Oregon providing greater access to free meals. We make every effort to eliminate any social stigma attached to, and prevent the overt identification of students, who are eligible for free/reduced meal prices. Any student may charge a lunch and pay at a future time if needed. Food is never withheld as a punishment.

Our school meals are prepared by qualified staff members with appropriate certification for food safety and food preparation. We are committed to providing professional development and annual training for our staff to continue to improve our service.

Food outside of Breakfast and Lunch times

Howard Street Charter will not have vending machines that sell food or drink items. Lack of vending machines prevents the sale of unhealthy items like soda or candy that cause a number of issues. We believe not having machines prevents student tardiness, students purchasing friends via snacks, keeps classrooms cleaner, and improves the overall academic atmosphere.

In the classroom, staff may use food when appropriate to an academic lesson. However, staff must send home a permission slip communicating what will be served in addition to why two weeks before the activity. This communication is to assist with food safety including allergies but it is also to improve overall nutrition and reason for food in a classroom. Staff will not organize student birthday parties, holiday celebrations, or general classroom parties without an academic reason.

Howard Street field trips may include food as part of the trip but the two week required communication is still necessary. Food on field trips should be reviewed for food safety and nutritional content annually and Howard Street will provide scholarships to cover the cost for any students who receive free and reduced lunches (and not claim these as approved NLSP meals). Howard Street recognizes that these are limited exceptions.

Once a year, Howard Street has a movie day exception in which we celebrate our community. This is again a one day a year exception in which students are provided with free popcorn and free water (all students receive this). Additional items may be available for purchase and will not be claimed as part of NLSP reimbursement.

Howard Street does not sell food as snacks before school, during lunch or after school. Howard Street policy prevents fundraising by students.

Conclusion:

Our commitment to healthy students and creating a healthy environment is an on-going endeavor. We continue to strive for improvement and encourage community, staff, and student input to improve this process. Input can be sent at any time to our principal, Christina Tracy (ctracy@howardstreet.org) or to our Board of Governors (board@howardstreet.org). This policy will be reviewed informally on a regular basis and more formally every three years.

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