

Laveen Elementary School District #59 School Wellness Spotlight

Laveen, Arizona

District Overview

- The Laveen Elementary School District (LESD) serves 7,200 PK-8 students and operates eight schools, with a ninth school opening in the 2020-2021 school year. LESD is one of 13 elementary school districts in the Phoenix area that feed into the Phoenix Union High School District.
- The district is located in the southwest area of Phoenix, serving both an urban and rural population, and 70% of the students are eligible for free or reduced-price school meals.

Local School Wellness Policy Goals and Activities

- Provide school meals that meet and/or exceed all USDA federal and state requirements.
- Provide students with opportunities to get physical activity before, during, and after school.
- Ensure that all school foods, including school meals and competitive foods sold outside the school meal program, meet the USDA's Smart Snacks in Schools guidelines.
- Provide all students the opportunity to participate in Physical Education (PE) classes that are taught by a licensed PE teacher.

Setting the Stage: Establishing the Local School Wellness Policy

In 2017, LESD established a district wellness committee to develop, implement, and evaluate a new wellness policy designed to create a healthier school environment that reflected the community's values. Working off of the district's board-approved student wellness policy, the wellness committee created an additional supplement in order to create more specific, measureable and attainable goals.

The wellness team includes a representative from each school building, which is unique unto itself, and made possible by the efforts of the Child Nutrition Services (CNS) Director, Mrs. Gordon, and the schools' principals. Representatives include school teachers (K-8), PE teachers, representatives of the school nutrition program (director and nutritionist), school volunteers, and a community representative from SNAP-Ed through the Maricopa County Department of Public Health.



The committee started by using the Arizona Department of Education's Local Wellness Policy Activity and Assessment Tool, a self-assessment and planning tool, to conduct a needs assessment. The committee met regularly to identify the district's strengths, what goals were already being met, and where there was need for improvement and growth. The results were then used to develop an action plan for improvement that was finalized by the committee in December 2019.

Initial Action: Plans and Activities to Meet Local School Wellness Policy Goals

School Meals, Nutrition Education and Competitive Foods

The district's child nutrition director and nutritionist are members of the wellness committee and create menus that meet or exceed USDA federal and state guidelines. Menus focus on whole grains, lean proteins, low-fat dairy, setting minimum and maximum levels of calories, reducing saturated fats and sodium,

and increasing the amount and variety of fruits and vegetables. To help increase fruit and vegetable consumption, students are allowed to take as many fresh fruits and vegetables as they would like. In addition, through requests from parents, teachers, and students, a first-ever plant-based menu option was introduced at lunchtime as well as organic soy milk, which can be purchased a la carte. Nutrition education is also offered in the cafeterias. The *Nutrition Spotlight* is published at least twice monthly and highlights a variety of foods that are offered in the cafeteria.

To further improve menu quality, the CNS Department has partnered with the Life Time Foundation. Through the partnership, LESD has committed to work on eliminating certain ingredients of concern from its menus. In return, the Life Time Foundation will provide grant funding for the CNS Department, which will be used, in part, towards professional development and culinary training. The goal through this partnership is to improve efficiency in the kitchens, develop cafeteria staff's culinary skills, increase scratch cooking, and sequentially eliminate the targeted ingredients. Ultimately, these changes result in healthier students, which leads to a healthier community and future.

The wellness committee is currently working to ensure all foods served and sold to students during the school day meet, at a minimum, the USDA's Smart Snacks in Schools guidelines. Committee members are working with their individual school sites to help ensure that foods on the school campus are healthy and meet requirements. In addition, the CNS Department helps schools with large, school-sponsored events, such as school-wide BBQs, by supplying foods and beverages that are already in compliance and are more cost effective. The CNS Department also works with outside organizations who bring in food to assure all foods and recipes meet requirements.

Physical Activity

To ensure students are getting enough physical activity, students have opportunities to be active before, during, and after school. All schools are open before classes begin and students are able to play and enjoy the school grounds. Laveen Elementary School has implemented a yoga program and yoga is offered to both students and staff before school begins, three days a week for

30 minutes. Throughout the day on all or most days, teachers offer students periodic opportunities to be physically active or to stretch, and teachers serve as role models by being physically active alongside students whenever possible.

All PE classes are taught by licensed teachers who are certified or endorsed to teach physical education. Depending on what school, which varies from site to site, elementary students have mandatory 40 to 50-minute PE classes that rotate with Art, Music, and Technology. Some schools require mandatory PE classes for at least 1 semester for middle school students, and all schools do offer PE as an elective.

PE teachers create thoughtful and age-appropriate physical education programs that are consistent with national and state standards, and encourage students to be moderately to vigorously active for at least 50% of class time. To maintain credentials and be up-to-date on current research and trends, all PE teachers at the district have access to professional development at least once per year.

To view the entire wellness policy supplement and tracking tool, please visit our district website.

Learn More

Laveen Elementary School District:

www.laveenschools.org

Arizona Department of Education: www.azed.gov

Life Time Foundation: www.lifetimefoundation.org

USDA SNAP-Ed Connection:

www.snaped.fns.usda.gov

