

Rising Tide Charter Public School Wellness Policy August 2024

Rising Tide Charter Public School (Rising Tide) promotes a healthy school environment by supporting whole school wellness as a part of the total learning environment. Our Wellness Policy is aligned with the [Whole School Whole Community Whole Child](#) framework which aims to improve each child's cognitive, physical, social, and emotional development. This model consists of ten components that address the symbiotic relationship between learning and health. These components encompass the commitment that Rising Tide has made to provide a comprehensive learning environment for developing and practicing lifelong wellness behaviors. A healthy school climate recognizes the diversity within the school community and is inclusive of each student, family, and staff member regardless of race, color, sex, gender identity, homelessness, religion, national origin, disability, or sexual orientation.

I. Physical Education and Physical Activity

Rising Tide recognizes the importance of promoting and maintaining the student's physical fitness and the impact that being physically fit will have on the prevention of conditions and diseases that are known to be associated with poor physical health. The healthy, physically active student is more likely to be academically successful.

- Students are given opportunities for physical activity during the school day through a variety of courses including Physical Education, Dance and Theater, and various elective courses.
- Students will be given opportunities for physical activity through after-school sports and clubs.
- Rising Tide will encourage parents and guardians to support their children's participation in physical activity, be physically active role models, and include physical activity in family events.
- Our physical education curriculum for grades 5-12 is aligned with the Massachusetts Comprehensive Health Frameworks and teaches students skills needed for lifelong physical fitness. This curriculum is reviewed annually by Rising Tide staff.
- All Rising Tide students receive physical education instruction throughout the school year and are taught by a teacher who is certified to teach physical education.
- Rising Tide does not allow students to be exempt from physical education time or credit but may adjust the curriculum for students who have medical issues; in the Upper School, students who participate in two or more after-school sports in a year may apply for a Plymouth Fitness waiver.
- Rising Tide provides daily physical activity breaks during the school day in the form of middle school recess.
- In addition to recess, Rising Tide teachers are encouraged to provide students with brief brain and movement breaks during class time.
- Rising Tide has agreements with community facilities to provide physical activity programming.

- Rising Tide develops comprehensive school physical activity programs that address family and community engagement in physical activity.
- Rising Tide teachers are encouraged to utilize movement in their classes whenever possible, including use of the school grounds when appropriate to the curriculum.

II. Nutrition Environment and Services

Rising Tide's nutrition environment provides students with opportunities to learn about and practice healthy eating through available foods and beverages, nutrition education, and messages about food in the cafeteria and throughout the school campus. Students may have access to foods and beverages in a variety of venues at school including the cafeteria, vending machines, classroom parties, school celebrations, and fundraisers.

Rising Tide's school nutrition services provide meals that meet federal nutrition standards for the National School Lunch and Breakfast Programs, accommodate the health and nutrition needs of all students, and help ensure that foods and beverages sold outside of the school meal programs (i.e., competitive foods) meet [Smart Snacks in School Nutrition Standards](#) and Massachusetts Nutrition Standards. All individuals in the Rising Tide community support a healthy school nutrition environment by marketing and promoting healthier foods and beverages, encouraging participation in the school meal programs, role-modeling healthy eating behaviors, and making sure that students have access to free drinking water throughout the school day.

Healthy eating has been linked in studies to improved learning outcomes and helps ensure that students are able to reach their potential.

Standards for USDA Child Nutrition Programs and School Meals

Rising Tide strongly encourages the sale or distribution of nutrient-dense foods for all school functions and activities. Nutrient-dense foods are those foods that provide students with calories rich in the nutrient content needed to be healthy. Rising Tide has adopted the following Nutrition Standards governing the sale of food, beverage, and candy on school grounds based upon the [Nutrition Standards in the National School Lunch and School Breakfast Programs](#). Rising Tide offers healthy meals every day at no cost to all students, including lunch and the USDA School Breakfast Program on any given day¹ without having to order ahead of time. The school receives funding for this program from the USDA and the Commonwealth of Massachusetts. At the beginning of each academic year, Rising Tide sends applications for free/reduced priced meals to students and their families and makes the application is accessible to families through our school website.

Rising Tide works closely with a food service vendor that follows the USDA's Smarter Lunchroom tools and other resources available on the USDA website such as the [Breakfast and](#)

¹ *Per [Smart Snacks in School](#), the school day is defined as the midnight before to 30 minutes after the end of the school day.*

[Lunch Meal Pattern Tables](#). Through our vendor, the nutrition program directors, managers and staff meet all hiring and annual continuing education/training requirements in the [USDA Professional Standards](#) for Child Nutrition Professionals. In addition to following the [Breakfast and Lunch Meal Pattern Tables](#) the following guidelines are in place regarding food and beverages:

- Low fat milk, water, and 100% fruit juices may be sold on school grounds both prior to and throughout the instructional day.
- Through our Comprehensive Health curriculum, students will explore the effects of sugar and caffeine on their bodies and will be encouraged to be mindful about beverage choices.
- Drinking fountains are available for students to have access to water throughout the day.
- It is recognized that there may be rare special occasions when the appropriate Principal may allow a school group to deviate from these guidelines as long as the food is served and not sold.
- Any food brought in by staff or parents for distribution to students must meet the Nutrition Standards and must have prior approval by a School Leader.
- A School Leader is allowed to make exceptions to the Nutrition Standards on a case by case basis. Exceptions can be made with prior approval from administration.
- No candy is to be distributed on school premises by teachers or parents. Exceptions can be made with prior approval by school administration.

Lunch Time

The lunch time environment provides students with a relaxed, enjoyable climate, in which students have the following:

- Adequate space to eat and pleasant surroundings
- Adequate time for meals
- Convenient access to hand-cleaning facilities before and after meals
- Available drinking fountains so that students have access to water
- Protection of the identity of any student who participates in the free and reduced lunch program

Nutrition Standards for Competitive and Other Foods and Beverages

Rising Tide follows the [Massachusetts and USDA Competitive Foods and Beverage Nutrition Standards](#) for all foods and beverages sold to students in the building during the school day, including foods and beverages sold through school fundraisers. No exemptions can be made for competitive food and beverages sold and intended for consumption during the school day that do not meet the nutrition standards.

If applicable, food and beverages sold à la carte items in school stores, snack bars, and vending machines will also follow the nutrition standards. Vending sales of soda, caffeinated beverages, or artificially sweetened drinks will not be permitted on school grounds. The non-vending sale of soda, caffeinated beverages, or artificially sweetened drinks will not be permitted on school grounds both prior to the start of the school day and throughout the

instructional day, but will be occasionally permitted at those special school events that begin after the conclusion of the instructional day. Vending sales of candy will not be permitted on school grounds.

Foods and beverages sold during fundraisers, intended for consumption outside of school hours (ig: cookie dough, frozen meals, large quantities), or sold at events held after school hours, off campus, or on weekends, such as school plays or sporting events do not need to meet the Smart Snacks nutrition standards. Fundraisers that sell non-food items do not need to meet the Smart Snacks nutrition standards. Alternative fundraising options include but are not limited to: selling books, school apparel, candles, activities, etc... For more fundraising ideas that sell non-food and beverage items or food and beverages that meet the Smart Snacks nutrition standards, please download this [PDF](#) and start planning a potential fundraising event. Rising Tide prohibits fundraisers that promote any specific brands or companies.

Promotion and Marketing

Rising Tide prohibits the promotion and marketing of any foods that do not meet the Smart Snacks nutrition guidelines, as well as the promotion and marketing of any food brands or food and beverage companies. The school will promote healthy food choices through images posted throughout the cafeteria space and other common areas. Any marketing or promotion of foods will be consistent with the Smart Snacks nutrition guidelines. When selecting educational materials, staff will consider any advertising of food or beverages.

Food or Physical Activity as a Reward or Punishment

- The school prohibits the use of food as a reward or punishment in the school.
- The school encourages the use of physical activity as an alternative to food rewards.
- The school will not deny student participation in physical activities as a form of discipline.

III. Health Education

Rising Tide Health Education follows the Massachusetts Comprehensive Health Curriculum frameworks for grades 5-12. Lessons are taught by members of the Wellness Team at Rising Tide. As a part of our education for students the Wellness team often will invite experts in the field to deliver content. The Rising Tide Wellness Team provides education on making health-promoting decisions, achieving health literacy, embracing healthy behaviors, and promoting the health of others. Our curriculum covers subject matters such as alcohol and other substance abuse, healthy eating and nutrition, mental health and mental illness, personal health and wellness, physical activity, safety and injury prevention, sexual health and violence prevention.

All students receive social-emotional health services, including classroom activities and support, and preventative education through the wellness curriculum in an effort to enhance and promote academic, personal, and social-emotional growth. For example, students attend

wellness lessons 1-3 times a week to discuss topics such as suicide and mental health awareness, substance abuse, and healthy relationships. During these lessons, students work with school or community mental health professionals.

Student Nutrition Education

Through the Comprehensive Health curriculum, staff members explore nutrition with students, emphasizing the health benefits of good nutrition. Students gain the knowledge and skills necessary to promote health and how to apply them to real world situations. Students acquire skills through activities like nutrition label reading and meal planning. Nutrition education is provided in wellness lessons as well as integrated throughout the broader curriculum at Rising Tide. Nutrition is integrated into the school environment with posters around the lunch room giving nutrition facts and brochures outside the health suite on healthy eating. Students receive education about agriculture and the food system through activities on growing vegetables and researching where their own food is coming from.

Parent/Guardian Nutrition Education

Nutrition education provided to parents includes:

- Knowledge of healthy diet information, healthy heart choices, and resources where nutritional information is available.
- Nutrition education may be provided in the form of handouts, postings on the website, or presentations that focus on nutritional value and healthy lifestyles.
- Parents/Guardians are encouraged to follow the school's [Nutrition Standards](#) when sending food to school with students. Nutrient dense foods such as whole grains, fresh fruits, and vegetables are excellent choices for snacks and lunch.

IV. Social and Emotional School Climate

Rising Tide provides a school environment that promotes social and emotional learning and promotes effective social and emotional development. The school recognizes the importance of developing age appropriate social and emotional skills and the positive impact that these skills have on a student's growth and development, including the ability for students to engage appropriately in the school environment, make effective academic progress and build supportive relationships with all members of the school community. The school utilizes the advisory curriculum to educate students about social and emotional topics through wellness lessons and community building lessons. Advisory time also serves to create a safe space for students to engage in challenging conversations. Staff at Rising Tide have been trained in the importance of promoting social and emotional development and ways to incorporate social and emotional learning in the classroom. Social and emotional learning is addressed within academic classes throughout the school day using practices such as daily check-ins with students and addressing social and emotional concepts related to the curriculum area. This culture of promoting the social and emotional well being of all students ensures that all students feel supported throughout their school day.

V. Physical Environment

Rising Tide provides a healthy and safe physical school environment and promotes learning by ensuring the health and safety of students and staff. The health suite is managed by the Nurse Leader, with support from a part-timer nurse to provide care to both students and staff. The physical school environment encompasses the school building and its contents, the land on which the school is located, and the area surrounding it. Our healthy school environment addresses the school's physical condition during normal operation as well as during renovation. The school buildings and grounds meet required health and safety standards, including environmental air quality, keeping them inviting, safe, and in good repair. The air and water in the building are regularly tested and maintained. An increased air filtration system has been installed to continue to improve air quality.

Rising Tide protects occupants from physical threats (e.g., crime, violence, traffic, and injuries) by working closely with the Plymouth Police Department and employing traffic guards for arrival and dismissal. Rising Tide also works with staff, students, and when appropriate, community resources and law enforcement to maintain a school environment that is free of tobacco, alcohol, and other drugs. Rising Tide practices drills for both fires and intruder situations under the guidance of the Plymouth police and fire department. We have a Crisis Response Team that meets regularly to go over protocols for emergency situations. AEDs and trauma kits are located throughout the building and are on site for sporting events. Staff are provided with training on appropriate safety procedures as outlined in our Safety Manual (e.g., Life Threatening Allergies, Blood Borne Pathogens, First Aid, CPR, use of AEDs and trauma kits, Nuclear Emergency, and Restraint Training). Rising Tide follows all protocols to respond to biological and chemical agents in the air, water, or soil as well as those purposefully brought into the school (e.g., pollution, mold, hazardous materials, pesticides, and cleaning agents).

VI. Health Services

Rising Tide health services has a health suite managed by the Nurse Leader with support from a part-time nurse. The nursing staff intervenes with actual and potential health problems, including providing first aid, emergency care and assessment and planning for the management of chronic conditions (such as asthma or diabetes). Wellness promotion is done through lessons for all grades 5-12, preventive services such as flu clinics for staff and screenings for students. Parent/Guardian education is done through community events as well as individual support as needed. Health services connect school staff, students, families, community and healthcare providers to promote the health care of students and a healthy and safe school environment. School health services work with other school staff and community support services to ensure the student is receiving all the support required to adapt to health and social stressors. Referrals will be made to outside services when the student or family requires additional support for chronic health conditions or social and economic barriers to health, in order to be able to manage these stressors and advocate for their own health and learning needs. The school nurses attend student support and grade

level team meetings, as well as 504 accommodation plan meetings and IEP meetings when necessary, to ensure the student's health is taken into consideration. Our school nurses provide these services under the direction of the school physician and work closely with other school nurses in the area as well at the Department of Public Health at the local and state level.

VII. Counseling, Psychological and Social Services

Counseling, psychological, and social services are provided to assess and improve the mental, emotional, and social health of every student at Rising Tide. All students have access to the school adjustment counselors to process an immediate or on-going stressor and learn more individualized skills to manage emotions, problem-solve, self-advocate, and improve conflict resolution. Students who need more targeted support may have services that include but are not limited to psychological, psychoeducational, and psychosocial assessments; direct and indirect interventions to address psychological, academic, and social barriers to learning, such as individual or group counseling and consultation; and referrals to school and community support services as needed. Rising Tide has certified or licensed support staff to provide these services either by division (Middle School 5-8 and Upper School 9-12) or the whole school grades 5-12. These professional staff include a Lead Counselor, an Adjustment Counselor, a Wellness Counselor, a School Psychologist, and several paraprofessionals. Additionally, Rising Tide has piloted partnerships with local counseling agencies to provide school-based counseling services to students.

Rising Tide promotes student's social emotional health in grade level team meetings and the student support teams, which occur on a weekly basis to discuss students strengths and concerns related to academic and social-emotional needs, and possible interventions to increase the student's success. Additionally, Rising Tide's counseling and support professionals provide on-going skilled consultation with other school staff and community providers, and also share community resources and events with families and students.

VIII. Employee Wellness

Rising Tide encourages all staff to engage in activities that promote overall wellness and to model healthy eating and physical activity. Staff are provided with a range of resources through promotional material in the staff lounge, including, but not limited to, tips for managing stress, recipes and ideas for healthy meal planning, school sponsored healthy eating events and information about local workshops and classes related to physical or mental health. Staff are also encouraged to seek help with referrals for mental health services by our Wellness Team.

Rising Tide promotes staff physical activity through promotional rates at Plymouth Fitness and through the fitness reimbursement program through school sponsored insurance. Staff are also provided the opportunity to participate in CPR training, an annual flu clinic and free yoga classes each week at the school.

IX. Community Involvement

Staff and students at Rising Tide have various collaborations with agencies/schools and various non-profits such as: Independence Academy, Minding Your Mind, Plymouth Youth Development Collaborative, South Shore Resource and Advocacy Center, Beth Israel Deaconess Plymouth, Plymouth Area Coalition, Beacon Hospice, Plymouth Family Resource Center, Healthy Plymouth, Wildlands Trust, Emeritus Nursing Home, Plymouth Beach, Rosie's Place, Whale and Dolphin Conservation, Black Feather Horse Rescue, Pine Barrens Association, National Marine Life Center in Bourne, Camp Wing and South Shore Head Start. These collaborations include connections made through guest speakers for Wellness lessons on social, emotional and physical health, volunteer opportunities through various Service Learning opportunities and connections to support our Discover and Expo curriculum in the middle school.

X. Family Engagement

Several staff members at Rising Tide are involved in our family engagement activities. Our Advisory program is structured to have ongoing communication with parents/guardians about student issues. Our conferences held twice a year bring families into the building to meet face to face with Advisors. Our weekly Monday Memo is sent out to all families to update them on events at the school. Our Wellness Team works to provide parent/guardian education on various mental health topics throughout the year. Our Special Education Director works to engage families through SEPAC (Special Education Parent Advisory Council) meetings four times a year. Our Academic Dean provides education for parents on various curriculum tools available to students. Our Head of School and Principal work with our Parent Group to provide support and offer opportunities for families to be more involved in our community. Our Athletic Director works with families to get them more involved in Homecoming and various alumni events. Our teaching staff offers opportunities for parents/guardians to come into the building during student showcase events at the end of each semester. Our whole staff works together to offer four Open Houses per year to help recruit new families to our program. In addition we offer open houses at the beginning of the year for existing families to come into the building, meet teachers and learn about our Philosophy of Practice and curriculum. Our Health Advisory Committee meets four times per year to review the social, emotional and physical health of our community. Our Future Planning Counselor hosts events for college and career planning.

Implementation, Evaluation & Communication: Health Advisory Committee

The purpose of the Health Advisory Committee is to ensure that Rising Tide has an established group of school staff and concerned community representatives to recommend, review, and help implement policies addressing school nutrition, nutrition education, physical activity, and related issues that affect student health. The committee will make efforts to recruit parents/guardians, students, Physical Education teachers, school food authority representatives, school health professionals, school board members, administrators and

members of the general public. The Health Advisory Committee will meet four times per year and will assess the implementation of this policy, and, as necessary, revise the policy. In addition, the Health Advisory Committee will conduct a quantitative assessment of this policy every three years using the Wellness School Assessment Tool. The results of this triennial assessment will be made available to the public and will include the extent to which Rising Tide is in compliance with the school wellness policy, how it compares to other model school wellness policies, and a description of the progress made in attaining the goals of our wellness policy. The Wellness Team shall be responsible for ensuring that the Wellness Policy is implemented throughout Rising Tide and will make sure that it is posted on our website so that it is available to our whole community.