ST. THOMAS THE APOSTLE SCHOOL

West Springfield, Massachusetts

LOCAL SCHOOL WELLNESS POLICY

Preschool–Grade 8 | Proposed for 2026–2027

I. Mission and Purpose

Rooted in our Catholic faith and respect for the dignity of every child, St. Thomas the Apostle School promotes the physical, intellectual, emotional, social, and spiritual well-being of students. This policy establishes schoolwide goals and practices for nutrition, physical activity, and a supportive learning environment, consistent with applicable requirements of the National School Lunch Program.

II. Nutrition and School Meals

1. Meals served through the National School Lunch Program will meet applicable USDA meal-pattern and nutrition requirements.
2. Students may receive school lunch or bring lunch from home. Families providing lunches are encouraged to include a variety of nutritious foods.
3. Students will have a reasonable opportunity to eat in a clean, welcoming setting. Free drinking water will be available during meal service as required.
4. Staff will encourage handwashing and positive, non-stigmatizing attitudes toward food and participation in school meals.

III. Peanut-Free and Tree Nut-Free Environment

St. Thomas the Apostle School maintains a peanut-free and tree nut-free school environment. This restriction applies to lunches, snacks, classroom treats, and food supplied for school activities.

5. Peanuts, peanut butter, tree nuts, and foods containing these ingredients may not be brought to school. Families should check ingredient labels before sending food.
6. Students may not share or exchange food. Families should communicate known allergies to the school nurse and provide required health plans and prescribed emergency medication.
7. School personnel will follow individual allergy action plans and established emergency procedures. Appropriate staff will receive training on recognizing and responding to allergic reactions.
8. Reasonable precautions will be taken to reduce exposure, but an entirely allergen-free environment cannot be guaranteed.

IV. Nutrition Education and Promotion

9. Teachers will integrate developmentally appropriate nutrition concepts into classroom learning where feasible.
10. The school will encourage balanced eating, hydration, and healthy lifelong habits without labeling children or foods in a shaming manner.
11. At least once each school year, the school will share nutrition or wellness information with families through a newsletter, school communication, or educational activity.

V. Physical Education and Activity

12. Preschool through Grade 8 students will participate in scheduled physical education classes emphasizing movement, fitness, coordination, teamwork, and sportsmanship.
13. Preschool through Grade 8 students will have daily recess opportunities, subject to weather, safety, and scheduling needs. Indoor movement opportunities may be used when outdoor play is impractical.
14. All students will have developmentally appropriate active play opportunities in addition to physical education.
15. Staff will provide reasonable accommodations for students with documented needs.

VI. Birthdays, Celebrations, and Food Practices

16. Classroom birthday treats and approved holiday celebrations may continue, provided all food complies with the school's peanut-free and tree nut-free requirements and applicable allergy precautions.
17. Families are encouraged to consider nutritious or nonfood celebration options; students will not be required to eat celebration foods.
18. Foods and beverages sold to students on campus during the federally defined school day, outside reimbursable meals, will meet applicable federal Smart Snacks standards and Massachusetts requirements, including any lawful exemptions.
19. Food and beverage advertising or marketing on campus during the school day will be limited to items meeting applicable Smart Snacks standards.

VII. Emotional, Social, and Spiritual Well-Being

The school supports wellness through prayer, religious instruction, liturgies, respectful relationships, service, kindness, compassion, and age-appropriate social-emotional learning. Staff will communicate concerns about a student's well-being to families and appropriate school personnel while respecting confidentiality.

VIII. Student Health and Safety

The school will maintain applicable procedures for health records, medication administration, illness prevention, emergency response, and food allergy management. The school nurse and administration will coordinate with families as appropriate.

IX. Wellness Leadership and Participation

The Principal will identify school personnel responsible for implementing this policy. The school will invite participation from teachers, school nutrition personnel, school health professionals, and administrators, in developing, reviewing, and updating the policy.

X. Measurable Goals and Monitoring

20. Nutrition education: Document at least one schoolwide or grade-appropriate nutrition learning or family communication activity annually.
21. Physical activity: Review class schedules annually to confirm physical education for Preschool–Grade 8 and daily recess opportunities for Kindergarten–Grade 8.
22. Nutrition environment: Review school meal compliance and any covered food/beverage sales annually with the school nutrition program administrator.
23. Allergy awareness: Communicate peanut-free and tree nut-free expectations to families at the start of each school year and when necessary thereafter.

XI. Public Notice, Assessment, and Records

24. The school will make this policy publicly available and notify families and the school community annually of its content and implementation.
25. At least once every three years, the responsible school food authority will assess compliance, compare this policy with a model local school wellness policy, and evaluate progress toward stated goals. Results will be made publicly available.
26. The school will maintain the policy, records of public involvement and annual notification, documentation of implementation, and triennial assessments as required by federal rules.
27. The policy will be reviewed and updated as needed, in coordination with the school nutrition program administrator and applicable diocesan or school authorities.

XII. Commitment

By supporting nutritious meals, active lifestyles, safe food practices, healthy relationships, and spiritual growth, St. Thomas the Apostle School seeks to help students develop habits that honor the gifts God has given them.

Approval and Review

Policy adoption date: November 1, 2026

Effective date: November 1, 2026

Wellness coordinator: Elizabeth Hawley

Principal / authorized approver: Elizabeth Hawley

Most recent review: 11/1/2026

Next triennial assessment due: 11/1/2029

Administrative note: Draft for review before adoption. Confirm the responsible school food authority, Massachusetts nutrition requirements, and local implementation procedures.