

WELLSAT POLICY INSTRUCTIONS

The WellSAT Policy is an online tool to assess local school wellness policies. It encompasses components of the [Whole School, Whole Community, Whole Child](#) (or WSCC) model that are relevant to local school wellness policies, as outlined by the [USDA's Final Rule for Local School Wellness Policy Implementation](#). It includes six sections: Federal Requirements, Nutrition Environment and Services, Nutrition Education, Physical Education and Physical Activity, Employee Wellness, and Integration and Coordination.

Please review the guidance for finding your policy documents, found [here](#).

SCORING ITEMS

Each policy item is rated "0," "1," or "2." The WellSAT lists each policy item, followed by an explanation of the item and examples of text from real policies that would be rated "1" and "2".

0

A zero means the item is not included in the text of the policy.

1

Assign a rating of "1" when the item is mentioned, but

- The policy will be hard to enforce because the statement is vague, unclear, or confusing
- Statements are listed as goals, aspirations, suggestions, or recommendations
- There are loopholes in the policy that weaken enforcement of the item, or
- The policy mentions a future plan to act without specifying when the plan will be established.

Words often used in statements rated as a "1": may, can, could, should, might, encourage, suggest, urge, some, partial, make an effort, and try.

2

Assign a rating of "2" when the item is mentioned and it is clear that the policymakers are committed to making the item happen because:

- Strong language is used to indicate that action or regulation is required, and
- The item is described with concrete plans or strategies for implementation

Words often used in statements rated as a "2": shall, will, must, have to, insist, require, all, total, comply and enforce.

One method for deciding between assigning a rating of "1" or "2" is to consider the scenario of a parent approaching a school district’s Board of Education to discuss an issue. If the policy is ambiguous on how the school should handle the issue, assign the item a rating of "1." If the written policy gives clear guidance about how to decide whether the school is compliant with the policy, assign the item a rating of "2."

Here are examples of language from two policies that relate to not using food as a reward.

“... will **encourage** non-food alternatives or healthy foods as student rewards”

The first example states that the district “will encourage non-food alternatives or healthy foods as student rewards.” This statement would receive a rating of “1” because it is weakened by the word “encourage.”

The second example states that “food rewards or incentives shall not be used in classrooms to encourage desirable behavior.” This statement uses strong, enforceable language, so it receives a rating of “2.”

“Food rewards or incentives **shall not be used** in classrooms to encourage desirable behavior”

TWO TYPES OF SCORES: COMPREHENSIVENESS AND STRENGTH

The WellSAT produces two scores upon your completion of the assessment: a **comprehensiveness** score, reflecting the extent to which recommended content areas are covered in the policy; and a **strength** score, reflecting how strongly the content is stated.

Comprehensiveness indicates how many topics the policy covers. Strength indicates how many topics the policy covers with strong, specific language that requires that actions be taken.

Comprehensiveness	Strength
Percent of items on scale addressed in some way in the policy	Percent of items on scale required by the wellness policy
Percent of items scored a “1” or a “2”	Percent of items scored a “2”
Shows how many topics the policy covers	Shows how many topics are covered in a required, specific manner in the policy

IMPORTANT

It is important to remember not to treat comprehensiveness and strength scores as grades. There are no “passing” or “failing” scores, and you should not communicate your results as a letter grade.

In our research with a sample of 50 districts from across the country, **the average comprehensiveness score was 54 out of 100 and the average strength score was 33 out of 100.**

These scores are included on your scorecard so that you can compare the overall quality of your policy across assessments. If, for example, you are completing a triennial assessment, you can use these scores to quickly determine whether your policy has generally improved since your last assessment, stayed the same, or fallen behind.

Example	
2021	2024
Comp: 56	→ Comp: 60
Strength: 30	Strength: 33

NAVIGATING THE WELLSAT POLICY TOOL

The WellSAT has six sections: Federal Requirements, Nutrition Environment and Services, Nutrition Education, Physical Education and Physical Activity, Employee Wellness, and Integration and Coordination. You can navigate between these sections by clicking the circles at the top of the page, or the Next and Back buttons at the bottom of the page.

Each item shows guidance on how to score policy language pertaining to a specific topic. Click to select a score. The guidance will automatically collapse once you choose a score, but you can expand it again by clicking the item text to change your score. You can also expand or contract all item guidance by clicking the button at the bottom of the page.

CSPAP AND FARM TO SCHOOL ITEMS



Items that address components of the Comprehensive School Physical Activity Program are marked with an icon of a running person.



Items that address components of Farm to School are marked with an icon of a watering can.

SCORECARD

This is how your WellSAT Policy scorecard will appear.

This will be automatically generated when you complete the WellSAT online. It details your scores for each item, highlights any federally required items with a score of “0” (indicating that updates to the written policy are necessary), and calculates comprehensiveness and strength scores.

If you are only assessing your policy, congratulations! You are done. However, if you are completing a triennial assessment or would otherwise like to assess your practices, you should proceed to the WellSAT Practice measure.

The screenshot shows the WellSAT website interface. At the top, there is a navigation bar with 'WellSAT' and links for Home, About, Triennial Assessment, Resources, FAQ, and Contact. On the right, there are links for Dashboard, Log Out, and Register. The main content area is titled 'Your District's Scorecard' and 'Policy Assessment Name: Triennial Assessment 2 (10/2024)'. Below this, it says 'District Name: None'. A congratulatory message follows: 'Congratulations! You have completed the WellSAT. Check out your scorecard below. It contains details of how you scored on each item and section of the assessment. It also provides resources that will help you improve your district's school wellness policy.' A note mentions that items with a rating of '0' (not addressed) or '1' (general/weak statement) can be improved by referring to resource links. A red banner states: 'You should update your policy and practices to ensure that you are compliant with federal requirements.' The main table is titled 'Section 1. Federal Requirements' and has a 'Rating' column. The table lists 13 items (FR1-FR13) with their descriptions and ratings. FR1-FR12 have ratings of 2, 2, 2, 2, 0, 0, 2, 2, 2, 1, 1, and 0 respectively. FR13 has a rating of 2. The description for FR13 is: 'Addresses how all relevant stakeholders (parents, students, representatives of the school food authority, teachers of physical education, school health professionals, the school board, school administrator, and the general public) will participate in the development, implementation, and periodic review and update of the local wellness policy. Federal Rule language states that the policy must include "a description of the manner in which parents, students, representatives of the school food authority, teachers of physical education, school health professionals, the school board, school administrators, and the general public are provided an opportunity to participate in the development, implementation, and periodic review and update of the local school wellness policy."'

		Rating
FR1	Includes goals for nutrition education that are designed to promote student wellness.	2
FR2	Assures compliance with USDA nutrition standards for reimbursable school meals.	2
FR3	District/school/institution takes steps to protect the privacy of students who qualify for free or reduced priced meals.	2
FR4	Free drinking water is available during meals.	2
FR5	Ensures annual training for food and nutrition services staff in accordance with USDA Professional Standards.	0
FR6	Addresses compliance with USDA nutrition standards (commonly referred to as Smart Snacks) for all food and beverages sold to students during the school day. The school day begins at midnight the night before and goes until 30 minutes after the final bell.	0
FR7	Regulates food and beverages sold in a la carte.	2
FR8	Regulates food and beverages sold in vending machines.	2
FR9	Regulates food and beverages sold in school stores.	2
FR10	Addresses fundraising with food to be consumed during the school day.	1
FR11	Regulates food and beverages served at class parties and other school celebrations in elementary schools. Use N/A if no elementary schools in district.	1
FR12	Restricts marketing on the school campus during the school day to only those foods and beverages that meet Smart Snacks standards.	0
FR13	Addresses how all relevant stakeholders (parents, students, representatives of the school food authority, teachers of physical education, school health professionals, the school board, school administrator, and the general public) will participate in the development, implementation, and periodic review and update of the local wellness policy. Federal Rule language states that the policy must include "a description of the manner in which parents, students, representatives of the school food authority, teachers of physical education, school health professionals, the school board, school administrators, and the general public are provided an opportunity to participate in the development, implementation, and periodic review and update of the local school wellness policy."	2

TRIENNIAL ASSESSMENT

If you are completing a triennial assessment, completing the WellSAT Policy is your first step in the process.

When you complete this step, you will have compared your wellness policy to a model policy and assessed compliance with federal requirements in your written policy.

CONGRATULATIONS!

You have completed the WellSAT Policy.