LOCAL SCHOOL WELLNESS POLICY

School Year: **2026–2027**
700 S. Hawthorne Street
Chattanooga, TN 37404
Status: Effective
Effective Date: **August 3, 2026**

1. PURPOSE AND SCOPE

Montessori Elementary at Highland Park (MEHP) is committed to the physical, social, emotional, and academic well-being of every student. Consistent with Montessori principles, MEHP will foster healthy habits through purposeful movement, nutrition education, independence, and an inclusive, supportive school environment.

This policy applies to students, employees, school food service operations, and school-sponsored activities on campus during the school day. It supports applicable USDA Child Nutrition Program requirements and Tennessee school nutrition review expectations.

2. OVERSIGHT AND SCHOOL HEALTH ADVISORY COUNCIL

The MEHP School Leader/Principal or written designee is accountable for implementation and compliance. The designated School Nutrition/Wellness Coordinator will maintain records, coordinate assessments, and serve as the public contact.

MEHP will convene a School Health Advisory Council (SHAC) at least twice each school year to review wellness priorities, implementation data, and improvements.

MEHP will invite caregivers, students when developmentally appropriate, school nutrition representatives, physical education teachers, health professionals, classroom educators, specialized support staff, administrators, governing body members, and the general public.

The school will maintain meeting invitations, agendas, attendance, minutes, and action items.

Accountable Official: Dr. Ronnie Christian
Title: Chief of Staff
Wellness Coordinator: Eura Pierre
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3. SCHOOL MEALS AND WATER ACCESS

Meals served through the National School Lunch Program and, if operated, School Breakfast Program will meet current USDA meal-pattern and nutrition requirements, including fruits, vegetables, grains, protein foods, and milk.

MEHP will make free potable drinking water available where meals are served during meal service and promote hydration throughout the school day.

Meals will be offered without discrimination or stigma. Required disability-related meal accommodations will be provided according to applicable regulations.

Students will receive sufficient time to obtain and eat meals in a safe, clean, positive environment. Staff will encourage healthy food choices without shaming students.

The school nutrition program will retain required menus, production records, meal counts, and nutrition documentation.

4. **COMPETITIVE FOODS, BEVERAGES, AND FUNDRAISING**

All foods and beverages sold to students on campus during the school day outside reimbursable meals, including vending, school stores, à la carte, and applicable fundraisers, must meet current USDA Smart Snacks standards unless a valid state-authorized exemption applies.

MEHP will review product labels or compliance documentation before sale and retain supporting records.

Any exempt fundraiser will be documented, including date, sponsor, and authorization. The coordinator will verify the current Tennessee exemption allowance before applying it. Exempt days cannot be carried over.

5. **FOODS OFFERED, CELEBRATIONS, AND REWARDS**

MEHP will encourage fruits, vegetables, whole-grain foods, water, and age-appropriate nutritious options for foods offered but not sold during the school day.

Classroom celebrations will prioritize nonfood activities. When food is provided, options consistent with Smart Snacks will be encouraged where practical, considering allergies, disability accommodations, and food safety.

Families will receive guidance on classroom snacks and celebrations. Food will not be withheld as punishment. Nonfood rewards such as recognition, books, leadership opportunities, and movement-based activities will be encouraged.

6. **NUTRITION EDUCATION AND PROMOTION**

MEHP will integrate age-appropriate nutrition concepts into Montessori classroom experiences, including food preparation, gardening where feasible, food-group identification, reading labels, and practical-life lessons.

Educators will reinforce healthy breakfasts, balanced meals, hydration, and respectful attitudes toward food. Menus and wellness messages will be shared with families.

Measurable Goals:

1. *Each classroom will document at least two nutrition learning activities per semester.*
2. *MEHP will share at least one nutrition or healthy-eating communication with families each semester.*

7. **PHYSICAL EDUCATION, MOVEMENT, AND RECESS**

MEHP will provide developmentally appropriate physical education and activity opportunities consistent with applicable Tennessee standards and requirements.

Students will have opportunities for active play, recess, movement breaks, and Montessori movement integrated into instruction. Activities will be inclusive and adapted for students with disabilities as appropriate.

Physical activity will not be used as punishment. Routine movement opportunities will not be withheld for disciplinary reasons except where necessary for immediate safety.

Measurable Goal:

1. *Classroom schedules will reflect regular opportunities for daily movement or recess, with implementation reviewed at least once per semester.*

8. **OTHER SCHOOL-BASED WELLNESS ACTIVITIES**

MEHP will promote handwashing, food safety, positive dining environments, social-emotional wellness, and age-appropriate health education.

School personnel will model respectful, health-promoting practices. Wellness events may include family activity challenges, gardening, or healthy cooking demonstrations as resources permit.

Measurable Goal:

1. *MEHP will conduct at least one schoolwide wellness activity or family engagement initiative annually and retain evidence of participation.*

9. **FOOD AND BEVERAGE MARKETING**

Food and beverage advertising directed to students on campus during the school day, including posters, menu boards, branded equipment, vending displays, and similar materials, will be limited to items meeting USDA Smart Snacks standards.

MEHP will consider this requirement when entering or renewing relevant contracts and replacing branded equipment.

10. **COMMUNITY INVOLVEMENT AND PUBLIC NOTIFICATION**

MEHP will invite caregivers, students, school nutrition staff, teachers, health professionals, administrators, governing body representatives, and the public to participate in developing, implementing, reviewing, and updating this policy.

At least annually, MEHP will inform families and the public that the policy is available, describe substantive updates, identify the wellness contact, and explain how to provide feedback or participate.

Communication methods may include the school website, email, newsletters, posted notices, and other accessible formats. Translation and alternate formats will be provided as appropriate.

11. **ASSESSMENT, UPDATES, AND RECORD RETENTION**

At least once every three years, MEHP will complete and publicly release an assessment measuring:

- Compliance with this policy.
- Comparison with a model local school wellness policy.
- Progress toward the policy's wellness goals.

The SHAC and wellness coordinator will review findings and recommend revisions based on implementation data, stakeholder input, school needs, and updated requirements.

MEHP will retain:

- Current and prior adopted policies.
- Evidence of public availability and annual notification.
- Stakeholder invitations, participation, and meeting records.
- Implementation and goal-tracking documentation.
- Triennial assessments and evidence of public release.
- Policy updates and revision records.

12. **IMPLEMENTATION MONITORING**

a. Nutrition education: Lesson/activity logs, reviewed each semester.
b. Family nutrition outreach: Newsletter/email copies, reviewed each semester.
c. Physical activity: Classroom schedules and observation notes, reviewed each semester.
d. Wellness initiative: Event materials and participation, reviewed annually.
e. Stakeholder participation: SHAC invitations and minutes, reviewed twice annually.
f. Public notification: Dated website postings or email copies, reviewed annually.
g. Policy assessment: Triennial report and publication, reviewed every three years.
h. Smart Snacks and fundraising: Product checks and exemption logs, reviewed as applicable.

13. **SCHOOL NUTRITION REVIEW DOCUMENTATION CHECKLIST:**

☐ Signed and dated policy and prior versions, if any.
☐ Accountable official and wellness coordinator identified.
☐ SHAC invitations, membership, agendas, minutes, and feedback.
☐ Annual public notice and evidence of public access.
☐ Nutrition education and physical activity implementation records.
☐ Smart Snacks compliance and exempt fundraiser records, if applicable.
☐ Triennial assessment, comparison to model policy, progress measures, and public posting, when due.

Approved By: Ronnie Christian **School Official's Title**: COS

Date: 8/3/26