

# Wellness Policy Helps Alvord Unified Stay Strong on Smart Snacks

Beginning in 2004, Congress required all schools participating in federal child nutrition programs to create school wellness policies, which set goals and outline guidelines that help schools and districts protect and promote the health of their students.

In advance of Congress's latest update to school wellness policy requirements, the Alliance for a Healthier Generation created a [Model Wellness Policy](#) template to set schools on the path towards meeting the government's new guidelines.

Alvord Unified School District in Riverside, California, enrolled in the Alliance's Healthy Schools Program since 2013, took advantage of the new tool as a way to update its district wellness policy and further engage its schools in the Healthy Schools Program's six-step process.

**“Our wellness council helps us move the wellness policy forward and ensures that everyone is on the same page.”**

The district wellness council, which meets quarterly, is responsible for updating and approving the policy, ensuring that it aligns with state and federal standards. To create the district wellness council, at the beginning of each school year, principals nominate one wellness lead to represent each school. These wellness leads, in addition to representatives from child nutrition services, risk management, supporting organizations outside of the district, and several parents, round out a diverse council that represents the interests of the school and greater community.

But getting everyone to agree on a district-wide wellness policy is no easy task for the district, which is comprised of 23 schools serving more than 19,000 students. Patti Suppe, physical education teacher and wellness lead from Loma Vista Middle School, has been part of the wellness council since

its inception 13 years ago. “It took us two years to write our first wellness policy,” she said. “We had to start from scratch and a lot of people were fighting having a policy at all so it didn't provide a lot of guidelines.”

**“The Model Wellness Policy was very valuable in convincing our administration that we needed to strengthen our policy.”**

Director of Child Nutrition Services Eric Holliday was hired by the district in 2014 while the policy was being revised. He's grateful for the guidance he received from Healthy Schools Program Manager Stephanie Roberts who helped the committee bridge the Alliance's new Model Wellness Policy with the existing district policy.

School staff were most wary of removing unhealthy snacks from classroom celebrations and school fundraisers. “Most of the pushback came from staff that used food sales to raise money,” said Eric. “This was an opportunity for

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— **PATTI SUPPE**, Physical Education Teacher, Loma Vista Middle School, CA

us to provide resources for healthier fundraisers. And there are many more ways to raise money than a bake sale—such as a car wash or a fun run.”

The Alliance’s Model Wellness Policy helped Patti and Eric stand their ground. After initially rejecting language that would require all foods at school to meet the USDA’s Smart Snacks standards, Patti and Eric shared the Alliance’s template with the committee. “We were able to back up our guidelines with the Model Wellness Policy,” said Patti. “And when we told them that we needed these changes in order to move forward with the Healthy Schools Program, they approved it. It was really helpful to have the Alliance’s strength behind it.”

## “Getting principals on your side is the number one key.”

Once the new policy was approved, Patti and Eric got to work providing training and resources to school staff and parents. They met with the superintendent and school principals and gave a presentations at back to school nights and parent teacher association meetings about why the policy was changing and how it would benefit their students.

The most important part of delivering on your school wellness policy’s goals—according to Patti—is, “Convincing the administration to get on board. You have to give them the facts and show the data that proves kids’ academics are going to improve if we are feeding them right and if they’re getting exercise.”

