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CALIFORNIA SCHOOL BOARDS ASSOCIATION
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May 16, 2005

Dear County and District Superintendents, and School Board Presidents:

The California Department of Education (CDE) and the California School Boards Association (CSBA) are joining together to notify you about an important new federal law requiring school boards across the country to adopt and implement a district-wide school wellness policy by the beginning of the 2006-07 school year.

Specifically, the federal Child Nutrition and Women, Infants and Children Reauthorization Act of 2004 requires each school board in districts participating in the National School Lunch Program (42 USC 1751-1769) or the Child Nutrition Act of 1966 (42 USC 1771-1791, including the School Breakfast Program) to adopt and implement a policy that, at a minimum, must include the following:

- Goals for nutrition education, physical activity, and other school-based activities that are designed to promote student wellness in a manner that the district determines is appropriate.
- Nutrition guidelines selected by the district for all foods available on each campus during the school day, with the objectives of promoting student health and reducing childhood obesity.
- An assurance that guidelines for reimbursable school meals will not be less restrictive than federal regulations and guidance issued pursuant to 42 USC 1758(f)(1), 1766(a) and 1779(a) and (b), as they apply to schools.
- A plan for measuring implementation of the wellness policy, including the designation of one or more persons in the district or at each school charged with operational responsibility for ensuring that the school meets the policy.

The law requires that certain persons be involved in the development of the student wellness policy. They include parents/guardians, students, school food service professionals, school administrators, Board representatives, and members of the public. We encourage School Boards to expand the categories of persons involved to include teachers, health educators, classified staff, school nurses, coaches, and other appropriate school representatives. Members of the public could be specified to include health professionals, representatives of city and county agencies, representatives of community organizations, food vendors, and others.

It is imperative that we promote and support a culture of health and fitness in our schools, which is why the CDE has made improving student health, nutrition and fitness, one of its top three educational priorities for 2005. The CDE also recently released a White Paper, *Healthy Children Ready to Learn*, which underscores the importance of improving the school health environment through a variety of means including implementation of school wellness policies.

Building upon the recommendations in the White Paper related to wellness policies, the CDE is also sponsoring legislation (Senate Bill 567/Torlakson) that calls for districts to:

- Align their school wellness policies with both federal and state regulations and statutes.
- Support, when developing these policies:
 - The coordinated school health system, consisting of health education, physical education, health services, nutrition services, psychological and counseling services, health promotion for staff, a safe and healthy school environment, and parent and community involvement.
 - High quality physical education and health education, as outlined in the most current editions of the *Physical Framework for California Public Schools* and the *Health Framework for California Public Schools* and as specified in California Education Code (EC) sections 51210, 51890, 51891, 51220-22, and 51225. These EC sections specify the required and recommended comprehensive health education and physical education components for grades one through twelve.

The CSBA's *Healthy Food Policy Resource Guide* summarizes research on the link between nutrition/physical activity and student achievement, presents a worksheet for policy development, and contains a list of resources that may be useful to district councils or committees in the development of recommendations for the wellness policy. Selected sections of the guide can be viewed, as well as information on how to purchase the entire guide, on the CSBA Web site at <http://www.csba.org/ps/hf.htm>. Also enclosed for your reference are resources provided by the CDE.

The CSBA has also developed a sample policy (BP 5030–Student Wellness), which outlines the process of developing the district wellness policy. (See enclosure). We strongly recommend that districts act now to begin the policy development process so there will be sufficient time to establish or expand an existing School Health Advisory Council to gather input from other interested stakeholders, develop thoughtful recommendations on a variety of topics, and allow ample time for the Board's deliberations, adoption and implementation of the policy.

May 16, 2005
Page 3

Currently the CDE and the CSBA are partnering with other state agencies, and a variety of nutrition and education groups (the same groups referred to in the federal law that local districts must collaborate with) to develop a model policy prior to December 2005. Once available, the CSBA will translate this California-focused model policy into board policy language; this language, along with additional policy guidance will be available in December 2005.

The CDE also will provide you the current state and federal regulations, policies, and statutes that are pertinent to the establishment of school wellness policies. Building upon its collaboration with other state agencies and organizations, the CDE will also post statewide and regional trainings on this subject, and other resources on the CDE Web site at <http://www.cde.ca.gov>, during May 2005.

The CSBA expects to provide more specific policy guidance by December 2005 to help districts meet the requirements of the federal mandate. However, each school board, while ensuring that the minimum federal policy requirements are met, must ultimately adopt its own unique policies on student wellness that are research-based, reflect local needs and philosophy, and promote student health as a way to support student achievement.

If you have any questions or need further information regarding this subject, please contact Martin Gonzalez, Assistant Executive Director, CSBA, at (916) 371-4691 or by e-mail at mgonzalez@csba.org or Jan Lewis, Nutrition Education Consultant, Nutrition Services Division, CDE, at (916) 323-7185 or by e-mail at jlewis@cde.ca.gov or Michael Danzik, Nutrition Education Assistant, Nutrition Services Division, CDE, at (916) 445-7346 or by e-mail at mdanzik@cde.ca.gov.

Sincerely,

JACK O'CONNELL
State Superintendent of Public Instruction

KERRY CLEGG, President
California School Boards Association

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Enclosures

cc: School Food Service Directors