



EXCEL
ACADEMY CHARTER SCHOOLS

Wellness Policy

2026-2027

Excel Academy Charter School prepares students to succeed in high school and college, apply their learning to solve relevant problems, and engage productively in their communities.

Overview

Excel Academy Charter School and Excel Academy Rho(Excel) is committed to providing a school environment that promotes and protects its students' health, well-being, and ability to learn by supporting healthy eating and physical activity. Therefore, it is the policy of this school that:

- The school will engage students, parents, teachers, and staff in developing, implementing, monitoring and reviewing school-wide nutrition and physical activity policies.
- All students will have opportunities, support, and encouragement to be physically active on a regular basis.
- Foods and beverages sold or served at school will meet the nutrition recommendations of the U.S. Dietary Guidelines for Americans.
- Qualified school staff will provide students with access to a variety of affordable, nutritious, and appealing foods that meet the health and nutrition needs of students; will accommodate the religious, ethnic, and cultural diversity of the student body in meal planning; and will provide clean, safe and pleasant settings and adequate time for students to eat.
- To the maximum extent practicable, Excel will participate in available federal school meal programs, including the School Breakfast Program and the National School Lunch Program, and the After-School Snacks Program.
- Excel will provide nutrition education and physical education to foster lifelong habits of healthy eating and physical activity, and will establish linkages between health education and school meal programs, and with related community services.

Health and Wellness Policy Goals

Based on the anticipated needs of Excel Academy Charter School students, the following policy goals have been recognized:

1. Food and Beverages Brought Into the School, Sold and Served

School Meals: Meals served through the National School Lunch and Breakfast Programs at Excel Academy Charter School will:

- Be appealing and attractive to children
- Be served in clean and pleasant settings;
- Meet, at a minimum, nutrition requirements established by local, state, and federal statutes and regulations;
- Offer a variety of fruits and vegetables;
- Serve only low-fat milk and 100 percent fruit juice.
- Provide free, potable drinking water during meal service

Water fountains will be maintained and monitored to ensure safe and functional operation.

Excel Academy will solicit feedback from students and caregivers regarding school meals and the dining environment through surveys. Feedback will be considered in program improvements.

Breakfast

To ensure that all children have breakfast, either at home or at school, in order to meet their nutritional needs and enhance their ability to learn:

- Excel Academy Charter School will serve school breakfasts that encourage participation by setting up a breakfast station near the entrance of the school easily accessible to all students;
- Excel Academy Charter School will notify parents and students of the availability of the School Breakfast Program;
- Excel Academy Charter School will encourage parents to provide a healthy breakfast for their children through newsletter articles, take home materials, and other means;
- Excel Academy Charter School students will have the opportunity to eat breakfast at school between the hours of 7:45 am to 8:05 am daily and after the bell.

Free and Reduced-priced Meals

Excel Academy Charter School will make every effort to eliminate any social stigma attached to, and prevent the overt identification of, students who are eligible for free and reduced-price school meals. Excel received the status of Community Eligibility Provision and will provide meals to all students free of charge.

- Excel Academy Charter School campuses will use a pin pad system to record which students eat school breakfast and lunch.
- Excel Academy Charter School will conduct Direct Certification with Massachusetts Virtual Gateway and will not ask students/families to complete free/reduced meal applications.

Summer Food Service Program

Excel Academy Charter School will notify parents of locations in their communities where children can receive free breakfast and lunch during the summer.

Meal Times and Scheduling

Excel Academy Charter School will:

- Provide students with at least 10 minutes to eat after sitting down for breakfast and 20 minutes after sitting down for lunch;
- Schedule meal periods at appropriate times between 11 a.m. and 1 p.m., except where state testing or AP testing schedules require modified meal times;
- Not schedule tutoring, club, or organizational meetings or activities during meal times, unless students may eat during such activities; and
- Will provide students access to hand washing or hand sanitizing before they eat meals or snacks.

Food Service Professionals

The food program will be administered by qualified professionals. Professionals will obtain appropriate certification and/or training to administer the food program on a continuous basis. School nutrition professionals will meet or exceed USDA Professional Standards training requirements and maintain documentation of required annual training hours.

Sharing of Foods and Beverages

Excel Academy Charter School discourages students from sharing their foods or beverages brought from home with one another during meal or snack times, given concerns about allergies and other restrictions on some students' diets. Students will be allowed to make use of a "share table" with food solely provided by the school's breakfast and lunch meal vendor.

Competitive Foods

All foods and beverages sold individually outside the reimbursable school meal programs (including those sold through student stores or fundraising activities) during the school day will meet the following nutrition and portion size standards:

Beverages

- Allowed: water or seltzer water; 100% fruit and vegetable juices; unflavored or flavored low-fat or fat-free fluid milk
- Not allowed: soft drinks containing caloric sweeteners; sports drinks; fruit-based drinks that contain less than 50 percent real fruit juice or that contain additional caloric sweeteners; beverages containing caffeine.

The school will make an effort to offer to sell at least one fruit and/or non-fried vegetable at any location on the school site where foods are sold. Such items could include, but are not limited to, fresh fruits and vegetables; 100 percent fruit or vegetable juice; cooked, dried or canned fruits (canned in fruit juice or light syrup); and cooked, dried, or canned vegetables.

Celebrations and School-Sponsored Events

Excel Academy Charter School will limit celebrations that involve food during the school day to no more than one party per class per month. Each party typically will include no more than one food or beverage that does not meet nutrition standards for foods and beverages sold individually.

Fundraising Activities

To support children's health and school nutrition-education efforts, school fundraising activities generally will not involve food or will use only foods that meet nutritional standards.

Snacks

Snacks eaten during the school day, in after-school programs or enrichment programs will make a positive contribution to the student's diet and health, with an emphasis on healthy snacks, and water/juice as the primary beverage.

2. Physical and Nutrition Education

Excel Academy Charter School aims to teach, encourage and support healthy eating by students. Excel Academy Charter School will:

- Offer physical and nutrition education as part of a sequential, comprehensive, standards-based program designed to provide students with the knowledge and skills necessary to promote and protect their health;
- Integrate health education into subjects such as math, science, language arts, social sciences, and elective subjects;
- Promote fruits, vegetables, whole grain products, low-fat and fat-free dairy products, health food preparation methods, and health-enhancing nutrition practices;
- Emphasize caloric balance between food intake and energy expenditure (physical activity/exercise);
- Teach media literacy with an emphasis on food marketing; and
- Offer training for teachers and other staff.

Family Support

Excel Academy Charter School will provide information about physical education and other school-based physical activity opportunities before, during, and after the school day; and support parents' efforts to

provide their children with opportunities to be physically active outside of school. Such supports will include sharing information about physical activity and physical education through take-home materials, special events, or physical education homework.

3. Physical Activity

Physical Activity Opportunities and Physical Education

- All students, including students with disabilities and special healthcare will receive physical education once a week for at least 45 minutes during the fall and spring.
- Student involvement in other activities involving physical activity (e.g., interscholastic or intramural sports) will not be substituted for meeting the physical education requirements
- Students will spend at least 50 percent of physical education class time participating in moderate to vigorous physical activity.

Other Physical Activity Opportunities

In addition to our physical education classes, Excel Academy Charter School will offer an enrichment program every week that will include physical activity programs, such as a soccer club, basketball club and other fitness-based activity groups. Excel Academy Charter School will offer a range of activities that meet the needs, interests, and abilities of all students, including boys, girls, students with disabilities, and students with special health-care needs.

Physical Activity and Punishment

Teachers and other school and community personnel will not use physical activity (e.g., recess, physical education) as punishment.

4. Evaluation

At least once every three years, Excel will conduct assessments to review policy compliance, assess programs, and determine areas in need of improvement. As part of that review, Excel Academy Charter School's Health Committee will review nutrition and physical activity and nutrition and physical education policies and program elements. Excel Academy Charter School will, as necessary, revise the wellness policy and develop work plans to facilitate their implementation.

The Head of School or designee will ensure compliance with established school-wide nutrition and physical activity wellness policies noted above. The last assessment was conducted in SY 22-23. The next assessment will occur during this school year, 2025-26.