



# Madera Unified School District: A Model for Stronger Wellness Policy

CASE STUDY | SUMMER/FALL 2016

## Background

Madera Unified School District, which serves 20,000 children, predominantly low-income Latinos in California’s Central Valley, is working to assure a healthier school environment. Strengthening its Local School Wellness Policy (LSWP) was a first step. The requirement for LSWPs was established by the Child Nutrition and WIC Reauthorization Act of 2004, and further strengthened by the Healthy, Hunger-Free Kids Act of 2010. It requires each local education agency (LEA) participating in the National School Lunch Program and/or School Breakfast Program to develop a wellness policy that promotes the health of students and addresses the growing problem of childhood obesity. The responsibility for developing a wellness policy is placed at the local level so the unique needs of each school under the jurisdiction of the LEA can be addressed.

## Objective

To revise and strengthen Madera Unified School District (MUSD) Wellness Policy and develop a plan for implementation.

## Motivation

Led by Sandon Schwartz, Assistant Superintendent, with a directive of the Superintendent and supported by two school Board of Trustees, strong community engagement, including local Promotoras de Salud who had been advocating for healthier school environments, California Project LEAN (CPL) was invited by the district to lead their wellness policy revision efforts. With support of a Kaiser Permanente Community Benefits Grant, CPL helped MUSD build a timeline, a policy revision strategy inclusive of the Coordinated School Health model, and an implementation plan template with progress

Madera Unified School District Demographics	
Enrollment: 20,530	
Hispanic or Latino	88.3%
Black or African American	2%
White	7.5%
Asian	1.1%
Filipino	.2%
American Indian or Alaska Native	.5%
Native Hawaiian or Pacific Islander	.1%

tracker. CPL provided ongoing technical assistance and support to an actively engaged wellness council comprised of various community and school stakeholders.

## Steps

The steps taken to revise the wellness policy were strategic and inclusive of the many partners that participated in the process. The Wellness Committee identified, invited, and was comprised of over 44 representatives, that included various community and school/district members (for a list, see end).

The Wellness Committee was in agreement that the policy ought to encompass Coordinated School Health (now referred to as Whole School, Whole Community and Whole Child approach), which is a systematic approach to improving the health and well-being of all students so they can fully participate and be successful in school. Workgroups for the various components were identified with a lead and committee members.

The Wellness Committee met approximately 10 times over the course of a 6-month period in addition to the many working group meetings that also took place. Each meeting comprised of reviewing, editing, and coming to consensus for each policy component. The final completed and agreed-upon policy went to the Board of Trustees for an initial reading in June 2015. Wellness Committee members and other stakeholders attended each of three Board of Trustee meetings to provide input and offer support.

“This policy sends a strong message that student nutrition, health, and overall well being is important and a priority of the district.”

## CASE STUDY

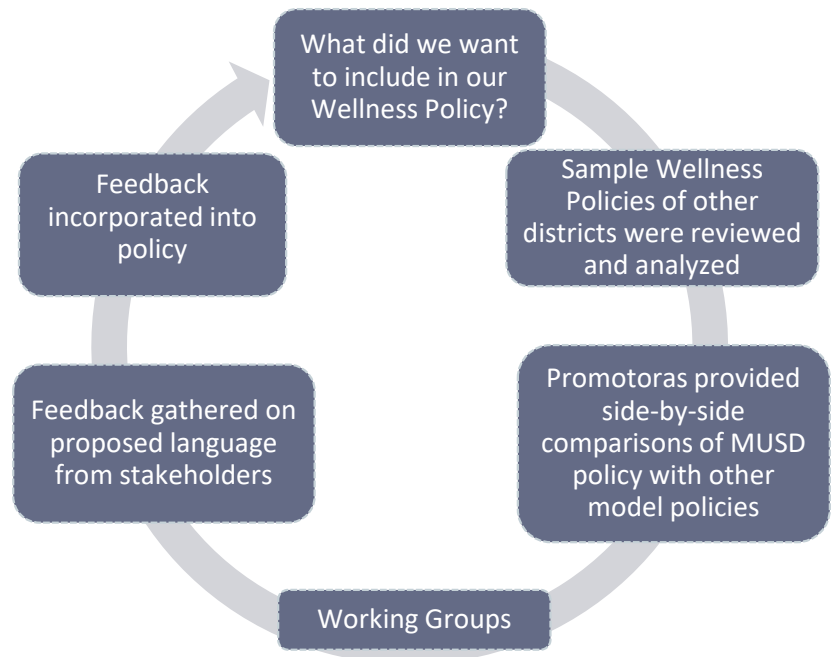
### Results

The Board of Trustees unanimously approved the revised and strengthened wellness policy on September 8, 2015.

The policy addresses nutrition guidelines for all foods and beverages available on school campus, including access to water language that exceeds the California Plumbing Code, guidelines for physical activity and physical education, the overall school environment, health services, mental health, restorative justice in District discipline practices, lactation accommodation for both staff and students, and other pertinent health and wellness issues.

Also, in anticipation of the USDA Final Rule, the Wellness Committee had the forethought to address provisions that were being discussed and made the decision to address them in their revised policy. The policy also addresses leadership, triennial assessments, annual reporting, and marketing.

CPL then developed an implementation plan template that included every policy component to assess current practices and to develop an action plan for wellness policy implementation, as well as creating a “traffic light” implementation progress tracker to track wellness activities. The District has completed its initial progress assessment of policy implementation thus far (see diagram on page 3.)



### Challenges and Solutions

One major challenge was the timeline. Updating and revising a wellness policy takes time, effort, expertise of a skillful facilitator, and lots of ongoing conversations that entail negotiations and compromises. However, CPL staff helped keep the process on track by adhering to the timeline. The Wellness Committee was committed to revising the Wellness Policy by the end of the school year even if it meant meeting more often each month as a committee as well as in workgroups.

Another challenge was agreeing to specific language on various topics, including beverages, classroom celebrations, lactation accommodation for example.

However, members worked through each issue, with some subject matters taking a bit longer than others, resulting in common language based on consensus and majority rule with keeping students’ overall health and wellness in mind.

***“I think this template is a useful way to break down the action items in the wellness policy and to track what is being done and by whom...so that we can share successes and strategize about next steps to full implementation of the wellness policy.”***

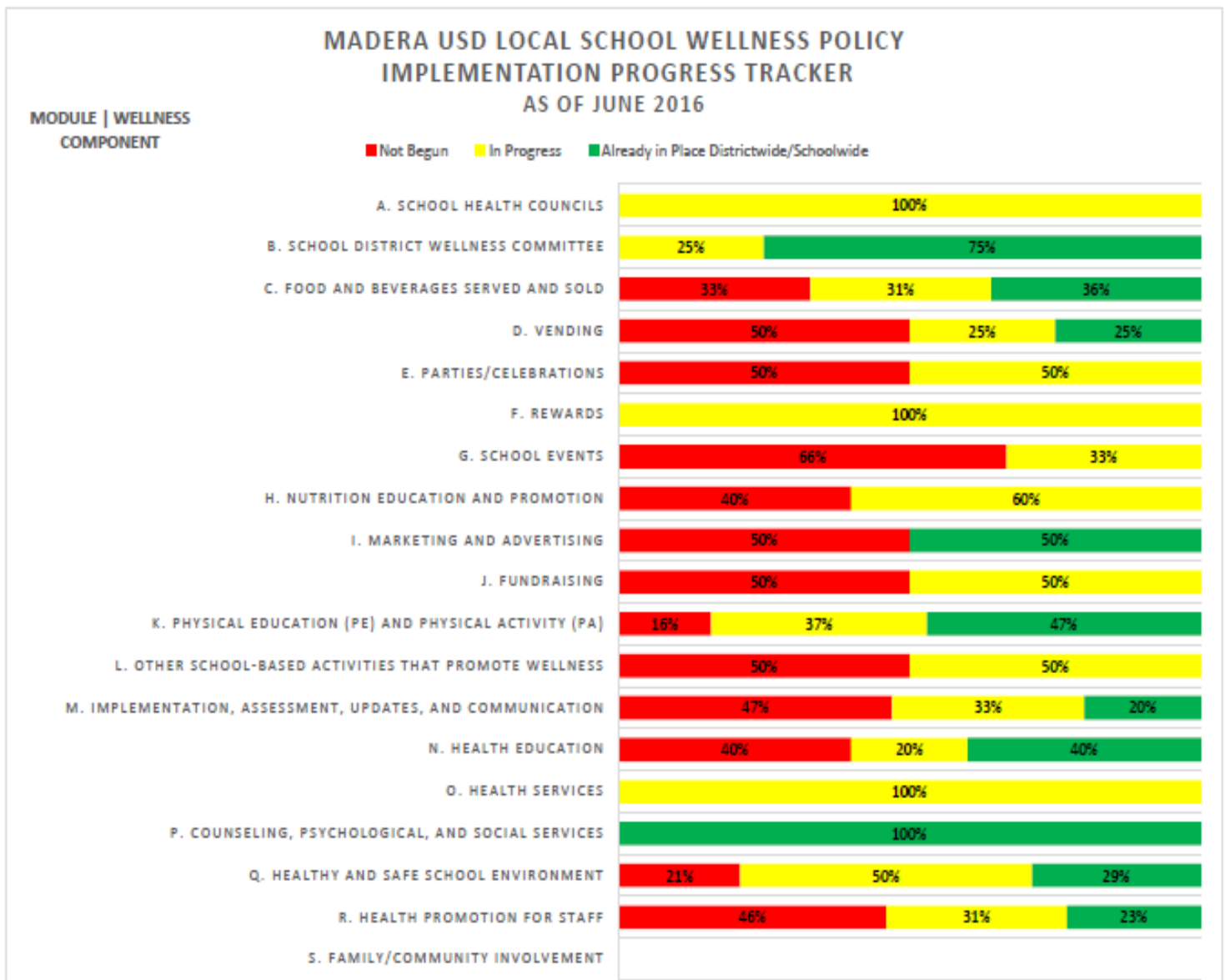
**-Phoebe Copp - Community Nutrition Adviser, Dairy Council of California**

## Future Plans

Now that the working groups have completed various implementation plan worksheets and assessed current practices using the implementation progress tracker, Madera Unified School District's Wellness Committee continues to meet monthly. For this next school year, the District will work on the following:

- Parent Outreach
- Site Administration Outreach and Training
- Common Messaging to Staff

To assure feasibility and sustainability, the District identified and included many of the wellness policy elements into their **Local Control Accountability Plan (LCAP)**, including support to engage parents, healthier school meals, water access, physical education, mental health and positive behavioral intervention systems.



## Summary

Madera Unified School District is a model district in its inclusive effort to bring its community together to develop a comprehensive wellness policy in the spirit of the Whole School, Whole Community and Whole Child approach and a strategic plan to implement it.



**Madera Unified School District Wellness Committee:** Board Trustees • California Project LEAN • Camarena Health – Promotoras • Central Valley Health Collaborative • CNEP – Cal Fresh • Dairy Council of California • District Office Administrators/Directors/Coordinators • Family Liaison/Family Support Specialist • First Five • Local Health Care Providers • Madera County Health Department • Madera Parks and Recreation • Nurses • Parents • Site Administrators • SNAP Ed • Teachers • UC Co-Op • Valley Children’s Hospital



California Project LEAN (Leaders Encouraging Activity and Nutrition) is a program of the Public Health Institute. California Project LEAN works to advance nutrition and physical activity policy in schools, early childcare and other community settings in order to prevent obesity and its associated chronic diseases. Our efforts are centered around youth and parent empowerment approaches, policy and environmental change strategies, and community-based solutions that improve nutrition and physical activity environments.


California Project LEAN recognizes that health inequities exist in communities and that specific low income residents and members of racial and ethnic minorities experience higher rates of overweight and obesity because of social conditions. With this in mind, we focus much of our efforts in low resource, high need communities whose members are adversely impacted by such social conditions.

California Project LEAN provides input on the development of national, state, and local policies and works with communities and schools to implement policies that will improve access to healthy foods and physical activity opportunities.

California Project LEAN works with state and local physical activity and nutrition leaders, key school and community organizations, school board members, youth, parents, and promotoras as stakeholder engagement is an essential component of obesity prevention and health promotion.

Visit us at [www.CaliforniaProjectLEAN.org](http://www.CaliforniaProjectLEAN.org) or follow us, [@Project LEAN](https://twitter.com/ProjectLEAN)

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