Core Practice 19

Teaching and Promoting Fitness and Wellness

EL Education promotes wellness in students and school staff members. Healthy eating, exercise, stress reduction, sleep, and healthy relationships—the key elements of physical and mental health—are included as part of a school’s wellness approach. The physical education program places a strong emphasis on personal fitness and nutrition and character development, and reinforces the EL school culture of respect, responsibility, and achievement. Physical activity and outdoor time are woven into the school day whenever possible and appropriate (e.g., walking to fieldwork research sites, setting up and cleaning classrooms and common spaces, using physical energizer breaks to enhance academic work times). Experiences in the natural world—working in and appreciating nature—are a priority for students in EL schools. Physical challenges push students to pursue excellence and assume responsibility for their own learning. Teachers help students understand the connections between physical challenge and academic challenge. Schools provide healthy meals to students and discourage unhealthy foods. Crews emphasize the importance of wellness and are stewards of a climate of social and emotional safety for students. Crew meetings and school staff explicitly support students to understand and monitor dangers to wellness posed by alcohol, drugs, and tobacco, as well as unhealthy relationships. School staff models healthy lifestyles and a healthy school culture.

A. Fitness and Wellness Process

1. Teachers promote fitness and wellness through modeling and instruction in a variety of aspects of physical and mental health, including food, exercise, sleep, and relaxation. Teachers engage students in understanding and addressing dangers to a healthy life.

2. The school collects data to demonstrate progress toward fitness and wellness goals.

3. Physical education programs support students in the fitness and wellness process.

4. Outdoor education programs and outdoor challenges, as well as individual and team sports, are explicitly connected to fitness, wellness, and character development.

5. Physical education teachers focus on students’ strengths and help each student experience success in achieving improved fitness and wellness.

6. Crew leaders and school counselors support a school culture of social and emotional safety and health.

B. Integrating Fitness and Wellness

1. Students create personal fitness and wellness plans with the support of crew leaders and physical education teachers. Students and teachers monitor plans regularly.

2. Physical education teachers explicitly plan opportunities for students to challenge their perseverance, personal fitness, and collaboration skills.

3. When possible, teachers link wellness, fitness, and physical challenge to academics through projects, learning expedition content, and reflection.

4. Schools have policies and protocols to ensure that physical education classes, adventure programming, and fieldwork are physically and emotionally safe.

5. Schools develop structures to promote students’ social and emotional health.

C. Creating a Culture of Fitness and Wellness

1. Teachers model fitness and wellness as a natural part of the school day (e.g., taking stretch breaks, eating healthy snacks).

2. Teachers include outdoor time and physical activity for students, whenever possible and appropriate, to energize students’ minds and bodies and encourage enjoyment of the natural world.

3. Students and teachers plan wellness initiatives that encourage all members of the school to enhance their own physical and mental wellness (e.g., wearing pedometers to track daily steps, keeping food logs, reflecting in journals).

4. Student portfolios, passage presentations and student-led family conferences include student fitness and wellness goals and achievements.

5. School communications with families regularly include wellness strategies or tips.

6. Schools limit availability of foods that do not contribute to wellness.

7. Students have access to community models of excellence in wellness.
Teaching and Promoting Fitness and Wellness (continued)

D. Assessing Fitness and Wellness

1. Teachers support students to set personal fitness and wellness learning targets and to keep track of progress through journals and data collection.

2. Progress toward personal fitness and wellness learning targets is shared in student portfolios, student presentations, and student-led conferences.

3. Wellness learning targets address the dispositions and life habits important to a healthy lifestyle as well as growth in physical fitness and skills.