

St. Gerald Catholic School Wellness Policy

2026-2027

St. Gerald Catholic School recognizes that schools play a critical role in creating a healthy environment for the prevention of childhood obesity and combating problems associated with poor nutrition and lack of physical activity. This policy requires that all members of the school and community maintain an environment that enhances maximum student potential.

Wellness Committee

- *Christy Keenan – Principal
- *Tim Adamek – PE Teacher
- *Annie Osborne – Cafeteria Manager
- *Anna Dohm – Cafeteria Assistant Manager
- *Sarah Miller – Safety Committee Lead
- *SAB President

Wellness Policy

In order to comply with the Child Nutrition and WIC Reauthorization Act of 2004, St. Gerald Catholic School has devised a Wellness Policy to address the areas of Nutrition, Physical Activity, and Health. This policy was enacted with the foundational belief that guidelines for good nutrition, physical activities/education, and health/nutrition education are essential for our students and staff. Research shows that children who begin each day as healthy individuals are better learners. This policy is assessed every three years by a representative from the State of Nebraska Education Department. St. Gerald will comply with recommendations made at the time of each review.

Physical Education (P.E.)

All students in grades K-5 will receive physical education class for 60 minutes per week for the entire school year. All students in grades 6-8 will receive physical education class for 100 minutes per week for the entire school year. All physical education will be taught by a physical education teacher. Students will spend at least 50% of physical education class time participating in moderate to vigorous physical activity.

In addition:

- Evening Extended Care uses the gym and/or outside play areas on campus.
- The students are also able to participate in school sponsored sports teams.
- Specials classes are located on all floors of the building to increase walking between class transitions.
- School Field Day happens annually.

Daily Recess

Students in grades PK-8 will have at least 20 minutes a day of supervised recess, preferably outdoors, during which schools should encourage moderate to vigorous physical activity verbally and through the provision of space and equipment.

Outside conditions are monitored daily. The following guidelines are in effect:

- *Outside temperatures 15 degrees or above = Recess Outside
- *Outside temperatures 14 degrees or below = Recess Indoor
- *Heat index of 95 degrees or above = Recess Indoor
- *Air quality monitored and AQI below 145 = Recess Indoor

Teachers attempt to take their students outside daily. The times they would opt to stay indoors would be on inclement weather days. On those days indoor activity is encouraged:

- Go Noodle Activities
- Activity time for indoor recess
- In place of recess on cold weather days a short outdoor walk for exercise and fresh air

Students who are not allowed to participate in recess due to behavior have the option of walking the lot for exercise during recess time. This is monitored by the staff member on duty. Never will the entire time be spent walking.

Nutritional Goal

At St. Gerald Catholic School all food and beverages served in the lunch line will comply with the state standards for nutrition in schools.

- St. Gerald Catholic School participates in the free and reduced lunch program
- Through participation in the program, the school follows the USDA nutrition guidelines outlined by this program for lunch and after school snacks.
- Follows the offer vs. serve guidelines
- Water at no cost is available at lunch; students are encouraged to hydrate throughout the day by allowing students to have a water bottle in the classroom.
- Fruit and vegetables are provided in the lunch line
- Menu choices are available for the main course including yogurt and cheese stick or peanut butter and jelly sandwiches.
- Students are allowed to choose their main course at the beginning of the day when they identify the lunch count in the classroom.
- There are no other times that food is sold during the school day.
- There are no vending machines for students' use.

Meals Served

Meals served at St. Gerald Catholic School will:

- Be appealing and attractive to children
- Be served in clean and pleasant settings
- Meet, at a minimum, nutritional requirements established by local, state, and federal statutes and regulations

- Offer a variety of fruits and vegetables
- Serve only low-fat 1% and fat free milk
- Ensure that half of the served grains are whole grain

Meal Times and Scheduling

St. Gerald Catholic School will:

- Provide students with at least 20 minutes for lunch
- Schedule meal periods at appropriate times, between 11:00 am and 1:00 pm
- Will not schedule tutoring, club, or organizational meetings or activities during mealtimes unless students may eat during such activities
- Provide students access to hand washing or hand sanitizing before they eat a meal or snacks

Sharing of Food and Beverages

St. Gerald Catholic School discourages students from sharing their food or beverages with one another during meal or snack times, given concerns about allergies and other restrictions on some children's diets.

Nutrition Education

The primary goal of nutrition education is to influence students' eating behaviors. Schools will promote nutrition education throughout students' PK-8 educational program. Nutrition education is incorporated into a variety of curriculum areas. These curriculum experiences provide the knowledge and skills necessary to make healthy food choices for a lifetime. St. Gerald Catholic School aims to teach, encourage, and support healthy eating by students by providing nutrition education that:

- Is offered at each grade level designed to provide students with the knowledge and skills necessary to promote and protect their health.
- Is part of not only PE/Health education classes, but also classroom instruction in subjects such as math, science, language arts, and social studies.
- Promotes fruits, vegetables, whole grain products, low-fat and fat free dairy products, healthy food preparation methods, and health-enhancing nutrition practices.
- The cafeteria has posters that teach about the food groups.
- Staff has a set of guidelines and rules for the students to follow in the lunchroom to ensure an enjoyable environment for lunch.
- The menu is posted on FACTS for all parents to access from home or on a mobile app.
- Links with school meal programs, other school foods, and nutrition-related community services

Nutrition Promotion

- Food and beverages are not used as rewards for student performance or behavior
- The staff members on duty monitor the lunchroom environment and report any issues to the school principal for further assistance when needed.

Integrating Physical Activity into the Classroom Setting

For students to receive the nationally recommended amount of daily physical activity (i.e., at least 60 min per day) and for students to fully embrace regular physical activity as a personal behavior, students need opportunities for physical activity beyond physical education class.

Goals:

- Classroom health education will complement physical education by reinforcing the knowledge and self-management skills needed to maintain a physically-active lifestyle and to reduce time spent on sedentary activities such as watching television
- Opportunities for physical activity will be incorporated into other subject lessons
- Classroom teachers may provide short physical activity breaks between lessons or classes, as appropriate.
- After-school Extended Care will provide and encourage –verbally and through the provision of space, equipment, and activities – daily periods of moderate to vigorous physical activity for all participants.

Physical Activity After School

After-school Extended Care will provide and encourage –verbally and through the provision of space, equipment, and activities – daily periods of moderate to vigorous physical activity for all participants.

Public Notification

- Families are provided this policy in the family handbook and have access to it electronically throughout the school year
- Modifications of the policy are communicated to the parents at the time the changes are made. Changes are made via the Mane Messenger newsletter.

Monitoring and Evaluation

- Christy Keenan, principal, will ensure compliance with the nutrition and physical activity policies of St. Gerald Catholic School.
 - ckeenan@stgerald.org
 - 402-331-4223
- This policy will be reviewed annually and updated in the Family Handbook.
- The School Advisory Board (SAB) will receive an annual summary report. The School Advisory Board (SAB) will be provided a copy of this policy for review. Upon request any additional information will be provided.

Wellness Goals for 2026-2029

1. Physical Wellness Goal

Goal:

- Increase student participation in physical activity by providing diverse opportunities that promote lifelong fitness, healthy habits, academic success, and overall well-being.

Implementation:

- Continue implementation and review of a standards-based PreK–8 physical education curriculum aligned with Archdiocesan and Nebraska standards, emphasizing skill development, personal fitness, and growth.
- Provide students with required physical education time, daily recess, and regular opportunities for movement and physical activity throughout the school day.
- Encourage family and community involvement in physical activity through wellness initiatives, clubs, sports, and extracurricular opportunities.
 - Support safe opportunities for students to walk or bike to school when appropriate.

Monitoring & Evaluation:

The School Wellness Committee will monitor progress toward this goal through ongoing review of wellness initiatives and the Nebraska Department of Education's Triennial Local Wellness Policy Assessment process.

2. Nutrition and Healthy Habits Goal

Goal:

- Promote healthy eating habits and wellness education by providing students with the knowledge and skills needed to make nutritious choices and develop lifelong healthy behaviors.

Implementation:

- Integrate nutrition education into the PreK–8 health, science, and physical education curriculum in alignment with Archdiocesan and Nebraska standards.
- Provide students with age-appropriate instruction on nutrition, healthy choices, and the connection between food, fitness, and overall well-being.
- Expand opportunities for hands-on learning through activities such as school gardens, cafeteria-based learning, wellness initiatives, and educational experiences connected to healthy living.

Monitoring & Evaluation:

The School Wellness Committee will monitor progress toward this goal through ongoing review of wellness initiatives and the Nebraska Department of Education's Triennial Local Wellness Policy Assessment process.

3. Staff and Family Wellness Goal

Goal:

- Build a culture of wellness throughout the school community by providing resources, education, and opportunities that support the physical, mental, and overall well-being of students, staff, and families.

Implementation:

- Share wellness resources and education through school communications, including newsletters, family updates, and staff communications. Topics may include healthy habits, stress management, physical activity, nutrition, sleep, and strategies for supporting overall wellness.
- Provide opportunities for staff and families to participate in wellness activities, challenges, and events that promote healthy lifestyles and community engagement.
- Offer wellness-focused events and educational opportunities, including guest speakers and presentations on topics such as nutrition, mental health, mindfulness, fitness, and healthy living.
- Encourage partnerships with community organizations and wellness professionals to provide additional resources and support for staff and families.
- Promote a school culture that values balance, self-care, and healthy choices as essential components of personal and community well-being.

Monitoring & Evaluation:

The School Wellness Committee will monitor progress toward this goal through participation feedback, review of wellness initiatives, and the Nebraska Department of Education's Triennial Local Wellness Policy Assessment process.