



WOLF RIDGESM
ENVIRONMENTAL LEARNING CENTER

Wellness Policy

December 2016

Wolf Ridge Environmental Learning Center (WRELC)

Overview and Description

The WRELC is a private accredited school by the North Central Association (NCA) of Colleges and Schools as well as the AdvancEd organization. The center is accredited as a “Special Purpose School” and functions as its own district. This status is due to the manner in which it functions. Public and private schools from all over the state use the WRELC as their field campus. They make annual field trips to the center to apply concepts and experiences from the classroom to real hands-on experiences in the outdoors. They are only at the center for a total of 3-5 days of the entire school year. During the summer the center provides multi-week learning experiences for academic credit. The curriculum and coursework taken by students at the center is only focused upon environmental education (sciences, human culture and history, personal growth and outdoor recreation). Visiting schools and summer students come to the center to focus upon graduation standards for these environmental based curricula. Curricular areas such as Health are not a component of the WRELC’s supplementary school status.

The student population of the WRELC does not come from the local area or community and thus a population of local collaborators within the WRELC area, with investment in the center’s student population, does not exist. The WRELC communicates only with one teacher from the respective communities from around the state as they plan to send their students annual field trip to the WRELC. Each of the schools attending the WRELC are implementing their own wellness policies and the WRELC works with each of those schools on an individual basis to assist them in implementation of their wellness policies while visiting the WRELC.

Wellness Goals

Nutrition Education

- 1) Nutrition education will be offered in the Dining Hall. Posters will indicate the subject matter: that of a balanced diet and the importance of fruits and vegetables in daily consumption. In addition, we share information about where our food comes from. We serve local, regional and organic foods as we can.

The center has begun participation in the farm to school initiative through construction of an organic farm on the property, with the goals of raising all the vegetables needed to supply the dining hall as well as incorporating the farm into curricular offerings to schools and students. A unique aspect of this project is that Wolf Ridge will be both Farm and School. The center's farmer works closely with the Food Service Director and the Lake County Health Department for incorporation of the farm vegetables into the food service menus.

As a special focus school that has no health education component to its mission or curricular offerings, the primary wellness efforts in nutrition education are conducted by the visiting schools at their respective home schools. The WRELC works with each visiting school on an individual basis to implement and support the visiting schools wellness policy components appropriate to their visit at the center.

Physical Activity

- 1) A high level of physical activity will be designed into 90% of the daytime curriculum offered at the center. Their respective classroom teachers will choose the curriculum in which students participate. Every student's daily curricular schedule will include routine hikes of 1/2 mile up to 3 miles in length. A typical 5-day stay at the center will have students hiking over two miles/day. Additionally, the topography of the center is such that these routine hikes integrated into nearly all curricula include hiking in terrain with elevation differences of up to 600' in one class. 90% of all daytime classes at WRELC will include regular aerobic exercise, i.e. walking and hiking.
- 2) Specific curricula at the center will include education in the values of adopting lifelong sports as part of a healthy lifestyle. This coursework will include experiential education in activities, which include: Cross Country Skiing, Snowshoeing, Canoeing, Orienteering and Superior View Hike (hiking). Trained teachers will teach skills, and then students will practice and develop competence in the above activities.
- 3) The campus is designed to accommodate regular and routine walks between facilities: Dorms, Classroom Buildings and Dining Hall.

- 4) As students are residing at the center and participating in classes or activities from 8:30 am to 9:15 pm each day, the opportunities for physical activity will encompass a full day's schedule. The high level of physical activity that is inherent throughout the day-to-day lifestyle led at the center will be a major step toward student demonstration of a lifestyle that diminishes factors leading to childhood obesity.
- 5) The WRELC will supply training opportunities and free use of recreation equipment to staff, thus promoting the development of an enjoyable, lifelong physically active lifestyle. These staff will serve as physically active role models to the students and teachers that visit the WRELC.

Other School Based Activities Relating to Wellness

- 1) Dining Environment
The WRELC will provide a clean, safe, enjoyable meal environment for students. Enough space in dining and serving will be provided to assure all students have access to school meals. Staggered meal times for students will assure minimal wait time to access their meals. Drinking fountains are available in all buildings so students can get water at all meals and throughout the day. Students will also be requested and encouraged to bring water bottles to classes and use thereof will be role modeled by WRELC staff as well. WRELC staff will regularly consume their meals in the dining hall thus serving as role models of healthy eating to visiting students. The only meals available to students are school program meals and the identity of those who eat free and reduced price meals will be protected.
- 2) Time to Eat
The WRELC will ensure an adequate amount of time for students to enjoy eating healthy foods by maintaining a daily schedule that allows for large blocks of time between meals and classes. These blocks of time will allow a short recess period prior to meals that enables elementary age students to come to meals less distracted and ready to eat. Lunchtime will be scheduled very near to noon to be near the middle of the WRELC school day and well balanced between the physical demands of morning and afternoon classes.
- 3) Snack
WRELC provides a healthy snack during its daytime classes. The snacks are designed to keep the students' energy up during our active classes.
- 4) Food or Physical Activity as a Reward or Punishment
The WRELC will not use food as a reward or punishment. Denial of participation in a physical activity will not be used as a form of discipline by WRELC staff unless it relates to maintaining safety for the students.

- 5) Consistent School Activities and Environment
The WRELC will offer fine arts or clothing based fundraisers to visiting schools as an alternative to food based sales for fundraisers. The WRELC has enlisted services of vendors to assist food service staff in analysis and development of nutritious menus and individual items.

Nutrition Guidelines, Foods Available During the School Day

- 1) The Minnesota Department of Education Food and Nutrition Service as well as a private consultant, currently Upper Lakes Foods Nutritionist, will review the menus used by the WRELC food service regularly.
- 2) Wolf Ridge will maintain a strong commitment to healthy choices in center menus. Examples of this commitment are seen in: breads baked from scratch on site, Western Lake Superior Region meats and produce are procured for menu items, fresh fruits and vegetables are used regularly as opposed to canned or frozen, fresh produce from our private farm is utilized regularly. Vegetarian options are available at every meal.
- 3) To support alternatives to food based fund raising sales, such as candy bars or foods as a reward to successful fund raising, WRELC will offer clothing based sales or a fine arts calendar as a fundraiser to visiting schools. The calendar has also been made available to schools not attending Wolf Ridge yet are searching for non-food based fund raising programs.
- 4) There is no sale of candy or pop products at the center. If visiting schools would like snacks for their students, WRELC offers a variety of non-candy items such as apples or oranges, cocoa or cider.
- 5) The menu and foods supplied by the dining hall are the only choices for students. With no vending or other options on site, this will assure that with offer vs. serve rules maintained by the center that adhere to the MDE Food and Nutrition Guidelines, students are only eating approved MDE nutritional foods.

Guidelines for Reimbursable Meals

- 1) Qualification for program participation will be set by the visiting schools. The WRELC will ask visiting schools to provide names of students who qualify and at what level of participation, i.e. Free, Reduced Paid or Full Paid.
- 2) The WRELC will ensure that reimbursable meals meet the program requirements and nutrition standards set forth by the applicable state and federal authorities. Regular Administrative Reviews by the Minnesota Department of Education, Food and Nutrition Compliance and Assistance Division will assure appropriateness of all related efforts. The findings on such reviews will be used to reinforce positive efforts and provide improvements in noted areas.

Measurement of Implementation

- 1) The WRELC Wellness Policy will be viewed as an ongoing and consistently implemented plan. The effects and benefits intended to affect our students will be measured and evaluated by the schools that attend here. The leaders from each of these respective schools will evaluate and provide the center with input on a variety of areas that include food service and curricular provisions. Through the evaluations and accompanying input, the policy will be amended as needed. Implementation of policy edits or additions will occur on an as needed basis.
- 2) The WRELC Education Director, Food Service Manager and Office Manager will be operationally responsible for internal evaluation and implementation of the wellness policy.

Community Involvement

- 1) As described in the center overview, the communities served by this school are scattered all around the state and are over 180 in number. The visiting schools to WRELC develop their own wellness policies with collaboration of their community. WRELC will support and collaborate with each visiting school to implement the appropriate components in their respective policies during their short stay with the WRELC.
- 2) The Wellness Policy adopted for the WRELC will be put together with collaboration of the staff at the center, with input from the visiting schoolteachers and parents that annually use the center and with the food service professionals that the WRELC enlists to support these wellness policies.