

Villa Marie School Wellness Policy

2026-2027 School Year

Villa Marie School is dedicated to promoting, encouraging and educating students and staff on being healthy physically, intellectually, emotionally, and socially. We will follow this mission by encouraging healthy eating and physical fitness.

We have students who have sensory issues and dietary dislikes. The Villa Marie staff will accommodate as necessary and encourage students to try different foods. We do not force students to eat every part of the meal, but we do encourage and educate them on the importance of having a balanced meal.

Professional Standards

All school nutrition program directors, managers, staff and volunteers will meet or exceed hiring and annual continuing education/training requirements in the USDA professional standards for child nutrition professionals. School nutrition personnel will refer to the Nebraska Department of Education Nutrition Services website for all training resources.

All families are provided with the proper information and forms regarding the National School Lunch Program when they enroll and at the beginning of each school year. Awareness of the program is made available year-round through communications posted within the Villa Marie building, respective sections located in the Student Handbook, and on the Villa Marie website. The Villa Marie staff continually takes steps to protect the privacy of students who qualify for free or reduced meals, as well as the status of meal accounts. No child is turned away from receiving meals at school. Villa Marie follows all nondiscrimination guidelines as provided in the Nondiscrimination Statement and assures compliance with USDA nutrition standards for reimbursable school meals.

Goals:

1. Encourage healthy eating
2. Develop healthy meals
3. Encourage students to try new foods and seasonings
4. Encourage physical fitness and teach the value of healthy living

The wellness team or designee shall establish further goals as are deemed appropriate.

Nutrition and Education: A primary goal at Villa Marie includes implementing practices which meet and exceed the health and nutrition education objectives established by the Nebraska Department of Education. The following are current measures taken to ensure this:

1. **Breakfast**
 - a. All students are eligible to participate in the Federal School Breakfast Program.
 - b. Fruit is provided at breakfast every day.
 - c. Milk and water are provided for each student.
2. **Lunch**
 - a. All students are eligible to participate in the Federal Hot Lunch Program.

- b. Fruits and vegetables are available every day.
- c. Milk and water are provided for each student.
- 3. **Snacks**
 - a. Healthy snacks are offered after school each day.
 - b. Fruits and vegetables are available every day upon student request.
- 4. **Villa Marie Cooking Class**

Students are instructed on how to:

 - a. Understand that an excess of sugars and fat intake can cause obesity and related heart diseases
 - b. Develop healthy meals
 - c. Try new foods and seasonings
 - d. Check nutritional labels
 - e. Read through basic recipes
 - f. Navigate basic culinary vocabulary
 - g. Identify kitchen utensils
 - h. Identify ingredients
 - i. Read, convert, and properly utilize cooking measurements
 - j. Properly maintain sanitization of oneself and the cooking space
 - k. Practice kitchen and food handling safety
- 5. **Science/Health Class**

All students are provided with nutritional education that includes:

 - a. Learning the balanced food plate
 - b. Food sampling projects
 - c. The nutritional function of food
- 6. **Cafeteria, School Displays**

The lunchroom and other school areas display posters or other communications that promote healthy choices suitable to the ages of students served. Educators are encouraged to incorporate such communications in their classrooms as well.

TO ACHIEVE THESE POLICY GOALS:

Wellness Team

Villa Marie will create, strengthen, or work within the existing wellness team to develop, implement, monitor, review, and, as necessary, revise school nutrition and physical activity policies. The team will also serve as a resource for implementing these policies. The wellness team consists of a group of individuals representing the school and community that should include parents, students, representatives of the school food authority, members of the Advisory Board, school administrators, teachers, health professionals, and members of the public.

Physical Activity to Promote Student Wellness:

1. **Curriculum:** P.E. is scheduled once a week for all students. Health and physical education will be integrated into other subjects to complement, but not replace, the health and physical education curriculum provided in accordance with NDE Rule 14. Educators are encouraged to incorporate physical activity promotion and non-sedentary lifestyles in all subject areas as appropriate. P.E. class includes:
 - a. Running, jumping, jump rope, catching, throwing, swinging, kicking, dancing, etc.
 - b. Various sports (kickball, softball, soccer, basketball, track and field, etc.).
2. **Qualifications for Physical Education Teachers Grades K-12.** Teachers at Villa Marie have received suitable degrees as Elementary School/Special Ed teachers, which includes teaching physical education. Teachers may attend professional development workshops on physical education as opportunity arises.
3. **Physical Activity during the School Day:** All students have the opportunity for two (2) recesses daily, outside if weather permits or inside during inclement weather. Students have access to slides, swings, a running track, basketball equipment, bicycles, scooters, and other sport and recreational equipment during recess and after school. Teachers are encouraged to include a routine of short physical activities during the day to promote healthy bodies and minds.
4. **Community Outreach:** Family and community engagement in physical activity consists of activities such as “Homer’s Heroes”, UNL track sessions for middle school students, and the Summer Baseball League sponsored by the Optimist Club. Information is sent home so parents can do the activities with their child.
5. **Physical Activity Health Events:** Educators are encouraged to search for and take advantage of community events that promote physical activity education and nutrition education. Activities may include:
 - a. Health fairs
 - b. Traveling health exhibits
 - c. Field trips to physical activity centers
 - d. Physical activity speakers (school assemblies or class speakers representing sports figures, medical people, etc.)
6. **Other School-based activities** designed to promote wellness
 - a. **Special Olympics**
 - i. Bowling practice meets every Tuesday Sept. 1st through Jan. 12th
 - ii. Basketball practice meets every Thursday Oct. 8th through April 1st
 - iii. Cheer practice meets every other Friday Oct. 2nd through May 21st
 - iv. Track and field practice meets March through May, exact dates TBD
 - b. **Field Trips**
 - i. All annual Villa Marie field trips incorporate walking and encourage physical play

c. **Growing vegetables and other plants - Villa Marie Garden**

- i. Students help plant seeds in the raised garden beds in the spring, and harvest vegetables in the fall.
- ii. Students help weed, water, and mulch the butterfly garden and other flowerbeds.

d. **Daily chores**

- i. Sweeping
- ii. Vacuuming
- iii. Loading recyclables
- iv. Crushing pop cans
- v. Taking out trash
- vi. Dishes
- vii. Folding laundry
- viii. Raking leaves (when applicable)
- ix. Scooping snow (when applicable)

e. **Volunteer work**

The list of volunteer projects below offers examples of volunteer work students have participated in in the past – current and potential volunteer projects are subject to change as opportunities arise.

- i. Prepare and serve meals at Matt Talbot Kitchen
- ii. Litter clean-up along rural campus roadside (~4 miles)
- iii. Litter clean-up in local Waverly Park
- iv. Set tables, chairs, and décor for after-school celebrations and community nights
- v. Visit local elderly care facilities (retired Marian sisters, Waverly retirement home)

7. **Community Resources:** The administration will endeavor to coordinate the school wellness program efforts with those available from medical, public health and other community organizations.

Nutrition Guidelines: School Breakfast and Lunch Programs will be offered which meet or exceed the requirements of federal and state law and regulatory authorities.

1. **Conditions for school meals:** Students will be allotted sufficient time to eat, up to 30 minutes. Meal schedules will be determined by the Principal and Food Service Manager in conjunction with Food & Nutrition Services.
2. **Selection of School Meals:** School meals shall, at a minimum, meet nutritional requirements established by state and federal law. Emphasis is to be on menu planning principles that offer healthy food choices, including lean meats and fresh fruits and vegetables. Food is purchased from local grocery stores and Farmers Markets, as much as possible and as is feasible.
3. **Teaching Students About Nutrition:** The Food Service Manager explains to students the importance of healthy balanced meals, encourages and reminds students to eat from each of the food groups.
4. **After School Day Snacks and Meals:** Villa Marie addresses nutrition standards for all foods and beverages provided to students before and after the school day,

5. **Vending Machines and Food Purchases:** No vending machines are provided at Villa Marie; no extra snacks, food or beverages are sold at the school; and no fundraisers providing food are held onsite.
6. **Water:** Students have access to free water all day. Water is available free of charge at all school meals. Students are encouraged to bring water bottles to classes.
7. **Smart Snack:** All foods and beverages sold on the school campus during the school day are consistent with federal regulations for school meals and the Smart Snacks in Schools nutrition standards.

Plan for Measuring Implementation and Designation of Responsible Persons: The Principal or the Principal's designee is charged with operational responsibility for ensuring that the school meets the Wellness Policy. The Principal or designee shall measure implementation of the Wellness Policy by conducting periodic reviews or receiving periodic reports, and reporting the progress to the Wellness Committee each year at their annual meeting.

The policy will be posted on our school website for the public to view, shared at staff meetings, and distributed to families in their back-to-school packet.

The Wellness Policy will be reviewed at least every three years by the Wellness Committee. The Wellness Committee will also compare our Wellness Policy to those of local school districts and other Catholic schools, collaborating when necessary. The Wellness Committee will regularly assess the extent to which our Wellness Policy compares to local Wellness policies, complies with state regulations, and our progress made in attaining the goals of our Wellness Policy.

Policy adopted: 05/19/2026