

STUDENT HEALTH, NUTRITION & FITNESS

MABE POSITIONS

The Maryland Association of Boards of Education, representing all local boards of education in Maryland:

- ✓ **Supports** local board discretion to adopt policies and allocate resources to support improvements in student behavioral and physical health and fitness.
- ✓ **Supports** funding and policy decisions to strengthen school meal programs to provide healthy food for all students and expand access for economically disadvantaged students.
- ✗ **Opposes** the unfunded mandate for increased physical education instruction, including minimum minutes per week.
- ✗ **Opposes** the unfunded mandate to expand the responsibility of public schools to provide “adequate school health services” to include behavioral health services.

BACKGROUND

Local boards of education place a very high priority on providing school facilities, school meals, and programs of instruction designed to promote the physical and behavioral health and fitness of students and to prepare them to maintain a healthy lifestyle as adults. Federal and state standards for student health and fitness, especially regarding nutrition, have been enhanced to address the national epidemics of juvenile diabetes and obesity. At the same time, child hunger impacts many students as an obstacle to learning.

The 2004 reauthorization of the federal Child Nutrition Act (CNA) required all local school districts to put wellness programs in place by the beginning of the 2006-2007 school year. The CNA required school districts to appoint wellness councils responsible for developing plans to address the types of food sold in schools, physical education, and nutrition. The 2010 Healthy, Hunger-Free Kids Act mandated additional reforms in school meal programs to improve the nutritional value of school meals.

School systems are increasingly involved in breakfast, summer and weekend meal programs; programs to help ensure daily access to healthy food for all students. The Healthy, Hunger-Free Kids Act included the community eligibility program (CEP) as an option for school systems with very high percentages of low-income children to provide free breakfast and lunch to all students in the school. MABE supports the state’s Hunger-Free Schools Act, passed in 2015 and extended in 2017, to allow school systems to utilize CEP. Also passed in 2017 with MABE’s support, the Grab & Go Meals in High Schools program allows breakfast to be served in any part of the school. In 2018, a bill passed with MABE support to phase-in state responsibility for the student share of the costs of reduced-price breakfasts and lunches.

Local boards of education are committed to providing quality physical education programs in Maryland’s public schools. State Board regulations require yearly physical education instruction for all students in grades kindergarten through 8, and elective classes for students in grades 9 through 12. Physical education programs must provide an “individualized, developmentally appropriate, and personally challenging instructional program that advances the student’s knowledge, confidence, skills, and motivation to engage successfully in a lifelong healthy and active lifestyle.” MABE supported 2011 legislation to ensure that coaches, parents, and students are fully informed about identification and responses to concussions.

In 2017, MABE supported the Start Talking Maryland Act to expand the existing drug education program in public schools to include a unit on opioids; require each local board to provide naloxone and authorize school personnel to administer it at every school; and require local boards or local health departments to employ community action officials. In 2015, a bill passed to require school counselor certification in areas of social and emotional development and indicators of trauma, abuse, depression, and other behavioral health issues. A 2016 bill requires age-appropriate education on awareness and prevention of sexual abuse and assault; and a 2017 bill requires suicide risk response training for all educators.

For additional information, see [MABE’s Resolution on Student Health and Fitness](#).