

National Overview

This analysis explores the extent to which a sample of local education agency (LEA) policies from the 2017-2018 school year addressed the Whole School, Whole Community, Whole Child (WSCC) framework. The LEAs studied are a sample of 432 agencies, spanning 19 states and the District of Columbia (hereafter “selected states”), and include both public school districts (“districts”; n = 368) and charter LEAs (n = 64).¹

The domains examined include the 10 domains of the WSCC framework: Health Education; Physical Education and Physical Activity; Nutrition Environment and Services; Health Services; Counseling, Psychological, and Social Services; Social and Emotional Climate; Physical Environment; Employee Wellness; Family Engagement; and Community Involvement. In addition, we examined references to WSCC, the “whole child,” “Coordinated School Health,” and broader wellness-related topics (collectively, we referred to this as the WSCC References domain).

For this brief, we looked across all domains of the WSCC to understand how broadly and deeply LEAs are addressing health topics. First, we assessed how comprehensively LEA policies, on average, addressed key topic areas in each of the WSCC domains (see [Methods Appendix](#) for information about cut-points used for these classifications). Then, we aggregated these assessments to categorize the breadth and depth of LEA coverage of all domains (except WSCC References): **deep** (six or more comprehensive domains), **broad** (eight or more moderate or comprehensive domains), **limited** (three to five low/none domains), or **weak** (at least six low/none domains). We also categorized the breadth and depth of state laws and regulations using these same procedures. Note that the state data presented herein only represent a subset of the state law data compiled and presented in our companion [state law report](#) and the data included in the National Association of State Boards of Education (NASBE) [State Policy Database on School Health](#).

District policies in the 20 states had limited coverage of the WSCC domains.

The district sample included 368 LEAs in 20 selected states, weighted to be representative of districts at the state level. The maps that follow (Figures 1a and 1b) illustrate the breadth and depth of each of the 20 states’ laws (left) and district policies (right).

- **Across the 20 states, the breadth and depth of both state law and district policies ranged from weak to broad.** Based on the topics included in this analysis, none of the state laws covered six or more domains comprehensively (deep). Only DC’s district policy had deep coverage.
- **The 20 states are mixed as to whether state laws or district policies have greater breadth and depth of coverage.** In six states, state laws had greater breadth and depth than district policies, and in five states, district policies had greater breadth and depth than state laws. The remaining nine states had similar breadth and depth across both state laws and district policies.
- **Six states had broad coverage of WSCC topics in both state laws and district policies.** State laws and district policies in Alaska, California, Colorado, New York, Oregon, and Washington broadly covered the WSCC domains. These states’ laws and the district policies within them not only addressed most of the WSCC domains, but they also thoroughly covered the topics within each domain.
- **Most of the district policies within the 20 states were limited in scope across the WSCC domains.** Overall, only five of the 20 states’ laws had limited coverage of the WSCC domains, while the district policies in 11 states had limited coverage of the WSCC domains. Although two states’ laws weakly covered the WSCC domains, none of the states’ aggregated district policy data fell into the “weak” coverage category.

Figures 1a and 1b. Breadth and depth of state law (left) and district policies (right) across WSCC domains



These maps show the extent to which state laws and district policies within the 20 selected states (2.1b) have [★] deep (state panel: 0, district panel: 1), [■] broad (state panel: 13, district panel: 8), [▲] limited (state panel: 5, district panel: 11), or [●] weak (state panel: 2, district panel: 0) coverage of the 10 Whole School, Whole Community, Whole Child domains. States shown in gray were excluded from this analysis.

State laws cover more topics than district policies in 6 of 10 WSCC domains.

Table 1 presents the average percentage of topics for each domain covered by state laws and district policies, respectively. On average, state laws were more comprehensive in their coverage across the WSCC domains than district policies for the 20 selected states. This analysis does not account for the considerable variation between states and between district policies, and is only intended to compare the aggregate of each type of policy.

Table 1. State law and district policy coverage of WSCC domains

Domain (# Topics)	State Laws	District Policies**
Health Education (10)	74% \ominus	57%
Physical Education and Physical Activity (7)	51%	57% \ominus
Nutrition Environment and Services (6)	28%	50% \ominus
Health Services (10)	69% \ominus	53%
Counseling, Psychological, and Social Services (8)	64% \ominus	49%
Social and Emotional Climate (14)	59% \ominus	51%
Physical Environment (12)	75% \ominus	62%
Employee Wellness (5)	15%	17%
Family Engagement (4)	60% \ominus	53%
Community Involvement (3)	70%	76% \ominus
WSCC References (6*)	33%	53% \ominus
N	20	368

*6 constructs were coded at the district level but only 5 were coded at the state level (equity policy was not coded at the state level).

**District data are weighted as discussed in the Methods section of the report.

Shading and \ominus indicates whether state or district policies are more comprehensive for the given domain.

- **On average, states did not universally cover any of the WSCC domain topics in either laws or district policies.** At most, state laws addressed 75 percent of the physical environment topics and 74 percent of the health education topics, on average, across the 20 states. The domains with the greatest coverage in district policies relate to community involvement and physical environment; average district policy coverage in the other domains is at or about 50 percent or below.
- **Generally, in six domains, state laws were more comprehensive than district policies.** In general, state laws addressed more topics related to the whole child than did the district policies (i.e., health education; health services; counseling, psychological, and social services; social and emotional climate; the physical environment; and family engagement).
- **The three areas where district policies were more comprehensive than state laws are tied to the congressionally mandated school district wellness policies.**² Specifically, all districts participating in the federal child nutrition programs (including school lunch and breakfast) are required to have and implement a district-level wellness policy. The wellness policy is required to include goals for physical activity and for ensuring that foods and beverages sold or served outside of federal school meal programs meet the federal Smart Snacks standards.^{3,4} In addition, although not required as part of the wellness policies, many districts have adopted policies governing use of school facilities for sports and physical activity programming outside of the school day (i.e., joint/shared/community use of facilities); these provisions are typically either included in the wellness policies or are companion district-level policies.
- **Employee wellness is hardly addressed in either state law or district policies.** Given that school staff serve as role models for children, and since school staff need to be healthy to perform at their best⁵, it is surprising that employee wellness has not garnered more attention in state law or district policy. It is likely that districts, in particular, are addressing issues of employee wellness in practice but not codifying such provisions into formal district policies.^{6,7}

Coverage of WSCC domains in charter LEA policies is generally weak.

Charter LEA coverage of the WSCC domains (and the topics within the domains) was markedly less comprehensive than state laws or public school district policies. Importantly, charter LEAs do not have the same wellness policy mandates as public school districts unless they participate in the federal child nutrition programs. Because we did not have data on school meal participation for the charter LEAs, we could not determine the extent to which charter LEAs are complying with the federal wellness policy requirement if it applies to them.

As indicated in Table 2, charter LEAs covered, on average, about one-third or less of the topics within each of the WSCC domains.

Table 2. Charter school policy coverage of specific WSCC domains

Domain (# Topics)	Charter LEA Policies
Health Education (10)	26%
Physical Education and Physical Activity (7)	18%
Nutrition Environment and Services (6)	31%
Health Services (10)	24%
Counseling, Psychological, and Social Services (8)	21%
Social and Emotional Climate (14)	32%
Physical Environment (12)	33%
Family Engagement (4)	35%
Community Involvement (3)	27%
Employee Wellness (5)	7%
WSCC Reference Domain (6)	18%
N	64

- **On average, the comprehensiveness of charter LEA policies around WSCC domains is generally weak.** None of the WSCC domains are comprehensively covered, on average, by the charter LEA policies examined in this report.
- **Topics related to family engagement, the physical environment, social and emotional climate, and nutrition environment and services are the most prevalent in the charter LEA policies.** However, only about one-third of the topics within each of these domains is covered by charter LEA policies on average.
- **Charter LEA policies generally addressed few of the examined topic areas related to physical education and physical activity and employee wellness (along with reference to WSCC, whole child, or coordinated school health).** This is in contrast to the public school district policies where topics within the physical education and physical activity domain were commonly addressed. Further, although district policy comprehensiveness was limited around both employee wellness and WSCC references, it was still greater than the comprehensiveness of charter LEA policies in those domains.

The Institute for Health Research and Policy at the University of Illinois at Chicago, in partnership with Child Trends, examined the extent to which 11 healthy schools domains are addressed in local education policies across 20 strategically selected states (including 19 states and the District of Columbia; see Methods section for details on the sampling methodology). These domains include the 10 components of the Whole School, Whole Community, Whole Child (WSCC) model: Health Education; Physical Education and Physical Activity; Nutrition Environment and Services; Health Services; Counseling, Psychological, and Social Services; Social and Emotional Climate; Physical Environment; Employee Wellness; Family Engagement; and Community Involvement. An additional domain, WSCC References, addresses the extent to which district policies include explicit references to the WSCC model, or similar language such as the Centers for Disease Control and Preventions' Coordinated School Health model. Sub-briefs covering the other domains can be found at <https://www.childtrends.org/publications/the-current-landscape-of-school-district-and-charter-policies-that-support-healthy-schools>.

¹ For purposes of this work, a charter LEA is an LEA listed in the U.S. Department of Education's Common Core of Data (SY 2014-15) as an "Independent Charter District."

² Local School Wellness Policy Implementation Under the Healthy, Hunger-Free Kids Act of 2010, Final Rule, (2016). 81 Federal Register 50151. Retrieved from: <https://www.gpo.gov/fdsys/pkg/FR-2016-07-29/pdf/2016-17230.pdf>.

³ Healthy, Hunger-Free Kids Act of 2010. PL 111-296; 124 Stat 3183. 2010(111th Congress). Retrieved from: <https://www.govinfo.gov/content/pkg/PLAW-111publ296/pdf/PLAW-111publ296.pdf>

⁴ National School Lunch Program and School Breakfast Program: Nutrition standards for all foods sold in school as required by the Healthy, Hunger-Free Kids Act of 2010, final rule. (2016). 81 Federal Register 50132. <https://www.fns.usda.gov/school-meals/fr-072916d>

⁵ Eaton, D.K., Marx, E., Bowie, S.E. (2007). Faculty and staff health promotion: Results from the school health policies and programs study 2006. *Journal of School Health*. 77(8):557-566.

⁶ Solomon, B., Katz, E., Steed, H., Temkin, D. (2018) Creating Policies to Support Health Schools: Policymaker, Educator, and Student Perspectives. Bethesda, MD: Child Trends. Retrieved from: https://www.childtrends.org/wp-content/uploads/2018/10/healthyschoolstakeholderreport_ChildTrends_October2018.pdf.

⁷ Asada, Y., Hughes, A., Read, M., Schermbeck, R., Schwartz, M., & Chiqui, J.F. (2018). Superintendent Perspectives on Local School Wellness Policy Implementation: Summary of Findings Report. Chicago, IL: National Wellness Policy Study, Institute for Health Research and Policy, University of Illinois at Chicago, Retrieved from: <https://go.uic.edu/NWPSProducts>.