

WellSAT WSCC | Policy

**Whole School, Whole Community, Whole Child
School Policy Assessment Tool**

USER MANUAL

2025



csch@uconn.edu
csch.uconn.edu



rudd.center@uconn.edu
ruddcenter.org

Suggested Citation: Schwartz, M. B., Chafouleas, S. M., Williamson, K.M., Koslouski, J.B., and Marcy, H.M. (2025). WellSAT WSCC Policy Assessment Tool. Storrs, CT: University of Connecticut.

Note: The original WellSAT WSCC was developed by Sandra Chafouleas, Marlene Schwartz, Taylor Koriakin, and Sarah McKee. Suggested Citation: Chafouleas, S. M., Schwartz, M. B., Koriakin, T. A., & McKee, S. L. (2019). WellSAT WSCC School Policy Evaluation Tool (Version 1.0). Storrs, CT: University of Connecticut.

Copyright © 2025 by the University of Connecticut. All rights reserved. Permission granted to photocopy for educational use as long as the names of the creators and the full copyright notice are included in all copies.

Introduction & Background

History of the WSCC Model

In 2014, the Whole School, Whole Community, Whole Child (WSCC) model was developed through a partnership between the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) and ASCD (formerly known as the Association for Supervision and Curriculum Development). The model was developed in response to research demonstrating the connection between student health and educational outcomes. It combined the previously separate Whole Child and Coordinated School Health models. The WSCC model responds to calls for integration and coordination across the many systems of care that support student outcomes, but often operate in isolation.

The WSCC model (right) depicts the child at the center, surrounded by several layers of support. The green center of the model depicts meeting the needs of the whole child. The ten core domains of the model supporting school wellness are portrayed in a circle—physical education and physical activity, nutrition environment and services, health services, counseling, psychological, & social services, social and emotional climate, physical environment, employee wellness, family engagement, and community involvement, and health education. The words in the white circle inside of the domains emphasize the importance of coordinating policy, process, and practice in order to improve learning and health. Finally, the entire model is surrounded by the community, representing the ecological factors affecting students and schools.



History of the WellSAT and WellSAT WSCC measures

In 2006, federal law was created requiring all local education agencies participating in the national school meal programs create a written school wellness policy to address school food, nutrition education, and physical education and physical activity. Although most districts complied with the requirement to develop wellness policies, the policies differed markedly in their quality, comprehensiveness, and the strength of the policy language (e.g., mandates or requirements versus recommendations). In order to study the impact of these policies, a team of researchers developed a measure to quantitatively evaluate written wellness policies (see Schwartz et al., 2009). In response to requests from the field, a shorter version of the original measure was developed by a multidisciplinary team and named Wellness School Assessment Tool (WellSAT). The WellSAT was posted online in 2010 at www.wellsat.org. In 2014, WellSAT 2.0 was released to respond to updates in federal regulations related to district wellness policies—including requirements to address food marketing in schools and nutrition standards for all food sold on

school grounds. In 2018, WellSAT 3.0 was released to reflect current best practices and input from 77 experienced users.

In 2019, the Rudd Center and CSCH collaborated to create the WellSAT WSCC, which expanded the WellSAT Tool to include all ten domains outlined in the WSCC Model. It also added an 11th section that addressed integration, implementation, communication, and evaluation of WSCC-related policies and the wellness promotion and marketing section already in the WellSAT. To develop the WellSAT WSCC, researchers from the Rudd Center and CSCH consulted national guidelines, recommendations from primary organizations, and a review of the literature in each of the domains of the WSCC model. To finalize the items for each domain, the teams then consulted with research and practice experts. After using the measure on a sample of districts, the WellSAT WSCC team revised the tool (v 2.0) in 2021.

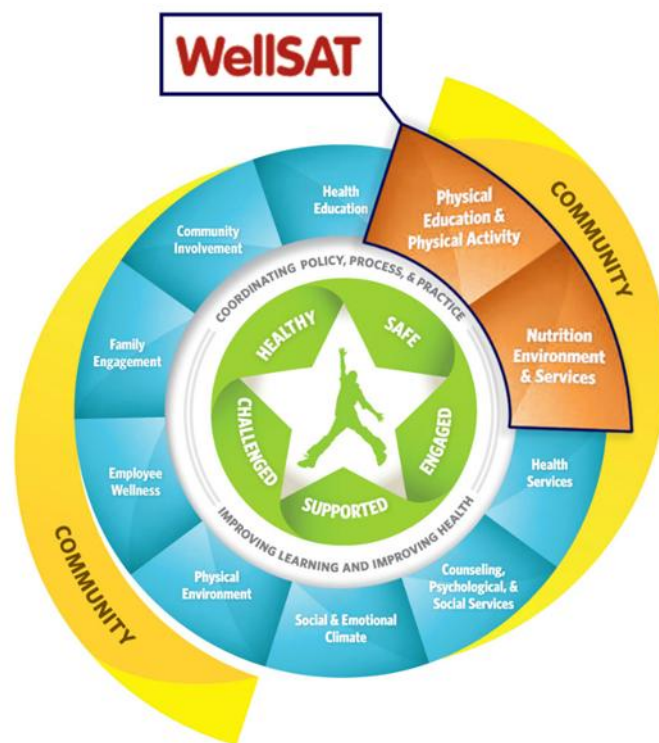
In 2025, the wellsat.org website was rebuilt based on requests from users. The new site includes features that allow teams to work together on an assessment; find previous assessments from their district; and complete their Triennial reviews (a federal requirement implemented by USDA in 2020). On the new site, WellSAT 3.0 was renamed WellSAT Policy and some items were reorganized. The federal requirements were placed in their own section, which became the first scale of the measure. The employee wellness items were put in their own scale and all of the questions were renumbered. A parallel measure to assess the implementation of the policies – i.e., practices taking place in school buildings – was named WellSAT in Practice and added to the website.

In order to ensure consistency across tools, the WellSAT WSCC Policy measure was reorganized later that year. In 2025, CSCH and Rudd staff also worked to create a WellSAT WSCC in Practice measure to assess implementation of policies across all 10 WSCC domains.

Why the WellSAT WSCC Policy tool was developed

As shown in the figure, WellSAT Policy primarily addresses the domains related to physical activity and nutrition, although it also includes elements of health education and employee wellness. It was not designed to assess all of the policies associated with the full WSCC model. The WellSAT WSCC Policy assessment tool was developed to expand WellSAT, and allow users to evaluate how well district policies align with ‘best practices’ in each domain of the WSCC model.

In summary, the WellSAT WSCC Policy is an assessment tool to help districts identify strengths and areas for improvement in their policies in relation to the WSCC Model. WellSAT WSCC Policy items reflect the federal law when applicable, the current evidence base, and best practices from professional organizations.



The WellSAT WSCC Policy tool includes 12 sections: one that addresses federal requirements, one for each domain of the WSCC, and one that addresses integration and coordination of WSCC-related policies. Definitions of each of the domains can be found in **Appendix A**.

To view the tool, see the WellSAT WSCC Policy Coding Guide.

How to use the WellSAT WSCC Policy

Who should complete this tool?

The tool is most appropriately used by a team of individuals who are familiar with school district policies. Those individuals might include:

- District level school officials
- Members of district Boards of Education
- Members of School Wellness Advisory Boards or committees, particularly those charged with evaluation responsibilities
- Public health professionals
- Researchers
- State Department of Education or Public Health staff overseeing child nutrition and health services
- School-level officials, provided they have a clear understanding that the tool is to be used for assessment of district, rather than school-level policies.

Who else should be involved

Because of the wide range of policies assessed by the WellSAT WSCC Policy, it can be useful to consult with district and school personnel whose roles are related to the policies, processes, and practices within specified domains. For example, consider including:

- Wellness coordinators
- School nurses and other district healthcare providers
- School psychologists, counselors, or social workers
- Health educators
- School safety team members
- School climate committee members.

How to decide which policies to evaluate

The WSCC model is comprehensive, so there are a lot of policies that could be evaluated! The task will be more manageable if you prioritize some domains to be evaluate first, and then build an action plan for completing the task. As previously noted, definitions of each of the domains can be found in **Appendix A**.

A worksheet to facilitate prioritizing WSCC domains for evaluation can be found in **Appendix B**. You can use the worksheet to rate each domain using considerations such as how easy it is to find policies associated with the domain; how the domain aligns with current strategic plans; or how clarifying policy in a domain may strengthen practice implementation. Once the ratings are completed, 3-5 might be selected as top priorities for evaluation.

Next, for each of the selected domains, you can build an action plan that articulates a specific process, timeline, and people to involve. This can then be used to monitor progress. See **Appendix C. Action Planning Around Prioritized Domains for School Policy Evaluation** for a template.

How to find district policies

Most school districts list their policies on their websites. Find your district's website and locate:

- Board of Education policies
- Any superintendent regulations
- Any administrative guidelines

You will need to find all potentially relevant policies for your identified domain to score. The local wellness policy is a good place to start, but also check for health and wellness related policies for buildings, students, staff, and curriculum.

If your district does not post these documents online, you may need to contact the district's office to request them.

How to score your policies

Policy statements are rated "0," "1," or "2" - using the definitions below.

Rating	Meaning	Explanation
NA	Not applicable	The item is not applicable, e.g. the item mentions a high school but there is no high school in the district.
0	Not Mentioned	The item is not included in the text of the policy.
1	Weak Statement	The item is mentioned, <u>but</u> • The policy will be hard to enforce because the statement is vague, unclear, or confusing. • Statements are listed as goals, aspirations, suggestions, or recommendations. • There are loopholes in the policy that weaken enforcement of the item. • The policy mentions a future plan to act without specifying when the plan will be established. • Words often used include: may, can, could, should, might, encourage, suggest, urge, some, partial, make an effort, and try
2	Meets Expectations	The item is mentioned and it is clear that the policy makers are committed to making the item happen because: • Strong language is used to indicate that action or regulation is required, including: shall, will, must, have to, insist, require, all, total, responsibility, comply and enforce. • A district is unable to enforce an item (e.g., teachers role modeling healthy behaviors), but the goal is clearly stated (e.g., "shall encourage teachers to role model healthy behaviors").

Users should always refer to the specific rating guidance for each item, which contains information about best practices and example policy language to assist the user and is included in this document.

In addition, if a law addressing an item is mentioned in the policy, the law should be reviewed and coded according to the 0-2 coding guidelines.

Calculating Comprehensiveness and Strength Scores

Comprehensiveness and strength scores can be calculated for each section of the WellSAT WSCC Policy.

Comprehensiveness = the breadth of your policy in addressing the domain

Strength = the depth of your policy in requiring actions that address the domain

Below is a completed example showing how to calculate comprehensive and strength scores.

Domain: Safe Environment

Item	Rating
SE1: Identifies regular cleaning and maintenance practices for district buildings.	1
SE2: Addresses prevention and safe removal (if applicable) of mold and moisture in district buildings.	1
SE3: Addresses minimization of student and staff exposure to toxins.	2
SE4: Specifies a system for monitoring and addressing air quality and ventilation for district buildings and grounds.	2
SE5: Specifies system for monitoring and addressing water quality in district buildings.	1
SE6: Specifies an integrated pest management plan.	1
SE7: Addresses district buildings' physical condition such as lighting, noise, and temperature during normal operating hours and construction.	0
SE8: Addresses student and employee involvement in maintaining the school physical environment (e.g., graffiti, littering, recycling).	0
SE9: Addresses maintenance of facilities and compliance to safety standards.	2
SE10: Specifies physical safety measures and procedures in district buildings and grounds.	2
SE11: Addresses the establishment of an ongoing school safety team.	2
SE12: Specifies a crisis preparedness and response plan.	2
SE13: Addresses training for school resource officers in district buildings (if applicable).	n/a

Comprehensiveness Score: Count the number of items rated as "1" or "2." Divide this number by the total number of items, excluding those that are not applicable (N/A). Multiply by 100.

Strength Score: Count the number of items rated as "2." Divide this number by the total number of items, excluding those that are not applicable (N/A). Multiply by 100.

Calculating SE Comprehensive Score	Calculating SE Strength Score
$\frac{10}{12} \times 100 = 83\%$	$\frac{6}{12} \times 100 = 50\%$

Comprehensiveness Score Explanation: 10 items were rated as “1” or “2.” The denominator is 12 because 12 items were rated (excluding SE13, which was rated n/a).

Strength Score Explanation: 6 items were rated as “2.” The denominator is 12 because 12 items were rated (excluding SE13, which was rated n/a).

How to get started

In addition to this user guide, make sure to download the **WellSAT WSCC Policy Coding Guide and Scoresheet**.

After assembling your team, reviewing this user guide, and downloading your district’s policies, we recommend starting by reviewing your district wellness policy. This should allow you to code most of the (a) Federal Requirements; (b) Nutrition Environment and Services, (c) Physical Activity, and (d) Integration and Coordination (IC) items. However, some of these items may be addressed in other policies, or there may be policy language aligned with other items included in the wellness policy. For example, some districts may address family engagement, community involvement, health education, or employee wellness in the wellness policy. Therefore, we suggest that you also code those items as you come across aligned language in the wellness policy.

Frequently asked questions

How does this tool differ from the WellSAT Policy?

The WellSAT WSCC Policy is designed to be an expansion of the existing WellSAT Policy. The WellSAT Policy was originally designed to assess [local school wellness policies](#), which are federally mandated to address nutrition and physical activity. The WSCC model provides a broader picture of all the elements of school health. Districts are not required to have policies that address all domains of the WSCC, but districts that desire to take this integrated, collaborative approach to school health may find it useful to assess their policies using this framework. The WellSAT WSCC Policy provides a snapshot of how well a school district's policies address ALL of the domains of the WSCC model of school health.

Does the WellSAT WSCC Policy measure policy implementation?

No, the WellSAT WSCC Policy measures the quality of written wellness policies. The WellSAT WSCC in Practice tool assesses the implementation of policies within schools.

Why should I be familiar with federal and state laws relevant to district policies?

Federal laws regulate several items in this assessment tool.

State laws vary considerably, and this measure will not indicate whether your school district is in compliance with all of the laws in your state. Therefore, we recommend a thorough review of your state's laws and regulations related to WSCC.

How should I use the results of this assessment?

This tool can be used to identify strengths and areas for improvement in your district's policies. See **Appendix A** for a worksheet to facilitate prioritization of WSCC domains for your policy evaluation efforts and **Appendix B** to learn how to develop an action plan around the domains you identify as priorities in your district.

Where can I find more information about the Whole School, Whole Community, Whole Child model?

[ASCD Whole Child Framework](#)

This site includes an outline of a Whole Child approach and includes many resources.

[UConn CSCH Whole Child Project](#)

Includes resources for assessing policies, processes and practices in schools.

[CDC Whole School, Whole Community, Whole Child Model](#)

Outlines and explains the WSCC model and its components.

Appendices

Appendix A. WellSAT WSCC Policy Domains and Definitions

Note. WSCC domains and definitions were adapted from the CDC/ASCD's [Whole School, Whole Community, Whole Child](#) model.

Behavioral Supports (i.e. Counseling, Psychological, and Social Services) is described as supporting the social, emotional, behavioral, and mental health of students, and extends along a continuum of prevention through intervention strategies that identify and address barriers to learning. School employed professionals such as school psychologists, school counselors, and school social workers provide direct services to individual students and families as well as classes and schools as a whole. In addition, referral and consultation with community providers is important in the coordination of counseling, psychological, and social services.

Community Involvement describes involving groups, organizations, and businesses within the community as important anchors to a school, creating partnerships, sharing resources, and volunteering to support student learning and health. Not only can schools benefit from these connections, but these benefits can also be reciprocal such as when schools share facilities with the community (e.g. meeting spaces, library sharing) and coordinate to disseminate information about resources and services available within the community.

Employee Wellness involves fostering health in all school staff, as healthy employees are more productive and better able to do their job in attending to student needs. Employee wellness approaches include programs and policies that embrace a continuum of prevention to intervention strategies, and offer personalized health programs such as stress management, improved physical health and nutrition, and risk reduction.

Family Engagement describes family-school partnerships to support the learning and health of students across student developmental periods, working together through shared responsibility of both school staff and families in actively supporting successful development of students.

Health Education and Nutrition Education includes planned learning experiences and opportunities to gain information and skills needed to make healthy decisions, achieve health literacy, and adopt healthy behaviors in self and others. Comprehensive and effective school health education extends appropriately across developmental periods, is based on identified needs, and is provided in a variety of ways – such as direct instruction, patient visits, and public service announcements. It addresses issues such as personal health, physical activity, nutrition, mental & emotional health, sexual health, violence prevention, tobacco use, and alcohol & drug use.

School **Health Services** staff and facilities are typically available to help all students with preventive care such as vision and hearing screening, as well as dealing with immediate injuries and first aid. In addition, school health services staff play a large role in the management of student chronic health conditions, including coordinating care and communicating with the student's family and other health care providers.

Nutrition Environment and Services includes facilitating healthy eating by providing appropriate food choices, education, and messages. The nutrition environment extends to all school places in which food and beverage access is available (e.g. cafeterias, vending machines, classrooms). School nutrition services provide meals that meet government nutrition standards and the school community supports a healthy nutrition environment.

Physical Activity describes comprehensive strategies to facilitate student physical health, which includes both (a) engaging in planned and sequential teaching of the motor skills, knowledge, and behaviors needed for physical activity and fitness and (b) providing students with opportunities to be physically active throughout the day.

Social and Emotional Climate is promotion of a safe and supportive learning environment through attention to social and emotional development and psychosocial aspects of the learning experience. A positive social and emotional climate fosters student engagement in activities; relationships with peers and adults that are respectful, trusting, and caring; and successful learning.

Safe Environment (derived from Physical Environment in the WSCC model) focuses on the physical school building, the land on which it is located, and the areas surrounding it. A healthy school environment attends to physical conditions during normal operation as well as renovation. It addresses factors such as ventilation, pollution, lighting, noise, and temperature – as well as protecting students from physical threats and injuries (e.g. traffic, crime, hazardous materials, pollution).

The final section is represented on the WSCC model as the white circle “coordinating policy, process, and practice.”

Integration and Coordination includes policies and practices designed to ensure the successful implementation and evaluation of all whole child wellness policies across the school district.

Appendix B. Worksheet for Prioritizing WSCC Domains for School Policy Evaluation

Date Completed:	People Involved:
-----------------	------------------

Policies – The laws, mandates, regulations, standards, resolutions, and guidelines which provide a foundation for school district practices and procedures.

Use this worksheet to facilitate prioritization of WSCC domains for your policy evaluation efforts. First, complete a rating for each domain using a 0 (needs work) to 2 (doing great) point scale. When rating each domain, consider things such as: *how easy it is to find policies associated with this domain, how the domain aligns with strategic plans, and how clarifying policy may strengthen practice implementation in each domain.* Next, provide a brief justification for your rating. As part of this justification, indicate the people who were consulted to help determine the rating (e.g., staff holding roles/responsibilities related to that domain). Finally, go back through to identify priority areas that might be targeted – *hint, select no more than 3-5 as top priorities.*

Domain	Rating 0 (needs work), 1 (sort of), 2 (doing great)	Rating Justification <u>Explain:</u> provide brief justification <u>List:</u> people consulted in determining rating
 FEDERAL REQUIREMENTS		
 NUTRITION ENVIRONMENT		
 HEALTH EDUCATION		
 PHYSICAL ACTIVITY		
 EMPLOYEE WELLNESS		

Domain	Rating 0 (needs work), 1 (sort of), 2 (doing great)	Rating Justification <u>Explain</u> : provide brief justification <u>List</u> : people consulted in determining rating
 BEHAVIORAL SUPPORTS		
 COMMUNITY INVOLVEMENT		
 FAMILY ENGAGEMENT		
 HEALTH SERVICES		
 SAFE ENVIRONMENT		
 SOCIAL & EMOTIONAL CLIMATE		
 INTEGRATION & COORDINATION		

Appendix C. Action Planning Around Prioritized Domains for School Policy Evaluation

Date Completed:	People Involved:
-----------------	------------------

Using the information gathered through completion of *Appendix B. Worksheet for Prioritizing WSCC Domains for School Policy Evaluation*, indicate the domain(s) that you have prioritized for evaluation of school policy, and build an action plan for the policy evaluation process.

Complete one form for each of your selected domains. Hint – it is recommended that you select no more than 3-5 domains at a time.

Step 1: Place a ✓ next to the chosen WSCC domain or section for evaluation of your policies.

Section Name	Selected	Section Name	Selected
Federal Requirements		Community Involvement	
Nutrition Environment and Services		Family Engagement	
Health Education and Nutrition Education		Health Services	
Physical Education and Physical Activity		Safe Environment	
Employee Wellness		Social and Emotional Climate	
Behavioral Supports		Integration & Coordination	

Step 2. Provide brief rationale as to why this domain has been selected for policy review.

--

Step 3. Identify who will be involved in the review.

(e.g., leader(s), review team, any additional staff that hold responsibilities related to the chosen domain)

Step 4. Provide the timeline and process for your review.

(e.g., who, what, when, where, how)

Step 5. Define the expected outcomes from this review.

(e.g., What will happen next? What are the deliverables? How will impact be measured?)

Step 6. Maintain progress notes throughout your process.

(e.g., include date, brief description, and progress rating with 1 (not proceeding as planned) to 10 (proceeding as planned))