

# Youth Voice Report-Out: MMSD Wellness Policy & Water Access in Schools

## Engagements

School district wellness policies are required to be updated every three years. In March 2022, Healthy Kids Collaborative partnered with the Madison Metropolitan School District (MMSD) and the Health Science Career Pathways programs at La Follette and East High Schools to hold listening sessions with students to get their input on revisions to MMSD’s Wellness Policy. We also held a focus group with Children for Future members at Memorial High School.

**Stakeholder Group:** Current MMSD East, LaFollette & Memorial High School students  
**Number of Students Reached:** 267  
**Methods of Engagement:** In-person listening sessions, Google Form survey

Students learned about the basics of the Wellness Policy, advocacy, and the issue of water access in schools before sharing their views and priorities around school health and wellness.

## Themes

Students identified the following areas as their top priorities for improving school health and wellness:



**Nutrition Services**  
School lunch, food, and water



**Structure of the School Day**  
More space and unstructured time at school for non-classroom activities



**Physical Environment**  
School building cleanliness and safety (especially bathrooms)



**Student Voice**  
Include student input in policy creation



**Mental Health & Health Services**  
Better access to counseling and period care products



## Water Access

Students expressed strong support for adding specific language related to water access in their schools to the wellness policy.

**96%** of students support improving water access and water bottle filling stations in MMSD schools.

**76%** listed “Water bottle filling stations are clean and sanitized regularly” as a priority.

**70%** of students voiced support for a policy to install water bottle filling stations in all new and renovated schools.

## In Their Own Words—Quotes from Students

“Mental health, nutrition, student voices, and staff wellness are very important to address because of how much it impacts everyone.”  
-East High School student

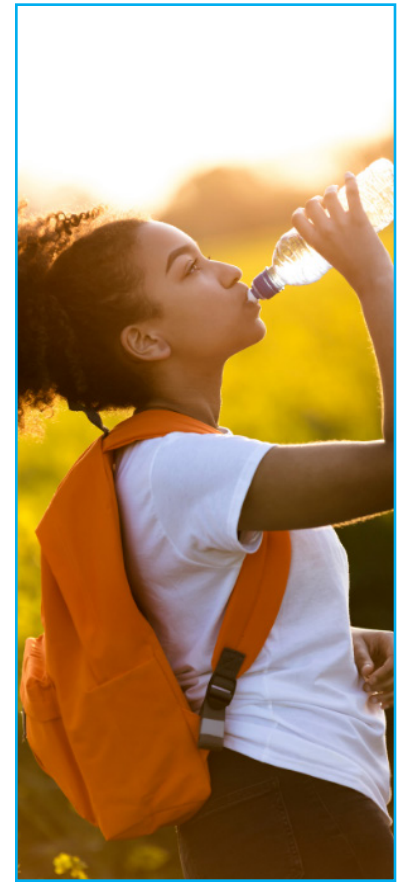
“We need more counseling staff, more LGBTQ+ counselors.”  
-La Follette High School student

“We need more spaces to process, reflect, and simply be.”  
-La Follette High School student

“I know so many people (including myself) who just don’t use or heavily avoid the school bathrooms due to their lack of cleanliness.”  
-Memorial HS student

“Many water fountains are commonly out of order or don’t feature a dispenser for reusable water bottles. Drinking sufficient water is just as important if not more important than eating breakfast every day.”  
-Memorial HS student

“I would rather use a water bottle filling station than a water fountain.”  
-East HS student



## Opportunities for Improving the Policy

The MMSD school board and District Wellness Advisory Council have the opportunity to strengthen school health and wellness by addressing these student priorities and concerns in the upcoming District Wellness Policy update.

- Add a “Physical Environment” section with specific language related to building safety and cleanliness
- Add a “Student Voice” section to the policy and work with student groups to address priorities such as nutrition, bathroom cleanliness and access, and access to period care products
- Add specific language to strengthen water access in schools
- Add specific language to increase access to mental health supports

## Action Steps—What Can I Do?

Talk to MMSD School Board members about your support for these priorities and improving school health and wellness. A vote on the updated Wellness Policy is scheduled for June.



Healthy Kids  
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