

# AFYA BALTIMORE INC. WELLNESS POLICIES & BELIEFS 2017-18 SCHOOL YEAR

## Purpose

Afya Baltimore Inc. (ABI) is the non-profit organization that operates Afya Public Charter School (Afya) and Brehms Lane Public Charter School (Brehms Lane), middle and elementary schools located in Belair-Edison, and Tunbridge Public Charter School (Tunbridge), an elementary-middle school in Govans. *Afya* is a Swahili word for health, and health is at the heart of what we do at ABI and in our schools. We focus on the academic/intellectual health, physical/nutritional health, and social/emotional health of our students. We believe that students need regular opportunities to think critically, be physically active, and interact constructively with peers to create and learn habits of mind and body that lead to healthier living.

In order to achieve our goals and promote our mission, we have aligned our work with the best practices promoted by the Alliance for a Healthier Generation, the Baltimore City Public School System guidelines (which ABI consulted on), and parents and board members. We annually update our policy.

The ABI Wellness Policies and Beliefs is categorized into three sections to match our mission of teaching Baltimore's children to live healthy, balanced lives:  
Intellectual/Academic Health,  
Physical/Nutritional Health, and  
Social/Emotional Health.

## Our Standards

### 1. Intellectual/Academic Health

Since the founders of ABI began working together in 2001, the intellectual work of our schools has been grounded in an approach

that features balanced literacy and the pedagogy that supports that practice. In the early 2000s, this way of thinking about teaching and learning flourished in the work of District 2, in NYC, perhaps most notably at the Manhattan New School, which Shelly Harwayne featured in her book, *Going Public*. We were also heavily influenced by the work around "nested professional development," espoused by Lauren Resnick, which concentrated teacher training on the classroom itself and valued hands-on coaching and collaborative practice in communities of learning.

In Baltimore City, this work was supported by the work of Achievement First, at the Fund For Educational Excellence, and was featured in the reform work that happened in the CEO's District.

The spirit of this early works continues to inspire our approach to the intellectual growth of our students. Today, our work aligns closely with the Maryland College and Career Readiness Standards so our students have access to rich and rigorous grade level curricula and we're committed to student assessment and data analysis across our academic program so all our students make at least one year's growth each year.

Our mission is to prepare our students for the high school of their choice and ensure that they are ready to live healthy, purposeful lives. Their intellectual growth is essential to this journey. As we do this work, the ABI governing board will ensure that all of our teachers are fully certified and experts in their craft. Furthermore, the board is dedicated to ensuring that teachers receive quality professional training that will help them improve their craft and increase student achievement.

## 2. Physical/Nutritional Health

### Health Education

- The comprehensive school health education curriculum will be a planned, sequential curriculum that addresses the intellectual/academic, physical/nutritional and emotional/social dimensions of health.
- Health education will be implemented as a component of the instructional program for grades pre-k through grade eight and taught by highly qualified health education teachers. Our approach to health instruction will be comprehensive, age-appropriate, and closely aligned with the Maryland state standards. Our goal is to create and implement a curriculum that includes functional knowledge and essential skills for students to achieve healthy behavioral outcomes.
- Sex education is taught in our health classes. We align our instruction with the state's guidelines. Students in grades six and seven begin study of puberty, healthy relationships, and risk taking behaviors. Students in grade eight learn about the factors involved in sexuality and human development; reproduction and birth; influences on sexual activity; healthful vs. harmful relationships; abstinence; pregnancy prevention and family planning; and myths and misconceptions concerning sexuality and sexual behavior. Additionally, we look for ways to supplement our curriculum through work with partners, who can provide additional age-appropriate information and counseling to students.
- The ABI governing board oversees all aspects of this policy and will receive progress reports on keys aspects of the

work during quarterly board meetings. School-based staff, under the supervision of the principal and in coordination the respective parent organizations, is responsible for implementation of the policies described herein. ABI staff will effectively communicate to our school community about the health and wellness of our schools, including progress towards stated goals and areas planned for improvement for the future, via letters home to families, our websites, Facebook pages and newsletters.

### Health Services

- Our schools will provide an array of health services for students provided by highly qualified school counselors, social workers, and school psychologists.
- Our schools will work with external partners provide additional services for families, including consultation, counseling, family planning, and access to a full range of mental health services.

### Nutrition Education and Promotion

- Our schools will provide students with nutrition education in the context of the comprehensive health education curriculum.
- Nutrition education concepts will be integrated across content areas such as physical education, science, social studies, English/language arts, humanities and mathematics.

### Nutrition Standards

- All foods and beverages served will meet or exceed USDA standards for federal meal programs and promote good health. Schools shall serve lunches

and breakfasts that are consistent with the goals of the most recent Dietary Guidelines for Americans.

- Priority will be placed on procurement of fresh and local produce.
- We will enact strategies to promote student participation in school meals and consumption of fresh fruit and vegetables.
- All food and beverage served outside of USDA school meals will comply with USDA competitive foods (Smart Snacks in School) policy. Advertisement of foods and beverages that do not comply with Maryland Nutrition Standards for All Foods Sold in Schools is prohibited.
- Schools shall make available to children, free of charge, as nutritionally appropriate, potable water for consumption in the place where meals are served during meal service.
- We accommodate the needs of students with food allergies in a number of ways in our schools. We have allergies documented in the main office, kitchen (the cafeteria manager makes a note in the computer system that comes up when the child purchases lunch), and of course the nurse. We provide peanut-free tables at lunchtime as needed. Our staff is trained in using the EpiPen.

### Physical Education

- ABI will ensure physical education is taught by qualified physical education teachers.
- Physical education equipment and facilities will be safe, clean, and accessible for all students. Physical

education will ensure developmentally appropriate instruction that meets the diversity of student needs and abilities at each grade level, including students enrolled in specialized programs.

### Physical Fitness

- ABI schools will provide students with an opportunity for supervised physical activity during the school day at the elementary and middle school grades.
- All schools will have recess regularly to provide an opportunity for students to engage in productive play with their peers
- All students will be provided with daily opportunities before, during and/or after-school for physical activity (e.g. physical activity breaks, extracurricular physical activity programs, clubs, intramurals, interscholastic athletics).

## 3. Social/Emotional Health

### School Climate and Culture

- Schools will promote a dining environment that is calm and friendly.
- Food will not be used as a punishment or reward anytime during the school day

### Student Support Services

- All schools shall create a safe and supportive school environment for all students that is culturally proficient, engaging, inclusive and youth driven.
- Prevention and intervention-based work will address and integrate social health, emotional health, physical health and behavioral health.
- Mental health, substance use, and violence prevention services will be provided through a continuum of

services beginning with the comprehensive health education curriculum.

- Mental health and substance use services will be provided by school psychologists, school social workers, school counselors, mental health counselors and/or substance abuse counselors assigned to schools to provide support for students in a culturally and linguistically appropriate manner.
- Prevention and intervention services will be implemented in identified schools by appropriately licensed professionals and/or competent and skilled individuals to positively address social-emotional and behavioral health concerns, as well as provide support for violence and substance use prevention efforts using evidence-based and/or evidence-informed practices.
- All schools will provide a skill-based education to promote healthy relationships, through violence prevention strategies and access to support services.
- School health services will be implemented jointly by ABI schools, the Baltimore City Public School System, and the Baltimore City Health Department.

- Our schools will actively engage with key community partners to enhance programming.
- Our school leaders and board members will serve in leadership roles in the community and act as stewards and ambassadors for the ABI mission.
- Our facilities will be readily available for active use by our school community before, during, and after school hours.

### **New Wellness Initiatives for 2017-2018**

ABI is supporting two new initiatives in our schools this year. They are:

- A new digital citizenship curriculum that will be taught across the grades in our schools. We recognize that navigating social media is challenging for students and adults alike. By implementing a new curriculum, we plan to teach students how to be good, responsible citizens in our schools and online.
- A new opportunity for parents and children to become wellness ambassadors for our schools and our city. This program will start at Afya this year and expand to Brehms Lane and Tunbridge next year.

### **Community and Parent Outreach, Support and Engagement**

- Our schools will promote the importance of organized parent groups and actively work with parents to assist their efforts to organize to support the needs of students.
- Parents will have opportunities to serve on the ABI governing board.