EXHIBIT F

Arkansas Code 20-7-135
Legislative Report

School District Nutrition and Physical Activity Priorities, 2026–2027 School Year

Purpose and Policy Context

This report summarizes school district implementation priorities related to nutrition and physical activity standards under Arkansas Code § 20-7-135. The law requires public school districts to establish and implement policies and activities that promote student health through improved nutrition, increased physical activity, and supportive school health environments.

Health and Wellness Standards Update

Over the past year, the Division of Elementary and Secondary Education (DESE) convened educators from across the state to revise the academic standards for health and physical education. The revised standards incorporate applicable legislative requirements, including, but not limited to, those addressing CPR, dating violence, gun safety, the benefits of breastfeeding, and human development. The standards also align cardiovascular fitness, strength, and endurance expectations with the executive order related to Presidential Physical Fitness.

The new Health and Wellness Standards are expected to be presented to the State Board of Education in December, with full implementation anticipated in the 2027–2028 school year.

District Planning and Annual Assessment

To reduce administrative burden and integrate district planning and budgeting, DESE developed a single platform, AR App. Districts use the platform to develop strategic plans in three areas: Improving Academic Outcomes, Quality Educator Workforce, and Safe and Healthy Schools. Health and wellness components previously developed separately are now incorporated into the broader district strategic planning process.

Districts identify strategies and measurable objectives to improve student wellness outcomes. This report summarizes the nutrition, physical activity, and built environment priorities selected for the 2026–2027 school year, including districtwide (K–12) approaches, grade-level strategies, and common combinations of strategies addressing local wellness priorities.

As part of the AR App process, each district Wellness Committee conducts a comprehensive assessment of school health and wellness practices. At a minimum, districts assess the following School Health Index modules annually:

- School Health and Safety Policies and Environment
- Health Education
- Physical Education and Other Physical Activity Programs
- Nutrition Services
- Family Engagement
- Community Involvement

Statewide Overview

District submissions in the Health and Safety portion of AR App indicate a strong preference for districtwide (K–12) strategies rather than separate elementary and secondary approaches. Across nutrition, physical activity, and built environment priorities, the most frequently selected strategies emphasize expanding access to existing health resources and improving current programs.

Three themes emerge from the submissions:

1. Districts favor K–12 approaches that serve both elementary and secondary students.
2. Nutrition priorities emphasize increased participation in school meal programs.
3. Physical activity and built environment priorities emphasize student access and program quality.

District Implementation Priorities

Nutrition

Findings. Increasing participation in school breakfast and lunch programs is the most frequently selected nutrition priority statewide. Districts generally selected this strategy for both elementary and secondary grade levels. Expanding the variety of school meal offerings is the second most common nutrition strategy.

Interpretation. These selections indicate an emphasis on increasing participation in existing nutrition programs and improving the appeal and variety of nutritious meals. Districts placed less emphasis on marketing, meal timing, and alternative purchasing practices, including farm-to-school initiatives.

Physical Activity

Findings. Districts most frequently selected strategies to improve the quality of physical education (PE) instruction. The leading strategy calls for students to engage in moderate-to-vigorous physical activity during at least 50 percent of PE class time. Implementing a standards-aligned, sequential PE curriculum is the second most common approach.

Interpretation. These priorities suggest that districts are concentrating on instructional effectiveness, student engagement, and program quality within existing PE schedules, rather than primarily increasing instructional minutes.

Built Environment

Findings. Providing free drinking water throughout the school day is the most frequently selected built environment strategy statewide, exceeding other options and generally extending across the district. Increasing community access to indoor and outdoor recreation facilities outside the school day is the second most common strategy.

Interpretation. These selections reflect an emphasis on environmental supports intended to improve access to healthy behaviors during and beyond the school day. The identified supports are characterized in the district analysis as relatively low-cost and high impact.

Effective July 1, 2026 the Child Nutrition Unit moved to the Department of Agriculture.