

Coventry High on the path to wellness

RIDE survey will be implemented in Sept. to ensure healthy eating

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COVENTRY— A newly-designed survey is in the works that will ensure schools follow district food service policies and will be implemented in the coming school year. Coventry will be one of the first in the state to adhere to the survey, the Vice Principal of Coventry High School and Co-Chair of the Wellness Committee, Joe Lucian said.

A survey will be distributed twice a year — during the beginning and end of the school year — to review and analyze the food service program and conditions of school cafeterias. Although the survey isn't yet finalized, Lucian said the school nurses

will most likely be the ones to complete it.

"It will probably be the school nurses who take the survey because they are the health experts inside our schools," Lucian said. "The survey will be a checklist to make sure schools are following existing policies as well as food vendors throughout all schools."

Some reference points in the survey, Lucian said, will include checking that no candy or unhealthy foods are being served in school eateries or vending machines. At a recent Coventry School Committee meeting, it was mentioned that the old food policy allowed 50 percent candy to 50 percent healthy foods be sold within the school, whereas now there is no candy.

In addition, any in-school fundraisers or celebration no longer allows unhealthy snack foods to come into the school to ensure all students are eating healthy foods.

"It will also be closely monitoring celebrations inside the school like pizzas parties, for example. We are now looking at a different route where kids can have free time or eat healthy foods," he said. "We want to get them eating a little bit better."

Lucian said the Rhode Island Department of Education and the Rhode Island Healthy Schools Coalition are involved in the development of the survey to help push schools be in compliance with food service

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policies.

With the results of the survey, Lucian said it will be given to the school committee to inform them on the progress of the cafeterias and what, if any, could be done further to better its condition and food distribution.

The template for the survey was originally developed by Kids First in 2007, according to RIDE, and has been submitted to USDA as a

best practice and has undergone revisions and updates to keep current with national recommendations.

Kids First is a non-profit organization dedicated to safeguarding the nutritional and physical well-being of Rhode Island's children.

Lucian hopes to have the survey completed by mid-summer, in time for the next school year. Once finished, it will be implemented district-wide and serve as a pilot that other cities and towns will use in the state, he said.