

Kids Unlimited Academy

2025-2026 Wellness Report

School Wellness Committee

Kids Unlimited Academy convened its wellness committee May 22, 2026, for a triennial policy and implementation review. The wellness committee membership was updated to reflect new employees and roles within the charter school. Committee co-chairs are Jacob Rooks, KUA physical education teacher, and David Thygeson, KUA assistant principal.

Wellness Policy Implementation, Monitoring, Accountability and Community Engagement

KUA's Director of Educational Services Lupita Vargas will convene the wellness committee and facilitate development of and updates to the wellness policy. Communication specialist Sarah Lemon will update the written policy, ensure its availability on the KUA website and post updates and links to quarterly reports online, including in school newsletters.

Nutrition

Lunchtime schedule

KUA will add five minutes to students' lunchtime in 2026-27 for a total of 20 minutes daily to give students an adequate amount of time to eat according to best practices for school nutrition programs. KUA English language development teacher Elaina Lambert requested a handwashing initiative to reduce reliance on liquid hand sanitizer, which is not as effective. The committee noted that handwashing takes more time prior to lunch.

Fresh Fruit and Vegetable Program

KUA in 2025-26 implemented a Fresh Fruit and Vegetable Program with grant funding from the U.S. Department of Agriculture. KUA will seek a renewal of grant funding in the 2026-27 school year to continue the program, emphasizing closer collaboration with local farms to source the produce items that students are consuming.

KUA in 2025-26 distributed approximately 2,000 pounds of fresh fruits and vegetables to students through the FFVP. Items included locally grown apples and pears during the fall and locally grown greens during the spring. More than 50 types of fresh fruit, vegetables and herbs

were procured from October through June, primarily from locally owned grocer and KU donor, Sherm's Food 4 Less. Three months of FFVP funding will carry over into the 2026-27 school year, when students will sample locally grown summer and fall produce from partner farms.

FFVP encourages children to try new foods, learn about seasonal produce and develop healthy eating habits to last a lifetime. A USDA study found that FFVP students eat more fruits and vegetables than students who do not participate in the program.

KUA distributed FFVP items during grades 3-5 PE/Health blocks and grades K-2 in-class afternoon snack time. These time slots allow KUA to integrate FFVP with students' health curriculum. None of these proposed time slots are during regular KUA meal times, under the requirements of the grant.

FFVP produce tastings come with "bite-sized" nutrition lessons composed by KUA staff. In addition to its health curriculum, KUA utilizes Food Hero, Cooking Matters and USDA MyPlate instructional materials. The additional portions of fruits and vegetables provide a wholesome supplement to KUA's daily meals.

For 2026-27, KUA will focus on additional marketing of FFVP to families and the community, including posts on the charter school's website, messages in the monthly school newsletter, the ParentSquare app, social media highlights and flyers in English and Spanish sent home with students.

KUA also seeks to enhance its FFVP with materials to encourage and incentivize students to try fruits and vegetables. KUA can utilize the Rogue Valley Farm to School "Harvest of the Month" tasting table model that allows kids to "vote" on what they like best. This resource includes recipes for students to take home and share with their families. Rogue Valley Farm to School is a KUA partner and offers "Harvest of the Month" resources free on its website. KUA will "tag" RV Farm to School in its social media posts about FFVP, which will be used to publicize the program to students, families and the broader school community.

Cafeteria Salad Bar

KUA is preparing to implement in the 2026-27 school year a salad bar program aimed at supporting student health by giving them access to fresh fruits and vegetables while also allowing autonomy for building their own meals. The initiative is multi-pronged with the goals of preventing food waste, promoting student meal satisfaction and laying the foundation for healthier eating choices through the process of students becoming familiar with a wider variety of fruits and vegetables than they may consume at home.

KUA leadership and Food Program staff seek to move from serving standardized meals to offering customizable options that meet students' nutritional needs and preferences. KUA will measure points of success through 1.) increased student meal participation, 2.) a wider variety of produce in student meals, 3.) purchase of more locally grown produce and/or procuring items

seasonally from the school garden and 4.) maximizing National School Lunch Program compliance by providing all the components of a fully reimbursable meal on the salad bar.

KUA executive chef Nathan Herbold will draw from his extensive background in recipe development for institutional food service to bring wholesome dishes with kid-friendly seasonings and cultural relevance to the charter school's salad bar. KUA has an ongoing partnership with the nonprofit Rogue Valley Farm to School for procurement of locally grown produce. KUA also utilizes funding from Oregon Department of Education's Farm to Child Nutrition Program grant dollars to purchase locally grown produce and locally raised meats.

KUA's salad bar marketing plan will include salad bar etiquette, including students sanitizing their hands, taking appropriate portions of only foods they are willing to try and preventing cross contamination by using the assigned utensil in each salad bar, which also ensure components are neatly presented and appealing.

KUA's student engagement plan around the salad bar, with assistance from school communications staff and classroom teachers, will include 1.) featuring seasonal or holiday-themed salad combinations, 2.) offering incentives, such as a sticker or badge for trying new produce items, 3.) soliciting student suggestions and holding a drawing to highlight their favorite salad each month, 4.) providing take-home recipes for students and parents and 5.) surveying families about changes in fresh produce consumption at home. Like other marketing efforts, these engagement strategies can be implemented on KUA's website, social media, newsletter and with cafeteria displays.

Physical Activity

Mr. Rooks noted that KUA's 150 minutes of physical education per week is a rarity among Oregon public schools. In addition to PE and 20-30 minutes of daily recess (depending on grade level), KUA promotes physical activity with sports clinics and leagues and school-sponsored wellness events, including the annual Jog-a-Thon, Field Days, family Zumba and dance nights and open gym nights. Ms. Lambert suggested promoting a walk or bike to school day.

Other Activities That Promote Student Wellness

Community Partnerships

KUA has several classroom initiatives, in addition to health and nutrition education, that promote student wellness and community engagement. Third grade participates in the local Calves in the Classroom Program, a partnership with Jackson County Stockmen's Association. The program culminates in Ranch Day, when third-grade classrooms from local schools visit a cattle ranch and rotate through several different stations to gain first-hand perspective of ranch life. Students are served a nutritious meal, based on classroom vote, followed by dessert.

KUA fifth grade classrooms will partner in 2026-27 with Rusted Gate Farm in Central Point. This nonprofit organization provides hands-on small (horticulture) and large (livestock) agriculture courses of study. Rusted Gate, through its own grant funding, is able to serve KUA among several other local schools.

Community Health Promotion and Engagement

Ms. Lemon suggested expanding local farm and ranch partnerships by inviting operators to a wellness fair or harvest festival-type event in 2026-27. The “meet-your-farmer” format also could be conducted in classrooms with samples of fresh, local produce in concert with the FFVP.

Ms. Vargas suggested creating a series of cooking videos with students and Food Program staff of healthy meal preparation to complement the monthly healthy recipe featured in KUA newsletters.

Staff Wellness and Health Promotion

The committee discussed ways to promote staff’s physical activity levels and connection for improved mental health. Mr. Rooks noted that wellness means something different to everyone, and the committee has been challenged to create equitable opportunities and achieve staff buy-in.

For 2026-27, Mr. Thygeson offered to organize and host a staff hike every trimester. PE teacher Mariah O’Connor offered to lead yoga sessions during staff PD days. Ms. Vargas asked if the committee also could organize a potluck of health dishes during staff PD days. Mr. Rooks suggested surveying staff about their preferred wellness activities.