

School Food and Nutrition Policy

A Food and Nutrition Policy is...

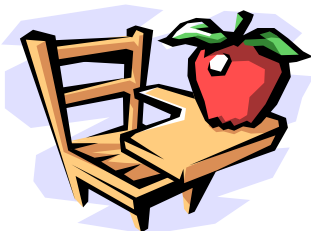
- Established to make the healthy choice the easy choice. A way to ensure that good nutrition is promoted both in theory and in practice.
- A statement of philosophy and belief.
- A direction for action.

Who Benefits From A Policy?

- **Schools** – Healthy choices enhance academic performance and concentration, eliminated inconsistencies and confusing messages about food and health, and reinforces messages learned in the classroom. In addition, vending revenues have the potential to increase when healthy choices are available.
- **Students** – Making healthy choices are easier in an environment where nutritious foods are made available; students are exposed to a greater variety of choices that encourage healthy eating.
- **Parents** – Healthy choices positively influence students learning and behaviour; school councils don't have to debate the issue year after year; healthy choices at school may impact choices made at home.

Making Your Policy Work

- Involve as many representatives from the school community as possible in policy development, e.g. students, teachers, parents and administrators.
- The policy should include all foods and beverages served or sold within the school and at school sponsored activities.
- The policy should be widely publicized and apply to students, student organization, staff and meal/snack providers.



Sample Policy Guidelines

- **Food For All:** Free breakfast will be offered to all students regardless of income.
- **Food Availability:** Breakfast and lunch will be offered during the school day as well as snacks in organized after-school programs.
- **Snacks:** Only snacks belonging to one of the four food groups of *Canada's Food Guide to Healthy Eating* will be available at school food outlets.
- **Pricing/Promotion:** Nutritious foods are competitively priced and appropriately promoted and advertised.
- **Fundraising:** In-school fundraising does not rely on the sale of non-nutritious foods.
- **Beverages:** Our school will not enter into an exclusive "pouring rights" contract.

Other Areas A Policy Guideline Can Address

- Foods available at special events; commercial vending/catering contracts, nutrition education; support of local food producers; using food as a reward, etc.

Related Websites

www.sustainweb.org/g5fp/index.htm

A model school food policy - a practical guide.

www.departments.oxy.edu/uepi/schoolfoodschecklist.htm

A healthy school policies checklist - a source of good ideas for organizations working to create or strengthen school food policies.

www.hc-sc.gc.ca/fn-an/nutrition/child-enfant/index_e.html

Key information on Canadian nutrition guidelines for children through key periods of growth.

www.schoolwellnesspolicies.org/WellnessPolicies.html

A collection of wellness policies on nutrition and physical activity.

Why Nutrition Is Important in Your School

Education and Healthy Eating are Intimately Linked

- A recent study showed children who were at nutritional risk had significantly poor attendance, punctuality and grades at school, and more behavioural problems. Adequate nutrition has been shown to improve learning skills, especially memory work.¹
- When at school most children and youth will eat at least one meal or snack. While parents have the most impact on shaping students' eating habits, schools can reinforce healthy choices.
- Most children learn about nutrition in the classroom but are given few opportunities to practice these lessons when food choices in vending machines, canteens and at school events are often limited to the less nutritious choices.

Health Risks

- Immediate health risks of poor nutrition include undernourishment, iron-deficiency anemia, overweight and obesity, eating disorders, unsafe weight loss methods and dental cavities.²
- The number of Canadian children who are obese or overweight has tripled in the last 20 years.³
- The increasingly high consumption of sugar-sweetened drinks is of serious concern. It is estimated that each additional can or glass of sugar-sweetened drink they consume each day increases the risk of becoming obese by 60%.⁴
- Up to 80% of coronary heart disease, 90% of Type 2 Diabetes and one third of cancers could be avoided by healthy eating, maintaining normal weight and exercising through life.⁵

Poor Eating Habits

Recent research suggests that despite the importance of a healthy eating, many school-aged children suffer from poor eating habits.

- Roughly three quarters of young Canadians do not consume the recommended five servings of fruit and vegetables daily.⁶
- Only 17% of Canadian children eat a lunch that includes choices from all four of *Canada's Food Guide to Healthy Eating* food groups. The predominant source of energy (>25%) in teenagers was from the "Serve Less Often" foods.⁶

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- 1 Papamandylaris, A. **Breakfast and learning in children: a review of the effects of breakfast on scholastic performance.** *Breakfast for Learning Foundation*, 2000.
 - 2 Stampfer MJ et al. **Primary Prevention of coronary heart disease in women through diet and lifestyle.** *New England Journal of Medicine*, 2000, 343:16-22.
 - 3 Tremblay MS., Katzmarzyk PT, Wilms JD. **Temporal trends in overweight and obesity in Canada.** *International Journal of Obesity Related Metabolic Disorders*, 2002 April; 26 (4): 538-543.
 - 4 Harmack L. Stang J., Story M. **Soft drink consumption among US children and adolescents: nutritional consequences.** *Journal of American Dieticians Association* 1999, 99:436-441.
 - 5 Key, TJ. **The effect of diet on the risk of cancer:** *Lancet*, 2002, 360:861-868.
 - 6 Starkey L.J., Johnson-Down L., Gray-Donald K. **Food Habits of Canadians: Comparison of intakes in adults and adolescents to Canada's Food Guide to Healthy Eating.** *Canadian Journal of Dietetic Practice and Research*. Summer 2001; 62 (2): 61-69.

Healthy children have the greatest power to achieve their academic potential.

