

Research

R E P O R T

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NUTRITION GUIDELINES FOR SCHOOLS

This resource was developed by the Public Health Nutritionists of Saskatchewan Working Group in cooperation with the Saskatchewan School Boards Association. This resource is intended:

- ✓ To strengthen awareness of the links between nutrition, health, and school performance.
- ✓ To serve as a resource for boards of education and school administrators in analyzing current nutrition practices in schools.
- ✓ To provide a framework for developing nutrition policies in schools.

Research Centre Report #04-01

Updated June 2009 to reflect
current healthy eating guidelines

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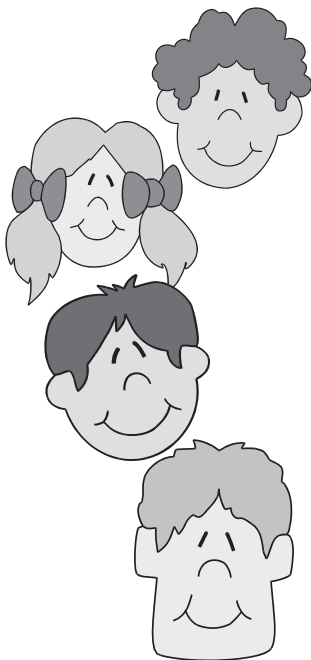
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Barry Bashutski
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INTRODUCTION

This report is intended to serve as a resource for school administrators and staff and/or school boards to use in analyzing present nutrition practices in schools. This document can also assist schools and school divisions in developing nutrition policies. Current scientific evidence links foods offered in schools to several health conditions such as obesity, type 2 diabetes, heart disease, and tooth decay. Well-nourished students attend school more regularly, concentrate better, are more alert, less aggressive, less anxious, and exhibit better behaviour and social skills. Schools and school boards have an obligation to ensure that nutrition policies and practices support classroom nutrition teaching and student well-being. As the education system is a significant employer, schools have an important role to play in supporting healthy lifestyle choices for employees. Healthy nutrition policies can contribute to a healthier school and workplace.



How does your school support and encourage healthy food choices?



To help you rate your school's performance see Appendix A "How does our school rate?"

THE ROLE OF THE SCHOOL IN HEALTH PROMOTION

Saskatchewan has been a national leader in health reform with increased emphasis on health promotion. Population health promotion creates the conditions that support the best possible health for everyone. Health services have limited impact on the overall health of the population. Key “determinants” of our health are factors such as income, social support networks, education, healthy child development, and the physical environments in which we live, work, and learn. Clearly, these factors exceed the limits of the health system. As a result, schools are integral partners in health promotion efforts for Saskatchewan children and families. Strong connections have been established with designated “Community Schools”. The School Plus™ Model provides opportunities to strengthen connections with all schools through integrated efforts to support child development.

School administrators and staff play a critical role in implementing school system policies to ensure a healthy learning and working environment. Adults within the school play an important role in modeling healthy lifestyles and nutrition behaviours. Ideally, these roles are reflected in school policy and culture.

NUTRITION ISSUES IN SASKATCHEWAN SCHOOLS

Nutrition plays a significant role in growth, development, resistance to disease, and physical and mental health. It is important that children receive all the nutrients they need to prevent illness and to optimize cognitive and behavioral performance. Research has clearly shown that many chronic degenerative diseases such as diabetes, heart disease and cancer have their roots in childhood and early food habits. Research also demonstrates a relationship between nutrition and children’s physical, emotional and intellectual

readiness to learn. Since lifelong eating habits are established in childhood, the school’s role in health promotion and disease prevention is significant. These effects extend beyond the school years.



Breakfast for Learning is organized to ensure that every child in Canada attends school well nourished and ready to learn. Explore the website at www.breakfastforlearning.ca

Saskatchewan communities are dealing with the following health issues:

1. Childhood Overweight and Obesity

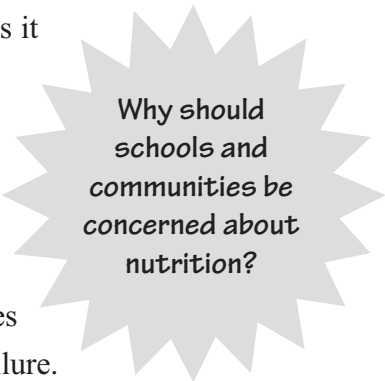
Being overweight is a growing health concern among Canadian children. In the 15-year period between 1981 and 1996, the number of overweight and obese boys rose from 11% to 33%. During the same period, the rates of overweight and obese girls rose from 13% to 27% (Tremblay, M. S., et al., 2002). Supporting healthy lifestyle choices such as active living and healthy eating is necessary for overweight children, and critical to prevent the continuation of this trend. In the late 1990's the World Health Organization predicted that being overweight could have as great an impact on health as smoking (Hartel, 1997).

2. Type 2 Diabetes

Type 1 diabetes has traditionally been called “juvenile diabetes” as it generally has its onset in children and young adults. Only about 10% of the people with diabetes have Type 1 diabetes.

Historically, Type 2 diabetes was diagnosed in mid to later life and was referred to as “adult onset diabetes”. Recently, diagnoses of Type 2 diabetes have been made in children as young as 5-8 years old (Health Canada, 1999). Complications of Type 2 diabetes include blindness, amputations, heart attack, stroke and kidney failure.

Contributing factors in Type 2 diabetes include physical inactivity, unhealthy eating, and being overweight. Because of the increasing rates of childhood obesity, the potential for type 2 diabetes has also increased. Initiatives in schools will support children and staff members in preventing the onset of further cases, and in managing the disease for those who have it.



Why should schools and communities be concerned about nutrition?

3. Chronic Diseases – Heart Disease and Cancer

In 1998 the Heart and Stroke Foundation (Heart and Stroke Foundation of Canada, 1998) released a report that indicated that of children aged 6–12, only 63% are physically active and only 20% eat the recommended amounts of vegetables and fruit daily. When schools offer or sell high fat snacks, fries or sweetened beverages, students have lower intakes of vegetables and fruit and a higher percentage of calories from total and saturated fat (Kubick et al. 2003). Inadequate vegetable and fruit consumption and high intakes of fat and saturated fat may contribute to diabetes, heart disease and cancer.

4. Food Insecurity

Many children do not receive sufficient energy or essential nutrients to support growth and good health. In 2001, Saskatchewan had 42,000 children living in poverty (Campaign 2000, 2003). Short-term effects of under-nutrition are tiredness, irritability, inattentiveness, and increased susceptibility to colds, flu and infections. Long-term effects include under-achievement in school, poor self-esteem and chronic poor health. The highest rates of obesity occur among population groups with the highest poverty rates and the least education. Many nutrition programs in schools were initiated because of food security issues. Since many children do not receive adequate nutrition at home, the food offered in school must be high quality, nutritious food.

5. Body Image Issues

Ironically, as the prevalence of overweight has increased, so has the prevalence of eating disorders (Woodward-Lopez, n.d.). The issues of body image, eating disorders and self-esteem are influencing more children/youth annually. The school environment should be accepting of all body shapes and sizes, and model healthy eating and enjoyable physical activity. School staff should be aware of how their personal lifestyle choices, attitudes and teaching practices contribute to disordered and unhealthy eating.

6. Teen Pregnancies

Good nutrition, both before conception and during pregnancy, is an important factor in ensuring healthy infants with healthy birth weights. There is less morbidity and mortality associated with a healthy birth weight infant. Saskatchewan has a high teen pregnancy rate (Dryburgh, 2000). A significant number of teens would benefit from the availability of nutritious food in schools in order to achieve the best possible pregnancy outcome.

7. Dental Health

Sugar consumption contributes to tooth decay. Both the type of sugar and the frequency of intake play a role in the formation of cavities. Poor snacking habits and improper diet contribute to cavities and decayed teeth. Increasing soft drink consumption by children and youth has become a concern. Soft drink consumption tripled for adolescent boys in the past three decades (Cavadini et al. 2000). This is not surprising since the serving size has increased 300% from 192ml in the 1950's to 591ml in 2000 (French, 2003).

8. Osteoporosis

As children grow, a healthy diet and regular physical activity help to build strong bones. Bones reach their peak mass between the ages of 19 and 30 years. After this time, the body loses calcium from the bones. Osteoporosis, a condition characterized by weak and brittle bones, has its roots in childhood. A Saskatoon study shows that adolescent girls have reduced bone mineral accumulation when low nutrient beverages replace milk (Whiting et al. 2001). Osteoporosis now occurs in 25% of women over 50 years and is more common in older women than heart attacks, diabetes and strokes combined (Brown, J.P. et. al. 2002). In elderly women with osteoporosis, up to 20% of hip fractures result in death. This is a serious but preventable condition.

How does your school support all children to achieve 60-90 minutes of physical activity each day, as recommended by Canada's Physical Activity Guides for Children and Youth?

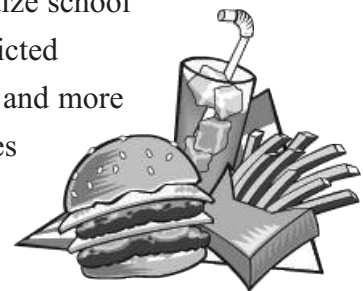
9. Physical Inactivity

Recent research has revealed that 51% of Saskatchewan children between the ages of 5 and 17 years are not active enough for optimal growth and development (Canadian Fitness and Lifestyle Research Institute, 2000). The problem is worse in girls than in boys, and it gets worse as children get older. A key influence on this trend has been television viewing. Children who watch 4 hours/day of television are 2.5 times more likely to be obese. (Crespo et al. 2001)

What foods and beverages are available in your school?

10. Problematic Societal Trends

In the larger “food system” there are a huge number of problematic food trends that are affecting the manner in which children are nourished. These include the increasing general availability of food, increasing portion sizes or “super-sizing” of portions, aggressive marketing of non-nutritious food to children and parents, and vending machine profits used to subsidize school programs. Trends contributing to decreased activity include restricted availability and access to play equipment, unsafe neighborhoods and more access to non-active pastimes such as computers, computer games and movies. Together, these trends have a dramatic influence on children's health.



For a free copy of Canada's Physical Activity Guide visit:
www.healthcanada.ca/paguide

FOOD POLICY QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS

Who should be making decisions about food and beverages available in schools?

A key entry point for becoming more proactive regarding nutrition is at the school level. Someone in each school is making choices about food and beverage options available in the school. Should these choices be made by individuals or collectively by the school as an organization? Should these choices be random or based on a philosophy and set of beliefs? This document is organized around a belief that the CORE curriculum and healthy lifestyle choices should be the basis for nutritional choices in schools.

Who makes decisions about what food and beverages are available in your school?

Why have a School Food Policy?

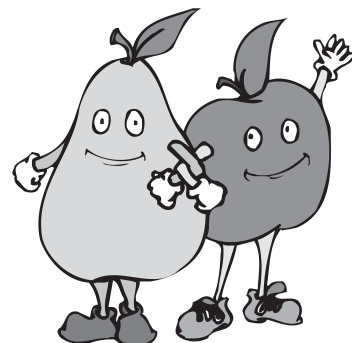
A school food policy ensures that decisions about the availability of food and beverages in schools are deliberate, and in the interest of students' well-being.

One objective of the education system is to establish a positive learning environment for students, staff and members of the public. By providing explicit guidelines for all food sales and services in the school system, a school food policy becomes an important educational tool.

Does your school have a nutrition policy?

A school food policy creates an environment where:

- foods available contribute to health
- students are challenged to put classroom learning into practice
- health curriculum is supported in all school activities
- all students have access to sufficient, healthy, affordable and safe food
- public health food safety standards are practiced.



A school food policy should be based on a healthy diet. A diet that is low in fat, sugar and salt and high in fibre with plenty of vegetables and fruit and follows *Canada's Food Guide* may:

- ✓ Promote a healthy body weight
- ✓ Prevent Type 2 diabetes
- ✓ Encourage a healthy body image
- ✓ Help prevent tooth decay
- ✓ Optimize learning in the classroom
- ✓ Improve student behaviour
- ✓ Help prevent chronic diseases such as heart attack, stroke, cancer and osteoporosis
- ✓ Support healthy pregnancies

Should your school develop a nutrition policy?

What is a school food policy?



A policy is a statement of philosophy and belief as well as a guide for action. A school food policy clearly outlines the standard that a board or school sets for foods sold and served in the school. It ensures that good nutrition is promoted both in theory and in practice.

If you are writing your own policy visit:
<http://www.healbc.ca/Schools.htm>, or
<http://www.sustainweb.org/g5fp/backgrd.htm>, or http://www.eecom.net/projects_school_examplepolicy.pdf

Sample Policy/Guidelines:

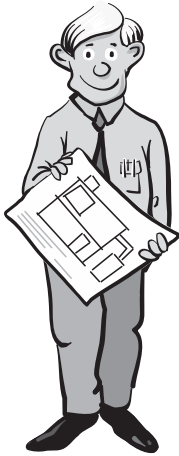
Adapted from: 2004 Summeractive School Resource Guide, Created by EverActive Schools and Schools Come Alive. For more information visit <http://www.everactive.org/files/ever%20active%20booklet.pdf>

- **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 include the sale of non-nutritious foods.
- **Beverages:** Our school will not enter into an exclusive soft drink contract.

Other Areas a Policy/Guideline Can Cover

- Foods available at special events, commercial vending/catering contracts, food packaging, food safety, nutrition education for students/staff/parents, support of local food producers, using food as a reward, allergies, adequate time and space to eat, and many more, depending on the issues identified by your school!

What is the Board's Role in Nutrition Decisions?



This is a complicated question. Perhaps this is first a philosophical question about the role of the board. Certainly we must begin by acknowledging that the board of education is responsible for approving the school program and overseeing school system operations. Perhaps some boards have not included nutritional decisions within this umbrella. Some boards of education may choose to have a specific policy about nutrition decisions. Other boards might establish policy that is focused on broader outcomes for students and see nutritional decisions as an administrative policy. How would your board of education respond?

Does your school board have a nutrition policy?

Certainly every board of education would be interested in monitoring overall trends in student and staff lifestyle choices. More specific policies would demand specific reporting on the effects of the policy. Results oriented policies would show how nutritional decisions are integrated into broader outcomes for students. What kind of information does your board receive about nutritional decisions?

Should your school board develop a nutrition policy?

When a board of education questions what is happening in schools regarding nutrition – then policy review is in order.

How does nutrition relate to the school program?

Ministry of Education is responsible for developing curricula and boards of education are responsible for ensuring that the objectives are learned. The Education Act 1995 gives boards of education considerable control over choices in the school program and the context in which the program is delivered. A comprehensive perspective on the school program ensures that what is taught in class is supported by other school activities. This orientation is reflected in board of education policy.

Will a School Food Policy Impact School Fundraising?

Growing awareness about the implications of school fundraising strategies has resulted in school systems establishing policies to guide practice. As a learning institution, school practice cannot be divorced from attaining the goals of education and curriculum objectives. For further information on guidelines for fees and fundraising see Saskatchewan School Boards Association Research Centre Report #03-04.



Schools must often turn to fundraising to support programs. However, it is important to consider what students learn in the process. Fundraising activities should not contradict what is taught in the classroom. For fundraising ideas visit <http://www.calgaryhealthregion.ca/hecomm/nal/ProgramsServices/SchoolNutritionProgram/SchoolNut.htm>

STEPS IN POLICY DEVELOPMENT

A nutrition policy cannot succeed without support at all levels. While individual school leaders may pursue good nutrition and health enhancing behaviours, the challenge for school systems is to advocate and implement these practices in all schools.

Writing a policy on nutrition in schools does not guarantee change in practice. Improving nutritional practices requires the combined efforts of trustees, students, teachers and the community. This will be more likely to happen if **policy development is treated as a process** – an opportunity to begin an ongoing dialogue with the community – rather than as an end in itself. It is important that students, teachers, parents, and the general public understand and support the role of nutrition in promoting wellness.

Before policy development begins:

- ✓ Identify key stakeholders and stakeholder groups.
- ✓ Form a nutrition committee in the school.
Consider including:
 - an administrator
 - community school staff
 - teachers (physical education, home economics, health and/or coaches)
 - SRC members, students
 - parent advisory council representative
 - health region representative (Public Health Nutritionist, Dental Health Coordinator, Health Promotion facilitator, School Nurse)
 - key community contacts (local business and service groups)
 - others interested in providing healthy food to students



Experiencing resistance?
See Appendix B
“Dealing with Opposition”



For ideas on advocating for a policy, visit www.cspinet.org/schoolfood

- ✓ Consult with other schools/school divisions that have developed similar policies.
- ✓ Identify the need and rationale for a policy. Discuss how a policy will contribute to learning and students' health.
- ✓ Provide examples of the types of food services that the policy is directed toward, such as snack programs, vending machines, hot meal days, sporting events, tournaments, cafeterias, etc.



Listen carefully to any concerns expressed by community members about the availability of certain kinds of foods, and food sold and served in the school.

During policy development:

- ✓ Discuss the process that will be used to develop the policy with the stakeholders/nutrition committee.
- ✓ Appoint a subcommittee to draft a policy.
- ✓ Involve students, teachers, board members and community members in all aspects of policy development.
- ✓ Discuss the availability of more nutritious foods with food suppliers and vending machine companies.



For a complete checklist, see Appendix C.

Consider a variety of strategies for getting input from stakeholder groups, e.g.: meetings, presentations, surveys



- ✓ Use the development process as an educational opportunity. Meetings, surveys, displays, consultations and presentations are useful ways to encourage greater public awareness and support. Consider the following opportunities:
 - Meet the teacher nights
 - Parent- teacher interviews
 - Teacher conventions
 - Staff meetings
 - Parent advisory council meetings
 - School newsletter articles

After the policy has been completed and adopted:

- ✓ Implement the policy.
- ✓ Use the policy as a foundation for ongoing public education about nutrition.
- ✓ Continue discussions with the community about the need for such a policy.
- ✓ Emphasize to parents and the community that the responsibility for appropriate nutrition is a shared responsibility.
- ✓ Use the policy as a vehicle to educate at inservices, seminars, staff/parent meetings or conferences.
- ✓ Evaluate the policy regularly, and change if necessary.



For a complete checklist,
see Appendix C.

Anticipate challenges and identify solutions.

Identify strategies to keep the
Board of Education and stakeholders
informed of progress.



GUIDELINES FOR FOODS IN SCHOOLS

Children have high nutrient needs in relation to the volume of food they eat; therefore it is essential to offer foods that are high in nutritional value without excessive fat, salt and sugar. Nutritious food supports growth, good health, healthy weight and optimal learning.

Healthy Eating Guidelines

The Healthy Eating Guidelines on page 15 were developed to support healthy eating in schools and are based upon the concepts of *Canada's Food Guide* and the Saskatchewan Ministry of Health's *Healthy Foods for My School*. **They apply to breakfast/snack/lunch programs, school and classroom celebrations, special foods days, fundraisers, cafeterias, canteens, vending machines, meetings or staff rooms.**



For Canada's Food Guide visit:

www.healthcanada.gc.ca/foodguide

For Healthy Foods for My School visit:

<http://www.health.gov.sk.ca/healthy-foods-for-my-school>

Food Safety

It is important to provide students with access to healthy food and it is equally important to ensure that the food provided is safe. Food provided to students should be acquired, prepared, stored and served in a safe manner. Follow good sanitation and food safety practices, including hand washing procedures.

For more information about food safety requirements, contact a Public Health Inspector in your local health region

Breakfast, Snack and/or Lunch Programs

See "Appendix D – Nutrition and Food Safety Guidelines for Nutrition Programming in Saskatchewan Schools" for additional menu planning and food safety guidance.

For guidance in applying these guidelines, consult a Public Health Nutritionist in your Health region.


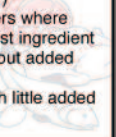
The guidelines are intended to support healthy eating for all students. Some students may have specialized needs that require a clinical diet. For students with life-threatening allergies, type 1 diabetes and other medical conditions, check with your school for guidance or policies regarding medical conditions.


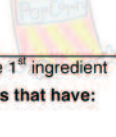





Healthy Eating Guidelines



Use the "food selection categories" to make better food choices for meals & snacks, school & classroom celebrations, special food days, fundraisers, cafeterias, vending machines, meetings, or staff rooms.

"Choose Most Often"	Vegetables & Fruit	Grain Products	Milk & Alternatives	Meat & Alternatives
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Fresh/ frozen / canned vegetables & fruit prepared without added sugar or salt Vegetables prepared with little fat Fruit canned in juice Vegetable soups (homemade) Vegetable/fruit salads Unsweetened applesauce, pineapple <p><i>Choose dark green and orange ones often</i></p> <p><i>Vegetables or fruit should be listed as the first ingredient (or second, if water is first)</i></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Whole grain bread, rolls, buns, bagels, pita bread, tortillas, baked bannock, English Muffins Whole grain muffins, loaves, pancakes, waffles Whole grain unsweetened cereals or low sugar cereals with: ≥ 2 g fibre/serving and < 8 g sugar/serving Cooked whole grain unsweetened cereals Corn bread Whole grain pasta, noodles Barley, whole wheat couscous Brown or converted (parboiled) rice <p><i>Whole grain products are preferred over enriched grain products.</i></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 2%, 1% or skim milk Yogurt (plain, unsweetened) Cheese (lower fat) Cottage cheese Milk-based soups Skim milk powder Soy beverage – fortified & low fat  <p><i>Choose milk often for adequate vitamin D</i></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Roasted/ baked/grilled chicken, turkey, fish, seafood, beef, pork, lamb, ham Canned tuna, salmon, chicken, flaked ham, crab Lean ground meat Wild meat (if butchered in an approved facility) Cooked dried peas, beans, lentils Canned beans, lentils (rinsed) Tofu & soy based alternatives (ie. veggie burger) Peanut & nut butters where sugar is not the 1st ingredient Nuts & seeds without added sugar or salt Eggs prepared with little added fat 
<p>These foods are: good sources of one or more of the nutrients iron, calcium, vitamin A, C, or D, and/or are high in fibre</p> <p>generally low in fat, sugar and salt</p>				

"Choose Sometimes"	Vegetables & Fruit	Grain Products	Milk & Alternatives	Meat & Alternatives
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Canned/frozen vegetables and fruit with added salt, sugar, fat or sauces Canned vegetable soups with ≤ 480 mg of sodium Fruit in syrup 100% Fruit / vegetable juices Dried fruit 100% Fruit leather 100% fruit & vegetable bars Fruit crisps, cobbles Frozen 100% fruit juice bars Salsa 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Enriched (white) bread, pita, bagels, rolls, tortillas, croissants, biscuits, scones, breadsticks with < 2g saturates and 0g trans Enriched (white) pancakes, waffles, loaves, cookies and other baked goods with < 2g saturates and 0g trans Most homemade pancakes, waffles, loaves, cookies, muffins etc made with enriched flour and non-hydrogenated margarine or oil Hot/Cold cereals with: ≥ 2 g fibre/serving and ≤ 12 g sugar/serving White or instant rice White or enriched pasta, noodles Crackers (whole grain or enriched flour) Granola bars/cereal bars (not dipped, < 12g sugar) Plain popcorn, rice cakes, baked chips Taco shells 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Whole milk Flavoured yogurt Milkshakes Flavoured milks eg. Chocolate Yogurt drinks Milk-based puddings and custards Frozen yogurt, ice milk Hot chocolate made with milk Processed cheese slices, cheese spread 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Lean deli meats (ham, corned beef, turkey roll, pastrami, etc.) Canned fish (packed in oil) Preformed meatballs or hamburger patties Breaded fish or meats with < 15g fat Canned beans, lentils (not rinsed) Canned beans in sauce with < 480 mg sodium Nuts and seeds that are salted or sweetened
<p>Vegetable or fruit must be 1st ingredient</p> <p>Grain must be 1st ingredient</p> <p>Milk must be 1st ingredient. In milk alternatives, water may be the 1st ingredient followed by a milk alternative such as soy.</p> <p>Meat or meat alternative must be 1st ingredient</p>				
<p>Select foods that have:</p> <p>Fat: ≤ 5 g Saturated fat: ≤ 2 g Trans fat: 0 g Sugar is not the first or second ingredient. ☹</p> <p>Select foods that have:</p> <p>Fat: ≤ 10g Saturated fat: ≤ 2 g Trans fat: ≤ 0 g Sodium: ≤ 480 mg Fibre: ≥ 2 g or whole grain Sugars: ≤ 12 g</p> <p>Select foods that have:</p> <p>Fat: ≤ 10 g Trans: ≤ 0.5g Sugar: ≤ 25 g Calcium: $\geq 10\%$ DV</p> <p>Select foods that have:</p> <p>Fat: ≤ 15 g Saturated fat: ≤ 5 g Trans fat: ≤ 0.5 g Sodium: ≤ 480 mg Protein: ≥ 5g</p>				


Prepared Mixed Dishes	
<p>A prepared mixed dish product must contain at least two food groups.</p> <p>Preference should be given to food items with a vegetable listed in the first three ingredients.</p> 	<p>Select foods that have:</p> <p><input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Trans fat: 0.5 g or less</p> <p>AND</p> <p>Four of the following six</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> Fat: ≤ 3 g (5% Daily Value) <input type="checkbox"/> Saturates: ≤ 2 g <input type="checkbox"/> Sodium: ≤ 960 mg (40% Daily Value) <input type="checkbox"/> Fibre: ≥ 2 g or greater <input type="checkbox"/> At least one of Vitamin A, Vitamin C, Calcium OR Iron: $\geq 5\%$ <input type="checkbox"/> Sugar should not be the 1st or 2nd ingredient. ☹
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Canned soups/stews/chili with < 960mg sodium Chunky soups/bean soups with < 3g fat and < 960mg sodium Pasta and pasta salad with veggies and < 3g fat Pizza, calzones, soft tacos, quesadillas, fajitas with < 3g fat Sloppy Joes Smoothies Snacks kits (tuna/crackers) Stir-fry Subs, wraps, pitas Trail mix with nuts and fruit  <p><i>Check out the food labels for other great foods.</i></p>	

☹ Sugars can be from many forms: honey, molasses, corn syrup and words ending in "ose".

Satisfy your thirst with water!


Breakfast:

1 serving from each of at least 3 food groups in Canada's Food Guide




Lunch & Supper:

1 serving from each of the 4 food groups in Canada's Food Guide



Snack:

1 serving from each of 2 or more food groups in Canada's Food Guide



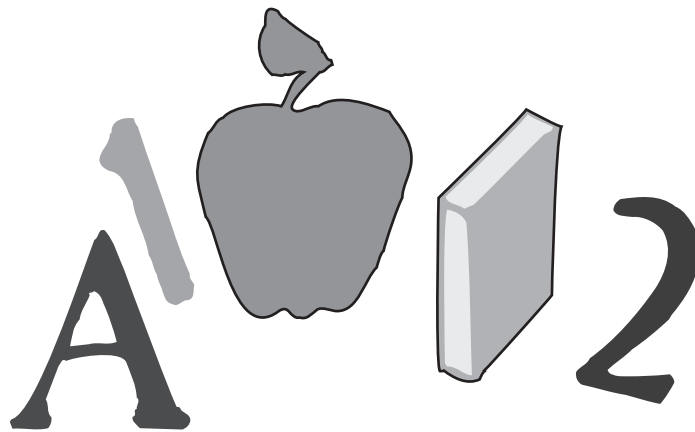

CONCLUSION

Schools have a powerful influence on children's eating habits (Kubik et al. 2003). Students spend a significant portion of their day in the school environment including snack and meal times. Schools that provide healthy food and beverage choices contribute to the well being of their students.

This document was created as a support to schools and school divisions in the development of a framework or philosophy around which decisions could be made about the food and beverages offered in schools.

The document will help to ensure that these foods choices:

- compliment the school curriculum
- optimize the learning environment
- support healthy growth and development of children
- ensure a healthy workplace for teachers and staff



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APPENDIX A: How Does Our School Rate?

(check all that apply)

Our school promotes healthy eating for students by:

- ☐ preparing snacks and meals that meet nutrition recommendations.



See Appendix D: *Nutrition and Food Safety Guidelines for Nutrition Programming in Saskatchewan Schools.*

- ☐ giving students enough time to enjoy meals and snacks.
- ☐ offering the “School Milk Program.”
- ☐ offering healthy food at school events (e.g. tournaments, play days)
- ☐ offering healthy food when it is a part of a school or classroom program (e.g. art lesson, cooking class, after school gym program).
- ☐ having a policy to address what foods are served and sold.
- ☐ offering nutrition education.
- ☐ offering foods in our school that reinforce the nutrition education program



We usually sell healthy food choices: (e.g. “Serve Most Often Foods”)

- ☐ at special meal days, fundraising breakfasts or lunches
- ☐ in vending/pop machines
- ☐ for fundraising projects (e.g. ticket or product sales)
- ☐ in the canteen
- ☐ in the cafeteria
- ☐ we usually provide healthy food at no charge to children who are consistently hungry.

Individual staff members are encouraged to “model” healthy eating and active living for students by:

- ☐ eating healthy meals at school
- ☐ eating healthy snacks at school
- ☐ being physically active regularly (e.g. 60 minutes per day)



For copies of *Canada’s Physical Activity Guide to Healthy Active Living* visit <http://www.hc-sc.gc.ca/hppb/paguide/>

- ☐ accepting people of all shapes and sizes
- ☐ avoiding comments about weight and dieting

Nutrition Guidelines for Schools

Reflect on the statements that you were able to check and those you were not. This may help you to identify strengths and weaknesses of your school food policies and programs.

Choose 3 areas where your school food policies and programs are doing well and list ACTIONS that would allow you to share these successes with others (e.g. parents, school division, and other schools)

1. _____

2. _____

3. _____

Choose 3 areas that may need improvement and list ACTIONS that your school can commit to (e.g. accessible snack program, lower fat choices for hot lunches, making milk available regularly)

1. _____

2. _____

3. _____

APPENDIX B: DEALING WITH OPPOSITION

Schools play an important role in preparing students for the future. Children are taught the principles of healthy eating as part of the school program. It is therefore important that the school environment support this learning by promoting nutritious and dentally acceptable food choices whenever food is offered.

Many food choices currently found in schools are high in calories, fat, sugar and/or salt.

Consider these discussion points when making a case for a healthy school environment.

ARGUMENT “Students have the RIGHT to choose whatever they want”

- Students have the right to choose, but schools have the responsibility to teach students how to make wise choices.
- Healthy choices need to be made as available and as appealing as unhealthy choices. Nutritious foods are too rarely made available and seldom promoted.

ARGUMENT “They’ll buy it down the street anyway”

- Many unhealthy choices are available outside of school but schools have the responsibility to ensure a healthy environment. Providing nutritious food choices makes good health sense and delivers a message consistent with nutrition theory taught at school.
- Some schools offering healthy food choices have found that students make healthier choices outside of school and bring fewer unhealthy foods to school.

ARGUMENT “The profit is used to fund student programs”

- This is a contradiction not a defense. Athletic programs encourage fitness, but fitness can’t be achieved on a diet high in sugar, fat and salt.
- Healthier foods and activities can be just as successful.
- Some parents report that fundraising sales of low nutrient value foods put them in a difficult position. They have concerns about the nutritional quality of these foods and the cost, but are reluctant to take the risk that their children will feel left out if they don’t participate.
- Program costs remain the same whether parents pay outright or subsidize the cost through fundraising.
- Partnering with business can be a win-win situation if the product/service being promoted is consistent with the values around healthy eating and active living.

ARGUMENT “Parents are responsible for what children eat.”

- Schools influence children’s eating habits. Children spend a lot of time at school and may consume up to 1/3 of their daily calorie intake there (American Dietetic Association, 2003).
- Peer pressure and marketing influence children’s food choices. Schools and parents need to support each other to ensure good nutrition for their children.
- A healthy school food policy can also serve to remind and educate parents about the important role of nutrition in their children’s health and well being.

ARGUMENT “These foods are being offered as a treat.”

- When unhealthy foods are being positioned as treats or rewards, it makes these foods seem more desirable. Serving healthy foods at special occasions can help to promote a mindset where healthy foods are viewed as treats. Fresh berries, watermelon and corn on the cob are examples of foods that are very popular when served at special events.

ARGUMENT “There is no profit in nutritious foods because students won’t buy them.”

- This old argument has been proven wrong time and time again in schools. It has been shown that students will purchase healthy foods when they are offered, particularly if they are not competing with unhealthy foods.
- Promote healthy food choices by using tried and true marketing techniques.
 - Display healthy foods prominently.
 - Use frequent purchase cards (e.g. buy 4 milks and get the 5th one free).
 - Competitively price healthy foods.

Adapted from “How to Deal With Arguments by the School Nutrition Advisory Coalition, Feeding the Future: School Nutrition Handbook.



APPENDIX C: NUTRITION POLICY DEVELOPMENT CHECKLIST

Use this checklist to ensure that all issues are dealt with in policy planning:

- ___ Nutritious food is defined.
- ___ Non-nutritious food is defined.
- ___ Students and staff understand definitions.
- ___ Policy is widely publicized and communicated.
- ___ Policy supports curriculum-based learning.
- ___ All stakeholders (students, parents, staff, coaches, organizations within school, public health nutritionist, dental health coordinator, etc.) participate in policy formulation.
- ___ Nutritious food is competitively priced and readily available.
- ___ Nutritious food choices are appropriately promoted and advertised.
- ___ Only nutritious foods are served to children requiring emergency food, breakfast or lunch programs.
- ___ Inappropriate foods are not more readily available than nutritious ones.
- ___ If choice of foods is not possible, only nutritious food items will be offered.
- ___ If unhealthy choices are offered, nutritious choices are offered as well.
- ___ Meals served in school are complete (e.g. offer foods from all four food groups).
- ___ Nutritious foods are served most often as treats or in classroom celebrations.
- ___ In-school fund-raising does not include the sale of non-nutritious foods.
- ___ The school health program includes nutrition.
- ___ Catering companies and outside vendors are notified of, and adhere to the nutrition policy.
- ___ Nutritious foods are served most often at field trips, sports events, canteens, workshops, etc.
- ___ Food waste is minimized.
- ___ Disposable packaging is minimized.
- ___ Regular nutrition and food safety in-services and education are provided for kitchen staff and volunteers.



APPENDIX D: NUTRITION AND FOOD SAFETY GUIDELINES FOR NUTRITION PROGRAMMING IN SASKATCHEWAN SCHOOLS

School nutrition programs can improve the health and learning potential of children. Children have high nutrient needs in relation to the volume of food they eat; therefore, it is essential to serve foods that are high in nutritional value. Also, serve food without excessive fat, salt, and sugar. Nutritious food supports growth, good health, healthy weight, and optimal learning.

Nutrition and Food Safety Guidelines for Saskatchewan Schools promotes the provision of high quality nutritious food and the management of efficient economical food service. These guidelines apply to breakfast/snack/lunch programs in elementary and secondary schools. Many of the concepts can also be applied to other food environments in schools, such as school & classroom celebrations, special food days, fundraisers, cafeterias, canteens, vending machines, meetings, or staff rooms. For guidance in applying these guidelines, consult a Public Health Nutritionist in your Health Region.

1. MENU PLANNING

1.1 The use of seasonally adapted cycle menus is recommended.

1.2 Base menus on the nutrition guidelines *Canada's Food Guide*.

BREAKFAST – contains 1 Food Guide Serving from each of 3 food groups

SNACK – contains 1 Food Guide Serving from each of 2 or more food groups

LUNCH – contains at least 1 Food Guide Serving from each of the 4 food groups

Serving sizes should be appropriate for the age of the child. Because young children have small stomachs that tend to fill up quickly, they need small nutritious meals and snacks throughout the day. One Food Guide Serving may be divided into smaller amounts and served at both meal and snack time as long as children are meeting the total recommended number of Food Guide Servings each day.

- Include a variety of foods from each food group listed in *Canada's Food Guide*.
- Serve whole grain or multi-grain products, dark green & orange vegetables and orange fruit more often.

- Prepare foods with little or no added fat, sugar, or salt. For foods that require little preparation, select those that are naturally lower in fat, sugar, and salt. Do not restrict nutritious foods such as cheese or peanut butter just because of their fat content. These foods can provide a concentrated source of nutrients for children.

What is One Food Guide Serving?

- **Vegetables and Fruit**

1 medium sized vegetable or fruit, 125 mL (1/2 cup) fresh, frozen, or canned vegetables or fruit, 250 mL (1 cup) salad, 125 mL (1/2 cup) juice.

- **Grain Products**

1 slice bread (35 g), 30 g cold cereal, 175 mL (3/4 cup) hot cereal, 1/2 pita or bun (35 g), 1/2 bagel (45 g), 125 mL (1/2 cup) pasta or rice.

- **Milk and Alternatives**

250 mL (1 cup) milk or fortified milk alternative, 50 g (1 1/2 oz) cheese, 175 mL (3/4 cup) yogurt.

- **Meat and Alternatives**

75 g (2 1/2 oz) meat, poultry, or fish, 2 eggs, 175 mL (3/4 cup) beans, 150 g (3/4 cup) tofu, 30 mL (2 tbsp) peanut butter.

1.3 Menus must meet the following criteria from the attached “Healthy Eating Guidelines”.

- **“Choose Most Often”** “Choose Most Often” These foods are sources of one or more of the following: vitamins, minerals, protein, carbohydrate and fibre. They are generally lower in fat, sugar, and salt. Foods may be served without restriction.
- **“Choose Sometimes”** Most of these foods are sources of one or more of the nutrients iron, calcium, vitamin A, C, or D, but they are also high in fat, sugar or salt, or low in fibre. This makes them less nutritious. If a food from this category is served, it should be combined with a food from the “Choose Most Often” group rather than alone.



The enclosed “Healthy Eating Guidelines” is a tool to support healthy eating in schools, and is based upon the concepts of *Canada’s Food Guide* and Saskatchewan Ministry of Health’s *Healthy Foods for My School*.

The guidelines in this resource are intended to support healthy eating for all students. Some students may have specialized needs that require a clinical diet. For students with life-threatening allergies, type 1 diabetes and other medical conditions, check with your school for guidelines or policies regarding medical conditions.

2. MENU EVALUATION

- 2.1 Menus should be prepared and evaluated in collaboration with a broad array of interested stakeholders including school personnel, School Community Councils, students and families/community members. A Public Health Nutritionist or Registered Dietitian may be consulted.

3. FOOD SAFETY STANDARDS

Food Safety Standards are intended to ensure that food offered to students is acquired, prepared, stored, and served in a safe manner. Provincial regulations and standards apply to food service in schools. For guidance in applying the regulations and standards, contact a Public Health Inspector in your local Health Region.

- 3.1 Prior to construction, renovation, and operation contact a local Public Health Inspector for plan approval and arrangements for necessary inspections.
- 3.2 All staff who handle food must successfully complete a Certified Food Handling Course prior to, or as soon as possible after, commencement of duties. Contact your Health Region for a schedule of available courses.
- 3.3 All food used in school nutrition programs must be purchased from an approved source. If there is a question about any source, contact the Public Health Inspector. Examples of sources not approved: private residence, farm-slaughtered meat.
- 3.4 Discuss the acceptability of donated food with a Public Health Inspector. In general, donated foods are not acceptable in school nutrition programs; however, fresh fruit and vegetables, day-old bread & muffins, and uncooked pasta may be acceptable.
- Never** accept the following foods:
- home canned goods
 - raw milk
 - eggs
 - home processed meat, poultry, fish or dairy products
 - dented, rusted, or bulging canned goods or any food with an expired “best before” date

- frozen food
- pastry or dessert items
- left-over food from banquets, parties, etc.

3.5 In the case of an emergency, such as suspected contaminated food or food-borne illness, a Public Health Inspector must be contacted.

***WRITTEN BY THE PUBLIC HEALTH NUTRITIONISTS OF
SASKATCHEWAN***

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