

Feeding the Minds & Bodies of BC Students Healthy Students are Better Learners



The primary responsibility of schools is to foster student achievement. The link between nutrition, learning and behaviour has been well established.

The school setting provides important opportunities for learning and practicing healthy eating habits that continue into adulthood.

Many BC schools and districts are working hard to create a culture of healthy eating. Those taking the lead are overcoming challenges and reporting success.

Schools Continue to Profit

BC schools that have increased the availability of healthy food choices for their students continue to profit, financially as well as through decreased litter problems, increased student pride and fewer office referrals.

At **Osoyoos Secondary**, water and 100% juice sell for \$1.00, pop for \$1.50 and sports drinks for \$2.00. Water is by far the #1 seller and profits are higher now than they were before. "The attitude change has been incredible, students have more pride and respect for what they are putting in their bodies," says their Healthy Foods Committee Chair.

Students Will Stay at School to Eat Lunch

There are 14 fast food outlets within two blocks of **Sahali Secondary** (Kamloops). Despite a cafeteria program that includes healthy choices, 400-500 students left the school every-day to eat lunch. The principal talked to students who said they would be more likely to eat at school if there was a comfortable and private place to sit. The principal arranged new tables for the lunch area in an intimate and relaxing configuration. Supervision ensures the area remains clean and comfortable. More students are staying at school to eat lunch, and students say they appreciate the pleasant space to eat, socialize and do homework.

"We send our students messages about health all the time. We have non-smoking campaigns and posters about unprotected sex, bullying, drugs, etc. How is healthy eating any different? It's all about health."

– BC School Trustee

Feeding the Minds & Bodies of BC Students Make the Healthy Choice the Easy Choice

Students Will Make Healthy Choices

At **Clayburn Middle** (Abbotsford) the goal is gradual but consistent improvement in the choices offered in the canteen and vending machines. Students have responded positively by buying more items like salads and bagels. (More than 150 salads are sold each week!) Parents support the program by volunteering and many are more comfortable providing money to their children now that a greater variety of healthy choices is available.

Common Elements of Success

- Involve parents, teachers, administrators, support staff and students in the process
- Get student input on food and beverage choices
- Make the healthy choice the easy choice:
 - change the pricing so that healthy choices are less expensive
 - make healthy choices highly visible
 - promote healthy choices through student-led marketing, specials, posters and advertising
 - ensure there is a variety of healthy choices available
 - work with food suppliers to improve the food choices available
- Identify ways to raise money for the school other than selling foods
- Use non-food items for rewards
- Schedule recess, or playtime, before lunch in elementary schools
- Advertise your healthy changes to the school community.

What Can You Do?

1. Start talking about it. Gather more information and share it with others. Visit:
 - **Making it Happen: Healthy Eating at School**
www.knowledgenetwork.ca/makingithappen
You'll find tips to develop policy, contact information for vendors that supply healthy choices, healthy fundraising ideas, success stories and much more.
 - **Directorate of Agencies for School Health**
www.dashbc.org/sfn/dc.html
Learn more about why healthy eating at school is important. Explore the DASH site to find out what schools and districts around BC are doing to support healthy eating.
 - **Ministry of Education**
www.bced.gov.bc.ca/health/health_publications.htm
Visit this site for *Guidelines for Food and Beverage Sales in BC Schools 2005*. These guidelines, along with the *Tools for Healthy Eating* aim to help schools make healthy choices easy and available.
2. Identify champions and form partnerships with people who can support you in promoting healthy eating. In middle and high schools, the home economics teacher is a great resource.
3. Contact your local health unit and speak to the Community Nutritionist, who can get you connected with school food initiatives in your area. Find the contact information in the blue pages of your phone book or call Dial-A-Dietitian at (604) 732-9191 or (800) 667-3438.