



NUTRITION & HEALTHY SCHOOL FOOD ENVIRONMENTS

Background

The qathet School District supports food literacy programs and access to healthy food in schools to fully support a child's ability to learn and make informed choices about nutrition. While all members of the school community have a role in creating a healthy food environment, it is the responsibility of each Principal, in coordination with district leadership, to implement measures that remove food access barriers and foster student well-being and nutrition education.

Definitions:

Food Literacy - Dietitians of Canada define Food literacy as the ability of an individual to understand food in a way that they develop a positive relationship with it, including food skills and practices across the lifespan to navigate, engage, and participate within a complex food system. It's the ability to make decisions to support the achievement of personal health and a sustainable food system considering environmental, social, economic, cultural, and political components.

Nutrition – Nutrition has been colonially defined as the process of obtaining the food necessary for health and growth. Nutrition is influenced by social, political, financial and environmental systems and structures. These impact individuals and communities eating habits and choices. (First Nations Health Authority Common Language Project Report, 2023)

Open Access – Wherein all students are welcome to access food programs within a school, but the program is not designed to serve the whole school population. Open access programs do not require students to prove need.

Procedures:

1. Healthy Lifestyles District
 - 1.1. The District supports providing and modeling healthy food and beverage choices in food offered at school and District meetings.
2. Food Literacy, Nutrition and Healthy Lifestyles Curriculum
 - 2.1. The District supports the use of provincially and locally developed curricula, resources, and programs to enhance student and staff food literacy, nutrition, and healthy lifestyles.
 - 2.2. The District supports schools to provide opportunities and encourage students to participate in activities that develop food skills, knowledge, and community connections. Food provision, knowledge and exploration will include Indigenous Ways of Knowing and a variety of cultural practices to reflect the diversity of students.

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3. Healthier School Food Environment

- 3.1 School personnel will create a safe, supervised, clean, and positive eating environment. Students will be provided distraction free minimum of 15 minutes for eating.
- 3.2 Schools and the District will work to reduce any stigma around eating and accessing food. This includes trusting students to eat according to their own hunger cues, providing meal and snack programs that respect students' dignity, and promoting positive messages such as, "Eating a variety of foods gives you energy to play and think," rather than saying, "This food is not healthy."
- 3.3 Foods and beverages will not be withheld from students as a consequence. Additionally, foods and beverages will not be offered as an incentive or reward, except when it is justified and documented in the student's Individualized Education Plan.
- 3.4 Each school will have an open access breakfast and lunch program that meets the needs of the school's students. Development and operation of the program will be supported by district leadership, follow Ministry requirements, and may be in coordination with community partners.
- 3.5 Fun Days, activities and celebrations will prioritize healthy options for students and will strive to meet current federal and provincial nutrition guidelines.
- 3.6 When accepting donated food, such as baked goods or meat, it is essential that the food is nutritious and follows applicable food safety standards, such as being prepared in a commercial space. The acceptability of donated foods should be discussed with a local Environmental Health Officer.

4. Paid Food Services in Schools

4.1 Vending Machine Services:

- 4.1.1 Vending machines are acceptable in middle and secondary schools.
- 4.1.2 Parents (PAC), staff and students must be consulted prior to vending machines being installed in schools (present vending machines are grandparented).
- 4.1.3 Vending machine contracts must be approved by the Superintendent.
- 4.1.4 Healthy foods and beverages must be provided in all vending machines. Offerings must be consistent with the most current federal and provincial guidelines for food and beverage sales in schools.
- 4.1.5 Foods with higher nutritional value must be priced lower than lower nutritional value items. An example of this would be that water must be lower priced than juice or other high sugar beverages.
- 4.1.6 Advertising on vending machines must support healthy choices.

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4.2 Cafeteria and Canteen Services:

- 4.2.1 Foods and beverages served on school grounds or at school functions must meet current federal and provincial food and beverage sales guidelines and follow highest food safety standards. All providers must include low-cost healthy options.
- 4.2.2 Cost of food to students will prioritize cost recovery over profits.

4.3 Fundraising

- 4.3.1 Food-based fundraising activities, such as bake sales, should still follow best food handling practices and do their best to align with current federal and provincial guidelines around nutrition and food sales in schools.
- 4.3.2 Lunches/meals/snacks offered by Parent Advisory Councils (PACs) or other not-for-profit organizations must include healthy options for students and provide options/opportunities for families facing financial insecurity. PACs are encouraged to prioritize nutrition and limit low nutrition value/quality foods such as hot dogs and pizza.

5 Ongoing Review

- 5.1 The District Health Committee will conduct a biannual review of this Administrative Procedure: Nutrition & Healthy School Food Environments.

Reference: Sections 17, 20, 22, 65, 85 *School Act*
Health Act
School Regulation 265/89
First Nations Health Authority Common Language Project Report

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