



Take Action: DISTRICT ADMINISTRATORS

Schools are in a unique position to influence and improve nutrition among children. You are a key player in your school district and can create a culture that values healthy eating and active living.

What can YOU do to create a healthy school nutrition environment?

Work with your school board and school district staff.

- Encourage discussion about school nutrition by the board and administrative team; arrange for your community nutritionist to present key facts on nutrition.
- Direct key stakeholders to the *Healthy Eating at School* Web site for resources on school nutrition: <http://www.healthyeatingatschool.ca> .

Develop a shared vision around school nutrition.

- Form a committee that represents staff, students, parents, trustees and relevant community members to develop a district nutrition policy that promotes healthy eating.
- Build on your success in promoting healthy choices in school-based food and beverage sales by developing policies in other areas related to healthy eating, such as fundraising events outside the school and/or in complementary areas, such as physical activity.
- Ensure students are able to participate in developing and implementing policies.

Support school nutrition policy implementation.

- Create a new health promotion/education position to provide comprehensive, customized support to schools to fully implement the Guidelines.
- Work with vendors to help ensure provision of a greater number and range of healthy snacks. When you send a request for proposal, ask for snacks that meet the Guidelines.
- Make the necessary funds available to implement and evaluate the school district nutrition policy.
- Support the development and sustainability of school meal, milk and/or snack programs where needed.
- Organize a support workshop and educate staff, parents and students about the Guidelines.



Why focus on healthy eating?

- Students who are well nourished have increased test scores, improved attendance, reduced tardiness, and better academic, behavioural and emotional functioning.¹
- Extra staff time and attention need to be devoted to students with low academic performance; better nutrition improves student performance and lessens the need for additional staff time.
- Having a school committee in place to promote healthy eating has a positive impact on food and beverage choices.²
- Students say the major barriers to healthy eating are that foods are not available, affordable or appealing at school.^{3, 4, 5}

For more facts on school nutrition, refer to the Dietitians of Canada backgrounder at <http://www.dietitians.ca/child/pdf/backgrounder.pdf>.

1 "Diet, breakfast and academic performance in children". *Annals of Nutrition and Metabolism*, Kleinman RE, Hall S, Green H, Korzec-Ramirez D, Patton K, Pagano ME and Murphy JM, 46 Supp 1: 24-30, 2002.

2 "School Food Sales and Policies Provincial Report II". BC Ministry of Education and BC Ministry of Health, 2007.

3 "Barriers and Enablers to Healthy Eating and Active Living in Children: Key Findings in 6 Nova Scotia Communities". Canadian Diabetes Association, December 2002.

4 "Healthy active living for children and youth". *Pediatric Child Health*, LeBlanc C, 7(5):339-345, 2002.

5 "Individual and environmental influences on adolescent eating behaviors". *Journal of the American Dietetic Association*, Story M, Neumark-Sztainer D, French S, 102(3 Suppl): S40-51, March 2002.