



**Action Schools! BC**

# Play First Lunch Toolkit

Play First Lunch is a change in the traditional scheduling order of lunchtime and playtime – students go out to play first and then eat lunch.

- Benefits!**
- ✓ Improved student behaviour on the playground and in the classroom.
  - ✓ Fewer accidents during the lunch break.
  - ✓ Less litter on the school ground and inside the school.
  - ✓ Students return to the classroom quickly.
  - ✓ Increased food and drink consumption.
  - ✓ Students are quieter and calmer, and focused on eating rather than thinking about getting outside to play.
  - ✓ Students are more settled and ready to learn when they are not hungry.

## SAMPLE SCHEDULE:

12:00 PM	Play time
12:25 PM	Bell to enter to use the washroom and wash hands
12:30 PM	Bell to go to classrooms and eat lunch
12:50 PM	Music appreciation/ silent reading
1:00 PM	Afternoon classes start

## Steps to Implementing a Play First Lunch Program

1

### Build Support

- Learn about the benefits and possible challenges associated with the Play First Lunch schedule – contact the Action Schools! BC Support Team to put you in touch with a school administrator who has successfully implemented the program.
- Talk to staff about the Play First Lunch program, its benefits, possible challenges, and what else they should expect. Include teachers, educational assistants, secretaries, custodians, volunteers and caterers.
- Share the program with parents at a PAC meeting, send a letter or email home, and/or include information in the school newsletter.
- Promote the program to students so they understand the change in schedule and the links with healthy living.

## 2

## Develop a Schedule

- Develop a schedule that will work for your school; be flexible and creative.
- Consult with staff, volunteers, students and other members of the school community to collect feedback and identify potential challenges and solutions (e.g. conflicts with band practices).
- Implement a multi-month trial of the new schedule to give staff, students, family members and other members of the school community time to adapt and adjust.
- The new schedule is a work in progress – it can be tweaked as needed! Get feedback from those involved.

## 3

## Don't Forget Hand Washing!

- Hand washing is an important food safety and health issue.
- Incorporate time for students to wash their hands before eating lunch. See Food Safety in the Healthy Eating Action Resource for more on hand washing.

## 4

## Schedule Eating Time

- Allow at least 20 minutes from the time students sit down to eat lunch.
- Younger students may need more time.
- Initially, noise in the classroom at lunch may increase as students adapt to the change in schedule. Over time, schools noted an improved atmosphere in the classrooms as children learn to eat slowly, relax and socialize during lunch.

*Adapted From: Kathy Romses, Community Dietitian, Vancouver Coastal Health & Betty Holmes, Licensing Nutritionist, Vancouver Coastal Health and Parent*

## 5

## Promote Healthy Eating

- Students may be hungrier and thirstier with this change.
- Post the Super Snacks Poster in the hallway or classroom.
- Promote the importance of healthy breakfasts, and a mid-morning snack to help fuel play.
- Implement Crunch & Sip™ – an activity that allows students to have vegetables or fruit and a bottle of water on their desks throughout the day (see Snacking in the Healthy Eating Action Resource).
- Involve student leaders by booking Healthy Eating Student Leadership Training.

## 6

## Modify Classroom Monitoring

- Initially, teachers or lunch monitors should spend as much time as possible with the students to practise the new routine and reinforce positive behaviour.

## 7

## Evaluate

- Talk with staff, students, family members and other members of the school community during and after the trial period to evaluate the program and consider any possible adjustments.
- Share results with members of the school community through staff and PAC meetings, and the school newsletter.

### RECOMMENDED RESOURCES:

(refer to Action Pages! at [www.actionschoolsbc.ca](http://www.actionschoolsbc.ca) for these and other resources)

- Action Schools! BC – Healthy Eating Action Resources – K to 7 (F); Healthy Eating Teacher Workshops; Super Snacks Poster (F) –at [www.actionschoolsbc.ca](http://www.actionschoolsbc.ca)
- HealthLink BC: Call 811 and speak to a registered dietitian
- Montana Office of Public Instruction – “Recess Before Lunch: A Guide for Success” [www.opi.mt.gov/pdf/schoolfood/RBL/RBLGuide2008.pdf](http://www.opi.mt.gov/pdf/schoolfood/RBL/RBLGuide2008.pdf)
- Peaceful Playgrounds – [www.peacefulplaygrounds.com/recess-before-lunch](http://www.peacefulplaygrounds.com/recess-before-lunch)