

Guidelines for Food and Beverage Sales in BC Schools---creating a healthy future for BC students

Well-nourished children are more prepared to learn, have better school attendance records, are less tardy and are more able to benefit from the educational opportunity available in schools.

Because of the strong connection between nutrition and learning and because children spend so much time at school, schools are a critical setting when it comes to the food and beverage choices offered to children while in the school setting. School administrators know students will not practice what they learn academically about the importance of health eating, if their school provides unhealthy food and beverages for sale within their school environment.

To this end, schools and districts are working with students, teachers, parents and others to develop strategies to assist in the implementation of the **Guidelines for Food and Beverage Sales in BC Schools**. There are several factors that have been identified and shared by schools and districts as 'key' to successful implementation of the Guidelines. These factors assist schools to help students make wise choices about the food they eat and enable students to practice what they learn in school by ensuring the school environment offers healthy choices. Key factors for success include:

- **enabling policies**
- **district leadership/champions**
- **dedicated staffing**
- **community partnerships**
- **educated vendors**
- **competitive pricing**
- **student and parent awareness/ interest**
- **integration into curriculum**

The following is a brief synopsis of how five school districts are successfully implementing the *Guidelines for*

Food and Beverage Sales in BC. Sharing these success stories will hopefully be useful to others.

School District 61 Victoria

District leadership/champions and competitive pricing

At Reynolds Secondary, successful implementation of the guidelines resulted from a parent who championed the cause with support from a local vending company and the community nutritionist. The parent, concerned over the health implications of selling unhealthy choices in her child's school, lobbied the PAC and school principal to eliminate unhealthy choices. Concerned over a loss in food based revenue, the school administrator was reluctant to make the change until the parent agreed to cover any loss of revenue. The local vendor helped market healthy foods using a competitive pricing system that **lowered** the cost of healthy choices and **increased** the cost of unhealthy choices. This resulted in a large increase in the sale of milk and water (healthy choices). The parent - who promised to cover any lost revenue - did not have to pay anything. To read the whole story visit: [Making it Happen: Healthy Eating at School](#).

Nutrition, healthy eating and learning have strong connections

School District 73 Kamloops

Enabling policies

SD 73 took a grass-roots approach to making change. An "Action for Healthy Communities Committee" comprised of school district personnel, city staff, a fitness professional, a pediatrician and a community nutritionist, was established to develop a District Food and Nutrition Policy. With the support of the Superintendent, a policy was completed in 2004 requiring each school to develop and implement a policy governing the sale and distribution of food and beverages. The existence of both district and school level healthy eating policies have been key to facilitating change.

Dedicated staff

This project resulted in the hiring of a full time school health coordinator whose many tasks include assisting schools with the implementation of the School Food Guidelines. This position enables coordination on the district's many healthy school activities.

Student and parent awareness/ interest

Dallas Elementary PAC came up with a fun way for students to take part in a food selection process for the schools Snack Shack and Hot Meal selections. Three students from each of grades 1 through 7 classes met with parents in the staff room to taste a variety of food products and provide feedback on the "buffet of food" options. The food options included yogurt tubes, cheese strings and Burritos. Data compiled by the PAC included:

- What % of students liked the individual food item?
- What was the cost of each item for the school to purchase?
- How many individual units were in each food package?
- What was the cost of each individual unit?

This data assists the school in ensuring the healthy nutritional choices are still viable fundraisers. For more information about this process for creating positive change, contact [Mike Johnson](#)

School District 44 North Vancouver

District leadership/champions

SD 44's Superintendent, a keen supporter of healthy schools, held a forum to gather input from parents, teachers, administrators, students and community members. As a result, a health promotion policy was passed at the June 2006 school board meeting and it included a section stating that the *Guidelines for Food and Beverage Sales in BC* should be implemented as soon as possible. The Guidelines were fully implemented in September 2006.

In November 2006, SD 44 received the [BC Provincial Health Officer's Award for Excellence in Public Health](#). The *Award* recognizes the North Vancouver School District's leadership as BC's first school district to 100% support the sale of healthy vending food products within the school setting. [Kathy Romses](#), the community nutritionist reports... "One of the main reasons the district was successful was because of the collaboration with Vancouver Coastal Health on a Request for Proposal (RFP) for vending".

Educated vendors

The RFP required prospective contractors to outline how they would meet the *Guidelines for Food and Beverage Sales in BC* if they were the successful proponent. The process was effective in expediting the entire implementation process, putting the onus on the vendor to understand the Guidelines and offer foods that met the Guidelines. SD 44 has graciously shared its RFP template with the Ministry so we in turn can share it with those districts interested in following SD 44's process. To review a generic version of SD 44's RFP visit the resource section at:

<http://www.bced.gov.bc.ca/health/hsnetwork/>



School District 35 Langley

Enabling policies and dedicated staff

SD 35 takes a holistic, healthy schools approach to the implementation of the Guidelines. Building on the success of their Nutrition Policy and a *Food for Thought Forum*, the district hired a Healthy Schools Coordinator to facilitate the implementation of the Food Guidelines. The school district partnered with Vancouver Coastal Health to **cost share** the services of a community nutritionist. The qualified nutritionist is working with the district in promoting awareness and understanding of the Guidelines, providing technical expertise in the interpretation of the Guidelines, train cafeteria staff and work with the district and vendors during the RFP process. The collaboration of the districts' procurement manager and the community nutritionist provided the perfect blending of business and nutrition expertise necessary to craft the appropriate language for the RFP vending contract.

In September 2006, a Healthy Schools Steering Committee was established. The committee consists of representatives from the school district, the Fraser

Health Authority, a school trustee, elementary and secondary administrators, PAC members and a local business.

The committee's main focus for the 2006-07 year included:

- developing awareness of the new policy;
- sharing ideas and strategies on how the transition can be positive and successful for students, educators and parents; and
- developing structures and strategies to support the upcoming change to school vending machine food choices.

Student and parent awareness/interest

SD 35 offers opportunities for students to become involved in the process; for example, including healthy living sessions as part of a Student Leadership Conference. A Healthy Schools sub committee is developing a *Hot Lunch Ideas Pamphlet* for distribution to PACs. The handout will support parents with knowledge about the Guidelines.

Curriculum Integration

R.E. Mountain is at the forefront of changes at the secondary level. All grade 8 students learn about the Guidelines through their home economic classes and school staff work with the vending contractor and cafeteria caterers to offer healthier choices.

Community Partnerships

Simonds Elementary recently organized a Spring Tune Up community event. It was a creative take on the traditional fun nights that many school communities have. [Dawn Holden](#), the new Healthy Schools Coordinator says "The Spring Tune Up is a district initiative that has the whole school community talking about ways to encourage more healthy and active choices at school and at home".

School District 49 Central Coast

Student and parent awareness/ interest

SD 49 contributes its success in implementing the Food Guidelines on parent involvement. Parents are supportive of the Guidelines and run the food-based programs and this combination has facilitated successful implementation.

The Nuxalk Nation also support healthy eating at school and a new parent-provided *hot lunch program* is available

to all students with funding from the Aboriginal Education funds.



[Denise Perry](#), Superintendent says "The Nuxalk Nation is very active with the school in the School Planning Council. Parents are key links to the community supports".

Community partnerships

The local Co-op, Hagensburg Mercantile and Shop Easy also support the process by allowing schools to purchase healthier items at reduced costs. Both Bella Coola Air and Pacific Coastal, two local airlines, transport food supplies to the district's remote schools at no cost. Amazing example of the power of partnerships!

DID YOU KNOW:

The BC Healthy Living Alliance in partnership with Dietitians Canada and the BC School Trustees Association announced on April 20, 2007 a **\$1 Million grant** to assist the education community in implementing the *Guidelines for Food and Beverage Sales in BC*. Stay tuned for more on this.