

FOOD AND NUTRITION POLICY
for
NEW BRUNSWICK SCHOOLS

Department of Education
Fredericton, New Brunswick

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INTRODUCTION

School students have been identified as a key target in the New Brunswick government's Health Promotion and Education program. The government's overall vision of health is one in which people will live longer in good health with fewer illnesses and disabilities, empowered to reach their full potential. The relationship between nutrition and health has been studied extensively; it is well accepted that the health of individuals is significantly influenced by their food habits. In 1990, Health and Welfare Canada published nutrition recommendations for the public aimed at promoting and maintaining health while reducing the risk of nutrition-related diseases. Canada's Guidelines for Healthy Eating are part of these recommendations and are intended to be the key nutrition message for all healthy Canadians.

Nationally there is recognition of the important role of public schools in implementing these guidelines. It is recommended that coordinated comprehensive food and nutrition provincial policies be initiated to ensure that foods served in Canadian Schools are consistent with Canada's Guidelines for Healthy Eating.

The Department of Education recognizes the importance of the early school years as an appropriate setting for helping students establish the basis for lifelong healthy eating habits that will contribute to overall good health. To this end, the Department of Education undertook a review of the food and nutrition policies and practices in New Brunswick schools in July 1990, the results of which formed the proposed policy.

RATIONALE

The mission of the Food and Nutrition Policy is to contribute to the health and well being of New Brunswick school students by developing healthful eating habits through education and to do so in an economically, socially and environmentally responsible manner.

Canada's Guidelines for Healthy Eating were chosen as the basis for the food and nutrition policy because they

- can provide students with a sound basis for lifelong good habits
- may have a positive impact on overall school performance
- can help address some of the nutrition problems that have been identified among school students

Nutrition education is an important component of the policy as the cafeteria and classroom can be effective partners in a multi-disciplinary approach to education. The school food program must serve as an extension of the classroom. Evaluations of nutrition education programs have shown they can be effective in increasing nutrition knowledge, developing positive attitudes about nutrition and increasing consumption of nutritious foods.

GOAL

The policy is intended to set out guidelines for school districts to implement a coordinated comprehensive food and nutrition policy that encourages all students to develop good eating habits by providing food services that feature nutritious foods, and nutrition education programs and activities.

Definitions

Food services include foods served in cafeterias, canteens, vending machines, hot lunch programs, food supplement programs and other food related activities on all school days.

Nutritious foods include only those foods from the four food groups of Canada's Food Guide and Canada's Guidelines for Healthy Eating.

Nutrition education is the process of teaching validated, current nutrition knowledge in ways that promote the development and maintenance of positive attitudes and habits of eating nutritious food.

OBJECTIVE 1

All School Food Services will follow Canada's Guidelines for Healthy Eating in order to ensure the nutritional needs of students are met, and will promote the development of healthy eating practices in a manner that provides a positive contribution to the emotional, social and educational development of students.

OBJECTIVE 2

All school districts will provide nutrition education through school food programs and classroom activities in order to positively influence students' nutrition knowledge, attitudes and eating habits.

OBJECTIVE 3

All school districts will ensure all students have access to nutritious food during the school day.

IMPLEMENTATION

GUIDELINES FOR HEALTHY EATING

All school food services will provide and emphasize:

- a variety of foods from the four food groups
- whole grain cereals, breads and other grain products
- vegetables and fruits
- lower fat dairy products and leaner meats
- foods prepared with little or no fat
- food items low in salt and caffeine
- foods that consider students' caloric needs and help achieve and maintain a healthy body weight.

In addition, low sugar foods should be emphasized. Milk and fruit juices should be the sole beverages. Food Services should not provide students with items such as fruit drinks, soft drinks, candy, chips, chocolate bars, deep fried foods, doughnuts and other foods high in fat, sugar and/or salt.

School food services should be organized to allow students to make choices regarding food selection in order to provide a positive contribution to the development of healthy food habits.

PROMOTION

On an ongoing basis all school food programs will

- ensure that the school food services programs are an extension of the classroom and complement the classroom nutrition education experiences of the students
- include nutrition education activities

FOOD SECURITY

School districts will ensure that all schools strive to

- develop and implement a plan to provide food for students who arrive at school without food or the means to purchase food
- offer the opportunity for students to buy milk at wholesale cost or less.

ADMINISTRATION OF THE POLICY

The responsibility for administering the policy rests with the districts. As such, they will be responsible for the implementation of the policy, its efficient administration, operation and control. The Department of Education, in cooperation with the Department of Health and Community Services and other departments, will facilitate the efforts of the districts.

The Food and Nutrition policy also includes the following principles

- to provide food programs that satisfy the client group and encourage community support
- to provide sanitary and safe conditions for food preparation and eating
- to provide a pleasant environment for eating
- to operate food programs in an environmentally responsible manner
- to operate food programs on the basis of purchasing New Brunswick products first where possible
- to organize school district resources, such as food service personnel and food facilities, efficiently
- to provide food at an affordable cost to students and to utilize sound financial practices in order to be self-supporting.

CONCLUSION

This comprehensive policy offers a new perspective on the delivery of present food and nutrition services and programs. It represents an effort to coordinate school food services in a manner that will provide a direct benefit to the health of students.