

EDMONTON PUBLIC SCHOOLS

April 14, 2009

TO: Board of Trustees

FROM: E. Schmidt, Superintendent of Schools

SUBJECT: Update on Plan to Promote Healthy Food and Beverage Choices

ORIGINATOR: D. Barrett, Assistant Superintendent

RESOURCE

STAFF: Jan Anderson, Gloria Chalmers, Mark Gratton, Patti McLeish

INFORMATION

This report provides an update on the progress the District has made to date with respect to the Plan to Promote Healthy Food and Beverage Choices brought to Board March 11, 2008. The plan is designed to reduce and ultimately eliminate less healthy foods and beverages in school environments. The plan is supported by Board Policy GBE.BP – Health and Wellness of Staff and Students and Administrative Regulation GBE.AR – Health and Wellness of Staff and Students, which recommends a comprehensive school health approach.

There have been considerable developments in the schools since the plan of March 11, 2008, was communicated. The *Alberta Nutrition Guidelines for Children and Youth* were finalized and provided to schools. While this has helped to clarify the criteria for the definition of which food and beverages to "Choose Most", "Choose Sometimes" and "Choose Least Often", ongoing work is required to clarify them. A sample is provided in Appendix I. The supporting document *Steps to a Healthy School Environment: School Nutrition Handbook*, developed by registered dietitians with Alberta Health Services, has also been made available to all schools by their public health nurse. The District continues to deepen partnerships with health authorities to provide schools with current information about healthy eating and to simplify the guideline recommendations for schools. Alberta Health has developed an evolving list of over 300 healthy food and beverage products that are locally available.

The partnership with Alberta Health Services and the involvement of the District's Purchasing department has been critical to the success of the implementation of the plan to date and has enabled escalation of the pace of the work in some areas. The plan has been revised (Appendix II) accordingly.

The Purchasing department has worked with vendors and suppliers with respect to healthy product availability and the development of a process which ensures the accountability of vendors and suppliers to provide healthy food and beverage choices in Edmonton Public Schools. Vendors and suppliers are now required to complete a "Nutrition Template" developed by Alberta Health Services intended to provide a full nutritional profile of each of their products sold in vending machines. Purchasing is currently working with legal counsel to develop a contract that clearly specifies that the District has sole control over the selection of school products. Failure to comply with the criteria will allow the District to terminate the contract with a particular vendor.

The following examples help to demonstrate progress made in support of the plan:

- Continual inquiries from school staff, parents and the community indicate that awareness has significantly heightened with respect to making the healthy choice an easy choice in our schools.
- Ten schools, including two high schools, have committed to pilot the Joint Consortium on School Health (JCSH) assessment tool provided by Alberta Health Services. This tool provides a profile of the school's current status regarding healthy eating, active living and tobacco reduction.
- The District has developed a constructive relationship with Heritage Foods, a major supplier of vending machines in schools. Time terms of existing contracts have not changed due to legal obligations, but schools have been very successful re-negotiating the machine contents to reflect healthier choices. Schools were advised by Purchasing not to sign or renew contracts, pending finalization of the criteria. Previously contracts with schools often extended to a five year commitment. The suggested time period that future contracts will be in effect is two years. Heritage Foods has committed to providing only "Choose Most Often" and "Choose Sometimes" foods and beverages in all district vending machines by September 2009. As healthy products become more available, Heritage Foods will work towards suggested levels per division.
- More schools are identifying "health champions" on site and forming school wellness committees to lead their work. The 10 schools that volunteered to pilot the JCSH assessment tool took part in a collaborative process informed by school wellness committees. This assessment tool had a successful pilot and is now available free online at www.jcsh-healthyschooltool.uwaterloo.ca to all schools.
- The District partnered with Edmonton Catholic Schools to offer two comprehensive school health symposiums in 2008-2009. This has been a very positive partnership, which attracted 400 participants from both districts. Positive feedback was received from participants.
- The Programs department presented two information sessions to school staff on interpreting the *Alberta Nutrition Guidelines for Children and Youth*, the *School Nutrition Handbook*, and the *Plan to Promote Healthy Food and Beverage Options in Edmonton Public Schools*. Additional sessions will take place periodically.
- The District has developed a relationship with the Alberta Health Food Inspection Branch. The Branch has recently appointed a full-time staff member solely dedicated to serve schools. This already has assisted in acquiring support for home economics teachers to prepare and sell healthy products at their school, in compliance with safety food guidelines.
- There have been many queries from school staff and parents concerning healthier fundraising and special events at school.
- Ongoing work with vendors and suppliers to increase the range of healthy product availability.

The District will continue to monitor progress with the plan and support schools in their quest to provide healthy choices and to encourage students to routinely make healthy choices.

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APPENDIX I - Sample of Criteria for Healthy Food and Beverages

APPENDIX II - Plan to Promote Healthy Food and Beverage Choices: Progress to Date

Sample of Criteria for Healthy Food and Beverages

The Food Rating System

The Alberta Nutrition Guidelines for Children and Youth use a food rating system as a simple way to separate healthy foods from less healthy foods and to decide which foods should be present in your school community.

The food rating system puts all foods into three categories, based on specific nutritional criteria. The three categories include: *Choose Most Often*, *Choose Sometimes* and *Choose Least Often*. Familiar symbols such as "Go, Yield and Stop" may also be used to identify the three categories.



Choose Most Often – High nutrient foods

- These foods should be consumed daily and in amounts and appropriate portion sizes, based on age category. These foods are all recommended as healthy choices in *Eating Well with Canada's Food Guide*.



Choose Sometimes – Moderate nutrient foods

- No more than three servings from the *Choose Sometimes* category are recommended per week. While foods in the *Choose Sometimes* category may still provide beneficial nutrients, they tend to be higher in added sugar, unhealthy fat and sodium (salt).



Choose Least Often– Low nutrient foods

- Eating these foods is not recommended. One serving could be eaten once a week.

Food Rating System Nutrient Criteria

The following charts show the food nutrient criteria that foods must meet to fit into the *Choose Most Often* and *Choose Sometimes* categories.

Vegetables and Fruit:

Canada's Food Guide recommends that vegetables and fruit be consumed more often than juice. The Alberta Nutrition Guidelines for Children and Youth recommend that 100% fruit juice be limited to ½ cup (125 mL) per day.

Per Serving:	Fat	Protein	Sugar	Fibre	Sodium	Examples
Choose Most Often All fresh, frozen or canned vegetables and fruit (low sodium and no added sugar) (1 medium or 1/2 cup/ 125 mL) 100 % pure juice (1/2 cup/ 125 mL)	Total Fat ≤ 5 g Saturated ≤ 3 g Trans 0 g	All naturally occurring	All naturally occurring (no added sugar)	≥ 2 g	≤ 200 mg	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Canned fruit (in juice) Dried fruit or 100% dried fruit leather Raw vegetable sticks
Choose Sometimes Fresh, frozen or canned vegetables and fruit, with added sodium or sugar (1 medium or 1/2 cup/ 125 mL) Some potato/ vegetable chips very lightly salted or unsalted and baked	Total Fat ≤ 10 g Saturated ≤ 6 g Trans 0 g	No specified amount	≤16 g 20 g juice beverages	≥ 2 g	≤ 400 mg	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Canned fruit (in light syrup) Dried fruit with added sugar Fruit/ apple chips Vegetable/ potato chips, very lightly salted and baked Lower sodium salsa

The food nutrient criteria is based on one Canada's Food Guide Serving unless otherwise noted.

< means "less than" ≤ means "less than or equal to" > means "greater than" ≥ means "greater than or equal to"

PLAN TO PROMOTE HEALTHY FOOD AND BEVERAGE CHOICES, PROGRESS TO DATE AND REVISIONS

Promotion and provision of healthy food and beverage options to encourage students to routinely make healthy choices

Timelines	Actions (Proposed March 11, 2008)	Actions Completed by March 2009	Revised Actions
April 2008 to September 2008	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Disseminate by April 30, 2008, the Health and Wellness Policy and Regulation, Plan and interim guidelines/criteria to promote healthy food and beverage choices. • In consultation with Purchasing, examine in greater detail the existing contracts with caterers, food suppliers and vendors; hold consultation meetings with schools (23) and vendors of contracts that end December 2008 by June 30, 2008 and establish a schedule to consult by June 30, 2009 with those schools (56) whose contracts end between January 2009 and August 2011. • Seek input by June 30, 2008 from principals regarding the interim guidelines/criteria prior to finalizing the criteria. • Using feedback on the interim guidelines/criteria and the assistance of health authority nutritionists, finalize criteria by September 30, 2008 for identifying <i>choose most often, choose sometimes</i> foods to enable schools to identify healthy choices • In collaboration with health authority nutritionists and vendors identify and lobby for product availability (Ongoing) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Achieved • Achieved • Achieved • Achieved • Achieved 	
October 2008 to September 2009	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Provide information sessions regarding the criteria and strategies for making the changes (as needed, October 2008 to June 30, 2009) • Maintain and expand partnerships with health authorities and other community organizations in support of healthy choices (Ongoing) • By August 2009, require 70% of food and beverages sold in schools to be in the <i>choose most often</i> or <i>choose sometimes</i> categories • Continue consultation with caterers, food suppliers and vendors whose contracts end by August 2011 (Ongoing) • Provide schools with information regarding healthy fundraising, special events and food safety guidelines. (Ongoing) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Work in progress • Work in progress • Have involved legal counsel and Purchasing to finalize a contract template. • Work in progress • Work in progress 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • By September 2009, 100% of foods and beverages sold in school vending machines will be from the <i>choose most often</i> and <i>choose sometimes</i> categories

Timelines	Actions (Proposed March 11, 2008)	Actions Completed by March 2009	Revised Actions
September 2009 to August 2011	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • By August 2011, require that 100% of food and beverages sold in schools to be in the <i>choose most often</i> or <i>choose sometimes</i> category; at least 50% of items offered must be from the <i>choose most often category</i> • Require that foods sold or provided in schools from the <i>choose least often</i> category be eliminated 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Work in progress. • Requirement remains the same. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 80%:20% ratio in elementary schools, 60%:40% ratio in junior high schools, and 50%:50% ratio in high schools, respectively.* • Assist schools to re-negotiate vending machine contents to reflect healthier choices respectively.

* Children require different levels of support for decision making at different ages

- In the youngest children, good decision making is encouraged by ensuring all available choices would be good choices.
- As children mature, it is important that they learn how to identify and make good choices on their own. Schools should offer a balance between recognizing at the need for young people to learn and practice good decision making, and modeling good life style choices.
- Note that the majority of foods available to children of all ages should be healthy, however older students can be given the opportunity for greater independence in decision making.