

EDMONTON PUBLIC SCHOOLS

November 29, 2005

TO: Board of Trustees

FROM: E. Schmidt, Acting Superintendent of Schools

SUBJECT: Promoting Healthy Lifestyles for Edmonton Public School Students

ORIGINATOR: C. McCabe, Executive Director

RESOURCE
STAFF: Gloria Chalmers, Elaine Decker, Dennis Huculak, Kevin Stevenson,
Stuart Wachowicz, Stephen Wright, Don Zabloski

INFORMATION

BACKGROUND

This report is provided in response to a board approved motion that “the administration prepare a report for the board on the feasibility, details and time frame for eliminating the sale of junk food in Edmonton Public Schools”. This report addresses the issue of feasibility and suggests timelines and a process for the district and its partners to address eating habits and the education of students and parents in weight management and healthy lifestyles.

CONTEXT

A January 27, 2004 report to board outlined Edmonton Public Schools’ current approach for promoting and supporting the benefits of a healthy, active lifestyle, noted the likelihood that daily physical education would be mandated and outlined plans for accommodating daily physical education. The report also provided suggestions regarding options for augmenting current practice, including working in partnership with others.

This report builds on the January 27, 2004 report to board *Obesity in School Age Children* and recognizes the board’s acknowledgement that healthy nutrition and academic achievement are directly related.

The district has undertaken the implementation of daily physical activity for all students, grade 1-9. Initiatives include an increase in the number of scheduled physical education classes, use of alternate indoors and outdoor spaces in schools for daily physical activity, 150 minutes per week of physical education scheduled in some junior high schools, enhanced choices in intramural programs for individuals and groups, and free inservicing for kindergarten – grade 12 teachers.

Research indicates students who participate in daily physical activity attend school more regularly, have more positive attitudes toward school, and experience better academic performance. Numerous studies show a similar link between nutrition and school performance.

The administration believes that over time we can successfully replace unhealthy food choices in schools with healthier ones. We believe the desired outcome of promoting a healthy lifestyle and positively impacting the eating and drinking habits of students can best be achieved through a long term plan that involves the broader community working together with schools to educate families.

A plan for the 2005-06 school year could include the following:

- Develop a board policy to direct the district work relating to healthy lifestyles.
- Collect input through TAG, Key Communicators, student advisory groups, principal support teams, and suppliers to identify issues related to the sale of junk food.
- Share best practices across schools on current initiatives to promote healthy living.
- Partner with the University of Alberta to conduct action research on how best to change the eating habits of students.
- Approach Alberta Education to address provincial policy and positions related to the issue.
- Request Alberta Education to review curricular requirements as they relate to healthy lifestyle choices.
- Have our board of trustees through the Alberta School Board Association (ASBA) advocate for province-wide action to ensure Alberta schools provide the healthiest possible learning environments.
- Develop a plan to minimize the financial impact on schools resulting from changes to vending machine product sales.
- Approach Capital Health and Health Canada to investigate opportunities to work together to increase public awareness of the long term risks related to consumption of junk food and benefits of a healthy diet.

We believe that these steps will help establish resources that will assist individual school sites as they continue their work to develop healthy lifestyles and to improve student achievement.

The administration will provide a summary of progress towards these goals in September 2006.