



Food and Nutrition Policy for Nova Scotia Public Schools

Policy Directives and Guidelines



**Education
Health Promotion
and Protection**



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Policy Statement and Objective

The Food and Nutrition Policy for Nova Scotia Public Schools is intended to increase access to and enjoyment of health-promoting, safe, and affordable food and beverages served and sold in Nova Scotia public schools. The objective of the policy is to help make the healthy food and beverage choice the easy choice in the school setting.

Definitions

School Day: The Ministerial Education Act Regulations Citation 2(3) defines the school day as “any day other than Saturday, Sunday or a statutory holiday which is within the school year.” In this policy the school day refers to the time when students arrive at school to the time that they leave at the end of the day.

Health Promoting Schools: An approach to school-based health promotion involving a broad spectrum of programs, activities, and services that take place in schools and their surrounding communities. The approach is designed to change the environment in which students and staff live and learn. Components include the school curriculum, environment, and school and community supports. Families, health professionals, educators, institutions, agencies, community organizations, and students all play important roles.

Maximum Nutrition: Food and beverages that are part of the four food groups of *Canada’s Food Guide to Healthy Eating*. These items are high in essential nutrients for growth, learning, and health (e.g., vitamins, minerals, protein, carbohydrate, essential fatty acids, fibre, and water) and are low in salt, sugar, sweeteners, and saturated and trans fats. They have undergone little or no processing.

Moderate Nutrition: Food and beverages that are part of the four food groups of *Canada’s Food Guide to Healthy Eating*. These items contain essential nutrients for growth, learning, and health (e.g., vitamins, minerals, protein, carbohydrate, essential fatty acids, fibre, and water), but are somewhat lower in fibre and higher in fat, salt, sugar, sweeteners, and/or processing.

Minimum Nutrition: These food and beverages may or may not be from the four food groups of *Canada’s Food Guide to Healthy Eating*. They offer minimal nutritional value; are very high in sugar, fat, salt, caffeine, sweeteners, and/or processing; and tend to replace nutritious foods when available as meals and snacks.

Special Functions: Events that may occur once or twice a month and include special occasions and in-school celebrations (e.g., parent-teacher night, Remembrance Day, school bazaar, Spring Fling, Halloween, Christmas bake sales).

Application

The policy and Food and Beverage Standards for Nova Scotia Public Schools apply to all public schools in Nova Scotia. The policy and standards also apply to all individuals, organizations, and businesses that serve or sell food and beverages to students in Nova Scotia public schools.

definitions

Directives – Rationale

1. Food and Beverages Served and Sold in School

Providing a variety of healthy, acceptable food and beverage options for students and staff reinforces the nutrition curriculum taught in the classroom as well as messages learned at home and in other environments.

2. Clean Drinking Water

Water is an essential nutrient. Even mild dehydration can have negative effects on brain function, alertness, and energy levels. Eating foods higher in fibre like whole grains and fruits and vegetables also requires a greater fluid intake.

3. Programming

Food programs can help ensure that all students have access to healthy, affordable foods during the school day.

4. Pricing

The cost of food and beverages influences whether or not they are chosen. School food and beverages should be served and sold primarily for the purposes of providing nutrition rather than for revenue generation.

5. Fundraising

Fundraising contributes to educational programs and opportunities for students. Fundraising can be complementary to the health of students and the community that supports them when healthy food and beverage or non-food options are chosen. Fundraising with healthy food and beverages or non-food items provides another opportunity to support nutrition messages taught in the classroom, home, and broader community.

6. Special Functions

Food can be a significant part of cultural and traditional celebratory events. Although healthy foods and beverages should be promoted, it is recognized that there needs to be flexibility for a wider range of food and beverage items for special school functions and celebrations.

7. Promotion and Advertising

The business world is keenly aware of the potential to build preferences and cultivate brand loyalty by targeting schools that house a captive and impressionable audience of future consumers.^{36, 37, 38} Partnerships between schools and businesses can be mutually beneficial. However, such partnerships work best when designed to meet identified health and educational needs rather than serve commercial motives.

8. Food as a Reinforcer

Children need to eat when they are hungry and stop when they are full if they are to develop a healthy relationship with their bodies as well as learn healthy eating behaviours.³⁹ Using food as a reinforcer teaches children to eat when they are not hungry. Finding alternatives to food to reinforce behaviours is an important part of providing a healthy school environment.

9. Students Who May Be Vulnerable

All students need nourishment during the school day. Some students may be challenged in meeting this need for a variety of reasons including poverty, life-threatening food allergies, and other medical conditions requiring special dietary considerations.

10. Portion Sizes

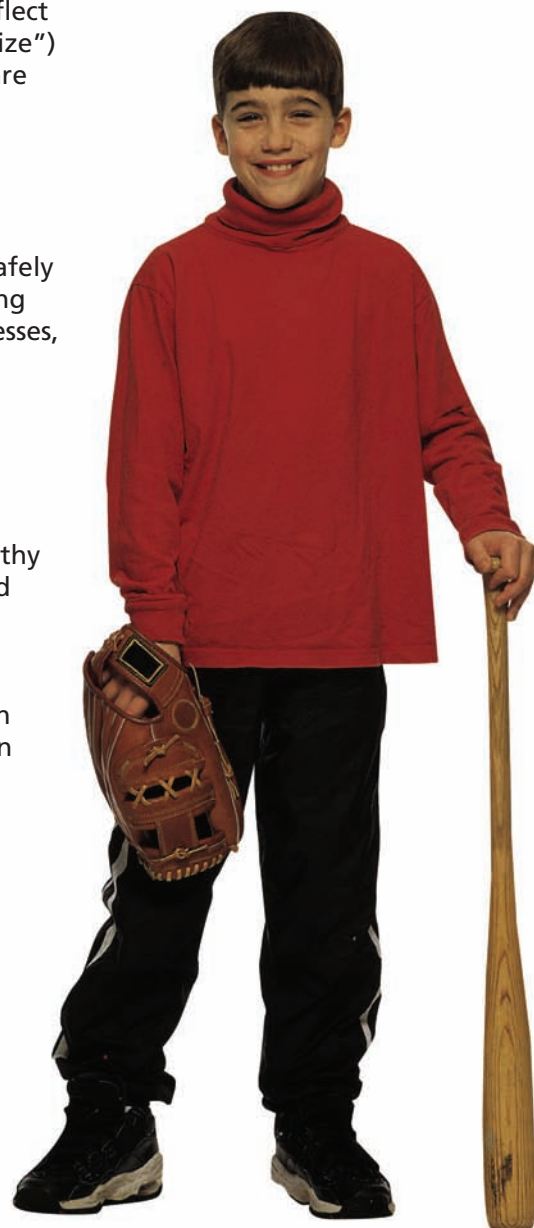
It is important that the portion sizes offered to students and staff reflect and support healthy eating behaviours. Large portions (e.g., “super-size”) not only provide more calories, but studies show that when people are served larger portions, they also eat more food.⁴⁰

11. Food Safety

Foods served and sold in schools need to be handled and prepared safely to prevent the spread of food-borne illness and disease. Hand washing is a simple and effective way to reduce the spread of food-borne illnesses, as well as colds and flu.

12. Nutrition Education

The health education curriculum describes the knowledge, skills, and attitudes students need in order to adopt and maintain lifelong healthy eating patterns. Nutrition education includes the formal, hidden, and parallel curriculum. The hidden curriculum provides opportunities to influence positive eating behaviours through creation of a school climate and learning environment supportive of healthy eating. The parallel curriculum builds external support systems and links between schools, families, and communities. Approaches that include nutrition education, policy, and programs and that focus on the larger school community (e.g., volunteers and families) have the greatest impacts on nutritional health and learning.^{4, 41}



directives

Policy

The policy is divided into Directives and Guidelines. It is based on a review of local, national, and international school food and nutrition policies; examination of health evidence; and feedback from public consultation. It has been developed in consultation with members of the Food and Nutrition in Nova Scotia Schools Policy Work Group.

Directives

1. Food and Beverages Served and Sold in School

- 1.1 During the school day when students are present, food and beverages served and sold in school will be consistent with the Food and Beverage Standards for Nova Scotia Public Schools. This includes cafeterias, canteens, vending machines, and lunch, breakfast, and snack programs.
- 1.2 The policy and food and beverage standards are also in effect during evening programs for students provided by the school. (Refer to Directives 5 and 6 for considerations for Fundraising and Special Functions.)
- 1.3 Schools will ensure that the majority of choices available are from food and beverages of Maximum Nutrition, recognizing that they are more nutritious than those of Moderate Nutrition.
- 1.4 Schools will serve or sell only milk (white, chocolate, flavoured, and nutritional alternatives to milk, e.g., soy), 100% juice, and water as beverages as per the Food and Beverage Standards for Nova Scotia Public Schools.
- 1.5 Schools will not use deep fat fryers to prepare food.

2. Clean Drinking Water

- 2.1 Schools will ensure that students and staff have access to clean drinking water during the school day.
- 2.2 Teachers and administrators will encourage students to drink water, especially during periods of hot weather or increased physical activity. This may be facilitated by allowing water bottles into the classroom.

3. Programming

- 3.1 It is expected that all schools will participate in the Nova Scotia Department of Agriculture's School Milk Program.

4. Pricing

- 4.1 To ensure that healthy food and beverage choices are accessible to the majority of students, schools will make affordability the primary consideration when setting prices or profit margins. Meal programs, in particular, will be priced with this in mind.

5. Fundraising

- 5.1 Fundraising with food and beverages organized by and through schools will centre only on items of Maximum or Moderate Nutrition.

6. Special Functions

- 6.1 Food and beverages of Maximum and Moderate Nutrition will be offered during Special Functions. However, Special Functions may include items from the Minimum Nutrition list. Special Functions are events that may occur once or twice a month and include special occasions and in-school celebrations (e.g., parent-teacher night, Remembrance Day, school bazaar, Spring Fling, Halloween, Christmas bake sales).

7. Promotion and Advertising

Schools will work to develop a culture that promotes health by

- 7.1 promoting healthy food and beverage choices that emphasize and are consistent with the Maximum Nutrition and Moderate Nutrition lists.
- 7.2 giving priority space to healthy food and beverages as defined by the Maximum Nutrition list (e.g., counter-top refrigerators, placement of fruits and vegetables at student eye level).





8. Food as a Reinforcer

- 8.1 School staff and volunteers will not offer food as a reinforcer or withhold food from students as a consequence, except in cases where a program planning team is using applied behavioural analysis to implement an individual program plan for a student.

9. Students Who May Be Vulnerable

- 9.1 Schools will ensure that students and parents are aware of breakfast, lunch, and snack programs that are offered in or through the school at minimal or no cost and are accessible to all students.
- 9.2 Schools must ensure that any food programs are made available to students in a non-stigmatizing manner.
- 9.3 Schools will work with parents to ensure that staff/volunteers are aware of food allergies and guidelines for supporting children with food-related chronic diseases (e.g., diabetes, celiac disease).
- 9.4 Schools will ensure that any food and beverages served and sold from those listed in the Food and Beverage Standards for Nova Scotia Public Schools are in alignment with school board anaphylaxis policy, Canadian School Boards Association Anaphylaxis Guidelines, or Peanut Aware policies and guidelines.

10. Portion Sizes

- 10.1 Schools will serve and sell appropriate portions of food and beverages. Super-sized portions are not appropriate to serve or sell in schools. Refer to *Canada's Food Guide to Healthy Eating* for information related to portion sizes.

11. Food Safety

- 11.1 Schools are required to prepare and serve foods in accordance with food safety standards and training guidelines as outlined by the Health Protection Act of the Nova Scotia Department of Agriculture. This may require the need for a Food Establishment Permit, food safety training, and Workplace Hazardous Materials Information System (WHMIS) training.
- 11.2 Schools will emphasize and promote cleanliness. Placemats or disinfectant wipes are encouraged if students are to eat at their desks.
- 11.3 Schools will ensure that students are aware of the importance of hand washing and will provide students with the opportunity to wash their hands before consuming meals.

12. Nutrition Education

- 12.1 The Department of Education will work with partners to ensure continued development and currency of high-quality, evidence-based health education curriculum that includes food and nutrition outcomes.
- 12.2 The Department of Education will work with partners to ensure continued development and currency of high-quality, evidence-based family studies curriculum that includes food and nutrition studies.
- 12.3 When possible, schools should integrate nutrition education into other subject areas and activities beyond the classroom.
- 12.4 The Department of Education will work with partners to enhance pre-service and in-service teacher education regarding nutrition.
- 12.5 The Department of Education will work with partners to ensure that opportunities for ongoing professional development are made available to teachers to support food and nutrition education.
- 12.6 The Department of Education will work with partners to ensure that teachers and students have access to the resources they need to address food and nutrition curriculum outcomes.



rationalale

Guidelines – Rationale

13. Time to Eat

Enjoying meals with others is an important component of healthy eating.⁴² After eating, the brain needs approximately 20 minutes in order to register that the body is full. Research shows that students need about the same amount of time to consume a meal. Allowing students and staff a minimum of 20 minutes to eat lunch provides time for the brain to register that the body is satisfied, provides a break in routine, and restores energy and enthusiasm for afternoon classes.

14. Nova Scotia Produce and Products

Nova Scotia produces an abundance of produce and products. Buying food that is grown and produced within the province supports Nova Scotia agriculture and business and means that more money remains in the community. Locally grown, fresh food is often more nutritious if it is used shortly after harvest.

15. Food Packaging and Environmental Consciousness

Schools in Nova Scotia have done a wonderful job partnering with and educating the community about how to be environmentally conscious at school and at home.

16. Role Models

School staff, volunteers, visitors, parents, and peers are all influential role models for students.

17. School Partnerships and Commitment

It takes many individuals and partners working together to build a supportive environment for nutrition and healthy eating in the school setting.



guidelines

Guidelines

Policy guidelines are recommendations that suggest a preferred course of action.

13. Time to Eat

- 13.1 It is recommended that the school day be scheduled to allow students and staff a minimum of 20 minutes to eat lunch. NOTE: This does not include the time it takes to stand in line, travel to lunch areas, or prepare foods.
- 13.2 School schedules should recognize that students need nourishment every three/four hours, based upon the time they would have last had an opportunity to eat. For example, students may benefit from a 10-minute break to eat a snack scheduled separately from recess, if possible.
- 13.3 It is recommended that students be given time to eat lunch, as well as to participate in activities (e.g., intramurals). Lunch and activities should be scheduled so they complement each other, rather than compete.

14. Nova Scotia Produce and Products

- 14.1 Whenever possible, schools and food service providers should use food and beverages that are grown, produced, or manufactured in Nova Scotia and Atlantic Canada.

15. Food Packaging and Environmental Consciousness

- 15.1 Schools are encouraged to continue, as well as find new ways, to reduce consumer and food waste and to support recycling and composting options.
- 15.2 Schools are encouraged to support energy-saving practices for food programs (e.g., energy-saving equipment such as fridges and stoves that meet the EnerGuide standard).



16. Role Models

- 16.1 School staff, administrators, volunteers, and guests are encouraged to model healthy eating practices consistent with the policy and Food and Beverage Standards for Nova Scotia Public Schools.
- 16.2 Community partners who have use of schools for community events are encouraged to follow the policy and Food and Beverage Standards for Nova Scotia Public Schools for consistency and role-modelling purposes.

17. School Partnerships and Commitment

- 17.1 Students should be involved in the planning of school food menus and choices offered by canteens, cafeterias, lunch and breakfast programs, vending machines, and at special functions.
- 17.2 Schools are encouraged to address food and nutrition issues within a unique or existing committee that includes administration, teachers, other staff, students, parents, food service staff, and community representatives (e.g., Health Promoting Schools Committee).
- 17.3 Schools are encouraged to have healthy foods that meet the Food and Beverage Standards for Nova Scotia Public Schools on hand for students who may require food.
- 17.4 Parent and community groups who participate in fundraising off the school site or outside of the school day are encouraged to focus on non-food or food and beverage items that are of Maximum or Moderate Nutrition.
- 17.5 Schools are encouraged to apply the policy and the Food and Beverage Standards for Nova Scotia Public Schools during school-based programs for students taking place on weekends in the school.
- 17.6 Schools are encouraged to consider the policy and the Food and Beverage Standards for Nova Scotia Public Schools when choosing venues and on student school trips.

Accountability and Monitoring

- Schools will ensure that parents, staff, students, food service providers, and community partners are informed of the policy and food and beverage standards.
- The Department of Education will review the policy and food and beverage standards biennially.
- School boards will monitor and evaluate policy implementation and effectiveness related to nutrition and the promotion of healthy eating and participate in the provincial evaluation of the policy.



implementation

Implementation Schedule

The Food and Nutrition Policy for Nova Scotia Public Schools will be phased in over three years beginning in 2006–07. This policy will ensure a healthy supportive environment is created for the school community by clarifying direction. This policy will demonstrate that schools value the health of students and staff.

Any contracts for food and beverage services will remain intact until they expire. Upon expiration, it is expected that any new contracts will meet the terms of the policy and Food and Beverage Standards for Nova Scotia Public Schools. Any new contracts signed during the implementation schedule must comply with the policy and Food and Beverage Standards for Nova Scotia Public Schools. This includes agreements related to promotional items such as scoreboards, clocks, and facades for vending machines.



A) Planning for Implementation

- i. Schools will ensure compliance with the Health Protection Act related to food safety; e.g., schools may consider arranging for training available through the Nova Scotia Department of Agriculture. (Directive 11.1)
- ii. Schools will continue to examine pricing to ensure access and affordability for the majority of students. (Directive 4.1)
- iii. Schools are encouraged to create a School Food and Nutrition Policy Team (e.g., an arm of an existing committee like the School Advisory Committee, Health Promoting Schools Committee, or a new committee) that can be tasked with addressing policy implementation issues at the school site. (Guideline 17.2)
- iv. Schools will examine menus or food lists in preparation for including more foods and beverages of Maximum and Moderate Nutrition and removal of some Minimum Nutrition items. (Directive 1.3)
- v. Schools should involve students in discussions related to menu selection and consider an ongoing strategy for student input into school food and beverage choices. (Guideline 17.1)
- vi. Schools should review beverage contracts to begin planning for full implementation of the beverage standards by January 2007. (Directive 1.4)
- vii. Schools not already participating in the Department of Agriculture's School Milk Program should begin planning to do so by January 2007. (Directive 3.1)
- viii. Schools that still have deep fat fryers should consider alternative menu items to replace deep fried foods in preparation for January 2007 implementation. (Directive 1.5)

Schedule

B) 2006–2007 School Year

- i. Schools should work to increase access to foods and beverages on the Maximum and Moderate Nutrition lists with an emphasis on fruits and vegetables and whole grains and to decrease access to foods on the Minimum Nutrition list. (Directive 1.3)
- ii. Schools should continue to work to emphasize positive promotion strategies for healthy foods and beverages. (Directives 7.1, 7.2)
- iii. Effective September 2006, school staff and volunteers will not offer food as a reinforcer or withhold food from students as a consequence, except in cases where a program planning team is using applied behavioural analysis to implement an individual program plan for a student. (Directive 8.1)
- iv. Effective January 2007, all schools will have removed food items listed in the Baked Goods, Snacks or Processed Foods, and Frozen Novelties sections of the Minimum Nutrition list of the Food and Beverage Standards. (Directive 1.1)
- v. Effective January 2007, all schools will participate in the Department of Agriculture's School Milk Program. (Directive 3.1)
- vi. Effective January 2007, all schools will implement the beverage guidelines (100% juice, milk and water). (Directive 1.4)
- vii. Effective January 2007, schools will no longer use deep fat fryers to prepare food. (Directive 1.5)
- viii. Schools that fundraise with food and beverages should consider options that centre on items included in the Maximum and Moderate Nutrition lists in preparation for September 2007 implementation. (Directive 5.1)

C) 2007– 2008 School Year

- i. Beginning September 2007, school fundraising campaigns involving food and beverages organized by and through the school will centre only on items on the Maximum or Moderate Nutrition lists. (Directive 5.1) (Note: Policy directive subject to review in Spring 2007.)
- ii. By June 2008, schools will not serve or sell Mixed Foods listed on the Minimum Nutrition list. (Directive 1.1)
- iii. Schools will begin to increase the amount of food and beverages of Maximum Nutrition in preparation for full implementation by June 2009. (Directive 1.3)

D) 2008–2009 School Year

- i. By June 2009, all schools will have fully implemented the entire food standards of the Food and Beverage Standards for Nova Scotia Public Schools. (Directives 1.1, 1.3)
- ii. By June 2009, schools will have implemented all policy directives identified within the School Food and Nutrition Policy for Nova Scotia Public Schools.



