

EDUCATION: STUDENTS

Policy 506-G

Health Promotion Guidelines

A school's health promotion statement describes how it will provide an encouraging, supportive and engaged environment that assists students in making informed health decisions and forming healthy habits for a lifetime. It also describes strategies for providing information, developing understanding and skills, and inculcating habits that enable and incline students towards active self-care, self-regulation, and self-advocacy that improves their physical, mental, and social/emotional health.

In particular, it describes steps being taken to comply with the [Guidelines for Food and Beverage Sales in BC Schools](#) and, for elementary schools, the statement describes the actions being taken to implement a physical activity program based on the [Action Schools](#) initiative.

Research Based Essentials for Health Promotion

Establish A Healthy School Policy

A policy statement promoting health and well-being guides actions to create and promote a safe, supportive and healthy school environment. It establishes commonly held and culturally rooted understandings and expectations that minimize the necessity of revisiting fundamental notions as staff, students and parents change.

Health promotion is oriented toward desired behaviours rather than behavioural prohibitions; for example, healthy food choices and practices to occur at school. Health-promoting environments are most effective when they are principle based rather than rule driven. This means that teachers, students and parents uphold common principles as equal partners in taking action for their own health as well as the health of others.

Whole school health promotion is enhanced by clearly stated support and highly visible active support from school-based administration.

The purpose of a health promotion statement is two-fold:

- To build health knowledge and skills in the cognitive, social and behavioural domains; specifically by:
 - Enhancing healthy lifestyle choices in Richmond by encouraging people to engage in life-long physical activity as well as encouraging healthy nutrition which promotes and supports individual health and a commitment to community health and wellness;
 - Increasing the number of Richmond students and staff who are physically active;
 - Capitalizing on school and community opportunities to promote physical well-being (e.g., Action Schools, Getting Richmond Moving, Healthy Nutrition); and
 - Increasing awareness of existing opportunities and information in our community; and
- To enhance educational outcomes by improving student health.

The school's health promotion policy will be most successful by:

- Providing a safe, supportive and respectful environment for all,
- Ensuring student participation and fostering student empowerment,
- Collaborating with parents and the local community,
- Addressing the health and well being of all those within the school environment, and
- Integrating health promotion into the school's ongoing activities.

Create A Small Group Of School Based Advocates

Richmond's goal is to be a proactive, strength affirming and health promoting community. Creating, maintaining and promoting a school policy that reflects these values should involve a specifically identified group of school based advocates including administrators, teachers, parents and community partners. This group will take responsibility for school food vending policies and food selection as well as health promotion with the student and parent community. Students should be particularly active in selecting healthy food to be sold at the school. Food selection is to be in accordance with [Energize Me!](#), which provides a summary of *Guidelines for Food and Beverage Sales in BC Schools – 2007*.

- Evaluate The School's Physical And Social Environment

The Physical Environment refers to the buildings, grounds and equipment in and around the school. An environmental scan can be used to modify existing conditions to enhance safety (eg. prune shrubs to improve sightlines, repair worn or fragile equipment, provide facilities for student activity.)

The Social Environment refers to the quality of the relationships among and between staff and students and the relationships with parents and the wider community.

- Employ Both Formal And Informal Curriculum

Formal and informal curriculum and activities assist students to gain understandings that enable them to build competencies for action to improve personal and community health.

Physical Activity

Physical well-being is an important aspect of health promotion. Growing concern about obesity in youth and forecast increases in health concerns such as diabetes require response from communities, parents, teachers and students. Providing for regular physical activity at home and at school is part of this response.

The [Canadian Adolescents At Risk Network](#) of Queen's University reports that 80% of youth aged 11-16 years do not participate in enough physical activity to meet national guidelines for healthy living. Conversely, rates of sedentary behaviours such as television viewing and computer use are alarmingly high in Canadian youth.

The province has responded to this need by providing [Action Schools! BC](#) to foster regular physical activity in schools and at home. Schools are encouraged to provide daily physical activity for all students using this program and other resources. (Note that *Actions Schools* is not yet available for secondary grades but a Grade 8 and 9 version is under development.)

Nutrition

The BC Ministries of Education and Health have developed [Guidelines for Food and Beverage Sales in BC Schools](#) to assist schools in ensuring that food and beverages sold on school premises or at school events are appropriate for students. These guidelines apply to food and beverage made available by the school itself, outside contractors or parent groups. They provide for significant changes to the foods and beverages sold in schools by 2008. See www.brandnamefoodlist.ca or call Dial-A-Dietitian at 604-732-9191.

For example food provided on hot dog days, pizza days and sports days will have to change. While most wieners are very high in salt, total fat or trans fat, there is nothing wrong with the concept of hot dogs. Healthier wieners do exist. For more information see [Healthier Foods: How to Make Fun-Fast-Food Healthier for Students](#). For potato chips, corn chips and French fries the key concern is with the sodium content and the total fat or trans fat content. Some brands have less of these ingredients and have some nutrient value. Baked fries are almost always healthier than those that are deep fried. For more information about these and other foods see the *Guidelines for Food and Beverage Sales in BC Schools*.

The [Health and Career Education K-10](#) IRP (which replaces *Personal Planning* at elementary and *Career and Personal Planning* at secondary) provides students with information to better understand the importance of good nutrition and regular physical activity.

Vending Machines

Each 12 ounce serving of a carbonated sweetened soft drink contains the equivalent of 10 teaspoons of sugar. The Journal of Pediatrics, citing research from Boston's Children's Hospital, states that teenagers who consume one can of sugary drink a day are likely to be up to 14 pounds heavier per year than those who drink only unsweetened versions.

Therefore, elementary schools will not provide carbonated or similar (e.g., iced tea) beverages. Secondary schools may provide beverages through vending machines so long as healthy choices are available and all choices are labeled to indicate caloric values and support informed decision making by older students. (Labeling must be in place no later than September 2007.) All drinks that have sugar as the primary ingredient (after water) must be eliminated no later than January 2008, in elementary schools and September 2008, in secondary schools. This includes most non-diet pops, iced tea and similar drinks.

When the community and schools reinforce health-promoting values and priorities, the effect is multiplicative. An example of consistent messaging is the decision by the City of Richmond to identify food choice classifications in vending machines consistent with those to be used by Richmond schools.

For information about the nutritional attributes of various beverages see the [Different Beverages, Different Benefits](#) table prepared by Refreshments Canada.

Some energy drinks cannot only be unhealthy but, in some situations, dangerous. In particular, those that provide high levels of caffeine should not be available in schools. For more information, see [Safe Use of Energy Drinks](#).

Elementary schools may not provide food through vending machines.

Secondary schools may provide food through vending machines so long as healthy choices are available and all choices are labeled to indicate their nutritional value using the four part scheme in the [Guidelines for Food and Beverage Sales in BC Schools](#): (choose most, choose sometimes, choose least and not recommended). No later than 2009 at least 50% of all foods and beverages sold in schools must be from the "choose most" category and 40% to 50% from the "choose sometimes" category. Not more than 10% can be from the "choose least" category and none can be in the "not recommended category."

In addition to ensuring that vending machines provide appropriate foods, secondary schools should consider the following.

- Display placement influences sales. For example items placed at eye level generate better sales. Conclusion: place healthiest choices at eye level.
- Price is the most important factor in helping students make healthier choices. Where healthier items cost less, students are more likely to choose them over their more expensive, less nutritious counterparts.
- Food items that have a higher probability of causing serious allergic reactions should be avoided or discouraged.

Social/Emotional Learning

A wide range of programs are provided in schools to support the mental and social/emotional health of students. The Health and Career Education K-10 curriculum is the primary provincial program. Additional programs are provided locally through partnership with Population Health, CHIMO, Touchstone, Richmond Youth Services, the RCMP and Richmond Addiction Services. Area Counsellors in elementary and school-based counselors in secondary are available to support these programs and provide additional services to students who require them. Some examples of Social Emotional Learning programs currently used would be CARE, a safety awareness and prevention program for primary children, DARE, a skill building program to assist children deal wisely with issues such as the pressure to use drugs, and Roots of Empathy, a positive pro-social skill building program emphasizing among other things, empathy and mutual respect.

Developmental Assets

The Search Institute's Framework of Developmental Assets identifies factors that collectively contribute to a person's ability to achieve personal success. Studies reveal strong and consistent relationships between the number of assets present in young people's lives and the degree to which they develop in positive and healthful ways. Results show that the greater the numbers of Developmental Assets are experienced by young people, the more positive and successful their development.

The Richmond School District, City of Richmond, Richmond Health Services, Ministry of Children and Family Development and RCMP have formed the Richmond Asset Group in order to collaborate in using Developmental Assets as an organizer for their collective efforts to build a stronger, youth friendly community. Schools are also encouraged to use this framework, particularly when considering the complementary roles of the school, home and community in health promotion.

The Framework of Developmental Assets describes the factors that build resilience in two categories: external and internal. Young people need to develop their personal strength but they also need to be embedded in a supportive community.

The positive experiences that young people receive from the people and institutions in their lives are divided into four categories of external assets:

- *Support* - Young people need to experience support, care, and love from their families, neighbors, and many others. They need organizations and institutions that provide positive, supportive environments.
- *Empowerment* - Young people need to be valued by their community and have opportunities to contribute to others. For this to occur, they must be safe and feel secure.
- *Boundaries and Expectations* - Young people need to know what is expected of them and whether activities and behaviors are "in bounds" and "out of bounds."
- *Constructive use of Time* - Young people need constructive, enriching opportunities for growth through creative activities and youth programs

These external assets are complemented by internal assets in the following four areas:

- *Commitment to Learning* - Young people need to develop a lifelong commitment to education and learning.
- *Positive Values* - Young people need to develop strong values that guide their choices.
- *Social Competencies* - Young people need skills and competencies that equip them to make positive choices, to build relationships, and to succeed in life.
- *Positive Identity* - Young people need a strong sense of their own power, purpose, worth, and promise.

For more information about the Search Institute see <http://www.search-institute.org/>.

For more information about developmental assets see:

<http://www.search-institute.org/assets/>.

Of particular note, see Protective Consequences of Developmental Assets and Thriving Consequences of Developmental Assets.

For asset lists in several languages see:

<http://www.search-institute.org/assets/assetlists.html>.

Additional Resources

Other useful resources can be found at <http://www.bced.gov.bc.ca/health/tools.htm>. For example:

- How to Make Fun-Fast-Food Healthier for Students
- How Sweet It Is! What Schools Need to Know About Sugar and Artificial Sweeteners
- Fat and Trans Fat: What Schools Need to Know
- Caffeine and the Student Body
- Dental Health and School Foods and Beverage Sales

Other informative web sites include:

- <http://www.knowledgenetwork.ca/makingithappen>: a variety of information and resources for healthy eating at school, including information about nutrition and school policies.

- <http://www.aitc.ca/bc/snacks>: recipes for healthy lunches and snacks, student activities, field trips and links to more web sites.
- <http://www.dieticians.ca/eatracker>: track your day's food and activity choices and compare them to the guidelines laid out by Health Canada.
- <http://education2010.lldt.net/programarchive.php>: wide range of student activities related to health and nutrition under the Olympic banner – for example, see Sports Channel>Food and Performance>Project Rooms.
- **Calculating Fat and Sugar Content**: understand how to determine the percentage of fat and sugar percentage by weight in a product.
- **Determining Sugar Source**: understand the importance of an ingredient list and the type of sugars used in products.
- **Success Stories**: a few examples of what schools learned when they made the transition to providing healthy foods to their students.
- http://www.health.gov.bc.ca/pho/pdf/o_prevention.pdf An Ounce of Prevention – a Report of the Provincial Health Officer.
- <http://www.actnow.bc.ca/> helps put schools' health promotion in a community context.