

IDENTIFICATION CODE
POL14-203

TITLE: NUTRITION POLICY FOR THE PROMOTION OF A HEALTHY LIFESTYLE

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Table des matières

Preamble.....	1
Objective	1
1. Target Audience.....	1
2. Obligations of the School Board	1
3. Responsibilities	2
3.1 Responsibilities of the Commission scolaire du Littoral:.....	2
3.2 Responsibilities of the Administration of the School or Centre:	2
3.3 Responsibilities of the personnel:	2
3.4 Responsibilities of the students:.....	3
3.5 Responsibilities of the parents:	3
3.6 Responsibilities of the Centre de Santé de la Basse-Côte-Nord:.....	3
4. Applying and updating the Policy	3
5. Nutrition-related recommenda-tions.....	3
6. Particular attention paid to food allergies.....	4
7. Sale of products	4
8. Childcare and Nutrition Services for Primary School Students	4
9. Lunchboxes and Snacks brought from Home.....	4
APPENDIX 1	5

Preamble

The present policy lies within the scope of the *Governmental Action Plan for the Promotion of a Healthy Lifestyle and for the Prevention of Weight-related Problems*, launched October, 2006, and spread out over 6 years (2006-2012). The Minister of Health, Honourable Minister Philippe Couillard, stated at the time: *"The increase in cases of diabetes and its emergence in a growing number of children, as well as increasingly widespread obesity within the general population, serve as indicators for us to move promptly to counteract problems associated with poor diet and sedentary lifestyles."*

It is well known that serious health problems, such as coronary disease and diabetes, can be directly attributable to, or closely related to poor diet. Moreover, malnutrition often causes dental health disorders and digestive tract diseases. In the school context, this can impact negatively on a student's development, given that poor eating habits can harm that student's education.

Objective

The objective of the Policy is to support knowledge acquisition and healthy eating practices among students in order to improve their well-being and quality of life both within the educational milieu as well as outside of the school.

1. Target Audience

Considering that good nutrition practices are formed right from the cradle, parents are the first to instill healthy eating habits in their child.

Once school begins, the young child is willing to discover and acquire new knowledge and learn new ways to achieve. The primary school must thus develop the means to support acquisition of basic knowledge on nutrition and to promote the adoption of healthy eating practices.

Adolescence is a favorable time to interest teenagers in prevention activities, because during this period young people show a marked increase in assuming responsibility for their lives and so are more likely to make decisions that have long-term effects.

Finally, adults, whether in training or at work, must be encouraged and supported in their choices in order to maintain healthy dietary practices.

2. Obligations of the School Board

Educational intervention related to nutrition for children, teenagers and adults in training initially aims at developing the capacity to make healthy choices, according to the needs of each of these groups.

- Ensure that study programs, dealing with health and nutrition, are implemented according to the requirements of the *Ministère de l'Éducation, du Loisir et du Sport*.

- Urge young people to eat three nutritionally-balanced meals each day.
- Encourage youth to eat healthy food when it's time for a snack.
- Apply the recommendations of *Canada's Food Guide* and the objectives of *Quebec's Policy on Nutrition*, namely, to exert control over:
 - meals and snacks offered by childcare services;
 - food choices offered during festivals, events and other extra-curricular activities.

3. Responsibilities

As part of its mission, the School Board supports the setting up of 'Healthy School' committees and must define the responsibilities of those involved in education regarding nutrition. Those responsible include the following:

- *Commission scolaire du Littoral* administrators
- Administration of the School or Centre
- Personnel
- Students
- Intervenors of the *Centre de Santé de la Basse-Côte-Nord*

3.1 Responsibilities of the Commission scolaire du Littoral:

- Ensure that at school mealtimes, nutrition principles set out in *Canada's Food Guide* and *Quebec's Policy on Nutrition* are respected.
- Ensure that personnel, students and parents are fully informed of the School Board's Nutrition Policy.
- Collaborate with healthcare organizations to promote good nutrition among the general public.

3.2 Responsibilities of the Administration of the School or Centre:

- Take care to apply the School Board's Nutrition Policy within establishments under its jurisdiction.
- Make sure that teaching and supervisory staff receive the training necessary to apply study programs related to nutrition.
- Develop mechanisms so that personnel, students and parents are implicated in successfully applying the Nutrition Policy.

3.3 Responsibilities of the personnel:

- Integrate the principles of the Nutrition Policy as part of their own eating habits so that they serve as role models and practical examples to their students.

- Ensure that Nutrition Policy directives are respected at recess and lunchtimes and during extra-curricular activities.
- Collaborate with other educational partners when applying the Policy.

3.4 Responsibilities of the students:

- Consider 'learning about nutrition' as an integral part of their education in general.
- Choose nutritive food at meal-times, for snacks and during extra-curricular activities.
- Collaborate with teachers and healthcare providers to promote good nutrition.
- Raise awareness among family members about the benefits of a balanced diet.

3.5 Responsibilities of the parents:

- Encourage their child to choose healthy foods at mealtimes and when snacking.
- Collaborate with teachers and healthcare providers to apply the Nutrition Policy.

3.6 Responsibilities of the Centre de Santé de la Basse-Côte-Nord:

- Respect and promote the School Board's Nutrition Policy.
- Collaborate with educators to apply the Nutrition Policy and as resource persons in the health and nutrition field.

4. Applying and updating the Policy

In order to validate the statements of the Policy, each school must work out its own 'Healthy School' Action Plan to meet the requirements and philosophy of the School Board's Nutrition Policy.

The School Board will ensure update evaluations of the Policy, if deemed necessary.

5. Nutrition-related recommendations

In accordance with the objective of the Policy, the School Board recommends a balanced diet - and one in which certain food categories have no place, namely:

- **Foods high in fat** (donuts, cream puffs, chips, fish sticks and chicken nuggets fried or pre-fried...)
- **Foods with high concentrations of sugar** (all types of candies, pastries rich in fat and sugar, all varieties of chocolate bars, commercially-made cookies: marshmallow

creams, chocolate-covered, etc., energy drinks, sodas, sugar-coated cereals, chocolate- or sugar-coated peanuts or other nuts, chewing gum, etc....)

- **Foods with high salt content** (salted nuts, pretzels, ...)

6. Particular attention paid to food allergies

It is mandatory to identify all foodstuffs (sold or distributed) containing peanuts or nuts or any trace thereof (almonds, Brazil nuts, cashews, hazel nuts or filberts, macadamia nuts, pecans, pine nuts, pistachios and walnuts).

Moreover, it is also important to inform those being served that certain products contain one or more of the following potential allergens: sesame seeds, milk, eggs, fish, shellfish and mollusks, soya, wheat and corn.

7. Sale of products

In accordance with the Policy, fundraising activities authorized by the school and its consulting partners cannot promote the sale of such food as defined in #5 above (chocolate, barley sugar, etc.). This Policy applies equally to Point-of-Sale counters and vending machines – whether such fundraising occurs inside or away from the school, namely:

- extra-curricular activities (like volleyball tournaments or others)
- sports and/or sociocultural activities (related to the hiring out of gyms, or auditoriums)
- student activities (carnivals, student trips, 'green' days, 'white' days...)

8. Childcare and Nutrition Services for Primary School Students

Considering the young age of attendees and the possibility of more easily exerting control over the types of food they eat (recess and lunchtime meals at school or under childcare supervision) the principles of this Policy and the prohibitions listed in #5 above apply, as far as possible, to all primary school students. This applies whether at school or at an after-school childcare centre or during particular out-of-school activities.

9. Lunchboxes and Snacks brought from Home

For meals brought from the student's home house, awareness can be raised among parents, specifically by communicating with them about this current Nutrition Policy.

APPENDIX 1

LIFESTYLE - NUTRITION

Educational activities for youth

- ± Implement educational activities ba-sed on *Canada's Food Guide*
- ± Rollout educational activities for each year of each cycle
- ± Develop educational activities which actively engage students:
 - Primary: handling, preparing and tasting food
 - Secondary: self-evaluation of eating habits
- ± Choose educational activities which present opportunities to try out basic competencies
 - Set up scenarios to support healthy food choices (to develop critical thought, to make decisions and to solve problems)
 - Discuss how peers influence each other when it comes to food choices (how to negotiate selections, knowing how to influence choices)...

Supporting parents

- ± Keep parents informed about the content of educational activities in order to create a focused message.
- ± At the Primary level, implicate parents by offering occasions to share with their child that involve healthier lifestyle choices (e.g. maintaining a community garden, cooking together...)

Policy – regulations – standards or other actions within the educational milieu

- ± Implement a Nutrition Policy which encompasses and supports the following:
 - Offer healthy food (vending machines, caterers, competitive prices, snacks).
 - Use common sense when ordering (buy citrus rather than chocolate).
 - Promote healthy eating habits and offer healthy food choices within the school.
 - Develop educational activities related to nutrition.
 - Arrange places (control over noise, equipment, climate) and lunchtime hours so that eating a meal is always a pleasant experience.
- ± Promote an environment that is judgment-free regarding body type differences:
 - Involve the students;
 - Subscribe to a code of conduct.

Prevention services

- ± Offer support or referral services to those students with food disorders.

A true partnership - school – family – community

- ± Create connections with community resources that can offer support to those families living through difficulties, e.g. collective meals, co-ops, community gardens, free breakfast.

Feasibility (workable conditions)

- ± Training of relevant personnel

Source: Quebec National Health Program