



October 2008

The Simcoe County District School Board produces this regular e-bulletin to help parents support children on their journey of lifelong learning. We know positive connections between home and school support student achievement. In each edition you'll find practical tips and strategies to help your child achieve success in those important years of learning from Kindergarten to Grade 12.

Bringing School Home is available through the Simcoe County District School Board website (www.scdsb.on.ca). As well, parents, guardians and other interested members of our school communities may subscribe through our website and have the bulletin e-mailed directly to their e-mail accounts (readers may also unsubscribe at any time). Please send your comments and feedback to: webadmin@scdsb.on.ca.

Questions of the month:

Offering Healthy Choices and Physical Activity for Busy Families

Offering Healthy Choices

The provincial government passed the *Healthy Food for Healthy Schools Act* in April 2008 to help provide healthier food options in schools. In compliance with the Act, foods and beverages or ingredients used in preparing foods and beverages that are sold in schools must meet specific guidelines with respect to trans fats. This important step is helping to ensure that our school environments support healthy lifestyles for all students and staff.

Why is it important for schools to have healthy food choices?

As parents and educators, we know that children need nutritious food to protect their health and to help them learn and achieve their full potential. Unfortunately, research tells us that many children are lacking the healthy foods they need for their optimal growth and development.

According to the Ministry of Health Promotion, healthy eating has been linked to improved school attendance, punctuality and academic success. Health experts note that children who are not getting enough to eat or who are eating too much unhealthy food may have trouble with learning

and positive behaviours.

Do you have tips for packing healthy lunches and snacks?

Involve children in grocery shopping and making lunches. Even little ones can help portion snacks or assemble sandwiches, and everyone will be more likely to enjoy meals they helped prepare.

- Round up your family's lunch bags, thermoses, napkins and supplies and put them all in one cupboard. Having everything in one place can help save time in the long run.
- Try packing lunches the night before or first thing in the morning, when you're less rushed.
- Be sure to include ice packs or insulated thermoses as appropriate to ensure food safety.
- Download your copy of [Canada's Food Guide](#). This [website](#) also allows you to personalize Guides for each family member.

Healthy Lunch Ideas

Healthy food need not be expensive or time-consuming. Here are some low-cost, quick and easy ideas for packed lunches:

- Roll leftover meat, grated veggies and lower-fat condiments and cheeses in a flour tortilla.
- Create "mini pizzas" with whole wheat pita breads, sauce, cheese and vegetable toppings.
- Heat last night's pasta, chili or soup and pour into a wide mouth thermos.
- Fill pre-portioned containers with foods from each of the four food groups. Try leftover roast chicken, tuna salad or a hard-boiled egg; cubed cheese, yogurt, or milk-based pudding; orange wedges, berries, baby carrots, or cucumber spears; bread sticks, whole-grain crackers or mini bagels. The possibilities are limited only by your family's preferences and imagination!
- Make the ordinary extraordinary for younger children by cutting sandwiches into fun shapes or including an unexpected flavour.

Nutritious Snack Ideas

- **Munchie Mix:** Combine raisins, your favourite dried fruit and nut-free granola or dry cereal for a quick snack.
- **Veggies and Dip:** Pack colourful veggies with a lower-fat salad dressing or hummus "dip" in a reusable container.
- **Mini rice cakes:** Spread with light cream cheese and top with sliced fruit and cinnamon.
- **Fruit Kabobs:** Thread chunks of fruit and cheese on bamboo skewers (or omit the cheese and pack a yogurt dip).
- **Cheese and crackers:** Include a side of cherry tomatoes, grapes or pickles to add

interest.

- **'Ants' on a Log:** Try celery spread with light cream cheese and sprinkled with raisins or dried cranberries.
- **Popcorn:** Make it special by seasoning leftover popcorn with a spice mix.
- **Frozen grapes:** Grapes taste like dessert when frozen, and are delicious even after they've thawed.

For drinks, try filling reusable containers with water, milk or 100% fruit juice. Freezing the containers keeps the beverage cool and also gives you an ice pack.

Don't forget to include the occasional treat! Pretzels, animal crackers and graham wafers are all good options that are inexpensive when purchased in bulk. Younger children also appreciate non-food surprises such as notes, jokes, comics, stickers and fancy drinking straws.

A REMINDER ABOUT PEANUTS AND ALLERGIES: SABRINA'S LAW

An Act to Protect Anaphylactic Pupils: Sabrina's Law came into effect on January 1, 2006. This law requires all school boards to have policies and procedures which address anaphylaxis in schools. "Anaphylaxis" refers to a severe allergic reaction which, if not treated, can be fatal. Since peanuts are a common trigger for people prone to anaphylactic reactions, we ask that students do not bring peanut butter or products with peanuts listed in the ingredients onto school property. Please call your child's school if you require more information or visit the [SCDSB web page](#).

Physical Activities for Busy Families

Our family would like to be more physically active. Can you suggest some fun activities?

Absolutely! Here are a few ideas:

- Teach your children a game you played as a child (e.g. hopscotch, skipping, street hockey).
- Go on a nature hike through your neighbourhood or a nearby park and enjoy the autumn leaves!
- Try a new activity at your local recreation centre. Many facilities offer aerobics classes, swimming lessons, ice skating, yoga sessions or even rock climbing lessons.
- If your school is within walking distance and your schedule permits, start a "walking school bus" with other families in the neighbourhood. Your group can walk together to and from school.
- Spend an afternoon together raking leaves (but be sure to have some fun jumping in the leaf piles!)
- Head to the nearest outdoor basketball court or baseball field and challenge a neighbouring family to a game.
- Make an after-dinner stroll a new family tradition. This can be especially enjoyable close

to the holidays when people starting turning on their festive lights.

- Pledge to spend one day a week being active as a family. Each week, let a different family member decide on the activity.

This month's featured web pages

We invite you to visit www.scdsb.on.ca often for news, facts, school information, Board highlights and hundreds of other pages about Simcoe County's public education system. This month we are featuring our [2008-2009 School Year Calendars](#), which contain valuable information about professional activity (PA) days and school holidays.

Our Internet surfing this month leads to two health-related resources: the provincial government's [Eat Right website](#) and the [Simcoe Muskoka District Health Unit's website](#).

Next Issue

The next issue of *Bringing School Home* will feature 'Parent Involvement in Education.'

Quote of the month

"A man too busy to take care of his health is like a mechanic too busy to take care of his tools." ~ Spanish Proverb

The Simcoe County District School Board is deeply committed to ensuring all learners have the opportunity to realize their dreams within a vibrant and successful public education system. We are very proud of our 50,000 students who are learning and achieving in our 107 schools and seven adult learning centres throughout our urban and rural communities. Working with school communities, our dedicated and skilled staff members provide quality programs to help students develop lifelong learning skills in safe, caring environments. Our schools are located in the Huronia and Georgian Bay regions of south-central Ontario.

For more information visit our web site at www.scdsb.on.ca



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District School Board