

Parent eBulletin – *Bringing School Home*
October 2011 edition



Simcoe County
District School Board



Question of the Month: How can I encourage healthy eating habits in my child?

All parents know that good food is essential for good health, and that good health is the foundation for children’s growth and development, learning and ongoing success in school and at home. Having healthy foods available for students can be the boost they need to keep their attention focused and their minds alert. However, busy schedules can make buying healthy foods and organizing nutritious meals difficult – but with a bit of planning, it IS possible.

Here are some tips for healthy eating at home and school:

- When you bring home your groceries, take the time to wash and chop your vegetables and fruit into school sized snacks. Place in reusable containers so they can be ready when you need them.
- Work with your children to come up with a weekly lunch plan. Look at the four food groups in [Canada’s Food Guide](#) and ask your children to name a few items from each food group that they’d like to take to school. Aim to have three of the four food groups included in each lunch.
- Involve children in grocery shopping and making lunches. Even little ones can help portion snacks, assemble sandwiches, and pack lunch bags - 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.



- [These tips](#) from the Simcoe Muskoka District Health Unit can help in choosing appropriate lunch and snack items.
- Get involved! Volunteer to participate on your school's healthy school committee, research healthier fundraising activities, and most importantly, model healthy behaviour. If your child sees you eating healthy food, he or she is likely to do the same.

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. For more tips on packing peanut-free lunches and snacks, visit [Eat Right Ontario's website](#).

How does the province's new food and beverage policy affect schools?

To help students build healthy eating into their school days, the Ontario Ministry of Education introduced a [policy](#) requiring healthier food and beverage choices to be sold in all schools, effective September 1, 2011. This policy offers schools, families, and communities an outline for everyday healthy eating.

Three basic categories explain what and how much food can be sold on school property and these categories apply to school cafeterias, vending machines, lunch programs and tuck shops:

- **SELL MOST** – At least 80% of the food and drink sold in schools must be high in healthy nutrients and low in fat, sugar or salt.
- **SELL LESS** – Food and drink with slightly more salt, fat or sugar can make up no more than 20% of what is sold
- **NOT PERMITTED** – Any food or beverage with few nutrients, tending to be high in fat, sugar or salt can not be sold

The policy does not apply to the foods students bring from home or buy while off of school property. Schools can also have up to 10 'special event' days when they can offer a wider variety of foods. Visit the Ministry's [School Food & Beverage Policy website](#) for further details, resources, and tools.

In the SCDSB, vendors, school councils, principals and teachers have worked together over the past year to prepare, introduce and implement this new food and beverage policy in all schools. SCDSB has also worked with community food providers across Simcoe County to create a 'Vendors of Record' list to support schools and school councils with determining which food(s) and beverages comply with the new Ministry of Education Policy. Vendors on this list meet all food and beverage guidelines, and foods and beverages on this list can be ordered from these Vendors of Record for school lunch programs and other school-related events.



This new initiative is part of a broader effort to develop healthier learning environments and improve student achievement since research has shown that children who eat a healthy diet are more ready to learn and more likely to be successful in school. The policy also presents many opportunities for students to recognize real life applications of the healthy eating and living curriculum they are learning in schools.

How can I encourage active living in our family?

Active living will be covered in a future issue of *Bringing School Home*, but, in the meantime, here are a few tips to get active with your family:

- 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 your 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 start 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.



Sources



Simcoe Muskoka District Health Unit: www.simcoemuskokahealth.org

Ontario Ministry of Education – Healthy Schools:
<http://www.edu.gov.on.ca/eng/parents/healthyschools.html>

Eat Right Ontario – www.eatrightontario.ca

Links

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. Some relevant healthy living links on the SCDSB public website are as follows:

Secondary School Athletics

This page features secondary athletics schedules, results and information that is updated daily. The Simcoe County Athletic Association (SCAA) provides opportunities for our secondary students, as future leaders, through athletics. Visit the webpage at: <http://scdsb.on.ca/student-street/secondary-athletics/>.

Healthy Living

Information on the food and beverage policy, active living and other health-related topics can be found on this page (<http://scdsb.on.ca/parents-corner/safe-schools/healthy-living/>) of the SCDSB's website. There is also information on the Simcoe Muskoka District Health Unit's 'Healthy Smiles Ontario' program, which is a no-cost dental program for eligible children and youth ages 17 years and under.

Here are some other helpful internet resources for healthy eating and active living:

EatRight Ontario

<http://www.eatrightontario.ca/en/SchoolHealth.aspx>

Canada's Food Guide

<http://www.hc-sc.gc.ca/fn-an/food-guide-aliment/index-eng.php>

Ministry of Education – Healthy Schools: Information for Parents

<http://www.edu.gov.on.ca/eng/healthyschools/tipsParents.html>

Ministry of Health Promotion & Sport – Physical Activity

<http://www.mhp.gov.on.ca/en/active-living/physical-activity.asp>

Simcoe Muskoka District Health Unit – Links for Packing Healthy Lunches

<http://www.simcoemuskokahealth.org/Topics/HealthyEating/ResourcesandPrograms/AtSchool/PackingHealthyLunches.aspx>

Next Issue

The next issue of *Bringing School Home* will feature information on parental involvement in education.

Quote of the Month

"A healthy mind depends on a healthy body. Students who eat right are better prepared to achieve in the classroom."

~ Margaret Best, Ontario Minister of Health Promotion and Sport

About the SCDSB

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 more than 100 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.