

Promoting Healthy Eating in a School Setting

Schools play a key role in shaping children's eating attitudes and behaviours. Teachers and other school staff are role models and can have a lasting influence on students. Providing children with positive food experiences promotes physical and mental health through improved:

- ✓ thinking and learning
- ✓ attention and focus
- ✓ body image and self esteem
- ✓ food choices, including cultural connections
- ✓ emotional regulation and self-control
- ✓ problem solving and memory
- ✓ school connectedness
- ✓ relationship with food

Apply Canada's food guide and support positive food experiences for students at school by exploring [VCH Supporting Healthy Eating at School](#) and the [Teach Food First BC Toolkit](#).

Examples include:

- ✓ **Eat a variety of foods** → Provide opportunities for students to try new foods
- ✓ **Mindful eating** → Allow enough time for lunch and snack; connect lunch to curriculum
- ✓ **Cook more often** → Plan food preparation at school
- ✓ **Enjoy your food** → Celebrate individual food choices, including culture and tradition
- ✓ **Eat meals with others** → Provide opportunities for students to share food with cultural and community connections
- ✓ **Be aware of food marketing** → Include media and food literacy activities



On the next page are more examples of ways to support a healthy eating environment, reinforcing key concepts taught through the curriculum, integrated with policies and ideas to extend student learning and engage community partners.

Ideas to Support Healthy Eating at School using a Comprehensive School Health Approach

School Policies

Consider:

- Applying the [healthy eating at school division of responsibility](#) with specific jobs for caregivers, staff, and students
- A “Play First” lunch, which can lead to more relaxed, focused eating
- Adequate time to eat lunch
- [Guidelines for Food and Beverage Sales in BC Schools](#)
- Alternatives to food rewards to encourage positive behaviour, e.g. instead of offering candy, offer extra free time.

Physical & Social Environments

Provide:

- A healthy social environment, [inclusive of diverse body types](#)
- Snacks and meals that meet cultural needs and fit the guidelines.
- Opportunities for water with refillable water bottles, water fountains
- Connectedness and mental wellness opportunities with pleasant eating areas and school gardens
- Environments that support [positive body image](#) and that focus on health, not weight.

Community Partnerships

Build partnerships and engage with:

- Indigenous education team
- Parent Advisory Councils (PAC)
- Food committees (students, parents, school staff)
- Public health
- Non-profit societies (e.g., Edible Garden Project, Fresh Roots, PHABC)
- Food vendors

Teaching & Learning

Use cross-curricular, food exploration:

- Link inquiry to students’ cultural connections, indigenous plants, foods, and knowledge
- Create an [outdoor classroom](#)
- Explore [Farm to School](#) to embed local food systems into the school community
- Integrate food into teaching and lesson plans, e.g. [BC School Fruit and Vegetable](#) or [+ Milk](#), and the [Teach Food First BC toolkit](#)
- Engage youth in exploring [media literacy](#) and food waste reduction



VCH SUPPORT

- ✓ We can provide food and nutrition consultation and workshops to educators; work with schools to plan food literacy initiatives; provide a review of your new food programs from a food safety lens; and support staff, parents, or youth on food-related committees.
- ✓ We can facilitate linkages with local community partners.
- ✓ We support in interpreting population health data, such as [McCreary Adolescent Health Survey](#) and [MDI data](#).