



Eat well, Learn well

Information for Educators

Many children are arriving at school hungry or undernourished and it has a significant impact on their cognitive, physical, and emotional abilities. Many children, who do not necessarily experience hunger or food insecurity, are undernourished because their diets are high in calories but low in nutrients. A number of children are NOT getting adequate nutrients to properly feed their bodies and their minds.

As leaders in the school community, teachers play an important role in promoting the importance of healthy eating and in creating a classroom and school environment that encourages good nutrition and a healthy lifestyle. Since students consume one third or more of their nutrition at school, schools can have a considerable impact on children's eating habits.



We're about good food!

Since 1989, CHEP Good Food Inc. has partnered with schools and parent/community groups to offer nutritious meals and snacks in many schools throughout Saskatoon. CHEP's approach to food insecurity issues has been one of community development. Together we have celebrated many accomplishments in increasing food security and in supporting healthy, independent families in our communities. Schools are fundamental in creating a good food environment for children and CHEP continues to work with schools and communities to assist in providing good food for everyone! CHEP provides support for school nutrition programs, pre-k nutrition, offers Fresh Food Buffets, a Good Food Box Program and much more.

“Children watch and copy adults and look to them to learn proper behavior...It will be harder for children to establish healthy habits if you are giving mixed messages. Lead by example and show children healthy habits.” Public Health Nutritionists of Saskatchewan

The research says...

The Breakfast for Learning *Report Card on Nutrition for School Children (2007)* found that:

- 33% of Saskatchewan children do not consume enough vegetables and fruits
- Only 41% of Saskatchewan children consume the recommended number of serving of grain products
- Most children in Saskatchewan are not consuming enough milk and alternatives products daily
- About one third of Saskatchewan children are consuming one or more soft drinks daily and 43% are consuming 2 or more servings of fruit juice daily

<http://breakfastforlearning.ca/english/resources/pop/Report%20Card%20-%20ENGLISH.pdf>

Educators have long known that nutrition influences school performance. According to recent studies:

- Behavioral, emotional and academic problems are more prevalent among hungry children
- Hungry children are more likely to be hyperactive, absent and late
- Hungry children have lower math scores
- Children who skip breakfast are less able to distinguish among similar images, show increased errors, and have slower memory recall

Nutrition for Learning. Recent scientific research on the link between children's nutrition and academic performance. *Child Nutrition Policy Brief*. Food Research Action Center (FRAC). <http://www.frac.org/pdf/cnnl.pdf>

Some facts from the Public Health Nutritionists of Saskatchewan:

- Children who do not consume an adequate diet are at risk for developing chronic diseases such as type 2 diabetes, heart disease and cancer
- Children are getting, on average, one third of their daily energy intake from salty snacks, pop, and candy and not enough of the nutrients needed for disease prevention.
- Rates of overweight and obesity have nearly tripled over the past 30 years

What are the classroom benefits to having a school nutrition program?

The benefits of good nutrition for students go far beyond having healthy bodies. Children who consume adequate nutrients and regular, balanced meals:

- Are more attentive in class
- Have better attendance, behavior and mood
- Have fewer discipline problems
- Participate more actively in education experiences, which benefits all students and the entire school community.
- Develop lifelong, healthy eating habits

What can you do to promote good nutrition?

- ◆ Offer school nutrition programs and activities such as:
 - Breakfast and lunch programs offered in a non-stigmatizing way
 - Toast and bagel stations
 - Universal snacks in the classrooms
 - Fresh Food Buffets
 - After school cooking programs
 - Healthy fundraisers
- ◆ Create a classroom environment that promotes healthy eating habits
- ◆ Avoiding using food as rewards (such as candy, cakes, etc)
- ◆ Reinforce what is being taught by modeling healthy food habits
- ◆ Develop a comprehensive scope and sequence for nutrition education
- ◆ Serve healthy snacks at class parties and school events
- ◆ Give students adequate time to eat. Allow 30 minutes if possible.

"It is not enough that we teach healthy lifestyle choices in the classroom. Schools must ensure that nutrition messaging and choices throughout the facility support the formal curriculum." - Berlinic (2007). Food For Thought School Nutrition Policy, Saskatchewan School Boards Association Research Report

Frequent comments about nutrition in the classroom...

- "These foods are being offered as a treat."
- "It is up to the students to make healthy choices."
- "It is up to parents to teach their children to make healthy choices."
- "Students will not buy or eat nutritious foods."
- "These foods won't harm them."

The response....

"Treats" have become a regular part of diets. When unhealthy foods are used as treats or rewards, it makes them more desirable. Marketing, peer pressure and a lack of healthy options makes it difficult for children to make healthy choices. Children spend much of their day at school and schools need to be offering healthy choices and modeling healthy behaviors. Children WILL eat healthy food options when they are not competing with unhealthy foods. The majority of Canadian children do not eat a nutritionally balanced or adequate diet and their health is being negatively affected.

Adapted from: The Case for Healthy Foods, developed by the Public Health Nutritionists of Saskatchewan

Where to look for information or resources...

- **Nutrition Positive**—if your school is a Nutrition Positive school you will have a NP Manual full of information and ideas. You can also access the manual online at www.chep.org Click on Nutrition Positive
- **CHEP Good Food Inc**—Children's Nutrition Programs 384-7041—support for school meal and snack programs and nutrition education.
- **Saskatchewan School Boards Association**—Research Reports: *Nutrition Guidelines for Schools 2004* and *Food For Thought: School Nutrition Policy 2007* available at www.saskschoolboards.ca
- **Saskatoon Health Region**—K-12 Nutrition Education materials and kits are available to borrow. Call Public Health Services at 655-4600
- **Breakfast for Learning** website - www.breakfastforlearning.ca
- **Food Research & Action Center** website - www.frac.org