Public Schools Branch

OPERATIONAL POLICY

SCHOOL FOOD ENVIRONMENT POLICY	
Policy Section **School and Workplace Health and Safety**	*Policy Number* **602**
Pages **4**	*Approved Date* **September 10, 2026**
Reviewed Date	*Effective Date* **September 10, 2026**
Replaces: **PSB Operational Policy 602 – Nutrition in Schools, October 18, 2016**	

1.0 BACKGROUND

1.1 Schools are key settings in which to promote healthy eating and apply curriculum outcomes related to food, nutrition, and healthy choices. Creating a healthy food environment that increases access to nutritious choices and decreases access to highly processed food has lasting health and academic benefits.

2.0 GOALS

2.1 Create and sustain a healthy school food environment for students and staff.
2.2 Provide equitable access to healthy food for all students.
2.3 Support student success and academic achievement.
2.4 Support students' physical, mental, and social-emotional health.
2.5 Ensure ongoing compliance with the *School Food Environment Policy*

3.0 OBJECTIVES

3.1 Increase the availability of healthy food and beverages that align with Canada's Food Guide.
3.2 Limit the availability of highly processed food and beverages that do not align with Canada's Food Guide.
3.3 Support an inclusive school food environment where every student has access to nutritious food and barriers to participation in food programs are reduced.
3.4 Promote a healthy school food environment that supports positive experiences and relationships with food.
3.5 Regularly measure, monitor, and report on whether food and beverages offered at schools comply with the *School Food Environment Policy.*

4.0 DEFINITIONS

For the purposes of this policy, the following definitions are adopted from credible sources:

4.1 *Food insecurity:* "Food insecurity refers to the limited or uncertain availability of nutritionally adequate and safe foods. It also refers to the limited or uncertain ability to acquire acceptable foods in socially acceptable ways." (Health Canada)

4.2 *Food literacy*: “Proficiency in food related skills and knowledge.” (Truman et al.)

4.3 *Healthy eating:* “Healthy eating is a pattern of eating that contributes to best possible health through positive relationships with food and diverse, balanced food choices that meet a person’s needs for nutrients and energy.” (Healthy Schools BC)

4.4 *Healthy school food environment:* “Refers not only to the nutritional value of the food served at school, but the ways in which schools create a culture of care and connection around how food is prepared, served, and eaten. It includes having safe spaces, as well as adequate time to eat and connect with friends.” (Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations)

4.5 *Highly processed food:* “Highly processed, ready-to-eat, pre-packaged foods, often high in sodium, sugar and unhealthy fats, while being low in fiber and micronutrients” (Baric et al.)

4.6 *Inclusion:* “The practice of using proactive measures to create an environment where people feel welcomed, respected and valued, and to foster a sense of belonging and engagement. This practice involves changing the environment by removing barriers so that each person has equal access to opportunities and resources and can achieve their full potential.” (Government of Canada)

5.0 APPLICATION OF THE POLICY

This policy is developed in accordance with Section 20 (2) (g) of the *Education Act*, which grants education authorities the responsibility “to establish and maintain governance and organizational structures that promote student well-being and success”.

5.1 The *School Food Environment Policy* applies to the food and beverages available, served, sold, or promoted in schools, including:

- Breakfast, lunch, and snack programs
- Cafeterias
- Canteens
- Vending machines
- School and classroom events
- Fundraisers
- Donations
- Marketing and sponsorship

5.2 The *School Food Environment Policy* does not apply to school events that occur away from school or outside of regular school hours (e.g., field trips, extracurricular activities). In these settings, schools are strongly encouraged to offer healthy options when possible.

6.0 FOOD AND BEVERAGES AT SCHOOL

6.1 All food and beverages available, served, sold, and promoted in schools will follow the *Food and Beverage Standards* unless otherwise stated.

6.2 Food brought from home for personal consumption at school does not have to follow the *Food and Beverage Standards*.

6.3 Food prepared as part of curriculum outcomes in Foods and Culinary courses does not have to follow the *Food and Beverage Standards*.

6.4 Energy drinks and energy shots are prohibited on school property.

6.5 Schools may have a limited number of exempt events where Foods to Limit are available to students, as outlined in the *Food and Beverage Standards* and the *Operational Procedures.*

7.0 ACCESS, EQUITY, AND INCLUSION

The *United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child* recognizes the right to non-discrimination, *Article 2 (non-discrimination),* and to "adequate nutritious foods", *Article 24 (right to health)*. Providing equitable access to healthy food at school helps mitigate the detrimental health and academic effects of food insecurity. When food programs are encouraged for all students, they become a social norm. This ensures that the students who need them most can fully participate without fear of stigma.

7.1 Schools will provide all students with equitable access to healthy food at school in a non-stigmatizing manner.

7.2 Schools will foster an inclusive food environment that respects the needs of all students and reduces barriers to participation in food programs and special events.

8.0 STUDENT ENGAGEMENT AND EXPERIENCE

8.1 Schools will provide a pleasant and relaxed eating environment for students.

8.2 Schools will provide students with adequate time to eat during the lunch period.

8.3 Schools and school food service providers will involve students in planning and decision-making related to food at school.

8.4 Schools will support students to develop and maintain healthy relationships with food.

The United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child. 1989. Article 3 (best interests of the child), Article 6 (life, survival and development), Article 12 (respect for the view of the child), Article 27 (adequate standard of living), and Article 29 (goals of education).

9.0 FUNDRAISERS AND DONATIONS

9.1 Schools will prioritize fundraising with experiences, healthy food, or non-food items.

9.2 The *Food and Beverage Standards* will apply to fundraisers that sell food directly to students during the school day.

9.3 Schools will communicate the *Food and Beverage Standards* to businesses and organizations that regularly donate to food programs (e.g., breakfast programs).

10.0 MARKETING AND SPONSORSHIP

10.1 Schools will not advertise or promote highly processed food and beverages, including as part of sponsorship agreements.

11.0 FOOD SAFETY

11.1 All food and beverages in schools will be purchased, handled, prepared, stored, and served using appropriate food safety practices.

11.2 Students will have time to wash their hands before eating.

12.0 ENVIRONMENTAL SUSTAINABILITY

12.1 Schools and school food service providers will use sustainable practices as much as possible.

13.0 FOOD SERVICE CONTRACTS

13.1 School food service contracts must include appropriate terms and conditions that require providers to comply with the *School Food Environment Policy* and the *Food and Beverage Standards*, unless the provider is only supplying food for exempt events.

14.0 ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES

14.1 The Department of Education and Early Years will:

- support the implementation and evaluation of the *School Food Environment Policy*;
- ensure alignment with food and nutrition curriculum; and
- support professional development.

14.2 The Education Authorities will:

- support the implementation and evaluation of the *School Food Environment Policy;*
- communicate the *School Food Environment Policy* to schools; and
- monitor and report on compliance with the *School Food Environment Policy.*

14.3 School Administrators will:

- communicate the *School Food Environment Policy* to staff, students, families and other groups as needed;
- ensure their school follows the *School Food Environment Policy;* and
- monitor and report metrics to their education authority as required.

14.4 School Staff, Volunteers, and Home and School Associations will:

- follow the *School Food Environment Policy*; and
- assist school administrators in measuring and monitoring compliance with the *School Food Environment Policy* as required.

14.5 School Food Service Providers will:

- comply with the *School Food Environment Policy;* and
- measure and monitor compliance metrics as required.

15.0 CROSS REFERENCES

15.1 Operational Procedure 602.1 - School Food Environment Procedure
15.2 Food and Beverage Standards