Public Schools Branch

OPERATIONAL PROCEDURE

SCHOOL FOOD ENVIRONMENT PROCEDURE	
Policy Section **School and Workplace Health and Safety**	*Procedure Number* **602.1**
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Replaces: **PSB Operational Procedure 602.1 – Nutrition in Schools, November 15, 2016**	

1.0 FOOD AND BEVERAGES OFFERED AT SCHOOL

Students spend a significant amount of time at school and consume a considerable portion of their daily energy and nutrient intake during the school day. Food and beverages available to students in school will align with Canada's Food Guide.

1.1 Schools will follow the Food and Beverage Standards to normalize healthy eating and make nutritious food the easy choice.

1.2 Schools will limit highly processed foods and beverages that are high in sugar, sodium and saturated fat.

2.0 EXEMPT EVENTS

Food is part of a school's culture and sense of community. Sharing food experiences provides students with opportunities for connection, learning, and social interaction. Food is also a valuable part of school traditions and celebrations. As such, schools can hold a number of exempt events that include Foods to Limit from the *Food and Beverage Standards*.

2.1 Schools can offer a maximum of 1 meal per week that serves Foods to Limit, e.g., pizza day.

2.2 School administrators can designate up to 12 celebration days per school year where Foods to Limit can be offered, e.g., holiday celebrations, school spirit days, end of year parties.

2.3 Participatory activities that are linked to curriculum outcomes and improve food literacy may include Foods to Limit as needed. Examples of these activities include students making ice cream to demonstrate endothermic reactions or students learning about Acadian culture and making traditional tourtière.

3.0 FOOD BROUGHT FROM HOME

Many factors determine what food a student brings to school, including personal preference, dietary restrictions, food availability, and cultural traditions. Students and families are encouraged to include nutritious choices that fuel learning, but it is ultimately up to each student and family to decide what food to pack from home.

3.1 The *Food and Beverage Standards* will not be used to monitor or evaluate food from home. Exception: energy drinks and energy shots cannot be brought to school from home or purchased off-site and brought to school.

3.2 Schools will discourage families from sending food from home for the whole class unless specifically requested for a classroom or school event.

4.0 ACCESS TO FOOD

4.1 Schools are encouraged to offer a free breakfast program that is available and accessible to all students.
4.2 Schools are encouraged to participate in the PEI School Milk Program.
4.3 Students will have access to a low- or no-cost healthy lunch at school through the PEI School Food Program.
4.4 Schools will make students and families aware of all the food programs available at school and how to access them.
4.5 Programs that feed students will be available and promoted to all students.
4.6 Food kept for emergency use (e.g., emergency food cupboards) does not have to follow the *Food and Beverage Standards*. Schools are encouraged to include nutritious options when possible.

5.0 EQUITY AND INCLUSION

Students come to school with diverse food-related needs. For example, students with food allergies must strictly avoid certain foods; students who are neurodivergent may require a quiet place to eat; and students from diverse cultural and religious backgrounds may have specific food traditions and/or restrictions. It is important that schools work with students and their families to respond to these needs.

5.1 To support an inclusive food environment, schools will reduce barriers to participation for students with special dietary needs. For example, schools can reduce barriers to participation by providing vegetarian and gluten-free options and by being mindful of dietary restrictions when planning special events.
5.2 Schools and school food service providers are encouraged to offer foods that reflect students' cultural identities.
5.3 Schools and school food service providers will make ingredient lists and nutrient data available upon request to students and families to allow them to make informed decisions.
5.4 Schools will support students with food allergies by following the Minister's Directive *Procedures for Dealing with Life Threatening Allergies* and the *Information Handbook on Anaphylaxis*.
5.5 Schools will support students with diabetes by following the *Guidelines for Diabetes Management in Schools*.

6.0 EATING ENVIRONMENT

Meal and snack times provide an opportunity for enjoyment and social connection. Students benefit from eating with others and socializing with their peers.

6.1 Where possible, schools should schedule a minimum of 20 minutes of seated eating time to give students adequate time to eat lunch.
6.2 Schools will not use screens for classroom management during meal and snack times for grades K-6, as outlined in the *Guidelines for Optimal Screen Time in Schools* set out by the Department of Education and Early Years.

7.0 FUNDRAISERS

Fundraisers support important initiatives, connect students to their community, and add enjoyment to the school day. However, the primary purpose of food at school is to nourish students, not raise money.

7.1 Schools may hold a limited number of exempt fundraising events that sell Foods to Limit to students during the school day, e.g., bake sales, ice cream sales, fry truck, or canteens.

7.2 The restrictions on fundraisers will be phased-in gradually to allow schools time to plan alternatives:

- Year 1: No limits on fundraisers. Schools will track the number of fundraisers that sell Foods to Limit to students during the school day and plan for change if needed.
- Year 2: Fundraisers that sell Foods to Limit to students cannot exceed 24 occurrences per school year.
- Year 3 and beyond: Fundraisers that sell Foods to Limit to students cannot exceed 12 occurrences per school year.

7.3 The *Food and Beverage Standards* do not apply to fundraisers that sell items in the community or to fundraising initiatives that occur outside of regular school hours.

8.0 STUDENT ENGAGEMENT

Involving students in planning and decision-making builds food literacy and increases connectedness to the school food environment.

8.1 Schools and school food service providers are encouraged to provide students with opportunities to contribute to the school food environment. For example, students could suggest menu items or taste-test recipes.

9.0 HEALTHY RELATIONSHIPS WITH FOOD

Schools are important settings in which students can develop and maintain healthy relationships with food. How food is used and discussed at school is as important as what food is available to students.

9.1 School staff will support students to eat according to their internal hunger and fullness cues. For example, school staff avoid praising students for eating, requiring students to eat foods in a certain order, and pressuring students to eat more or less.

9.2 School staff will use neutral, value-free language when talking about food. For example, school staff avoid terms such as “good” or “bad” food, “junk food”, or “clean eating”.

9.3 Food will not be used as a reward or incentive, or withheld as a consequence.

9.4 Food may be used as a reward or incentive only when it is part of a student’s individualized education or behaviour plan.

9.5 Students will never be asked to track or measure their personal food intake as part of curricular or extra-curricular activities. For example, students will not be given assignments that involve keeping food diaries, counting calories, comparing their intake with others’, or evaluating their intake against a standard.

10.0 DONATIONS TO BREAKFAST PROGRAMS

The *Food and Beverage Standards* apply to breakfast programs, but these programs often rely on community donations. Maintaining these relationships is crucial to program success, and as such some flexibility is warranted.

10.1 Once schools have communicated the *Food and Beverage Standards* to donors, if items that do not align are nonetheless donated, then schools may serve those items at the discretion of school administrators or their designate.

11.0 MARKETING AND SPONSORSHIP

Children and adolescents are easily influenced by marketing techniques. Exposure to marketing of highly processed food and beverages can undermine healthy eating.

11.1 Schools will not advertise or promote highly processed food and beverages. For example, brand names or logos associated with highly processed food and beverages cannot appear on vending machines, posters, educational resources, or merchandise in schools.

11.2 Sponsorship agreements will not include direct marketing of highly processed food and beverages to students. Examples of direct marketing include signage in classrooms or other learning spaces, providing coupons or discount codes, and logos on apparel or merchandise.

12.0 FOOD SAFETY

Following appropriate food safety practices is important for student safety.

12.1 Schools and school food service providers are required to comply with the *Food Premises Regulations* (30) under the *Public Health Act* set out by the Department of Health and Wellness.

12.2 School food service providers are required to hold a current food premises license.

12.3 School food programs (e.g., breakfast programs) are required to apply for a food premises license and hold a current license unless it is determined by the Department of Health and Wellness that they are exempt.

12.4 School food programs (e.g., breakfast programs) require supervision by at least one staff member or volunteer with current food safety certification from an approved training program.

12.5 Schools and school food service providers will only purchase or accept food from licensed and inspected food premises.

13.0 ENVIRONMENTAL SUSTAINABILITY

Schools and school food service providers can play an important role in promoting sustainable practices and strengthening local food systems.

13.1 Schools and school food service providers will consider waste reduction in their planning, including food waste, packaging, and single-use plastics.

13.2 Schools and school food service providers will support local food producers, providers, and businesses when possible.

14.0 COMPLIANCE MEASUREMENT

14.1 The measurement, monitoring and reporting of compliance with the *School Food Environment Policy* will be conducted throughout the school year and publicly reported by the Education Authorities on an annual basis.

15.0 APPLICABLE LEGISLATION AND GUIDELINES

The *School Food Environment Policy* and its *Operational Procedures* are aligned with the following documents:

- *Education Act. Government of Prince Edward Island. 2025.*
- *Guidelines for Diabetes Management in Schools. Public Schools Branch, Commission scolaire de langue française, and the Department of Education and Early Years, Government of Prince Edward Island. 2024.*
- *Guidelines for Optimal Screen Time in Schools. Department of Education and Early Years. Government of Prince Edward Island. 2025.*
- *Information Handbook on Anaphylaxis, sixth edition. Department of Education and Early Years and Health PEI. Government of Prince Edward Island. 2020.*
- *Minister's Directive: Procedures for Dealing with Life Threatening Allergies. Department of Education and Early Years. Government of Prince Edward Island. 2020.*
- *Public Health Act. Government of Prince Edward Island. 2023.*
- *Public Health Act Food Premises Regulations. Government of Prince Edward Island. 2024.*

16.0 CROSS REFERENCES

16.1 Operational Policy 602 - School Food Environment Policy
16.2 Food and Beverage Standards