

Healthy Refreshments for School Meetings and Events

Nutrition Tools for Schools

Making the case for healthy school meetings and events

Schools host many meetings and events, including school council meetings, staff meetings, parent-teacher interviews, 'meet the teacher' nights, family barbecues, movie nights and holiday concerts. These are all venues where a school can show its commitment to a healthy nutrition environment by serving healthy food and beverages. Attitudes and behaviours of parents and adult role models directly influence children's choices of food.¹ Therefore, school meetings and events that involve the whole school community provide an ideal opportunity for adults to role model healthy eating. Additionally, school community members who are committed to eating well and who may be trying to control blood pressure, diabetes, cholesterol or weight will also appreciate and benefit from the healthy food and beverage choices.

What are healthy school meetings and events?

Healthy school meetings and events are those that offer refreshments that emphasize foods and beverages with Maximum Nutritional Value and exclude those with Minimum Nutritional Value. Ensure that, if serving foods with Moderate Nutritional Value, they are offered with foods with Maximum Nutritional Value.



Benefits of healthy school meetings and events

Offering healthy foods and beverages at school council meetings and events:

- Recognizes the social aspect of eating
- Reinforces the classroom healthy eating education
- Provides an opportunity for positive role modelling of healthy eating by adults
- Links to the 'whole school approach' to creating a Healthy School Nutrition Environment
- Supports adults in their healthy eating behaviours
- Shows parents and the local community that the school takes the health of its students seriously

Success to share

Laurentian Public School in North Bay, Ontario offered pepperoni pizza on white crust for one of its weekly 'special food' days and for family events. The School Nutrition Action Committee wanted to offer a healthier choice but felt parental input was important prior to making the change. The school successfully introduced a new ham and cheese pizza on whole wheat crust at their fall open house for parents. Because the response was favourable the healthier pizza is now being offered on a regular basis both at the family events and for 'special food' days.

Submitted by Carolyn Froats-Emond, Public Health Dietitian, North Bay Parry Sound District Health Unit

¹Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. 1996. Guidelines for School Health Programs to Promote Lifelong Healthy Eating. Morbidity and Mortality Weekly Report, Vol. 45.

Make healthy eating an important part of school meetings and events!

Use this chart to select foods and beverages for the next school meeting or event. Remember to emphasize the Maximum Nutritional Value choices and avoid the Minimum Nutritional Value choices. Ensure that, if serving foods with Moderate Nutritional Value, they are offered with foods with Maximum Nutritional Value.

Maximum Nutritional Value	Moderate Nutritional Value	Minimum Nutritional Value
Whole wheat wrap, pitas, bagels, bread and buns	Plain white or flavoured wraps, white bread, bagels, buns or pitas	Croissants, doughnuts, Danish and other pastries
Pizza on whole wheat crust with vegetable and lean meat toppings	Pizza on white crust with vegetable and lean meat toppings	Crackers that contain more than 2 grams saturated + trans fat or more than 480 mg sodium
Fresh fruit or fruit salad	100% unsweetened fruit juice	Chewy fruit snacks
Unsweetened canned fruit or frozen fruit	Sweetened frozen or canned fruit	Processed cheese spread with more than 480 mg sodium per 30 gram serving
Fresh vegetables	Processed cheese slices (reduced fat, fat-free or made from skim milk)	Cream cheese
Lower-fat cheese - block or strings (15 - 20% MF)	Cheese – block or strings (no more than 32% MF)	Sausage-type meats, such as salami, for making wraps and sandwiches
Hummus dip	Fruit-filled bars (eg, fig)	Pepperoni pizza on white crust
Lean deli meat, eg, turkey, ham, roast beef slices for making wraps or sandwiches	Plain soda crackers and melba toast	Hot dogs and sausages
Lower-fat yogurt (2% MF or less) with added vitamin D	Plain popcorn	Fruit punch/drinks
100% whole wheat crackers, melba toast, crisp bread	Lower-fat yogurt in tubes (no more than 2.5% MF)	Sports drinks
Plain or flavoured milk (skim, 1% or 2% MF)		Pop
		Cookies

Contact a public health dietitian for more examples of foods with Maximum, Moderate and Minimum Nutritional Value.

Looking to involve others?

- Ask other parents and students to help prepare snacks for meetings or events
- Ask your student nutrition (eg, meal or snack) program volunteers to prepare one of their healthy snacks for a school council meeting or event

Does your school have a Healthy School Nutrition Environment?

A Healthy School Nutrition Environment exists when a school promotes healthy eating through words *and* actions. Students get the same message about food, nutrition and healthy eating wherever food is served – in the classroom, in the school and at home. The following nine Essential Elements¹ are recommended for a school to have a healthy nutrition environment.

Whole School Approach	Essential Elements
In the School	<p>Does your school offer healthy, reasonably priced and culturally-appropriate food choices? For example does your school have:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • healthy fundraising? • a school milk program? • a healthy tuck shop? • healthy 'special food' days? • non-food rewards in the classroom? • healthy classroom celebrations? • healthy refreshments at school meetings and events?
	Do parents, teachers and volunteers role model healthy eating and body image behaviours at school?
	Does your school have a Student Nutrition Program (eg, breakfast, snack and lunch)?
	Does your school practise safe food practices and have an allergy-safe environment?
	Are nutrition breaks at school appropriately scheduled?
	Does your school have a food and nutrition policy?
In the Classroom	Do teachers participate in professional development on nutrition?
	Do teachers have up-to-date nutrition resources to support the healthy eating expectations in the curriculum?
In Homes and In the Community	Does your school provide student, parent and community education about healthy eating?

¹ Ontario Society of Nutrition Professionals in Public Health School Nutrition Workgroup. 2004 *Call to Action: Creating a Healthy School Nutrition Environment*.

Need more information?

Public health offers *Nutrition Tools for Schools - a toolkit for elementary schools*. Whether you're a teacher, parent, school administrator or volunteer, this toolkit will lead you through a step-by-step process to creating a healthy nutrition environment in your school. *Nutrition Tools for Schools* contains a variety of resources and tools to implement the nine Essential Elements listed above. For more information about this toolkit, please contact your public health unit/department.

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