

# Appropriate Scheduling of Nutrition Breaks at School



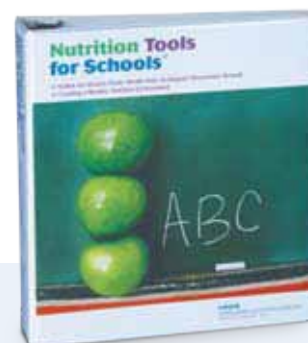
Regular eating times during the school day help children eat healthy, be active and do well at school. Some school schedules can make it difficult to eat healthy snacks. For example, a child who leaves for school at 7:30 am may not have an opportunity to eat until first recess at 11 am. If children are only allowed to eat outside during recess, it can limit food choices especially if it's cold. Often the 20 minutes needed to eat lunch can be cut short due to the time it takes to get dressed to go outside, use the bathroom, and to get their lunch. Therefore, it's important for schools to provide indoor eating opportunities during the school day.

## Apply the School Food and Beverage Policy (P/PM 150) to appropriate scheduling of nutrition breaks

The Ministry of Education's School Food and Beverage Policy (P/PM 150) mandates that all food and beverages sold in schools meet nutrition standards and states that schools should establish a healthy environment that reinforces healthy eating. Practices that support and reinforce healthy eating include the appropriate scheduling of nutrition breaks for students.



## Nutrition Tools for Schools



Nutrition Tools for Schools® is a program consisting of a Toolkit and public health support to help your school create a healthy nutrition environment.

## Success to share

At St. Paul's School we identified that students could perform better if they were well nourished. Students are encouraged to have water bottles and fruit and vegetables on their desks during instructional time. The expectation is simple: students are welcome to crunch, munch and sip as long as their teachers are not teaching a lesson. This has proven successful at our school. Students eat when they're hungry and drink when they are thirsty – both positively impacting their ability to learn. As well, parents have shared that the vegetables and fruit in their kids' lunches are being eaten up! Extra snacking during classroom time means that students do not take food out on the school yard during recess. Garbage is no longer an issue and students with anaphylactic reactions to bee stings feel safer.

*Submitted by Karen Beamish, Principal, St. Paul's School, Lakefield*

## Options for increasing student eating opportunities at school

Option	Description	Rationale
<b>Universal Breakfast and Snack Programs</b>	Breakfast and snack programs are led by volunteers and may be offered up to five days a week. (See the Student Nutrition Program Action Guide for additional information)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Provides an eating opportunity for students who have skipped breakfast</li> <li>• Increases consumption of healthy food choices</li> <li>• Provides an opportunity in a social environment that may encourage children to eat breakfast</li> <li>• Provides parents with an option for encouraging breakfast consumption</li> </ul>
<b>In-Class Snacking</b>	Guidelines to allow students to eat at specified times in class.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Allows students to eat when they are hungry and drink when they are thirsty</li> <li>• Increases consumption of healthy food choices</li> </ul>
<b>Water Promotion</b>	Water should be available in the classroom and in the school.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Provides a low-cost refreshment</li> <li>• Promotes adequate fluid intake which may reduce headaches, bladder and bowel problems and improves brain performance and concentration</li> <li>• Reduces feelings of being thirsty, tired or irritable. Where schools have improved water provision, students consume more water regularly</li> </ul>
<b>Lunch Recess Scheduling</b>	Schedule recess before eating lunch as opposed to after eating lunch.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Students eating lunch before recess may anticipate recess and not focus on eating</li> <li>• Students may not eat as much of their meal compared to students who have recess before lunch</li> </ul>
<b>Balanced School Day</b>	The Balanced School Day consists of three 100 minute blocks of instructional time, and two 40-50 minute nutrition breaks. Each nutrition break is 20 minutes for students to eat a nutritious mini-meal.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Some schools with a balanced school day note that less food is going home uneaten, children are not as hungry after school, and more healthy food choices are coming from home</li> </ul>

## Together we can make the healthy choice the easy choice!

For more information about Nutrition Tools for Schools®, P/PM 150, or healthy eating, please contact your local public health unit:

York Region Community and Health Services  
Health Connection at 1-800-361-5653  
or visit  
[www.york.ca/nutrition](http://www.york.ca/nutrition)

For information on healthy schools go to the Ministry of Education Healthy Schools website: [www.ontario.ca/healthyschools](http://www.ontario.ca/healthyschools).