STUDENT NUTRITION PROGRAMS - (Morning Meal)
Teacher FAQ

1. Why do we need a Student Nutrition program?

The TDSB, through its Nutrition Foundation Statement, recognizes the direct relationship between healthy nutrition and academic achievement of students. Research demonstrates that student nutrition programs improve learning and behavioral outcomes. According to the 2024 Canada National School Food Policy, *School Food programs can improve student behavior and increase school attendance, completion and scholastic achievement.*

Student Nutrition Programs not only address hunger issues without stigma, but they also build connections and provide opportunities for food literacy learning, skill development, and student leadership. They support student well-being, achievement, and equity in all our schools.

2. How will the food be distributed to Students?

In elementary schools, Morning Meal is served in the morning after the bell and before first recess. The food is brought to classrooms in a plastic bin with a lid, clearly marked with classroom number, number of students in the class and any allergies (alternative options offered to those with allergies). Spoons and serving gloves or tongs will be provided and staff may choose to serve primary grades. In Secondary and Middle schools, students may serve themselves and/or their peers. **Secondary schools** typically have their program set up in easy to access common areas for a grab and go delivery model before school begins and throughout the day.
Unused food can still be made accessible throughout/later in the day as appropriate. All dairy, eggs, or meat products should not be out of the fridge for over two hours. All garbage is to be put in proper disposal bins assigned by the school.

3. What food will be provided?

Morning Meal consists of 3 food groups: vegetables and/or fruit, whole grains and protein. Program volunteers and the Local Nutrition Program Committee develop menus in compliance with Toronto Public Health Safe Food Handling guidelines and follow the Toronto Public Health Nutrition Guidelines. Summary of Nutrition Guidelines: toronto.ca/wp-content/uploads/2017/11/962f-tph-SNPguideline-fs-eng-2017-09-05.pdf

4. Who participates in the program?

The Student Nutrition Program is universal, all students in the school will be offered food regardless of the ability to contribute a donation to the program. The funding criteria of universality is designed to be non-stigmatizing and supports student well-being and student success. Eating together and learning about healthy food contributes to a caring, positive classroom and school environment.

5. I'm concerned about the mess this may create in the classroom. How do I minimize this?

Engaging student volunteers is an excellent way to ensure the success of your Student Nutrition Program. Provide roles and responsibilities to promote leadership skills and get students' input on how to keep the classroom tidy. Develop rules together for the program, emphasizing community benefits and students' responsibilities for their actions (putting wrappers in the garbage, repacking bins, etc.). Set a particular time for eating when it is least disruptive for your class, e.g. during announcements or at the end of the period. Collaborate with your school's Eco Club to reduce waste.

6. What happens if the students don't like or don't eat the food?

Menus are created according to Toronto Public Health Student Nutrition Guidelines and Canada's Food Guide. The program aims to provide healthy food options for students which they will enjoy. Teachers should encourage students to try new foods. It may take several attempts; some may try it once they see their classmates enjoying it. The Student Nutrition Program Lead Volunteer will be aware of food coming back and adjust the menu as needed. Student voice is important and we encourage student surveys and feedback to better reflect the student community and help with waste management.
Great resources: ODPH School Nutrition Workgroup

7. What about allergies and dietary restrictions?

Parents/Guardians are reminded to include all student allergies and dietary restrictions in the Start of Year Consent Form for returning students or the medical section on student registration for students new to TDSB. Every classroom bin has a class list attached with student allergies identified so that volunteers and supply Teachers/staff are aware which children have allergies. If possible, appropriate alternatives will be provided to students with allergies. If there is an anaphylactic allergy in the class, we recommend not serving that item to the whole class. The Student Nutrition Program Co-ordinator must complete the Student Nutrition Safe Food Handling training and ensure the food preparation area is sanitized daily.

Every effort will be made to control the school environment to minimize the exposure of identified allergens as part of a prevention plan. For example, all schools are peanut-free. Despite these efforts to reduce the risk of exposure to zero, the Board cannot ensure an allergen-free school environment. For secondary school, students are responsible for making their own appropriate and safe food choices.

8. How can I connect the Student Nutrition Program to classroom learning?

Eating nutritious food gives students the foundation to make informed, healthy choices. In addition to Ontario's Physical and Health Education curriculum (Healthy Eating, Strand C), there are many opportunities to integrate nutrition education across subject areas and skill development. These include "kitchen" math, science, and environmental studies, the cultural significance of food, social skills, and life skills. Student can also explore issues of hunger, food marketing, food literacy, and food sovereignty. Here are some examples of online resources available with activities and lessons.

- OPHEA: Ophea.net
- Sustain Ontario: sustainontario.com/greenhouse/resource-database/?_sft_initiatives=children-youth
- Food as Science by Sustain Ontario: foodisscience.ca
- Bright Bites by Ontario Dietitians in Public Health: brightbites.ca/practical-guides/elementary
- Health Canada – resources including Nutrition labelling online course: canada.ca/en/health-canada/services/food-nutrition/healthy-eating
- Canada's Food Guide Resources for children and more: food-guide.canada.ca/en/toolkit-educators/activities-9-11/
- Coalition for Healthy School Food – Great Big Crunch: healthyschoolfood.ca/great-big-crunch

Find the Nutrition Liaison Officer for your School: Click HERE

For general inquiries: studentnutrition@tdsb.on.ca