

# Starting a School Milk Program

## Making the case for starting a school milk program

**Nutrition Tools  
for Schools**

Children today are guzzling more soft drinks, sweetened fruit-flavoured beverages, 'energy' drinks and sports drinks than ever before. These trendy beverages are low in nutrients and high in calories from added sugar. Some research suggests that consuming high amounts of soft drinks or other sugar-sweetened beverages is linked to overweight and obesity in children<sup>1,2</sup>.

As well, these nutritionally poor beverages often take the place of healthier ones, such as milk. Half of children between the ages of six and 12 years do not consume any milk products at lunch<sup>3</sup>. Milk provides many of the nutrients, such as calcium, vitamins D and A, protein that growing children need to develop strong bones. Children who don't have milk at lunch are unlikely to meet their daily calcium needs<sup>4</sup>. To prevent osteoporosis later in life, it is important that children get enough calcium and vitamin D by consuming the number of Food Guide Servings of Milk and Alternatives recommended in *Canada's Food Guide*.

## What is a school milk program?

A school milk program provides students with daily access to milk. Schools can help to encourage students to choose healthier beverages by offering lower-fat plain or flavoured milk at a reasonable price every day.

## Benefits of a school milk program

Offering a school milk program:

- Increases children's consumption of milk
- Encourages children to practise healthy eating behaviours
- Reinforces the classroom healthy eating education
- Links to the 'whole school approach' to creating a Healthy School Nutrition Environment
- Makes money for the school
- Shows parents and the local community that the school takes the health of its students seriously



# Ten steps to starting a marvellous milk program!

## Success to share

Bracebridge Muskoka Lakes Secondary School Nutrition Action Committee wanted to increase the sales of milk and milk products in their cafeteria. In February 2006, they developed a Milk Moustache campaign based on the popular magazine promotion of celebrities sporting milk moustaches to promote milk. Students and school staff became the 'Milk Moustache Celebrities.' Posters of the participants wearing their milk moustache and holding various milk products (eg, smoothies, cheese, yogurt drinks, yogurt tubes) were hung in the cafeteria and school halls and votes were cast for the best moustache. The posters also contained a milk promotional 'Did you know...?' message. The committee supported the poster campaign with morning announcements and point of purchase reminders to increase the visibility of the milk product message. The result was a huge increase in sales of milk, cheese, yogurt and yogurt beverages in the cafeteria, not only during the campaign, but until the end of the school year as well.

*Submitted by Mary Ellen Deane, Public Health Dietitian, Simcoe Muskoka District Health Unit*

### Did you know...?

**Chocolate milk provides just as much calcium and vitamin D as white milk, and contains the same amount of sugar as an equal amount of unsweetened fruit juice.**

## Ten steps to starting a marvellous milk program!

1. Survey the school community to see if they are interested in participating in a milk program.
2. Register for the Dairy Farmers of Canada (Ontario) Milk Program by calling: 1-888-730-MILK (6455) or e-mailing: [schoolmilk@milkmilk.org](mailto:schoolmilk@milkmilk.org). Dairy Farmers of Canada (Ontario) will connect you with:
  - Other schools to help you get started
  - The Five Star Milk Service. Five Star dairies provide a service that is designed to minimize your time spent on the program. They offer:
    - automatic ordering
    - fridge stocking
    - product rotation
  - Educational brochures. Their parent information brochures explain the benefits of milk for children and help parents understand the importance of milk at lunch time
  - Refrigerator financing, if required
  - Step-by-step instructions
  - A toll-free help desk

For more information about the Dairy Farmers of Canada (Ontario) Elementary School Milk Program, visit: [www.dairygoodness.ca/en/Teachers/EducationalProgramsResources/Prov\\_Ontario/ElementarySchoolMilk/ESMP.htm](http://www.dairygoodness.ca/en/Teachers/EducationalProgramsResources/Prov_Ontario/ElementarySchoolMilk/ESMP.htm).

# Ten steps to starting a marvellous milk program!

3. Obtain a fridge to keep your milk cool.

Milk should be competitively priced with local grocery stores and also with other beverages that may be for sale at your school.
4. Name a milk program coordinator, such as a school administrator, volunteer, parent or school nutrition program coordinator, who will organize the program. Sometimes high school students will help: volunteering to help qualifies for the community service credit for high school students.
5. Promote the milk program within the school community
  - Post announcements in school newsletters
  - Have students develop posters promoting the program
  - Read morning announcements
6. Place a milk order with a dairy.
7. Encourage parents to prepay for milk by the month or term. This is the best way to get milk regularly and the easiest for you to administer.
8. Set the price for milk. Make it easy for yourself by selling the milk in multiples of five cents to simplify the handling of cash or prepaid orders. Some schools offer milk at cost, while others mark up the price to help raise money for specific projects.
9. Appoint student moo-nitors to distribute the milk to classrooms, or have a designated location for milk pick-up.
10. Have fun giving out rewards to your milk drinking students. Look for fun ways to award the incentives provided by Dairy Farmers of Canada (Ontario). For example have:
  - 'Black and white' days
  - Milk moustache and moo-ing contests
  - 'Name that cow' contests
  - Milk trivia contests
  - 'Name the milk program' contests

<sup>1</sup> Pediatric Overweight: a review of the literature. 2001. Center for Weight and Health, University of California, Berkeley.

<sup>2</sup> Malik, VS. Schulze, MB. Hu, FB. Intake of sugar-sweetened beverages and weight gain: a systematic review. *American Journal of Clinical Nutrition*. 2006;84:278-88.

<sup>3</sup> Market Facts, 1998. 1997 Canadian Eating Habits.

<sup>4</sup> Johnson, RK. Panely, C. Wang, MQ. 1998. The association between noon-time beverage consumption and the diet quality of school-aged children. *Journal of Children and Nutrition Management*, 2:95.

Adapted from: What is the Elementary School Milk Program?  
[http://www.bcdairyfoundation.ca/school\\_milk\\_program/pdf/About%20the%20ESMP%20Program.pdf](http://www.bcdairyfoundation.ca/school_milk_program/pdf/About%20the%20ESMP%20Program.pdf)

Accessed September 13, 2005

# 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 Elements<sup>1</sup> 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"> <li>• healthy fundraising?</li> <li>• a school milk program?</li> <li>• a healthy tuck shop?</li> <li>• healthy 'special food' days?</li> <li>• non-food rewards in the classroom?</li> <li>• healthy classroom celebrations?</li> <li>• healthy refreshments at school meetings and events?</li> </ul>
	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 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?

<sup>1</sup> 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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