

# The Gold Standard Student Nutrition Program



Based on a combination of documented best practices, the review of international programs, input from subject matter experts, and following the Ministry of Children, Community and Social Services guidelines, the following are the seven characteristics of a “gold standard” Student Nutrition Program (SNP):

## NUTRITION



- Offers a variety of nutritious foods that meet the MCCSS Nutrition Guidelines ([Student Nutrition Program Nutrition Guidelines, 2020: Section 3: food and beverage choice tables | Ontario.ca](#))
- The snack or meal program (depending on what the school is funded for) provides 2-3 food groups and includes a serving of vegetables and/or fruit
- Offers new and different flavours, textures, and colour combinations. Encourages students to try new items. Serves seasonal and local (Ontario grown) food items when possible.

## FOOD SAFETY



- Has clean and adequate kitchen facilities and equipment in the food preparation area, food serving area, food storage area
- Uses safe food handling practices to prepare food safely. Has at least one volunteer who is trained/certified in safe food handling. Consults with CDC and local health unit for information about how to safely handle, store and prepare food.
- The school’s anaphylaxis policy is consulted and followed.

## PROGRAM PLANNING



- Engages a knowledgeable, well-trained and committed School Program Lead
- Uses environmentally friendly practices whenever possible, such as using reusable or recyclable dishes and utensils. Waste is minimized from food, packaging and disposable items.
- Determines how much time is available for children and youth to eat, providing at least 20 minutes for meals, when possible.
- Includes program budgeting, monitoring and evaluation on a regular basis. Completes and submits accurate reports on time.

## PROGRAM SUSTAINABILITY



- Operates as a financially sustainable, cost shared model. Program receives funding and donations from diverse, safe and reliable sources (eg OSNP, parental contributions, school raised funds, grants and community donors)
- Has strong partnerships between students, parents, school administration, teachers, volunteers, CDC, local community groups (businesses, religious institutions, etc.), school board level staff, and public health
- Utilizes sufficient volunteers to share the workload to avoid “volunteer burnout”

## EQUITY & INCLUSION



- Universal and non-stigmatizing. SNP Is offered to all students within a school who can benefit from the program (since schools offer a key opportunity for intervention), or in a nearby community-based environment
- All students are aware of the program. The environment encourages a sense of community and is welcoming and inclusive for all.
- Offers food choices that are inclusive of the faiths and cultures of the school community.

## ENGAGEMENT STRATEGIES



- Involves children, youth, parents and volunteers with program planning. Involves children and youth with food preparation and clean up where possible.
- Provides an eating environment that is positive and encourages pleasant conversation. Minimize distractions, such as screens.
- Emphasizes a positive relationship between program supervisors and students. Adequate supervision is provided.

## FOOD LITERACY & HEALTH PROMOTION



- Integrates food and nutrition knowledge into the school program via curriculum links and experiential learning opportunities
- Respects that the appetites of children and youth can change for a variety of reasons. Encourages students to listen to their hunger and fullness cues. If a student is full but has not finished their food, they are not pressured to eat more. Likewise, food is not withheld from a student if it's thought they have had enough.
- Avoid offering food as a reward or an incentive.