

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 MCCSS guidelines, the following are the seven characteristics of a “gold standard” Student Nutrition Program:

NUTRITION



- Offers a variety of nutritious foods that meet the MCCSS Nutrition Guidelines
- 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.