

GOING THE *healthy route* AT SCHOOL





For school boards, public and private preschools, elementary and secondary schools as well as vocational training and adult education centres

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FOREWORD



The development, health and success of young people are important challenges facing Québec society. However, since the problem of overweight and obesity has become increasingly prevalent, not only among adults but among children and adolescents as well, the Québec government recently adopted an action plan entitled *Investir pour l'avenir* [Investing in the future] to promote healthy lifestyles and prevent weight-related problems (2006-2012). The Ministère de l'Éducation, du Loisir et du Sport (MELS) wanted to contribute to this plan by publishing the Framework Policy on Healthy Eating and Active Living.

Adopting and maintaining healthy eating habits, and engaging in regular physical activity, are key to young people's personal and social development, since a healthy lifestyle and educational success go hand in hand. In fact, it has been shown that a healthy diet has a positive effect not only on young people's development and well-being, but on learning as well, and that regular physical activity promotes concentration, a factor associated with educational success. Because schools are places where knowledge is imparted and values are transmitted, it makes sense for the educational community to concern itself with the health and lifestyle of young people.

This concern translates into an official commitment by the MELS to act in concert with the education system to improve the health of young people by creating an environment conducive to healthy eating and active living. This Framework Policy outlines the orientations for the development of these lifestyle habits. We encourage school boards as well as public and private schools in both the youth and adult sectors to familiarize themselves with these orientations and to put them into practice by taking concrete steps adapted to their individual situations. In this sense, the Framework Policy will serve as a tool to facilitate initiatives in the field, where the real challenges of such a vast undertaking lie. It also presents measures to support the work of teaching institutions.

Although the MELS recognizes that many schools have already implemented several highly successful initiatives and encourages them to continue, it feels that more substantial commitments may be required in other schools. Whatever the case, the MELS expects all schools to commit gradually yet wholeheartedly to creating an environment that promotes the adoption and maintenance of healthy living habits for all Québec students. The MELS is aware that such an undertaking comprises challenges that schools may have difficulty meeting on their own.

Many obstacles can hinder efforts to promote healthy living—resistance to change or additional costs associated with change, the need to develop new expertise, increased requirements with respect to both nutrition and physical activity—all of which must be dealt with in a period of educational reform that already requires colossal efforts on the part of school staff. While the challenges are real, they are not insurmountable. The proof is that many schools have already begun, or are planning, to successfully mobilize their resources! One of the key factors to success is undoubtedly the consolidation or creation of partnerships, which provide other favourable opportunities for working together toward building community schools.

Finally, the MELS is proud to contribute to the well-being of young people by acting simultaneously on two aspects of the school environment: healthy eating and active living. Its enthusiasm is reflected in the work of all those who have devoted their time, energy and passion to developing this Framework Policy. The MELS would like to thank all of the individuals and organizations from the education community and other networks for their generous contributions. Their participation reflects a desire to take immediate action in the interests of all young people. Thanks to this partnership, the vision of healthier schools can take shape in the following pages.



INTRODUCTION

In October 2006, the Québec government launched its *Plan d'action gouvernemental de promotion des saines habitudes de vie et de prévention des problèmes reliés au poids 2006-2012, Investir pour l'avenir* [1]. In this action plan designed to promote healthy lifestyles and prevent weight-related problems, the government declared its commitment to improving the quality of life and well-being of Quebecers by enabling them to live in environments that promote the adoption and maintenance of healthy living habits. In keeping with this action plan and with two measures¹ of the 2006-2009 Youth Action Strategy [2], the Ministère de l'Éducation, du Loisir et du Sport (MELS), in conjunction with the Ministère de la Santé et des Services sociaux (MSSS) and the Ministère de l'Agriculture, des Pêcheries et de l'Alimentation du Québec (MAPAQ), is publishing the *Framework Policy on Healthy Eating and Active Living*.² This Framework Policy demonstrates the firm intention of the MELS to make Québec schools a place where students can eat better and be more active. Such an undertaking is not possible, however, without the commitment and participation of all school community stakeholders and partners, who are called upon to continue working together to ensure the future of our youth and society.

In Québec, the government's commitment to healthy living is both substantial and many-faceted, and the action plan reflects the government's strong desire to work with various ministries and their respective networks in order to improve the health and well-being of young people.

GOVERNMENT ACTION PLAN: INVESTIR POUR L'AVENIR

The government action plan to promote healthy lifestyles and prevent weight-related problems grew out of a partnership between seven ministries and three government agencies. The environments targeted by its objectives include families, daycare centres, schools, municipalities and the restaurant industry. The MELS has clearly indicated that it intends to contribute to this action plan by introducing the present Framework Policy, among other measures.

In its action plan, the government has identified five main focuses of intervention. They are: to promote and support the development of environments conducive to the adoption of healthy eating habits and a physically active lifestyle; to promote favourable social standards; to improve services for people with weight-related problems; and to promote research and the transfer of knowledge. Following consultations and initiatives coordinated by the MSSS, each ministry has determined the course of action it will pursue over the next few years. Without reviewing in depth all of the measures associated with the plan, an overview of the proposed actions can help determine the scope of the plan and identify the support that partner ministries will be able to offer the education community.

In conjunction with the MAPAQ, the MSSS and its network will provide support to health establishments, workplaces and schools that wish to implement a nutrition policy. These two ministries will also implement education programs to help teach the general public ways of preparing foods and developing basic cooking skills.

1. Eliminate junk food in schools and implement the "Healthy Schools" approach.
2. The expression *active living* refers to a lifestyle in which physical activity or sport is safely integrated into daily living, be it for recreation or transportation [3].

In addition to raising awareness among food producers, processors and distributors and encouraging them to support the nutritional objectives targeted, the MAPAQ will also develop, in collaboration with the MSSS, a basic nutrition program to train food service personnel to prepare healthy menus.

The Ministère des Affaires municipales et des Régions (MAMR), in conjunction with the MELS, will publicize agreements between schools and municipalities concerning the sharing of sports facilities. In partnership with the Ministère des Transports du Québec (MTQ), the MAMR will also offer a support program to promote active transportation in urban areas, while the MTQ, with the assistance of other ministries, will produce a technical guide on active transportation for municipalities. This guide will be designed to assist municipalities, school boards and schools in developing safe routes to school. In conjunction with the Ministère de la Famille, des Aînés et de la Condition féminine (MFACF), and with the cooperation of the MAPAQ and the MSSS, the MAMR will inform municipalities of the measures they can take to promote healthy eating.

The MFACF will also update its tools for early childhood and daycare centres, in keeping with the orientations of the action plan. Together with the MELS, the MFACF and the MSSS will provide in-service training activities to help daycare staff promote physical activity and the development of psychomotor skills among children.

One of the initiatives conducted by the MSSS, in collaboration with the Ministère de la Justice (MJ), concerns the promotion of favourable social standards by reinforcing the application and follow-up of sections of the *Consumer Protection Act* that deal with advertising aimed at children. Like other ministries, the Secrétariat à la jeunesse will publish accurate, up-to-date information on nutrition and physical activity on its Web site "Espace J."

These various ministries and the Secrétariat à la jeunesse will continue to work together in order to ensure that their efforts reach all of the groups targeted and lead to a cohesive vision of a healthy society. Complementarity of action is therefore essential, given that the education system is not alone in working with young people.

THE "HEALTHY SCHOOLS" APPROACH

The government action plan calls upon several ministries to adopt concrete measures to promote healthy living habits. The MSSS and the MELS have been working towards this goal in schools, particularly since 2003, when they signed a complementarity of services agreement between their two networks focusing on a common objective: youth development [4]. Common initiatives have been undertaken as part of this agreement, including supporting the development and implementation of a comprehensive and concerted intervention regarding health, well-being and prevention. This "Healthy Schools" approach [5] draws its inspiration from the findings of international experts such as the World Health Organization, and was designed to take into account the orientations and principles that underlie the education reform and that are reflected above all in the *Québec Education Program* [6, 7] and in complementary educational services programs [8]. The "Healthy Schools" approach is one of the measures approved in the *Québec Public Health Program 2003-2012* [9]; it is also one of the focuses of the 2005-2008 Strategic Plan of the MELS [10], the 2005-2010 MSSS Strategic Plan [11], the 2006-2009 Youth Action Strategy [2] and the government action plan *Investir pour l'avenir* [1].

The "Healthy Schools" approach is intended to help the schools and their partners increase the effectiveness of health promotion and its prevention activities, in order to ensure that more young people succeed and live healthy lives. This approach consists in integrating appropriate health promotion and prevention measures into schools' educational projects and success plans, as well as into various partners' action plans.

These measures are designed for young people, families, schools and the community. They reinforce and complement one another in order to influence the key factors affecting the educational success, health and well-being of young people: self-esteem, social skills, living habits, safe and healthy behaviours, favourable environments and prevention services. The types of action vary from one school to another, depending on the needs and priorities of each. Schools that implement the "Healthy Schools" approach can incorporate into it their draft policy on healthy eating and active living.

CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK

Like the government action plan *Investir pour l'avenir* [1], the Framework Policy on Healthy Eating and Active Living is based on a conceptual framework developed by D. A. Cohen [12] (see diagram).

According to this conceptual framework, to optimize and maintain healthy living habits, actions must simultaneously target both individuals and their environments and engage all levels of government—be they local, regional or provincial. In other words, actions must be aimed not only at young people, but at their families and schools as well. In fact, environmental factors are essential and instrumental in promoting the adoption of behaviours associated with living habits.

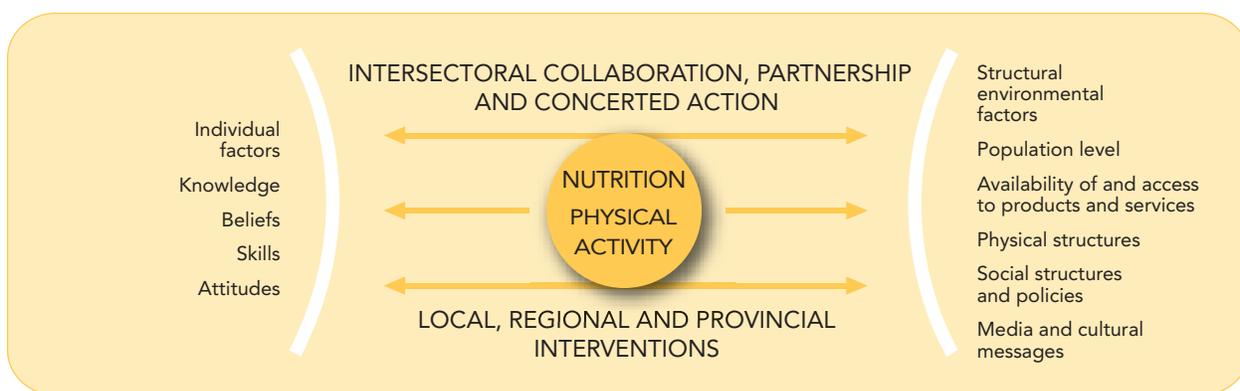
Making schools more conducive to healthy eating and active living requires the mobilization of all stakeholders around a shared plan [13, 14]. Because healthy living habits acquired at a young age are more likely to be maintained, raising awareness among preschoolers and elementary-school children is all the more important. While the family environment is largely responsible for the development of young people's living habits, the schools' role should not be underestimated, given the number of hours students spend in school, daycare or extracurricular activities. Schools must help raise awareness and provide an environment that is conducive to the adoption of a healthy lifestyle.

EDUCATIONAL FRAMEWORKS: A CONTEXT CONDUCTIVE TO HEALTHY LIVING HABITS

Educational frameworks provide the schools with the leeway they need to establish their priorities and the means to achieve their objectives. School boards' strategic plans, the educational projects and success plans of public and private schools, and adult education and vocational training centres are ideal channels for stating intentions with regard to healthy eating and active living.

In the youth sector, both the *Québec Education Program* [6, 7] and the complementary educational services programs [8] contain elements that can serve as anchor points for the implementation of this Framework Policy. These elements include the Physical Education and Health program,³ the Science and Technology program, the broad areas of learning of Health and Well-Being, Media Literacy and Environmental Awareness and Consumer Rights and Responsibilities, as well as the Promotion and Prevention program of complementary educational services. The "Healthy Schools" approach fits into these educational frameworks in that it uses a coherent, comprehensive approach that calls for concerted action and complementary resources within the community to implement promotion and prevention interventions in matters of healthy eating and active living.

DIAGRAM OF CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK



Source: Plan d'action gouvernemental de promotion des saines habitudes de vie et de prévention des problèmes reliés au poids 2006-2012, *Investir pour l'avenir* [1].

3. Since September 2006, an additional 90 minutes of teaching time, prescribed by the *Basic school regulation* for the elementary school level, has made it possible to increase the time allotted to Physical Education and Health. The recommended time is two hours per week.

In the adult sector [15], the new general education personal development programs will examine healthy living habits as they affect daily nutrition, fitness, rest and relaxation. Adult learners will thus be encouraged to take concrete steps to change or improve their lifestyles.

In vocational training [16], the development of healthy lifestyles is in keeping with one of the general goals of vocational training, namely to foster students' personal development. Most vocational training programs contain competencies or elements of competencies that deal with occupational health, while programs in the Food Services and Tourism sector focus more specifically on healthy lifestyles.

CONTENT OF THE FRAMEWORK POLICY

This Framework Policy consists of three chapters, a bibliography and seven pamphlets.

Chapter 1 describes the current situation and explains how poor eating habits and sedentary lifestyles negatively impact public health and quality of life. It summarizes the positions of international organizations on the issue, and presents several international and Canadian initiatives that have been implemented to improve the health of students in schools, including initiatives taken by the Québec government and the school network.

Chapter 2 contains the Framework Policy itself. It describes the Framework Policy's goal, objectives and target audience, as well as the principles on which it is based. It then outlines nine orientations, centred around three themes: 1) the school environment (healthy eating, active living); 2) education, promotion and communication; 3) the mobilization of partners. Through these orientations, the MELS hopes to guide the measures that schools can begin to take to improve the health and educational success of young people. Chapter 2 also specifies conditions conducive to the adoption of local policies and presents a table summarizing the various orientations.

Throughout the chapter, the Framework Policy orientations are illustrated by means of some 30 examples of school-based initiatives⁴ which show how partners are already working together on the issue. As these examples reveal, schools are able to meet the challenges set by the Framework Policy.

Chapter 3 focuses on policy implementation, follow-up and evaluation. It contains some of the ministerial and interministerial measures that will support the Framework Policy's implementation, and outlines some of the mechanisms that will be put in place to translate the Framework Policy into concrete action. Priority actions have therefore been established, along with outcome indicators, targets and a timetable. Guidelines for evaluating the Framework Policy are also provided.

Seven pamphlets complete the document. Designed as concrete tools to help schools implement the orientations these pamphlets can be used by school boards and school administrators, cafeteria and catering personnel, as well as by students and parents. The themes covered include:

PAMPHLET

- 1 Healthy School Menus
- 2 Healthy Vending Machines
- 3 Healthy Snacks
- 4 Healthy Lunch Boxes
- 5 Schoolyard Activities and Layouts in Elementary Schools
- 6 Schoolyard Activities and Layouts in Secondary Schools
- 7 Extracurricular Physical Activities in Elementary and Secondary Schools

4. The examples provided serve to illustrate the orientations and are not intended to summarize a school's project.



Chapter 1 **CURRENT SITUATION**

Over the past few decades, the prevalence of obesity has increased at an alarming rate, not only in adults, but in children and adolescents as well. Globally, an estimated 22 million children under five and 10% of children aged 5 to 17 are overweight or obese [17]. The picture that emerges from the findings of the 2004 Canadian Community Health Survey, presented by Statistics Canada in August 2006 [18], is far from reassuring. Over the past 25 years, the prevalence of obesity in Canadian children and adolescents has nearly tripled, going from 3% to 8%. And while obesity was virtually nonexistent in children aged 2 to 11 in 1978, today 6% of 2- to 5-year-olds and 8% of 6- to 11-year-olds are considered obese [18]. Although the combined overweight/obesity rate in Québec children and adolescents (23%) is below the national level (26%), the situation is nonetheless alarming [18]. In 1999, one out of four children aged 6 to 16 in Québec was overweight, and depending on the age and gender, 4% to 10% of these children were considered obese [19].

A GLOBAL HEALTH PROBLEM

The excess weight now observed among growing numbers of children has major consequences on their physical, emotional and psychosocial health [20]. Overweight or obese children are frequently the target of peer stigmatization, discrimination and violence, which no doubt have a direct impact on their self-esteem [21]. Overweight or obese children are also more likely to become obese adults [22] and develop complications associated with obesity [23]. Diseases that were once seen only in adults, such as type 2 diabetes, are now occurring earlier in life [24, 25], a trend that may affect life expectancy and furthermore life expectancy in good health [26]. However, these adverse effects on health can be prevented in part by adopting healthy habits, such as healthy eating, regular physical activity and tobacco-free living.

IMPACT OF LIVING HABITS

The rapid rise in obesity over the past few years clearly indicates that lifestyle factors, such as physical activity and nutrition, play important roles [27].

The current generation of children and adolescents is more sedentary than that of its parents or grandparents. Many children today take part in passive pastimes, a number of which are considered obstacles to regular physical activity and sports. According to the findings of the 2004 Canadian Community Health Survey [18], children aged 6 to 17 who spend more time watching television, playing video games and using the computer are at a greater risk of being overweight or obese. The amount of time 12- to 17-year olds spend in front of a screen has increased significantly, from 9 hours a week in 1988 to 20 hours a week in 2004. Numerous scientific studies corroborate the relationship between increased screen time and obesity [28-30].

In 2005, only 43% of 12- to 17-year-olds in Québec met the physical activity guidelines (which recommend at least 60 minutes of moderate physical activity per day), while 34% did not meet half of the recommended guidelines [31]. It should also be noted that participation in physical activity varies according to gender. In fact, 25% of boys and 44% of girls did not meet half of the recommended guidelines [31].

As with physical activity, the eating habits of young people have also changed over the past few decades. As scientific literature shows, there are links between weight gain, low fruit and vegetable intake [32], and an overcon-

sumption of fast food, sugar-sweetened foods and soft drinks [33]. According to a 1999 health and social survey of Québec children and adolescents, 22% of foods eaten daily by 6- to 16-year-olds are not part of any of the four food groups of Canada's Food Guide. At least 34% of children aged 6 to 8 and 44% of adolescents aged 15 to 16 consume snack foods, candy or soft drinks on a daily basis [19].

All of these changes in eating habits and physical activity have a significant effect on weight gain in the medium and long term. Their consequences on the well-being and personal and social development of young people (e.g. success in school, violence, self-esteem, stress, concentration) can sometimes be serious. Although few studies establish clear links between physical activity, healthy eating and academic achievement, or with success indicators such as concentration, it is generally agreed that children who participate in sports are better able to concentrate at school, and those who are physically fit have better grades [34, 35]. Research also shows that poor eating habits interfere with learning and hinder success at school [36]. According to a recent study, body mass index, diet and physical activity patterns explain up to 24% of the variance in academic achievement, even when variables associated with gender, parental education, family structure and absenteeism are taken into account [37]. For the sake of general health, we must address children's eating and living habits.

POSITIONS OF INTERNATIONAL ORGANIZATIONS

According to the World Health Organization (WHO), the situation has reached epidemic, if not pandemic, proportions. The WHO is therefore asking all countries to take concrete steps to prevent and manage the obesity epidemic, including [38, 39]:

- > Modifying the environment in order to promote healthy lifestyles in schools and the community
- > Promoting the acquisition of knowledge and skills that enable individuals to make healthy choices
- > Limiting and regulating advertising aimed at children

The WHO *Global Strategy on Diet, Physical Activity and Health* recommends adopting an integrated, concerted approach and stresses the responsibility that many stakeholders in the public and private sectors, civil society and the media will have over the next decades to change the dietary habits and patterns of physical activity of the population [39].

At the school level, the WHO and the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) advocate approaches similar to the “Healthy Schools” approach [14, 40], which addresses young people’s optimal development by setting objectives for both education and health, and recommends that all promotion and prevention efforts begin in school.

Several other health organizations such as the American Heart Association, the Heart and Stroke Foundation, the American Dietetic Association, Dietitians of Canada, and many others agree that schools are ideal places to reach the greatest number of children and communicate the importance of healthy lifestyles.

In keeping with the above recommendations, several countries and governments have rallied behind the cause and introduced initiatives, programs or policies, based on their situation and priorities, to promote a healthy diet and physical activity. The initiatives presented below are not intended as models to be emulated but are simply included to illustrate how stakeholders worldwide are working together to improve the health of young people. As such, we hope they will inspire school communities in achieving Québec’s objectives.

INTERNATIONAL INITIATIVES

In Europe in 1999, a document entitled *Healthy Eating for Young People in Europe: A School-Based Nutrition Education Guide* was published to encourage the development of nutrition education in elementary and secondary schools. Written by a committee of experts from the European Network of Health Promoting Schools, with support from the WHO, the European Commission and the Council of Europe, this guide recognizes that schools are health-promoting settings. A framework for developing and implementing nutrition education programs, it suggests concrete tools for young people, families and communities [41].

Several countries, such as England [42], Scotland [43], Australia [44], Switzerland [45], the Netherlands [46] and Northern Ireland [47], have also developed projects or government action plans to increase levels of physical activity in their population. Schools are regularly cited as ideal settings to achieve this objective. The projects focus, among other things, on the creation of environments conducive to active school transportation, optimal use of resources such as the schoolyard, and participation in sports and active pastimes during and after school.

In the United States, the United States Department of Agriculture (USDA) Food and Nutrition Service has established dietary guidelines for child nutrition programs and implemented the *Team Nutrition* initiative to provide school and community support for healthy diet and physical activity [48]. In 2004, a federal law was passed [49] to support and improve the effectiveness of government programs affecting close to 28 million children from disadvantaged backgrounds. According to this law, all schools participating in USDA meal programs must establish locally designed policies with respect to the foods sold or served at school, nutrition education and physical activity. In March 2005, a *National Alliance for Nutrition and Activity (NANA)* work group designed a policy model that can be easily adapted to each school and made to comply with federal requirements. This model contains a number of recommendations and actions to promote healthy eating and active living [50].

CANADIAN INITIATIVES

In Canada, most provinces have established strategies for promoting healthy lifestyles among elementary and secondary school students, and many schools have already taken initiatives to promote healthy eating and active living. Provincial strategies therefore support school-based initiatives and serve as guides to orient and encourage the schools' actions.

Some provinces, such as Ontario [51, 52], New Brunswick [53], British Columbia [54], Nova Scotia [55] and Prince Edward Island [56], have developed government policies and toolkits, mostly on diet and nutrition. Their policies, aimed at school or district boards as well as elementary and secondary schools, must follow implementation schedules set up by the main ministries involved. School boards and schools must also keep their respective ministries informed about progress achieved and measures taken. Other provinces, such as Saskatchewan [57] and Alberta [58], have published recommendations and toolkits to guide schools and school administrators in developing nutrition policies.

Certain provinces have also published physical activity guidelines. The Ontario government, for example, has established a program of daily physical activity in elementary schools, for grades 1-8 [59] and grants subsidies for the program's implementation and related training activities and resources. Similarly, British Columbia [60], Manitoba [61], Nova Scotia [62], Saskatchewan [63] and Alberta [64] are all developing, promoting and implementing provincial strategies or programs to provide elementary and secondary school students with increased daily opportunities to be physically active at school.

QUÉBEC INITIATIVES

In 1988, the Ministère de l'Éducation (MEQ), the MAPAQ and the MSSS published *L'alimentation au Québec : voies d'action pour le milieu scolaire* [65], a document containing orientations and objectives to guide the actions of school administrators in matters of diet and nutrition. This call to action gave rise to a vast provincial undertaking and numerous initiatives throughout Québec. The evaluation report made certain recommendations, calling for greater leadership from ministries, a reorientation to better meet the needs of schools, the development of a communications strategy giving diet and nutrition greater visibility in schools, and the development of regional exchange mechanisms to ensure better monitoring of the nutrition policy.

As the initiatives below reveal, the Québec government is acting on a number of fronts—at the provincial, regional and local levels—to improve the health of young people and provide environments conducive to good health. In addition to the measures associated with the government action plan and the opportunities provided by the “Healthy Schools” approach, other important initiatives exist. The most important ones are briefly described below.

Kino-Québec Program

Kino-Québec is a government program [3] that has been in existence since 1978. Administered by the MELs, the MSSS and the public health branches of health and social service agencies, the program is intended to promote a physically active lifestyle to help improve the well-being of Quebecers. Among its action priorities for 2005-2008, Kino-Québec focuses on schools, among other players, to create sustainable environments that encourage regular physical activity in and around schools. To achieve this goal, the program relies on interministerial and intersectoral partnerships, as well as on awareness-raising and mobilization initiatives conducted through its network of consultants. Every year, Kino-Québec and its partners invite the schools to submit proposals for installing or purchasing equipment to foster physical activity and good nutrition, or for promoting safety and ethics in physical and sports activities. Schools are also invited to organize activities as part of the *Plaisirs d'hiver* campaign.

Québec en Forme

Québec en Forme is a nonprofit organization that was created in 2002 through a partnership between the Fondation Lucie et André Chagnon and the Québec government [66]. Its mission is to support communities in their efforts to create and implement sustainable actions that promote a healthy, active lifestyle for underprivileged children aged 4 to 12. Activities are organized by local action committees (LAC), the backbone of the project. These are made up of small teams of representatives from the community, parish, neighbourhood, borough, municipality, regional county, etc. Although Québec en Forme considers physical activity and sports the most important lever in supporting local communities, its broader aims include developing healthy lifestyles, encouraging children to stay in school and preventing them from dropping out.

Fédération québécoise du sport étudiant

The Fédération québécoise du sport étudiant (FQSE) was created in its current form in 1988. It is represented across the province by various regional student sport associations [67]. Its mission is to ensure, through concerted action, the development and promotion of sports and physical activity at all school levels, as privileged tools for the education and health of young Quebecers. The Sport étudiant network focuses primarily on promoting sports in schools through the support, collaboration and expertise it provides in organizing various sports activities, leagues and competitions. Through the ISO-ACTIVE program, Sport étudiant hopes to improve the overall health and development of Québec youth by encouraging schools to set up programs that promote healthy living habits, namely regular physical activity, a healthy diet and tobacco-free living.

Other Québec Initiatives

Many other initiatives to promote healthy eating and active living have been implemented in the past few years. Here are just a few:

- > the government program *Move More, Eat Better*, formerly known as *Do it for you!* (November 2004) [68]
- > the Sports and Physical Activity Development Fund (August 2006) [69]
- > the Québec Public Health Program 2003-2012 (November 2003) [9]
- > the Québec Sports and Activity Day (October 2005) [70]
- > the Wellness-Oriented School Program (September 2004) [71]
- > the allocation of funds for schoolyard improvements from the MELS (April 2005) [71]

This Framework Policy illustrates the government's commitment to continuing the actions undertaken to improve the health of young people. It supports existing initiatives, be they provincial or local, and opens up new avenues for the school community.

School Community Initiatives: Policies, Action Plans, Extracurricular Activities

Up until now, several school boards, adult education and vocational training centres, and public and private schools have developed, or have been in the process of developing, nutrition policies, action plans or measures to change or improve the environment related to diet and physical activity. Moreover, most of the previously mentioned initiatives, as well as those of different organizations, have already had an impact on Québec schools.

A wide variety of extracurricular activities in different schools shows strong potential for achieving the aims of this Framework Policy. There are many opportunities for students to engage in physical activity outside of school hours: daycare services; team sports such as basketball, soccer, football or volleyball; special events in the gym; theme events that focus on physical activity; and walking or fitness clubs; to name a few. Certain schools even offer cooking workshops that teach students how to plan and cook healthy meals.

Other cultural, social or community activities also contribute differently, but just as importantly, to improving the students' well-being. For example, a lunchtime activity can be the perfect opportunity for discussing diet or physical activity. Following the *Québec Education Program*, which asks all members of the school team to contribute to the broad area of learning Health and Well-Being, organizers of extracurricular activities can also help promote the aims of this Framework Policy, no matter what these activities may involve.





Chapter 2

FRAMEWORK POLICY ON HEALTHY EATING AND ACTIVE LIVING

This chapter describes the Framework Policy on Healthy Eating and Active Living, a special initiative developed by the Ministère de l'Éducation, du Loisir et du Sport to improve the health of young people. The MELS hopes that school boards and public and private schools will be able to provide all young Quebecers—including those in daycare services, in youth and adult general education and in vocational training—with an environment that is conducive to the adoption and maintenance of healthy living habits.

In this Framework Policy, the MELS presents the orientations it has selected. It asks the school community to mobilize its resources to introduce measures in all of Québec's schools and create partnerships so that education, promotion and communication efforts can have a real impact on the lives of young people. It hopes that the Framework Policy will also provide food for thought for colleges and universities while it plans, with the proper authorities, separate guidelines for healthy eating and active living for these two sectors.

AIM

To support schools in providing an environment conducive to the adoption and maintenance of healthy eating and active living habits and the development of students' personal competencies in this regard.

OBJECTIVES

- > To ensure that food supplied in the school environment promotes the adoption of healthy eating habits.
- > To increase physical activity opportunities for all students at school.
- > To create education, communication and promotion programs to facilitate the adoption of sustainable healthy living habits.
- > To mobilize the different school and community partners to undertake comprehensive, concerted actions that support the adoption of healthy eating and active living habits.

INTENDED AUDIENCE

- > This Framework Policy is intended mainly for school board administrators, principals and managerial staff of public schools and adult education and vocational training centres, their governing boards, directors of private schools and their boards of directors.
- > It is also addressed to other individuals and organizations that are called upon to help implement the Framework Policy, including teaching and non-teaching school staff, food service and school daycare service personnel, sports and cultural activities coordinators, parent committees or associations, and student councils.
- > Lastly, the Framework Policy applies to parents as well as members of the health and social services network, MAPAQ and other ministries concerned with the health of young people. It may also interest different community partners, such as municipalities, community organizations, social clubs, etc.

PRINCIPLES

Several principles are at the heart of the Framework Policy. They constitute the foundation on which it is based:

- > The environment in which young people live, particularly the school environment, must promote the adoption of healthy eating and active living habits.
- > Acting simultaneously on diet and physical activity maximizes positive effects on young people's health.
- > The situation and circumstances specific to each environment (e.g. existing initiatives, the socioeconomic situation, cultural groups, established habits, available resources) must be taken into account.
- > Actions on diet and physical activity must comply with current educational frameworks, such as the Québec Education Program, the school boards' strategic plan, complementary educational services programs and the schools' educational projects and success plans, in order to facilitate the implementation of the Framework Policy.
- > Continuity must be sought at every educational level, in order to provide an environment that is conducive to healthy eating and active living.

ORIENTATIONS

The orientations are contained in this section. While, for some schools, these orientations may correspond to actions they have already taken and that are starting to bear fruit, for others they may represent new challenges. Whatever the case, each school will need to establish its own priorities by paying special attention to its specific characteristics. Some schools may need to revise their educational project or success plan in order to introduce measures to support the orientations. In such cases, the leadership shown by school administrators and governing boards is of prime importance. School boards and private schools will need to translate the Framework Policy into local policies that will guide their actions. The table at the end of the chapter summarizes these orientations.

THEME 1 SCHOOL ENVIRONMENT

The school environment is an essential factor to consider when planning measures to encourage healthy lifestyles. The orientations described below aim to improve this environment in order to modify both eating habits and patterns of physical activity. In each school, the orientations will be translated into concrete actions that can promote the adoption and long-term maintenance of healthy eating and active living.

ORIENTATIONS RELATED TO HEALTHY EATING

What young people eat is a responsibility that is shared by parents, schools and the youth themselves. The purpose of establishing orientations for schools is not to take this responsibility away from parents, but rather to ensure that schools provide an environment that is conducive to healthy eating, since schools are responsible for the variety and nutritional value of the foods they offer.

The following orientations are intended for school staff, food service providers, catering and cafeteria personnel. Each orientation consists of elements that the MELS considers highly important. They concern not only menu quality, but also foods dispensed in vending machines, canteens, etc. They also provide school boards and private schools with a nutritional framework to guide them in their local policies and in preparing calls for tender.

The elements of the orientations are based on Health Canada's recommendations for healthy eating (*Eating Well with Canada's Food Guide*, 2007) [72] and on the recommendations by Dietitians of Canada regarding school food and nutrition as well as snacks and beverages dispensed by vending machines [73, 74].

Orientation 1

OFFER A VARIETY OF FOODS AND GIVE PRIORITY TO FOODS OF GOOD NUTRITIONAL VALUE.

The priority elements of this orientation are:

1. Offer meals that include foods from each of the four food groups of *Canada's Food Guide*: Vegetables and Fruit, Grain Products, Milk and Alternatives, and Meat and Alternatives.
2. Prepare a main course accompanied by at least one vegetable.
3. Provide a variety of fruits and vegetables.
4. Provide a variety of 100% pure (unsweetened) fruit juices and vegetable juices, in addition to milk and water.
5. Give priority to whole grain products.
6. Offer desserts made with fruit, milk products and whole grain products; avoid desserts that have a high fat or sugar content.
7. Reduce the fat content of meats.
8. Favour low-fat or nonfat cooking methods, such as steaming, baking, braising, poaching, grilling or roasting.
9. Avoid products containing saturated or hydrogenated fats (trans fats).

- > At the Commission scolaire Marguerite-Bourgeoys on the Island of Montréal, several schools offer students a made-to-order sandwich bar. As a result of this initiative, more students now eat in the cafeteria, even in the face of competition from local fast-food restaurants. The school board has not only improved the nutritional quality and the variety of foods on offer, but it has also enhanced the students' sense of belonging to the school.
- > The Commission scolaire des Découvreurs has updated its specifications concerning the food services offered in its centres and in its elementary and secondary schools, in order to update its health orientations and requirements. The objective was to encourage students—children, adolescents and adults alike—to adopt and maintain healthy eating habits while taking into account Québec's socioeconomic context.
- > At La Frontalière, a secondary school in Coaticook (Commission scolaire des Hauts-Cantons), a committee was created to improve the quality of its student cafeteria. The committee, which includes two members of the student council, two teachers, a parent, the school nurse, the cafeteria cook and two school administrators, has gradually introduced a number of changes. There is now a new salad bar with a greater selection; meals have been revamped (e.g. less salt and sauce); there are fewer breaded items on the menu (e.g. chicken nuggets and fingers are often replaced with chicken tournedos, timbales or thighs); breaded fish is being replaced with real fish filets; and chocolate chip cookies are making way for trans-fat-free muffins.

Orientation 2

ELIMINATE FOODS OF LOW NUTRITIONAL VALUE FROM ALL SCHOOL FOOD SUPPLIES.

The priority elements of this orientation are:

- 10.** Eliminate sugar-sweetened and artificially sweetened (diet) soft drinks as well as sugar-sweetened beverages.
- 11.** Eliminate products in which sugar or a sugar substitute is the first ingredient listed.

- > The École secondaire De Rochebelle (Commission scolaire des Découvreurs) has restocked its vending machines and canteen, replacing all foods and beverages whose first ingredient is sugar; special attention was given to products made with saturated and trans fats. All of these products have been replaced with more nutritional food. A colour coding system helps students differentiate foods that can be eaten often from those that should be eaten occasionally.

12. Eliminate French fries.

- > In 2004, the Coopérative de solidarité Les Horizons began providing food services to the Monseigneur-Euclide-Théberge secondary school in Marieville (Commission scolaire des Hautes-Rivières). A contest, Kapout poutine, was organized in which all students who chose the healthy lunch specials or salads were eligible to enter a monthly draw. French fries and all other fried foods gradually disappeared from the menu, and breaded foods are now baked and not fried.

> When the deep fryers broke at the Châteauguay Valley Regional High School (New Frontiers School Board), the students had an opportunity to see that it is possible to live without French fries. In this school, which is already aware of the importance of healthy eating, a number of major initiatives followed. These included the establishment of a health and nutrition awareness and action committee, the selection of a new supplier, the revision of the cafeteria menu, and changes in the types of food available through vending machines. Students' involvement in various food-related activities proved to be an important factor. This switch to healthier living was made possible by allowing students to make their own salads in the cafeteria, having "reluctant" students take part in the activities of the health and nutrition awareness and action committee, and taking students' suggestions for awards to be offered in a weekly contest.

13. Eliminate frying and deep-frying, and avoid commercial or pre-fried breaded foods.

14. Sell or offer foods and beverages that meet dietary guidelines at fundraising events, special events, on school trips, outings, etc.

> Every year, to raise funds for extracurricular activities (e.g. school trips, graduation), the Séminaire Saint-François de Saint-Augustin-de-Desmaures organizes a citrus fruit sale. The students take orders and collect funds in October and deliver oranges and grapefruit in December.

Orientation 3

PROVIDE APPROPRIATE AREAS AND FAVOURABLE CONDITIONS FOR MEALS.

The priority elements of this orientation are:

15. Make sure that eating areas are safe at all times.

16. Make lunchtime an enjoyable part of the school day by ensuring that eating areas are pleasant and inviting.

> At Sutton Elementary School (Commission scolaire du Val-des-Cerfs and Eastern Townships School Board), the way lunch is organized was revamped in the wake of problems associated with the use of microwave ovens. The students had to wait in line for long periods in order to heat up their meals. As a result, they had little time left in which to eat, which caused an increasing amount of tension. It was decided therefore, with the parents' participation and agreement, to take the microwave ovens out of the school and to revise the cafeteria menu. The cafeteria has taken on a whole new aspect with the help of a head cook, who favours home-style cooking and approves the healthy foods to be offered and how students play a role in preparing certain meals.

Four pamphlets have been designed to help schools promote healthy eating. Pamphlets 1 and 2 can be used to create a healthy eating environment, while pamphlets 3 and 4 can guide policies on snacks and packed lunches, or be distributed to parents to help them make healthy choices.

PAMPHLET

1 Healthy School Menus

2 Healthy Vending Machines

3 Healthy Snacks

4 Healthy Lunch Boxes

ORIENTATIONS RELATED TO ACTIVE LIVING⁵

Many Québec and international organizations recommend that children and adolescents accumulate at least 60 minutes of moderate to vigorous physical activity every day, be it at home, at school or in any other appropriate location. To achieve this goal, young people should participate in activities that can easily fit into their day (e.g. daycare services, sports, structured training, outdoor activities or other recreational activities, physical education, active transportation such as walking or biking) [3, 75, 76].

Schools are asked to take charge of a large portion of this time by providing opportunities for daily physical activity, in addition to the Physical Education and Health program. This is all the more important, given the number of hours children spend at school. It is also essential for students who have limited access to resources or sports programs outside of school. Schools therefore have a vital role to play in offering all students a variety of physical activity opportunities during recess, in daycare, during extracurricular activity programs, before or after school, or during lunchtime.

The MELS is aware of the extent of the challenge, as the measures associated with these orientations affect not only the physical environment but school organization as well. Sustained efforts will also be required to identify the needs and preferences of young people and ensure their active participation.

In establishing orientations to promote active living in schools, the MELS hopes above all to reach students who do not participate, or participate very little, in physical activities. Schools will therefore need to adopt concrete measures to provide more opportunities for students to get moving, offer activities that they are likely to enjoy, and organize the physical layout of certain areas, particularly the schoolyard, where these activities are likely to take place.

The following three orientations should help promote active living. They are described below, along with effective actions that are in keeping with the recommendations of the *Proposal to the School Environment Against Youth Disengagement from Physical Activity Presented by the Director of Public Health (2000)* [77]. School boards and schools may draw inspiration from the examples presented or introduce other actions that better suit their needs.

5. While the orientations in this section mainly concern preschool, elementary and secondary schools, adult education and vocational training centres may use these orientations as a source of inspiration to ensure continuity in their efforts to promote a physically active lifestyle.

Orientation 1

INCREASE PHYSICAL ACTIVITY OPPORTUNITIES, PRINCIPALLY DURING RECESS, LUNCHTIME, DAYCARE OR EXTRACURRICULAR ACTIVITIES.

To translate this orientation into concrete action, various actions considered effective or promising can be taken, such as:

1. Offer a wider range of recreational activities.

> Alice-Parizeau school (Commission scolaire de Montréal) in Cartierville in Montréal offers a selection of sports activities to all elementary school students (from Elementary 1 to 6) who attend after-school daycare. Students must participate in at least one activity offered in partnership with the neighbourhood recreation department (Loisirs Sainte-Odile). To allow students to fully participate, parents agree not to pick up their children until the sports activity is over.

2. Train and support young leaders.

> At the École Des-Cœurs-Vaillants (Commission scolaire des Découvreurs), an elementary school in Québec City, students are encouraged to develop leadership skills, their sense of responsibility, and competencies in “conscious entrepreneurship,” an educational approach that aims to enhance children’s overall health. One of its strategies is to encourage children to be physically active while making them responsible for their health. The school offers 30 minutes of animated sports and health activities every day. This approach is unique in that some of the activities offered are created by Cycle Three students during entrepreneurship workshops. These activities are sometimes led by the students who designed them, also known as “playmakers.”

3. Train and support daycare workers.

> The Service régional de soutien et d’expertise pour les élèves en difficulté de comportement de la région de l’Estrie (the regional service providing support and expertise for students with behavioural difficulties in the Estrie region), in collaboration with the Commission scolaire de la Région-de-Sherbrooke, the Commission scolaire des Sommets and Kino-Québec and the Agence de santé et des services sociaux de l’Estrie, have put together a guide for school administrators entitled Ateliers de formation continue offerts aux surveillants d’élèves et au personnel en service de garde (in-service training workshops for monitors and daycare workers). This guide is based on the principle that children need to engage in active forms of play in the schoolyard, particularly since games and physical activity teach them how to socialize and live together. The document proposes a training model designed to develop intervention skills and strategies in order to improve student behaviour management.

4. Incorporate physical activity opportunities into the timetable.

> Aware of the benefits of physical activity, Notre-Dame-du-Sacré-Cœur de Gaspé school (Commission scolaire des Chic-Chocs) has been offering judo to students during class for nearly four years. Students from kindergarten to Elementary 6 receive one 50-minute judo class per week. This project has been possible thanks to a partnership with Judotech (a local judo club) and the financial support of the Association sportive étudiante, Kino-Québec, the Town of Gaspé and the Knights of Columbus Council of Saint-Majorique.

Orientation 2

OFFER ACTIVITIES THAT MEET STUDENTS' VARIED INTERESTS AND ABILITIES.

To translate this orientation into concrete action, various actions considered effective or promising can be taken, such as:

5. Involve students in selecting the activities to be offered.

> At the *École secondaire Saint-Martin*, a secondary school in Chomedey, Laval (Commission scolaire de Laval), a sports committee of six to eight students has been formed to represent various categories of students in the school. The members of the committee have come up with different strategies to get their peers moving, including "midi sportif," a sports program that offers a variety of lunchtime activities (e.g. badminton, basketball, floor hockey, wall climbing, volleyball, soccer, archery and physical fitness). In addition, on the fifth day of every month, the lunch hour is reserved for students who are interested in practising a sport with participating teachers.

6. Plan activities that are specifically geared to girls.

> In order to help girls become more physically active at recess, the physical education teacher of *Sainte-Louise-de-Marillac*, a school located in Mercier Est in Montréal (Commission scolaire de Montréal), has organized a dance club. Some thirty girls use the gym two or three times a week during recess to practice choreography to their favourite music. The choreography is then presented to students and teachers during special events. The physical education teacher provides support and supervision, while the girls themselves create and execute their own choreography, thus displaying their artistic side.

7. Offer elementary school students more activities to develop their motor skills.

> At the *Commission scolaire de l'Or-et-des-Bois*, in Abitibi-Témiscamingue, the local action committee of *Québec en Forme* has created a program of activities to improve students' motor skills. Every week, all preschool children can participate in three 45-minute sessions of psychomotor activities included in their timetable, as well as in a 60-minute introduction to team games in the gym. In addition, families can also take in the community weekend sports activities free of charge throughout the year, and children have the opportunity to attend summer camp.

8. Offer activities that focus on games and the pleasure of being physically active.

> The *Commission scolaire de Laval* has helped compile a treasury of schoolyard games. This compilation is the work of many classrooms in the Francophonie, which participated in a project entitled "Les jeux des cours d'école." It includes over 280 games, rated according to how much fun students think they are. Assistance for this project was provided by Prof-Inet, a Web site created in 1997-1998 by the MEQ and the Commission scolaire de Laval. Students throughout the world continue to contribute to the games bank by logging onto the Prof-Inet Web site at <<http://www.cslaval.qc.ca/prof-inet/anim/jfd/jeux/index.htm>>.

Orientation 3

PLAN THE LAYOUTS OF INDOOR AND OUTDOOR PLAY AREAS AND ANIMATE THE ACTIVITIES CARRIED OUT IN THEM IN ORDER TO OPTIMIZE THE OPPORTUNITIES TO BE PHYSICALLY ACTIVE.

To translate this orientation into concrete action, various actions considered effective or promising can be taken, such as:

9. Provide students with an adequate supply of safe and well-maintained equipment.

> *The Parc elementary school in Sainte-Rose, Laval (Commission scolaire de Laval), has introduced several measures, including a sports equipment loan service for cross-country skis, snowshoes, skates, crazy carpets, etc. Students also enjoy circus workshops as well as a teacher-supervised skate park.*

10. Plan the layout of the schoolyard to encourage students to be more physically active.

> *Notre-Dame-de-Lourdes, an elementary school located in a high-density urban neighbourhood in Montréal (Commission scolaire Marguerite-Bourgeoys), has undertaken a major schoolyard improvement project with the assistance of the borough of Verdun and other partners such as the Caisse populaire, a community organization and Kino-Québec. Students will be able to enjoy their new schoolyard, which will include a green area and pavement markings for games, as well as age-appropriate, safe modular play equipment. All of these changes should allow students to experiment with new games.*

11. Animate activities in areas where students assemble during breaks.

> *At Sainte-Marguerite-Notre-Dame, an elementary school in Saint-Félix-de-Valois (Commission scolaire des Samares), the physical education and health teacher is in charge of organizing recess activities for students. The schoolyard is divided up into different play areas, depending on the season. Students receive training and support and participate in organizing and coordinating recess activities. Special activities such as treasure hunts and tournaments are also organized.*

Three pamphlets have been designed to help schools promote active living. Pamphlets 5 and 6 will help them organize schoolyard activities and layouts, while pamphlet 7 will help them plan extracurricular physical activities.

PAMPHLET

5 Schoolyard Activities and Layouts in Elementary Schools

6 Schoolyard Activities and Layouts in Secondary Schools

7 Extracurricular Physical Activities in Elementary and Secondary Schools

THEME 2 EDUCATION, PROMOTION AND COMMUNICATION

If we want students to improve their health in a sustainable way, we must do more than provide a favourable school environment: we must also make them responsible for their health, so that their actions outside of school are consistent with the healthy habits they acquire in school. To bring about these changes, we must promote healthy lifestyles through education, awareness and promotion activities aimed at students, their families and school stakeholders. These activities are essential for achieving the Framework Policy's objectives and must go hand in hand with changes in the school environment. The current educational frameworks offer numerous opportunities for integrating these types of activities. Two orientations on the subject are described below.

Orientation 1

IMPLEMENT EDUCATIONAL AND PROMOTIONAL ACTIVITIES THAT FOSTER HEALTHY EATING AND ACTIVE LIVING.

The examples below illustrate actions that may serve as inspiration for schools.

1. Include activities to raise awareness of healthy living habits in daily school life.

> *Chabot et du Châtelet (Commission scolaire des Premières-Seigneuries), an elementary school in Québec City, has included in its educational project a nutrition education program entitled De saines habitudes alimentaires, ça commence au primaire! [Healthy eating habits start in elementary school]. The program enables students in all three cycles to acquire nutrition concepts that allow them to make enlightened food choices and even influence their parents' choices. The program also focuses on physical health, energy needs, body image, everyday stress management and daily physical activity.*

2. Include activities associated with the development of healthy living habits in the promotion and prevention program of complementary educational services.

> *At L'Aubier, a secondary school under the Commission scolaire des Navigateurs in Lévis, the school's health action committee organized an awareness-raising program aimed at school staff, parents and students to promote healthy living. All students were given a logbook on physical activity, healthy eating, tobacco use and secondhand smoke. Armed with a pedometer and a food guide, they were asked to keep track of their actions every day over a two-week period. In order to get families involved, students were also given a second logbook to take home to their parents. The project was enriched with many activities, including a showing of the movie Super Size Me, "walking during lunchtime," healthy food tastings and a draw for gift certificates to a health food restaurant.*



3. Make all educators aware of the importance of promoting attitudes and behaviours that are essential for the adoption of healthy living habits.

> Every year, the Juvénat Notre-Dame du Saint-Laurent (F.I.C.) in Lévis organizes a day of activities for its staff. These activities, which are intended to promote the adoption of healthy living habits, consist of conferences and workshops on health in the morning, a healthy lunch at noon, and sports and outdoor activities in the afternoon. As a result, more and more teachers now engage in regular physical activity.

4. Offer students new foods and meals to help them develop their taste buds.

> Aux Quatre-Vents (Commission scolaire de la Côte-du-Sud), an elementary school in Saint-Malachie, has joined forces with the community organization Frigos-Pleins to offer students in Elementary 5 and 6 opportunities to sample various dishes. The tastings, which are done on a voluntary basis, not only allow students to discover new foods, but also add a bit of spice to the long winter months. A cook-book produced by the students will soon be available.

5. Organize extracurricular activities to help students develop cooking skills.

> *The Lajeunesse elementary school in Vieux-Longueuil (Commission scolaire Marie-Victorin), a disadvantaged neighbourhood, has partnered with a volunteer community action organization, La Mosaïque, to offer cooking classes to students in Elementary 6, using a cookbook that was developed specifically for them. Through these classes, students discover foods they have never tasted before; and since they get to take these foods home, they help change some of their parents' eating habits as well.*

6. Conduct regular activities to promote the adoption of healthy living habits (e.g. *Plaisirs d'hiver*, Sport Étudiant's Physical Education Month [MEPSE], Walk to School Day/Week, Nutrition Month, *Moi, j'croque 5 fruits et légumes*, *Bien dans sa tête, bien dans sa peau*, *Pelure de banane*).

> *In order to promote active living, a daylong event entitled *Pourquoi pas?* was organized as part of the 42^e finale des Jeux du Québec in the MRC de l'Assomption. This was carried out in conjunction with the Commission scolaire des Affluents and the Direction régionale de la santé publique. During this event, more than 10 000 pedometers were distributed to elementary school students and staff members. In order to get participants to accumulate a requisite number of steps, several activities such as snow soccer, snowshoe races and ice bowling were organized. The aim was not only to promote the 22 sports disciplines of the games, but also to send a clear message—that sports and physical activity are for everyone, not just athletes. Close to 10 000 people took part in the activities, i.e. 9 200 students and 800 school staff members.*

7. Take advantage of special activities to raise awareness of healthy eating and active living among parents.

> *The Masson elementary school in Danville (Commission scolaire des Sommets) has chosen snacks as a way to reach families and improve eating habits. Working in partnership with the Fondation de l'école Masson, grandparents, several business partners (e.g. supermarkets, cheese stores) and the Collectif contre la pauvreté (an anti-poverty organization), the school offers students a healthy snack free of charge once a week. Once a month, a group of students also prepares a snack for their classmates. Thanks to the combined efforts of these partners and the support of a nutritionist, a dental hygienist and a nurse, the school has improved the nutritional content of the students' snacks. By sharing their discoveries with their parents, students also help promote awareness of healthy eating.*

Orientation 2

PERIODICALLY PROVIDE INFORMATION ON INITIATIVES TO PARENTS AND THE COMMUNITY SO THAT THEY CAN SUPPORT THE SCHOOLS' EFFORTS AND ENSURE CONTINUITY.

Schools have long recognized the importance and usefulness of communicating information to parents and the community. Practices in this regard, encouraged by provisions of the *Québec Education Act* (R.S.Q. I-13.3, ss. 74, 82, 109, 220), are many and varied. School boards and public schools are required to produce annual reports informing parents and the population as a whole about the educational services provided and the quality of these services. Although the Act does not require the same of private schools, current practices are such that parents are kept informed.

Regardless of the legal obligations, information is provided to parents and the community for educational reasons, and because of a conception of education by which various stakeholders are considered responsible for students' success. The idea and need to communicate information are thus at the heart of the schools' role. Thus, in promoting healthy eating and active living, both the schools and the students stand to gain if parents and the community are well informed.

Information can be communicated to parents and the community in various ways:

- 8.** Post messages, videos, etc. on the school's Web site.
- 9.** Include a special section in an annual report.
- 10.** Publish articles in a local or school newspaper.
- 11.** Hand out brochures published by government ministries or other organizations.
- 12.** Distribute newsletters on a regular basis.
- 13.** Distribute pamphlets produced in conjunction with partner organizations (CSSS, municipality, etc.).
- 14.** Set up information booths in the schools during parent visits or social activities in the community.

THEME 3 MOBILIZING PARTNERS

Orientations to promote healthy eating and active living cannot come to fruition without the help of partners. Several mechanisms already exist to support the schools: cooperation mechanisms between the education system and the health and social services network, cooperation with families and community organizations, agreements with municipalities, etc. All of these arrangements represent opportunities to create true community schools. Because the MELS wishes to increase such initiatives, it has developed the following orientation:

Orientation 1

ESTABLISH OR CONSOLIDATE PARTNERSHIPS WITH THE COMMUNITY.

This orientation can be put into practice in several ways:

1. Share or use infrastructure and human resources in the community (e.g. municipality, community centre, private club).

> *The École Saint-Louis-de-Gonzague, an elementary school in Québec City, had no green space in its schoolyard. Thanks to an agreement with Parks Canada, it was given access to a parcel of land next to the school, along the old city walls. The school administrators, in conjunction with the school foundation and the parent committee, were able to install a natural grass soccer field for their students.*

2. Establish, with the help of the municipality, safe routes to school (e.g. appropriate signage, safe access, traffic regulations).

> *By creating a special committee, the Saint-Pie-X elementary school in Montmagny (Commission scolaire de la Côte-du-Sud) was able to make municipal officials aware of parents' concerns for their children's safety. Changes were therefore made to municipal infrastructures: an intersection was changed; a sidewalk was added; a multipurpose route was created; and vehicular traffic areas on school grounds were redesigned. As a result, speeding has decreased in front of the school, making the area safer for both pedestrians and cyclists.*

3. Implement consolidated projects that call on various community groups.

> *At the École de l'Aubier (Commission scolaire des Samares), an elementary school in Saint-Lin-Laurentides, many activities have been developed to promote healthy eating among students. In answer to a pilot project initiated by the Cégep de Joliette to counter obesity among young people, the school staff, the governing board and Buffet Accès Emploi joined forces. Since 2004, students have been taking part in cooking classes, where they learn how to create healthy, balanced meals. Teachers raise awareness concerning healthful snacks, while the physical education teacher provides students with instruction on the basic concepts of nutrition.*

> The *Commission scolaire des Navigateurs (CSDN)* has partnered up with a sports centre in Lévis in order to complete phase 2 of an expansion project at the *Centre de formation professionnelle Gabriel-Rousseau*. The CSDN will thus benefit from additional funds to complete the expansion of its vocational training centre and provide its students with access to sports equipment. The sports centre will be able to take advantage of local infrastructure (a parking lot, for example) and increased visibility. Talks are under way to provide students and school staff with access to the sport centre's services at reduced rates.

4. Carry out comprehensive and concerted promotion and prevention projects, in conjunction with various partners.

> The "Healthy Schools" approach is at the core of the success plan of the *Antoine-Hallé elementary school*, located in a disadvantaged area of Grand-Mère (*Commission scolaire de l'Énergie*). The enlistment of the community, consistent leadership on the part of the school administrators, a rigorous analysis of the school's situation and the establishment of clear priorities, evaluation criteria and conditions conducive to success (budgetary flexibility, schedule and task reorganization, etc.) have enabled the students, their families, the school staff and its community partners to join forces to support the school in carrying out its educational mission. For example, a number of partners, including the *CSSS* and a supermarket, have collaborated in the operations of a healthy snacks micro-business run by young people. Other partners such as *Québec en Forme*, a dance school and an educational consultant with the school board have provided assistance to both young people and teachers as they carried out drama-related projects and prepared a circus show.

5. Encourage family and community volunteers to participate.

> At the *École Buissonnière*, a Montréal secondary school, parent volunteers have mobilized to provide students with healthy food options. Rather than renew agreements with food service providers, the school has decided to take over its cooking services. Two parents—a restaurant owner and a nutritionist—have created healthy menus and recruited and trained a chef. A pilot project with *Équiterre* will enable the school to purchase supplies from a local producer. The two parent leaders also offer students free cooking classes as extracurricular activities, while the school assumes the cost of the ingredients. The children learn to read product labels, prepare food and, best of all, they get to take home what they have prepared.

LOCAL POLICIES AND CONDITIONS FAVOURABLE TO THEIR IMPLEMENTATION

The orientations that the MELS has just announced will become a reality through school-based measures, actions and projects. In the public sector, schools will benefit from the support of their school boards which, due to their school management role, can exert a significant influence on the community—particularly if they assume a leadership role and mobilize resources to support the Framework Policy's orientations.

The school boards' role is all the more important if we consider that many decisions concerning healthy eating and physical activity imply choices that are beyond the purview of the schools themselves. This is why school boards are asked to develop their own local policies or, where policies already exist, to update them as needed. Local policy making provides opportunities for deciding on courses of action, determining operating or support conditions, defining follow-up mechanisms, etc. The MELS is also asking private schools to establish their own local policies, given their independent nature.

For local policies to be successful and bring about lasting changes, certain favourable conditions must be in place. The measures described below are generally recognized as conducive to the successful implementation of local policies.⁶

- > Ensure the cooperation of a team committed to the process. Such a team will be able to help set objectives and local priority actions, and establish a schedule for meeting these objectives. It will also be able to participate in other planning aspects, as well as in the implementation and evaluation of the local policy.
- > This team could consist of school administrators, teachers, professional staff members, cultural and sporting life coordinators, parents and student representatives. It could include food service providers, representatives from the health and social services network, members of the community and close partners. To avoid task duplication and maximize efforts, this team could be an existing committee within a school board or private school, such as the committee responsible for implementing the “Healthy Schools” approach or one responsible for developing complementary services programs.
- > Make use of the recognized expertise of individuals (e.g. dietitians, nutritionists, nutrition technicians, physical education teachers, recreational technicians, kinesiologists) and organizations (e.g. CSSS, DSP, ARSE, OIIQ, OPDQ, FKQ, FEEPEQ).⁷
- > Communicate the importance of having students and their parents participate in policy implementation, so that they feel involved in the changes, take ownership and make appropriate decisions that will benefit their health.
- > Take into account the students’ specific characteristics (e.g. handicaps or impairments, reduced mobility, allergies).
- > Ensure that school staff, students, food service providers and any individual or organization likely to be concerned by the local policy or its measures are informed of its content and adhere to it.
- > Establish agreements with subcontractors that are consistent with the principles of healthy eating and active living.
- > Inform school staff of the importance of being familiar with the local policy and of participating in its implementation.
- > Involve school staff in developing and implementing the local policy since they can influence students’ living habits.
- > Create partnerships with different organizations (e.g. municipality, CSSS, community organizations, businesses).
- > Determine strategic times to implement changes (e.g. at the beginning of the school year, after a school break).
- > Recognize that desired changes may need to be implemented gradually, according to the community’s ability to act and meet challenges.
- > Monitor the application of the local policy and the progress made.

6. All of these measures may be adapted and serve as guidelines for public schools when they establish their own action plans and measures to promote healthy eating and active living.

7. Health and social service centres (CSSS), the Direction de la santé publique (DSP), the Association régionale du sport étudiant (ARSE), the Ordre des infirmiers et infirmières du Québec (OIIQ), the Ordre professionnel des diététistes du Québec (OPDQ), the Fédération des kinesiologues du Québec (FKQ), the Fédération des éducateurs et des éducatrices physiques enseignants du Québec (FEEPEQ).

TABLE 1 SUMMARY OF FRAMEWORK POLICY ORIENTATIONS

THEME 1: SCHOOL ENVIRONMENT

	Orientations	Priority Elements
Healthy Eating	1. Offer a variety of foods and give priority to foods of good nutritional value.	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Offer meals that include foods from each of the four food groups of <i>Canada's Food Guide</i>: Vegetables and Fruit, Grain Products, Milk and Alternatives, and Meat and Alternatives. 2. Prepare a main course accompanied by a least one vegetable. 3. Provide a variety of fruits and vegetables. 4. Provide a variety of 100% pure (unsweetened) fruit juices and vegetable juices in addition to milk and water. 5. Give priority to whole grain products. 6. Offer desserts made with fruit, milk products and whole grain products; avoid desserts that have a high fat or sugar content. 7. Reduce the fat content of meats. 8. Favour low-fat or nonfat cooking methods, such as steaming, baking, braising, poaching, grilling or roasting. 9. Avoid products containing saturated or hydrogenated fats (trans fats).
	2. Eliminate foods of low nutritional value from all school food supplies.	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 10. Eliminate sugar-sweetened and artificially sweetened (diet) soft drinks as well as sugar-sweetened beverages. 11. Eliminate products in which sugar or a sugar substitute is the first ingredient listed. 12. Eliminate French fries. 13. Eliminate frying and deep-frying, and avoid commercial or pre-fried breaded foods. 14. Sell or offer foods and beverages that meet dietary guidelines at fundraising events, special events, on school trips, outings, etc.
	3. Provide appropriate areas and favourable conditions for meals.	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 15. Make sure that eating areas are safe at all times. 16. Make lunchtime an enjoyable part of the school day by ensuring that eating areas are pleasant and inviting.
	Orientations	Actions considered effective or promising
Active Living	1. Increase physical activity opportunities, principally during recess, lunchtime, daycare or extracurricular activities.	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Offer a wider range of recreational activities. 2. Train and support young leaders. 3. Train and support daycare workers. 4. Incorporate physical activity opportunities into the timetable.
	2. Offer activities that meet students' varied interests and abilities.	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 5. Involve students in selecting the activities to be offered. 6. Plan activities that are specifically geared to girls. 7. Offer elementary school students more activities to develop their motor skills. 8. Offer activities that focus on games and the pleasure of being physically active.
	3. Plan the layouts of indoor and outdoor play areas and animate the activities carried out in them in order to optimize the opportunities to be physically active.	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 9. Provide students with an adequate supply of safe and well-maintained equipment. 10. Plan the layout of the schoolyard to encourage students to be more physically active. 11. Animate activities in areas where students assemble during breaks.

THEME 2: EDUCATION, PROMOTION AND COMMUNICATION

Orientations	Actions that may serve as inspiration
<p>1. Implement educational and promotional activities that foster healthy eating and active living.</p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Include activities to raise awareness of healthy living habits in school life. 2. Include activities associated with the development of healthy living habits in the promotion and prevention program of complementary educational services. 3. Make all educators aware of the importance of promoting attitudes and behaviours that are essential for the adoption of healthy living habits. 4. Offer students new foods and meals to help them develop their taste buds. 5. Organize extracurricular activities to help students develop cooking skills. 6. Conduct regular activities to promote the adoption of healthy living habits (e.g. <i>Plaisirs d'hiver</i>, Sport Étudiant's Physical Education Month [MEPSE], Walk to School Day/Week, Nutrition Month, <i>Moi, j'croque 5 fruits et légumes</i>, <i>Bien dans sa tête, bien dans sa peau</i>, <i>Pelure de banane</i>). 7. Take advantage of special activities to promote awareness of healthy eating and active living among parents.
<p>2. Periodically provide information on initiatives to parents and the community so that they can support the schools' efforts and ensure continuity.</p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 8. Post messages, videos, etc. on the school's Web site. 9. Include a special section in an annual report. 10. Publish articles in a local or school newspaper. 11. Hand out brochures published by government ministries or other organizations. 12. Distribute newsletters on a regular basis. 13. Distribute pamphlets produced in conjunction with partner organizations (CSSS, municipality, etc.). 14. Set up information booths in the schools during parent visits or social activities in the community.

THEME 3: MOBILIZING PARTNERS

Orientation	Actions that may serve as inspiration
<p>1. Establish or consolidate partnerships with the community.</p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Share or use infrastructure and human resources in the community (e.g. municipality, community centre, private club). 2. Establish, with the help of the municipality, safe routes to school (e.g. appropriate signage, safe access, traffic regulations). 3. Implement consolidated projects that call on various community groups. 4. Carry out comprehensive and concerted promotion and prevention projects, in conjunction with various partners. 5. Encourage family and community volunteers to participate.



Chapter 3 **IMPLEMENTATION, FOLLOW-UP AND EVALUATION**

This chapter outlines the process involved in implementing the Framework Policy and the kind of support schools can count on. It also describes the benchmarks the MELS will use to monitor and evaluate the process.

IMPLEMENTATION

The success of implementation rests largely on the support and commitment of the education system. School boards and schools are all urged to make every effort to meet the objectives set by the Framework Policy.

Students will eat healthier foods and be more active in schools that have translated the Framework Policy's orientations into concrete actions. The MELS realizes that the time required to implement such actions may vary depending on the school; however, it believes that some measures must be put in place quickly. All priority actions as well as their implementation timetable are presented in Tables 2 and 3.

To meet their commitment, schools will be able to count on support available, as well as on existing mechanisms and the ministerial actions described further on:

- > support from the network of regional sponsors and partners in the territory, who are implementing the "Healthy Schools" approach, particularly by providing awareness and training activities, documentation and tools
- > cooperation between stakeholders in the public health network and the CSSS, who promote healthy living habits, especially healthy eating and physical activity (Kino-Québec)
- > cooperation of the regional offices of the MELS
- > tools designed by MAPAQ
- > local, regional or provincial organizations with expertise in, or programs on, healthy eating and active living

MINISTERIAL ACTIONS

The MELS will take steps to facilitate the process in different schools. Some of these steps will be carried out in partnership with other ministries. The MSSS and MAPAQ also intend to support the implementation of the Framework Policy by announcing various initiatives they plan to pursue.

The following are the main actions that the MELS will be undertaking:

- > Tour the regions to inform schools and help them embrace the Framework Policy.
- > Provide the school community with \$8 million to promote the implementation of various elements of the orientations related to healthy eating, \$6.5 million of which will be allotted to the purchase of capital assets such as stoves, refrigerators and microwave ovens.
- > Increase funding allocated to schoolyard beautification projects from \$3 million to \$6 million.
- > Provide a checklist to help schools and school boards draw up a profile of their situation with respect to the Framework Policy orientations, so that they can establish their priorities, define or improve their actions, and evaluate their approach.
- > Publish information and animation tools to provide parents, students and school staff with key information about the benefits of active living as well as recommendations to assist them in making informed food choices.
- > Set up a Web site where schools and school boards can obtain information on initiatives, documentation, and links to nutrition and physical activity resources.
- > Ensure that government campaigns promoting healthy living habits are also aimed at young people and their parents.

The following are the main actions that the MSSS and MAPAQ will be undertaking, unilaterally or jointly:

- > Train sponsors from the health network who will be working directly with the schools and school boards to help them implement their local policy.
- > Include a section on healthy eating in *Mes aliments, j'en prends soin!*, an education resource kit targeting elementary school students.
- > Carry out various prevention and monitoring activities in hygiene and food safety in order to prevent health risks throughout the biofood chain.
- > Include awareness-raising and educational messages about healthy eating and wise food choices on the Web site *Mes aliments, j'en prends soin!*
- > Produce awareness-raising and information tools and materials on hygiene and food safety.
- > Include awareness-raising and education messages about healthy eating in information tools intended for consumers.
- > Develop a basic nutrition training program for food service workers who prepare menus and meals and choose condiments.
- > Offer training to food service managers and workers (food safety).
- > Together with Pêche et Aquaculture Québec, raise awareness among food processors to help them create products that are suited to school and daycare populations as well as their cafeterias and vending machines.
- > Establish partnerships between local producers and distributors on the one hand, and school and daycare cafeterias on the other, by integrating actions to promote the purchase of local foods.

FOLLOW-UP OF THE IMPLEMENTATION OF THE FRAMEWORK POLICY ORIENTATIONS

Before the end of November 2007, school boards and public and private schools will receive a checklist from the MELS to help them prepare a profile of their situation prior to the implementation of the Framework Policy. To prepare this profile, schools and school boards will have access to community resources, in particular the CSSS, the public health network and community organizations. This profile will allow them to determine where they stand in relation to the orientations, identify priorities and establish an action plan. A committee comprising the main partners will then be created to monitor implementation. Indicators associated with the orientations described in Chapter 2 will be developed, in addition to those presented in Table 2.

It should be noted that the timetable in Table 2 places priority on the orientations promoting healthy eating, in accordance with the government's Youth Action Strategy. This timetable is shorter than the one suggested for the orientations promoting active living. From January 2009 to January 2011, school boards and private schools will be asked to submit an annual report on the implementation of the Framework Policy. The MELS will consult them to discuss the checklist's content and how the profile and report should be transmitted.

EVALUATION OF THE FRAMEWORK POLICY

In conformity with its policy regarding program evaluation, the MELS will evaluate this Framework Policy. The evaluation will take place in two stages. First, in 2009, the MELS will evaluate the implementation process as it is being applied. This formative evaluation will provide feedback to the school boards, private schools and the MELS concerning aspects to be improved, and should thereby increase the effectiveness of the process.

Then, in 2011, the MELS will examine whether the Framework Policy's objectives have been achieved. School boards and private schools will be consulted on the procedure to be followed.

TABLE 2 PRIORITIES FOR THE IMPLEMENTATION OF ORIENTATIONS

Organizations	Priorities	Indicators	Targets and Deadlines	
School boards Private schools	Using a checklist provided by the MELS, prepare a profile of their situation with respect to the Framework Policy orientations related to healthy eating and active living. ⁸	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> > Percentage of school boards that prepare a profile of their situation > Percentage of private schools that prepare a profile of their situation 	100% November 2007	
	Adopt a local policy on healthy eating and active living or, if applicable, update an existing policy, taking into account the deadlines in this table and in Table 3.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> > Percentage of school boards that have adopted or updated a local policy > Percentage of private schools that have adopted or updated a local policy 	100% November 2007	
	Every year, for a period of three years, prepare a report on the implementation of the Framework Policy, using a checklist provided by the MELS.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> > Percentage of school boards that prepare a report on the implementation of the Framework Policy > Percentage of private schools that prepare a report on the implementation of the Framework Policy 	100% In January of every year (2009 to 2011)	
Public schools and centres	Include in their planning (success plan, action plan or other) their strategy for implementing the Framework Policy orientations, taking into account the deadlines in this table and in Table 3.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> > Percentage of public schools and centres that have established a strategy for implementing the Framework Policy orientations > Percentage of private schools that have established a strategy for implementing the Framework Policy orientations 	100% January 2008	
Private schools	Implement elements associated with the orientations for healthy eating. (See Table 3 for the timetable on the implementation of 16 priority elements)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> > Number of elements implemented > Percentage of schools that have implemented the expected number of elements⁹ 	January 2008	September 2008
			4 100%	16 100%

8. School boards will prepare a profile of the situation for all of the schools and centres for which they are responsible.

9. The term *schools* refers here to both public and private elementary and secondary schools as well as adult education and vocational education centres.

Organizations	Priorities	Indicators	Targets and Deadlines		
Public schools and centres	Adopt measures to implement the orientations related to active living.	> Percentage of schools that have adopted measures for each of the orientations related to active living	September		
			2008	2009	2010
			50%	75%	100%
Private schools	Adopt measures to implement the orientations related to education, promotion and communication.	> Percentage of schools that have adopted measures for each of the orientations related to education, promotion and communication	September		
			2008	2009	2010
			50%	75%	100%
School boards Public schools and centres Private schools	Create partnerships with the community in order to implement the Framework Policy orientation.	> Percentage of schools that have created partnerships with the community	September		
			2008	2009	2010
			50%	75%	100%

TABLE 3 IMPLEMENTATION TIMETABLE FOR ORIENTATIONS RELATED TO HEALTHY EATING

The implementation of orientations related to healthy eating will be carried out in two stages. Four of the 16 priority elements in the Framework Policy will be implemented starting in January 2008; the remainder, in September 2008. The table below provides an overview of how this process will be executed. We are asking schools to respect this timetable so that students may have access to healthy foods at school as soon as possible.

THEME 1: SCHOOL ENVIRONMENT

ORIENTATIONS RELATED TO HEALTHY EATING

January 2008 September 2008

	January 2008	September 2008
<p>ORIENTATION 1 Offer a variety of foods and give priority to foods of good nutritional value.</p> <p><i>Priority Elements:</i></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Offer meals that include foods from each of the four food groups of <i>Canada's Food Guide</i>: Vegetables and Fruit, Grain Products, Milk and Alternatives, and Meat and Alternatives. 2. Prepare a main course accompanied by a least one vegetable. 3. Provide a variety of fruits and vegetables. 4. Provide a variety of 100% pure (unsweetened) fruit juices and vegetable juices, in addition to milk and water. 5. Give priority to whole grain products. 6. Offer desserts made with fruit, milk products and whole grain products; avoid desserts that have a high fat or sugar content. 7. Reduce the fat content of meats. 8. Favour low-fat or nonfat cooking methods, such as steaming, baking, braising, poaching, grilling or roasting. 9. Avoid products containing saturated or hydrogenated fats (trans fats). 	<p>●</p>	<p>●</p> <p>●</p> <p>●</p> <p>●</p> <p>●</p> <p>●</p> <p>●</p> <p>●</p> <p>●</p>
<p>ORIENTATION 2 Eliminate foods of low nutritional value from all school food supplies.</p> <p><i>Priority Elements:</i></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 10. Eliminate sugar-sweetened and artificially sweetened (diet) soft drinks as well as sugar-sweetened beverages. 11. Eliminate products in which sugar or a sugar substitute is the first ingredient listed. 12. Eliminate French fries. 13. Eliminate frying and deep-frying, and avoid commercial or pre-fried breaded foods. 14. Sell or offer foods and beverages that meet dietary guidelines at fundraising events, special events, on school trips, outings, etc. 	<p>●</p> <p>●</p> <p>●</p>	<p>●</p> <p>●</p>
<p>ORIENTATION 3 Provide appropriate areas and favourable conditions for meals.</p> <p><i>Priority Elements:</i></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 15. Make sure that eating areas are safe at all times. 16. Make lunchtime an enjoyable part of the school day by ensuring that eating areas are pleasant and inviting. 		<p>●</p> <p>●</p>

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