

Toward a School Nourishment Program at New Westminster Schools

This update is to inform you of the process and rationale for how we will move forward with creating our first cost-shared, universally accessible meal program at New Westminster Schools, starting in early 2019. Our sustainable program will feature a two-year roll-out and increase access for all students in our schools to healthy, nutritious lunches.

How we got here

On June 27, 2017, the following Board motion was passed:

THAT the Board of Education for School District No. 40 (New Westminster) direct staff to provide a report by January 2018 on the steps to be taken and costs associated with a district-wide plan to address food security and healthy eating, that will make available food programs to all of our schools so that no child is hungry and every child eats healthy.

Based on the motion, the School District and Fraser Health worked together to conduct a review of our existing food programs and propose a model that would best meet our needs.

What we did

Data collection:

- Family and staff surveys
- Student focus groups
- Focused interviews
- School site visits

Review of Best Practices:

- Other school districts
- Canadian and International

What we heard

Our Parents:

- Want a district-wide lunch program.
- Would like meals be to be reasonably priced, healthy and provide choice. Meals must also have flexibility to allow for daily, weekly or monthly ordering.
- Would be willing to pay between \$5 and \$6 for a lunch (44% of respondents).
- Are willing to pay more (.50/meal) to subsidize a child in need.
- Recognize that subsidies, full and partial, would be needed for all families to participate.

Our Students:

- Identified relationships as the key means of how students access food.
- Said stigma is a key reason why some were not accessing, or comfortable accessing, the food supports provided.
- Say there is a need to better advertise, in a non-stigmatizing way, food supports available in schools.
- Would like to see food available in multiple locations so those in need are less likely to be identified.

Our Teachers/Staff/Admin:

- Felt food could be used to build relationships and a sense of community.
- Felt there was a need for a daily school nourishment program at their school.
- Identified the lack of consistency in food supports across the district as an issue, and felt stigma had an impact on who would access them.
- Said there were challenges with the time needed and staffing required to provide food supports.

What we will do

- Address gaps in access to healthy food for vulnerable students across the district.
- Develop a sustainable model that increases access for all students to eat healthy lunches.
- Reduce stigma so that vulnerable students know how to access food and are not ashamed to access it.

How we are getting there

- The Board directed staff to support the development of a new School Nourishment Program that will make nutritious food available to students in all schools if parents choose to purchase. Participation in this meal program will be optional. Families choosing to participate will pay an additional .50 cents/meal to support a subsidy program.
- Full and partial subsidies will be available to families who need assistance. Subsidy support will be accounted in such a way that students will not know if others have been subsidized, with the aim of decreasing stigma and barriers to participation.
- The Board has approved the formation of an ad hoc (2018 – 2021) *School Nourishment Program Advisory Committee* with representatives from the district, school based administration, CUPE, and the Fraser Health Authority to support and guide the rollout. Others (i.e. post-secondary partners, NWTU, alternate program staff, parents, students, etc.) will also be invited to participate as the process unfolds.

Rollout

The new school lunch program rollout will begin in February 2019 at École Qayqayt Elementary School, Queen Elizabeth Elementary School, and Queensborough Middle School. No changes will happen to the existing model of food provision in our other schools until the beginning of the school year in September 2019. More details regarding the new school lunch program will be available in the coming months.

The School Nourishment Program Review Report can be viewed at: <http://bit.ly/2RyZlpc>.

If you have questions, please contact: Cyndi Adams, School Nutrition Coordinator, New Westminster Schools, cadams@sd40.bc.ca.