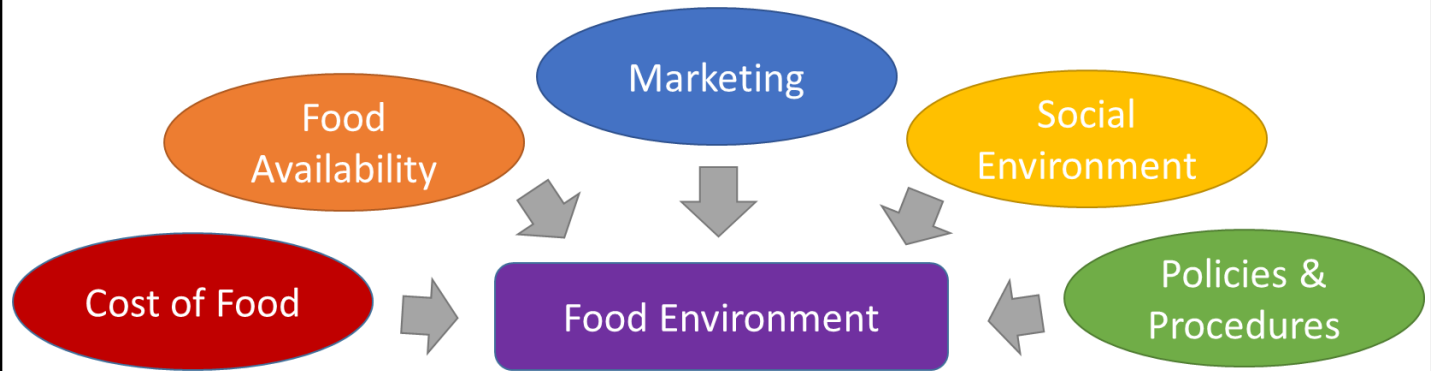


Food for Thought: School Food Environment Report

A dietetic internship research project was conducted in 2017 to identify and assess the facilitators and barriers to a healthy food environment in local schools in Grey and Bruce County. The study involved 14 semi-structured interviews with key informants such as principals, faculty, and volunteers. The essential elements of a school food environment are outlined below.



Following each interview, researchers completed environmental scans using a tool adapted from Alberta Health Science's *Healthy Eating Rubric* and Nutrition Tools for Schools' *Creating a Healthy School Nutrition Environment*.

The supports already in place within the schools and the perceived barriers are outlined in the chart below.

Perceived Facilitators	Perceived Barriers
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• School Food and Beverage Policy• Ontario Student Nutrition Program• Parents/Parent's Council• Availability of a milk program• Staff role modelling healthy eating	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Food sent from home• Need for healthy fundraising ideas• Inaccessibility of healthy food choices• Lack of nutrition resources• Need for improved allergy education• Need for more policy implementation

Researchers identified Free Cooking Clubs, Student Nutrition Program (SNP) Delivery, and Indigenous Inclusion Activities that represented positive current practices in Grey Bruce schools. These programs enhance student food literacy and increase access to healthy foods. Features of successful programs are summarized below. These activities can be adapted to other Grey Bruce schools.

Free Cooking Club

- Operates on donated food, time, and money
- Students prepare the food before delivering it to classrooms
- Students create a year-end cookbook

SNP Delivery

- Small groups of students help to refill SNP food bins daily
- All students have all-day access to healthy foods from the bins
- Maximizes the impact of the SNP
- Supports the most vulnerable students in a non-stigmatizing way

Indigenous Inclusion Activities

- Indigenous community members guide or support activities. These contributions are acknowledged and respected.
- Indigenous teachings are included in daily activities (eg. Indigenous phrase of the day)
- Traditional foods and events are honoured

Recommendations for Action

Curriculum, Teaching and Learning

Offer staff training on evidence-based nutrition concepts, food literacy, and available resources. Encourage consistent nutrition messaging. Regularly review nutrition policies and practices.

School and Classroom Leadership

Create a dedicated School Health Champion or committee to lead nutrition initiatives. Encourage School Health Champions to connect with public health for support.
Avoid using food as a reward in the classroom.

Student Engagement

Ensure each student has the opportunity for meaningful participation in sustainable food security initiatives beyond the charitable food response. Facilitate connections with community food programs (eg. The Good Food Box, community gardens, community kitchens)
Engage students in opportunities for peer leadership in creating supportive school food environments

Social and Physical Environment

Use non-food items for fundraising and rewards.
Evaluate the food environment within the school.
Ensure that healthy food choices are available and accessible.
Continue to support universal Student Nutrition Programs.

Home, School, and Community Partnerships

Share nutrition information from credible sources with caregivers and families through newsletters and social media.
Increase local food procurement and offer opportunities to experience local food and agriculture.

Support for Indigenous Inclusion

Learn more about Indigenous culture, traditional ceremony and foods. Connect with members of local Indigenous communities in coordination with partner agencies

Supports for Action



Visit www.brightbites.ca for programs and activities to boost school nutrition.



Connect with your School Public Health Nurse to access current health information and borrow resources:
www.greybrucepublichealth.on.ca



Visit www.UnlockFood.ca for information on food and nutrition, healthy eating and disease prevention.



At www.ophea.net you can receive free resources, teaching tools and activity ideas to support a healthy classroom and school environment.