



## Healthy Eating in Halton Schools Program Update – May 2008

*A Guide to  
Creating a Healthy School  
Nutrition Environment*

Healthy eating is happening in Halton schools! Since, 2004 the Halton Healthy School Nutrition Environment committee (HSNE) has been working diligently to ensure that schools are aware of the importance of healthy eating and are offering nutritious foods at school.

The first initiative of the HSNE was to produce a resource to help schools develop a healthy school nutrition environment. That means supporting healthy eating through all aspects of the school environment including the curriculum, foods available at school, and role models. *Healthy Eating in Halton Schools: A guide to Creating a Healthy School Nutrition Environment* was distributed to all schools in the fall of 2006. The guide explains that foods offered or sold in schools should be healthy choices including foods available for "special food" days and fundraising (e.g., lunch program, vending machines, cafés or tuck shops). Having healthy foods available in schools reinforces the curriculum, which teaches children what foods to eat to be healthy.

The second initiative of the HSNE committee was to provide Nutrition Action Grants to Halton elementary and high schools. These grants, which have been available since the fall of 2006, are intended to help area schools get healthy eating programs started in their school. In the 2006-07 school year, 22 elementary schools and 10 high schools received grants. Nutrition Action Grants have been distributed again for the 2007-08 school year to 22 elementary and 12 high schools.

Schools came up with some innovative ways to promote healthy eating. Most schools had healthy eating campaigns featuring student designed murals, posters, photography, and newsletters.

- **Tecumseh Public School** came up with a "catch you eating healthy" contest with sport related prizes. Georgetown's **Christ the King Catholic Secondary School** students came up with a "muffin a day giveaway" to promote eating breakfast.
- **Gladys Speers Public School** hosted multicultural food days. **Acton District High School** created a community garden.
- **Holy Rosary Catholic Elementary School** started an Iron Chef Cooking Club. **Oakwood Public School** prepared healthy snacks and created a cookbook. **White Oaks Secondary School** started a cooking club and created recipes featuring novel foods.
- **St. Andrew's Elementary School** focused on healthy snacks for intramural events and **St. Vincent's Elementary School** worked on healthy fundraising.
- **St. Ignatius of Loyola High School** grade 12 students learned how to prepare healthy foods and taught grade 2 students at **St. Joan of Arc Elementary School** about food and nutrition.
- **Oakville Trafalgar High School** students hosted a "Feed your Brain Campaign" offering fruit, vegetables, healthy snacks and water during exams. **Iroquois Ridge High School** also provided healthy snacks and beverages for exams and literacy testing.
- **Blakelock High School** made an outstanding effort producing a nutrition rap song, a "Nutrition Man and Veggie Fairy" drama production, and filmed a video on organic farming, food availability and the loss of Halton's rich agricultural land to development.



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These nutrition programs resulted in increased awareness of the importance of healthy eating and increased interest in healthy eating in students and staff. Many programs offered opportunities to sample healthy foods, some students trying these foods for the first time. The biggest impact was the increased skill building opportunities for students involved in food preparation, leadership, and peer mentoring.

According to Lynn Roblin, Registered Dietitian and Chair of the Healthy School Nutrition Environment Committee, "school nutrition programs and policies that support healthy eating at school can improve the food choices available at school and impact the foods children bring from home. Today many children have poor eating habits that can cause unhealthy weights and increased risk of adult health problems such as type 2 diabetes. Having healthy foods available at school contributes to healthy growth and development in children and helps children be better prepared to learn and be active".

The Halton Healthy School Nutrition Environment Committee and the Nutrition Action Grants are funded by Halton Choices 4 Health, a community network that works together to promote healthy eating, physical activity, good mental health and tobacco free living in Halton. For more information visit [www.choices4health.org](http://www.choices4health.org).