

Give Your School a Food Makeover

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“Children growing up in North America today are at risk of being the first generation in modern memory that will have a shorter life expectancy than their parents.”(Dr. David Katz - Yale University School of Medicine)

For the past three years I have been both a teacher and a student. I teach in an elementary, multi-grade classroom at the SDA Christian School in Saskatoon, SK. I have another area of interest and that is the field of Dietetics and Nutrition. I have been working on a Masters degree in Nutrition part-time for the past three years. Some people think I'm crazy! They can't imagine how the two disciplines fit together.



Actually, they fit together very well. In fact, serious concerns have motivated educators, nutritionists and other care providers to develop health promotion programs for students within schools. Educational institutions can play a significant role in health promotion and disease prevention. They are ideal settings for creating an environment in which to promote healthy eating behaviours among children and teens. Adults within the school can play an important role in modeling healthy lifestyles and nutrition behaviors.

I've been studying a school-based health promotion program called *Nutrition Positive (NP)*. The initiative was first introduced in four Saskatoon elementary schools in the year 2000. Today, there are more than fifty schools under the *NP* umbrella. These include both Public and Catholic schools at the elementary and high school levels. The program is coordinated by a *NP Advisory Committee* made up of representatives from the Saskatoon Public School Division, Greater Saskatoon Catholic Schools, and community partners including the University of Saskatchewan.

Since nutrition month is coming up (March in Canada), I thought I'd share some **great ideas for promoting healthy eating habits at your school**. All of these come from the *NP* program manual which is available at www.chep.org. Click on *Nutrition Positive*.

- ☺ Research and create a poster 'rainbow' of foods grown or produced in your region.
- ☺ Have Science students determine the amount of fat in fast foods & make a display.
- ☺ Incorporate a Snack Shack into Math class. Students sell healthy snacks at recess.
- ☺ Create & publish a nutrition edition of the school newspaper or newsletter.
- ☺ Have students plan a nutritious menu and budget for a classroom campout.
- ☺ Create a nutrition facts trivia game to use as a competition between two classes.
- ☺ Decorate hats with food themes and display them in a 'Healthy Hat' parade.
- ☺ Have students survey students and staff on nutritional habits (e.g. eating breakfast).
- ☺ Create a video or power point presentation on a nutrition topic.
- ☺ Hold a debate on a nutrition topic (e.g. genetically modified foods).
- ☺ Have an 'Apple and Kite Day'. Fly kites and give each student an apple.
- ☺ Organize an international food fair to give students a taste of other cultures.

- ☺ Remove non-nutritious food, pop, and sugar drinks from school vending machines.
- ☺ Use non-food items for classroom rewards (e.g. pencils, games, extra recess etc)
- ☺ Serve healthy snacks at sporting events and school celebrations (For instance: watermelon, popcorn, carrot sticks, fruit cups, salad bar etc.)