

School Food Sales and Policies Provincial Report II

Ministry of Education
And
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ActNowBC

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Introduction

This report is a follow-up to British Columbia's first *School Food Sales and Policies Report*¹, which was issued in 2005. That report provided an overview of what foods and beverages were being sold in B.C. elementary, middle and secondary schools; how they were being sold (vending machines, school stores, cafeterias, fundraising events, etc.); and what policies, if any, were in place at the school and district levels to guide food and beverage sales. The 2005 report also looked at the proportion of "more healthy" versus "less healthy" food and beverage options provided in schools and identified seven opportunities for action – areas where schools or districts could focus their attention to help promote more healthy choices.

The 2005 report established a baseline as B.C. accelerated its work towards the goal of eliminating unhealthy foods and beverages from all public schools. This report measures progress since 2005. It also presents additional findings in areas not covered in the 2005 report, broadening the baseline for further research. Specifically, it assesses the impact of the *Guidelines for Food and Beverage Sales in B.C. Schools*², which were issued in November 2005, following release of the first *School Food Sales and Policies Report*. It also assesses the economic impact of school food and beverage sales, identifies opportunities for action, and highlights examples of progress in schools and districts province-wide.

It should be noted that nutrition is just one of the areas in which B.C. schools and districts are working to provide more healthy choices and to build healthier learning environments. For more information, visit the Ministry of Education's Healthy Schools home page at www.bced.gov.bc.ca/health/. The Province has also established ActNowBC (www.actnowbc.ca), a broad-based initiative designed to improve the health and wellbeing of British Columbians by promoting healthy eating, physical activity, healthy pregnancies and reductions in tobacco use.

Data Collection

The information in this report was collected in the spring of 2007 using two online surveys - one for districts, to be completed by the superintendent or designate, and one for schools, to be completed by the principal or designate.

Districts were asked to report on the status of nutrition policy development, and other efforts being made to promote healthy eating. Schools were asked to report in four areas:

- vending machines (including number of machines and types of items stocked)
- food and beverage-based fundraisers
- allocation of revenue from food and beverage sales, and
- the impacts of the 2005 *Guidelines for Food and Beverage Sales in BC Schools*.

¹*School Food Sales and Policies Provincial Report*. Ministry of Education and Ministry of Health, 2005. Available online at http://www.bced.gov.bc.ca/health/sales_report.pdf

² *Guidelines for Food and Beverage Sales in BC Schools*. Ministry of Education and Ministry of Health, 2005.

Measuring Progress

The questions asked of schools and districts in 2007 were similar to, but went beyond the scope of the questions asked in 2005. Therefore, direct comparisons of results are not possible in all areas. Where relevant, this report remarks on trends and general directions, as well as noting statistical differences. In areas where no questions were asked in 2005 (e.g., revenue and impacts of the *Guidelines*), the information in this report represents a benchmark against which B.C. can measure future progress.

It should be noted that, since the 2007 survey was conducted, an updated version of the *Guidelines* has been distributed to schools and districts. It sets higher standards for food choices in schools (requiring the elimination of “choose least” options as well as “not recommended” options) and shortens the timeline for implementation from 2009 to 2008 – recognizing that schools and districts have already made tremendous progress.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Since 2005, B.C. schools and districts have made considerable progress towards eliminating unhealthy choices from school-based food and beverage sales. Although direct comparisons with 2005 were not always possible, the 2007 survey results show improvements in a number of areas. They also highlight a series of opportunities for further action. Key findings are discussed below.

Sales from Vending Machines

- Schools are making excellent progress in eliminating “not recommended” beverages from vending machines, as directed by the 2005 *Guidelines for Food and Beverage Sales in B.C. Schools*. In 65 per cent of reporting schools, “not recommended” beverages made up less than a quarter of the options available in vending.
- The survey also underlines the fact that schools face more significant challenges in eliminating “not recommended” snacks from vending machines. This is due in part to the fact that the healthy snack market is not yet as mature as the healthy beverage market. Schools and districts can improve these results by working more closely with vendors and emphasizing their interest in, and demand for, healthy choices.

School Food and Beverage-Based Fundraising

- The survey found that food and beverage-based fundraisers continue to be common in schools. Most (54%) hold these fundraisers once a month or less often. As with sales from vending machines, progress in eliminating “not recommended” beverages has been very good. In 83% of schools, “not recommended” beverages made up less than 10% of the choices offered in fundraisers.
- Almost half of reporting schools (49%) had either eliminated “not recommended” foods from their fundraisers, or kept their proportion to 20% or less. Progress here is likely faster than in the area of vending snacks because foods for sale at fundraisers can be made at home or purchased from any of a wide range of suppliers, while vending snack choices are more dependent on a much smaller number of suppliers.

Revenues and Allocation

- Most schools (77%) valued their total annual revenues from food and beverage sales (vending machines and fundraisers) at \$10,000 or less. Most (58%) reported no impact from implementing the *Guidelines*, while a small number saw their revenues increase. Experience in other jurisdictions suggests that any losses from eliminating less healthy choices are likely interim in nature.

Partnerships and Committees

- The 2007 results show improvements in several areas related to parent and community involvement. For example, in 82% of responding districts, parent organizations were directly engaged in developing nutrition guidelines, and 40% of responding schools had committees in place to promote healthy eating, compared to 25% in 2005. This is significant because, in both the 2005 and 2007 surveys, schools with committees were making more progress in eliminating “not recommended” choices.

Additional Support

- About a third of the schools completing the 2007 survey responded to a question about the need for additional support to implement the *Guidelines*. Most were elementary schools, and the area in which they said they needed most support was “additional information and resources.”
- A \$1 million School Guidelines Support Initiative was announced in May 2007 by the B.C. Healthy Living Alliance. It offers schools and districts comprehensive, customized support to fully implement the *Guidelines*. Details are available at www.bced.gov.bc.ca/health/news_bchla.htm or visit the Healthy Schools Network Special Edition Newsletter, October 2007 at http://www.bced.gov.bc.ca/health/hsnetwork/newsletter_oct07.pdf

Recommendations

- Based on the findings of the 2007 survey, the ministries of Education and Health have made a number of recommendations to schools and districts. These *opportunities for action* are identified throughout the Results in Detail and Conclusion section.

RESULTS IN DETAIL

1. Response Rates

Response Rates for School Districts

- Fifty (50) district offices returned the district survey, for a response rate of 83%. (See Appendix A for a district-level overview.)
- The 2005 response rate was somewhat lower at 78% (47 district offices).

Response Rates for Schools

- Eight hundred and sixty-eight (868) schools responded, for a response rate of 52%. Surveys were received from at least one school in every district. (See Appendix B for a school-level overview.)
- The 2005 response rate was 71% (1,169 schools).
- The lower level of response from schools compared to 2005 may be related to differences in how the surveys were administered (online in 2007 versus hard copy in 2005) and the length of time provided for responses (schools had more time to respond in 2005).

Response Rates By School Category

- Of the 868 reporting schools:
 - 67% were elementary schools, compared to 74% in 2005.
 - 6% were middle schools, compared to 7% in 2005.
 - 27% were secondary schools, compared to 18% in 2005.
 - One school did not have a school type in the database.
- Although the number of responses was lower, analysis by region suggests that survey respondents were representative of the province's schools. As shown in Table 1, the percentage of survey respondents by school region mirrors closely the number of schools in each region. For example:
 - Metro Coast Region, with 38% of B.C. schools, yielded 37% of the survey respondents.
 - Vancouver Island Region, with 18% of B.C. schools, yielded 16% of the respondents.
 - Fraser Valley Region, with 9% of B.C. schools, yielded 9% of the respondents.

Table 1. Distribution of school-level responses by B.C. School Region

School Region	Schools %	Respondents %
Fraser Valley	9%	9%
Kootenays	6%	7%
Vancouver Island	18%	16%
Okanagan Mainline	13%	15%
Metro Coast	38%	37%
Northwest	5%	4%
Northeast	11%	12%
Total	100%	100%

In addition, analysis of respondents by school type suggests the data mirrors the provincial situation, with some over-representation of elementary schools and some under-representation of secondary schools, as follows:

- Elementary schools comprise sixty per cent (60%) of B.C. schools; 67% of respondents were from elementary schools.
- Middle schools comprise five per cent (5%) of B.C. schools; 6% of respondents were from middle schools.
- Secondary schools comprise 36% of B.C. schools; 27% of respondents were from secondary schools.

2. School District Nutrition Policies

Policies in place or under development

Thirty-seven (37) of the reporting districts (74%) had food and beverage policies in place or under development. See Appendix A for further details.

In 2005, 81% of reporting districts had policies “in place, under development, or planned.” Precise comparisons are not possible because the 2007 survey did not ask about planning – only policies in place or under development.

Representatives of all the major stakeholders in school districts contributed in varying degrees to developing these policies, with senior administration (98%), district employees (98%), trustees (90%), and parent organizations (82%) contributing most often.³

Districts were asked to report on the policies in place or under development in 16 categories. Many of the 50 reporting districts had policies in place or under development on the types of food sold in schools, for example:

- In school vending machines (74%)
- In school stores (70%)

³ Respondents were asked to check all categories that applied, hence the total number of responses exceeds the number of respondents.

- In school cafeterias (68%)
- During fundraising events inside schools (62%)

More than half of the reporting districts had policies in place or under development regarding:

- Parent participation on food committees (60%)
- Limiting access to less nutritious food during school hours (60%)
- Food sold at special events or field trips (56%)
- Competitive pricing of healthy food choices (56%)

Fewer than half had policies in place or under development regarding:

- Discouraging the use of food as a reward (40%)
- Food sold during fundraising events outside schools (38%)
- Food brought from home for lunch and snacks (22%)

Opportunity for Action: More districts could demonstrate their leadership by working to develop food and beverage policies. Districts – with dedicated expertise in areas such as accounting – may also be better positioned than schools to work with suppliers such as vending companies to help ensure provision of a greater number and range of healthy choices.

Additional efforts underway at the district level

Eighty-four per cent (84%) of reporting districts monitored their food and beverage policies for adherence. Most (77%) did so through all-principals’ meetings at the district level, and more than half (55%) through meetings with individual principals at the school level.⁴

Thirty-two (32) responding districts provided additional information on their efforts to promote healthy eating and decrease the availability of unhealthy food choices as defined by *Guidelines for Food and Beverage Sales in BC Schools*. Efforts included consulting with or educating stakeholders (19%), working with vending companies (15%), and creating new health promotion/educator positions (13%). The comments were categorized as shown in Table 2.⁵

⁴ Respondents were asked to check all categories that applied, hence the total number of responses exceeds the number of respondents.

⁵ Some comments fell into more than one category, hence the total number of responses exceeds the number of respondents.

Table 2. Additional efforts by districts to meet the *Guidelines for Food and Beverage Sales in BC Schools*

Additional Efforts to Meet Guidelines	N	%
Consulting with or educating administrators, staff, parents, and students	9/47	19%
Working with vending companies	7/47	15%
Creating health promotion/educator position	6/47	13%
Adopting and/or distributing Ministry guidelines	5/47	11%
District committee in place or being formed	4/47	9%
Developing policy	4/47	9%
Requiring schools to develop health promotion policies and/or strategies	3/47	6%
Accessing grants and funded programs	3/47	6%
District funding to schools to make up lost revenue	3/47	6%
Implementing specific programs	3/47	6%

Additional support

Thirty-one (31) districts reported that they need additional support to fully implement the *Guidelines for Food and Beverage Sales in BC Schools*, mainly in the form of additional information and resources (36%) and increased funding (28%). The comments were categorized as shown in Table 3.⁶

Table 3. Additional support needed by districts to implement the *Guidelines for Food and Beverage Sales in BC Schools*

Additional Support Needed	N	%
Additional information and resources (educational, clarification, guidelines)	14/39	36%
Increased funding	11/39	28%
Cooperation of vending and fast food retailers	3/39	8%
Time and personnel	2/39	5%
Provincial advertising of guidelines	1/39	3%
None	8/39	20%

Opportunity for Action: Schools and districts can get comprehensive, customized support to fully implement the *Guidelines for Food and Beverage Sales in BC Schools*. The B.C. Healthy Living Alliance – a provincial coalition that works to promote the health of British Columbians – is spearheading a comprehensive School Guidelines Support Initiative. Details are available at www.bced.gov.bc.ca/health/news_bchla.htm or visit the Healthy Schools Network Special Edition Newsletter, October 2007 at http://www.bced.gov.bc.ca/health/hsnetwork/newsletter_oct07.pdf

⁶ Some comments fell into more than one category, hence the total number of responses exceeds the number of respondents.

Districts without food and beverage policies

The 11 districts reporting that they do not have food and beverage policies either in place or under development were asked to outline their position on such policies. Almost half (46%) said their schools have already made or are making good progress toward providing healthy foods, hence district-level policies are not necessary.

3. School-Based Food and Beverage Sales

3.1 School Vending Machines

Data from the 2007 survey showed that school-based food and beverage sales continue to be the norm in B.C. Of reporting schools, 52% had vending (beverage and snack) machines. In 2005, 42% had beverage machines and approximately 19% had snack machines. Precise comparisons are not possible because of differences in how the questions were asked in the two surveys. In 2005, schools were asked to report on their numbers of permanent food sales outlets, which included cafeterias and school stores; the 2007 survey did not focus on cafeterias and school stores.

Across all school types, most schools with vending machines (60%) have only one or two machines. Though precise comparison with 2005 is not possible, the concentration of vending machines in 2007 is similar to the concentration of permanent food sales outlets in 2005.

The lowest concentration of vending machines is in elementary schools, with 84% having only one machine. The highest concentration is in secondary schools, with 60% having between four and 10 machines. Table 4 shows the number of vending machines across school types.

Table 4. Number (N) and percentage (%) of vending machines accessible to students across school types

Number of vending machines accessible to students	Elementary		Middle		Secondary		Total	
	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%
None	1	0%	0	0%	1	0%	2	0%
1	186	84%	1	2%	18	10%	205	47%
2	31	14%	3	6%	22	12%	56	13%
3	1	0%	11	23%	15	8%	27	6%
4	0	0%	14	30%	22	12%	36	8%
5 – 10	0	0%	17	36%	87	48%	104	24%
More than 10	1	0%	0	0%	7	2%	8	2%
Total	220	98%	46	97%	172	92%	438	100%

Percentages may not add to 100 due to rounding.

School vending machines that stock beverages

As shown in Table 5 below, all reporting schools with vending machines stock beverages,⁷ and the numbers of machines are highest in secondary schools.

Table 5. Number (N) and percentage (%) of vending machines that stock beverages across school types

Number of vending machines that stock beverages	Elementary		Middle		Secondary		Total	
	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%
None	0	0%	0	0%	0	0%	0	0%
1	187	85%	3	6%	29	16%	219	50%
2	32	14%	14	30%	30	17%	76	17%
3	0	0%	17	36%	28	16%	45	10%
4	0	0%	11	23%	28	16%	39	9%
5 – 10	0	0%	1	2%	55	29%	56	13%
More than 10	0	0%	0	0%	1	0%	1	0%
Total	219	99%	46	97%	171	94%	436	99%

Percentages may not add to 100 due to rounding.

Types of beverages sold in school vending machines

The *Guidelines for Food and Beverage Sales in BC Schools* divide foods and beverages typically sold in school settings into four categories: not recommended, choose least, choose sometimes and choose most. The 2007 survey shows that, overall, schools are making good progress toward eliminating “not recommended” beverages from vending machines, as evidenced by the “not stocked” bars in Figures 1, 2, 3, and 4.

Since the survey was conducted, a revised version of the *Guidelines* has been distributed to schools and districts. The 2007 *Guidelines* require the elimination of “choose least” choices from school sales as well as “not recommended” choices.

⁷ If a vending machine contained both beverages and snacks, respondents were asked to count it only if beverages made up most of the offerings.

Figure 1. Percentage of “not recommended” vegetable and fruit beverages in vending machines

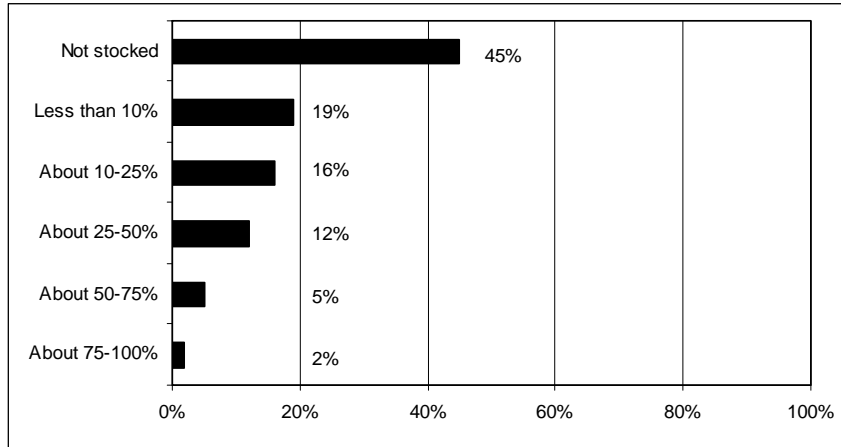


Figure 2. Percentage of “not recommended” milk-based beverages in vending machines

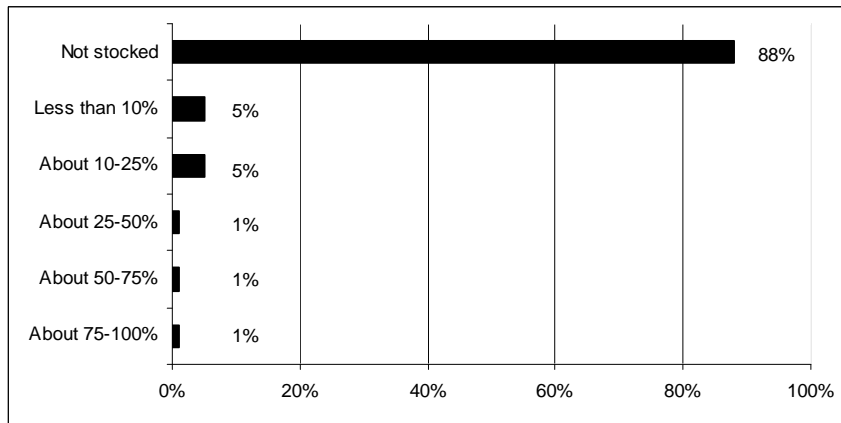


Figure 3. Percentage of other “not recommended” beverages (non-juice and non-milk-based) in vending machines

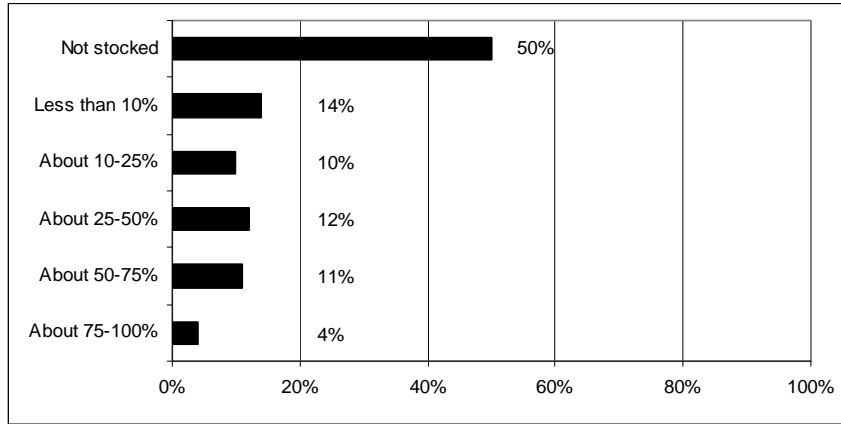
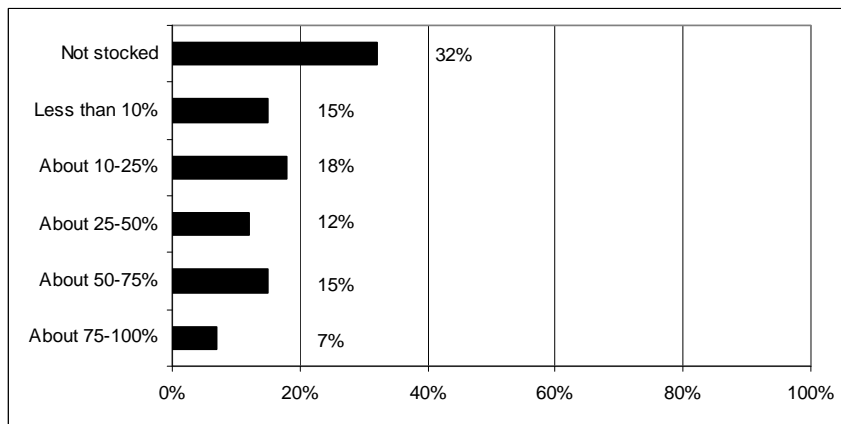


Figure 4. Percentage of all types of “not recommended” beverages in vending machines



School vending machines that stock snacks

Forty per cent (40%) of reporting schools with vending machines stocked snacks and, of these schools, most (81%) had only one or two such machines. Table 6 shows the number of vending machines that stock snacks across school types.⁸

The North Vancouver school district was the first in B.C. to fully implement the 2005 *Guidelines*. One of the keys to its success was collaborating with the local health authority to develop a Request for Proposal for vendors – based on the *Guidelines*. A generic version of the RFP is now available to all B.C. schools and districts through the Healthy Schools Network website at <http://www.bced.gov.bc.ca/health/hsnetwork/resources.htm>

⁸ Respondents were asked to count all machines that stock snacks, even if the snack offerings were not predominant in those machines.

Table 6. Number (N) and percentage (%) of vending machines that stock snacks across school types

Number of vending machines that stock snacks	Elementary		Middle		Secondary		Total	
	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%
None	0	0%	0	0%	0	0%	0	0%
1	2	100%	10	50%	31	38%	43	42%
2	0	0%	8	40%	32	39%	40	39%
3	0	0%	2	10%	12	14%	14	13%
4	0	0%	0	0%	4	4%	4	4%
5 – 10	0	0%	0	0%	2	2%	2	2%
More than 10	0	0%	0	0%	0	0%	0	0%
Total	2	100%	20	100%	81	97%	103	100%

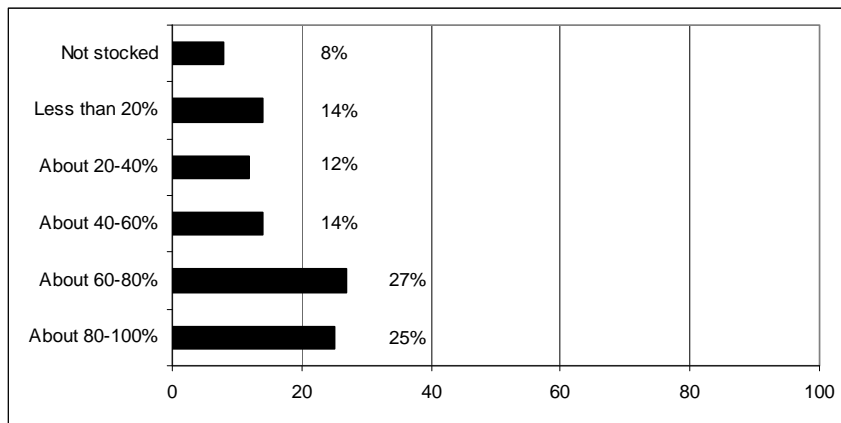
Percentages may not add to 100 due to rounding.

Types of snacks sold in school vending machines

While schools are doing well in eliminating “not recommended” beverages from vending machines, they face more significant challenges in eliminating “not recommended” snacks.

As shown in Figure 5, about a third (34%) of schools were meeting or exceeding that target. However, in more than half of responding schools (52%), “not recommended” snacks made up 60-100% of snack choices in vending machines. Only 8% of reporting schools did not stock “not recommended” snacks at all.

Figure 5. Percentage of “not recommended” snacks in vending machines



Opportunity for Action: Experience to date shows that vendors will respond to demand for healthier food and beverage choices. However, changes do take time and the snack market has not yet caught up with the beverage market. Districts and schools can help maintain the current positive momentum in this area by continuing to require vendors to provide choices that meet the Guidelines.

3.2 School Food and Beverage-Based Fundraisers

Eighty per cent (80%) of reporting schools held food and beverage-based fundraisers, compared to 72% in 2005.

For the purpose of this survey, food and beverage-based fundraisers are those that sell food primarily to students in the school, but not through cafeterias or schools stores. They include lunch, recess, and before/after school sales by parent advisory councils (PACs), athletic departments, student councils and business classes. Fundraisers where food and beverages are sold to parents or others in the community were excluded from the survey.

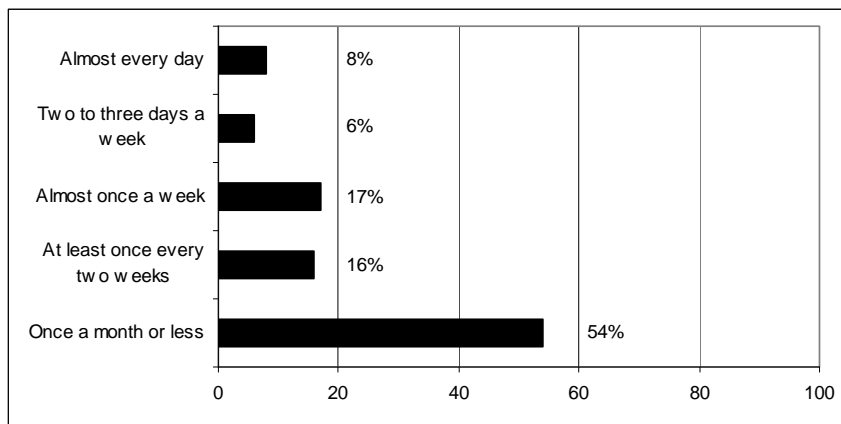
Eighty-eight per cent (88%) of reporting elementary schools said they hold these fundraisers. The figure was lower for middle and secondary schools at 67% and 63% respectively. Table 7 shows the distribution of food and beverage-based fundraisers across school types.

Table 7. Distribution of food and beverage-based fundraisers across school types

Holds food and beverage-based fundraisers	Elementary %	Middle %	Secondary %	Total %
Yes	88%	67%	63%	80%
No	12%	33%	37%	20%
Total	100%	100%	100%	100%

As shown in Figure 6, most schools (54%) offered these fundraisers once a month or less often.

Figure 6. Frequency of food and beverage-based fundraisers



Parent advisory councils (PACs) organize about half of food and beverage-based fundraisers. In the four weeks immediately preceding the survey, PACs organized 49% of these fundraisers, with students, including student councils, organizing 21%. A further 16% were organized by teachers and school administrators; 6% were organized by athletic departments and 2% were organized by business classes.

Types of food and beverages sold in fundraisers

Fundraising groups are making excellent progress toward eliminating “not recommended” beverages from sales to students, and good progress toward eliminating “not recommended” foods. For example:

- In 83% of reporting schools, “not recommended” beverages made up less than 10% of beverage choices sold in fundraisers during the reporting period (Figure 7).
- In 49% of reporting schools, “not recommended” foods made up less than 20% of food choices sold in fundraisers during the reporting period (Figure 8).

Figure 7. Percentage of “not recommended” beverages sold in fundraisers

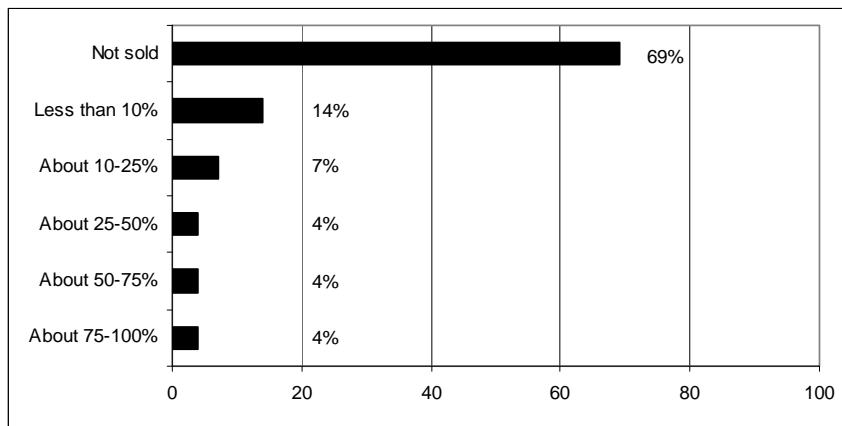
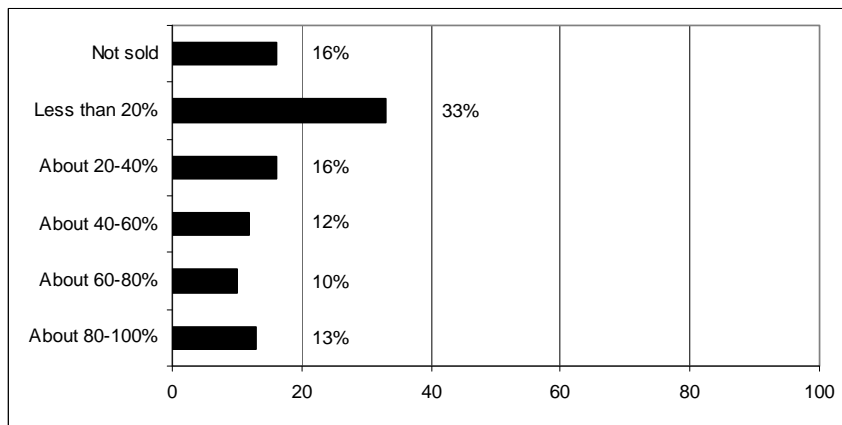


Figure 8. Percentage of “not recommended” foods sold in fundraisers



3.3 Revenues and Allocation

One of the major goals of the 2007 survey was to determine the financial impact of moving to eliminate “not recommended” foods and beverages from sales in B.C. schools.

Respondents were asked to provide annual total sales from vending machines and food and beverage-based fundraisers. As Figures 9 and 10 show, most schools have annual sales of \$10,000 or less from vending machines (77%) and food and beverage-based fundraisers (92%).

Figure 9. Annual total sales from vending machines

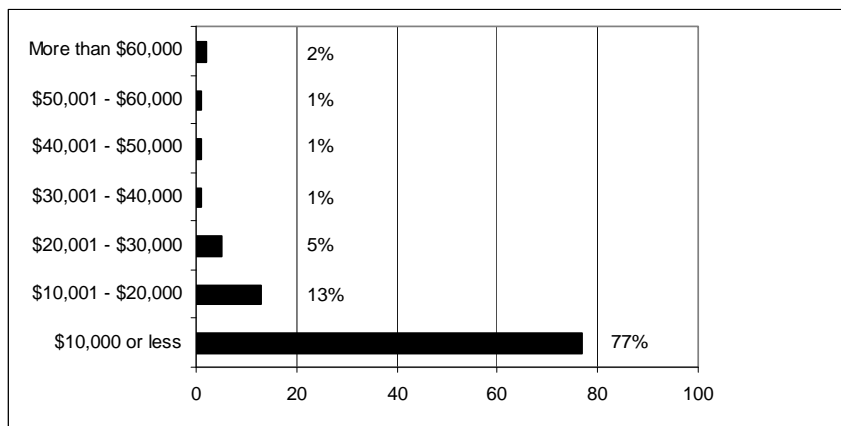
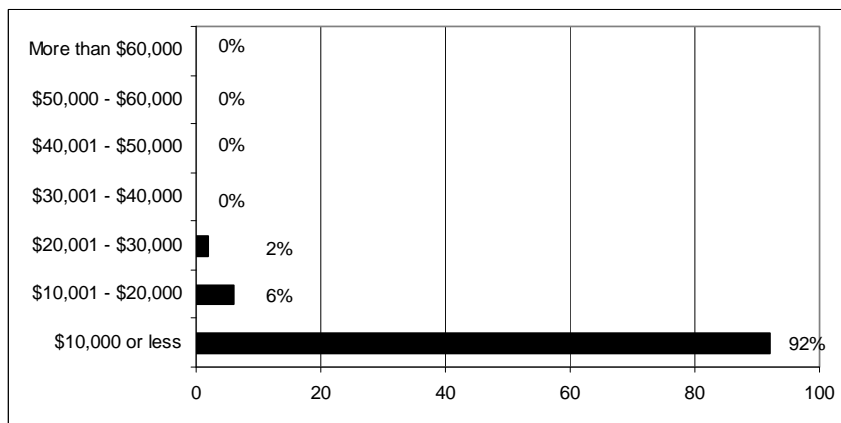


Figure 10. Annual total sales from food and beverage-based fundraisers



Review by school type shows there are no elementary schools with sales from vending machines exceeding \$10,000. For middle schools, 75% reported annual sales of \$10,000 or less. Secondary schools, as expected, tend to have higher annual sales, with 46% reporting revenues of \$10,000 or less, 30% reporting revenues between \$10,001 and \$20,000 and 24% reporting revenues of more than \$20,000. Four per cent (4%) of secondary schools reported annual sales from vending machines of over \$60,000 (Table 8).

Table 8. Annual sales from vending machines by school type

Annual Sales from Vending Machines	Elementary		Middle		Secondary	
	%	N	%	N	%	N
\$10,000 or less	100%	217	75%	33	46%	73
\$10,001 - \$20,000			14%	6	30%	48
More than \$20,000			9%	4	24%	32
More than \$60,000			2%	1	4%	7

Percentages may not add to 100 due to rounding.

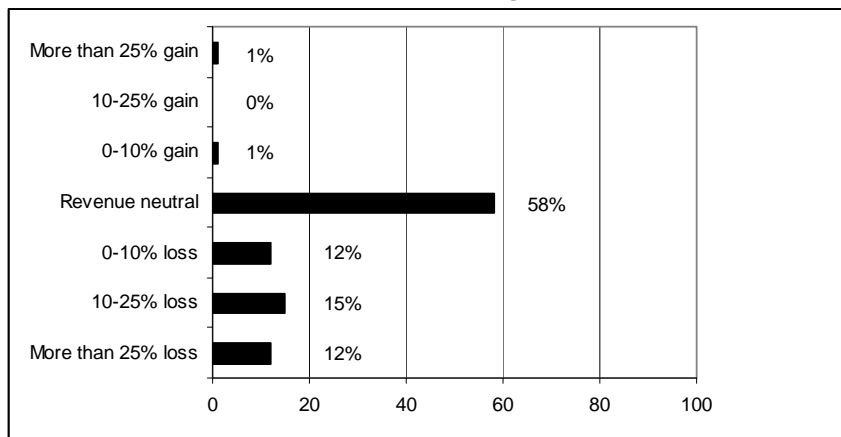
Respondents were also asked to indicate, in percentages, how revenue from vending machines and food and beverage-based fundraisers was allocated within the school. Most revenue went toward field trips (37%), athletics (31%), classroom extras (26%), and school events and presentations (25%).

4. School-based food and beverage guidelines

Effect on revenue

Another key focus of this study was to gauge the effect of the *Guidelines for Food and Beverage Sales in BC Schools* on school revenues. A majority (58%) of respondents said the impact was neutral, 39% said they experienced a loss; 12% of schools reporting a loss of up to 10%, 15% of schools reporting losses of 10 to 25%, and 12% of schools reporting losses greater than 25%. A small proportion said their revenues had increased. (Figure 11).

Figure 11. Effect of *Guidelines for Food and Beverage Sales in BC Schools* on food and beverage sales revenue



Many respondents (225) took the opportunity to estimate the impact of the *Guidelines* on revenue. Twenty-seven per cent (27%) noted that the *Guidelines* were influencing discussion and practice in the school.

Opportunity for Action: Since some schools are reporting that the *Guidelines* had a positive impact on revenues, there may be opportunities for schools and districts to learn from one another’s successes in this area. For an overview of successful approaches and strategies from five districts, go to: www.bced.gov.bc.ca/health/hsnetwork/newsletter_april07.pdf

Mitigating losses

Respondents were asked what, if anything, their schools are doing either to mitigate losses from selling healthier foods and beverages or to encourage healthier food and beverage choices among students. Seventy-one per cent (71%) said they were providing a greater variety of healthier choices, and 69% were increasing promotion of healthier food and beverage choices (Table 9).⁹

Table 9. Action taken by schools to mitigate losses from sales of healthier foods and beverages or to encourage healthier food and beverage choices by students

Action Taken	N	%
Providing more variety of healthier food or beverage choices	466/659	71%
Increasing promotion of healthier food or beverage choices	457/659	69%
Making healthier food or beverage choices more visible and available than other less nutritious options	231/659	35%
Preparing transition plans to allow for learning and adaptation to healthier food or beverage choices	206/659	31%
Adjusting prices to make healthier food choices less expensive than other less nutritious options	160/659	24%
Other	58/659	9%

Under “Other,” respondents cited, among other things, ongoing discussion in the classroom and school community. They also took the opportunity to elaborate on their efforts to provide healthier food and beverage choices and eliminate unhealthy choices.

At RE Mountain school in Langley, all Grade 8 students learn about the *Guidelines* in their home economics class, and school staff work with vendors and cafeteria caterers to offer healthier choices.

Opportunity for Action: Schools should celebrate their successes in providing more healthy choices, and recognize that revenue impacts change over time, with initial losses typically interim in nature. The fact that 58% of reporting schools have implemented positive changes with no loss of revenue should be a significant source of encouragement.

Opportunity for Action: More schools could use competitive pricing to encourage healthy choices and offset any potential loss of revenue. When healthier choices are priced lower than less healthy alternatives, experience shows that students are more likely to choose the healthier option.

School committees

Forty per cent (40%) of respondents had a committee in place to promote healthy eating in school. This is an increase from 2005, when only 25% of reporting schools had “a formal group with a central focus on nutrition in place.”¹⁰

At Reynolds Secondary in Victoria competitive pricing has supported healthy choices. Prices for milk and water were lowered, while prices for unhealthy choices were raised. This resulted in a large increase in the sale of milk and water – and no

As in 2005, there is some evidence in the 2007 findings that having a school committee in place to promote healthy eating has a positive impact on food and beverage choices. In schools where there is a committee in place, the data show the following (Table 10):

- The percentages of “not recommended” beverages and snacks eliminated from vending machines are also higher: for beverages, 41% compared to 32% for all survey respondents; for snacks, 42% compared to 8%.
- The percentage of “not recommended” foods eliminated from fundraisers is higher (49% compared to 16% for all survey respondents).
- However, the percentage of “not recommended” beverages eliminated from fundraisers is lower—39% compared to 69% for all survey respondents.

Table 10. Impact of school committee on food and beverage choices

	School Committee in Place	All Survey Respondents
% “not recommended” beverages “not stocked” in vending machines	41%	32%
% “not recommended” snacks “not stocked” in vending machines	42%	8%
% “not recommended” foods “not sold” at fundraisers	49%	16%
% “not recommended” beverages “not sold” at fundraisers	39%	69%

⁹ Respondents were asked to check all categories that applied, hence the total number of responses exceeds the number of respondents.

¹⁰ *School Food Sales and Policies Provincial Report*. Ministry of Education and Ministry of Health, 2005. Page 11. Available online at http://www.bced.gov.bc.ca/health/sales_report.pdf

Opportunity for Action: Given the correlation between school nutrition committees and the provision of more healthy food and beverage choices, schools that do not have such committees may wish to consider forming them.

The Langley school district partnered with the local health authority to cost-share the services of a community nutritionist. The nutritionist works with the district to promote awareness and provide expert guidance, including training for cafeteria staff and support in working with food and beverage vendors.

Opportunity for Action: Given the success of school nutrition committees in influencing healthy vending choices, these committees may wish to work more closely with fundraising groups to help promote more healthy choices at fundraisers.

The Kamloops school district has had a healthy eating policy in place since 2004, created through an “Action for Healthy Communities Committee.” Committee members included school district personnel, city staff, a fitness professional, a pediatrician and a community nutritionist. Each school in the district also has a complementary healthy eating policy.

Categories of school-based guidelines

Schools were asked to report on the guidelines in place or under development in their school. Comparison with 2005 was possible in five categories. In these categories, a higher percentage of schools had guidelines in place in 2007 than in 2005, except on “limiting access to less nutritious food during schools hours.” In that case, the percentages are the same.

Analysis of other categories indicates that schools are adopting important guidelines to encourage healthier food choices among students. For example, more than 70% of all schools in 2007 had guidelines in place to provide “adequate time,” “pleasant, safe, and orderly spaces,” and “appropriate times during the day” for eating. Thirty-seven per cent (37%) had guidelines in place on “parent participation on school food committees” and 11% on “student participation on food committees” (Table 11).

Opportunity for Action: Schools may wish to build on their success in promoting healthy choices in school-based food and beverage sales by developing policies in other areas related to healthy eating, and/or in complementary areas, such as physical activity.

Table 11: Percentage (%) of BC schools with nutrition guidelines

Categories of guidelines	2005 “in place”	2005 “under development”	2007 “in place	2007 “under development”
Types of food sold in vending machines, cafeterias and school stores *	20%	15%	--	--
Types of food sold in school vending machines *	--	--	19%	16%
Types of food sold in school cafeterias *	--	--	15%	10%
Types of food sold in school stores *	--	--	9%	9%
Types of food sold at special events or field trips	11%	17%	12%	19%
Types of food brought from home for lunch or snacks	--	--	12%	17%
Types of food sold at fundraising events outside the school	7%	9%	8%	12%
Types of food sold at fundraising events inside the school	--	--	20%	35%
Competitive pricing of healthy food choices	17%	13%	22%	11%
Advertising of only healthy food choices	--	--	14%	12%
Discouraging the use of food as a reward	13%	15%	18%	16%
Limiting access to less nutritious food during school hours	29%	14%	29%	13%
Providing adequate time and pleasant spaces to eat	46%	9%	--	--
Providing adequate time for eating **	--	--	73%	5%
Providing pleasant, safe, and orderly spaces to eat **	--	--	71%	3%
Providing appropriate times during the day for eating	--	--	78%	1%
Having student participation on food committees	--	--	11%	12%
Having parent participation on food committees	--	--	37%	17%

* In 2005, schools reported on types of food sold in vending machines, cafeterias, or schools stores as a single category. In 2007, these categories were separated, hence comparison with 2005 is not possible.

** In 2005, schools reported on providing adequate time and pleasant spaces to eat as a single category. In 2007, these categories were separated, hence comparison with 2005 is not possible.

-- (not applicable) has been used where comparison between 2005 and 2007 was not possible.

Analysis of categories by school type, looking at “in place” and “under development” in combination, provides additional perspective (Table 12). It is encouraging to note that middle and secondary schools, which have most of the vending machines, have higher percentages of guidelines in place or under development on “types of food sold in vending machines.” Sixty-nine per cent (69%) of middle and 54% of secondary schools have this guideline in place or under development, compared to 21% of elementary schools.

Thirty-two per cent (32%) of elementary schools in 2007 had guidelines in place or under development on “types of food sold at special events or field trips,” compared to 31% of all schools in 2007 and 28% of all schools in 2005. Fewer middle and secondary schools had this guideline in place (19% and 20% respectively). This suggests that elementary schools may see a greater need for this type of guideline than schools with older students.

However, on “types of food sold at fundraising events outside the school,” there was little change from 2005. This may suggest that schools do not consider events outside the school to be part of their responsibility.

Guidelines on “competitive pricing of healthy food choices” were in place or under development in 57% of middle schools and 53% of secondary schools, compared to 30% of all schools in 2005 and 33% of all schools in 2007. Because students in middle and secondary schools may have more discretionary money, it is encouraging to see the larger percentages of middle and secondary schools with this guideline in place or under development.

It is also encouraging to see an increase in the percentage of schools with guidelines on “discouraging the use of food as a reward.” Thirty-four per cent (34%) of all schools had this guideline in place or under development in 2007, compared to 28% in 2005. Considerably more elementary schools, where food is more likely to be used as a reward, had the guideline than middle or secondary schools (36% elementary, 19% middle, 23% secondary).

Middle and secondary schools exceeded the 2005 and 2007 averages of all schools for guidelines in place or under development on “limiting access to less nutritious food during school hours.”

There was little difference among school types for guidelines on “providing adequate time for eating” and “providing pleasant, safe, and orderly spaces to eat.” Most schools (78% and 68% respectively of all schools in 2007) had guidelines in these areas.

Table 12: Categories of guidelines “in place” and “under development” by school type

Categories of guidelines	All Schools 2005	All Schools 2007	Elementary 2007	Middle 2007	Secondary 2007
Types of food sold in vending machines	--	35%	21%	69%	54%
Types of food sold at special events or field trips	28%	31%	32%	19%	20%
Types of food sold at fundraising events outside the school	16%	20%	19%	19%	14%
Competitive pricing of healthy food choices	30%	33%	19%	57%	53%
Discouraging the use of food as a reward	28%	34%	36%	19%	23%
Limiting access to less nutritious food during school hours	43%	42%	35%	50%	44%
Providing adequate time and pleasant spaces to eat	54%	--	--	--	--
Providing adequate time for eating	--	78%	74%	61%	69%
Providing pleasant, safe, and orderly spaces to eat	--	68%	69%	65%	66%

Communicating guidelines

Schools use a variety of ways to communicate food and beverage guidelines to people in the school, such as students and teachers. The most common ways are newsletters (77%) and announcements at school events (35%).¹¹ Handbooks for students and staff (28%), community meetings (22%) and student orientation sessions (17%) were also used.

¹¹ Respondents were asked to check all categories that applied, hence the total number of responses exceeds the number of respondents.

Monitoring guidelines for adherence

Sixty-four per cent (64%) of reporting schools monitored their food and beverage guidelines for adherence. Most did so through meetings of interested stakeholders (57%) and annual reviews or assessments (42%).¹² Respondents also cited monitoring by the principal or vice-principal, ongoing observation and review, and discussion at staff and PAC meetings.

Additional efforts to promote healthy eating

Respondents were offered the opportunity to provide additional information on their schools' efforts to promote healthy eating and decrease the sale of unhealthy food choices at school. The more common ways are:

- Healthy meal, snack, and event programs (27%)
- Ongoing discussion, including classroom discussion (23%)
- PAC and parental support (13%)
- Newsletters and other written material (5%)

Additional support

Finally, respondents were asked what additional supports and help they needed to fully implement the *Guidelines for Food and Beverage Sales in BC Schools*. Of the 868 schools completing the survey, 279 (about 32%) responded to this question. Of these, 185 were elementary schools, 17 were middle schools, and 77 were secondary schools).

The elementary and middle schools said they could use additional information and resources (34%), funding (17%), and parent education and support (14%). Secondary schools identified a need for similar types of support but in different priority, with funding in the lead at 35% and additional information and resources at 22%.¹³ Ten per cent of the secondary schools also said they could benefit from more parent education and support. A small proportion of all schools (between 2% and 7%) also said they could benefit from increased access to qualified personnel, such as nutritionists, and from greater cooperation by vending and fast food retailers.

Opportunity for Action: The B.C. Healthy Living Alliance – a provincial coalition that works to promote the health of British Columbians – announced in May 2007 that it is spearheading a comprehensive initiative to support schools in implementing the *Guidelines for Food and Beverage Sales*. Details are available at www.bced.gov.bc.ca/health/news_bchla.htm or visit the Healthy Schools Network Special Edition Newsletter, October 2007 at http://www.bced.gov.bc.ca/health/henetwork/newsletter_oct07.pdf

¹² Respondents were asked to check all categories that applied, hence the total number of responses exceeds the number of respondents.

¹³ Some comments fell into more than one category, hence the total number of responses exceeds the number of respondents.

Conclusions

Overall, the survey found that schools and districts have made considerable progress since 2005, especially in eliminating “not recommended” beverages from sales to students. It also found that revenues from food and beverage sales in schools are relatively low – in most cases, less than \$10,000 a year – and that most schools’ revenues had not been affected by their implementation of the *Guidelines for Food and Beverage Sales in BC Schools*.

The data also highlight a number of opportunities for action. The Ministries of Education and Health are therefore recommending that:

1. More districts demonstrate their leadership by working to develop food and beverage policies. Districts – with dedicated expertise in areas such as accounting – are better positioned than schools to work with suppliers such as vending companies to help ensure provision of a greater number and range of healthy choices.
2. Schools and districts take advantage of the opportunity to get comprehensive, customized support to fully implement the *Guidelines for Food and Beverage Sales in BC Schools*. The B.C. Healthy Living Alliance – a provincial coalition that works to promote the health of British Columbians – announced in May 2007 that it is spearheading a comprehensive School Guidelines Support Initiative. Details are available at www.bced.gov.bc.ca/health/news_bchla.htm or visit the Healthy Schools Network Special Edition Newsletter, October 2007 at http://www.bced.gov.bc.ca/health/hsnetwork/newsletter_oct07.pdf
3. Experience to date shows that vendors will respond to demand for healthier food and beverage choices. However, changes do take time and the snack market has not yet caught up with the beverage market. Districts and schools can help maintain the current positive momentum in this area by continuing to require vendors to provide choices that meet the Guidelines.
4. Since some schools are reporting that the *Guidelines* had a positive impact on revenues, schools and districts should pursue opportunities to learn from one another’s successes in this area. For an overview of successful approaches and strategies from five districts, go to: www.bced.gov.bc.ca/health/hsnetwork/newsletter_april07.pdf
5. Schools should celebrate their successes in providing more healthy choices, and recognize that revenue impacts change over time, with any initial losses typically interim in nature. The fact that 58% of reporting schools have implemented positive changes with no loss of revenue should be a significant source of encouragement.
6. More schools should use competitive pricing to encourage healthy choices and offset any potential loss of revenue. When healthier choices are priced lower than less healthy alternatives, experience shows that students are more likely to choose the healthier option.

7. Given the correlation between school nutrition committees and the provision of more healthy food and beverage choices, schools that do not have such committees should consider forming them.
8. Given the success of school nutrition committees in influencing healthy vending choices, these committees should work more closely with fundraising groups to help promote more healthy choices at fundraisers.
9. Schools should build on their success in promoting healthy choices in school-based food and beverage sales by developing policies in other areas related to healthy eating, and/or in complementary areas, such as physical activity.

District-Level Overview

School District	School District responded	Policies in place or under development
5 Southeast Kootenay	Yes	
6 Rocky Mountain	Yes	Yes
8 Kootenay Lake	Yes	Yes
10 Arrow Lakes	Yes	Yes
19 Revelstoke	Yes	Yes
20 Kootenay Columbia	Yes	Yes
22 Vernon	Yes	Yes
23 Central Okanagan	Yes	Yes
27 Cariboo Chilcotin		
28 Quesnel	Yes	Yes
33 Chilliwack		
34 Abbotsford	Yes	Yes
35 Langley	Yes	Yes
36 Surrey	Yes	Yes
37 Delta	Yes	Yes
38 Richmond	Yes	Yes
39 Vancouver	Yes	Yes
40 New Westminster	Yes	
41 Burnaby	Yes	Yes
42 Maple Ridge-Pitt Meadows	Yes	Yes
43 Coquitlam	Yes	Yes
44 North Vancouver	Yes	Yes
45 West Vancouver	Yes	Yes
46 Sunshine Coast	Yes	Yes
47 Powell River	Yes	Yes
48 Howe Sound		
49 Central Coast		
50 Haida Gwaii-Queen Charlotte	Yes	
51 Boundary	Yes	Yes
52 Prince Rupert		
53 Okanagan Similkameen	Yes	
54 Bulkley Valley	Yes	Yes
57 Prince George		
58 Nicola Similkameen	Yes	
59 Peace River South	Yes	Yes
60 Peace River North	Yes	Yes
61 Greater Victoria	Yes	
62 Sooke	Yes	Yes
63 Saanich		

Appendix A

School District	School District responded	Policies in place or under development
64 Gulf Islands	Yes	Yes
67 Okanagan Skaha	Yes	Yes
68 Nanaimo Ladysmith	Yes	Yes
69 Qualicum	Yes	Yes
70 Alberni	Yes	
71 Comox Valley	Yes	Yes
72 Campbell River	Yes	
73 Kamloops Thompson	Yes	Yes
74 Gold Trail	Yes	Yes
75 Mission	Yes	Yes
78 Fraser Cascade	Yes	Yes
79 Cowichan Valley	Yes	
81 Fort Nelson	Yes	
82 Coast Mountain	Yes	Yes
83 North Okanagan-Shuswap		
84 Vancouver Island West	Yes	
85 Vancouver Island North	Yes	
87 Stikine	Yes	
91 Nechako Lakes	Yes	Yes
92 Nisga'a		
93 Francophone Authority		
Total	50	37

School-Level Overview

School District	Schools in district	Schools in district that responded	Schools in district that responded	Respondents in district with guidelines in place or under development	Respondents in district with guidelines in place or under development
	(N)	(N)	(%)	(N)	(%)
5 Southeast Kootenay	23	14	61%	5	36%
6 Rocky Mountain	20	12	60%	5	42%
8 Kootenay Lake	28	17	61%	9	53%
10 Arrow Lakes	5	3	60%	2	67%
19 Revelstoke	5	5	100%	3	60%
20 Kootenay Columbia	17	9	53%	5	56%
22 Vernon	26	14	54%	10	71%
23 Central Okanagan	43	25	58%	17	68%
27 Cariboo Chilcotin	31	16	52%	6	38%
28 Quesnel	18	13	72%	10	77%
33 Chilliwack	31	15	48%	5	33%
34 Abbotsford	50	29	58%	8	28%
35 Langley	49	26	53%	8	31%
36 Surrey	132	27	20%	6	22%
37 Delta	37	12	32%	2	17%
38 Richmond	52	20	38%	10	50%
39 Vancouver	119	69	58%	24	35%
40 New Westminster	18	8	44%	1	13%
41 Burnaby	56	28	50%	8	29%
42 Maple Ridge-Pitt Meadows	33	16	48%	6	38%
43 Coquitlam	75	60	80%	18	30%
44 North Vancouver	38	29	76%	9	31%
45 West Vancouver	17	9	53%	1	11%
46 Sunshine Coast	15	10	67%	5	50%
47 Powell River	10	8	80%	2	25%
48 Howe Sound	16	12	75%	3	25%
49 Central Coast	5	1	20%	1	100%
50 Haida Gwaii-Queen Charlotte	8	6	75%	4	67%
51 Boundary	12	4	33%	2	50%
52 Prince Rupert	13	2	15%	0	0%
53 Okanagan Similkameen	11	6	55%	4	67%
54 Bulkley Valley	10	5	50%	2	40%
57 Prince George	54	26	48%	6	23%
58 Nicola Similkameen	13	8	62%	1	13%
59 Peace River South	23	15	65%	7	47%

Appendix B

School District	Schools in district	Schools in district that responded	Schools in district that responded	Respondents in district with guidelines in place or under development	Respondents in district with guidelines in place or under development
	(N)	(N)	(%)	(N)	(%)
60 Peace River North	21	14	67%	7	50%
61 Greater Victoria	55	22	40%	10	45%
62 Sooke	28	11	39%	5	45%
63 Saanich	17	9	53%	8	89%
64 Gulf Islands	11	6	55%	2	33%
67 Okanagan Skaha	20	8	40%	1	13%
68 Nanaimo Ladysmith	48	11	23%	5	45%
69 Qualicum	17	13	76%	6	46%
70 Alberni	16	9	56%	1	11%
71 Comox Valley	27	14	52%	5	36%
72 Campbell River	24	12	50%	2	17%
73 Kamloops Thompson	50	31	62%	21	68%
74 Gold Trail	15	8	53%	2	25%
75 Mission	23	13	57%	6	46%
78 Fraser Cascade	13	7	54%	2	29%
79 Cowichan Valley	30	20	67%	4	20%
81 Fort Nelson	5	5	100%	0	0%
82 Coast Mountain	23	17	74%	5	29%
83 North Okanagan-Shuswap	32	20	63%	6	30%
84 Vancouver Island West	5	4	80%	1	25%
85 Vancouver Island North	16	8	50%	6	75%
87 Stikine	4	1	25%	0	0%
91 Nechako Lakes	23	12	52%	6	50%
92 Nisga'a	4	2	50%	0	0%
93 Francophone Authority	39	12	31%	3	25%
Total	1,679	868		329	