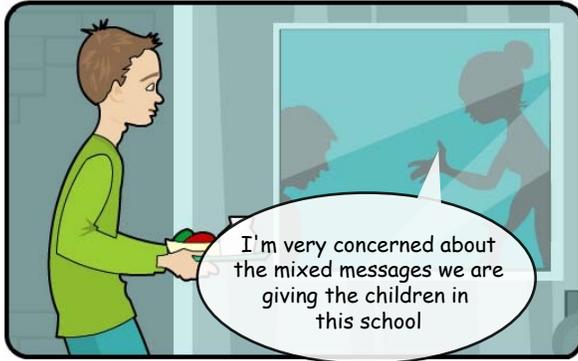


The Student Body: Promoting Health at Any Size

Background Information for Teachers :

School Climate



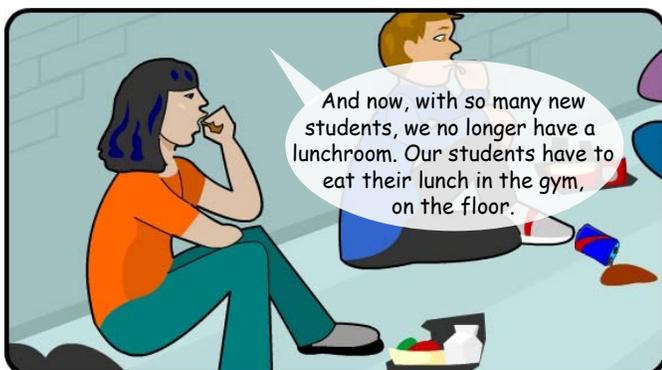
- The school environment is recognized as having a powerful influence on students' eating behaviours.

- Pop machines can be a good, if not essential, fund-raising strategy (especially in today's climate of cutbacks and budget constraints). One way to help children meet their healthy eating goals (and for schools to continue to profit) is to include a variety of foods in the vending machines.

- Did you know that in Lambton County, Ontario, a group of students (the student wellness committee) surveyed their peers and found out that a top priority for students in their school was to have a juice machine and a healthy snack machine brought into their school. With the help of their principal and food services management, their goal was reached! Funds raised from these machines now go to future wellness activities in their school. This is one example of how schools can develop policies to promote wellness and healthy eating so that children can meet their energy and nutrition needs.

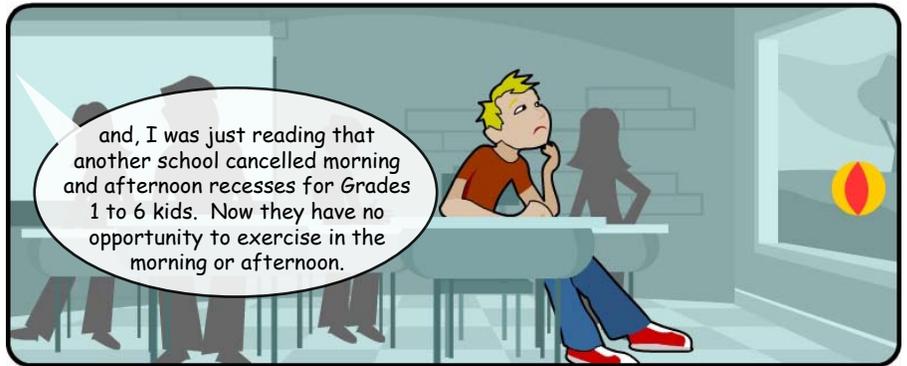
- Coaching families on ways to help children eat healthy is another strategy (e.g. share information about healthy snacks and lunches in school newsletters).

- Students are usually not allowed to bring food to class. If there is no recess, then there might not be an opportunity for snacking in between meals.



- Schools are not always the most appetizing places to eat, particularly in schools where there are no cafeterias and students eat in their classrooms or eat while sitting on gym or hallway floors. Did you know that in Middlesex-London (Ontario) a school in a culturally diverse, low-income neighbourhood formed a healthy school committee to find ways to upgrade their cafeteria. "Healthy teen cuisine" sessions were organized by the students, and posters reminding students about healthy food choices were designed for the cafeteria walls. Simple ideas can contribute to a positive school climate.

- Kids who are dropped off early in the morning might only have access to the school vending machines for their breakfast. If there is little variety, they might end up eating chips, candy, and pop for breakfast. Why not start a breakfast program at your school (see Web site in supplementary resource section for easy steps on how to initiate a breakfast program in your school).



- Tight timelines might mean exposing students to other ways of being active throughout the day. Given that it takes a few minutes at the beginning of each class for students to settle in, why not incorporate a body break at the beginning of each class (to eat a snack or to perform a brief stand-up activity).



- In addition to the physical environment, there are several other aspects which influence the overall school climate, such as:
 - (a) a nurturing environment that recognizes weight and size acceptance, and develops school policies that address weight and size discrimination;
 - (b) an environment that emphasizes an inclusive body-positive focus in physical education activities;
 - (c) an environment in which adult role models examine their own teaching practices to ensure that body image discrimination does not occur in their teaching methods;
 - (d) a physical activity environment that provides opportunities for gym space during non-gym hours
 - (e) an emphasis on personal skill development in a variety of activities, and opportunities for extra-curricular participation for both male and female students of all abilities.