

STUDENT NUTRITION PROGRAM PROGRESS REPORT



South East Region: Hastings, Prince Edward, Lennox & Addington, Frontenac,
Leeds & Grenville and Lanark counties

2006-2007

SOUTH EAST REGION STUDENT NUTRITION PROGRAM

In 2005, the Province of Ontario transferred funding for Student Nutrition Programs to the communities in which they serve. This process resulted in a significant increase in financial support to programs in the South East Region comprised of Hastings, Prince Edward, Lennox & Addington, Frontenac, Leeds & Grenville and Lanark counties.

The purpose of Student Nutrition Programs is to support communities wishing to provide nutritious food, including breakfast, lunch and/or snacks, to children and youth aged 5 – 18 years. The central objective of the program is to support the healthy development of children and youth arriving at school ready to learn. Government funding operates within a broader group of contributors to deliver the program including parents/caregivers, corporate sponsors, local charities, community organizations and municipalities.

Student Nutrition Programs are community driven initiatives with a large voluntary component. The individuals who prepare and serve meals to students are often parents/caregivers, teachers, principals, educational assistants and community volunteers who are not paid for their work. Their commitment, dedication and support are essential to the ongoing operation and success of the program.

The South East Region's Student Nutrition Program is directly linked to the government's key priorities of Success for Students and Better Health and is an integral component of a larger collection of programs designed to improve outcomes for children and youth. The program supports initiatives to increase levels of school readiness among young people and provide a healthy nutritional environment in schools. The Student Nutrition Program also complements efforts to improve the eating habits of children and youth as well as to reduce rates of childhood obesity.

There is much to be celebrated!

We are proud to share the many accomplishments in the South East Region that has enhanced the lives of over 23,800 children and youth.





GROWTH

In 2005, there were 303 active breakfast, snack or lunch programs facilitated throughout the South East Region. Within two short years, programs grew to 481 marking a 59% increase. More importantly, we saw service delivery increase from approximately 13,500 to 23,800 children and youth served. The ability to grow to this extent was largely due to funding increases at the program level. Yet there is a great deal of work to be done.

It is our ultimate goal to ensure that all children and youth have access to a Student Nutrition Program within the South East Region.

Growth May 05 - March 07, # Programs - South East Region

	Hastings & Prince Edward	Frontenac, Lennox & Addington	Leeds & Grenville	Lanark
2005	74	179	26	24
2007	122	203	94	62

A Principal Remembers

"A few years ago, while Principal of a school that had a high population of students who needed healthy and nutritious food on a daily basis, a grade 8 female student was having a very difficult time, socially, academically and emotionally. As a result of some very serious problems at home, she was placed in foster care at a foster home not far from the school. Like many other girls her age she defied authority and frequently ran away from the foster home, sleeping in different places and endangering her safety. As the situation progressed it became obvious that she was headed for protective custody. In an attempt to keep her from ending up in a secure facility we modified her school day allowing her to arrive later in the morning for a specific task. Her job was to assist our volunteer in preparing the soup for our lunch program. I believe that she found an identity that she could be proud of and as a result she attended school every day for the last month of the year. Her "running" behaviours decreased dramatically and she became a regular helper in the Kindergarten class across the hall from the kitchen area. In effect, she began to attend school on almost a full time basis. As a bonus, she was so proud of her soup that she began to eat lunch everyday in a healthy manner, as opposed to eating the junk food she would have previously had. For this young adolescent, at least for a while, the food program gave her self-esteem and a purpose in an otherwise bleak existence."

Elementary Principal, Hastings and Prince Edward District School Board:

PROGRAM IMPACTS

Research supports the existing link between nutrition and a child's readiness to learn. Studies indicate that students arriving at school hungry have difficulty concentrating, display behavioural problems, are less alert and often lethargic. These children are more likely to cause disruptions in class, are less curious, involved in bullying and are more irritable.

Our program extends well beyond nutrition and health related issues. From a social perspective, Student Nutrition Programs provide a safe environment for children to establish a sense of belonging and develop relationships with caring volunteers. This further increases a child's self confidence; improved behaviours in the classroom; resiliency; improved academic performance; strengthening of social relationships and alertness and energy levels. The children receive so much more than a healthy meal, they are provided with a sense of community, a chance to make new friends and someone to talk to before the start of their day.

We provide a non-stigmatizing environment where all children are welcome. Programs are unique, reflecting each school environment: from full breakfast programs to in-class snack programs, from front hallway grab and go stations to senior students and volunteers delivering food baskets to classes, to provision of packed lunches for students who routinely arrive at school without food...ensuring children do not go hungry.

As we become more aware of eating disorders, the alarming rates in child and youth obesity (it has tripled since 1981) and increased poverty, our service is needed more than ever. One in ten children arrive at school without having breakfast, snacks or lunch to sustain them throughout an entire school day. For many children, our service is a lifeline.

**S.P., grade 7 student,
Upper Canada District School Board:**

"I think that the breakfast program is a good idea because sometimes students have no time to eat their breakfast, so they are hungry and tired. When students come in the school they can ask the teacher if they can get some food and they can pick something that they want, and eat it to fill their bellies. If the program is taken away the students might be in a cranky mood and have a bad day."



COMMUNITY PARTNERSHIPS

Our ability to leverage community support has been unprecedented. Collectively, in South East Ontario over \$299,355 was raised this year through community grants, corporate funding and fundraising events. This funding, in combination with the Ministry of Children and Youth Services support, has ensured that at minimum, one paid staff person exists in each community, who is responsible for program facilitation. The additional funding has inspired new program development, expansion of existing programs, an increase in the quality of foods served to children and youth and finally, has increased the profile of Student Nutrition Programs and the issue of child hunger.

One of the greatest accomplishments we have seen was our ability to engage businesses and services to donate in-kind product (primarily food) to our programs. This remarkable show of support ranged from grocery stores to established businesses to local farms, all who gave extensively allowing cost savings at the programs level. This year, program providers and the regional partnerships have received over \$134,815 combined of in-kind donations to support our student nutrition programs.

A THANK YOU TO OUR DONORS

Algonquin and Lakeshore Catholic District School Board
Breakfast for Learning
Bridge Street United Church Foundation
CIBC World Market Community Response to Neighbourhood Concerns
City of Kingston Healthy Communities Fund
Community Foundation of Greater Kingston
County of Frontenac
Dewe's Your Independent Grocer
Empire Life
Family Fun Fair
General Mills - Champions for Healthy Kids
Hastings and Prince Edward District School Board
Hastings County
Hendrik's Your Independent Grocer
Jackie Seaton's "Empty Bowl" Project
Kawartha Credit Union
Kilmarnock Orchards
Kingston Frontenacs
Limestone District School Board
McCoy Travel
Ministry of Children and Youth Services
Patrice's Your Independent Grocer
Partners in Mission Food Bank
Pepsico Foods Canada Inc, Trenton Quaker Plant
Queen's University
Reid's Dairy
Smylie's Your Independent Grocer
Startek
Stock Transportation
The Churchill Foundation
The Hastings and Prince Edward Learning Foundation
United Counties of Leeds and Grenville
United Way
Upper Canada Leger Centre for Education and Training
Wal-Mart
Warring's Your Independent Grocer
Zal & Rose School Breakfast Fund



VOLUNTEER SUPPORT

Volunteers are the lifeline of Student Nutrition Programs and without them, our services would be non-existent. There are over 405 active volunteers (excluding Leeds & Grenville) who work diligently to ensure children and youth receive service within the South East Region. While there is a national trend indicating a decrease in community volunteerism, we are in fact seeing the opposite.

Sourcing volunteers is an ongoing task and several methods were used to engage the community that included: high school students, older adult volunteers, reaching to the multicultural sector, service clubs and employee volunteer programs. Our greatest success is with parents themselves who recognize the importance of their role in contributing to a healthy and vibrant school community.

Throughout the region, several volunteer resources central to our program are available to assist program volunteers. Program Manuals offer a how-to guide for volunteers and school administrators to effectively operate a student nutrition program. It is recognized that establishing a new program is a daunting task that requires a great deal of time, planning and support for success. These manuals have also proven to be a valuable aid for new program development.

It is anticipated that during the 2007 - 2008 academic year, guidelines will be developed for the South East Region that will provide a listing of best practices to ensure that programs meet the highest standard of service. Although not mandated, these guidelines will provide a helpful tool to volunteers responsible for program facilitation. In addition, a meal guide will be created, filled with meal combinations and suggestions to lessen the planning load of volunteers.

Grade 9 student, Kingston:

"The Food Portable is an extremely Positive place to be! It encourages students to eat healthy and have fun doing it! I'm comfortable here and I don't feel like I have to look a certain way to be here! Everyone that comes here are all friends and get along. Some students that come are in an extremely bad mood in the morning but once they've come here it changes to Happy! And I know this for a fact! Without The Food Sharing Project I don't think some students would be positive at lunch because they could be out getting in trouble or getting expelled, because in here we are staying out of trouble and having fun."



Changing the world, one child at a time

While we work diligently addressing the various aspects of Student Nutrition Programs, our focus will always be the needs of children and youth. Child hunger is an issue we must recognize as a contributing factor that impacts the physical, academic, cognitive, behavioural and psychological needs of children. Although Student Nutrition Programs are not a complete solution, the preventative nature through provision of food, a basic human need, does impact each child's and youth's ability to function, thrive, develop resiliency and contribute to their community. We have become increasingly aware that the provision of healthy food can in fact, diminish the need for more costly and extensive interventions.

Looking to the Future....

Our focus in the coming year will be to build on our success. We will continue to source funding to allow the development of new program launches. We will further engage the community through volunteerism and community partnerships. We will maintain our commitment to providing a cost-effective program ensuring every dollar spent will have impact on children and youth. Finally, we remain committed to facilitating a program, where every child who is in need of food, shall be nourished.



Testimonials

Parent, Lanark County:

"I never thought that I would struggle to provide food to pack school lunches and snacks. But a few years ago my life changed. That is when I became a single mother. It is really hard to pay for all our living expenses on my salary. It breaks my heart that there are often times when I do not have money for groceries. My three wonderful kids go to an elementary school where healthy eating is very important. There are snack bins in every classroom and baskets of fresh fruit in the hallways. The school also prepares lunches for students who have "forgotten" theirs. The great thing is that everyone is welcome to eat this food. I am so thankful to the caring volunteers who make sure students are not hungry. They have a talent for making my kids feel special. I will never forget the support this nutrition program has given to my children and to me. I am forever grateful."

Alex:

"The benefits of our Food for Learning program is seen daily through staff observations of eight year old Alex. Following a lengthy bus ride, he arrives at school full of unfocused energy. After a warm welcome by the administrator he heads to breakfast club where he is greeted respectfully and given a nourishing and balanced meal. During this time, lessons on manners and respect for others and self are reinforced. The meal and stabilizing atmosphere provide Alex with a firm start to his academic day. He is able to focus on his school work and accomplish many of the tasks he is asked to finish. On those few occasions when Alex has been unable to go to breakfast club there has been a noticeable difference in his attitude, ability to focus on the task at hand and his social behaviours. Although he is only one of many of the students who benefit from this excellent program, his achievements epitomize the philosophy of the program and strengthen the need for us to continue to provide for students like Alex."

Alex's Principal, Hastings and Prince Edward District School Board

David, Grade 11 student,

Hastings and Prince Edward District School Board

"I have been attending the breakfast club at NHHS for a number of years now. I can eat breakfast at home but being a teenage boy, when I smell breakfast cooking at school I automatically feel hungry. The meals are always great tasting and filling. The staff and parents that prepare the breakfast are always friendly, and are great people to talk to, to kick off the day. It is really nice to see less fortunate teenagers attend breakfast club. Some teens who come for breakfast do not have the opportunity to have a meal before school, and our breakfast club is what they are counting on to get them through the day. Breakfast club has been great for me, and I hope to see it continue for years to come."

CONTACT INFORMATION



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