

The Good Practice Guide

Supporting Healthy Eating and Drinking at School

Vision

All Australian schools have a healthy food and drink culture that maximises student wellbeing and achievement.

Introduction

Good health is fundamental to a happy and prosperous life. Australian children are growing up in an environment where unhealthy food and drink are readily available, heavily promoted and perceived as low cost. Evidence shows that most Australian children are having too many unhealthy foods and drinks which may result in low intakes of essential nutrients, poor oral health, increased risk of being overweight or obese and sub-optimal educational performance.

One quarter of Australian children aged 5 to 17 years and two-thirds of adults are overweight or obese. Alongside the home, schools play an important role in teaching children and young people the skills to develop healthy habits in an environment that supports and promotes healthy eating. A whole-of-society approach is important to encourage and support healthy eating and drinking in our communities. Workplaces, health services, schools and sport and recreation facilities are all taking positive steps to shift the balance towards healthier environments and build momentum for healthier choices across a range of settings.

Work is happening at both the national and state level to promote healthy choices and address student health and wellbeing. The food and wellbeing connection is presented across learning areas of the Australian Curriculum in all bands of schooling, to ensure students develop knowledge, understanding and skills to support them to make healthier choices. To complement this, the *Student Wellbeing Hub* provides a range of resources for educators, pre-service teachers, parents and students, aligned to the Australian Curriculum and the Australian Student Wellbeing Framework, to promote wellbeing in schools. In addition, health and education sectors across many jurisdictions have implemented healthy eating policies, frameworks and strategies to support schools in promoting a healthy food and drink culture.

Context

In 2016 the Council of Australian Government Health Council endorsed five actions to limit the impact of unhealthy food and drinks on children and agreed to consult with Ministers in other portfolios to develop joint approaches.

Recognising the importance of working with and across sectors, Australian Health, Sport and Recreation, and Education Ministers, have committed to collaborative action. Schools, sport and recreation, and public healthcare facilities are the focus of the national initiatives, as well as potential enhancements for the food regulation and food marketing systems.



Numbering of actions is only for the consultation draft and will be removed in the final version

DRAFT FOR CONSULTATION – Not Government Policy

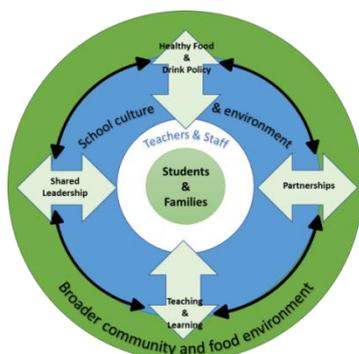
The *Good Practice Guide — Supporting Healthy Eating and Drinking at School* (Good Practice Guide) is one part of a three-pronged national approach to strengthen efforts to support healthy eating at school. It follows the Joint statement from the *Council of Australian Government, Education and Health Councils — Promoting and supporting healthy food and drink choices at school* and will be backed by quality resources at the Student Wellbeing Hub (www.studentwellbeinghub.edu.au).

Benefits

The Good Practice Guide identifies evidence-based approaches to achieving supportive environments that create and reinforce healthy habits, and make a positive difference to learning and wellbeing outcomes for children. The Good Practice Guide promotes:

- shared ownership between health and education sectors
- nationally agreed approaches
- clarity about the roles government and the community can play
- flexibility allowing for local decision-making.

Pillars of good practice



The four Good Practices pillars¹ are:

- shared leadership
- healthy food and drink policy
- teaching and learning
- partnerships.

Within each pillar there is a series of evidence-based activities to assist schools and their community to work towards better practices through a process of continual improvement. A school's community may include parents/carers and families, local government, non-government and local business services, parent groups, health and community organisations.

Schools and their community are part of the broader environment that includes government, non-government organisations and the private sector. Actions by these groups can support schools and influence community sentiment.

Recognising that each school, community and jurisdiction is different, the application and implementation of The Good Practice Guide should be tailored to meet local circumstances.

¹ *The Good Practices pillars are consistent with two key directions from the World Health Organisation, the Health Promoting Schools Framework and the 2017 Report of the Commission on Ending Childhood Obesity: implementation plan. They also support food and drink choices consistent with the Australian Dietary Guidelines.*

Numbering of actions is only for the consultation draft and will be removed in the final version

1. Shared leadership

Strong leadership, commitment and collaboration is required across the education and health sectors to build and sustain a healthy food and drink environment in schools. State and Territory Education and Health departments, peak bodies for Catholic and Independent schools, state and non-state schools and health services, all have a shared responsibility for establishing clear and relevant goals and focussing their efforts.

Action for schools

School leaders play a powerful role in the promotion of healthy eating. Principals and staff have the opportunity to model healthy eating, teach students about food and nutrition through the curriculum, and expose students and their families to healthy, tasty and appealing food and drink at school events and in the school food environment.

Schools can:

- 1.1. consult with their community to develop goals and expectations for healthy food and drink provision at school for inclusion in a policy
- 1.2. support and encourage school staff, parents and community members to model healthy eating and drinking behaviours within the school environment
- 1.3. work in partnership with expert educators and relevant organisations to develop engaging pedagogy that builds student food literacy which are the tools needed for a healthy lifelong relationship with food and drink
- 1.4. provide information to support staff and volunteers who work with students to avoid using food as a reward
- 1.5. avoid unhealthy food and drink sponsorship of school-related activities
- 1.6. support staff to develop and expand their professional knowledge and skills in food literacy
- 1.7. ensure healthy options are available when food and drink is provided at staff meetings and professional development sessions
- 1.8. support parent organisations and community groups to include healthy food and drink options whenever they provide food and drink at school events

Action for others

Government and the broader community can:

- 1.9. prioritise ongoing education and health collaboration that provides expertise and evidence-based resources for schools to implement healthy eating promotion and practices
- 1.10. support workforce development for school leaders and staff to extend their knowledge and skills to integrate healthy eating and drinking to improve student wellbeing
- 1.11. prioritise support for schools in disadvantaged areas and identifying the support required to overcome known barriers
- 1.12. determine the best way to monitor and communicate states and territories successes and learnings about the healthy food and drink culture in schools in their jurisdiction
- 1.13. work together to assess and address community concerns such as unhealthy food advertising close to schools, on public transport and at sporting facilities. This action recognises the significant influence of the broader food environment on children as they travel to and from school and participate in other activities.

2. Healthy food and drink policy

The development, implementation, communication, monitoring and review of policies remains an important engagement tool for schools, staff, students and their families and provides opportunity to clearly articulate expectations for specific school settings and contexts.

Action for schools

Schools promote an environment and culture of healthy eating and drinking through the provision and promotion of healthy food and drink choices at school and for all school activities, consistent with the *Australian Dietary Guidelines*.

Schools can:

- 2.1. implement a healthy food and drink policy (this may comprise a commitment to a state and territory level policy) which is developed in consultation with students, their families and the community (and reviewed regularly)
- 2.2. ensure the school's food and drink policy and practices specifically consider:
 - 2.2.1. ensuring water is available for students at all times
 - 2.2.2. encouraging healthy food and drinks to be brought from home
 - 2.2.3. providing students and staff with designated and inviting spaces to sit down and eat
 - 2.2.4. providing students with allocated and adequate time to eat
 - 2.2.5. encouraging non-food items to be used as rewards or incentives for students
 - 2.2.6. avoiding sugar sweetened beverages or confectionery at school activities
 - 2.2.7. encouraging a range of healthy options that reflect the cultural diversity of the school community
 - 2.2.8. encouraging non-food or healthy food fundraising activities
 - 2.2.9. avoiding sponsorship of school-related events and activities (e.g. sports) by unhealthy food products or companies selling these products
- 2.3. ensure the food and drink policy encompasses the range of school activities where food and drink is supplied in the school environment — canteens, vending machines, fundraising activities, school excursions and camps, school sporting events, outside school hours care, fetes, school nutrition programs, classroom rewards and breakfast programs
- 2.4. nominate program champions, including students, teachers and community members to promote and communicate the policy.

Action for others

Government and the broader community can:

- 2.5. establish state and territory healthy food and drink policies for schools that are regularly updated and informed by consultation
- 2.6. regularly communicate state and territory policy through departmental/organisation level correspondence and communication
- 2.7. provide tools and resources to assist schools to implement healthy food and drink policies
- 2.8. consider monitoring and communicating measures of implementation of healthy food and drink policy in schools in their jurisdiction.

3. Teaching and learning

Consuming healthy food and drinks supports students to maximise their learning and educational potential. The school curriculum develops students' knowledge, understanding and skills in relation to their health, wellbeing, safety and participation in physical activity. It presents opportunities to embed, expand and reinforce healthy eating and drinking behaviours that promote lifelong learning and support wellbeing.

Action for schools

Schools can:

- 3.1. support staff and volunteers with professional development opportunities to facilitate implementation of the school's food and drink policy
- 3.2. use a range of formal, informal and varied teaching strategies to embed and reinforce healthy eating and drinking behaviours such as linking with cooking programs and local food gardens
- 3.3. promote quality resources to support curriculum activities focused on healthy eating and drinking, including those available on the Student Wellbeing Hub
- 3.4. consider setting specific times for students to have a vegetable or fruit snack and a drink of water
- 3.5. promote collaboration with families regarding their children's health and wellbeing.

4. Partnerships

Fostering partnerships between students, educators, families, community, state and local government, non-government organisations and local businesses assists in the expansion of knowledge, skills, resources and opportunities available to schools and students.

Action for schools

Schools expand their capacity to support student healthy food and drink choices by nurturing partnerships with and between students, educators, families, support staff, community groups, state and local government, non-government agencies and local businesses.

Schools can:

- 4.1. network, share learnings and provide support around shifting the balance towards healthier food and drink environments including with other schools
- 4.2. access support and services from a range of local community organisations, businesses, universities, non-government and government organisations to implement and update their local healthy food and drink policy
- 4.3. be responsive to the needs of students from diverse linguistic, cultural, religious and socioeconomic backgrounds when planning and implementing healthy eating and drinking initiatives and activities
- 4.4. involve students, staff and families in the development and implementation of healthy food and drink initiatives and activities
- 4.5. encourage families to partner in their child's learning by reinforcing healthy food and drink choices at home and contributing to school-based efforts.

Actions for others

Government and the broader community can:

- 4.6. form, facilitate and support collaborative partnerships across sectors to drive healthier food and drink environments in schools
- 4.7. strengthen and support the ability of schools to work with parents through policy, frameworks and resourcing.

Numbering of actions is only for the consultation draft and will be removed in the final version

Resources

Student Wellbeing Hub

www.studentwellbeinghub.edu.au

Key References

Australian Dietary Guidelines

<https://www.eatforhealth.gov.au/guidelines>

National interim guide to reduce children’s exposure to unhealthy food and drink promotion

[Website link will be provided once approved](#)

Report of the Commission on Ending Childhood Obesity – WHO

<http://www.who.int/end-childhood-obesity/publications/echo-report/en/>

What is a health promoting school? – WHO

http://www.who.int/school_youth_health/gshi/hps/en/