



No Junk Food Policy in Moose Kerr School



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Imagine a school classroom where students can't sit still, have short attention spans, poor concentration, reading, writing and comprehensive skills, disruptive behaviour, and are unmotivated to learn. Now imagine this same classroom where students are engaged in their learning, interested, focused with good reading, writing, and comprehension skills. What is the difference?

Origins of the No Junk Food Policy

For more than 15 years, Moose Kerr School in Aklavik, NT has had a **No Junk Food Policy** in place. Before that time, student learning was highly influenced by sugar spikes and sugar lows with students eating candy and other sugar products throughout the day. Teachers became concerned as sugar was impacting everyone and they wanted to find a way to help their students.



Moose Kerr School

We wanted a healthy learning environment for students so we had to remove anything with a lot of sugar content from our school environment and replace it with what is allowable or acceptable in terms of healthy food choices. When you go back to the year 2000, there was no such policy. We really needed to work with the students about what was a healthy food choice.

*Participant
Moose Kerr School*



The student body lacked this awareness and insight, but more importantly they didn't understand the impact it had on their learning and health.

The students took a while to develop a new perspective, as being children, there was resistance to the efforts initially. However, over time the change has been accepted and currently our gauge is after the Halloween weekend you don't see mass amounts of wrappers in the school. Our custodians can attest to this as they have seen the difference with the No Junk Food Policy.

*Participant
Moose Kerr School*



Halloween Candy, Wikimedia

For the past three years, the school has also had a vending machine that supplies healthy snacks that students can purchase during their breaks.

Policy Formulation

Hearing all the feedback from teachers and school support staff about the behaviour issues with students in the classroom prompted the principal to take a deeper look at the relationship between what the children were eating and their behaviour and performance issues in the classroom. Staff sat together, identified the concern, and decided that they would address it with a No Junk Food Policy.

A lot of thought went into finding out information about healthy food and then everybody just sitting together as a staff and saying this is what the guideline has to look like. We were the first school in the Beaufort Delta to initiate a No Junk Food policy.

*Participant
Moose Kerr School*

Policy Implementation

How was the policy implemented?

We took the policy to the local District Education Authority (DEA) to address the issue with them and to make them aware this is what we would like to do. From there, we did some awareness raising with the public through our newsletters, using each of our classrooms and telling the kids this is our new policy.

*Participant
Moose Kerr School*

At the beginning of every school year, the policy is re-enforced by the principal and the DEA chair who go to every classroom to remind the students of the policy.

When students return in the first part of the school year, there are minor attempts to bring in sugary drinks but it doesn't take them long to revert back to the school's expectation. All the students make a good effort and there are minor incidents over each school year.

*Participant
Moose Kerr School*

A. Working with Partners

Working with partners in the community has facilitated students learning about their health as it relates to common diseases prevalent in the community. Partnerships facilitate the implementation of the No Junk Food Policy through supporting and encouraging healthy lifestyles.

We've got a number of good partnerships especially with the Community Health Representative (CHR). She comes to the school often and teaches the students about diabetes. It opens their eyes to their own self-care of their body. And that with diabetes we all know we need to avoid sugar. So if you get that message across really strongly to them along with the NWT Education, Culture, Employment's yearly 'Drop the Pop' campaigns, that the school does annually, it works together to support the No Junk Food Policy and reinforces the importance of the policy.

*Participant
Moose Kerr School*



B. Working with the Neighbourhood Store

Across the street from the school is one of two local stores. During the implementation of the No Junk Food Policy the store manager was asked not to sell Monster drinks, energy drinks and anything else on the No Junk Food Policy list. There was a lot of concern from families who felt that the store could not limit what they sold to their daughter or son.

As a result, the store manager now directs staff not to sell junk food to students during school hours. If students appear in the store and attempt to purchase anything on the No Junk Food list, the store clerks tell the children that they cannot purchase junk food during school hours.

C. Traditional Foods

While not officially part of the policy, the students learn about traditional foods by going out on the land to hunt, trap, fish and harvest. Students learn how to skin, dry, preserve and cook their harvest. The children also assist in preparing and eating what they harvest while participating in their On The Land programming.

You put a granola bar and traditional food in front of them and they'll take the traditional food. So we try to have a little bit of mixture of everything where we can and that's pretty good. Like when we came back in September, fish sticks are a popular thing. It's nice to have that and the kids thoroughly enjoy eating them and it's nice to see them eat it with enthusiasm for this country food along with their berries.

*Participant
Moose Kerr School*

Evidence of Success

The initiative that has been in place for the last fifteen years is a testament to the effort from the staff back in 2000-2001. It has had significant positive impacts. Teachers appreciate the difference it makes in the learning environment and more importantly the students' daily learning. Students are more focused and less distracted by eliminating high levels of sugar in their bodies.

Even if students arrive late at school, their morning snack are all healthy choices and they are familiar with helping themselves and ensure their needs are being met before they start their day of learning.

*Participant
Moose Kerr School*



One strong indication of the policy's effectiveness is during the Halloween season when candy intake is at its highest.



Moose Kerr School, Gov. of NT

But here we are now 15 years later, Halloween is a big thing in every community. But you can come to our school and the next day after, it's not an issue here. Kids know not to bring it to school because it is not an acceptable choice and it will be taken from them and returned at the end of the day.

*Participant
Moose Kerr School*

The longevity of the policy has created a student population that knows why they are not allowed to bring junk food.

Students may go back to junk food after school hours but at least we can say that for X number of hours in the school building, it's all healthy products. And I think about how much we've minimized the consumption by saying for these hours, please refrain from eating junk food. It is impressive because consumption does add up and if we can decrease their daily consumption then we have had a strong impact over the years.

*Participant
Moose Kerr School*

The students also know there are consequences if they continue to bring junk food.

We just keep collecting it and reiterate the acceptable food choices for the school. Eventually, not more than one day they know what the policy supports and eventually it subsides.

*Participant
Moose Kerr School*



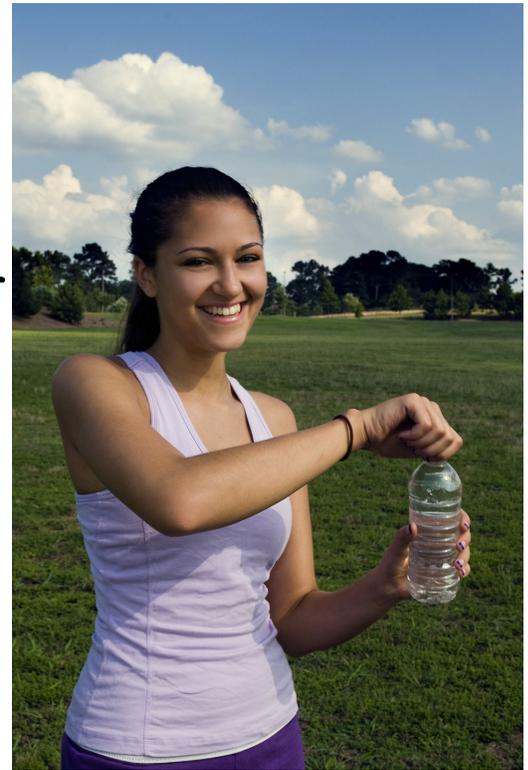
Aklavik NT, Wikimedia Commons

Another strong indication of making healthy choices in the school is that there are lots of water bottles.

Senior high girls are bringing water bottles with lemon or a green tea and junior high girls pay attention to that. They're not going to go outright and do it yet but they're watching.

*Participant
Moose Kerr School*

The No Junk Food Policy has not only impacted the students — the shift in staff has been noticeable as well with their selection of water bottles over a cup of coffee. More staff snacks are healthy conscious selections as well. For the most part it has been our mainstay and it has affected the school immensely in a positive light.



*Drinking Water,
Free Stock Photos*

Going Beyond Students in the Classroom — Impacting the Community

As a result of implementing the No Junk Food Policy in the school, any community member or organization using the gymnasium in the evening also must support the No Junk Food Policy. They must sign an agreement that says they agree to follow the policy.

Current Challenges

Most students revert back to unhealthy eating habits when they are with their families, friends, and community unless they are supported along same lines as the school.

There is some solid family support in this area for the students and these students are the ones who tend to take the lead with supporting healthy food choices.

*Participant
Moose Kerr School*

For More Information:

To learn more about Moose Kerr School, please visit: http://www.bdec.nt.ca/?page_id=58

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