



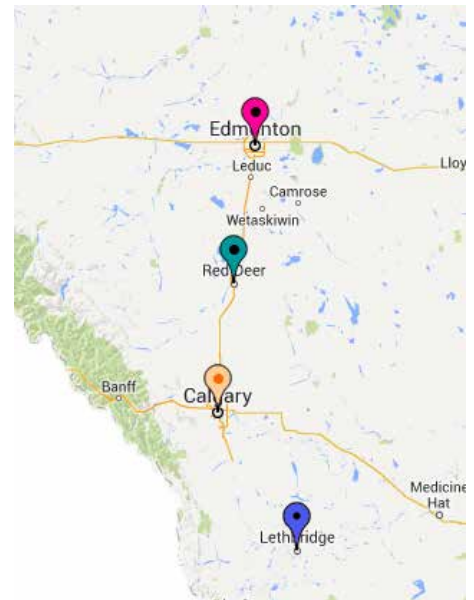
# Ever Active Schools

## Hosting Healthy Sporting Events: Focus Group Summary Report

### Background Information

Ever Active Schools (EAS) and the Alberta Schools' Athletic Association (ASAA) are supporting healthy changes in Alberta school sporting events: they want them to include healthy eating and believe Albertans are on the same page. In a recent survey of Alberta school coaches, teachers and athletic directors, 76% of respondents indicated they would support a policy mandating healthy food options at sporting events. Further, 85% of survey respondents would support prohibiting advertising of sugar-sweetened beverages at these events and 83% would support restricting sales of sugar-sweetened beverages at school concessions/canteens.

As a result, EAS and ASAA firmly believe that supporting the implementation of school and district policies which encourages the sale of nutritional foods and beverages at school concessions/canteens will help to provide students, staff and school community members with healthy eating habits and, overall, create healthier school communities. EAS and ASAA have hosted focus group discussions with teachers, athletic directors, and health promotion coordinators from Edmonton, Red Deer, Calgary, and Lethbridge to acknowledge pertinent challenges and successes regarding healthy food and beverage sales within the school environment. These meetings have provided innovative ideas, solutions and sharing of best practices to address current barriers associated with implementation of Alberta school policies focused on healthy food offerings. Below is a summary of the topics discussed during the focus groups. The feedback from the groups has been summarized and categorized into themes.




### Focus Group Findings

1. Support from provincial organizations (EAS, ASAA, and Alberta Health Services (AHS)) to provide:
  - a. Professional Education Days
  - b. Education around the Alberta Nutritional Guidelines for Children and Youth
  - c. Streamlining current resources and providing one comprehensive resource
  - d. Provide information and statistics on how other programs have been implemented successfully

...make the current resources easier to access, easier to find, easier to use...



2. Essential Conditions for a Successful Healthy Food in Schools Implementation and Adherence to the Program/Policy
  - a. “Buy in” from the whole community
  - b. Collaboration from all stakeholders
  - c. Educational resources
  - d. Funding from provincial organizations / grants to offset potential loss in revenue
  
3. Barriers to Implementation of policy
  - a. Lack of knowledge of parents, volunteers around what healthy foods are
  - b. Lack of school administration support
  - c. Perceived loss of revenue
  - d. Lack of preparation space and time for Choose Most Often foods
  
4. Potential Solutions to barriers
  - a. Provincial support (resources, education, funding) from EAS, ASAA, AHS
  - b. Central, easy to find, easy to use website with resources
  - c. Education to coaches, teachers, parents around nutrition
  - d. Community sponsorship/subsidy program to schools to offset potential loss of revenue
  
5. Current Knowledge Level
  - a. Most felt they had a good working knowledge of the material but had some concerns and recommendations
  - b. Material is good but very large in volume and can be difficult to put into practice
  - c. Teachers need to be aware of the good resources that are on the AHS website
  - d. One good comprehensive resource would be valuable
  
6. Current Successes
  - a. Healthy vending machines
  - b. Education nights for parents
  - c. Designated “health champions” following a comprehensive school health approach
  - d. Manual for canteens and kiosks using Choose Most Often/Choose Sometimes options



In order to make a 100% policy we need knowledge and buy in from executive administration, students, principals, parents and food providers.

## Adoption of New Policies

The Policy Readiness Tool is an assessment tool used to assess municipal readiness for policy change. It was developed by the University of Alberta’s School of Public Health with help from the Alberta Policy Coalition for Chronic Disease Prevention (APCCP). It is designed to make health policy change more manageable by classifying municipalities into three groups; Innovators, Majority or Late Adopters. The majority of the focus group participants represented the Innovators, who are classified as being passionate, forward thinkers who take pride in being leaders. There were also some Late Adopters in the group who are classified as being reluctant to change, wary of new ideas and seek to maintain status quo. The Policy Readiness Tool is an important tool to be mindful of when thinking about implementing new policies as some people/districts may be more cautious of change than others.

## Toolkit Recommendations

One of the goals of the Hosting Healthy Sporting Events project is to create a resource toolkit that would assist schools in achieving the target of 100% healthy foods at school and community events. By making a comprehensive and user-friendly toolkit and teaching schools how to use it, we hope to have more schools consider implementation of similar healthy projects!

The focus groups presented many great ideas on essential items for this toolkit. The overall consensus on what to include are as follows: grocery shopping list, list of acceptable and unacceptable foods, single serving list, recipe and food storage solutions, success stories, education materials (videos, PowerPoint's, posters), ready to use templates and parent/volunteer packages.

One of the main themes that developed out of the focus group sessions was that although there are many healthy eating resources available in the province, they are scattered on different websites and are not easy to locate, making the implementation of healthy eating programs in schools difficult.

EAS is working on creating a visual lecture to highlight the importance of healthy eating programs at school sporting events. This lecture will draw attention to the Alberta Nutrition Guidelines for Children and Youth and demonstrate how these can be implemented quickly and easily in our school communities.

EAS and ASAA are working to put together the final Hosting Healthy Sporting Events Toolkit. This will be available by Summer 2014.

## Contact

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