

Public Health Nutrition Framework for Action 2012-2016: Improving the food environment in schools in New Brunswick's Francophone sud school district Case Study

Project Name:	Improving the food environment in schools in New Brunswick's Francophone sud school district
Public Health Organization/ Zone: <i>(Vitalite, Horizon, OCMOH)</i>	Zone 1
Partner Organizations:	Le réseau des cafétérias communautaires Inc.
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Priority area for action:	<input type="checkbox"/> Food Security <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Healthy Environments <input type="checkbox"/> Prenatal and early childhood <input type="checkbox"/> Breastfeeding <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> School-aged children and youth
Scope: <i>(e.g. province-wide, health network, zone, school district)</i>	Schools in the Francophone sud school district served by Le réseau des cafétérias communautaires Inc.
Target audience <i>(e.g. general population, local community, low-income group, 3rd graders)</i>	Students, staff, parents, and communities in the Francophone sud school district.
Dates	<i>Initiated:</i> 2011 <i>Completed:</i> N/A <i>Case study submitted:</i> November 2014
Level of completeness	<input type="checkbox"/> Planning stage <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Ongoing <input type="checkbox"/> Terminated
Goals and Objectives:	
<p>The goal of this initiative is to improve the food environment in schools in the Francophone sud school district served by Le réseau des cafétérias communautaires Inc.</p> <p>Objectives:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> To provide nutritious, balanced meals in accordance with food policy 711. To put as many local products as possible on the menus. To develop an entrepreneurial culture among youth. To create meaningful learning situations and share responsibility for healthy eating with students. To contribute to the economic development of communities. 	

Underlying problem and evidence:

What was the motivation behind this initiative? What evidence was used to inform this initiative? If applicable, provide links to relevant literature, documents, and other resources used to inform this initiative.

Motivation and background:

The pioneer behind the concept of the “entrepreneurial cafeteria” is Rachel Schofield Martin. Ms. Schofield Martin is a physical education teacher by training. In 2007, she accepted a position as a community development officer at École Blanche-Bourgeois. Seeing that students and staff were unhappy with the food available in the cafeteria and concerned about everyone’s health, Rachel saw a golden opportunity to launch an innovative community project.

In September 2011, she then got approval from her school district to pilot “entrepreneurial cafeteria” initiative at École Blanche-Bourgeois in Cocagne, New Brunswick. This concept, which she developed, is based on four foundations: entrepreneurship; education; health; and, sustainable development. As planned, the school began managing its own cafeteria, and local foods (meat, fruit, vegetables, etc.) were supplied thanks to the cooperation of farmers and growers in the area. The change in food taste and quality was remarkable! In addition to offering hot meals, the project made it possible to develop many educational and/or entrepreneurial activities in collaboration with teaching staff through which students shared responsibility for healthy eating at school.

In June 2013, the food services contract shared by a number of urban schools in the Francophone sud school district (DSFS) expired. The DSFS supported expanding the concept to schools in the school district. At that point, the community really became involved, and community members banded together to form a non-profit organization with a social mandate to oversee the management of food services in DSFS schools. In May 2013, Le réseau des cafétérias communautaires Inc. (RCC) was established and assumed responsibility for the schools’ food services (operations sector).

Ms. Schofield Martin became the coordinator of healthy eating and social entrepreneurship for the DSFS and the person in charge of the education sector. In addition, she worked with Le réseau des cafétérias communautaires and many community partners to improve the food offered in DSFS schools.

In September 2014, 25 schools in the Francophone sud school district were being served by Le réseau des cafétérias communautaires, which means more than 8,616 students!

Evidence-based data:

The increase in obesity and avoidable chronic diseases among young people is a world-wide problem. New Brunswick’s record is poor, with more than 24% of young people aged 12 to 17 who are overweight or obese. The factors related to overweight and obesity are complex and include behaviours that affect health, such as eating habits and physical activity.

Wellness surveys of New Brunswick students show that a large percentage of young people do not eat enough fruits and vegetables. School is a place where young people spend a great deal of their time. School is not just a place of intellectual learning but also a place where healthy lifestyles are taught, and the food environment in schools has an undeniable influence on what young people eat.

Underlying problem and evidence:

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To encourage healthy eating among young people, we must act on this environment by making nutritious foods more accessible, appetizing, and affordable.

http://www2.gnb.ca/content/dam/gnb/Departments/h-s/pdf/en/Publications/Health_Indicators5.pdf

<http://recoltedechezvous.com/en/>

<http://www.lasanteaumenu.ca/category/coin-des-professionnels>

Description of the initiative:

What was your initiative? Who was involved? What was public health's involvement or role? Report on your unique context.

Le Réseau des cafétérias communautaires Inc. (RCC) is a social enterprise that operates 25 cafeterias in the Francophone sud school district. The RCC concept is based on four components: education, entrepreneurship, health, and sustainable development.

Really Local Harvest, an agricultural cooperative of about 30 farmers in southeastern New Brunswick, is a key partner in this project. It is responsible for supplying the RCC with locally produced fruits, vegetables, and meat. Local food distribution is essential to the success and sustainability of the project. Really Local Harvest set up a non-profit organization, Terroir Foods & Agrimarketing Inc. (TFA), to meet the demand for institutional procurement. TFA is responsible for coordinating the purchase and distribution of local foods. A warehouse with refrigeration and freezer space was built to store local foods. In addition, a refrigerated truck was purchased to ensure distribution that meets food safety standards. Among other things, the project has made it possible to redefine institutional procurement chains.

Students have had some unique learning opportunities thanks to the collaboration of different partners. For instance, farmers have visited classrooms to share their knowledge and passion. Those visits have resulted in some unique and magical moments, as well as meaningful learning experiences both in terms of making the link between the source of food and the environment and the importance of healthy eating.

Involvement of Public Health dietitians:

From the start, Le réseau des cafétérias communautaires has called on Public Health dietitians to serve as key partners in this amazing adventure. Menus have been designed in collaboration with the RCC's team. Standard menus are proposed to the elementary and high schools. The two menus reflect the fact that these populations are different. High school menus offer more choices than elementary school menus. To ensure that menus are in line with the crops of farmers and growers in the region, a fall and winter menu is being proposed this year for the first time. Dietitians are resource persons when it comes to supporting the implementation of food policy 711. Meetings and discussions take place regularly so they can look at all of the menus together and adjust certain

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items to reflect needs.

The RCC and the Public Health dietitians are currently working on setting up a dessert structure that will offer more fruit in different forms. Desserts based on fruit will be added to the menu. Surveys administered to high school students resulted in recipe contests in the schools and the creation of milkshakes, which will be added to the menu as a “student creation.”

To support and improve the food knowledge of RCC staff, the dietitians gave some workshops on food issues for youth, food policy 711, and nutrition labelling. As part of these workshops, cafeteria staff were given the opportunity to visit the farmers and growers participating in the project. An RCC newsletter is being developed as well. The dietitians think this newsletter could become a means of conveying key messages about healthy eating among young people for RCC employees and school staff. Public Health dietitians and the RCC have set a goal for the coming year: developing more initiatives in the education component for parents and the community.

The RCC and the dietitians are also collaborating in other components as part of the Healthy Learners in School Program. Public Health dietitians and nurses have the opportunity to work with their school communities, learning specialists, and the RCC on entrepreneurial projects related to healthy eating and health.

Describe the extent to which your intervention integrated the strategic directions identified in the New Brunswick Public Health Nutrition Framework for Action 2012-2016	
<i>Capacity-building</i>	<p>The community cafeteria project may contribute to capacity building among students, cafeteria staff, and teaching staff, as well as at the community level.</p> <p>The commitment of local producers and the development of a food distribution system for the school cafeterias definitely contributes to community capacity building in a sustainable way. Such an initiative has the potential to help change behaviours and attitudes towards the importance of including our local producers in our food system more.</p>
<i>Partnerships and collaboration</i>	<p>Many partners and collaborators from different sectors support Le réseau des cafétérias communautaires Inc.:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Francophone sud school district • New Brunswick government • Government of Canada • Local growers/farmers • School staff, community officers • Public Health dietitians and nurses (Healthy Learners in School Program) • Parents • Business people in the communities • Place aux compétences organization • J.W. McConnell Family Foundation
<i>Knowledge management and communication</i>	<p>Development of a newsletter for RCC schools.</p> <p>Sharing of best practices such as new recipes, entrepreneurial projects related to healthy eating among RCC schools.</p> <p>Healthy eating training for RCC cafeteria staff during annual educational days.</p> <p>Sharing of information and knowledge between farmers and students.</p>
<i>Comprehensive approach</i>	<p>The RCC project proposes different strategies for achieving its objectives. The partnership between the RCC and Public Health dietitians involved in the Healthy Learners in School Program supports an integrated, comprehensive approach. The Comprehensive School Health Framework is the approach recommended by Public Health professionals in the schools.</p>

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Policy	Support the application of food policy 711 to the development of the menus offered by the RCC.
Surveillance, monitoring, evaluation	<p>Interpretation and use of wellness surveys of New Brunswick students to guide the RCC in identifying nutritional challenges among young people in the schools.</p> <p>Surveys of high school students to evaluate their appreciation of the choices offered and obtain their suggestions.</p> <p>Evaluation of the workshops offered to RCC cafeteria staff.</p>
Outputs:	
<i>Please share links to any resources, reports, or other materials emanating from this initiative. Please indicate if you have already shared this initiative with others or provide links to any presentation, articles, or other materials you used to share your work.</i>	
<p>Video on the development of Le réseau des cafétérias communautaires Inc.: http://www.apprendreetentreprendre.ca/projet_cafeteria_entrepreneuriale.php</p> <p>Newsletter for schools in the RCC: http://ecole.district1.nbed.nb.ca/ecole-grande-digue/files/2014/10/RCC-BulletinSept2014-Vol1-no1vWEB.pdf</p> <p>Copy of survey on improving the food environment for high schools – available upon request</p>	
Resources required:	
<i>Describe the resources that were required (human and capital) and who provided them.</i>	
Public Health dietitians are working on this initiative as part of their role and responsibilities with respect to the Healthy Learners in School Program.	
Outcome measures, indicators, and evaluation:	
<i>Describe the outcomes of the initiative and the results of any evaluations completed to date. If outcomes or evaluation data are unavailable, describe any plans for evaluation, and outcome and indicators you plan to monitor.</i>	
<p>The number of schools joining the RCC has continued to increase since the initiative began, and other schools will be joining in 2015. Sales are good and growing. The RCC will soon be releasing a report on the project’s economic spinoffs in the communities.</p> <p>The Public Health dietitians and the RCC plan to come up with more ways of evaluating the various food-related components of the project over the course of the coming year.</p>	

Lessons learned:

What lessons have you learned? What are your impressions of why the initiative succeeded or failed?

Building good working relationships and good communication among Public Health dietitians and the RCC has been a critical step in the success and advancement of the project. The Public Health dietitians and the RCC have developed a work plan so they can continue to meet everyone's objectives. The dietitians' managers have supported this collaboration since the beginning.

The vision of creating an environment that promotes healthy eating among young people while supporting our local economy is shared by the individuals involved in the project. This philosophy, which is shared by the partners, definitely contributes to the success of the initiative.

Also, the fact that the organization responsible for the food service is a non-profit makes it possible to offer clients food of superior quality at an affordable price.

Recommendations and next steps:

A few recommendations for the continuation of the project:

- Develop more strategies/methods of communication for parents and the community.
- Develop a plan to evaluate the various components of the project in terms of supply, education, changing behaviours, etc. Identify indicators to be monitored over the next few years.
- Look at the possibility of extending the concept to all schools in the zone (Francophone and Anglophone) and possibly elsewhere.

The Public Health dietitians plan to continue this collaboration for the next few years. Working in partnership with the RCC enables the dietitians to reach a significant number of young people and families since more than 8,616 students are associated with the RCC.