

Healthy food and drink choices in WA public schools

Principals and their school communities continue to embrace their role in creating a healthy food environment. Western Australian public schools support a whole school approach to health and wellbeing by complying with the Department of Education’s (DOE) *Healthy Food and Drink* (HFD) policy. Almost all schools with a canteen/foodservice (95%) reported that their canteen menus offer a majority of healthy (green) food and drinks.

Background

Schools play a key role in introducing, supporting, and teaching children and young people about healthy eating. The HFD policy is mandatory in all Western Australian public schools and applies to school canteens, classroom rewards and cooking activities, school camps, excursions and school-based fundraising activities. The policy is based on:

- [Australian Dietary Guidelines](#); Australian Guide to Healthy Eating;
- a whole school approach; Health Promoting Schools Framework; and
- the [traffic light system](#) of categorising food and drink as green, amber or red.

2019 Principals’ survey

The mandatory policy includes five areas of [compliance](#). As part of DOE schools reporting systems, an annual online HFD compliance survey is conducted; the 2019 results* are positive.

Core area	Requirement	2019 results
Written policy	Schools are required to develop their own healthy food and drink policy. Sample template available	<p>No policy 11% Under development 18% Policy in place 69%</p>
Canteen menus	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Menus must contain minimum 60% green items; maximum 40% amber • Red items are off the menu • Amber savoury commercial items <2 days per week 	<p>95% = <40% red, >60% green 78% = no red items 84% = restricted amber</p>
Promoting healthy eating	Schools must promote healthy eating to the school community e.g. newsletters, programs, events etc.	<p>98% Healthy eating is a priority</p> <p>e.g. programs such as, gardens and Crunch&Sip® (80% primary); and Health Promoting Schools framework (80% secondary)</p>
Traffic light training (TLT)	Canteen staff and/or their employers (e.g. P&C) must complete TLT	<p>TLT: Canteen staff ~90, P&C/volunteers ~80 FoodSafe: Canteen staff ~100, P&C/volunteers ~80</p>
FoodSafe training	Canteen staff and volunteers must complete food safety and hygiene training e.g. FoodSafe	



Department of Health
Department of Education



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Fill the menu
>60%

Select carefully
<40%

Off the menu

Activities and achievements 2019/2020

The 2019 survey results reflect the support being provided to schools by the Western Australian School Canteen Association Inc. (WASCA), for example:

- 52 new tools and resources developed to support schools to implement the policy, including a new [traffic light poster](#) translated into 17 languages; HFD compliance checklists for [canteens](#), [principals](#), [teachers](#) and [P&C's](#); updated [policy template](#); [33 new recipes](#);
- 565 people completed training, including online (n=99) and face to face (n=466) during 33 training and capacity building sessions;
- providing information to 2,927 new school families to encourage healthy lunchboxes and support for the HFD policy;
- tailored support and advice provided to 228 schools; and
- the Action on Nutrition (AON) project (February - July 2019), which aimed to investigate barriers, enablers and support strategies for implementing the HFD Policy in secondary and regional schools. One of the key activities from AON was conducting menu assessments with regional and secondary schools; and implementing a new strategy conducting follow-up phone calls to schools that received a menu assessment. Findings showed schools removed red items and increased fruit and vegetables on the menu as a result of receiving the menu assessment. This is now standard protocol for WASCA.

Recommendations for 2020/2021

WASCA will continue to work with the Departments of Health and Education to provide:

- targeted support to high schools to meet HFD policy criteria, particularly to remove red items from canteen menus; continue to offer tailored training sessions for secondary schools to ensure relevance of topics and networking opportunities; develop marketing messages and fact sheets specifically focussing on red food and drinks in secondary schools;
- develop marketing materials customised for high schools and primary schools promoting healthy eating;
- support regional schools to increase completion of traffic light training;
- support to all schools, i.e. those with and without canteens, to increase the number of schools with a written policy for the provision of healthy food and drinks;
- an opportunity to promote and recognise schools promoting healthy eating through [‘HARVEST: Bright ideas from the field’](#) (online case studies) and WASCA Wednesday (brief posts on social media); and
- training, events and resources that include tips and ideas on advocating for healthy food and drinks by all stakeholders in the whole school community.

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*A total of 450 (56.7%) schools completed the survey representing 64% metropolitan schools; 36% regional schools; and 71% primary schools; 21% secondary schools (including district high schools; K-12 schools); and 8% other schools (e.g. Education support). There were no significant differences in reported menu compliance between metropolitan and regional schools; secondary schools (36%) were more likely to have red items than primary schools (16%).