



# HEALTHY SCHOOLS STUDENT CLUB SECONDARY GUIDE: NUTRITION

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**York Region**

## Introduction

Welcome to the *Healthy School Student Club Secondary Guide: Nutrition*

In this guide, you will find nutrition **ideas and activities** you can plan and implement in your school.

Promoting healthy eating at school is a great way to help you and your friends understand the importance of nutritious foods. It can also help develop food literacy skills, like your ability to cook different foods, and will benefit you throughout life.

The activities are grouped into four **nutrition themes to guide you** throughout the school year:

- ❖ Nutrition Education and Awareness
- ❖ Food Exploration
- ❖ The Food Environment
- ❖ Nutrition Communication and Advocacy

You can also create your own themes to meet the needs of your school!

Remember these activities are only suggestions. Make them your own by changing elements of any of the activities or create your own to make it fun for your peers.

*If you need more information, or are looking for additional ideas, ask your school champion to contact the Registered Dietitian assigned to your school. The Nutritionist will work with you and support you!*

## Become a Healthy School Ambassador

York Region Public Health School Services offers a *Healthy Eating Ambassador* program that will train you and your peers to be nutrition leaders in your school and how to plan and implement nutrition initiatives. To learn more, and arrange a training session, ask your School Champion to connect with the Public Health Nurse and/or Registered Dietitian who supports your school.

Good luck and remember your health promotion activities will make a big impact in the **health and well-being** of everyone in your school. Thank you for all your help. **Be creative and have fun!**

## Nutrition Education and Awareness

Let's explore the world of food and nutrition in a fun and creative way! Nutrition has many interesting facets waiting to be discovered. Remember, what constitutes healthy eating can vary among individuals, cultures, and more. Take the time to explore the diverse perspectives on what healthy eating means to different people, where our food comes from and more!

## ACTIVITIES

### Activity 1: Nutrition Suggestion Box

**Purpose:** To collect diverse perspectives and suggestions from students and staff on nutrition and healthy eating priorities within the school.

Students set up a “Nutrition Suggestion Box” where students can submit nutrition activity ideas, suggestions, and their opinions. Place the box in a central location in the school, such as the cafeteria or main lobby, where it is easily accessible. Set up paper and pencils beside the suggestions box. Encourage students and staff to submit their thoughts on what healthy eating means to them, and their suggestions on activity ideas that could be implemented in the school.

To increase participation, consider setting up a table where Healthy School Student Club members can encourage their peers to participate by explaining the purpose of the box and encouraging them to participate. Get creative and decorate the box with a nutrition theme to make it more eye catching!

This can be used to launch a healthy eating campaign or to gather ideas on how to proceed with a nutrition campaign.

### Activity 2: Celebrate Local Food Week

**Purpose:** To learn about and appreciate local foods and food systems. Local Food Week is usually the first week of June, but you can celebrate any time.

Local Food Week is a province-wide event in Ontario, dedicated to celebrating and supporting locally grown food and agriculture. This week is an opportunity to recognize all the people who grow, process, package, transport and cook food.

Below are some activity ideas to celebrate local food week:

- Partner with your Hospitality, Geography or Family Studies department and feature local veggies and fruit by hosting recipe contests or altering your school’s cafeteria menu to include local produce in the dishes served during local food week.
- Develop engaging “Did you Know” quizzes about Ontario’s agriculture to highlight facts about local crops and farming practices. These can be shared over morning announcements or students can set up a quiz table during lunch time.
- Selfie Campaign: Participants share selfies with local produce on their school’s social media accounts to promote local foods and agriculture. Add a caption to showcase a fun fact about how or where the food is grown.

Additional ideas and events for **Local Food Week can be found** at the following web sites [Foodland Ontario: I Love Local Food](#) and [The Ontario Federation of Agriculture](#).

Visit a local farm or farmers’ market, check out [York Region’s Farm Fresh Guide](#).

# Food Exploration

Exploring new foods is an exciting way to broaden your taste buds and discover dishes you might not usually try! You can make this even more enjoyable by adding some fun activities. It's also a great chance to put your cooking abilities to the test. Have you ever wondered how to master the art of chopping an onion? Look at the activity suggestions below and start to explore foods of various textures, tastes and colours as well as new recipes!

## ACTIVITY SUGGESTIONS

### Activity 1: Iron Chef Competition

**Purpose:** To develop food and cooking skills through hands-on experiences.

Organize an **Iron Chef Competition** using a specific theme (e.g., smoothies, easy lunches, cuisines from around the world). Choose three or four judges with diverse roles at your school (e.g., teacher, cafeteria manager, York Region Dietitian).

Ensure the recipes include ingredients found in [Canada's Food Guide](#), recognizing the cultural and traditional diversity of food choices. Connect with your Healthy Schools Champion about the equipment you have available at the school to run this activity.

Browse these **resources** for recipe ideas:

- [Cookspiration](#)
- [Canada's Food Guide](#)
- [UnlockFood.ca](#)

### Activity 2: Guess the Mystery Food

**Purpose:** To expand your knowledge about different kinds of foods and provide an opportunity to expose students to a variety of foods in a fun environment.

Put a **mystery food** into a paper bag. Have students and staff guess what the food is without looking at it. Provide hints/clues about the food as participants touch, smell, and even taste it (be sure to set aside some extra). Make sure to highlight nutritional characteristics of the food(s).

Ensure the **mystery food** aligns with foods found on [Canada's Food Guide](#). Some ideas include kiwi, cottage cheese, squash, pomegranate, tofu and oatmeal. Avoid using foods that are [common allergens](#).

### Activity 3: Food Tasting Event

**Purpose:** To explore recipes and provide an opportunity for students to taste food in a fun environment.

Host a **Food Tasting event**. Use this as an opportunity to highlight some of the nutritious food and beverage choices in the cafeteria, items available in vending machines, or food made from the Family Studies or Hospitality Classes.

Make sure to have ingredient lists and nutrition information readily available for participants. Connect with the cafeteria manager to see if they can provide free samples.

Browse these resources for recipe ideas. Be sure to adjust the recipe depending on the number of portions needed. Ask your Healthy School Champion if a staff who has their Safe Food Handling certification is available to support this activity:

- [Cookspiration](#)
- [Canada's Food Guide](#)
- [UnlockFood](#)

## Activity 4: Create a School Cookbook

**Purpose:** To celebrate the diverse culinary heritage within your school by sharing dishes and discovering new recipes that may not be a part of your everyday meals.

Ask students to bring to school a copy of a recipe their family enjoys. It can be from their culture, a family tradition, or just their favourite recipe. Combine the recipes into a cookbook to be shared amongst the school community. You can print the cookbook or create it electronically.

**Tip:** You could also create the cookbook and turn it into a fundraising opportunity for your school.

## School Food Environment

Enjoying a wide range of foods from [Canada's Food Guide](#) is essential for nourishing and energizing our bodies and our minds and creating social connections. Our surroundings, where we live, study, and engage in activities, can impact our food choices significantly. Environments that encourage healthy eating make it simpler to choose nutritious options.

## ACTIVITY SUGGESTIONS

### Activity 1: Frequent Buyer Cards

**Purpose:** To increase consumption of vegetables and fruits.

Promote vegetables and fruit intake by issuing **Frequent Buyer Cards** where each purchase of a vegetable or fruit from the school cafeteria earns the student a stamp. Offer an incentive after collecting a certain number of stamps, such as the tenth fruit or vegetable for free. Partner with cafeteria and administrative staff to implement this initiative.

### Activity 2: Cafeteria Makeover

**Purpose:** To develop an eating area in the school students' feel pride in, feel comfortable using and is safe.

Give your **cafeteria a makeover** and a new look. Work with the Art Department and design murals and posters promoting food and nutrition to display in the cafeteria.

Consider adding some life to your cafeteria by adding plants, painting the walls a bright colour and changing the lighting. Speak to your administration about adding circle tables and chairs. Make your cafeteria comfortable and inviting.

Take before and after pictures, promote the redesigned cafeteria through your school's PA system, newsletter and website. Consider giving a fun and welcoming name to your cafeteria that reflects your school spirit like The Mighty Mangoes or Wildcat Watermelons.

Here is an example of a cafeteria in an Ontario school that focuses on healthy eating:

- [Screaming Avocado Blogspot](#)

Check out the "[Fresh it Up](#)" badge from the [BrightBites](#) website for ideas on how to freshen up your school cafeteria.

## Nutrition Communication and Advocacy

Let's get talking! Start a conversation and raise awareness about the significance of nutrition. Nutrition isn't just about what we eat; it plays a vital role in our overall well-being, affecting everything from our energy levels to our long-term health. By sharing information and advocating for healthy eating, we can inspire our peers and school community.

### ACTIVITY SUGGESTIONS

#### Activity 1: Social Media Campaign

**Purpose:** To increase awareness about nutrition topics and how to broadly communicate this information to the school community to advocate for change.

Choose a food or nutrition topic students care about and make it come alive by sharing it over various internet platforms.

Develop social media posts or take pictures of nutrition activities or events going on in the school to share on your school's social media channels. Determine your key messages for each post, draft captions, and determine hashtags.

#### Activity 2: Nutrition Month Campaign (March)

**Purpose:** To learn about nutrition and develop food literacy skills.

March is National Nutrition Month! Each year, [Dietitians of Canada](#) chooses a theme to celebrate for the month of March and releases supporting materials such as activity ideas, recipes, and a social media toolkit.

Develop a **Nutrition Month** Campaign calendar for the month of March by incorporating activity ideas found within this document, on [BrightBites](#) and from [Dietitians of Canada](#).

Check out these badges from BrightBites:

[Fresh it Up](#)  
[Green Thumb](#)  
[Spread the Word](#)