

Dixon Grove JMS Healthy Eating Survey Results

Surveys and data collection/entry done by:

Linda Chung and Jazmyne Kent (York University Nursing Students)

Summary written by: Sharon Bain, Public Health Nurse (Toronto Public Health)

Surveys were sent out to Dixon Grove JMS parents, students and teachers (Grades 3-8).

Some Limitations of Results

- Not formal research
- Student responses about food eaten were from the previous day (1 sample day only)
- Were results accurately remembered and recorded?
- Results may not reflect the overall student/parent/staff population

However, there is **a lot of good information** to give us ideas where to start in promoting healthy eating.

General Findings

- Parents and students think healthy eating is very important
- Many parents are unaware that there is a breakfast and snack program in the school
- Teachers mostly disagree that students eat very healthy
- Some teachers notice students throwing away healthy lunches and/or snacks
- Students are having a lot of foods and drinks that are unhealthy (high in sugar or salt and low in nutrition)
 - A high number of students are drinking fruit-flavoured drinks that do not count as a serving of vegetables or fruit
- A majority of students drink water frequently
- Some students are having drinks that are high in caffeine (i.e. coffee, energy drinks)
- Many students are not meeting the minimum requirements for:
 - Vegetables and fruit
 - Whole grains
 - Milk and alternatives
- A number of students are not eating breakfast everyday
- Almost ¼ of students (gr. 6 to 8) do not eat lunch everyday
- About half of students do not participate in the breakfast and snack program
- Half of students do not eat with an adult family member everyday
- Most children say they like to be involved in making meals and decisions about the food they eat

Parents: 195 Responses

1. **Number of people per family**
 - about half have families with 3-4 members and half have 5+ members;
 - 10% have 7+ members;
 - very small number of 1-2 members
2. **Eating healthy is a priority in my family:** all agree (85%); sometimes agree (15%)
 - Parents consider healthy eating to be important
3. **It is hard to find time to cook healthy meals every day**
 - agree 11%; sometimes agree 39%; 50% disagree
 - Some parents have challenges finding the time to cook healthy meals
4. **It is easy to make healthy eating choices every day**
 - Agree (58%); sometimes agree (38%)
 - Majority said yes. Compared with what teachers are noticing, what does this mean?
5. **It is easy to get my children to eat healthy**
 - Agree (54%); sometimes agree (40%)
 - Majority said yes, although many only sometimes agreed. Some parent comments indicate this is a concern. This is often an area that parents consider a challenge. Note teacher responses.
6. **It is easy to find healthy food in the grocery store**
 - Agree (78%); sometimes agree (20%)
 - What is the understanding of healthy food? (see teacher and student results); is healthy food affordable?
7. **Grocery shopping is done together as a family**
 - Agree (42%); sometimes agree (47%)
 - Many families shop together. This can be a great opportunity to get children involved and thinking about the family's food, and helping to make some healthy choices.
8. **My children influence what I buy at the grocery store**
 - Agree (37%); sometimes agree (45%)
 - Involving children in choices about food can interest them in eating better. Are parents influencing children to make healthy choices?
9. **My children help make the meals at home**
 - Agree (22%); sometimes agree (45%); 1 in 3 disagree
 - 2/3 of parents indicated children are at least sometimes involved. Again, this can be another way to help get children involved and interested in healthy food choices.
10. **Where do you get information about healthy eating?**
 - High: family/friends; media/TV; doctor; also books/magazines and internet
 - Lower: pamphlets; newspaper; school newsletter
 - Lowest: library, telephone

11. Some parent comments:

- Many positive comments about what the school is doing:
 - “I think Dixon Grove is doing a great job educating students about healthy eating.”
 - “I appreciate you giving the students healthy food for their breakfast.”
 - Majority of parents do feel healthy eating is important
 - Many parents feel that healthy eating starts in the home setting
 - Lots of good ideas about how to encourage healthy eating at the school
 - Provide incentives for healthy eating
 - Prohibit certain unhealthy foods (pop; 'junk' food)
 - Parent suggestions for food options (Snack and lunch program)
 - Many parents suggested a hot lunch program
 - One major problem is getting children to eat healthy food
 - Some parents interested in becoming involved in healthy eating at Dixon Grove and/or increasing parent involvement
 - “Let the parents understand the importance of eating healthy meals. Let them become involved in healthy eating programs at school”
 - “I would love to participate in a healthy eating program at the school”
 - “Have a menu of what is on the weekly nutrition program so parents can choose from a variety of snack choices”
-

Teachers: 19 Responses

1. **Students tend to eat very healthy**
 - almost 80% disagree
2. **Students are fairly well educated regarding healthy eating**
 - mixed results
3. **There is a wide gap between knowledge and practice of eating healthy**
 - most agree (2/3)
4. **I often notice students throwing away healthy lunches/snacks**
 - more than half agree
5. **There is a noticeable difference in behaviour for students before and after lunch and/or snack**
 - most agree (research supports this)
6. **I believe the foods students eat affect their academia**
 - strong majority agree (research supports this)

(continued on next page)

Students:

- 73 Gr. 3 to 5
- 364 Gr. 6 to 8

Canada's Food Guide

- Canada's guide to healthy eating
- Eat the recommended **amount** and **type** of food each day.
- We are using the guide to compare with students' responses.
- ****Note:** students were asked how many times a day they ate foods, not how many servings according to Canada's Food Guide, so comparisons won't be completely accurate**

Canada's Food Guide recommends:

Limit foods and beverages high in calories, fat, sugar or salt.

Salty Snacks (example: chips, popcorn, crackers, fries):

- Gr. 3-5: 29% ate 2 or more times (6% ate 4+ times)
- Gr. 6-8: 34% ate 2 or more times (7% ate 4+ times)

Sweet Snacks (example: candy, ice cream, chocolate, pop, cookies)

- Gr. 3-5: 39% ate 2 or more times (6% ate 4+ times)
- Gr. 6-8: 51% ate 2 or more times (10% ate 4+ times)

Fast Food (example: burgers, fries, hot dogs, pizza, taco)

Note: some of these choices may be healthy if lower in fat and sodium and higher in fibre and nutrients (for example, lean meat, whole grain bread)

- Gr. 3-5: 39% ate 2 or more times (6% ate 4+ times)
- Gr. 6-8: 32% ate 2 or more times (11% ate 4+ times)

Soft Drinks (example: soft drinks, pop, diet pop)

- Gr. 3-5: 19% drank 2 or more times (9% drank 4+ times)
- Gr. 6-8: 30% drank 2 or more times (8% drank 4+ times)

Sports Drinks (example: Gatorade®)

- Gr. 3-5: 13% drank 2 or more times (6% drank 4+ times)
- Gr. 6-8: 13% drank 2 or more times (4% drank 4+ times)

Fruit-Flavoured Drinks (example: Sunny D®, lemonade, Kool-aid® Jammers)

Vegetable or fruit drinks, beverages, punches and cocktails may contain only a small amount of real juice. ****They don't count as servings for vegetables and fruit.****

- Gr. 3-5: 32% drank 2 or more times (13% drank 4+ times)
- Gr. 6-8: 42% drank 2 or more times (11% drank 4+ times)

Caffeine:

- For children 10-12 years old, Health Canada recommends no more than 85 mg. of caffeine per day (the amount in 2 cans of cola); for youth and adults, the recommendation is a maximum of 400 mg.
- Coffee has ~130 mg. per cup
- Some energy drinks have over 250 mg. of caffeine

Energy Drinks (example: Red Bull®)

- Gr. 3-5: 12% drank **1** or more times (5% drank **3+** times)
- Gr. 6-8: 13% drank **1** or more times (5% drank **3+** times)

Coffee

- Gr. 3-5: 21% drank **1** or more times (6% drank **3+** times)
- Gr. 6-8: 17% drank **1** or more times (4% drank **3+** times)

Canada's Food Guide Recommendations for Numbers of Servings

Age in Years	Children			Teens	
	2-3	4-8	9-13	14-18 years	
Sex	Girls and Boys			Females	Males
Vegetables and Fruit	4	5	6	7	8
Grain Products	3	4	6	6	7
Milk and Alternatives	2	2	3-4	3-4	3-4
Meat and Alternatives	1	1	1-2	2	3

Vegetables and Fruit

- Eat at least one dark green and one orange vegetable each day
- Choose those prepared with little or no added fat, sugar or salt
- Have vegetables and fruit more often than juice
 - Toronto Public Health recommends a maximum of 1 cup of juice a day
 - Choose 100% vegetable or fruit juices (not drinks, beverages, punches, cocktails, etc.)

Vegetables (example: lettuce, broccoli, carrots, squash)

- Gr. 3-5: 64% ate 2 or fewer times (28% didn't eat any)
- Gr. 6-8: 71% ate 2 or fewer times (23% didn't eat any)

Fruit (not including juice; example: fresh, dried, canned, frozen)

- Gr. 3-5: 67% ate 2 or fewer times (29% didn't eat any)
- Gr. 6-8: 68% ate 2 or fewer times (19% didn't eat any)

Fruit Juice (100%)

- Gr. 3-5 (number of times): 0 = 33%; 1 = 21%; 2 = 7%; 3 = 13%; 4+ = 21%
- Gr. 6-8 (number of times): 0 = 21%; 1 = 32%; 2 = 23%; 3 = 14%; 4+ = 10%

Whole Grains: (example: whole grain bread, brown rice, oatmeal)

Canada's Food Guide says to make at least half of your grain products whole grain each day—for 6 servings, 3 or more should be whole grain

- Gr. 3-5: 66% ate 2 or fewer times (20% didn't eat any)
- Gr. 6-8: 72% ate 2 or fewer times (19% didn't eat any)

Milk and Alternatives

Canada's Food Guide says to: drink skim, 1% or 2% milk each day; select lower fat milk alternatives

Milk (example: white or chocolate, soy)

- Gr. 3-5: 33% drank 0 or 1 time (11% didn't drink any)
- Gr. 6-8: 33% drank 0 or 1 time (9% didn't drink any)

Dairy (example: milk, cheese, yoghurt)

- Gr. 3-5: 40% ate/drank 2 or fewer times (23% didn't eat/drink any)
- Gr. 6-8: 26% ate/drank 2 or fewer times (5% didn't eat/drink any)

Meat and Alternatives (example: fish, chicken, beans, tofu)

** Note: Some meat may have been counted in "Fast Foods" instead (example: burger, fries, hotdog, pizza, taco). Red meat was not included in the example.**

Canada's Food Guide says to: have meat alternatives such as beans, lentils and tofu often; select lean meat and alternatives prepared with little or no added fat or salt; eat at least 2 food guide servings of fish each week

- Gr. 3-5 (number of times): 0 = 23%; 1 = 34%; 2 = 14%; 3 = 10%; 4+ = 19%
- Gr. 6-8 (number of times): 0 = 19%; 1 = 28%; 2 = 25%; 3 = 16%; 4+ = 12%

Satisfy Your Thirst with Water

Canada's Food Guide suggests we drink water regularly and use it to quench our thirst

- Majority of students drank water 4+ times a day—a healthy choice.

How many times per week (Mon. – Fri.) do you...?

Grades 3-5	0	1	2	3	4	5
Eat breakfast (71)	2 (3%)	7 (10%)	3 (4%)	0	4 (6%)	55 (77%)
Eat lunch (71)	0	4 (6%)	3 (4%)	2 (3%)	3 (4%)	59 (83%)
Eat as part of the breakfast or snack program (66)	30 (45%)	3 (5%)	2 (3%)	5 (8%)	1 (1%)	25 (38%)
Eat meals with at least one adult family member (66)	12 (18%)	5 (8%)	6 (9%)	5 (8%)	4 (6%)	34 (52%)

- A significant number of students didn't eat breakfast daily (33%); fewer missed eating lunch every day (13%).
- Most students did not eat either the breakfast or snack provided by the Student Nutrition Program.
- Half of the students ate meals with an adult daily; 18% didn't eat with an adult at all.
 - Children who sit down with others regularly for meals are more likely to eat healthier, learn table manners and develop strong relationships (www.toronto.ca/health/pdf/nm_helping_children.pdf)

Grades 6-8	0	1	2	3	4	5
Eat breakfast (353)	21 (6%)	31 (9%)	22 (6%)	27 (8%)	17 (5%)	23 (66%)
Eat lunch (345)	7 (2%)	23 (7%)	12 (3%)	20 (6%)	21 (6%)	262 (76%)
Eat as part of the breakfast or snack program (321)	190 (59%)	19 (6%)	16 (5%)	12 (4%)	13 (4%)	71 (22%)
Eat meals with at least one adult family member (345)	36 (10%)	28 (8%)	44 (13%)	30 (9%)	32 (9%)	175 (51%)

- A significant number of students didn't eat breakfast (34%) and lunch (24%) daily.
- Most students did not eat either the breakfast or snack provided by the Student Nutrition Program.
- Half of the students ate meals with an adult daily; 10% didn't eat with an adult at all.
 - Children who sit down with others regularly for meals are more likely to eat healthier, learn table manners and develop strong relationships (www.toronto.ca/health/pdf/nm_helping_children.pdf)

Some students don't eat breakfast: their reasons (gr. 6 to 8; may have responded more than once)

There is no time in the morning for breakfast	74
I tend to like to sleep in	34
I am not hungry in the morning	69
I don't like the breakfast provided	12

Healthy eating is important to me

- Strong majority in both groups agreed—younger students more strongly agreed

My parent/guardian(s) thinks healthy eating is important

- Almost all students agreed, most of them strongly agreed.

I like being involved in making the food I eat

- About 2/3 students in both groups agreed/strongly agreed. This is a great way to encourage students to get interested in healthy foods, especially if they have fun.

I think healthy food tends to taste bad

- More than half disagreed; more of the older students disagreed. About ¼ agreed. Quite a few said they didn't know.

I regularly go grocery shopping with my parent/guardian(s)

- Most agreed.

I regularly provide input/suggestions on grocery items

- Over half agreed; more agreed in the older group.
- Getting input from children about healthy choices can be a good way to encourage them to eat better.

I enjoy packing my own lunch

- More than half in both groups agreed.
- This can help to create interest and develop skills.
- Offer healthy choices.

I like learning about healthy food options

- Most of the younger students agreed
- More than half of the older agreed

I would be interested in joining a school healthy eating club

- There are a large number of students who are interested, especially younger students.

Student Comments

- Students suggested more in-class and out-of-class education about nutrition:
 - “Show them why you should eat healthy food and why you shouldn't eat junk food”
- Most students appeared knowledgeable about the importance of healthy eating
- Snack Program:
 - suggested increased variety in snacks offered, and suggested doing a survey; interest in more frequent food and hot lunches
- Other ideas offered for promoting healthy eating

Next Steps

- Take a closer look at the results to see how can we support students and families in the following ways:
 - Student Nutrition Program
 - In-class education and nutrition campaigns
 - Parent information sessions
 - Establish community partnerships
- Establish a Dixon Grove Healthy action Committee: teachers, parents, admin., students and Toronto Public Health