

Advocating for a Universal School Meal Program in B.C.

Vancouver Food Policy Council (VFPC):

An official civic agency that works to help improve food sustainability in Vancouver by providing advice to Vancouver City Council¹

What is a universal school meal program?

- ✓ A cost-shared program that enables all students in B.C. to have access to healthy meals at little or no cost
- ✓ Includes food education to serve culturally appropriate, local, sustainable food²



15.8%

of children live in food insecure households in B.C.³

Issue

Children in B.C. Experience:
Poor diet quality and inadequacy
 +
Food insecurity³

Approach

Environmental scan of school food programs and resources in B.C.

1) Web-based search

- UBC library
- Google



2) Keywords

- British Columbia
- Vancouver
- School meal/food program
- Children

3) Summarize and organize

information on policies, resources, programs into an excel sheet

Objective

Support policy making of the universal school meal program

Why it Matters

537,589

students in K-12⁴

1,566

schools

89

districts

26%

of children aged 12-17 are **overweight/obese⁵**

Obesity costs B.C. ~860M annually⁶

Healthy eating behaviours:²

- ↑ Cognitive development
- ↑ Academic performance
- ↑ Psychosocial outcomes
- ↑ Consumption of fruits + vegetables

- ↓ Hunger
- ↓ Chronic disease risk

Findings

What are some policies?

- ✓ Guidelines for Food & Beverage Sales in B.C. Schools
- ✓ School Meal and School Nutrition Program Handbook

Types of meal programs

- ✓ What: Breakfast, lunch, and snacks
- ✓ Who: organizations includes:



Breakfast Club of Canada



Farm to School



FUEL catering



Mavacilious KidsEat

- ✓ Where: Schools around B.C

Funding models

- ✓ Non-profit organizations
- ✓ Catering (3rd party)
- ✓ Parents advisory committee (PAC)
- ✓ Government

Limitations of findings

- ✗ No policies in place regarding school meal programs
- 🔍 Future research should include community based assessments

Universal School Meal Program

Should we advocate for it?

YES



Why?

- 💰 Provide opportunities for children to eat **low cost, healthy food and support local farmers**
- ↓ Emotional/social barriers that may prevent some low-income students from participating in meals program

Take Home Message

- Different meal programs across every school which is **not sustainable**
- A **cost-shared universal school meal program** is needed to help address issues of food insecurity and poor diet quality²
- Collaborative work with **stakeholders and all levels of government** is needed²



(1) VFPC. (n.d.). About Us. Retrieved March 25, 2018, from <http://www.vancouverfoodpolicycouncil.ca/about/>
 (2) Food Secure Canada. (2015, March 19). For a Universal Healthy School Food Program. Retrieved March 01, 2018, from <https://foodsecurecanada.org/CHSF2015>
 (3) PROOF. (2012). Research to identify policy options to reduce food insecurity. Retrieved March 25, 2018, from <http://proof.utoronto.ca/>
 (4) BC Gov News. (2017, August 29). Education by the numbers. Retrieved March 23, 2018, from <https://news.gov.bc.ca/releases/2017EDUC0095-001489>
 (5) Shields, M - Report. (2005). Measured Obesity: Overweight Canadian Children and Adolescents. Statistics Canada.
 (6) Force, BC Obesity Reduction Strategy Task, & desLibris - Documents. (2010). Recommendations for an obesity reduction strategy for British Columbians. British Columbia Ministry of Health.