



# Student Nutrition Ontario

At Student Nutrition Ontario, we stand for community, collaboration, and student success. We empower communities to address local needs and ensure that every student has access to nutritious foods, learns to make healthy choices, and is able to succeed. To support our partners, we bring knowledge, guidance, experience and passion. We offer a unified voice with the power to influence, build capacity, and ensure every student is well nourished.

**We work to provide every child in Ontario an equal opportunity to eat, learn and succeed.**



[www.StudentNutritionOntario.ca](http://www.StudentNutritionOntario.ca)

# How are Student Nutrition Programs connected to student well-being?\*

## Student nutrition programs support healthy schools.

Healthy schools promote and support child and student well-being using an integrated approach, recognizing that healthy students are better prepared to learn.<sup>1</sup>

Student nutrition programs are an important component of a comprehensive approach to healthy eating in schools. By providing a healthy social and physical environment where students have the opportunity to practice making healthy choices, nutrition programs underpin the healthy eating teachings in the Ontario Health and Physical Education Curriculum.

## Student nutrition programs are a route to improved mental health.

Promoting positive mental health is a key component of well-being and research is beginning to reveal the connection between nutrition and mental health.

Children spend more time at school than anywhere else. Educators can promote positive mental health through healthy eating and physical activity, and student nutrition programs can play an important role. Participation in school meal and snack programs has been linked to a decrease in student-reported measures of depression and anxiety, and an increase in teacher-reported measures of students that are better prepared to learn.<sup>2</sup> Also, research suggests that school meal and snack programs provide children with a stronger basis to succeed at school.<sup>3</sup>

### Notes:

<sup>1</sup>Ontario's Well-Being Strategy for Education: Discussion Document'.

<sup>2</sup>Murphy et al., 'The Relationship of School Breakfast to Psychosocial and Academic Functioning: Cross-Sectional and Longitudinal Observations in an Inner-City School Sample'.

<sup>3</sup>Brown, Beardslee, and Prothrow-Stith, 'Impact of School Breakfast on Children's Health and Learning: An Analysis of the Scientific Research'.

<sup>4</sup>Muthuswamy, 'Feeding Our Future: The First- and Second-Year Evaluation'.

\*With thanks to the Southwest Ontario Student Nutrition Program for the original briefing on which this document is based.

## Student nutrition programs can help level the playing field for all children.

All children deserve the best possible start in life. Supporting equity and inclusive education means eliminating systemic barriers to student achievement and well-being. Students that are food insecure face a sizeable barrier to achievement and well-being.

Students in Toronto who ate a morning meal most days of the week achieved better learning skills, were absent less than their peers who did not participate, received fewer suspensions, and were more likely to be on-track to graduate (receiving sufficient credits in grades 9 and 10).<sup>4</sup> Student Nutrition programs help by ensuring all students are ready to eat, learn, and succeed.

## Student nutrition programs help kids feel safe and connected.

Student nutrition programs can increase school connectedness and reinforce to children, families and community that student health and well-being are valued by providing caring and compassionate adult support, opportunities for group learning and a commitment to nutrition education and a positive school environment.

### WHAT WE SEE...

Offering breakfast, snack or lunch programs is an excellent way to create a safe and caring school environment for students.

*"Everyone is welcome at breakfast club and everyone helps out. Even our principal serves breakfast on Wednesdays."*

~ London Breakfast Club volunteer

# EAT. LEARN. SUCCEED.

