



Burdett School
Grades K-9
Burdett, Alberta

BEFORE School Makeover

Burdett School is part of a community with many Kanadier Mennonites whose first language is German. The majority of students have daily German classes, which left little time for nutrition teaching. The school had no programs or guidelines in place about nutrition. The school store featured pop, chips, chocolate bars and candy. If a student forgot lunch, they were given mini-pizzas or noodle cups. On *Treat Box Friday* teachers gave candy for good classroom behaviour. Finally, students' lunches often had processed meats, fried foods, chips and pop.

AFTER School Makeover

Description of the Project:

Creating opportunities for students to learn about healthy eating and to practice making healthy foods became a priority. Three programs were developed to address this issue:

The first was *Munchy Monday* for K-6 students. Each Monday students received a nutrition lesson and a healthy snack, which often included vegetables and fruit. The lessons also had healthy living areas such as exercise, sleep and mental health.

The second was starting a cooking club for grades 4-6 students and a junior high course on cooking.

The third program addressed the types of foods offered at school. Pop and junk foods were banned from the school store. A vending machine was purchased and filled with only healthy foods such as fruit cups, granola bars and yogurt. As well, weekly hot dog days were replaced with healthy choices and an annual *Stone Soup Day* ensured that students have healthy lunch options. To promote milk to students, the school used Alberta Milk's Club Moo program. Monthly milk and cookies parties for students who had milk during the month included videos or songs about drinking milk also helped to promote milk products. In the classroom, candy is no longer used as a reward for good behaviour.

Overcoming the Roadblocks:

Large families with busy schedules intensified the need for teaching about quick and nutritious meals and snacks. Language was also a barrier because many parents speak only German, making communication a challenge. Overcoming these roadblocks was done using a German liaison team. The team was composed of German teachers who received nutrition information from the school and passed the information on to German speaking parents. As well, teaching students was an excellent way to reach parents with healthy messages.

Another roadblock was finding funds for the nutrition programs. The school sent letters to potential community donors who responded with overwhelming financial and verbal support.

RESULTS

Surveys given to students had very positive feedback about the new programs. Students are bringing healthier snacks and are excited to show them to their teachers. Parents are asking for recipes of the snacks made at school and students have noticed that their parents now pay more attention to nutrition information in the grocery store. Community groups are approaching the school and offering continued financial support for the nutrition programs. One story the school shared is from a family who moved away from the community. The school received a letter from the family saying they still talked about healthy living around their dinner table as a result of what they learned at Burdett School.

FUTURE Plans

Burdett School plans to continue their nutrition programs and to offer healthy foods at school. They plan to send information in school newsletters about healthy snacks and recipes and to invite parents to attend nutrition lessons. As well, they plan to create a simple cookbook for parents to purchase and to use the proceeds to fund a parent snack day where parents work with their children to make healthy snacks. Integrating culturally specific foods is also important and they plan to have German parents teach the school how to make healthy snacks from their culture.

Burdett School states their goal is “to involve the parents and ensure that the learning students experience at school is transferred to their home life.” We believe they are well on their way.

Healthy Growth Through Nutrition

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