

Executive Summary | VSB Food Framework

Background

In 2022, VSB Trustees and an Ad Hoc Food Committee comprised of stakeholders and food, nutrition, and poverty food experts from outside of the VSB, worked together to create the first-ever VSB Food Framework. This Food Framework is firmly rooted in: 1) the need for a Universal School Food Program, 2) the VSB Education Plan 3) Auditor's Report Promoting Healthy Eating and Physical Activity in K-12, and 4) BC School Food Guidelines.

The Food Framework takes a wholistic view of feeding students by incorporating school food growing spaces and food literacy and culinary education as key elements. Decolonization, reconciliation, sustainable food systems, and social justice and inclusion are also part of this wholistic approach to establishing a Universal School Food program.

Vision for Food in VSB Schools

Every student has access to nourishing food at school; they develop the skills they need to choose, eat, grow, prepare, and share food through VSB School Food programs. Eating and learning about food is based on principles of a sustainable, resilient, and inclusive food system and contributes to reconciliation and decolonization. In practice, this might look like students coming to school and passing through school grounds that are alive with plants, knowing that they will be nourished in their mind, body, and spirit. Students eat together, learning the skills to grow and make food as well as the relationships, joy, and beauty that food can bring into our lives. Lifelong skills for preparing food and sharing culture through food are part of the day-to-day experience for all students. School culture is warm, welcoming, and dynamic just as school meals, school food growing spaces, and food literacy and culinary education programs are.

VSB Food Framework Guiding Principles

- ✓ Food is a human right
- ✓ The VSB Food Framework is student-centered
- ✓ Every student should graduate with food skills
- ✓ Social inclusion is paramount
- ✓ Food plays a critical role in decolonization and reconciliation
- ✓ The well-being of school staff is important
- ✓ It's about enabling food choice and a healthy relationship to food
- ✓ Every school is different
- ✓ Shifting school culture is at the root

Healthy eating is a pattern of eating that contributes to best possible health through positive relationships with food and diverse, balanced healthy food choices that meet a person's needs for nutrients and energy.
HealthLinkBC (2013). The Meaning of Healthy Eating in British Columbia.

VSU Food Framework Goals

Goals for feeding students at school are to:

- ✓ Develop a Universal School Food Program that provides sufficient, nutritious, safe, socially just, environmentally sustainable, and culturally appropriate food to all students
- ✓ Reflect the diversity of cultures of the student body and broader community in food provided and encourage universal participation
- ✓ Destigmatize who is using food programs
- ✓ Create enjoyable eating environments where students share food and eat together as part of a school community
- ✓ Foster a lifelong positive relationship with food through food choice
- ✓ Provide food that is made from scratch and uses as much local, sustainable food as possible including foods grown in school food growing spaces
- ✓ Foster an appreciation of food and the many people and environments that work very hard to make sure we have food to eat
- ✓ Limit food waste

Goals for school food growing spaces are to:

- ✓ Provide students, guardians, and teachers with a tangible connection to the land that sustains life and regular practice of acknowledging the land
- ✓ Ensure inclusive and equitable access to school food growing spaces
- ✓ Incorporate an Indigenous lens in garden design, plant selection, and learning activities
- ✓ Transmit cultural information in garden design and programming
- ✓ Foster student leadership and hands-on skill development through garden stewardship
- ✓ Demonstrate and celebrate values of equity, diversity, and inclusion
- ✓ Support conversations that respect different ways of knowing and being
- ✓ Encourage students to taste, try, and enjoy foods they have helped to grow
- ✓ Focus on food plants and medicines

Goals for food literacy and culinary education are to:

- ✓ Ensure all students leave school with basic food skills
- ✓ Increase student participation in food literacy and culinary education opportunities
- ✓ Continue to support student leadership in culinary arts, school gardens, and other food-related activities
- ✓ Enable students to be part of preparing food for students in teaching cafeterias
- ✓ Connect food literacy and culinary education to the vibrant food culture of Vancouver, including red seal Indigenous chefs, local food businesses, and Grandmas and Grandpas
- ✓ Upgrade home economics and food service facilities at every school, as appropriate for each school