



HEALTH POLICY (Nutrition)

It is not the impurity of food I fear, but that of uncontrolled desire. (*Confessions*, X, 31, 46).

Freedom is the power, rooted in reason and will, to act or not to act, to do this or that, and so to perform deliberate actions on one's own responsibility. By free will one shapes one's own life.

The Rule of St Augustine

Preamble

In terms of Article 5 of the Education Act, Chapter 327 of the Laws of Malta, the responsibility to promote the physical health of students, through health information and promotion and healthy lifestyle programmes, falls under the Ministry for Education and Employment, particularly the Directorate for Educational Services.

In line with this, as per 'A WHOLE SCHOOL APPROACH TO A HEALTHY Lifestyle: Healthy eating and PHYSICAL ACTIVITY POLICY', issued by the Ministry for Education and Employment in 2015, the school must:

- Give high priority to healthy eating and physical activity through holistic education.
- Strengthen the necessary framework and support an enabling school environment to help the whole school community to adopt healthier patterns of living by encouraging physical activity, promoting healthy foods and limiting the availability of products high in salt, sugar and fats.
- Empower children to achieve the required physical and health literacy, to adopt a healthy lifestyle from an early age and to make informed choices about their lifestyle throughout the life course.
- Make provision for a flexible curriculum which highlights health, nutrition, food safety and hygiene and food preparation, which promotes physical activity.
- Ensure that clear and consistent messages about food, drink and physical activity are delivered across the school day as to reinforce the health messages consistent with those promoted by the Health Authorities.

Scope of the Policy

As a College, we are providing the below healthy eating policy with the aim of encouraging our students to live a healthy lifestyle. Children who follow a healthy balanced diet (which includes the necessary vitamins, minerals and other nutritional requirements) grow into healthy young adults. And these positive habits of healthy eating need to be instilled in our students from a very young age. Children should also be given the skills, from a young age, to make healthy eating choices, thus the same healthy eating lifestyle is ideally followed at home too.

As a College we also believe that encouraging students to be active on a regular basis helps them to follow a healthy lifestyle.

This policy applies to all years at St Augustine College. Thus this policy is aimed to:

- recognise that food has always been a central part of community, social, cultural and religious life.
- recognise in its practice guidance that, in addition to satisfying physical and social needs, food and the way it is experienced may also satisfy certain emotional needs. These emotional needs include a sense of security, love and acceptance.
- Help keep in mind the effect of poor nutrition on learning to be considered.

Statement of intent

- Eating patterns have a significant effect on health and well-being. Childhood and adolescence are critical periods, and the provision of a healthy diet reduces the risk of diet-related health conditions including obesity and oral health issues.
- Parents need to know what foods and drinks are provided by the service or to be included by them in their child's lunch box, how they are provided and what foods or drinks should not be included.
- Staff and management members need clear information to give to parents/guardians and students about what foods is encouraged to be consumed on campus.

Definition of nutrition education

- Nutrition education should focus not only on nutrition information, but also on developing skills and behaviours related to areas such as food preparation, food preservation and storage, social and cultural aspects of food and eating; enhancing of self-esteem and positive body image and consumer aspects (Contento, 1981; Dixey et al., 1999).

Objectives of this policy

- Invest more in school gardens, outdoor spaces, and hands-on experiences that can help students to develop a personal connection to their food and a lasting relationship to healthy eating.
- Work towards a College setting can be taken as an opportunity whereby peer influences, social support and teacher role models can influence healthy eating behaviours.
- Limit the exposure to unhealthy food items in schools and ensure that foods

- which are HFSS (Foods high in fat, sugar and salt) are not permitted.
- Schools should also have restrictions on sponsorships and marketing of HFSS products as evidence shows that children are highly influenced by the marketing of such products.
 - Encourage the College community to restrict instant sugar sweetened beverages and ensuring access and promotion of regular intake of plain water throughout the school day ensures a reduction in caloric intake and ensures that children consume water as the best choice of fluid for meeting daily fluid requirements.

Adopting a healthy-diet school environment:

- The College is to adopt a whole-college approach to educate its students towards a balanced-healthy diet lifestyle on the guidelines below:
 - o Our students should learn to enjoy physical activity and reduce time spent passively on TV, video and computer games in order to maintain normal growth and body weight within the recommended limits
 - o As per the WHO 'Food and nutrition policy for schools guidelines' (2006) the college is to introduce its students to food handling and cooking and encouraged to join in safe food preparation.
 - o Information is to be passed on to our students to help them avoid a HFSS diet and opt for a healthy food-intake lifestyle
- Whenever a student is deemed to be in possession of HFSS (Foods high in fat, sugar and salt), a student is to be guided accordingly that they are prohibited on campus, and guided how he can improve his eating habits on the following points:
 - o A variety of vegetables and fruits should be eaten, preferably fresh and local, several times a day
 - o He is to select foods that are low in sugar with limited frequency of sugary drinks and sweets (substitute soft drinks for water or dilute pure unsweetened fruit juice)
 - o If need be, the student is to be given a timeline for a transition period to help him change his eating habits
 - o The parents are also be involved in such discussions to ensure that whilst the College policies are adhered to, the student nutrition is being safeguarded.

Recommendations to follow a healthy eating diet

BREAKFAST

It is highly believed that breakfast is the most important meal of the day. Several studies show that children who eat healthy breakfasts tend to eat healthier overall, get more physical activity and maintain a healthy body weight. A good breakfast gives the children's body the fuel it requires for the day.

As a College we do understand that certain students leave very early from home and have no time to eat take their breakfast. Thus, they are allowed to get some healthy food items which can be taken as their breakfast upon their arrival at College. This can only be done until 8.30am in the Primary Campus and 7.30am in the Secondary Campus.

Recommended food items for breakfast:

- a. All types of bread with healthy fillings. These may include tuna, salmon, chicken, turkey, ricotta, cheese, cheeselets, hard boiled eggs, vegetables, low fat spreads, baked (not fried) omelettes;
- b. Plain or fruit yoghurts;
- c. Cereals (not cereal bars and not chocolate cereal) based in rice, oats, wheat and corn;
- d. Fruit salads (with fresh fruit);
- e. Plain galletti, water crackers;
- f. Plain sponges, plain qaghaq tal-hmira.

BREAKS

At St Augustine College, students have 2 breaks every day. Thus, parents/guardians are encouraged to prepare enough lunch for both breaks: a small portion for the 1st break and a larger portion for the 2nd break. Children should also be provided with enough water to keep them hydrated for the whole morning.

Food ideas for breaks:

- a. All of the food items mentioned for breakfast;
- b. Salads;
- c. Pasta or rice salads with healthy toppings;
- d. Baked pasta or rice;
- e. Baked potatoes or jacket potatoes.

Drinks:

- a. Still water;

- b. Water with fresh squeezed fruit (not juices);
- c. Oat, rice, barley, cereal drinks.

Food items which are not allowed:

- a. Sweets, chocolates, doughnuts, crisps and other packets, biscuits;
- b. Sausages, nuggets, fishfingers;
- c. Cheesecakes and other fatty food;
- d. All types of processed meats including salami, pepperoni etc...
- e. Peanut butter or peanuts (due to allergies)

Drinks which are not allowed:

- a. Energy drinks;
- b. Ice tea;
- c. Flavoured/fizzy water;
- d. Soft drinks;
- e. Juices;
- f. Flavoured milk

BIRTHDAYS

For their birthdays, students may opt to bring plain cakes (already sliced from home), plain muffins or plain cupcakes. Plain muffins and plain cupcakes are highly recommended.

Cakes/cupcakes/muffins with chocolate toppings, icing and creams are not allowed. Students will not be given permission to give out any of these items to their peers in class.

ALLERGIES

The College is aware of the possibility of food allergies within the College population. We strongly recommend and suggest that students with any type of allergies inform us regarding this matter.

Conclusion

St Augustine College aims to educate its students beyond the academic aspects of knowledge but as a life-long experience of healthy choices. This policy aims to achieve this, whilst taking also into consideration the social and emotional aspect message that a student might be

conveying through his choice of diet. Guidance, not condemnation, should always be the main focus of the educator in implementing this policy on campus.

Contento, I. (1981). Children's thinking about food and eating: A Piagetian-based study. *Journal of Nutrition Education*. 13(1), 86-90.

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