
2017 OPERATING BUDGET BRIEFING NOTE

Proposed Expansion of the Student Nutrition Program

Issue/Background:

- At its meeting on January 12, 2017, Budget Committee requested the Acting Medical Officer of Health to provide a briefing note on the list of schools being given consideration for expanded nutrition program funding, including school-wide socio-economic data relating to the expansion.
- In 2009, 2012, and 2013, the Board of Health and City Council endorsed multi-year funding plans to strengthen and expand student nutrition programs within the context of a shared partnership framework.
- Since 2013, when the current 6-year municipal plan (2013-2018) to strengthen and expand student nutrition programs in Toronto initiated, the number of student nutrition programs in Toronto with municipal investment has grown from 649 to 764 in 2016 and will increase to 812 schools in 2017, accounting for municipal expansion as well as other natural changes in program operations such as school mergers.

Key Points:

- The Province's directive to contracted lead agencies which administer the provincial student nutrition program grant prohibits the identification of schools that receive provincial funding under the Ontario Student Nutrition Program.
- The 48 public schools proposed for municipal funding of student nutrition programs in 2017 are among the list of designated sites for funding by the Province of Ontario, based on socioeconomic data.
- A key element of the current 6-year municipal funding plan is to incrementally extend municipal funding to 215 student nutrition programs operating in eligible publically funded schools each year as follows: 19 new programs (2013), 27 (2014), 24 (2015), 49 (2016), 48 (2017), 48 (2018).
- In order to receive a student nutrition program grant from the City of Toronto, the proposed expansion programs need to apply, be reviewed, and meet eligibility criteria per City of Toronto Grants Policy. The identified expansion programs which are most ready to start are awarded municipal grant allocations by Student Nutrition Toronto (SNT), the partnership with overall program oversight, and are administered by the Toronto Foundation for Student

Success and the Angel Foundation for Learning, which are the contracted lead agents with the city for this grant.

- The public schools proposed for 2013-2018 expansion funding have been identified using the following factors to consider eligibility for funding to support a student nutrition program:
 1. **Provincial designation for student nutrition program funding.** The 48 public schools proposed for municipal funding of student nutrition programs in 2017 are among the list of designated sites for funding by the Province of Ontario, based on socioeconomic data. They are currently operating with only Provincial government grant funding. This direction is in keeping with the Board of Health request for the City of Toronto and the Ministry of Children and Youth Services to work together to coordinate funding to mutually agreed upon designated schools, to achieve the greatest funding impact and support sustainable programs.
 2. **Indices of need produced by Toronto district school boards.** Both Toronto English public school boards produce indices of need: the Learning Opportunities Index (TDSB schools) and N-tiles (TCDSB). These indices rank each school based on measures which look at external challenges that impact student success. Indices reflect a variety of socio-demographic data, including household income, adults with low level of education completion and lone parent families, and are based on tax-filer and census data linked to the postal codes of students attending each school. Schools with a lower rank number have a greater number of students which experience greater level of external challenges.
 3. **French schools.** Public French schools in the City of Toronto have very large catchment areas, resulting in school populations with students of diverse socioeconomic status. Students travelling long distances to school may also be more likely to arrive to school hungry. French boards do not produce the indices of need that English public boards do.
 4. **Neighbourhood Improvement Areas (NIA).** Neighbourhoods in Toronto have been ranked on indicators of well-being and equity, including health equity. The 31 lowest-ranked neighbourhoods are designated as NIAs as part of the Toronto Strong Neighbourhoods 2020 project. City neighbourhoods with the lowest Health Equity Scores correspond with the 66 lowest-ranked equity neighbourhoods. In 2017, 3 public schools in NIAs and 23 public schools in neighbourhoods with lowest equity rankings have been prioritized to receive new municipal funding. Schools in higher-ranked neighbourhoods were then prioritized based on the other factors.
 5. **Program readiness.** A key element of program success is readiness. As programs need to raise and secure funding from other sources other than the municipal grant, in addition to relying on significant contributions of volunteer time to manage programs, schools must be ready to offer programs. Readiness is demonstrated by various factors such as schools able to start running programs with only Provincial grants, establishing local program operating committees, recruiting and training volunteers, and ensuring proper safe food preparation and food handling surfaces and equipment. These factors are gauged by SNT through the grant application process.

- Schools begin programs based on identified needs within their school. Often, staff and administration recognize populations of students within the school that need access to healthy food during the school day. This can be the case in schools which draw from broad catchment areas and follow an optional attendance policy, such as secondary schools with specialized programs. Students travelling from across the city bring their level of need with them. Student nutrition programs are the best way to provide food to students in need, as more targeted approaches, such as offering food to individual students, have been shown to create stigma and alienate the students in greatest need.
- Public school boards produce indices of need based on socio-demographic data, using tax and census data linked to students' postal codes. Actual household-level data linked to students cannot be analyzed because it is protected by privacy legislation. The proposed public schools for expansion have been reviewed against and fall within the criteria above which consider various key socio-economic data.
- The 48 public schools proposed for new municipal funding in 2017 are drawn from the complete list of 218 public schools for expansion based on the factors used to determine eligibility listed above. Each started a student nutrition program within the 2015/16 and 2016/17 academic years with initial funding from the Province of Ontario and operational support by Student Nutrition Toronto. There are 42 elementary schools and 6 secondary schools across each of the four public school boards. The table below identifies the Wards with proposed expansion programs for 2017 and the number of new programs in each.

Table 1: Distribution of Proposed Expansion Programs for 2017

Ward	Number of expansion programs	Ward	Number of Expansion programs	Ward	Number of expansion programs	Ward	Number of expansion programs
2	1	13	1	24	2	37	3
3	3	15	3	27	1	39	1
4	3	19	1	31	1	40	2
5	1	20	1	33	3	41	2
6	3	21	1	34	3	42	1
9	1	23	2	36	3	44	5

The 2014 Learning Opportunities Index: Questions and Answers. 2014. Toronto District School Board. Accessed January 2017 at:

<http://www.tdsb.on.ca/research/Research/LearningOpportunitiesIndex.aspx>

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Date: January 20, 2017