



Lunch Room Programs in Toronto Schools

Date: May 29, 2018

To: Community Development and Recreation Committee

From: Acting General Manager, Children's Services

Wards: All

SUMMARY

This report provides a summary of current policies and practices related to supervision, space, and nutrition programs in lunch room programs in Toronto schools, as requested by City Council.

RECOMMENDATIONS

The Acting General Manager, Children's Services, recommends that:

1. Community Development and Recreation Committee receive this report for information.

FINANCIAL IMPACT

There is no financial impact arising from this report.

The Interim Chief Financial Officer has reviewed this report and agrees with the financial impact information.

DECISION HISTORY

At its meeting on May 23, 2018, City Council requested the Acting General Manager, Children's Services, to consult with School Boards, and to report to the Community Development and Recreation Committee at its June 13, 2018 meeting on the current policies and practices related to supervision, space and nutrition programs for lunch room programs in Toronto schools. This report responds to this request.

<http://app.toronto.ca/tmmis/viewAgendaItemHistory.do?item=2018.EX34.23>

COMMENTS

Background

Children's Services staff requested information from Toronto's four school boards related to space, supervision, and nutrition programs in school lunch programs to respond to the direction received from Council. Responses from all four school boards are provided below, organized under the three categories of space, supervision, and nutrition programs.

In Toronto currently, there are 582 elementary schools, including: 399 operated by the Toronto District School Board (TDSB), 163 by the Toronto Catholic District School Board (TCDSB), 11 by Conseil Scolaire Viamonde (the French public board), and 9 by CSC MonAvenir (the French catholic board).

It is important to note that local conditions and space constraints affect how lunch programs operate in Toronto schools. In terms of space, students eat lunch in a variety of locations. In most cases, school boards have indicated that full-day kindergarten (FDK) students eat lunch in their classrooms, while older children may eat in classrooms or in common areas such as gymnasiums. Ratios of lunch room supervisors to students vary by board and may be impacted by local conditions such as available space and school layout. In addition, in 2017 the TDSB initiated a review of provincial regulations pertaining to FDK lunch time supervision and before and after school programs. The review was completed, and the board reported on its findings and next steps on November 7, 2017.

School Board Responses

Space

TDSB

There are a variety of locations where students eat lunch, including in classrooms, gymnasiums, common areas or other school spaces. This is based on a number of local factors, including number of students, school layout, availability of space, school programming, etc. The length of the lunch period varies from school to school but generally it is a 50-60 minute time block. Students are provided with time to eat lunch followed by outdoor play.

TCDSB

In almost all schools, children remain in their classroom and eat lunch at their desk. There are a few schools which have a designated eating area. This designated common area does not accommodate all students. Based on the school layout the younger students eat in the common area and the remainder of students eat at their desks in their classroom. Students are provided with 20 minutes to eat lunch and 40 minutes of outdoor play.

Conseil Scolaire Viamonde

Students eat lunch in their classrooms for about 20 minutes. The next 40 minutes is recess and clubs (sports, arts).

CSC MonAvenir

Students eat lunch in their classroom no matter the number of students in that particular class. This lasts usually 20 minutes. The rest of lunch period is spent outside in the playground, for about 40 minutes.

Supervision

TDSB

For 2018-19 the TDSB has approved 1,431 regular lunchroom supervisors and 1,418 FDK lunchroom supervisors. Regular lunchroom supervisors are allocated to each elementary school, based on the Grade 1-8 projected enrolment. Additionally, each FDK class is allocated at least one lunchroom supervisor based on their total enrolment. Lunchroom supervisors work 75 minutes each day.

Elementary school staff, including teachers and other support staff, are also assigned supervision duties during lunch time. The elementary collective agreement limits the total weekly supervision to 80 minutes per week.

TCDSB

At every TCDSB elementary school there is a minimum of one lunchtime supervisor in accordance with the Toronto Elementary Catholic Teachers' collective agreement. Additional lunchtime supervisors are allocated based on the number of students who remain at school for lunch and the FDK enrolment.

Elementary school staff (including teachers, educational assistants, child and youth workers and designated Early Childhood Educators) are assigned 20 minutes of lunch supervision in adherence with their collective agreements up to a maximum of 60 – 80 minutes per week. The number of assigned staff varies based on school needs and teachers supervise a designated area during the lunch period. As part of student leadership opportunities in some schools, intermediate students volunteer monitor lunchrooms based on individual school decisions.

Conseil Scolaire Viamonde

Lunch supervision is assumed by lunch supervisors and teachers/support staff. Generally, there is one supervisor per class. In most schools, students eat in their classrooms.

CSC MonAvenir

Lunch room supervisors are hired by the Board. Ratios of supervisors to children take into consideration the configuration of school yards. Consequently, in some schools three supervisors will be assigned, and in others schools four may be assigned.

Nutrition Programs

TDSB

TDSB operates 580 universally accessible Student Nutrition Programs (SNP) consisting of breakfast, morning snacks and lunch serving 139,000 students daily. SNPs provide healthy meals and snacks to children to promote health and learning, and are governed by Toronto Public Health and operated by participating schools. Schools serve meals and snacks in accordance with the Guiding Principles outlined in the SNP Nutrition Guidelines (2016).

TCDSB

TCDSB operates 187 universally accessible SNPs consisting of breakfast, morning snacks and lunch serving 58,000 students daily. SNPs provide healthy meals and snacks to children to promote health and learning, and are governed by Toronto Public Health and operated by participating schools. Schools serve meals and snacks in accordance with the Guiding Principles outlined in the SNP Nutrition Guidelines (2016).

Conseil Scolaire Viamonde

Most schools in Toronto have hot lunch programs as an option for families. A number of elementary schools operate the SNP program to offer healthy snacks and breakfasts to children.

CSC MonAvenir

Students bring their lunch (parents prepare lunch for their children) or order when there is fundraising. Schools work on promoting the nutrition guidelines among parents; for example, they will encourage student to bring a fruit platter to share with the class for a birthday instead of a cake.

Conclusion

As illustrated in the responses from school boards, policies and practices relating to space, supervision, and nutrition programs in lunch room programs vary widely across the City and are dependent on a variety of circumstances, including available space and collective agreements. This suggest the need for a system-wide approach to lunch programs, with further direction from the Ministry of Education, to achieve the best outcomes for all children in schools.

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SIGNATURE

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