



Ras Al Khaimah American Academy				
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School Canteen/Food Service Policy

What is a Healthy School Food Service?

A healthy school food service:

- Makes it easy for students to choose healthy snacks and meals.
- Offers a variety of nutritious foods.
- Promotes foods that are consistent with the *Dietary Guidelines for Children and Adolescents*.
- Can be an avenue for consistent and continual health education.
- Complements the diverse elements of the school curriculum.
- Involves students, parents and the wider school community.
- Is an integral part of the entire healthy school environment.

International menus for a global community

The food at RAKAA is of exceptional quality and meal times are always eagerly looked forward by our students.

Here at RAKAA we source only fresh ingredients from nominated and approved suppliers. Most of our daily deliveries of vegetables, fruit, dairy and meat come from local producers, meaning we can literally trace each meal from 'farm to fork'.

We keep our supplier's menus seasonal, change them regularly, and embrace the School Food's Trust nutritional guidelines.

With food freshly delivered on daily basis by ABELLA Company with a strong emphasis on healthiness, girls and boys are given a choice of delicious hot options as well as a snack/salad bar and freshly made sandwiches and puddings.

The catering staffs are employees of Abella food provider rather than centrally contracted and their sense of pride is evident in the preparation and presentation of every meal.

Meals are eaten centrally in the dining hall, providing an opportunity for students to nurture friendships beyond their classrooms and enjoy the communal dining.

Why is Healthy Food in Schools Important?

For many students who use the canteen regularly, the food purchased there makes a significant contribution to their total food intake and nutrition. For those students who do not use the school canteen or food service regularly, the canteen still plays an important educational and modeling role for healthy eating habits.

In addition to the provision of nutritious food, the canteen has an important role within the

broader school environment in complementing the knowledge, skills and behaviors about healthy eating and lifestyles that are taught in the classroom. The food provided within the

school environment has a considerable influence on the development of children's long-term eating habits, food preferences and attitudes towards food.

The school canteen can play an important role in promoting healthy foods and creating a school culture of healthy eating. This can extend beyond the school environment and influence food choices within the family and community and enhance the social and multicultural aspects of food and eating.

Some nutritional issues that affect children include:

- Growth.
- Bone health and development.
- Dental health.
- Weight management (overweight and obesity).
- Eating disorders and body image.
- Mood, concentration and learning.
- Development of food preferences, tastes, eating habits and skills.
- Promotion of health and prevention of lifestyle disease.
- Nutritional adequacy.

Children and adolescents need sufficient nutritious foods to grow and develop normally. Growth should be checked regularly for young children. Physical activity is important for all children and adolescents.

Children and adolescents should be encouraged to:

- Eat plenty of vegetables and fruit.
- Eat plenty of cereals, preferably wholegrain.
- Include lean meat, fish, poultry and/or alternatives.
- Include milk, yoghurt, cheese and/or alternatives (reduced-fat milks are not recommended for children less than 2 years because of their high energy needs, but reduced-fat varieties should be encouraged for older children and adolescents).
- Choose water as a drink.

Care should be taken to:

- Limit saturated fat and moderate total fat intake (low-fat diets are not suitable for infants).
- Choose foods low in salt.
- Consume only moderate amounts of sugars and foods containing added sugars.

Whole-school Approach to Healthy Eating

The school's food services and curriculum programs on healthy eating should be complementary. Positive peer pressure within the education setting can create a culture in which nutritious foods and a healthy lifestyle are actively chosen. This culture should permeate the entire school environment and can have an impact on choices made by students about food consumption when they are not at school.

A positive attitude towards a school canteen that supports healthy eating should be promoted and endorsed. This is facilitated through a whole-school approach to nutrition.

The World Health Organization encourages schools to take a health promoting schools approach to support healthy eating.

The Health Promoting Schools framework provides a useful model for schools to promote and protect the health of students. The framework highlights the importance of the relationships between:

- Curriculum, teaching and learning.
- School organization, ethos and environment
- Community links and partnerships.

Examples of healthy food-related actions

1. Curriculum, teaching and learning
 - developing curriculum that supports healthy food choices
 - encouraging students to become involved in food-related activities, for example planning meals, growing foods, shopping for food products, cooking and promoting foods
2. School organization, ethos and environment
 - offering a variety of nutritious foods at the school food service and regularly changing the menu
 - being creative with presentation and preparation of healthy foods
 - maintaining consistent messages about healthy foods in all parts of the school operation
3. Community links and partnerships
 - making links with local fruit and vegetable retailers – this could include a school visit by the retailers, or an excursion to a local market
 - supporting an enthusiastic group of people to serve the foods to students

What Foods Should be Provided?

Guiding Principles for Food Selection:

A healthy school food service should provide foods that reflect the *Dietary Guidelines for Children and Adolescents*.

In summary, the Dietary Guidelines for Children and Adolescents encourage students to:

- Enjoy a wide variety of nutritious foods.
- Eat plenty of vegetables, legumes, fruits, breads and cereals.
- Include lean meat, fish, poultry and/or alternatives.
- Include milks, yoghurt, cheeses.
- Choose water as a drink.
- Limit saturated fats and moderate total fat intake.
- Choose foods low in salt.
- Consume only moderate amounts of sugars and foods containing added sugars.

Children are also encouraged to eat a range of foods from each of the five food groups: breads and cereals; vegetables; fruits; milks, cheeses and yoghurt; and meat and meat alternatives.

The following principles should inform the selection of foods sold in school food services:

- A range of foods from each of the five food groups.
- Fresh rather than processed food is provided.
- A range of portion sizes that cater for varying energy use and developmental Requirements are offered.
- Foods offered reflect the multicultural diversity of the school community.

The importance of developing a policy

A school canteen/food service policy will ensure the sustainability of the healthy changes made to the school food services by providing a school document that supports the change.

The policy communicates a consistent message to the whole school community and gives direction and support to the canteen staff. By defining the role and activities of the canteen and other school food services it sets goals and guides its operation and management.

The policy reflects the values of the school community and clarifies what the community expects from the canteen and other school food services

The policy could include:

- Background statement or rationale.
- Aims.
- Operation.
- Nutrition information about foods to be offered.
- Strategies for promoting and marketing healthy choices.
- Roles and responsibilities of staff and volunteers.
- Food safety and hygiene and occupational health and safety guidelines and procedures.
- Canteen management.
- canteen staff (including roles and responsibilities of staff and volunteers)
- volunteers (including procedures for orientation and support strategies for reward and recognition)

- Staff training.
- financial management
 - Pricing and profit issues.
 - Financial and stock management.
 - Accounting and reporting responsibilities.
 - canteen equipment
- Links to the school's curriculum and community.
- Evaluation, review and monitoring of processes.

The School Canteen as a Viable Operation

School canteens need to be viable and this viability can be evaluated using a number of measures. These may include student support, numbers of canteen workers and profitability.

Profit from the operations of a school canteen is often a significant source of revenue for a school. Consequently, it is important that the nutritious food items are attractive to students and are offered at an affordable price that will contribute to profit. There is often a misconception that healthier foods are more expensive.

Students and their families need to be involved in the process of supporting healthy school food services. Strategies to involve them include:

- Educating and informing parents through articles in the school newsletter, announcements at school assemblies and community activities.
- Involving parents and students in decisions about menu items and healthy fundraising.
- Advertising canteen prices on notice-boards and sending price lists home.
- Encouraging parents to volunteer their services for the school canteen.

Food Safety

Current requirements specify that all registered food premises, including schools, must demonstrate that the food prepared and served is safe to eat.

Food safety and handling requirements cover personal hygiene practices, food preparation practices, food storage and cleaning procedures.

- Personal hygiene requirements include:
 - washing and drying hands before handling food and frequently during work
 - not smoking near food
 - not going to work when sick with a gastric disorder or contagious disease
 - Using a handkerchief or tissue when coughing or sneezing.

Food preparation requirements include:

- Ensuring that food is handled by either a gloved hand or by utensils.
- Ensuring that benches are clean.
- Ensuring that there are suitable areas for food preparation (animals are forbidden in these areas).
- Avoiding cross-contamination of cooked and raw foods – hands or utensils that have been

used to prepare raw foods must be washed properly before they are used to prepare ready-to-eat or cooked foods.

Food storage requirements involve:

- ensuring that cold food is stored below 5°C
- ensuring that frozen food is stored below minus 15°C
- ensuring that hot food is maintained at over 60°C
- minimizing the time that food is kept in the danger zone, that is between 5°C and 60°C – the temperature range at which bacteria are most likely to grow
- Ensuring that when cooling hot, potentially hazardous food it is cooled within two hours from 60°C to 21°C and within a further four hours to 5°C.

Cleaning requirements involve:

- Ensuring that there is a display of schedules outlining how the premises are cleaned.
- Having procedures for the storage and disposal of garbage and the location of bins.

