

Healthy food and drink choices in WA schools

Principals and their school communities continue to embrace their role in creating a healthy food environment. Western Australian public schools support a whole school approach to health and wellbeing by complying with the Department of Education's (DOE) *Healthy Food and Drink in Public Schools* (HFD) policy. Almost all schools with a canteen/foodservice (96%) reported that their canteen menus offer a majority of healthy (green) food and drinks.

Background

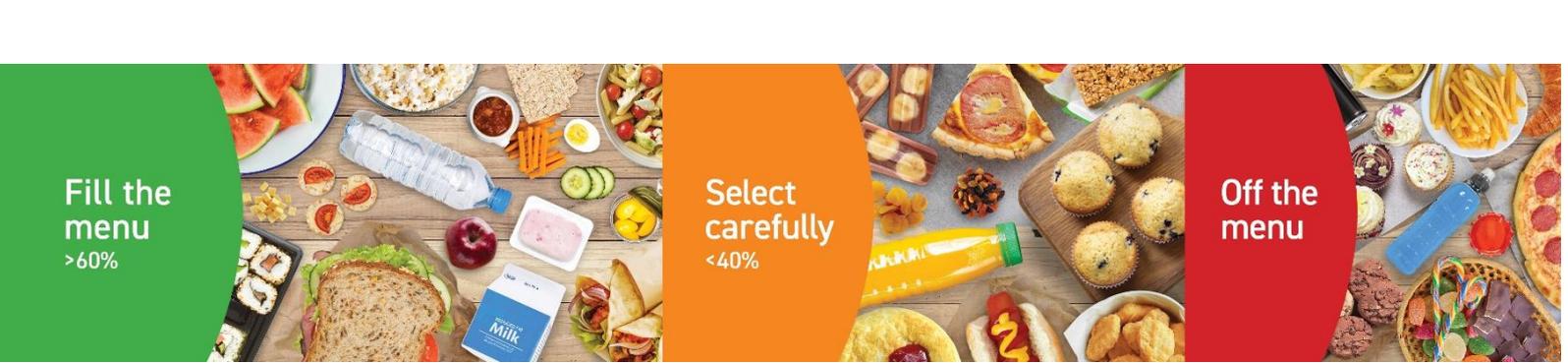
Schools play a key role in introducing, supporting, and teaching children and young people about healthy eating. The HFD policy is mandatory in all public schools and applies to all school canteens, classroom rewards and cooking activities, school camps, excursions and fundraising activities coordinated by the principal. The policy is based on:

- [Australian Dietary Guidelines](#); Australian Guide to Healthy Eating;
- a whole school approach; Health Promoting Schools Framework; and
- the [Traffic light system](#) of categorising food and drink as green, amber or red.

2020 Principals' survey

The mandatory policy includes five areas of [compliance](#). As part of DOE school reporting systems, an annual online HFD compliance survey is conducted; the 2020 results* are positive.

Core area	Requirement	2020 results
Written policy	Schools are required to develop their own healthy food and drink policy. Sample template available	<p>No policy 15%</p> <p>Policy in place 65%</p> <p>Developing 20%</p> 
Canteen menus	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Menus must contain minimum 60% green items; maximum 40% amber • Red items are off the menu • Amber savoury commercial items no more than two days per week 	<p>96% =</p>  <p>82% = no red items</p>  <p>83% restricted amber</p> 
Promoting healthy eating	Schools must promote healthy eating to the school community	 <p>Schools use multiple strategies to promote healthy eating e.g. school kitchen garden, Crunch&Sip®, healthy fundraising and newsletter inserts</p>
Traffic light training (TLT)	Canteen staff and/or their employers (e.g. P&C) must complete TLT	<p>Traffic light training</p> 
FoodSafe training	Canteen staff and volunteers must complete food safety and hygiene training	<p>Food safety</p>  <p>0% 25% 50% 75% 100%</p>



Fill the menu
>60%

Select carefully
<40%

Off the menu

Activities and achievements 2019/2020

Overall, the 2020 WA HFD School Principal Survey results are encouraging especially in light of the COVID-19 pandemic and its impact on schools. The Western Australian School Canteen Association (WASCA) successfully adapted their service delivery to maintain school engagement during this time.

Examples of support provided by WASCA:

- [13 COVID-19 communications](#) and resources including JobKeeper webinar; Canteen COVID-19 plan; and free access to COVID-19 hygiene training;
- 84 new tools and resources developed to support schools to implement the policy, including a suite of nine '[You deserve the best posters](#)'; 16 resources focusing on advocacy and HFD compliance; [Catering guidelines](#) and [24 new recipes](#);
- 602 people completed training and capacity building sessions;
- tailored support and advice were provided to 672 schools, an increase of 61% compared to the previous year;
- information provided to 3,476 new school families as part of kindy orientation sessions to encourage healthy lunchboxes and support for the HFD policy; and
- 42 follow up phone calls to schools that received menu assessments to further evaluate policy compliance and understand additional needs and implementation barriers.

Key recommendations for 2020/2021

WASCA will continue to work with the Departments of Health and Education to:

- provide targeted support to schools to meet HFD policy criteria, particularly to remove red items from menus and reduce the number of days per week amber savoury commercial products are offered;
- increase participation in all training activities, particularly in regional schools. This will include the promotion of training opportunities via newsletters and social media pages and increasing online participation for all training;
- increase education and awareness of the HFD policy to P&C Associations in schools to increase engagement, implementation and compliance;
- provide targeted support to all schools to increase the number of schools with a written policy for the provision of healthy food and drinks; and
- increase awareness of the HFD policy in external organisations and professional associations.

*A total of 576 (72%) public schools completed the survey representing 62% metropolitan schools; 38% regional schools; and 74% primary schools; 18% secondary schools (including district high schools; K-12 schools); and 8% other schools (e.g. Education support). There were no significant differences in reported menu compliance between metropolitan and regional schools; secondary schools (24%) were more likely to have red items than primary schools (16%).