

Poplar Ridge Elementary School, Red Deer, AB Kindergarten – grade 6

BEFORE School Makeover

Poplar Ridge Elementary being a countryside school; situated between Red Deer and Sylvan Lake, had many challenges in providing nutritious programs and food choices for their student. Students did not have access to convenience stores within walking distance and it was always expected that the school provide the “junk” for the students. The school also had the challenge of finding suppliers to deliver fresh milk to the school weekly.

Since Poplar Ridge Elementary was a small school it had limited funds to cover for the “extra” needed at the school. To compensate the school used “snack” food selling as fundraisers where the school store stocked chocolate bars, pop, and candy. For hot lunches that are provided by parents twice a week, generally consisted of fast food items such as corn dogs or nachos and cheese. Other special events such as holiday and other celebrations usually focused around baked treats and hot dogs. They admitted **“They Needed Help”**.

THE PLAN

Poplar Ridge Elementary conducted a survey with parents and students about concerns they had over the products being sold at the school. The feedback confirmed that 100% were in support of a new healthier initiative. After consulting with a Dietitian and feedback from the parents it was decided to do a complete overhaul of the items sold at the school store. Chocolate bars were out and 100% fruit snacks were in!

Another area examined was the hot lunch program. With support from the parents; healthier options were added such as whole wheat bread and for side accompaniment, carrot sticks and salads replaced chips. Hot lunch was provided free of charge for those families who were unable to afford it.

“Club Moo” was implemented with the help of parent volunteers who offered to pick up and deliver milk from a local dairy to the school. A student team distributes the milk to the classrooms everyday.

Snacks were overhauled allowing only healthy snacks in the morning to maximize learning and all parents were encouraged to send healthy snacks for the entire day

ACTIVITIES FOR SUCCESS:

Poplar Ridge Elementary used many other initiatives to ensure their success:

- Food Bingo is used in some classes where children try and meet their food group requirements and “x” out each square as choices are consumed.
- During celebrations parents are asked to consider bringing healthy snacks.
- Creating a team environment and with the commitment from teachers, parents, and school council helps ensure success.

AFTER School Makeover

Poplar Ridge Elementary now offers hot lunch 3 times per week, fresh milk everyday, healthy food items provided in the store, daily exposure to Canada’s Food guide and a new focus of students and staff to make excellent lifestyle choices.

Other changes:

- Fruit and vegetable trays for special celebrations are now more popular than cookies and cupcakes.
- Children monitor other students’ choices when it comes to snacks. Open discussion in the classroom often follows and the teacher discusses what is on the food label for ingredients. This all helps the children learn and make more informed choices.
- The milk program maintained 141 out of the 200 children from the school (71% of the population drinking milk daily!) during year one and is now up to 75% in year two.

Students have commented that they are now “a healthy school”.

FUTURE Plans

With such commitment from the teachers, parents, and students Poplar Ridge Elementary School is sure to maintain these great changes; keeping their students well informed and making excellent lifestyle choices!