

## Chapter 30

# St. Paul's Roman Catholic Separate School Division No. 20— Promoting Good Student Health and Physical Fitness

### 1.0 MAIN POINTS

As one of Saskatchewan's 27 school divisions, located in Saskatoon, St. Paul's Roman Catholic Separate School Division No. 20 is responsible for promoting good student health and physical fitness.<sup>1</sup> Research indicates that physically active and properly nourished students are better learners.<sup>2</sup>

As at March 2021, St. Paul's is not sufficiently limiting the availability of non-healthy food choices it sells and/or serves to students.

While St. Paul's has implemented centralized purchasing for schools and standard menus for use in high school cafeterias, and its standard menus have healthy choices for students (e.g., wraps, salads), they also include items that are not healthy choices, (e.g., cookies, muffins, flavoured water). Furthermore, schools are serving items not on the standard menus (e.g., sweets, iced tea).

Drink vending machines at three high schools we observed contained items on the nutrition policy's restricted list (e.g., carbonated drinks). Whereas, snack vending machines in those schools complied with the Division's policy and contained over 50 percent healthy choices in snacks (e.g., popcorn).

Giving students access to unhealthy food choices puts students at risk of not having the right nourishment to learn. It also increases the risk that St. Paul's will not meet its strategic goal of increasing health and fitness of its students.

### 2.0 INTRODUCTION

#### 2.1 Background

The Education sector strategic plan includes the following as a statement of strategic intent for students: "I am ready to learn—I am safe, healthy and hopeful."<sup>3</sup> Good student health and physical fitness directly supports this strategic intent.

Under *The Education Act, 1995*, Boards of school divisions are responsible for the administration and management of schools, with oversight from the Ministry of Education. The Act specifies that schools are to provide *for instruction and activities to promote the good health and physical fitness* of students.<sup>4</sup>

<sup>1</sup> *The Education Act, 1995* (s.188) specifies that schools are to provide instruction and activities to promote the good health and physical fitness of students.

<sup>2</sup> *Veuglers and Schwartz, Supportive Environments for Learning: Healthy Eating and Physical Activity within Comprehensive School Health* (2010), Canadian Journal of Public Health p. 7.

<sup>3</sup> [pubsaskdev.blob.core.windows.net/pubsask-prod/100620/2019-03-11%252BL1%252BC4%252BMMatrix-ENG-FINAL.pdf](https://pubsaskdev.blob.core.windows.net/pubsask-prod/100620/2019-03-11%252BL1%252BC4%252BMMatrix-ENG-FINAL.pdf) (9 December 2020).

<sup>4</sup> *The Education Act, 1995* (section 188).



Located in Saskatoon, St. Paul's Roman Catholic Separate School Division No. 20 is Saskatchewan's largest Catholic school division with 50 schools and over 19,000 students.<sup>5</sup> In common with other school divisions, it is responsible for promoting good health and physical fitness of students within its division.

One of St. Paul's strategic priorities is improving student learning and achievement; one of the supporting goals is *to commit to increasing the health and fitness of all students by ensuring a culture of student engagement and participation as foundational in our curricular and extra-curricular opportunities for students.*<sup>6</sup>

Healthy diets are a well-established factor that reduce the risk of obesity, heart disease, stroke, cancer, and diabetes.<sup>7</sup>

## 2.2 Focus of Follow-Up Audit

This chapter describes our second follow-up audit of management's actions on the one remaining recommendation first made in our *2015 Report – Volume 2*, Chapter 40 about St. Paul's processes to promote good student health and physical fitness.<sup>8</sup>

By February 2019, St. Paul's had implemented four of the five recommendations made in our *2015 Report – Volume 2*, Chapter 40.<sup>9</sup> St. Paul's established central monitoring of partnerships and community relationships, and had set clear expectations for promoting physical activity and making school-level decisions about which health and physical fitness initiatives to select. Furthermore, it was actively monitoring initiatives used to promote good student health and physical fitness.

To conduct this audit engagement, we followed the standards for assurance engagements published in the *CPA Canada Handbook—Assurance* (CSAE 3001). To evaluate St. Paul's progress towards meeting our recommendations, we used the relevant criteria from the original audit. St. Paul's management agreed with the criteria in the original audit. We interviewed principals of selected schools and a key management staff of St. Paul's division. We conducted on-site observations, examined St. Paul's policies and other documentation applicable to the subject matter.

## 3.0 STATUS OF RECOMMENDATION

This section sets out each recommendation including the date on which the Standing Committee on Public Accounts agreed to the recommendation, the status of the recommendation at March 15, 2021, and St. Paul's actions up to that date.

<sup>5</sup> St. Paul's Roman Catholic School Division No. 20, *2019–20 Annual Report*, p. 7.

<sup>6</sup> St. Paul's Roman Catholic School Division No. 20, *Board of Education Priorities and Goals 2016–2020*.

<sup>7</sup> Candelas, Armstrong, and Xuereb, *Diet and Physical Activity in Schools: Perspectives from the Implementation of the WHO Global Strategy on Diet, Physical Activity and Health*, in *Canadian Journal of Public Health*, Supportive Environments for Learning: Healthy Eating and Physical Activity within Comprehensive School Health, July/August 2010 p. S 28.

<sup>8</sup> *2015 Report – Volume 2*, Chapter 40, pp. 284-291.

<sup>9</sup> *2019 Report – Volume 1*, Chapter 40, pp. 347-352.

### 3.1 Unhealthy Food Choices Not Sufficiently Limited at High Schools

***We recommended St. Paul's Roman Catholic Separate School Division No. 20 provide principals with criteria to guide their assessment and selection of health and physical fitness initiatives at the school level.***

(2015 Report – Volume 2, p. 288, Recommendation 3; Public Accounts Committee agreement September 14, 2016)

**Status**—Partially Implemented with respect to health initiatives<sup>10</sup>

As of March 2021, St. Paul's Roman Catholic Separate School Division No. 20 is not always making sure its schools limit the non-healthy food choices it makes available to students.

St. Paul's nutrition policy guides provision of all foods served or sold to students. In January 2020, St. Paul's provided schools with standard menus and centralized food purchases for schools.

We found the standard menus contained items that did not comply with St. Paul's nutrition policy (e.g., vitamin water, cookies).

We found items in the snack vending machines of all three high schools we visited (a total of five vending machines) met the nutrition Policy's percentage of healthy items, with percentages ranging from 56 percent to 70 percent. The nutrition policy states that 50 percent of the items in snack vending machines will be heart healthy.<sup>11</sup>

However, we found some items in the five drink vending machines located in three high schools we visited that did not comply with the nutrition policy, and included unhealthy food choices like carbonated drinks and sports drinks. The nutrition policy restricts items in drink vending machines from including drinks such as regular or diet carbonated drink, milk or sports drinks.

In addition, in our testing of three high schools menus, we found two schools were offering students items not on the standard menus and contrary to the nutrition policy, such as sweets and sugary drinks (e.g., iced tea, sports drinks).

As of March 2021, St. Paul's plans to form a committee to revise its nutrition policy. It expects the committee to include staff from the division, schools, and high school cafeterias. St. Paul's expects to have the committee in place by May 2021 with a new policy in place by June 2021. St. Paul's has provided guidance to schools to allow ginger ale and iced tea. It expects to include these items in the revised policy. It also plans to review the items in its standard menus.

Not sufficiently limiting non-healthy food choices available to students puts students at risk of not having the right nourishment to learn. It also increases the risk St. Paul's will not meet its strategic goal of increasing the health and fitness of its students.

<sup>10</sup> As our 2019 Report – Volume 2, Chapter 40 notes St. Paul's gave guidance to schools and participated in regular discussions about the physical activities offered in schools. Our testing found schools offered physical activities consistent with the Division's Physical Activity policy. In March 2021, principals told us that prior to the pandemic they were regularly discussing opportunities with their superintendent about selecting physical activity initiatives for schools. As of March 2021, no physical activities are taking place in schools due to COVID-19.

<sup>11</sup> Heart healthy foods include items such as whole grains and oats.



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