

Chapter 25

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

1.0 MAIN POINTS

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

As at December 2022, the Division is making healthy food and beverage options available to its high school students in vending machines. We found over two-thirds of items in vending machines at the two high schools we visited aligned with Ministry nutritional guidance. Healthy options in the vending machines included granola and fruit bars, and baked crackers.

Providing healthy food choices to students increases the likelihood of students having the right nourishment to learn. It also supports the Division in meeting its strategic goal of increasing the health and fitness of its students.

2.0 INTRODUCTION

2.1 Background

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 instruction and activities to promote the good health and physical fitness of students.²

St. Paul's Roman Catholic Separate School Division No. 20 is Saskatchewan's largest Catholic school division with 50 schools and over 19,500 students.³ In common with other school divisions, it is responsible for promoting good health and physical fitness of students within its division.

One of the Division's strategic priorities is to improve student learning and achievement while one of its 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."⁴

Good nutrition for children and youth supports their readiness for learning and is foundational to student success. Schools play an important role in preparing students for

¹ Veuglers and Schwartz, *Comprehensive School Health in Canada*, in *Canadian Journal of Public Health, Supportive Environments for Learning: Healthy Eating and Physical Activity within Comprehensive School Health*, July/August 2010, p. 7.

² *The Education Act, 1995*, (s. 188).

³ St. Paul's Roman Catholic Separate School Division No. 20, *2021–22 Annual Report*, p. 8. The Division has 43 elementary schools, 6 high schools and 1 associate high school.

⁴ St. Paul's Roman Catholic Separate School Division No. 20, *Board of Education Priorities and Goals*.



the future and well-nourished students are more likely to achieve their academic potential, physical development, mental growth, and lifelong health and well-being.⁵

2.2 Focus of Follow-Up Audit

In 2015, we assessed St. Paul's Roman Catholic Separate School Division No. 20's processes to promote good student health and physical fitness. Our *2015 Report – Volume 2*, Chapter 40, concluded the Division had effective processes other than the matters reflected in our five recommendations.⁶ By March 2021, the Division fully implemented four recommendations and partially implemented one recommendation.⁷

This chapter describes our third follow-up audit of management's actions on the one outstanding recommendation.

To conduct this audit engagement, we followed the standards for assurance engagements published in the *CPA Canada Handbook—Assurance* (CSAE 3001). To evaluate the Division's progress toward meeting our recommendations, we used the relevant criteria from the original audit. Division management agreed with the criteria in the original audit.

In this follow-up audit, we interviewed principals of select schools and key management staff of the Division. We also conducted on-site observations, and examined Division policies and other applicable documentation.

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 December 31, 2022, and the Division's actions up to that date.

3.1 Healthy Food and Beverage Options Available to Students

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—Implemented

As at December 2022, St. Paul's Roman Catholic Separate School Division No. 20 is providing high school students with healthy food and beverage options in its vending machines. As previously reported, the Division implemented physical fitness initiatives in relation to this recommendation in 2019.⁸

⁵ *Nourishing Minds: Eat Well – Learn Well – Live Well*, p. 5. publications.saskatchewan.ca/api/v1/products/76416/formats/85696/download (11 January 2023).

⁶ *2015 Report – Volume 2*, Chapter 40, pp. 279–291.

⁷ *2019 Report – Volume 1*, Chapter 40, pp. 347–352 and *2021 Report – Volume 1*, Chapter 30, pp. 281–283.

⁸ *2019 Report – Volume 1*, Chapter 40, pp. 347–352.

The Division's nutrition policy guides provision of all foods served or sold to students. It revised its nutrition policy in June 2021, and provided the revised policy to principals. The Division expects its schools to restrict beverages in its vending machines from including regular and diet carbonated soft drinks, fruit drinks with less than 100% juice, or energy drinks with caffeine. Further, it expects foods and beverages served and sold to students to align with Ministry of Education nutritional guidance.⁹

We found over two-thirds of items in vending machines at the two high schools we visited aligned with Ministry guidance. For example, at one high school, we observed 12 healthy food options, and noted one instance of a deep-fried snack and one instance of a chocolate bar available among the choices. Healthier options in the vending machines included granola and fruit bars, and baked crackers.

Providing healthy food choices to students increases the likelihood of students having the right nourishment to learn. It also supports the Division in meeting its strategic goal of increasing the health and fitness of its students.

⁹ Ministry guidance emphasizes choosing fresh fruit and vegetables, whole grains, unsweetened milk, lean meats, and foods that are lower in fat, sugar and salt, and high in fibre. www.saskatchewan.ca/government/education-and-child-care/facility-administration/services-for-school-administrators/student-wellness-and-wellbeing/nutrition (10 January 2023).

