

# Play First Lunch Toolkit

## What is Play First Lunch?

Play First Lunch is a change in the traditional scheduling order of lunchtime and playtime – students go out to play first and then eat lunch.

## Benefits!

- Improved student behaviour on the playground and in the classroom
- Fewer accidents during the lunch break
- Increased food and drink consumption
- Students are quieter and calmer, and focused on eating rather than thinking about getting outside to play
- Less litter on the school ground and inside the school
- Students return to the classroom more quickly and are settled and ready to learn

## Sample Schedule:

12:00pm	Play time
12:25pm	Bell to enter to use the washroom and wash hands
12:30pm	Bell to go to classrooms and eat lunch
12:50pm	Music appreciation/silent reading
1:00pm	Afternoon classes start

## Steps to Implementing a Play First Lunch Schedule:

### 1. Build Support

- Educate yourself about benefits and possible challenges associated with the Play First Lunch schedule – contact a school administrator who has successfully implemented the program to talk about their experience (contact the Action Schools! BC Support Team).
- Talk to staff about the program, its benefits, possible challenges, and what else they should expect. Include teachers, aides, secretaries, janitors, volunteers and caterers.
- Share the Play First Lunch program with parents at a PAC meeting, send a letter home, and/or include information in the school newsletter.
- Promote the program to students so they understand the change in schedule and the links with healthy living.

### 2. Develop a Schedule

- Develop a schedule that will work for your school; be flexible and creative.
- Consult with staff, volunteers, students and other members of the school community to collect feedback and identify potential challenges and solutions (e.g. conflicts with band practices).
- Implement a multi-month trial of the new schedule to give staff, students, family members and other members of the school community time to adapt and adjust.
- The new schedule is a work in progress – it can be tweaked as needed! Get feedback from those involved.

### **3. Don't Forget Hand Washing!**

- Hand washing is an important food safety and health issue.
- Incorporate time for students to go to the washroom and wash their hands before eating lunch. See "Food Safety in the Classroom" in the Action Schools! BC – *Classroom Healthy Eating Action Resource* for more information on hand washing.

### **4. Schedule Eating Time**

- Allow at least 20 minutes from the time students sit down to eat lunch.
- Younger students may need more time.
- Initially, noise in the classroom at lunch may increase as students adapt to the change in schedule. Over time, schools noted an improved atmosphere in the classrooms as children learn to eat slowly, relax and socialize during lunch.

### **5. Promote Healthy Eating**

- Students may be hungrier and thirstier with this change.
- Promote the importance of healthy breakfasts, snacks and lunches to students and family members.
- See "Snack Ideas" in the Action Schools! BC – *Classroom Healthy Eating Action Resource* for healthy snack ideas.
- Implement Crunch & Sip™ in your school – this is a snacking activity that allows students to have a healthy snack and a bottle of water on their desks throughout the day (see Snacking in the *Classroom Healthy Eating Action Resource*).

### **6. Modify Classroom Monitoring**

- Initially, teachers or lunch monitors should spend as much time as possible with the students to practise the new routine and reinforce positive behaviour.

### **7. Evaluate**

- Talk with staff, students, family members and other members of the school community during and after the trial period to evaluate the program and consider any possible adjustments. Sample surveys are included.
- Share results with members of the school community through staff and PAC meetings, and the school newsletter.

*Adapted From: Kathy Romses, Community Dietitian, Vancouver Coastal Health & Betty Holmes, Licensing Nutritionist, Vancouver Coastal Health and Parent.*

### **Recommended Resources:**

1. Action Schools! BC – *Classroom Healthy Eating Action Resource* (refer to Action Pages!)
2. Healthy Eating At School website – Resources include a video clip from a school in Victoria who implemented a "Recess Before Lunch" program. [www.healthyeatingatschool.ca](http://www.healthyeatingatschool.ca) (refer to Action Pages!)
3. Hand washing information – [www.dobugsneeddrugs.org](http://www.dobugsneeddrugs.org) (refer to Action Pages!)
4. Dietitian Services at HealthLink BC – Call 811 (refer to Action Pages!)
5. Montana Office of Public Instruction – "Recess Before Lunch: Kids Play and Then Eat!" [www.opi.state.mt.us/schoolfood/recessBL.html](http://www.opi.state.mt.us/schoolfood/recessBL.html)

# Memo Home

Note: Available in ten languages on [www.actionschoolsbc.ca](http://www.actionschoolsbc.ca).

Dear Parents/Guardians:

## Re: **Play First Lunch**

Our school will be trying a new schedule during our lunch break that allows students to play first and then eat. Benefits of the Play First Lunch program include:

- Improved student behaviour on the playground and in the classroom
- Fewer accidents during the lunch break
- Increased food and drink consumption
- Students are quieter and calmer, and focused on eating rather than thinking about getting outside to play
- Less litter on the school ground and inside the school
- Students return to the classroom more quickly and are settled and ready to learn

Before eating lunch, students will be dismissed to the playground to play followed by time for going to the washroom and washing their hands and then sitting down to lunch in their classroom. The new schedule is:

12:00pm	Play time
12:25pm	Bell to enter to use the washroom and wash hands
12:30pm	Bell to go to classrooms and eat lunch
12:50pm	Music appreciation/silent reading
1:00pm	Afternoon classes start

Schools that have implemented this program have found students are hungrier and thirstier at school. To prevent your child from becoming too hungry, encourage them to eat breakfast and send a healthy snack. Please contact the school for a list of healthy snack ideas or visit the Dietitians of Canada website for lunch and snack ideas at [www.dietitians.ca](http://www.dietitians.ca).

This new schedule will be piloted for up to (insert number) months. After the pilot period, we will be evaluating the program to consider its full implementation. We hope the Play First Lunch schedule will promote healthy eating and improve student achievement.

If you have any questions or comments about this new program, please contact the school.

# Play First Lunch Survey for Staff

We would like your feedback to help us decide how well the Play First Lunch program worked and whether we should implement it permanently.

The benefits we hope to achieve with the Play First Lunch program are:

- Improved student behaviour on the playground and in the classroom
- Fewer accidents during the lunch break
- Increased food and drink consumption
- Students are quieter and calmer, and focused on eating rather than thinking about getting outside to play
- Less litter on the school ground and inside the school
- Students return to the classroom more quickly and are settled and ready to learn

## PLEASE ANSWER THE FOLLOWING QUESTIONS:

1. Do you think the Play First Lunch program helped achieve the above benefits?

Yes       No

If no, why not? \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

2. List any positive or negative outcomes you noticed for you or for students:

\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

3. Do you think the Play First Lunch program should be implemented on a permanent basis?

Yes       No

If no, why not? \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

4. Do you have any suggestions to improve the Play First Lunch program?

\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

# Play First Lunch Survey for Family Members

We would like your feedback to help us decide how well the Play First Lunch program worked and whether we should implement it permanently.

The benefits we hope to achieve with the Play First Lunch program are:

- Improved student behaviour on the playground and in the classroom
- Fewer accidents during the lunch break
- Students are quieter and calmer, and focused on eating rather than thinking about getting outside to play
- Less litter on the school ground and inside the school
- Increased food and drink consumption
- Students return to the classroom more quickly and are settled and ready to learn

## PLEASE ANSWER THE FOLLOWING QUESTIONS:

1. Do you think the Play First Lunch program helped achieve any of the above benefits?

Yes       No

If so, which ones, if not why not? \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

2. Did this change in schedule cause any difficulties to your child or family?

Yes       No

If yes, what? \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

3. Do you think the Play First Lunch program should be implemented on a permanent basis?

Yes       No

If no, why not? \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

4. Do you have any suggestions to improve the Play First Lunch program?

\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

# Play First Lunch Survey for Students

PLEASE ANSWER THE FOLLOWING QUESTIONS:

1. Did you like to play first and eat later?

Yes       No

If not, why not? \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

2. Did you eat more lunch when you played first?

Yes       No

3. Do you want to continue the Play First Lunch?

Yes       No

If no, why not? \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_



# Play First Lunch Survey for Students

PLEASE ANSWER THE FOLLOWING QUESTIONS:

1. Did you like to play first and eat later?

Yes       No

If not, why not? \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

2. Did you eat more lunch when you played first?

Yes       No

3. Do you want to continue the Play First Lunch?

Yes       No

If no, why not? \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_