

October 18, 2018

ASD-South District Education Council
c/o Linda Sherbo, DEC Representative
490 Woodward Avenue
Saint John, New Brunswick
E2K 5N3

RE: Policy 711

Dear Ms. Sherbo,

I am writing to you today on behalf of the Parent School Support Committee (PSSC) from Harry Miller Middle School (HMMS), to express our concerns regarding the newly implemented Policy 711 (the policy). While we all appreciate efforts to improve the nutritional content of food available in our schools, we have both questions and concerns around the approval, implementation and enforcement of the policy. While unquestionably the intent behind the policy is good and sound, operationally it creates conflicts in that it appears to leave little room for schools to use discretion.

First, we are seeking some clarification regarding the following:

1. *In what context did the need for, and approval for, this policy originate?* As parents, we are not clear whether this is a district policy, provincial policy, or something else.
2. *What was the consultation process applied in the crafting of this policy?* As a PSSC member and thus parent, I can confirm that at no point during the lead up to implementation of this policy were parents at HMMS consulted around the dimensions and concerns leading to this policy.
3. *How will the implementation of the policy be monitored and enforced?* Specifically, is this to be implemented in a big bang approach or phased in over a period of time? Is there any room left for flexibility for the Principal and administrators to use judgement and discretion?

The questions above are contextualized by the following issues and concerns raised by members of our committee:

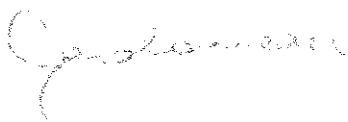
1. Schools in our area, HMMS included, rely heavily on partnerships with local businesses. For HMMS, those partnerships include the Real Atlantic Superstore, Dairy Queen, and others. Based on my experiences with elementary schools, they too rely heavily on local partners to develop their healthy lunch programs. These partnerships are incredibly important to the running of the schools, and create opportunities for breakfast clubs, fun contests, etc., and it seems implausible that they should not be recognized for their contributions. Superstore donates fruit to our school each week, which for some students, may be the only fresh fruit they receive. The owners of the Dairy Queen in KV are tremendous supporters of youth through investment in the arts, theatre and schools. They donate coupons for sundaes to support our daily 'pat of the back' program. Again, while ice cream does not fall under the policy as an acceptable food, this treat may be the only one some of our students receive. It is the view of this committee that such partnerships should be both encouraged and supported, not suppressed in any way.
2. Many of the foods listed as acceptable list have enormously high price points which cannot be supported by public school budgets. Examples include Made Good products, yogurt drinks, etc.

The position of this committee is that if the province/district is recommending these as preferred products, they should, through the Central Purchasing Branch, too be willing to negotiate a better price for vendors than could ever be achieved by any one school.

3. The requirement to purchase a full lunch or no lunch seems excessive to members of this committee. It seems unreasonable that a student needs to either purchase a \$6.00 meal including protein, veggie, fruit and milk, or have no options. While nobody disputes the value of a fully balanced meal, the operational concerns are two-fold: first, there is a lot of food going straight into the trash which is irresponsible. Many students do not like white milk so are throwing the whole container in the trash receptacles. Similarly, students do not have a lot of time to eat lunch, or have smaller appetites, and thus eating parts of their lunch and throwing the rest out. Culturally, we generally have our largest meal at supper time, and most children are not able to eat a large meal at noon. Second, many students simply cannot afford a full meal, leaving them in a situation whereby they have no option. Having something in their stomachs (salad or sandwich for instance) is better than nothing in terms of their ability to learn during the afternoon classes.
4. Fun events to which the children tremendously look forward, are directly impacted by this policy. As an example, HMMS has a 'smarty pants' project that is run by our Renaissance Club, which provides parents and friends the opportunity to purchase a box of Smarties and write a little note at time of report cards to support their child in their studies. These types of activities in the view of the committee are not promoting unhealthy eating and living, but rather just acknowledging that these are still children and little treats on occasion contribute to feelings of acceptance, pride, etc.
5. Fundraisers, including canteens, at school sponsored sporting and arts events, provide opportunities to keep costs lower for teams, thus allowing them to play more, and encourage more to join. Having to increase the price of participation on a team could discourage some from trying out, and while healthy eating is a key dimension to overall well-being, it should not be at the expense of getting students involved in physical activity. All fundraisers rely strongly again on community partnerships, as well as being able to sell items which are not on the approved list.
6. In terms of implementation and monitoring, it is unclear who is responsible. As parents, while we accept that healthy children are better learners, we are conflicted in terms of how many of the school's resources (administrators, teachers) should be diverted away from key learning activities to roll this policy out.
7. The removal of chocolate milk, though not the main concern, continues to be on the minds of parents.

We would be happy to discuss any of the above matters further with you should request.

Kind regards,



Jana Comeau, MBA
HMMS PSSC Chairperson
On behalf of the HMMS PSSC Committee

cc. HMMS Committee Members