

Engaging students in healthy eating

Sunday Harrison, Green Thumbs Growing Kids

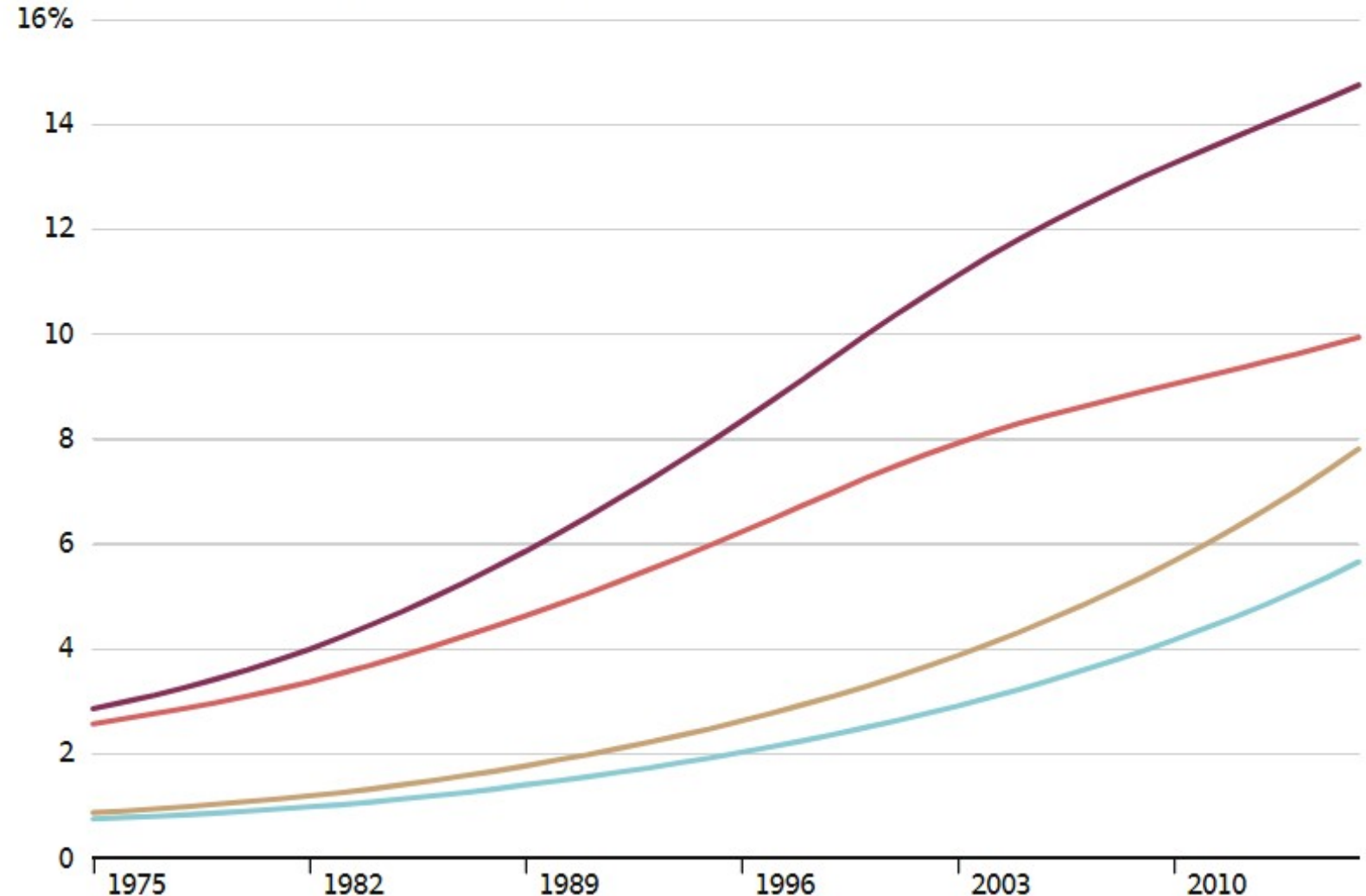
People for Education conference, Nov. 11, 2017

Problem!

More than half (58%) of all annual healthcare spending in Canada is for the treatment of chronic diseases for which the main risk factors are **unhealthy eating**, physical inactivity, smoking and the harmful use of alcohol.

Prevalence of obesity among children and adolescents, Canada vs. the world, by gender

Boys (Canada) Girls (Canada) Boys (world) Girls (world)



THE GLOBE AND MAIL, SOURCE: WORLD HEALTH ORGANIZATION

DATA SHARE

Federal policy

- Canada is one of the few industrialized countries without a national school food program.
- A national food policy is in the works via Ministry of Agriculture with other ministries.
- The Coalition for Healthy School Food (Food Secure Canada) is working on advocacy.

Food issues in Ontario schools

- Food insecurity is an urgent public health challenge in Canada, affecting one in six Canadian children on average - up to two in three Inuit children.
- 1/3 of students in elementary schools and 2/3 of students in secondary schools do not eat a nutritious breakfast before school, leaving them at risk for learning, behavioural and health challenges at school. The prevalence of diabetes and obesity are at all-time highs amongst Indigenous peoples, for whom prevalence is higher than in the rest of the population.

Food policy in public education system

- **Healthy Food for Healthy Schools Act 2008**
 - PPM 150 – coming up for review
 - Trans Fats - limiting
- **Curriculum – Physical Education (elementary – no assessment), SHSM includes Culinary Arts & Horticulture (optional)**


Curriculum

- **Canada Food Guide** – under revision for 2018 release. Used at all grade levels in curriculum.
- Only about 1/3 of children between the ages of 4 and 13 years eat five or more servings of vegetables and fruit daily as per the Canada Food Guide.



Environmental Policy Framework 2007-2009

The vision for environmental education in Ontario is enunciated in *Shaping Our Schools, Shaping Our Future*:

 “Ontario’s education system will prepare students with the knowledge, skills, perspectives, and practices they need to be environmentally responsible citizens. Students will understand our fundamental connections to each other and to the world around us through our relationship to food, water, energy, air, and land, and our interaction with all living things. The education system will provide opportunities within the classroom and the community for students to engage in actions that deepen this understanding.”

Shaping Our Schools, Shaping Our Future, p. 4

Funding for school grounds?

- Currently, the Grants for Student Needs from the Ministry of Education to school boards does not include any funding for the school grounds
- School grounds are increasingly used as instructional spaces, through gardens and physical education more generally, and Outdoor Education centres have been cut back
- Schools used their Full-Day Kindergarten money to expand play spaces on school grounds

Example: Enabling policy – school gardens and healthy eating

POLICY: SCHOOL FOOD GARDENS		#	502
SECTION: 500	: Curriculum	Page	1 of 1
APPROVAL/REVISION DATE: June 17, 2013	EFFECTIVE DATE: June 18, 2013	REVIEW DATE: June 18, 2018	
CROSS REFERENCE: Appendix A – Guidelines for School Food Gardens			

A: POLICY

1. The Thunder Bay Catholic District School Board recognizes the important role that school food gardens can play in students' learning. Garden-based learning can enhance academic achievement through the integration of hands-on experiences into diverse subjects such as math, science, nutrition and environmental education. Garden-based learning allows students to discover and experience fresh, healthy food and to make healthy food choices.
2. The Board is committed to healthy food environments. School food gardens allow for the incorporation of fresh, local fruit and vegetables into the school community. A school food garden can play a role in increasing the options of healthy food for the students and their families by providing space for the production of food through school gardens.
3. By contributing to the greening of school grounds and the building of green spaces for neighbourhoods in Thunder Bay, the Board promotes enhanced social and emotional development in students.
4. The Thunder Bay Catholic District School Board recognizes the many benefits to developing and maintaining school food gardens including opportunities for learning and increased access to healthy food. Therefore, the Board encourages and supports the development of school food gardens.

B: GUIDELINES

1. Guidelines for School Food Gardens (Appendix A) have been developed to help the school community carry out a successful and sustainable project that is consistent with the policy statements above.

Research

- School food programs have been linked with positive impacts on children's mental health, including reductions in behavioural and emotional problems, bullying, aggression, anxiety, and depression as well as fewer visits to the school nurse.
- An evaluation of a morning meal program in the Toronto District School Board found that students who consume a morning meal most days show at least a 10% increase in skills such as independent academic work, initiative, conflict resolution, class participation and problem solving at school.
- School gardens are shown to increase academic achievement, increase consumption of vegetables and fruits, increase environmental awareness and support positive social/emotional development

Advocacy

- Many leaders and experts have called for a universal school food program, including the United Nations Special Rapporteur on the Right to Food, the Ontario Healthy Kids Panel and Dr. David Butler-Jones, former Chief Public Health Officer for Canada.
- Ontario Edible Education Network (a working group of Sustain Ontario) aims to bring together practitioners and policymakers
- Advocacy now includes food literacy, not just feeding, as food skills such as gardening and cooking from scratch have been lost due to packaged & convenience foods

Green Thumbs Growing Kids



- Runs school garden and food literacy programs in a cluster of four elementary schools
- Since 2000, charity since 2009
- Each school is different – but all are majority low-income families and the schools are all Model Schools within the TDSB
- www.greenthumbsto.org – curriculum resources & more





Equity

- Higher-income schools hire garden educators
- Universal programs guarantee that those who most need programming have access to it



Summer Programs

- Weekly drop-in to harvest
- Day camps
- Youth hired for summer



Volunteer Program

- Extensive volunteer program, to keep ratio high
- Includes parents, community members and placement students from:
 - Early Childhood Studies (Ryerson)
 - Teacher candidates (York, UT)
 - Masters, Nutrition Communications (Ryerson) and Environmental Studies (York)
 - Nursing (Humber College)

Model for replication/expansion

- We propose to place a Garden Educator (Ontario Certified Teacher) into clusters of 3-4 schools, who will:
 - Run programs for children/youth (one day per week/school)
 - Train teachers to use the garden
 - Facilitate summer programming/maintenance
 - Support winter food literacy programming in classrooms
 - Integrate volunteers through our Volunteer Program