

Prince Edward Island Healthy Eating Alliance

Progress Report

August 2003



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The PEI Healthy Eating Alliance

The PEI Healthy Eating Alliance (HEA) is a multi-sector group of individuals from community organizations, university and government departments who share a concern for children's health, and who are committed to improving the eating habits of children and youth. The HEA was established in November, 2001 to improve the eating habits of Island children and youth through nutrition education and promotion, and through the creation of supportive environments for healthy eating. In December 2002, we released the *Healthy Eating Strategy for Island Children and Youth*, a three year plan to guide the work of the HEA.

This progress report provides an overview of the activities and accomplishments of the HEA since the release of our Healthy Eating Strategy in December, 2002. Annual reports will follow beginning in July, 2004.

Our Mission

The PEI Healthy Eating Alliance is committed to working collaboratively to develop a comprehensive and coordinated strategy which will encourage Island children and youth to enjoy, understand, and benefit from healthy eating. The HEA will cultivate and foster an environment that promotes and supports healthy eating behaviours.

Our Guiding Principles

- To build on the work that has already been initiated by individuals, government departments and organizations, and to strengthen partnerships whose purpose it is to improve the nutritional health of Islanders; and
- To build support, increase capacity and obtain commitment for a comprehensive strategy for healthy eating for children and youth within the members' own organizations/government departments

Strategy and Goals

The HEA released a comprehensive strategy in December 2002 to improve the eating habits of Island children and youth. This strategy, the *Healthy Eating Strategy for Island Children and Youth 2002-2005*, will guide the work of the HEA in achieving three main goals:

1. To increase nutrition education and promote healthy eating to student, parents, teachers and all those who have an impact on how children eat;
2. To increase access to safe and healthy foods in all types of environments where children gather; and
3. To conduct research which increases our understanding of how children and youth are currently eating, factors influencing eating habits, and how we can best improve current eating behaviours through up-to-date and quality research.

A Steering Committee is in place to provide overall guidance and coordination for the strategy. Two working groups have also been formed: 1) the Education and Promotion Working Group, and 2) the Access to Safe and Healthy Foods Working Group. As well, an ad hoc Research and Surveillance Committee is in place to conduct research activities and provide expertise to the HEA as required. Members of these committees are attached in Appendix A.

The Steering Committee and Working Groups met regularly over the past six months to plan and implement the action plans identified to carry out the three main goals.

Because eating habits develop early in life and tend to continue into adulthood, our actions to date have focused largely on school-aged children and youth. Although schools are an ideal environment for early health interventions, the broader community also has a great impact on the health of children by providing a supportive environment that promotes and fosters healthy eating. Over the next year, we will continue to work with parents, recreation leaders and others in the community who are role models and can influence the eating habits of children and youth.

We have had an extremely busy first six months since the release of the *Healthy Eating Strategy for Island Children and Youth 2002-2005* in December of 2002. The following is a summary of the work completed during that time.

HEA Steering Committee Activities

The HEA Steering Committee has completed the following activities over the past year:

1. Developed Terms of Reference for the HEA and a Responsibility Statement for the Steering Committee.
2. Held a provincial planning meeting with all members of the HEA in October, 2002.
3. Conducted numerous presentations and media interviews (Co-Chairs and others on the Steering Committee). A main objective of the HEA over the past year has been to raise awareness of the Healthy Eating Alliance and to provide information to encourage and assist individuals and organizations in promoting an environment conducive to healthy eating. These include:

Presentations

Eastern School District Principals Meeting Oct 30, 2002
Eastern School District Board of Trustees Dec 11, 2002
PEI Public Health Dentistry staff. Charlottetown, PEI, November, 2002.
PEI Public Health Nursing staff. Charlottetown, PEI, Feb 12, 2003.
West Royalty Home & School, Feb 11, 2003
Central Queen's Home & School, Feb 19, 2003
Central Queen's Professional Development Day, Feb 21, 2003
Parkside Home and School, Summerside, May 13, 2003
UPEI Research Breakfast, Charlottetown, May 21, 2003

Radio and Television Interviews

CBC radio interview re: Healthy Eating Strategy (HES) Launch Dec 05, 2003
CBC television interview for Compass re: HES Launch: Dec 05, 2003
Island Focus interview: Healthy Eating Strategy Feb 11, 2003
Live at Five ATV Interview, Mar 10, 2003 (Healthy Eating Week)
Guardian picture for Press release, Mar 10, 2003 (Healthy Eating Week).

4. Developed and secured funding for the *School Healthy Eating Guidelines Project*. The aim of this project is to promote supportive environments by encouraging elementary schools to adopt healthy eating guidelines. An HEA Guidelines Sub-Committee was formed to lead this project. Activities of this sub-committee are listed below.

HEA School Healthy Eating Guidelines Subcommittee Activities

- Hired a Project Coordinator (half time).
- Worked closely with key players from New Brunswick (Ian Rowe from Saint John and Odette Comeau Lavoie from Fredericton), who are using a similar process, in developing a detailed plan for a consultative process with schools. Ian and Odette provided us with valuable insight into challenges, successes and overall learnings from the New Brunswick process.
- Compiled an inventory of healthy eating policies and guidelines in other parts of North America. A dietetic intern from the Moncton Hospital (Tanya Murphy) initiated this process during her placement with the Healthy Eating Alliance.
- Conducted interviews with four lead elementary schools to gain a better understanding of schools' perceptions regarding school nutrition issues, healthy eating guidelines and the proposed process. A dietetic intern worked for four weeks on this project in May to assist with planning and the interviews with principals. We received positive feedback on the proposed consultative process and identified some key issues for consideration. We plan to involve these lead schools as we begin to develop healthy eating guidelines and one year nutrition action plans with elementary schools in the fall of 2003. We will invite school administrators, school staff, and parent volunteers from each elementary school to be involved. The project is expected to be completed in the Spring of 2004.
- We plan to develop a funding proposal in the Fall of 2003 for a full evaluation of this process in elementary schools, and expansion to intermediate and high schools. Funding was provided by the Department of Health and Social Services; the project is also being sponsored by the Department of Family and Nutritional Sciences at UPEI.

5. Developed a Healthy Eating Alliance Logo. In the spring of 2003, the HEA worked with a student at the Colonel Gray High School to develop a logo for the HEA. The student was the top prize winner for a provincial graphics design competition. The logo will be used on promotional material to raise awareness of the HEA.
6. Attended various conferences related to healthy living, healthy eating and active living, including the Pan Canadian Healthy Living Symposium, Atlantic Community Capacity Workshop on Healthy Eating and Active Living, Re-stocking Your Community Tool Kit (Healthy Eating & Physical Activity), and the International Society of Behavior in Nutrition and Physical Activity, among others.

Nutrition Education and Promotion Working Group Report

The Nutrition Education and Promotion Working Group has completed the following activities over the past year, under the direction of Pat Charlton:

1. Developed and distributed monthly healthy eating tips through school newsletters in the Eastern School District and Western School Board.
2. Developed a trial website, accessible through the Western School Board site.
3. Implemented the first ever “Healthy Eating Week” in Prince Edward Island in March 2003 in conjunction with Nutrition Month to provide information and practical tips to parents to promote healthy eating habits. The key objectives were to: 1) create and increase awareness of the Week, 2) increase awareness of the health and educational benefits and risks associated with the eating behaviours of school-aged children, and 3) stimulate activities to improve healthy eating behaviours among children and youth.

HEA partners implemented the following activities to achieve these objectives through Healthy Eating Week:

- Developed news release and backgrounder for Healthy Eating Week.
- Participated in a CBC radio call-in show to discuss the question ‘What Is Keeping Islanders from Eating Healthy?’ Islanders directed questions to Co-Chair, Dr. Jennifer Taylor, and to Amanda Rogerson, R.D., member of the Education and Promotion Working Group.
- Organized a television kick-off event with Boomer Gallant.
- Developed public service announcements for parents on CFCY, CHTN, and Magic 93.
- Sent information package to schools including Nutrition Month fact sheets and Healthy Eating Week backgrounder.
- Submitted article to ‘La Voix Acadienne’.
- Submitted articles to the Health Regions, government and school newsletters
- Developed and distributed over 1000 ‘Healthy Eating Survival Kits’ to the general public and various community organizations.
- Featured on ATV-Live at Five and developed newspaper ads to promote the week, the HEA, healthy eating tips, and the survival kits.

4. Developed several print resources for distribution to the public, including recipes and fact sheets for parents to help their children eat healthier, as well as menu planners and grocery lists to help parents plan ahead for healthy meals. Healthy eating information sheets encouraging fruit and vegetable consumption were also developed in cooperation with the UPEI Dietetic Internship Program. The latter are currently under review and will be piloted in the near future.
5. Participated in a health and trade show “Showcase 2003” and in the “Children’s Expo” in Summerside in April, 2003, providing information to parents and children about healthy eating.
6. Currently partnering with the Active Living Alliance on a *Partnerships for Children Initiative*. The objectives of the project are to increase awareness of the importance of leading a healthy lifestyle among Island children ages 4-8 and their parents and teachers.

HEA partners implemented the following activities to achieve these objectives:

- Co-ordinated visits to pre-school/ kindergartens and grade 1-3 classes by “Freggie”, a healthy eating mascot, and the Active Living mascot to provide active living and healthy eating messages, and provide the children with a healthy snack.
- Developed a poster, as well as a parent’s handout, teacher’s guide, and song/activity sheet for children ages 4-8. These resources will be launched in the Fall of 2003.
- Developed a newspaper ad to increase awareness of the HEA , as well as promote healthy eating and active living.

Access to Safe and Healthy Foods Working Group Report

The Access to Safe and Healthy Foods Working Group has completed the following activities over the past year, under the direction of Bob Gray:

1. Actively supported the development of school-based child nutrition programs based on best practices from the Canadian Living Foundation/Breakfast For Learning Canada (CLF/BFL). Planned and implemented breakfast and snack programs in Island schools; specific activities are listed below.

Access to Safe and Healthy Foods Working Group Activities

- Developed partnership with CLF/BFL: Became the first provincial adjudicating body for funding of school breakfast and snack programs in PEI; participated in conferences and monthly teleconferences.
- Adjudicated more than \$25,000 in grants for school breakfast and snack programs. Currently, there are 22 programs in PEI (Breakfast: 13; Snack: 9); an average of 953 children participating on a daily basis. (This number will vary from day to day as this is based on a daily average for the period of one week. Some programs operate on a daily basis while others operate less frequently.) **Table 1** (on the following page) provides a summary of programs and funding sources.
- Secured funding from CLF/BFL to hire a half-time Provincial Coordinator for the School Healthy Eating Programs.
- Formed a Provincial Advisory Council to oversee the CLF/BFL programs in cooperation with the Provincial Co-ordinator. The Council is currently in the process of refining guidelines and grant deadlines.
- Obtained other provincial and regional sponsors, including the Grocery Industry Foundation...Together (GIFT) Atlantic organization, which provided ~ \$7,000 in funding for PEI school breakfast and snack programs. Exploring the possibility of formally partnering with other Atlantic provinces in securing sustainable funding from other sources.

Table 1 Successful Applicants By Funding Source: PEI School Food Programs

Fiscal Year March 2002 - March 2003				
	2002**	BFL Grants (Feb 16, 2003)	GIFT (Nov 2002)	GIFT (Feb 16, 2003) n=8
	<i>Successful Applicants</i>	<i>Successful Applicants</i>	<i>Successful Applicants</i>	<i>Successful Applicants</i>
	Tracadie Cross Consolidated ¹ Canadian Red Cross (Dine'N Shine ²)	Fortune Consolidated School, Souris High Schools, Montague High School, Somerset Elementary School, Georgetown Elementary School, Morell Alternative Education Site	Somerset Elementary, Fortune Consolidated, Birchwood/Prince Street, Stonepark/St. Jeans, Montague High, SIS, Charlottetown Alt, Montague Alt, Morell Alt, Tracadie Cross, Elliot River, West Royalty, Cardigan, Souris High, Souris Alt, A+ Alt Georgetown, Morell High	Souris Consolidated, Rollo Bay Consolidated, Kinkora High School, Eastern Kings Consolidated, St. Teresa
Received the money	February 2003 ¹ May 2002 ²	\$37,725	Dec 2002	March 2003
Totals	\$3,400	\$14,300	\$6,300	\$1,600
Grand Total March 2002 - March 2003 \$25,800				

^{1,2} Granted prior to coordinator being hired

Fiscal Year March 2003 - March 2004	
	<i>Successful Applicants:</i> Westwood Primary, Elliot River, Westisle Alternative Site, Montague Alternative Site, A+Site
	Anticipated September 1, 2003 (Anticipated total \$13,000)

1. Developed and evaluated a six week pilot Fruit and Vegetable Snack Program designed to increase the availability of fresh fruits and vegetables among PEI elementary school children. Many HEA partners were actively involved in implementing this project, including the PEI Division of the Canadian Cancer Society; Department of Family and Nutritional Sciences, UPEI; Western School Board; Eastern School District; parents, the Department of Agriculture and the Department of Health and Social Services. A description of the program is below.

- Three elementary schools volunteered to participate in the pilot program (West Kent in Charlottetown, Ecole-sur-Mer in Summerside, and Alberton Elementary in Alberton).
- Children in each classroom were provided with a free fruit and vegetable snack tray once a week at morning recess. Local community sponsors provided the fruit and vegetables and or funds to purchase the food.
- “Freggie” visited West Kent School on the final week of the program (see p. 5 for description of Freggie).
- ‘5 to 10 Are You Getting Enough?’ brochures were distributed to parents.

3. An evaluation of the pilot Fruit and Vegetable Snack Program was conducted under the supervision of Dr. Jennifer Taylor, in cooperation with the UPEI Dietetic Internship Program (Jillyan Gallant and Pam Crozier, dietetic interns). A pre-post design was used to evaluate change in children’s food preferences (liking) and willingness to try fruits and vegetables before and after 6 weeks of the program. Preliminary analysis indicates that the program was highly successful: students (n=379) reported a significant increase in preference ratings for all fruits and vegetables offered during the six week program. Further, they were significantly more likely to report that they were willing to try raw cauliflower and turnip sticks after the program. Our findings support past research that suggests that exposure to foods is a critical factor in increasing liking and ultimately consumption of fruits and vegetables. Anecdotal reports from school staff, students and parents indicate very strong support for the program. A full evaluation report is being prepared, and funding sources are being explored to expand this successful pilot project.

Research and Surveillance Committee (ad hoc)

The Research and Surveillance Committee (ad hoc) has completed the following activities over the past year, under the direction of Dr. Jennifer Taylor:

1. Over the past 2 years, surveys of students' eating habits have been completed in the Western School Board, Eastern School District and the French School Board under the direction of Dr. Jennifer Taylor. A total of 4,832 students in grades 1-12 were surveyed. As well, school principals in the Eastern School District and the Western School Board were surveyed regarding any nutrition programs and policies and foods available in their schools. A comprehensive literature review of best practices in nutrition and health interventions has been completed as well, funded by the Socio-behavioural Cancer Research Network of Canada.
2. Several research projects have recently been conducted evaluating specific HEA initiatives including the Fruit and Vegetable pilot project. A proposal is being prepared to implement this program in a larger number of schools. A second proposal will be prepared to obtain funds to evaluate the School Healthy Eating Guidelines project (see p. 4).
3. Work has begun on developing a comprehensive evaluation framework which will identify targets and both process and outcome indicators which will be used to measure the performance of HEA activities and programs in meeting our goals. We are working to ensure that our framework is consistent with that of the PEI Healthy Living Strategy: Dr. Jennifer Taylor, Co-chair, is currently a member of the Evaluation sub-committee for the Healthy Living Strategy.

Future Initiatives

Over the upcoming year, the HEA will continue to implement activities designed to increase nutrition education and promotion, increase access to safe and healthy foods and conduct research aimed at improving children's eating habits. Healthy eating tips will be continued through school newsletters and planning will begin on the development of a Healthy Eating Kit for Community Organizations and for our second annual Healthy Eating Week in March, 2004. The trial HEA website will be further developed, and avenues for funding and support investigated. We will also be seeking funding to expand the current fruit and vegetable pilot project, expand breakfast programs, and expand the School Healthy Eating Guidelines Project. Finally, we plan to complete our evaluation framework.

Conclusion

It has been a busy and exciting six months for the Healthy Eating Alliance. We have accomplished a great deal since the HEA was formed in November 2001, due to the tremendous support, contributions and active participation from the many members of the PEI Healthy Eating Alliance. We now have a plan and framework to achieve our vision of optimal nutritional health for Island children and youth. Much work remains, however, to establish a physical, social, and learning environment that is conducive to healthy eating across Prince Edward Island. A key task in the upcoming months is to ensure adequate and sustainable support for proposed initiatives.

Appendix



Appendix A

HEA Steering Committee

Dr. Jennifer Taylor, Family and Nutritional Sciences, UPEI (Co-chair)
Holly Smith, PEI Division of the Canadian Cancer Society (Co-chair)
Margaret Prouse, Home Economist
Bob Gray, Eastern School District
Kathy Kiley, Parent
Wendy MacDonald, PEI Home and School Federation
Crystal MacGregor, Coordinator, PEI Breakfast Programs, staff resource
Megan Mullally, Dietitian, Kings Health Region
Pauline Coady, Department of Education
Dr. Peggy Bethune, QEH Pediatrics Unit
Jean Doherty, Communications, Department of Education
Deborah Bradley, Department of Health and Social Services
Pat Charlton, Department of Health and Social Services, staff resource

Education and Promotion Working Group

Pat Charlton, Department of Health and Social Services (Chair)
Colette Arsenault, Wellington
Loretta O'Brien, Association of Nurses of PEI
Audrey Fraser, Queen Elizabeth Hospital
Janice Ployer, Department of Health and Social Services
Mae Gorrill, Public Health Nursing, West Prince Health Region
Jean Ellis, Dietitian, East Prince Health Region
Leslie Trainor, Heart and Stroke Foundation of PEI
Megan Mullally, Dietitian, Kings Health Region
Lynda Oulton, Kings Health Region
Gloria Wood, PEI School Milk Foundation
Ron Rice, Western School Board
Sharon Lawlor, Public Health Nursing, Queens Health Region
Sherry O'Keefe, Dietitian, Atlantic Superstore
Mary Jean McCarthy, UPEI School of Nursing
Carolyn Knox, Dietitian, West Prince Health Region
Meaghan Lister, PEI Active Living Alliance
Maureen Paquet, East Prince Health Region
Karen Mair, CBC
Amanda Rodgerson, Dietitian, Sobeys



Access to Safe and Healthy Foods Working Group

Bob Gray, Eastern School District (Chair)

Janice MacWilliam, Canadian Red Cross

Crystal MacGregor, Provincial Coordinator, PEI Breakfast Programs

Rhonda MacPhee, Community Services, Kings Health Region

Margaret Prouse, Home Economist

Holly Smith, PEI Division of the Canadian Cancer Society

Dawn Binns, PEI Division of the Canadian Cancer Society

Katherine Schaefer, Home Economist, Registered Dietitian, PEI Home Economics Association

Francois Caron, PEI Department of Community and Cultural Affairs

Lisa Shaffer, Department of Health and Social Services

Kathy Kiley, Parent

Shelley Strang, Representative, Chartwells International

Ad Hoc Research and Surveillance Committee

Dr. Jennifer Taylor, Family and Nutritional Sciences, UPEI

Dr. Philip Smith, Department of Psychology, UPEI

(Committee composition to change with projects underway).