

## **BC Dairy Foundation Elementary School Milk Program**

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### **History**

BC's Elementary School Milk Program [ESMP] started in 1973. BC only began analysing school data in 2002. Across Canada, BC has the lowest number of schools currently participating in a school milk program:

BC – 27%  
Alberta – 40%  
Saskatchewan – 63%  
Manitoba – 79%  
Ontario – 72%  
New Brunswick/Nova Scotia – 100%  
PEI – 100%  
Newfoundland – 91%

### **Program Overview**

- Chocolate and white milk are available to elementary students.
- Schools need to serve milk 3 time per week to qualify for the program.
- Participating schools receive free milk reminder prizes to encourage consumption and participation.
- BCDF and the ESMP program are funded entirely by the dairy farmers in the province. BCDF receives no government funding.
- BCDF also has registered dietitians on staff who deliver four-food-group nutrition education workshops to teachers.

### **Packaging, Refrigeration & Distribution**

**Packaging:** The majority of milk sold in BC Schools is served in 125 mL or 250 mL plain plastic or gable-topped cartons. Schools are also beginning to see 355 mL Milk2Go packaging sold through vending machines.

**Refrigeration:** BC elementary schools do not have cafeterias. Milk is usually stored in a large commercial refrigerator in a common room or staff room and distributed to individual classrooms. Schools with lack of refrigeration continue to be one of the major barriers for increasing the number of schools on our program.

**Distribution:** Dairies deliver milk to the majority of schools registered on the program. The milk coordinator in rural areas often drives to their local grocery store to pick up milk themselves. Delivery difficulties is another barrier to our program.

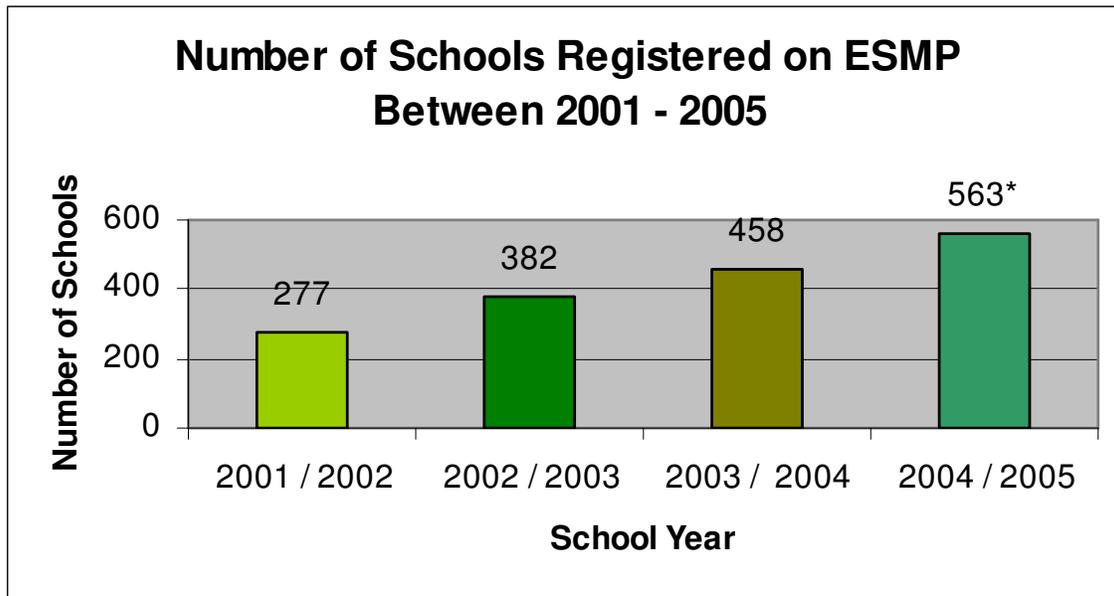
### World School Milk Day

Registered schools are also eligible to participate in program contests throughout the school year.

This year, a BC Elementary School won the National World School Milk Day poster contest in February 2005.

### Statistics

For the past 4 years, BC Dairy Foundation has been committed to growing the program. We still have a long way to go to match other provinces in Canada. Even after this growth we will only be in 33% of schools!



### Meals Program

BC has a govt' sponsored meals program. All students are eligible to participate (families who can afford it, pay the full cost of the meal). The BC provincial government regulates that the nutritional requirements for the meal must include milk at least 3 times per week.

Last year 70% of schools registered on the School Milk Program had a meals program.

### Program Marketing

Building Relationship with PAC, DPAC, BCCPAC  
Direct mail and telemarketing to principals

### 5 Winning factors:

- Prepayment: Month or term
- Parent at Milk Coordinator
- Price point below 0.55 cents
- Offer both white & chocolate milk
- Milk delivered by a dairy (rather than picked-up)

## **Focus Groups**

The nutritional benefits of milk are the main reason for introducing a milk program into the schools.

All schools agreed that prizes are helpful, especially with younger kids.

Be sure to advertise that BCDF is a non-profit organization (so schools understand that you are not trying to sell them something).

## **Lactose Intolerance**

Tolerance to lactose can be improved by gradually increasing intake of milk products.

Research tells us that people with lactose intolerance can usually tolerate one and even two glasses of milk, especially when consumed with a meal or other foods.

Children who are recent immigrants generally try to be like their peers and that includes eating foods they see around them. Children quickly adapt to eating breakfasts like cereal with milk; evening meals tend to be more traditional.

## **Milk Vending**

Schools that only sell milk through a vending are eligible to register for the School milk program.

We encourage vending schools to offer milk through the vending machine AND through the regular 250 mL milk containers, as they are the best way to reach the younger students.

35 elementary schools with milk vending machines have been registered on the program to date.

## **Junk Food Ban**

There has been major media coverage (provincially and nationally) of studies showing increasing children's obesity rates.

In the fall of 2003 our provincial government announced a ban on pop and other junk food in elementary schools.

In 2003, BCDF held a nutrition forum for health professionals exploring school nutrition policy. The forum was standing room only - trustees, teachers, parents, and dietitians.

Schools can play an important role in fostering healthy eating habits for student if school communities work together. BCDF, in partnership with the BC Ministry of Health services and a local educational broadcaster developed a video and online resource to help schools make healthy changes.

## **Making It Happen: Healthy Eating At School Video Resource**

Three short videos, each approximately 5 minutes in length, which feature school nutrition policy in action, and were developed to inspire schools to make healthy changes.

**Online Resource**

This tool is an in-depth online how-to resource that school communities can use to plan their own school nutrition policy project. [www.knowledgenetwork.ca/makingithappen](http://www.knowledgenetwork.ca/makingithappen)