

School nurse's experiences and perceptions of healthy eating school environments

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School nurses provide health promotion and health services within schools, as healthy children have a greater potential for optimal learning. One aspect of the school nurses' role is in encouraging healthy eating and increasing the availability of fruits and vegetables in the school. The purpose of this study was to explore and describe school nurses' perception of their role in promoting increased fruit and vegetable consumption in the school setting. One avenue to increased availability of fruits and vegetables in schools is Farm to School programs that have been mandated by the Federal government to increase the health of children within the public school system. School nurses are optimally positioned to work with the Farm to School programs to promote healthy eating in the schools. A secondary aim was to explore school nurses' knowledge, experiences and/or perceptions of the Farm to School program to promote

fruit and vegetable consumption in the school setting. Three themes that emerged from the focus groups included: if there were more of me, I could do more; food environment in schools; school nurses promote health. School nurses reported that they addressed health issues more broadly in their roles as educator, collaborator, advocate and modelling healthy behaviours. Most of the participants knew of Farm to School programs, but only two school nurses worked in schools that participated in the program. Consequently, the participants reported having little or no experiences with the Farm to School programs.

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