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## A whole school approach to healthy eating at school case findings from New Nordic Foodat School week

Mikkelsen, Bent Egberg

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**Conference office**

**State Environmental Health Centre**

Kalvariju str. 153, Vilnius, Lithuania, LT-08221

Phone: +370 5 236 04 92, fax: +370 5 273 73 97

E-mail: [info@conference2009.lt](mailto:info@conference2009.lt)

[conferencebsth@gmail.com](mailto:conferencebsth@gmail.com)

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# A WHOLE SCHOOL APPROACH TO HEALTHY EATING AT SCHOOL CASE FINDINGS FROM NEW NORDIC FOOD AT SCHOOL WEEK

**Prof. Bent Egberg Mikkelsen**  
*Aalborg University, Denmark*

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**Background:** The prevalence of obesity continues to grow and schools are increasingly being named as key settings for interventions related to healthy eating. In the whole school approach both food service as well as the curricula is considered as important and the school is seen as having a connection to the wider community.

**Theoretical framework:** This paper criticizes the traditional evidence based approach to interventions at school. Antonovsky's theoretical framework *Sense of coherence* with its key notions of comprehensibility, manageability, and meaningfulness seem to be well suited.

**Method:** We use a case study approach to a healthy eating intervention in Danish schools. It draws on data collected using interviews among 7<sup>th</sup> and 9<sup>th</sup> graders in two Danish schools that had gone through a "New Nordic Food at School" intervention. The intervention aimed at promoting organic food and healthy eating through the food service and curricula. The project use a dialogue research based approach.

**Main results:** The findings suggest that three dimensions seem to be important if students should be able to make sense of interventions. In the first dimension it is found that there seems to be a tension between food service praxis and curricular praxis. In the second dimension it is found that there seems to be a tension between backstage and front stage perspectives. In the third perspective it is found that there is a tension between learning in theory and learning in practice.

**Conclusion:** The paper concludes that it is important a whole school approach in which both food service praxis, curricula and the wider school social environment is used. There are huge possibilities in integrating curricula and food praxis in new ways by using out of class room teaching environments.

**Contact:** Bent Egberg Mikkelsen, [bemi@plan.aau.dk](mailto:bemi@plan.aau.dk)

# THE HEALTHY SCHOOL CANTEEN, A PROGRAMME FOR DUTCH SECONDARY SCHOOLS

**Noor J. Gudden, Margret L.M. Ploum, Frédérique Mensink**  
*Netherlands Nutrition Centre, the Netherlands*

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Dutch youngsters have an unhealthy food pattern: too much saturated fats, sugars and insufficient fibres. Of the Dutch children (4-15 y.), 15% is overweight and 3% suffers from obesity. The Netherlands Nutrition Centre's (NNC) aim is to realise healthier school canteen policies for secondary schools in the Netherlands.

The programme is based on several behavioural models indicating personal and environmental determinants of youngsters' eating behaviour.

The programme consists of a three-step road map for school working groups: ensuring support of concerned parties, writing an action plan and implementing/sustaining the programme. This was translated into practical information and concrete (digital) tools for schools, students, parents and regional health services. This programme is also linked with the NNC 'know your food' teaching method and the Dutch 'healthy school method'. A Healthy School Canteen Award (HSCA) was developed consisting of working budgets for schools and a 10.000 Euro reward for the school with the most sustainable healthy school canteen implementation plan.

The programme is currently being evaluated. A pilot in 2001 showed positive results. Students appreciated the healthier canteens and as a result reported healthier canteen eating behaviour. To date 95 schools have participated in the HSCA and reported good results.

This programme supports schools and regional health services in creating a healthy school canteen policy.

It is essential to explore further ways of encouraging more schools to improve their canteens.

**Contact:** Noor Gudden, [gudden@voedingscentrum.nl](mailto:gudden@voedingscentrum.nl)