

School cooking program saluted

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By [Nicholas Donaldson](#)

Mine Centre School will receive the Rainy River District School Board's monthly recognition of excellence tonight for its "You're the Chef" program.

In a report to the board from principal Barbe Dennis, she explains the program aims to boost the fruit and vegetable intake of students while teaching lifelong cooking skills.

"Food literacy skills include food and nutrition knowledge, skills in food preparation, and the confidence to apply the learning to influence dietary behaviour," Dennis wrote.

"Research shows that students who have developed food literacy skills, and cook on a regular basis, have a heightened sense of self-confidence and pride," she noted.

Dennis added they also are exposed to more nutritious foods, and do not rely on fast and processed foods as much.

Each class at Mine Centre School participated in a 90-minute cooking lesson once a week for four weeks led by trained program leader Cecilia Stewart.

During these lessons, students learned kitchen safety, knife safety, handwashing, and sanitizing surfaces, as well as how to avoid cross-contamination and food-borne illnesses.

"Classes prepared a variety of healthy foods, including French toast with fruit salsa, yogurt and fruit parfaits, pizza wraps, pumpkin and apple muffins, and much more," Dennis said.

Items for a classroom cooking kit were purchased to sustain the program, and Dennis noted staff are encouraged to continue providing cooking opportunities for their classes using the kit.

There also are opportunities to support the school's breakfast and snack programs through the "You're the Chef" program.

The recognition of excellence will take place during the board's monthly meeting, which goes tonight at 7 p.m. at the Education Centre here (board office).

Also on tonight's agenda, trustees will:

- hold elections for chair, vice chair, and the Ontario Public School Boards' Association rep;
- receive a presentation on supports and programming for students with special education needs;
- attempt to pass resolutions from the By-law, Finance, Audit, and Policy Committees;
- hear the student trustee report and the chair report; and
- receive the Director's Update from Director of Education Heather Campbell, and the personnel report from Kevin Knutsen, the executive officer of Employee and Labour Relations.