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PRESS RELEASE

MoEST Joins #ActOnFacts: The Food in Our Schools Matters Campaign

Belmopan, May 7, 2025.

The Ministry of Education, Science and Technology (MoEST) joins the **#ActOnFacts: The Food in Our Schools Matters** campaign. This regional initiative, led by the Healthy Caribbean Coalition (HCC), in collaboration with UNICEF, the Pan American Health Organization (PAHO), the Organisation of Eastern Caribbean States (OECS) Commission, the Caribbean Public Health Agency (CARPHA), and the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO), aims to continue building momentum for healthier school food environments across the Caribbean. The four-week digital campaign spotlights the urgent need for healthier food environments in schools by sharing vibrant images and facts promoting school food and nutrition policies.

School surveys show children consume ultra-processed foods and sugary drinks daily in Belize. These unhealthy products are widely available in and around schools, crowding out nutritious options and putting children's health and academic success at risk, since poor nutrition is linked to poor attendance and performance in school. Furthermore, unhealthy eating habits are contributing to high rates of childhood overweight and obesity and raising serious concerns about early-onset non-communicable diseases (NCDs).

The MoEST is actively working to ensure that all schools will be places where healthy habits are supported and healthy choices are easy for students. The Ministry's National Healthy Start Feeding Programme currently provides daily nutritious meals to over 14,000 students in 76 primary and high schools nationwide, reinforcing its commitment to student health and well-being. Additionally, supported by Mesoamerica Hunger Free AMEXCID-FAO, the MoEST is developing a National School Food and Nutrition Policy to ensure schools provide safe, healthy, and supportive food environments. As the Act

on Facts campaign states, “Policy Can Make A Difference.”

Creating healthy school food environments requires strong collaboration. The MoEST is grateful for partnerships with HCC, FAO, PAHO, the Kidney Association of Belize, the Belize Diabetes Association, and the Ministry of Health and Wellness. Working together, Ministries, organisations, and communities can continue to advocate for, develop, and implement policies that protect children’s health.

Belize’s participation in #ActOnFacts reflects a shared national responsibility: ensuring that schools are not only places of learning, but spaces that empower children to be healthy.

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