



Healthy Eating Schools Reclaim the Lunchbox Program



Aim

The aim of the Healthy Eating Schools – Reclaim the Lunchbox Program is to support Victorian primary schools, in particular those from low socio-economic areas and Culturally and Linguistically Diverse (CALD) groups, to promote healthy eating to children and their families. The Program is based on the Health Promoting Schools model where strategies promote healthy eating across the whole school, including the curriculum, community and the school environment.

Objectives

- To provide activities, resources and support to schools to help them support families to provide and promote healthy food choices.
- To provide resources and support to schools to help them promote healthy eating across the whole school environment.

Key Activities

A total of 50 primary schools participated in the Program in 2008 and 2009, reaching 17,500 students and their families.

Curriculum

Resources were provided to support 750 teachers in promoting the healthy eating message to students. Resources included **nutrition curriculum activities** focussing on fruits, vegetables and the Healthy Living Pyramid and regular newsletters and emails. **Healthy eating stickers** featuring cartoon characters promoting the five food groups were also provided to reward students with healthy lunchboxes. Several schools also held a **nutrition curriculum session** for staff.

School Environment

Schools were provided with an action plan manual to develop a nutrition policy, a healthy fundraising manual, case studies and a variety of other posters and nutrition resources. A canteen newsletter was distributed to all schools and of the schools with canteens, 14 opted to have their canteen menu assessed to help add fruits and vegetables to the menu.

Fruit and water breaks were encouraged in the classroom by offering resources and the opportunity to run a kiwifruit session with students.

A "Let's Get Fruity" workshop was held in 21 schools, providing 4,013 children with fresh kiwifruit and spifes whilst discussing the importance of fruit and water in the classroom and lunchboxes. Stickers, posters and classroom activities were provided to teachers to reinforce the messages of this event in the classroom.



Parent lunchbox workshop, Maralinga Primary School

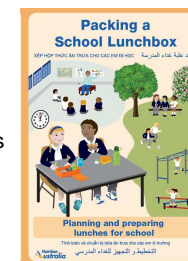


Wallarano Primary School kiwifruit event

Community

Schools were provided with a variety of resources to inspire parents with healthy lunchbox ideas, including nutrition newsletter inserts, healthy lunchbox posters and a pictorial healthy lunchbox/budgeting display. An educational DVD produced by Nutrition Australia, **Packing a School Lunchbox**, was provided to schools to educate parents on how to prepare healthy and inexpensive lunchboxes for their children. The DVD was translated into Vietnamese and Arabic.

Healthy lunchbox workshops for parents were delivered in 45 schools, providing 756 parents with information and skills to prepare healthy lunches for their children. Fussy eating, food safety, food label reading and healthy recipes were also covered, with some schools providing interpreters for parents from CALD backgrounds. Many parents were exposed to new healthy and inexpensive food ideas. Parents were also encouraged to continue including traditional ethnic foods where appropriate.



Evaluation

Parents were surveyed six months post workshops. Evaluation data below summarises the outcomes of the lunchbox workshops at 22 schools during 2008. The remaining 28 schools will be evaluated 2010. Evaluation of 41% of parent workshop attendees revealed a positive impact on making changes to what they are providing their children in lunchboxes.

- 87% of parents reported increased knowledge in providing healthy lunchboxes
- 80% of parents reported making changes to their child's lunchbox
- 87% of parents reported increased ability to choose healthier products at the supermarket as a result of the food label reading activity
- 100% of parents tried some of the workshop ideas
- 74% of parents used the recipes from the recipe book provided

Changes to lunchboxes as a result of the workshop included:

- An increase in fruit and vegetables (36%)
- Increase in high fibre foods, e.g. changing from white to wholemeal bread (46%)
- Replacing unhealthy, nutrient poor packaged snacks with nutritious options (53%)
- Including more dairy (3%) and
- Increasing variety (27%)

Evaluation of teachers indicated an increased capacity, awareness and commitment of schools in providing and promoting healthy food choices.

Conclusion

With an increased capacity of parents to provide healthy lunches, and actual improvements to children's lunchboxes as a result of these workshops, this Program will contribute to the long-term benefits on improving the food intake and nutrition of children. Schools also reported an increased capacity, awareness and commitment of schools to healthy eating and implementing healthy eating activities which will also contribute to increasing children's consumption of more nutritious foods and drinks while they are at school.