



## **The School Food Programme: Background Information**

### **Overview:**

One of the key objectives of The National Heart Foundation of New Zealand is to level off the rising rate of childhood obesity.

The Foundation's *School Food Programme* helps to achieve this objective by encouraging and supporting New Zealand schools to bring about positive changes in their nutrition environment.

Research shows classroom nutrition education can be very effective at changing nutritional knowledge. However, to influence attitudes and behaviours, a comprehensive multi-faceted approach needs to be taken. Schools that provide an environment that promotes and supports healthy choices can have a significant impact on the food choices children and adolescents make.

By providing a clear framework and supporting resources, the *School Food Programme* helps schools play their part in improving the community's health, by assisting them to identify and address a wide range of nutrition issues within the school and promote healthy eating in their community.

Participation in the School Food Programme supports schools to:

- Implement the *Health and Physical Education Curriculum*
- Link classroom teaching and learning with the school and community environment
- Develop consistent messages about food and nutrition
- Focus on the areas of food and nutrition that will make the greatest difference to the health and wellbeing of students and staff
- Facilitate the whole school community's involvement in healthy food and nutrition.

The Heart Foundation has been offering this proven health promotion programme free to all schools since 1989. In 2000, the programme underwent a significant review to ensure schools were supported to address the whole school environment, including: the curriculum, food service, school policies, promotion of healthy foods and family/whanau involvement.

During the programme, schools work towards making long-term sustainable changes that can be maintained by the school with increasing independence. Changes are recognised with a Heartbeat Award.

Programme evaluations have shown a number of positive outcomes, including increased student participation in food and nutrition activities, positive changes in food sales (reduced sales of high fat, high sugar and high salt foods and increased

sales of healthier alternatives), increased healthy options in the food service and perceived positive behavioural changes amongst students.

The School Food Programme is a not-for-profit programme run with the assistance of Ministry of Health funding.

The School Food Programme is one of three education programmes provided by the Heart Foundation. The two other programmes are the Healthy Heart Award, which is a free initiative for early childhood centres that encourages teachers to promote healthy food and active movement to under fives and their families, and the Jump Rope for Heart programme. Jump Rope for Heart develops fundamental movement and motor skills through skipping, places importance on physical activity and heart health, and helps children develop lifelong positive attitudes towards physical activity.

### **The School Food Programme's four key areas:**

The School Food Programme is focused around four key areas:

#### **Food Choice:**

This focuses on the development of a food and nutrition policy and the provision of healthy food via the school food service, if the school has one. It is not necessary for schools to have a food service to participate in the programme. Schools may include strategies into their food and nutrition policy such as 'students will be encouraged to be responsible for their health and make healthy food choices' and 'the tuck-shop will offer a variety of healthy foods that are attractively presented and reasonably priced'.

#### **Nutrition Education:**

This area is directly linked to the implementation of the *Health and Physical Education Curriculum* and cross-curricula learning opportunities. For example, students might learn about how to read nutritional panels in class then identify items in the canteen that are high in salt, fat or sugar and create strategies for replacing these items over a period of time.

#### **Promoting Healthy Foods:**

This area encourages a school to promote healthy food choices to students, staff, family/whanau and caregivers. For example, schools might display posters of healthy foods, display healthy foods at the top of the menu or competitively price healthier options.

#### **Community Health Promotion:**

The involvement of parents, whanau, caregivers and the wider community influences the outcomes of nutrition education. This key area motivates schools to initiate activities that promote nutrition to the wider school community. For instance, schools may hold fundraising galas where the food sold has an international theme as well as being healthy, or include lunchbox tips in the weekly newsletter.

### **Heartbeat Awards:**

Once a school has begun the process of making positive changes in their nutrition environment, they are able to apply for a *School Food Programme* Heartbeat award. The Awards allow schools to gain recognition for their commitment towards fostering a healthy nutrition environment for students, staff and families.

Heartbeat Awards are available at four levels: Heartbeat, Bronze, Silver and Gold. Each level recognises an increasingly comprehensive nutrition environment and a Gold Award demonstrates that a school has achieved extremely high standards in their nutrition environment. Every school is required to achieve a Heartbeat and/or Bronze Heartbeat before progressing to a Silver or Gold Award.

### **For more information about the School Food Programme:**

Visit [www.sfp.org.nz](http://www.sfp.org.nz)

Or contact National Programme Manager, Anna Martin on (09) 526 8569, email [annam@nhf.org.nz](mailto:annam@nhf.org.nz)

The School Food Programme provides your school with resources, guidance and support to develop an environment that encourages healthy eating.

The programme takes a whole-school approach to healthy eating and is offered free to all schools. It can assist your school community to identify and address a wide range of healthy eating issues.

Four levels of Heartbeat Awards will provide recognition of your school's commitment towards fostering an environment that encourages healthy eating.

## The School Food Programme Framework

The four key areas:



## What are the Heartbeat Awards?

Once a school has begun the process of making positive changes towards a healthy eating environment, they are able to apply for a Heartbeat Award. The award recognises a school's commitment to developing a healthier food environment and promotes this commitment to the wider community.

## Awards are available at four levels:

Heartbeat, Bronze, Silver and Gold.

## What are the four key areas?

### Food Choice

- the development and implementation of a food and nutrition policy, which is the first step towards creating an environment that fosters healthy eating
- the provision of healthy food via the school food service (if applicable), which reinforces the food and nutrition education programme.

### Food & Nutrition Education

Supports the implementation of the Health and Physical Education Curriculum (Key Area of Learning: Food and Nutrition). It also supports cross-curricula and integrated learning opportunities.

### Promoting Healthy Foods

This area encourages a school to promote healthy food choices to students, staff, family/whanau and caregivers.

### Community Health Promotion

The involvement of parents, whanau, caregivers and the wider community influences the outcomes of food and nutrition education. This key area motivates schools to promote healthy eating to the wider school community and involve them in healthy eating initiatives.



## What are the Benefits?

### Benefits of being involved

Participation in the School Food Programme supports your school in:

- implementing the Health and Physical Education Curriculum
- linking classroom teaching and learning with the whole school environment and wider community
- developing consistent messages about healthy eating
- focusing on the areas of food and nutrition that will make the greatest difference to the health and wellbeing of the school community
- facilitating the whole school community's involvement in healthy eating initiatives
- NAG 1 (i) (a) and 5 (i).

Classroom food and nutrition education can be very effective at changing a student's nutritional knowledge. However, to have a significant impact on the food choices young people make, it is important to provide an environment that promotes and supports healthy choices.

### School Feedback

#### Learning and Behaviour:

"We've really noticed a difference, more 'on task' behaviour, less hassles in the playground."

#### Intra-School collaboration and involvement:

"The social studies department does a bit on food from other cultures, the science department does a bit on what's in a hamburger, in English they'll ask them to come up with a poem to do with food."

"Health promotion is just so integrated into the school and the emphasis on nutrition is dealt with as different issues arise."

#### Students:

"Everytime a school gets an award, silver then gold, a mention goes into the newsletter...the students are proud of it."

"They [students] survey other children to see what they want, sample food and make decisions, make posters advertising healthy food, talk about new food at assembly."

"[Students say] 'Cool, they've got satay naan today!' Before they wouldn't have even known what a panini was."

#### Supporting the Health and Physical Education Curriculum:

"When the health curriculum committee are planning a unit they look at the School Food Programme to help plan it...a good framework to have goals to go by."

#### Programme flexibility:

"It's able to be adapted to meet the needs of children from diverse groups."

"We plan according to the needs of our children with the [School Food Programme] framework - [it's] very diverse."



# SFP EXAMPLE CONTENT

Every School that's registered for the School Food Programme can access all the online resources for the programme including a range of programme material, case studies from other schools of the School Food Programme in action plus they can share and learn with other Teachers around the country. Here's a sample of what's inside for registered schools...

## SFP PDFs



## Healthy Food Making a Profit; Silver Heartbeat Award

# Fairburn School Lunch Scheme, Auckland

### School Profile

Fairburn School is a multicultural, decile 1 school which has an average roll of 740 pupils up to Year 6. Fairburn has a commitment to improving health and has adopted the Health Promoting Schools framework in order to achieve this. Under this framework, Fairburn have used the School Food Programme to assist in addressing nutrition issues in their school. As a result, Fairburn has achieved both Bronze and Silver Heartbeat Awards.

### What Happened?

For some time there had been growing concern at Fairburn over the existing lunch scheme, which did not offer many healthy food choices. The amount of junk food and fizzy drinks children were consuming at school was on the rise. With the support of Health Promoting Schools, Fairburn decided to prioritise nutrition in their commitment to creating a healthy school environment. Community consultation was used to raise awareness about the present unhealthy situation and collect feedback and recommendations for improvements. Community consultation was also central to the development of a food and nutrition policy and the setting up of a new lunch scheme. The support gained through this consultation process was overwhelmingly positive.

### The Power of Policy

The key to the success of Fairburn's Healthy Lunch Scheme has been consultation and policy development. These two processes continue to be on going. Each time the menu changes or issues arise that relate to the policy objectives, it is open to discussion. The policy has also proven to be a useful tool when negotiating with food suppliers and distributors.

### Profiting from Student and Parent Involvement

Fairburn is a Health Promoting School and as such, carried out an extensive consultation process with students, staff and parents to identify the needs of the community. This has ensured good communication with parents and caregivers, which has made raising awareness about the importance of good nutrition a lot easier. This link with community also created a sense of ownership, which has further strengthened the community's support for the lunch scheme. Parents actively encourage their children to purchase healthy lunches from school.

### Lunch Scheme Set Up

The set up of Fairburn's lunch scheme is relatively simple. The menu is made up of a selection of healthy snacks available at morning break, 7 different combo meal deals and a limited amount of additional products that can also be ordered for lunch (e.g. milk, muffins, yoghurt, cheese slices). The combo meals include 3 or 4 items such as a filled roll, a piece of fruit and one other snack item. Two staff work in the lunchroom - one full time and one part time. Negotiation was undertaken with food suppliers and distributors so that the lunches were affordable. Each morning orders are made through classroom teachers and sent on to the lunchroom before 9.30am. Two students from each class pick these up 5 minutes before lunch and take the lunch orders back to their class for distribution.

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## The Healthy Profit

In the years before the new healthy lunch scheme was implemented, the income generated through the unhealthy lunch order system averaged around \$6,000 + GST per year. The turn around has been staggering. In the first year of the new lunch scheme, profits hit a whopping \$25,000 + GST! That's 416% growth in 12 months. In the 5 years since Fairburn first made a commitment to better nutrition, the lunch scheme has continued generating a healthy profit from healthy food.

## What Does This Prove?

- Healthy food is very profitable
- Children will eat lots of healthy food at school especially when the school environment promotes healthy food as important, 'cool', interesting and fun
- A school food and nutrition policy is a valuable tool to support and sustain positive changes
- Parents will support the healthy changes if/when they have been consulted with and because they feel less pressure from their children to purchase fad, pre-packaged foods.

## Fairburn's Hot Tips for Success

- Involve students through classroom nutrition education. Kids love to create combo ideas - this gets them really involved and at the same time they are learning the essentials of good nutrition (secondary students could get involved in menu planning too).
- Teachers are extremely powerful role models. Ensure all staff are aware of their responsibility to be a healthy eating role model.
- Other schools in the area may be interested in making some healthy changes. Get together and discuss products that could improve your menu. It is important to keep the price of healthy food competitive. As a group, you will have much greater bargaining power with food suppliers and distributors.

**If you require more information, please contact either the Principal or the Executive Officer.**

Email: [admin@fairburn.school.nz](mailto:admin@fairburn.school.nz)

## Heartbeat Awards

# Rowley School, Christchurch

## School Profile

Rowley School is a decile one school with a population mix of 48 per cent Maori, 35 per cent Samoan, 6 per cent Tongan and 11 per cent from other ethnic groups. Students often arrive at school having had no breakfast and with no lunch, or a poor quality lunch e.g. a packet of chocolate biscuits or chippies.

## Who initiated the changes and why?

The staff decided to look at ways to address student diets as a result of poor student behaviour. They felt that by ensuring the children had a sound nutrition base, their behaviour would improve inside the classroom. The school approached various companies for sponsorship for a school breakfast programme, and is now providing cereal, fruit, milk and toast to students free of charge. The school also decided to change the menu for the Lunch Cottage (canteen) so that students had access to affordable, healthy lunches.

## How was the criteria met?

### Food Choice Criteria

- Developed and implemented a Food and Nutrition Policy
- The previous menu consisted of pies, cookies, chippies and caramel popcorn. Lollies were also sold, and fish and chips were available once a week
- The price for pies, which were the main savoury item sold, was increased and other lower fat items were introduced including toasties, American hotdogs and pizza. Pies sales have decreased from 22 to 5 on average a week
- The range of lollies available has decreased and liquorice is the only option now sold. The sweetened popcorn was replaced with a plain flavour. The large cookies were removed and replaced with homemade muffins. All types of chippies, except for one, were removed from the menu. Potato sticks (98 per cent fat free) have become a new favourite
- To reduce the frequency of fish and chips, the school introduced chop suey. This is prepared with the assistance of the parents and sold as a fundraiser. The chop suey is proving popular and has encouraged the school to look at further ways of reducing the frequency of fish and chips

### Nutrition Education Criteria

- Students receive annual education as part of their health curriculum, however senior students also had active involvement in the parent evening as they constructed examples of healthy lunch meals to present and compared the cost of less healthy options.

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## Promoting Healthy Food Choices

- Not required at this level, however RowleySchool initiated the following
- Parents were invited to contribute to the construction of the new menu plan. A draft was sent home in the school newsletter
- Parents were also invited to a nutrition-focused evening with health professionals presenting information on nutrition, displays of the sugar and fat content of items were set up, and students presented healthy lunches and provided cost comparisons with less healthy options
- Information is frequently sent home in newsletters regarding new food items. A summer and winter menu were constructed to maintain interest in the items sold
- Prices have been set to encourage consumption of healthier food items. There is no expectation that the Lunch Cottage makes a profit, it just has to be able to meet costs.

## Community Health Promotion Criteria

- Not required at this level.

## This award's best feature

Parental involvement was sort when constructing the menu. Students were also aware of the changes planned due to their involvement in the parent education evening. RowleySchool has a strong commitment to health and good nutrition. They have Jump Jam every morning and established systems to provide healthy breakfasts and lunch foods. They continually try to engage the parents in the provision of healthy foods such as the preparation of chop suey.