



Successful Healthway Projects

Fruit and Water Policy in School Pilot Project

The Fruit and Water Policy in School Pilot Project aimed to increase fruit and water consumption among primary school children.

Case Study
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Fruit and Water Policy in School Pilot Project

Organisation:	Great Southern Public Health Service
Healthway funding:	\$17,370 (Funded: partial project coordination, operational and research and evaluation costs, teachers' kits, advertising, drink bottles and promotions)
Program Period:	15 months
Target Group:	Primary school students in the Great Southern region, parents, teachers and school nurses
Year:	2000 - 2001
Number of Participants:	300 students plus parents and teachers

What was the project about?

Earlier surveys found that fruit and vegetable consumption was particularly poor in the Great Southern region and community consultation supported the need to encourage good childhood eating habits, particularly in the Aboriginal community. Dehydration was also identified as an issue among school children, affecting concentration in the classroom.

This pilot project was run over two school terms and aimed to encourage teachers to implement classroom policies to increase the consumption of fruit and water among primary school children from six selected schools in the Great Southern region. Students were encouraged to consume a small bottle of water in the classroom throughout the day and a small piece of fruit (or vegetable) during the afternoon. The program included classroom lessons and complemented the Great Southern region's "Fruit 'n' Veg" campaign.

What strategies were used?

Schools were consulted to register an interest in the project, identify possible barriers to participation and incorporate teachers' ideas into the development of the project. A resource kit aligned with the curriculum framework was provided to teachers and this included background information, student resources, certificates and fruit and water sticker charts. Teachers were also offered professional development and support in implementing the project.

Project activities included:

- Developing and distributing sample fruit and water policies, and providing schools with assistance in policy implementation.
- Encouraging structured 5 minute sessions within lessons to allow students to consume their fruit.
- Encouraging students to drink a 500ml bottle of water each day.
- Encouraging classes to record their consumption on a sticker chart and rewarding students with participation certificates.

- Reminding students daily to either purchase or bring fruit from home.

Additional strategies were implemented where needed, including securing fruit through community organisations, contacting parents if children frequently forgot their water and liaising with District Aboriginal Education Councils to support children to access fruit.

The project encouraged parental involvement through regular communication including letters and school newsletter articles. Parents and school nurses were offered training in conducting Supercent\$ supermarket tours.

All teachers in the region were invited to the project launch, including sample policy kits and a free breakfast. The launch attracted good media interest, and the project was promoted to the community through newspaper and newsletter articles. All schools in the Great Southern region received a copy of the final report.

What did the project achieve?

- Eleven classes from 6 schools participated in the activities during the first term, and 9 classes from 5 schools participated in the second term.
- The majority of students consumed fruit on most afternoons and drank a bottle of water on most days.
- All the teachers who answered the survey said they planned to continue the water policy, and 82% planned to continue the fruit policy.
- Feedback from teachers suggested that the project had improved students' concentration levels.
- The media publicity resulted in requests for the policy booklet throughout WA.

What Healthway had to say about the "Food and Water Policy in School" project:

This project is an excellent example of an initiative which has continued beyond the end of Healthway funding. It has since been adapted to form the "Crunch & Sip" project in WA schools.

What Were the Effective Health Promotion Elements?

1

PLANNING

The project was developed through a strong partnership between the Great Southern Public Health nutrition team and Education Department of WA.

The application was well researched with relevant local data, included measurable objectives and was based on consultations with schools, primary health services and the Education Department.

Potential barriers to program implementation in Noongar schools were identified via consultations with the District Aboriginal Education Councils, Aboriginal Health Workers, school health nurses and members of the Aboriginal community.

The project strategies were adapted from resources produced through health promotion campaigns including "Fruit 'n' Veg", "Kids in the Kitchen" "Supercent\$" and "Foodcent\$". Teachers helped to develop the teachers' kit.

2

IMPLEMENTATION

The project strategies were aligned to the Ottawa Charter for health promotion.

The Fruit and Water Policy was implemented through structured classroom activities to educate children about the importance of fruit, vegetables and water consumption.

Involving parents in the project ensured support for the program in the home environment and children were more likely to take their fruit and water to school.

In some cases school canteens provided fruit for those children who were unable to bring their own.

The project was promoted through school newsletters and articles in local and state newspapers. A short video about the project was made available on loan to schools.

3

EVALUATION

The process evaluation included:

- A student sticker chart to record daily consumption, and teachers' record sheets.
- Collecting information on teachers' intentions to implement the policy and perceived usefulness of the policy.
- A telephone survey of principals' awareness of the implementation of the project and policies.

Pre and post-project surveys of parents assessed changes in food and drinks taken to school, as well as children's fruit and vegetable consumption at home.

Telephone surveys of teachers assessed the use and suitability of the resources and their commitment to continuing the classroom fruit and water activities.

The project results were disseminated through reports, statewide meetings and media coverage.

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SUSTAINABILITY

The project continued beyond the end of the Healthway funding by incorporating it into the work of the Great Southern Public Health Unit Nutrition Plan.

The nutrition coordinator continued to promote, monitor and review the project statewide, and schools continued to implement fruit and water policies.

The project was adapted by the Department of Health to form the statewide "Crunch and Sip" campaign in WA schools.

The project was well documented, increasing its transferability.

What lessons were learned?

- Some of the strategies targeting school nurses, such as supermarket tours, were ineffective. Feedback from nurses indicated that these strategies would have been better directed at teachers.
- Feedback from teachers identified other potential policy activities, such as coinciding the fruit break with silent reading time and using a small annual parent levy to purchase fruit for students.

- Gaining teacher support was essential for the effective implementation of strategies.
- Some teachers implemented their own classroom rules for the Fruit and Water Policy, such as providing guidance on the size of water bottles and requesting that children bring chopped rather than whole fruit from home.



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