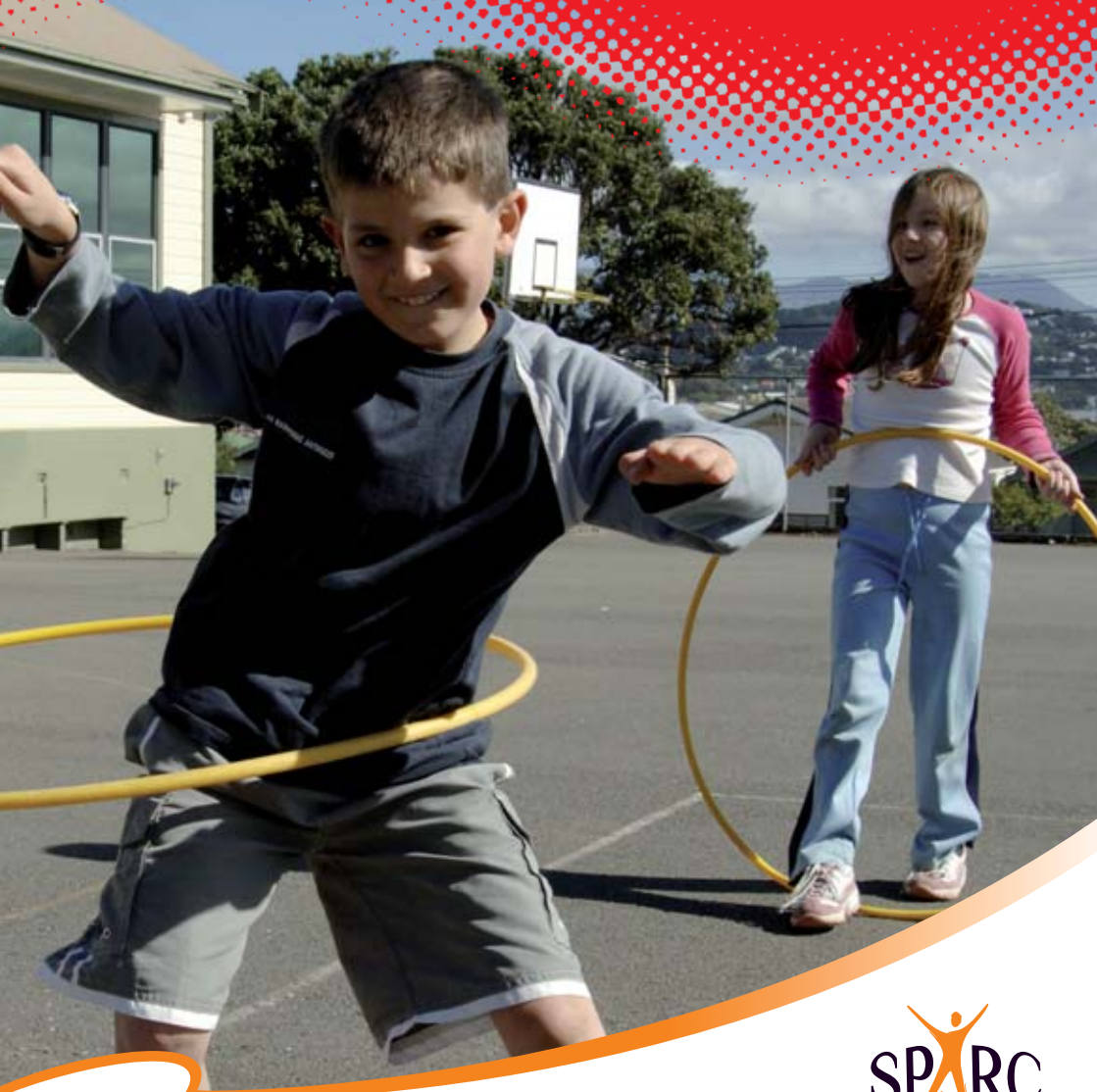


Healthy Eating in Active Schools:

Taking a School
Community Approach



Acknowledgement

SPARC wishes to thank the National Heart Foundation of New Zealand, the Ministry of Education and the Ministry of Health for their contribution to this booklet.



Contents

Welcome to <i>Healthy Eating in Active Schools</i>	2
Healthy eating has benefits for everyone	3
Healthy eating for children	4
The school community approach	4
Establishing and sustaining a school community approach to healthy eating.....	5
Implementing a school community approach to healthy eating.....	7
Identifying needs and planning for change	8
Food and nutrition in the curriculum	9
The school community environment	10
School community engagement	12
Where to go for support and guidance.....	13
Case studies: Healthy eating environments in action	15
Getting started (flow diagram)	18
Action plan template	19
References	20

Welcome to *Healthy Eating in Active Schools*

The Active Schools initiative encourages schools to adopt a school community approach so that students choose and enjoy physical activities. This approach can be effectively applied to other lifestyle behaviours that contribute to well-being, such as healthy eating.

The *Healthy Eating in Active Schools* booklet is an introduction to a school community approach to healthy eating. It links with the *Active Schools* initiative by illustrating the elements of a school community that encourage and support healthy eating.

Healthy Eating in Active Schools is for principals, management teams and Boards of Trustees. It helps schools to identify the benefits of healthy eating and discusses factors to consider when establishing a school community that promotes healthy eating.

Healthy Eating in Active Schools includes templates and case studies to support your school in initiating a school community approach to healthy eating.

Healthy Eating in Active Schools provides suggestions of agencies to contact for further support.

Healthy eating has benefits for everyone

The Ministry of Education's *National Administration Guidelines* require schools to provide a safe physical and emotional environment. A school community approach that supports and promotes healthy eating can help to support this requirement.

Research indicates that nutrition can affect learning and student achievement. Many studies report that better nutrition is associated with enhanced brain development, cognitive processes and behaviour conducive to learning.¹

Other benefits for people in school communities include:

- > higher student and staff concentration levels
- > improved attendance
- > improved health outcomes for students, staff and families/whānau
- > healthy eating initiatives can be used to create stronger links between the school, home and community.



1. Powney, J., Malcolm, H., Lowden, K. 2000.

Healthy eating for children

Children aged 2 to 12 should eat many different foods including:¹

- > vegetables and fruit
- > breads and cereals
- > lean meats, chicken, seafood, eggs and dried beans, peas and lentils
- > milk and milk products.

Children should drink plenty of fluids each day, and water is best.

Foods that are high in fat, salt and sugar are best left to occasional treats.

The school community approach

In a school implementing a school community approach “all members of the school community (students, staff and families/whānau) work together to provide integrated and positive experiences and structures, which promote and protect their health”.²

A school community approach to healthy eating involves every related aspect of school life.

What is a school community?

In the context of *Active Schools*, the term ‘school community’ includes students, teaching staff, support staff, management teams, Board of Trustees, volunteers, families/whānau and support agencies.

1. Ministry of Health 1997 and Ministry of Health 2005.

2. Scottish Health Promoting Schools Unit 2004.

Establishing and sustaining a school community approach to healthy eating

Creating an environment that fosters healthy eating is an ongoing process that becomes part of the school community's everyday business rather than a focus or initiative that ends after a period of time. Moving through this process involves identifying needs, planning for change, taking action and reviewing changes.

Schools that have moved through this process talk about providing a healthy eating environment as being "so easy, it's just what we do. It's just what we believe in." (deputy principal)

To establish and sustain a healthy eating environment the school community should focus on changes in a number of areas. This booklet provides suggestions in the following areas:

- > identifying needs and planning for change
- > food and nutrition in the curriculum
- > the school community environment
- > school community engagement.

Creating sustainable change involves buy-in from the school community. Systems and structures should encourage family/whānau involvement, support collaboration across the school community and lead to school community ownership of the changes that are made. School community commitment needs to be fostered from the start.

Factors to consider when establishing and sustaining a healthy eating environment include:

- > consultation, collaboration and engagement across the school community
- > identifying needs or concerns related to healthy eating that are appropriate for the school community and actions that are sustainable
- > endorsement and/or active involvement of those with leadership capacity
- > encouraging family/whānau involvement
- > establishing or reorienting a group or team, which is representative of the school community, to implement and lead agreed actions
- > linking the needs of the school community with external support agencies (page 13).



Implementing a school community approach to healthy eating

Implementing a school community approach to healthy eating involves a range of strategies that can be implemented over time to meet identified needs.

Consultation

Consultation can enhance intra-school collaboration and school community engagement and ownership.

“Consultation and discussion can be an exciting and important way to forge links between the school and its communities. It can ensure that programmes are well planned, enhance student learning and meet the communities’ needs.”¹

Examples of consultation include:

- > student peer survey
- > students interview their family/whānau about the school’s healthy eating environment for homework
- > a parent meeting focused on healthy eating facilitated by an informed provider
- > suggestion/feedback box placed where family/whānau wait for parent-teacher interviews
- > a draft policy/procedure at the school entrance or on classroom doors.

1. Ministry of Education 2002.

Identifying needs and planning for change

Process for identifying needs

One of the first steps in establishing an environment that supports healthy eating is the identification of the needs of the school community. This process is best undertaken by a group of people who are representative of the school community. Questions that may be asked include 'What do people see as the main needs?' and 'What evidence is there to suggest the need exists?'. The process of addressing the identified needs will vary from school to school, as will the pace of change.

Planning for change

Once a range of needs have been identified, a school community will prioritise the areas of need, identify changes in the school community to address these needs, develop possible actions for achieving change and review the effect of these actions.

Two resources have been included to support school communities in these processes: 'Getting started (flow diagram) on page 18 and 'Action plan template' on page 19.

Healthy eating policy or procedure

One of the agreed actions may be the development of a policy or procedure.

A school healthy eating policy or procedure is a statement outlining the school's position concerning healthy eating. It provides guidance for making decisions in relation to these issues, provides a focus for the identification of areas of need and strength, provides the basis for an action plan appropriate for each school community, and is a reference point for measuring each year's progress.

The policy or procedure establishes goals, actions and outcomes that can help support a school in developing a sustainable healthy eating environment.

For example:

Goal

Teaching and learning about food and nutrition are supported by the school environment.

Action

- > The lunch menu will be planned with input from students, family/whānau and school staff.
- > Food used as rewards will support the healthy eating environment.

Outcome

More students will select lunch menu foods in line with *Eating for Healthy Children Aged 2 – 12*.¹

The policy or procedure should be reviewed regularly to meet changing needs.

Food and nutrition in the curriculum

*“Food and nutrition education enables students to make informed decisions about food and the choices that will contribute to their own well-being and other people’s.”*²

Health promotion approaches are supported and encouraged in *Health and Physical Education in the New Zealand Curriculum*. These can involve students taking action to identify and address needs. Opportunities for teaching and learning are enhanced when the school community works together to promote and protect health.

1. www.healthed.govt.nz/details/content.cfm?id=437.

2. Ministry of Education 1999.

The *Curriculum in Action*¹ resources produced by the Ministry of Education such as *Healthy People Eat Healthy Food*, *In the Outdoors* and *Choice Food!* include a range of ideas for teaching and learning about food and nutrition. These ideas are clearly linked to *Health and Physical Education in the New Zealand Curriculum* and provide a range of learning experiences and ideas for assessment that are action-oriented and designed to engage and support children in making health-promoting food choices in their everyday lives.

Examples of teaching and learning about food and nutrition can also be found on the Ministry of Education's resources website www.tki.org.nz.



The school community environment

“Effective food and nutrition education is reinforced by a school environment that encourages healthy eating, promotes safe food-handling practices, and makes use of community support.”²

The school environment plays an important role in communicating to students, staff and the wider community about healthy eating. There are many situations in which the school environment can provide food choices and healthy eating messages that are consistent with *Eating for Healthy Children Aged 2 to 12* and reinforce learning from the school's food and nutrition education programme.

-
1. Copies distributed to all schools. Further copies can be obtained from www.learningmedia.co.nz/nz/products/moecatalogue/.
 2. Ministry of Education 1999.

Examples include:

- > lunch-order service, tuck shop or canteen
- > advertisements for food
- > fundraising with food
- > snacks and drinks at sports events, festivals, class parties and staff functions
- > school camps
- > food used as rewards
- > the food consumed by staff in the school grounds.

The following signposts¹ illustrate the importance of giving consistent messages about healthy food. Through changes a school makes, the ‘signposts’ can gradually be turned so they are all pointing in the same direction.



A school ‘Nutrition Signpost’ that provides students with **confusing, negative** messages about healthy eating.



A school ‘Nutrition Signpost’ that provides students with **consistent, positive** messages about healthy eating.

1. National Heart Foundation of New Zealand 2000.

School community engagement

A strong link between the school and family/whānau has shown a number of positive effects including student behavioural and attitudinal gains, provision of learning opportunities, relationship building and parent empowerment.¹ Research shows that almost all parents want to support their children in their learning as much as they can.² Current literature highlights the importance of food availability in the home, parental modelling, media exposure and interactions with children in the eating context.³ Engaging the school community is therefore important in developing and sustaining healthy eating behaviours in children.

Opportunities to strengthen community engagement include:

- > consulting with families/whānau on the school's healthy eating policy or procedure
- > facilitating the provision of healthy eating information to parents in a number of forms
- > school events and festivals
- > food and nutrition education activities that involve students being active in, and sharing their learning with, the school community.



1. Ministry of Education 2005b.
2. Ministry of Education 2005a.
3. Crawford D., et al 2002.

Where to go for support and guidance

This booklet is an introduction to the school community approach as applied to healthy eating. If your school wishes to work in this way you are likely to need to access support. These support agencies include the National Heart Foundation, School Support Services, Health Promoting Schools and public Health Units.



The Heart Foundation of New Zealand: School Food Programme

The School Food Programme provides schools 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 assists a school community to identify and address a range of food- and nutrition-related issues. The School Food Programme provides schools with a framework to guide this process of change.

The School Food Programme information brochure is included with this resource. To contact the School Food Programme, visit **www.sfp.org.nz** or **www.heartfoundation.org.nz**, email **sfp@nhf.org.nz** or phone 0800 SFP 001 (0800 737 001).

School Support Services

Curriculum advisers may be able to provide support and advice on food and nutrition education. Please contact your regional school support services for details.

Health Promoting Schools

Health Promoting Schools (HPS) is a worldwide movement to promote and support the health and well-being of all members of the school community through a whole-school approach.¹

HPS aims to:

- > support the development of young people
- > offer a supportive framework for planning, action and evaluation
- > enhance links between schools and their communities
- > engage school communities in relation to health and well-being.

For information about HPS visit www.hps.org.nz.

Public Health Units

The public health unit in your region may be able to provide support and advice related to healthy eating. For contact details of your local public health unit visit www.healthed.govt.nz/contacts/.

1. Ministry of Health 2003.

CASE STUDIES

Healthy eating environments in action

Onerahi School, Whangarei

How did Onerahi School start the process of change?

Onerahi School's first step was the development of a healthy eating policy to provide guidance in creating an environment that values the health of its students, staff and families/whānau. This policy is regularly reviewed by the staff, students and families/whānau.

What are some of the changes that have been made to the school environment?

- > An edible garden has been established and is managed by a student garden group. The produce from this garden is made into nutritious meals (e.g. soups, salads and stir-fries). An orchard has been started and an olive grove planted with a view to pressing oil in the future.
- > Staff members are role models of healthy eating behaviours.
- > Classes were taught how to identify 'healthy' foods by putting stickers on various items in their lunch boxes – 'green' for eat often, 'orange' for eat in moderation, 'red' for eat last and only if still hungry. This is continually reinforced during lunch eating time.



Have any activities been established that link with and involve family/whānau?

Onerahi instigates many one-off and ongoing activities to link with the community. Some of these have included:

- > All shared lunches and morning teas for the school community are encouraged to be healthy and guidelines for this are sent home in notices and newsletters.
- > Health tips and recipes are regularly included in school newsletters.
- > The school gala included a cultural festival featuring healthy food from the various cultures in the school community.
- > At a hui to celebrate the children's successes, a dietitian spoke to the children and parents about healthy eating.

How does the food service reflect the healthy eating policy and the classroom food and nutrition programme?

- > Combos were introduced in the school food service to provide a balanced meal that was value for money.
- > As part of the food technology programme, students make healthy toasted sandwiches and sell them to other students and staff.

Mangere Central School, Auckland

What started the school thinking about making some changes?

When the principal arrived at Mangere Central School in 2002, the lunch service consisted of a van delivering fish and chips. With the support of the staff, this service was replaced with a school-run lunch-order system.

What strategies were put in place to ensure success and sustainability?

A health committee was formed to drive this process. The committee, which included the principal, the associate principal and the majority of the staff, drafted a healthy eating policy that provided guidelines for shaping a positive healthy eating environment. A simplified version of this policy, called 'Food for Learning', was presented to the students and sent home to parents and caregivers for comment. A student health team has also been established to initiate and support healthy eating activities in the school.

How does the school link with and include family/whānau?

- > Information on healthy food is given to parents on enrolment and during parent-teacher evenings.
- > Parents and students are actively discouraged from bringing fizzy drinks, pies, takeaway foods and large cookies to school.

How is the classroom food and nutrition programme linked with the needs of the school community?

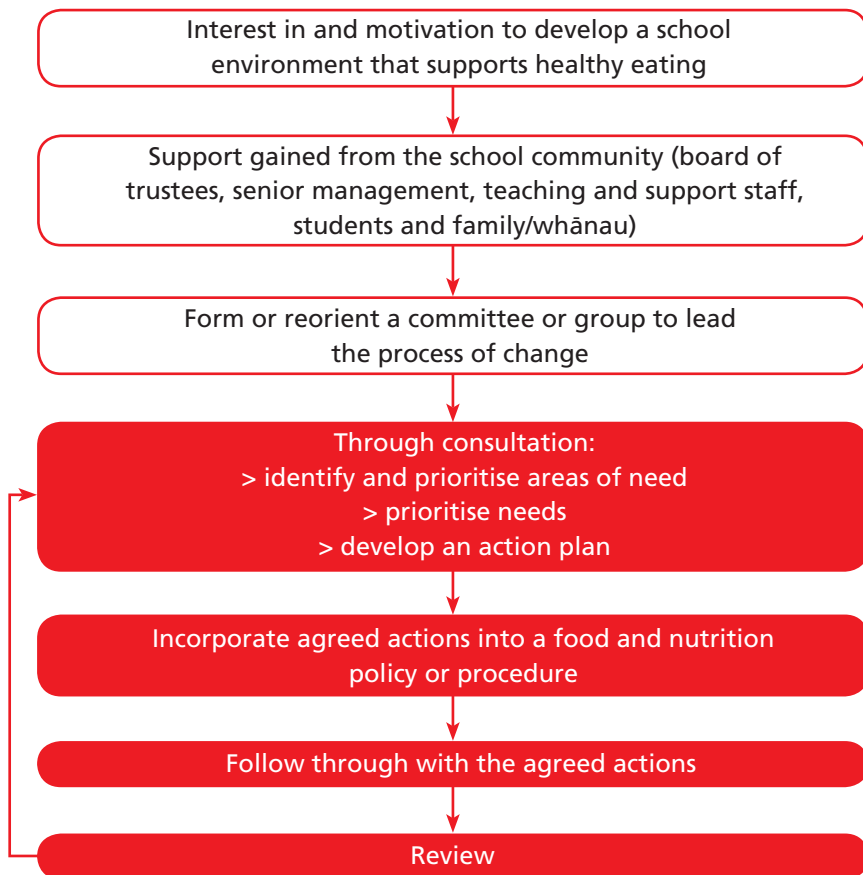
- > Students are involved with planning healthy meals for the school camp, in line with the school's healthy eating policy.
- > Students help prepare healthy snacks for the after-school homework club.
- > Junior students have regular language experience lessons involving preparation of nutritious foods such as fruit smoothies, sandwiches and fruit kebabs.

How does the school promote the consumption of healthy food?

- > Staff members eat healthy food at school and student teachers are informed that they are expected to model healthy eating behaviours.
- > Students plant and care for an edible garden.
- > Healthy food posters are displayed on noticeboards.
- > Healthy food is competitively priced.

Getting started

This flow diagram describes a process for carrying out the school community approach:¹



1. Adapted from: National Heart Foundation of New Zealand 2000.

Action plan template¹

	Assessment	Objectives	How to improve	Strategy	Resources	Monitoring
	What is currently happening?	What do we want to achieve?	What could be done to achieve our objectives?	What are we going to focus on? What are we going to do?	What do we need to support and achieve our objectives?	How will we know we've achieved our goals?
Curriculum, teaching, learning and assessment						
Community participation						
Wider school environment						
Food and nutrition policy or procedure						
School food service						

1. Adapted from: National Heart Foundation of New Zealand 2000.

References

Crawford, D., Salmon, J., & Worsley, A. 2002, *Children's Eating, Physical Activity and the Influence of Their Family Environment*, School of Health Sciences, Deakin University.

Ministry of Education 1999, *Health and Physical Education in the New Zealand Curriculum*, Learning Media, Wellington.

Ministry of Education 2002, *Sexuality Education: Revised Guide for Principals, Boards of Trustees, and Parents*, Learning Media, Wellington.

Ministry of Education 2005a, *Making a bigger difference for all students: Schooling strategy 2005–2010*, Ministry of Education, Wellington.

Ministry of Education 2005b, *Parent Mentoring Initiative Evaluation*, Ministry of Education, Wellington.

Ministry of Health 1997, *Eating for Healthy Children 2 – 12: A Background Paper*, Ministry of Health, Wellington.

Ministry of Health 2003, *About Health Promoting Schools*, Ministry of Health, Wellington.

Ministry of Health 2005, *Eating for Healthy Children Aged 2 – 12*, Ministry of Health, Wellington.

National Heart Foundation of New Zealand 2000, *The School Food Programme*, National Heart Foundation of New Zealand, Auckland.

Powney, J., Malcolm, H., Lowden, K. 2000, 'Health and Attainment: A Brief Review of Recent Literature', *SCRE Research Report No 101*, Scottish Council for Research in Education, Glasgow.

Scottish Health Promoting Schools Unit 2004, *Being Well – Doing Well: a framework for health promoting schools in Scotland*, Scottish Health Promoting Schools Unit, Dundee.

Level 4, Dominion Building, 78 Victoria Street,
PO Box 2251, Wellington, New Zealand
Phone: +64 4 472 8058 Fax: +64 4 471 0813