

Guidelines for School Food Programmes

BEST PRACTICE GUIDANCE FOR YOUR SCHOOL



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Cover photo: Titahi Bay School Health Expo Day. Used with permission

The working group

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- Catherine de Groot – Businesswoman and journalist
- Claire Cohen – Ministry of Pacific Island Affairs
- Dave Appleyard – Rata Street School Principal, Naenae
- Julia Lyon – Agencies for Nutrition
- Lauren Ensor – Regional Public Health
- Mary Hall – New Zealand School Trustees Association
- Michael Ellender – Young People's Advisory Group (OCC)
- Natalie Vincent – KidsCan
- Rachel Currie – Ministry of Education
- Shane Ngatai – Rhode Street School Principal, Hamilton
- Sian Bolton – The Heart Foundation

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The purpose of these guidelines

These guidelines are for schools that want to have a successful food programme – whether they are just thinking about where to start, or wanting to improve an existing one.

The guidelines aim to ensure any programme achieves the maximum possible health and educational benefits for all children. They share information and advice on key aspects of food programmes, and provide schools with the opportunity to learn from the experiences of others.

Food programmes are for all schools regardless of decile. While a fundamental priority is to ensure that no child goes hungry at school, a school food programme can equally be used to promote good nutrition in a tangible way for students. It benefits the wider school community by building and strengthening relationships between students, parents and whānau, volunteers and the organisations that support the school.

A food programme can be more than just filling tummies – it can lay the foundations for a lifelong knowledge of, and respect for, nutritious food and healthy lifestyles. If students can learn how to make healthy food choices, and even how to grow their own vegetables, they will be equipped with an important life skill and encouraged to be self-reliant. Ensuring children are fed and ready to learn is one of the key ways of realising our investment in education and creating a healthier society.

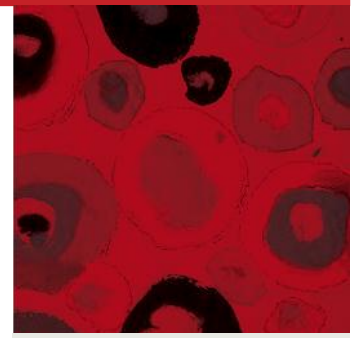
BENEFITS OF SCHOOL FOOD PROGRAMMES

Teachers know that hungry children will struggle to learn. They may also be disruptive in the classroom making learning more difficult for their peers. Poor nutrition, including skipping meals, has negative effects on cognition, behaviour and overall health in children.¹ It means children don't do as well as they can at school and have more time off sick. It puts undue pressure on families and schools.

Not eating breakfast or lunch can be related to poverty, but children and young people from all backgrounds sometimes forget their lunch, sleep in, make ill-informed food choices, or prioritise socialising before eating. A well-designed food programme can be used address all these issues, and can play an active role in enabling children to reach their full educational potential by:

- being healthier, more focused, and better able to learn
- growing partnerships with children, young people, parents, whānau, and the community
- making learning about nutrition more relevant and real.

There is a risk that if school food programmes are not set up effectively or sustainably they may



A food programme can be so much more than filling tummies.

¹ See <http://pediatrics.aappublications.org/content/108/1/44.short> and [http://www.occ.org.nz/assets/Uploads/ Reports/Poverty/A-framework-for-food-in-schools.pdf](http://www.occ.org.nz/assets/Uploads/Reports/Poverty/A-framework-for-food-in-schools.pdf)

stigmatise students or create a level of dependence. These guidelines show how other schools have designed and delivered their programmes to overcome these problems.

A WHOLE OF SCHOOL APPROACH

These guidelines cover a range of options for schools who want to address food related issues – from a simple change in nutritional policy to more substantial food programmes. If you are implementing a programme with the intention of feeding children, best practice shows it is more likely to be successful if it is operated as part of a whole-school approach rather than being seen as an ‘add-on’.

Integrating a food programme into the wider life and culture of your school can bring about many benefits. It becomes more than a one-way transaction of feeding children – it provides them with knowledge of healthy food and important life skills through practical learning and engagement, and fosters a stronger sense of school community. It also normalises the concept of having a food programme in a school, and therefore reduces the stigma that children can encounter for receiving a free breakfast or lunch. As part of a whole-school approach, a food programme will:

- meet the needs of the children and the community
- be integrated into the school curriculum
- value student wellbeing and their aspirations
- align with the school’s strategic direction
- be consistent with legal and ethical obligations under the Education Act
- be clearly identified within the framework of your school’s overall priorities for student safety, wellbeing and education
- be explained to other stakeholders (e.g. new parents, ERO, auditors) in terms of your school’s commitment to improving student outcomes
- be sustainable (e.g. when key individuals leave the school or are assigned to other work)

THE IMPORTANCE OF LEADERSHIP

Strong leadership underpins all of the guidelines. It is critical to the success of any school food programme, and goes across all aspects of planning, implementation and management.

Leaders ‘walking the talk’ will model good practice for the whole school community, and embed a culture that celebrates nutritional food and healthy living.

Self-review may highlight entrenched habits in your school that could act as a barrier to a programme being a success (such as inconsistent messages around healthy eating, or students making poor food and drink choices). If so, it may be necessary to initiate an internal culture change. This will be up to the leadership of the school to take the lead.

Case study

See the exemplar in appendix 1 for how the Principal at Yendarra School used her leadership position to transform the school culture.

The guideline principles

The following principles were developed by the Working Group to encompass the elements of best-practice, and should be at the heart of all school food programmes. School leaders can play an integral role by promoting these principles in the design and delivery of a food programme:

- 1) **Child-centred** – all decisions are made in the best interest of the children and young people and their needs are prioritised over other interests, such as business.
- 2) **Inclusive** – programmes should be accessible to those who need them. Include children, young people, families, whānau and the community, and ensure that a culture of collaboration exists in the design and delivery of the programme. It is important that programmes do not create stigma or dependence.
- 3) **Nutritionally sound** – programmes should provide and promote food of good nutritional quality. An essential part of the programme should be to equip students with an understanding of how to maintain their own and collective wellbeing through good nutrition.
- 4) **Take a whole-school approach** – programmes that are primarily targeted to feed children should be integrated into the wider life of the school, working seamlessly alongside a school's charter and policies, planning and reporting processes, and curriculum. Celebrate food and make it an integral part of school life.
- 5) **Sustainable and evidence-based** – programmes should be based on an understanding of the needs of the children and the school, and its ability to deliver on the goals of the programme. They should be subject to review and reflective practice.

Guideline 1: Assessing your need and deciding the best response

School food programmes can take a variety of forms, so it is important to determine what your school needs and what will work best. How each school delivers a food programme will depend on the scale of the identified need.

Perhaps you have noticed in your school that some students are going without adequate food – they are hungry in morning classes, and have little or no food for lunch. If this is the case, then introducing a food programme may be the most appropriate response.

If, on the other hand, you are concerned with your students' health and learning because of poor food choices, it may be that a change in school policy is the most appropriate response – e.g. banning fizzy drinks, or putting more emphasis on nutrition education in your school curriculum.

This guideline offers some advice on how to identify the needs of your students and the school community and decide the appropriate response. The primary audience of this guideline is for school leaders and those responsible for organising the food programme.

ASSESSING THE NEEDS OF YOUR CHILDREN AND THE SCHOOL COMMUNITY

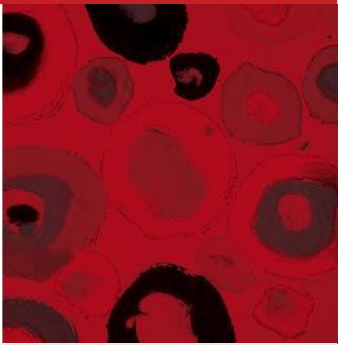
The first step is to establish if there is a need for a food programme in your school. This can be done through simple observation – do teachers and staff know of any students missing breakfast, or have they noticed students not bringing lunch? Are students eating and drinking unhealthily – is this affecting their learning? The principal could bring these issues up at a staff meeting and ask for feedback on these questions, and whether they have any ways of addressing them – e.g. making toast from the staff freezer during breaks. You may want them to write down their observations and practices for your reference.

INQUIRY INTO SCALE AND SCOPE OF NEED

Once you have observed the situation in your school and identified the issues, the next step is to get an understanding of the depth of your students' needs. This process could be undertaken by the board of trustees, a parent's group, and/or other staff members. There could be a number of issues to address, for example: how many children are coming to school hungry, and how often; the quality of food that children are bringing in their lunches or buying; or children who are not eating regularly enough. Critical to any inquiry is to engage students and families to have input early on.

Know your school context:

You need to take into consideration the culture and values of your school and the wider community. This includes ensuring that you have documented what your school's current



Assess the needs of your students with a simple survey (see appendix 2).

policies, practices and facilities are, and your unique situation. Consider, for example:

- do you have any protocols (policies or practices) for monitoring food eaten at school, what happens when children are hungry, how to communicate to children about what to do if they are hungry?
- do some children bus long distances to your school, or are some children dropped off early? (you may find in both cases children will be hungrier than others if they have been up for a while, even if they have already eaten)
- if you have a canteen, what does it currently provide and at what cost?
- do you actively promote healthy eating and lifestyles?
- do you have adequate kitchen facilities?

Any protocols you have should also be reviewed regularly as part of your on-going self-review process. How recently were they reviewed? Will they still be appropriate after the needs assessment?

Ask your students

Find out if students have the things they need to enjoy their time at school and achieve to their best ability. Even if your main concern is whether they have sufficient breakfast and lunch (or any food at all), it is also helpful to look at this in the context of what is happening in your school more generally. You can use this opportunity to find out if they have other material things they need such as shoes, raincoats and stationery, and the school facilities such as the play areas and sports equipment.

Have students fill out a fun questionnaire asking what they like about school, what could make it better, *and* if they have everything they need. Appendix 2 provides a sample student survey that was used in a primary school, which can be tailored to suit different ages and the context of your school. Note the surveys should be filled out at school and be anonymous to ensure privacy. Permission from parents is not necessary, though you may inform them if you deem it appropriate.

Engage with parents and whānau

Engaging with parents and asking for their input is the next important step. Involving parents in this process will give you greater insight into what they may expect of your school, and whether a food programme has the wider support that it will need to be successful. It also builds links between your school and the community by giving parents the opportunity to have their voices heard and be involved.

Engaging parents can be done in a number of ways, and will partly depend on the makeup of your school community. Different means of communication may be more appropriate than others (e.g. email, face to face meetings, or a letter home). Use the appropriate method for your school to share the results of the surveys with the parents, and invite them to be involved in the process (you could propose an after school meeting to have an open discussion, or simply a written response by letter or email). Ask the parents for:

- their feedback on the results
- what sort of programmes or initiatives they would be likely to support – e.g. a breakfast club or school garden, or a blanket ban on fizzy drinks and pies at school
- whether they would be willing to help if something does go ahead – e.g. helping at the food programme, or being on the committee that organises and oversees the programme.

Analyse and share the results

People will actually read the needs assessment results and be interested in the findings.

Analyse the results of your student and staff surveys and write up a brief summary of the key results.

These findings can be shared with the board of trustees to help them in decision-making, and can also be the basis for your engagement with parents and whānau.

DECIDING THE APPROPRIATE RESPONSE

The information you collected from teachers, students and parents should give you an idea of the size and scope of any action that might be suitable for your school – from changing policy around food and drink, to integrating a food programme into the entire school. The table below provides some suggestions for appropriate ways of responding to a range of situations that other schools have experienced.

Situation	Response
<p>Low need</p> <p>An infrequent number of children are going to school hungry or don't have adequate food on certain days</p>	<p>Provide food as needed, i.e. snacks during breaks to ensure everyone has something healthy to eat when necessary:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Provide simple snack foods at breaks (fuelled4life has a list of appropriate school snacks)• Keep a few loaves of bread in the staffroom freezer to make a basic sandwich or some toast• If your school is enrolled in <i>Fruit in Schools</i>, keep some fruit on hand to give out at morning tea / lunch• Incorporate a "milk break" within the classroom through the Fonterra Milk for Schools programme. Fonterra supplies fridges to all schools, along with a recycling programme• Potluck and shared school lunches on a frequent basis.
<p>Medium to high need</p> <p>A more significant number of children are coming to school without breakfast or adequate food on any given day.</p>	<p>Integrate a food programme or policy into everyday school life:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Breakfast clubs – through the nationwide KickStart Breakfast programme and partnerships with local community groups or businesses (Counties Manukau DHB has published best practice guidelines for establishing breakfast clubs in schools)• School lunches – either through your canteen, lunch orders, or as a programme• School gardens – a long term undertaking, but one that creates opportunities for children to be directly involved in making the food they eat. Garden to Table is an organisation that can help you get on track to growing your own school garden• Cooking courses for students and parents• Align your programme and nutrition into the wider curriculum (see guideline 4)• Encourage whānau and parental participation in school life through food, with healthy eating days and events, and cultural food days to celebrate the diversity of the school.

Need to improve the health of your students

Students are eating and drinking unhealthily, affecting their learning

- Make your school a 'water only school'
- Improve the quality of food and services of canteens, e.g. healthier lunch orders that are *affordable* (see guideline 4)
- Initiate a new school culture that celebrates healthy eating (see Yendarra School case study in appendix 1)

Whichever option you decide for your school, you will still need to consider how to source the food, funding, volunteers and other resources for your programme (see Guideline 2 for more details).

Guideline 2: Getting started and resourcing the programme

This guideline looks at how to create partnerships with members of the community and businesses to provide your programme with funding, consumables, and volunteers.

Funding and contributions can come from a variety of sources, such as local or national funding grants, community sponsorship, families and whānau, private funding, relationships with business or any combination of these things.

Whether your school is eligible for government and charitable funding (i.e. [KidsCan](#) or [KickStart Breakfast](#)) or intending to run a programme independently, you must find ways of funding and sourcing food and other resources, as well as volunteers to run the programmes.

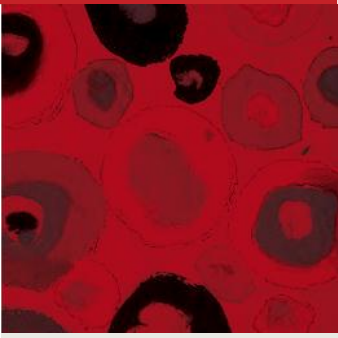
BEFORE YOU PITCH, PLAN

School leadership plays a vital role in starting the process for finding funding and resources for the programme. The principal can take the lead or nominate a person responsible to convene a group of volunteers to form a committee. This could include a combination of other staff members, parents, and members from local community groups such as Lions, Rotary, marae and churches.

Develop a transparent and open process for making decisions about developing your food programme. Be clear about what you are considering or proposing to do so that everyone understands what the school is trying to achieve through the programme. School leaders will have to ensure the people who run the programme have sufficient time and resources to review their work and the programme's outcomes.

Before you approach community organisations and businesses for support and funding, your committee needs to make a clearly defined proposal of your programme that explains:

- why you are doing it – what problem you are trying to solve
- what you are wanting (funding, equipment, consumables) – and the figures and quantities
- the benefits and intended outcomes of the programme – what will change as a result (long and short term)
- what the programme will look like – breakfast, lunch, gardening, other activities
- who will be involved – volunteers from the community, family, staff, students
- where the programme will be held – at your school, community centre, church hall



Successful partnerships can lessen the burden of the often arduous task of fundraising.

Be sure to include students on the committee – they can be invaluable in assisting with organising and publicising your programme.

The fact that students are part of the project is a key selling point when approaching sponsors.

- where you intend to get your food from – government and charitable funding, donations from business, or as part of the school budget
- how partners can be involved and recognised – attend events, public acknowledgment
- how you will know you've made a difference (evaluation).

This will not only make your programme more robust, but will make it more attractive to potential community and business sponsors. Businesses and community organisations want to know that the programme will be safe and will benefit children.

An on-going feature of organising and running your programme will be to have a communication plan that clearly informs parents, whānau and the community of the goals of the programme and how you believe it will improve your students' educational outcomes. Make all the potential benefits for students and the school community clear. Explain how you will know if the programme is achieving these goals, and what everyone involved in the programme (students, whānau, staff, business partners etc.) needs to do to make it successful.

IDENTIFYING AND APPROACHING POTENTIAL PARTNERS

Once you have a clearly defined proposal for your programme, then your committee can start approaching potential partners. Delegate members to approach different community groups and businesses.

NATIONAL PROGRAMMES

Your school may qualify for the support of national programmes, so it is important to investigate the eligibility that they have, and the food and services that they supply. Starting here may help identify the additional support you may need from community groups to further enhance your programme. Eligibility may change over time, so check out the programme website for the most accurate information:

- [KickStart Breakfast](#) – a national programme supplying Fonterra Anchor milk and Sanitarium Weetbix for breakfast. All schools across all deciles are eligible, including teen parent units and Alternative Education providers
- [Fonterra Milk for Schools](#) – a nationwide programme that supplies free milk to all primary schools (Years 1-6)
- [KidsCan](#) – a national charity that supplies equipment and food for breakfast and lunch programmes, as well as supplying items to address other student needs, such as raincoats, shoes and head lice treatment.

There may be retirees in your community looking for opportunities for social interaction who have cooking and gardening skills that they would love to pass on.

Ask students and parents to talk to their grandparents and older neighbours, approach senior citizen clubs and organisations.

THE LOCAL COMMUNITY

Your local community is a great source of support, as parental and whānau support and contributions can come in many forms. There may be a number of willing volunteers within a school community, so it is a matter of taking the time to find them. This could be done in a variety of ways, for example:

- getting key players in the school community to raise awareness through word of mouth
- doing a letter box drop in the local community
- talking to local services such as community centres, marae, and churches
- placing advertisements in your local newspaper

- getting the word out through your school newsletter, Facebook page or website.

Parents, whānau, community youth workers and mentors can be given the opportunity to volunteer and take leadership roles, such as making and serving the food, or donating and delivering food items.

You may wish to approach local churches to help with funding, consumables or services. Church halls can provide alternative venues for hosting food programmes and events if you don't have sufficient space or facilities. Churches and charities can also be good sources of volunteer services.

COMMUNITY GROUPS AND ORGANISATIONS

Meet with key people in your community to discuss your ideas, such as community board members, Rotary and Lions Clubs, councillors, the chamber of commerce, Iwi leaders etc. Even if they do not have the ability to support your project themselves, they will usually be happy to point you in the direction of others who can.

Different groups and organisations in the community will be able to help you in different ways:

- A local Lions Club or similar charity could provide funding for set up costs such as toasters, tables, linen and dishes;
- Local community health experts such as your [DHB](#) or Health Centre, or other national organisations with regional branches such as the [Heart Foundation](#), [Health Promoting Schools](#) or [Diabetes New Zealand](#) can give you advice on nutrition, accommodating students with allergies or illnesses, and even funding / resource support
- Media outlets (newspapers and radio stations) are good for getting word out about your programme, as is social media.

BUSINESSES

Generating links with businesses can support the sustainability of your programme.

Supermarkets, bakeries and grocery shops can donate and deliver on-going consumables such as spreads, porridge, bread and milk.

Businesses and other organisations are also excellent sources of information about other funding or partnership options available. For example, a bread supplier may have an existing distribution link with a milk or fruit supplier who may be a good partner for your project.

There could be businesses whose products or services are unrelated to food which could still help your programme, such as logistics and advertising. If one of your goals is to start a school garden for example, approach gardening and DIY stores to get materials and funding ([Runanga School](#) from Greymouth did just that!)

Carefully consider who you partner with and how that partnership could reinforce or undermine classroom learning about food and nutrition. For example you would not want a fast food company as a sponsor, even if they can provide bread or cereal for a breakfast programme, as publicising your relationship would send inconsistent or confusing messages about making healthy food choices.

COMMUNICATING BENEFITS FOR BUSINESS

As mentioned earlier you need to have a clearly defined plan and objectives for your programme. If you communicate the aims of your school food programme and its potential benefits for business, then local businesses are more likely to appreciate the benefits of

supporting you. Ultimately, they will want to know what's in it for them. Businesses always appreciate good (and free!) press.

Approaching a local bakery, for example, not only creates goodwill within a community, but can also offer a business the opportunity to build consumer loyalty from the sponsorship of such a programme. Being known as 'that bakery' that donates bread to the local school is great 'press'.

It can also foster a stronger culture within its own organisation by inviting staff to get involved in the school food programme. This is a way in which businesses can feel they are 'giving back' to the community in a practical and valuable way.

TIPS FOR APPROACHING POTENTIAL PARTNERS

- **Engage by word of mouth**, through parents who work for businesses and through your local business associations. Try to meet with people in person rather than just by phone, email or mail. Your plan or project will be more appealing if the idea explained to them by the people behind it. Follow up potential partners' enquiries promptly.
- **Get the word out**. Ask for a free editorial in your local paper or community newsletter. Approach local radio stations to see if you can make an on-air advertisement or sweeper for your programme.
- **Always read the fine print** when applying for money from grants and trusts as they will usually have specific requirements. Be aware that some funding sources may take months to be achieved. If you need to report on how you have spent the funds as a condition of the grant, build the reporting deadlines into your planning.
- **Just go out and ask!** Partnerships are waiting in the community – business, non-governmental organisations, non-profit organisations and others just need to be asked to help in specific ways. The biggest factor in getting others involved is the asking. The worst that can happen is that they say no, but many will be willing and eager to help.
- **Think about food safety**. If you are going to source donated food from the community or businesses, you must ensure that the food has not passed its use-by date and has been properly cooked / stored when donated. For more details, see the Ministry for Primary Industries '[Donations of food from commercial sources](#)' resource. Useful tips that are especially relevant to people selling or raffling food for fundraising purposes are also contained in '[Food Safety Tips for Occasional Events](#)'. Your local council will also be happy to offer you guidance and clarification of regulations.

MAINTAINING PARTNERSHIPS OVER TIME

Building a secure partnership with sponsors will ensure sustainability of your food programme. This starts with a written agreement between your school and your partners that outlines what you will do for them and what they have agreed to do for you. It is important for both parties to set clear and concise expectations before the partnership is solidified.

Record key information such as attendance and produce informative feedback for your sponsors. Make sure you meet with your partners and sponsors, even if it is only annually, to review your relationship and renew agreements.

Publically thank and recognise a business or community group that supports your school through your newsletter or website. Allow your partners to promote your school and its achievements in their newsletters and staff communications.

OVERALL BENEFITS FROM PARTNERSHIPS

Food can help bring your school community together. At one primary school the Children's Commissioner's Office spoke with, all parents were invited to join together for an evening meal provided by the school. The school also hosts regular breakfasts to recognise key events such as White Ribbon Day. Involving children in the organisation of these events is a great way for school community to connect with each other.

Having volunteers supporting your programme has reciprocal benefits – many volunteers get great satisfaction out of supporting others in their community, sharing their knowledge and skills and meeting new people.

Food is also a great vehicle for learning about cultural beliefs, values and traditions. New Zealand is becoming more and more multicultural and with this comes opportunities to understand and value each unique culture, and to ensure everyone feels a sense of belonging in their community. Food programmes can be a vehicle for exploring all the unique cultures that make up your school community.

Encourage teachers, volunteers and programme staff to sit down and eat with children.

This cements relationships, helps children to develop social skills, and reinforces positive behaviour throughout the day.

Guideline 3: A positive food programme that does not stigmatise

If your food programme is purpose-built to address a food need, rather than a health policy focus, then children and families need to feel comfortable about taking part. The stigma from being singled out as 'poor' or 'needy' can prevent children from participating, forcing them to ask their peers for food, another source of stigma, or go without food completely.

Taking a whole of school approach by making your programme an integral part of your school and not just an 'add on' for 'needy' students is the most effective way to avoid this problem.

It is also important to make sure your school food programme does not create dependence. This is why it is vital for the wider school community to be involved in the delivery of the programme, not just a 'top down' transaction from the school. Learning skills such as growing vegetables, and how to make healthy food choices independently, will enable children to become more self-reliant in later life.

KEY WAYS TO REDUCE STIGMATISATION

There are several practical ways to ensure your food programme promotes constructive values such as community spirit, sharing and caring for others.

INVOLVE YOUR STUDENTS IN THE DESIGN AND DELIVERY OF THE PROGRAMME

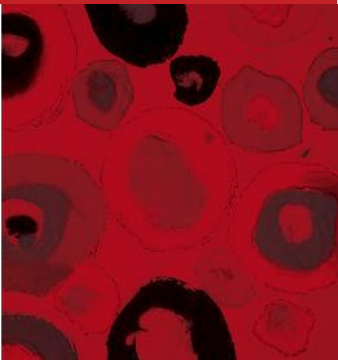
Make sure your students participate actively in the development and delivery of your programme. It is the children themselves who will decide if they are going to participate – so take their views seriously. Your programme will be more successful if students feel they have a stake in it, so ask what sort of activities or responsibilities they want.

School food programmes can provide a great opportunity to develop leadership skills for students – this includes designing menus, preparing and serving food, packing up, or being a student representative who reports to the board of trustees.

BE INCLUSIVE AND CHILD-CENTRED

Avoid targeting your programme only to certain children you see as being 'in need', as different students may need it on different days for all sorts of reasons. Make sure that the programme is available to any student who may need it, whether or not they are regular attendees. Ensure that the best interests of your students are prioritised ahead of other interests.

Be sensitive to students' individual needs and beliefs, such as food allergies or eating only vegetarian, kosher or halal foods. Take into account the various cultural practices in your school that may be linked to food – for example that some students bless food before eating.



Eliminating stigma associated with participating is vital for any food programme to be successful.

LINK YOUR PROGRAMME WITH THE WIDER COMMUNITY

Make sure your food programme reinforces and reflects the school's other activities and priorities. Use it to build a partnership with your local community, as well as parents and whānau of current students. When the whole community helps organise and run your food programme it becomes a focus of community pride and helps avoid a divisive "us and them" mentality.

Engage the school community in school-based events that relate to your programme, such as cooking classes, community gardens, and food fairs. You can also incorporate cultural food tasting evenings hosted by the students, or a focus on the cuisine from a different part of the world for a day or week in the school food programme. Teachers and students could give a presentation on where the food comes from, including how it is prepared and why, and the customs that surround the food.

Case study

See the Rhode Street School food programme exemplar in Appendix 1 for how the school has linked their programme to the wider school community.

COMMUNICATION

School leadership plays a vital role in creating a positive culture for your food programme. Frame your messages in a positive way that reflects a strengths-based approach. You may find it useful for those involved to develop a consistent vocabulary and set of key messages.

Teachers are generally very aware of the need to show tact when a child is hungry and to communicate with them in an open and non-judgmental way. Make sure that others (e.g. relief teachers, parents, business partners) also have a strengths-based vocabulary to talk about the programme. Make sure all your students know what they should do if they are hungry and unable to participate fully in learning.

STRENGTHENING STUDENT VOICE

School leadership is not just about the principal and teachers; it is also about creating leadership opportunities. Build depth and understanding of your programme by ensuring students have a voice in planning and implementation. They need to be encouraged to feel confident that their thinking will be heard and reflected in the planning of the programme. There are great opportunities for students to develop leadership skills – from envisaging what the programme will look like to writing job descriptions for breakfast servers and milk monitors.

Guideline 4: Healthy nutrition in schools

A school food programme that is both filling and nutritious will prepare kids to learn at their best. Whether you want to develop and improve a food programme, or you want to ensure your students make healthier food choices, implementing a nutrition policy will be a beneficial addition to your school.

Providing a 'nutritious' food programme may sound challenging, but can be as simple as providing low-sugar cereal and milk with fruit for a breakfast club, or having some fruit available in the classroom for students to snack on. Changing your school nutrition policy needn't be overly difficult either – you could begin by considering a ban on all sugary / energy drinks.

This guideline gives practical advice for altering your school food policy and delivering nutritious food programmes.

PUTTING NUTRITION INTO PRACTICE

Essentially, a nutrition policy is a statement outlining the school's position regarding food and nutrition. Such a policy sets short, medium and long-term goals to make healthy eating and lifestyles an integral part of your school culture.² For instance, a short term goal could be to make your school 'water only', while a medium to long term goal could be to align your canteen menu with your policy.

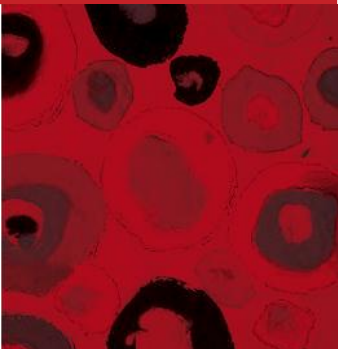
KEEP IT CONSISTENT

Teachers and staff play a key role in ensuring all direct and indirect nutritional messages are relevant and consistent. If the aim of your policy for example is to have children eating healthily, then teachers and staff need to be active role models and eat healthily themselves.

Your school health policy will need to balance good, everyday practice of healthy eating with 'sometimes' treats for special occasions – such as school fairs and fundraisers (see [ideas for healthy fundraising](#) and party food ideas for healthy alternatives to consider).

A consistent food policy needs to consider the wide range of school events taking place throughout the year. If food is provided regularly at events, it should reinforce the healthy eating messages that you are promoting. If, for example, your school has a health problem that you are trying to address, then having food and drink that are high in fat, sugar and salt at school events would send conflicting messages. Providing lollies or chocolates for good behaviour also undermines healthy eating messages. Consider alternative rewards such as free time, outdoor activities and board games.

² For a useful example of what you may wish to include in your policy framework, see the [Heart Foundation Sample Nutrition Policy](#).



Children learn better when they are healthy and well fed.

ALIGNING YOUR SCHOOL CANTEEN WITH HEALTHY EATING MESSAGES

If your observations and assessment of your students found that poor diet was affecting their learning and behaviour, then the school canteen can play an important role.

It could be students are going to the dairy to buy pies and sugary drinks simply because there are few or no options available to purchase better quality food at school.

By providing food and drink choices that are healthy, tasty and affordable, students can act on the healthy eating messages promoted by the school's nutrition policy. Below are some useful resources to help you on your way:

SCHOOL CANTEEN MENU DEVELOPMENT

A carefully planned menu with a variety of healthy and attractive foods will attract students to the canteen. Ideally a menu should offer students several items that remain the same, with variety provided by specials for sale only at certain times, or on certain days of the week. Seasonal fruit, whole or cut into appropriate sized pieces, should always be available.

ONLINE RESOURCES

The [Heart Foundation](#) has a wide range of resources, tools and guidelines for writing healthy and varied school canteen menus.

For further support with school canteen menu development, you can contact a [Heart Foundation Health Promotion Coordinator](#).

[Fuelled4life](#) provides a classification system which provides support for selecting the healthier options.

For evidence-based technical information and best practice recommendations (on nutritional food groups, serving sizes, New Zealand children's diets and healthy options) see the Ministry of Health's [Food and Nutrition Guidelines](#).

MENU EXAMPLES FOR SCHOOL FOOD PROGRAMMES

This section recommends appropriate nutrient types and serving sizes for breakfasts and lunches. Breakfast, as we know, can be the most important meal of the day, so it is important to have filling and nutritious food so children get the best possible start.

A breakfast club will ideally provide one option from each of the following food groups:

- Breads and cereals – porridge, Weetbix, natural muesli, wholegrain toast, crumpets
- Toppings – peanut butter, jam, honey, tomato, baked beans or spaghetti.
- Fruit – any fruit fresh, frozen or tinned in natural juice.
- Milk products – milk, yoghurt and low-fat cheese.

See the [Heart Foundation](#) for ideas around policy development and reviewing menus (scroll down on the webpage for the links). The Counties-Manukau DHB also has some good sample menus in their [guidelines](#). Below are some very basic menu ideas to give you an idea (serving sizes will differ depending on whether children are primary or secondary school aged):

Tasty canteen ideas

Mousetraps – melted cheese and Marmite

Hot dishes – vegetable fried rice, spaghetti, lasagne, stuffed potatoes

Burgers – lean meat patty, lettuce, cheese and tomato

Filled rolls – with ham or chicken, cheese and salad

Veggie soups – with toast

BREAKFAST CLUB IDEAS:

Primary School:

Porridge (½ - 1 cup cooked per child)
Banana (½ to 1 medium banana per child)
Milk (200mL milk per child)

Secondary School:

Weetbix (2-3 biscuits per child)
Tinned peaches in natural juice or pour off syrup (1/2 cup per child)
Yoghurt (150g per child)

LUNCH AND SNACK IDEAS:

Schools are ideally placed to support parents by providing healthy lunchbox ideas. Send clear messages to students and parents to encourage them to bring healthy lunches, such as:

- > Fresh fruit / fruit salad
- > Sandwiches – with ham, tomato, cheese, egg ...
- > Raw vegetable sticks – carrot, celery, capsicum, or cucumber
- > Popcorn – without caramel or icing sugar
- > Fruit yoghurt
- > Pikelets
- > Wraps / Pita Pockets / bread rolls – with sandwich fillings mentioned above
- > Left overs – fried rice, pasta or roast vegetables
- > Hard boiled eggs

More lunchbox ideas can be found [here](#)

RESOURCES FOR MANAGING FOOD ALLERGIES

- The [Ministry for Primary Industries](#) has a range of information on food allergies and intolerances
- For tips on how to substitute ingredients to make recipes dairy-free, gluten-free or egg-free, visit the [Healthy Food Guide](#)
- [Allergy New Zealand](#) also provides a wealth of information on [food allergies](#)
- Visit [Coeliac New Zealand](#) for information about gluten free diets and coeliac disease.

Guideline 5: Connecting school food programmes to the New Zealand Curriculum

A school food programme and the school curriculum can be mutually reinforcing and provide opportunities for children to have learning experiences that are interesting, relevant and real. This is a key step in taking a whole of school approach with your programme.

Make your food programme interesting, relevant and real.

WHY LINK YOUR PROGRAMME TO THE CURRICULUM?

Reinforcing your school food programme and nutrition policy with the curriculum provides great opportunities for children to develop life skills. The following are just a few examples:

- **Put learning into real contexts:**
 - > Science – students can analyse the sugar contents of drinks and the composition of food, the way ingredients chemically and physically react during cooking, and plant biology for growing vegetables
 - > Mathematics – calculating ingredient ratios, budgeting, serving sizes as a proportion of recommended daily intake
 - > Literacy – reading and writing recipes and understanding nutrition terminology
 - > Social studies – understanding the different traditions around food in other cultures
- **Critical thinking:** students learn to interpret and critique messages and advertising about healthy eating and sustainability
- **Managing self:** students learn to make their own informed decisions about food and nutrition; develop creativity and leadership; experience accomplishment; gain more control over their own diet and nutrition by learning to prepare, cook, and serve healthy food
- **Relating to others:** students eat together; learn to recognise diverse experiences and values about food preparation and eating; share; take turns; and be able to influence the eating patterns of others in their environment
- **Participating and contributing:** students learn to help with food preparation and distribution; planting, maintaining and harvesting school gardens; planning food programmes and menus; working with others in the community; and developing leadership.

FOOD AND NUTRITION RESOURCES

Learning materials and programmes are available to support learning about food and nutrition at all curriculum levels, from new entrants to senior secondary.

Ideas for units of learning developed by the Ministry of Education are in:

- [Food and Nutrition for Healthy Confident Kids](#) (pages 23-29)
- [The Curriculum in Action](#) series (scroll down on page to 'Choice Food')
- [Focus on Food: Hauora ā kai Thinking Critically about Food and Nutrition](#) at the following links:
 - > [Level 2 - Health and Physical Education](#)
 - > [Level 3 - Health and Physical Education](#)
 - > [Level 4 - Health and Physical Education](#)
- The [Figure it Out](#) series of mathematics books contain many activities using food and nutrition as the learning context
- A comprehensive list of materials that support food and nutrition education can be found in: [Focus on Food - Thinking Critically about Food and Nutrition](#).

[Growing and Learning with 5+ A Day](#) has been developed in conjunction with teachers and aligns with the New Zealand Curriculum supporting health and physical education, literacy, numeracy and science through practical learning experiences. It involves practical classroom or other activities that are supported by differentiated resource sheets. Lessons include cross-curricular links, achievement objectives, strands and appropriate learning objectives. This teaching resource can be incorporated in short to long term planning.

Growing healthy food on-site is a further opportunity to provide authentic learning opportunities for students and that also supports a food in schools programme. Growing kai in schools sustainably is supported through initiatives such as [Enviro-schools](#), [Garden to Table](#), and [Health Promoting Schools](#).

There are many great food and nutrition resources for you to draw upon.

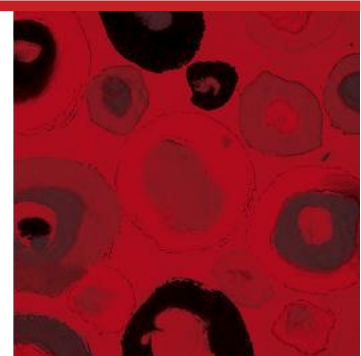
Appendices

Appendix 1 Examples of successful school programmes

Appendix 2 Sample student survey for needs based assessment

Appendix 3 Sample teacher survey for needs based assessment

Appendix 1: Examples of successful school food programmes



The case studies provide great ideas about how to integrate a food programme into your school and improve the health and well-being of the wider school community.

The Ministry of Education has provided detailed and inspiring [case studies](#) of 16 primary and secondary schools that are running successful food and nutrition programmes. Each example gives details on:

- the school ethos and organisation
- curriculum programmes
- co-curricular health promotion opportunities
- the school and community environment and partnerships.

OUTCOMES OF SUCCESSFUL SCHOOL FOOD PROGRAMMES

These schools have taken a whole-school approach to their food programme and reaped many positive outcomes for students and the school, including:

- having fitter, more attentive pupils
- developing more active student councils
- obtaining Green-Gold Enviro status and Gold Healthy Heart Awards
- developing community gardens in school grounds
- increasing multi-cultural awareness and understanding through introducing different foods
- increasing contact with local health organisations and support networks.

The table below lists the 16 schools with very brief descriptions of some notable initiatives they have undertaken.

Further, more detailed, examples provided by the Working Group follow after.

Name of School	Notable initiatives
Breens Intermediate School Christchurch, Decile 6	Students keep healthy eating journals and are given reward credits to bid for prizes or activities in an end-of-term auction. Students are encouraged to eat bread or fruit during the 10am break, which follows a 20-minute physical activity session.
De la Salle College Auckland, Decile 1	Year 13 health promotion research project – students give recommendations to teachers and the principal on improving some aspect of the school environment or teaching. Fizzy drinks are banned from school.

Golden Bay High School Nelson, Decile 6	A Canteen Committee designs and delivers healthy and popular food. It is jointly run by the principal, a board member, a student trustee, the chair of the Home and School Committee and a canteen manager.
Grovetown Primary School Blenheim, Decile 6	A Healthy School Committee is run by students and staff. Students have \$5 Friday lunches based on 5+ADay.
Kaingaroa Forest School Rotorua, Decile 1	The school is leading health promotion in the community – talking with shop owners to stock healthier food, and hosting monthly health information evenings for whānau.
Miller Avenue School Paeroa, Decile 1	The school hosts an annual community Big Breakfast; students grow potatoes over summer; and the principal has written food guidelines for staff to observe the diets of the students and promote healthy eating in the classroom.
Mountain View High School Timaru, Decile 6	Mountainview High School is one of only a few schools where every student in years 9 to 12 is taught health. They brought in the National Heart Foundation’s school food coordinator to begin improvements to the food and nutrition environment.
Nelson Park Primary School Napier, Decile 4	Garden clubs are run by students and parents, local farmers donate fruit, and there are class visits to orchards. Each day there are ‘Energiser Breaks’ where students eat fruit and exercise. Nelson Park is a ‘water only’ school.
Reporoa College Rotorua, Decile 6	A new school canteen is open for breakfast (50c per item) and lunch (5\$ per hot meal).
Runanga School Greymouth, Decile 3	Runanga Rascals Café has \$2 meals and is open to the wider community. The café buys local ingredients and the school garden was funded through DHB funding and Mitre 10 grants. The café was Winner of the Development Westcoast Young Entrepreneur award.
St James School Christchurch, Decile 1	School garden, led by a class of Year 3/4 students, ran interviews and survey questionnaires for the design and use of the garden. Students and teachers have a fruit break at 10:30 each morning and lunch eating is supervised in the classroom for 10 minutes before children go outside to play.
St Peter’s College Gore, Decile 8	The Student Health Committee (SHC) is made up of year 12/13 students and is considered to be a ‘job’. The canteen staff work with the SHC who promote the new healthy menu to other students to increase take-up. Fizzy drinks have also been banned.
Tawhiti School Hawera, Decile 5	The school has a 10am Brainfood Break when students eat fresh vegetables and fruit to ‘stimulate their brains’ and help with their learning. Tawhiti is a ‘water only’ school.
Te Matauranga Primary School Auckland, Decile 1	A school garden in the internal courtyard area has made growing food fun and educational for the students. Funding was made available to build the planters and buy soil, seeds/seedlings, and tools. One key person oversees the garden, gardening activities teach students about growing, cooking, and nutrition.

**Waitakere College
Auckland, Decile 4**

Year 10 students at Waitakere are required to complete a healthy eating assignment for their health class every year, promoting an aspect of healthy eating to other students. The annual Health Week is coordinated by NCEA Level 2 students as part of their health promotion achievement standard, and includes healthy eating, exercise, and general well-being.

**Wanganui Girls College
Wanganui, Decile 4**

Students in the food technology class (Years 11, 12, and 13) were involved in all aspects of designing the new menu for the canteen. They conducted a school-wide survey about students' food preferences, looked at the costs involved in making and sustaining the menu, then actually made and prepared the food and sold it to their fellow students.

RHODE STREET SCHOOL FOOD PROGRAMME

The Rhode Street School food programme consists of three main components: food security, sustainability, and community engagement.

OVERVIEW

Breakfast is supplied every school day to pupils between 8.00 am and 8.30 am. Breakfast is supported by the KickStart Breakfast Programme, and is set up by the school's Sustainable Kitchen Manager with assistance from the Student Council. It is monitored by the Manager and all teaching staff. Breakfast is available to all students whether or not they have already had it at home. It is served in the school's Kai Time Café where children can sit at purpose-built dining tables and socialise with each other and the staff.

The commercial kitchen supplies daily hot meals for sale at \$5.00 per lunch. Students are rostered to harvest fresh vegetables and fruit for use in menus designed by the students on a seasonal basis. The costs of this programme are more than met by the sales and supplies from the school vegetable gardens and orchards.

Sponsored lunches are also available for students who have no lunch or means to purchase one and are available from the school office (which records usage for evaluation and review purposes). These lunches are made possible by KidsCan and a local Church group.

In the third term of 2013 Rhode Street School introduced Fonterra Milk for Schools where all students are given a 200ml container of chilled milk in class before morning tea time.

FOOD SUSTAINABILITY

Rhode Street School has a long-term focus on food sustainability. The school's charter and strategic plan include a food in schools programme. Job descriptions for staff reflect health and ecological sustainability in line with the Health Promoting Schools and enviro-schools kaupapa.

There are 18 vegetable gardens and two organic orchards with over 50 fruit trees. There is a kitchen garden with chickens and a community garden open to all whānau, as well as a hydroponics tunnel house to grow out-of-season salad lines, watercress and puha.

A fully functional, registered, stand-alone, commercial kitchen with a full-time chef works with students and provides cooking and gardening classes for whānau members

COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT AND SCHOOL LIFE

The school has run Kai Festivals annually for 7 years. Classes are expected to have their garden planted in time for the produce to be ready to use on stalls at the festival (held toward the end

of March). Before planting in term four, classes discuss what they will be selling at the Kai Festival (the following year) and plan on producing at least 300 servings. They work out recipes, a timetable for planting, marketing and sales plans and budgets.

The remainder of the year it is up to the class to decide what they wish to grow, e.g. vegetables, a winter green crop (e.g. lupins), herbs or flowers. They may decide to have a 'Master Chef'-like competition using the kai they are growing, or they may want to grow vegetables to make a salad or soup for the class, or contribute to the Koha Table every Friday for whānau to take kai home.

Community members are involved in planning, planting and cooking throughout the year in individual classes. They also support groups within the school such as the Student Council or Green Team. On average, 3,000 people attend each Kai Festival from the wider community and make a significant contribution to the school's fundraising efforts. 'Student voice' ensures that the children have ownership of the whole process and celebrate their authentic learning by deciding how to utilise their net profits.

It is expected that a local Māori Trust, Rauawawa, will be working in partnership with the school to introduce the Aroha Nga Mokopuna Project. Kaumatua and kuia will visit the school every week to share their healthy living messages by growing and cooking traditional Māori kai with students.

VIDEO LINKS

Check out a great [video clip](#) that looks at what Rhode Street School is doing.

CHANGING THE SCHOOL CULTURE – A CASE STUDY OF YENDARRA SCHOOL³

Yendarra, a decile 1a school (the lowest decile) in Otara (South Auckland), has shown that it is possible to use the influence that schools have in the community to effect positive change. Yendarra used a whole-school approach to promote healthy lifestyles for the students and their whānau. Their journey is inspiring and something that all schools can learn from.

The first step that the school took was to ban fizzy drinks, which staff noticed were making kids hyperactive and disruptive in class. The Principal, Susan Dunlop, remembers simply suggesting at an end of year board meeting that they make Yendarra a 'water-only school':

It just happened. Overnight, water was the preferred drink. To start it off we gave all children a free water bottle. We also received funding to put in new drinking fountains... The behaviour problems disappeared overnight. It was amazing... more peaceful, kids were feeling happier, [and] teachers were feeling happier.

Next, the school began to 'celebrate' good food that kids brought to school for lunch. This, along with educating the parents too, created a culture where it was 'cool' to bring healthier food for lunch – as opposed to coke, pies and chippies. At parent teacher evenings, which are very well attended by whānau, the school took the opportunity to give food budgeting advice – such as buying bread and spreads for lunch, buying seasonal food when it's cheap, knowing

³ Adapted from Dr Tim Lindley's interview with Yendarra School Principal Susan Dunlop. Read the full story at <http://blog.aspireforlife.com/2012/10/food-choices-at-otara-school-are-impacting-on-students/>

how many you can feed with a loaf of bread and a box of Weetbix, and how money is quickly spent on takeaways.

The school brought in gradual changes when opportunities arose. When there was a government move to ban pies and promote healthy eating in schools, Yendarra saw this as the right time to change the tuck shop from a commercial business within the school selling sugary drinks and pies, to a 'Kai Shop' selling fresh sandwiches and rolls sourced from a local bakery. Basically it is run as a service for parents – a healthy lunch for \$2 for those who, for whatever reasons, are unable to make lunch for their children.

Leading from the top was also a key aspect of changing the school eating culture. Some staff were eating unhealthy takeaways for lunch and were not sending good messages, so this had to change. There is now a bigger focus on healthy kai for everyone at Yendarra – not just for the children.

The school teaches eating expectations to the children – “we take what [portions] we can eat, we consider other people, we don't take a plate full of food just because it is there”. Children are also taught basic food preparation such as making porridge, and ways to make healthy food more interesting. They are taught that it's OK to have treat food now and again; it's just about how much you have (frequency and portions).

A *Masterchef* style programme is run, where the kids make hamburgers with lettuce, onions, eggs, and tomatoes – so they learn that people can make their own hamburgers at home, not just at McDonald's.

The entire school community – staff, children and whānau – has experienced a shift in culture and expectations, and have all moved towards healthy food as a result of this programme.

Appendix 2: Sample student survey

The following is an example of a survey you can use to determine the needs of your students and decide on the appropriate response needed – amend as needed for your school!

About You and Your School

Question 1: Please CIRCLE the 3 things you like most about our school			
Reading	Writing	Maths	Art
Music	Sport	My friends	My teacher
The playground	Computers	Dancing	Learning my culture
I don't like anything about school	Other (please write):		

Question 2: Please CIRCLE 3 things you think our school needs most to be even better			
A sunshade	More library books	Exercise equipment	More computers
Musical instruments	A school garden	More sports gear	Food for kids
Play equipment	Other (please write):		

Question 3: Do you have the things you need? Circle YES, NO or SOMETIMES				
<i>Do you have ...</i>	Breakfast before school?	Yes	No	Sometimes
<i>Do you have ...</i>	Food for lunch at school?	Yes	No	Sometimes
<i>Do you have ...</i>	Money for school trips or special school events?	Yes	No	Sometimes
<i>Do you have ...</i>	Medicine when you are sick?	Yes	No	Sometimes
<i>Do you have ...</i>	A jacket for when it rains?	Yes		No
<i>Do you have ...</i>	Sport shoes (trainers) you can wear to run or play sports?	Yes		No

Do you have ...	A school bag?	Yes	No
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Question 4: Do you know what you should do? Circle YES or NO

Do you know what you should do if ...	There is an earthquake while you are at school?	Yes	No
Do you know what you should do if ...	You are sick or get hurt while you are at school?	Yes	No
Do you know what you should do if ...	You are hungry and don't have food at school with you?	Yes	No
Do you know what you should do if ...	You are being bullied at school?	Yes	No

Question 5: About you!

<p>Please tick all the cultures/ethnicities that you are:</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> New Zealander / New Zealand European / Pakeha</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> Maori</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> Pacific Islander</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> Other e.g. Dutch, Japanese (Please write)</p> <p>_____</p>	<p>Are you a boy or a girl? (Circle)</p> <p style="text-align: center;">BOY GIRL</p>
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How old are you? (please circle)

5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12+
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Question 6: Is there anything else you want to tell us about how to make things better for you at our school?

Appendix 3: Sample teacher survey

The intent of this questionnaire is to get a picture of staff views of any unmet needs of students, particularly concerning any children hungry at school. This will help the board to understand if we need any additional actions or whether current policies and process are working well for our students.

1. Do you have a way of regularly monitoring whether children in your class are bringing adequate food to school for snacks and lunch?

Yes (specify)

No

2. Have you observed children who are hungry at school? (tick one)

Never

Rarely (1/month)

Sometimes (more than 1/month, but not frequently)

Frequently (regular pattern for some students, e.g. days before 'payday', at least one student hungry each week)

Any comment:

3. If you have observed children who are hungry at school, why do you think they are hungry? (tick all that apply)

They have not eaten breakfast on offer at home

They have not brought adequate food to school for snacks and lunch

They likely do not have adequate food at home

Any comment:

4. Do you know of students being kept home from school you suspect could be because they do not have food to send with them?

Yes (any comment)

No

5. Do you know what to do if a child is hungry at school?

Yes (what?)

No

6. Do you see any other unmet needs of children in your class we should be aware of e.g. where they are unable to achieve to their potential or to fully participate in activities offered at the school due to lack of resources? (Tick all that apply)

Children have untreated medical conditions (please specify)

- ❑ Children don't participate in activities where any extra payment is requested (e.g. swimming, trips, shows) (please specify)

- ❑ Children don't participate in sporting activities that require special equipment (e.g. trainers for cross-country, togs) (please specify)

- ❑ Other

Is there anything else you want to tell us about how to make things better for children at our school?
