

EVALUATION: FOODBANK WESTERN AUSTRALIA'S SCHOOL BREAKFAST AND NUTRITION EDUCATION PROGRAM



FIGHTING HUNGER
IN AUSTRALIA



PROGRAM BACKGROUND

The School Breakfast and Nutrition Education Program (SBNEP) is delivered to schools throughout Western Australia by Foodbank WA. The program is jointly funded by the Western Australian Departments of Education, Health and Primary Industries and Regional Development (SBNEP reference group).

The SBNEP consists of two distinct programs developed and delivered by the Foodbank WA *Healthy Food For All*® team. The programs are the *School Breakfast Program* (SBP) and *Food Sensations*® for Schools (FSS) nutrition education and cooking program.

The overarching aim of the SBNEP is to improve the nutrition and wellbeing of children who are vulnerable to poor diet and health by improving access to a variety of healthy foods in schools and improving food literacy and basic cooking skills of students from K-12.

FOODBANK WA plays an integral role in food relief in Western Australia providing over 6.1 MILLION meals across the state. In addition, Foodbank WA provides 68,000 breakfasts to over 21000 students each week.



"This program (The School Breakfast Program) provides food for students who otherwise wouldn't eat that day and is an essential process in student learning."

SBP Coordinator, Mid West



WHAT IS BEING EVALUATED?

A comprehensive evaluation of the School Breakfast and Nutrition Education Program (SBNEP) was conducted from 2015 to 2017 by a cross-disciplinary team from the School of Education and School of Medical and Health Sciences at Edith Cowan University and the Telethon Kids Institute. A *School Breakfast Program* Coordinator Survey was administered three times throughout the study duration to all registered schools. A student survey was conducted in 2017, with Year 4-12 students from all 428 registered schools invited to participate, however there was a low response rate. Additionally, five schools were selected for an in-depth case study in consultation with the SBNEP reference group. Only schools receiving the SBNEP through the reference group funding were included in this evaluation.

The evaluation was conducted to determine the extent to which the SBNEP has delivered the intended activities/ outputs, outcomes and impacts and provided value for money as well as to guide decision making about the future directions of the program.

PROGRAM IMPACTS

FOOD BANK

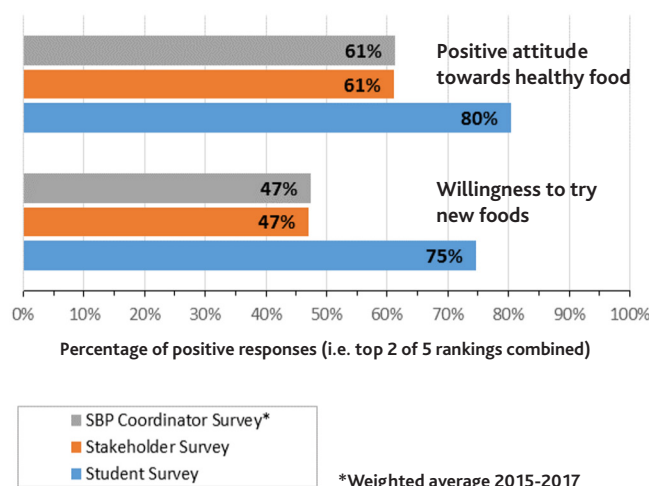
KNOWLEDGE, SKILLS & ATTITUDES

Evaluation data from the SBP Coordinator, stakeholder and student surveys demonstrates the majority of stakeholders believe the *School Breakfast Program* plays a valuable role in promoting positive attitudes towards healthy eating, particularly students, with 80% responding with a positive rating (see Figure 1). In addition, 75% of students responded that the SBP had a positive impact on their willingness to try new foods, along with 47% of SBP Coordinators and stakeholders.

Over 70% of respondents across the three SBP surveys strongly agreed that the SBP contributes to the overall health promoting environment of the school and the school community.

Schools reported that involving students in preparing and/or serving food in the SBP further enhances their ability to choose and prepare healthy breakfasts, and provides them with important knowledge and skills relating to food handling and hygiene.

Figure 1: Comparison of positive ratings of impact of the SBP on Children's attitudes to healthy eating



SOCIAL IMPACTS BEYOND THE BREAKFAST BOWL

There is clear evidence that the value and reach of the SBP extends well beyond the immediate humanitarian imperative of ensuring children do not go hungry. The social environments of the SBP provide a space where students feel safe and cared for, contributing to increased self-esteem and confidence. Schools have identified that the SBP provides an important transition between the home and school, showing improvements in student's attendance, punctuality and willingness to learn.

In addition to this, schools recognised the value of the program as a catalyst for parental engagement by promoting SBP as a community event where parents/carers and children alike can join in and socialise.

The informal setting of the SBP was perceived by respondents to have contributed to the development of positive relationships between students and school staff, by bringing students together in a way that encourages a widening of friendship groups and greater sense of connection to the school.

25% of schools reported that they received support from local businesses, community organisations, parents and families and they attributed this to being seen to have a genuine comprehensive ethos of care and concern for the health and wellbeing of students and families.



STUDENTS' CAPACITY FOR LEARNING

All stakeholders groups (SBP Coordinators, stakeholders, students) strongly and consistently agreed that the SBP had a positive influence across a range of factors relating to the student's capacity for learning; including readiness for learning, on task concentration, attendance, punctuality, productivity in class, behaviour and social skills.

Schools reported that the positive impact at the class level translated to the overall school climate, including a smooth transition from home to school and a reduction in inappropriate behaviour across classes, leading to a greater sense of calm and order.

The social environment of the SBP was also found to be influential in lifting students' mood and increasing their receptiveness and willingness to engage with learning.

Schools based in areas of severe disadvantage and food insecurity state that if they were unable to feed their students, then learning could not take place and classrooms would be barely functional.



SUSTAINABILITY & SATISFACTION



"The students really enjoyed the *Food Sensations*® session, and I know many of them were planning on buying the ingredients and making the recipes at home. A lot of families in [our town] have had 'fasta pasta' over the weekend I think."

Teacher, Wheatbelt

A high level of satisfaction in the SBNEP was expressed by school leaders, teachers, students and parents. The average continuous length of involvement in the SBP was 7.44 years, demonstrating the extent to which the SBP has been strongly integrated across a large number of schools for a long period of time.

Teachers and school leaders strongly felt that the SBP was not only essential to alleviate hunger and disadvantage in the school community, but to ensure the effective running of the school.

The *Food Sensations* for Schools nutrition education program was highly valued by teachers and students. The hands-on approach of FSS is one of the many reasons the program is valued, as it is appropriate and highly suited to the student population and enables the teaching of healthy eating messages, along with the reinforcement of food safety and hygiene practices.

The resources developed for the delivery of the FSS program are accessible for teachers and are often utilised within SBP and the classrooms to reinforce key health messages to students. Teachers have noted that the resources available are of high quality and make an important contribution to the sustainability of nutrition education in schools and the wider community.

THANK YOU FOR YOUR SUPPORT



Foodbank WA would like to sincerely thank all of our *School Breakfast Program* Schools, teachers, school leaders, education assistants, students, parents and school representatives particularly those that took the time to complete the surveys and case studies. We would not have this valuable data without your time and support.

We would also like to thank the School of Education at Edith Cowan University for their continued efforts with this extensive evaluation process, data collection and report writing. Your team has collated the findings in a valuable way that gives a great insight into our School Breakfast and Nutrition Education Program, as well as recommendations for further direction of the program.

Lastly, we would like to say a warm thank you to the Western Australian Departments of Education, Health and Primary Industries and Regional Development; Telethon and our other funders. This program and the demonstrated impacts would not be possible without your ongoing support. Thank you for allowing us to do what we do and support so many communities throughout Western Australia by helping to improve knowledge, food literacy, basic cooking skills and spread our key health messages.



For more information on Foodbank WA or our School Breakfast & Nutrition Education Program, please visit: www.foodbank.org.au

CITATION

Byrne, M., Hill, S., Wenden, E., Devine, A., Miller, M., Quinlan, H., Shaw, T., Eastham, J., & Cross, D. (2018). Evaluation of the Foodbank WA School Breakfast and Nutrition Program Final Report. Edith Cowan University, Perth, WA.

TO READ THE FULL REPORT GO TO:

www.foodbank.org.au/school-breakfast-program-evaluation-reports

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