

Evaluation of the Move Well Eat Well Primary School Award Program



Summary

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The Move Well Eat Well program's success is testament to the effectiveness of health promotion programs and highlights what can be achieved with adequate resourcing and commitment over time.

Submission to the Parliamentary Joint Select Committee on Preventative Health Care, 2015

Executive summary

The Tasmanian Move Well Eat Well (MWEW) Primary School Award Program, based on the World Health Organisation's Health Promoting Schools model, encourages the incorporation of healthy eating and physical activity into day-to-day activities of primary school children. It is managed by Public Health Services (PHS) in the Department of Health (DoH) with a strong partnership with the Department of Education (DoE) and support from a range of partner organisations.

MWEW had its beginnings in 2004, with the current Award Program being progressively established in Tasmania schools from 2009. It has had periodic/regular external evaluation since its inception.

The Tasmanian MWEW program is aligned with the Healthy Tasmania Five Year Strategic Plan (2016) and the Department of Education's 2018-2021 Child and Student Wellbeing Strategy and Health and Wellbeing Curriculum.

This evaluation, conducted during July to December 2018, was commissioned by Public Health Services to 'assess the effectiveness, efficiency and sustainability of the Move Well Eat Well Primary School Program'. An outcomes evaluation approach using surveys, focus groups and interviews, was used to collect qualitative data from schools and stakeholders to determine the relevance, value and efficiency of the current MWEW program for schools.

In all, 329 people contributed their thoughts and ideas to the evaluation.



Key findings

The evaluation provided ample evidence that the MWEW Primary School program is achieving its goal, *'to provide the opportunity for primary schools to promote and support healthy eating and physical activity as a sustainable and normal part of every child's day'*.

The MWEW program has had an extensive impact on the school system in Tasmania, reaching 82.4% of eligible schools in total (89% of government, 76% of Catholic, and 60% of Independent schools). Over one third (34%) of member schools have proceeded to become Award schools.

The program has been very successful in engaging with Tasmanian primary schools across the socio-economic spectrum, and in establishing a culture that promotes healthy eating and physical activity. Children and families are now much more aware of the benefits of healthy behaviours. Some children and families have changed their behaviours. However, there continue to be barriers towards implementing some of the key messages. Sustained effort is required for the MWEW program to maintain and grow its profile amid competing pressures in schools and in the community.

Aspects of the MWEW Primary School Program that were strongly supported by informants were:

For schools

- A whole-school approach with links to other school programs
- Access to evidence-based resources and support
- Maintaining the current 7 MWEW key messages
- The MWEW calendar of events
- MWEW incentives for schools
- Links to the curriculum
- Teachers adopting healthy behaviours
- Recognition of schools' Award status
- Regular contact and visits by MWEW staff, including refresher sessions
- Links with the school canteen.

For parents

- Consistent messaging, reinforcing messages in the home
- Creating healthy choices as the social norm in schools
- Reducing access to unhealthy foods
- Providing ideas for healthy lunchboxes
- Promoting waste reduction and environmental sustainability
- Providing MWEW activities for children
- Presenting healthy choices in a fun way.

For the MWEW Program

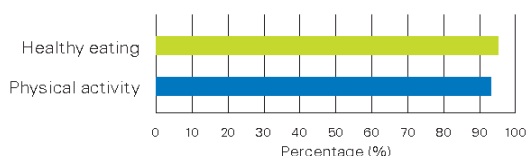
- Internal leadership and support from PHS
- Support of the Department of Education
- Involvement of other PHS staff
- Partnerships with the Tasmanian School Canteen Association (TSCA), Family Food Patch and other non-government organisations
- Alignment of the Early Childhood and Primary School MWEW programs.

Selected survey findings are illustrated in the following infographic.

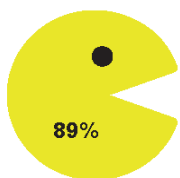
Move Well Eat Well (MWEW) Program Impact & Effectiveness

Almost **95%** of respondents to the school staff survey indicated that MWEW had been moderately or very effective in establishing opportunities in their schools to promote healthy eating.

93% stated that it had been effective in providing opportunities for physical activity.



A Whole School Approach



Eighty-nine percent (**89%**) of staff in MWEW schools thought the program had contributed either very or moderately well to a whole-of-school approach to health and wellbeing.

Of the school-based staff who responded to the survey, **79%** believed that students were eating **more healthily** as a result of MWEW.



Eighty-three percent (**83%**) of school staff responding to the survey indicated that students had become **more physically active** as a result of MWEW.

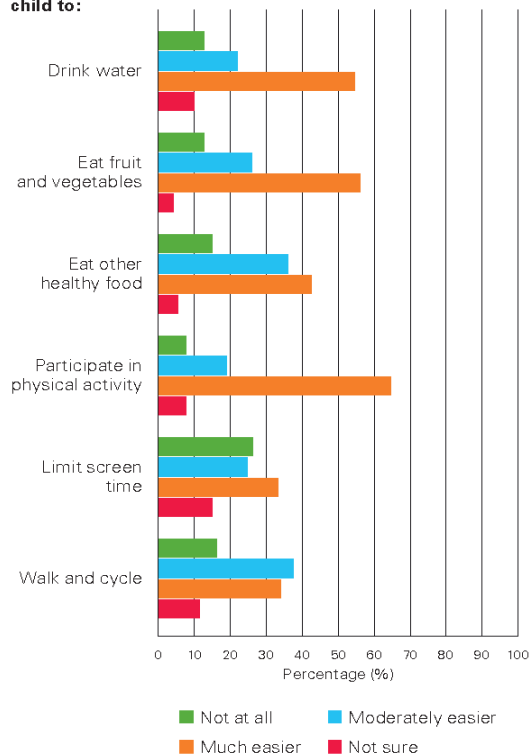
Meeting the needs and expectations of schools

School staff were asked whether MWEW was meeting the needs and expectations of their school. Eighty-two percent (**82%**) responded either 'very much so' or 'a moderate amount'.

Parents on Supporting Healthy Behaviour

Parents were asked whether MWEW had made it easier for their child to engage in a range of healthy eating behaviours and physical activity when at school.

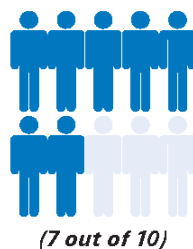
Q8 When at school, does MWEW make it easier for your child to:



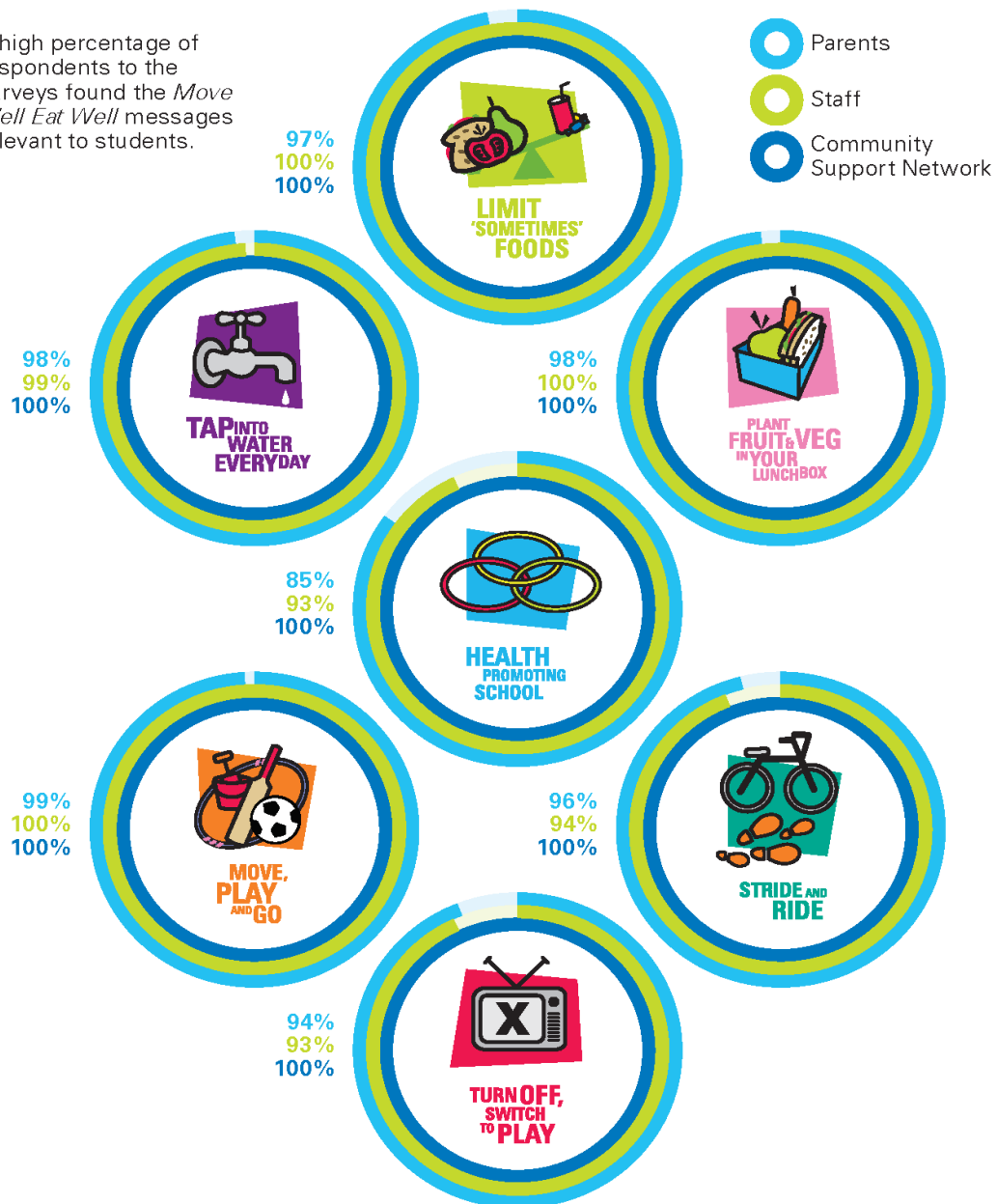
Seventy-six percent (**76%**) of parents indicated that their children had become more aware of the **value of healthy eating** as a result of MWEW.



Parents were asked whether their child had become more aware of the **value of physical activity** as a result of MWEW. **70%** answered 'a lot' or a 'moderate amount'.



A high percentage of respondents to the surveys found the *Move Well Eat Well* messages relevant to students.



Recommendations

Public Health Services to:

- **Continue to support the MWEW program by providing ongoing leadership and resourcing**
- **Re-position the MWEW program during 2019/2020 to align with government priorities and DoE's mental health and physical health focus areas and consider the feasibility re-branding (to encompass a 'Feel Well' or 'Be Well' focus)**
- **Lead the development of a dynamic 5-year Action Plan for the MWEW program in collaboration with the MWEW Steering Committee and based on recommendations of the evaluation**
- Increase the profile of MWEW within government and promote its inclusion in relevant government plans and strategies
- Explore options for establishing baseline data to monitor the effectiveness of the MWEW program and other PHS initiatives in changing healthy eating and physical activity behaviour and health outcomes of Tasmanian primary school students
- Update and renegotiate the Memorandums of Understanding with the DoE, TCEO and Independent Schools Office
- Explore ways to extend MWEW to high schools via further development of the Healthy Young People (HYP) resources.

The MWEW program to:

- **As part of the re-positioning of MWEW, develop a promotional campaign for 2020 to inform school communities of what it offers, its alignment to curriculum areas and priorities, MWEW staff roles and responsibilities, key contact numbers etc**
- **Increase support, outreach and communication with schools and the profile of MWEW in the community**
- **Reinvigorate the TAG calling for new members, particularly from Catholic and Independent school systems, and establish more regular meetings (e.g. once per term) enabling statewide engagement (e.g. northern meetings or online meetings).**
- **Continue to develop and update program resources and incentives, and consider re-vamping/modernisation of the MWEW website, icons, signage etc as part of the 5 Year MWEW plan (in consultation with the TAG and DoE/Catholic and Independent schools)**
- **Work with MWEW Steering Committee members to develop a model MWEW Implementation Plan/process for schools aimed at minimising paperwork and making this simple, streamlined and integrated with similar programs**
- Contact new school principals and provide presentations to principals' forums
- Provide support to new MWEW school contact people and school nurses taking on a lead role in implementing the program and help develop mentoring/buddy relationships

- Provide additional support and further incentives to schools undertaking the Award/Renewal processes
- Consider some flexibility to accommodate schools with specific barriers to meeting some criteria (e.g. location, lack of a canteen, lack of cooking facilities)
- Promote regular MWEW refreshers for schools, particularly those going through Award/Renewal processes.
- Investigate ways to increase the use of the MWEW Facebook page as a forum for sharing ideas and celebrating successes among schools and school communities
- Consider removal of password protection to the website and online resources
- Consider a partnership with KidsMatter and Rethink Mental Health (Mental Health Services Tasmania)
- Further develop materials linking MWEW to oral health
- Engage with CSN members who are interested in joint planning and collaboration (including local government) and explore ways to support schools in promoting healthy food and physical activity options in their communities (e.g. via local takeaway shops, sporting clubs).

The Department of Education to:

- **Continue to support and promote the MWEW program**
- Contribute to the development of a model MWEW Implementation Plan (as part of the focus on wellbeing) to guide schools in the development of school-specific planning and sustainability
- Work with the Department of Health to explore ways to extend MWEW to high schools via further development of the Healthy Young People (HYP) resources.

The evaluators note that following the appointment of a new full time MWEW Program Coordinator in May 2018, work has commenced on implementing some of these recommendations. Implementation of recommendations that are large scale and far-reaching is contingent on resources, funding and capacity.

