

Tasmanian Award schools: what are they saying?

A summary of the evaluation of Award schools, 2011

1 BACKGROUND

Move Well Eat Well (MWEW) is a joint Australian and State Government initiative funded under the National Partnership Agreement on Preventive Health. It is managed by the Department of Health and Human Services, with the cooperation and support of a range of partner organisations and services. *Move Well Eat Well* promotes a healthier Tasmania in which children can enjoy healthy eating and physical activity every day. It contributes to a healthy lifestyle and to the prevention of a range of chronic conditions such as obesity, diabetes, heart disease, some cancers and dental decay.

The *Move Well Eat Well* Award is available to Tasmanian early childhood services and primary schools. Schools and services that become Members of the program are supported to meet key criteria which reinforce healthy eating and promote physical activity.

In 2011, *Move Well Eat Well* undertook an evaluation of 12 Tasmanian primary schools that had achieved a *Move Well Eat Well* Award within the last twelve months ie had been awarded for one year.

2 THE EXPERIENCE OF BEING AN AWARD SCHOOL

All of the participating schools found the Award was valuable to their school. For some, it enhanced their recognition within their local community while for others it acted as a catalyst for change, conferring on them the legitimacy to focus on healthy eating, physical activity and healthy lifestyles within the school setting. The MWEW application process served as the impetus for a whole range of actions to improve the health and wellbeing in schools, described by some as a culture shift within their school community.

The MWEW framework fitted with the healthy lifestyles goals of many schools and the integrated, comprehensive nature of the program provided the structure and resources to work towards a healthy outcome and in some cases to form effective partnerships with other groups and organisations. It enabled schools to identify gaps in physical activity or healthy eating opportunities and made them more conscious of implementing policies and initiatives consistently and many schools have now integrated MWEW into their School Improvement Plan.

In some award schools, the MWEW programs fostered greater engagement with parents in specific MWEW activities while for others it meant linking to existing community development initiatives.



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WATER
EVERYDAY



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FOODS



MOVE,
PLAY
AND GO



TURN OFF,
SWITCH
TO PLAY



STRIDE
AND
RIDE

Move Well Eat Well

www.movewelleatwell.tas.gov.au

3 IMPLEMENTATION OF MWEW POLICIES AND PRACTICES

A number of common themes emerged as contributing to successful implementation of the MWEW program.

- Tailoring MWEW to the culture of the school/broader community School 'Champions' for health and wellbeing and visible leadership by the Principal
- Student and staff role models to promote and facilitate healthy eating and physical activity,
- Partnerships with external bodies to develop supportive infrastructure (such as bike tracks) and to increase options available to students and families (e.g. Active After Schools Communities, Tas School Canteen Association)
- Replacing 'occasional' food fundraisers with alternatives

4 CHALLENGES TO IMPLEMENTATION OF MWEW

The challenges schools faced often reflected differing school cultures and communities. These included:

- Changing existing models of school canteen or food service provision
- Finding healthy fundraising ideas as an alternative to traditional sweet sales
- Changes of key personnel (particularly Principals) resulting in a loss of focus on MWEW

5 POTENTIAL FOR DEVELOPMENT

The evaluation pointed to a number of ideas for future directions as the MWEW program evolves including

- A focus on the links between physical and mental health
- Professional learning support for staff in dealing with complex health and wellbeing issues.
- Expanded opportunities for Member schools to share ideas with each other

6 CONCLUSION

All of the schools participating in the 2011 evaluation valued the MWEW Award for providing focus and a consistent framework for health and wellbeing activity. In some schools this has led to significant cultural change while for others it has enabled consolidation and ongoing improvement.

The Award schools have for the most part shaped MWEW to fit the particular culture of their school community and are proud of their achievements.

The findings of this evaluation indicate that MWEW is being embedded into the operating philosophy by the majority of Award Schools. The language, resources and style of support provided is highly valued by the schools.

Schools would like the MWEW program to continue to support them to access resources and equipment, to gain up to date information, access to professional development for new staff and assistance in writing documentation.



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The Tasmanian *Move Well Eat Well* Award Program is adapted from the Kids – 'Go for your life' program ©State of Victoria, Australia.

It is a joint Australian and State Government initiative under the National Partnership Agreement on Preventive Health.

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