Immanuel Lutheran School Gawler

Healthy lunchboxes

An eat well be active - Primary Schools project school

Our thanks go to ACHPER for this article from ewba Newsletter Feb 2013

Immanuel Lutheran School is an IB school in Gawler. We have a growing enrolment with currently just over 350 students from Reception to year 7. Immanuel has been involved in the eat well be active – Primary School Project for approximately 4 years.

Eating well
Initially the eat well be active – Primary School Project (EWBA) committee wanted to delve into what students were putting into their lunch boxes. We had an inkling that a large number of students were eating red foods, foods with high fat, sugar and/or salt levels (energy dense, nutrient poor (EDNP)). This was an assumption that had no proof. The objective was to gather data. Along with the help of the Yr. 6/7 students we completed a whole school lunch box audit. The results were as we suspected; many students had packaged processed foods for recess. We were surprised to learn that student’s lunches were reasonably healthy.

As a result of the data findings we decided to focus on what the students were eating at recess. Previously the school had been offering a canteen service once a week at lunchtime. After discussions with various stakeholders, parents, teachers and a local dietician we decided to focus our attention on recess and not lunch. Friendly Food Friday was then created. Based on recommendations that evolved from becoming a right bite policy school, healthy and nutritious homemade recess foods became available for purchase. While the Friendly Food Friday was in its infancy the school vegetable garden had developed and was producing enough produce to be used in the canteen recipes. What was not used in the cooking was sold at a Friday market which was available to parents. Education was a key aspect of getting the healthy food message through to the students. The education came through the Peer Leaders program. In this program, identified year 6/7 students became trained...
experts to teach a variety of health lessons to the younger students. We also held a variety of education sessions run by health professionals for parents. We found many of the people who came were mums. We wanted to get the message through to dads and held a specific Father Son evening that gave the opportunity for dads and their sons to create a healthy meal and learn about nutritious foods as well as spending quality time together (something lost in today’s hectic society).

A goal of the project is to create change which is sustainable. The year 2/3 teachers are currently doing an inquiry unit with a central idea “A balance between nutrition and exercise contributes to human health” During this unit they will be conducting another lunch box audit. Once this is completed the results will be compared with those from 4 years ago. This will enable us to measure the success of the above mentioned programs and initiatives.

Immanuel Lutheran School Gawler has also made many changes in the way we implement and encourage physical activity throughout the school. Some of these have included: whole school health hustle, a variety of staff professional learning, new playground and lines in the playground, fitness program, and documentation of a PE program which is sequential and skills based.

As the EWBA coordinator at Immanuel I have had the pleasure of regular meetings with Rick Baldock our ACHPER (SA) project coordinator. We have many discussions, shared ideas and encouraged us to fulfil our school goals and my passions in Health and PE. Rick’s experience and knowledge of current trends has helped clarify and create an innovative PE curriculum. With the support from our school leadership we have been able to design and support a range of innovative strategies to improve healthy eating and physical activity. Working with our staff, students and parents has led to a deeper understanding of what is happening in our community regarding healthy eating, physical activity and sedentary behaviours. Armed with a range of evidence about what was happening and with the active support of staff, students, parents and the eat well be active – Primary School Project we have begun to make a real and sustainable difference to our children’s lives.

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eat well be active - Primary Schools Project, a joint SA Health and Department for Education and Child Development project from 2008-2013.