

Food Education – Interesting Practice Exemplar

What is this?

A case study looking at how one primary school brought about a transformation in the snacks consumed at morning break.

Who is it for?

Teachers, pupils and parents with a desire to change the culture and practice around snacks.

The issue

Staff at a primary school in Aberdeen were concerned about the quality and quantity of snacks being brought to school for morning break which generally did not reflect the nutrition and dietary messages children were learning at school. Working with the Pupil Council and with the support of staff and pupils, the school embarked on series of initiatives to improve morning break snacks.

What was done?

- The Pupil Council undertook surveys looking at the types of food consumed at morning break. Staff were aware that almost all children were eating breakfast before coming to school.
- After analysing the results of the survey, a healthy snack day was introduced along with a tuckshop selling healthy snacks one day a week. (Initially fresh and dried fruit, popcorn, low fat crisps, fruit juice, water, milk). Competitive pricing was used to encourage sales.
- A newsletter to parents shared the schools approach to promoting healthy options for snack and asked for parental support on the healthy snack day.
- Social snack focusing on development of social skills was introduced where children would come together in their classes to eat snack together before going out to play.
- The tuckshop was a success and it was agreed to open it over two days.
- Healthy snack was rolled out to five days per week.
- Children were consulted on their views on healthy snacks. Ultimately the range of snacks on offer was changed to become fruit/vegetables only.
- The expectation that children would bring only fresh fruit or vegetables from home was highlighted in the school handbook. At all stages it was discussed in class and following a exploration by children in P4 and P7 of sugar in drinks information was shared with parents via the school newsletter and at parents evenings. This expectation is also discussed with parents at enrolment.
- The introduction of a daily mile prior to morning break in 2016 resulted in social snack becoming active social snack where children walked, snacked and talked together.
- The school did not consult with parents, rather the focus was on supporting children to apply their learning about good food choices.
- The last day of each term is designated as a treat day where children have free choice of snack.

What were the challenges?

- A small number of parents were not initially fully on board but staff stood by their belief that as a health promoting school, promoting healthy options for morning snack was a key part of the whole school approach to promoting a healthy lifestyle.

- Oral health concerns related to fruit acids and tooth care were discussed with health partners Childsmile.
- When items such as cereal bars and fruit puree products were noted to be increasingly appearing as snacks from home information was provided for parents to explain the rationale for fresh fruit and vegetables only.

What impact has this had?

- Almost every child eats fruit/vegetables almost every day at morning break. This continues the practice from nursery where all children eat fruit for snack.
- Significant numbers of children continue to bring fruit/vegetables on termly free choice treat days.
- This approach has been in place for many years and is accepted practice in Abbotswell PS.
- Parents are very supportive and engaged.
- Playground litter following morning break is no longer an issue.

Possible next steps?

- There is potential for children, staff and parents to look at monitoring the impact of morning snack on uptake of fruit/vegetables at other times of the day, including packed and school lunches.
- Continue to share this good practice example with other schools within the ASG including the cluster secondary school.

How to find out more?

Further information about the success of the approach taken at Abbotswell Primary School can be obtained by contacting
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