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FOOD & FRIENDS STUDENT NUTRITION PROGRAM: BASELINE EVALUATION FINDINGS

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- Upper Grand District School Board, specifically the Program Coordinators, Principals and Teachers of Mitchell Woods, Elora, Waverly and Palmerston Public Schools.
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INTRODUCTION

This project was prepared for The Children's Foundation of Guelph and Wellington's Food & Friends Program. Serving Dufferin, Wellington and Guelph, Food & Friends strives to initiate, facilitate and support quality nutrition programs in local schools, providing meals ranging from breakfast, lunch and snacks programs¹ to those wishing to make use of it. Nutrition programs are offered in a supportive, non-judgemental environment, aimed to ensure that students do not go hungry so that they are able to reach their full potential in school.

The goal of this project was to evaluate the universality of student nutrition programs (SNPs) in Guelph-Wellington-Dufferin. Specifically, our goal was to examine the opinions and experiences of students and program coordinators and understand how they perceive the benefits of universally offered SNPs. These goals will help provide information about the benefits of universally offered programs and can be used to improve SNPs and help acquire future funding.

This project was built upon previous research done by the Research Shop, *Evaluating Universal Student Nutrition Programs: Methods, Indicators, and Outcomes*, which provided an overview of the existing literature and evaluations of Student Nutrition Programs (Bond, 2015). Additionally, a Logic Model (Appendix A) and Evaluation Framework (Appendix B) was created for Food & Friends by Natachia Bond (former Research Shop Intern), Sara Crann (Project Manager) with support from Lindsey Thomson (CESI staff), and Anita Macfarlane (Food & Friends).

Research Goals

The objectives of this research project were to evaluate the universality of Student Nutrition Programs (SNP) as delivered by Food & Friends Guelph-Wellington-Dufferin. Specifically, we aimed to determine how students, program coordinators, and principals perceive the benefits of SNPs, evaluate the extent to which SNPs are being offered universally in schools and identify the challenges involved with offering this universally.

The overall goal of this research was to help provide information about the benefits of universally offered programs. The information obtained will be used to inform, support, and advocate for SNP programming in the future.

¹ Program offerings vary by school.



Four types of evaluative questions were used to investigate the objectives outlined above. These included an outcome and three process evaluations, listed below:

1. Outcome evaluation: What are the perceived impacts of universal SNPs?
2. Process evaluation: To what extent are program coordinators understanding/following ministry and sponsor directives?
3. Process evaluation: To what extent are program volunteers, coordinators, and principals committed to SNPs?
4. Process evaluation: Is there adequate support and effective use of funding to meet ministry and sponsor directives?

Background

The Student Nutrition Program is a program in Ontario that ensures all school children have access to safe and nutritious food throughout the school day. In Canada, not all school-aged children receive a nutritious breakfast prior to arriving at school. Children may not consume a morning meal due to a variety of factors including: morning time constraints, parental work schedule, low appetite in the morning, long travel time to school, or lack of food in the household (de Wit, 2012).

SNPs are designed to provide children and youth with access to snacks and meals through schools or community organizations (de Wit, 2012). In Ontario, nutrition programs are partially funded by the Ministry of Children and Youth services, but Canada does not have a standard student nutrition model (de Wit, 2012). The literature suggests that SNPs benefit students by improving their attendance, behavior, academic performance, as well as their health and nutrition (Lambton Student Nutrition Advisory Committee, 2012).

Despite the benefits of participating in SNPs, participation can be hindered. While not a large cause for concern with younger children, adolescents and families deal with fear of stigmatization and judgment from peers for using SNPs (Poppendieck, 2010). These concerns can cause the programs to alienate children and families living in poverty (Raine, McIntyre, & Dayle, 2003). For this reason, universal SNPs were developed.

Universal SNPs are designed to reduce stigma and alienation associated with SNPs that are focused on families of need. Universal nutrition programs provide meals to all



students and participation is not dependent on a child's or youth's financial status (Muthuswamy, 2012). This type of program is designed to remove financial and stigmatizing barriers (Muthuswamy, 2012). Many universal nutrition programs operate throughout Ontario and several have been evaluated on their performance and the attitudes towards them.

METHODS

To evaluate the Student Nutrition Program, quantitative and qualitative methods were used (see Appendices D & E for study materials). Students were asked to complete a survey consisting of both quantitative measures and open-ended questions asking about their experience and opinions regarding the SNP offered at their school, and the principals and program coordinators at each school participated in independent semi-structured interviews focusing on the SNP. The measures were developed by the staff and interns at the Research Shop in conjunction with the Food & Friends program; most measures were adapted from existing evaluations used in similar SNP programs across Ontario. Ethics approval was received from the University of Guelph's Research Ethics Board and the Upper Grand District School Board.

Recruitment. Five public schools in the Upper Grand District School Board were invited to participate. Each school received an information letter about the study and was invited to participate by the director of the Food and Friends program via email. Of the five schools invited, four agreed to participate.

Procedure. Grade 6, 7, and 8 students (ages 10-14) enrolled in the participating schools were invited to participate. Parental consent forms (see Appendix F) were sent home with the students two days to two weeks prior to the researchers arriving. Students who returned a signed parental consent form by the designated data collection date were eligible to participate. The researchers orally reviewed the consent form with eligible students in a group setting (i.e. their classrooms) and allowed students to ask questions about the study/process. If students chose to participate after the consent process, they were asked to sign their own consent form (see Appendix G) before beginning either a hard or electronic copy of the survey (dependent on resources; see Appendix D for the survey). On average, students completed the survey in less than 20 minutes.

The principals and program coordinators at the four participating schools were all eligible to participate in the structured interview. Each interview session involved two



researchers (one conducting the interview and one taking notes) and began with an oral review and signing of the consent form (see Appendix). Interviews ranged from 20 to 50 minutes (see Appendix E for interview guide) and were recorded and transcribed for the qualitative data analysis.

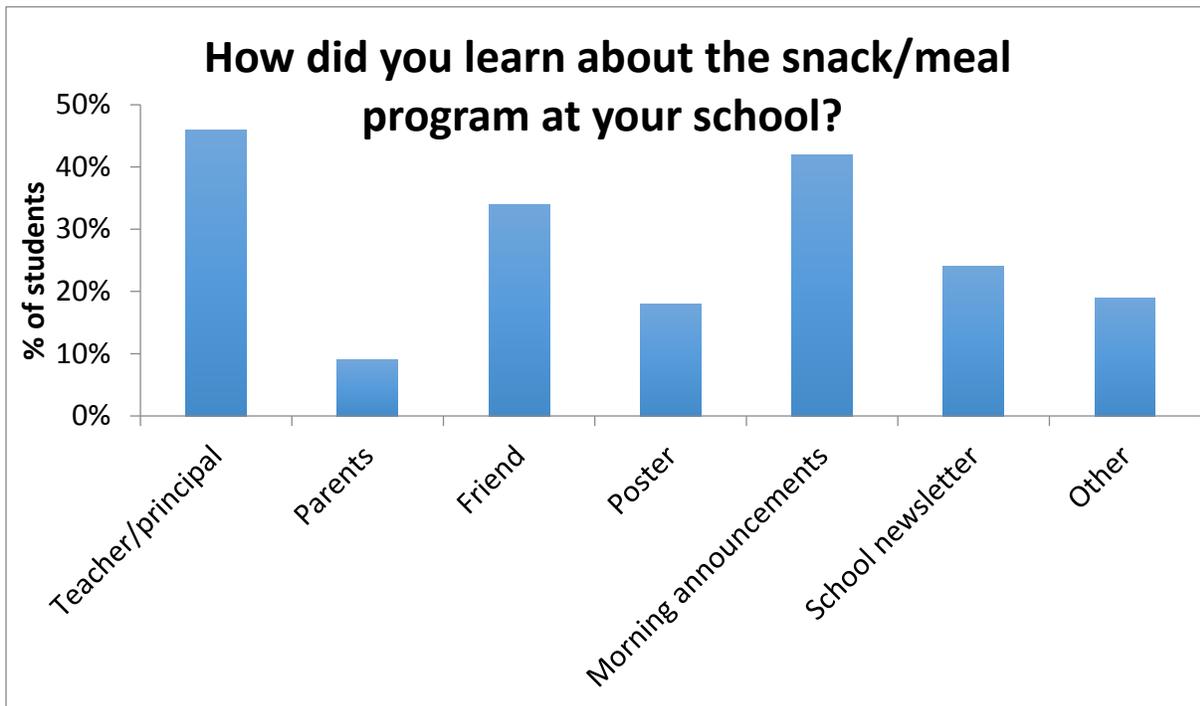
RESULTS/FINDINGS

Student Survey Results

A total of 258 students, ranging from grades 6 to 8, from four schools in the Upper Grand District School Board, participated in the SNP evaluation survey. Students completed either a hard copy (paper) version of the survey or an electronic version.

Student Knowledge of SNP

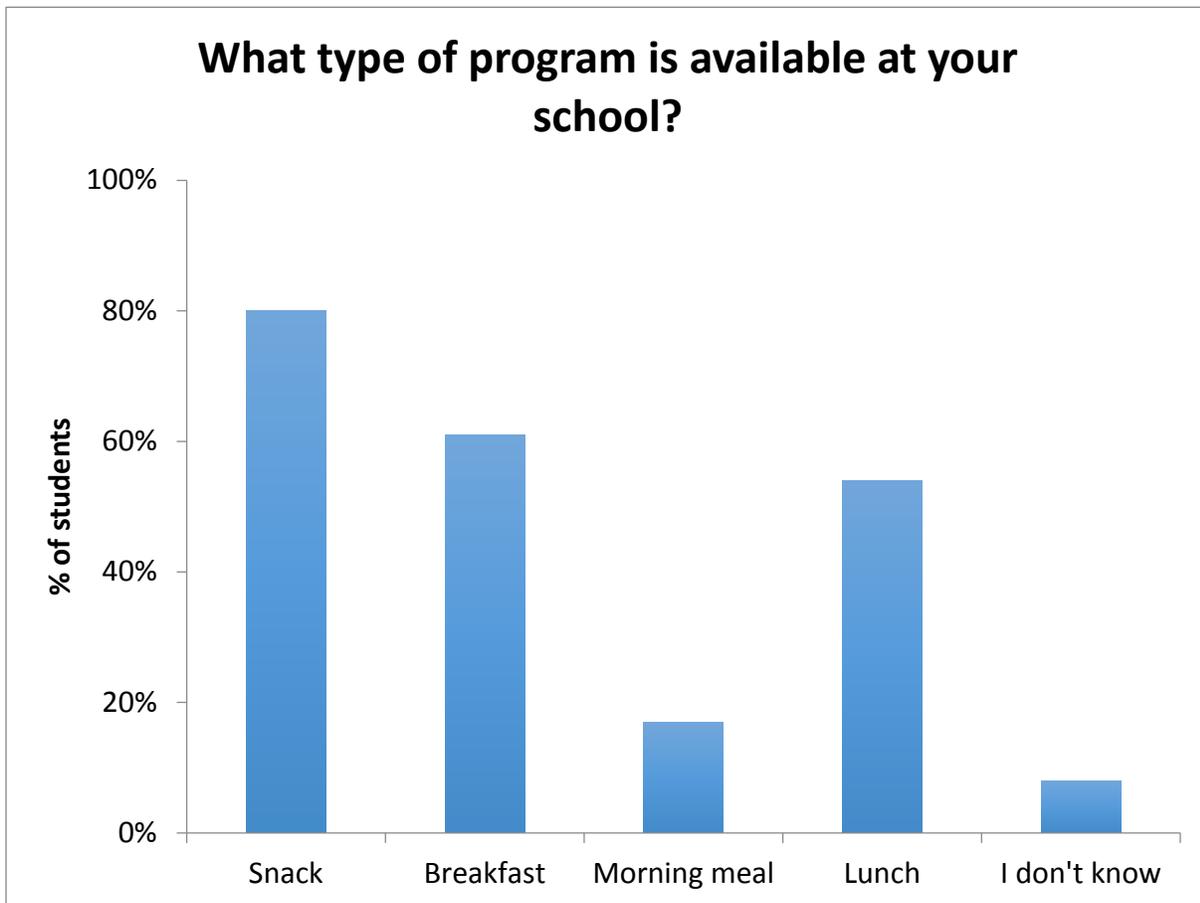
According to the student survey results, 98% of students were aware that their school offered a snack/meal program. When asked how they learned about the snack/meal program at their school, responses varied as demonstrated below. Note that the students could select multiple responses for this question.





Many of the students who selected “Other” reported that they had learned about the snack program by walking by the preparation/distribution area at their school. Several others noted that they learned about the program when a sign-up sheet was posted asking for volunteers to help (and they reported responding to this call to help out).

When asked about the types of programs that are available at their school, the most common response was a snack program, followed by breakfast and lunch. These responses were expected to vary as each of the four schools offered a different variation of the SNP. Note that the students could select more than one response for this question.



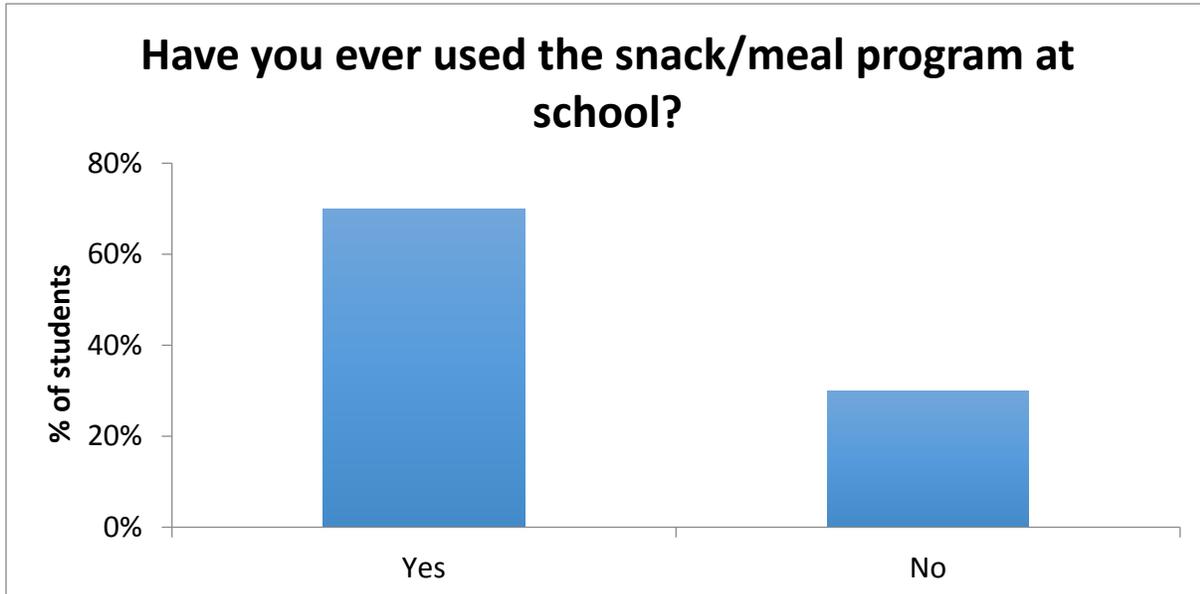
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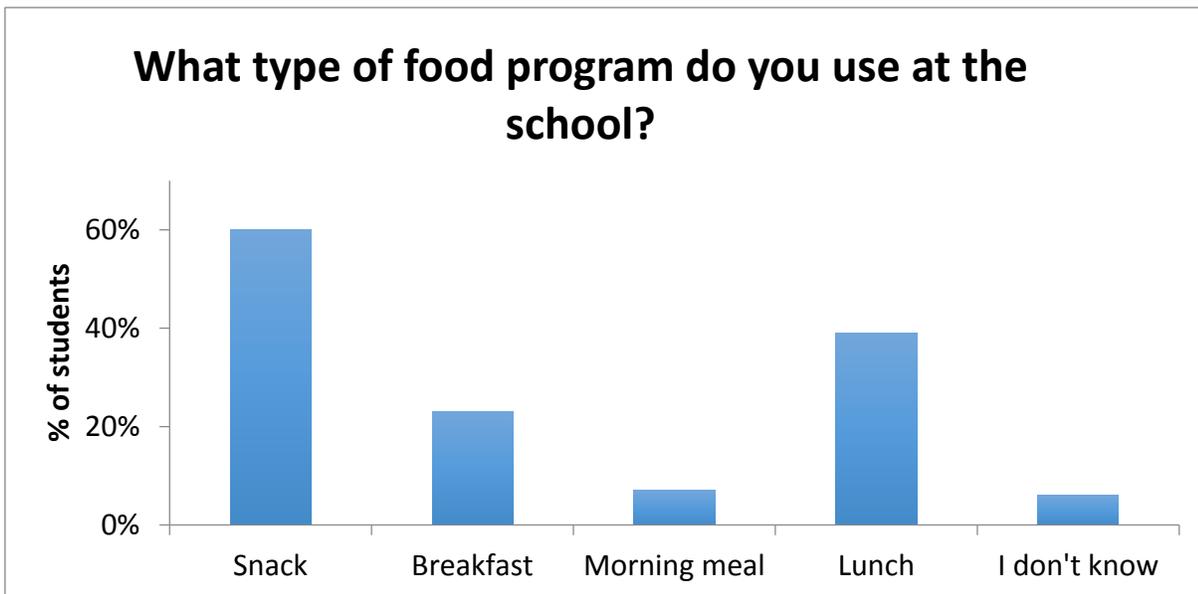


Student Participation in SNPs

To evaluate student participation in the program, the following questions were asked.

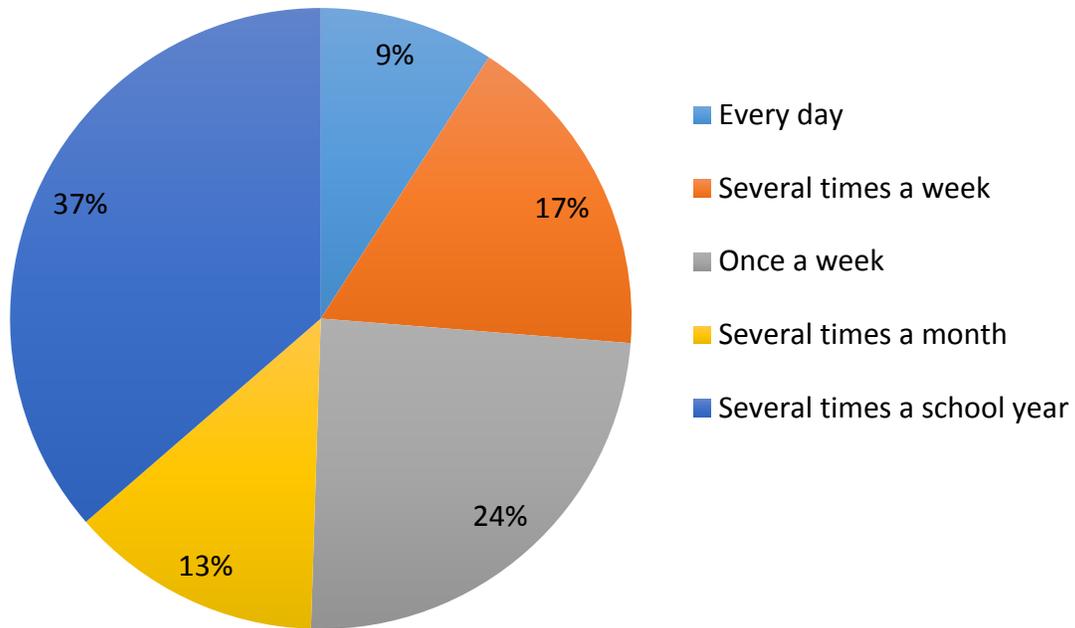


Note that students could choose more than one response for the following question.





How often do you use the snack/meal program at your school?

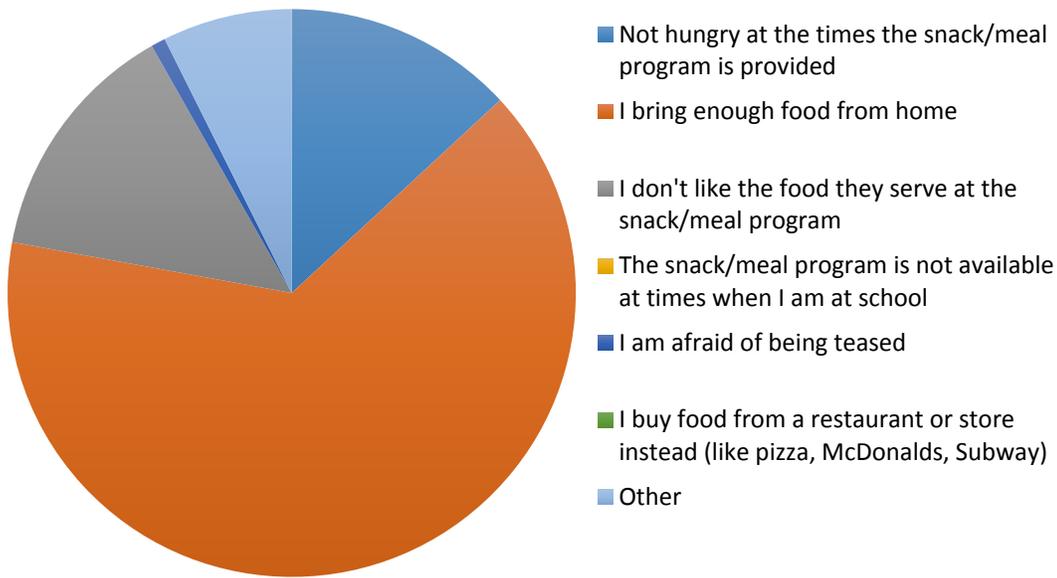


The majority of students had used the SNP at some time during the school year, with the snack and lunch program being reported as the most used. Most students reported using the SNP more than once a month. When asked what they liked most about the program, 71% of students stated the food was their favourite part. On the other hand, some students reported that they have never used the snack/meal program at their school.





Why have you never used the snack/meal program at school?

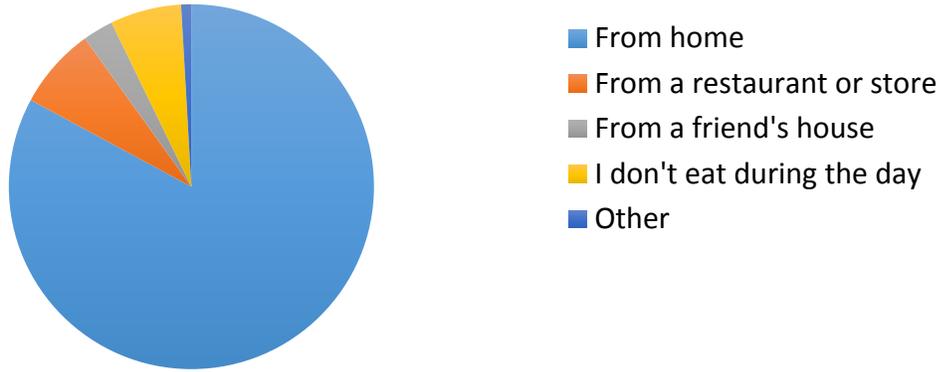


Most students who reported not participating in the program specified that they bring enough food from home, or from a store/restaurant. Six students specified another reason for not using the snack/meal program. Three of these students reported that they choose to not eat at school, one said the program was too far to go to, one reported being new to the school and simply not having the chance to use the program yet, and one reported having several allergies that prevented them from participating. When asked where they get their food for the day the following responses were given:

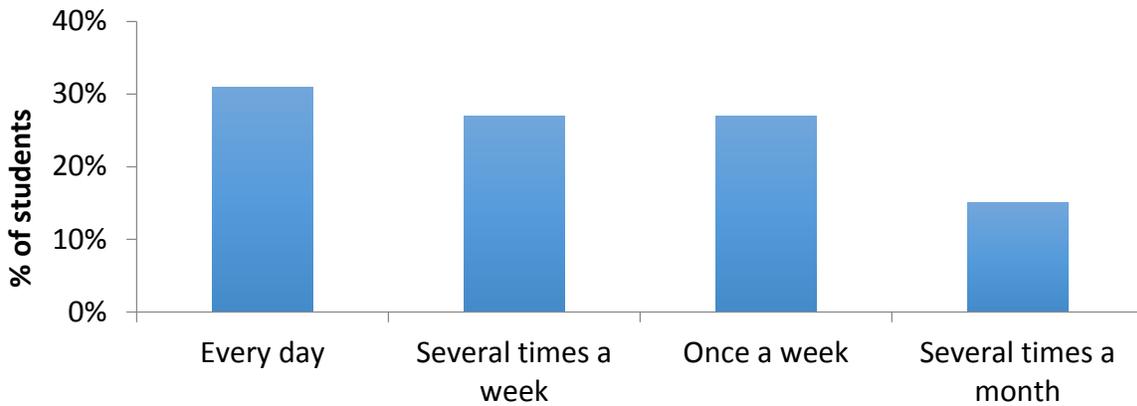




Where do you get the food you eat during the school day?



How often do you feel hungry during the day?



Factors Influencing Student Participation

Nearly two thirds of students (65%) indicated that they sometimes feel hungry during the day. When asked how often they feel hungry during the day, students answered as follows:

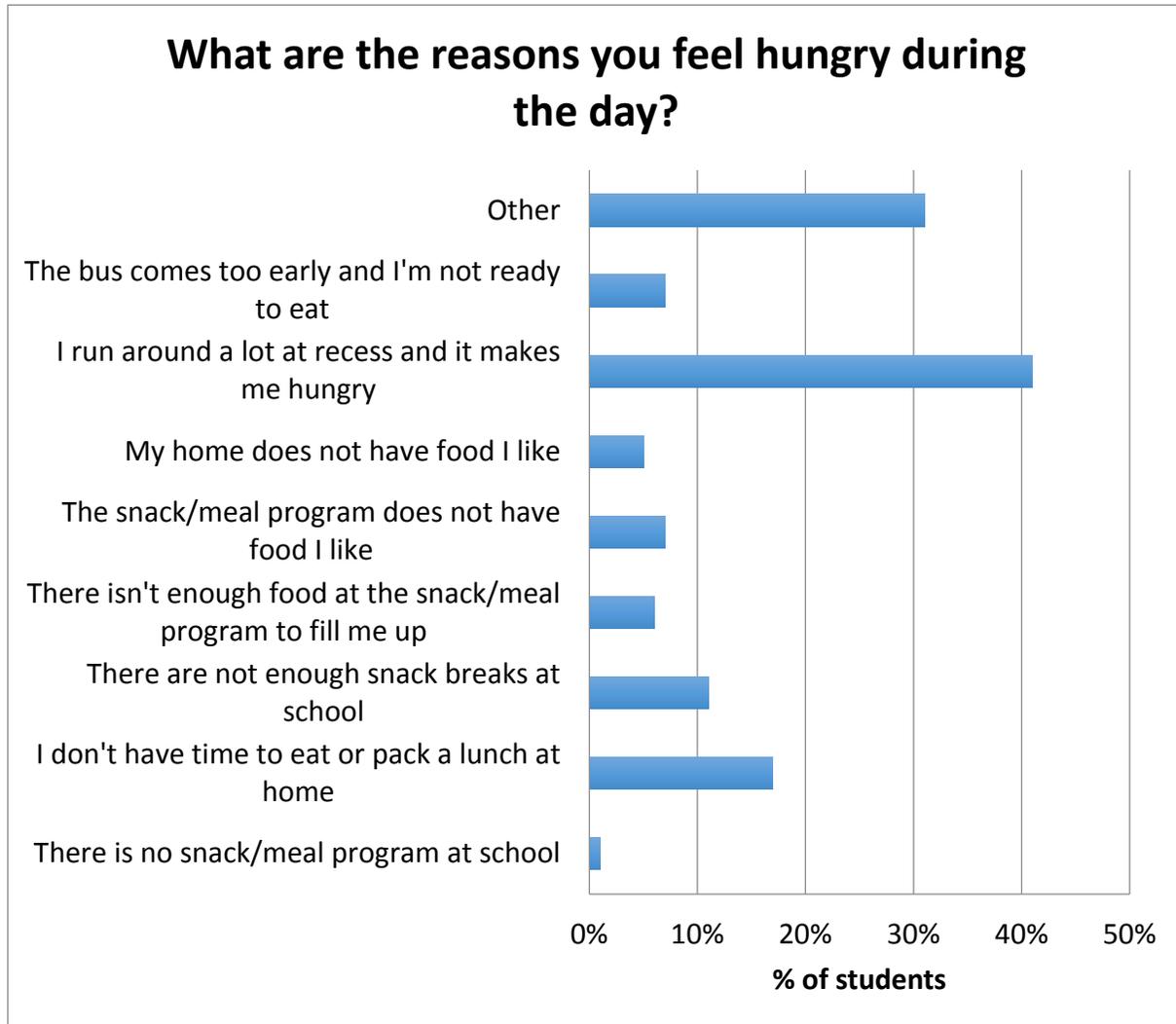


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Students also indicated the reasons for their hunger during the school day. Note that the students could choose more than one response for this question.

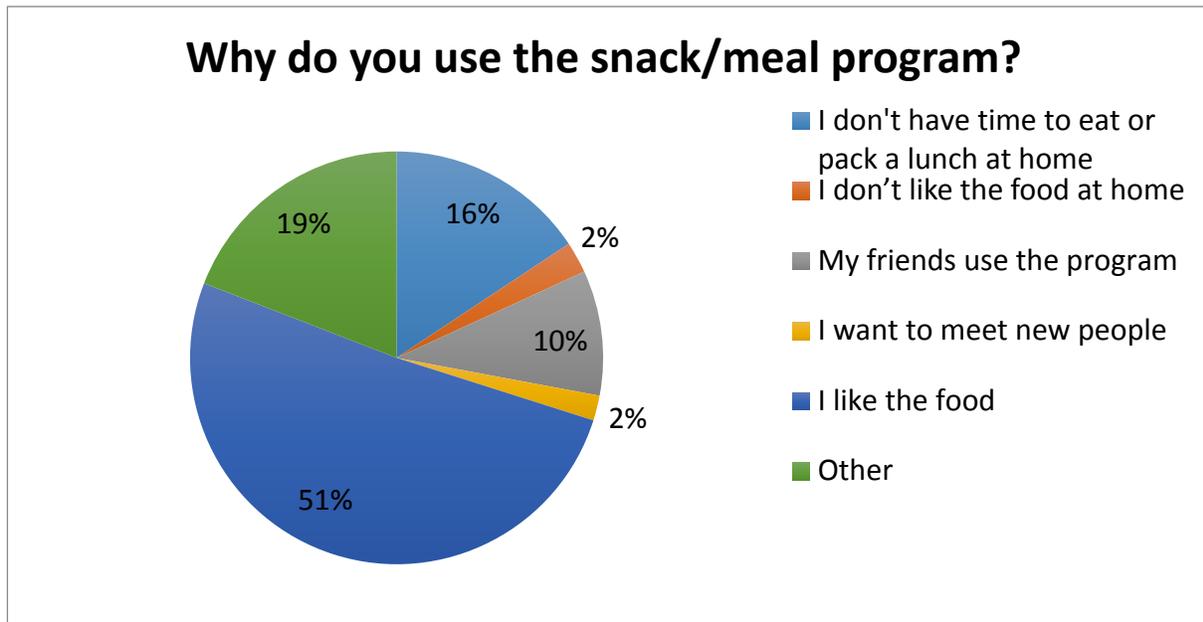


Many of the students who selected “Other” as a reason for feeling hungry during the day specified that they either forget or choose not to eat breakfast in the morning. Reports of “I’m always hungry” were also common, along with clarifications that students are hungry when it’s close to snack/lunch time. Several students acknowledged that the



nutrition breaks were not long enough, and a few reported that they did not bring enough (or any) food from home.

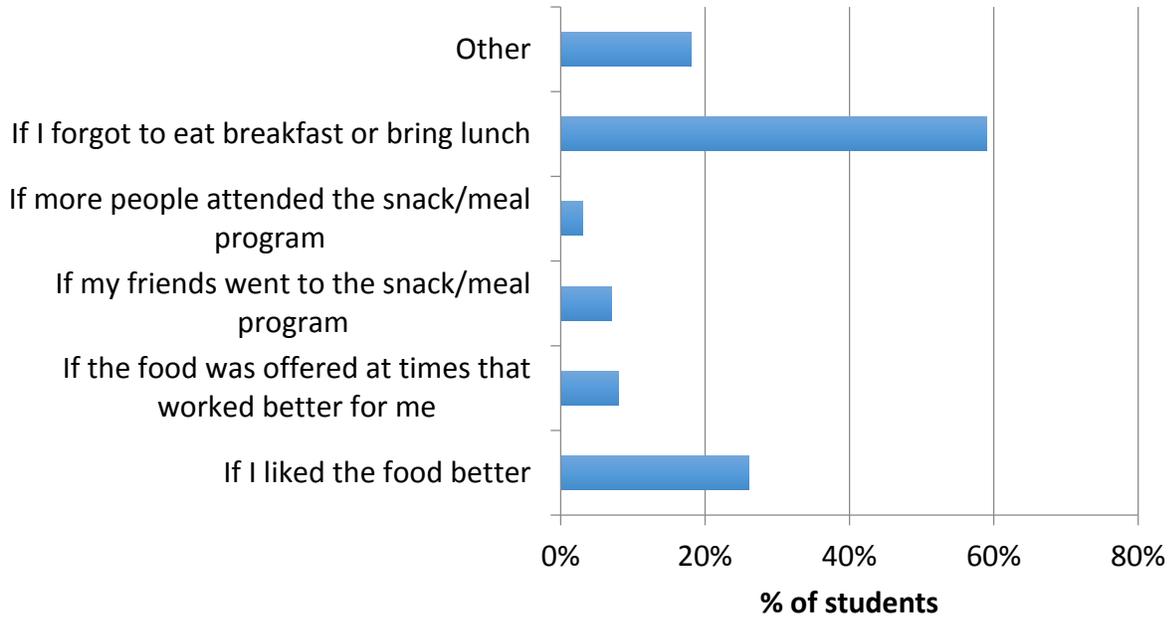
In terms of why students use the snack/meal program at their school, the most common reason reported was that the students like the food. Nearly one fifth of the students specified a different reason (other than those listed) for using the snack/meal program, with most indicating that they used the program when they did not bring/have enough food, or that they ate leftovers after they volunteered to help with the program.



When asked what would make students want to use the nutrition program, more than half reported that they would use the program if they forgot to eat breakfast or bring a lunch, and nearly one quarter said they would be more likely to participate in the program if they liked the food that was offered. Of those who indicated “Other”, answers really varied; some students said they could not think of a motivating factor to use the program, some students asked for very specific types of food, and one student acknowledged that they bring enough food and therefore they do not use the program. Note that students could select more than one response for this question.



What would make you want to eat the food provided at the snack/meal program at your school?



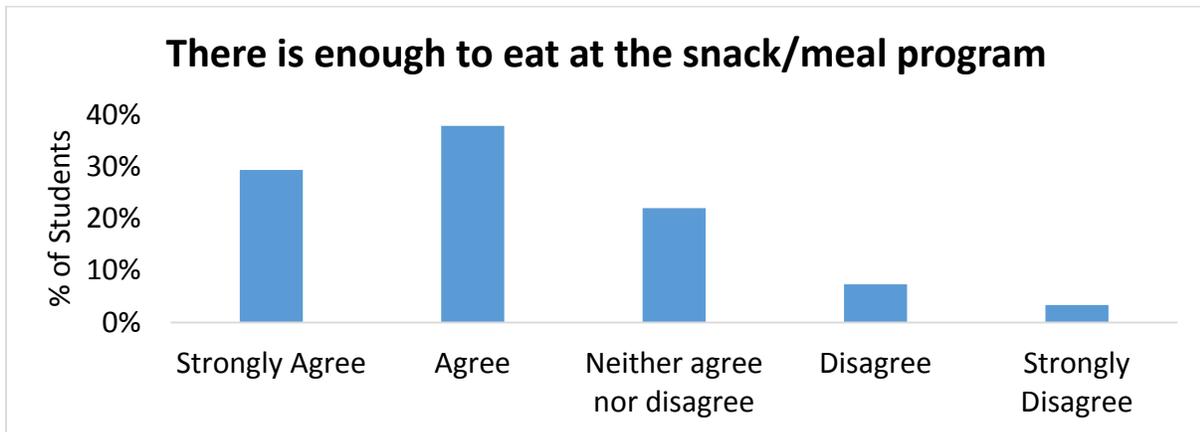
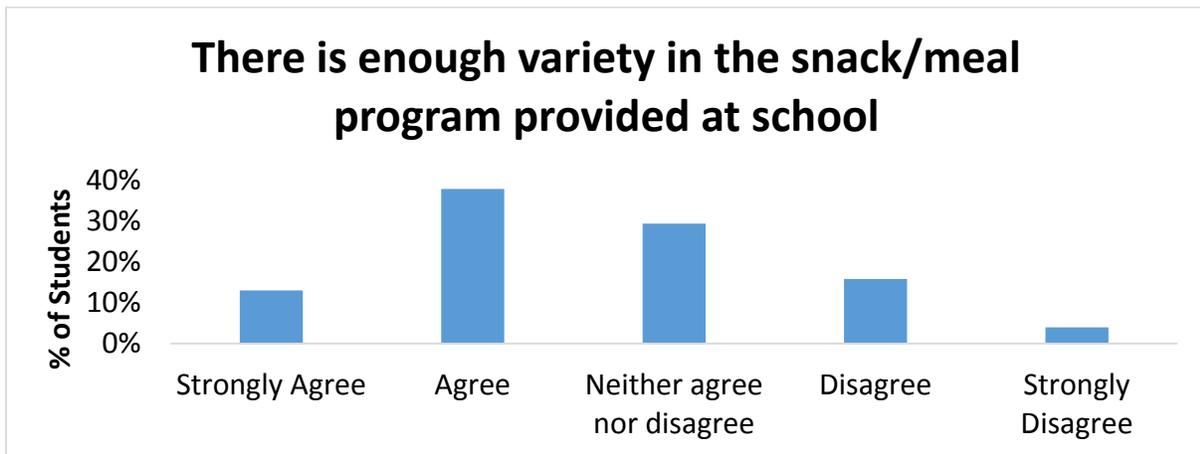
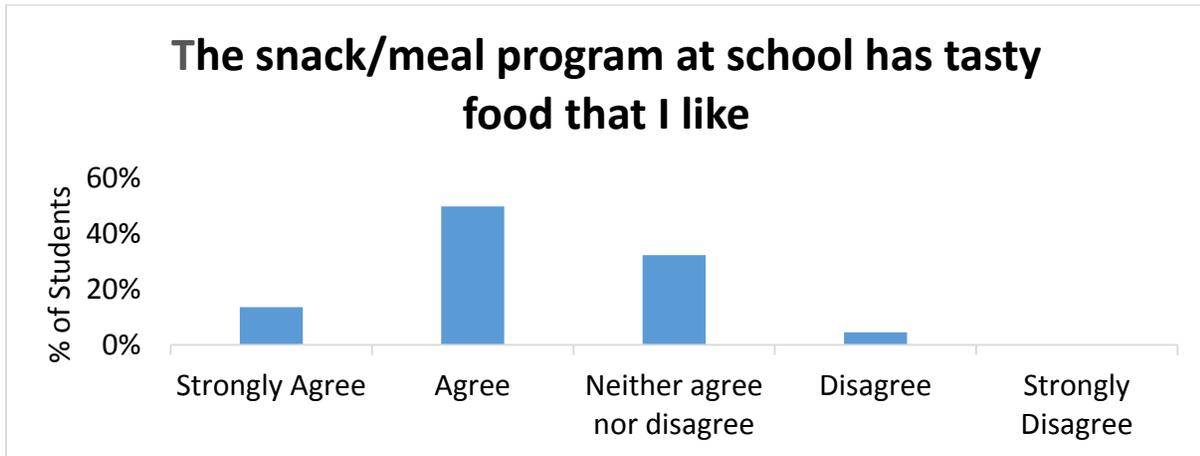
Satisfaction with the Program

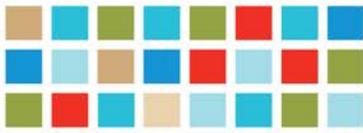
The vast majority of students that used the snack/meal program agreed/strongly agreed that the snack/meal program at their school offers healthy/nutritious food (75%), and that the food offered is fresh (72%). Most students also agreed/strongly agreed that the snack/meal program offers tasty food that they like (63%), that there is enough variety in the program (51%), and that there is enough food offered (67%); however, a number of students did not agree with these statements (as seen in the graph below).



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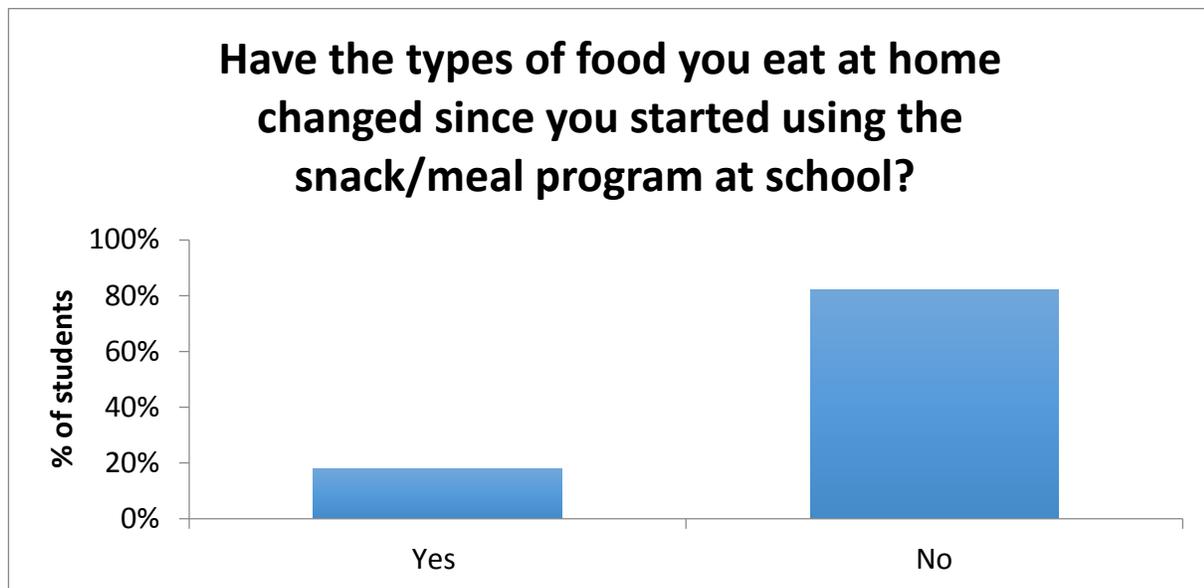




Overall, many students responded to the request for feedback to improve the program by stating they enjoyed the program the way it was. Most of the students who offered suggestions for improving the program explained that they would like to see more variety (either overall or week-to-week), and some requested some very specific menu items they would like to see (e.g. more fruits/vegetable, hot food options, more meat and, alternatively, vegetarian/vegan options; and a few requested food options such as pizza, tacos, and a selection of desserts). A few noted that it might be helpful to ask students at the school what particular foods they would like to see in the program. One concern that was raised by several students was that there was not enough time/space for the snack program, and possible solutions offered to resolve this concern involved increasing the space for the program, inviting classes one-by-one to use the program, lengthening nutrition breaks, and/or bringing food to each class “so there wouldn’t be so much pandemonium”. The last major theme to arise was that more promotion for the program should occur, as some students were still not aware of what was offered.

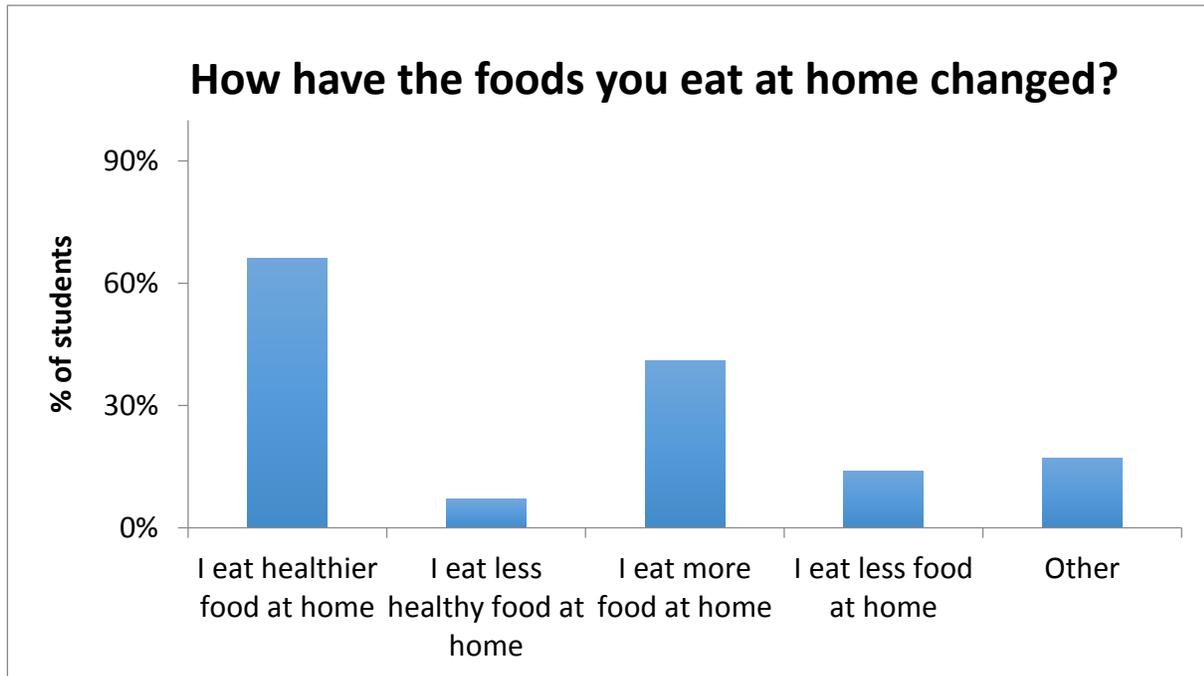
Behaviour Change

Most students reported that the types of food they ate at home did not change since they started using the snack/meal program.





For those that noticed a change in the foods they ate at home, most reported that they now eat healthier, and/or consume more. Note that students could select more than one response to this question.



Attitudes towards the SNP

The most notable effects of the snack/meal program on students were that most students felt their body was healthier (72%), most reported feeling happier (60%), and most reported that they were less stressed about being able to eat when they felt hungry (57%). On average, students reported that they did not feel the snack/meal program had an impact on their absenteeism at school, their relationships, or their grades. Anecdotally, though, students had questions about this survey item as they pointed out that they have had access to the food program since they began school.

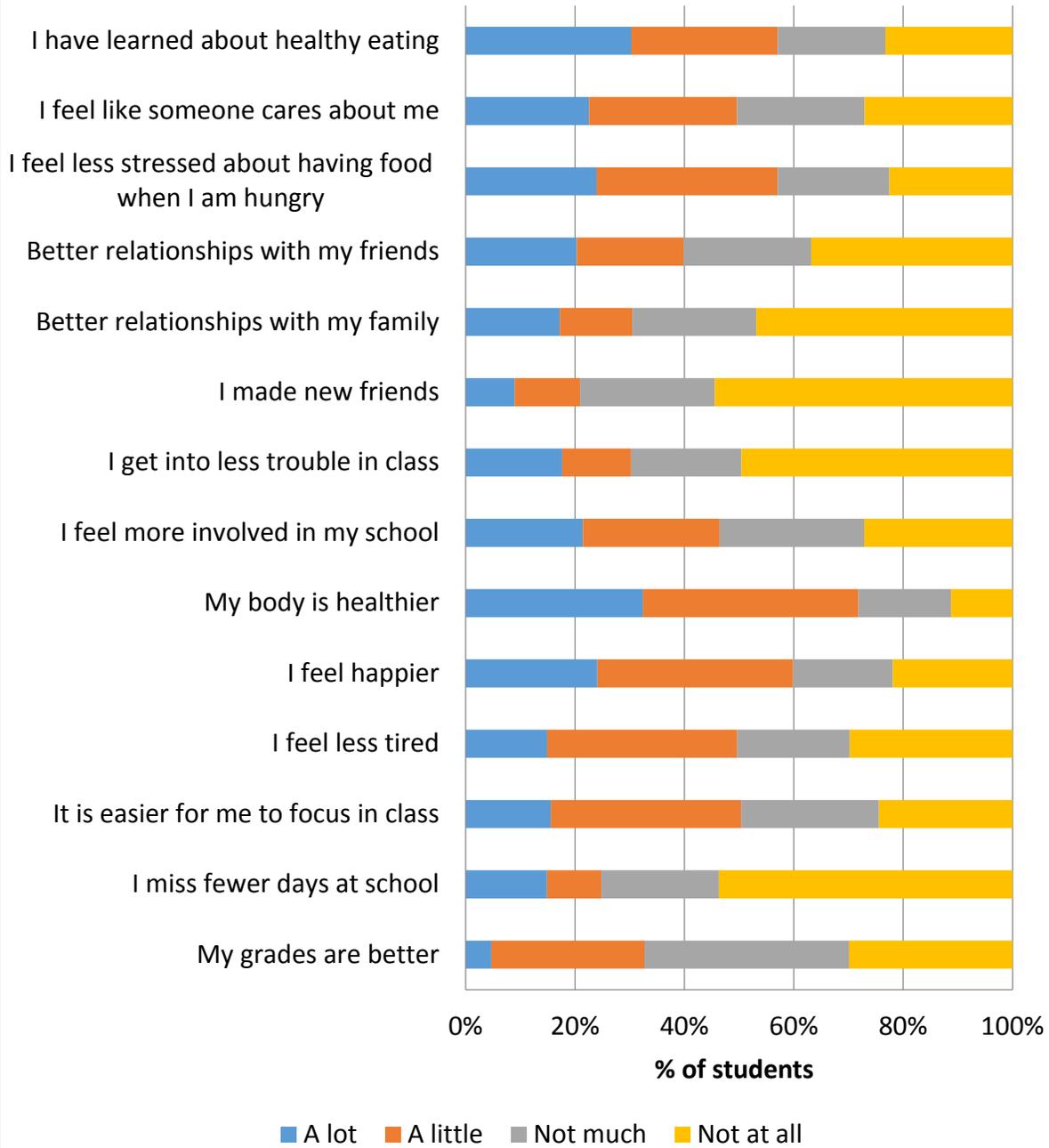


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Personal effects of the snack/meal program on students

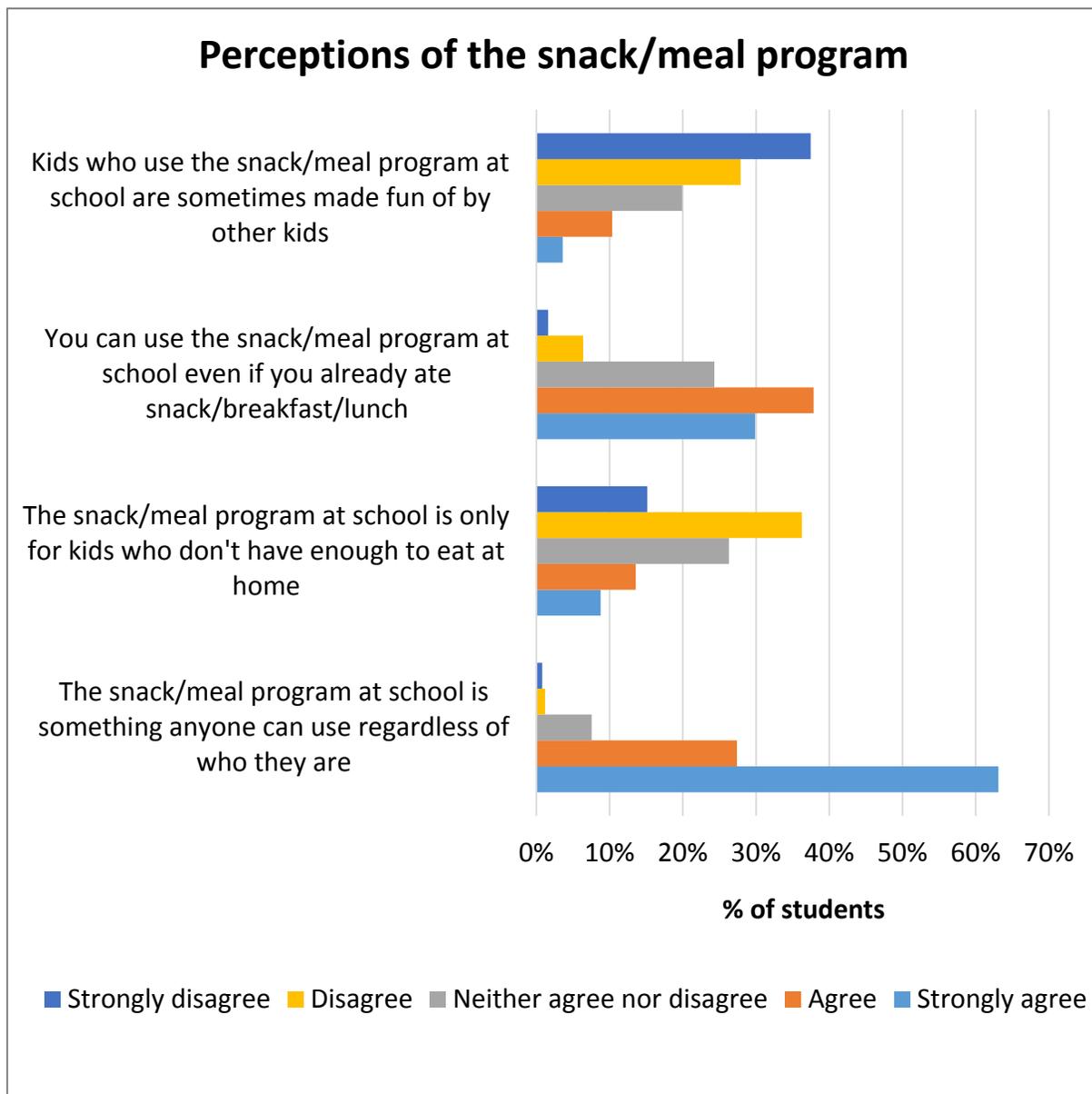


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In general, students were most likely (90%) to report that anyone can use the snack/meal program, regardless of who they were or if they had already eaten. Most participants reported that students who used the program do not get teased for their participation.





Principal/Coordinator Results

This analysis is based on interviews conducted with principals and program coordinators regarding their responsibilities of the program, experiences recruiting and working with volunteers, perspectives on program resources, and their perception of the impact of student nutrition programs on students. This section is presented according to the structure of the questions asked during the interviews and by themes that emerged during the analysis.

Responsibilities and Experiences

Questions in this section relate to the principals and program coordinators involvement with the student nutrition programs, aspects of their role they enjoy, and challenges they face in running the program.

Involvement and Responsibilities

Involvement of both principals and program coordinators in student nutrition programs varied to some degree. While some principals were highly involved and knowledgeable about the programs, others described more limited responsibilities and were involved in the program on a more peripheral level such as signing cheques and approving menus. Principals who were more involved in the program described responsibilities such as helping with fundraising, picking up food, overseeing the program, watching the budget, working with staff and parents, and approving food choices. All of the principals believed the program was valuable, wanted to continue running it, and did not see their involvement and responsibilities of the program overly taxing. One principal described his responsibilities as “its certainly an add on but the benefits far outweigh the little bit of stress”.

Program coordinators were highly committed and involved with the student nutrition program. Each school had one program coordinator aside from one school which had two program coordinators who shared responsibilities. Every program coordinator described their roles as often going beyond working hours. This included shopping on weekends, arriving before school starts, and staying late after school. Responsibilities included buying and ordering food, menu planning, food preparation, serving food, clean-up, fundraising, applying for grants, paperwork, recruiting volunteers, and managing volunteers and students. Program coordinators either applied, volunteered, or were asked to take on the role. Sometimes this was in addition to other responsibilities such as being a teacher at the schools.



Positive Aspects of Role

Both principals and program coordinators described positive aspects of their role in the student nutrition program and were noted as reasons why they continued to be involved in the program. Benefits included: addressing needs in the community, improving academic learning and concentration, providing leadership skills for students, seeing students socializing with friends, and knowing students enjoyed the food (some of these benefits are explored further under 'Perceived Benefits of the Program').

Program coordinators also commonly discussed the excitement and enjoyment they saw in students attending the program as one of the main benefits of their role. One program coordinator described the stories she heard from teachers and students about the program as “really heartwarming and its nice to give kids that opportunity”. Other benefits included working with staff and parents, meeting new people, offering healthy foods to students, having students try new foods, connecting with students, meeting a need for children who are hungry, and seeing how valuable and well used the program is in the schools.

Principals also discussed the benefits of their role in the program including meeting a need in the community, helping students concentrate in class, helping to calm students, using the breakfast program as a drop-off for students who arrive early to school, and creating a positive start to students' days.

Challenges

Both principals and program coordinators identified several challenges they experienced within their roles and in running the program. Across the interviews, the challenges appeared to be more cumbersome for program coordinators compared to principals as their roles within the program were more involved. An analysis of some of these challenges are presented below.

Time

Program coordinators described their roles as one they enjoyed yet was very time consuming. One program coordinator stated she left her position as she felt the time she dedicated to the program was significantly cutting into her home life with her children, “I saw how much time I was dedicating to that and you know some of it I wouldn't be paid for it was just more volunteer time and it was a lot of work and I found my home life lacking”. Other program coordinators also mentioned the extra time they



dedicated to the program such as on weekends, before and after school as a large commitment. Time management was mentioned by program coordinators as a critical part of their role in juggling their role as program coordinator and their home life.

Similarly, some principals found time as one of their biggest challenges, “Time is always and probably the biggest restraint. I’m always trying to find time”. However, other principals we interviewed mentioned time as not being a significant challenge in their responsibilities to the program. Therefore, time being a constraint varied depending on each principal’s responsibilities of the program in addition to other duties they held.

Food

All of the program coordinators described challenges related to food. Issues included finding companies that provide peanut free food without being overly expensive, developing new menu plans while keeping costs low, and being able to afford certain foods in meeting the recommended food guidelines.

A specific company used by the program was mentioned by several principals and program coordinators who used their services for the program as resulting in some difficulties relating to extra charges, and incorrect deliveries of food products. A desire was expressed in wanting recommendations of companies that could provide large deliveries of food without substantial costs added.

Space and Storage

Space to prep food was described by several program coordinators as an issue they faced in running the program. Due to lack of space, one program coordinator stated she felt restricted in being able to prep large quantities of food or prepare hot meals. Lack of space also created other problems such as limiting the number volunteers who can help prep food, reducing the amount of food that can be purchased and stored, and being restricted by the types of food that’s can be prepared (i.e. hot meals were more difficult to prepare in smaller areas).

Replacing and Training New Program Coordinators

Replacing program coordinators who have either retired or stepped down was described as a challenge in finding someone who could commit to the time involved with the role. At one school a principal stated the average period a program coordinator stayed at the school was two years due to the amount of work involved. However, at other schools program coordinators had been in their role for up to six years and



planned to stay in their role until they retired. Training new program coordinators was also mentioned as a challenge as it involved additional time for the current program coordinators.

Volunteers

Questions in this section related to their perspectives on volunteer commitment and whether additional support was needed from volunteers. Volunteers including parents, community members, education assistants, university students and elementary students (see student leadership section) were described by both principals and coordinators as highly valuable. Volunteers were described by both principals and coordinators as being either deeply committed or highly uncommitted. Individuals who were deeply committed were often described as being consistent, reliable, and long-term. On the other hand, volunteers who were uncommitted did not show up despite scheduling specific times to volunteer or only volunteered several times before stopping.

Parents Volunteers and Commitment

Recruiting and maintaining parent volunteers was a challenge brought up by both principals and program coordinators at almost every school we interviewed. When asked why they felt there was difficulty in recruiting and keeping parent volunteers time was mentioned as the biggest barrier, “I think for most parents in an elementary setting its time because they have younger children”. In addition to time, the scope of commitment required to volunteer was also noted as another reason parents were reluctant to help out due to other responsibilities such as work and taking care of young children.

Some of the schools did have several consistent parent volunteers, yet additional parent volunteers were needed as mentioned by the following principal, “We’re still trying to get parents, like we have wonderful parents who volunteer on a consistent basis but its only a few who do a lot of work and with more parents it would be lighter work and less responsibility”. Although parent volunteers are lacking in schools, some parents were involved in parent council which was viewed as being highly supportive by the majority of principals and program coordinators. This support however was often through funding rather than offering time as noted in the following excerpt by a program coordinator: “parent council didn’t really want to be involved, they think the program is amazing and they want it to run they just can’t offer their time”. One program coordinator felt parent council did not provide enough funding to support the program at her school.



University Student Volunteers and Commitment

University students were mentioned by some of the schools as being a significant contribution to running the program. University students were noted as volunteering their own time, usually one hour per week to help with the program. Some university students also helped out with the program through student placements mainly offered through the University of Guelph applied human nutrition program. However, program coordinators described some difficulties in keeping university student volunteers throughout the school year. One program coordinator noted, “I think that’s my biggest struggle with the program overall is consistency of volunteers because we rely so heavily on university students and they finish in April”.

Additional Support Needed

For the majority of the schools, program coordinators and principals stated they thought having more volunteers would be beneficial in running the program. Out of the 8 interviews we conducted, 6 program coordinators and principals stated more help was needed. Program coordinators who expressed a desire for additional support believed they could use volunteers to help with the following tasks: food prep (hot and cold meals), serving hot meals, grocery shopping, clean-up, and menu planning.

Program Resources

Questions in this section relate to financial or other resource constraints that impact running the program on a daily basis. Questions also centered around how these constraints could be reduced or improved.

Finances

Financial difficulties were a common concern for running student nutrition programs at the schools. While for some of the schools finances were only a slight concern, at other schools finances were one of the main challenges they faced. At one school finances were stated as not being a concern at all. A lack of finances was described by some principals and program coordinators as resulting in cutbacks at times for their student nutrition programs. One principal described the program coordinator as needing to make changes due to cutbacks, “I know she’s had to revamp some of the food that she buys just a little bit more on the cheaper side to help out with that”.





Food vouchers offered through the Grocery Foundation was mentioned by two program coordinators as helping to substantially save money on food. However, one drawback was the limited grocery stores willing to accept the vouchers which were not always within close driving distance. Food donations from companies such as Eggs Canada were also seen as being helpful in reducing costs of the program.

Funding

Live Free Day campaigns were described by both principals and program coordinators as the biggest contributor in funding the program with one school raising over \$1000. While the Live Free Day campaign was one of the most successful methods in raising money, one school found it less successful and created their own events such as a beach day. Other funding was noted as coming from parent council, individual parents, private funders, charity groups, and from Food & Friends. Fundraising was viewed as necessary to keep the programs running.

Improving Constraints

Suggestions to improve the above constraints and others include the following:

- Recruiting and maintaining more parent volunteers
- Finding volunteers to replace university students during exams and breaks
- Receiving more funding for the programs
- Having more resources for food storage such as fridges and freezers
- Having access to a dishwasher
- Being provided with list of suppliers that offer peanut free products
- Being provided with list of suppliers that deliver products without high delivery costs
- Having more space for food preparation
- Food & Friends training for new program coordinators



Perceived Impact of Student Nutrition Programs

Questions in this section relate to the perceived benefits of the student nutrition program for students. The main benefits were discussed as meeting a need for hungry children, increasing student socialization, promoting student leadership, and improving academics.

Meeting a Need for Hungry Children

All of the principals and program coordinators described the student nutrition programs as meeting an important need at their schools for children who are hungry. They felt the program was reaching children that would benefit the most from it. Some schools were identified by principals and program coordinators as having a higher proportion of students coming from low-economic families. One program coordinator noted, “I saw the need of the students in our school and our area”. Students travelling to school on buses were also identified at several schools as highly benefiting from the program due to their early mornings as stated by the following principal:

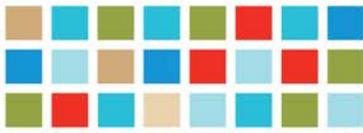
“There are some kids who are on the bus for an hour before they get here...and it’s not because parents can’t afford it and it’s not because you know parents or students are lazy in not bringing things, it’s because really kids are starting their day long before others do.”

As well, offering the program throughout the week was mentioned by some principals and program coordinators as important for children who rely on the program on a daily basis. Whether children were from low income or more affluent areas, both principals and program coordinators felt the programs were delivering healthy and nutritious food that highly benefited all children.

Student Socializing

Beyond providing food for hungry children, student nutrition programs were viewed by principals and program coordinators as benefiting students socially. They felt breakfast, lunch, and snack programs provided children with the opportunity to socialize and bond with their peers, as noted by one of the program coordinators, “I think the students look at it as an exciting time of their day, they do this as a social outing for their breakfast”.





Student Leadership

At each school, students were also involved in helping to prepare the food for the student nutrition programs. Other leadership roles included helping to deliver food to classrooms, and coming up with ideas for menus. This not only provided extra help for the program coordinators who greatly appreciated their student helpers but was also described by principals as providing students with leadership roles. In addition, involving students in the program was also described as reaching out to students who had an interest in culinary arts. When asked why they felt students wanted to help out with the program, one program coordinator stated, “I think it’s the feeling of accomplishment of being a part of the school”.

Academic Improvement

The student nutrition program was described by both principals and program coordinators as helping to improve student concentration, and learning. This was described by one principal who noticed a difference in students who participated in the program, “we have students that we know they learn best if they have some food in the morning and if they have some snacks at recess time so the morning program is always...we just think it’s a necessity to make sure kids do have that”. This was also recognized by program coordinators who also believed the program made a difference in student academics, “I think if they’re not hungry they are able to learn more”.

Other Emerging Themes

Stigma

Stigma was a topic that was brought up in several interviews. When this topic was brought up it was often mentioned by principals and program coordinators as an issue they faced in the past with students using student nutrition programs but was no longer an issue due to how the program is now structured. At all of the schools the programs are available to every student. Both principals and program coordinators felt opening the breakfast, lunch, or snacks programs to be available to every child at the schools was a positive decision and one that greatly reduced stigma. Part of reducing this stigma was described as not singling out specific students but rather promoting the program as one that is available to all students whether needed or not as highlighted by one program coordinator:



“I think that the fact that the snack program is offered to the whole school really eliminates any stigma of having to accept or needing that healthy meal because it’s just part of every day school. If you need a snack you can get a snack. It doesn’t matter if you have money or you don’t have money”

Part of reducing this stigma was also mentioned as resulting from involving students in the program through food preparation, menu planning, distribution of food, and food delivery to classrooms. Students were also seen as helping to popularize the program among their friends. While there was no stigma attached to the program by students a few program coordinators felt some parents stigmatized the program. One program coordinator said “I always run into parents who say well my child doesn’t participate, they don’t need lunch and I said that’s not the point, everybody is welcome”. The programs were promoted by both principals and program coordinators as being inclusive, and welcoming for all students.

CONCLUSIONS

In summary, the above results provide information around the universality of Student Nutrition Programs in the Upper Grand District School Board. Such data is useful in determining both benefits and challenges in running the program and in providing information to help inform, support, and advocate SNP programming in the future. While the SNPs differed across the schools we visited, we found commonalities across the programs in terms of benefits and challenges identified by students, principals and program coordinators.

Survey results indicate students were highly aware (98%) that their school offered a student nutrition program with awareness mainly coming from principals and teachers, morning announcements, and friends who attend the program. Snack and lunch programs were the most well used with the majority of students attending at least more than once a month. While students indicated they were aware of breakfast programs, based on our data they are not as well attended as the lunch and snack programs. However, further evaluation is needed in understanding why breakfast programs are less popular among students (we note here that less popular may not mean less significant, as identified by one principal who felt that although breakfast was the least attended at his school it was the most significant in reaching children who needed it). The most common reason for using the program was because students liked the food, with 58% of students indicating they would use the program if they forgot to eat





breakfast or bring a lunch. In addition, 65% of students stated they were hungry during the day. The most common reason for this hunger was running around at recess (33%) followed by 'other' (25%), with students indicating that they sometimes forgot or were unable to eat, or that they were always hungry, amongst other reasons. The majority of students who did not use the program felt they brought enough food from home.

Qualitative results from the interviews indicate that both principals and program coordinators experience benefits of being involved in running the programs but also face daily challenges. Benefits included meeting a need for hungry children, having students eat nutritional and healthy food, having students involved in the program through leadership roles, and seeing students perform better academically. The most significant challenges included lack of time, lack of steady volunteers, lack of resources (space and utilities) and lack of funding, although this varied between schools. Suggestions for reducing or eliminating these challenges were identified as recruiting more volunteers, increasing funding, having more resources such as space and utilities, providing training for new program coordinators, and being provided with lists of suppliers who can deliver large quantities of food without high delivery costs.

These results highlight the need, success and meaningful impact of SNPs in Guelph-Wellington-Dufferin region upon students. Of note is the high number of students who use the snack and lunch programs and the enjoyment students indicated in eating the food offered by the programs. In addition, this report identifies the high commitment and involvement of both principals and program coordinators in running the program. As well, both principals and program coordinators felt the programs their school offered were meeting a significant need for hungry students. However, the challenges identified in this report by principals and program coordinators also suggest improvements could be made in facilitating the running of SNPs. This is especially of note for program coordinators whose high commitment but significant challenges are taxing in running the program.

While this report provides valuable information about student nutrition programs in the Upper Grand District School Board, future evaluations may provide additional information in further understanding why students may use or not use the programs offered by their schools. This may include inquiring further why students do not use breakfast programs, and understanding if differences in student responses exist due to the different programming options offered at each school.





Limitations of the Report

The results presented in this report may not reflect the opinions of all principals, program coordinators and students in Upper Grand District School Board elementary schools, as data was collected from only 4 of 65 schools. The evaluation was not a random sample of participants, and the results cannot necessarily be generalized beyond the study sample.

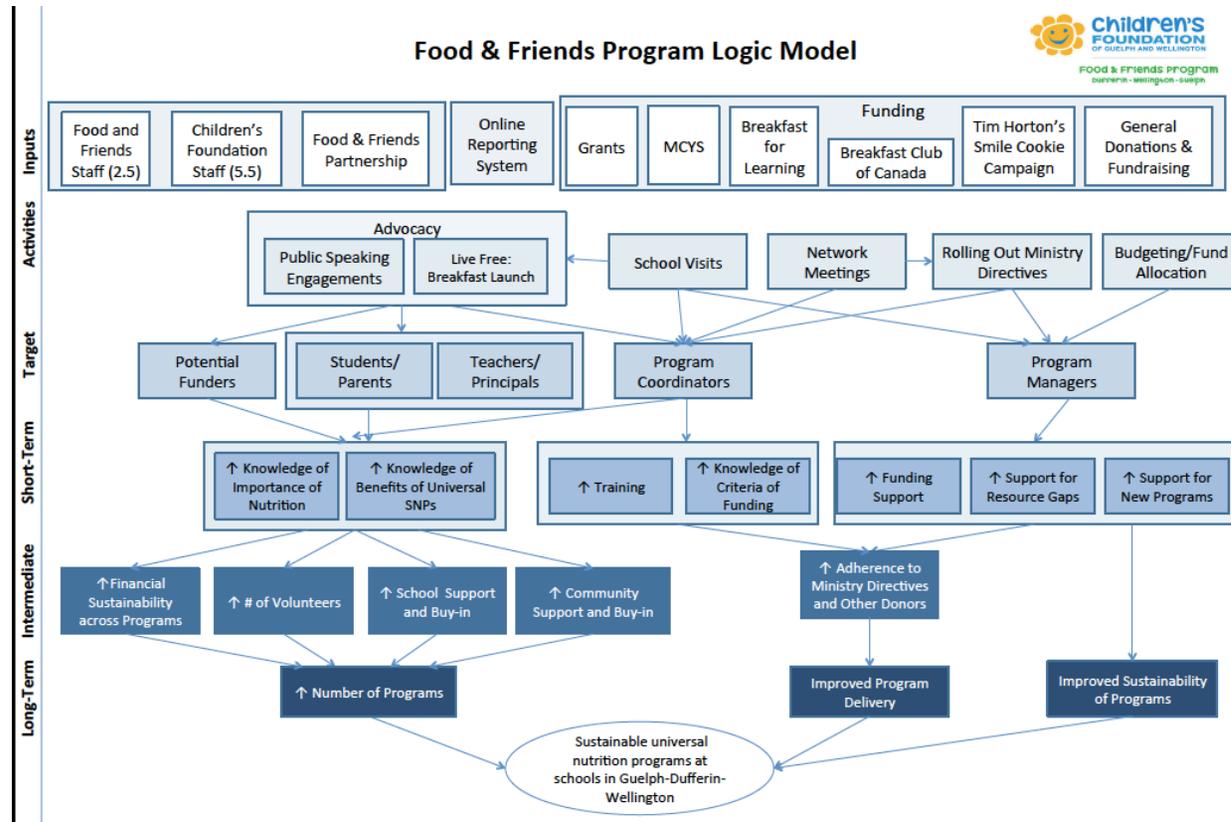
It should also be noted that two of the four schools were located in the City of Guelph and two in the County of Wellington, with no representation of schools from the County of Dufferin. One school in Dufferin County was contacted to participate in the study but chose to decline. Due to time constraints it was decided not to look for an additional school.

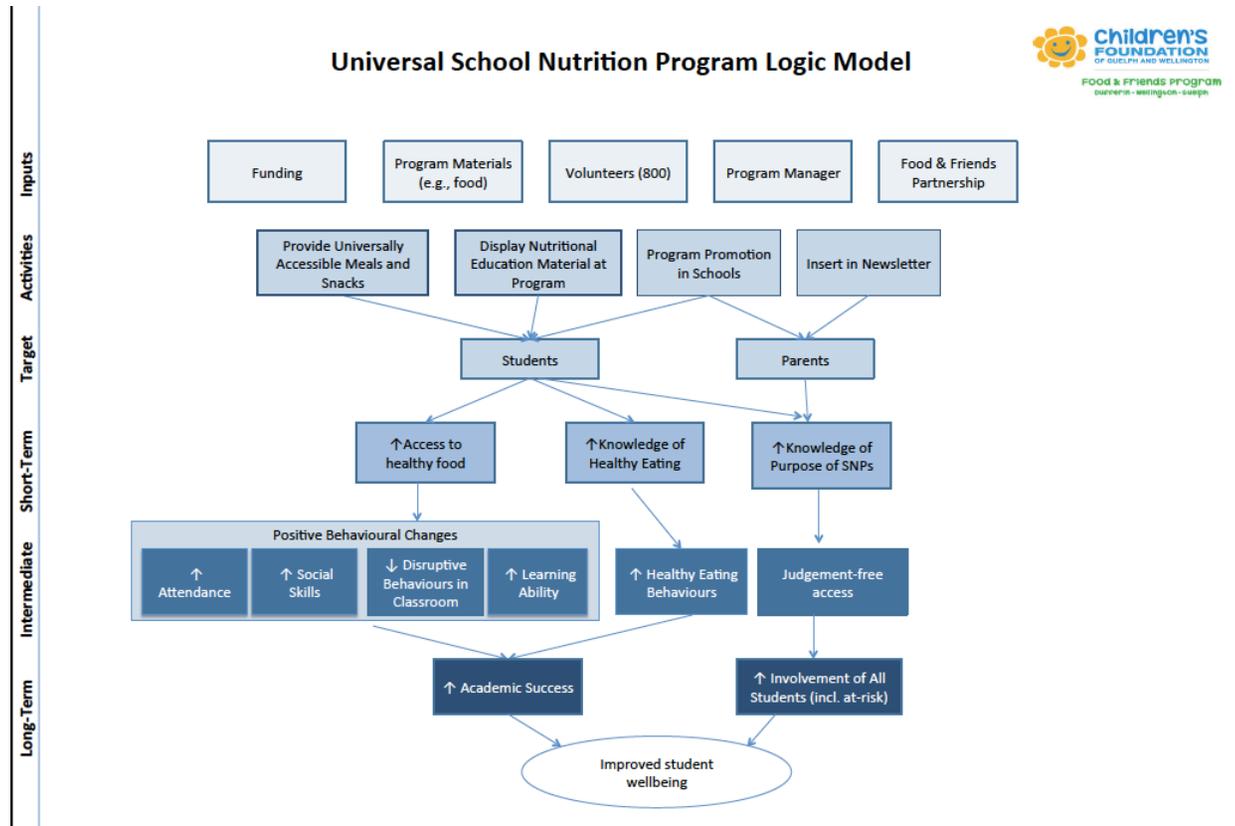
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APPENDIX A: LOGIC MODEL







APPENDIX B: EVALUATION FRAMEWORK

Process Evaluation

Evaluation Questions	Link to activities or target population in logic model	Indicator(s)	Data Collection Method(s)	Data Collection Tool(s)	Respondent(s)	Person(s) Responsible for Data Collection	Timing of Data Collection
To what extent are program coordinators understanding/following ministry and sponsor directives?	Rolling Out Ministry and Other Directives Program	Directives being implemented by each program	Written Report	F&F's Recommended Practice Rubric	Program Coordinators	Food & Friends (Program Managers)	Ongoing
To what extent are program volunteers and coordinators committed to SNPs?	Rolling Out Ministry and Other Directives Program Volunteers	Program coordinators report experiences with volunteer engagement and long-term commitment	Interviews	Interview scripts developed by Food and Friends and the Research Shop	Program Coordinators	The Research Shop	October 2015 – May 2016



The Research Shop

Food & Friends Student Nutrition Program: Baseline Evaluation Findings

Evaluation Questions	Link to activities or target population in logic model	Indicator(s)	Data Collection Method(s)	Data Collection Tool(s)	Respondent(s)	Person(s) Responsible for Data Collection	Timing of Data Collection
<p>Is there adequate support and effective use of funding to meet ministry and sponsor directives?</p> <p><i>*Universally accessible programs not salaries</i></p>	<p>Rolling Out Ministry and Other Directives</p> <p>School Visits</p> <p>Budget/Funds Allocation</p>	<p>Level of perceived support from F&F to implement ministry and other directives</p> <p>Self-reported rating of financial status of program</p> <p>Allocated funds for each program</p> <p>Number of meals and students served</p>	<p>Existing funding data from F&F</p> <p>Interviews</p>	<p>Interview scripts developed by Food and Friends and the Research Shop</p>	<p>Program Coordinators</p> <p>Principals</p>	<p>The Research Shop</p>	<p>October 2015 – May 2016</p>



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Food & Friends Student Nutrition Program: Baseline Evaluation Findings



Food & Friends Program
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APPENDIX C: OUTCOME EVALUATION

Evaluation Questions	Link to outcomes in logic model	Indicator(s)	Data Collection Method(s)	Data Collection Tool(s)	Respondent(s)	Person(s) Responsible for Data Collection	Timing of Data Collection
How can various support pillars (e.g., parents, donors, and principals) ensure that SNPs are universally accessible through their contributions?	<p>Increased school support and buy-in</p> <p>Increased community support and buy-in</p> <p>Increased Number of Volunteers</p>	<p>Self-report rating of support for universal programs</p> <p>Number of new volunteers</p> <p>Number of new donations</p>	<p>Existing volunteer/donation data from F&F</p> <p>Interviews</p>	<p>Interview scripts developed by Food and Friends and the Research Shop</p>	Principals	The Research Shop	October 2015 – May 2016



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The Research Shop

Food & Friends Student Nutrition Program: Baseline Evaluation Findings

Evaluation Questions	Link to outcomes in logic model	Indicator(s)	Data Collection Method(s)	Data Collection Tool(s)	Respondent(s)	Person(s) Responsible for Data Collection	Timing of Data Collection
What are the perceived impacts of universal SNPs?	Increased Knowledge of Benefits of Universal SNPs; Increased Academic Success	Self-report of perceived impacts of universal SNPs	Hardcopy & Electronic Survey	Survey developed by Food & Friends and the Research Shop	Students	The Research Shop	October 2015 – May 2016
			Focus Groups	Interview scripts developed by Food and Friends and the Research Shop	Principals/ Program Coordinators		October 2015 – May 2016



The **Research** Shop

APPENDIX D: STUDENT SURVEY

Student Nutrition Program Survey

What is this survey about?

This survey will help us learn what students like you think about the snack/meal programs at your school. **Snack/meal programs include snacks, breakfast, morning meal, and/or lunch offered by your school.** We will ask you and other students why you use or do not use the snack/meals programs at your school, and how the snack/meal programs may help you. Your answers will help us support the nutrition program at your school.

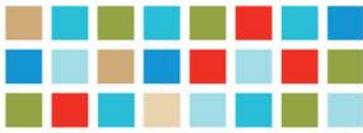
Survey Instructions:

There are no right and wrong answers to these questions. Each student filling out this survey will have different thoughts and experiences and we want to learn about all of them.

If you have questions about the instructions or the survey, please ask one of the researchers or snack/meal program volunteers.

Do NOT write your name anywhere on this survey.

READY? TURN THE PAGE TO START ON PAGE 1.



PAGE 1

1. Did you know that your school offers a snack/meal program? (Circle your answer)

Yes

No

If you answered **Yes**....go to PAGE 2

If you answered **No**....go to PAGE 3



PAGE 2

Answer these questions if you answered YES on PAGE 1.

If you answered NO on PAGE 1, go to PAGE 3.

2a. What type of program is available at your school?

Put a check mark next to all the answers that apply.



Snack	
Breakfast	
Morning meal (during school in the morning)	
Lunch	
I don't know	

2b. How did you learn about the snack/meal program at your school?

Put a check mark next to all the answers that apply.



From a teacher/principal	
From my parents	
My friend goes to the program	
I saw a poster about the program	
Morning announcements	
School newsletter	
Other (Tell us where):	
I don't know	

PLEASE CONTINUE ON PAGE 3.



PAGE 3

3. Do you sometimes feel hungry during the day? (Circle your answer)

Yes

No

If you answered **Yes**....go to PAGE 4

If you answered **No**....go to PAGE 5



PAGE 4

Answer these questions if you answered YES on PAGE 3.

If you answered NO on PAGE 3, go to PAGE 5.

4a. How often do you feel hungry during the day?

Put a check mark next to your answer.



Every day	
Several times a week	
Once a week	
Several times a month	

4b. What are the reasons you feel hungry during the day?

Put a check mark next to all the answers that apply.



There is no snack/meal program at school	
I don't have time to eat or pack a lunch at home	
There are not enough snack breaks at school	
There isn't enough food at the snack/meal program to fill me up	
The snack/meal program does not have food I like	
My home does not have food I like	
I run around a lot at recess and it makes me hungry	
The bus comes too early and I'm not ready to eat	
Other (Tell us):	

PLEASE CONTINUE ON PAGE 5.



PAGE 5

5. Have you ever used the snack/meal program at school? (Circle your answer)

Yes

No

If you answered **Yes**....go to PAGE 6

If you answered **No**....go to PAGE 11



PAGE 6

Answer these questions if you answered YES on PAGE 5.

If you answered NO on PAGE 5, go to PAGE 11.

6a. What type of food program do you use at the school?

Put a check mark next to all the answers that apply.



Snack	
Breakfast	
Morning meal (during school in the morning)	
Lunch	
I don't know	

6b. How often do you use the snack/meal program at your school?

Put a check mark next to your answer.



Every day	
Several times a week	
Once a week	
Several times a month	
Several times a school year	



6c. What do you like most about the snack/meal program?

Put a check mark next to all the answers that apply.



The food	
Hanging out with my friends	
Meeting new people	
Having somewhere to eat when I don't eat at home or bring a lunch	
Other (Tell us):	

PLEASE CONTINUE ON PAGE 7.



PAGE 7

7a. Students use the meal programs for many different reasons. Why do you use the snack/meal program?

Put a check mark next to all the answers that apply.



I don't have time to eat or pack a lunch at home	<input type="checkbox"/>
I don't like the food at home	<input type="checkbox"/>
My friends use the program	<input type="checkbox"/>
I want to meet new people	<input type="checkbox"/>
I like the food	<input type="checkbox"/>
Other (Tell us):	<input type="checkbox"/>

7b. Have the types of food you eat at home changed since you started using the snack/meal program at school? (Circle your answer)

Yes

No

I don't know

If you answered **Yes**....go to PAGE 8

If you answered **No**....go to PAGE 9



PAGE 8

Answer this question if you answered YES on PAGE 7.

If you answered NO on PAGE 7, go to PAGE 9.

8. How have the foods you eat at home changed?

Put a check mark next to all the answers that apply.



I eat healthier food at home	
I eat less healthy food at home	
I eat more food at home	
I eat less food at home	
Other (Tell us):	

PLEASE GO TO PAGE 9.



PAGE 9

9a. How would you make the meal program at your school better?

Write your answer in the box below.

9b. Below are statements about the food at the snack/meal program at your school. Circle the number that matches how much you agree with each statement (1 = strongly agree; 5 = strongly disagree)

	Strongly Agree	Agree	Neither Agree or Disagree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
EXAMPLE: I like cats more than dogs	1	2	3	4	5
The snack/meal program at school has tasty food that I like	1	2	3	4	5
The snack/meal program at school has food that is healthy/nutritious	1	2	3	4	5
The snack/meal program at school has food that is fresh	1	2	3	4	5
There is enough variety in the snacks/meal provided at school	1	2	3	4	5
There is enough food to eat at the snack/meal program	1	2	3	4	5

PLEASE CONTINUE ON PAGE 10.



PAGE 10

10. Below are different ways that the snack/meal program at your school may affect students who use the program. Circle the number that matches how much you think the snack/meal program at your school has helped you (1 = A lot; 4 = Not at all).

	A lot	A little	Not much	Not at all	I don't know
EXAMPLE: I like cats.	1	2	3	4	5
My grades are better	1	2	3	4	5
I miss fewer days at school	1	2	3	4	5
It is easier for me to focus in class	1	2	3	4	5
I feel less tired	1	2	3	4	5
I feel happier	1	2	3	4	5
My body is healthier	1	2	3	4	5
I feel more involved in my school	1	2	3	4	5
I get into less trouble in class	1	2	3	4	5
I have made new friends	1	2	3	4	5
I have better relationships with my family	1	2	3	4	5
I have better relationships with my friends	1	2	3	4	5
I feel less stressed about being able to have food when I'm hungry	1	2	3	4	5
I feel like someone cares about me	1	2	3	4	5
I have learned about healthy eating	1	2	3	4	5

PLEASE CONTINUE ON PAGE 13.



PAGE 11

Answer these questions if you answered NO on PAGE 5.

If you answered YES on PAGE 5, go back to PAGE 6 to complete the questions.

11a. Why have you never used the snack/meal program at school?

Put a check mark next to all the answers that apply.



Not hungry at the times the snack/meal program is provided	
I bring enough food from home	
I don't like the food they serve at the snack/meal program	
The snack/meal program is not available at times when I am at school	
I am afraid of being teased	
I buy food from a restaurant or store instead (like pizza, McDonalds, Subway)	
Other (Tell us):	

11b. Where do you get the food you eat during the school day?

Put a check mark next to all the answers that apply.



From home	
From a restaurant or store	
From a friend's house	
I don't eat during the day	
Other (Tell us):	

PLEASE CONTINUE ON PAGE 12.



PAGE 12

12. What would make you want to eat the food provided at the snack/meal program at your school?

Put a check mark next to all the answers that apply.



If I liked the food better.	
If the food was offered at times that worked better for me.	
If my friends went to the snack/meal program.	
If more people attended the snack/meal program.	
If I forgot to eat breakfast or bring lunch.	
Other (Tell us):	

PLEASE CONTINUE ON PAGE 13.



PAGE 13

13. Below are statements about the snack/meal program at your school. Circle the number that matches how much you agree with each statement (1 = strongly agree; 5 = strongly disagree)

	Strongly Agree	Agree	Neither Agree or Disagree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
EXAMPLE: I like cats more than dogs	1	2	3	4	5
The snack/meal program at school is something anyone can use regardless of who they are.	1	2	3	4	5
The snack/meal program at school is only for kids who don't have enough to eat at home.	1	2	3	4	5
You can use the snack/meal program at school even if you already ate snack/breakfast/lunch	1	2	3	4	5
Kids who use the snack/meal program at school are sometimes made fun of by other kids.	1	2	3	4	5

THE SURVEY IS FINISHED. THANK YOU!!



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APPENDIX E: PRINCIPAL/PROGRAM COORDINATOR INTERVIEW GUIDE

Script:

This focus group is part of an evaluation conducted by the Food & Friends Program and the Community Engaged Scholarship Institute/The Research Shop at the University of Guelph. The evaluation will help us understand how students are benefiting from the student nutrition programs at the school. It will also provide insight into the experiences and perspectives of program coordinators and volunteer involvement in the programs. This information will help us better support SNPs and provide information to funders, donors, and other stakeholders regarding program impacts.

The information you provide in this focus group is confidential. You do not have to participate or answer any questions you do not feel comfortable answering. You will not be “called upon” to answer questions.

Responsibilities and Experience

1. How long have you been involved with SNPs/been a program coordinator?
 - a. How long did you anticipate being a program coordinator when you first started?
 - b. What has made you want to/be able to continue in this role?
 - c. What do you enjoy most about being a program coordinator?
 - d. Do you experience challenges as a program coordinator? If so, what are the challenges you have encountered as a program coordinator?

Volunteers [Program coordinators only]

2. What do you think contributes to volunteers’ long-term commitment to Student Nutrition Programs?
3. What might prevent volunteers from long-term commitment to the program?
4. Do you require additional volunteer support? How much and for which activities?

Program Resources

5. Do you experience financial or other resource constraints in running the program on a daily basis? If so, please tell us about those constraints.
 - a. What are the most significant constraints? How do you envision those constraints could be lessened?
 - b. How could the use of program resources be improved?



Perceived impacts of Student Nutrition Programs:

6. To the best of your knowledge, why do students participate in Student Nutrition Programs?
7. In what ways do you see the Student Nutrition Program benefiting students?
Prompts if needed: i) academically; ii) socially; iii) physically; and iv) emotionally?
8. Which children do you think benefit most from the program?
9. In your experience, is the program reaching those children who would most benefit? If not, what is preventing the program from reaching those children? How could this be improved?

Principal Questions

This focus group is part of an evaluation conducted by the Food & Friends Program and the Community Engaged Scholarship Institute/The Research Shop at the University of Guelph. The evaluation will help us understand how students are benefiting from the student nutrition programs at the school. It will also provide insight into the experiences and perspectives of principals involved in the programs. This information will help us better support SNPs and provide information to funders, donors, and other stakeholders regarding program impacts.

Responsibilities and Experience

1. How long has your school been involved with SNPs?
 - a. How involved are you with the SNP and how taxing is it for you to be involved?
 - b. What has made you want to/be able to continue offering an SNP at your school?
 - c. Do you experience challenges having an SNP at your school? What are the main challenges you have encountered?
2. As a school principal, what are your responsibilities to the SNP?
 - a. What challenges do you face in meeting those responsibilities? What makes it easier to meet your responsibilities?

Program Resources

3. Do you experience financial or other resource constraints in running the program on a daily basis? If so, please tell us about those constraints.
 - a. What are the most significant constraints? How do you envision those constraints could be lessened?
 - b. How could the use of program resources be improved?



Perceived impacts of Student Nutrition Programs:

4. To the best of your knowledge, why do students participate in Student Nutrition Programs?
5. In what ways do you see the Student Nutrition Program benefiting students?
 - *Prompts if needed:* i) academically; ii) socially; iii) physically; and iv) emotionally?
6. Which children most benefit from the program?
7. In your experience, is the program reaching those children who would most benefit? If not, what is preventing the program from reaching those children? How could this be improved?



APPENDIX F: PARENTAL CONSENT FORM



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FOOD & FRIENDS PROGRAM
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Student Nutrition Program Evaluation Parental Consent Form

Your child is invited to participate in a research study to evaluate the Student Nutrition Program (SNP) (i.e., the snack/meal program provided at your child's school). This study is being conducted by researchers from the Community Engaged Scholarship Institute/the Research Shop at the University of Guelph and the Food & Friends Program of Dufferin-Wellington-Guelph.

PURPOSE OF THE STUDY

The purpose of this study is to evaluate the Student Nutrition Program at your child's school. Specifically, we want to learn why students do or do not use the SNP. We also want to learn about student experiences using SNPs and how they think it may or may not be benefitting them. Findings from the evaluation can be used to improve SNPs in Guelph-Wellington-Dufferin.

PROCEDURES

If you give permission for your child to participate in this study, they will be asked to complete an anonymous 10-20 minute survey during class time. Your child will also be asked to give his or her own consent to participate and will not be obligated to participate even if you have given permission. Students who do not participate in the survey will be provided with another task (to be determined by their teacher) to complete during this time.



POTENTIAL RISKS AND DISCOMFORTS

It is possible that your child may feel uncomfortable answering some of the questions. To reduce this risk, all survey questions are optional and all students will be informed they do not have to answer any questions they are not comfortable answering. Students will have the right to withdraw from the study at any point without consequences. They will be informed of this right during the student consent process. You will not be informed as to whether your child chooses to participate in the study.

POTENTIAL BENEFITS TO PARTICIPANTS AND/OR TO SOCIETY

There are no direct benefits to your child by participating in this study. However, they may feel good providing their input on programs that operate in their school. There is a direct benefit to the community from this project because it will provide an evaluation of the SNPs that can be used to acquire funding and support for the nutrition programs.

CONFIDENTIALITY

The survey is anonymous, which means that your child will not write their name on their survey, so we won't know which survey is theirs. Because the survey is anonymous, once your child completes the survey the information they provided cannot be removed from the evaluation. Only the researchers will see the surveys (teachers and parents won't see the answers). We will keep your child's identity as confidential as possible. Direct quotes from open-ended questions (will be used in publications. Surveys will be kept at the University of Guelph in a locked office and all results will be stored electronically on a computer with a password.

PARTICIPATION AND WITHDRAWAL

You may withdraw your consent at any point prior to data collection. The survey anonymous so you will be unable to remove your child's data once the data has been collected because it will not be possible to identify individual data within the larger data set.

RIGHTS OF RESEARCH PARTICIPANTS

The Research Liaison Committee of the Upper Grand District School Board has given permission for this study to be carried out at your child's school.

All information collected will be strictly confidential and the students will not be identified individually.

Your son or daughter's participation is completely voluntary.

The information is collected under the authority of Board Policy #204 and the Municipal Freedom of Information and Protection of Privacy Act. Users of this information will be the members of the



researchers from the Community Engaged Scholarship Institute/the Research Shop at the University of Guelph.

If you have any questions or concerns about the research, please contact Karen Nelson from the Community Engaged Scholarship Institute at 519-824-4120 Ext 54535

If you have any questions regarding your rights as a research participant in this study (REB #15NV025), you can contact: Sandy Auld, Director, Research Ethics; University of Guelph; reb@uoguelph.ca; 519-824-4120 ext. 56606.

**Karen Nelson, Research Shop
Coordinator**

School Board Rep

SIGNATURE OF RESEARCH PARTICIPANT’S PARENT OR LEGAL GUARDIAN

I have read the information provided for the study “Student Nutrition Program Evaluation” as described herein. My questions have been answered to my satisfaction, I understand I can keep a copy of this form for my records, and I give permission for my child _____ (child’s name) to participate in this study.

Name of Parent/Legal Guardian (please print)

Signature of Participant

Date

If you would like to learn about the results of this study, please go to our website (www.cesinstitute.ca) in Summer 2016.



The **Research** Shop

COMMUNITY. CAMPUS. COLLABORATION. 

APPENDIX G: STUDENT CONSENT FORM



**COMMUNITY
ENGAGED
SCHOLARSHIP
INSTITUTE**



**Children's
FOUNDATION**
OF GUELPH AND WELLINGTON

Food & Friends Program
DUFFERIN • WELLINGTON • GUELPH

Student Nutrition Program Evaluation Student Consent

You are asked to participate in an evaluation of school snack and meal programs available to all students at your school by Community Engaged Scholarship Institute /The Research Shop at the University of Guelph and the Food & Friends Program of Dufferin-Wellington-Guelph.

If you have any questions about the study, you or your parents can call Karen Nelson (Community Engaged Scholarship Institute) at 519-824-4120 Ext 54093

Why are we doing this evaluation?

We want to learn why students use or do not use the snack and meal programs offered at school. We also want to learn how the snack or meal program may have affected students who have ever used it.

It is **your choice** if you want to participate in this evaluation or not. While your parents have consented to your participation in the study, you are free to choose whether or not you want to participate. Your parents will not be informed of your decision to participate, or not participate, in the study. Your choice will **not** affect whether or not you can use the snack and meal programs at school.

COMMUNITY **ENGAGED** SCHOLARSHIP INSTITUTE

College of Social and Applied Human Sciences
University of Guelph Guelph, Ontario Canada N1G 2W1
519.824.4120 Ext. 53829 | cesi@uoguelph.ca
www.cesinstitute.ca



**What we will ask you to do if you agree to participate:**

- Fill out a paper survey about why you use or do not use the snack and meal programs at school. If you do use the program, you will be asked to answer questions about your experience at the program and how you think it may or may not be benefitting you.
- The survey will take 10-20 minutes to complete.

If you do not wish to participate in the survey, your teacher will provide you with an alternative task.

Will there be any negative experiences if you participate?

It is possible that you may feel uncomfortable answering some of the questions. **You do not have to respond to any questions or provide information you do not feel comfortable providing.** If you no longer want to participate in the evaluation, let the researchers or a teacher know you want to withdraw from completing the survey. There is no consequence to you if you do not complete the survey.

Will there be any positive experiences if you participate?

It may feel good to give your input on the school snack and meal programs. Your input will help us learn how well the programs are working and can be used to improve the programs for students like you.

What will happen to the information you give us?

The survey is anonymous, which means that you will not write your name on your survey, so we won't know which survey is yours. Because the survey is anonymous, once you complete the survey the information you provided cannot be removed from the evaluation. Only the researchers will see the surveys (your teachers and parents won't see your answers). We will keep your identity as confidential as possible. Direct quotes from open-ended questions (things you tell us in the survey) will be used in publications. Your survey will be kept at the University of Guelph in a locked office and all results will be stored electronically on a computer with a password.

If you have any questions regarding your rights as a research participant in this study (REB #15NV025), you or your parent can contact: Sandy Auld, Director, Research Ethics; University of Guelph; reb@uoguelph.ca; 519-824-4120 ext. 56606.

If you would like to learn about the results of this study, please go to our website (www.cesinstitute.ca) in Summer 2016.



SIGNATURE OF RESEARCH PARTICIPANT

I have read the information about this evaluation. My questions have been answered by the researchers and I agree to participate in this evaluation.

Your name

Your signature

Date

Signature of Witness

Date