



FORUM with SA HEALTH

Looking at the findings of the Project,
Healthy Eating and Physical Activity –
12.11.09

DECS, SA Health and ABHI

The context for this project

- The torrent of evidence, knowledge and writings from educators, scientists and economists, in the power of quality early childhood education for positive life outcomes for children and families
- Overwhelming changes in policy and financial backing, as a consequence, by all strands of government, in providing a more cohesive and rigorous early childhood education throughout Australia

Societal changes

- With health concerns for the growing predominance of chronic disease related to overweight and obesity by 2020 and the 2004 SA research findings by C&YH that 1 in 4 four year olds were showing signs of being overweight
- The success of intervention with children under 5 in their educational settings could lessen this likelihood

Aim of the Project

- For DECS and SA Health to work collaboratively in developing appropriate models of professional development for the early childhood workforce
- To promote a stronger awareness, understanding and involvement of healthy eating and physical activity guidelines by early childhood professionals in their settings
- To support parents and carers in encouraging healthy eating and being active within the family

The model

- A 3 year action research project aimed at building sustained pedagogy and practice for early childhood educators, children and families around the importance of healthy eating and physical activity for life long health
- Each site commits to a 12 month study, based around a contextually driven inquiry question.
- Each site receives a grant for the 12 months – from \$2500 up to \$6500, depending on site complexity, category and distance

Numbers and varieties of sites

- 74 sites over the 3 years
- Mixture of Preschools, Children's Centres, Child Care, Child Parent Centres, Family Day Care Workers and Rural Care
- DECS, Community and Private
- 21 Country sites
- 3 Aboriginal sites
- Each site nominates project leaders

Professional Learning Mix

- Was 4, now 5 Professional Learning Days held every 3 months, finishing with an EXPO (June) with every site presenting their findings
- Experts in Nutrition, Physical Activity, Research processes, Curriculum Outcomes and Media present & provoke on these days
- Time for discussion, questions, discovery and always around excellent food – seeing quality food presented here resonates with what they can do back at their sites

Regional Cluster Meetings

- Was 2, now 3 Regional Cluster Meetings for all sites – usually in each other's settings - allowing perusal for all
- Time for intimate discussion, concern and support for all members
- Time to show resources, outline new ideas
- Above all – a time of reflection, deeper understandings and project strengths

Project Officer

- I visit each site at least once and mostly more, sharing time with the educators and the children in a wide range of ways
- Alongside the children in play
- Offering extensive Music and Movement sessions with the children – guiding the educators here, seeing M & M in action
- Helping with issues, concerns and research hurdles – often over 4 -5 visits

Further Professional Learning

- As a Music Educator I carry through Music and Movement Workshops for
 - All staff at an individual site at night
 - Regional Cluster Teams
 - Wider cluster groups
- Other night workshops around Outdoor Settings, Children's Engagement and skills in collecting data
- Building workforce enthusiasm & commitment – and relieving the fear of research!

Fundamental Movement Skills Courses

- 4 sessions each year are carried through in the north and south of the Adelaide region - allowing easy access for all
- Carried out by ACHPER (Rick Baldock and Matthew Chapman)
- Many acknowledge this as the 'light bulb moment' in their project – educators much more aware of the importance of PA and plan and implement accordingly

Community links

- Each site is encouraged to link with the wider community and build connections that offer new dimensions to program and project strength
- These could be neighbouring schools, shops, individuals (from MP's, sport heros, dancers, dieticians, gardeners, musicians, parents and local business support
- Applying for grants – and succeeding – for garden beds, water tanks and infrastructure to build project scope

Links with other projects & agencies

- Many sites have been involved with other SA Health projects – e.g. EWBA especially in the southern area
- Healthy Weight initiatives in the north and country – and now OPAL in 6 council areas
- ACHPER, Young Media Australia, Start Right Eat Right have all been involved and very supportive
- This builds momentum, sustainability and belief in the approach, delivery and pride of the educators

Resonance, sustainability

- The EXPO truly shows the pride in the journey of this project in workforce capacity building
- Observing the growing knowledge, changes (in the main) in collegiality and collaboration within staff teams, program enhancement, skill in collecting and analysing data and firmer partnerships with families
- Growing technical skills and ability to present to the public

And the Final Report

- Each site finishes the project with a formal summary of the journey they have undertaken through the past 12 months
- It acknowledges the comprehensive changes in policy, programming and pedagogy
- And it reveals the strength and breadth of the impact this project has offered to all

And the future

- With action research and the inquiry model, educators progress to new dimensions of self reflection and pedagogical depth
- With these changes, sites commit to continued involvement with the wonder and scope of healthier eating and physical activity – making life changes for the educators, the children and their families

