

HEALTHY ACTIVE LEARNING

Supporting schools and early learning services to improve child and youth wellbeing through healthy eating and quality physical activity

Healthy Active Learning is a new Wellbeing Budget initiative that will promote and improve healthy eating and physical activity in schools, kura and early learning services across Aotearoa.

As part of this joint Ministry of Health, Ministry of Education and Sport New Zealand initiative - a new investment of \$47.6 million over four years - schools, kura and early learning services will be supported through new curriculum resources and a new health promotion workforce. Many primary and intermediate schools will also benefit from the work of physical activity advisors.

It's based on evidence showing children's nutrition and physical activity are linked to both academic achievement and improved physical and mental health.

Research shows that only seven per cent of young people aged 5 to 18 are meeting the New Zealand guidelines for physical activity through sport, exercise and active recreation.

7%

of children and young people (aged 5-18) are meeting the New Zealand guidelines for physical activity (at least 1 hour a day of moderate to vigorous physical activity) solely through PE, sport, exercise and active recreation.

54%

of children aged 2-14 had fizzy drink at least once in the last week.

About the new initiative

Healthy Active Learning has three components which, individually and collectively, will drive better education and health outcomes for young New Zealanders.

1.

NEW CURRICULUM RESOURCES

The Ministry of Education will work with curriculum experts, teachers, school and kura leaders to design and publish Health and Physical Education (HPE) and Hauora curriculum resources for schools and kura to enhance the understanding and delivery of HPE and physical activity initiatives.

2.

A HEALTH PROMOTION WORKFORCE AND TOOLKIT

The Ministry of Health will develop a toolkit to help all early learning services and schools create a healthy food and drink environment. This will include a focus on healthy food and water-only (and plain milk) policies. Following consultation, the toolkit will be finalised in December 2019.

A health promotion workforce will be employed by District Health Boards and/or Public Health Units, and will assist schools and early learning services to develop healthy food and water-only (and plain milk) educational environments. They will be in place for the start of 2020.

3.

A PHYSICAL ACTIVITY WORKFORCE

Sport New Zealand will partner with regional sports trusts to provide a workforce to work with 40 per cent of all year 1 to 8 primary schools, intermediate schools and kura. This workforce will help create active school environments by working alongside school leaders and teachers to enhance the provision of play, sport and physical education, and to create better connections with physical activity providers in their local communities.

This draws on lessons learned from pilots run by Sport New Zealand across schools in Auckland and Upper Hutt over the past three years. Sport New Zealand anticipates implementing this aspect of Healthy Active Learning in around 300 schools in 2020 and 2021, expanding to a further 500 in 2022 and 2023.

Why this matters

Children spend a significant proportion of their day in school and eat a third of their food there on each school day. For children in early learning services, this can be even more.

Good nutrition and quality physical activity both improve physical health and educational outcomes. Being active has also been proven to improve mental health and social connectedness.

Children who are malnourished, have nutrition deficiencies or are obese, have an increased risk of poorer education outcomes, while physically active children are more likely to have better physical and mental health, stay in school and kura longer and achieve better academically.

All schools and early learning services are involved in the provision of, or education about, food and drink.

Schools and kura are key settings for physical activity, whether that's play, physical activity or sport.

The food and physical activity preferences developed during childhood influence food and activity choices as an adult - and therefore future health and wellbeing outcomes.