

DEVELOPMENT OF AN EVALUATED PRE-SCHOOL NUTRITION EDUCATION
PROGRAMME

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At the present time, nutrition education in Queensland pre-schools depends on the interest of individual teachers as there are no set recommendations for nutrition education.

It has been shown that when developmentally appropriate materials are used, a classroom nutrition education programme can be successfully implemented with children as young as three to five years of age (Gorelick and Clark 1985).

Thirty pre-schools, both State and Community, were selected from the south side of Brisbane. This is more than 10% of all Brisbane pre-schools. The area was divided into three groups of suburbs according to the income of residents using information obtained from the Australian Bureau of Statistics. Schools were then randomly selected from each group in proportion to the total number of preschools in that area. Fifteen of the schools acted as controls where there was initial and final assessment only, and fifteen were in the test group.

Parents were asked to complete a short questionnaire indicating how often their children ate some particular foods. From the results of this it was possible to select particular nutrition problems in some pre-schools. The programme could then be targeted at any problem areas encountered. The results showing the percentage of children eating selected foods are given in the following table.

Frequency	Juice	Water	Raw Vegetables	Fruit	Take Aways	Quick Homemade Meals
Never	0.8	0.4	11.5	0.4	2.2	3.7
Occasionally	13.3	6.7	27.9	2.6	69.2	56.7
½ times per week	10.2	1.6	13.3	3.0	25.8	33.5
¼ times per week	21.3	6.5	23.0	8.7	2.2	4.1
Once per day	28.8	12.8	19.5	37.2	0.6	1.4
More than once per day	25.6	72.0	4.7	48.1	0	0.6

* n = 497

Topics addressed were: (a) increase in fruit and particularly raw vegetable consumption, (b) decrease in intake of fruit juice and (c) increase in quick nutritious homemade meals rather than take-aways.

The programme consisted of three visits at three weekly intervals to each of the test pre-schools. Back-up material was prepared for parents. Acceptance of the programme was favourable, and it was integrated into the normal pre-school routine. On completion of the programme, another assessment will be made and then a final assessment two months later.

GORELICK, M.C. and CLARK, E.A. (1985). *J. Nutr. Educ.* 17: 92.

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