

Supporting a School Wide Intervention;
Play, Eat, Learn

Author: Ellie Tofts, Educational Psychologist

The Context

- One school with four open behaviour cases
 - One in the senior school (IWS)
 - Three in the middle school
- Presence, participation and learning improved for the three in the middle school, lunch time behaviours had, reportedly, not for two of the three
- Colleague and I completed lunchtime observation



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The Findings

- Junior School students appeared mostly well engaged with creative free play e.g. sandpit, playground
- Middle School students appeared to be 'roaming' and/or engaged in physical play e.g. wrestling, chasing and grabbing
- Senior School students appeared mostly well engaged with teacher aide supported activities e.g. group games, library, and basketball in the hall
- Last ten minutes of lunch time were chaotic, atmosphere changed significantly
- One teacher on duty, roving across three large playing areas, and three teacher aides, largely stationary
- Two students observed, at different times, in 'elevated' state. Neither requested adult support

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Recommendations

- Revise playground duty roster, including what supervision in the playground looks like
- Visit another full primary school, with a similar cohort/demographic, to see what their playground looks like
- Explore Play – Eat – Learn

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Play – Eat – Learn

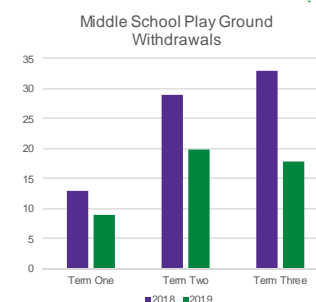
- Children who miss breakfast, or children who have dysregulated autonomic nervous systems (such as those with PTSD) may be missing out on the food necessary to sustain attention, and maintain control over the behaviour
- Structure food-intake, play and learning activities throughout the school day
- Designed to promote attention and reduce behaviour problems during learning times
- Play – Eat – Learn does not reduce play time in schools, it reschedules it
- Intervention involves changing the schedule of the school day, scheduled eating at 90 minute intervals, timetabling key skills directly after eating
- Playtime is crucial to children's development and learning, and can improve student's thinking and learning, as well as appetite
- Research shows that changing the order of playtime and lunch results in; a calmer lunch time atmosphere, a decrease in disciplinary problems, increased attention in class, and more food being eaten

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Outcomes

- More adults on duty
- Strengthened the playground leadership project
- Play – Eat – Learn
- Continued analysis of lunch time data collection



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Play – Eat – Learn outcomes

- Senior students were positive about the change
- Middle school students were mostly in favour of the change
- Junior students were mostly positive about the change
- Whanau responses were mixed
- Teachers were mostly positive about the change in routine
- Support staff had some mixed thoughts
- The school would not go back to the traditional way of Eat – Play – Learn

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In Summary

- While referrals may be for individual students, we often look wider (ecological lens)
- Good relationships with schools are important
- New Zealand based research, applying to our unique context, can't be under-estimated when looking for best available evidence
- Research around psychological knowledge, learning theory, and interventions that pertain to helping students with special educational needs is particularly important for psychologists working at MoE

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