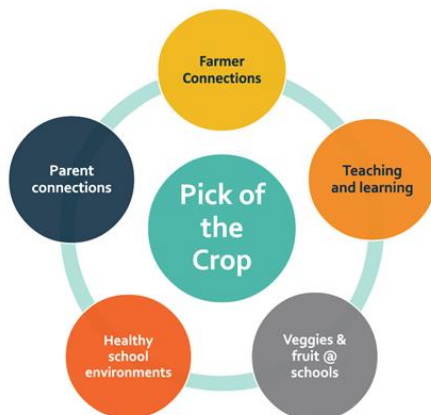


Enhancing Parent Connections for the Pick of the Crop Program – Student Project



Background

The [Pick of the Crop program](#) supports Queensland primary schools to boost children's intake of **vegetables and fruit**. Recent data shows only 4.6% of Queensland children aged 5-17 years old consume the recommended amount of vegetables every day and 68.4% consume the recommended amount of fruit.¹ Pick of the Crop aims to improve these statistics and support student learning and improve the health of Queensland children through five components:



Parent Connections Project

A recent project undertaken by QUT Dietetic students on placement with Health and Wellbeing Queensland has explored ways in which Pick of the Crop can enhance the *Parent Connections* component. This was done by understanding the facilitators and barriers that exist for parents when it comes to engaging in school-based food and nutrition programs.

By reviewing current research and consulting Queensland parents, teachers, principals and other stakeholders; determinants of parental engagement were identified and are summarised below.

Findings

Facilitators of Parental Engagement

- Short-term commitments (convenient, infrequent activities or events)
- Activities directly involving children
- Use of multiple communication channels (Newsletters, Emails, Social Media etc.)
- Deliver personalised, tailored and bite-sized information

Barriers of Parental Engagement

- Time (work commitments, conflicting child schedules, competing priorities)
- High levels commitment within activities/events
- Perception of adequate food and nutrition knowledge
- Cultural and socioeconomic factors
- COVID-19 Parental visitation restrictions

Continued parental engagement throughout schooling optimises child learning and wellbeing outcomes



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Recommendations

These provide the opportunity for the Pick of the Crop program to enhance *Parent Connections* of the program in schools.

One: Provide schools with strategies to enhance local parental engagement. These include:

- Create quick home family activities as a fun extension of child's learning
- Host school-based student and family healthy meal events
- Host practical child and parent health and wellbeing workshops which include related nutrition aspects
- Create family supermarket visits
- Create yearly class recipe books where each student and parent contributes a nutritious recipe
- Invite a nutritionist/dietitian to present at a parent workshop before the child begins schooling, to demonstrate what constitutes a healthy lunchbox.

Two: Ensure Pick of the Crop activities, actions and communication are completed in ways that encourage parental engagement. Such as:

- Limit on-site Pick of the Crop events as grade-specific and once/term
- Provide tailored, personalised and bite-sized information
- Utilise multiple platforms for information delivery

Three: Facilitate *Parent Connection* events for regional clusters of schools, to maximise parental engagement. These include:

- Guest presentations from nutritionists/dietitians
- Hands-on learning opportunities for parents
- Opportunities for strengthening of social support networks

Four: Develop a broad range of quick, easy-to-make nutritious and tasty Pick of the Crop recipes for weekly school newsletters. These should expand on those already available online and focus on 'quick' healthy recipes.

Priority Populations

Additional recommendations have been provided to assist better reach with priority populations, including Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities, those of low socioeconomic background and culturally and linguistically diverse parents.

1. Adapt resources to be linguistically and culturally sensitive to groups schools are seeking to engage or groups represented in Queensland Schools.
2. Include a variety of different cuisines within the suite of Pick of the Crop recipes produced.
3. Schools could consider to allow families to nominate another friend or family member to attend events or activities, to reduce personal burden and harness sense of community.
4. Invite culturally competent nutritionist or dietitian to hold culturally-sensitive workshops to increase engagement and motivation.

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For further information, contact info@hw.qld.gov.au or visit the Pick of the Crop website - <https://hw.qld.gov.au/pick-of-the-crop/>.

Reference: 1 - Queensland Health. Queensland Survey Analytic System 2020. Accessed 28 March 2022.

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