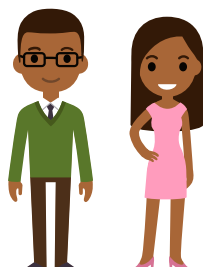


The Nourishing Hawke's Bay: He wairua tō te kai surveyed early learning services across Hawke's Bay in 2023 about the healthiness of food environment policies and practices.

Measuring food environments for children in Hawke's Bay



58 registered early learning services across Hawke's Bay



74% Centre Manager / Director / Head Teacher / Kaiwhakahaere
 12% Teachers
 2% Parents / whānau / volunteers
 12% Not specified

Response rate of 37% of invited centres

Policies* on food and beverages

97% have food and / or nutrition policies

83% have drinks / beverages policies

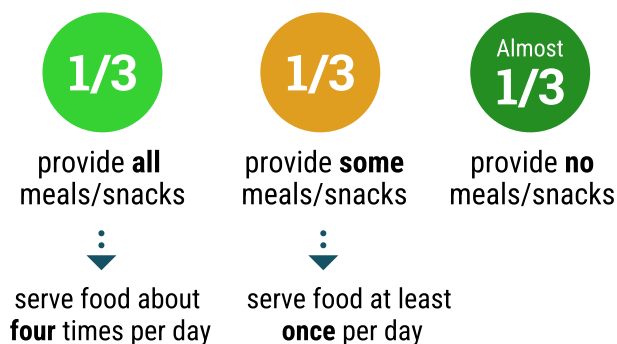
4 of the 20 policies provided was "water-only"



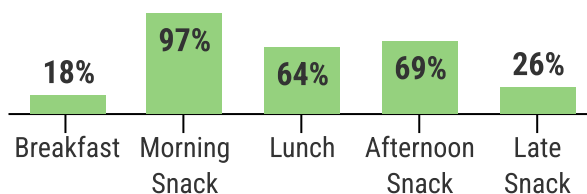
1 policy mentioned water as "preferred or recommended"

*a written policy / procedure or guideline, for staff and / or parents

Provision of kai



Of centres providing **all** or **some** kai (n = 39), they provided...



Recommendations - what is needed?



A **water-only** policy

Preferred / recommended is not strong enough



Professional learning and development for teachers



Education on healthiness of celebration foods

Particularly foods bought from home



More communication of policies with whānau



NOURISHING HAWKE'S BAY
HE WAIRUA TŌ TE KAI



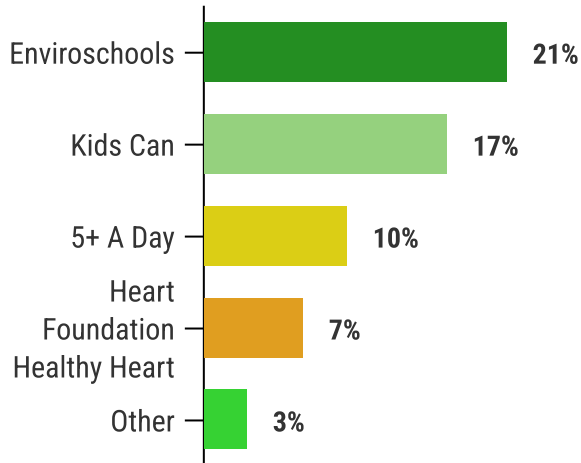
Programmes and barriers



Almost half of centres participate in Food and /or Nutrition Programmes (48%)



Over half of centres report barriers to providing or promoting healthy food to children / tamariki (59%)
Over 1/10 reported 4 or more barriers



The most common barriers are:



Lack of support from parents / whānau (33%)



Concerns about food-related choking (26%)



Requirements around food safety (21%)



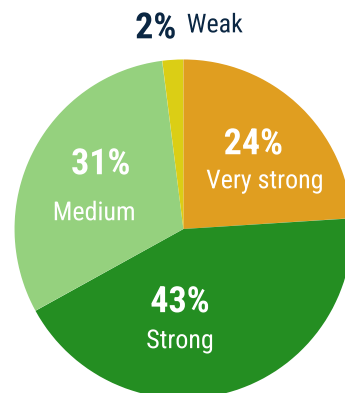
Lack of staff training (19%)



Concerns about food intolerances or allergies (16%)

Culture around healthy eating

Most centres have a strong perceived culture around healthy eating



Very strong = policies in place, strong healthy food practices, staff / parents strongly support healthy food kaupapa

Strong
Medium = some policies and practices support healthy food, mixed support from staff / parents for healthy food kaupapa

Weak
Very Weak = no policies, considerable unhealthy foods provided, healthy eating is a low priority

We asked centres how much they agreed with the following statements

There was strong support for...



a **strong collective vision** around hauora / health between centre **management** and **staff**



the centre **highly prioritises nutrition** and healthy eating



staff consistently act as **role models** for healthy eating



frequent **communication with parents** and whānau about nutrition and healthy eating

There was less support for...



a **strong collective vision** around hauora / health between centre **management** and **parents / whānau**



Nutrition training is provided and regularly updated for all staff (29% disagreed that it was provided at all)




*aggregate of 'strongly agree' and 'agree' responses

Special occasions and fundraising


Food and drinks for special occasions are mostly healthy when provided by the centre



The ratio of green to red items is...

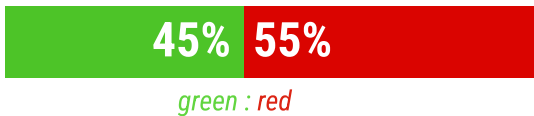
Green items ('everyday' healthy items like fruit, vegetables, plain milk, cereals, bread, etc.)



Red items ('occasional' unhealthy items - muffins, pizza, sausage rolls, cake, flavoured drinks & chips)



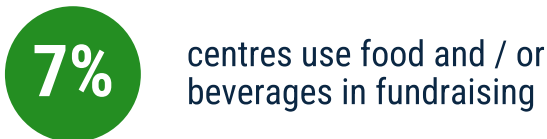
The ratio of green to red items is...




Food for special occasions brought from **home is less healthy** than food provided by the centre



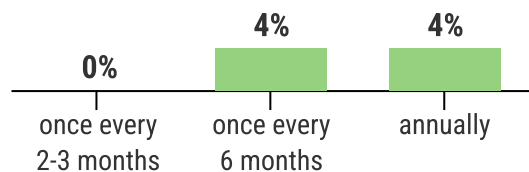
Few centres use food and beverages in fundraising, and only infrequently. When food is used in fundraising, it's generally healthy



The ratio of green to red items is...



How frequently do centres fundraise?



What might enable healthier food environments in early learning services?

Staff Training/knowledge
Participation in external programs

" Workshops for whānau that showcase how easy and cost effective it is to replace unhealthy options for a healthier alternative...and **funding** to support training.

Parent/whānau education
Making healthy food more affordable

Lunchbox contents leaflets and recipe cards for parents.

MOE flexibility around presentation of food (choking)

Revising the menu regularly in line with **cheaper alternatives** and eating fruits/vegetables **seasonally**.

More flexible MoE guidelines

Growing **vegetables** so children can eat fresh...but **guidelines** around safe eating and choking 'can limit what can be used or brought into the centre' "

Early learning services policy analysis

This policy analysis used the shortened WellCCAT-NZ tool (20 centres)*

Average **comprehensiveness** score **5.6/10**

1.9/10 Average **strength** score

Most policies did not use strong prescriptive wording, rather focusing on encouragement and recommendations



Many centres did not provide a specific course of action when food from home did not meet nutritional standards



Most centres did not address nutritional standards of foods provided for special occasions and fundraising



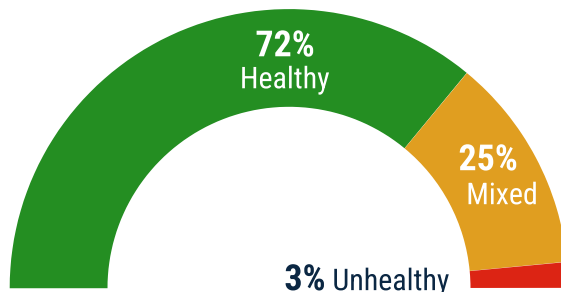
Many policies provided guidelines around the **nutritional value** of food provided from **home**

*WellCCAT = Wellness Child Care Assessment Tool

Menu analysis



3/4 of the food on the daily food menus in centres is healthy*



The proportion of **unhealthy items** varied across centres from **0% to 13%**

*According to 2020 NZ Ministry of Healthy Food and Drink Guidance for Early Learning Services (14 menus analysed)

Summary of key findings



Almost all centres report having **policies on food and beverages**



Over 2/3 of centres **provide kai**



Almost 1/2 of centres **participate** in Food and /or Nutrition Programmes



Over half centres **report barriers** to providing or promoting healthy food to children/tamariki



Food and drinks for **special occasions** are **mostly healthy** when provided by the centre



Many centres did not **communicate food and nutrition policies** with parents and caregivers

Most food items provided in centres are **healthy**

Full results available at: <https://nourishinghawkesbay.org/regional-survey-of-student-health-and-wellbeing/>

For more information, please contact: nourishinghb@eit.ac.nz

Nourishing HB: He wairua tō te kai has ethic approval from the EIT Research Ethics and Approvals committee (EA03230123).