

Student 6: High Not Achieved

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Obesity is a huge worldwide problem these days with every "one in twelve children (aged 2-14 years) are obese (8.3%) and that every "one in five children are overweight (20.9%)" (5) in New Zealand alone, if we don't do anything about this problem soon, society's numbers of obese and overweight people will increase, and society will suffer the consequences. For overweight or obese people, there are increased risks of health related diseases such as 'diabetes, high blood pressure, cancers, arthritis, stroke and heart disease'. (2) This means more money is needed for hospitals and health people. We as a country need to find a way to stop the increasing number of overweight or obese people in the country, by first starting with fundraising in schools, where it all begins for the children.

1

Schools need to fundraise so that the students of the school are able to go on school trips, and so that the school can purchase necessary items for the school, for example they need to be able to afford sports equipment or school books for each individual student, etc., and the best way for the school to do that is to fundraise. Most of the time schools fundraise using food for example the school could easily host a sausage sizzle to sell to the public, and it encourages students to bring money to school to buy a sausage. Also the majority of schools in New Zealand have canteens, which are open at lunch times for the students to purchase food, which most students would have for lunch instead of bringing their own, because it is a lot easier for parents to grab some coins to give to their children instead of making them something easy like a sandwich because that takes up time in the morning/late night for a busy parent. The students are attracted to the canteens mainly because they are well known for selling fatty foods such as pies, sausage rolls, chips, doughnuts, and the popular drink which is juice or soft drinks such as coke, lemonade, raspberry, Fanta, and the list goes on, young people like to eat and drink this type of food because it fills them up fast, and it could also be some sort of social factor, meaning at that school in particular it could be cool to have fizzy drinks, or juice at lunch instead of water.

2

The average total of food items sold at school canteens each week in New Zealand primary and intermediate schools is around 272,044, with the main food items being pies – '55,882 sold every week, potato chips- '27,750 sold every week, and the main drinks being juice – '31,920' sold every week and soft drinks -'18,868 sold every week (data from (1))

3

Canteen menus, display mainly high fat foods at the top of the list, probably so that the students can make up their mind easier and just choose the fatty food, over the food that could have been a healthier option for them, like sushi for example or wraps which might have been placed at the bottom of the list also, maybe because the things like pies are more expensive and if they are at the top the students will pick that without even looking through the rest of the list, having high fat and sugar products at the top of the list could also be showing the price of the food item, and how the profit will benefit the school, for example on most school canteen menus meat pies are all each around \$3, and another popular item, chips are around \$2-3, from this data we can tell that these food products must be popular because they are selling at a higher price than the rest of the items, the children won't think twice about buying them because it's their parents money, not theirs. The children's decisions somewhat profits the school.

4

Another big problem to do with the obesity rate in New Zealand is the media side of things, when kids get home around 2 o'clock and 4 o'clock (when children usually get home from

school) they turn on the television to watch their local television programme, during the ad breaks there is a large number of junk food or takeaways adverts "A group of New Zealand experts who say they've made a link between kids watching television and bad health." (4) This proves that the advertising affects the viewers (the children) from what I can gather is that the children would see the advert, then go and nag their parents for them to get them something like 'McDonalds' or 'KFC' or any other junk food to eat that they see advertised. "Researchers from the University of Otago in Dunedin studied 1000 children from age three to 26. They found that those who watched television more than two hours a day had higher levels of obesity, blood cholesterol and smoking - as well as lower levels of physical fitness - when they reached adulthood than kids who watched less than two hours a day" (3) this just proves that the amount of television a child watches impacts what their future life will turn out like, and proves that the media need to remove or change the times of the advertisements.

5

This problem is not just affecting children physically, but also mentally/emotionally, and even socially, the children don't know any better than to think themselves are not just over weight but more of an outcast in the community and of their school they are attending, being overweight would lower the children's self-esteem and they would think badly of themselves.

6

Children in primary and intermediate schools are not the nicest of children they would more than likely bully over weight kids, for what they look like.

Children in schools these days are being taught 'mixed messages' in their classes the teachers are teaching them about nutrients that their bodies need, and the rule 5+ and day, keeps the doctor away, but then are being rewarded for work with a sweet/lolly of some sort full of sugar, so of course the children are confused of what to eat.

If New Zealand does not sort out this 'problem' soon we will become an obese country. Schools need to start fundraising with non-food products or healthier products (such as sushi) than what they sell at the moment, which will start to teach the children selling the products that there are other options than just un-healthy foods. I feel that as a small country we can still make a difference if we all pull together and do something about the problem instead of just talking about it.

(References 1 to 5 were listed.)