LOVE in a LUNCHBOX Acquittal Report - Year One.
2016 – 2017
Please demonstrate how the initiative meets student and school community needs.

The Love in a Lunchbox (LIAL) initiative was an unprecedented success in the second year of the program in meeting the needs of the student and school community. With the launch of the LIAL event as a pilot program in 2016, the ‘what is Love in a Lunchbox’ identity had been established.

The critical question of ‘why LIAL is so important’ was the expo’s second priority in 2017 with the event organisers anticipating a stronger following from parents, carers and children from the Clarendon Vale Primary School. Boosted by funds made available through the Student Health Initiative’, a project evaluator was employed to identify how effective the critical message was getting across through the primary school and into the general public. The ‘why’ factor was supported by the evaluation of a professional researcher whose aim was to work alongside a group of parents/carers in the lead up to the event, conduct interviews and utilise other research methodologies during the expo. The action research enquiry cycle employed by the researcher was concluded with a following up session with the parents/carers having participated in the event.

The purpose of the acquittal will identify the successes of the project and its accompanying research and frame up the next stage in the evolution of the four phased plan of the Love in a Lunchbox initiative.

Reviewing the objectives of the project:

The objectives of the Love in a Lunchbox initiative are to:

- Provide healthy food taste experiences for Clarendon Vale Primary School and their parents/carers
- Enhance the knowledge, skills and confidence of parents/carers to prepare a healthy lunchbox for low cost
- Contribute to improved nutritional content of school lunchboxes of the Clarendon Vale Primary School children

Reviewing the objectives of the evaluation is to:

- Develop and pilot a set of evaluation tools in the first year of the LIAL project
- Refine these tools based on the findings and implement the evaluation tools for the remaining three years of the project
- Publish the results, including the evaluation tools to enable other school communities to implement the project within their community.
Love in a Lunchbox 2017 had achieved many quality outputs and outcomes, including:

- A school-wide lunchbox survey was conducted two weeks prior to the expo and repeated four weeks post-expo in the same school term. The survey measured the lunchbox servings of fruit, vegetables and discretionary items (sometimes food). The surveys were conducted with little to no resistance from parents/carers. "Parents/carers confirmed that they didn’t feel ‘targeted’ by the LJAL initiative (or made to feel as though they were bad parents/carers) and were generally receptive to trying to improve the nutrition content of student’s lunchboxes”. (Love in a Lunchbox Evaluation Report, Draft One. Pg.15).

- Participants all responded positively to the expo. Parents/carers noted that a day designated for them resulted in a higher participation rate as compared to year one of the expo. Others commented on the ease of food preparation and the great taste of the food offered during the event.
The evaluation of phase one of LIAL indicated a strong engagement with the project across the school community. The growth of those participating in the project grew exponentially (see illustration 1).

The event spawned a second event materials resource kit which can be found on the following link: http://intranet.education.tas.gov.au/intranet/Pages/lift.aspx.
An online animation tool, www.goanimate.com was employed to digitally illustrate the success of the event. The staff of the Clarence Plains Child & Family Centre produced a 00:08:39 video featuring animated characters telling the story of the development of the event/expo. The video was shown during a sitting of Tasmanian Parliament (and was recorded in the parliamentary proceedings, HANSARD) and at the recent State-wide Early Years conference in Launceston. The LIAL video can be accessed via a QR code (see illustration two).

Illustration Two: Featuring Liala (our Love in a Lunchbox ambassador and the LIAL quick response code.

Event targets 2018:

The Love in a Lunchbox expo and the accompanying research indicated a number of key target areas in which to address in the lead up to and during the 2018 event. The key aim of the 2018 event will address the ‘how’ factor when preparing lunchboxes, preplanning meals and the mathematics behind food preparation.

The evidence of the evaluation findings have been welcomed as an exciting new direction for the LiaL event and it is anticipated that the range of stakeholders will also increase due to a broadening of understanding to spreading one consistent message throughout localised organisations hosting food related programs and events, particularly those embracing the ‘healthy eating’ philosophy.

Key target areas include:

- Continued monitoring of lunchbox contents and reducing the complexity of factors in determining the contents and its preparation.
- Find innovative ways to attract the 10% of ‘hard to reach’ families that are traditional non-attenders to school or community based events.
- Increase children’s involvement in the choice/selection of healthy options through direct event involvement (i.e. creating healthy lunchboxes for adults or judging a ‘My Kitchen Rules’ style contest during next year’s event). Family Food Patch resources can be used to create student lead initiatives, supported by the work of the school and CPCFC staff, including the Speech Pathologists.
• Promoting vegetables and fruit as a “trusted” source of nutrition as a side from plastic wrapped or packaged food. The evaluation stated that “parents struggled to provide nutritious food, particularly vegetable-based snacks for their children. It was felt that there wasn’t a supportive culture of consuming vegetables for recess/lunch at the school. This was confirmed by other stakeholders, who described LiaL as a project aiming to achieve cultural change, which takes time” (LiaL Evaluation Report, pg. 15).

• Develop connections with LINC Tasmania in the delivery of mathematics, food and fun related programs. The evaluation reported that “parents displayed a lack of knowledge in the doubling of recipes (e.g. low literacy skills).” (LiaL Evaluation, pg. 23). Expanding our networks into other food related initiatives can enhance LiaL’s influence in shaping a cultural change across Clarence Plains and other districts and prepare parents/carers with the skills to be organised.

• Feature displays with increased activity and interaction. Whilst the static displays were valuable in relating information (i.e. the amount of sugar content in popular sports drinks), participants indicated that children and parents would receive a heightened level of understanding as to the nature of the displays had there been someone to guide them through the information. Collaboration between stalls with a ‘take home’ message and affirmed learning outcomes will value add to the experience at each stall site and also compliment classroom based learning.
The 2017 evaluation also suggested that “consideration should be given to why and how the involvement of more organisations could add value to the event without taking away community ownership.” (LiaL Evaluation Report, pg. 24). One way of doing this would be to introduce organisations that can ‘skill up’ parents/carers and provide them with the confidence to do prepare healthy lunchboxes (i.e. TasTAFE’s Drysdale and Rosny College’s VET Kitchen Operations), whilst also gaining the support of potential mentors from the Clarendon Vale Neighbourhood Centre Inc. [CVNC Inc], the Bayview Secondary College and other Primary schools or volunteers with a specific skill set that can lead teams of parents / carers involved in the event. Another option to enhance community ownership in the LiaL initiative is to utilise the food resources grown in local community gardens (i.e. Rokeby Neighbourhood Centre Inc. or the Mission Australia / CVNC Inc. GROW project) and encourage localised shop owners to increase the amount of fresh produce in their stores at an affordable price. Challenge peer pressures and create a counter-culture of acceptance that vegetables can be cool to kids. A recent video was released on YouTube celebrating the benefits of broccoli by a band called the Rocket Surgeons. The video is catchy, appeals to children and carries a fun, upbeat appeal to try the green goodness of mini-trees (link: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=q_GCrh6iG).

Financial Budget Statement Report – Year One:

| Evaluation facilitation costs: | $4,730.00 |
| Food vouchers / boxes of fruit and vegetables: | $640.00 |

Influencing communities

The Love in a Lunchbox initiative’s message has commenced broadening outwards amongst public schools and other prominent places, including:

- Parliament House – Tasmania (The Go Animate video was included in Hansard)
- Rokeby Primary School (They wish to become an active partner in 2018)
- Family Food Patch (They wish to become an active partner in 2018)
- Communities for Children Network (Tamar Valley) expressed interest in the program
- Let’s Inspire – RBF Award Night (Department of Education’s Marketing Division produced a video on LiaL, granting the program extensive exposure on the awards night)
- Early Years State-wide Conference (Launceston)

A food scan program has commenced with an environment survey being conducted across Clarence Plains to ascertain the number of food programs exist. So far, in excess of 20 foods related program exist and more are being developed. LiaL will encourage representatives from each program to play a part in our event in the future.
Planning for the ‘The Love in a Lunchbox’ initiative has commenced for the 2018 school year. The planning process has been made so much easier with the information made available from the evaluative methodologies employed by the LiaL researcher. As suggested by our initial funding application, the anticipated success of each event will be based on the informed data collected from the direct responses from parents/carers, children and stakeholders. It is from the direct involvement of the collective community that a cultural shift in promoting healthier lunchboxes may take shape given the time and capacity for a shift in thinking that preparing meals is as easy as 1,2,3.