**The changing role of Australian primary schools in providing breakfast to students: A qualitative study.**

**Running Title:** School Breakfast Programs Australia

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**Conflict of Interest statement**

The authors declare no conflict of interest.

**Title: The changing role of Australian primary schools in providing breakfast to students: A qualitative study.**

**Abstract**

Issue Addressed: In recent years state governments throughout Australia have provided significant funding to support the expansion of school breakfast programs (SBPs), in response to concerns about children arriving at school hungry. This study investigated how schools have responded to the growing expectation that they provide breakfast for students.

Methods: This qualitative study draws on case studies of five Australian primary schools that operate SBPs. Interviews or focus groups were conducted with 78 children, parents, staff, volunteers and funders and data underwent thematic analysis.

Results: Three key themes were identified; Adjusting to the changing role of schools, SBPs reflecting the school’s culture, Schools as an alternative or additional site for breakfast. Some staff and parents expressed unease about SBPs shifting responsibility for breakfast provision from parents to schools but were committed to supporting vulnerable students as part of the broader school culture. SBPs were found to provide an alternative or additional site for breakfast consumption for many children not experiencing food insecurity.

Conclusion: The expectation that schools provide breakfast has created some challenges and tensions that have not been fully resolved. The adoption of an inclusive approach, undertaken to ensure students were not stigmatised for attendance, had resulted in concerns about the resources used by the programs as well as over-consumption of breakfast by some students.

So What?: Increasingly, Australian schools are providing breakfast for students. Concerns about shifting responsibility and over-consumption could be addressed if schools were given more advice on program management by government and non-government funding bodies.

**Key Words:** Child Health, School health, qualitative, health promotion

**Summary**

This study investigated how schools have responded to the growing expectation that they provide breakfast for students by speaking with children, parents, teachers, volunteers and funders. Some parents, volunteers and teachers were concerned about this change in breakfast provisions. Offering open access breakfast programs meant some students chose to eat breakfast at school or some students ate two breakfasts.

**Introduction**

Breakfast consumption is reported to have a range of benefits including behavioural, social, health and academic 1-3. In Australia, the 2011-12 National Nutrition and Physical Activity Survey showed that 13.2% of boys and 18.6% of girls aged 2 – 17 years skipped breakfast on at least one out of two days 4. A survey of Australian families in 2018 found that 1 in 5 children go without breakfast once per week. Of the families who reported experiencing food insecurity (i.e., not having regular access to sufficient, safe and nutritious food to meet their dietary need 5) 11% sought food assistance through schools 6. School breakfast programs (SBPs) have been established to address issues of food insecurity and are reported to have a range of benefits, including social, behavioural and school connectedness 7-11. However, evidence that SBPs improve classroom behaviour and academic performance is weak. Three high-quality randomized controlled trials found that making free school breakfasts available to all students did not improve classroom behaviour or academic performance when measured using standardised tests and children who usually ate breakfast at home substituted it for breakfast at school 12-14. However, the number of children who did not eat breakfast at home was low, making it difficult for the interventions to demonstrate any effect.

In response to concerns about children arriving at school hungry and the impact this may have on their learning, in the past decade state governments throughout Australia have provided funding to support the establishment and/or expansion of breakfast programs in Australian schools 6. In contrast to countries such as the UK and USA, Australian schools do not have a history of providing sit down meals to children at school, with Australian children generally bringing their lunch from home 15. However, many schools do offer a complementary food service such as a school canteen where children may purchase an entire meal or supplement food brought from home 15. It is unknown exactly how many schools in Australia currently offer such services, but a survey of the school food environment in 248 metropolitan schools in Melbourne in 2012 found that the majority (88%) of schools had a food service such as canteen, tuck shop (i.e. another term for school canteen), lunch order system or breakfast club 16. Over 85% of Tasmanian schools have a canteen/food service (unpublished data).

Australia’s relatively recent introduction of SBPs contrasts with other countries that have offered school breakfast programs for decades. For example, the National School Breakfast Program in the USA commenced in the 1960s 17, 18 with over 13 million children in 2014 accessing the program. However, despite having the same eligibility criteria, more than twice as many children in the USA access the National School Lunch Program than the Breakfast Program 17, 18. A 2013 review of school food services in the UK recommended that free school meals be reintroduced for all primary school students and schools in more disadvantaged areas establish SBPs 19. Despite no historical precedent of subsided school food provision in Australia the most commonly used model for delivery of SBPs appears to be one of access to all students at no cost 10, 11, 20. This avoids the sensitive issue of targeting SBPs to needy students that may inadvertently offend or stigmatise rather than engage families experiencing food insecurity. Support and funding for SBPs in Australian schools has grown, but there is limited guidance from the education and health departments regarding the provision of breakfast by schools. There is also little consideration of how the growing expectation that schools provide breakfast for students might impact schools and their communities. This paper draws on findings from a qualitative study involving five case studies with Tasmanian primary schools that investigated the perceived benefits and challenges of delivering SBPs21. This paper examines how primary schools have responded to the growing expectation that they provide breakfast for students.

**Methods**

This qualitative study, guided by pragmatism22, 23 draws on five case studies with Tasmanian primary schools from a range of socioeconomic backgrounds and geographic locations (i.e. rural, urban) who were currently delivering SBPs. A qualitative approach was adopted as it facilitated investigation of perceptions from a range of individuals in the school setting, including students.

School recruitment

The Tasmanian Department of Education provided a list of schools that received one-off funding during 2011 to 2014 to establish a school breakfast program, along with their Occupational Education Needs Index (OENI). The OENI “provides a relative measure of socioeconomic status of each school. It is based on a socioeconomic status index, Australian Bureau of Statistics information and the proportion of the school’s population on Student Assistance” 24. The OENI categorises schools as having low, medium or high levels of disadvantage. Five southern Tasmanian primary schools from a range of OENI categories and geographic areas (i.e., rural, urban, outer urban) were initially selected. School principals were sent an approach letter and information sheet inviting them to participate in the study. Four principals declined to participate, as they were too busy. Declining schools ranged from high to low disadvantage. When a principal declined to participate, another school was selected. This process continued until five schools had been recruited. Ethical approval was received from the Human Research Ethics Committee (Tasmania) (H0015712) and from the Department of Education (FILE 2016-22) to conduct research in Tasmanian Government schools.

Individual recruitment

Following enrolment of the school into the study, the coordinator of the school breakfast program or a nominated teacher was contacted and provided with further information about the study. Schools were provided with a sample newsletter article informing parents/carers about the study, information sheets (for staff, volunteers and parents/carers) and consent forms, and advice for recruiting students, parents and school staff into the study. Recruitment of children, parents/carers, volunteers and staff into the study was then undertaken by each school. Representatives of the funding bodies were contacted directly by researchers, sent an information sheet, consent form and invited to participate in the study. All adults provided written consent and parents/carers were required to give written consent for participating children.

Procedures

Survey

Principals completed a short survey online or in hard copy. The survey collected information on eligibility criteria to attend the breakfast program, number of children who usually attend, days the program was available, and the types of foods provided. Principals were also asked to report how the school breakfast program was funded and to provide the names and contact details for the funding bodies.

Interviews, Focus groups and Observations

Two of three researchers (author initials) visited the schools during July and November 2016. Two researchers (author initials) had extensive public health, evaluation and qualitative research experience with young people and adults. One researcher (initials), a public health nutrition epidemiologist, was conducting qualitative research for the first time. None of the researchers involved in this study were connected in any way with the schools in which this study occurred. During these visits, observations and fieldnotes were made about the breakfast program at each site and interviews (one-on-one and group) and focus groups were conducted with staff, volunteers, parents/carers and students (see supporting information for details). Additional phone or face to face interviews were conducted with staff or parents/carers who were unable to attend the breakfast program on the day researchers were in attendance. All interviews and focus groups were conducted by one of three researchers. Participants also completed a short questionnaire to obtain characteristics of the participants and their usual involvement in the breakfast program. During initial interviews with staff and parents it was apparent that there were differing perspectives on the role of schools in providing breakfast to students. An additional question was added to the schedule that asked adult participants ‘What role/responsibility do you think schools have in providing breakfast to students? '.

All focus groups and interviews were audio-recorded and transcribed. Field notes were written up after each visit to the SBP. Transcripts and field notes were de-identified and imported into qualitative data analysis software, NVivo 11 (QSR International) and Excel, to support data management and analysis. Transcripts field notes underwent a process of careful reading, coding and categorising. Data were then analysed thematically using an iterative process that utilised coding and the constant comparison technique 25. Researchers met regularly to discuss and guide the thematic analysis process. Coding decisions, key concepts, ideas and reflections were identified and recorded in the project log and memos 26. The research team held a series of group analysis meetings reviewing coding, key themes and refining the analysis. All interviews were analysed exploring how schools and their communities were responding to the changing expectations with respect to breakfast provision.

**Results**

*Overview of SBPs and study participants*

Five Tasmanian primary schools participated in the study. School populations varied from 100 to 500 students. The reported percent of students accessing the SBPs ranged from 5-23% (Table 1). In total, 78 individuals participated in the study, including children, parents/carers, school staff, volunteers and funding body representatives (Table 2). One representative of a funding body was also the coordinator of the program.

At all schools there were no eligibility criteria for access to SBPs. SBPs were offered with varying frequency across schools, ranging from once per week to five days per week. One school ran the program from the nearby community centre, all other schools ran the SBP on site at the school. Coordination of the SBPs was carried out by teaching staff, school chaplains, school cleaners, community workers or parent volunteers. All programs relied on volunteers to run and assist with delivering the program. Only one school collected data on the number of children attending each morning and none collected information on student background (i.e., need). Some schools permitted parents or carers to attend breakfast with their children. SBPs were funded through a combination of school funds, community groups and donations. Food was sourced from a variety of places, including food relief organisations, local businesses and donations from the community as well as food bought by the school specifically for the program.

Thematic analysis of interview and focus group data identified three key themes; The changing role of schools, SBPs reflecting the school’s culture, Schools as an alternative or additional site for breakfast. All quotes are presented indicating if the responder was a parent, staff, volunteer or student.

*Adjusting to the changing role of schools*

When adult participants were asked to reflect on the role of schools in providing breakfast, some participants considered it an ‘*essential service’* (parent) while others reflected that in a ‘*perfect world’* (*volunteer*) schools would not need to offer breakfast programs as children would eat breakfast at home. A number of participants had mixed views on whose responsibility it was to provide breakfast, indicating that schools should address the needs of their school community and in this context SBPs could be considered an integral school service.

*I’m not sure that it’s really essential for the school to provide it but I think it’s essential for all the community to know that it’s there or for the parent community to know that it’s there (parent)*

The growing need for schools to offer breakfast programs was considered a consequence of broader societal changes, such as changing family structures, living arrangements and work patterns, as well as socioeconomic challenges experienced by some families that resulted in schools taking on a range of new and non-traditional responsibilities as this staff member reflected:

*We [schools] seem to be accepting more and more responsibilities that in days past we’ve always held as responsibilities of the family. That doesn’t stop at the breakfast club. There’s so many other things too that schools are picking up now. (Staff).*

The complexity associated with the question of whether school should provide SBPs was illustrated by one staff member who recognised the importance of the program, but considered that it fell outside the core business of schools.

*I think it’s [SBP] an integral part that is positive, otherwise we wouldn’t do it. But it’s off to the side a bit. It fills an absolute niche and you’d notice if it wasn’t there … It’s an important cog that just does its job, but the measure of it doing its job is that no-one notices it. Sort of like sewerage systems, they work but you would notice if they weren’t, you’d know. It’s an interesting little part. It’s a big part, but it’s not an official part.* (Staff)

Two experienced staff reflected that in the past only the few children known to need this type of support would have been provided with some food at school, ‘*we just target[ed] the kids who we knew hadn't had anything’* (Staff).

Discussions with school staff revealed the unease some of them experienced about schools providing breakfast as it was acknowledged that this shifted responsibility for breakfast provision from home and parents to schools. At three schools some volunteers and staff raised concerns that a few parents and children were ‘*taking advantage’ (staff)* of the program. One staff member recalled how parents had changed their approach to breakfast provision at home because they had access to a SBP.

*I've had parents say to me now, we don't bother giving them breakfast at home, because if we know they're going to eat at school: ‘Why?’ … So, it's that thing where you see like parent responsibility becoming less and less, and the schools taking over those roles that really should be in the family.* (Staff)

Given the reliance on volunteers to run the SBPs, one staff member questioned if SBPs were the best use of volunteers.

*It's another area where we're using a lot of volunteer time where perhaps we could be using it to listen to kids read or practise spelling works, or just those tasks that teachers don't always catch up on with the lower kids.* (Staff)

Placing the needs of students, particularly those experiencing food insecurity or living in more complex social circumstances, at the centre of decision making about the provision of breakfast by the school, assuaged the doubts of staff, parents and volunteers about the program.

*That’s a real contingency issue. I think ultimately schools don’t have the responsibility ultimately, but I think they have a social obligation to those children that possibly are disadvantaged, that they would actually provide breakfast.* (Parent)

*I believe that children learn better if they’ve had breakfast, and we care about them, and we want to set them up for a good day. Due to whatever circumstance, they haven’t had brekkie at home, if we can support them in any way, we’ll do it. (Staff)*

*SBPs reflecting the school’s culture*

Many parents and staff considered SBPs a tangible demonstration of the schools’ culture and commitment to the wellbeing of its students and families. The inclusive approach adopted by all schools to their SBPs was integral to this. Schools knew that some of the students, possibly even the majority, who attended the SBPs would have access to breakfast at home but adopted the inclusive approach to reduce any stigma associated with attending the SBPs and ensuring those students with greater need found the program accessible.

*It’ll mean we can’t come in and say, “You can have it, but you can’t.” So, it’s got to be available for all of them otherwise that will make them get singled out if you had to put them into that position. (Volunteer)*

SBPs were also considered an indication of how a school cared for its students and families and a mechanism for promoting the wellbeing of students and their families.

*They [previous school] didn’t do anything like this. So, I find it very giving. In fact, that’s how I would describe this school, yeah, I find it very giving, it’s giving back to the families at the school. And it opens the school up to the community as well in that way. (Parent*)

*It's always a bit of a thriving, happy environment. Some of those kids who may have been rushed to school early or straight onto … I guess it's that settling, associating with others before going into the classroom. So, it always seems like a nice environment. (Staff)*

Children also valued the SBPs, indicating that the SBP was “*fun”* (Student 8 years) and that without the SBP school would be “*more boring*” (Student 9 years) the program was part of the school experience

*Mornings wouldn’t be fun without breakfast club ‘cause you don’t get to communicate with other people and stuff* (Student - 8 years)

All five schools were part of the Move Well Eat Well program; a voluntary Tasmanian government initiative that supports the healthy development of children and young people by promoting physical activity and healthy eating in primary schools. Two schools were also part of other food related programs. Health and wellbeing was recognised as part of the remit of schools and the SBPs were considered an extension of this commitment to students’ health as this parent and volunteer reiterated.

*Just the kids' health basically, like it's a big concern for most schools. Some schools don’t seem that way, but what I've learned from this school so far - yeah, they do. Nutrition is a big thing. (Parent volunteer)*

School staff in two schools outlined how the SBP was considered an integral part of other activities they conducted at the school around healthy nutrition. In the remaining schools these links were less apparent.

*Schools as an alternative or additional site for breakfast*

Most participants, including children, indicated that the majority of children attending the SBPs would have access to some food at home. Children were frequently choosing to eat breakfast at school instead of at home.

*Some days [daughter] won't want to eat at home. She'll want to come up here and have it up here and then sometimes she'll have something at home. (Parent)*

Children were choosing to eat breakfast at school because they preferred the food that was available at school, they enjoyed eating with friends or they did not wake up early enough to eat breakfast before the family left home. It was also apparent that some children were eating two breakfasts: one at home and one at school. The reason for the consumption of two breakfasts varied, but included the desire to socialise with friends, different foods available at school, children still feeling hungry when they arrive at school or students leaving home early in the morning.

*Just to fill me up because I don’t usually have a big breakfast. (Student, 9 years)*

*I have breakfast very early in the morning and when I get to school I’m still hungry or thirsty or I’m a little cold, so I come down and get a drink. (Student, 8 years)*

*My kids always have breakfast, but I think they also like to have a little bit more sometimes by the time that they get to school. I think it is also a little bit of that socialisation as well. (Parent)*

Only a few staff and volunteers indicated that they were concerned about the over-consumption of food among some children at the school, but acknowledged that it was not always apparent who had already eaten breakfast.

*I guess another thing I see is probably 80 per cent of our kids have had breakfast … kids are eating huge amounts. … you can never really tell who's had breakfast and who hasn't. (Staff)*

Most adult participants considered the social benefits associated with attending the SBPs for those who had already eaten at home greater than concerns about over-eating as this staff member illustrates.

*I think some kids take advantage of it and are eating far more food than they probably should in the morning. They've had breakfast and they still come and have some more. But in turn, those are the kids that probably need that contact anyway. (Staff)*

For children living in rural areas who travelled to school via bus, having access to breakfast at school was considered particularly beneficial.

*I think it’s good, though I think they should help provide breakfast because a lot of kids come early on the bus, so they don’t get breakfast. (Parent)*

For the small number of parents who indicated that providing breakfast was sometimes a struggle for them, they appreciated the support the program provided.

*When they [children] don't have breakfast at home its always here when needed. (Parent)*

**Discussion**

In this study we found that the establishment of SBPs was undertaken to support the wellbeing of students and their families, providing a tangible demonstration of a school’s broader culture. The provision of breakfast at school was acknowledged as a recent and growing responsibility for schools, undertaken in response to societal changes that had resulted in some children attending school without breakfast as well as changing expectations of the broader role of schools. In this study, despite some concerns that SBPs shifted the responsibility for breakfast provision from parents to schools’, staff, volunteers and parents were committed to providing breakfast to children in real need using an inclusive approach as adopted by schools in other Australian states 20, 27. However, a lack of monitoring and the adoption of an inclusive approach created some challenges with respect to the use of available resources and the potential over-consumption of food by some children.

The inclusive model of SBPs adopted by the schools in this study was one of two models recommended in the review of school food services in the UK in 2013 19. This review identified two possible models of school breakfast provision; 1) Breakfast provided free to all children who want it, 2) User-pays system, with parents who could afford to paying for breakfast 19. The universal free access program was considered important for reducing any stigma associated with attendance at SBPs. This model relied on volunteers and alternative sources of subsidisation or partnerships to support the program. The user pays model was based on understandings that SBPs may act as childcare for some families and in this context expectation of a financial contribution was not unreasonable. Payment was considered a potential mechanism for ensuring SBPs remained sustainable 19. Changing the eligibility criteria for the breakfast program can impact participation. When schools changed from offering a universal to an eligibility based SBP, participation decreased 28, wheras changing from an eligibility based to a universally available SBP 29 increased participation. The change was greatest among those whose eligibility to receive free meals changed 28, 29, but participation in the SBP also decreased for those students who remained eligible for a free breakfast when eligibility criteria were introduced 28. None of the schools in this study discussed adopting a user pays approach with all schools relying on volunteers and sourcing food from a range of places including relief organisations, local businesses and donations. This reliance on volunteers and challenges in sourcing food impacted on the frequency with which the SBPs operated as well the potential sustainability of the program 10, 11. All schools reported difficulty in finding volunteers to help run their SBC reflecting the broader trend of a decrease in volunteering in Australia 30. This trend may result in programs, such as SBPs, that rely on volunteers being vulnerable to closure.

This study found that some children were consuming two breakfasts. While this study was unable to quantify the number of children consuming two breakfasts, concerns about over-consumption were raised by staff and volunteers. Previous studies examining SBPs that have adopted an inclusive approach to delivery reported that children substituted breakfast at home with breakfast at school 12-14, 31, 32. Only one of these studies investigated the consumption of two breakfasts by students, reporting that students in schools with a universal SBP were twice as likely to consume breakfast at home and school as students in schools without a SBP 12.The provision of breakfast at schools has been adopted to address concerns about food insecurity, the nutritional quality of breakfast consumed and general student wellbeing. Considerations of unintended harms, such as over-consumption, of SBPs have rarely been raised although one UK study involving interviews with senior level stakeholders in a Local Authority and senior school staff identified over-consumption or ‘double-breakfasting’ as a potential concern 33 . A longitudinal study on breakfast location patterns in middle school students in the USA found that weight changes were similar across all breakfast groups, including double breakfast eaters 34 . In the current study parents who were not volunteers for the SBPs did not raise concerns about over-consumption. At a time when there is national and international concern about the rates of obesity in children 35 this potential unintended harm warrants further investigation.

In Australia, individual schools make decisions about the food services they offer students. However, the newly released Tasmanian Department of Education, Child and Student Wellbeing Strategy acknowledges growing expectations for schools to take responsibility for issues previously considered a family or community responsibility, such as breakfast provisions 36. Concerns about SBPs shifting responsibility for breakfast provision from parents to schools have been previously raised 20, 33, 37. In a national review of SBPs in the USA in 1980 it was found that school districts where this perspective prevailed were less likely to establish SBPs 37. Despite some adults in the current study raising concerns about shifting responsibility for breakfast provisions from parents to schools, the schools remained committed to the SBPs, valuing the benefits they associated with the program. Schools may need to actively address concerns about shifting responsibility through family engagement, communication, capacity building strategies and embedding the program into the school’s broader health and wellbeing agenda. Monitoring the effectiveness of their SBPs, including the range of benefits, and communicating this to the school community will ensure schools are able to respond to any concerns about delivering SBPs, including the use of resources.

Australian schools are adopting a range of initiatives to support the health and wellbeing of their students and staff. The new Tasmanian Child and Student Wellbeing Strategy identifies a range of initiatives that support students to attend and engage in their learning 38. The Australian Student Wellbeing Framework 39, Health Promoting School framework 40 and Friendly Schools initiatives 41 all recommend adopting whole school approaches in order to maximise student wellbeing. These frameworks recognise the critical role the school context and school community play in supporting student wellbeing, as well as the need for integrated and multisectoral action to maximise outcomes. This study found that SBPs were considered tangible evidence of the broader school culture, fostering connection and building community 11. Currently in Tasmania, some support is available through the Move Well Eat Well program 42 and food relief organisations such as the Australian Red Cross' Breakfast Club 43, Foodbank School Breakfast Club programs 44 provide some online resources. These programs may provide some practical guidance on how to establish SBPs as well as provide some food, but do not address broader concerns raised in this study such shifting responsibility, embedding the program within the schools’ core business nor how to address potential issues such as over-consumption. Schools with canteens or an alternative food service are also able to access resources through the state based canteen association which promotes the National School Canteen Guidelines canteen guidelines 45. There is an opportunity for the Move Well Eat Well program to provide more support to schools to assess the need for a SBP, to plan and to strengthen community partnerships for sustainability.

This study has some limitations. Despite attempts to recruit more primary schools from high-levels of disadvantage only one of the schools in this study was so categorised, with three schools categorised as low-level disadvantage. This may have impacted the degree of unease expressed by participants about schools accepting responsibility for providing breakfast as it is possible that there may be fewer concerns where the need is potentially greater. Schools may also be less likely to be considered an alternative or additional site for breakfast. Families who rely on the SBPs to provide breakfast may not have participated in this study or participants may have been reluctant to indicate the extent of their need. Staff who were less supportive of the program may have been less inclined to participate. There was no formal assessment of the schools’ policies and practices with respect to food services nor was breakfast consumption quantified. Only schools that had SBPs were included in this study and opinions regarding the responsibility of providing school breakfasts may be different in schools that do not have a breakfast program or among parents whose children do not attend the program. Strengths include the inclusion of children, parents, volunteers and staff and the cross-case synthesis. Despite the differences in school demographics and approaches to delivering SBPs the tensions around shifting responsibility and over-consumption were similar.

Conclusions

Increasingly, Australian schools are involved in providing breakfast for students. This study shows that this growing expectation and new role for schools has created some challenges and tensions that have not been fully resolved. Monitoring the effectiveness of their SBPs may assist schools to address some of these concerns. Schools were committed to supporting their most vulnerable students along with promoting the health and wellbeing of their whole student population and SBPs were considered a tangible way of addressing the needs of students. However, SBPs were not yet fully embedded as core business and concerns remained about shifting responsibility for breakfast provision from home to school. The adoption of an inclusive approach, undertaken to ensure students were not stigmatised for attendance, had resulted in concerns about the resources used by the programs as well as over-consumption of breakfast by some students. If SBPs are to be strengthened and increasingly incorporated into schools’ core business, state and federal departments of education and health, along with non governmental funding bodies, will need to give schools more practical advice and support with regard to program management and monitoring of effectiveness.

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| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **Table 1. Characteristics of the schools and the breakfast clubs** | | | | | | | | | | | |
| **School** | **School Demographics** | | | |  | **Breakfast Club Program Characteristics** | | | | **Study participants** |
|  | **Enrolment**  **(range)\*** | **Disadvantagea** | **Eligible** | **Location** |  | **Commenced** | **Availability** | **Attendance per day** | **Foods provided** |  |
| 1 | 100-199 | High | All | Metro |  | 2014 | 5 days | 20 | Cereal, toast, yoghurt, juice, milk, milo | Children=5 |
| Parents=5 |
| Staff/Vol=3 |
| 2 | 300-399 | Med | All | Metro |  | 2008 | 5 days | 30-50 | Cereal, toast, milk, yoghurt, fruit | Children=6 |
| Parents=9 |
| Staff/Vol=2 |
| 3 | 400-499 | Low | All | Rural |  | 2008 | 2 days | 40-60 | Cereal, toast, milo | Children=11 |
| Parents=1 |
| Staff/Vol=4 |
| 4 | 200-299 | Low | All | Rural |  | 2013 | 5 days | 50 | Toast, fruit, milo | Children=4 |
| Parents=2 |
| Staff/Vol=5 |
| 5 | 400-499 | Low | All | Metro |  | 2009 | 1 day | 25 | Toast, fruit, juice milk, milo | Children=6 |
| Parents=3 |
| Staff/Vol=6 |
| \*Range used to ensure schools not identifiable  a Disadvantage was measured using the OENI. OENI = Occupational Education Needs Index is derived from parental background data collected at enrolment. | | | | | | | | | | | |
|  | | | | | | | | | | | |

**Table 2. Participant characteristics**

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| **Participants** | **N = 78** |
| **Children** | **35** |
| Age (Years) |  |
| 6-7 | 9 |
| 8-9 | 16 |
| 10-12 | 10 |
| Sex |  |
| Male | 16 |
| Female | 19 |
| Participation in SBP |  |
| Every day provided | 16 |
| Not every day provided | 18 |
| Did not answer | 1 |
| **Parents/carers** | **17** |
| Sex |  |
| Male | 2 |
| Female | 15 |
| Number of children in family |  |
| One | 2 |
| Two | 6 |
| Three or more | 9 |
| **Staff** | **15** |
| Sex |  |
| Male | 7 |
| Female | 7 |
| Not stated | 1 |
| Role with school |  |
| Principal | 2 |
| Teacher | 6 |
| Chaplain | 2 |
| Other | 5 |
| Years of service at school (range, years) | 0.3 -11 |
| Years direct involvement in SBP (range, years) | 0.4 - 9 |
| **Volunteers** | **8** |
| Sex |  |
| Male | 2 |
| Female | 6 |
| Years of school engagement (range, years) | 1.5 - 9 |
| Years direct involvement in SBP (range, years) | 1 - 4.5 |
| **Funding bodies’ representatives** | **3** |
| Sex |  |
| Male | 1 |
| Female | 2 |

SBP; School breakfast program