



AUGUST 2017

SCHOOL SURVEY

RESULTS



SCHOOL SURVEY RESULTS

FOOD4KIDS HAMILTON: SCHOOL SURVEY 2016-2017

With a presence in **45 Hamilton schools**, and **servicing over 1,060 children every weekend** during the 2016-2017 school year, Food4Kids Hamilton provides a “solution-based program that addresses, responds to and diminishes weekend hunger within Hamilton”(1) through the distribution of weekend food bags. Given the negative developmental outcomes associated with child hunger, Food4Kids offers a prevention focused approach to reducing food insecurity and increasing children’s ability to thrive.

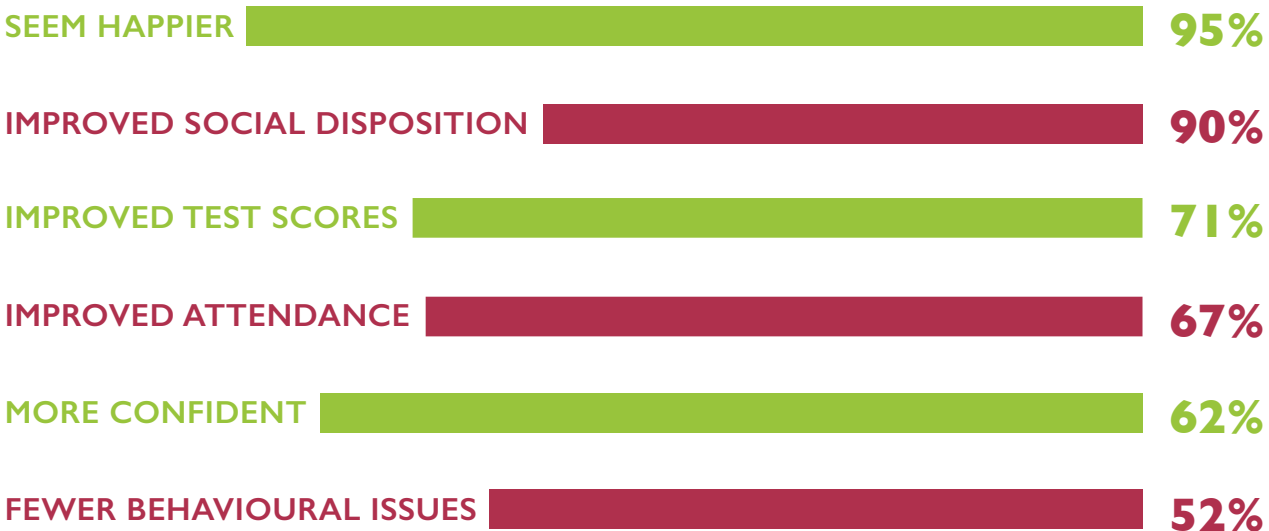
In early 2017, Food4Kids Hamilton circulated a survey to 45 schools receiving support from Food4Kids in Hamilton. The survey focused on identifying the impact of the program, as well as any challenges experienced, and unmet needs. Responses were received from 21 schools who support 634 children through Food4Kids programming. Principals, Vice Principals, Administrative staff, and teachers completed the survey. The following is a summary of responses that speak to the impact and challenges associated with Food4Kids programming, as well as suggestions to improve programming in the future.



IMPACT OF FOOD4KIDS IN HAMILTON

Food4Kids is making an important difference in the Hamilton community. Diminishing weekend hunger through the provision of healthy food is associated with a number of notable outcomes for children and their families. Accordingly, over the past year, school staff observed a number of meaningful improvements among children involved with Food4Kids. The table below summarizes the main outcomes observed by school staff.

PERCENTAGE OF SURVEY PARTICIPANTS WHO OBSERVED OUTCOME AMONG CHILDREN



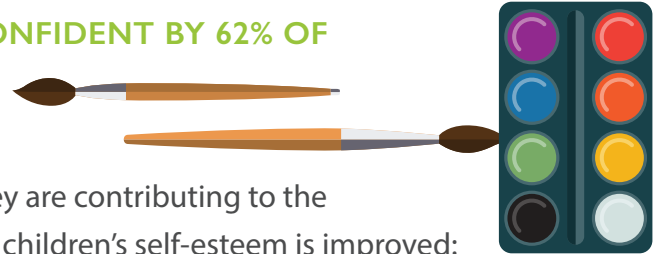
1 <http://www.food4kidshamilton.ca/our-schools>

Among school staff responding to the survey, 90% reported that children have an improved social disposition and 95% reported that children seem happier. One individual noted:

THERE ARE LOTS OF HAPPY FACES WHEN THE BAGS ARE GIVEN OUT

School staff shared that Food4Kids reduces the anxiety felt by children who, prior to program involvement, worried about access to food on weekends when school nutrition programs are not available.

CHILDREN WERE ALSO OBSERVED TO BE MORE CONFIDENT BY 62% OF SURVEY RESPONDENTS.



By bringing food home to their families, children feel that they are contributing to the household, and through consistent support from Food4Kids, children's self-esteem is improved:

SOME OF THEM HAVE ISSUES WITH SELF-ESTEEM AND THE FACT THAT OTHERS ARE WATCHING OUT FOR THEIR BEST INTEREST HELPS THEM FEEL ACCEPTED AND CARED FOR.

Food4Kids also contributes to important academic outcomes such as improved attendance and improved test scores. Among survey participants,

67% OBSERVED THAT CHILDREN HAVE IMPROVED ATTENDANCE AND 71% REPORTED IMPROVED TEST SCORES AMONG STUDENTS SUPPORTED BY FOOD4KIDS.

When children receive better nourishment, they are better able to concentrate in class and demonstrate a greater enthusiasm toward learning:

ONE LITTLE BOY USED TO ASK FOR FOOD CONSTANTLY EVERY MORNING AND IT WAS HAVING A MAJOR IMPACT ON HIS ABILITY TO FOCUS. WITH FOOD4KIDS, HE IS MUCH MORE FOCUSED NOW THAT HE IS GETTING THE SUPPLEMENTED FOOD.

AMONG SURVEY PARTICIPANTS, 52% ALSO OBSERVED FEWER BEHAVIOURAL PROBLEMS AMONG STUDENTS INVOLVED IN FOOD4KIDS.

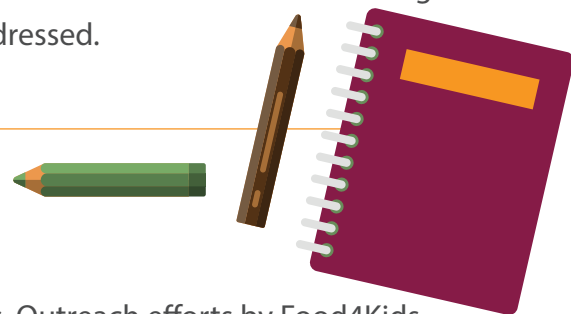
By diminishing weekend hunger through providing nutritious food, Food4Kids prepares children for the school week ahead. School staff noticed that:

STUDENT DEMEANOUR IS MORE SETTLED WHEN THEY RETURN AFTER THE WEEKEND

The provision of healthy food is a central component of Food4Kids, and one that is largely appreciated by school staff and children alike:

THEY LOVE FRUITS AND VEGGIES. FOR MANY, THEY WOULD NOT HAVE FRUITS AND VEGGIES IF NOT FOR FOOD4KIDS

Food4Kids also benefits the families of children supported by the program. The supplementation of weekend meals diminishes the stress faced by families facing financial hardship (including refugees who possess fewer resources), and eases some of the “mental burden” associated with poverty. School staff perceive that involvement with Food4Kids also helps families to feel more at ease when seeking support due to understanding that their needs will be discretely addressed.



COMMUNITY LEVEL IMPACT

Food4Kids also contributes to important community level outcomes. Outreach efforts by Food4Kids representatives within the schools contributes to an increased awareness of particular realities facing the community:

THE PRESENTATION AT OUR SCHOOL COUNCIL MEETING WAS REALLY INFORMATIVE AND I THINK IT OPENED SOME PEOPLE’S EYES TO THE PROBLEM WE HAVE IN OUR CITY.

Food4Kids also facilitates a strengthened connection between schools and the community. One staff member recounted the following story that speaks to the extended reach of the program:

WATCHING A JUNIOR CLASS BE INSPIRED BY THE PROGRAM AND STARTING A FOOD DRIVE AT THE SCHOOL ONLY TO DISPERSE THE FOOD BACK TO OUR COMMUNITY TO HELP A LARGER RANGE OF FAMILIES THAT MAY BE IN NEED AROUND THE HOLIDAYS

OBSERVATIONS ABOUT PROGRAM IMPLEMENTATION

Among participating schools, 52% (n=11) unequivocally reported that they did not experience any challenges with Food4Kids programming over the past year. They described the program as well planned, organized, and easy to implement within the school, with prompt and reliable food delivery. The program is responsive both to students by offering food options that accommodate particular dietary restrictions (e.g., halal and peanut free options), and to the school environment by working within school schedules to ensure that children receive food bags for the weekend. For example, Food4Kids delivers food bags to the schools a day early when a P.A. day disrupts the normal delivery schedule.

There were however some challenges reported by school representatives associated with program implementation. Most commonly, challenges are encountered when children are absent on Fridays when the food bags are distributed, or when children forget to bring the bags home for the weekend. In both of these circumstances, children subsequently receive the food bags on Mondays, but nonetheless this negates the potential of the program to benefit families over the weekend.

During the summer months, school nutrition programs are generally put on hold. However, Food4Kids has implemented the first regionalized program of its kind in Canada that supports children during the summer months. Schools refer children with limited access to food during the summer months to the Summer Feeding Program. This program is accessible on a priority basis based on assessments by the school. Prioritizing the list of students for the program was described as difficult by some school staff.

The need for the program in some schools is currently outpacing the capacity of the program. Among schools participating in the survey, there is a wait-list of approximately 153 students, with the average being approximately 7 students per school. While 3 schools reported that they have a wait-list of 0 students.

There is a strong demand for programming such as Food4Kids. Indeed, as stated on the Food4Kids website, there are currently 30 schools and 400 students waiting to become involved with Food4Kids. One survey participant described the current reality that their community is facing:

THE NEEDS IN OUR SCHOOL COMMUNITY ARE INCREASING AND IT IS VERY DIFFICULT TO CHOOSE WHO SHOULD GET THE SUPPORT WHEN WE HAVE A CAP ON THE NUMBER WE CAN SUBMIT. WE TRY OUR VERY BEST TO SUPPORT THOSE FAMILIES IN OTHER WAYS.

Schools are extremely appreciative of Food4Kids. As one individual put it:

IN MY OPINION, THIS IS THE MOST IMPORTANT PROGRAM OFFERED IN MY SCHOOL.



CONCLUSIONS

Food4Kids Hamilton demonstrates outcomes associated with positive childhood development and is strongly appreciated by the community. Such outcomes include increased happiness, improved social disposition, increased confidence, decreased behavioural issues, and improved attendance and test scores among children receiving support from Food4Kids. Food4Kids Hamilton also benefits the families of children receiving support by reducing some of the stress associated with financial hardship through the provision of weekend food bags, and outreach efforts have helped to increase awareness of food insecurity within the community. Additionally, Food4Kids Hamilton has strengthened the connection between schools and the community, which has inspired positive action. The results of the survey underestimate the true impact and reach of Food4Kids in the Hamilton community given that approximately only half of schools who receive programming responded to the survey. The program is well organized and reliable, and responsive to dietary restrictions. Food4Kids also accommodates changes to school schedules to ensure that children receive their food bags for the weekend. Observations made by school staff indicate that there are few challenges associated with the implementation of Food4Kids programming, but most challenges that are encountered are associated with actionable suggestions identified by the schools. The need for Food4Kids is demonstrated by the number of children who could benefit from support outpaces the program's capacity.

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