

NZBGP

New Zealand Beverage
Guidance Panel



Glenview School,
Porirua East

Water Only Schools for Aotearoa, New Zealand Policy Brief:



Wednesday 5 August, 2020

Policy brief: Implementation

Glenview Primary School, Porirua East

Glenview school is a decile 1a school located on a hill in Cannons Creek which backs onto the Belmont reserve. Our School led by former Principal Pauline Thomas adopted healthy food and drink policies, health promotion initiatives and Environmental Schools initiatives to address health issues that were pertinent in our community.

Issues of diabetes, tooth decay, obesity and learning difficulties due to poor nutrition saw our board and staff lead a change in mindset through the adoption of healthy eating policies and practice that would over time see positive health changes and mindset among our community.

The availability of low-cost food with poor nutritional value coupled with a cultural Pacific practice of showing love and generosity through food cause a persistent need to combat this through education and practice. We couple our policies and practice with promotion through swimming and physical activity and Environmental School initiatives which have seen community garden and orchard being created and tended by children that provide free and healthy eating options.

Working together in such projects promotes use of key competencies and natural science opportunities where our senior children act as Tuakana to model safe practice and co-operative working together for a common cause.

As a teacher with 25 years of experience in implementing programmes and seeing positive results I can hand on heart endorse such initiatives and attest to how much easier our children find focusing and learning new concepts and ideas due to positive personal health. Self-esteem of children and the whanaungatanga that blossoms among our kids have so many other positive outcomes for us all.

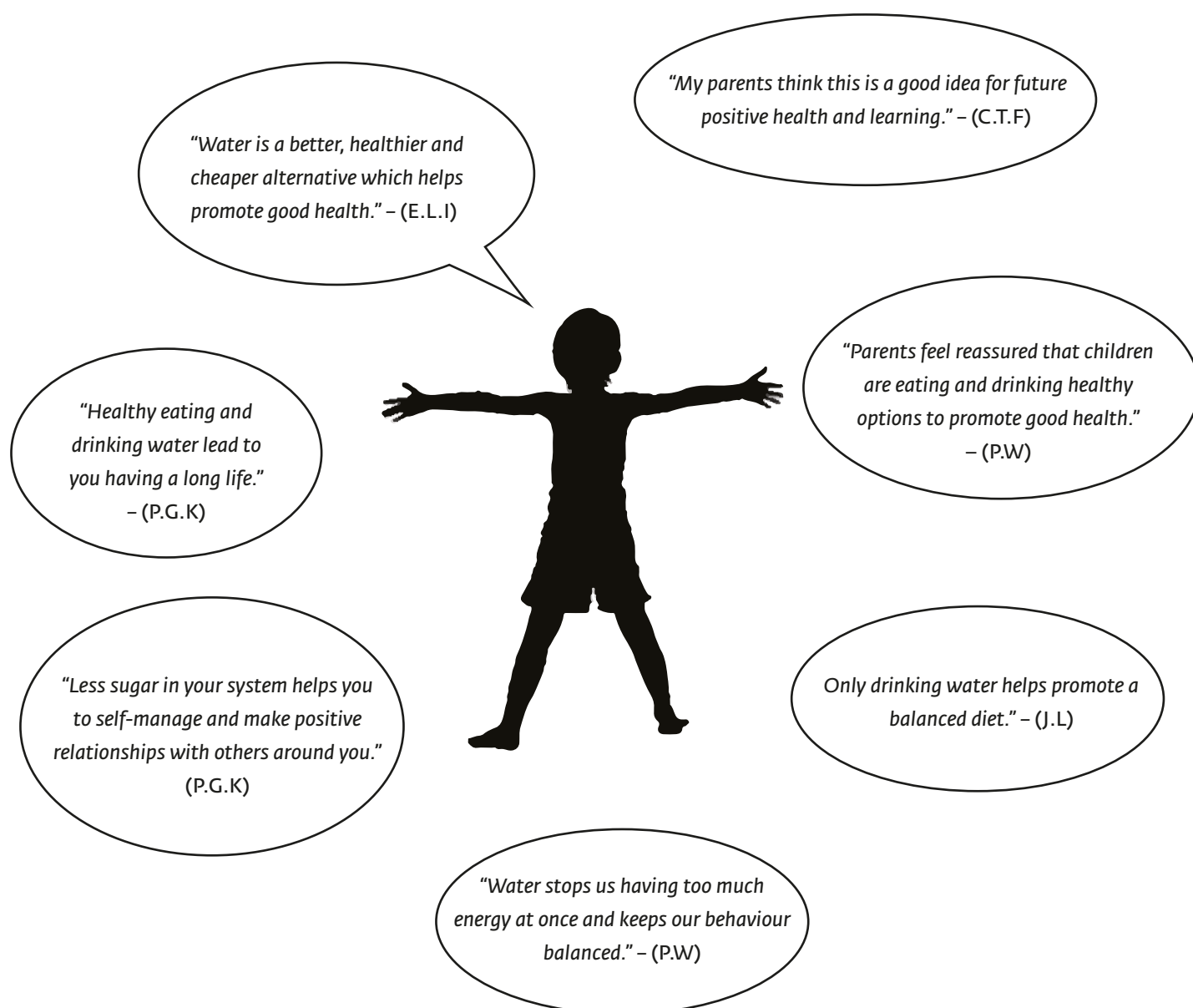
We are planting positive seeds for the future of our children's health and well-being. We are providing a coding and way of life that was the norm for our Pacific people historically". – *Lester Mohi, Deputy Principal of Glenview School*

Glenview school is predominantly Pasifika and Māori and located in Cannons Creek, Porirua City. Close by the local shops are populated with dairies and fast food outlet stores that have many unhealthy options, with sugary drinks on hand everywhere. However, these children, their families and the Glenview whanau are proud of and strongly support their school's stance on water and healthy kai. Each day Glenview students bring healthy, low-sugar lunches to school that fuel their busy days. With healthy food and beverage policies in place for over 25 years, healthy food choices are part of the Glenview school culture.

1. Purpose

The purpose of this policy brief is to highlight the importance of adopting a **‘water only schools policy’** nationwide to improve the health of New Zealand children. This policy aims to ban the availability and consumption of sugary drinks during school hours on school and early childhood education (ECE) premises. We believe our government has a responsibility to implement comprehensive policy in areas that are known to be detrimental to health. There is clear evidence of the negative health effects associated with sugary drink consumption and thus it is important that all schools and ECEs in New Zealand be required by government policy to remove sugary drinks and adopt **‘water only schools policy’**.

This document outlines the issue of sugary drink consumption in New Zealand (NZ), and its related negative health consequences, along with the potential benefits of how a **‘water only schools policy’** can provide guidance for schools in New Zealand. This policy will also describe how a multi-stakeholder effort is imperative for effective implementation of this policy as well as describing key attributes of what such a policy may resemble.



2. Policy

Water Only Schools POLICY

- This policy applies to all Schools and Early Childhood Educations Centers in New Zealand.
- Sugary drinks * will be unavailable on school premises.
- Any sugary drinks that are brought onto school grounds will be confiscated and handed back to the child at the end of the school day.
- Sugary drink consumption is prohibited during school hours and on school premises.
- Water (tap/drinking fountain/packaged) and Unflavored milk are drinks that will be offered in schools and ECEs

Water (tap/drinking fountain) and unflavoured milk are the preferred drinks recommended for school children/students, however, sugar-free alternatives are acceptable.

All events including gala days, fundraisers, celebrations, trips, events, and catering will adhere to this policy.

- For example - Sports events: Sports teams should only have water or zero sugar drinks for hydration

Exemptions: – This policy does not affect staffroom tea and coffee, or alcohol.

*A sugary drink here is defined as any drink that has 5 grams or more of sugar per 100ml, as described on the nutrition label. (Including: soft-drinks, fizzy-drinks, energy drinks, sports drinks, flavoured milk, fruit-drinks, juices)

3. Rationale for Water Only Schools policy

DEFINITION of a sugary drink (SD): All types of beverages that contain free sugars or other caloric sweeteners. The WHO describe “free sugars” as “monosaccharides (such as glucose or fructose) and disaccharides (such as sucrose or table sugar) added to foods and drinks by the manufacturer, cook, or consumer, and sugars naturally present in honey, syrups, fruit juices, and fruit juice concentrates” ⁽¹⁾. The main categories of sugary drinks include fizzy-drinks (carbonated), soft-drinks (including sachet mixes), fruit juices, fruit drinks, cordials, flavoured milks, and energy/sports drinks.

Why target sugary drinks?

The consumption of sugary drinks (SDs) is very popular in most countries, particularly amongst children and adolescents⁽¹⁾. New Zealand is no exception, with SD consumption being the leading source of sugar in the diet of youth and the second leading source for adults ^(3, 4). Over-consumption of sugar increases the likelihood of developing unhealthy weight, type-2 diabetes, non- alcoholic steatohepatitis, gout and tooth decay ⁽⁵⁻¹³⁾ and thus SD intake is a significant public health concern worldwide. A reduction in SD consumption will reduce the risk of developing these avoidable health conditions. Policy and regulatory controls on SDs are likely to be the most effective strategy to reduce SD intake ^(5, 6, 14). Such policies are also likely to be the most cost-effective approach ⁽¹⁴⁾.

Studies have shown that energy consumed in beverages increase net energy intake and is not well compensated for by a reduction in food intake ⁽¹⁵⁾. A growing body of evidence shows that sugar and SDs have addictive characteristics among high intake consumers. Sugar has addictive-like properties and acts on the brain to encourage frequent consumption. People coming off high sugar diets describe experiencing feelings of withdrawal similar to those experienced when coming off other addictive substances ⁽¹⁶⁻²⁰⁾.

Sugary drinks are easily identifiable, inexpensive, nutrient poor, highly concentrated in sugar and the leading single product item contributing sugar to the diet of children and adults. The development of the adverse health outcomes associated with SD consumption is avoidable. These reasons provide a strong rationale for policy action to improve the health of the children.

Historical context of relevant Water Only Schools Policy

In 2006, the then government added 'clause 5 section 3' to the National Administration Guidelines (NAGs) that stated: *'where food and beverages are sold on schools' premises, to make only healthy options available.'* This saw unhealthy foods and drinks exit schools including sugary drinks. National Administration Guidelines sit within the Ministry of Education and are for school administration and set out statements of desirable principles of conduct or administration for specified personnel or bodies ⁽²¹⁾. These are revised on a regular basis and subject to change.

Unfortunately, in 2009 a new administration revoked 'clause 5 section 3' which saw these unhealthy items re-emerge in many schools again. We recommend that rather than including a clause into the NAGs again that government introduce **enduring policy** that will require schools to only allow healthy drinks to be sold and consumed on school grounds as described in this policy brief. This will ensure the sustainability of this policy into the future.

When 'clause 5 section 3' was revoked in 2009 many schools continued to adhere to its principals and did not allow unhealthy foods and drinks back in. More recently many schools have been part of a Water Only movement to get rid of sugary drinks from their premises ⁽²²⁾. Water Only Schools Policy is supported by many health organisations including the NZ Dental Association, the NZ Medical Association and the Health Coalition Aotearoa.

Health impacts of sugary drink consumption

Since 2006, there have been several systematic reviews and meta-analyses of prospective cohort studies, observational studies, and randomised controlled trials (RCT) that have assessed the association between SD consumption, body mass index (BMI), unhealthy weight and related health consequences. These reviews demonstrate a significant positive relationship between SD intake and unhealthy weight, ^(9, 12, 23-28) type-2 diabetes, ⁽²⁹⁻³⁵⁾ hypertension ⁽³⁶⁻⁴⁰⁾ and gout ^(8, 41, 42). Two randomised control trials conducted by de Ruyter and Ebbeling found that masked substitution of SDs with sugar free equivalents compared to usual intake, resulted in significantly less weight gain and fat accumulation in the sugar free group ^(5, 6). This is in consensus with pre-twentieth century studies, which have shown that a diet which is limited in free sugars, reduces total energy intake and induces weight loss ⁽⁴³⁻⁴⁶⁾.

In addition, there is strong evidence indicating a significant association between SD consumption and dental caries ⁽⁴⁷⁻⁵²⁾. There is also increasing evidence demonstrating that high SD intake is likely linked to the development of cancer and impaired cognitive development ^(53, 54). These adverse health outcomes have long-term health effects such as illness, disability, premature mortality and also contributes to inequity in New Zealand ⁽⁵⁵⁾. We believe that a diet high in sugar is a form of malnutrition in which unhealthy weight gain, type-2 diabetes and dental caries are predictable results.

New Zealand's consumption of SD

SD consumption remains very high in NZ. The most recent national nutrition surveys show that SDs contribute 26 percent of sugar to the diets of New Zealand children and 17 percent of total sugar intake to the diets of adults ^(3, 4). Further, 29 percent of children consumed four or more SDs per week. This was markedly higher for boys (33 percent as opposed to 24 percent for girls), Pasifika (49 percent) and Māori (39 percent) ⁽⁵⁶⁾. Oral health is directly impacted by high sugar and SD intake and oral health is the leading cause of avoidable hospitalisations in pre-school children.

Scragg et al, using the 2002 National Children's Nutrition Survey, found a positive relationship between SD consumption and BMI in children ⁽⁵⁷⁾. Children who drank more than one SD per day had a significantly higher BMI compared to children who drank less than one SD per week (BMI: 19.7 verses 18.8 kg/m²) ⁽⁵⁶⁾. Findings from the Obesity Prevention in Communities study showed that children who consumed more than one SD per day had a mean BMI of approximately 26.3 kg/m² compared to 25.3 kg/m² for non-regular SD drinkers ⁽¹⁾.

Learning and behavior implications of Sugary drinks and Sugar intake.

Research shows that SD consumption and poor diet are associated with lower academic achievement and problematic behaviours from students. Local schools that have removed sugary drinks and become water (and milk) only have seen that it benefits both teaching and learning as well as student health and wellbeing ⁽⁵⁸⁾.

"We noticed the chemical nature of the foods...it doesn't take a rocket science degree to know that this is not going to be conducive to good learning." (Pauline Thomas. Principal of Glenview)

"On a scale of 1 to 10, it was about a one...We knew they were not reaching their potential."

(Susan Dunlop, Principal Yendarra)

How will removing sugary drinks from school's address obesity, diabetes and dental caries?

This is a simple action that can have significantly positive health effects if implemented well. Prohibiting the sale and consumption of SDs on school premises and making water more readily accessible will make it easier for children to establish healthier behaviours and to normalise these. The introduction of a such a policy will also raise childrens', the staff and the community's awareness of the harms that sugary drinks pose. This awareness raising is just as important as the reduction in sugary drink intake that is likely to result from this policy.

Changes to accessibility of SDs may prompt different behavioural responses. This is likely to de-normalise SD consumption, and eventually lead to a reduction in SD intake and burden of preventable illnesses like rotten teeth, diabetes, and unhealthy weight. The Water Only Schools policy is a simple initiative that will improve learning and health outcomes.

What about fruit juice?

There is a misconception that fruit juice is an acceptable and healthy alternative for water. Unfortunately, fruit juices contain very high amounts of sugar and in some cases have more sugar than some fizzy drinks. High consumption of fruit juices carries the same risk in the development of rotten teeth, unhealthy weight, diabetes as other sugary drinks such as fizzy drink. The high sugar content will also make concentration and learning difficult. For these reasons fruit juices and fruit drinks are not available for children as part of the Water Only Schools Policy.

What does your whanau (mum/dad) think about your school's water only policy?



4. Implementation

Challenges?

- 1) Reluctance to change
- 2) Perception that choice is being removed
- 3) Parents unaware of policy
- 4) Teachers will need to role model this behavior
- 5) Poor quality drinking fountains in some schools

No doubt there will be challenges experienced during the implementation of a Water-Only school policy. However, these can be addressed by the principal or a designated staff member charged with implementing this policy meaningfully engaging with all staff, students and their families in the leadup to the implementation of the policy. In addition, there needs to be clear communication that the policy places the well-being of their child at the center of this policy as it will not only improve their ability to learn but also their health.

By clearly and frequently communicating these messages to all involved will help address our natural.

Is it difficult being a school that has water only?

“NO, because there is the same rule for everyone which means there is equity and lack of argument.” – (N.P)

“At times monitoring this and communicating our policy to parents is difficult.” – (Teacher)

Implications for Staff

It is vitally important that teachers engage fully with this policy for it to be successfully adopted by students. For this to happen – we believe that an educational resource be developed by the Ministry of Education and delivered to all staff in schools that clearly articulates the rationale and evidence that shows what health and learning benefits will be experienced and how the policy should be worked into school practices.

Modelling and expectation of staff

- Staff lead by example by modelling healthy drinking behaviours. This means, staff also cannot have sugary drinks, at school.
- Promote healthy drinking habits through education and awareness.
- If a student is seen with a sugary drink, staff will be expected to remove the product from the child and return it at the end of the day. A letter will also be sent home with the student to inform parents and/or their caregiver why the product was removed.

Orientation of staff – Along with other school principles and values, it is important that all new staff are informed of the rules and regulations of the Water-Only policy during their orientation and most importantly the reasons for this policy.

Implications for Students

- Students are only allowed to bring water and plain milk to school.
- If a student is seen with a SD, it will be confiscated immediately and returned after school. In addition, a letter will be sent home with the child to inform parent and/or caregiver.
- If a student purchases a SD from a nearby store, it cannot be consumed on school premises.

Implications for Parents

Expectations of parents

- Parents will need to provide healthy lunch options that do not include sugary drinks.
- It is hoped that parents will eventually encourage these healthy behaviours out of school too.
- Less lunch money for purchasing lunch and more home-made lunches.

Note – it is **very** important that the parent and/or caregiver of new students are explained the Water Only policy as well as any other nutrition policies in place.

Schools should audit their drinking fountains on a regular basis to ensure that they have enough to support their student population, that they are clean, hygienic and in accessible locations in their school grounds.

What are the positive outcomes that come from drinking water and eating healthy food?

“Healthy eating and drinking water lead to you having a long life.” – (P.G.K)

“Physical fitness.” – (J.N)

“Learning is easier when you are healthy.” – (K.H)

“Your brain works better and faster.” – (A.L)

“It helps you in the future because you are in good eating and drinking habits.” – (S.M)

How

Partnership between principal – teachers – students – parents – wider community

For effective implementation, this change will need to be embraced and supported by all the partnership stakeholders. To achieve optimal benefits from this policy, the principal and staff have a responsibility to support parents and/or caregivers as well as the community to be engaged in the students’ learning and health.

Implications on School Fundraising activities and Events

- All school events including school gala, fundraisers, sports events or other celebrations will uphold practices outlined in the Water Only Schools Policy.
- NO sugary drinks will be available for purchase or consumption at any school event or on school premises at all times.
- The Heart Foundation’s ‘healthy fundraising ideas for schools – tool’ (59) provides ideas of healthy fundraising alternatives.

Consideration of alternatives

- Focus on full sugary drinks first
- 50% less sugar juice alternatives are acceptable but not ideal
- Diet drinks that are zero sugar are acceptable

Consideration of water fountain quality and accessibility

Accessibility

- At least one water fountain is required per 60-70 students
- Allow children's access to water during class time

Quality

- Water fountains will need to be cleaned regularly
- Regular maintenance
- Should be simple for children to re-fill their water bottles

There needs to be a audit of the number and quality of water fountains in your school. If schools are needing to upgrade and/or install more water fountains, the school principal and Board of Trustees must set aside/ provide a budget for this.

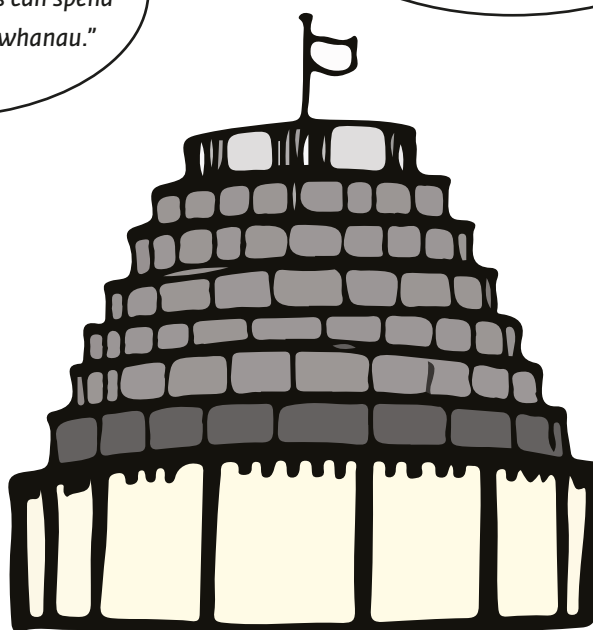
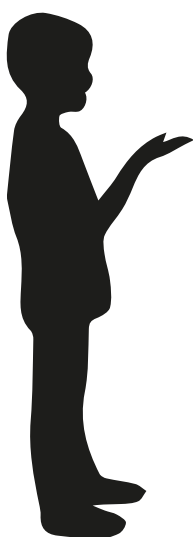
What would you tell the Prime Minister and Minister of Health about your schools Water Only policy?

"Parents feel reassured that children are eating and drinking healthy options to promote good health."
– (P.W)

"Drinking water helps your body to be healthy and to grow properly." – (J.M)

"There are less health problems so our Doctors and Nurses can spend more time with their whanau."
– (J.N)

"Less sugar in your system helps you to self-manage and make positive relationships with others around you." (P.G.K)



5. Leaders in our communities

Which other schools have implemented a Water Only policy?

- Yendarra Primary School (Otara, Manukau City) adopted a Water-Only policy in 2006 (14 years ago). Since the improvement of the food and beverage environment in 2006, there has been anecdotal reports of weight loss, improvements in behaviour, attendance, academic achievement, better health and fewer rotten teeth.
- Orautoha School (Ruapehu District) has been Water-Only for some time now and the principal recognises the benefits were numerous. “The children are able to focus longer, they have more energy, they stay hydrated throughout the very warm summers and water is so much healthier for their teeth and bodies – and it’s free.” ⁽⁶⁰⁾
- Mosston School (Whanganui City) implemented a Water-Only policy in 2010. The principal said that children were more able to learn when they were well hydrated and drinking plenty of water also helped recovery from illness so there were fewer absences ⁽⁶⁰⁾.
- Glenview School (Cannons Creek, Porirua City) has had a Water-Only policy in place for over 25 years, making it New Zealand’s longest duration Water-Only school. Regardless of the vastly available and cheap unhealthy foods and beverages in neighbourhood, the children usually show up with healthy lunch options anyway. This shows how deeply rooted and normalised these behaviours have become ⁽⁵⁸⁾.

These are progressive schools and leading the way to address childhood unhealthy weight and other negative health consequences associated with SD intake. Many principals have said that the transition to a water-only school was not difficult.

We note that there are many other schools across New Zealand that are also Water Only, that we do not have the space available to acknowledge here. However, we accept that there is a larger number of schools that have sugary drinks freely accessible to our NZ children.

For this reason, we believe that it is necessary for the government to introduce enduring policy – that ensures ALL Schools and ECEs in New Zealand only provide drinks that have No SUGAR as part of a **‘Water Only Schools Policy’**.

Summary

Sugary drink consumption negatively affects children’s behaviour, learning and health. Childhood obesity, dental caries and type-2 diabetes are all preventable disorders with serious long-term health consequences. Stopping the sale and consumption of SD in schools is essential to help tackle these health issues. Implementing the **‘Water Only Schools Policy’** will ensure all school children and students get the best possible start that they can and establish healthy lifestyle possible.

Why do you think it is important to have water-only drinks?

“Water is a better, healthier and cheaper alternative which helps promote good health.” – (E.L.I)

“Water stops us having too much energy at once and keeps our behaviour balanced.” – (P.W)

“Only drinking water helps promote a balanced diet.” – (J.L)

Authors

This policy brief was jointly written by The New Zealand Beverage Guidance Panel (NZBGP) and Glenview School staff and students. From Glenview School Deputy Principal Lester Mohi provided the Glenview Story and workshopped questions with his students so their voice could be included in this document. We would like to acknowledge the amazing efforts that Glenview students, Deputy Principal Lester Mohi and Principal Lynda Knight-de Blois have made in supporting the development of this policy brief and its presentation to political party representatives including the Associate Minister of Health Hon Julie Anne Genter and Minister for Youth Hon Peeni Henare on Wednesday 5th August, 2020.

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