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Meaningful engagement strategies for school health evaluation: Challenges and opportunities

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Background



- Schools are increasingly recognised as key settings for health promotion
- Schools are notoriously under-resourced and under-appreciated, and often see student health as on the fringe of their core business of achievement
- Schools and early childhood education services are over-researched and over-evaluated
- Schools do not engage in systematic evaluation of extra-curricular activities

The challenge



- Accountability demands require evaluations to prove the worth of funded health programs
- Health evaluators find themselves fighting for a place in an already overcrowded sector
- Perception that engagement in the evaluation is imposed on the school and/or is punitive
- Adding value for the school as well as the programme funders/developers

Evaluation philosophy



- Characterised by a continuous learning model
- Inclusive, collaborative and flexible
- Expert group guide's evaluation design, implementation and analysis, and interpretation of findings
- Use the *language, process, and infrastructure* of schools - understand:
 - curriculum teaching and learning;
 - school organisation;
 - ethos;
 - environment ; and
 - community links and partnerships

Case studies



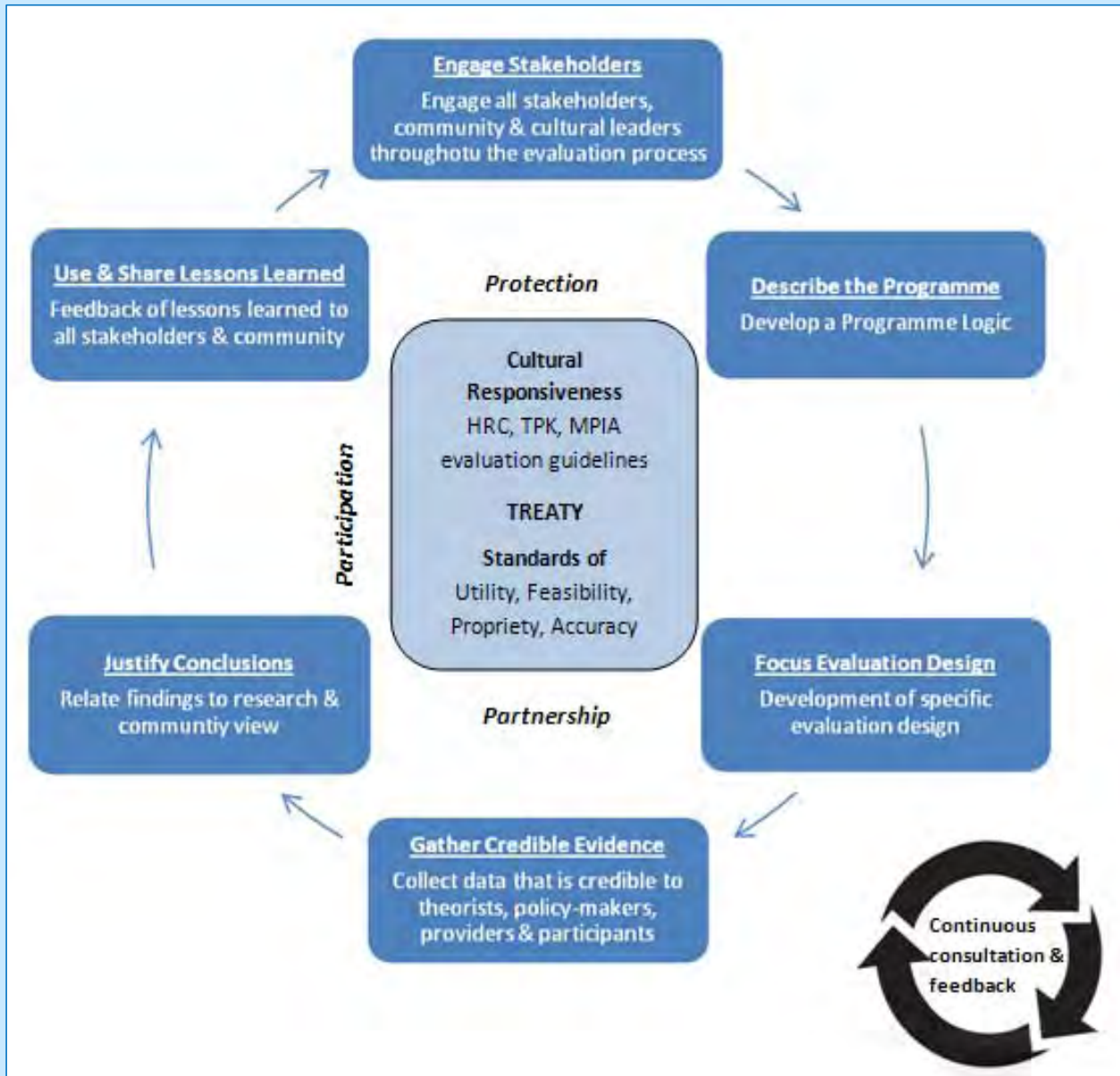
Project Energize
(Sport Waikato)



Mission-On initiative
one (MoH/MoE)



Evaluation framework





Evaluation methods

- Multi-method
 - **CATI survey**
 - Focus groups
 - **Lesson plans**
 - In-depth interviews

CATI (Computer-assisted telephone interviews)



- How we've used it: maximising reach and efficiency
 - A logistically feasible means of surveying a nationally representative sample of education settings
 - Potential participants are asked to indicate what time is most convenient for a call-back to maximise response rate
 - Supplemented with more in-depth sentinel site visits
 - Used to identify interesting cases

CATI (Computer-assisted telephone interviews)



- Advantages

- Produces good quality data – programme in safeguards and no accidental skips or missing data
- No need for ad-hoc data entry
- Efficient – automated skip patterns to avoid asking redundant questions
- Allows for multiple call-backs - response and convenience for the respondent is increased
- Provides a much better response rate - less burdensome on a schools time
- Combines recruitment and scheduling

Lesson plans

<p>Time 10-15 min</p>	<p>Class discussion for all Using photos of breakfast cereals and other foods:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> •Discuss reasons why the body needs to start the day with breakfast (analogy made to starting a car without fuel). •Do a brainstorm of suggested foods for breakfast with the class. •Get the class to identify the healthy choices from the photos; get the students to tell you why they are healthy. •Discuss why sugary cereals like Coco Pops are not the best choice
<p>5 min 20 min 20 min 5 min</p>	<p>Individual Activity: BREAKFAST MENU Distribute the Breakfast Menu assessment sheet to each child and get them to write the name of the school and class at the top. Give the children instructions on how to choose a healthy breakfast from the pictures provided; the children should:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> •Tick the boxes of any kinds of foods you think would make a healthy breakfast. •Or draw in their own choices on the blank menu; if they do this get them to write what the foods are. <p>When they have chosen their menu get the children to write why they think that these foods are a healthy choice for breakfast.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> •If you ticked any boxes, explain why you think these foods are a healthy choice for breakfast. <p>Collect the assessments up and then discuss some of the food chosen as a class; reminding the children again of the importance of a healthy breakfast.</p>

Start Your Day With a Healthy Breakfast!

Name:	
Age:	
School:	
Class:	

Breakfast is the best way to start the day! So, today we are going to choose a healthy breakfast!

Tick the boxes of any of foods below that you think would make a healthy breakfast. If your healthy breakfast is missing you can draw in your own on the empty menu!

My Breakfast Menu



Lesson plans



- How we've used it: creating a win-win for schools and evaluators
 - Structured school lesson plans were developed to evaluate children's knowledge and awareness of nutrition (breakfast and drinks)
 - Served a dual purpose: a means of gathering data to inform the evaluation, whilst also providing a resource that schools could continue to use in the classroom.
 - Allowed for a judgment about *depth* of student's knowledge

Lessons learned



- Approach
 - Consider time/resource required to engage, and reflect this in the selection of methods
 - Endorsement helps; engage the sector
 - Be mindful of what has gone before
 - Forewarned is forearmed: give a 'heads up' and an opportunity to opt out
 - Let schools dictate the logistics of participation
 - Close the information loop

Lessons learned



- Methodology
 - Engage educators in planning for evaluation where feasible
 - Consider timing of data collection in relation to school term activity
 - Invite participation from wider stakeholder group
 - Build in learning opportunities for students where possible
 - Build capacity: challenge preconceived ideas about evaluation

Conclusion



- To engage schools in the evaluation process in a meaningful way requires a unique evaluation philosophy and approach, careful selection of methods, and an understanding of the language and organisation of schools.
- School-based health evaluations can meet the needs of the evaluator, whilst also acknowledging the realities of the education sector, and adding value to the school through the evaluation process.