



TITLE: Children's work as health advocates in the context of the 'obesity epidemic'

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Obesity is promoted as a critical family health threat attracting significant resources. The *Healthy Weight Report* (2008) argues for children and teenagers to become advocates of healthy eating within families and the National Curriculum Standards Framework has explicit activities directed at children changing family food practices. But this mobilization of children as food change agents has not been fully explored. There have been few critical examinations of the consequences for children and family relationships (Burrows & Wright 2007).

We present initial findings of a pilot Melbourne primary school study, exploring healthy eating messages, food programs, curriculum, and children and family experiences. The school has a diverse student mix. An ethnographic approach was adopted: a researcher attended over one term participating in food activities with children, teachers and volunteer parents. Collections of school materials were analysed and followed by interviews with children, parents and teachers about healthy food messages and practices at home and at school. Teachers were interviewed for curriculum insights. While preliminary and local, our findings suggest the importance of local knowledge/engagement in positive experiences of wider food and health messages. Emphasis on inclusion and wellbeing, rather than responsibilising and monitoring, seemed to produce some supportive and effective food practices in this school context.