BRAIN FOOD POLICY

RATIONALE/BELIEFS ABOUT LEARNING

It has been recognised through research that people regularly need food and water to maintain high level brain function. This has important implications for students in our schools. John Joseph, (one of SA's leading exponents for increasing the potential of the brain to learn), has been a strong advocate for students being able to nibble on brain food and drink water throughout the school day.

"….brains run better on a "nibbling diet". Nibblers were shown to have better cognitive functioning, fewer discipline problems, lower cortisol levels, better glucose tolerance and better maintained insulin levels. Some South Australian schools have reported significant drops in behaviour problems and increased learning performance since making nibbling food available at various times of the day".
(John Joseph – Focus Education "Food for Thought : The Critical Foundation for Brain Care").

For a young developing brain the most important meal of the day is breakfast. The metabolic rate in the brain increases soon after the alertness chemicals move us out of sleep patterns and into daytime cycles. An increase in blood flow to the brain will ensure that nutrients are carried to the brain for conversion into chemicals. Brain cells require fuel (through glucose) to operate effectively and water to keep them hydrated. Proteins also boost brain alertness while carbohydrates induce calmness or relaxation.

Research shows that a significant number of Australian children miss breakfast or eat foods before school that are not ideal for optimum brain function. For some others, particularly during periods of growth, the wait until recess time can also cause a decrease in energy and brain function. The brain also needs a regular supply of water as it is made up of approximately 80% water. Throughout learning, it is vital to keep the brain in top working order.

Hamley Bridge Primary School has a Literacy Block before recess, which is a long morning learning before a break. This means that for children who eat breakfast early in the day, it may be as long as 4 hours before the opportunity to eat brain food arises again and for those who eat no breakfast at all, the time elapsed since the last meal could be as long as 18 hours.

ROLE OF TEACHERS

Staff at Hamley Bridge Primary School will :

- Provide a mid morning Brain Food time for students. (The time needs to be flexible due to the variety of activities in which students participate over any given week). Brain Food time is not a play break. It is a time when students are encouraged to eat small amounts of brain-healthy food that helps maintain the glucose supply to the brain.
- Allow students access to water bottles on desks to enable them to have regular sips of water throughout the day, which needs to be pop-top bottles.
- Ensure students are seated when they are eating food or drinking water.
- Include Healthy Lifestyles programming as part of the Health curriculum.

ROLE OF PARENTS/CAREGIVERS

It is expected that students will arrive at school having eaten an appropriate and healthy breakfast.

Parents/Caregivers are asked to support the school's Brain Food policy and provide children with healthy food options to eat at Brain Food time. The food provided for this snack time needs to be separate from what is provided for recess and lunch and should be appropriately stored (eg in a separate container). Parents/Caregivers are also asked to ensure children have a water bottle filled with water only, for use in the classroom, each day.

Appropriate Brain Foods are generally unprocessed and ensure a slow release of glucose rather than a quick fix provided by high sugar/fat filled foods, which do not sustain the consistent glucose input the brain requires.

Acceptable Brain Foods include :

- Fresh fruit and vegetables
- Fresh mushrooms
- Dried fruit (eg apricots, prunes, raisins and sultanas)
- Shelled unsalted nuts (eg almonds, brazil nuts, pistachios, macadamias, walnuts, pecans, cashews, hazelnuts and peanuts for years 3-7
- Rice cakes
- Plain unsalted popcorn
- Seeds (eg sunflower, sesame, tahini, linseed and pepitas)
- Chick peas and other legumes
- Cheese sticks/cubes
- Boiled eggs (already shelled)
- Yoghurt

Food needs to be pre-cut ready for eating.

LEARNING OUTCOMES FOR STUDENTS

Students will :

- Develop higher level brain function
- Have more energy to learn
- Be more engaged in their learning thus reducing behaviour concerns
- Experience more success with learning
- Begin to develop lifelong skills around healthy eating and lifestyles.