



Schools go healthy

DANIELLE NICASTRI

IT may not have hundreds of thousands of dollars to fund a mass media marketing campaign.

But the Cancer Council's battle to get children eating fruit and vegetables has been given a welcome boost among children on the north shore.

The Cancer Council launched fruit and vegetable month this month, with five north shore schools taking part.

Each school organised fun activities designed to get children interested in fruit and vegetables.

This is the latest campaign in its fight against the promotional arsenal some food companies selling foods high in sugar and fats have at their disposal.

And it has the Education Department, teachers and parents on its side.

Some of the activities included a

food fair where students made healthy treats and sold them to other students.

Other students prepared, then ate a wide range of fruit and vegetables together.

It comes as the Cancer Council NSW, together with The Obesity Policy Coalition and The Parents' Jury, recently called for promotional characters, movie tie-ins and sports stars to be banned from promoting foods high in sugar, fat and salt.

Researcher and Cancer Council nutritionist Kathy Chapman said new research showed 70 per cent of promotional characters on Australian food packets spruiked products to children that were high in fat, salt and sugar.

"Food companies invest millions of dollars on attention-grabbing promotional characters to encourage children to pester their parents for unhealthy snacks," she said.

"What we'd really like to see are

regulations encouraging promotional characters for healthy food only, which would give parents another weapon in their armoury to promote healthy eating to their children."

Turrumurra Public School principal Margaret Foott said the school is right behind the council's efforts to promote healthy food.

"What we're trying to do is teach the children it's not that hard eating healthy food and they can do this easily," she said.

"Our canteen is embracing this and the parents are embracing it and we would like to take it further with our vegetable patch.

"If we only get the message to a small number, it still makes a difference."



How can we get kids to eat fruit and veggies? Comment online at northshoretimes.com.au



West Pymble Public School students will enjoy fruit and vegetable tasting platters on Wednesday, October 12. Every Wednesday after this, they will take part in the Crunch and Sip program. Picture: DANIELLE BUTTERS



THE FACTS

■ The 2010 NSW Schools Physical Activity and Nutrition Survey found only 40 per cent of NSW primary school students consumed the recommended four or more serves of vegetables per day

■ The NSW Centre for Public Health Nutrition's Report on the consumption of vegetables and fruit in NSW 2003 states food preferences and habits formed during childhood tend to be maintained into adulthood

■ The Fruit 'n' Veg Month program is coordinated by the Healthy Kids Association and jointly funded by both the Healthy Kids Association and Inghams Enterprises

■ The University of

Wollongong, on behalf of the Cancer Council Australia, has previously produced a report on the sophisticated techniques major food companies in Australia use to market unhealthy food products to children

How kids get sucked in

■ TV commercials

■ Billboards

■ Sponsoring sporting teams

■ Toy giveaways

■ Cartoon characters

■ Endorsements by cartoon characters, sporting figures or movie tie-ins



How the schools are fighting back

More photos online at northshoretimes.com.au



Turrumura Public School held a Crunch and Sip day where students tried more than 20 different fruits and vegetables.



Chatswood Public School students received a token every time they bought a piece of fruit or something with vegetables in it from the canteen. When they collected four tokens, they won a prize.



At Ravenswood School for Girls, Gordon, kindy students planted corn this month, ate food from the school's veggie patch and did pictograms of their favourite fruit. Years one to three planted pea plants, kept lists and tallies, held a quiz and held a "fantastic food fair".



Gordon East Public School has been taking part in the Crunch and Sip program since 2009. Kindergarten to year 2 pupils take a break to eat fruit at 10am each morning. It also has a school veggie patch, which school grandfather Ray Costa began in 2009 voluntarily.

PHOTO: COURTESY OF THE SCHOOLS