



## Free Fruit & Vegetables In Schools Receives Top Marks From NZ Parents

**Wednesday 7<sup>th</sup> August 2019:** Kiwi parents and school principals overwhelmingly back the Fruit & Vegetables in Schools (FIS) initiative and new research shows there's a strong desire for the Government-funded scheme to be expanded.

Over 100,000 children from low decile primary and intermediate schools currently receive fresh seasonal produce to eat every day in class – over 24 million servings handed out every year at 550 different schools nationwide\*.

The initiative aims to improve both health and education outcomes for kiwi kids, as healthy food helps tamariki to concentrate and learn. FIS is funded by the Ministry of Health, run by United Fresh and supported by The 5+ A Day Charitable Trust.

Chairperson of The 5+ A Day Charitable Trust, David Smith, says new Nielsen research conducted in May this year shows that the vast majority of parents (88 percent) agreed the initiative should continue beyond 2019.

“We're heartened to see there's very strong support for Fruit & Vegetables in Schools,” he says. “Eighty percent of parents would like to see the initiative extended to all decile three primary and intermediate schools.”

A separate survey conducted by Quigley and Watts Ltd showed school principals are also in favour of the initiative with 83 percent believing the overall health of their children would decline if FIS came to an end, and three quarters of parents surveyed say their children now eat more fruit at home because it's handed out at school.

“We know improving wellbeing and equity are important goals for the current Government. We believe this initiative is an excellent and affordable way to achieve both of these outcomes,” Smith says.

Bruce Young, Principal of Holy Cross School in Papatoetoe, says cases of impetigo (school sores) have all but disappeared amongst his students since FIS was introduced several years ago.

“The fruit and vegetables seem to have definitely contributed to getting rid of that. The children are also more open to trying different sorts of fruit and vegetables.

“A child who may have no fruit in a week now gets five or more servings a week. Over 40 weeks that’s a lot of fruit and vegetables. If you look at it that way, the children are far better off.”

Smith says feeding hungry children remains the number one benefit of FIS but there are a number of other positive outcomes. “Children are more engaged at school, they are less likely to get sick, and it teaches them about health and nutrition. Handing out a crisp carrot or juicy orange helps fill young bellies and provides support to parents who are struggling to feed their families on low incomes.”

Government funding for the FIS contract is due to roll over next year, with 5+ A Day keen to see the initiative continue. The 5+ A Day Charitable Trust also provides free curriculum-linked resources to help promote healthy eating and teach students how to grow their own fruit and vegetables.

“Eating five or more servings a day is incredibly important for people of all ages. If we can teach our youngsters what a healthy diet looks like and help increase their consumption of fruit and vegetables, the long-term cost savings will be enormous.

“We want the Ministry of Health to continue their current investment and ideally expand this initiative into decile three schools. These two pieces of research show we have strong support from parents and schools to do

exactly that. We believe this is a positive way the Government can show their commitment towards improving the wellbeing and equity of New Zealand's youngest citizens."

### **About 5+ A Day**

The 5+ A Day Charitable Trust was established in 2007 for the benefit of all Kiwis, especially children. The Trust is committed to increasing the consumption of fresh fruit and vegetables for better health in all New Zealanders. We encourage all Kiwis to eat five or more servings of colourful, fresh fruit and vegetables every day for good health. Our key messages are in line with our Ministry of Health and the World Health Organisation's recommendations. The 5+ A Day Charitable Trust is funded by voluntary contributions from New Zealand's pan produce industry.

\*For the full list of schools in your area, images or interviews, please contact:

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