

BackPack Buddies
Program Evaluation Report
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Results

The success seen by participants in this program has been reported to have a large social impact on the kids at JW Smith elementary. Documentation and feedback from administrative staff, faculty, parents and children shows distinct improvements in many ways.

School staff informally reported whether or not improvements in grades, positive behavioral gains, decrease in number of unexcused absences, participant relationships with others, social communication and attitudes toward school had been made.

Principal Pat Welte said that she has heard and seen that “The students enjoyed receiving the bag and the food, and I can tell it made a difference. The parents have been very appreciative. The program is a major support system for struggling families. It helps students and families and it gives them one less thing to worry about by providing food during the weekend. It gives many of our children something to look forward to at the end of each week. Because we have so many children who are in danger of having no food for the weekend this program has been helpful.”

Some comments made by teachers and the Para-professionals include:

“The program is an outstanding service provided for students. While it does not help to improve the academic performance of students. Students look forward to the backpacks each week.”

“It was on Fridays when students took home backpacks they would have some nutritious food to eat over the weekend.”

“I like the fact that something “extra” is being done to assist those children in need. They really look forward to getting their backpack each week.”

“We have experienced so much success with the backpack program and have seen tremendous strides in the lives of our children.”

Parents have expressed their appreciation and everyone is saying it is so exciting to see the faces of the children when their backpacks are given to them...it is a phenomenal thing to witness”. Teachers report that they’ve seen changes in both attitudes and social skills/interaction

The school surveys results yield strong evidence of multiple benefits for participating students’ well-being, including better relationships with school personnel, higher self-esteem, fewer worries, and more interest in school.

While no feedback showed improved grades or academic achievements, results did point to a variety of benefits for children receiving assistance from the Backpack Buddies Program. At least 50 percent of school staff reports that participating children appear “less worried.” A similarly high percentage of school staff report students appear “healthier” and many report fewer behavioral problems in the classroom. Additionally, schools report participating students demonstrate a better and more trusting relationship with school personnel and/or other students. Because the educational environment improves as the behavioral problems within a classroom community declines, many of these benefits could be affecting all the students in the classroom and not just the children participating in the program.

Compelling arguments can be made that anything of value to humans has costs associated with it, but the important question is always whether the benefits derived are greater than the costs. (Rodgers and Milewski, 2005). While we recognize that there are several kinds of values, in this study we focus mainly on the value of health and wellness and to point out important categories of health costs associated with food insecurity.