



# Paediatrics Health Education Case Study: Redfern Jarjum College

Redfern Jarjum College is a Jesuit primary school for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children. Since 2013 dedicated staff and volunteers at Jarjum have provided outstanding Health Education for students in the areas of nutrition, dental hygiene, exercise, general health, safety and mental health.

## Nutrition

Nutrition impacts a child's ability to learn and grow,<sup>1</sup> and their longer-term risk of developing chronic diseases such as type II diabetes, cardiovascular disease and obesity.<sup>2</sup>

At Jarjum, meals of breakfast, lunch, morning and afternoon tea are provided to ensure the student's daily nutrition requirements are met. It has taken time, effort and patience from the kids and staff alike to shift towards healthier eating patterns; reducing sugar, salt and unhealthy fats and integrating vegetables and fruits into their daily diet.

Strategies have included:

- Teaching cooking skills and including the kids in the food preparation process
- Offering fresh and diverse meals each day prepared by a dedicated team of volunteers
- Grating vegetables – such as zucchini, carrots, and pumpkin – into sauces and baked goods
- Supporting the kids through education and encouragement to make better dietary choices for themselves



Edward and Des preparing a green masterpiece in the kitchen

## Dental hygiene

Oral health impacts on a child's ability to eat, speak, play and sleep.<sup>3</sup> Across Australia, four-year-old Aboriginal children have more than three times the rate of dental decay compared with non-Aboriginal children.<sup>4</sup>

At Jarjum, all kids are actively encouraged to brush their teeth after breakfast and are taken for yearly dental health check-ups at the Redfern Aboriginal Medical Service next door.



When first enrolled in kindergarten Gloria's baby teeth were blackened with decay. Now, with healthy shining white adult teeth coming through, Gloria is all smiles every day at school.

## Exercise

Physical inactivity accounts for around 30% of the disease burden of cardiovascular disease and diabetes for Aboriginal people.<sup>5</sup>

At Jarjum every day the kids access the local parks like Prince Alfred Park and Redfern Park for regular activities such as swimming lessons and athletics after they have completed their academic work.



Aiesha and Alyrah 'hanging' out together at the park

## General health

Hearing, speech, vision and good general health are essential in supporting children to participate and learn productively at school.<sup>6</sup> Across Australia 9% of Aboriginal children aged 0-14 years had hearing problems and 7% had sight problems.<sup>7</sup>

When enrolling in Jarjum all kids are given a full health check by Dr. Jacky Pollack, the school's paediatrician. From there referrals are made, with common issues including speech delay, hearing issues and mental health.

Ongoing health care linkages are made with the Aboriginal Medical Service next door to the school, so access to healthcare for the kids and families is made as easy as possible.





## **Safety**

**While safety is essential for every child, Aboriginal children are 1.7 times more likely to be hospitalised from injury than non-Indigenous children, with some of the most common injuries including falls, land transport accidents, burns and scalds.<sup>8</sup>**



**Here's Greall proudly cooking up a breakfast feast for him and his friends.**

**At Jarjum, safety programs have focused on educating and empowering kids to keep themselves safe. When children were found to have burns and scalds on their arms from attempting to cook meals at home, staff implemented a breakfast cooking program to teach them how to use a stove safely.**



**Other programs include surf lifesaving lessons for safe beach swimming and skate boarding lessons to encourage helmet use and safe road behaviour.**

## **Mental health**

**Some Aboriginal children can have complex stressors in their home and community environments that can lead to increased emotional and behavioural difficulties.<sup>9</sup>**

**At Jarjum, each morning after breakfast and teeth brushing, the kids and staff sit down together for “gathering” to practice mindful breathing together and pray. After this two students chair the gathering to discuss the day’s agenda, any issues that have arisen and then together they practice the gratitude ritual of “Celebrating Us” where students and staff acknowledge one another for their efforts, kindness and good deeds.**



**Psychological education is provided throughout the year and when necessary, referrals are made to the Aboriginal Medical Service for professional support.**

**Through these Health Education programs, the kids at Jarjum are planting seeds for a healthier, happier and brighter future.**



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