

# Students As LifeStyle Activists

SALSA



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# SALSA Project Team



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# Nature and Extent of the Problem

During the past three decades, the prevalence of overweight and obesity in children and adolescents has increased rapidly throughout the world

In NSW, around 25% of children and young people are overweight or obese

The obesity “epidemic” is evident in adolescents in Western Sydney

# Adolescent Obesity

Adolescent obesity is a major predictor of obesity and ill health in later life

Interventions to prevent excess weight gain are most important at this stage of life

More so for socio-economically disadvantaged, indigenous and ethnically diverse communities

Schools provide an appropriate setting for health promotion

Lack of effective obesity prevention programs for this age group

# Need for Health Education

Mt Drutt GPs identified a need to educate young people in Western Sydney about healthy lifestyle

They realised that addressing obesity in young people is difficult to achieve in general practice

A peer-led approach in schools was considered a viable option



# Goal

To enable students from a socio economically disadvantaged community to maintain a healthy lifestyle through increasing physical activity and improving nutritional choices

# Aim

To develop a peer-led program to prevent obesity in adolescence based on psychosocial theory

To conduct a feasibility study to test the program's acceptance and relevance for adolescents

# Objectives

To increase physical activity

To increase intake of fruit and vegetables

To decrease television viewing

To increase awareness about health services

To encourage a healthy lifestyle

# Program Development

Model based on the Triple A (Adolescent Asthma Action) Program to improve asthma outcomes in adolescents in schools in Australia (Shah, 2001)

The theoretical framework drew on Bandura's Social Cognitive Theory and empowerment education approach

The program content and materials were developed by the team in consultation with students, staff and parents from RHHS

# Methods

The quality, fidelity and the delivery of the intervention and its influence on the school community was assessed with a range of formative and process evaluation measures

Questionnaires were completed by participating Year 8 students, Peer Leaders and teachers after each of the lessons

Peer Leaders also participated in a feedback session

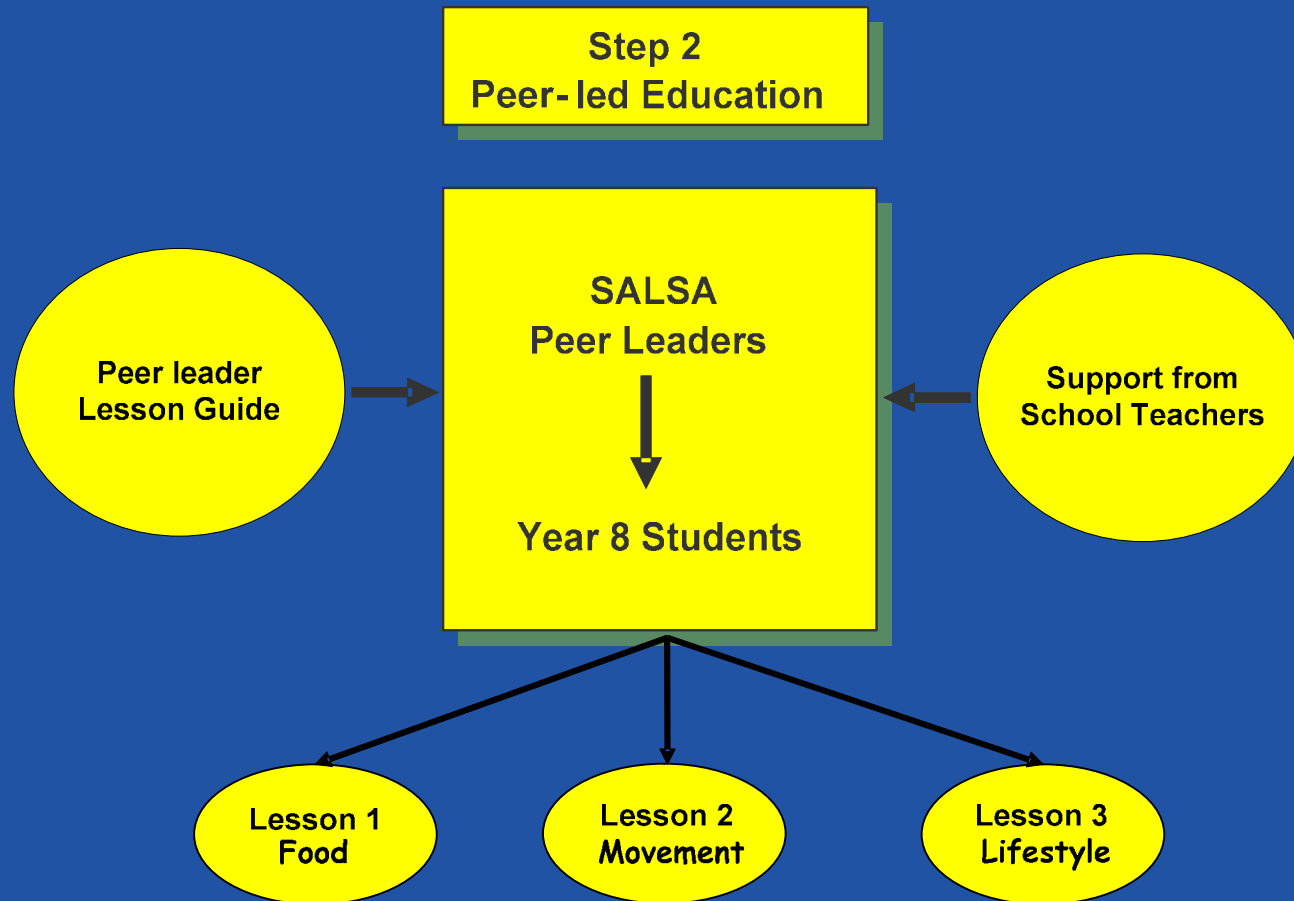
# Step 1 : Peer Leaders Workshop



# Peer Leaders Workshop in Action



# Step 2: Peer-led Education



Quizzes - Games - Videos

# Peer-led Education in Action



# Peer Leaders Feedback



# Key Results

Well accepted and highly rated by all involved

Easily integrated into the existing school health curriculum

Program was delivered by the Peer Leaders as planned

Peer Leaders' performance was rated highly by students and teachers

# Gains Reported by Year 8 Students

What they learnt and would put into action

- Eat fruit not junk food
- Drink water
- Eat well
- Be healthy
- Be active
- Less TV
- More exercise
- Nothing

# Additional Results

Increased awareness of healthy diet and lifestyle in the school community

Peer leaders reported a positive change in their own dietary and physical activity behaviours

Changes in school canteen practice

- Reduced fried & fatty foods choices
- Increased sales of healthy foods

# Reflective Cycle

Production of a SALSA video featuring Peer Leaders interviewing the Sydney Swans footballers

Evaluation report for distribution to stakeholders

Update the Peer Leaders Manual & Peer Leader Training Workshop

Conduct the updated SALSA program in 2007



# Future Plans

Maintain local implementation working with Associations and Divisions of GP

Plan and conduct a randomised controlled study in schools to assess the impact of SALSA on behaviour and indicators of overweight and obesity

Application for funds to NHMRC, NIH and other funding sources

