

# Kids Pack Evaluation 2008-09

Outcomes Assessment and Survey Findings from Inland Empire United Way's Kids Pack Program

## INTRODUCTION

This report contains the outcomes evaluation results for the Inland Empire United Way's (IEUW) Kids Pack program for the 2008-09 school year. Multiple surveys were analyzed to learn more about the program participants, provide a measure of the effectiveness of the Kids Pack program, determine the need for the program, and participants' satisfaction with the program. Altogether, five surveys are analyzed. This report includes an overview of the Kids Pack program, analysis of the participant survey, parent survey, teacher surveys, and a summary of the findings.

## DESCRIPTION OF THE KIDS PACK PROGRAM

IEUW's Kids Pack program is a weekend nutrition program designed to provide disadvantaged school children with easily prepared food. Weekends have been identified as a vulnerable time for these children because free meals provided by schools through the federal free and reduced meal program are not available. Also, many other programs, such as after school programs run by nonprofit organizations or schools, do not operate on weekends. Thus, IEUW's Kids Pack Program addresses a need at a time when other assistance is unavailable. 1,473 children were served by the program at some time during the 2008-09 school year.

Kids Pack is a collaborative effort between IEUW, local school districts, and case management organizations working with disadvantaged children and families. The school districts, cities, and affiliated case management organizations are listed in the table below.

School District	City	Case Management Organization
Apple Valley Unified School District	Apple Valley	
Barstow Unified School District	Barstow	
Ontario-Montclair School District	Montclair	Montclair Community Collaborative
Ontario-Montclair School District	Ontario	Family Solutions Collaborative
Chino Valley Unified School District	Chino	CARE Program
Fontana Unified School District	Fontana	
Hesperia Unified	Hesperia	Coordinated by the district family liaison
Redlands Unified School District	Redlands	Healthy Start/Building a Generation
Yucaipa-Calimesa Joint Unified	Yucaipa	Coordinated by school personnel
Lucerne	Lucerne	

The Kids Pack program also relies on many community volunteers. There is an advisory board composed of community volunteers who oversee the Kids Pack program as well as other children's programs at IEUW. In addition, groups of volunteers fill backpacks with food each week at IEUW's program headquarters located in Rancho Cucamonga.

Five basic activities relate directly to accomplishing the goals of the Kids Pack program. Case management organizations and school personnel perform the first and fourth activities listed below. The remaining activities are joint efforts of IEUW staff, community volunteers, school staff, and case management personnel. These activities include:

1. Identifying students at-risk of hunger
2. Assembling 2-day supplies of nutritious food
3. Delivering the food packed by volunteers to school sites

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4. Distributing backpacks to program participants
5. Collecting backpacks on Mondays to be refilled with food for the following weekend.

In addition to the normal operational activities required to operate the program, there is a significant amount of time and effort devoted to determining the effectiveness of the Kids Pack program. The overarching goal, or outcome, of the Kids Pack program is that low income children do better in school. This goal has four indicators used to measure this outcome. The indicators are (1) attentiveness, (2) attitude, (3) participation, and (4) academic performance.

The Kids Pack outcomes evaluation utilizes a pre-test/post-test model to measure the effectiveness of program intervention. Data is collected from program participants, participants' parents, and their teachers. Data is collected soon after a child enters the program and again at the end of the program year. This provides an opportunity to measure changes in behavior, situation, and academic performance for program participants. Finally, the information is systematically analyzed to provide a measure of the overall impact of the program.

**DESCRIPTION OF THE EVALUATION SAMPLE**

There are 1,438 participants represented in the 2008-09 Kids Pack program analysis. The following analysis is based on what data is available regarding those 1,438 students. The amount of data varies by survey. In general, the teacher surveys are fairly complete. However, some of the post-program surveys from the students and parents are not available. When pre-program and post-program data are compared only information about students having both surveys are used in the analysis.

All of the program participants come from very low-income households. Some program participants live in extreme poverty. In some cases, the children's families are homeless and live with relatives or even in cars, necessitating easily prepared foods. These unfortunate circumstances are partially illustrated in some of the surveys.

**GRADE LEVEL**

The table at right shows the number and percentage of students in each grade represented in the analysis sample. The majority of the students are in pre-k through 6<sup>th</sup> grade. Grade-level information was not available for three students in the sample.

Grade Level of Sample		
Grade	Number	Percent
Preschool / Kindergarten	193	13.4%
1st	188	13.1%
2nd	245	17.1%
3rd	242	16.9%
4th	200	13.9%
5th	193	13.4%
6th	99	6.9%
7th	33	2.3%
8th	37	2.6%
9th	2	.1%
10th	2	.1%
12th	1	.1%

## **SCHOOL DISTRICTS**

Participants in the 2008-09 Kids Pack evaluation sample came from nine school districts, up from four from the previous year. One district, Ontario-Montclair Elementary, represented almost half (46.6%) of the sample. Of the remaining school districts, Redlands Unified School District accounted for 21% of the sample, Fontana Unified School District accounted for 13% and Chino Valley Joint Unified accounted for 8.5% of the sample. The remaining school districts accounted to less than 5% of the sample each. The data did not contain school district information for one of the students included in the analysis.

<b>Program Participants by School District</b>		
<b>District</b>	<b>Number</b>	<b>Percent</b>
Apple Valley Unified School District	32	2.2%
Barstow Unified School District	24	1.6%
Ontario-Montclair School District	670	46.6%
Chino Valley Unified School District	122	8.5%
Fontana Unified School District	189	13.2%
Hesperia Unified	20	1.4%
Redlands Unified School District	305	21.2%
Yucaipa-Calimesa Joint Unified	49	3.4%
Lucerne	26	1.8%

## **OUTCOMES EVALUATION METHODOLOGY**

The IEUW Kids Pack program evaluation utilizes a pre-test/post-test model to determine if participation in the Kids Pack program is associated with changes in students' behavior, performance, and circumstances, as defined by the program outcomes. The pre-test/post-test model is the closest available to the experimental model outside of a laboratory or clinical setting. In this case, the program participants' circumstance is evaluated before entering the program and again when the program ceases at the end of the school year. This analytical model provides an opportunity to measure change associated with program participation.

The data used for IEUW's Kids Pack program outcome evaluation was collected using self-administered surveys. Data was collected regarding each participant using a total of five surveys, two surveys by both teachers and parents and one survey completed by students. The teacher surveys which are used to measure the program outcome were administered prior to program participation and repeated at the end of the school year. Teachers filled out surveys regarding each student participating in the program. Likewise, the parent surveys were completed when a child entered the program and again at the end of the year. The student surveys were completed at the end of the school year.

The parent and student surveys were designed in both English and Spanish, the two most common languages among the population served by the Kids Pack program. In instances where students or parents had trouble reading or understanding the survey questions assistance was provide to complete the surveys by school or case management personnel.

Completed surveys were collected by school and case management personnel and returned to IEUW Kids Pack program staff. Program staff entered the data into a database. The data were then checked for accuracy before the analysis was conducted. Additional checks on the data were conducted prior to analysis.

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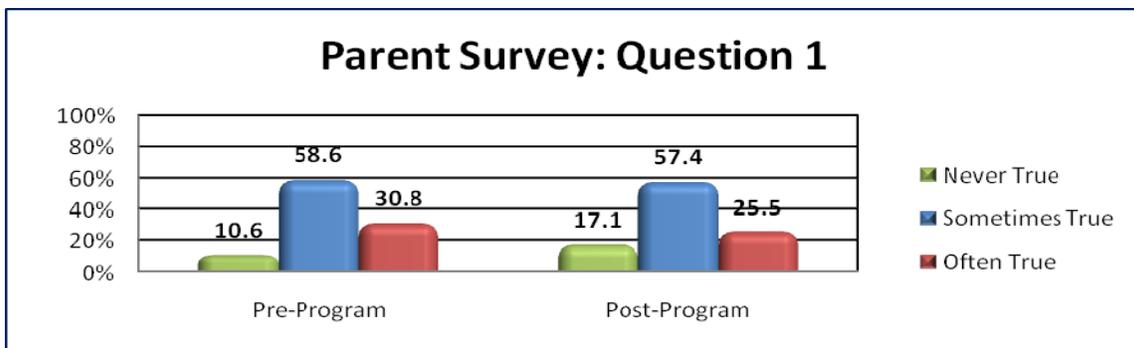
We begin the analysis by examining the parent surveys since the information from this survey provides some background information that informs us of the extent of the hunger/nutrition problem faced by program participants. The result of the parent survey, a determination of food security status, is used to enhance the analysis of the other surveys. We then examine the results of the program participant survey and finally, we examine the teacher survey results which provide the program outcomes data.

### **PARENT SURVEYS**

When a child entered the program and again at the end of the school year, parents of the program participants were asked to fill out a 5-item survey that was adapted from the USDA short form food security scale. Each response to a question is assigned a numeric score. These scores from the five questions are then used to calculate a food security scale score ranging from 0 to 6. The food security scale scores determines placement into one of three food-security categories: food secure, food-insecure without hunger, and food-insecure with hunger. A total of 952 participants' parents provided fully completed surveys.

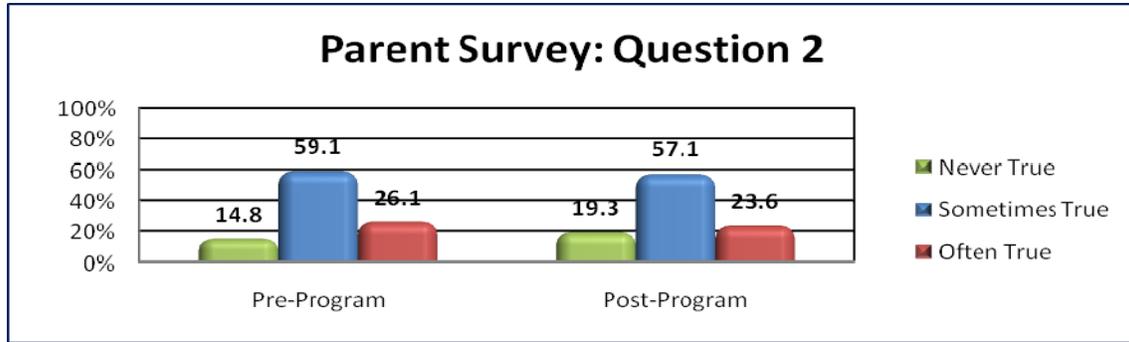
Since providing food is the central activity of the Kids Pack program and a lack of food is the underlying problem the program addresses, the distribution of responses to each survey item is presented in detail below.

The first question on the parent survey is “In the past 12 months, the food that my family bought just didn't last, and we didn't have money to get more. How often was this true?” The response options were “Never true”, “Sometimes true”, and “Often true”. The chart below shows the distribution of survey responses. Prior to their children entering the Kids Pack program 90% of the survey respondents indicated that they had run out of food at some point in the past year and did not have money to buy more. While this percentage decreased the percentage of family that run out of food and couldn't buy more still stood at 83% at the end of the school year.

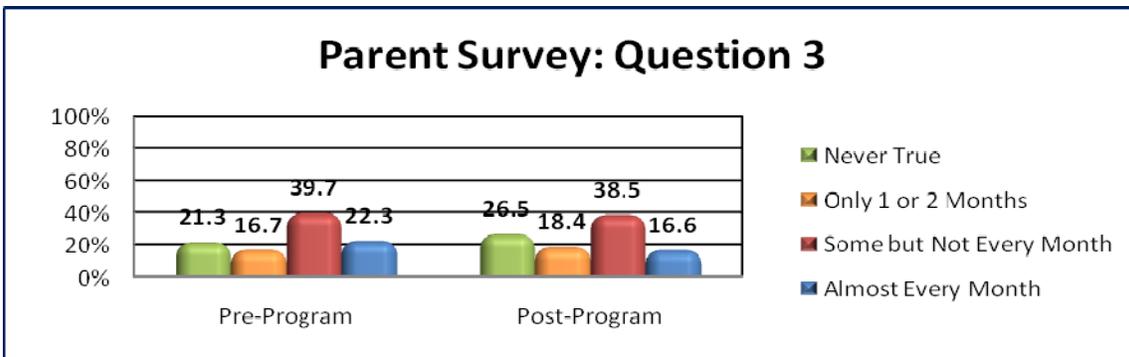


The second question on the parent survey is “My family could not afford to eat balanced meals. How often was this true in the last 12 months?” The response options were “Never true”, “Sometimes true”, and “Often true”. The distribution of the survey responses, which is very similar to that of the previous question, is shown in the chart below. While the percentage of family for which affording balanced meals was a decreased, the vast majority of participants' families were still having problems affording balanced meals at the end of the school year.

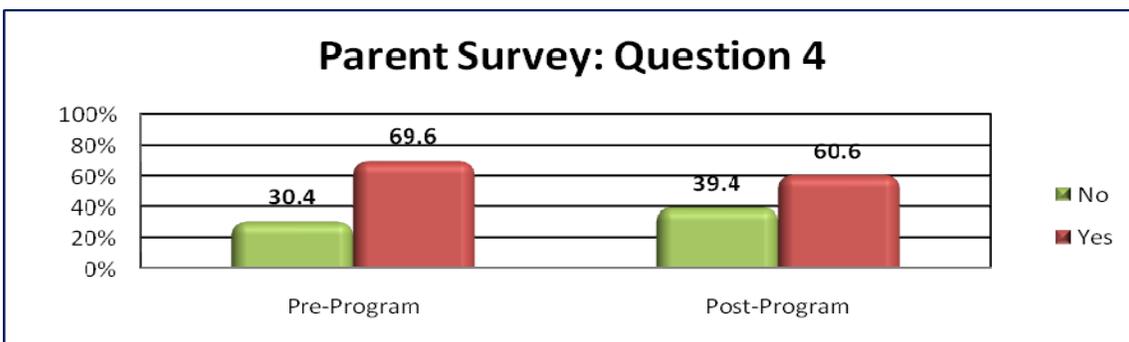
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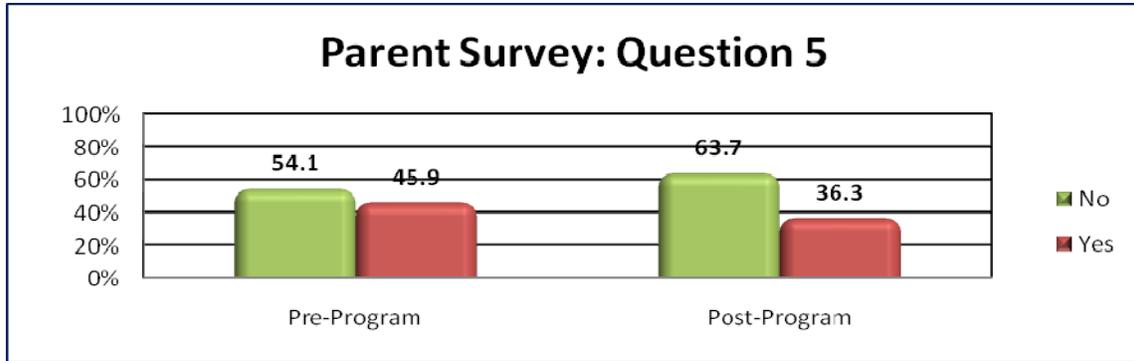
The third question on the parent survey is “In the past 12 months, how often did you or other persons in your household cut the size of your meals or skip meals because there wasn't enough money for food?” The response options were “Never”, “Only 1 or 2 months”, “Some months, but not every month”, and “Almost every month”. The chart at the top of the following page shows the distribution of survey responses. There were improvements during the school year. Fewer respondents indicated that they had skipped meals and the frequency of skipping meals decreased. Despite this improvement almost three out of four of the respondents indicated that they have had to cut or skip meals.



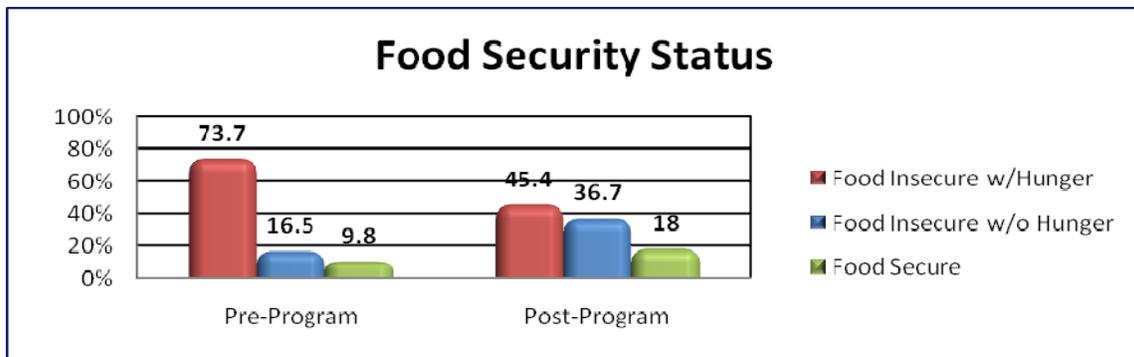
The fourth question on the parent survey is “In the last 12 months, did you ever eat less than you felt you should because there wasn't enough money to buy food?” The response options were “Yes”, and “No”. The chart below shows the distribution of survey responses. The percent of parents indicating that they had not been eaten less because they could not afford food increased from 30% to 39%. However, a majority of respondents still indicated that they skimped on eating because they could not afford to purchase food.



The fifth and final question on the parent survey is “In the last 12 months, were you ever hungry but just didn't eat because you could not afford enough food?” The response options were “Yes”, and “No”. The chart below shows the distribution of survey responses. The percentage of respondents indicated that they had gone hungry decreased from 46% to 36%.



The result of the parent survey is a food-security classification for the program participant’s family. The chart on the following page shows the distribution of food security classifications. The change in food security is obvious. A pre-program to post-program comparison shows that the overall food-security rate among program participant families almost doubled. Perhaps more importantly, the food-insecurity-with-hunger rate dropped by over 28 percentage points. Further evidence of this change is demonstrated by the statistically significant dropped in mean scale scores from 4.2 to 2.5. Despite the dramatic improvement many families remain at risk.

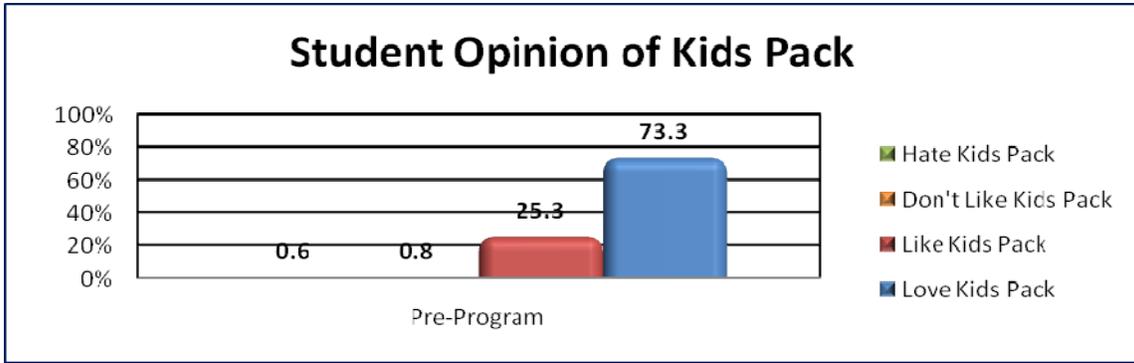


## STUDENT SURVEYS

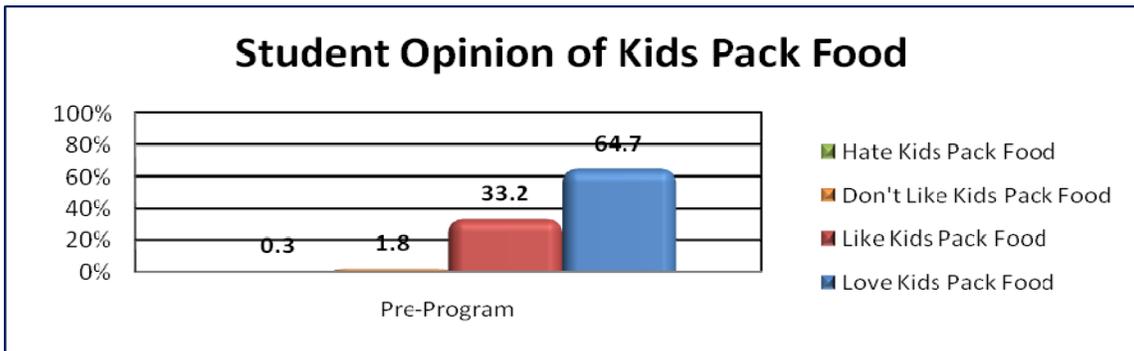
The Kids Pack program participants completed surveys about their experience with Kids Pack. The participant survey focuses largely on students’ satisfaction with Kids Pack in general and the clients’ preference for specific food items. The survey also included questions regarding the quantity of food provided by Kids Pack, if participants share the Kids Pack food with family, and the availability of food at home other than what is provided by Kids Pack.

To gauge the overall impression of the Kids Pack program, participants were asked to rate how well they liked Kids Pack. Their options were “I love getting my Kids Pack”, “I like getting my Kids Pack”, “I don’t like getting my Kids Pack”, and “I hate getting my Kids Pack. Over 98% of the students indicated positive feelings for Kids Pack. The response distribution is found in the chart below.

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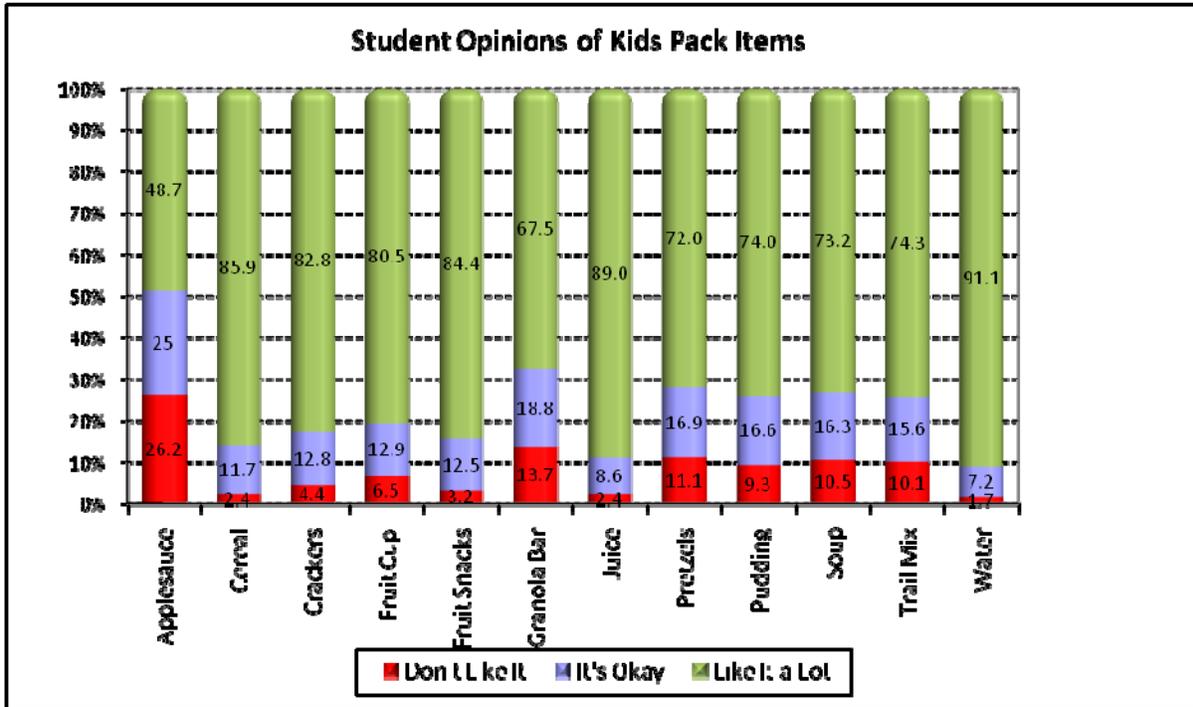


Program participants were asked a general question about how well they liked the food provided by Kids Pack. The overall response distribution was very similar to the general question regarding the program. Only 2% indicated that they either “hated” or “don’t like” the food. 33% indicated that they liked the food and 65% indicated that they “loved” the food. Overall, about 98% of the students had a positive opinion of the food provided by Kids Pack.

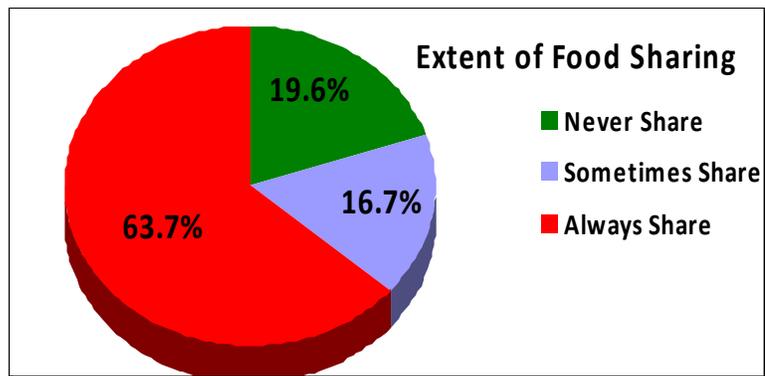


Program participants were asked to rate twelve food items that are often provided by Kids Pack. The chart below shows survey response distributions. Most items were rated about the same. However a couple of items, water and juice, were rated very high and one item, applesauce, was rated significantly lower. Overall, the ratings for the food items were very high; the vast majority of participants like each of the food items.

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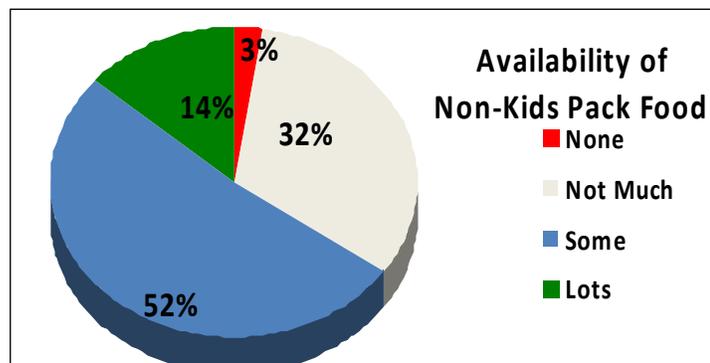


Students were asked the extent to which they shared their Kids Pack food with family members. The chart at right shows the range of responses. 64% indicated that they always share their Kids Pack food and 17% indicated that they sometimes share their Kids Pack food. Only 20% said they never shared their Kids Pack food. Overall, 80% of the students indicated that they shared their Kids Pack food with family members.



Further analysis into the relationship between food sharing and food security revealed that there is no correlation between food security and sharing their food. In other words, all program participants are equally likely to share their food regardless of the food situation at home.

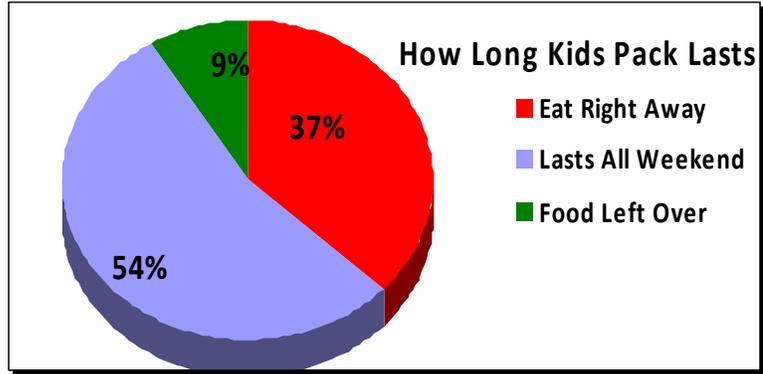
Program participants were asked about the availability of food at home other than what is provided by Kids Pack. The chart at right shows the distribution of responses. 3% of the program participants indicated that there is no other food and 32% indicated that there is not much food other than Kids Pack. 52% of the program participants



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indicated that there is some other food and 14% indicated that there is lots of food.

Program participants were also asked how long the Kids Pack food lasts them. The chart at right shows the distribution of responses. 37% of the participants indicated that they eat all of the Kids Pack food right away. Most participants (54%) indicated that the food lasts all weekend and the remainder indicated that they have food left over. Further examination shows that how long the Kids Pack food lasts is related to the household food security level and the amount of other available; food lasts longer in households that are more food secure or have more non-Kids Pack food available.



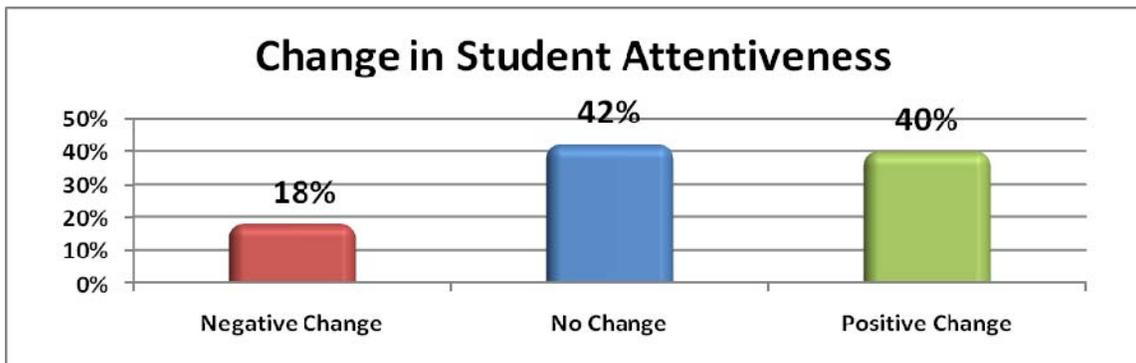
**OUTCOMES ANALYSIS**

The Kids Pack program has one overarching program outcome – Low-income children do well in school. To measure this outcome four indicators, which were used to develop a composite scale, were chosen. Each teacher survey item, or indicator, was presented as a Likert-type scale and coded from 1 to 5, with 5 representing the most positive score or most agreement with the statement on the survey. These numbers were used to calculate the statistics presented below. Results from each item were examined individually and as a grouped scale score.

**Outcome Indicator 1: Students are attentive during class**

For indicator 1 of the program outcome (based on item #1 on the teacher survey), the mean score increased from 3.56 on the pre-program item to 3.91 on the post-program item. A paired-samples T Test shows that the differences in means were statistically significant, indicating that students, overall, were more attentive while at school after involvement with the Kids Pack program.

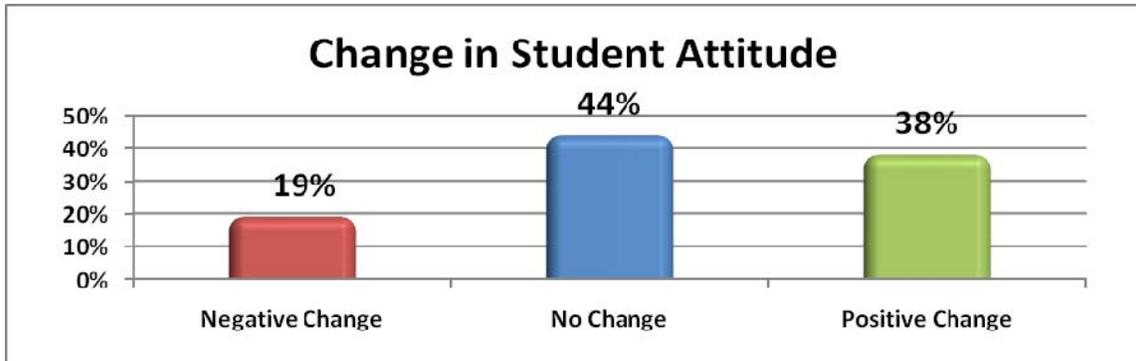
The change in students’ attentiveness is illustrated in the chart below. 40% of the students in the Kids Pack program were more attentive, 42% showed no change in attentiveness, while the remaining 18% were less attentive.



**Outcome Indicator 2: Student has positive attitude toward school**

For indicator 2 of the program outcome (item #2 on the teacher survey), the mean score increased from 3.94 on the pre-program item to 4.19 on the post-program item. A paired-samples T Test shows that the differences in means were statistically significant, indicating a positive change in attitude toward school.

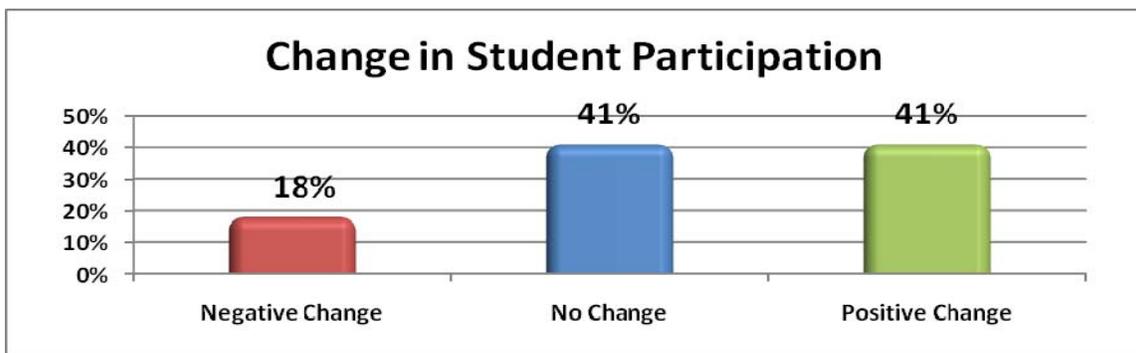
The chart below, based on teacher surveys with the second item completed for both the pre-program and post-program shows that 38% of the students improved their attitude toward school while 19% of students participating in the Kids Pack program were rated as having a worse attitude towards school. The largest group (44%) experienced no change in their attitude.



**Outcome Indicator 3: Students actively participate in class**

For indicator 3 of the program outcome (item #3 on the teacher survey), the mean score increased from 3.59 on the pre-program item to 3.93 on the post-program item. A paired-samples T Test shows that the differences in means were statistically significant, indicating that teachers perceived an increase in Kid Pack program participants participation in class.

The following chart shows the change in student participation. Teachers rated 41% of students higher in class participation while 18% were rated lower. The remaining 41% showed no change in participation.

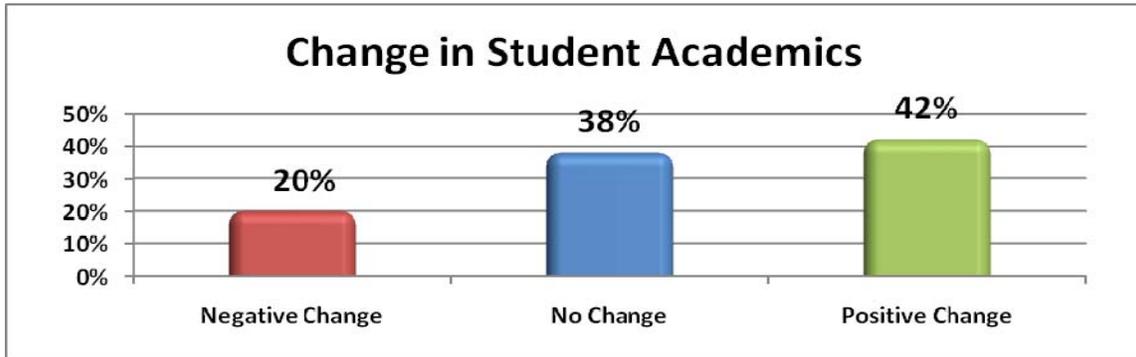


**Outcome Indicator 4: Students Academic Performance is Satisfactory**

For indicator 4 of the program outcome (item #4 on the teacher survey), the mean score increased from 3.29 on the pre-program item to 3.64 on the post-program item. A paired-samples T Test shows that the differences in means were statistically significant, indicating that teachers perceived an increase in Kid Pack program participants academic performance.

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The chart below shows the changes in academic performance. Overall, 42% of the students showed an improvement in grades, 38% showed no change, and only 20% had worse grades.

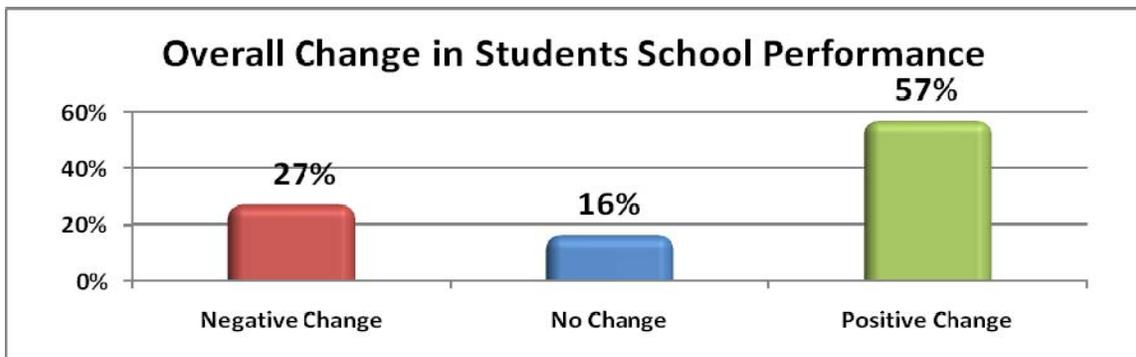


**Teacher Survey Combined Scale Score**

Outcome scale scores were created by adding the score from related individual survey items for the pre and post-tests. Data from each survey item were tested for their inclusion in a single scale using reliability and principal components analysis. Reliability analysis (Chronbach's Alpha) showed that these survey items were well-suited to inclusion in a scale. The Chronbach's Alpha statistic for the pre-test survey items was .882 while the post-test items had a reliability score of .872, well above minimally accepted standards. Principal components analysis showed that these items appear to be related to the same underlying construct. The research findings are presented below.

Teachers' evaluation of a students' attentiveness, attitude toward school, academic performance, and participation in class were combined into a single scale that provides a summary measure of progress on the program outcome. A comparison of pre-program and post-program ratings indicated an increase in the mean score from 14.37 to 15.68. A paired-samples T Test shows that the differences in means are statistically significant. The median score increased from 14 to 16. This demonstrates that Kids Pack participants experienced an increase in overall teacher perception of students.

The chart below shows the overall change for program participants. 57% of the students improved their overall performance in school, 16% remained steady, while 27% exhibited decreased overall school performance.



### **Summary of Outcomes Analysis**

Overall, the outcome results for the Kids Pack program are positive. The majority of the program participants (57%) showed overall improvement. The results are fairly consistent across indicators all indicators. The number of participants showing improvement outnumbers those with negative change by greater than a 2-to-1 margin.

### **CONCLUSION**

This program outcomes evaluation has shown that the program is achieving its goal of low-income students doing better in school. The majority of participants (57%) are showing overall improvement. However, about one-fourth of the participants (27%) are doing worse in school. This underscores the challenges facing the program participants and their families. Considering the circumstances of most of the program participants and the current economic recession, it is a demonstration of the Kids Pack program's effectiveness that more children are not falling further behind.

The findings from the parent surveys underscore the need for a nutrition program such as Kids Pack. The pre-program food-insecurity rate of 91% shows the vulnerability of this population. In fact, 74% of the program participants' families have experienced hunger in the year prior to program participation. At the end of the program year, the percent of families that had experienced hunger decreased to 45%, no small feat.

The program participants' survey shows that the children are very positive about the program and like the food the program provides. The participants' survey also corroborates the parents' survey findings household food situations and shows that Kids Pack benefits participants' families through the sharing of food.

In summary, it is safe to conclude that Kids Pack is having a positive impact on participants, Kids Pack is well-liked, and that the challenges faced by program participants are severe.