



Evaluation of school-based physical activity program on the Mid North Coast, NSW (the ‘KM Club’)

Office of Preventive Health, NSW Ministry of Health

Final Report

February 2020



First published: 2020

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ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

The Cultural and Indigenous Research Centre Australia (CIRCA) wishes to acknowledge Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people as the traditional owners of Australia and custodians of the oldest continuous culture in the world, and pay respects to Elders past and present.

We would like to thank all those who generously contributed to the evaluation. In particular we would like to thank the principals, teachers, parents and, of course, the students who took part in the project.

We would also like to thank NSW Office of Preventive Health (OPH), Ministry of Health (MOH) and the Mid North Coast Local Health District (MNCLHD) for their valuable partnership in this evaluation.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

School-based physical activity interventions are an option as a tool in the prevention of increasing childhood obesity. The KM (Kilometre) Club is such, a physical activity program currently offered in four New South Wales primary schools on the Mid North Coast – Kendall, Hastings, North Haven and Aldavilla Public Schools.

The KM Club is similar to the Daily Mile running program developed in the United Kingdom and now operating in a number of countries. Primary school children are engaged to run or walk outdoors for fifteen minutes each day. The NSW Office of Preventive Health (OPH), NSW Ministry for Health in collaboration with the Mid North Coast Local Health District (MNCLHD) engaged CIRCA to conduct qualitative research as part of an overall evaluation of KM Club focussing on both processes and outcomes to ascertain the following:

- The effectiveness of the KM Club at improving participants' levels of physical activity within the school settings on the Mid North Coast;
- The reach and acceptability of the KM Club program model's; and
- The potential feasibility and scalability of the KM Club (to other school settings throughout NSW).

The quantitative component for the evaluation was collected and collated by the research investigation team using outcomes data from the use of accelerometers used by the student participants. Process data collection is the focus of this qualitative component managed by CIRCA. The aim of the qualitative research conducted by CIRCA was to evaluate the effects of the KM Club on physical activity behaviours of school children, and the factors associated with successful program implementation for potential translation and upscaling across NSW. This component of the evaluation compares and examines factors which influence acceptability and feasibility through the perception of families and teachers at schools participating in KM Club.

In total twenty six (n=26) parents and children, and six (n=6) principals or teachers took part in semi-structured interviews. Parents and children interviewed included those participating in the KM Club program at their school, those not participating and families with more than one child who are both participating and not participating. In addition, twenty one (n=21) participating children completed a hard copy rating scale using a visual response method.

Across the research groups the outcomes were positive and the KM Club program was strongly supported unanimously across the various cohorts – Parents, Children, Teachers/Principals, Participating, Non-Participating and Both. This uniformity of responses was high enough to not warrant reporting on the cohort groups beyond the Parent, Children, Teachers/Principals distinction.

The rating scale was completed by twenty one participating children. The majority of responses were positive for the affirmative indicators (Confident/Fantastic/Strong/Fit/Proud). The children were asked to rate how they felt when they take part in the KM Club. Twenty recorded that they felt 'proud' and fifteen rated that they felt 'fantastic' and 'confident'. In terms of physical fitness, thirteen respondents said they felt 'fit' and twelve that they felt 'strong'. Conversely, the negative indicators (Awful, Shy/Embarrassed, Weak, Unfit) did not score higher than four out of twenty one and the neutral indicator (Bored/nothing) only two.

All interviewees (parents, teachers, children) were strongly positive about the KM Club at the target schools. The effectiveness of the program in terms of improving participant physical activity levels was demonstrated through the comments provided by both children and parents.

Effectiveness

The effectiveness of the KM Club can be categorised as follows and went beyond improved physical fitness benefits:

Physical and general wellbeing:

- | Improved fitness: While improved physical fitness was not solely attributed to the KM Club it was seen as an important contributing factor and most children nominating staying fit and health as the main benefit of participation
- | Greater participation and improvement in other physical activities
- | Sense of general good health and wellbeing
- | Mental health benefits for children with anxiety or children with disability

Socialisation:

- | Welcome space for children across age groups to socialise together in non-academic setting
- | Opportunity for parents to socialise together

Improvements in classroom and at home behaviours:

- | Teachers identified improved learning environments in the classroom during KM Club periods as the greatest benefit of the program
- | Parents identified improved behaviours at home including children being calmer, easy to motivate in the mornings for school and more compliant behaviour around routines in the home such as bedtimes.

Reach and acceptability

Challenges to the reach and acceptability of the KM Club program model is based on two findings from the qualitative research:

- Encouraging participation from children
- Overcoming challenges to participation for some children to encourage sustained involvement.

Barriers to participation for children were identified as children not considering themselves 'sporty' enough, children already involved in out of school physical activities opting out, and lack of peer endorsement for the program.

Some children were identified as struggling to participate in the program. Specifically children with health issues such as asthma and children with disability or other special needs. However mental health benefits for children with anxiety and/or disability were also identified as part of the effectiveness of the KM Club above.

Younger children can find the course challenging and can struggle to complete. Lack of variation in the track can also prove challenging to maintaining the interest of participants over the course of the program. As well, given the location of the four schools on the Mid North Coast of NSW, hotter months can prove challenging if the KM Club is run within school hours as by recess or lunchtime the temperature and humidity levels can be high in late spring and summer.

A highly flexible approach to incentives across and within the four target schools has led to a variety of examples including awards, tracking lap numbers, and using a map to collectively track distance completed. However, in later years of program implementation teachers and principals noted that incentives have not always been necessary to encourage participation. Goal setting has proved the most significant motivating factor for the children and has encouraged ongoing participation, and both parents and teachers noted a sense of pride in children who have reached their personal goals.

Feasibility and scalability

Parents and teachers are the key enablers of the KM Club establishment and implementation and include three key factors:

- Available school resources
- Availability of teachers to organise and supervise
- Involvement of parents.

The combination of parent/teacher as enabler varied across the four schools. Three of the four schools nominated teachers or principals as the key enabler of the program, while at the fourth school success of the KM Club is based on the involvement of parents. The ability to be flexible with the KM Club and adapt its use to the individual school environment is the most significant key factor in the potential feasibility and scalability of the KM Club to other school settings throughout NSW.

This adaptability and flexibility was nominated by all four schools as also allowing for the program to be made to fit the needs of the children and the capacity of the school. For example, schools have allowed for flexibility of activities. One school (Kendall) permits children to kick a soccer ball and plays music while KM Club is operating. The flexibility of the program in terms of duration was also noted as a positive, allowing schools to run for a length of time suitable to each school or to plan KM Club operation in line with other sporting activities, such as cross country, with a corresponding increase in student participation levels.

The KM Club was deemed easy to establish and sustain by parents and teachers/principals. All participants involved in the implementation of KM Club agreed it has not required intensive time or resources and has been simple to handover to multiple or successive organisers. However, having consistently reliable volunteers or teachers to run KM Club is essential to the sustainability of the program.

The timing of KM Club before school was the only aspect indicated by one parent that verged on inaccessible and a challenge to participation.

Recommendations for the KM Club program into the future:

The following recommendations have been provided for consideration of extending the KM Club beyond the four current schools:

Program flexibility and adaptability

The flexibility of the KM Club program is key to its success and should be maintained. Schools who participate or wish to participate should be encouraged to adapt the program to their school needs and resources. Providing new schools with case studies to encourage adaptability is recommended.

Walk or run options

Providing walk or run options for children regardless of age with the ability to transition from walking to running could improve participation rates among children who consider themselves 'not sporty' by removing the emphasis or expectation that they will immediately commence running at the start of their participation.

Providing walk or run options for parents to encourage involvement of families not engaging in physical activity is also recommended to broaden participation from parents and children from

families currently exercising regularly to those who do not have exercise routines as part of family life.

Incorporating goal setting

Goal setting is a significant motivating factor for children participants and encourages sustained, ongoing participation. Harnessing the success of motivating factors for the individual child is recommended. These include achieving personal goals and health and fitness benefits.

Encouraging the social aspects of the program for children and parents

The social aspect of participation has been identified by both children and parents interviewed in this evaluation as a key motivator. Encouraging the social aspect of spending time together and motivating others to participate is recommended for both children and parents. It will be important to also encourage the endorsement of KM Club activities by peers, perhaps via the social aspects of participation.

Alignment with school sports calendar

Based on the success of the schools targeted in this evaluation, using scheduled sports activities such as the cross country carnival as a motivator is recommended to increase the participation of children at each school.

It is clear from the research in this evaluation that variance in the track is an essential component to long-term sustainability of the KM Club program to combat the boredom of children participating.

Encouraging parent volunteers

While schools adapt to the level of participation of parents, consistent, reliable volunteers is a key component for successful implementation of the program, particularly if a tracking system is introduced as an incentive. Parent volunteers alleviate the time constraints on teachers and help to stretch school resources.

Providing a hot weather alternative

The schools involved in the research for this evaluation are all located on NSW's Mid-North Coast. Spring and summer months can be hot and running outside early morning or late afternoon hours may not be a viable option. Providing hot weather alternatives could extend the life of the KM Club program each year for participating schools.

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1. BACKGROUND/INTRODUCTION

The NSW Office of Preventive Health (OPH), Ministry of Health (MOH) collaborated with the Mid North Coast Local Health District (MNCLHD) to conduct a robust process and outcome evaluation of the KM Club using a mixed methods approach. CIRCA was contracted to conduct qualitative research as part of the KM Club process evaluation.

1.1 The KM Club program

Overweight and obesity—defined as abnormal or excessive fat accumulation—is one of the most important public health issues in Australia, contributing to a multitude of adverse health outcomes and placing significant burden on the individual, their family and the public health system.

Overweight and obesity is influenced by a range of determinants at the individual level, including behavioural factors, as well as social and environmental factors¹. These factors are interrelated, contributing to the complex nature of obesity.

Of significant concern is the high rate of childhood obesity in the Mid North Coast. According to the National Health Survey 2017-18, one quarter (25.7%) of children aged 2 to 17 years in NSW were overweight (17.6%) or obese (7.9%), with the rate remaining similar since 2014-15². Key behavioural risk factors for unhealthy weight gain during childhood include poor diet, inadequate physical activity, excessive screen time and inadequate sleep. Children who are obese are more likely to continue being obese throughout their lifetime, with many of these risk factors being sustained from early childhood into adulthood. Being overweight can increase the chance of developing medical conditions such as type 2 diabetes and make a child more vulnerable to decreased self-esteem and confidence. Preventing obesity therefore has direct benefits for children's health and wellbeing, in childhood and continuing into adulthood, and must be given priority and investment³. The school environment has considerable influence over children's risk factors for unhealthy weight gain and the implementation of school policies that promote healthy eating and participation in physical activity are encouraged⁴.

The KM (Kilometre) Club is a school-based physical activity program initiated in multiple primary schools on the Mid North Coast (MNC) of NSW. The KM Club engages students in outdoor activities

¹ Australian Institute of Health and Welfare. Australia's Health 2018, 'Overweight and Obesity'. Australia's health series no. 16. AUS 221. Canberra: AIHW. Available at <https://www.aihw.gov.au/getmedia/4b395076-f554-4818-9150-64ffe2fc3039/aihw-aus-221-chapter-4-10.pdf.aspx>

² Australian Bureau of Statistics. National Health Survey: First Results, 2017-18. Available at: <http://www.abs.gov.au/ausstats/abs@.nsf/Lookup/by%20Subject/4364.0.55.001~2017-18~Main%20Features~New%20South%20Wales~10002>

³ World Health Organisation (2018). Taking Action on Childhood Obesity. Available at: <https://apps.who.int/iris/bitstream/handle/10665/274792/WHO-NMH-PND-ECHO-18.1-eng.pdf?ua=1>

⁴ As above n1

such as walking and running for around 15 minutes each day and has drawn influence from a similar program in Scotland, the Daily Mile, that demonstrated a number of benefits to participating children.

1.2 Strategic Linkages

The KM Club, as well as the Evaluation of the KM Club, aligns with various strategic priorities and policies in NSW Health and Department of Education.

1.2.1 NSW Health Strategies and Policies

The NSW State Health Plan (2019-2020)

SD 1: Keeping People Healthy

“Prevention is critical to keeping people healthier and out of hospital. NSW Health already delivers effective public health programs in areas like smoking, obesity, risky alcohol use and early intervention. NSW Health will continue to invest in these programs targeting high risk groups, and will ensure they are monitored, evaluated and refined to continue to deliver results. NSW Health is committed to building partnerships and working across Government agencies to help keep people healthy and to improve our overall quality of life, support our economy and reduce the burden of chronic illness on the community”.

The KM Club Evaluation supports the NSW State Health Plan *Keeping People Healthy* through demonstrating the need to monitor and evaluate effective public health programs to prevent child obesity and to keep people healthier and fitter. Additionally, the evaluation has been conducted in collaboration with numerous NSW Local Health Districts and the Department of Education, demonstrating NSW Health’s commitment to building partnerships and working across Government agencies.

SD 2: Supporting and Harnessing Research and Innovation

“Interagency collaboration on prevention and management of disease via data collection, linkage and analysis, population health research, and training programs in public health, research and related disciplines”

“Strengthening capacity to evaluate programs and policies across NSW Health”

The KM Club Evaluation demonstrates a coordinated and interagency approach to facilitating better use of research expertise, assets and data. The KM Club Evaluation aims to translate research outcomes into innovative practice to create healthier and more active communities.

1.2.2 The NSW Rural Health Plan (Towards 2021) – ‘Healthy Rural Communities’

SD 1: Healthy Rural Communities

'Support early childhood services and primary schools to implement policies and practices that promote healthy eating and physical activity through the Healthy Children's Initiative.'

The outcomes produced by the KM Club evaluation aligns with the NSW Rural Health Plan as it aims to support primary schools to implement policies and practices, such as KM Club, that promote physical activity, thus improving the health of rural children, young people and families.

MNCLHD Strategic Priorities (2017-2021)

SD1: People, Patients and Community

'Data analytics role in planning activity, early intervention a priority for improving future health of community, engage community, provide information to assist informed decisions supporting their health, enable shared decision making with community'

The KM Club Evaluation aims to provide people and agencies with the information and knowledge to create early intervention programs, such as KM Club, which support communities to make informed decisions supporting and improving their health.

SD 5: Innovation and Research

"Innovation informed by research that demonstrates improved health outcomes for patients, innovate and create solutions"

The KM Club Evaluation demonstrates the MNCLHD's commitment to undertaking high quality research and use evidence to inform the delivery of early intervention programs such as the KM Club.

NSW Premier's Priority – Caring for People in the Community

"Reduce preventable visits to hospital by five per cent through to 2023 by caring for people in the community by focusing on preventive healthcare in the community"

The KM Club Evaluation demonstrates the need to focus on preventative initiatives in the community which help people stay as healthy as possible for as long as possible. It is also important to note that in June this year, the Commonwealth Health Minister committed to the development of a *National Preventive Health Framework*, with the intention of delivering a long term national preventive health strategy. While the detail of this framework is yet to be fully resolved, it is reasonable to assume that the KM Club Evaluation will align with numerous strategic directions within the framework.

NSW Healthy Eating and Active Living Strategy: Preventing overweight and obesity in New South Wales (2013-2018)

This document highlights the importance of preventive health measures through strategic, coordinated investments across agencies and sectors to change environments and support individuals to achieve and maintain a healthy weight, throughout life. Although this document is being reviewed and revised, it is still an important document highlighting strategies to facilitate

active living and improve health. It is also reasonable to assume that the KM Club Evaluation will align with numerous strategic directions within the revised document.

Healthy eating and active living – ages and stages

“Being physically active is important for the healthy growth and development of infants, toddlers and pre-schoolers and for the health and wellbeing of children, young people and adults. Regular physical activity can help prevent a range of chronic diseases and their risk factors including heart disease, stroke, high blood pressure, type diabetes and some cancers, and also help promote psychological wellbeing and healthy weight.”

The KM Club encourages regular physical activity amongst children and adults (parents and teachers) and provides social benefits such as increased sense of community, social connectedness and engagement.

Implementation, monitoring and evaluation (Research)

“The NSW Government will continue to invest in policy relevant, high quality and ethical research to improve and inform approaches to healthy eating, physical activity and the prevention of overweight and obesity. This will include intervention research to inform the development and implementation of new programs and services and evaluate their impact, and improve existing programs and service design in order to improve population health outcomes and reduce health inequities in NSW.”

The KM Club Evaluation demonstrates the need to build evidence to improve access for decision-makers to high quality and contemporary information about physical activity in NSW, relevant to state-wide and local priorities. The KM Club Evaluation will identify priorities and make recommendations for further research and contribute to applied research (including evaluation projects) that build the evidence base to inform better practice in the promotion and implementation of school physical activity initiatives and prevention of overweight, obesity and chronic disease in NSW.

1.2.3 NSW Department of Education Strategies and Policies

The Wellbeing Framework for Schools

Teaching and learning

‘Whole school approaches to physical health and fitness, social skills and friendship, empathy and resilience, peer support and mentoring, student leadership, citizenship and community engagement contribute to the growth of individual and collective wellbeing.’

The KM Club Evaluation demonstrates how the KM Club enables students, teachers and community members to experience choice and achievement of meaningful goals, improve and increase physical health and fitness, social skills and friendship, peer support and mentoring, and community engagement. These factors contribute to the growth of the individual and collective wellbeing, enabling positive health outcomes for all participants involved.

1.3 Project aim and scope

The aim of the qualitative research conducted by CIRCA was to evaluate the effects of the KM Club on physical activity behaviours of school children, and the factors associated with successful program implementation for potential translation and upscaling across NSW. This component of the evaluation compares and examines factors which influence acceptability and feasibility through the perception of families and teachers at schools participating in KM Club.

1.3.1 Research questions

The evaluation investigated the following questions:

- (1) Does participation in the KM Club assist children to meet and/or exceed the daily step guidelines ?
- (2) What factors prevent and enable successful implementation of KM Club?

The key focus for CIRCA was on Research Question Two. The views of families and staff in relation to the strengths and benefits of the program and any barriers and challenges faced as well as acceptability among families were collected through interviews.

2. METHODOLOGY

2.1 Recruitment and consent

CIRCA worked closely and collaboratively with the MNCLHD and each participating school to recruit families. The recruitment process was as follows:

Schools: The HCI Health Promotion Coordinator on the MNCLHD initially engaged schools in the research by informing school principals about the evaluation and confirming their willingness to participate. The HCI Health Promotion Coordinator then sent a letter of invitation to all school Principals, requesting participation in the study. Once the Principals accepted the invitations, MNCLHD Health Promotion Officer lead for the KM Club Evaluation contacted the key KM Club contact to organise a face-to-face meeting. Face-to-face meetings were conducted as an opportunity to outline the requirements of the study and confirm participation in the study.

Teachers/Principals: Following school recruitment, Principals from each school were contacted by the MNCLHD Health Promotion Officer lead for the KM Club Evaluation who asked them to identify either themselves or another teacher to participate in semi-structured interviews. One teacher or Principal from each school was identified based on their in-depth knowledge about the KM Club, their ability to communicate this effectively and provide valuable and critical feedback about the program.

Once the teacher or Principal was identified and their expression of interest obtained, CIRCA contacted the teacher or Principal by telephone, informing them about the purpose of the study, inviting them to participate in a semi-structured interview and arranging a suitable time, date and place to conduct the interview. Following the telephone conversation, the teacher or Principal was emailed a study information letter outlining the purpose of the study and level of involvement. Once a suitable time, date and place was arranged, the teacher or Principal was required to complete a consent form before participating in the semi-structured interviews. CIRCA ensured that written consent was obtained from principals/teachers and consent forms shared with the relevant contact person at MNCLHD.

Families: Following school recruitment, Principals from each school were contacted by the MNCLHD Health Promotion Officer lead for the KM Club Evaluation or by CIRCA's researcher directly and asked to identify suitable families for interviews and gauge their interest in being interviewed. The aim was to recruit a mix of families into the research, with different experiences with KM Club – some of whom who had children who participated in KM Club ("participating families"), but also some of whom who did not have children who had participated ("non-participating families"). CIRCA then phoned families who expressed interest in participating in the research, informing them fully about the nature of the research and arranging a date, time and place for interview. Again, CIRCA

ensured that written consent was obtained from parents and consent forms shared with the relevant contact person at MNCLHD.

2.2 Data Collection and Analysis

2.2.1 Development of research instruments

CIRCA reviewed the discussion guides for families and teachers/principals provided by the MNCLHD project lead and no changes were recommended as the existing discussion guides were considered appropriate to allow for the collection of robust data from families and teachers/principals aligning with the aims of the research. Copies of the discussion guides are found at Appendix 7.1.

2.2.2 Semi-structured interviews with parents and children

CIRCA conducted 26 semi-structured interviews with parents and children across the four nominated school locations, as follows:

- 11 interviews were conducted with parents and their children who had participated in the KM Club
- 5 interviews were conducted with parents and their children who had not participated in the KM Club
- 9 interviews were conducted with parents and their multiple children, where at least one of their children had participated in KM Club, but the other child(ren) had not participated
- 1 interview was conducted with a parent and child who is occasionally participating in the KM Club only

Table 1: Number of families across 4 target schools

Number of families interviewed from each school	Aldavilla	Hastings	Kendall	North Haven	TOTAL
#	6	7	7	6	26

These interviews were conducted face-to-face and took approximately 60 minutes to complete. In order to encourage participation in the research, adult participants were reimbursed for their time in these interviews with an incentive payment of \$60 per family in the form of a grocery gift card.

The incentive assisted with recruitment of parents who were likely to be very busy and who may have found it hard to make time available for an in-depth interview.

Face to face, semi-structured interviews with parents and their children who participate in the KM Club were identified as the most effective research approach for this project. The potential challenges of recruiting families was considered and a flexible approach to involving families was discussed in the planning stage with MNCLHD and the schools involved as the most effective way of encouraging families to participate. Two interviews were conducted by telephone.

2.2.3 Children's activity sheets

Students who had participated in the KM Club at their school and who took part in semi-structured interviews with their parents were provided with a range of coded emojis to select in order to describe how they feel when they are doing KM Club.

Visual and interactive response mechanisms are an evaluation method that can be used with a range of ages when conducting research with children, particularly children in their early school years. A copy of the rating scale is provided at Appendix 7.3. Children were asked to select all of the emojis (cartoon graphics/pictures) that described how KM Club made them feel.

2.2.4 Semi-structured interviews with teachers and principals

Four semi-structured interviews in total were conducted with six (n=6) principals/deputy principals and/or teachers at each school with in-depth knowledge of implementing and/or coordinating the KM Club. If more than one person was involved in the program, paired or small group (up to 3) in-depth interviews were undertaken to maximise feedback on the program implementation and any interim outcomes.

2.2.5 Ethical considerations

Ethics approval for this project was granted on 28 March 2019 by the North Coast NSW Human Research Ethics Committee.

Research involving children raises particular ethical concerns as a result of their potential limited capacity to understand what the research entails, which may challenge their ability to give informed consent, the potential for possible coercion by parents into participating, and the risk of surfacing conflicting values of parents and children within the context of the interview. In developing the research protocol, CIRCA was attentive to the developmental level of children when engaging them in understanding the nature and likely outcomes of research, and when judging their capacity to assent to the research.

All CIRCA staff who conducted fieldwork in schools had current Working With Children Checks (see appendix 7.1).

The potential discomfort of parents of non-participating students manifesting in guilt as a result of the non-participation in the KM Club was acknowledged. To minimise risk, parents/carers were provided with an information sheet about the research project and an opportunity to ask questions and have their concerns satisfactorily addressed. Discomfort was minimised by informing participants, before the semi-structured interviews were conducted, that they have the right to cease participation at any point during the interview. Furthermore, participants were also informed that they had the right to review or edit their response or contributions prior to data analysis. Children were provided with the opportunity to request the presence of a teacher or their parent/adult carer during their interview to minimise discomfort.

2.2.6 Analysis and Reporting

During the analysis stage, the qualitative research findings were explored through thematic analysis. Thematic analysis identifies patterns of meaning across the qualitative interviews in order to provide detailed findings in relation to each of the research objectives. This involved a process of data familiarisation, data coding, and theme development and revision and delivers the breadth of perspective required to inform valid, robust and credible analysis. CIRCA used NVivo software to code and analyse the data.

3. FINDINGS

3.1 Participating schools

Four local schools from the Mid North Coast Local Health District were included in the research – Aldavilla Public School, Hastings Public School, Kendall Public School and North Haven Public School. An overview of each school and participation in the KM Club program is included here:

3.1.1 Aldavilla Public School

Aldavilla Public School is located west of Kempsey, on the Mid-North Coast of NSW. The school currently has 320 students and has run the program as the 'Running Initiative' under the direction of one teacher since commencement of the 2019 school year. The program is offered to K-6 students and approximately 100 students participate by running or walking with the lead teacher and other teachers for ten minutes after recess, Monday to Friday, on the school oval. During Terms 1 and 2 2019 all classes participated, but this dropped to four classes in Term 3 2019.

3.1.2 Hastings Public School

Located in Port Macquarie NSW, Hastings Public School has 670 students enrolled in 2019. One teacher leads the program and runs it as 'the KM Club' for students and parents. The KM Club program commenced at Hastings Public School in 2011/2012 and is offered to K-6 students. KM Club is offered at the school in Weeks 1-6 in Terms 2 and 3 as the weather in Terms 1 and 4 is deemed too hot for running outside in the area. During operation, the participating students and parents run a one-kilometre lap before school through a rainforest walk/trail within school grounds and across the school oval from Monday to Friday each of the six weeks.

3.1.3 Kendall Public School

Kendall Public School is situated south of Port Macquarie on the NSW coast. It is a small school that has nine classes and 225 students in 2019. The KM Club was introduced and is run by a teacher who was introduced to the program at Hastings Public School when he worked there. The program has been run at the school since Term 4 2016 and is offered across the nine classes from K-6 from Terms 1 through to 4. The KM Club is offered on Mondays and Thursdays in the school grounds at 8:30am before school starts. Weather can interrupt the program, and as the temperature rises during summer months the KM Club stops operating.

3.1.4 North Haven Public School

North Haven Public School is the southern-most location of the four participating schools, located furthest south of Port Macquarie. The school is of a similar size to that of Kendall Public School with 230 students in 2019. Teachers at the school have run the KM Club for students from Years K-6 since

2016. Students participate and some parents and teachers have participated as well, but not on a regular basis. The KM Club runs each weekday apart from Wednesdays, for 5 weeks in Terms 1, 2 and 3. Participating students run around the perimeter of the school oval, a distance of approximately 500 metres before school at 8:30am.

3.2 Children's Activity Sheets

The participating students were provided with a range of coded emojis to select in order to describe how they feel when they are doing KM Club. The emojis represented the following emotions or feelings, which were categorised as positive, negative or neutral as follows:

Positive:

- Confident;
- Fantastic;
- Strong;
- Fit; and
- Proud

Negative:

- Awful;
- Shy/Embarrassed;
- Weak; and
- Unfit

Neutral:

- Bored/Nothing.

A total of 21 forms were collected and the results are tabled as follows by location:

Table 2: Emotional outcomes among interviewed children who participate in KM Club

How children feel when they do KM Club (Emotion Rating)	Aldavilla	Hastings	Kendall	North Haven	TOTAL
Awful	—	—	—	—	0
Confident	6	5	4	—	15
Shy/Embarrassed	1	—	1	—	2
Bored/Nothing	—	1	1	—	2
Fantastic	4	5	4	2	15
Strong	4	3	4	1	12
Weak	—	—	1	—	1
Fit	6	3	5	2	13
Unfit	—	—	1	—	1
Proud	7	5	6	2	20
TOTAL	28	22	27	7	81

Source: KM Club children participants' rating scale measurement dataset (n=21)

Across all four schools, the most children reported that participating in KM Club made them feel Proud with 20 of 21 responses, followed by Confident and Fantastic at 15 responses each. Other emotion ratings that scored 11 or above were Fit (13 responses) and Strong (12 responses)

Table 2: Positive, negative or neutral emotional outcomes among interviewed children who participate in KM Club

How children feel when they do KM Club (Emotion Category)	Aldavilla	Hastings	Kendall	North Haven	TOTAL
Positive	27	21	23	7	75
Negative	1	0	3	0	4
Neutral	0	1	1	0	2
TOTAL	28	22	27	7	81

Source: KM Club children participants' rating scale measurement dataset (n=21)

The response of the 21 participating children was overwhelmingly positive. Of the 81 emotions selected by interviewed children from the rating scale, 75 fell in the positive category; only four responses were negative and two were neutral.

4. KEY CHALLENGES AND LEARNINGS

4.1 Benefits of KM Club

All participants spoke strongly about the benefits of KM Club. These benefits fit into three categories:

- benefits for children;
- benefits for parents; and
- benefits for teachers.

4.1.1 Benefits for children

Benefits for children were most commonly discussed throughout the interviews. Across all four schools fitness was mentioned as the most prominent benefit for children. These benefits varied depending on the general fitness of the child and their level of physical activity outside KM Club. These were:

- **Improvement in the overall fitness of the child:** While this wasn't solely attributed to KM Club, it was considered an important contributing factor. This has been a benefit that both children and their parents have noticed, particularly children who track their participation and see the progress in the number of laps they can achieve. Most children noted staying fit and healthy as the main benefit to participating in KM Club.

"You get to stay fit and healthy."

"Just getting fit and you can walk around and talk to your friends."

- **Greater participation and interest in other physical activities.** Many parents have seen an increase in the amount of physical activities their children are wanting to do since starting KM club. This ranges from more interest in walking and running after school or participation in other sports. Teachers also noted increased participation in school sports such as cross-country and sports carnivals.

"I noticed a difference in their behaviour at home, like, they're coming home and [child's name removed] used to walk in and turn on the TV and just sit in the afternoons, but he just seems to be a bit more spritely and a bit more wanting to be outside running around and a bit more focused and able to concentrate a bit more."

- **Improvement in other sporting activities** such as the school cross-country and extra-curricular sports. Teachers in particular highlighted improved results in sporting. However, this has yet to be studied quantifiably.

"We've got 18 going to North Coast athletics carnival which is our biggest team ever... That's one of the reasons it [KM Club] started was that we had really poor sporting outcomes."

Other benefits beyond fitness included:

- **General health and wellbeing:** Children spoke about feeling good after KM Club, with most saying they felt "good tired". There was also a sense of general wellbeing that some children noted: *"Happier, better energised."*

*"And it actually tunes them in, that's what I find. We know how good it is for mental health as well **and I think that's really important.**"*

- **Social benefits:** One school (Aldavilla) pairs younger children with older children for part of KM Club. Other schools noted the KM Club as a welcoming space for socialising between children as they walk or run, given its flexibility. This has resulted in some children making friends in their own year or other years with others they had never met or spoken to before. One child noted the benefit of KM Club is that *"you can make new friends out of it too."*

"You know, you would see some kids out there walking and, like chatting to other kids that they may not normally – and because it was all of the years – they were all out there together, so it wasn't kind of like, okay, Year 5 and 6 did it at this time, little ones did it at this time. I liked that they were all out there together."

- **Teachers are seeing benefits in concentration from students** during the period of KM Club being run. This was the greatest benefit identified by teachers and had flow-on effects such as creating an easier environment for teachers to perform their work. This was considered a benefit for children of all years.

"The output I've got from my kids in phonics and "read to" session has been so much greater... because they have the wriggles out and I can get – their concentration is up."

"I can concentrate."

"It actually tunes them in, that's what I find."

- **Mental health benefits for children with anxiety around school or children with disability:** For children with anxiety, KM club has helped to reduce some of that anxiety and has made going to school an easier process for the child and parent. For some children on the autism spectrum it has helped their concentration or helped calm them before class.

"Whether it's the physical activity or just the nature of being with other students, or whatever it is, who knows what it is. But they love participating and then so they're

finding that that alleviates their anxiety for school which flows onto their academic work as well."

4.1.2 For parents

Overall, KM Club has benefited parents by contributing to 'ease of life'. Many parents (10 interviewees) found that KM Club allowed their kids to burn more energy while at school, resulting in them being calmer at home. Some parents even attributed the extra energy being used at school to their children being more compliant at home, including during bedtime routines. Additionally, some parents (four interviewees) found that KM Club acted as a positive motivator for their children to prepare for school in the morning, resulting in morning preparation being much easier and less stressful.

"It helps them get organised in the morning in my household anyway, it actually assists to get them sorted because they're so keen to get to school."

Working parents found that it gave them one less thing to stress about in the morning as their children would have something to do when they were dropped off at school early. This also relieved stress for parents not able to take their children to extra-curricular physical activities after school.

"I like that they're getting that fitness here at the school before they go into class because then that pressure's off at home."

"Being a working parent it's tricky to find things for them to be able to do without having to have parents there."

"Some of those parents have said to me 'it's great because I don't have to feel guilty leaving my kid sitting in the COLA (covered outdoor learning area) at school. At least they have something to do'."

In addition to the ease of life benefits, many parents identified social benefits for themselves. This was particularly the case in Hastings. Parents who volunteered with running KM Club, or who participated with their young children noted that they got added benefits of being able to socialise with other parents or with their own child while engaging with KM Club.

"It's a social thing for me too, because I'm down there chatting with the other Mums of a morning and, you know, there's some Mums that come and drop off their kids and will stop by a chat... so it's a nice thing for me to do too to start my day."

It has also been a social activity for some parents to enjoy with their children, and has helped facilitate more physical activities within families:

"(My husband) really enjoys being able to do something with the kids at school that's active and something that he feels he can be involved in."

"Families are joining in fun runs, community fun runs and things,

so that's part of the making healthy normal."

4.1.3 For teachers

KM Club has been a positive experience for school staff in all interviewed schools, whether predominantly organised and implemented by parents or by teachers. The simplicity of the program assists schools to easily contribute to the *Premier's Priorities* on child health and physical activity, something which teachers in all schools mentioned. It is also a program that has been easily integrated with other health related initiatives.

"So from the teacher's perspective, as I said it's good to have an easy opportunity for kids to access physical activity, and contribute to the Premier's Priorities for getting more active time, kids having more active time without impacting learning time."

"We're seeing the spin-off – because we've got our kitchen garden program with Healthy Eating, like that has really transcended through the whole school"

The positive impact on children has contributed to flow-on benefits for teachers. All teachers noted that their classrooms are easier working environments during KM Club weeks. The benefits of higher concentration and the "good tired" that children experienced from the program has resulted in improved learning environments for teachers.

"Just gets them going, gets everything working the way it should and when they come into the classroom, they're much more settled and ready to learn"

This improved learning environment may even be contributing to decreases in misbehaviour and detentions, but schools have not been collecting data on that. One principal reflected:

"Thinking about that over the weekend, it would be interesting to see the fact that we've been doing [KM Club] – and I know it's only on like certain grades but the fact that we've been doing it, has playground incidences or behaviour – detention instances decreased because of it? I don't know – because it's certainly – within my own class, I've noticed confidence and improved behaviour."

Some teachers also mentioned that KM Club has also allowed them to naturally include applied maths in cases where children are tracking their progress.

"It's really good for talking about maths and numbers and setting goals because they all want to set"

For teachers that are involved in the implementation KM club, they have found it a positive way to start their day.

"I enjoy it, it's a nice way to start my day."

4.2 Participation in KM Club

4.2.1 Challenges

Participants across all school emphasised the simplicity of establishing and implementing the KM Club itself. There were no challenges identified that related to the program itself.

The majority of challenges related to KM Club participation for children at the schools. This was in two distinct categories:

- Challenges in encouraging participation; and
- Challenges while participating.

The challenges and barriers to participation do not apply across the entire student cohort, but were case-by-case challenges raised in the interviews. There were few barriers to participation identified by the participants except the timing of KM Club. This was clearly defined as two issues – parents being unable to drop off their child to school early enough or because the school bus does not arrive in time for children to participate. This barrier was only experienced by one participant with children who occasionally participated in KM Club.

*“I've heard that some parents are like that's just too early or whatever.”
“If you're on a late bus or if you are a parent that can't get your child to school early enough”*

4.2.1.1 Challenges in encouraging participation

In most cases children who do not participate in KM Club have made the personal choice not to. The reasoning behinds this choice varies. In some instances, the child considers themselves as not “sporty” and does not want to participate in physical activities. For other children who participate in physical activities outside of school, they appear to be making a choice not to participate in this type of additional exercise.

*“But it's just personality, I think. Their individual self and how they feel about themselves.”
“Unfortunately there are things that you just don't participate in, but we are lucky that we are in the environment that they are active for the rest of the day, it's not as if it's just one opportunity, and that's the good thing”*

Peer endorsement is an integral part to the participation in KM Club. As such, some children do not participate because they would rather socialise with their friends or, in the case of some children, their friends do not think that KM Club is “cool”.

“I think that she prefers to go off and play with her friends in the kindergarten play area”

*"I think it's more of a peer thing for my son. His mates aren't doing it."
"I'd say maybe it's not cool, that's a big thing for my daughter, so yeah, and they probably just get chatting and things like that. Yeah, that's the only thing I can think of."*

4.2.1.2 Challenges while participating

Some children struggle to participate for health reasons. This is predominantly related to asthma. In these cases it has been the responsibility of the child to remember their medication, which does not always happen. Additionally, this can exhaust the child depending on the intensity of their walk or run, or the severity of their asthma.

"My child is an asthmatic, so she has done a couple of rounds but finds that she gets quite weak afterwards... it interrupts a lot of the actual schoolwork for her if she was to go and run."

There can also be issues for students with disability or special needs, though this varies from child to child.

*"Some of the kids with high needs don't like being sweaty... So they don't want to run around and get all yuck before they go to school, like, there's sensory issues."
"(My son) has autism so he's quite stuck in his ways. I think that if the whole class did it then it would be less of a drama for him."*

Other challenges included:

- The course can appear challenging for younger students, especially if it involves hills and this can result in younger children struggling to complete the course in time for school. In some schools this is addressed by younger children needing to be accompanied by their parent.

"They're very reserved at the start and they're going, I'm not walking, and it is far, that's a long way."

- Maintaining interest for the duration of the KM Club can be challenging. Particularly if students get bored of the course. *"You're bored because you're bored of the track."*
- Weather can impact the duration of KM club. Hotter seasons make it difficult to run KM club.

"Thought about straight after lunch but at the start of the year it was too hot, so I just stuck with straight after recess when it wasn't."

- While injury was a concern during the early stages of implementation, no interviewed parents, teachers or principals found it challenging to address injuries appropriately. Some noted that there had been no injuries reported since beginning KM Club.

"It's just – it's hard when they get back to Kilometre Club and they're like, "I tripped over," and they're bleeding and we're like, "We're actually not allowed to do anything. You need to go to the office." The poor office ladies. As if they don't have enough to do before 9 o'clock. But that doesn't happen too often because it's not – they don't do any running on cement, obviously."

"Everyone is pretty good, but it does happen. There are little bleeds, and they just go up to first aid and get dealt with."

4.2.2 Incentives

All schools have implemented some form of incentive to encourage participation in KM Club. Incentives vary not only by school, but also by class. In some schools, teachers have been able to create their own incentives for their classes. This process has been very "fluid". Example incentives were:

- Awards based on the amount of physical activity children do in a single week.

*"You get bronze, silver, gold or platinum or diamond level, and they have a goal at which level they want... They get handed out at the morning assembly on Monday mornings,
so yeah, it's nice for them to get that."*

- Tracking the number of laps students are completing or the number of days they are participating. This has been done by stamping or hole-punching cards on the KM club track, or by getting a tick in class. In at least one instance this has integrated into other tracking systems, with one class getting ticks on their "behaviour charts" with their own rewards system.

"So we get to these three levels and at the end of each term there is a rewards day, and depending on what level you are on, depends on what reward you get at the end of the term. So at the end of the year if they are on gold, they get to go to the swimming pool for half a day and they have a barbeque lunch and things like that."

- A map is used in some classes to track the total distance the class has walked for the duration of KM club. This is done through adding up the total number of kilometres walked by all students and teachers who participated and using Google Maps to track that distance around Australia.

"So collectively as a community we record how many kilometres that the whole school community are running and so that's boys and girls, parents, grandparents and some teachers participate as well. So we record all of those laps and we set a school goal to run around Australia, so we've got a map of Australia and using Google Maps it's very easy just to work out the distances. So collectively our school has run all the way around Australia and through to Uluru."

“We did that for the first – we mapped Australia for probably all of 2017, and then 2018 there wasn't really an incentive.”

Incentives have been flexible across the implementation of KM Club in all four schools, changing throughout the subsequent terms and years since initial program implementation. Across all schools there was no incentive for coming first in KM Club (*“There are no prizes for being the fastest runner”*) however it was common for teachers or parent volunteers to track how many laps children were completing as a form of encouragement and to assist children in setting personal goals and achieving them.

Teachers at Kendall and Hastings cited goal as a significant motivating factor for children participating in KM Club and has encouraged ongoing participation. This has been a positive for children, as parents and teachers reported there has been a sense of pride in children who have reached their goals.

“He was very, very, very proud that he got his half-marathon and then he was a little disappointed because he missed out by two laps or something of getting a full marathon, but he was sick one of the days so didn't come in, so he was kind of a bit disappointed by that, but very, very proud of his half-marathon certificate.”

“I'm pretty sure he's motivated by the certificates and going from one colour card to the next card and filling it up. He just wants to get as many done as he can.”

“What we do want is for children to set a personal fitness goal and set about to achieve that goal and receive the intrinsic reward of the pride that they get in achieving that goal and the personal fitness that comes along with it.”

In later years of implementation, teachers and principals reported that incentives have not always been necessary to encourage participation.

“We haven't found they've really needed any extra motivation to do it. Less active kids, perhaps they're in need of a little verbal encouragement, but yeah, kids have generally sort of run with it.”

4.2.3 Motivation

While incentives have been commonly used by schools, there have been other important motivators for KM Club participation. Children and parents discussed the following things that have motivated participation:

- ❶ **Health and fitness benefits.** Some children have noticed their own improvements in fitness. Most children noted improving their fitness as a motivating factor.

“I just like running. I want to get fit.”

“I don't think there's any motivation issues, they just want to go and run around.”

- **Achieving personal goals** with no incentive has encouraged children to participate more frequently and try to run a greater number of laps. Goal setting has been introduced by some teachers, though some children also like to be competitive with other students and with themselves.

“And lots of kids talk about their goal and whether they're going to achieve their goal.”
“The kids get really excited every time they hit a new milestone, or they hit a new card”
“I put up the thought of maybe you could set yourself a personal goal to run a marathon and that has become a really popular milestone, so kids are setting themselves personal fitness goals of running a marathon over the six-week period, and then this was something that I didn't envisage.”

- **Socialising** has been a big factor for children's' participation. The flexibility to walk and talk with friends while participating has meant children often take this time to catch up with friends and sometimes meet new friends.

“I like running with my friends and sometimes walking and talking to them.”
“It's really good exercise for the morning and I like hanging out with my friends.”

- As previously mentioned, children have been motivated by **peers and siblings** to either participate or not participate in KM Club. Children have acted as champions for KM Club amongst their own groups of friends.

“I did it, so he started doing it, and he wanted to do it with me. And then [child's name removed] started coming and we started doing it – and the class.”

- In some schools it is the **only activity available** to children before teachers begin playground duty.

“In the morning, you would just get bored of doing nothing, unless you do something else.”

4.3 Key Learnings

4.3.1 Enablers of KM Club

While varied across the schools, parents and teachers are key enablers in the set-up and implementation of KM Club. These enablers depend on three factors:

- available school resources;
- availability of teachers to organise and supervise KM Club; and
- the involvement of parents in the school itself.

In North Haven, Kendall and Aldavilla, principals and teachers have been the key enablers of KM Club by organising the course, setting-up incentives and supporting KM Club tracking. Some teachers have been enablers of participation within their own classrooms through tracking mechanisms such as maps of Australia or integrating KM Club into their rewards systems. Teachers who organise or participate in KM Club also actively encourage students to participate and this has been seen as an important aspect of the success of KM Club so far.

"I think it's great with having [teacher's name removed] because she obviously runs herself... She has been really active in it... So you can see the kids are getting more interested from that perspective as well."

"One teacher who is keen to do something, that's all it took."

"They know who I am, and they know that I'm somebody that they can come to, I'll always have a smile for them and that's engaging, so it gets them out there."

Hastings Public School, for example, has a very active parent base which assists with almost all of the day-to-day running of KM Club and they have become the primary enablers of the KM Club:

"Very much a parent run, like, you won't see a teacher."

"Our Hastings community is really involved in our school. We call it a school community because our P&C Association is really supportive of our school. Very helpful."

"So we measured out our track and then enlisted lots of parental support – we would definitely not be able to do this program without the help of our parents - and it went from there."

In schools with less parent involvement, parents still play an important role in enabling their children to participate in KM Club. Most importantly, they are responsible for their children arriving in time to participate. A secondary enabler role for parents was raised in the interviews as a correlation between children who are less likely to participate in physical activities generally and parents who enable this lack of participation or do not participate in physical activity themselves. Conversely, a correlation was raised between families who live physically active lifestyles, and children who participate in KM Club (however, this can also be a reason for lack of participation as mentioned in 4.2 above).

North Haven Public School had some initial external support when setting up KM Club. The local Woolworths supermarket supported the initiative by donating fruit and vegetables to give to participants every morning. This assisted in the early stage of implementation, but was not part of long term implementation as teachers found it an unnecessary incentive for participants (see 4.2).

4.3.2 Adaptability and flexibility

The implementation of KM Club has been flexible, allowing for adaptations to the program based on the needs of the children and the capacity of the school.

Pace and length of the course

The most frequently discussed flexibility was in regard to the running or walking pace of participants. Students were able to participate at their own pace, from walking a single lap, to running as many laps as possible. This was seen as a positive by parents, children and teachers and has been used to encourage participation. This flexibility also included the length of the course that students were running, allowing them to take shorter routes if they desired.

"It's not a running event every day because some of the kids go, 'Well, I'm not a good runner.' 'So, just walk it.'"

"Sometimes you can just walk or run, but if you are – have got asthma or something and you didn't bring your puffer, you are allowed to just walk." (Child)

"Just have a little loop today. Like, you don't have to do the big one."

Activities while participating

Schools have allowed for flexibility of activities that students are permitted to do while participating in KM Club. For example, at Kendall they are allowed to kick a soccer ball while participating and music is played from a playlist the teacher has created, but is controlled by the children.

"If they want to take a soccer ball and kick the soccer ball to each other around the course, couldn't care less, they take a footy, the kick the footy to – they're still going in the circuit, but take a ball, whatever, just get them moving, that's essentially it... it's just another way they can get involved, it's easy. "

Duration of the program

KM Club has been flexible in terms of the duration of the program. This means that schools have been able to run KM Club for more or fewer weeks, depending on the needs of their school at the time. In Hastings, they ran an extra week of KM Club in one term (six, instead of five) because the children wanted to reach a particular goal.

"Last term, in term 2, we did six because the kids wanted to just get that little bit further, so they could get their hundred or (double marathon)."

Parent participation

Schools have adapted to the level of participation of parents at their school. This is dependent on who the enablers of KM club are in the school. Kendall's KM Club is run predominantly by a single teacher who helped set it up while Hastings' is run almost entirely by parent volunteers. In the case of Hastings, parent participation was a gradual process as they were allowed to participate and volunteer.

"Parents started to come along and said, 'Well, we really love it idea, can we join in too? And, so, 'Absolutely. Sure, we'd love you to join in as well.' So, they started to put their joggers on in the morning and get involved, and then as the program became more and more popular I realised that I needed some more help and so I just started to ask some parents if they'd like to help and they were very, very eager to help with – so now they pretty much run the whole program."

4.3.3 Intersections with other aspects of school

KM Club did not often directly intersect with other aspects of school. There were short term instances of it intersecting with other health related initiatives such as Breakfast Club. The program predominately acts as part of various good health initiatives that schools are taking to meet the *Premier's Priorities*.

"It fits in I guess just with our whole approach to schooling, like we are very health"

"Crunch and Sip happens every day in every room, so that's a break, mine is at 10 o'clock in the morning so then they have 15 minutes to sip some water and they can have fruit or vegetables."

"And they kind of work hand-in-hand with one another as well... they're all interlocked to one another so if we can get it embedded, like our healthy eating is embedded in everything, it would just be so much easier for people to do."

Schools have planned KM Club in line with other sporting activities (e.g. the cross-country and the athletics carnival) as a way of integrating it into the school's sports calendar. One Principal cited the fitness benefits for children have resulted in greater participation in events at the athletics carnival. The cross country also acts as a motivating factor for children to participate in the KM club as a way to practice.

"It's in the six weeks leading up to our school cross country carnival and also the athletics carnivals, and it improves the children's fitness enormously leading up to those carnivals."

4.3.4 Sustainability

Overall, KM Club was considered easy to set up and sustain. All participants involved in the implementation of KM Club agreed it has not required intensive time or resources and has been

simple to handover to multiple or successive organisers. However, having consistently reliable people (volunteers or teachers) to run KM Club is essential to the sustainability of the program. The amount of resources required has been dependent on the way in which schools choose to incentivise participation. In schools with little to no incentive, such as Kendall, a single staff member has sustained the program. Whereas in schools promoting the tracking of KM club through stamps per lap, there is greater need for resources and support, which increases with the number of participants.

“Make sure that they’ve got enough reliable people to do the stamping because if they don’t have anyone to do stamping then it is hard, and just to pump it up.”

“it’s very low resource, it’s very low time-consuming. Other than that 15 minutes, that’s it, it’s so good because you literally just walk, you get out, I make sure I’ve got music, make sure my speaker is ready.”

“Well that’s what I think is the beauty of it, it’s not very intensive with resources.”

“I just think the benefits of this particular activity are in its simplicity.”

Some interviewees emphasised the importance of volunteers in schools where teachers did not have the capacity to consistently monitor KM Club while doing other playground duty. In these instances, community involvement has been integral to the success of KM Club. This is evident in the case of Hastings which has seen success through the involvement of parents in implementation.

The main reason for the success is the community involvement because in a school it’s just too hard with teachers on playground duty and meetings... I’m unable to be out there as often as I would like to be. In the early years I was out there almost every morning.”

Variance in the track was highlighted as essential to running KM Club in the long term. This has been done in schools both for the duration of the program on a term-by-term basis and with regards to variation of the track itself. As these schools have implemented KM Club across numerous years, students have noted that the track itself gets boring. Some students who are enthusiastic for the KM Club get bored by the track itself: *“He’s not bored of Kilometre Club, just the track.”*

5. KEY CONSIDERATIONS FOR KM CLUB MOVING FORWARD

The KM Club program is being evaluated across the four schools along these two dimensions:

- (1) Does participation in the KM Club assist children to meet and/or exceed the daily step guidelines ?
- (2) What factors prevent and enable successful implementation of KM Club?

As the key focus for CIRCA was on research question two, this report is not intended to provide insight into the success or failure of the program, as a physical activity program. The intention of this report is to provide insights into how physical activity manifests in the context of the four KM Clubs, as well as insights into the views of families and staff in relation to the strengths of the program, its challenges, and the program's acceptability among families.

Interviewed families, teachers and principals all suggested that KM Club is providing an additional opportunity for students to participate in physical activity. Interviewed families and teachers concede, however, that not all students participate and this stems from a variety of reasons. Families and school staff reported that the type of physical activity that occurs in each KM Club is flexible, but typically takes the form of running or walking and sometimes involves vigorous play.

The interviews with parents of participating and non-participating children as well as teachers and principals suggest that there are key benefits for children who participate in the KM Club. Interviewed children overwhelmingly reported positive emotions about themselves while participating in KM Club; a finding that should be continually monitored if the program continues or expands. Interviewees also cited improved fitness levels and general health and wellbeing, which they felt led to greater participation in other physical activities. Parents and teachers also pointed to the benefits of children expending energy through physical movement, which contributes to an improved learning environment for teachers and children, as well as increased 'ease of life' benefits at home for parents and children.

Key challenges are found in encouraging children to participate, meeting the needs of children with health or disability challenges, and achieving the appropriate teacher/parent volunteer balance to enable the implementation and sustainability of the program.

Acceptability among families was high. The only aspects of the KM Club that families indicated verged on unacceptable was the timing of it, that made it challenging to get their children to participate. This was, however, only mentioned as a barrier by one parent.

The flexibility and adaptability of the program to the individual school contributed to the high level of acceptability among families and teachers/principals.

6. RECOMMENDATIONS

6.1 Program flexibility and adaptability

The flexibility of the KM Club program is key to its success and should be maintained. Schools who participate or wish to participate should be encouraged to adapt the program to their school needs and resources. Providing new schools with case studies or a flexible and replicable model of implementation to encourage adaptability is recommended.

6.2 Walk or run options

Providing walk or run options for children regardless of age with the ability to transition from walking to running could improve participation rates among children who consider themselves 'not sporty' by removing the emphasis or expectation that they will immediately commence running at the start of their participation.

Providing walk or run options for parents to encourage involvement of families not engaging in physical activity is also recommended to broaden participation from parents and children from families currently exercising regularly to those who do not have exercise routines as part of family life.

6.3 Incorporating goal setting

Goal setting is a significant motivating factor for children participants and encourages sustained, ongoing participation. Harnessing the success of motivating factors for the individual child is recommended. These include achieving personal goals and health and fitness benefits.

6.4 Encouraging the social aspects of the program for children and parents

The social aspect of participation has been identified by both children and parents interviewed in this evaluation as a key motivator. Encouraging the social aspect of spending time together and motivating others to participate is recommended for both children and parents. It will be important to also encourage the endorsement of KM Club activities by peers, perhaps via the social aspects of participation.

6.5 Alignment with school sports calendar

Based on the success of the schools targeted in this evaluation, using scheduled sports activities such as the cross country carnival as a motivator is recommended to increase the participation of children at each school.

6.6 Variation of the track/course

It is clear from the research in this evaluation that variance in the track is an essential component to long-term sustainability of the KM Club program to combat the boredom of children participating.

6.7 Encouraging parent volunteers

While schools adapt to the level of participation of parents, consistent, reliable volunteers is a key component for successful implementation of the program, particularly if a tracking system is introduced as an incentive. Parent volunteers alleviate the time constraints on teachers and help to stretch school resources.

6.8 Providing a hot weather alternative

The schools involved in the research for this evaluation are all located on NSW's Mid-North Coast. Spring and summer months can be hot and running outside early morning or late afternoon hours may not be a viable option. In the summer months children need to continue to get their recommended 60 minutes of moderate to vigorous physical activity each day. Providing hot weather alternatives, such as walking or running in shaded areas, or resistance training exercises (lunges, squats, high knees), could encourage children to meet recommended PA guidelines and extend the life of the KM Club program each year for participating schools.

7. APPENDIX

7.1 Discussion Guides

7.1.1 Non-Participating families

Interview schedule for families (non-participating)

Firstly, I want to say thank you for taking the time to talk with me about the KM Club. My name is X and I am a X for X. This interview is part of research to understand what makes the KM Club successful. We know that KM Club has been run at your child's school since [year] and while there are some families that participate in KM Club, there are many others that do not for many reasons. We are keen to learn today about some of the reasons why some families decide not to participate in KM Club. Your input is really valuable as it will help other schools to run this initiative successfully.

The discussion will take anywhere between 10 to 30 minutes. My job is to facilitate this discussion and ask some questions to help get us talking. Just a few points before we start:

1. THERE ARE NO RIGHT OR WRONG ANSWERS

- Your individual experiences and opinions are important

[Face-to-face interview]

2. WHAT IS SAID IN THIS ROOM STAYS HERE

[Phone interview]

WHAT IS SAID ON THE PHONE STAY HERE

- I want you to feel comfortable sharing if sensitive issues come up
- We don't identify anyone by name in our reports and you will remain anonymous

3. WE WILL BE TAPE RECORDING THE DISCUSSION

- As mentioned in the participant information sheet, I would like to record the interview. With your permission, a researcher will type up what we have discussed, combine this with other interviews we are conducting and share the transcript with the Mid North Coast Local Health District. We will then look at these and try and figure out what themes and ideas have come out of the discussions. This data will be used to help other schools plan and deliver the KM Club more effectively.
- All personal identifiers will be removed from the transcript prior to sharing. The transcript will only be used for research purposes.
 - Please confirm that I have your permission to record the interview?
 - Please also confirm you are happy to have the de-identified transcripts shared with the Mid North Coast Local Health District
- [If the response is 'Yes'] Thank you. I will now start the interview.
- [If the response is 'No' to recording] I am unable to conduct this interview without your permission to record the interview. Thank you for your participation in this research to date. [End interview]

Turn tape recorder on

Families of non-participating students

Introduction

- **Firstly, have you heard much about the KM Club and if so, what do you think it involves?**
- **Are there any types of physical activities that your family regularly participate in? If so what are they?**

[If they do participate]

- **How often does your family participate in these activities?**
-

1. Intervention implementation

- **As I said at the start, while there are some families that participate in KM Club, there are many others that do not. So today we'd appreciate if you could help us to understand some of the reasons your family may not participate. What are some of the challenges which prevent your child from attending KM Club?**

Prompt: other commitments, time, transport, money

- **From what you know about Km Club, what don't you like about it?**

Prompt: Childs behaviour, parents/child have to wake up earlier, have to bring a change of clothes to school, track is too long, less time for other activities

- **Are there any other weaknesses about the program that you think would affect other families?**

- **Is there anything you would change and/or improve about the program?**

- **From what you know about KM Club, what do you think are the benefits of KM Club?**

Prompt: Better behaviour, improved health, fitter, happier, improved attention in the classroom, good social interaction with friends

[Depending on reason for not participating]

- **Would you like your child to participate in KM Club in the future?**

- **Finally, is there anything else you'd like to add about what we've discussed today?**
-

End

- Thank you
- Reiterate what will happen with the data and next steps (data recorded, transcribed, and combined with other interviews we are conducting and with student physical activity outcomes)
- Can I contact you again if I have any more questions

7.1.2 Participating Families

Interview schedule for families (participating)

Firstly, I want to say thank you for taking the time to talk with me about the KM Club. My name is X and I am a X for X. This interview is part of research to understand what makes the KM Club successful. We would like to know what does and doesn't work, the benefits and disadvantages, and what advice you would give to other schools trying to start KM Club.

The discussion will take anywhere between 10 to 30 minutes. My job is to facilitate this discussion and ask some questions to help get us talking. Just a few points before we start:

4. THERE ARE NO RIGHT OR WRONG ANSWERS

- Your individual experiences and opinions are important

[Face-to-face interview]

5. WHAT IS SAID IN THIS ROOM STAYS HERE

[Phone interview]

WHAT IS SAID ON THE PHONE STAY HERE

- I want you to feel comfortable sharing if sensitive issues come up
- We don't identify anyone by name in our reports and you will remain anonymous

6. WE WILL BE TAPE RECORDING THE DISCUSSION

- As mentioned in the participant information sheet, I would like to record the interview. With your permission, a researcher will type up what we have discussed, combine this with other interviews we are conducting and share the transcript with the Mid North Coast Local Health District. We will then look at these and try and figure out what themes and ideas have come out of the discussions. This data will be used to help other schools plan and deliver the KM Club more effectively.
- All personal identifiers will be removed from the transcript prior to sharing. The transcript will only be used for research purposes.
 - Please confirm that I have your permission to record the interview?
 - Please also confirm you are happy to have the de-identified transcripts shared with the Mid North Coast Local Health District
- *[If the response is 'Yes']* Thank you. I will now start the interview.
- *[If the response is 'No' to recording]* I am unable to conduct this interview without your permission to record the interview. Thank you for your participation in this research to date. *[End interview]*

*****Turn tape recorder on*****

Parents of participating students

Introduction

Now I'll be asking you both a variety of questions about your experiences with KM Club. Please both feel free to add any comments at anytime.

Ask parent

- **What can you tell me about KM Club at your child's school? How does it work?**
 - ◄ *Prompt:* How far is the distance, what time does it run, how many people on average turn up, what age groups can participate, who coordinates it

Ask student (child)

- Is there anything you would like to add, [child's name]?

Ask parent

- What originally made you decide for your child to participate in KM Club?
-

2. Students participation

Ask parent

- How many days does your child participate on average in the KM Club a week?

Ask student

- What kinds of activities do you do in the KM Club?

Prompt: e.g. walking, jogging, running, hopping

3. Parents participation:

Ask parent

- And what about yourself, do you participate in the KM Club too?

[If the response is 'Yes']

- What type of activities do you usually perform when participating in the KM Club?

◀ Prompt: e.g. walking, jogging, running, hopping

- On average, how many days do you attend KM Club each week?
-

4. Intervention implementation

Ask parent

- What are some of the things which influence and motivate [child's name] to participate in KM Club?

Prompt: easy access to school grounds, parents work schedule, motivation

Ask parent

- What do you believe are the benefits of participating in KM Club?

Prompt: better behaviour, improved health, fitter, happier, improved attention in the classroom, good social interaction with friends

Ask student

- What do you like about the KM Club?

Ask parent

- Are there any challenges that make it difficult for [child's name] to attend KM Club? If so, what are those challenges?

Prompt: parent dropping kid to school early, getting kids up earlier, no public transport, not a priority for parent, hard to bring a change of clothing to school

Ask student

- Is there anything that makes it hard for you to participate in KM Club? If so what are those things?

Ask student

- Is there anything you don't like about KM Club? If so what don't you like?

Ask parent

- **Are there any disadvantages to the KM Club? If so what do you think they are?**

Prompt: Child is tired at school, parents/child have to wake up earlier, have to bring a change of clothes to school, track is too long, less time for other activities

Ask parent and student

- **Is there anything else you'd like to add about what we've discussed today?**

Ask student and parent

- **Finally, is there anything you would change and/or improve about the KM Club?**
-

End

- Thank you
- Reiterate what will happen with the data and next steps (data recorded, transcribed, and combined with other interviews we are conducting and with student physical activity outcomes)
- Can I contact you again if I have any more questions?

7.1.3 Principals/Teachers

Interview schedule for teachers and/or principals

Page 2: Original Teacher/Principal who organised the PA initiative

Page 4: Other teachers involved in implementing the PA initiative

Firstly, I want to say thank you for taking the time to talk with me about the KM Club. My name is X and I am a X for X. This interview is part of an evaluation study focussing on factors which influence successful implementation and sustainability of the KM Club. We would also like to know what did and didn't work, the benefits and disadvantages, and what advice you would give to other schools trying to start KM Club.

The discussion will take anywhere between 10 to 30 minutes. My job is to facilitate this discussion and ask some questions to help get us talking. Just a few points before we start:

7. THERE ARE NO RIGHT OR WRONG ANSWERS

- Your individual experiences and opinions are important

[Face-to-face interview]

8. WHAT IS SAID IN THIS ROOM STAYS HERE

[Phone interview]

WHAT IS SAID ON THE PHONE STAY HERE

- I want you to feel comfortable sharing if sensitive issues come up
- We don't identify anyone by name in our reports and you will remain anonymous

9. WE WILL BE TAPE RECORDING THE DISCUSSION

- As mentioned in the participant information sheet, I would like to record the interview. With your permission, a researcher will type up what we have discussed, combine this with other interviews we are conducting and share the transcript with the Mid North Coast Local Health District. We will then look at these and try and figure out what themes and ideas have come out of the discussions. This data will be used to help other schools plan and deliver the KM Club more effectively.
- All personal identifiers will be removed from the transcript prior to sharing. The transcript will only be used for research purposes.
 - Please confirm that I have your permission to record the interview?
 - Please also confirm you are happy to have the de-identified transcripts shared with the Mid North Coast Local Health District
- *[If the response is 'Yes']* Thank you. I will now start the interview.
- *[If the response is 'No' to recording]* I am unable to conduct this interview without your permission to record the interview. Thank you for your participation in this research to date. *[End interview]*

*****Turn tape recorder on*****

Original teacher/principal

(Check whether they still work at the school)

(Determine what physical activity initiative their school implements [km club, running club etc] before interview)

1. Background information about teacher

- **How long have you been teaching at [school name] for?**
-

2. Intervention development, trialling and roll out:

- **When and how did KM club start in your school?**

Prompt: Whose idea was it, when did you try and start it, what steps did you take, were parents and children involved, did you try and disseminate the idea to teachers, did you promote the project, did you get external support, was it phase in or all at once?

- **Why did you decide to try and start the KM Club?**
- **Did you encounter any challenges trying to set up KM Club?**

Prompt: Motivation (staff, kids), parent's approval, access to facilities, weather, clothing, risk assessments, space, timetabling?

- **What helped the most in setting up KM Club?**

Prompts: External support, resources?

- **Can you tell me how KM Club works at your school?**

*Prompt: What **type** of activity is performed during the KM Club? (walking, running); What **time, duration** and **how many days a week** is KM Club run at your school?; **Where** is the track located and **how many kilometres** is the track? Who decides when it is used?; **Who can participate?** (students, parents, teachers); **Who** runs the program (teachers or parents)?*

- **Has it changed over time – if so how?**

Prompt: What happened when the field changed?

3. Benefits, disadvantages and recommendations

[Ask all teachers]

- **What do you believe are the benefits of KM Club?**

Prompt: behaviour, health, engagement, attention?

- **Do you believe there are any disadvantages to KM Club? If so, what are they?**

Prompt: Kids left out, supervision, tired in class

- **Do you believe there are any disadvantages to KM Club? If so, what are they?**

Prompt: Kids left out, supervision, tired in class

- Based on what you've seen and heard from families, what are some of the things that prevent families from participating in KM Club?
 - Is there anything else you would like to add in regards to KM Club implementation?
 - Finally, what top tips would you give to another school looking to start KM Club?
-

End

- Thank you
- Reiterate what will happen with the data and next steps (data recorded, transcribed, and combined with other interviews we are conducting and with student physical activity outcomes)
- Can I contact you again if I have any more questions?

Other teachers involved in implementation

(Determine what physical activity initiative their school implements [km club, running club etc] before interview)

1. Introduction to teacher and KM Club

[Ask all teachers]

- How long have you been teaching at [school name] for?
- Were you teaching when KM Club was originally implemented?

[Only ask teachers who were there from the beginning]

- When and how did KM club start in your school?

[Ask all teachers]

- Can you tell me how KM Club works at your school?
 - Prompt: What **type** of activity is performed during the KM Club? (walking, running); What **time, duration** and **how many days a week** is KM Club run at your school?; **Where** is the track located and **how many kilometres** is the track? Who decides when it is used?; **Who** can **participate**? (students, parents, teachers) **Who** runs the program (teachers or parents?)
 - Has it changed since you first started – if so how?
Prompt: What happened when the field changed?
-

2. Teachers role/responsibility

[Ask all teachers]

- What is your role within KM Club?
Prompt: do you just supervise? Or do you participate too?
- How often do you supervise KM Club?

- **What motivates you to coordinate the KM Club?**
- **Do you receive any support regarding your commitment?**

3. Intervention development and implementation

[Only ask teachers who were there from the beginning]

- **Did you encounter any challenges with the roll out of KM club in the beginning?**
Prompt: Motivation (staff, kids), parent's approval, access to facilities, weather, clothing, risk assessments, space, timetabling?
- **What helped the most in setting up KM Club?**
Prompts: External support, resources?

[Ask all teachers]

- **How do you ensure the safety of children participating in KM Club?**
Prompts: Risk assessment, working with children check?

4. Benefits, disadvantages and recommendations

[Ask all teachers]

- **What do you believe are the benefits of KM Club?**
Prompt: behaviour, health, engagement, attention?
- **Do you believe there are any disadvantages to KM Club? If so, what are they?**
Prompt: Kids left out, supervision, tired in class
- **Is there anything else you would like to add in regards to KM Club implementation?**
- **Finally, what top tips would you give to another school looking to start the KM Club?**

End

- Thank you
- Reiterate what will happen with the data and next steps (data recorded, transcribed, and combined with other interviews we are conducting and with student physical activity outcomes)
- Can I contact you again if I have any more questions?

7.2 Working with Children checks

Team Member	WWC number	Valid to
Sarah Ciftci	WWC0932632E	01/03/2021
Victoria Smith	WWC0495606E	08/10/2019
Pino Migliorino ⁵	APP3407509	Application submitted

⁵ CIRCA will provide Pino's WWC number to MOH and MNCLHD when we receive it. Please note, Pino does not have a role within this project that involves direct contact with children.

7.3 Children's rating activity sheet

Circle the pictures that best explain how you feel when you are doing KM Club.



Awful



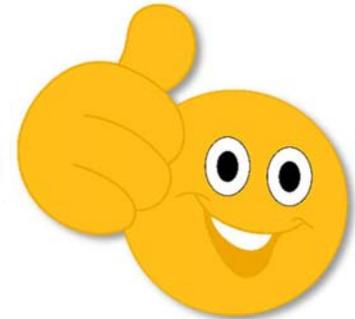
Confident



Shy/ Embarrassed



Bored/ Nothing



Fantastic



Strong



Weak



Fit



Unfit



Proud



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