

Frequently Asked Questions



We understand that decisions about whole-of-school programs/partnerships often involve a number of people. This FAQ document is to help inform these discussions. If you have any other questions arise please contact your Certified Instructor directly.

What is Making Friends with Food (MFWF) by The Root Cause?

MFWF is an innovative food literacy partnership for schools, with:

- Fun in-person incursions and workshops for the whole school community,
- Online resources for teachers and parents, plus
- Year-long mentoring lovingly provided by your dedicated Certified Instructor.

MFWF engages students, empowers parents to make better food choices at home, and equips schools with resources to integrate nutrition education into everyday activities.



Who is The Root Cause?

The Root Cause is a trusted education partner and social enterprise, with more than a decade of experience collaborating with schools. We keep things fun, while sparking conversations about food, health impacts, education, sustainability, and the environment. We have a national team of passionate Certified Instructors, we've partnered with hundreds of schools, with over 60,000 participants in our programs, across Australia.

Who is MFWF for?

This unique partnership is for innovative primary schools and early learning centres who recognise that food plays a foundational and critical role in wellbeing, academic results and sustainability.

If you're looking for a program that ticks curriculum boxes *and* helps bring about a change in culture that will have a positive flow on effects to behaviour, wellbeing, teacher stress levels and waste in your school, then MFWF is for you!

Is MFWF science/evidence based?

Yes, MFWF is grounded in science, and employs a multifaceted approach that educates, empowers, and encourages the school community to embrace healthier behaviours. When we eat better, we fuel positive learning behaviour, create healthier communities and protect the planet by reducing waste. Many peer-reviewed scientific journals link food to mood, behaviour, learning and academic results. Professor Felice Jacka from Deakin University's Food and Mood Centre is leading the charge in the field of Nutritional Psychiatry, with strong evidence showing how what we eat impacts our wellbeing. Further, in 2006, researchers at the Institute of Education London found that nutrition is believed to impact on individual behaviour, including concentration & activity levels – and those behaviours affect school performance, peer interaction, and self-esteem.

Dr Charlotte Middleton - an Integrative GP specialising in Maternity, Paediatric, Nutritional and Environmental Medicine with over 20 years clinical is a consultant for Making friends with food by The Root Cause. She provides expert advice on the intricate relationship between nutrition and wellbeing.

How does MFWF align with the National Australian Curriculum?

The student incursion component of the partnership addresses several Learning Areas in the Australian Curriculum, particularly Health and Physical Education and Science. Opportunities exist within the program for the development of several General Capabilities, especially in the Stage 3 incursion. These include literacy, numeracy, ICT, critical thinking, and creative thinking, personal and social capability and ethical understanding. It also addresses the Cross-Curriculum priority of Sustainability.

For more details on curriculum alignment, [click here](#).

How much time is required of the Principal?

We recognise Principals have a large workload, so we limit their time commitment to an initial planning meeting, and a review meeting towards the end of the year. We do suggest Principals nominate 1-2 people to act as your school's Primary Contact to work with your Certified Instructor on planning and logistics – often an Assistant Principal, Wellbeing Co-ordinator, PDHPE teacher or a Stage/Year Coordinator. Our most successful schools have Principals who lead by example, reinforcing the key MFWF messages and using the shared language.

How much work will the school need to do?

MFWF has been designed to save teachers time and speed up implementation, with most elements being done for you, or setup as reusable templates. Every school's time and work commitment is different, because each school has a different starting point, and different goals. We meet you where you are, help you set practical goals, and lovingly mentor your school (via your Certified Instructor) to make steady progress. Chat with your Certified Instructor for more details on the time and effort schools typically invest in a successful MFWF partnership.

How much work will parents need to do?

Parents can be as involved in this process as much or little as they wish, although our most successful partner schools invest time in engaging their parent community to participate and learn together. MFWF includes both in-person and online parent seminars, plus the Food Friendship Café: an online portal with recipes, templates and games to inspire parents to Make Friends With Food at home.

Will families be able to afford to implement MFWF at home?

When your the school chooses to Partner with The Root Cause, there is no cost to families to access the Food Friendship Café, or any other MFWF resources. Your school may choose to pass on some of the partnership fee to families, at your discretion.

What's included in the Food Friendship Café?

The MFWF Partnership with your school includes free access to Food Friendship Café for all families at your school for the duration of our partnership, normally priced at \$60 per family per year.

Food Friendship Cafe includes:

- Over 150 Healthy & Simple Recipes
- Lunchbox Bootcamp Online Course for healthier lunchboxes
- Quarterly Online Seminar/Workshop Events for parents
- Food, Mood & Sleep Diary, plus other eBook/PDF downloads
- Video Vault with tutorials, tips and tricks for healthier choices



How long does the Mad Food Science Student Incursion run for? Where should we have it?

The Incursion runs for 90 minutes for Year 3-6 students, and 75 minutes for younger students, and runs best in a large enclosed space that can comfortably fit up to 120 students (or 4 to 5 class groups) with space for 4 or 5 trestle tables set up around the room. Given the interactive nature of the Incursion it can get noisy! We recommend the school hall or similar space to minimise disruption to other classes. Your Instructor can help you select the best space.

How does the Incursion work?

During the Incursion, students sit in the centre as the Instructor introduces a health idea, then students break into their class groups with their teacher, and conduct an experiment at their workstation, which reinforces that health idea. Afterwards they return to the centre to discuss observations and findings as a group, then the Instructor introduces the next health idea and they conduct another experiment. This process repeats four to six times during the Incursion.

Do the students sit still that long?

The incursion is interactive with students only sitting for blocks of about 10 minutes at a time. Then they are up doing an experiment to support the idea they have just learned. The stimulating experiments keep kids interested and focussed, which helps to keep their brains switched 'on' during the workshop. Through active participation the students stay engaged, learn quickly and retain the key messages, as well as participate in detailed discussions with their peers and teacher. As well as learning the information fast, we have found that kids thoroughly enjoy the vibrant and interactive nature of the incursion.

How many students can participate at once?

We can work with schools of any size. We run the Incursion in sessions of 100-120 students, or four or five classroom groups at a time. This allows us to work with large school groups more quickly – while also ensuring a high quality experience for all students.

Is Making Friends With Food™ Guaranteed?

Yes! We stand behind the Program. We want our partner schools to be happy with MFWF and in any situation where we haven't met your expectations, we commit to meeting with your school and working together to find a suitable resolution – whether that involves re-running programs, or extending online access to resources, etc. Terms & conditions apply, and for more details contact your Certified Instructor..



Click above to watch a time-lapse video of the incursion.

Any take-home materials?

At the end of the Incursion, students receive a complimentary handout with instructions for some Mad Food Science experiments to do at home with their parents. Teachers will get access to topics and activities for further discussion in class via the Schools Portal.

How does the Teacher and Canteen Manager Professional Development seminar work?

This valuable training can be run as an in-person seminar, or a group/individual self-paced online course, depending on what suits your school and your Instructor. The training lasts for 60-90 minutes, and can be run in place of a staff meeting, or a regular education and training session. It consists of a series of videos, plus worksheets, to help you get the most out of the training. On completion each participant receives a certificate for 90 minutes of Unregistered Professional Development time.

For more information, visit therootcause.com.au or contact your Certified Instructor.