Background

SALSA (Students As LifeStyle Activists) is a unique peer-educational partnership program designed to motivate high school students to eat breakfast, fruit and vegetables, and to be physically active. Volunteer Year 10 students are trained by university students, to become SALSA Peer Leaders responsible for delivering the SALSA program to Year 8 students.

Aim:
To assess SALSA Peer Leaders’ baseline indicators of eating habits, physical activity and recreational screen-time.

Methods

Year 10 students from 10 high schools in Western Sydney completed an online, self-reported SALSA questionnaire (Fig. 1) at the start of the Peer Leader training workshop.

The questionnaire was designed to measure the SALSA program objectives which included adolescent eating behaviours, physical activity and recreational screen-time in line with Australian recommendations.

Fig 1. Screen shot of the evaluation questionnaire

Results

Participants
213 (93%) SALSA Peer Leaders completed the questionnaire (69% girls)

Eating behaviours
Breakfast
76% ate breakfast that day
54% ate breakfast daily in the previous week (Fig. 2)

Fig 2. Peer Leaders’ reported frequency of eating breakfast

Fruit and vegetable intake
56% ate 2 or more serves of fruit per day (Fig. 3)
8% ate 5 or more serves of vegetables per day (Fig. 4)

Fig 3. Peer Leaders’ reported daily fruit intake
Fig 4. Peer Leaders’ reported daily vegetable intake

Physical activity
10% met the recommendation for physical activity (> 60 minutes each day) (Fig 5).

Fig 5. Participation in ≥ 60 mins/day of moderate-vigorous physical activity

Recreational screen-time
Less than half of the students met the recreational screen-time recommendation (< 2 hours each day) on school days and weekends (Fig 6).

Fig 6. Time spent sitting using an electronic device or watching TV/DVDs

Discussion

The Table shows that although the vegetable intake and physical activity behaviour of Year 10 students in western Sydney matched that reported in NSW reference datasets they had a lower rate of daily breakfast eating and intake of 2 or more serves of fruit.

Table 1. Year 10 students’ compliance rate with behavioural recommendations compared with NSW reference data.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Behavioural recommendation</th>
<th>Compliance rate (%) in YR 10 students</th>
<th>Compliance rate (%) in NSW reference dataset</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Eat breakfast daily</td>
<td>54</td>
<td>63</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Eat ≥ 2 fruit serves daily</td>
<td>56</td>
<td>72</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Eat ≥ 5 vegetable serves daily</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Participate in ≥ 60 mins of moderate-vigorous physical activity daily</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Conclusion

• There is much scope to improve the eating and physical activity behaviours of SALSA Peer Leaders.
• Peer Leaders will be learn through teaching their younger peers and will complete post program questionnaires later in 2014.

Acknowledgements

We would like to thank the staff and students who have participated in the SALSA project in 2014.
This study is funded by the Commonwealth Department of Health (2013-15).

References