

# Singapore-based web portal Whizmeal aims to reduce childhood obesity

How exactly does Whizmeal plan to reduce childhood obesity? The Singapore-based tech startup, founded by Tan Soon Mei, explains the idea and the web portal

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It's not always easy to educate school children on the merits of healthy eating. Every so often, in the eyes of a typical student, delicious snacks and processed foods would trump nutritious meals.



Tan Soon Mei,  
Founder,  
Whizmeal  
Credit: [Lianhe](#)  
[Wanbao](#)

Enter [Whizmeal](#), a Singapore-based technology startup with a mission to reduce childhood obesity. According to the Senior Minister of State (Ministry of Health), Amy Khor, the city-state is experiencing a childhood obesity rate of 11 percent.

Founded by Tan Soon Mei in early 2013, the startup has already piloted at Punggol Green Primary School, and

is looking to test the system with West Spring Primary School.

Tan tells [e27](#), “We spent almost a year to understand the situation and at the same time, testing and pivoting the business model and workflow. We are still fine-tuning the model as we speak.”

Parents could pre-order healthy set meals on the web portal. These set meals could then be redeemed with a passport-sized booklet, which the child will use to document his or her food choices, or given to these children with name labels.

Tan explains that the school’s principal could choose

between giving out name labels to food items or having the child redeem his or her meal, which encourages independent behaviour. Parents and school children can also use the booklet to discuss about food choices and boost communication.

Furthermore, the system also claims to help canteen vendors better manage resources as Whizmeal will identify the ingredients used in each healthy set meal.

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Try watching this video on [www.youtube.com](http://www.youtube.com), or enable JavaScript if it is disabled in your browser.

Formerly a canteen stall owner in a private school for nearly six years, Tan had conceived the idea for Whizmeal after realising that young children are not able to properly monitor their diets.

She says, “At the same time, being a mother of two young children, I also hope that I am able to understand more of the school meals, and ... be able to monitor my kids’ meals.”

At the moment, Tan says that her plan is to talk to as many principals and vice principals in both public and private schools. She adds, “It is imperative to gather even more feedback and hear their concerns so that we can further enhance the Whizmeal online engagement platform to enable these benefits be shared with the community and the multiple stakeholders in a school.”

Additionally, with focus groups, interviews and surveys making up the bulk of Whizmeal’s market research, Tan was affirmed that parents would like to be involved and engaged in their child’s physical growth. “In fact, majority of the parents at this point in time remain unaware of what their children are having in schools, and this is not new, adds the 34-year-old.

Tan shares that Whizmeal really believes in being lean. She had formed a strong partnership with a Singapore-based IT company, which resulted in the current Whizmeal system 1.0. It also freed Tan up to focus on enhancing and marketing the service.

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From 2014 onwards, Whizmeal will be charging parents

S\$1.50 (US\$1.20) every month to use the web portal. There is also an option to charge vendors a small commission instead.

There is also a clear focus on helping folks from lower-income groups. “If we charge them S\$5 per month, some parents will still pay. But those people from low income families, they cannot (afford it). At the end of the day, my Whizmeal’s vision is to reach out to the community.”