

Resilient Children

Suicide Prevention

Conference

Hobart, 28 April 2009

Col Harrison

research context

- Peer Support Program as a model of best practice activities for school age children
- Peer Support Program builds capacity amongst young people through support networks and improved communication and relationships



key factors

Risk factors

- Mental illness
- Low self esteem
- Poor coping skills
- Hopelessness
- Peer rejection
- Social isolation
- Poor communication

Protective factors

- Mental health/wellbeing
- Positive sense of Self
- Resilience
- Sense of possibility
- Supportive relationships
- Social connection
- Good communication

Living is for Everyone

research based strategies

- Focus on populations rather than individuals
- Focus on constellation of protective factors:
 - social and emotional skills
 - positive relationships
 - help seeking behaviours

Living is for Everyone

mental health

- being **connected**
- feeling **cared for / supported** by adults
- having a **sense of belonging** and **worth**
- knowing how to **think optimistically**
- being **resilient**
- displaying **social skills**



mental health

- 14% of 4-17 year olds suffer from mental health problems
- 75% of mental illness begins between 15-25
- boys are more likely to experience mental health problems than girls
- rates of depression increase when:
 - relationships are poor
 - less connected
 - less involved



mission

to provide dynamic peer led programs which foster the physical, mental and social wellbeing of young people and their community

Peer Support Foundation

peer support program

- peer led
- skills based
- universal
- early intervention
- integrated into curricula and sustained
- operates in over 1400 schools

what is peer support?

- authentic leadership
- 2 day leadership training for Peer leaders
- weekly sessions in small groups (8-10)
- 2 older student leaders with each group
- support from teachers



outcomes

- building **positive relationships**
- developing **skills**
- enhancing **mental health**
- taking **personal responsibility**
- fostering **lifelong learning**
- developing **key concepts**
- encouraging **participation**

student quote

“They are teaching us to cooperate and how to be part of a community.”

Peer Support Leader



key concepts

- sense of Self
- resilience
- connectedness
- sense of possibility

unique features

- key concepts
- sustained and integrated through K-12
- peer led and collaborative
- dynamic, fun, relevant and flexible
- practical skills to address social issues
- endorsed by all education sectors
- independent research



research

Conducted by the UWS, 03 and JCU, 05.

Significant findings included:

- skilling students for transition
- enhancing relationships
- attitudinal change to bullying behaviours

student quote

“Peer Support is like a key to unlock qualities that you never thought you’d have for your life.”

Peer Support Leader



focus areas

- orientation
- relationships
- optimism
- resilience
- anti-bullying
- values

curriculum links

- Health and Wellbeing
- English and Literacy
- Society and History

educational initiatives

- Pastoral Care
- MindMatters/KidsMatter
- National Safe Schools Framework
- National Framework for Values Ed
- Anti-bullying
- buddy programs

continuum

1. If one thing goes wrong for me, then everything else usually goes wrong too
2. Even when I know something can't be changed, I still get upset about it
3. When bad things happen in my life, they are unlikely to affect me for a long time
4. To make my life better, I enjoy taking risks and moving outside my comfort zone



continuum

5. If I succeed at something it's because I've tried hard and persevered
6. I often feel that I have little or no control over what happens to me
7. If I think there is any risk of failure or embarrassment in a situation, I try to avoid it
8. If something bad could happen, then I worry because it probably will happen



implementation - schools

- 1 day Implementation workshop
- central venues
- 32 workshops conducted annually
- primary and secondary teachers
- investigates whole school approach
- develop and maintain positive school culture
- student leadership training notes
- learning guide for teachers

DOHA SPI

July 2006 – Apr 2009; Qld and Tas

- 23 workshops
- 257 teachers trained from
- 147 Primary and Secondary Schools

July 2008 – Apr 2009; WA and NT

- 7 workshops
- 94 teachers
- 46 Primary and Secondary Schools
- 60,000 students in total



training impact

	Primary Schools	PS Teachers	High Schools	HS Teachers	Total Schools	Total Teachers
QLD	63	99	35	56	98	155
TAS	23	35	26	67	49	102
WA	14	29	12	26	26	55
NT	10	16	10	23	20	39
Total	110	179	83	172	193	351

primary schools

- 2 day leadership training
- integrated groups of 10-12 students
- 30 min weekly sessions for 8 sessions
- weekly briefing and debriefing sessions
- support from Supervising Teachers



primary module overview

Getting Started	2 sessions	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• orientation• group dynamics
Keeping Friends	8 sessions	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• relationships• maintaining friendships• fair play
NEW	8 sessions	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• optimism• positive self talk• perseverance
Taking Opportunities	8 sessions	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• resilience• coping
Promoting Harmony	8 sessions	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• values clarification• relationship building• decision making
Speaking Up	8 sessions	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• anti-bullying strategies• assertiveness• reporting

Secondary Schools

- 2 day leadership training
- groups of 8-10 students from Grade 7
- 40 min weekly sessions for 8 sessions
- weekly briefing and debriefing session
- support from Supervising Teachers



secondary module overview

Framework for Orientation	4 areas	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• orientation• transition
Facing our Challenges	8 sessions	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• resilience• perseverance• optimism
Behaving with Integrity	8 sessions	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• values• decision making• relationship building
Working through Conflict	8 sessions	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• anti-bullying• assertiveness• relationship building



personal resilience

The 3 keys:

- I am – my personal qualities
- I can – my strengths and achievements
- I have – my support network



peer support program

- is a catalyst for cultural change
- provides authentic leadership
- relies on the value of friendships
- develops protective factors
- builds resilience
- increases social capacity
- empowers young people to respond positively to challenging situations



contact us

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