

Making



for Learning

Trauma Informed Practice in Schools

Victorian Project Reports Cardinia Schools 2017

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Trauma Informed Practice in Schools

A practical resource reflecting the work of Cardinia Schools involved in the Trauma Sensitive Practice in Schools project. This has been compiled by the Australian Childhood Foundation and Cardinia Schools Victoria.

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Trauma Sensitive Schools Project Australian Childhood Foundation School Services Program – Manager's Report

When we don't listen to the whispers of children, we are forcing them to shout –a beautiful adaption of the Cherokee proverb that says: "Pay attention to the whispers, so we won't have to listen to the screams".

Educators in the Cardinia area have done just that. Focused on children in need, "screaming" for *attention, attunement* and an adult to notice and *support their unmet needs*. The results of their year-long research have been remarkable with many commenting that this work has forever changed their practice, their *empathy* for such children and their desire to *connect in a more relational way* with many naming that ALL teachers have responsibility for ALL children in their school. Many



of these professionals certainly learnt that when the "whispers" are attuned to, the "screams" become less and less and the child learns to manage their emotions and their "big feelings" as well as to *seek support* from the adults they have begun *to trust*. In this support seeking, the child begins to be able to *self-regulate* and 'quieten' their own physiology to not react so readily but more respond to what they now know will take

them to a place of *safety* in their mind, body and environment. This is a critical factor if we want

them to engage in the learning process at school.

It has been an absolute pleasure for our Australian Childhood Foundation School Services team to work, in 2017, with Uniting Connections Cardinia School Focused Youth Service (SFYS) and three schools in Pakenham who have been waving the flag for Victoria with the first ever Action Research conducted in this state. We have appreciated the funding provided by the Department of Education and Training Victoria (DET) to ensure that this project could take place.

We introduce in this project report the fine work of Pakenham Springs Primary School, Minaret College – Officer campus and Pakenham Consolidated School.



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The year began with the training of the Australian Childhood Foundation's Making SPACE for Learning (MSFL) package conducted in February. Theoretical frameworks were introduced and the neurobiology and neurophysiology of trauma discussed along with the impacts of such traumatic experiences on brain, body, emotions, relationships, memory, learning and behaviour. We had an amazing day. The level of participation, intelligent questioning and conversation was stimulating and thought provoking. The three schools were then supported throughout the year with their research with regular meetings being attended and more 'capacity building' tied into those meetings. The projects continued to be nurtured behind the scenes and the outcomes have been impressive.

Once again, I have been incredibly humbled by the achievements of these three schools and their ability to translate our theory and frameworks at ACF, into practice. The work they have dedicated here does not happen by chance. It requires full engagement with the subject matter, belief that Educators can make a difference in the lives of children and young people who have been traumatised, an understanding that ALL children have a right to feel and be loved. They need the time to be exploratory and creative with regards to activities to support the children's 'growth' throughout a year. However, most recognised that this work was not just "another project on top of the many others" but more the foundational platform that began to determine all core practice, pedagogy and daily classroom routines. Calming to engage was the focus and when looking at their results, we note that overall this has been wonderfully achieved.

It has been well noted at Pakenham Consolidated that the children commented on the fact that "learning about the brain stuff was really cool". This allowed for child to child understanding and thus greater empathy amongst the student cohort. There was also a marked difference in the 'calm' and 'engagement' of the "experimental" and "control" groups. The staff in these classes were feeling a sense of greater calm at the end of the school day. Of great note was the use of the sensory room. Prior to their work, there had been 91 incidents in the one week before the project and most visitations took place for over an hour. At "check in", the children do their breathing, name emotions and speak their brain talk. At "check out", the same procedure occurs. After the project and activity implementation, the numbers had dropped to 19 and the time spent in the room away from class was between 10-15 minutes. A hugely positive outcome. 85% of students understood, post project, what the Zones of Regulation were. There was also an increase in staff compassion (as well as student empathy) and a freshly developed sense of being able to do their work well. Students began to "respond" rather than "react".



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Minaret stated that the training was one of the “highest quality” they have ever had. “It was very focused and hit the target immediately.” They focused on “walking in other people’s shoes” and being empathic. They also advise educators to, “ask the hard questions!”. The project allowed for a “wake-up” call and an adherence to the fact that *“every child deserves an adult who never gives up on them”*. They question why we punish children for what they cannot control? But are extremely hopeful that continued implementation of this work, will benefit all children.

Very cleverly, Pakenham Springs used the word BRAIN as the acronym for their work. They realised that the project and the ACF work was less of a “program” (on top of all the others) and more a “mindset”. They focused on the words of Richard Branson: “A baby gets up to walk and falls flat on its face. And again. And again”. Therefore, we need to support all children to be able to ‘stand’. The school have decided that they will introduce, post 2017, MSFL across the whole school in 2018 with the understanding now that *“Trauma Informed Practice does have a positive impact on Student Wellbeing”*.

And at ACF, we say “hear, hear” to all of that!

Deborah McKenzie
Program Manager
Australian Childhood Foundation

Trauma Sensitive Schools Project School Focused Youth Service Coordinator's Report

Cardinia Schools

Project Aim:

To develop a Trauma Informed Framework for Cardinia Schools.

Sarah Lucas:

Coordinator School Focused Youth Service

Funding:

This project, was funded by the Department of Education and Training (DET) and facilitated by Uniting Connections Cardinia School Focused Youth Service (SFYS) in collaboration with the Australian Childhood Foundation.

SFYS 2016-2017 has a critical role in supporting schools and will contribute to Breaking the Link (between disadvantage and outcomes) by supporting Victorian students at risk of poor learning outcomes to reach their full potential and stay engaged in education for better life opportunities.

Delivery Framework for SFYS:

SFYS plays a critical role in addressing school disengagement and helping young people to reach their potential. The individual, economic and social costs of school disengagement are well documented. We know that school disengagement has significant impacts on the health, wellbeing, future employment opportunities and trajectory of a young person's life.

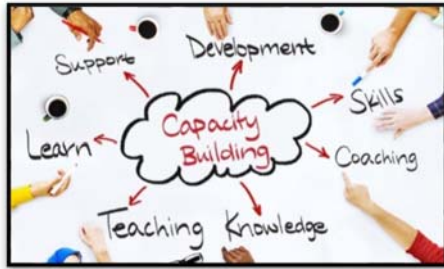
15% of young people will experience issues such as disconnection and isolation, challenging family settings, mental health issues or homelessness, making them at risk of early school leaving.

5% will demonstrate highly complex barriers to school engagement and require targeted / individualised support to remain engaged in school.



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SFYS delivers services in three key areas:

- A. Governance, Planning and Accountability
- B. Capacity Building
- C. Target Group Interventions

This project comes under Capacity Building.

Identifying issues impacting students in Cardinia:

A survey monkey was developed by the SFYS coordinator and sent to all schools in Cardinia to identify the issues impacting on vulnerable children, and the four main issues that were identified are:

- Mental Health of Parent / Carer
- Mental Health of Student
- Finances of Family
- Family Breakdown

SFYS coordinated a Local Working Group (LWG) that is made up of several school representatives and service providers with the aim to come up with a sustainable solution to the above issues. The LWG met bi- monthly during 2017.

The Local Working Group identified Trauma Training for all school staff as one possible response to the issues identified. The schools reported that they currently use The SMART (Strategies for Managing Abuse Related Trauma) Online Learning Program. This training is excellent except teaching staff have identified that the practical application is missing from this training.

Why are students struggling to engage at school?

One of the indicators of poor school engagement is exposure to traumatic stressors including abuse, neglect and violence directed at young people. Unfortunately, the frequency of this type of abuse is on the rise in Australia. Up to 40% of students have been exposed or witness to traumatic stressors (ABS, 2008; NTCS, 2011). One in three girls and one in six boys are abused before the age of 18 (ABS, 2005). One of the potential impacts of this abuse is disengagement from school: currently more than 10% of young people disengage (DET, 2011).



The 'Making Space for Learning: Trauma Sensitive Practice in Schools' is a training program that has been developed by the Australian Childhood Foundation which incorporates theory and practical strategies that any school can implement on an individual, class room and whole school spectrum.

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In February 2017, all Cardinia schools were invited to attend the Making Space for Learning training day. Eight staff from each school had the opportunity to attend this training day. Fifty school staff from across the Cardinia LGA attended this training day. The next step of the project involved asking all schools who attended this training day to apply, via an expression of interest (EOI) process, to participate in an Action Research Project. The SFYS coordinator would fund 3x 2-hour school consultation visit sessions with SFYS and the Australian Childhood Foundation to support each school to embed the trauma theory into practice on a daily basis within their schools.

The following 3 schools applied to participate

- Pakenham Springs PS (Government)
- Pakenham Consolidated PS (Government)
- Minaret College: Prep to year 12: Officer (Independent)

Each of these schools put into practice the key principles of Making Space for Learning and participated in an Action Research Project. Each school presented their Action Research findings to a variety of professionals at a 'show case' event held in November 2017.



Minaret College Project Report – Officer Campus

School Context

Minaret College was founded in 1992 with the aim of providing a setting for young Muslim Australians in which they could grow up secure in their identity as Muslims and confident in being upright and productive members of Australian society. The current student population profile is mainly migrant-based, from a wide variety of cultural backgrounds, speaking over 20 different languages at home. Minaret College Officer Campus educate children from pre-school to VCE.



The enrolment in 2017 was approximately 588 students. High percentages of student disengagement, challenging behaviour, low school attendance rates and low socio-economic disadvantage are prevalent issues impacting student learning.

Staff involved

Dr Samir Dorhmi - (Assistant Principal- Student and Family Support Services)
Rubina Nawabi – Student Counsellor (Wellbeing)
Daud Dlongolo – School Chaplin / Secondary School Teacher
Masooda Keshtiar – Primary School Coordinator / Teacher
Amalthea McMartin – Senior School Coordinator

Research Project Inquiry Question

Do “soft landings” and regular brain breaks create a calmer class room?

(Soft landings refer to coming into the classroom space by engaging in calming activities to begin the day and after transitions)

Framework/theme focus areas

The focus areas for our Trauma Sensitive Schools Project were:
To educate ourselves about trauma sensitive practice in schools
To support our students and provide them with a predictable, safe, responsive and engaging environment
Support our teachers to implement effective strategies in the classroom
To incorporate Making SPACE for Learning practices within our school setting with a focus on being:

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The SPACE Acronym in the title Making SPACE for Learning is utilized in the following:

Staged

Teaching staff encouraging students to take time to participate in a 'soft landing' activity such as reading, writing their expectations for the day or participating in 3 minutes of meditation before class starts

Teaching children about their 'brain' and its functions including how it can impact human behaviour

Shared values and beliefs

Providing an environment of acceptance and belonging

Provision of repetition and rehearsal of concepts

Emotional Quotient (EQ) & Social Quotient (SQ) staging

Predictable

Creating predictable weekly routines for students

Teachers providing a safe and predictable class room environment

Teachers calmly greeting students each morning and listening to 'how they are'.

Reinforcing each student is respected and valued within the school community

'Soft-landing' every morning as the first activity

Adaptive

Prepare to meet the needs of the children and young people and adapt timetable accordingly

Teaching staff being aware of their own body language

Allow for children to adapt to more relational form of discipline

Connected (Calm)

Teaching staff mindfully investing in relationship building with students

Providing fruit to students who have not eaten breakfast

Providing positive praise on an ongoing basis throughout the day

Providing regular and structured 'Brain Breaks' to support students to remain engaged in learning activities

Calming

Using a chime to gain students attention rather than raising their voice

Celebrating relationships and providing support when required

Shared values and beliefs

Enabled (Engaged)

Providing an environment of acceptance and belonging

Allowing for children to participate in all activities

Support children in being able to make meaning of their experiences

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Continue to build relationships that best support children's needs with the help of a regulated adult



Timeframe

In 2017 Minaret Officer Campus Wellbeing Staff were active participants of the Local Working Group for Cardinia SFYS and participated in the identification and implementation of developing a trauma informed framework for Cardinia Schools.

Term 1

Dr. Samir Dorhmi (Assistant Principal, Wellbeing) and seven school staff attended the Making Space for Learning: Trauma Sensitive Practice in Schools training day

Term 2/3

Term 2: teachers collected pre-data from year 6 and year 10 students

Terms 2/3: Year 6 students and year 10 students and teachers started to implement 'brain training'

Teaching staff began incorporating regular 'brain breaks' and 'soft landings' every morning, after recess and after every lunch break

Data collection started to be gathered

Students actively participated in meditation, mindfulness techniques and calming exercise 3 times per day (minimum)

Term 4

Teachers collected post data from year 6 and year 10 students

Minaret Staff collated their pre-and post-data

Minaret Staff presented their Action Research Inquiry question findings at the Cardinia SFYS Show Case event

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Description of Project

After attending the Making Space for Learning: Trauma Sensitive Practice in Schools training that was delivered by the Australian Childhood Foundation (ACF) in February 2017, Minaret College (Officer campus) applied via an expression of interest (EOI) process to participate in an Action Research Project, where teaching / wellbeing staff would implement the theory that they learnt at the training day and put it into practice within their school.

Year 6 and year 10 students were identified as struggling to regulate their behaviour at the beginning of the day and after returning to the class room after having scheduled breaks. This impacted on learning time and teaching moral due to the time that it took staff to redirect students and encourage them to re-focus on learning tasks. Making Space for Learning strategies were implemented across many year levels though mapping and data collection was focused on year 6 and 10 students.

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Data

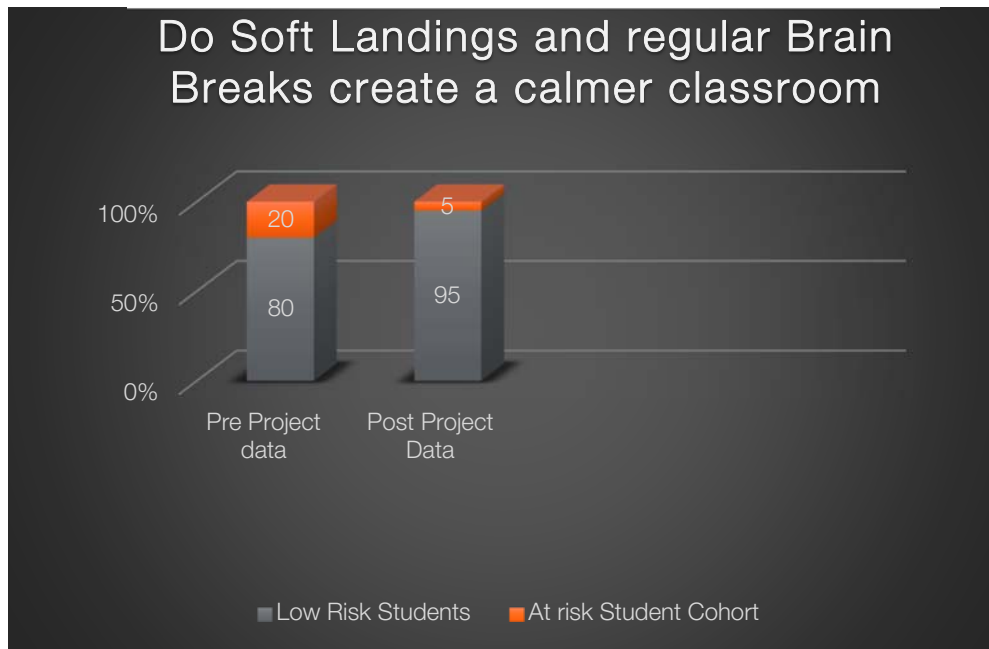
The following matrix was used to collect pre and post data from students:

	Not at all (1)	Rarely (2)	Sometimes (3)	Often (4)	Always (5)
Displays disruptive behavior in the classroom					
Has the ability to settle quickly in the classroom					
Is meeting current learning expectations					
Is verbally or physically abusive towards peers					
Has the ability to follow instructions when first asked					
Gets along with peers					
Is able to stay engaged in classroom activities and discussions					

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Data collection shows that out of all year 6 and year 10 students, 20% were identified as at risk of disengaging from education. The impact of incorporating “soft landings” and regular ‘brain breaks’ had a positive impact for at risk students with a reduction in disruptive behaviour, increased ability to regulate emotions and increased engagement with learning. At the end of this project, only 5% of students were identified as being at risk of disengaging from education (see table below):



Challenges

Our school had significant staff changes and did not have a school Principal for the duration of this project
School commitments – busy curriculum
Having time to meet as a project group

Most significant learning / Key messages

We gained knowledge and experience in trauma sensitive practice
We are better equipped to deal with trauma once we became aware of its implications for our teachers, students and their families
We strengthened our attitudes towards people affected by trauma
We built the necessary knowledge to share with all staff, students and parents
We can make informed decisions and take actions to address different aspects of trauma related behavior
We are aspiring to achieve a behavior change related to Trauma progressively in the school and in the community

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Conclusion

Implementing a trauma informed framework within our school yielded positive outcomes for staff and students. Our most vulnerable children benefited from the implementation of 'soft landings' and regular 'brain breaks' with an obvious improvement in student engagement and behaviour. These strategies were easy to implement and supported teaching staff to focus on students as a 'whole person' and met student's emotional, psychological, physical and social needs.

Students advocated for 'more' soft landings and brain breaks which made learning fun.

Making Space for Learning: Trauma Sensitive Practice in Schools training gave teaching staff insight into how children's brains are impacted from negative life experiences such as abuse and neglect. Having the understanding, strategies and empathy to deal with at risk students has provided staff with an increased commitment to maintain these skills and strategies for future students.

Resources Used

Making Space for Learning: Trauma Sensitive Practice in Schools Professional Development Training

Making SPACE for Learning resource book (ACF)

Mind Up Curriculum

Consultations with ACF (3, 2-hour consultations)

Energy chimes

Foam brain models



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Project Team at Minaret College

Pakenham Consolidated School Project Report

School Context

Pakenham Consolidated School (PCS) is a primary school, with current enrolment of 624 of students. The school is comprised of 7.5% of English as an Additional Language (EAL); 3.2% living in out of home care arrangements; and 6% funded for having severe disabilities. In 2015, the Cardinia Shire was the second highest for family incident police callouts per 100,000 population, in the Southern Metropolitan Region¹. Students were experiencing complex relational trauma, developmental trauma, as well as simple trauma.



In 2015, in response to many students across all year levels presenting with trauma consistent behaviours at school, the whole Pakenham Consolidated School staff completed the Strategies for Managing Abuse Related Trauma (SMART) online training modules, through the Australian Childhood Foundation. This training was completed by all staff, to increase their understanding of trauma and the impact that it can have on the development and learning capacity of students. In addition, to learn about strategies to support these students. Staff also participated in discussions facilitated by school based wellbeing staff.

To build on this learning, and in the context of many new teachers to the school in 2016, Pakenham Consolidated School applied to participate in the Making SPACE for Learning training and Action Research Project in 2017.

Project title

How Student and Staff Neural Knowledge Changes Behaviour

Research Project Inquiry Questions

Q1: Does explicit teaching of the brain and knowledge of calming strategies improve behaviours in students with trauma consistent behaviours?

Q2: How does exposure to trauma consistent behaviours impact on staff self-perceived professional quality of life?

¹ Crime Statistics Agency, 2016, <https://www.crimestatistics.vic.gov.au/>

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Framework/theme focus areas

The project was focused around Year 5 and 6 students and staff:

Knowledge about the brain:

- The role of different areas of the brain
- The brain and emotions
- The brain and behaviours

Knowledge of calming strategies:

- Consistent, repetitive, predictable

Timeframe

The project took place over the 2017 school year.

Term 1:

- Year 5/6 staff and wellbeing team attended a Making SPACE for Learning training, facilitated by the Australian Childhood Foundation
- Wellbeing staff presented key learnings and practical activities from the Making SPACE training, to the whole of staff

Term 2:

- Data collection started
- 5/6 team started to implement strategies from the Making SPACE training day
- Sensory Room check-in altered to implement strategies from the Making SPACE training day
- Growth Mindset professional development for staff

Term 3:

- CHiPS Emotional First Aid seminar for senior school students and staff; involved learning about the brain
- 5/6 team continued to implement strategies
- Sensory Room continued to implement strategies

Term 4:

- Post project data collection
- Review of progress

Staff involved

- Year 5 and 6 teaching and education support staff
- Year 5/6 Coordinator (Leading Teacher)
- Wellbeing Team (Complex Case Manager, Primary Wellbeing Officer, Speech Pathologist)
- Assistant Principal (Wellbeing)

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Description of Project

Our inquiry questions were developed following the 'Making SPACE for Learning' training. Through the training we learnt about the connection between the brain and the trauma consistent behaviours that students were demonstrating. We were encouraged by how quickly and easily activities could be put in place to address the behaviours, and we were inspired to implement calming activities to support these students.

Explicit teaching of the brain for staff:

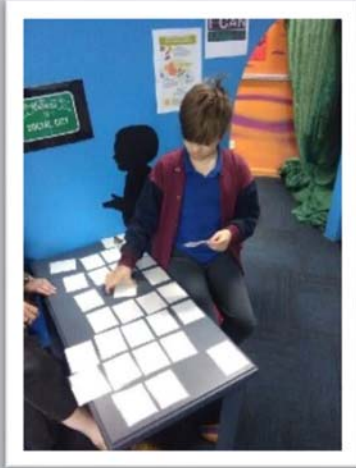
- The action research team participated in the Making SPACE for Learning training, which provided an opportunity for building knowledge of the brain;
- The action research team have engaged in self-directed learning about the brain and encouraged and supported their teams to engage in self-directed learning;
- The action research team provided the whole of staff with facts about the brain:
 - Snippets of information placed in staff pigeon holes
 - Creation of a "Wellbeing Tree" as a central and prominent location, where facts, activities and strategies are displayed for staff
 - Weekly emails

Explicit teaching of the brain for students:

- Activities from the MindUp Curriculum were implemented sequentially in Year 5 and Year 6 classes;
- A dedicated "Wellbeing Hour" was established, as a time to incorporate Growth Mindset, Mindful Learning, MindUp curriculum. These time slots, aimed to teach students about the brain and behaviour;
- Students have used apps during the "Wellbeing Hour" to explore the parts of the brain and the functions;
- 3D models of the brain were also used to provide kinaesthetic learning opportunities;
- Students who require withdrawal from the classroom, access the school's Sensory Room or Wellbeing Centre. These spaces provided explicit teaching of the brain, emotional literacy, self-awareness of level of arousal, as well as selection of calming strategies.

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Calm Down Game

Task: Memory: matching pairs of information about the brain

Benefits: Focuses on rote learning of the brain information on each card



Drawing the brain

Task: Drawing a diagram of the brain with the different lobes and components

Benefits: Focuses on learning the role of the parts of the brain in relation to our behaviours

Knowledge of calming strategies:

- The trauma action team participated in the Making Space for Learning training, which provided an opportunity for building knowledge of calming strategies
- A whole of staff “Wellbeing and Engagement Framework” presentation was conducted by the action research team, highlighting some of the key learnings from the ‘Making SPACE for Learning’ training (e.g. clapping activities, breathing activities)
- The Year 5 staff have been supported through the Employee Assistance Program, with visits from psychologists.
- Year 5 students (and those who access the Sensory Room and Wellbeing Centre) have had explicit learning around Zones of Regulation, which was linked to the movie “Inside Out”. This teaching promoted the selection and trialling of a range of strategies.
- Practicing a range of repetitive, consistent, and predictable brain breaks and calming strategies between activities and after recess/lunch breaks
 - Classical music
 - Smiling Mind app
 - Rhythmic breaks
 - Breathing activities

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- Mindfulness
- Clapping
- PCS has a whole school 'Bucket Fillers' program. Part of this program involved students reflecting on their behaviour and interactions with peers and staff, as well as reflection around recognising self-worth and learning self-care strategies.
- Students who required withdrawal from the classroom, accessed the school's Sensory Room or Wellbeing Centre. These spaces provided explicit teaching of the brain, emotional literacy, self-awareness of level of arousal, as well as selection of calming strategies. Students were supported to identify the emotion that they were experiencing, their level of arousal, and trialling different strategies to build up an individualised bank of calming strategies.
- Students utilising the Sensory Room and Wellbeing Centre trialled the use of a heart rate monitor app, to provide bio-feedback in relation to their level of arousal.



Brain Break

Task: Working in pairs, blowing air through a straw to keep a feather afloat.

Benefits: Focuses on breathing, allowing higher level cognitive tasks



Brain Break

Task: After lunch Grade 5 students complete 5 minutes of relaxation.

Benefits: Focuses on breathing and being present

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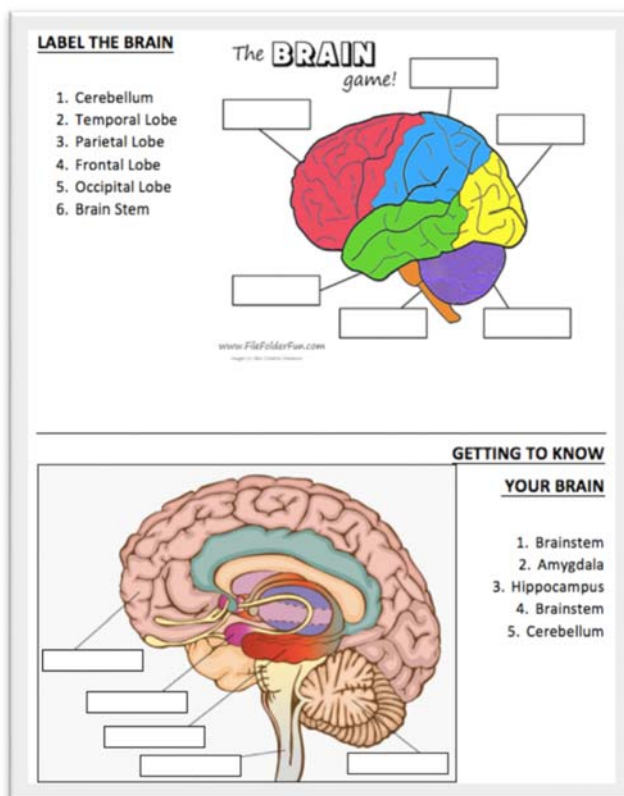
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The second inquiry question related to monitoring the impact of exposure to trauma consistent behaviours on staff. The focus of our project was learning about the brain and calming strategies. The inclusion of the second question was to examine the impact of behaviour changes on staff self-perceived quality of life, rather than implementing strategies specifically related to self-care for staff.

Evaluation processes

A range of measures were used to evaluate the impact of our project.

- We took a snapshot of data, which tracked type, time and frequency of behaviours for students in Year 5, who are known to have significant trauma. We also tracked type, time and frequency of behaviours for whole Year 6 cohort, which allowed reflection of patterns for the whole class.
- The snapshot data tracking provided information about other students, who are influenced by the behaviours of their peers.
- Pre- and post- survey for students:
 - Year 6 Brain quiz
 - Year 5 Brain quiz



NAME: _____ GRADE: _____

WHAT DO YOU KNOW ABOUT YOUR BRAIN? AND MINDFUL LEARNING?

1. What does the hippocampus control?	2. What does the Limbic system control?
3. What does the Prefrontal Cortex control?	4. What is mindful awareness?
5. What is mindful listening?	6. What is mindful seeing?
7. What is mindful smelling?	8. What is mindful tasting?
9. What is mindful movement?	10. Why is it important to express gratitude?
11. What are acts of kindness?	12. What are the four zones of regulation?

Pre- and post- survey for staff:

Professional Quality of Life: Compassion Satisfaction and Fatigue Version 5 (ProQOL)²

² B. Hudnall Stamm, 2009. Professional Quality of Life: Compassion Satisfaction and Fatigue Version 5 (ProQOL). /www.isu.edu/~bhstamm or www.proqol.org.

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This is a commonly used self-rating measure of the negative and positive effects of helping others who experience or have experienced trauma. It consists of 30 questions and is free to access.

- Compassion satisfaction:
The pleasure derived from being able to do work well. Lower scores may indicate that the staff member finds problems with their job, or that they have another activity that provides more satisfaction e.g. a hobby.
- Burnout (component of compassion fatigue):
Associated with feelings of hopelessness and difficulties dealing with work or in doing their job effectively. The negative feelings reflect a perception that their efforts may make no difference, or can be associated with a very high workload, or a non-supportive work environment.
- Secondary Traumatic Stress (component of compassion fatigue):
- Work related secondary exposure to extremely or traumatically stressful

PROFESSIONAL QUALITY OF LIFE SCALE (PROQOL)

COMPASSION SATISFACTION AND COMPASSION FATIGUE (PROQOL) VERSION 5 (2009)

When you teach people you have direct contact with their lives. As you may have found, your compassion for those you teach can affect you in positive and negative ways. Below are some questions about your experiences, both positive and negative, as a teacher. Consider each of the following questions about you and your current work situation. Select the number that honestly reflects how frequently you experienced these things in the last 30 days.

1=Never

2=Rarely

3=Sometimes

4=Often

5=Very Often

Outcomes - What's different now?

- Project team members have gained knowledge about the brain, and have a deeper understanding of how traumatic experiences impact brain development and how this relates to the behaviour that we see;
- Project team members are more easily able to speak about learning and behaviour in relation to the brain, using specific vocabulary;
- Project team members understand how the amygdala responds to calming techniques;
- Project team members and some teaching staff now respond to behaviours differently, with knowledge of why behaviours may be demonstrated and which strategies may help;
- Senior school coordinator is spending less time being called upon to assist with student behaviours;
- Students are out of the room for less time, and able to regulate much more quickly. Appropriate supports and calming strategies are provided when entering the Sensory Room. This, combined with student knowledge of the brain and behaviours, has led to a reduction in student time spent in the

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Sensory Room, from approximately 1 hour at the beginning of the year, to 15 minutes at the end of the project.

- Students have a better understanding of the behaviour of their peers and therefore respond differently;
- Students have a better understanding of their own behaviour, and increased ability to self-regulate;
- Year 6 students are transitioning more quickly between activities in middle learning block (11:20am - 1:20pm), even when taking into account the five-minute brain break activity.
- Year 5 and 6 students have increased their knowledge of the brain, calming strategies, zones of regulation;
- Students are talking about their behaviour and calming in relation to the brain. They are also generalising their knowledge to outside of school situations. Below is the writing piece from a Year 5 student reflection:

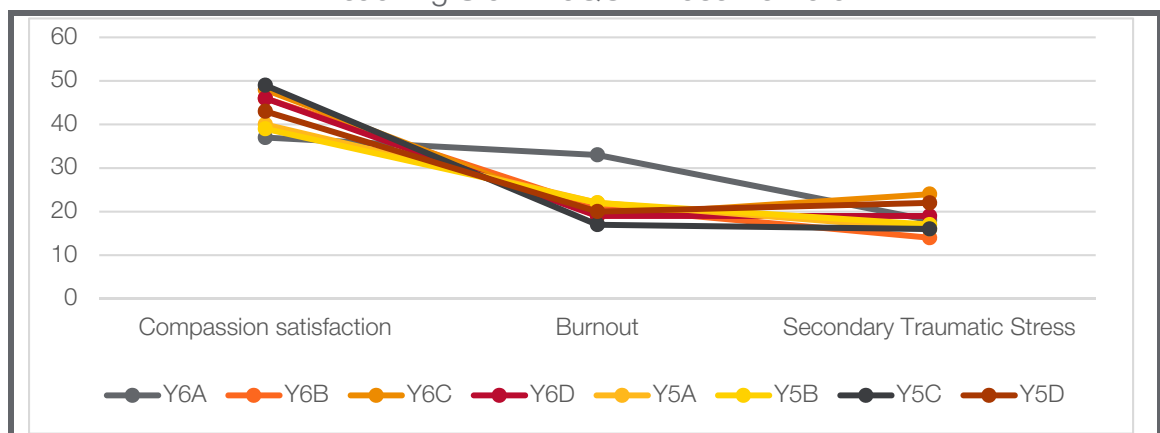
"Zones of Regulation"

On Friday the 17th, I was very angry because my older brother stole my iPod without asking me first, so I got angry. Then I remembered, if my lid's not closed, then I won't be able to learn or think. So, I shut my door and took 5 deep breaths and that helped a lot. After that, I opened the door and asked for it back and he said "ok, fine. I was just checking snapchat because my iPod is charging because it's dead flat" So I said, that's fine, just ask next time, OK. He said that's cool and there you have it."

Data

Professional Quality of Life (ProQOL)

Teaching Staff ProQOL: Baseline Data



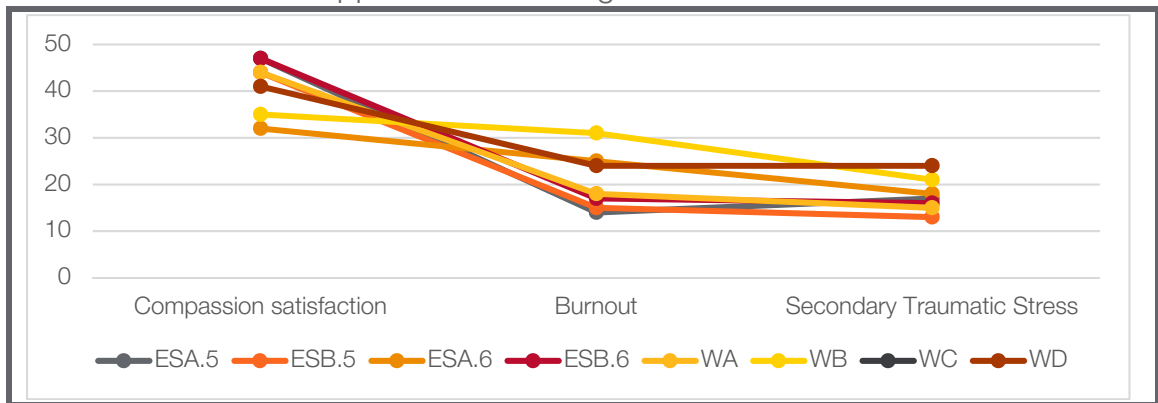
The Year 5 and Year 6 teaching staff, rated themselves using the Professional Quality of Life (ProQOL), prior to the commencement of the project. Below is a summary of the results:

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- Staff who rated themselves as deriving higher amounts of pleasure from work, also rated that they felt that they were making a difference and doing their job effectively. These teachers also had a greater amount of compassion fatigue, in relation to the impact of the student trauma related behaviours.
- Staff who were not deriving high amounts of pleasure or satisfaction from work had higher feelings of not doing work effectively or not making a difference. These teachers had less feelings of compassion fatigue. In addition to exposure to behaviours in the classroom, these ratings may also be reflective of a high workload.

Education Support and Wellbeing Staff ProQOL: Baseline Data



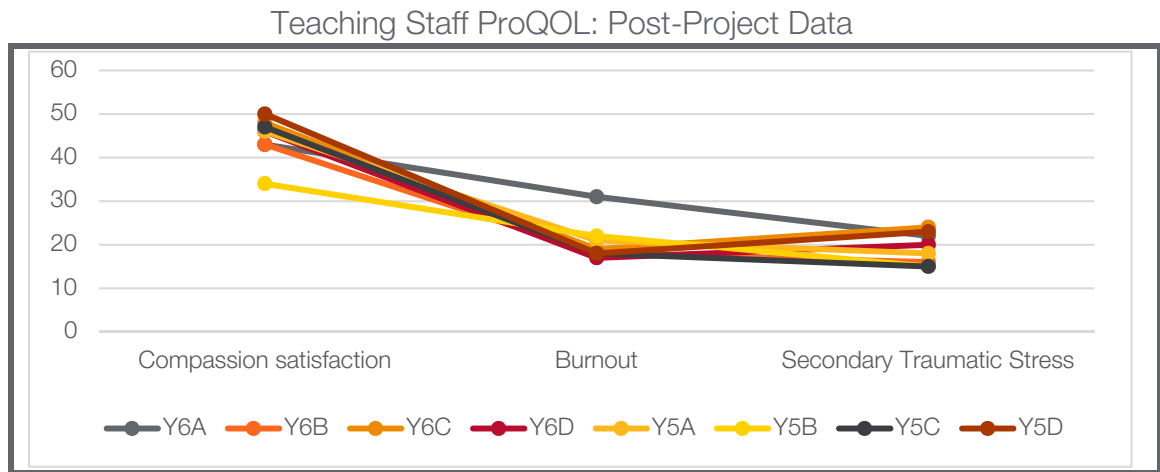
The Education Support staff and Wellbeing Team, rated themselves using the ProQOL, prior to the commencement of the project. Below is a summary of the results:

- The wellbeing/ES staff who rated themselves as deriving higher amounts of pleasure from work also rated that they felt that they were making a difference and doing their job effectively. These teachers had a lower amount of compassion fatigue, in relation to the impact of the student trauma related behaviours.
- The wellbeing/ES staff who were not deriving high amounts of pleasure or satisfaction from work had higher feelings of not doing work effectively or not making a difference. Unlike the teachers, these wellbeing/ES staff also had less feelings of compassion fatigue.

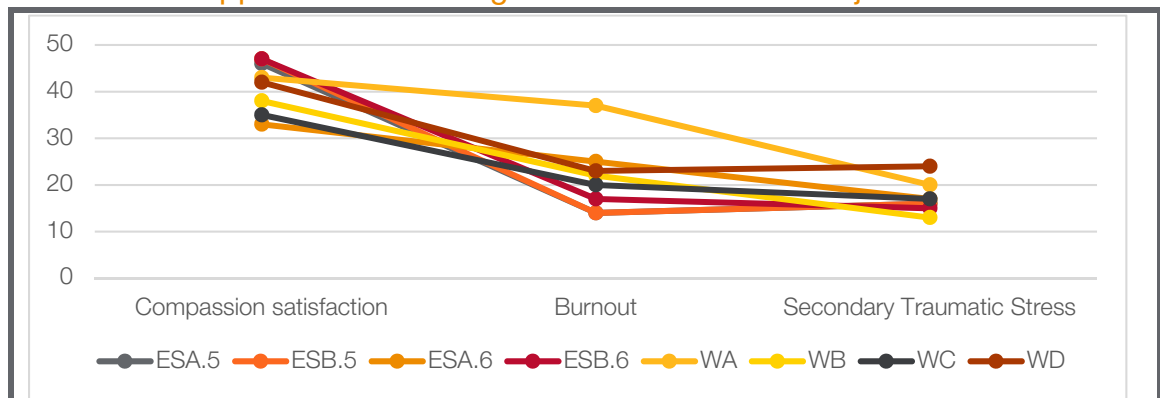
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Post-project ProQOL data:



Education Support and Wellbeing Staff ProQOL: Post-Project Data



There were a couple of individual ratings (teacher and ES), which skewed the average data from baseline data to post-project data. Without looking at those individual ratings, on average:

- Self-rated 'Compassion Satisfaction' increased slightly
- Self-rated 'Burnout' remained stable
- Self-rated 'Secondary Traumatic Stress' decreased slightly

The data hasn't been analysed extensively. Although positive, the changes were minimal and there are many factors which may have influenced results, including general workload as well as external factors.

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Behaviour tracking:

Year 5 behaviour tracking - the table below is a snapshot of a week of behaviours of two students, *Tash and *David (*pseudonyms), prior to implementing the project (Term 2).

	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday
9am-11am					
Verbal aggression			Tash		
Physical violence			Tash		
Leaving room	Tash			Tash	
Non-compliance		David			Tash
Destructive				Tash	Tash
Withdrawn/emotional					
Recess					
11:20-1:20					
Verbal aggression		Tash, David			
Physical violence					
Leaving room	Tash	Tash		Tash	Tash
Non-compliance	David	Tash, David		David	Tash
Destructive		Tash		Tash	Tash
Withdrawn/emotional	David	David			David
Lunch					
2:20-3:20					
Verbal aggression			Tash	Tash	
Physical violence					
Leaving room	Tash		Tash	Tash	Tash
Non-compliance	David		Tash	Tash	Tash
Destructive				Tash	
Withdrawn/emotional	David	David			David

Year 5 behaviour tracking - the table below is a snapshot of a week of behaviours of two students, *Tash and *David (*pseudonyms), at the end of the project (Term 4).

	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday
9am-11am					
Verbal aggression					David
Physical violence				Tash	
Leaving room		Tash			
Non-compliance	David				David
Destructive					
Withdrawn/emotional					
Recess					
11:20-1:20					
Verbal aggression					David
Physical violence					
Leaving room	Tash	Tash	Tash	Tash	
Non-compliance		David	David	David	David
Destructive					
Withdrawn/emotional					
Lunch					
2:20-3:20					
Verbal aggression				David	
Physical violence			David	Tash	
Leaving room	Tash			David	
Non-compliance		David			
Destructive					
Withdrawn/emotional					

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Year 6 behaviour tracking - the below table is a snapshot of a week of behaviours across the whole Year 6 cohort, prior to the commencement of the project (Term 2).

	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday
9am-11am					
Verbal aggression	X	XXXXX			X
Physical violence					
Leaving room	X	X			XXXXXXXX
Non-compliance	X	XXXXXX		XXX	XXXX
Destructive					
Withdrawn/emotional				XX	
Recess					
11:20-1:20					
Verbal aggression		XXX		X	XXXXXXXX
Physical violence					XXX
Leaving room	XX	X			XXX
Non-compliance		XXX		XXXXXX	XXXX
Destructive					X
Withdrawn/emotional		X		XXXX	
Lunch					
2:20-3:20					
Verbal aggression	X	X			
Physical violence					
Leaving room	X	X	X		
Non-compliance	X	XX	XX	XXXXXX	
Destructive					
Withdrawn/emotional		XX	XX	XX	

Year 6 behaviour tracking - the below table is a snapshot of a week of behaviours across the whole Year 6 cohort, at the completion of the project (Term 4).

	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday
9am-11am					
Verbal aggression				X	
Physical violence					
Leaving room				X	
Non-compliance		X		XX	
Destructive					
Withdrawn/emotional				X	
Recess					
11:20-1:20					
Verbal aggression					
Physical violence					
Leaving room				X	
Non-compliance				XX	X
Destructive					
Withdrawn/emotional	X				
Lunch					
2:20-3:20					
Verbal aggression					X
Physical violence					X
Leaving room			X		X
Non-compliance			X		X
Destructive					X
Withdrawn/emotional					X

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Note: On Wednesday's, the Year 5 and Year 6 students participate in 'Electives' from 9am until 1.20pm. This program involves hands-on learning in topics of interest to the students.

Brain knowledge

Year 5 brain test:

- 85% of students are now able to identify what each zone of regulation looks like (e.g. yellow zone could mean that I am excited or anxious)
- 79% of students are now able to accurately name 3/5 (or more) parts of the brain (refer to "getting to know your brain" pre-test template)

Year 6 brain test:

- 76% of students are now able to describe what 'mindful awareness' is.
- 73% of students are now able to describe the role of the hippocampus, limbic system and prefrontal cortex.

Staff Response

All the Year 6 teaching team took on board the project and participated in self-directed learning about the brain. There was consistent delivery of learning about the brain and mindfulness across the classes and all teachers were reinforcing the specific language and learning. The Year 6 team prioritised learning about the brain and mindfulness, and ensured that these sessions

Only 2 of the Year 6 teachers took on board the project and the self-directed learning; this resulted in lack of consistency across the year level.

Below is a transcript of feedback from a Year 6 teacher, who participated in the project. The teacher did not attend the Making Space for Learning Training; however, took on the project with support from the teaching team, team leader, and project team:

"Since the implementation of brain breaks and the MindUp lessons in Grade 6, I have seen a drastic change in student behaviour, thought processes and self-regulation. This project has allowed students to have a deeper, more meaningful understanding of how the brain works, how each part interacts and plays a vital role in our emotions and thinking, and how to self-regulate. I have found that my students really enjoy participating in brain breaks between classes. In fact, many will ask as soon as they get to class, "is it brain break time?". As many of the students move between classes...it has been incredibly beneficial to have a brain break in between. Having the brain break straight away has helped to settle the students.... I have found my students are much more engaged and balanced, when returning to the floor, when receiving their next instruction.

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I have thoroughly enjoyed the implementation of the MindUp lessons. It has been a great way for students to begin to understand their emotions and their thoughts. When heightened or anxious, it has been great to see students acknowledge which part of their brain is currently at work and the flow on effects this has with other areas of the brain.

I have also received some very welcomed feedback from parents, saying they love learning from their children on a Tuesday evening, all about the brain.

Overall this project has had an amazing impact, not just on the students, but also on the teachers."

Student response

Year 5:

- Initially Year 5 students responded well to the activities and appeared calmer, however new students to the year level have unsettled the cohort;
- The students have enjoyed the activities in the 'Wellbeing Hour';
- Students are asking to do brain breaks everyday (especially rhythmic activities);
- Students are demonstrating their understanding of how their brain works and using specific language;
- Students have a better understanding of why peers are behaving the way they do;
- Students are identifying when their 'lid is flipped', and the need to put in place a calming strategy that works for them;

Year 6:

- Students found learning about the brain to be an intriguing and mature approach to understanding emotions. The students have enjoyed learning about the brain;
- There has been improvement in behaviour after recess/lunch breaks as the students are settled and ready to learn;
- The students are applying their learning when reflecting on their behaviour;
- Short 'brain breaks' enabled quicker transitions;
- Students who experienced struggles in the first session were able to relax and 'de-stress' before moving onto the next class;
- Students are more aware of their emotions and what is happening in their brain when they are feeling overwhelmed, stressed, upset or angry. With this knowledge, they are able to put into place strategies such as the 'Core Practice' to help self-regulate. They are now also able to communicate in depth how they are feeling and what they need to do to calm themselves.

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Transcripts from student feedback:

Archar:

"I like brain breaks because of the fun games we do in them. They help me to process what I just learnt, and get ready for the next lesson"

Lizzy:

"Brain breaks are really fun because we always do a different activity, they help us to concentrate because we have a little bit of time to reset our brains."

Abbey:

"I think brain breaks have helped me wind down after maths, which I find very stressful. It has also helped me clear room in my mind to learn more in writing. The Core Principles help me to calm down my amygdala in very stressful situations..."

Challenges

- PCS has a transient student population. In 2017 there was an increase in the number of new students in Year 5 cohort, who were linked in with DHHS, in Out of Home Care (OoHC) arrangements and/or exhibiting extreme behaviours. This created challenges with combinations of students, as well as the students having different levels of understanding of the PCS expectations and routines;
- Amongst the Year 5 cohort, the "Wellbeing Hour" was allocated after lunch, which was also the time when students would learn about the term's topic, finish off work, participate in gender groups, participate in ICT. The afternoon timeslot resulted in students bringing in their issues from the yard, and having difficulty settling;
- In trying to make meaning and narrate their story, we had a combination of students who were competing to have the most sympathy for having the "worst story." We had challenges in staff knowledge of how to moderate this. We sought advice through the ACF, in relation to why the students were behaving in the manner that they were, and different ways for us to respond. Through this challenge, we learnt about the importance of teaching an emotional quotient, and that all experiences are personal and individual, and not worse than anyone else.
"We are all impacted by trauma. My experience is personal to me. Not worse."
- It was difficult for teachers to find a balance between following up lunchtime issues, and settling the students using a proactive approach (mindfulness/relaxation/meditation). Many times, when students returned

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after lunch, the habit was for teachers to be reactive and follow up issues straight away, rather than being proactive with settling the whole class first;

- Students leaving the classroom frequently without permission. The students who would have experienced great benefit from the Wellbeing Hour, were students who missed much of the learning, through frequently walking out of the classroom;
- Without consistency from the teachers, across the whole year level, students did not get a clear message of the importance of the learning;
- Amongst the Year 5 cohort, there were a high number of students vying for control. (i.e. refusing to leave or go to another space to calm).
- We had hoped to run a separate social skills program in the afternoons for a core group of students, who were missing out on learning about the brain and trialling strategies. We were unable to staff such a program, so all of the learning took place within the classroom.
- During our project journey, we received feedback that the students aren't taking in the learning, e.g. "we're not hearing them talking about the brain." We had to address this through educating staff about the journey:
 - Not all students were participating in the sessions where they were learning about the brain, emotions, and strategies, however, their peers were participating in the learning, which assisted with helping to co-regulate;
 - Students were demonstrating a different response to the behaviour of peers, due to their new knowledge (e.g. they were not antagonising their peers, like they had prior to the project)
- Allowing students to have a brain break in the middle of a session. Although staff had a better understanding of signs of students needing regulation (e.g. pen tapping), it was not always at a good time for the class to stop work and participate in a self-regulation activity.

Most significant learning

- Investing time in teaching about the brain and practicing calming strategies and brain breaks results in a calm learning environment, where students are focused on task sooner. Despite taking time out to implement a whole class calming activity after a break, the students were on task sooner than they were previously (prior to the implementation of calming activities).
- The impact of developing a window of tolerance. It is important that teachers are aware of the need of benefit of building a window of tolerance for students, in situations that can be intolerable for them. Helping students to do that through teaching about attuned, connected and appropriate relationships and then titrating exposure back in classroom.
- As a result of the training and learning about the brain, staff have a better understanding of behaviour, and are not looking to punish trauma consistent behaviours.

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- Students enjoy learning about the brain and readily pick up the concepts. This learning helps the students understand their own behaviour and strategies, but it also facilitates co-regulation amongst the students.

Key messages

- All students benefit from learning and practicing rhythmic and repetitive activities;
- There needs to be consistency and prioritising of learning about the brain and calming activities. This cannot be the task that gets crossed off the busy timetable; it sets the students up to be in the right mindset for learning;
- Use brain breaks! They are quick and easy to implement, with immediate benefit;
- Support students to gain control over their behaviours, by understanding how their brain works, as well as building emotional literacy. The mantra “If I can name it, I can tame it” is very powerful for students;
- Teach about the brain! This helps students when faced with stress, not just in arguments;
- Encourage deep breaths as a strategy for overcoming a “flipped lid” and allowing the brain to function as one;
- Provide an environment which is repetitive, consistent and predictable.

Conclusion

Our action research project results show that explicit teaching of the brain and knowledge of calming strategies does improve behaviours in students with trauma consistent behaviours. The project also demonstrated some improvement in the self-rated professional quality of life, which resulted from the behaviour changes and increased understanding of the reasons for behaviours. Following activities from the MindUp Curriculum allowed practical activities to be implemented quickly and easily by teachers. The best results were achieved when there was consistency and predictability.

Resources required

Training:

- Making SPACE for Learning training: staff
- Strategies for Managing Abuse Related Trauma (SMART) training: staff
- Growth Mindset training: staff
- CHIPs Emotional First Aid training: students

Resources:

- Energy chimes
- 3D (cross section) brain models
- MindUp Curriculum
- Zones of Regulation
- Class Dojo

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Apps:

NAME	DEVICE	CREATOR	COST
Relax Melodies	iOS & Android	iLBsoft	Free
Meditation Time	iOS	Daniel Wuerstl	Free
Smiling Mind	iOS & Android	Smiling Mind	Free
Breathe: Calming reminders for mindful breathing	iOS	KSI Technology LLC	Free
3D Brain	iOS	Cold Spring Harbor Laboratory	Free
3D Brain	Android	dna learning center	Free
Instant Heart Rate: HR Monitor	iOS	Azumio Inc	Free

Websites

- GoNoodle: <https://app.gonoodle.com/discover>
- Stories in Motion: <https://www.educateiowa.gov/pk-12/nutrition-programs/quick-links-nutrition/learning-tools-nutrition/stories-motion-physical>
- Smiling Mind: <https://www.smilingmind.com.au/>

Next steps

Due to the success that we have experienced across Year 5 & 6, we will be extending trauma informed practice across the school.

- We will provide opportunities for all staff to participate in the Making SPACE for Learning training;
- Provide MindUp curriculum books for all year levels;
- Ensure that time is scheduled for explicit teaching and learning, in addition to brain breaks;
- Continue to provide opportunities for kinaesthetic learning in relation to the brain, across the year levels. There are many different formats in which this could occur, for example, making brains and labelling them, using real brains, using cauliflower to represent the brain, using resources to represent shape, size and weight;

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- Introduce rote learning (e.g. timetables) as an example of neuroplasticity. This teaches how the brain is wired and that the messages travel along the pathways faster and better with repeated practice;
- Continue to provide opportunities for mindful exposure (e.g. mindful eating, mindful breathing, etc.).



Project Team at Pakenham Consolidated School

Pakenham Springs Primary School Project Report



Project Title: Pakenham Springs Brain Trainers

Schools Context:

Pakenham Springs Primary School is a Professional Learning Community.

The school's mission is to *educate, motivate and inspire all students to ensure they acquire the essential skills and knowledge necessary to become respectful and informed members of the local and global community.*

The enrolment in 2017 was approximately 900 students.

Research Project Inquiry Question

What affect does empowering students with knowledge to regulate their emotions have on building resilience and improving learning outcomes?

Framework/ Theme Focus areas

The focus areas for our Trauma Sensitive Practice in Schools Project were:

- Understanding parts of the brain, specifically the Prefrontal Cortex, the Hippocampus and Amygdala
- Learning the responses associated with heightened stress, specifically flight, fright and freeze
- Learning and implementing calming strategies on a daily basis (e.g. breathing, meditation)



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Timeframe

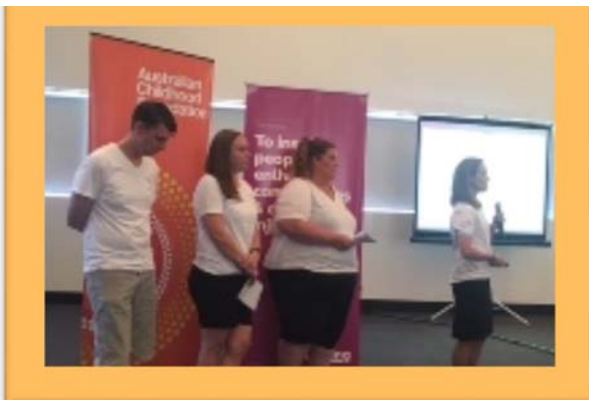
The Trauma Sensitive Practice in Schools Project, funded by the Department of Education and Training, was organized by United Connections Cardinia School Focused Youth Service in collaboration with the Australian Childhood Foundation from February to November 2017.

Initially, professional learning for nominated staff was facilitated by the Australian Childhood Foundation in Term 1.

Action research was undertaken by the Brain Trainers Team, following the professional learning, and during Terms 2, 3 and 4.

During that time, three, two hour consultations occurred with the Team facilitated by the Uniting Connections Cardinia School Focused Youth Service and the Australian Childhood Foundation.

The Team presented the Project at a Showcase Event in November, organised by the Uniting Connections Cardinia School Focused Youth Service in collaboration with the Australian Childhood Foundation.



Staff Involved

Brain Trainers Team

- Rosemary Teed, Student Wellbeing Coordinator
- Erin Talbot, Year 1 teacher
- Rebecca Kotzur, Year 2 teacher
- Kelly Utting, Year 3 teacher
- Andrew Kaiser, Year 4 teacher

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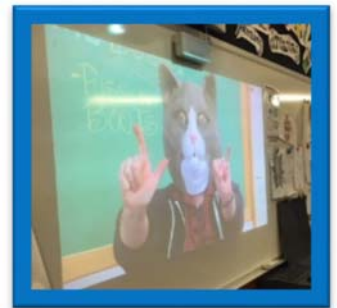
The Team facilitated two professional learning sessions about the Project, at staff meetings in Terms 2 and 4. Rosemary Teed compiled this report, in consultation with the Team.



Other Staff

Other staff who attended the professional learning in Term 1 were:

- Bec Garrow and Renee Cotterell - Assistant Principals
- Tere Harry - Wellbeing Worker
Access Ministries who works at the school two days per week
- Megan Humphrys - Office Staff member



Bec Garrow and Renee Cotterell attended the three subsequent consultations with the Team.

Vicki Miles, Acting Principal at Pakenham Springs Primary School and now Principal at Beaconsfield Upper Primary School, endorsed the school's application in 2016 to participate in the Trauma Sensitive Practice in Schools Project.

Kerryn Baillie, Principal at Pakenham Springs Primary School supported the Project in 2017.

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Description of Project



Brain Beginning

Pakenham Springs Primary School submitted an application in 2016 to the Uniting Connections Cardinia School Focused Youth Service to participate in the Trauma Sensitive Practice in Schools Project due to the challenging issues for many students (e.g. various forms of abuse, domestic violence, mental health, substance abuse, family breakdown).

The school was one of three selected. The Project enquiry question, subsequently identified by the Pakenham Springs Brain Teamers Team, was:

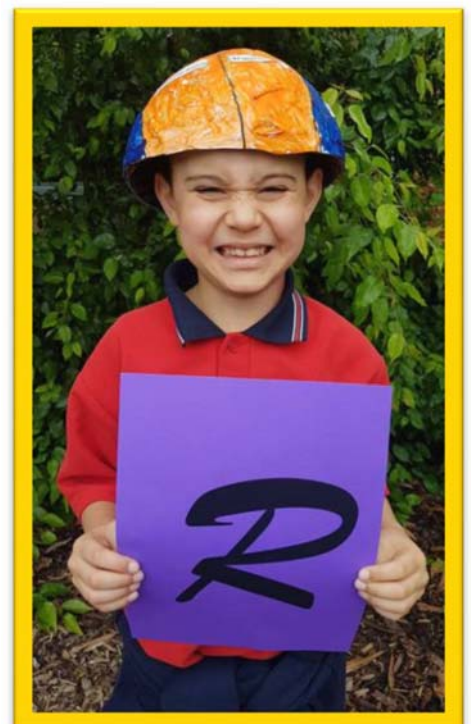
What affect does empowering students with knowledge to regulate their emotions have on building resilience and improving learning outcomes?

Brain Resilience Response vs React

The Brain Trainers Team discussed with their students the importance of resilience and the difference between responding and reacting when faced with adverse circumstances.

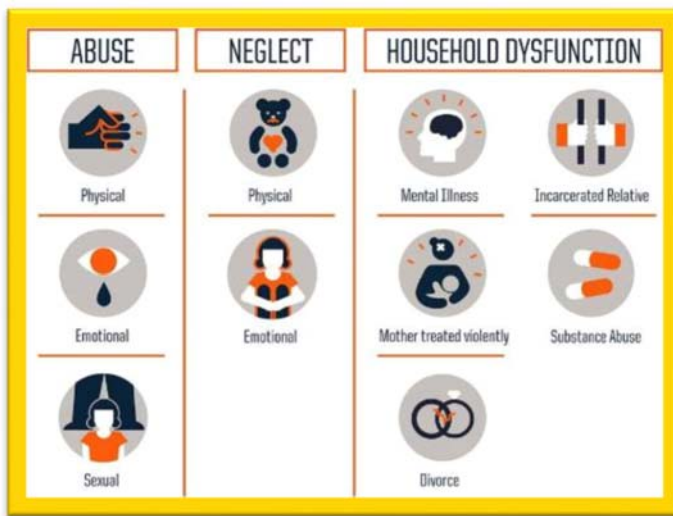
One male and one female student completed the Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACE) Resilience Questionnaire at the beginning and completion of the project. Each teacher also completed a questionnaire on both of their nominated students.

In addition, a Resilience Questionnaire developed by the Team was undertaken at the beginning and completion of the project, again by the student and respective teacher.



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The Adverse Childhood Experiences Study (ACEs) reported that toxic stress brought on by complex trauma caused by abuse, neglect and/or household dysfunction can harm the developing brain of a child, which may in turn, contribute to behavioural and academic problems by the time a child reaches school.

The importance of developing resilience to overcome adversity was addressed in the Study.



The Brain Trainers Team teachers subsequently focused on the following areas with their students during 2017:

- Understanding parts of the brain, specifically the Prefrontal Cortex, the Hippocampus and Amygdala.
- Learning the responses associated with heightened stress, specifically flight, fright and freeze.

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- Learning and implementing calming strategies on a daily basis (eg breathing, meditation).



Brain Action

The Brain Trainers Team, in their classrooms, utilised a myriad of strategies and resources including:

- Making SPACE for Learning ACF Book
- MindUp Curriculum
- Focus on Core Practice
- Brain Breaks
- Smiling Mind Sessions
- GoNoodle
- Models of the Brain
- Brain Workbooks
- Mindful Journals - three Cs - cares, concerns, celebrations



The MindUp Curriculum:

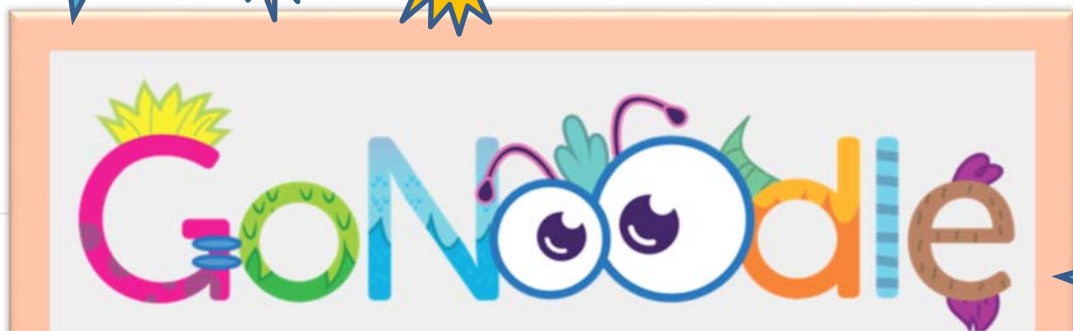
Helps students achieve and maintain focused attention.

Identifies students as individual learners with a more accurate view of their talents and challenges.

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- Assists students to be more thoughtful and mindful, rather than reactive, when under pressure.
- Improves communication with students, parents/carers and staff.
- Develops a classroom climate that is infused with optimism and hope.
- Creates a stronger, more vibrant school ethos and culture.



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Brain Integrate and Involve

Students

- Developmentally appropriate learning experiences were created to introduce the brain to each year level.
- Learning experiences were relevant, appropriate, engaging and built upon prior knowledge.



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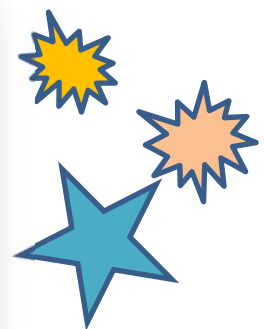
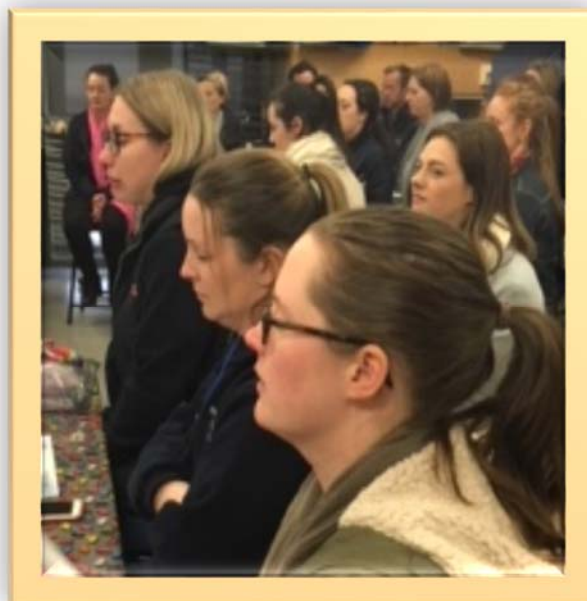
Staff

The Project was presented at a staff meeting in Term 2.

The Brain Trainers Team:

- Shared the goals that had been identified, the research and activities/resources implemented.
- Articulated an understanding of trauma and the impacts on student learning.
- Explained the resources, specifically the MindUp Curriculum, GoNoodle and Smiling Mind.
- Sparked interest amongst the teaching staff to implement some of the content and programs.

The Team presented the final project at a staff meeting in Term 4.



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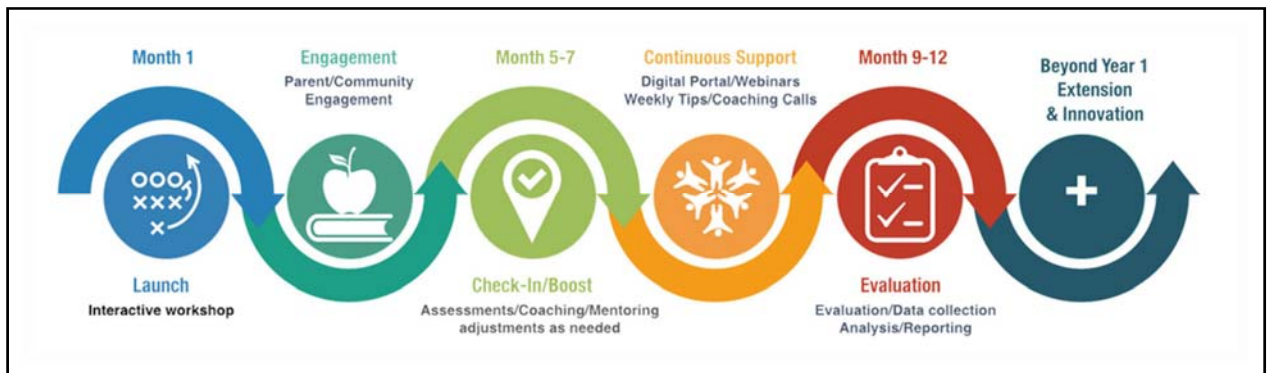
Brain Next Refine and Implement to sustain

In 2018, it is proposed to establish a school-wide mindfulness program.

Implementation will take place in the first three weeks of school, along with our four school basic beliefs, to prepare students for the year.

Tool boxes will be developed for each teacher filled with the resources and strategies utilised during the Project.

Ongoing evaluation will occur.



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Data

A Resilience Questionnaire, developed by the Brain Trainers Team, was undertaken with eight 'at risk' students from Years 1 to 4 at the beginning and completion of the Project.

The four male and four female students and their respective teachers completed the questionnaire, as below.

PAKENHAM SPRINGS PRIMARY SCHOOL - RESILIENCE QUESTIONNAIRE

Please circle the most accurate answer under each statement:

In a difficult spot, I turn at once to what can be done to put things right.

Strongly Disagree Disagree Undecided Agree Strongly Agree

I influence where I can, rather than worrying about what I can't influence.

Strongly Disagree Disagree Undecided Agree Strongly Agree

I don't take criticism personally.

Strongly Disagree Disagree Undecided Agree Strongly Agree

I generally manage to keep things in perspective.

Strongly Disagree Disagree Undecided Agree Strongly Agree

I am calm in a crisis.

Strongly Disagree Disagree Undecided Agree Strongly Agree

I'm good at finding solutions to problems.

Strongly Disagree Disagree Undecided Agree Strongly Agree

I wouldn't describe myself as an anxious person.

Strongly Disagree Disagree Undecided Agree Strongly Agree

I don't tend to avoid conflict.

Strongly Disagree Disagree Undecided Agree Strongly Agree

I try to control events rather than being a victim of circumstances.

Strongly Disagree Disagree Undecided Agree Strongly Agree

I trust my intuition.

Strongly Disagree Disagree Undecided Agree Strongly Agree

I manage my stress levels well.

Strongly Disagree Disagree Undecided Agree Strongly Agree

I feel confident and secure in my position.

Strongly Disagree Disagree Undecided Agree Strongly Agree

Due to the volume of data collected, one sample is reported below.

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The following case studies demonstrate the significant outcomes that were attained through the Project for two students by incorporating the *Making SPACE for Learning (ACF)* framework which includes being *Staged, Predictable, Adaptive Connected and Enabled*

Pseudonyms have been used to protect the students' privacy

JOHN - YEAR 4

John presents at school in a very emotional state at times due to extremely traumatic experiences in both his past as well as the present.

John has been diagnosed with Severe Behaviour Disorder (SBD). Earlier this year at school, this took the form of temper tantrums, physical aggression such as attacking other children, excessive argumentativeness, stealing and other forms of defiance or resistance to authority. John also has a suspected acquired brain injury due to excessive alcohol intake when he was in utero.

John has a strong sense of justice, whereby he identifies issues in which he feels unjustly treated and seeks justice either in an appropriate manner by telling an adult, or by seeking justice in his own way. Earlier this year this was in the form of physical and verbal aggression towards others, including students who were not directly involved. Police needed to be called to the school on one occasion for support. The Leadership Team would intervene through the form of suspension or timeout. Interventions were put in place to ensure the safety of other children within the school.

John's Individual Learning Plan (ILP) was developed which focused on literacy and numeracy and his interests. A Behaviour Management Plan was also developed to address his challenging behaviour. Ongoing meetings were organised with the student's carer.

John developed a strong relationship with the school's Student Wellbeing Coordinator, where he felt safe to discuss his feelings, needs and wants freely. He participated in a 'Feeling Is Thinking' group which was facilitated by Student Wellbeing. 'Feeling Is Thinking' is an eight week program that focuses on working with children who experience difficulties in their interpersonal relationships, and in expressing their strong feelings, in particular anger, sadness and frustration.

The resilience questionnaire was undertaken with John as a component of the Trauma Sensitive Practice in Schools Project.

Through the Project, the Year 4 students learnt about the brain, breathing and strategies to re-engage the 'foggy' brain. John used a lot of these strategies

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both in and outside of the classroom. Each student made a clay model of the brain.

At the completion of the Project, it was observed that he could assess his own state of mind and put in place a learnt strategy to refocus his thinking, so he was able to think and engage rationally, thus minimising the risk of outburst.

Throughout the course of the Project, vast improvements were recorded in John's academic achievements and response to stressful situations, both in and outside of his control. By the end of the year, John was achieving the required academic levels in both literacy and numeracy for Year 4.

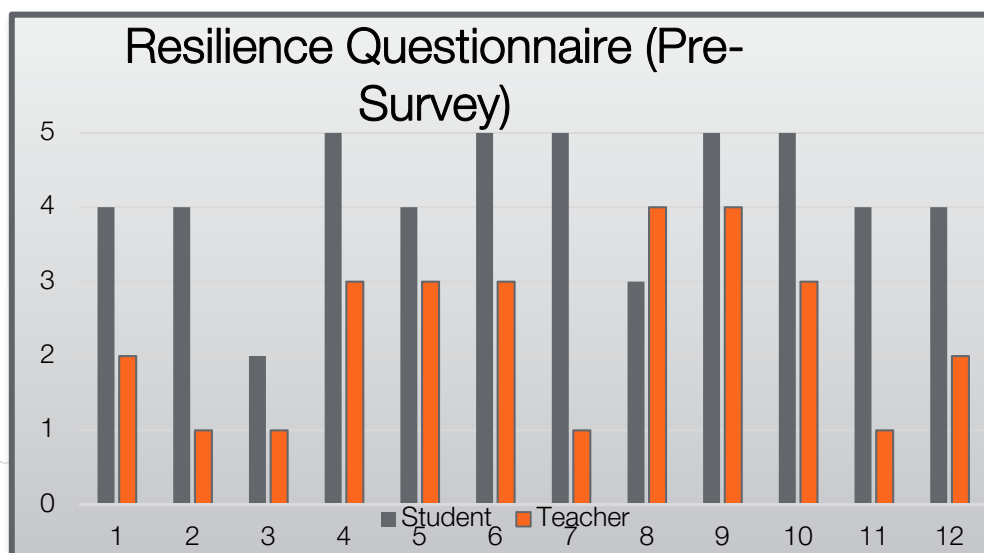
The need for structured breaks throughout the day, support when transitioning and during unstructured times, visual cues to support his behaviour and routines to minimise and prevent risk to those around him, were implemented.

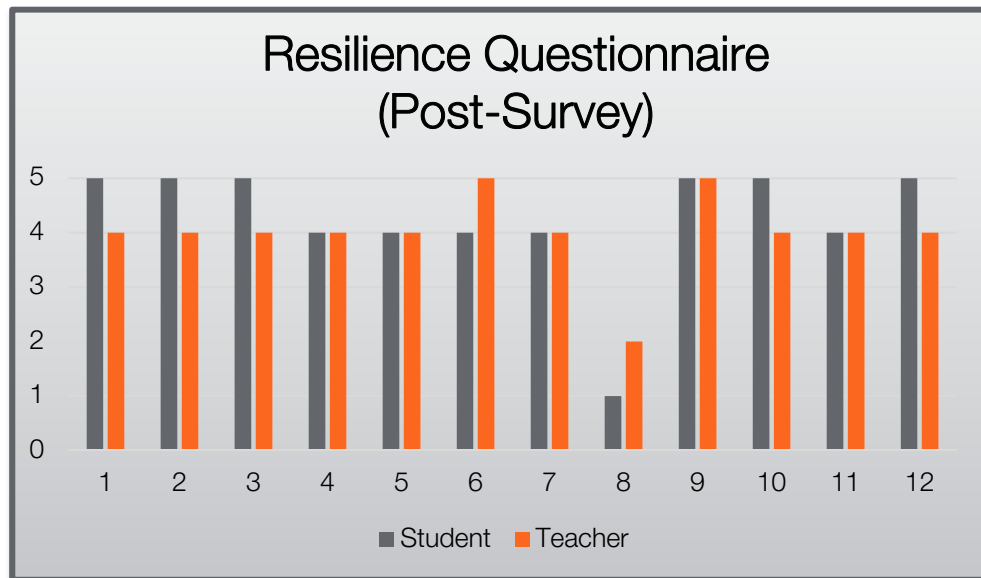
John's teacher developed a visual timetable to ensure John was well aware of the daily routine, what to expect and what would be required of him. Conversations with John occurred on a daily basis to 'check in' with him about his feelings. Student Support Group meetings occurred every term with John's carer and other meetings were organised to ensure the management and care of John was relevant and to the highest standard. Ongoing support was also provided to his carer to ensure she had relevant resources to provide the best care for John at home.

The pre and post assessment data highlighted the significant positive changes in both John's behaviour and wellbeing.

Mindfulness interventions have resulted in reduced depression, anxiety and trauma related symptoms, enhanced coping skills and an improved quality of life for John who was positively impacted by trauma informed practices within the classroom.

In the Resilience Questionnaire, developed by the Brain Trainers Team, John was significantly more optimistic about his future at the conclusion of the Project.





The above data clearly shows that John was positively impacted by trauma informed practices within the classroom. This highlights the human capacity to be resilient and even grow through big challenges. Again, the role of teachers and other adults in the lives of children is important, as they provide support and security.

Learning to manage stressful times can be part of the ongoing education process of becoming more resilient. Resilience is something we all keep working on over the course of our lifespan. We can learn the skills and gain the confidence to deal with challenges throughout our lives.

SAM - YEAR 2

Sam lives with his biological parents and older brother.

Sam was referred to Student Wellbeing at the beginning of the year due to his aggressive behaviour towards other students and staff and his violent temper tantrums which occurred on a regular basis. Sam reacted strongly to change, especially if his teacher or Learning Support Assistant (LSA) were absent from the classroom. As a consequence of this behaviour, Sam was frequently suspended and/or his mother was requested to take him home early.

Sam was diagnosed with Severe Behaviour Disorder (SBD). He was subsequently referred to Connections' School Attendance Support Project (SASP) in Term 1. SASP aims to increase school attendance, facilitate school connectedness and support community integration. Service delivery is aimed at supporting vulnerable families through intensive outreach family support and addressing blockages to education.

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Sam's Individual Learning Plan (ILP) was developed which focused on literacy and numeracy and his interests. A Behaviour Management Plan was also developed to address his challenging behaviour. Sam participated in a 'Feeling Is Thinking' group facilitated by the Student Wellbeing Coordinator.

Sam received counselling from a psychologist who attended the school on a weekly basis. In addition to the Student Support Group meetings held once per term, ongoing meetings were organised with the student's parents, his teacher, the case manager from the School Attendance Support Project, the school's Student Wellbeing Coordinator and psychologist.

Sam participated in activities from the MindUp Curriculum and participated in daily calming activities within the classroom. Regular 'brain breaks' and 'soft landing' approaches were implemented to support Sam feel safe within the classroom environment.

These approaches provide safe, supportive classrooms where children are able to calm, increase on-task behaviours and investment in class work.

- All students are taught how to self-regulate their emotions and behaviour.
- Safe, supportive learning environments reduce disciplinary incidents and time spent managing 'problem' behaviour.
- Teachers feel empowered to better manage student behaviour and have more time for teaching and learning.
- Collaboration with other professionals and community agencies supports outcomes for students.

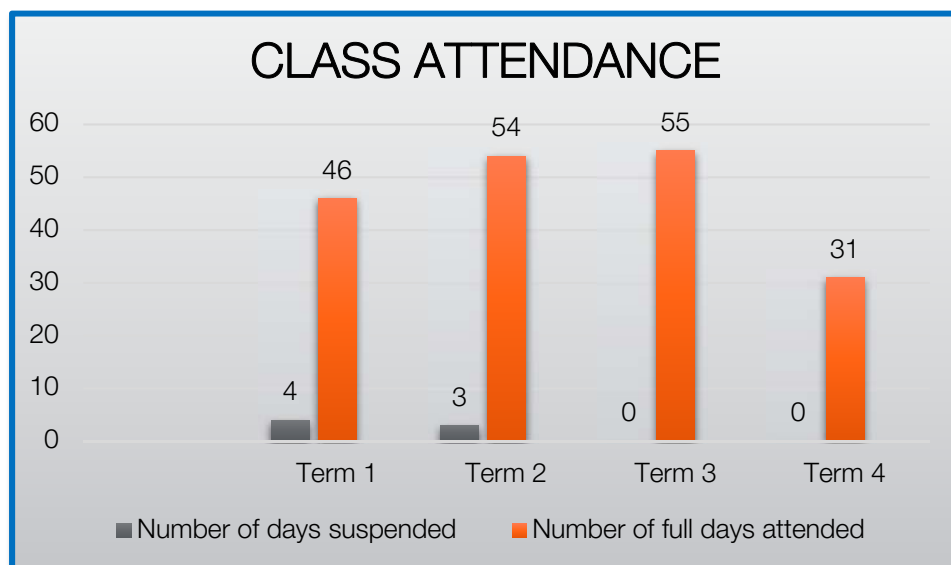
By implementing the above strategies, incorporating a safe and predictable school environment and teaching Sam about the brain and its functioning, the data below shows a significant decline of school suspensions for Sam during the time that the Project was undertaken.

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“Learning to manage stressful times can be part of the ongoing education process of becoming more resilient. Resilience is something we all keep working on over the course of our lifespan. We can learn the skills and gain the confidence to deal with challenges throughout our lives.”

MONTH	SUSPENSIONS
February	1 day
March	3 days
April	0 days
May	1 day
June	2 days
July	0 days
August	0 days
September	0 days
October	0 days
November	0 days



Note: Days for Term 4 have been recorded until 22 November 2017

In addition, at the completion of the Project, Sam was academically at year level for literacy and numeracy. He also was able to use the strategies taught when the teacher or LSA were absent from the classroom to avoid feelings of anxiety and subsequent anger outbursts.

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Outcomes- What's different now?

Brain Trainers Team

- Developed a comprehensive understanding of trauma sensitive practice
- Facilitated presentations with staff to enhance the understanding of the impact of trauma on student learning
- Implemented teaching strategies on a daily basis to enable students to understand the brain's functions and to build resilience

Staff

- Developed a greater understanding and knowledge of trauma sensitive practice
- More empathy for children experiencing adverse conditions

Students

- Developed an understanding of the brain and its functions through various teaching strategies, including building models of the brain
- Enjoyed the daily core practice sessions (eg GoNoodle)
- Built resilience, as measured for the nominated students by the initial and post Project questionnaire
- Learnt to identify feelings and manage emotions
- Improved academic performance for the nominated students



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Challenges

The only challenge was the varying levels of staff understanding and knowledge of trauma sensitive practice, as the initial training facilitated by the Australian Childhood Foundation was limited to nominated staff due to the Project's funding.

Most significant learning

Trauma is not the thing that happened but the effect left within us by our experiences. (anon)



It only takes one relationship to change someone's life. (anon)

Key Messages

The following was taken from the Australian Childhood Foundation's website: *Experiences of abuse and family violence rock children to their very core. They do anything to survive, not because they want to but because they need to. They shut down their feelings. They push away memories of pain. They stop relying on relationships around them to protect them. They stop trusting and believing in others. Even after the stressful or traumatic situation has passed, children's brains and bodies continue to react as if the stress is continuing. They become self-protective.*

There are so many different consequences of trauma on children and young people. And yet, they are not well understood. These children are often labelled as disruptive, defiant and challenging.

- A student's traumatised memory is implicit or subconscious.
- Students may struggle to remember life events.
- Working memory can become paralysed (eg ability to remember instructions is poor).

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- Students impacted by trauma have a negative internal working model (eg I am unworthy, the world is unsafe).
- The key to reshaping behaviour is to understand it and respond at its source rather than how it is expressed.

If we set out to change the behaviour, we are in danger of destroying the meaning which that behaviour holds. (Cairns)

The importance of utilising **Making SPACE for Learning** to improve and enhance the learning of students affected by the consequences of trauma and toxic stress.

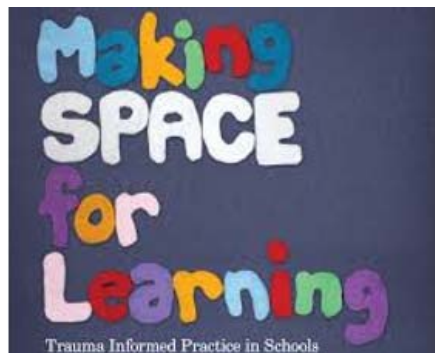
S - staged

P - predictable

A - adaptive

C - connected

E – enabled



Resources Required

- Professional learning for all staff in trauma sensitive practice facilitated by the Australian Childhood Foundation
- Making SPACE for Learning Resource book (ACF)
- Teaching resources (eg MindUp Curriculum, Smiling Mind, GoNoodle)
- Adverse Childhood Experiences Study (ACEs)
- Have You Filled A Bucket Today? - Carol McCloud
- The Boy Who Was Raised As A Dog - Bruce Perry and Maia Szalavitz
- Settling to Learn - Louise Bomber and Daniel Hughes
- Bucket filling publications, posters and activity sheets
- Art and craft equipment

Conclusion

Pakenham Springs Primary School was honoured to be selected to participate in the 2017 Trauma Sensitive Practice in Schools Project.

Implementing trauma informed classroom strategies resulted in extremely positive outcomes for the Brain Trainers Team teachers and their students,

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especially the eight nominated students who were monitored throughout the Project.

The Team and other staff at the school were able to determine and measure that *empowering students with knowledge to regulate their emotions builds resilience and improves learning outcomes*. It is intended to embed trauma sensitive practice across the school next year.

Our thanks are extended to everyone involved, and in particular to, Sarah Lucas, Coordinator, Uniting Connections Cardinia School Focused Youth Service and Deborah McKenzie, Program Manager, School Services Program, Australian Childhood Foundation.

All kids need is a little help, a little hope, and someone who believes in them.



Project Team at Pakenham Springs Primary School

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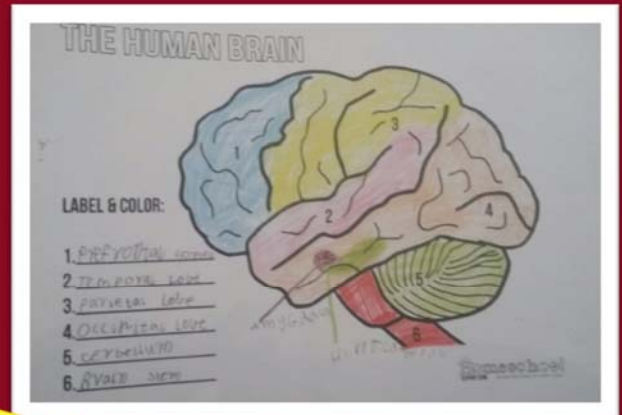
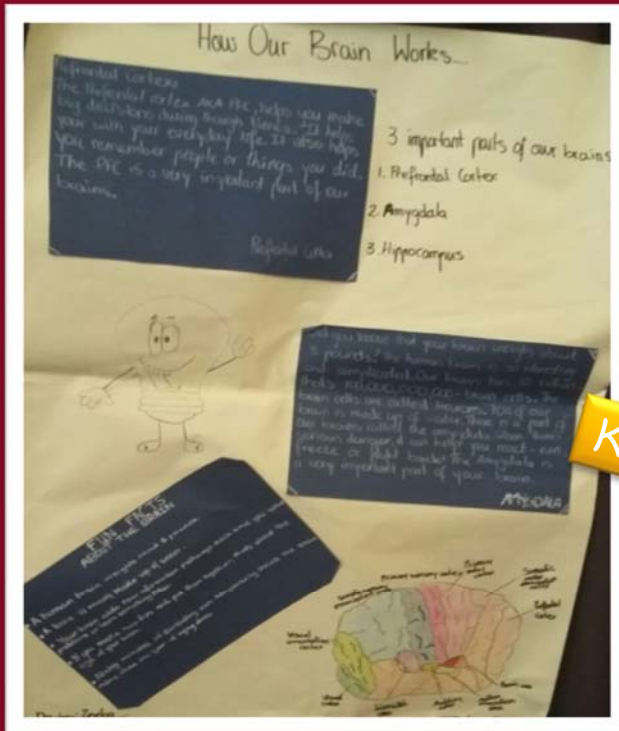
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Selected Photos of Showcase Presentation



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KNOWLEDGE



S.P.A.C.E.



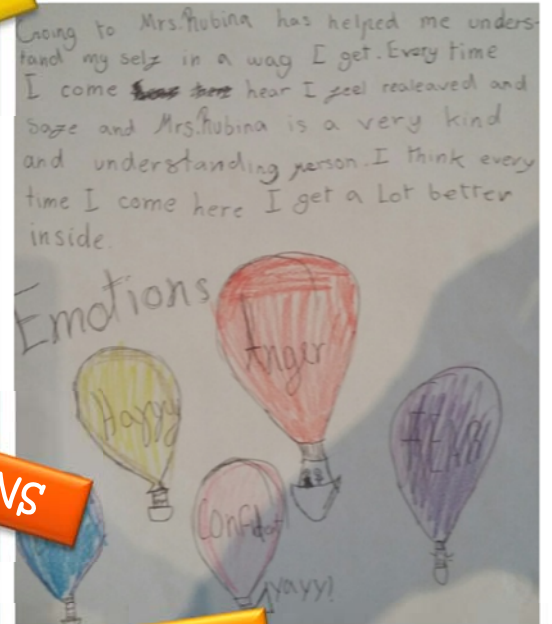
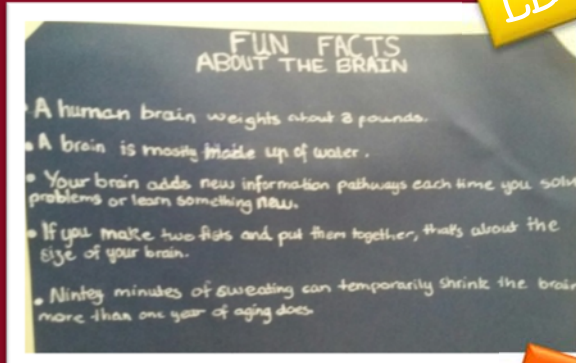
CHALLENGES



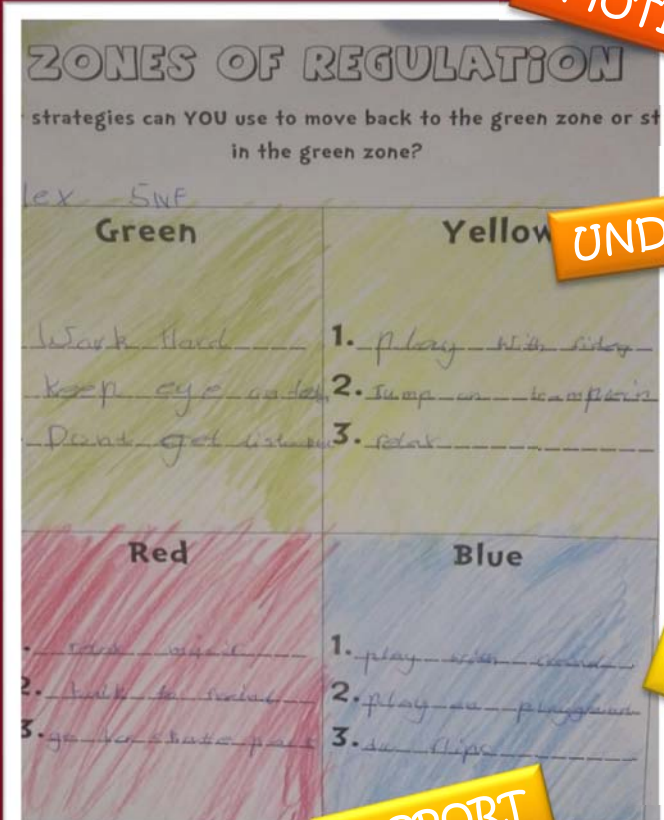
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LEARNING



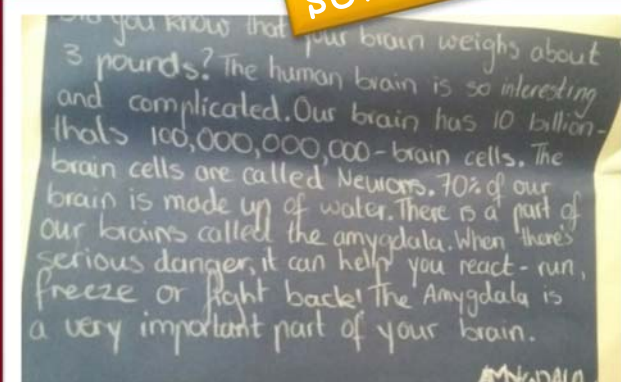
EMOTIONS



UNDERSTANDING



THE BRAIN

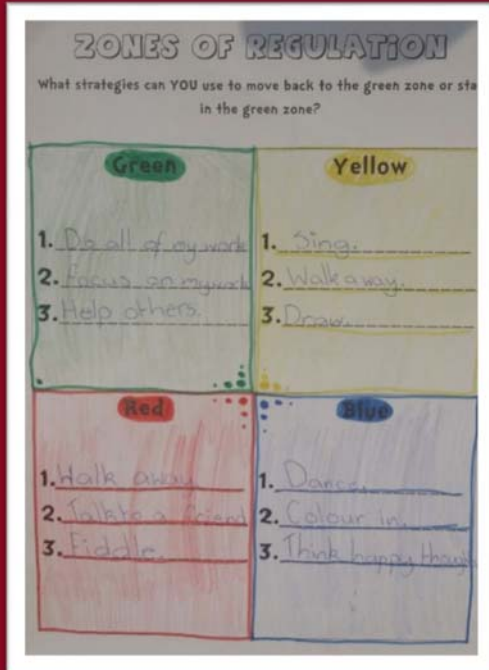


SUPPORT

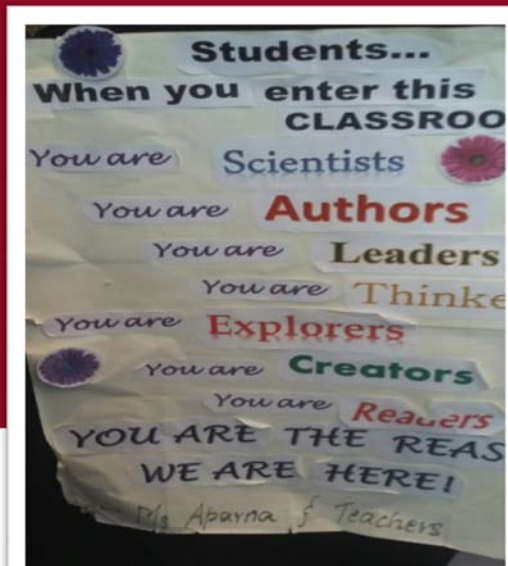
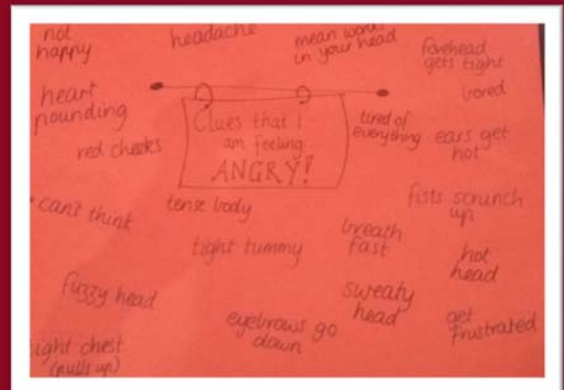
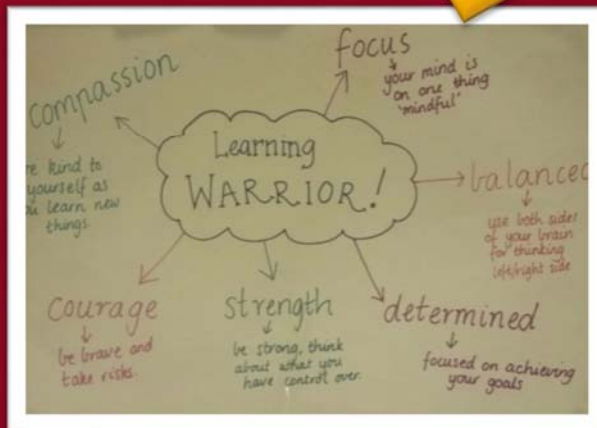


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CONFIDENCE

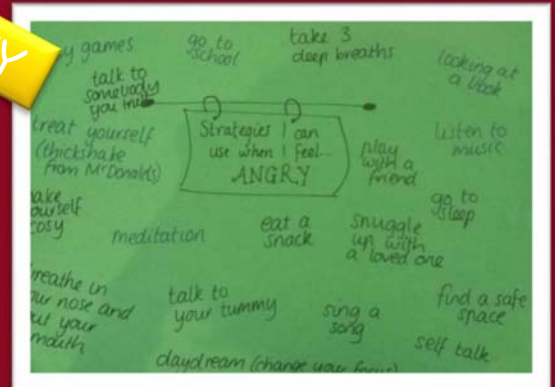


PROTECTIVE

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EMPATHY



RESILIENCE



RESOURCES



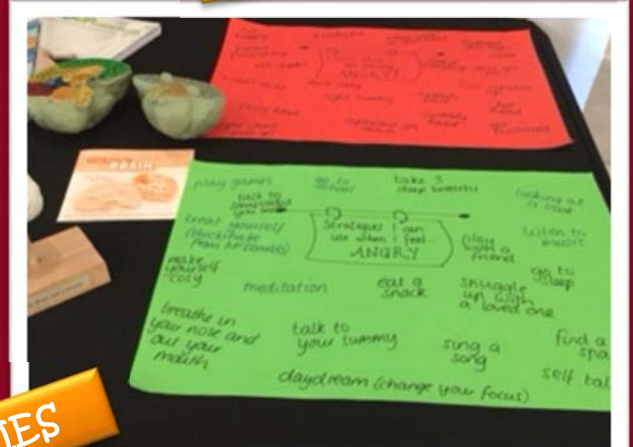
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ACTIVITIES



RELATIONSHIPS



STRATEGIES

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Acknowledgements



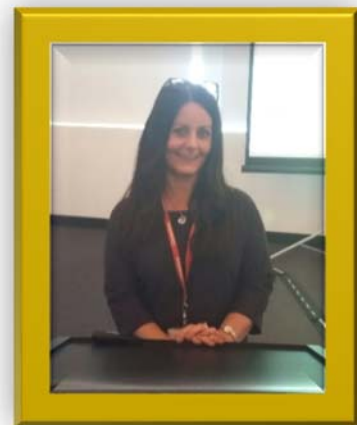
Above:
Deborah McKenzie – Program Manager, School Services Program ACF (left)
Sarah Lucas – Coordinator, Uniting Connections School Focus Youth Services (right)



Below:
ACF School Services Program Team
From left: Alexa Duke STC, Sonja Vanderaa STC and Deborah McKenzie PM



Above - The Project Team from Minaret College



Above - Sarah Lucas

Right - Deborah McKenzie and Sarah Lucas with a member from Minaret College Project Team



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The Project Team from
Pakenham Consolidated
School



Deborah McKenzie with the
Project Team from Pakenham
Springs Primary School

