

Making SPACE for Learning



Trauma Sensitive Practice in Schools

CATHOLIC EDUCATION
SOUTH AUSTRALIA

PROJECT REPORTS 2017

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

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TRAUMA SENSITIVE SCHOOLS PROJECT AUSTRALIAN CHILDHOOD FOUNDATION SCHOOL SERVICES PROGRAM MANAGER'S REPORT

In late 2016, The Australian Childhood Foundation introduced a new program to its organisational structure – the Schools Services Program. The SSP was established because of the growing demand within the Education sector; individual schools, regional areas and at a departmental level, to become Trauma Sensitive/Trauma Informed environments. The School Services program has a team of dedicated professionals from Education, Psychology and Child Protection backgrounds who are very well skilled in the delivery of the various workshops we have on our scope; namely our Making SPACE for Learning program and associated workshops.



The aim is for Educators and the support staff in schools to be very well informed about the neurobiology and neurophysiology of complex relational and developmental trauma and to have a clear understanding of the impacts of this on children and young people's ability to form relationships, on their learning and cognitive capacities, their behavioural presentations, their emotions, body and brain system as well as their ability to regulate themselves. Once the

theory and theoretical frameworks are understood, several strategies and activities are introduced to assist in supporting children and young people whom often present to teachers with an "unmet need". When Educators can translate such theory into their 'practice', we begin to see classrooms that are transformed; pedagogy shifts, *judgement moves to 'understanding and empathy*, teachers see the *power of unconditional positive regard and love*. Love in the form of what the ancient Greeks would refer to as *agape*. That is, what we might extend to others whether they be family, friends or those at a distance. This in the Latin context could be translated to mean 'charity' and thus has the foundation of Empathy. Empathy for another's story and empathy to the extent that they try to 'walk in the shoes' of the children and young people they have in their schools and thus nurture them accordingly. The child's needs are then 'held' in centre of all deliberations in the educative space.

The Australian Childhood Foundation and Catholic Education South Australia have had an incredibly positive and very productive partnership since 2014 and it is with pleasure that we introduce here the amazing work of eight schools who embarked upon Action Research in 2016-2017. This Action Research is a huge commitment for the various schools who express an interest in partaking in it. The staff from ACF are engrossed in the process from the onset with the initial training days being conducted at the commencement of the school year in 2016 to the conclusion of the research in 2017. Cross collaboration with the highly skilled Behaviour Consultants at CESA is respected and valued immensely by all.



The Action research allows for Educators and support staff to consider their own school context and needs. Once a needs analysis is completed, the team of staff who will embed their new learnings into practice, will devise a Project Inquiry Question that will guides their research over the eighteen-month period. Both qualitative and quantitative data is collected, collated and analysed. In this collection of reports, you will read about why the project was embarked upon, what the guiding principles for the teams were, why they chose to do what they did, how they achieved what they did, what supported them in the project, what challenged them along their journey and what the outcomes were. Without exception, you will read here about positive and “life changing” outcomes.

Teachers have shared with us some of the following comments pertaining to how trauma sensitive practice has changed them as Educators and impacted them personally:

- *“I feel that I have more permission to do what I feel is ‘right’. I now do what I would do at home with my own children and that is to be more therapeutic in my approach with my students”.*
- *“There has been evidence of a change in the culture of the school. The staff are much more respectful of each other and more willing to be open and supportive”*
- *I feel that I am not as reactive. I ‘stop and pause’ before I respond. I try to understand the child’s feelings. If a child is exhausted, I let them sleep”.*
- *“My stress levels have decreased. I have been a lot calmer and we are having more fun. The curriculum is not the be all and end all”*
- *“I have become more reflective. I am nurturing my own children differently. This has really helped me at home. I have stopped ‘micro-managing’.*
- *“I am reflecting on many things differently. I am approaching emotions (mine and others) differently. I am mindful of when I am (or others) about to ‘flip my lid’.*
- *“I have been reflecting a great deal on my parenting style. I am being much more attentive and engaged with my own children”*
- *“The project has confirmed my ‘values’ and what is important to me when I became a parent.”*
- *“There have been significant improvements in the staff group. They have ‘come more together’ and are much more supportive of each other.”*
- *“I see a different culture in the school. Calmer. More respect. The children are supporting each other and being more empathic”.*
- *“This project has made a complete difference in my entire life. My life will be completely different from here on in”.*
- *“Instead of existing, I now know how to live”.*
- *“I have learnt that relationships are key. It is important to set children and teachers up for success”.*

The following schools are to be congratulated and applauded for the incredible work they have presented here and we thank them for valuing the right of a child to feel safe, to have adults in their life they can trust to nurture them and their needs, to learn what an empathic and loving relationship can be, to know that they are valued and respected for their individual skills and talents and to be supported to live a fulfilling life free from harm.

- ✚ All Saints Primary School
- ✚ FAME
- ✚ Antonio Catholic School
- ✚ Our Lady of the Visitation
- ✚ St. Therese School
- ✚ St. Josephs School
- ✚ St. John the Apostle School
- ✚ St. Thomas More School



In addition, we thank Catholic Education South Australia for their commitment and belief in the work of The Australian Childhood Foundation. We wish to acknowledge Mary Carmody, Senior Education Advisor for her desire to see all children feeling connected and excited to be in schools with high levels of care. Her incredible team of Behaviour Consultants: Michael Lincoln, Andrea Richardson and Angela Morrison, are the consummate professionals whose unwavering support of the ACF consultants as well as the schools they are aligned to is admirable. The children in Catholic Education South Australia are blessed to have such compassionate, caring, understanding and well skilled Educators to show nurture to them.

We are looking forward to continuing our work in partnership with CESA for the next three years.

Deborah McKenzie
Program Manager – School Services Program
Australian Childhood Foundation

*“I have learnt that relationships are key.
It is important to set Children and
teachers up for success”*

TRAUMA SENSITIVE SCHOOLS PROJECT CESA CONSULTANT'S REPORT

TRAUMA-INFORMED COMPASSION

In her 2010 TED talk Buddhist roshi Joan Halifax observes that love and compassion are not luxuries, but necessities for human survival recognise. In this, she describes compassion as the ability to see clearly into the nature of suffering and know that we are not separate from it. Drawing on the neuroscience of compassion she explains that compassion is an inherent human quality that when aroused inspires a desire to transform suffering. However, she cautions against attaching compassion to outcome. Being compassionate is good for us. It promotes neural integration and enhances our immune systems. To link our exercise of compassion to outcomes for others places in jeopardy these essential inner processes.

LOVE COMPASSION AND
KINDNESS ARE THE
ANCHORS OF LIFE

Further, Halifax explains that there are also inner realities that are the enemies of compassion. They are pity, moral outrage and fear. They are the enemies of compassion because these too are not attached to outcome, but nor do they inspire action. Rather, they serve to justify the inertia that allows suffering to continue unchallenged.

Along with the privilege and joy that sits at the heart of the exchange called teaching and learning often sits an appeal to compassion. Children and young people exhibiting trauma-consistent behaviour often carry experiences that lead them to perceive the world around them as unsafe, the relationships available to them as dangerous and hold on to a need to draw on inner resources that are chaotic and anti-social. As such, they remain among the most vulnerable children and young people in our communities. While these children and young people in our classrooms may challenge our beliefs about engagement, order and responsiveness, we cannot falter in our call to compassion.

While it is easy to wax eloquently about ideals, I do so confidently. In this project, the second iteration of the CESA Trauma Sensitive School Project I have again been touched by



the exercise of compassion demonstrated by the teachers and support staff (educators) throughout the project. I often comment that educators are by their nature an optimistic bunch. This optimism is born out in their commitment to children and young people, and their resolve to the good in and for them. In a conversation I had with a teacher during the

project, she reflected that the project moved the staff in the school in relation to dysregulated or anti-social behaviour. They had come to understand that support and real change occurred by 'moving in, not away'. Putting aside fear or pity had opened a space for connection and trust.

A key way of assuring that compassion does not default into moral outrage, pity or fear is education. One of the pillars of the Trauma Sensitive Schools Project is *Making SPACE for*

Learning. This training is critical in furthering the skills of educators to respond effectively to the needs of children and young people exhibiting trauma-consistent behaviour. Understanding how trauma can affect a developing brain invites a compassionate response and having the necessary skills is essential in formulating that response. The second pillar of the Trauma Sensitive Schools Project is action research. This element of the project provides an opportunity for educators to apply the skills and strategies they have learned. As the notion implies, action research is not outcome driven, but is rather a purposeful process of engagement. The reports following from each of the schools will provide a summary and evaluation of their action research.

In this report, I will share some observations on the broader project from a bird's eye view.



I will shape my reflections around the themes of hearts, hands and brains. Following the initial training, the first thing I noticed was a change in hearts. *Making SPACE for Learning* offers a new lens through which to view the inappropriate behaviour of children and young people. Importantly, it allows educators to assess behaviour differently and with renewed

confidence that they can respond effectively. Believing you can help and having the skills and strategies to do so fosters a sense of hopeful engagement.

Maladaptive behaviour while undesirable is purposeful. It may have been protective and is communicating a need. Changing behaviour is a process that centres on trust and learning. Predictability and consistency are two of the hallmarks of *Making SPACE for Learning*. Using hands as a metaphor for action, the second thing I noticed was a willingness and confidence to persist with strategies for responding to trauma-consistent behaviour. The adage 'practice makes permanent' certainly rings true.

As a Behaviour Education Consultant, I sometimes find myself working alongside educators who are at their wits-end. In these circumstances, educators may go to one of two places. Either they start to question their own capacity for the profession or they emotionally withdraw from the child or young person they are attempting to engage. In these situations, neural integration and healthy immune systems are conspicuously absent. The experience of vicarious trauma is always a possibility when supporting children and young people with trauma in their lives. This is especially so when children and young people feel safe enough to share something of their story. These privileged moments also bear a cost. In this second version of the Trauma Sensitive Schools Project, the whole staff from each of the schools participated in *Making SPACE for Learning*. The shared understanding and common language of this undertaking fostered more supportive professional relationships in each of the schools. Caring supportive professional relationships equates to healthier brains, for everyone!

As people of compassion, educators stand in defiance of apathy and refuse to be mute in the face of suffering. Being trauma aware and employing trauma-informed pedagogy is essential for effectively responding to the needs of children and young people who carry trauma in their lives. Drawing on this, the articulation of the Trauma Sensitive Schools Project in each of the project schools was much more than a pedagogical project. It was a resolve for justice, the pursuit of the ideal that each child and young person has an entitlement to see the world around them as safe, relationships as



nurturing and respectful engagement as beneficial. In this sense the 2016-17 Trauma Sensitive Schools Project was an exercise of trauma-informed compassion that was transformative.

Michael Lincoln
Behaviour Consultant
Catholic Education South Australia

Reference

Halifax. Joan (2010) https://www.ted.com/talks/joan_halifax

Making SPACE for Learning



ALL SAINTS CATHOLIC PRIMARY SCHOOL

PROJECT REPORT AND POWERPOINT PRESENTATION

Making SPACE for Learning



Trauma Sensitive Practice in Schools

Mindfulness – Engagement – Learning



Melissa Canil

All Saints Catholic Primary School – Seaford SA

Research Project Inquiry Question

“Does the implementation of Mindfulness and Calming Activities after recess and lunch improve student engagement in learning?”

Framework/theme focus areas

At All Saints Catholic Primary School we have many children who have experienced various levels of Trauma throughout their childhood and in their home environment. These children present with social, emotional, academic and behaviour difficulties which effects their ability to engage in learning on a daily basis.

School Context

All Saints Catholic Primary School is situated on Grand Boulevard in Seaford and currently has 598 children enrolled. All Saints opened in February 1994 and is adjacent to the Seaford

Ecumenical Centre (SEM). All Saints has a large hall, a kitchen, an oval, two playgrounds, gardens, and a library/resource centre.

Faith and recontextualising our Catholic identity is an important part of the All Saints community. Our vision statement is *“A spirit-centered community of learners, inspired by Jesus, seeking integrity and fullness of life.”* This vision reflects the strong connection our school has with linking our everyday learning to the life and teachings of Jesus Christ, while encouraging every member of the community to seek fulfillment.

All Saints has 24 Classes from Reception to Year 7. There are 14 Indigenous children at the school. There are 29 funded children for adaptive education and 95 children who have an IEP. We have 2 GOM students (Guardianship of the Minister). There is a large number of children from multi-cultural backgrounds (EAL). Across the school there are 31 children known to have experienced some form of trauma throughout their childhood however, there are many more suspected to have experienced trauma. This means that some children present with behaviour and/or emotional instability that is consistent with that of trauma affected children.

Year Level 2016	Focus Children
Reception	2
Year 1	2
Year 2	4
Year 3	4
Year 4	8
Year 5	6
Year 6	2
Year 7	3
Total	31

All Saints base their teaching and learning on the philosophy of Reggio Emilia, which is a city in Italy. This influences the child's learning and the materials and furniture used. The importance is on the environment being the child's third teacher. Many staff members at All Saints have visited Reggio Emilia and participated in a study tour.

Project Focus

The focus of our project was to identify the children who have experienced Trauma and implement strategies to improve their engagement in learning. We aimed to explore the various ways that we could support the emotional needs of our traumatised children without compromising the needs of the whole class. Teachers need to know each and every child and how they learn. This is quite complex for a traumatised child, therefore one of our focuses was to implement strategies that connect with our traumatised children and help them engage in learning. The whole class setting was also taken into consideration because we realised that the strategies that benefit traumatised children also benefitted every child.

At All Saints we recognised that the most difficult times for our traumatised children is after recess and lunch times. These children find it difficult to settle and engage in learning after play times. Often the traumatised children will feel anxious or emotional about a yard play incident and need assistance to return calmly to their classroom.

Our main focus of our project was to implement calming and mindful activities after recess and lunch as a way of creating a calm learning environment and preparing the children to engage positively in learning. We wanted the focus to become a whole-school strategy that every member of our community was part of. By providing staff and children with resources to do this (Eg, MindUp Currulum), we intended to create a place of calm at All Saints. The calming activities will become second nature to our staff and children and therefore innately become part of our school culture.

Another main focus of our Trauma Project is the education of our school community about trauma and how it affects a child's development. If we are implementing a whole-school strategy then it is imperative that all members of our community have an understanding about what we are doing and why we are doing it.

Timeframe

Our Trauma journey began in March 2016 when All Saints had 2 school closure days so that every member of staff could participate in the Trauma Training. The Trauma Project has been a whole-school strategy. After completing the training we formed a Trauma Committee and appointed a POR to lead the Trauma Project.

In Term 2 2016 the committee discussed the project and possible focus areas. After deciding on our inquiry question, we each chose a Traumatised child that we would take data from. We took raw data for 4 weeks in Term 3 then realised we needed to change our data record sheet to include more information. We took further data for 4 weeks and then started implementing calming activities. We implemented calming activities after play times as a whole school for a whole term before taking any further data. Term 4 was a time of immersing our children in mindful and calming activities so that it started to become a habit for them.

Term 1 2017 is when we took further data of our traumatised children to explore the impact that the calming and mindful activities have had on the children's engagement in learning.

Staff involved

Every member of All Saints Catholic Primary School Staff attended the Trauma Sensitive Schools Training in March 2016.

The Trauma project was lead by:

- Principal – Justin Cavuoto
- Deputy Principal – Helen Thompson
- POR (Trauma Project and Child Development) – Melissa Canil – Year 5 Teacher

Trauma Committee:

- Jess Rushby – Reception teacher
- Sharmaine Gawley – Year 1 Teacher
- Lindee Hopkins – Year 3 Teacher and POR
- Kylie Sumner – Year 3 Teacher
- Sharon Carter – Education Support Officer

Project Data also recorded by:

- Danae Ceasarowicz – Year 5 Teacher
- Karen Faulkner – Education Support Officer

Description of Project

The Trauma Project was a much needed endeavour for All Saints Catholic Primary School. With children who have experienced trauma in almost every classroom affecting the learning environment for other non-traumatised children, it was obvious that our school needed to address the needs of this cohort of children at a deeper level. After the staff completed the trauma training in March 2016, it became evident to us that many more children may have experienced trauma that we had previously not recognised.

After the training, a trauma committee was formed to develop the direction of our project. We analysed our Making SPACE for Learning – Site Audit Tool and looked at some of the suggestions and ideas from staff that could support our traumatised children. We recognised that there are many children at All Saints that have experienced trauma at varying levels. For example, grief and loss, family breakdown, violence, mental health issues, alcohol abuse and foster care. The staff recognised that these children’s engagement in learning was affected by behaviours such as

- Running out of the classroom or running to hide
- Hiding in corners, under desks
- Lashing out with violent behaviour
- Unsettled when changes in routine
- Anxiously pacing or tapping
- Poor communication skills
- Lack in confidence and low self-esteem
- Poor hygiene
- Avoidance strategies
- Withdrawing or unable to trust
- Defiance
- Not engaging in learning due to the inability to overcome feelings of anger and anxiety
- Disrupting peers
- Not participating in group work
- Verbal abuse
- Breaking or throwing things
- Over-reaction and self-blame with minor situations
- Loud, noisy voice and sounds
- Attention seeking behaviour
- Inability to engage in conflict resolution
- Socially awkward

After surveying the staff, it became apparent that these behaviours were most visible after recess and lunch play times. This is why we developed a focus question around calming our children down after play times. We strived to make it part of our school culture that we regularly engage in mindfulness and calming activities. We aimed to give our children the skills and knowledge to be able to practise mindfulness daily and use it as a tool for self-calming.

Our very first step in the trauma project was to hear first-hand from other teachers who had engaged in the project previously. We organised a visit from two teachers who had been involved in the CESA pilot Trauma Project the previous year. These two teachers were from Our Lady of Mount Carmel School, Pennington and presented their project at the ACF International Conference. The aim of this presentation was to give our staff a sense of what is involved in the trauma project and gain some ideas about our direction. The staff found it insightful to view what another school had done and how it improved their overall student behaviour and engagement in learning.

To begin with, we needed to take raw data on our focus children’s emotional state after play times to evaluate their current engagement in learning. The trauma committee members each identified one trauma child to take data on and observe throughout the project. We took raw data twice daily for 4 weeks using the proformas below. We began with the first proforma but then decided to change it to a more specific, in depth proforma to collect data.

Trauma Project Data Collection – Proforma 1

Child's Name: _____
Date: _____

Year Level: _____
Lesson: _____

After Recess engagement in learning

Tick appropriate box ✓

Highly Anxious and no engagement

Shows some signs of anxiety with minimal engagement

Mostly engaged with very little signs of anxiety

Completely Calm and positive engagement

Comments

Trauma Project Data Collection – Proforma 2

Date:	Name:									Year Level:
Time:	Lesson:									
Engagement Criteria:	5min	10min	15min	20min	25min	30min	35min	40min	45min	Comments
Attentive (cognitive)										
Interacting with Peers and Teacher (social)										
Focused on Task (pre-frontal)										
Ask Questions (pre-frontal)										
Is the child calm?										

During this time of data collection we provided staff with resources, ideas and strategies for conducting mindfulness and calming activities in the classroom. After the 4 weeks of raw data collection, every teacher implemented calming and mindfulness activities immediately after recess and lunch play. Some of these activities were:

- Mandalas
- Origami
- Relaxation music with guided breathing
- Hand drumming
- Pinwheel blowing
- Controlled breathing
- Guided meditation
- Mindful taste, touch, movement
- Yoga, Tai Chi
- Feather blowing
- Bubble blowing
- Mirroring



Calming Activities

The implementation of mindfulness and calming activities was simply one aspect journey in the trauma project. Throughout 2016, the trauma committee ran staff meetings regularly to keep the staff up-to-date and engaged with our learning around trauma and how it affects the brain. During these staff meetings, we shared resources, had discussions and engaged in hands-on calming activities. It was very valuable for the teachers and ESO's to engage in mindfulness themselves and then be able to practice it with their class. The committee shared up-to-date resources and video clips around the benefits of mindfulness and calming activities to keep staff encouraged along our journey.

One of our strategies to further staff education around trauma was the online "SMART" (Strategies for managing abuse related trauma) training program. This is a free training program created by the Australian Childhood



Foundation that aims to enhance the capacity of those working with children to effectively respond to the needs of children who have experienced abuse and trauma. All classroom teachers completed this training in 2016 and new teachers to All Saints in 2017 also completed it.

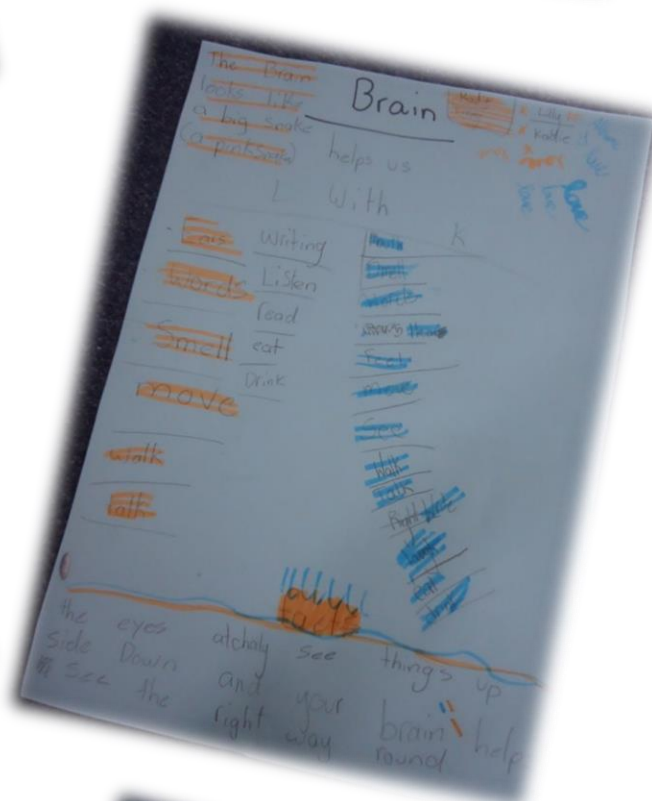
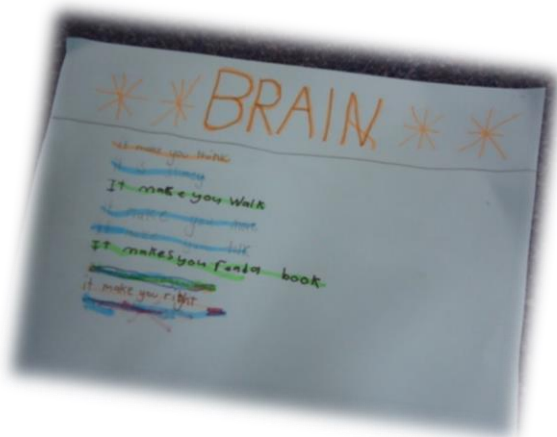
We chose not to take our post-data until our children were very well equipped with the skills of mindfulness and brain calming activities. Mindfulness is an acquired skill and is not something that we would expect our children to be able to pick up in one term. We wanted solid results for our inquiry question therefore we took the time we needed to explore the brain, how it works and strategies to calm in down with our children. To compliment our practice in mindfulness we installed the 'Smiling Mind' App on all school iPads which is a non-for-profit web and app-based meditation program developed by psychologists and educators to help bring mindfulness in your life. We needed our children to gain a deep understanding of mindful awareness and the positive effects this creates within the brain so they were able to see a purpose for what we were doing through the trauma project.

Mid-year 2016 we introduced the MindUp Curriculum. This is a comprehensive curriculum that fosters social and emotional awareness, enhances psychological wellbeing and promotes academic success. Every classroom teacher was provided with the resource book and we discussed the purpose and activities that MindUp offers. Teachers began using this resource immediately as it is very user friendly and can be integrated with other areas of learning such as Health, Religion and English. The MindUp Curriculum was an integral part of educating our children about the brain and how it works. It was imperative that our children had a comprehensive understanding of brain physiology and mental processes. In particular the Limbic system which controls the emotions and motivations from deep inside the brain. We educated our children by explicit teaching and various practical activities the three key parts of the Limbic system: the Amygdala, Prefrontal Cortex and the Hippocampus. The key understanding that we wanted our children to understand was how the Amygdala does not know the difference between perceived threats and actual threats from the sensory input. This is what can trigger 'false alarm' reactive behaviour that is often a child lashing out in anger and causing disturbance to the classroom environment or yard. This is described as unmindful behavior, which is a negative action before the mind thinks about it. This is why it was of high importance that children understand what mindful awareness is so that they can consciously process sensory input.



“With children who have experienced trauma in almost every classroom affecting the learning environment for other non-traumatised children, it was obvious that our school needed to address the needs of this cohort of children at a deeper level. After the staff completed the trauma training in March 2016, it became evident to us that many more children may have experienced trauma that we had previously not recognised.”

Mind-Up Curriculum and learning about the brain in Classrooms at All Saints



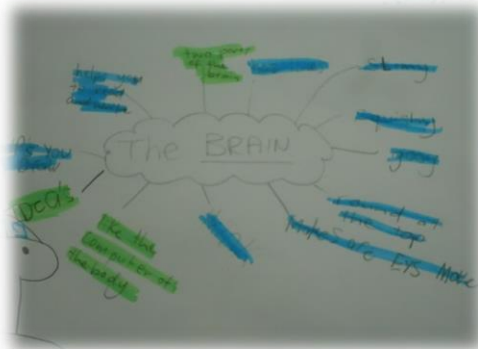
An important part of becoming a Trauma Sensitive School is educating the entire community about trauma and how it affects the brain. We kept our community informed of our journey through the trauma project with regular newsletter articles, posters, displays of children's learning on the brain and a parent workshop. In September 2016 we ran a parent workshop on trauma and the brain and we also produced a parent fact sheet to distribute within the community. The workshop covered these topics:

- Our purpose for being involved in the CESA Trauma Project
- Definition of trauma and how it affects the developing brain of a child.
- Trauma and engagement in learning
- How do we collect data and what will we do with our data
- Physiology of the brain - Fight – Flight – Freeze
- Calming activities in the classroom
- Mindfulness and it's benefits for children

Throughout the trauma project many class teachers added a 'Calm Zone' to their classroom and we created one in the office for access by all children. The Calm Zone was designed to be a safe place that children could go to when they are

feeling anxious, angry or when they are about to 'flip their lid'. The Calm Zone was usually a teepee or tent so that children could enclose themselves away from distractions.

The Calm Zone was equipped with fidgets and objects to assist the children calm their brain. For



example, stress ball, mandalas and gel pens, feathers, bubbles, soft blanket and pillows. By creating an open space for children to calm themselves down, we were giving them the opportunity to create a time buffer between the input and response. Therefore if their Amygdala was firing and they were able to calm themselves down then this prevents unmindful behavior that could



potentially affect the classroom environment.

By Term 4 2016, every class teacher was running mindful and calming activities after every play time and children would often be able to run these activities themselves. This became habitual in many classes and children often looked forward to this time as being in the yard was very stimulating and children appreciated the 'down time' directly after it. Children were using 'brain language' to describe their emotions and feelings as the majority of teachers had worked through parts of the MindUp curriculum, some more than others. We produced a folder for each classroom



teacher that included scripts for meditation, resources for calming activities, ideas and easy-to-read instructions on how to carry out meditation with children. We also had a common folder on our school network where teachers shared resources such as meditation music, scripts, video clips or links that supported MindUp.

In 2017 we purchased a large amount of literacy resources that linked directly to the MindUp curriculum. Teachers were also provided with a 'Calming Kit' for their classroom. As we continued our journey through the trauma project we wanted to ensure that teachers were provided with appropriate resources to support their work with children around mindfulness.

We took our final data in Term 2 2017 which was taken after children had engaged in a calming activity. Children were very well practiced in the art of mindfulness and it was part of our school culture that calming the brain was something we do on a regular basis.



Evaluation processes

In order to evaluate the effectiveness of our inquiry question, we used a variety of evaluation methods to observe outcomes. The evaluation process began with observing our case study children BEFORE implementing any calming strategies. We used the data collection proformas to do this and made anecdotal notes about the

children on their behaviour and influences that might be affecting their emotional state. For example, one case study child was observed to behave differently at school depending on which parent (divorced parents) that they were staying with for the week.

The initial data was taken early in 2016 to effectively gauge how long our focus children could stay engaged in their learning and how effectively they were engaging in their learning after play times. This initial data was very important for us to compare with post-data in order to show evidence to support the effectiveness of mindfulness and calming activities.

Once our raw data was taken then it was time to implement mindfulness, calming activities, learning about the brain and the MindUp Curriculum. To evaluate the effectiveness of this, we interviewed children and documented their responses. Through staff meetings we discussed different calming strategies and resources that we were using and how they were effective or not effective. The trauma committee met regularly to evaluate the direction of our trauma project.

In 2017 we took our final post-data on our case study children. We used the same proforma to observe how the case study children engaged in learning after recess and lunch play however, the most important factor was that every child was engaging in mindfulness BEFORE beginning their learning. Our post-data were integral in proving our inquiry question. Once calming activities and mindfulness were part of a regular routine for our children, the results were almost immediate. Apart from our data results, staff was asked the following question as part of our evaluation process - *"Have you noticed any change in your children's engagement in learning AFTER they do a calming or mindful activity? Describe."* Their answers provided further evidence that we were on the right track as far as proving our inquiry question.

- *"The children approach work with far less apprehension and are calmer."*
- *"Yes. They are generally more calm and able to focus for slightly longer."*
- *"They are certainly more responsive to listening and are more likely to follow instructions or listen to other people's ideas and thoughts."*
- *"The physical calming activities as a class worked well as a way of burning off extra energy ready to commence their learning."*
- *"Yes. The children become more focussed and centred."*
- *"More engaged, settled and happier persona."*
- *"They seem a little more refreshed, at peace. They re-gain a little more focus."*
- *"Yes. The children are a lot more settled and focused during learning time."*
- *"Yes. More concentration, being mindful and focus is higher."*
- *"Yes! They are communicating more about their feelings and taking control of their thoughts/feelings/actions and are more focussed."*
- *"Yes, much more settled, focussed, ability to engage/continue learning."*
- *"Much more settled and on task."*
- *"The children's ability to think analytically about a narrative, predict events, spot mistakes etc. has improved greatly."*

When comparing our data taken from before and after implementing mindfulness and calming activities, there was a clear improvement in the length of time that children could stay engaged. The data also showed less anxiety in our focus children after they engaged in mindfulness/calming activities after play times.

Outcomes - What's different now?

The trauma project was a significant part of our work at All Saints around developing the 'whole child' (spiritually, emotionally, physically). The wellbeing of our children is of high importance in order for them to engage successfully in their learning journey. After our journey through the trauma project, teachers and children are now equipped with skills to manage their emotional wellbeing with more confidence. All Saints is now on the way to becoming a calm learning environment.

A big difference that has come about from the trauma project is the community's understanding around trauma and how it affects the brain. Parents and staff have learnt about the physiology of the brain and how it contributes to how a child learns. The children have learnt in depth how their brain works, what happens when they have certain feelings and how they can control their emotions. The calming strategies and mindfulness is something that children have shared with their families at home. This all contributes to our community having appreciation for our work in the trauma project and how to improve our school.

We were very pleased with the data results as it proved to us that calming activities made a difference to our case study children. Some of the differences that we noticed in our case study children were:

- staying in class for longer periods of time.
- focussing longer on a learning task in class
- positively interacting with peers and teachers rather than withdrawing or lashing out
- being able to calm themselves down better by using techniques we had taught them.

A big difference at All Saints now is that calming activities and mindfulness is something that is part of our daily routine. Many classes continue to engage in mindfulness after play times and children are able to run these activities independently in some classes. The MindUp curriculum is something that is continuing to be taught across year levels therefore the children of All Saints have a deeper understanding of the brain and how it works.

Data

The data below was taken with Proforma 1 which was less specific than Proforma 2. This data collection only required a tick in one box to assess the child's engagement in learning however the second data collection sheet was more specific about how the child was engaging in learning. The initial data in 2016 was collated from 6 case study children throughout the school. The data was taken daily over a four week period.

Child A – Year 1

Child B – Year 2

Child C – Year 2

Child D – Year 3

Child E – Year 4

Child F – Year 5

The numbers on the graph below show how many times a focus child was recorded in each box. For example, in the first column there were 34 ticks recorded in the "highly anxious" box.

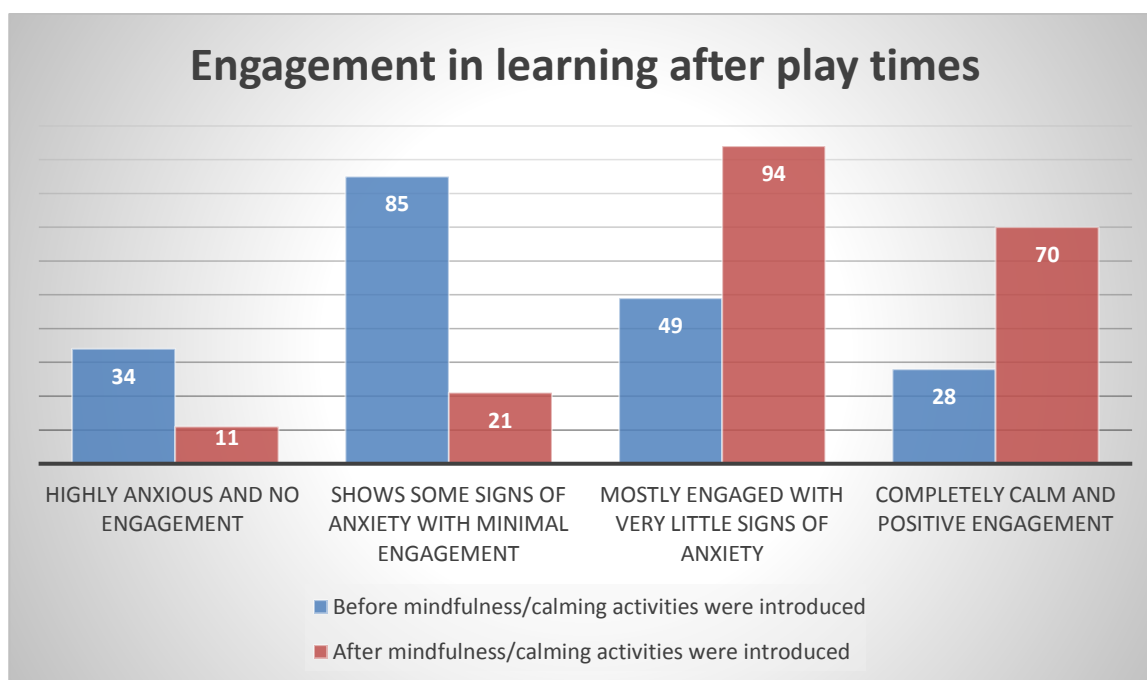
Trauma Project Data Collection Sheet

Child's Name: I.P Year Level: 1
Date: 1-8-16 Lesson: after recess / finishing etc

After Recess engagement in learning Tick appropriate box ✓

Highly Anxious and no engagement	Shows some signs of anxiety with minimal engagement	Mostly engaged with very little signs of anxiety	Completely Calm and positive engagement
	✓		

Comments
• physically looked angry in line up
• with positive reinforcement settled into learning



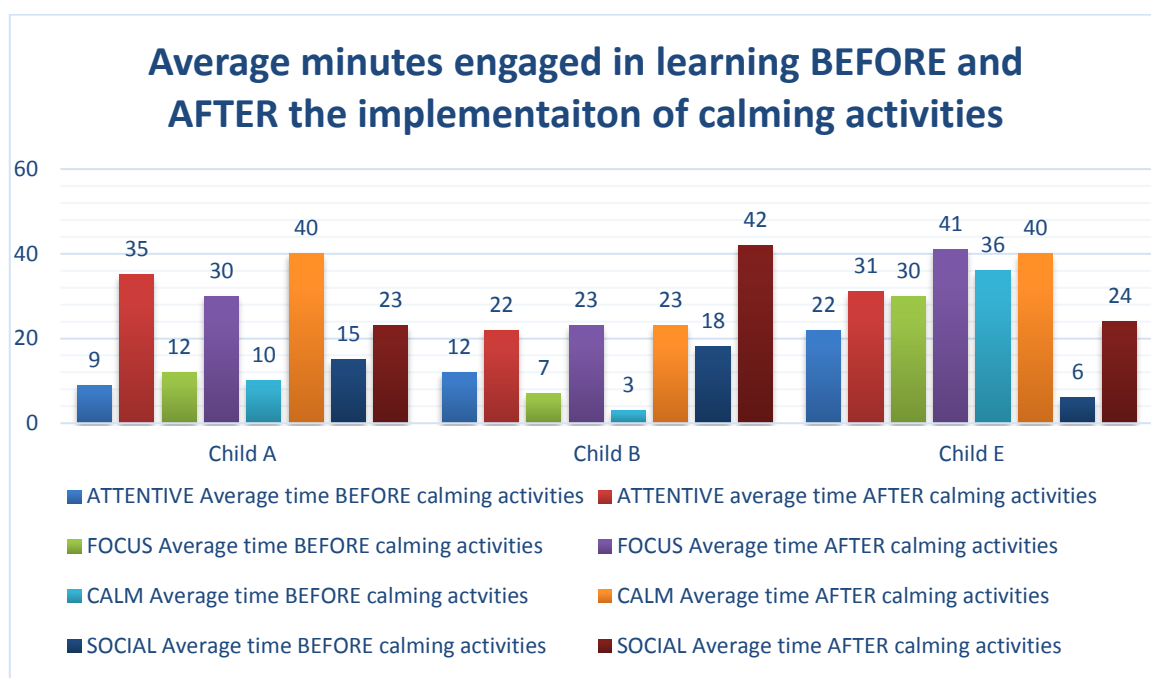
The graph above shows that there was clear improvement in anxiety levels of our focus children after we introduced calming activities. The greatest results is in the area of “showing SOME signs of anxiety”. This is an obvious success of the trauma project as we can see that we have improved the anxiety levels of children by simply engaging in regular mindfulness.

In 2017 when we took our data to show the results after introducing calming activities, we used both proformas again. This was because we did not want to waste the original data that we took on Proforma 1 but we needed something to compare it to. The graph below shows the data from Proforma 2, which is the more specific. We only managed to collect data on three of our original case study children in 2017 as some children moved to another school. It was also a challenge that the children were in different classes with different teachers who had not previously taken data or been part of the Trauma Committee.

The graph below shows improvement across all areas in the trauma child’s engagement in learning. Child A who is now in Year 2 showed the greatest amount of improvement in remaining calm and engaging in learning. Child E did not have much movement on their scale as this child is very withdrawn and it is often difficult to tell whether they are calm or not and their level of engagement in learning is generally good. Child B showed some excellent growth in ability to remain calm, focussed and positively engaged in learning.

The most significant change we noticed after introducing the calming activities after play times was how much calmer and focussed the children were during the lesson. We learnt that by giving our children time to calm their minds before commencing a lesson, allowed the brain to return to an optimal state for learning. The bar graphs clearly indicate the increase of learning engagement from our case study trauma children.

Trauma Project Data Collection										
Date: 23rd May	Time: 9:40am					Name: I.P				Year Level: 2G
						Lesson: Guided Reading				
Engagement Criteria:	5min	10min	15min	20min	25min	30min	35min	40min	45min	Comments
Attentive (cognitive)					✓					After a 'rocky' start to the day/morning as arrived late Settled into learning well and was engaged and focused with a intrinsic desire to complete his learning task.
Interacting with Peers and Teacher (social)				✓						
Focused on Task (pre-frontal)					✓					
Ask Questions (pre-frontal)		✓								
Is the child calm?					✓					



Staff Response

The staff was asked for responses to a survey in both 2016 and 2017. We ensured that we regularly discussed as a staff, the direction, challenges and positive steps forward throughout our trauma project journey. For many of the staff, the work we did around trauma and how it affects the brain was significantly new learning for them. They were asked:

What has been your most significant learning this year around trauma and how it affects children in our care?

- *"I have always done calming activities and didn't realise how positive they can be for children with a trauma background."*
- *"I was so interested to learn about how children's development can be stunted when they experience trauma."*
- *"I've gained a great collection of strategies to implement in the classroom."*
- *"I've learnt how the brain works and what bits get affected when there is trauma."*
- *"Learning why children may act certain ways and I also believe the sharing of resources has helped."*
- *"Their different needs. The needs on one day could be completely different to the next. It's worthwhile having a few different strategies up your sleeve."*
- *"I have enjoyed learning about the physiological affects trauma can have on the brain. This has helped me to understand the reasons behind some children's behaviours."*
- *"A greater pool of activities to introduce in aid of creating a calmer classroom."*
- *"Understand the brain has been a fantastic learning curve."*

During our trauma staff meetings we often had discussions and asked the staff questions about their understanding of trauma and what it means to be trauma sensitive. With the intention of re-working our Personal Responsibility Policy, we posed questions to staff about how we would do this with a trauma sensitive view. Here are some responses:

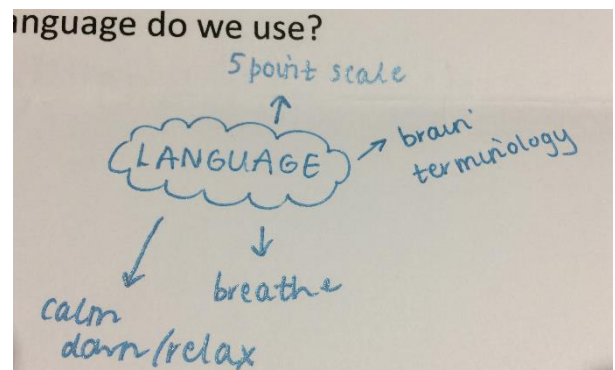
What does being a Trauma Sensitive School mean? What is our belief about trauma children?

- "We are sensitive to the needs of the children"
- "We employ practices to support those children from trauma backgrounds"
- "Children who have experienced trauma respond differently to various environments/practices"
- "Children who have experienced trauma have the same right to learn as others"
- "Being aware and knowing the children as individual and unique"
- "We have the tools to be able to assist these children case by case"
- "Each child is different and we acknowledge that we need to support them in different ways"
- "Behaviour is based on physiological affects – not choices"
- "Being sensitive to the needs of children and understanding how trauma affects the brain"
- "Supporting individual needs and implementing strategies appropriately"

How does it impact the way we teach and interact with children?

- "We utilise the information we have learnt to create a calming environment"
- "All classes use a similar approach/same language and we build strong relationships"
- "We treat them with respect and dignity"
- "Listening and being aware of their needs"
- "We are always mindful and aware of their situations"
- "We are on the lookout for their triggers"

What does it look like? What language do we use?



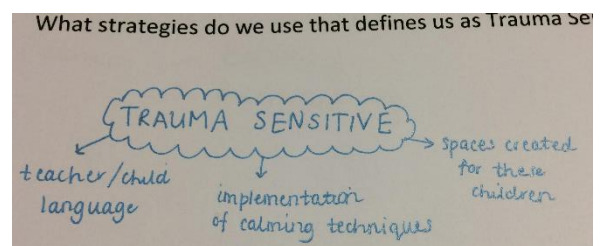
- "Calm, less talk"
- "Respectful and appropriate language"
- "Building capacity for self-regulation"
- "Consistent, inclusive, responsive"
- "Positive language and brain language eg. Flip your lid"
- "5 Point scale"

What strategies do we use that define us as Trauma Sensitive?

- "MindUp Curriculum and calming activities"
- "Mindfulness"
- "Learning about the brain"
- "Calming exercises like breathing and awareness"

How does it link to our Catholic Identity?

- "Every child is unique and different"
- "Every child matters and has a voice"
- "Child created in God's image"
- "Reconciliation – restorative justice/practice"



- *“Upholding the dignity of the child”*
- *“Made in the image of God – dignity of the child”*
- *“Valuing uniqueness”*
- *“Reggio image of the child – competent and capable”*
- *“Our job isn’t done until the child transforms”*

In Term 2 2017 Staff completed a survey through Survey Monkey. This was a great opportunity for us to gain feedback on how the Trauma project has made an impact on our staff, children and community. We also wanted to explore ways we could continue to be Trauma Sensitive and how we could continue to be a Trauma Sensitive School after the Project’s completion. We received some rich and insightful responses and gave us direction for future planning. Here are just a few of the responses to the staff survey.

How has the Trauma Project affected your own understanding of children affected by trauma and how it affects their brain?

- *“It has allowed my understanding of how children are affected by trauma and how it affects their brain in a huge way. I had limited knowledge on both of these areas prior to commencing the project, particularly how trauma affects brain development.”*
- *“The Trauma training, implementing the MindUp Curriculum, learning about the brain through staff meetings and working on the Trauma Project has helped me to understand the affect that brain education has on young people. This new learning has transformed the way I speak to children and I have implemented new language and strategies for supporting children. I have a new understanding of how important it is to educate children on brain function and how it supports their behaviour and wellbeing.”*

Has the Trauma Project influenced your teaching practice or the way you interact with children?

- *“Yes, the Trauma Project has allowed me to develop my understanding of trauma and brain development which then transfers into my teaching practice. Particularly in the way that I interact with children who have suffered trauma and also how we educate the children in understanding the brain and the development behind it.”*
- *“Yes, I now incorporate the MindUp Curriculum regularly in my class. I allow more time for brain breaks, meditations, calming activities and discussions about the function of the brain. I regularly hear children utilise the modelled language and I use different language with the children too.”*

Did you find calming activities/mindfulness a beneficial strategy to engage students in learning?

- *“Yes, calming activities and mindfulness is certainly a beneficial strategy to engage students in learning. I find this particularly useful when my class has engaged in a high energy activity or after play times. Providing an opportunity to calm/think/reset is such valuable lifelong learning.”*
- *“Yes, I have noticed that incorporating these activities from the beginning of the year (regularly) has supported some of the children in my class with calming themselves down independently and with having an understanding of why it’s important to feel calm and be mindful.”*

What were challenges along the way?

- *“I think the challenges that arose in my classroom include one particular child that really struggles to calm down and focus. However, I have noticed that from regularly*

and consistently implementing the MindUp Curriculum, using the consistent language and continuing with calm activities that I am starting to notice a difference."

Do you think All Saints is a trauma sensitive school? Why or why not?

- *"I think we are on the way to being a trauma sensitive school however it is essential that everyone is on board to ensure a whole school approach."*
- *"Yes, I think as a staff, we are aware of how to support children who have experienced trauma and we are aware that different approaches, language and strategies are needed for different children. I think that to continue being trauma sensitive, we need to regularly listen to all children and work hard at building relationships with not only children that have experienced trauma but all children."*

Student response

Early in 2017 we asked our early years children some questions about the brain. As a Reggio school, we place importance on documentation and using this to guide our learning programs. They were asked...

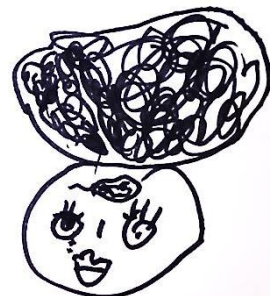
What is a brain?

- *"It helps you think about something and then you do it"*
- *"It makes your body move"*
- *"It has a red part in it"*
- *"It helps you think"*
- *"Your brain makes you move"*



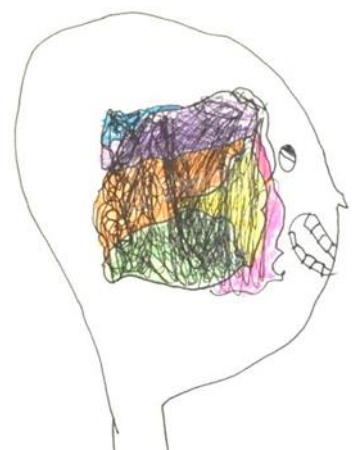
How can you make your brain grow stronger?

- *"You can give something a try"*
- *"By breathing deeply"*
- *"Trying to do something"*
- *"By saying 'I can' not saying 'I can't'"*
- *"Do something super tricky"*
- *"Say you can do it"*



What do you know about the brain now?

- *"It helps you move your body"*
- *"It has a thing like a padder and when you're frustrated it moves fast and when you're calm it moves slower"*
- *"It helps you think about the things you draw"*
- *"Because of the brain you can run"*
- *"It helps you walk fast"*
- *"Brain Food is good for your brain"*
- *"Yeah and broccoli"*
- *"Water is good for your brain"*
- *"There is a part in the brain that tastes which food is spicy"*
- *"If you give something a go, your brain will grow"*
- *"If you do something a little bit harder for you, then your brain will grow bigger"*
- *"Your brain is a very important thing to your body"*
- *"You need to exercise your brain"*
- *"You can eat lots of things for your brain to get healthy and bigger"*
- *"Feather breathing is good for your brain"*
- *"Yeah, it's good because it helps your brain calm down"*
- *"Relaxing is good for your brain"*



- *"We do inhale and exhale breathing"*
- *"Yeah you put the feather up and inhale"*
- *"Then you put it down and exhale"*
- *"Water calms my brain if I'm up on the 5 point scale"*
- *"Sometimes if you fall down and cry you have a deep breath and it helps your brain"*
- *"When you're high on the 5 point scale, you take a deep breath in and a deep breath out. They're called inhale and exhale"*
- *"When you're so angry, the little bit in your brain stops working and you might need to do feather breathing"*
- *"When you do all this stuff, your brain gets stronger"*
- *"Yoga is good for your brain. It helps it grow. Yoga makes you calm down"*

Children were given a survey towards the end of the Trauma Project to see how they felt about calming activities as part of our school culture. The children were asked the following questions:

1. What makes you feel angry or anxious?

- *"When people don't listen to me"*
- *"When I'm left out and don't get my way"*
- *"Being pushed around"*
- *"When people annoy me"*
- *"When people tackle in sport and they're not supposed to"*
- *"People being mean to me or my friends"*
- *"When I can't get my work done in time"*

2. What is your favourite calming activity?

- *"Listening to the relaxing music"*
- *"When the teacher tells me how to breath slowly"*
- *"Blowing bubbles"*
- *"My fidget spinner"*
- *"Thinking happy things and deep breaths"*
- *"I love colouring mandalas with gel pens"*
- *"Meditation"*
- *"Putting the feather on my face and blowing the feather"*
- *"Lying on the pillows in the tent"*

3. How do you feel after you do a calming activity?

- *"I feel calm and happy"*
- *"Very calm and relaxed"*
- *"Like I'm on a cloud that is floating"*
- *"Makes me feel happy and fresh"*
- *"Good, relaxed, happy, calm"*
- *"I feel relaxed"*

4. How do the calming activities help you during the school day?

- *"It calms me down after recess and lunch"*
- *"They help me with stress and help me forget all my troubles"*
- *"They help me focus"*
- *"The activities make me happy during the day and I can concentrate on my study"*
- *"It makes everyone relax after play time because sometimes people are a bit crazy after lunch"*
- *"When we listen to relaxing music and it's quiet, I can do my work better"*
- *"If something bad happens at recess then it helps me feel better"*

Hearing the children verbalise how they found calming activities beneficial was a very rewarding aspect of the project. We were glad to see that children responded positively to the calming activities and the children would notice if we forgot to do it during the day, as they would remind us!

Challenges

Our initial challenge in the trauma project was choosing what direction we would take and developing an inquiry question. The initial training days were excellent in regards to learning new information however we needed to work out how we used this information to develop and inquiry question. The inquiry questions needed to be something that we would be able to collect data on and prove that our school is working towards being trauma sensitive. Once our inquiry question was established we then had the challenge of developing a data recording proforma. Taking data for teachers was an extra pressure in their busy timetable therefore we needed to create a data recording system that was easy and quick. This is why we chose to use a tick box system.

Once our raw data was taken, the next challenge was getting staff on board with implementing mindfulness and calming activities in the classroom. The curriculum is already crowded and it was a challenge for us to convince teachers to make the time for mindfulness. There was a belief that if their classroom did not have any trauma children then they did not need to do calming activities. This is when we went down the road of educating the staff on the benefits of mindfulness. We used research, video clips and other resources to demonstrate the mindfulness is a technique that is beneficial to ALL children.

An ongoing challenge with the trauma project has been resistant staff and scepticism about what we were doing as a school community. Staff questioned whether calming activities and mindfulness had any real affect to children's engagement in learning. This was due to the challenges they were encountering when initially trying to implement these strategies. We needed to remind them that mindfulness is not something that you can learn overnight. We encouraged staff to persist as we believed it would prove to be beneficial. There was mention of labelling children as 'trauma affected' when they believed it was simply bad behaviour. It was seen as children who had experienced trauma getting away with certain behaviours by those staff who lacked understanding of the special needs of trauma affected children. We met these challenges by engaging in professional dialogue about our purpose as a trauma sensitive school and by revisiting our understanding of trauma and the brain. Another way we subtly challenged the doubters was by placing quotes, pictures and info strategically around the school/staffroom about positive steps forward. We constantly worked toward building a positive staff culture that would overcome challenges by team work.

Another challenge was when our school underwent building works during 2017. One third of the school grounds was closed off due to building. There were builders, trucks, cranes, bulldozers, machinery and temporary fences around the school grounds. The constant loud sounds and disruption to our school environment proved to be very challenging for our focus children and many other children with special needs. For example, our playground was closed for many weeks which immediately caused anxiety for several of our trauma children who find comfort in repetitive gross muscle movement (swinging on bars). During this time, we noticed that our children in general were hyper aroused and it seemed we almost took a step back in our trauma project. More than ever, our children needed to be engaged in calming activities and mindfulness after play times to settled them from a highly stimulating and crowded environment. However, this interruption was only temporary and simply a sacrifice

that our school needed to make in order to build new and exciting learning spaces for our children.

A community challenge we faced was educating the parents around trauma and the purpose of our project. When using the word “trauma” there is a stigmatism that comes with it and we overcame this by using different language. For example, in newsletter articles we would use the headings ‘child development’ or ‘learning about the brain’ rather than the word ‘trauma’.

All Saints is a large school and the biggest challenge has been getting everyone on board with the trauma project and working across such a diverse group of staff. We found that many staff were supportive however we needed ALL 24 classes to be engaging in calming activities and mindfulness as the trauma project was a whole-school approach. Creating calm zones and calm kits proved to be a challenging for some classes. Some teachers found it unnecessary or irrelevant to have a calm zone in their classroom. Some teachers were not supportive of the calm kits in their classroom as they felt it was also an unnecessary resource. As with every challenge, we needed to prove our purpose for what we were doing. We explained the effectiveness of calm zones for trauma children and how the calm kits were designed to be used as needed. The objects in the calm kit were aimed at reducing anxiety in children (eg. stress ball).

Most significant learning

The initial training that we did as staff was the most significant learning about how the brain works and how trauma affects the development of the brain. Children are so vulnerable to the effects of trauma because their brain is malleable. The brain development of a traumatised child can slow down or be impaired which is why they experience splintered development. The Limbic System is the part of our nervous system that is responsible for our survival, emotions, fear, anger and our fight/flight response. If parts of a child’s Limbic System are impaired, it can strongly influence their behaviour. Children with prolonged exposure to traumatic situations are overwhelmed with internal reactions. Traumatized children shut down their feelings, stop trusting other, do anything to survive and push memories of pain away which leaves very little space in the brain for learning. We now know that trauma children avoid trusting anyone and have a distorted view of relationships. This has a huge impact on their engagement in a classroom setting. Through the trauma project we learnt that often the behaviours displayed by traumatised children can be misunderstood. Behaviour is communication and when a traumatised child is acting in a way that we may think is ‘bad behaviour’, it could actually be an internal response from their amygdala. The Amygdala of a traumatised child is constantly firing as they scan their environment for potential threats. Understanding how the nervous system of a trauma child is altered by their experiences, is imperative to working with them on strategies to restore calm.

The next part of our significant learning was discovering the benefits of mindfulness and calming activities. Some of our key learning around mindfulness was that when you’re feeling calm, it means that you can use your Pre-Frontal Cortex to regulate impulses such as:

- Being aware of own feelings and other people’s feelings – having intuition
- Understanding values & morals – thinking about the needs of others and the environment
- Talking about your feelings and managing your feelings
- Allowing you to develop supportive & trusting relationships
- Allowing you to develop all of this to become resilient.

Mindfulness is a skill that requires lots of practise therefore our children needed to be regularly exposed to calming and mindful activities to become competent in controlling their emotions and thoughts.

Key messages

One key message that we have taken from our work with traumatised children is that it is an ongoing challenge. Some days calming activities will have no effect on a traumatised child if they are having one of “those” days. Becoming a trauma sensitive school is an ongoing task that requires ALL of the community to commit to. It will always have challenges and it will be something that requires practise and persistence. There were setbacks and challenges along the way of our trauma project however we kept focussing on the successes and not giving up. Traumatized children are challenging in many ways and require a nurturing and calm environment to be able to succeed.

Another message that we have taken from our project is that the impact of learning about the brain is significant in becoming a trauma sensitive school. The knowledge that the staff gained from the training helped them understand traumatised children at a deeper level and implement strategies to improve child development at All Saints. When the children started learning about how their brain works then they were able to articulate their emotions better and recognise when they were close to “flipping their lid”.

We would encourage every school in CESA to work towards becoming trauma sensitive. Something significant that we noticed was how calming activities and mindfulness was beneficial to ALL children and not simply just a strategy for traumatised children. Using calming strategies was particularly helpful for children with ASD and special needs. Once we recognised that these strategies were benefitting every child, we made it part of our daily routine. Even staff were engaging in regular mindfulness and calming activities at staff meetings.

Conclusion

The Trauma Project at All Saints has been a valuable learning experience for our staff, children and community. It is only the beginning of the work that we intend to do around developing the WHOLE child. Staff have become more informed in the neurobiology of the brain therefore being able to teach our children about how the brain works. The Trauma Committee have become leaders to other staff, especially new staff, and are able to mentor colleagues on how to integrate mindfulness in the class timetable

A continuing challenge for All Saints is understanding the individual stories of our traumatised children and working out how to cater for their needs amongst a classroom of diverse needs. Traumatized children can take up a large amount of time and energy some days and our challenge is to be consistently provide a calm and nurturing environment where relationships are central

One of the challenges our staff are facing is understanding children’s trauma stories and finding ways to support, connect and understand these students. We are currently witnessing a gradual change within our school culture as to how our staff is viewing children’s behaviour. Our teachers are now applying their knowledge of the Limbic system when faced with students displaying unmindful thoughts and actions. This reinforces the importance of getting to know the story behind the negative behaviour, as we’re seeing more teachers take this into consideration.

The trauma project has launched a wellbeing focus at All Saints and it has become part of our strategic plan to improve child wellbeing. We have already learnt that calming strategies and mindfulness can make a large impact on a child's engagement in learning. We are now keen to find out what other strategies we can use to become more trauma sensitive. One idea we have is to create a central "Calm Zone" where children can visit when they are feeling overwhelmed in their classroom or in the yard.

Our children have become "experts" in the neurobiology of the brain and are able to articulate their learning when faced with threatening situations. They understand why we do calming activities and they are making the connections with how and why they react to certain situations. The children now realise that the physical sensations they experience are actually the expression of certain emotions. In some cases children are able to use a range of calming techniques on their own to help manage their emotional responses. Our children are now able to identify early warning signs in themselves and are able to use calming techniques appropriately to reduce their level of anxiety. It is so rewarding to see children self-regulating and self-soothing when they are feeling anxious or angry.

The Trauma Project has been a significant development in child wellbeing at All Saints and helped promote a positive and calm learning environment. We feel that we have made a positive impact on the school and we are eager to continue working towards trauma informed practice throughout the whole school. Being a trauma sensitive school is something that requires persistence, patience and passion. We believe that we have made a great step towards trauma informed practice and required the dedicated of the entire community to continue our journey in child development at All Saints.

Resources

You Tube Clips

- Dan Siegel - "Flipping Your Lid:" A Scientific Explanation.
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=GOT_2NNoC68
- Dr. Dan Siegel- On The Importance of Mindfulness.
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=FXxrJEnIboM>
- A Quiet Revolution – Mindfulness in Education
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=cJzcdeEaOBA>
- Making School Mindful: The Benefits of Meditation for Children
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=yaZJB24nbaE>

Film clips

- <http://removedfilm.com/> - Removed Part 1 and 2.

Websites

- <http://youth.anxietybc.com/> - Downloaded scripts for mindful activities: Body Scan, Calm Breathing, Mindful Breathing,
- <http://www.therapistaid.com/> - Mindful Exercises for Children
- www.actonpurpose.com.au – "I just want to be me: Mindful activities for young children"
- <http://www.coolaustralia.org/> - Teacher Resource Unit -The Nature of Mindfulness – 2 minute activities – Primary.
- <https://nfrc.ucla.edu/> - Focus Family Resiliency Training Manual – Appendix B: Calming and

- Grounding Activities
- “The Dunedin Multidisciplinary Health and Development Study”
<http://dunedinstudy.otago.ac.nz/>

Teacher Resources

- Making SPACE For Learning: Australian Childhood Foundation
- The MindUp Curriculum – Scholastic www.mindup.org and the school purchased many of the literature links that support the MindUp Curriculum
- ‘Smiling Mind’ App installed on all school ipads – www.smilingmind.com.au
- SMART online Training – Australian Childhood Foundation
- CESA Trauma Project Showcase Booklet 2015
- “Settling to Learn” by Louise Bomber and Daniel Hughes
- “The Body Keeps Score” by Bessel Van Der Kolk.



Project Team at All Saints Catholic Primary School

TRAUMA SENSITIVE SCHOOLS PROJECT

Mindfulness Engagement Learning

All Saints Catholic Primary School



School Context

"A spirit-centered community of learners, inspired by Jesus, seeking integrity and fullness of life."

- 24 Classes from Reception to Year 7
- 14 Indigenous children at the school
- 29 funded children for adaptive education and 95 children who have an IEP
- 2 GOM students (Guardianship of the Minister).
- There is a large number of children from multi-cultural backgrounds (EAL).
- 31 children "known" to have experienced some form of trauma throughout their childhood

Year Level	Traumatised Children
2016	
Reception	2
Year 1	2
Year 2	4
Year 3	4
Year 4	8
Year 5	6
Year 6	2
Year 7	3
Total	31



Behaviours displayed by Focus Children



- Running out of the classroom or hiding
- Hiding in corners, under desks
- Lashing out with violent behaviour
- Unsettled when changes in routine
- Anxiously pacing or tapping
- Poor communication skills
- Lack in confidence and low self-esteem
- Avoidance strategies
- Withdrawing or unable to trust
- Defiance
- Not engaging in learning
- Disrupting peers
- Overcome with feelings of anger and anxiety.
- Verbal abuse
- Breaking or throwing things
- Over-reaction and self-blame
- Loud, noisy voice and sounds
- Attention seeking behaviour
- Inability to engage in conflict resolution
- Socially awkward

Inquiry Question

"Does the implementation of Mindfulness and Calming Activities after recess and lunch improve student engagement in learning?"



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Year 4	8
Year 5	6
Year 6	2
Year 7	3
Total	31



Behaviours displayed by Focus Children



- Running out of the classroom or hiding
- Hiding in corners, under desks
- Lashing out with violent behaviour
- Unsettled when changes in routine
- Anxiously pacing or tapping
- Poor communication skills
- Lack in confidence and low self-esteem
- Avoidance strategies
- Withdrawing or unable to trust
- Defiance
- Not engaging in learning
- Disrupting peers
- Overcome with feelings of anger and anxiety.
- Verbal abuse
- Breaking or throwing things
- Over-reaction and self-blame
- Loud, noisy voice and sounds
- Attention seeking behaviour
- Inability to engage in conflict resolution
- Socially awkward

DATA COLLECTION FORM 1

Child's Name: _____

Year Level: _____

Date: _____

Lesson: _____

After Recess engagement in learning

Tick appropriate box ✓

Highly Anxious and no engagement	Shows some signs of anxiety with minimal engagement	Mostly engaged with very little signs of anxiety	Completely Calm and positive engagement
Comments			

DATA COLLECTION FORM 2

Date:

Name:

Year Level:

Time:

Lesson:

Engagement Criteria:	5min	10min	15min	20min	25min	30min	35min	40min	45min	Comments
Attentive (cognitive)										
Interacting with Peers and Teacher (social)										
Focused on task (pre-frontal)										
Ask Questions (pre-frontal)										
Is the child calm?										

Focus Children

- Child A – Year 1
- Child B – Year 2
- Child C – Year 2
- Child D – Year 3
- Child E – Year 4
- Child F – Year 5

Trauma Project Data Collection Sheet

Child's Name: J.F. Year Level: 2G

Date: 1-8-16 Lesson: Guided Reading

After Reading engagement in learning

Engagement	Engagement	Engagement	Engagement
Engaged in learning	Engaged in learning	Engaged in learning	Engaged in learning

Comments: physically behind during lesson
with parent reinforcement gained into learning



Trauma Project Data Collection

Date: 23rd May Time: 1:40pm

Name: I.D Year Level: 2G

Lesson: Guided Reading

Engagement	Engagement	Engagement	Engagement	Engagement
Engaged in learning	Engaged in learning	Engaged in learning	Engaged in learning	Engaged in learning

Comments: After a 'reading' start to the day focusing on guided task
settled into learning well
and new engaged and focused with a positive desire to complete his learning task

Parent Workshop

- What is Trauma and how does it affect a child's brain?
- What is the role of All Saints as a Trauma Sensitive School?
- What is Trauma Informed Practice and how are we doing it?
- What does it mean for our children?



Are you interested in how the brain works?

Come to a Parent Trauma Workshop



- ✓ Learn how Trauma affects the brain of children.
- ✓ Learn how All Saints is becoming a Trauma Sensitive School.
- ✓ Learn how you can train the brain to become calm.

When: Week 9, Tue 20th Sept

Where: School Staffroom

Time: 6:30-7:30pm



Our Project Journey

- Mind Up Curriculum
- Parent workshop
- Learning about the brain in the classroom
- SMART online training
- Smiling Mind App
- Budget for resources
- Calm Zones
- Staff meetings
- Trauma Committee



The Brain Model

Prefrontal Cortex uses information to make decisions, focus and reason. BUT only works when the Amygdala is calm.

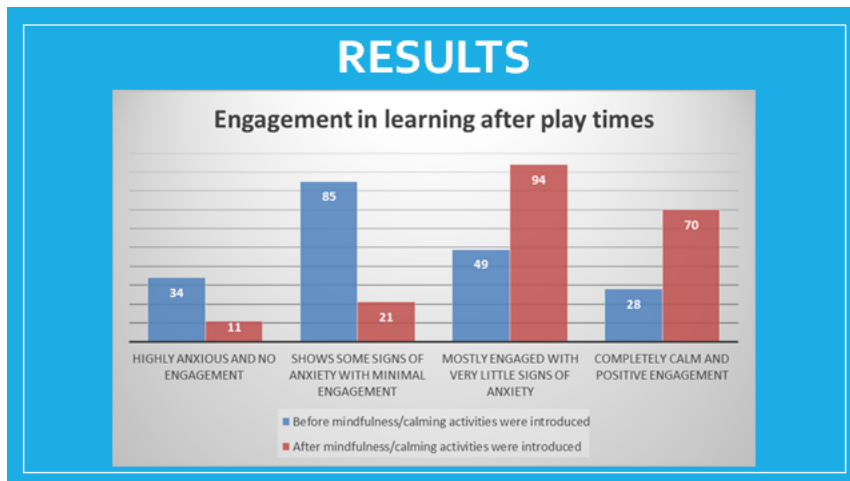
Amygdala is on alert and keeps you safe. It regulates and blocks information to PFC so you can react in a flash.

PREFRONTAL CORTEX

AMYGDALA

HIPPOCAMPUS

Hippocampus creates and stores memories and important facts.



Trauma Project Data Collection Sheet

Child's Name: I.P. Year Level: 1

Date: 1-8-16 Lesson: after recess / writing etc

After Recess engagement in learning

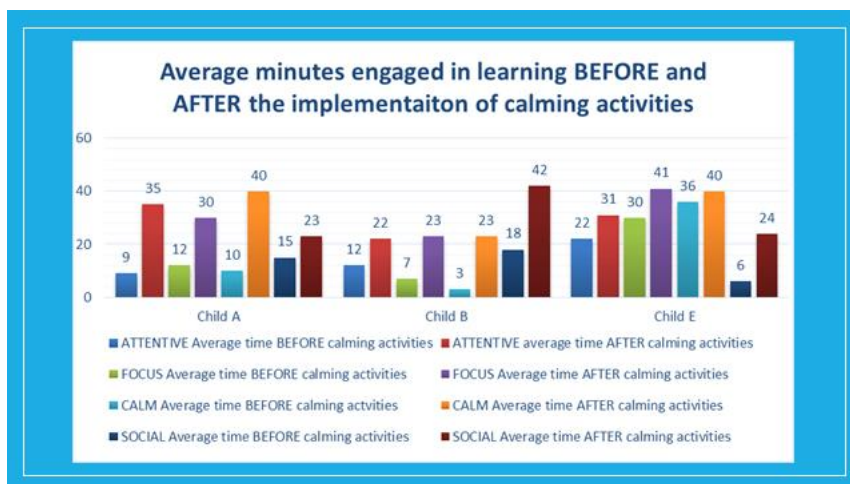
Tick appropriate box ✓

Highly Anxious and no engagement	Shows some signs of anxiety with minimal engagement	Mostly engaged with very little signs of anxiety	Completely calm and positive engagement
	✓		

Comments

• physically looked angry in line up

• with positive reinforcement settled into learning



Staff Response



- Have you noticed any change in your children's engagement in learning AFTER they do a calming or mindful activity?
- How has the Trauma Project affected your own understanding of children affected by trauma and how it affects their brain?
- Has the Trauma Project influenced your teaching practice or the way you interact with children?
- Did you find calming activities/mindfulness a beneficial strategy to engage students in learning?
- Do you think All Saints is a trauma sensitive school? Why or why not?

Staff Response



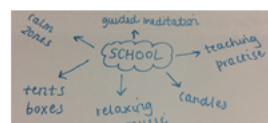
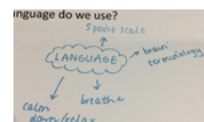
What has been your most significant learning this year around trauma and how it affects children in our care?

What does being a Trauma Sensitive School mean?

What is our belief about trauma children?

What does it look like? What language do we use?

How does it link to our Catholic Identity?



Children's Responses



What is a brain?

How can you make your brain grow stronger?

What do you know about the brain now?

What makes you feel angry or anxious?

What is your favourite calming activity?

How do you feel after you do a calming activity?

How do the calming activities help you during the school day?



Challenges



- Building Project
- Resistant Staff
- Culture change
- Getting everyone on board
- Not seeing results immediately – Persistence is the KEY!
- Data collection
- Stigma of "Trauma"



Making SPACE for Learning



ANTONIO CATHOLIC SCHOOL

PROJECT REPORT AND POWERPOINT PRESENTATION

Trauma Sensitive Practice in Schools

Making
SPACE
for
Learning



Antonio Catholic School

Project Title

Relax-Reflect-Retain

Research Project Inquiry Question

What specific relaxation activities and strategies help create a calm school environment?

The Context

Antonio Catholic School is an R-7 parish school located in Morphett Vale south of Adelaide. We are a faith-centred community of learners committed to connected relationships with God, self and others. Learning is student-centred with a strong commitment to quality and self-management. Members of the community are self-motivated, respectful and inclusive of others, and willing to meet the challenges of life-long learning.

Our teaching and learning is founded on the holistic development of each person through:

- Supportive teams
- Effective organisational structures and procedures
- Effective communication
- Contemporary and appropriate use of resources
- And current pedagogical practices

All of which lead our learners towards goals of success, excellence, and spiritual growth.

Enrolments for 2016/17 are 209 students across R-7. This consists of 41 resourced special education students, 33 recognised adaptive education students, 23 EAL students and 4 Indigenous students.

To ensure that we support student and family needs we work in partnership with allied health services such as Speech Pathologists, Occupational Therapists, Psychologists, Novita, CAMS and private tutors.

At Antonio ***“everyone matters... and matters absolutely”***

Antonio Catholic School community members are active learners who are confident, compassionate and committed to quality in their faith, relationships and work. We are a faith-centered community of learners committed to connected relationships with God, self and others. Learning is student centered with a strong commitment to quality and self-management. Members of the school community are self-motivated, respectful and inclusive of others, and willingly meet the challenges of lifelong learning



Staff Involved

To ensure that the project continued to evolve we formed a Project Team which consisted of teaching staff from each area across the school.

Our Project Team

R/1: Steph Taylor 2016

R/Leadership: Tanya DiLernia 2016-2017

2/3-1/2: Claire Little 2016-2017

4/5-6/7: Tanya Bode 2016-17

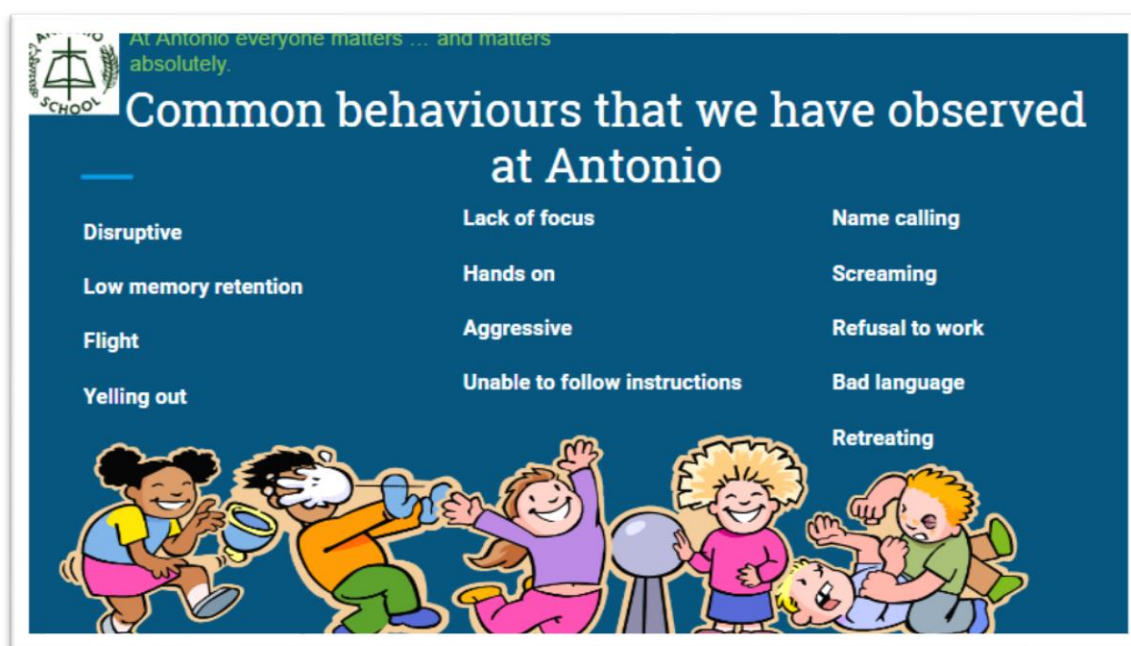
Initially all teaching and ESO staff were involved through professional development and using activities and strategies in class, OSHC, and break times. Staff also participated in mindful activities during staff meetings to build their capacity for introducing activities to students.

2016



Description of Project

What was the initial reason for joining the project?



As a staff, we were noticing student behaviour to be lacking. We had a number of students showing common behaviours like hands on, bad language, name calling, running out of class and being disruptive to other students learning. It was becoming a big issue and students were losing focus and all our attention was being spent on negative behaviours. We were happy to hear when leadership signed us up to the Trauma Sensitive Project so that we could be better educated on identifying trauma behaviours and how to deal with them. After the professional development day, we noticed that students who we did not believe had trauma were exhibiting trauma related behaviours. Other significant trauma related behaviours that we noticed were:

- Flight
- Yelling out
- Aggressive/screaming
- Unable to follow instructions
- Retreating
- Hands on
- Name-calling
- Lack of focus
- Refusing to work
- Low memory retention
- Unable to follow instructions
- Bad language

Data Collection

For the first two weeks into the project, we collected student data on behaviours in the classroom. Each class had two focus children who either exhibited trauma behaviours or was known by the school to have experienced some sort of trauma in their lives. We used a simple template for this data collection, which can be observed in figure 1. Each day for two weeks data was recorded to track when these behaviours were present most. We hoped

this would give us more of an indication of problem times throughout the school day and when we needed to implement class strategies.

Figure1. Data collection sheets

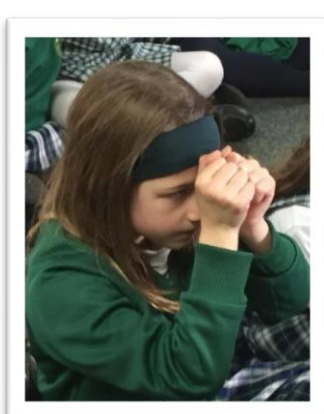
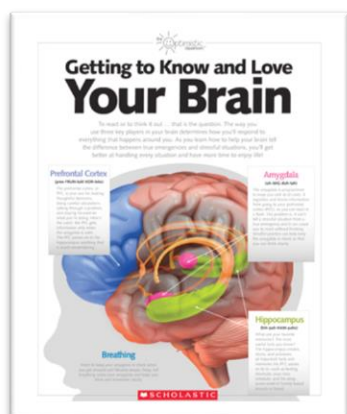
	Monday				Tuesday				Wednesday				Thursday				Friday			
	Balance	Yelling	Retaining	Interrupting	Peer Conflict	Balance	Yelling	Retaining	Interrupting	Peer Conflict	Balance	Yelling	Retaining	Interrupting	Peer Conflict	Balance	Yelling	Retaining	Interrupting	Peer Conflict
T3 week																				
Tuning In																				
Investigations																				
Reflection																				
L1																				
1 st Play																				
L2																				
L3																				
2 nd Play																				
L4																				

Observation Checklist																				
	Monday				Tuesday				Wednesday				Thursday				Friday			
	Out of seat	Leaves classroom	Sweating	Hands on	Out of seat	Leaves classroom	Sweating	Hands on	Out of seat	Leaves classroom	Sweating	Hands on	Out of seat	Leaves classroom	Sweating	Hands on	Out of seat	Leaves classroom	Sweating	Hands on
Session 1																				
Recess																				
Session 2																				
Lunch																				
Session 3																				
Notes																				

It was noted that after transition times and during play breaks were our biggest ‘danger times’ and students found it difficult to calm back down before entering the room. This is how the data proved to be valuable. At the beginning of the project, we thought that this data would be valuable to compare and contrast. The information that was most valued was finding out when our students most needed our support, and then we could deal with their emotions and behaviours without it disrupting the other groups of students. From here as a staff, we then looked at this data and reflected:

If we know now that danger times are play breaks and transition times, then what are we doing to make sure that they become manageable.

From then on, classes decided to have calming strategies after play times and incorporate meditation sessions after lunch. For the older students, they found that most of their problems stemmed from students in small groups or students who did not have something planned to do during play times. They decided to do a survey within the middle school unit. This enabled students from the middle school to voice their opinions and set up some sporting activities to keep them busy. They all agreed that they were less stressed knowing that there was something they could go to if they wanted to and it was predictable. Each class teacher had the freedom then to meet the needs of his/her students. As a staff, we came to the agreement that for our cohort, it was valuable to teach the basics from the MindUP curriculum with the three major parts of the Limbic System. The hippocampus, the prefrontal cortex and the amygdala.





Years 2-5 worked together to deepen their understanding of the brain's limbic system, by creating visual brain hats.

Students used balloons and papier-mâché for the outer layers and then used other resources to create the 3 key players.

Once completed students handed the hats out to each year level to put on display in their rooms as a reminder of the connection and the importance of the limbic system.

While students worked together on their brain hats, there was a sense of community, calmness and happy faces. Due to the time slot being so successful, we decided to make it a regular time in our timetable dedicated solely to engage in The MindUP Curriculum.

We revisited our learning of the limbic system in year 4/5 and looked at how we feel and who is in charge of that, here is an example of our warm up lesson.



<p>WARM-UP</p> <p>MIND UP</p>		<p>WHO ARE THESE PEOPLE?</p> <p>WHAT DO THEY HAVE IN COMMON?</p>	<p>Discussion</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> In order for these athletes to perform at a high standard, they first must learn to exercise their minds as well as their bodies. Successful athletes learn to focus their attention, manage distractions and continuously improve their skills in their sports.
<p>Steph Curry- Pre Game Routine</p>	<p>HAVE YOU EVER?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Imagine: you are walking down the hallway and someone jumps out and scares you.... How does your body react? What are you thinking? How does your body feel? 		<p>Who came into play?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Was it your brain's wise leader the PFC? Was it your brain's security guard the amygdala? Or was it your brain's memory saver the hippocampus?

Calming activities that teachers have used in the classroom from years R-5:

Relaxation

Yoga

Breathing techniques – cotton balls, straws

Mandalas

Drawing

Colouring in pictures

Reading

Listening to music

Amygdala bottle

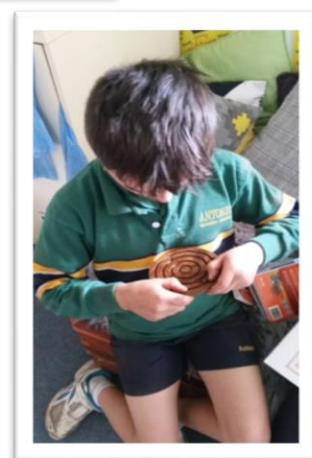
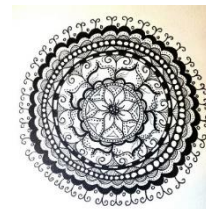
Quiet space in all rooms

Going for a run

Going for a swing

Body language games

Mindful listening



Year 6/7 organised lunch activities:

Sensory based play – playdough, shaving foam, sand

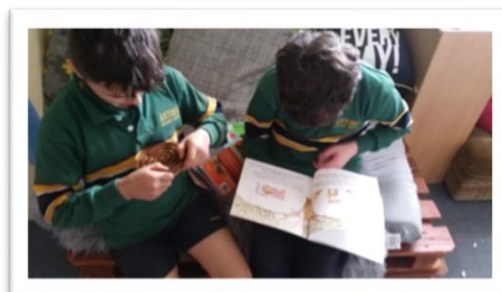
Nature play

Affirmation cards

Using a worry jar

Blowing bubbles

Mindful tasting-using chocolate



Last year, prior to each staff meeting, the TSSP Team put together a number of mindful tasks for staff to engage in. Some of these included:

- **Mindful eating-Tim Tams**
- **Mindful smelling- A number of herbs/ guess the herb**
- **Mindful listening- Relaxation**
- **Mindful prayer**

2017: Year 6/7s have been learning about growth mindset and what it means to be physically, mentally and socially well. The students completed a wellness assignment condensing some of their knowledge about growth mindset, how we can be positive and recognising their warning signs.

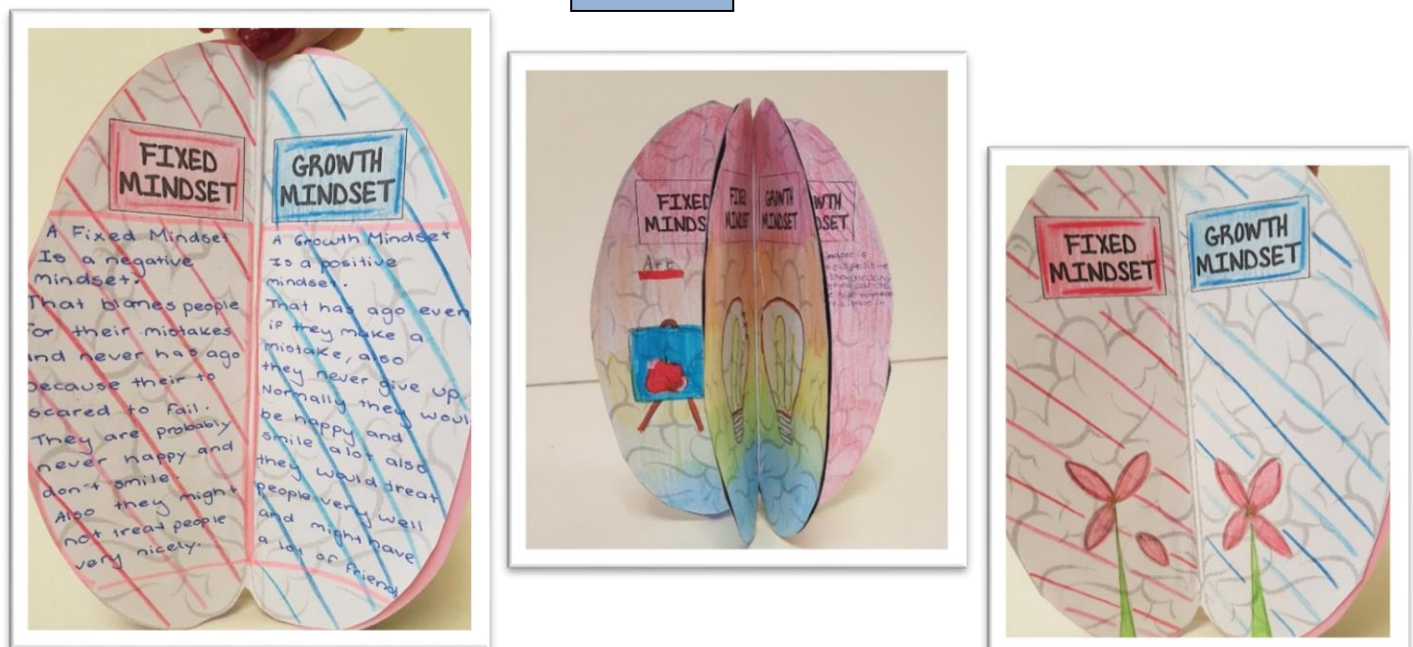
Figure 2A



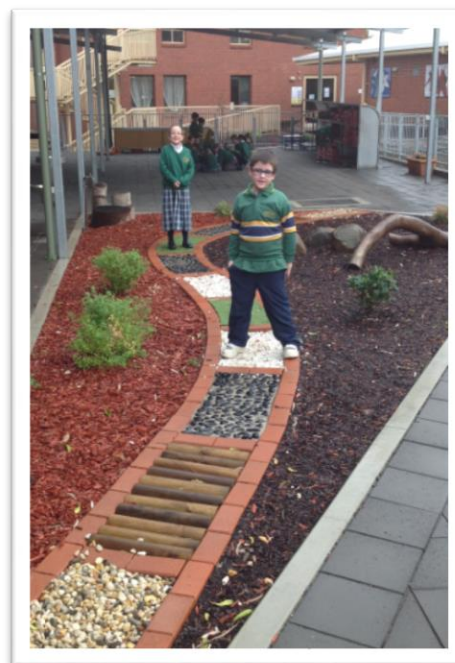
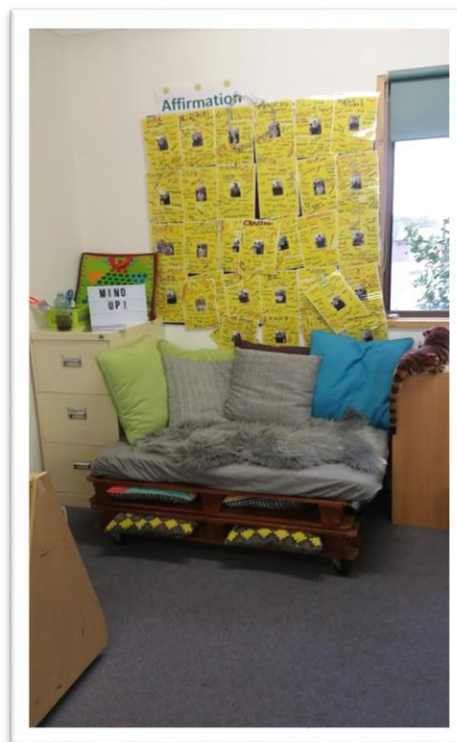


The 6/7 students created Brain models. These models represent their understanding of a fixed mindset and a growth mindset:

Figure 3



Calm spaces throughout our school:





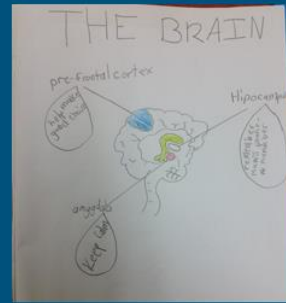
At Antonio everyone matters ... and matters absolutely.

Teaching about the brain

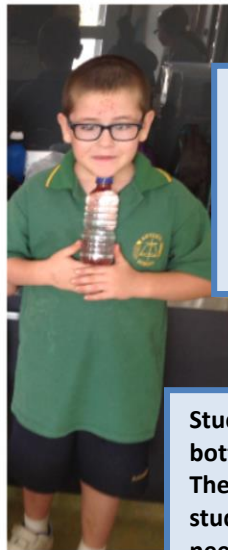
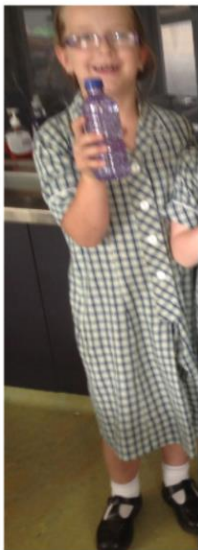
We all made a model to demonstrate how the brain processes information under stress.

The solution of glitter and sand represented the amygdala scattering information.

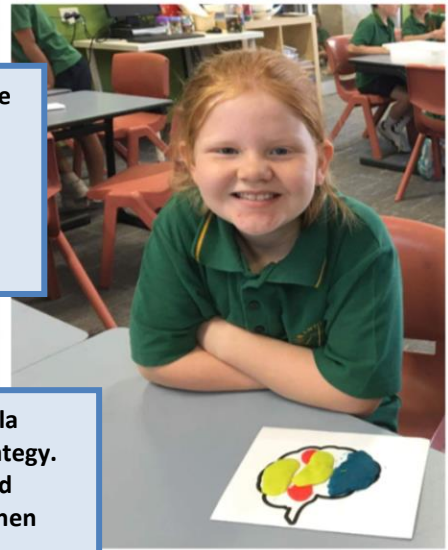
We brainstormed ways in which we can help our brains to settle so that we can think clearly.



Reception students drew pictures of the brain using Year 2-5 models.



Students in 2/3 created the limbic system using playdough to consolidate their learning on the functions and what they look like.



Students in 1/2 made amygdala bottles to use as a calming strategy. They used them after lunch and students were able to use it when needed.



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Teaching about the brain

In R/1 we investigated the Reticular Activating System (RAS). The RAS keeps the brain awake and is the brain's attention focussing centre.

The students used split peas, salt and a strainer to observe how the RAS works by filtering certain sensory inputs.

The split peas were the unwanted material that the brain blocks.





At Antonio everyone matters ... and matters absolutely.

Mindful Breathing

Year 4/ 5 students participated in mindful breathing as a way to regulate and calm. Our focus was to give students the opportunity to really focus on the breath and be in control.

Their first instinct was to push their breath out hard, but after conversations and focus, students were able to centre their breathing and effectively control where the cotton ball went.



At Antonio everyone matters ... and matters absolutely.

Mindful Breathing

Year 2/ 3 students using similar strategies to focus and control their breathing.



At Antonio everyone matters ... and matters absolutely.

Mindful Movement

Year 6/7 play activities

"Our aim was to provide supervised activities at lunchtime that encouraged students in the unit to be involved in. In particular we focused on those students who had a dislike for play 1 and 2. When we offered activities we spread them over three lunchtimes during the school week." year 6/7 teacher

Exercising our gross motor skills help some students regulate behaviour.

Basketball
Bike riding
Walking club
Running club
Netball





At Antonio everyone matters ... and matters absolutely.

Year 6/7 survey

Year 6/7 students all participated in a survey where they were asked a number of questions about the play activities that they were given the opportunity to be involved in.

The students all agreed:

- There was no boredom
- They were all involved
- They were happy
- They didn't have to think about what to do at 1st and 2nd play. Predictable and involved.
- Basic needs were met.



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Mindful Transitions

Legs-Up-The-Wall Pose

INSTRUCTIONS

- 1 Sit with hips against the wall and roll onto back, taking legs up the wall
- 2 Bottom should be pressed as close to the wall as possible; hold for 5 minutes

Warnings: Avoid if you have glaucoma. If toes become tingly, bend knees and with feet together bring feet closer to pelvis



HOW IT CALMS

- Helps stress reduction
- Helps renew blood and lymph drainage back into the heart area

Legs Up The Wall

This powerful yet incredibly restorative pose is beneficial to the health of your heart. It gives your heart a rest so it doesn't have to pump as hard, and helps to slow down your heart rate, leaving you feel relaxed with a more calm mind. Spend 5 minutes here noticing the natural rhythm of your breath and see what happens. Enjoy.



jecayoga.com

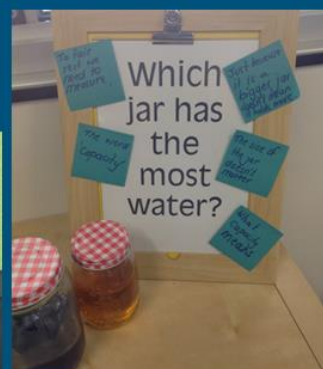


At Antonio everyone matters ... and matters absolutely.

Mindful Reflection

One key question that the year 2/3 have focused on was 'What did you learn today?'

This enables students to articulate their thinking and to process the information learnt throughout the day.

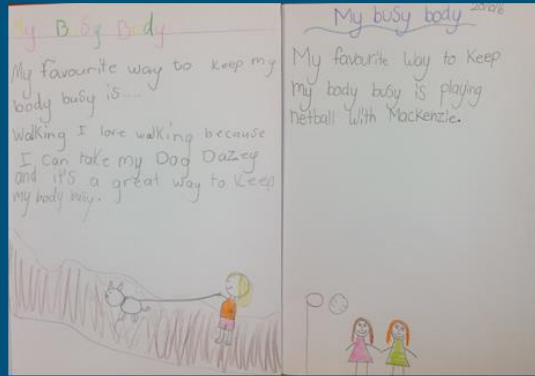
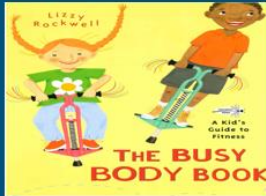




At Antonio everyone matters ... and matters absolutely.

The core practice

My Busy Body- After reading The Busy Body Book the year 2/3 students reflected on their favourite way to keep their 'bodies busy'.



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Movement, Singing and Engagement in Prayer

2016- Prayer and mindfulness go together. We participated in an Andrew Chinn workshop where students had the opportunity to engage in music through prayer.

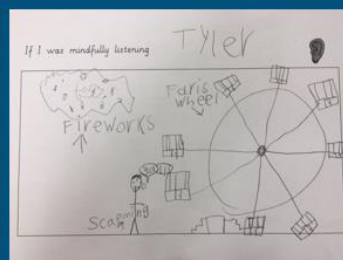
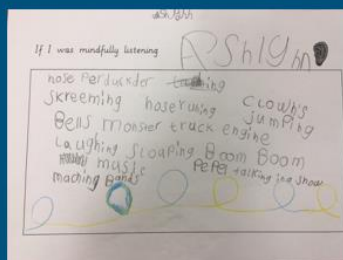
2017- students were put with their buddy classes to engage in some mindful rosary bead making.



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Mindful Listening

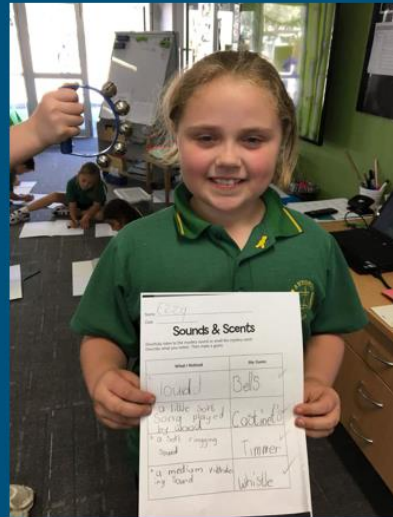
After some focused listening activities involving instruments, story and the environment, the R/1 students imagined what they would hear if they were mindfully listening at the park or at the beach.





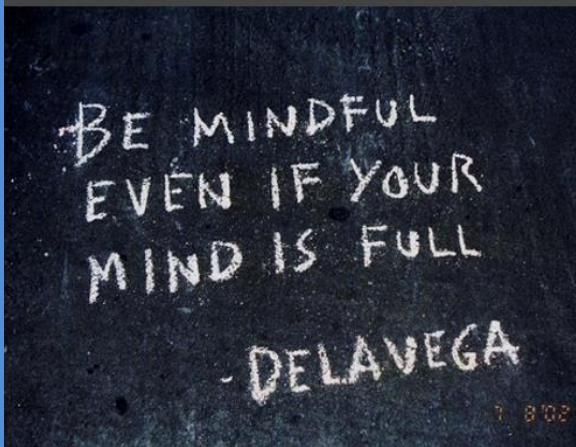
At Antonio everyone matters ... and matters absolutely.

Sounds and Smell



At Antonio everyone matters ... and matters absolutely.

Mindful vs Unmindful



In control/Out of control

Students were asked how they felt in certain situations, especially ones where they had been removed from the classroom...

'My brain feels really red, I can't help it, I don't feel in control'- Year 5 Student

'My brain feels hot'- Year 1 student

Student Survey:

What do you do to calm down?

Shauna (yr 1) - 'During play I like to go to 'my tree' and sit on it'

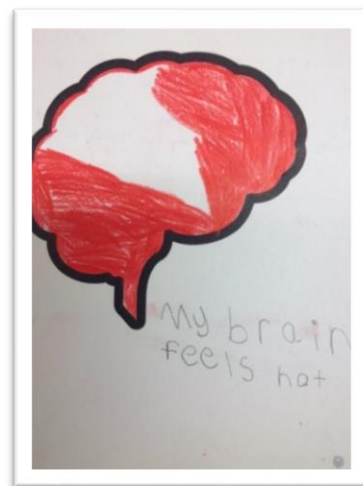
Bella (yr 2) - 'I go somewhere quiet and I take 3 deep breaths'

Ashlynn (yr 2) - 'I try to walk away from the problem'

Sam (yr 1) - 'I need to be alone and I like to curl up'

Josh (yr 1) - 'I like to sit in the reading space with my amygdala bottle'

Bradie (yr5) - 'I take deep breaths and count to 10'



What does growth mindset mean?

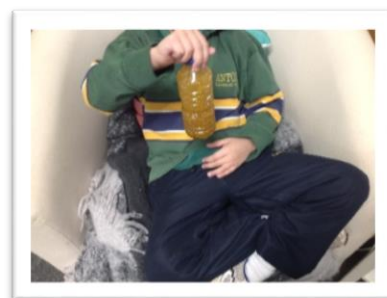
Isobel (yr 2) - 'I can try'

Nic (yr 2) - 'I'm not going to give up'

Maddi (yr 2) - 'I can do this'

Jai (yr 2) - 'I will give it a try'

Zarianna (yr 6) - 'Growth means you are always positive and you give it a shot'



Charron (yr 6) - 'It means you want to try everything and be positive, it is the opposite to fixed'

Niamh (yr 6) - 'It means you are positive fun and nice'

Annmary (yr 7) - 'That you are approaching something in a positive way you do not give up on what you are doing'

How has growth mindset changed your thinking?

Charron (yr 6) - 'I want to try everything instead of whinging'

Zari (yr 6) - 'It changed my thinking by not always being down on myself and now I like to give things a go'

Annmary (yr 7) - 'It has changed my thinking in lots of ways. I used to have a fixed mindset with sport and now I approach it with a positive mindset and now I can see my improvements'

Where to now?

- Each class have been given a small basket of resources so that they have the tools to continue teaching the curriculum and strategies.
- Staff will continue to embrace being mindful in staff meetings.
- Teaching from a growth mindset perspective in all years.

Most significant learning:

The most significant learning was for those teachers who had traumatised students in their groups. Teachers who had these students while implementing the learning found that their students learnt to regulate stress, identify problems and remove themselves; the students also learnt that when they were stressed they were able to use the terminology to identify what was going on, recognising that it was not their fault, but actually what was happening in their brain.

“After implementing the project in my class of 28, one of my biggest challenges was being three days part time. In the group of 28, I had a number of students that had a trauma background and others that would exhibit aggressive behaviours, meltdowns, yelling, swearing and running. One child in particular who was one of my focus students was having meltdowns after lunch, during lesson times, swearing at other students and becoming aggressive to his parents and myself. In class we worked on regulating our behaviour; we unpacked the limbic system in the MindUP curriculum, we took the blame off ourselves and discussed sometimes these behaviours control us, but we need to control them. In the first semester, these meltdowns were frequent, once, twice, three times a week. We implemented strategies to make consequences predictable if hands on or swearing was happening. If we could tell the student was becoming agitated we would at first assist him with calming strategies, talk to him or remove him from the group. After lunch, we came in and had silent reading, meditation, colouring or MindUP activities. This settled the students who needed it most and gave them an opportunity to relax and reflect. In the second semester, the student who was exhibiting these meltdowns did not have any for the rest of the year. For me this was the biggest learning that took place and the biggest achievement for the student.” -Tanya Bode



Challenges:

One of our biggest challenges came from within our project group. Our project group consisted of majority part time teachers over the two years, with new teachers joining part way through the project. Many problems evolved from this including being time poor, finding it difficult to have time outside the classroom to complete planning and executing the project.

The project team supported teachers where possible, but with busy schedules and changes with teaching staff it was not valued the same throughout. This made it hard to develop the project because people lost interest or others did not have the training, depth of understanding or confidence to approach it.

Resource List:

The MindUp Curriculum- Brain-Focused Strategies for Learning- and Living

Picture Books

When Sophie Gets Angry- Really, Really Angry- Molly Bang

The Busy Body Book- Lizzy Rockwell

A Boy and a Bear- Lori Lite.

The Mixed-Up Chameleon- Eric Carle

The invisible string- Patrice Karst

How full is your bucket? Tom Rath, Mary Reckmeyer

The Dot- Peter H. Reynolds

Youtube/Website

Flip your lid- <http://yourbrainhealth.com.au/teach-kids-brain/>

Pre-Game How to calm down-<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=90dLrbZVy20>

A boy and a Bear (YouTube clip)

Mindful eating- <https://www.imu.edu/counselingctr/files/Mindful%20eating.pdf>

Apps

3D Brain

Steph Curry's pre game routine-<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=90dLrbZVy20>

Growth mindset YouTube clips- <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=EIVUqv0v1EE&t=3s>

The mixed up chameleon by Eric Carle video

I Spy School Days by Jean Marzollo

Famous Failures- <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=zLYECIjmnQs>

Growth Mindset Creativity: <https://www.teacherspayteachers.com/Product/Growth-Mindset-Craftivity-2359819>

Growth Mindset Drama Circle: <https://www.teacherspayteachers.com/Product/Growth-Mindset-Drama-Circle-2446368>



Project Team at Antonio Catholic School

ANTONIO CATHOLIC SCHOOL – SHOWCASE POWERPOINT PRESENTATION

This school submitted a movie and thus their presentation is not available as a PowerPoint.

Making SPACE for Learning



FAME

PROJECT REPORT AND POWER POINT PRESENTATION

Making SPACE for Learning

Trauma Sensitive Practice in Schools

FAME

(Flexible Accredited Meaningful Engagement)

Flexible Learning Centre Christies Downs South Australia

The Context

Fame (Flexible Accredited Meaningful Engagement) Flexible Learning Center is the first Special Assistance School in South Australia. FAME FLC has been established to meet the needs of young people between the ages of 13-20 years of age who are **at risk**.

The FAME team is comprised of teachers, welfare workers, youth workers and vocational trainers. Each team member is highly professional and passionate about what they do. They have a strong commitment to best practice standards of alternative education and are guided by Edmund Rice's humanitarian principals: social justice, human rights, access & equity. Our goal is to provide innovative and flexible learning opportunities that meet individual needs.

FAME FLC is a co-educational Catholic school in the Edmund Rice tradition. The philosophy of the FAME FLC draws on the spirit and vision of Edmund Rice Education Australia (EREA). Our learning community has a clear commitment to social justice and stands in solidarity with disenfranchised young people of all social, cultural and religious backgrounds.

The philosophy also has a practical focus based in the application of four core principles of Respect, Safe and Legal, Participation and Honesty among all participants of FAME FLC. This is evident in the ways the organizational culture and practices are shaped through the application of these principles. In essence, the principles establish a common ground among

staff, young people and parents. This collective forum offers the means to resolve conflict, negotiate learning, recognize rights, responsibilities and consequences as they are modelled and explored. This occurs both within the group, as individuals and as members of the broader community.

FAME FLC works with young people who are vulnerable and experience a complexity of inter-related needs. As discussed above, participation and retention are key elements in the philosophy of FAME FLC. The development of moral reasoning through the application of the four principles prepares students for responsible citizenship. The learning experiences also build self-confidence and esteem in young people, promote an optimistic view of their potentialities and future, and assist them to develop the knowledge, skills and attitudes necessary to enjoy a healthy and fulfilling life.

Project Title

The FAME Brain

Research Project Inquiry Question

Does learning about the impact stress has on the brain, in conjunction with calming strategies, help young people to reduce their levels of stress and dysregulated behavior?

Description of Project

In addition to the array of difficulties experienced by teenagers and adolescence a vast majority of the young people who attend FAME are also faced with the extra challenges of homelessness, domestic violence, abuse, drug addictions, mental health concerns, pregnancy, special learning needs and involvement in the youth justice system. All of which contribute toward sporadic attendance and decreased levels of engagement. These unique circumstances posed a barrier against being able to roll out a one size fits all approach to the delivery of brain learning materials across the school. As limited attendance meant that many of our young people may not have received enough regular exposure to the project for it to be of significance. Hence to ensure successful results and allow each student the opportunity to engage in at least some degree of 'brain learning' the welfare team had to be creative in the structure and framework of the project. It was identified that we needed to separate the students into 2 groups: A and B, (Group A being the general learning group and group B was the intensive focus group).

GROUP A (CLASSROOM GROUPS)

Group A, was comprised of 70 students across 3 classrooms. Most students from group A have some level of trauma with either a diagnosed mild to significant mental health disorder or neurodevelopmental disorder such as ADHD or ASD. Often requiring medication and at times periods of hospitalisation.

Each student was given the opportunity to complete worksheets based on the physiology of the brain and its relationship with drugs, alcohol, anxiety, depression, and sleep and impulse control. In addition, teachers introduced therapeutic techniques into their classroom such as mindful minute, table top drumming, silent pug, exercise bikes and other opportunities to engage in calming brain breaks.

In addition, our afternoon classes placed a strong focus on having young people identify ways of releasing trauma and negative emotions through a creative outlet of their choice. This included subjects such as art therapy, lyric and rhyme lessons and/or music.

In order to stimulate learning amongst young people who remained disengaged visual cues were placed throughout the classrooms. This included materials such as: laminated relaxation techniques; mental health posters; brain and chemical facts (**Fig. 1**) and anatomy cards. This was to facilitate self-directed learning and open up conversations with the disengaged young people about the brain.

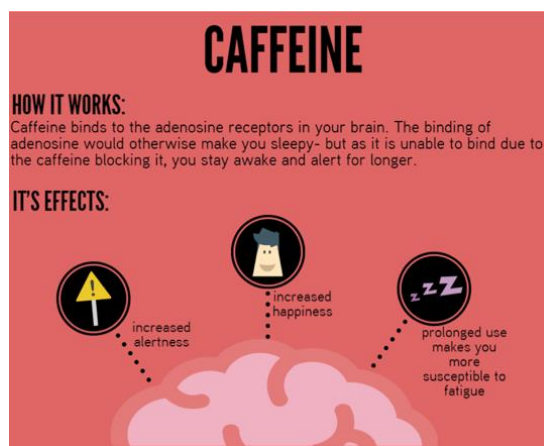


Figure 1

GROUP B (FAME BRAIN FOCUS GROUP)

The second group was made up of 6 students. Like group A they had a background of mild to significant trauma thus resulting in varying degrees of learning needs and mental health concerns. These students became a part of our FAME Brain Focus Group. Group B students were invited to attend a 2 and a half hour session per week for 10 weeks. These sessions focused on the structure of the brain and provided a more intensive look at how the body and brain responds during times of anxiety, depression and dysregulation. Furthermore, students were guided through self-inquiry questionnaires in order to create a deeper awareness of their own fear triggers and therapeutic techniques to help minimise and manage associated maladaptive behaviours.

Group B students were made up of 6 young people who have been living with at least some level of adversity, these are as follows:

GROUP B 2016 PARTICIPANTS		GROUP B 2017 PARTICIPANTS	
Student A	Drug Abuse	Student A	Moderate trauma Conversion disorder Eating disorder
Student B	Homelessness Drug abuse Diagnosed anxiety disorder	Student B	History of abuse & neglect Drug abuse Depression
Student C	Anxiety & depression	Student C	Drug Abuse
Student D	Significant trauma Involvement in Youth Justice	Student D	Learning difficulties Significant trauma

	History of drug abuse Death of biological father & stepfather Mother, patient receiving ongoing methadone treatment		Involvement in Youth Justice Involvement in Child Protection Drug Abuse Mental Health Concerns Homelessness Identified 'At Risk' youth
Student E	Significant trauma History of self-harm Hospitalization	Student E	History physical abuse Significant drug abuse History self-harm
Student F	Recent death of father Diagnosed anxiety disorder	Student F	History of neglect Mental Health Concerns

Framework/theme focus areas

In addition to participation and engagement barriers our students often have sensitivities around their literacy levels. This became extremely evident when trying to introduce brain activities such as papier-mâché brains and amygdala jars were swiftly rejected by our young people. To combat this welfare staff needed to be mindful of the types of materials and activities that students were encouraged to engage in, as well as how they were delivered.

GROUP A FRAMEWORK AND FOCUS AREA

The Framework for Group A was that each teacher would deliver 'Brain Worksheets' to their class once a week. The worksheets focused on:

- Anatomy of the brain
- Effects of substance abuse on the brain
- Brain injuries and diseases
- Depression, anxiety and the brain
- Treatment options for mental health concerns
- Impulsivity and the teenage brain
- Circadian rhythm and the teenage brain

It was anticipated that regular distribution of these worksheets and calming activities would allow student (despite sporadic attendance) to learn about the brain at their own pace and exposure to calming techniques.

GROUP B FRAMEWORK AND FOCUS AREA

In addition to engaging in the same activities and worksheets as their Group A peers, the Group B participants were provided with more in depth knowledge about the brain, including:

- Adolescent brain development
- Executive functioning vs limbic system
- Epigenetics (Hereditary vs Environmental Factors)
- Brain plasticity and the environment

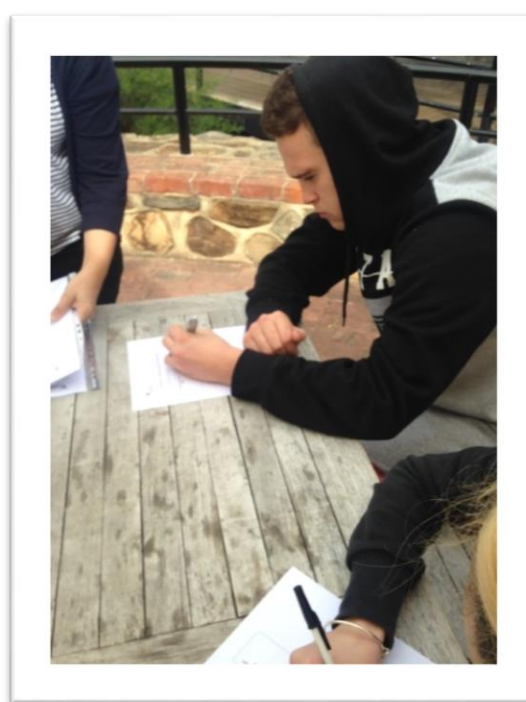
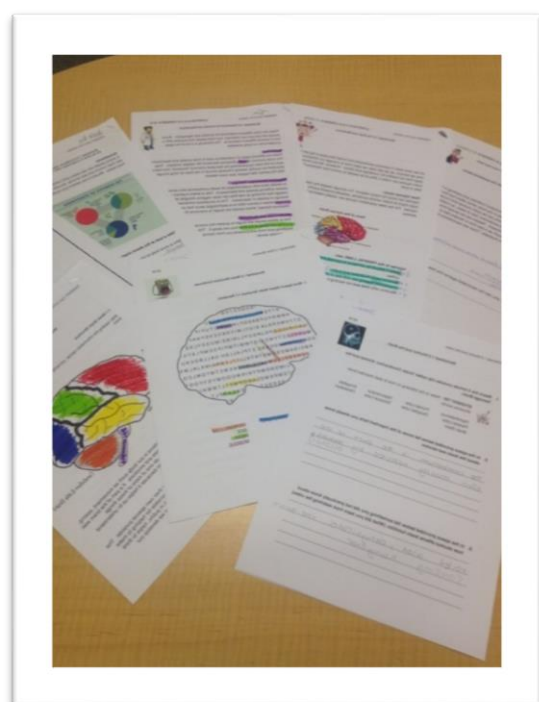
These focus areas were then linked in with learning materials which paid particular attention to:

- The impact of chronic stress on brain development
- The brain's response to fear
- Identifying stressors
- Healthy and unhealthy coping strategies
- Application of mindfulness
- An overview of cognitive behavioural therapy

The abovementioned content was then complimented by a 'Self Inquiry Sessions', where welfare staff would guide the focus group through worksheets which allowed them to identify:

- Where they feel stress and anxiety in their body
- Whether they are most likely to fight, flee, faint or freeze during times of stress
- Identification of their individual baseline stress levels
- Identifying stressors in their life
- How they currently deal with stress
- Any unhelpful or unwanted thought patterns which may exacerbate stress, anxiety and depression.

The information collated during these self-inquiry sessions assisted staff and students in creating an individualised safety de-escalation plan which could be referred to at times of dysregulation.



CALMING ACTIVITIES FOCUS AREAS

In addition to the theory based content and mindful activities presented in the classroom. Group B students were also invited to participate in calming strategies and lifestyle activities including:

Mindful Meditation

Learning meditation techniques in a Japanese Garden



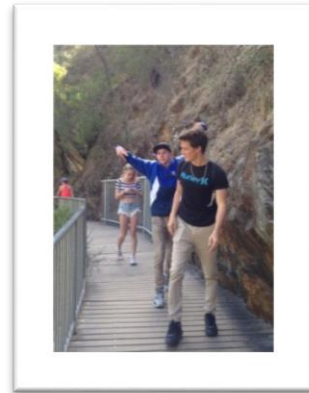
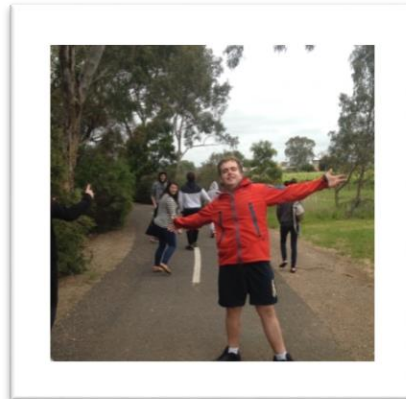
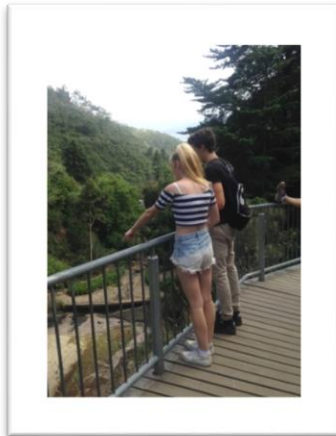
Sand and Sea therapy

Calming the mind with walks along the jetty, beach mandalas, sand art and fishing.



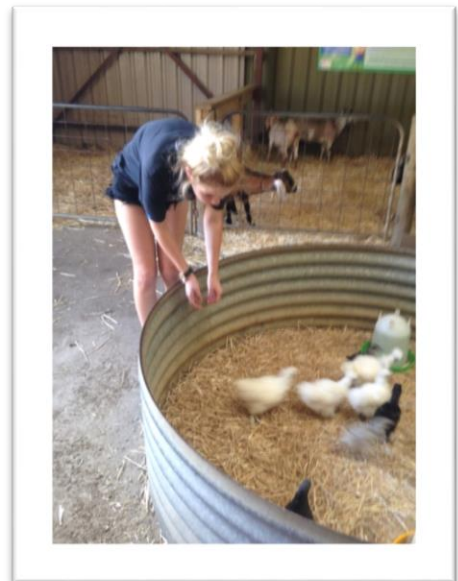
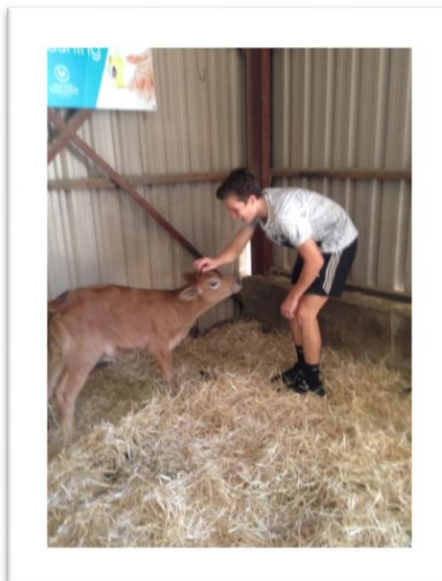
Mindful Exercise

Nature walks through Mt Lofty, where students are given the opportunity to experience the therapeutic benefits of moderate exercise in a calming, serene environment.



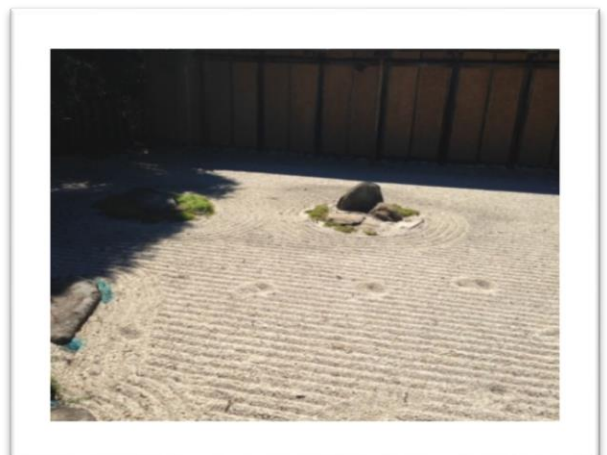
Mindful Touch / Pet Therapy

Students were taken to the Handorf Animal Farm Barn where they were able to feed, hold and milk a variety of animals, linking in with pet therapy techniques.



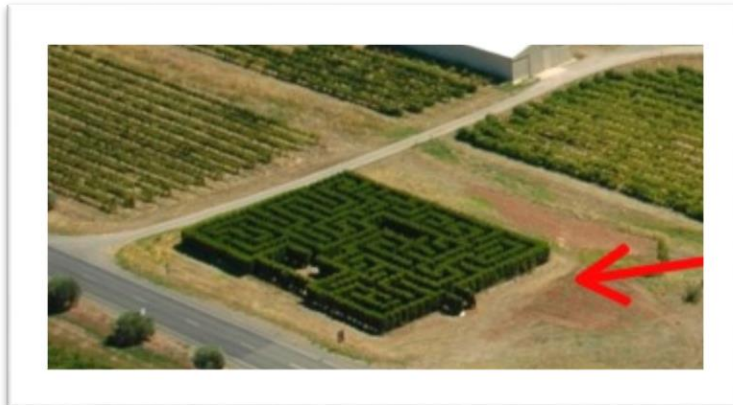
Mindful Gardening

Students created their own Zen/TeePee Garden, whilst in an environment conducive to relaxation, with the aid of meditation music and an essential oil burner. They were also invited to join in outdoor gardening, Japanese Zen Gardens and strawberry picking.



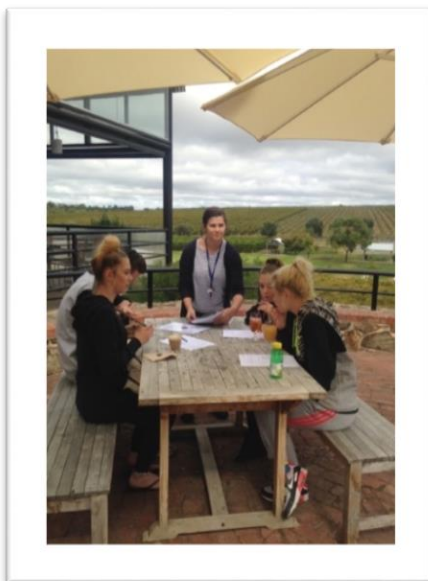
Therapeutic Landscapes

Young people were taken to a maze in McClaren Vale where they could engage in problem solving and memory retention, in a calming, serene environment.



Talk Therapy

Students were taken on a light bush walk to a café where they were invited to discuss issues that concern them in a safe, caring environment with trusted peers and welfare staff.



“We needed our children to gain a deep understanding of mindful awareness and the positive effects this creates within the brain so they were able to see a purpose for what we were doing through the trauma project”

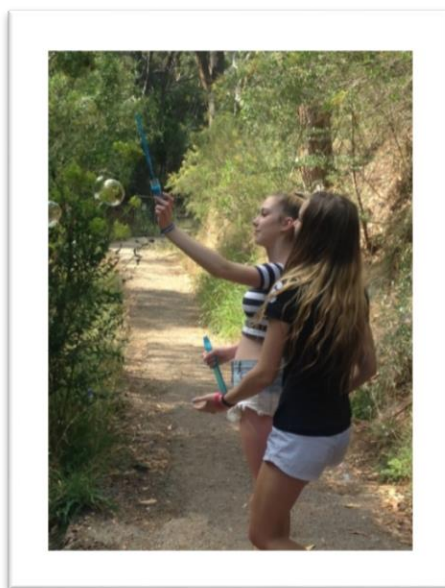
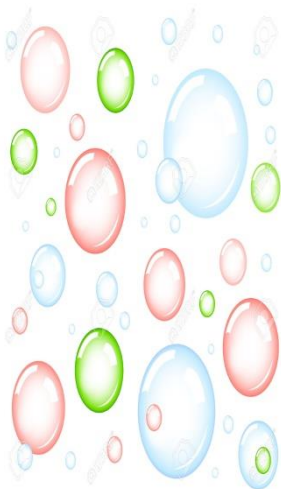
Mindful Artwork

Learning about the brain through abstract artwork



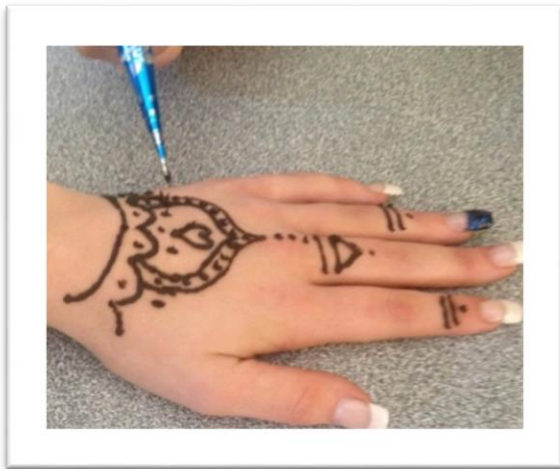
Mindful Breath

Learning how to calm the body and mind through breathing techniques with the help of bubbles



Henna Mandalas

Henna mandalas helped to induce a state of calm whilst engaging in an activity which is more in line with the interests of our cohort. A new twist to mandalas!



Gratitude Envelopes



Inviting our young people to not only participate in brain regulation techniques but to start to notice what's working well in their lives, and what they are truly appreciative of.

Laugh therapy and examples of healthy stress

Students were taken to Adelaide Adventure Rooms, where they worked with welfare staff to answer trivia questions and 'break out of goal' within a set time limit. Giving students a real life example of how it can be difficult to access memory and apply focus when under pressure.

KAHOOT Brain Quiz

Group B created a multiple choice quiz for their Group A peers to complete with a focus on content learnt through the Brain Worksheets.

THERAPUTIC SUBJECTS (Accessible to all students)

Art Therapy

Designed to encourage participation in calming and creative activities which help to evoke mindfulness. Some of which include:

- Dream Catchers
- Pet Rocks
- Pottery Making

Rhymes and Lyrics

This class gave students the opportunity to use their favourite genre of music to help process and express emotions and traumatic experiences. This class was popular with our male cohort who wrote their own lyrics and recorded songs which have been performed on stage at council and community events.

Music Therapy

Many of our students find it therapeutic to write and compose their own music or learn to perform songs which resonate with them. As with lyric and rhymes, many of our young people have had the opportunity to perform their music.

All of the above areas incorporate some degree of focus on the brain and or calming strategies which as per our project inquiry question may reduce stress and dysregulated behaviour.

Timeframe

March 2016 to June 2017

Staff involved

Head of Campus:	Yvonne Schultz
Associate Head of Campus:	Dale Zampona
Senior Welfare:	Jordan Bentham
Wellbeing Staff:	Danae Andrawos, Caitlin Barrett, Pete King, Simone McInnes and Joanne Williamson
Class Teachers:	Pete Clark, Jack Monaghan, Katie Dubrich, Gonzo Figueroa, Emma Kinge and Sam McGuire

Data

Over the course of the year we have collated a variety of different data to assist us in measuring how effective we have been at reducing perceived stress levels and dysregulated behaviour of our young people.

Qualitative (any anecdotes, feedback)

Several types of qualitative data were used in order to evaluate the effectiveness of our project. This included interviews with group A and B student which were used to gain information about the young person's life experiences and possible contribution to persistent fear responses, hyperarousal, diminished executive functioning and maladaptive behaviours. Individuals were then asked to identify whether they had a greater understanding of the brain. As well as asked if they were more able to and apply positive coping strategies through classroom mindful activities, brain breaks, therapeutic subjects and brain worksheets.

Questions were not only based on the interest and delivery of the course content but also their enjoyment and perceived benefit of each of the therapeutic activities. These questionnaires were completed after each 2 ½ hour session with varying results as outlined below.

In addition to student interviews and questionnaires we also asked teachers and parents to participate in the data collection process. This involved a weekly behaviour observational checklist completed by a teacher for each group B students along with providing self-reported data on the effectiveness of various activities, programs and therapeutic subjects offered within the project. Some of the staff responses have been outlined below.

'Many of our young people look forward to their Tuesday morning FAME Brain focus group, it's been surprising to see how many of them engage in learning about the brain'.

'FAME Brain focus groups have given some of our more disconnected students the opportunity to make valuable connections with our wellbeing staff, this has then had a flow on effect in other areas of their life, allowing them to feel more connected, more supported and more confident in making positive choices'

'A combination of the FAME Brain Focus Group, along with the mindful activities which teachers have introduced into their classrooms have assisted our young people in being able transition into the learning space with a calm and settled mood. This then extends to not only their engagement in learning, but the way they conduct themselves at times of dysregulation and peer conflict'.

'There appears to be a significant difference in the conduct of our young people since the implementation of mindful activities, therapeutic afternoon lessons and the FAME Brain focus group'.

Another way of measuring the usefulness of this project was by asking our young people whether they had noticed any differences since participating in the focus group and or therapeutic lessons and activities, some of their responses are as follows:

'I really like doing the brain worksheets, they are more interesting than the other work we do, I like doing silent pug in between classes because I can move around and it stops me from falling asleep'.

'I think the brain is crazy, it does heaps of stuff that I didn't even know it does, I liked talking with Danae and Caitlin about what can happen to the body if certain parts of the brain don't work properly, I also feel more normal because they talked to us about anxiety and depression'.

'I liked being in the FAME Brain Focus group because we got to go places that were calming and relaxing (like the beach and animal farms) and it got me away from my problems, I don't ever get to go to these places unless I go with the school'.

'It is good to learn about the brain and my emotions so that I know how to act safely and what I can do to chill if I start to feel irritated with people around me'.

'Subjects like art and music are good because I feel more relaxed and I can be more creative which calms me down'.

Quantitative (tables, charts, checklists, figures)

It was hypothesised that students from group B would have increased levels of stress reduction as opposed to their group A counterparts. This is because Group A had less exposure to brain worksheets and therapeutic strategies. To measure this we began by having students complete the Sheldon Cohen Perceived Stress Scale (PSS) which enabled welfare staff to identify the mean *baseline* perceived stress level of each student. After 9 weeks of completing either the FAME Brain worksheets, therapeutic activities and/or the intensive focus group, the PSS was re administered to both groups. This information allowed us to identify whether there had been a decrease of the participant's stress levels after having engaged in the project, see Figure 2.

Evaluation processes

What does the data show?

Analysis of the above data has shown conflicting results. All qualitative data, based on questionnaires, overt natural observations, surveys and interviews showed a correlation between the implementation of the FAME Brain Wellbeing Program and the young person's ability to self-regulate, process negative emotions and attend to de-escalation strategies outlined in their safety behaviour plan, this was complimented with an increase in participation, engagement and general wellbeing. To the contrary our qualitative data did not support the abovementioned hypothesis that group B would yield more positive results than group A, in fact, as per the below example (Fig. 2) the data shows that overall group B (2016) had no significant change with the exception of 2 outliers. Group B (2017) had similar results in that all students bar 1 were between 1 and 4 points higher in stress levels with the remaining student being 1 point lower than their original baseline.

Figure 2 PSS Table

PERCIEVED STRESS SURVEY GROUP B 2016

NAME	PSS SCORE WEEK 1	PSS SCORE WEEK 9	CALCULATED DIFFERENCE	COMMENT
Student 1	20	21	-1	Increase
Student 2	15	22	-7	Increase
Student 3	30	20	10	Decrease
Student 4	13	13	0	Same
Student 5	27	27	0	Same
Student 6	28	24	4	Decrease
GROUP MEAN	22.167	21.167	6	No significant difference

There are several reasons why the above data may not have produced the results we were expecting, one of the most obvious reasons could include the validity of the PSS. Unlike the data methods used to collate qualitative data the PSS does not *specifically* identify whether the young person is better able to regulate their emotions after having engaged in FAME Brain subjects and activities, but instead focuses on how well the young person believes they have been able to cope with stress and anxiety over a 4 week period. Whilst, on first glance this survey might appear to be a valid way of answering the inquiry question, it does not account for any confounding variables which may have caused the student to feel more or less stressed over the course of the project. In addition, the temporal nature of the survey means that major life stressors, such as homelessness and involvement in the youth justice system can contribute toward a significant reduction in predictive validity after 4 to 8 weeks. Furthermore, if a major incident had occurred the morning the PSS was administered this could have created state anxiety which may have changed the way the participant viewed their current stress levels and ability to cope. The qualitative data however, asked questions which were specific to their stress levels and coping strategies *in relation to* the 9 week program this allowed the interviewer the opportunity to identify whether there were any current traumatic affects which might skew data results.

Whilst the PSS was limited in its ability to distinguish between the impact of the wellbeing program and any significantly stressful concern the student might suddenly be facing, it was still beneficial in that it gave a snap shot of the mean stress levels of our students. As a side,

FAME students means scores were 10 to 15 points higher than group norms collected by L. Harris Poll gathered information on 2,387 respondents in the U.S.

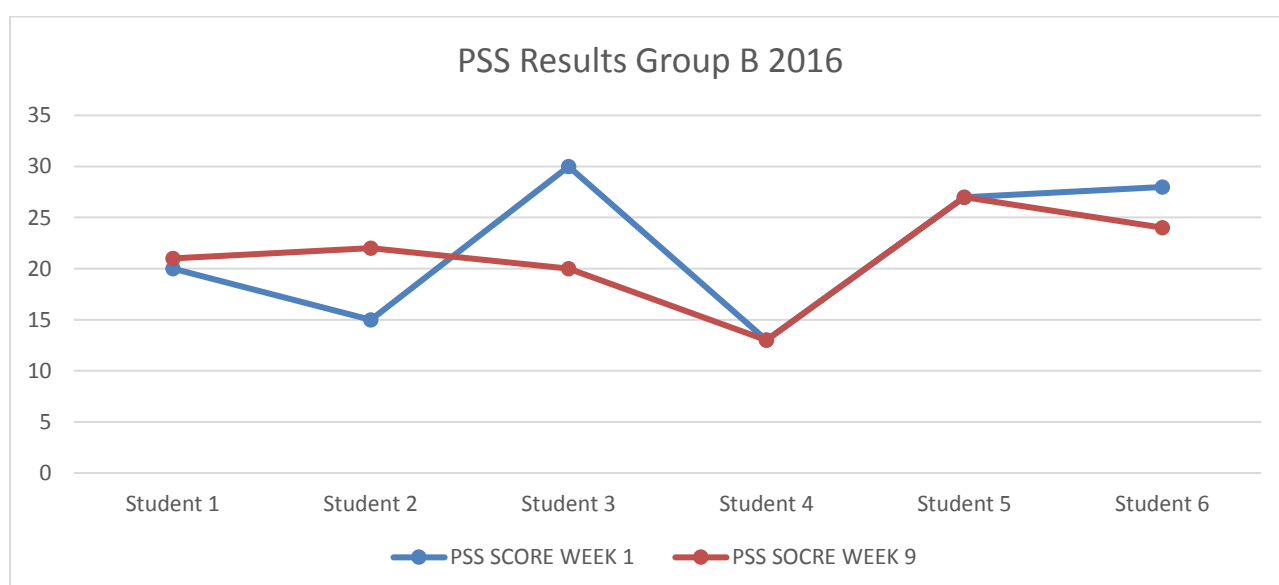
Group A results were more difficult to track using the PSS for the same reasons as those outlined for group B. With an additional barrier of poor or sporadic attendance, resulting in limited exposure to the brain worksheets and classroom activities. For this reason group A was much better measured with qualitative data and a general overall observation of classroom calmness and number of critical incidents.

Comparatively, after a 9 week period Group A had a similar mean PSS to group B. This contradicted expectations as it was predicted that Group B (the intensive focus group) would have much lower scores than the students who weren't as engaged in the project. This caused us to re-evaluate how we were interpreting our data.

Another way of viewing the results could be that students did in fact receive a reduction in their stress levels and an increased ability to regulate their emotions. However learning about the body, brain and its relationship with stress may have made them more aware and better equipped at identifying their levels of stress. This would be a shift in their perception that heightened stress levels, persistent fear and hyperarousal is normal.

As per the below chart (Fig. 3) student 2 and 3 showed the most significant differences. Upon further inquiry it was deduced that student 2 was not only more aware of his stress levels though the program's self-inquiry techniques. As well as being better able to answer the survey honestly once he acknowledged that he was in a safe and caring environment. Student 3 explained that his stress levels had reduced significantly because having been taught about the brain and its fear responses had taken the mystery out of anxiety, therefore making it less overwhelming.

Figure 3 Outliers



Moving forward the PSS has been identified as a useful data collection tool. However, not one that will necessarily help to answer our inquiry question. Given this, it would have been beneficial to have another quantitative tool. A tool that could specifically relate to whether participation in the wellbeing program directly impacts on their stress levels would give a clearer picture. Whilst it could be argued that the qualitative data could be skewed by

external variables and confirmation bias, it allows students to elaborate on their answers. Therefore assisting staff to identify the possibility between a direct link in benefits to the wellbeing program.

Challenges

As previously outlined in the project methodology our biggest challenge was that many of our students have both sporadic attendance and are often disengaged in their learning due to significant life factors. We were aware that this made it very difficult for staff to measure firstly how much benefit the brain worksheets would have on their learning. Secondly, whether the limited exposure they had to classroom mindfulness would have any effect. Despite this, we still appreciated the value in making 'Brain Learning' accessible to all students. However, for the sake of measuring the project's effectiveness on the wellbeing of our young people we came up with our Group A (Classroom learners) and Group B (FAME Brain Focus Group). It was originally posed that we would compare the stress levels between Group A classroom students and Group B Focus Group Students. Predicting that those who were involved in the Focus Group would have much lower stress levels than those who only received sporadic delivery of brain worksheets and occasional exposure to classroom mindful techniques. However because of the nature of the Group A student's attendance it became evident that it would be easier to measure group B's baseline stress levels against their stress levels after 9 weeks of attending the intensive focus group. This being said we did loosely compare Group A outcomes against their Group B counterparts, with varying results.

Our second challenge was to select 6 students who would be willing to join our group B FAME Brain Focus Group. Whilst we had many students who would benefit from the sessions initially it was a difficult task to convince these students to see the value in this learning. This was overcome by explaining the benefit of learning about the brain structure in conjunction specific changes that occur through trauma and chronic stress, and thus making it relatable. The content delivered during these sessions deliberately complimented brain focussed materials and activities which were being introduced through the rest of the school therefore solidifying Group B's learning and encouraging continued interest.

Another challenge was that many of our students range in age between 13-18years. This made it difficult when creating lesson plans that would suit the maturity level and learning stages of each of our students, whilst continuing to keep them engaged. This involved getting creative by using PowerPoint, YouTube clips as well as excursions that would develop their knowledge around stress reduction and mindfulness. Our creativity involved thinking of ideas such as visiting the Hahndorf farm barn and the Maxwell Maze to get our point across. The students struggled at times sitting in a classroom and therefore we would find going to a café was more beneficial and the students were more engaged in the content that was delivered to them. This was discovered and adapted in first 2016 group B by trial and error and then refined for group B 2017.

A final challenge was interpreting the data that was collected. Because of confounding variables, the quantitative data was hard to gauge the changes in whether students had developed a reduction in their stress levels or not. The data could be interpreted in many ways with a confounding variable being that students had learnt about the body, brain and its relationship with stress. This may have made them more aware of their stress their stress could be higher than when they first completed the PSS.

Outcomes - What's different now?

Students are now requesting to be in the intensive FAME Brain Focus Group. They feel that it is a special unique class and overall, participants within the group have confirmed that they have enjoyed themselves. From this, it has allowed other students to approach staff requesting to be in the next group. The group is run termly and instead of staff needing to encourage students it is flowing positively with willing participants. We aim to continue this program after the research is completed and add it into our elective classes in the afternoon.

The brain worksheets are now available to be used in all classes and students appear to be willing to complete the worksheets. The everyday classes are also incorporating calming techniques with teachers in the classrooms on board with using their own techniques such as 'mindful minute' and 'mind breaks'. This is now an integral part of every classroom and all lead teachers taking on their own calming strategies that have helped students become more settled and less disruptive in classes.

Most significant learning

The most significant learning from both a welfare and educational perspective is the importance of adjusting our learning to suit student's interests. We as a staff need to adapt and change to suit the cohort of students that we have. Our cohort at FAME Flexible Learning Centre are different to mainstream schools and as a school probably have an increased need to adapt our classrooms and implement changes due to smaller class sizes and the young people's need.

We are amazed at the willingness for students to learn this subject area and their knowledge that they have on the brain that they like sharing. Overall from the FAME Brain Focus groups we have found students more willing to share their own experiences on fight, flight, freeze responses. The Focus groups have been successful and students have participated successfully.

As a staff, we have learnt about the brain and consider ourselves the "experts" when students approach us with questions. Our classrooms have posters about the brain up on the walls and this has opened up conversations that staff are readily open to answer and engage students in. We now know that students are wanting to know about how their brain works and are able to identify where they feel stress and anxiety in their bodies. The staff feels that from this research we have opened up another connection with students where they are approaching us and telling us about their stresses and anxieties. This in turn allows for personal growth and ability to flourish.

Key messages

Some of the key messages to come from this project was that whilst we are aware of the effects trauma and chronic stress can have on the development and consequently mental health of our young people, teachers, welfare staff and parents alike should not underestimate the enormous benefits that regular application of therapeutic activities can have on a young person's wellbeing. Which in turn has a flow on effect to other parts of their lives such as work, relationships and learning. In addition, it should never be assumed that because students are disengaged in one area of learning that they are unwilling to apply efforts to discover how the brain functions, the impact that trauma can have on development and ways to lessen associated mental health concerns. It is the belief of the staff who created and delivered this content that the reason the FAME Brain Focus Group generated so much interest and engagement from students is because the content was

relatable, useful and on many occasions resonated with our cohort. Once their attention was captured we were then able to teach them about the workings of the brain. This helped take the mystery of certain states, including impulsivity, escalated emotions, anxiety and depression. In turn this can help them to master their emotions.

Conclusion

Our research question was *‘Does learning about the impact stress has on the brain, in conjunction with calming strategies help young people to reduce their levels of stress and dysregulated behavior?’*

From our involvement in this research we aim to continue the brain focus group ‘Fame Brain’ and now have expanded to morning and afternoon classes, which will reach a larger group of students. Our aim is that all students will be involved across the years in the focus groups instead of a select group. The interest from students in wanting to be involved has been positive and the connection between staff and students has strengthened.

Our classes will continue to incorporate mindfulness techniques and this project has reinforced the importance of continuing this. This will continue as teachers have seen a significant change in the classroom structure and to now go back into the old structure would be a step backwards. We feel that by adapted these changes in the classroom it has become a part of our school and what makes us more trauma informed.

We believe that this project has been a learning experience for both the staff and young people. We have been able to further develop our relationships with the young people we work with as well as help them to live a fuller and more meaningful life through self-discovery.

Resources required

Books

- Finding Peace in a Frantic World (Mark Williams)
- Change Your Thinking (Sarah Edelman)
- Psychology 3rd Edition (Burton, Westen & Kowalski)
- Essentials of Neuroanatomy for Rehabilitation (Leah Dvorak)
- Berry Street Education Model Classroom Strategies (Domain 1 to 4)
- Hey Worrier (Karen Young)
- The Mindup Curriculum (Grades 6 to 8)
- Brainstorm, The Power and Purpose of the Teenage Brain (Daniel J Siegel)

CD

- Mindfulness Meditation CD (Mark Williams)
- Sitting Like a Frog (Eline Snell)

Youtube

- Sympathy vs Empathy (Bene Brown)
- How Stress Affects Your Brain (Ted Ed)
- The Teenage Brain Explained (SciShow)
- Emotional Hijack (Kayode Akinyele)
- Frontline Teenage Brain

Internet

- Headspace Meditation (Headspace.com)
- Free Guided Meditation (Smiling Mind)

- How to Eliminate Your Fears and Achieve Your Goals (Iqdoodle.com)

Literature

- Understanding the Effects of Maltreatment on Brain Development 2015 (Child Welfare Information Gateway, Children's Bureau)

“whilst we are aware of the effects trauma and chronic stress can have on the development and consequently mental health of our young people, teachers, welfare staff and parents alike should not underestimate the enormous benefits that regular application of therapeutic activities can have on a young person’s wellbeing”



Project Team at FAME

FAME SHOWCASE POWERPOINT PRESENTATION

FAME BRAIN WELLBEING PROJECT



INQUIRY QUESTION

- ▶ Does learning about the impact stress has on the brain, in conjunction with calming strategies help young people to reduce their levels of stress and dysregulated behaviour?
- ▶ GROUP A (ENTIRE SCHOOL)
 - ▶ Worksheets and therapeutic subjects
- ▶ GROUP B (INTENSIVE FOCUS GROUP OF 6 STUDENTS 2.5 HOURS A WEEK FOR 9 WEEKS)
 - ▶ As with Group A but more intensive learning and targeted activities.

THE VIDEO

- ▶ <https://drive.google.com/open?id=0B4FZlyFrFmJpaTg5NWNMd1JmN1U>

KEY NOTES

- ▶ Trauma Sensitive School
- ▶ Creative and deliberate in our approach and delivery of materials
- ▶ Two students from our FAME Brain focus group have both approached wellbeing staff about participating in a drug diversion program as a result of discussions regarding unhealthy coping mechanisms.
- ▶ Will continue to integrate the program throughout the classes.



Making SPACE for Learning



OUR LADY OF THE VISITATION TAPEROO

PROJECT REPORT AND POWER POINT PRESENTATION

Making SPACE for Learning



Trauma Sensitive Practice in Schools

Our Lady of The Visitation School Taperoo



Name of School: Our Lady of The Visitation



The Context (school context):

A snap shot of our School

- Approximately 170 students
- Reception to Year 7 (Pre-school on site)
- 8 composite classes
- On site Out of School Hours Care and Vacation Program
- Active Parents and Friends Community
- Early Years Co-ordination Program “Move it” (re-introduced in 2016)
- Transition to School Program for Kindy students (Terms 3 & 4)
- Children’s University Program
- Quicksmart Numeracy Program for Upper Primary
- Rainbow Reading
- Inclusive Education Program supporting Special and Adaptive Education students
- Literacy Intervention Programs across the school for students at risk
- Transition Program with Mt Carmel College focussing on Science and Woodwork (Yrs 5-7)
- Small percentage of Indigenous students
- Growing percentage of students from an African background (EAL)

History

Our Lady of The Visitation School at Taperoo became a centre for Mass and a school for children in the local area in 1953. The Dominican Sisters came from Semaphore to conduct the first classes. The Sisters were to study and teach the truths of Christ. The school motto “VERITAS” means truth and provides the inspiration for the staff and students. The Taperoo Parish is located on site and is part of the LeFevre Catholic Community under the pastoral leadership of Fr Brian Angus. The Parish is actively involved in the school community and shares school facilities. Class Masses are organised by the school and are a valued part of Parish life. This parish school draws its students from a wide cross section of the community, attracting enrolments from Taperoo, Largs, Osborne, and North Haven.

Mission Statement

Our Lady of The Visitation is a Catholic school providing the highest quality of education for boys and girls from Pre-School to Year 7. Our Lady of The Visitation is a Catholic community which celebrates the Image of God and the unique qualities in every person and supports them in reaching their full potential.



Our Lady of The Visitation Catholic School Preschool – Year 7

Making Space for Learning – Trauma Sensitive Practice in Schools
Julie Willson and Louise Jensen

Keep Calm and Sparkle!

Timeframe: (2 Year Project)

May 2016 – December 2016

January 2017– June 2017

Staff involved:

- Louise Jensen (Early Year's Teacher)
- Julie Willson (Early Year's Teacher)
- Frank DeTullio (School Principal)

Research Project Inquiry Question

'Do calming activities support positive engagement for students' throughout their school day?'

Why did we choose this focus for our Project?

As a school community, we noticed that across the school a growing number of students were experiencing unsettled and social issues during play breaks, transition times in between lessons and specialist classes. As a staff, we were dedicated to developing strategies that support the needs of these students at risk, along with implementing approaches to support the whole school's teaching and learning practices.

Types of Trauma experienced by students and families across our School

We have discovered throughout our Project that there is a growing proportion in our school community who are experiencing or have experienced different forms of trauma in their lives. This trauma may be simple, complex or developmental – each of these forms can have a significant impact on social and emotional wellbeing and academic performance at school. Some examples of the forms of trauma experienced within our community include:

- Family breakdown
- Blended families
- Children moving between families/homes
- Death of a parent
- Suicide of a parent
- Sick/terminal illness within the family
- Unstable accommodation

- Children estranged from a parent
- Incarcerated parents
- Domestic Violence
- Mental Health issues
- Drug and Alcohol abuse
- Custody/restraining orders
- Families/Refugees who have experienced War in their native country

As a school community, we were aware of the many students/families experiencing ongoing trauma. We were also mindful and very concerned about the many families who might be experiencing their own trauma that we were not even aware of. The main reasons for this being, they might be a new family in our community, or there may not be a documented history.

Indicators of our trauma affected students included:

- Inconsistent attendance/frequent lateness
- Withdrawn behaviour
- Attention seeking/demanding behaviour
- Sensory seeking/grabbing collecting touching objects
- Lying
- Stealing
- Destruction of property
- Deliberate wetting of pants
- Inappropriate language
- Bullying/targeting other students
- Sexualised behaviours
- Excluding themselves from other children
- Aggressive behaviour towards other students and staff
- Uncontrolled crying
- Tantrums/unable to regulate emotions
- Memory deficit
- Selective mutism
- Short concentration span
- Low self esteem
- Low academic achievement
- Running away/hiding

Our 'Target Students' and how they were selected

In 2016, two teachers were focussed on a student each from Reception and Year One. The Reception student, who had only just begun school, was of greatest concern. She was exhibiting complex behavioural issues that were affecting her safety and wellbeing, as well as that of others. The child had family members who were Refugees and had experienced war-related violence and significant injury whilst living overseas.

PROFILE OF FOCUS STUDENT # 1:

Reception student in her 1st year of school
Female
Youngest in the class
Often tired and hungry at school
Recently diagnosed with Autism Spectrum Disorder with severe behaviour concerns
Social and emotional needs
Receives 1:1 ESO support in class
Is on a Individualised Learning Plan



OBSERVABLE BEHAVIOURS

Focus Student # 1

Negative body language
Unsafe movements
Destruction of property
Inappropriate language
Theft
Demanding attention
Calling out, sounds
Lying
Physical attacks



OBSERVABLE BEHAVIOURS

Focus Student # 2

Negative body language
Crying
Invading personal space
Loses her property
Calling out
Loses balance
Fidgits
Lying



IMPACT OF BEHAVIOURS ON LEARNING

- Frequent interruptions to learning
- Traumatizing other students/staff (exposure to inappropriate language and physical attacks)
- Having to stop learning and evacuate class for safety
- Lock down to keep students safe



IMPACT ON TEACHING

- Trauma and stress to teaching staff
- Fear of safety
- Frustration not getting through curriculum
- Inability to form positive relationships
- Dealing with constant parent complaints
- Stealing from the teacher
- Making verbal threats
- Physical attacks of staff



As a school community, it was evident that some of our students were experiencing some extreme effects of trauma in their personal lives. With this in mind, our school felt the need to implement some different practices throughout our school day to support all students in identifying and managing their emotions so that our community could reflect a calmer teaching and learning environment.

Description of the Project

How did we build the profile of Trauma Sensitive Practices among staff at Our Lady of The Visitation School in 2016?

- The majority of staff attended the TSSP training at West Beach in Term 1, 2016.
- The school selected a project team (Julie and Louise) to lead.
- The Team led teaching staff in professional learning sessions.
- Michael Lincoln (CEO) led staff session on the effects of trauma on the 'Developing Brain'.
- The Project Team gave examples of some mindfulness activities that could be used in the classroom.
- The Project Team introduced weekly 'buzz words' to promote agreed language to be used in the classroom and yard.
- Visual displays around the school (affirmations and gratitude tree)
- Sharing of resources – books and websites stored on the T Drive.
The next step was to take it to our school community to build tolerance and understanding as to how trauma impacts on our students and their learning.
- Articles in 'Our Place' School Newsletter
- Front Office window display
- Connected with parental resources

Whole School Programs currently in place

- What's the Buzz?
- Restorative Practices
- Circle Time
- Mind up Curriculum (introduced 2017)

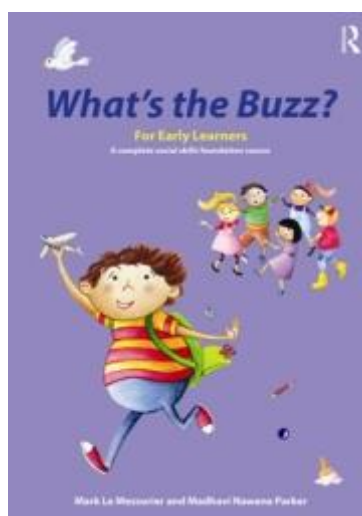
These first 3 programs were used throughout the school to develop and support students social and emotional wellbeing. They also provided language, games/activities and scenarios to support students in building positive relationships. It was important for our students to be engaging in this learning and using these frameworks each year, so regardless of their year level or teacher, their skills and knowledge were being built on and further developed as they moved throughout the school.



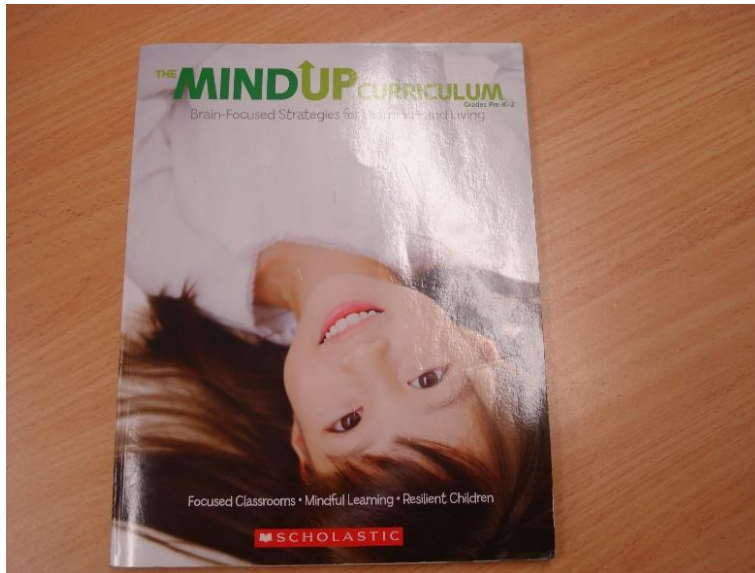
Circle Time



Restorative Practices – Questions to ask



What's the Buzz - Early Years



Mindup Curriculum introduced 2017

Whole School Approach

Our Lady of The Visitation School believes aside from having consistent use of programs in place, we needed to have improved consistency in how we interact and communicate with students across the school. With this in mind we developed the use of 'agreed language' with a positive focus.

Examples of some of our agreed language included:

- 'And Stop' (to gain students attention on the person speaking)
- Restorative conversations with students (What happened? How did that make you feel? What can you do to make things better?)
- Use of buzz words (listed below)
- **Calm**
- **Gratitude**
- **Gentleness**
- **Humour**
- **Being Present**
- **Affirmations**
- **Relaxation**
- **Relationships**
- **Being Optimistic**
- **Communication**

Buzz Words

Each week staff were sent a new 'buzz word' to focus on with their class. The idea was to provide common language throughout the school that students could use to express themselves and interact positively with their teachers, peers and family members. These words would be used in class, at assembly and in their learning environment (eg: Specialist Classes). Each word was also associated with a 'visual symbol'. Examples included a gratitude tree with gifts of gratitude to show what 'gratitude' can mean, affirmation cards with pictures and affirming words to show what 'affirmations' mean and relaxation music and instruments to represent things that help us to feel 'calm'.

Other Whole School Approaches

Students were seated at the end of playtimes

As a School we were seeing a trend of many unsettled, disruptive behaviours occurring at the end of playtimes while students were lining up waiting for their teachers. In an attempt to support student safety and wellbeing, we trialled 'seated areas' outside of classrooms. This practice was modelled throughout the school with successful results. We have continued to use this approach throughout the school and it has become embedded into our culture.



We sit down at the end of play time and wait for the teacher



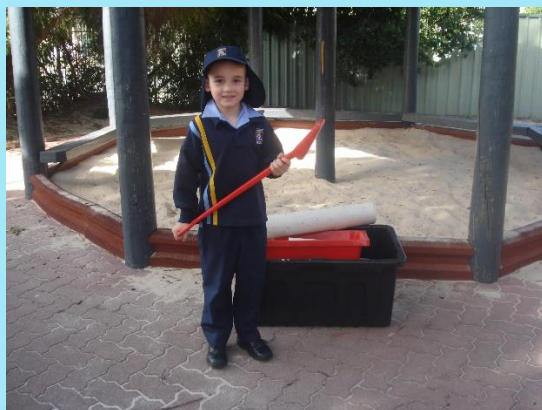
Development of 'Calm Zones' at Playtime

As a school community, staff were concerned that whilst our school has vast play spaces, some students required specific activities and equipment to guide and support them in safe and inclusive play. Each learning team within the school provided ideas to support their student cohort. We implemented ideas such as:

- Pop up play stations (dress ups and toys)
- Colouring in tables
- Nature play area
- Sandpit
- Fairy Garden
- Library for board games/chess club
- Dance club
- Extra sports equipment available for the oval
- Caring for the school's garden
- The Enviro club



Dress up Play



Sand Play

Calming Toys



Nature Play/Building Cubbies



Calming Strategies used throughout the school day

Teaching staff at Our Lady of The Visitation School were noticing that much of the unsettled behaviour and social and emotional distresses were occurring during transitions between lessons/specialist classes and at the beginning and end of the school day. This had us believe that 'change' was perhaps one of the major stressors effecting our traumatised and 'at risk' students. To support all students across the school with their learning and wellbeing, teachers introduced the following calming techniques.

- Music with a relaxation focus
- Prayer/focus symbols
- Mindful art (Mandalas)
- Classroom visuals to show routines
- Mindful movements (Yoga)
- Relaxation techniques (guided meditation)
- Support Programs (Move it)
- Mindful breathing
- Affirmations
- Acts of gratitude
- Compliments as part of prayer
- Singing
- Use of happy/upbeat music



The singing Bowl would sound to start the day in Reception

Yoga



Mindful Art – Mandalas



Gratitude Boxes



Gratitude Bears



Visit from Chintamani Yogi Ji from Nepal to talk to students about living in peace



Students made calming jars to help them relax their minds and bodies



Guided Relaxation

Mindful Breathing





The 'Egg Chair' was a calm quiet place to relax

Whole School Sharing

At the end of the 2016 school year, each staff member was asked to present what calming activities they had implemented with students in their classrooms and reflect on their own personal learning journey as educators. Staff were apprehensive as to whether or not they had done enough and if this 'new style of teaching' had made an impact. The Project Team were also a little apprehensive as to whether all classes had participated in trauma informed practices.

What did we discover?

From the moment the first staff presentation was under way, the Team knew that staff had embraced these practices and enacted them in ways that reflected their own teaching styles and personalities.

The presentations ranged from:

- Examples of art work
- Types of music played
- Games
- Guided meditation
- Humorous stories
- Websites shared
- Sensory activities
- Brain fitness
- Brain gym
- Mindful breathing
- Use of metronome
- Music with a 30-50 bpm
- Visualisation activities
- Use of mindful smells

At the end of the sharing process, our staff were inspired by the creativity and the work invested into Trauma Informed Practices.

Teacher Wellbeing

It became apparent throughout the Project that teacher wellbeing was an area that was often underestimated. As a teaching community, we discovered we were coming up with excellent ways to support student wellbeing, but was often overlooking the need to nurture our own hearts and minds.

Our Principal led staff with a mindful activity each Monday morning. These activities united all staff and brought humour, relaxation and ideas to use in the classroom.

Staff Feedback included:

- “We don’t do enough of this”
- “It’s good to be able to laugh at yourself”
- “The kids will love this activity”
- “Great way to start the day”
- “I feel so much more relaxed”

Teaching and Learning about the Brain

Following Michael Lincoln’s staff session in 2016 about the effects of trauma on the developing brain, teachers asked their students what they knew about the brain and why their brain is important. Early Years teachers completed a unit of work on the brain and the level of interest and fascination from the younger years was impressive to staff. It was following this work that our school decided to purchase and use the Mind Up Curriculum in 2017 so that all learning teams could access this teaching and learning.

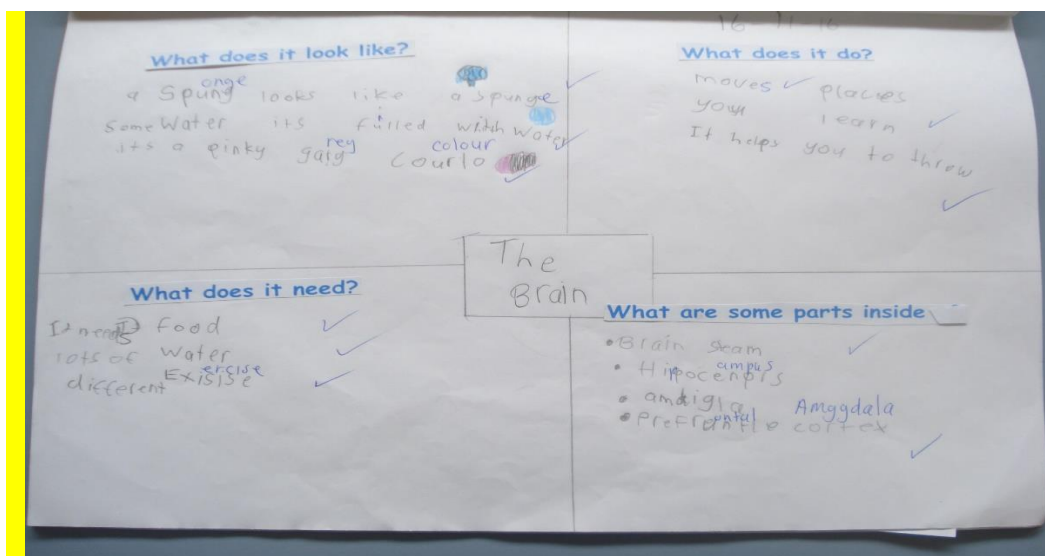
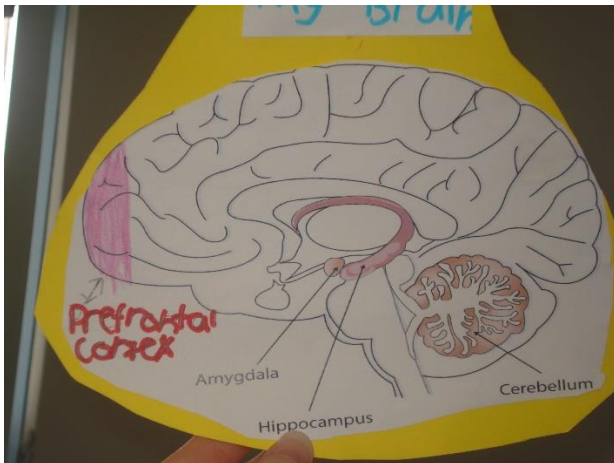
Our teachers believed it was important for all students to gain an understanding of how their own brain worked and in particular, how brain function was linked to emotion and our responses to certain situations. Teachers planned lessons on basic brain anatomy and the functions of 4 parts of the brain.

Important parts of the Brain we taught about:

- ✓ Amygdala: The part of our brain where our feelings and emotions are generated.
- ✓ Hippocampus: The part of our brain where our memories are formed and stored.
- ✓ Pre-frontal Cortex: The part of our brain where we do our thinking, planning, organising and decision-making.
- ✓ Cerebellum: The part of our brain that controls our movements, posture, balance and co-ordination.

Students in the Early Years participated in art-based activities about the brain. They made their own 2D brains out of cardboard and then used the Ipad app called 'The 3D Brain' to build their understanding about what their own brain actually looked like inside. They also watched a Zen-Den Meditation that described the 'Pre frontal Cortex' being like our 'Wise Owl' that processes new learning and makes decisions. It then described the Amygdala being like our 'Guard Dog' to guard our emotional responses and protect us from scary and uncomfortable situations.

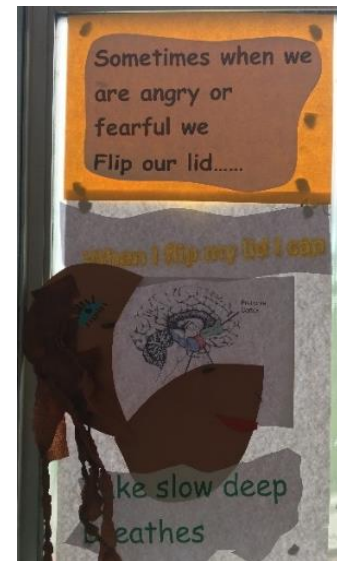
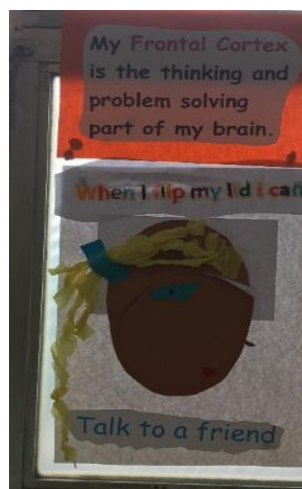
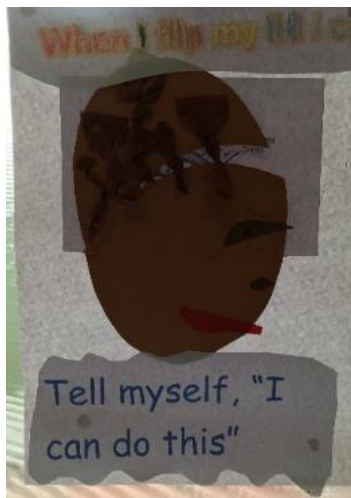
Brain activities in the Early Years



RECEPTION YELLOW

We have been learning about our brain.

When we get angry, upset or are frightened our **Amygdala** gets set off. We call this our guard dog. It senses fear and we react by either fighting, running away or freezing. The part of our brain that can calm our amygdala is the **Prefrontal Cortex**. We call this our wise owl. This is our thinking part of the brain and it helps us to think how to solve a problem, work something out and think rationally. When we get angry, upset or frightened we sometimes say we "**Flip our Lid**". We made a profile of ourselves, and brainstormed what we can do when we "flip our lids" or calm our **amygdala**.



The Mind Up Curriculum

At the beginning of the 2017 year, the 'Mind Up' curriculum was introduced to all staff. Each learning team had their own teaching guide to use to plan relevant lessons. This program builds on our school's commitment to support student's social and emotional wellbeing by empowering them about their own minds and bodies.

Student Response

Positive – we have seen that staff have embraced teaching about the brain and making connections between their thought processes and reactions. The students have become more aware of their own actions and reactions to different situations and most importantly, have increased their tolerance and understanding of the different needs of other students across the school.

Our Project Data - 2016

A combination of qualitative and quantitative methods were used to collect data on our 2 focus students.

- **Qualitative Data was collected on behaviours observed in class**

Anecdotal notes were taken during a 3-week period of data collection in Term 3 of 2016. This allowed teachers time to implement some of the calming strategies and see if there were early signs of their impact on student's behaviours in class.

- **Quantitative (tables/charts & checklists)**

A checklist of observable behaviours was used during this collection period. The most commonly observed behaviours were selected by the teachers for the checklist and these were also the behaviours of most concern in regards to safety, wellbeing and impact on learning. These behaviours were number-coded to make the data collection process more efficient as sometimes there was multiple behaviours occurring within a short space of time. We divided the school day up into 3 parts to monitor when the behaviours were at their peak (Morning, Recess-Lunch and Afternoon).

What the initial data revealed?

Our initial data revealed that Focus Student # 1 dominated our data collection with significantly more entries than Focus Student # 2. Focus Student # 1 exhibited all of the behaviours listed, however 'unsafe movements' and 'physical attacks' were the most recorded behaviours. Often these behaviours were occurring repeatedly within a short space of time, often escalating. Even with teacher intervention and the applying of calming techniques, the student was unable to have her behaviour and emotions regulated by staff or self.

On the days when Focus Student # 1 arrived late, it was noted that her behaviour and emotional state was significantly elevated and extremely difficult to monitor and support. That led us to believe that she was coming to school already unsettled and not in the best position to be open and available to learn.

The data did not reveal any one part of the school day to be a trigger. Sometimes the behaviours would heighten as the day progressed, but there was not any clear trend.

Although Focus Student # 2 did not provide a lot in regards to physical data, she was emotional and weary on the days that she arrived late and her learning was affected by lack of organisation and most significantly, by hearing and seeing the physical and emotional outbursts of another child located in the classroom next door.

Our Project Data - 2017

In 2017, it was decided by the Project Team that we would focus our data collection solely on Focus Student # 1. The reasons for this decision were as follows:

- Focus Student # 2 had moved to a different teacher in a different area of the school
- Focus Student # 2's learning had now begun to improve
- Focus Student # 2 had started to form some close social connections with new peers – she had previously struggled in this area
- Overall, Focus Student # 2 appeared happier. She was now physically distanced from the 'visual and verbal disruptions' of another student

Data was collected on Focus Student # 1 in Term 1 of 2017. This took place over a two-week period. The purpose behind continuing to collect data on this student was to monitor her growth as she was now a Year One student and to observe if she had developed any strategies from last year to self-regulate herself when confronted with challenge or stress.

The findings were significantly different to the data collected on her in 2016. There was much less behaviour being observed and recorded and although there was still concerning observations and disruption to the teaching and learning environment, they were overall on a much more minor scale in regards to their physical nature. Much behaviour could be regulated and therefore contained, either by the teacher, or by the student herself.

This was a pleasing development in our Project because our calming activities and whole school approach as to how we communicate and interact with each other was transferring into creating a calmer community. Focus Student # 1 was experiencing improved calmness and increased academic involvement in her classroom setting in 2017 and this was having a roll on effect throughout the school. Leadership had to spend less time following up and supporting this student with her behaviour, the family relationship with the school appeared stable and slightly more amicable and other students in the school felt safer and applied improved strategies in responding to this student in the classroom and yard.

On the following 2 pages are examples of the proformas used in 2016 and 2017 to collect our qualitative and quantitative data.

TSSP – Data Collection

Focus Student #

T3 Wk																									
TOB	Monday					Tuesday					Wednesday					Thursday					Friday				
Morn	1	2	3	4	5	1	2	3	4	5	1	2	3	4	5	-1	2	3	4	5	1	2	3	4	5
R-L																									
A/N																									
T3 Wk																									
TOB	Monday					Tuesday					Wednesday					Thursday					Friday				
Morn	1	2	3	4	5	1	2	3	4	5	1	2	3	4	5	1	2	3	4	5	1	2	3	4	5
R-L																									
A/N																									

Code

1	-B/L	negative body language (turning away when someone is speaking, face pulling, eye rolling, crossing arms)
2	U/M	unsafe movements (cartwheels, kicking, rolling, tumbling, headstands)
3	DOP	destruction of property
4	IL	inappropriate language
5	O	T theft, invading personal space, DSA demanding special attention, C calling out, D distracting others, making sounds, lying

Anecdotal Notes

Monday

Tuesday

Wednesday

Thursday

Friday

Monday

Tuesday

Wednesday

Thursday

Friday

Challenges

Our first challenge and perhaps one of the greatest to the Team in the early stages of the Project was our school had 3 changes to its Leadership. This meant bringing different people up to speed with the direction we were taking and hoping that they would embrace the Project and assist in its promotion across the school. With time came stability and this supported us in moving forward and being able to make decisions about what to do next in our active research.

Throughout the Project, there have been a number of other challenges that have come up along the way. Initially the Project Team was unsure about how our teaching community would embrace the Trauma Informed Practices – would everyone get on board? This uncertainty was there initially because change in teaching and learning culture can be confronting and people can sometimes see a different approach as ‘hard work’ and question why they should change what they are doing.

It was after the staff presentations took place at the end of the 2016 school year that provided the greatest hope and inspiration to our Team. Staff did climb on board and in their own way were implementing creative and effective practices that were having an impact.

The curriculum is constantly growing and there is pressure to fit everything into the timetable and be accountable to leadership and to our families about what we are teaching and why. The inclusion of teaching about the brain was also something quite new and there was the concern about whether our Early Year’s students were too young and would parents think it is appropriate to give such little people big words and explanations. As teachers, there was also concern about our own knowledge about the brain. These concerns quickly diminished when our youngest learners were not only interested in this, but were retaining and using the newly acquired vocabulary and explanations in the correct context. This was perhaps one of the most astonishing and exciting developments in the Project.

The other great challenge the Project Team faced was the uncertainty about whether or not our 2 Focus Students would remain at our school. There was a lot of talk that the Focus Students would begin the new school year somewhere closer to home. Both students are still attending our school in 2017. There continues to be lateness and inconsistent attendance on occasions, but given the long travel, the school is doing their best to support the family. The mother of our Focus Student has commented numerous times that moving her children would be hard and unsettling for them, particularly the younger sibling. The family has reiterated that they love our school and this is evident by their continuation to attend. Yes, there are still hard days where things ‘fall apart’ in the world of Focus Student # 1. The relationship the family of this student have with the school is workable and hopefully the family can see that our school is passionate about supporting them on this journey with the ups and the downs and hopefully many celebrations.

The data process was a time-consuming part of the Project. What data did we need to collect and how best to design a proforma to collect it were the questions we posed

ourselves? We ended up designing some bizarre codes to describe the behaviours we were observing and used a number system to allow all of this information to fit onto the one proforma. Dealing with the data once it was collected was also a challenge that the Team had to contend with. The first round of data was overwhelming and it had us question if we could have used a different process to collect it that may have assisted in the ease of interpreting it. When we got our second set of data in 2017, it was nowhere near as intimidating. There was much less of it to contend with and this gave us a sense that our 'Focus Students' had actually come a long way and were far more successful at being able to regulate their emotions and use more effective skills in communicating their feelings and needs. The final challenge was whether or not to actually put the raw data into our Showcase Report. We decided that aside from it looking very messy, it actually contained some anecdotal information that was quite personal for the students involved and may breach their privacy. It was also written as the events occurred, so it was often in a context mainly understood by the person who wrote it. We opted to just include the blank proformas and do our best to describe what the data showed.

This year, the R/1 classes have a number of learning and social/emotional needs among their student cohort. This puts pressure on classroom teachers to be flexible and remain calm in working through behaviours that can interrupt teaching and learning. For staff and our families, it is about understanding that all students have a different experience and life story. Nobody is the same and often the behaviours being seen at school are the result of some form of trauma being experienced in their life away from school, rather than the challenging behaviours of students being seen as 'naughty' or out of control. Whilst as teachers we have this need to fix things and be problem-solvers, we are still learning that we cannot control or change some situations; rather it is about being compassionate, open-minded and willing to embrace self-growth along the way.

Evaluation Process: What's different for our community in 2017?

The 2017 school year has seen an improvement in the way that our student cohort communicates and expresses their feelings towards others. There is a greater willingness to listen to the feelings of each other, students are more confident in communicating things that happen to them and most students feel their voice is being heard and that they can make a positive difference to others.

The school year began with a 'Wellbeing Day' to celebrate different calming activities that have been used in classrooms to support our Trauma Informed Practices. Students from R-7 were randomly grouped and got to work with different teachers doing fun-based, creative activities. This event ended with a community showcase to spread the messages and the learning with our parent community.

In the coming weeks, our school will use a similar layout to 'WellBeing' Day to host an 'Anti-Bullying/Harassment Day' that will promote positive, safe relationships and strategies to communicate with others in respectful ways. Each class throughout the school has contributed to ideas for activities to be undertaken during this day.

Staff at Our Lady of The Visitation School now feels more comfortable and informed about Trauma Informed Practices. They continue to implement existing ideas/strategies used last

year, but are also now seeking out new and creative ideas that support their current students and classroom environments.

All classes across the school have now implemented and use a 'calm zone' at the end of recess and lunch breaks. Students no longer line up and wait for their teachers, jostling for space and arguing about who was in front. All classes are seated and go into class when students are calm. This strategy has eliminated many arguments and upsets and in some instances, eased the tensions of social upsets at playtime.

Some classes have used 'journaling' or a reflection time after play to write about their recess and lunch. This has given students an opportunity to express their feelings and 'offload' without dominating teacher time/lesson time. Younger students have used a similar book titled 'The Optimistic Me' to share positive information about their playtime experiences and feelings. Students feel they now have an outlet to reflect things that are significant to them, without the pressure or stress of the whole class hearing about it through a public discussion. These journals/reflection books can be shared with the teacher at the request of the student. Students feel like they have their own privacy, but also support if it is needed.

Overall there is more ownership from students about their feelings and actions – they are engaging in more positive dialogue and conversations. Less language of blame.

Finally, there is greater professional sharing by teachers about what resources are being used, what works well and more openness in asking for help/support. This is important as our Project has shown that staff wellbeing needs to be nurtured for our school community to flourish.

Most Significant Learning & Key Messages

- Positive trusting relationships strongly shape who we are and who we can be.
- Wellbeing is essential in building and maintaining positive relationships and learning habits.
- Consistent language and expectations build a successful school culture.
- Everyone needs to make the time for mindfulness – it is essential to connect with your surroundings, with other people and most importantly, with yourself.
- You need to be able to care for yourself before you are able to care for others.
- There needs to be physical time and financial resources invested into mindfulness in the school curriculum. Young people need to be socially and emotionally in a position to learn. Until we invest time into this, our other curriculum areas may not be accessible to students experiencing trauma.
- We cannot change where our children come from (home life), but we can provide a safe place for them to learn and grow and build strategies for resilience and a positive image of themselves.
- Personal reflection helps us to grow and understand others.
- We started this journey 2 years ago. Our job is not done. There is no finishing line. It is an ongoing journey because these trauma-informed practices will continue to provide support to young people and the families that come into our school community.

- Never stop trying. We never truly know just how what we say or do impacts on others. Our trauma informed practices, the level of care and interest we show to our students and their families may one day be the light that makes a difference and helps them to shine, even when their world may look dark and lonely.

Conclusion

This Project has felt significantly different to many of the other projects that we have been involved with as a school. It has been impossible to not feel connected to it. It has become a passion for us and a topic of much conversation. We have felt personally moved by it. The accumulating of ideas and resources has helped shape us as people and professionals. The Project has shone a light on how important mental health is in the community, but also among young people. It has challenged us to look at our children beyond their academic and social needs. It has made us even more aware of the significant role that schools and educators have in the lives of young people. It has inspired us to work harder and look for ways to become better.

Our inquiry question ‘Do calming activities support positive engagement for students’ throughout their school day?’ Our data has shown that for Focus Student # 1, yes, her level of school engagement and overall relationship skills have become significantly more positive since our school adopted the inclusion of calming activities throughout the day. This student by far was considered the most effected by trauma in our community and one of the students who would most benefit from calmness in her environment.

Focus Student # 1 has spent her first year and a half of school with teachers who were leading this Project. She has been immersed in the trauma informed practices of these teachers and has participated in many of the calming activities throughout the 2-year Project. Our hope is that she will continue to benefit and grow from her exposure to this teaching and learning.

We acknowledge that we cannot change the circumstances young people grow up in, but as a school community, we are committed to providing that safe and tolerant environment for students to reach their potential and hopefully build skills that will support positive wellbeing and most importantly, resilience for their future years.

Having participated in the 2-year Project, we certainly realise there is still more to learn and others areas to improve on. Our work is by no means complete. Our approach all along has been to ‘drip feed’ our community to come on board and join in this journey with us. We did not want to bombard or overwhelm, instead go gently and build faith in our messages.

The hopes we have beyond this Project are that our staff will continue to use practices that are working well for them, but also be enthusiastic and dynamic in seeking new ideas to build trauma informed practices in our community. We have discovered that there are an endless supply of ideas and resources online for educators to use, most of which are free of charge. The goal is to take the time to search and seek. We want to continue to build the profile of trauma informed practices at Our Lady of The Visitation School into the future and pass our passion onto our young people so that they too can educate, empower and inform others.

Resources

Online

Cosmic yoga – <https://www.youtube.com/user/CosmicKidsYoga>
Zen Den youtube – relaxation, parts of the brain, calming techniques
Relaxation music – youtube – use to unwind after play/while doing mindful art
Desk top drumming – youtube
Meditation for kids – youtube
3D Brain app - Ipads
The Mindful ART of Thich Nhat Hanh - Calligraphic Meditation



Online Information for Teachers

Ellen Langer: Mindfulness over matter
Why Aren't We Teaching You Mindfulness | AnneMarie Rossi | TEDxYouth@MileHigh
Mindfulness in Schools | Tabitha Sawyer | TEDxCardiff
Breathing love into communities | Holistic Life Foundation | TEDxCharlottesville
There are so many great Ted talks on mindfulness, and the effects on the brain....just type in 'ted talks mindfulness'
'Our Brains Need Attention: Jenny Brockis at TEDxUniMelb' on
YouTubeFuture+Brain_Healthy+Stress_sample_secured.pdfFuture+Brain_Healthy+Stress_sample_secured.pdf
<https://smilingmind.com.au/>



Useful Books/Resources

The Red Beast – K.I Al-Chani
Have you filled a bucket today – Carol McCloud
Autism Sa – 5 Point Scale (A and B Choices)
Moonbeam – a book of meditations – M Garth
Star bright- visualizations- M Garth
Sunshine – further visualizations for children M Garth
Coming Home – guide to teaching Christian meditation – E Christie
Religion section – teacher resource- many books about mindfulness, peace, love
Making Space for Learning activities – Australian Childhood Foundation



Programs

Whole school - "Whats the Buzz" - Social and Emotional learning - resource book and big book - Madhavi Nawana Parker and Mark Le Messurier
Circle Time – teaching restorative behaviour, restoring relationships and managing conflict- Jenny Mosley
The MindUp Curriculum – Brain focused strategies for learning and living R-7



Project Team at Our Lady of the Visitation Taparoo

OUR LADY OF THE VISITATION – SHOWCASE POWER POINT PRESENTATION

INSTRUCTIONAL LEADERSHIP

Instructional leadership is the process of continually improving what teachers and leaders do on a day-to-day basis.

Instructional leaders work to ensure the implementation of practices that will improve the quality of teaching and learning, and thus outcomes for students.

EDUCATIONAL LEADERSHIP

Having knowledge about curriculum, teaching and learning.
A belief that all children can learn.

Modelling a commitment to ongoing learning, reflection and improvement in professional practices.

Leading curriculum construction /configuration.

Having an excellent understanding of teaching, learning and thinking

MINDFUL LEADERSHIP

Is being fully present, aware of oneself, and sensitive to one's reactions to stressful situations.

Allows leaders to innovate by expanding our mental capacities beyond our habitual point of view.

Leaders who are mindful tend to be more effective in understanding and relating to others and motivating them toward shared goals.

Mindful Leadership involves working with others ...

- Active listening
- Positive Feedback
- Corrective feedback
- Coaching
- Influencing
- Meeting Processes
- Career counselling
- Creating a performance culture

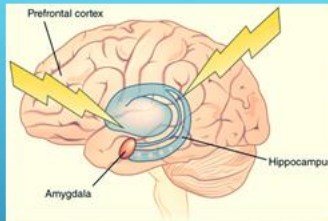
MINDFUL APPROACH TO LEADERSHIP

- Automatic pilot → present awareness
- Doing mode → Being mode
- Past/future → present
- Judgment/Criticism → compassion
- Avoidance → embrace and approach

As Leaders we need to be AWARE ... Be in the PRESCENCE

Aware of ourselves – check in on our 6 senses
Aware of self-perception – self compassion
Aware of others – compassion
Aware of nature – appreciation and gratitude

The Amygdala

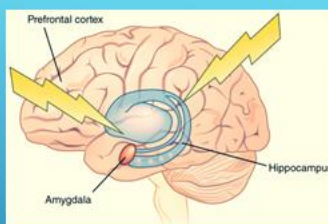


The amygdala is the emotional centre.
Generates feelings of fear and anger and "defend" and "display" behaviours.
Can cause stress and negative emotions generated by other people.
May lead to stress may lead to physical changes in the brain and the development of anxiety disorder.
But positive emotions generally enhance our ability to think and excel in performance.

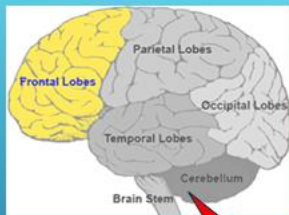
EMOTIONAL INTELLIGENCE

1. **Self and other awareness**
2. **Mood management**
3. **Self-motivation**
4. **Empathy**
5. **Management of relationships**

The Amygdala



The amygdala is the emotional centre.
Generates feelings of fear and anger and "defend" and "display" behaviours.
Can cause stress and negative emotions generated by other people.
May lead to stress may lead to physical changes in the brain and the development of anxiety disorder.
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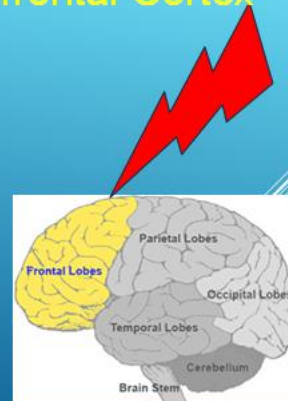


This controls our movement,
balance, posture and
coordination.
As a leader it controls
thinking
novelty
fun / humour
Our "emotional brain"

Cerebellum

Prefrontal Cortex

Memories (good &
bad ?????)
The capacity to:
Reflect
Visualise
Discipline
Judge
Connect with others



Looking after myself (brain) has a
big impact on my ability to be an effective
leader.

I know that stress has a negative impact on
the quality of my thinking

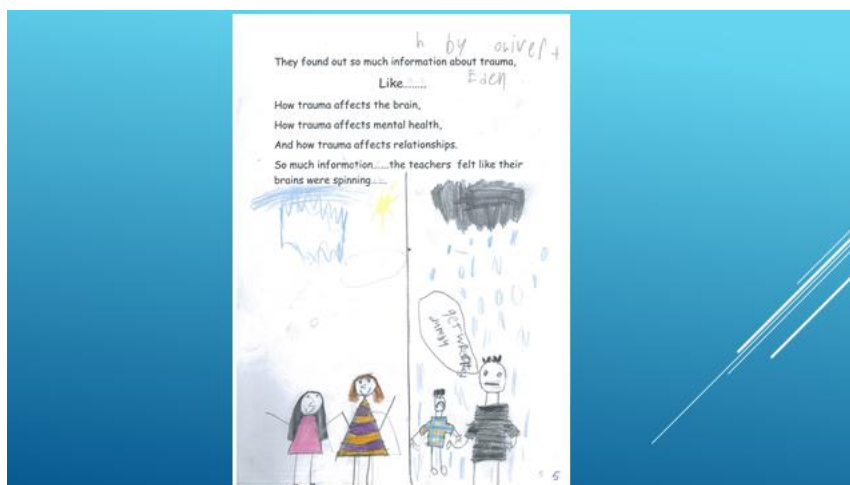
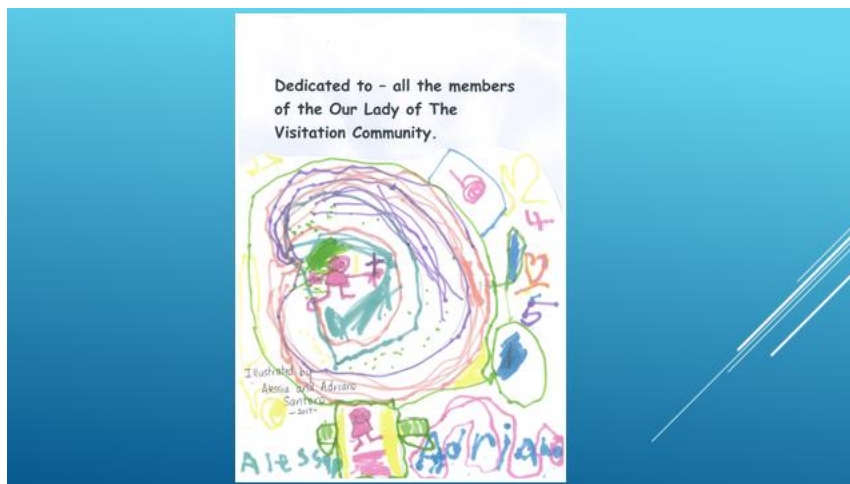
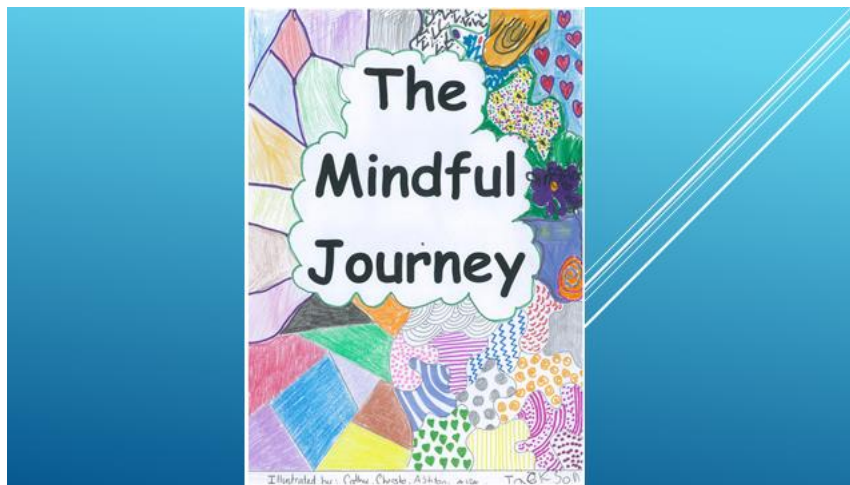
Too much multi-tasking can overwhelm my
brain – affecting my effectiveness (can
become inefficient) – putting things off
(KPI's)

Good decisions require thoughtful thinking
(Quiet time)

FUN FUN FUN!

Mindful Leadership





Everyone was very excited. Talking, sharing, and trying out new ideas with the children.



Illustrated by Amelia Dwyer and Pippa McIsaac

The children enjoyed...
blowing bubbles, learning how to relax, doing yoga,
and so many new mindful activities.
They even learnt about their brains and how they
worked.



Illustrated by Emma Beaton and Lily Shen

After a while the teachers noticed that more and
more children had smiles on their faces.





The teachers were amazed!!!



Our Lady Of the Visitation School felt very proud of themselves, and learnt something very important.



With effort, everyone's mental health can improve, and being mindful is a life long journey.



Making SPACE for Learning



ST THERESE SCHOOL

PROJECT REPORT AND POWERPOINT PRESENTATION

Making SPACE for Learning



Trauma Sensitive Practice in Schools



ST THERESE SCHOOL
COLONEL LIGHT GARDENS

community | respect | grace | courage

Research Project Inquiry Question

How can:

- Growing connectedness
- Learning about the brain and;
- Engaging in regular calming activities

Help our children (especially those who show trauma consistent behaviours) regulate their behaviours?

The Context

Our Parish School is a co-educational Reception to Year Seven school located in the heritage-listed suburb of Colonel Light Gardens, approximately 9kms from the Adelaide CBD.

As a co-educational primary school in the Dominican tradition, St Therese is built on a foundation of Truth, and from this stems our values of “Grace, Courage, Respect and Community”. These values permeate everything we do at St Therese.

Our Mission

Educate and develop the whole child for life in the Church and the World of today and tomorrow

- Rec – Year 7 co-educational primary school
- Built in Dominican Tradition
- 191 students
- 8 classes
- 21 staff members – 15 teachers, 6 ESOs
- 5.75% students diagnosed with a disability
- 30% students receive adaptive education support
- Centacare counsellor 1 day per week in 2016 and 2017
- Kids Matter School

After our initial training on the brain and trauma, it became quite clear that we had a number of students across all classes with complex behavioural and/or social and emotional issues with some individuals having experienced complex trauma in their lives – e.g. family breakdown, deaths, domestic violence, mental health issues and drug and alcohol abuse. For some students, their issues are being worked through with professional help and we currently have a number of students and families accessing our school counsellor.

We noticed that those children demonstrating trauma consistent behaviour often had difficulty self-regulating their behaviour - particularly strategies for calming themselves. In our trauma training, we discovered how effective calming techniques are for the brain and we were inspired to apply this knowledge in our school environment.

We wanted all students R-7 to have a deep understanding of the brain, how it works and things they can do to help their brains when aroused. As a result, we have decided to have a whole school focus on teaching about the brain and how it works as well as employing a range of calming and thinking strategies in our classrooms (as a whole class and individuals) to help the students to self-regulate their feelings.

Timeframe

The project went over an 18 month period:

1. Professional whole staff learning – 2 days Professional Development, Term 1 2016
2. Team formation – Term 3 2016
3. Action Research – Term 2 and 3 2016
4. Expansion of practice - 2017

Staff involved

Siobhan Paley	Reception classroom teacher (2016-2017)
Gab Foster	Year 1/2 classroom teacher (2016 – 2017)
Margaret McCarthy	Year 3/4 classroom teacher (2016 – 2017)
Julie Hardiman	Year 1/2 classroom teacher (2016 – 2017)
Anne Tymukas	Inclusive Education Coordinator, Classroom/Drama (2016 – 2017)

Staff were invited to join the team as an optional invite. Those with children exhibiting trauma consistent behaviours were asked to join.

Description of Project

Key concepts to be taught/employed:

- Learning about the brain
- Learning about growth mindset approach
- Calming Strategies
- Building Relationships

The key concepts were taught across the whole school R-7. There were individuals whom teachers knew had experienced trauma and individual focuses (alongside the whole-school approach) were implemented for these individuals. Strategies were enacted to help specific trauma children in a class/school context as it benefit all.

Evaluation processes

As a staff we collected some quantitative data (pre data) from teachers on what they were already doing in their learning spaces to support children to self-regulate.

Some of the processes used included:

- Collection of Pre data at the beginning of project to provide a baseline of what students and staff knew about the key concepts to be taught.
- Collection of Post data at the end of the project to evaluate outcomes and staff and student responses
- Work samples and evidence
- Observations and anecdotal records
- Staff surveys and teacher responses

LEARNING ABOUT THE BRAIN

After the Trauma Sensitive School training with the Australian Childhood Foundation facilitators, staff were beginning to use the language of parts of the brain and talk about their new understandings. Over a number of staff meetings, we decided as a team to look further into the brain physiology and its effects. We decided that this would be integral to our understanding the reason behind the behaviour and what was actually occurring within the brain.

Now that we knew a lot about the parts of the brain from the Trauma Sensitive training, we wanted to ask the children what they knew. This became our pre-data on learning about the brain. Before any formal learning about the brain occurred, a number of classes asked their children 'what do you know about the brain?'

The Reception and Year 1 classes recorded an informal conversation about their understanding of the brain. The question posed '**What do you know about the brain?**' and the answers and theories came quick and fast.

What do you know about the brain?
A conversation with Rec/1 children
July 26 2016



Mrs P: What do you know about the brain?
Matthew: If you didn't have a brain you wouldn't be able to think.
Angelina: Your brain controls your body...it controls hands and legs.
Mrs P: How does it control your body though?
Isabel: The brain has blood. Yeah, the brain gives all the blood to the parts to control it.
Hannah: The brain helps you think and makes you much more clever than you think.
Mrs P: Ahh. So, can a brain grow?
Children : Yes! No!
Mrs P: How, how can it grow?
Hannah: When you grow the brain grows as well.
Mrs P: Why do you say it can't grow Lucas?
Lucas: Because when it was your birthday, it had to be medium sizes.
Mrs P: So when you were born, you think it was grown?
Claire: Some brains can help you think.
Crosby: Without your brain you can't even do anything because your brain makes you alive.
Mrs P: How?
Crosby: Because there are electric parts in your body that go down.
Angelina: If you didn't have a brain you'd be stopped and not even move. Without your brain you won't be alive. You need your brain for working and moving.
Lilly: your brain is switched on when you're awake and your brain is switched off when you're asleep.
Mrs P: How does my brain switch on and off? Is there a switch I can use?
Lilly: No, it's just when you get too tired your brain switches off by itself.
Mrs P: What does it do when it switches off?
Isabel: It goes to bed! It sleeps in your head!
Lilly: All the energy...because sleeping makes it have more energy.
Mrs P: So, what would happen if you never had a sleep? Would it work?
Emma: You can't switch off because you can have a dream.
Mrs P: Yeah, where do dreams come from?
Emma: Because even if it's switched off its still working because its having a dream.
Matthew: I know how. You think of what you're going to do and stuff in your dream. You don't even know it.

Adam: How does the brain make the nightmares?

Mrs P: *That's a really good question! I don't know. How do you think it makes it?*

Isabel: Sometimes I have good dreams not bad dreams but that happens.

Angelina: Sometimes your brain makes you talk...cos there is another brain cos it has a voice in it and it's really squishy.

Mrs P: *How do you know it's squishy? Have you ever felt one?*

Angelina: It's protected by your skin, your bones. Your bone is around it.

Mrs P: *So the brain is a bone?*

Claire: Your brain is made of out bones.

Crosby: No it's not! I saw one.... on Operation Ouch.

Emma: I saw one when my brother was born.

Georgin: You can't feed the brain cos you can't see it.

Mrs P: *You can't feed your brain? Can you though? How?*

Isabel: You can, I know a lot about it but I'm scared of the blue blobs – the things, because there is little pipes. When we eat the food there's little pipes and the food goes up to the brain.

Ava: Obviously, Lilly was a little bit wrong. The brain doesn't go to sleep at night, it still works. Because how does it make your dreams if it's asleep? It doesn't make anything if it's asleep. It stays up in the morning and night. It never goes to bed. Your skull is actually protecting your brain so your brain is squishy. If I touch my head, that's the bones I'm feeling, not the brain.

Mrs P: *What if we didn't have a skull what would happen?*

Isabel: Your brain will break if you squish very hard.

Lilly: Your brain doesn't make nightmares, you do, cos if you see something really, really scary that will just happen in your dreams. If you see something really really scary, that means you will have a dream about it.

Mrs P: *So, is that your brain working?*

Crosby: No, it's your eyes!

Isabel: No, it's God! He makes the dreams and puts them in your head.

Matthew: If you didn't have a skull your neck would be all floppy.

Adam: If I didn't have a brain, I wouldn't be able to stand up or do anything I would just lay down.

Mrs P: *So what does your brain do then?*

Adam: It makes you think.

Mrs P: *How does it make you think? Do you have to tell it what to do or does it do it automatically?*

Crosby: Because it follows what the person says.

Miss M: *That would be like me saying, Ok now brain tell your hand to push you up to the floor and lift up your bottom. Ok brain, now lift yourself up to your knees and get to your feet. Is that what happens? Do I talk out loud for that to happen?*

Children: No!

Hannah: Yourself is doing it!

Mrs P: Well then who's telling yourself how to do it?

Hannah: The brain!

Mrs P: How does the brain know what to do?

Georgina: When we watched operation such you can watch it and operation such talks about bodies.

Angelina: The brain is full of wires and electric.

Mrs P: Is it? Do I have telephone wires in my head?

Angelina: No! It goes around the head and makes your body work.

Crosby: Your brain can actually talk inside it.

Lilly: Your brain is connected to the bits because all the food from it goes through these little pipes.

Mrs P: What happens with those pipes?

Lilly: The pipes get really good energy so you can run.

Lucas Mc: Last night I went to sleep and I was dreaming about bad things. And when I was doing snoring I fell off my bed!

Crosby: Your brain controls your body. Without your brain you couldn't even do anything.

Mrs P: So does everyone have a brain?

Children: Yes! Of course!

Isabel: You have to walk and think!

Mrs P: Do dogs have brains?

Claire: No, cos their brains doesn't work much.

Lilly: Cats and dogs have very, very small brains cos their heads are small.

Mrs P: What about a chair? Does a chair have a brain?

Children: No!!!

Crosby: Cos it's made of wood = wood doesn't have a brain!

Mrs P: What about plants?

Children: Yes! No!

Matthew: Yes! Cos their root is kind of their brain. Because when you put water on it, it grows.

Mrs P: So if I put water on my brain will it grow?

Children: No!!

Mrs P: So how can I grow my brain? Can it grow?

Emma: When it's your birthday it grows. Because when you're one it can't be big.

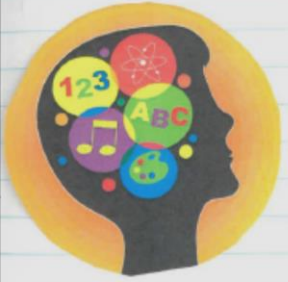
The conversation revealed that the children had quite a considerable amount of prior knowledge on the brain, its role and what it does in relation to our bodies. The next step was to build on their ideas and answer some of their wonderings.

The Year 3/4 classes began a brain journal logging their ideas and thoughts about the brain. The idea was to track children's thinking and understanding. They journaled on a regular basis to reflect on ideas, thoughts and concepts.

'Learning about the brain has helped me to calm down when I am

What I know about the brain
The brain has millions of cells which is connected
to nerves which is connected to bones, which encloses
our spinal cord. You also have an alpha which helps
you remember things. Right in the middle of your
brain is a light yellow star shaped thing which keeps
our brain together. Your brain is pink with little
squiggles all over it. The little squiggles are our nerves
in our brain. The brain is squishy, wet and soft.

Brain Journal What I know about the brain
I know that the Brain Tells your body
what to do and is the thing that Tells you
messages so you are smart. the Brain controls
your muscles, the Brain is something that everyone
has got, the Brain something that lives inside your
head. It is



What I know about the brain
the brain is made up of
lots of cords that connected
it kind of looks like a bundle
of wool but pink. your brain
controls your whole body not
just your thoughts, happy, sad
it makes you walk, talk, move
work. but what it controls the most
is you: choices action thoughts
emotions: happy sad @ @
Focus
if you didn't have a brain
you would be alive

Year 3/4 Brain Journal Reflections

A brain is a round oval looking
shape in your head. The brain tells
you what to do and how to think.
We need the brain because it is
connected to all our body parts so
without it you would not be able
to move, that is why we have a
forehead so it can protect the
brain and not have awful injuries.
If you don't treat your brain well
bad things could happen to yourself.
That's why you should go to bed
early and eat healthy food.

*'Learning about my amygdala has helped me
to understand why it is important to calm
myself down.'*

The Growth Mindset approach had been an approach which was currently being used in conjunction with the Numeracy project we were involved in. This tied in nicely with our Trauma Sensitive School training and has been expanded to include everything; not just numeracy.

We surveyed staff to ask what they are currently doing in their classrooms in relation to Growth Mindset. The survey revealed most people were aware of the growth vs fixed mindset approach and were teaching about it in a number of different ways – most via calming activities in relation to social interactions and the power of changing our thinking. A number were using specific programs to help teach their students.

Results from Growth Mindset survey			
Bucket filling	2	Changing our thinking	4
Teach Growth v Fixed Mindset	5	Teaching Neuroplasticity	1
Learning about brain function	2	Allocating buddies/mentors	1
Learning Pit	2	Using teachable moments	2
Changing our thinking	4	Program Achieve	2
What's the Buzz? program	3	Calming Techniques	8
Mind Up Curriculum	2	Helpful/Unhelpful thinking	2

GROWING CONNECTEDNESS

In response to the initial Trauma Sensitive training, we decided as a staff to implement a pastoral care program to foster the development of stronger relationships across all year levels. This also sat well with our school value of Community. The intention was that it would widen the children's network within the school environment on a both a student and teacher level.

Labelled 'Amici Time' (The word Amici means friends in Italian) the program ran once a week on a Friday afternoon for around 45 minutes. Each staff member (including teachers, Education Support Officers, Administration Staff and Outside School Hours staff) ran an activity for children to choose from and participate in for the course of the term. Activities were designed to promote connectedness and relationship building and ranged from car washing to cooking to craft to cup stacking. Children were grouped across year levels with children ranging from R-7.

As part of our pre-data, a Circle of trust (COT) pro-forma was given to all students to complete before the first Amici session. The COT has four concentric circles. Students placed themselves and all the important people in their lives in each circle according to the closeness with those people. The idea was then to compare another COT completed in term 3 to see if the students identified a wider range of both adults and students.

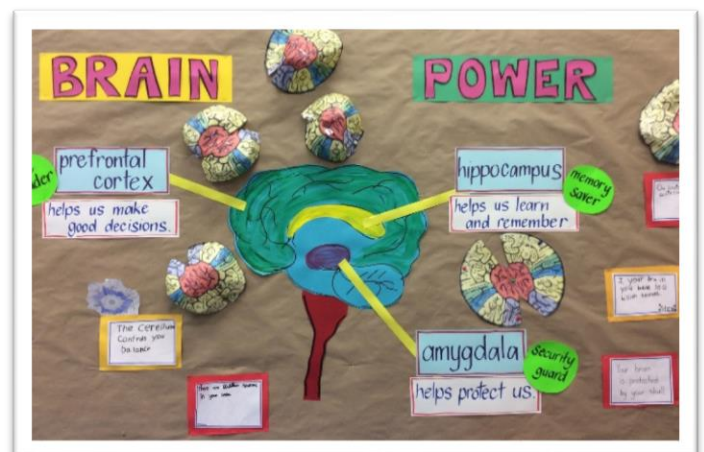
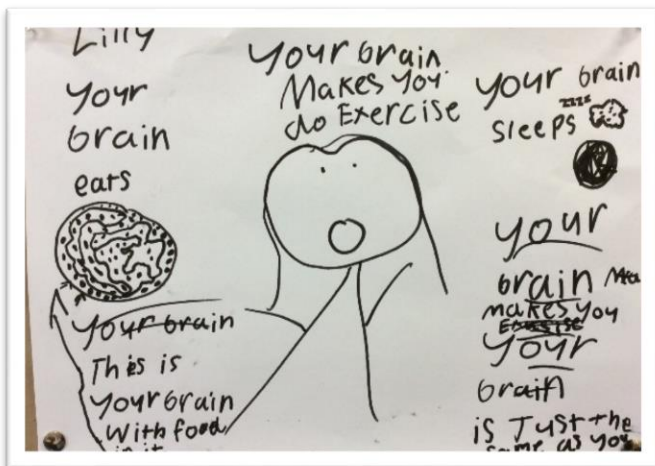
(See Appendix 4)

Outcomes - What's different now?

As a result of the project, there have been a variety of different initiatives, ideas and practices implemented across the school to help with the key concepts taught.

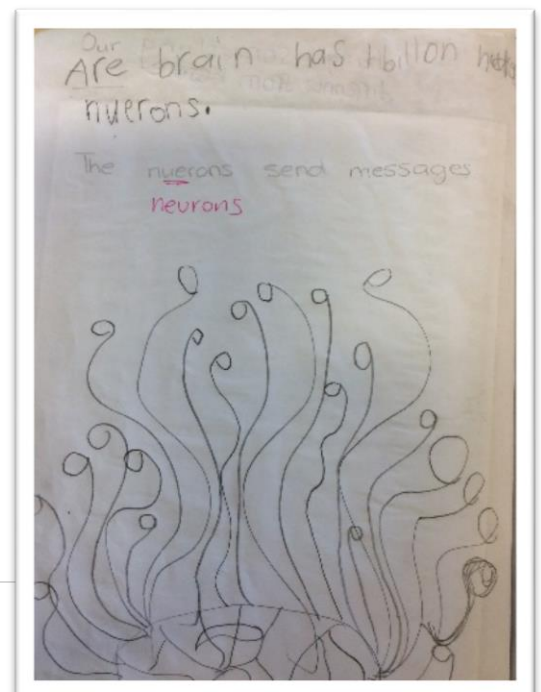
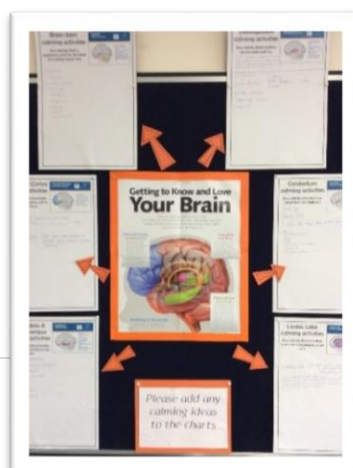
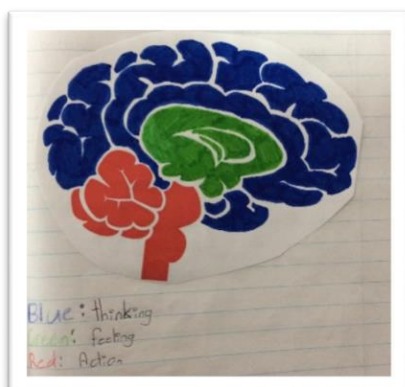
LEARNING ABOUT THE BRAIN

- All classes use the correct terminology/language of what happens in the brain if students become dysregulated.
- All classes using and teaching the 'Mind-Up' curriculum to explicitly teach about the brain.
- Student awareness of behaviours has developed to the point where they can identify reasons and parts of the brain responsible for behaviours and the need to have a break.
- Teachers constantly refer to making new connections in our brain- synapses by having a go at new challenges.
- The use of visual, displays and learning about parts of the brain in classrooms.
- The set-up of a staff room display indicating calming strategies to target specific parts of the brain.



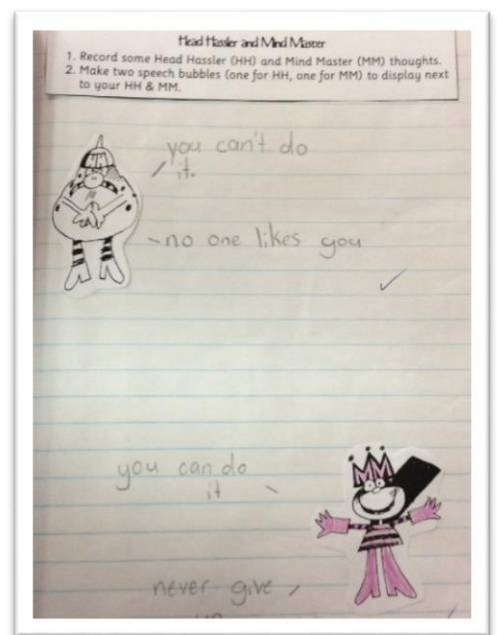
DATA

- Work samples and student reflections (See Appendix 1)
- Teacher observation and anecdotal records
- Staff and student reflections



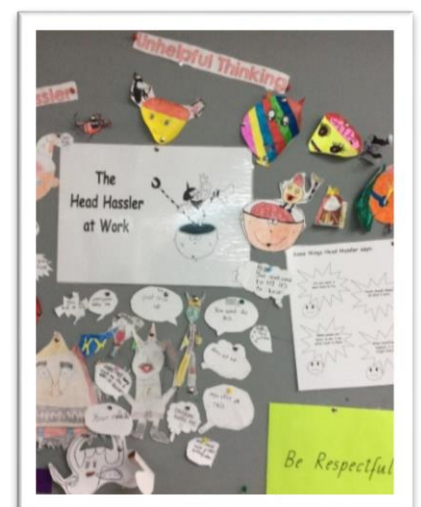
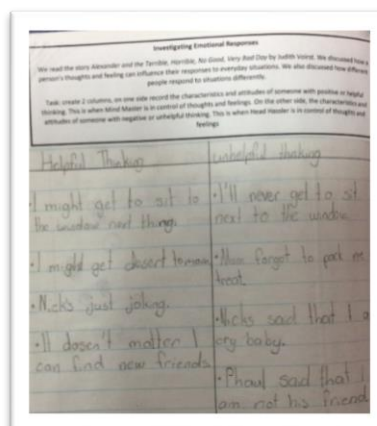
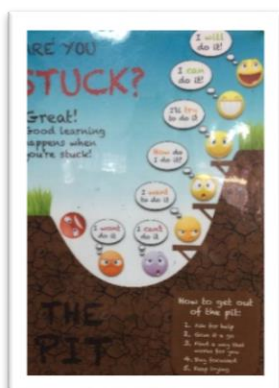
GROWTH MINDSET

- All teachers use the language of growth mindset in daily classroom activities- growth mindset versus a fixed mindset.
- The use of visual, displays and learning about growth mindsets in classrooms.
- Teachers refer to the power of YET. Not all students can do everything yet but will get there by adopting the growth mindset strategies.
- Growth mindset information posted on our Share point electronic platform which is accessible to the parent community.
- At the beginning of 2017, a whole school parent information session was held to discuss 21st Century Learning principles, the Trauma Sensitive School Project and the strategies and concepts implemented across the school to address such.



DATA

- Work samples and student reflections
- Teacher observation and anecdotal records
- Staff and student reflections
- Parent presentation power point (See Appendix 2)



CALMING STRATEGIES

- Each class has implemented mindfulness/relaxation after break times and during lesson transition.
- Journaling after break times used as a calming strategy but also as a way to write about issues/feelings that occurred during recess and lunch.
- Teachers give students brain breaks/calm down times who become dis-regulated throughout the day.
- Use of sensory and fidget toys to help children with sensory needs regulate.
- Classes use a singing bowl or musical instrument to gain classes attention.
- Instead of a school bell to indicate break times we play music over the PA system.
- A nature play garden has been installed in the back playground which include sensory elements such as pond, a mud kitchen, a water pump and a pergola used for quiet time.
- Regular daily fitness and brain food breaks.
- Use and teaching of the '5 point scale' to help regulate emotional responses.



DATA

- Work samples and student reflections
- Teacher observation and anecdotal records
- Staff and student reflections
- Student reflection (see Appendix 3)

[illegible]

GROWING CONNECTEDNESS

- We are continuing to have a whole school activity time once a week called Amici time. (Amici means friend in Italian).
- We now have a buddy gardening club held every other Wednesday in the Community Garden located behind the parish Church to build community and connectedness.
- Parent coffee club every Friday morning to build relationships.
- Establishment of weekly 'Learning Trees' Playgroup to build community and foster relationships with local families.
- Establishment of the 'Learning Trees' long transition to school program to help children starting school become familiar with the school environment, school routines and build relationships.
- The addition of the school 'Buddy Bench' to help children find others to play with at yard play time.



DATA

- Teacher observation and anecdotal records
- Circle of Trust work samples (see Appendix 4)
- Teacher reflection



Staff Response

As a staff, we found the introductory professional learning sessions extremely interesting – particularly the practical applications for classroom use. This was a new area of learning for our staff and it meant a shift in culture was required. Over time, teachers became more tolerant and knowledgeable of trauma consistent behaviours and had a deeper understanding of the reason behind the behaviour rather than focusing on the behaviour itself. There has been a greater feeling of collegial support and collaboration within the staff and a major attitude shift from *‘that is my child, in my class’* to *‘that is our child, in our school’*.

Staff found that they were already implementing a range of calming strategies in their classrooms and were eager to try a variety of different ones at different times. Teachers found the ‘Mind-Up curriculum’ as a valuable resource to help teach the parts of the brain and were actively talking about brain function and parts to both students and parents. The use of sensory items to help children regulate has been extensive and staff no longer view them as a distraction, but rather as an essential part of support.

As part of our post data collection, teachers were asked to respond the question below:

What impact or effect have you seen from using Trauma Sensitive approaches?

‘Implementing calming strategies daily has created strong, predictable routines. Children often no longer feel the need to have a teacher solve their playtime issues after they have had time to calm down. If they do require support, they are calm and can talk rationally about the situation and restorative practices become much easier and simpler in this situation’.

‘Children are way more relaxed, they know how to regulate’.

‘When visitors come to the school for enrolment interviews, they always comment that the school has a calm feeling about it and it is often one of the reasons they choose to come here’.

‘Staff have notice the target children have shown a big increase in their ability to self-regulate’.

Relief Teachers have commented that target children have shown a huge improvement in their behavior.

Target children were often needing to be removed when the class had a Relief Teacher but this is no longer the case. This is supported by the school trying to employ Relief Teachers who are known to the children whenever possible.

The buddy bench has been a great addition. Children will approach someone who is sitting on the bench without prompting and the children on the bench consistently accept the offer to come and play.

It is evident in the yard that the play space is calmer in general, there has been a reduction in the incidents of anger and physical aggression of the course of the project. Children are better able to regulate their emotions, acknowledge that negative emotions are ‘normal’ and are less likely to catastrophize.

Student response

Students seemed to welcome the opportunities to engage in and learn about Trauma Sensitive Practices. The use of calming strategies was particularly highlighted by many students and became a familiar part of the school routine. Student's use of sensory items and opportunities for sensory processing is now an integral part of the school day and is used by many students to help with self-regulation.

Many students are able to articulate the differences that calming activities make to their feelings, thoughts and brain. (See appendix 3) Perhaps the most significant student response to the project can be seen/heard in a conversation a student had with his peers during lesson time and was overheard by his teacher.

'I don't have Autism anymore!

A Year 2 boy began at St Therese at the beginning of 2017 after a move from another local school. At his previous school, the child was unable to regulate his feelings and was often removed from class as he was aggressive and violent. The child suffered high anxiety and had sensory regulation issues that compounded his frustration and aggression. The communication and relationship between family and school began to break down and as a result, it was decided that the child would move schools.

A slow transition program followed, whereby the child came for a number of short visits to St Therese to allow him to become familiar with the school, the teachers and his peers. The child began the school year comfortably and settled well into school routines and expectations. His teacher noticed he did have trouble regulating himself and saw that he would often seek sensory input when stressed, unsure or overwhelmed. She gave him a range of sensory toys to fidget with and negotiated with him the use of break times to help with his self-regulation. She also taught the whole class about the parts of the brain, the growth mindset approach and regularly used whole class calming strategies.

Over the course of the term, the child's behaviour and demeanour had changed. He successfully used the sensory items to help with his self-regulation and learnt how to ask for a break when he felt overloaded. No longer was he exhibiting the anxiety, anger and violent behaviour that was evident at his previous school but instead became more independent with his self-regulation of his feelings and thoughts.

The classroom teacher noted a conversation the student was having with a group of his peers during lesson. In conversation, he exclaimed quite proudly **'Last year I had Autism and this year I don't have it!'** When the teacher heard this she questioned and doubted his self-proclamation asking **'Really, you had autism?'** His response was **'Yes, I had autism at my old school and now I am cured! You have helped me close all the tabs in my brain to focus on one thing at a time!'**

This conversation demonstrates a number of different things in response to how the student identifies himself and his self-regulation. It shows us how children with trauma consistent behaviours can be exceptionally aware of their differences and how when trauma sensitive practices are implemented, the change it can bring.

Challenges

The challenges of the project included:

- Involving and engaging teachers in a busy school environment
- Collecting data
- Staff who may be resistant to new learning and teaching
- Finding time to teach about the parts of the brain
- Keeping motivated and on top of time lines

Most significant learning and Key Messages

Over the course of the project Staff have become more familiar with trauma consistent behaviours and became more adept at putting practices in place to support children. Teachers now understand the importance of trauma sensitive practices and how this can impact a child's learning. Teachers' approaches and responses to situations are continuing to reflect their new understandings. Students now have a deeper understanding of their own feelings and thoughts and are becoming more skilled at verbalising these. Children, staff and parents now have a shared understanding of the brain, the growth mindset approach and the use of calming strategies to help with self-regulation. The sense of calm across the school and in classrooms indicate a positive and proactive change.



Conclusion

This project has supported and extended our school focus on student well-being and the importance of adopting trauma sensitive practices. It has provided both staff and students with the knowledge, understanding, skills and strategies to help with self-regulation. The project has deepened our level of connectedness in relation to each other, the children, the parents and the wider community.

The knowledge and skills gained within this project have now become part of each teachers pedagogical 'toolbox' and are now second nature in relation to how we interact with all students - especially those students exhibiting trauma related behaviour.

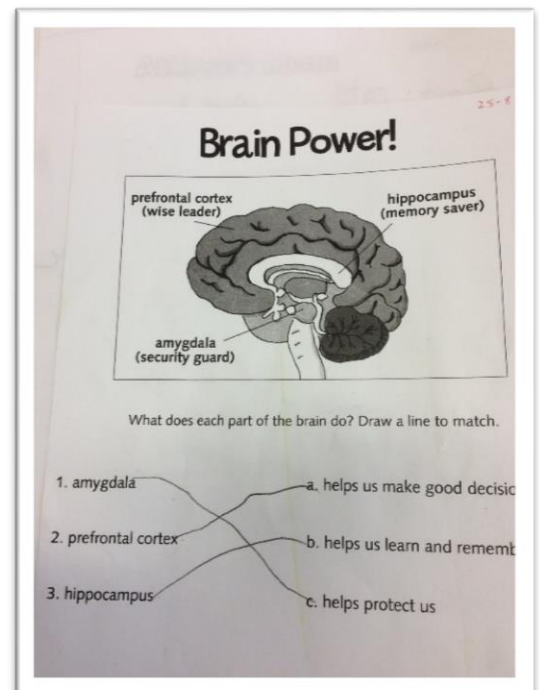
“Teachers now understand the importance of trauma sensitive practices and how this can impact a child’s learning. Teachers’ approaches and responses to situations are continuing to reflect their new understandings.”

LEARNING ABOUT THE BRAIN – APPENDIX I

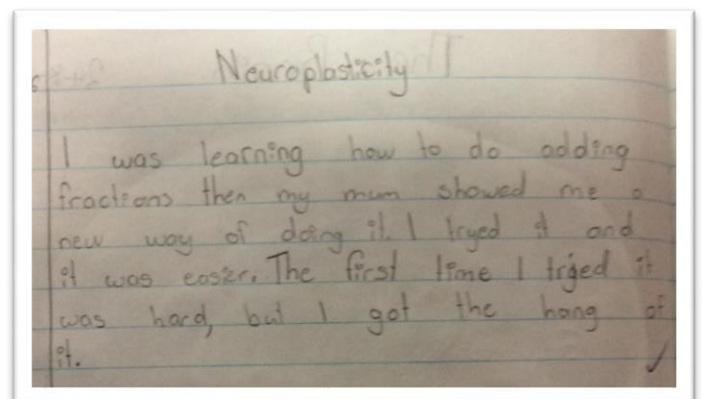
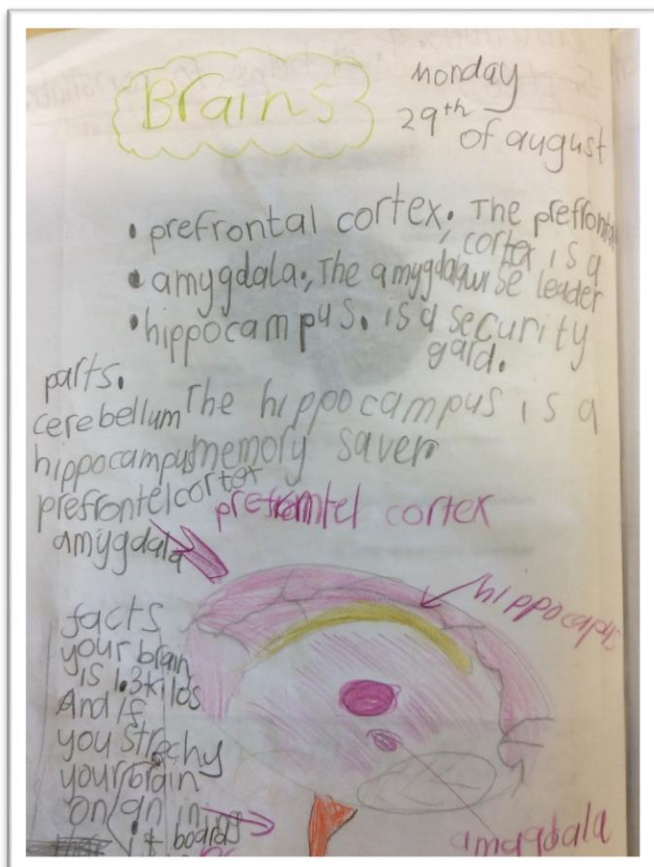
WORK SAMPLES



Junior Primary documentation wall on an inquiry unit on the brain



Labelling parts of the brain using resources from the 'Mind-up' curriculum



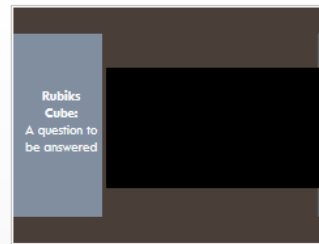
Journal entry from Year 3/4 brain journal

Year 4 reflection on what they have learnt about the brain

APPENDIX 2 – 21ST CENTURY LEARNING PARENT PRESENTATION

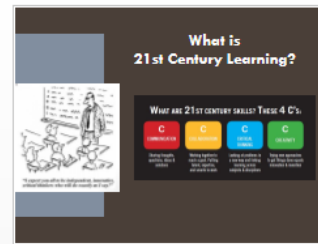


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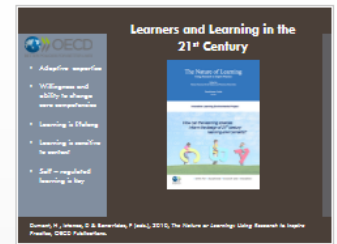
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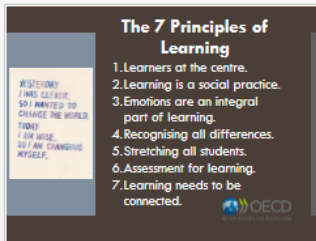


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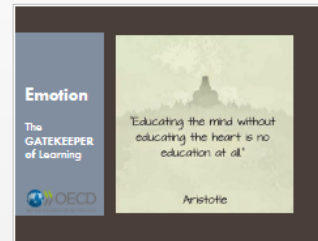
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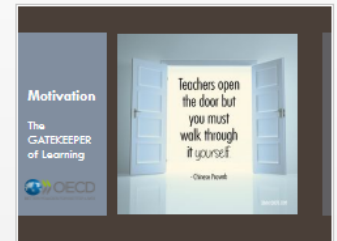
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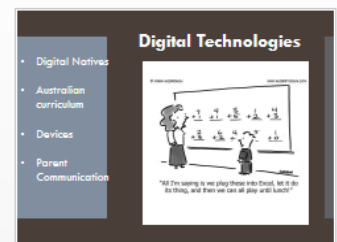
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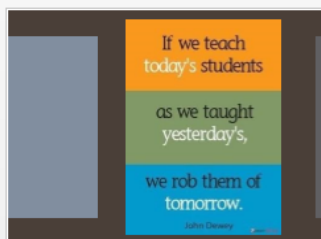
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APPENDIX 3 - REFLECTION OF USE OF CALMING STRATEGIES

Students were asked to reflect on the calming strategies they find most effective and to give example of when calming strategies have helped them to self-regulate their emotions.

'I use reading at school at calm down time because I like reading and I love books. I also use drawing because I love drawing.'

The calming strategies that work for me are reading, the Cup Song, sketching and deep breathing. These strategies work for me because when I do these activities I forget about everything that has happened and I relax and calm down.

Writing about you feeling is easy to do because you let your feelings out on a piece of paper without saying it out to the world and it makes you feel a lot better.

Fresh air works for me because once I got frustrated with my work then the teacher let me get some fresh air and then I came back in and I was the first one to finish in the class.

My favourite calming strategy is drawing. Drawing helps me when I feel sad or angry. It gets your mind off what happened that made you feel upset.

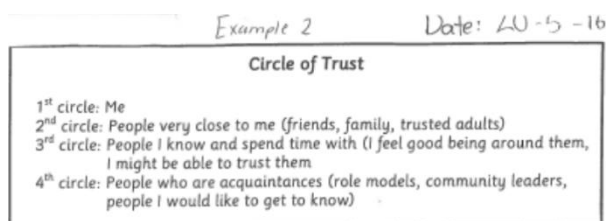
I use meditation to calm down, meditation is good to calm you when you have had a fight or when you are tired. It is also useful when you feel upset or angry or you are very excited. When I am upset I can use my knowledge about the brain to tell myself to calm down. This is a time when you use your knowledge to connect to other things so that you can lower your anger and troubles.

Drawing helps me to calm down whenever I am sad, angry or frustrated. When I draw I come from a 5 (on the Incredible 5 Point Scale) to a 1. One of the times when it helped me was when I got upset so I did some drawing and it made me calm again.

My favourite calming strategy is fidgets. They're really calming because they are very soft and they feel amazing.

The calming strategies that work for me are reading, drawing and deep breathing. These work for me because they help me to forget what happened to get me worked up.

APPENDIX 4 - CIRCLE OF TRUST WORK SAMPLES (GROWING CONNECTEDNESS)



Prior to amici time

3rd circle

People I know and spend time with
 (I feel good being around them, I might be able to trust them)

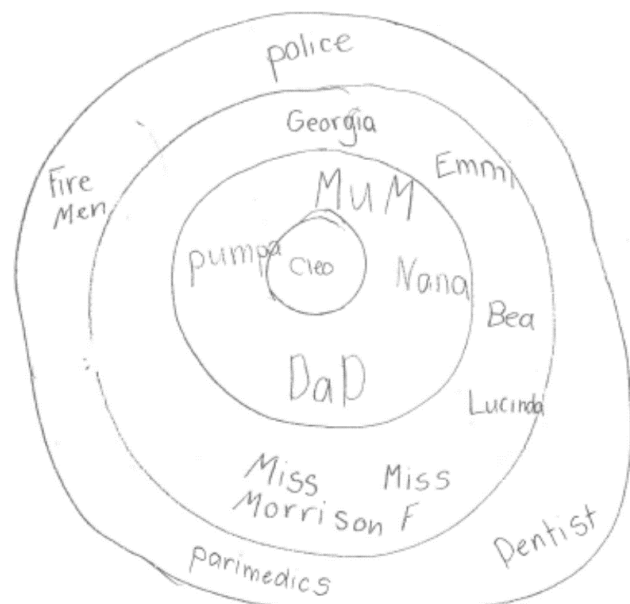
- Ms Fitzgerald
- Ms Morrison

After amici time

3rd circle

People I know and spend time with
 (I feel good being around them, I might be able to trust them)

- Ms Fitzgerald
- Ms Morrison
- Lucinda
- Bea
- Emma
- Georgia



This is the final COT completed after Amici Time ended. Students had a total of 16 sessions in 2 groups. Looking at the third circle again, it now indicates the same two teachers as well as a range of students. This trend was consistent across a number of the COT completed.

APPENDIX 5 – RESOURCES USED

- Anna Kendrick ‘Cups’ (Pitch Perfect’s ‘When I’m Gone’):
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=cmSbXsFE3l8>
- Australian Childhood Foundation <http://www.childhood.org.au>
- Making Space for Learning: Australian Childhood Foundation
- Bomber L.M., Hughes D. (2013) Settling to Learn, Worth Publishing
- Circle Time
- Cosmic Kids Yoga: <https://www.youtube.com/user/CosmicKidsYoga>
- Fidget toys for calming and to promote concentration
- The Hawn foundation: <http://thehawnfoundation.org/mindup/>
- Hawn Foundation (2011) Mind Up Curriculum, Scholastic, Inc. USA
- Keeping Safe Student Protection Curriculum Department for Education and child Development www.decd.sa.gov.au/teachingandlearning
- Kids Matter Website and resources: <https://www.kidsmatter.edu.au/>
- Kinetic Sand
- Le Messurier, M., & Nawana M., What’s the Buzz?
- Made In The Image Of God
<https://online.cesa.catholic.edu.au/docushare/dsweb/Get/Document>
- Magic Bubbles Guided Meditation:
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=KF52txZvUsA>
- Mandala colouring
- Moving Mandala Meditation: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=XL9zUsTjB9Q>
- Mozart for Babies Brain Development:
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=XL9zUsTjB9Q>
- Rainforest Meditation: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=d_fcF2y_p_A
- Sentis Brain Animation Series:
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=XSzsI5aGcK4&list=PL53nCCeNj-RQDhbjE9LjvnFad-wdB5bw7>
- Sesame Street “What I am”:
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=cyVzjoj96vs&list=PLcmWun34sQ9rB3SEBWknlWrVomJglllyAU>
- Singing bowls



Project Team at St Therese School

ST THERESE SCHOOL – SHOWCASE POWERPOINT PRESENTATION



growing minds



ST THERESE SCHOOL
COLONEL LIGHT GARDENS

Trauma Sensitive
Schools
Showcase
Presentation

ST THERESE SCHOOL
COLONEL LIGHT GARDENS

- Rec – Year 7 co-educational primary school
- Built in Dominican Tradition
- 191 students
- 8 classes
- 21 staff members – 15 teachers, 6 ESOs
- 5.75% students diagnosed with a disability
- 30% students receive adaptive education support
- Centacare counsellor 1 day per week in 2016/17
- Kids Matter School

community | respect | grace | courage



OUR MISSION...


“Educate and develop the whole child for life in the Church and the World of today and tomorrow”

ACTION RESEARCH QUESTION

How can:

- **Growing connectedness**
- **Learning about the brain and;**
- **Engaging in regular mindfulness activities in classrooms**

help our children (especially those who show trauma consistent behaviours) regulate their behaviour?



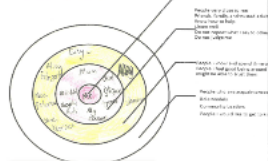
KEY CONCEPTS TO BE TAUGHT

- Learning about the brain
- Growth Mindset Approach
- Calming Strategies
- Building Relationships



EVALUATION PROCESS

Circle of Trust



Results from Growth Mindset survey

Bucket filling	2	Changing our thinking	4
Teach Growth v Fixed Mindset	5	Teaching Neuroplasticity	1
Learning about brain function	2	Allocating buddies/mentors	1
Learning Pit	2	Using teachable moments	2
Changing our thinking	4	Program Achieve	2
What's the Buzz? program	3	Calming Techniques	8
Mind Up Curriculum	2	Helpful/Unhelpful thinking	2

'Your brain controls your body, it controls hands and legs.'

'If you didn't have a brain you wouldn't be able to think.'

Your brain is squishy, wet and soft.'

IMPLEMENTATION

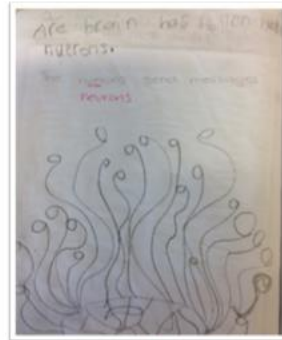
Learning about brain function
Nature Play Area
Mind-Up Curriculum
Mustard Seed Gardening Club
Amici Time
Whole School training
Calming Strategies
What's the Buzz?
Growth Mindset Approach
Kids Matter
Individual student observations
Buddy Bench

growing minds

OUTCOMES LEARNING ABOUT THE BRAIN

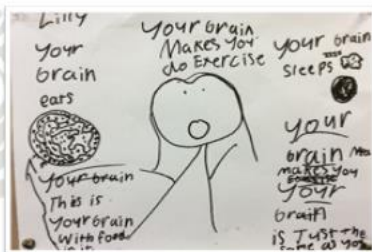


Classroom displays

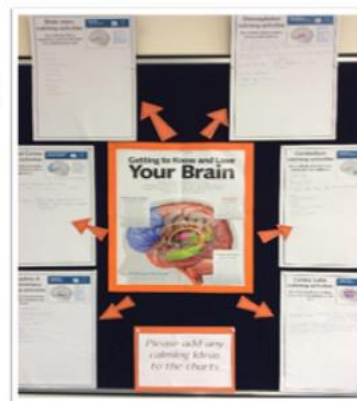


Brain Journals

OUTCOMES LEARNING ABOUT THE BRAIN



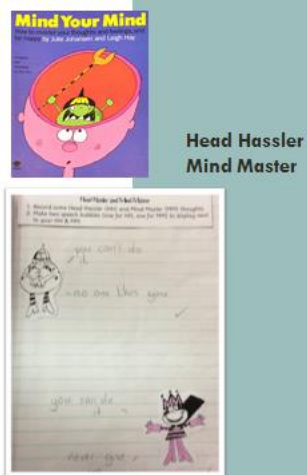
Student reflections



Staff room reference board

OUTCOMES GROWTH MINDSET

Classroom displays



Head Hassler
Mind Master

OUTCOMES GROWTH MINDSET



Parent Information Session



Share Point
Page



OUTCOMES CALMING STRATEGIES



Cosmic Yoga



Mandalas



Sensory items

5 Point Scale



OUTCOMES CALMING STRATEGIES



Singing bowls



Nature Play
Garden



OUTCOMES GROWING CONNECTEDNESS



Learning Trees Playgroup



Mustard Seed
Gardening Club



Amici Time



Buddy Bench

CHANGES STAFF RESPONSE

That is MY child,
in MY class



That is OUR child,
in OUR school

'It is evident in the yard that the play space is calmer in general, there has been a reduction in the incidents of anger and physical aggression of the course of the project.'

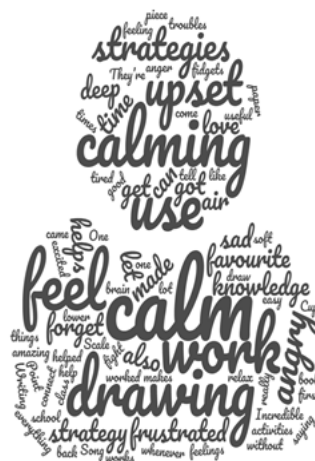
'Children are way more relaxed, they know how to regulate'.

'Implementing calming strategies daily has created strong, predictable routines'

CHANGES STUDENT RESPONSE

Drawing helps me to calm down whenever I am sad, angry or frustrated. When I draw I come from a 5 (on the Incredible 5 Point Scale) to a 1.

My favourite calming strategy is fidgets. They're really calming because they are very soft and they feel amazing.



CHANGES
STUDENT RESPONSE



*'I don't have
Autism any
more!'*

MOST SIGNIFICANT LEARNING



Making SPACE for Learning



ST JOHN THE APOSTLE PRIMARY SCHOOL

PROJECT REPORT AND POWER POINT PRESENTATION



2016 - 2017

TRAUMA SENSITIVE PRACTICES IN SCHOOLS

ST JOHN THE APOSTLE PRIMARY SCHOOL

A collection of data, lessons, and learning experiences through the engagement of trauma sensitive and inclusive practices by the staff and community of St John the Apostle Primary School.

School Vision Statement

St John the Apostle is a place of Welcome, Love and Truth.

Our foundation stone acknowledges the writing of St John the Apostle, God is Love (1John 4:8)

Spirited by our Catholic faith and in partnership with parents, the parish and the wider community, we are committed to providing a high-quality, holistic and contemporary education for our students. Therefore we respond to the message of St Luke the Evangelist, by being a welcoming and inclusive school community, as part of the Noarlunga Seaford Parish.

From Reception to Year 7, students are invited to participate in a parish-based Sacramental program, which builds upon the foundations of each year. Sacraments are celebrated in our Parish, strengthening and affirming valuable links between the Parish and the school community. Students commence their celebration of the Sacraments from Year 3 beginning with Reconciliation, and following with Confirmation and Eucharist.



PROJECT TITLE

Student Wellbeing Program

RESEARCH PROJECT INQUIRY QUESTION

2016 inquiry question:

‘What shared pedagogical understandings do we use to ensure that all students are working towards their full potential?’

2017 edit:

‘As a school community what shared understandings do we use to build relationships, so that all students are working towards their full potential?’

FRAMEWORK/THEME FOCUS AREAS

2016

The focus areas for our project were:

- Educate all staff on the brain by sending them to a 2-day workshop (Making SPACE for Learning presented by ACF)
- Imbedding calming strategies into our classrooms and school practice
- Building meaningful relationships with our students
- Understanding what students know/ want to know about their brains

2017

- Engaging students in calming and mindfulness strategies
- Building a whole school awareness around mindfulness and the importance of individuality
- Understanding dysregulated behaviour to intervene, engage and teach
- Becoming mindful of triggers and effective strategies to manage
- Include spaces around our school that are symbolic of mindfulness strategies

TIMEFRAME

Beginning in 2016, our school dedicated 18 months to implement, educate and execute trauma sensitive practices in our school. From this we developed relationships, understandings and strategies that would assist our students, teachers and community in the future.

STAFF INVOLVED

Project leaders:

Dee - Anne Peters Acting Principal
Krystal Lowey 4/5 Classroom Teacher
Tricia Clark R/1 Classroom Teacher
Amy Brockman 6/7 Classroom Teacher
Jacinta Verhagen ESO
Lynn Madden Children's Counsellor

Project team:

Professional Learning Communities (PLC'S) Foundation to Year 7 at St John the Apostle Primary School
R/1 PLC Mrs Lisa Martin and Mrs Tricia Clark
2/3 PLC Mr Anthony Egidio, Mrs Loretta Wheatland and Mrs Anne Marcelline
4/5 PLC Ms Krystal Lowey and Simone Mashford
6/7 PLC Mr Justin Marsh, Mrs Amy Brockman and Ms Rebecca Pittard

THE CONTEXT

St John the Apostle School was founded in 1965 by the Dominican Sisters. It has become an important provider of Catholic education in the southern suburbs. The school has grown to 225 boys and girls from Reception to Year 7.

We retain the Dominican motto of "Veritas" - Truth, which encourages us to hear and live the Word of God. The Dominican spirit continues to foster community life and the celebration of the Eucharist.

At St John the Apostle School we recognise that each child is a unique individual. We strive not merely to impart knowledge but to bring about Christian attitudes and family values of caring and sharing, of giving, forgiving and thanking.

We create a safe, nurturing and caring environment for children.

We strongly encourage a close, working partnership between the home and school, where communication and parental involvement is highly valued and critical to the success of each child.

At St Johns we are an R-7 school with 9 classes, we have large learning areas where classes work as professional learning communities (PLC'S).

As an invitation, our school was chosen to participate in the Trauma Sensitive Practices Project. From here we accepted the project because of the increased need within our school to support our students. Our aim was to change our teaching practices to support all students in reaching their full potential; incorporating the project as a whole school approach rather than singling out and targeting specific students with a trauma background. As a whole school approach, our staff participated in the Making SPACE for Learning training and from here we discussed a long list of those specific students. From creating this list, it became evident that addressing individual needs didn't suit our school and it was then decided that it was needed as a whole school approach. Formulating a specific team to guide our school in the implementation process was key and this drove the project to success; referring to the project within our school as the Student Wellbeing Program. From this Project the teachers also benefitted from gaining the ability to recognise, understand, cope and apply their knowledge from the project to better handle behaviours and connect with their students.

Why the trauma sensitive school project would benefit our community?

As a school we had small numbers of students with trauma consistent behaviours and we had large groups of children exposed to these behaviours within our schools setting. Those students then became involved with the behaviours and followed as a result to gain attention of both peers and teachers. As a result the overall calm of our school had diminished. The small number of students displaying trauma consistent behaviour had a profound impact on the teaching and learning within the classroom for both students and teachers. The sense among staff and leadership was a lacking of calm.

DESCRIPTION OF THE PROJECT

Guided by professional development with our whole school through the Making SPACE for Learning training days, we educated our staff with the knowledge of what trauma sensitive is and how we could implement this in our school. By formulating a trauma sensitive team within our school we developed a PowerPoint filled with images and information; specific to the foundations of understanding our brains functions. It was vital that these understandings were **consistent** throughout our school to ensure **predictability** from R-7.

From here each learning community then developed and implemented a variety of specific strategies and visual representations along with practices that compliment these understandings.

Whole school:

- Children's counsellor visited each learning community in an informal setting to discuss the Dan Siegel Brain Hand Model "flipping your lid"
- Creating a sensory table in the library that was available to all students
- Visual poster representations around our school – Name the brain
- Reduced the number of bells for transition times- from 11per day to now 2
- Differentiated meeting spots after recess and lunch
- Whole school staff meetings sharing our students learnings and inquiries
- Learning community sensory boxes

- Meditation and mindfulness practices
- Quiet zones and reflection zones within our school
- Specific reflection times
- Designated brain breaks throughout each day
- Implementation of background calming music during lessons
- Specialist programs i.e. – Speech and language, rhythm, brain gym, fun and games, phonics, fine motor and reading programs
- Creating a trauma sensitive resource section in our teacher library and hard drive

EVALUATION PROCESS

As a whole school, our evaluation process and collection of data mutually contributed to the way we shared the knowledge of student wellbeing practices, in order to target the needs within our school. Documenting student understandings and queries and then enabling teachers and staff to collate these into KWL charts allowed for a targeted approach to implementing trauma sensitive practices.

- Student Questionnaire
- Staff KWL chart to document student understandings and queries (KWL; What I know, what I wonder and what I have learnt summarising task)
- Staff learning and sharing meeting to collate ideas and future plan
- Student reflections and evaluations

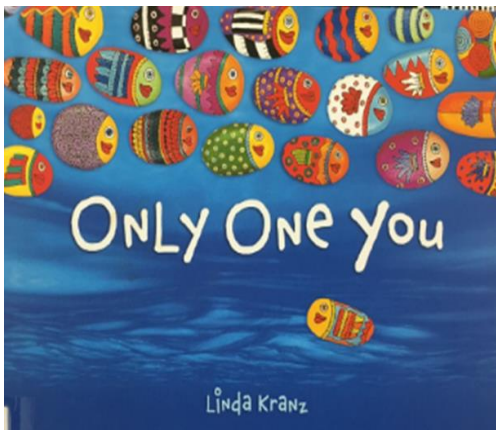
OUTCOMES / WHAT'S DIFFERENT NOW?

Bells

Creating predictability in our school lives meant that we wanted to lessen the amount of bells ringing in our school. We previously had 11 bells signalling times of transition throughout the day. We agreed as a staff that this was too many and that whilst at school the students heavily relied on this to behave and respond accordingly. We began by turning off all the bells and this saw students noticing the time, moments of feeling hungry and a lessened negative triggered response to a bell ringing. Further on from this, staff found their voices being strained at the end of recess and lunch to signal the end so we re-introduced 2 bells so that students can hear these when out on the oval. From this students are now more self-regulated throughout the day. Currently we are moving towards a new PA system where we hope to implement music instead of 2 bells to signify the end of play time.

Butterfly Garden

Representing spaces in our school for reflective time and quiet was one thing we added to our school upon responses from the students and staff. We had developed a butterfly garden as part of an ecology project during the year and evolved this to include a whole school art task that reflected our learnings and understandings from the story 'Only one you' by Linda Kranz. Which highlighted the importance of individuality and how this is important and special in everyday life. Inspiring the analogy that although we are all different we all swim in the same ocean. Using river rocks each student in our school painted a design that reflected the story and we had these concreted into a path within the butterfly garden. The garden is a work-in progress and will soon include benches in which the students can sit amongst the garden plants.



Trauma sensitive practises in the R/1 classrooms

We looked at table arrangements, as group desks were found to be more beneficial for the children to connect and participate with others and have a feeling of belonging.



Morning fruit - Routine

We quite often found that students were hungry at various stages in the morning. We decided to cut out fruit time at 10 am and allow them to choose when they would eat their fruit. Each morning they bring their fruit into the classroom and if they have an apple their parent can cut it for them or we cut them during pack up time. We have found that by

doing this, there are some students who will eat their fruit rather than doing their work and will quite often get fruit juices all over their work. We are trying to encourage the students to do their work and eat their fruit when they have finished.



Morning activities - Predictability

We introduced morning activities for the students. Originally, we would start with work for them, but found that this would make students anxious when coming to school, not knowing what was expected of them. We changed the activities to be more inviting for the students, but keeping in mind that there was a learning intention behind the activity.



As part of the morning activities, we worked towards being able to let the students choose their own activity. The day before, students get to choose the activity they would like to do the following morning. This was to give the students a sense of ownership and to let them have a strong sense of identity and predictability in the classroom by being given the choice of what activity they would like to start the day with.



Brain breaks - Sensory

Between the 2 hour morning block, we broke up the learning time with brain breaks between literacy lessons.

This consisted of YouTube clips of Wii dancing and the students would dance along.

All students loved this; however, it worked better in the straight reception class.

The R/1 class had a number of large boys in the group (with little or no spatial awareness) and some smaller children got accidentally hurt.

As an alternative, they were taken outside to the playground for 10 minutes where they could run on the oval or use the playground.



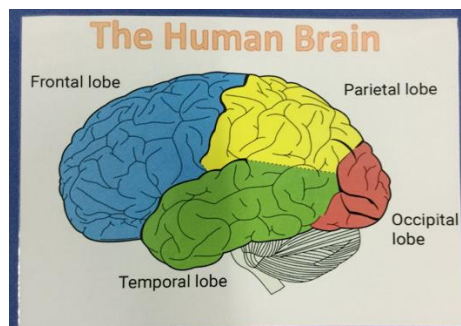
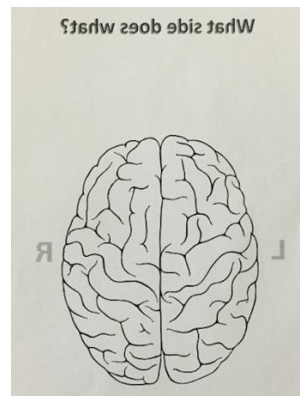
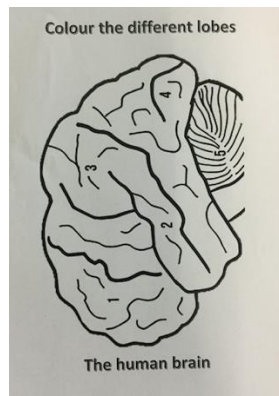
Evaluation of strategies

Engaging students in morning activities created a great sense of predictability within our learning space. Students selected their task before leaving and were excited to choose and then prepare everything they needed to get ready for the next day. When entering the classroom the next day students knew exactly what to expect and there was less disruptions and issues with separation anxiety from parents leaving. Our strategies have promoted a sense of calm and we know spend our time in the morning chatting with the students whilst they partake in their chosen task. It sets them up for a really successful day of learning. Brain breaks and choosing fruit are still things in our everyday practice and this allows a sense of responsibility among the class.

Trauma sensitive practises in the 1, 2& 3 classrooms

Models of the brain – Understanding the brain

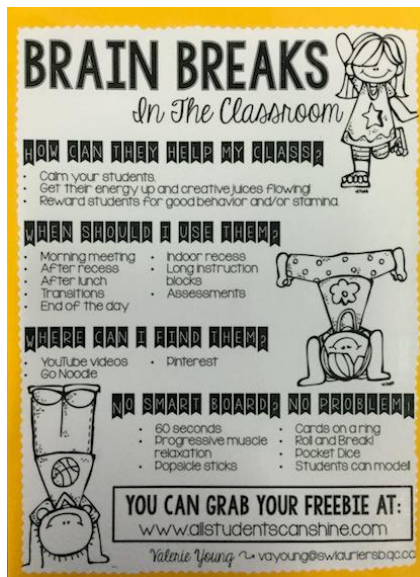
We built models of the brains to understand the different sections of the brain and aid our discussion from the poster. It was great to get the students to create these for hands on visual understanding of their brains. As well as having representations of the learning in our classroom. The poster created a visual reminder around the room to remind students of the discussions about.



Brain break cards

Using these has allowed the students to have an opportunity to have a quick break from their work. With a focus on body movement and social skills among the group. We focused a great deal of implementing breaks that involved movement as several of the students struggle to sit still for periods of time.





Meditation, yoga and prayer

A wellbeing program aimed at relaxation and fitness for body and mind was run by Jo Bishop (Director Yoga Jyoti). The program ran over five weeks during Term 4 and was designed to suit the individual needs of each student.

The children were introduced to postures, gentle breathing, awareness and relaxation through individual, pair and group activities involving imaginative, artistic and dramatic play in a versatile, fun-filled program.

Benefits to the children included:

- Improved self-awareness and confidence
- Enhanced physical fitness and flexibility
- Improved balance and coordination
- Improved health and wellbeing
- Development and maintenance of focused attention
- Deep relaxation
- Plenty of fun and laughter



Growth Mindset

To initiate learning and understanding about the brain we introduced our students to the idea of a 'Growth Mindset'. This explained to them that the brain is like a muscle and has a deep impact on learning. We watched a video with the students and they enjoyed listening to the story and identifying with Mojo's struggle. This led to discussions where the students could recognize feelings and make positive changes on how they thought about learning.

In addition we focused on understanding elements of the brain and how it functioned. This was carried out at an age appropriate level and was designed to make the students aware of effects of what and how they did and responded to things in their lives.

A hub of 'brain breaks' was made accessible for each class in addition to self-regulating activities which incorporated making mandalas and mediation.

The students were introduced to mindfulness by being still and listening to the sounds around them in the school outdoor environment. They were encouraged to find a quiet place, close their eyes and focus on their breathing.

Colouring in mandalas offered a calming experience for the students. In addition, the students created nature mandalas using a selection of leaves, twigs and nature artifacts from our school yard. Creating the mandala was a calming, peaceful activity for our students.

Evaluation of Strategies

The strategies have assisted in helping children who struggle to remain focused and driven to complete set activities and develop a sense of success. Creating brain models aided the students to understand why certain behaviours happen and the different sections within the brain. Focusing on language and emotion of the brain allowed the teacher to convey some of his own personal experiences with the class to build understandings of different behaviours that occur. Building relationships and understanding why certain emotions and behaviours happen. Engaging in prayer, yoga and meditation has built clarity amongst students on the importance of finding a sense of calm and using this time to bond with teachers has been enlightening.

Trauma Sensitive Practises in the 4/5 Classrooms

Understanding our brain

The Trauma Sensitive Project took our learning community on a journey to discover how our brains are essential to our learning and wellbeing. Understanding the brain and its functions as well as its stressors and how these are different for each of us gave us an understanding of how we could foster each child to understand and communicate their feelings, thoughts and identify when the best time to step away from a task is to gain clarity. We engaged our students in a variety of activities that began with exploration of the brain and understanding its different sections and functions, this was beneficial to the students as they moved away from the thought that the brain is a round pink mass that "is lumpy" (Year 4 student reflection) and "sometimes doesn't work". (Year 5 Student Reflection).

Some of the brain breaks and activities we implemented in our learning community include:

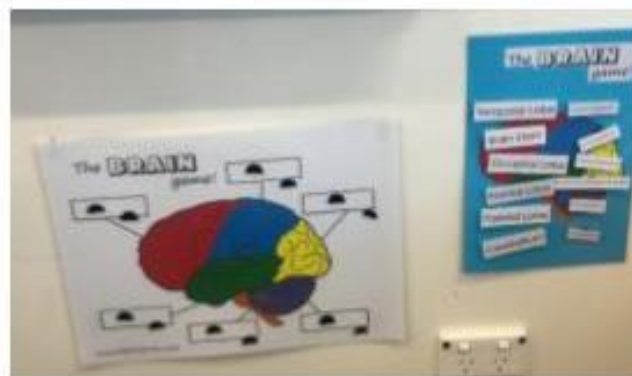
Understanding the brain - Consistency

Here the students created a replica of the colours associated with various sections and placement of these on a model head.



Expanding our knowledge of the brain

The brain game' gave our students the opportunity to associate both colors and the appropriate names for the various areas of the brain.



Brain Breaks -Sensory

Using these 'Would you rather cards' or 'Quick action cards' allowed us to have humorous conversations and sharing time with our students. Participating in this activity grew when students realised everyone looked a little silly and they wouldn't stand out.





Visual cards – Visual learning

These cards allowed us to visually speak and communicate with our students rather than verbally. These were often found effective when engaging with students who preferred visual instructions or needed assistance with organisation skills.

Calm Cards – Conversation starters

These were a series of cards that asked students to participate in a number of activities that work on their skills and abilities in various areas such as; reasoning and self-awareness, relaxation, movement and sensory needs, logic, memory, relationships and breathing. These activities were useful in getting students to participate with their peers in which they were not familiar with. These activities were sourced from the Making SPACE for Learning training which all our staff attended.

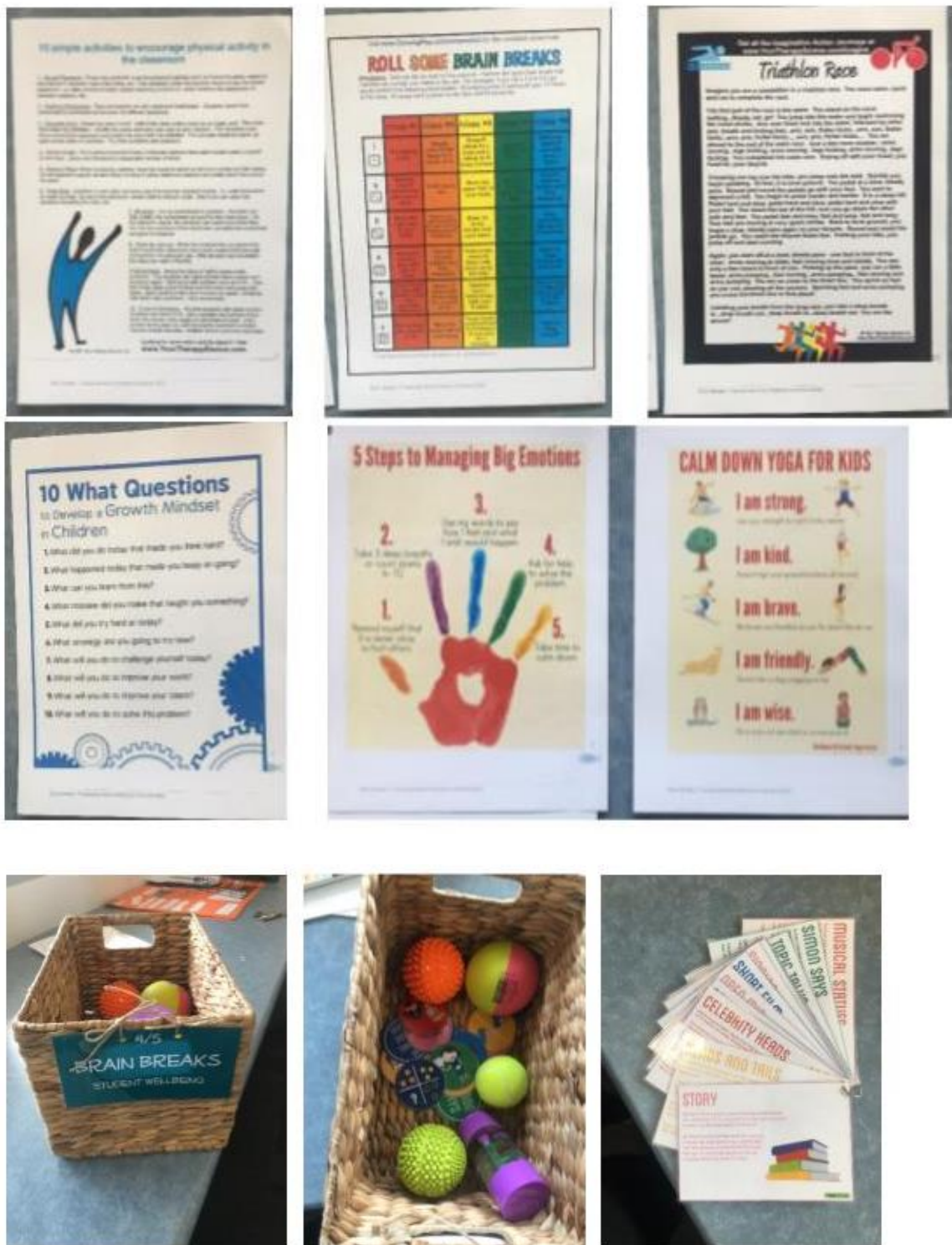


Reflection Journals – Safe Communication

These journals were used in conjunction with our religious education teaching and learning for the year, on a number of occasions students utilised this book to present their religious understandings as well as a space for quiet reflection, drawing and contemplation. An important part of these journals was allowing students to decorate their journals however they wished too, this allowed great conversations between student and teacher to eventuate and build teacher to student relationships.

Brain Breaks – Building Relationships

Some of the various types of brain break activities the students engaged with were; short bursts of physical activity and stretching in the classroom, rolling a brain break, the triathlon race, discussions and investigation a growth vs fixed mindset and calm down yoga for kids. All these activities allowed the students to take a break anywhere from 5-15 minutes, and then return to work much more focused and willing to participate.



2017

Moving into 2017 we wanted a clear and specific box dedicated to brain breaks in our classroom. After a discussion with other staff members and then a discussion with our trauma sensitive team we decided to implement a 'Brain Breaks box' with activities dedicated to our students at each age group. The box includes a set of cards with a variety of activities on them, balls, visual timers and some fiddle toys. These boxes will continue to grow as we develop, change and adapt our brain break activities. We have also implemented differentiated seating with round exercise balls for seating as well as resistance bands around the chair legs.

Overall we have found the trauma sensitive project to be helpful, insightful and informative to not only the student learning but our practice as a staff, it has educated us on the brain and allowed us to further educate our students on the importance of understanding their brain as well as listening to signs of fatigue, stress and alertness as well as many others. Changing the name to the student wellbeing program within our school encourages all to participate rather than identifying or secluding anyone or any group of students.

Evaluation of strategies

Targeting specific behaviours in our learning space meant the strategies we put into place had to allow predictable breaks, expectations and opportunities to build relationships both with peers and teachers. The strategies we used increased the strength of relationship between both teacher to student as well as peer morale, we found it was important to ensure strategies were age appropriate and whole class to ensure consistency among the group. Overall educating students with the knowledge and understanding of their brain and the control it has on everyday functions allowed students to regulate and modify their behaviours dependent on their built understandings. From this students felt it was important to release the tension and stress of everyday life by taking a break and this is where we implemented brain breaks. This has greatly affected the management of and quantity of undesirable behaviours and outbursts in the classroom.

Trauma Sensitive Practises in the 6/7 Classrooms

The Year 6/7 unit has had great success using the trauma sensitive program and concepts in achieving social, emotional and intelligent goals. We, as team teaching partners worked together to develop an understanding of what our students know, didn't know and what they could achieve from learning about the brain and the way it functions.

First, we decided to gather some information from our students using a KWL chart. They were asked what they knew and what they wanted to know. They were encouraged to be proactive in really thinking about what they wanted to know and be creative in their responses. Their responses proved a great resource for discerning what direction we were to head in next.

After looking at the KWL chart as well as having a discussion as a teaching team around their social and emotional needs we highlighted a few key topics on which we needed to teach.

Yr 6/7 Brain Pre Assessment	
K	W
What I know	What I Wonder
<p>Year 7 Responses:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • That our brains are the most complicated computers in the world. (Ecc) • The right side of the brain controls the left side of the body and vice versa. (Mason) • The size of the brain is your fists put together. (Austin) • If you didn't have a brain you would not be able to function. (Matthew) • Right side: Creativity, fun – Left side: work, smart, more serious. (Matthew and Ari) • If a mother is ill during pregnancy when the babies brain is developing it can be born without some parts of its brain. (Eve) • It floats in liquid and can be damaged. (Tim) • The most extraordinary thing. (Tim) • It has a number of different sections. (Harrison) • The brain works automatically. (Ella) • Brain works 24 hours a day, 7 days a week even when you are sleeping. (Kristen) • Knowledge and thought are kept in the brain. (Emily) • If the brain stops working the whole body stops. (Joanna) • Our brain is protected by our skull. (Ciera) • We only use a percentage of our brain. (VU) 	<p>Year 7 Responses:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Can the brain work with just one side working? (Ecc) • How it gets your heart to beat and your lungs to breathe all at the same time? (Mason) • I wonder why it's all possible? (Austin) • How it controls the other side of your body? (James) • Does it move around? (Dai) • How can the brain actually control your whole body? (Matthew) • Why is the brain in your head? (Matthew) • What helps the brain? (Ari) • When does the brain stop developing? (Eve) • Are there any parts of the brain we don't need? (Eve) • How can a squishy organ think and make decisions? (Tim) • Where do ideas come from? (Tim) • What are the sections called? (Harry) • Why does it look the way it does? (Dai) • What happens to my brain when I pass away? (Kristen) • What is a <u>tempor</u> and what can it become? How big is your brain? (Chantal and Emily) • How does blood go through the brain? (Aaron)

Understanding the Brain

Students firstly took a questionnaire which enabled them to see through visual stimulus which side of their brain they used most frequently, and how they can understand the relation between this connection and emotional, social and intellectual needs each individual possesses.



“Finding out which side of the brain I use the most really hit home with me, as it helped me understand my qualities.” Year 7 Student

We then asked the students to work in groups whilst researching further into the different functions of our left and right side of the brain.

The students then worked collaboratively in creating posters demonstrating their understanding of the varying sides of the brain and were challenged to interpret ideas given into pieces of work that illustrated their understanding.

Supporting predictable transition times

“Silent reading is my favourite part of the day! I get to switch off for a while.” Year 6 Student

We discovered after lunch play, it would often be a time of distress for some students after incidents in the playground or being on emotional highs from social issues. We found silent reading a useful calming tool in bringing all those emotions back down to a working level.

Not only did it provide a great opportunity for kids to switch off and delve into a different world, it allowed those that had been impacted by lunch time issues to either discuss and problem solve with a teacher or have some quiet time.



Classroom environment - Sensory

We have made several quiet zones in our classroom space to provide students with feelings of comfort and belonging. We wanted the students to feel they could move around and experience varying levels of seating. These included, normal desks, side benches, area outside the classroom, couches and bean bags.

“I love using the couch, it’s comfy and calming” Year 7 student

Emotional Regulation

This also gave us spaces where we could use beanbags and couches, arm chairs and places that students would often go to when feeling upset.



Breath of fresh air

- Fitness breaks have been a great way to engage students in social development. Learning to work with one another outside the classroom and developing another means to release any pent up emotion into physical exercise.
- We also started to use timed breaks for some of our students who struggle under pressure on occasion in the classroom. Often a quick run around the oval was enough for them to return with a clear mindset and a new found enthusiasm towards their learning.

Evaluation of strategies

The strategies promoted calmness in our classroom, especially after lunch time when social issues are being diffused. Having the opportunity to go out side and have negotiated spaces have been good for building student to teacher relationships to be nurtured and for trust to increase.

Trauma Sensitive Practises – Specialist Programs

The specialist programs are ESO run and focus on specific skill building in areas identified by teachers that need assistance. They are small groups that promote skill building of similar students from a variety of classes working together. These students are selected from R-7 and work in similar aged group levels in a designated area in the school removed from the class. In order to build on the individual needs of the student.

Brain Gym

- Works on the Cerebellum
- Different motor skills become automatic
- Things become easier instead of using other parts of the brain

Student Reflection:

Year Two: "I like doing it because it keeps me calm and gives my body a feeling of been relaxed"

Year Six: "Makes me nice and calm. Makes my body calm"

Rhythm groups

- Brain integration
- Rhythm regulates the brain
- Focuses attention with short 5-20 minute lessons
- Taps into the power of presence
- Improves concentration
- Releases stress
- Helps improve social skills
- It's a whole lot of fun

Student Reflection:

Year One: "Makes me feel relaxed. Makes my body feel cool."

Year One: "Makes me feel good. Makes my body feel relaxed."

Year Six: "Makes me feel nice and relaxed. My body feels relaxed."

Fun and games

- Gross motor[physical] skills are those which require whole body movement
- Involves the large muscles of the body
- Includes hand-eye coordination skills
- Influence over every day functions.eg running, walking, skipping as well as playground skills

Student reflection:

Year One: "Makes me feel calm. Afterwards makes my body feel sleepy."

Year Reception: "Makes me feel happy. Makes my body feel happy as well."

Year Reception: "Makes me feel happy Makes my body feel good."

Year Reception: "Makes me feel happy. Makes my body feel beautiful."

Fine motor program

- To improve every day skills
- To increase speed in doing every day skills
- Important for self-esteem
- Works on improving cutting, self-care tasks and pencil skills

Student Reflection:

Reception: "It makes me feel happy. My favourite is building things."

Year One: "It is joyful. It makes me feel very happy."

Year Three: "It feels fun. I feel smarter."

Year Two: "I like it. It is fun time."

Phonics Program

- Children develop phonological awareness skills in a sequential pattern
- The awareness of what sounds are
- How they come together to make words
- Skills develop include rhyme
- Segment words into syllables and single sounds
- Blend sounds together
- Identify sounds in different positions in words
- Manipulate sounds within words

Reading Programs

- Voice facilitated reading programmes involving repeated readings
- Non threatening
- Confidence boosting
- Increases exposure to print
- Focuses on reading for meaning fluency and phrasing
- Learner centred and designed to accommodate students with reading difficulties
- Complement existing classroom reading programmes
- Speech and language groups
- For children whose language is developing slower than other children of the same age
- Delay in receptive or expressive language
- Work on articulation
- Play games and activities around their ability and age level depending on individual needs
- Connecting in with phonics programs that are run in the class room
- For older students is to increase their vocabulary and sentence structure
- Increases expression skills
- What staff thought of learning the trauma sensitive practices

OSCH

- Need to be included in future training
- Recommended to do online SMART training

Office

- Included photo of horizon in first aid room
- Helped how to deal with students thinking of use of tone and language used
- Becoming familiar and reading the signs of students
- Using what to look out for due to the Making SPACE for Learning training

Library

- Asked children what they wanted in the library (one suggestion was a disco ball)
- Play music that is relaxing
- Mat to offer a sense of connectedness in the space
- A couple of relaxing chairs
- Fidget toys (including fidget cubes and spinners.)
- Interactive Discovery table, changed every two weeks

Indonesian

- Now look more carefully at the behaviour and not make judgement
- Look at cause of behaviour and not just the negative behaviour
- Having a greater understanding for individual's behaviour and having a discussion with their teacher
- More aware of triggers of individuals
- More aware of things to assist with certain behaviours i.e. Sensory toys
- Age appropriate aids to help with behaviours

Music

- Become more aware and now deal differently with behavioural issues
- Deliver instructions to include students that understand differently
- Became more patient with students that have challenging behaviours

Children's Counsellor

- Now play 80 bpm music in some sessions to help child to self-regulate
- Used Dan Siegel's hand model explained to staff then to all students
- Use of sensory toys and a weighted frog in some sessions
- Using different strategies on individual basis
- Child is self-paced so they have some control in sessions
- Use of sand tray and funnel in some sessions enable child to self-regulate

Future planning

- Gardening club: volunteer run at lunch times one day per week on Fridays; working on vegetable patch and butterfly garden
- Mandala table: run one day a week on a Thursday (run and organised by the students. Offering different mandalas or they can create their own)
- Disco group run one day a week. Run by students playing old c.ds in the old library and having lights and bean bags creating a relaxed environment

- PALS Groups run by older year level students
- Organising parent and friends group to help with some of the above groups
- Graduate Certificate in trauma sensitive practices attended by a staff member
- Placing mindfulness practice ideas in fortnightly newsletter
- A blurb ever fortnight in newsletter suggestions about how to deal with certain children's behaviour. Strategies that are age appropriate
- Christian meditation practices. To be implemented across all year levels and done on a regular continual basis. Run by classroom teachers
- Running a workshop for staff/ parents with Mark Le Messurier
- Changing 2 bells to music instead. Using 60 to 80 beats per minute

DATA

See Appendix 1

- Trauma Sensitive Practices Team meeting notes
- Student Questionnaire
- Staff KWL Charts
- Learning reports – personal performance of specialised programs

STAFF RESPONSE

Reviewing the implementation of Trauma Sensitive Practices has been an important part of the project, especially with a whole school approach in order to ensure consistency. Regularly our staff has engaged in conversations about their practise and this has enabled sharing and allowed room for improvements along the way. Towards the end of our Project we discussed 2 key questions with each teaching member 1: What do we need to develop further? 2: What can we do as a school to increase student participation in trauma sensitive practice at school?

R-2 Teacher Response

Q1

- Finding out more information about how to handle behaviour issues using best practice.
- Ensuring a model of the brain in every classroom
- Incorporating brain function teaching as compulsory
- More training in complex trauma
- Wellbeing room in our school
- Demonstrating expected behaviour when returning to class after break times

Q2

- Having somewhere students can go where they feel safe or comfortable outside the classroom
- Age appropriate brain development knowledge – MITIOG (Curriculum integration)
- Implementing puzzles, mandala creation and quiet games during recess and lunch
- Increasing more benches and tables outside
- Books explaining and supporting trauma education

Year 2-3 Teacher response

Q1

- Increased level of team building
- Developing an awareness of internet safety
- Increasing education about how to identify students that may have been sexually abused and how to support them.

Year 4-5 Teacher Response

Q1

- Increased visual posters about the brain placed around the school as well as puzzles for them to build and support awareness
- Explain the information and put into TRT folders.
- Building upon our resources
- Further teacher engagement about the brain – concreting the knowledge (Professional Development)
- Increased level of positivity for teachers- quote of the day etc.

Q2

- Running relationship building groups every fortnight to enhance the relationships between a variety of staff and students.
- Increasing the practice of using appropriate terminology
- Increasing the amount of quiet and reflective spaces in our school

6-7 Teacher Response

Q1

- Increasing our school quantity of hands on activities explaining brain development
- More time allowance for teaching Trauma Sensitive Practices

Q2

- More concrete materials so it can also be more visual to see what is talked about.

OSHC Response

Q1

- Include oshc staff in any further training
- Participate in the online SMART training
- Documenting triggers and students with specific behaviours
- Further Professional Development for responding to aggressive behaviours

Q2

- Managing quiet spaces

Overall the response from our students and staff has been positive, taking the time to implement these practices and allowing the time to develop them and planning for further implementation has shown a great deal of effect into a successful project. The time taken has been rewarded with an increased level of student moral and strategies that allow teachers to change their frame of mind when dealing with a student who is ‘flipping their lid’ rather than just a naughty student. This understanding has led our staff into the

understanding that we can provide our students with an understanding of self regulating and how they can do this.

STUDENT RESPONSE

The response from our students has seen a focus on a change of mindset, noticing how students have welcomed the learning and been able to ask questions, seek answers and inquire about their brains and behaviours.

Acknowledging students using visual clues such as the 'flip your lid' hand model to understand behaviour and actively do something about this.

Trying a variety of strategies at different age appropriate levels has shown progress as students are talking and sharing with one another the differences and looking forward to changes in the levels as they move through the school.

"It feels like I'm learning sitting on a cloud" Year 4 Student – in regards to the stretchy resistance bands tied around the legs of the chair.

"Makes me feel relaxed. Makes my body feel cool." Year 1 Student – rhythm Groups

"I don't only love meditation it makes me get rid of my worries! It makes my heart rate slower and I said a peace prayer and I got to talk to God it almost changed my day and I feel more loved than ever." Year 2 Student – Meditation Activity

"It feels fun. I feel smarter." Year 3 Student – Fine Motor Groups

CHALLENGES

- Time; finding time to build upon our understandings and program for learning to progress personally in order to share a developed sense of understanding
- Collection of data – knowing what data to collect in the beginning
- In the beginning understanding the direction we wanted to take
- Ensuring all staff were teaching the understandings at roughly the same time

MOST SIGNIFICANT LEARNING

Everyone's brain works in different ways!!

We can educate and demonstrate effective calming strategies for our students and they may not react in the way we want them too but we need to push past our own beliefs, be consistent and allow students to develop their own sense of self in monitoring what works best for them as the individual.

KEY MESSAGES

The trauma sensitive project has most effectively broadened our awareness of trauma consistent behaviours in our classrooms and the impact of this on our school community. The project also helped us to recognise how trauma behaviour affected each of us on a professional and personal level. Our students and staff have been educated with the foundations of why we do what we do and how sometimes life's experiences alter our realities. We have learnt as a staff that we can educate our students about their brains, their actions and how we can regulate in a variety of situations. By doing this as a whole school approach we have shown the students the importance of wellbeing at every age.

“The Trauma Sensitive Project has deepened my level of compassion towards students and families; it has made me more tolerant. My awareness has grown and I now ask ‘why?’ instead of being reactive towards negative behaviours.” – Educator at St Johns the Apostle

The title of the project alarmed us as a staff at first and we were certainly disheartened by using the ‘trauma’ word within our school in fear of it labelling specific students. The constant use of the word ‘trauma’ that the project brought about made the word less hyped and a lessened sense of shame came from the continual use of it. Demystifying this word and the varied thoughts brought about when using it was really important to us as a staff to ensure our perceptions weren’t negatively influencing our students. When we decided to rename the project in our school to the student wellbeing program it was for the importance of parent involvement for the future.

The training assisted teachers to not push against undesirable behaviours but rather pull students closer to them, this led to a greater awareness amongst our staff as to the reasoning behind negative behaviours. We found students began to feel safe to share and once this began we learnt to listen to more deepened levels of negative impacts within our students lives. Initiating the sharing; students began the healing process of beginning to share in a safe place and the levels of trust have since risen. Dealing with this information, staff had a conversation about sharing this information within safe restraints of our staffing community to ensure we were sharing the vicarious trauma of our students within a safe place to ensure we were taking care of our own wellbeing.

CONCLUSION

As a school, we have worked together and achieved a strong sense of community. The importance we have placed on building strong relationships within our school has been noticed by students, staff, parents and professionals from the wider community.

The dedication our students have shown to participating in the learning has shown the need for such important life skills to be everyday practice in our schools. We have seen students strive to implement the strategies we have helped them build and this learning has complimented the 5 keys to success program in which our school currently practices. The changes and learning we have implemented have promoted a sense of predictability and consistency within our school; meaning our students know what to expect.

Overall our school has seen many benefits from the project and endeavours to make further changes to continue the great work of the Trauma Sensitive Practices Project to ensure we are setting up our students for success.

RESOURCES REQUIRED

- Kranz Linda (2006) Only one you. Rising Moon publisher.
- Art supplies: Many and varied.
- Making SPACE for Learning Book: Australian Childhood Foundation
- Tents purchased at Ikea store.
- Sensory box, one from each learning community. Included visual timer’s/stress balls/sensory balls /fidget toys and brain brake cards with outlined activities. Sourced from various shops in local area.
- Brain representation poster with labels used in every learning community from web site www.filefolderfun.com
- Calm cards. From Trauma Sensitive information day.

- Questionnaire for students designed by the trauma sensitive team.
- KWL chart. Designed for teachers to document knowledge gathered designed by trauma sensitive team
- Reflection journals for students to write in. : Brain break activities. From various web sites, www.teachstarter.com. www.yourtherapysource.com www.growingplay.com
- Christian Meditation programme
- Wellbeing program aimed at relaxation and fitness for body and mind, run by Jo Bishop (Director Yoga Jyoti).
- Relaxation music sourced from YouTube using 60/80 beats per minute.
- Visual representation used from Australian childhood foundation formulated into a power point to share staff prior knowledge and teachings.
- Creation of quiet zones within the learning community i.e. use of head phones. Specific seating cushions and use of tents creating a homely approach.
- Implement a yoga meditation and prayer session. Calm down yoga for kids sourced from Pinterest.
- Key jar. <https://keyteachers.wordpress.com/2015/06/10/the-key-jar-48-questions-to-ask-your-kids/>
- Discovery table. Used sensory toys, sensory bag, tactile brain model, poster of a brain for students to label.
- Differential seating; Exercise balls from Kmart retail store stretch bands also from Kmart used around legs of children's seats.
- Dunn Buron, Kari and Curtis, Mitzi .(2003). The incredible 5-point scale. Autism Asperger Publisher.
- Dr Dan Siegal presenting a hand model of the brain. YouTube. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=gm9CIJ74Oxw>

“Our students and staff have been educated with the foundations of why we do what we do and how sometimes life’s experiences alter our realities. We have learnt as a staff that we can educate our students about their brains, their actions and how we can regulate in a variety of situations. By doing this as a whole school approach we have shown the students the importance of wellbeing at every age.”

Name: _____ Class: _____

What do you know about your brain?



Name: _____ Class: _____

What do you know about your brain?



What do you want to know about your brain?

Name: _____ Class: _____

What do you know about your brain?



What do you wonder about the brain?

Brain Pre Assessment Feedback Date: 9/16

K

What I know

W

What I
Wonder

L

What I have
learned



Project Team at St John The Apostle

ST JOHN THE APOSTLE - SHOWCASE POWERPOINT PRESENTATION

This school submitted a movie and thus their presentation is not available as a PowerPoint.

Making SPACE for Learning



Trauma Sensitive Practice in Schools

ST JOSEPH'S SCHOOL

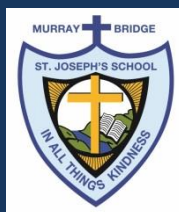
PROJECT REPORT AND POWER POINT PRESENTATION



“Does the use of positive, consistent language across the school impact relationships at St Joseph’s School?”



A collaborative project between the **Australian Childhood Foundation**, **Catholic Education South Australia** and **St Joseph's School, Murray Bridge**



TRAUMA SENSITIVE SCHOOLS PROJECT

WHAT YOU SAY MAKES A DIFFERENCE

Research inquiry question

“Does the use of positive, consistent language across the school impact relationships at St Joseph’s School?”

The context of our school

St Joseph's School, Murray Bridge was founded in 1925 and remains true to its Josephite charism, ethos and values and is built on the land of the Ngarrindjeri people. We have a rich heritage and we work closely in partnership with all of our families, parish and wider community. Our holistic and child centered approach focused by the Gospel values proudly continues our Josephite tradition which is enshrined in our motto - In All Things Kindness. Our Religious Education programs complement and facilitate student led social justice activities, which aim to form our children to become responsible global citizens of the 21st century.

St Joseph’s, Murray Bridge is a school that demands innovation, accountability and a clear vision. Our students deserve the best we can provide which can only be achieved by continually improving. 2016 has seen our school improve in many ways.

At St Joseph's our mission has always been to promote the Catholic faith and instill the charism of the Josephite Sisters, within a partnership of our families and community which in turn creates opportunities for our students to encounter wonderful educational experiences.

As a school we respect the dignity of each person within our community. As a collective, the staff at St Joseph's are committed to employ processes of learning that are formative, challenging, engaging, inclusive, sensitive to the needs of each child, in a fashion that espouses justice and compassion.

We have continued to recognise the importance our Catholic identity. Prayer is one aspect of our Catholic identity and is an important part of everyday life at St Joseph's Murray Bridge. Within our school we strive to ensure the Catholic social teaching is evident within the classrooms and throughout the whole school community. Our Parish Priest is, Father John Herd and Assistant Parish Priest is Father John Vildzius. Father John Herd regularly visits St Joseph’s, Murray Bridge. Both are active supporters of St Joseph’s, Murray Bridge and play active roles across the four Parish centers in Murray Bridge, Mannum, Tailem Bend, and Meningie.

Academic excellence is delivered through a comprehensive curriculum which caters for each individual's needs as a learner, so that every child with timely support, intervention,

extension and challenge will meet their full potential. Our Physical Education, Visual and Performing Arts programs are key components in enriching and enhancing every child's learning experience at St Joseph's. Our outstanding new school facilities, including our purpose built Performing Arts Centre and Learning Resource Centre. St Joseph's Murray Bridge is a school where every child counts and every child matters. The school currently has an enrolment of 504 students who represent the multi-cultural, multi-faith and demographic composition of the region. Our indigenous students account for 3% of the student body.

St Joseph's School, Murray Bridge is an R-7 Catholic primary school which was founded in 1925. St Joseph's, serves the rural city of Murray Bridge and the surrounding Murray Mallee area. We are a multi-cultural school providing a safe, inclusive and positive learning environment that serves the surrounding area and rural district of Murray Bridge.

Approximately 15% of the school population is eligible for a School card. ICSEA measure indicated that the school community is on parity with the National Average with a value of 1000. Within this figure 27% of our families are represented in the bottom quartile. The school has a highly regarded special and adaptive needs programme and approximately 79 students benefit from this.

	Bottom quarter	Middle quarters		Top quarter
School Distribution	27%	35%	28%	10%
Australian Distribution	25%	25%	25%	25%

The School also caters for a range of families from the following backgrounds:

School Card level	15%	(79 students – 53 Families)
EAL	10%	(50 students – 19 Nationalities)
Special Education (funded)	3%	(20 students)
Indigenous students	2%	(17 students)
Boarding students	0%	(0 students)

The focus areas of the project

Research would acknowledge the variety of generations within the teaching profession within St Joseph's and identify the characteristics, motivations and strengths that each of the generations bring to the teaching profession, specifically those working within school. In doing this we acknowledge that the register of language has changed over the past 40 years. Research would then explore the characteristics of language used to motivate and inspire students.

This research would then draw on a data set established prior to any conversation with children. The Class questionnaire would focus on the impact of teacher language on students and the emotions evoked from this language, be it positive or negative.

The research would explore what Social and Emotional Learning (SEL) programs are used at St Joseph's and more broadly with the Kids Matter Survey findings. This honest evaluation would also establish how often SEL programs are taught and whether we witness students using this knowledge independently.

Fullan (2012) would suggest that a leader has the potential to enable change, suggesting that there are various levers of change that a leader can employ to engage staff to improve learning outcomes. Fullan recommends Motion Leadership as a style of leadership to engage entire systems of mixed age employees to have moral imperative to want best outcomes for students. If characteristics of language are known to whole school staff then it can be used in their daily conversations, pedagogy and interactions to positively impact students and the community.

The nucleus of the project is to develop a whole school language that is multilingual which builds community that is positive and consistent, where relationships are nurtured.

Timeline

2015

St Joseph's begins implementation of Kids Matter - Component 1

2016

Implementation of Kids Matter Component 2

March – 2 day whole school Trauma training days with Australian Childhood Foundation

May – Australian Childhood Foundation School visit tracking progress

May – CESA/Carclew/ Indigenous Artists project commences on Wednesdays

July – Kids Matter Team in regular meetings engages with the Trauma Sensitive Project

August – Australian Childhood Foundation School visit tracking progress

September – Question finalised and data collection

September – Whole school Culturally Sensitive Training day

October – Australian Childhood Foundation School visit tracking progress

November 11th – Hub group Project Sharing – Sarah Tiramacco, Sonja Smith, Paula Wesley, Deb Holland and Brady Stallard

2017

February – school visit tracking progress

February – CESA/Carclew/Indigenous Artists continue on Wednesdays

April – Staff PD “Bringing it altogether”

Term 2 – May 26th Making Space for Learning book due

June 30th – Project sharing

The staff involved

This has been an evolving team as the team has changed with new appointments throughout this process, however the founding staff involved, included:

Brady Stallard – Acting Principal (2016)

Adrian Brown – Principal (2017)

Susan Hennessy – Acting Deputy Principal (Terms 1, 2 & 3 2016)
 Brady Stallard – Deputy Principal (2017 Term 1)
 Erika Dixon – Acting Deputy Principal (2017 Term 2)
 Deb Holland - APRIM/Inclusion Coordinator, Kids Matter Action Team
 Sarah Tirimacco – Student Wellbeing POR, Reception Teacher (PLC 1 2016)
 Paula Wesley – Kids Matter Action Team, Year 4 teacher (PLC 2)
 Sonja Smith – Kids Matter Action Team, Year 6 teacher (PLC 3)
 Nicki Clifford – Social Justice and Student Wellbeing POR, Year 5 teacher (POR, 2017)

School Card level	15%	(79 students – 53 Families)
EAL	10%	(50 students – 19 Nationalities)
Special Education (funded)	3%	(20 students)
Indigenous students	2%	(17 students)
Boarding students	0%	(0 students)

Projects St Joseph's has been involved in over the last 3 years

- **Culturally Safe Schools Project**

As part of the Culturally Safe Schools project we were approached by CESA and Carclew to be the pilot school for an ATSI Artist Development Project in 2016. We were very pleased to receive this offer as the opportunities it offered our community will be very beneficial for all and it was obvious the links it would provide for our Kids Matter and Trauma Sensitive Project.

Initially there were 3 local Ngarrindjeri artists working with each class for an hour a week for a total of 6 weeks the two year project. The curriculum focus has been the Arts (Dance, Drama, Music and Visual Arts), English (creating confident communicators, imaginative thinkers and informed students who will build relationships with others and the world around them), Language (building intercultural capabilities, and understanding of the role of language use and learning), HASS, Health and PE (develop knowledge, understanding and skills to support resilience, develop strong sense of self, build and maintain satisfying relationships, enhancement of health and wellbeing). Overarching outcomes lie in 3 main areas: student learning, Aboriginal artists' development and community development.



Local Ngarrindjeri artists working with students

- **Kids Matter – Components 1 & 2**

St Joseph's School Murray Bridge has been incorporating Kids Matter as a student wellbeing and Social & Emotional Framework since 2015. Throughout the 2016 school year, we focused on component one 'Positive School Community' and component two 'Social and Emotional Learning'.

A result of undertaking each of these Kids Matter components as a teaching staff, we have introduced many facets to improve our St Joseph's school community.

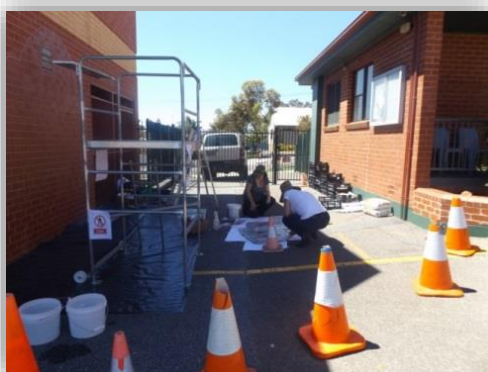
Component 1: Positive School Community

The Kids Matter idea that "In a positive school community, every face has a place, every voice is valued and everyone has something to contribute" (2017) identified several initiatives that became a whole school focus throughout the 2016 school year.

Creating an environment where our community could come together to celebrate our Catholic Identity was the driving force behind the introduction of Community Prayer. Community Prayer is a whole school celebration held once a fortnight on a Friday where classes, various groups or leadership elect to run Prayer at the beginning of the day. Students are informed Prayer is beginning through the use of a musical piece being played through the speaker system. Students make their way to a central area within our school and join together within their school community to Pray.

Ensuring we provided a welcome feeling to all our community was a key element of component one. The installation of a welcome space ensured all members of our school community were greeted and saw our school motto of 'In all things Kindness' as an evident reminder. Students in all classes were asked to draw images they felt could be used as a base design. Upon an image being selected, local artists worked with all classes to create clay feature tiles. These feature tiles were then attached to the final mural piece by students in all classes and year levels. This mural acts as a constant reminder of our school motto and Catholic identity, whilst celebrating the community that assisted in creating the master piece. In addition to our welcome mural, all students received a letter asking them to inform us of the word for welcome in their given culture. These words representing welcome in various languages were then painted by our local artists on a wall to complement our welcome space and highlighting St Joseph's School Murray Bridge as a community where all people and cultures are welcome, respected and cared for.

Children preparing the tiles



Getting the site ready for the mural



Welcome words in language



The completed projects



Component 2: Social and Emotional Learning

Throughout 2016 teaching staff explored the Social and Emotional learning focus from Kids Matter. We discussed current programs and approaches that were explicitly teaching Social and Emotional skills within our classrooms, whilst identifying possible resources that could assist our development in this area. We saw this component as a chance to highlight the importance and necessity of providing our students with a Social and Emotional program. Staff unpacked the concept of Social and Emotional learning and brainstormed ideas of how they could incorporate this vital teaching component into their teaching programs. A policy was created by staff to ensure that all classes were participating in SEL. (See appendix 1)

Throughout 2017 staff will further embrace with component three 'Working with Parents and Carers'. This is an area that we greatly value and have been embedding over a number of years into various structures of our school and community life.



• Seasons for Growth

In 2015 a number of staff undertook training to become Seasons for Growth Companions. This program is built around the grief theory related to the work of J. William Worden (1991) where he has conceptualised grief work into 'tasks' that demand something active of the grieving person. The program emphasises the importance of thinking, questioning, deciding and doing.

The approach in the program is based on research which highlights the importance of social support in dealing with grief, as well as the need to practise new skills, learn new ways of thinking and acquire more effective ways of coping with change and loss.

Companions work with groups of 8 children over 8 sessions using age appropriate materials which are linked to the 4 seasons. Children are given opportunities to share their stories and feelings as well as listen to those of others in a safe environment. As no seasons last forever, not even winter, the Seasons for Growth program gently and symbolically integrate this reality into the learning experience.

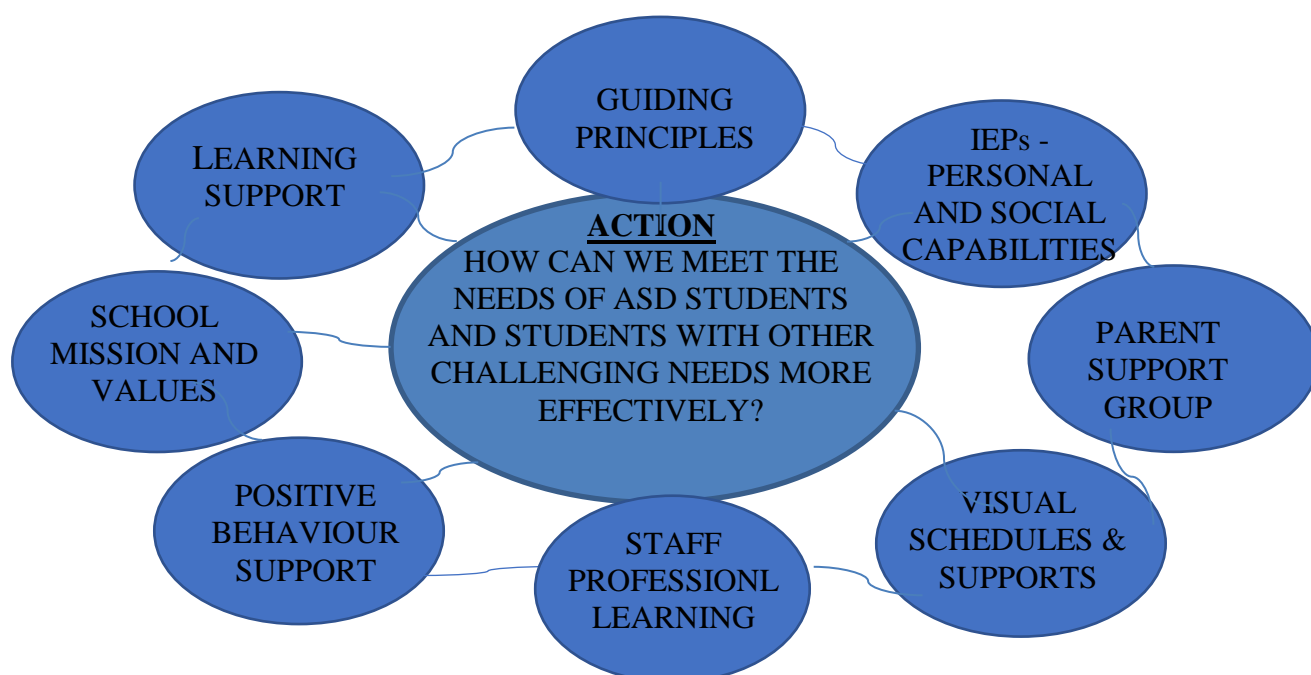
- **Learning Support Team – Autism Awareness**

The school Learning Support Team (LST) was established in Term 3 2016 as a result of two staff members completing a Graduate Certificate in Special Education with a focus on Autism Spectrum Disorders.

In response to data collected from the Universal Supports Assessment and Planning Tool (USAPT) and Classroom Environment and Teaching Assessment (CETA), as part of this study, the priorities for planning and implementation were established.

Developing team process and problem solving was identified as an area of high priority. In order to develop a whole school approach – co-planning, collaboration and capacity building, it was essential to develop a learning support team to meet regularly. For this team to be effective its members needed to have sufficient training and experience in ASD and have clear roles and responsibilities within the group as well as assigned tasks. Programs already implemented in the school, Kids Matter Primary (2015) and Trauma Sensitive Schools programs (Term 1 2016), support the mental health and well-being of students and families within the school. It was envisaged that the inclusion of a learning support team to support the educational demands of ASD students and students with learning or behaviour challenges would work together or alongside these groups and share common language and priorities. The focus for the LST was to establish a committed whole school approach and to build awareness and understanding in how best to support the staff and meet the needs of individual students with ASD.

The School Mission and values encompassing ‘In All Things Kindness – Respect, Community, Cooperation, Compassion and Inclusion played a significant part in the establishment of the Guiding Principles and the ‘common language’ that connected these groups as a model of shared responsibility.



Mentoring Program

At St Joseph's school the Mentoring program was established in 2011 and is based on an in school mentoring program initiated by Mark Le Messurier. Through the program we aim to develop a trusting relationship which is likely to support children in both the classroom and school yard.

The program is a personalised encouragement approach. With the help of their mentor, the program supports students to develop skills, build self-esteem, find confidence and to discover new ways to interact, learn and work.

An ESO has been trained to work one on one with children who are experiencing difficulties at school. The mentor and child meet each week for a set time at school establishing a good working relationship whereby the student understands the mentor is there to help them and in some cases advocate for them.

How we got to our question

A number of ideas were considered:

- Calming activities – most classes were already using these effectively.
- How the brain works – some classes were interested but not everyone.

We had already begun the Kids Matter as well as the Culturally Safe Schools project and through the Learning Support Team were looking at our school values throughout the school community.

Our question came about after much brainstorming through the realisation that as a school we were undertaking many valuable programs and projects that were centered on the wellbeing of our students and we needed a question that could bring these together. We realised that language was a focal point in each of the programs.

Description of the project

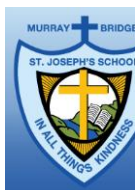
In March 2016 all staff from St Joseph's School attended a two day training course in Adelaide with a number of other CESA schools which was facilitated by the Australian Childhood Foundation as an introduction to the trauma sensitive project. Through having all staff attend the sessions it placed a greater value on the information being provided as it was the beginning to a whole school approach. Following these sessions there was a focus team put together to drive the trauma sensitive schools project for St Joseph's School. This team met regularly with Deb McKenzie and other people from the Australian Childhood foundation and CESA. These regular meetings allowed us to remain focused and motivated to ensure our desire to create a trauma sensitive school remained as our key driving force. Some of the initiatives we have been able to implement using the outcomes of our research question include:

- Positive Behaviour Action plans (Appendix 1)
- Guiding Principles (Appendix 2)
- SEL Policy (Appendix 3)
- Staff discussions surrounding relationships especially with children from a trauma background

Pre surveys – June 2016

The 3 classes of the teachers who were on the Project Team were given a survey at the beginning of the project about the use of language on the wellbeing of the children in their class. The questions had a focus on the positive language used, which the team concluded didn't give us a balanced view of how the children were responding or feeling about language in our school. The children were then given another two questions to respond to:

1. What words by staff at school make you feel unsafe and unhappy?
2. What words do you and your friends use at school to make you feel unsafe and unhappy?



St Joseph's School

Trauma Sensitive School Survey

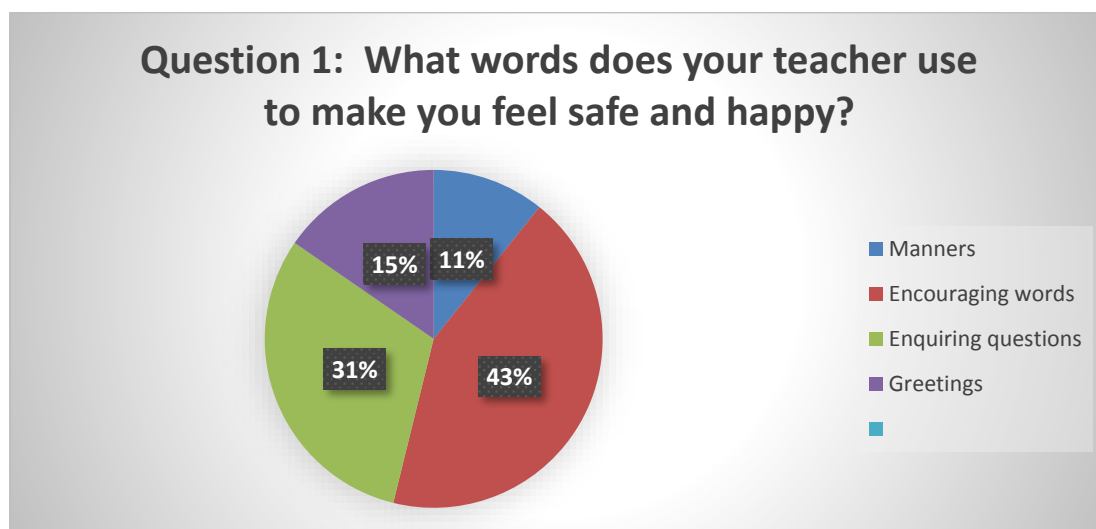
June 2016

Please answer the following questions about our classroom.

1. What words does your teacher use to make you feel safe and happy?
2. Are there times in our classroom when you feel unhappy? Yes No
3. If you answered yes, what is happening during these times to make you feel unhappy?
4. What happens in our classroom to make you feel calm?
5. What happy / safe words do you and your friends use when you are talking to each other?

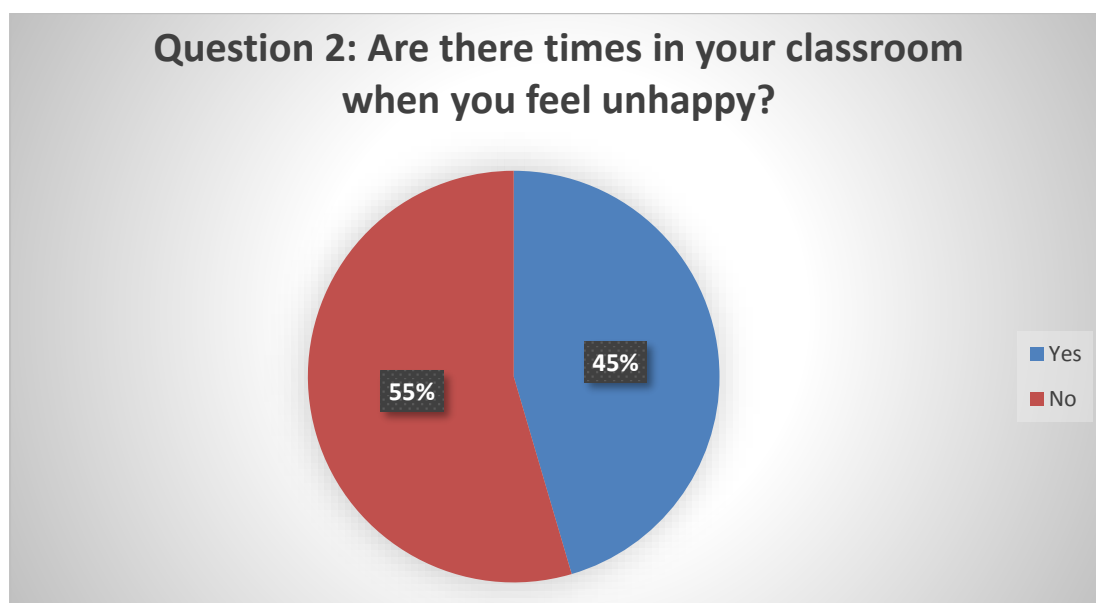
Results from June 2016 survey

Question 1: What words does your teacher use to make you feel safe and happy?



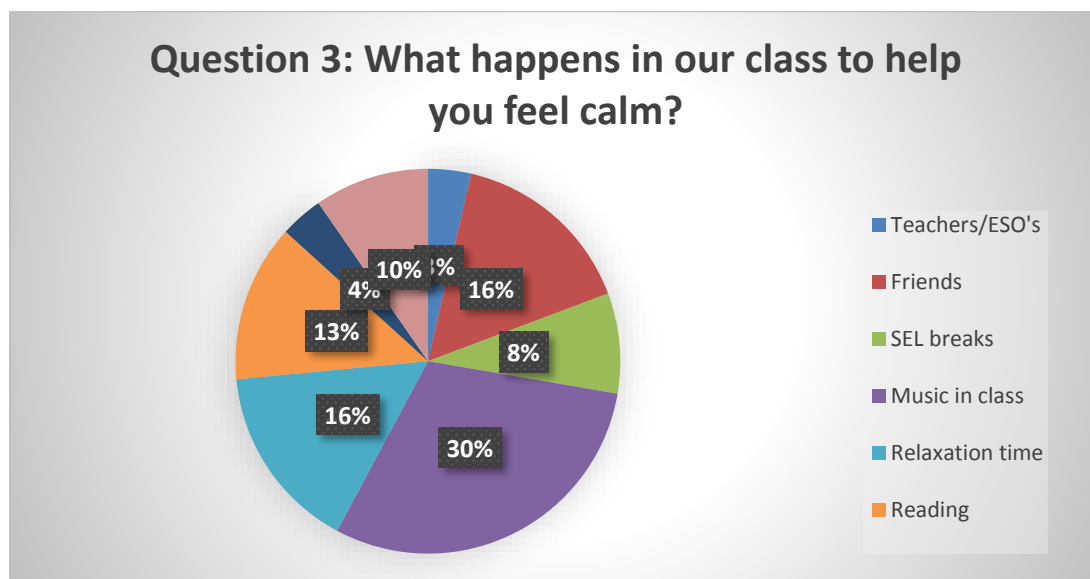
A large percentage of children indicated that when their teachers use encouraging words this makes them feel safe and happy and also asking enquiring questions about their wellbeing: how are you going? Are you ok? Can I help you? Greetings in the morning and manners were also valued.

Question 2: Are there times in your classroom when you feel unhappy?



More children indicated that there weren't times in class when they felt unhappy and of the 45% who indicated yes it was for reasons of teasing, being yelled at, friendship issues or not wanting to do the activity.

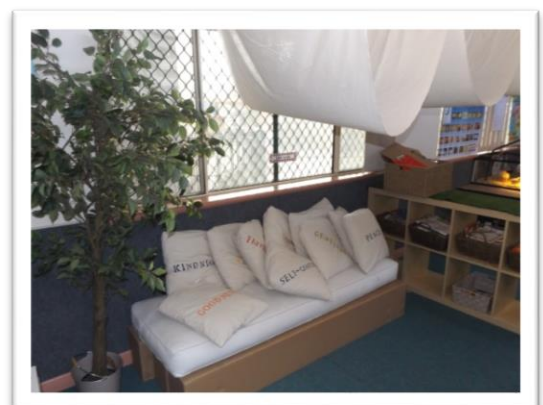
Question 3: What happens in our class to help you feel calm?



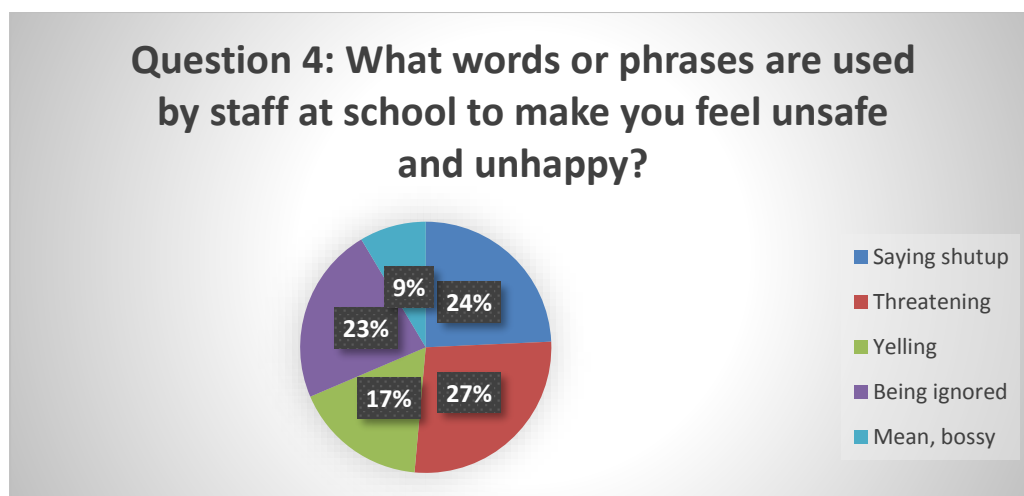
It was most pleasing to note that the children were able to come up with many different ways that they were able to feel calm in the classroom as calming activities had been a focus for many of our classes over a period of time.



Calming spaces and activities offered in classrooms

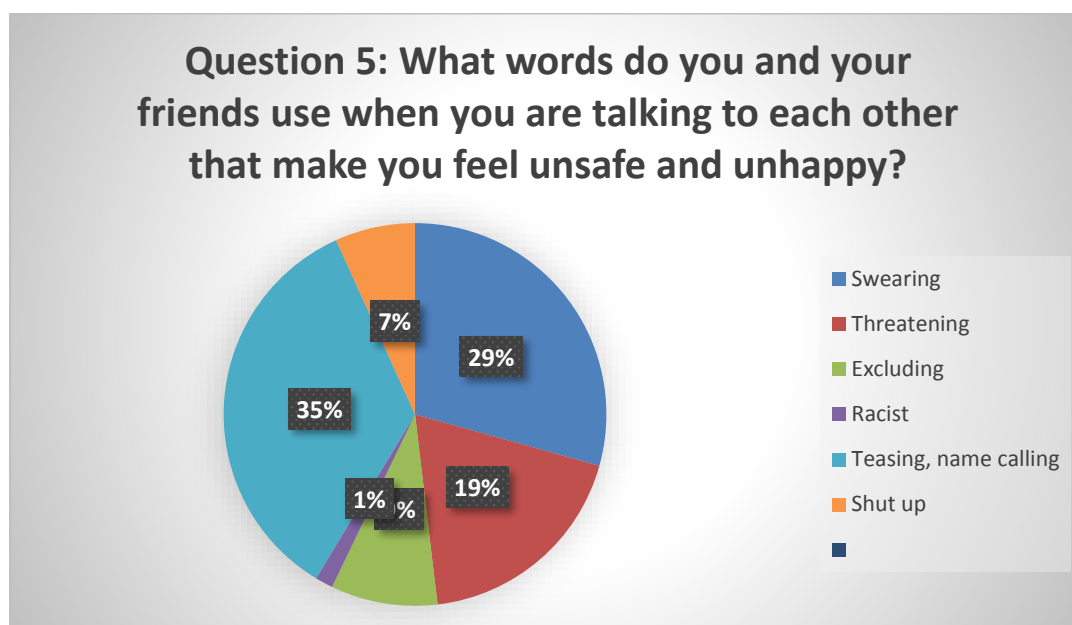


Question 4: What words or phrases are used by staff at school to make you feel unsafe and unhappy?



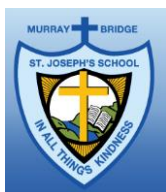
The team were quite shocked and surprised by some of the responses of the children and spent some time discussing the comments. We came to the conclusion that some of the words and phrases indicated by the children were obviously from their perspective, (a teacher talking in a loud voice could be perceived as yelling) but as a staff we needed to take into consideration how this was making children feel.

Question 5: What words do you and your friends use when you are talking to each other that make you feel unsafe and unhappy?



The team identified the use of unfriendly language and actions amongst the students in the yard and discussed the implications of this upon returning to the classroom.

Post survey – May 2017



St Joseph's School **Trauma Sensitive School Survey**

May 2017

Please answer the following questions about the use of positive language used by the staff at St Joseph's to help student wellbeing.

1. Have you noticed a change in the language or phrases used by staff with students?
Such as, 'take a break', 'brain break time' 'take 5' etc.

YES

NO

2. If you answered YES, please record the words and phrases that you have noticed.

3. What words or phrases are used by staff at school to make you feel safe and happy?

4. What happens in our school to help you feel calm? This might be in the classroom, the yard, library, office etc.

5. What happy / safe words do you and your friends use when you are talking to each other?

Outcomes

Trauma Sensitive School Survey – May 2017

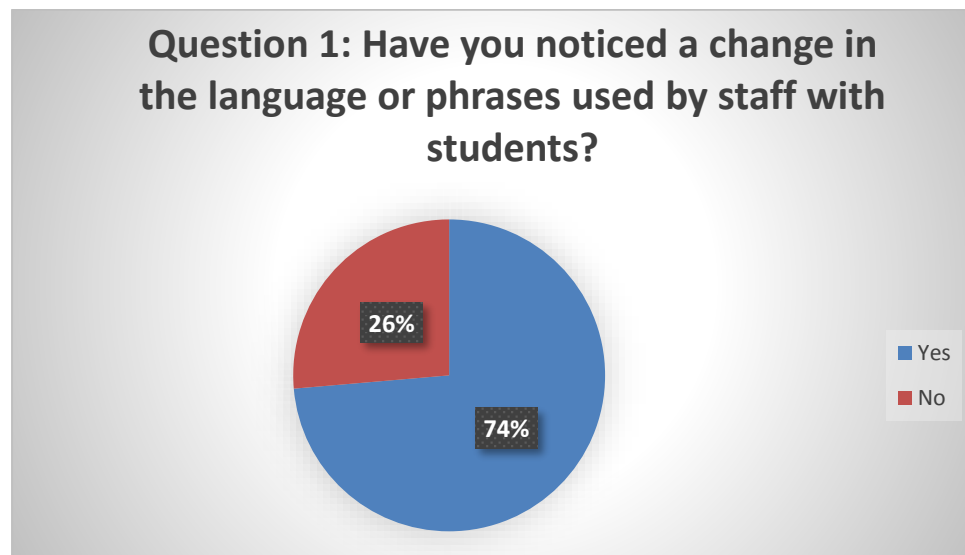
Results Summary

In Term 2, 129 students were surveyed and asked to respond to five questions to establish if there had been a noticeable positive shift by staff at St Joseph's School in using positive language consistently across the school.

The questions, a summary of responses from the students and a pie chart have been included for each question.

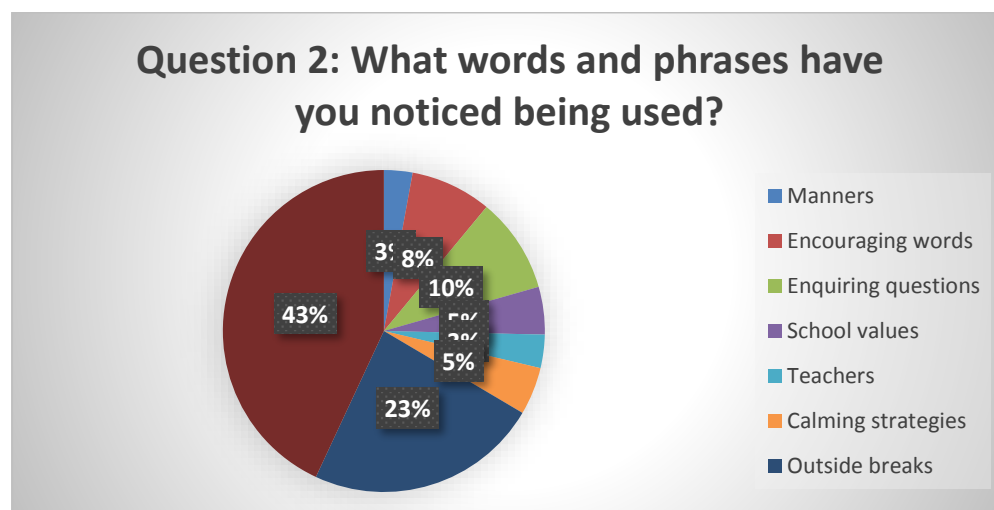
Survey Questions and Results

Question 1: Have you noticed a change in the language or phrases used by staff with students?



It is evident from the responses that the majority of students have noticed a shift in the language being used by the staff.

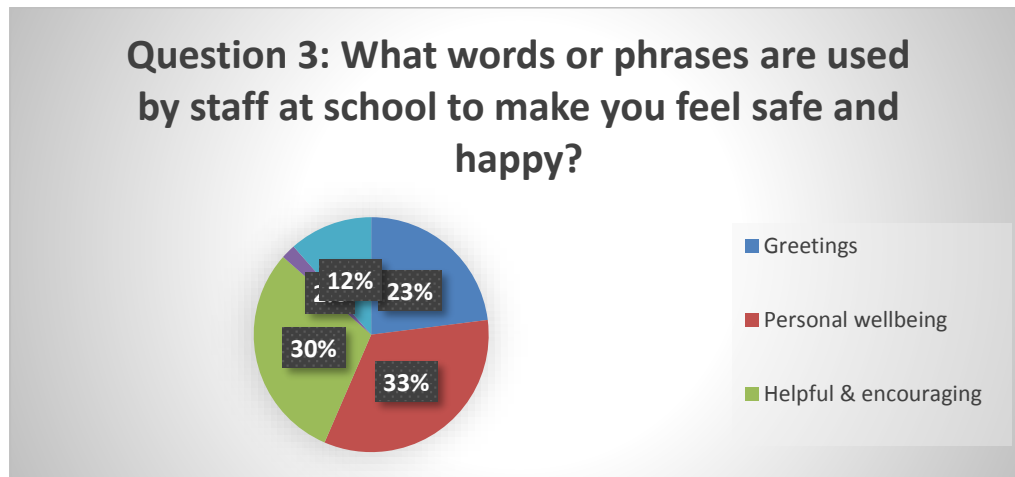
Question 2: If you answered YES, what words and phrases have you noticed being used?



Students reported a noticeable difference in staff using phrases such as; take a break, brain break time, take 5, go for a lap/walk, stretch, swing on the swings, get some fresh air, with 66% of students identifying with consistent Social Emotional Learning (SEL) 'break' style language being used by staff. A further 18% of responses showed staff encouraging students

and asking enquiring questions such as; are you ok, how are you and did you have a good day positively impact students wellbeing.

Question 3: What words or phrases are used by staff at school to make you feel safe and happy?



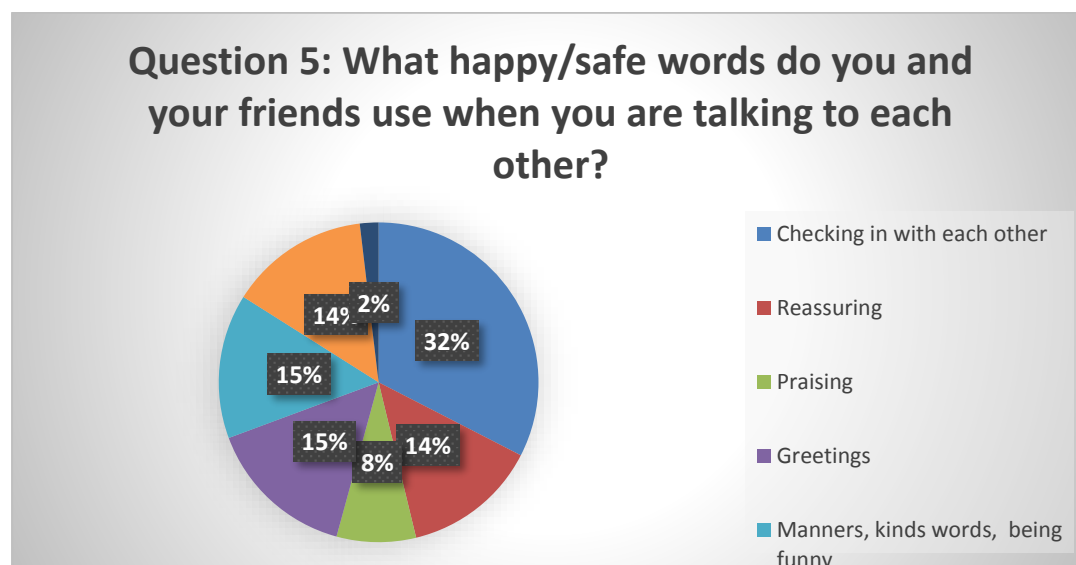
Overwhelming the 33% response showed students feel safe and happy when staff put the students wellbeing as a priority through asking questions such as; are you ok and how are you, how was your weekend, and reassuring them that they are in safe hands, and everything is going to be fine. 30% of responses from students focused on positive reinforcement, being asked if they needed help and being reassured the teacher would 'sort it out' when staff were seen as encouraging and being helpful. Students also clearly value being greeted, positively by staff with 23% of students surveyed this helps make them feel safe and happy.

Question 4: What happens in our school to help you feel calm?



There were a number of important physical spaces in the school where students felt calm, including the library, classrooms, the garden and yard. SEL breaks and activities such as prayer, exercise, reading, and drawing had a response of 24% with teachers and friends also accounting for 24% of students feeling calm when they are with people. Technology use such as iPad time and listening to music helped 30% of students to feel calm.

Question 5: What happy/safe words do you and your friends use when you are talking to each other?



A continuing theme emerged as students valued how they care for one another with 32% checking in with each other and 14% using reassuring language such as, it's ok, you'll be fine, don't worry, you're safe, you're funny and you're a good friend and 14% asking friends to play and being inclusive. Modelling the school's motto of 'In all things kindness' was evident by 30% of responses being about using kind words, having manners and greeting one another.

Supporting research

What does the Research Say?

- Kids Matter *"Cultural diversity and children's wellbeing"*

"We all learn to communicate and understand our world through sharing language, customs, behaviours, beliefs and values"

"Having a strong sense of their own cultural history and traditions helps children build a positive cultural identity for themselves. This also supports children's sense of belonging and self esteem."

"Developing relationships across cultures requires good communication and flexibility to support children's wellbeing"

https://www.kidsmatter.edu.au/sites/default/files/public/KMP_C1_CDCW_CulturalDiversityAndChildrensWellbeing.pdf

- Taking Positive Language School Wide: *from “The Responsive Classroom”*

“Positive Language is a powerful tool for building a calm, safe school climate. The words we use when we talk to students, the intention behind the words, and how we deliver them shape the way students see themselves and their school.”

“In the Responsive classroom approach, positive adult language is language that’s direct, brief, and focussed clearly on specific actions that help children meet academic and behaviour expectations and thrive as valued members of a learning community.”

<https://www.responsiveclassroom.org/taking-positive-language-schoolwide/>

- Victorian Early Years Learning and Development Framework: *“Practice Principal 5 Respectful Relationships and Responsive Engagement.”*

“A warm, responsive emotional climate is demonstrated by close physical proximity, matched affect, laughter and enthusiasm, calm voices and respectful language – between the early childhood professional and the child, and the child and the other children” (Pianta et al, 2008)

“Put simply the child only becomes truly human through interactions and relationships. Without human relationships there is neither opportunity to form a sense of self nor consciousness of that self” (Rolfe 2004,p41)

<https://www.eduweb.vic.gov.au/edulibrary/public/earlylearning/respectful-relns.pdf>

- Positive education: positive psychology and classroom interventions

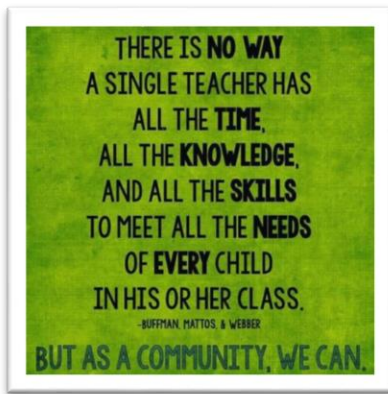
Oxford Review of Education Vol. 35, No. 3, June 2009, pp. 293–311

“We conclude that, were it possible, well-being should be taught in school on three grounds: as an antidote to depression, as a vehicle for increasing life satisfaction, and as an aid to better learning and more creative thinking. Because most young people attend school, schools provide the opportunity to reach them and enhance their well-being on a wide scale.”

“Well-being programmes can: 1) promote skills and strengths that are valued by most, and perhaps all, parents; 2) produce measurable improvements in students’ well-being and behaviour; and 3) facilitate students’ engagement in learning and achievement.”

Challenges

- Changes in staff over the 2 years: St Joseph’s school has had many staff turnover as well as change of leadership over the past 3 years, with 3 Principals and 3 Deputy Principals as well as staff members on the team transferring to other schools.
- Time constraints: As with other schools on the project we found time to be a challenge. Time to meet together, time to communicate and mentor staff and time to implement our ideas.
- Some negative response from staff in regards to inspirational posters in toilets and teams that were being implemented, Learning Support Team to name one as perceived as closed groups even though an open invitation was given to all staff members.



Conclusion

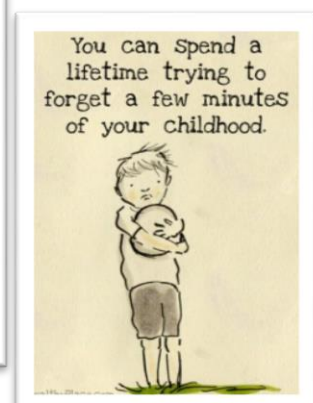
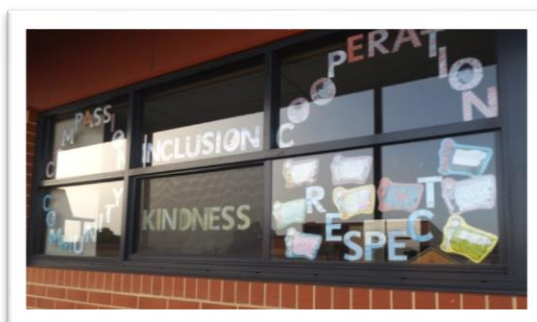
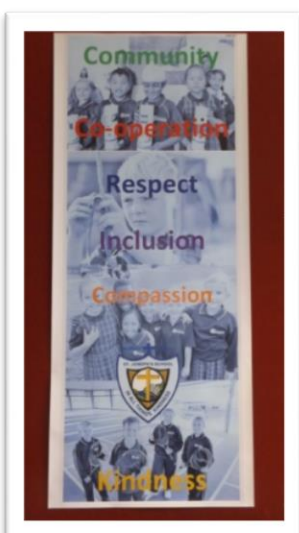
In conclusion we have found that the words we use do make a difference to the wellbeing of others. Some examples of this include:

- Explicit teaching and visual representations of our school values around the school
- The implementation of Positive Behaviour Action Plans with positive, consistent language as a focus

It is our intention to continue the valuable work of the project through current initiations of school wide pedagogy and Kids Matter linking this work to our strategic and annual improvement plans. The journey is just beginning...

Where to from here?

- Define what Trauma Sensitive School is and communicate this to the school community
- Make Trauma Sensitive a regular item on the Staff Meeting Agenda
- Link the Trauma Sensitive Schools work with focus on School Wide Pedagogy
- Create a community brochure outlining what a trauma sensitive school is and the consistent positive language that we have all agreed to use.
- Continue to build the St Joseph's School community through Kids Matter
- Work with all staff members to ensure language across the school is more consistent
- Encourage all classes to participate in and lead Community Prayer
- Complete a Staff community Survey and link this with the Staff Retreat
- Complete Kids Matter Components 3 and 4 to become a Kids Matter school





Project Team at St Joseph's School

ST JOSEPH'S SCHOOL – SHOWCASE POWERPOINT PRESENTATION

This school submitted a movie and thus their presentation is not available as a PowerPoint.

Making SPACE for Learning



ST THOMAS MORE SCHOOL

PROJECT REPORT AND POWER POINT PRESENTATION

Making SPACE for Learning



Trauma Sensitive Practice in Schools

Name of School: St Thomas More School



The Context

St Thomas More School, Elizabeth Park, SA

St Thomas More is a Reception to Year 7 Catholic primary school located in the City of Playford, to the north of Adelaide in South Australia. The school was founded by the Sisters of Mercy in 1960 and our Mercy charism calls us to care for the poor and disadvantaged, in our own area and the wider community, giving us a real focus on social justice. With our neighbouring Catholic schools we employ a community worker to help nurture and develop courses and support for the parent members of our community, which we hope, in turn, will help our students.

There are approximately 270 students and the area is characterised as a low socio-economic area, with many sole parents, blended families and a high unemployment rate of approximately 33% in the Elizabeth area. The GMH Factory is due to close in 2017.

Project title: 'Working Towards a Calmer Community'

Research Project Inquiry Question:

'Does the process of teaching students about their brains combined with mindful strategies make a difference to a child's ability to shift from needing co-regulation to self-regulation?'

Description of Project

The whole of St Thomas More School is focussing on teaching calming and mindful strategies to assist students with trauma consistent behaviour. Teachers are using data to measure the level of effectiveness of these strategies on students' ability to self-regulate and participate positively in the classroom and learning environment. There are a variety of strategies being implemented across the school, ranging from teaching about the anatomy and functions of the brain, to using the five point scale to measure students' levels of anxiety before and after mindful and calming activities.

Framework/theme focus areas

The effects of mindful and calming strategies on students' well-being and mental states particularly around transition times.

Timeframe

May 2016 – December 2016 January 2017 – June 2017

Staff involved

- All teachers and ESOs at St Thomas More School
- Project Team: Joe Blefari, Connie Carter, Nicole Musolino, Anna Kaczmarek, Jess Jenkins and Sonia Kilmister

Data

Qualitative (any anecdotes, feedback)

- Anecdotal notes about impact of trauma-consistent behaviour on whole class
- Student survey to gather feedback about transition times
- Student feedback on how they feel after transition times and then after mindful and calming strategies
- Charting behaviours of individual case study students
- Students' own feedback on where they feel they have been in relation to the

Window of Tolerance

- Use of Five Point Scale to monitor students' emotions
- Surveys on students' levels of stress (Student Stressor Interviews)
- Case Study Student Notes
- Teacher feedback on impact of project

Staff Response

All staff have responded in a positive manner. All teachers are employing some kind of calming or mindful strategies within their classes and are documenting the effects of these strategies on their students.

Student response

Interviews with students to determine the effectiveness of the project are included.

The students' response to the project has been positive. The students have shown a keen interest in learning about the brain and understanding the way it works and changes.

Quantitative (tables, charts, checklists, figures)

- Window of Tolerance chart data
- Checklists of student behaviours data
- Five Point Scale data

Evaluation processes

Data, professional conversations and feedback from students at the beginning, middle and end points have been compared in order to draw conclusions about the effectiveness of the project.

Challenges

- Some classes having two teachers.
- Remembering to implement mindful and calming strategies on a regular basis.
- Recording data when students are absent or removed from class.
- Case study student not responding to the calming strategies although class as a whole has benefited.
- Project spanning over two years presented some challenges with case study students sometimes changing classes.
- Being consistent with collection of data

Notes from Teachers

In our Year 2/3 Class we undertook a survey to determine whether students found transition times stressful and if so, why. The students were given a choice of possible answers and some students circled more than one option.

Of the 21 students who were surveyed, one student refused to do it and here are the results for the other 20 students:

Options (choose one or more)	Options chosen	Totals
Sounds too noisy	111111111	9
Feels unsafe	111111	6
There is too much movement	11111	5
Student behaviour	111111111	9
I don't know what I am supposed to be doing	11111	5

The survey results were not really a surprise for us, as we had several students whose behaviour was extremely disruptive and at times caused the classroom environment to be unsafe. Our main goal was to create a safe and calm environment for all students. From this data, we decided to focus on independent reading first thing in the morning to help to settle the students by encouraging a quiet environment and we planned various calming strategies after lunch time, because some students came in quite agitated.

We also agreed to track the behaviour of a student (Student A) who displayed trauma-consistent behaviours to discern as to whether our mindful and calming strategies would make a difference to his behaviour over a period of time. This student left the school mid-way through the school year and throughout the tracking time, his behaviour did not improve at all, despite his participation in some of the activities.

We then began to track the behaviour of another student (Student B) who also displayed trauma-consistent behaviours. We began tracking his behaviour in August 2016 and he is in our class again this year in 2017, so we have been able to follow up with some comparisons this year. We have found that overall, the project has had little impact on his behaviours.

The mindful and calming strategies we used in our classroom were:

- Teaching about the amygdala and providing students with materials to make their own amygdalae, which they could use as a calming strategy, when they felt their amygdalae were over active. Students kept their 'amygdalae' (A jar filled with water, glycerine and glitter) and would shake them up when they felt that their amygdalae were overactive.
- They would then watch as the glitter eventually settled to the bottom, which would take some time. The objective was to use the jar to represent the students' amygdalae and to encourage them to focus on it as a mindful and calming strategy whilst they waited for the glitter to settle. Teachers would reinforce the concept for them by saying things such as: 'That is just like your own amygdala. It will take some time to settle down.'
- Square breathing. Students point to the air and draw a line up and breathe in, draw a line across and hold their breath, draw a line down and breathe out slowly through pursed lips and complete the square by holding their breath, before beginning the square again.
- Use of stretchy bands on some students' chairs to keep their feet busy and encourage them to stay in their seats and on task.
- Colouring in of mandalas to promote mindfulness.
- Line of my day to teach students how to reflect on their daily lives and to help them understand that we can all experience a range of different emotions in just one day.
- Circle time to assist students to take turns, develop their social skills, work on their listening skills and practise their communication skills, whilst focusing on an area of their emotions.
- Meditations usually after lunch each day, combined with teacher reading and square breathing.
- Compliments game



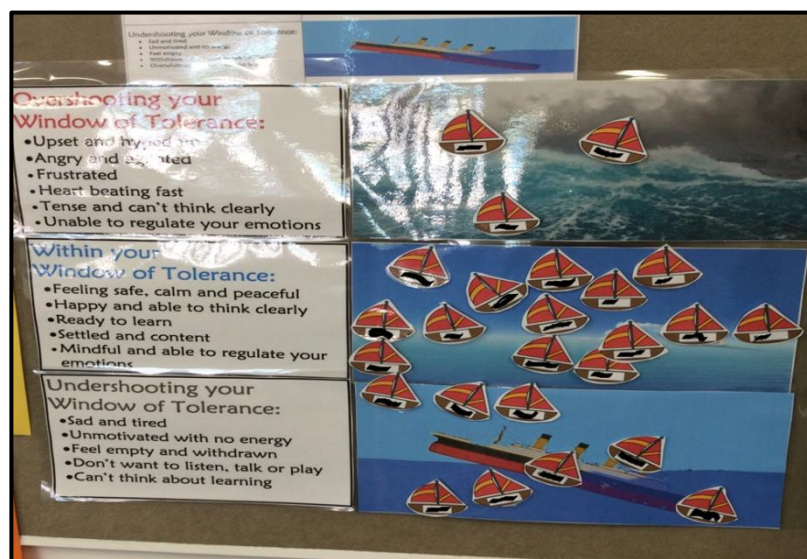
Window of Tolerance theory taught to students as a strategy for them to track their own emotions and to reflect on how these emotions can impact their capacity to learn. Students were given their own 'window of tolerance' sheet to fill out each day, from August 2016. They were asked to draw a sailing boat on the area that mostly represented where they were at throughout the day.

This year we have a Year 3/4 class. Student B, our case study student is still in this class. We are still using the 'Window of Tolerance' this year to track the well-being of all students in our class, but we have implemented it in a slightly different way. Last year we were tracking each individual student through them filling out a form at the end of each day. We collated this information, but didn't feel that the data was overly useful in pin pointing how students were able to regulate their emotions throughout the day.

This year we have a laminated poster of the windows with each child having their own little laminated sail boats to place on the area that they feel matches their emotions. They are asked to do this on a daily basis, first thing in the morning, straight after lunch and then after the teacher has implemented mindful, meditation or relaxation activities for students, which occurs straight after lunch. We are aiming to collect the data via photos – see attached as an example, at least twice per week. We will be able to see if the mindful strategies that we are implementing in the classroom are effective in assisting most students to self-regulate their emotions.

Over the past few weeks, my colleague and I who share one of the Year 3/4 classes, discovered that some of the students didn't understand the whole idea of the Window of Tolerance enough to be able to use it as a way to monitor their emotions.

We both explained it more fully to them and gave examples. We focussed on the idea that if you are overshooting or undershooting your window, then you probably would be having



difficulty in regulating your emotions and focussing enough to be able to learn. We described how a person may behave if they cannot regulate their emotions. We clearly identified the behaviours you may see in each of the different sections of the windows.

We noticed after, that the students seemed to be more mindful of where they were placing their sailboats.

Student's Cry for Help

This system is proving useful to identify students who come into school first thing in the morning and place their sailboats in either the top or bottom of the window. It can be a red flag to the teacher to show us that a student may be angry or upset or indeed sad or depressed first thing in the morning. We are finding it helpful to continue to build relationships in the classroom and also to keep an eye on students who may otherwise 'slip through the net', because sometimes the quiet ones may be struggling with an issue, which would not otherwise be noticed.

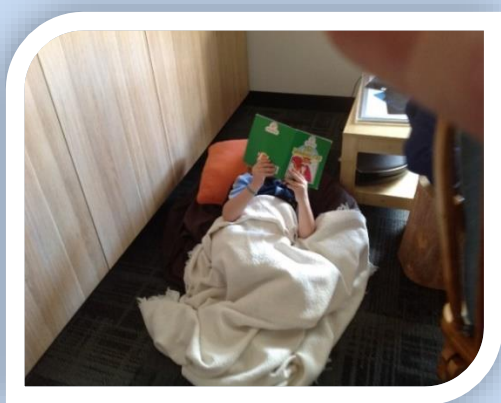
After looking at our data, there seems to be a difference in the number of students undershooting or overshooting their windows by the end of our relaxation/mindfulness/meditation sessions. The photos reveal that there are fewer students in the top or bottom windows, with the majority of our students now placing their sailboats in the middle Window of Tolerance.

Early Years Team

In 2016, the Early Years team consisting of three Reception/Year 1 classes agreed to implement the use of the 5 Point Scale. In Term 1 we discussed each level of the scale with the children and had a visual display of the scale in each classroom. For the first two weeks, children were encouraged to put their name by the number they were at.



We also introduced a variety of calm down strategies. First, we practised them as a whole class. As time went by, we allowed the children to choose from the calm down strategies we had introduced. After each recess and lunch time, children were given up to 5 minutes of calm down time. They were also encouraged to use their preferred calm down at other times when they felt they may be escalating.



After two weeks of practising using the scale, we asked each child to respond to 5 questions relating to their understanding of the 5 Point Scale.

We sat in a circle and explained that we want to find out how much they know about the scale and it is important for each child to respond to each question.

Then we read the story “The Red Beast” to assist the children in their understanding that the angrier we become, the less we are able to listen and hear others, and the louder we are more likely to become.

We spent time explicitly teaching, that when you are at a 2 or 3, it is the time to do a calm down strategy.

We encouraged the children to illustrate and/or write their feelings and behaviours when at levels 1, 3 and 5 in particular.

Then we culminated these lessons with each child drawing and writing what they look like at number 1 and 5 and what makes them feel that way.



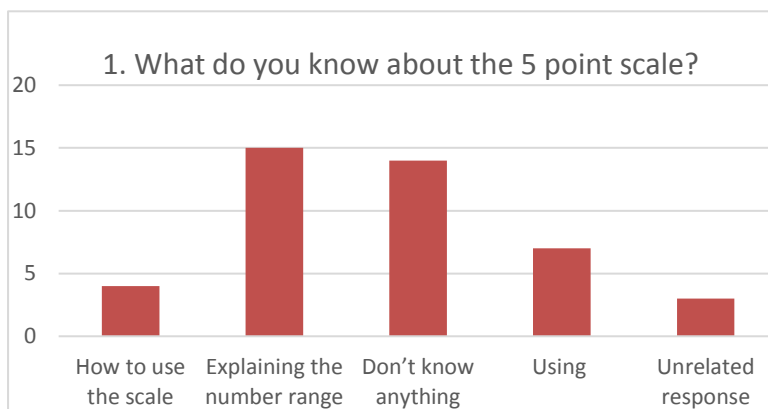
Each teacher also used a survey to find out each child’s triggers. We were then able to be proactive and put strategies in place to assist these children in situations that cause them stress.

Earlier, it was mentioned that we had surveyed the children in relation to the children's understanding of the 5 Point Scale. In Term 4 we resurveyed the same children and graphed the results from Term 1 and Term 4.

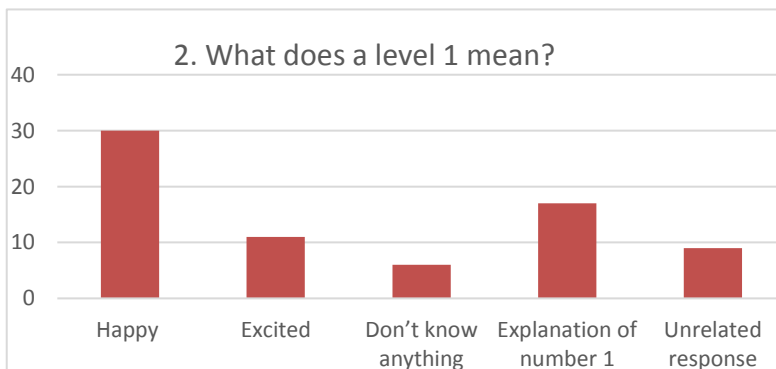
Below are the graphs and some conclusions that can be drawn from the information gathered:

Student Stressor Interview	
Student: _____	Date: _____
Interviewer: _____	Class: _____
Directions: Interview the 1-point scale to student. Explain that you are going to mention some things that may or may not make the student nervous or upset or excited. Let the student that you will read each situation and he/she should answer using the 5-point scale (1-5) depending on how it makes them feel.	
1. Getting ready for school.	1 2 3 4 5
2. Being late.	1 2 3 4 5
3. Someone touching your stuff.	1 2 3 4 5
4. Having to wait to talk about your favourite things.	1 2 3 4 5
5. When things change.	1 2 3 4 5
6. Being around a lot of noise.	1 2 3 4 5
7. Being around a lot of rowdy people.	1 2 3 4 5
8. Being sick.	1 2 3 4 5
9. Having to wait to do something you really want to do.	1 2 3 4 5
10. Being touched.	1 2 3 4 5
11. Having someone stand close to you.	1 2 3 4 5
12. Strong smells.	1 2 3 4 5
13. Having to stop doing one thing and starting another.	1 2 3 4 5
14. Having someone take your stuff.	1 2 3 4 5
15. Being around a lot of people.	1 2 3 4 5
16. Playing sports.	1 2 3 4 5
17. Writing.	1 2 3 4 5
18. Listening and following instructions.	1 2 3 4 5

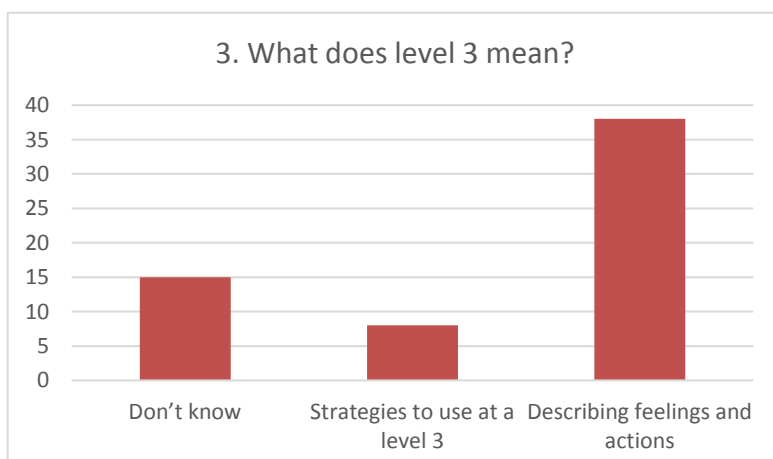
Term 1 Data Collection Q1



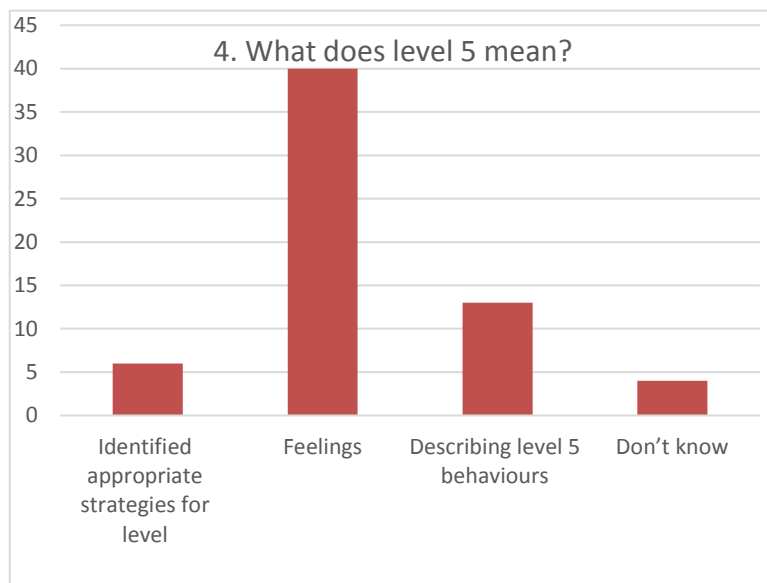
Term 1 Data Collection Q2



Term 1 Data Collection Q3



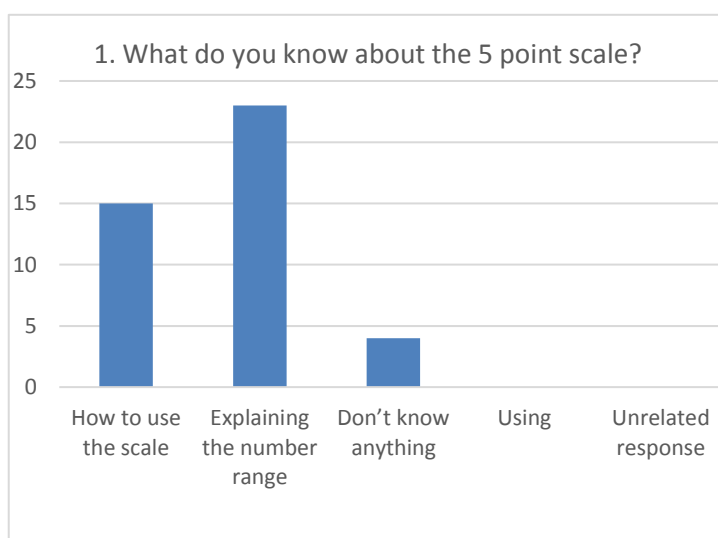
Term 1 Data Collection Q4



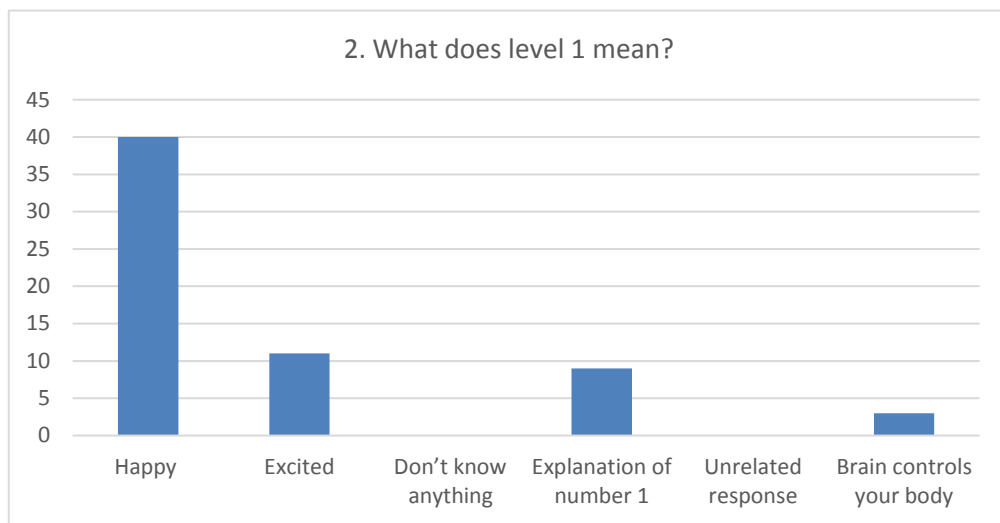
Term 1 Data Collection Q5



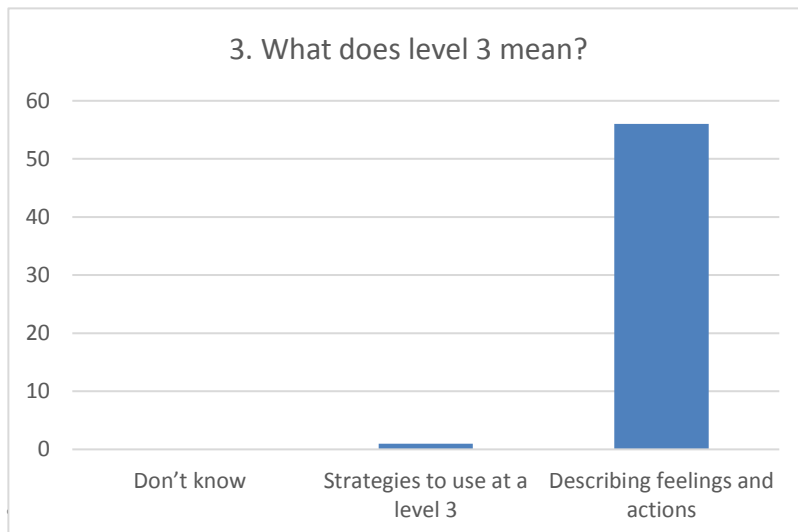
Term 4 Data Collection Q1



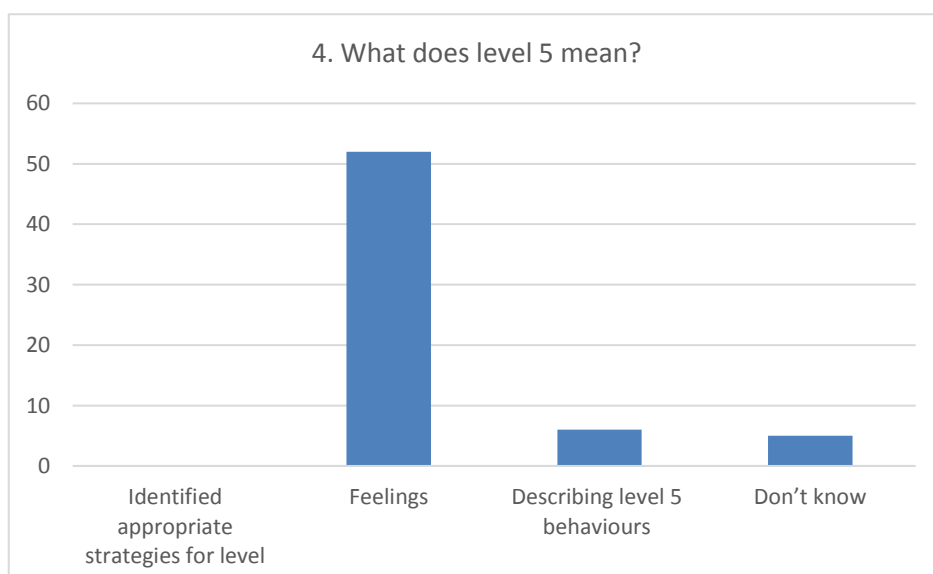
Term 4 Data Collection Q2



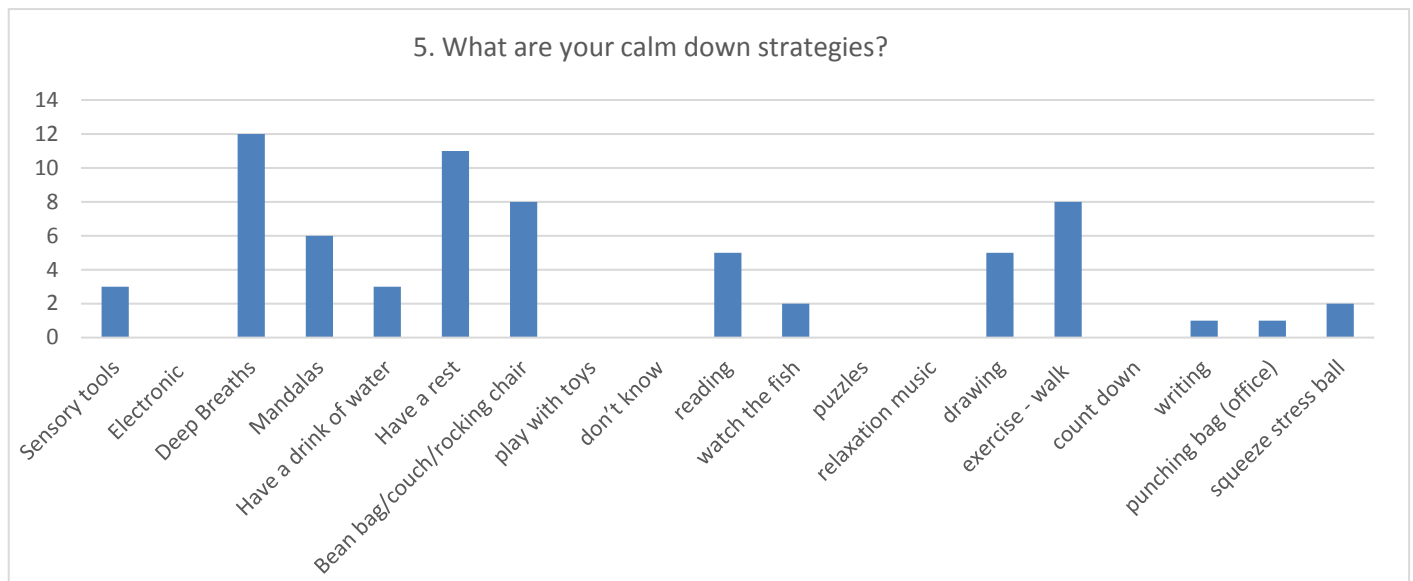
Term 4 Data Collection Q3



Term 4 Data Collection Q4



Term 4 Data Collection Q5



In Term 4, all responses related to the 5 Point Scale.

In Term 4, more children were able to verbally explain a feature of the 5 Point Scale (14 down to 4).

As the year progressed, there was an improvement in the understanding of how to use the scale appropriately.

In Term 4, every student had a related response.

In Term 4, a few children used appropriate language in term 4 (e.g. brain controls your body, happy).

After explicit teaching

- More children were able to describe feelings and actions.
- More children were able to talk about strategies they could use.
- Every child was able to give a related response (15 don't know to 0).

More children were able to articulate feelings that go with that level.

Conclusions from results of survey

The children became more aware of the strategies that were suited to calming down.

In Term 4, every child was able to name a suitable calm down strategy.

The children focused more on the calm down strategies introduced since first surveyed in Term 1.

The results of the data reflect the collaboration and consistency across the three Reception/Year 1 classes. It is also important to acknowledge, that the success of this project from the Reception/Year 1's point of view, was the decision to work as a team to support each other in the learning process.

Case Study

This case study involved observing a Year One in a Reception/Year 1 class in 2016. In 2017 she went in as a Year 2 in a Year 1/2 class. This case study began in Term 3, 2016 and continued until the end of Term 1, 2017. She had been with the same teacher in 2015 and 2016 and in a team teaching shared class in 2017. This case study child is a very quiet student who only began participating in class discussions in her second year of school. She made friends quickly and developed close relationships. She is a sensitive child and could easily be overlooked within the classroom setting. She also takes time to feel comfortable and safe in new situations.

As previously discussed, the 5 point scale was implemented within the classroom with all the children.

Below is some observations and data collected as to how efficiently this child used the scale to assist with firstly, acknowledging for herself where she was at emotionally. Secondly, enabling the teacher to be aware of where she was at. Thirdly, being able to then discuss and choose a suitable calm down strategy.

2016

Before the implementation of the 5 Point Scale

The case study child would sometimes come in from recess or lunch visibly upset. It was difficult for her to communicate what had happened and how she was feeling. As an adult, you felt you needed to ask the right questions to be able to find out the problem. Most times she would not respond as she was too upset and not willing to share what was bothering her.

During some lessons, notably Maths, she would go back to her work area after watching the task being modelled and just sit quietly. She could sit for up to 10 to 20 minutes at a time not doing the task.

After the implementation of the 5 Point Scale

During a Maths lesson, after all the initial explicit teaching as a whole class had been done, the children were asked to go off to work. After about 5 -10 minutes, I noticed the case study child put herself from a 1 to a 4. I went to her to indicate that I had noticed where she had put herself. She did not reply. I asked again with no response. I began guessing and asking her different questions to ascertain what had caused this shift. Eventually, I asked her if she wanted some help with her Maths. She responded yes. I spent 5 -10 minutes helping her with her work. She then got up from her chair and took herself back to 1 and then went on with the task.

First thing one morning, the case study child walked into the classroom and immediately put herself at number 4. I discussed with her that I had noticed this and she told me she was very upset that her best friend had left the school a week or two before. She chose a calm down strategy and then I checked in with her periodically, to see how she was. I asked her if she would like to write a letter, but she declined. She brought herself down to a 3

then 2 as the day progressed.

On one occasion, we were resetting the classroom after recess and we missed our calm down session. She took herself from a 1 to a 4. She would or could not verbalise the reason for the shift, so I preceded to ask questions. Eventually, she admitted it was because we had not had calm down time. I explained she could go and have calm down, she did so for about 15 minutes and then took herself down to a 2.

There were various examples later in the year where she would place herself at a 4. She would then choose a calm down strategy such as colouring in a mandala, drawing or watching the fish and then would move herself to 1 again.

For this case study child, this proved a very insightful way for me to understand the child's state of emotion and allowed her an avenue to visually let me know how she is feeling. Before the implementation of the 5 Point Scale, I only knew because she was crying, as she rarely verbalised when something was concerning her and she tended to internalise everything.

The student stressor interview also enabled me to understand her triggers. So when she wasn't that communicative at the beginning of the case study, I could use the information from that interview to ask the right kind of questions. Some of her triggers were:

- Being around a lot of noise and rowdy people
- Someone taking and touching her things
- Being yelled at and getting into trouble
- Not being picked in a team
- Being teased and friends not letting her play

It was very apparent, that as time progressed she was beginning to self-regulate using the 5 Point Scale and the calm down strategies. I became less involved in the process as she would use the scale to indicate the level she was at, engage in a calm down strategy and then indicate through the scale, that she had brought herself down.

2017 – New Teacher

As the case study child successfully and consistently used the 5 Point Scale in 2016, I ensured I implemented the scale into my classroom.

The changes of a new school year brought about many challenges for the case study child and therefore the number on the scale would fluctuate daily between 1 and 3 for the first few weeks. Hot weather, friendship issues and Maths seemed to be the main triggers for this child and these were confidently verbalised to me.

The child's strategies to bring the number down on the scale were completing puzzles, writing, drawing, resting and mandalas. At the beginning of Term 1, I would suggest a range of strategies and the child would pick one. However, towards the end of term, the child would identify the need for a strategy and confidently ask and chose one independently.

When the case study child did not understand a Maths task the number on the scale would rise but the child would not seek help. The scale has been crucial to me in order to know how the case study child is feeling and so I check the scale consistently throughout the day. Because of this, I am able to provide one on one help to explain the task and give assistance when needed. The child immediately brings the number down to 1 and completes the required task.

Issues before school have caused the child to enter the room at a level 3 or 4 and the child has visited the counsellor or taken a calm down strategy such as reading or drawing. The child has ended the day on a number 1 or immediately changed it to a number 1 upon entering the classroom the next day.

Case Study 1Cr

Background

Case Study student 1Cr started Reception at St Thomas More School Term 1, 2016. He is one of three children at home. As with all of our new students he completed a phonological screening assessment and his fine and gross motor skills were also reviewed. From these results interventions were put in place to support growth in all three of the above areas. Case study student 1Cr was often unsettled in the mornings. He had interrupted sleep patterns and started the day looking tired. He finds it challenging to sit down and begin the day with the rest of his classmates. Once settled he usually looks to join the other students in an activity. He rarely physically hurts other students or adults. He can be loud and have little awareness of what is happening around him. He often trips, bumps into things and walks through where others are working.

Classroom

Our day starts with minimal sitting time in the morning to welcome students and then a short tuning in of Learning Intentions, before beginning play based investigations for approximately forty five minutes. This routine is followed four mornings per week. Case study student 1Cr was usually engaged during the Investigation time with only occasional redirection from a teacher needed.

Observations/Data/Planning

Case study student 1Cr was finding transition to specialist lessons a challenge. He also found it unsettling to have relief teachers or an unfamiliar adult working with him. It appeared there was not an increasing scale for events or accompanying emotions such as anger, sadness, and disappointment. He often appeared to over react to small situations and this would escalate quickly. Student 1Cr was very much 'fight or flight', standing his ground and becoming combative if there was a perceived wrong or running away.

Initially retreat spaces were provided for the case study student, both in the classroom and in the rooms of specialist teachers. Identifying his needs was very much adult directed, for example "I can see you look tired this morning, that can make it hard to work, do you need some quiet time or a rest?" Sensory tools such as fidgets and weighted animals were also used to support listening at whole group times. Noise cancelling headphones were also

available to use as needed.

Our learning team met and decided our focus would be on supporting all of our students with initially co- regulation leading to self-regulation. We chose to explicitly teach how to use the 5 Point Scale as a tool to identify when a break or intervention was needed by students. The students were supported in finding and developing calming strategies suitable for school and home. These explicit lessons in addition to working with our school counsellor in 'What's the Buzz?' supported students to identify and describe a range of emotions. As a group it was important to have a common language and give the children a way to safely express emotions and feelings and support to work through them. A 5 Point Scale visual was displayed in the classroom and the children were invited to place their name on the scale throughout the day. We also decided to collect data on individual student stressors. This information together with anecdotal observations helped to build a profile for all of our students and in particular our case study students.

Student 1Cr identified the following areas as level 5

- Being around a lot of noise
- Having to wait to do something you really want to do
- Having to stop one thing and starting another
- Having someone take your stuff
- Being yelled at
- Getting in trouble
- You are not picked for a team
- Having homework
- Being teased
- Wearing uncomfortable clothes

“The training days reminded me of the importance of body language and tone of voice. This was very important for me to consider with this student who is very sensitive to even subtle changes in voice and the body language of the adults around him. Involvement in this project has reinforced for me the priority of building genuine and trusting relationships within our classrooms and creating spaces where children feel safe and valued.”

on how it makes them feel:	
1. Getting ready for school.	1 2 3 4 5
2. Bright lights.	1 2 3 4 5
3. Someone touching your stuff.	1 2 3 4 5
4. Having to wait to talk about your favourite things.	1 2 3 4 5
5. When things change.	1 2 3 4 5
6. Being around a lot of noise.	1 2 3 4 5
7. Being around a lot of rowdy people.	1 2 3 4 5
8. Being sick.	1 2 3 4 5
9. Having to wait to do something you really want to do.	1 2 3 4 5
10. Being touched.	1 2 3 4 5
11. Having someone stand close to you.	1 2 3 4 5
12. Strong smells.	1 2 3 4 5
13. Having to stop doing one thing and starting another.	1 2 3 4 5
14. Having someone take your stuff.	1 2 3 4 5
15. Being around a lot of people.	1 2 3 4 5
16. Playing sports.	1 2 3 4 5
17. Writing.	1 2 3 4 5
18. Listening and following instructions.	1 2 3 4 5

20. Getting in trouble.	1 2 3 4 5
21. Having a conversation.	1 2 3 4 5
22. Playing on the playground at school.	1 2 3 4 5
23. Reading.	1 2 3 4 5
24. Maths.	1 2 3 4 5
25. Losing a game.	1 2 3 4 5
26. Having a relief teacher.	1 2 3 4 5
27. Asking for help.	1 2 3 4 5
28. You are not picked to be on a team.	1 2 3 4 5
29. You think someone is ignoring you.	1 2 3 4 5
30. Having homework.	1 2 3 4 5
31. Your friends are playing a game and they won't let you play.	1 2 3 4 5
32. You lose your money.	1 2 3 4 5
33. Being late for school.	1 2 3 4 5
34. Coming back to school after holidays.	1 2 3 4 5
35. Meeting new people.	1 2 3 4 5
36. Being teased.	1 2 3 4 5
37. Having to look at someone in the eyes.	1 2 3 4 5
38. Being hugged.	1 2 3 4 5
39. Wearing uncomfortable clothes.	1 2 3 4 5
40. Someone cuts in front of you in the line.	1 2 3 4 5
Interviewers' notes:	

Student 1Cr kept changing his mind about scaling 'having a relief teacher', starting at one, then after thinking about it settling on a three. He does not like loud noises/shouting. He does not like 'getting in trouble' so if he perceives he is in trouble and there has been an incident, how the adult reacts will impact student 1Cr's responses and interactions with that person in the future. From notes left by relief staff it became apparent he was 'testing' new adults by displaying lots of low level attention seeking behaviours such as calling out, work refusal, rolling on the floor. How the adult worked with these behaviours influenced whether there was an escalation such as running around the room, running away and on rare occasions jumping on furniture.

To assist relief staff, notes are left with suggested strategies to use. Support staff and teaching partner are able to check in with him. He has break cards to use if needed, other school staff are identified as designated safe people to go to if a break from the room is needed, rather than running into the yard unsupervised. Where possible he is able to prepare for someone new coming to the room so it isn't an unexpected change. He knows he has activities and work available in his learning space if he needs to be away from the group and be on his own.

I started to collect data on Student 1Cr throughout the day, using the level 1-5 scale, initially this data reflected where I thought he was based on the behaviours being displayed. Later this data also reflected where he placed himself on the scale. I also documented if he was able to use a calming strategy or was receptive to the suggestion to use one and how effective this was in reducing inappropriate or unsafe behaviours. Student 1Cr identified sitting in the rocking chair, colouring Mandalas (particularly after play breaks) and watering the classroom plants as calming strategies. Deep breathing and listening to

quiet music are also effective. When unwell or very tired he is able to rest/sleep in a bean bag. At times 'heavy work' is appropriate and this is supported by our Deputy Principal allowing Student 1 Cr to accompany him on tasks around the school for example moving bins, locking/unlocking gates. When possible support staff are able to support supervision with a circuit on the playground and fitness equipment. In 2017 as Student 1Cr's fine motor skills have developed he finds constructing and making activities to be calming. He is able to engage in these types of activities during morning investigations and as part of his individual behaviour plan, for example when meeting a desired goal or completing his modified and negotiated learning tasks. It is important unfinished projects have a safe place to be kept so he can return to them. A visual timer is also used for reward time, reducing conflict over packing up or stopping before a project is completed. It has been important to spend part of each day connecting with this student 1-1, not only through learning tasks but on a personal level. This could be through playing a game during investigations, a conversation on a topic of interest, drawing or colouring together during our mindfulness time after play breaks or kicking the ball when on yard duty.

Findings/Progress

In the beginning calming choices and identifying emotions were almost always directed by an adult, as skills and trust developed this slowly changed to student 1Cr identifying needs and selecting an appropriate strategies to meet them.

Mornings can still be an unsettling time for this student, what has changed though is how he manages this time of the day. Student 1 Cr started by not being able to identify how he was feeling, using inappropriate and attention seeking behaviours to communicate something was wrong. Slowly this changed to naming an emotion or problem and he then often used this as an excuse for inappropriate behaviour, for example 'my brother kept me awake. I'm tired, it's not my fault'. He would then need to be directed to use a calming strategy. After restorative conversations or when following up difficulties and once calm we talked about 'big feelings' and how it effects our thinking. These conversations were daily and at times of great stress several times a day. Over time and once student 1 Cr started to trust he wasn't 'in trouble' and he wasn't going to be yelled at he was more likely to verbalise a feeling word or problem and choose a calming strategy, or simply start the day with a snack and spending about ten minutes in the rocking chair before joining the class. Most breaks he comes straight back to class and gets his drawing or mandala out for up to ten minutes. If highly emotional he is still reluctant to come straight into the room but will now stay close to the classroom and once the rest of the class has settled he will then come inside, choose a quiet space and come and talk once calm.

Student 1 Cr rarely uses the scale to place his name on this year, but it has provided a visual reminder to refer to or prompt him to use a calming strategy.

Reflection

This process has reminded me even with planning and strategies in place things go wrong and what worked one day may not the next. Progress can be slow and not necessarily linear. Time needs to be given to see if a strategy is working before moving on to trying something new. The training days reminded me of the importance of body language and tone of voice. This was very important for me to consider with this student who is very

sensitive to even subtle changes in voice and the body language of the adults around him. Involvement in this project has reinforced for me the priority of building genuine and trusting relationships within our classrooms and creating spaces where children feel safe and valued.

Calming Strategies and Learning About the Brain in Years 4-6

In early 2016 the Year 4/5/6 Professional Learning Community began introducing the topic of mindfulness to the students. To begin with, our PLC met to discuss and brainstorm a list of calming strategies that we would implement within our classrooms. As a team we agreed upon implementing a range of calming strategies to begin with, to gauge which ones were beneficial for our students and which ones made little or no difference. The activities which we implemented after break times included Colour Me Calm mandalas, Zentangle artwork, listening to a class novel, table drumming, sketching, playing relaxation music and listening to the Smiling Mind guided meditation website.

As part of the learning journey, both the Year 4/5 classes and the Year 5/6 class were re-introduced to the Incredible 5 Point Scale. Students also watched a video clip of the movie “Inside Out”. Following the clip, the class had an in depth discussion about the different types of emotions depicted in the movie. After our discussion, we reviewed our understanding of the 5 Point Scale and what the different scale numbers meant. Students completed a Student Stressor Questionnaire to give the teachers a better indication as to the different types of situations/activities which may cause the students to react emotionally. Following this, the teachers implemented the use of a Before Mindfulness and After Mindfulness 5 Point Scale poster. Using the poster, the students were asked to indicate where they were at on the scale before the implementation of a calming strategy and again straight after a calming strategy. This data was tracked and recorded throughout the year. From the evidence collected, it was evident that the calming strategies that we were implementing were of great benefit to the students. The students also expressed how they liked participating in mindfulness activities as it helped them to calm down and settle for the remainder of the day.

In 2017, the new cohort of Year 5/6 students continued using the Before and After Mindfulness posters straight after break times, to indicate where they were at on the 5 Point Scale before and after the implementation of a calming strategy. Students listened to a class novel being read, participating in the Smiling Mind meditation activities and taking the time to do mindful breathing exercises. The classroom teachers collected data using charts to gauge whether the calming strategies were assisting students to self-regulate their emotions.

As part of our focus on trauma, the teachers implemented the MindUp Curriculum during Health lessons. The students learnt about the different parts of the Limbic System. Students were extremely receptive and interested in learning about the brain and the term ‘neuroplasticity’. They were interested in understanding the importance of mindful

breathing and the role it plays in helping us to regulate our emotions. As part of Design and Technology, the Year 5/6 students researched, designed and created brain models to deepen their understanding of the brain and how it can influence our emotions.

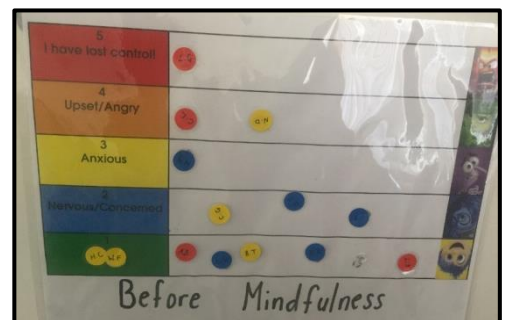
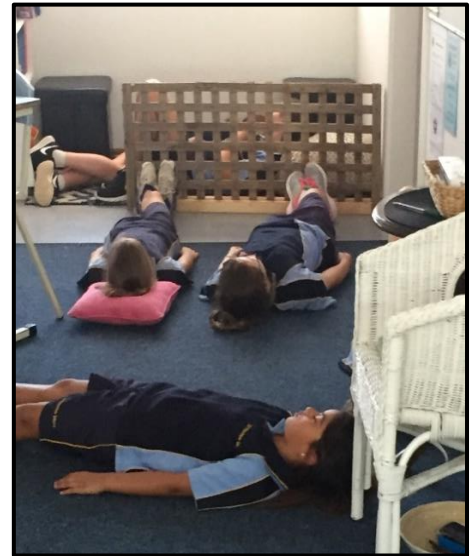
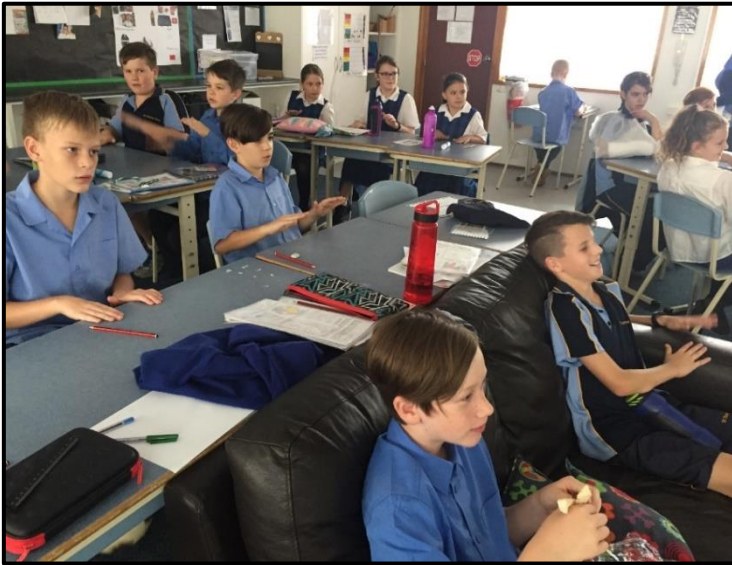
5-Point Scale

Rating	Looks/Sounds Like	Feels Like	How I Can Respond
5 I have lost control!	Screaming, crying, making unkind comments, throwing objects at others or in the classroom	I'm going to physically hurt someone if I don't fix the situation.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Ask to take a break Participate in a mindfulness activity to calm down. Talk to an adult about your feelings/thoughts.
4 Upset/Angry	Pacing, clenched fists	Angry	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Speak with a teacher or someone from Leadership about your thoughts and feelings.
3 Anxious	I am starting to feel nervous.	Anxious	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Write about how you are feeling and what you are thinking. Talk to a friend/adult.
2 Nervous/Concerned	I am not feeling right and I am not feeling like myself.	Nervous Being bothered by something Concerned	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Take some deep breaths and count to 5.
1 Happy	I feel happy!	Good!	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Stay in a great mood!

Calming Strategies Implemented

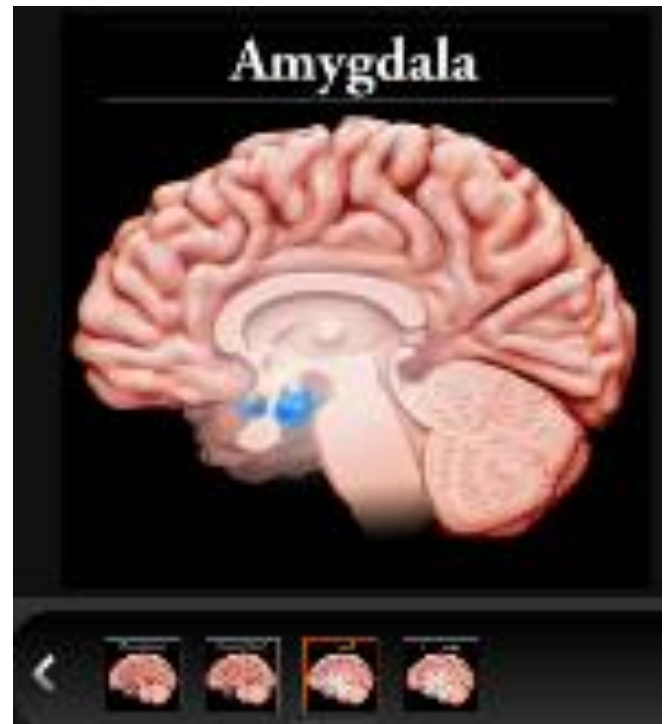
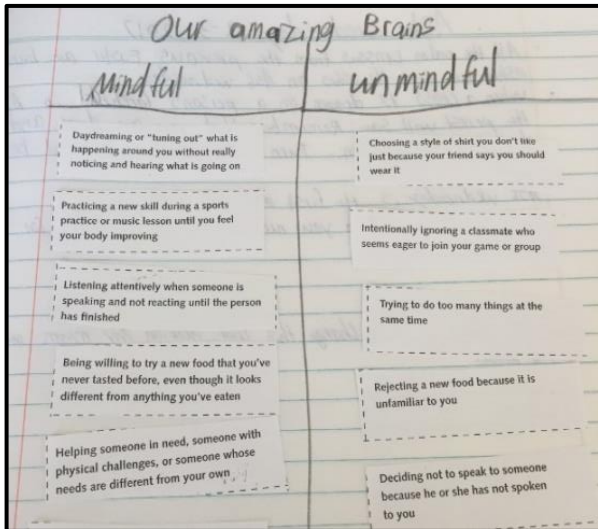
Zentangle Art was used by the students to help them calm down



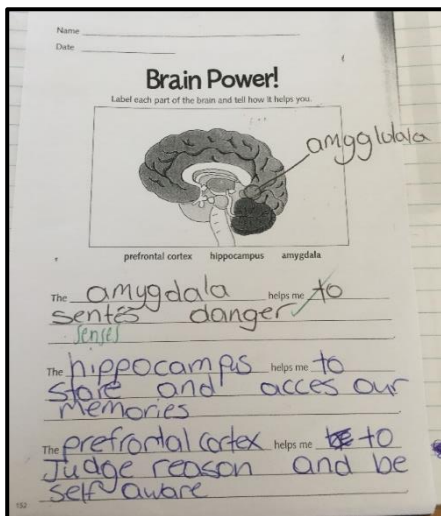


After break times the students would indicate where they were at on the 5 Point Scale posters before and after mindfulness activities. Data was then collected before and after calming sessions.

Learning about our brains and what it means to be mindful...

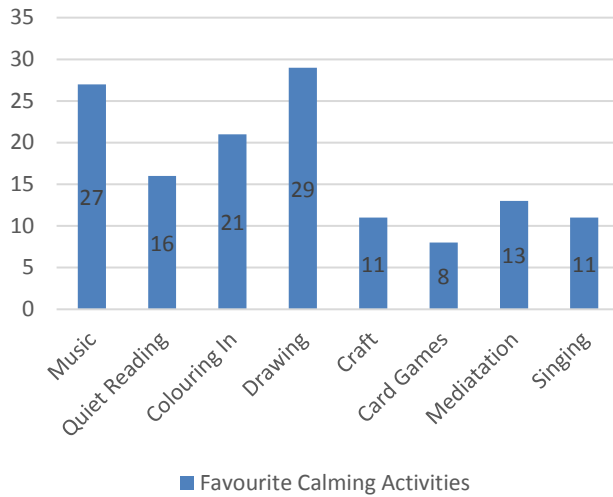


The Years 4-7 students used interactive websites to research information about the brain. They then designed and created models of the brain.

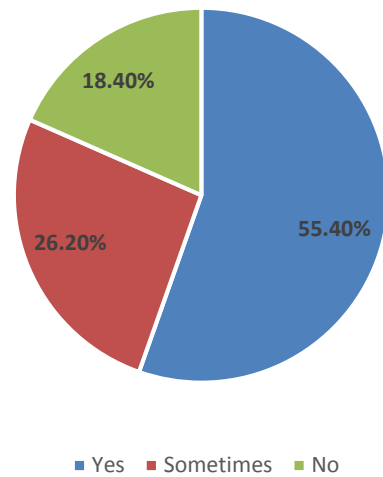


Data Collection and Results

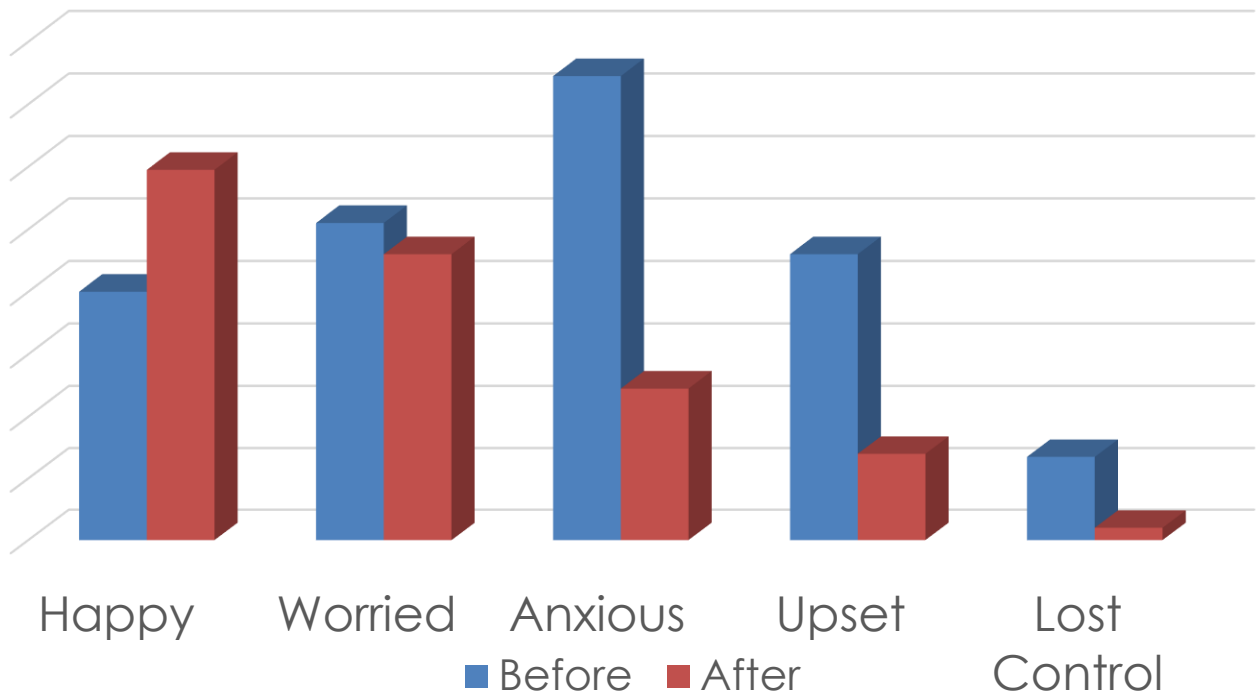
Survey Q4 - Favourite Calming Activities



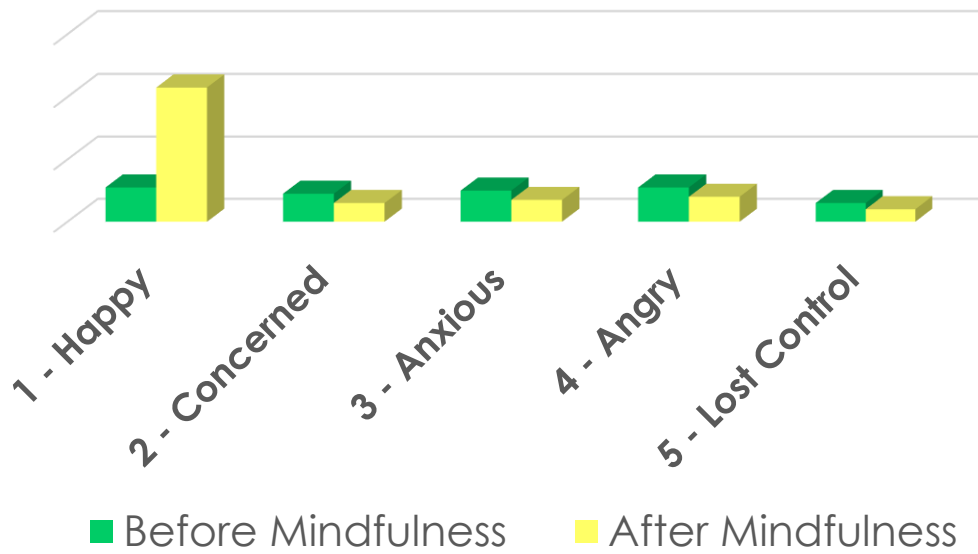
Survey Q6 - Do you think meditation/mindfulness helps you calm down after lunch?



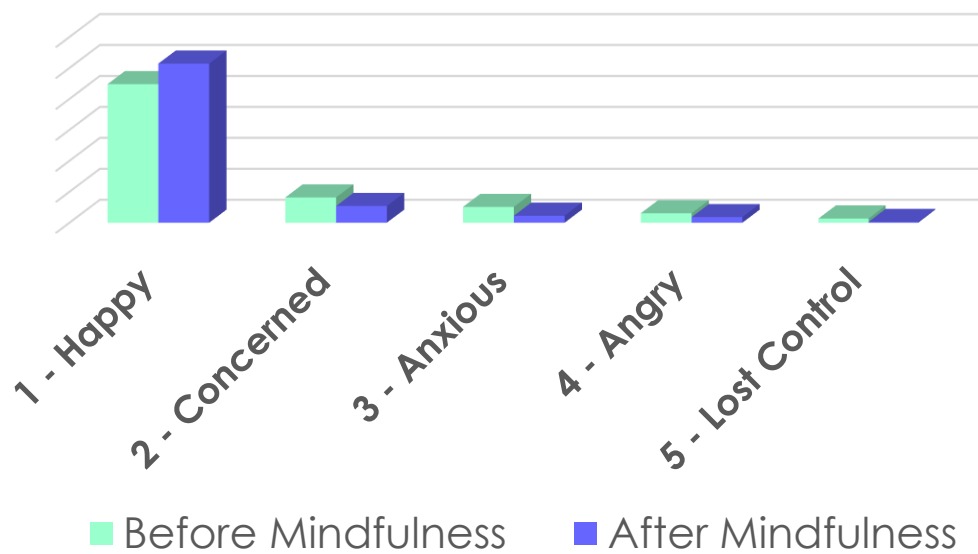
Before and After Mindfulness - 4/5S



Before & After Mindfulness - 4/5 DC



Before & After Mindfulness - Year 5/6 CK



The data presented demonstrates that calming strategies have had an impact on the students at Saint Thomas More School.

Case Studies and the Benefits of Calming Strategies

A Year 4/5 teacher's reflective journal of the case study student (2017):

My focus student was chosen as he had experienced a traumatic event earlier in his childhood. He is diagnosed with Autism Spectrum Disorder and finds it difficult to regulate his emotions. Focus student A used the 5 Point Scale daily to indicate how he was feeling in relation to the five different emotions. Issues that occurred at home before school, or during break times would significantly impact his emotional well-being. A range of calming strategies were used with focus student A when his emotions were heightened. Student A enjoyed free drawing and reading Minecraft books. As mindfulness was introduced, student A engaged in different activities such as Colour Me Calm, Smiling Mind guided meditation, reading and drawing. He would engage in these activities independently and enjoyed the quiet, calm environment with the lights turned off. I kept a record of student A's behaviour throughout the day and noted when he was feeling angry, frustrated, upset or worried. I recorded his actions (refusing to work, walking out of the classroom, disrupting others) if and when they occurred.

Focus student A settled in well after engaging in mindfulness activities. At times, he would need a further 5-10 minutes alone to complete his mindfulness activity before he participated in the follow-up lessons. He would often engage in mindfulness activities at different times during the day if needed, for example after recess if an issue had occurred. Student A enjoyed sharing his mindfulness activities with the teacher, especially his free drawing. Student A's records indicated a decline in behavioural issues in the classroom after engaging in mindfulness activities. He was able to use these strategies to assist with calming and regulating his emotions before they reached a 5 on the scale. Using the 5 Point Scale was an effective way for the student to recognise that he was anxious, upset or angry about a situation and therefore led him to using mindfulness activities or strategies as a way to settle before talking to the teacher. Using mindfulness in the classroom proved to be a successful way for students to enter and engage in a calm, quiet environment after break times and settle before transitioning to the following lesson.

Case Studies and the Benefits of Calming Strategies

Two Year 4/5 teacher's reflective journal of the case study student (2016):

In 2016, student T had been chosen to be a focus during our project due to the fact that he would often experience difficulties transitioning from break times to classroom time. His behaviour was disruptive and he would experience friendship issues with others due to his inability to read other's emotions and his lack of empathy.

At the start of the project, student T was taught the 5 Point Scale and had been introduced to different calming strategies which would support him when he needed to calm down. T was also provided with support from an Autism S.A worker and provided with additional resources and strategies to help him calm down. In the earlier stages of the project, T did not always use the strategies taught to him in an appropriate manner. However, T did respond well to whole class calming strategies and he particularly enjoyed participating in

mindful drawing activities. As the year progressed, T became more accustomed to the calming strategies and began to ask for 'meditation time'.

A Year 5/6 teacher's reflective journal of the case study student (2017):

In 2017, the class that student T was in continued to implement calming strategies after each break time (recess and lunch). Both teachers who team taught together were well aware of T and the importance of encouraging him to use calming strategies when he was feeling angry or upset. As the year progressed, it was clear that student T was able to better self-manage his emotions (compared with the previous year) and transition more easily into lessons after break times with the help of calming strategies and mindfulness time. The class would participate in lessons involving the brain and learnt about how our brain can have control over our emotions and actions. From this, it was clear that student T enjoyed learning about the brain and the different parts of the brain that influence our decision making processes and emotional responses to different situations.

Overall, as both teachers looked back on the TSSP data they had collected on student T, it was evident that the calming strategies that they were implementing in their classrooms were having a significant impact. Upon reflection, in 2016 student T went from struggling to manage his emotions and behaviour, to being able to choose appropriate calming strategies in 2017 to support his wellbeing. One such example is when student T came back from recess angry and unsettled. He was holding a packet of chips in his hand and some fell on the ground during his emotional outburst. The teacher asked T to choose a calming strategy and his choice was to sit on the bench outside the classroom. During this time he chose to play with his fidget spinner to help him calm down. After approximately ten minutes, student T returned to the classroom. During this time he also asked where he could locate a dustpan and broom so that he could clean up the mess he made during his emotional outburst. The teacher thanked him for making the right choice and for coming back into the room quietly.

It has been great to see the improvements made by our focus student over time. As the years progress, we hope that student T can continue to utilise the calming strategies that he has been taught as part of our journey in the Trauma Sensitive Schools project.

During 2016, the Year 6/7 cohort began their learning journey by having the students undertake the survey that the entire school completed around the 5 Point Scale.

Directions - introduce the 5-point scale to student. Explain that you are going to mention some things that may or may not make him/her stressed, nervous, anxious or even excited. Tell the student that you will read each situation and he/she should answer using the 5 point scale (1-5) depending on how it makes them feel.

1. Getting ready for school.	1 2 3 4 5
2. Bright lights.	1 2 3 4 5
3. Someone touching your stuff.	1 2 3 4 5
4. Having to wait to talk about your favourite things.	1 2 3 4 5
5. When things change.	1 2 3 4 5
6. Being around a lot of noise.	1 2 3 4 5
7. Being around a lot of rowdy people.	1 2 3 4 5
8. Being sick.	1 2 3 4 5
9. Having to wait to do something you really want to do.	1 2 3 4 5
10. Being touched.	1 2 3 4 5
11. Having someone stand close to you.	1 2 3 4 5
12. Strong smells.	1 2 3 4 5
13. Having to stop doing one thing and starting another.	1 2 3 4 5
14. Having someone take your stuff.	1 2 3 4 5
15. Being around a lot of people.	1 2 3 4 5
16. Playing sports.	1 2 3 4 5
17. Writing.	1 2 3 4 5
18. Listening and following instructions.	1 2 3 4 5

Student Stress Interview

Student	Date
Student	Date

Directions - Read each item and ask student to rate how they feel about each item on the 5-point scale (1-5) depending on how they feel about it. 1 = Not at all, 2 = A little, 3 = Somewhat, 4 = A lot, 5 = A great deal.

1. Getting ready for school.	1 2 3 4 5
2. Bright lights.	1 2 3 4 5
3. Someone touching your stuff.	1 2 3 4 5
4. Having to wait to talk about your favourite things.	1 2 3 4 5
5. When things change.	1 2 3 4 5
6. Being around a lot of noise.	1 2 3 4 5
7. Being around a lot of rowdy people.	1 2 3 4 5
8. Being sick.	1 2 3 4 5
9. Having to wait to do something you really want to do.	1 2 3 4 5
10. Being touched.	1 2 3 4 5
11. Having someone stand close to you.	1 2 3 4 5
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14. Having someone take your stuff.	1 2 3 4 5
15. Being around a lot of people.	1 2 3 4 5
16. Playing sports.	1 2 3 4 5
17. Writing.	1 2 3 4 5
18. Listening and following instructions.	1 2 3 4 5

Mindfulness Survey

2. How do you feel when you have problems in the yard and you come into the classroom after lunch? Circle your answer.

angry sad upset not confused upset

3. How do you feel when other students come in unexcited after lunch?

yes - it doesn't bother me a little bit worried upset

4. When you come in from lunch do you feel ready to start work?

yes somewhat no

5. Which activity works best to help you settle after lunch?

Music Quiet reading Colouring in drawing

6. What are some different activities that you would like to do that would help you settle/ calm down after lunch?

craft card games meditation singing

7. Do you think meditation/ mindfulness has helped to help you calm down after lunch?

yes somewhat no

It was an extremely useful tool in being able to understand exactly what made the students' behaviour accelerate, as many of the students had a great deal of anxiety about things such as noise, being late to class and having a relief teacher.

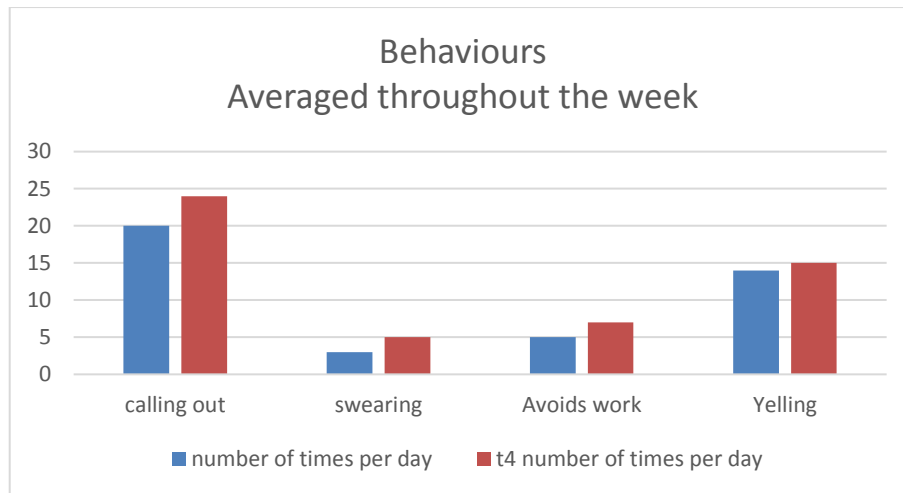
After completing the surveys, it became evident as to which student should become the case study child. Data was then collected on the student in order to find which calming activities best suited him, so that he could better engage in the curriculum in a positive way. The entire class benefited from the activities that were introduced such as; desk top drumming (their favourite), the metronome, meditation and mandalas. Unfortunately, the case study child was unable to make any real changes to his behaviour. As the year progressed, and in my personal opinion this was probably due to the fact that he was still experiencing a great deal of trauma at home and it had escalated. The focus child had data collected which represented the ways he disrupted learning (see below charts).

Term 3 Week: 2		Monday					Tuesday						
Behaviours:		Walk Out	Abusive	Avoid Work	Defiant	Swearing	Destructive	Walk Out	Abusive	Avoid Work	Defiant	Swearing	Destructive
8.50 – 11.00		✓			✓	✓	✓			buddy	Clas	J	
11.20 – 1.00				✓		✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
1.30 – 3.00		✓		✓		✓	✓			Sent to buddy 11.50			
										Double	NIT		
Term 3 Week: 3		Monday					Tuesday						
		8/8					9/8						
			k						k				

This was discussed and shared thoroughly with the focus child as he was in Year 7. It was important for him to not only be aware of what behaviours he was exhibiting but also how often. We worked continuously on trying to find ways that would help to calm the student, so that he could engage in the curriculum. However, towards the end of the year he would refuse to engage in any calming activities that were on offer.

The graphs below show that no progress was made with the student's behaviour and engagement. However, it is acknowledged that there was an improvement in self-regulation strategies in other students although data was not collected on this.

“It was an extremely useful tool in being able to understand exactly what made the students' behaviour accelerate, as many of the students had a great deal of anxiety about things such as noise, being late to class and having a relief teacher.”



During 2017, the focus has been more about teaching 'The Brain' to students. We have used the Mind Up Curriculum as a resource and the children showed great enthusiasm when learning. Our goal this year, was that the students would better understand what was happening in their thought processes and therefore make better behavioural choices. A new focus child was not selected as the children in the classes are extremely settled and we have not had any challenging behaviours as of yet. The students have completed inquiry projects and presentations about the brain and are also making 3D brains.

The students have also engaged with a variety of mindful techniques including mindful eating, listening and breathing. The students completed a great deal of work about the amygdala and one student uses the amygdala we made as a method to calm down as she watched the sand and glitter settle to the bottom of the bottle.

One particular activity the students found interesting was sparking their amygdala to 'fire and go off' as we popped balloons, eventually having them popped with our eyes closed. The children could then get a true indication of how to describe their feelings accurately.



Outcomes - What's Different Now?

The main outcomes for St Thomas More School students are:

- Many students are able to articulate their feelings or indicate their level of emotion on a five point scale.
- Teachers are more aware and therefore more empowered to adjust their teaching strategies and environment to accommodate students.
- Teachers have developed their understanding, skills and knowledge about how mindful strategies impact students' ability to self-regulate their emotions.
- A whole school approach and respect for calming and mindful strategies has resulted in the school being a calmer place in comparison to twelve months ago.
- Students are taking more responsibility for the regulation of their emotions.
- Students are using specific language which indicates their new knowledge and understanding of the brain.
- Students are coming to an understanding of how the brain links to emotions and well-being.
- Teachers are using the same language in relation to calming strategies and self-regulation across the school.

Quotes from Teachers:

- 'Students are more settled and have a better idea of how the brain works and what triggers emotions. They have also developed their own techniques to calm down when in an emotional state.'
- 'Students are more aware of calming strategies when emotions are heightened. They use tools like the 5 Point Scale to understand how they are feeling and can then choose strategies to help manage this. Before we started, some students had difficulty describing how they felt (whether they were worried, sad or angry) so using the 5 Point Scale has really helped. Students enjoy participating in mindfulness activities and it is evident that they need this time after recess and lunch to settle. Towards the end of the year there were less issues after break times to resolve, perhaps because students had this time to come in and calm down'.
- 'There are less lunch time issues being brought into the classroom after lunch and children know they will have calm down time when they come into the room. Most children are prepared to participate and enjoy the meditation and calming activities'.

Most Significant Learning

Our most significant learning is the knowledge of the brain and the different functions. We have learned about the effects of trauma on the brain. We have also discovered that trauma affected children do not always exhibit overt, extreme behaviours.

Quotes from Teachers:

- 'It has helped me to understand students and their behaviours and which calming strategies actually work. It's a matter of experimenting to find out what works for

different students or groups. I have seen a significant improvement in the way students are able to focus after break times. Providing a flexible system of tiered interventions has enhanced students' concentration and learning.'

- 'The brain – Experiencing traumatic events can cause developmental delays. It was also great to learn about the different strategies that we could engage in as a class to assist with regulating emotions in the morning, after recess and lunch.'
- 'The importance of giving the children this time after breaks and teaching calming strategies has been significant for me. The strategies do help the children and make for a peaceful classroom'.

Key Messages

Some key messages from this project are:

- The importance of consistency among staff in relation to using mindful, calming strategies and techniques. This allows students to continue to build their knowledge on how to articulate their emotions and thus how to self-regulate their emotions and therefore behaviour. This is actually a life skill that those students will carry with them throughout their life.
- It is crucial that it is a whole school approach.
- It is essential to give staff time to learn and process information on an ongoing basis to ensure that this has a continuing importance. This could take the form of an agenda item in staff meetings or as a focus for PLC meetings.
- It is useful to continue to talk about it as a staff to compare notes and share best practice.

Quotes from Teachers:

- 'Integrating soothing and sensory activities into classroom instruction has helped students to control and identify their internal state of emotion.'
- 'The students have a greater understanding of how their brain and body works and what they need to do to help themselves. The students are also more aware of when they need to calm down and what they can do'.

Conclusion

Our inquiry question was:

'Does the process of teaching students about their brains combined with mindful strategies make a difference to a child's ability to shift from needing co-regulation to self-regulation?'

As a result of our involvement in the Trauma Sensitive Schools Project, our teaching practices pertaining to mindfulness and calming strategies have become embedded into everyday school life. The information learned has been taken into consideration when reviewing and implementing our student well-being policy. The knowledge gained from this project has made a difference in the way staff and students interact and respond to situations.

We believe that the process of teaching students about their brains combined with mindful strategies has made a difference to the majority of students' ability to shift from needing co-regulation to self-regulation. However, the time and support required for a child to internalise and develop the skills to self-regulate their emotions will vary.

Due to the success of the project, it will continue to be a priority within our school.

Quotes from Students:

'I now know what happens when I feel sad and angry.'

'I remember that the PFC (pre-frontal cortex) helps us to be self-aware and to judge.'

'Being able to know what part of the brain is being affected.'

'I can understand when I or others are angry and what is happening in my or their head.'

Resources required:

List of resources (not limited to this list):

- Making Space for Learning: Trauma Sensitive Practice in Schools – Australian Childhood Foundation
- Mind up Curriculum – The Hawn Foundation
- Smiling mind website - <https://smilingmind.com.au/>
- The Red Beast - K.I. Ghani
- Desktop drumming – YouTube
- Calm down and release the Amygdala video - Christopher Bradley
- The human brain - science for kids.com
- Class dojo - growth mindset videos
- How mindfulness empowers us - Sharon Salzberg
- Mind in a jar - the power of mindfulness for children movie
- 3D Brain Anatomy website - <http://www.pbs.org/wnet/brain/3d/>
- Genes to Cognition Online - <http://www.g2conline.org/>

“We believe that the process of teaching students about their brains combined with mindful strategies has made a difference to the majority of students' ability to shift from needing co-regulation to self-regulation. However, the time and support required for a child to internalise and develop the skills to self-regulate their emotions will vary.”



Project Team at St Thomas More School

OUR PLAN

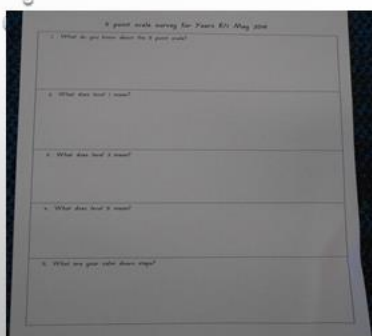
- Our aim was to implement a range of calming and mindful strategies for students across the school, in the hope that it will have an affect on trauma consistent behaviours.
- As a project group, we formulated a whole school action research based question:

‘Does the process of teaching students about their brains combined with mindful strategies make a difference to a child’s ability to shift from needing co-regulation to self-regulation?’

PLANNING

- Data was being collected on students’ trauma consistent behaviour. This happened from the beginning of the project.
- Data was collected throughout the project mainly with a focus on one or two students, in each class, but could also be collected on the whole class.

DATA COLLECTION METHODS USED



5 POINT SCALE SURVEY



5 POINT SCALE POSTERS

Mindfulness Survey

1) How do you feel when you have problems in the yard and you come into the classroom after lunch? Circle your answer.

angry happy upset sad confused nervous
calm stressed worried calm

2) How do you feel when other students come in and sit at their desks?

☹️ Yes - I don't like them 😊 No - I like them 😐 I don't know

3) When you come in from lunch do you feel ready to start work?

☹️ Yes 😊 No 😐 I don't know

4) Which activity works best to help you settle after lunch?

Music Quiet reading Calming in Drawing
yoga card games meditation singing

5) What are some different activities that you would like to do that would help you to settle down after lunch?

6) Do you think meditation/mindfulness has helped to help you calm down after lunch?

☹️ Yes 😊 No 😐 I don't know

MINDFULNESS SURVEY

Case Study Notes

Date	Time	Location	Activity	Notes
10/10/18	10:00	Classroom	Reading	Student A was very calm and focused.
10/10/18	10:00	Classroom	Reading	Student B was very calm and focused.
10/10/18	10:00	Classroom	Reading	Student C was very calm and focused.
10/10/18	10:00	Classroom	Reading	Student D was very calm and focused.
10/10/18	10:00	Classroom	Reading	Student E was very calm and focused.
10/10/18	10:00	Classroom	Reading	Student F was very calm and focused.
10/10/18	10:00	Classroom	Reading	Student G was very calm and focused.
10/10/18	10:00	Classroom	Reading	Student H was very calm and focused.
10/10/18	10:00	Classroom	Reading	Student I was very calm and focused.
10/10/18	10:00	Classroom	Reading	Student J was very calm and focused.

CASE STUDY NOTES

TRANSITIONAL SURVEY

Survey on Transition Times

Name: _____ Date: 10/10/18

During transition times (the time in the morning, after lunch, after school, and at bedtime) do you:

1) How calm do you feel?

☹️ Very calm
☹️ Calm
☹️ Not very calm
☹️ Stressed or worried
☹️ Angry or frustrated

Comments: _____

2) If you do not feel calm, circle the closest reason below:

☹️ Don't like the noise
☹️ Don't like the lights
☹️ There is too much movement
☹️ Student behaviour
☹️ I don't understand what I need to be doing

Comments: _____

STUDENT REFLECTION

Name: _____

Draw your own coloured boat in the picture which matches how you felt for most of the day today. Then in the space below, write down or draw a picture to explain your feelings.

Date:	Date:	Date:	Date:	Date:
Stressed	Stressed	Stressed	Stressed	Stressed
Calm	Calm	Calm	Calm	Calm
No energy	No energy	No energy	No energy	No energy

EFFECTIVENESS OF CALMING STRATEGIES

TSP Data Collection Data Collected for: Sam Year Level: 10 Student Code: 1000000000

Term 4 Week:	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday
5-Point Scale Observation	1-100%	1-100%	1-100%	1-100%	1-100%
Before Calming Strategy	1-100%	1-100%	1-100%	1-100%	1-100%
After Calming Strategy	1-100%	1-100%	1-100%	1-100%	1-100%

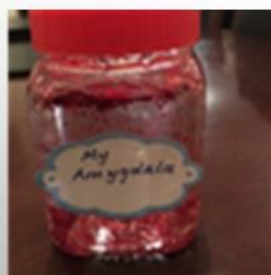
Term 4 Week:	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday
5-Point Scale Observation	1-100%	1-100%	1-100%	1-100%	1-100%
Before Calming Strategy	1-100%	1-100%	1-100%	1-100%	1-100%
After Calming Strategy	1-100%	1-100%	1-100%	1-100%	1-100%

STRATEGIES USED:

These are the strategies that were implemented as a result of collating and analysing the data.

- TEACHING ABOUT THE ANATOMY AND FUNCTIONS OF THE BRAIN
- MANDALAS
- WINDOW OF TOLERANCE
- FIVE POINT SCALE
- ROUND ROBIN CALMING AND MINDFUL STRATEGIES
- SQUARE BREATHING
- MEDITATIONS
- ELASTIC CHAIR BANDS
- CIRCLE TIME
- LINE OF MY DAY
- GOLD SPECK PANNING
- FEATHER BREATHING
- WELL BEING PLANS AND QUESTIONNAIRES
- EMOTIONAL TRACKING

MAKING OUR OWN AMYGDALA'S



MEDITATION



ROCKING CHAIR



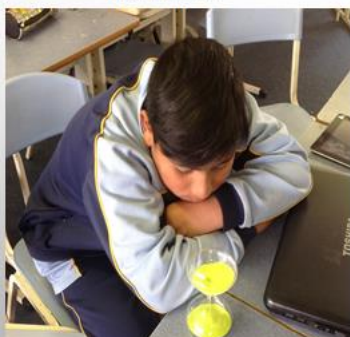
COLOURING



READING

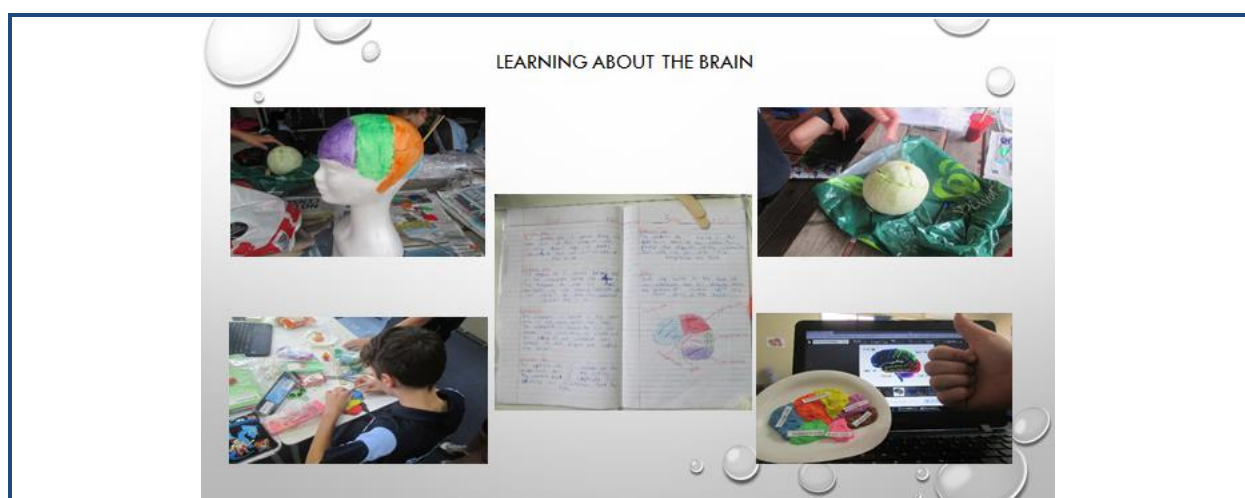
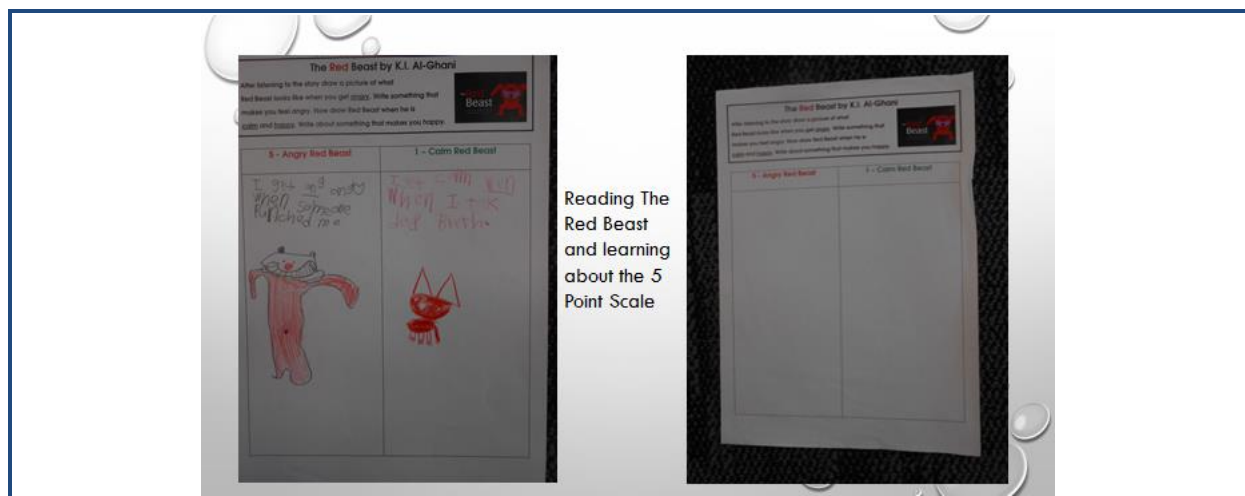


HOURL GLASS



MINDFUL BREATHING AND SMILING MIND





THE 5 POINT SCALE



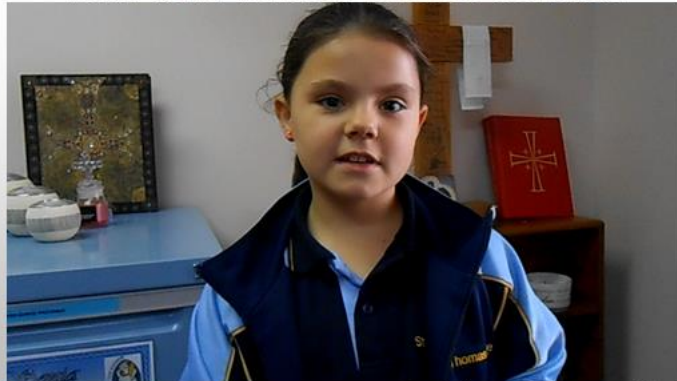
THE WINDOW OF TOLERANCE



WHY HAVE WE LEARNT ABOUT THE BRAIN



WHAT HAVE WE LEARNT ABOUT THE BRAIN



RESOURCES

- MIND UP CURRICULUM
- SMILING MIND WEBSITE
- THE RED BEAST (K.I. AL-GHANI)
- DESKTOP DRUMMING – YOUTUBE
- CALM DOWN AND RELEASE THE AMYGDALA VIDEO (CHRISTOPHER BRADLEY)
- THE HUMAN BRAIN (SCIENCE FOR KIDS.COM)
- CLASS DOJO (TEACHING VIDEOS – GROWTH MINDSET)
- HOW MINDFULNESS EMPOWERS US (SHARON SALZBERG)
- MIND IN A JAR (THE POWER OF MINDFULNESS FOR CHILDREN MOVIE)

CONCLUSION



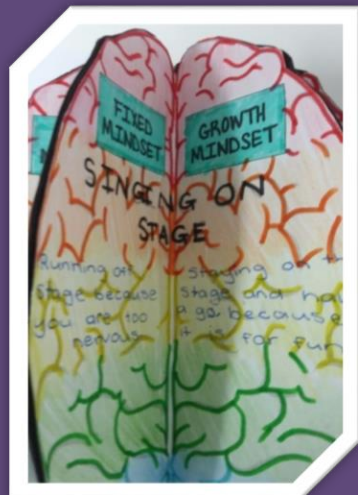
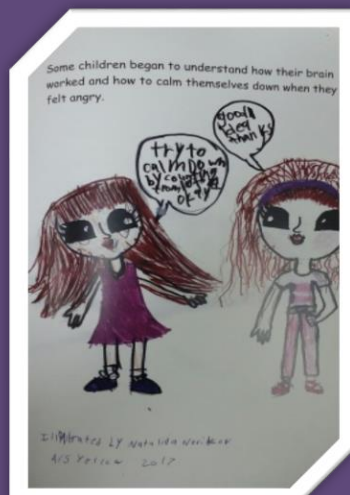
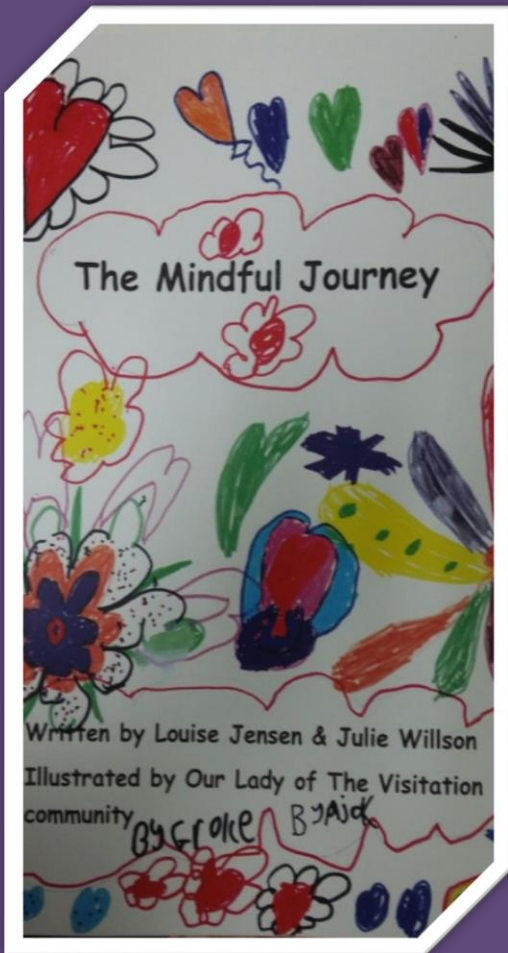
Making SPACE for Learning



Trauma Sensitive Practice in Schools

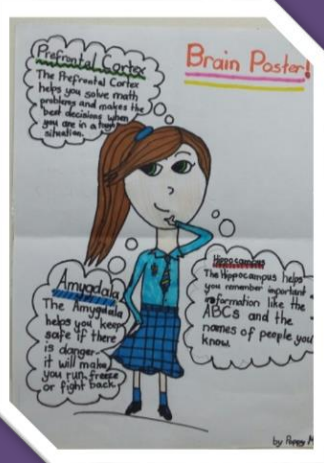
SELECETED PHOTOS OF SHOWCASE “VILLAGE GREEN” PRESENTATION





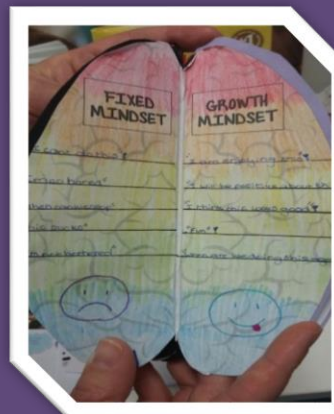
Undershooting your Window of Tolerance:

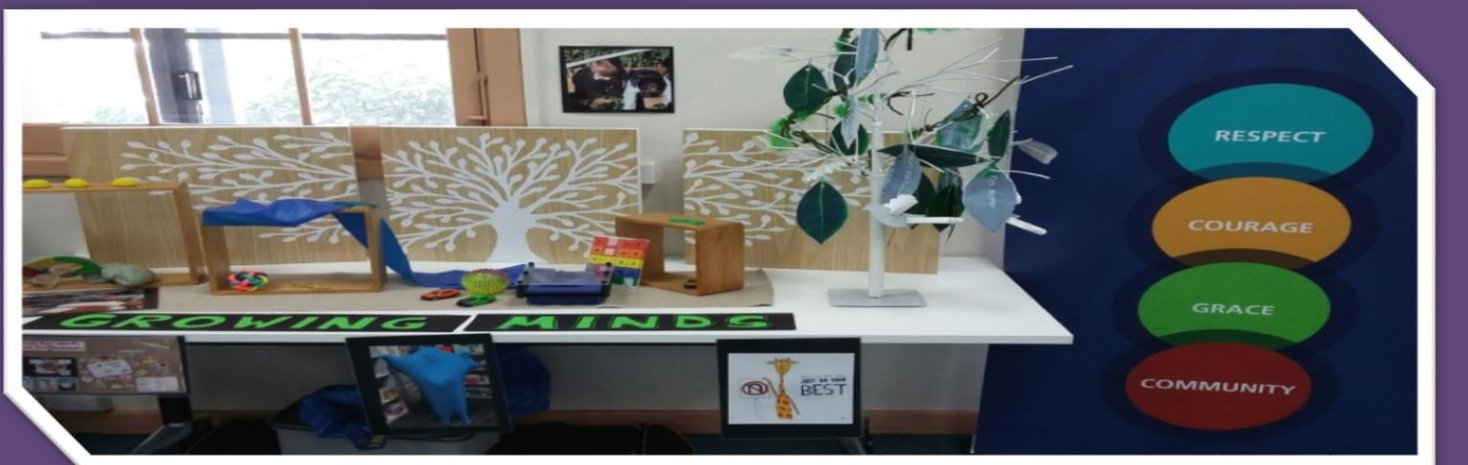
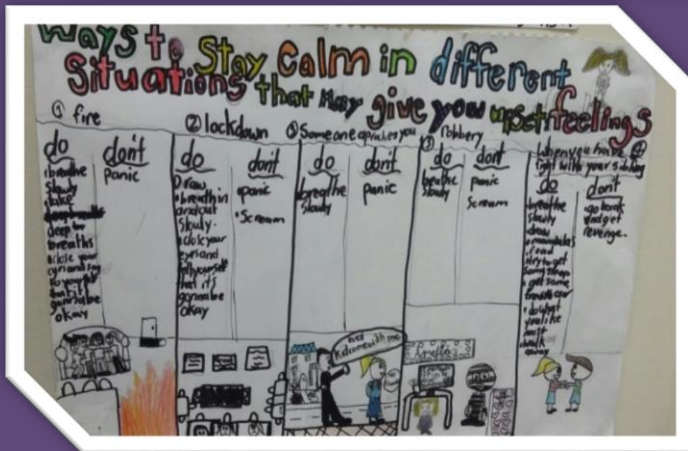
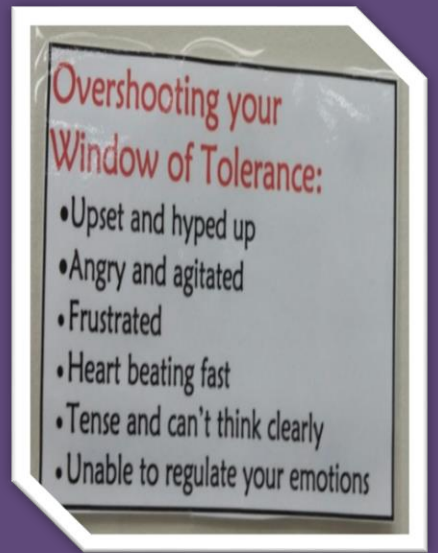
- Sad and tired
- Unmotivated with no energy
- Feel empty and withdrawn
- Don't want to listen, talk or play
- Can't think about learning

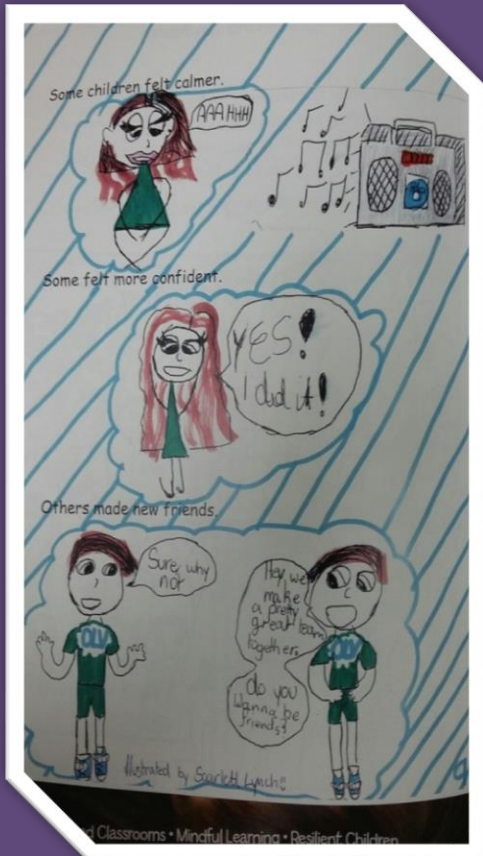


Within your Window of Tolerance:

- Feeling safe, calm and peaceful
- Happy and able to think clearly
- Ready to learn
- Settled and content
- Mindful and able to regulate your emotions







Trauma Sensitive Schools Project (2016-17) CESA Consultant's Report

TRAUMA-INFORMED COMPASSION



Two Vantage Points



Through the Looking Glass



From a Bird's-eye Perspective



Through the Looking Glass

Hope
Alexa Andrea
Del Learning for
Optimism
Commitment more
Dedication
collabority Angela Auxiliary passion support understanding
Enthusiasm Making
SPACE
Love

From a Bird's-eye Perspective

LOVE COMPASSION AND KINDNESS ARE THE ANCHORS OF LIFE

Compassion

Buddhist roshi Joan Halifax



- TED Talk 2010
- Compassion is not a luxury, but a **necessity**
- Compassion is the ability to see clearly into the nature of suffering ... and know we are **not separate** from it
- Compassion is an inherent human quality, that when aroused inspires a **desire** to transform suffering
- To our desire to transform suffering she offers two cautions:

Compassion – Caution # 1

- Do not **attach** compassion to outcome
- To do so establishes the outcome for another as the **measure** of our compassion
- Any act of compassion is a **good** in itself
- Further, acts of compassion are good for **US** and not just morally!



Compassion is **good** for us

Promotes Neural Integration

Enhances our Immune System



Compassion – Caution # 2

Compassion has **enemies**:

1. Pity
2. Moral Outrage
3. Fear

- ↪ Do not **inspire** action
- ↪ Not **connected** to outcome

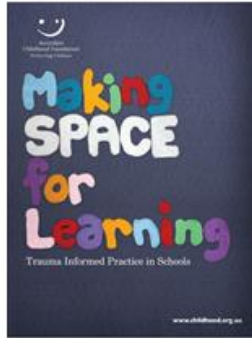


Education is ...

- A **privileged** exchange
- An **Exciting** endeavour
- ... sometimes, an **appeal** to compassion

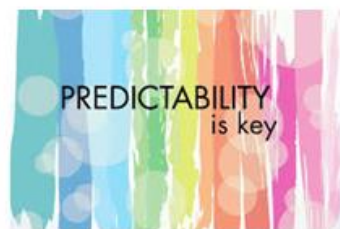


Trauma Sensitive Schools Project



Trauma Sensitive Schools Project

- Changing trauma-consistent behaviour requires **trust** & **learning**
- The hallmarks of a pedagogy for this are **predictability** and **persistence**



TSSP 2016- 17

- In the 2016 – 17 Trauma Sensitive Schools Project I saw Trauma-informed compassion!
- At its heart is a pedagogy that **recognises** suffering, **understands** that we are not separate from it and **seeks** to transform it.



ACKNOWLEDGMENTS



ACF School Services Program Team

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CESA Project Support Team

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