

Working with the community

'There is a lot of outside expertise that I think we need to be tapping into more frequently.'

Community agencies are experienced in many of the issues which are central to the lives and the educational outcomes of students.

Working with these agencies is beneficial to schools because:

- students respond well to workers outside the school community;
- working with community organisations helps students to feel that their work is recognised outside the school—by their peers, teachers and the broader community;
- students feel that they can talk more freely with workers outside the school about issues they may be facing; and
- teachers can access the skills and resources of these agencies.

Encouraging student participation works

"The first day when he showed his work to the class, he just stood up there and beamed."

(Teacher)

Student participation, by giving students greater control over their own learning, helps them to be more committed to learning and to achieve in accordance with their own strengths.

Not all students respond well to traditional classroom activities. Students who are struggling may benefit from ways of learning which build on their interests. Student participation gives them the opportunity to use their creativity, and to respond

to their learning needs creatively.

Providing students with opportunities to explore the local community is empowering for them. It gives them access to information about resources available in the community, and strategies to pursue in situations of risk.

Students working in cooperative ways with one another helps to strengthen friendships and improve the cohesiveness of a group: this in turn leads to reduced levels of conflict.

Involving students in formulating their own rules about interacting with each other can help to improve behaviour among students.

Students who are less adept at writing activities enjoy the change from regular programs. This can improve their class attendance as well as their interest and involvement in other activities.

Students feel empowered by the programs and this can help them to be more open about their thoughts on those things they would like to see changed in the school environment.

Exploring real-life issues is meaningful

"She was getting involved more in classroom activities and completing work assignments ... she was always out of class but now she is more on track, more focused in doing things."

(Teacher)

Many students respond better to a school curriculum which explores real-life issues.

Programs which emphasise real issues allow students to change their behaviour and apply it to other situations. For example, they can apply

skills learned in conflict resolution to situations at home, thereby improving family relationships. This can help students to stay on and achieve at school, because they get positive reinforcement of their work from their parents, peers, and other teachers.

Exploring real-life issues allows the students to reflect on, and learn more about, the workings of society.

Ways to increase student participation

"You don't have to sit down writing all of the time, we go out and we do other things as well."

(Student)

Doing 'other things' includes:

- students choosing topics by carrying out a survey or other research in their school or local community to identify the issues of most concern to young people;
- students and teachers discussing which school subjects can be used to study the topic area chosen; and
- students and teachers discussing how the program will be carried out and assessed.

Student participation programs—recipes for success

"That was the beauty of the program, it geared into their self-esteem, it gave them a chance to do things they were good at."

(Teacher)

The work students are required to do needs to be relevant to their needs and interests.



Students need to be given as much responsibility for their own learning as possible.

Programs should be implemented over long timeframes and be integrated with other school activities.

Programs are more likely to be effective in reducing the risk of homelessness if introduced at primary school level.

Programs should take advantage of expertise available at the school—for example, the Student Welfare Coordinator.

Once-off programs aren't enough. Involve the whole school, and continually reinforce the ideas and concepts.

Bonding activities are important, and help to break up the work. These can include games which encourage trust between students, and those which teach leadership skills, how to give and receive praise, how to work in a team, and how to manage differences.

Acknowledgments

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- Alcoa of Australia Ltd.
- Royal Mist Properties Pty. Ltd.
- Poppy Industries Pty. Ltd.
- Lease Plan Australia

Other PYHP publications:

Other publications arising from the PYHP project are:

Strengthening Attachments for young people, full report of the PYHP project.

Strengthening Attachments, main findings of the PYHP project.

Gill Tasker, *Moving On: Austudy and the lives of unsupported secondary students*.
\$13 plus postage

Copies are available from:

Publications Unit
Brotherhood of St Laurence
67 Brunswick Street,
Fitzroy, 3065.
Tel: (03) 9483 1383

or
visit the Brotherhood's homepage
www.vicnet.net.au/~bstl
for the PYHP findings, *Strengthening Attachments* and *Getting it Together* as well as a catalogue of all Brotherhood of St Laurence publications.

Other resources that can help (Victoria only)

Organisations and programs

Sutherland Community Resource Centre

258 Nell Street West
Watsonia Vic 3087
Ph: (03) 9435 9777

Creating New Choices

Using a community development model, works with teachers and students in upper primary and secondary schools in the northern region to create a supportive environment for changing school attitudes to violence.

Getting Along

Works in secondary schools in the northern region to increase and enhance the whole school community's role in the resolution of conflict, the prevention of violence and the promotion of safety. This is achieved through a range of interventions, including training, group work and counselling for teachers, students and parents.

Department of Human Services, Youth Services Branch

555 Collins Street
Melbourne Vic 3000
Ph: (03) 96167300

Provides information and resources on pilot projects dealing with the issues of school retention.

Department of Education

Level 15, Rialto South Tower
525 Collins Street
Melbourne Vic 3000
Ph: (03) 9628 3701

Extra Edge

A statewide program which aims to assist schools to support students at risk of homelessness and facilitate effective collaboration between school and community agencies in meeting the needs of students at risk and their families.

Families and School Support Team (FASST)

32 Federal Street
Footscray Vic 3011
Ph: (03) 9688 5087

Provides small-group activities for young people in schools in the areas of communication skills, conflict resolution and anger management. It is funded until December 1998.

Languages and Multicultural Education Resource Centre

217 Church Street
Richmond Vic 3121
Ph: (03) 9429 6699

Offers a range of books and other curriculum materials for teachers on a variety of subjects, including racism, violence and conflict resolution, gender issues, social justice, self-esteem and participatory learning. It also provides database services, bibliographies of specialist areas within the collection, displays and referrals to other information networks.

Local councils and shires

May be able to offer information and referral on mediation trainers working in the community.

Peer Support Foundation

PO Box 17
Ashburton Vic 3147
Ph: (03) 9885 8956

Runs workshops for teachers and parents in training students in peer mediation. A charge is involved, but where financial difficulties occur, the Peer Support Foundation is generally able to raise funds from other sources.

Personal Safety Program

C/- Children's Protection Society
70 Altona Street
West Heidelberg Vic 3081
Ph: (03) 9458 3566

An empowerment and abuse prevention program which introduces students to strategies they can employ to improve their safety and well-being. It is auspiced by the Children's Protection Society, which provides training to primary and secondary teachers to enable them to teach the program to students.

Police Schools Involvement Program Coordination Office

Victoria Police Centre
Concourse Level
637 Flinders Street
Melbourne Vic 3005
Ph: (03) 9247 5306

Offers classroom-based learning activities carried out by police in collaboration with teachers on issues such as police and the legal system; drugs and alcohol; personal development and keeping ourselves and others safe.

Ringwood Extended Family Service

57 Wantirna Road
Ringwood Vic 3134
Ph: (03) 9879 3634

Trains students and teachers at both primary and secondary level on peer mediation and conflict resolution. A charge is involved.

Victorian Community Council Against Violence

PO Box 42
Flinders Lane Post Office
Melbourne Vic 8009
Ph: (03) 9655 5220

Works towards the prevention and elimination of violence in the community. This includes the development of education and publicity strategies to change cultural attitudes and values which encourage violence.

West Education Centre Inc.

38 Kingsville Street

West Footscray Vic 3012

Ph: (03) 9314 3011

Offers school-based professional development sessions on a range of social issues for teachers of all class levels. Sessions can also be individually tailored to the needs of the school. Topics include: dealing with school violence; appreciating diversity; positive self-esteem development; behaviour guidance and supporting open communication.

Youth Affairs Council of Victoria

250 Gore Street

Fitzroy Vic 3065

Ph: (03) 9419 9122

Provides information, resources and referral on issues relating to young people. Members receive a regular newsletter which includes valuable information on issues relevant to young people such as suicide, homelessness, health issues, welfare issues and sexual abuse.

Written and audiovisual material

'Being me'

An anti-violence guide to developing positive relationships for primary students from Prep to Year 4 available from the West Education Centre, tel. (03) 9314 3011. It contains many activities to assist children in relation to learning about feelings, resolving conflict and getting along in a group.

'Hands off!'

An anti-violence guide to developing positive relationships, suitable for Year 5 to Year 8, available from the West Education Centre, tel. (03) 9314 3011. It includes detailed and sequential lesson plans, handouts and research activities for students, and comprehensive teachers' notes.

The options report: promoting well-being and human rights in schools

Documents the implementation of the Options Project in 20 Victorian schools and includes descriptions of the project outcomes and effectiveness. It is available from the Mental Health Foundation (Victoria) or the Victorian Council for Civil Liberties.

Personal Safety program resources

Personal Safety Program

70 Altona Street

West Heidelberg Vic 3081

Ph: (03) 9458 3566

A number of resources suitable for primary and secondary students, which can be used to teach the Personal Safety Program include:

- personal safety statement posters;
- 'feeling photos'—poster-sized photos plus instructions;
- lesson plans and storybooks for primary students;
- workbooks for secondary students;
- resource book for primary teachers; and
- videos on personal safety issues for primary and secondary students.

Women's Health in the South East

PO Box 1278

Frankston Vic 3199

Ph: (03) 9783 3211

Respect yourself, protect yourself training manual

Designed for secondary teachers, the manual covers issues related to violence and young women, including gender and violence, women's health and violence, tips for teaching anti-violence strategies and peer education.

Mental Health Library

Clinical Services Centre

Royal Park Hospital

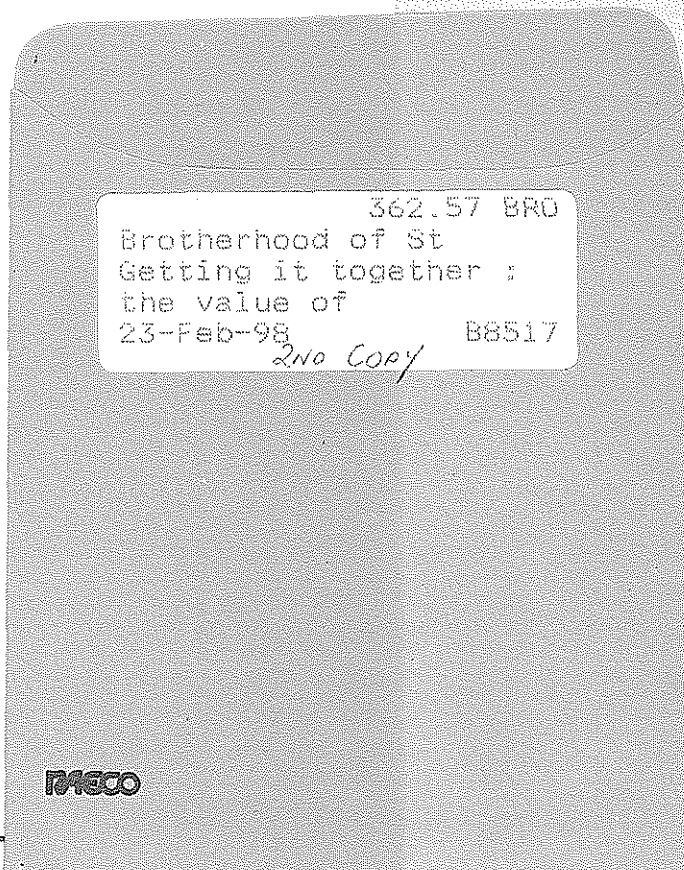
Park Street

Parkville, Vic 3052

Ph: (03) 9342 2574

Victoria's Mental Health Services Youth Suicide Prevention Information Kit

Contains information leaflets designed for general use.



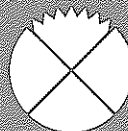


*Thanks to the students and staff of Ballarat Secondary College for appearing in our photos.
None of the students shown are necessarily at risk. Photographer: Andrew Chapman.*

The Brotherhood of St Laurence is a
non-government welfare agency.

It works for the well-being of the poorest members of the Australian
community to improve their economic, social and
personal circumstances.

It provides essential services for people who need them most and
works towards positive change through
community education, research, social action and advocacy.



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