Sabbatical Inquiry and Report 2016:

Strengthening school curriculum and culture through the development of children's personal social and emotional skills using programmes of behaviour education and self-management.

Brent Caldwell: Principal Mornington School

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Activities Undertaken:

The sabbatical has provided the opportunity to:

- Read, discuss and reflect upon a range of publications about self-regulated behaviour practices, social and emotional learning and related topics;
- Visit seven schools in Dunedin, Adelaide and Perth to observe the Play is the Way® programme in action, and discuss with leaders practical learning experiences, implementation and policies;

- To read, view and review a full range of 'Play is The Way®" manuals and articles.
- Review Mornington School behaviour management documentation in response to reflections.
- Attend an Otago Primary Principals' seminar on Play Is The Way® and take part in the panel discussion.
- Arrange specific training in Play Is The Way® methodology with programme founder and facilitator, Wilson McCaskill.
- Refresh, recharge and refocus.

Executive Summary

The New Zealand National Curriculum (2007) vision states that our young people are to be "confident, connected, actively involved lifelong learners" (p.8). In 2015 the Mornington School Board of Trustees consulted all community stakeholders to refresh its vision. As a result of this process the Mornington community's vision of the qualities our students will show as a result of their years of learning and living in our school and its community is that our children become "*confident, resilient, healthy, thinkers*" (Mornington School Charter 2016, p.1).

The development of children's personal social and emotional skills, and the ability for them to be responsible for their own self-management and behaviour, is the foundation stone upon which all other learning can be successfully built. In this way the visions of the New Zealand Curriculum and the Mornington School community can be achieved. The Education Review Office (2016) reports that, "a student's sense of achievement and success is enhanced when they feel safe and secure at school. This is turn lifts their confidence to try new challenges, strengthening their resilience" (p.4).

This paper contends that by deliberately teaching and developing personal social and emotional skills through a programme behaviour education and self-management, not only can our children learn to become confident, resilient, healthy thinkers but also the school's culture can be strengthened.

Purpose:

To strengthen school curriculum and culture through the development of children's personal social and emotional skills using programmes of behaviour education and self-management.

Rationale & Background

Mornington School is a decile 7 state primary school. The current role of 279 comprises of approximately: 77% NZ European / Pākehā students, 9% Māori, 6% Asian, 6% Pasifika with the remaining 2% of students made up of other nationalities.

In the sixteen years I have been a principal I have worked with a number of challenging children, their peers, teachers, support staff and parents. I have been fortunate to work alongside, and have the support of, Resource Teachers of Learning and Behaviour (RTLB), Educational Psychologists, Child Youth & Family social workers and other para-professionals who provide support, guidance, funding, and programmes of intervention.

Over this time, I have reflected upon these experiences and have concluded that much of what we do to support these children in schools is reactive. By this, I mean that our interventions and supports of children's challenging behaviours tend to be in direct response to their behaviour e.g. if a child either acts out in class, or hits and hurts others, is verbally abusive, or puts themselves or others in harms way, we respond accordingly. Often it seems as if we are more like the proverbial ambulance at the foot of the cliff waiting for the next behavioural disaster to occur, rather than the protective fence that could prevent the inevitable result.

To be clear, I am referring to cases of student behaviour that are beyond the norm. The section of the schools' population often referred to as the "80 /20 children", that is the 20% of children who will generate 80% of the social, emotional, class or playground issues in a school.

Included are the so-called "1%ers", those children at the very upper limits of the 80/20 scale. The children whom Jenny Mosely founder of Quality Learning Circle Time refers to as "children beyond". Mosely (1996) describes these as students as "children who seem 'beyond' all the sound ethos and behaviour strategies you work with".

What personal social emotional skills do children need to be equipped with in order to become these confident, resilient healthy thinkers we envisage? What tools can educators utilise to teach behaviour education and self-management?

New Zealand Curriculum Values and Key Competencies

As noted earlier, the New Zealand Curriculum (2007) provides all Aotearoa / New Zealand schools with a nationwide vision. Furthermore, it clearly describes both the values and key competencies our children are expected to gather as they move through the school system.

In terms of values The New Zealand Curriculum states that students should be encouraged to value:

- Excellence
- Innovation, inquiry and curiosity
- Diversity
- Equity
- Community participation
- Ecological sustainability
- Integrity
- Respect

It states that values are "deeply held beliefs about what is important or desirable. They are expressed in the way in which people act. Values, it states, are to be "encouraged, modelled and explored… They should be evident in the school's philosophy, structures, curriculum, classrooms and relationships. When the school community has developed strongly held and clearly articulated values, those values are likely to be expressed in everyday actions and interactions within the school" (p.10).

Many schools, including my own, encourage, model and explore values by way of acknowledgement. For example, children are acknowledged for displaying school values with incentives such as "Caught in the Act" tickets where their name is put into a prize draw to receive an ice-block each fortnight.

The New Zealand Curriculum identifies five Key Competencies:

- thinking
- using language, symbols and texts
- managing self
- relating to others
- participating and contributing

Students are to be "supported to develop the key competencies to live, learn, work and contribute as active members of their communities. Students need to be challenged and supported to develop them in contexts that are increasingly wide-ranging and complex" (ibid p.12)

At Mornington we specifically and regularly celebrate children who demonstrate these competencies, one from each class, each fortnight. At the Community Assembly we present them with a certificate. The children are further publicly celebrated by publishing their names in the school newsletter.

At Mornington, as at all other New Zealand primary schools, teaching and learning programmes are designed to provide a myriad of opportunities to model, encourage and explore the NZC values and to support and develop the five key competencies in the six years children live and learn in our school community. Certainly much of the professional development teachers undertook around the implementation of the NZC between 2007-2010 focused on these very areas as the cornerstones of the new curriculum.

But herein lies the issue. In my view there is a gap between the plans and programmes we have in put place for children to develop these, what is referred to as the "intended curriculum", and the actual learning children take away from school each day, the so-called "learned curriculum". Why might this be?

In recent times leading educators in this country have become more and more concerned that the curriculum of Aotearoa / New Zealand has narrowed with the introduction of the National Government's National Standards. They cite its relentless

focus upon raising achievement in Reading, Writing and Mathematics in relation to other OECD countries as a key factor. Leading New Zealand educationalist Lester Flockton (2013) notes, …it is worth remembering, at this point, that both National Standards and the PACT tool focus on two learning areas only (literacy and numeracy) and ignore children's' abilities in other equally important areas. Both lead to the narrowing of the curriculum, the ignoring of students' diverse talents and strengths and contribute to the side-lining of the excellent 2007 New Zealand Curriculum."

These fears have been borne out by the well-publicized experiences of other countries. Jane David, writing in Educational Leadership (2011) cited the research of McMurrer (2007) on the United States experience with 'No Child Left Behind' signed into law in 2002 by President George W. Bush. McMurrer found that "since the advent of No Child Left Behind (NCLB), with its high stakes for schools, the traditional pattern of time allocation across subjects in elementary schools has (sic) changed markedly. Five years into NCLB, researchers found that 62 percent of a nationally representative sample of all districts in the United States—and 75 percent of districts with at least one school identified as needing improvement—increased the amount of time spent on language arts and math in elementary schools."

It is this writer's view that real curriculum time has indeed been compressed and its attention diverted from the well-intentioned goals of the NZC. It is possible that this may have created a generally accepted assumption amongst teachers that children will "pick up" the NZC values and develop the five key competences skills as they move through their schooling, that they will in effect be "caught" by each child as they move through the school.

A review of Mornington teachers' timetables shows that while there are significant chunks of class time allocated to the development of literacy and numeracy very little time, if any, is wholly and solely devoted to the teaching of personal, social and emotional skills.

Wilson McCaskill observes that in schools “behaviour is incidentally taught and in being so is most likely to be taught when it’s going wrong. With no rightful place in a classroom timetable, dealing with behaviour is seen as a wasteful intrusion into the “must learn” of the curriculum” (2016).

Furthermore, Bill Boylan (2016), principal of Tapping School in Perth Western Australia states, “Its time for behaviour education, not management. Its time to educate in all subject areas, including the subject of personal and social capabilities (behaviour)…it is the most important subject of all because it is the subject which affects all others.”

The case both educators make is that if we are to provide children with the skills and attributes they need to take their place in the world then they deserve well-planned, deliberate acts of teaching to develop their personal social and emotional skills. The ability for children to be responsible for their own self-management and behaviour is the foundation stone upon which all other learning can be successfully built.

What are the Social and Emotional Learning Core Competencies?

The Collaborative for Academic, Social, and Emotional Learning (CASEL) has identified five interrelated sets of cognitive, affective and behavioural competencies. The definitions of the five competency clusters for students are:

Self-awareness: The ability to accurately recognize one’s emotions and thoughts, and their influence on behaviour. This includes accurately assessing one’s strengths and limitations and possessing a well-grounded sense of confidence and optimism.

Self-management: The ability to regulate one’s emotions, thoughts, and behaviours effectively in different situations. This includes managing stress, controlling impulses,

motivating oneself, and setting and working toward achieving personal and academic goals.

Social awareness: The ability to take the perspective of and empathize with others from diverse backgrounds and cultures, to understand social and ethical norms for behaviour, and to recognize family, school, and community resources and supports.

Relationship skills: The ability to establish and maintain healthy and rewarding relationships with diverse individuals and groups. This includes communicating clearly, listening actively, cooperating, resisting inappropriate social pressure, negotiating conflict constructively, and seeking and offering help when needed.

Responsible decision making: The ability to make constructive and respectful choices about personal behaviour and social interactions based on consideration of ethical standards, safety concerns, social norms, the realistic evaluation of consequences of various actions, and the well-being of self and others.

Towards Behaviour Education and Self-Management

In May of 2015 this author partook in an in-service professional development day to learn about behaviour education and self-management facilitated by Wilson McCaskill. The were a number of factors that lead me to this examination of the programme:

- a community consultation and review of the School's vision had highlighted the need to redirect teaching and learning towards social and emotional learning to develop children's confidence, resilience, healthy attitudes and critical thinking
- a review of our behaviour management policy had us asking questions about its effectiveness and our ability to meet the needs of our children
- we were experiencing a greater volume of challenges with the behaviour of a number of senior (Yr 5-6) students. This included interpersonal relationships, pupil safety and complex behavioural patterns which were impacting on teaching and learning

Wilson McCaskill is the founder, educator, writer and facilitator of a programme called

Play is the Way® (PITW) which he describes as:

- A practical methodology for teaching social and emotional skills using guided play, classroom activities and empowering language.
- A process that gives primary schools a way to develop, improve and entrench the personal and social capabilities of students of all ages, abilities and ethnic backgrounds.

It comprises four main parts:

1. a unique program of physically interactive games,
2. key concepts to guide students through life and learning,
3. a specific and empowering language to help attain self-mastery
4. a philosophy of behaviour education and student self-regulation that fosters independent, self-motivated, empathetic, life-long learners.

The games programme is a cross-curricular tool for social and emotional learning (SEL). Typically, students participate in 4 x 20 minute games sessions per week for every week of the school year, for every year children are in primary school. The games are the context within which children have the opportunity to learn and practice the key concepts taught in class. (2011 p.1)

Upon returning to school I had an immediate opportunity to share an aspect of the programme with the whole school as part of an assembly. With no other teachers present, I shared one of the five key concepts, referred to as “Life Rafts”, with the 270 children in the assembled in the hall.

The Life Raft concept was *“Treat others as you would like them to treat you”.* The underlying message being that if someone is unlike you, seek to understand them. The context for this was to focus on manners, and in particular the daily transactional exchanges we have when we see or meet someone for the first time.

Over the course of 15 minutes I explained the concept and talked about what it might look like, sound like, and feel like. Most importantly we had some fun acting out these interactions. In particular, I modelled the important extension or "flick in the tail" of the responder also enquiring after the initial greeter as exemplified below

***Tom**: Good morning, Mary*

***Mary:** Good morning, Tom*

***Tom:** How are you (today, this morning etc.)?*

***Mary:** Fine thanks. <u>And how are you?</u>*

I drew the children's attention to how we often do not actually pay attention to the other person or actively listen and engage with them. I challenged the children to put this into action and try it out to see what would happen. I especially encouraged them to add the "flick in the tail" by using the "and how are you" segment. This we discussed would show respect for the greeter and might open the door to more meaningful exchanges.

The results were quite astounding both in impact and speed. Within days teachers, relieving teachers and parents were reporting their surprise, pride and delight at how children were interacting with them.

For me it was an "uh-ha!" moment, and a timely reminder *(to someone who should knows better!)* that in order to give children the social and emotional skills they need *we teachers* need to give them the tools with which to build it, using deliberate acts of teaching and role play. More importantly it seemed it was the sharing not just the 'how' but the 'why' behind what is being taught.

It became obvious to me that it was important to find an effective methodology to ensure personal social emotional skills be taught and not caught. I also saw how it could have an impact on interpersonal relationships, classroom and playground behaviour. McCaskill's Play is the Way® programme and its impact bore further investigation.

Activities Undertaken (Methodology)

In order to learn more about behaviour education and self-management and to see how

Play is the Way® developed it through personal social and emotional learning I visited a number of schools in Australia and New Zealand *(Fig 1.)* who are currently using the programme. As a change leader I was interested in finding out the answers to the following questions:

- how and why schools had implemented the programme?
- what were their keys to success?
- what challenges they had met?
- how they had overcome them?
- What evidence they had for demonstrating the success or otherwise of the Play is the Way® methodology?

Fig 1. *Play is the Way® Schools visited July-August 2016*

School	**State / Province**	**Leader / Lead Teacher**
Hackham East Primary School	Adelaide, South Australia	Bob Thiele, Principal
Stradbroke Primary School	Adelaide, South Australia	Greg Johnstone, Deputy Principal Rachel Pontifex, Deputy Principal
Salisbury Downes	Adelaide, South Australia	David Bentley, Deputy Principal
Para Vista Primary School	Adelaide, South Australia	Terena Pope, Principal Matt Brumby, Lead Teacher
Christie Beach School	Adelaide, South Australia	Michelle Morrison, Lead Teacher
Tapping Primary School	Perth, Western Australia	Bill Boylan, Principal
Green Island School	Dunedin, New Zealand	Steve Hayward, Principal Aaron Warrington, Lead Teacher

School Descriptions

Hackham East School is rated a Category 3 (out of 7) state primary school. The

category describes where the school sits on the index of Social Disadvantage, (1 being lowest). Category 3 is roughly equivalent to New Zealand's Decile 4. The principal Bob Thiele has been implementing Play is the Way® with his team for the past seven years. Originally Hackham East was the lead school in a cluster of eight schools working together which has subsequently reduced to three due to changes in leadership and commitment to the programme. Hackham East's aim was to teach in a better way, and have children self-motivated and self-regulated.

Stradbroke Primary is a Category 6 state funded primary school. Stradbroke began using Play is the Way® in 2016 in response to the need to provide a social emotional learning component to their curriculum. Following a literature review of all available programmes they chose Play is the Way®. The school operates an International Baccalaureate curriculum and was influenced by their use of resources from the Collaborative for Academic Social and Emotional Learning (CASEL). Leaders report that after the first six months almost 60% of teachers are "on board".

Salisbury Downs is Category 3 school. It was one of the first schools in Adelaide to introduce Play is the Way®. Seven years ago the newly appointed principal, along with a new deputy and school counsellor introduced the programme in response to the needs of their "quirky" kids who lived in a mostly disadvantaged suburb. The community was notable for its high incidences of drug and alcohol use, transience, absenteeism and low resilience. These factors and their associated behavioural challenges were the key factors in the school prioritizing behaviour education and self-regulation through personal social and emotional learning.

Para Vista Primary School is a Category 4 state primary school. They first began using Play is the Way® in response to high numbers of suspensions, office corrections and a desire to move towards behaviour learning rather than behaviour management. There has been some teacher resistance towards fully adopting and embedding the programme.

Christies Beach is Category 2 state primary school. Play is the Way® has been part of the schools curriculum since late 2010 when all staff were trained. The staff have had a wide range of professional development opportunities including inter-state visits to Western Australia. In 2015 the programme leaders aimed to move the school to the deeper level of the programme to explore the restorative practices of reflection, repair and restitution. It has not been without challenge.

Tapping Primary School, in Perth Western Australia, is the so-called “lighthouse school” for the Play is the Way® programme. Play is the Way® forms the core of the schools philosophy and programmes. Tapping is an Independent Public School with a roll of 780. Unlike other schools it is allocated its entire budget and has full control over all aspects of operations, including teacher appointments. Principal Bill Boylan is a charismatic figure who walks the talk and drives the programme from the top.

Green Island School, in Dunedin New Zealand, is a Decile 6 Full Primary School. The current role of 183 comprises of approximately: 83% NZ European / Pākehā students, 9% Māori, 3% Asian, 3% Pasifika with the remaining 2% of students made up of other nationalities. The school introduced Play Is the Way® as part of their participation in the Positive Behaviour for Learning Project in 2013.

Visits to the schools consisted of:

- Recorded interviews with leaders and lead teachers
- Review of resources and planning documentation
- Observations of Play is the Way® games, class-based activities including Group Problem Solving (GPS) circles in action
- Anecdotal teacher and student-voice feedback

Findings

The findings outlined below represent a combined summary and synthesis of the data collected during the information gathering stage of the project. They are not necessarily a consensus of views held by all schools but those which this author has identified as being crucial to the successful implementation of a programme of social emotional learning such as Play is the Way®. Outlined below are three keys to success as identified by schools currently implementing the programme. Next are some of the common challenges faced by these schools on their implementation journey. Included here are ideas that have been used to address them.

Keys to success

1. Leadership

In schools where the principal and leadership were highly visible, the programme appeared to be being more successfully implemented. In these schools, leaders were a full part of the team at every level and spent much of their time driving the programme from the top. Principals and teacher-leaders who saw it as their responsibility to be out and about supporting their staff and having conversations with the students, teachers and parents daily, were not only far more aware of the challenges and triumphs, but were able to respond more appropriately as issues arose.

Where personal social and emotional learning was prioritised by the leadership as a key strategic priority it was well resourced, well funded and kept at the forefront of the schools' governance, management and teaching programmes. As a result, some barriers to the success of the programme were able to be quickly pre-empted, or at least, minimized. By making the programme highly visual in all aspects of school life: class, playground, notices, website etc. leaders infused the programme at all levels throughout the school.

The role of a designated lead teacher in behaviour education and self-management (BESM) was a key element in the effectiveness of the schools' developments. In schools that had a lead teacher supported by a committee, comprised of a representative from each teaching team, problems were shared, achievements celebrated and new ideas integrated. This contributed hugely to the buy-in of other staff and achieved the critical mass necessary for the programme to get underway in its early stages.

Key roles of the lead teachers included:

- Supporting teachers with new games
- Inducting new staff
- Ensuring equipment is in place and regularly replenished
- Teaching new games at staff meeting
- Continually feeding in ideas, research and readings.
- Liaising with administrative staff

Clear expectations from all principals and teacher leaders was deemed an essential

element to the successful embedding of the Play is the Way® methodology. Setting expectations and holding all staff accountable was key. Other important steps were to include: having Play is the Way® implementation as part of the appraisal landscape, having teachers formally timetable the games and Life Raft sessions, regularly hold "talk and share" sessions at team meetings, and "walkabouts" by leaders. In schools where teacher resistance was a factor, leaders who used momentum building actions and "downward pressure" mechanisms were able to achieve greater traction. Examples of this were:

- Social Emotional Learning (SEL) on the agenda for every staff meeting
- Teachers asked to share their success, challenges and ideas
- Lists of teachers and the games trialed posted publicly in the staffroom
- Games played at every staff meeting
- Inclusion in performance management goals
- Principal and leadership in class observations of lessons and games sessions
- Regular feedback to staff on the tone and anecdotal effects observed

2. **Professional Development**

All schools interviewed reported that the most essential element of success in implementing Play is the Way® was the provision of high quality, timely, professional learning opportunities. Schools experiencing greater success were those that had opted to provide full training for all staff including administrative, support and grounds staff. This commitment to everybody on site being familiar with the key tenets of the programme enabled the development of the language and games to get established quickly.

Visits to other schools, including inter-state travel to Tapping Primary in Perth (the lighthouse school) had a strong impact on teachers. Some groups took along governors, support staff and students so that all stakeholders could see the impact of the programme first hand. This type of shared learning also grew adult confidence in applying the key concepts (life raft skills) in day to day interactions with children in class and out in the playground as the philosophy was common to all.

Schools interviewed stressed the importance of training all new staff on arrival, as part of their induction. The continued momentum was reliant on all staff being involved. The fluid nature of staffing saw the need for continual induction and professional development. In addition, once up and running some schools reported that mentor

days, where their practice was critiqued and appraised, saw practices strengthened. As noted above, the continual funding of ongoing and additional professional development was pivotal is supporting this.

To support professional learning all schools continually fed in research to teachers, support staff and parents via staff meetings, in-service training days, newsletters and the school's web site. This ranged from small "snack sized bites" of information to more complex readings, videos and podcasts. As one principal interviewed noted "you have to keep the brand fresh and keep the research in front of teachers all the time. People need to understand why they were doing what they doing and by constantly dripping in information you upskill and strengthen their resolve."

Almost all the schools interviewed spoke specifically about growing the understanding of brain function and development. In order to be effective teachers of social and emotional learning, it was crucial that they were be familiar with the neuroscience that underpins children's social and emotional learning, and where the methodology of the programmes is positioned in relation to it. Note here, too, that children were included here. They needed to be made aware of their brain function and taught how their emotions and behaviours were linked.

By providing this knowledge and understanding of children's social and emotional behavioural responses, adults reported feeling better equipped to deal with the processes required, and were able to adjust their teaching and interactions with children.

Some schools went further and invested in neurological assessments and tools to enable teachers to learn what their thinking, personality, behaviour and learning traits were. One school had used the Hermann Whole Brain Thinking Tool®. Hermann (2016) describes Whole Brain Thinking® as "a methodology designed to help thinkers, teams and organizations better benefit from all of the thinking available to them. It acknowledges that while different tasks require different mental processes, and different people prefer different kinds of thinking, organizations will get better results when they can strategically leverage the full spectrum of thinking available".

Edwards & Butler's (2016) model of the "Learning Pit" was employed as a useful tool for describing the passage of some schools through their transformational change. They state that "When we are introduced to new ideas, new content, new ways of thinking,

our minds are puzzled. This is commonly called cognitive conflict or cognitive dissonance." They called this "the Pit". Edwards & Butler gave it the visceral name because "it had impact on both children and adult learners. Everyone is (sic) able to recognise learning pits they have known. It is reassuring to know that this is an essential art of the learning journey.' They went on to say that this is important to realise as many organisations "abandon powerful change efforts just before they start to bear fruit." Leaders is schools where staff were supported through the trials and tribulations of introducing new social and emotional learning programmes experienced higher levels of long term teacher success. By publicly acknowledging the "learning pit" teachers would experience and supporting their learning leaders reported more willingness from their staff to sustain the momentum and stick with the programme when the going got tough.

3. Systematic, Sustained, Structured & Supported Implementation

Kohn (2015) wrote, "having spent a few decades watching one idea after another light up the sky and then flame out – in the field of education and in the culture at large- I realise this pattern often has less to do with the original (promising) idea than with the way it has been oversimplified and poorly implemented."

In interviews undertaken at each school there were a number of varying views on aspects of implementation that were identified. The one area of consensus was the importance of a systematic, sustained, structured plan of implementation.

The most important tool was an overview of the delivery and expectations of the programme that was given to every teacher. Term overviews included which weeks concepts were to be covered, suggested games for each level in the school and highlighted synergies with other programmes of learning. In two schools visited the first two weeks of the year were used to set the foundation for learning. These start of the year activities were planned co-operatively and repeated annually to refresh and re-establish behaviour education and self-management programmes with every teacher, in every class, for every child.

Sitting below the overviews was the specific scheduling and timetabling of the games and Life Raft lessons in each teacher's work plan. A key pressure point was relieved when core curricular leaders showed their support for the programme and thereby "paved the way" for teachers to schedule activities in priority learning time i.e. the first morning session, a time often held to be sacrosanct for literacy and numeracy lessons.

By committing core curriculum time and making room for the programme elements teachers were more likely to implement it. However, this was not the case in all schools. In some schools even where curriculum time had been freed up by curriculum leaders, and where all classes participated at the same time, low-level compliance and some teacher resistance was still being noted.

Reporting to parents was amended to specifically include children's self-assessments and teacher formative judgments on each child's personal, social and emotional learning. This led to open and rich conversations around each child's progress and achievement at interview time.

Many schools reported that in hindsight they had rushed into the programme. All agreed that a slow, measured introduction consisting of the three pillars (the language, concepts and games) over a two-year period would be the best for all concerned. Getting the language right e.g. Self-Mastery Check List, takes time. Adults and children needed time to adjust and grow in confidence.

Coupled with this is the important understanding that Play is the Way® is not a quick fix. Schools had to be prepared for processes to take more time in the early stages if they were to make a difference to children in the long term. Other schools noted that the best use of the resource was to be had by tailoring it to meet the needs of each individual school and community.

Other systems and structures used to support the introduction of Play is The Way® included highly visual posters, billboards and quotes being placed strategically around the school, on websites, in newsletters and promotional materials. These tools served to promote and support the programme and reinforce the concepts with teachers, parents, children and the wider community. Supporting whānau and the wider community to understand the purpose and practices of this programme was seen as critical if young people were to have confidence to put these skills and attributes into action in their daily lives.

Resourcing is a critical factor. In schools where the games were adequately resourced and maintained leaders reported greater levels of implementation success. At Tapping Primary School, the lead teacher for BESM was specifically charged with ensuring that every class, every teacher and child had exactly what they needed every day. Each team had bin of resources and this was topped up weekly. Damaged or broken equipment was replaced. New staff were provided with all the manuals and resources required. The key point was to remove any possible resourcing barrier that might stop a teacher from teaching.

Challenges

In summarizing the observation notes, conservations and audio interviews three key challenges emerged that were common to all school

- Time
- Changing teacher practice
- Rewards & Punishments

Time: As one might expect in these days of competing curriculum imperatives, governmental and political high stakes education drives, one of the most common challenges faced by schools was addressing teacher perceptions that valuable learning time would be lost with the introduction of social and emotional learning. Leaders not only had to permit the use of time and but also alleviate fears of a loss of traction in core curriculum areas by the children. Teachers often voiced fears that parents would not view this favourably. Also coupled with this was the challenge of getting all teachers to get their classes out playing games three times per week.

To address this schools regularly shared research with their teachers that reinforced the notion of student academic and social gains despite time being "taken out" of core curriculum areas. Payton et al (2008) found that "…the positive impact of these programs on academic outcomes, including school grades and standardized achievement test scores, was particularly noteworthy in light of the current educational policy environment in which schools are held accountable for raising student test scores. Although some educators argue against implementing this type of holistic programming because it takes valuable time away from core academic material, our findings suggest that SEL programming not only does not detract from academic performance but actually increases students' performance on standardized tests and grades."

Scheduling of the games was one area where every school had trialed a range of options before settling on a final time. Options included: all classes timetabled at the same time, teaching teams at the same time, individual teacher choice of times, buddy classes choosing different times. The bottom line was that the experience in every school had borne out that it was the power of the whole school doing the games at the same time that had the biggest impact. Teachers saw their colleagues in action, children saw their peers participating and leaders were able to more accurately assist their teams and lend support where required. In many cases this process of trial and error took many months.

Changing teacher practice. Moving teachers from wanting to have power over children to learning to empower children to self-regulate was identified as a challenge in all schools. Changing the language and tone of interactions between teachers and students required a great deal of shift e.g. instead of saying “Get out from under that desk!" teachers were taught to reshape their language and tone e.g. “Where should you be sitting now?” The key learning here was that any changes in behaviour had to firstly come come from changes in teaching.

Rewards: In interviews with schools that had been implementing the programme for some time it became evident that the use of rewards was counter intuitive to the ideals of social emotional learning.

Bill Boylan (2016) states, “The research around offering rewards or using punishments to produce lasting change indicates that it fails miserably. It rarely produces the desired result because it does not alter the attitudes and emotional commitments that underlie behaviour. Rewards and punishments will get obedience and short-term compliance. However, if the objective is to develop careful thinkers with good values who can maintain positive relationships and are persistently self-motivated, then rewards and punishments are virtually useless. *Do this and you will get that*; turns out to be bad news whether our goal is to change behaviour or to improve performance.”

Alfie Kohn’s research into the area of rewards and punishment has been seminal in turning the tide of behaviour education in schools. The “do this and you will get that” philosophy that permeates all areas of classroom management in classrooms today has

been challenged head on by the raft of evidence that categorically proves that not only are rewards and punishments ineffective but they are counter-productive to producing self-regulated learners. In his now ubiquitous book “Punished by rewards: the trouble with gold stars, incentive plans, A's, praise, and other bribes” (1999) Kohn wrote, “what rewards and punishments do is induce compliance, and this they do very well indeed, but if your objective is to help students become careful thinkers and self-directed learners, or support children in developing good values then rewards, like punishments are absolutely useless, they are counterproductive” (p.41)

To address this often confronting reality the majority of Play is the Way schools deconstructed their systems of rewards very slowly. Some teachers were fearful that their control over classes and the level of compliance would spiral out of control as their tried and true systems were phased out. In some schools interviewed leaders reported that the opposite was true. One school reported that it was the teachers themselves who came to this conclusion as they implemented the language of self-mastery with their classes. Having read the research and taken small steps such as reducing the use of superlatives e.g. “*awesomely fantastic lining up kids!”* a number of practitioners phased out their behavioural rewards in relation to the personal social and emotional growth of their learners of their own accord.

Effectiveness

In the course of the visits I spoke with a number of teachers. They all spoke candidly of the challenges they had faced moving from behaviour management to behaviour education. Many were long-serving, experienced teachers. Common to them all was the agreement that by changing the language they used in dealing with children they immediately de-escalated situations, were more calm themselves and were quickly able to cut to the heart of issues.

Many talked of their initial reticence and how over time they had adjusted their thinking. One teacher, Mark, reported he had become a much calmer and more measured practitioner. He noted that because he was more relaxed in his teaching than he had previously been, his children’s engagement and achievement had improved.

Other teachers reported that children's excitement and willingness to attend school had shown a marked improvement. The junior team leader at Tapping Primary also reported that children did less "dobbing' and took more responsibility for dealing with things themselves as their skills and awareness grew.

A measure of the progress that some schools had made was noted by the way in which children who transferred into the school often struggled with the difference in the behaviour education approach. These were often authority dependent children who had long histories of intrusive behaviours. In each school visited I met children who had slowly taken over their behaviour management and were now fully engaged in their learning.

Common among all schools was that teachers with their own young children at home reported how the understanding of behaviour education and personal social and emotional learning had changed them both as teachers and parents. Parents within the school community were likewise using the approach in their interactions with their children at home. I personally witnessed a parent reporting her use of the language to her son's principal. "It worked!" she said.

Green Island School, in Dunedin New Zealand, introduced Play Is the Way® as part of their participation in the Positive Behaviour for Learning Project in 2013. In a presentation to the Otago Primary Principals' Association, in August 2016, Principal Steve Hayward and his team reported the following shifts as a direct result of behaviour education and self-management skills that were fostered through the Play Is the Way® methodology

- school culture had changed from punitive to positive
- a common language had been established
- consistent approaches had been embedded
- children were "walking the talk"
- children were more socially and emotionally competent
- data indicated lower percentages of repeat offenders *(see Figs 2-4)*

Fig 2. Green Island School Stand Downs

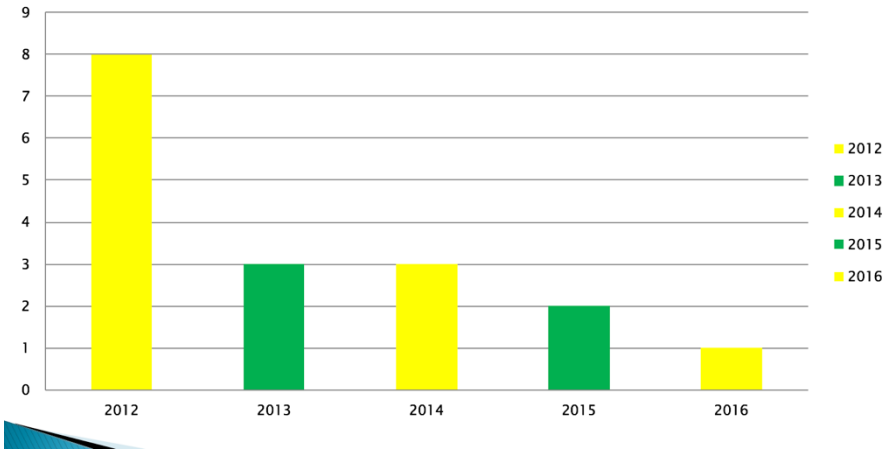


Fig 3. Green Island School Detention Data

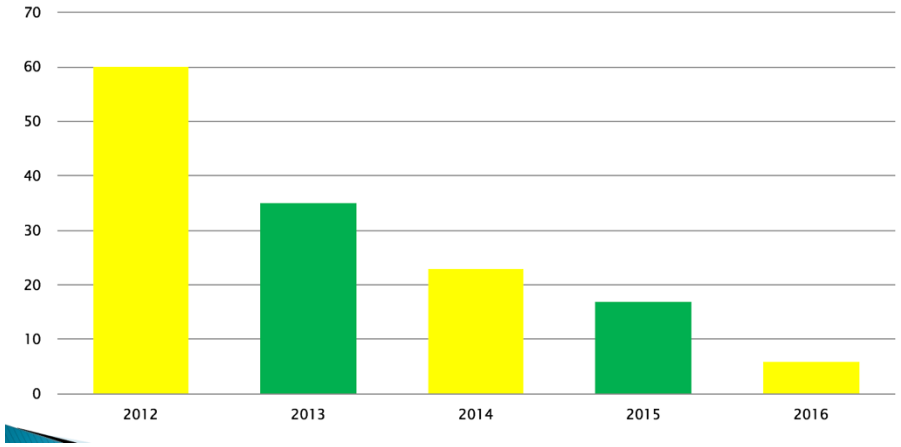
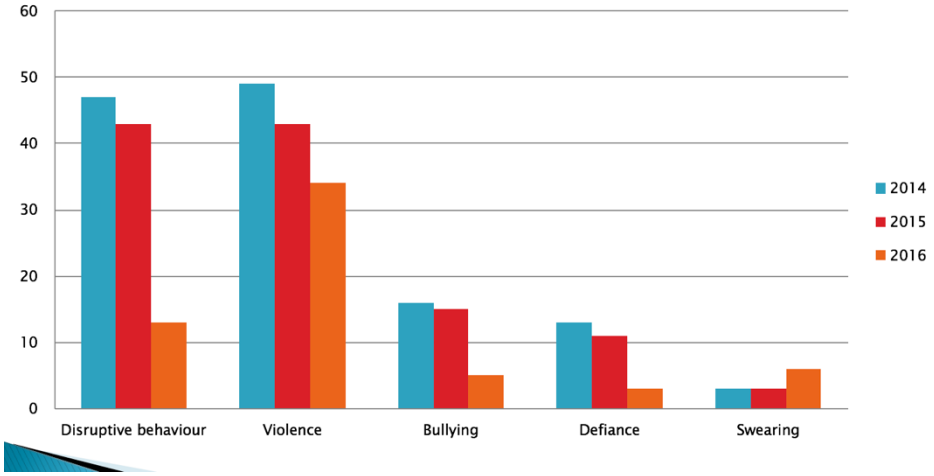


Fig 4. Green Island School: Type of Offences



Green Island students interviewed on their exit from the school in Year 8 recorded their thoughts on how behaviour education had affected their personal social and emotional learning and self-management:

> "Over time these have helped me be more independent and a friendlier member of the class."
>
> "Given us ways to face all the problems that might come in life."
>
> "I was taught to stick to the values. Play is the Way has helped me interact better with other people."
>
> "[by] working together to solve a problem and to never give up."
>
> "Play is the Way has made me more determined to do my best no matter what."
>
> "It's made me understand other people."
>
> "[It has] given us ways to face all the problems that might come in life."
>
> "It has taught me to control my emotions."
>
> "It helps you realise the world around you, and how to work with people whether they are big, small, tall, short."

Conclusion

The internationally acclaimed and highly influential Dunedin Longitudinal Study underlines the importance of establishing from an early age the personal social and emotional skills that enable all individuals to self-regulate their behaviour. Its findings are that "the capacity for self-control over our thoughts and actions is a fundamental human faculty. But the inability to make use of that capacity can be our greatest personal failure, especially in today's fast-paced, fast-food world of endless possibility, distraction, and temptation." This world renowned 40-year study of 1,000 children revealed that "childhood self-control strongly predicts adult success, in people of high or

low intelligence, in rich or poor, and does so throughout the entire population, with a step change in health, wealth, and social success at every level of self-control." (2013 p. 354)

Franklin D. Roosevelt said, "We cannot always build the future for our youth, but we can build the youth for our future." What we as educators can give to our students are the opportunities to learn skills and develop the attributes required to take their place in the world. It is clear that if we can be the 'stitch in time that saves nine' for our young people and provide them with the internal tools for self-regulated behaviour and understanding over their personal social and emotions, we can assist them to be those confident, connected, life-long learners envisaged in the New Zealand Curriculum.

The Education Review Office states that, "student wellbeing is central to successfully implementing the New Zealand Curriculum. A focus on wellbeing ties together the curriculum's vision, values, key competencies and learning areas. Wellbeing clearly positions learners and their development as confident young people at the centre of what schools do." (2016 p.10)

By introducing into the Mornington School's intended curriculum, programmes that deliberately teach and develop personal social and emotional skills such as Play Is the Way® not only can our children become confident, resilient, healthy thinkers but also our school curriculum and culture can be enriched and strengthened.

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Schools Visited

Hackham East Primary School

Contact: Bob Thiele (Principal) Bob.Thiele933@schools.sa.edu.au

Address: Collins Parade, Hackham, SA

Stradbroke Primary School

Contact: Greg Johnston (Deputy Principal)
Greg.Johnston948@schools.sa.edu.au
Address: 73 Koonga Avenue, Rostrevor, SA

Salisbury Downs Primary School
Contact: David Bentley (Deputy Principal)
David.Bentley976@schools.sa.edu.au
Address: 39 Paramount Road, Salisbury Downs, SA

Para Vista Primary School
Contact: Terena Pope (Principal)
Terena.Pope947@schools.sa.edu.au
Address: 351 Montague Road, Para Vista, SA

Christies Beach Primary School
Contact: Michelle Morrison (PITW Coordinator)
Michelle.Morrison199@schools.sa.edu.au
Address: 46 Maturin Ave, Christies Beach, SA

Tapping Primary School
Contact: Bill Boylan (Principal)
bill.boylan@education.wa.edu.au
Address: 87 St Stephens Crescent, Tapping, WA

Green Island Primary School
Contact: Steve Hayward (Principal)
principal@greenisland.school.nz
3 Howden St, Green Island, Dunedin