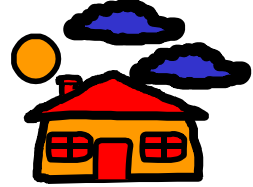


RAP NEWSLETTER

Volume 2 Issue 1

June, 2003



RAP-T and School Connectedness

Special points of interest:

- New Workshops on fostering school connectedness are well received.
- New grant in the Central West.
- Great Southern in WA winning awards!
- RAP-A & RAP-P camps in QLD prove very successful.

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As many of you will be aware from the last newsletter we are in the process of developing a RAP for teachers. What you may also be aware of is the recent research into adolescent health showing important links between school connectedness and positive development in teenagers, including less drug abuse and behavioural problems as well as less depression and anxiety and better educational outcomes for students. School Connectedness is defined as “the extent to which students feel personally accepted, respected, included and supported by others in the school and classroom.”

We have recently piloted some workshops focusing on school connectedness. The whole staff at a local high school participated in a workshop which covered : a) The value of positive school connectedness. b) A reflection of what teachers are already achieving in fostering school connectedness at the school. c) A comprehensive model for enhancing school connectedness. The **WISE** model (Shochet & Wurfl, 2003) of school connectedness was presented. It includes: **W**arm relationships based on a foundation of mutual respect and understanding, **I**nclusiveness and the importance of involving students in school activities and providing a niche for students, **S**upport for competence and the importance of helping students recognise their unique strengths and competencies and **E**quity and fairness d) Strategies were generated for utilising these concepts in pastoral care groups to foster school connectedness as well as in general classroom teaching.

The workshops were conducted with teachers in group sizes of around 18 per group.

Overall teachers were very positive about the workshop and found “the opportunity to share thoughts & ideas “ to be extremely valuable. They enjoyed the group discussions and the opportunity for interacting with colleagues. The concept of school connectedness and how it relates to both students’ behaviour and teaching practices was also valued.

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Promoting Positive Partnerships: The Great Southern Model

“The success of RAP over the past three years has been the result of a coordinated approach where each agency has shared ownership of specific roles and responsibilities of promoting the mental health and well being of students in the Great Southern. Together Everyone Achieved More.”

The Department of Health, Education and Community Development have collaborated to promote the mental health and well being of students in the Great Southern by implementing and sustaining the Resourceful Adolescent Program (RAP) and another program identified in the *National Action Plan for Promotion, Prevention and Early Intervention for Mental Health* as effective evidence based programs that can be delivered in the school setting. The goal of the partnerships was to deliver evidenced-based prevention pro-

grams using a sustainable partnership focused approach.

The establishment of inter-agency committees in both the Narrogin and Albany Education districts to oversee the implementation and sustainability of the programs was considered vital to the success of the partnerships. *The Mental Health Promotion in Schools Committees* include representatives from Public and Primary Health, Child and Adolescent Mental Health, Department for Community

Development, Student Services Managers from Department of Education, School Psychologist representing non-government schools and teacher representatives. The committees have developed terms of reference and interagency roles and responsibility documents to assist with the sustainability of the programs. The partnership model adopted by the Great Southern is consistent with the Health Promoting Schools Framework and the Ottawa Charter for Health Promo-

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Supplement to RAP-A on the Drawing Board

At a meeting of some stakeholders in Sydney last year organised by Ros Montague and Namoi Morton, a few ideas for improving RAP-A, including some ideas regarding implementation were put forward. Thanks to all those who came and contributed their experience.

Here, to whet your appetite, are a few ideas:

- ❖ Introduce RAP early in the year, concepts can then be revisited later in the year.
- ❖ Structure your group combinations if possible, eg, keep problem children in separate groups. Break up friendship groups (maybe keep two friends together) so that children bond well as a group. Depending on

the mix of the school, run separate gender groups, eg. Some boys from NESB find it impossible to talk about their feelings in front of girls.

- ❖ The “RAP Team” should meet before the program starts, and regularly while the program is running.
- ❖ Some kids respond to the language “unhelpful/helpful” better than to “risky/resourceful”.
- ❖ The Key Message for each session should be copied and put up.
- ❖ In session 5, use the movie Shrek to replace the video role-play. (Near the end of the movie Shrek overhears the Princess explaining something to Donkey and jumps to the wrong conclusions.)

- ❖ At the beginning of RAP ask the children to write down a problem, pop it into an envelope, seal it, write their names on it and hand it in. After Session 10 (Problem Solving) hand them back the problem and ask them how they would deal with it now.

These ideas (+ + + !) will be put together in a supplement to RAP-A to be published some time next year. Feel free to send ideas or suggestions to Astrid at: A.Wurfl@griffith.edu.au

RAP in the Central West of WA

The Central West Mental Health Service in partnership with Kids Help Line have been granted just under a quarter of a million dollars from the Department of Health and Ageing under their National Suicide Prevention Strategy. The funding will see the implementation of the RAP program into all year 8 classes, and Kids Help Line's Peer Skills Program into the either 9, 10 or 11 year groups, of all the Secondary Schools in the Midwest, Murchison and Gascoyne Regions in WA (roughly the size of Victoria!), until June 2005.

As part of this project, all year 8 students participating in RAP will undergo screenings for any early signs indicating depressive symptoms, as early detection will assist in the prevention of further development of depression and other mental health problems in later years.

The first wave of RAP facilitator training was recently completed with great success, with participants ranging from school psychologists, teachers, principals, chaplains and school nurses. Overall feedback indicated that the participants viewed the training as valuable and were very motivated and looking forward to implementing the RAP program in their schools throughout the year. A very big thank you must go to Ros Montague who made the trip out West to co-facilitate the training – we all learnt so much from you and greatly appreciate the effort you went to in making the trip to our little town of Geraldton!

Peer Skills Facilitator Training is next on the agenda with training organised for mid May. If you want to discuss the project in general, feel free to give me (Lara Teakle) a call at Central West Mental Health Service on (08)9956 1941 or e-mail me at Lara.Teakle@health.wa.gov.au

By Lara Teakle.

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The workshops successfully contributed to an increased awareness of the value of school connectedness as a protection against teenage difficulties. It also provided the opportunity for teachers to reflect on their existing strengths as well as providing a comprehensive model for promoting school connectedness through the pastoral care program and other classroom and school activities.

This workshop represented the first session of a 3 part program which aims to:

- 1) Increase recognition of the importance of teachers in adolescent development and behaviour.
- 2) Alleviate teacher stress.
- 3) Help facilitate student-staff relationships and collegial relationships and
- 4) Discuss ways of infusing School Connectedness and the language of resilience into the teachers subject curriculum.

Any schools in QLD interested in pursuing this program should contact Astrid at:

A.Wurfl@griffith.edu.au

Shochet I., & Wurfl A., (2003).
RAP-T: A Program for Teachers to Promote School Connectedness and Resilience in Teenagers. ©

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tion.

The success of the two programs over the past three years has been the result of a coordinated approach where each agency has shared ownership of specific roles and responsibilities of promoting the mental health and well being of students in the Great Southern.

T o g e t h e r E v e r y o n e A c h i e v e d M o r e .

The interagency committees that are established in Al-

bany and Narrogin (WA) were successful in the WA Department of Educations Health and well-being awards in 2002. The awards were established to recognise the role of schools and districts in promoting health and well-being for students. The Narrogin Education District won the Partnerships and Services category for their Mental Health Promotion in Schools Committee that coordinate the RAP and FRIENDS programs in the district. The overall winner of the

Awards was the Albany Education District, also for their establishment of an inter-agency committee, an inter-agency policy addressing early intervention in the mental health of young people and the sustainability of the RAP and FRIENDS programs.

I think WA is definitely on the mental health promotion map!!!

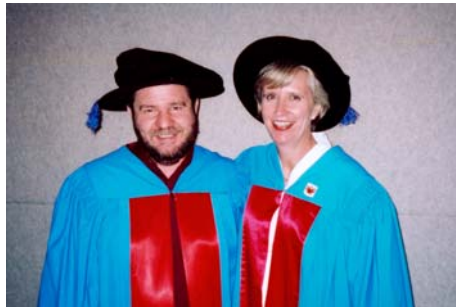
By Trish Travers

“WA is definitely on the mental health promotion map!!!”.

CONGRATULATIONS

“The best thesis I have read in 27 years”.

Congratulations to Ros Montague on having completed her PhD. The title of Ros’s thesis is: Preventing Adolescent Depression with Sustainable Resources: Evaluation of a School-based Universal Effectiveness Trial.



It was described by the overseas examiner as “the best thesis I have read in 27 years”.

CONGRATULATIONS!

Ros with her supervisor, Ian Shochet

“Cutie pie”



Sam

Congratulations must also go to Kerry and Alan Barham who had a beautiful little boy, Sam in December. Both mother and baby are doing well and Kerry is loving her time at home with Sam.

RAP Camps in QLD

As many of you are aware RAP can be challenging to implement. Tracey Howell from Connections at Murgon came up with a very innovative idea. In the September school holidays last year Tracy and her team took 15 young people from the Communities of Murgon, Cherbourg and Goomeri 2 1/2 hours away to a Family resort at Hervey Bay to deliver RAP-A. They were away for 5 days in total, with 3 full and 2 half days being program delivery. This format worked very well, with young people attending 100% of programs, which were integrated with fun activities.

Some of the responses from their evaluations revealed that:

12 young people truly believed that something that they had heard during RAP-A would help them to become a more resourceful adolescent and gave them new coping mechanisms for home and school.

All agreed that the program was delivered in a helpful way and RAP-A was easy to understand and participate in.

Their favorite sessions (in order) were, Keeping Calm, Networking, Self-Talk and Self-Esteem.

Then, in November, Tracy and the connections Support Worker, Colleen Bishop, took 11 parents to the same location to deliver RAP-P. They bussed over on Friday night with a full day of programs on Saturday, and half day on Sunday, getting back to Murgon around 4pm. These parents went on to form their own support group after the weekend camp and have since gone on to assist other parents offering short term respite for their teenagers when parents and teens need time out. All 11 parents attended every session, and all participated in the evaluation. All parents believed that the skills they'd learnt over the weekend will help them become more comfortable with their parenting style and some pointed out parts of the program they found especially useful. These included; learning to keep calm, recognizing their own strengths as parents and discovering that their teenager was "normal".

Some comments from the Parents were:

"I know now that I'm not alone - meeting new people and friends, and being able to talk to other parents and get their views."

"Having a break away from my family, time out, and knowing that I'm not alone."

"Having others' ideas was truly helpful and wise and I appreciated it. Tracey, you are a gifted Mother."

"The staff and the accommodation was wonderful. It was nice and relaxing. Coming away gave me a chance to look at myself and see where I could see in what areas I could do better and now I am ready to go home and enjoy my family again."

All in all it can be seen that both parents and adolescents enjoyed and benefited from RAP Camps. They are planning to go away in September again and are hoping to put on two more RAP weekend camps, budget allowing.



Parents at the RAP Camp

Resourceful Adolescent Programs

Applied Psychology
Griffith University
Mt Gravatt Campus
Nathan, QLD, 4111

Phone: 61 7 3875 3391
Fax: 61 7 3875 3364
Email: A.Wurfl@mailbox.gu.edu.au

We're on the Web!
www.gu.edu.au/school/psy/rap



Resourceful Adolescent Program

Newsletter compiled by Astrid Wurfl

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WA

Marcelle Cannon
Charlotte Brown
Maree Dawes
Trish Travers
Lara Teakle

NT

Morris Bastion

QLD

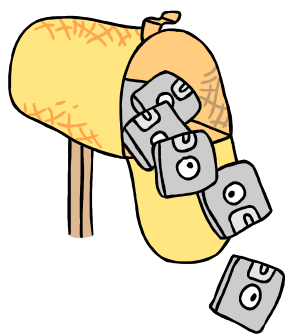
Ian Campbell
Hayley Stevenson
Astrid Wurfl

TAS

Pam Lehman
Sharon Cowles

INTERNATIONAL

Lorraine Cushing



We Want to Hear From You!!!

Do you have any tips for implementing RAP?

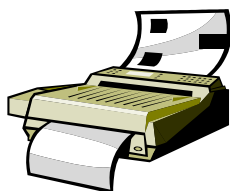
How did you get your school staff interested in RAP?

We want your input for the next newsletter.

What changes have you made to RAP to suit your population group?

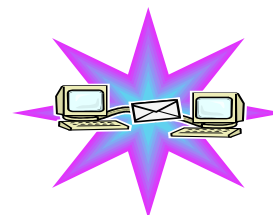
What success have you had in "whole school" implementation?

Email or fax your stories and questions.



What ideas have you got on recruiting parents for RAP-P?

What questions do you have regarding RAP?



Next edition due November 2003.