

# RAP NEWSLETTER



Volume 9

December 2011

*Special Points of Interest:*

- **Diabetic Trial**
- **RAP in a Boarding School**
- **RAP with Adolescents with Autistic Spectrum Disorder**
- **RAP & At-Risk Adolescents in Townville**

## RAP for Adolescents with Autistic Spectrum Disorder

As many of you will be aware, children with Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD) face significant social challenges and are at increased risk of experiencing depressive symptoms and developing depressive disorders. While the prevalence of children being diagnosed with ASD is increasing, there are very few programs available that promote wellbeing to prevent depression for children with ASD.

Beth Mackay, a QUT Doctoral student, has been conducting a randomised control trial of RAP-A ASD. As part of this project, a RAP ASD Guidelines Supplement was created. One of the major changes was altering the delivery of the program to a one-on-one setting. Other adaptations included: use of the iRAP computerised sessions, additional creative challenges, discussion cards and prompts, emotional recognition and expression tasks, a social story (Gray, 2000) and information about working effectively with children with ASD.

This adapted version of RAP maintains a strength-based focus, encouraging participants to draw on pre-existing coping strategies and skills and recognise their strengths. RAP-A ASD provides them with the opportunity to develop an awareness of their thoughts, feelings and behaviours, and equips them with skills to cope with stressful and difficult situations. It is expected that with exposure to RAP, students with ASD will have the opportunity to build problem solving skills and strengthen self-esteem, which will promote positive development. The RAP program is also expected to have a positive impact on the participant's capacity to understand both themselves and those they interact with.



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There has been positive feedback from staff, parents and students in relation to the program.

**"It was awesome... I learnt stuff that can help me when I get older... like stopping arguments and finding an easier solution."** *(Participant)*

**"I liked 'keeping the peace', instead of arguing about a problem. Like if you want to watch TV for 5 hours and someone wants you to watch it for 5 minutes, changing it up and finding another time."** *(Participant)*

**"We have seen real improvements in her approach to school and her behaviour"** *Learning Support Teacher*

**"He is so articulate now. I've noticed how confidently he speaks to others"** *Teacher*

Bethany Mackay has conducted this research for her doctoral thesis, with the supervision of Professor Ian Shochet, School of Psychology and Counselling, QUT. For further inquiries please email [b.mackay@qut.edu.au](mailto:b.mackay@qut.edu.au)

# RAP Camps at Yanco Agricultural High School

Yanco is a small town in South-Western New South Wales. Yanco Agricultural High School (YAHS) is the only fully-residential government high school in New South Wales. Katherine Alexander, District Guidance Officer for the Yanco region, has been running the RAP programs in YAHS since 2006. Together with her RAP team, Alanna, Greg, Lisa and Dan, they run a modified version of the program with Year 9 students – 15 year olds. RAP is run over 3 days (not consecutive) with 3-4 sessions/day. The teachers implementing the program have all chosen to be facilitators. The RAP team has incorporated a lot of physical games into their sessions plus team building and leadership activities.



Katherine has also written out the dialogues of the video scenarios so that the kids play the scenes themselves, this is mainly because they sometimes have difficulties accessing a player or computer; however the adolescents really enjoy this activity.

Most of the children in the program have known each other since Year 7 – they all board at the school. However the RAP team mixed up the groups and the children enjoyed getting to know people they didn't know as well.

With this adaptation of RAP they have successfully embedded other concepts like bullying and cyber bullying.

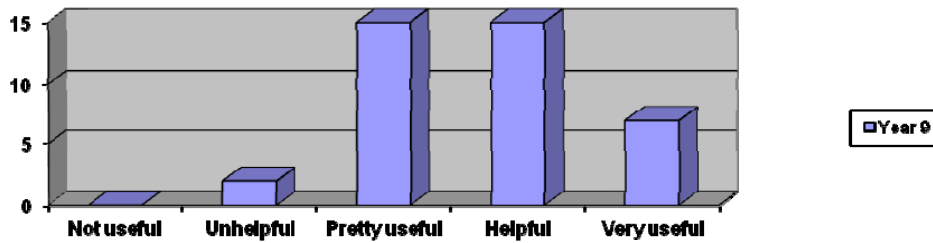
Each RAP camp ends with a celebration BBQ with delicious food and fun activities.



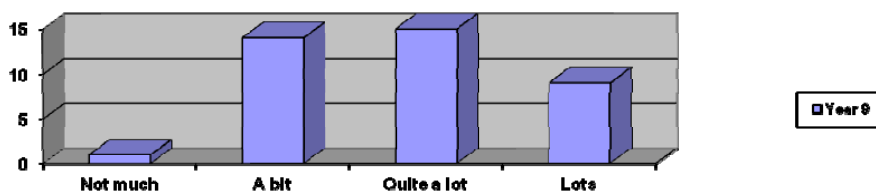
Katherine and her team have been asking the adolescents to evaluate their experience of RAP and as you will see, participants have found it very worthwhile.



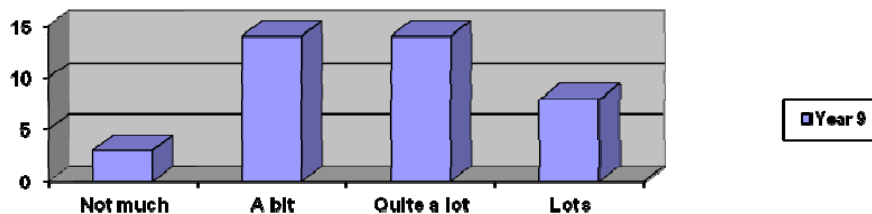
**How useful do you think RAP will be to you?**



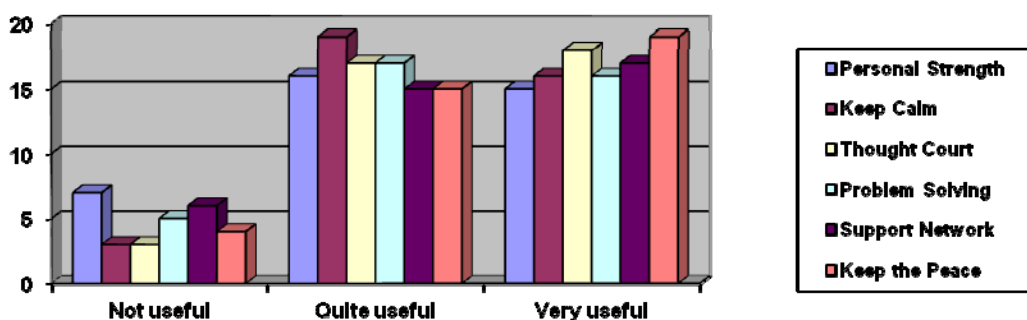
**How much you think RAP will help you get on with your friends?**



**How much will RAP help you cope with arguments, disagreements and conflicts with other people?**



**How useful were the “bricks” making up the RAP house?**



**Congratulations to a very dedicated RAP team; Katherine, Alanna, Greg, Lisa and Dan, for their innovative implementation of RAP.**

# The RAP Diabetes Project

By Jo Pennisi-Credentialed Diabetes Educator

The Queensland Diabetes Centre at the Mater is collaborating with Professor Ian Shochet and Associate Professor Brett McDermott (Kids in Mind, Mater) on an adaptation and trial of the Resourceful Adolescent Program for adolescents with diabetes and their parents. Living with a chronic condition such as Type 1 diabetes can be a struggle at any age, and the adolescent years can be particularly challenging for both adolescents and their families.

The RAP diabetes trial is set to commence in March 2012. Adolescent and parent focus groups are currently being conducted to gain a better understanding of what it is like to live with or parent a child with diabetes. This will inform the adaptation of RAP and guide the delivery of the RAP sessions. The RAP diabetes will then be trialled in a small group of adolescents and their parents and feedback will be used to further refine the program. The RAP diabetes will then be piloted in a group of approximately 15 adolescents aged 13 to 14 years.

Research suggests that adolescents with diabetes are three times more likely to develop psychological problems than adolescents without diabetes. Managing a child's chronic illness can exacerbate usual stressors inherent in family life, and parenting a child with Type 1 diabetes significantly increases the burden on the parent and family.

Successful diabetes management involves a complex regimen of blood glucose monitoring, insulin injections, healthy eating, carbohydrate counting and regular exercise. Technological advances can provide more freedom with dietary intake and activities, but do intensify the management regimen and demand more attention from the adolescent with diabetes, and their family.

It is anticipated that adolescent and parent participation in the RAP diabetes will lead to improved emotional well-being and less conflict surrounding diabetes management.

## RAP TRAINING 2012

### **Brisbane Training**

March 12th and 13th 2012

### **Sydney Training**

April 2012 Dates TBC

You can download a training registration form at:

<http://www.rap.qut.edu.au/documents/TrainingRegistrationform2011.pdf>

All RAP Training is advertised on our website.

Please check for updates at:

<http://www.rap.qut.edu.au/documents/RAPTrainingSept11.pdf>

# YACCA Does RAP!

Catherine Fraser, a Youth Development Officer from Youth and Community Combined Action (YACCA), has been running RAP groups for adolescents at risk for entering the Juvenile Justice System in Townsville, Queensland. These are adolescents who are in the system already and are at risk for becoming further involved, adolescents who are disengaged from school, or those who are having behavioural problems or engaging in risk taking behaviour (e.g. drugs and alcohol).

Catherine initially targeted schools that her organisation, UnitingCare, had already worked with and that she had a relationship with. Using information from the RAP Group Leaders Manual (GLM) and the website ([www.rap.qut.edu.au](http://www.rap.qut.edu.au)). Catherine produced an information pamphlet. Armed with this resource, she made contact with relevant people at the schools to interest them in what she had to offer their students, free of charge! Word of what she was doing soon spread, through word of mouth and the strong Youth Network they have in Townsville.

Catherine has run 10 groups this year with students from years 6 – 11. To deal with the problem of stigmatisation, some schools have combined adolescents who are at risk with other students. They have asked the students for feedback on the program as they are considering rolling it out to the whole grade next year. Students have attended enthusiastically and felt empowered knowing that their feedback is going to be used by the school in their decision making.

Catherine has made few changes to RAP, tending to run it as described in the GLM. However, she has focussed more on discussion than writing tasks, and those kids not comfortable with writing have had the choice not to write in their workbooks. One innovative adaptation Catherine has introduced is a very novel rendition of the Three Little Pigs. She has used a clip from YouTube which has been very well received by kids of all ages. So much so, that some adolescents asked to be shown it again when they had some spare time at the end of some sessions further into the program! This is the clip Catherine has been using;



Both adolescents and primary schoolers have engaged well with the program;

**“Thank you for coming, I love it.”**

**“I liked the problem solving.”**

**“I liked the brainteasers/wordles”**

**“I liked not having to write.”**

**“I liked all the talking.”**

Teachers gave very positive feedback as well;

**“The program targets exactly what these students need – self esteem, communication and choices issues. The discussion around this (turn taking, sharing, listening) were valuable and essential!**

**“Catherine is wonderful! Patient and entertaining, keeping students engaged at all times.”**

**“The pastoral, respectful approach by Catherine mirrored the content of the program – listening, respect.... And engaging manner which students responded very well to.”**

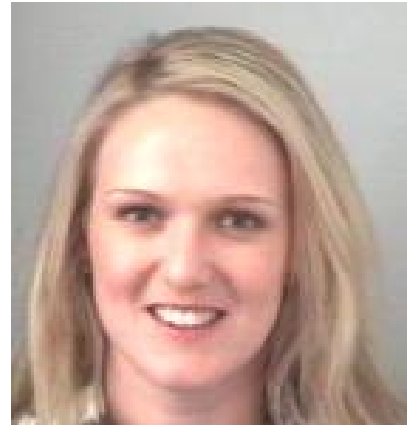
**“RAP builds elements of confidence and enhances self esteem which are keys to learning and improved learning outcomes”**

At present Catherine is discussing a cost sharing arrangement with schools that are interested in having the program run again at their schools.

**Congratulations to Catherine on a wonderful service!**

# Welcome!

We would like to take the opportunity to welcome Beth Mackay to the RAP training team. Beth is a clinical doctoral student at QUT conducting the RAP-A Autistic Spectrum Disorders Project. Before undertaking her postgraduate training as a psychologist Beth worked as a teacher. Along with her expertise in RAP, her teaching background makes her especially well placed to be a RAP trainer, particularly as we train so many teachers. Welcome to the RAP team Beth!

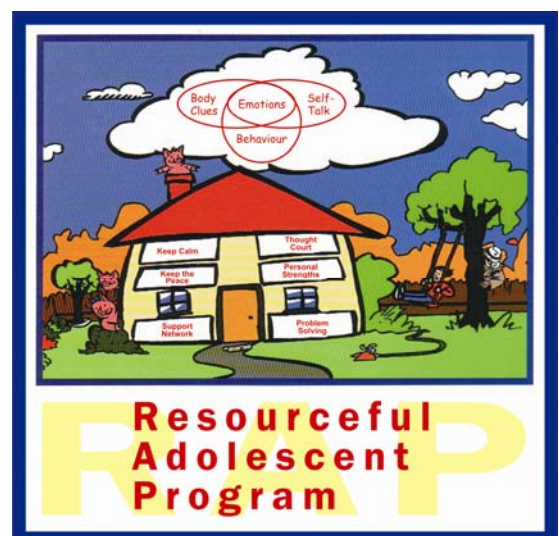


## I'll Huff and I'll Puff and I'll Build my self-esteem!



Click this link for an interesting article on RAP in Mauritius

<http://www.preventionaction.org/what-works/i-ll-huff-and-i-ll-puff-and-i-ll-build-my-self-esteem/5617>



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**NEWSLETTER COMPILED BY  
ASTRID WURFL**



Do you have any tips for implementing RAP?

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

What questions do you have regarding RAP?



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

How did you get your school staff interested in RAP?

**We want your input for the next newsletter.**

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

## RAP OFFICE TEAM

<b>Ian Shochet</b>	Director
<b>Astrid Wurfl</b>	National Coordinator of Training & Program Development
<b>Kyran Hynes</b>	Admin Support

## RAP TRAINERS

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Tracy Robinson	Astrid Wurfl
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Marcelle Cannon	Sharon Cowles
Maree Dawes	Sharon Rush
Tanya Graham	INTERNATIONAL
Trish Travers	Janine Shamos
Belinda Wainwright	Anne Lazarus
	Emilie Rivet

## We Want to Hear From You!!!

