



A Systems Approach to Helping Those Really Difficult Kids (...with Challenging Behaviours

Michael Flood, Melissa Fuller and Julie Hollitt

Challenging Behaviours-What are we talking about?

- From the referrals to Catholic Education Diocese of Bathurst and reading about challenging behaviours there seem to be two groups of students:
- Those with extreme behaviours so those with emotional and behavioural disorders that "...cause distress to either self, peers, or teachers." (Vinson, 2002, in Carter, et al., 2006, p. 191).
- Those with "...disruptive behaviours such as swearing, confronting behavior, disobedience, inattention and inappropriate clowning..." (Vinson, 2002 in Carter, et al., 2006, p. 190).

Teacher Support Bathurst CEO

- Extreme behaviours -school staff generally try to address the issues internally but often seek help from outside the school -Catholic Education Office for example or medical intervention
- Disruptive behaviours are generally handled at the lowest level-regular classroom-consultation with parents-good classroom management

2012-2015 Incidents

- Requests for support from the Catholic Education office rose from 12 students during 2012 to 35 students during 2013 to 56 in 2014, 65 2015.
- During 2014 work began to better understand what was going on and to plan to intervene .

Since 2014

- We have studied and continue to study the literature, begun to collect data for our diocese, developed behavioural professional development and developed support networks with other agencies like Centacare.

Literature-What did it tell us?

- Education systems, schools and teachers working with, students with challenging behaviours report the incidence of these behaviours as increasing, both in Australia (Slee, 2003; McDougall, 2006; Flood & Fuller, 2016; Legge, 2016) and other countries (Offord, Boyle & Racine, 1991; Lines, 2003; Axup & Gersch, 2008; McCormick, Turbeville, Barnes, & McClowry, 2014).

Recent Literature

- “Australian students continue to rank among the worst behaved in the developed world” (Balogh, 2017,p.1)
The Australian
- “Australia continues to sit below the OECD average for classroom discipline.”
- “About one-third of the students in affluent schools, and about half of those in disadvantaged schools reported that in most or every class there was noise and disorder, students didn’t listen to what the teacher said, and students found it difficult to learn.”
- Education Minister Simon Birmingham is calling for “zero tolerance approach to bad behaviour” and that improvement here is needed to return Australia to near the top of international rankings
- Article linked poor behaviour to performance _Program for International Assessment (PISA) and Trends in International Mathematics and Science Study (TIMSS)

Is it simply about teacher capacity?

- While teacher capacity has been discussed in many forums and identified as the most important consideration in student performance/achievement (Hattie, 2016), what a student brings to the classroom setting however can be as important. A teacher charged with responsibility for student engagement, may find some students are unable to engage.

Student Background a Factor-The Literature

- Carr-Gregg (2013) argues “Good sleep is essential for health, however more than 68% of adolescents don’t get enough of it. When we are sleep-deprived the chemical cortisol increases in our body and this leads to an increase in impulsive behaviour, a decrease in concentration, empathy, sense of humour...” (p.1).

Student Background

- Grose (2017) suggests “One in three girls and one in five boys in Australia now live with an anxiety disorder” (p.ix)
- Fuller (2017) states “... anxiety peaks in Year 12 with 53 percent of students reporting clinical levels of anxiety.” “...children in Year 3 and 4 also report alarming levels of anxiety, with 27 percent suffering” (Saturday Telegraph, March 2017,p.32)
- Report in Saturday Telegraph 4th March 2017 indicates school counsellors are worried “... The amount of children they see has doubled in the past five years and many kids are acting out in troubling ways.” (p.32)

Encouraging Student Engagement

- (Firestone, 2016) suggests we need to teach students to regulate their emotions as this can impact on student engagement in significant ways. In other words a student's mental fitness can make the difference. When you teach kids "...how to recognise their feelings, understand where they come from and learn how to deal with them, you teach them the most essential skills for their success in life." (Firestone, 2016,p.1)
- Emotional Intelligence is being discussed a great deal at the moment

Help for students through Mindfulness/Meditation

- Positive psychology (Seligman, Steen, Park & Peterson, 2005) has also emerged as an approach to behavior management that has much to offer schools. Briefly positive psychology is “A field concerned with well-being and optimal functioning...” (Duckworth, Steen & Seligman, 2005, p.630).

Data From our schools

- Already established requests for help from the office rose from 12 students during 2012 to 65 during 2015

Data from Schools' counselling Program-29/33 schools-Centacare established 2014

- Total Number of Clients Centacare schools Program 2015 926
- Total Number Clients Centacare Schools Program 2016 1083

Presenting conditions

- 2015 -192 students presenting with anxiety, depression and stress
- 2016 -240 students presenting with anxiety, depression, stress
- 2015-156 Behavioural issues
- 2016-161 Behavioural Issues

Presenting Conditions

- 2015-127 Poor resilience
- 2016-184 Poor resilience
- 2015-63 Poor self esteem
- 2016-113 Poor self esteem



Comment-Julie Hollitt-Psychologist

Three initiatives designed to help-based on what we know

- The development of the Diagnostic Assessment and Intervention Centre and Pathways to support. From Mid 2014-124 students profiles to March 2017 have been studied by the team
- Professional Development Regulation of the nervous system
- Kindergarten Program-helping students to start school well

Diagnostic Assessment and Intervention Centre

- Handout



Regulating the Nervous System



Kindergarten Program



Conclusion