



Re-engaging Anxious Disaffected Students

An initiative at Gladys Newton School
Perth, Western Australia



The target students

- 12 to 14 year olds
- High levels of anxiety in school settings
- Significant emotional regulation difficulties
- Autism (some, but not all)
- Other mental health concerns
- Social isolation
- Unusual behaviours not necessarily accounted for by ASD
- Borderline to average cognitive capacity



Who was involved?

- School psychologists and other school-based staff
- Behaviour centre
- Regional office
- Complex Behaviour and Mental Health team
- Children's hospital



What was needed

A safe and personalised learning environment:

- Relational and responsive approach
- Staff capacity for co-regulation
- Staff willingness to learn
- Program flexibility





About Gladys Newton School

- For students aged from 4 to 18 years who have intellectual disability, autism, physical disability
- Over 90 students with personalised education plans and access to ASDAN programs
- Specialist programs and facilities, including indoor heated pool, library, gymnasium, art room, bike track, multi-sensory room, fitness centre, kitchen garden program, cooking program, inclusion program, Bush Rangers Cadets, VET

Challenges

- Suitable staff
- Expertise
- Funding
- Safety of other, vulnerable students





Success factors

- Staff empathy for students
- Flexible and adaptable staff
- Availability of psychological expertise
- Co-regulation and de-escalation strategies
- Lack of peer challenges
- Risk management
- Regular reviews
- Student voice
- Small group size
- Communication!



Evaluation

Led by Dr Russell Pitcher, School Psychologist
Consultant with the Department of Education (WA)

How suitable is the student for the RADS program?

- Nine person-centred indicators of student need fulfilment were measured

How adequate is the RADS program for the student?

- Five efficacy components of the RADS program were measured

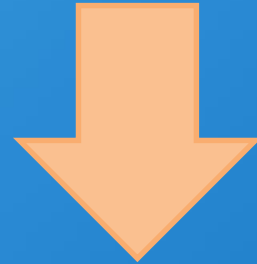
Are there realistic prospects for the student to successfully transfer to an alternate education placement?

- Two transition readiness components were measured



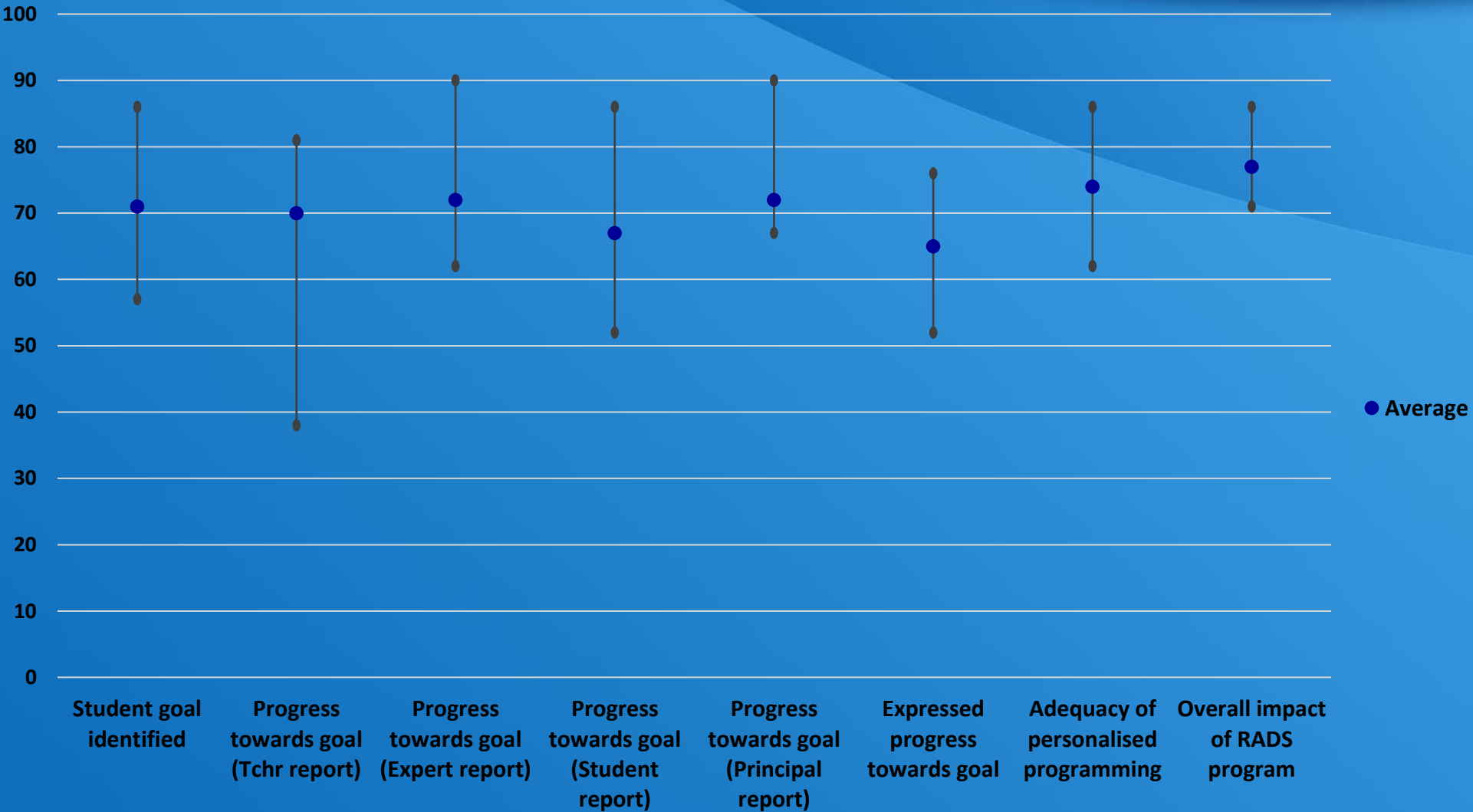
Evaluation was informed by:

Discrepancy Needs Analysis Model (McKillip, 1987)
– evidence-based investigative process

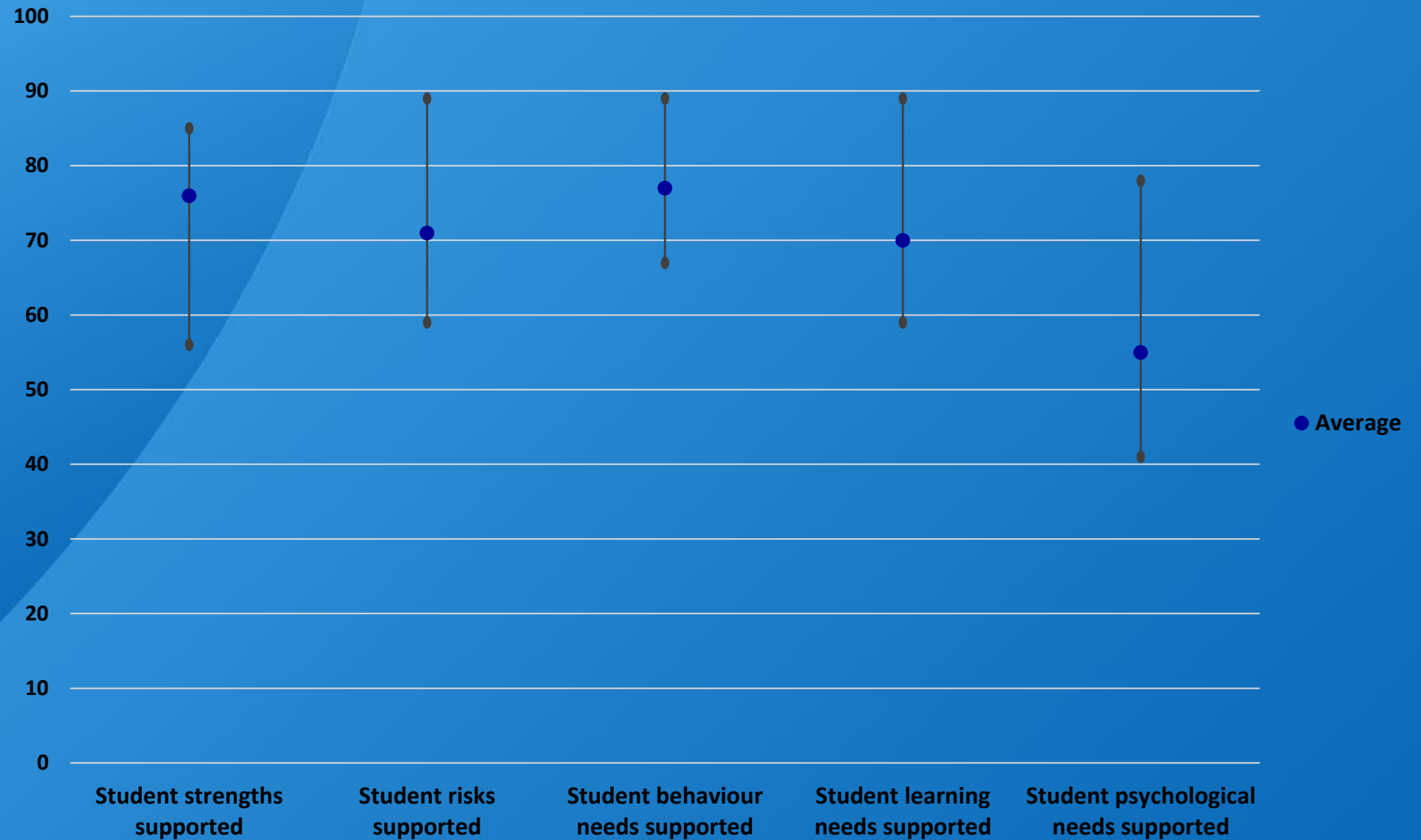


- Structured interviews – student, teacher, principal, external expert consultant (qualitative data)
- Online surveys about a range of individual factors which correlate with school engagement, e.g. confidence, need for autonomy, coping, school satisfaction, school anxiety, academic motivation (quantitative data)

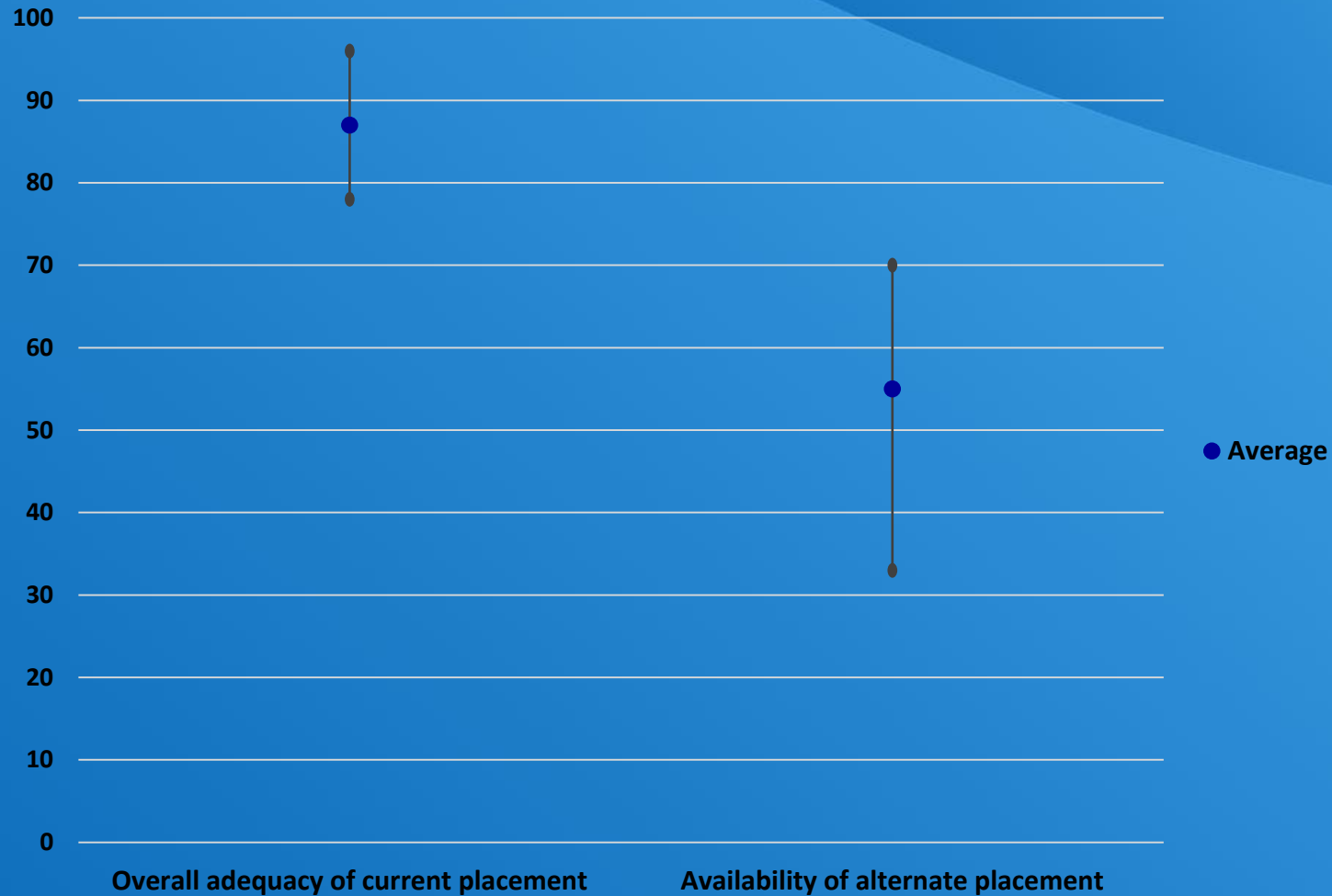
Suitability of students for the RADS program



Adequacy of the RADS program for students



Prospects of successful transfer to alternate placement





What happened?

- Change in policy settings
- Program no longer funded
- Alternative educational placements identified, in consultation with families, the Region and Statewide Services
- Students were transferred
- Varying degrees of success experienced by each

And...

- Ongoing personal connection to Gladys Newton School!😊