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Evaluation of the Kidpower Teenpower Fullpower Healthy Relationships Programme

Executive Summary

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The overall aim of this evaluation was to learn about programme training, delivery and outcomes for students. Specifically, the evaluation explored:

1. Teacher and parent understandings of healthy relationships, their perceptions of student/children's' understandings and their expectations around programme delivery and its potential impact upon these young people
2. Perceptions of teaching staff, parent and young people through in-depth interviews in terms of the impact of the programme on student behaviour (e.g. if and how students used the Healthy Relationships skills to prevent potential sexual violence)

Key findings

Overall, the programme was perceived to have had a positive impact on students and most teachers observed behaviour change in their students. It was acknowledged that change in this student group can be challenging and that long-term, repeated teaching is often required before students absorb and apply learning. Therefore, that the three-month Healthy Relationships programme was seen to have resulted in at least some change for many students is an indication of its efficacy.

Teachers were motivated and well prepared to deliver the programme following their training. They reported that while training had not significantly extended their knowledge, it had given them valuable information and techniques for working with children around these issues, and this had increased their confidence. Following the teacher training, teachers felt able to use and adapt the programme to the specific needs of the students.

The programme was high quality, easy to follow and enjoyable for students, particularly because of its interactive nature. The most useful resources were the teachers guide and CDs, and the least useful were the sticker pages. CDs were particularly effective when used in combination with a 'smart board'. Teachers found the role play activities were also very useful.

Teachers indicated that the programme had good potential for being integrated within other education programmes already running in the school. However, for most teachers, time to fit all programmes in was an issue and although integration would make a positive difference, this too would take time.

The main barrier mentioned by teachers was that some language could have been more accessible to the target group. Further, the length of some of the stories tended to lose the attention for some of the target group of children. Other helpful suggestions were also offered by teachers who had used the programme.

The programme was designed to be shared with parents. Some information about the programme had been shared by teachers with parents but this had not been systematic. Thus parents were not greatly aware of the details of the programme and nor were they involved in the programme. This is a flaw that needs addressing, since parent involvement is important for embedding learned understandings and behaviours in their children.

In terms of learning outcomes, teachers reported greater awareness and action among students, particularly in terms of setting and respecting boundaries and stopping unwanted behaviour. Positive behaviour changes were noted both in the classroom, during break times and at home. Families reported that their children's understanding and behaviour in terms of healthy relationships had improved after taking part in the programme. Teachers and parents reported that the programme was best suited to high ability students.

Recommendations

That teachers' adaptations to the programme are captured on a regular basis (suggest annually) in order to assist with ongoing review and adjustment.

That teachers' experience of using resources is captured on a regular basis (suggest annually) in order to assist with ongoing review and adjustment.

That, in addition to the existing guide, an advanced teacher training guide is developed that includes examples of adaptations to delivery and resources and suggestions for integration of Healthy Relationships in other school programmes.

That suggestions for improvements to delivery and resources made by teachers in this evaluation are considered.

That issues for teachers in sharing the programme with parents are explored with teachers during training, as well as possible solutions. Where possible Kidpower representatives might consider discussing these issues with school principals or lead teachers in order to find ways that Kidpower representatives can facilitate greater parent involvement.

That Kidpower representatives explore the value of offering free posters to all teachers in the school whether or not they were delivering the programme. This would reinforce the work being done by participating teachers and might also generate interest among non-participating teachers.

That Kidpower management undertakes regular (suggest annual) evaluation using a mix of quantitative and qualitative methods. However, if achieving sufficient survey responses is going to be a continuing issue, we recommend that a greater emphasis is placed on qualitative methods such as observations, interviews and focus groups.