Getting It Together

Making a Difference with School-Community Partnerships

Spyns Inc

Working with Young People in Schools Project

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Getting It Together
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Working with Young People in Schools Project
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Spyns Inc
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‘Girls Can Do Anything’ in progress for Year 9 Glenmore Park High students. Running the program from the Youth Centre allowed the girls to really focus their attention on the program and made a welcome change for students as well as the supporting teachers.
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Introduction

“There is growing recognition that the task of supporting young people is not the responsibility of schools alone; it is a ‘whole of community’ responsibility, including the contribution of parents, teachers and community-based service providers. Where school communities and service providers are able to establish effective partnerships, there is a much greater chance of developing comprehensive, integrated responses to the needs of young people....”

(Making it Easy, School Focused Youth Service, 2002 p 6)

For schools, ‘connecting with community’ has been mainly associated with building bridges with businesses, parents, church-based groups or cultural communities. However in every Australian neighbourhood there is a range of not-for-profit community-based agencies with dedicated, experienced, professional workers. Many of these workers have a strong interest in working with young people in schools. Schools have not traditionally worked in collaboration with community-based agencies, except in the case of students at risk or with special needs. Working with community-based agencies has the potential of tapping into experience, skills and resources that can enhance and add value to the school environment. Community-based agencies often have the flexibility to innovatively respond to emerging issues and are connected to a vast network of services.

How do schools begin to work with community-based agencies and tap into this resource for the general school community?

For community-based agencies, working collaboratively with schools is increasingly seen as a useful way to build community strength and do effective early-intervention and prevention work. Working with young people in schools is not the core business of community agencies and is a specialised way of working. Working with schools provides direct contact with large numbers of young people. This invites active participation in types of programs, such as early intervention, that may be difficult to attract within a youth centre setting.

What is the best way to go about approaching schools about working together?

Community-based organisations already have a presence in schools, delivering a range of activities for young people. Often, these activities are ‘one-offs’ or short term, taking place before school, at lunch-time or after school and focusing on recreational or additional activities such as those with a sports or religious focus. The arrangements for these activities have often been made using verbal agreements and have usually been fairly informal.

Increasingly, schools and community-based agencies have looked at more structured and sustainable program delivery within the school environment to enhance students' experiences and to look at achieving measurable outcomes for individuals, schools and the broader community.

“Many youth and community service providers are interested in working within an early intervention and prevention framework because of the multiplicity of benefits for young people as well as for the broader community. Schools too are looking to
create ways to give young people broader learning opportunities. Developing the necessary partnerships and relationships to deliver these opportunities to young people within schools can be challenging.”
(Snakes and Ladders 2005, Spyns Inc.).

It had been identified by both schools and community-based agencies that a guide to assist with developing collaborative partnerships was needed in the Nepean region (Penrith, the Blue Mountains and Hawkesbury areas). To respond to this need the community-based agency Spyns Inc collaborated with stakeholders to research and develop an innovative project.

The Working with Young People in Schools Project (WYSP) was developed and is a short term project of Spyns Inc funded under the Western Sydney Area Assistance Scheme. Since being funded in 2005, the WYSP project has successfully resourced improved links between schools and the community sector in the Nepean region (Penrith, the Blue Mountains and Hawkesbury areas). The development of this Getting It Together resource represents the culminating achievement of the Working with Young People in Schools Project.

Getting It Together encapsulates much of the knowledge Spyns has gained from working successfully across the school and community sectors. It provides some basic and clear guidelines for schools and community agencies on how to effect successful cross-sector collaboration on mutually beneficial projects.

Getting It Together aims to increase awareness and understanding between schools and community-based agencies and encourage exploration of the potential benefits of working together.

Getting It Together details the step by step process of how to go about planning joint projects and building professional cross-sector relationships, both from a school-based and a community-based agency perspective. Ideas of what joint projects might look like and examples of successful programs are included to provide concrete scenarios.

Getting It Together also outlines how a partnership for program delivery can be negotiated and suggests how a memorandum of understanding (MOU) can be agreed on for the benefit of the stakeholders involved. The aim of the Getting It Together MOU template is to provide a clear understanding of roles, responsibilities and expectations in order to achieve consistency of service delivery across the Nepean region.
Getting It Together has been developed to assist schools and community-based agencies to see more possibilities and feel greater confidence in sharing their complementary expertise and resources. Ultimately, young people are the ones who will benefit most from schools and community-based agencies Getting It Together.

While the project was funded to support collaboration and cooperation between youth services and the education system, the ideas, principles and tools can easily be applied by generalist community organizations who are interested in working closely with schools and the school community.

Hands-On Activities are used to engage students and facilitates the discussion of complex issues
How to Use this Resource

Getting It Together is deliberately structured so that it does not demand much time to find and read the sections you are most interested in. Information has been tailored to suit both community-based and school-based professionals.

There are examples of projects, programs, schools and community organisations to help you visualise how you could utilise school-community partnerships in your own situation.

Checklists provide information and tips for how to go about connecting with people from schools or community-based agencies. There is scope to think outside the square.

Benefits, opportunities and ideas are listed as a starting point for professionals to start thinking about what ideas may work for their respective organisations. These benefits and opportunities can assist with schools and community-based-agencies to visualise the possibilities and to get on board. Multiple goals and outcomes can be achieved through cross-sector collaboration. A vital step when working in partnership is to discuss and document how the partnership will work.

The purpose of the Memorandum of Understanding template is to assist schools and community-based agencies to document their agreements in a way that prompts attention to the necessary roles and responsibilities involved in project partnerships. It is hoped that this will bring clarity and consistency to working together. The more widely we start using similar kinds of agreements, the sooner we could look at formal protocols at the regional level to support us working together with less reinventing the wheel.

For the purposes of this resource, the terms young people and student will be used interchangeably. The Nepean region is the term used that the area covered by the Penrith, the Blue Mountains and Hawkesbury local government areas. Community-based agencies are individual organisations that make up the community sector.

A self-esteem and positive body image workshop activity
Community Development

In the Nepean region, there is a diverse and vast range of community-based organisations that provide a broad array of services, projects and activities for the community.

These organisations are funded by various government departments e.g. Department of Community Services, to undertake the delivery of services based on identified priorities.

There are a number of priority service delivery areas including:

- building resilience for individuals, families and communities
- improving equitable access to the service system
- connecting people with services
- improving service cohesiveness
- developing responsive partnerships
- policy development and advocacy

The community sector provides the delivery of services using a community development framework.

What is Community Development?

Community development is a “grassroots” process by which communities:

- Become more responsible
- Organise and plan together
- Develop healthy lifestyle options
- Empower themselves
- Reduce poverty and suffering
- Create employment and economic opportunities
- Achieve social, economic and cultural and environmental goals

(from Community Builders NSW website)³

Community development is the process by which organisational, social, cultural and structural disadvantage is identified and strategies are identified to bring about real social shifts and changes. Community development can occur within any community group and requires the commitment of a range of stakeholders to bring about change and to increase the resilience of the identified community. Community development allows for all stakeholders such as individuals, families, groups and organisations to experience the benefits. Benefits can occur in the short term and often have ongoing benefits and opportunities for communities long into the future.

A core driver in the community development framework is the development of opportunities to increase resilience within individuals, families and communities. Resilience is the ability to cope effectively with difficult, challenging and critical incidents that may occur in a person’s life. Resilience in young people is a vital skill to develop as is assists with positive
decision-making and the ability to learn from experiences, applying this learning in a positive way.

It has been identified through research that school and education play a vital role in determining pathways in people’s lives. Education can be a positive factor providing the opportunity to overcome disadvantage and build resilience.

Tony Vinson, author of Community Adversity and Resilience report, speaks strongly of the links between the importance of education and overcoming or avoiding disadvantage in life.

“Few things are as important in avoiding or overcoming disadvantage as successfully completing school education.”

Professor Vinson, in his publication ‘Dropping off the Edge: the distribution of disadvantage in Australia’ discusses the close linkages between poverty, unemployment and low educational attainment.

In this same publication, he suggests that education for young people should include “Support for projects which combine personal support, attention to educational deficits and skills development for disengaged young people.

These are very strong and clear arguments that support collaborative partnerships to deliver appropriate programs.

So, identifying that schools and community-based agencies want to work together, let’s look at how.

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**Key ideas**

Community development framework increases resilience
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Why Engage with the Community Sector?

Education, health and welfare agencies are increasingly recognising the importance of supporting young people’s emotional wellbeing in order to optimise the success of all young people. This proactive approach aims to provide timely and effective responses to those potentially at risk of disengagement or harm.

The recent proliferation of programs and initiatives addressing safety and security, social skills development, conflict management, anti-racism, anti-bullying and other welfare and social justice approaches reflect similar lines of thinking by government and community-based agencies. It’s an opportune time to form collaborative cross-sector partnerships and resource each other to work more effectively to benefit young people.

“It is important that we create meaningful connections with parents, other schools, local businesses and industry, government agencies, community organisations, tertiary providers and others within the community in order to provide relevant, real world learning opportunities, effective student support and expand students’ career horizons.”

(Our Middle Years Learners - Engaged, Resilient, Successful - An Education Strategy Years 5 - 9 in NSW 2006-2009 October 2006 NSW Department of Education & Training)

Benefits and Opportunities

There are many benefits and opportunities to realize by engaging in partnerships and collaborative work with community-based agencies. These include:

- Helping students feel a greater connection to school
- Enhancing and enriching student learning
- Utilising additional resources and funding
- Accessing extra skills and experiences for students
- Engaging students experiencing difficulties at school
- Addressing topics and programs to enhance students opportunity to develop resilience, for example *Mind Matters*¹ and other student welfare programs and strategies

¹A resource and professional development program to support Australian secondary schools in promoting and protecting the social and emotional wellbeing of school communities
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- Co-facilitate healthy lifestyle programs that build resilience and add value to current teachings for example self esteem, healthy relationships and stress reduction
- Access community and youth workers that are experienced in dealing with challenging youth issues
- Refer students to youth sector services
- Refer to family support services
- Build local community connections
- Access additional programs to core school business for example, Negotiating Consent\textsuperscript{2}
- Take up opportunities for extra funding through working in partnership with community organisations
- Learn additional successful models and ideas for engaging young people
- Engage in early intervention and prevention programs for young people
- Resource additional support for at risk young people
- Expand support and resources for parents
- Expand the professional learning community to include community-based professionals
- Realise positive flow on effects for the whole school community

**Key ideas**

Partnerships, collaboration, networking and building local community capacity.

**Ideas for working in partnership**

There is a wide range of options for schools to work with community-based agencies to deliver programs to young people in the school environment. Projects can be short term or ongoing over a number of years. Ideas for joint programs are:

- Personal effectiveness programs, for example self esteem and goal setting
- Healthy lifestyle programs, for example stress reduction techniques, body image, anti-smoking strategies
- Early intervention and/or prevention programs, for example Resourceful Adolescent Program (RAP)\textsuperscript{3} and Friends for Life\textsuperscript{4} (evidence-based programs for increasing resilience and reducing the risk of developing mental illnesses)

\textsuperscript{2} A program to support young people to avoid unwanted sexual experiences in their social contexts.

\textsuperscript{3} A program specifically aimed at preventing teenage depression and related difficulties

\textsuperscript{4} Pre-school, Primary and High School programs for anxiety and depression treatment and prevention, building self-esteem and social skills training
• Leadership and mentoring
• Transitions from home to school, from primary to high school and from school to work and further education
• Job seeking skills ie resume writing, traineeships and work experience
• Accessing guest speakers, experts and lifestyle or career role models
• Consultation, research and planning for local facilities
• Referrals to local services for students and families
• Assistance with students experiencing difficulties or students not engaging with mainstream education
• Parent support initiatives
• Joint social activities
• Assistance with issues within the community for example vandalism, safety and transport issues
• Building connections with the local community. Often local NGO’s (Non-Government Organisations)/community organisations have good working relationships with local community services and networks including government providers relevant to students.

Rock and Water is much-requested by schools in the Penrith area - Spyns youth workers run the program throughout the year.
Connecting with Community Checklist

1. Identify needs that could be met in partnership with community providers
2. Contact community organisations that have shown interest in working in schools or look for relevant organisations according to the issue you want to address
3. Ask about the ethical/philosophical framework of the organisation to ensure compatibility with school ethos
4. Decide together what the outcomes for students will be
5. Think about how you will select students.
   - Do you plan to involve an entire Year group?
   - Do you want students to self-nominate or be nominated by Year Advisors or the School Counselor according to set criteria? (Think about the consequences of your choices for the group dynamic and the success of the program)
6. If using a specific program,
   - Be clear on what the content is and its suitability for the age group – it may need to be adjusted for your group
   - Ask where the program has been run before and talk to someone who was involved
   - Find out if the program has been evaluated and tested previously with young people or if this is a pilot decide and agree on what evaluation will take place
7. How will any data/statistics/evaluation results be used
8. Agree on confidentiality issues
9. Clarify what is expected from the school, other teachers and staff and what the community-based agency will supply
10. Make sure that community-based workers delivering the program have completed Working with Children Checks in accordance with Section 36 (1)(f) of the Commission for Children & Young People Act 1998
11. Obtain permission from the School Executive
12. Prepare information and permission notes for parents if necessary
13. Decide on an ongoing communication strategy both within the school and between partners
14. Fill out the Getting It Together MOU and review throughout program

Community Sector Profile: Spyns Inc

This section provides a community-based agency profile of an organisation that has worked successfully with schools.

Spyns Inc. receives funding from the Department of Community Services to run a number of community development, early intervention and prevention strategies in the Penrith area. Spyns Youth Team has been concentrating on running programs for young people in school hours since 2001. Around 600 young people per year currently access Spyns programs for young people in schools.

At the time Spyns started with this approach, schools were not used to opening their doors to community-based agencies, let alone youth services. So getting started with this work and building up the confidence and expertise that Spyns now enjoys took a concentrated effort over several years.

Initially focusing on students at risk, Spyns developed Forward Thinking, a hands-on approach to goal setting. It was successfully implemented over 3 years in one local high school. (The approach used in Forward Thinking has since been incorporated into the Making Tracks program, which uses hands-on learning, Aboriginal cultural experiences and family activities to increase the engagement of Indigenous young people and their families with school.)

Following extensive consultation with schools and using an action research approach to program development, Spyns currently emphasises strength-based social skills...
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development for universal groups of students, offering programs such as Girls Can Do Anything, Rock and Water, Resourceful Adolescent Program, Friends for Life and others shown to increase the resilience of young people. Spyns’ PATSI Team (Penrith Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Neighbourhood Workers Project) runs programs for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander young people, such as the Cultural Dance group, Year 10 Formal Gown Sewing Project and the Making Tracks Project. All have been shown to improve attitudes to school, and increase attendance and retention of the targeted students as well as engaging their families with school.

Spyns was assessing interest from other agencies wanting to work with young people in schools, and secured Community Development Support Expenditure (CDSE) (Penrith Gaels Club) funding for the Working with Schools Forum Project which involved conducting a Nepean-wide forum to showcase best practice for working with young people in schools using school-community partnerships.

The forum was named Snakes and Ladders, to acknowledge the challenges and benefits that come through working across the school and community sectors. The Snakes and Ladders forum was held on 30th July 2004 at Jamison High School with 70 representatives attending from schools, Wentworth Area Health Service and youth and community agencies.

The Snakes and Ladders forum led to the development of a resource, also called Snakes and Ladders, that highlighted school-community partnership success stories. It was launched in May 2005 and 500 copies were produced and distributed to local schools and community agencies. It is still available via Spyns website www.spyns.org.au.

In 2006 Spyns Inc. was also funded through the Department of Community Services Better Futures program to provide middle school support and resources to the local area involving both local youth services and Department of Education and Training. A conference titled “Middled not Muddled” was held bringing those stakeholders together to highlight successful partnerships between youth services and schools and to promote closer working relationships. Held on 25th August 2006, approximately 100 people attended. This has led to stronger partnerships and working relationships between the sectors, looking at priority areas of support needed for student and parents.

To build further on this work, Spyns applied to the Western Area Assistance Scheme and received funding for a Working with Young People in Schools project. Over the last 2 years this project has provided professional development and/or mentoring support to over 100 teachers, youth and community workers, as well as supporting several successful school-community partnership pilots. The development of Getting It Together is the final strategy to be implemented under the Working with Young People in Schools project.
Rock and Water – not just for boys....
How to work with Schools – a guide for Community Organisations

Why Work with Schools?

When working with young people it makes sense to work with an organisation that has hundreds of young people on site on a daily basis. Going to where young people spend much of their time is a sensible way to both provide youth services and do effective early intervention and prevention work.

It is well known that young people do not readily access generic, centre-based services. By connecting with young people in schools, organisations can make their services and strategies known and available to all young people in the local area.

Visitors in schools readily capture the attention of young people who are alert to the interesting and less familiar. This provides great potential for community-based workers to get a message across, when the teachers’ familiarity may result in difficulty getting through, for example when delivering preventative health messages.

Resourcing teachers is an effective way to resource young people. If teachers know about your service and are given resources to present effectively on issues, many more young people can benefit.

By building links and working together with schools, the capacity of the community services system is strengthened and enhanced, increasing community resilience and opening up areas of support which may not have previously been utilized.

Benefits and Opportunities

Working with schools can bring many benefits and provide an array of opportunities for youth and community organisations.

- Make direct contact with young people/client group
- Access a range of age groups and groups with specific needs
- Deliver your program across various sites
- Use your time efficiently and access maximise the number of young people engaged
- Focus attention on priority issues affecting young people
- Engage young people with your core service
• Raise awareness of youth services to high numbers and a broad mix of young people
• Increase referral opportunities
• Add to the school experience for young people
• Access to parent groups
• Provide on hand support with pressures and demands of school and study for young people
• Collect data, consult and conduct research
• Pilot and develop programs
• Implement early intervention and prevention strategies
• Form links with other local organisations thereby building the capacity of the service system that is available to support young people
• Demonstrate the effectiveness of a community development approach and working from evidence and strengths-based perspectives

Key ideas
Increase effectiveness; meet access and equity goals; and build the local capacity of the service sector.

Ideas for working in partnership

Working in partnership with schools can be seen and practiced in many different ways

• Deliver services to young people on-site at schools
• Collaborate with teachers, year advisors and school counselors on shared goals
• Support children and young people through times of crisis and transition for example starting kindergarten, primary to high school and leaving school
• Promote your service and provide resources to teachers and students
• Jointly conduct preventative health campaigns or early intervention programs
• Collaborate on community art and other community development projects
• Offer resources to support leadership and mentoring programs
• Assist young people to gain employment and connect with further educational opportunities
• Work with parent groups to support/develop parental skills via education, information and referral to relevant support services
• Access guest speakers, experts and lifestyle or career role models
• Consult, research and plan with school staff and students for local facilities development
• Encourage more referrals to local services for students and their families
• Connect and assist with students experiencing difficulty or students not engaging with mainstream education
• Conduct joint social activities
• Raise awareness and generate action on issues within the community for example vandalism, safety and transport issues
• Build connections between schools and the local community.

A strengths-card mobile made in Girls Can Do ANYTHING!
Working with Schools Checklist

1. Do your homework. Investigate current issues and successful approaches. Find out what’s already happening in the school.
2. Link up with partners to make the hours and energy go further.
3. Consider sustainability from the outset.
   • Who could continue to be involved if someone leaves the school or community agency?
   • Is there potential to build on the work over time to have a bigger or more lasting impact?
4. Clarify what you can offer versus what resources and energy will be required from the school.
5. Write up a proposal to facilitate gaining approval from executive staff, making it clear what is being proposed, what the benefits will be and what is expected from all participating.
6. Approaching the school needs to be strategic and resembles a campaign rather than simply making a phone call. Follow leads to locate a proactive and approachable staff member to be a link with the school executive and explain protocols.
7. Plan and implement a pilot project. Ensure your first project is successful – even if it means being less ambitious. Establishing a track record is the best way to convince schools of the quality of what you have to offer. Demonstrate professionalism by how you operate in the school.
8. Don’t forget that resourcing teachers can be an effective way of indirectly assisting young people.
9. Evaluate from all points of view, including feedback from all stakeholders.
10. An important part of the exercise in the early stages is relationship building. Communication is vital.
11. Communicate about the achievements and the learning. Write up articles for the school and community newsletters, publish on relevant websites, do press releases for the local press, even consider doing an article for a Youth or Education journal if the project is a real hit!
12. Take it back to the local networks and start planning the next step.
13. Fill out the Getting It Together MOU and review throughout program.
Making a Difference with School-Community Partnerships

School Profile: St Clair High School

This section provides a profile of schools that have worked successfully with community-based agencies.

St Clair High School is a local comprehensive school that works collaboratively with its community to create a positive and stimulating learning environment for all students. The school incorporates the NSW Department of Education and Training values of: integrity, excellence, respect, responsibility, cooperation, participation, care, fairness and democracy both in teaching programs and in the culture of the school through a range of programs including Peer Mediation, Student Leadership, Gifted and Talented, Learning Support, the Gatehouse Project and Rock and Water.

The Gatehouse Project is a whole-of-school approach to emotional wellbeing. The intervention is designed to make changes in the social and learning environments of the school as well as promoting change at the individual level. It provides schools with strategies to increase the connectedness of students to school and increase students' skills and knowledge for dealing with everyday life challenges.

Fifty young women per year participate in the Gatehouse Project at St Clair High School. The Gatehouse Girls Program is managed by the Gatehouse Girls Program committee and currently coordinated by Jackie Saisithidej. It focuses on young women in Year 9 who are generally enjoying school but could be challenged further to set higher expectations for themselves and their future. The Gatehouse Girls participate in a wide range of fun and exciting activities aimed at building up their self confidence and self-esteem. The program utilises skills and resources of St Clair High School staff as well as the surrounding community.

The young women spend a day at Bridging the Gap where they are encouraged to see their potential and learn how to achieve it, as well as to learning how to work together. They also participate in three 2 hour “Girls Can Do ANYTHING!” workshops delivered by Spyns Youth Team and the St Clair Youth and Neighbourhood Team. Activities based on physical activity, craft and theatre are used to explore topics relevant to their age group, including a self defence workshop. Gatehouse also includes rock climbing, a session of yoga and a visit to the Sydney Model and Etiquette College. Parents get involved too. The annual celebratory Mothers’ Day breakfast hosted by the Gatehouse Girls is always well attended.

St Clair was one of the Boys Education Lighthouse Schools funded by the Department of Education Science and Technology to look for and assess the effectiveness of ways to engage boys in school and learning. Rock and Water is offered to a large number of Year 8 boys every year. By regularly hosting the Rock and Water 3 day professional development

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5. A project promoting emotional wellbeing in schools
6. A program guiding boys ages 10 to 15 years in their growth to manhood.
7. A youth service based in St. Marys
8. A community development project based in St. Clair
9. A program looking at innovative and alternative curriculum opportunities for students at risk
course, St Clair High School can afford to keep sufficient teachers trained in Rock and Water despite staff turnover. The school accessed Spyns Youth Team to run Rock and Water intensives over 3 days to enhance the boys’ learning and support teachers less experienced with running the program.

St Clair High School’s success with addressing whole school wellbeing springs partly from having an empowering approach to leadership. Teachers are supported to try new ideas. The local community is welcome to engage with the school. Emotional and social factors are prioritised with the understanding they contribute to students overall success.

**Key ideas**

Leadership-enabling school climate supports teacher initiative and morale, embraces community-based resources, focuses on whole school as well as individual wellbeing

Rock and Water program in action with Year 9 boys at a local high school.
Project Success Stories

Here are a few local examples of successful school-community collaborative partnerships.

**Resourceful Adolescent Program at Jamison High School**

The Resourceful Adolescent Program or RAP has run at Jamison High School as a school-community partnership project with Spyns Youth Team from 2003 - 2007. RAP needs to be run with small groups, so utilising a community-based facilitator was how the school could manage this without having to hire extra staff.

RAP has been successful in reducing the incidence of anxiety and depression among adolescents. The approach is based on Cognitive Behaviour Therapy. RAP is designed to promote positive coping strategies. It covers 6 main areas: Personal Strengths, Keeping Calm, Thought Court (the recognition and challenging of cognitive distortions to achieve more positive self talk), Problem Solving, Keeping the Peace (recognition of the existence of different perspectives and the development of empathy and strategies to promote harmony and avoid conflict escalation) and Support Networks. It is designed as a universal (deliver it to everybody) program. It is Australian and has been well researched. It has an accompanying parent program.

*See Resources section for further information on RAP.*

**Friends for Life professional development and pilot in Glenmore Park schools**

Early in 2007, Spyns coordinated a professional development day for 38 teachers, youth and community workers on how to deliver Friends for Life, developed by Paula Barrett of the Pathways Health and Research Centre, Griffith University. Friends for Life has been shown to increase resilience in children and young people from 7 to 16 years.

Following the training, a group of schools and community partners met to plan the implementation of pilots. Four primary schools implemented Friends for Life with their Stage 3 students. Glenmore Park High School teachers then present the program to a group of 20 Year 9 students, who will become mentors for primary students in the local community of schools. Funding for the professional development and pilot came from NSW Department of Community Services’ Better Futures Strategy.
Kinks and Bends at Katoomba High School

Kinks and Bends has been running at Katoomba High School as a school-community partnership project since 2004. A network of local community agencies provide trained facilitators so that all Year 10 students can access the program.

Developed on the Central Coast with lots of input from young people, Kinks and Bends is highly relevant and hard-hitting on the topic of preventing sexual violence in relationships. The impact of drug and alcohol use in relation to unwanted sexual experiences is included. Kinks and Bends utilises realistic scenarios and games to get discussion going and everyone actively participating.

Blue Mountains Women’s Health Centre, Phone: 4782 5133

Middle Years Enrichment and Girls Can Do Anything in the Hawkesbury

In 2006 North Richmond Youth Work Project also received funding under NSW Department of Community Services’ Better Futures Strategy to provide a Middle Years Conference at Hawkesbury High School. Following the conference, they instituted a Gala Day for Year 6 students to enhance Proud Hawks, the existing transition program. In addition to the mentoring, peer support and team adventure activities included in the Proud Hawks program, the Gala Day provides a team building workshop and initiative games such as a scavenger hunt so students can actively familiarise themselves with the high school environment. It gives the opportunity for outside agencies to provide special presentations, for example, this year the police gave information and prevention strategies to do with internet safety. The students also participate in drumming, art and sport activities as well as a workshop to address anxieties and get people talking. The Gala Days have run twice now and looks like becoming an indispensable component of transition in the Hawkesbury.

The conference also led to North Richmond Youth Work Project gaining additional Better Futures funding to train teachers, using Andrew Fuller’s Heart Masters, with a view to providing resilience building activities for all middle years (Years 5 to 8) students in the Hawkesbury community of schools, including Hawkesbury High School and Ebenezer, Freemans Reach, Glossodia, Colo Heights, Wilberforce, Windsor and Richmond Public Schools.

Hawkesbury High School’s School Counsellor, Dr Ruth Bruce has strongly encouraged community agency involvement. Michele Tibbetts and Lisa Eggers of North Richmond Youth Work Project regularly present Girls Can Do Anything to groups of Hawkesbury High Year 8 girls. The young women participate in journaling, art and discussion based activities to build up their self esteem and body image and other topics identified as supporting their personal growth. Some of the young women have accessed programs through the

10 A series of books written for teachers to help young people who are at the onset of adolescence develop awareness, skills and behaviours that will help them manage their difficult emotions.
Richmond Women’s Cottage which has greatly improved their confidence and expanded their outlook on possibilities for the future.

## Getting It Together

Getting It Together aims to make the whole process of sharing ideas, approaches and delivering high quality programs and services to young people in schools more manageable.

The challenges of working together across the school and community sectors are well worth the effort. The challenges themselves provide useful learning, as they encourage us to be more aware of our sometimes unhelpful assumptions and revisit the philosophical basis for our work.

Below are some suggestions for clarifying and documenting who is responsible for what when you are planning a project. These ideas represent the beginnings of the dialogue between the community organization and the school staff. Flexibility is important and the documentation of your agreement needs to be modified as your relationship and range of projects progress. The benefits of formalising your understanding are; to be able to refer back and ensure your original vision is being adhered to. Providing a framework for communication and reassuring executive staff that all stakeholders have been considered. And importantly, it means continuity when staff changes occur (new workers can see what previous arrangements were in place, so they don’t have to start completely from scratch).

## Making It Work

Throughout this resource, lots of great ideas have been discussed; benefits and opportunities have been identified. Working examples have been showcased and success stories illustrated.

Now it is time for Getting It Together!
How the MOU works

The MOU is an easy, step by step template that will assist schools and community-based agencies to develop collaborative partnerships for program delivery. This MOU follows a basic format. It has been adapted to meet the requirements of a schools/community sector partnership, based on the authors’ experience over the years.

Vital points:

1. It is essential to identify who the MOU is between. This means not only the lead agency and school but also any additional partners. The person/s and organisation/s identified in this section are responsible to deliver what is agreed to in the MOU.

2. It is essential that all parties are clear about what they are committing to and agree to the program delivery schedule. The more detail documented the better the understanding between the partners and the less likelihood of misunderstandings.

3. Be clear on the timeframe including duration of program, day and time specifications and discuss any need for flexibility in the school timetable.

4. Include details of staff that will be involved in delivering the program from all partners. Discuss any staff changes before they happen. Make sure all staff involved have cleared a Working with Children Check.

5. Agree on student participant selection, age group and numbers.

6. Discuss what materials/equipment is needed and who is providing them. Also make sure all material is suitable for the age group.

7. Agree on an evaluation and review process.

8. Discuss confidentiality issues and how data collected can be used.

9. Discuss how to resolve any conflict that may arise. Agree to a process.

10. Make sure all of the issues discussed in this list are documented. Each partner now can review the MOU content and agreement is reached.

11. All partners sign the MOU and agree to the terms.

12. Review as necessary.

After going through this process and using the MOU template, schools and community-based agencies should be very clear about how the partnership will work. The template is a guide and can be customized to suit the organisations involved.
Memorandum of Understanding Template

This is a memorandum of understanding between

(A) ________________________________________

and

(B) ________________________________________

other identified parties

(i) ________________________________________ and

(ii) ________________________________________

Organisational Details

(A)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Service Name:</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Contact person:</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Position:</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Phone contact:</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Email:</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other workers to be involved:</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Getting It Together

Other parties involved in this memorandum of understanding:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Service Name:</th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Contact person:</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Position:</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Phone contact:</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Email:</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other workers to be involved:</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Aim of the MOU:**
To formalize the above partners agreement to work together and to clarify arrangements for conducting the agreed project/program

**Timeframe for this MOU:**
For what time period does this MOU apply – duration (depends on an ongoing relationship between the parties) or whether brief, one-off programs/activities.

**Details of the program to be delivered**

*Name of Project/Program:*

*Description:*

*Expected Outcomes:*

*Timeframe:*

**Workers involved:**

Working With Children Check filled out by all workers and attached to this protocol: Yes/No

Written documentation provided: yes/no

Provide program outline as attachment

Selection criteria for participants:
Making a Difference with School-Community Partnerships

Year group:

Age group:

At risk group:

Max and Min Number:

Other:

Roles and responsibilities:

(A) Will provide:

Workers:

Supervisors:

Materials:

Handouts:

Catering:

Other:

(B) Will provide:

Workers:

Supervisors:

Materials:

Handouts:

Catering:

Other:

Relevant Policies (listed and supply copies as attachments):

Evaluation process:
Getting It Together

Program:

Participants:

Partnership:

Review period for MOU:

Dispute/conflict resolution:

MOU signed
Signing of this MOU commits the above-mentioned parties to the terms of this document

This is an agreement between
(A) signed:

(B) signed:

Date:

Review dates:

Copy given to each party
Resources

Program Information and Links

**Mind Matters**
A resource and professional development program to support Australian secondary schools in promoting and protecting the social and emotional wellbeing of members of the school community [http://cms.curriculum.edu.au/mindmatters/index.htm](http://cms.curriculum.edu.au/mindmatters/index.htm)

**Friends for Life**

**Forward Thinking**
A hands-on goal setting program for young people [www.spyns.org.au](http://www.spyns.org.au)

**Making Tracks**
An Aboriginal specialist program using hands-on learning, Aboriginal cultural experiences and family activities to increase the engagement of Indigenous young people and their families with school [www.spyns.org.au](http://www.spyns.org.au)

**Girls Can Do Anything**
Girls Can Do Anything addresses low self-esteem, negative body image or lack of self-confidence. ‘Girls Can Do Anything’ offers a variety of modules such as Self Defence, Body Image & Self Esteem, Relationships and Futures Unlimited. [www.spyns.org.au](http://www.spyns.org.au)

**Gatehouse**
A program developed in Victoria by the Centre for Adolescent Health to:
- promote adolescent emotional well-being
- prevent adverse health outcomes such as drug and alcohol use, depression and youth suicide

**Heart Masters**
A series of books written for teachers to help young people at the onset of adolescence develop awareness, skills and behaviours that will help them manage their difficult emotions. [www.inyahead.com.au/](http://www.inyahead.com.au/)

**Kinks and Bends and Negotiating Consent**
Both these packages focus on supporting young people to avoid unwanted sexual experiences in their social contexts.

Kinks and Bends encourages young people to explore issues surrounding violence and sexual safety in relationships. ‘Kinks and Bends’ also teaches young people how to avoid risky situations and support friends. It tackles tricky issues like date rape, drink spiking and
Getting It Together

violence in relationships with sensitivity. Only for ages 14+. Developed by the Central Coast Violence Against Women Strategy group and funded through NSW Attorney General’s Department, NSW Department of Community Services, NSW Health, NSW Police and in partnership with NSW Department of Women.


Developed by the Violence Against Women Specialist Unit, the Negotiating Consent kit comprises lesson plans and student resources to help young people deal with complex issues around consent in personal relationships. The Negotiating Consent kit provides teachers with lesson plans as part of the NSW Department of Education Years 10, 11 and 12 Personal Development, Health and Physical Education curriculum. Through active classroom discussions, students look into serious issues such as date rape, what it means to give or refuse consent and how to recognise an unsafe situation. To order copies of the kit, phone the Violence Against Women Specialist Unit on (02) 9716 2061. For more information about the Negotiating Consent program, visit www.aboutdaterape.nsw.gov.au/. Follow the educational resources link for information on Kinks and Bends, Negotiating Consent and other packages for schools about respectful relationships and human rights learning.

Resourceful Adolescent Program (RAP)

The Resourceful Adolescent Program (RAP) was developed to build resilience and promote positive mental health in teenagers. The program specifically aims to prevent teenage depression and related difficulties. The Area Health Services’ School Link Coordinators are the contact for local training and implementation information. www.hlth.qut.edu.au/psyc/rap/

Rock and Water

The Rock and Water program was developed in the Netherlands by Freerk Ykema to focus on guiding boys ages 10 to 15 years in their growth to manhood. The Rock and Water program centers around the themes of safety and integrity. Physical exercises are linked with mental and social skills. Topics include intuition, body language, mental power, empathy, positive thinking and visualizing, bullying, sexual harassment, homophobia, life goals, desires, and following an inner compass. Also useful with girls, however single gender groups are preferable for high school and older students. www.newcastle.edu.au/centre/fac/rock-and-water/ and www.rockandwaterprogram.com
Community Directory

The Nepean region incorporates three Local Government Areas. Each council has a comprehensive listing of the community-based agencies in their local government area which can be accessed through the Council’s website. Each area also has well-organized networks of workers that can be accessed for finding suitable contacts and potential community partners. Following is a list of contacts for each council and relevant networks in the Nepean region.

Council contact details

Penrith City Council (includes St Marys area)
A comprehensive and up-to-date community services directory can be found on the council website-  
www.penrithcity.nsw.gov.au or call 47327777 for more details

Blue Mountains City Council
www.bmcc.nsw.gov.au or call 47805000 for more details

Hawkesbury District Council
www.hawkesbury.nsw.gov.au or call 45 604444 for more details

Local network contact

Each area has a number of local community networks or inter-agency groups. You can contact each Council’s Community Development department for specific contact details.

You can also find local network and inter-agency information by contacting Tri Community Exchange
www.tricomm.org.au

Contacting Spyns Inc.

Spyns have a team of Youth Workers delivering in-school programs in the Penrith area and can be contacted on 47 218 520

Finding out about local Schools

The NSW Department of Education and Training (DET) have a new school locator search facility based on postcode, so it’s easy to find out contact information and other details about schools nearby. The DET School Education Area Offices are a great contact point to find out what is happening in schools in the local area and which schools could be most interested in forging community connections. See www.schools.nsw.edu.au/
References

1. Making it Easy, School Focused Youth Service (2002)

2. Snakes & Ladders, Spyns Inc, 2005
   www.spyns.org.au


   http://www.jss.org.au/content/view/109/133/

5. Vinson, T; Dropping Off The Edge, the distribution of disadvantage in Australia (2006).
   http://www.jss.org.au/content/view/109/133/

6. Our Middle Years Learners - Engaged, Resilient, Successful
   An Education Strategy Years 5 - 9 in NSW 2006-2009 (October 2006)
   NSW Department of Education & Training