

helping families thrive via stepping stones program ...

What is Group Stepping Stones Triple P?

Stepping Stones Triple P (SSTP) forms part of the Triple P positive program system of family intervention for parents of children who have or are at risk of, developing behaviour problems. SSTP includes adaptations for preadolescent children who have a disability. Group SSTP is an intensive 9 session parent training program provided in group format.

The School-Link Children's Hospital at Westmead Group Stepping Stones Triple P Pilot

The Children's Hospital at Westmead School-Link research in 2009 identified the need for the development of mental health promotion, prevention and early identification programs for students with an intellectual disability. CHW has partnered with Ageing Disability and Home Care – Department of Family and Communities (ADHC) to evaluate the program as delivered in the school community. The Triple P parenting program compliments the existing positive behaviour systems that an increasing number of schools are becoming engaged in. The delivery in the school community will ensure a consistent positive behaviour approach between the home and school, improving the environment for decreased problem behaviours in the home and classroom. In 2011 and 2012, the parent training package was delivered in 12 NSW government Schools for Specific Purposes (SSPs) by school and ADHC co-facilitators. The schools and their facilitators have done an amazing job with recruiting families and running sessions within their schools. Fisher Rd School, Kurrambee and Beverley Park School share some experiences below.

Fisher Road School Group Stepping Stones Triple P Program



*Jen Plunkett
Teacher and
Computer Coordinator
Fisher Road School*

My name is Jen Plunkett (Special Education Teacher) and I ran the program with Joy Thompson (ADHC psychologist). I work at Fisher Road SSP where we cater for students with moderate to severe disabili-

ties. This was the 2nd year we have implemented the program for a group of parents who have children that attend our school. We have had an extremely successful outcome each year and we will continue to run the program.

As a presenter of the program I really enjoyed making a difference in the home lives of families and helping them to become more positive and confident parents when dealing with difficult situations. The parents loved coming each week and they enjoyed sharing stories and nutting out problems they were having at home.

Every one of our parents has success with the issues they were working through. Some of them couldn't believe that they were able to change difficult behaviour that they had been struggling with for years. Each week the parents became close and some of them started meeting outside of the group, this is a very rare occasion at our school due to the nature of the children and the isolation our parents experience. Some of the parents are still in contact today and we all plan to meet up for reunions throughout the year. The program is so beneficial and really helps parents to make a change in their parenting skills. I look forward to my next group of parents in 2013 and I know that we will have great success again.

Kurrambee School Group Stepping Stones Triple P Program

In 2011, Kurrambee School was given the opportunity to participate in the Triple P facilitator training. After a few full days of training and a (slightly scary) accreditation process we returned to our school ready to offer our families the opportunity to participate in a Group Stepping Stones Triple PPP course run in the familiar environment of our school in 2012.

Due to a lack of funds at Kurrambee School to release two staff to run this program it was decided that only one of the facilitators would run the initial course, with the other staff member providing support if needed. Kylie Isaacs (Assistant Principal, Kurrambee School) partnered with ADHC, Penrith's Senior Psychologist, Kasha Bedford. We sent out expressions of interest to our families in our primary school and had lots of interest. We found that lots of families had difficulty committing to the length of the program, so ended up with a small group that was attended by 5 parents in total, 3 grandparent carers, a grandparent foster carer and a single par-

ent of children with severe to profound intellectual disabilities. We found this group to be very supportive of each other. They listened to each other and shared their stories and became a support network for each other, even swapping phone numbers at the end of the course. The group has also met a couple of times since the course to share how they are going and catch up over some cake and a cup of tea or coffee. The opportunity to maintain a stepping stones support group will continue to be facilitated by our school.

“There were significant changes and improvements noted in parental adjustment levels with reductions in depression, anxiety and stress levels of all parents/carers who attended...”

It was fantastic to have the support of The Children's Hospital, Westmead to collate and analyse data collected and provide support and feedback as necessary. From a co-facilitator point of view a teacher and a psychologist running the course together was very effective. A strength of this group was the involvement of a trained practitioner from the school attending the group who had knowledge of the children and their specific needs. The opportunity to have a class teacher involved in the week to week running of the program has proved extremely beneficial in providing and maintaining increased knowledge of the client group and consistency across environments for implementation of Stepping Stones Triple P interventions.

A further strength of the group was the opportunity to network with other grandparents/parents of children with similar needs of a more severe nature. Of greatest benefit was the parents opportunity to vent and share their experiences with parenting to date which included the high's and lows of parenting a child with additional needs. All of the children were non verbal and had significant support needs.

The outcomes of the course for our families was very positive. There were significant changes and improvements noted in parental adjustment levels with reductions in depression, anxiety and stress levels of all parents/carers who attended. All parents reported significant improvements in their

mental health. All parents reported improvements in their parenting competence with each reporting improved confidence in managing their child's behaviour and improved confidence in managing their child in particular settings. One parent reported following completion of the group "I am assertive" now.

Issues raised in the group have also been followed up. In Term 4 of 2012 we ran a toileting clinic at Kurrambee School as this was an issue that seemed to reoccur. We also plan to run fussy eating groups and anger management groups for families in the near future.

As the running of this group at Kurrambee School was so successful we also plan to target specific intellectual disability populations such as fathers, grandparents, foster carers, children with ASD, and children with specific syndromes such as Downs Syndrome.

We would thoroughly recommend that all SSP's have at least one staff member trained in Triple P – it is definitely a worthwhile experience!!!

*Kylie Isaacs, Assistant Principal,
Kurrambee School, DEC
Kasha Bedford, Senior Psychologist,
ADHC*

Beverley Park Triple P Stepping Stones Program

Parents gain skills to tackle tricky kids
By Scott Dougherty Aug. 8, 2012, 12:30 a.m.



Graduation day: Beverley Park School parents Lisa Pozzecco, Vicki Veneran, Christine Willis, Tina Krakue, Amanda Dennis, Kylie Jone and Iemaima Mote celebrate finishing the school's inaugural Triple P course last week. Picture: Jonathan Ng

SEVEN parents of Campbelltown's Beverley Park School pupils last week graduated from the school's first Triple P Parenting Program.

The school was invited by the Children's Hospital at Westmead to be part of a pilot

program that introduces effective management strategies for dealing with a range of childhood behaviour problems and developmental difficulties.

"It's a wonderful program that gives parents the confidence to develop lifelong skills at home," said Campbelltown mayor Annoulack Chantivong, who attended the graduation. "I really commend the school and the program and look forward to seeing more graduates."

The course provides specific training for parents of children with a disability. The parents donned uni-style graduation gowns and hats for the occasion.

"We'd like to continue the program as these seven parents have seen it as a success," principal Carmel Seeto said. "It strengthens the partnership between home and school and whole families benefit."

Source: <http://www.macarthuradvertiser.com.au/story/245053/parents-gain-skills-to-tackle-tricky-kids/>

Karonga School Musical

A giant octopus with flashing rope lights and a remote-controlled shark were part of the spectacle when Karonga Special school recently staged a whole-school musical, called Under the Sea, showcasing the musical talents of our students.

The story about two children who go to sleep and dream of being in an octopuses' garden was performed by all 71 students from kindergarten to Year 12. As part of the show, each class dressed up as a different sea animal including octopus, turtles, dolphins, soldier crabs, jellyfish, clownfish, stingrays and starfish, with the father of one student volunteering the services of his sound and lighting company to

give our students the full theatrical experience.

In preparation for the musical each class rehearsed weekly for an entire semester with our music therapist Jann Birks. Students painted and contributed artwork to the scenery and some also made parts of their costumes.

The musical was supported in class with a cross-curriculum program including researching, reading stories and creating artworks about their chosen sea animal. Several classes also went on an excursion to the Sydney Aquarium to see their sea animal in its natural habitat.

Whilst the challenges were many and varied, there were none that couldn't be overcome. Students needs in order to achieve success were at all times a priority. Musical instruments were modified, with in several instances head switches and foot switches connected to the electric piano to allow students the opportunity to accompany the music. The needs of our students on the autism spectrum were also considered with modifications to the sound and lighting effects to avoid a sensory overload.

Despite all the challenges our students performed brilliantly. They seemed to have a sense of the importance of the occasion and it was an interesting journey for me to see just how important dressing up and performing is to every child regardless of their disability.

The school musical has been an important component in creating a positive school community, encouraging increased confidence and self-esteem in our students and a greater sense of belonging and inclusion in our school. The musical culminated in an enormous sense of achievement for all our staff and students.

One student said to me, "thank you for believing in me that I could do it."

*Janelle Simpson-Goodwin
Assistant Principal, Karonga Special School*

