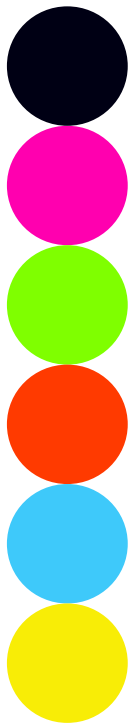


Helping Families Change Conference...



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The 15th annual international Helping families Change Conference (HFCC) was held on 13-15 February 2013 in Los Angeles, hosted by Triple P International.

During the pre-conference workshops I discovered the latest Triple P parenting innovation: online and community Triple P. Local facilitators recruit families, provide online monitoring and feedback on completed activities. There is the regular online version for individuals and the second online version is the "Triple P Community" where a group of families start the online interactive education sessions at the same point in time and use a social networking approach to replicate the success of the group process. According to their research, Triple P suggest that online learning is favoured (second to mass media such a TV) by parents as they are increasingly accessing information over the internet including smart phones and tablets. An online version of Stepping Stones Triple P is currently being trialled in a national evaluation.

The conference opened my eyes to other versions of Triple P that are available or are in research stages, including: Resilience Triple P, Triple P for indigenous parents, Fear-less Triple P for anxiety in children and their parents; Disaster Recovery Triple P, Preparing for Bad Weather Triple P, Grandparent Triple P, and Baby Triple P.

The most notable key note address was from James Garbarino from Loyola University, Chicago and author of the Lost Boys. His talk on the challenge of parenting in a socially toxic environment was enlightening. He discussed that it is not only the parenting strategies used but where they decide to live, where they send their children to school, how much violence they are exposed and have access to that impacts on a child's development and behaviour.

Garbarino argued that in his opinion, high schools should not exceed 500 students in order to create a nurturing environment. He reported that the average high school size in the USA comprised of 1200 students. His main argument for large schools being a toxic environment has to do with opportunities to participate: for example in sporting teams, music clubs, parent involvement etc, simply because of the numbers of other students they would be competing for participation in these other areas.

Before his talk was even over I found myself googling statistics for Australia. According to the Australian Bureau of Statis-



Triple P Founder Professor Matt Sanders and School-Link Coordinator, Jodie Caruana

tics, in 2011, the average secondary school enrolments were just over 500, including 195 schools with over 1200 students. Primary schools were considerably lower with an average of between 200-300 students. Garbarino in his Lost Boys summary paper (2005) discusses the accumulation of opportunity as an individual's developmental assets and describes how schools can contribute up to 10 of these (with a maximum of personal assets being around 40), based on research from the Search Institute in Minnesota. This concurred with my own personal experience of attending a larger high school, and then attending a smaller one. How does this impact students with developmental or intellectual disabilities? Most schools for specific purposes tend to be

under 100 students in size anyway, however we need to ensure that in larger mainstream schools, there are opportunities for success and participation in academic and non-academic activities and for parental involvement not just for a select few, but for all students both with and without disabilities to enable the student to thrive.

Selected presentations from the conference are available on the HFCC website (including our School-Link evaluation on Group Stepping Stones in a Special School Environment): <http://helpingfamilieschange.org/about-the-hfcc/past-conferences/2013-los-angeles/>.

The 2014 international HFCC conference is being hosted in Sydney from February 19-21 2014. Further information is available at: <http://helpingfamilieschange.org/>

References

Australian Bureau of Statistics (2011) 2011 Schools Australia 4221.0. www.abs.gov.au

Garbarino, J (2005) Lost boys: Why our sons turn violent and how we can save them. *In Paediatric Child Health* Vol 10 No 8 October 2005.

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