



Project Name: Hunter Regional Primary School COVID Life Skill recovery project

This Children and Young People Wellbeing Initiative project was jointly funded by the Commonwealth and the New South Wales Government under the Disaster Recovery Funding Arrangements for a total of **\$49,971.58**

This project was managed by TESSA Inc. and delivered by two accredited Life Skills Instructors, Leisa Graham and Darius Wingate-Pearse in the Newcastle Regional area.

Project Objective

We sought to deliver the MAT Life Skills Program across the nominated Hunter Region Primary Schools. The aim was to help Year 6 students achieve the required level of social and emotional development to effectively transition from primary school to high school. This included areas of resilience, emotional regulation, mindfulness and respectful relationships. These capabilities are particularly critical in recovery from critical events.

The schools involved flagged this as being a priority recovery issue as social and emotional development had been significantly impacted by online and remote schooling, and other COVID-19 related disruptions. Children in Year 6 2022 had a limited time to address this deficiency before the increased social and emotional demands of high school.

We had ascertained strong need in both government schools and Catholic schools. One such request for support was received from Craig Moore Clinical Psychologist Education Officer (Behaviour Support) for the Diocese of Maitland CSO, who stated that *“The periods of lockdown due to COVID have resulted in increased anxiety levels for children and adults across our communities. For our young people, the disruptions, and long periods away from school, have also had an impact on their peer relationships, which in turn, further impacts on their wellbeing. A group of students of particular concern for me are the current Year 6 students in our schools, who in the context of this destabilising period of time in their lives, are now preparing for their transition into secondary school. A difficult transition for many even when all other things are equal. Their capacity to be resilient, to re-build peer relationships over the last semester of the year will be crucial to their wellbeing and a successful transition”* and that *“the MAT program made freely available to students in the school setting would be a wonderful step in providing equity for students who don’t have the same family-based resources or opportunity to access supports privately. It is also a unique opportunity for students to participate in an intervention program together, supporting their shared experience and relationships. Further, with it being delivered in the school environment, it supports their capacity to demonstrate and use these skills in the school context.”*

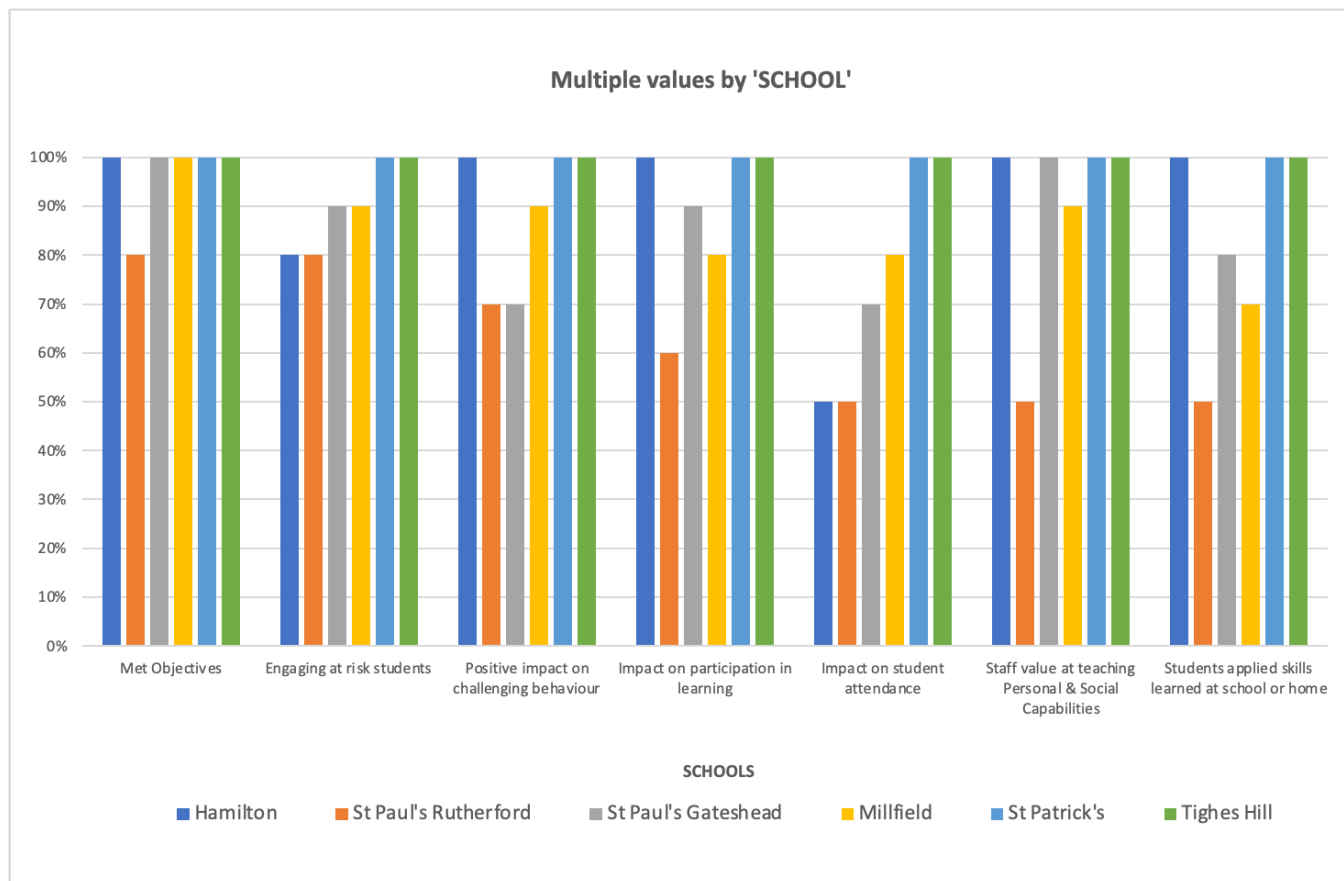
Project Scope

The project was delivered to approximately 315 students in 7 schools via 150 sessions from the 20th of July 2022 to the 15th of December 2022 as follows.

School Name	Number of students	MAT LS sessions delivered
Millfield Public School, Millfield	15	10
Hamilton Public School, Hamilton	64	40
St Paul’s Primary School, Gateshead	40	20
St Paul’s Primary School, Rutherford	57	20
St Patrick’s Primary School, Swansea	15	10
New Lambton South Public School, New Lambton	69	30
Tighes Hill Public School, Tighes Hill	55	20

Project Evaluation

Evaluation was sought from the participating schools' staff filling out a TESSA Inc program evaluation form that was returned by 6/7 schools.



Feedback was also sought directly from the student participants and sample comments from **St Paul's Rutherford** included:

- *"You helped so much and made me so much more confident"* **H.**
- *"Thank you both for teaching me things about high school and strength. I am extremely grateful for you being here at St Paul's"* **S.**
- *"I have learned to be more resilient and confident. Thank you for everything you have done for me"* **B.**
- *"Thank you, thank you for teaching us important life skills such as resilience. It has helped me with my anxiety and depression. You encouraged me to be more optimistic about life. I appreciate you guys"* **A.**

Key Project Outcomes

- Developed student self-efficacy through approaches that increased inter-personal problem-solving skills.
- Built student resilience and provided strategies for coping constructively with stress.
- Increased social skills to improve connection to peers, teachers, family members and their community.
- Promoted positive goal setting through optimistic thinking, having a sense of direction and meaning in life.
- Thus, prepared students for transition from Year 6 in 2022 to Year 7 in 2023.

The successful outcomes are also evident from 3 schools, with sufficient internal funding, deciding to implement the MAT Life Skills Program in 2023. Thus, supporting the transition of their 2023 students to high school in 2024.