

The MAT Program

A therapeutic martial arts program for engaging
our most vulnerable and disadvantaged children and youth

Restoring hope / Building resilience /
Engaging in school / Positive futures /
Safe learning environments

Overview report of the four year pilot
for the Department of Education and
Early Childhood Development

Victoria, Australia June 2014

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Startling Statistics and MAT Deliverables

Do you know that mental illness is the major cause of disability in children and young people (70%)? That 31% of visits to School Nurses in 2009 by secondary students were for mental health related issues.

Department of Health, 2010

Our survey suggests that some students with disabilities are suspended multiple times or expelled, nearly always in connection with behavior-related issues.

Held back: the experience of students with disabilities in Victoria Schools, Main findings, Victorian Equal Opportunity & Human Rights Commission, September 2012

The MAT Program promotes mental health and wellbeing

“The program does this by reducing risk factors for mental health, providing an age-appropriate treatment for children with emerging mental health problems, and providing targeted support for these vulnerable children.” (Legg, 2013, p.66)

Do you know that children and youth contact with the criminal justice system increase their risk of offending? Targeted early intervention programs for at risk young people are a cost effective way to reduce crime.

Smart Justice for Young People, 2013

The Martial Arts Therapy program enables young people to turn their life around, away from drugs, violence, crime and a trajectory to jail, to successfully completing year 12 and a pathway to employment.

Do you know that one in five young people do not have anyone in their lives to turn to for help and support?

Mission Australia, 2011

“We were truly amazed by the impact of this (MAT) program. The program develops student’s social skills, self-discipline, respect for self and others, and it provides techniques to manage emotions in challenging circumstances through the medium of Martial Arts.” Today’s Schools Channel 31, May 2012

Do you know that in December 2013 74% of teacher survey respondents, experienced physical violence from students, up from 67% in 2011 and 55% in 2009?

Do you know that in December 2013 88% of teacher survey respondents were aware of other teachers experiencing violence, up from 84% in 2011 and 75% in 2009?

Herald Sun/Galaxy Research of secondary and primary educators across all sectors

The MAT program delivers professional development sessions to teachers and aides which enables them to effectively identify behavioural triggers, defuse potentially violent situations and to provide alternative strategies which build student confidence and resilience.

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1. Executive Summary

The Martial Arts Therapy (MAT) Pilot Program was established at the beginning of 2010, being auspiced by the Department of Education and Early Childhood Development (DEECD) for three years, to specifically assess the value of the Program to improving educational outcomes in Victoria.

The MAT Program aims to provide children and young people with new skills to successfully manage the challenges (social, emotional and behavioural) in their lives, to support their learning, wellbeing and retention in education, training or employment.

Reports documenting the outcomes of the MAT Pilot in relation to the Goals and Key Performance Indicators were provided to DEECD in 2010 and 2011. During 2012 an external review of the MAT Pilot was undertaken by DEECD, which resulted in the pilot being extended into 2013.

DEECD monitoring of the pilot was undertaken by the Eastern Metropolitan Regional Office, with authentication of the processes, data and outcomes associated with the MAT pilot program implementation.

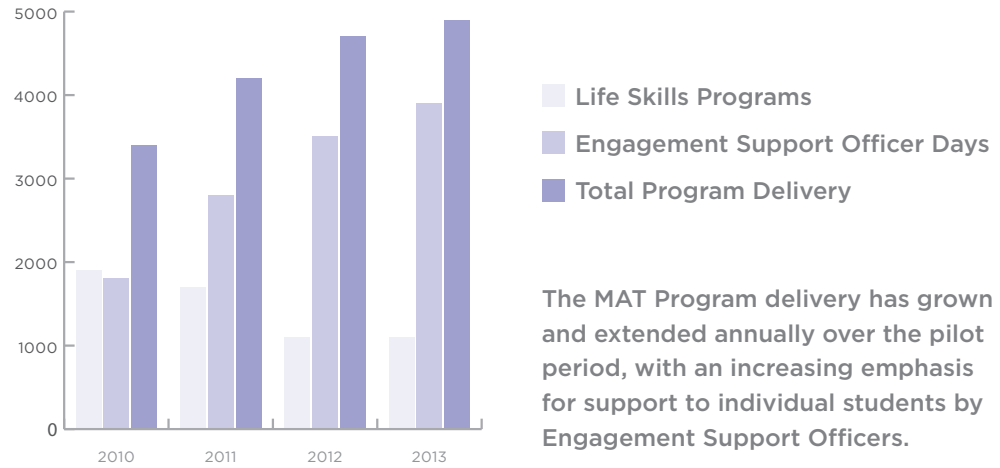
In support of the MAT Program intention to become self-sustaining, DEECD is progressively reducing their direct financial contribution over the period 2014 to 2017 (inclusive).

The MAT Program works to support children and youth where nothing else has worked. It is able to deliver sustainable change in behaviour at school and at home.

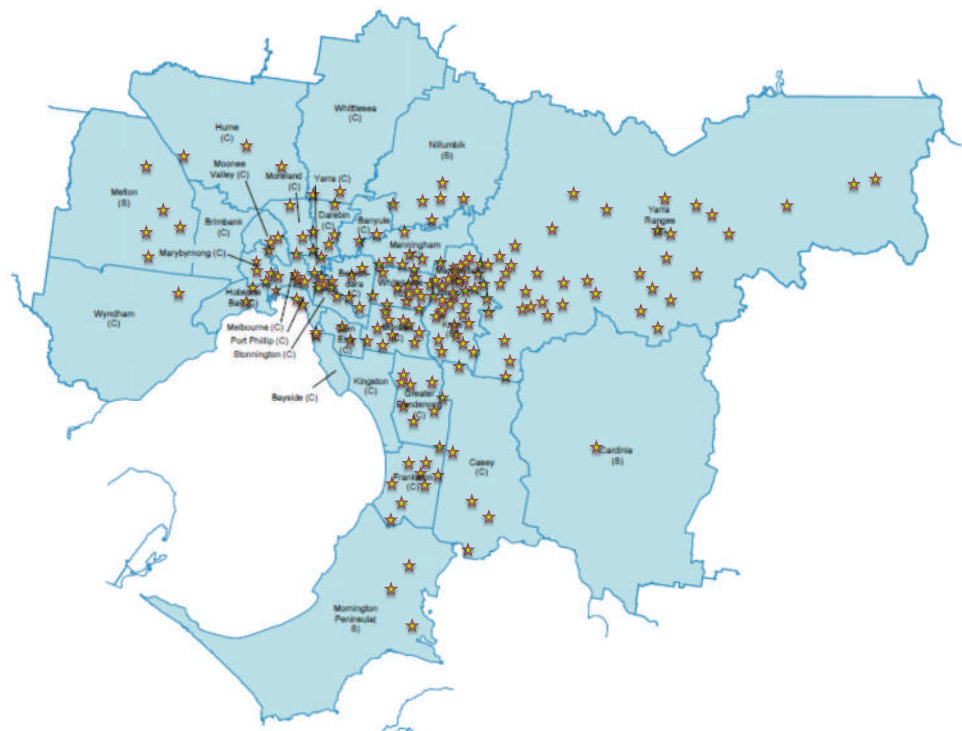
This final report demonstrates achievement of Goals and significant outcomes in relation to the original Key Performance Indicators of the MAT Pilot Program 2010-2013.



MAT Program Delivery



MAT Program in Schools 2011–2013



Croydon Community School Council has been the governing body for the MAT Pilot program.

In April 2013, the Therapeutic Martial Arts Association Incorporated (TMAA) was established as a not for profit organisation with the Board of Directors being responsible for ongoing governance of the MAT program. The ownership of the MAT program intellectual property was transferred from MAT Pty Ltd to TMAA.

The MAT program continues to be hosted by Croydon Community School, as a contributor to EMR Options. During 2013 senior DEECD and North Eastern Victoria Region officers were briefed on the MAT program.

It needs to be noted that over the period of the pilot changes in nomenclature have occurred. The accredited personnel who provide one to one assistance were initially Re-direction Aides, then Martial Arts Therapy Support Officers (MSO) and now are **Engagement Support Officers (ESO)**, which more clearly conveys the purpose of their role in working with children and young people.

Similarly, in order to explicitly convey the nature of a final intervention step in the event of an emergency situation where there is imminent danger of harm to the student or to others and all alternative measures to avoid the danger are exhausted, then **protective practices** involving restraint by a trained ESO staff can only occur strictly in accordance with DEECD policy.

The continuing need for the implementation of MAT programs and services is evidenced by recent reports and articles.

Although the exact number of students with special learning needs in Victoria is not known, it is commonly accepted that about 20 out of every 100 students have additional needs of some sort. Having systems in place to identify and support these students in a timely and equitable manner is critical to maximising their educational and life outcomes. Schools are under growing pressure from increasing numbers of students with special learning needs.

Programs for Students with Special Learning Needs, Audit Summary, Victorian Auditor-General's Report August 2012

Many young Victorians face challenges as they move from childhood to adulthood, including homelessness, mental health issues, family violence, abuse and neglect, drug and alcohol issues and involvement in the criminal justice system.

Building the Scaffolding VCOSS and Youth Affairs Council Victoria, 2013

Research shows that one third of young people will have had an episode of mental illness by age 25

One in Five: Mental Health Research

Of the students being assisted by MAT Engagement Support Officers during 2013 & early 2014, 70% had experienced trauma, 28% were diagnosed with Autism Spectrum Disorder, 62% were experiencing mental health issues, 41% had shown violent behaviours, 52% had interacted with police and 72% were connected to the Department of Human Services care arrangements.

Depression rife in high schools

Jill Stark

An alarming snapshot of the mental health of Australian high school students has found one in three girls and a quarter of boys are depressed, with many turning to violence, alcohol and unwanted sex to cope with problems.

The study, of almost 4500 year 7 to 12 students, also revealed 34 per cent of girls and 30 per cent of boys felt constantly under strain and unable to overcome difficulties.

Psychologists and educators say many young people lack the basic skills of impulse control, conflict resolution and relationship-building to help them cope with life's challenges.

"As a nation we need to start empowering our kids and giving them these skills. The kids who get violent... and get really drunk often have no idea how to form a relationship," Andrew Fuller, a clinical psychologist and director of Resilient



levels of resilience – factors such as good relationships with adults, engagement at school and a sense of empowerment – to protect them against engaging in violence, alcohol abuse and school dropout.

One in five had been bullied online and a third were suffering sleep problems, while one in four lacked confidence and had trouble concentrating at school. Former teacher Janet Etty-Leal, who runs mindfulness and meditation lessons in more than 70

and be considerate," she said.

"From a teacher's point of view if the class is harmonious, co-operative and settled, their job is 10 times easier than putting out spot fires of emotional dysfunction."

Ms Etty-Leal said that while once children learnt social and emotional skills from religious organisations or community groups such as Scouts and Girl Guides, these institutions were less popular today and parents were often unable to impart wisdom because of demanding work and home lives.

2011/12

4,017

FAMILY VIOLENCE INCIDENTS

They are more likely to exhibit behavioural problems due to reduced abilities to pay attention/concentrate and poor self-regulation.

Siegenthaler, Munder & Egger, 2012

"The CHAMPS MAT program was found to be an effective, suitable and valuable program for children and families where a parent has a mental illness and the child has at least one behavioural or psychosocial issue that impacts their engagement in occupations." (Legg, 2013, p.vii)

The independent research based evaluation verified that the four issues identified as needs by the child participants: help to self-manage behaviours and emotions; being better able to focus/concentrate; involvement in interesting social and leisure activities; support regarding having a parent with a mental illness; and

opportunities to improve self-esteem were addressed through the program. Furthermore, that the program provided occupational benefits for the children in home and school environments.

In 2011/12, Victorian police were called to 4,017 family violence incidents where an adolescent aged under 18 years was the offender, almost doubling since 2006 (2,154 call outs). "We're talking about high level violence where parents feel very, very scared –stabbings, beatings, broken windows and smashed walls." Jo Howard, Manager Peninsula Health, The Age 10 February 2013. Violence by adolescents to parents and other family members has doubled in the last five years and is a major concern for police and other agencies. Violence at home is often carried over into behaviour at school towards staff and peers.

Herald Sun,
Tuesday
January 28,
2014

VIOLENCE TOWARDS TEACHERS

Teachers experienced physical violence from students
74%
up from 55% in 2009 and 67% in 2011

A student has used aggressive or threatening body language towards you
62%
up from 43% in 2009 and 57% in 2011

A student has verbally threatened you with physical harm
38%
up from 23% in 2009 and 37% in 2011

A student has intentionally vandalised your property or property in your classroom
39%
up from 26% in 2009 and 33% in 2011

A student has pushed, shoved or been physically violent towards you
33%
up from 20% in 2009 and 28% in 2011

Aware of other teachers experiencing violence
88%
up from 75% in 2009 and 84% in 2011

Experienced verbal abuse or physical threats from a parent
53%
NA for 2009, up from 50% in 2011

DRUGS, ALCOHOL, WEAPONS

Caught students with drugs	33%
Caught students with alcohol	37%
Caught students with weapons	46%

MORE CCTV IN SCHOOLS

Yes	55%
No	35%
Don't know	10%

MAT testimonials, interviews and case studies attest the outcomes for students and staff.

MAT TESTIMONIALS

“Somerville PS became involved with the MAT program during 2013. The services that the Croydon Community School provided suited the needs of our children that have undergone traumatic childhood experiences and demonstrated difficult and challenging behaviours. The MAT Team have gone above and beyond for the students they work with at our school and have helped make Somerville PS a safe and caring environment for all students. Their professionalism when dealing with difficult situations has been exemplary and their manner with our whole community has been first rate.”

Matt Jackson
*Acting Assistant Principal
Somerville Primary School*



.....

“I found the Mat program has helped improve confidence when managing challenging behaviour on a physical level as I am now more informed and aware of body mechanics, having learnt safe ways to protect myself and minimising risk to the student. I also acknowledge the benefits of learning new re-direction strategies giving me the ability to respond positively with a sense of calmness in a variety of situations.

Julie Davie
*Education Support Staff,
Somerville Primary School*

Approximately 10% of Victorian young people aged 15-19 years are not in education, training or employment.

Australian Bureau of Statistics, 2011

The risk of poverty for those who leave school early (without post-school qualifications) is twice that of those who possess such qualifications.

The single most important mechanism that helps young people to compete for employment is continued participation in education and training.

Negotiating the Maze

MAT INTERVIEW EXTRACT

(Today's Schools Channel 31 broadcast)

The MAT Program assists kids to become self-reliant and to develop their own resilience. It enables them to be in class as much as possible. Behaviour management plans are developed with students and then staff, so staff members are less stressed.

Greg Carroll
*Principal
Yarra Hills Secondary College
May 2012*

The MAT Program has developed an effective practice model which is the basis for replication elsewhere in Victoria to support children and youth at risk.

Key elements include:

- » Prevention and early intervention are more effective than restoration

Executive Summary

Conclusion

- » Services being provided by quality assured training of committed professionals with formal supervision and ongoing professional development
- » Program delivery through creating quality relationships and a partnership approach with young people, family/guardian/carers, teachers and staff
- » Activities that build on the capacity and strengths of young people to develop resilience in meeting life's challenges, including the ability to deal with the unexpected or setbacks
- » Approaches that address differing needs, developmental stages and are culturally aware
- » Established practices and operating systems in accordance with DEECD policy requirements
- » Single entry point for all services delivered in partnership with schools and respected organisations
- » Using existing infrastructure, school or community facilities, to minimise costs of program delivery.

MAT TESTIMONIAL EXCERPT

The MAT program has over several years of research and development, designed a robust, evolving and dynamic delivery model that engages young people in active learning about themselves, their peers, family & community. Programs strongly encompass Cognitive Behavioural Therapy, Psycho-Education and Mindfulness Therapy and are delivered through active engagement with sincerity & humour.

Alan James

*Team Leader, Early Interventions Unit
'youth connections/youth projects', May 2013*

DEECD has been a significant benefactor to the delivery of MAT programs and services in schools, particularly in the inner and outer metropolitan areas of Victoria. DEECD is continuing to support the delivery of MAT programs and services whilst a transition is made to self-sustainability by 2017.

Evaluation and reporting on the MAT Pilot program (2010-2013) has substantiated the return on the DEECD investment, through a cost effective model, to deliver a range of outcomes: including improved student engagement in learning, improved student and staff wellbeing and improved safety in schools.

The pilot has established the applicability of the MAT program for access by schools across Victoria on an as needed basis, which assists with the implementation of Victorian Government policy in education and human services.

This is the final report to the Department of Education and Early Childhood Development on the MAT Pilot Program (2010-2013).

TMAA will continue to report on the outcomes of the MAT Program suite of therapeutic services, through presentation of an Annual Report at the Annual General Meeting, being publically accessible via the TMAA website.

2. *Introduction: The Martial Arts Therapy Program (MAT)*

The MAT Program is an active therapeutic approach and set of processes that combines the principles of psychosocial rehabilitation (such as an emphasis on developing self-competence and self-mastery, the belief new behavior can be learned and a focus on personal strengths) with those of traditional martial arts training techniques as a means of engaging young people in learning skills for life.

Applying the ideas from research into sensory integration, learning and developmental theories, trauma, and group theory, the MAT Program utilises a variety of martial arts techniques that support student learning. Research has shown children and young people who are struggling with ADHD, autism spectrum disorders, severe behaviour disorders or other behavioural difficulties, benefit from a variety of learning modalities and in particular, through the coordination of body and mind through active and calming activities.

MAT programs are delivered by a team of qualified Engagement Support Officers and Life Skills Instructors from a variety of martial arts training and professional backgrounds, on an individual basis and/or group sessions. Professional development programs to support student and staff safety are also offered.

MAT programs can be of particular benefit for those students who struggle to learn in more traditional ways. The MAT Program is designed for children and young people between the ages of 5 to 25 years. Many of the programs include pathways that support young people to gain and maintain connections to their peers, school communities and families, along with providing opportunities for further education and employment.

Be kind





VISION

Schools being safe, orderly, supportive and inclusive educational environments; where all young people are engaged so that they develop the skills to successfully manage the challenges in their lives and to thrive in our community.

MISSION

The Martial Arts Therapy (MAT) Program will improve the inclusion of students, engage them in schooling, support their wellbeing and make schools more productive places.

PURPOSE

The program aims to provide young people with new skills to successfully manage the challenges (social, emotional and behavioral) in their lives.

VALUES: THE CODE

力

BE STRONG

Ryoku-Strength
Be Strong

穩

BE CALM

Odayaka-Calmness
Be Calm

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BE KIND

Ji/itsuku-Compassion
Be Kind

努

TRY HARD

Do/tsuto-Effort
Try Hard

3. Goals, Achievements *and* Conclusions

The MAT Pilot Program commenced in 2010, drawing upon the research base, learnings and respected practice of a private business operated by Steve Golding that had provided support schools in the Eastern Metropolitan Region (EMR) since 2002.

The pilot auspiced by the Department of Education and Early Childhood Development (DEECD) was established to:

Address escalating challenges and risks in the school system through development and implementation of best practice programs and services

Provide the Department and Minister with facts related to the educational value of the MAT Program, through measurement and documentation of outcomes and annual reports.

The Department provided funding for the pilot with allocations of \$201,500 in 2010, \$209,500 in 2011, \$231,000 in 2012 and \$231,000 in 2013.

The pilot program set seven **Goals**, and assigned eleven **Key Performance Indicators** across three core delivery modes, as the basis for measuring, determining and reflecting upon outcomes, in order to monitor progress, focus upon continual improvement and as documentation of transferable best practice.

Assessment methodology has included specifically designed surveys; school and agency testimonials; Today's Schools Channel 31 Programs; independent research thesis; literature search authentication; analysis against frameworks and case studies.

This final report presents outcomes and evidence drawn from the documented records covering the pilot program period of 2010 to 2013.



Goals

GOAL 1

Establish MAT program training centre based at EMR Options with a regional structure that provides for future growth across all regions.

- 1.1 Train 20 new MAT Engagement Support Officers (ESO) to be employed and funded by schools as Education Support personnel.
- 1.2 Train 15 new MAT Life Skills Instructors (LSI) to be contracted to schools on a fee for service.

OUTCOMES

MAT program training and operational centre based at EMR Options, Croydon Community School was established in 2010.

Training and accreditation of new Engagement Support Officers and Life Skills Instructors has occurred annually over the pilot period 2010 (two sessions) to 2012/2013 (three sessions), with MAT personnel being employed and funded on a user pays basis by schools and agencies.

CONCLUSION

In order to sustain and grow the Engagement Support Officers and Life Skills Instructors service provision annual MAT accredited training of new personnel is required.

A pool of 10 newly trained ESO and 4 new LSI is required annually for each of the four DEECD regions to sustain the existing provision.

Extension of the service requires 10 ESO (4 full time, 6 part time) to deliver 35-40 shifts per week; and 4 LSI (part time) to deliver 10-15 programs per week (variable delivery depending upon complexity of student needs and time between sessions).

- 1.3 Develop and deliver onsite Professional Development Programs for teaching and aide staff.

- 1.4 Develop a Professional Development Program Team that will deliver to teaching staff within regional schools on a fee for service basis.

OUTCOME

MAT Professional Development Programs have been delivered continuously on a fee for service basis since 2010, the focus being on protective practices with reference to DEECD policy requirements, OH&S guidelines, legal and physical realities. The programs are tailored to each educational setting: primary (main demand), secondary, specialist and alternative. They are delivered as stand alone, or as a series, or in conjunction with other MAT services. Program design is practical, user friendly, empowering, acknowledges risk factors and levels of resourcing.

CONCLUSION

Professional Development Programs are an integral component of the MAT suite of services to be offered to schools. The targeted programs are highly valued by school leaders and enable teachers, aide staff and students to work in a safe environment in accordance with DEECD policy.

- 1.5 Work with other associated Government departments, agencies and personnel such as Department of Human Services, CYMHS, Student Wellbeing Coordinators, Psychologists and Allied Health providers in order to provide an integrated support network for students, parents and teachers.

OUTCOME

The MAT program has established relationships with a range of providers (locally and statewide) to create integrated support networks for students, parents and teachers. MAT personnel are highly valued contributors to case conferences, student support groups, and care meetings, involving up to eight other key stakeholders.

CONCLUSION

The MAT program has demonstrated that the approach of one integrated educational support plan for each student and family/guardian is effective in addressing the complex needs of students at risk.

- 1.6 Establish waiting list of demand for MAT services based on the fee for service funding in other regions.



OUTCOME

Fee for service provision in other metropolitan areas is being delivered from word of mouth recommendations by Eastern suburbs schools and community agencies. A growing number of schools across North Western and South Western Victoria regions are requesting MAT programs and services.

CONCLUSION

It is expected that demand will significantly increase from the three other regions in both metropolitan and rural areas once the availability and effectiveness of MAT services is made widely known, through testimonials and evaluation outcomes.

Schools, agencies and Principal Networks will be able to make an informed choice as to the extent of participation in the range of MAT services.

GOAL 2

Streamline existing MAT programs into 4 Main areas: Life skills (primary), Life skills (secondary), MAT Education Support Officers (redirection aides), Professional Development of school staff.

OUTCOME

The full suite of successful MAT programs was established by 2011 with the integrity maintained through continuous review during 2012 and 2013. High standards of delivery are sustained through quality assurance, accredited training and regular mandatory professional development of MAT personnel.

CONCLUSION

Provision of the range of quality assured MAT programs and services needs to be guaranteed through ongoing base level funding, and continually enhanced by MAT management oversight, to meet the diverse and challenging needs of students, family/guardians and school staff.



GOAL 3

Develop the recruitment, training and support processes for MAT trained personnel.

OUTCOMES

Extensive documentation of effective MAT personnel recruitment, selection, training, accreditation, supervision, reporting and performance assessment processes and procedures have been developed by the MAT Pty Ltd.

There is a continual requirement to train and support new MAT personnel because:

- » ESO trained personnel are offered contracted employment in schools within their budget (replacing teacher aides and integration aides). * It is important to note that the MAT Program head office staff continue to provide support for such personnel;
- » ESO roles and impact have become pathways to employment in related fields, including primary teaching, Victoria Police, Youth Work, DHS and Community Services;
- » Rigorous accountability and probationary period have seen some employment discontinued to ensure quality of and sustain respect for MAT Program services;
- » There is a need to match MAT personnel to the specific needs of students and their school.

CONCLUSION

Quality assurance of MAT program delivery to schools necessitates the continued use of this documented best practice in recruitment, training, monitoring and support for MAT personnel.

GOAL 4

Formalise accreditation of MAT trained therapists/ instructors.

OUTCOMES

Formal accreditation of personnel is accorded by the Therapeutic Martial Arts Association Board, based upon rigorous standards aligned to relevant DEECD requirements (such as OH&S) and in accordance with the 'Dimensions of Work' for Education Support Officers.

Chisholm TAFE Youth Work Certificate IV students are trained as Engagement Support Officers which is recognised within the industry placement component of their qualification.

CONCLUSION

A renewable source of trained and MAT accredited personnel is vital to sustain current delivery patterns, and for extension of the MAT services statewide to meet the increasing needs of schools, settings and agencies for effective support to students and staff.



GOAL 5

Develop Information and Communication Technology (ICT) infrastructure required to support the projects on management, reporting and future expansion.

OUTCOMES

A web based referral, documentation and basic program management system operation via Croydon Community School was established in 2011. This system is transferable to other host schools, in extension of MAT services to the other three regions.

An online forum has also been established to: provide professional learning access and support to the MAT community; enable interaction between ESOs and with the head office MAT management team; platform for ESOs to discuss ideas and strategies and as an information distribution tool.

CONCLUSION

The MAT program infrastructure of a host school, funded through additional baseline allocation in the Student Resource Package and user pays service access, is replicable in the four newly established DEECD regions.

The online forum is regularly updated and will be accessible to support all accredited MAT service personnel on a statewide basis.

GOAL 6

Develop a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) between MAT Pty Ltd and DEECD that covers Intellectual Property.

OUTCOMES

The MAT delivery program intellectual property has been developed over the last 8 years at a cost in excess of \$500,000 and is now owned by a not for profit organisation the Therapeutic Martial Arts Therapy Association Inc. (TMAA). Mr Chris Bennett, Partner Consulting, Pricewaterhouse Coopers has provided pro bono consultancy support to TMAA Inc. establishment.

The basis for a Memorandum of Understanding between TMAA and DEECD covering Intellectual Property was provided for DEECD consideration in March 2013. This included modest annual allocation of \$30,000 as a royalty payment to the TMAA for a licence to use all of the MAT materials on a statewide basis, with further development of materials and delivery of accredited training for MAT personnel being contracted on a fee for service basis from TMAA to DEECD.

GOAL 7

Develop the measurement techniques and processes to provide feedback to DEECD and the Minister on the performance of the Pilot.

OUTCOMES

MAT pilot reports were provided to DEECD in 2010 and 2011 with assessment against goals and key performance indicators. DEECD employed an external consultant to undertake an independent review of the pilot MAT program against the Goals and Key Performance Indicators, including consideration of performance data and information related to 2012 outcomes as requested of MAT management. In October 2012, the Minister for Education, the Hon. Martin Dixon MP viewed the Today's Schools Channel 31 DVDs of the MAT Pilot program in action at Kew High School. "We were truly amazed by the impact this program has on the students. It assist students in their personal growth, elicits changes in self-control, perseverance and the management of their emotions" Feature Story Narrator.

Testimonials from schools and agencies show improved outcomes for young people involved in MAT programs, including reduction in violent and challenging behaviours of students, increased safety for teachers and classmates, improved staff and student morale, increased options for school leaders in managing at risk students.

CONCLUSION

Evaluation, attestation, reporting and review demonstrate the educational value of MAT programs and services and highlight the considerable benefits to individuals and schools. The aim to develop and implement best practice programs and services to address escalating challenges and risks in the school system has also been achieved.

86%

OF SCHOOLS
HAD IMPROVED
CLASSROOM
SAFETY

100%

OF SCHOOL
LEADERS
HAD MORE
POSITIVE
OPTIONS
TO MANAGE
STUDENT
BEHAVIOUR



Key Performance Indicators *for* Core Delivery Modes

K1. MAT ENGAGEMENT SUPPORT OFFICER SERVICE

KPIs:

Reduce student behaviour that places the student or other students or staff at risk of injury.

Reduce teacher/staff stress levels and increase staff morale

Increase effective options for school leaders in managing entrenched challenging/ concerning behaviours by students.

Schools in the Eastern metropolitan area using the ESO service for 6 months or longer were asked to respond to a series of questions regarding the amount of positive change created on a ten point scale, where '0' indicates no positive change to '10' indicating change above reasonable expectations. Responses in Table One demonstrate that the three original KPIs for the MAT ESO service were met.

1. Indicate the amount of positive change the MAT Program has had on the number of incidents resulting or likely to cause injury.	100% responded with a score of 7 or above 86% responded with a score of 8 or above
2. Indicate the amount of positive change the MAT Program has had on classroom safety in general.	100% responded with a score of 7 or above 86% responded with a score of 8 or above
3. Indicate the amount of positive change the MAT Program has had on disruption to classroom environment.	100% responded with a score of 7 or above 71% responded with a score of 8 or above
4. Indicate the amount of positive change the MAT Program has had on teacher/staff morale.	85% responded with a score of 7 or above 71% responded with a score of 8 or above
5. Indicate the amount of positive change the MAT Program has had on number of options for school leaders having to manage challenging/ concerning behaviours.	100% responded with a score of 8 or above

Table One:
MAT Engagement Support Officer Service (Year 2011 data example)

Respondents were also asked to estimate/predict the level of improvement the MAT ESO service had on student participation in learning:

(a) Academic performance

A 30% improvement in student's learning outcomes was noted by 86% of the schools using the MAT ESO Service for the first time and 75% advised continuing improvement for the students six months later

(b) School attendance

A 40% improvement in student's attendance was noted by 86% of the schools using the MAT ESO Service for the first time and 100% advised continuing improvement for the students six months later.

CONCLUSION

The MAT Engagement Support Officer Service is generating a high level of positive change in individual student wellbeing and engagement, improving student and staff safety, increasing staff morale and is providing an affordable avenue for school leaders to engage qualified and skilled personnel as an effective option to address entrenched challenging/concerning behaviours in students.

Case Study: Darren

The Martial Arts Therapy program has enabled "Darren" to turn his life around, away from drugs, violence, crime and a trajectory to jail, to successfully completing year 12 and a pathway to employment

IN THE BEGINNING

Darren's early childhood and teenage development was negatively impacted upon by several influential factors. Chronic long term drug use by both his parents had resulted in their imprisonment and rehabilitation periods. He frequently felt unsafe at home due to the frightening people that would visit and their subsequent drug usage. Domestic violence was a regular occurrence within the household and his first memory of Victorian Police is being interviewed during family court hearings in relation to domestic violence proceedings. *"Dad never really lived with me and Mum, whenever we tried to make things work it would always fail".*

During his early primary school years Darren was diagnosed with ADHD and was often involved in fights with other students, which he describes as being caught in the middle of confrontations attempting to defend someone from being bullied. Darren was referred to a student development centre because of his disruptive behaviour, a few days later he was asked to leave, the reason given to his mother was that staff believed he would become a 'murderer'.

In year 8, Darren was referred to Croydon Community School (CCS) because of his troublesome behaviour. His teacher at the time said "When Darren came to us he was out of routine making him disengaged from

education which created initial problems in his learning ability, anxious and scared of some of the older boys, constantly tired, lots of unprovoked aggression, selfish and would not take responsibility for his own actions, expected a lot on a social level but also from school staff and students”.

Around this time Darren had his first major encounters with alcohol and marijuana. *“I started drinking heavily every day when I was 14; I only did it because my best mate was doing it. I also got peer pressured into smoking cones when I would go to friends’ houses”. “I wasn’t really attending school at the time” One of his teachers believes that that Darren used marijuana to feel ‘numb’, instead of addressing high levels of emotion and the trauma of being bullied he was able to ignore and block them out.*

Darren was accumulating a string of Police charges for offences related to travelling on public transport without tickets, drugs and violence resulting in him being placed under house arrest for 3 months and then spending a weekend in remand for not adhering.

The CCS Principal said that “Darren used to get angry at authority more so away from school, he would mouth off or even try to take on Police Officers but he would always stand up for what he believed was right”.

THE MAT PROGRAM

At the end of Term One in year 10 Darren had his first encounter with the Martial Arts Therapy Program learning pathway run by Steve Golding. From the very beginning he was drawn to the physical side of the program and

showed much respect toward the instructors, a change which was also noticed by CCS teachers. *“Around the time I had started up with the MAT Program I was already changing within but it was the program that helped me channel my focus into something more constructive and it helped me in a significant way” Much progress was made by Darren in a short period of time because of the way the MAT Program is tailored to suit the needs of each individual student.*

Darren found the program very engaging and has nothing but praise for it. It helped him open up and to refine skills in coping with difficult aspects of his life. He said that being a part of the MAT environment made him feel completely different and he didn’t feel the need to go back to a life of fighting and crime. The CCS Principal observed that “There was calmness about him. Darren is a magnet to kids all over the shop and has always had a group around him; he is now able to steadily guide others although he does not fully comprehend the power that he holds. Darren is a born leader.”

LEARNINGS

Darren’s learnings gained from the MAT Program include understanding the significance of being physically fit and having a healthy mind. *“Before the program I could barely do any physical activity, I now really see the importance of being healthy and keeping my head clean. Now instead of damaging my body I will now do something constructive like play sport or go to the gym. If I focus, I know I can do it.”*

Whilst undertaking year 12 studies Darren became a MAT Peer Educator and was involved in delivery of MAT programs, such as, a personal development program for Year 10 girls at Kew High School, a positive living program for year 5 boys at Mullum Primary School and general life skills program for students with intellectual disabilities at Heatherwood Specialist School. "I've always liked working with kids especially primary school students because they are much more outgoing than a lot of secondary school students."

LASTING CHANGE

Darren has come a long way from where he used to be and is very grateful to everyone that helped him *"If it weren't for Steve (MAT Program Instructor) being firm on me along with the help and support from Croydon Community School and my mum never giving up on me my situation would've ended up a lot worse"* The lasting change is evident in his self believe, self-confidence, attitude and actions *"You've got to put in your own effort, you can't just sit back and watch everyone else get what they want and sit around feeling sorry for yourself, you have to go out and get it yourself."*

K2. PRIMARY, SECONDARY, AND VCAL MAT LIFE SKILLS PROGRAMS

KPIs:

Reduce challenging /concerning student behaviours

Determine effectiveness in engaging disconnected/at risk students

Increase student participation in learning and education pathways

Increase staff support in VCAL programs using this approach

Schools who utilise MAT Life Skills programs are asked to respond to a series of questions regarding the amount of **positive change** created on a five point scale, where '0' indicates no positive change to '5' indicating change above reasonable expectations.

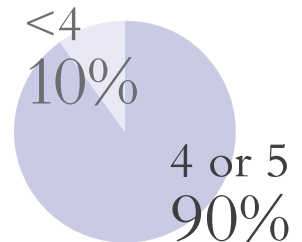
Responses are shown in Chart One which demonstrates that the four KPIs for Life Skills programs were met (year 2012 as an example).

CONCLUSION

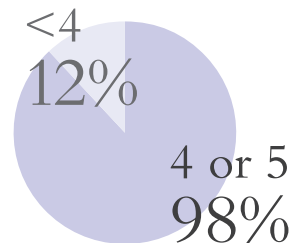
The MAT Life Skills programs are effective in re-engaging students in education, having a high level of positive change in student challenging/concerning behaviours, participation in learning and school attendance. The programs are highly valued by staff as an effective way of teaching Personal Development.

Chart One: Life Skills Program Impact

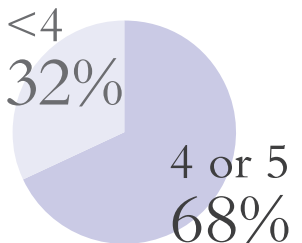
The LSP IS **EFFECTIVE** in engaging disconnected/at risk students



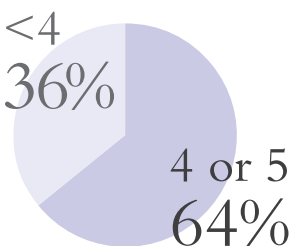
The LSP has made a **POSITIVE** impact on challenging/concerning behaviour



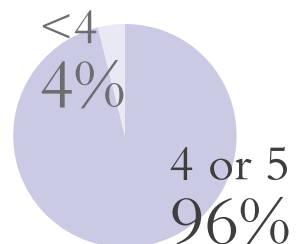
The LSP has made a **POSITIVE** impact on student participation in learning



The LSP has made a **POSITIVE** impact on student attendance



The LSP is valued by staff as an **EFFECTIVE** way of teaching Personal Development



K3. SPECIALIST SETTING PROGRAMS

Child and Youth Mental Health, Disability and Alternative Education sectors

KPIs:

Decrease challenging/concerning student behaviours

Determine effectiveness in engaging disconnected/at risk students

Decrease teacher/staff stress and increase staff morale levels

Provide effective options for school/agency leadership to manage challenging behaviours

Successful outcomes in relation to these Key Performance Indications are demonstrated in the academic research undertaken by Kathryn Legg, Monash University and the following sample of testimonials received.

“All parents/guardian participants reported that their child had learned techniques such as “the rock” and “deep breathing” to help them self-manage behaviour, be calm and focus/concentrate.” “Better self-management of behaviour and emotions was also seen in school environments.” (Legg, 2013, p.40)

“Overall, the children appear to have improved behavioural and emotional self-regulation, concentration, focus and observation skills after completing the CHAMPS MAT program. These results are supported by research that found martial arts improve concentration (Bell, 2008; Zivin et al., 2001) and self-regulation (Aljadeff-Abergel, 2011).” (Legg, 2013, p. 41)

Three of the eight benefits were produced directly because the program (CHAMPS MAT) addressed their child's need. These primary benefits were: (a) the child got support regarding having a parent with a mental illness, (b) the child learnt games/activities they can do in other places and (c) the child improved their self-confidence, pride and resilience. The remaining secondary benefits resulted from the children's application of skills learnt in the program or their engagement in the sessions.” These were: “(a) the child had less aggression and behavioural problems, (b) the child improved their school performance, (c) the child got social benefits and a sense of belonging, (d) the child enjoyed coming to the program and having it as part of their weekly routine, and (e) the child got to have a role model.” (Legg, 2013, p.48)



28 May 2013

TO WHOM IT MAY CONCERN

The Berry Street School in Noble Park is an alternative education setting providing Years 7-10 and Foundation VCAL for students aged 12-18. Our students have a history of trauma resulting in disrupted education, poor behaviour and social difficulties.

This year we have engaged the MAT program to run a weekly therapeutic martial arts session with the aim of engaging the students and assisting them to regulate their behaviour. We take a collaborative approach and our staff work with the MAT team to promote involvement. We see this as a long term project.

The MAT team clearly have an understanding of disadvantaged young people and the most effective ways to work with them. They have a great manner with both students and staff and are very inclusive in their approach.

We have found the MAT team to be highly professional with a strong commitment to their program. They have developed a program that is structured and builds skills in a systematic way which scaffolds students' learning and moves at the students' pace. At the same time they are flexible and able to adapt their program to suit the needs of the students.

In addition to the school program, MAT have run therapeutic martial arts sessions for young people who are clients of Berry Street Education Support Services and reside in residential units in the region.

The therapeutic martial arts programs provide a pro-social experience in a fun way.

I would be happy to be contacted regarding the program.

Sue Nilsen
Senior Education Manager
Head of Campus

Noble Park Campus 11 Tower Court, Noble Park VIC 3174 Phone: (03) 9239 1400 Fax: (03) 9798 5759 Email: schoolnp@berrystreet.org.au
www.berrystreet.org.au

Central Office 1 Salisbury Street Richmond VIC 3121 Phone: (03) 9429 9266 Fax: (03) 9429 5160 Email: info@berrystreet.org.au ABN: 24719 196 762

Berry Street believes all children should have a good childhood



VACCA

Connected by culture

VICTORIAN ABORIGINAL CHILD CARE AGENCY CO-OPERATIVE LIMITED

ABN 44 665 455 609

139 Nicholson St, East Brunswick, 3057

PO Box 494, Northcote Plaza, Northcote, 3070.

Tel: (03) 8388 1855 Fax: (03) 8388 1898

Email: vacca@vacca.org

Website: www.vacca.org

To Whom It May Concern. 28/5/2013

I am currently managing the Residential Care Program for VACCA and have been in the Welfare Field for 20 years.

In that time, many of our children, who have experienced abuse and neglect and exhibit challenging behaviors due to the trauma, cannot manage a mainstream school.

The MAT program has been successful in engaging them positively into a school setting and enable their individual needs to be met.

The Mat Program allows flexibility for interactions and engagement that can be tailored to the child's individual behaviors and triggers.

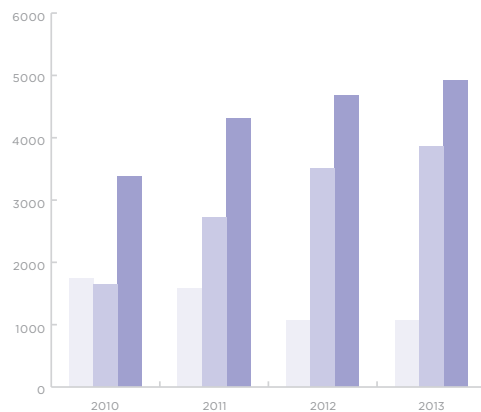
Strong relations are formed by the child and their Mat worker installing consistency, predictability and positive interactions.

I fully support the program and believe more MAT workers are needed as there are many children in Out of Home Care situations that would benefit from this program.

Yours Sincerely,

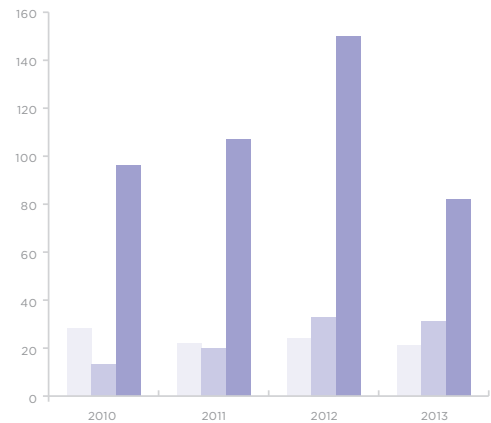
Frank Palomares
Program Manager

Provision of MAT Program Services



MAT PROGRAM DELIVERY

- Life Skills Programs
- Engagement Support Officer Days
- Total Program Delivery



MAT PERSONNEL & SUPPORT

- Life Skills Programs
- Engagement Support Officer Days
- Total Program Delivery

Over the course of the MAT Pilot Program there has been a significant change in the Victorian education sector, which has necessitated the adaption of programs and service delivery to ensure that the needs of students and schools continue to be met. DEECD changes include introduction of a new regional structure, central office re-structure, reduced regional student wellbeing personnel and changed focus of Senior Advisors (from Regional Network Leaders). Changes at a school level have included removal of School Focussed Youth Service brokerage funding, reduction in Victorian Certificate of Applied

Learning (VCAL) budgets and changes to employment practices (schools no longer able to employ casuals).

CONCLUSION

The MAT Pilot Program has demonstrated its capacity to adapt to changing circumstances and continue to provide a highly respected and valued service to schools in support of their students and staff.

4. Literature Review

4.1 DISTINGUISHING MARTIAL ARTS AS A THERAPEUTIC APPROACH

Martial arts training aims to result in several benefits to trainees, such as their physical, mental, emotional and spiritual health. Martial arts therapy refers to the usage of martial arts as an alternative or complementary therapy for a medical disorder. This can include disorders of the body or of the mind.

Through systematic practice in the martial arts a person's physical fitness may be boosted (strength, stamina, flexibility, movement coordination, etc.) as the whole body is exercised and the entire muscular system is activated. Beyond contributing to physical fitness, martial arts training also has benefits for mental health, contributing to self-esteem, self-control, emotional and spiritual wellbeing. According to Bruce Lee, martial arts also have the nature of an art, since there is emotional communication and complete emotional expression.

Martial arts therapy can embody unique traits that other therapies don't incorporate into their practice. For example, children with low self-esteem, this therapy can simultaneously develop areas such as physical fitness, instructions on how to handle stressful scenarios in a physical and mental context, and self-confidence, through the successful applications of martial technique.

(Wikipedia, 26 January 2014)

The martial arts require practitioners to develop both their bodies and their minds. Because the martial arts give specific attention to both elements, they differ from most other sports and physical activities, which focus on purely physical training. Traditional teachers emphasize self-improvement, whereas non-traditionalists emphasize self-defence. When instructing their students traditionalists focus on three priorities of spiritual development, discipline, and physical fitness (including aesthetic form and coordination). Other potential students are drawn to martial arts that emphasize all-round health-mental, moral and physical- and self-actualization of the practitioner.

(Bin Bu et al., 2010 pp. 205-219)

4.2 ADDRESSING MENTAL HEALTH VIA MAT PROGRAMS

The Children of Parents with a Mental Illness (COPMI) literature research (GEMS, 2013) found that: “Approximately one in four young Australians experience a mental health issue – mostly anxiety disorders (15.4%), substance use disorders (12.7%), and affective disorders (6.3%), (ABS, 2008)–at levels that are moderate to severe. Suicide is also a concern, (Wilson et al, 2011, pp. 34–39). Between 25–50% of children with parents who experience mental illness will experience some form of psychological difficulties during childhood or adolescence, and 10–14% will be diagnosed with a psychotic illness at some point in their lives, (Worland et al, 1987, pp. 185–210). Appropriate support and early treatment for these children is vital to reduce the long-term impact of mental health issues and to protect against the development of more severe forms, (Rickwood et al, 2007, S35-S39)”

Further that: “The risk of developing mental disorders for children whose parents have a mental illness ranges from 41% to 77% (Hosman et al, 2009, 8). Family interventions have the potential to reduce children’s mental illness symptoms. Family interventions have the potential to reduce the risk of children acquiring a mental illness by 40% (Siegenthaler et al, 2012, pp.12–14).

The GEMS authors conclude that “In order to stop the cycle of mental illness in Australian families, there is a clear need to assist young people in families where a parent has a mental illness, (Maybery & Reupert, 2012, 13).”

Between 21–24% of Australian children are living with a parent with a mental illness. These children are more likely to develop behavioural, emotional and social difficulties, and often have limited social and leisure occupations (DHS, 2012).

Children and Mentally Ill Parents Martial Arts as Therapy (CHAMPS MAT) program

Evaluation of the CHAMPS MAT program undertaken as a research study by Kathryn Legg, Monash University, found that the four issues identified as needs by the child participants: help to self-manage behaviours and emotions; being better able to focus/concentrate; involvement in interesting social and leisure activities; support regarding having a parent with a mental illness; and opportunities to improve self-esteem were addressed through the program. Furthermore, that the program provided occupational benefits for the children in home and school environments. "Addressing the children's needs and improving their participation in school occupations reduces their risk factors for poor mental health and overall wellbeing (Queensland Health, 2013)." (Legg, 2013, p.62)

The occupational benefits noted at school were "1. Improved engagement and performance in classroom activities; 2. Reduced interruptions to occupations/activities; 3. Increased opportunities for social activities/occupations." (Legg, 2013, p.53 Table 6) The researcher notes that this is

consistent with other research "... that found martial arts occupations decreased maladaptive classroom behaviours (Morand, 2004) and improved cognitive and affective self-regulation (Lakes & Hoyt, 2004)." (Legg, 2013, p.54)

Program features that children and parents deemed effective were: the MAT instructor's interactive style, the program structure and its overall occupational nature. The researcher suggests "...that it is the distinctive way instructors interact with the children and structure the program, as well as its occupation-based nature, that makes the CHAMPS MAT program different from other martial arts programs and effective for families where a parent has a mental illness." (Legg, 2013, p.57). Important features, similar to other research findings, include "...having instructors use encouraging, funny and engaging interaction styles with children, as well as providing a fun, interactive, and physical program structure that allows for observation and practice of skills." (Legg, 2013, p.62).

"The results of this current study are also consistent with research that found occupation-based programs decreased externalising behaviours, aggression, conduct problems, and increased self-esteem, self-confidence, positive social behaviours and school performance.



These programs also reduced barriers to occupational function and increased participation in school, home, social and leisure occupations (Durlak & Weissberg, 2007; Tokolahi et al., 2013).” (Legg, 2013, p63)

Hence, the researcher concludes that “The CHAMPS MAT program was found to be an effective, suitable and valuable program for children and families where a parent has a mental illness and the child has at least one behavioural or psychosocial issue that impacts their engagement in occupations.” (Legg, 2013, p.vii)

4.3 INCREASING EDUCATIONAL ENGAGEMENT VIA MAT PROGRAMS

A research project undertaken by the Good Shepherd Youth & Family Service, Jesuit Social Services and

Mackillop Family services “I Just Want to Go to School” identified key factors inhibiting youth educational engagement, including: bullying and violence; need for additional learning assistance within and outside school; not being adequately recognised as an individual, with distinct learning and other needs; little understanding of the range of issues young people face (for example, mental health issues, bullying, living in out-of-home care, abuse from parents, drugs, alcohol, social media).

The report of findings has key recommendations, including:

“Schools should be supported to provide strong prevention, early intervention and holistic responses to student wellbeing issues, including bullying and mental health issues.”



“Schools should provide additional forms of assistance to facilitate learning and participation for all students (within and outside school), with proactive measures to engage students from disadvantaged backgrounds.”

“Education policy should recognise that schools need to be a ‘safe space’ offering security, stability and a holistic learning environment. This is particularly critical for vulnerable children and young people (Campbell et al, 2012, pp 2-4).”

Dr Coralie Wilson author of GEMS Edition 15, August 2013 notes that “Consistent with large international studies, Australian studies have repeatedly found that children, adolescents, and young adults with elevated symptom levels (of suicidal ideation, depression, anxiety, and general psychological distress) are also those most likely “not to seek help from anyone”, and least likely

to seek help from mental health professionals, including family doctors (General Practitioners), friends, and parents.” The article finds that “Therapeutic intervention must involve the young person as an active collaborator in a recovery plan that empowers them to manage their family context.”

The MAT program ensures that children and young people feel heard and understood. “Another identified benefit for children was that ‘the child got to have a role model’, that they could respect, listen to and learn from; particularly because the MAT instructor... had “gone through it” himself.” (Legg, 2013, p.51)



FOREST HILL
COLLEGE

Mahoneys Rd.,
East Burwood, 3151
9814 9444

To whom it may concern,

Forest Hill College has had a professional relationship with the Martial Arts Program for the last 5 years. We have identified disengaged and troubled students who require more one-on-one attention than the average curriculum can provide and referred them to this program. The MAT program has had a targeted approach meeting the specific needs of our various groups. It is the combination of the program, and the instructor, that result in the quality outcomes.

1. *The program* provides the students with an ability to take control of their thoughts, emotions and behaviour. This has positively influenced the ways in which the boys deal with their ongoing relationships, frustration, anger and stress. The program demonstrated and facilitated the boys' use of body and mind in order to help impulse control and decision making.
2. *The instructor* enabled a positive relationship to develop from which modelling, intentional mentoring occurred.

Specifically this year, Craig has been able to work with a challenging group of Year 8 and 10 boys from our College. The group connected well with Craig and their respect for him was evident. He challenged the boys appropriately, pushed them to reach their potential as well as encouraged and acknowledged their efforts. The feedback from the boys was sensational and from our perspective we were more than satisfied with our investment. Craig has an upfront personality with a high capability when working and connecting with adolescents. His stories, and life testimonial enable his authenticity to speak into the students' lives.

It is without any hesitation that I recommend both the Martial Arts Program and Craig Cole. If you have any questions, please feel free to contact me either via email m.mcewen@fhc.vic.edu.au or (03) 98149444.

Yours sincerely,

(Mrs.) Marianne McEwen

Counselling and Wellbeing leader
Forest Hill College

5. Assessment of the MAT Pilot Program in relation to Research

5.1. The report “Building the Scaffolding: Strengthening support for young people in Victoria” April 2013, produced by the Victorian Council of Social Services and the Youth Affairs Council of Victoria Inc., identifies five key elements critical to building a strong service system for children and young people.

1. “Support across the life course: adolescence is starting earlier and finishing later. This shift demands a rethink about how we respond to children, young people and young adults.
2. Early intervention at every age and stage: a diverse mix of services can provide support to young people at every age and at every stage of an issue, from prevention and early invention to more specialist supports through to crisis support and beyond.
3. Services working collaboratively: youth services must remain at the heart of the service system for young people, but an integrated response also requires the expertise of other services such as family support, adult support services and schools.
4. Accessible and inclusive services: support needs to be accessible, available when and where young people need it and inclusive of a diverse range of young people.

5. Supporting improved outcomes: services and supports need to be built on sound evidence and respond to identified need within communities.”

The MAT program and services clearly meet all elements defined in this report, as demonstrated below.

1. SUPPORT ACROSS THE LIFE COURSE

MAT Programs and Services:

- » Are adaptable and applicable to all ages from primary years children to year 12 VCAL students
- » Encompass full range of programs including 1:1 individual support, small and large groups, one off stand alone programs, short and long (up to 16 weeks) programs, Peer Education programs of up to 3 years tailored to student and school needs
- » Are deliverable in a range of contexts: government primary, secondary, specialist and alternative schools; independent schools and community settings

2. EARLY INTERVENTION AT EVERY AGE AND STAGE

MAT Programs and Services:

- » Support children and youth at first sign of challenging or concerning behaviours
- » Build student capacity through Life Skills programs across entire year levels as an integral component of curriculum
- » Provide targeted approaches to identified issues: for example, managing anger, managing anxiety
- » Are utilised as a recovery response: for example post suspension programs, grief and loss support
- » MAT Engagement Support Officers trained to safely respond to critical incidents to minimise potential harm or injury.

3. SERVICES WORKING COLLABORATIVELY

MAT Programs and Services:

- » Are provided to assist schools assist their students: for example Campus support services through liaison with Student Wellbeing Coordinators, Year Level Coordinators, Teachers and School Leadership.
- » Are developed and delivered in partnerships with community agencies: for example Uniting Care Connections CHAMPS program (children living with parents with mental health issues); Headspace to support adolescents with mental health issues.
- » MAT Engagement Support Officers assist in developing Educational Plans for students and contribute to Program

Support Groups (students on the program for disabilities and impairments) meetings and Care meetings (some cases include 8 different stakeholders).

4. ACCESSIBLE AND INCLUSIVE SERVICES

MAT Programs and Services:

- » Assist students unable to participate in mainstream programs
- » Are delivered in and out of school hours, including weekends
- » Are accessed through referral from a wide range of organisations: for example EastCare (out of home care), Berry Street, Connections Uniting Care, Eastern Health, Migrant Information Centre and Oz Child Australia
- » Encompass inclusive approaches: for example age appropriate, gender specific, cultural diversity

5. SUPPORTING IMPROVED OUTCOMES

MAT Programs and Services:

- » Utilises proven therapeutic and clinical models and theories
- » Comprise a diversity of approaches that respond to identified needs of individuals, families and communities
- » Are informed by feedback from participants, teachers, agency staff, stakeholders and from reviews completed by MAT Engagement Support Officers
- » Evaluation, through surveys, case study interviews and testimonials evidence improved outcomes for students and teachers.



5.2. Researchers have found that a broader focus encompassing young people’s strengths and assets is important for building their skills and competencies as well as being an effective strategy for reducing problem outcomes (*Porter, 2010; Scales, Benson, Leffert, & Blyth, 2000; Theokas et al., 2005*).

Karen Pittman, an early advocate for positive youth development, coined the phrase “Problem-free isn’t fully prepared” in the 1990’s. Pittman argued that we need to shift the paradigm in youth work from preventing (fixing) behaviour deficits to building and nurturing “all the beliefs, behaviors, knowledge, attributes, and skills that result in a healthy and productive adolescence and adulthood”. Her approach was supported by resiliency research as well as the emergence of 40 Developmental Assets identified by Search Institute.

Building on available youth development research and theory, Pittman offered the model of 5 Cs as a framework for understanding positive youth development outcomes:

- **Confidence**—a sense of self-worth and mastery; having a sense of self-efficacy (belief in one’s capacity to succeed)
- **Character**—taking responsibility; a sense of independence and individuality; connection to principles and values
- **Connection**—a sense of safety, structure, and belonging; positive bonds with people and social institutions
- **Competence**—the ability to act effectively in school, in social situations, and at work
- **Contribution**—active participation and leadership in a variety of settings; making a difference

Richard M. Lerner (“The Good Teen”, 2007) includes an additional outcome:

- **Caring**—a sense of sympathy and empathy for others; commitment to social justice

The MAT program and services clearly reflects all six positive youth development outcomes.

1. CONFIDENCE

- » Evidence of mastery through participant's development of MAT skills and drills to build and sustain, for example impulse control, coordination and balance
- » Peer Educators display and report development of self-worth, self-efficacy, fitness and positive body image
- » Development of self-worth and mastery are components of Life Skills programs with extra emphasis in Headspace and Connections programs
- » Outcomes in this area for participants in previous Heatherwood Special School programs led to program being embedded in their curriculum.

2. CHARACTER

- » Documented learning outcome for VCAL programs
- » Character development is a key component of all Peer Ed programs
- » Heatherwood use MAT Code as link to school values
- » MAT Code assists young people develop principles and values

3. CONNECTION

- » Uniting Care "Connections" MAT program
- » MAT Life Skills programs designed to encourage the benefits of shared learning
- » Headspace programs good examples of safe and structured approach
- » Peer Educators develop positive bonds with each other, younger students and schools/agencies involved

4. COMPETENCE

- » Ability of participants to use learned skills in school, family/carers and community contexts
- » Ability of school/agency staff, families/carers to use learned skills with participants/students/children
- » Life Skills VCAL programs have learning outcomes in both Personal Development and Work Related Skills streams
- » Case study evidence of participants using learned skills to obtain and maintain employment

5. CONTRIBUTION

- » Peer Educator participants display and report leadership and sense of making a difference
- » Long association between Croydon Community School students and Heatherwood
- » Making a difference is a learning outcome of the community project component of VCAL Personal Development stream which is taught in MAT Life Skills VCAL programs
- » All Life Skills programs feature participants being active, practicing leadership and assisting other students within the group to achieve success

6. CARING

- » MAT Code specifically refers to compassion
- » All Life Skills programs feature exercises and stories to develop sympathy and empathy
- » Life Skills games teach development of fairness

6. Nature of Programs and Services

Applying the ideas from research into sensory integration; learning and developmental theories; trauma; and group theory, the **MAT Program** utilises a variety of martial arts techniques that support student learning and development.

Research has shown children and young people who are struggling with ADHD, autism spectrum disorders, severe behaviour disorders or other behavioural difficulties, benefit from a variety of learning modalities and in particular, **through the coordination of body and mind through active and calming activities.**

MAT Programs are delivered by a **team of qualified engagement support officers and life skills instructors** from a variety of professional and martial arts training backgrounds. Programs are generally conducted in school terms, five days a week, between 8am and 6pm, in either 60 minute or 90 minute sessions. The programs are non-combative, and provide the means for students to re-engage with learning.

The suite of programs is provided to schools and organisations, including:

- Government and independent schools (primary and secondary)
- Community schools
- Employment and training programs

- Specialist education settings
- Parent and child groups
- Government Departments and Agencies (DHS, Juvenile Justice, Eastern Health)
- Child and youth mental health service programs (Headspace, CYMHS)
- Family support, Youth services, Homelessness and Foster care organisations.

Programs can be tailored to meet the needs of the school or organisation, but are typically either 8 or 16 weeks in duration, and include a staff education session. The longer duration programs are usually for Peer Education and/or VCAL Personal Development components and are tailored to student/school requirement.

The MAT Program encompasses a **wide variety of individual and group based programs**, including Life Skills programs; Engagement Support Officer services; gender specific programs; peer educator and mentor programs; 1:1 Individual programs; Motivational and Life Skills sessions for VCE students; Protective Practice programs for staff.

“We tend to complicate social problems but there is always a common sense, simple message that cuts through. In the end that’s the message the young people will hear. If you’re positive and kind, if you accept people, then you don’t have bullying”

The Minister for Education, the Hon. Martin Dixon MP,
as quoted in the Herald Sun 21 March 2014.

‘LIFE SKILLS’

Therapeutic martial arts based programs involving intervention and prevention approaches for children and young adults identified as needing social, emotional or behavioural support to learn life skills (including values of respect and responsibility, skills in decision making, growing a positive future, managing emotions and behaviours).

There is increased recognition that many young people are not competent in these areas.

They either lack the support required to reinforce and build on essential life skills from family and significant others or it may be that traditional mechanisms for passing on life skills (family and cultural factors, role models) are not sufficient given today’s stressors.

The actual practice of skills in an active, experiential way is a vital component in integrating new knowledge for young people.



These skills can then be generalised to other environments such as in the home, playground and classroom settings.

The MAT program teaches life skills through a range of modalities including:

- Interactive lectures.
- Exercises focusing on fitness and strength (developing responsibility for self and resilience).
- Games and play.
- Martial art drills and skills (fun and challenging).
- Behaviour rehearsal (using games/ role play to practice life skills).
- Relaxation and breathing techniques (managing frustration, anger and anxiety/ worry and to develop focus, happiness/calmness).
- Story telling (metaphors to teach a life lesson by engaging young peoples’ imagination).
- Guided visualisation (an imaginary journey to discover new qualities/ abilities or to use the skills learnt to address a previously experienced stressful/challenging situation).
- Small group discussions (utilising worksheets to guide the flow of discussions).
- Programs are usually conducted by two qualified life skill facilitators. Smaller less challenging groups can be conducted by a single facilitator.

‘MAT ENGAGEMENT SUPPORT OFFICER SERVICES’

Engagement Support Officers (ESOs) play an important role as part of an integrated education and behavioural management plan for students. These are developed by the school and ESOs work under the supervision of the classroom teacher.

ESOs can support children and young people to develop coping skills for life. ESOs are in a unique position to be a positive, calm, consistent and reliable influence in a young person’s life while working as part of a learning support team in the school and managed by the teacher in the classroom. Equally, ESOs work closely with the school psychologist and other aides in the school.

The ESO program is designed to support schools manage students who are struggling with moderate to severe behaviour challenges and who may be, or currently are, at risk to the safety of themselves or others.

GENDER SPECIFIC GROUPS

The W.O.W ‘Way of the Warrior’ is a physically active therapeutic group program that combines the principles and philosophy of traditional martial arts with a structured opportunity to develop confidence, self-esteem and a sense of belonging for boys aged between 5 and 12 years of age. The program does not teach children how to fight but takes all of what it is to be a warrior on the inside and applies this in a therapeutic framework.

Program content is tailored to the specific needs of each group comprising up to 10 boys. Program topics include: feeling good about self, making good choices, respect and responsibility, managing strong emotions, managing anger and conflict, social skills training, growing positive futures.

The WOW Program is delivered over 8 weeks. Program participants are expected to obtain a range of skills applicable to situations in the school and home/ family environment.

“The MAT Program provides positive role models, of gentle males. It shows that ‘warriors’ are peaceful, not aggressive”

Bronwyn Harcourt,
Principal EMR Options,
Today’s School Channel 31, May 2012.

Therapeutic group programs are also designed, tailored to each school’s needs, and delivered to give girls and young women the confidence and self-belief to live their lives more fully. A range of activities which are female inclusive are provided in a safe, stimulating yet challenging learning environment. Students are empowered and value the sessions which combine action with discussion.

An example being the Northcote High School Girls Power Class conducted over 6 weeks covering topics of: Self Esteem; Body Image; Friendships; Healthy Relationships; Staying Safe and Goal Setting.



Peer Educator students from Keysborough Secondary College assisting with the delivery of a MAT program at a local primary school.

“We also went through the importance of being part of a team, and despite apparent strengths and weaknesses, when we are involved in a group effort; everyone needs to be supportive of everyone else. We put this into practice by doing the invisible chair exercise, which they all loved.”

Frankston Headspace Session 5, 17th October 2011



PEER EDUCATOR AND MENTOR PROGRAMS

The MAT Peer Educator program provides young people with structured and supervised opportunities for personal development. Peer Educators experience success through the development of leadership skills, self-esteem and self-confidence as role models for their younger peers.

Peer Educators are graduates of a 6-8 week martial arts based school situ ‘Life Skills’ Program and are drawn from Years 8 to VCAL students. After completion of the program, Peer Educators act as assistants to a MAT Program group instructor. Peer Educators are required to model appropriate behaviour to their younger peers in other groups held at their own school or they may be part of Life Skills groups in other schools.

“Leadership skills are enhanced and are pivotal to personal growth, which empowers the participants to view themselves as positive contributors. This is highlighted in the Peer Education component which sees the participants help instruct Primary students over a number of weeks”

Rhonda Crouch

*Director of Student Services,
Hawthorn Secondary College testimonial letter
extract, 2011*

1:1 INDIVIDUAL PROGRAMS

The one to one programs support students who are disengaged from education, at risk of disengagement from education, or unable to connect socially. They are designed to assist young people to re-engage with peers, education and/ or employment.

The aims are to:

- » engage young people in fun and fitness;
- » work on goal setting and problem solving for education/employment;
- » provide pathways for socially isolated young people to become 'group ready'.

PROTECTIVE PRACTICE PROGRAMS

These sessions provide practical, effective ideas and techniques that educators can use to address their personal safety concerns in schools. The focus is upon implementing pre-cursor strategies (for example de-escalation) before the need for self-defense. Thus enabling and empowering staff to have a 'front foot' approach to behavioural management, rather than being drawn into reactive patterns.

The feedback from these sessions has always been exceptionally positive with the teachers and carers stating that they learned useful and empowering skills, gained relevant information whilst having fun. Many said that the sessions have changed their lives by reducing stress levels; physically, strategically and mentally empowering them with skills and through awareness to be able to manage physically dangerous students.

Participant input is used to continually improve and target sessions enabling program development to evolve in a flexible manner to address emerging needs of staff.

The comprehensive accreditation process of MAT Engagement Support Officers includes specific Modules on Protective Practice Training (in addition to Theory Training Modules) which cover:

- » Understanding of DEECD policy requirements
- » Understanding Conflict (verbal, emotional and physical contexts)
- » Principles of Movement (deflection, relaxation under pressure)
- » Effective use of body language and positioning, vocal tones and the environment
- » Breath, time and self-care
- » Scenario training and assessment

CAMPUS SUPPORT

The MAT ESO Campus Support model is designed to augment a school's abilities to deal with ongoing behavioural issues. ESOs trained in campus support can assist in the design, development and implementation of Individual Education Plans in association with student/s, teachers, parents and other key stakeholders (for example DHS, CYMHS). Campus support ESOs work with teachers, year level coordinators and the school leadership to achieve sustainable student outcomes.

Case Study: *Karl*

“Karl” in reflecting upon his connection with the MAT program believes that it was one of those moments in life when you wonder, if you hadn’t have done this, where would you be today! *“Steve could have very easily said I’m not the right guy so I am very appreciative for going out of his way, it really says something about character”*. Both Karl and his mother agree that the guidance learned from the MAT program has been extremely beneficial and played a big role in shaping the man that he is today.

IN THE BEGINNING

Up until the age of six and half Karl frequently witnessed violent and abusive behaviour from his father towards his mother, to the point of severity where she said *“Should I make it out of the incident alive, I would not let history repeat”* and a divorce was obtained, with Karl and his twin brothers living with her.

At age 14 Karl began to visit his father on some weekends describing some of the time spent with him as quite tense, *“when Dad would have a stressful day, his actions would make it seem like it was always your fault. It was like walking on egg shells around him just trying not to get in his way”*. On several occasions Karl witnessed his father engaged in “off his face drunk driving”, which Karl did not agree with but was in no position to say so, as he was fearful of any repercussion.

Many aspects of Karl’s life were creating enormous amounts of stress within, resulting in him becoming increasingly frustrated and showing signs of severe aggression toward family members. His depression and anxiety became so extreme that he experienced

panic attacks which were misdiagnosed as an anaphylactic reaction to foods containing ‘MSG’. Karl describes how he felt living with anxiety *“It’s almost like if you don’t do this ‘thing’ that you need to do the world is going to end; you would feel wrong for the rest of the day”*. All of which was significantly affecting Karl’s learning, coupled with what he describes as *“under the radar bullying”* which *“bust my confidence, I had a lot of anger and resentment toward them.”*

At age 16 Karl was introduced to the Martial Arts Therapy program with Steve Golding as the instructor. *“I didn’t have an outlet until the time I started training with Steve, I loved the challenge and couldn’t wait to go back”*. Karl’s mother began to really notice that he was a much happier, that he was drawn to the physical aspect of getting stronger and the philosophy that strength isn’t about fighting or aggression but about self-control and using the ‘The Code’ to constructively address life and school experiences.

Karl completed his VCE and ceased his participation in the MAT program. His mother observed that Karl regressed to a continuing state of anger, depression and anxiety, which was tearing their family apart like it had been previously *“He wouldn’t shower or groom, his room was disgusting, he had no hope and felt that there was no one to reach out to”*

A tipping point was reached when Karl picked up a knife, making violent gestures and saying that it was within his power to end her life. During the interview, Karl disclosed that he has done some things that he isn’t too proud of and that it is a good thing that his mother was able to stay strong and not give up on him.

He describes his experience as *“getting down to that raw survival type instinct and that I wasn’t told how to do this, it wasn’t out of a book. I was literally on my hands and knees and decided that I’m not going to continue this, the weight of the world was on my shoulders, it was the build-up of the last couple of years, I’m worth more than what I’m currently doing.”*

Karl took up the opportunity to assist Steve in the MAT Life Skills program, being selected (because of his life experiences) as a role model/mentor to engage young people in understanding their current situations and to gain another perspective for their future.

Karl enjoyed this work and his enhanced skill set enabled him to train to become an accredited MAT Engagement Support Officer (ESO). He started full time employment with the Student Development Centre (EMR Options) overseen by Brooke Karl progressed from involvement in programs for young children to those for senior students. “It has been such an advantage having Karl around, because of his natural ability to make connections through empathy and drawing upon his own experience. He displays excellent engagement skills and shows interest toward students, intuitive, picks up on feedback and acts on it very well, has always had a good understanding of his role which is that he is there to assist the teachers, not be the teacher.” Karl’s input is “...also beneficial during staff debriefings; he is able to reflect in great detail some of the approaches to different situations that have worked for him through his own practice.”

THE FUTURE

Karl explains that he does not have just a single desired path that he is set to follow, there are many things he wishes to accomplish and that he believes that to do one thing does not mean another must be sacrificed. He wishes to travel to Japan to study Martial Arts culture and practices, and to climb Mount Everest. He is also very keen on the concept of becoming a detective (something that he is working toward achieving during his own time).

“We are all the hero of our own story... you are the one that must make the choice... and believe in yourself.”

7. Unique Characteristics

MAT Programs and Services are highly valued as they are adaptable to changing school and student needs. The increasing uptake by schools of our programs and services over the last several years is attributed to the following factors.

MAT ENGAGEMENT SUPPORT OFFICERS

- » Have collaborative approach of Support the School to Support the Child
- » Effective in assisting staff to improve disengaged student's participation in learning
- » Provide school based support both in the classroom and the schoolyard
- » Engage in safe practices
- » Build school and staff capacity to manage challenging behaviours
- » Effective in reducing negative outcomes associated with student behaviour likely to cause the risk of injury to other students and staff.
- » Effective in reducing staff stress related to students with challenging behaviour
- » Affordable as ESO employment is at basic DEECD Education Support Staff rates
- » ESOs used on a short, medium and long term basis (including use of split ledger payment methods)
- » Accountable as all ESO shifts are documented and reviewed
- » Backed up by a network of experienced staff to assist in development of student Individual Education Plans

- » Collaboration with Options Capacity Building Unit as campus support to implement student Individual Education Plans
- » Professionally supported: all ESOs receive quarterly individual reviews and participate in mandatory professional development sessions
- » Flexibility of ESO staff: able to interchange staff depending on performance/suitability, staff can move schools along with a student (within the region), avoiding potential excess.

MAT Engagement Support Officers undertake an intensive training program of 63 hours spread over 9 days encompassing:

- The Role of MAT Engagement Support Officers
- Role of MAT Coordinator
- Working in Schools-Things To Know
- Normal Child Development Information
- Causes of Behaviour Problems in Children
- Observation
- Principles of Managing Challenging Behaviours Escalation and De-Escalation Cycles
- Dealing with Concerns about Student Safety
- Reporting Child Abuse
- Minimising Risk of Allegations
- Writing Reviews
- Principles of Redirection and Technique



MAT ESOs are required to successfully complete written, active scenario and observed field placement assessments in order to achieve accreditation.

Ongoing training throughout the year is provided to support the professional development of ESOs and enhance their capacity to support children and education staff. Four professional development days are now mandatory for all ESOs to attend as well as compulsory quarterly supervision meetings. These cover areas such as professional practice and standards, professional development needs and other issues as they arise. Hence, maintaining a high level of quality control and support to staff working with children with significant needs in school systems that are frequently under stress and are not able to provide the debriefing or guidance needed for ESOs to continue to be successful in this role.

MAT LIFE SKILLS PROGRAMS

- » Stronger therapeutic background than other Martial Arts (MA) private providers and with greater Life Skills educational content versus MA skills content

- » More able to engage less willing and more disruptive students than other MA providers
- » Consistent recommendation by a major funding body School Focussed Youth Service as a quality provider
- » Proven track record using Peer Education concepts within programs
- » First Martial Arts Life Skills Program to receive exemplar status by VCAL quality assurance as an effective method for reaching expected learning outcomes in the Personal Development stream
- » Cost effective in comparison to other therapeutic program providers (such as outdoor adventure, animal therapy) as generally MAT is between 30 to 50% cheaper
- » Wide variety of Instructors in terms of life experience, age and gender and all with MAT training and accreditation

LIFE SKILLS INSTRUCTORS UNDERTAKE THE MARTIAL ART THERAPIST TRAINING PROGRAM, LEVEL 1.

This provides participants with the skills and knowledge they will need to act as Assistant and Lead Instructors in group and individual Life Skills programs.

- The training program consists of 7 modules and is delivered over 7 hours encompassing:

COST EFFECTIVE IN COMPARISON TO OTHER THERAPEUTIC PROGRAM

30-50% CHEAPER

- The MAT Program and Role of MAT Program Instructors
- Standards Required for MAT Program Instructors and Peer Educators
- The CODE and Martial Art Therapy Skills and Drills
- Managing Challenging Behaviours
- Managing Challenging Behaviours and Running Groups
- Lesson Plan examples; MAT Manual; General Polices and Work Instructions

Life Skills Instructors (LSIs) must successfully complete a written assessment task within 14 days of attending training. LSIs must then successfully complete a minimum of 30 hours (within 6 weeks) practical assessment delivering program components under the direct supervision of a Senior MAT Life Skills Instructors to a variety of groups in a variety of settings. After successfully completing both written and practical assessment tasks LSIs Level 1 deliver programs as Assistants to Senior Life Skills Instructors. Progression from Level 1 to Senior Life Skills Instructor is a case by case experience.

All Life Skills Instructors receive ongoing Professional Development as individuals at the end of each school term.

MAT PROTECTIVE PRACTICE PROGRAMS

- » Strong therapeutic background in comparison to generic Martial Arts based staff safety programs
- » Specifically designed to meet the needs of staff (teachers and aides) working in a range of school settings and environments
- » Model based on principles of harmony and natural movement with research and in practice validation of effective

approaches

- » Includes soft hand approach to physical protective behaviours component
- Contains innovative interactive participant assessment approach
- Increases DEECD staff capacity to maintain safe, orderly and inclusive environments (within and external to the classroom)
- Consistent recommendation by school principals and participants of MAT as a quality protective practice program provider
- Program content continually updated in line with DEECD policy



**VERMONT SOUTH
SPECIAL SCHOOL**

The MAT Program strategies have been a great tool used in our school to help absorb, and then re-direct challenging behaviours. The information given was direct, incisive, & all extremely relevant. I have found this course, amongst all the other PD's I've done, to best practically implement the legislated theory of Protective Practices. The thoroughness, planning, and resources committed to this very important specialised field by the MAT team is plain for all to see. I would a have no hesitation in recommending this program to people working with individuals exhibiting extreme or challenging behaviours.

*Hugh Watson, Welfare Officer
Vermont South Special School, 2014*

8. Return on Investment

The Martial Arts Therapy Program delivers social, economic and environmental benefits to individuals, schools, families, communities and the State on a cost effective basis.

It does so through a range of strategies including:

- » support for children and young people with a prevention focus (Life Skills programs); intervention and development focus (Engagement Support Officers)
- » quality assurance of practices through rigorous training of MAT personnel, formal supervision and ongoing professional development
- » capacity building of school staff and agency staff, through professional learning programs
- » retained memory through documentation (Student Individual Educational Plans and School Safety Plans)
- » established practices and operating systems which are sustainable and replicable

Social return on investment benefits can be identified in terms of direct outcomes and in terms of savings on future expenses, as cost avoidance or reduction.

Considering the lasting changes created in children and young people's lives by their involvement in MAT programs and services, and building a wider story of impact (effects on individual's schools, families, and communities) gives an

insight into the return on investment from the MAT Pilot program.

It is beyond the scope of this report to assign specific monetary values to MAT Program outcomes and savings.

8.1 MAT PROGRAM ECONOMIC BENEFITS:

"There is sound evidence that prevention and intervention strategies applied early in life and in the life of a problem are more effective for individual outcomes, and deliver a better economic return to the state, than intervention applied later in life." VCOSS & YACVic (2013)

"We know that by intervening early to help young people stay in school, engage in training or find work, we can set them up for a better future and so they can participate fully in the workforce rather than languishing on benefits." Yeomans, C. (2014)

Interventions that reduce youth disengagement could potentially return 23.6 times the government's initial investment to society. Melbourne Interface Councils, (2006)

Early school leaving costs Australia over \$2.6 Billion each year, Jack Thompson AM

"Research has shown that the average lifetime costs to Australia for

each early-school leaver (i.e. before Year 12) is \$74,000—nearly half of which is a direct monetary cost, with the remainder including social costs such as increased demand for medical and social services, related crime prevention costs, etc.” King, A. (1999).

“There is a growing crisis in Australia of youth unemployment and disengagement. Some young people need a lot of support to successfully overcome the challenges and issues in their lives that are holding them back.....if we don’t make the effort to keep young people engaged in education and work, then there is a greater risk that they’ll engage in anti-social behaviour” Thompson, D. (2014)

The underemployment for 15 to 24 year-olds is 12.6 per cent; for the whole population it is 6.9 per cent. The underutilisation rate for 15 to 24 year-olds is 23.7 per cent, compared to 11.9 per cent for the entire labour force population. 20 per cent of all casual workers are aged 15 to 19. FYA (2013)

“With a rising unemployment rate in Australia, it’s getting harder and harder to get a job if you don’t have Year 12 or qualifications that employers need.” Sharkie, R. (2014)

There is an annual cost of \$20,000 for a young person to be on Youth Allowance.

Economic benefits of retention also include the additional earning potential for school graduates continuing to further education, training or employment compared to early school leavers and through reduction in unemployment benefits.

8.2 MAT PROGRAM EDUCATIONAL BENEFITS:

According to the Australian National Social Inclusion project, which examined the role education can play as a pathway out of disadvantage; the add-on benefits of education include greater access to employment, participation in community activities, and improved sense of wellbeing, particularly for those from a low socioeconomic background.

“Children from poorer households are more likely to underperform in Literacy and Numeracy tests and to leave school earlier than their more advantaged peers” Muir, K et al. (2009)

As evidenced by surveys, testimonials and case studies the MAT Program delivers a range of educational benefits for students, including: school retention, minimizing school changes (arising from expulsion), regular attendance, and improved learning focus resulting in enhanced academic performance. It does this by using activities that build on the capacity and strengths of young people to develop resilience in meeting life’s challenges, including the ability to deal with the unexpected or setbacks.

The MAT Program is based upon the fact that prevention and early intervention strategies are more effective than restoration and that continuing in school education is a pathway to higher education, training or employment.

The MAT Program delivers whole of school benefits, including: strengthened relationships between students and their peers and between staff and students; increased teacher time dedicated to student learning (minimizing diversion to address behavioural issues); reduced teacher stress, savings on work cover claims, increased classroom safety and reduced school leadership time required for student disciplinary/welfare issues.

The MAT Program leaves a legacy through capacity building of principals, teachers and aides in alignment with school wide positive behaviours and wellbeing policies.

8.3 MAT PROGRAM FAMILY BENEFITS:

“Many Australians find it hard to break free from cycles of disadvantage. This cycle can result from patterns of disadvantage established in childhood and adolescence reverberating into adulthood. Youth policy should focus on building relationships with trusted adults and service providers.” ASIB A. Report (2010).

MAT programs and services create quality relationships and a partnership approach with young people, family/guardian/carers, teachers and staff. It offers increased stability, safety and improved family relationships. Representing a new approach for families/agencies when young people have fallen through the gaps and when other existing approaches have been unsuccessful.

The MAT Program is delivered by quality assured trained and committed professionals, many of whom have “lived experience” of the issues facing children, youth and their families.

8.4 MAT PROGRAM HEALTH, WELFARE AND WELLBEING BENEFITS:

The MAT Program encompasses approaches that address differing needs, developmental stages and that are culturally aware. It creates a learning environment that is welcoming, respectful, stimulating, non-threatening, interactive and engaging for children and youth. MAT Program participation leads to improved physical and mental health of individuals.

Savings accrue through reduced demand for health services and case workers, and through reduced or eliminated need for drug treatment, counselling and rehabilitation.

“The goal is to enable children to develop health, educational and social skills upon which they can build successful lives” ASIB, A. Report (2010)

The MAT Program reinforces a positive life affirming attitude in line with society’s expectations, restoring hope to young people and belief in their future.



8.5 MAT PROGRAM COMMUNITY BENEFITS:

“It costs approximately \$528 per day to hold a young person in custody compared to just \$52 per day for community-based supervision.”
Minister for Community Services,
The Hon Mary Wooldridge, MP, May 2011

The MAT Program provides significant benefits for the community in reducing youth offending and decreasing recidivism.

The provision of a holistic system of support for young people, where services are ‘linked-up’, can be likened to ‘scaffolding’, support that is available to young people as they build their own capacities. Gilligan, R. (2006)

The MAT Program provides a single entry point for all services delivered in partnership with schools and respected community organisations.

MAT programs and services are provided in existing facilities of schools and community agencies thus minimizing costs of delivery and providing accessibility (flexible hours and choice of locations including less formal) to match participant needs.

MAT Program outcomes include the re-establishing connection to school and to local community and hence contribution to building stronger communities.



CROYDON COMMUNITY SCHOOL

December 2013

To whom it may concern

I am writing in support of Martial Arts Therapy program. Since 2002 The Martial Arts Therapy program has developed a highly successful partnership with Croydon Community School. This program has worked with thousands of students across the Eastern Metropolitan Region in engaging young people in fun and fitness activities whilst placing emphasis on providing skills of goal setting and problem solving within an educational context. The program has clearly developed pathways for students and families who would have remained at risk of social isolation and ongoing criminal involvement.

The program continues to bring together key partners in supporting disadvantage youth, partners include schools, government and non-government youth support agencies such as Outer East Youth Connections, Department of Human Services and the Salvation Army.

The MAT pilot program has developed in to a highly effective practice with well-established strategies and infrastructure. Since its inception the program has built evidence to support excellent practice and has been able to clearly demonstrate impressive results for their participants. The focus of the peer training program has been around leadership and personal growth, indeed our students have benefited from the engagement offered by the MAT program with many students transitioning into full-time employment and training. In many cases these young people, who were involved in the juvenile justice system have made life changes and been averted away from a life of crime.

It is through the linking of key stakeholders and the adaption of the program to the schools' and communities' individual needs that the program develops a targeted implementation plan. The program maintains a commitment to evaluation and performance with clear lines of accountability. It is through this evaluation that the program continually adapts to the changing needs of the local community and in particular the young people.

I highly recommend the Martial Arts Therapy Program.

Yours Sincerely

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Mark Heuston', is written over a white rectangular area.

Mark Heuston
Campus Principal

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8.6 MAT PROGRAM INCOME VERSUS COST ANALYSIS

Table One: MAT Pilot Program Expenditure

Year	Total Costs	All Personnel - salaries - on costs - casuals - sub contracts	Administration	Training Accreditation PD	MAT Equipment	Professional Fees	Transport - travel - accom.
2010	\$773,467	\$692,507	\$36,180	\$5,365	\$1,795	\$37,620	0
2011	\$811,008	\$716,342	\$31,629	\$17,179	\$3,593	\$40,290	\$1,975
2012	\$842,126	\$763,842	\$9,232	\$18,744	\$5,542	\$40,155	\$4,611
2013	\$760,966	\$682,849	\$9,590	\$10,695	\$3,982	\$53,850	0

MAT Pilot Program Total Income and Total Costs Tables

2013 Notes:

A new financial management system based upon an appropriate Business model was implemented at the beginning of the year, previously this was CASES based. The Professional Fees figure includes the costs associated with the capacity to employ casual ESO staff through an external system (no longer being possible through the host school) and access to professional expertise.

In 2011 and 2012 the Transport costs reflected expenses incurred for the outreach contact required to establish and support the ESO service model. In line with our progress toward sustainability this area of expenditure was covered by reimbursement from schools via the DEECD Employee transport policy or via inclusion in personal taxation returns.

MAT pilot program service delivery highest cost component

is on personnel, accounting for approximately 90% of the annual budgets.

Expenditure on administration has been kept to a minimum, being 4.7% in 2010 and reducing to 1.3% in 2013 of total costs. This is attributed to the location of the program in the host school which provides access to DEECD systems. The administration cost for 2010 and 2011 included the costs of developing and implementing the required operational program document management system (to align with DEECD requirements).

Year	Total Income	Pilot Grant DEECD	Fee for Service
2010	\$611,784	\$201,500	\$410,284
2011	\$635,500	\$209,500	\$426,000
2012	\$841,000	\$231,000	\$610,000
2013	\$754,040	\$231,000	\$523,040

CONCLUSION

MAT pilot program establishment and development was supported by the DECCD grants. Program delivery has been strongly underpinned by fee for service payments from schools and agencies. This funding model has generated a financial return on the DEECD pilot investment of \$2 raised for every \$1 provided, with the majority of combined income being expended on personnel for program delivery to schools.

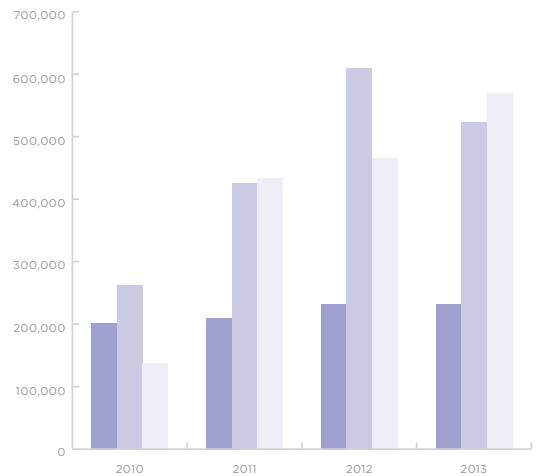
In addition schools have directly employed MAT trained and accredited personnel by accessing SRP funding to meet the needs of their students.

Table Three		
Year	MAT trained School Employed	MAT trained youth work agencies employed
2010	\$137,000	
2011	\$433,000	
2012	\$465,000	
2013	\$570,000	\$349,000

CONCLUSION

MAT accreditation has also provided employment pathways to community agencies supporting youth at risk, such as YASA, Brotherhood of St Lawrence, Youth Connections and Autism Plus. This direct employment by schools and agencies has necessitated the continuing recruitment, MAT training and accreditation of Engagement Support Officers.

MAT Program Pilot Funding Sources



MAT PROGRAM DELIVERY

- DEECD Pilot Allocation Funding
- MAT Program Fee for Service
- MAT Trained & Supported Staff School Employed Salaries

9. MAT Program: Delivering on Government Policy

The Victorian Government has set the scene for improving the education system as outlined in key documents being enacted through the Department of Education and Early Childhood Development (the Department).

Towards Victoria as a Learning Community (TVLC)

“The evidence confirms that a safe and orderly school environment is essential for improved student learning. Unruly behaviour impacts not only on the students concerned, but also disrupts the learning of other students.” TVLC p.16 (2012)

“The Department will: Support schools to purchase professional development directly from their choice of high-quality provider.” TVLC p.17 (2012)

The Therapeutic Martial Arts Association oversees MAT governance; schools and agencies attest our provision of high quality effective programs and services.

The MAT Program is an explicit, evidenced-based model of student behaviour management, to guide professional practice. TVLC p.23 (2012)

“Victorian schools will only be able to fully meet needs of students by collaborating and fostering networks of partners to build personal learning experiences for each student. This

is particularly true in addressing the complex needs of students who are disadvantaged or vulnerable.” TVLC p.25 (2012)

The structure of MAT service is designed to be inclusive of input from all stakeholders in collaborative framework. MAT programs are flexible, so they can be tailored to the complex needs of students who are disadvantaged or vulnerable.

The Compact: Roles and responsibilities in Victorian government school education

“Principle 1: All students can exercise education choices that meet their learning needs, aspirations and interests, and will be supported to reach their full potential.

Aim

- Provide teaching and learning programs, and implement practices and resources, which allow young Victorians to fully participate in education.
- Develop the skills and abilities that will prepare all students, including vulnerable students and students with disabilities, for lifelong learning and success in their chosen post-school pathway.” The Compact, p.3

The MAT Program is attested by schools and agencies as being accessible and as a provider of inclusive services.

The MAT Program has a strong history of support to students and staff in specialist schools, alternative settings and via agencies (such as Headspace, Berry Street), as it can be tailored to meet the specific developmental needs and provide skills to address the complex challenges facing children and youth.

The programs focus upon empowering students using a capacity building framework to enable them to continue in education

Principle 3: Schools provide inclusive, safe and orderly environments for all members of the school community.

Aim

Support the engagement and wellbeing of all staff and students, including vulnerable students and students with disabilities, by providing a climate of fairness, trust and mutual respect.” The Compact, p.5 (2013)

The MAT Program values base enables the creation of a learning environment (for students and staff) which reflects the climate describe in the above aim.

Responsibilities “Schools will:

- Build partnerships in local areas and with families to maximise student inclusion, engagement and re-engagement in high quality learning experiences.

Schools and agencies request MAT services to participate with families to create new patterns of engagement at home and at school,

to maximise student attendance in order to improve their learning outcomes.

- Document, communicate and implement school policies and strategies relating to student safety, wellbeing and engagement. This includes taking reasonable measures to eliminate discrimination, and victimization as far as possible, addressing the impact of disadvantage, and supporting students facing complex challenges” The Compact, p.5 (2013)

The MAT Program Manager has regular communications with DEECD policy units in relation to documentation of school policies and practical implementation strategies to support students facing complex challenges. MAT personnel work with the Options Capacity Building Unit to assist schools with appropriate documentation of policies and strategies and with information management.

“The Department will:

- Provide practical guidance and resources for managing challenging behaviour of students, parents and staff, and for managing bullying, discipline, cyber-safety and wellbeing
- Ensure access to professional learning relating to student welfare and discipline, and access to specialist expertise in exceptional, complex cases

MAT Protective Practice programs promote access to specialist expertise in complex cases (every Engagement Support Officer referral).

Concord School is a great example of a school utilising a range of MAT services including Life Skills programs, ESO support and training staff in Protective Practices



Broker partnerships with youth, community and health services where a school is facing particular challenges and needs support

The MAT program long term relationship with Croydon Community School exemplifies the capacity to establish and sustain partnerships for the benefit of schools, children, youth and their families.

“The program (MAT) continues to bring together key partners in supporting disadvantaged youth, partners include schools, government and non-government youth support agencies such as Outer East Youth Connections, Department of Human Services and the Salvation Army.” “It is through the linking of key stakeholders and the adaption of the program to the school’ and communities’ individual needs that the program develops a targeted implementation plan.” Mark Heuston, Campus Principal Croydon Community School, 2013.

The Victorian Government is also enacting change through the Department of Human Services (DHS).

The Department of Human Services is committed to making a positive difference for Victorians most in need through the provision of housing and community services.

The Commission for Children and Young People (CCYP) has been established to promote continuous improvement and innovation in: policies and practices relating to the safety and wellbeing of children and young people generally and in particular those who are vulnerable; and the provision of out of home care services for children.

“By intervening early to support attitudinal and behavioural change in adolescents, we can reduce the risk of them graduating to other violent behaviours – and enhance family safety” Minister for Community Services, The Hon. Mary Wooldridge, MP (as quoted in The Age, February 10, 2013)

“Like all adolescents, young people involved with youth justice face developmental changes and challenges associated with this life stage covering physical, cognitive, psychological and social changes. However in contrast to most adolescents, they often present with complex needs associated with: socio-economic disadvantage, childhood abuse and neglect, exposure to family criminal behaviour, substance abuse and /or mental illness, poor school performance, lack of family and social supports, and homelessness.” Youth Justice and Disability Forensic Unit, DHS, January 2013

Training and accreditation of MAT personnel involves knowledge of the developmental stages of young people and the capacity to build and sustain rapport across these stages.

Knowledge of health and welfare issues and their usual and unusual manifestations, together with awareness of the impact of peer and family challenges for children and youth are essential. Effective interpersonal skills include empathy from lived experiences, and capacity to motivate change through belief in each individual. The currency of such knowledge and skills is sustained through quality assurance processes and regular professional learning sessions.

The MAT Program Manager has regular communications with Departmental officers from DEECD and DHS to confirm that MAT service delivery remains in line with Government policies and to pass on best practice knowledge gained through the continuing implementation of MAT program and services.



Department of Human Services

Incorporating: Community Services, Housing, Women's Affairs and Youth Affairs

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27 October 2011

OUR REF:
YOUR REF:

To whom it may concern,

Re: Martial Arts Therapy (MAT) Programme

I have accessed the MAT programme in regard to one of my difficult teenage clients to assist in managing him within the classroom environment and assisting him manage his anxieties with the social interactions that occur in recess times.

The programme has been of great benefit towards my client and the MAT team have been excellent to work with. The MAT team leader has attended care Team Meetings and has been on board to gather a holistic view of the young person to best assist him match a support person that will best manage his needs.

Through utilising the programme we have been able to see a decrease in anxiety within the school environment and have seen the young person develop a great respect and positive relationship for his support worker.

I would recommend the programme to other protective workers to utilise as it has assisted in managing a very difficult and complex young person.

If you have any further questions in regard to the experience of engaging with the MAT programme, feel free to contact me on (03) 98436391.

Yours Sincerely,

Iain Mitchell
Protective Worker



Case Study: *Daniella*

The Martial Arts Therapy program provided Daniella with the tools she required to turn her life around. It enabled her to effectively manage her anger and frustrations with strategies learned through psychosocial rehabilitation as well as traditional martial arts training techniques. It has helped her with her personal development and through the support of the engaging staff and trainers Dani was able to rebuild her confidence, self-esteem and a sense of belonging.

The MAT code has become a way of life for Dani and is something she constantly refers back to in dealing with everyday challenges. She has become a teacher and mentor in her own right, promoting the “Way of the Warrior”. Dani believes the MAT program opened her eyes and enabled her to make life choices that were not previously available to her and that in turn has allowed her to share her passion with other vulnerable young people.

Dani has many achievements. Whilst studying VCAL in 2006 she undertook a traineeship in disability studies and completed work experience in primary and secondary schools in Maroondah. She also worked at the adolescent psychiatric ward at the Maroondah Hospital. She is a qualified masseur and has completed a certificate in beauty therapy. A certificate in disability health and fitness allows Dani to work with special schools, such as Heatherwood. In 2007 Dani was recognized for her dedication and commitment, she was awarded the Young Citizen of the Year; presented to her in recognition of her contribution to the community of Maroondah. Dani now runs a successful business of her own; she incorporates her love of fitness and beauty therapy to provide a service for women in the city of Maroondah.

Dani hopes to make a difference in the lives of others. Her passion, enthusiasm and professionalism are apparent as she thrives on being a positive role model and support to young people with troubled lives.

The MAT program has enabled Dani to re-focus on her life. She has learned that it is what you do that defines you. No longer is she the angry and confused teen that arrived at Croydon Community School. Dani is highly motivated and enthusiastic about her future. Her dedication and strong work ethic is displayed in her business success today. Dani’s hopes are for a thriving business, a family, and a fulfilled and happy life.



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11. Acknowledgements

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- Victoria Triggs, Director Leading Lady Consultancy
- Jenny Ward
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- atEast VET and School Based Apprenticeships
- Birdman Accessories
- Hollywood Panels
- Shukokai Karate Victoria
- Ultimate Martial Arts
- Victorian Kung Fu and Tai Chi Association
- Warrandyte Aikido
- Fudoshin Martial Arts
- Tans Martial Arts supplies



Be strong

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