Determining Implementation Drivers in Resilience Education: Primary Schools Data Snapshot
In Determining Implementation Drivers in Resilience Education, we investigated the factors that influence the uptake, implementation and impact of the Resilience, Rights and Respectful Relationships (RRRR) program, a wellbeing and respectful relationships education program offered to primary and secondary schools in the state of Victoria.

The research was conducted by a team of researchers at the Melbourne Graduate School of Education, led by Professor Helen Cahill. It was funded by an ARC Linkage grant, in partnership with the Department of Education and Training (DET), and the Victorian Health Promotion Foundation (VicHealth).

The primary students were in Year 4-6, and their age ranged from 9 to 12.

The majority of students feel positively connected with and supported by their peers, but there is room for improvement.

875 primary students answered a wellbeing and resilience survey in 2017, 261 students were interviewed in focus groups in 2017-2018.

- 85% of students felt strongly connected to their school.
- 85% of students ‘agreed or strongly agreed’ that their teachers care about them as a person.
- While most students reported high wellbeing, 15% reported signs of possible psychological distress.
Determining Implementation Drivers in Resilience Education

Students report that one of the most stressful things about school is making and keeping friends.

“There’s the popular kids, and then there’s the unpopular kids, and then there’s all the kids in between. And if you’re down here, you get dirty looks and people call you names.”

About 1 in 3 boys (38%) and 1 in 5 girls (23%) reported having called others mean names at least once in the previous week.

“Everyone’s different, he was a bit more different, and they started picking on him. Kids tease people for what they look like, body shape and stuff, being a bit different, skin color.”

Girls (42%) were more likely to feel left out by peers than boys (29%).

“Lots of people have groups and that’s helpful, but sometimes with groups people get excluded, which I see quite a lot. There’s just lots of groups and not many people go to different groups, which I think is not that good because you just stay with a specific group of people.”

79% of students agreed or strongly agreed that those who were ‘different’ were treated with respect at school, but around 1 in 5 did not agree with this statement.

95% of students agreed or strongly agreed that boys and girls should be treated equally.

However, about 1 in 4 believed girls and boys were not treated equally at school.

17% of students agreed or strongly agreed that those who were ‘different’ were treated with respect at school, but around 1 in 5 did not agree with this statement.

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Almost 1 in 5 students (17%) feel lonely either most days or every day.
DETERMINING IMPLEMENTATION
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PROGRAM IMPACT
Students reported a number of benefits from participating in the Resilience Rights and Respectful Relationships program:

**Improved conflict resolution skills:**
"I used to get into fights with my friend; we used to go and speak to the teacher because we could never sort it out. But since we did the program, we can talk through it and work it out."

**Improved gender attitudes:**
"I think that when we learned about gender stereotypes that people got more tolerant of other people. In our class not many girls play basketball, only the boys. Learning about this helped people to realise that girls can do this as well, it’s not just the boys."

**Improved peer connectedness:**
"The games that we play help to bond us together and create more of a calm environment, like there’s no arguments."

**Improved cross-gender friendships:**
"I feel like Respectful Relationships sort of helped us sometimes bond, I don’t really know how to say it. I feel like at the start of the year everyone was separated into boys and girls. But I feel like now sometimes some people can mix."

**Improved confidence with help-seeking:**
"The lessons have helped us to know not to be scared to ask for help."

**Stronger teacher-student relationships:**
"My teacher, you could probably ask him anything. I could …the program kind of shows that they (our teachers) care about us, even though we knew that the whole time. It helps to reassure us of this."
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PROFESSIONAL LEARNING

Female teachers were more likely than male teachers to report that the program was ‘an extremely good fit’ with their own values.

Teachers more than 10 years from graduation were twice as likely as those with fewer years of experience to believe it was ‘extremely important’ to teach the program.

Teachers expressed concerns about the more sensitive aspects of the program including anxieties about backlash to teaching about gender equity and gender diversity, and concerns about evoking distress among students and teachers:

“It can be that people are worried that if they bring things up with kids, then it’s something else that they might have to respond to and deal with: ‘So, it’s better not to talk about any of that stuff and then I don’t have to respond to it! Do I open a can of worms about anything?’

Support from colleagues and professional learning teams enabled teachers to overcome their anxieties about teaching the more sensitive aspects of the RRR program:

“It’s the team; it’s the working together. It’s the collaborative stuff that we do together, and we have the discussions and we are respectful amongst the staff, you know. We understand that some people might find it [talking about gender-based violence] challenging . . . so ‘how can we support those staff members?’ [. . .] it’s bouncing off each other. If something gets sticky, then another teacher can support you there. Just knowing you’ve got that other person and you’re just working together. Yeah, I find it much more comforting.”

293 primary and secondary teachers took part in a conjoint two-day training provided by the University of Melbourne in 2017-2018. The training aimed to build knowledge, confidence and readiness to teach the RRR program.

90% of teachers found the sampling of the learning activities devised for the students was a very or extremely effective experience and was the most valued aspect of the training.

89% were very or extremely likely to recommend the training to their colleagues.

92% reported that the program was a very or an extremely good fit with their personal values.
DETERMINING IMPLEMENTATION DRIVERS IN RESILIENCE EDUCATION

EFFECTIVE IMPLEMENTATION
Ten key factors improved teacher comfort and were associated with effective program implementation:

- **Strong leadership** support from principal and staff champions
- **Previous history** of providing wellbeing education
- **Program home** which permitted sufficient time for delivery
- **Teamed teaching** to support teachers who lacked confidence or experience
- **Specialised professional learning** from experts who shared methods and rationale
- **In-house professional learning** to build staff capacity with use of collaborative methods and topics addressing prevention of gender-based violence
- **Availability of high-quality teaching resources** in the form of the RRRR program manuals
- **Policy mandate** supporting provision of Respectful Relationships education in schools
- **Disclosures training** to build teacher confidence about responding to anticipated disclosures about family violence and abuse.
- **Wellbeing staff** available to assist in follow up with affected students