



Enhancing the lives of children

••• We are proud to be sending you SWiS NEWS along with a colourful suite of posters and a brand new brochure which explains the SWiS service.

The posters feature real life quotes from teachers, parents and children whose lives have been transformed thanks to a social worker in their school.

“This new material celebrates the real difference that Social Workers in Schools are making to children and families. The bright, colourful images are a real reflection of the

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positive impact this service has,” says Bryan McKee, manager of Child, Youth and Family community partnerships. “It will also be a great resource for social workers, schools and providers in promoting the service.”

The new material features the line ‘Social Workers in Schools: Enhancing the lives

of children’. “The whole point of the partnership between social work and schools is to enhance children’s educational, health and social outcomes,” says Bryan. “It’s about the whole child, so that really summarises what we want to achieve together.”

The posters are designed to encourage interest in SWiS and promote it as a positive service that families can feel proud to be a part of.

The brochure can be used widely to explain the service to parents, as well as other community groups, agencies and partners.

We hope you enjoy these new resources. If you would like to order additional material please contact cyf_swis@cyf.govt.nz



Simple tips on using the material

- Make sure you have your contact details clearly displayed near the poster – for example, you might want a stack of your business cards in a holder.
- Keep brochures in a stand underneath the posters as well, so people passing by can easily find out more about SWiS.
- Use the brochures as a first point of contact with families, as it explains what we do in a straightforward way.
- Brochures can also be used to explain the service to any community partners.
- Do put up the posters and celebrate being a SWiSie!



in this issue

- **Partnering Agreement:** What you need to know
- **Whānau time:** New DVD celebrates Maori parenting
- **Tūmeke:** Social workers transforming their school
- **Kiwi icon:** SWiS in country schools

Everything you need to know... about the Partnering Agreement

• • • Why does SWiS have a Partnering Agreement?

The Partnering Agreement establishes an operational framework for managing the SWiS service across the cluster, enabling effective service delivery and development. The content of the Partnering Agreement demonstrates a willingness by all parties to collaborate in SWiS service delivery. It also reflects local needs.

• • • Who participates in developing the Partnering Agreement?

The parties to the Partnering Agreement are the schools in the cluster, the service provider, Child, Youth and Family and the Ministry of Education. Child, Youth and Family is represented by the contract specialist and the Ministry of Education by the local development officer.

• • • What's happening with the Partnering Agreement?

The Partnering Agreement template is currently being updated, along with all SWiS contract documents. This will assist the cluster to build a positive framework for the SWiS service into the future.

• • • What changes have been made?

1. The Partnering Agreement will have a standardised format for use by all SWiS clusters throughout New Zealand.

2. The first few points of the new template explain the background to the Partnering Agreement. This includes the purpose of the Partnering Agreement, the parties to

the Agreement, the length of time of the Agreement, a commitment statement and the objectives of the service as defined in the Service Description.

3. The points after the background are open for discussion between the parties. These points include the cluster's mission statement and values, the operational structure, the policy for referrals to Child, Youth and Family, a list of assets and responsibilities for these assets, service support and responsibilities for service support, contact details of the parties, a plan of social worker availability, service planning, group programmes and a protocol for resolving differences.

4. Once the content is agreed by all parties it is documented, and then signed off by all parties.

• • • What happens after 1 November 2008 when the new contracts are implemented?

- The SWiS clusters will have the opportunity during their planned cluster meetings to review their current Partnering Agreements and to modify them accordingly. The schools and service providers will be supported during this process by Child, Youth and Family.

- This completed Partnering Agreement can be used as the agenda for each cluster meeting.

- The Partnering Agreement will be reviewed annually.

If you have any queries please contact Miranda Pittaway on 04 918 9014 or miranda.pittaway001@cyf.govt.nz

Give it a go!

We're really excited that New Zealand will be hosting the fourth International School Social Work Conference, to be held in Auckland on 14-17 April 2009. We would love to see our own SWiS service well represented at this forum, as it's a real opportunity to showcase our unique model to the world.

Why don't you consider submitting an abstract or even a poster proposal? This could be about innovations in your service, some of your outstanding successes or the challenges that you face.

Themes for the conference include: 'Embracing and Empowering Diversity', 'Focusing on Better Outcomes for Children and Young People' and 'Social Work Practice and Development'.

Papers are welcomed on issues relating to the conference themes, although any other papers making a contribution to school social work in an international context will be considered.

The deadline for submissions is 24 December 2008. To find out more or submit a proposal online go to <http://4isswc.massey.ac.nz>

For help with your proposal, contact Tracy Sanderson on 09 414 0800 ext 9051 or email t.l.sanderson@massey.ac.nz



Pahia with his whangai son



Involve conference

Getting involved

"It's a blessing to be given the chance to be a dad again. I wouldn't have it any other way," says Pahia Turia, a whangai – or foster – dad.

Pahia, who is a youth development worker, was one of the stand-out speakers at the Involve youth conference in July, attended by 11 MASSiSS social workers. He is also featured in a new DVD *Tātai Kōrero*, which celebrates Maori parenting experiences.

It was an unexpected phone call four years ago that turned Pahia's life upside down. The mum-to-be, who is close to Pahia's whānau, called him the day she went into labour and asked if he would go and support her at the hospital. "The minute he came into the world I fell in love with him," says Pahia. "From that day on I have been his other father. I don't view him any differently from my other babies."

The rewards of whangai care are in the small but significant things: "Getting a cuddle and hearing 'I love you'. It's the same thing as all my kids, the rewards are just seeing them grow up and develop into young people," says Pahia, who has three other children aged between nine and 17.

The Involve conference celebrated youth and was an inspiration for the social workers, says Saffron Gardner, MASSiSS senior advisor. "It really countered the bad press that youth get in New Zealand where graffiti, youth gangs, violence and drug abuse are highly profiled.

"We heard instead of the success, the resilience and the creativity of youth and the dedication and compassion of the adults who work with them," she says.

The youth work Code of Ethics was launched at the conference. To download a copy go to www.youthworkers.net.nz/CoE0book.pdf

Tātai Kōrero is intended as a discussion tool on Maori parenting values, such as whakapapa, whānau, waiata and mirimiri, and may be a useful resource for you. If you would like a copy of this DVD please email skipinfo@msd.govt.nz

note to readers

In this issue of *SWiS NEWS* you might stumble across the word 'partnering' several times. We have stories of two brothers-in-arms who helped transform Porirua College by banding together, and we look at how schools and SWiS are working effectively together in a rural community.

The SWiS service would be nothing without passionate people, creating great partnerships with schools, providers, agencies and the community, in order to make a difference to the lives of children and families. We are currently preparing to make changes to our Partnership Agreements, in order to strengthen this multi-agency approach to services.

Recently there have been a few changes to the team at National Office but we're pleased that Nicki Weld, our former practice advisor took the time to share some final thoughts before she moved on.

We would love to hear from you if you would like to share any news, innovative programmes, the difference SWiS has made in your school or any tips for other Social Workers in Schools. Please email Ingrid.goodwin001@cyf.govt.nz





School work: SWiS is all about relationships

Country life

••• Paeroa may be ‘world famous in New Zealand’ for being a typically small Kiwi town. But a close partnership between SWiS and local schools has garnered big results. SWiS NEWS takes a look at the small town with a big heart.

During the last few years Paeroa has gone from one of the lowest achieving areas in education for Maori students to 26 percent above the national average, and 10 percent above the national average for all students. “I think the SWiS service is a large part of that,” says Kaye Ferguson, principal of Miller Avenue School, the largest primary school in Paeroa with 140 students. “The SWiS service works quietly in the background. It has engaged families and freed up the time

for teachers, leading to tremendous results in our low decile schools.” One of the huge highlights of the past few years has been a school trip to Wellington, which involved almost the whole school and was “phenomenal in changing behaviour long term,” says Helen Fraser, SWiS contract specialist. It was a huge undertaking and included many at-risk children. A year out from the trip, the school began working to change

behaviour. “They focussed on bullying and aggression, and put a plan together that would see the children work hard all year so that they could have the trip to Wellington. “If a kid was a bully they asked ‘why are you bullying?’; they engaged the families and gave them skills to cope. The change in the kids by the end of the year was amazing,” says Helen. Even a simple thing like selling raffle tickets, was an opportunity to teach manners,

presentation and honesty. The students were even taught about waiting at traffic lights and how to walk on a crowded street. At the end of the year, 80 students were flown down to Wellington and stayed in a hotel in town. They saw all the sites and had new experiences like going to a high rise hotel and eating at a food court, before taking the train back home.

“It was fabulous. Everywhere we went people were saying this is the best school we’ve ever had visit.”

“When the kids hear that over and over again it has an effect,” says Kaye. “It opened up a whole group of students to possibilities beyond what they knew. Even just seeing people walking down the street with briefcases, we asked the kids, ‘Do you think they were any different to you when they were at school? They were just the same as you, and you can have these dreams too if you want!’ Murray Ferguson is the Social Worker in Schools for the area, and says working in the rural environment is often about opening up the children’s worlds, as there are high levels of unemployment which can lead to social problems. “The main employment is from the meatworks, so I will tell the kids that if they want to go to university they could become a meat inspector or a manager, and help them discover new dreams.” Working in a small town is all about relationships, says Murray. “I find the

relationship I have with the kids is unbelievably fantastic, they tell you everything, they run up to you in the playground – they are just looking for a really safe person in their lives and they just need someone to believe in them.” Murray will often visit families in their home – popping in for a cup of tea or even staying for a meal. This has helped bridge the gap between the children’s home and school lives, and engaged isolated parents. Truancy at the local schools has dropped dramatically, simply because he will go and pick them up and get them some kai if they don’t have any. He is happy to go the extra mile to help out families in need – like the family who moved into town without a bed to sleep on. Murray sourced a bed from the local Salvation Army and gave it to the family. One family he worked with had a child with health issues but they had been living without power in their house for over a year. “It took me about six months, but I took the father out to lunch and he opened up about everything in his life,” says Murray. “We did a whole lot of work around what family means, and responsibility with money. They worked really hard and after a long time they paid off the power bill and got power back in their house. He is now committed to his family in a big way.” Murray says that the SWiS service is a true partnership between schools, his provider Hauraki Maori Trust, agencies and families. “I’ve been really fortunate to have a good cluster of principals, it’s really supportive and they’ve given me freedom to evolve the role.”



Teamwork: Murray and Kaye



“We’ve seen kids go from very destructive to happy, confident young people. Who knows what might have been without the service?”

“I feel very passionately about the impact of this service,” agrees Kaye. “We’ve seen kids go from very destructive to happy, confident young people. Who knows what might have been without the service?”

10-4 good buddy

Remember Starsky and Hutch, the straight-talking crime fighting team? Now think Phil and Conway. The partners in crime – so to speak – have helped transform Porirua College into a thriving academic community, where P.C. stands for ‘pride and courage’.

As the dynamic duo walk around the school grounds, they are constantly greeted by pupils at the College. “I’ll see you at Saturday School eh,” says one young man as he shakes Phil’s hand. Another comes up and hassles the pair about their popular radio show *2mekemaoriZ* on Holla FM.

Phil Skipworth, the MASSiS social worker, began in 1999 and brought in Conway Matthews, the community liaison worker, a year later when he “realised the job was too big for one man”. The pair have lived on the same street, have children almost the same age and describe themselves as “joined at the hip”.

When they began, the school had some gang and drug problems and was in danger of being shut down. Today it is the highest achieving school in the Porirua area, is thriving with 600 students, and has just received a state-of-the-art building as part of the Schools Plus pilot. When the multi-million dollar investment in the school was announced, Prime Minister Helen Clark explained that the school was chosen for the pilot because of its hard work in “lifting education achievement for its young people”. It has been a huge effort from the principal Susanne Jungersen, along with the Board of Trustees and teachers. Bringing Phil and Conway on board has been part of this transformation.

“P.C. [Porirua College] used to mean Poor Children, now it means Pride and Courage,” says Phil.

“Kids used to want to be in gangs, now the majority say ‘Hell no, I’m going to uni or polytech’.”

The pair introduced a restorative justice system to the school, and committed to work with any student that went through the system for their entire school life and even beyond.

“Some schools have zero tolerance on violence or drugs, but if we send them to the gates, what happens next? They’ll be doing the same things, but without the school environment to help them.



P.C.: Pride and courage at Porirua College



Bright future: Phil and Conway at the wall painted by students

“Our way is to find out the cause before we deal with the problem – if you don’t deal with the cause, you’re not really fixing the problem.”

One young man, who stands out to the pair, had serious behavioural problems and caused thousands of dollars in damage. Phil and Conway worked hard with Police to divert him from prosecution. “By the

time he was a senior, he was a leader in the school. He even went to Taiwan as part of the kapa haka group. His family saw the huge change in him too, which was beautiful to see,” says Conway.

At the heart of their approach is the Saturday School, where Phil and Conway give of their own time every weekend. If a young person needs to be given clear messages about appropriate behaviour, the pair will work with them in a way that relates to the ‘wrong doing’ - so if they have damaged school property, they will repair it. If they have skipped school, they do academic work - the teachers and principal also willingly give of their time and have dug into their own pockets for supplies.

The day is run like a real day’s work, from nine-to-five with work breaks and lunch

provided, to help instil a good work ethic. They are taught skills like painting, roofing, carpentry and horticulture.

The concept evolved after some students tagged the school and as punishment were taught to paint the building they had tagged. “That was seven years ago and it has never been tagged since. Before that we were one of the worst tagged areas around,” says Phil.

“We create an environment where the students take ownership for what they have done,” says Conway. “And it’s also an environment where they can open up.”

“When the kids start getting into the job with us, they start chatting and talk about themselves without realising. Like one young guy the other day who is pretty staunch, told us ‘My old man beats me up’, so you get a chance to talk.”

Nowadays the Saturday School is so popular that Phil and Conway have trouble keeping the kids away.

“They know we’re there for them and that’s what makes the difference,” says Phil. “We see ourselves as having 600 kids on our books and I can honestly say I know the mother, father, aunty, uncle and cousin of every student.

“Seeing the growth in the young people is payment in full, that is how we earn our riches.”



New attitude: The school’s new state-of-the-art building

A final thought (or two) *from Nicki Weld*



This will be my last practice thought for *SWIS NEWS* but be assured it won't be the last for social work in education! I've been thinking a lot lately about the social work voice, or sometimes lack of it. I am delighted that the *SWIS* service now has its own Competency Framework which gives more detail to the social work role, and the unique skills and tasks connected to it. Overall though, as social workers I think we still have a way to go to give description to the work that we do and what sets it apart from other professions. Anne Weick back in 2000 summed this up really well when she said:

“What we most need to do is collectively clear our throats and give voice to the rich practice heritage that makes social work distinctly itself.”

Within this we need to give voice to the learning developed from our practice which is found through listening, questioning, and paying attention to the emotional and spiritual elements of our social work experiences. We need a marriage between social work theory and social work practice wisdom, where both inform and strengthen each other to achieve positive outcomes. We need to celebrate that which makes

social work unique – the skills required to build relationships to support positive change, and the skills of assessment that help us map pathways forward with children and families.

To bring forward our voice, we need to create practice theory through the ongoing process of action and critical reflection. Sometimes though, we have a tendency to focus on what went wrong instead of what went right. While we should always learn from mistakes we must always move on to looking forward. We need to keep sharing

stories of success and achievement as this is the fertile ground we can learn and grow practice excellence from.

It has been a privilege and a wonderful experience to work with you all in *SWIS*. Thank you for allowing me this opportunity, you have informed and strengthened my learning in many ways.

Stand tall in the work that you do, it really is making a difference.

Choose to Hug

A new booklet gives parents great, down-to-earth advice on how to provide children with a positive, non-violent home environment. *Choose to Hug*, published by the Office of the Children's Commissioner, gives parents a range of suggestions about how they might respond when children do things they find difficult or unacceptable. Instead of using fear or shame, the booklet provides suggestions which develop self-discipline and self-confidence. This resource is free and can be ordered by going to www.occ.org.nz



Here's an example of some of the tips from Choose to Hug:

Rewarding children for good behaviour works better than criticising and punishing them for unacceptable behaviour. Positive attention and praise are the best rewards parents can give to a child of any age. Even small children really want to please their parents.

Say positive things: “You did well”, “Thank you for putting that away.”

Look out for success: Notice good and improved behaviour.

Be affectionate: Look and smile at your children when you talk to them.

Comment on improvement: “You were

very quiet while I was on the phone. I like that a lot.”

Use humour and surprise: “Wow! You were the first one to eat all your dinner.”

Tell someone else: “Dad, I have something very special to tell you about how well your kids behaved today...”

Link good behaviour and enjoyable activities: “After you have cleaned up I will read you a story.”

Avoid put-downs: Don't call children names.

Say sorry if you make a mistake: Kids feel valued when adults apologise to them.

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