

Resilient Families:

Assisting the parent community to support schools and students



The Resilient Families program provides resources and services that schools use to strengthen their parent community and enhance student learning and wellbeing.

Background: Professor John Toumbourou is a well known adolescent health researcher. He has been working for a number of years with a team of researchers and family practitioners to design and evaluate the Resilient Families program. This program has been designed to be easily implemented by secondary schools and assists parents to develop healthy relationships with their adolescent children. Adolescents show improved educational outcomes and wellbeing where they experience effective parenting and maintain positive family relationships. The definition of family in this program is broad and acknowledges the reality that while some children live with both parents, many others live with only one parent, or with other carers. The program is designed in awareness of the difficulties many schools experience in their efforts to involve and engage families.

Aims of the Resilient Families Program: The program aims to provide a structured sequence of activities and resources that secondary schools can utilise to encourage family support for education and positive student experiences with parents. The program aims to increase family involvement and enhance parent education opportunities and through these means improves student adjustment to secondary school. In addition to enhancing family protective factors that can improve adolescent wellbeing the program also aims to reduce threats such as alcohol misuse.

Services within the Resilient Families Program: The program includes four main components that schools can purchase as independent services or implement together.

1. **School Planning and Staff Training:** Resilient Families staff meet with the school leadership to plan program and policy objectives. A half day professionally-facilitated “staff development” training session is provided to explore the benefits of working with parents and to examine potential problems and solutions. **(Price: \$600).**
2. **Student Social Relationship Curriculum.** Teachers participate in a half day training that provides guidance in the delivery of a 10-session curriculum that can be flexibly placed within the schools health and wellbeing or pastoral care program. The curriculum Includes social relationship homework that students complete with their parents. **(Price \$800).**
3. **Quiz Night (Plus distribution of book):** In schools that consider themselves ready for this - parents are brought together in the school for a professionally-led interactive evening. **(\$800 - externally facilitated Quiz evening or \$600 for training and 1-year license for up to two internal facilitators; Parent book \$15 per copy or \$1000 per 100).**
4. **Parenting Adolescents a Creative Experience:** An 8-week professionally-facilitated program for parents run at the school (2 hours per evening) **(\$2,000 for external facilitator for eight sessions; or \$800 to train and support one or more internal facilitators).**

Schools have the option of parent education programs being delivered by external facilitators or alternatively having their own staff trained to deliver these programs. The Resilient Families team can assist with funding applications for paying the program fees.

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SOLID EVIDENCE SUPPORTS THE RESILIENT FAMILIES PROGRAM

	OVERALL MODEL	EXPECTED BENEFIT.	EVIDENCE
	The model comprises a feasible approach to building capacity in schools for active engagement with parents. The integrated components listed below start by carefully planning school activities.	Aims to improve student retention, positive school experiences for students and reduce adjustment problems such as alcohol misuse. Does this by reducing peer detachment from adults by increasing attachments to school, parents and to friend's parents.	The overall program receives substantial support from longitudinal evaluation studies (Shortt et al, 2007). A large quasi-experimental "effectiveness study" of the Program for Parents variant reduced adolescent alcohol and antisocial behaviour and improved targeted family protective factors (Toumbourou & Gregg, 2003). The large Resilient Families experimental trial fully supports the overall program logic (Shortt et al, 2007) and effectiveness (Toumbourou et al, 2013).
#	SERVICES	EXPECTED BENEFIT.	EVIDENCE
1a	School Planning. A survey usually with the Principal is completed in a 2 hour meeting.	Aims to help schools to develop policies and programs that can involve parents.	A school survey was developed and successfully completed by 91% of the 24 Principals in the Resilient Families trial. The survey is currently being tested in larger samples to explore its benefit as a planning aid for Principal's.
1b	School Staff Training: A half day professionally-facilitated "staff development" training session for the welfare and teaching staff.	Aims to (1) develop school staff understanding of the benefits for student education of engaging parents; (2) overcome potential barriers; and (3) collaboratively develop a plan to enhance engagement.	There has been little research into the potential range of "family-friendly" programs and policies. School trainings were successfully completed for the Resilient Families program and these received high approval.
2	Student Social Relationship Curriculum. Ten sessions in health and wellbeing or pastoral care curriculum. Includes homework to be done with parents.	Aims to increase student social attachments to parents and teachers by increasing (1) social problem solving skills and (2) identifying mentoring strategies for students who don't have available parents.	The first year impacts (Shortt et al, 2007) for the Resilient Families (RF) program trial supported the view that the curriculum has overall benefits. Teachers and students positively evaluate the curriculum and schools are able to identify students who do not have a family member who can assist with homework.
3	Quiz Night (Plus distribution of book). Parents are bought together in the school for a professionally-led interactive evening.	Aims to encourage a "community of parents" within the school and in this way to increase student attachments to parents and to friends' parents and to enhance monitoring of adolescents.	Parent's positively evaluate the Quiz (Shortt et al, 2006). The first year (Shortt et al, 2007) and second year impacts (Toumbourou, 2013) for the RF trial demonstrated very positive outcomes for the students for the 10% of parents who attended.
4	PACE: 8 week professionally-facilitated program for parents run at the school (2 hours per evening).	Aims to increase student attachments to parents and to friends' parents and to enhance monitoring of adolescents by enhancing parent community skills.	Parents positively evaluate PACE (e.g., Shortt et al, 2006). There is positive evidence from the large effectiveness trial (Toumbourou & Gregg, 2002). PACE was also supported by the first (Shortt et al, 2007) and second year impacts (Toumbourou, 2013) for the RF trial.

REFERENCES:

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