



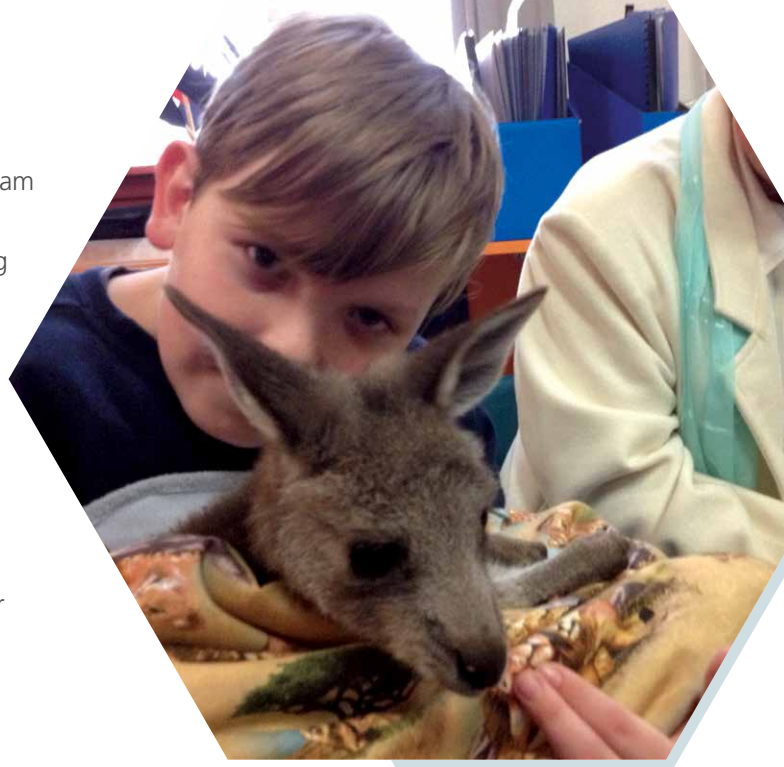
Kids Thrive: InSchools Philanthropy

www.kidsthive.org.au

Innovation

The Kids Thrive *InSchools Philanthropy* (KTISP) program enables primary school-aged children to connect with their communities through philanthropy. Young children engage with their significant adults, the professionals who work with them, and with the communities through arts based experiences.

The children use music, writing, play-acting, drawing and dance to understand and explore philanthropy, community and their personal values and motivators. The children then initiate and forge partnerships with local organisations that share their values to create and deliver projects to benefit their communities.



Outcomes

Young children can play a pivotal role in bringing communities together and leading positive social change. Children are rarely considered as agents for social change, however Kids Thrive's child-led approach supports children to: develop a positive sense of self; engage with their communities; and create the world in which *they* want to live. This approach recognises that children are able to initiate and lead positive change from their own perspective for the benefit of all. In practice, Kids Thrive defines this approach as children:

- ▶ Taking a lead in identifying community strengths, and finding ways to increase those strengths through their own actions;
- ▶ Identifying community problems and finding solutions and actions they can take to remedy that problem - with or without the support of adults;

- ▶ Taking life-transforming ideas and skills back into their homes and communities, leading their adults by example into new ways of being in the world.

The approach requires adults to:

- ▶ Respect children as capable and able to achieve great things;
- ▶ Give children space to be deep and insightful people;
- ▶ Create opportunities for children to participate in community decision-making;
- ▶ Accept children's offers and viewpoints respectfully;
- ▶ Be open to having our entrenched prejudices or limitations challenged and even changed by children.



Examples include

Improving	What might help you notice whether improvements are being made? Through... Evidence and approaches, such as
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Student capabilities: Personal and social competencies	Students are: <ul style="list-style-type: none">• More organized and demonstrate improved time management;• Setting and achieving goals;• Functioning as part of larger group of students to develop and implement a project from start to finish;• More able - post the KTISP program - to direct their own learning;• Making phone calls to community groups on their own.• Developing budgets and managing finances
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Student capabilities: Leadership	Students are: <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Willing to try something new;• Using their experience of KTISP as evidence of their leadership skills in their 'pitch' for school captain speeches;• Initiating and forging relationships with local community groups;• Initiating policy changes at school (e.g. flying the Aboriginal flag)
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Student behaviour	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Students are referring to themselves now as philanthropists – this cultural shift is noticeable in the playground with one school teacher and principal noticing that the students in the program are being more helpful and considerate in the school yard;• Students are listening to each other respectfully in their project teams.• Students are working supportively in their project teams with other children who are not in their friendship circle.
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Student engagement	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• When the Kids Thrive team arrives at a school, students are already waiting for them at the gate.• Students are working on their community projects out of school hours;• Students are working on their community projects even when it is not a set task;• Students talk in positive ways about KTISP, "I want to do this forever!"• Students with previously unexpressed attention to detail in their school work or its aesthetics now do so;• Students' body language changes in the sessions from just sitting in a chair to leaning forward; walking to walking confidently;• Teachers and parents discovering things about their students/ children they did not know they could do or had an interest in.
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I want to do this forever!

continued





Examples include

Improving

What might help you notice whether improvements are being made? Through... Evidence and approaches, such as

Family engagement

- The student-led projects are giving families a way to have a community-focused conversation at home;
- Family members ‘tear-up’ as they see and hear their children caring and doing something about a community issue;
- Attendance of family members, who previously had minimal contact with the school, at the students’ showcasing of their community projects and/or volunteering to be on the students’ funding panel.

Community engagement

- Students know of community organisations in their local area that they did not know of or have a relationship with before KTISP;
- Connections with community are being made in ways not normally done by students - via philanthropy; via doing their own research; via direct approaches; via informal conversations.
- Talking with members of the community that otherwise had not been talked to by children;
- Students are valuing their ‘local’ community context through such comments as, “the world is full of bad news... more important things are happening in front of us, but we can’t see them because we are looking at bigger things. You need to look at the small stuff as well” and “it felt good to help the mums”.
- Members of community organisations are turning up to KTISP events, and participating in the program with students.

Two small evaluations were undertaken of the KTISP program in 2013: The Lord Mayor’s Charitable Foundation commissioned an evaluation of the program in three primary schools; and the Maldon Community Bank (a local program delivery partner) undertook an internal and community-based evaluation in three regional primary schools. The evaluators gathered feedback through interviews with teachers, principals, students and community organisations. This formal method, as well as the informal day-to-day observations of the Kids Thrive team, teachers and principals helped to elicit what students now know and are able to do; who they now know in their communities that they did not know before; and their ongoing engagement with philanthropy and community.



Lessons learned

Ongoing learning and communication: Kids Thrive undertakes constant reflection about the processes and outcomes of the KTISP program, whilst it is being delivered, and at the end of each program cycle. Trainers and directors are in regular conversation with teachers, principals and community members to gauge their responses, and observations of the students as they progress through the course of the program.

Just as KTISP encourages students to disconnect from IT and practice social and relationship building skills, so Kids Thrive staff are encouraged to forge relationships with students, teachers, school and community leaders to ensure honest conversations and reflections continuously build the program.

Spend time with evaluators: Independent evaluation sits side-by-side with our learning and relationship building processes. This ensures we create space for critical feedback and to provide additional data and analysis. In order to achieve useful outcomes in the evaluation process it is important to spend time with the evaluator, ensuring they have a deep understanding of the aims of the project – and how it might differ from other programs they have evaluated. This keeps the focus of the evaluation on the aims of the project. It also ensures the emerging data is relevant and useful to the schools and to us at Kids Thrive, as well as the ongoing growth of the program.

Approaches can serve improvement and evaluation

purposes: Keen observation and journal keeping are the key tools we use in our evaluation 'tool box'. When delivering programs in schools, we work side-by-side with teachers who are, after all, with their students every day. From this we can learn from the teachers' observations understanding of their students. For example, we listen to their comments, note their observations, and compare them to our own – as the outside 'eyes' who see the students afresh. Using this approach, we improve our program and we gather systematic evaluative data from student 'case studies' – "Waleed is so shy he will find it challenging to participate" ending with "I can't believe Waleed led the presentation, and approached the leader of the community organisation to ask if he can become a member."