

## Graeme Dingle Foundation Research and Evaluation

### Research & Evaluation Overview

Our Research and Evaluation is guided by:

- Developing credible and rigorous evidence that our programmes work, through both internal and external research projects.
- A commitment to inquiry and learning.
- Building a knowledge base – i.e. understanding the theory behind our programmes and how our programmes work, as well as proving outcomes.
- Developing research partnerships.

### University Partnerships

As a result of the Graeme Dingle Foundation and The University of Auckland partnership we have together produced eight academic articles that have been published in seven academic journals (five international), (3 articles are currently being prepared or have been submitted for publication).

The benefits of publishing in scientific journals:

- The Peer review process assesses the quality of the articles and research practice
- This validates the quality of our research (published articles are viewed as best research practices in field)
- Articles in International and national journals reach a wide scientific/academic audience
- Supports our relationships with universities and academics
- Contributing to the collective knowledge on Youth Development

## PROJECT K - How are we impacting the lives of the young people who take part in Project K?

A Randomised Controlled Trial Research project (a “Gold standard” rigorous scientific design) means we can say with confidence that the following positive outcomes are more likely to be found among Project K students than among a comparison group, i.e. a similar group of young people who do not take part Project K.

- On average, Project K participants increase their self-efficacy from pre to post programme *What difference does this make? – A young person with higher self-efficacy will have more positive beliefs about their capabilities (more than their actual ability), and therefore view a task as a challenge to be conquered, expend more effort and persevere when things become difficult. This will have a positive influence on how he/she thinks, feels, motivates themselves, acts, the choices he/she will make and their levels of accomplishment.*
- Project K graduates are more confident socially, they have significant gains in social self-efficacy and sense of community. Parents also tell us that their children are more socially confident after taking part in Project K. These improvements in their social confidence are due mainly to their engagement in the outdoor adventure and the support they receive during the mentoring.
- Project K also appears to reduce discrepancies between groups of young people, e.g. close the gap in academic self-efficacy between boys and girls, and academic achievement between students in low and high decile schools.
- One year after Project K, compared to a comparison group, our Project K students are more likely to sustain their increase in self-efficacy, be more resilient, eat more healthy, be more connected to their school and less likely to wag, be in full time education or employment, have higher academic achievements, and are less likely to continue any illegal drug use.



## What are we researching now?

- **What are the factors that enhance positive experiences in Project K?**

Research to understand what determines participants' positive experiences: e.g. Individual differences, the dynamics that exist within each PK programme, factors related to programme delivery. Examine how participant experiences influence outcomes.

- **Family reintegration experiences of young people after a positive youth development programme.**

Research to explore Project K participants' experiences of reintegration after the Wilderness Adventure and investigate the perspective of parents/caregivers and programme providers.

## STARS - How are we impacting the lives of the young people who take part in Stars?

Stars incorporates many of the components of best practice and in particular Lerner's "Five Cs" of Positive Youth Development which specifies five ideal outcomes that youth development programmes want to achieve with young people *competence, confidence, connection, character and caring*.



## Year 9

- Year 9 students enjoy Stars, they gain practical skills and life skills such as: working with others, connecting to their communities, achieving their goals, improving relationships with friends, and developing relationships with older students.
- While Stars benefits all Year 9 students, Pasifika students and those from low decile schools appear to benefit the most. (It has been suggested that this is due in part to the cultural appropriateness of the Adventure Camp for New Zealand youth and of group mentoring for Pasifika and Maori students.)

## Peer Mentors

Over the duration of the programme Peer Mentors reported significant increases in their:

- **Social competence** (how able you feel in social situations) and
- **Character** (your belief in the importance of values associated with honesty, responsibility, and integrity).

One year after the programme Stars continued to influence their lives through increased:

- **Maturity.**
- **Sense of responsibility.**
- **Social competence.**
- **Character.**
- **Self-confidence** - Confidence in your abilities, knowing that you can do what you need so that things work out well.
- **Task leadership** - How well you lead other people, especially when you need to get something done).
- **Intellectual flexibility**- Being able to change the way you think and use new information as it becomes available to you.
- **Friendships.**
- **Confidence and competence** - socially and as leaders.
- **Influence** - mentors enjoy having a positive influence on the Year 9 students and being respected and listened to.
- **Academic achievements** – that are above what can be expected relative to decile-based norms.

It appears that being a Peer Mentors can have positive impacts on the life skills and character of a young person while not compromising their academic achievements.

Gains are greater for Peer Mentors who attend many sessions (i.e. over 20).



## KIWI CAN - How are we impacting the lives of the young people who take part in Kiwi Can?

A University of Auckland study to clarify the theory underpinning the Kiwi Can programme found that Kiwi Can incorporates many of the components of best practice including Lerner's "Five Cs" of Positive Youth Development. Five ideal outcomes that youth development programmes want to achieve with young people *competence, confidence, connection, character and caring*.



As part of a PhD project Kiwi Can leaders reported that they had adequate access to resources, it also found that Kiwi Can lessons are well organised, topical and structured to meet student needs. Kiwi Can was found to be delivered to a high standard across all regions, and students regardless of age, gender, or ethnicity, reported similar results.

The researcher also found that there may be a 'protective effect' of participation in Kiwi Can under highly transient conditions.

Research shows that:

Kiwi Can Students develop more positive and respectful relationships, and improve their ability to work with others and resolve conflict independently, using strategies taught in Kiwi Can

*"Kiwi Can has the best activities ever in the world there fun they have fitness activities that get us fit we use activities that has teamwork in them that help us communicate"*

Kiwi Can Students Look forward to Kiwi Can. They make every effort to come to school on Kiwi Can days and fully participate in the activities

*"I really love the activities because they are fun they make me feel happy I like the games they are really fun and cool"*

Kiwi Can Students like their leaders and they are seen as making a positive contribution to the school.

*"What I like about Kiwi Can activities is that it makes wanna do it because there fun and encourages you to do it"*

Kiwi Can Students Report a high degree of learning and enjoyment in the Kiwi Can classroom

*"Kiwi Can has new games that are fun, and help us learn new things that help us to be a better person and help and care about each other"*

The leaders keep the children motivated and engaged and act as positive role models

*"I like everything about Kiwi Can because I can trust them"*

Kiwi Can is particularly effective at building positive relationships and improving students' social skills

*"Every school I went to all the kids were mean to me and the teachers didn't teach them to be kind. But now at [school name] nearly everyone's kind to me and I thank it all to you guys. THANKS GUYS. KIWI CAN IS AWESOME. From the new girl [student name]. Long black hair big smile and a big heart for Kiwi Can."*



## CAREER NAVIGATOR - How are we impacting the lives of the young people who take part in Career Navigator?

To support the ongoing development of the Career Navigator programme the Graeme Dingle Foundation are currently using a Theory of Change (ToC) approach to clarify the theory behind Career Navigator, and to provide us with a visual depiction of how the programme is proposed to create positive change. From previous evaluations we have explored the effectiveness of the Career Navigator and found:

**Workplace Mentoring** *students receive help and guidance from mentors who have experience and expertise in a particular vocational field.*

- At the start of the mentoring, mentees recognised the value of the mentors to help connect them with someone in a job or career they are interested in and help them look for a job. After the programme they also valued the mentors help to define their career path and goals.
- After the mentoring, mentees felt more confident about successfully completing job seeking tasks and navigating a career path. This was supported by an increase in their levels of self-efficacy, indicating an increase in their confidence to perform career related tasks.
- The group career mentoring provided a mix of individual and group mentoring, and all mentees benefitted from the collective mentoring and learning.
- Group mentoring events, such as the rock climbing were ideal opportunities for breaking down barriers and building trust.
- The workshops and the school project also provided mentors with the opportunity to teach life and career skills such as the value of planning, working efficiently and not losing focus.
- Mentees said they benefitted from the mentors' experience and knowledge, and their perspective of the workplace. They described their mentors as knowledgeable and realistic, and said that the mentors helped provide direction and motivation, which in turn helped them to approach job seeking with confidence.
- The mentors enjoyed the 'feel good factor' and the opportunity to give something back and make a difference in the lives of their mentees.
- Individual mentoring contacts were restricted by mentees limited access to home computers and cell phones (or no cell phone credit).

**Career Pathway Events** *provide a taste of possible career and employment opportunities and pathways*



- Gave students a greater awareness of what will be expected from them to be successful in the workplace.
- Increased skills and confidence in their ability to make career and subject choices.
- Help to identify suitable career and subject choices, confirm their current options and encouraged students to carefully consider their future career path and relevant subjects.
- Increased student confidence in their ability to research and get information about careers and set their own career goals.
- Additionally, Employers value the opportunity to raise their profile and to benefit young people and their community.



## MYND - How are we impacting the lives of the young people who take part in MYND?

### Current MYND Research

A joint project between Graeme Dingle Foundation and the Department of Psychological Medicine, University of Auckland (Fleming et al, 2013-2015) evaluated the effectiveness of the MYND programme for participants on selected outcomes related to mood and behaviour. Participants received either the MYND programme only or the MYND programme and computerised cognitive behavioural therapy (SPARX-R).

Following this project, we examined MYND participant changes over time and found that there was a statistically significant reduction in depressive symptoms and anger from baseline to a 20-week assessment. And, although not statistically significant there was also a downward trend in participants reports of antisocial cognitions (as measured using the 'How I Think' questionnaire), and a beneficial change in the majority of help-seeking intentions and conduct behaviours. The results are promising, and we are planning to build on this earlier research to examine these outcomes further. This research will help us to find out more about why youth offend, the impact of the MYND intervention on these measures, and what aspects of the MYND programme are successful in reducing re-offending behaviour.

\* Fleming et al, (2013-2015) A Prospective Step-Wise Cohort Study of the Mentoring Youth New Direction (MYND) Programme for Adolescents With or Without Computerised Cognitive Behavioural Therapy (SPARX-R).



## Kiwi Tahī

The Kiwi Tahī Programme is a life-skill development programme for the vulnerable younger male siblings of youth offenders. It aims to reduce the likelihood that they will become involved in delinquency and offending behaviour. The programme targets vulnerable young males that have an older brother involved with the youth justice or criminal system, and who are exposed to many risk factors. For example, families of the siblings may be under stress due to poverty, family dysfunction, and/or deprived neighbourhoods. Being exposed to risk factors at an early age has been linked to the increased likelihood of a young person becoming involved in anti-social behaviours. The Kiwi Tahī programme helps to address this issue by providing positive role modelling, supporting healthy relationships with their parents/caregivers, teaching life skills that build resilience, and providing access to community services and support. The Kiwi Tahī programme aligns with MSD priorities for Vulnerable Children.

In 2015 and 2016 the programme was delivered consecutively to two groups of six young people (the first programme group from July 2015 to December 2015 and the second programme group from January 2016 to August 2016). To assess the effectiveness of the programme, a comprehensive mixed methods evaluation was completed on both programme groups. The findings of this evaluation will be made available in April 2017.