



PEACEFUL SCHOOLS PROGRAM PILOT SCHOOL OVERVIEW

Catholic College Bendigo

A MACRO INDEPENDENT APPROACH TO CASSE'S PEACEFUL SCHOOLS PROGRAM

Catholic College Bendigo is the largest of CASSE's Peaceful Schools Program (PSP) pilot schools, with over 1000 students at the junior campus.

Staff were concerned about bullying at the school and designed their own student survey to identify issues. Results of this, together with details of the CASSE Peaceful School Program and compelling data on the mental health risks for victimisers and their targets was presented to Staff. With active support from the Principal and Deputy Principal, John Ferris, a very successful launch of the CASSE PSP occurred in the first year of the Pilot. Care was also taken to select Student Leaders so that the group was a microcosm of the wide range of students at the school and represented the critical mass, thereby maximising the potential influence on the student body as a whole.

The CASSE student team started with approximately 30 students in the first year and expanded to 70+ in the second year to include year 8s and 9s. The team is made up of many talented students, including musicians, singers, writers and dancers who also exhibit leadership qualities.

Chris MacDonald and Kerri Bowman are the dedicated CASSE team leaders and the staff team comprises Heads of House and teachers from each house group, school counsellors, and parent liaison, with keen interest from parents.

To manage this large student group, the students created smaller teams according to the CASSE project they wished to work on. Each CASSE Project was facilitated by a teacher (staff team) and all the Projects were overseen by Kerri and Chris, who felt their role had become like a manager's role. This of course reflected the success of

the implementation as increasing numbers of staff and students have taken up ownership and responsibility for the implementation at their school.

The students have autonomy over their project and the Project leaders on staff have assisted the students according to their needs and ideas. The Projects included

- writing and recording a CASSE song detailing a CASSE Student Leader's former experience as a target of bullying prior to the school's CASSE involvement.
- ongoing reminders reinforcing kind and friendly behaviour on their CASSE notice board.
- designing and producing an anti-bullying DVD.
- fundraising.

The school's commitment to supporting Catholic charities and thoughtful religious education sits beautifully with CASSE's emphasis on altruism and caring for those who may be in need in our community.

At the beginning of each year, each of the 35 Home Room classes designed CASSE commitment statements focusing on the discrete needs of each class group. A large copy of these is signed by each student from his/her home room and displayed there as a visual reminder of expectations about peer/staff wellbeing. This process generated lively discussions with all students and staff about what CASSE looks like to them.

The school has added the CASSE values to their school Mission statement and strategic planning, showing their commitment to the sustainability of CASSE in their school culture. Following the success of the implementation thus far, staff have decided to introduce the CASSE PSP to the senior campus in 2014 and it is hoped that the new Catholic College in Bendigo will also embrace this approach.

This resource and further information about Creating A Safe Supportive Environment is available to download at www.casse.org.au.