

## **Kids as Catalyst**

### **Goldfields Region – Maldon Primary School, 2017**

### **Outcomes Evaluation Report**

#### **Introduction**

This report presents a summative evaluation of the *Kids as Catalyst* program provided in 3 classes (grades 3-6) at Maldon Primary School in the Goldfields region – 2 hours north west of Melbourne.

Kids Thrive received funding to deliver the *Kids as Catalyst* program to the Goldfields region in 2017 from:

- Victorian Department of Education and Training's Strategic Schools Partnerships Program
- Helen Macpherson Smith Trust
- William Buckland Foundation
- WCF Thomas Charitable Trust and
- Vichealth's Research Innovation program

#### **The Kids as Catalyst Program**

Kids as Catalyst is a six-month resilience and creative leadership program. It aims to ignite and skill children to become catalysts for positive change in their local communities. 'Kids as Catalyst' builds children's resilience, educational engagement, community connections and mental wellbeing, whilst engaging literacy, numeracy and teamwork skills. Kids as Catalyst is delivered in upper primary schools, through direct training and self-directed, action-based learning over two school terms.

In 2017 the first term of delivery Kids as Catalyst was a weekly program - with direct training delivered by the Kids Thrive team, and follow up activities led by the teachers. Students connected with their personal values; researched, identified and engaged local community groups as project partners; conceived, co-designed and budgeted a series of philanthropic projects to benefit their local communities; and wrote persuasive applications for funding.

In the second term of the program students pitched for funding and project support to a panel of school and community leaders, and then took responsibility for delivering their community projects in partnership with their selected community organisation. They managed project schedules, finances and documentation, supported by schools, community and the Kids Thrive team. The program culminated in a community Showcase at which students shared their project outcomes, challenges and achievements with an audience of family and community members.

The program also delivered professional development for teachers in arts-based learning, community engagement and project development, establishing the groundwork to enable teachers to step into the program leader role in 2018.

*Kids as Catalyst* engages children in the later years of primary school and the early years of secondary school. This vital time in a child's development - known as the 'middle years' - is characterised by rapid emotional, physical, social and cognitive development. *Kids as Catalyst* closely matches the needs of children in this age group, which have been summarised as 'to have good self-esteem; belong, feel connected and supported; have increasing independence in a safe environment; be able to achieve, learn and feel competent; and be heard, participate, and be listened to' (Committee on Children and Young People, 2009: 17). Promotion of resilience is key to supporting mental wellbeing at this time of transition; and factors promoting resilience are central to the program. These include developing individual attributes such as self-efficacy, social competency, and problem-solving skills; and supportive relationships with family, other caregivers, peers, teachers, and members of the broader community (Hunter, 2012; Luthar and Cicchetti, 2000).

A logic model is attached, describing the theory of change underlying the *Kids as Catalyst* program. In summary, the intervention comprises an innovative, child-led social change program that empowers children to engage in, and take the lead in social change activities. It is delivered by Kids Thrive facilitators in partnership with educators, community agencies and children, and uses the arts as a learning and community engagement strategy. It explicitly:

- Builds links and relationships between children, schools, agencies and their community.
- Develops the skills of teachers and children to investigate and understand themselves, others and their community from a philanthropic/social action perspective.
- Inspires and equips children to lead change at a community level.

Program outputs include partnerships between children, schools and community organisations to co-design and deliver local philanthropic projects. The project logic maps outcomes onto a socio-ecological framework at individual, interpersonal, community and societal levels. Individual level outcomes include increased self-esteem, self-confidence, resilience and expanded social networks for children; interpersonal outcomes include increased connectedness between children, teachers, schools and communities; at a community level, children become active participants in addressing local issues; and at a societal level, we expect to see improved cohesion and wellbeing with children better equipped to be contributing members of society.

The program has been delivered to over 30 Victorian schools since 2011.

This evaluation of *Kids as Catalyst 2017* is based on teacher-observed data sets measuring demonstrated change in individual student competencies, plus interviews with teachers, principals, community partners and students. These demonstrate that students respond very positively to the program, with schools noticing key improvements in children's learning, creative thinking, leadership, agency, self-esteem and mental wellbeing. The evaluation also includes a simple pre-and post-test to understand students' community connections emerging from involvement in the program.

*Kids as Catalyst* aims to increase child and youth confidence and capacity to identify issues of importance to them and their local communities, and to take action to address these issues. It also aims to build students' resilience, self-esteem, social connections and sense of agency by:

- Using the arts to explore their personal values and to rehearse key social and community development skills
- Promoting social inclusiveness and community connectedness
- Encouraging community cooperation and participation
- Fostering awareness and understanding of community issues

- Enacting alternative, positive pathways for children and communities in environments with few perceived options
- Exploring creative approaches to transforming challenges and obstacles into opportunities for growth.

## The Evaluation

This evaluation identifies the impact of the *Kids as Catalyst* program in the Goldfields Maldon Primary school in 2017.

### Project Logic

The evaluation has been guided by a project logic. The project logic is included as Appendix 1 at the end of this document. The project logic makes the thinking that underlies the project explicit and exposes the underlying 'hypothesis' on which the program is based. The purpose of the project logic is to be clear about the activities, outputs and expected outcomes of the project so that the correct evaluation questions are identified.

### Evaluation Approach

This evaluation uses a summative approach aimed at determining the impact of the *Kids as Catalyst* program during 2017. Summative evaluation is a method of judging the worth of a program at the end of the program's activities. The focus is on the outcomes achieved, changes observed in participants, and differences that have been demonstrated.

### Evaluation Questions

Based on the project logic the following summative evaluation questions have been developed for this evaluation. The questions are based on the project outputs and short-term outcomes identified in the project logic:

1. To what extent have children, teachers and community members participated in *Kids as Catalyst*?
2. What has *Kids as Catalyst* delivered?
3. To what extent have children demonstrated growth in positive social and emotional skills?
4. To what extent have children learnt and applied creative learning skills, and improved their educational engagement?
5. To what extent have children learnt and applied leadership and community engagement skills?
6. To what extent has the community had a positive engagement and improved participation with the school?
7. To what extent have children built their community networks?

These questions form the framework for the presentation of the Evaluation Results in the next section.

### Data Collection

Key documents and data sources for this evaluation have included:

- Minutes of meetings with teachers and principals
- Student Progress Reports - detailed reports completed by teachers for each child in their class detailing progress as a result of *Kids as Catalyst*

- Student interviews
- Teacher and Principal Evaluation interviews and surveys

Data has been analysed using a constructivist approach - based on the understanding that the “truth” of a situation is individually and collectively **constructed** by the people who experience it<sup>1</sup>. In constructivist evaluation it is assumed that there are many different ways of interpreting or understanding the intent and impact of an activity and that to understand the activity the evaluator must gather together those understandings from a range of sources. For a constructivist evaluator the truth of the situation is what the people who experience it describe.

## Evaluation Results

In this section each evaluation question is answered based on an analysis of the data. A summary of the results is provided at the end of this section.

### 1. To what extent have children, teachers and community members participated in *Kids as Catalyst - Goldfields*?

Data collected by Kids Thrive indicates that the program *directly* involved:

- 57 students in grades 3/4/5/6
- 1 government primary schools
- 4 teachers
- 1 school principals
- 2 Kids Thrive Artist/Trainers
- 10 local community organisations (see Appendix 2)
- 239 local community members – 6 community panelists; 26 partnering in delivering students’ community projects; 77 engaged in community events; 130 community participants and/or beneficiaries of students’ community projects

### 2. What has *Kids as Catalyst* delivered?

During 2017 *Kids as Catalyst* delivered:

- 36 workshops with Kids Thrive Artist/Trainers
- 2 community engagement events (Project Pitch and Student Showcase)
- 13 community projects realised by children with community partners

### 3. To what extent have children demonstrated growth in positive social and emotional skills?

Teachers provided Student Progress Reports identifying their perception of the impact of *Kids as Catalyst* on each child. The progress reports include four areas of relevance to this evaluation question. The progress reports indicate that:

- 93% of children demonstrated improved self-confidence as a result of their participation in *Kids as Catalyst*;
- 86% demonstrated improved teamwork;
- 83% demonstrated improved empathy;

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<sup>1</sup> The other major approaches to evaluation are positivist or post positivist. These approaches start from an understanding that truth is objectively knowable (positivism) or able to be accurately approximated (post-positivism).



- 93% demonstrated improved social awareness.

#### **4. To what extent have children learnt and applied creative learning skills, and improved their educational engagement?**

Student Progress Reports include five dimensions of relevance to this evaluation question: 'willingness to participate', 'self-directed learning', 'perseverance', 'literacy' and 'numeracy'.

- 93% of children showed improved willingness to participate in class through their involvement in *Kids as Catalyst*.
- 66% of children demonstrated improvement in self-directed learning;
- 82% demonstrated improved perseverance;
- 50% demonstrated improved in literacy;
- 37% demonstrated improved numeracy.

It is important to note that *Kids as Catalyst* is not delivered as a literacy and numeracy program. However, Kids Thrive has included this data at the request of participating teachers, who wish to understand the impact of the program on this core curriculum.

#### **5. To what extent have children learnt and applied leadership and community engagement skills?**

Two dimensions in the Student Progress Reports are relevant to the development and application of 'leadership' and 'community engagement' skills by children, indicating that:

- 78% of children demonstrated improved understanding and practice of leadership skills;
- 88% demonstrated improved understanding and capacity to participate in community engagement.

#### **6. To what extent have children engaged with their community, and the community had a positive engagement with the school?**

Data shows the children and schools developed new relationships with:

- 10 local community groups
- 26 community members directly
- Over 77 family and community participants in celebratory events.
- Approximately 130 community members as participants or beneficiaries of students' community projects.

#### **7. To what extent have children built their community networks?**

Children filled in a simple graphic representation of their community support networks both pre- and post-program, responding to the question: 'How many people can you talk to about things that matter to you?' The following graph represents a median of their before and after responses, revealing significant increases in children's perception of and access to community support networks, including:

- 97% increase in positive connections with other students at school
- 37% increase in connections with kids outside school

- 44% increase in trusted connections with adults at school
- 55% increase in trusted connections with adults in the community
- 30% increase in positive family connections.

## Summary of Evaluation Results

Question	Result 2016	Result 2017
1. To what extent have children, teachers, and community members participated in <i>Kids as Catalyst</i> ?	48 children participated in 2016. 105 community members directly engaged as project participants or event participants. Teachers and Principals fully engaged.	57 grade 3-6 students participated. 10 community organisations and.. 239 community members engaged as project participants, event participants, or beneficiaries of student projects.
2. What has <i>Kids as Catalyst</i> delivered?	36 workshop sessions; 2 community engagement events; 9 community projects fully realized by children.	36 workshop sessions; 2 community engagement events; 13 community projects realized by children.
3. To what extent have children demonstrated growth in positive social and emotional skills?	69% increased confidence; 77% show improved teamwork; 63% show improved empathy; 67% social awareness.	93% increased confidence; 86% show improved teamwork; 83% show improved empathy; 93% social awareness.
4. To what extent have children learnt and applied creative learning skills, and improved educational engagement?	71% improved willingness to participate; 63% improved self-directed learning;  40% improved literacy; 21% improved numeracy	93% improved willingness to participate; 66% improved self-directed learning; 82% demonstrated greater persistence; 50% improved literacy; 37% improved numeracy
5. To what extent have children learnt and applied leadership and community engagement skills?	61% improved leadership skills; 65% improved community engagement.	78% improved leadership skills; 88% improved community engagement.
6. To what extent has the community had a positive engagement and improved participation with the school?	Schools and students have new connections / relationships with: 9 local community groups, 105 community members	Schools and students have new connections / relationships with: 10 local community groups, 103 community members
7. To what extent have children built their community networks in <b>2017</b> ?	97% increase in connections with kids at school 37% increase in connections with kids outside school 44% increase in trusted connections with adults at school 55% increase in trusted connections with adults in the community 30% increase in family connections	

## CONCLUSION

The above results indicate that continued involvement in the Kids as Catalyst program has led to increased outcomes across all domains for students at Maldon Primary.

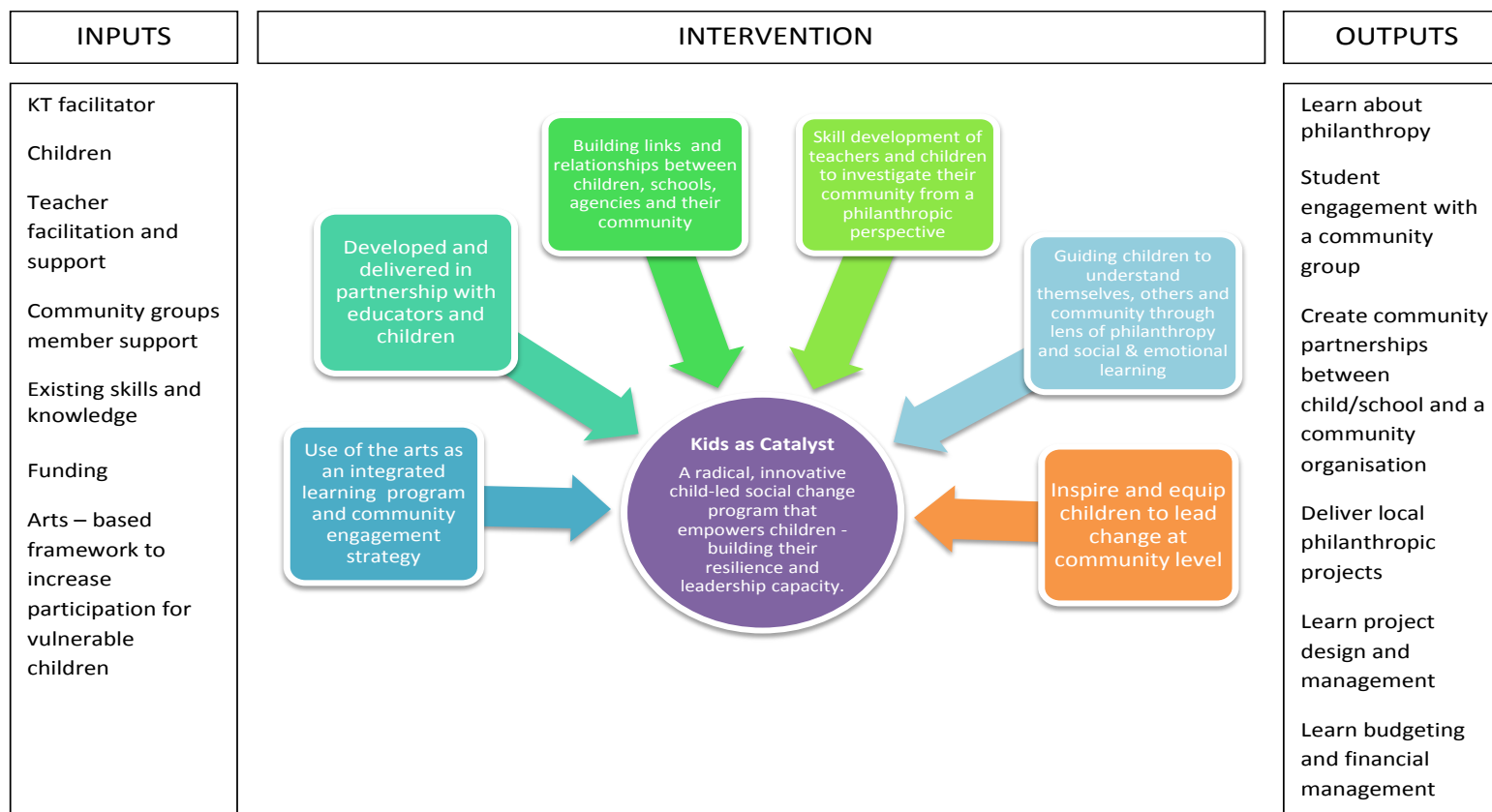
Based on the above results, it is also possible to conclude that:

<p><i>Kids as Catalyst - Goldfields</i> builds children's resilience by significantly improving their:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Self-confidence</li><li>• Teamwork</li><li>• Empathy</li><li>• Social awareness</li><li>• Self-directed learning</li><li>• Educational engagement</li><li>• Perseverance</li><li>• Literacy and numeracy</li><li>• Leadership skills</li><li>• Community engagement</li></ul>	<p><i>Kids as Catalyst</i> also makes a significant contribution towards improved:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Engagement of families with schools</li><li>• Connection between schools and local community groups</li><li>• Children's safe community networks</li></ul>
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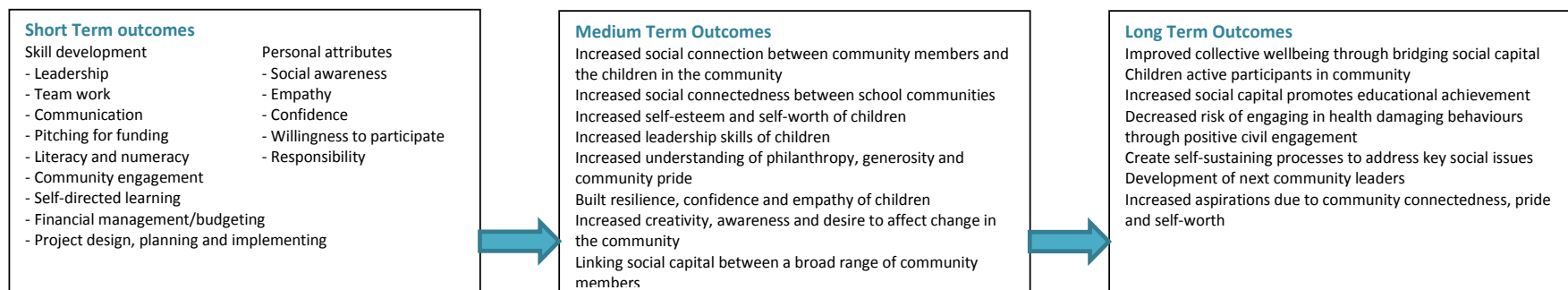
*Kids as Catalyst* is based on sound evidence of the value of the arts in engaging and educating young children. *Kids as Catalyst* delivered a successful program in Maldon Primary School in the Goldfields region of northwestern Victoria. The evidence from this evaluation indicates that the program has improved children's learning and educational engagement, built their social and emotional skills, extended their community capacities, built links between families, schools and community groups, and extended children's safe community networks. From these results we can draw the conclusion that *Kids as Catalyst* contributes significantly to building children's resilience and leadership capacity.

## Appendix 1:

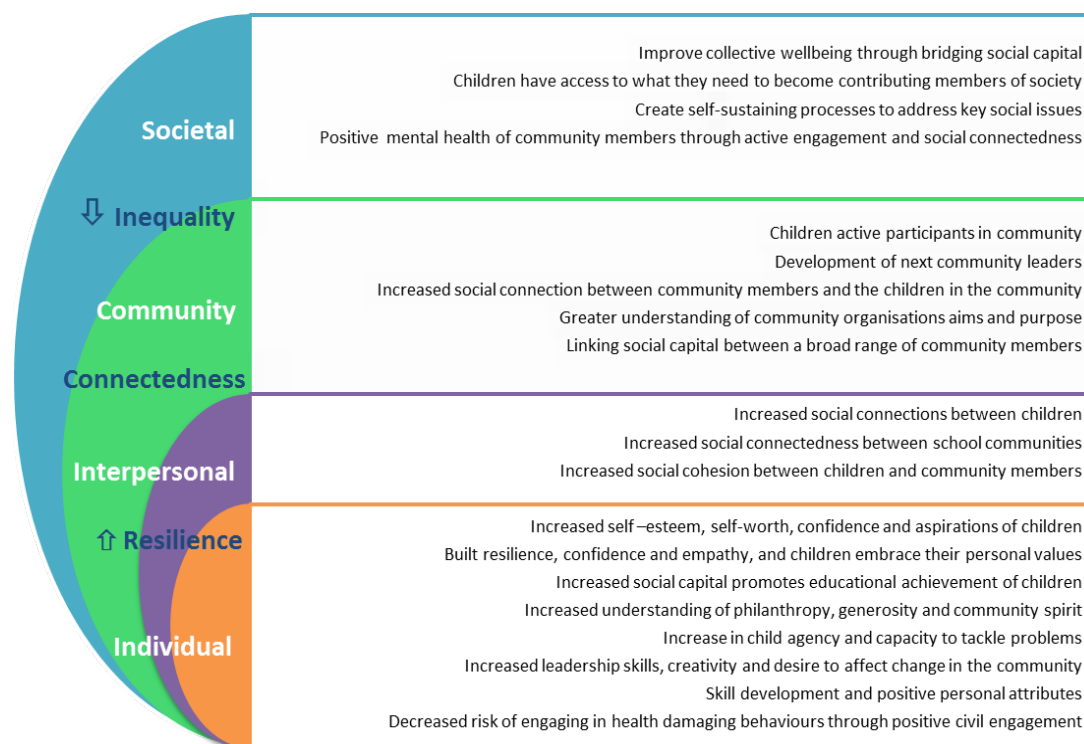
### Kids Thrive 'Kids as Catalyst' Program Logic



# OUTCOMES



*Kids as Catalyst outcomes mapped against the socio-ecological model*



## APPENDIX 2: Kids as Catalyst – 2017 Community Projects – Maldon Primary School

Community Partner	Project Aim	Issue
Maldon Hospital	Bringing an Animal Visiting Program to the elderly residents	Elderly living in residential care - particularly those who lived on farms – have lost connection with animals.
Wildlife Vic	Designing and building roadside signage for animal rescue/awareness, warning people of local wildlife	High numbers of animals killed and injured on local country roads
Windarring Disability Service	Lobbying the local council to install a Liberty Swing in the Botanical Gardens	Disabled kids unable to play and join in on the swings in the gardens
Maldon Hospital	Making instruments and bringing a music concert to the elderly and disabled residents.	Lack of access to participating in music for aged care and hospital residents
Bushtech Ecological Land Management	Building and installing nesting boxes for the gardens of the local aged care facility	Local hospital residents lacking opportunities to interact with nature
Cactus Warriors	Creating a large sculpture of an Aussie raven for the Easter Parade to raise awareness about the spread of the wheel cactus	The increased spread of wheel cactus in the local area, caused by crows eating and spreading seeds.
Maldon Neighborhood Centre	Making a box with circus equipment for children to play with at the local the market	There is nothing for kids to do at the local markets
Castlemaine Housing Organisation	Making and selling calendars to raise awareness of homelessness, and raise money for food vouchers for homeless women	Increasing number of girls and women experiencing homelessness in the local area
RSPCA	Building rabbit and guinea-pig hutches	Stray pets not having suitable homes

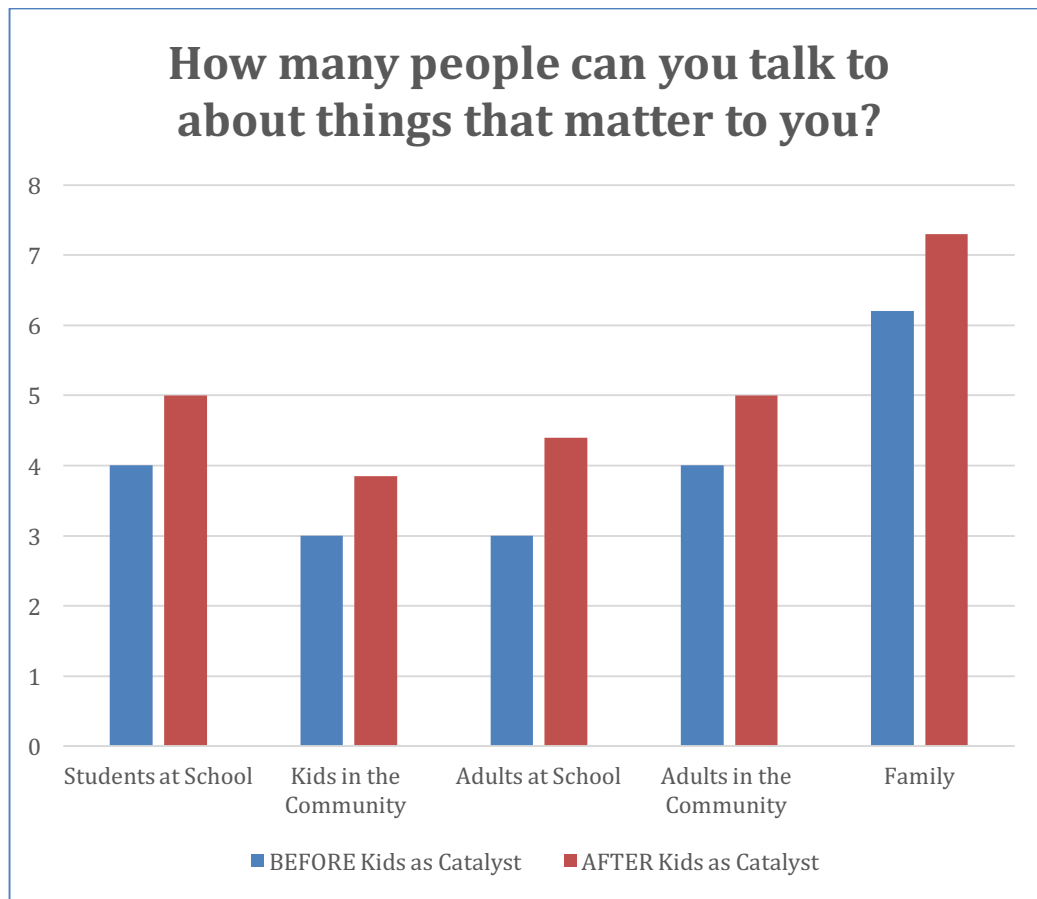


RSPCA	Making coats for the dogs, and donating \$300 for medicine	Making sure that stray pets are warm in winter, well looked after and healthy
Maldon Neighborhood Centre	Making musical instruments for kids to play with at the markets	No activities for the local kids at the markets
Maldon Football & Netball Clubs	Promoting sport to girls and boys in Maldon	Sport enrolment numbers are falling in Maldon
Day Centre, Maldon	Make an IT tip sheet to help older people troubleshoot their digital devices	Access to technology for the elderly

### APPENDIX 3:

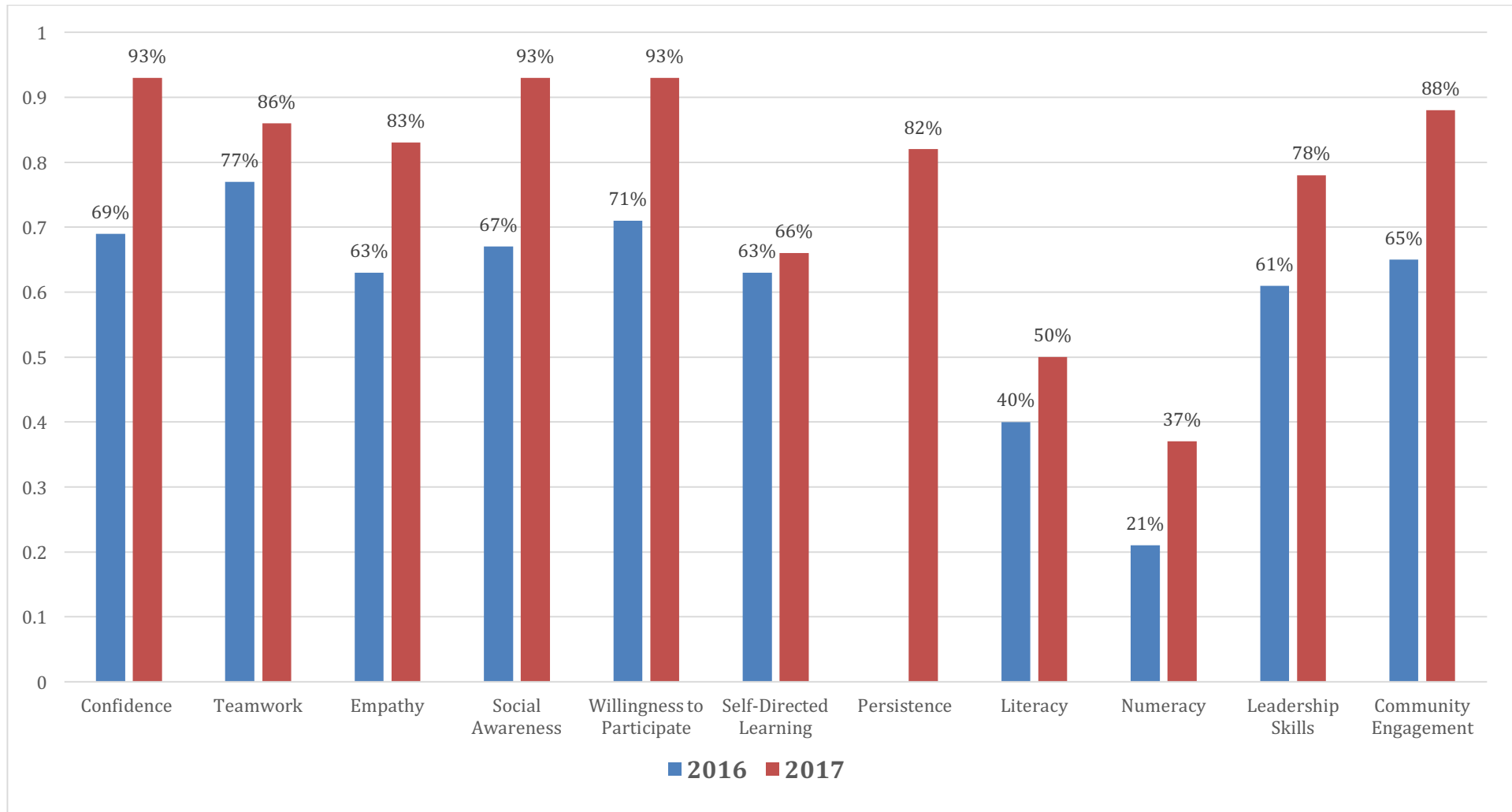
## Student Social Networks

### Goldfields 2017



## Comparative Outcomes Data

### Percentage of students demonstrating change – 2016/2017



## Goldfields Kids as Catalyst

### Appendix 4: Student Evaluation Drawings – How I saw MYSELF before and after Kids Thrive

**HAVE I CHANGED? Please draw pictures**

**BEFORE** Kids Thrive I saw myself like this

I didn't like  
school work muck



Kids Thrive

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**AFTER** Kids Thrive I see myself like this

I like school  
work a lot  
now



My name: \_\_\_\_\_ Teacher: \_\_\_\_\_

## HAVE I CHANGED? Please draw pictures

BEFORE Kids Thrive I saw myself like this

Strange



o  
o  
o



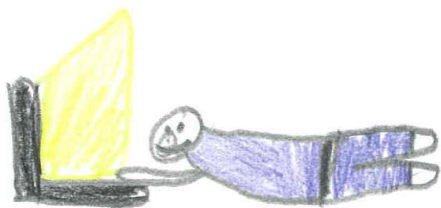
AFTER Kids Thrive I see myself like this

Proud



**HAVE I CHANGED? Please draw pictures**

**BEFORE** Kids Thrive I saw myself like this



This is me on my  
computer being  
lazy.



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**AFTER** Kids Thrive I see myself like this



This is me being  
active.

My name: \_\_\_\_\_ Teacher: \_\_\_\_\_

## HAVE I CHANGED? Please draw pictures

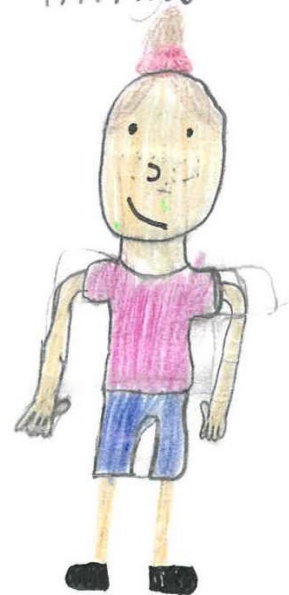
BEFORE Kids Thrive I saw myself like this

I thought I was small  
and could not do anything.



AFTER Kids Thrive I see myself like this

Now I know even the  
smallest things can make a  
change.





## APPENDIX 5: Student Evaluation Drawings – How I saw the WORLD before and after Kids Thrive

HAVE I CHANGED? Please draw pictures

BEFORE Kids Thrive I saw THE WORLD like this



AFTER Kids Thrive I see THE WORLD like this



I Didn't like Handstuffs I like Hard stuff



**HAVE I CHANGED? Please draw pictures**

**BEFORE** Kids Thrive I saw THE WORLD like this



**AFTER** Kids Thrive I see THE WORLD like this

