Kids as Catalyst
Benalla region – Benalla P-12 College 2017
Outcomes Evaluation Report

Introduction

This report presents a summative evaluation of the *Kids as Catalyst* program provided in 3 class groups at Benalla P-12 College, in Benalla – a regional town 2 hours north of Melbourne.

Kids Thrive received funding from the Victorian Government Department of Education and Training's Strategic Schools Partnerships Program, Tomorrow Today Foundation, Benalla Rural City Council, the William Buckland Foundation, Sidney Myer Fund, Newsboys Foundation, Collier Charitable Fund and VicHealth Research Innovation program to deliver the ***Kids as Catalyst*** program to the Benalla region during 2017.

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, in 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 Benalla P-12 College 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[1]. 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 - Benalla*?

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

- 67 students in grades 5/6
- 1 government school
- 1 local foundation (Tomorrow Today Foundation)
- 4 teachers
- 1 school principal
- 3 corporate volunteers
- 2 Kids Thrive Artist/Trainers
- 13 local community organisations (see Appendix 2)
- 236 local community members – 7 community panelists; 13 partnering in delivering students' community projects; 56 engaged in community events; app. 150 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)
- 12 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:

- 100% of children demonstrated improved self-confidence as a result of their participation in *Kids as Catalyst*;

[1] 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).

- 98% demonstrated improved teamwork;
- 100% demonstrated improved empathy;
- 100% 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'.

The Student Progress Reports indicate that:

- 97% of children showed improved willingness to participate in class through their involvement in *Kids as Catalyst*.
- 96% of children demonstrated improvement in self-directed learning;
- 94% demonstrated improved perseverance;
- 100% demonstrated improved in literacy;
- 100% 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.

The Student Progress Reports indicate that:

- 88% of children demonstrated improved understanding and practice of leadership skills;
- 96% 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 schools developed new or stronger relationships with:

- 13 local community groups
- 13 community members directly
- Over 56 family and community participants in celebratory events.
- 150 community members participating in / benefiting from student community projects.

Students engaged weekly with members of the Tomorrow Today Foundation staff and volunteers, with Bendigo Bank volunteers, and forged relationships with key members of community groups with whom they partnered.

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:

- 20% increase in positive connections with other students at school
- 59% increase in connections with kids outside school
- 15% increase in trusted connections with adults at school
- 63% increase in trusted connections with adults in the community
- 5% increase in positive family connections.

Summary of Evaluation Results 2016 and 2017

The following table presents a summary of the Evaluation Results

The below results indicate that continued involvement in the Kids as Catalyst program has led to increased outcomes across all domains for students at Benalla P-12 College.

Evaluation Question	2016 Result	2017 Result
1. To what extent have children, teachers, and community members participated in *Kids as Catalyst?*	46 students in grade 5/6 participated. 8 community organisations and 77 community members engaged as project participants or event participants, or were beneficiaries of student projects.	67 students in grade 5/6 participated. 13 community organisations and 236 community members engaged as project participants or event participants, or were beneficiaries of student projects.
2. What has *Kids as Catalyst* delivered?	10 workshop sessions; 2 community engagement events; 9 community projects by children.	36 workshop sessions; 2 community engagement events; 12 community projects by children.
3. To what extent have children demonstrated growth in positive social and emotional skills?	83% increased confidence; 83% show improved teamwork; 80% show improved empathy; 85% demonstrated improved social awareness.	100% increased confidence; 98% show improved teamwork; 100% show improved empathy; 100% demonstrated improved social awareness.
4. To what extent have children learnt and applied creative learning skills, and improved educational engagement?	85% improved willingness to participate; 74% improved self-directed learning; (not measured) 71% improved literacy; 69% improved numeracy	97% improved willingness to participate; 96% improved self-directed learning; 94% demonstrated greater persistence; 100% improved literacy; 100% improved numeracy
5. To what extent have children learnt and applied leadership and community engagement skills?	74% improved leadership skills; 85% improved community engagement.	88% improved leadership skills; 96% 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: 8 local community groups, Over 70 community members	Schools and students have new connections / relationships with: 13 local community groups, Over 70 community members
7. To what extent have students increased their trusted community networks in 2017?	20% increase in positive connections with other students at school 59% increase in connections with kids outside school 15% increase in trusted connections with adults at school 63% increase in trusted connections with adults in the community 5% increase in positive family connections.	

CONCLUSION

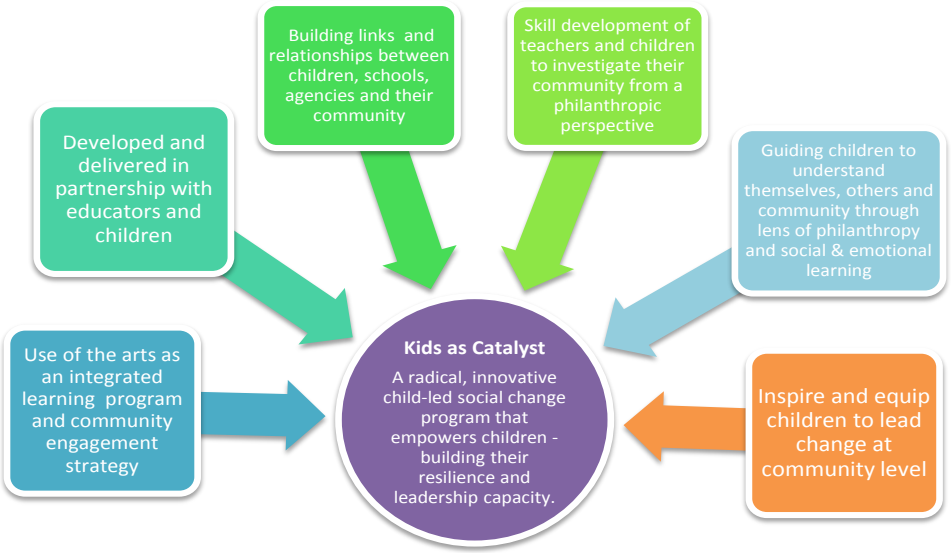
Based on the above results, it is possible to conclude that:

Kids as Catalyst - Benalla builds children's resilience by significantly improving their: • Self-confidence • Teamwork • Empathy • Social awareness • Self-directed learning • Educational engagement • Perseverance • Literacy and numeracy • Leadership skills • Community engagement	*Kids as Catalyst* also makes a significant contribution towards improved: • Engagement of families with schools • Connection between schools and local community groups • Children's safe community networks

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 these Benalla primary schools in a significantly disadvantaged region of the north-eastern region of Victoria. The evidence from this evaluation suggests that the program has improved children's learning skills and 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 skills.

APPENDIX 1: Kids as Catalyst Project Logic

Kids Thrive 'Kids as Catalyst' Program Logic

INPUTS	INTERVENTION	OUTPUTS
KT facilitator Children Teacher facilitation and support Community groups member support Existing skills and knowledge Funding Arts – based framework to increase participation for vulnerable children		Learn about philanthropy Student engagement with a community group Create community partnerships between child/school and a community organisation Deliver local philanthropic projects Learn project design and management Learn budgeting and financial management

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OUTCOMES

Short Term outcomes

Skill development
- Leadership
- Team work
- Communication
- Pitching for funding
- Literacy and numeracy
- Community engagement
- Self-directed learning
- Financial management/budgeting
- Project design, planning and implementing

Personal attributes
- Social awareness
- Empathy
- Confidence
- Willingness to participate
- Responsibility

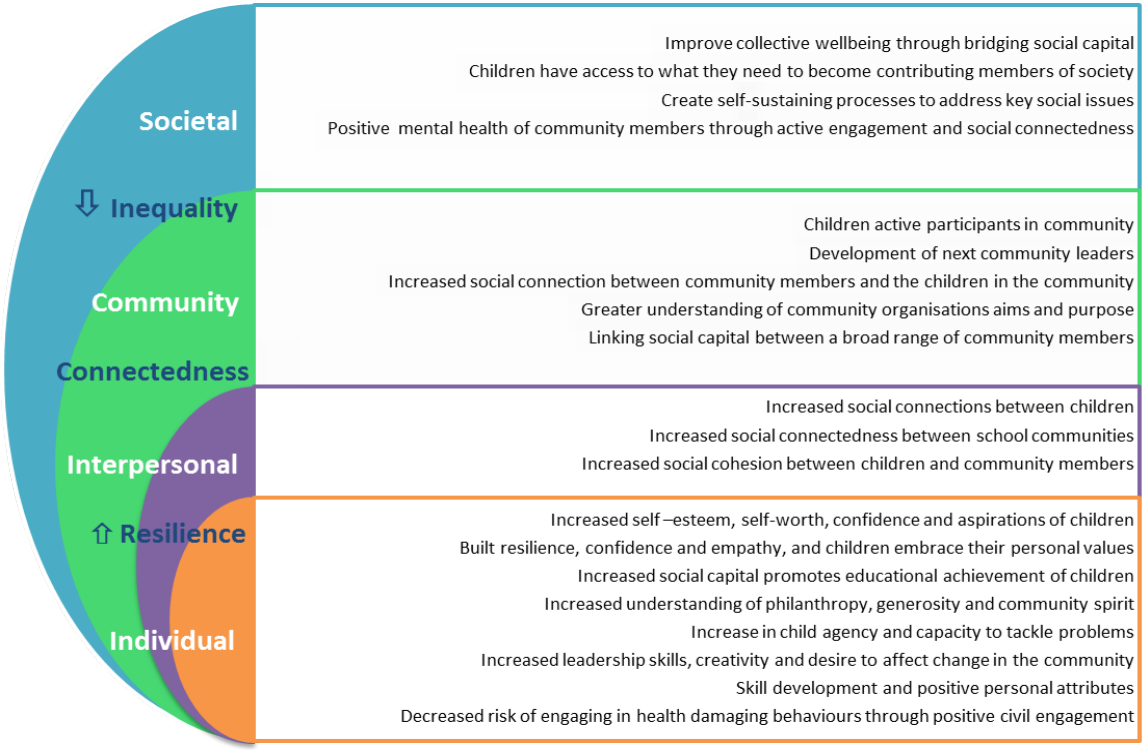
Medium Term Outcomes

Increased social connection between community members and the children in the community
Increased social connectedness between school communities
Increased self-esteem and self-worth of children
Increased leadership skills of children
Increased understanding of philanthropy, generosity and community pride
Built resilience, confidence and empathy of children
Increased creativity, awareness and desire to affect change in the community
Linking social capital between a broad range of community members

Long Term Outcomes

Improved collective wellbeing through bridging social capital
Children active participants in community
Increased social capital promotes educational achievement
Decreased risk of engaging in health damaging behaviours through positive civil engagement
Create self-sustaining processes to address key social issues
Development of next community leaders
Increased aspirations due to community connectedness, pride and self-worth

Kids as Catalyst outcomes mapped against the socio-ecological model

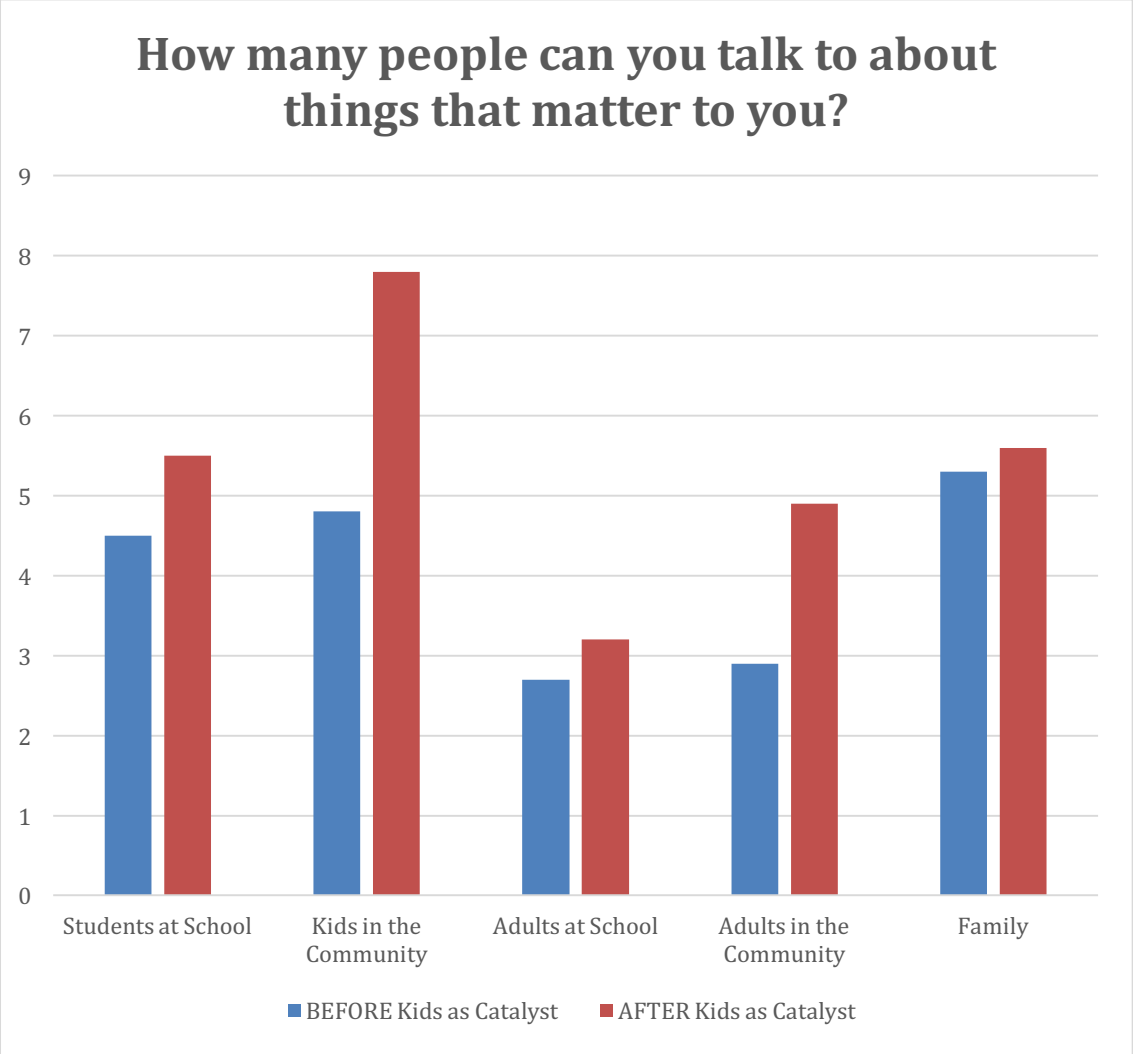


APPENDIX 2: Kids as Catalyst 2017 - Benalla P-12 College Community Projects

Community Partner	Project	Issue
Hands on Learning	Educating kids to RRR waste (Reduce, Reuse, Recycle)	High amount of rubbish and litter in Benalla
Winton Wetlands	Making mesh coverings and placing around turtle nests to protect the baby turtles from foxes	Reducing numbers of turtles in the wetlands, as foxes eat babies
Benalla P-12 College - Social Inclusion Officer	Helping kids with a disability to play games and develop happy and safe friendships	Lack of relaxation and activity space for kids with disabilities, and kids who struggle socially.
Koori Kids Education	Painting a mural at the school to help Koori kids to belong, learn and share their culture. Spread the word about our art-time and sharing stories through art	Improving Koori education and wider engagement with Koori culture
Benalla Girl Guides	Making and distributing promotional material to encourage kids to join Girl Guides	Not many girls joining Girl Guides, numbers are running very low
Estia Health	Trivia games and conversations at the local aged care facility, helping to make the residents feel like they belong, are important and feel respected	Elders feeling like they don't belong. Wanting elders to feel important and respected
Salvation Army, Waminda House	Homework Club. Helping local kids with their homework. Teaching them new skills to complete their homework	Some kids not getting the help at home they need with homework
Broken Boosey Conservation Management Network	Making nesting boxes for Turquoise parrots, a local threatened species.	These parrots nest in tree hollows, but there has been destruction of Turquoise Parrots nesting habitats
K9 Support	Taking assistance dogs around to school classes and other groups to educate students about various types of assistance dogs, how to behave around them, and which vests they wear.	People don't know how to behave around assistance dogs.
Benalla Country Women's Association	Organising a Craft Day and Community Event, to promote the CWA to all ages, encouraging younger girls and women to join.	Younger women and girls are not joining the CWA and local branches are in threat of closing.

Community Partner	Project	Issue
Benalla Litter Gatherers	To do presentations at the P-4 campuses to get people to realise how bad plastic is for the environment - '100s and 100s of animals die every year because of plastic pollution'	Plastic waste and litter in the Benalla community is causing 100’s of animals to die
Benalla CFA	Creating a power point on fire safety and presenting it to other classes at school, focusing on small devices and chargers often used by young people.	Lack of Fire Safety awareness around children’s devices in local homes and the role they can play in causing house fires.

APPENDIX 3: Students' Trusted Social Networks Data - Benalla 2017.



Appendix 4: Students' 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

AFTER Kids Thrive I see myself like this

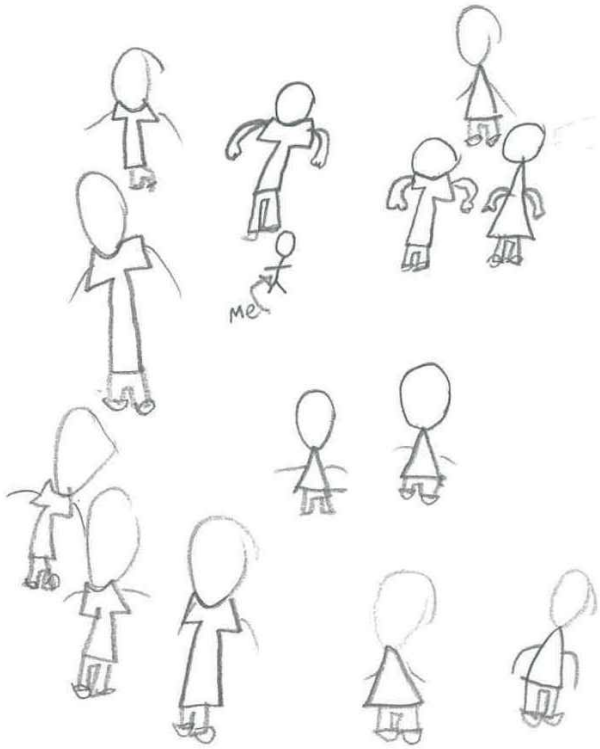
HAVE I CHANGED? **Please draw pictures**

BEFORE Kids Thrive I saw myself like this

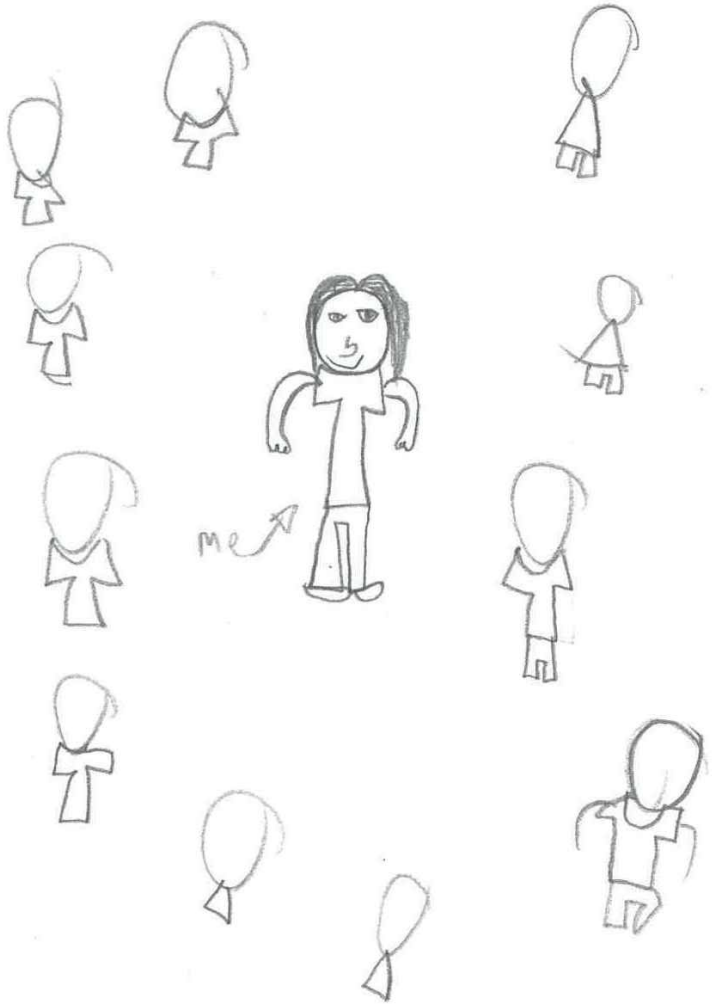
AFTER Kids Thrive I see myself like this

HAVE I CHANGED? Please draw pictures

BEFORE Kids Thrive I saw myself like this



AFTER Kids Thrive I see myself like this



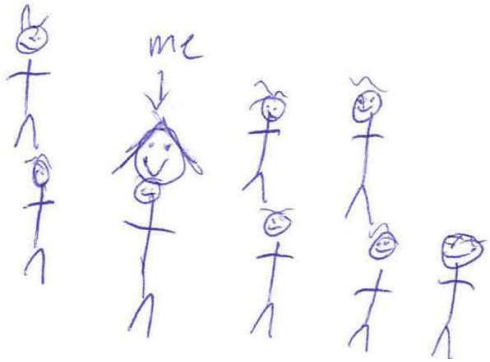
HAVE I CHANGED? **Please draw pictures**

BEFORE Kids Thrive I saw myself like this

I was hever notest, I
usely Just stood arand lishing
and Being Bord

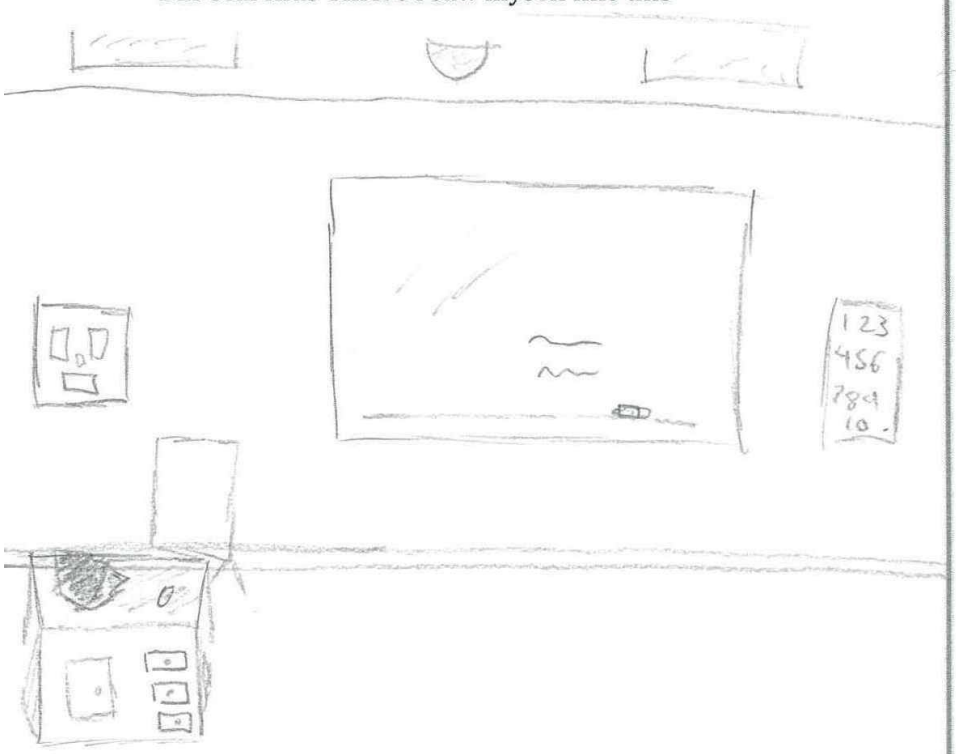
AFTER Kids Thrive I see myself like this

I Jone in and have
a lood of Fun.



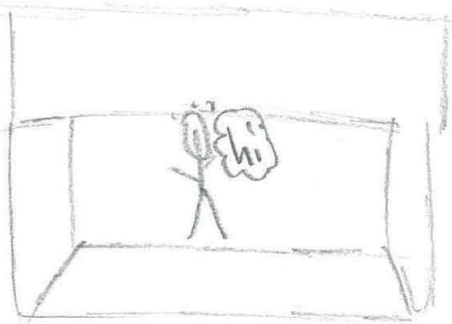
HAVE I CHANGED? Please draw pictures

BEFORE Kids Thrive I saw myself like this



I felt nevos and unconferdent about myself but I gave up alot.

AFTER Kids Thrive I see myself like this



I now feel un frighted and not scared to talk in front of people.

APPENDIX 5: student evaluation drawings - How I saw the WORLD before and after Kids Thrive

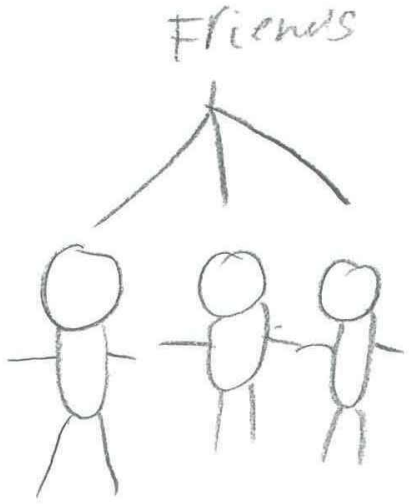
HAVE I CHANGED? Please draw pictures

BEFORE Kids Thrive I saw THE WORLD like this

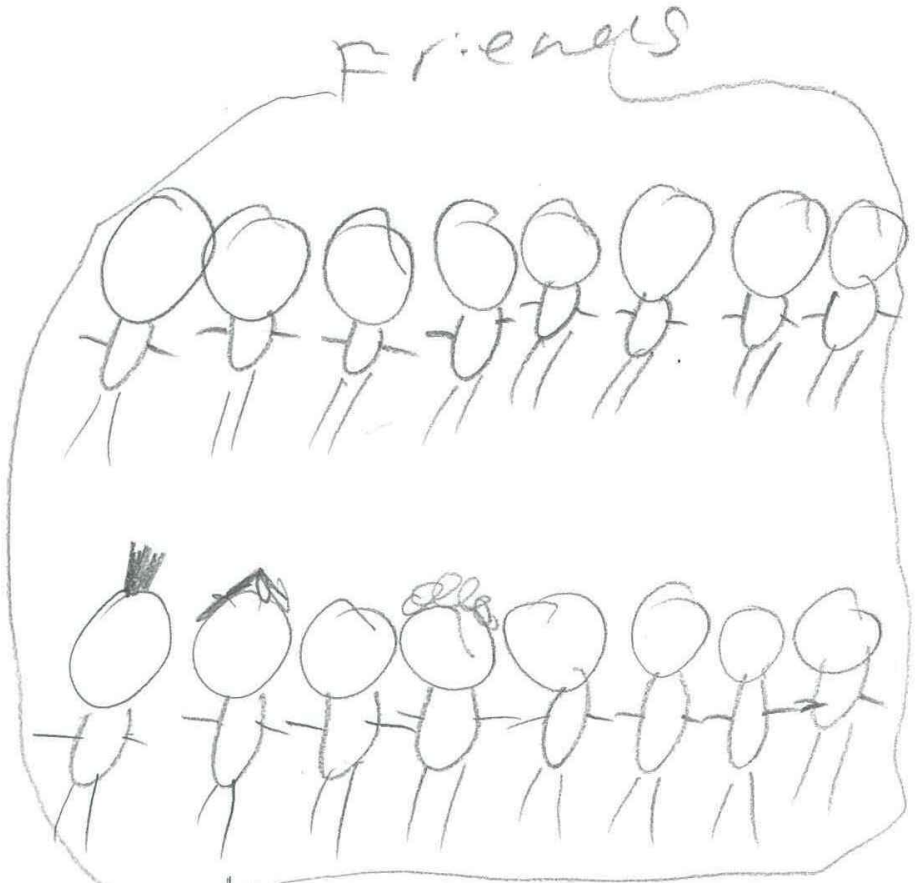
AFTER Kids Thrive I see THE WORLD like this

HAVE I CHANGED? Please draw pictures

BEFORE Kids Thrive I saw THE WORLD like this



AFTER Kids Thrive I see THE WORLD like this



HAVE I CHANGED? Please draw pictures

BEFORE Kids Thrive I saw THE WORLD like this

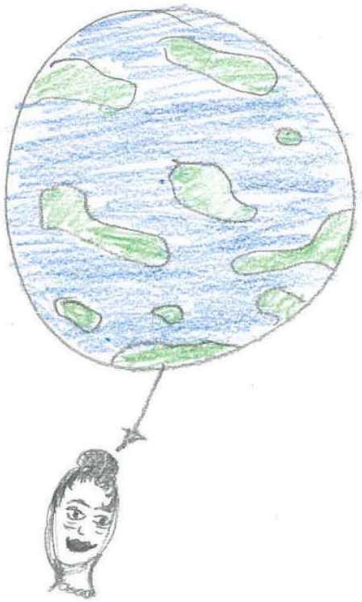
AFTER Kids Thrive I see THE WORLD like this

HAVE I CHANGED? **Please draw pictures**

BEFORE Kids Thrive I saw THE WORLD like this

Old people are mean.

AFTER Kids Thrive I see THE WORLD like this



Old people are nice to talk to and love young people they also and kind and lovely

HAVE I CHANGED? **Please draw pictures**

BEFORE Kids Thrive I saw THE WORLD like this

I really didnt like School

AFTER Kids Thrive I see THE WORLD like this

Really Fun

HAVE I CHANGED? Please draw pictures

BEFORE Kids Thrive I saw THE WORLD like this

AFTER Kids Thrive I see THE WORLD like this

HAVE I CHANGED? Please draw pictures

BEFORE Kids Thrive I saw THE WORLD like this

AFTER Kids Thrive I see THE WORLD like this