POSITIVE CHOICES & Climate Schools

Empowering young Australians

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The Matilda Centre
Acknowledgements & Declaration

We would like to acknowledge the contributions of the Chief and Associate Investigators and the staff of The Matilda Centre. We would also like to acknowledge the many community members from around the country who contribute to our research.

We acknowledge our funders National Health and Medical Research Council (Centre of Research Excellence, Project Grants, Fellowships); Australian Government Department of Health, NSW Department of Health, Rotary PhD Scholarships and Fellowships, Society for Mental Health Research Fellowships, Ian Potter Foundation Travel Grant, Paul Ramsay Foundation.

We acknowledge all of the students, teachers and schools involved in the research and the assistance of the NSW, WA and QLD departments of Education and Catholic Education Department and Independent Schools.

Declaration: Maree Teesson and Nicola Newton are the directors of CLIMATESCHOOLS PTY LTD, an Australian company set up in 2015 to distribute the online CLIMATESCHOOLS Programs. Income from the company supports the distribution.
Within **one year**, AFL, NRL and Cricket broadcasts draw a cumulative viewing audience of **26.9 million children**. During this time, **these children** will be exposed to **50.9 million instances of alcohol advertising.**

Alcohol and other drug use in Australia

Among young people aged 14-19 (in the last year):

- 56% consumed alcohol
- 12% used cannabis
- 3% used ecstasy
- 1% used some form of methamphetamine
- <1% used New Psychoactive Substances (NPS)

The peak onset of drug and alcohol use is during teenage years

Source: NDSHS 2016
Why prevent?

– Burden of disease associated with AOD use is substantial.
– Associated harms are considerable - peak impact is 15-24yrs
– Early initiation leads to:
  – Substance use disorders
  – Comorbid mental health problems
  – Poor academic performance/drop out
  – Neuropsychological deficits
  – Less likely to access treatment
Young people want a better future

Mission Australia asked over 24,000 young Australians what they think are the most important issues in Australia today:

1. Mental Health
2. Drugs and Alcohol
3. Equity and Discrimination
Young people are starting to drink later

Source: National Drug Strategy Household Survey
Rates of risky drinking are significant

- Rates of very high risk binge drinking are significant and are highest among young people
- Younger people remain more likely to be victims of alcohol related crime

Source: 2016 National Drug Strategy Household Survey
Risk factors for teenage drug & alcohol use

– Peer use, and confidence to assert own choices (Trucco et al. 2011)

– Perception of use as normative (“everyone is doing it”) (Amialchuk et al., 2019)

– Mental Health and behavioural problems (Birrell et al., 2016)

– Parental attitudes, monitoring, and rule setting
  (Yap et al., 2017; Tael-Oeren et al; 2019; Newton, 2018)
Reviews of school-based drug prevention
Effective principles of school-based drug prevention

– Evidence-based and theory driven
– Developmentally appropriate & immediately relevant
– Implemented prior to harmful patterns of use
– Part of a comprehensive health education curriculum
– Use of peer leaders but keeping teacher as the central role
– Employ interactive teaching methods
– Adopt a social influence or comprehensive approach

Common obstacles to effective implementation

– Insufficient resources e.g. time & money
– Adaptation
– Lack of training
– Commercially based packing
– Sustainability

Poor implementation ➔ poor outcomes
A new approach was needed

1. Evidence-based
   – adheres to effective principles of drug prevention

2. Overcame barriers to implementation
   – to increase fidelity & outcomes

3. Improved student engagement
Climate Schools program

Universal prevention programs which aim to prevent substance use and related harms in adolescents

Alcohol module
(Yr 8: 13-14yr olds)

Alcohol & Cannabis module
(Yr 8/9: 13-15yr olds)

Cannabis & Psychostimulant module
(Yr 9/10: 14-16yr olds)

Ecstasy & Emerging Drugs module
(Yr 11: 16-17yr olds)
Integrated into the learning centre

climateschools.com.au
Part 1: Online lessons

climateschools.com.au
Every time she drinks it ends in tears. I'm getting sick of this.

I just want to die.
Do you want to go home?

No, I feel too sick.
Aaaah FOUL!
Hey Clare, jump in!
Come on!
Seriously Mike - Alcohol slows down your brain so your reaction time is slower.
Fine, your loss... ...Later!
The day after
KNOCK!
KNOCK!
I just want to say I'm really sorry about last night.
Why do you always have to do stupid things?

I suppose I get carried away when I have a few drinks.
At the time it seemed like a good idea...
...that was until I threw up in that older girl’s lap...
Online lesson summaries

climateschools.com.au

METHAMPHETAMINE

What is the difference between amphetamine and methamphetamine?
Methamphetamine is a chemical compound which is very closely related to amphetamine, but stronger. Amphetamine was common in Australia in the early 1950s, but nowadays, what you buy on the streets is almost always methamphetamine.

How is methamphetamine made?
Methamphetamine is a synthetic or man-made drug which is typically made in backyard laboratories and sold illegally. However, certain types of amphetamines are made by pharmaceutical (medicinal) companies and can legally be prescribed by a doctor to treat different medical conditions.

These over-the-counter amphetamines will be briefly covered at the end of this section. The remainder of this section will address those forms of the drug which are illegal.

Methamphetamine and the law
Unless amphetamines are prescribed for a person by a medical practitioner, possessing, using, making or selling amphetamine/methamphetamine is against the law. Methamphetamine and the law will also be covered in greater detail in lesson 6.

What are some of the different names for methamphetamine?
There are many different names used for methamphetamine, including base, speed, ice, shabu shabu, and crystal.
Part 2: Optional activities

Worksheet

Activity 1: Seeking help

In last week’s lesson, Lee was experiencing a number of difficulties related to his drug use. For example, he punched a hole in the wall at home, he upset his family, and he handed his mum’s jewellery to buy drugs. This week, he acknowledges that he is having trouble giving up drugs and discusses this with his parents. For the next 15 minutes, your task is to create a list of four other places he could get help from. You may wish to use the Internet to assist you with this task. You may also wish to find organisations that are happy to provide information on drugs and give advice where needed. Any place you choose must be easily accessible for teenagers living in your area.

For each place you find, complete the details below. The first example has been completed for you.

Name of organisation: KidsHelpline
Phone number: 1800 555 180
Opening hours: 24 hours
Problems they can help with: All youth problems for people aged 5-27 years
Advantages of seeking help from here:
1. Anonymous
2. Specific for young people
3. You get a specific counsellor assigned to you who you can talk to next time
Disadvantages of seeking help from here:
1. You don’t get to see someone face to face
2. They won’t always be able to talk to you
3. They might not feel comfortable telling their problems to a stranger
4. You may not have access to a phone in a private location

Optional Class Activities

Choose the activity or activities to suit the needs of your class.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name of Activity</th>
<th>Task</th>
<th>Format</th>
<th>Preparation</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Evaluating drug related information on internet sites</td>
<td>Pairs of students find and critically analyse three internet sites on the drug they are assigned. Students then present their findings and gain feedback from the class.</td>
<td>Work in pairs followed by a brief class presentation</td>
<td>Book computer access for class and photocopy or print worksheets</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Drugs and their classification</td>
<td>Students complete worksheets aimed at familiarising them with the names and classes of various drugs.</td>
<td>Individual worksheets followed by class discussion</td>
<td>Photocopy or print worksheets</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Psycho-stimulant Quiz</td>
<td>Students learn about psychostimulant drugs through compelling in pairs against one another in a knowledge quiz.</td>
<td>Small group activity (5 per group). Each group completes a quiz on psychostimulants.</td>
<td>Photocopy or print worksheets and student summary. Take a pair of scissors for each group</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. Mind Maps</td>
<td>Students break into groups and develop a mind-map for one of a number of different drugs. Following this students answer questions encouraging them to think more deeply about the key points in their mind maps.</td>
<td>Small group activity</td>
<td>Photocopy or print sample mind-map worksheets and student summary. Take an A3 paper for students to use if possible</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. Homework/Assignment Activity: Drugs in the Media</td>
<td>Students collect three articles or advertisements about drugs and critically evaluate the way information is provided</td>
<td>Research and collect media articles and critically analyse the information provided. Please note: This homework activity is designed to be done over a two week or longer period.</td>
<td>Photocopy or print worksheets and dictate worksheet instructions</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
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Climate Schools: Alcohol module

- Two independent RCTs
- Summary of results:
  - Increased alcohol knowledge
  - Decreased average consumption of alcohol
  - Decreased binge drinking
  - Decreased alcohol-related harms
  - Decreased positive expectancies
  - Positive teacher & student evaluations

Climate Schools: Alcohol & Cannabis module

- Three independent RCTs
- Summary of results:
  - Increased alcohol and cannabis knowledge
  - Decreased frequency of cannabis use
  - Decreased average alcohol consumption
  - Decreased binge drinking
  - Reduced truancy, psychological distress & moral disengagement
  - Positive teacher & student evaluations

Climate Schools: Cannabis & Psychostimulant module

Summary of results:

- Increased cannabis & psychostimulant knowledge
- Reduced positive attitudes towards psychostimulants
- Decreased intentions to use psychostimulants & ecstasy in the future
- Decreased recent use of ecstasy
- Positive teacher & student evaluations

Climate Schools: Ecstasy & Emerging Drugs module

– **Summary of results:**

- ✓ Increased knowledge about ecstasy & New Psychoactive Substance (NPS)
- ✓ Reduced intentions to use synthetic cannabis and any NPS
- ✓ Positive teacher & student evaluations

Champion, K.E. et al (2017)
Australian evidence base behind Climate Schools

- 7 RCTs in Australia (6 complete, 1 ongoing)
  - 169 schools and > 14,600 students have participated across NSW, WA, VIC, ACT, QLD
  - 24 papers reporting effectiveness
  - Effect sizes for the AOD use uptake $d=0.16 - 0.38$
International evidence base behind Climate Schools

- Trial in the UK
- 222 students and 11 teachers at secondary schools in London.
- Overall, Climate Schools was found to be feasible and acceptable in the UK.
Evidence base behind Climate Schools

- Cited in a number of influential reviews (e.g. Cochrane)
- Registered with US National Register of Evidence-based Programs & Practices (NREPP)
- One of only three alcohol education programs rated as having good evidence of effect (Roche et al, 2014; Lee et al, 2016).
Who has Climate Schools reached?

- In addition to the participants in the trials (169 schools and >14,600 students)

- ~450 schools and >13,000 unique users have accessed Climate Schools online climateschools.com.au
Where to Next? New program development

- **An online drug prevention program for parents and students**
  - RCT underway

- **A computerised drug prevention program for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander secondary students**
  - In Development

- **An online multiple health behaviour change program to reduce chronic disease risk among students**
  - In Development
Climate Schools Summary

- Earlier initiation of use is associated with long-term negative outcomes.

- School-based prevention has proven effective in reducing use and related harms.

- Internet-based programs can be effective and increase engagement and scalability.

- **Climate Schools** provides an effective and efficient program for prevention.
What are the barriers to evidence-based prevention?

- Survey of teachers to assess current teaching practices, attitudes and barriers

![Attitudes towards evidence-based approaches](chart)

- I believe evidence-based approaches have only limited usefulness.
- Most research articles are not directly relevant to my everyday teaching.
- My workload is too high to keep up to date with new evidence.

Stapinski, Lawler, Newton, Reda, Chapman & Teesson, 2017 Learning Communities Journal
What is currently being implemented in schools?

Primary approach to drug education

- Guest speaker with personal experience
- Evidence-based program
- Programs with limited evidence-base
- Guest speaker from drug and alcohol field

Stapinski, Lawler, Newton, Reda, Chapman & Teesson, 2017 Learning Communities Journal
Barriers to evidence-based prevention

- Teachers reflected that they valued evidence-based approaches.
- Reported barriers to drug prevention were:
  - Lack of support
  - Lack of time
  - Student background & attitudes
  - Difficulty communicating
  - Parental attitudes
  - Teacher confidence*
POSITIVE CHOICES

One-stop portal providing up-to-date evidence-based information

Builds on existing research and resources

Resource developed with teachers, students & parents

Online delivery & ease of access

WWW.POSITIVECHOICES.ORG.AU
POSITIVE CHOICES
Facilitating evidence-base prevention

Access to a database of school-based prevention programs with research evidence of effectiveness.

Access to up to date drug and alcohol info & teaching resources linked to curriculum.

Support via regular newsletters, social media updates, training opportunities.
POSITIVE CHOICES
Reach and Engagement Since Launch
Linking school communities to evidence based prevention

OVER 1.4 Million pageviews
& 591,357 site users

OVER 185,000 hardcopy resources distributed to every high school in Australia

53% site users Australian

Social Media Reach
3.3 million Facebook impressions
1.8 million Twitter impressions

Monthly site user growth

The Matilda Centre
POSITIVE CHOICES

Reach and Engagement Since Launch

Linking school communities to evidence based prevention

Newsletter

Sent 4x year
Teachers: 1,468
Parents: 845

Webinars

13 webinars
1,595 live viewers
3,196 total views

Conferences & events

44 Presentations/
Workshops
15 Booths/
Conferences
Positive Choices Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Resources

The Positive Choices portal now provides culturally appropriate resources for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people. Resources include:

- Videos
- Factsheets
- Games
- Programs
OUR APPROACH

- Identify new and more effective ways to improve learning
- Spanning low to high risk individuals
- Bridge evidence and community

PRINCIPLES

- Self determination
- Equipping young people with skills to shape their own future
- Enabling environment
Thank you

To find out more, visit:
positivechoices.org.au
climateschools.com.au

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