

Foundation For Youth Development

Resilience, Pro-social Behaviours and Well-being

Through its positive youth development programmes, the Foundation for Youth Development (FYD) encourages young people to adopt healthy and pro-social behaviours, and engage in activities that will increase their resilience and self-efficacy. These are important abilities that have a positive effect on the well-being of young people and help them to successfully negotiate life's transitions. The following summarises some key research project findings related to these gains for the young people who have taken part in four FYD programmes: **Project K**; **Stars**; **Kiwi Can**; and **Career Navigator**.

*"The body of evidence on youth volunteerism and service indicates that young people who engage with voluntary leadership opportunities within their schools and communities are positively impacted by such experiences and are more likely to become engaged citizens as adults (Yates & Youniss, 1996; Youniss, 2011). Accordingly, providing young people with opportunities to contribute whilst developing prosocial values and skills that will enable them to be more effective in the world is a critical part of cultivating a flourishing future society."*¹

Pro-social Behaviour

- FYD programmes address healthy lifestyle behaviours directly by providing experiences of desirable behaviour (e.g., volunteerism), providing positive role models and through discussions of the benefits of pro-social behaviours and the risks of unhealthy behaviours. They also address pro-social behaviours indirectly by promoting overall positivity, self-efficacy, goal-setting and reflection.²
- FYD programmes provide many opportunities for young people to volunteer and 'give back' to their community through community projects. A University of Auckland Master of Education project examined Year 9 Stars mentee feedback following their community projects. The project showed that students learned about "caring" for their community and environment, "to help out people in the community" and "to look after the community and birds, trees, plants".³
- Stars provides opportunities for senior students to volunteer as Peer Mentors. Stars Peer Mentors support Year 9 students to successfully transition to secondary school, to develop pro-social relationships with their peers, and the Peer Mentors provide examples of positive mentoring and role modelling. A study by FYD's Research and Evaluation team and an academic partner from the University of Auckland (Deane et al, 2012) investigated the impact of the Stars Peer Mentoring programme on Peer Mentors' development of life effectiveness skills and prosocial values. Among the findings, the study found that the Peer Mentors' social competence and character (their belief in the importance of values associated with honesty, responsibility, and integrity) increased significantly from the beginning to the end of the programme, and these increases were sustained one year later.
- There is strong evidence that Project K has a consistent positive effect on academic and social self-efficacy. A Massey University study found that students who reported higher levels of academic and social self-efficacy were also more likely to report higher engagement in pro-social rather than risky lifestyle behaviours.⁴

1 Deane, K. L., Moore, J., Gillham, B., & Brown, K. (2015). The Impact of Stars on Peer Mentors. Auckland: University of Auckland & Foundation for Youth Development. Retrieved from <http://www.communityresearch.org.nz/research/the-impact-of-stars-on-peer-mentors-2/>

2 X Zhang, (2012). A randomized Controlled Trial Evaluation of a positive Youth Development Approach to Physical Fitness and Health Eating. Article submitted for publication; Journal of Adolescent Health

3 K Noonan, P Bullen & S P Farrugia (2012). School-based mentoring: Examining the cultural and economic variations in engagement and effectiveness. New Zealand Journal of Educational studies. Vol 47, No 1.

4 S Naomi (2012). Investigating the Impact of the Stars Programme on youth self-efficacy and its relationship to overall health and wellbeing. A thesis completed in partial fulfilment of the requirements for an Honours degree in Psychology; Massey University Auckland

- A University of Auckland PhD study found that Kiwi Can students reported a deep personal commitment to prosocial attitudes and an increase in the incidence of regular, prosocial behaviour in the school classroom.⁵

Resilience

- A Massey University doctoral thesis showed that on average Project K students finished the programme with higher resilience scores than when they started, while the resilience scores in a similar group of students who did not take part in Project K declined. At the end of the programme those in the Project K group with higher scores in resilience were also more likely to have higher well-being scores.⁶
- Kiwi Can Schools report that Kiwi Can is most effective at promoting positive and respectful relationships and increasing the children's ability to resolve relationship problems independently, personal skills and values that can help to foster resilience and well-being in children.
- Increasing levels of positivity and self-efficacy can help young people to be more resilient and face any obstacles they may come across while working to achieve their education and career goals. Career Navigator is a ready-for-work programme designed to provide secondary school students with the information they need to make informed decisions about future employment. The Career Navigator programme has been shown to increase career self-efficacy and to help students feel more confident and optimistic about successfully completing job seeking tasks, navigating a career path and performing career related tasks.

Well-being and Thriving

- A University of Auckland research project (Furness, 2012) examined changes over a year in the well-being of 27 Project K students and a matched control group of young people who did not participate in Project K. The study revealed that the young people who took part in Project K experienced significant increases in well-being over time, with no such increase evident for the control group.
- Education and employment success can help young people to achieve higher living standards leading to greater well-being. A University of Auckland PhD research project compared outcomes for Project K students with a similar group of students who did not take part in the programme. Project K students were less likely to truant school and one year later Project K students were more likely to report attending school, being in full-time education, being employed full-time and looking for educational opportunities.⁷
- In the Deane et al study, six months and one year after taking part in Stars, the Peer Mentors said that Stars continued to influence their lives because of the positive impact the experience had on their confidence and competence (socially and as leaders) and their levels of maturity and sense of responsibility.
- Research projects examining the theory underpinning FYD programmes have found the programmes incorporate many of the components of Positive Youth Development and in particular Lerner's "Five Cs" (competence, confidence, connection, character and caring). "A child or adolescent who develops each of these Five Cs is considered to be thriving. Moreover, developmental scientists believe that these thriving youth develop a sixth "C": contribution (to self, family, community, and civil society)."⁸

⁵ R Williams (2013). Can it? Conducting an Implementation Evaluation of the Kiwi Can programme in Aotearoa New Zealand. Report of Key Findings - Student Survey. A report submitted for the Foundation for Youth Development, PhD Candidate, Faculty of Education; The University of Auckland

⁶ K Furness (2012). Resilience, self-efficacy, and connectedness: Changes in protective factors with Project K students. A thesis being completed in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the degree of Doctor of Clinical Psychology; Massey University.

⁷ K Deane (2012). Project K in black & white: A theory-driven and randomized control trial evaluation of a youth development programme. A thesis submitted in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy in Psychology; The University of Auckland.

⁸ <http://www.childtrends.org/wp-content/uploads/2013/01/Youth-Positive-Development.pdf>