Trauma Informed Positive Education:

Research and Evaluation of the Berry Street Education Model (BSEM) as a wholeschool approach to student engagement and wellbeing (2016-2018)

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At the Melbourne Graduate School of Education we acknowledge the Australian Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples of this nation. We acknowledge the Traditional Owners of the lands on which our Centre is located and where we conduct our research and teaching. We pay our respects to ancestors and Elders, past, present and future.

The Berry Street Education Model (BSEM) is a trauma-informed strengths-based approach designed to inform and guide teacher practice, student learning, student engagement, and psychosocial functioning. By integrating clinical, educational and welfare approaches and perspectives, the BSEM aims to expand the possibilities of teaching and learning within schools to address the needs of vulnerable and at-risk students who have experienced various forms of trauma.

The BSEM begins by guiding teachers in developing a trauma-informed lens through which to understand their students’ behaviours and needs. Then, it provides a developmental curriculum focussed on five domains: Body, Relationship, Stamina, Engagement, and Character. The curriculum contains over 100 classroom strategies and practices that assist students to learn skills to build networks of support, feel confident as learners and manage difficult and challenging emotions. The Berry Street training team also provides teachers with ongoing professional development and detailed advice on structuring the teaching day through a suite of printed curriculum guides.

In 2016, Berry Street partnered with three schools, two primary and one P-9, and researchers within the Melbourne Graduate School of Education at the University of Melbourne to undertake a three-year research and evaluation project examining the implementation and effectiveness of the BSEM within the mainstream schools in the greater Melbourne area. The three schools had begun their BSEM training with Berry Street in 2015.

A self-report survey, containing predominantly quantitative items, was completed twice per year across the three years (i.e., up to 6 measurement occasions per student), and interviews occurred annually. Participants at the three schools included students (Years 5 - 9), teachers, and leaders (Principals, Assistant Principals, BSEM leaders, Wellbeing Leaders). The surveys, interviews, and focus groups were supplemented by additional data provided by the schools, including the Student Attitudes to School Survey (SASS), critical incidents, suspensions, and attendance information.

The training (delivered from 2015-2017) was well received, providing a greater understanding of trauma. Trainers from Berry Street were highly praised by all participants. There was strong agreement that the training days, especially face-to-face and ongoing professional learning, were crucial to teacher engagement with the BSEM.

A distinguishing feature was the whole-school approach in the delivery of BSEM. Support of the leadership team was universally seen as crucial in supporting implementation. Respondents pointed to the shared BSEM language as a driver of change. Respondents also valued developing a deeper understanding of trauma and the related behaviours through engaging with the Model.

School leaders and staff noted a range of impacts on teaching practice. Staff at all three schools believed that the BSEM had impacted positively on the whole-school management of student behaviour. School leaders highlighted the growth in their own and their teachers’ capacities to understand trauma, identify students’ triggers and support students to regulate their behaviour in order to be well and learning ready.

Both teachers and students believed that their BSEM work had had a positive impact on student-teacher and peer relationships. Interview respondents also identified a range of positive effects of the BSEM implementation on relationships between the schools and their communities and, in particular, parents.

Students across all schools were able to freely name a large number of BSEM terms and strategies. Students spoke in detail about how they applied them in regulating and managing their behaviour. They also described the many ways in which using different BSEM strategies enabled them to learn, understand and empathise with their peers, build relationships and manage learning and social challenges.

Implementation of the BSEM does not mean that the schools are problem free. In all three schools, students reported experiencing some bullying and mean type behaviours from others. However, staff acknowledged that having the BSEM as the central framework enabled them to manage these behaviours with understanding, and in timely and consistent ways. Importantly, they were able to support their students to work toward reflection on, and understanding of, their emotional triggers and to give them strategies for learning to regulate their behavioural responses.

The pattern of results cannot definitively be attributable to the BSEM. Nonetheless, evidence suggests that:

- Students, staff, and leadership demonstrated greater understanding of the impact of trauma and how to respond to this and, as a result, felt positively about embedding the BSEM within the school.
- While there was some variation and exceptions, students generally demonstrated good psychosocial functioning over the evaluation period.
- Attendance rates at all schools were sustained at over 90%.
- Positive gains in SASS responses correlated with learnings in the BSEM domains.
- Students could recall elements of the Model and clearly describe how it was implemented and useful in their everyday lives.

Experiences and responses varied across schools. These variations were due to a range of features not captured by this evaluation. Still, evidence suggests that optimal positive outcomes occurred when the BSEM was adopted across the whole-school.

Enabling this was a number of factors:

- The leadership team was involved and supportive and a BSEM coordinator was identified.
- BSEM was included in the on-going strategic planning of the school.
- All staff, teaching and non-teaching, were formally trained by the Berry Street training team, with on-going (in-school and Berry Street provided) support.

- Aspects of the BSEM were incorporated into the everyday classroom routine as well as direct instruction within the curriculum.
- Students were explicitly taught the strategies and skills.

While the data generally provide a positive picture of implementing the BSEM in three mainstream schools, an on-going challenge is to identify how to best implement the BSEM within secondary settings, which bring a number of structural and policy issues that are not present in primary schools.

Based on the data gathered, it appears that for maximal impact of BSEM, schools, with the support of Berry Street, should seek to facilitate school-wide implementation of the BSEM. This includes:

- Ensuring the school has resources and time to maintain a consistency in the approach, including BSEM training for all staff.
- Identifying a BSEM team including a member of leadership, to oversee the implementation and maintenance of the BSEM delivery.
- Assisting school leadership to align BSEM to school policy and strategic planning.
- Ensuring a common language is used across the school.
- Integrating BSEM strategies into the curriculum and classroom activities.
- Integrating the BSEM elements into everyday activities and daily routines.
- Refresher training for the whole school approximately three to four years after initial implementation.

In sum, the research provides compelling evidence of the BSEM’s relevance and application to diverse mainstream educational settings particularly when it is delivered and then implemented using a whole-school approach.

Executive Summary
Introduction

The Berry Street Education Model (BSEM) is a Trauma-Informed Positive Education (TIPE) initiative (Brunzell, Stokes & Waters, 2016), a strengths-based approach designed to inform and guide teacher practice and student learning, engagement, and psychosocial functioning. By integrating clinical, educational and welfare approaches and perspectives, the BSEM aims to expand the possibilities of teaching and learning within schools to address the needs of vulnerable and at-risk students who have experienced various forms of trauma.

There is growing recognition that many young people within mainstream schools have experienced various forms of trauma. This is particularly the case in severely socio-economically disadvantaged areas where schools are catering for significant numbers of students needing complex educational and therapeutic support. Trauma, however, occurs across schools and no young person is guaranteed to be immune from its effects. The experience of trauma can cause students to exhibit a variety of internalising and externalising symptoms, which can be disruptive of learning for both the struggling student and others in the class. Managing such students also adds stress to teachers, affecting their own wellbeing and functioning. As such, there is a need to better support teachers within mainstream schools to address the complex needs that students bring to the classroom.

In 2016, following a successful pilot, Berry Street partnered with three schools, two primary and one P-9, to further trial the implementation of the BSEM within mainstream settings. Berry Street also invited researchers within the Melbourne Graduate School of Education, University of Melbourne to undertake a three-year research and evaluation project examining the implementation and effectiveness of the BSEM within the three schools.

This report first provides background on Berry Street and offers an overview of BSEM. It describes the research and evaluation design, details the findings, and identifies limitations and recommendations for the future.

Background

Berry Street is the largest independent child and welfare organisation in Victoria. Since 2003, its wide range of services and activities has expanded to include direct provision of alternative education for young people who are affected by experiencing or witnessing trauma. There are currently four Berry Street School campuses, each of which emerged out of concerns with the inability of local mainstream schools to adequately meet the complex educational and therapeutic needs of trauma-impacted young people. Learning at each Berry Street campus is framed by the organisation’s own model of education, the BSEM, which draws on extensive international research that has included systematic reviews, analyses and comparisons with programs and models such as the Sanctuary Model in the USA (Bloom, 1995) and the Calmer Classrooms approach in Australia (Downey, 2007).

Existing models typically take a two-tiered approach to learning, which is grounded in a deficit perspective. Such approaches first aim to repair the student (e.g., addressing faulty self-regulatory skills and relational abilities), and then adjust learning strategies to the deficiencies or developmental struggles that the student faces (Brunzell, Waters, & Stokes, 2015). In contrast, the BSEM takes a three-tiered approach to learning, which is grounded in a strengths-based perspective. Like other models, Tier 1 begins with repairing the student’s regulatory abilities. Tier 2 focuses on repairing disrupted attachments. Tier 3 focuses on increasing the young person’s psychological resources, drawing on the young person’s strengths to promote post-traumatic growth. By focusing on healing while simultaneously providing pathways towards post-traumatic growth, the BSEM expands the possibilities of teaching and learning and makes a unique contribution that bridges research from the fields of traumatology and positive education.

It is argued that BSEM has strong cross-sectoral potential, with indications that its impact within specialist settings is replicable and that it can be applied effectively in mainstream schools (Stokes & Turnbull, 2016). This is necessary because as seen from the United States almost 40% of school students can be defined as being trauma-affected, after being exposed to some sort of traumatic stressor. The majority of these students are in mainstream schools (National Child Traumatic Stress Network, 2014). While there is no equivalent Australian data, studies suggest that between 57-75% of Australians will experience some form of trauma during their lifetimes (Mills et al., 2011). Further, particular groups of children are at greater risk of experiencing trauma (Bendall et al., 2018), including children and young people living in out-of-home care (Child Family Community Australia, September 2018) and those from Indigenous (Australian Institute of Health and Welfare, 2019) and refugee (Bryant et al., 2018; Miller, Ziaian, & Esterman, 2018) backgrounds.

Considering the diverse nature of many Australian schools, these findings have clear and disturbing implications for the Australian education community. There is high likelihood that teachers will have a number of students in their classes who have been impacted by trauma. Indeed, teachers in both mainstream and specialist settings increasingly report challenges in dealing with students who present with a range of symptoms and behaviours stemming from their experiences with trauma, including peer bullying, school refusal, conduct and oppositional-defiance disorders, distracted or aggressive behaviour, limited attentional capacities, poor emotional regulation, attachment difficulties, high levels of anxiety, self-harm, and poor relationships with peers. The complexities in trying to teach academic skills while dealing with the complex needs that many students bring to the classroom can undermine teachers’ confidence, cause distress, lead to exhaustion or burnout, and heighten the risk of attrition.

Typical approaches to dealing with these symptoms and behaviours involve sending students to the school psychologist, welfare officer, a general practitioner, or referrals to other specialists within or outside of the school. While such approaches can be useful, they are time and resource intensive, and many students do not receive the support they need. Intensive treatment approaches are no longer sufficient - classroom-based approaches are needed that proactively support student and teacher mental health within everyday practice. That is, there is a need for educational approaches that effectively address the complex needs of the growing proportion of students who are struggling in 21st century classrooms. A trauma-informed approach assists schools to provide the necessary “sense of safety, trust and understanding” that all young people need (Bendall et al., 2018, p. 7).
A whole-school approach is a cohesive, collective and collaborative action in and by a school community that has been strategically constructed to improve student learning, behaviour and wellbeing, and the conditions that support these (DET, 2009). The BSEM offers a whole-school approach to pedagogy and behavioural management that can be used consistently in the classroom and throughout the whole-school. It provides a way to teach the content of any subject area while addressing the social and emotional learning needs of the students in the process.

The approach draws on neuro-scientific findings that suggest that the child’s biological and developmental responses to trauma need to be addressed before they are ‘ready’ to build relationships and engage with learning content. In repairing dysregulated stress responses, focus is placed on restoring self-regulatory abilities. Self-regulation includes emotional control, impulse management, and regulatory capacities, and are crucial to the child’s healthy development (Bath, 2008; Duckworth & Seligman, 2017; Duckworth & Steinberg, 2015).

Educational and therapeutic strategies aimed at addressing the dysregulated stress response and building regulatory capacities include creating supportive environments and engaging in physical and emotional regulation activities. A focus on supportive environments involves creating a classroom environment within which young people can explore self-regulation and co-regulation, identify negative emotions, and learn to manage their behaviour. Such environments support young people through classroom activities that have both physical and emotional foci. Physical regulation activities seek to align the body through sensory integration and rely heavily on rhythm, repetition, and routine. Emotional regulation activities aim to help the young person to identify, acknowledge, label, understand, and work with difficult feelings; build the capacity to communicate those feelings to others; link internal thoughts to external stimuli; acquire and practise strategies for de-escalating emotions; and learn how to return to a comfortable state after arousal. Underpinning the BSEM is the importance of building both in-the-moment self-regulation and longer-term resources and capacities (Brunzell et al., 2015b).

To support students in developing these capacities, the BSEM begins by guiding teachers in developing a trauma-informed lens through which to view and understand students’ behaviours and needs. Then, it provides a developmental curriculum that assists students to learn skills to build networks of support, feel confident as learners, and manage difficult and challenging emotions. The Berry Street training team also provide teachers with intensive and on-going professional development, and detailed advice on structuring the teaching day in the form of a suite of printed curriculum guides (Brunzell et al., 2015b).

As illustrated in Figure 1, the BSEM curriculum comprises five domains: BODY, STAMINA, ENGAGEMENT and CHARACTER, all anchored by RELATIONSHIP. As shown in Figure 2, each domain contains a cluster of focus areas, within which are located sets of teaching and intervention strategies and practices. Identification of the foci was guided by international research (Brunzell, Stokes & Waters, 2016). The domains and their respective foci are applied sequentially, beginning with BODY, and subsequently proceeding through RELATIONSHIP, STAMINA, ENGAGEMENT, and CHARACTER.

The BSEM curriculum contains over 100 classroom strategies and practices, which have been designed to enable teachers to adapt the components to their own classroom context. Each part of the curriculum is designed to be a Strategy, a Brainbreak, or a Lesson Plan.

- **Strategies** are teacher-centred approaches for strengthening students’ self-regulation or relationships, and teacher behaviours that are integrated with pedagogical approaches.

- **Brainbreaks** are short burst regulatory activities designed to ready students’ brains for learning. Containing options such as mindfulness and emotion/humour activities, Brainbreaks promote both self-awareness through checking current emotional, physical and psychological states, and self-regulation through cultivating flexible, resilient and open mindsets. They are flexible and can be interwoven into the classes at any time.

- **Lesson Plans** provide detailed sequences for teaching specific skills and strategies. Within each lesson there are several core learning intentions, supported by a collection of activities. Teachers are able to select lesson components to suit the needs and capabilities of their students. These activities can also be integrated into other curriculum areas to support students’ learning. Each lesson plan contains background information outlining the reasons for the activity; lesson aims/objectives; a list of materials needed; an estimated session duration; a description of the activity, and materials such as worksheets.
Within the BODY domain, classroom strategies and practices are framed by four inter-connected focal areas: Present, Centred, Grounded, De-escalation, Mindfulness, and Self-Regulation. Activities help students develop awareness of their physical and emotional states, identify their own stress responses and readiness to learn, establish and practice a variety of coping strategies that can be used within and outside of school, be mentally present in the classroom, and develop a strong self-regulatory capacity. Strategies include breathing and stretching, classroom discussions, collaborative design of individual Focus/Safety plans, focusing attention on a single point, and visualization.

The RELATIONSHIP domain is the BSEM’s anchor, with the belief that struggling students will put forth their best efforts for teachers they like, respect, and believe will be present for them at times when they are not at their best (Brunzell, Waters, & Stokes, 2015). Practices and strategies focus on Attachment, Unconditional Positive Regard, Redefining Power, Empathy and Zen Mind, Golden Statements, Process vs. Person Praise, and Active Constructive Responding. Activities embrace the shared responsibility for the student within a consistent and closely-aligned whole-school context, emphasizing the importance of peer support and mentorship for teachers. Strategies help teachers to maintain a vision of the child’s wholeness, separate the student from their behaviours, respond to students in ways that open up conversation and create a sense of connection, remain calm despite provocation, and empower students to take responsibility for their own behaviours.

The STAMINA domain helps students overcome adversity, embrace opportunities for growth, and stay engaged in learning over extended periods of time. Focus areas include Growth Mindset, Emotional Intelligence, Resiliency, and Stamina for Independent Learning. Activities include identifying one’s emotions, seeing how they change over time, and managing emotions well, reconceptualising failures as opportunities for learning, and encouraging students to embrace mistakes as part of the learning process.

The ENGAGEMENT domain highlights the importance of providing learning experiences that trigger interest, have a purpose, are relevant to the student’s own ambitions and vocational goals, and fall within the student’s competencies. Focal areas include Flow, Willingness, Positive Emotions, Positive Movement and Rhythm, Play, Humour, and Fun, Physical Theatre and Clowning Around, and Cultivating Wonder. Activities include transitioning into lessons with positive hooks (i.e., short-burst attention-grabbing activities) and including short ‘fun breaks’ (i.e., fun stories and scenarios) into teaching.

The CHARACTER domain draws on Peterson and Seligman’s (2004) Values in Action (VIA) classification of 24 signature character strengths (i.e., positive traits manifested in thoughts, feelings, and behaviours) – focusing on what is ‘right’ within the young person. Studies suggest that identifying and using one’s strengths relates to higher levels of school performance and greater wellbeing (Shoshani & Slone, 2013). Focal areas include Virtues, Character Strengths, Hope, and Gratitude. Activities help students to identify and practise their personal strengths, articulate their personal values, develop understanding of themselves and others in the context of community, develop tolerance and respect for others’ strengths, and employ strengths and values for future pathways. Strategies include ‘strengths storytelling’, ‘strengths spotting’, ‘strengths assessment’ activities, and applying/modelling resilient mindsets to small adversities in day-to-day classroom management.
Ross P-9 College

Ross P-9 College is located in the outer-eastern Melbourne area. In 2018, Ross College had an enrolment of 752 in classes from Foundation to Year 9, with an additional 130 in the Early Years Centre. The school population includes 65% LOTE and 7% Indigenous students and has an ICSEA score of 901 (average 1000) with a spread of 65% bottom, 23% lower middle, 10% upper middle and 2% in the top level.

Describing itself as a ‘birth to Year 9 community learning centre’, Ross College was launched in 2012, to meet the needs of children and young people within a district that has been identified by Socio-Economic Indexes for Areas (SEIFA) as the lowest quintile. The school has a ‘wraparound’ service ethos articulated through active liaison with community agencies, a local hospital and Maternal & Child Health services.

The school has faced a number of challenges over its short lifetime, as staff have needed to “think outside the square” (Principal, Ross College, 2018), given the particular needs of many of the students.

Ross College provides an integrated services model, including an Early Learning Centre (ELC), P-9 classes, playgroups, adult education programs, and allied health specialists. The school’s Wellbeing Team includes social workers, therapeutic case managers, group work counsellors, a chaplain, integration staff, psychologists and speech therapists. Previously the school had used Restorative Practices.

Staff undertook BSEM training from 2015 to 2017.

Preparing Teachers to Teach the BSEM

The BSEM began with a four-day professional development (PD) course in which participants learned classroom and whole-school strategies to promote an understanding of the five domains of the Model. Utilising a ‘blended learning’ methodology which incorporates instructor expertise, peer collaboration, and opportunities for participants to pilot learned strategies, the PD aimed to increase teacher capacity to work with challenging students.

The training used a series of workshops, seminars and training sessions, specifically geared to the needs of each setting. These sessions were led by the Berry Street training team both offsite and within the schools. Each session focussed on a different component of the BSEM, as described below.

Day 1: BODY

The first day and set of sessions focused on building school-wide rhythms and body-regulation through a focus on physical and emotional regulation of the stress response and de-escalation in school and classroom contexts. Topics included:
- From a developmentally neuro-sequential perspective, designing and delivering curriculum that promotes academic performance, wellbeing and future pathways.
- Acknowledging trauma’s impact on the body, on the stress response, and on learning (specifically, helping students to self-regulate to a heart rate of around 80 beats per minute).
- Offering opportunities throughout the day for students to elect individualised time to both co-regulate and self-regulate.
- Using rhythmic, predictable, and consistent timetables for lessons, weeks and the school year.
- Providing opportunities for mindful practice.

Day 2: RELATIONSHIPS

The second day focused on increasing relational capacities in staff and students through attachment and attunement principles with specific relationship strategies for difficult-to-engage young people. Topics included:
- Staff/student connections built on attachment principles of unconditional positive regard and positive emotion.
- Foundations of safety, tolerance and respect.
- Teaching social and emotional intelligence.
- Friendship and teamwork.
- Strategies to build lasting, strong relationships by increasing positivity relations within relationships.

Day 3: STAMINA and ENGAGEMENT

The third day included two parts. The first part focused on creating a strong culture of independence for academic tasks by nurturing resilience, emotional intelligence and a growth mindset. Topics included:
- Strategies to build emotional intelligence, personal resilience, frustration tolerance and self-regulation.
- Growing the stamina for attention and strategies for managing distraction.
- Structures to support group affiliation.
- Encouraging growth mindsets for academic learning and accomplishment.
- Developing passion for learning and the persistence to follow through.

The second part of the day focused on employing engagement strategies that build willingness in struggling students. Topics included:
- Understanding the pathways to complete engagement through flow activities.
- Active engagement, including flexible timetabling, hands on activities and multiple learning modalities.
- Broadening, building and savouring positive emotions.
- Building motivation through healthy play and fun.
- Sparking curiosity and interest through real world application, vocational pathways, problem solving and investigation.

Day 4: CHARACTER

The fourth day focused on harnessing a values and character strengths approach to enable successful student self-knowledge which leads to empowered future pathways. Topics included:
- Helping students articulate their own values.
- Finding personal meaning in those values and extending that meaning to include others.
- Understanding self and others in the context of culture and community.
- Identifying personal strengths and practising those strengths.
- Exploring strengths through stories, narratives, metaphors and heroes/paragons of particular strengths.
- Cultivating attainment through tolerance and respect for others’ character strengths.

Following completion of the training, the Berry Street training team provided several Masterclasses to staff which were informed by research, anchored in practice, and aimed at building sustainability and consistency in the BSEM through a whole-school approach. The sessions were designed to create opportunities for educators to extend their knowledge, re-connect with, and further their application of the BSEM.

The Masterclasses provided teachers with the opportunity to model the activities they were presenting in the classroom. Masterclasses included Implementation Strategies for the BSEM and Managing Complex Behaviour.

Staff at Curran were trained incrementally, with all teaching...
staff receiving training over a one year period in 2015, and then integration support staff receiving training in the following year using a train-the-trainer model (i.e., with the teaching staff providing training within the school). All teaching and leadership staff at Gemert completed the training over a two year period, beginning in 2015. All staff at Ross College, including integration support, administrative staff and allied health professionals working within the school received the training over an 18-month period from 2015-2016, and then participated in subsequent Masterclasses with the Berry Street trainers. Ross College also implemented a train-the-trainer approach, providing additional training within PD and curriculum days at the school.

Qualitative and Quantitative Assessments
Along with participating in the training, the schools agreed to participate in a series of qualitative and quantitative assessments over a three-year period to evaluate the impact of, and experiences with, the BSEM. A student self-report survey containing predominantly quantitative items was completed twice per year across the three years (i.e., up to 6 measurement occasions per student), and qualitative evaluation occurred annually.

Participants included Year 5 through 9 students, teachers, and leaders (Principals, Assistant Principals, BSEM leader, Wellbeing Leader, etc.) at the three schools. Table 1 summarises response rates across the three-year period, separately by school.

Table 1: Data collection summary

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</table>
Student Surveys

From 2016 through 2018, students in Years 5 and 6 at Curran and Gemert and students in Years 5 through 9 at Ross were invited to complete a self-report online survey. Surveys were completed by 911 students (344 students from Curran, 100 students from Gemert, and 467 students from Ross College). Surveys were administered in February-March and then October-December each year. **Table 2** summarises the number of responses at each measurement occasion, for the full sample and separately by school and year level. As there were 6 time points, it is the number of respondents at each school, at each time point.

| Time | Full Sample | Curran | Gemert | Ross | Level 5 | Curran | Gemert | Ross | Level 6 | Curran | Gemert | Ross | Level 7 | Curran | Gemert | Ross | Level 8 | Curran | Gemert | Ross | Level 9 | Curran | Gemert | Ross | Level 10 | Curran | Gemert | Ross |
|------|-------------|--------|--------|------|--------|--------|--------|------|--------|--------|--------|------|--------|--------|--------|------|--------|--------|--------|------|--------|--------|--------|-----|
| 1    | 411         | 107    | 52     | 252  | 123    | 44     | 29     | 50   | 143    | 63     | 23     | 57   | 53     | 0      | 0      | 0    | 35     | 0      | 0      | 0    | 57     | 0      | 0      | 0    |
| 2    | 411         | 140    | 45     | 226  | 139    | 61     | 25     | 53   | 145    | 79     | 20     | 46   | 48     | 0      | 0      | 0    | 29     | 0      | 0      | 0    | 50     | 0      | 0      | 0    |
| 3    | 299         | 0      | 55     | 244  | 87     | 0      | 27     | 60   | 78     | 0      | 0      | 0    | 52     | 0      | 0      | 0    | 49     | 0      | 0      | 0    | 49     | 0      | 0      | 0    |
| 4    | 440         | 155    | 51     | 234  | 174    | 88     | 26     | 60   | 145    | 67     | 28     | 46   | 46     | 0      | 0      | 0    | 46     | 0      | 0      | 0    | 28     | 0      | 0      | 0    |
| 5    | 292         | 105    | 41     | 146  | 120    | 59     | 14     | 47   | 112    | 46     | 25     | 27   | 25     | 0      | 0      | 0    | 18     | 0      | 0      | 0    | 26     | 0      | 0      | 0    |
| 6    | 309         | 138    | 39     | 132  | 102    | 49     | 14     | 39   | 156    | 88     | 25     | 25   | 25     | 0      | 0      | 0    | 24     | 0      | 0      | 0    | 25     | 0      | 0      | 0    |

Some of these responses were the same students across multiple measurement occasions, whereas others were new respondents. Of the 931 students who completed at least one survey, most students responded on 1 or 2 occasions. **Table 3** summarises the survey completion rate across the six measurement occasions, separately by school. Out of 6 time points possible, it could be any or all of the 6 time points within that. For example, a student might have completed 3 surveys (so in Table 2, the student would be counted as 3 responses), which occurred at Time 1, Time 3, and Time 4 (so a student would be counted at these 3 time points in Table 2).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Survey</th>
<th>Curran</th>
<th>Gemert</th>
<th>Ross College</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1 survey</td>
<td>107 (31.1%)</td>
<td>12 (12.0%)</td>
<td>102 (21.8%)</td>
<td>221 (24.3%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2 surveys</td>
<td>173 (50.3%)</td>
<td>33 (33.0%)</td>
<td>158 (33.8%)</td>
<td>364 (40.0%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3 surveys</td>
<td>64 (18.3%)</td>
<td>16 (16.0%)</td>
<td>72 (15.4%)</td>
<td>152 (16.6%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4 surveys</td>
<td>0 (0.0%)</td>
<td>38 (38.0%)</td>
<td>96 (20.6%)</td>
<td>134 (14.8%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5 surveys</td>
<td>0 (0.0%)</td>
<td>1 (1.0%)</td>
<td>18 (3.9%)</td>
<td>19 (2.1%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6 surveys</td>
<td>0 (0.0%)</td>
<td>0 (0.0%)</td>
<td>21 (4.5%)</td>
<td>21 (2.3%)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

It is important to note that while the surveys capture student functioning over the three-year period, they do not capture change pre to post intervention. The initial round of surveys was completed during and after the training with teachers and staff. Most likely teachers were already implementing their new learnings into the classroom. In addition, while some students were followed over time, average responses often capture new sets of students. As such, the responses are best seen as capturing the general student psychosocial functioning at the three schools over the evaluation period, rather than tracking changes from pre to post the BSEM intervention. In interpreting the responses, emphasis is placed on the pattern of responses compared to what would be expected, based on the profiles of the schools, rather than on specific patterns or trends.

The surveys were mostly quantitative in nature, asking students about several aspects of their wellbeing, relationships with others, character, self-esteem, coping ability, the extent to which they are bullied or bully others, how important school and education is to them, and the extent to which others disrupt their learning. Items were measured on a 5-point scale, indicating how well each item described them (1 = not at all, 2 = a little bit, 3 = some, 4 = quite a bit, 5 = lots). The same questions were asked at each measurement occasion, with the exception that in 2018, several questions were added to capture their perceived ability to calm down when angry or upset. For each construct, several items were averaged together to reliably capture the construct. **Table 4** summarises the constructs measured and reported on here, with the number of items representing that construct, reliability, and representative items.
Table 4: Constructs captured in the student surveys

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Construct</th>
<th># items</th>
<th>Reliability Range</th>
<th>Sample Items</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Positive affect</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>.90-.91</td>
<td>I feel happy at school. I feel positive at school.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Negative affect</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>.86-.88</td>
<td>I feel frustrated at school. I feel stressed at school.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Teacher connectedness</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>.92-.94</td>
<td>My teachers are good at helping students with problems. My teachers help me do my best.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Peer connectedness</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>.76-.80</td>
<td>I get on well with other students at my school. My friends at school really care about me.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Perseverance</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>.83-.87</td>
<td>I am a hard worker. I keep at my schoolwork until I am done.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Optimism/satisfaction</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>.79-.85</td>
<td>I am satisfied with my life. I believe that things will work out, no matter how difficult they seem.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Body image</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>.74-.80</td>
<td>I feel like changing something about my body. I worry about the way I look.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Coping</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>.82-.84</td>
<td>I can calm myself down when I am angry. I have ways to calm myself down when I feel upset.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Importance of school</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>.84-.87</td>
<td>Doing well in school is important to me. My education is important to me.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Others interrupt learning</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>.88-.91</td>
<td>It’s often hard to learn in class because some students are really disruptive. The behaviour of some students in class makes it hard for me to do my work.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bullied to others</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>.82-.88</td>
<td>I have picked on other kids recently at school. I have been mean to other students at school.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bullied by others</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>.81-.88</td>
<td>I have been bullied recently at school. Students are mean to me at school.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note: Reliability is based on Cronbach’s α. Values > .70 typically indicate good reliability.

Each domain is measured on a 1 to 5 scale. For positive constructs (positive affect, relationships with peers and teachers, perseverance, optimism, coping, school importance), scores closer to 5 are desirable, whereas for negative domains (negative affect, negative body image, bad aspects of school, bullying by self or others), scores closer to 1 are desirable.

To summarise responses to these variables, average responses at each occasion are presented as notched bar graphs, as illustrated in Figure 3. The occasion is noted along the bottom. Note that Curran was missing Time 3, so that occasion appears blank in each graph. Domain scores (e.g., peer connectedness) are given along the vertical y-axis.

Qualitative Interviews and Focus Groups

The qualitative approach included individual interviews with teachers and school leaders and focus groups with students. Over the three years, interviews were conducted with 17 teachers/school leaders, and 51 students participated in 12 focus groups. Student focus groups were comprised of young people drawn from Years 5 and 6 at the three schools. Where possible, the same teachers and students were involved in the data collection each year.

Teachers and leaders participated in qualitative interviews across the three years. Questions had various foci. School staff reflected on the effectiveness of the training, reported on how they implemented or observed other teachers implement the BSEM, impacts of the Model on teacher practice, relationships within and outside of the school (student-teacher relationships, peer relationships, community relationships), and behaviour management. They also provided overall reactions to, and reflections on, working with and implementing the BSEM over the three-year period.

Some students at each school participated in focus groups. Students were asked to describe any BSEM strategies and terms that they had learned about in their classrooms. They were then provided with a list of terms and invited to talk about their experience and use of the strategies. They also provided their perceptions of the impact of the BSEM, including on their relationships with the peers and teachers, on their ability to manage their own behaviour, and perceived benefits of the Model.

Additional Measures Collected

The surveys, interviews, and focus groups were supplemented by some additional data provided by the schools, including:

- Student Attitudes to Schools Survey (SASS).
- Critical incidents and suspension data.
- Attendance data.

Schools provided varying amounts of data from these sources. Curran provided SASS 2017 and 2018 data and Gernert provided behaviour incidents data for 2017 and 2018. Ross College provided SASS 2017 and 2018 data and records of critical incidents and suspensions for the period 2014-2018. Attendance data for each school was obtained directly from the My School website (https://www.myschool.edu.au/).

The findings reported here predominantly focus on the quantitative and qualitative data directly collected during the research process, with some information from other sources included where relevant.
The findings of the evaluation are organised around three areas:

1. The effectiveness of the training on preparing teachers to deliver the BSEM.
2. How the BSEM was implemented.
3. The impact of the BSEM on teaching, learning, wellbeing, and behaviour for students and teachers within each of the schools.

Training Effectiveness

In the interviews, school staff reflected on how effective they felt the training was for developing knowledge of strategies to use when teaching the BSEM. There was strong agreement across participants that the training days were crucial to teacher engagement or buy-in with the BSEM. While the usefulness of the BSEM curriculum guides was acknowledged, there was consensus that face-to-face, on-going, professional learning was essential to the success of the implementation. There was a sense that the training provided a “greater understanding of trauma” (Wellbeing Leader, Ross, 2018).

Trainers from Berry Street were highly praised by all participants, being described as “very effective … sensational presenters” (Wellbeing Leader, Gemert, 2018). The evidence-informed delivery by experts from outside the school was noted as important in facilitating staff buy-in to the Model. For instance, one participant noted, “I think our staff responded better to this outside source: it had ‘kudos’” (Wellbeing Leader, Gemert, 2018).

The return of Berry Street trainers every 12 months from 2015-2017 was also seen by the Wellbeing Leader at Gemert as “kudos” (Wellbeing Leader, Curran, 2016). Another respondent valued the training for providing a “different voice to reinforce and consolidate work” (Wellbeing Leader, Gemert, 2016) previously done in another program.

Schools emphasised the importance of training all school staff. Leaders and teachers at Curran observed that there were “moments when some integration staff were not integrating the strategies or sharing the perspective of [the BSEM]” and this led to the “realisation of the need to extend training to integration aides as they are the first port of call for the majority of kids with challenging behaviours” (Curran, Teacher, 2017). This was particularly emphasised at Ross College, where all staff were trained, including Out of School Hours Care (OSHC), administrative and allied professionals providing services within the school, in line with their view that for successful implementation a whole-school approach was necessary. At Curran, Casual Relief Teachers (CRTs) and student teachers were involved in the training and a future consideration for Ross is to train regular CRTs. Similarly, the Wellbeing Leader at Gemert emphasised the value and importance of the whole staff training because of the power of “all hearing the same message at the same time” (2017). The Leader further advised, “get all staff involved and take it step by step. Have all staff trained, introduce one module per term, then allow it to embed” (2018).

The delivery of training, which provided theory and was followed by modelling applications of the strategies, enabled teachers to discuss the approaches and then, in between training sessions, to practise implementation. This was seen to be highly effective. For instance, a teacher at Curran noted: “Tom presents on staff wellbeing and trauma-informed approaches and follow-up sessions. We had a chance to play with the Model and had lots of PD and conversation. We learn how to apply the strategy and run lessons it really works” (2017).

For on-going training, Curran and Ross applied a train-the-trainee model, in which staff members who received training provided the information and approaches to new staff members, in tandem with the on-going Masterclasses and visits from Berry Street trainers. The Wellbeing Leader at Gemert noted that while she was trained to be able to deliver the professional learning, she and the school leadership felt that the on-going engagement with external Berry Street trainers was more optimal for uptake within their setting.

Ross designated one of the assistant principals as the BSEM leader to work across the primary and secondary levels with both teams and individual staff to support them in delivering either the lessons (in the primary area) or the language and approach (in the secondary area). As part of this training, he undertakes observations and provides feedback on the BSEM teaching practice. He has also videoed seven of the teachers delivering lessons and these videos are used with staff in professional development sessions in conjunction with a checklist designed to analyse and reinforce the BSEM messages and pedagogy. He commented, “it’s been a powerful tool” (Wellbeing Leader, Ross, 2018) in embedding and strengthening the implementation of the BSEM.

Implementation of the BSEM

Support of the leadership team was universally seen as crucial for successful implementation. Having a supportive Principal and a dedicated BSEM team driving implementation was seen as a precursor to establishing and embedding a whole-school approach to teaching, learning and student wellbeing. Participants from Gemert noted that the leadership team was “passionate and supportive” (Wellbeing Leader, Gemert, 2018) of the BSEM while at Curran the Wellbeing Leader highlighted that it was the Principal “who jumped on board. Knowing it’s coming from leadership was important” (Assistant Principal, Curran, 2018) in creating buy-in and an on-going commitment to the Model.

The three schools demonstrated clear buy-in with the BSEM. Each school allocated a set time in the week to teach a particular component of the BSEM, and included the BSEM in their strategic plans, trained all staff, including many non-teaching staff, encouraged a whole-school approach, and used the shared language provided by the BSEM. The exception was the later year levels at Ross College, where it is more challenging to set aside time for explicitly teaching the BSEM with other curricular demands. Instead at the secondary level the BSEM informs and underpins the teachers’ pedagogical and behavioural management approach in the classroom. Using the shared language of the BSEM at this level was the priority rather than specific teachings on the BSEM domains.

The three schools were at varying stages in the journey and this is reflected in the ways in which the staff and students understood and talked about their experiences of implementing the BSEM.

Curran Primary School

Staff at Curran Primary School did not initially see the BSEM as a natural fit for their setting.

When the (BSEM) began, it wasn’t a typical fit; we don’t really have extreme cases here, but we could see the [BSEM] benefits in its general values. We could see how it develops students anyway, towards making them more grounded (Wellbeing Teacher, Curran, 2016).

However, once they had committed, they embraced the Model, using the BSEM guidelines as the basis for the school’s wellbeing policy and program. The school developed a detailed term-by-term, 5-year implementation plan for delivering the BSEM throughout the school, with 2019 being Year 4 of this plan. All teachers received copies of the plan for use in their class. A school leader noted:

The school has a young but consistent staff, and all are confident in using the documents and book provided as guidelines for the [BSEM] (Assistant Principal, Curran, 2018).

The BSEM is actively taught to all students at some point in their schooling, with direct instruction at Foundation level, and becoming less formalised with older students.

In the Junior School one hour per week is timetabled for teaching the [BSEM], in the Senior School Positive Ed is the background to everything (Assistant Principal, Curran, 2018).

The school’s wellbeing guidelines specify one BSEM domain focus for each term, but all domains are in the background and BSEM language is used throughout the school.

Visual signs of the school’s commitment to the BSEM include a school hall display of its values. Underneath each value lies its current BSEM focus areas, which are changed each term. Reinforcement of the focus is provided at weekly assemblies. ‘Wellbeing Wednesdays’ have been initiated, with activities running in the library or outside under the trees at lunchtime. A Valet Service has been introduced, whereby Year 5 students in high visibility vests meet and greet younger students daily as they arrive at the school.

There is a sense that the Model has had a real impact on the school culture. For instance, a school leader commented that “both teachers and students are on board” and that she hears “positive talk all day” (Assistant Principal, Curran, 2018).
We do Brainbreaks in between classes, to relax our minds. You get relaxed and ready to learn (Year 6 student, Ross, 2017).

They spoke of how the strategy helped them both manage feelings and/or behaviours and refocus on tasks:

Brainbreaks get you focussed if you’re overheated (Year 5 student, Gemert PS).

It [Brainbreak] takes your mind off what you’re stressed about cos you’re physically doing something (Year 6 student, Gemert PS).

Another student shared that Brainbreaks had helped them to "enjoy school" (Year 6 student, Ross, 2017).

Despite the positive reactions to the Brainbreaks, students also identified the importance of timing and understanding of student needs:

Brainbreaks is where you have your mind refreshed. I don’t necessarily like ‘em that much because when I’m on task and have a Brainbreak, I just forget what I’m doing (Year 6 student, Curran PS).

Similarly, a school leader highlighted the need for targeted Brainbreaks to be strategically placed and connected with an element of the lesson:

Two years ago, Brainbreaks used to last 30 minutes; not now. Staff now link Brainbreaks to the lesson (BSEM Leader, Ross, 2018).

Focus (Safety) Plans and De-Escalation Charts

All focus groups mentioned Focus/Safety plans and de-escalation charts. Students spoke of how the plans and charts assisted them to manage their emotions, including anger, when the behaviour of others caused them distress:

At the beginning of the year we had to write down some strategies to de-escalate when we’re mad or sad - like get a drink, go outside … I think it’s important to have one of these because if you don’t and you get annoyed one day you won’t really know what to do. Some people don’t use them, but I do (Year 6 student, Curran, 2018).

I think the [Focus/Safety] plan was probably the best because it helps you … if you feel angry you don’t know what to do … all these thoughts just flood in your head, so you just look at your [Focus/Safety] plan (Year 6 student, Gemert, 2017).

By having the chart, one student noted:

I think Brainbreaks are really good because at this age when we’ve got a lot of work, I think it’s really good to refresh your brain (Year 6 student, Curran, 2018).

We reinforcing the power of a shared language used within the charts to name emotional states, one student commented:

They [the teacher and peers] ask, ‘what zone are you in? (Year 6 student, Gemert, 2018).

Another student noted that the de-escalation chart provided a useful reference point for others in the class to identify when someone was in a heightened emotional state. This, the student observed, enabled both the teacher and peers to respond sensitively, increasing the student’s capacity to calm down.

Using a de-escalation chart with a moveable token provided a way for students to visually communicate their mood to others:

“People around us can tell that we’re stressed … and then our teachers know” (Year 6 student, Curran, 2016).

They contrasted this with previous practice:

It’s really annoying when I’m stressed or angry and people don’t know, so then they can make me angry (Year 6 student, Curran, 2016).

Students emphasised the role that teacher and peer awareness and approaches can play in helping them to de-escalate, including the use of humour:

If you’re angry the teachers or your friends make you calm down or have a laugh (Year 6 student, Gemert, 2018).

Character Strengths

Students spoke of the universality of strengths, recognising that there were cases where some students may need help to identify their own character strengths. Some students were at first sceptical of the strengths approach but once immersed found that it was valuable. For instance, one student noted:

I enjoyed the activity. I didn’t think it would work, but it did (Year 5 student, Ross, 2017).

A common emphasis was the role character strengths play in assisting people to feel good about themselves:

Everyone has character strengths and it makes people feel happy about themselves (Year 6 student, Curran, 2018).

Character strengths were seen by some to be central in navigating their social relationships, providing students with a way to maintain their sense of self as they worked to develop friendships:

I form relationships using my character strengths and by being friendly and showing interest in the people I meet (Year 6 student, Curran, 2018).

You want to go with people who accept you as you are, and not with you changing just to be with people (Year 6 student, Gemert, 2018).
Another student spoke of the importance of referring to their listed character strengths to recalibrate when feeling upset:

The character strengths are also … important. When you’re like angry, and like that’s not something you normally are, you can go and look at it [characters strengths list] and see what you truly are … and then you try and be like that (Year 6 student, Gemert, 2018).

Resilience
Resilience was understood by the students to be an individual attribute that enabled them to persist in the face of challenges. These challenges related both to school work and to peer relationships. Thinking about academic challenges, students defined resilience as:

Being able to try again even if you fail like one, two, three, a hundred times. You have to be able to stand up and think I can do this if I try even harder (Year 6 student, Ross, 2018).

If something’s hard and you don’t really get it you keep on trying to do what you have to do, you don’t say you can’t do it, you say you can (Year 6 student, Curran, 2018).

At Curran, students used the word perseverance interchangeably with resilience:

Perseverance means there’s no point giving up – even if you’re not good at it if you keep on trying, you’ll learn it (Year 6 student, Curran, 2018).

Resilience was also seen as “asking more for help” (Year 6 student, Gemert, 2018), and was believed to be important in the face of social rejection: “say you’re not accepted, keep trying, keep going” (Year 6 student, Gemert, 2018).

Several students noted that personal resilience required the capacity to resist others’ negative reactions:

Never give up, don’t listen to them [negative people] (Year 6 student, Ross, 2018).

Keep your personality the way you want it to be and not to be ashamed of yourself (Year 6 student, Curran, 2018).

Fixed and Growth Mindsets
Students were able to differentiate fixed and growth mindsets and articulate the application of the concept to a range of situations:

Fixed mindset is when you say, I can’t do that I’m not going to try; a growth mindset means that you’re going to try (Year 5 student, Gemert, 2018).

Fixed is just giving up on the spot when you start to struggle. It’s like a mountain, as the mountains get high for you if you have a fixed mindset you stop. If you have a growth mindset, you would just keep going. You would say that I’m not going to give up now (Year 6 student, Ross, 2018).

Their discussion of the way they applied the strategy highlighted some students’ ability to use critical and reflective reasoning:

A strategy to use when you’re very stressed … in your mind you think ‘I can’t do this … my friend does this better.’ You need to try and change that. “Yeah my friend can do this, but it doesn’t mean I can’t” (Year 6 student, Curran, 2016).

One student noted the relationship between resilience and growth mindset:

Being resilient is having a growth mindset (Year 6 student, Gemert, 2018).

Other students spoke of the ways in which they used the terms to reflect on and evaluate their own mindsets and the value of the strategy:

I used to have a fixed mindset – I’d think ‘this is boring’, but now I see what the teacher gives us is helpful (Year 6 student, Ross, 2018).

A number of students described applying the mantra, “I can’t do this - YET!” (Year 5 student, Ross, 2017; Year 6 student, Ross, 2018) when faced with new and challenging work and situations.

Present, Centred, Grounded
Students within all focus groups had an understanding of what it meant to be present, centred and grounded. They described:

Being there and not in your own world sort of thinking about a lot of things. Really focussing on the task at hand (Year 6 student, Curran, 2018).

If they’re having problems outside then they’re not thinking about that (Year 6 student, Ross, 2018).

One student drew a connection between different BSEM strategies, integrating Brainbreaks and becoming present, centred and grounded:

Brainbreaks are something to get yourself present, centred and grounded so that if you’re going to do something a bit tricky or if you’re bored, to bring yourself back to what you were doing (Year 6 student, Ross, 2018).

Students spoke of the changes brought about by being supported to become present, centred and grounded:

I am not always on the edge (Year 5 student, Ross, 2017). At this school, a lot of things are very stressful, but when you have that grounded stuff, it helps to calm you down (Year 5 student, Ross, 2016).

Students also noted that the strategy could be useful beyond school:

If you have any siblings … they could get you mad and being present, centred, grounded can come in (Year 5 student, Gemert, 2018).

Ready to Learn
In talking about the term ‘ready to learn’, students often detailed the converse – what not being ready to learn looked like. They spoke of how they either communicated this to their teachers, or that their teachers were able to observe this through their behaviour. A number of students talked about the different ways they let the teacher know if they were not feeling ready to learn:

I say I need help, or I might not be the best I can be today (Year 6 student, Curran, 2018).

I would tell her privately because I wouldn’t be confident to tell her in front of the class (Year 5 student, Gemert, 2018).

Some students felt there were fellow students who were not yet using this strategy to enable themselves to be learning ready, and this presented challenges:

There’s some people who don’t want to try. It kind of stops me from doing my best, which I don’t like (Year 6 student, Ross, 2018).
Other students, however, observed the positive alteration in behaviour of some of their peers:

Two students, they’re now good – their behaviour has changed over the last 2 years (Year 6 student, Ross, 2018).

I can tell it helps a lot of people in my class – I see people are a lot calmer and they focus a lot more (Year 6 student, Ross, 2018).

It was important for teachers to be attuned to students’ readiness. One student noted the teacher’s capacity to note readiness by observing student demeanour:

I don’t tell her she just knows, she’ll know by the way I act … she knows what I look like when I’m not ready (Year 6 student, Ross, 2018).

Students suggested that the way for teachers to know about their readiness was to ask the students themselves rather than always rely on students to share this information:

The teachers just need to ask us how things are going (Year 6 student, Gemert, 2018).

Additional Reflections on the BSEM Strategies
Thinking holistically about the strategies, students spoke of the future:

Our teacher does a balance of it all, so I think she prepares us for many different things – learning strategies for the future, like how to deal with bullying or friendship problems in high school and that kind of stuff (Year 6 student, Curran, 2018).

I know that some of the things I learn I will always come back to in life (Year 5 student, Gemert, 2018).

A teacher had a similar observation when thinking about her students’ responses to learning the strategies:

Students realise that even if they don’t use the strategies now, they’re strategies for life. This isn’t about school, it’s about life (Assistant Principal, Curran, 2018).

Another teacher summed up the positive effects of the BSEM strategies on the students within the school:

It’s throughout the school, they know the language, and the school’s just got a really lovely feel about it. It’s accountability for the students: ‘What are your strategies? Your Plan A and Plan B?’ The kids value it (BSEM). Sometimes it can be all about the academic, which is important, but we need to make rounded, healthy children who can cope (Wellbeing Leader, Gemert, 2018).

Impacts of the BSEM

Teacher Practice
School leaders and staff noted a range of impacts on teaching practice. A distinguishing feature was the whole-school approach:

Previous programs haven’t been whole-school initiatives. The difference with this one is that it’s embedded in the school – it’s from Foundation to Year 6 – it flows all the way through and is a language understood by all students and staff (Assistant Principal, Curran, 2018).

Schools pointed to the shared BSEM language as a driver of change:

The shared language is probably the most powerful and significant difference … amongst staff and the kids (Principal, Ross, 2017).

The value of a shared language extended into communications with parents. The Ross Principal appreciated having “less emotive discussion” (2017), which is focussed on support rather than condemnation. The Principal also valued having a unified way to:

Speak with parents, taking the heat out of the interaction by not being seen to blame the kid and providing strategies that can be also used at home, learning to identify triggers and developing the shared language with parents (2017).

Respondents also valued developing a deeper understanding of trauma and the related behaviours through engaging with the Model. They acknowledged the strength of the BSEM trauma-informed approach in enabling them to understand and work with students exhibiting challenging behaviours. For instance, the Ross Principal noted:

The BSEM has created a shared understanding that kids don’t misbehave because they’re bad, they misbehave because of something else … we have no idea what’s gone on … ‘they’re not doing this because of me’ (2018).

Similarly, the Wellbeing Leader at Gemert noted that the knowledge of the impacts of trauma “facilitate[ed] an extra layer of understanding of what the kids are experiencing] … and a greater awareness of what their lives might be like” (2018).

These understandings led to tangible approaches to addressing challenging behaviour, which some participants noted was missing in previous professional development:

In the past there was no PD about how to deal with kids with trauma. No real behaviour management strategy. There was a focus on building relationships but no ‘how to’ (Principal, Ross, 2018).

Teachers reported an “increased understanding of being inclusive” (and as a consequence), “the use of strategies to avoid conflict” (Wellbeing Leader, Gemert, 2018).

One participant also noted a shift from notions of ‘saving’ children to one in which children are supported to be ready and able to learn:

It used to be about ‘saving’ kids, now it’s ‘what is it we can do to ensure this child is ready to learn, and therefore more connected, more successful?’ (Principal, Ross, 2018).

Staff observed that recognising triggers, asking “what are the triggers for this kid?” (BSEM Leader, Ross, 2018) was essential for supporting learning readiness.

As a result of introducing the BSEM, supporting students with challenging behaviours shifted from being seen as an individual teacher’s responsibility to a shared task. The Wellbeing Leader from Curran described this change in approach as one of educating teachers in “trainging” students exhibiting traumatised behaviours. She explained the process in which they “look[ed] at student needs, conduct[ed] needs analysis, and focus[ed] on what can be done” (Wellbeing Leader, Curran, 2017). This differed from previous practices because teachers now “come together, share perspectives, document strategies and develop student support teams” (Wellbeing Leader, Curran, 2017).

At Curran, embedding the BSEM across all areas of the school included mapping the BSEM lessons against the Personal and Social Capabilities and content descriptors in the Victorian curriculum. This ensured that it did not sit as a separate add-on but was integrated into all learning. Staff noted the level of planning that went into this process:

A lot of work (was done) analysing the Personal and Social Capabilities in the Victorian curriculum and linking curriculum content descriptors with the ‘I Can’ statements to develop strong positive learning communities (Wellbeing Leader, Curran, 2017).
This also involved the Wellbeing Team tailoring the BSEM delivery to:

- Simplify the BSEM information (by) pulling out best bits (to develop) a set of non-negotiables for staff (Wellbeing Leader, Curran, 2017).

Readiness for learning was seen as particularly valuable across all three schools:

- Berry Street is the foundation, all that language of ‘ready to learn’; it’s all about the terminology that we use (Wellbeing Leader, Gemert, 2018).

At Ross College, if students needed to leave the classroom to de-escalate, the Wellbeing Team ensured that they were supported to do this and that their return only took place when they were ready to learn. The Principal noted, “de-escalation is used by teaching staff and support staff” (2018). This was seen as markedly different from previous approaches:

- The big difference is that kids are not returned to class till they’re ready to learn. Teachers know that now, regardless of why they were sent out (Principal, Ross, 2018).

Across the schools, staff spoke of the ways in which de-escalation charts and Focus/Safety plans had been integrated into their teaching and of the ways in which students’ learning had increased:

- There is a [Focus]/Safety plan for all children. In week 2 of every new year students fill in a plan, identifying what makes them anxious or stressed or angry or out of the green zone … and then what helps them. Levels of behaviour mean some students access their [Focus]/Safety plan every lesson, most every two weeks (Wellbeing Leader, Gemert, 2018)

- Some teachers have de-escalation charts on the kids’ desks (Teacher, Curran, 2016).

Staff at the schools spoke of the ways the BSEM impacted teaching in the broader curriculum. One Grade 1 teacher spoke of how the Stamina domain was working to develop the reading capacities and abilities of her students with a target of 10 minutes for reading:

- The kids take Stamina very seriously … they love it (Teacher, Curran, 2016).

In 2018, Ross developed an assessment tool to help evaluate the BSEM implementation. This followed on from mapping the Student Attitude to School Survey (SASS) data against the BSEM domains. They found that it was highly valuable in tracking shifts in students’ attitudes. With data in hand, one leader stated:

- The BSEM is improving our pedagogy (Principal, Ross, 2018).

Teachers also spoke of the personal impact of working with the BSEM. They described how learning about and embracing the BSEM was helping them to “regulate [their] own emotions” (Wellbeing Leader, Gemert, 2018). The BSEM Leader at Ross believed that “without a doubt [the] use of de-escalation and Brainbreaks” (Principal, Ross, 2018) was supporting teachers to manage their own stress. Teachers also commented on the impact BSEM had on their private lives, reporting it had “even affected their own parenting” (Teacher, Ross, 2016).

Another shift as a result of the BSEM was an increase in reflective practice. A teacher from Gemert described ways in which the BSEM moved them to reflect:

- I can do better than that, even stopping and thinking how can I handle that better? (2017).

Another teacher from Gemert detailed taking time to consider:

- What the kids’ lives might be. BSEM is facilitating that extra layer of understanding of what kids are experiencing (2017).
Social Relationships
Questions from the self-report surveys along with interview responses focused on relationships at the school, including student-teacher relationships, peer relationships, and school and community relationships.

Student-Teacher Relationships
Figure 4 illustrates average teacher connectedness scores for the three schools across the three-year period. While there was a range of responses, in general students at all three schools believed that their teachers listen to them, want to help them learn, provide help and support, explain things clearly, make school work enjoyable, and help students do their best. This was strongest in Curran, where at times 1, 2, 4, and 5, scores were near the top of the scale. There was greater variance at time 6\(^1\). In Gemert, scores were clustered near the top of the scale, with very few students viewing their teachers in a negative light. Ross demonstrated greater variability, but demonstrated increasingly stronger relationships from Times 4 through 6.

Figure 4. Positive perceptions of one’s teacher

Based on the qualitative interviews and focus groups, both teachers and students believed that the BSEM had a positive impact on student-teacher relationships. The BSEM trauma-awareness training and the shared language was seen as central to this impact, increasing teachers’ capacity to talk with students and in turn, resulting in changes in the students’ behaviour, including students’ increased willingness to talk to teachers:

The way we talk to kids has changed their ability to talk to us (BSEM Leader, Ross, 2018).

[It’s] different from 5 years ago. Kids will tell you now when they’re ready to talk (BSEM Leader, Ross, 2018).

Creating a sense of connection led to students feeling that their teachers understood them and that they offered learning support when needed:

Our teacher is very supportive in many different ways - she lets people work at their own pace and gives help (Year 6 Student, Curran, 2018).

If I had a problem or question about my work teachers would stop and listen and would help me out! :) (Student, Survey, 2016).

Students also described feeling supported emotionally:

The teachers listen to what you have to say and they will help you (Year 6 Student, Gemert, 2018).

The teachers are there for you to talk to if you’re feeling upset (Year 6 Student, Gemert, 2018).

Heightened connectedness between students and teachers led to students feeling confident to enlist their teacher’s help in order to become ‘ready to learn’:

I’d say I’m not ready to learn (Year 6 Student, Gemert, 2018).

I’d ask the teacher if I can go outside or do something to get myself positive, centred and grounded (Year 5 Student, Curran, 2017).

School and Community Relationships
Interview respondents also identified a range of positive effects of the BSEM implementation on relationships between the schools and their communities. While schools varied in terms of how much information about the BSEM was shared with the community, school leaders at all three schools reported positive responses to the BSEM in their local communities.

Ross College held two parent volunteer sessions about the BSEM and both sessions were well attended. The local media also reported positively on the BSEM in their local communities.

The Principal further noted:

We struggle to get parents at info nights, but teachers have their own focus plans on the walls in their classrooms and will tell parents about them at next week’s meet and greet ... Teachers might also suggest ‘maybe try this at home’ (Principal, Ross, 2018).

Peers Relationships
Figure 5 illustrates peer relationship scores for the three schools across the three-year period. Students at all three schools generally reported getting on well with other students and classmates at school and feeling liked and cared for by others. At both Curran and Gemert, peer relationships tended to increase from the beginning to end of each year (i.e., time 1 to time 2, time 3 to time 4, and time 5 to time 6), with the exception that at Gemert scores dropped somewhat from time 5 to time 6. There was greater variance at Ross, but in general responses were consistently positive in nature.

Figure 5. Positive peer relationships

In the qualitative interviews and focus groups, both teachers and students spoke of the how the BSEM strategies had impacted peer relationships at the school:

Students have more understanding of the behaviours of others. There are compassionate, tolerant children, there’s no judgment. BSEM allows students to be aware of other people’s triggers and how to manage them. I often see an older student help a younger student in the yard (Wellbeing Leader, Gemert, 2018).

One student observed they:

Enjoyed getting to know each other’s feelings and how they handle it. If you know how the person handles it, you’re able to help them with that (Student, Curran, 2016).

Another noted the role that acceptance plays in enhancing relationships:

We’re all pretty close in our class - we accept each other for who we are (Year 6 Student, Curran, 2018).

A teacher commented that students were now able to speak positively to peers, for example, helping them to identify their character strengths:

Students are comfortable to suggest another student’s strengths (Wellbeing Leader, Gemert, 2018).

Another student drew a connection between a number of the BSEM strategies when describing how a peer had developed positive relationships:

At the start of the year, [a student] was shy and upset and didn’t like school. They used the de-escalation chart quite a bit but now they are really happy. They used a growth mindset to make friends. They play with other kids now and people see him better (Year 5 Student, Curran, 2017).

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1 The BSEM training was conducted in 2015 at Curran. While the other schools had training over a longer period of time. This dip in scores at time 6 could point to the need for BSEM refresher training after 3 years.
Another teacher commented that as a result of the BSEM their school had developed:

A greater understanding of the community and the individuals in it, [and this had resulted in them] putting programs in place that are more engaging for kids … and build their confidence (BSEM Leader, Ross, 2018)

At Curran, a parent approached a teacher “expressing gratitude at how teachers are relating to their child and the impact of this on their child’s growth” (Curran, Wellbeing Leader, 2016). The Assistant Principal noted that starting ‘Wellbeing Wednesdays’ with activities in the library or out under the trees had seen not only students participating, but also “some of the parents even coming along” (2018).

The Assistant Principal at Curran further noted, “our parent community love it. It makes their kids happy, and they want their kids to be happy, so they can flourish” (2018).

**Student Psychosocial Functioning**

The student surveys provide an indication of student psychosocial functioning across a range of areas (positive and negative emotion, perseverance, optimism/satisfaction, negative body image, coping).

For Curran and Gemert, emotion tended to decline over the six assessments (i.e., lower levels of positive affect, higher levels of negative affect). Notably, in Gemert, median scores centred around 1 (not at all), indicating very few reports of negative emotion. Changes in emotion can be due to a variety of factors. It may be that students felt worse over time. Alternatively, it may have become more acceptable within the schools to admit to negative emotions, as literacy and comfort around mental health becomes destigmatised and supported. At Ross, there was a greater range of functioning, but median scores tended to stay relatively constant over time.

For perseverance (i.e., working hard, sticking at school work until done), students at Curran demonstrated a clear increase from Time 1 to Time 2, and then maintained a high level across subsequent time points. Students at Gemert demonstrated a similar, though less pronounced pattern. Students at Ross demonstrated greater variability, but generally reported moderate levels of perseverance.

Figure 6 summarises average responses over the six assessments.

**Figure 6. Student psychosocial functioning**

[Graphs showing data on student psychosocial functioning for Curran Primary, Gemert Primary, and Ross College, including positive affect, negative affect, perseverance, optimism/satisfaction, and negative body image across different occasions.]
Students at the three schools generally reported having a positive body image, although a handful of students reported very negative views of themselves. This was particularly true at Ross which included secondary students to Year 9. Here a greater number of students were wanting to change their bodies, worrying about how they look, and feeling jealous of others. This aligns with studies that find a growing number of body image issues occur for both boys and girls in later primary and early secondary school years. Notably, median scores decreased at Time 5 and 6, suggesting that students are becoming more comfortable with themselves. While it is unclear the extent to which the BSEM caused these improvements, it is a promising sign.

Coping (being able to calm one’s self down when stressed or angry) was only assessed at Times 5 and 6. There was a range of responses across the schools, but on average students at Curran and Gemert felt like they were quite able to calm themselves down when stressed and angry, and students at Ross were moderately able to calm themselves down when stressed or angry. At Ross, there was a notable improvement in coping ability from Time 5 to 6.

The graphs above report on the median scores across the sample. The majority of respondents completed the survey one or two times, such that these scores capture average student functioning/responses at the school at the time. At Ross College, some individual students completed up to 6 measurement occasions. This created the opportunity to provide a longitudinal view of these particular students. Figure 7 illustrates spaghetti plots for students who completed the survey 5 or 6 times. In these plots, the black lines represent individual trajectories/responses, whereas the red triangle indicates the median trajectory for each of these individuals. As would be expected, there is considerable variation. Importantly, while the median score increases and decreases at times, it is generally stable, indicating fairly consistent experiences of quite a bit to lots of positive affect, perseverance, and optimism/satisfaction; moderate to quite good ability to calm down when upset (coping), and little to none negative affect or negative body image issues. This is highly significant, considering both the challenging social environment at Ross College, and students themselves who are at an age when psychosocial function tends to decline.
School Attendance

Table 5 summarises attendance rates from 2016-2018, based on data from the My School website. Throughout the evaluation period, all schools maintained attendance rates over 90%. Despite the self-declared transient and challenging school populations at Gemert and Ross, these rates highlight that students felt connected to their school sufficiently to consistently attend.

Table 5. Student attendance rates 2016-2018

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>School</th>
<th>2016</th>
<th>2017</th>
<th>2018</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Curran</td>
<td>94%</td>
<td>95%</td>
<td>94%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gemert</td>
<td>93%</td>
<td>93%</td>
<td>91%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ross</td>
<td>94%</td>
<td>92%</td>
<td>93%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

These rates are further complemented by the student survey data, which asked students to reflect on how important education is to them. Figure 8 illustrates student responses across the six occasions. The median score, for all three schools across all assessments was 5, indicating that students believed their education and doing well at school was very important to them. This clearly indicates that the schools have communicated the importance of education.

Figure 8. Perceived importance of education

Student Attitudes to School

Curran and Ross supplied Student Attitudes to School Surveys (SASS) for the 2017-2018 period. While it is difficult to determine the extent to which the BSEM can be linked directly to shifts in students’ attitudes, some interesting patterns emerged when considering SASS responses over the evaluation period.

Curran Primary School

While there was a range of up and down fluctuations in Curran’s SASS results, a number of areas improved over the 2017-2018 period. As the Assistant Principal noted:

> From our BSEM journey there has been a considerable increase in the overall positivity and resilience of our students. This is reflected in our whole-school surveys, including the Attitudes to School Survey (Assistant Principal, Curran, 2018).

There were improvements in students feeling an increased ability to focus in class (2017, 84%; 2018, 88%) and feeling able to undertake challenging tasks (2017, 79%; 2018, 81%). There has been a marked increase in willingness to persist with things despite initial failure (2017, 88%; 2018, 93%). There were also increases in trying hard at school (2017, 92%; 2018, 94%). There has been a marked increase in willingness to persist with things despite initial failure (2017, 88%; 2018, 93%). There were also increases in trying hard at school (2017, 92%; 2018, 94%).

Students at Curran also reported feeling slightly more engaged by teachers’ approaches, including being able to have input into class activities and rules (2017, 72%; 2018, 75%) and having a say in what they learn.

There was a drop in students reporting that they have experienced bullying at school (2017, 33%; 2018, 20%). Changes included less verbal teasing (2017, 36%; 2018, 26%), exclusion (2017, 22%; 2018, 17%), physical bullying (2017, 34%; 2018, 26%) and online bullying (2017, 7%; 2018, 5%).

Ross P-9 College

To track impact of the BSEM implementation, the Ross leadership grouped data from the annual SASS under the BSEM domains. The BSEM Leader noted:
The Student Attitude to School data was so much in 4th quartile it was extraordinary! It’s reflective of something that’s going on in the school; we would suggest it’s largely reflective of the Berry Street approaches (BSEM Leader, Ross, 2018).

There were upward shifts across a range of the SASS domains at Ross. Aligned with the BSEM Engagement domain, there were improvements in effective teacher time (2017, 77%; 2018, 80%), stimulated learning (2017, 72%; 2018, 77%) and classroom behaviour (2017 64%; 2018 67%). There was a marked increase in students believing that appropriate behaviour is acknowledged or rewarded (2017, 39%; 2018, 47%).

Still, classroom management remained a challenge. There were slight declines in students’ belief that teachers are treated respectfully by students (2017, 48%; 2018, 46%) and that students at the school treat each other respectfully (2017, 45%, 2018, 43%).

Aligned with the BSEM Relationship domain, students believed that their teachers encouraged their learning (2017, 85%; 2018, 89%), and that teachers care for their feelings (2017, 85%, 2018, 87%). However, while students believed teachers were interested in their wellbeing (2017, 58%; 2018, 60%), this did not translate into increases in feeling that they could talk to them about any of their concerns (2017, 64%; 2018, 37%), and or they could talk to their teacher if something was worrying them (2017, 76%; 2018, 74%).

Experiences of bullying showed a decrease over the 2017-2018 period (2017, 22%; 2018, 18%) and students reported an increase in knowing where to seek help if they felt bullied (2017, 78%; 2018, 87%).

Related to the BSEM Stamina and Character domains, students consistently recognised themselves as confident learners (2017, 75%; 2018, 75%) with resilient learning behaviours (2017, 66%; 2018, 71%).

Student Behaviour

Students reflected on the extent to which their learning, ability to do their work, and listening to the teacher was disrupted by the behaviour of other students. Responses are summarised in Figure 9. Students at all three schools generally believed that the behaviour of other students disrupted their learning some to quite a bit of the time. Notably, at Curran, scores decreased (indicating less disruption of learning) from Time 1 to Time 2, but increased from Time 5 to Time 6. At Gemert, this consistently occurred some of the time. At Ross, from Times 1 through 4, this tended to occur some of the time, but increased some at Times 5 and 6.

Students also indicated the extent to which other students bullied, picked on, teased, deliberately hit/kicked/threatened, were mean, or spread rumours about them, and the extent to which they did these behaviours to others. Responses are summarised in Figure 10. While there were exceptions, most students at Curran and Gemert reported not engaging in any of these behaviours, consistently across the time points. Responses were more variable in Ross, suggesting that such behaviours, while not common, do occur, and students are willing to admit that they engage in such behaviours. Students at all three schools were also much more likely to feel victimised by others, with such behaviours occurring some of the time. Notably, median scores decreased in Gemert over time. Some increases occurred by Time 6 in both Curran and Ross.

Figure 9. Extent to which other students disrupt learning

Figure 10. Bullying-related behaviours enacted and experienced

Staff at all three schools believed that the BSEM had impacted positively on the whole-school management of student behaviour. Curran reported that there were no suspensions during the evaluation period, and did not provide other incident information. Gemert and Ross both provided various indices. At both schools, a number of incidences occurred, but staff noted that many of their students have trauma histories which play out in complex ways in social and learning situations and impact behaviour, so statistics taken alone are only part of the story. Staff believed that the BSEM had allowed their schools to develop clear and transparent expectations that were consistently enforced.

Figure 11 summarises behaviour reporting data in Terms 1 and 2, 2018, at Gemert, which shows increased reports of inappropriate student behaviours. The number of students actually requiring attention was about 6 to 10%. The increases from Term 1 to 2 could reflect natural annual fluctuates that might be expected within a school, or as noted by the Wellbeing Leader, the increase may be due to a more consistent approach to expectations, rather than a deterioration in the actual behaviour of students.
It enables teachers to have the BSEM strategies as a framework for working with students and providing them with options for managing their responses (Wellbeing Leader, Gemert, 2018).

The system also allows students and teachers to see and acknowledge improvement.

Table 6 summarises suspension and critical incidences (i.e., suspension of 5 or more days) rates at Ross College, from 2014 to 2018. Prior to the appointment of the new Principal in late 2015, only 2 critical incidences in 2014 and 1 critical incident in 2015 were recorded. As the BSEM Leader explained:

There was a very small belief in suspensions as a tool to keep an orderly and safe environment. The numbers show that. [However, this] is not a reflection of how challenging the environment was at the school (BSEM Leader, Ross, 2018).

The introduction of the BSEM at Gemert coincided with the establishment of an electronic system for recording student behaviour. The Wellbeing Leader explained this created a consistent approach to tracking all students’ behaviour, especially those who were struggling with regulation. The data is now used to generate weekly reports for teachers, allowing them to quickly identify struggling students, respond and provide support. Students are grouped on levels, ranging from 1 to 4, providing an indication of the need for timely intervention. This ensures an approach to triage behavioural issues.

Students at Gemert review their Focus/Safety plan on a fortnightly basis. If the data report shows a student has moved up one or more levels due to increased challenges with behaviour, the school environment was at the school (BSEM Leader, Ross, 2018). [However, this] is not a reflection of how challenging the environment was at the school (BSEM Leader, Ross, 2018).

The arrival of the new Principal coincided with incorporating the BSEM into the school. The BSEM Leader noted that this resulted in more consistent and higher expectations of students, subsequently leading to an increase in suspensions from 75 in 2015 to 107 in both 2016 and 2017. There was also an increase in critical incidents in 2016 (10). These increases suggest a more consistent enforcement of policies, rather than an increase in student poor behaviours. Notably, incidence and suspension rates dropped from 2017 to the 2018 period.

Key Findings

This research and evaluation aimed to address the following questions:

1. Did the training prepare teachers to deliver the BSEM?
2. How was the BSEM implemented in schools?
3. What impact did the Model have on teacher practice, social relationships, student psychosocial functioning and student behaviour and engagement?
4. What impact did the Model have on both teachers and students managing everyday stressors both in and out of the school environment?

It was anticipated that the BSEM would:

- Inform the teacher’s overall classroom approach (i.e., explicit teaching, such as modelling behaviours, interactions with the students).
- Be articulated through specific classroom sessions/activities (i.e., explicit teaching, such as integration of the BSEM curriculum within assignments, personal development activities).
- Have a positive impact on student socioemotional functioning and teachers’ confidence and ability to meet the needs of their students.

The research and evaluation, as a whole, attests to the introduction of the BSEM having had positive impact on students and teachers in mainstream schools. The Key Findings are presented in regard to the four research questions.

Research Question 1: Did the training prepare teachers to deliver the BSEM?

School leaders highlighted the growth in their own and their teachers’ capacities to understand trauma, identify students’ triggers and support students to regulate their behaviour in order to be well and learning ready. An important part of this, as a number of teachers noted, was the way the BSEM had assisted them to regulate their own responses to challenging situations. By providing practitioners with a tool-kit of ideas and strategies, the BSEM also facilitated increased teacher versatility, reflection, confidence and authenticity.

The face-to-face training and follow-up visits by Berry Street staff were central to embedding the BSEM within each school. The intensive professional development enabled dissemination of cutting-edge ideas and practice within an alternative pedagogy. Training supported the strong whole-school approach and enabled schools to develop a shared language. This was evidenced by the ease with which school staff responded to interview questions, easily speaking of the ways in which they heard students both within classrooms and in the playground utilising the language and strategies to resolve problems, manage relationships and to help them in the face of new, challenging learning. Students in the focus groups were able to recall, describe and illustrate practical applications of the strategies and ideas within the BSEM.

Research Question 2: How was the BSEM implemented in schools?

While the three schools implemented the BSEM in different ways, there were some common features that ensured greater success in implementation and corresponding outcomes in regard to student wellbeing and engagement. The main finding is that the BSEM was adopted across the whole school. To enable this:

- The leadership team was involved and supportive and a BSEM coordinator was identified.
- BSEM was included in the on-going strategic planning of the school. As the Gemert BSEM Leader stressed, there is a need to ‘keep it on the agenda’ (2018).
- All staff, teaching and non-teaching, were formally trained by the Berry Street training team, with on-going (in-school and Berry Street provided) support.
- Aspects of the BSEM were incorporated into the everyday classroom routine as well as direct instruction within the curriculum.
- Students were explicitly taught the strategies and skills.

Ross P-9 College provides a good example of a challenging school environment and a structured well thought out approach to implementation. At the school, everyone working there, including support teachers, administrative and canteen staff, as well as any allied health professionals providing services in the school, was trained in the Model. Any new staff
were expected to commit to the BSEM and receive training. A leader within the school had trained as a BSEM Leader and is currently driving the delivery. Time release was provided for him to support teachers to integrate the BSEM into their classrooms and subjects in the case of the secondary level. As part of this role, he modelled lessons and observed and provided feedback to teachers. Videoing of teachers was done to aid them to refine and enhance their practice. SASS data were mapped against the BSEM domains as a way to assess impact and the BSEM was included as a key performance indicator in teachers’ performance reviews. BSEM was also addressed within each term’s professional development plan. As the BSEM Leader highlighted:

This is part of the school’s key improvement strategy; it is a long-term commitment to the Model. This is not passing, it’s now part of the Ross school community (BSEM Leader, Ross, 2017).

The benefits of this rigorous approach were also reflected in the survey data. While there was individual variation, students who were consistently followed over time generally maintained good levels of psychosocial functioning throughout the period of the research as they progressed into the middle years of schooling.

Research Question 3: What impact did the BSEM have on teacher practice, social relationships, student psychosocial functioning and student behaviour and engagement?

As most interviewees responded to these two questions simultaneously the data is presented together. All the educators interviewed across the three schools emphasised the positive impact on students and teachers of the introduction of the BSEM. Qualitative data from the students, teachers and leadership affirmed the impact of BSEM strategies and instruction in effecting positive changes to student self-awareness, behaviour regulation, peer and teacher relationships and school engagement. Students in focus groups and in SASS data could recall elements of the BSEM and clearly describe how it is implemented and useful in their everyday lives.

Students, staff, and leadership felt positively about embedding the BSEM within the school. Of particular note is that the BSEM was equally relevant to all three schools, despite a marked difference in demographics. Similarly, the BSEM provided an important tool for two schools, Ross and Gemert, who were dealing with higher levels of trauma and disadvantage, but also to Curran where managing trauma responses and behaviour was minimal.

Implementation of the BSEM does not mean that the schools are problem free. In all three schools, students reported experiencing some bullying and mean type behaviours from others. Within Ross and Gemert, there remained a small core of students exhibiting challenging behaviours. In both cases, the staff acknowledged that having the BSEM as the central framework enabled them to manage these behaviours with understanding, and in timely and consistent ways. Importantly, they were able to support their students to work toward reflection on, and understanding of, their emotional triggers and to give them strategies for learning to regulate their behavioural responses.

The pattern of results cannot definitively be attributable to the BSEM. Nonetheless, evidence suggests that:

- While there was some variation and exceptions, students generally demonstrated good psychosocial functioning over the evaluation period.
- Attendance rates at all schools were sustained at over 90% during the period of the evaluation.
- Positive gains in SASS responses correlate with learnings in the BSEM domains.
- Students could recall elements of the BSEM and clearly describe how it is implemented and useful in their everyday lives.
- Students, staff, and leadership felt positively about embedding the BSEM within the school.

Research question 4: What impact did the BSEM have on both teachers and students managing everyday stressors both in and out of the school environment?

While the data generally provide a very positive picture of implementing the BSEM in the schools, the research and evaluation also outlines recommendations for the future delivery of the BSEM in mainstream schools.

To heighten opportunities for successful implementation, it is important to ensure that all teachers within schools are fully trained in the BSEM and are supported to feel comfortable in teaching and utilising the BSEM activities and strategies. To ensure this, schools need to commit time to professional development and training and for liaison and follow-up meetings with Berry Street. The professional development days and supplementary meetings proved to be crucial to teacher engagement with the BSEM. A coherent, well supported BSEM team is also a vital component of ensuring the long-term embedding of the Model.

Maintaining consistency in the approach, including generalising BSEM training across all staff, teaching and non-teaching is also important, to maximise the impact of the BSEM on school culture. While schools have incorporated a train-the-trainer model, the survey data pointed to some declines in the later time points. There could be benefit in providing annual BSEM refresher courses for staff and training for those who are new to the school.

It was found that there is a need to integrate the BSEM elements into everyday processes, the school curriculum, strategic planning and policy. Evidence suggests that embedding the BSEM into the curriculum has greater impact than does limiting delivery of BSEM elements to particular parts of a pastoral care program.

Lastly, there is a need to determine how to best implement the BSEM within a secondary setting, where the challenges of subject teaching can create silos which do not as easily accommodate the BSEM as primary settings.

Based on the data gathered, it appears that for maximal impact, schools with the support of Berry Street should seek to facilitate school-wide implementation of the BSEM. Such an approach includes:

- Ensuring the school has resources and time to maintain a consistency in the approach, including BSEM training for all staff.
- Identifying a BSEM team including a member of leadership, to oversee the implementation and maintenance of the BSEM delivery.
- Assisting school leadership to align BSEM to school policy and strategic planning.
- Ensuring a common language is used across the school.
- Integrating BSEM strategies into the curriculum and classroom activities.
- Integrating the BSEM elements into everyday activities and daily routines.
- Refresher training for the whole-school approximately three to four years after initial implementation.

Research Question 3: What impact did the BSEM have on teacher practice, social relationships, student psychosocial functioning and student behaviour and engagement?

Research question 4: What impact did the BSEM have on both teachers and students managing everyday stressors both in and out of the school environment?
Conclusion

The Berry Street Education Model is unique in integrating both a trauma-informed approach with the strengths-based elements of positive education. The BSEM informs and guides teacher practice and student experiences in the school. The BSEM aims to expand the possibilities of teaching and learning within schools to address the needs of vulnerable and at-risk students who have experienced various forms of trauma. Such students exist in every classroom. This project implemented the BSEM into three mainstream schools from a range of contexts.

As a whole, the results point to the benefits of careful, considered application of the BSEM, providing compelling evidence of the BSEM’s relevance and application to diverse mainstream education settings. It is not a quick fix. It requires commitment by the school, careful training of staff, and ongoing support. But the efforts appear worthwhile in supporting students and staff as they navigate the school environment. As noted by one school leader:

This is the way of the future. We need to look after not just the academic side. We need to create well-grounded students and that will make them able to achieve their learning outcomes, but we need them to be able to cope in life… I don’t know how this couldn’t work in any school (Assistant Principal, Curran, 2018).

References


