



Evaluation of the Berry Street Education Model (BSEM)

**DAREBIN SCHOOLS PROGRAM
LEARNING FOR ALL
2019**

**ANNE FARRELLY, ASSOCIATE PROFESSOR HELEN STOKES
AND RUTH FORSTER**

Melbourne Graduate
School of Education



Contents

- Introduction 2
 - Evaluation Context..... 2
 - Demographic Context: City of Darebin 4
 - Schools’ educational context 4
 - Research Design 5
- The BSEM 6
 - The BSEM Training Program 8
 - The BSEM at Rutland and Kimbla Primary Schools..... 9
- Findings 12
 - Research Question 1: Has the BSEM been implemented with high fidelity? 12
 - Research Question 2: Has the BSEM had an impact on teacher practice?..... 21
 - Research Question 3: Has the BSEM had an impact on Student Engagement, Wellbeing and Achievement? 26
 - Research Question 4: Has the BSEM had an impact on school-wide practice? 30
- Where to Next: Challenges and Enablers 31
- Conclusion..... 32
- Recommendations for Future Delivery of the BSEM 33
- References 35

BSEM EVALUATION OF THE DAREBIN PILOT

Introduction

The Berry Street Education Model (BSEM) is an educational initiative that (a) provides schools with training, curriculum and strategies to engage *all* students, including the most challenging, and (b) is designed to improve a school's capacity to engage vulnerable or disadvantaged young people and help them to achieve their personal and social potential through educational achievement (Brunzell et al., 2015). It is currently being implemented at Rutland and Kimbla Primary Schools in northern metropolitan Melbourne. The implementation is part of the Darebin City Council's Community of Practice initiative, that has as its focus supporting and bringing schools together.

The current evaluation report, which has been commissioned and funded by the City of Darebin and Berry Street, examines the roll-out of BSEM in two primary schools, with particular reference to its impacts on teaching and learning in the schools. It is anticipated that the report findings will inform ongoing delivery of the BSEM at the two schools (including monitoring of the students as they progress through year levels) and help inform the growing program of the BSEM across Darebin schools.

Evaluation Context

Darebin Council has been working specifically with schools for a period of time. As the Community Renewal Officer (CRO) in the Equity and Wellbeing department of the Council comments,

"Many Councils work with early years or youth service provision, but this (initiative) is particularly to strengthen the relationship and be responsive to the needs of children and young people in Darebin, most of whom are in schools" (Community Renewal Officer, Darebin).

The initiative, while aimed at all children across all Darebin schools, began with schools where families and children experience educational disadvantage.

An open enquiry in 2013 into public education within Darebin found high levels of inequality. In response to the findings, the Council committed to focus its work with schools and education through a strong equity lens. The inquiry resulted in the creation of the position of Community Renewal Officer, and the establishment of the Darebin Education Committee, which is an advisory Committee to Council, with participation by Darebin principals and DET. As the CRO notes, *"Darebin Council has a strong equity and wellbeing focus in everything that we do."* This is

reflected in whole of Council's Health and Wellbeing plans and in the Equity, Inclusion and Human Rights policies and frameworks.

The Darebin Education Committee invites all Darebin principals from all school sectors, public, Catholic and independent to attend, with 10 - 12 Principals and education representatives participating regularly. Meetings are held quarterly and are chaired by the Mayor of Darebin. The role of the Committee is to work collaboratively with Council to address mutual priorities and to strengthen the relationship between schools and all areas of Council.

In 2015, the CRO attended an INLLEN forum on the significance of middle years, where she heard Tom Brunzell from Berry Street outline the BSEM. Hearing the research behind the Model and the tools for practice was described as a lightbulb moment for the Officer: *"it all came together...the BSEM aims to support children who are bodily, emotionally, psychologically and socially traumatised, but is also underpinned by positive psychology."* She returned to Council convinced that the BSEM could support its wellbeing and equity focus within schools. The BSEM has been one key and gradually growing area of collaboration over the past three years between Darebin schools, Berry Street Victoria and Darebin Council which support all students to know how to be, to define themselves socially and psychologically and to support their learning. A whole of school approach is seen by the CRO as essential and she believes the BSEM encompasses this and presents a wide range of powerful tools to support students.

Initial attempts in 2015 and 2016 to promote the BSEM with Darebin schools was not successful, despite interest in the program. The attempts did, however, provide valuable insight into the fact that the level of demand on schools' and on teachers' time acted as a barrier to uptake. To address this, the CRO recognised that she would need to proactively facilitate the process, including undertaking all communication and the establishment of avenues for bringing schools together.

An important element of this facilitation was the decision by the Council to offer coordination support and co-funding under the Community of Practice focus on bringing schools together. This led to one principal (from Kimbla) coming onboard and this, in turn, brought the other schools into the program. The CRO highlights, *"you need to have a motivator"* and the leadership of this principal, coupled with her support, provided this. Three other primary schools subsequently joined the project, each one representing a different level of educational disadvantage and they began their PD together in 2017. The four initial primary schools negotiated with Berry Street to carry their four whole of school PD across two years. Kimbla school was in this first cohort. During 2017, a second group of four schools indicated their interest to collaborate and carry out their BSEM PD together. Importantly, this second group of four schools came from three very different school sectors in Darebin. Rutland School was in the second group of schools that began their PD in 2018.

Confirming the Council's decision to adopt BSEM as the preferred model was the response from teachers that the BSEM was very practical and could so easily be integrated into their teaching. The CRO stresses, *"from an organisational change perspective I know that's how it needs to operate"* and having this teacher enthusiasm was vital.

Two of the eight primary schools, Rutland and Kimbla, are the site of this evaluation. The following section provides background on the area of Darebin and each of the schools.

Demographic Context: City of Darebin

The City of Darebin is a socio-economically and culturally diverse Local Government Area (LGA) of Melbourne, with 33% of the population being born outside Australia. Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islanders constitute 0.8% of the area's population (*Australian Bureau of Statistics, 2016*). On the Socio-Economic Index for Areas (SEIFA), the locale in which Kimbla is situated sits at the 19th percentile when compared with other areas throughout Australia. This places it in the bottom quintile for advantage. Rutland sits at the 22nd percentile (*Australian Bureau of Statistics, 2016*) placing it only slightly higher. So, while there is increasing gentrification of the greater area of Darebin, this is yet to significantly impact in the areas in which the two schools are located. The schools replicate the cultural diversity of Darebin and present high levels of socio-economic disadvantage. Their specific demographic profiles are provided in the following section.

Schools' educational context¹

In 2018, **Rutland Primary School** had an enrolment of 300 students, supported by 33 teachers and 16 non-teaching staff. The school has a 933 ICSEA value (average 1000) with a spread across the quartiles of 57% bottom, 22% lower middle, 15% upper middle, and 5% top. As such, it experiences a high level of socioeconomic disadvantage. The student population is culturally diverse with 57% of the students with a language background other than English (LBOTE). as home. Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students make up 11% of the student population (ACARA, 2019a).

The Assistant Principal noted that the school has a substantial number of students with trauma backgrounds and challenging behaviours.

The BSEM Leader at Rutland has been at the school for two years, coming from a school where he was heavily involved in promoting and implementing the BSEM. He has stepped into this role only recently as the previous BSEM Leader is on leave. He is also the team leader of the Year 3-4 level.

In reflecting on the Student Attitudes to School Survey (SASS) data, the BSEM Leader noted that 2018 was a challenging year at the school:

¹ Each of the schools in evaluation have been given a pseudonym.

“Last year (2018) was not a great year. We had a lot of moving, we had building etc. and our data reflected that” (BSEM Leader, Rutland).

However, he did note that the resiliency developed through the BSEM enabled students to get through:

“But the kids were resilient. That is one thing that has come out of the Berry St is that our students are becoming more resilient to change” (BSEM Leader, Rutland).

Kimbla Primary School is located in the northern suburb of Reservoir within Darebin. It was established in 2011 through the merging of two schools. Following the merger, the schools moved to a new site and completed building works. It is co-located with Kimbla Secondary College.

In 2018, the school had an enrolment of 234 students with 19 teachers and 6 support staff. The school has an ICSEA value of 943 (average 1000) with a spread of 55% bottom, 27% lower middle, 12% upper middle, and 5% top. As such, it too experiences a high level of socioeconomic disadvantage. The student population is culturally diverse, with 58% of the students with a language background other than English (LBOTE) at home. Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students make up 6% of the student population (ACARA, 2019). Like Rutland, it too has a core of students with a range of trauma behaviours.

At Kimbla, the BSEM leader is also the Year 3-6 Coordinator has been at the school for an extended period.

Research Design

Evaluation of the Rutland and Kimbla Primary Schools’ delivery of the BSEM has drawn on qualitative techniques in addressing four key research questions:

1. Has the BSEM been implemented with (the intended) high fidelity?
2. Has the BSEM had an impact on teacher practice?
3. Has the BSEM had an impact on students’ wellbeing, engagement and achievement?
4. Has the BSEM had an impact on school-wide practice?

To answer these questions, interviews were conducted with the Darebin Community Renewal Officer and two trainers from Berry Street. At each school, interviews were undertaken with staff and a student focus group was run. The number of participants is detailed in Table 1.

Table 1: Summary of data collection

Data source	Method	Number of people
School leadership (2 Assistant Principals, 1 Year 3-6 coordinator & BSEM Leader)	Interview	3
Teacher (BSEM leader & Year 3-4 coordinator)	Interview	1
Students (Years 5 & 6)	2 Focus groups	7 (3 Kimba; 4 Rutland)
Darebin Community Renewal Officer	Interview	1
Berry Street trainers	Interview	2
TOTAL		14

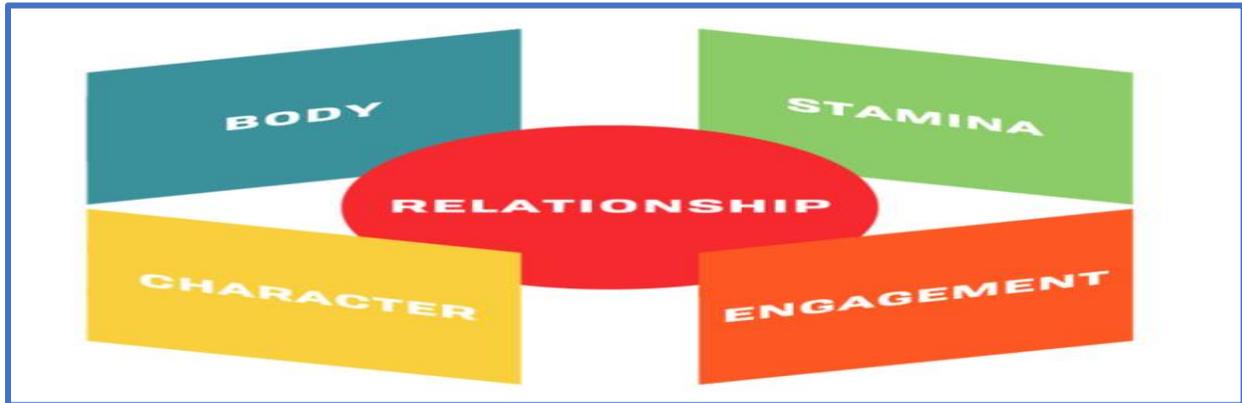
In the interests of privacy, students within this evaluation report are cited using the pseudonym selected by them. Those who did not wish to choose a name are identified using student and a numeric. As noted above, the schools have been de-identified and staff are cited using their position within each setting.

The BSEM

The BSEM builds on, and extends, the two-tier ‘healing’ approach characteristic of traditional or standard models of trauma-informed learning (Brunzell, Waters, & Stokes, 2015). The Model proposes three tiers of therapeutic learning and growth that extend the focus of previous practice on repairing the student’s regulatory abilities (Tier 1) and repairing the student’s disrupted attachments (Tier 2), by adding a third domain: increasing the young person’s psychological resources in order to promote post-traumatic growth (Tier 3) (Brunzell et al., 2015). Both the professional development (PD) training and classroom application of the BSEM are developmental. Teachers and students work progressively through five domains or pedagogical lenses, starting with BODY/Increasing regulatory abilities, and then progressing through the

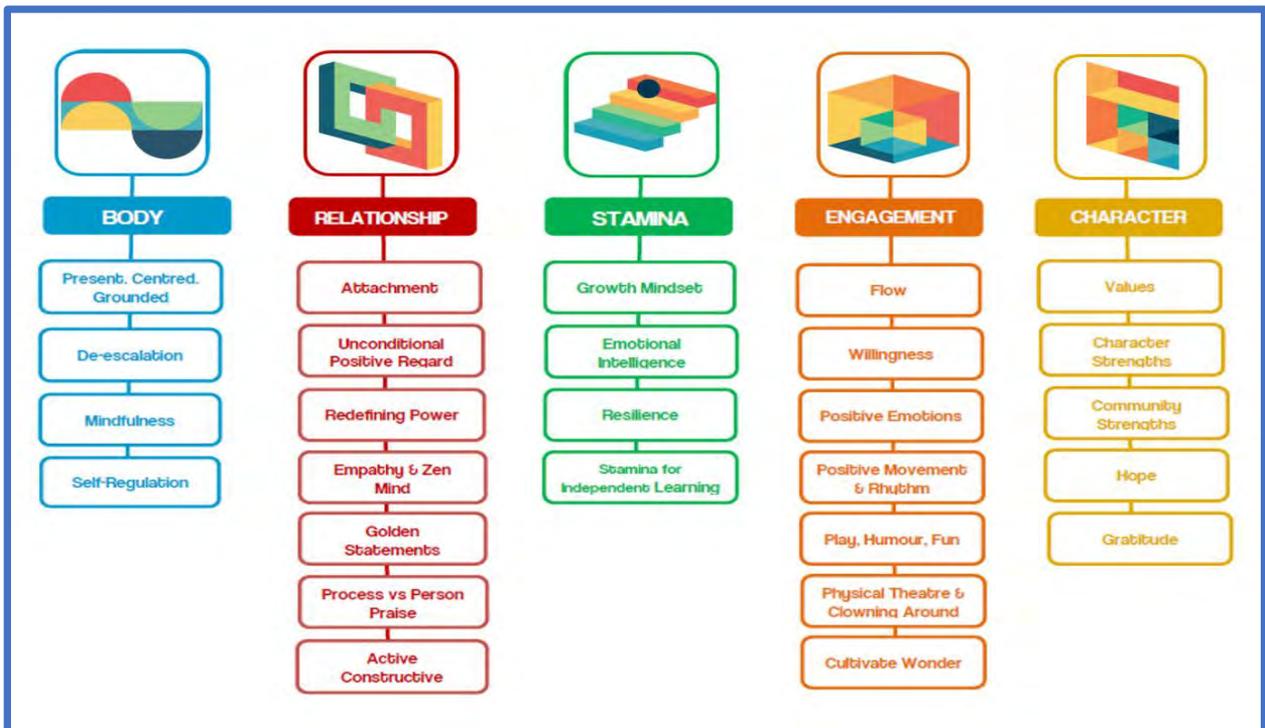
domains of STAMINA, ENGAGEMENT and CHARACTER. All are anchored by the 'lens' of RELATIONSHIPS (see Figure 1).

Figure 1: The Berry Street Education Model (Brunzell et al., 2015)



Each of the domains comprises a cluster of focus areas/sub-themes within which are located sets of teaching and intervention strategies. The BSEM curriculum contains over 100 classroom strategies and recommendations. Each has been designed as a Strategy, a Brainbreak or a Lesson Plan. The Model has been developed in this way to enable teachers to adapt the components to their own classroom context and weave it across all subject areas to respond to an individual student's emotional state at any time (see Figure 2).

Figure 2: The BSEM including tiers, domains and themes (Brunzell et al., 2015)



During the four-day BSEM training, educators are taken through the research underpinning the program design and tools for implementing the activities in each of the domains. Details of the training are provided in the following section.

The BSEM Training Program

The Berry Street training team provides teachers with (a) intensive and on-going professional development, and (b) detailed advice on structuring the teaching day in the form of a suite of printed curriculum guides (Brunzell, et al., 2015).

The professional development program aims to:

- (a) educate participants in re-engaging young people in learning, and progressing them, through sustained cognitive and behavioural change;
- (b) develop the capacity of each participant to take strategies back to their schools/classes and lead changes to school culture and teacher practice; and
- (c) assist teachers in achieving a range of short and long-term educational outcomes that include improved connection to school, social and emotional well-being, attendance, academic achievement and a decrease in anti-social or challenging behaviours.

The training typically runs for four days over a two-year period. During the training, participants learn about trauma and its effects and classroom and whole school strategies to promote an understanding of the five domains of the Model.

Utilising a 'blended learning' methodology, based on instructor expertise, peer-collaboration, and opportunities for participants to pilot learned strategies, the professional development program has aimed to achieve increased teacher capacity to work with challenging students. Each session focused on a different component of the Model, as shown below.

Day 1 BODY

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.

Day 2 RELATIONSHIP

Increasing relational capacities in staff and students through attachment and attunement principles with specific relationship strategies for difficult-to-engage young people.

Dy 3 (Part 1) STAMINA

Creating a strong culture of independence for academic tasks by nurturing resilience and emotional intelligence.

Day 3 (Part 2) ENGAGEMENT

Employing engagement strategies that build willingness in struggling students.

Day 4 CHARACTER

Harnessing a values and a character strengths approach to enable successful student self-knowledge which leads to empowered future pathways.

The BSEM was presented to all staff at the two schools (within a group of four schools) through a sequence of professional development 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.

Reflecting on training the four schools together, the trainers from Berry Street noted that the grouping of a number of schools together for training was not ideal as the *“messaging can be diluted”* (Berry Street trainer, 2019). The trainers explained that schools have different cultures, so it is optimal to train one school at a time. They also noted that having large numbers within the space was challenging and that the space where the training is held needs to be carefully considered and planned.

The Berry Street trainers did recognise, however, that cost factors can impact making grouped training the only viable way for some schools to take it on board. This costing arrangement, while providing for the four training days, did not include follow-up consultation visits from Berry Street trainers. Seeing this follow-up as crucial in supporting and sustaining implementation, the Darebin CRO approached the Darebin School Focus Youth Service (DSYFS), explaining that all the schools were working with the Model and it was important to support teachers' practice through discussion and reflection with the trainers. As a result of the approach, the DSYFS agreed to fund the consultations.

All staff, both teaching and non-teaching, across the two evaluation schools have been included in the training. At the time of the interviews, Kimbla had completed the course (2017-2018) and had one consultation. They were yet to engage in any Masterclasses. Rutland was less progressed in their BSEM journey, having completed 3 of the 4 training days. The school plans to complete the training in 2019.

In the following section the report details each of the schools' motivation for choosing to implement the BSEM.

The BSEM at Rutland and Kimbla Primary Schools

Why the BSEM?

The schools shared a range of reasons for choosing to embrace the BSEM.

At Kimbla, the first school to engage with the Darebin BSEM project, the staff interviewed talked about the impact of attending a presentation at Darebin Council in which Tom Brunzell from Berry Street provided an overview of the Model. The BSEM Leader from the school shared that:

“Four or five members of the leadership team heard Tom B speak at (the) session about BSEM and were blown away by his personality, what he presented” (BSEM Leader, Kimbla).

The Assistant Principal was drawn to the trainer’s personal story as it created a belief that *“this guy knows what we’re on about” (Assistant Principal, Kimbla).*

Both schools were at a crossroad. Kimbla was evolving, following the initial years of the merging of two schools which had used different wellbeing programs (Paths and You can Do It). Having chosen to go with the Paths program at the time of the merger, they felt ready for a new direction:

“(We had) done (the Paths Program) for a few years, but ha(d) plateaued. We think BSEM will now help both adults and children” (Assistant Principal, Kimbla).

Moving to a new site also provided an impetus for change:

“(This is a) new site, we were revamping all our existing policies, including wellbeing policy, at the time” (BSEM Leader, Kimbla).

At Rutland, it was the change of principal that resulted in a shift to embrace the BSEM. It was presented to staff as a:

“New direction for the whole staff, ‘this is what we’re doing’” (Assistant Principal, Rutland).

Another salient factor in uptake for Kimbla was the recognition that many of the behaviours Tom spoke of in the presentation matched those of students within the school:

“The behaviours of the kids Tom was describing - it was fitting the same sort of behaviours we were starting to see. We have an influx of kids coming to our school for a new start, a lot of families (on whom) we didn’t have very much background” (BSEM Leader, Kimbla).

The importance of supporting and equipping teachers to work with students who presented with trauma behaviours was highlighted by both schools as a powerful enticement.

At Rutland, the Assistant Principal spoke of the high numbers of students with challenging behaviours and the fact that staff were not responding to them in ways thought to be supportive of behavioural change:

“About half the staff (were) not showing the level of empathy and understanding of children with trauma that we wanted to see in our teachers. (Dealing with the behaviours) has been frustrating for teachers” (Assistant Principal, Rutland).

The Assistant Principal at Kimbla observed that the BSEM's emphasis on helping teachers to first understand themselves in order to build positive relationships with students was important in bringing him on board, as was the proactive nature of the Model. He explained:

"This guy knows what we're on about. We (need to) understand ourselves then build a lot more positive relationships with our children and our families... We're going to get benefit out of this. We have to understand our own triggers and emotions for us, and then for our kids" (Assistant Principal, Kimbla).

The fact that the BSEM, as distinct from previously used programs, directly addressed understanding and managing trauma behaviours, was noted by the Rutland Assistant Principal:

"We've ran other programs, You Can Do It etc., but they were not directed at the 'pointy end' (of behaviour)" (Assistant Principal, Rutland).

A further factor was the whole of school approach that is central to the BSEM. As the BSEM Leader at Rutland described:

"We were a school that didn't have a set SWPBS plan in place and the BSEM plan was a wholistic approach for trauma-affected kids that was going to benefit the whole school ... we had some bits of a number of programs, You Can Do It, Keys to Life, Bounce Back – but the message was lost. It (BSEM) was a chance to embrace something 'whole school'" (BSEM Leader, Rutland).

The Assistant Principal at Rutland reiterated the importance of the whole school approach, in particular the inclusion of all school staff, not just teachers, in the training:

"The whole staff are involved – canteen manager, office staff" (Assistant Principal, Rutland).

Another factor for the Rutland BSEM Leader was the benefit to all students:

"While it was directed primarily at students who had or were experiencing trauma it would also benefit all students within the school" (BSEM Leader, Rutland).

All these factors taken together created a strong motivation for those interviewed to advocate, in the case of the Kimbla to the Principal, and then at both schools with all staff, for the adoption of the BSEM.

The following sections present the findings on the implementation of the Model within each of the schools.

Findings

Research Question 1: Has the BSEM been implemented with high fidelity?

Fidelity of program delivery refers to the levels of adherence to the original program design (Durlak & DuPre, 2008). Research has shown that high fidelity of program delivery is associated with increased likelihood of achieving a program's desired outcomes (Durlak & DuPre, 2008; Stead et al., 2007). In assessing fidelity, it is therefore important, to have reference to the developer's intentions in creating a program. The BSEM is both developmental (a hierarchy of skills) and cyclically iterative (spiralled strategies that consistently address children's needs.). In recognition of this program logic, teachers are encouraged to resist strictly adhering to a sequenced mode of delivery. Instead, teachers are asked to acknowledge students' different competencies, needs and strengths and tailor the delivery to these. So, while the program has been designed to support the sequential development of students' physical, psychological, social and emotional capacities, this is to be done in a way that is responsive to the needs of the students as they emerge. In utilising the lesson plans, teachers may follow all the lessons in a domain, or alternatively they may select from the list to meet the needs and capacities of their students as they evolve. Fidelity of delivery within the BSEM program therefore, is to be understood as the delivery of the program in its entirety over time, but with teacher practice that is fluid, thereby meeting the changing needs of the classroom and students.

As noted, the two schools are at different stages of their implementation of the BSEM. Kimbla completed the training in 2018 and is further down the implementation path than Rutland, who has completed three of the four training days. Based on the feedback from those interviewed, each school is working with the BSEM in ways that are responsive to their students' needs.

At Kimbla, the BSEM Leader was provided with time release to facilitate the program. For the first year, she supported the delivery through planning the lessons and then modelling them while the classroom teacher observed. Lessons were chosen and adapted to address the needs as understood by the classroom teacher. Following this first year, the Leader is working with the teachers to recognise the competencies and needs of the students in their classes and then select and/or adapt and teach BSEM lessons/strategies. In keeping with the intention of the program to teach at the point of need, the BSEM Leader supports teachers to reflect on their class. She describes how she prompted three Year One teachers to think about differentiation:

"You have different issues in your class, you have different issues in your class, you have different issues in your class, so why is this one lesson going to be a fit for all? ...We need to find out what's happening in your classroom" (BSEM Leader, Kimbla).

While teachers at Kimbla now adapt lessons and deliver them, the school has identified a number of key BSEM strategies that are non-negotiable and, as such, must be taught and utilised in every

class. This includes safety plans. If teachers come to the BSEM Leader with a challenge in relation to managing a student's behaviour, teachers are supported to reflect on what BSEM strategies they have utilised:

"They are reminded with, 'Well have you done this? No? Well go back and do it, then come back and speak with me'" (BSEM Leader, Kimbla).

Through their responses within the focus group, students at Kimbla provided confirmation that a range of the BSEM activities and strategies had been taught (further detail can be found in the section on Student Engagement, Wellbeing and Achievement).

The BSEM Leader at Rutland described having selected purposively those sections of the program that supported the needs of the students while omitting those it was believed their kids 'aren't ready' for:

"It was, what suits the needs of our kids? What are the non-negotiables that we need to have in order to ensure it is effective, but what were other parts of it where we would say our kids aren't ready for that? So, we would put it on the back burner (but) we would make sure that we're doing it in the year to come" (BSEM Leader, Rutland).

He noted that they had covered the BODY module within the classes and teachers had worked with the RELATIONSHIPS domain. STAMINA had been linked with the BODY, but he noted this had been a little rushed. In reflecting on delivery of the BSEM he commented:

"(It is) not like it rolls off a blackline master and do the activity. It is bigger than that and it requires teachers to actually have some thought and develop activities" (BSEM Leader, Rutland).

The students at Rutland showed through their responses within the focus group that a range of the BSEM activities and strategies had been taught (see the section on Student Engagement, Well-being and Achievement in this report).

Within the limitations of the research design, being a small sample of interviews with four educators, of whom only one is a classroom teacher, it is challenging to reach definitive findings on fidelity of implementation. However, the interviews and the responses of the students within the focus groups show that the BSEM is being implemented in each of the schools with fluidity and flexibility to meet contextual needs, as intended by the program designers.

In each school, there is a recognition that no one size fits all and teachers are encouraged to reflect on the specific needs of their cohort and individual students over time. There are, however, within both schools non-negotiables that all teachers must teach and use. An indication that this is taking place is the fact that students were able to talk about and illustrate their knowledge, understandings and applications, where necessary, of a range of BSEM strategies. While a more definitive finding on fidelity may be made if the data collection includes interviews

with classroom teachers across a school, nonetheless, based on the interviews and student responses, it appears that both schools are implementing the program with the expected fidelity. The following section provides detail of the preparation and roll-out of the BSEM in the two schools.

Implementation of the BSEM

The Training: Preparation of the teachers to implement the BSEM

Participants from both schools spoke of the integral part training played in preparing teachers to implement the BSEM.

The training was seen as highly effective, in particular having a range of trainers who were experienced with children and young people and who provided differing perspectives:

“Different trainers for different sessions has been quite positive. You get a different take. All the trainers are experienced” (BSEM Leader, Rutland).

It was felt to be accessible, being *“clear and simple” (BSEM Leader, Rutland)*.

The science behind the program was viewed as a feature, as it created heightened awareness of the drivers of student behaviours. The Rutland Assistant Principal noted:

“The science behind it, the facts behind it were really eye opening. The evidence behind it ... (The training provides) a sense of context, what’s affecting our kids” (Assistant Principal, Rutland).

A notable component was the blending of science and practice, as it both enlightened and created a rationale for buy-in while providing teachers with concrete strategies for application.

“It’s having the practical skills to go with the research and the info to understand those students” (BSEM Leader, Rutland).

“Some of those brainbreaks they’ve come up with, how to do circle time effectively, that’s been really effective. So, teachers traditionally love (getting) two or three things that they can take away and use the next day...but also, they’re getting the knowledge of why they’ve got to use those” (Assistant Principal, Rutland).

In preparing schools to implement the BSEM, an important aspect was the training of *all* school staff, because every member of the school community interacts with students.

“Training - all staff. Half our staff aren’t teachers” (Assistant Principal, Rutland).

Having all staff together for whole days was also seen as essential because it created the space to engage fully with the content:

“(Professional Development) – you need a whole day to do it. After school PD – it’s really difficult to take on information” (BSEM Leader, Rutland).

The Rutland Assistant Principal supported the observation by the BSEM trainer that, where possible, the preferred mode of training was as a single staff rather than as part of a group of schools:

“We’ve particularly enjoyed the ones (training days) that have been at our school and it’s just our staff. It gives us more of an opportunity to really unpack some of the specific examples that we’re dealing with as a staff” (Assistant Principal, Rutland).

Having the staff together also provided extended time for working collaboratively around the challenges they were facing. This was seen as an important morale booster:

“There’s positive feedback from staff. They go into those PDs thinking about one or two children that they’re working with and it’s really trouble shooting with people in the groups, drawing on the experience of others, it’s a short-term morale booster” (Assistant Principal, Rutland).

The Rutland Assistant Principal also noted the long-term effect of training in facilitating a change in thinking and therefore, approach:

“Long term it’s a change in thinking. In the past there was the perception that ‘he’s just a naughty boy or girl’, but when you put in the context of drug use, family violence and sexual abuse, kids in OOHC, DHS care, appointments for parents etc., we have a lot of children that would tick every one of those boxes” (Assistant Principal, Rutland).

The Assistant Principal at Kimbla described the seismic nature of this shift for many of his staff:

“A lot of us did a 360 spin as to how we should be working with our kids, to understand where they were coming from” (Assistant Principal, Kimbla).

An essential discovery for staff at Kimbla was the need to address their own sense of presence in order to be present to teach and support all students:

“Feedback from the training was that we have to make sure we’re okay before we present in front of the class. It (training) made a lot of staff question whether they were okay when they spoke in front of the kids” (BSEM Leader, Kimbla).

Staff at both schools emphasised the importance of ensuring that the training was conducted over two years:

“It needs to be over two years, so the processes can be embedded and practiced” (BSEM Leader, Rutland).

With the support of this training schools moved to roll-out the program. The next section details the ways in which each school is undertaking this task.

Program Roll-out

Kimbla began rolling out of the program in 2017, while at Rutland it commenced in 2018. At both schools, those interviewed believed that the majority of teachers had come on board with the program, while acknowledging that there was a small number who were still not quite there. The Assistant Principal at Kimbla noted that it can be:

“A challenge where some teachers can be very fixed in their ways, ‘I’m the teacher’, but gradually we could see them softening. It just took a bit of time” (Assistant Principal, Kimbla).

This was echoed at Rutland.

As each of the participants described and reflected on, the roll-out of the program in their schools, a number of features emerged including the:

- Role of leadership;
- Preparation of teachers;
- System support;
- Planning;
- Physical space;
- Management of student behaviour; and
- Community Engagement

Each of these factors is explored below.

Leadership support

At both schools, an essential feature of uptake and implementation was the support of leadership.

“Leadership was supportive of the change. Our (then) Principal worked with Darebin Council and got three other schools involved” (BSEM Leader, Kimbla).

Leadership support was seen at Rutland as crucial to:

“Set the narrative, set the tone for staff to then actually want to come towards it (BSEM) ...and setting the environment for the staff to actually own it - own the process, own the program and implement it effectively” (BSEM Leader, Rutland).

At Rutland, this involved the Assistant Principal modelling and supporting classroom teachers. He described how he:

“Model(s) the behaviours, go(es) off to a classroom to help deal with someone. I’m guiding teachers through it” (Assistant Principal, Rutland).

Teacher preparation

Emphasis at Kimbla was placed on preparing teachers to be ready to teach the program by having them do some of the work expected of students. Teachers were guided to explore and reflect on their own triggers and the ways in which they manage these, just as students are supported to do in the early stages of the BSEM program. Staff came together to:

“Identif(y) their own triggers and de-escalation strategies. (We said) don’t share anything you don’t feel comfortable sharing. Joining in on the conversation requires teachers to be very brave. We just need more practice” (Assistant Principal, Kimbla).

At both schools having staff fully understand the initial BODY domain prior to teaching it was seen as essential to ensure successful delivery of program as a whole:

“The BODY domain, all linked to this. We needed to have a deep understanding of this domain first” (BSEM Leader, Kimbla).

The centrality of this domain to the whole of the program led to Rutland beginning with the BODY. They also noted this decision helped support teachers to get started because it was the most accessible and the easiest to teach. The BSEM Leader having delivered it previously was then able to support all staff. Rutland has subsequently worked through STAMINA and RELATIONSHIPS, although in the case of the latter, this was more at a teacher rather than student level.

System support

Each of the schools undertook structural change in order to implement the program. In both settings, a BSEM Leader was appointed to support teachers in classroom delivery. At Kimbla, this involved the provision of sustained time allocation for a teacher to act as a coach and mentor to all teaching staff. This teacher was also the Year 3-6 Coordinator. As noted above, this person planned the roll-out, developed the lessons and then modelled these for teachers. This continued for the whole of the first year. She described the rationale for this approach:

“Teachers actually need to know the reason behind it” (BSEM Leader, Kimbla).

At Rutland, it was the Wellbeing Coordinator who took the BSEM leadership role in 2018. When she went on leave at the beginning of 2019, the Year 3-4 Leader, who had previously worked with the BSEM Leader, stepped into the position. He noted how his previous experience teaching the BSEM at another school assisted him in initially working with the Wellbeing Coordinator and then leading the BSEM at Rutland:

“(In) helping the Wellbeing Coordinator implement it as a school, I used a lot of my knowledge from having previously taught the BODY module to reinforce and make sure it took off here” (BSEM Leader, Rutland).

At both schools dedicated timetabling has been an important feature of delivery. At Kimbla, there is a one hour weekly block for BSEM. In the 3-4 level at Rutland, BSEM is explicitly taught in 1-2 lessons per week, with everyone covering the similar content. The interviewee was unsure of the exact time allocations in the other levels, however, it was his understanding it was being taught on a regular basis.

While timetabling was viewed as important, the Assistant Principal at Kimbla in reflecting on the set teaching schedule did caution against siloing the BSEM into only timetabled sessions:

“I would prefer it if teachers address a need as it arises” (Assistant Principal, Kimbla).

Each school has used a staged roll-out providing incremental guidance and support for teachers:

“In the first year (at Kimbla) it was me and they (teachers) were just watching. In the second year we started planning lessons together, formalised in a planning document. Berry St can be used to address the problems, the specific issues in your classroom. We then moved through the books” (BSEM Leader, Kimbla).

As teachers at Kimbla grew in confidence, they began teaching their own lessons with the BSEM coach observing and providing feedback. The support is now focused on responding to teachers’ questions about ways to best implement lessons in response to the needs of their students:

“Individual teachers ask me, ‘which books would help with this?’ I recommend to staff which lesson might help” (BSEM Leader, Kimbla).

The Kimbla mentoring and coaching role also entails providing intensive support in classrooms where teachers are struggling to manage:

“(Some) teachers with the cohort, they are not managing very well and it is impacting their mental health so I am actually going in there once or twice a week and working with these staff ... so it’s about going back and modelling for them how to start winning back trust with these students and how to make the classroom a safe space because we’re not in a good place” (BSEM Leader, Kimbla).

At Rutland, they are working their way slowly through the domains as they relate to the stage of training received, as they are in the initial 12 months of delivery.

Planning

A key feature of the implementation in the schools has been ensuring the BSEM is at forefront of planning. This was particularly emphasised at Rutland where the BSEM Leader detailed the extent of the reach:

“(It is in) area meetings, student focus teams, professional learning teams, leadership teams; all use planning time to ensure BSEM is in the curriculum. At the end of each term there is a planning day in which a significant amount of time is devoted to developing SEL. Teachers design a SEL unit for the next year” (BSEM Leader, Rutland).

Essential also to the roll-out has been creating the expectation that the program is non-negotiable:

“It’s an expectation that it’s done, (and that it’s done) because the kids need it” (BSEM Leader, Rutland).

This mandated approach, however allows for flexibility:

“We (mandated) a few non-negotiables of Berry St lessons/activities, then (the teaching of) others depends on the issues in each class” (BSEM Leader, Kimbla).

To ensure that the program is meeting student need, Rutland has instituted a termly data collection that is used to inform teacher planning. The BSEM Leader described how this has worked:

“All teams track data to see how the students are tracking, then make changes, trying to introduce student voice into the program as well. Not in a linear fashion, you try and have an input into what the students need at the moment and then tailoring the program accordingly. From the 3-4 point of view, we take the wellbeing survey ... we used a lot of the SASS to develop our own questions, the Prep-2s do a smiley face survey and the 3-6s used a worded survey. We then analyse that data and take it back to the kids and go okay, this is one area that you guys as a class felt we needed to improve or we’re not doing crash hot on. Let’s problem solve and let’s work together in a collaborative fashion to actually come up with ideas and then, having those, students own those ideas and then implement that to try and build upon what you have ... (It is done) once a term, either at the start or the end” (BSEM Leader, Rutland).

In this way, student voice is being used to ensure that teachers are being responsive to the needs of their students. It is also supporting a potentially a more targeted planning and delivery of the BSEM.

Physical space

Another significant component of the roll-out at the schools is the ways in which physical space has been adapted and is now used to enable students to de-escalate. Within the classrooms, students at Kimbla initially used the library corner, however this was changed:

“Some use their library corner, but this gives mixed messages” (BSEM Leader, Kimbla).

Other alternatives were put in place with *“some teachers having a tent that is their safe space”* (BSEM Leader, Kimbla). However, students were given options in terms of the space they use:

“(it) depends on the child” (BSEM Leader, Kimbla).

The Assistant Principal at Rutland highlighted:

“The physical organisation of the classroom has changed as we have been able to (literally) build in calm down spaces, flexible spaces” (Assistant Principal, Rutland).

These spaces played an important role in supporting students to learn to de-escalate and then return to the class space ready to learn.

Management of student behaviours

Implementing the BSEM has led to a range of changes in the ways in which Kimbla responds to challenging student behaviours.

Students who are experiencing challenges on the playground are given the option of alerting the yard duty teachers or coming to the office:

“There are always two yard duty teachers (and) students can come into the office area to tell a teacher if they’re not feeling safe or if they need to de-escalate” (BSEM Leader, Kimbla).

In the office, there is now a range of objects for students to use to support their de-escalation as the Assistant Principal describes:

“In the office there is now a sensory box out and some puzzles for students to use in de-escalating” (Assistant Principal, Kimbla).

A further change at Kimbla has been the approach used to address inappropriate behaviours:

“As welfare officer, we used a number of blue forms (reflecting on our behaviour and how to improve it) to lead to suspensions. (Being issued with a blue form meant a discussion with the Assistant Principal regarding their behaviour. Three blue forms meant an internal suspension.) The school has changed this system to incorporate BSEM activities. For example, there’s a body outline on the back of the form, an escalation map for kids to reflect on their behaviour... this has helped students acknowledge their feelings” (Assistant Principal, Kimbla).

The staff interviewed believed that these changes had resulted in less extreme behaviours and students being better able to recognise their emotions and use strategies to de-escalate.

Community engagement

The participants at Kimbla reported that they have let the students ‘do the talking’ at home with regard to the program and that this has paid off; a number of parents have asked about the BSEM

and have also been heard to use the language, such as ‘stress cup’, that has been taught to their children.

More broadly, the communication tool used with families at both schools is the newsletter. For example, Kimbla places an excerpt in their newsletter detailing what will be covered from the BSEM in the next term.

Kimbla has also incorporated the BSEM into their reporting:

“BSEM is in the school’s reports – learning intentions, material covered” (Assistant Principal, Kimbla).

In response to parents’ questions about the BSEM, the BSEM Leader at Kimbla decided to create a display at parent/teacher/student conversations:

“Discussion has started to happen at home, parents ask about BSEM, so I set up a table (at parent/teacher night) with Berry St books so parents could ask questions about the program” (BSEM Leader, Kimbla).

Engaging parents at Rutland remains an ongoing challenge on all levels and the BSEM sits within this context. As the BSEM Leader and the Assistant Principal shared, while there is knowledge about it among the parents who attend school council, it has yet to reach the broader parent community.

All the factors described above are enabling each of the schools to work toward successfully implementing the BSEM.

The following section details the impact of this implementation on teacher practice.

Research Question 2: Has the BSEM had an impact on teacher practice?

Those interviewed spoke of a range of ways in which implementing the BSEM had positively impacted teacher practice. The impetus cited for these positive impacts was the increased understandings of trauma and the ways in which it can affect behaviour. This greater understanding led to shifts in how teachers were reported to perceive those students who displayed trauma responses and the manner in which they communicated with them and other students. As highlighted above, teachers learnt, taught and utilised a range of BSEM strategies that led to modifications in their classroom practice, providing both students and teachers with ways to regulate stress responses and employ a strengths-based approach to challenges. A corollary of new understandings of trauma responses and subsequent shifts in practice was a reported enhancement of student/teacher relationships. Noted by those at both schools was a greater sense of trust amongst previously distrustful students. Teachers were also observed, by those interviewed, to have developed an increased confidence, and therefore willingness, to

manage challenging behaviour. The participants also noted a heightened ability amongst teachers to manage their own stress leading to better teacher wellbeing.

These impacts are detailed below.

Understandings of student behaviour

Foremost among perceptible shifts was a different way of understanding those students exhibiting challenging behaviours.

At both schools, those interviewed spoke of how students who were labelled as the 'naughty child' were, since the introduction of the BSEM, understood and seen in a different light:

"We used to automatically blame 'the naughty child – it's gotta be them' (for disturbances in the yard). A child would come (to me) with his fifth blue form of the day ... That mentality in the staff has changed a lot. Now they're more open to listen to both sides of the story. Not 'we don't have time to do it'" (BSEM Leader, Kimbla).

"There are better conversations among teachers about kids. It's not about 'you're bad', (it's) a change in expectations. Not everyone's going to fit into one model (of acceptable behaviour)" (Assistant Principal, Rutland).

This sense of each child having their own level of behaviour rather than a single standard was echoed by a graduate teacher at Kimbla:

"A graduate teacher said, 'We have to differentiate our curriculum with behaviour management too' – this was a real eye-opener for staff" (Assistant Principal, Kimbla).

The Assistant Principal at Kimbla noted the shift in teacher expectations:

"It was a change for teachers (concerning their) expectations of students: this (behaviour) is what we have to work towards, not demand on the spot" (Assistant Principal, Kimbla).

This shift was seen to have been facilitated by the opportunities within in the training for gaining a deeper understanding of trauma and its impact on students. This was particularly important, the BSEM Leader at Rutland felt, because the experiences of the students were very often outside the cultural and social experiences of many teachers. He explained:

"It's understanding a world you've never truly been exposed to. You know, having white middle class values, my thinking and my expectations don't work in an environment like this because I haven't gone through the trauma that my students have gone through. It's (BSEM) opened my eyes to, well, trauma's happened, their body has reacted a certain way, then I need to be the professional and create an environment that is going to be encouraging and supportive to them" (BSEM Leader, Rutland).

Reinforcing this heightened ability to understand experiences outside her own life experience, the BSEM Leader at Kimbla commented:

“I (am) a bit more open minded. I could now understand why not all children come to school having had breakfast, clean uniforms ...it really made me take a step back and go, don’t judge, listen and see what you can do to help” (BSEM Leader, Kimbla).

The knowledge of the drivers and triggers for students’ dysregulated behaviours provided by the BSEM has also allowed teachers the opportunity to better understand and reframe student actions and reactions.

“All teachers have a better understanding. It’s not an acceptance, because a lot of the time people see these traumatic experiences as, ‘oh it’s just the student misbehaving and therefore the student needs to have a consequence for their actions’. I think staff at this school see it more that they have a role to play in ensuring that these kids aren’t just misbehaving, that there are true indicators that there are things that we can do...to ensure the kids are safe here at school and learning” (BSEM Leader, Rutland).

This reframing of students and their behaviours has paved the way for changes in patterns of communication fostering enhanced teacher-student relationships.

Enhanced communication and relationships

Further observed change has been the way in which teachers talk and respond to students. Where some teachers were previously seen to be reactive to behaviour, they are now using new knowledge to interpret behaviour and adjust their responses accordingly. The BSEM Leader at Kimbla described how teachers are:

“Very much more in tune with their students and knowing when they are acting out of character” (BSEM Leader, Kimbla).

A student confirmed how their teacher had, after being coached by the Kimbla BSEM Leader, become more in tune with students’ emotions:

“A couple of years ago when I was in Year 4 our teacher didn’t have full self-regulation to know when a kid is mad or stressed and when Ms X walked in, she stayed for a session and (our teacher) saw how Ms X used strategies. Then Ms Y used some of the strategies and now she can tell if someone’s mad or something” (Mark, Kimbla).

The Assistant Principal at Kimbla went on to share the new ways he is hearing teachers talk with students:

“There’s been a change in teacher language, it’s ‘good, you’re settling down’ instead of ‘oh it’s you again’ when teachers comment to a student working outside my office” (Assistant Principal, Kimbla).

He summarised the shift as one where:

“Teachers are a lot more proactive than reactive” (Assistant Principal, Kimbla).

At Rutland, even though the school is in the early stages of implementation, similar shifts have been observed. The BSEM Leader characterised the shift as a move from a more authoritarian mode to one of facilitation:

“Teachers see that they have a role to play in ensuring that kids aren’t just misbehaving. This has changed, very much so. It’s a switch from an authoritarian role to that of facilitator” (BSEM Leader, Rutland).

This has translated into more positive teacher-student relationships. Particularly noted at both schools was an increase in the sense of trust between the teachers and students:

“There is a better understanding of each other and a trust was built up between people. Students have a better understanding and trust” (Assistant Principal, Kimbla).

At Rutland, the word trust was also highlighted:

“I would say there’s an increased trust between students and staff and I think that is just coming down to the conversations that staff have; because of the conversations students and staff have” (BSEM Leader, Rutland).

Staff relationships have also been observed to have improved, leading to *“more peer to peer meaningful conversations about students” (Assistant Principal, Rutland).*

Changes in classroom practice

Teachers in the schools have also incorporated the new strategies into their classroom teaching. At both settings, students have developed and use safety plans and de-escalation charts. Brainbreaks have been built into the curriculum and at Rutland there has been a focus on the use of circle time. As noted above, physical space has also been configured to enable students to have sites for de-escalation. As all those interviewed at the schools noted the BSEM, while being taught explicitly is also threaded throughout classroom and playground practice. As the BSEM Leader at Rutland emphasised:

“These practices aren’t done purely in isolation because they need to be throughout all of learning, but we do make sure that we explicitly teach certain topics” (BSEM Leader, Rutland).

Students spoke of the activities and strategies taught in their classes:

“She (the teacher) gave us the outline of a person, then we put in veins and On this person there’s a half line. If you go below the line, then you’re calm. (You write down) how you went up and down. We had this chart, you had to label how you feel - Happy? Ready to learn? We (call it) ‘excited to learn’ if you’re ready to learn” (Mark, Kimbla).

“We have charts of fixed and growth mindset on the wall. So, if I’m like, I can’t do this, but when I look at the chart I think I can do this” (Jasmine, Rutland).

“There’s lots of emojis - angry, annoyed, stressed. You put the emoji as tired or whatever. It’s on the wall. You have a face you created. You put the face where you’re feeling” (Mark, Kimbla).

“We learnt about bullying last year and about emotions. When we started, it was also about team work. We did a lot of team work and made new friends. Team work is easier now” (Slinky, Rutland).

Each of these student’s responses highlights the ways in which teachers have incorporated the BSEM into their everyday practice.

Teacher confidence and wellbeing

Another shift noted by the staff at Kimbla has been that teachers now feel empowered to address student behaviour directly rather than automatically referring it to leadership.

“In the beginning, if there were any issues outside or any issues in the classroom, they would just withdraw the students and then send them to (Assistant Principal) or myself...handball it, and say ‘deal with it’. ...Teachers are following (more) things up in the yard” (BSEM Leader, Kimbla).

Where time was previously used as reason for referring challenges up, this has also been seen to shift:

“They now make the time (to listen to both sides of the story) where before the biggest excuse was well, we don’t have time to do it” (BSEM Leader, Kimbla).

One student also noted this shift:

“Teachers take more time to speak to students, not just ask what’s wrong. They (now) work it out in that session” (Slinky, Kimbla).

Another significant feature of the BSEM implementation, the Assistant Principal at Rutland observed, has been teachers’ increased ability to identify and manage their own stress:

“Staff are managing their stress levels and managing their ability to cope with trauma, ... we are in a classroom with traumatised children. They realise they are experiencing secondary trauma. You do need to unpack a lot of it and for our staff learning ways to manage that and dealing with that and a big part of that is understanding ... I talked a lot about students having a language to talk about how they are feeling, I think it helps with

staff as well. This is why I'm feeling like that ... it's giving people an avenue to talk about that and process that for themselves" (Assistant Principal, Rutland).

An increased capacity to feel supported and have the skills to manage student behaviours and personal responses to these behaviours was seen by the Assistant Principal at Rutland to have contributed to retention of all staff in 2019. This was the first time this had occurred in many years. He comments:

"This year we've had all the same staff as last year, so no turnover. Two years before that (there were) very high levels to the point where teachers were leaving mid-year ... There's been a marked improvement in how behaviour has been managed in the classroom and I think things are getting less escalated into bigger issues, particularly in areas such as the specialist classes" (Assistant Principal, Rutland).

Taken as a whole, these changes in teachers' perceptions, understanding and responses to students highlight the positive impacts that those interviewed believe the BSEM has had on teaching practice within their respective schools.

The following section examines the impacts of the introduction of the BSEM on student engagement, wellbeing and achievement.

Research Question 3: Has the BSEM had an impact on Student Engagement, Wellbeing and Achievement?

Student's understanding of BSEM domains and increased self-awareness

Discussions within the focus groups indicated that the strategies and concepts from the BSEM had resonated with the students. They were able to readily identify terms including safety plans; de-escalation; brainbreaks; present, centred, grounded; growth mindset; mindfulness; resilience; ready to learn; and character strengths and to explain their meaning and application. The following illustrates these understandings and applications:

- **Safety Plans:** *"We have a class safety plan. Their friend will try to figure out why they're mad" (Slinky, Rutland).*
- **De-escalation:** *"I have a skeleton, it's a bendy skeleton. I play with it (Jeff, Kimbla); "When you're escalated that's when you're angry. Or if you have any problems and you're really sad, there will be a place to go. If you're de-escalated you're ready to learn and you know what you're thinking about and your brain's ticked on to learn" (Jasmine, Rutland).*
- **Growth Mindset:** *"Growth mindset. I never give up. Just before recess we were doing prefixes, we were creating a sentence. I had about five minutes to go, the bell went, but I kept going. I didn't give up" (Mark, Kimbla).*

- **Resilience** *“It’s sort of like persistence to me. Keep on trying, get back up and try again” (Slinky, Rutland).*
- **Mindfulness:** *“Calm down, take three deep breaths” (Student 2, Rutland).*
- **Present Centred Grounded:** *“Present – you’re there, you know what’s going on. Grounded: you’re not angry, you’re just calm” (Jasmine, Rutland): “We go to the calm down corner. We have a corner with a teddy bear, colouring, a pillow, a comfortable place to sit, a book to calm yourself down” (Slinky, Rutland).*
- **Character strengths:** *“We did strengths that we like in other people like kind, loyal, friendly” (Student 1, Kimbla).*
- **Brainbreaks:** *“We have a (toy) cockatoo we throw around, silent ball. If we do really hard work, so the teacher lets us. Sometimes (we play) heads down thumbs up” (Mark, Kimbla); “I really like brainbreaks. Sometimes your brain drops for some reason and you’re bored. Then I do a brainbreak and I start to gear up again” (Fred, Rutland).*

Students also displayed increased self-awareness. In one instance, a student spoke of challenges experienced with regulation and how the BSEM strategies had helped with this:

“I’ve got ADHD and I keep on getting angry and stuff. We were trying to use some strategies and they worked” (Jeff, Kimbla).

Another student shared that they had received a reduction in the number of blue forms:

“The amount of blue forms – hardly any this year” (Student 1, Kimbla).

Students also spoke of the changes they observed in their classmates:

“Last year, when I was in Grade 4, my friends were sometimes rude to me. This year they’ve changed a lot and they’re really nice to me” (Jeff, Kimbla).

“Now there’s not a lot of distractions in class. If they’re upset they go to that corner” (Slinky, Rutland).

A student summed up the value of the program:

“I think Berry St should be done in every school, because there might be kids who blow off (temper) and if someone’s about to have a mental breakdown and they feel like breaking a wall, they might see a poster about de-escalation or mindfulness ... There’s a lot of strategies” (Mark, Kimbla).

Teachers also noted increased levels of self-awareness and regular use of the BSEM language and strategies amongst students. This was particularly so at Kimbla where the BSEM had been in use for a longer period of time.

The BSEM Leader noted:

“There’s a more supportive environment among the children. They’re using de-escalating language, they’re better able to communicate with their teachers. They say, ‘I need to de-

escalate'. They know they have a safe place in their room. Students use their ready to learn chart. More students talk to me" (BSEM Leader, Kimbla).

She describes how one student was able to reflect on the impact of their behaviour on her:

"One student said, 'I'm sorry I was escalated, and I took it out on you'" (BSEM Leader, Kimbla).

There was also a notable shift in boys coming to talk about the issues they were facing:

"It was interesting. It became that more and more boys were coming to have a chat and it wasn't just about 'oh that happened'; it was about, you know, being afraid of growing up" (BSEM Leader, Kimbla).

The Kimbla Assistant Principal talked of the impact on peer-to-peer relationships at the school:

"Students understand more about their de-escalation needs. Students now ask, 'What can I do to help you?' And if they say leave me alone, then okay" (Assistant Principal, Kimbla).

At Rutland students have, the Assistant Principal observed:

"Learned not to prod as much. They used to keep the ball rolling to see how far it would go, now they see the colours (on the escalation chart). It doesn't always translate into respect, but they better manage their own emotions, are more empathetic" (Assistant Principal, Rutland).

The BSEM Leader noted that within the classroom Rutland students are:

"More articulate about how they feel. They can articulate that they're not yet ready to talk, where they are in the escalation stage and what they'll need to do ... The students are also articulate enough to use that vocab in their common vernacular" (BSEM Leader, Rutland).

Impact of the BSEM on student achievement and engagement

It is too early in the implementation phase of the BSEM in each school, particularly at Rutland, to be able to reliably discern any impact of the BSEM on student achievement. Those interviewed were clear in stating that it would be an oversimplification, and certainly premature, to draw a link between any shifts in Student Attitudes to School Survey (SASS) and Naplan results and the introduction of the BSEM. Each of the schools adopted the program with the clear view of helping teachers to be able to manage and support students who were exhibiting trauma behaviours. The roll-out was very much, therefore, seen as one contributing factor within the 'bigger picture'.

As the BSEM Leader from Rutland observed:

“Data in 3-4 in 2018 was up and down like a yoyo and then trying to contextualise something based upon a program was really quite hard. It didn’t quite marry up nicely” (BSEM Leader, Rutland).

But as he noted:

“The kids’ resilience is growing. This shows not in numerical form, it’s a vibe. We use a calm down corner and zones of regulation; fewer students exit the classroom. They say, ‘that’s part of my safety plan and come back’” (BSEM Leader, Rutland).

He is hopeful that shifts may show up in the next round of the Student Attitudes to School Survey.

The Assistant Principal at Rutland remarked there had been an improvement in academic results in the past eighteen months, however he felt this was attributable to increased workforce stability rather than directly to the BSEM. Given this stability was thought by him to perhaps be attributable to the BSEM helping teachers to better manage themselves and their students, it could be argued that the BSEM has indeed been one factor leading to this upward shift. He also commented:

“There is no question that if children are getting exited from the class less, classes are getting exited from their classrooms less then that’s got to have a positive impact” (Assistant Principal, Rutland).

In thinking about engagement, the staff interviewed at both schools highlighted that there were fewer students exiting classes and also fewer suspensions. At Kimbla, as noted above, the introduction of the BSEM had led to a modification of their behaviour management process (the blue forms). Some students, particularly those affected by disruptive behaviours, were involved in the re-design of the form. From this, they developed and gave a presentation to the School Council who agreed to trial a modified, incremental approach. As the Assistant Principal at Kimbla highlighted, the new forms are *“reflective not punitive.”* He described how they worked:

“Students reflect (on their behaviour) in writing, but there’s also a picture of a person (on the back) so kids can locate their feelings on the picture” (Assistant Principal, Kimbla).

Both Kimbla staff agreed that the new approach had resulted in a modification of student behaviour and fewer students being exited from the class or suspended. A corollary has been the sense that the school and parents have a better relationship when there is a need to call about an in-house or out-of-school suspension. The Assistant Principal observed:

“Parents now say, ‘thank you for listening to me and not judging, I was a bit angry’. Sometimes people (parents) feel they’re the bad ones when they come in here. Now they say, ‘You do it differently’ - that’s the impact of the BSEM” (Assistant Principal, Kimbla).

The participants at both schools clearly noted the positive impacts even in these early stages of BSEM implementation, on the practice of teachers and on student's ability to identify and manage their behaviours. This had led, they stated, to students being more trustful and to heightened levels of social, emotional and academic engagement.

The following section reports on the impacts of school-wide practice.

Research Question 4: Has the BSEM had an impact on school-wide practice?

As shown above, the introduction of the BSEM has impacted on school-wide practice in both schools in multiple ways. BSEM leaders were appointed and time was allocated in each school for them to lead the roll-out. Given the greater length of time that Kimbla has been implementing the program, it is not surprising that they report a broader range of impacts. Of particular note was the time allowance given at Kimbla for the leader to plan, deliver and model the BSEM lessons for the first year of the implementation. This had the effect of ensuring teachers were well-prepared to deliver the program in their classrooms the following year.

At both schools, the BSEM has been embedded in the whole school and year level planning process and influenced the framing of discussion in the student support teams.

At Kimbla, the BSEM strategies have been incorporated into the school protocols. The BSEM Leader detailed how this looked with regard to teachers getting to know their students before the beginning of the school year:

"In the 'start of the year program' (which takes place in the last weeks of a school year) teachers interview each student in their new grade, to get to know each student. Learning style, friends, food favourites, etc. and any questions they'd like to ask of the teacher. It is relationship building. It helps teachers to know students. There's also a (formal) handover between teachers" (BSEM Leader, Kimbla).

The BSEM has also been included in the Kimbla school reports and as a component of parent/teacher/student conversations.

The taking on of the BSEM also led Kimbla to redesign the behaviour management program at the school, and this, supported by more trauma-informed teacher practice, was seen by both staff members as having contributed to students' being better able to regulate their behaviour.

A significant feature impacting school-wide practice at both schools was the training of all staff. The BSEM leader at Rutland highlighted that this meant everyone was on board:

"We have included business admin, we have included sick bay, we have included the canteen lady and I think having that whole school approach and understanding to the

program is beneficial because then everyone is on board. Everyone owns it and we just move forward” (BSEM Leader, Rutland).

Having everyone trained and conversant in the program was enabling of one of the most cited impacts, a common language. All those interviewed referred to the significance of the embedding of a shared language throughout the school. While it was acknowledged that this remains “*a work in progress*” (Assistant Principal, Rutland), it was nonetheless a significant change. It was observed in the way in which teachers and other school staff spoke to students and how students interacted with staff and peers. It was exemplified in the increased capacity of students to recognise their response levels, name them and identify their de-escalation needs.

The following section examines the ‘where to next’ for each of the schools and the challenges and enablers to moving forward with the program.

Where to Next: Challenges and Enablers

With well-received training having inspired and encouraged the BSEM-related activity across the schools, one of the greatest challenges is how to sustain the momentum over time, particularly with staff turnover. As the BSEM Leader at Rutland states:

“I think the school sees value in it and it is not just one thing that we would drop, but as with any program I worry about whether it is embedded. I think if the training stops, then it’ll be, ‘okay, where to next?’” (BSEM Leader, Rutland).

He suggests a truly embedded and sustained program will require further support from Berry Street or a network type organisation. The Rutland Assistant Principal believed a way to ensure sustainability is to maintain it as high priority within leadership.

Challenges faced by Kimbla was the change in principal and staff turnover. As the Assistant Principal observed, there are difficulties in having to induct new staff into the BSEM:

“There’s a cost factor with new to the school staff. Every two years we need to have a whole school refresher day rather than sending a new teacher off to a PD (on their own) ... because we’re doing it together, not just a group of us, we’re all thinking that way. It’s about meaningful relationships; we’re all different, but we’re all the same” (Assistant Principal, Kimbla).

Both schools emphasised the need for ongoing training and for more in-school consultations with the Berry Street experts. The BSEM Leader at Rutland noted:

“We would love to have more consult days or ... the opportunity to visit other (BSEM) schools” (BSEM Leader, Rutland).

The BSEM Leader at Kimbla reinforced this desire for more consultation with Berry Street. Given the busy nature of schools she wondered if a better approach would be for Berry Street to initiate the follow-up. Both leaders believed it would be highly valuable to be able to de-brief (one-to-one) with a Berry Street expert particularly because, as the Rutland BSEM Leader explained:

“You are never quite sure if you are doing it right, so it would be good to be able to have guidance” (BSEM Leader, Rutland).

The Darebin Community Renewal Officer was aware of this desire on the part of schools to have further training and support. She commented:

“You can do the training bit, (but) if you don’t practise it immediately and if you’re not supported to practise it then all that is [lost]” (Community Renewal Officer, Darebin).

In the light of this, she has been exploring options for funding individual consultation visits and refresher courses.

At Rutland, an essential element of sustainability is seen to be the scoping and sequencing of the BSEM. The plan is to complete the training and then sit down with leadership and teachers to look at scoping and sequencing the BSEM, so it is clear what will be taught and the sequence in which it will be taught. This, the BSEM Leader believes, is the way to maintain program momentum:

“It needs to be scope and sequenced ... I think that is the only way we can make people be accountable and bring to their attention that it is important and vital” (BSEM Leader, Rutland).

Another approach being taken at Rutland is to ensure the program stays fresh and engaging for the students. The way in which this is being done is to integrate it with their Start Up program, running each bi-annually. This, the BSEM Leader suggests, will go some way in counteracting comments from students such as *‘we’ve done this before.’*

Both schools in moving forward were unequivocal about their intentions to continue working to embed the BSEM across their schools.

Conclusion

The implementation of the BSEM at Rutland and Kimbla primary schools has had positive impacts.

In terms of the research questions, this report outlines the ways in which the two schools implemented the BSEM with fidelity, and the BSEM’s impact on teacher practice, students’ wellbeing, engagement and perhaps achievement, and on school-wide practice.

The BSEM training was seen as crucial by participants in preparing schools and teachers to deliver the program. Receiving sustained Berry Street training into the effects of trauma led to increased

and deeper teacher understandings of the impacts of trauma on student behaviour and having this understanding enabled teachers to be present in their practice to students exhibiting trauma behaviours while also being aware of and managing their own responses. As a result, schools report that relationships between staff and students improved:

“Closer, more caring relationships are being developed between student and teachers” (Assistant Principal, Kimbla).

They also report that there has been a decrease in problematic student behaviours:

“There’s been a marked improvement in student behaviour, in how that’s managed in the classroom... Things are getting less escalated. We need to be flexible, to understand trauma and how it plays out. Your role is not to save the world. Trauma isn’t that easy to fix. Do your bit” (Assistant Principal, Rutland).

The BSEM curriculum was universally recognised by students in focus groups and staff interviewed as being integral to improvements in student behaviour as it provided students and staff with a common language and practical strategies to support regulation and develop positive self-regard, social relationships and work practices.

Adopting the BSEM led to the development of wellbeing policies within the schools that better serve the needs of students who are educationally disadvantaged, but was also seen as benefitting all students:

“While it was directed primarily at students who had or were experiencing trauma it also benefits all students within the school” (BSEM Leader, Rutland).

In speaking of the BSEM, participants agreed that, *“the research and the understanding that (the BSEM) gives is ... second to none (BSEM Leader, Rutland)* and that the commitment in taking the BSEM on board was highly beneficial to both staff and students.

Recommendations for Future Delivery of the BSEM

A number of recommendations for implementing the BSEM emerged from the evaluation. These act as a guide for both those beginning the BSEM journey as well as those, such as Rutland and Kimbla, seeking to embed and sustain the program.

Where possible, it is recommended that schools:

1. Maintain the involvement of school leaders in a team structure to oversee the implementation of the BSEM within the school.
2. Appoint a dedicated teacher, with time-release, to take on responsibility for overall co-ordination of the BSEM, especially in the initial years of embedding the program.

3. Timetable set times for the explicit teaching of the BSEM and encourage curriculum-wide adoption of the strategies.
4. Scope and sequence the BSEM summarising what is to be taught and the sequence in which it will be taught while also allowing for incidental teaching when needed.
5. Use a modelling, mentoring approach to support optimum delivery of the program.
6. Ensure all new staff, including non-teaching staff, receive induction into the BSEM program and training.
7. Negotiate follow-up Berry Street school consultations and explore the possibility of refresher courses for staff.
8. Track the schools' wellbeing data, including SASS and broader data, against the BSEM domains to enable analysis of practice and impact.
9. Incorporate student voice in assessing, evaluating and refining the delivery of the program to best meet the needs of student's over time.
10. Involve local secondary schools in the BSEM, as a large percentage of primary students transition into local schools.

References

- ACARA. (2019). My School. [online] Retrieved from <https://www.myschool.edu.au/school/45289>
- ACARA. (2019a). My School. [online] Retrieved from <https://www.myschool.edu.au/school/44833>
- Australian Bureau of Statistics, *Census of Population and Housing*. (2016). Retrieved from <https://www.abs.gov.au/ausstats/abs@.nsf/mf/2033.0.55.001>
- Brunzell, T., Norrish, J., Ralston, S., Abbott, L., Witter, M., Joyce, T., & Larkin, J. (2015). *Berry Street Model: Curriculum and Classroom Strategies*. Melbourne: Berry Street Victoria.
- Brunzell, T., Waters, L., & Stokes, H. (2015). Teaching with strengths in trauma-affected students: A new approach to healing and growth in the classroom. *American Journal of Orthopsychiatry*, 85(1), 3.
- Durlak, J. A., & DuPre, E. (2008). Implementation matters: A review of research on the influence of implementation on program outcomes and the factors affecting implementation. *American journal of community psychology*, 41(3-4), 327-350.
- Stead, M., Stead, M., Stradling, R., Stead, M., Stradling, R., MacNeil, M., . . . MacKintosh, A. M. (2007). Implementation evaluation of the Blueprint multi-component drug prevention programme: fidelity of school component delivery. *Drug Alcohol Review*, 26(6), 653-664.