



MINISTRY OF EDUCATION NEW ZEALAND

*Te Tāhuhu o te Mātauranga Aotearoa*

**“It’s, like, trying to make us  
better people”**

**My FRIENDS Youth final  
evaluation report**

Report to the Ministry of Education

Jo MacDonald, Roseanna Bourke, Melanie Berg and Jacky Burgon

NZCER

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## Key findings

This evaluation report shows that the My FRIENDS Youth Resilience Programme aligns with government strategies, is consistent with the *New Zealand Curriculum* key competencies and the health and physical education curriculum, and can be effectively facilitated by teachers for all Year 9 students, including priority learners.

Positive student and teacher outcomes were evident. If students are not using the strategies already, they reported they are likely to do so in the future. The majority of students reported that:

- the programme was worth doing
- they use the strategies from My FRIENDS Youth
- what they learned from the programme will be useful for them in the future.

Teachers and guidance counsellors thought that:

- the programme contributed to the health and physical education curriculum
- the specialised training was valuable
- their students benefited from the programme.

Overall, My FRIENDS Youth was implemented with fidelity to the programme structure, while enabling teachers to meet their own teaching preferences and their specific students’ needs. Teachers expressed a desire to continue to incorporate the programme within the health and physical education curriculum in the future, adapting it more for their local context while maintaining programme fidelity.

These key findings are discussed in more detail in the executive summary.



# Executive summary

## The My FRIENDS Youth Resilience Programme

*We learnt that everyone uses different strategies to relax; we learnt how to reduce stress like before a test or something. I’ve got new ways of coping with people I don’t like very much.*

(Year 9 student)

The My FRIENDS Youth Resilience Programme (referred to throughout this report as My FRIENDS Youth) was developed to support young people aged 12–16 years to increase their resilience by developing knowledge, strategies and skills to cope with difficult and challenging times in their lives. It is a 10-session programme based on cognitive behavioural therapy (CBT) principles, and it was developed in Australia by Dr Paula Barrett as part of a suite of FRIENDS programmes.

My FRIENDS Youth is designed to be implemented in school, hospital and community settings and may be adapted for individual therapy. In New Zealand My FRIENDS Youth was facilitated as a universal programme for all Year 9 students in schools participating in the trial.

As a component of two key programmes of work—Positive Behaviour for Learning (PB4L) and the Prime Minister’s Youth Mental Health Project—My FRIENDS Youth was introduced to New Zealand secondary schools by the Ministry of Education (the Ministry) in 2013. It was trialled with Year 9 students in 2013 and 2014 as part of the health and physical education curriculum. A total of 26 schools participated in the trial: 10 began in 2013 and a further 16 joined the trial in 2014.

## This evaluation

In 2013 the New Zealand Council for Educational Research (NZCER) was commissioned, in partnership with Associate Professor Roseanna Bourke from Victoria University of Wellington, to undertake an evaluation of My FRIENDS Youth in the New Zealand trial schools. This is the final evaluation report of the programme.

The evaluation focused on whether the programme was implemented as it was intended to be (implementation fidelity), the progress made towards short-term outcomes for teachers and students, and the degree of fit with the New Zealand educational and cultural context. This report analyses quantitative and qualitative data from the 26 schools that trialled the programme in 2014. These data include Wellbeing@School surveys completed by over 2,000 students before and after the programme, a survey of 31 teachers, and case study interviews with 17 staff and 160 students at five diverse secondary schools.

## Key findings

### The majority of students thought My FRIENDS Youth was worth doing

The majority of students in the case study schools highly rated their My FRIENDS Youth programme experience. When 160 students were asked to rate it on a 1–5 scale (5 being the most positive), the average rating was 4. This positive response was confirmed by the survey data, when 62 percent of students either agreed or strongly agreed that My FRIENDS Youth was worth doing.

There were small gender and ethnicity differences.

- Girls were more likely than boys to agree or strongly agree that the programme was worth doing (65 percent of girls compared with 57 percent of boys).
- Māori and Pasifika students were slightly more likely than their NZ European peers to agree or strongly agree that the programme was worth doing (62 percent of Māori students and 72 percent of Pasifika students, compared with 59 percent of NZ European students).

### The majority of students reported using the strategies they learned

Most teachers (78 percent) reported that students were more aware of their feelings as a result of the programme. Most also believed the programme helped students to know each other better (62 percent), and that it fostered a sense of community (62 percent).

Although students were able to explain how they learned strategies from the programme, they did report that it was harder to use these strategies in “real life”. However, over half the students surveyed (56 percent) reported that they used the strategies learned from the My FRIENDS Youth programme. A higher proportion of girls (60 percent) than boys (52 percent) reported that they used the strategies. Students from all ethnic groups experienced the programme as being relevant for them. The facilitation by the teacher was an important aspect of this.

Although most teachers believed that it was an appropriate programme for Māori and Pasifika students (74 percent and 71 percent, respectively, strongly agreed or agreed), they were less sure about whether it had made a difference for these students. Pasifika students identified learning more from the programme than their teachers reported: most teachers (65 percent) were unsure whether the programme had made a difference for Pasifika students, compared with 62 percent of Pasifika students who agreed or strongly agreed that they used strategies from the programme.

There was a greater alignment between the teachers’ responses about whether the programme had made a difference for Māori students (55 percent agreed or strongly agreed) and Māori students reporting they used strategies from the programme (57 percent agreed or strongly agreed).

Over half the teachers (55 percent) agreed or strongly agreed that it was an appropriate programme for students with special education needs, but few teachers (16 percent) thought the programme made a difference for these students. This is an area that could warrant further attention in understanding and adapting the programme for the New Zealand context.

## Many students thought what they learnt would be useful in the future

Although just over half of the students reported using strategies from My FRIENDS Youth sessions, more students (nearly 70 percent) either agreed or strongly agreed that what they learnt from the programme would be useful in the future. Consistent with the other survey findings, there were gender and ethnicity differences.

- More girls than boys either agreed or strongly agreed that what they learnt would be useful in the future (72 percent of girls, compared with 65 percent of boys).
- Māori students and Pasifika students overall rated the future usefulness of the programme more strongly than their NZ European peers (71 percent of Māori students and 73 percent of Pasifika students agreed that what they learnt would be useful in the future, compared with 67 percent of NZ European students).

## The Wellbeing@School survey showed some positive shifts

Over 2,000 Year 9 students completed a Wellbeing@School survey before they started My FRIENDS Youth in 2014 (pre-programme), soon after finishing the programme (end-of-programme, later in 2014), and at the start of 2015, when they were in Year 10 (post-programme).

The biggest shifts between the pre-programme survey and end-of-programme survey (i.e. the survey the students completed in Year 9, soon after finishing My FRIENDS Youth) were for the three items that refer to students having been *taught* something. This could be associated with them having just completed the My FRIENDS Youth programme.

- At school I am taught how to manage my feelings (62 percent of students agreed or strongly agreed in the pre-programme survey; 69 percent of students agreed or strongly agreed in the end-of-programme survey).
- At school I am taught to think about other students’ feelings (75 percent of students agreed or strongly agreed in the pre-programme survey; 81 percent of students agreed or strongly agreed in the end-of-programme survey).
- At school I am taught what to say or do if students are hassling or bullying me (70 percent of students agreed or strongly agreed in the pre-programme survey; 76 percent of students agreed or strongly agreed in the end-of-programme survey).

School-level analysis showed that some schools had larger increases than others.

The survey was repeated when students were in their first few weeks of Year 10, in term 1 2015. The percentage of students agreeing with items returned to pre-programme levels. Although positive shifts evident immediately after the My FRIENDS Youth programme were not maintained, a return to pre-programme levels contrasts with the expected pattern of students’ views of school getting more negative as they get older. In other words, scores would have been expected to decline between Year 9 and Year 10. This suggests that students could be maintaining positive perceptions related to My FRIENDS Youth.

The Wellbeing@School data reiterate the importance of the My FRIENDS Youth booster sessions and the inclusion of ongoing conversations around CBT strategies in the classroom to maintain the benefits from the programme.

## Teachers felt well supported

A 2-day training programme is mandatory before teachers can facilitate the programme in their school. The training introduces the importance of CBT principles that underpin the programme and also includes a background to New Zealand youth mental health and the requirements of the pilot. In some schools, guidance counsellors, deans, members of the senior management team, and Resource Teachers of Learning and Behaviour (RTLB) were included in the training.

Teachers expressed a high degree of satisfaction with the content of the training and the quality of the facilitation by Ministry personnel. The majority of teachers felt they had received enough training to facilitate the My FRIENDS Youth programme in their classes (77 percent).

The specialised training and the ongoing support from the Ministry facilitators enhanced teachers’ ability to understand the CBT principles within the programme, and teachers developed expertise and confidence in working with the programme with their students. The programme introduced them to a common language to talk about feelings, behaviour and experiences, which supported students and teachers to manage classroom conversations about wellbeing and resilience.

## Teachers implemented the programme with a high degree of fidelity

Completing the programme and facilitating the sessions in sequential order are important for ensuring fidelity of implementation. The majority of sessions within the schools reported on in this evaluation adhered to this requirement. In general, the timing and lesson sequence matched the manual, students were able to attend all sessions, and sessions were able to be implemented without interruption or distraction. However, not all classes completed the programme or experienced the sessions in order.

There was strong evidence from the case study data of peer and experiential learning taking place. Students reported on the group activities and their work with peers, and both students and teachers enjoyed the programme because of these pedagogical practices.

## Teachers adapted the programme and resources for their students

My FRIENDS Youth is a clearly structured programme, although adaptations to activities are permitted—and even encouraged—as long as the objectives and major learning outcomes of each session are retained. There are two manuals that come with the programme: *My FRIENDS Youth Resilience Program: Group Leaders’ Manual for Youth* (Barrett, 2012b) and *My FRIENDS Youth Resilience Program: Activity Book for Youth* (Barrett, 2012a), which is designed for students to write in and retain.

The case study data showed that teachers and students used the manuals with limited benefit. Teachers believed they needed the activity book for the structure and support, but having run the programme once were less reliant on it when implementing the programme a second or third time. Survey data confirmed that teachers needed to adapt the resources. These findings also foreground the considerable lengths that teachers went to to ensure the programme was student-focused, needs-based and relevant for their cohort of Year 9 students.

- Only 22 percent of the teachers responding to the survey agreed that the activity book was appropriate.
- The majority of teachers (71 percent) reported they needed to adapt the resources. This adaptation is consistent with the terms of the programme licence.



## My FRIENDS Youth is a good fit with the New Zealand school context

This evaluation shows that My FRIENDS Youth can be successfully implemented within secondary schools in the New Zealand educational context. Teachers reported the programme was compatible with *The New Zealand Curriculum* and worth doing.

In the ‘real-world’ complex environment of a secondary school, with other ongoing school-based and extra-curricular activities, teachers were willing to be trained, and trial, this new initiative. Competing priorities, lack of resources, lack of training, drift from the programme and the complexity of a classroom environment can derail any new programme (Evans & Weist, 2004), but on this occasion there was considerable commitment by teachers and Ministry facilitators to keep it on track. Teachers also reported that their principal and senior leadership supported the programme (81 percent).

The majority of teachers (84 percent) believed their school intended to continue with the programme. In their second year of facilitating the programme, teachers were planning to improve curriculum alignment, adapt aspects of the programme for their students, involve more teachers to incorporate a whole-school approach, and make more intentional connection with other initiatives in the school, such as PB4L School-Wide. There was evidence that schools were starting to integrate My FRIENDS Youth into the overall PB4L School-Wide approach, although this was not embedded at the time of the evaluation.

## Teachers identified areas to adapt and build practice

The evaluation findings showed that there are a few areas that could be adapted or enhanced to build practice in New Zealand secondary schools. These include:

- continuing to adapt the programme activities to the New Zealand context to maximise student engagement, particularly for boys
- continuing to create opportunities for teachers facilitating the programme to share activities, experiences and ideas with colleagues in other schools
- supporting teachers to extend the reach of the programme in their school, including ongoing involvement of guidance counsellors and introducing the programme to parents
- considering whether a shortened version of the programme could be developed, while still meeting licence requirements and programme fidelity
- considering sustainability issues related to the training of teachers.

The majority of teachers commented that there was an issue with the quantity of content to cover, and that this had an impact on other areas of the health curriculum. The perspectives of teachers in this evaluation suggest there is demand for a classroom-based programme that can be facilitated in 10–12 lessons and completed in a school term. The Ministry facilitators and experienced teachers of the programme could consider whether this would be possible without compromising programme fidelity and outcomes. If this is not possible, the communication with schools prior to their engaging with the programme could clarify that if a class is taught only once a week, the programme will take two terms, and that providing more than one My FRIENDS Youth session a week may enhance student and teacher satisfaction with the programme.

Teachers valued the network opportunities across the schools involved in the My FRIENDS Youth trial. In these meetings they created, developed and shared resources to use within the programme. The Ministry might like to consider whether this could be an ongoing support structure for the programme.

The evaluation shows minimal parental involvement in the programme in the form of information evenings, workshops or participation in class sessions. Although schools did not actively involve parents in the programme, it is seen as an important factor in the success of early intervention programmes (Barrett, 2012b).

There were some sustainability issues. Staff turn-over within schools was identified as a potential risk to the programme, especially as the 2-day training programme is mandatory for teachers to complete before they facilitate My FRIENDS Youth. There are only a few trained and accredited Ministry personnel in New Zealand who can train the teachers. In addition, during the current trial the activity books were received by the schools without a charge. Teachers were concerned that in the future, if the activity books needed to be purchased, the cost would cause difficulty for both school and students.

An aspect that is recommended in the group leaders' manual but that was not evident in New Zealand schools is the participation of more than one adult in the classroom when a My FRIENDS Youth session is being held. Schools could consider how this might be achieved, particularly for those programme sessions where students may need additional support due to the nature of the activity (e.g. coping plans, which require more writing). As more teachers are trained, this may be easier to achieve, but given the intense resource this requirement takes, it may not be a feasible aspect of the programme for New Zealand schools.

One way some schools mitigated this risk was to ensure guidance counsellors received the My FRIENDS Youth training alongside teachers, and made students aware that they could make an appointment to meet individually with a guidance counsellor. The My FRIENDS Youth programme is compatible with the philosophies and approaches used by guidance counsellors in New Zealand.

## **Summary**

This evaluation indicates that My FRIENDS Youth has been successfully implemented in the New Zealand trial schools and has been positively received by both teachers and students. Positive outcomes for teachers and students were evident. The convergence of teacher and student views strengthens the findings of this evaluation.

# 1. Introduction and background

## The My FRIENDS Youth Resilience Programme

The My FRIENDS Youth Resilience Programme (My FRIENDS Youth) is designed to reduce young people’s anxiety and depression and build resilience. It was developed in Australia as part of a suite of programmes, including those for younger children (FRIENDS for Life) and adults (Adult Resilience). My FRIENDS Youth is designed to be implemented in a small- or large-group environment, led by a group leader, including in school settings. In schools the group leader is typically the teacher, who has been trained specifically to teach the My FRIENDS Youth programme.

The programme is based on a cognitive behavioural therapy (CBT) framework, and the theoretical principles of the programme address attachment (emotion), physiological (body), cognitive (mind) and learning (behaviour) processes, which are “seen to interact in the development, experience and maintenance of anxiety” (Barrett, 2012b, p. 6). Many of the activities are centred around CBT strategies involving self-talk and positive visual imagery, and the concept of mindfulness. The activities are designed to provide opportunities for students to interact with their peers, and to play an active role through experiential learning. The programme also incorporates a broader social agenda such as environmental awareness, team building, collaboration, and caring for others and animals.

The content of the programme is covered over 10 sessions and two booster sessions (usually one month and then three months after completion of the programme). FRIENDS stands for the steps young people are encouraged to work through: (**F**eelings; **R**emember to relax; **I**nnner helpful thoughts; **E**xplore solutions and coping step plans; **N**ow reward yourself; **D**o it every day; and **S**tay strong inside). The programme is supported by a group leaders’ manual and a student activity book. Each session concentrates on a letter from FRIENDS, and the group leaders’ manual provides objectives and learning outcomes, an agenda, suggested materials and resources, and activities. Each session in the manual outlines the warm-up activities alongside review and activities for that session.

## My FRIENDS Youth in New Zealand schools

In New Zealand, My FRIENDS Youth is part of two key programmes of work:

- Positive Behaviour for Learning (PB4L), which is a major cross-education sector strategy to improve capability to focus on student wellbeing (positive behaviour), through evidence-based initiatives with sound social and cognitive learning theoretical foundations
- the Prime Minister’s Youth Mental Health Project, launched by the Prime Minister in April 2012, which includes 26 initiatives across four areas: schools, online, families and communities, and health. My FRIENDS Youth is one of a group of school-based initiatives.

This evaluation of My FRIENDS Youth contributes to the monitoring and evaluation of both PB4L and the Youth Mental Health Project.

The New Zealand implementation of the programme is targeted at Year 9 students, although some schools also facilitated the programme with students at other year levels. In 2013, 10 schools trialled My FRIENDS Youth. These schools continued with the trial of the programme in 2014 and were joined by a further 16 schools running the programme for the first time.

Schools participating in the pilot were clustered in the regions of Waikato, Greater Wellington, Canterbury, Otago and Southland. Each school had a nominated My FRIENDS Youth school co-ordinator, and the programme was facilitated by specially trained teachers within each school as part of the health education programme. My FRIENDS Youth consists of 10 sessions, some of which are run over more than one lesson.

Training was provided regionally by one of two co-ordinators contracted to the Ministry of Education. These co-ordinators maintained contact with schools throughout the year, providing additional support for co-ordinators, organising regional hui, and visiting schools to meet with other staff when requested.

## **Evaluating My FRIENDS Youth in New Zealand**

While FRIENDS for Life (the FRIENDS programme for children aged 6–12) has had significant international research to explore its effectiveness for students, less is known about the effects of My FRIENDS Youth for young people aged 12–16. The FRIENDS for Life programme has been evaluated in schools in a number of countries, including South Africa (Mostert & Loxton, 2008), Norway (Martinsen, Aalberg, Gere, & Neumer, 2010), the UK (Green, 2013), Canada (Rose, Miller, & Martinez, 2009), the Seychelles (Labiche & Kaczmarek, 2003) and Scotland (Liddle & Macmillan, 2010); and in contexts other than schools, such as young children living in an orphanage in Mexico (Gallegos-Guajardo, Ruvalcaba-Romero, Garza-Tamez, & Villegas-Guinea, 2013).

A meta-analysis of the evaluations of the FRIENDS programmes (FRIENDS for Life and My FRIENDS Youth) was undertaken by Maggin and Johnson (2014), and their conclusion was that “the research underlying school-based versions of the FRIENDS program presently lacks the rigor to certify it as an evidence-based practice” (Maggin & Johnson, 2014, p. 298). Given the recency of the implementation of the programme in New Zealand, there are currently no New Zealand data on the effectiveness of the programme, nor is there evidence of whether students and their teachers find it valuable within the model adopted in New Zealand.

Therefore, this evaluation focuses on the implementation and short-term outcomes of My FRIENDS Youth in its first year(s) of implementation in 26 New Zealand secondary schools. The evaluation is designed to provide evidence the Ministry of Education can use to decide if there are aspects of the programme that need strengthening or changing in order to achieve medium- and long-term outcomes. Also, the results of this evaluation could contribute to decisions about the extent and nature of scale-up of the programme.

There are two key areas of the evaluation.

- How My FRIENDS Youth is being implemented in New Zealand: is it implemented as intended, what factors support and hinder satisfaction and acceptability of the programme, and is it relevant in the New Zealand context?
- How well the programme is progressing towards achieving its short-term outcomes, particularly improvements in wellbeing for students, and teacher confidence in supporting students. Particular attention is paid to how the programme is experienced by priority learner groups—Māori students, Pasifika students, students with special education needs, and students from low socioeconomic backgrounds.

The specific evaluation questions addressed in this report are:

1. Has My FRIENDS Youth increased wellbeing (as measured through Wellbeing@School) in young people?
2. How does My FRIENDS Youth impact on priority learners?
3. Was My FRIENDS Youth implemented as intended?

4. Is My FRIENDS Youth relevant in the New Zealand cultural and educational context?
5. What are the My FRIENDS Youth programme factors that support and hinder adherence, satisfaction and acceptability of the programme?
6. Does the My FRIENDS Youth programme support teachers to manage classroom conversations about wellbeing?

In line with evaluation question 1, the term ‘wellbeing’ is used throughout this report. The overarching and multidimensional term ‘wellbeing’ captures the intent of the programme, which includes aspects of social and emotional wellbeing, such as students having more strategies and skills for managing themselves and relating to others, and the resilience to deal with difficult personal and social situations. The terms ‘wellbeing’ and ‘resilience’ are used throughout the report in an educational, rather than a clinical, capacity.

The evaluation began in 2013, focusing on the introduction of the programme in Year 9 classes in 10 schools. Staff in the trial schools completed a survey early in the implementation and students completed the Wellbeing@School survey at the start and end of the year. Two formative evaluation reports were finalised in January 2014 (Bourke, MacDonald, Burgon, & Berg, 2014; Burgon & Ferral, 2014). These reports provided early information about how schools were implementing the programme and helped shape the research instruments used in the evaluation in 2014.

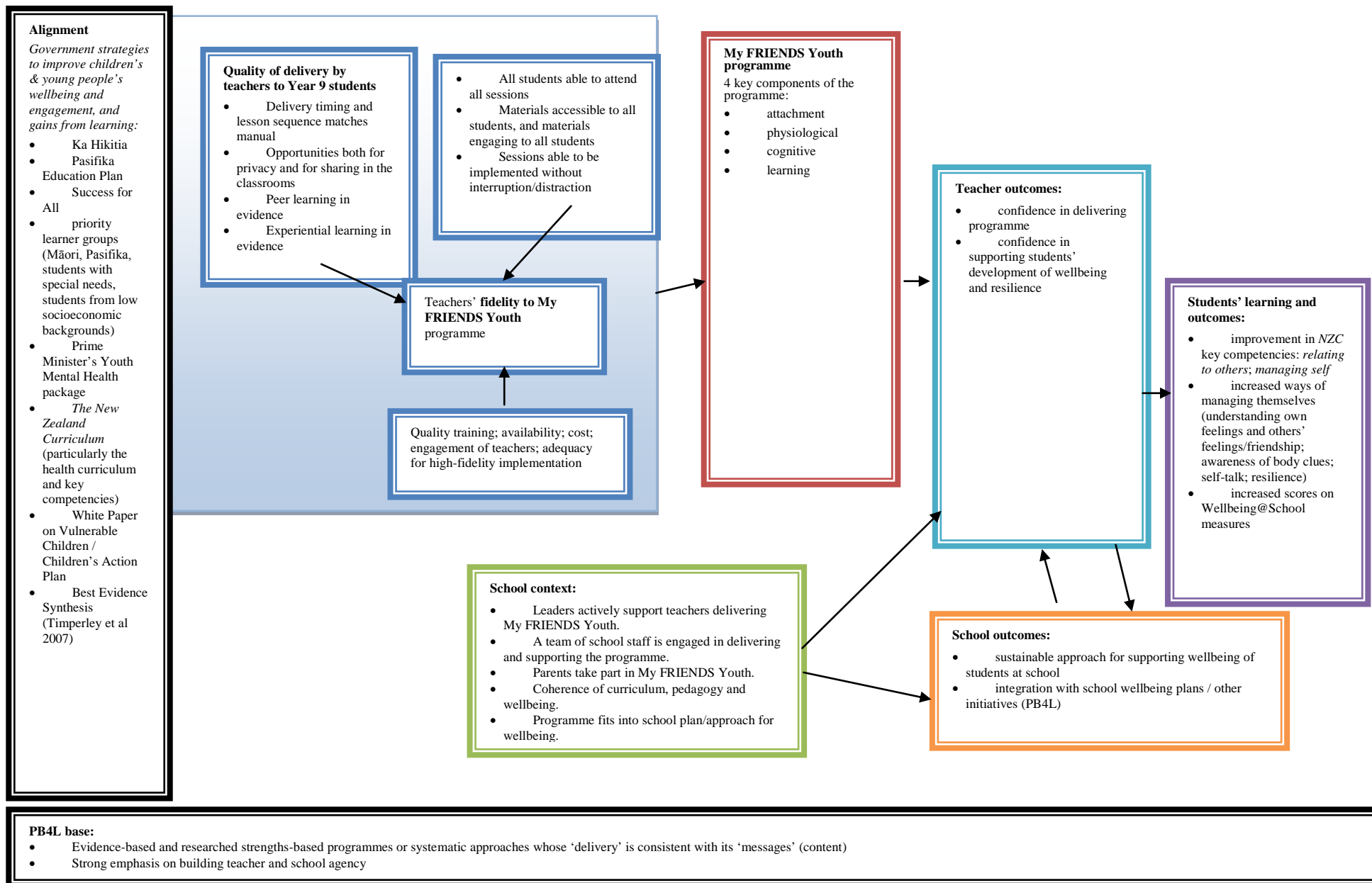
The evaluation continued in 2014, with 26 schools implementing the programme with their Year 9 students. The 2014 evaluation activities are the focus of this report. The next chapter describes the methods used in the evaluation in 2014 and the range of data sources drawn on for this report.

## **How My FRIENDS Youth is intended to work**

A theory of change was developed at the start of the evaluation in 2013 (see Figure 1). This shows how the programme is intended to work, the conditions that need to be in place, and what needs to happen for the programme to achieve its short-term outcomes. The desired outcomes for teachers, schools and students are shown on the right-hand side of the figure.

The theory of change guided decisions about who was spoken to during the evaluation, and the questions asked in surveys and qualitative interviews.

Figure 1 Theory of change for My FRIENDS Youth: short-term outcomes



## **This report**

This final evaluation report draws together multiple sources of data to answer the six evaluation questions, providing the Ministry of Education and other stakeholders with evidence about the implementation and short-term outcomes of My FRIENDS Youth in 26 New Zealand secondary schools.

After a description of the methodology and methods used, it reports on students’ experiences and outcomes (chapter 3). Implementation is the focus of chapter 4, discussing teachers’ engagement and enactment of the programme, followed by discussion of the New Zealand educational and cultural context in relation to My FRIENDS Youth (chapter 5). Chapter 6 discusses the evidence from across the report to identify issues for consideration.





## 2. Methodology

This chapter outlines the methodological approach used in evaluating the implementation and short-term outcomes of My FRIENDS Youth in 2014. Given the need both to explore the extent to which changes occurred, and to understand at a personal and individual level how the programme affected students and their teachers, this evaluation used mixed-methods with both quantitative and qualitative measures (see Tables 1 and 2). One aspect of this was a qualitative case study across five school sites.

Tables 1 and 2 give an overview of the data reported in this report of the 2014 trial. These included:

- case study data from interviews with staff and students in five schools
- Wellbeing@School student survey data at three points during the evaluation: the full survey before students started the programme, selected items after completing the programme, and the full survey repeated early in 2015
- a post-programme online teacher survey.

Each of these is described more fully in this chapter.

Table 1 **Case study data**

Teacher and guidance counsellor interviews	Student interviews	Principal interviews	Classroom observations and document analysis
n = 14	n = 160 32 focus groups	n = 3	Group leaders’ manual and student activity book Classroom wall My FRIENDS Youth displays, PB4L displays

Table 2 **Survey data (students and teachers)**

Pre-programme W@S student survey 2014	End-of-programme student survey 2014	Follow-up post-programme W@S student survey 2015 (Year 10)	Post-programme teacher survey
n = 2,739 26 schools	n = 2,435 22 schools	n = 2,101 20 schools	n = 31 teachers n = 16 co-ordinators 17 schools

## Case study data

Five schools that had completed or were close to completing the My FRIENDS Youth programme with their Year 9 students were invited to participate in the evaluation case study.<sup>1</sup> Researchers spent between 1 and 3 days in each school. Most visits occurred in terms 3 or 4 of 2014. The purpose of these visits was to understand at a school and individual level how the programme was being implemented and experienced by students and teachers.

### The case study schools

As part of the trial, all schools were informed by the Ministry that an evaluation was being undertaken by NZCER and that they may be invited to participate as a case study school. Schools in different contexts—including location (urban, provincial city or rural), decile, single-sex or co-educational, and schools in their first or second year of facilitating My FRIENDS Youth—were invited to be part of the case study.

All five schools approached for the case study agreed to participate, and teachers were also given the option of participating in an interview with the researchers. Students were invited to participate, and information sheets and consent forms were provided to the schools, including an information sheet for parents and the opportunity for them to request that their child not participate (opt out). (See Appendix 2 for the information sheets and consent forms).

The sites for the case study were secondary schools: four co-educational and one a girls-only school. Two were located in the North Island and three in the South Island. Three of the schools were designated Year 7–13 schools and two were Year 9–13. The decile ratings of the schools ranged from 2 through to 8, and school rolls ranged from 447 to 1,218 students. From these schools, substantial qualitative data sets were gathered through interviews with 160 students, three principals, 11 teachers, and three guidance counsellors, and six classroom observations were completed of My FRIENDS Youth sessions taking place.

### Interviews with students

The students were interviewed in 32 focus groups within the five schools (ranging from 2 to 10 groups in each school). The school co-ordinator in each school was provided with guidelines for inviting students to take part in a focus group interview (see Appendix 2). The expectation was that volunteers would be called for, but from this group we asked teachers to consider students who were:

- likely to be comfortable expressing their opinions in a group situation
- representative of the main cultural groups at the school
- a mix of boys and girls (if the school was co-educational).

School co-ordinators were also asked to consider including students with special education needs (perhaps teamed with a buddy), and a group of students who identified as Māori or Pasifika.

Focus groups had from two to seven students in a group. Some were mixed groups of Year 9 students, but others were gender-specific or for Māori students only. Year 9 and Year 10 students were interviewed in separate groups. Although the focus of this evaluation was the trial with Year 9 students experiencing the programme in 2014, in schools running the programme for the second year, Year 10 students who had experienced the programme in 2013 were also interviewed.

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<sup>1</sup> Data from these five schools were analysed as one ‘case’. The single case study is therefore used throughout this report.

In total, 130 Year 9 students and 30 Year 10 students were interviewed (see Appendix 1 for the semi-structured interview schedule). Of these 160 students, 41 percent were male and 59 percent female (see Table 3). There were more interviews with students in sites 1 and 2. The interviews were audio recorded in all but two groups, where at least one student within the group chose not to be audiotaped.

Table 3 **Number of boys and girls interviewed across five school sites**

Site	Male	Female	Subtotal
1 Year 9	17	16	33
Year 10	10	15	25
2 Year 9	23	36	59
3 Year 9	8	8	16
Year 10	3	2	5
4 Year 9	5	4	9
5 Year 9		13	13
No. of students	66	94	160

## Document analysis

Documents from the five sites within the case study, and the My FRIENDS Youth documents (the *Group Leaders’ Manual for Youth* and the *Activity Book for Youth*) formed part of the analysis. Classroom wall displays and school PB4L displays were incorporated into the analysis when further information was required, or when data from student and teachers needed to be placed in the context of the source.

## Wellbeing@School student survey data

Wellbeing@School (Intermediate and Secondary version) is a 58-item student survey, designed to be used by schools as part of a self-review process. This survey provides a series of statements for students to respond to on a four-point Likert scale, where they indicate their level of agreement to statements such as: “I can stand up for myself in a calm way” and “I feel I belong at school”. Although these items do not specifically relate to the My FRIENDS Youth programme, the survey examines students’ social wellbeing generally. The survey explores students’ perceptions of themselves at school, their teachers, their peers, and their view of how they deal with issues (such as being hassled, or when they have a problem). Therefore, it is a relevant measure, and a positive outcome on this scale could be indirectly linked to what could be expected from a successful My FRIENDS Youth experience.

For this evaluation, the full Wellbeing@School student survey was completed by 2,739 students in all 26 schools prior to them starting the programme, and then again by 2,101 students from 20 schools early in 2015, when these same students were in Year 10. The pre-programme administration occurred in terms 1 or 2 of 2014, before Year 9 students had experienced the My FRIENDS Youth programme. The follow-up post-programme administration of the full student survey occurred in the first few weeks of term 1 2015, when the students were in Year 10. The number of students completing these surveys is shown in Table 4.

In addition, a shorter survey (see Appendix 1) was completed by 2,435 students as they finished My FRIENDS Youth (for most students this was late in term 3 or in term 4 2014). This survey comprised 13 items from Wellbeing@School

selected because they had the closest alignment to the content of My FRIENDS Youth and had shown shifts in some schools when tested with the 2013 trial schools. Three relate to the school-wide aspect, four to the teaching and learning aspect, five to the prosocial student culture aspect, and one to the community partnership aspect.

This short survey also included three questions about students’ views on My FRIENDS Youth:

- I am using strategies that I learnt from the My FRIENDS Youth programme
- The My FRIENDS Youth programme was worth doing.
- What I have learnt from the My FRIENDS youth programme will be useful for me in the future.

As shown in Table 2, there were 2,435 student responses to this short end-of-programme survey with the specific questions about My FRIENDS Youth. Of those, 2,417 provided gender data (918 males and 1,499 females). The students also identified their ethnicity and could choose more than one option; therefore the total number of ethnicity responses (2,973) is more than the number of students. These responses showed the representation of ethnicities as NZ European (55 percent), Māori (22 percent), Pasifika (6.5 percent), Asian (7 percent), and other (9.5 percent) (Table 4).

Table 4 **Representation of Year 9 students, by ethnicity and gender**

Year 9 males ( n = 918)					
NZ European	Māori	Pasifika	Asian	Other	TOTAL
589	252	76	81	108	1,106
Year 9 females ( n = 1,499)					
NZ European	Māori	Pasifika	Asian	Other	TOTAL
1,058	403	116	116	174	1,869

\* A student could indicate more than one ethnicity. Therefore the 2,973 responses are from 2,435 students.

## Post-programme teacher survey data

A post-programme teacher survey was emailed to schools (via My FRIENDS Youth school co-ordinators) as they completed the programme from term 3 2014 onwards. This online survey remained open for teachers to complete until early February 2015. At least one teacher responded from 17 of the 26 schools (65 percent) trialling the programme. In total, 33 teachers completed the survey; 16 had the co-ordination role for the programme in their school, and 31 had facilitated the programme.

## Limitations of this evaluation

### Response rates

Pre-programme student survey data were available from all 26 schools, but not all schools provided student survey data after students completed the programme: end-of-programme student data were received from 22 of the 26 schools, and post-programme Year 10 student data were received from 20 of the 26 schools. However, we gathered at least some post-programme student survey data from 24 schools—only two schools did not return either end-of-programme or post-programme student data.

Teachers from 17 of the 26 schools responded to the post-programme teacher survey. One of these respondents was the school My FRIENDS Youth co-ordinator and the only representative from their school but did not directly facilitate the

programme, so much of this report is based on teacher responses from 16 schools. As a result, this report does not include information about the implementation of My FRIENDS Youth in nine schools. It is possible that implementation in these schools differed in some way from the schools that did provide teacher survey data.

Only one school opted out of the post-programme evaluative activities entirely by not returning end-of-programme or post-programme student surveys or teacher surveys.

### Timing of student surveys

Administering the Wellbeing@School student survey at the end of a school year can lead to lower ratings because of student lack of interest and fatigue. Unlike student achievement scores, which rise during the academic year, there is a well-documented trend for non-cognitive scores to dip at the end of the year (cited in Burgon & Ferral, 2014). To avoid this, the evaluation included the short end-of-programme student survey for students to complete close to the end of the My FRIENDS Youth programme (usually in term 3 or early 4), and the full Wellbeing@School student survey was administered early in 2015, when students were in Year 10.

This avoided the end-of-year dip, but ideally the survey would have been completed later in term 1, when students were more settled at school, or in term 2. Also, there is a tendency for students’ views of school to get more negative in the early years of secondary school (i.e. between Year 9 to 10). This tendency needs to be considered when comparing surveys completed part way through Year 9 with surveys completed early in Year 10.



### 3. Students’ experiences and outcomes

I find it quicker to get to sleep at nights. By just focusing on one thing—that worked. (Year 9 student)

It does change you. As a person. Cliché but it does. It explains to you, different things. (Year 9 student)

Learning to act sportsmanlike and not challenging others ... learning to appreciate things more ... It [plastic pancake activity] helped you to think from other people’s point of view and think about others at the same time as yourself ... learning the word ‘empathy’ really helped me to understand how other people feel and being in their shoes. (Year 10 student)

I feel that the students have a sense that people care, and they should care too ... about themselves. (Guidance counsellor)

The world is changing rapidly [and] so are the skills to be able to cope with the changing environment that they’re living in. (Teacher)

This chapter outlines the findings on the students’ experiences and outcomes from their participation in the My FRIENDS Youth programme. It specifically addresses two of the evaluation questions:

- Has My FRIENDS Youth increased wellbeing (as measured through Wellbeing@School) in young people?
- How does My FRIENDS Youth impact on priority learners?

This chapter draws on all sources of student and teacher data in this evaluation: the 160 students interviewed across the five schools in the case study, their My FRIENDS Youth teachers, guidance counsellors and principals, the post-programme teacher survey, and the Wellbeing@School student survey data from before the programme (pre-programme), soon after completing it (end-of-programme), and follow-up early in 2015 (post-programme).

The majority of students were positive about their My FRIENDS Youth programme experience. There was a small gender and ethnic difference showing that Māori and Pasifika students rated the programme slightly higher than their New Zealand European peers, and girls rated it slightly higher than boys.

#### Students’ experiences of the programme

When asked to describe the programme in one word, words representing negative connotations were not used and the most cited words were: helpful, good, educational, boring but helpful, safe, fun, teaching, learning, different, encouragement and confidence. Two Māori students gave their descriptions using te reo Māori and the translations provided here are the ones the students gave to the researcher: harikoa (happy), and whakahirahira (important).

In the case study interviews, 160 students were asked to rate My FRIENDS Youth on a 1–5 scale (5 being most positive). Responses ranged from 3 to 5, with an average of 4. This was confirmed by the survey data when the students

responded to a four-point Likert scale asking their level of agreement/disagreement to the statement<sup>2</sup> “The My FRIENDS Youth programme was worth doing”. Of the 2,238 students who responded to this item, 62 percent either agreed or strongly agreed that it was worth doing (Table 5).

**Table 5 Students’ responses to whether the My FRIENDS Youth programme was worth doing (n = 2,238)**

		Strongly disagree	Disagree	Agree	Strongly agree	Summary data: agree/strongly agree
		%	%	%	%	%
NZ European	Male	17	29	45	9	54
	Female	9	28	54	10	64
	Total	12	28	50	9	59
Māori	Male	14	24	52	9	61
	Female	8	29	54	9	63
	Total	10	27	53	9	62
Pasifika	Male	7	28	49	16	65
	Female	6	18	62	14	76
	Total	7	21	57	15	72
Asian	Male	14	25	43	17	60
	Female	10	29	52	9	61
	Total	12	28	48	12	60
Other	Male	19	22	46	13	59
	Female	11	30	46	13	59
	Total	14	27	46	13	59
Overall	Male	14	28	47	10	57
	Female	9	27	54	11	65
	Total	11	27	51	11	62

<sup>2</sup> It is important to note that the student survey, based on a four-point Likert scale, was designed to elicit a forced choice response from the student. The scale did not offer the student an option to provide a neutral response.



## Gender and ethnicity

More girls than boys agreed or strongly agreed that the programme was worth doing (65 percent of the girls and 57 percent of the boys). In the case study there was a tendency for the girls to express enjoyment of the programme, whereas the boys tended to express factual accounts of the programme. The classroom observations in two schools suggested that the boys did not attend to the sessions in the same way as the girls, although this does not mean they were not listening and learning. The case study interviews with teachers supported this. Boys preferred any of the physical or active activities, and also were more likely to want to ‘move on’ rather than deliberate over a point. As the Wellbeing@School data show, boys did feel they had been ‘taught’ through the programme, in particular to manage feelings and think about other students’ feelings.

*The girls have a lot more deeper thinking; whether the boys have it and don’t want to share or it’s a lack of maturity; maybe it’s a bit of both. (Teacher)*

A focus group consisting only of boys illustrated that boys did see value in the programme:

Boy (B): It kind of sounds like this FRIENDS programme is a bit of rehab.

Researcher (R): Is it?

B: Yeah that’s what it sounds like, if it’s like, trying to make us better people.

R: Is that good or bad?

B: Pretty good ... yeah it’s good.

Māori students responded slightly higher than their NZ European peers (62 percent compared with 59 percent), and the Pasifika respondents (in particular the girls) were more in agreement that the programme was worth doing (72 percent).<sup>3</sup>

## Did the students learn new strategies, and use them?

Over half the students (56 percent) agreed or strongly agreed with the statement “I am using strategies that I learnt from the My FRIENDS Youth programme” (see Table 6). However, as this section describes, in the case study students were more likely to express awareness of having learned new strategies than be able to say how they had used them.

## Gender and ethnicity

A higher proportion of girls (60 percent) than boys (52 percent) reported that they used the strategies. There were only slight differences across the different ethnic groups, which suggests that all students experienced the programme, as facilitated by their teachers, as having relevance for them. Māori (57 percent) and Pasifika (62 percent) students overall agreed or strongly agreed that they used the strategies, which was higher than the NZ European students (55 percent). The Asian students rated their use of the strategies from the My FRIENDS Youth even higher (64 percent).

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<sup>3</sup> Tests for statistical significance were not carried out because the group of My FRIENDS Youth trial schools was a small, non-random, sample of New Zealand secondary schools.

Table 6 **Students’ use of strategies from the My FRIENDS Youth programme (n = 2,250)**

		Strongly disagree	Disagree	Agree	Strongly agree	Summary data: agree/strongly agree
		%	%	%	%	%
NZ European	Male	16	35	42	7	49
	Female	8	33	53	6	59
	Total	11	34	49	6	55
Māori	Male	14	34	46	6	52
	Female	9	33	50	8	58
	Total	11	33	49	8	57
Pasifika	Male	13	32	37	18	55
	Female	10	22	57	10	67
	Total	11	26	49	13	62
Asian	Male	12	24	54	11	65
	Female	10	26	56	8	64
	Total	11	25	55	9	64
Other	Male	19	27	44	10	54
	Female	9	32	51	8	59
	Total	12	30	49	9	58
Overall	Male	16	33	44	8	52
	Female	9	32	53	7	60
	Total	11	32	49	7	56

### The difference between learning strategies and using them

These data show that over half the students believed they used the strategies directly linked to the My FRIENDS Youth programme. In the case study data it was notable that students reported having an awareness of the strategies but they did not always use them. There was a difference between what students reported they learned and what they reported they used. Therefore, although a level of awareness of a variety of strategies to support their wellbeing and build resilience was evident, it was harder to apply these strategies in ‘real life’. A typical example is a side comment by boys within one of the focus groups. One of the boys (B2) has, in jest, called his mate a fatty:

B1 (laughing): You called me fatty.

B2: You called me a girl, boy.

R: Some is jokey stuff isn’t it? How do you know if you’re hurting someone?

B1: Their voice gets deeper, and you can see it in their face...

They were then asked what they might do in such a situation where they have been hurt by a comment.

B1: And then I do it back to them.

R: Is that what it [My FRIENDS Youth] teaches you to do?

B1: No

R: What does it teach you to do?

B1: Not to do it back to them ... but I just can’t help it.

Another example taken from a focus group involving girls shows the same theme: the challenge of using strategies learned through the programme. One of the girls had explained that she knew she should count to 10 to break an anger cycle when she gets angry at home, especially with her mother.

G: I can’t count to 10. I mean, I can count 10 but it just won’t work.

R: So sometimes the strategies won’t work when you’re really...

G: If I’m really angry I just have to go to my room and I scream. I throw things round, I can’t leave I just have to say something back. It’s when I get told off even more because I talk back.

Even so, she later went on to say, “It’s a really good programme and it can, it can help people.”

## Teachers’ perspectives on student learning

When teachers reported on their observations of their students who had been involved in the programme, their responses generally aligned with the students’ views of what they had learned. This suggests that the students had a general sense of awareness of how they thought they were going, and that their teachers had a good knowledge of their students. Most of the teachers (78 percent) reported that students were more aware of their feelings through the programme (Table 7). Teachers also believed the programme helped students know each other better (62 percent), and that it fostered a sense of community (65 percent).

Interestingly, the Pasifika students identified learning more from the programme than teachers thought they did. Most teachers were neutral (i.e. they neither agreed nor disagreed) about whether My FRIENDS Youth made a difference for Pasifika students. Only 19 percent agreed or strongly agreed. This compares with 62 percent of Pasifika students who agreed or strongly agreed that they used strategies from the programme. There was a greater alignment between the teachers’ responses that the programme made a difference for Māori students (55 percent) and the percentage of Māori students who reported using the strategies (57 percent). Few teachers thought the programme made a difference for students with special education needs: only 16 percent agreed (and no teacher strongly agreed). This may require further investigation, because it is unclear whether these teachers had students with special education needs in their Year 9 classroom and observed they did not benefit, or simply hypothesised that these students would not benefit.

Table 7 **Teachers reporting on the difference they think My FRIENDS Youth has made for their students<sup>4</sup> (n = 31)**

	Strongly disagree	Disagree	Neither	Agree	Strongly agree	Summary data: agree/strongly agree
	%	%	%	%	%	%
FRIENDS has helped students know each other better	0	3	32	42	20	62
As a result of FRIENDS students support each other	0	0	45	45	7	52
FRIENDS has fostered a sense of community	0	3	29	58	7	65
Students are more aware of their feelings	0	0	19	68	10	78
Students use strategies they have learnt from FRIENDS	0	0	52	42	3	45
Students are better at reading body cues	0	0	52	39	6	45
Students are better at problem solving	0	3	58	26	10	36
Too early to say whether FRIENDS has made a difference	0	10	32	45	10	55
FRIENDS has made a difference for Māori students	0	0	42	45	10	55
FRIENDS has made a difference for Pasifika students	3	7	65	16	3	19
FRIENDS has made a difference for students with special education needs	3	10	61	16	0	16

<sup>4</sup> Percentages do not sum to 100, because between one and three teachers did not respond to each item.

### The sessions most identified by students

Analysis of the student interviews showed that the way students referred to My FRIENDS Youth and the strategies they discussed were mainly evident within three of the ten My FRIENDS Youth sessions. These were sessions 2, 4 and 5: “Feelings: understanding feelings in ourselves and others and empathy for others’ feelings”; “Learning to relax: become more aware of yourself, others and your environment”; and “Attention training, Introduction to inner helpful thoughts: changing unhelpful thinking to helpful thinking” (see Table 8). This is consistent with the teacher data: 78 percent of teachers agreed or strongly agreed that students were more aware of their feelings (session 2), but only 36 percent of teachers agreed or strongly agreed that students were better at problem solving as a result of the My FRIENDS Youth programme (related sessions that students seldom referred to in sessions 7 and 8).

Table 8 **Overview of the 10 sessions of My FRIENDS Youth**

Session	Learning objectives
Session 1	Introduction to the group
Session 2	Feelings: understanding feelings in ourselves and others and empathy for others’ feelings
Session 3	Let’s focus on confidence
Session 4	Learning to relax: become more aware of yourself, others and your environment
Session 5	Attention training. Introduction to inner helpful thoughts: changing unhelpful thinking to helpful thinking.
Session 6	More attention training and thought challengers
Session 7	Exploring solutions and coping step plans
Session 8	Using problem solving and building support teams
Session 9	How to make our interactions with others a success: the skills for happy relationships
Session 10	Using the FRIENDS skills to help ourselves and others

Session 2, which dealt with feelings, and session 4, on relaxation, were the ones the students talked about most. The sessions were facilitated in slightly different ways across the school contexts, but the students understood the principles behind them. In one school the relaxation session took place on the school marae, and one of the boys specifically mentioned that he liked the marae context “because it’s quiet”. Another noted:

*It was quite cool though, because our teacher, for the relaxing part of it, taught us how to relax, she took us down to the marae. We did it down there and it was quite cool. (Student)*

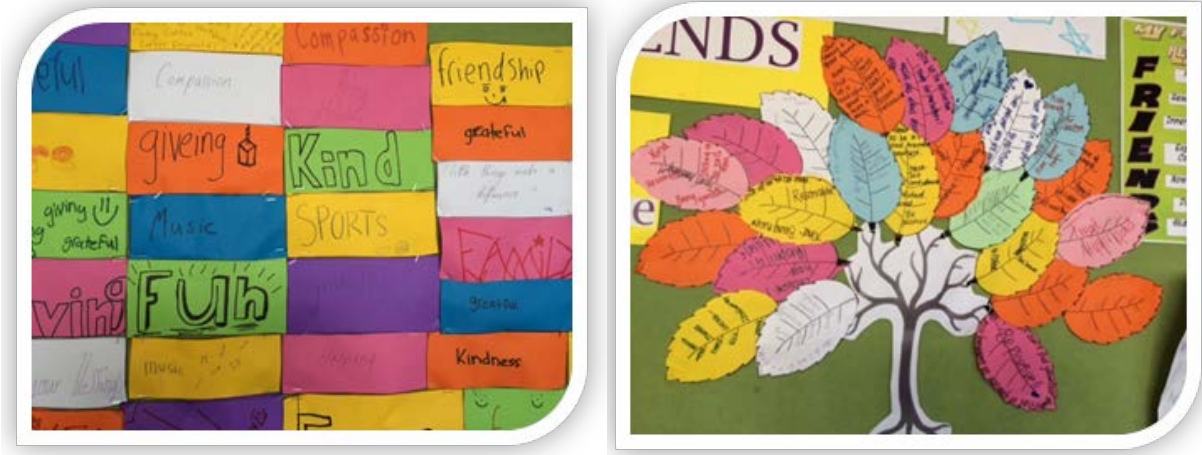
In another school the ideas of mindfulness and meditation were used, and as one student reported,

*When we were doing meditation we lay down and we closed our eyes. And were told one thing to focus on. We felt so relaxed we could fall asleep. (Student)*

The 160 students interviewed across five schools talked about specific “things they did” during the My FRIENDS Youth experience and identified a number of practical classroom-based activities that resonated with them. The types of My FRIENDS Youth activities identified by students included the balloons, relaxation techniques, massage, mindfulness, the happy movie, and an activity called Cape Reinga to Bluff (in this last one the students were not entirely sure what the message was, although they all mentioned teamwork). The coping step plan was mentioned,

although often students who did talk about this found it a challenge. They all mentioned that the programme involved “feelings”. This was also represented on one of the classroom walls (Picture 1).

**Picture 1      Feeling words (session 2) displayed on the classroom wall**



One of the concepts most commonly referred to was “the bucket filler”. This activity is part of session 2, although not a formal activity in the My FRIENDS Youth programme. The exercise is based on the ideas from a picture book originally designed for children aged 4 to 9 years (McCloud, 2006). This is based on cognitive behavioural principles, where the bucket represents the mind and mental or emotional state. The idea is that when the bucket is full, the child will feel happy, secure, calm and generally positive about him/herself. When the bucket is empty, they may be in a state of negative agitation, sad or anxious. The story is recommended in My FRIENDS Youth, and the teachers presented it to the students either through telling the story with the use of the picture book, or, as some students reported, by watching the story on YouTube.

The students reported this activity in a range of ways: “the filler bucket”, “bucket dipper”, “that bucket filler”. They noted that they could fill each other’s buckets through positive comments, and that bullying and detrimental comments to a peer would potentially “empty” that child’s bucket, and effectively they (the bully) would be a bucket dipper. This comment from a Year 9 girl explains this:

Girl (G): You’re supposed to fill someone’s bucket. Which means you pay them a compliment. Say something nice.

Researcher (R): So has anyone asked how full is your bucket?

G: My bucket’s full every day.

R: Can you tell if their bucket is not filled?

G: They’d be glum. They wouldn’t have that spark in their eyes.

Students reported that when saying unkind things or being disrespectful to others, they would be emptying someone else’s bucket and they themselves would not necessarily fill their own in the process. This idea resonated with the students, and they were able to explain the principle and provide illustrations of how it might play out.

*You empty their bucket if you’re mean to someone but it doesn’t make your bucket any fuller.* (Student)

*When you see someone being mean you say, “Don’t dip!”* (Student)

*Everyone has a bucket. How you react can make them happy, if you are positive and if you dip you are negative and let someone else down.* (Student)

Some students reported that they had experiences of where teachers could be bucket dippers. The teachers and guidance counsellors also referred to this metaphor, and a guidance counsellor gave an example of where she used it in her work with senior students who had not taken part in the My FRIENDS Youth programme.

The bucket-filling exercise was one of the few aspects of the My FRIENDS Youth programme that students did share with their parents, and teachers used this metaphor with their students outside of My FRIENDS Youth sessions as well:

*Yeah I told them [parents] a few things about it, like we talked about the bucket filling activity.* (Student)

*I always said to students be kind, but now if I see unkind behaviour I will say ‘that is bucket dipping’ or if they are doing good, ‘you’re bucket filling!’* (Teacher)

The teacher in one of the schools had a visible display reinforcing the concept, and illustrating for the students that “We are a bucket filling classroom” (Picture 2).

Picture 2 **Picture display on the classroom wall (bucket filling)**



Another session that was clearly recalled by the students was the idea of substituting negative, unhelpful thoughts with positive, helpful thoughts. As part of the CBT principle, this is based on the notion that if thoughts influence action and behaviours, then the first step in creating positive behaviour change is through generating positive self-talk. This is part of the ‘I’ in FRIENDS (inner helpful thoughts), which Barrett (2012b) introduces as “the idea that positive thoughts are a powerful way to change negative inner thoughts and self-talk” (p. 50). In this session the major learning outcome is identified as enabling students to “understand the concept of positive attention and self-talk”.

Picture 3 **Traffic lights on classroom wall**

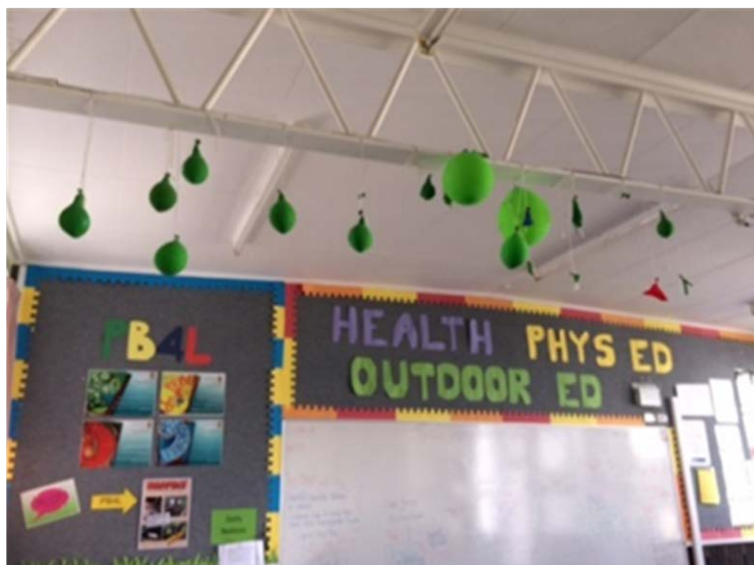


Students referred to this idea in two ways: traffic lights, as indicated on their classroom wall (Picture 3), and an activity with green and red balloons. This latter activity involved negative thoughts written down by students on red balloons, and positive thoughts on green balloons. The red balloons were popped, and the green ones remained and were placed on the classroom rafters. Even when these balloons started to deflate, the students retained the message (Picture 4).

*The balloons were fun and great to have on the ceiling, even if they are deflated now, wrinkly and hard to read. (Student)*

*We did the balloons and popped your negative thoughts away. The green ones had quotes on them. (Student)*

Picture 4 **Green balloons on the classroom rafters**

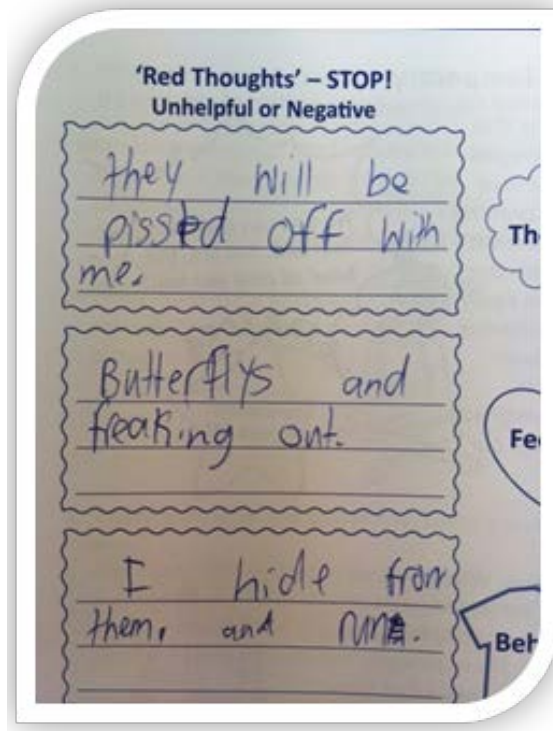


Students followed up on group-based activities by writing in their activity books (Picture 5). In session 5, where they concentrated on changing unhelpful thinking to helpful thinking, students identified their own red thoughts. In one example, students were asked to respond to a scenario where they bought a new T-shirt and their friends thought it was



“lame”. They were asked what their red thoughts were, and as the example below shows, students could relate it to their thoughts, feelings and associated behaviour. As this example also illustrates, students engaged with the material in their own way and using their own language.

Picture 5 **Red thoughts exercise in activity book (session 5)**



## Is the programme future-focused for students?

Students reported using some of the strategies identified through the My FRIENDS Youth programme that they ‘knew about’, but for some students there was too much of a discrepancy between the ideal world where they could walk away from a problem, and that of their own experiences, where in the heat of the moment—at home and at school—they acted in ways they knew would escalate a situation.

However, students did believe that what they learned from My FRIENDS Youth would be useful in the future (see Table 9). This was the most highly rated item for students, where 69 percent either agreed or strongly agreed that what they learnt from the My FRIENDS Youth programme would be useful in the future. Consistent with the other survey findings, there was a gender difference in experiences of the programme: 72 percent of the girls either agreed or strongly agreed, and 65 percent of the boys either agreed or strongly agreed with the statement. Māori (71 percent) and Pasifika (73 percent) students overall rated this item more strongly than their NZ European peers (67 percent). The Asian students also rated their learning from the My FRIENDS Youth highly for the future (72 percent).

Table 9 **Students’ views on whether My FRIENDS Youth would be useful in the future (n = 2,241)**

		Strongly disagree	Disagree	Agree	Strongly agree	Summary data: agree/strongly agree
		%	%	%	%	%
NZ European	Male	15	24	48	14	62
	Female	7	22	56	14	70
	Total	10	23	53	14	67
Māori	Male	11	19	53	17	70
	Female	7	22	56	15	71
	Total	9	21	55	16	71
Pasifika	Male	10	23	38	29	67
	Female	6	18	50	27	77
	Total	7	20	45	28	73
Asian	Male	9	17	49	25	74
	Female	7	21	55	17	72
	Total	8	19	52	20	72
Other	Male	18	22	47	14	61
	Female	11	19	53	18	71
	Total	13	20	51	16	67
Overall	Male	13	22	49	16	65
	Female	7	21	56	16	72
	Total	9	22	53	16	69

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## Has My FRIENDS Youth increased wellbeing, as measured through Wellbeing@School?

As well as reporting how students experienced the programme, whether they were using strategies now or thought they would in the future, and whether they thought My FRIENDS Youth was worth doing, we measured whether scores had increased on the Wellbeing@School survey.

Wellbeing@School explores student perceptions of five aspects or dimensions of school life. For this evaluation, the full Wellbeing@School student survey was completed by 2,739 students in all 26 schools prior to their starting the programme, and then again by 2,101 students from 20 schools early in 2015, when the students were in Year 10.

In addition, a shorter survey (see Appendix 1) was completed by students at the end of the My FRIENDS Youth programme. This survey comprised 13 items from Wellbeing@School selected because they had the closest alignment to the content of My FRIENDS Youth and had shown shifts in some schools when tested with the 2013 trial schools. This short survey also included the three questions about students’ views on My FRIENDS Youth reported earlier in this chapter.

This section focuses on reporting these 13 items, for which there are three data points: pre-programme, end-of-programme, and follow-up post-programme. It also reports on the shifts in the five Wellbeing@School aspects from the full survey.

Data are reported at the My FRIENDS Youth cohort level (i.e. the whole cohort of Year 9 students in the 26 schools). Any differences in patterns for boys and girls, and Māori and Pasifika students, are also discussed.

### Shifts on key items with most alignment to the programme

#### *Shifts between pre-programme and end-of-programme*

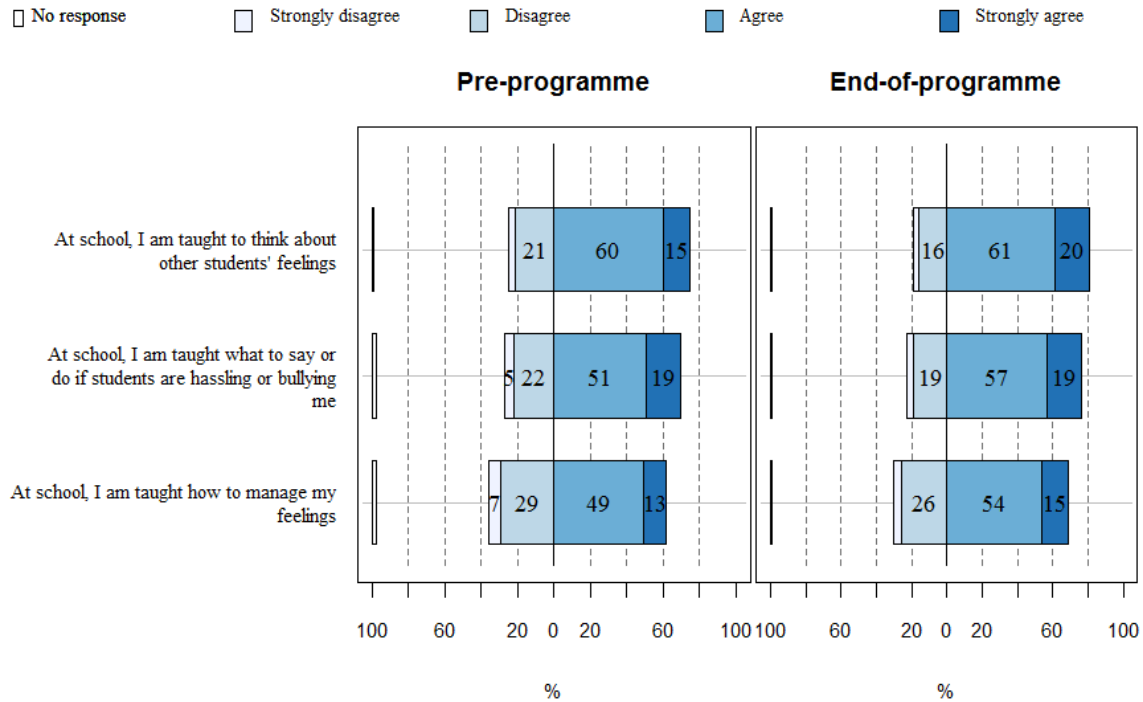
For the 13 key items, student survey data at three time points were analysed: pre-programme, end-of-programme and post-programme. This analysis showed that the biggest shifts were between pre-programme and end-of-programme (i.e. the survey the students completed in Year 9, soon after finishing My FRIENDS Youth). Data for all 13 items from these two time points are presented in Appendix 3.

The overall pattern was an increase in the percentage of students who agreed with each item. Nine of the 13 items had an increase in the percentage of students who agreed/strongly agreed (an increase of between two and seven percentage points). The other four items saw either no change in the percentage of students who agreed or disagreed or a slight decrease.

Of particular note is that the three items that saw the largest shift from pre-programme to end-of-programme are the three that refer to students having been *taught* something (see Figure 2). This could be associated with them having just completed the My FRIENDS Youth programme and having been *taught* by their health and physical education teacher. These items are as follows.

- “At school I am taught to think about other students’ feelings” (75 percent of students agreed or strongly agreed in the pre-programme survey; 81 percent agreed or strongly agreed in the end-of-programme survey).
- “At school I am taught what to say or do if students are hassling or bullying me” (70 percent of students agreed or strongly agreed in the pre-programme survey; 76 percent agreed or strongly agreed in the end-of-programme survey).
- “At school I am taught how to manage my feelings” (62 percent of students agreed or strongly agreed in the pre-programme survey; 69 percent agreed or strongly agreed in the end-of-programme survey).

Figure 2 **Wellbeing@School student survey comparison between pre-programme and end-of-programme ratings on three items showing the most shift**



*Were shifts maintained for Year 10 students post-programme?*

When students completed the survey in their first few weeks of Year 10, most of the 13 items returned to their pre-programme levels. Although positive shifts evident more immediately after the My FRIENDS Youth programme were not maintained, a return to pre-programme levels contrasted with the expected pattern of students’ views of school getting more negative as they get older (Darr, Ferral, Boyd, Shih & Fisher, 2012). This suggests that students could be maintaining positive perceptions related to My FRIENDS Youth. These data also support the need to facilitate the booster sessions to ensure that end-of-programme gains are maintained and built on. Some schools were already planning to complete the booster sessions in Year 10.

*Gender differences*

An interesting pattern emerges when looking separately at the responses from boys and girls. On the three items where the largest increase is seen in pre-programme and end-of-programme responses (“At school I am taught what to say or do if students are hassling me or bullying me”; “At school I am taught how to manage my feelings”), this appears to be due to more boys responding that they agreed or strongly agreed, as follows.

- “At school I am taught how to manage my feelings” (53 percent of boys agreed or strongly agreed in the pre-programme survey; 69 percent agreed or strongly agreed in the end-of-programme survey).
- “At school I am taught to think about other students’ feelings” (60 percent of boys agreed or strongly agreed in the pre-programme survey; 77 percent agreed or strongly agreed in the end-of-programme survey).
- “At school I am taught what to say or do if students are hassling or bullying me” (40 percent of boys agreed or strongly agreed in the pre-programme survey; 76 percent agreed or strongly agreed in the end-of-programme survey).

This is particularly interesting in view of the earlier findings reported in this chapter, where boys were less likely than girls to say that the programme was worth doing or that they were using the strategies. These data show that the boys do recognise they are taught aspects of wellbeing at school, and perhaps a combination of the wall displays, the link between the My FRIENDS Youth programme and their teacher, and the structured sessions created an ongoing visible

reminder of this. Boys also have more need of programmes such as My FRIENDS Youth as they are almost twice as likely to be diagnosed with emotional and behavioural problems as girls, with boys aged 10–14 having the highest rate (Ministry of Health, 2013).

### *Ethnic differences*

The same three items were analysed looking at responses from Māori students in comparison with all other students. Although the percentage of Māori students who agreed or strongly agreed with each of these three items did increase, it was not as large as the increase for non-Māori students.

However, the analysis for Pasifika students did show that the increase in positive responses for these items was in part because of a larger increase in the percentage of Pasifika students who agreed or strongly agreed, as follows.

- “At school I am taught how to manage my feelings” (58 percent of Pasifika students agreed or strongly agreed in the pre-programme survey; 64 percent agreed or strongly agreed in the end-of-programme survey).
- “At school I am taught to think about other students’ feelings” (72 percent of Pasifika students agreed or strongly agreed in the pre-programme survey; 80 percent agreed or strongly agreed in the end-of-programme survey).
- “At school I am taught what to say or do if students are hassling or bullying me” (66 percent of Pasifika students agreed or strongly agreed in the pre-programme survey; 76 percent agreed or strongly agreed in the end-of-programme survey).

### *The school level*

Certain schools had a much larger increase than others in the percentage of students who agreed or strongly agreed with each of the three “At school I am taught” items. This suggests that some schools have models of practice that could be shared.

Of the 22 schools for which both pre-programme and end-of-programme student survey data are available, 16 schools had an increase of more than 10 percentage points for at least one of these items. Five schools had an increase of more than 10 percentage points for all three items. The greatest increase was a school where, pre-programme, 57 percent of students agreed or strongly agreed that “At school I am taught how to manage my feelings”, and at the end of the My FRIENDS Youth programme 86 percent of students agreed or strongly agreed with this statement, an increase of 29 percentage points. The remaining six schools showed smaller increases in the percentage of students who agreed or strongly agreed with these three items, or, in some situations, showed no discernible change.

The schools that had the largest increase on these three items did not necessarily maintain these shifts. The picture was mixed: for example, some dropped back to pre-programme levels, others dropped but not back down to pre-programme levels, and others maintained end-of-programme levels. This suggests that practice varies between schools and could be investigated further (e.g. are schools maintaining positive shifts using the booster sessions? Have they increased the spread of My FRIENDS Youth within the school?).

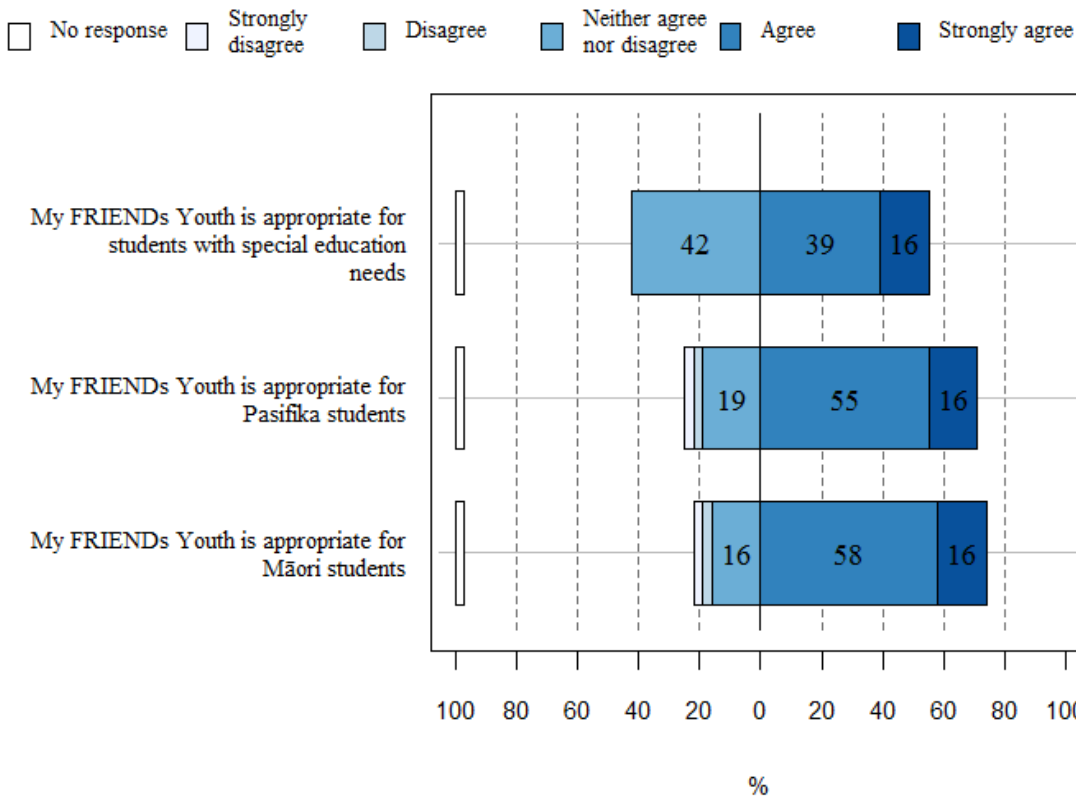
## Ability to support Māori students, Pasifika students and students with special education needs

An important question for this evaluation was to examine how My FRIENDS Youth affects priority learners. Priority learners were defined by the Ministry of Education as Māori students, Pasifika students and students with special education needs. The data in this chapter suggest that Māori and Pasifika students experienced the programme at least as positively, if not more so, than their NZ European peers.

Teachers were asked about the appropriateness of the programme for Māori students, Pasifika students and students with special education needs (see Figure 3). Around a quarter of teachers responding to the survey either responded neutrally or disagreed that the programme is appropriate for Māori or Pasifika students.

The appropriateness of the programme for students with special education needs received the lowest level of agreement of all statements (55 percent agreed / strongly agreed, and 42 percent neither agreed or disagreed). This is an area that could warrant further attention, particularly if schools and Ministry personnel work on adapting the programme further.

Figure 3 Teachers’ views on the appropriateness of the programme for priority learners



## Summary and issues for consideration

The student survey data show that the majority of students:

- use the strategies from My FRIENDS Youth
- believe that it was worth doing
- think that what they learned from the programme will be useful for them in the future.

Feedback from the case study suggests that students feel they need ongoing reminders about these approaches, the material would have been useful for them when they were younger (Years 7 and 8), and reminders would be useful when they are older.

There was a gender difference in how the students engaged with the programme. Girls found the programme less threatening than boys and tended to rate it more highly. Boys, nonetheless, reported both in the qualitative case study and in the survey that they benefited from the programme, and the Wellbeing@School student survey data showed a larger increase in the percentage of boys that agreed or strongly agreed with key items aligned with My FRIENDS Youth.

There was evidence that the My FRIENDS Youth programme supported the learning and wellbeing of priority learners in terms of Māori and Pasifika students. However, there was minimal evidence to show that students with special education needs were included in the programme, and of those teachers surveyed, only 16 percent thought the programme made a difference for these learners. As noted above, it is unclear whether these teachers had students with special education needs in their classes.

While a large proportion of students believed the programme was worth doing and that in the future they would use the strategies learned, they also recognised it was not always realistic for them to intentionally use these strategies in moments of stress. As the students identified, knowing about and using the strategies in real life were different things.

In terms of the theory of change, the data give confidence in the link between the students’ positive experiences of the programme and the programme’s intended short-term outcomes, such as students having increased skills and strategies for managing themselves and relating to others, and increased resilience. Students clearly understood what the My FRIENDS Youth programme was for and what their teachers were introducing them to. The students also had an ability to articulate a range of positive coping strategies to use during times of uncertainty or stress.

The findings show that the students were benefiting in different ways from the programme. For some, it helped them understand others in terms of reading body language and being aware of the impact of their actions on others’ feelings, and therefore behaviours. For others, it was an increase in their ability to use self-talk to change negative thoughts to positive thoughts. There was a connection between student responses and evidence of understanding and using the New Zealand key competencies, particularly in relation to *managing self* and *relating to others*.

## 4. Teachers and the enactment of the My FRIENDS Youth programme

One girl said, 'I don't do happy'. Even this is important [so I can] help them acknowledge the good things in life. Prior to that you would have noticed the girl was not happy, but not gone there. (Teacher)

It gives us [teachers] structure, it gives us another vehicle to teach some of the harder aspects ... talking about feelings, being mindful. (Teacher)

If the teacher's not enjoying it, then obviously the kids aren't as well. (Student)

It would be a great programme if we had more time to go through everything. (Teacher)

This chapter outlines the findings on the teachers' experiences and engagement with My FRIENDS Youth and how the programme was enacted within schools. It specifically addresses three of the evaluation questions:

- Was My FRIENDS Youth implemented as intended?
- What are the My FRIENDS Youth programme factors that support and hinder adherence, satisfaction and acceptability of the programme?
- Does the My FRIENDS Youth programme support teachers to manage classroom conversations about wellbeing?

Teacher engagement and confidence are important pre-conditions for teachers to implement a programme successfully and with fidelity. This chapter also focuses on other conditions that need to be met in terms of the way teachers and schools facilitate the programme, including lesson sequence, whether students participated in all sessions, and the learning experiences students were engaged in. It reports that, on the whole, My FRIENDS Youth is being implemented as intended, and by clearly engaged teachers.

The evaluation findings in this chapter build on the preliminary phase of this evaluation in 2013 (Bourke et al., 2014). In that report we noted that teachers identified the four areas they most liked about the programme: resources, content, process and structure (Table 10). Although there is some consistency with these findings, the 2014 data show that adapted 'home-grown' resources became increasingly relevant as more schools became involved and teachers networked with their colleagues facilitating the programme in other schools.



Table 10 **Factors teachers most liked about the My FRIENDS Youth programme from the preliminary study (2013 trial schools)**

Resources	Student booklets are clear; everything is in books—handout activities; relevant practice activities; workbooks that are specific to activities; the resources; pre-planned activities; students love the book; planned activities to build on; variety of activities; the practical activities for learning; a variety of activities.
Content	The emphasis on relaxation skills; focus also based on values; helping teach resiliency; helping students identify and cope with mental health issues; it focuses on things that often get neglected i.e. feelings; it promotes positive thinking and looking at the good or the learning from each situation; students can apply concepts taught throughout their lives.
Process	Discussion in class; opportunities it has opened for class discussions; promotes a safe environment to tackle sensitive issues; positive thinking; it fosters a safe and open environment for discussion.
Structure	Great structure and sequence of lessons; progression of activities; it is progressive in nature so that students build skills based on a good foundation; clearly set out; having an in-depth programme relevant to our students; the order of the lessons and flow; structured lessons; the follow-on structure of each lesson; it appears well laid out.

## Who facilitated My FRIENDS Youth in New Zealand schools?

The group leaders’ manual states that “the role of the group leader is crucial to the effectiveness of the FRIENDS programs” (Barrett, 2012b, p. 10). Co-ordinators were asked who was facilitating My FRIENDS Youth in their school in 2014. In the post-programme survey the majority of schools (13 out of 16) reported that three or more teachers facilitated the programme. These teachers were mostly likely to be teachers of health (12 schools) and physical education (12 schools). Two schools had a Year 9 dean teaching the programme, two had teachers from another curriculum area, and one had a guidance counsellor. No schools reported RTLBs were facilitating the programme.

The teacher survey results were consistent with this finding: 22 taught physical education and 22 taught health (these groups overlap: 18 selected both health and physical education, and eight taught either one or the other), six taught another curriculum area, five were deans, three were home-room teachers, one was a guidance counsellor, one was a deputy principal, and one was head of whare.

Half of the teachers responding to the survey (15 out of 31) had facilitated My FRIENDS Youth with one Year 9 class, and a quarter had facilitated the programme with four or more Year 9 classes. Although this evaluation focuses on Year 9 students, of the 16 schools where the co-ordinator completed the survey, four had also facilitated the programme with Year 10 students in 2014, and one had facilitated FRIENDS for Life with Year 8 students.

The case study schools included a combination of health and physical education teachers as facilitators, and there was one example of it being taught by the home-room teacher and another by the guidance counsellor. These three models are illustrated by scenarios in Figure 4. However, there is no evidence from the outcomes data—and it is beyond the scope of this evaluation—to suggest that the programme being facilitated by teachers with different roles or curriculum specialities led to different outcomes for students.

Figure 4 **Three scenarios illustrating how the programme was facilitated**

**Scenario 1:** In one school, My FRIENDS Youth was facilitated by health teachers for one lesson a week over two terms. This was a common model. The school had initially planned to complete the programme in term 2 but had needed to use part of term 3 as well. For 2015 the school was considering getting more flexibility in how they delivered the programme by using physical education lessons as well as health. The subject health was described as “strong” in the school, with senior classes for all NCEA levels. The My FRIENDS Youth programme had provided an opportunity for health teachers to share their work with other teachers in the school by leading a staff meeting. This had received positive feedback.

**Scenario 2:** In this school, My FRIENDS Youth was facilitated with all Year 9 students by the guidance counsellor, taking one class at a time for a term. One of the benefits identified was that the guidance counsellor was building relationships with students across the year group. She observed that, after she had facilitated the programme with them, more students were coming to her and saying they were concerned about a peer. She attributed this partly to them knowing who she was and what her role was, and partly to the discussion of at-risk behaviours and strategies in the programme itself. Students at this school said this when asked about having the guidance counsellor teach them: ‘We got to know her’, ‘People trusted her’ and ‘She was suited to it’.

**Scenario 3:** This school has a home-room model for Years 7 to 10. Home-room teachers teach core subjects, including health. The school is in its second year of facilitating the My FRIENDS Youth programme with Year 9 and 10 students, and FRIENDS for Life with Year 8 students. Home-room teachers facilitated the programme with Years 8 and 9, and in Year 10 the programme was facilitated using a mix of home-room and physical education teachers. Teachers were positive about the flexibility the home-room model gave them to spread a My FRIENDS Youth session over the week and to use the vocabulary of the programme in the wider classroom context.

## Teacher engagement

The interviews from the five school sites in the case study overwhelmingly identified a strong commitment to the My FRIENDS Youth programme by the teachers who were facilitating it, and by the guidance counsellors who were supporting the programme generally. This was consistent with the teacher survey data from 16 schools. A high proportion of teachers in the survey indicated that they used aspects of My FRIENDS Youth in their other teaching (77 percent), with only a few teachers reporting that My FRIENDS Youth made little difference to their teaching (6 percent agreed or strongly agreed). Teachers involved in teaching the programme expressed confidence in being able to do so, with 61 percent confident or very confident, and 39 percent a little confident. Teachers in the case study schools identified using the My FRIENDS Youth strategies in their own lives, with their students, colleagues, peers and families.

There were indications that teachers were adapting the programme to suit their local context and their student needs. They were also adapting it to suit their own style and pedagogical approaches, although this was not always necessary. For example, one teacher noted that she did not need to change any of her pedagogical practices and stated, “that’s maybe why I’ve adopted it [FRIENDS] so easily”. Another teacher noted, “The more you know the programme, the more you can integrate with other aspects of the curriculum, and know where certain aspects fit”.

The My FRIENDS Youth programme is based on principles consistent with *The New Zealand Curriculum* in health and physical education. The students recognised the programme as being part of their health and physical education curriculum, although they indicated that this belief came from the fact that their health and physical education teachers

were (usually) running the sessions. Nearly all teachers (90 percent) either agreed or strongly agreed that My FRIENDS Youth was compatible with the *New Zealand Curriculum* key competencies, and with the health and physical education curriculum. The teachers who had facilitated the programme identified that they would continue to run the programme (84 percent), and that in their school the principal and senior leadership supported the programme (81 percent). These aspects are discussed further in chapter 5.

The teachers and guidance counsellors focused on the development of specific skills for students to use. They were interested in the practical components of the training, and the sharing of useful home-developed (i.e. New Zealand-contextualised) activities in their network meetings. All school sites were also developing individual and unique ways to adapt the programme for their own student needs, and there was some slight variation in terms of methods and approaches. These adaptations did not seem to have an impact on programme fidelity but did suggest that New Zealand-specific amendments to the programme should be recognised.

As one guidance counsellor noted, there are many different approaches to managing behaviour, so identifying and teaching a range of strategies for students to use is important:

*I think it’s very much skills based. Teaching young people skills to cope with their feelings and their thoughts and the behaviours that result from those. And it’s letting them know that there is no set way of doing things but there are helpful ways that you can think about situations and providing strategies that they can have a go at using if they think it’s warranted. I think it’s about young people developing skills to cope with things that aren’t always easy and straightforward and also being aware of themselves and their own emotional reactions to things, so identifying their feelings and having better self-management skills around who they are and how they respond and then realizing, as people, we all respond differently to situations. There’s not always a wrong or a right way. But the impact your response has on others is pretty important to think about. (Guidance counsellor)*

While there was evidence that the My FRIENDS Youth activity book was used in the classroom sessions, neither teachers nor students viewed this as pivotal or necessary for successful engagement with the ideas in the programme. In all case study schools, the books tended to be used in only a few sessions, and often sporadically. This is discussed later in this chapter.

## **The context for teacher engagement**

### **The training component: professional learning and development (PLD) for teachers**

There is a mandatory 2-day training or professional learning and development (PLD) programme associated with the My FRIENDS Youth programme, run by accredited Ministry of Education personnel who have received additional specific training to train the teachers. The training is based on the programme structure and content and introduces the importance of the CBT principles that underpin the programme. It covers areas such as anxiety, risk and protective factors for health, emotional development, and the link between anxiety and depression. The group leaders’ manual includes an introductory section on the theoretical assumptions of the programme along with a theoretical model for the prevention of and early intervention for anxiety. The manual notes that the training is “essential” for teachers and educational professionals who are considering running the programme in a group setting. The rationale is that it enables the teachers to “become familiar with the principles, skills, and techniques in the programs and so that they are fully aware of the possibilities and challenges of the role” (Barrett, 2012b, p. 10).

All teachers in the case study schools and responding to the survey had attended the training, and for all but one teacher this was reported as the 2-day training course (Table 11). Overall, the teachers expressed a high degree of satisfaction in

terms of both the content of the training and the quality of the facilitation by the PLD providers (Ministry facilitators). The facilitators who had worked with the programme enabled teachers to “make it real”, and, as one teacher reported, “The key was, she [the facilitator] was a secondary school teacher; she had taught it before and is very approachable”.

To supplement this training, local cluster group meetings and hui were held with the teachers involved in teaching the programme. In addition, the teachers reported support from a specialist coach (61 percent), from colleagues in their own school (48 percent) or from other schools (32 percent). The majority felt they had received enough training to facilitate the My FRIENDS Youth programme in their classes (77 percent).

**Table 11 Type of training and support experienced by the teachers (n = 31)**

Type of training and support	Number of teachers	%
2-day training course	30	97
Support from specialist coach	19	61
Support from colleagues in own school	15	48
Support from colleagues in other school	10	32
Follow-up session with specialist coach	9	29
Information from MoE	7	23
One-day intro by MoE	6	19
MoE meeting with you at your school	6	19
1-day training course	1	3

Note: MoE = Ministry of Education

The training programme was also useful for guidance counsellors, even when they were not in a teaching role within the school. Typical comments included:

*Best PD I’ve had in a long time ... I went away energised. It upped my game again. (Guidance counsellor)*

*I loved the 2 days. I loved the activities. It would be good if all guidance counsellors get the training. (Guidance counsellor)*

One of the benefits of the training programme was to ensure the teachers at the school “spoke the same language” when working with their students. For this reason, teachers (and guidance counsellors) felt that more teachers would benefit from the training, even in situations where the teachers did not teach the My FRIENDS Youth programme. As one teacher reported:

*Well the next step is to do whole staff training, just to get the staff aware of the ‘language’, because at the moment, that is another disadvantage in the way we are doing this [FRIENDS] because students come from all over the school and I don’t see them again outside of the health and PE curriculum, and it’s about transferring the language to other contexts. I want to get the entire PB4L team involved with this [FRIENDS] and you may start to get that language used across the board.*

One of the principals reported that the PLD created an energy and enthusiasm among the staff who attended the training. This school was represented in the training a year earlier, where teachers came back disillusioned with

the programme. This time it was clearly evident that the training enthused the teachers enough to want to proceed with the programme:

*I don’t know what happened the second year, but whoever facilitated the training must have done a fantastic job. They were just buzzing; they could just see how they could fit it into their programme and really make a difference for our kids. (Principal)*

The follow-up sessions through cluster meetings enabled teachers to share ideas once they had commenced working with the My FRIENDS Youth programme in their classrooms. In particular, the practical nature of these meetings was valued by teachers, as they could share their adaptations and ideas with others and use collaborative problem-solving to determine how to meet the needs of their students. These meetings provided the opportunity to see beyond their classroom and create new ideas. Teachers reported the benefits of these networking opportunities:

*I reckon the hui is what has to stay or you get stuck in your bubble ... just came away a lot more energised. (Teacher)*

*MOE typed up all our work and sent out the 10 sessions ... so I have it sitting on my computer drive and I find it so useful. (Teacher)*

Staff turn-over within schools was identified as a potential threat to the programme, especially because a requirement of the programme is that My FRIENDS Youth is facilitated by a trained facilitator. These issues were raised in two of the case study schools, where teachers identified the vulnerability of the programme if trained staff leave the school. There are only a few trained and accredited people in New Zealand who can train the teachers. Registered teachers are not able to pick up the programme and use it without prior training. In part, the rationale is that this protects the programme’s fidelity.

## The My FRIENDS Youth resources



The programme has two booklets that teachers use when facilitating and teaching the programme. The first is *My FRIENDS Youth Resilience Program: Group Leaders' Manual for Youth* (Barrett, 2012b), and the second is *My FRIENDS Youth Resilience Program: Activity Book for Youth* (Barrett, 2012a), which is designed for students to use, write in and retain. The case study data showed that teachers and students initially used the booklets to support the early stages of the programme, but there was no clear evidence they had benefits for the students. Teachers believed they

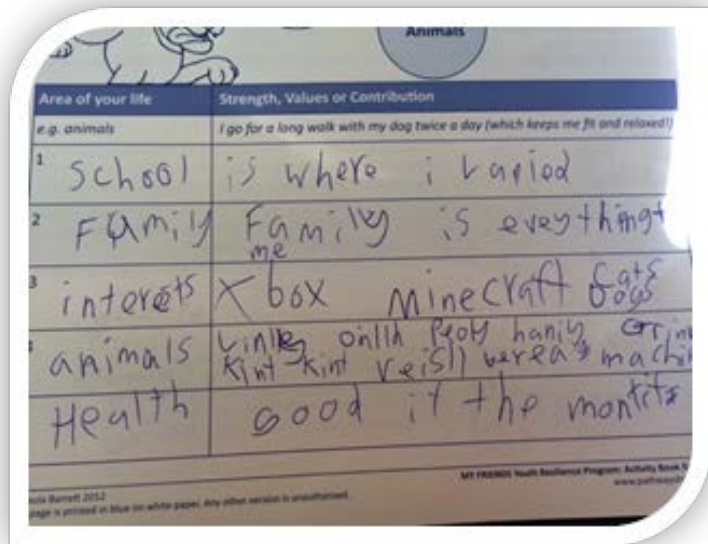
needed the booklets for the structure and support, but having run the programme once were less reliant on the booklets for further series of the My FRIENDS Youth programme.

One teacher noted that the activity book was more useful for her because she could use the same format as the students, and that after completing a My FRIENDS Youth programme she would be less likely to refer to the group leaders’ manual for further teaching sessions. The students generally did not rate the booklets highly, although there were some examples where they did access them to refer back to ideas after the My FRIENDS Youth sessions were completed. In general, the students did not use the activity book beyond the requirements of the classroom sessions, and there were few positive comments about the book by either the students or the teachers.

The language used in the book did not reflect the language of a typical 13-year-old. For example, within the activity book there were 20 “star ideas” given to praise others within the activity book (p. 83), including: “Outstanding”, “Hooray for you!”, “Now you’re flying” and “You tried hard, terrific”. In contrast, the type of language students used in the interviews depicted more “street cred” language, such as “cool” and “hanging with the bros”, along with body language—the lift of an eyebrow for a greeting.

Throughout the activity book there was space for the students to write their responses. As illustrated in the example below (Picture 6), students portrayed their ideas using their own language. Picture 7 (see later in this chapter) provides another example, highlighting the range of literacy skills. A key point here is that literacy may have been a barrier to some students engaging with the activity book, especially where more writing was required. Even so, students attempted to represent their ideas.

Picture 6 An example of student writing in the activity book



The teacher survey findings showed that the activity books were used, but that there needed to be more space in them for student input, additional room for writing reflections, more New Zealand-specific examples, and generally they needed to be more practical and interactive. Teachers reported that the activity book has “too much repetition of activities and too wordy”. Many of them reported adapting activities and using YouTube clips from the internet to supplement the work they were doing. Some teachers reported developing their own PowerPoint presentations to simplify points made in the activity book. One teacher from the survey noted, “I adapted most of the activity book, made it more practical and interactive”, and another noted, “some of the pages required a lot of reading and this was sometimes a problem for the students”. Only 22 percent of the teacher respondents agreed that the style of the activity book was appropriate for their students, and 71 percent reported they needed to adapt the resources.

As well as teachers placing less reliance on the group leaders’ manual when they became increasingly confident with the programme, there was also general agreement there was too much reading involved:

*The student book was so intensive to look at because of the layout. As the programme progresses the book comes out less and less. (Teacher)*

*Too much reading in it, and not enough spaces to write when you need to write. I can’t write small. (Student)*

*Get rid of the book and go digital ... done quicker ... no spelling worries. (Student)*

There were, however, some students who did see the benefit of the activity books beyond the work in the classroom:

*When I take it home I will cut out the CALM and stick it on my board of quotes on my wall. (Student)*

*It’s a book of advice for when you’re older. (Student)*

Given the activity books were provided by the Ministry of Education to the trial schools free of charge, the teachers were comfortable with using them. They did note, however, that if the activity books needed to be purchased for future sessions, this would cause difficulty for both school and students in terms of the associated costs. The teachers did not feel the school would fund every child to receive their own copy. In addition, teachers noted that they rewrote some aspects of the activity book or reformatted some of the activities, and felt they could easily facilitate the programme without them. The teachers also noted that the students enjoyed the beginning of the activity book, but further into the book, when the text becomes dense and more reading is required, it becomes less interesting for the students and they become disengaged with the process.

## Cultural awareness

The teachers were culturally comfortable with the programme, and one noted that she liked the *karakia* in the activity books and was comfortable with the *whakataukī* (positive sayings and proverbs) in the activity books. Although she noted that these proverbs and sayings were from the Western world, she believed the way teachers present these are the key, and that some of the students were using the ones provided to identify with, and then suggest, Māori *whakataukī*.

One participant in the case study who is Māori noted that she felt the New Zealand-based facilitators ensured the material was culturally appropriate. As she stated:

*I was glad that our presenters are New Zealanders, because when I saw the flame tree I’m going, Really? So there was acknowledgement, around that it was brought in, but so was PB4L and we can adapt, we can adapt things very well, so culturally I’m comfortable with it. (Teacher)*

Teachers were able to encourage their students to include their own culture in their responses to the programme. For one teacher this was evident in the form of using the *marae* as a context for the relaxation activities (which the students explicitly noted), and as the student in Picture 7 shows, the programme allows for identifying and foregrounding cultural values.

Picture 7      **Activity book entry from session 1**

Area of your life	Strength, Values or Contribution
e.g. animals	I go for a long walk with my dog twice a day (which keeps me fit and relaxed!)
1 Health	I do a lot of fitness, it keeps me fit.
2 Friends	I stay loyal to my friends, so it doesn't discourage anyone
3 Family	I stay close and communicate with my family. so theres no trouble
4 Hobbies/Interests	I play a lot of sports, it keeps me occupied.
5 Spirituality/Religion	I speak Maori, to keep my culture and religion alive.

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MY FRIENDS Youth Resilience Program: Activity Book for Youth  
www.zdfrfriends.com.au

In another example (Picture 8), a student's cultural identity is evident in the artwork across a section of the activity book, interestingly, around the aspect of confidence.

Picture 8      **Activity book entry from session 3**

**So what is confidence?**

Confidence is the belief in yourself and your abilities.

Why should we build our confidence?

- Confidence helps you to deal with whatever comes your way. For example performing your best at an athletics carnival when you are nervous. If you are confident and feel good about yourself you will be able to calm your nerves and you will be ready to give your all. However if you don't feel confident you might make mistakes, for example false starts or forgetting your coach's advice.
- Confidence gives you the ability to face whatever happens in your life.
- Confidence gives you the motivation to try new things. A confident person is usually have a go at something new. People who aren't as confident are sometimes afraid are reluctant to try new things.
- Confidence allows you to make positive decisions. The older you get the more you important choices. Your parents may want you to do one thing and your friends to do something completely different. People with confidence can make the right themselves. They can make a brave but unpopular decision if they know it is right.
- People who have confidence are happy to listen to advice from more knowledge people (such as teachers, parents, grandparents) or wise, younger people and put advice into their actions. They are able to listen to constructive criticism and not offended. They weigh it up and possibly even take it.
- Confident people can cope with making mistakes, receiving feedback



## Developing a trusting learning environment

When teachers set up the programme in the classroom, they were aware of the need to develop a supportive and trusting environment for the students because, unique to this area, students either needed to express or consider personal issues that might not otherwise be foregrounded in a classroom context. For some teachers this meant changing the way they usually teach, whereas others reported that it was typical of how they aspired to create their classroom environment for learning. As the student survey data and the case study interviews highlighted, girls engaged in this process more easily than boys, and clearly some students felt uncomfortable (but not unsafe) when exploring how their thoughts and actions affected their own wellbeing, as well as others.

The classroom environments had some visual displays created through the My FRIENDS Youth programme (see Picture 9) that reinforced aspects of the programme for students, clearly making the My FRIENDS Youth programme visible and providing a way for students to think about the ideas outside of the session times. When researchers interviewed the students, they referred to these displays, knew what they were about and what they represented, and they reminded them of the class-based activities they had engaged in.

Picture 9 My FRIENDS Youth posters in the classroom



My FRIENDS Youth is designed to include both peer learning and experiential learning, and to provide opportunities for privacy and for sharing in the classroom. These different types of learning experiences were evident in our qualitative interviews with teachers and students. In two schools, My FRIENDS Youth sessions were also observed.

### Peer learning

My FRIENDS Youth is designed to be implemented in a group environment, where the participants are a similar age. Students reported how they worked with their peer group and shared ideas. The facilitation of the programme within classrooms was generally in a group context. Some individual activities were assigned (e.g. making their own notes in the activity books), but the majority of tasks involved small groups working together. For some students this was beneficial in terms of their learning and socialising within their peer group:

*You get to learn in a group and create a better friendship together. (Year 9 student)*

*It's a fun way of learning. (Year 10 student)*

*We can share ideas amongst each other. (Year 9 student)*

In contrast, for other students—and in some cases the teachers—the group work created barriers for students’ learning. Some boys reported a preference to complete an activity in their own friendship group: “We’re the brothers!”. Students reported they did not like it when their peers did not respect their views, or when they were laughed at, and when others did not join in the assigned activity: “[I did not like] inappropriate laughter and other students and people not behaving” (Year 10 boy). Another mentioned “uncooperative people” (Year 10 student).

A teacher identified an issue when students were “not willing to give it a go”, although for some students this may have been a result of their own insecurities and concerns about being exposed. This reinforces the need for a trusting support environment in which to facilitate the programme.

The group leaders’ manual gives suggestions for enhancing group processes, including dividing classes into smaller groups and rearranging the groups for different sessions to avoid “cliques” and to allow for practising skills with different friends. Students talked about this in focus groups:

*Most of the time we weren’t teamed up with our friends, we were teamed up with random people in the class so we got to know them better. (Student)*

*[I liked] activities where we went as a group with people we didn’t really know. So we learnt more about people. (Student)*

*I did make friends from that [activity] as well. I have friends now that I started talking to then [during that activity]. Who knows if I would have been friends if I hadn’t done that? (Student)*

## Experiential learning

Experiential learning refers to activities that encourage participants to reflect on their own experiences and play an active role in learning. Activities that involved moving, talking and working with others were dominant in student accounts of the programme. These were the activities they remembered, had enjoyed and thought they learnt more from (see chapter 3 for a discussion of the activities that students particularly talked about).

*I get it more by the activities than the book work. (Student)*

*I think we all worked well and got interested in it when it was being able to move. Run around and move and think about stuff. (Student)*

*The times we got [outside] were the best times that everyone remembers. Everything we’ve mentioned, we were moving. We feel so confined when we’re at our desk. (Student)*

*We did the balloons and popped your negative thoughts away. (Student)*

Some students reported a desire to have less writing to complete in their activity books, although others viewed it as important to have some “book work” because “you have to understand what the activity was supposed to be about”. This individual work in books also provides an opportunity for students to have privacy in their individual responses to the My FRIENDS Youth activities.

When students were asked what their advice would be for any teacher who was teaching this programme, they reported that they enjoyed the programme most when it was fun. The group leaders’ manual also reinforces this view: “Young people learn best when they actively experience play and have fun” (Barrett, 2012b, p. 19).

Both peer learning and experiential learning have been central to the facilitation of My FRIENDS Youth in New Zealand schools, and students and teachers were positive about these aspects of the programme. When asked what they would do differently next time, the 16 teachers responded that they would adapt the programme or resources, providing

even more opportunities for experiential learning and practical activities. One teacher who had run the programme with four different classes of students, one per term, reflected that the more she got to know the programme, the “less I used the books. I used more experiential stuff”. She gave an example of turning what was an individual activity into a group activity completed on a big piece of paper.

## **How My FRIENDS Youth was facilitated in New Zealand schools in 2014**

Teachers were asked about implementation of the programme with only one class—either the only class they facilitated the programme with, or with one of the classes. They were asked about:

- how many lessons a week this class received
- how many weeks it took to complete the programme with this class
- if all sessions were covered, and in order
- how many students were in this class
- if there was another adult with this class for My FRIENDS Youth sessions.

The resulting information from about 30 classes suggests that most classes of Year 9 students experienced the My FRIENDS Youth programme in the following way:

- once or twice a week (23 out of 30 classes, 11 once a week and 12 twice a week)
- over one or two terms (28 out of 29 classes, 11 over one term, and 17 over two terms)—most probably terms 2 and 3
- in a class of 21–30 students (25 out of 30 classes)
- as a complete programme (20 out of 30 classes)
- working through each My FRIENDS Youth session in order (27 out of 30 classes)
- with their teacher, and no other adult in the class (23 out of 30 classes).

The group leaders’ manual has suggestions for implementing the programme, recognising that “the needs of each group are slightly different” (Barrett, 2012b, p. 11). The manual strongly recommends that the programme be facilitated twice a week (for 30–60 minutes each), over two school terms, preferably terms 2 and 3. The programme can be adapted by repeating some sessions to go into more depth, and teachers can tailor the programme by changing and creating their own scripts and selecting appropriate activities (Barrett, 2012b). However, the manual states that “it is important that the structure and sequencing of the My FRIENDS program are respected” (Barrett, 2012b, p. 18).

For the majority of classes reported on in the survey, the programme was implemented in line with the recommendations and suggestions provided in the manual. However, ensuring teachers complete the programme is an area that may need more attention. Not all students received the complete My FRIENDS Youth programme. Eight teachers from the post-programme survey (26 percent) responded that their class had not received all 10 My FRIENDS Youth sessions. Another two teachers were unsure. When asked why this was, all but two responses related to running out of allocated time (the other two responses referred to a change in teacher, or to finding the sessions repetitive). This is an area that warrants further attention for schools implementing the programme in 2015 and beyond.

## Covering the content

Although there was variability across schools, the survey data suggest that running the programme over two terms as part of the health curriculum was a common way for My FRIENDS Youth to be facilitated. This usually meant the whole cohort of Year 9 students experienced the programme at the same time. Some teachers and students identified only having one lesson a week or less as a factor that hindered satisfaction with the programme:

*We didn’t finish a lot of the areas, we started or skimmed them. There was a lot of stuff to cover, only once a week.* (Student)

*Doing the lesson for a bit longer [would be an improvement]. We only had one health lesson a week and I don’t like it as you tend not to retain the information.* (Student)

*It would be a great programme if we had more time to go through everything.* (Teacher)

*I only teach my Year 9 class once a fortnight so found it difficult to get through all of the sessions. It is a difficult programme to teach when you have only one class a fortnight.* (Teacher)

Some schools had hoped to complete the programme in one term but needed to take time in the following term as well. Teachers suggested that other topic units in health could not be covered or were not covered as fully as a result. Students at one school visited also had two physical education lessons a week but not necessarily with their health teachers. The school was considering how to introduce more flexibility in 2015 so that physical education lessons could also be used for the My FRIENDS Youth programme, allowing it to be taught in a more concentrated period of time.

Nearly all teachers (87 percent) said that My FRIENDS Youth sessions were facilitated in order— just one said no, and two were unsure. The reasons given for not facilitating the sessions in order were that a previous teacher had “done sessions in random order” or that they were “done as best fit”. Implementing the sessions in order is an important aspect of programme fidelity.

Some teachers particularly commented on the challenge of completing the programme with lower-achieving students. One teacher suggested that an activity might take 20 minutes with a higher-band class, but an hour with a lower-band class.

Teachers also reported that the amount of content to get through was a challenge, and either “getting through the content” or the “length of the programme” was mentioned by eight teachers in response to “What has been the most challenging part of the programme for you?”. There was a sense from many teachers, including those who *did* complete all sessions, that the amount of content to get through was an issue. Some teachers suggested that the programme could be shortened so that it could fit into 10–12 lessons, taking up less of the health curriculum time.

## Involvement of other adults

The My FRIENDS Youth group leaders’ manual recommends that for larger groups, such as in a school setting, more than one group leader be involved with the running of the programme. The size of the class was not mentioned in any open responses to the survey and was rarely mentioned specifically in our interviews with teachers.

No classes had an additional adult in the classroom for all of the sessions, but seven had an additional adult for some of the sessions. This additional adult was most likely to be support staff and probably not trained in My FRIENDS Youth. One or two classes had another teacher, student teacher, RTLB or guidance counsellor in the classroom for some My FRIENDS Youth sessions. None had parents in the classroom. One teacher in a case study school suggested it was “doable” with only a teacher in the classroom, but it would make it easier if there were more adults to work with students, including catching them up if they had been absent for a session. However, this was not raised by any other teachers.

## Booster sessions

My FRIENDS Youth contains two booster sessions that “review the central components ... and help participants to maintain therapeutic gains” (Barrett, 2012b, p. 12). The group leaders’ manual suggests that these be implemented one month and three months after completing the 10-session programme. Co-ordinators were asked if they had run or were planning to run each of the two booster sessions. Of the 16 schools, six were unsure whether they would run either session, five had run both sessions, four were not planning on running either session, and one had run session 1 and might run session 2.

The schools visited had little experience of the booster sessions as most were only just completing the core programme when visited. All planned to run the sessions later in 2014 or with Year 10 students in 2015. One teacher commented that this was a way to “build that culture” and “utilise what they already know from this year”.

## Factors that support satisfaction and acceptability

Nearly all teachers thought that My FRIENDS Youth had been worth doing (87 percent agreed or strongly agreed, and this was confirmed in interviews). Overall, teachers were satisfied with the programme and reported that it had been accepted in their schools. Chapter 5 provides further discussion of My FRIENDS Youth in the New Zealand cultural and educational context.

A similar proportion (77 percent) said they would recommend the programme to other teachers. Positive responses included those who would like aspects of the programme changed but would still recommend it to others, illustrated by the following quote:

*If the course were shortened, contextualised for the New Zealand student, concepts clarified and with less text in the workbooks, I would recommend teaching the course. I believe it is important for students to think about mental health, their own thought processes, beliefs and self-talk and what practical steps they can take to help themselves when in states of anxiety.*

The main factor that supported satisfaction with and acceptability of the programme was that it was seen to address a valuable and important topic, relevant for young people in New Zealand. There were many comments about this when teachers were asked to name the two things they most liked about the programme or why they would recommend it to other teachers. The following responses are illustrative of their views:

*The main theme is great and is needed for our young people.*

*Teaches much needed strategies to help students cope with issues they are experiencing right now and will experience over the next few years.*

*The kids’ response has been really motivating. To believe that it’s making a difference and it’s a positive. I feel I’m spending my time well.*

*I would strongly recommend this programme to other teachers as it teaches useful (necessary) strategies that both students and their teachers can use throughout life in times of conflict or stress.*

Other factors that supported satisfaction and acceptability were the training and support from others involved in the programme. This support included that from the Ministry of Education facilitators, the school co-ordinator, the senior leadership team, other teachers in the school (including guidance counsellors), and teachers in other schools facilitating the programme. Teachers gave examples of all of these in interviews (just one teacher was less positive about the amount of time taken up with training and cluster meetings).

*[The principal] is really supportive, which enabled us to train so many people. (Co-ordinator)*

*As a department, we sit in the same office, sit and talk about what we’ve done, get ideas. Having that department support.* (Teacher)

*Cluster meetings are great. They involve the three local colleges meetings with the facilitator.* (Teacher)

*[The Ministry of Education facilitator] was really good. The cluster meetings and hui were great.*  
(Co-ordinator)

Consistent with other findings in this report, aspects of the programme itself were also identified as factors that teachers liked and that supported satisfaction and acceptability. These were the pedagogy (discussion-based, experiential, practical, hands-on learning) and the structure (the sequence of lessons, lesson plans, layout of the activity book).

As has already been discussed, teachers held mixed views on the usefulness of resources. The student activity book, in particular, was identified as a factor that hindered the adherence to, satisfaction with and acceptability of the programme. However, having a structure to follow for suggested activities was seen by many teachers to be important. It may be that this is supporting teachers with their understanding of CBT principles. One teacher summed it up by saying that the activity books are hard to use as they are, but there needs to be something or the programme would “fall over”:

*I think the booklets are really important, especially in the first year you do it. It gives you that structure, you know exactly what you’re doing and where you’re going. It’s spelled out for you. It would have been a lot trickier if we did a course and then just had to teach it.* (Teacher)

## **Factors that hindered satisfaction and acceptability**

As has already been discussed, the main challenge that was identified by teachers was the amount of content to cover in the programme. This was followed by cautionary comments about the student activity book. Other challenges were identified by only one or two teachers and were school-specific (e.g. getting teacher buy in, or consistency between staff teaching the programme). On a positive note, no teachers suggested that support from senior staff, resourcing or timetabling had been challenges in facilitating the programme.

## **Summary and issues for consideration**

My FRIENDS Youth was mostly facilitated by health and physical education teachers as part of the health curriculum, once or twice a week, over one or two terms. Some schools used other models, but it was beyond the scope of this evaluation to consider whether this led to different outcomes for students.

Teachers valued the professional learning and development opportunities, and the networking meetings and hui during implementation of the programme. However, within the requirements of the licence for accredited trainers, it is worth considering involving schools more directly in the training in order to build sustainability of the programme over time.

Teachers involved in the My FRIENDS Youth programme put much effort into ensuring the programme was needs-based for their students, and some teachers went to considerable effort to create visual images for the students to reflect on the specific ideas outside of class time. Students appreciated this effort.

My FRIENDS Youth was implemented with a high level of fidelity, with some areas that could be refined. For most classes the timing and lesson sequence matched the manual, students were able to attend all sessions, and sessions were able to be implemented without interruption or distraction. However, some classes did not complete the programme or experience the sessions in order.

An aspect that is recommended in the manual but has not happened in New Zealand schools is the participation of more than one adult in My FRIENDS Youth classes. Schools could consider how this might be achieved, particularly for those programme sessions where students may need additional support due to the nature of the activity (e.g. coping plans, which require more writing). As more teachers are trained in schools trialling the programme this may be easier to achieve, but given the intense resource this requirement takes, it may not be a feasible aspect of the programme for New Zealand schools. One way schools did mitigate this risk was to ensure the guidance counsellors received the My FRIENDS Youth training alongside the teachers, and ensured that students at risk who needed to address a traumatic issue in their lives as a result of it re-emerging through a session or activity could see the guidance counsellor.

There was strong evidence of peer and experiential learning. Many teachers—including those who did complete the programme—commented that there was a lot of content to get through and that this affected other areas of the health curriculum. The programme manual gives schools and teachers permission to adapt My FRIENDS Youth for their own context. Many teachers say they would adapt it more when running the programme again, and teachers who taught the programme more than once in 2014 indicated that they made changes and adaptations as they learnt more about the programme and increased in confidence. This resulted in them placing less reliance on the programme manuals. Providing schools and teachers with more support for adapting the programme could be an area for the Ministry of Education to consider.

The perspectives of teachers in this evaluation suggest there is demand for a programme that can be facilitated in around 10–12 lessons and completed in a school term. The Ministry of Education facilitators and experienced teachers of the programme could consider whether this would be possible without compromising programme fidelity and intended outcomes. If this is not possible, the communication with schools prior to their engaging with the programme could clarify that if a class is taught only once a week, the programme will take two terms, and that providing more than one My FRIENDS Youth session a week may enhance student and teacher satisfaction with the programme.

Most teachers reported that the programme was worth doing and would recommend it to other teachers, mainly because it provided strategies to manage wellbeing, an area many considered important. Their belief in the programme intent was an important consideration for teachers and appeared to override any concerns they had about adjustments for the New Zealand context, such as the student activity book.





## 5. My FRIENDS Youth in the New Zealand cultural and educational context

[My FRIENDS Youth is] a very nice fit for our curriculum area. Mental and emotional, social and spiritual health [are all covered]. And physical with the relaxation exercises. (Teacher)

It fits with the key competencies really well. (Teacher)

I think it’s a perfect fit ... Our students do seem to struggle with resilience, problem solving, all the things this is aimed at addressing. They need strategies. (Co-ordinator)

It fits very well with the school values which are up on all classroom walls. Respect, integrity, self discipline and contribution. I felt like I was constantly saying ‘it’s like our school value of ...’. (Teacher)

This chapter considers My FRIENDS Youth in the New Zealand cultural and educational context, including compatibility with *The New Zealand Curriculum* and the school’s existing health and physical education programme, along with its appropriateness for Māori and Pasifika students, and those with special education needs. The chapter considers the evaluation results within the wider school context, including leadership support and alignment with other initiatives. The level of parental involvement in My FRIENDS Youth is also raised in this chapter.

Evidence from the teacher survey and interviews with teachers and students in the five schools visited suggests that most participants agree that the programme works in the New Zealand cultural and educational context. However, there is potential for a better fit in the New Zealand context in terms of the content and look of the student activity books. There is also potential for including parents more intentionally into the programme.

An overview of the teacher survey data on the compatibility and fit of the programme is presented in Table 12. Of note, very few teachers disagreed with any of the statements and they were overall positive about the alignment and fit of My FRIENDS Youth within their school and the New Zealand context.

As shown in Table 12, teachers viewed the My FRIENDS Youth programme as compatible with the New Zealand health and physical education curriculum and as consistent with the key competencies. They also believed the programme contributed to their school’s goals in relation to student wellbeing and met the needs of their students across ethnicities. One exception can be seen in how teachers perceived the appropriateness of the programme for students with special education needs (55 percent agreed or strongly agreed, and 42 percent neither agreed nor disagreed). Around a quarter of teachers responding to the survey either responded neutrally or disagreed that the programme is appropriate for Māori or Pasifika students, as discussed in chapter 3. Each statement is also discussed later in the chapter alongside the qualitative data.

Table 12 **Teachers’ views on My FRIENDS Youth in the wider context (n = 31)**

	Disagree/strongly disagree %	Neither agree or disagree %	Strongly agree/agree %
Compatible with <i>NZC</i> key competencies	0	3	90
Compatible with <i>NZC</i> health and PE	0	6	90
Appropriate for Māori students	6	16	74
Appropriate for Pasifika students	6	19	71
Appropriate for students with special education needs	0	42	55
Compatible with school’s existing health programme and goals relating to student wellbeing	0	10	87
Our school will continue to run the programme	0	13	84
Principal and school leadership team support the programme	0	16	81
Fits well within our school	3	16	77
Aligns well with other initiatives or programmes in the school	0	26	71
We have the resources available to support students if issues arise as a result of the programme	0	10	87

Note: One teacher did not give a response to any of these statements. Two teachers did not give a response to the statement about compatibility with the *NZC* key competencies.

## Parental involvement

The My FRIENDS Youth group leaders’ manual describes the support of parents as an important factor that affects the success of early intervention programmes (Barrett, 2012b). Guidelines are provided for generating interest in the programme: develop awareness, highlight that early intervention programmes prevent anxiety, frame the programme in a positive manner, and organise an information evening.

Although the manual emphasises the importance of the involvement of parents and encourages parent information sessions, these sessions were not run in the trial schools. Parents were not involved in the facilitation of the programme, nor did the students actively engage their parents in either homework or activities associated with the programme. Reports from teachers and students suggested that, like other curriculum areas within the secondary school, the My FRIENDS Youth sessions were not shared at home.

Teachers generally recognised the lack of parental involvement and expressed a desire or intention to involve parents more fully. Some schools were including information about the programme in their newsletters or on their school website. One Year 9 dean noted:

*[I’m] trying to help them engage in that conversation with their parents but I can’t say whether they have or not. I think we could do better at it and inviting our parents in. It’s sometimes hard because a lot of our parents work shift work and things like that, but if we could hit a few that way it might be valuable.*

The guidance counsellors also noted within the case study schools that parents were not involved, although one did note that “It’s really good stuff for families and parents ... a lot of parents don’t know that stuff either”.

Teachers responding to the survey were asked, “How were parents or whānau informed of or involved in the My FRIENDS Youth programme?”. These responses are presented in Table 13, at both the teacher and school level. (More than one teacher could respond to the survey from each school. This varied from one to five teachers.)

The main way that schools had informed or involved parents in My FRIENDS Youth was through student homework (11 out of 16 schools) or by putting information in the school newsletter (11 out of 16 schools). One school had invited parents to an information evening or workshop, as is recommended in the group leaders’ manual. No schools had invited parents to participate in My FRIENDS Youth student sessions.

Table 13 **Parent and whānau involvement in My FRIENDS Youth**

Type of involvement	Number of teachers (n = 31)	% of teachers	Number of schools (n = 16)
Students had homework relating to My FRIENDS Youth	17	55	11
Information was included in a newsletter	15	48	11
Invited to an information evening or workshop	4	13	1
No parent information or involvement	3	10	2
Invited to participate in My FRIENDS Youth class sessions	0	0	0

## Parents’ evenings

The level of parental involvement in the case study schools was consistent with the survey data. Only one of these schools had held a parents evening in 2014. This had involved parents experiencing some of the My FRIENDS Youth activities. Although the turnout had been low, feedback from parents had been positive:

*It wasn’t a huge turnout, but those that did come [found it] was really good. We also provide a space for babysitting. The Year 9 and 10 students also prepare dinner for their parents as part of the evening. We explain the programme, eat together, and then the young people clear up. It was a good response.*

Schools that had not put an emphasis on parental involvement recognised it as important. Some of the teachers indicated the intention to involve parents more as “our information to parents has been a little sketchy”, but another explained they had a PTA meeting for parents but few parents turned up.

*I think it would be really helpful for parents [to be involved] because it’s reinforcing what students are learning in their programme to their daily lives. Ideally what you would want to do with them is go over some of the activities in the workbook with the parents, because it’s a good way for parents to get conversations going and find out what’s going on in their children’s lives. (Teacher)*

Most of the schools in the case study were planning to provide more opportunities for parental involvement in 2015, including running a parents evening if they had not already done so. One school planned to include activities from the adult resiliency programme.

### Homework

The use of homework activities was not typical practice across all the schools, with 17 teachers (55 percent) responding that students had homework relating to My FRIENDS Youth. Teachers interviewed suggested that one of the challenges was ensuring students brought their activity books back to each session, especially if health lessons were only held once a week. This issue is also recognised in the programme manual.

*The homework books didn’t work very well, so we don’t use them.* (Teacher)

*Couldn’t take the books home until the end of the unit as they might not have brought them back. Only have health once a week.* (Teacher)

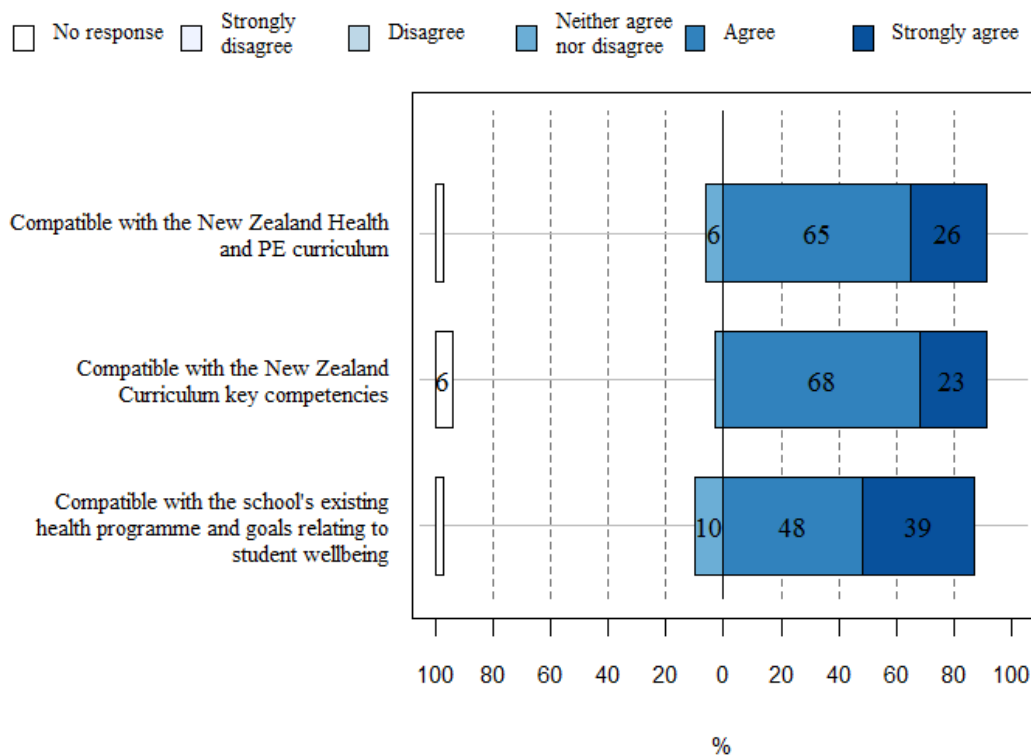
All teachers encouraged students to have conversations at home, regardless of whether they had set homework. There was some evidence of this in interviews with students, although students tended not to actively talk with their parents about the programme. However, they also indicated that they were not all that interested in taking school life home generally, and that when parents asked, “How was your day?” they had one-syllable responses (fine, dumb, good, OK), as, in one student’s words, “I’ve just spent all day at school and I don’t want to relive my day again”. However, in relation to the activity book, one student noted this could be a way to include their parents:

*A couple of the things in there [activity book], it would be beneficial for parents to be involved in.*  
(Year 10 boy)

### Compatibility with the curriculum

Teachers were asked how much they agreed that the My FRIENDS Youth programme is compatible with the *New Zealand Curriculum* key competencies and health and physical education curriculum, and with their school’s existing health programme. There was a very high level of agreement (around 90 percent for each item), as shown in Figure 5.

Figure 5 **Teachers’ views on compatibility with *The New Zealand Curriculum***



Teachers said “it fits with the key competencies really well” and “we linked it to managing selves and relating to others”. They also saw a good fit with the health and physical education curriculum area:

*[The programme] covers areas of the health curriculum not usually covered well. (Teacher)*

*[The programme is] a great umbrella for the whole health programme. There is a continuity throughout the programme not one-off lessons. Able to expand and add related topics like bullying and drug education. (Co-ordinator)*

One school gave specific examples of how they had integrated other aspects of their health programme with My FRIENDS Youth:

*That is something I have found valuable about the programme, that we can incorporate some of the previous health ideas we have used in our health programmes, and it connects and then put it in the right place within FRIENDS .... Here [referring to manual] it talks about brain development, and we’ve been able to do drug education here ... Also the Keeping Ourselves Safe aspect [of the curriculum] can also link into the problem solving exercises used in the programme. (Teacher)*

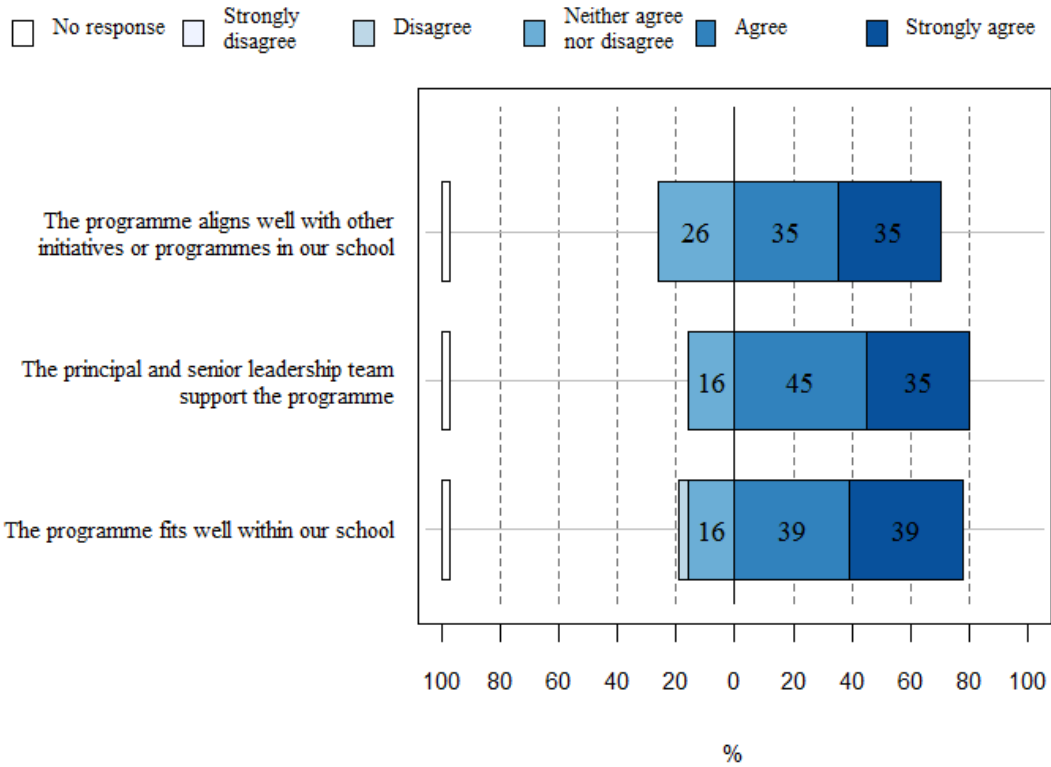
Other schools were also exploring ways to include this type of alignment through developing lesson plans, adapting activities and enhancing links to the curriculum. This is consistent with the discussion in the previous chapter about schools adapting the programme for their own context:

*Excited to be doing it again next year and integrating more into the Health programme. (Co-ordinator)*

## **Fit within the school**

Most teachers were positive about the fit of the My FRIENDS Youth programme within their school and the alignment with other initiatives (see Figure 6). Although the level of agreement was slightly lower than for the statements about curriculum alignment, it was, nonetheless, a high level of agreement and indicates the programme did not occur in a vacuum. Most teachers (78 percent) thought that My FRIENDS Youth fitted well in their school, 80 percent thought that the school leadership team supported the programme, and 70 percent agreed that My FRIENDS Youth aligned well with other initiatives or programmes in the school. Nearly all schools (13 out of 16) were part of PB4L School-Wide. A few schools were currently or recently involved in other initiatives to support student wellbeing: four with Te Kotahitanga, and one each with PB4L Check and Connect, and Travellers (Skylight).

Figure 6 **Teachers’ views on the fit within their school**



In discussing alignment, principals, co-ordinators and teachers in case study schools made particular mention of their distinct school community context and why building resilience was important. A particular example was schools located in the Canterbury region in the context of the Canterbury earthquakes:

*I think it’s a perfect fit. Our students do seem to struggle with resilience, problem solving, all the things this is aimed at addressing. They need strategies. (Co-ordinator)*

Schools were at different stages of engaging with and involving the wider staff in My FRIENDS Youth. Those that had run full staff meetings had received positive feedback:

*Staff really enjoyed the session in the staff room. [I] knew some would think it ‘fluffy’ but [they said it was] the best session they’ve had all year. A good laugh, talking about things that relate to their teaching in a non threatening way. (Teacher)*

Other teachers were planning on including more staff in 2015, and saw this as an important way to bring about a “culture change” in the school:

*[It’s] pretty hard to get a culture change if it’s just the health department, but easier if other staff are exposed to it. (Co-ordinator)*

*Develop a culture of talking about this stuff and making it more accessible. (Co-ordinator)*

*There isn’t [yet] a huge transference of content across teaching practice, but we think this will grow over time and become ingrained. (Co-ordinator)*

This included having more teachers use the common vocabulary of My FRIENDS Youth, such as turning red thoughts (negative and unhelpful) to green thoughts (positive and helpful), or using the metaphor of bucket-filling to encourage students’ respectful responses to each other. The importance of common language and of consistency across the school

were also highlighted in the PB4L School-Wide case study report (Boyd, Hotere-Barnes, Tongati’o, & MacDonald, 2014).

### Alignment with PB4L School-Wide

Four of the five schools in the case study were involved in current PB4L initiatives, particularly PB4L School-Wide, and although My FRIENDS Youth was seen as part of this overall package, few of the teachers or guidance counsellors made the explicit link. There was evidence on the school walls (in staffrooms and classrooms) that the PB4L programme operated within the school, but the connection between the initiatives rarely came through in the teacher, student, principal or guidance counsellor interviews. Some teachers and guidance counsellors felt that too many initiatives hindered implementation, that the “change management” involved meant that nothing became embedded long term, and that they’ve “lost sight of good programmes like Te Kotahitanga”. As one teacher noted, “every one of them fits within my philosophy”, but for her the programmes had not been visibly linked, and in some cases had been dropped.

However, in one school the compatibility between PB4L School-Wide and My FRIENDS Youth was clear. One principal described it as “a fit made in heaven”. In focus group interviews, Year 9 students at this school also articulated how the programmes were complementary. The principal suggested that the “right environment” was necessary for My FRIENDS Youth to be successful, and for their particular school PB4L-SW was an important aspect of the environment:

*I think if you didn’t have the right environment already, I don’t know how the FRIENDS programme would go because it does need those relationships to be strong so that the risk isn’t too high for students in openly talking about and sharing the things that come up in it and need to be discussed. (Principal)*

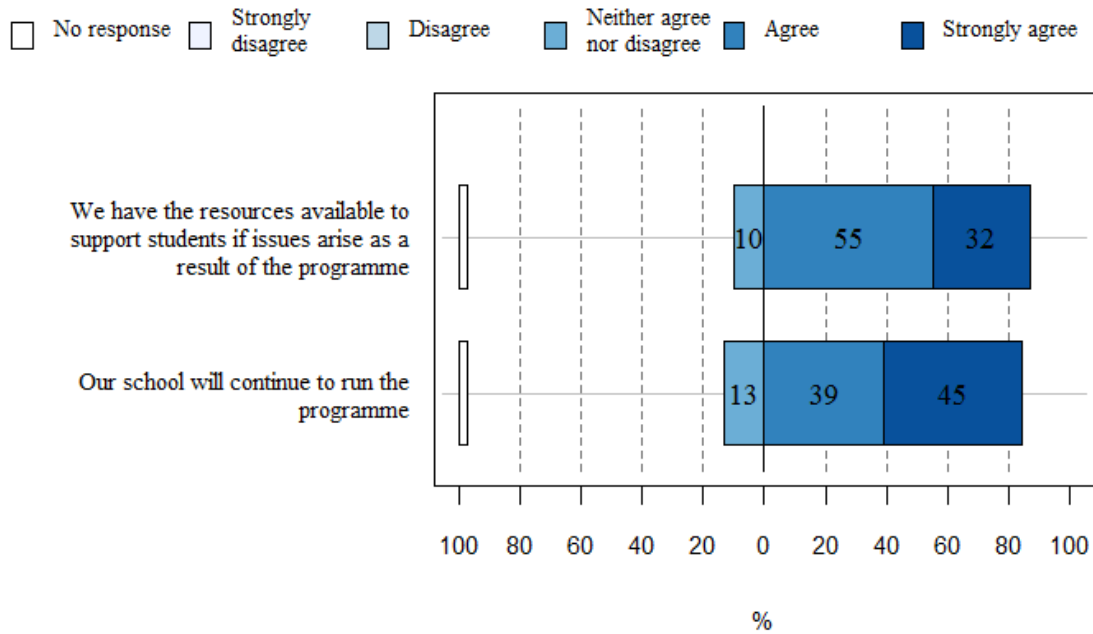
Another school had recently started PB4L-SW and was keen to strengthen the links between the two initiatives. The co-ordinator felt the programmes complemented each other and that “The bit that’s missing in PB4L for the kids, I find in FRIENDS ... that person-centred care that’s not explicit in PB4L”.

### Future plans and sustainability

Most teachers (84 percent) agreed that their school would continue to run the My FRIENDS Youth programme and the others did not know. Teachers said their school had the resources available to support students if issues arise as a result of the programme (87 percent of teachers agreed) (see Figure 7). Some schools were making plans to use the programme at additional year levels, including the possibility of the adult resiliency programme being facilitated for senior students. At least one teacher also thought this adult resiliency programme could be beneficial for parents in the school community.

The requirement for teachers facilitating the programme to undertake training with an accredited trainer could have an impact on sustainability. Issues raised by schools were the risk to the programme if trained teachers left the school, and access to training with only two accredited trainers in New Zealand.

Figure 7 Teachers’ views on continuing with the programme and resourcing to support students



The evaluation did not directly explore the implications of the funding of the programme or the cost of components such as the student activity books if schools facilitated the programme in the future. However, some issues relating to funding were raised in the interviews by teachers and co-ordinators, with one school suggesting they may have to consider a class set of activity books that could be used across classes and therefore students would not write in. No teacher made a specific comment about the funding or resourcing of the programme in the open responses to the survey.

### Summary and issues for consideration

This evaluation shows that My FRIENDS Youth can be successfully implemented in the New Zealand educational context. Most teachers thought the programme had been worth doing, believed in the programme’s intent of providing strategies to support and enhance student wellbeing, and would recommend it to other teachers.

The My FRIENDS Youth programme is consistent with the aims and objectives of aspects of the health and physical education curriculum, and is compatible with the philosophies and approaches used by guidance counsellors in New Zealand. To build on this, other curriculum-related teachers and staff in other roles in the school would benefit from understanding the programme intent, strategies and language, so that a consistent whole-school approach to students could be achieved, which PB4L promotes. Schools are starting to work towards achieving this.

There has been very little parental involvement in the programme in the form of information evenings, workshops or participation in class sessions. Some schools did not report any communication with parents about the programme. This is an area that could be developed, because it is seen as an important factor in the success of early intervention programmes (Barrett, 2012b).

The majority of teachers believed that their school intends to continue with the programme, but considerations that may affect sustainability included access to training, staff turnover, and the provision of individual student activity books. As discussed in chapter 4, there is also demand from teachers to adapt the programme further. However, this evaluation suggests that schools see My FRIENDS Youth as a sustainable approach for building and supporting the wellbeing of students. In 2015 schools have plans to improve curriculum alignment, involve more teachers to take a whole-school approach, and make more connections with other initiatives, such as PB4L School-Wide.



## 6. Discussion

### Introduction

This report summarises the findings from an evaluation of the trial of My FRIENDS Youth with Year 9 students in 26 New Zealand schools over 2014. The programme has largely been facilitated by teachers, typically health and physical education teachers. My FRIENDS Youth was largely successful for those teachers and students involved in the trial schools. The evaluation shows that students learned from their participation in the programme. Factors that contributed to the positive outcomes for teachers and students included a combination of training and networking; co-operative synergies between teachers and guidance counsellors; supportive school leadership; and teachers and students willing to engage in a personal area that is not considered “easy” for young adolescents.

To inform this discussion, other evaluations of the My FRIENDS programme (either My FRIENDS Youth or FRIENDS for Life) were reviewed. These have been undertaken in diverse contexts and countries: for example, schools in South Africa (Mostert & Loxton, 2008), Norway (Martinsen et al., 2010), England (Green, 2013), Canada (Rose et al., 2009), Seychelles (Labiche & Kaczmarek 2003) and Scotland (Liddle & Macmillan 2010), along with young children living in an orphanage in Mexico (Gallegos-Guajardo et al., 2013).

### Teachers as facilitators

This evaluation provides evidence to support the notion that having teachers as the facilitators is an important component of the success of the My FRIENDS Youth programme, because it supports their ongoing relationships with students and enables teachers to learn from their students about their coping strategies and the anxieties they face. Through the teacher facilitation, the programme engages the school community (principal, teachers, guidance counsellors and students) with a common language to talk about feelings and mental health wellbeing.

In other countries, the programme has often been facilitated by health or educational specialists (e.g. educational psychologists, school nurses, guidance counsellors, psychology graduates). In one study, small groups of students were involved in the programme run by educational psychologists, and one of the findings was that even though there was short-term gain for students with regard to social skills, gains were not maintained 4 months after implementation of the programme (Liddle & Macmillan, 2010). Liddle and Macmillan hypothesised that when going back into their own classroom settings, the students did not have a common language with their peers. Not all had received the experience of the programme, and therefore “it seems likely that if the groups were run with whole classes, the language of the FRIENDS programme and concepts taught would be reinforced more often” (p. 65).

The New Zealand whole-class approach in facilitating the programme provided greater cohesion in being able to talk with students about the principles and ideas from the programme beyond the specific My FRIENDS Youth sessions. Given the high proportion of teachers in the survey who indicated they used aspects of My FRIENDS Youth in their other teaching (77 percent), it does suggest that the CBT principles were also helpful for teaching outside of the programme. In addition, only 6 percent of teachers felt My FRIENDS Youth made little difference to their teaching, which also suggests that something about their *teaching* was influenced by the programme.

School-based universal mental health interventions are ambitious, and, as noted in the research literature, are not an easy option. Miller (2008) observed that “implementing evidence-based mental health programming in the schools is a formidable task” (p. 29), and Evans and Weist (2004) argued that “the dissemination and widespread implementation of

empirically supported school-based treatments is a lofty goal” (p. 263). Therefore the teachers and schools within the New Zealand trial should be applauded for their endeavours in finding ways to support the mental health wellbeing of their Year 9 students. In the real-world complex environment of a secondary school, with other ongoing school-based and extra-curricular activities, these teachers and the associated guidance counsellors were willing to be trained, and trial, this new initiative. As others have noted, competing priorities, lack of resources, lack of training, drift from the programme and the complexity of a classroom environment can derail any new programme (Evans & Weist 2004), but on this occasion there was considerable commitment by teachers and Ministry of Education staff to keep it on track.

## **The cognitive behavioural therapy framework: the role of training and manuals**

Stallard (2010) highlights the importance of locating the My FRIENDS Youth programme within the CBT framework. In doing so, he reiterates the importance of those presenting the programme to understand the elements and theoretical premises of CBT, while also emphasising that the programme itself is not ‘CBT for therapy’:

*Class leaders are not CBT therapists. They are delivering a standardised intervention with a structured set of materials that are based upon a particular model. The training and expertise to deliver standardised prevention programmes such as these is more limited and requires familiarity with the basic CBT model, understanding how each session relates to the model and an ability to adapt the specified tasks to the child’s experiences and interests. (Stallard, 2010, p. 33)*

Consistent with this view, the teachers in this evaluation did learn through the CBT framework, and were introduced to CBT within the structured set of materials, but they neither attempted to, nor believed their role was to, provide individual therapy for their students.

This evaluation identified one of the strengths of the New Zealand trial as being the inclusion of guidance counsellors in the training and their understanding of the programme, as they were able to follow up on an individual level with students who required more support. Some guidance counsellors specifically used the CBT model in their work and arguably are more trained than teachers to use this framework individually with students. While in general the guidance counsellors did not facilitate the training in classrooms (although in one school this was the guidance counsellor role), their ability to support both teachers and students was enhanced by their inclusion on the training days.

The training associated with this programme was an essential component for the teachers’ understanding of the:

- aims, intent and major learning outcomes
- CBT principles, practices and framework that underpin the programme
- structured and sequential layering of the programme, in order for students to build their own knowledge and understanding of how CBT could work for them (albeit disguised as typically fun activities).

The specialised training provided for the My FRIENDS Youth programme was well received by teachers. The additional networking and hui opportunities to talk with other teachers involved in the programme was an important aspect of the sustainability of the programme once they had commenced including it within the health and physical education curriculum. These hui supported teachers, increased their confidence and created space for them to develop and share local initiatives in terms of activities that would enable them to stay true to the objectives and major learning outcomes intended for each session. A Canadian study showed that networking opportunities were critical to the success of the programme, as “educators suggested that discussing and communicating with other colleagues increased their familiarity and understanding of the program” (Sawyer, 2011, p. 124).

Another aspect of the programme that contributed, initially at least, to the teachers’ understanding were the two books provided to them on the training day: *My FRIENDS Youth Resilience Program: Group Leaders’ Manual for Youth* (Barrett, 2012b) and *My FRIENDS Youth Resilience Program: Activity Book for Youth* (Barrett, 2012a). The students did not rate the activity book highly, but the manuals provided their teachers with a structure and sequence for the programme.

## **Māori students, Pasifika students and students with special education needs**

Within this current evaluation, Māori and Pasifika students believed the programme was worth doing and reported they would use the strategies in the future. For Māori learners within a New Zealand context, building positive relationships between teachers and learners has been identified as particularly important (Bishop, Berryman, Tiakiwai, & Richardson, 2003; McKinley, 2000). My FRIENDS Youth was facilitated in a context within which students and their teachers could develop and enhance their relationships based on trust and understanding.

The evaluation highlighted the importance of encouraging cultural considerations and foregrounding these more in class-based activities so that teachers and students can create a bicultural and multicultural presentation of the programme intent. While there is a suggestion that the activity book detracts from this aim, it did provide a starting point. More intentional and local adaptations contributed to a bicultural focus. For example, completing the relaxation sessions on the school marae was well received by the students.

Internationally, studies show that universal programmes for wellbeing can be advantageous for students from less privileged backgrounds. Mifsud and Rapee (2005) noted that “school-based early intervention appears to offer an effective means of reducing anxious symptomatology in economically disadvantaged populations” (p. 996); and in a South African study of a FRIENDS programme, the results looked promising for children from low socioeconomic backgrounds (Mostert & Loxton, 2008). Although the current evaluation did not explore individual students’ engagement with the programme in relation to their socioeconomic background, given the high number of low-decile schools involved in the trial and evaluation it is reasonable to conclude that these students benefited from their experience.

Teachers in this evaluation identified students with special education needs as not benefiting from the programme as much as their peers. This may require further investigation because it is unclear whether these teachers had students with special education needs in their Year 9 classroom and observed they did not benefit, or these teachers hypothesised that these students would not benefit. There was no international literature in this area with regard to My FRIENDS Youth or FRIENDS for Life involving students with special education needs. Research involving students with special education needs has shown that they are vulnerable in terms of bullying and victimisation (Rose, Espelage, & Monda-Amaya, 2009; Uusitalo-Malmivaara et al. 2012) and emotional and behavioural problems or mental health issues (e.g. young people with autism, Brereton, Tonge, & Einfield, 2006), making a programme like My FRIENDS Youth particularly important.

## **Limitations of the programme**

The current evaluation did indicate that, for teachers, the My FRIENDS Youth programme could become repetitive and provide “content-overload”. Teachers in other countries (e.g. Canada) have also pointed to these aspects as hindering implementation (Sawyer, 2011). Even so, for the New Zealand teachers there was general programme fidelity in terms of objectives and major learning outcomes. Teachers were very cognisant of this aspect, and when incorporating activities did so in terms of the objectives of the sessions. There were specific sessions that the students reported on more readily and had clearly engaged with, suggesting more time was spent on some of the sessions. The coping step

plan was mentioned less than other activities, consistent with another study that reported limited time was spent on this aspect of the programme in a secondary school setting in the UK (Green, 2013).

The New Zealand evaluation indicated minimal parent involvement, an outcome also identified by the UK study (Green, 2013). The students in the evaluation tended not to discuss their schooling with their parents, and given the My FRIENDS Youth programme is situated within the school and curriculum context, the majority of students did not see the relevance. However, teachers that had made an attempt to have a parent evening introducing the parents to components of the programme noted that certain parents mentioned the usefulness of the strategies.

## **The evidence base for My FRIENDS Youth**

My FRIENDS Youth is positioned as a universal programme that aims to be largely preventive. The programme does not rely on identifying or pathologising students participating in the programme as having mental health issues. Rather, it recognises that all young people have times when they feel low or anxious, and therefore all students would gain some benefits. A systematic review of universal school-based programmes that target prevention of anxiety shows they can provide positive benefits for young people and are effective for student emotional wellbeing (Adi, Killoran, Janmohamed & Stewart-Brown, 2007; Shucksmith, Summerbell, Jones, & Whittaker, 2007). The Ministry of Education positioned the pilot of My FRIENDS Youth to focus on student wellbeing and resilience (e.g. students building practical life skills for coping with challenges).

Although many studies report that the My FRIENDS Youth programme has been recognised by the World Health Organisation (2004) as an evidence-based programme, the actual WHO report wording is that it is “a promising prevention of anxiety programme” (p. 42). Recently, a meta-analysis of the evaluations of the FRIENDS programmes (FRIENDS for Life and My FRIENDS Youth) was undertaken by Maggin and Johnson (2014), and their conclusion was that “the research underlying school-based versions of the FRIENDS program presently lacks the rigor to certify it as an evidence-based practice” (p. 298).

Given the complexity of individual school contexts, the use of group- and classroom-based approaches, and different facilitators (including nurses, educational psychologists, teachers, psychology students and guidance counsellors), it is difficult to compare studies. Maggin and Johnson (2014) therefore placed emphasis on three areas the research identifies could increase the effectiveness of the programme in school settings. These three aspects are discussed below in relation to the current evaluation: two of these are already present in the New Zealand implementation of My FRIENDS Youth, and the third is recognised as an area to develop.

### **Ensuring there is a plan for those students identified as at risk**

The first aspect involves ensuring there is a plan for those students identified as at risk. Within the New Zealand evaluation, guidance counsellors received the same training as teachers, and in the case study schools there was a plan agreed between the teachers and guidance counsellors to ensure students were aware of the one-on-one support with a guidance counsellor should this be required. In at least two of the case study schools there was evidence of students receiving support from guidance counsellors when issues arose through their participation in My FRIENDS Youth sessions. In this regard, the programme was successful in enabling students to recognise their need for specific help, and the guidance counsellors were able to support them through the process.

### **Ongoing exposure to the ideas**

The meta-analysis found that students did not tend to maintain their ability to manage their anxiety or use coping strategies longer term; in other words, the changes were not necessarily sustained over time. In their analysis, Maggin and Johnson (2014) emphasised that students should constantly receive exposure to the ideas and strategies introduced through the programme. While some schools had visual displays from the My FRIENDS Youth sessions and were

making the ideas ‘visible’ within the classroom context, this is one area that the current evaluation noted could be developed and enhanced. This could be achieved through greater use of the booster sessions and extending the reach of the programme in the school. This advice is consistent with the World Health Organisation report in relation to universal programmes in schools.

### Teachers are trained to facilitate the programme

In their meta-analysis, Maggin and Johnson recommended that teachers be trained to teach and facilitate the programme in order to increase sustainability within a school. Given that this is essentially the current New Zealand model, it is clearly key to the likely sustainability of the programme over time within a school context. Through training teachers to incorporate the programme into the health and physical education curriculum, it normalises the programme content and ensures all students have access to it. As noted above, teachers also reported using the strategies in other aspects of their teaching.

## Concluding comments

In the New Zealand context this programme was well supported and facilitated by the Ministry of Education, and was adapted appropriately by the teachers and schools. Future considerations could include greater transparency and alignment with other school-wide initiatives, informing more teachers from other curriculum areas of the intent and approach of the programme, and intentionally adding more bicultural experiences and multicultural components. Students benefited from the programme and could inform their teachers about appropriate adaptations. The case study interviews with students highlighted their interest in conveying their clear ideas about what works for them. Involving students who have been through the programme to support the process with younger students could be worth considering.

The CBT theory and principles underlying My FRIENDS Youth resonated with the teachers, guidance counsellors, principals and students. This framework is clearly one that has potential benefit to work within a school context, providing the skills and strategies for students to use across their lives (homes, classroom, playground, sports). The structure within My FRIENDS Youth incorporates sophisticated CBT concepts within a ready-made practical framework.

All principals from the case study schools were highly enthusiastic about the programme and supported its intent. Given that school leaders are pivotal in supporting change within a school and have the mandate to determine which initiatives they support, their role was a contributing factor in the success of the programme at the school level. Research has shown either excessive or competing demands on staff within schools can affect how teachers enact a policy or programme (Mifsud & Rapee, 2005). As this evaluation has shown, some teachers did feel this pressure, and it should be a consideration when introducing the initiative into further schools. As part of a suite of PB4L initiatives, it will be important to explicitly link the programme into this existing framework.

This programme aligns with government strategies, is consistent with the *New Zealand Curriculum* key competencies and the health and physical education curriculum, and can be effectively facilitated by teachers for all students, including priority learners. In addition, at-risk students can be supported within the CBT framework by guidance counsellors within secondary schools. While longer-term outcomes for students are not clear, early indicators show that boys, in particular, had shifts in the Wellbeing@School items relating to being ‘taught’ ways to manage feelings and behaviour. Focusing on maintaining these shifts reiterates the importance of booster sessions for young people and the inclusion of ongoing conversations on CBT strategies in the classroom.

An important aim for increasing wellbeing is to have fewer young people saying “I don’t do happy”. Some Year 9 students showed that this aim had been achieved through My FRIENDS Youth, saying “we learn happiness” and “[we

learn] what makes us happy”. Two of the Māori students highlighted the programme as being “harikoa” (happy) and “whakahirahira” (important). Any programme or intervention that strengthens the emotional resilience of young people, and that provides a forum for teachers and their students to develop a common language for understanding how to interpret feelings and behaviours, is important to pursue (World Health Organisation, 2014).

This current evaluation shows that My FRIENDS Youth has promise. Students themselves were generally positive about their experiences in the programme, and one of the more empowering aspects of the programme for students was learning that they could change their thoughts, and in doing so, influence their actions and general wellbeing.

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## Appendix 1: Surveys and interview schedules

### Semi-structured interview protocol with students

1. Do you know what I mean when I say the “FRIENDS Youth programme”?
  - a. *If not, provide a brief explanation and name the teacher who runs the sessions.*
2. What do you think the aim of the FRIENDS Youth programme is? What is it trying to do, and why?
3. What did you learn from the programme?
4. Have you used any of these ideas at school? At home? With your friends? With those you might have had conflict with?
  - a. *Develop discussion around the areas learned, skills and techniques and how these have been applied across contexts and with different people? Explore who with, why and when.*
5. Do you think you have changed because of what you learned?
  - a. *If yes—Can you explain this a little more?*
  - b. *If no—Did you already know about these ideas, or did you use them as part of your everyday life anyway?*
6. Did you find the class sessions easy to follow? What worked best for you in the class sessions?
7. What did you like best about the programme? Why?
8. What did you like least about the programme? Why?
9. What subject do you think this programme is linked to?
10. Do your parents know about the programme? (*How did they know about it? Did you talk to them about what you were learning? Do you think they have noticed anything different about you because of this programme?*)
11. Do you think this programme should be available to other Year 9/10 students? (*Would it be better to have it when you were younger? Older?*)
12. What did you think of the booklet that came with the programme?
13. If you were to give your teacher (or any other teacher) advice about how best to run this programme...what would you suggest?
14. Is there anything else you would like to say about FRIENDS Youth that we have not talked about?

## Semi-structured interview protocol

### Teachers, Year 9 dean, FRIENDS Youth co-ordinator, school guidance counsellor

1. What is your current role? What involvement have you had with the FRIENDS Youth programme?
2. What do you think the aim of the FRIENDS Youth programme is? What is it trying to do, and why?
3. What did you expect from the programme? What did you hope would happen as a result? (*For students, for teachers; What were your expectations based on?*)
4. Have those things happened?
5. What difference has the programme made for students? Can you give any examples of changes you have seen in students that you think are because of FRIENDS Youth? (*Māori students, Pasifika students, students with special education needs?*)
6. What difference has the programme made for you as a teacher? Can you give any examples? (*Are there things you now do differently or feel more confident about?*)
7. Did you need to change the way you teach to deliver FRIENDS Youth?
8. Did you link FRIENDS Youth to the NZC? (*If so, how?*)
9. Did you involve parents in the programme in any way? (*newsletter home, activities for homework with their child, attending sessions?*)
10. Did you get the support and training you needed to use and facilitate FRIENDS Youth? (*Would you have liked more? What would you have liked more of?*)
11. How helpful/useful did you find the resources within FRIENDS Youth to use with students/parents?
12. How good a 'fit' has FRIENDS Youth been in your school, considering your school community and cultural context, other initiatives you are involved with, and your goals? Do you plan to run the programme in the future?
13. Were there any factors that hindered the successful delivery and outcomes for FRIENDS Youth in your school?
14. Were there any factors that helped or supported the successful delivery and outcomes for FRIENDS Youth in your school?
15. Is there anything else you would like to say about FRIENDS Youth that we have not talked about?

## End-of-programme student survey



### My FRIENDS Youth evaluation 2014 student survey

About me...	
I am a...	Male <input type="radio"/> Female <input type="radio"/>
I am in Year...	7 <input type="radio"/> 8 <input type="radio"/> 9 <input type="radio"/> 10 <input type="radio"/> 11 <input type="radio"/> 12 <input type="radio"/> 13 <input type="radio"/>
I am...	NZ European <input type="radio"/> Māori <input type="radio"/> Pacific <input type="radio"/> Asian <input type="radio"/> Other <input type="radio"/> (You can pick more than one)

#### Instructions

We are researchers who are doing a study about the My FRIENDS Youth programme that has been run at your school. We would like to understand how students feel about school and My FRIENDS Youth.

Over the page are some questions. You need to colour in **one circle** to show your answer to each question. The questions ask how much you **agree or disagree** with a sentence. You can choose "Strongly disagree", "Disagree", "Agree", or "Strongly agree". Here is an example.

	Strongly disagree	Disagree	Agree	Strongly agree
E1: I like being at school.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input checked="" type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

For E1 the person **Agrees** that they like being at school.

This survey is not a test. There are **no right or wrong answers**. Choose the answer that is best for you. If you are not sure, choose the answer **closest** to how you feel. Think about what school is like **this term** when you are answering the questions.

**It is best to use a pen to colour in the circles.** If you want to change your answer, put a cross through the circle you want to change  and fill in another circle.

### Confidentiality

You do not need to write your name on this form. No one else will know your answers.

This section is about you and school		How much do you agree? (choose one answer for each sentence)			
		Strongly disagree	Disagree	Agree	Strongly agree
1	At school, people accept me for who I am.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
2	I feel safe at school.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
3	Teachers care about how I feel.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
4	At school, I am taught to think about other students' feelings.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
5	At school, I am taught how to manage my feelings (like if I get angry).	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
6	At school, I am taught what to say or do if students are hassling or bullying me.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
7	Students get on well with other students from different cultures.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
8	Students are good at listening to each other's views and ideas.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
9	I can say how I am feeling when I need to.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
10	I can stand up for myself in a calm way.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
11	If I have a problem with another student, I feel I can ask teachers for help.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
12	If other students hassle me, I know how to ignore them or walk away.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
13	Outside school, I have a parent or adult who I can go to if I am upset.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

This section is about the My FRIENDS Youth programme		How much do you agree?			
		Strongly disagree	Disagree	Agree	Strongly agree
14	I am using strategies that I learnt from the My FRIENDS Youth programme.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
15	The My FRIENDS Youth programme was worth doing.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
16	What I have learnt from the My FRIENDS Youth programme will be useful for me in the future.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

### Have you finished the survey?

**When you have finished the survey please go back and check you have answered all the questions. If you found any of the questions upset you, please talk to your teacher.**

You could also talk to the people at Youthline

**Helpline phone: 0800 37 66 33 Text for free: 234**

Email: [talk@youthline.co.nz](mailto:talk@youthline.co.nz)

**Thank you very much for doing this survey.**


## Teacher post-programme survey

[Add Users](#) NZCER\_SDM

My Surveys Examples Survey Services Plans & Pricing + Create Survey

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**Friends** Summary Design Survey Collect Responses Analyze Results



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To change the look of your survey, select a theme below.

NZCER Blues ▾ [Edit Theme](#) [Create Custom Theme](#)

#### TITLE & LOGO

[Edit Title](#) [Edit Logo](#) [Edit Layout](#)



My FRIENDS Youth: Teacher Survey

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##### Post-programme Survey for My FRIENDS Youth

###### My FRIENDS Youth Evaluation

The New Zealand Council for Educational Research (NZCER) has been contracted by the Ministry of Education to evaluate the impact of My FRIENDS Youth on student wellbeing, and how My FRIENDS Youth works in secondary schools within a New Zealand context.

###### Who is this survey for?

This survey is for all teachers that have taught the My FRIENDS Youth programme to Year 9 students in 2014. It is also for the school's My FRIENDS Youth coordinator.

This survey asks about the training you received, how you facilitate the programme with your **Year 9** classes, your views on the programme, and what difference it has made for you and your students. If you are the school coordinator, there are some questions for you to answer about My FRIENDS Youth in your school.

###### Confidentiality and Anonymity

Your response to this survey is anonymous and will be kept confidential. You do not put your name on the survey. We will not name individual schools, principals, teachers, or students in any reports we write, or in any presentations or discussion. Data is stored on a secure password protected server in secure offices, and only members of the evaluation team will have authorised access to data and reports.

###### Any Questions

If you have any questions about the evaluation of My FRIENDS Youth, please contact Jo MacDonald at NZCER. Her email is jo.macdonald@nzcer.org.nz and her phone number is 04 802 1459.

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##### Your school

We are asking this question as we would like to link other information about your school to your survey answers. Please remember that your responses are confidential, and no individuals or schools will be identifiable in the final report.

+ Add Question ▼

**Q1** Edit Question ▼ Move Copy Delete

**1. What school do you teach at?**

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### My FRIENDS Youth

If you are the school coordinator, we would like to ask you a few questions about My FRIENDS Youth in your school.

+ Add Question ▼

**Q2** Edit Question ▼ Edit Question Logic (2) Move Copy Delete

**\* 2. Are you the school coordinator for My FRIENDS Youth?**

Yes

No

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### School Coordinator

+ Add Question ▼

**Q3** Edit Question ▼ Add Question Logic Move Copy Delete

**3. Please indicate the year levels that have received or will receive the My FRIENDS Youth programme at your school in 2014.**

Year 7

Year 11

Year 8

Year 12

Year 9

Year 13

Year 10



+ Add Question ▼ Split Page Here

Q4 Edit Question ▼ Add Question Logic Move Copy Delete

4. How many teachers in your school have facilitated, or will facilitate, My FRIENDS Youth in 2014?

- One
- Two
- Three
- Four or more

+ Add Question ▼ Split Page Here

Q5 Edit Question ▼ Add Question Logic Move Copy Delete

5. Who is, or will be, facilitating My FRIENDS Youth at your school in 2014?

Please select all that apply.

- Teachers of Health
- Teachers of Physical Education
- Teachers of other curriculum areas
- Year 9 Dean
- Guidance counsellor
- RTLB

Other (please specify)

+ Add Question ▼ Split Page Here

Q6 Edit Question ▼ Add Question Logic Move Copy Delete

6. Have you run, or are you planning to run, the first My FRIENDS Youth booster session in your school with your Year 9 classes?

- Yes
- No
- Maybe

+ Add Question ▼ Split Page Here

Q7 Edit Question ▼ Add Question Logic Move Copy Delete

7. Have you run, or are you planning to run, the second My FRIENDS Youth booster session in your school with your Year 9 classes?

- Yes
- No
- Maybe

+ Add Question ▼ Split Page Here

Q8 Edit Question ▼ Add Question Logic Move Copy Delete

8. Which of these initiatives has your school been involved with in the last two years?

Please select all that apply.

PB4L initiative - School Wide

PB4L initiative - Check and Connect

Travellers (Skylight)

Te Kotahitanga

I'm not sure what other initiatives the school has been involved with

Other (please specify)

+ Add Question ▼ Split Page Here

Q9 Edit Question ▼ Edit Question Logic (2) Move Copy Delete

\*9. Did you personally teach the My FRIENDS Youth programme to a class of Year 9 students?

Yes

No

+ Add Question ▼

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### Training and Support

Please answer the questions in this survey about **Year 9** classes that you have facilitated the My FRIENDS Youth Programme with in 2014. We are not asking about classes at other year levels.

+ Add Question ▼

Q10 Edit Question ▼ Add Question Logic Move Copy Delete

10. What training and support did you receive before or during the delivery of My FRIENDS Youth?

Please select all that apply.

One day introductory forum organised by the Ministry of Education

Ministry meeting with you at your school

One-day training course

Two-day training course

Follow up training session with My FRIENDS Youth specialist trainer/coach

Information from the Ministry of Education

Support from the My FRIENDS Youth specialist trainer/coach

Support from colleagues within your own school

Support from colleagues in other schools delivering My FRIENDS Youth

Other (please describe)

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**Q11** Edit Question ▼ Edit Question Logic (3) Move Copy Delete

\* 11. Did you receive enough training and support?

Yes No Not sure

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### Training and Support

+ Add Question ▼

**Q12** Edit Question ▼ Add Question Logic Move Copy Delete

12. If you thought the training and support you received was not enough, or you were not sure if it was enough, what would you have liked more of?

Please select all that apply.

- Follow up training session with My FRIENDS Youth specialist trainer/coach
- Information from the Ministry of Education
- Support from My FRIENDS Youth specialist trainer/coach
- Support from colleagues within your own school
- Support from colleagues in other schools delivering My FRIENDS Youth

Other (please specify)

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### Training and Support

+ Add Question ▼

Q13 Edit Question ▼ Move Copy Delete

13. Do you have any further comments about the training and support that was provided for My FRIENDS Youth?

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### Facilitating My FRIENDS Youth

+ Add Question ▼

Q14 Edit Question ▼ Add Question Logic Move Copy Delete

14. Thinking back to the start of the programme, how confident were you about facilitating My FRIENDS Youth?

Very confident

Confident

A little confident

Not at all confident

+ Add Question ▼ Split Page Here

Q15 Edit Question ▼ Add Question Logic Move Copy Delete

15. How were parents or whānau informed of or involved in the My FRIENDS Youth programme?

Please select all that apply.

No parent information or involvement

Information was included in a newsletter

Parents and whānau were invited to an information evening or workshop

Students had homework relating to My FRIENDS Youth

Parents and whānau were invited to participate in My FRIENDS Youth class sessions

Don't know

Other (please explain)

+ Add Question ▼

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### My FRIENDS Youth Resources

+ Add Question ▼

Q16 Edit Question ▼ Move Copy Delete

16. This set of statements is about the resources for My FRIENDS Youth, including teacher manuals and the Activity Book for Youth student booklets.

Strongly agree Agree Neither agree or disagree Disagree Strongly disagree

The style of the Activity Book for Youth (e.g. graphics, how it looks) was appropriate for my Year 9 students

The content and activities in the Activity Book for Youth were appropriate for my Year 9 students

The Activity Book for Youth was at an appropriate level for my Year 9 students

The teacher manual was easy to use

I needed to adapt the resources to suit my students

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Q17 Edit Question ▼ Move Copy Delete

17. If you needed to adapt the resources to suit your students, what did you adapt?

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### My FRIENDS Youth Impact

+ Add Question ▼

Q18 Edit Question ▼ Move Copy Delete

18. What difference do you think the My FRIENDS Youth programme has made for students?

Strongly Agree Agree Neither agree or disagree Disagree Strongly disagree

My FRIENDS Youth has helped students know each other better

As a result of My FRIENDS Youth, students support each other more

My FRIENDS Youth has fostered a sense of community within the class

Students are more aware of their feelings

Students are using strategies they have learnt from My FRIENDS Youth to deal with being angry, upset or anxious

Students are better at reading body cues

Students are better at problem solving

It is too early to say whether My FRIENDS Youth has made a difference for students

My FRIENDS Youth has made a difference for Māori students

My FRIENDS Youth has made a difference for Pasifika students

My FRIENDS Youth has made a difference for students with special education needs

+ Add Question ▼ Split Page Here

**Q19** Edit Question ▼ Move Copy Delete

**19. What difference do you think the My FRIENDS Youth programme has made for you as a teacher?**

Strongly Agree    Agree    Neither agree or disagree    Disagree    Strongly disagree

I am more confident in my ability to support student wellbeing

I am more confident that I will recognise issues arising for students

It has added new ideas or strategies to what I was already doing

I am more confident in managing classroom conversations about student wellbeing

I have found some aspects of My FRIENDS Youth challenging

I use aspects of My FRIENDS Youth in my other teaching

My FRIENDS Youth has made little difference to how I teach

+ Add Question ▼ Split Page Here

**Q20** Edit Question ▼ Move Copy Delete

**20. Have there been any other outcomes for either you or your students as a result of the My FRIENDS Youth programme? Please describe these.**

+ Add Question ▼

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### About My Friends Youth

+ Add Question ▼

Q21 Edit Question ▼ Move Copy Delete

21. Please select the option that best describes how much you agree with each statement about My FRIENDS Youth.

Strongly agree    Agree    Neither agree or disagree    Disagree    Strongly disagree

The My FRIENDS Youth programme is compatible with the New Zealand Curriculum key competences

The My FRIENDS Youth programme is compatible with the New Zealand Health and PE curriculum

The My FRIENDS Youth programme is appropriate for Māori students

The My FRIENDS Youth programme is appropriate for Pasifika students

The My FRIENDS Youth programme is appropriate for students with special education needs

The My FRIENDS Youth programme is compatible with the school’s existing health programme and goals relating to student wellbeing

Our school will continue to run the My FRIENDS Youth programme

The principal and senior leadership team support the My FRIENDS Youth programme within our school

The My FRIENDS Youth programme fits well within our school

The My FRIENDS Youth programme aligns well with other initiatives or programmes in the school

We have the resources available to support students if issues arise as a result of their participation in My FRIENDS Youth

My FRIENDS Youth has been worth doing

+ Add Question ▼ Split Page Here

Q22 Edit Question ▼ Add Question Logic Move Copy Delete

22. How many Year 9 classes have you facilitated the My FRIENDS Youth programme with?

One

Two

Three

More than three

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### Your My FRIENDS Youth Class

If you have facilitated My FRIENDS Youth with more than one Year 9 class, please think about just one class and keep it in mind as you answer the rest of the survey.

+ Add Question ▼

**Q23** Edit Question ▼ Add Question Logic Move Copy Delete

**23. How many lessons a week of My FRIENDS Youth did this class receive?**

- Fewer than one lesson a week (e.g., fortnightly)
- One lesson a week
- Two lessons a week
- Three lessons a week
- More than three lessons a week

+ Add Question ▼ Split Page Here

**Q24** Edit Question ▼ Add Question Logic Move Copy Delete

**24. How many weeks did it take to complete the My FRIENDS Youth programme with this class?**

- 4 weeks or fewer
- 5-7 weeks
- 8-10 weeks
- 11-14 weeks
- More than 15 weeks

+ Add Question ▼ Split Page Here

**Q25** Edit Question ▼ Add Question Logic Move Copy Delete

**25. How many students were in this class (on the roll)?**

- 15 or fewer students
- 16-20 students
- 21-25 students
- 26-30 students
- More than 30 students

+ Add Question ▼ Split Page Here

**Q26** Edit Question ▼ Add Question Logic Move Copy Delete

**26. Was there another adult with this class for My FRIENDS Youth sessions?**

- No
- Yes, for some of the sessions
- Yes, for all of the sessions



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### Your My FRIENDS Youth Class

+ Add Question ▼

Q27 [Edit Question ▼](#) [Add Question Logic](#) [Move](#) [Copy](#) [Delete](#)

27. Which other adults were in the classroom (for either some or all sessions) when you facilitated My FRIENDS Youth?

Please select all that apply.

Other teacher(s) including RTLB

Support staff e.g. teacher's aide

Guidance counsellor

Parents/whānau

Not applicable - no other adults for any sessions

Other (please specify)

+ Add Question ▼ [Split Page Here](#)

Q28 [Edit Question ▼](#) [Add Question Logic](#) [Move](#) [Copy](#) [Delete](#)

28. Were all ten of the My FRIENDS Youth sessions facilitated for this class?

Yes

No

Not sure

+ Add Question ▼ [Split Page Here](#)

Q29 [Edit Question ▼](#) [Move](#) [Copy](#) [Delete](#)

29. If not, why was that?

+ Add Question ▼ [Split Page Here](#)

Q30 [Edit Question ▼](#) [Add Question Logic](#) [Move](#) [Copy](#) [Delete](#)

30. Were all the My FRIENDS Youth sessions facilitated in order for this class?

Yes

No

Not sure

+ Add Question ▼ Split Page Here

Q31 Edit Question ▼ Move Copy Delete

31. If not, why was that?

+ Add Question ▼

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### Your Experience With My FRIENDS Youth

+ Add Question ▼

Q32 Edit Question ▼ Move Copy Delete

32. Please describe the two things you like MOST about the My FRIENDS Youth programme.

- a)
- b)

+ Add Question ▼ Split Page Here

Q33 Edit Question ▼ Move Copy Delete

33. What has been the most challenging part of the programme for you?

+ Add Question ▼ Split Page Here

Q34 Edit Question ▼ Add Question Logic Move Copy Delete

34. Would you recommend this programme to other teachers?

- Yes
- No
- Maybe



Other (please specify)

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**Thank you for filling in this survey!**

+ Add Question ▼

**Q39** [Edit Question ▼](#) [Move](#) [Copy](#) [Delete](#)

39. Do you have any last thoughts about My FRIENDS Youth that you would like to add?

+ Add Question ▼ [Split Page Here](#)

[Edit Question ▼](#) [Move](#) [Copy](#) [Delete](#)

**Thank you very much for your time. It is really appreciated.**

+ Add Question ▼

+ Add Page

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## Appendix 2: **Information sheets and consent forms**

### **Student Information Sheet Group Discussion — My FRIENDS Youth (Year 9)**

Term 4 2014

#### **Greetings / Kia ora / Kia orana / Malo e lelei / Talofa lava**

This year all Year 9 students at your school will do the My FRIENDS Youth programme. My FRIENDS Youth aims to support you with ways to manage feelings and develop skills for life. We are researchers who are doing a study about the My FRIENDS Youth programme. We would like to find out about how the programme is being run at your school and whether it helps you. Therefore we would really like to hear your views.

#### **What will I be asked to do?**

We are inviting you, and some of the other Year 9 students from your school, to be part of a group discussion about the programme. The discussion will take about 30 minutes, and will be in school time. We are interested in what you thought about the programme and if you think you have learnt anything from doing My FRIENDS Youth. A digital voice recorder will be used to record what the group talks about. You can withdraw at any time up until the focus group discussion commences.

#### **What will happen to the information I give?**

If you agree to take part in this study, only the people in the group and the people from the research team will know what you have said. We will write reports using the information we have collected from you, but we will not put your name, or teachers' names, in these reports.

#### **What do I do next?**

If you think you would like to take part in this study, please sign the consent form and return it to your school. Even if you sign this form now, you can change your mind later about answering the questions. If you would like to take part, please take the information sheet home to your parent or caregiver to inform them, and if they would not like you to take part please bring this form back to school.

If you have any questions about this project, please talk to the teacher who gave you this sheet or contact a member of the research team:

[contact details]

Thank you very much for your help.

**Student Information Sheet**  
**Group Discussion — My FRIENDS Youth (Year 9)**

I have read the Information Sheet and understand what I am being asked to do. I agree to take part in the group discussion about My FRIENDS Youth. I understand I can withdraw at any time up until the focus group discussion commences.

Yes       No    *(please tick one)*

*Please print your name clearly.*

Write your name here:.....  
First name
Last name

Write your school name here: .....

The date today is ..... 2014

So we know who is part of the discussion, please answer these questions:

1) I am a ...       **male**       **female** (please tick one)

2) I am ...

New Zealand European

Maori

Tongan       Samoan       Fijian       Tuvaluan

Tokelauan       Niuean       Cook Islander

Asian

Other

*Thank you very much for your help.*  
*Please give this form to your teacher.*

November 2014

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Dear staff member with involvement in My FRIENDS Youth

We would like to invite you to take part in an evaluation of the My FRIENDS Youth programme in your school. We have been contracted by the Ministry of Education to evaluate the programme. The overall aim of the evaluation is to look at the impact of My FRIENDS Youth on student wellbeing as well as evaluating how My FRIENDS Youth works in New Zealand secondary schools.

### **What we are asking of you**

A team of researchers is visiting a small number of schools to gain an understanding of your experiences with the programme. We will be visiting your school in Term 4. During this visit we would like to interview you to hear more about your experiences of the My FRIENDS Youth programme in your school. A general outline of the interview questions is attached with this information letter. You may have examples of lesson or curriculum planning documents that you wish to share.

### **Other information we will be collecting**

During our visit to your school, we would also like to speak to a group of Year 9 students about their experiences of the programme. We will provide your school with information letters and consent forms for students and information sheets for parents/caregivers.

### **Reporting to your school and the wider sector**

We will be writing reports to the Ministry of Education which summarise data and findings across schools. The information from this study may also be used to write articles and conference presentations.

### **Ethics and confidentiality**

With your permission, we will audio-record interviews. We will not transcribe the full recording, but we will use it as an aide to our notes. Any information collected will be confidential to the research team and held in a secure location. We will not name schools, principals, teachers, or students in any reports we write.

### **Next steps**

Even if you agree to participate, you can withdraw at any stage before our visit. If you agree to take part, please complete the attached consent form. We will collect it when we visit your school. The My FRIENDS Youth co-ordinator at your school will be co-ordinating our visit to your school.

If you have any further questions about this study, please contact me by phone or email. We look forward to visiting your school and hearing more about your experiences with the programme.

[sign off]

## TEACHER Consent Form

### Evaluation of the My FRIENDS Youth programme 2014

**I have read the Information Sheet and understand what my involvement in the study will be.**

Yes       No

**I agree to take part in an interview and provide information about my experience of the My FRIENDS Youth programme.**

Yes       No

Your name: \_\_\_\_\_

School name: \_\_\_\_\_

Your role in the My FRIENDS Youth programme (e.g. Year 9 Dean, teacher of the programme):

\_\_\_\_\_

Email: \_\_\_\_\_

Signed: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_

**Thank you very much.**

**We will collect this form when we visit your school.**



*Parent/Caregiver Information Sheet 2014*

**Student group discussion about the My FRIENDS Youth programme in your child's school  
— November 2014**

**Greetings / Kia ora / Kia orana / Malo e lelei / Talofa lava**

**Your child has been invited to be part of a study about the My FRIENDS Youth programme.** My FRIENDS Youth is being delivered in about 30 schools in New Zealand this year and your child's school is one of those schools.

We are researchers who are doing a study about My FRIENDS Youth for the Ministry of Education.

**What is My FRIENDS Youth?**

As part of My FRIENDS Youth teachers are trying to increase student wellbeing by teaching students effective ways to solve problems and cope with difficult situations.

Teachers are taking students through a ten-session programme, during health classes, to help students develop problem-solving and coping skills.

For more information see: <http://www.friendsforlife.org.nz/parents/>

**What will my child be asked to do?**

As part of this study we would like your child, as well as some other Year 9 students at their school, to take part in a group interview to talk about what they think about the My FRIENDS Youth programme. The group interview will take about 30 minutes of their school time. Your child does not have to take part in the interview. If they agree now, they can still decide later not to be part of the group interview.

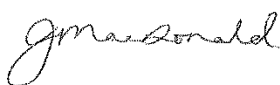
**What will happen to the information my child gives?**

Only the researchers and the other students in the group will know what they have said. We will use the information the students share with us to write reports for the schools and the Ministry of Education. These reports may be published. We will NOT use the name of any students or teachers in these reports.

**What do I do next?**

We would value your child's participation in this study. However, your child is under no obligation to be involved and if you **do not** agree to your child being part of this study please fill in the form and give it to your child to return to school. If you have any questions about this study, please contact me by phone or email.

Kind regards,



Jo MacDonald  
Email: [jo.macdonald@nzcer.org.nz](mailto:jo.macdonald@nzcer.org.nz)  
Phone: 04 802 1459

***Parent/Caregiver Opt-Out Form 2014***

I **do not** want my child being part of a group interview for the study about My FRIENDS Youth.

Please print your child's and your name clearly.

**Your child's** full name is: \_\_\_\_\_  
(First name) (Last name)

Your signature: \_\_\_\_\_

The date today is: \_\_\_\_\_ 2014

**Please give this form to your child to return to school.**

## **Protocols for selection of students to interview**

### **My FRIENDS Youth Co-ordinator Guidelines: Inviting students to take part in a group interview about My FRIENDS Youth**

Please use these guidelines to ask for Year 9 and Year 10 students (where applicable) who are willing to take part in a group interview

#### **Ideas for introducing the evaluation to students**

This year the Year 9 students at our school are doing the My FRIENDS Youth programme in their health class. My FRIENDS Youth aims to support you with ways to manage feelings and develop skills for life. Some researchers are doing a study on My FRIENDS Youth. They would like your help.

They would like some students from this school to be part of a group interview. This interview will take about 30–45 minutes, and will be in school time. The students in this group will be asked questions about what they thought of the My FRIENDS Youth programme and what they have learnt from the programme. The researchers are really interested in hearing your views.

The researchers will use a digital voice recorder to record what the group talks about. They will also be talking to the principal and teachers at this school, and may visit some classrooms.

If you agree to help with this study, only the other students in the group and the researchers will know what you have said. The researchers will write reports using the information they have collected from us, but they will not put your name or teachers’ names in these reports.

If you would like to be part of this group interview please tell me and I will give you a letter to read and a form to sign. If you are chosen to be part of the group we will give you an information sheet for your parents. Do you have any questions?

#### **Notes: Selecting students for the interview**

If possible, from those who are interested, select students in Year 9 and Year 10 who are:

- likely to be comfortable expressing their opinions in a group situation
- likely to feel comfortable talking about My FRIENDS Youth and their feelings
- representative of the main cultural groups at your school
- some focus groups that are made up only of boys – and some only of girls
- Consider special educational needs students (perhaps teamed up with a buddy)
- Consider a group of students who identify as Maori or Pasifika as a specific group



## Appendix 3: Wellbeing@School student survey data

Figure 8 Wellbeing@School student survey comparison between pre-programme and end-of-programme ratings on 13 key items

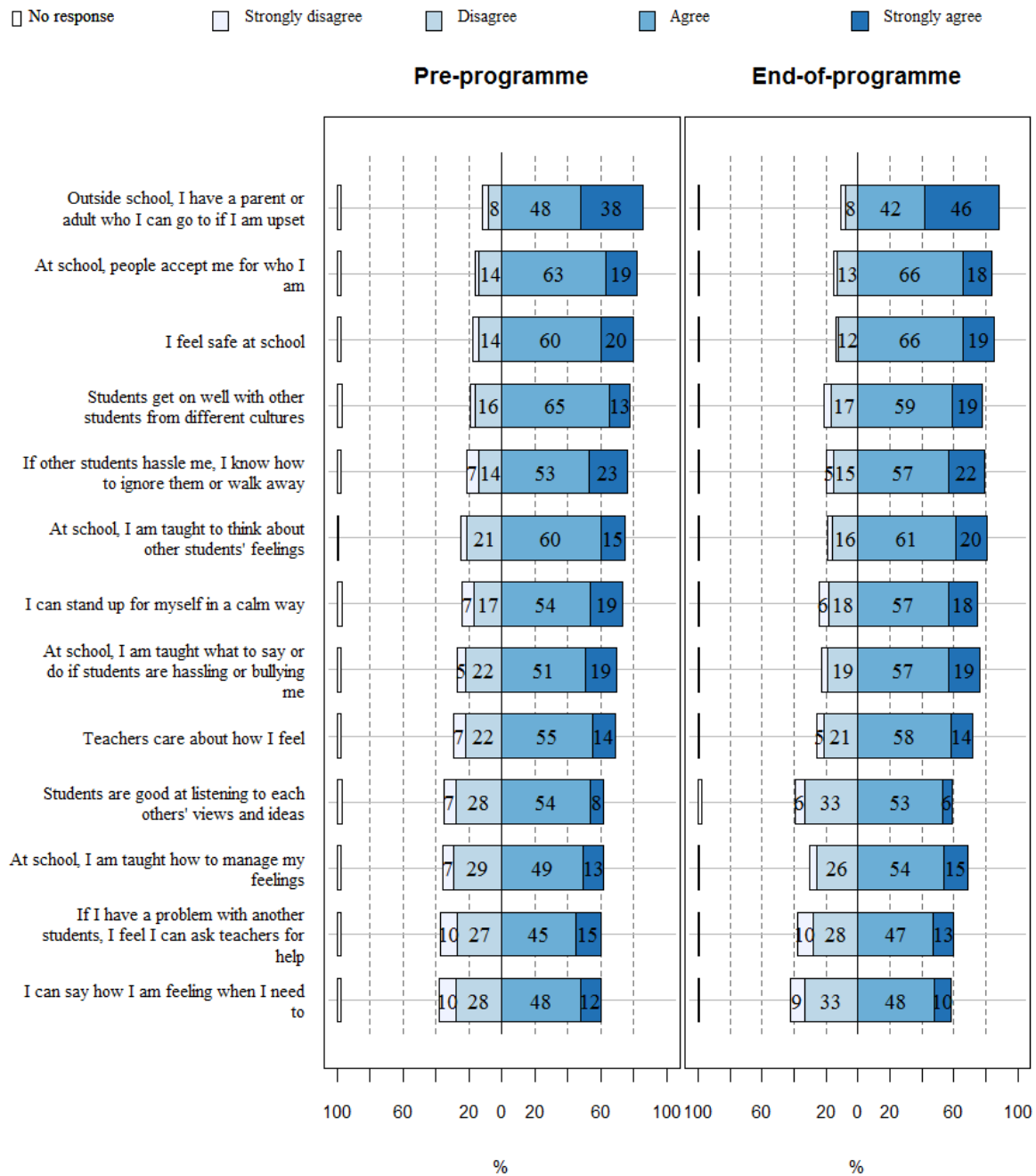


Figure 9 Wellbeing@School student survey comparison between pre-programme and post-programme (follow-up at Year 10) ratings on 13 key items

