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GROW YOUR MIND

UNIVERSITY OF WOLLONGONG AUSTRALIA

KEY FINDINGS

from the University of Wollongong independent study on Grow Your Mind:

In 2021 we commissioned an external evaluation of the Grow Your Mind Program with the University of Wollongong. The evaluation report has just been finalised and we are thrilled to share the findings.

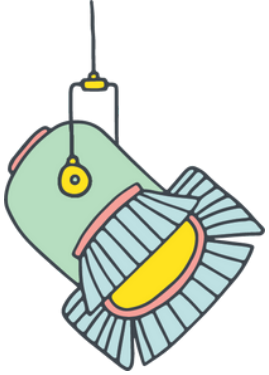
Participants were 32 teachers and 657 students across 25 classrooms from three schools. Classes were matched and then randomly assigned to either participate in the Grow Your Mind program or continue with their routine practice.

Students' responses to validated surveys indicated positive impacts for those whose class teachers participated in the Grow Your Mind program. These included:

a reduction in negative affect

positive gains in physical and psychological wellbeing

quality of the child's interactions with others, sense of connection, belonging and engagement



A FEW FACTS TO SPOTLIGHT

- Pre-evaluation of students' wellbeing and mental health took place BEFORE the NSW lockdown and online learning of Term 3 2021.

- Under challenging circumstances; unanticipated COVID-19 restrictions required a shift to home schooling during program implementation.

- Despite these challenges and suboptimal program implementation conditions, the Grow Your Mind program was implemented by teachers over 10 weeks in Term 3 of 2021, using the schools' online learning platforms and protocols.

- The data trends that emerged from this evaluation suggests that the Grow Your Mind program generated positive changes to mental wellbeing, but also for buffering against negative affect and its consequences.

- This is an important mechanism in facilitating ongoing growth and mental wellbeing, which, in turn, may support children's development of optimism, connectedness, emotional competence and resilience, both at school and in their everyday lives.

If you would like any further information about Grow Your Mind please contact

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GROW YOUR MIND

EVALUATION REPORT

Final Report on the 2021 Program Evaluation conducted by the University of Wollongong

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UNIVERSITY OF WOLLONGONG - MARCH 2021

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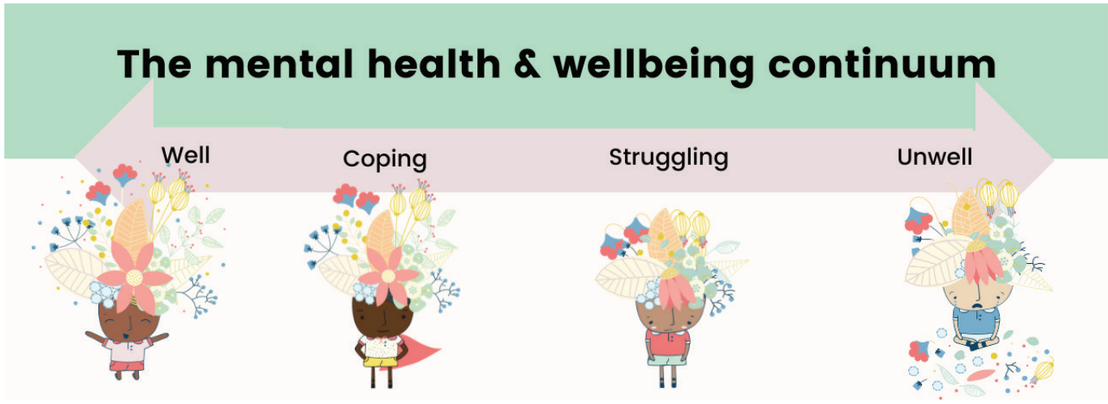
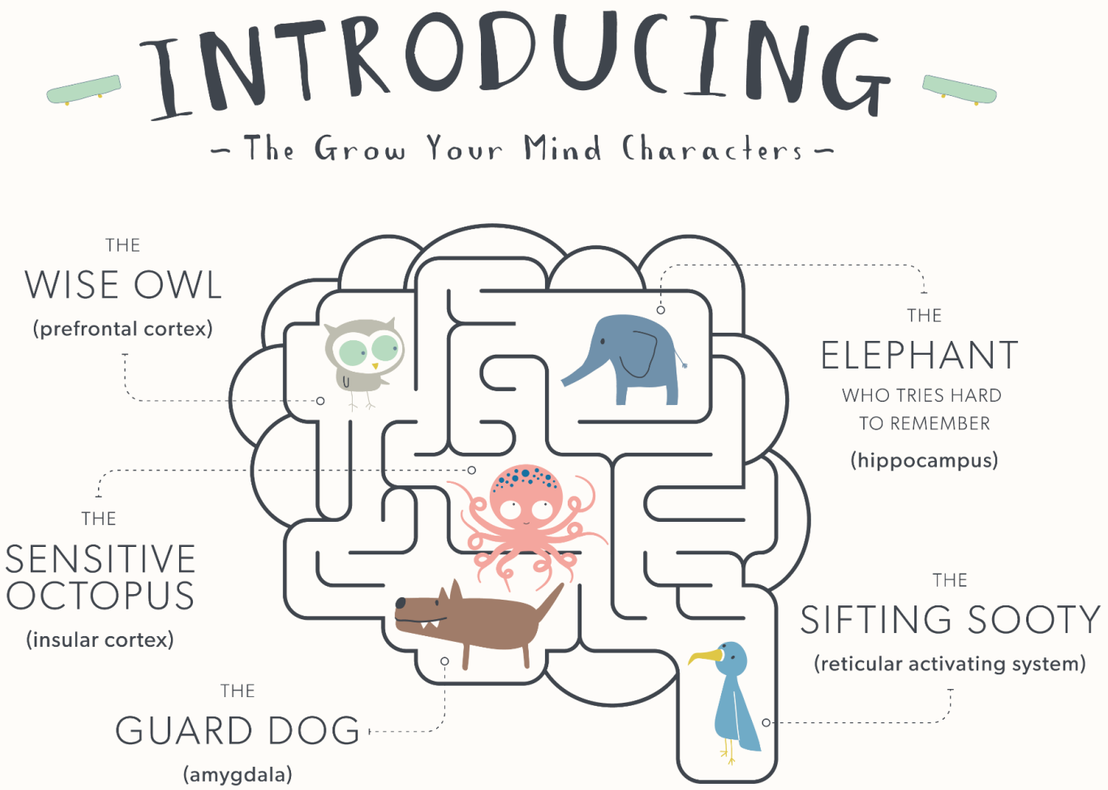
A FOREWORD FROM THE GROW YOUR MIND TEAM: INTRODUCTION & BACKGROUND

Grow Your Mind is a social and emotional wellbeing program for pre and primary school aged children, educators and families. Our reason for being is to reclaim the term mental health. We all have it, it can be fantastic, terrible and somewhere in between. Our belief is that we are on a continuum and that due to the fact that we all have mental health, we can all learn ways to look after it.



We know that prevention is easier than any cure. So starting early is key. We want to arm children from the age of 3 through to 12, their educators and families with the knowledge about what mental health is and the key skills essential for supporting it. We found a fantastic, super engaging way to do this. Beginning with animals and the brain.



We created animals to represent key parts of the brain. Using neuroscience, positive psychology, public health and social and emotional learning research and combining it with animal analogies and storytelling has been our hook for captivating the imagination and attention of children. With this as our launching pad we have made mental health education relatable, engaging and high impact.

What we do

We provide:
Outstanding educational content for use in the classroom, playground, whole school and wider community. We have an online schools program which stands alongside physical resources to make this important messaging visible. Our content is in line with NSW and Australian curriculum and has been written by an accredited NSW primary school teacher. The Grow Your Mind schools program is one of a small number of social and emotional wellbeing programs to be listed on the Beyond Blue, BE YOU program directory. It is a multimedia program with videos, lesson plans, grab 5 minutes of wellbeing activities, units of work, breathing techniques, student journals, reflection questions, literacy resource list, audio productions, embedding wellbeing across the curriculum tools and more.

We run:
Professional development courses for educators focusing on how to teach mental health education, staff wellbeing, building resilience in children and character strength education.

Webinars and courses for parents and families on raising resilient kids, taking care of your own wellbeing, creative households, emotional regulation and more.

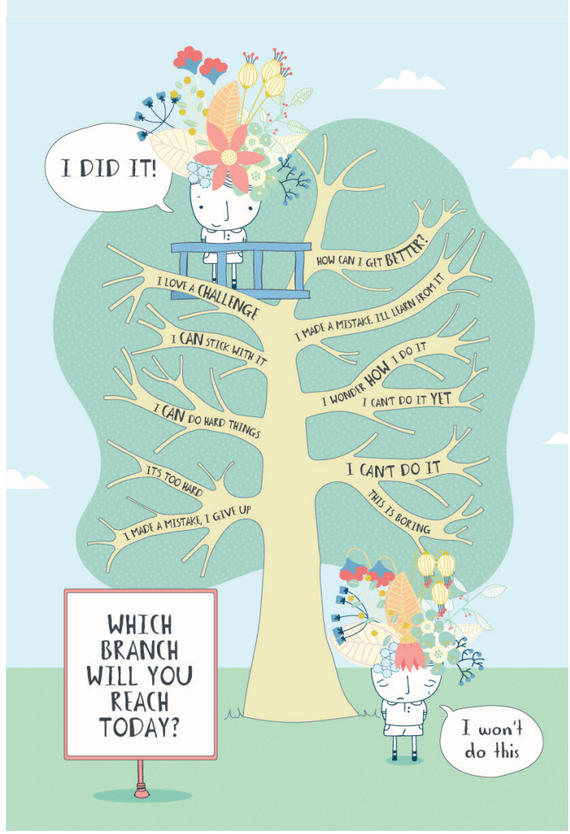
We create:
An annual award winning children's mental health podcast. Listened to in over 90 countries. To date it has 18 meaningful, hilarious and research informed episodes on topics ranging from respectful relationships, conflict, dealing with disappointment, grief, hope, climate change, resilience, values, jealousy, gratitude, being of benefit and more.

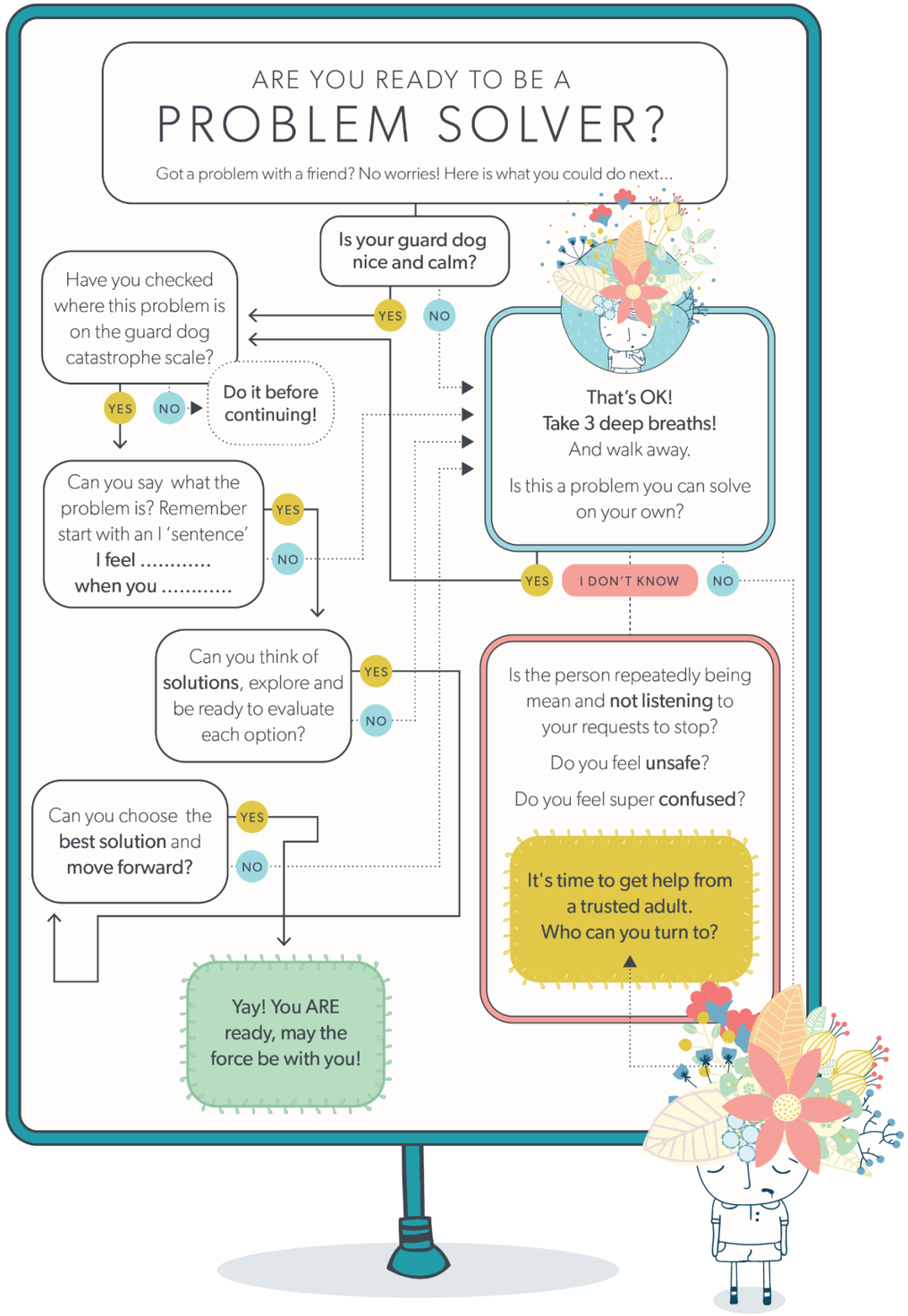
Why did we want this study?

For 5 years we have been gathering overwhelmingly positive qualitative data about the impact of our program. Impact lies at the core of our business - we are driven to make a difference. This is why we were keen for independent quantitative research to examine what we believed to be true: Grow Your Mind boosts resilience and feelings of mental wellbeing in children and educators who receive the program.

Having research informed evidence for the impact of our program is crucial to what we do and our vision for the future. We want to show the world how simple and yet effective Grow Your Mind is a whole school program.

By Alice Peel and Kristina Freeman

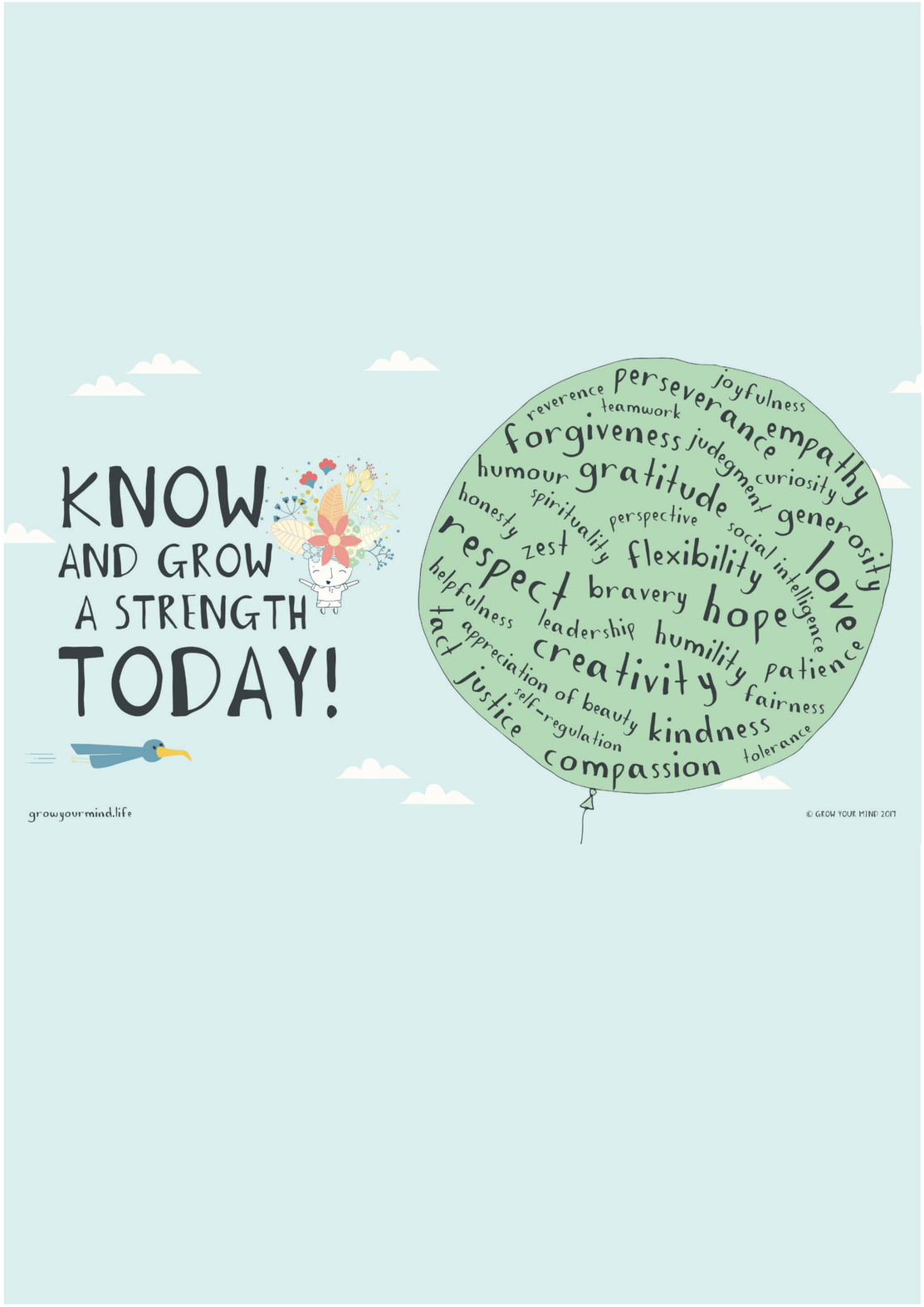




GROW YOUR MIND EVALUATION RESULTS

Executive Summary Highlights

- Despite deferrals and best efforts, implementation and evaluation of the Grow Your Mind program occurred under challenging circumstances; unanticipated COVID-19 restrictions required a shift to home schooling during program implementation, despite schools being fully open in the preceding months.
- Despite these challenges and suboptimal program implementation conditions, the Grow Your Mind program was implemented by teachers over 10 weeks in Term 3 of 2021, using the schools' online learning platforms and protocols.
- The evaluation was also conducted remotely, using established and validated online surveys, immediately before and after program implementation. The evaluation analyses focused on whether there was more-positive pre- to post-intervention change for the Grow Your Mind group compared to a business-as-usual waitlist control group.
- Participants were 32 teachers and 657 students across 25 classrooms from three schools. Classes were matched and then randomly assigned to either participate in the Grow Your Mind program or continue with their routine practice.
- The pattern of results across the 22 student outcomes evaluated suggested broad positive impacts for students whose teachers participated in the Grow Your Mind program. More than two-thirds of the outcomes favoured the Grow Your Mind student participants.
- Teacher results were difficult to interpret due to a necessarily smaller sample size, and an unexpected level of non-response at follow-up (especially for teachers with initially poorer mental wellbeing). This may have been related to the additional burdens and stresses of a second months-long period of home schooling and COVID-19 restrictions. Regardless of the reason, non-completion precluded clear conclusions about the impact on teachers using these data.
- Nevertheless, given that Grow Your Mind does not operate directly with or upon students - but rather leverages teachers as the vehicle for implementation - the student findings imply a positive change in teacher knowledge, practice, programming, and/or efficacy for student growth to have been stimulated.
- It is recommended that future evaluations seek to replicate these results. In doing so, we recommend that the implementation and/or evaluation period be extended over a longer period to provide sufficient time for the program to be fully embedded and any effects to be fully realised. This contrasts the current 10-week implementation, in which new lessons were introduced each week over that period (and thus full program knowledge/benefit was not complete until shortly before post-intervention assessment).



Evaluation Context

This implementation and evaluation of the Grow Your Mind program was undertaken in 2021, with evaluation conducted by University of Wollongong researchers and implementation (to which the UOW team was blind) by Grow Your Mind staff. Due to the unforeseen COVID-19 pandemic restrictions introduced following the study's commencement, the Grow Your Mind program was delivered to students entirely online using each school's online learning platform. Evaluation was also conducted remotely, via online surveys. Further details on the context are provided in Appendix A: Methodology.

Intervention Effects on Student Outcomes

Given a fundament aim of the Grow Your Mind program is promoting positive and evidence-based mental health strategies to ensure students' mental wellbeing, initial analyses focused on evaluating whether students participating in the Grow Your Mind program improved in mental wellbeing-related outcomes to a greater extent than did the control group (the latter reflecting typical and expected change without intervention). For some of the outcomes evaluated there was growth in mental wellbeing, while others declined. It is unclear whether this was related to expected peaks and troughs across a typical school year and/or COVID-related impacts. Nevertheless, our analyses sought to evaluate whether teachers and students participating in the Grow Your Mind program showed larger gains, or less decline, in mental wellbeing than the control group.

In total, we evaluated change in 22 outcomes related to students': mental health and wellbeing; their knowledge and confidence to look after their mental health; and their connection to school and peers. These results are reported in full in Table 1 and depicted in Figures 1 and 2 that follow.

Reconciling the full pattern of results, 15 (more than two-thirds) of the 22 outcomes evaluated showed a more desirable change amongst Grow Your Mind participants – that is, larger gains in some areas and less declines in other areas of mental wellbeing – compared to the control group (see Figures 1 and 2). This is suggestive of broad beneficial impacts of the program for diverse aspects of student mental wellbeing.

For instance, students participating in the Grow Your Mind program showed greater gains than students in the control group in areas such as psychological well-being, and perceptions of family support and autonomy. For psychological wellbeing, for instance, whereas the control group showed an average 2% decline in self-ratings of their psychological wellbeing (resulting from unmeasured factors that may include challenges inherent to that stage of the school year, challenges related to the COVID pandemic and others), students of teachers who participated in the Grow Your Mind program noted a slight increase in their psychological wellbeing.

There were also several outcomes for which the control group showed undesirable decline, yet this was less so for students in the Grow Your Mind program. This was the case for outcomes in areas such as negative affect and quality of students' interactions with peers. For instance, whereas the control group showed ~3% increase in self-identified frequency of negative affect over the preceding few weeks (an increased level of negative emotions), students in the Grow Your Mind program showed an almost 5% reduction in negative affect.

TABLE 1

A Summary of the Outcomes for Each Variable for Students

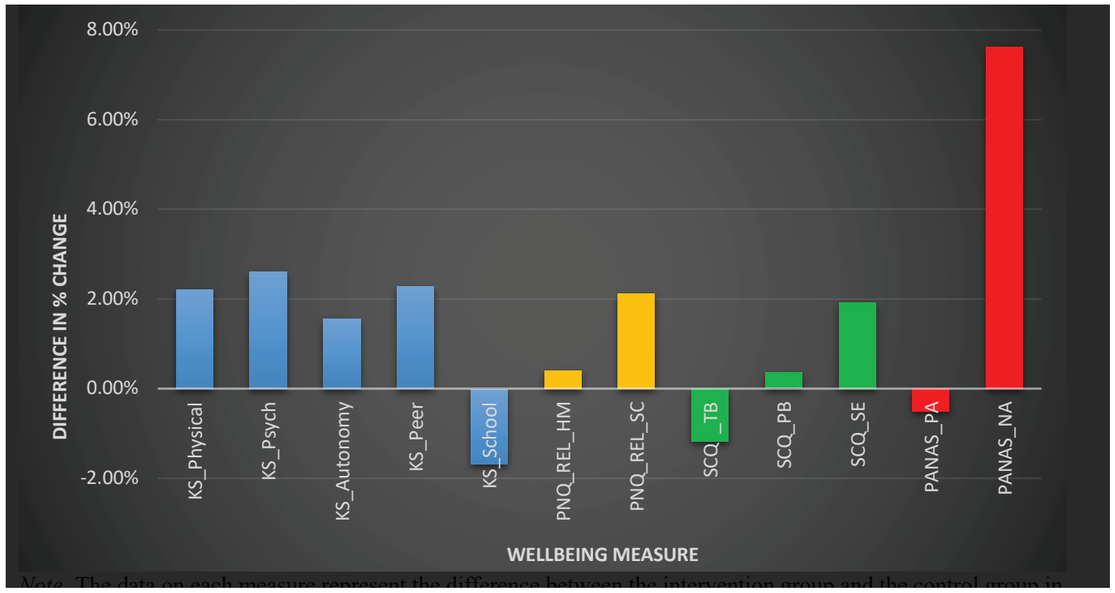
	Intervention Group				Control Group				
Outcome	*n*	Baseline *M(SE)*	Post-Test *M(SE)*	*% Chg*	*n*	Baseline *M(SE)*	Post-Test *M(SE)*	*% Chg*	**Construct**
Outcomes for which we seek growth									
KS_Physical	184	16.39 (.25)	15.98 (.27)	-2.50%	111	15.80 (.34)	15.05 (.36)	-4.70%	Physical well-being
KS_Psych	184	24.58 (.35)	24.65 (.36)	0.28%	109	24.52 (.44)	23.95 (.48)	-2.32%	Psychological well-being
KS_Autonomy	184	26.39 (.39)	27.48 (.39)	4.13%	107	27.23 (.47)	27.93 (.47)	2.57%	Quality of child's interaction with and perceived support by family + perceived autonomy.
KS_Peer	183	16.77 (.24)	15.81 (.27)	-5.72%	107	16.10 (.33)	14.81 (.39)	-8.01%	Quality of child's interaction with and perceived support by peers
KS_School	183	16.29 (.19)	15.86 (.21)	-2.64%	107	15.74 (.25)	15.59 (.29)	-0.95%	Child's perception of learning/cognitive capacity + feelings about school + relationship with teachers
PNQ_REL_HM	181	41.73 (.56)	43.23 (.53)	3.59%	107	41.72 (.72)	43.05 (.67)	3.19%	Sense of connection and belonging toward other people at home
PNQ_REL_SC	179	41.85 (.57)	43.34 (.56)	3.56%	107	42.08 (.76)	42.68 (.74)	1.43%	Sense of connection and belonging toward other people at school
SCQ_TB	183	8.60 (.07)	8.50 (.07)	-1.16%	107	8.68 (.07)	8.70 (.07)	0.02%	Child's ability to create and maintain relationships with teachers.
SCQ_PB	183	11.16 (.08)	11.20 (.09)	0.36%	107	11.06 (.13)	11.06 (.13)	0.00%	Child's ability to create and maintain peer relationships
SCQ_SE	183	8.27 (.08)	8.36 (.08)	1.09%	107	8.48 (.08)	8.41 (.08)	-0.83%	The degree a student engages in school-related behaviour
PANAS_PA	183	20.09 (.35)	19.78 (.33)	-1.54%	107	19.45 (.40)	19.25 (.43)	-1.03%	Frequency of positive affect over past few weeks
Outcomes for which we seek decline									
PANAS_NA	183	9.93 (.33)	9.45 (.30)	-4.83%	107	9.65 (.41)	9.92 (.41)	2.80%	Frequency of negative affect over past few weeks
Vignettes for which we seek growth									
Vignette 1	**Failed to do something in class**								
Pos sum	268	0.58 (0.34)	0.60 (0.33)	3.45%	243	0.57 (0.33)	0.54 (0.35)	-5.26%	Endorsed positive coping strategies (%)
Neg Sum	276	0.32 (0.31)	0.30 (0.31)	-6.25%	235	0.29 (0.29)	0.30 (0.31)	3.45%	Endorsed negative coping strategies (%)
Vignette 2	**Has to do too much homework**								
Pos sum	268	0.56 (0.34)	0.31 (0.32)	-44.64%	243	0.56 (0.33)	0.48 (0.35)	-14.29%	Endorsed positive coping strategies (%)
Neg Sum	276	0.31 (0.32)	0.29 (0.32)	-6.45%	235	0.27 (0.28)	0.27 (0.29)	0.00%	Endorsed negative coping strategies (%)
Vignette 3	**Not allowed to join in play at school**								
Pos sum	268	0.56 (0.36)	0.53 (0.37)	-5.36%	243	0.54 (0.33)	0.45 (0.37)	-16.67%	Endorsed positive coping strategies (%)
Neg Sum	276	0.36 (0.32)	0.34 (0.30)	-5.56%	235	0.36 (0.29)	0.30 (0.29)	-16.67%	Endorsed negative coping strategies (%)
Vignette 4	**Being bullied at school**								
Pos sum	268	0.56 (0.38)	0.51 (0.38)	-8.93%	243	0.50 (0.35)	0.46 (0.37)	-8.00%	Endorsed positive coping strategies (%)
Neg Sum	276	0.31 (0.31)	0.29 (0.30)	-6.45%	235	0.34 (0.29)	0.27 (0.29)	-20.59%	Endorsed negative coping strategies (%)
Vignette 5	**Arrived at school having a bad/sad day**								
Pos sum	268	0.56 (0.38)	0.52 (0.38)	-7.14%	243	0.54 (0.36)	0.47 (0.39)	-12.96%	Endorsed positive coping strategies (%)
Neg Sum	268	0.30 (0.30)	0.27 (0.30)	-10.00%	235	0.30 (0.27)	0.27 (0.28)	-10.00%	Endorsed negative coping strategies (%)

Note. Black text identifies outcomes for which there was descriptively more-positive change for the intervention group. Red text identifies outcomes for which there was descriptively more-positive change for the control group. Values above the middle black dividing line represent students' self-ratings on established and validated scales: KS = Kidscreen-27; PNQ = Psychological Needs Questionnaire (Home); SCQ = School Connectedness Questionnaire; PANAS = Positive and Negative Affect Scale (Child Short Version). Each scale yielded multiple subscale scores, which are described in the column 'Construct'. Values represent the sum of item ratings for each subscale.

Vignettes were short scenarios (briefly characterised in the tables and provided in full in Appendix B) against which students indicated the extent to which they would endorse a range of positive (constructive) or negative (avoidant) strategies. Values represent the percentage of available positive (pos sum) or negative (neg sum) strategies that were endorsed from available selections.

FIGURE 1

Relative Percentage Change in Student Mental Wellbeing Measures

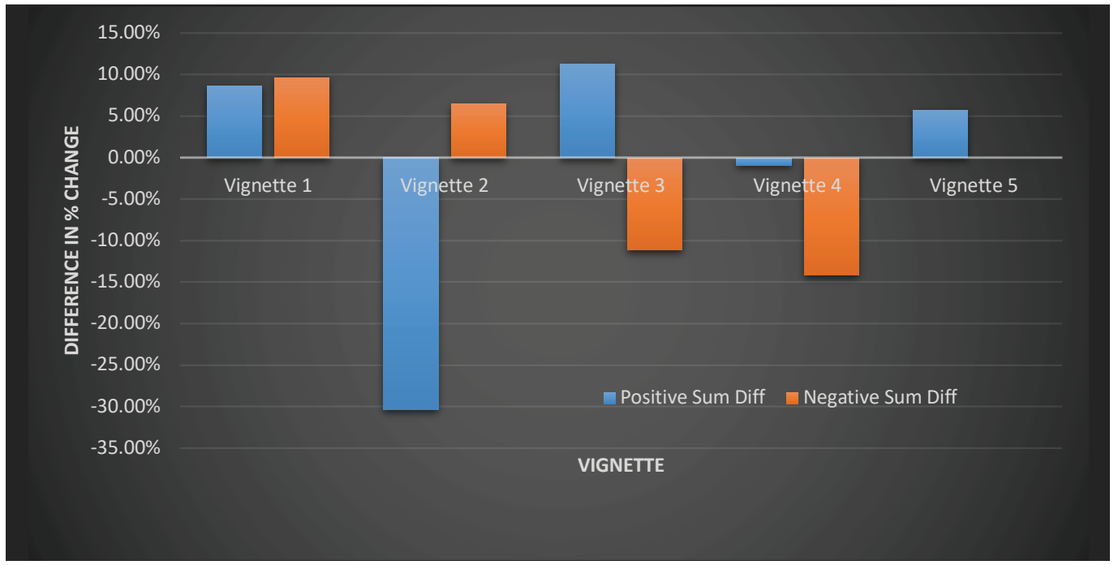


Note. The data on each measure represent the difference between the intervention group and the control group in

Note. The data on each measure represent the difference between the intervention group and the control group in the percentage change of scores from Time 1 to Time 2. Values above 0% indicate that the difference was descriptively in favour of the intervention group. KS = Kidscreen-27; PNQ = Psychological Needs Questionnaire (Home); SCQ = School Connectedness Questionnaire; PANAS = Positive and Negative Affect Scale (Child Short Version).

FIGURE 2

Relative Percentage Change in Students' Endorsed Positive and Negative Coping Strategies to Hypothetical Stressful Scenarios



Note. The data for each vignette represent the difference between the intervention group and the control group in the percentage change from Time 1 to Time 2, for students' endorsements of positive and negative coping strategies, respectively. Values above 0% indicate that the difference was descriptively in favour of the intervention group.

This pattern of positive student-level change amongst Grow Your Mind student participants is particularly notable given that Grow Your Mind does not operate directly with or on students, but rather student-level change is reliant on flow-on effects of changes in teacher knowledge, practice and/or efficacy.

While the pattern of change in outcomes was not unanimously in favour of Grow Your Mind participants–the intervention group fared descriptively worse than the control group in feelings about school, frequency of positive affect and, children's ability to maintain relationships with teachers–this was not entirely unexpected. For feelings about school and teacher relationships in particular, the Grow Your Mind program does not explicitly address these topics in its programming. Rather, these were outcomes included to evaluate possible conferral of benefits to other aspects of wellbeing that were not explicitly addressed in the program. This was also the case for Vignette 4, which asked students about the strategies they would adopt in the event of being bullied at school–which is not addressed explicitly or in-depth within the Grow Your Mind lessons.

It is less clear why there was greater decline in the intervention group in positive affect, though it is notable that the intervention group rated themselves higher in positive affect than did the control group prior to the Grow Your mind program, and they remained higher in positive affect on conclusion of the program. The degree of difference in change was also small, with -1% for the control group and -1.5% for the intervention group. Together, these raise questions about the authenticity of this finding; that is, whether we would expect this result to be replicated if the evaluation were repeated, or whether it is a product of random variation. While the current data cannot conclusively endorse one or the other of these interpretations, the higher baseline and small difference in change suggests that this is unlikely to be a robust and replicable result.

It should be noted that none of these differences rose to the level of statistical significance. This must be considered in the context of the brief duration of the program (10 weeks), however, and that the confluence of results points toward benefits for students in the intervention group. As such, we consider these results as a promising sign of the potential and likelihood that the Grow Your Mind program had positive impacts for participating students.

Intervention Effects on Teacher Outcomes

The pattern of results in teachers' outcomes was the near opposite of the pattern in the student data. That is, changes in 8 of the 12 outcomes (two-thirds) we evaluated–related to teachers' experience of positive emotions and actions, experiencing gratitude in daily life, resilience, and confidence to deliver mental health-related content–favoured the control group. This was unexpected given: (a) the Grow Your Mind program intervened directly with teachers; (b) the Grow Your Mind program explicitly strives to generate positive change in teachers' mental wellbeing, in addition to enhancing their practices for supporting students' mental wellbeing; and (c) there was a pattern of broad and positive change amongst Grow Your Mind students, which implies changes in teacher knowledge, practice or efficacy to stimulate these student-level changes. Teacher results are reported in full in Table 2 and are depicted in Figure 3.

Further inspection of these results showed that, regardless of the opportunity to participate in the Grow Your Mind program in the evaluation period, teachers who completed the questionnaires at both data collection points showed a modest positive change in their mental wellbeing across almost every wellbeing measure (see the '% change' columns in Table 2). The only exception was in teachers' confidence to deliver mental health-related material in the classroom (TCSDMH_TOT), in which teachers in the intervention group showed a small reduction in their confidence. In contrast, teachers in the control group showed a small positive change in their mean confidence rating. This finding has been found in other similar program contexts too, in which introduction of new knowledge and practice initially increases professional challenge and decreases confidence; that is, prior to new learning, teachers are not acutely aware of what they did not know (and thus are confident to continue doing what they have been doing already).

Our data inspections also showed unexpectedly high levels of non-completion within the post-program questionnaires. This was particularly pronounced amongst teachers who were lower in mental wellbeing at the start of the program, and especially for those with lower mental wellbeing who did not participate in the Grow Your Mind program during the evaluation period. Regardless of reasons for non-completion (perhaps related to additionally burdens and stresses of a second round of home schooling and COVID restrictions), this precluded clear conclusions about the impact of the Grow Your Mind program on teachers using the teacher data.

It may be informative that the stresses of the situation precluded completion of the evaluation instruments particularly for control group teachers with comparatively lower initial mental wellbeing levels. While this was also present among teachers participating in the Grow Your Mind program, it was less pronounced in that group. As in the student results, wherein Grow Your Mind participation appeared to buffer against negative declines for some outcomes, it is plausible that teachers' participation in the Grow Your Mind program helped mitigate whatever stresses precluded completion in program non-participants. This is speculative, however, and given the issues in teacher data we were unable to draw any definitive conclusions from these results–neither in favour of nor contesting Grow Your Mind benefits.

Nevertheless, given Grow Your Mind does not operate directly with or on students–but rather it leverages teachers as the vehicle for program implementation and generating student benefit–the student findings imply a positive change in teacher knowledge, practice, programming and/or efficacy for student growth to have occurred.

TABLE 2

A Summary of the Outcomes for Each Variable for Teachers

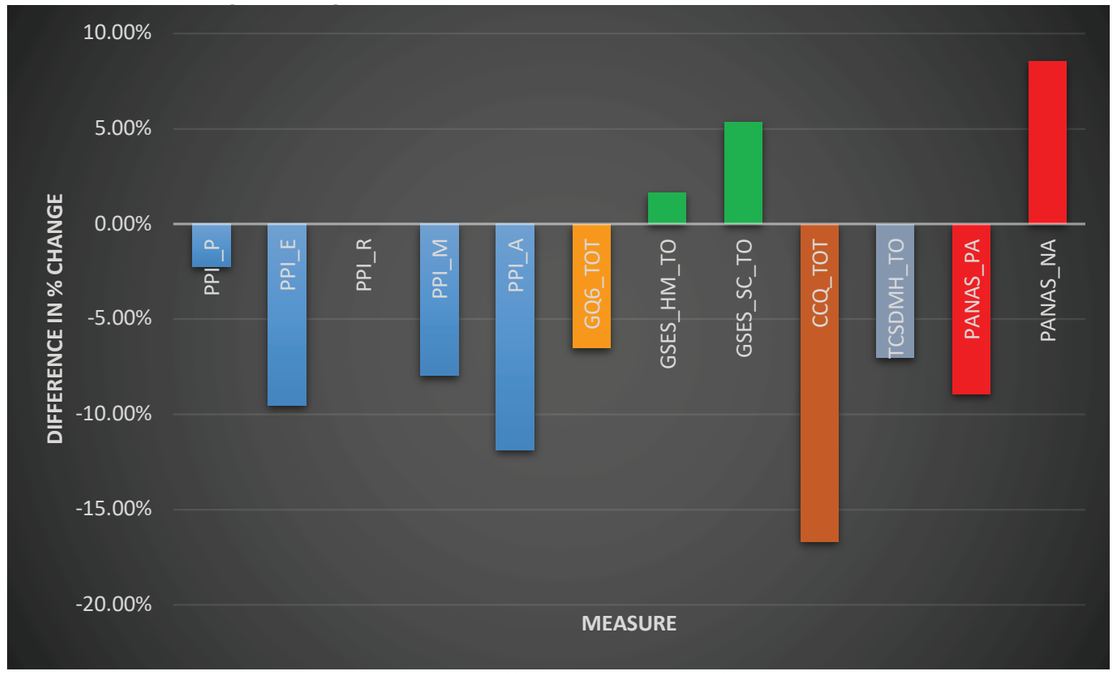
	Intervention Group				Control Group				
Outcome	n	Baseline M(SE)	Post-Test M(SE)	% Chg	n	Baseline M(SE)	Post-Test M(SE)	% Chg	**Construct**
Outcomes for which we seek growth									
PPI_P	15	20.67 (2.23)	21.78 (2.20)	5.37%	12	21.00 (2.26)	22.60 (1.52)	7.62%	Degree of experience of positive emotions
PPI_E	15	22.00 (1.51)	22.67 (2.40)	3.05%	12	21.50 (1.78)	24.20 (1.10)	12.56%	Degree of immersing oneself deeply in activities, utilising one's strengths,
PPI_R	15	22.93 (2.15)	23.33 (2.69)	1.74%	12	23.00 (2.17)	23.40 (1.52)	1.74%	Degree of experience of positive, secure, trusting relationships
PPI_M	15	20.33 (2.99)	20.67 (2.92)	1.67%	12	20.25 (2.99)	22.20 (1.64)	9.63%	Degree of belong to and serving something with a sense of purpose
PPI_A	15	20.13 (2.53)	21.67 (3.08)	7.65%	12	19.58 (3.20)	23.40 (1.82)	19.51%	Degree of pursuing success, mastery, and achievement for its own sake
GQ6_TOT	15	36.47 (4.09)	37.56 (4.28)	2.99%	12	37.08 (6.83)	40.60 (1.67)	9.49%	Proneness to experience gratitude in daily life
PANAS_PA	15	35.93 (6.61)	38.67 (6.52)	7.63%	12	37.92 (6.75)	44.20 (5.07)	16.56%	Frequency of positive affect over past few weeks
GSES_HM_TO	15	32.80 (3.80)	34.11 (3.79)	3.99%	12	34.00 (5.34)	34.80 (3.42)	2.35%	Strength of individuals belief in their ability to respond to and control demands and challenges at HOME
GSES_SC_TO	15	32.00 (3.70)	33.78 (4.63)	5.56%	12	34.92 (3.87)	35.00 (5.05)	0.23%	Strength of individuals belief in their ability to respond to and control demands and challenges at SCHOOL (work)
TCSDMH_TO	15	100.87 (16.28)	100.56 (18.56)	-0.31%	12	99.33 (13.69)	106.00 (12.71)	6.71%	Educators' confidence in delivering mental health related materials in the classroom
Outcomes for which we seek decline									
PANAS_NA	15	19.87 (6.05)	16.11 (4.46)	-18.92%	12	19.42 (7.24)	17.40 (4.45)	-10.40%	Frequency of negative affect over past few weeks

Note. Black text identifies outcomes for which there was descriptively more-positive change for the intervention group. Red text identifies outcomes for which there was descriptively more-positive change for the control group. Values above the middle black dividing line represent teachers' self-ratings on established and validated scales:

PPI = Positive Psychotherapy Inventory; GQ6 = Gratitude Questionnaire 6; PANAS = Positive and Negative Affect Scale; GSES = Generalised Self-Efficacy Scale (Home or School); CCQ = Coping Competence Questionnaire; TCSDMH = Teacher Confidence Scale for Delivering Mental Health. Each scale yielded multiple subscale scores, which are described in the column 'Construct'. Values represent the sum of item ratings for each subscale.

FIGURE 3

Relative Percentage Change in Teacher Outcome Measures



Note. The data on each measure represent the difference between the intervention group and the control group in the percentage change of scores from Time 1 to Time 2. Values above 0% indicate that the difference was descriptively in favour of the intervention group. PPI = Positive Psychotherapy Inventory; GQ6 = Gratitude Questionnaire 6; GSES = Generalised Self-Efficacy Scale (Home or School); CCQ = Coping Competence Questionnaire; TCSDMH = Teacher Confidence Scale for Delivering Mental Health; PANAS = Positive and Negative Affect Scale.

SUMMARY & CONCLUSIONS

An evaluation of the 10-week implementation of the Grow Your Mind program was conducted in Term 3 of 2021. Teachers and students from three primary schools in New South Wales participated remotely during unanticipated COVID restrictions. This evaluation focussed on the extent of pre- to post-intervention change in mental wellbeing for students and teachers who participated in the Grow Your Mind program, relative to a business-as-usual waitlist control group.

Students' responses to validated surveys broadly indicated positive impacts for those whose class teachers participated in the Grow Your Mind program, in aspects of wellbeing that were explicitly addressed in the program. These included a reduction in negative affect, as well as small positive gains in physical and psychological wellbeing, quality of the child's interactions with others, sense of connection, belonging and engagement. The findings were more-mixed on aspects of wellbeing and self-regulation that are either not explicitly addressed in the program (bullying and ostracism at school), or had limited opportunity for practice due to COVID-related restrictions (children's perceptions of relationships with their school and teachers). No clear conclusions can be drawn from the teacher data, due to selective attrition from a small initial sample, combined with other extraneous factors that could not be anticipated or controlled for within the design and implementation of this evaluation study.

In light of the circumstances under which this program implementation and evaluation was conducted, our recommendations for future evaluations of the Grow Your Mind program are threefold. Specifically, it is recommended that: (i) future evaluations be conducted with a larger teacher sample, (ii) with teachers having the opportunity to implement the Grow Your Mind program with students in physical school settings, and (iii) for the implementation/evaluation period be extended across more than a 10-week period. This would enable teachers to facilitate more robust student engagement, provide greater opportunities for teachers and students alike to practise the skills and knowledge gained from the Grow Your Mind program, and would allow sufficient time for any program benefits to be fully realised.

The data trends that emerged from this evaluation suggest that the Grow Your Mind program shows potential for facilitating a positive change in teacher efficacy, knowledge, outlook and practice, and its likelihood for generating positive change in students' mental wellbeing. This appeared to be the case not only for generating positive changes to mental wellbeing, but also for buffering against negative affect and its consequences. This may be an important mechanism that facilitates ongoing growth and mental wellbeing, which, in turn, may support children's development of optimism, connectedness, emotional competence and resilience, both at school and in their everyday lives.

AN AFTERWORD FROM THE GROW YOUR MIND TEAM: QUALITATIVE FEEDBACK

Even during program implentation, the Grow Your Mind team was receiving positive feedback from the participating schools, such as:

> "My students are loving following the Grow Your Mind lessons during online learning and having really mature discussions about their feelings. I have actually been quite blown away by their engagement, enthusiasm, and quality participation. The students are confidently using the language of the brain and the animals and are also starting to make connections with the different behaviours regulated by each. We have been practicing mindfulness breathing techniques, and the students have loved the Guess Who episodes." Year 6 Teacher St Luke's Dee Why.

> "That was without a doubt the best PD I've done for many years. Thank you for giving us a renewed sense of what wellbeing is and how to look after ourselves and our students. I am excited about what our next steps will be as a school and look forward to making a difference in the lives of our young people with the help of Grow Your Mind." Assistant Head of Junior School, St Lukes Dee Why.

Post-program feedback was similarly positive, as in the following examples:

> "The students embraced the Grow Your Mind program and were keen to learn, develop and grow each week. The timing of this program was hugely beneficial. The students shared their thoughts and emotions on the topics and provided positive solutions to real life situations. During Off Campus Learning, the students were able to reflect on their mindset and be more positive to help them through that difficult time. The Humdinger Grab 5 was definitely a favourite and helped us all to laugh. In particular, the language learnt began to be used in other lessons and situations, whether it was needing to activate their sifting sooty or elephant, calm their guard dog, thinking like a dolphin or working out where they were on the growth mindset tree. This enabled the students to embrace challenges as they knew they had tools and strategies to face and overcome them. Students were regularly checking when the Grab 5's were going to be undertaken each day. We all enjoyed that time of focusing on breathing, having a laugh and checking in about how we were feeling. The Guess Who's were popular as the students were able to relate to them, see the character strengths that others have and reflect and grow their own." Year 5 & Cross Campus Stage 3 Coordinator.

This feedback is reproduced with permission of the participants.

By Alice Peel and Kristina Freeman

APPENDIX A: METHODOLOGY

Context

This implementation and evaluation of the Grow Your Mind program was undertaken in 2021, with evaluation conducted by University of Wollongong researchers and implementation (to which the UOW team was blind) by Grow Your Mind staff. Due to the unforeseen COVID-19 pandemic restrictions at the time of study commencement, the Grow Your Mind program was delivered entirely online through each school's online learning platform.

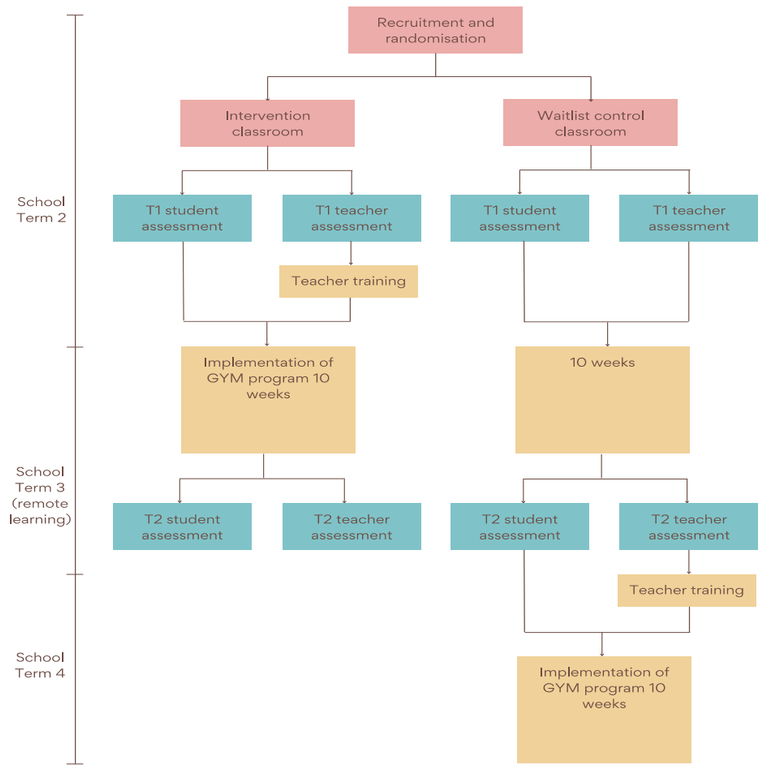
Baseline data collection preceded program commencement, at the end of school Term 2, 2021. For the intervention group, teacher training commenced at the start of Term 3 and the program was implemented across school Term 3. Post-program data collection occurred at the end of school Term 3. Control group classrooms were offered participation in the Grow Your Mind program over School Term 4.

Evaluation Design

The Grow Your Mind program was evaluated using a gold-standard cluster randomised control trial design. In this design, classrooms within each school were first matched (e.g., two Year 3 classes in the same school) and then the classrooms (teachers and their students) were randomly assigned to either participate in the Grow Your Mind program or continue their routine practice (waitlist control). All participating teachers and students completed baseline measures prior to start of the Grow Your Mind program (Time 1) and immediately after completion of the program (Time 2). Researchers from University of Wollongong leading the evaluation were blind to implementation of the Grow Your Mind program. See Figure A1 for a schematic of this design.

FIGURE A1

Schematic of the Study Design



Participating Teachers and Students

A total of 3 schools were recruited by the Grow Your Mind team to participate in this evaluation. Teachers and students in Year 3 to Year 6 classrooms in these schools participated in the evaluation. This yielded an initial sample of 32 teachers and 657 students (~75% participation rate) across 25 classrooms. Due to pragmatic constraints (e.g., time, absence), response rates amongst the recruited sample at were 84% for teachers and 79% for students at Time 1. There was further attrition at Time 2, with 52% of these teachers and 75% of these students completing post-intervention assessment.

Intervention

While the UOW evaluation team were independent, separate and blind to the implementation of the Grow Your Mind program for this evaluation, a brief overview of the program framework follows. To commence, teachers completed a 2-hour wellbeing course and 1-hour Grow Your Mind implementation training course online in the weeks prior to their implementation of the Grow Your Mind program within their classrooms. Classroom delivery of the Grow Your Mind program then consisted of the teachers implementing lessons and materials developed by a NSW-accredited teacher from the Grow Your Mind team. Due to COVID-19 restrictions, the delivery of the Grow Your Mind program to students occurred entirely online. Teachers implemented Grow Your Mind lessons with their classes through their online learning program.

Over the ten-week period students received 1 explicit lesson on each of the following topics, as well as 3-5 wellbeing activities that took less than 5 minutes and a character strength focus:

- Mental health, the Grow Your Mind animals, and Neuroscience
- Perspective
- Optimistic vs pessimistic thinking
- Mindsets: fixed vs growth
- Benefit mindset and kindness
- Respectful relationships
- Resilience
- Gratitude
- Character strengths
- Movement and mood

Outcome Measures

Table A1 summarises the constructs and associated measures that were assessed prior to and after the program, to evaluate effects of the Grow Your Mind program. Teacher-level outcomes assessed were mental health and wellbeing, self-efficacy and confidence in teaching mental health content. While the program did not directly intervene with children, it was anticipated the changes in teachers' knowledge, practice and self-efficacy would nevertheless yield benefit for students. As such, additional student outcomes were assessed, including their mental health and wellbeing, knowledge and confidence to look after their own mental health, connection to school and peers, and coping strategy use.

TABLE A1

Constructs and Associated Measures used to Evaluate the GYM Program

Outcome	Measure	Score(s) Generated	Length
Child			
Mental Health & Wellbeing	Positive and Negative Affect Scale for Children (PANAS-C; Ebesutani et al., 2012)	Levels of positive and negative emotions experienced over the previous few days	10 items (2 min)
	Kidscreen-27 (Robitail et al., 2007)	Physical well-being, psychological well-being, autonomy and parents, peers and social support, school environment	27 items (5 min)
Knowledge, Confidence Looking After Mental Health	Depicted vignettes adapted from Stress and Coping Questionnaire for Children (Roder et al., 2002)	Knowledge of and confidence to use coping strategies learned in the GYM program in response to hypothetical stressful scenarios.	5 vignettes (20 min)
Connection to school and peers	School Connectedness Questionnaire (SCQ; Marsh & Rudolph, 2020)	School connectedness on 3 subscales: teaching bonding/attachment; peer boding/attachment; school engagement	10 items (2 min)
	Relatedness Subscale, Psychological Needs Questionnaire (Deci & Ryan, 2000).	Satisfaction of needs for Relatedness in School setting	8 items (2 min)
Teacher			
Mental Health & Wellbeing	Positive Psychotherapy Inventory (PPTI ; Seligman, Rashid, & Parks, 2006)	Well-being in terms of positive emotions, engagement, Relationships, meaning and accomplishment	25 items (3 min)
	Gratitude Questionnaire-6 (GQ-6; McCullough et al., 2002)	Proneness to experience gratitude in daily life	6 items (1 min)
	Negative subscale of the Positive and Negative Affect Scale – Short Form (PANAS-SF; Watson et al., 1988)	Levels of negative emotions experienced over the previous few days	10 items (2 min)
General Self-Efficacy and Coping	Generalized Self-Efficacy Scale (Schwarzer & Jerusalem, 1995)	Personal competence to deal/cope effectively with stressful situations	10 items (2 min)
	Coping Competence Questionnaire (CCQ; Schroder & Ollis, 2012)	Resilience against helplessness responses to negative events	12 items (2 min)
Confidence in Teaching Mental Health Content	Teacher Confidence Scale for Delivering Mental Health (TCS-MH; Linden & Stuart, 2019)	Educators' confidence in delivering mental-health-related content in the classroom	12 items (2 min)

Procedure

Following in-principle recruitment of schools by the Grow Your Mind team in 2021, the UOW evaluation team independently secured informed consent from the school principal, teachers and students' guardians prior to baseline assessment. Given COVID restrictions that prevented face-to-face data collection or instrument administration, all measures were administered via a Qualtrics online survey. Teachers completed pre- and post-program assessments via the online survey link in their own time. Pre-program assessment for students was conducted during class time, wherein classroom teachers invited and provided students class time to access the Qualtrics survey link and supervised the students to complete the survey. Due to continued COVID-19 school closures at the end of the Grow Your Mind program, students were again invited by their teacher and provided class time to access the Qualtrics survey through the school's online learning platform.

Analysis & Reporting

While inferential significance tests were conducted on all outcomes, given the short duration of the program (and thus limited dose/duration for improvements to be realised) we privileged the direction and size of effects using descriptive data to identify possible impacts of the Grow Your Mind program. That is, while significantly greater improvement in the Grow Your Mind group than the waitlist control group is preferable to infer program effects more confidently, to rely exclusively on these results after a short evaluation period could miss important emerging program impacts. We thus also considered patterns of change (e.g., outcomes consistently pointing in favour of the intervention group) as possible evidence of program impact.

APPENDIX B: VIGNETTES DEVELOPED FOR THE GROW YOUR MIND PROGRAM EVALUATION

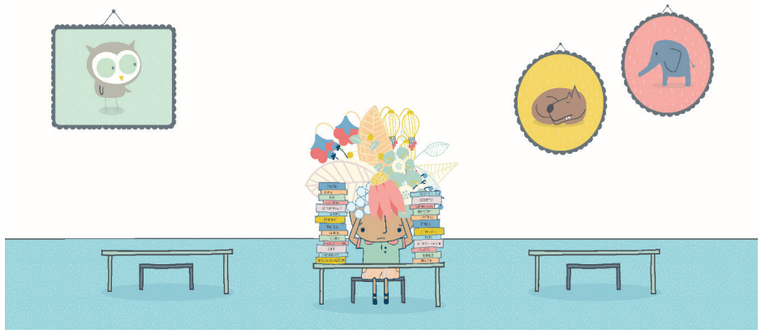
For every vignette, children were prompted to respond to two questions in relation to each of 14 potential coping strategies

VIGNETTE 1

What would you do if the rest of the class had completed their work, but you still had more to do?

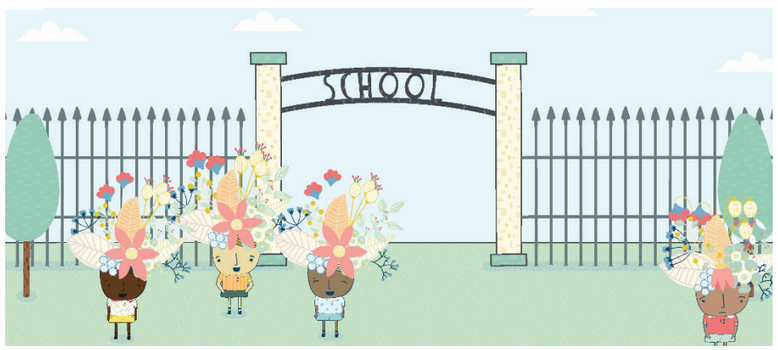
VIGNETTE 2

What would you do if you felt you had way too much homework to do?



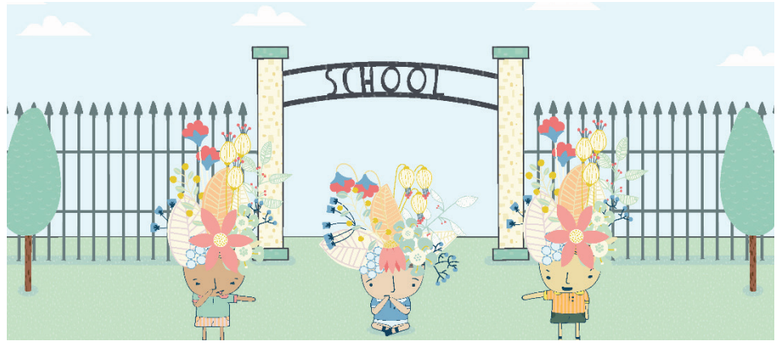
VIGNETTE 3

What would you do if your friends at school wouldn't let you play with them anymore?



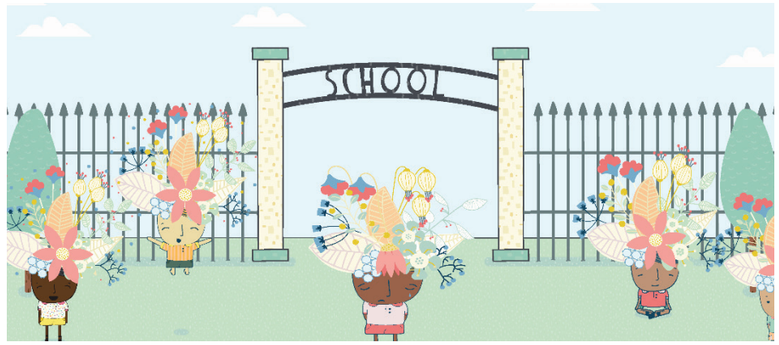
VIGNETTE 4

What would you do if some children at school were being mean to you for no reason?



VIGNETTE 5

What would you do if you got to school and you were already feeling bad or sad?



Potential coping strategies:

- Take some deep breaths
- Worry about the problem
- Think about something that makes me happier
- Cry
- Remind myself that I am safe
- Do other things and hope the problem will go away on its own
- See this as a small and solvable problem
- Try not to think about it
- Figure out how I'm feeling so I can work through it
- Do things to make others feel the same way as I do
- Remind myself of things I am good at
- Be grumpy or aggressive
- Think of a way to overcome this
- Do something else to improve my mood

Questions:

1. Would you do this? (check all that apply)
2. How helpful do you think this would be? (5-point rating scale with response options ranging from 1 = not at all helpful, to 5 = extremely helpful)