

Festival for Healthy Living

Creative arts for mental health and
connecting communities



Dr. Anna Loewendahl

Arts Coordinator, RCH Community Development, Mental Health



The Royal **Children's**
Hospital Melbourne

The Festival for Healthy Living known as 'Dream Big' in Melton



To work in partnership to build the capacity of schools and communities to promote mental health and wellbeing of children & young people through the performing & visual arts



What's Happening in 2023-24



- Dream Big Festival has happened!
- Deadly Dreamin'
- Dream Big Youth Music Festival - RU OK? Day

Festival for Healthy Living Guiding Principles



- To provide a universal health promotion approach to enhance wellbeing for all
- To be flexible, creative and supportive framework - rollout of program is adapted to suit each school and each community's unique needs
- To strengthen social connectedness; relationships between students, parents, school communities and local services

**DREAM
BIG**

FHL Artist



An agent for change...

...for the wellbeing of children, young people and their communities

...working in partnership with teachers, health providers, school communities incl. families

FHL activities include:



- Professional development for local education, arts and health professionals about mental health promotion and use of integrated multi-disciplinary creative approaches
- Engaging students with artistic activities, exploring mental health issues with a creative, solution-focused, problem-solving approach
- Celebratory Outcomes: Performances, exhibitions, launches, & presentations in communities
- Strategies for parent & family engagement including participation in arts & wellbeing workshop activities and festivals



How do we build very real, collaborative partnerships?



- Partnerships needed at all levels:
 - steering committee and sub committees
 - shared professional learning & planning
 - team teaching with young people, in school and community settings
 - Event creation and delivery
- What will remain?
 - ✓ Improved child wellbeing
 - ✓ Working relationships for ongoing collaboration

Evaluation - Student Outcomes

- Destigmatisation - positive attitude to mental health
- Enhanced relationships with peers, teachers, parents
- Increased self-confidence
- Skill development

“[the Festival] gives you confidence. Most of the time, like in PE (physical education) if you make a mistake you get told off but with the Festival you’re told to have fun and keep on trying”



Evaluation - Teacher Outcomes

- Positive professional learning opportunity
- New ways of working with students
- Enhanced relationships with students
- Opportunity to network

*...the stigma around mental health has changed (after the Festival).
At the beginning mental health was associated with being crazy”*

Teacher

*...the Festival has increased our capacity to better understand and
deal with the mental health issues of our students in our own
environment”*

Principal

Evaluation - Parent Outcomes

- Witnessing positive impact on their children - a window to getting involved
- Opportunities for participation - decision-making, arts workshops, creative and production roles

...there were evening workshop nights for parents which were fantastic. I thought I was going to be in the audience but was up there spinning plates and all of that which was great. I felt like I was 12 again”
Parent



Evaluation - Community Outcomes

- Enhanced relationships between community organisations and schools
- Atmosphere of celebration
- Inclusive of all in the local community
- Positive outcomes in areas other than school life including home, family, community appreciation

It was a dream come true! It has improved the links between me and the schools”

Schools Focused Youth Services Coordinator

Festival for Healthy Living



For further information:

Dr. Anna Loewendahl
FHL Arts Coordinator
Royal Children's Hospital Mental Health
50 Flemington St
Flemington VIC 3031
03 9345 6011
0481 242 459

festival.hl@rch.org.au

www.dreambig.org.au

www.rch.org.au/fhl



Additional Slides (for deeper
discussion and more references)

Talking About Life's Ups & Downs









Research says:

- A sense of belonging at school is a protective factor against mental illness (*Gatehouse Project 2002*)
- Participation in performing & visual arts promotes resilience, nurtures development of cognitive, social, and personal competencies, reduces risk factors, and enhances protective factors (*RCH Mental Health Service 2002; VicHealth 2003; Fiske 2000*)
- A health promoting school community is inclusive of the whole school community, and incorporates strategies that promote and protect its members (*VicHealth 2000*)

Bushfires, Covid and Recovery

- [Mental Health : Bushfire Recovery in the Cathedral Ranges 2009-2012 \(rch.org.au\)](#)
- [Cartwheels - Creating for Wellbeing](#)

Dream Big is...

- A partnership - schools, health services, the arts, community agencies
- Working through a collaborative, *whole school* approach...
- and also providing a *whole of community* approach... to emotional, social and mental health and wellbeing
- Working in disadvantaged areas, & areas impacted by natural disasters.



Project Activities	Start date	End date	Who
May Steering Committee - schools confirm art form and dates, roles responsibilities.	16 th May	16 th May	Us!
Evaluation Committee meeting	May?	May?	
Appoint Artists	May	May	
Final Term 3/4 workshop schedule confirmed	Early June	Early June	
June Steering Committee planning meeting	June?	June?	
Evaluation implementation commences by schools - specific week?	End Term 2	End T2	
Artists PD - Be You (headspace) RCH (full day) & Planning Day	Friday 17 th	Friday 17 th	
Schools PD - Be You (headspace) RCH	June	June	
School & Community PD - Andrew Fuller (time, location?) Per Westerman Show?	25 th July	25 th July	
Weekly workshop program commences in school and community centres -- leading to Festival	Term 3	Term 3/4	
Workshop program commences for community (how many? Where?)	Term 3	Term 3/4	
OPTION: "Dream Big Live! For RUOK? Day 2022" Produce a short music/spoken word with arts video for online live streaming broadcast with 15+ schools.	8 th September	8 th September	
July Steering Committee Meeting	July		
August Steering Committee Meeting	August		
Mid- program evaluation and progress report for DoH Recommendations assessed and adopted in consultation with working parties (steering committee, evaluation team, artists team). Learnings applied to refine selection of timing, style & content of activities, to achieve maximum engagement of children and their families	August		
September Steering Committee Meeting	September		
Artists/Production Meeting pre-event(s)	September/ Oct		
Final event(s)	End Term 3/ 2 nd week T4?	End Term 3/ 2 nd week T4?	
Evaluation finalised (arts organisations, schools, mental health partners, community partners): Artists Reflection Meeting School/SC Reflection Meeting	T3/4	T 3/4	
Final report and financial acquittal for DOH, leading to sustainability planning with all partners - more IFHL?	October	October	



artists, teachers and workers for wellbeing

www.creatingforwellbeing.com

Festival for Healthy Living



animation drama sculpting

music dance circus cartooning clowning

drumming singing clapping stomping

strumming leaping building writing

miming imagining


filming dreaming scripting

harmony unison solo group



poetry





Artists (a/b/c)

+ Teachers (x/y)

+ Health Professional (z)

= ax/ay/az/bx/by/bz/
cx/cy/cz?



“We learn from
and
with each other”

www.rch.org.au/fhl

www.creatingforwellbeing.com

Capacity Building

Our shared task is to build capacity for a community to achieve progress on three fronts:

- Improved Mental Health outcomes (Wellbeing)
- Better learning outcomes (Educational)
- Community Cultural Development (Artistic)

Go for broke... the total overlap!

Building mutual understanding and ongoing relationships

- Professional development
teachers <> artists <> health professionals
- Strengthening relationships
teachers <> artists <> agencies <> students
- Raising awareness and empowering partners and participants to be agents of prevention and mental health promotion

The Festival for Healthy Living...

- Since 1998: 38 communities; 200 schools, over 18,150 children and young people
- Ideally runs over a minimum of 3 years - necessary to build local sustainability
- Works through a collaborative, *whole school* approach...
- and also provides a *whole of community* approach... to emotional, social and mental health and wellbeing