

Submission by the Lifepaths Trust to the Ministry of Education on the New Zealand Curriculum: Draft for Consultation

November 2006

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1. This submission

Feedback Questionnaire: Section A

Question 1. Institution

Charitable Trust

Question 2. Contributors

On behalf of a group: 8 people (codes 01, 02, 08, Other: Charitable Trust Trustees)

As an organisation that has a significant interest in the education and future wellbeing of our young people, the Lifepaths Trust is pleased to have the opportunity to submit a response to the New Zealand Curriculum: Draft for Consultation 2006.

This submission is intended to:

- endorse the value- and competency-based approach to learning, as an important step towards education realising a balance between academic outcomes and social outcomes
- provide an example of an innovative, World Health Organisation endorsed programme currently being piloted in five New Zealand schools, that develops competencies through value-based teaching, while delivering on the requirements of the health curriculum (the FRIENDS programme)
- request that the Ministry of Education recognise the potential for the FRIENDS programme to be of value to schools right across New Zealand, to the extent that the Ministry is willing to consider the findings of the pilot study as they become available.

The FRIENDS programme

"Our review of the literature revealed a cognitive behavioural program, FRIENDS, that appears to be efficacious across the entire spectrum, as a universal prevention program, as a targeted prevention program and as a treatment."

- World Health Organisation

"The 'Friends for Life' programme is an interesting and practical course. It fits perfectly within our health curriculum and is well supported with texts and friendly helpful resource people. We look forward to watching our students develop and practice these skills"

- Vivienne Butcher, Principal Hornby Primary

2. Background information on Lifepaths Trust and the FRIENDS pilot

"The Lifepaths Trust is a charitable organisation committed to reducing anxiety and enhancing the emotional resilience of young New Zealanders."

In 2005 the Lifepaths Trust was formed by the Wayne Francis Charitable Trust, which has a number of initiatives underway in the Christchurch area. The Wayne Francis Charitable Trust is a large private trust that aims to make a positive difference in the lives of young people by fostering innovation and collaboration within the youth development field, and sustaining those outcomes through creating systemic change in funding and policy.

The Lifepaths Trust is a not-for-profit organisation, formed specifically to address the emotional resilience of young New Zealanders in a focused, collaborative, and sustainable manner. Its primary objective is to develop, pilot, and evaluate a school-based programme for building resilience in our young people, and then to make that programme available and accessible to schools throughout New Zealand. The Trustees of both Trusts are listed below:

Lifepaths Trust

Hamish Douch
Chair Helena Francis
Robin Wybrow
Simon Abbott
Sue Bagshaw

Wayne Francis Charitable Trust

Mayor Garry Moore
Chair Graeme Davey
Guy Johnston
Helena Francis
The Very Reverend Peter Beck
Simon Mortlock

After an extensive search and evaluation of existing programmes available world-wide, the Trust adopted the FRIENDS programme and in January of 2006, began piloting it in a 5-year longitudinal study at three primary schools, an intermediate school and a high school in Hornby, Christchurch. Those schools and the number of students participating are listed below.

Table 1. Schools and Number of Students Participating in the Pilot Study of the FRIENDS Programme

Schools involved in the pilot of FRIENDS	Number of students participating
Branston Intermediate	240
Hornby High School	90
Hornby Primary School	46
Sockburn School	40
South Hornby School	50
Total number of students	466

3. The FRIENDS programme: Whakamana Taiohi

An innovative approach to developing competencies and fostering values while meeting the requirements of the health curriculum

Feedback Questionnaire: Section B

Question 3: Intent and Direction

The Lifepaths Trust would like to endorse the intent and direction of the draft curriculum in so far as it places significant emphasis on providing opportunities for students to explore values and develop personal competencies that will enable them to cope with life challenges and make good choices.

Question 6: Implementation challenges

We believe that schools will face major challenges as they design and implement a curriculum in line with the direction set out in this document.

The curriculum clearly articulates values for schools to model and foster as well as key competencies for learning and life. These present an ambitious challenge to schools, for whom responsibility for social outcomes is largely new. While we expect schools to respond to these aspects of the curriculum with enthusiasm and eagerness, the challenge of designing a programme to deliver on those outcomes (which is safe, evidence-based, true to its community, and incorporates best practice) is likely to be highly problematic and outside the skill-sets of the majority of our educational professionals.

The Lifepaths Trust would like to draw the Ministry's attention to the FRIENDS programme currently being piloted in five schools in Christchurch. This programme has been uniquely adapted to New Zealand's Health and Physical Education Curriculum (see the Table below) and explicitly fosters the values and key competencies articulated in the draft Curriculum.

FRIENDS is the only programme of its type that has received endorsement from the World Health Organisation. Its comprehensive evaluation and research has shown that up to 80% of children showing signs of anxiety disorder no longer display that disorder for up to six years after completing the programme.

FRIENDS is a community-oriented cognitive-behavioural programme designed to combat anxiety and depression by teaching children and young people how to cope with and manage anxiety, both now and in later life.

It is based on a robust psychological model which addresses cognitive, physiological and behavioural processes that are seen to interact in the development, maintenance and experience of anxiety.

FRIENDS was developed by Dr Paula Barratt (Griffin University, Queensland Australia) to address anxiety disorders in children. It has been adopted by the state of British Columbia, Canada, as part of its core health curriculum and has World Health Organisation endorsement for its eight years of comprehensive evaluation and practice.

The programme has been adapted to a New Zealand environment and is currently being evaluated in a five-year longitudinal pilot study in Christchurch, which will look at individual outcomes as well as the impact on the overall behavioural culture of the schools implementing the programme. In addition, the Lifepaths Trust has fielded significant interest from schools outside the pilot and will be supporting many of them to implement the programme.

How FRIENDS works

FRIENDS is a 10-session programme where teachers guide students through a series of class-based activities designed to teach them how to deal with worrying situations.

Teachers help students to develop self-identity self-help strategies, reward themselves, and seek support when needed.

In each session students are given a home-based activity to complete before the next FRIENDS session, and at the end of the programme will be able to keep their special FRIENDS workbooks for future reference. Parents have an opportunity to help their children and learn more about what they are experiencing in the FRIENDS programme by attending two sessions for parents which can be arranged by the school.

The FRIENDS programme is very well supported with materials, teacher training, and advisory support.

Table 2. The FRIENDS Programme as it Fulfills the Requirements of the Proposed Health and Physical Education Curriculum

AO Level	Strand	1	2	3	4
3 (yr 5/6)	A	■		■	■
	C		■	■	
	D			■	■
4 (yr 7/8)	A	■		■	■
	C		■	■	
	D			■	■
5 (yr 9/10)	A			■	■
	C	■	■	■	
	D			■	■

- A = Personal Health and Physical Development
- C = Relationships with other People
- D = Healthy Communities and Environments
- = FRIENDS

4. Conclusion

A large and rigorous body of research has accumulated, that demonstrates the ability of the FRIENDS programme to have a significant positive impact on young people around the world.

The current longitudinal study being conducted in Christchurch will evaluate the effectiveness of the FRIENDS programme within the New Zealand context. Specifically, the programme will evaluate:

- the impact of the FRIENDS programme on indicators of anxiety and emotional resilience among children
- the impact of the FRIENDS programme on the behavioural culture of the school
- the utility of the programme (in terms of ease of use, cost, and other factors) for schools who wish to utilise the programme to meet the requirements of the Health and Physical Education Curriculum

It is the desire of the Lifepaths Trust to continue to communicate to the Ministry of Education and other Government agencies as this study progresses and as evidence of the effectiveness of this programme becomes available.

Our request, as part of this submission, is that the Ministry of Education recognises the *potential* of this programme to assist schools in implementing the new curriculum, and agrees to consider the findings of our study as they become available.

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