

# A Therapeutic Environment for Learning

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JOSIE HOWIE – SCHOOL DIRECTOR

MIKAELA SMEE – SENIOR COUNSELLOR (PROVISIONAL  
PSYCHOLOGIST)

THE PAVILION SCHOOL

# A little bit about us...

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- The Pavilion School
  - 215 students
  - 16 EFT staff (30 staff members)
  - VCAL, pre-VCAL and Distance Ed. Curriculum



# Our students

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- Have been excluded from or have left mainstream schools
- Want to continue their education
- Have experienced childhood trauma
- Are youth justice and child protection clients
- 6% are young parents
- Have poor mental health
- Have social and behavioural problems
- Have huge gaps in their education
- Approx. 70% Use drugs and alcohol
- 15% Indigenous



# Four key elements to support therapeutic learning environment

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1. Whole school culture
2. Relationship based practice
3. Program structure
4. Professional development and support

# 1. Whole School Culture

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- Employment of appropriately skilled and qualified staff team
  - Calm and non-punitive approach
  - Professional skills that match needs of students
  - Culturally inclusive space and practices
- Shared Philosophical Approach
  - Create a philosophy that staff want to buy-in to
  - Belief in a more inclusive state school system
  - Human Rights focus
  - Understanding social/structural disadvantage
  - Understanding student behaviour

# Whole School Culture cont...

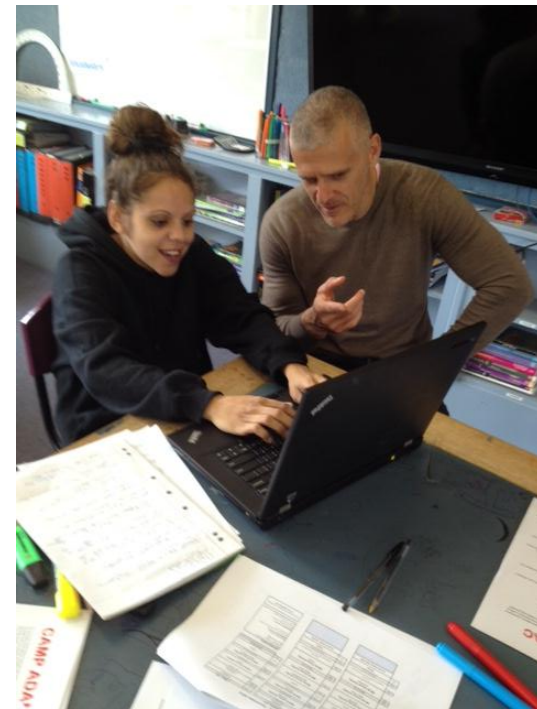
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- Intake
  - A place to be heard
  - Begin building relationship
  - Address power imbalance
- Classroom expectations for whole school community
  - To maintain a safe and respectful environment
  - To participate in school work
  - To allow fellow students to work free from disruptions

# 2. Relationship based practice

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- Relationship between student and staff members
  - John Hattie's research demonstrates better student/teacher relationships = better outcomes
  - Attachment theory
    - Awareness of developmental history and relational templates
    - Safe and secure base provided at school
    - Co-regulation between staff and student
  - Trauma theory (Bruce Perry, NMT)
    - Relational (safe)
    - Relevant (developmentally-matched)
    - Repetitive (patterned, consistent)
    - Rewarding (pleasurable)
    - Rhythmic (resonant with biology)
    - Respectful (child, family, culture)



# Relationship based practice cont...

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- Behavioural therapy
  - Positively-worded expectations
  - Clear and consistent reinforcement of expectations
  - *Example in practice* → BW
- One/ones and restorative practice
  - *Example* → CL
- External vs internal locus of control
  - Encouragement, modelling, scaffolding, reinforcement
  - Developing internal drive and self efficacy
  - MIPs programming



# 3. Program Structure

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- Mixed age/ability class groups
- Each group supported by teacher, youth worker & teacher assistant
- Circle time – is a predictable beginning and end to every class



# Program Structure cont...

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- Organised and prepared teachers
- Clear, consistent instructional model
  - Circle time /
- Feedback for students

# 4. Professional Development & Support

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- Instructional coaching program
  - Teaching staff
- Clinical supervision
  - Weekly, bi-weekly
  - Experienced supervisor, separate from line manager
  - Confidential
- Reflective practice
  - Transference: something is triggered in the student
  - Counter-transference: something is triggered in us
  - Escalation often occurs when transference/counter-transference has been mis-managed
  - Self-reflection is essential: understanding what has been stirred up in us will help us to self-regulate and respond with empathy and intention
- Postvention including de briefing, understanding critical incidents, restorative practice

# Professional Dev. & Support cont...

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# Questions...

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