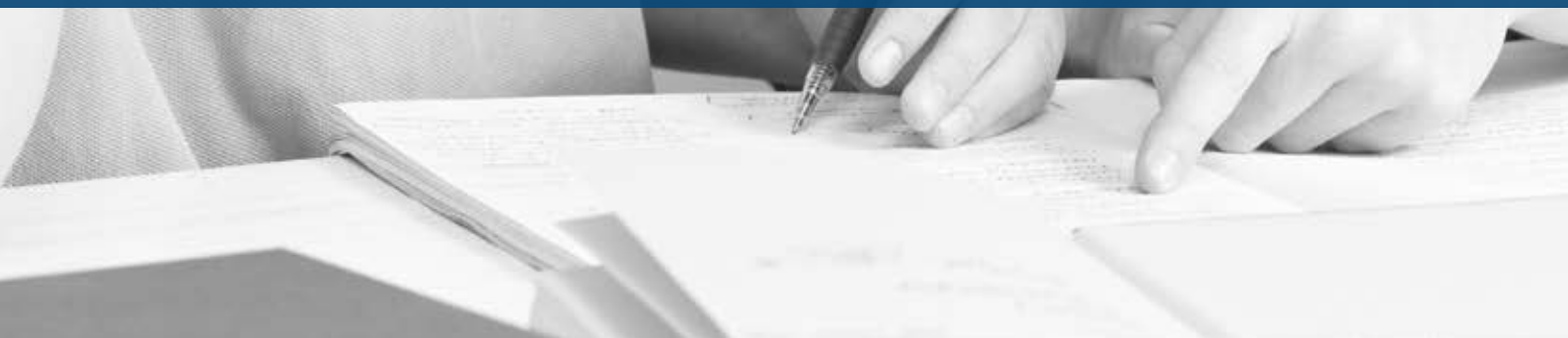




TEACHaR

Transforming Educational Achievement for
Children in Home-based and Residential care

OUTCOMES THAT MATTER





Victoria needs the TEACHaR program in 2019

Since 2013 Anglicare Victoria has been piloting an innovative evidence-informed response to the very poor educational outcomes of many children and young people living in out-of-home care (hereafter 'children in care'). The response - our TEACHaR program - is designed to improve the life trajectory of these children and end intergenerational cycles of disadvantage. During this time over 500 students across 300 schools have seen improved outcomes as a result of this program.

Over the last 6 years, the program has expanded into every Department of Health and Human Services (DHHS) Division. There are now more than 20 teachers producing exceptional outcomes for one of the most vulnerable client groups in Victoria. TEACHaR works closely in collaboration with DET's LOOKOUT Education Support Centres and is able to fill a much needed gap in one to one outreach based teaching.

The TEACHaR program has received fantastic support from the philanthropic sector - nineteen philanthropic trusts have supported the program during this time. In addition, the North Division of the Department of Health and Human Services has become a very important funder for TEACHaR. Over recent years this has allowed Anglicare Victoria to evaluate the program and build an evidence base highlighting the worth of this intervention. However philanthropic funding cannot continue indefinitely and Anglicare Victoria has now arrived at the time to look to Government to provide ongoing funding to secure the future of the program.

Anglicare Victoria therefore requests the Department of Health and Human Services fund the TEACHaR program to continue its current level of service provision in each of the 4 Divisions in 2019 and beyond. This valuable program is now at a tipping point, and without Government backing the 200 children currently supported by TEACHaR will see their educational support come to an end and their academic progress cease.

Outcomes with evidence

The TEACHaR program routinely selects a group of students for a comprehensive program evaluation. The TEACHaR evaluation is run every two years, and on this most recent occasion the Department of Health and Human Services Centre for Evaluation & Research, System Intelligence and Analytics Team provided oversight of the evaluation methodology and analysis.

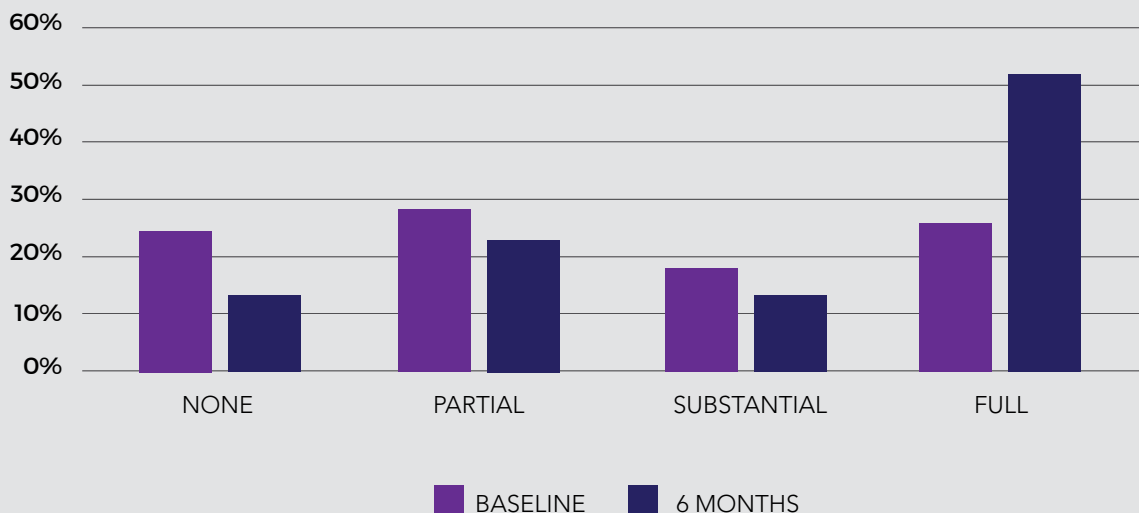
In 2018, 31 students were randomly selected for baseline and 6 month follow-up data and their progress was measured across five outcomes:

- School attendance
- Numeracy
- Literacy
- Attitude to learning
- Mental health and wellbeing

The DHHS Centre for Evaluation and Research endorsed the evaluation findings, and the highlights are presented below:

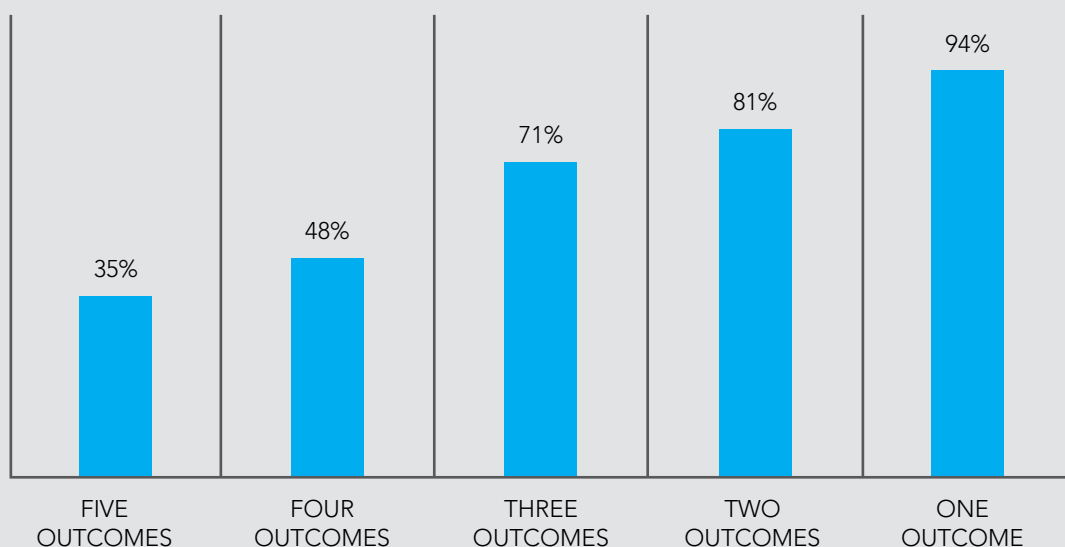
After 6 months of the TEACHaR program 74% of students improved or maintained their school attendance. The number students attending school full time doubled, from 26% at baseline to 52% after 6 months. At the same time, the number of students not attending any school halved from 26% at baseline to 13% after 6 months of support. A detailed breakdown of the improvement in school attendance is provided in the graph below.

SCHOOL ATTENDANCE



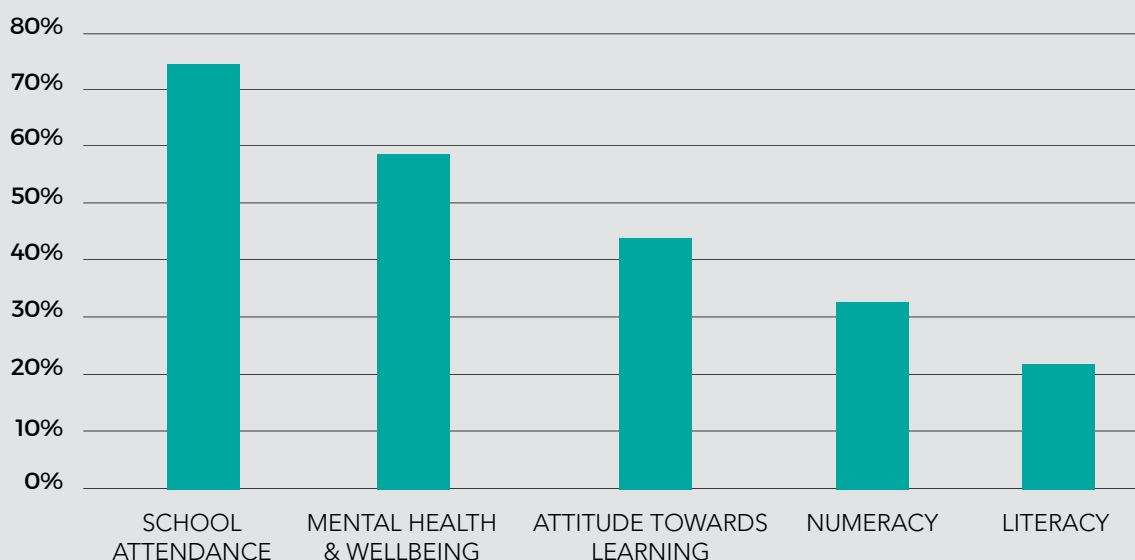
It was fantastic to see that 94% of students saw their outcomes either improved or maintained. Furthermore, over a third of students improved or maintained their progress in all five outcomes areas. (school attendance, numeracy, literacy, attitude to learning and mental health and wellbeing) This is highlighted in the graph below.

IMPROVEMENT OR MAINTENANCE ACROSS MULTIPLE OUTCOMES



Student progress was measured for all five outcome areas. This is shown in the graph below. Progress towards an outcome includes a positive change, as well as maintenance at a positive level. For example, maintaining full school attendance is an achievement for this group of students, as is maintaining good mental health. The TEACHaR program has supported many positive outcomes, and as is highlighted in the graph below 45% of students maintained or improved their positive attitude towards learning.

PERCENTAGE OF STUDENTS WHO IMPROVED OR MAINTAINED THEIR PROGRESS TOWARDS EACH OUTCOME





Model Overview

The TEACHaR program supports children and young people residing in care. TEACHaR targets students who are struggling to re-engage with their education and aims to 'bridge the educational gap' between the students' current educational level and their age appropriate benchmark.

In particular, the program works with school-age students where there is:

- Poor school attendance, school suspension and/or risk of being expelled from school
- Known or suspected poor numeracy or literacy compared with peers
- Confrontational and/or challenging behaviour that impacts on learning
- A need for a personal plan for literacy and numeracy achievement or a comprehensive assessment of performance against the Victorian Education Curriculum

The program is designed to help vulnerable children in care to maintain school attendance, educational engagement and age-appropriate literacy and numeracy skills – given that children in care are at much higher risk of educational disengagement than children in the general population.

TEACHaR works intensively with students on a one-to-one basis within the carers' home, residential home or school. The direct teaching ranges from 2 to 10 hours per week, depending on the individual circumstances. TEACHaR also works closely with individual schools to transition the student into full attendance and deploy strategies that maintain that attendance.

Referrals for the program are received from Child Protection and case managers from OOHC organisations. The age range is typically between 5 - 18 years old, covering primary and secondary school students.

TEACHaR employs experienced, registered teachers, hereafter called 'Educators'. Anglicare Victoria's Educators bring a mix of classroom, welfare and senior level teaching experience, together with a range of complementary higher qualifications, such as special education.

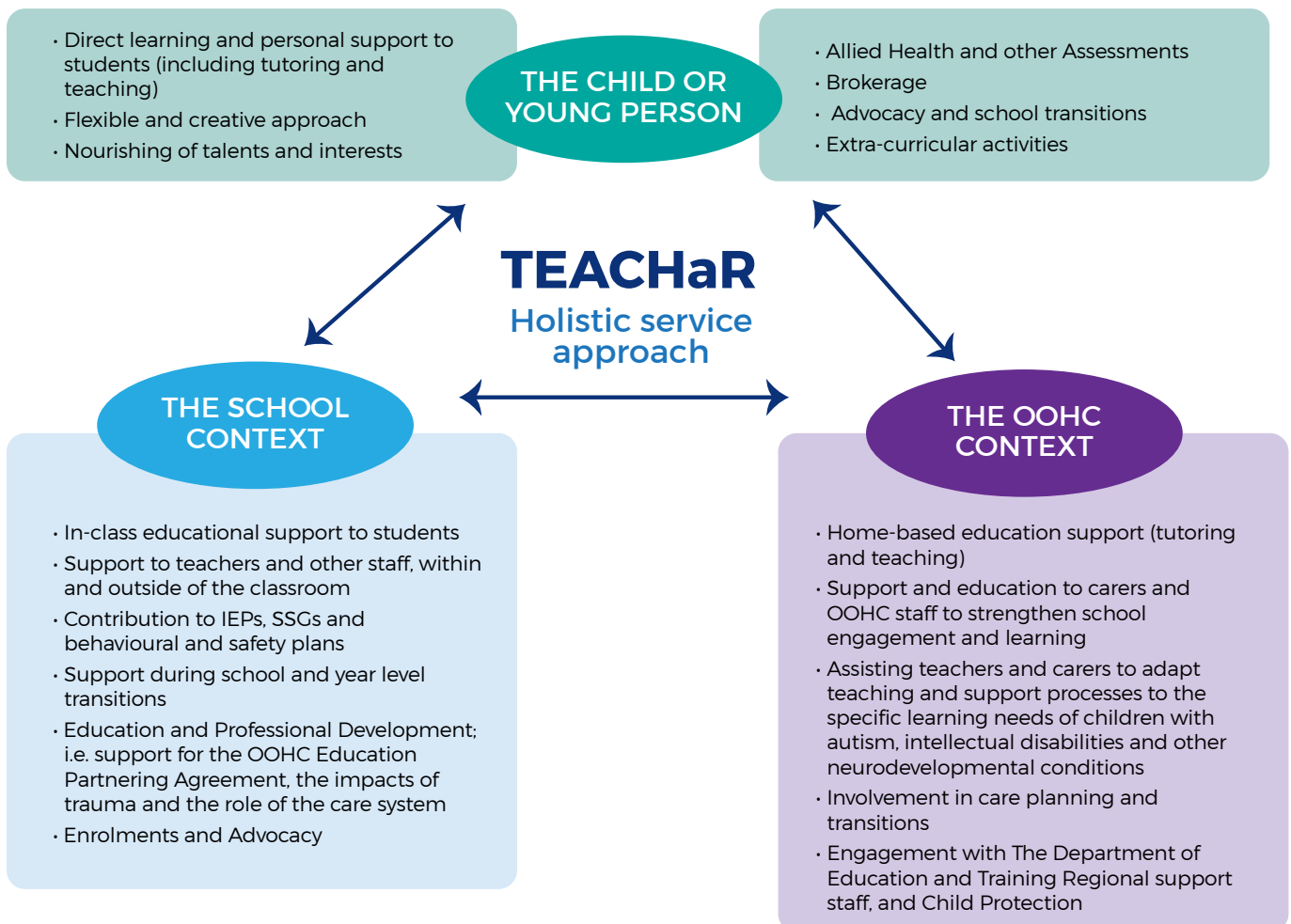
The program is outreach based, and delivered holistically across placement and school settings. The team collaborate and work in partnership with schools, carers, case managers, residential workers, Regional DET student wellbeing officers, LOOKOUT Centres, Navigator pilots and the DHHS Services.

Core Practices:

- Interventions are highly flexible, with strategies, responses and resources tailored to the interests, needs and strengths of individual students. Interventions are delivered within classroom and school settings, and in the care home environment.
- Typical interventions include one-on-one teaching, group work and informal and creative learning activities. Interventions have a focus on positive school engagement and academic progression as well as student wellbeing
- Provision of advocacy, liaison and educational case management, largely in the context of school disengagement, complex classroom behaviours, placement changes, care planning, school transitions, and new school enrolments
- The program prioritises mainstream school attendance wherever possible, and works co-operatively with LOOKOUT to encourage schools to pursue alternatives to suspensions, expulsions, and the use of 'out of classroom' behaviour management strategies that can impede student engagement and access to learning opportunities. Educators often work intensively with students in the initial stages of school re-engagement in collaboration with schools and carers, to support positive transitions.
- Communicating positive aspirations and expectations for education achievement is a core program philosophy. The program insists that school attendance is possible for all children and young people in care, and that all students are deserving of positive education experiences. Interventions seek to:

- o Ensure students attend as much school as possible.
- o Raise students' own beliefs and expectations about what they can achieve as learners, as well as the expectations that organisations and schools may hold for them.
- o Build on each individual student's strengths and interests, and encourage teachers and schools to similarly adopt an individual strengths-based outlook.
- o Support carers and OOHC staff to strengthen and enrich the education 'culture' and opportunities available to students in their OOHC home environments.
- Assisting and providing funding for students to access educational and allied health assessments, complementary services (such as tutoring and music lessons), extra-curricular activities and learning resources (such as laptops, learning software books and instruments).

The program's holistic operating model is summarised in Figure 1.



What others say

"With Anglicare you know that the child's education is being looked after."

Senior Member of Southern Division
Victorian Dept of Health & Human Services

"The TEACHaR program has provided invaluable support to a young person currently in out of home care. The program has allowed this young person to have an advocate, tutor and role model who not only supported them with increasing their educational outcomes but support them with problem solving and socialisation. Having the support of the TEACHaR program has allowed Child Protection to provide support to the young person in other areas knowing his education was being well supported. The program has been exceptionally beneficial for this young person. TEACHaR has been able to bridge the gaps between school and the care team and resi units and lead this work with all the stakeholders."

Health & Education Assessment Co-Ordinator
Victorian Dept of Health & Human Services

"In my experience of working with (the teacher), you have done everything that your position allows for the young people you support. You are a strong advocate for young people in care."

Case Manager
Educational Leadership, Training and Networking
Victorian Dept of Health & Human Services

"Young people in out of home care have numerous reasons for why they won't attend school. The TEACHaR team listens and build plans that will enable small steps to engagement, (and) strengthen their attendance and inclusion. The TEACHaR program can move across different out of home care agencies and placement types, which is the flexibility required. Having a service that understands and supports both the education and welfare side of service provision is invaluable."

Student Wellbeing Unit
Northern Division
Victorian Dept of Health & Human Services

"As an employee of Specialist Services at (DHHS), we are frequently faced with the challenge of meeting the needs of children in (OOHC) who have multiple and complex needs across a range of life areas including education. It has been evident that your willingness to work flexibly across various settings has benefitted (our 13-year-old) client and enabled the Care Team and Foster Carer to develop a positive view of him and his academic potential. Your input and expertise at Care team meetings is highly valued and contributes significantly to future planning for this child. The opportunity for him to experience success through your program has been both novel and therapeutic for him. Your capacity to assess his needs and integrate social and emotional development goals in addition to academic has been refreshing and no doubt reassuring for him. The TEACHaR program philosophy and approach aligns with best practice (for this client cohort)."

Senior Child Protection Practitioner
Specialist Services East
Victorian Dept of Health & Human Services

"TEACHaR has worked very closely with (our student), and provided that essential support that has obviously been lacking in his life. The student has taken the opportunity to improve his education outcomes and is now building a strong basis of success and I attribute this primarily to TEACHaR's refusal to give into the frustration that inevitably arises after he takes the one step back after the two steps forward. TEACHaR's continued support of the student, myself and the school is paramount if the strong gains are to be built upon"

Year 9 Teacher
Eltham College

"The support that TEACHaR has delivered to our staff and (our student) is very useful. ... Planning, classroom management, and general advice about (the student's) strengths and weaknesses. The program has provided invaluable information and strategies to develop (the student's) social skills. The teachers were pivotal to (the student's) engagement in the classroom and willingness to come to school every day. This success cannot be under estimated. Also giving (us) at the college an insight into (the student's) world. These were critical to his successful integration into school".

Integration Co-Ordinator
John Fawcner College

"I write to support the continuation of the Anglicare (TEACHaR) program for the simple reason it works, it supports, and it brings about substantial and longitudinal change in the child and our teachers. As a Principal of wide experience never have I seen or experienced such an effective intervention and support program for these children which it serves."

Principal
Monbulk Primary School

"I just wanted to say thank you so much to Anglicare, for there (sic) professionalism and the service they provided for my son in residential care, and to (the teacher) for working with my son. (The teacher's) warm friendly personality makes you feel comfortable when meeting her. Her dedication to the students she works with excels in every way. She has worked closely with my son over the last few months. As a parent you want what's best for your child. I feel that (the teacher) has really worked hard to achieve the best for my son, so that he can re-enter school, in a positive way. For that I'm extremely thankful for everything she has done."

Young Person's Mother

"Since working with the TEACHaR Program, my client has shown improvement in all areas of his schooling. My client has progressed academically and has grown in confidence. As my client has grown in confidence, with the encouragement of the education specialist, he has been able to develop new friendship networks within the school as he has transitioned from prep into grade 1 into a new classroom with different students."

Home Based Care Case Worker

"The TEACHaR program is an integral part of providing the intensive support required for a young person at school to ensure that teaching staff understand the impact on learning that occurs with trauma. The ability to have a teacher who speaks the language and can truly understand the complexities that schools face is so helpful in trying to work with schools. Personally I have worked with several clients who have benefited immensely from the support of the program"

Therapeutic Services Team Leader
Australian Childhood Foundation

The TEACHaR evidence base

Multiple Australian and international studies have shown that, compared to children and young people in the general population, children and young people in out-of-home care (OHC) have poor educational outcomes. This includes increased rates of school disengagement, as well as reduced literacy, numeracy and academic attainment (see Sebba, Luke & Berridge, 2017). These poor educational outcomes – combined with the effects of childhood trauma and other adversities which are characteristic experiences of those who have lived in OHC – can wreak harmful effects that persist across the lifespan.

As is overwhelmingly indicated by research evidence, school disengagement has long-lasting associations with several poor life outcomes, particularly in relation to criminal offending and problematic substance use (Rocque, Jennings, Piquero, Ozkan & Farrington, 2016), as well as teenage pregnancy, poor health outcomes, and dependence on social services (Kronholz, 2011; Ekstrand, 2015). Moreover, poor literacy and numeracy skills have been shown to have long-term, negative effects on employment, acquisition of employment-related skills and training, probability of owning a home, and both physical and mental health outcomes (see Parsons & Bynner, 2005; Moon, Aitken, Roderick, Fraser & Rowlands, 2015), as well as a host of other indicators of social inclusion and quality of life (see Bynner & Parsons, 2006).

In recognition of these significant risks for children and young people living in OOHC, in 2012 Anglicare Victoria launched its Transforming Educational Achievement for Children in Home-based and Residential care program, or TEACHaR. The first two evaluations of the TEACHaR model (see David, 2015; David, 2016) evidenced a range of significant improvements to educational outcomes for children and young people living in OOHC.

Following these studies, Anglicare Victoria made some considerable changes to the approach used by teachers to assess children and young people's literacy and numeracy – with this now generally being accomplished via standardised testing. Additionally, the TEACHaR program introduced several psychometric instruments to better assess additional constructs of interest. These included the teacher-rated Strengths and Difficulties Questionnaire (Goodman, 1997) as a measure of clients' psychosocial wellbeing (which the TEACHaR program actively works to improve), and both the Quality of School Life – Adventure (Motivation) subscale (Ainsley & Bourke, 1992) and School Attitudes Assessment Survey – Revised (McCoach and Siegle, 2003) as measures of attitudes to school and learning, and learning-related behaviours. For further information please refer to the 2018 TEACHaR Evaluation Report, available from Anglicare Victoria's website.

The 2018 TEACHaR Evaluation Report and the data presented in this paper reflect a robust approach to data capture and analysis. This evaluation has been endorsed with oversight from the Department of Health and Human Services Centre for Evaluation & Research, System Intelligence and Analytics Team.

Case Studies

Rose's Story

Rose was an 11-year-old girl in foster care when she was referred to the TEACHaR program. Her case manager reported that she refused to attend school on some days and arrived several hours late on others. This was due to behavioural challenges and performing her morning routine at a very slow pace. Rose's difficulties with school attendance were putting her foster care placement in jeopardy. Her primary school wasn't aware of the Victorian Government's Out of Home Care Education Commitment and, therefore, was yet to fulfil its obligations. In addition to all of that, Rose was about to make the transition to secondary school and had been denied admission to the school that almost all of her classmates would be attending.

By the time the TEACHaR educator met Rose, she'd lived in a number of foster care placements and had attended several different primary schools. Despite having a good relationship with her carer, Rose was openly hostile about her living situation and regularly communicated about the injustice of her predicament. She had experienced sexual abuse in the past and was struggling with those memories.

The TEACHaR educator began working with Rose by visiting her at home for three mornings each week. The aim was to assist Rose with her morning routine, and ensuring she gets to school on time. Initially, Rose was very resistant and refused to alter her routine at all. Some days, the more support and encouragement Rose received, the more she would put her foot down and refuse to budge.

Over time, Rose and the TEACHaR educator established a trusting relationship. They made a sticker chart depicting the times Rose left for school each morning. Rose was encouraged to challenge herself and try to beat the time from the previous day. Within a month, Rose was arriving at school by 9:30am on most days, as opposed to somewhere between 10am and 12pm prior to TEACHaR involvement. A couple of months later, Rose had an 80% success rate of arriving at school on time. To her credit, she made the decision to invest in her education and change the way she was perceiving her situation.

Throughout this time, the TEACHaR educator worked with the Student Support Group at Rose's school to assist in the implementation of the Out of Home Care Education Commitment. Rose benefited from the development of an Individual Learning Plan that catered to her needs. She was also provided with a Learning Mentor who met with Rose regularly to discuss any issues.



In order to promote a smooth transition, the TEACHaR educator communicated with the Student Welfare Coordinator at Rose's new secondary school. Rose was nervous to attend her transition day but with support from the TEACHaR educator, she was able to overcome her fears and ended up having a terrific time. Rose was particularly impressed with the Feminist Collective at the school and looked forward to joining it the following year. She was also pleased to have made a new friend and run into some old classmates from a previous school.

Now that Rose has achieved a good attendance rate, her next challenge lies in attending to her academic issues. Periods of school refusal and late arrivals have left Rose with significant gaps in her education. In order to close this gap, the TEACHaR program continues to work with Rose offering her two 60 minute homework sessions each week. Rose is a bright student who will flourish with the right tailored support.

Charlie's Story

Charlie is a 13-year-old boy currently living in residential care in Melbourne. He has experienced a very unsettling childhood and, as a result, has spent many years in residential care in various Victorian towns. He has had numerous placements and carers, attended four different primary schools and at the time of referral was in Year 7. Following an incident in his residential unit which resulted in criminal charges, Charlie was re-located to Melbourne and referred to TEACHaR for education support that 'could move with him' through placement changes.

When he arrived in Melbourne, Charlie had not been enrolled into school, and his care team were concerned that he was not ready for a new school transition. Therefore, the TEACHaR educator began working with Charlie directly in the residential care unit.

Charlie had a lack of current educational reports from previous schools. The TEACHaR educator completed some literacy and numeracy assessments and found significant gaps in literacy, but interestingly Charlie was actually performing 3 years above his peers in numeracy. The TEACHaR educator tailored an educational program working with Charlie four times a week. This was an interim plan, due to Charlie experiencing isolation from peers and living on his own in a residential care placement.

Goals were established in collaboration with Charlie, with a focus on preparing Charlie to return to school on a limited program. One significant priority was assisting Charlie to engage appropriately with students his own age and to engage in appropriate conversations and behaviours with adults. It was important to develop a Behavioural Support and Safety Plan through this process. After some initial anxiety, an enrolment was finalised and Charlie commenced the following term. TEACHaR was able to provide the school with a tailored program, which the TEACHaR educator and the school could progress together. This enabled the classroom teachers to commence support immediately. Charlie stated that he felt 'weird' being at school again but was keen to attend. He began by attending until recess, supported by TEACHaR educators and this was gradually extended to lunchtime. Over time TEACHaR educators gradually reduced the time spent in the school, remaining available if required.

Soon after, the school reported that Charlie had started using appropriate language to describe how he feels, and has begun to interact with more confidence with his classmates. The real success, however, has been that while Charlie still prefers to work on his own or with an adult, he has made two friends and is not feeling that he stands out or doesn't belong. This has been very meaningful progress for a child who has experienced so much isolation, stigma and difficulty with peer interactions (including violence) in the past.





Kelli's Story

Kelli was referred to TEACHaR for assistance in returning to school after a twelve month absence. Kelli had been struggling with school attendance due to serious issues involving self-harm, suicide ideation, dangerous behaviour, and difficulty with peer relationships. She had also recently relocated to Melbourne from a rural setting. The extended school absence and the social isolation caused by residing in a single client residential house contributed towards her academic and social confidence.

The complexity of her health concerns meant that it was several months before an enrolment could be attempted. At this time the TEACHaR program provided six hours of one to one teaching each week, with consultation from the care team, who investigated potential schools for Kelli. The TEACHaR educator established excellent rapport with Kelli by engaging her in a variety of learning tasks and helping her build confidence to enable her to return to school.

The process of re-enrolment was complicated by on-going health issues and the difficulty of identifying a school setting that could provide the appropriate safety planning and well-being support. Before long a school was identified and the TEACHaR educator took Kelli on several tours and a pre-enrolment interview. Kelli was drawn to the re-engagement program the school offered, which catered for students at all levels and provided a staged return to school. Her anxiety about returning to school was eased by the ability to slowly re-engage with the option of increasing her time when she was ready and also having the TEACHaR educator available to attend school with her, if she wanted extra support. An enrolment took place after sustained advocating, and Kelli's ability in an interview to connect honestly and openly with staff.

The importance of identifying the best school and providing on-going support is demonstrated in this case study. Kelli has had continuing health issues resulting in two serious incidents that would cause many schools to challenge the enrolment. The TEACHaR educator worked with the Department of Education, Student Wellbeing and Engagement Officer, to support the school to provide increased supervision that enabled Kelli to remain at school.

