

## **Project Name-Being Active Eating Well-Tai Chi for Kidz**

### **Lead Agency-Bentleigh Bayside Community Health**

This report was prepared by: Jackie Gleeson with input from Barb Ryan & Deakin Health Promotion students

#### **1. Project Overview**

Tai chi for kidz has been successful in providing physical activity to primary school children in Kingston and Bayside. Tai chi for kidz a new, modified tai chi program provided a fun activity which has developed the children's coordination, concentration and agility. The program offered primary students an opportunity to exercise in a stimulating, fun and supportive environment.

This has been achieved using a settings approach at Clarinda Primary School in two prep classes as a physical activity component of the Kingston Bayside Being Active Eating Well Health Promoting Communities Program (appendix 1). This program was a follow on from the successful pilot program delivered to Sandringham Primary School in Bayside.

The participatory research demonstrated at the Being Active Eating Well Show Case (appendix 2) identified the medium term and sustainable outcomes for the participants when they demonstrated the tai chi movements at the Show Case some three months after completion of the program. While the students had continued weekly tai chi and a refresher /update session was held with the students, tai chi instructor and trained volunteer as well as their tai chi trained teacher prior to the Show Case, the performance by the 8 students was exceptional in front of an unknown audience (appendix 3 photos).

Following the two day training two teachers (2 for Clarinda & 2 for Sandringham Primary School the pilot school) and two volunteers (appendix 4) assisted the tai chi instructor conduct the 8 week program at the school. The training component has resulted in the sustainability of the program by the teachers following the completion of the follow up program, with the two prep classes to continue tai chi.

#### **2. Who was involved?**

The follow up for tai chi for kidz was conducted in Kingston at the Clarinda Primary School. While the target group for the Being Active Eating Well initiative was students aged between 0-12 years the cohort selected for this initiative was prep children. Two prep classes each with 20 students were selected by the school.

Two teachers from the school along with two volunteers from Bentleigh Bayside Community Health were trained leaders by Bayside Tai Chi to assist the tai chi instructor conduct the program and to sustain the program when the instructor departs.

The logistics of the program were worked out by the partners; Clarinda Primary school, Bentleigh Bayside Community Health and Bayside tai Chi prior to implementation.

Others involved were Arthritis Victoria, Kingston and Bayside Primary care Partnership and the Being Active Eating Well Steering Committee.

### **3. How did you measure the success of the activity?**

Evaluation was based on a model of participatory action including the collection of qualitative and quantitative data which was used to develop a meaningful understanding of the experience of the tai chi for kidz program for the children, trained teachers & the trained volunteer leaders.

Methodology: questionnaires & interviews including focus groups and a showcase-at all levels i.e. children, instructor, trained teachers, and trained volunteer leaders.

The approach was participatory, non-threatening and informal to facilitate discussion in a warm, fun environment. Consent was obtained at all levels for assessments, participating in program, demonstrations/presentations, interviews, surveys as well as photographs.

Pre-commencement of program, the children were assessed as per attached assessment form and post course (appendix 5.6). A physiotherapist assisted trained teachers, instructor and trained volunteer leaders with the assessments.

At the end of the eight week program a focus group was conduct with students from both prep classes, by the program coordinator and the BAEW Program Manager (appendix 7).

See teacher testimonial (appendix 8).

Teacher satisfaction was ascertained by a questionnaire (appendix 9).

### **4. Results**

There were 40 participants in the program and 37 pre and post assessment evaluations were received. Four students who returned the post evaluation form did not complete all three activities.

Analysis of the evaluation has shown that the assessment results and the focus group feedback from both the children and teachers were positive. The children and teachers opportunity to participate in physical activity was increased and the children's motor skills and balance improved. Tai Chi also helped the children remain calm and relaxed in the classroom. As the teachers were trained by the instructor and participated with the children, they have continued tai chi in what was the two prep classes in the school after the instructor and volunteers departed.

### **5. Discussion**

The assessment results indicate that the program was successful in improving gross motor skills, coordination and balance as there was an average improvement in all three assessment tasks following the program. 30 out of the 37 students improved their speed to hop 6 meters on one leg. The average pre-program time was 5.7seconds, and improved by 1 second to an average speed of 4.7 seconds, post program. 19 out of the 33 students who recorded information improved their ability to sit down and stand up repeatedly. The

average improvement was 1.3 seconds, from 10.4 seconds pre-program to 9.1 seconds post program. The children's ability to balance on their left and right leg also improved. When asked to balance on each leg for 10 seconds, 27 students were able to stand on their left leg for 10 seconds pre-program, and post program this increased to 33 students. Pre-program 27 students could balance on their right leg for 20 seconds, and post program this increased to 31 students.

During the focus groups run after the Tai Chi 4 Kidz program, children were first asked how the program made them feel. 13 of the 14 children chose the smiley face to represent their feelings, and 1 child gave a thumbs up. To describe how they enjoyed tai chi or why it made them happy, children responded with "it was fun", "helped me balance better", "I liked everything", I liked "the bird", "the magic ball", "counting side steps". Five students also agreed it helped them concentrate at school.

The children were asked if they did tai chi outside of the program, and 7 children said they do, 3 had shown their families and 1 had indicated they taught their mum, dad and grandma. When the children were asked to think about the different parts of their bodies, and how tai chi affects their bodies, all of group 1 students reported they felt "happy", some felt "sweaty" and a couple felt they "might be nauseas after too much tai chi". Group 2 students indicated that some of them felt quiet, peaceful and calm and that tai chi helped them concentrate at school. None of the students in group 2 felt tired, and they all requested to do tai chi at lunchtime. When asked what their parents thought about the tai chi program, most indicated their parents liked them doing tai chi, but one parent was unsure about the program. All 14 children indicated that they would like to continue tai chi, and that they liked the leaders and teachers.

Different pre and post evaluation forms were used at Clarinda and Sandringham.

It was identified that the instructions were unclear and confusing on two of the questions (gross motor skill standing and balance on one leg). The questions were rephrased for use by the Clarinda Primary School study, to ensure consistent performance amongst the group.

Both the pre and post assessments were recorded on the pre evaluation sheet of each student. Four of the students did not complete all three motor skill post evaluation tasks, which may have been a result of having no specific space to record data, and therefore the task was skimmed over or missed.

The Tai Chi 4 Kidz program is a sustainable program, the trained school teachers have the ability to continue tai chi if monitored and receive refresh/update training to maintain and enhance their skills.

## **6. Lessons learned**

- Teachers and volunteers recording pre and post data may have been bias and recorded incorrect data or been lenient when timing.
- As the children are young, even with help from teachers, they may not have understood the motor skill assessment tasks.

- Extremely difficult to find two days for the training to allow the teachers to attend hence need to secure 'back fill' funds.
- In addition funds are needed to ensure on going update training for the tai chi for kidz trained leaders-teachers and volunteers ,as is available for training tai chi leaders for adults.

### ***6.1. How could the activity be improved on?***

Although the program has been very successful there are various strategies that could be organised differently, to enhance the program.

Seek, plan to have an additional staff member assist the program coordinator throughout the program. This will assist in the labour intense planning , implementing, evaluating and reporting of the program to better meet all significant reporting deadlines.

Enhance the concept/marketing of physical activity and the benefits that are being strongly indicated if physical activity in particular tai chi, is introduced in the early years in all primary school settings and publications including this information disseminated to parents.

Ensure increased early ongoing communication with the School where the tai chi for kidz is being introduced.

Ensure that the pre and post assessments are completed and data accurately collected and stored as well as the attendance records of each session.

A significant number of the participants recommended re producing the DVD provided to the trainees prior to the training, and making it easier to follow .It was suggested that the tai chi instructor make an instructional DVD.

## **7. Into the future**

- The trained teachers in the school will be able to continue the tai chi classes in the school after the instructor and volunteers depart the program.
- Initial and ongoing support and information sharing to build confidence, skills and knowledge at an appropriate pace with monitoring and refresher/update training.
- Seek further funding to extend this innovative program within Clarinda primary School and replicate in more schools.
- The initiative was a poster presentation at the Australian Health Promotion Association 20<sup>th</sup> National Conference April 2011.
- The program has been forwarded to Ballarat Community Health Service.

## **8. Conclusion**

A successful program with significant benefits for primary school children, although labour intense, very worthwhile.

It has been a rewarding and beautiful experience working with the Clarinda Primary School and assisting in the implementation of tai chi for kidz. Special joy has resulted from seeing the impact of the program on the delightful prep students.

**For more information:**

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**9. BUDGET REPORT**

*9.1. Acquittal of funds*

Amount received:

Income		Expenses	
Amount of grant requested	\$1804	Instructor fee	\$1970
Other funding (carry over funds 1 <sup>st</sup> funding round (please specify source)	\$ 848		
		Photographer	\$100
	\$	Graphic artist	\$726
Funds from your agency	\$144	Balance graphic artist	\$144
In-kind support (please specify)	(\$4800)	Admin +	\$-
		Project management	\$-
Other (please specify)	(\$300)	Volunteers	\$-
<b>Total Income</b>	<b>\$2652</b>	<b>Total Expenses</b>	<b>\$2652</b>

*9.2. Non-financial resources*

Non-financial resources	Approximate cost/hours etc.
<b>Example:</b>	
Venue (1 venue for three events)	• N/A as school was the setting and the venue
Staff time	
Program management	• \$4,800
Volunteer/student support	• \$300