

Let's CHAT about a whole school approach to road safety and health

Mick Jackson Pierce

School Drug Education and Road Aware (SDERA, Western Australia)

Background

Changing Health Acting Together (CHAT) is a School Drug Education and Road Aware (SDERA) initiative. SDERA is the Western Australian Government's primary drug and road safety education strategy for children and young people. To date, 103 primary and secondary, metropolitan and regional schools are involved in CHAT which includes in-school support guiding schools to develop a best practice whole-school approach to road safety, drug and resilience education, and to holistically examine student safety and wellbeing. Research clearly indicates that a whole-school approach to any safety/health related issue, where schools, parents and communities work together, can produce the best health outcomes.

Evaluation

In 2013 SDERA commissioned Edith Cowan University to conduct a process evaluation of the CHAT initiative. The purpose of the evaluation was to describe observed changes to whole school policies, practices and environments in schools participating in the CHAT initiative. Changes were observed and recorded by SDERA, school teams, staff, parents and students.

Presentation

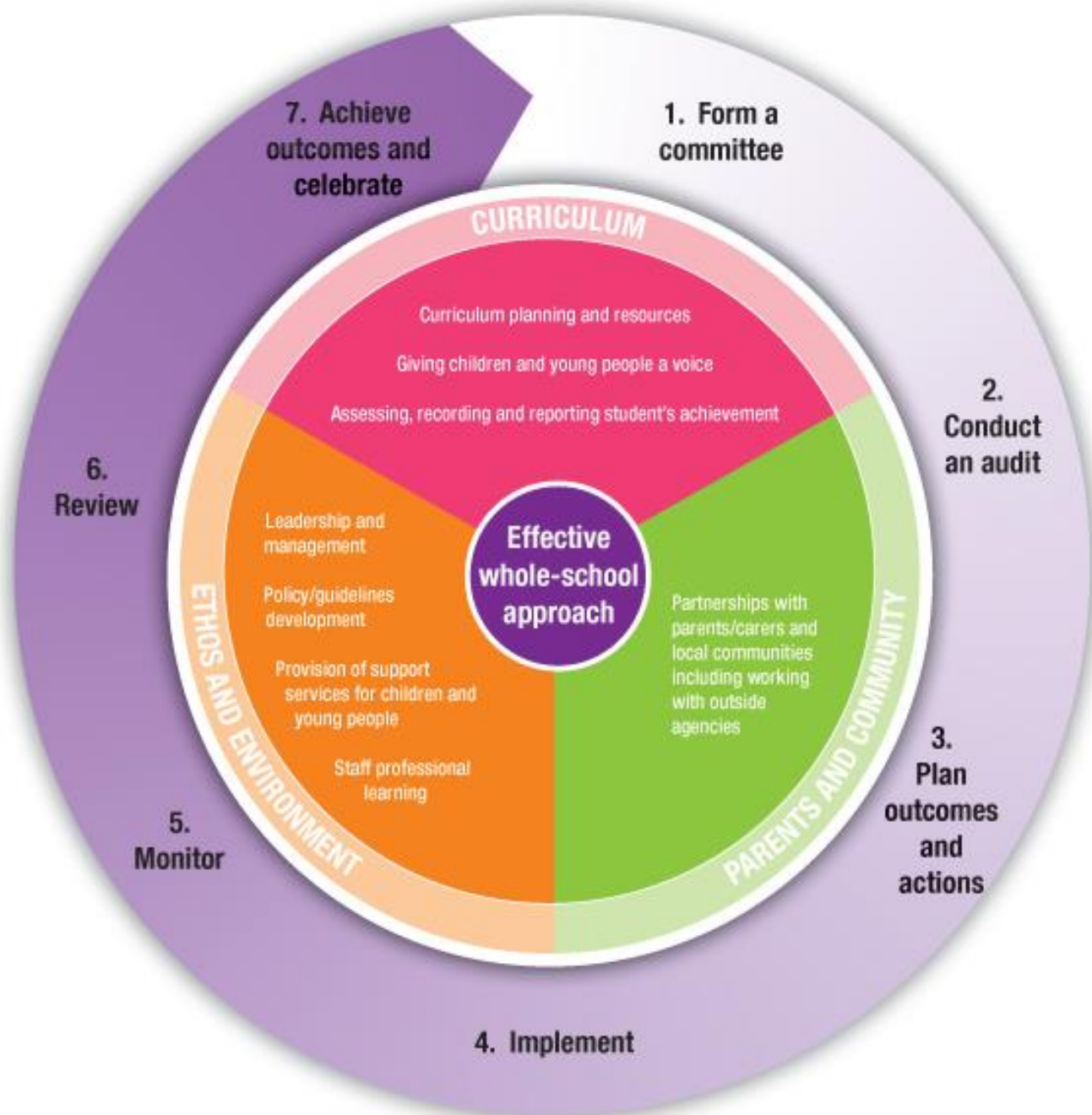
This presentation will describe the CHAT approach to whole school engagement; report on the key findings of the evaluation and explore how the findings impact on plans for developing a sustainable model for the implementation of a whole school approach to student health.

Benefits of the CHAT initiative

- development of policy and school guidelines for road safety, drug and resilience
- positive changes in the school culture
- improved student participation
- improved partnerships with parents
- a method for formalising processes and increasing collaboration with other schools and services
- opportunities for, and increased participation in, professional learning for teachers
- management principles that build human, organisational and social capital within the schools
- improvements to the social environment that can have a positive impact on students' safety and well being including their mental health, smoking and alcohol intake, and road safety practices.

The CHAT Model

The CHAT Model (below) demonstrates key elements of the Health Promoting School (HPS) framework that contribute to an effective whole school approach and how the model is used to assist schools to understand how their work can achieve best practice in the three HPS areas and clearly see the steps in the process they will work toward with guidance and support from SDERA staff.



© CHAT Model, Government of Western Australia, School Drug Education and Road Aware, 2010.

CHAT Model ((Changing Health Acting Together Model), Government of Western Australia, School Drug Education and Road Aware (SDERA) 2010

Results

The majority of schools had implemented to a high standard, the first three steps of the CHAT seven step implementation process, with schools showing improvement at implementing steps 4-7 by the time they are working towards Gold. The majority of schools had implemented the first three steps comprised in the CHAT implementation process to high levels, with Gold schools having completed more fully the remaining steps than Bronze schools.

Most schools moderately agreed they had planned, implemented and monitored CHAT targets and activities across each of the three components of the CHAT Model, with higher agreement reported by Gold, compared to Bronze schools.

Qualitative evidence confirmed schools had used the CHAT implementation process to guide their implementation of activities to build resilience, drug and road safety education.

"It's just been a great model of how to do a whole-school approach effectively, because we've started from number one and we're still going around and around, because we're always reviewing and monitoring, it's been a really good process to refer to." [CHAT School]

The CHAT initiative has provided a process and guided framework for action in resilience, drug and road safety education through the establishment of leadership support and a school team to drive planning, implementation and evaluation.

"The main strengths of CHAT are the scaffolding. It actually has a complete structure but also it gives the schools flexibility within that structure." [CHAT School]