

2020

South Australia's
young people -
thriving online

Youth Opportunities Term 2, 2020
Impact Report: Thrive Online +



130
young people



across 6
SA schools



YOUTH
OPPORTUNITIES

Overview

Youth Opportunities' vision is a world where all young people have opportunities to be their best.

During 2020, this vision has been tested like never before as Australia's youth have been challenged by the devastating bushfires, and then faced the sustained impact of COVID-19. This caused considerable disruption to schooling, increased mental health concerns, and widespread unemployment.

Our organisation was also challenged, as we too had to quickly adapt the delivery of our face to face Personal Leadership Program to support young people who were now learning from home. And the results were astounding.

Through the use of our interactive and online personal leadership program, Thrive Online, and supported by coaching and peer mentoring over Zoom, in spite of the significant and complex challenges these young people were facing, they thrived.

Throughout this report you can read testimonials from participants, watch a highlight reel of our virtual graduation ceremony and, most importantly, see the profound impact through our robust outcome measurements.

While none of us anticipated how COVID-19 would change our organisation, I am proud to say it has given us an opportunity to innovate and create a new service model which has proven successful, is not limited by geographical boundaries, and now allows us to deliver our programs at scale.

We look forward to the chance to partner with more schools, communities and the government in the future to ensure together we can reach more young people who, in the coming years, will need our support more than ever before.



Erin Faehrmann
Chief Executive

61%

reduction in the number of students at high risk of developing a mental health disorder*



*The Kessler (K10) measures general levels of psychological distress. Students at high risk are more likely to have reduced confidence, decreased motivation, affected sleep and experience anxiety or depression. Using this globally recognised, valid and reliable measure our results showed a very high effect size in reducing psychological distress of students by the end of the program.

Thriving Online



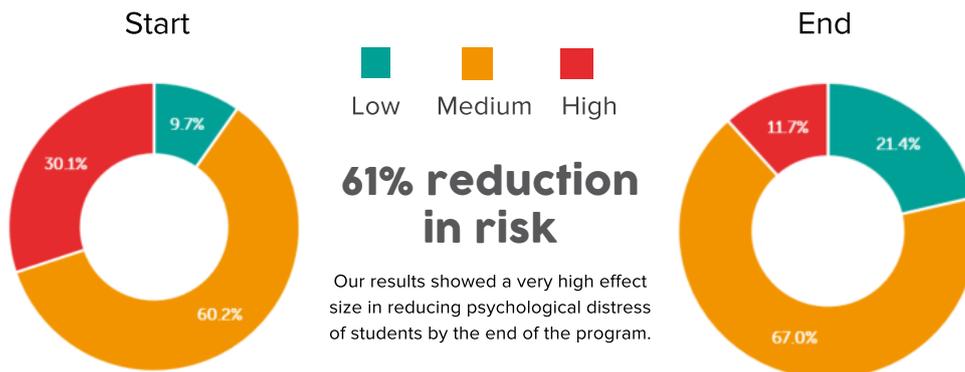
Thrive Online is an innovative and interactive, SACE aligned program for secondary students that improves wellbeing, leadership, enterprise and communication skills. The program is built on Youth Opportunities' 20+ years of experience, and combines a broad range of theoretical underpinnings, including motivation, cognitive behaviour approaches, social learning theory, and positive psychology.



During Term 2, in response to COVID-19 restrictions, all Youth Opportunities programs were delivered by blending Thrive Online with group facilitation, one-to-one coaching via videoconferencing (Zoom), and other collaborative tools such as Mural and Google Docs. Our accredited trainers were proactive in this new situation, embracing the enhanced technology and working collaboratively, with strict adherence to online safety to support students.

Using a formative and developmental evaluation approach, each week we assessed what was working, what was not, and what innovation could be shared across all of our programs.

Kessler (K10) Measure of Psychological Distress



"I have improved on my self-confidence, I am happy with who I am and who I'm turning out to be. I have been happy and positive since this program started and I love being happy and positive, it makes everything good."

Graduate

4 Big Decisions

Using the framework of our 4 big decisions to develop students' belief in a happier, more successful future, the results, as you can see outlined in this report, were astonishing!



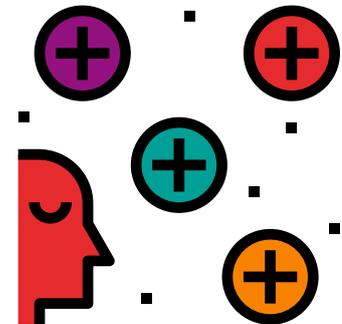


Decide to be happy

Current research on the negative impact of COVID-19 showed around half of young people reported their mental health had suffered during the period with heightened levels of stress and anxiety. In contrast, students who participated in our program saw large improvements in wellbeing and mental health indicators from the beginning to the end of the program.

Despite over one third of young people reporting to UNICEF Australia that they had lost hope, we saw an increase in optimism* of nearly 20% and ...
... all of our students believe they are kinder now.

+19% increase in optimism



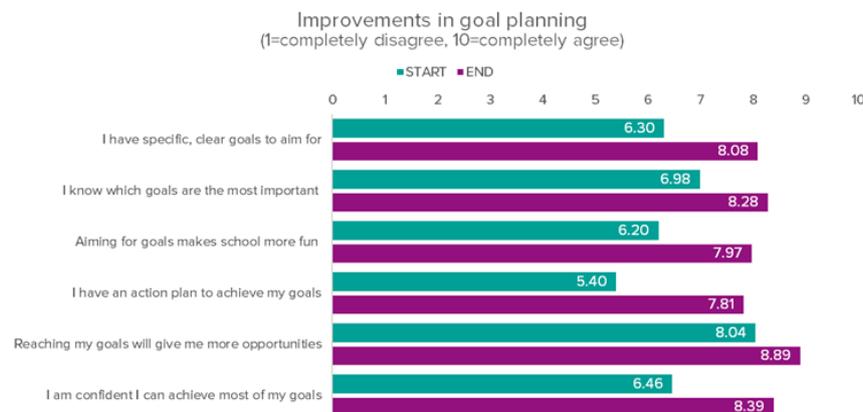
*Optimism measured as a construct of EPOCH measure of adolescent wellbeing within the PERMA framework, using inferential statistics, showed significance with large effect size.

100% of students believe they are a kinder person now



Decide to goal plan

A national survey of 2,208 young people aged 15-25, conducted by the National Youth Mental Health Foundation at the height of the COVID-19 lockdown in Australia, showed 40% of young respondents felt that the pandemic had impacted their confidence to achieve future goals. Thanks to Thrive Online + our graduates tell a different story ...



100%
of Term 2, 2020 graduates received their full 20 SACE points for the online Personal Leadership Program.

“They are much more organised with their schoolwork. They are focused on completing their assignments on time and taking pride in them. They have received higher grades and positive and encouraging feedback from their teachers.”
Parent



Decide to send stars

A reduction in social connectedness was cited by 70% of young people in UNICEF Australia's 'Living in Limbo' report as a result of COVID-19. Creating a safe social learning environment for sharing is an important part of our program, and when we transitioned to a wholly online environment we worried about the impact for students and their social connectedness.

It turns out that these online environments can create strong relationships between students and productive coaching partnerships with trainers.



99%

**communicating
better with others**

89%

**felt safe to share and
became closer to group
members**



"Learning about stars and black holes I never really thought about how one bad comment could impact everyone's day."

Graduate



Decide to grow

We use a process of graded exposure in our programs to encourage students to take increasingly bigger steps outside of their comfort zone. Students with low confidence found it safer, and easier to self-pace in an online environment that enabled them to find, and practice, the tools that helped them develop their skills and confidence.

Digital literacy skills developed though completing the program:

- 87% learned new computer navigation skills.
- 89% learned new skills in collaborating with others.
- 96% were able to take a leadership role during the zoom sessions.
- 91% have been able to express themselves more creatively using technology.
- 94% have been able to critically examine online information and make better judgements about it.

Skill development - participation in online learning

- 100% of trainers reported that students were engaging more and more, week on week, as the program progressed.
- 93% said group collaboration allowed them to think differently about what they learned online.
- 88% students scored using Thrive Online was on the 'easier' side of the scale.

100% of young people have improved their self image

Virtual Graduation Video

Graduations were held 'virtually' via Zoom, where students and their parents were able to celebrate their many achievements. Despite the challenges, Thrive Online + delivered outstanding results in our evidence-based measures for the entire cohort, which are comparable to our face to face Personal Leadership Program. During the graduation, students spoke in depth about how they used various program tools to challenge their negative self-talk, improve their relationships, focus themselves to complete tasks and take healthy risks for personal growth.



"I now feel very motivated to do schoolwork and homework. I am proud of how far I have come and how much effort I have put into the program. What I have learnt will definitely help me in the future because I will have all of the strategies and knowledge on how to overcome difficult situations."
Graduate

"I'd like to work on keeping up my 4 big decisions and making them into habits, as well as getting closer to getting into university."
Graduate



YOUTH OPPORTUNITIES

To engage Youth Opportunities to deliver our programs and services for young people in your school, organisation, community group or council, please reach out to Larry Waller, Head of Training on 8240 3133 or larry.waller@youthopps.com.au

To support Youth Opportunities to reach even more young people, contact Linda Jones, Head of Fundraising on 0419 264 065 or linda.jones@youthopps.com.au

Stay up to date with Youth Opportunities activities and events, or support our work by following us on social media.

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Marshman Foundation

live • learn • thrive

The Marshman Foundation is the research and development arm of Youth Opportunities.

The Foundation provides support to protect the integrity and fidelity of our programs and services, while also overseeing new program development, and testing viability in the marketplace.

We appreciate the support of Marshman Foundation in the transition to Thrive Online + during Term 2, and their support in validating the measures used in this report.