

## The De La Salle Project

*By Kim van Duiven, Executive Director, Brainwave Trust Aotearoa*

In 2008, Brainwave Trust was fortunate to receive funding from the Auckland Airport Community Trust to deliver its presentations to schools and early childhood centres in the Area of Benefit (see page 17). From this project came a request that has influenced the way we deliver our key messages.

Brother Steve Hogan was, at that time, the Principal of De La Salle College, a school with many students from within the Trust's Area of Benefit. The school offers a catholic education to approximately 1000 boys from year 7 to year 13, predominantly from the communities of South Auckland. Brother Steve felt that the Brainwave Trust programme had a philosophical fit and was of strategic importance in supporting the school's mission to build good men.

The next step was to develop the Brainwave Trust programme content at an age appropriate level for each of the 38 classes. This provided a very exciting opportunity, to connect with older boys, those soon leaving school and future fathers. It was also made relevant to the younger students, many of whom are involved in the care and raising of their siblings. The challenge lay in delivering the programme in the right context so all students could learn and understand the value of the key messages – the importance of positive experiences and raising children in a loving and nurturing environment.

We delivered a pilot programme, at an age appropriate level, to a year 7 and a year 13 class with exceptional results. Students at both age levels made thoughtful comments which demonstrated understanding, enjoyment of the programme and valuable new knowledge.

**“Babies need to be secure and feel safe”**

**“I learned that it's bad to leave kids on their own”**

**“If you shake a baby, the baby's brain will bang against its skull.”**



Responses from evaluations done before and after the programme were outstanding, with a clear indication that the message was hitting home, evident in the following responses to the question

**After hearing the presentation the most important thing I have learnt that fathers can do when caring for babies and young children is**

A sample selection includes

**“spend time with them”**

**“always show your child love and affection”**

**“never let the mother drink or do anything that will harm the baby during pregnancy”**

**“do not shake babies”**

**“show the baby that I care for them and keep them safe and give them security”**

**“lots of love by playing, talking and looking at the baby”**

**“to not let them grow up in a violent childhood”**

**“hug the baby”**

**“talking to them”**

**“to never let them feel scared, stressed and be violent to them”**

(Comments reproduced as written.)

We went on to deliver the programme to all classes at every year level, approximately 38 classes. The key ‘anti-abuse’ and ‘never shake a baby’ messages reached approximately 1000 boys. We are optimistic that this information will influence the way these young men will eventually parent, as well as being beneficial in their lives before they hit mainstream society. Best of all, it is an early and cost effective intervention.

Recently returning to deliver the programme to this year’s Year 7 boys our presenter was welcomed with “Hey, it’s the Brainwave lady - never shake your baby, eh miss”. Some students shared how they are spending more time with their siblings or nephews talking, playing and reading to them because they now know it “makes their brain really healthy.”

One senior prefect from last year is off overseas to help with a literacy programme and felt that what he had learned through the Brainwave School Programme would be very helpful in his new role.

News of the success of this project has reached another trust based in the Manawatu/Wanganui region. This trust was so taken with the results that they have provided a three-year funding contract to get this programme delivered to as many schools in the Wanganui/ Rangitikei and Palmerston North regions as possible.

The final word goes to one of the year 10 boys

**“The most interesting thing I learnt is that cuddles and love make you stronger.”**