

**A Pilot Study: The Impact of the WorryWoos Developing Emotional Intelligence
Program on Children’s Social and Emotional Literacy and Regulation:
The WorryWoos Educational Setting Pilot Program 2018: Diocese of Broken
Bay**

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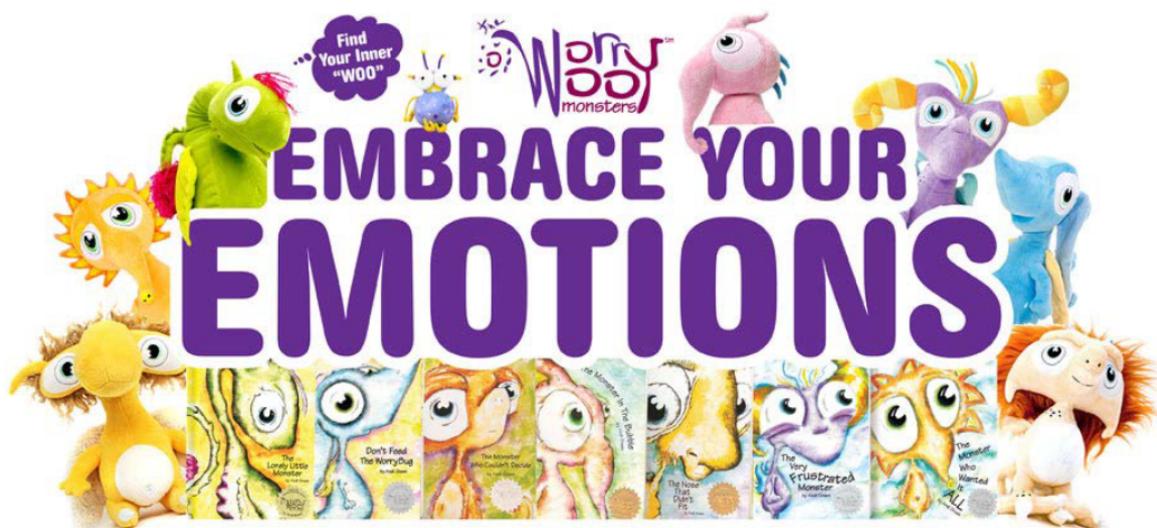


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Executive Summary

There can be nothing surer than children's social and emotional well-being are fundamental to their happiness, academic progress and future success in life. Historically the accent in assessing students has been around performance on basic skills but, in framing education for the 21st Century, many countries are moving beyond a focus on "learning to do" and "learning to know", to higher-order challenges of public education linked to self-actualisation and intra-personal challenges ("learning to be") and inter-personal challenges ("learning to live together"). This pilot study sought to find and measure progress in SEL (social and emotional literacy) using a new and socially/emotionally comprehensive program – The WorryWoos Program – to develop emotional intelligence/literacy. As the literature is replete with findings about the importance of early intervention, this study sought to measure progress using the program with Infants/Stage One children.

The program was offered to Stage One (Kindergarten to Year Two) children attending Catholic Schools within the Broken Bay Diocese. While the researchers sought 300 children from 10 voluntarily participating schools, the schools decided to use the program in more than one class in each school, creating a total of approximately 1,000 Kindergarten to Grade Two students in the sample.

Teachers from each school met with the researchers for two hours prior to initiating the program with their children, at which time they were shown how to use "Developing Emotional Intelligence Program" for Stage One children using the Australian guidelines developed by Dr John Irvine. At that meeting, teachers were also shown how to complete an online pre- and post-test measure which consisted of a well-respected and reliable objective measure, viz: the Strengths and Difficulties Questionnaire (SDQ); and 10 questions relating specifically to the emotions embraced within the program (Developing Emotional Intelligence Questionnaire – DEIQ). A random sample of approximately 50 children was used as a Control group.

The program was commenced in Term Two 2018 rather than Term One, to give teachers time to get to know their pupils. Children were then pre-intervention tested at the end of Term One with results submitted online. As the program consists of seven characters, each representing different emotional problem clusters (Anxiety / depression, frustration / anger, body image self-esteem, loneliness / rejection, self-confidence / assertion, social confidence/shyness, jealousy and bullying), the program was delivered over a seven-week period, with one character focus per week. Teachers were free to choose whatever sequence their circumstances allowed, there was no set order, and teachers were also free to use the guidelines as a base. However, being a dynamic and social interactional learning program, teachers were free to expand and treat each character as they saw fit.

At the end of Term Two 2018, teachers were asked again to go online and complete the same questions from the SDQ and Dr John's self-developed measure DEIQ) specifically relating to the program. Teachers did not have access to their previous ratings at the time of the post-test. In the scoring, all students were identified by a code number to reduce any bias and for ease of computer analysis. All scores were then analysed using the SPSS program using parametric statistical analysis. The following results were significant at the $p < .01$ level:

- There was a significant improvement in pro-social behaviours on the SDQ;



- There were significantly less difficulties reported on the conduct problems scale, hyperactivity problems scale, peer problems scale, emotional problems scale, internalising difficulties, externalising difficulties and total problems on the SDQ post data analysis;
- There was a significant improvement in overall ability to understand and manage emotional difficulties on the DEIQ;
- There was a significant improvement in intrapersonal skills, interpersonal skills, emotional awareness, empathy and resilience on the DEIQ.

Reasons for these significant findings include the following: (a) the program was introduced at a critical developmental phase in children’s lives as they become emotionally aware and confronted (i.e. keen to learn); (b) the classroom-based program is easy to learn and understand when in-servicing teachers; (c) the program is non-prescriptive in order or content; (d) teachers’ apparent enthusiasm for the program (this perception is reinforced by qualitative statements by so many of the participating teachers); (e) teachers and children really enjoyed the material – both reading books and plush toy characters; (f) relative freedom of timing and content for teachers; (g) the power of the social interactional learning style; and (h) parental involvement.

Limitations of the pilot study and directions for future research are discussed in detail. These include: the need for longitudinal study of any impact; the adaptation of the program for older children and specific student populations (e.g. students with a disability); gaining parental ratings to see the degree of domestic carry-over there has been; a larger control group; and a comparison with other SEL program effects.



1. Introduction

1.1 Social and Emotional Intelligence Overview

The concept of Emotional Intelligence (EI) has been hotly debated as a construct ever since the Howard Gardner (1983) publication “Frames of Mind: The Theory of Multiple Intelligences”. Regardless of its merits as a construct, there appears to be general consensus that Social and Emotional Literacy is at least as important as more traditional mathematics and linguistic literacy for the well-being and school success of students. Being able to recognise, understand and self-manage emotions, and to handle the increasingly complex area of social engagement, are paramount skills for children seeking to navigate the complex and ever-changing demands of the 21st century (Mayer, Salovey & Caruso, 2004).

As Mayer et al (2004) commented, emotional intelligence improves the ability to accurately perceive emotions, to access and generate emotions so as to assist thought, to understand emotions and emotional knowledge, and to reflectively regulate emotions so as to promote emotional and intellectual growth. There can be little doubt that the clamour for attention to social and emotional skills is intensifying. The evidence suggests that well developed social and emotional skills are both protective and helpful. Strong social and emotional skills in children not only predict fewer behavioural problems in the classroom, but they are also related to positive academic outcomes and improved school performance (Myles-Pallister, Hassan, Rooney, & Kane, 2014; January, Casey & Paulson, 2011; Durlak, Weissberg, Dymnicki, Taylor, & Schellinger, 2011)

Politically too, there is clear shift away from a belief that the NAPLAN focus of recent years, however valuable that information might be, is, in itself, able to achieve any significant shift in children’s academic success or their sense of wellbeing. The “3 R’s”, for discussion purposes only, can be recast within the Howard Gardner (1983) Multiple Intelligence Framework. Of his eight specified areas of intellectual functioning, there can be no doubt that the linguistic and logico-mathematical areas of Intelligence are comprehensively covered by NAPLAN. Likewise, the naturalistic and spatial intelligence constructs are covered by environmental studies and art, while bodily-kinesthetic and musical intelligence are covered by PD/H/PE and music. However, despite the acknowledged importance of intrapersonal and interpersonal intelligence in our lives, there is only fleeting references to its role in the health and PD/H/PE curriculum areas. Gardner (1983) refers to interpersonal ability as the ability to communicate effectively with other people and to be able to develop relationships. He refers to intrapersonal ability as the ability to understand one’s own emotions, motivations, inner states of being, and self-reflection (Gardner, 1983).

Mayer et al., (2004) claim that the high EI individual, most centrally, can better perceive emotions, use them in thought, understand their meanings, and manage emotions better than others. Solving emotional problems likely requires less cognitive effort for this individual. The person also tends to be somewhat higher in verbal, social, and other intelligences, particularly if the individual scored higher in the understanding emotions portion of EI (Mayer et al., 2004). The individual tends to be more open and agreeable than others.

Mayer et al., (2004) also argue that the high EI individual, relative to others, is less apt to engage in problem behaviours and avoids self-destructive, negative behaviours such as smoking, excessive drinking, drug abuse, or violent episodes with others.



Their claims of beneficial long term outcomes for high EI individuals get strong support from a recent longitudinal study involving a sample of 753 children in four study sites within the USA (Jones, Greenberg and Crowley, 2015). In their longitudinal study over 13 to 19 years, the researchers found “statistically significant associations between measured social-emotional skills in kindergarten and key young adult outcomes across many domains of education, employment, criminal activity, substance use and mental health”. The authors plead for more effort into early intervention in these “non-cognitive” areas to improve outcomes for tomorrow’s adults.

This may be a very compelling argument, but, to our knowledge, there has not been any systematic assessment of an early intervention social and emotional literacy package/program that gives a coherent coverage of the intra-personal and inter-personal quadrants outlined by Howard Gardner. Some research does exist to back up some of the excellent programs addressing components of social and emotional competence such as “Kids Matter”, “Friends for life”, “Fun Friends”, “You Can Do It”, “Bounce Back”, “Bully Busting”, “Mind Matters”, “Rock n Water” to name but a few. However while some research exists in support of some of these programs, such studies tend to focus on specific aspects of SEL and many are not focusing on early intervention. Yet this is precisely the age when children become aware of these feelings and when educators have the best chance of helping their students identify, understand and manage these feelings. As Brouzos, Misailidi and Hadjimatheou (2014) found, early intervention is vital; age is a critical factor in improving emotional intelligence and achievement at school.

1.2 Introduction to the WorryWoos Developing Emotional Intelligence Program

In 2014, Dr John Irvine was asked by the Australian distributor of the WorryWoos to assess the material for its suitability to the Australian market. The WorryWoos are high quality soft plush toys and accompanying story books designed by American artist and creative designer, Andi Green. The seven cuddly toys are an ideal medium to approach the identification and exploration of emotions. The program is based upon engaging children with the WorryWoos to further their understanding of their emotions and the emotions of others.

The USA program for the WorryWoos was adapted by Dr John Irvine specifically for Early Childhood centres and Stage One (K-2) Australian schools and contained the guidelines titled “Developing Emotional Intelligence Program”. Dr John also wrote two books for parents and educators to assist them with children who were either struggling with their internalized feelings “Helping young worriers beat the worry bug” or who were struggling with externalized feelings “Helping young children manage frustration and anger.”

Each of the WorryWoos has an accompanying picture book. The picture books follow the story of the WorryWoos through the associated emotion and make an excellent literacy addition to the program. The material and its SEL component can be seen in the table below (Table One).

Table 1. The WorryWoos characters, targeted emotions and books available

WorryWoos	Emotions	Picture Book	Dr John Parent Guide
Wince	Anxiety/Depression	Don't Feed the Worry Bug	Helping Young Worriers Beat the WorryBug
Twitch	Frustration/Anger	The Very Frustrated	Helping Young Kids



		Monster	Handle Frustration and Anger
Rue	Body Image/Self-Esteem	The Nose that Didn't Fit	
Nola	Loneliness/Rejection	The Lonely Little Monster	
Fuddle	Self-Confidence, Assertion & Bullying	The Monster who Couldn't Decide	
Squeak	Social Confidence/Shyness	The Monster in the Bubble	
Zelly	Jealousy/Envy & Bullying	The Monster who Wanted it all	

Dr John's Australian adaptation of the USA program provides educators and teachers with a strong theoretical backgrounding in emotional intelligence, as well as practical learning experiences that will engage children. The Australian adaptation incorporates elements of Bloom's taxonomy of learning, Maslow's hierarchy of children's needs/motivation, Kohlberg's moral development (viz through social interactional learning children gravitate towards higher order or better responses), while couched within a Piagetian pre-operational and concrete operational framework. As mentioned above, the entire program is conducted within the context of the power of social interactional learning. In one sentence, it's aimed to be developmentally and socially sensitive and also sensitive to school daily routines and time constraints. It focuses on what children want and what they need to learn and how they learn.

The Australian program follows a clear and concise but not prescriptive structure, sensitive to time constraints and multiple class usage of the kit.

- Session One – Introduction and Identification of the Emotion
- Session Two – Reading and Recalling
- Session Three – Sharing and Suggesting
- Session Four – Reflecting and Extending
- Session Five – Reviewing and Forward Planning

The program and more comprehensive guidelines for teachers, parents and educators, and detailed directions for implementation on a session by session, character by character basis are contained within the kit provided to centres/schools. For further details see "Embrace your emotions: developing emotional intelligence program" by Dr John Irvine on the website www.WorryWoos.com.au.

This program/guidelines were then put into printed format in 2017 for a more extensive trial and available free (courtesy of Mingara Recreational Club and Clubs NSW) to all Central Coast NSW schools (including Independent, Catholic and public schools). Each school sent representatives to be in-service trained and then given the total kit with Dr John's Australian adaptation guidelines for use in Terms 3 and 4 2017. After three months, those centres that took the program were then canvassed for feedback.

1.3 Previous Program Quantitative Feedback

Central Coast NSW feedback



- 87% said the children are enjoying the WorryWoos program and the delivery of the program very much.
- 80% believed that in only 3 months using the program it had been very beneficial to children’s emotional wellbeing.
- 73% said the DEI Program guidelines were very helpful
- 93% said they would highly recommend the DEI Program to other teachers

The program was then sought by the Mingara sister club, Westport, for early childhood centres and schools in the Port Macquarie area. On this occasion workshops involving the training of “champions” from each centre/school was also made compulsory so the kits would be used efficiently and co-operatively and so there was someone to co-ordinate and handle staff and parent questions. The momentum was gathering and qualitative feedback was very encouraging but there was still no quantitative evidence of its value.

This omission is despite the growing call for such research. As Billings et al., (2014) noted “currently only limited research exists concerning the EI of preadolescent children and this is surprising given the important developmental changes that are known to occur during this phase of life, particularly in terms of a changing social context and the growing importance of peer relationships and children’s increasing ability to understand themselves and others.” The present research was commissioned by Educational Experience to ascertain just what impact the WorryWoos SEL program was having in the lives of young children undertaking the program.

1.4 Previous International WorryWoos Exploratory Research

As recently as June 2018, exploratory research, commissioned by the inventor/designer, Andi Green, was conducted on the USA program for the WorryWoos in New Jersey schools with 380 5-6 year olds. The results are very encouraging. The authors, Stilton and Zehring concluded “The WorryWoos study results suggest that the WorryWoos educational intervention significantly enhanced students’ recognition of basic and complex emotions, as well as their reported sense of self, positive attitude toward themselves and others, ability to control their emotions, understanding of the feelings of others, emotional awareness, empathy and reduced their feelings of feeling like a failure” (Silton & Zehring, 2018). However, these USA results could not be transposed to the Australian scene for several reasons:

- (a) The instrument used to assess gains was researcher designed and lacked any objective psychometric properties;
- (b) While the material used, as described above, was identical to that available in Australia, the curricula support material and personnel were not available in Australia;
- (c) The curricula goals and integration of material within the USA curricula framework was not transposable to the Australian Curriculum framework.

1.5 Hypotheses

The current study aims to examine the impact of the WorryWoos program on measures of children’s social and emotional well-being within the educational setting. Based on the qualitative findings and other overseas research referred to above, it would be predicted that there would be a significantly positive relationship between students who participated in the program and areas measured by the rating scales that were utilised. Specifically, the following predictions are hypothesised:

1. There will be a significant improvement in pro-social behaviours as measured by the SDQ.



2. There will be a significant decrease in peer related problems, emotional problems, behavioural difficulties and internalising and externalising symptomology as measured within the SDQ.
3. There would be a significant improvement in the understanding and ability to manage emotions as reflected in scores on the DEIQ.
4. There would be a significant improvement in intrapersonal skills, interpersonal skills, emotional awareness, empathy and resilience as reflected in scores on the DEIQ.



2. Methodology

2.1. Participants

Participants (N = 1089) were students who had attended Kindergarten to Grade Two of participating Catholic Primary Schools from the Diocese of Broken Bay. There were 84 participant data exclusions, primarily due to incomplete, or unable to be matched (due to rater error across pre- and post-surveys). Research Pilot advertisement to schools was conducted electronically, via expression of interest email and through attendance at cluster-based research pilot information and training presentations. Parents of participants read an information statement within a parent letter provided by the school (Appendix A), with an 'opt-out' implied consent procedure offered to the parents as part of this information statement. Teachers of participants completed the subsequent online pre- and post-questionnaire. Research approval was obtained from the Diocese of Broken Bay Catholic Schools Office.

2.2 Measures

2.2.1. *The Strengths and Difficulties Questionnaire (Goodman, 1997).*

The Strengths and Difficulties Questionnaire (SDQ) is a brief 25-item informant-report measure, assessing the psychological attributes (i.e., emotional, social and behavioural functioning) of a child aged 3 – 16years (Goodman, 1997). The SDQ exists in various versions, which can be completed by researchers, clinicians and/or teachers. As per Goodman (1997), the SDQ quantifies both positive and negative attributes, which can be divided into five subscales: (1) emotional symptoms (Current Study $\alpha = .83$); (2) conduct problems (Current Study $\alpha = .78$); (3) hyperactivity/inattention (Current Study $\alpha = .92$); (4) peer relationship problems (Current Study $\alpha = .68$); and (5) pro-social behaviours (Current Study $\alpha = .84$). As per Goodman et al., (2010), in low risk or general population samples, it may be better to utilise the alternative three-subscale division of the SDQ, including: (1) internalising symptoms scale – a combination of emotional and peer symptoms (Current Study $\alpha = .45$); (2) externalising symptoms scale – a combination of conduct and hyperactivity symptoms (Current Study $\alpha = .66$); and (3) prosocial scale (Current Study $\alpha = .84$). As per Goodman et al., (2010) and for the purposes of this pilot research, both subscale divisions of the SDQ have been utilised (clinical and non-clinical population groups). A higher score on each subscale 1 and 2 indicated greater difficulties with internalising and/or externalising symptomology. A higher scores on subscale three indicated engagement in more individual pro-social behaviour.

2.2.2. *The Developing Emotional Intelligence Questionnaire (Irvine, 2017).*

The Developing Emotional Intelligence Questionnaire (DEIQ) is a 10 item informant-report questionnaire about how the participant understands and copes with varying feelings and emotional presentations. Each item was rated on a 3-point Likert scale. The DEIQ was designed specifically in relation to the WorryWoos Developing Emotional Intelligence Program for the purpose of understanding the impact of the program itself. The questionnaire consisted of 10 questions, seven of which are related to each Worry Woo Character and the feeling associated with that character (i.e., worry, sadness, envy, etc.) and three general questions in relation to the participant's (1) general ability to understand emotions; (2) general ability to manage emotions; and (3) general ability to demonstrate empathy for others. Based upon the themes within the questions (i.e., intrapersonal/interpersonal emotions), the following sub-scales were developed: (1) Overall



Emotional Intelligence Impact Scale; (2) Interpersonal Scale; (3) Intrapersonal Scale; (4) Emotional Awareness and Empathy Scale; and (5) Resilience Scale.

2.3. Procedure

Teachers of participants completed a pre- and post- online survey, provided in Appendix B – Appendix D. This consisted of demographic information about both the teacher and the child, including items about the participating school and student grade. This was followed by Strengths and Difficulties Questionnaire (standardised measure) and the Developing Emotional Intelligence Questionnaire as described above. Teachers were requested to complete the online questionnaire in the four weeks prior to administering the program and within the four weeks post program administration.

Program administration was completed over a seven week period (throughout weeks two – eight during Term Two, 2018). As the program consists of seven characters, each representing different emotional problem clusters (anxiety/depression, frustration/anger, body image/self-esteem, loneliness/rejection, self-confidence/assertion, social confidence/shyness, jealousy and bullying), the program was delivered over a seven week period, with one character focus per week. Teachers were free to choose whatever sequence their circumstances allowed (there was no set order of administration) and teachers utilised the provided educational guidelines as a basis to fit within their teaching context.

2.4 Statistical analyses

Statistical analysis were carried out using SPSS statistical package version 25.0 (IBM Corp, 2011). The data was prepared for analysis by recoding variables and reverse scoring items (DHS) so that full-scale scores could be used for analysis. Additionally major incompleteness (defined as participants who (a) did not complete mandatory survey items, (b) were not recorded in both pre- and post- test scores, and (c) responses that were unable to be paired) were deleted ($N = 84$). The assumption of normality was tested using the Shapiro-Wilk procedure, and non-parametric analysis was utilised where this assumption was violated. Paired samples t-test analysis was utilised to gain further information regarding whether the mean difference between the two data observations sets (pre and post-test) was statistically significant. Parametric analysis were conducted and results provided in the body of the report and non-parametric results have been included in Appendix E.



3. Results

3.1 Demographics

There were 1005 participants (treatment and control), ranging from Kindergarten to Grade Two. There were a total of 959 participants within the treatment group and 49 participants within the small control group. Table 2 provides frequencies and percentages of demographic characteristics of the participants. Most participants were in Grade Two with equal spread across gender.

Table 2. Participant Demographic Information

Variable	Frequency	Percentage
Gender		
Male	502	49.95
Female	503	50.05
Grades		
Kindergarten	213	21.19
One	347	34.53
Two	445	44.28
Schools	10	100
Classes/Teachers	48	100

3.2 Strengths and Difficulties Questionnaire (Goodman, 1997)

The social and emotional capabilities of participants was measured using the Strengths and Difficulties Questionnaire (SDQ). The Strengths and Difficulties categories were not normally distributed for this population sample. A paired samples t-test was conducted to determine the impact of the WorryWoos Program on various social and emotional capabilities of participants as measured by the SDQ.

3.2.1. SDQ Total Difficulties Scale

A paired samples t-test was conducted to compare the total difficulties of participants prior to the WorryWoos Developing Emotional Intelligence Program (DEIP) and following program administration. There was a significant difference for pre-test Total Difficulties ($M = 8.40$, $SD = 6.46$) and post-test Total Difficulties ($M = 5.81$, $SD = 5.20$); $t(958) = 14.62$, $p < .01$. These results suggest that the program was effective in reducing the overall social and emotional difficulties of participating students.

3.2.2. SDQ Internalising Difficulties Scale

A paired samples t-test was conducted to compare the internalising difficulties of participants prior to the WorryWoos DEIP and following program administration. There was a significant difference for pre-test Internalising Difficulties ($M = 3.38$, $SD = 3.20$) and post-test Internalising Difficulties ($M = 2.21$, $SD = 2.58$); $t(958) = 11.86$, $p < .01$. These results suggest that the program was effective in reducing the internalising difficulties of participating students.

3.2.3. SDQ Externalising Difficulties Scale

A paired samples t-test was conducted to compare the externalising difficulties of participants prior to the WorryWoos DEIP and following program administration. There was a significant difference for pre-test Externalising Difficulties ($M = 5.02$, $SD = 4.60$) and post-test Externalising Difficulties ($M = 3.60$, $SD = 3.83$); $t(958) = 11.46$, $p < .01$. These results suggest



that the program was effective in reducing the externalising difficulties of participating students.

3.2.4. SDQ Emotional Problems Scale

A paired samples t-test was conducted to compare the emotion problems of participants prior to the WorryWoos DEIP and following program administration. There was a significant difference between pre-test Emotional Difficulties ($M = 2.13$, $SD = 2.34$) and post-test Emotional Difficulties ($M = 1.46$, $SD = 1.95$); $t(958) = 9.19$, $p < .01$. These results suggest that the program was effective in reducing the emotional problems of participating students.

3.2.5. SDQ Conduct Problems Scale

A paired samples t-test was conducted to compare the behavioural problems of participants prior to the WorryWoos DEIP and following program administration. There was a significant difference for pre-test Conduct Difficulties ($M = 1.21$, $SD = 1.81$) and post-test Conduct Difficulties ($M = .80$, $SD = 1.42$); $t(958) = 8.10$, $p < .01$. These results suggest that the program was effective in reducing the conduct problems of participating students.

3.2.6. SDQ Hyperactivity Problems Scale

A paired samples t-test was conducted to compare the hyperactivity problems of participants prior to the WorryWoos DEIP and following program administration. There was a significant difference for pre-test Hyperactivity Difficulties ($M = 3.81$, $SD = 3.29$) and post-test Hyperactivity Difficulties ($M = 2.80$, $SD = 2.91$); $t(958) = 10.96$, $p < .01$. These results suggest that the program was effective in reducing the hyperactivity problems of participating students.

3.2.7. SDQ Peer Problems Scale

A paired samples t-test was conducted to compare the peer problems of participants prior to the WorryWoos DEIP and following program administration. There was a significant difference for pre-test Peer Problems/Difficulties ($M = 1.25$, $SD = 1.59$) and post-test Peer Problems/Difficulties ($M = .75$, $SD = 1.27$); $t(958) = 10.24$, $p < .01$. These results suggest that the program was effective in reducing the peer related problems of participating students.

3.2.8. SDQ Pro Social Scale

A paired samples t-test was conducted to compare the pro-social behaviours of participants prior to the WorryWoos DEIP and following program administration. There was a significant difference for pre-test Pro-Social behaviour ($M = 7.32$, $SD = 2.41$) and post-test Pro-Social behaviour ($M = 8.27$, $SD = 2.00$); $t(958) = -12.78$, $p < .01$. These results suggest that the program was effective in improving the pro-social behaviours of participating students.

3.3 Developing Emotional Intelligence Questionnaire (Irvine, 2017)

The emotional intelligence of participants was measured using the Developing Emotional Intelligence Questionnaire (DEIQ). The DEIQ was not normally distributed for this population sample. A paired samples t-test was conducted to determine the impact of the WorryWoos Program on various emotional intelligence capabilities of participants as measured by the DEIQ.

3.3.1. DEIQ Total Scale



A paired samples t-test was conducted to compare the overall improvement in understanding and managing (emotional intelligence) the various identified emotions prior to the WorryWoos DEIP and following program administration. There was a significant difference for pre-test Emotional Intelligence ($M = 7.89$, $SD = 4.06$) and post-test Emotional Intelligence ($M = 10.56$, $SD = 3.75$); $t(958) = -18.71$, $p < .01$. These results suggest that the program was effective in improving the emotional intelligence of participating students.

3.3.2. DEIQ Interpersonal Scale

A paired samples t-test was conducted to compare the interpersonal skills of participants prior to the WorryWoos DEIP and following program administration. There was a significant difference for pre-test Interpersonal Skills ($M = 2.18$, $SD = 1.34$) and post-test Interpersonal Skills ($M = 2.99$, $SD = 1.26$); $t(958) = -16.52$, $p < .01$. These results suggest that the program was effective in improving the interpersonal skills of participating students.

3.3.3. DEIQ Intrapersonal Scale

A paired samples t-test was conducted to compare the intrapersonal skills of participants prior to the WorryWoos DEIP and following program administration. There was a significant difference for pre-test Intrapersonal Skills ($M = 4.45$, $SD = 1.93$) and post-test Intrapersonal Skills ($M = 5.59$, $SD = 1.62$); $t(958) = -17.45$, $p < .01$. These results suggest that the program was effective in improving the intrapersonal skills of participating students.

3.3.4. DEIQ Emotional Awareness and Empathy Scale

A paired samples t-test was conducted to compare the emotional awareness and empathy of participants prior to the WorryWoos DEIP and following program administration. There was a significant difference for pre-test emotional awareness and empathy ($M = 1.26$, $SD = 1.24$) and post-test emotional awareness and empathy ($M = 1.98$, $SD = 1.23$); $t(958) = -15.27$, $p < .01$. These results suggest that the program was effective in improving the emotional awareness and empathy of participating students.

3.3.5. DEIQ Resilience Scale

A paired samples t-test was conducted to compare the resilience of participants prior to the WorryWoos DEIP and following program administration. There was a significant difference for pre-test resilience ($M = 3.75$, $SD = 2.23$) and post-test resilience ($M = 5.12$, $SD = 2.06$); $t(958) = -17.30$, $p < .01$. These results suggest that the program was effective in improving the resilience of participating students.

3.4 Control Group

A paired samples t-test was conducted to determine the impact of developmental time and standard curriculum delivery (and no administration of WorryWoos Program) on various social and emotional capabilities of participants as measured by the SDQ and the DEIQ. The results from the control group for both the SDQ and the DEIQ have been presented in Table 3.

Table 3. Paired Samples t-test results from the SDQ and the DEIQ for the Worry Woo Control Participant Group.

Scale/Sub-Scale	Mean	SD	df	t	Sig (p =)
SDQ Total Difficulties			45	1.33	.19
Pre:	5.46	6.69			
Post:	4.50	6.53			
SDQ Internalising			45	.68	.50



Difficulties Pre: Post:	1.72 1.54	2.27 2.46			
SDQ Externalising Difficulties Pre: Post:	3.74 2.96	5.26 4.90	45	1.34	.19
SDQ Emotional Problems Pre: Post:	1.20 .96	1.81 1.69	45	1.38	.18
SDQ Conduct Problems Pre: Post:	.87 .72	2.05 2.03	45	.75	.46
SDQ Hyperactivity Problems Pre: Post:	2.87 2.24	3.63 2.29	45	1.43	.16
SDQ Peer Problems Pre: Post	.52 .59	1.01 1.15	45	-.37	.71
SDQ Pro-Social Pre: Post	8.30 8.74	2.41 2.11	45	-1.63	.110
DEIQ Total Pre: Post:	11.13 9.28	3.81 4.40	45	4.17	<.01
DEIQ Interpersonal Pre: Post:	3.15 2.57	1.30 1.38	45	3.53	<.01
DEIQ Intrapersonal Pre: Post:	5.76 5.46	1.74 1.93	45	1.66	.10
DEIQ Awareness & Empathy Pre: Post	2.22 1.26	1.15 1.48	45	4.40	<.01
DEIQ Resilience Pre: Post	5.43 4.50	2.29 2.44	45	3.53	<.01

4. Conclusion

4.1 Discussion

Jones, Greenberg and Crowley (2015) explored the long-term benefits for individuals who demonstrate high social and emotional skills in early life. The longitudinal study investigated the positive link between social competence during the early developmental period and key young adult outcomes. The researchers found statistically significant correlations between



the social-emotional skills and competencies in kindergarten and key young adult outcomes across many domains of education, employment, criminal activity, substance use and mental health. The authors highlight the need for further effort targeting early intervention in social and emotional development to improve outcomes for tomorrow's adults.

The pilot research study aimed to investigate the impact of the WorryWoos Developing Emotional Intelligence program on various social and emotional skills for students in Grades Kindergarten to Grade Two. As previously identified, there is a general consensus that social and emotional literacy is just as important as more traditional academia and curriculum learnings to wellbeing and overall student achievement. Being able to recognise, understand and manage emotions, as well as handle increasingly complex interpersonal interactions, are paramount for children's development and success moving into adulthood.

The current research included approximately 1000 students from ten Diocese of Broken Bay Systemic schools, across 48 classes. Following an initial in-service for Teachers to learn about the implementation of the program, teachers were requested to complete an online pre-test questionnaire, evaluating their perceptions of the social and emotional competencies of their students prior to program administration. The program was commenced in Term Two 2018, and was administered over a seven-week period, with one character/emotional focus per week (1. anxiety/depression; 2. frustration/anger; 3. body image self-esteem; 4. loneliness/rejection; 5. self-confidence/assertion; 6. social confidence/shyness; 7. jealousy and bullying). Teachers were free to choose whatever sequence their circumstances allowed.

At the completion of the program, Teachers were again requested to complete the same questionnaire regarding the social and emotional competencies of their participating students post program administration. All results were then analysed using the SPSS Statistical Analysis program using both parametric and non-parametric statistical analysis. As per the paired sample t-test, the following results were significant at the $p < .01$ level:

- Significant improvement in pro-social behaviours as measured on the SDQ.
- Significantly less difficulties reported on the conduct problems scale, hyperactivity problems scale, peer problems scale, emotional problems scale, internalising difficulties, externalising difficulties and total problems as per the SDQ.
- Significant improvement in overall ability to understand and manage emotional difficulties in relation to each WorryWoos Character as per the DEIQ.
- Significant improvement in intrapersonal skills, interpersonal skills, emotional awareness, empathy and resilience as measured on the DEIQ.

4.2 Limitations and Implications for Future Research

Keeping in mind that this was a pilot study, the results are still very impressive. However there are significant limitations offering directions for further research.

1. Although teachers obviously indicated that the program was of considerable benefit, it would be very useful to get parental pre- and post-test ratings to see if the parents feel there is carry-over to home.
2. It would be beneficial to have a larger cross-sectional control group - while nearly all the teachers wanted to participate at the program in second term, rather than hold



back or not participate, a larger control group from non-involved schools would be helpful.

3. The authors are aware of the potential for the Pygmalion effect to operate but this tends to operate more individually and mediated by student's self-esteem (Friedrich et al 2015)
4. Possibly some of the effect was just students settling in and adjusting to the teacher – while the intervention research was deliberately positioned to second term to give teachers a chance to get to know their students, developmental maturing would indicate that progress should have been expected.
5. In similar vein, maybe a future study could examine the impact of the WorryWoos against another SEL program – while none come easily to mind that cover the gamut of feelings embraced by the WorryWoos for Stage One students, some program such as “Fun Friends”, “Bounce Back”, “You can do it” or “Rock ‘n Water”, “Friends for life” could be used for comparative purposes.
6. As further curriculum support and extension material are being produced locally and overseas to assist teachers using the WorryWoos, further research could involve the impact with older (Stage Two and Stage Three) students using this extension material.
7. There has been considerable interest from specialist teachers working with Conduct Disordered children, those on the ASD spectrum and those working with indigenous groups – further research on impact (and / or modification) for specific groups is strongly advised.
8. There is no doubt that teachers felt very warmly both to the material and also to the researchers who undertook the study and pre-serviced the teachers – this could be an effect needing more objective input in future research.
9. There clearly needs to be some longitudinal or follow-up study on the maintenance of these short term gains – this would be important for funding bodies to be confident in moneys being well invested.
10. As there have been suggestions in the Introduction that there would be carry-over of improvements in SEL to NAPLAN and other academic measures, it would be interesting to test this association.

The results of the current study leave little doubt that children are more than the sum of their academic parts. They are ready to embrace the real social and emotional issues facing them and to benefit from an attractive, age-appropriate program such as the WorryWoos. There's an old saying that “Winners are Grinners”. This study suggests that maybe social and emotionally secure children are primed to succeed – i.e., “Grinners are Winners”.



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List of Abbreviations

ASD – Autistic Spectrum Disorder

DEIP – Developing Emotional Intelligence Program

DEIQ – Developing Emotional Intelligence Questionnaire

EI – Emotional Intelligence

NAPLAN – National Assessment Program – Literacy and Numeracy

PD/H/PE – Personal Development, Health and Physical Education

SDQ – Strengths and Difficulties Questionnaire

SPSS – Statistical Package for the Social Sciences



Appendix A: Informed Consent via 'Opt Out' Parent Letter

Letter to Parents

Hi! I'm Dr John, and I'm very excited that you and your child are taking part in the WorryWoos™ Developing Emotional Intelligence Program.

The WorryWoos™ Developing Emotional Intelligence Program is aimed at developing children's emotional awareness and understanding in an interactive, meaningful and safe way. The WorryWoos™ are a group of distinct, yet relatable, plush resources with accompanying story books, all written and brilliantly illustrated by Andi Green, the creator and designer of the program. They have been designed to help all children in their emotional development with links to the Australian Curriculum in areas such as identification of emotional responses. Over the coming Term your child will focus on the range of characters and the associated emotions. The guidelines have been written for 3-8year olds, and very much use a play type approach. Essentially the power of the program is that it capitalises on what is termed social interactive learning, in other words children's learning through the teacher and from each other.

For participants in the program, the WorryWoos™ storybooks will be delivered as part of the shared text lessons within the standard curriculum, with lesson plans included to guide and support conversations and learning relating to the character of the week. Teachers will be requested to complete a pre- and post- social and emotional skills questionnaire re your children's progress.

As parents, you are very important in the program. If the kit is being used in your child's school, the teacher may ask you to notice and report back if your child has had a really good go at beating frustration, handling worries, making friends or trying something new, and you may notice these behaviours relating to the character of the week. Additionally, at the end of each segment, you will have the opportunity to let the teacher know of specific issues your child may have with a particular emotion. That could mean that those children will be given extra support and that the parents of those children may be invited to team up to get ideas on how they can help their child. You will also be given the chance to provide feedback at the end of the program.

Congratulations on taking the initiative to equip your child with the emotional resilience to face an ever changing world.

Very best wishes,

Dr John Irvine

Paediatric Psychologist

B.A. PhD. M.A.C.E., M.A.P.S

* If you *do not* wish your child's progress in relation to the WorryWoos™ Program to be recorded, please check the box below and return to the classroom teacher with the student's name completed on this form.

I do not wish my child to participate Student

Name:



**Appendix C: The Strengths and Difficulties Questionnaire
(Goodman, 1997)**

Strengths and Difficulties Questionnaire	Not True	Somewhat True	Certainly True
Considerate of other people's feelings	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Restless, overactive, cannot stay still for long	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Often complains of headaches, stomach-aches or sickness	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Shares readily with other children, for example, books, food	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Often loses temper	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Rather solitary, prefers to play alone	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Generally well behaved, usually does what adults request	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Many worries or often seems worried	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Helpful if someone is hurt, upset or feeling ill	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Constantly fidgeting or squirming	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Has at least one good friend	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Often fights with other children or bullies them	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Often unhappy, depressed or tearful	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Generally liked by other children	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Easily distracted, concentration wanders	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Nervous or clingy in new situations, easily loses confidence	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Kind to younger children	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Often lies or cheats	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Picked on or bullied by other children	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Often volunteers to help others (parents, teachers, other children)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Thinks things out before acting	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Steals from home, school or elsewhere	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Gets along better with adults than with other children	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Many fears, easily scared	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Good attention span, sees tasks through to the end.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>



**Appendix D: The Developing Social and Emotional Intelligence Program
Questionnaire
(Irvine, 2017)**

Developing Social and Emotional Intelligence Program Questionnaire	Not True	Somewhat True	Certainly True
Shows a basic understanding and ability to manage anxiety	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Shows a basic understanding and ability to make decisions	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Shows a basic understanding and ability to manage frustration	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Shows a basic understanding and ability to try new experiences	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Shows a basic understanding and ability to manage rejection and loneliness	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Shows a basic understanding and acceptance of his/her body image	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Shows a basic understanding and ability to manage his/her sense of envy of others' belongings	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Shows a general ability to understand his/her emotions	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Shows a general ability to manage his/her emotions	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Shows a general ability to demonstrate empathy for others' feelings	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>



Appendix E: Developing Emotional Intelligence Questionnaire Subscale Inclusions

DEIQ Sub-Scale Scale	Question Inclusions
DEIQ Total Scale	- All DEIQ Items (1 - 10)
Interpersonal Scale	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Shows a basic understanding and ability to manage frustration - Shows a basic understanding and ability to manage rejection and loneliness - Shows a basic understanding and ability to manage his/her sense of envy of others' belongings
Intrapersonal Scale	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Shows a basic understanding and ability to manage anxiety - Shows a basic understanding and ability to make decisions - Shows a basic understanding and ability to try new experiences - Shows a basic understanding and acceptance of his/her body image
Emotional Awareness and Empathy Scale	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Shows a general ability to understand his/her emotions - Shows a general ability to manage his/her emotions - Shows a general ability to demonstrate empathy for others' feelings
Resilience Scale	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Shows a basic understanding and ability to manage anxiety - Shows a basic understanding and ability to manage frustration - Shows a basic understanding and ability to manage rejection and loneliness - Shows a basic understanding and ability to manage his/her sense of envy of others' belongings - Shows a general ability to manage his/her emotions



Appendix F: Non-Parametric Statistical Analysis

3. Non-Parametric Results

3.2 Strengths and Difficulties Questionnaire (Goodman, 1997)

The social and emotional capabilities of participants was measured using the Strengths and Difficulties Questionnaire (SDQ). The Strengths and Difficulties was not normally distributed for this population sample. A Wilcoxon Signed-Ranked Test was conducted to determine the impact of the WorryWoos Program on various social and emotional capabilities of participants as measured by the SDQ.

3.2.1. *SDQ Total Difficulties Scale*

A Wilcoxon Signed-Ranked Test was conducted to compare the total difficulties of participants prior to the WorryWoos Developing Emotional Intelligence Program (DEIP) and following program administration. There was a significant difference for pre-test and post-test Total Difficulties, $Z = -13.95$, $p < .01$. These results suggest that the program was effective in reducing the overall social and emotional difficulties of participating students.

3.2.2. *SDQ Internalising Difficulties Scale*

A Wilcoxon Signed-Ranked Test was conducted to compare the internalising difficulties of participants prior to the WorryWoos DEIP and following program administration. There was a significant difference for pre-test and post-test Internalising Difficulties, $Z = -11.65$, $p < .01$. These results suggest that the program was effective in reducing the internalising difficulties of participating students.

3.2.3. *SDQ Externalising Difficulties Scale*

A Wilcoxon Signed-Ranked Test was conducted to compare the externalising difficulties of participants prior to the WorryWoos DEIP and following program administration. There was a significant difference for pre-test and post-test Externalising Difficulties, $Z = -11.56$, $p < .01$. These results suggest that the program was effective in reducing the externalising difficulties of participating students.

3.2.4. *SDQ Emotional Problems Scale*

A Wilcoxon Signed-Ranked Test was conducted to compare the emotion problems of participants prior to the WorryWoos DEIP and following program administration. There was a significant difference for pre-test and post-test Emotional Difficulties, $Z = -9.37$, $p < .01$. These results suggest that the program was effective in reducing the emotional problems of participating students.

3.2.5. *SDQ Conduct Problems Scale*

A Wilcoxon Signed-Ranked Test was conducted to compare the behavioural problems of participants prior to the WorryWoos DEIP and following program administration. There was a significant difference for pre-test and post-test Conduct Difficulties, $Z = -8.40$, $p < .01$. These results suggest that the program was effective in reducing the conduct problems of participating students.

3.2.6. *SDQ Hyperactivity Problems Scale*

A Wilcoxon Signed-Ranked Test was conducted to compare the hyperactivity problems of participants prior to the WorryWoos DEIP and following program administration. There was a significant difference for pre-test and post-test Hyperactivity Difficulties, $Z = -10.86$, $p < .01$.



These results suggest that the program was effective in reducing the hyperactivity problems of participating students.



3.2.7. SDQ Peer Problems Scale

A Wilcoxon Signed-Ranked Test was conducted to compare the peer problems of participants prior to the WorryWoos DEIP and following program administration. There was a significant difference for pre-test and post-test Peer Problems/Difficulties, $Z = 10.13$, $p < .01$. These results suggest that the program was effective in reducing the peer related problems of participating students.

3.2.8. SDQ Pro Social Scale

A Wilcoxon Signed-Ranked Test was conducted to compare the pro-social behaviours of participants prior to the WorryWoos DEIP and following program administration. There was a significant difference for pre-test and post-test Pro-Social behaviour, $Z = -12.27$, $p < .01$. These results suggest that the program was effective in improving the pro-social behaviours of participating students.

3.3 Developing Emotional Intelligence Questionnaire (Irvine, 2017)

The emotional intelligence of participants was measured using the Developing Emotional Intelligence Questionnaire (DEIQ). The DEIQ was not normally distributed for this population sample. A Wilcoxon Signed-Ranked Test was conducted to determine the impact of the WorryWoos Program on various emotional intelligence capabilities of participants as measured by the DEIQ.

3.3.1. DEIQ Total Scale

A Wilcoxon Signed-Ranked Test was conducted to compare the overall improvement in understanding and managing (emotional intelligence) the various identified emotions prior to the WorryWoos DEIP and following program administration. There was a significant difference for pre-test and post-test Emotional Intelligence, $Z = -16.31$, $p < .01$. These results suggest that the program was effective in improving the emotional intelligence participating students.

3.3.2. DEIQ Interpersonal Scale

A Wilcoxon Signed-Ranked Test was conducted to compare the interpersonal skills of participants prior to the WorryWoos DEIP and following program administration. There was a significant difference for pre-test and post-test Interpersonal Skills, $Z = -14.33$, $p < .01$. These results suggest that the program was effective in improving the interpersonal skills of participating students.

3.3.3. DEIQ Intrapersonal Scale

A Wilcoxon Signed-Ranked Test was conducted to compare the intrapersonal skills of participants prior to the WorryWoos DEIP and following program administration. There was a significant difference for pre-test and post-test Intrapersonal Skills, $Z = -15.31$ $p < .01$. These results suggest that the program was effective in improving the intrapersonal skills of participating students.

3.3.4. DEIQ Emotional Awareness and Empathy Scale

A Wilcoxon Signed-Ranked Test was conducted to compare the emotional awareness and empathy of participants prior to the WorryWoos DEIP and following program administration. There was a significant difference for pre-test and post-test emotional awareness and empathy, $Z = -13.33$, $p < .01$. These results suggest that the program was effective in improving the emotional awareness and empathy of participating students.

3.3.5. DEIQ Resilience Scale



A Wilcoxon Signed-Ranked Test was conducted to compare the resilience of participants prior to the WorryWoos DEIP and following program administration. There was a significant difference for pre-test and post-test resilience, $Z = -15.11$, $p < .01$. These results suggest that the program was effective in improving the resilience of participating students.

3.4 Control Group

A Wilcoxon Signed-Ranked Test was conducted to determine the impact of developmental time and standard curriculum delivery (and no administration of WorryWoos Program) on various social and emotional capabilities of participants as measured by the SDQ and the DEIQ. The results from the control group for both the SDQ and the DEIQ have been presented in Table 3.

Table 3. Wilcoxon Signed-Ranked Test results from the SDQ and the DEIQ for the Worry Woo Control Participant Group.

Scale/Sub-Scale	Z	Sig (p =)
SDQ Total Difficulties	-1.67	.09
SDQ Internalising Difficulties	-.46	.64
SDQ Externalising Difficulties	-2.23	.03
SDQ Emotional Problems	-1.32	.19
SDQ Conduct Problems	-.85	.40
SDQ Hyperactivity Problems	-2.12	.03
SDQ Peer Problems	-.36	.72
SDQ Pro-Social	-1.67	.94
DEIQ Total	-3.54	<.01
DEIQ Interpersonal	-3.20	<.01
DEIQ Intrapersonal	-1.87	.06
DEIQ Awareness & Empathy	-3.62	<.01
DEIQ Resilience	-3.21	<.01



Appendix G: Qualitative Feedback from Participating Teachers Students

Comment/Quote	Participant
School One	
"I like them when they become friends"	Student
"Because it helps me learn about my emotions and what I can do"	Student
"I like the Pink one because she helps me and gives me ideas"	Student
"I love the WorryWoos, I want them to stay forever"	Student
"I like how the soft toys and book go together teddy and book"	Student
"I think it was really, really, really great and they actually helped me to know everyone has the same feelings"	Student
"I like how they had different emotions and how they worked it out"	Student
"They could work with us in the classroom"	Student
"They looked different and we look different too"	Student
"I want them to stay longer and I enjoyed the way they talked about the problem"	Student
"Each week was different, that was exciting and a surprise"	Student
"My class got a lot out of the program, many parents spoke about the positive effect of the Worry Woo program during parent/teacher interviews"	Teacher
"Discussion was great in building respect of self and others"	Teacher
"The Worry Woo program supported the SEL programs implemented in our school e.g., PBL, Rock and Water, EXSEL groups"	Teacher
School Two	
"They are sooo fun – they have helped me a lot with my frustrations (Twitch) and when I get fuddled up (you get so confused) like Fuddle"	Student
"Fuddle has helped me not to get confused by deciding which one I want e.g., at West Wyalong on the weekend we went to a shop and I couldn't decide on a scarf – so I decided on the colourful. I was thinking of Fuddle"	Student
"Squeak has helped me not be scared of trying new stuff – I used to be scared to try new things in Maths and now I am not scared of trying new things in Maths"	Student
"I usually get really frustrated in Maths – Squeak taught me not to be scared by showing to me that we can do it"	Student
"Squeak trusted herself and hopped out of her balloon and I never thought that I could do that and now I can"	Student
"Zelly taught me not to be so jealous – I used to be jealous that all my friends had loads of 'squishies', e.g., Hallie has 17 squishies – now I know that it's best to be you and be happy with what you have - I have four squishies and I am happy about that now"	Student
"Wince and the worry bug – Wince worries about everything – Wince has taught me not to be worried"	Student
"His worry is that he doesn't look good about his big nose – Rue taught me that your body is perfect no matter what – I still don't like how I have eczema but I have changed that now – I'm happy that I'm me and it's ok that I have it because lots of people have it... Rue has taught me to just be who you are and to be grateful for how you look and for the inside of yourself. And it doesn't matter if you have a small nose and that you are you"	Student
"Squeak taught me that I should take a step out of my bubble and go on the 'viral mouse' at Luna Park because that makes me scream"	Student
"I still need a bit of help about it but Wince has made me to feel"	Student



better about worrying about getting robbed or kidnapped during the night. I can't get to sleep without mummy or daddy or my lamp on. Wince has helped me by knowing that it should be alright – we live in a safe suburb and go to a safe school”	
“I like Twitch - sometimes I'm frustrated too –he makes me feel better because sometimes you can solve things and sometimes you can't”	Student
“I like Wince – because sometimes I worry about if there is going to be a robber coming to our house – but there is never actually a robber; sometimes I worry if I'm getting my homework right or wrong – it's like Wince is talking to me and he would say 'you are doing it right – don't worry”	Student
“My favourite monsters are Fuddle and Squeak”	Student
“Fuddle is very cute and I get confused sometimes – I get confused with homework – I couldn't choose which answer and Fuddle helped me because he let me know that I have to decide or otherwise I can never do it”	Student
“Squeak: Sometimes I have to stay inside my bubble because I'm really scared – now I'm not scared to go to school now and I have lots of friends”	Student
“The teachers and children love the program and are finding it to be a fantastic way to talk about issues that arise each day – even referring back to earlier stories as friendship and playground issues arise”	Teacher/Principal
“When I went into the year two room after school yesterday, there were the Worry Woo monsters looking like they were sitting up and ready to learn at the kid's desks around the room – the kids have really bonded with and used each of the monsters and their stories as a new language to discuss issues”	Teacher/Principal
“I was really impressed with how well the students could articulate their fears and use strong language to support them”	Teacher
School Three	
“I learnt a lot off Fuddle... I don't know how to make decisions and he taught us to make decisions”	Student
“Nola was my favourite. She was lonely... she had the same feelings as me sometimes... it helped me to know what to do”	Student
“It's helpful because they always solved their feelings”	Student
“It's given us tips to not worry”	Student
“WorryWoos has been very beneficial for my class as it discusses a wide range of emotions and strategies to manage them. My class particularly liked Twitch, Wince, Nola and Zelly, who provided us with some wonderful examples of how to deal with frustration, anxiety, loneliness and jealousy. We made up role plays for dealing with all emotions and students were able to put a name to feelings they may not have been able to before”	Teacher
School Four	
“It makes me smile”	Student
“Colourful”	Student
“You can see all the other characters in one book”	Student
“The books all had a happy ending”	Student
“Sharing your feelings”	Student
“Teaching me stuff that I can do when those feelings come to me”	Student
“I liked the soft toys/nice colours/they make me feel happy”	Student
“The cards on the toys helped describe the character”	Student



"I liked how the toys were passed around because they were soft"	Student
What did you learn?	Student
"I learnt what to do when I'm cranky"	Student
"Different ideas to help me with my feelings"	Student
"The characters have different fears"	Student
"I learnt about what to do with those feelings"	Student
"To talk to your Mum"	Student
"Go and look for a person you know and tell them"	Student
"You should exercise"	Student
"Listen to music"	Student
"Go outside and play"	Student
"Dance"	Student
"Go for a run"	Student
"Take deep breaths"	Student
"On our first day that we started the WorryWoos program, happened to be the day when we discovered the snake in the classroom. This was quite upsetting for some of the children so our first lesson on feeling worried and anxious came at a very good time! With the children being so young and having limited life experience, there were certain feelings that they could express and relate to more than others. Having the opportunity to also do a lesson with year 2, I felt that they were able to communicate their experiences and feelings easier and the opportunity for discussion and sharing was greater with year 2 in comparison to kindy. The addition of the soft toys that come with the program are a lovely touch and the children loved each new 'monster' that comes with each feeling. These toys seem to give more meaning to each character. I'm not sure whether the surveys will be any different following the program, but I feel the program is beneficial in helping children understand the importance of talking about their feelings, knowing they are not alone in feeling the way they do, and understanding that there are things we can do to help us feel better in some of these difficult moments"	Teacher



About the Authors

Dr John Irvine – John has been a teacher, school counsellor, lecturer, academic researcher, clinician, author, speaker and media consultant in his many years working with schools, children, parents and community groups. His principle research areas have been in Child development, Early Childhood Education and Educational Psychology. For more information contact media@thearadclinic.com.

Jaye Bloffwitch – Jaye completed a B.Psych in 2008 and has worked within the private practice sector, education and public health settings. After completing a Masters in Clinical Psychology in 2015, Jaye commenced working at the Diocese of Broken Bay Catholic Schools Office. Her principle research areas have been in auditory steady state responses, Child and Family social and emotional wellbeing and multi-modal support service model for family caregivers.

