

## Welcome to the last e-news for 2009

As the end of the year approaches, we are reflecting on an incredibly busy, yet rewarding and fulfilling year for all the Positive Partnerships team involved in the organisation, delivery and evaluation of the workshops. We have over 70 team members involved in our national delivery, from every state and territory, and I would like to take this opportunity to thank them all for their great commitment, skills and energy in making the content 'come to life' during the workshops.

We are currently in the process of finalising our planning for 2010 with each of the states and territories – the dates and locations are now available on our website. The ongoing support and engagement of all state and territory education sectors, autism organisations and other key stakeholders has been integral in ensuring the successful 'roll-out' of the Positive Partnerships initiative across Australia. I would like to take this opportunity to thank each of our State/Territory planning teams for their involvement and support over the past 18 months and look forward to an ongoing 'positive partnership' during 2010 and 2011.

This issue of e-news will highlight our approach to evaluation, with a feature by the Evaluation Team, and explain the importance of evaluation in improving and monitoring the quality delivery of the Positive Partnerships initiative.

This being the final e-news for 2009, on behalf of the Positive Partnerships team I would like to wish you all a very Merry Christmas and a safe and relaxing New Year. Please keep checking our website over the next two months for additional resources and information about the 2010 Positive Partnerships workshop program.

Julie Hook  
Director, Positive Partnerships

***Keep up to date  
- visit the website***

## Year's wrap up

By the end of 2009, Positive Partnerships will have achieved the following:

- 35 four day workshops completed nationally for over 1 300 school staff
- 34 professional networks established to support these workshops, with the assistance from 150 Key Local Professionals
- 81 two day workshops and information sessions completed for over 2 600 parents/carers (including a workshop for Vietnamese speaking parents/carers)
- 71 Key Local Facilitators involved in providing support to parents/carers following the workshops and information sessions
- Over 10,600 people registered for our online learning portal with over 22 000 online learning modules either completed or in progress.

## Evaluating Positive Partnerships

The Evaluation Team, located at the University of Canberra and led by Professor Tony Shaddock, is responsible for collecting, analysing and reporting on data gained from participants in the Positive Partnerships initiative.

Evaluation is an essential part of 'quality control'. Throughout 2008 and 2009, feedback was gained from participants in every session of the professional development for teachers and other school staff and the workshops and information sessions for parents and carers. Information is fed back to presenters and team leaders, focusing on any issues that participants reported about registering for Positive Partnerships, what worked and what did not work in the sessions, and the overall adequacy of the program. Armed with this information, presenters and team leaders consider whether adjustments to the program are necessary – a process of ongoing quality improvement.

Interesting findings so far include:

- Formative evaluation data provided for the Professional Development program indicates that participants have reported statistically significant increases in five areas: attitudes, knowledge, skills, inclusive teaching and collaboration and partnerships.



- Participant evaluation data from the parent/carer workshops and information sessions indicates statistically significant increases in knowledge of educational environments, knowledge of parenting and partnerships.

As it is particularly important to know whether the workshops and sessions are having a longer-term impact, data is analysed to monitor changes over time, for example, participants' reactions before, during and after three months.

In a similar way, the Evaluation Team monitors how the networking services for teachers and for parents and carers are working. As the online component of Positive Partnerships is so important, particularly for teachers, parents and carers who are not metropolitan-based, the evaluation team carefully tracks participants' views of these services as well.

The Evaluation Team's plans for 2010 and 2011 are to continue to assist with quality control and helping to write up and publish aspects of the evaluation so that there is a permanent record of what worked, what was learned and ways in which parents and teachers can collaborate to improve the learning outcomes of students with autism.

Charlotte Liu  
Research Officer



## EVALUATION TEAM PROFILES

### **Charlotte Liu (pictured above left)** **M.Ed. Studies, PhD in Education**

Before joining the Positive Partnerships team, Charlotte worked for over 9 years in teaching and teacher training as a secondary school teacher, subject coordinator, school counsellor in China, and a university tutor and lecturer at University of Adelaide and University of Canberra.

Charlotte is currently working as a Research Officer specialised in qualitative design and analysis for the AAETC Evaluation Team. Led by Professor Tony Shaddock and alongside Dr Louise Skelt, she is responsible for designing evaluation strategies and instruments, analysing data, and preparing ethics clearance and research and evaluation reports.

### **Judy Bell (pictured above right)** **Administrative Officer**

After a long career as a Personal Assistant at the University of Canberra, Judy retired to pursue and enjoy her many interests until June 2008, when she decided to join AAETC and Positive Partnerships. As a founding member of the Evaluation Team, she helped establish the AAETC evaluation office in the Faculty of Education at the University of Canberra with Professor Tony Shaddock.

Judy's varied role includes managing the distribution of evaluation material to workshops, note taking for teleconferences, organising resource materials for presenters' kits and assisting the workshops presenters in the administration tasks onsite.

Judy says "being part of Positive Partnerships is a rewarding experience that is reinforced when hearing positive comments from the participants and witnessing how energised they feel as they leave".

**aaetc**  
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