

Why a social skills group?

For all sorts of reasons some children find it much harder to think socially and use their social tools suitably when it really counts; making friends, rolling with the punches, joining in, reading others, coping with not getting their way, taking turns, thinking positively and dealing with frustrations appropriately.

The verdict is in. A body of well regarded studies reveals that teaching social thinking to young people with social delay does improve their ability to interact socially.

The value of a social skilling group is that kids can learn these vital living skills through direct teaching, role-play practice and social activities in the context of a small friendly group.

A *What's the Buzz?* group either consists of 4 or 5 children with one facilitator, or 7 or 8 children with two facilitators. Children selected are about the same age so everyone has the opportunity to build friendships in a safe, structured and encouraging environment.



Written and developed by Mark Le Messurier and Madhavi Nawna Parker

Mark is an author, teacher and mentor to kids and their families. He is married to Sharon and has two daughters, Kim and Noni. His background spans twenty years in schools and includes special education. Mark is a recipient of an Australian National Excellence in Teaching Award.

He works in private practice at Fullarton House often with the kids and teens whose unpredictable emotion and behaviour gets in the way of their learning, friendships and a cohesive family life. These kids find life tough and also make it tough on those who care and teach them. Increasingly, this challenging group are being identified with Asperger syndrome, learning difficulties, ADHD, oppositional defiant disorder, depression and so on.

Mark provides practical and therapeutic interventions to strengthen the performance of these kids, and this is the essence of his latest book *Teaching Tough Kids*. It follows hot on the heels of his internationally best selling book, *Parenting Tough Kids*.

Mark and Madhavi have just completed writing '*What's the Buzz? a social skills enrichment program for primary students*'. This unique 16 lesson program highlights social thinking through role-play practice and play-based activities.

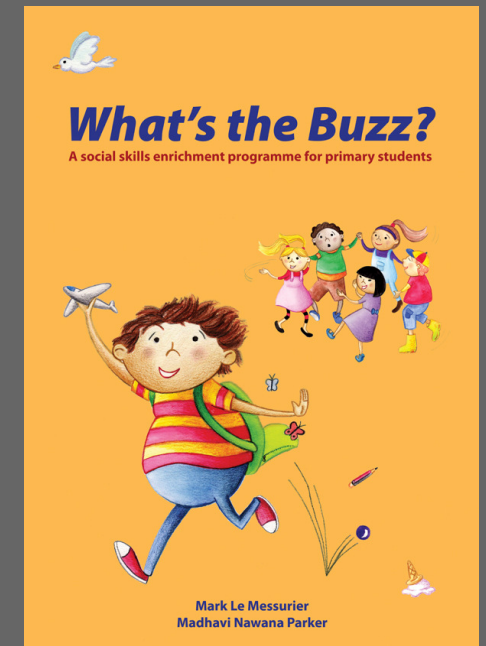
The program has been written for use in schools by teachers, school counsellors, school psychologists, teacher assistants, support staff, parent volunteers and allied health professionals. It also has application in a range of private clinical settings; psychologists, counsellors, speech pathologists, occupational therapists, social workers, play therapists and so on.

The Routledge Publishing Group in London plan an international release of '*What's the Buzz?*' early in 2011.

WHAT'S THE BUZZ?

A SOCIAL SKILLS EXPERIENCE

A social skills enrichment program for primary students



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Assessment, Therapy and Teaching

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First term

- meeting people and exiting
- getting attention
- following instructions
- being friendly
- competition, winning and losing
- feelings, identification
- feelings, early warning signs
- thinking positively Celebration and interim certificates

Second term

- feelings, simple ideas to create wellbeing
- responding to others (showing empathy)
- handling worry
- dealing with disappointment
- responding to bullying behaviours
- the connecting art of conversation
- learning to 'fit in'
- giving and receiving compliments. Celebration and achievement certificate

When and Where?

Children's sessions are usually scheduled for Tuesday or Wednesday afternoons at:

Fullarton Park Centre
411 Fullarton Road
Fullarton

They usually begin in week 2 of school and conclude in week 9 (DECS calendar).

'Parent only' sessions are usually scheduled from 7pm to 8pm on the 3rd Monday of the school term (DECS calendar):

Fullarton House
213 Fullarton Road
Eastwood

Please note 'parent only' sessions are in a different location to children's sessions.

What can parents do to help?

A parent's role is invaluable. At the beginning of the course parents will be given an overview so they have a good idea of what's involved. Each week parents can follow up on what is covered in the session by working their way through the book with us. In addition, each lesson offers parents comprehensive 'tips' so they may continue to work with each of the social skills being developed well into the

Can parents sit in on sessions?

In order to protect the confidentiality of all, parents are not invited to children's sessions. We guarantee to supply ample feedback. Actually, one of the strengths of *What's the Buzz?* sessions is the friendships, exchange of information and support parents have found in one another over coffee while sessions take place.

Do children need a psychological assessment to attend?

An assessment can be helpful, but it is not a requirement.

Will Mark speak to my child's teacher?

Generally, we have found teachers prefer to know when a student is attending and will contact us if they wish to. It will be important to hand the 'teacher questionnaires' and this brochure to your child's teacher so they know your child is participating. Please pass on a copy of each session outline to your child's teacher so they understand what your child is experiencing.

How does reporting my child's progress work?

Besides the formal 'Parents Only' meeting Mark will continue to chat with you following each session or by email. And of course phone conversations from time to time are absolutely fine.

Is this group suitable for my child?

Kids who attend *What's the Buzz?* are usually challenged by:

- Friendship building and maintenance skills
- Emotion; being too passive, fearful or too reactive
- Poor empathy (at the moment it counts)
- Picking up social cues; conversational skills, interpreting social cues such as body language, facial expressions, personal space & joking around
- Dealing with their feelings appropriately
- Reading the intentions and feelings of others
- Quick, angry reactions when things go wrong

Enrolment and cost?

Arrange enrolments through Sharon (8332 0698). The cost is \$500 per term, plus a one off cost \$75 for a copy of the book. The book (*What's the Buzz?*) contains comprehensive lesson notes and practical follow up suggestions for parents. Full payment is expected by the end of the 3rd children's session each term. The course runs for two terms.

Are refunds available for missed sessions?

Refunds are not available for missed sessions. However, it is very helpful to us, and to the group, to know in advance if your son or daughter cannot attend.

Can I enrol for just one term?

No. This is a 16 week course. The objective is for kids to have two terms together to consolidate learning and meaningful friendships.