



# Stories of Us

Promoting Positive Relationships  
Changing School Culture

*Made with Students, For Students*

## Internationally Acclaimed Australian Resources

**Stories of Us** is a unique series of education resources for **primary** and **secondary** students, **professional development** and **community engagement**.

**Empirically supported** and **internationally acclaimed** by some of the world's leading bullying prevention scholars in Australia, the UK, Canada and the USA.

**Easy to use** resources combine **extensive instructional material** with **films and plays** developed and produced with school students.

**Multiple studies** have found the **Stories of Us** classroom resources have a measurable, **statistically significant, positive influence on student attitudes**.

*"Stories of Us is the best, most realistic account of bullying in schools that I have come across. Compulsive viewing for both children and educators."* **Dr Ken Rigby**, University of South Australia

*"The impact on the kids was unbelievable."* Kate Pollock, Teacher, Hillsmeade Primary School

### Primary Classroom

- **Bullying**
- **Belonging**

### Secondary Classroom

- **Bullying**
- **Relationships**
- **Stress**

### Community Engagement

- **Aboriginal & Torres Strait Islander**

### Professional Development

- **Bullying Prevention**



**Stories of Us** recommended by:  
Australian Primary Principals Association  
Australian Secondary Principals Association



# *Stories of Us*

*Made with Students, For Students*

**Stories of Us** uses storytelling to promote positive relationships and behaviour, and change school culture. The classroom resources centre on films built from the group up with groups of students who collaborated in researching the subjects, developing the scripts and performing in the films. Every word is their own, and every detail approved by the students. The *Stories of Us* films draw upon the collective experience of the students, holding a mirror to their reality with such authenticity that students watching the films are often convinced they are real. These films are compelling viewing – however **the key to their effectiveness is how the films are applied.**

Designed with specialist psychologists, the classroom resources take students through a structured program which is proven to be uncommonly effective. A University of South Australia study recorded a significant positive shift in student attitudes<sup>1</sup>, and a University of California study revealed ‘**statistically significant positive changes using pre-post test methodology**’.<sup>2</sup>

The **Stories of Us** resources are now being used in approaching 30% of Australian secondary schools and around 15% of primary. The success of these Australian resources led to the establishment of *Stories of Us* in the USA with the support of the universities of California, Illinois and Nebraska, and three of America’s leading bullying prevention specialists.

*“My students, racially, economically, and experientially diverse, came together in a way that I’ve not had the pleasure of seeing in my 16 years of teaching.”* Shameem Rakha, Teacher, Franklin Middle School

## **CLASSROOM RESOURCES**

These resources are designed to help students and teachers develop effective strategies to enhance awareness and understanding, and reduce bullying behaviours and improve the quality of relationships among students, and reduce stress.

The classroom resources are composed of DVDs and extensive Teacher’s Guides. Each film presents the story of two “students” (one boy and one girl) as they deal, in their own way, with the given issue. The films serve as a catalyst to explore the subtle dynamics in the development of the issue, and help the students develop an understanding of what happens and why – and how the situation can be improved.

The objective is to *engage*, rather than *tell*. The class explores the issues in-depth through discussion and group activities. As well as step-by-step instructions for a number of classes, the Guides provide detailed support information for teachers, and links to further resources. Because of their realism the films also form an excellent basis for extension activities in English or Drama.

The **Stories of Us** primary and secondary resources have been developed with Optima Psychologists & Mediators, specialists in child and youth psychology, in consultation with student counsellors and teachers from a range of schools, with the support of the South Australian **Department of Education & Child Development, MindMatters** and **beyondblue**.

There are three secondary school classroom resources:

- **Bullying**
- **Relationships**
- **Stress**

And two primary school resources:

- **Bullying**
- **Belonging**

<sup>1</sup> Post-intervention quantitative findings of a study of the bullying resource. The University of South Australia awarded a 1st Class Distinction to Richard Stephens’ Honours’ Thesis on *Stories of Us* (with Dr. Barbara Spears as second author). <sup>2</sup> Study involving 147 7th grade students in California by Professor Shane Jimerson and Tyler Renshaw (University of California, Santa Barbara).

## PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT

Created using the same collaborative process with students, *The Method of Shared Concern* is a staff training resource for **dealing with bullying in schools**.

**Dr Ken Rigby** describes in detail this internationally recognised method originated by Swedish psychologist Dr Anatol Pikas. The DVD and accompanying User's Guide present a step-by-step group training session for staff, built around two case studies enacted by practitioners trained by Dr Pikas.

Recent evaluations of the effectiveness of intervention methods in reducing bullying reveal that most have been only modestly successful. Teacher interventions have been found to result in bullying being stopped in only 25% of cases. In 16% of cases, bullying was reported as actually increasing after teachers had sought to deal with it (Smith & Shu, 2002). We need to try new ways of dealing with this old problem.

*The Method of Shared Concern* has an impressive success rate – well ahead of what has been reported using other methods – and has been incorporated in successful intervention programs in a number of countries including England, Spain, Finland and Australia.

*The Method of Shared Concern* is appropriate for medium-level, group-based bullying with secondary students and, at the discretion of staff, students in the late primary years.

## COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT

The *Stories of Us PaCE Program* is designed to enhance the capacity of **Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander** families and communities to engage with schools and education providers in order to support improved educational outcomes for their children.

The program centres on short, simply staged plays developed by parents and students and performed for their community and school educators. The students perform both young and adult roles in the plays, bringing a certain playfulness in exploring a serious topic. These plays serve as a non-confrontational means of raising and exploring the community's relationship with schools, acknowledging the positives and examining some of the obstacles to greater engagement. The presentation of the play is followed by a guided discussion aimed at strengthening parental and community engagement with schools and education providers, with a common goal of improved educational outcomes for their students.

The program resource is composed of a DVD and binder, and provides step-by-step instructions for the development and staging of the plays, extensive support information, follow-up sessions and program evaluation. Communities also have the option to simply present the play included on the DVD.

Readymade Productions collaborated with Aboriginal parents and students in northern Adelaide to create a program for large-scale implementation, with the support of the Department of Education, Employment & Workplace Relations under its Parent and Community Engagement Program (PaCE).

**For more information** about the *Stories of Us* resources including online film previews, instructional guide extracts, pricing and ordering options – visit:

**[www.storiesofus.com.au](http://www.storiesofus.com.au)**

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