



## **Strategies for Resilient Teachers Program**

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**NSW Institute of Teachers endorsed provider of professional development for maintenance of accreditation at Professional Competence**

Scope of endorsement – Elements 5 and 7 of the Professional Teaching Standards for Strategies for Resilient Teachers Program

# Strategies for Resilient Teachers Program (SRTP)

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'Strategies for Resilient Teachers Program' (SRTP) is an evidence-based three-day program designed to increase the psychological resilience for beginning, mid-career, and late career teachers to enable them to more effectively meet the demands of entering and continuing in the teaching profession.

The SRTP can be tailored to meet the various needs of early childhood, primary and secondary teachers and teacher's aides as well as those from special education and indigenous backgrounds. Its overarching aim is to provide a practical, tailored psycho-education and capability development program for teachers. The core assumption that underlies the program is that teachers will benefit enormously from developing advanced psychological self-management skills that they can apply in all school-based contexts - whether that is communicating effectively with their students, actively engaging with members of their profession and the wider community, or more broadly, improving their professional knowledge and practice by developing these personal and interpersonal capabilities.

According to recent research<sup>1</sup> teaching is one of the top 5 most stressful professions and more than a quarter of all teachers report that they find teaching very stressful or highly stressful. This research estimates that up to a half of all teachers leave in the first 7 years - citing reasons such as stress, frustration and fatigue (Matthew R Sanders Ph.D, 2006).

With WorkCover NSW reporting that the education industry has the highest incidence rate for mental disorder claims across industries, the SRTP is an initiative to make teachers more resilient, more confident and skilled in interpersonal relations, more personally efficient and more positive in their outlook. The SRTP has been developed by CommuniCorp senior psychologists with extensive expertise in the area of teacher stress and resilience factors in close consultation with a broad range of professionals from within the education arena.

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<sup>1</sup> PADA National Anxiety and Depression Conference 2006. A public health approach to positive parenting. Presented by Matthew R Sanders Ph.D. Parenting and Family Support Centre. The University of Queensland



The SRTP is designed to not only stem the tide of teachers leaving the profession, but to also more generally improve teaching outcomes associated with having a more satisfied, robust and resilient teaching workforce. Stress has major and ongoing impacts on our ability to think, to concentrate and to deliver our best. People may survive in teaching with chronic levels of stress, but their performance and their contribution to students will be less than what they genuinely wish to offer.

With turnover costs cited as being between 93% and 200% of an employee's annual salary ([www.diversityaustralia.gov.au](http://www.diversityaustralia.gov.au)), the SRTP also makes sound commercial sense, as even at the lower limit, the SRTP only needs to help retain 1 out of every 100 participating teachers in order to recoup the cost of implementation. Initial costs of the SRTP are also potentially negated through savings associated with reduced workers' compensation, reduced absenteeism and sustained productivity.

### **Additional longer term benefits of the SRTP include:**

- More realistic expectations and outlooks providing higher motivation and resilience
- Increased confidence, morale and performance of teachers
- Work culture benefits as an increasing number of staff with advanced self-management skills and a sense of increased personal responsibility progress in the organisation
- Reduced management requirements and costs associated with supporting individual teachers with difficulties



## The SRTP Covers:

### *Identifying Stress & Using it to your Advantage*

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This incorporates assessing pre-existing stress tendencies in participants; strategies for identifying, minimising and optimising stress; understanding behavioural, psychological and physical components of stress; and examining stress and performance issues including practical work on various coping strategies and developing everyday resilience.

### *Understanding Procrastination and Effective Time Management*

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This includes identification of pre-existing procrastination and poor time management practices as well as providing strategies for improvement. It covers other elements of time management and personal efficiency and issues around maintaining appropriate work-life balance and organising oneself.

### *Staying Positive*

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This includes self-assessment of individual optimism-pessimism profiles to allow people to leverage their strengths and target specific areas for improvement. It also includes training in realistic optimism and positive psychology to enable teachers to improve their resilience and maintain constructive outlooks when faced with adversity and challenge.

### *Interpersonal Dynamics and Responding to Confrontation*

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This includes the psychological fundamentals of interpersonal behaviour and responding to challenging situations likely to be encountered as a teacher. This component includes skills development in how to minimise, deflect and respond effectively to confrontation and how to respond appropriately to criticism from parents, colleagues and school administration.

### *Developing Realistic Expectations & Identifying and Accessing Available Support*

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This module provides participants with a chance to reflect on their expectations of teaching and re-calibrate them to better reflect reality. It will bring together their learning from the SRTP and provide information on resources and support options available should they encounter difficulties. This also includes advice and information on establishing and maintaining informal support networks.

## Program Timing

The full SRTP is designed to run over individual three days (or combinations of half days). It can be run successfully at any point throughout the teaching calendar, but is most likely to have maximum benefit if commenced early in the teaching year and then staggered over a number of weeks to minimise classroom disruption and to fit in with scheduled professional development periods.



## S RTP Facilitators

All CommuniCorp's SRTP facilitators are senior consultants with experience highly relevant to the program. The following people are the primary CommuniCorp SRTP facilitators.

**Mr David Burroughs** - Principal Psychologist CommuniCorp Pty Ltd. David has extensive experience as a senior Consultant Psychologist. He has undertaken numerous workplace investigations into work-related stress matters affecting those working in educational areas. He has extensive training experience in developing resilience and has developed and delivered numerous psycho-education programs.

**Ms Carmel O'Sullivan** – Senior Consultant, Clinical Psychologist and ex-primary school teacher. Carmel has extensive experience developing and facilitating psycho-education programs. She also has extensive exposure to workplace stress issues and experience in the rehabilitation of people when their coping resources have been insufficient to accommodate their workplace demands.

**Dr Chris Stevens** - Principal Psychologist CommuniCorp Pty Ltd. Chris has teaching qualifications and has been a casual school teacher, an Adult Migrant English teacher, a TAFE Teacher and a Learning Development Lecturer at the University of Wollongong. Chris has extensive experience in investigating work-related stress matters for those working in educational areas. He has also developed and conducted numerous programs for increasing resilience and developing constructive outlooks across various industries.

**Mr Philip Parker** – Senior consultant at Communicorp Pty Ltd. He is currently completing his PhD in Education at the University of Sydney on teacher burnout, involving extensive in-school engagement with teachers and students. Philip has taught at university level and has presented in peer-reviewed international conferences both in Australia and abroad on self-concept, personality, and stress and has recently published a chapter in Dennis McNerney's and colleagues' book *Standards in Education* (out 2007). Philip is concurrently completing a Master of Organisational Psychology.

