



Drama's classy results in West

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Dr Haris Karnezi, as Super Spy W, and Dale, as Shintaro discover the secret of the 39 Steps as part of Cognitive Behaviour Drama.

NAMED Woman of the Year in Greece last year, former actress, now educational psychologist Dr Haris Karnezi is bringing her innovative teaching methods to the Western Autistic School.

Cognitive Behaviour Drama is the method developed by Dr Karnezi that she says is helping high-performing children with autism and Asperger's syndrome develop confidence and flexibility. Based around problem solving skills, Dr Karnezi said the drama exercises she set - like "injections of experiential learning" - encouraged children to find solutions and look at the consequences of choices they made.

Detective games with a heavy focus on interpreting body language appealed to the children's sense of logic and helped them find ways to enjoy communicating.

"Basically the problem children with autism have is putting themselves in other people's shoes, but (CBD) is putting them in other's shoes," she said.

A priority of the method was to help children see that interacting with others could be a joy - not something stressful with a lot of rules.

In the long run Dr Karnezi said learning to communicate better would allow the children to develop a circle of people they could rely on and be supported by.

"It's the most important thing in the life of everyone," she said.

Dr Karnezi said she was grateful to the Western Autistic School for taking a leap of faith to help promote CBD to teachers.

"I'm impressed by the positive approach to education here," Dr Karnezi said.

"I've been doing (the method) for the past six years in Ireland but I came to Australia and they've opened their doors to me."

Western Autistic School principal Val Gill said the group of primary school boys engaged in the program were loving the lessons and teachers were also keen to adopt the methods.

"It's another string to their bows," Ms Gill said.

"We need as many research-based options as we can get."

Details: cbDMETHOD.com