

Girls design a friends bench

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GirlPower founder Dana Kerford with Jemma Gartrell, Cate Lowry and Eden Powell on the bench.

GIRLPOWER founder Dana Kerford felt goosebumps when she met three Perth College Year 6 students who invented special ‘talk it out’ benches inspired by her workshops.

“GirlPower is about teaching young girls how to stand up for themselves, create healthy friendships and put out what we call ‘friendship fires’,” the Canadian youth and friendships expert said.

“One of the key steps to putting out a friendship fire is finding a quiet space to be alone, and that is tricky in school.

“I think it’s just so brilliant they had this idea. I have never heard of a ‘talk it out’ bench, so this is officially the first one in the world.”

Built by Perth College design and technology teacher Karol Guglielmana, the two wooden benches were installed at the junior school and outside the Founders Centre for Early Learning preparatory classroom last Friday.

Jemma said she and her classmates Eden and Cate came up with the friendship bench because they were having some problems in their friendship.

“Everyone kept coming up and saying: ‘What’s wrong, what’s wrong?’ and we didn’t want to tell them to leave us alone,” she said.

Mrs Kerford said she started GirlPower with her own students in 2009 and it quickly grew in popularity, with boys’ program GoodGuys launching in 2014.

“Now our curriculum Friendology 101 is in over 125 schools around the world,” she said.

“I have worked with tens of thousands of girls and boys and found that children are the same in their friendships, they just want to be liked and get along.”

Perth College is Australian facilitator of the GirlPower and GoodGuys workshops.