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COMMUNITY NEWS

Special needs educator presents workshop

WHITSUNDAY and Mackay residents attended a sensory detective workshop ran by special needs educator Nelle Frances on Saturday at the Whitsunday Christian College.

A strong crowd of up to 100 people attended the full-day information session and workshop that provided a detailed description of students or clients with Autism or Asperger's Syndrome, including profiles on the neurology, biology, cognitive processing, perception differences and learning styles of those with the condition, with a focus on sensory issues.

Ms Frances shared alarming statistics such as one in 68 Australians live with Autism or Asperger's Syndrome but anecdotally teachers are claiming that three out of five children in each classroom are affected.

Participants learnt specific techniques for dealing with challenging behaviours and how to decrease stress in stu-

dents with Autism or Asperger's. A driving force behind the event was sponsor Laura Morrison, who has been very proactive in finding strategies to deal with her grandson who is in grade two at Whitsunday Christian College.

Ms Frances said the day was about approaching the syndrome with an 'inside out' point of view.

"I hope to change the thinking of how teachers and parents and workers in the community see children with autism spectrums and through that adapt strategies that make it easier to deal with in the classrooms and in the community," she said.

The college's principal Nathan McDonald said the day was well received.

"As a school principal, it's important for school communities to realise that Autism isn't a behavioural issue and that you have to be mindful of the fact that they are coming from a different point of view," he said.



HELPFUL WORKSHOP: Whitsunday Christian College principal Nathan McDonald, sponsor Laura Morrison, guest speaker Nelle Frances and enrichment co-ordinator Karen Felwards at Whitsunday Christian College on Saturday.