



December 2010 KidsMatter Primary eNewsletter: Issue 18

Editorial

Welcome to final edition of the KidsMatter Primary newsletter for 2010

Parents entrust schools with their children for many of the most critical years of their lives. For many parents and carers this involves a considerable leap of faith. Will their child be safe in a positive environment? Will their child learn, and develop personally and socially? Will they, the primary carers and educators of their children, be taken seriously? Will the school notice when things aren't going well for their child, and know what to do? The KidsMatter framework is designed to support schools in taking a planned, strategic and positive approach to address some of these questions.

This edition of the newsletter focuses on ways in which schools can work with parents and carers to ensure that their children have the best possible chance, in the words of the Melbourne Declaration on Educational Goals for Young Australians, "to be successful learners, confident and creative individuals and active and informed citizens".

Two KidsMatter resources are featured that present ideas for supporting and encouraging parents' engagement in their children's learning, as well as supporting children's transition to school. You can also find out more on what is happening for children at a policy level and on the ground in Western Australia, including updates on the pilot of the KidsMatter Transition to School: Parent Initiative and KidsMatter Early Childhood.

KidsMatter Primary is also celebrating the news that the Australian Government is significantly increasing funding for the initiative until 2014. This means that many more schools around Australia will be able to access the support to implement KidsMatter Primary, improving the mental health and wellbeing of their students.

On behalf of the KidsMatter Primary team, best wishes for you and your families for a happy Christmas and a peaceful New Year.

Jeremy Hurley

Principals Australia
KidsMatter Primary National Coordinator

Supporting Children's learning: Resources for schools, parents and carers

Supporting Children's learning at home and school



This can involve developing a set of day-to-day practices, attitudes, beliefs, and interactions that support learning at home, at school and after school. Component 3: Parenting support and education can assist schools with planning and implementing links between learning at school and at home.

Consultation with parents about their values, beliefs and practices around learning in the home can assist schools in creating home school partnerships and can be incorporated into schools action planning for this component.

Consultation with parents and carers can help emphasise that 'parents matter' while promoting a school's understanding of the cultural influences on learning in the home.

Such efforts can assist in building relationships between schools and parents and carers who are not currently as engaged in the school community.

It may be the case that these parents and carers are unsure about how to engage with the school or there may be other barriers to their participation. Research shows a consistent relationship between increasing parental engagement and improved attendance, behaviour and student achievement.¹

Depending on your schools' context and needs, parent engagement may be one area to consider auditing for your school and for Component 3 planning.

¹ Department of Education, Employment and Workplace Relations, *Family School Partnerships Framework*, Retrieved from; <http://www.dest.gov.au/NR/rdonlyres/A1443756-85CE-4BDD-AED5-644A25C337F1/24590/FamilySchoolPartnershipsFrameworkFINAL.pdf>

Supporting learning in the home

For some areas of learning, children may need lots of support. This is especially the case when they are learning new things. As children's abilities develop, they gradually become more independent in their learning and parents and carers can start to reduce their direct involvement.

Parents and carers can assist children to think through tasks to support their learning and build independence. Teaching children thinking skills can also help children to become independent thinkers and learners.

Some other ways parents and carers can support their children's learning include;

- Provide a challenge that is *just* beyond what your child can already do easily by him or herself
- Giving prompts
- Asking questions
- Showing the steps involved
- Praising your child for attempting the task, not just for succeeding
- Watching to see if your child is struggling or becoming frustrated, as these may be signs that the task is too hard.

For an overview on children's learning and their development go to our Component 3: Parenting support and education resource sheet -

<http://www.kidsmatter.edu.au/wp/wp-content/uploads/2009/09/thinking-and-learning-overview.pdf>

For Suggestions for Parents and Carers on assisting children's thinking and learning go to-

<http://www.kidsmatter.edu.au/wp/wp-content/uploads/2009/10/thinking-and-learning-suggestions-1.pdf>

For Suggestions for Teaching Staff for assisting children's thinking and learning go to-

<http://www.kidsmatter.edu.au/wp/wp-content/uploads/2009/10/thinking-and-learning-suggestions-2.pdf>

Making a Positive Transition to school

The KidsMatter Transition to School: Parenting Initiative provides resources and information sessions for parents and carers to support their children's transition to school. The information featured here is part of the parent and carer booklet, 'setting the scene' which contains information to support parents and carers beginning the transition process. This initiative is currently being piloted and the information booklets will be made freely available following the pilot in mid 2011.

Starting primary school is an important time for children and their families. Children who make a positive start to school are more likely to feel:

- Comfortable, relaxed and valued;
- Good about themselves as learners; and
- A sense of belonging within the school community



Transition is not just about the first day; it is a process that happens as children and families start to think about and prepare for beginning school. Early childhood services and schools often provide information and support to children and families at this time.

Transition to school involves a number of changes for children and families, for which children can experience many feelings of excitement through to nervousness. Supporting children during their transition to school is important because research has shown that a positive start to school promotes children's capacity to learn and make and maintain friendships.

Parents and carers play an important role in supporting children to manage the transition to school. Parents can help their children to feel confident about starting school and help them to cope with new social and emotional challenges that starting school often brings.

Some other things that parents and carers can do to help children include;

- Speaking positively and enthusiastically about school
- Listening to your child's concerns and reassuring them that it is okay to feel nervous about change
- Answer any questions they may have

More information on supporting children's friendship skills that complements the Transition to School Initiative can be found in the following KidsMatter Primary information sheets;

Suggestions for parents and carers- <http://www.kidsmatter.edu.au/wp/wp-content/uploads/2009/10/friends-suggestions-1.pdf>

Suggestions for school staff- <http://www.kidsmatter.edu.au/wp/wp-content/uploads/2009/10/friends-suggestions-2.pdf>

Breaking News: KidsMatter Expands

Under the "Taking Action to Tackle Suicide" Package the Australian Government will invest \$274 million over four years from 2010-11 which includes funding for the expansion of KidsMatter Primary of \$18.4 million. This funding will enable KidsMatter Primary to be expanded to a further 1700 primary schools by June 2014.

As a result of this funding from 2011 Australian primary schools will have more options to implement KidsMatter Primary in their schools.

Planning is underway for a nationwide calendar of free professional development events for schools and teachers in central locations, telephone and online support to assist in the implementation of KidsMatter Primary and free materials for all participating schools from mid 2011.

Further information on how schools can become involved in the KidsMatter Primary initiative will be posted to the website in early 2011.

A School Story Hannans Primary School

In 2010 one of our KidsMatter schools; Hannans Primary School (HPS), was the recipient of a Goldfields District Education Excellence in Award for their work on Components 1: A Positive School Community and 2: Social and Emotional Learning for Students. This year has seen a focus on enhancing positive community relationships to build belonging and family connectedness to school, target areas for Component 1.

Their 'Every Face Has A Place' and 'Knowing Me, Knowing You (and getting along too)' projects are driven by the national KidsMatter initiative.

'Every Face Has A Place' began with a school and community BBQ, which was attended by over 250 members of the school community and gave parents and families the chance to network with others and included local services in Kalgoorlie-Boulder. Staff, parents and families also have access to quality parenting resources, including Michael Grose's 'Parenting Ideas' website and fortnightly tip sheets focusing on relevant parenting issues.

'Every Face Has A Place' is the springboard aiming to promote HPS as the hub of parenting support in our local community.



Families enjoy the "Every Face has a place" School and community BBQ at Hannans Primary School



More families enjoy the "Every Face has a place" school and community BBQ at Hannans Primary School

'Knowing Me, Knowing You' is an initiative which concentrates on giving students opportunities to develop social and emotional skills fostering self-awareness, social awareness, self management, responsible decision making and effective relationship skills.

These are target areas for Component 2. Each student and teacher has been involved in reflective assessment strategies, measuring and monitoring of resilience factors in classroom processes and students. This reflective process determined the areas of development across the school, with each Learning Team strategically planning for the improvement of social emotional skills.

The adoption of a common lesson focus and framework gave students and staff a common language for exploring and discussing social and emotional development in the key areas of emotions, relationships and bullying.

KidsMatter Primary around Australia

What's happening in the WA?

Western Australia: A State where KidsMatter

In days gone by Western Australian license plates carried the slogan "The State of Excitement" unfortunately, nowadays we are sloganless with the powers to be deciding that a plain "WA" says it all.

In terms of mental health I am thinking that "State of Opportunity" may be a relevant slogan. In the last month KidsMatter has responded to the newly formed Mental Health Commission's 'WA Mental Health Towards Consultation Plan' and the Commissioner for Children and Young People's 'Inquiry into Mental Health'.

These have provided great opportunity to provide a voice in shaping the future on Mental Health policy within WA. A big thank you to Luke Martin, Carolina Aguirre and the team at the Australian Psychological Society for the incredible work they did on these two submissions.

On the education front these are interesting times of change.

The Department of Education is decentralising schools at the moment providing individual principals with a greater say in how they run their schools. This again is a great opportunity for schools to place mental health on the agenda in their communities.

The Independent and Catholic schools are showing great interest and both sectors have consultants who have made the promotion and support of KidsMatter part of their role.

Over the month of October 70 schools attended information sessions on how to implement the KidsMatter framework within their school.

Schools were encouraged to think carefully about the implementation and make sure they were in a position to begin the process.

The regional areas of Albany and Bunbury showed great interest in getting involved and these regions will join Kalgoorlie as the regional clusters involved in KidsMatter. There will be about 25 schools commencing KidsMatter soon with a similar number wanting to begin early in 2011. Our pilot schools still speak positively about the initiative with a number of them reinvigorating their approach to KidsMatter as they see the networking with other KidsMatter schools to be an invaluable part of the process. It is exciting so see school's enthusiasm for engaging with KidsMatter and recognising the potential of the framework. Possibly in keeping with the theme of number plates we could develop a new one for teachers "The State where KidsMatter".

Stephen MacDonald, KidsMatter Primary WA State Coordinator



Artwork from students at Hannans Primary School in WA

KidsMatter Transition to School: Parent Initiative & KidsMatter Early Childhood-Updates

Update on the KidsMatter Transition to School: Parent Initiative Pilot

The KidsMatter Primary State-and Territory-based Coordinators have conducted professional learning days with school staff across Australia for the pilot of the *KidsMatter Transition to School: Parent Initiative*.

The professional learning day aimed to provide school staff with an overview of the *Parent Initiative* in preparation for facilitating information sessions with parents and carers at their school. It was also an opportunity for the KidsMatter Transition team to gain valuable feedback from school staff.

Pilot schools will run four parent and carer information sessions on transition to school and will be supported by their KidsMatter Primary State-and Territory-based Coordinators and a range of resources.

Session one, "*Setting the scene*", provides parents and carers of children who are transitioning into school with an opportunity to meet each other.

The session focuses on providing information about the changes children are likely to experience during transition to school and how parents and carers can support their child during this time. It also encourages parents and carers to reflect on how their child has responded to change in the past and the skills children already have that will support them in making a positive start to school.

The Initiative has been met with lots of enthusiasm from Pilot schools and some have already held their first session.

Session two, "*Getting ready*", will be held at schools towards the end of the 2010 school year and the final two sessions titled

"*Settling in*" and "*Looking forward*" will be run in 2011.

We look forward providing a further update on the pilot in the next newsletter.

