

KidsMatter is a primary school mental health promotion, prevention and early intervention initiative developed in collaboration with the Australian Government Department of Health and Ageing, *beyondblue: the national depression initiative*, the Australian Psychological Society, the Australian Principals Associations Professional Development Council (APAPDC) and supported by the Australian Rotary Health Research Fund.

EDITORIAL

Welcome to Edition 3!

Welcome to edition 3 with its more refined focus on how our KidsMatter primary schools are currently engaging with the initiative. Through this and future editions we want to showcase what KidsMatter looks like in practice. The diversity of our KidsMatter primary schools allows for a variety of stories and we hope you enjoy sharing some of these with us. Over time you will have an opportunity to learn a little from what is happening in every state and territory and each sector represented by KidsMatter. In this edition the spotlight falls on Round 1 primary schools in the Australian Capital Territory and South Australia.

KidsMatter Update



The first 50 schools participating in the KidsMatter trial have hit the ground running in 2007. In each school, Action Teams have begun implementing their 2007 school plans around the four KidsMatter components (1) Positive School Community; (2) Social and Emotional Learning for Students; (3) Parent Education and Support; and (4) Early Intervention for Students at Risk or Experiencing Mental Health Problems. Schools have now received their KidsMatter Programs Guide which identifies and overviews 'evidenced-based' programs that they can implement. KidsMatter Project Officers are assisting

schools to select programs that best suit the needs of their school community and have also begun delivering Professional Development around the four KidsMatter components.

The Australian Rotary Health Research Fund has generously provided \$750,000 to assist schools participating in the KidsMatter trial, and a number of schools have already submitted their funding applications. Schools will use their Rotary funds to help them implement their KidsMatter component plans. Examples of how schools are using their Rotary funds will be highlighted in future e-newsletters



**KidsMatter
will soon be
on the Web!**

Finally, while it has been sometime in coming, the full KidsMatter website is getting closer to reality. We hope to have the website up and running over the next few months. This website will provide the latest information on KidsMatter (including stories from individual schools) and overview resources, materials and websites that can be used to support the mental health and well-being of primary school communities. In the meantime, readers can access important information on KidsMatter from our interim website at www.kidsmatter.edu.au.

The KidsMatter Evaluation Team

Over the past month, the KidsMatter Evaluation Team from Flinders University has been in close communication with schools participating in the KidsMatter trial to develop an evaluation strategy that will ensure as many teachers, parents and students participate as possible. To this end, the Evaluation Team has established a website that outlines the evaluation process which can be viewed at <http://caef.flinders.edu.au/kidsmatter/>.

The team from Flinders University would like to thank participating schools for their support for the evaluation, and in particular school staff members who have provided the team with valuable advice and information – it speaks volumes of their commitment and professionalism!

Introducing... KidsMatter Schools in Australian Capital Territory and South Australia

There are currently six Round 1 South Australian primary schools and three from the ACT participating in the KidsMatter pilot.

South Australia	Australian Capital Territory
East Torrens Primary School	Canberra Girls' Grammar School, Junior School
Hamley Bridge Primary School	Blue Gum Community School
Hewett Primary School	Turner Primary School
Leigh Creek Area School incorporating Marree Aboriginal School	
Woodville Primary School and Centre for Hearing Impaired	
St. Aloysius College, Primary School	



A POSITIVE SCHOOL COMMUNITY

Reinforcing Belonging and Connection

Learning and teaching don't just take place in the classroom. They take place in every aspect of the school environment. What do our five year olds learn at lunchtime when they watch older students playing in the yard? What do they learn when they approach a duty teacher? What do students teach each other? What do parents learn when they walk through the school to pick up their children at the end of the day? What do staff learn about each other at staff meetings or in the staff room? What do visitors learn as they wait in the reception area? Every day and all day a multitude of interactions in our environment have the potential to promote a positive school climate where there is a sense of belonging and connection or, if negative, a climate where bullying, rejection and alienation are fostered. Caring and supportive relationships are at the core of creating a sense of belonging and connectedness to school.

Read how these KidsMatter schools are reinforcing belonging and connection and creating strong and positive school communities....

East Torrens Primary School – current enrolment 255 (South Australia – Metropolitan / Government)

East Torrens Primary School is a disadvantaged school in the East District. The population profile is very diverse and multicultural - over 50 different linguistic and cultural groups are represented in the school. Over 60% of the student enrolment is supported through School Card and the school hosts an intensive English program for students newly arrived from overseas as well as two District Special Education classes for students with profound disabilities.



At the first KidsMatter Professional Learning Day, East Torrens Primary School was interested in the staff perspective around the school's development in establishing and maintaining a Positive School Community, Component 1 of the initiative. The overwhelming perception of staff in the school is that this domain has been very well addressed in the school due to the experience, skills and knowledge of the staff and school leaders, particularly in the area of forming powerful relationships with diverse groups. The School is very keen to go deeper in challenging this presumption and they are developing an inquiry question that will seek to collect evidence of their work as highly performing professionals in the Positive School Community domain.

Hamley Bridge Primary School – current enrolment 95 (South Australia – Rural / Government)

Hamley Bridge Primary School is in a small country town that was once a thriving railway centre and farming community. As new families move into the community there are issues of adjusting to living in a country town away from metropolitan facilities, fitting into the community and making new friends.



Hamley Bridge Primary School in conjunction with the Lower North Health group organised a representative from Men's Health to work with dads on cooperative games they could play at home with their children. This activity was a great way of getting fathers to meet one another and to also acknowledge their very important role in parenting.

Hewett Primary School – current enrolment 530 (South Australia – Metropolitan / Government)

Hewett Primary School has a rapidly growing enrolment of over 500 students. The school was established in 1977 in a new housing suburb north of Adelaide. The site is shared with a community church, a community house and a preschool facility. As is common in many new housing estates, families are dealing with the pressures associated with mortgages and juggling work and family care. In addition to its mainstream classes Hewett also has two classes for students with disabilities.



Hewett Primary School held an exciting and successful 2006 end of year picnic prior to their concert. Students and families were invited to bring a picnic dinner and participate in a range of interactive games on the school oval. There was a fabulous attendance by families and an opportunity for the whole school community to celebrate their successful year.

Leigh Creek Area School incorporating Marree Aboriginal School – current enrolment 185 (South Australia – Remote / Government)

Leigh Creek is situated 560 kms north of Adelaide in the hot arid zone of the Flinders Ranges. Students come from Nepabunna, Iga Warta, Copley, Lyndhurst, Beltana, Leigh Creek and station properties. Marree is a further 120 kms north and sits at the junction of the Oodnadatta and Birdsville tracks. One principal has the responsibility for managing both sites.

A "Photo Scrap Booking Workshop" was organized at the Aroona Community Centre at Copley, approximately 6 kms outside of Leigh Creek as part of the "Building Healthy Communities & Well-Being Project" in early March 2007. The Community Support Worker at Copley and a teacher from Marree Aboriginal School worked together to make this possible. There were approximately 15 local community women of varying ages who attended. A number of the mums, aunties and nannas have children who attend the Leigh Creek Area School, and this provided a time "just for them". There were many precious moments shared about town and family history in an informal and fun setting, and with the success of the afternoon, it is anticipated that this group will meet at least once a month.



Woodville Primary School and Centre for Hearing Impaired – current enrolment 441 (South Australia – Metropolitan / Government)

Located in the western suburbs of Adelaide with an established residential environment the school is over 128 years old. Incorporated in the school is a Centre for Hearing Impaired. Hearing impaired students are fully integrated into mainstream classes and travel some distance to attend the school. The community has a rich diversity and includes students from Aboriginal, Polish, Greek, Indian, Vietnamese and African cultures. Some transience occurs with two Domestic Violence Units located in the local area.



Woodville Primary School conducts a 'Kids Conference' at the beginning of each year to promote student voice. This year the Conference had explicit links to KidsMatter, Component 1: A Positive School Community targeting "Sense of belonging and Inclusion" and Promoting Student Engagement. The attitudes, beliefs, behaviour and history of Woodville all contribute to its culture and there is an emphasis on participation by all in fun and challenging activities.

The aim of the Conference was to further develop children's

- Sense of belonging to the whole school (wellbeing)
- Understanding of our values (inclusion)
- Skills and dispositions in interacting with others (attitude and behaviour)
- And abilities to transfer these to a range situations (optimism)

The Conference opened with a ceremony organised by the students. The day had a strong sense of community connection. It began by recognising the Traditional Owners of the Land and an invitation for representatives of neighbouring schools to attend and participate.

St Aloysius College - Primary enrolment 316 girls (South Australia – Metropolitan / Catholic)

St Aloysius is a Catholic single sex Kindergarten to Year 12 School located in the CBD of Adelaide and managed by the Sisters of Mercy. Being located in the centre of the city the school has a varied clientele. The school is multicultural with a large number of fee paying international students from China in the Senior School.



In Week 9 the Reception and Year 1 classes are holding a simple liturgy in the Chapel to give thanks for their five senses which are gifts from God. At the Liturgy each child will share something that is special to them and talk about which sense it uses. After the Liturgy there is a shared lunch to celebrate the senses of taste, touch, sight, feel and smell. St Aloysius has invited families to attend so that every child will have someone with them to be part of this special event.

Turner Primary School – current enrolment 365 (ACT– Metropolitan / Government)

Turner School is in inner city Canberra. It has mainstream and special needs students integrated into an inclusive environment. The students range from preschool to year 6. Students come from a diversity of family backgrounds and circumstances.



At Parent / Teacher interviews during week 4 the school's teacher librarian used the comfortable facilities of Turner's library as a place for parents to meet with each other while waiting for their interviews. She provided some food and refreshments and used the waiting time to further brief parents about the school's engagement with KidsMatter. Parents were also provided with an information newsletter that detailed how staff were committing to KidsMatter through their professional development and whole school activities.

Blue Gum Community School – current enrolment 70 (ACT– Metropolitan / Independent)

Blue Gum is a small inclusive school in Inner North Canberra established by parents and staff. Many of the students enrol after negative schooling experiences in other sites and the school works hard to reengage them with learning and life.



Recently the school decided to rent a shop in the local community nearby to the school. Going out into the community rather than waiting for the community to come into their school is a very innovative approach to building links. The shop front is being used for staff meetings and a place for parents and community to meet for a coffee and conversation or find brochures or information about the school. The KidsMatter Project Officer is also using this venue to provide professional development to all the staff on KidsMatter.



Canberra Girls' Grammar School, Junior School – Current enrolment 441 (ACT – Metropolitan / Independent)

The Junior School is located in the inner south of Canberra. The school has a transient population with many students on postings from overseas. This is due to the near location of many foreign embassies, the Australian Defence Forces and the Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade. Many of the students speak languages other than English in the home.

As a result of conducting a school survey, Canberra Girls' Grammar School identified recognition of cultural diversity as an area for further development. This year the school is starting with multi-age activities with their Junior Primary students and ending with a Harmony Day Assembly. It is planned that in future years the activities will be spread across all ages of the Junior School and into the Early Learning Centre for their youngest students.

It's the 40th Anniversary of the 1967 Referendum!

In the 1967 referendum, over 90% of eligible Australians voted to take account of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people as citizens and give the Commonwealth Government power to make laws regarding Indigenous Australians. On a national stage this could be seen as a step towards making a more positive community for all Australians. As schools are communities that exist within wider communities many sites may be looking to mark this significant event. Over the coming weeks the APAPDC website will provide strategies that schools can use to celebrate this important time and further build connection between all Australians through acknowledging Reconciliation.

2007 is the 40th anniversary of the 1967 referendum:

What was the referendum all about?


In the 1967 referendum, over 90 per cent of eligible Australians voted to take account of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people as citizens and to give the Commonwealth Government power to make laws regarding Indigenous Australians. This event is often referred to as the first stage of the Reconciliation movement in Australia.

The 40th anniversary of the referendum, in 2007, is of national significance. Along with many other Australian organisations, APAPDC is developing a Reconciliation Action Plan to mark the event.

Further information about this, and ideas for schools to consider in marking the occasion, will be circulated and featured on the APAPDC website in coming months.

Reconciliation Australia is encouraging its partner organisations (including APAPDC) to "take action to address this issue of vital importance to Australia's social, economic and political well-being and advancement".





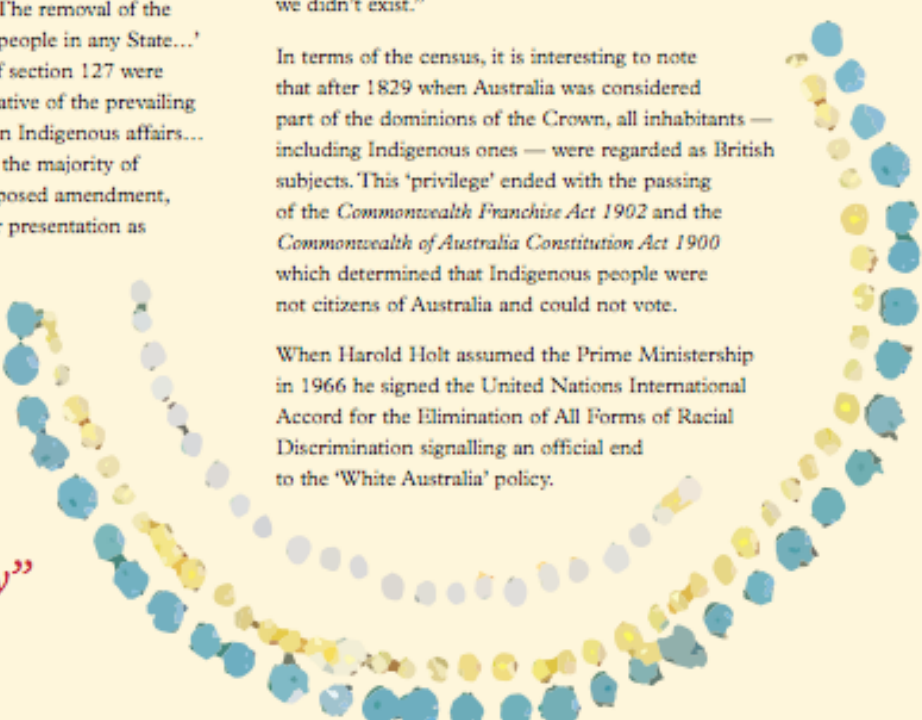
As education professionals, one aspect of our involvement will be assisting with eliminating ambiguity about the nature of the referendum. Contrary to some popular beliefs, it did not confer citizenship on Indigenous Australians, nor did it explicitly address issues such as land rights, equality of pay or the right to vote. However, its symbolic importance cannot be underestimated. Professor Marcia Langton has called it “a watershed in Aboriginal affairs”. It changed the inconsistent treatment of Indigenous Australians within the states and territories, and laid a platform for the implementation of federal programs.

The two sections of the Constitution under scrutiny were:

- 51. The Parliament shall, subject to this Constitution have power to make laws for the peace, order, and good government of the Commonwealth with respect to: (xxvi) The people of any race, other than the aboriginal people in any State, for whom it is necessary to make special laws.
- 127. In reckoning the numbers of the people of the Commonwealth, or of a State or other part of the Commonwealth, aboriginal natives should not be counted.

As the National Archives records, “The removal of the words ‘... other than the aboriginal people in any State...’ in section 51 (xxvi) and the whole of section 127 were considered by many to be representative of the prevailing movement for political change within Indigenous affairs... It is interesting to note that because the majority of parliamentarians supported the proposed amendment, a NO case was never formulated for presentation as part of the referendum campaign.”

...the referendum should be seen as “a symbolic event enshrined in history”



In many ways the referendum was the culmination of a period of activism and change where there was increasing uneasiness within Australia about international perceptions regarding treatment of Indigenous people, and a growing call for equity. In 1962 Indigenous Australians were given the right to vote federally, and in most states and territories this right was enshrined across all states by 1965. In 1966 Indigenous people were given the same access to the welfare system as other Australians. In that year also the Commonwealth Arbitration Commission ruled that Aboriginal workers should receive the same wages as non-Aboriginal workers.

Historian Henry Reynolds says that the referendum should be seen as “a symbolic event enshrined in history”. For activist Chicka Dixon it signalled validation because, “Section 51 was quite specific and said the Australian Commonwealth Government would recognise all races of people other than Aboriginal — in other words, we didn’t exist.”

In terms of the census, it is interesting to note that after 1829 when Australia was considered part of the dominions of the Crown, all inhabitants — including Indigenous ones — were regarded as British subjects. This ‘privilege’ ended with the passing of the *Commonwealth Franchise Act 1902* and the *Commonwealth of Australia Constitution Act 1900* which determined that Indigenous people were not citizens of Australia and could not vote.

When Harold Holt assumed the Prime Ministership in 1966 he signed the United Nations International Accord for the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination signalling an official end to the ‘White Australia’ policy.

A major force in compelling the Federal Government to hold the referendum was the Federal Council for the Advancement of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islanders. This Council collected the minimum requirement of 100,000 signatures on petitions to commence the process of holding a referendum. It is notable also that the media played a strong role in maintaining focus on the issue.

In a paper for the Australian Bureau of Statistics, Scott Bennett cites a typically enthusiastic editorial from the *Sydney Daily Mirror* on 22 May 1967:

*“We’ve taken his lands,
decimated his tribes, degraded
his women, taken away his
dignity and forced him to live
in squalor. This is our chance
to make some sort of amends.
We still have a long way to go.
But at least we can make
a start at treating him
as an equal.”*

A record was sent to every commercial radio station by the Aboriginal Rights ‘Vote Yes’ Committee with these lyrics: “Vote ‘Yes’ for Aborigines, they want to be Australians too/Vote ‘Yes’ to give them rights and freedoms just like me and you/Vote ‘Yes’ for Aborigines, all parties say they think you should/Vote ‘Yes’ and show the world the true Australian brotherhood.”

The referendum was ultimately held on 27 May 1967, and achieved the highest Yes vote ever recorded in a federal referendum, with 90.77 per cent voting for change, and the Yes case prevailing in every state. Northern Territorians did not participate. Some commentators have noted with concern that more than nine per cent of Australians managed to vote No, but the significance of this in a country where referenda have been habitually rejected is moot.

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Bennett notes that the 1967 result provided a clear mandate, even if action was far from immediate. “The change of government in 1972 saw the Commonwealth moving squarely into this area of administration on the grounds that the 1967 vote justified such action. Prime Minister Whitlam defended his government’s activity in the area of land rights, for instance, by referring to, ‘the will of the Australian people, expressed overwhelmingly in the Referendum of 1967, giving this Parliament, the national Parliament, the opportunity and the responsibility to see that Aborigines have a right to land!’”

In his editorial Bennett also observes the curious fact that significance is attached to the referendum even by those who do not understand its details. “Many Indigenous persons therefore look back at 27 May 1967 as an occasion to honour and celebrate. Interestingly, the referendum has assumed an important place in peoples’ consciousness that has transcended what it actually did to the Constitution: ‘the passing of time has seen the precise terms of the referendum disappear from historical consciousness, only to be replaced by myths...’ (Hain Attwood & Andrew Markus in collaboration with Dale Edwards & Kath Schilling, *The 1967 Referendum, or When Aborigines Didn’t Get the Vote*).

In Background Paper 11, 1996–97 for the Parliament of Australia Parliamentary Library, researcher John Gardiner-Garden is blunter. “The proper significance of the referendum has, however, been obscured to some extent by popular myths,” he wrote. “It is, for example, widely believed that the referendum was whole-heartedly supported by both sides of politics, that it ended legal discrimination, conferred the vote, equal wages and citizenship on Indigenous Australians, and that it permitted for the first time Commonwealth Government involvement in Aboriginal Affairs. None of this was the case:

- the Menzies and Holt Governments were less than enthusiastic about altering s.51(xvii)

- the repeal of the State legislation which discriminated against Aboriginal people was a process which was independent of the 1967 referendum and which had begun before the referendum
- Aboriginal voting rights had been clarified by the Commonwealth Government two years before the referendum and the extension of award wages to Aborigines occurred in 1968 as a result of actions unrelated to the referendum
- the Commonwealth Government had been involved in Aboriginal Affairs in the Northern Territory since 1911 and, through the grants provision in 96 of the Constitution, could have been involved in State Aboriginal Affairs before 1967 if it had wanted to be
- the referendum result did not automatically make the Commonwealth more involved and indeed little changed for five years.”

However, Gardner-Garden finds that, “Though its practical significance may be questioned and though it has not led to parity between indigenous and non-indigenous Australians in social, economic and health status, the 1967 referendum has provided a head of power for some significant legislation and has been of unquestionable symbolic significance. Although the event may have become distorted by myths, it has come to act as a form of historical shorthand for a decade of change which began in the early 1960s and ended in the early 1970s.”

In 1997, Indigenous academic Parry Tripcony said in a paper to the Aboriginal Nations and the Australian Constitution Conference, “Whether, in retrospect, the 1967 amendments to the Commonwealth Constitution have led to policies and programs in accordance with expectations of those involved in the referendum campaign, is yet to be recorded.”

In 2007, many people will reflect again on exactly this topic.



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APAPDC MISSION STATEMENT

APAPDC is passionate in its support of principals, their associations and their schools, to build effective, inspirational and sustainable leadership in Australia. This leadership has the learning and wellbeing of students and staff as its prime focus.

We do this by providing top quality professional learning activities and resources on leadership development and leading learning — particularly in leading schools in the promotion of social and emotional health and wellbeing, and improving the educational outcomes for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students.

Some APAPDC projects include:

- Dare to Lead (www.daretolead.edu.au)
- MindMatters (www.curriculum.edu.au/mindmatters)
- KidsMatter (www.apapdc.edu.au)
- Leaders Lead (www.apapdc.edu.au)

Image adapted from Spirit Figures
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people Central Western NSW) —
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Why Social and Emotional Learning is Important

Social and emotional learning fits in clearly with the National Goals for Schooling in the Twenty -first Century and the National Framework for Values Education. Social and emotional learning is the process of developing the ability to recognise and manage emotions, develop caring and concern for others, make responsible decisions, establish positive relationships, and handle challenging situations effectively. Social and emotional skills are essential for the development of good mental health and KidsMatter highlights the need for a formal, regular, coordinated and supported approach to teaching competencies across the primary school.

Knowing how to manage feelings, establish friendships and solve problems are essential life skills that support wellbeing and positive mental health. Social and emotional skills promote children's abilities for coping with difficulties and help to prevent mental health problems. Children who have developed social and emotional competencies find it easier to manage themselves, relate to others, resolve conflict, and feel positive about themselves and the world around them.

The importance of schools catering for children's social and emotional development is reflected in national policy (MCEETYA, 1999) and in state and territory curriculum frameworks for teaching health and personal development. SEL skills also assist with learning in other curriculum areas. Research has demonstrated that SEL improves academic learning and enhances students' motivation to cooperate and achieve (Bernard, 2006).

Teaching social and emotional skills has positive benefits for teachers and parents too. When children are taught specific strategies for recognising and responding to emotions, thinking through challenging situations and communicating effectively, they are less likely to act out frustrations in the classroom or at home. Teaching SEL is therefore an effective preventive strategy for teachers seeking better ways to manage difficult classroom behaviours. When teachers have access to skills and strategies for improving classroom management practices it supports their own sense of competence and wellbeing.

So... How is SEL best taught?

So, how is SEL best taught? Importantly, the emphasis needs to be not just on teaching about emotions and relationships, but on teaching practical skills that children can apply across a range of situations at school, at home and in the broader community. Formal instruction needs to be offered regularly to maximise the benefits.

Opportunities for learning need to be coordinated across the school to support progressive development of skills with age and experience. As with other curriculum areas, children will show a range of abilities in SEL that may be influenced by individual temperament, prior experience, family circumstances, exposure to positive role models, or other factors. A comprehensive school-based program will therefore provide a structured and developmental approach for teaching specific SEL competencies that lead to effective learning.



Research has identified the following five core SEL competencies and associated subskills...

<p>1. Self-Awareness – this includes the following subskills:</p>	<p>a) Identifying emotions: Identifying and labelling one's feelings. b) Recognising strengths: Identifying and cultivating one's strengths and positive qualities.</p>
<p>2. Social Awareness - including:</p>	<p>a) Perspective-taking: Identifying and understanding the thoughts and feelings of others. b) Appreciating diversity: Understanding that individual and group differences complement each other and make the world more interesting.</p>
<p>3. Self-Management - including:</p>	<p>a) Managing emotions: Monitoring and regulating feelings so they aid rather than impede the handling of situations. b) Goal setting: Establishing and working toward the achievement of short- and long-term pro-social goals.</p>
<p>4. Responsible Decision-Making - including:</p>	<p>a) Analysing situations: Accurately perceiving situations in which a decision is to be made and assessing factors that might influence one's response. b) Assuming personal responsibility: Recognising and understanding one's obligation to engage in ethical safe and legal behaviours. c) Respecting others: Believing that others deserve to be treated with kindness and compassion and feeling motivated to contribute to the common good. d) Problem solving: Generating, implementing, and evaluating positive and informed solutions to problems.</p>
<p>5. Relationship Skills - including:</p>	<p>a) Communication: Using verbal and nonverbal skills to express oneself and promote positive and effective exchanges with others. b) Building relationships: Establishing and maintaining healthy and rewarding connections with individuals and groups. c) Negotiation: Achieving mutually satisfactory resolutions to conflict by addressing the needs of all concerned. d) Refusal: Effectively conveying and following through with one's decision not to engage in unwanted, unsafe, unethical, or unlawful conduct.</p>

(Collaborative for Academic, Social, and Emotional Learning, 2003)

These five social and emotional skill areas are viewed as essential for the development of good mental health. Structured teaching of these SEL competencies, and opportunities for students to practise and generalise them in the classroom, school and wider community, are also crucial to implementing effective SEL. KidsMatter encourages schools to communicate with families about their work in teaching and promoting children's SEL. Informing and working with families on the development of children's SEL competencies has been found to increase the benefits for children.

A number of programs for teaching SEL competencies have been developed in Australia and internationally. KidsMatter has comprehensively reviewed a range of them and compiled a resource guide that includes information on the competencies targeted, the evidence base for the effectiveness of the program, the mode of delivery and the availability of specific professional development to support school implementation.

State-based project officers work with action teams at each KidsMatter school to provide more specific advice on SEL programs and help schools select those that best suit their needs for coordinated implementation across the curriculum. Project officers also work closely with schools by providing specific KidsMatter professional development for staff, and guiding implementation and evaluation processes. School-based social and emotional learning offers gains all-round - for students, for schools and for families.



Link:

If you're interested in how social and emotional learning fits in with values education, you might like to check out Sue Roffey's article on Learning to Care in the Spring 2006 issue of EQ:

<http://www.curriculum.edu.au/eq/spring2006/article1.html>

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Ministerial Council on Education, Employment, Training and Youth Affairs (MCEETYA) (1999) *The Adelaide Declaration on National Goals for Schooling in the Twenty-First Century*

<http://www.mceetya.edu.au/mceetya/nationalgoals/index.htm>

PARENTING SUPPORT AND EDUCATION

Families and Schools working together

Component 3: Parent Education and Support

KidsMatter includes a component on Parenting Education and Support because it recognises the importance of parenting in promoting children's mental health. It makes sense that if we want to support children's mental health and wellbeing, families and schools should work closely together.

KidsMatter also recognises that parenting can be difficult and children don't come with a manual on parenting! Most parents don't have childcare degrees but learn on the job with advice from family, friends and teachers. Wanting or needing to get more information or learn more skills about parenting doesn't mean that parents aren't doing a good enough job - it just means they want to learn more about effective ways of bringing up children.

How schools can offer parenting information and support

How schools can offer parenting information and support

There are many ways that KidsMatter schools are working on the Parenting Education and Support component. They may be doing things like:

- ☆ Organising opportunities for parents to meet with other parents either informally or formally (Parent Clubs)
- ☆ Providing parenting tip sheets in school newsletters
- ☆ Offering workshops, seminars and information sessions where topics of interest to parents are presented, such as Bullyproofing your child, the importance of fun, Anger management, the impact of separation and divorce on children, Issues for siblings of children with disabilities.
- ☆ Offering parenting programs on general parenting and/or for parents of children with challenging behaviour organised through local community health centres

These are things that all schools can be involved in to support parents and carers in their crucial child-rearing role.

You may like to conduct a survey or have informal discussions with the parents/ carers to find out more about what they would like to have happening at the school to support them in their parenting. How could your school support parents and carers to access parenting resources they would find helpful?

Many community agencies happily accept invitations from schools to deliver parenting information and programs at the school. Find out what parenting services are available in your school's local community and explore ways of making them more accessible for parents and carers.



Links:

Note: There is an array of web-based information for parents. Each newsletter we will include a small selection of links, both national and state or territory-based, that schools and parents might find useful. This edition of the newsletter features links to sites in SA and the ACT to complement our featured state and territory. Resource links for other states and territories will be featured in subsequent issues.

National

The *Australian Childhood Foundation's Kidscount* website provides a number of easy to read parenting tip sheets in multiple languages, including: Amharic, Dari, Khmer, Swahili, Arabic, Dinka, Macedonian, Tigrinya, Chinese, English, Somali, Turkish, Croatian, Farsi, Spanish and Vietnamese. These may be useful resources for helping schools to establish communication with parents of varying language backgrounds. See: <http://www.kidscount.com.au>



For comprehensive parenting information do check out the Australian Parenting website featured in our first newsletter: <http://raisingchildren.net.au/>

South Australia

Schools and parents/carers can go to www.parenting.sa.gov.au to find information about parenting groups and parenting education courses available for different age groups of children and different concerns. There are groups for mothers, fathers, grandparents and carers. The site also contains *Parent Easy Guides* (or PEGs as they are affectionately known), which offer simple, easy-to-read information on many of the issues faced by parents from birth through adolescence. Hard copies of these PEGs are available free in SA and many have also been translated into other languages.

The *South Australian Department of Education and Children's Services* provides grants for Parent Initiatives in Education that schools might encourage parents to take up. Information, including examples, is available at the link below. Check out how the parent initiative undertaken at Modbury School has addressed both parenting support and positive school community (KidsMatter components 3 & 1). See: <http://www.leadersdesktop.sa.edu.au/governance/default.asp?id=4836&navgrp=129>

Australian Capital Territory

Schools and parents/carers can go to <http://www.parentlink.act.gov.au/> to find information about community and parenting groups that are currently on offer.

The *ACT Department of Education and Children's Services* is emphasising school partnerships with parents and parenting organisations through its Schools as Communities strategic projects. Funding is available for specific projects to support at-risk children and families through partnerships with community/health services. Details can be found at: http://www.dhcs.act.gov.au/ocyfs/s_a_communities.htm

EARLY INTERVENTION FOR STUDENTS EXPERIENCING MENTAL HEALTH DIFFICULTIES

NEW Medicare rebate for psychological treatment of mental health problems

More help for kids with mental health problems

In November 2006, the Australian Government extended the Medicare Benefits Scheme to include psychological treatments for many childhood mental health problems. The introduction of the new Medicare rebates for psychological services will help families who may have had difficulties in the past accessing mental health services for children who need assistance.

A Medicare rebate for psychological services is available if your child is referred by a general practitioner, psychiatrist or paediatrician to an eligible allied health professional for treatment of mental health problems such as:

medicare

- ☆ Anxiety and depression
- ☆ Behavioural problems
- ☆ Difficulties in controlling anger
- ☆ Sleep problems
- ☆ Concentration and attention problems
- ☆ Bed-wetting
- ☆ Obsessive-compulsive disorder

What to do if you are concerned about your child and want them to be treated

☆ If your child is already seeing a psychiatrist or paediatrician, then discuss your concerns with them. If not, make an appointment with your GP to discuss your concerns.

☆ If the GP, psychiatrist or paediatrician assesses your child as needing psychological treatment, they can refer your child to an eligible allied health professional. The eligible allied health professional can be a psychologist, or a social worker or occupational therapist who specialises in treating mental health problems.

☆ Your child will be eligible for up to 12 psychological treatment sessions per year. The referring doctor will assess progress after the first six sessions. Your child is also eligible for up to 12 group therapy sessions where these services are available and are seen as appropriate by the referring doctor.

Requirements for eligibility for the new Medicare rebate

☆ To be eligible for the Medicare rebate, your child must be referred by a GP, a psychiatrist or a paediatrician. If the referring doctor is a GP, he or she must carefully assess your child and complete a *Mental Health Care Plan*.



☆ Your child must be assessed by the referring doctor as having one of the mental health problems that are covered by the extended Medicare rebates.

☆ The allied health professional that your child is referred to must have a Medicare provider number.

If your child is already seeing an allied health professional, payments for these services do not meet the criteria for eligibility for a Medicare rebate. To qualify for the Medicare rebate, it is necessary to follow the process outlined above.

What will the psychological treatment cost?

The rebate available from Medicare will vary according to the length of the treatment session and the consultation fee being charged, which is set by the allied health professional. If there is a gap between the consultation fee and the Medicare rebate, you will be responsible for the additional payment. You cannot use private health insurance extras cover to cover the out-of-pocket expense.



More information

The extended Medicare benefits are also available for many adolescent and adult mental health problems. Further information can be found at the following sites:

[Download Australian Government Department of Health and Ageing fact sheet for consumers:](#)

[http://www.health.gov.au/internet/wcms/publishing.nsf/Content/C972FCCDAC5928A8CA257201007C3E6F/\\$File/Better%20Access.pdf](http://www.health.gov.au/internet/wcms/publishing.nsf/Content/C972FCCDAC5928A8CA257201007C3E6F/$File/Better%20Access.pdf)

Download the Australian Psychological Society fact sheet for consumers:

http://www.psychology.org.au/members/Medicare/6.18_7.asp

Download beyondblue: the national depression initiative fact sheet for consumers:

http://www.beyondblue.org.au/index.aspx?link_id=7.246&tmp=FileDownload&fid=611



Australian Government
Department of Health and Ageing



beyondblue
the national depression initiative
www.beyondblue.org.au



KidsMatter is a national primary school mental health promotion, prevention and early intervention initiative developed in collaboration with the Australian Government Department of Health and Ageing, *beyondblue: the national depression initiative*, the Australian Psychological Society, and the Australian Principals Associations Professional Development Council and supported by the Australian Rotary Health Research Fund