

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

It's worth celebrating!

KidsMatter has now completed its first trial year and we have a lot to celebrate. The willingness of our pilot schools to stick with us, provide feedback on resources, manage the demands of the evaluation, timetable in meetings and professional development, be prepared to attend Cluster days to share their stories, and for some to tell them at the Briefing for Round 2 schools in September has been inspiring. You will get a 'taste' of some of these stories in this edition. It is definitely a big read but take some time and discover why we are so impressed by what our schools are doing in their KidsMatter journeys.

Welcome Aboard

We would officially like to welcome our second group of 50 schools who have recently commenced implementing the KidsMatter initiative. We would also like to thank them for their patience in fulfilling their wait-list control condition, which has meant they have had to wait

From New South Wales:

- Bexley Public School - Bexley
- Carramar Public School - Carramar
- Faulconbridge Public School - Springwood
- Harrington Street Public School - Cabramatta West
- St. Bede's Primary School- Braidwood
- St. Oliver's Primary School- Harris Park
- St. Mary's Catholic Primary School - Noraville
- Tahmoor Public School - Tahmoor
- St. Patrick's Primary School - Macksville

From Victoria:

- St Mary's Primary School - Echuca
- Benalla Primary School - Benalla
- Corio Primary School - Corio
- Lumen Christi - Churchill
- North Brunswick Primary School - West Brunswick
- Southvale Primary School - Noble Park
- St Andrew's Catholic Primary School - Werribee
- St Anne's Primary School- Seaford
- St Therese's Primary School - Cranbourne
- St Louis De Montfort Primary - Aspendale

From Queensland:

- Caloundra Primary School - Caloundra
- Goondiwindi State Primary School - Goondiwindi
- Mater Hospital Special School - Woolloongabba
- Redlynch State School - Redlynch
- Tallebudgera State School - Tallebudgera
- The Willows State School - Kirwan
- Unity College - Caloundra West
- Upper Mt Gravatt State School - Brisbane

From Western Australia:

- Geraldton Grammar School - Geraldton
- Hilton Primary School - Hilton
- Lance Holt School - Fremantle
- Leeming Primary School - Leeming
- Rockingham Beach PS - Rockingham
- Star of the Sea Catholic Primary School - Rockingham
- Cooina Primary School - Bunbury

From South Australia:

- Annesley College - Wayville
- Cobdogla Primary School - Cobdogla
- Elizabeth Park Schools - Elizabeth Park
- Munno Para Primary School - Munno Para
- Open Access College - Marden
- Roxby Downs Area School - Roxby Downs
- Woodcroft Primary School - Woodcroft

From Northern Territory:

- Howard Springs Primary School - Howard Springs
- Jingili Primary School - Darwin
- Sacred Heart Primary School - Palmerston

From Australian Capital Territory:

- Aranda Primary - Aranda
- Gowrie Primary School - Gowrie
- St Francis of Assisi Primary School - Calwell

From Tasmania:

- Kempton Primary School - Kempton
- Lauderdale Primary School - Lauderdale
- Rocherlea Primary School - Mowbray

Evaluation Update

KidsMatter Update – November Newsletter

We are pleased to report that the first phase of the KidsMatter evaluation – the collection of baseline data from both teachers and parents - has now been completed. We would like to acknowledge the enormous work done at the school level to ensuring as many teachers and parents participated in evaluation as possible. In particular, we would like to thank school personnel who 'volunteered' to coordinate data collection at their school – we appreciate that this was no small task and cannot say enough about your commitment and creativity. Through your efforts the KidsMatter evaluation has been able to achieve a truly impressive response rate of 76% for the baseline data collection. Such a response rate will ensure that we have a diversity of views that will inform how KidsMatter can be improved for the next generation of primary schools. The KidsMatter evaluation will move into its second phase during the final school term of 2007. With this second phase only teachers will be asked to complete questionnaires. As of writing this newsletter, KidsMatter schools would have begun receiving important information about this phase of the evaluation from Flinders University team. For those wishing to know more about the KidsMatter evaluation information can be viewed at the website established by Flinders University

<http://caef.flinders.edu.au/kidsmatter/>

Hot off the Press!!

A newly revised version of the Guide is on its way...

The newly revised and updated version of the KidsMatter Programs Guide has just gone to print and all Project Officers and round 2 schools should be on the lookout for their copies which will start arriving over the next few weeks. In addition to updated price and contact information, there are seven new programs listed in the Guide with at least one new program listed in each of the four components. There are also some new features that will make it easier to directly compare programs.



Fear not round 1 schools, whilst you may have already chosen your SEL curriculum, your Project Officer will have copies of the revised version on hand for you to have a look through should you be interested in choosing programs for other components. If you have any queries about the information presented in the Guide, the resource development team based at the Australian Psychological Society (APS) can be contacted through your Project Officer.

Professional Development Opportunities

The *Helping Children with Autism* package that was recently announced by the federal government will provide a number of initiatives as of July 2008, that are designed to help children with autism spectrum disorder (ASD), their families, carers and schools. As part of this package, \$16.3 million has been designated to funding professional development for teachers and other school staff to support students with ASD to achieve better educational outcomes; and \$7 million has been allocated to parents and carers of school students with ASD so that they can attend workshops and information sessions, as well as access web-based information.

For further information, or to download the relevant fact sheets, follow this link:

http://www.dest.gov.au/sectors/school_education/programmes_funding/programme_categories/special_needs_disadvantage/helping_children_autism/

Latest Developments



Our second group of schools recently attended a 2-day introduction to KidsMatter that was held in the popular coastal region of Glenelg in South Australia. This orientation to KidsMatter was a great opportunity to invite some of the first group of schools back to give an update on their progress. They were also on hand to share some pearls of wisdom with our new schools.

Some of their thoughts regarding the KidsMatter framework, each of the four components and the 7-step process are the focus of this newsletter, so read on and enjoy...

"KidsMatter – a way of being" – Woodville Primary School, SA



Kaye Johnson, principal at Woodville, introduced our new schools to the KidsMatter framework. She found a major strength of KidsMatter was that it enabled Woodville PS to enhance things it was already doing for children and families.

Making KidsMatter a priority at Woodville meant confirming children's well-being as school business, extending and refocussing current practices to promote student engagement and well-being, establishing a common language to talk about children's mental health with staff, children and parents, and adopting more systematic and co-ordinated ways of working in partnership with parents. Kaye stressed the importance of having the support of a KidsMatter Project Officer for working through each component. "They are a source of information and your voice" she said.

A POSITIVE SCHOOL COMMUNITY

"Rotary support and community connections" – Nulsen Primary School, WA



Lisa Helenius, former principal at Nulsen Primary School, highlighted the importance of community connections for the success of the KidsMatter initiative. Since many of Nulsen's students have high needs for support, and families are often struggling themselves, it was important for Lisa to look beyond the parent body to establish support networks through local service organisations and agencies. After giving a talk to the local Rotary group and inviting local agencies to come to the school and discuss how they could support Nulsen, they were overwhelmed by the positive response received. Nulsen established an interagency group brochure and is developing close working relationships with several key local organisations.

"Looking with the KidsMatter eye" – St. Joseph's Primary School, NSW



"Looking at things with the KidsMatter eye" was how principal Barbara Myers described the influence of KidsMatter on the outlook of St Joseph's staff. All aspects of school life are now looked at in terms of what they can contribute to children's mental health. "The genius of KidsMatter," according to Barbara, is that it provides a structure and a lens through which to view current practice & activities, attitudes & approaches. "KidsMatter has meant that we now explicitly name

mental health and wellbeing as fundamental to the work of our school. It has given our school community the language and opportunities to explore issues surrounding mental health & well-being."

One important emphasis that Barbara would like to see added to the KidsMatter initiative is staff wellbeing. She argued that it makes sound educational sense to explore ways to support those who have the most impact on our children. There can be no argument about that! So we are looking into it.



SOCIAL AND EMOTIONAL LEARNING FOR STUDENTS

"Growing happy and healthy minds" – Waverley Primary School, TAS



Staff at Waverley primary school see social and emotional development as part of their core business alongside literacy and numeracy. However, not all teachers were confident about their capacity to teach SEL effectively. With the help of Tasmanian



Project Officer, Helen Barrett, Waverley primary researched the field of SEL and chose two programs, Program Achieve and BounceBack, to guide them in planning a school-wide SEL curriculum. All teachers participated in professional development for SEL and continue to be involved in planning SEL objectives and learning activities.





Principal Troy Roberts emphasised team involvement and engaged professional learning as the key to making Waverley’s approach to SEL successful. “Professional learning and leadership certainly top my list as the most important factors in implementing an SEL curriculum.” Also on Troy’s list was the need to have good teaching resources available. In Troy’s view (and we would agree!) SEL is just as important for children who are not at any risk. Regular opportunities for students to generalise their SEL skills beyond the SEL lesson helps to consolidate their learning. Waverley staff continue to monitor and review their SEL teaching and have been considering what kinds of evidence can best indicate students’ progress.

“Focus on health promoting schools” – Turner School, ACT



An inner city school in Canberra, Turner includes over 100 children with special needs amongst its 420 students. Joanne Formica, teacher-librarian at Turner, explained that KidsMatter fit perfectly with the other health promoting school initiatives at Turner. When the staff looked at integrating SEL across the whole curriculum they started by looking at the ACT Education Dept essential learnings framework and identified the important student outcomes that match the KidsMatter SEL framework.

Turner staff developed their own scope and sequence for incorporating SEL systematically and regularly at all levels of the school. Joanne shared the following example from their lesson planning.

Week	Aim/s	Indicator/s	Teaching Points/Ideas
	To revise & refresh how we communicate our EMOTIONS	SEL 1.4 	CIRCLE TIME Eg. What is a <i>feeling</i> ? Today I am feelinguse Stone Cards – which card best describes how <i>you are feeling</i> OR which <i>feeling word</i> best describes the card you have ? Work in pairs. When is it OK to be ANGRY ? negative feelings are important and justified at times.
	To discuss the various intensity of Emotions Does the Intensity match the situation?		FEELINGS WORD LADDER – Discuss how emotions vary depending on the situation. Finish open-ended sentences eg. I was annoyed, angry.... overjoyed... furious.... excited....

Looking at SEL in this way has enabled staff at Turner to carefully consider how they will use the program they have selected to suit the particular learning styles and needs of their special needs students.

PARENTING SUPPORT AND EDUCATION

“Educating children is a team effort” - St. Simon Peter Primary School, WA



Principal Richard Cavanagh pointed out that success with KidsMatter is largely dependent on the well-being and willingness of school staff, and so he views the key decisions about supporting and resourcing both staff and students as crucial. “KidsMatter gave us a framework to pull everything we were doing together. After 12 months, we have had a wonderful experience”.

Tanya Ryan and Lisa Yates, parent members of St. Simon Peter’s KidsMatter Action Team, were passionate about the importance of schools and families collaborating. As Tanya emphasised, “It is a team effort to educate children; school isn’t a place where you just drop your kids off and pick them up educated”. Lisa appreciated the structure KidsMatter provides for schools and families to develop mutual



understanding and support. "I realise my role as a parent is to ensure my child is happy and healthy, and I can do this *with* my child's teacher through KidsMatter."

To help promote mental health at St. Simon Peter members of the Action Team have put together a mobile display (pictured) of mental health information for parents that does the rounds of the school. KidsMatter is also featured on their school's homepage to keep parents and carers updated on what is happening with KidsMatter at their school. They are planning a school-wide homework task for students to teach their parents how to access the KidsMatter page.

"KidsMatter is a great way to get integrated" - Living Waters Lutheran School, NT



As the full time Pastoral Care Coordinator at Living Waters School Karen Koehler puts a lot of effort into supporting families. With the KidsMatter framework, staff at Living Waters realised that although the school provided opportunities for parents to get together and socialise, they didn't have a good idea of what kinds of parenting support and education parents might want. "Even when you think you are on the right track, there is always room for improvement" Karen said.

Surveying parents helped the school get a better idea of what they wanted and helped parents feel like KidsMatter was for them. Living Waters now has 'Class Parents' who help to welcome and support families who are new to the school. The school holds large social events for all parents twice a year, such as a picnic or bowling. Karen has been working closely with the NT Project Officer to establish strong community links with family support agencies in the area. Karen echoed the advice of many round one schools: "It's important to get to know your Project Officers well; they are a fabulous resource."

Living Waters has plans to provide additional information sessions for parents and carers on how they can support their children's learning. They are also looking into hosting parenting courses at the school.



EARLY INTERVENTION FOR STUDENTS EXPERIENCING MENTAL HEALTH DIFFICULTIES

"What has changed? KidsMatter came to Labrador" - Labrador State School, QLD

Labrador State School is has focused on de-stigmatising mental health issues amongst its diverse community. De-stigmatising mental health is something all schools can do according to the Labrador team. Cathie Lawson, Angela Dimmock and Lee Heydon offered some tips on how schools can actually go about achieving this. They recommended:

1. Modelling appropriate acceptance of mental health
2. Supporting and up-skilling staff so that they have the skills to help students and parents in areas relating to mental health
3. Using mental health language which gives permission for people to discuss MH difficulties and concerns
4. Normalising mental health by including information about relevant topics in school newsletters and other in-house activities (e.g. giving coverage to mental health week).



An example of how de-stigmatising mental health has helped at Labrador was shared by Deb Fisher, classroom teacher. In the past Deb said she had often struggled to address the mental health needs of her students, particularly when parents were not ready to acknowledge their child's social, emotional and/or behavioural difficulties. When KidsMatter was introduced at the school, and information about the initiative was sent home to parents, parents and carers began to feel they could discuss their concerns about their children with school staff. Deb reported that now, "... of the 10 children in my class with mental health difficulties, almost all of their parents acknowledge their child's difficulties, and seven have sought help. Six have now engaged on-going services for their child". As KidsMatter emphasises, teachers can make a difference to children's mental health by facilitating access to early intervention. "So what has changed?" Deb asked, "KidsMatter came to Labrador."

THE 7-STEP PROCESS

"KidsMatter was an opportunity to make a difference for the future" – Monmia Primary School, VIC



Monmia Primary School

To achieve whole school improvements for children's mental health, schools are guided through a 7-step process for each of the four components of KidsMatter. Brenda Murphy, assistant principal at Monmia Primary School, had some very practical advice for round two schools on how to get the most out of the 7-step process. Keeping Action Team meetings focussed was important, so staff at Monmia developed a detailed agenda for each meeting that also helped them keep track of timelines, plans, goals and achievements. Monmia used a data projector to ensure everyone could see, and be involved in, the planning process. This helped to cultivate a sense of ownership and engagement from staff. "KidsMatter was an opportunity to make a difference for the future, and it was a good chance to develop the skills and confidence of staff," Brenda emphasised.

Brenda pointed out that, "It is important to make the goals achievable and realistic." This is particularly important in situations where staff move on to other schools, as it will mean that someone else must be prepared to take on the action and the tasks.

"We have learned that meetings are important," Brenda said. "We plan to have our Action Team meet more regularly, once a fortnight for two hours rather than once a month, just to keep track and make sure we don't lose sight of KidsMatter."

AND A FINAL WORD ON ROTARY....



It was great to have Ian Oliver, Chairman of the Australian Rotary Health Research Fund, at the briefing and to hear his enthusiasm for the work our round 1 schools have been doing. Many of them have been able to purchase valuable resources to support their work on KidsMatter thanks to Rotary funding. Ian's advice to schools was to get to know their local Rotary branch members, to tell them about KidsMatter and to ask for help with specific KidsMatter needs. "Remember, Rotary is an important community resource and a valuable source of networking opportunities," he said. Please also remember to acknowledge the contributions made by Rotary, which is an entirely voluntary organisation.

"Through Rotary, we have been able to make some powerful connections"

– East Torrens Primary School, SA

The additional funding and community connections that were generously provided after East Torrens Primary principal, Sandra Mauger, attended the meeting of the Rotary Club in Campbelltown SA, were greatly appreciated. In a complex and disadvantaged school like East Torrens Primary, Sandra's day typically involves providing breakfast for a large number of students, as well as the occasional bath. Rotary funds have been used in a variety of ways to support the mental health and well-being of the students at her school; including some much needed haircuts! Sandra's key message to schools attending the 2-day briefing was to utilise the resources available to them in their communities, "Through Rotary, we have been able to make some powerful connections," she affirmed.



East Torrens
Primary School



Australian Government
Department of Health and Ageing



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



The Australian
Psychological
Society Ltd



Australian Rotary Health
Research Fund



Australian
Principals
Associations
Professional
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Australian Primary Schools
Mental Health Initiative