Trinity Anglican School - Cairns: it's okay to be caring

Introducing KidsMatter: one school, two sites:

White Rock 2010
In April 2010, Barbara LaCoste, Head of the Junior School at White Rock, attended a Staff and Student Wellbeing Conference. She discovered that KidsMatter Primary could support the school focus on social and emotional learning. Barbara thought it would assist teachers to respond to the diverse needs of students.

Positive effects
Barbara LaCoste, Head, Junior School, White Rock Campus has observed the positive effects of KidsMatter Primary in student interactions. Teachers in the playground do not spend as much time sorting out squabbles between peers. Even the youngest students at White Rock now use language that shows they are more able to solve problems. Students understand that ‘it’s okay to be caring.’

Kewarra Beach 2012
Head of the Junior School, Imelda Spence, has supported staff to work on Component 2 during Term 1 through training in Bounce Back skills. The school has a strong musical focus and within a short time of introducing KidsMatter Primary, a member of the Action Team composed a song with the theme, I matter.
White Rock shares information about KidsMatter Primary with Marlin Coast. The school community learns about the new directions on social and emotional learning through introductions at assemblies and newsletters with information from KidsMatter Primary and library displays.

What’s different about KidsMatter? All sorts of materials sit on shelves from previous programs. But the KidsMatter framework allows us to develop an approach to student wellbeing that we can tailor – it is not a one-size fits all. It’s not a program but a ‘framework’ for the purpose of supporting students and their mental health.

Barbara LaCoste
Head, Junior School White Rock

Some of our assemblies focus on creative ways of reinforcing wellbeing. Our weekly awards promote KidsMatter qualities: kindness, respect, helpfulness and honesty. The lower junior area is a social hub for parents involved in school activities such as assemblies and they can hear information about social and emotional health and wellbeing.

Imelda Spence
Head, Junior School, Kewarra Beach
Communication
At White Rock, communication between the school and families and carers is made simpler through eduKite, a communication hub that allows each student to have a personal webpage.

Parents receive daily e-newsletters with information, photos, and resources that focus on classroom programs such as Bounce Back. Teachers can convert almost any content item into a portfolio item, and download homework and notices.

A mirror is situated in the playground area at Kewarra Beach to enable students to look at their reflection. The mirror is surrounded by positive and encouraging words.

Knowing about the school community
When the Action Team at White Rock organised the Component 1 parent survey, they did not expect to find that one parent group felt isolated. The findings showed the international community was on the fringes.

The school learned there were language barriers. Teachers worked on ways to include parents and carers from non-English speaking backgrounds. The English as a Second Language teacher teaches English classes to adults twice a week. She arranges interpreters for parent-teacher interviews and other meetings.

Talking about mental health
Both Barbara and Imelda agree that staff at their respective campuses were already aware of mental health. However; they see that they talk about it differently now. Both Heads value the new focus on mental health and wellbeing, and they are building it into the curriculum.

Another success was the International Camp we held for parents and families from Culturally and Linguistically Diverse communities. Now our Parent Community Group meets fortnightly to assist with the implementation of KidsMatter Primary initiatives. The group welcomes new families and invites guest speakers for coffee mornings.

Barbara LaCoste
Head, Junior School White Rock

… Weekly Action Team meetings include parent representatives and guide the implementation of KidsMatter. We’ve used Restorative Justice practices for some years, and we expect students to think about solutions for their relationships. We have the ‘I matter’ song, and students know the importance of giving respect. Our photo display of students strengthens the message that we are an inclusive community.

Imelda Spence
Head, Junior School, Kewarra Beach

School Profile
Trinity Anglican School – Cairns
Queensland

- Established in 1983 in Cairns with primary schools at two sites
- P – 7 enrolment at White Rock, south of Cairns is 340 with 48 Kindergarten students, and also a secondary school
- Enrolment at Kewarra Beach to the north is 300 P -7 students
- The school motto is teaching them to observe all things.

http://www.tas.qld.edu.au