Knowing the community
In 2010, Leda Primary School was exploring ways to work with parents to raise student attendance and support those who had difficulties regulating their behaviour. Leda PS was keen to make links to the community. As Sue Knight, Principal, said: our purpose with KidsMatter Primary was to build a welcoming and supportive environment where all stakeholders would feel welcome and valued.

Inviting parents into the school
Before introducing KidsMatter Primary, parent meetings were held at the start of each year, and hosting other events was not simple. New ideas were generated after Component 1 professional learning. Since then Leda Primary School has invited parents to Father’s Day breakfasts; Mother’s Day events; open nights; and afternoon learning workshops coinciding with student pick-up time. Friday afternoon sessions provided parents with opportunities to play educational games with students in classrooms.

Steps towards implementation
As each component has been introduced, the Action Team has spent considerable time planning and making links to the context of students and families. After the Action Team attended Component 1 and facilitated the staff professional learning, KidsMatter Primary was written into the school Operational Plan for 2011 and 2012. The school developed an integrated approach to address mental health and social, emotional development across the curriculum through implementing Component 2. Purposeful links were created with families and the community which began formally early in 2011.

Inviting parents into the school
Before introducing KidsMatter Primary, parent meetings were held at the start of each year, and hosting other events was not

Community Expos
Team members worked hard in late 2010 to plan a Leda Primary

"...Our aim was to explore and strengthen connections between the school and community. The school wanted to know more about resources in our region so we could assist parents to make connections if they required the support of any agency."

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Emily McNally, KidsMatter Coordinator

"...We created the Expo to promote Leda as a positive school community. Our overall objective was to strengthen links between the families in our school and agencies and services in our area."

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Karen Davey, Deputy Principal

Emily McNally, who teaches Year 2, says that: students loved the experience of the open classroom and some became quite upset if their parents could not be there for some reason. As a result of completing Component 3 in 2012, involving parents and community agencies is a stronger feature of the way Leda PS operates and plans its events.
School Community Expo early in the 2011 school year. They made contact with over 70 outside agencies. The Expo included many child-centred activities such as a mini farm with live animals; a magician; face painting and sports activities.

The success of the 2011 Expo encouraged the Action Team to plan a second one in 2012. The 2:00pm start time coincided with the time that parents picked up their children, and well over 100 parents participated in each Expo. At the Expo money was raised from a sausage sizzle, and was used to improve the signage around the school. The aim was to create an environment in which parents and visitors felt welcome and can identify areas within the school.

"Parents gained knowledge of the available community resources as they visited the agencies at their stalls. They also met staff in a casual environment, and this built positive relationships.

Emily McNally, KidsMatter Coordinator"

"...It’s an adjustment to think about a whole-school approach to teaching social and emotional learning. Students develop caring and concern for others and are supported to make responsible decisions and manage difficult or challenging situations in an appropriate manner.

Karen Davey, Deputy Principal"

Challenges of Component 2
One of the challenges for schools in implementing Component 2 is selecting a social emotional learning (SEL) program, and integrating it in a way that enables teachers to teach social and emotional competencies alongside the required curriculum. Leda chose PATHS® (Promoting Alternative Thinking Strategies), and all staff attended two days of training.

Karen says: fitting it into the curriculum can be viewed as difficult. We’re still working on it and teachers are finding their feet with PATHS®. Using key teaching opportunities is imperative. When teachers talk about the success of teaching SEL at Leda, they report that students as young as six years now have the vocabulary to describe how they feel. Students can use the ‘Turtle’ resource to solve problems and reflect on their issues. Teachers appoint a PATHS® Kids of the Day complete with sticker and identifying badge. It’s clear there are new ways to understand how social and emotional learning affects academic learning.

Impact of KidsMatter
It’s possible to identify some effects of KidsMatter Primary in Leda over two years.

"...I think we understand more about the impact of mental health on student behaviours. Students learn strategies and ways to deal with feelings. More parents come into contact with the school in different ways. We’d like to think we are integrating KidsMatter themes into the daily life of our school. It’s working!

Emily McNally, KidsMatter Coordinator"

School Profile

Leda Primary School
Western Australia

- Located in the metropolitan area 38 kms south west of Perth
- Has an enrolment of 520
- Is co-located with the Leda Education Support Centre
- Promotes the logo, ‘Facing the challenge’

www.ledaps.wa.edu.au