Launching KidsMatter Primary with the Macarena!
The launch was part of a College Wellbeing Day in Term 1 2013 that involved the junior, middle and senior school students and parents and friends. Members of the Action Team had visited another R - 12 school where KidsMatter Primary was integrated, and it provided inspiration for them to involve the whole school in planning for the Wellbeing Day.

... We are lucky because we have people on the Action Team with varied talent. We wrote down all our ideas for Wellbeing Day and then looked at what we could fit into one day at school! We included a number of elements: reflection of our Catholic identity and links to ‘every face has a place’; student artwork and decoration of classrooms; involvement of parents; contribution of older students; group dance routine, and we invited students to wear red.

Michelle Thomas, Religious Education Coordinator

The College Counsellor, along with the Marketing and Communications Manager, and Paul Cahalan, KidsMatter Primary Project Officer, organised a discussion with parents and friends about wellbeing and mental health, and shared morning tea with them. Parents cooked a sausage sizzle for students at lunchtime. Youth Empowerment Process (YEP) students in the middle and senior schools assisted with activities and worked with the R-5 students to present the Macarena dance to parents. After the official launch, YEP students worked in classrooms on a range of activities.

Views of the launch
The focus on wellbeing was a visible theme for students, staff and parents that day. The range of activities assisted Junior school students to make links with older students and experience different interactions. Two students commented about their perception of KidsMatter Primary:

- ‘[It’s] about letting people join in your games and having fun’
- ‘[It] helps us with our mental health and helps you bounce back if you are having problems.’

History of wellbeing at the College
Wellbeing has been an important aspect of the culture at St Francis de Sales. Staff began implementing MindMatters in March 2012, and worked across middle and senior schools with separate age-appropriate Action Teams. After visiting other schools that worked with KidsMatter Primary, the school took the step and introduced KidsMatter in the Junior School in Term 1, 2013. Vanessa Grave, Marketing and Communications Manager, whose role includes supporting the development of wellbeing across the whole school, speaks about the importance of the whole-school endeavour: We want to have consistency about what it means...
to have good mental health. It fits with our school structures to have the focus in three discrete student groups in our school.

What does wellbeing mean at the College?
The interpretation of wellbeing is about the connections between people and feeling accepted in the College community. As Michelle Thomas says: We want our students to know that they belong to our community, and that there is always someone they can talk to. We want our families to feel connected and to understand that they are always welcome and to feel as though they can contribute. We want our students to know that there are YEP students in the middle and senior school who can also help them. It is about students leading students and reducing instances of conflict and bullying.

Linking wellbeing and learning
At staff meetings wellbeing is consistently on the agenda. Wellbeing resources are available in the staffroom as a way of linking the focus with what is happening in the classroom. The school is keen to develop a culture that links learning with wellbeing.

Challenges
Of course, a major challenge in schools is time. It takes time to implement a culture change through a wellbeing context, and to communicate and interpret it, particularly in a large R–12 school. The College is committed to integrate wellbeing across the three different schools.

Parents spread the wellbeing concept to parents
When the Action Team planned the Wellbeing Day in the Junior School earlier this year, members acknowledged the importance of including parents:

“The goal of the College is to increase the number of parents who engage with wellbeing and learning so that they increase understanding of how to support their children in the schooling context. A core group of ten parents who attended a parent workshop indicated interest in meeting with other parents to communicate and explore ideas about supporting children. Two parents are members of the R-12 Wellbeing Committee that meets twice a term.”

St Francis de Sales College
South Australia

- Is a Catholic Coeducational College located in Mt Barker, 33 kms east of the City of Adelaide
- Is a Reception to Year 12 school
- Has a total enrolment of 1,055 students
- Is a community-focused school that inspires learning for life

“... We wanted our parents and friends to also feel connected, so it was important to our team that they were invited and made to feel special.”

Michelle Thomas, Religious Education Coordinator

“... We want to build consistency in the way our community understands wellbeing and how it links to effective learning in the classroom. We want to grow wellbeing from the ground up – from KidsMatters to MindMatters and Youth Empowerment Process program. We’re committed to growing it.”

Vanessa Grave, Marketing and Communications Manager