Hastings Primary School - Layers of wellbeing

Early attraction to KidsMatter
Community wellbeing and developing effective welfare and discipline policies have had a long history at Hastings Primary School. However, in 2006 when some challenges with communication between the school and the families were evident it was time to take a new direction.

When the Principal, Sue Lyons, saw a one-page flyer about KidsMatter Primary advertising an invitation to become a pilot school, she was clear that it would be helpful for the school at the time. She thought it would assist with a new response to circumstances in the school community.

Wellbeing is for everyone
The school has a belief that the wellbeing of each student is not just one person’s responsibility. As Jo Munn says, Our strength is that everyone works as part of a team.

The need to understand the community
At the start of its commitment to KidsMatter, Hastings Primary School staff took steps to understand the context of its community. The results of surveys with students and families indicated the need to become more familiar with the concerns of the diverse school population that included a significant proportion of low socio-economic families.

The school staff worked really hard to make connections with parents and carers and they took a number of initiatives to break down barriers. Now it is evident that staff and families respect and value each other. There has been a ‘deep cultural change’. Staff invite parents to be part of school community.

The focus on wellbeing extends to the placement of new teachers.

When new positions are advertised, an extra criterion is added which requires applicants to provide evidence about their knowledge of student wellbeing and KidsMatter Primary.

“I... KidsMatter Primary had a flavour that we could not resist. We realised that the language could pull together everything we were working on in terms of building a culture. We liked the idea of it being ‘a framework’ for wellbeing in our school.”

Sue Lyons, Principal

... We are explicit about what wellbeing is at Hastings. If you have a narrow definition, we find we don’t get the outcomes. So we have worked across the school to make wellbeing permeate our culture. Our students have developed a strong sense of mental health and know when their wellbeing is at risk. We try to empower them to step up and demonstrate care in their interactions with others.

Jo Munn, Assistant Principal

www.kidsmatter.edu.au
events, and it is common to see parents and community members working in classrooms.

**Involving the community**

Working with families is a key component of the KidsMatter framework at Hastings Primary School. It is talked up in newsletters and inclusive events are held throughout the year. The school invests in supporting the social and emotional wellbeing of all members of the community. For example, it provides resources, including the Student Wellbeing Team which meets once a week and the KidsMatter Primary Professional Learning Team which involves about a third of the staff including support staff provide assistance across the school.

There are many ways that partnerships are developed with members of the community.

Volunteers are involved in a range of activities and these include: Support in the classroom, specialists and extra-curricular activities and programs:

- Buildings and grounds development and maintenance
- School Council and Friends of Hastings Primary School (FoHPS) social and fundraising group
- Community Café
- Bugs’n’Beetles facilitated playgroup
- Assemblies, special events, student-lead conferences.

Every Thursday afternoon, the KidsMatter market is set up in the school grounds. Children and families spend time together after school. They can buy snacks, select a book from the free book trolley or look through the other items for sale.

**Engaging with Component 4**

The training for Component 4 initiated a number of new structures in the school. The first steps included becoming aware of mental health difficulties and building confidence to develop referral pathways for students and their families.

As Sue Lyons says, we wanted to be proactive and we needed a combined approach with pastoral care within a familiar and supportive environment. This has worked in conjunction with private psychologists, the care team involving school staff and allied health professionals.

The school now makes appointments and runs meetings with service providers. As a result, within the school community there has been a gradual acknowledgement and understanding of mental health, including an awareness of the signs of mental health difficulties.

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"... Parents, students and staff have begun to de-stigmatise mental health issues to the point of openly talking about, and celebrating successful outcomes of mental health."

Jo Munn, Assistant Principal

**Layers at Hastings**

Throughout its experience of KidsMatter staff have worked with the four components of the framework. They have established a really strong and solid understanding of the importance of mental health and wellbeing and there have been opportunities to integrate components as opportunities arise. For example it has been possible to combine initiatives for Component 1 with social and emotional learning and include parents in sessions and activities.

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**Hastings Primary School**

Victoria

- Is a Prep to Year 6 school
- Is located on the Mornington Peninsula about 73 kms from Melbourne
- Enrolls about 245 students
- Was a pilot school in 2006
- Promotes social, emotional, physical and intellectual wellbeing of every individual

www.hastingsprimary.vic.edu.au