Tailem Bend Primary School: Parents are welcome

Starting out with KidsMatter Primary

When it was first rolled out in schools in 2007, the then school counsellor at Tailem Bend Primary School kept in touch with KidsMatter and received newsletters and information about what schools were doing.

This knowledge was a strong starting point when Tailem Bend Primary School made the decision to implement KidsMatter Primary in 2011. The school wanted an ongoing wellbeing focus.

Visiting another KidsMatter Primary school

The two teachers, who shared the school counsellor role in 2011, went to visit a school that had successfully implemented KidsMatter Primary.

The teachers spent a day at Cobdogla Primary School at the end of the year to see how the students and staff worked with KidsMatter Primary. They were ‘completely inspired’.

Planning to introduce KidsMatter Primary

An Action Team was established consisting of the 2012 counsellor, the Special Education Coordinator, the Year 1 teacher and a critical friend, the local Community Mentor Coordinator (Department for Education and Child Development). The Action Team planned an event to launch KidsMatter.

The main focus was to use ways to involve the community in the school. Part of the planning involved examining the local community and identifying the strengths which included a small but active community of businesses and volunteers.

This enabled the Action Team to plan an inclusive and innovative launch.

Taking time to invite parents to the school

How could parents be attracted to participate in the school? The Action Team knew it would be a challenge because some parents had had a negative experience of school in their own lives. Many school families are isolated and do not have strong networks. The team spoke at the local Rotary Club meeting and mustered support from a local business for prizes.

The launch of KidsMatter

KidsMatter Primary was launched on the 2nd of March 2012. In the afternoon Year 6 and 7 students organised games for younger students and other activities on the oval. This included face-painting. When parents arrived they watched the DVD about Cobdogla Primary School and why KidsMatter Primary is an important aspect of the school community.

Then parents moved around classrooms and listened to a series of information sessions from different local community health service agencies. These included: Child
Adolescent Mental Health Services; Centacare; Tailem Bend Community Centre; Communities for Children program and Headspace.

Throughout the afternoon parents enjoyed cappuccinos donated by a local business which had brought its espresso machine into the school. Students joined parents for afternoon tea, and the State Project Officer gave a presentation about KidsMatter and wellbeing.

Every student received a KidsMatter Primary Grab Bag that contained pamphlets from service providers that had been promoted in the information sessions and other items including some KidsMatter Primary materials. The intention was for families to discuss the items in the grab bag when they went home.

 Welcoming parents
Over 40 parents attended the launch of KidsMatter Primary, and staff members were very pleased with the response. Staff wanted parents to feel welcome and valued as part of the school community.

 Sandwich boards provide a focus in the campus
After the launch, the Action Team followed up the message – that all children need to experience emotional health and wellbeing.

There are now three sandwich boards placed in the school grounds and messages are written on them. At first, staff were not sure if students would read them but it has become routine for them to check the messages that have included ‘every face has a place’. The messages are a way to build a common language in the school.

Trees in the classroom
Each classroom has been provided with a wooden tree about two metres high that is assembled easily from two pieces. Students can display images of themselves which reinforce the ‘every face has a place’ theme or other topics such as ‘people in my life’ or ‘what I like doing’. The trees are a great way to exhibit individual student work.

Advice for other schools beginning
Marie Flavel and Travis Schenke consider that it is important to take the steps for implementation slowly:

It was really important for us to see KidsMatter Primary in action in another school before we began our work. It was valuable to see how we could apply what Cobdogla had done in our context.

Marie Flavel and Travis Schenke, Action Team members

School Profile

Tailem Bend Primary School:
South Australia

- Is located in 99 kms east of Adelaide on the River Murray
- Has an enrolment of 163
- Is co-located with the Tailem Bend Community Library
- Promotes its motto: to be positive and successful
  www.tailembdps.sa.edu.au/