Wanniassa School sends postcards to parents

Why Wanniassa School became involved in KidsMatter Primary
In 2010 when Wanniassa School became involved in KidsMatter Primary it had already developed the P–10 Values Program based on the Federal Government’s nine values for schooling. This underpins the culture of leadership and pastoral care. Resilience is a key component for the school. The school staff wanted to provide an environment that encourages and nurtures students. KidsMatter Primary offered an opportunity to further embed the values with the school community. Staff have completed the first three Components and will begin Component 4 in Term 2, 2012.

The Action Team
The Action Team meets formally twice a term and has ongoing informal discussions about KidsMatter. Team members include: the Deputy Principal; two executive teachers; a classroom teacher; Counsellor; and the Chaplain provides extra support.

Parent Link offers parents and carers opportunities to access information, build links with each other and the school including the Pre-school. We want parents to feel safe there and we’ve made sure that they know that confidentiality is maintained. It’s already a success because parents asked for the hours to be extended even further.

Sonya Maybury, classroom teacher and KidsMatter Facilitator

Creating welcoming spaces
The school has developed welcoming spaces for children and parents to participate in the broad learning environment. Children’s Link, created in 2007, provides a space for students to access small group activities, participate in a Breakfast Club one day per week, and for informal conversations with the Chaplain. After completing Component 3, the Action Team created a new space, Parent Link.

Sonya Maybury has given a common language to parents, staff and students. We have brought mental health into the open. Staff, students and parents can talk about issues that were not discussed openly in the past. We say that all people experience some difficulties sometimes. With the focus on parents and carers in Component 3, the school has become closer to the community. We are building a supportive community in our school.

Jenny Tatham, Senior Executive School Leader
Parents now have a separate room with external access. It displays resources about: child development; various mental health resources; local agency services and government benefits. Parent Link was initially open for two hours daily, but because of increased interest, it is now open daily from 9-3.

**Giving a language**
The Action Team was clear it did not want to ‘overload’ teachers when it introduced KidsMatter Primary. It has built on the work of the Values Program. Now mental health is an everyday topic and an agenda item in staff meetings.

> We use the postcards to make small ‘deposits’ of positive recognition and give respect to individual students. The postcard initiative is an example of the way that we can efficiently generate positive connections between the school and home environments. The postcards were ready to use within three weeks of the idea being adopted.
>
> Jenny Tatham, Senior Executive School Leader

‘A note from Wanniassa School’
After completing Component 3 the staff developed the KidsMatter postcard idea to communicate the achievements of students with parents and carers. A commercial printer developed a set of postcards using photos of student artwork.

> We’ll revisit the ideas and make sure our resources are up-to-date. We’ll continue to give information through the ‘dripping tap’ process. We’ve made KidsMatter Primary our own and we’re helping to build up resilience in our students. We give them practical strategies to deal with life. We’ve empowered staff, parents and students with the knowledge and skills of the Values Program and KidsMatter Primary.
>
> Sonya Maybury, classroom teacher and KidsMatter Facilitator

All teachers have a bundle of postcards and use the reverse side to write, ‘A note from Wanniassa School’ to parents and carers to recognise and support the achievements of students.

**Maintaining KidsMatter Primary**
The Action Team will keep KidsMatter Primary on the agenda even after completing component 4. They view it as a learning continuum in promoting the school role in supporting students’ mental health and wellbeing. They will review and evaluate directions as the needs of the staff, students and community change.

The Wanniassa School motto, ‘Partners in Learning’, also highlights the focus on mental health and wellbeing promoted through KidsMatter Primary. Staff members are more aware of the resources and services available to them to support students and families building capacity for resilience now, and in the future.

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