Kids Matter

Australian Early Childhood
Mental Health Initiative

Literature Review

Component 1: Creating a sense of community

Important Notice

KidsMatter Early Childhood Australian Mental Health Initiative and any other KidsMatter mental health initiatives are not to be confused with other businesses, programs or services which may also use the name 'Kidsmatter'.

Contents

Component 1: Creating a sense of community

Background Information on KidsMatter Early Childhood

KidsMatter Early Childhood is a national mental health promotion, prevention and early intervention initiative developed to support the mental health and wellbeing of young children in early childhood education and care services (ECEC). It has been developed in collaboration with *beyondblue* and Early Childhood Australia, with funding from the Australian Government Department of Health and Ageing and *beyondblue*. It involves families, early childhood professionals, and a range of community and health professionals working together to make a positive difference to young children's mental health and wellbeing during this important developmental period of birth to five years.

KidsMatter Early Childhood uses a risk and protective factor framework to focus on four components that ECEC services can use to strengthen the protective factors and minimise risk factors for children's mental health and wellbeing.

All four components are outlined below.

1. **CREATING A SENSE OF COMMUNITY** within ECEC services by focusing on belonging, inclusion, positive relationships and collaboration.

2. **DEVELOPING CHILDREN'S SOCIAL AND EMOTIONAL SKILLS** is fundamental to children's mental health. These skills are developed through adults' warm, responsive and trusting relationships with the children in their care, as well as through constructive peer relationships.

3.   **WORKING WITH PARENTS AND CARERS** ECEC services and families can establish collaborative partnerships in the interests of their children. ECEC services can support families by helping them to connect with other families and by providing access to parenting support.

4.   **HELPING CHILDREN WHO ARE EXPERIENCING MENTAL HEALTH DIFFICULTIES**. ECEC services are well placed to recognise when young children may be experiencing difficulties, to implement simple strategies to assist children, and to support families to seek additional help.

Definitions of terms used in this document

Children: Children from birth to five years unless otherwise stated.

Culturally and Linguistically Diverse (CALD): A broad concept that encompasses individual differences, such as language, dress, traditions, food, societal structures, art and religion.

Early childhood education and care (ECEC) services: Preschools, kindergartens and long day care services.

Early childhood staff: Educators, teachers, day care staff, integration aides, assistants, and other staff that are based within ECEC services.

Externalising: Disruptive, impulsive, angry or hyperactive behaviours (i.e. where the child 'acts out'). These behaviours are generally readily observed and therefore are relatively easy to detect.

Internalising: Inhibited or over-controlled behaviours (i.e. where the child 'holds in' their difficulties), including withdrawal, worry, and emotional responses that primarily affect the individual child rather than having effects on others.

Mental health: Early childhood mental health involves being able to experience, manage and express emotions; form close, satisfying relationships; and explore and discover the environment.

Parents and carers: This includes biological mothers and fathers, parents of adopted children, GLBT parents, foster parents, grandparents, aunties and uncles. The primary caregivers of a child/children and are usually the child's legal guardians.

Protective factors: Strengths that enable children to maintain positive mental health and wellbeing, even though risk factors for mental health problems are present.

Resilience: A person's capacity to adapt to adverse situations in ways that enable them to cope positively and reduce or minimise negative impacts on mental health and wellbeing.

Risk factors: Factors that increase the likelihood that mental health difficulties will develop. The presence of particular risk factors does not necessarily mean a difficulty will develop. The presence of multiple risk factors usually increases the likelihood of difficulties developing.

Temperament: Individual characteristics and style of behaviour that a child is born with, now considered to have a basis in both biology and environment.

Creating a sense of community

EARLY CHILDHOOD EDUCATION AND CARE SERVICES CAN PLAY AN IMPORTANT ROLE IN CREATING A SENSE OF COMMUNITY.

Component 1 of the KidsMatter Early Childhood initiative: *Creating a sense of community* focuses on four target areas selected because of their impact on children's mental health and wellbeing: *belonging and connectedness; inclusion; positive relationships; and collaboration*. While there is some overlap in the target areas, each also makes a unique contribution to building a positive sense of community in an early childhood service. Each of the target areas is discussed in detail below. The numbers appearing in the text are linked to references listed at the end of the document. If you would like more information about the ideas presented in this paper, the reference list is a starting point.

Belonging and connectedness

CULTIVATING BELONGING AND CONNECTEDNESS is an important part of building a positive community at an early childhood service. Belonging comes from feeling valued, accepted, respected and cared about by others. The sense of belonging to a community is a two way process of contributing to and receiving the benefit of others' friendship and care. [1-3]

A sense of belonging is fundamental to life. People seek out meaningful, lasting relationships in order to meet their need to belong.[4] To foster a sense of belonging, these interactions need to be enjoyable, frequent, and involve mutual, genuine regard for each other's wellbeing. In addition, continuity of relationships is an important factor in enhancing a sense of belonging and connectedness.[4]

During the early years, a sense of belonging and connectedness facilitates many protective factors for good mental health and wellbeing.[3,5] These include a positive sense of self; strong relationships with others; and, perhaps most importantly, a strong sense of identity.[3,6] Belonging has been described as the relational part of identity, or the 'glue' that connects one individual to others; to places (e.g., home and ECEC services);

and to beliefs and ideas (e.g., cultural or religious practices).[3] All children grow and develop in the context of these connections.[6]

Children who experience a positive sense of community in an early childhood service are more likely to feel connected and that they belong.[3,6] They are also more likely to be involved in their community in positive ways and to benefit from belonging to it.[3,6] In contrast, children who feel they don't belong or feel disconnected from their community through experiences such as exclusion, discrimination and lack of involvement, are at greater risk of experiencing isolation, loneliness and developing mental health difficulties (such as anxiety, depression or low self-esteem) in childhood and beyond.[3,4,6]

Children who are connected and feel that they belong in the worlds they inhabit are more likely to develop a strong identity, a positive sense of self and strong relationships with others.

ECEC services can make a positive difference to children's mental health and wellbeing by creating an environment that fosters belonging and connectedness. Belonging and connectedness are enhanced when ECEC services are welcoming and inclusive, and there are clear and accessible opportunities for everyone to contribute and get involved.[7]

Inclusion

INCLUSION is about respecting diversity.[8] Australia is known for being one of the most culturally diverse societies in the world. **In its broadest sense, diversity is about "understanding and appreciating different ways of thinking and being"[9(p1)]** Respecting diversity can relate to cultural (e.g., children from CALD backgrounds), family (e.g., single parent or same sex parents) and individual differences (e.g., gender, age, abilities, interests). Valuing every child's own individuality and unique qualities is an essential part of respecting diversity.[9,10] Truly inclusive practise in an early childhood setting involves actively finding ways to respect these differences and to value each child for their individual qualities.[11]

Making inclusion and respect for diversity a priority is particularly important in an early childhood setting. Children are less likely to hold negative attitudes towards differences and to exclude other children because of individual differences.

When inclusion is made a priority at an early childhood service, the benefits to mental health and wellbeing are numerous and wide-reaching.[12,13] For example, when

a child feels their family, community background and individual uniqueness are respected and valued, their sense of identity, belonging and self-esteem is reinforced.[9] Furthermore, children who feel included at the service they attend are better able to participate actively in collective and social activities, form strong relationships with significant others and enjoy the benefits associated with being a part of the early childhood community.[9]

During early childhood children first become aware of differences among people and start to form opinions and attitudes about those differences. It also a time when children are highly influenced by the values, attitudes and behaviour of respected adults. As such, promoting inclusion and respect for diversity is of utmost importance for ECEC services during this time.[12,14] Children who attend a service that makes inclusion and respect for diversity a priority are less likely to hold negative attitudes towards these differences and to exclude other children because of them.[13] Children's attitudes about, and responses to, diversity amongst their peers can be shaped and guided by those around them. Inclusion, acceptance and respect are promoted when adults view diversity (in whatever form) as commonplace; value the unique needs of each and every child; address children's questions and curiosity about differences; and create an environment where everyone is included (regardless of differences). [15]

Engaging children and their families in the ECEC services requires cultural sensitivity as the concept of 'family' can have diverse meanings.[16] For example, for some children the term family may include same-sex parents, step-parents and siblings and members of the extended family (like grandparents, aunties and uncles) as well as biological parents and siblings.[9,17] Some families may also have child rearing practices, beliefs and values that differ from the early childhood service their child attends.[18] Early childhood settings that respect this diversity and are responsive to it benefit all children by cultivating an inclusive environment where everyone can participate freely and enjoy the feelings of belonging and connectedness that result.[19]

Positive relationships

All children develop and learn in the context of relationships and interactions with others.[5] Early childhood is a period during which relationships play an important role in children's development, mental health and wellbeing.[5,20] Through positive early relationships, a number of protective factors for mental health are strengthened, including developing a sense of trust in the world, positive social skills; the ability to form positive and lasting relationships with others; a strong sense of identity; the ability to understand and respond appropriately to the emotions of others; and the ability to understand and operate within the customs of the cultures that children identify with.[5,20] It is for these reasons that during early

Positive relationships in early childhood support a number of protective factors, including social skills; the ability to form positive and lasting relationships with others; a strong sense of identity; and the development of empathy and morality.

childhood it is important children have the opportunity to observe and learn to form *positive* relationships with significant others.[5,20]

Children experience and observe a 'hub' of relationships in an early childhood setting, emanating from the relationship that children have with their family to those [20] between children and their peers; between children and early childhood staff; between their family and early childhood staff; and those between the early childhood staff themselves. Each type of relationship is important as they can all facilitate feelings of belonging, connectedness and inclusion.

The most influential relationship children will experience in their lifetime is with their parents or carers. These relationships are reciprocal and begin building during pregnancy. As soon as they are born, babies engage with their parents and carers by doing things like turning towards their voices, looking at them long periods and crying in order to receive their care and attention.[21] Parents and carers reciprocate by providing sensitive and responsive care, comfort when babies are upset, affection, and talking, smiling and playing with their child.[21] Toddlers and preschool aged children then use the positive relationships developed with their parents and carers in infancy as a base from which to explore, test and master new skills.[21] Parents and carers reciprocate by providing guidance, setting limits, respecting their growing need for independence and providing comfort and reassurance when needed.[21]

The quality of the relationship children have with their parents or carers has a long term effect on their development and a major influence on their mental health and wellbeing. Secure, warm and responsive relationships, for example, have been linked to a number of protective factors for good mental health and wellbeing during early childhood. These include shorter fear responses in infants[22]; lower incidence and frequency of behavioural difficulties in toddlerhood and early childhood[23]; and lower levels of aggression and greater social competence in kindergarten.[24] Young children also tend to be better able to regulate their behaviour and emotions, and have more developed social and emotional skills. On the other hand, less secure relationships between children and their parents or carers have been linked to numerous risk factors for poor mental health in early childhood.[22] [23] [24]

While the relationship children have with their parents or carers is the most important, other relationships in early childhood also contribute to mental health and wellbeing and development. A good example of this is the quality of the relationships that a child has with his or her peers. It appears peer rejection and social exclusion are risk factors for mental health difficulties in early childhood, because both affect feelings of inclusion and sense of belonging and acceptance.[5] Studies have shown that peer rejection has been linked with behavioural and emotional difficulties in kindergarten aged children, including aggression and depression. [25,26] There also appears to be a relationship between peer rejection and the ease of children's adjustment to school. In this case, children with a large number of friends when they entered

kindergarten were more likely to feel positively about going to school than were those who had fewer friends.[27,28] Children who have more positive interactions with their peers are also more competent at sharing, turn taking, understanding and empathising with the needs of others, and learning in formal and informal settings than those who are socially isolated.[5,20]

> **Children experience and observe a 'hub' of relationships in an early childhood setting. Each type contributes to creating a sense of community because each facilitates feelings of belonging, connectedness and inclusion.**

Another relationship that is very influential during early childhood is between children and early childhood staff who care for them. As the number of children attending ECEC services for long periods of time is increasing, positive relationships between staff and each child are critical. A positive relationship with at least one caring, competent adult outside of the child's immediate family is related to greater mental health and resilience in children[29,30] and early childhood staff are ideally placed for this role.

Early childhood staff can enhance the sense of community at their service by modelling positive relationships for children.[18] Children learn how to be with others through observation and early childhood staff are well suited to be role models in this area. [18] For example, when staff join in with children's play and social interactions, they can model interactions to children that emphasise care, respect and empathy towards others.[6,18] By observing staff interactions with other adults, children also learn how to initiate relationships with their peers. Staff who model appropriate behaviour, language, skills and attitudes help to create an environment that is inclusive and enhances children's sense of belonging and connectedness to the service.[31]

Another way staff can contribute to the sense of community within their service is to support children to build positive relationships with each other. Adults can provide a scaffold for infant's and children's social interactions and support them to learn appropriate group behaviours whilst also monitoring and protecting them from becoming overwhelmed. [18] Staff can play an important role in supporting social development by creating age-appropriate opportunities for social interactions. They can also support the development of positive peer relationships through introducing social guidelines that encourage cooperation, turn-taking and sharing. Staff can foster children's friendships by promoting small group interactions and play experiences with others. Children will then begin to create their own social groups and develop more social competence with their peers.[5,18,32] Widening children's network of positive peer relationships can help them to develop feelings of competency, confidence and respect and value in themselves, as well as their sense of inclusion and belonging and connectedness to the service.[6,18]

The quality of the relationship between those who care for a child (i.e., a child's family and early childhood staff) also has an impact on a child's mental health and wellbeing and can contribute to the sense of community at the service. When families and early childhood staff have a positive relationship and good communication, the child can feel secure and 'known'. This is particularly important the younger a child is, as infants and young children rely on carer to share information between them until they develop verbal skills and can tell people their experiences themselves.   Having a good relationship with families enables staff to also identify family risk factors and to provide information and referrals when required.[33] Building positive relationships between families and staff also allows families to feel more informed and involved with the care of their child at the service. By spending more time at the service, families may also develop relationships with other parents and increase their involvement in the broader community. Having a good relationship with families also allows staff to share their knowledge about early childhood development and their day-to-day experiences with their child. This promotes inclusion and helps families feel connected to the service, enhancing the positive sense of community.

> **Building positive relationships between families and staff allows families to feel more informed and involved with the care of their child at the service.**

Finally, it is also important for services to build partnerships with other services within their local community (such as those in the health sector, family and community services, community based organisations, local councils). Services can share valuable resources, thus increasing the level, types and timeliness of support available to families and children.[34] Staff also benefit in various ways when their service develops positive relationships with other early childhood and family support services and professionals. For example, research has linked partnerships between staff at ECEC services and early childhood mental health consultants to significant increases in early childhood staff's ability and confidence in managing children's challenging behaviour.[33] In addition, it appears that effective relationships between staff and mental health consultants are related to lower levels of early childhood staff stress and staff turnover and higher levels of perceived competency. [33] In summary, when staff build positive relationships with other early childhood professionals they feel more supported, competent and satisfied with their role; better equipped to support families and children at their service; and less stressed. This in turn contributes to building a positive sense of community.

Collaboration

COLLABORATION occurs when children, families, staff and communities are engaged with and involved in the service in meaningful ways. This in turn fosters a

sense of belonging and connectedness which are protective factors for mental health and wellbeing.

The ultimate goal of collaboration is to involve the whole family in the service and to build positive relationships between parents, siblings and carers and staff. When families and staff collaborate it involves trust, empathy, open communication, teamwork, and shared decision making.[35] In an early childhood context, this means that parents and carers and staff already have a shared interest in a child's development and wellbeing, and by working together as equals they can facilitate the best possible outcomes for that individual child.[36]

> **In order to facilitate collaboration and involvement in an early childhood service, opportunities need to be created for families to become involved in ways that suit their needs and circumstances.**

When ECEC services actively encourage collaboration and family involvement, everybody benefits. For example, collaborative decision making about the day-to-day care a child receives at the service helps families to feel involved in a meaningful way, increases their sense of belonging and connectedness and helps them to feel empowered and valued for the information that they can provide about their child.[37] When families feel more attached and connected to the service, their child is more likely to consistently attend the service.[38]

Children benefit especially when families and staff work collaboratively.[36] Both families and staff have an influence on children's mental health and wellbeing, so strengthening the connection between the service that the child attends and their home is a significant protective factor.[39,40] Family involvement also demonstrates to children the service is a safe place to be and promotes feelings of belonging and connectedness.[41] Family involvement has also been associated with many other positive outcomes for children during the early childhood period. Greater family involvement in preschool, for example, has been found to have a positive impact on children's pre-literacy development and school readiness.[42,43] There is also a significant relationship between family involvement at preschool and children's social and emotional competency and lower frequency of behavioural difficulties.[44] [43]

In order to facilitate collaboration and family involvement in an early childhood service, several factors are important. Firstly, opportunities need to be created for families to become involved that allow them to participate in ways that suit their needs and circumstances.[45] Sometimes this involves ECEC services looking closely at the opportunities they provide for families to become involved and adjusting them to meet different family group needs. . For example, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children

are often cared for not only by their immediate family, but also by members of their extended family, including grandparents, aunts, uncles and members of their community. Creating an environment and climate that is welcoming, inclusive and actively seeking contributions from the child's extended family creates opportunities for everyone to become involved in the service, further enhancing their sense of inclusion, belonging and connectedness.

Secondly, open and honest communication between parents, carers and staff is essential for establishing family collaboration and involvement in an early childhood service.[46] There are common types of information that parents and carers want to learn from staff that helps them to feel involved in their child's care.[46] For example, parents and carers want staff to share their expertise and knowledge about child development to help them understand and better support their child. Parents and carers also want information about what their child is learning at the service, and how the curriculum contributes to their overall development. Parents and carers also want to know about their child's day-to-day routine and experiences during the day, so that they can create a more seamless transition between care in the home and at the early childhood service. Overall, meaningful two-way communication between parents and carers and early childhood staff is one of the most important factors in improving collaborative engagement of families with ECEC services.[46]

Collaboration and family involvement in an early childhood service is a gradual process rather than one that happens straight away. Time is needed for relationships to develop between families and the service, and as the relationship progresses, parents and carers and staff engage with each other based on a 'hierarchy of need'.[45] At the beginning of the relationship, communication between parents and carers and staff is primarily focused on conveying information about the child's immediate physiological needs, such as safety and nutrition. As the relationship progresses and everyone knows that the child's basic needs are being met, parents and carers and staff begin to communicate about the child's other needs, such as their sense of belonging and self-esteem. Then, when parents and carers understand that they are important contributors to their child's care and development, they begin to engage with staff to gain more information about the curriculum at the service. It is at this stage they might show an increased interest in decision making and curriculum planning at the service. Eventually the relationship turns into true collaboration and partnership between parents and carers and staff about the care and development of the child. At this stage, parents and carers and staff share responsibility for child development and learning. It is under these optimal circumstances that children have the best opportunity to reach their full potential and are most protected from risk factors that can impact on their mental health and wellbeing.[45]

Summary and Implications for Practice

ECEC services play an important role in promoting mental health and wellbeing in young children. *Component 1* of the KidsMatter Early Childhood initiative, *Creating a Sense of Community,* provides a framework that can be used in an early childhood setting to achieve this goal. The four target areas of Component 1 focus on the importance of enhancing children's sense of belonging and connectedness to the service; creating an inclusive environment; developing positive relationships between children, families and staff; and encouraging families to participate and collaborate with staff about their child's care.

A substantial body of evidence suggests a positive, inclusive environment at a service facilitates many protective factors for mental health and wellbeing in early childhood. Creating an environment where children and their families feel valued, accepted and respected for who and what they are, enhances feelings of belonging and connectedness. Children who feel like they belong in their community are more likely to develop a strong sense of identity, a positive sense of self and strong relationships with others. Furthermore, making inclusion a priority at a service is especially important for social and emotional development during early childhood. Children who attend a service that respects diversity are more likely to feel like they belong and less likely to hold negative attitudes towards differences among people. Feelings of belonging and connectedness and a healthy respect for diversity also have flow on effects on children's ability to build and maintain positive relationships with their families, peers and the early childhood staff who care for them. Finally, parents and carers and staff can further strengthen these protective factors by collaborating with each other about child development and care. Both parents and carers and staff have a significant influence on mental health and wellbeing during early childhood, so strengthening the connection between their home and the service their child attends is a significant protective factor. In conclusion, a positive sense of community within an early childhood service is essential for good mental health and wellbeing in young children.

References

1. Dawe S, Harnett P, Frye S. Improving outcomes for children living in families with parental substance misuse: What do we know and what should we do. *Child Abuse Prevention Issues.* 2008;29:1-14.

2. McGraw K, Moore S, Fuller A, Bates G. Family, peer and school connectedness in final year secondary school students. *Australian Psychologist.* 2008;43(1):27-37.

3. Woodhead M, Brooker L. A sense of belonging. *Early Childhood Matters.* 2008;111:3-6.

4. Baumeister RF, Leary MR. The need to belong: Desire for interpersonal attachments as a fundamental human motivation. *Psychological Bulletin.* 1995;117(3):497-529.

5. Kay-Lambkin F, Kemp E, Stafford K, Hazell T. Mental health promotion and early intervention in early childhood and primary school settings: A review. *Journal of Student Wellbeing.* 2007;1(1):31 - 56.

6. Department of Education Employment and Workplace Relations. Belonging, being and becoming: The early years learning framework for Australia. Barton, ACT: Commonwealth of Australia; 2009a.

7. Hadley F, De Gioia K. Facilitating a sense of belonging for families from diverse backgrounds in early childhood settings. *Early Childhood Matters.* 2008;111:41-46.

8. Vandenbroeck M. De-culturising social inclusion and re-culturalising outcomes. *Early Childhood Matters.* 2007;June:7-10.

9. Professional Support Coordinator Tasmania. Diversity: Translating values into practice. 2009. www.psctas.au/resources.htm. Accessed 22 July 2009.

10. Valdiva R, Brault L, Kuschner A. Embracing inclusion: When ALL means ALL. In: Lally JR, Mangione PL, Greenwald D, eds. *Concepts for care: 20 essays on infant/toddler development and learning* San Francisco, CA: WestEd; 2006:65-69.

11. Kennedy A. Respecting difference: An ethical duty. *ECA Voice.* 2009;9(3):3-4.

12. Friendly M. How ECEC programmes contribute to social inclusion in diverse societies. *Early Childhood Matters.* 2007;June:11-14.

13. Stonehouse A. The practice of relationships: Essential provision of children's services. In: NSW Department of Community Services: Office of Childcare, ed. Sydney: NSW Department of Community Services: Office of Childcare; 2002.

14. Aboud F. *Children and prejudice*. London: Blackwell Publishers; 1988.

15. Erwin EJ, Guintini M. Inclusion and classroom membership in early childhood. *International Journal of Disability, Development and Education.* 2000;47(3):237-257.

16. Vicary DA, Bishop BJ. Western psychotherapeutic practice: Engaging Aboriginal people in culturally appropriate and respectful ways. *Australian Psychologist.* 2005;40(1):8-19.

17. Sanson A, Lewis V. Children and their family contexts. *Family Matters.* 2001;59:4-9.

18. Zero to Three. *Caring for infants and toddlers in groups: Developmentally appropriate practice.* Washington: Zero to Three; 2008.

19. Betts J, Lata D. Inclusion of children with disabilities: The early childhood imperative. *UNESCO Policy Brief on Early Childhood.* 2009;46. http://unesdoc.unesco.org/images/0018/001831/183156e.pdf. Accessed 17 February 2012.

20. National Scientific Council on the Developing Child. *Young children develop in an environment of relationships: Working paper No.1.* Cambridge: The Center on the Developing Child at Harvard University;2004.

21. Gowen JW, Nebrig JB. *Enhancing early emotional development: Guiding parents of young children.* Sydney: Paul H. Brookes Publishing Co.; 2002.

22. Siegal DJ. Toward an interpersonal neurobiology of the developing mind: Attachment relationships, "mindsight" and neural integration. *Infant Mental Health Journal.* 2001;22:67-94.

23. Suess GJ, Grossman KE, Sroufe AL. Effects of infant attachment to mother and father on quality of adaptation in preschool: From dyadic to individual organisation of self. *International Journal of Behavioral Development.* 1992;15(1):43-66.

24. Schmidt ME, Demulder EK, Denham SA. Kindergarten social-emotional competence: Developmental predictors and psychosocial implications. *Early Child Development and Care.* 2002;172(5):451-462.

25. Perren S, Alsaker FD. Depressive symptoms from kindergarten to early school age: longitudinal associations with social skills deficits and peer victimization. *Child and adolescent psychiatry and mental health.* 2009;3(28):1-10.

26. Perren S, von Wyl A, Stadelmann S, Burgin D, von Klitzing K. Associations between behavioral/emotional difficulties in kindergarten children and the quality of their peer relationships. *Journal of the American Academy of Child & Adolescent Psychiatry.* 2006;45(7):867-876.

27. Ladd GW, Kochenderfer BJ, Coleman CC. Friendship quality as a predictor of young children's early school adjustment. *Child Development.* 1996;67(3):1103-1118.

28. Ladd GW. Having friends, keeping friends, making friends, and being liked by peers in the classroom: Predictors of children's early school adjustment? *Child Development.* 1990;61(4):1081-1100.

29. Werner EE. Resilience in development. *Current Directions in Psychological Science.* Jun 1995;4(3):81-85.

30. Department of Education and Children's Services. Healthy minds/Healthy futures: Child mental health and wellbeing study. Summary of findings. 2006. http://www.decs.sa.gov.au/speced2/files/pages/chess/hsp/Research/final_2005_parent_results.pdf. Accessed 17 February 2012.

31. Siraj-Blatchford I, Sylva K. Researching pedagogy in English pre-schools. *British Educational Research Journal.* 2004;30(5):713-730.

32. Sheridan MD. *From birth to five years: Children's developmental progress.* 3rd ed. London: Routledge; 2008.

33. Green BL, Everhart M, Gordon L, Gettman MG. Characteristics of effective mental health consultation in early childhood settings: Multilevel analysis of a national survey. *Topics in Early Childhood Special Education.* 2006;26(3):142-152.

34. Commonwealth Department of Health and Aged Care. Promotion, prevention and early intervention for mental health - A monograph. In: Mental Health Special Programs Branch, ed. Canberra: Author; 2000.

35. Stonehouse A. *The cornerstone of quality in family day care and child care centres: Parent-professional partnerships.* Parkville: Centre for Community Child Health;2001a.

36. Keyser J. *From parents to partners: Building a family-centred early childhood program.* St. Paul. MN: Redleaf Press; 2006.

37. Cohen J. Social, emotional, ethical, and academic education: Creating a climate for learning, participation in democracy, and well-being. *Harvard Educational Review.* 2006;76(2):201-237.

38. Sandy SV, Boardman SK. The peaceful kids conflict resolution program. *International Journal of Conflict Management.* 2000;11(4):337-357.

39. Galinsky E. *The economic benefits of high-quality early childhood programs: What makes the difference?* Washington: The Committee for Economic Development;2006.

40. Gonzalez-Mena J, Widmeyer Eyer D. *Infants, toddlers, and caregivers.* 8th ed. New York: McGraw-Hill; 2009.

41. Weiss HB, Caspe M, Lopez ME. Family involvement in early childhood education. *Family involvement makes a difference.* 2006;1(Spring):1-8. http://www.hfrp.org/publications-resources/browse-our-publications/family-involvement-in-early-childhood-education. Accessed 17 February 2012.

42. Arnold DH, Zeljo A, Doctoroff GL, Ortiz C. Parent involvement in preschool: Predictors and the relation of involvement to preliteracy development. *School Psychology Review.* 2008;37(1):74-90.

43. McWayne C. A multivariate examination of parent involvement and the social and academic competencies of urban kindergarten children. *Psychology in the Schools.* 2004;41(3):363-377.

44. Webster-Stratton C, Reid MJ, Hammond M. Preventing conduct problems, promoting social competence: A parent and teacher training partnership in Head Start. *Journal of Clinical Child Psychology.* 2001;30(3):283-302.

45. Elliott R. Engaging families: Building strong communication. *Research in Practice Series.* 2005;12(5):1-18.

46. Elliott R. Sharing care and education: Parents' perspectives. *Australian Journal of Early Childhood.* 2003;28(4):14-21.

This resource is part of the KidsMatter Early Childhood Initiative. The KidsMatter team welcomes your feedback at www.kidsmatter.edu.au

Australian Government

Department of Health and Ageing

beyondblue

Early Childhood Australia
A voice for young children