

Building resilience in schools: KidsMatter Primary

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KidsMatter Primary is the first national mental health promotion, prevention and early intervention initiative specifically developed for primary schools. Developed collaboratively by national health and education organisations, KidsMatter began in 2006 with a 2 year national pilot, with the view to:

- improving the mental health and wellbeing of primary school students
- reducing mental health problems amongst students
- achieving greater support for students experiencing mental health problems.

KidsMatter Primary provides schools with an overarching framework and resources to implement a comprehensive student mental health strategy. The framework has four focus areas (components) for schools to target their efforts:

- **Component 1:** A positive school community
- **Component 2:** Social and emotional learning (SEL) for students
- **Component 3:** Parenting support and education
- **Component 4:** Early intervention for students experiencing mental health difficulties

Dividing KidsMatter Primary into the four components makes the task of tackling student mental health and wellbeing more manageable and ensures schools effectively involve all the significant people impacting on children's lives.

A comprehensive evaluation of KidsMatter Primary pilot was conducted by Flinders University of South Australia. The findings indicate KidsMatter Primary had a positive impact on schools, children, parents and carers, including:

- improved student mental health and wellbeing such as optimism and coping skills
- reduced mental health difficulties such as emotional symptoms, hyperactivity, conduct and peer problems
- improvements in students' school-work
- improved teacher capacity to identify students experiencing mental health difficulties
- improved teacher knowledge on how to improve students' social and emotional skills
- increased parent capacity to help children with social and emotional issues
- facilitated the placement of mental health as an issue on schools' agenda and provided a common language to address mental health and wellbeing issues.

Copies of the Evaluation Report can be obtained at www.kidsmatter.edu.au.