



## Mental Health Promotion and Illness Prevention in School Settings

<b>MindMatters</b>			
<b>Setting and Target Group</b>	<b>Approach</b>	<b>Focus</b>	<b>Access</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Secondary School communities</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Whole of school approach</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Mental health promotion</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>All secondary schools within Australia entitled to resources and training at no cost.</li> </ul>

MindMatters is a national mental health initiative for secondary schools funded by the Australian Government Department of Health and Ageing. It is managed by the Australian Principals' Associations Professional Development Council (APAPDC) and Curriculum Corporation, and is a collaboration between the health and education sectors. The central office is located in Adelaide SA, with project officers based in all states and territories.

### Description

MindMatters promotes a comprehensive, 'whole of school' approach to mental health and wellbeing, and aims to enhance the development of school environments where young people feel safe, valued, engaged and purposeful. The approach uses multiple strategies and involves parents, students, staff and the community to create an environment that promotes mental health and wellbeing. The role of a 'school core team' is considered integral to the successful development and implementation of strategies which support a whole school approach to mental health.

The 'MindMatters Implementation Model' is built on the health promoting schools' model which focuses on three key areas:

1. School ethos and environment
2. Curriculum teaching and learning
3. Internal and external partnerships and services

Schools interested in implementing a whole school approach to mental health can engage in long term (18 months – 3 years) professional development and support opportunities using a range of MindMatters resources. The major components of the MindMatters approach include:

- MindMatters resources: these include background information on promotion and prevention approaches to mental health, planning tools for addressing wellbeing issues within a whole of school and community context, as well as activities for classroom use on topics such as resilience, loss and grief, bullying and harassment, and understanding mental illness.
- Level 1 professional development: enables school and community staff to increase their understanding of:
  - mental health and mental health promotion;
  - how resources provided by MindMatters can be used most effectively; and
  - how existing capacities of the school and its community can be used in a whole school approach to wellbeing.
- Level 2 professional development: supports leadership, planning, data collection/analysis and curriculum development towards the implementation of whole school approaches to mental health and wellbeing. Extension professional development training modules are provided where appropriate on issues such as leadership, students with high mental health support needs, teaching and learning for wellbeing, measuring progress etc.

### Process

In each state MindMatters facilitates a partnership with state education and health personnel who provide delivery of aspects of the MindMatters professional development process. Local members of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities or members of Aboriginal Education Units within state systems are also involved as appropriate.

The resources and professional development programs are designed to support schools in developing appropriate mental health promotion strategies within their individual school contexts. MindMatters and other



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relevant staff provide comprehensive support to the school core team which provide a key coordinating and leadership role.

### Access

MindMatters is fully funded by the Australian Department of Health and Ageing and is therefore able to offer professional development at no cost. A training calendar is available at:  
<http://cms.curriculum.edu.au/mindmatters/calendar/calendar.htm>

All secondary schools are eligible for sets of resources at no cost (additional sets may be purchased or downloaded at no cost from the website).

It is recommended that the school core group (including school leadership) receive training but participation is not limited to specific numbers. All members of the secondary school community (including staff, parents, counsellors, community members, GP's and school leadership) are eligible.

Project Officer support is provided in each state and territory. Comprehensive information and communication networks are available from the website.

### Evaluation

MindMatters Level 1 has been comprehensively evaluated over the period 2000-2005, with an additional evaluation summary being published in 2006.

"There was some early evidence of an ... increase in student attachment to school. There was some evidence that students who participated in the skills building activities felt more confident in their ability to deal with mental health issues and were comfortable talking about such issues with staff and others...

Teachers reported that the initiative gave them the confidence and skills to better support and understand the needs of students, and to identify those children who may need additional support; Teacher and student reports indicated an increase in student help-seeking behaviour as well as an increase in their knowledge, awareness, skills and attitudes towards mental health problems"

(from MindMatters Evaluation Summaries, 2006,

[http://cms.curriculum.edu.au/mindmatters/resources/pdf/evaluation/summary\\_dec06.pdf](http://cms.curriculum.edu.au/mindmatters/resources/pdf/evaluation/summary_dec06.pdf))

A range of evaluation information and papers for Level 1 are available from  
<http://cms.curriculum.edu.au/mindmatters/evaluation/evaluation.htm>

Level 2 is yet to be fully implemented or evaluated.

### Website

<http://cms.curriculum.edu.au/mindmatters/>

Contains

- overview
- Resources
- links to state and territory information
- evaluation
- training information
- discussion forum.

### Contact

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