Information for parents, carers & school staff:

Component 1
A positive school community

Kids Matter

Australian Primary Schools
Mental Health Initiative

Introducing KidsMatter Primary

KidsMatter Primary is the first national mental health promotion, prevention and early intervention initiative specifically developed for primary schools. It has been developed in collaboration with the Australian Government Department of Health and Ageing, *beyondblue: the national depression initiative*, the Australian Psychological Society and Principals Australia (formerly the Australian Principals Associations Professional Development Council) with support from Australian Rotary Health (formerly the Australian Rotary Health Research fund).

Through KidsMatter Primary, schools implement evidence-based strategies to ensure students remain 'connected' to school and families and are equipped with the necessary social and emotional skills to manage ongoing challenges and to relate well to others. It also provides parents, carers and school staff with the necessary knowledge and skills to meet the mental health needs of the children they care for, particularly those experiencing mental health difficulties.

In 2006–2008 KidsMatter Primary was piloted nationally in 101 schools across all States and Territories of Australia, all three education systems (Government, Catholic and Independent) and metropolitan, rural and remote communities.

A comprehensive evaluation was conducted by Flinders University, with findings showing that KidsMatter Primary has a positive impact on schools, children, parents and carers. The full report is available at **www.kidsmatter.edu.au/evaluation**.

July 2010

How to use this resource

Contained in this booklet are resource sheets about KidsMatter Primary and children's mental health, which may be useful for a range of different purposes. They are designed for you to share with parents, carers and other interested people involved with your school. You can distribute these through your newsletter, emails, as handouts or as a display in your school. They will be helpful in assisting parents and carers who have specific questions about issues related to KidsMatter Primary and to children's mental health. It could also provide an opportunity for you and other school staff to learn more and research a particular issue that you might be dealing with at your school.

The resource sheets contained in this booklet provide general information about the initiative with specific details about Component 1: A positive school community. It covers the three target areas; sense of belonging and inclusion, creating a welcoming and friendly environment, and collaboration between students, staff, families and the community in school.

The resource sheets in this booklet provide:

• An overview of the specific topic

• A short story

• Practical ideas for parents, carers and school staff

• Where to go for further information and selected references

You can photocopy sheets from this resource, or visit the KidsMatter Primary website for a PDF version of the documents and to find other helpful links:
www.kidsmatter.edu.au/

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Please feel free to photocopy as needed.

These materials can be downloaded from the KidsMatter Primary website:
www.kidsmatter.edu.au/resources/information-resources/

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Further resources

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Introducing KidsMatter Primary

Do kids matter? Of course! They matter to families, to schools and to the community. These are the groups that KidsMatter Primary wants to bring together to improve children's mental health.

Good mental health is vital for learning and life. Children who are mentally healthy are better able to meet life's challenges. They also learn better and have stronger relationships with teachers, family members and peers.

KidsMatter Primary is a national mental health initiative that has been trialled nationally in over 100 schools since it began in late 2006. KidsMatter Primary has been developed in collaboration with the Australian Government Department of Health and Ageing, *beyondblue: the national depression initiative*, the Australian Psychological Society, and Principals Australia (formerly the Australian Principals Association's Professional Development Council). The trial was also supported by Australian Rotary Health (formerly the Australian Rotary Health Research Fund).

Research has found that up to 14% of Australian children have mental health problems such as anxiety, depression and behaviour problems. Only one out of every four young people with mental health problems receives professional help[1]. Sometimes this is because parents, carers and school staff are unsure whether children need further help. They may not know what kind of help is available or where to get it. In some cases it may be difficult to access child and adolescent mental health services in their area.

[1]Sawyer, M. G., Arney, F. M., Baghurst, P. A., Clark, J. J., Graetz, B. W., Kosky, R. J., et al. (2001). The mental health of young people in Australia: Key findings from the Child and Adolescent Component of the National Survey of Mental Health and Well-Being. *Australian and New Zealand Journal of Psychiatry, 35(6)*, 806-814.

KidsMatter Primary has three major aims:

· To improve the mental health and wellbeing of primary school students

· To reduce mental health problems among students

· To achieve greater support for those students experiencing mental health problems

One in seven Australian children have mental health problems - KidsMatter Primary aims to reduce this.

The four components of KidsMatter Primary

Schools can make a difference to children's mental health and wellbeing by addressing four key areas. Each KidsMatter Primary school will be working on the following four components:

1. A positive school community

Positive relationships at school enable children and families to feel that school is a place where they feel welcome, where they will be listened to and where they can contribute. A positive school community helps children feel that school is a safe place where their needs can be met. Research has shown that when children and families feel connected to the school, children are less likely to develop mental health problems and they succeed better at school.

2. Social and emotional learning for students

Learning how to manage feelings and get on with others is an important part of children's development that helps them learn better and feel good about themselves. Teaching children social and emotional skills as part of the school curriculum gives them tools for coping with emotions, solving problems and learning more effectively.

3. Parenting support and education

If we want to promote children's mental health and wellbeing, it makes sense for families and schools to work closely together. Schools can support parents and carers in their central role of caring for children by making useful information and resources about parenting available and by letting them know where they can get further assistance.

4. Early intervention for students who are experiencing mental health difficulties

When children and families are able to access effective mental health intervention early it can make a significant difference to their lives. KidsMatter Primary schools learn to respond more effectively to children's mental health difficulties by identifying when problems may need follow-up, providing information for families and developing links with mental health services in their local area.

This resource is part of the KidsMatter Primary initiative. We welcome your feedback at **www.kidsmatter.edu.au**

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KidsMatter Primary at your school

Every child is different, every family is different, and every school is different.

This means that each school participating in the KidsMatter Primary initiative needs to look at the mental health needs of its children and families and work out how it can strengthen support for children's mental health. The KidsMatter Primary framework has been designed to help schools build on what they are already doing to promote children's wellbeing.
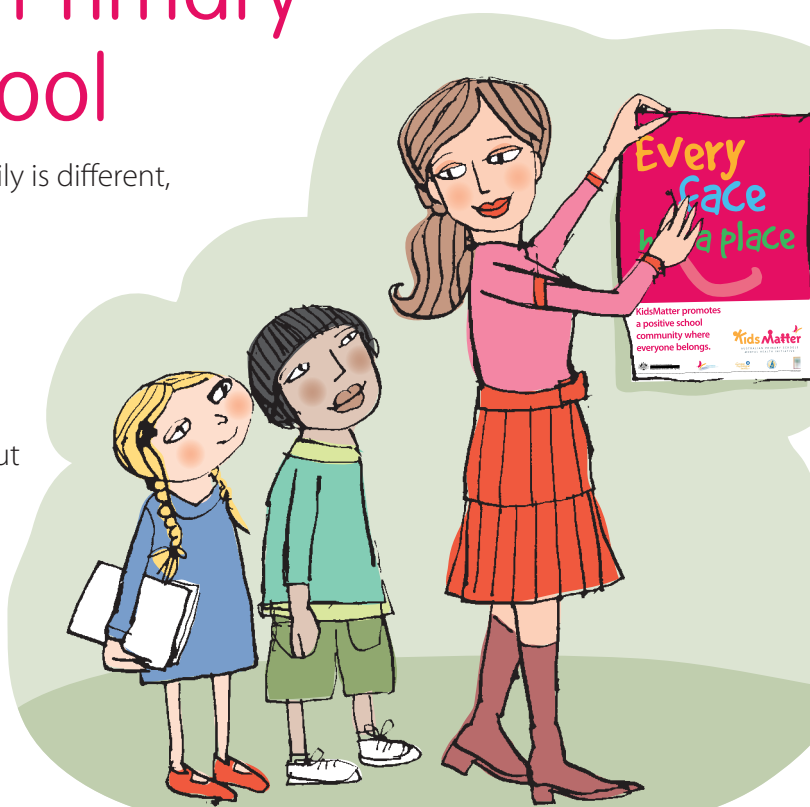
What schools are doing

Each school's KidsMatter Primary Action Team has the job of coordinating all the steps that need to be taken to get KidsMatter Primary going. These include:

- providing information about the KidsMatter Primary initiative to school staff, students and families

- checking what the school already does to support children's mental health

- working out where the gaps are and what can be done

- planning what to do to provide each KidsMatter Primary component at the school

- working out how to do it and getting it going

- seeing how it works and deciding whether anything further is needed.

Each KidsMatter Primary school will be supported by a person trained in the KidsMatter Primary implementation process who will work with the Action Team to plan and implement the four components of KidsMatter Primary. The KidsMatter Primary Implementation Support Person will also provide KidsMatter Primary education to all school staff so they understand what KidsMatter Primary is about and what they can do to support children's mental health.

Together they will be working on ways to make the school a more inviting place for children and families as part of the *positive schools community* component.

The Action Team and school staff will be choosing school programs for teaching *social and emotional skills* as part of the curriculum.

They will be looking into how the school can *support parents and carers* by providing them with information and resources about children's development, children's mental health and parenting.

They will also be finding out more about *children's mental health* and working out how the school can assist children and families to find help when they have concerns about the mental health of students.

Implementation in each State and Territory will be supported by a KidsMatter Primary State and Territory Coordinator.

What parents and carers can do:

Keep informed

- Look for information about the activities your school will be planning for KidsMatter Primary

- Look for regular KidsMatter Primary resource sheets like this one with your newsletter, or at school

- Attend information evenings and social activities at the school whenever you can

- Check out the parenting resources available at your school.

Contribute

- Respond to any school requests for ideas or information

- Let the school know what your needs and wants are by talking to your child's teacher or to members of your school's KidsMatter Primary Action Team

- Talk to other parents/carers about ways the school could support your needs

- Let the school know what skills or talents you would be happy to share.

Further information on the national KidsMatter Primary initiative is available at **www.kidsmatter.edu.au**

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Belonging at school makes a difference

Tommy's Aunt Sue had just arrived for a visit.

"Hi Tommy. You're a big school boy now! How is school?"

"Good," Tommy said.

"What do you like about it?" asked Aunt Sue.

"Friends - Allan and Georgio."

"Great! You've made some friends already."

"I like my teacher too."

Aunt Sue also talked to Tommy's friend, Lulu, who had come over to play.

"What about you Lulu? How do you like school?"

"It's good. If I need the teacher then I have to put up my hand. But if I need help at playtime I can ask Jackie," said Lulu.

"Is Jackie your friend?"

"Jackie's my buddy. She's a big girl."

"What does a buddy do?"

"She helps me if I don't know where to go or other stuff. She helps to look after me 'cos she's big and I'm new."

Starting school is a big change for kids...

Not only do they have to cope with schoolwork and teachers, but they also have to get used to being part of a class and a whole school. A lot more is expected of children when they start school and there are lots more people to get on with. It helps kids to know that there are people at school who will look after them.

Belonging improves mental health and learning

All children need to feel that school is a safe place where people will care about them, where their needs for support, respect and friendship will be met, and where they will be able to get help to work out problems. When these needs are met children develop a sense of belonging at school. Belonging is very important for mental health.

Children who feel that they belong at school are happier, more relaxed and have fewer behaviour problems than others. They also learn better, are more motivated and more successful with schoolwork. Research into children's mental health has found that a sense of belonging at school helps to protect children against mental health problems and improves their learning.

Making friends and having positive relationships with teachers helps children develop a sense of belonging at school. Having older "buddies" to turn to helps younger children feel that school is a place where they can get help if they need it. Looking after younger children encourages caring and helping in older children and helps to reduce conflicts and bullying. These are some of the ways that children's sense of belonging at school can be supported.

More ways schools can help create a sense of belonging

As part of KidsMatter Primary, schools look closely at ways they can continue to build strong positive relationships with all students and families. This includes things like:

- Making the school environment welcoming for all students and families

- Encouraging teachers to get to know all their students and their families

- Identifying ways of improving communication with families

- Making sure that school policies on safety, welfare and discipline are clearly communicated and support a sense of belonging for children and families.

What parents and carers can do

Parents and carers can work with school staff to help create a bridge between home and school. When the adults responsible for children take a positive interest in what happens at school it helps children feel at home with school. It also makes it easier to pick up any problems early when they are easiest to resolve.

- Find out about the school and what your child is learning; participate in information sessions

- Make time to listen to your child tell you about what he or she is doing at school

- Let your child's teacher know if he/she is having difficulties and discuss what kinds of things you can do at home and school to help.

This resource is part of the KidsMatter Primary initiative. We welcome your feedback at **www.kidsmatter.edu.au**

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Why connect at school?

Peter held his daughter Rachel's hand tightly. It was a first for him to be taking Rachel to school. His heart was pounding as they made their way to the classroom. There was the teacher, Ms Lim. She smiled at them, "Welcome Rachel, hello Peter." Another child waved at Rachel. She seemed happy to have a friend to play with. So why was Peter still nervous?

"We're having a morning tea for parents next week. Will you come?" Ms Lim asked. "I'll try," Peter said.

"It all seems different from when I went to school," he thought as headed out the door. "They seem to want parents to be involved. I wonder what else has changed?"

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Schools can be scary places, and not just for children...

Parents and carers also need to feel welcome and at ease to get the most out of being involved with their children's school.

When parents and carers are involved and connected with school, children learn better and have better mental health. This is an important emphasis in schools nowadays that may be very different from what parents or carers remember, or what they may have experienced in another country.

Connecting at school

Being connected at school is not about having mobile phones and computers. It's about knowing you can get support, that you will be listened to, and that you can work together with school staff to help your child learn and develop. Working together to care for children is the best way for schools and parents/carers to support children's mental health.

- *When schools and parents/carers work together*, children find it easier to understand what is expected from them and are better able to manage. They have fewer behaviour problems and do better at school.

- *When parents/carers are connected to school* it helps them get support when they need it. Support may come from talking with teachers or other school staff, or from making connections with other parents. Schools help families to connect through having lots of different activities that parents/carers can get involved in.

- *Being connected to the school helps keep parents informed.* Parents who are informed about what their children are learning at school and about opportunities to get involved are able to support them better at home.

School is a place for adults to make new friends too!

Having opportunities to get to know other parents, to find out how to support your children's learning, or to get involved in class activities can help parents and carers feel connected to the school.

How parents and carers can get connected to the school

- Make contact with your child's teacher and keep in touch. Ask for help if you don't understand something.

- Check for notices that are sent home and keep informed about school activities through the school newsletter.

- Attend information sessions and social activities at the school whenever you can.

- Make contact with other parents at your school: perhaps meet up informally with parents of other children in your child's class, find out about parent social groups that meet at or near the school, or join a parent committee.

- Take an interest in the school council – and consider joining it if you have the time and skills.

KidsMatter Primary has developed a range of resources for parents and carers to help keep them informed about children's mental health and how they can help.

Keep an eye out at your school for further KidsMatter Primary resources that provide information on children's social and emotional learning, on child development and parenting, and on mental health problems in children.

This resource is part of the KidsMatter Primary initiative. We welcome your feedback at www.kidsmatter.edu.au

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What makes a positive school community?

"Mum, Miss Collins told me to be sure you go to the school for the meeting tonight. She says it's very important."

"You're not in trouble, are you Omar? Teachers only ask parents to come to school when there is a problem, don't they?"

"No Mum. She says she is looking forward to meeting you."

When Rasheeda got to the meeting it wasn't like she had expected. Lots of other parents were there and they were talking with each other and with the teacher. It seemed quite friendly. The teacher explained what the children would be learning in school this term and then asked the parents to talk to two different people they didn't know.

Rasheeda felt a bit shy about this. Luckily, the other parents at her table started talking to her. They asked her what school was like in her home country. "Oh, very different!" she told them. "Over there the teacher talks and the children listen. They don't learn in groups. They start early and they go home at lunchtime." The other parents seemed interested.

Miss Collins also spoke with her: "Rasheeda, I wonder if there's anything more you would like to know about how Omar is going or what we are doing at school? We want to be sure you feel welcome, so if there is anything the school can do to help you or Omar settle in, please let us know."

What feeling included is all about

Positive school communities create opportunities for children, families and staff to feel included. They make help and support accessible and find lots of ways to invite people to take up the offer. They build bridges to help everyone benefit from understanding experiences and cultures that may be different to their own.

When children feel included, when they are part of a community that promotes inclusion and respect for everybody, they show more caring and compassion towards others and they feel safer and more secure. They also learn better and have better mental health. In a positive school community *every face has a place*, every voice is valued and everyone has something to contribute.

School communities from around Australia chose care, compassion, respect, understanding and inclusion as important values for children to understand. These are things that children can learn about. The best learning happens when children see the adults around them putting values like these into practice.

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Some ways of showing people they are welcomed and included at school

- Display information, posters, and artwork that reflect the diversity in the school community

- Provide information in appropriate languages, verbally where possible as well as in written form

- Cater to specific needs where possible, e.g., dietary needs, access needs

- Publicly celebrate diverse cultures and diverse families.

Being included and learning to include others are very important for children's social development. Being included promotes belonging and connectedness, which are also key factors for supporting children's mental health.

What parents and carers can do

- Get to know other families, take an interest in others' different backgrounds as well as what you have in common

- Set up a "buddy system" where families who have been at the school for a while buddy up with new families to provide welcome and support

- Encourage children to include and appreciate others' cultural and individual differences.

This resource is part of the KidsMatter Primary initiative. We welcome your feedback at www.kidsmatter.edu.au

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Children with additional needs and mental health

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- Understanding the mental health needs of children with disabilities

- Children with additional needs
  1. Suggestions for parents and carers
  2. Suggestions for school staff

Please feel free to photocopy as needed.

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Supporting kids with additional needs

Lee liked going to school. He liked playing with his friends, doing science, and he especially liked sports on Friday afternoons.

Unfortunately, Lee got sick a lot and sometimes had to go to hospital. Lee had a genetic condition that meant his body didn't always work properly by itself. Lee didn't like having to take special medications and going to doctors all the time.

When Lee came back to school after being sick, he felt nervous and shy. His friends all seemed to have other friends and new games to play. But when the class needed a goalie for soccer, Lee was ready. He loved playing goalie and being part of the team.

Lee's teacher worried that he might get hurt playing soccer. She decided to talk to Lee's parents to find out more about his health and other needs. Together Lee's teacher and parents worked out some important things the school could do to include Lee safely and help meet his social and learning needs.

We are all differently abled

This means that we may need different kinds of support to participate in the community and at school.

When children are affected by disability it restricts them from being able to do some of the things that other children can do.

A chronic or permanent illness or disability may affect children's physical health, as shown in the story above. Other kinds of disabilities may affect children's ability to learn.

By working together families and schools can make sure that children with disabilities are included so that their learning, social and mental health needs are met.

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Your attitude makes a difference

Sometimes people talk about disability in very negative ways. They may think that people with a disability are unintelligent or that they don't have feelings. They may assume that the child can't do certain things and stop them from joining in with others. These types of negative attitudes further restrict children with disabilities from opportunities to learn, grow and be part of the community.

Children with disabilities may have different or additional needs to those of other students. Providing all children with the support they require helps to meet their needs and enables them to grow and achieve with their classmates.

Schools can support students with additional needs by teaching children how to include and respect others.

Some ways schools can work to include students with disabilities:

- Work with parents and carers to meet children's physical, social and emotional needs

- Teach children that everyone has a right to be respected

- Provide opportunities for children with and without disabilities to play and learn together

- Promote cooperative, caring and helpful behaviours for all students.

How parents and carers can help

Parents and carers of children with additional needs can talk to school staff about your children's needs and strengths and about ways to make sure they are included at school. All parents and carers can:

- Encourage your own children to include children of different abilities in their play

- Teach social skills that can help children manage friendships

- Be role models for inclusion by showing through your actions how to be caring and respectful towards others.

What Lee's parents and teacher decided to do:

- Lee's parents and teacher communicated regularly about how Lee was going at school and at home so they could coordinate support.

- Together they decided that Lee's teacher would explain to the class why Lee kept getting sick and encourage his classmates to support him.

- Lee was given the role of classroom leader for science. This helped him and his classmates see what a valuable class member he is.

- Lee's teacher also arranged for one of Lee's health workers to come and talk to school staff about his condition and ways to support him and help him manage at school.

Further information about the mental health needs of children with disabilities is available in the KidsMatter Primary resource sheet on *Children with additional needs* located in this booklet. For information about teaching children how to include and respect others see the KidsMatter Primary resource sheet titled *Learning to value others* and on our website:

www.kidsmatter.edu.au/resources/information-resources/

This resource is part of the KidsMatter Primary initiative. We welcome your feedback at **www.kidsmatter.edu.au**

Contents

Understanding the mental health needs of children with disabilities

In Australia most school-aged children with a disability (89%) attend an ordinary school. However, 63% of these students have been found to experience difficulties at school, while only some receive additional support[1]. Meeting the needs of children with disabilities can be challenging for schools and families. However, effective support for children's mental health and wellbeing involves efforts to meet the social, emotional and learning needs of all children.

Children with disabilities

are often seen as 'different' by other students. When they are excluded from play with other children they may experience social isolation. Such experiences of isolation and exclusion are common contributors to children's mental health difficulties. All children benefit from having positive friendships and feeling a sense of belonging at school. These positive experiences are especially important for children with additional needs.

In this overview we look at how disability and illness affects children and their families, why children with additional needs are at a greater risk of mental health problems and how schools can promote mental health in children who have additional needs. With careful attention and planning, and well coordinated efforts between parents, carers and schools, children with disabilities can be supported to participate and be included at school and have their needs met.

How disability affects children

The term 'disability' refers to a wide range of conditions that in some way limit people's ability to manage everyday living. Different disabilities are often grouped in categories such as intellectual and learning disabilities, psychiatric disabilities, sensory and speech disabilities, chronic illness, acquired brain injury or physical disabilities. People may also be affected by more than one kind of disability.

Having a disability places limits on the things that children can do. It may restrict them from participating in some activities that their classmates do. It is vital to see the whole child, not just the disability or illness, and to offer support for what children with disabilities *can do* so as to reduce restrictions on their participation. This approach helps to build self-confidence and motivation for trying new things. It promotes ways of valuing and including all children.

1. Australian Institute of Health and Welfare, 2006, Disability updates: Children with disabilities, Bulletin, 42, Australian Government

International Classification of Functioning, Disability and Health (ICF)

The World Health Organisation (WHO) uses the following model to show the impact of illness and disability on children and young people.
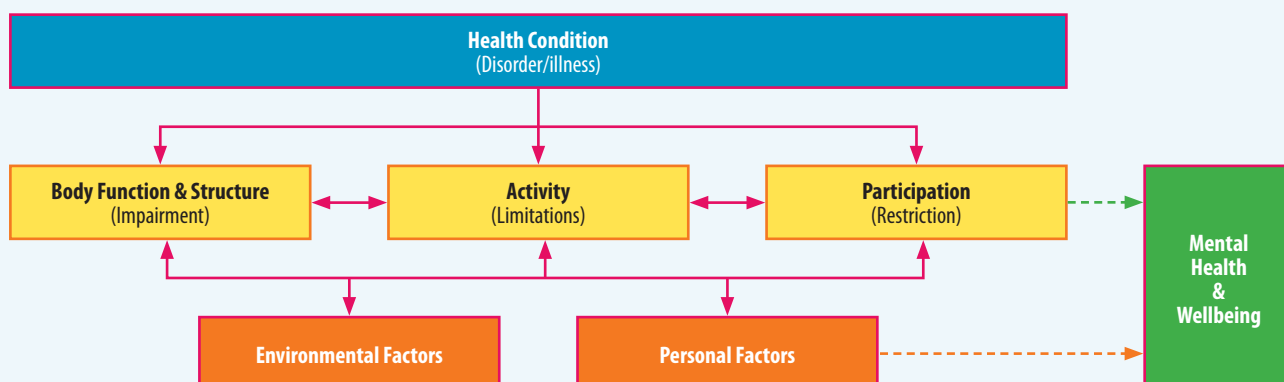
The model describes three key factors that can impact the mental health and wellbeing of children with disabilities or chronic illness. The part shown in blue on the diagram looks at how children's illness or condition impacts on their functioning, that is, their ability to carry out everyday learning and activities. Impairments in the ways a child's body works (due to problems with body function and/or structure) can lead to difficulties in performing particular activities (*activity limitations*) and/or in restrictions to participation in different life situations and events (*participation restrictions*).

The part shown in orange looks at the all the factors other than the illness. These are divided into two different types – those factors to do with the individual child and those that are to do with the environment in which they live. Environmental factors include the level of support and attitudes of people and groups around the child and accommodations made for the child's needs in school and the wider community. These factors can also lead to difficulties with performing activities or restrictions in participating in different life situations.

Families and children with disabilities

A family who cares for a child with a disability or chronic illness is faced with many challenges. These challenges can affect the whole family or particular individuals within it. For example, social isolation often affects families who have a child with a disability. Friends and extended family may find it difficult to understand and support the family's new situation. Time for catching up with friends or going on outings may be severely reduced as family members strive to meet the child's additional needs.

For parents, the challenges often include working out how to access the right services for their child, and dealing with the roller coaster ride of emotions that can accompany parenting a child with a disability. There may be a range of challenges associated with caring for your child's additional needs on a day-to-day basis. These challenges may include the difficult behaviours of some children with disabilities, the need to administer daily treatments, helping children with self-care, (e.g., such as bathing, dressing and eating), dealing with discrimination, and making sure there are facilities that can accommodate your child's needs when you visit places outside the home.

Having a brother or a sister with a disability or serious illness can affect siblings in different ways. They may feel a range of emotions – jealousy for parents spending more time with child with the disability, guilt for complaining about the strains that the child with the disability puts on the family, or joy when their brother or sister accomplishes something new for the first time. Siblings may sometimes get teased about their brother or sister with a disability. Having a break from the responsibility by spending time with friends can be really helpful for siblings. Being able to talk about their feelings and getting support from parents is also really important.

Disability and children's mental health

Research tells us that children with disabilities have a greater chance of developing mental health problems than children without disabilities. For example, 41% of young people with intellectual disability aged 4–18 years had also been diagnosed with emotional and behaviour disorders like depression and Attention Deficit Disorder (ADD)[2]. Young people with Autism were found to have even higher rates of emotional and behavioural difficulties than did those with intellectual disability. High rates of mental difficulties have also been found in young people who are hearing impaired, have cerebral palsy, epilepsy or chronic illness.

The level of the child's impairment and support and attitudes from others are key factors that influence the mental health and wellbeing of children with disabilities. When those around them take effective steps to include children with disabilities and ensure their needs are met, they can help foster positive mental health and wellbeing. However, when this does not occur, mental health difficulties are more likely to develop.

Some children with disabilities may have difficulties in forming and maintaining relationships because the impairments caused by the disability limit or restrict them from participating in everyday activities with their peers. Children with disabilities are also more likely to experience situations that negatively affect their mental health such as bullying, alienation and discrimination.

Some children with disabilities have difficulty in picking up social cues that allow them to participate cooperatively with others. Children with physical disabilities may find it hard to participate in games that other children play. Some children may find it difficult to approach their peers to engage in social activities, particularly if they are aware of being 'different'. As a result, children with disabilities may lose confidence in their ability to make friends or to participate in activities that other children their age enjoy.

The combination of these sorts of factors can lead children with a disability or serious illness to develop mental health difficulties such as low self-esteem, and mental health disorders such as depression. While the disability and resulting impairment is rarely able to be changed, participation restrictions can be addressed, and environmental and personal factors can be improved to support children's wellbeing.

2. Brereton, Einfield & Tonge. (2006). Psychopathology in children and adolescents with Autism compared to young people with intellectual disability, Journal of Autism and Developmental Disorders, 36, 863-870.

Key principles for supporting children with disabilities

Build strengths step-by-step
Breaking tasks into small steps helps to ensure success and supports children's learning. Support children's confidence by emphasising what they can do.

Be an advocate for children with disabilities
Children with disabilities often face discrimination. Making sure that others understand the need to include and value all children benefits the individual child and promotes a caring community.

Focus on the child not the disability
Children's needs should be assessed individually and regularly. Do not to assume that all children with a particular disability have the same problems and needs. An individual child's needs may also change over time.

Develop partnerships
Parents and carers cannot meet the complex needs of children with disabilities alone. Collaborative involvement between families, schools and health professionals helps to ensure the best outcomes for children's development and mental health.

Using the KidsMatter Primary framework to help children with disabilities

1. Creating a positive school community for children with disabilities

Developing a culture of belonging and inclusion at school is especially important for children with disabilities and their families. This involves finding out about the particular needs of children with disabilities, tailoring teaching practices accordingly and collaborating effectively with parents and carers. Schools can also support belonging and inclusion by promoting values of friendship, cooperation and respect, and by ensuring that the school's policies and practices address instances of bullying or harassment quickly and effectively when they occur.

2. Social and Emotional Learning (SEL) for children with disabilities

When planning a SEL curriculum, teachers of children with disabilities should be sure to take into account their particular learning needs. By assessing each child's social and emotional skills individually, a learning plan can be developed to build skills step-by-step. Breaking down complex skills into smaller concrete steps is important for ensuring success. Opportunities for students to practise should be provided for each step. Providing structured peer-to-peer learning activities in which students learn social skills through direct interaction with one another is often particularly helpful. Praise or rewards given for effort and achievement of each step help to consolidate new skills. Any materials used to teach social and emotional skills need to be considered in terms of their appropriateness for use with children with disabilities.

> ⓘ More information on teaching social and emotional skills to children with additional needs can be found on the KidsMatter Primary resource sheet *Children with Autism Spectrum Disorders*.

3. Supporting families of children with disabilities

Having good support is especially important for families of children with disabilities. Schools can provide support by listening to parents and carers, finding out about the particular needs of their children, and collaborating with parents and carers to work out ways to meet them. Schools can also provide relevant information and links to services that can assist families. By facilitating access to support networks, disability advocacy groups, and professional services, schools can help families of children with disabilities get the range of support they require.

4. Early intervention for mental health difficulties

Early intervention aims to ensure that children's disabilities are appropriately identified and that professional help and learning support are provided as soon as possible. Effective early intervention helps to minimise the effects of the disability and provides developmental support. Some disabilities, particularly those involving learning and social difficulties, may only become apparent after children begin school. In these circumstances schools can provide crucial assistance through facilitating children's referral for specialist assessment and services.

Schools can increase the protective factors that support children's mental health by working in partnership with parents, carers and health professionals in order to meet the needs of children with disabilities. By paying attention to the mental health needs of children with disabilities and identifying mental health concerns, school staff can help to facilitate appropriate early intervention for mental health problems.

> ⓘ For more information on children's mental health difficulties see the KidsMatter Primary resource sheet *Children's mental health difficulties and how to get help*. For assisting children with Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder or Autism Spectrum Disorders, see the relevant KidsMatter Primary resource sheet.

Further information about children with additional needs who may be at risk of developing mental health problems is available on our website:

www.kidsmatter.edu.au/resources/information-resources/

This resource is part of the KidsMatter Primary initiative. We welcome your feedback at www.kidsmatter.edu.au

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Children with additional needs
Suggestions for parents and carers

Parenting a child with a disability is often challenging, especially when your child's additional needs are complex and time-consuming. Working together as a family and getting support from relatives, friends and professional services is really important. Finding ways to meet the challenges helps to develop your strengths and can lead to resilient and rewarding family relationships. The following suggestions may be helpful.

Be an advocate for your child

Being an advocate for your child involves letting others know about your child's needs and working with them to find ways to have them met. Parents and carers can be active in this by finding out what kinds of additional support are available for your child and making sure this is provided. This can be hard work at times, so gather allies to help you. Supportive allies may include family, friends, school staff or health professionals who understand your child's difficulties and are committed to meeting the child's needs. There are also a number of disability advocacy groups who can provide valuable support.

Work collaboratively with the school

Discuss your child's needs with school staff and work with them to develop strategies for supporting your child's learning, social and emotional development. Talk with school staff about ways you can collaborate to actively support your child's involvement in school life so that it is a positive and enjoyable experience. For example, you might write a letter to introduce your child to the class. Make sure to communicate regularly with your child's teacher so you can share information, provide updates and continue to work together effectively. One strategy is to use a booklet for daily or weekly communication between home and school. Another approach is to set up regular telephone or meeting times to talk about how your child is managing socially as well as academically.

Teach social and emotional skills

Social relationships can sometimes be difficult for all children. Parents can help by supporting the development of social and emotional skills. Extra help may be needed by children with disabilities if they have been absent from school due to ill health and have to re-engage with others, or if they face intolerance or bullying behaviour. For some children the nature of the disability may mean that learning social skills is difficult and therefore requires lots of guidance and practice. See the KidsMatter Primary resource sheets on social and emotional learning for more information on how you can support children's social and emotional skills.

Provide opportunities for developing friendships

Inviting classmates over to play can be a good way to strengthen a budding friendship. Choose activities or games that your child can do confidently with friends. With younger children, or if your child's social skills are limited, ensure you are available to provide support if needed.

Support siblings

Be open with siblings about the challenges that affect their brother or sister with a disability. Provide important acknowledgement by showing you appreciate their help, but also ensure that they have time and space for themselves. Try to ensure that they have regular 'off-duty' times when they do not have to be responsible for their sibling with a disability. Listening to their feelings and experiences lets them know you are there for them too. Setting aside some regular time to spend with your other children, even if it is brief, helps to maintain positive family relationships.

Get support for you

Parents have needs too. Some people try to be super-parents. It's important to set realistic expectations of what you can and can't do. Take some time out. Spend time with friends, your partner, or alone doing something that you enjoy. Asking friends, family or respite services for help when you need it is a really important coping strategy for families. Talking with other parents or carers of children with disabilities can be very helpful.

This resource is part of the KidsMatter Primary initiative. We welcome your feedback at www.kidsmatter.edu.au

Children with additional needs
Suggestions for teaching staff

Students with disabilities require extra support to ensure their learning and developmental needs are met. A learning environment that emphasises inclusion and cooperation supports all students, both those with and without additional needs. Showing students how to value the differences in others and taking steps to address safety issues such as bullying helps children with disabilities to feel accepted and to belong at school. The following suggestions may also be helpful for school staff.

Be informed: do your research

Knowing about how a particular disability may affect a child helps with creating an inclusive environment and meeting the child's learning, social and developmental needs. Seek advice and support from special education services or from health professionals involved with the child, or seek resources from relevant information services that are backed up by good evidence.

Work collaboratively with parents

Working closely and respectfully with parents and carers is crucial for meeting the complex needs of children with disabilities. Collaborative involvement from parents and carers in the development of individual learning plans for children is especially beneficial for enhancing learning outcomes and building a sense of belonging and connectedness for children and their families. Take special care to ensure that parents and carers of children with disabilities know who they can contact at the school for help and support and what resources are available to them and their child. Maintaining a home-communication booklet or establishing a regular time to 'touch base' is often very helpful for teachers to keep in regular contact with parents and carers and exchanging vital information about the progress and wellbeing of their child.

Build strengths

Children with disabilities require a curriculum that is tailored to their needs. An individual learning plan should be created that addresses children's needs and builds on existing strengths. Working collaboratively with the child to identify learning strengths and interests is important for building engagement in learning and matching needs. Assess what the child can do and build on it step-by-step to ensure success and build confidence. This applies to the academic curriculum and also to development of social and emotional skills.

Promote acceptance and caring

Teaching students about acceptance begins with your own personal beliefs and demonstration of inclusive behaviour in the classroom. Promote respect and inclusion by acknowledging that we are all differently abled and through emphasising cooperative and caring relationships. When introducing a child with a disability to the class, the focus should be on the whole child and their strengths and abilities, rather than highlighting their disability.

Provide opportunities for social support

Social relationships can be difficult for children with disabilities. Provide structured support through teaching social and emotional skills. Setting up a buddy system, or providing for peer tutoring in structured classroom activities are examples of strategies that can be particularly beneficial for children with disabilities – and for promoting cooperation and caring with all children.

Provide opportunities for active participation in school

Children with a disability need to be able to participate in everyday school activities along with their peers. Adaptations to teaching methods, curriculum and the physical environment in the classroom and playground may be required. Extra support staff may be needed so that children with disabilities can participate in school-based excursions.

The Department of Education website for your State or Territory provides policy information and practical guidelines for teaching and supporting children with disabilities at school.

This resource is part of the KidsMatter Primary initiative. We welcome your feedback at **www.kidsmatter.edu.au**

Cultural diversity and children's wellbeing

Contents

- Helping kids connect across cultures

- Why culture matters for children's development and wellbeing

- Supporting children from culturally diverse backgrounds:
  1. Suggestions for parents and carers
  2. Suggestions for teaching staff

Please feel free to photocopy as needed.

These materials can be downloaded from the KidsMatter Primary website:
www.kidsmatter.edu.au/resources/information-resources/

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Further resources

A comprehensive list of resources and references on this and other topics, is available on the KidsMatter Primary website to access and print as required for school staff and parents:

www.kidsmatter.edu.au/resources/information-resources

Helping kids connect across cultures

"Would you like to come to my party?" Ella asked Sefra. "It's on Sunday in two weeks."

"Thanks Ella, I'll ask my parents if I can come," said Sefra.

Sefra wanted to go to Ella's party, but it was at the same time as her weekly language class. Sefra's parents always told her how important it was to keep up her culture and language. Would they let her miss the language class and go to Ella's party instead? Sefra hoped they would.

Though she was excited about the party, Sefra also felt nervous. Not everyone who might be going was as good a friend as Ella. Some children in Sefra's class teased her because she didn't look or speak like they did. They stopped when Ella told them not to be mean, but it still hurt.

Sefra hoped the other children at the party would be friendly and play with her.

Being part of two cultures

Being part of two cultures can get complicated at times. Children may find there are differences in values and expectations. Sometimes there might be difficult choices. When different sets of expectations don't match, it can make it hard for children to feel like they fit in.

In addition, children who are seen as different are sometimes not respected by others. Being teased or bullied for being different makes 'fitting in' especially difficult. When this occurs it can lead children to feel anxious and isolated. This can have very negative mental health effects.

By working together, schools and families can help children from all cultural backgrounds to understand, respect and appreciate cultural differences.

When adults behave in ways that are open and accepting it can help to teach children to respect and embrace cultural differences.

Everybody needs to feel accepted, respected and included. Feeling welcome and at home in both cultures is very important for positive mental health.

Parenting is rarely easy.

Being a parent in a new country has added challenges. Just as it can be difficult for children to learn to be part of two cultures, learning to parent 'between' cultures can be stressful for families too. Taking a 'best of both' approach can help you work out ways to adapt your parenting to suit your child's needs, and your own.

Australia is home to people from many different cultural backgrounds. Creating a positive sense of community for everyone involves learning to understand and appreciate others' values, experiences and beliefs so that together we can build a caring and accepting society that supports mental health and wellbeing. In a positive school community…

Every face has a place

Things parents and carers can do

- Tell your children stories that help to share a sense of pride in your culture.

- Talk to children about the Australian cultural values you appreciate. This will help them see how they can be part of both cultures.

- Seek support and advice from people you trust. Talking with relatives and friends who understand your values can help you think through the different problems you might face as a parent.

- You can contact your child's school if you have any questions about your child or their education. Schools welcome questions from parents and carers.

- Take an active interest in activities at your child's school. Get to know your child's teacher and look for ways to get involved at school, for example, by helping in the classroom or by joining parent working groups.

- If children complain of being teased or bullied be sure to tell your child's teacher so the school can take action to stop it.

Things schools can do

- Provide opportunities for students to express and listen to different cultural perspectives.

- Ensure students know that racist comments and behaviour are not acceptable.

- Talk to parents, carers and families about their cultural values and needs.

- Respect individual differences - don't assume that membership of a cultural group means everyone has the same values and needs.

- Invite family members into the classroom to observe and participate.

- Provide information and school correspondence in appropriate languages for parents and carers.

- Work with interpreters or multilingual aids to ensure accurate communication with parents or carers whose English language skills are limited.

- Encourage social opportunities for parents, carers and families to support and learn from each other.

- Link with local agencies who can provide culturally appropriate support and assistance.

For information about teaching children how to include and respect others see the KidsMatter Primary resource sheet titled *Learning to value others* and on our website:

www.kidsmatter.edu.au/resources/information-resources

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Contents

Why culture matters for children's development and wellbeing

Cultural diversity and children's wellbeing

Australia is one of the world's most culturally diverse societies

Census figures show that 2.5% of the population is Indigenous Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander. 24% of the Australian population were born overseas. 26% of Australians have at least one parent who was born overseas, and the number of languages spoken at home by Australians is more than 400 (ABS figures 2006 – www.abs.gov.au). Schools in Australia therefore serve students and families from many different cultural backgrounds.

Humans are cultural beings. We learn to communicate and understand our world through sharing language, customs, behaviours, beliefs and values. Our cultural experiences and values shape the ways we see ourselves and what we think is important. Cultural perspectives influence how we parent, how we understand children and how we educate them.

This overview looks at influences related to cultural diversity that may affect the social and emotional development and wellbeing of children from Culturally and Linguistically Diverse (CALD) backgrounds. Some of the issues discussed may also be relevant to Indigenous children and families. However, to adequately address the mental health and wellbeing of Indigenous children and their families, a more specific understanding of their particular cultural needs and circumstances is required.

What is cultural and linguistic diversity (CALD)?

Cultural and linguistic diversity (CALD) refers to people who identify with particular groups based on their birthplace, ethnicity, language, values, beliefs or world views. This does not mean that everyone from a particular cultural group will hold exactly the same values or do things in the same way. Showing support for cultural diversity involves talking with people to find out how best to include them and respect their cultural needs.

Culture and belonging

Research in many different cultures confirms the importance for all children of developing secure emotional connections with the adults who care for them. However, the ways that parents and carers go about developing these connections vary based on cultural beliefs about parenting and child development, as well as individual preferences and capacities. For example, in some cultures children are expected to always listen and respect their elders, while in other cultures children are taught from an early age to speak up for themselves.

Children's connection to their culture develops as they learn the rules and standards that govern social relationships for their cultural group. Having a strong sense of their own cultural history and traditions helps children build a positive cultural identity for themselves. This also supports children's sense of belonging and self-esteem.

To be able to also get on well in another culture children (and adults) need to understand and respond to different expectations. It can be complex, and sometimes confusing, for children from diverse cultural backgrounds to fit within two cultures. Children may feel that they have to choose one culture or the other, even though they have to live in both.

The stress of experiencing cultural conflict can have negative impacts on children's wellbeing. However, when children have a positive sense of belonging to both cultures, their emotional wellbeing is supported and so is their learning.

Particular challenges that may affect children and families from CALD backgrounds

Children and families from CALD backgrounds may face a range of challenges as they find their way in the broader Australian society. The following challenges are common.

Migration and resettlement

Resettling in a new country or into a new place involves finding housing, employment, schools, social connections and services. Lack of knowledge about how things work in the new environment and communication difficulties can make the challenge of resettlement all the more stressful. Family, friends and others who would normally provide support may have been left behind in the move. Feelings of loneliness, isolation or concern for those left behind can occur. These difficulties affect both children and adults.

Language and communication

Language can be a major barrier for newly arrived families. Lacking English language skills or being unfamiliar with Australian English can undermine confidence, make finding a job or learning at school more difficult, and contribute to social isolation. Concern about language skills can make communication with schools and other services more difficult for parents and carers.

Communication issues can arise in other ways as well. When the experiences, customs and beliefs of children and families from different cultural backgrounds are not recognised or valued, it can lead to miscommunication. For example, making eye contact when speaking to someone else is considered a sign of respect in mainstream Anglo-Australian culture; however, in some other cultures respect is shown by lowering eyes or looking away.

Effects of trauma

When migration is prompted by particularly stressful experiences, as is the case for refugees, there can be additional challenges for resettlement and wellbeing. Traumatic experiences may have occurred through being exposed to violence, war or torture. Children and families may have lived under threat and in fear, they may have witnessed the deaths of relatives or friends, or experienced hardship and danger in coming to Australia. Some have received harsh treatment in immigration detention on their arrival here.

These kinds of highly stressful circumstances remain difficult long after the events that caused them. Some of the common reactions that may occur in children who have been through traumatic events include increased fear and anxiety which may lead to clingy behaviour, re-experiencing the trauma when feeling threatened, or difficulty in trusting and connecting with others. Such difficulties may sometimes lead to extreme independence and mistrust of others and/or social isolation. Refugees may have strong feelings of shame and guilt about past events. For some children who have been traumatised feelings of pain and anger can also lead to behavioural problems. Difficulties associated with past trauma and resettlement can affect learning and school performance of children from refugee backgrounds.

Discrimination and racism

Being subjected to racist and discriminatory attitudes is a problem for many people from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds in Australia. This is especially an issue for visible minority groups, such as those who look different from the majority (white) population. Both overt racism (e.g., name-calling and bullying) and covert racism (e.g., ignoring or otherwise disadvantaging those from diverse backgrounds) can leave children (and adults) feeling marginalised and disempowered, with negative impacts on wellbeing. The effects of racism and discrimination make resettlement more difficult for families, and create undue stress and social disadvantage. Racism increases children's sense of difference and vulnerability by devaluing their culture and making them feel unwelcome.

> It takes time and effort for families and individuals to work out how to keep their own cultural traditions and at the same time understand and find a place within the wider Australian culture.
>
> The accompanying KidsMatter Primary resource, *Supporting children from culturally diverse backgrounds – Suggestions for parents and carers*, provides a number of ideas that CALD parents and carers may find helpful.

Parenting across cultures

Cultural differences in parenting practices can lead to tension or misunderstanding both within families and between families and others. Common differences relate to the ways affection is shown to children, attitudes to physical punishment, and how much emphasis is placed on family responsibility compared with promoting children's independence. Some cultural practices have very strict codes of behaviour according to age and/or gender.

When children from CALD backgrounds are exposed to different cultural values, parents and carers may find that practices that once worked in the home culture may no longer be effective. Some practices, for example physical punishment, may no longer be appropriate. This can create confusion and miscommunication, and may also become a source of family conflict and tension, especially as children grow into the teenage years. Parents and carers may be concerned about children losing their values and cultural identity through the influences promoted in the media, at school, or through contact with children from different backgrounds. Questions of cultural identity are common themes in inter-generational conflict within CALD families as they try to maintain their own cultural values while adapting to the range of cultural influences found in the wider community.

The role of schools

Schools play a central role in the lives of students and their families. The school experiences of children and families from CALD backgrounds shape their encounters with Australian society and have significant effects on their sense of inclusion or exclusion and subsequent quality of engagement within the wider community.

In order to meet the learning, social and wellbeing needs of students and their families from diverse backgrounds, it is important for schools to understand their particular circumstances. These may include migration, refugee and resettlement experiences as well as different cultural values and styles of communicating and learning. Schools can play a critical role in supporting and engaging students and families from diverse backgrounds. They also have a significant responsibility to promote values of mutual respect and understanding, and to effectively address problems of discrimination when they occur in the school setting.

By actively promoting the needs and interests of students and families from culturally diverse backgrounds and building relationships of trust and understanding with parents and carers, schools can make a positive difference to CALD students' mental health and wellbeing. Having a positive sense of belonging in both settings helps children move between cultures with greater ease and confidence and increases their motivation and engagement at school.

Cultural competence and children's wellbeing

Cultural competence begins from the understanding that we are all influenced by the different social, educational and organisational cultures in which we live and participate. Recognising that ours is not the only way of seeing or doing things opens us to learning about other perspectives. Exploring differences as well as similarities in our cultural expectations improves our capacity to understand and relate to others and helps to build social cohesion.

One cultural expectation that may be new to many CALD parents and carers is the idea that parents, carers and school staff can work together to support children's learning and development. Some cultures (and some families) emphasise relying on family rather than outsiders to resolve difficulties. This can make parents and carers reluctant to discuss their concerns about children with school staff. Families may also be structured differently. For example, in some families grandparents, aunts or uncles may be centrally involved in decisions affecting children.

Developing effective cross-cultural relationships

Developing effective cross-cultural relationships for supporting children's wellbeing requires careful listening and flexibility. It is particularly important to recognise that there may be very different understandings of mental health and a range of ways of expressing difficulties. Children's emotional or behavioural issues must be considered in their cultural context and discussed in ways that are non-judgmental and non-stigmatising.

Further information about children from culturally diverse backgrounds and children's mental health problems including KidsMatter Primary is available on our website:

www.kidsmatter.edu.au/resources/information-resources

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Supporting children from culturally diverse backgrounds
Suggestions for parents and carers

> **Parenting across cultures has particular challenges.** Sometimes children and their parents or carers have different ideas about how to balance the values and expectations of two cultures. When children have a sense of belonging to both cultures it supports positive mental health and wellbeing. The following list of suggestions may assist you and your children to achieve a positive sense of belonging in both cultures.

Celebrate your own culture
Developing a positive sense of cultural identity supports children's self-esteem and their sense of belonging. By telling stories and sharing customs you can help children to connect with their cultural heritage. It is important to talk to children in ways that are appropriate for their age and interest. Knowing and taking pride in their own heritage can help children feel comfortable and secure with their identity.

Build social networks
Friendships and social networks are important both for children and for families, helping them to feel part of the community. Making connections with local people is important for feeling welcomed and building a sense of belonging in Australian society. Your connections may be with your own cultural group or you may prefer to build your connections with another cultural group. Your children's school is often a great meeting point for parents and carers where long-term friendships develop.

Get to know your child's school
Contact your child's school if you have any questions about your child or his or her education. School staff can discuss with you how the school works and what you can do to support your child's learning and social relationships. When you participate in school events it helps your children feel more comfortable and positive at school. Knowing your child's teacher and other key staff at the school makes it easier for you to approach them if a problem does occur.

Learn about parenting in Australia
Some parenting practices may be quite different in different cultures. Finding out about parenting practices and expectations in Australia, including things like legal requirements of parents and supports available, can help you work out the best ways to manage problems that may arise. Many families from Culturally and Linguistically Diverse (CALD) backgrounds find that blending the best parenting ideas and practices from both cultures is very helpful. Several parenting organisations offer specific assistance and advice on cross-cultural parenting.

Be flexible
Children can feel confused or torn when the values and behaviours expected at home seem to be different from what happens with their friends. It is helpful to be flexible when deciding on rules and expectations so you can take into account any difficulties your children may be facing. Listening to your children and talking openly about the concerns they may have regarding different expectations for school and home means that solutions can be found through understanding and compromise.

Be patient
Adjusting to a new life after migration has lots of challenges for both families and children. Establishing a secure and caring home environment helps to provide children with a sense of stability. Finding people who understand you and can support you as you settle in is really important. It is also often very important to access the help that is available through government agencies, community organisations and English language programs.

Seek support
Getting help in your own language can be especially important at times of stress or when dealing with complex issues. Many community organisations around Australia provide specific support and advice from a cultural perspective. Some organisations offer regular meetings or short courses to help with parenting or other family issues.

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Supporting children from culturally diverse backgrounds
Suggestions for teaching staff

School staff have a very significant role to play in supporting children and families from Culturally and Linguistically Diverse (CALD) backgrounds. When staff are welcoming and approachable it helps to build a sense of belonging and trust for students and their families. Cultivating a culture of respect, caring and inclusion of difference amongst the whole school community is very important for supporting positive mental health and reducing school-based risk factors for children from CALD backgrounds. Read the list below for specific suggestions on how to do this.

Get to know your community

Gather information about who is in your school community. Accurate knowledge about the diversity of families in your school community and their needs and preferences for receiving information will help guide school policies and practices around communication. Remember also that there is diversity within cultural groups. It is most important to connect with and understand individual families and their needs.

Communicate effectively

Ensuring that staff have an understanding of the cultural backgrounds, preferred communication styles and concerns of CALD students and families is very important for overcoming communication difficulties. Check that school correspondence, displays and activities are geared to including and supporting the cultural backgrounds of all families. Classroom practices may need to be adapted to enhance communication between teaching staff and students, and amongst students from different cultural backgrounds. When selecting social and emotional learning programmes for your school it is important to consider their appropriateness for different cultural groups and to adapt them accordingly.

Engage parents and carers

By providing materials in appropriate languages and offering professional interpreting services, schools and other organisations can help to break down communication barriers for families and encourage them to be involved with the school. Contacting parents and carers prior to, or early on during the new school year may also help to involve them. Having an "open door" policy at designated times may make parents and carers more inclined to approach teachers about issues or questions they may have regarding their child. Ensuring that contact is made with carers may be especially important for children whose parents may have died or been lost in traumatic circumstances.

Celebrate diversity

Teachers can encourage a positive school environment for children of CALD backgrounds by inviting diversity into the classroom. Provide a range of opportunities for children and their parents and carers, to share their cultural stories in an atmosphere of respect and acknowledgement. Mutual respect across cultures involves being open to learning different ideas and approaches and appreciating the enrichment this provides. Teachers should be aware of differences in parenting styles between cultures and be sensitive to the issues faced by parents from newly emerging populations. In this way, clashes between the school and cultural values imposed by parents and carers may be minimised.

Build connections

Being safe and feeling safe can take time to achieve. Connecting with others who have been through a similar experience provides opportunities to talk about difficulties and can help to reduce isolation. Culture-specific community organisations may be especially well-placed to provide sensitive support during resettlement. Specialist mental health services are also available in different states to provide assistance to refugees from diverse cultural backgrounds.

Counter racism and discrimination

Racism can be countered by identifying and challenging the kinds of practices that disadvantage or discriminate against those of different racial or cultural backgrounds and promoting inclusive practices in their place. It is very important for schools to encourage and support children to take positive action against discrimination and bullying by speaking up and reporting incidents. Complaints about racism and harassment should be taken seriously and addressed promptly when they occur.

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Further resources

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