



Family-School
& Community
Partnerships
Bureau



Family School Partners

August 2010

Mental Health

In this edition we're going to explore how parents and schools can - and must - work together to build, maintain and nurture our children's social and emotional well-being, their mental health. It's a huge topic, and we're not aiming to be comprehensive, but we want to give you an idea of what the issues are and what parents and schools can do to meet their children's needs. We'll refer to many sources of good information, each of which warrants much further exploration.

Understanding the Issues

Social and emotional wellbeing indicators

Australian Research Alliance for Children and Youth

Why is there so little nationally and internationally comparable data on the social and emotional wellbeing of children and young people?

How can Australia begin to benchmark the wellbeing of its own children and young people without such basic information?



With the support of the Fred P. Archer Trust, which is managed by the Trust Company, and in partnership with the Australian Institute of Health and Welfare (AIHW) and UNICEF Australia, ARACY commissioned two research papers to address what is meant by social and emotional wellbeing for children (those aged 0–12 years) and young people (those aged 13–25 years) and to identify possible key national measures / indicators based on these constructs. This work also considers the policy and practice implications of analysing and reporting on such data.

The new emphasis on whole-of-child reporting has complemented more longstanding series of reports on issues such as educational achievement in Australia and internationally (OECD, 2001, 2004, 2007). It is also in step with broader international efforts to develop wide-ranging indexes of child and youth wellbeing (Ben-Arieh, 2008; UNICEF, 2007), and with efforts to develop more comprehensive measures of human progress that go beyond national income statistics.

This is evidenced by the recent 3rd OECD World Forum, held in Korea in 2009, at which one of the main themes was new measures of social progress that go beyond GDP, including indicators of happiness, life satisfaction, mental health, subjective wellbeing, and social and emotional wellbeing.

The report on the '*Conceptualisation of social and emotional wellbeing for children and young people, and policy implications*' is available at [http://www.aracy.org.au/cmsdocuments/SEWB%2007_071%20\(2\).pdf](http://www.aracy.org.au/cmsdocuments/SEWB%2007_071%20(2).pdf).

Project News: http://www.aracy.org.au/index.cfm?pageName=SEWB_Project_News

Read more: http://www.aracy.org.au/index.cfm?pageName=Social_and_emotional_wellbeing_indi

Our Children, Our Future

The Children's Mental Health Coalition



The Goal: To give Australian children a better start in life by ensuring access to mental health services from early childhood.

The Facts: Population statistics: There are 4.1 million children in Australia aged to 14 years, representing 19% of the population. On average, 20% of children in modern societies have their lives harmed by mental health problems:

- Children with mental health problems could fill the Concert Hall at the Sydney Opera House on 300 consecutive nights (almost a year!)

9% of Australian children have a long term mental health problem. Looking only at these 234,600 children:

- They would fill the Concert Hall at the Sydney Opera House on 88 consecutive days (12.5 weeks)

Most of these children with chronic mental health problems are not receiving services. The cost and burden falls on children, their families and society when these children fail.

The Solution: Invest in prevention and early intervention for children's mental health; this will create an economic dividend through making more productive citizens and reducing pressure on justice, hospital and child protection services.

Children's mental health services are the least well funded part of the mental health system. More investment, in early identification and treatment services is crucial to reducing the overall rate of mental illness in our community.

Read more: http://www.ranzcp.org/images/stories/ranzcp-attachments/Home/Our_children_our_future_final.pdf

Misleading claims in the mental health reform debate

Melissa Raven and Jon Jureidini, Online Opinion, 9 August 2010

Since Professor Patrick McGorry was appointed 2010 Australian of the Year, mental health has had a remarkably prominent public profile.

GetUp has played a major role, with a campaign promoting McGorry's call for radical reform, particularly in relation to youth mental health, arguing that early intervention should be the norm. Many Australians have enthusiastically responded, donating money, signing a petition, and sending faxes to politicians.

A further impetus came when Adjunct Professor John Mendoza dramatically resigned as Chair of the National Advisory Council on Mental Health (or, as he terms it, "head advisor to the Rudd Government on mental health") and joined the GetUp campaign. Mendoza endorses many of McGorry's demands, including a national rollout of headspace youth mental health centres and the Early Psychosis Prevention and Intervention Centre (EPPIC).

McGorry and Mendoza are adept at capturing media attention, using emotive statistics and feel-good messages as powerful soundbites. However, few people seem to have critically examined their claims, which have been widely accepted at face value.

We have examined several claims, and found them seriously problematic. Not only is there a high degree of spin in the rhetoric but also there is misrepresentation of evidence.

Two claims are analysed here. In each case the evidence cited to justify the claim, although relevant, does not support it, and other evidence challenges the validity of the claim.

Read more: <http://www.onlineopinion.com.au/view.asp?article=10793>

ANXIETY

Program developed to treat children's anxiety

Lindy Kerin, ABC News, Jun 29, 2010

Child health experts estimate that about one in 10 children suffer from anxiety, ranging from extreme shyness to an irrational fear of global problems.

Experts says the issue can even occur among preschoolers.

Macquarie University researchers in Sydney are treating children as young as two and say anxiety is nowhere near as well understood as illnesses like depression.

It is estimated that about 11 per cent of children suffer from anxiety compared to 3 per cent who suffer from depression.

Macquarie University PhD student Elizabeth Lau has set up a 10-week program at the Macquarie University Centre to treat preschoolers suffering anxiety.

The program focuses on teaching parents how to respond to their children's behaviour.

"At three-and-a-half [years old] I've had kids who have said 'I'm afraid mum might die'," Ms Lau said.

Ms Lau says the moods of parents can have a big impact on how a child develops.

"One thing we find is that parents feel a lot more confident, a lot more empowered in terms of number one, 'I know how to respond to my child', and 'I know I'm doing the right thing' and I think that's really important for parents."

Read more: <http://www.abc.net.au/news/stories/2010/06/29/2940429.htm>

Children and Social Anxiety

Social Phobia tends to start during adolescence. According to Montgomery (1995), approximately 40% of social phobias start before the age of 10 and approximately 95% before the age of 20. The early onset of social phobia can have serious consequences for a child's social and academic development.

If left untreated, social anxiety can lead to increased risk of: alcoholism, drug abuse, developing further psychological problems and even suicide. Therefore, it is important not to dismiss a child's anxiety by saying they'll grow out of their excessive shyness /self consciousness as many will not without (1) appropriate assistance from other people such as parents, other family members and teachers and (2) treatment by a mental health professional.

- How do I know if my child has social anxiety?
- What Can Teachers Do To Help The Socially Anxious Child?
- What parents can do to help the socially anxious child and/or adolescent?

Read more: http://www.socialanxietyassist.com.au/children_anxiety.shtml

FRIENDS for Life

The world's leading school-based anxiety prevention program.

FRIENDS for Life helps children and teenagers cope with feelings of fear, worry, and depression by building resilience and self-esteem and teaching cognitive and emotional skills in a simple, well-structured format.



Used in schools and clinics throughout the world, FRIENDS is the only childhood anxiety prevention program acknowledged by the World Health Organization for its 12 years of

comprehensive evaluation and practice.

It has proved effective for up to 6 years after initial exposure. The program is currently used in schools and clinics throughout Australia, New Zealand, Canada, the United Kingdom, Ireland, Germany, Finland, the Netherlands, the United States, Mexico, Norway, and Portugal.

- Teacher Guides
- Evidence Base

Read more: <http://www.friendsinfo.net/>

BIPOLAR DISORDER

Educational Adjustments - Bipolar Disorder

What is bipolar disorder?

Unlike many adults with bipolar disorder, whose episodes tend to be more clearly defined, students with the illness often experience very fast mood swings between depression and mania many times within a day. Children with mania are more likely to be irritable and prone to destructive tantrums than to be overly happy and elated. Mixed symptoms are also common in young adolescents with bipolar disorder. Older adolescents who develop the illness may have more classic, adult-type episodes and symptoms.

Bipolar disorder in children and adolescents can be hard to tell apart from other problems that may occur in these age groups. For example, while irritability and aggressiveness can indicate bipolar disorder, they also can be symptoms of attention-deficit hyperactivity disorder, depression, anxiety, conduct disorder, oppositional defiant disorder, or other types of mental health difficulties more common among adults such as schizophrenia.

Students with bipolar disorder may be prone to drug use, which can aggravate symptoms. Furthermore, drug use alone can mock many of the symptoms of bipolar disorder, making an accurate diagnosis difficult.

- Educational Implications
- Possible Educational Adjustments
- Files to download
- Links to web sites

Read more: <http://www.learningplace.com.au/deliver/content.asp?pid=34812>

DEPRESSION

beyondblue Schools Intervention



The beyondblue schools Intervention was developed collaboratively by the University of Queensland, the Victorian Centre for Adolescent Health, the South Australian Department of Education and Children's Services and beyondblue.

It draws on national and international research and the groundbreaking work conducted with schools in Australia in the past decade. The intervention aims to buffer the effects of adverse life events by building protective factors within the individual, through the teaching of life skills, and within the environment by enhancing the capacity of schools to provide a supportive and safe environment.

- Classroom Curriculum
- Supportive Environments
- Pathways for Care and Education
- Community Forums

Read more: http://www.beyondblue.org.au/index.aspx?link_id=4.64

Black Dog Institute

Youth programs

One in five adolescents are affected by mood disorders, however with increased education and awareness, early detection and through developing resilience skills, our youth education program aims to reduce stigma and achieve positive outcomes for all young people.



The book 'Navigating Teenage Depression: A guide for parents and professionals', innovative research programs and educational presentations are some of the key strategies for the prevention & management of mood disorders in youth.

The Black Dog Institute offers a range a programs for young people, their parents and school staff, including:

- INSIGHT School Presentations
- Understanding Depression and Resilience
- Parent Education
- Education for School Staff

Read more: <http://www.blackdoginstitute.org.au/public/communityprograms/youthprograms.cfm>

EATING DISORDERS

Eating Disorders

Better Health Channel

Eating disorders can affect children. More than half of Australian primary school age children want to lose weight. Knowing the risk factors and early warning signs in this age group can help to prevent the development of eating disorders.

Eating disorders are rare in children under the age of eight, even though many children are fussy eaters or have eating issues.

Eating disorders are really about feelings and could signal that a child is having emotional, social or developmental difficulties. Often the eating disorder develops as a way for a child to feel in control about what's happening in their life.

The main types of eating disorder include:

* Anorexia nervosa – characterised by restricted eating, loss of weight (to an unhealthy level) and a fear of putting on weight.

* Bulimia nervosa – periods of bingeing on high-kilojoule foods (often in secret), followed by attempts to compensate by over exercising, vomiting or periods of strict dieting. The bingeing is accompanied by feelings of shame and being 'out of control'.

* Binge eating disorder – similar to bulimia but without the compensating behavior such as vomiting or over exercising.

- A range of influences
- Personality factors
- Social or environmental factors
- Boys and girls
- Early warning signs
- How parents and teachers can help

Read more: http://www.betterhealth.vic.gov.au/bhcv2/bhcarticles.nsf/pages/Eating_disorders_children

Proposed National Strategy on Body Image

National Advisory Group on Body Image

The Advisory Group was established by the Minister for Youth, the Hon Kate Ellis MP, to provide advice to Government on an approach to address the growing problem of body image dissatisfaction in the general community, particularly among young people.

The National Advisory Group on Body Image recommends that the Australian Government:

- makes the positive body image checklist available as a resource for schools to adopt.
- considers the issue of body image in the development of the national curriculum, within the health and physical education curriculum.
- collaborates with state and territory government and non-government education authorities to encourage schools to address body image, through:
 - the use of short-term school curricula.
 - funding for reputable organisations to deliver body image initiatives within schools.
 - informing teachers of appropriate and best practice opportunities to incorporate body image issues within teaching and learning.



The National Advisory Group on Body Image recommends that the Australian Government:

- provide appropriate information to parents and carers to assist them in fostering positive body image messages in the home.
- note the impact of maternity on body image and explore the adequacy of current efforts in this area.

Read more: <http://www.youth.gov.au/Documents/Proposed-National-Strategy-on-Body-Image.pdf>

RESILIENCE

Resilience and School Curriculum

Kathy Walker, Early Life Foundations



THE term resilience refers to the ability to bounce back, to try again. It is a term used often these days in reference to helping children to acquire skills in giving things a go, taking risks, developing skills in adapting to new situations, dealing with disappointments and to continuing to try rather than give up.

Resilience has become popular with many schools and there are several programs that provide opportunities for children to learn about and practise the skills of resiliency. Phrases such as "bounce back, you can do it" are used within these programs.

It is interesting to reflect upon the notion of, and development of, resilience. Resiliency involves a set of skills and strategies, attitudes and perspectives that are more easily acquired through daily practice and experience than simply having a program or lesson at school. In fact, there is some belief that for very young children in their early primary years there is limited advantage in undertaking a resilience program. Rather, resiliency is best acquired through ordinary experiences.

The family home, the playground and the classroom provide daily experiences where children learn about their feelings, responses to others, not always having what they want, knowing how to work alongside others (even if you don't always like everyone) and how to respond to disappointments such as, "she doesn't want to be my friend any more".

The reality in life is that there will always be times of challenge, disappointment, anger, frustration, sadness. There will be things we can do easily and things that are difficult to achieve. Learning how to deal with these experiences, and understanding that sometimes some things are not fixable, is an important part of life.

Read more: <http://earlylife.com.au/info/node/214>

Primary School Teachers' Ability to Recognise Resilience in their Students

Australian Educational Researcher

This study found that, despite an obvious lack of professional development in the area of resilience, teachers' theoretical knowledge of resilience was sound. It also found that teachers had a perceived level of confidence in their ability to identify associated protective factors and to assist children in building resilience.

However, teachers' ability to identify students who had or who lacked these protective factors was problematic. This finding suggests a gap between teachers' theoretical knowledge of resilience and the practical application of this knowledge in the classroom.

One of the fundamental findings in this study is that the majority of teachers have not been involved in any professional development about resilience. Two of the three teachers involved in professional development wrote that they had not attended programmes that directly covered these areas of resilience.

Instead, components of resilience were embedded in programs related to bullying, behaviour management, stress or Child Protection Policy.

This nesting of resilience issues in professional development programmes is of concern because teachers may not readily identify resilience or may attribute some components as being part of other broader issues such as bullying.

Read more: <http://www.aare.edu.au/aer/online/0701c.pdf>

TECHNOLOGY

The Psychiatric Issues Behind Cyberbullying

Dr. Harold Koplewicz, The Huffington Post, 28 July 2010

Children and teens want to be normal, and when they struggle with psychiatric issues, they tend to have difficulty "fitting in." Differences make these kids vulnerable to bullying experiences and attendant emotional turmoil. And those who experience cyberbullying may be at even higher risk for mental health problems. A study forthcoming in the Archives of Suicide Research found that youth who have been victims of cyberbullying are almost twice as likely as victims of traditional bullying to have attempted suicide.

Whatever more research can show us, it's clear that to effectively deal with cyberbullying, we need to address the psychiatric problems that both motivate it and are exacerbated by it.

Peer aggression is never normal. While it doesn't cause a child to develop a psychiatric disorder, it is a red flag for preexisting mental health problems and can contribute to depression, low self-esteem, irritability and feelings of hopelessness. Bullies usually have problems with impulse control and hyperactivity. Many of them have Attention-Deficit/Hyperactivity Disorder (ADHD) and a co-occurring conduct disorder.

Victims, on the other hand, are more likely than their peers to feel low self-worth and experience depression. Their feelings of low self-worth can be compounded when any form of bullying occurs, but their emotional response to cyberbullying may be especially devastating.

Since cyberbullying occurs in virtual space (and without physical contact), victims can experience the double anguish of being powerless to stop their harassment and unable to prove who's harassing them. As for cyberbullies, they can be more vicious, their feelings of empathy minimized, since they don't see the impact of their meanness.

Read more: http://www.huffingtonpost.com/dr-harold-koplewicz/the-psychiatric-issues-behind-cyberbullying_b_655556.html

Teen Internet addicts more likely to get the blues: study

Google News (AFP), Aug 2, 2010

Teenagers who are "addicted" to the Internet are more than twice as likely to become depressed than those who surf the Web in a more controlled manner, a study published Monday found.

For the study, published in the Archives of Pediatric and Adolescent Medicine, 1,041 teens from Guangzhou in southeastern China completed a questionnaire to identify whether they used the Internet in a pathological way, and were assessed for anxiety and depression.

The vast majority of the teens -- more than 940 -- used the Internet normally, but 62 (6.2 percent) were classified as being moderately pathological Internet users and two (0.2 percent) were "severely pathological" users.

Nine months later, the teens' psychological states were reassessed, and the researchers found that students who used the Internet uncontrollably or unreasonably were around two-and-a-half times as likely as normal Web users to develop depression.

Even when the stress of the teens' studies was factored into the equation, the Web-addicted teens were still one and a half times more likely to feel depressed at the nine-month follow-up than kids who used the Internet in a controlled way.

"This result suggests that young people who are initially free of mental health problems but use the Internet pathologically could develop depression as a consequence," study authors Lawrence Lam of the School of Medicine in Sydney, Australia, and Zi Wen-Peng of the Chinese Education Ministry said.

Read more: http://www.google.com/hostednews/afp/article/ALeqM5hj0bQwFUB83yFeU_GvG2CdjATXZA

VIOLENCE

New report calls for relationships education to curb youth violence

House of Representatives Standing Committee on Family, Community, Housing and Youth, 16 July 2010

Young Australians should be taught respect and how to deal with conflict while at school, according to a new report by the House of Representatives Family and Youth Committee.

At a time of growing concern over increasing violence among 12 to 24 year olds, the Federal Parliamentary Committee is calling for social development education to be a core component of Australia's new national curriculum.

"We need to teach our young people from a very early age how to develop and maintain respectful relationships, how to deal in a non-aggressive way with conflict and how to build resilience," Committee Chair, Annette Ellis said today.

"A consistent theme raised throughout the inquiry is that early intervention to prevent violence from happening in the first place is preferable."

Ms Ellis said engaging with young people had been a priority for the Committee and more than 1300 young Australians had responded to an online survey expressing their concerns. The majority of respondents said that they had witnessed violence in the last 12 months and over two thirds believe that the incidence and intensity of violence is increasing.

Read more: <http://www.aph.gov.au/House/committee/fchy/youthviolence/media/media013.pdf>

Read the report: <http://www.aph.gov.au/house/committee/fchy/youthviolence/report.htm>

The Effects of Domestic Violence on Children

National Child Protection Clearing House

There is now a small, slowly emerging literature on the effects of witnessing violence on children's psychological development. Initially the literature was limited to clinical descriptions of children's behavioural and emotional problems elicited primarily from assessment of children in women's shelters.

These assessments used a standardised checklist which measures internalising problems (depression, somatic or physiological complaints, anxiety and withdrawal) and externalising problems (disobedience, destructiveness and aggression).

Recent studies have improved methodologically by including appropriate comparison groups and additional standardised measures, and by examining a wider range of children's dysfunctional and adaptive behaviour.

These studies represent beginning efforts to document the effects domestic violence has on children's behaviour, their cognitive and social problem-solving abilities, as well as their coping and emotional functioning. A discussion of this literature in terms of age, stage of development and gender is outlined below.

- Infants
- Toddlers
- Pre-Schoolers
- Primary School Age
- Adolescents

<http://www.aifs.gov.au/nch/pubs/issues/issues2/issues2.html>

YOUTH SUICIDE

Fact Sheet: Reducing Youth Suicide in Queensland

Commission for Children and Young People and Child Guardian

The Reducing Youth Suicide in Queensland (RYSQ) project grew from the Commission for Children and Young People and Child Guardian's concern about the high number of young people taking their own lives each year in Queensland.

RYSQ is a detailed review of the lives and deaths of children and young people in this state who suicided between 2004 and 2007. The review aims to provide a solid and contemporary evidence base to better target future efforts at reducing youth suicide in Queensland.

By improving our understanding of the factors that increase suicide risk among children and young people, this information can be used to explore new ways to protect the lives of some of Queensland's most vulnerable youth.

The RYSQ Discussion Paper is available for key stakeholder consultation until 30 November 2009. The Commission is seeking feedback from professionals, government and non-government organisations with knowledge or experiences engaging with children and young people who are at risk of suicide or who have suicided.

Read more: <http://www.ccyipcq.qld.gov.au/pdf/monitoring/Fact-sheet-RYSQ.pdf>

WHAT'S THE GOVERNMENT DOING?

New Early Intervention Services for Parents, Children and Young People

The New Early Intervention Services for Parents, Children and Young People measure aims to support early intervention for children and young people who are at highest risk of developing mental health problems, or who are showing early behavioural signs or symptoms of mental health problems. It forms part of the Commonwealth's component of the Council of Australian Governments' (COAG) National Action Plan on Mental Health 2006 - 2011.

Responsibility for the New Early Intervention Services for Parents, Children and Young People measure rests with the Australian Government Department of Health and Ageing.

The measure recognises that an estimated 14-20% of children and adolescents are affected by a mental health problem every year, but only one in four receives any professional help.

Mental health problems in childhood and adolescence can have far reaching effects on the physical well-being, educational, psychological and social development of individuals. Children who are mentally healthy are better able to:

- learn;
- experience stronger relationships with teachers, family members and peers;
- negotiate challenges including the transition into adolescence and then adulthood;
- achieve long-term education and career goals; and
- enjoy a better quality of life.

When early signs of difficulty are not addressed, mental health problems can potentially become more serious and possibly extend into mental disorders.

The measure aims to provide support to children, young people and parents, in particular those at highest risk or showing early symptoms of mental health problems. Research into risk and protective factors reveals that there are a number of groups within the population that have particular mental health needs and can be at increased risk of developing mental health disorders. Additional attention and support for these groups can potentially prevent mental health difficulty. These groups include:

- Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children and young people;
- children affected by significantly adverse life events such as severe trauma, loss or grief; and
- children of parents with a mental illness.

The New Early Intervention Services for Parents, Children and Young People measure includes the KidsMatter initiative, a school based mental health promotion, prevention, and early intervention pilot which has been developed for use in primary schools.

A suite of KidsMatter activities is being delivered under the measure. This suite of activities includes:

- a transition year to test implementation models prior to a national roll-out of the KidsMatter primary school initiative in 2010;
- development and piloting of a KidsMatter preschool initiative;
- development and distribution of Response Ability, a resource for helping trainee preschool and early childhood teachers understand resilience and wellbeing;
- provision of support for groups at highest risk; and
- development and implementation of parenting programs for parents in families where children have early symptoms, or a diagnosis, of mental health illness such as Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder or conduct disorders.

<http://www.kidsmatter.edu.au/>

<http://www.responseability.org/site/index.cfm>

The school structure offers a systematic means to identify children at highest risk or who are already showing 'early warning signs', intervene early and engage children and young people to effective mental health treatment so that they are less likely to suffer from severe and enduring difficulties. Schools are also uniquely placed to provide information and support to parents and families regarding their child's mental health and wellbeing.

The measure will build upon KidsMatter, expanding the concept into early childhood settings such as preschools and long day care.

The measure will also provide support and resources for children at highest risk of developing mental health problems, including additional support to ensure parents, primary schools and early childhood settings are able to appropriately identify and refer children at increased risk early, to prevent progression of early symptoms of mental illness into more serious disorders.

The Australian Child and Adolescent Trauma Loss and Grief Network is being developed to provide information specifically about these issues. The Network will provide an online forum for communication and sharing of information and expertise, as both a community and a professional resource. The goal of the network is to offer key resources to:

- professionals and community workers providing services for children and adolescents experiencing trauma, loss and grief;
- professionals and administrators involved in research, policy, education, and training;
- parents and other caregivers and interested members of the community.

<http://www.earlytraumagrief.anu.edu.au/>

The Australian Infant, Child, Adolescent and Family Mental Health Association have been funded to provide support, information and resources to workers and families regarding Children of Parents with a Mental Illness (COPMI).

In 2005, Maybery and Reupert, estimated that there were between 21% and 23% of children living in Australian households where at least one parent has a mental illness, equating to just over a million children at that time.

Not all children of parents with a mental illness will experience difficulties as a result of their parent's ill health. However a combination of genetic inheritance and a range of factors often associated with mentally ill adults can increase risks to their children's well-being.

COPMI provides information for family members across Australia where a parent has a mental illness and for people who care for and work with them. The website is one tool we use to deliver this information. We also work with the media, researchers, educators, service organisations, consumers, carers and others.

The COPMI initiative is being undertaken by the Australian Infant Child Adolescent and Family Mental Health Association (AICAFMHA) with funding from the Australian Government. The overall aim of the Australian COPMI initiative is to promote better mental health outcomes for children (0 - 18 years) of parents with a mental health problem or disorder.

<http://www.copmi.net.au/>

<http://www.aicafmha.net.au/>

Read more: <http://www.health.gov.au/internet/mentalhealth/publishing.nsf/Content/early-intervention-1>

WHAT ARE SCHOOLS DOING?

AusParenting in Schools

Parenting Research Centre

AusParenting in Schools is a school-based parenting and family support strategy, designed to establish organisational structures, policies and practices that promote parent involvement.

The Parenting Research Centre is undertaking an evaluation of AusParenting in Schools with 18 primary schools in the Northern and Western regions of Melbourne (representing Department of Education and Catholic Education Office schools). The program is not currently available to other schools; however, you can stay informed about the project evaluation by reading What's New, and visiting our section For Professionals for parenting information and resources.

AusParenting in Schools is a school-based parenting and family information and support strategy for primary schools, developed by the Parenting Research Centre.

It aims to promote the wellbeing and resilience of children by helping schools to:

- strengthen family-school partnerships
- encourage family involvement in their children's education
- provide parenting information and resources to all families in the school community.

Its development is based on theory and research into family-school partnerships and the parent involvement process, recognising the importance of a range of school, parent and family factors in shaping and maintaining parent involvement in the children's education. It is also based on research-informed approaches to working with parents and families.

Read more: <http://www.parentingrc.org.au/vp/programs/programview.php?id=5&page=overview>

The Whole School Approach



MindMatters is a resource and professional development program supporting Australian secondary schools in promoting and protecting the mental health, and social and emotional wellbeing of all the members of school communities.

A whole school approach to mental health and wellbeing involves using multiple strategies that have a unifying purpose and reflect a common set of values. It requires that all stakeholders, parents, students, staff and the community work together to create a protective environment that promotes mental health and wellbeing on both the social and emotional levels.

The MindMatters whole school approach is an implementation process with clear action. It is fundamentally about creating a Continuum of Connection to support the mental health and wellbeing of all students, including those experiencing high support needs.

The key dimensions are:

- School ethos and environment
- Curriculum; teaching and learning
- Internal and external partnerships and services.

The model also identifies four enablers for a whole school approach:

- Extending leadership and participation
- Increasing staff understanding of mental health and wellbeing
- Making links with other key initiatives
- Evidence-based evaluation and data collection, analysis and action.

Read more: http://www.mindmatters.edu.au/whole_school_approach/the_whole_school_approach_landing.html

WHAT ARE PARENTS DOING?

Bringing Parents up to speed - thriving not just surviving being a parent!

NSW Parents' Council Inc



The NSW Parents' Council (peak body in NSW representing parents with children at non government schools) and Hills Schools Industry Partnership (through partnership brokers the aim is to foster a strategic, whole community approach to supporting young people's learning and development) have come together to plan an event to coincide with Mental Health month in October 2010.

Feedback from the parents/ principals/ educators/ school counsellors indicates the mental health issues related to young people is of high concern to them and many feel overwhelmed, under resourced and unsure how they can identify and assist young people that may be suffering from mental health problems.

With the growing incidents of youth suffering and being diagnosed with Mental Health issues there appears to be a lack of accessible information & resources for parents/ carers/ schools. This along with the current stigma attached to mental health issues and young people create barriers to addressing the problem.

This **afternoon forum** which will be held on **Saturday November 6, 2010** in Chatswood and will provide parents/ educators/ school counsellors and other members of the community with up to date information on Mental Health issues related to young people (12- 16 years). The focus of this forum will include building resilience in your family, understanding mental health from the experts themselves- young people and providing information on relevant services.

The afternoon will begin with a presentation on adolescent brain development by the Clinical Nurse Consultant at Royal North Shore Hospital. Participants will then be able to choose to attend workshops covering topics such as eating disorders, social networking and Transition Strategies for High School - and Beyond. The forum will conclude with a panel discussion made up of representatives from NSW health, local service providers and young people.

The afternoon will be interactive and offer the audience 'real' information/ support and point of contact in their local area. Local relevant services will also attend to provide the audience with a 'face' to a service.

For further information please contact Rowena Stulajter, Community Development manager, NSW Parents' Council on 9955 8276 or email at community@parentscouncil.nsw.edu.au

Read more: <http://parentscouncil.nsw.edu.au/>

Parents Victoria Annual Conference 2010

Celebrating Relationships How we fit together

7-8 September, The Downtowner on Lygon, Carlton, VIC



The final presenter at this year's Parents Victoria Annual Conference is Andrew Fuller. His presentation *Creating a Resilient Life*, takes life in 7 year cycles and looks at what is required at each phase to have a wonderful time.

As a clinical psychologist, Andrew Fuller works with many schools and communities in Australia and internationally, specialising in the wellbeing of young people and their families.

He has been a principal consultant to the national drug prevention strategy REDI, the ABC on children's television shows, is an Ambassador for MindMatters and is a member of the National Coalition Against Bullying.

Andrew describes resilience as "the happy knack of being able to bungy jump through the pitfalls of life - to rise above adversity and obstacles."

This presentation will deepen participants' understanding of the intricacies of relationships.

Read more about Andrew Fuller: <http://www.andrewfuller.com.au>

Read more about Parents Victoria: <http://www.parentsvictoria.asn.au/>

iConnect ... with Learning, in Partnership, in Faith

2010 Catholic Schools Parent Conference

11-12 September, Australian Catholic University, North Sydney Campus

This is a conference for parents, teachers and school leaders.

Keynote speakers are Mia Freedman on Pop Culture, Technology and Your Kids – what parents need to know and Danielle Miller: Beyond Toxic - Raising Amazing Girls.

Of the 24 workshops that make up the rest of the conference, half are pertinent to the broad theme of mental health in the context of students and parents.

As the conference is only a day and a half long, you can only attend four workshops, though, and it's really quite a difficult choice. Topics include:

- New Australian Curriculum
- Internet Safety
- Raising Strong Kids
- Children's Learning Styles
- Faith and Families
- Family School Partnerships
- Meditation and Spirituality
- Grief and Loss for Children

- Dealing with Teens, Alcohol and Drugs
- Gifted Education

Read more: <http://www.cbsp.catholic.edu.au/dbpage.php?pg=Conference&toplink=1>

Parenting support and education

KidsMatter includes a component on Parenting Support and Education because it recognises the importance of parenting in promoting children's mental health.

International research has shown the positive effects of good parenting on children's mental health and on school achievement. Australian research has found that parents more often consult teachers about emotional or behavioural problems their children experience than they do mental health professionals.

It makes sense that if we want to support children's mental health and wellbeing, families and schools should work closely together.

Parenting support and education is crucial to the success of school-based mental health programs for students. A collaborative approach where parents and schools work together to promote children's mental health is more likely to yield substantial and sustained improvements for children.

Parents and carers play an important role in promoting the effectiveness of school-based social and emotional learning (SEL). Families can have a positive impact on student achievement by providing additional support and opportunities for children to practise and reinforce the SEL skills they are learning in the classroom.

Schools, through their regular contact with families, are well placed to assist parents and carers in their child rearing and parenting roles by providing access to high quality information and education about parenting, child development and children's mental health.

Helping parents and carers to understand children's mental health issues and to identify support services, will in turn enhance the mental health of their children.

The resources relating to Parenting support and education have been specifically designed by KidsMatter to provide parents, carers and school staff with information and suggestions on how to work together to improve children's development and mental health.

Read more: <http://www.kidsmatter.edu.au/parenting-support-and-education/resources/>

WHAT ARE YOUNG PEOPLE DOING?

Headroom

The Headroom project based in South Australia commenced with the 'Partnership with young people project' in January 1997. Its broad aim was to develop ways to promote mental health among young people aged 6-18.

The Headroom website was launched in 2000 and was unique at that time as the content focuses on promoting positive mental health rather than mental illness. The website aims to increase community awareness and mental health literacy among children, young people, parent/carers and professionals.

Headroom's website aims to increase mental health literacy of children and young people. It provides access to mental health information and local services links to inform and support young people, professionals, families, and those who are concerned about the wellbeing of children and young people.

Youth participation and action is vital to this program, as it drives the creation of relevant and accessible information for children and young people.

Youth participation is underpinned by strong and respectful partnerships with young people. This is based on encouraging meaningful participation and integrating the thoughts of young people into decisions that impact on their lives.

Headroom provides mental health information to empower young people to make informed decisions about their health and wellbeing.

Read more: <http://www.headroom.net.au/>

headspace

headspace provides mental and health wellbeing support, information and services to young people and their families across Australia.

Established and funded by the Commonwealth Government of Australia in 2006, headspace is the National Youth Mental Health Foundation. The people that work at headspace are providing solutions for young people aged 12 to 25 years.

Our primary focus is the mental health and wellbeing of all Australians. We know that getting help early is the key to resolving these problems quickly.

With 30 one-stop-shops, headspace has a range of youth friendly health professionals who can help you with:

- General health
- Mental health and counselling
- Education, employment and other services
- Alcohol and other drug services.

headspace is making a difference where it is needed most – our young people

Read more: <http://www.headspace.org.au/>

Reach Out

Reach Out is a web-based service that aims to improve the mental health and wellbeing of young people aged 14-25 years by providing them with information, support and skills development and by working with health professionals to strengthen the pathways between online and community based service delivery.

The aim of Reach Out is to improve the mental health and wellbeing of Australian young people.

Reach Out's key objectives are:

- To increase mental health literacy amongst young people aged 14-25 years
- To increase resilience amongst young people aged 14-25 years
- To increase help seeking behaviour amongst young people aged 14-25 years

Inspire Foundation identifies six principles as being crucial to achieving the objectives above. These are:

- Young people have the right to be involved in decision-making processes that directly affect them, and are able to help themselves and others through tough times.
- The involvement of young people in Reach Out will enhance the quality of the service Inspire Foundation delivers.
- For Reach Out to be able to improve a young person's mental health and wellbeing, the young person must know that Reach Out exists, and see it as relevant in their lives.
- All information on Reach Out is based on the most up-to-date mental health research and best practice service delivery.
- The Inspire Foundation uses technology to continue to use innovative ways of delivering mental health information to young people.
- To reach young people Inspire Foundation must be present in the environments in which young people interact.

Read more: <http://au.reachout.com/>

WHERE TO NOW?

Abbott finds \$1.5bn for mental health

Michelle Draper, Adelaide Now (AAP), June 30, 2010

A COALITION proposal to fund early intervention mental health programs will ease the burden on services caring for patients with advanced mental illness, Australian of the Year Professor Patrick McGorry says.

With the prospect of an election date announcement looming, Opposition Leader Tony Abbott launched into campaign mode with a plan to provide 800 acute and sub-acute early intervention beds, 60 new youth mental health centres and 20 Early Psychosis Prevention and Intervention Centres (EPPIC).

There is currently only one Early Psychosis Intervention Centre in Australia, based in metropolitan Melbourne.

The plan to roll the centres out nationally was a key recommendation in the federal government's health commission reform report.

Prof McGorry, who previously criticised the Labor government for failing to prioritise mental health funding, said investing in early intervention centres would ease pressure on the mainstream mental health system.

"A lot of these young patients then won't have to go into the mainstream system, freeing up a lot of capacity for patients in later stages of illness," Prof McGorry said.

Read more: <http://www.adelaidenow.com.au/news/in-depth/abbott-finds-15bn-for-mental-health/story-fn5rizbk-1225886382272>

Moving forward to a better health system

Julia Gillard, forum of the Committee for Economic Development of Australia, 27 July 2010

Today I announce a comprehensive package of measures to tackle suicide and promote better mental health in our community.

A re-elected Gillard Labor Government will invest \$277 million to support our communities, our schools, our health services and our carers to do more to identify and prevent suicide.

Our comprehensive package will target four key areas – (1) frontline services for those most at risk (2) direct prevention and crisis intervention (3) services targeted to men and (4) looking after kids, both those at risk and generally building their resilience.

We will boost frontline services in communities for people at greatest risk of suicide in our community, by providing:

- Fourth, we will promote resilience and good mental health for both our young children and our young people, by:
 - expanding services to improve children's resilience by teacher and parent training to a further 1,700 primary schools.
 - training frontline health and community workers to better identify and support children with serious mental health, developmental and behavioural issues
 - giving young people who are reluctant or unable to access face-to-face mental health services an online alternative through which to seek help

Making progress in preventing suicide and improving mental health will not just take investment, but it will also take reform.

If re-elected, a Gillard Labor Government will move forward, with a different perspective, a Labor perspective grounded in our view that comprehensive health reform is the starting point for better mental health services.

Read more: <http://www.alp.org.au/federal-government/news/speech--julia-gillard.--address-to-the-committee-f/>

Australian of the year Patrick McGorry criticises Julia Gillard's mental health announcement

Robert Burton-Bradley, news.com.au, July 27, 2010

Prof McGorry said it was "great" that Ms Gillard was committed to tackling mental health if elected. However, he said the investments were "off scale and off focus" by failing to identify the priorities raised in the National Health and Hospitals Reform Commission's final report.

"People need places to go where there is real support, at the moment 700,000 young people are currently locked out of access to care and these small investments in awareness and promotion don't reduce waiting times," he said.

Professor McGorry said Opposition Leader Tony Abbott's \$1.2 billion commitment to mental health was superior to the Government's, but still needed to focus more on improving access to services for those dealing with mental illness and those at future risk.

"The Coalition's policy is much more up to the mark in terms of scale, it's four times bigger and it does focus on the most urgent priorities facing Australia's with mental health; young people aged 12 – 25 with emerging disorders is the biggest area where focus is needed," he said.

"There are some areas that look positive, but they have not really taken up the challenge of re-engineering and rebuilding mental health strategy in Australia and in particular in relation to young people who bear the brunt.

"I would urge the Prime Minister to add to her investments. She is trying to give the impression this is important, but it's not enough of an investment."

Read more: <http://www.news.com.au/features/federal-election/labor-prime-minister-julia-gillard-inks-277m-for-suicide-prevention/story-e6frllr-1225897387696#ixzz0xLGqfzh3>

Young people's mental health and well-being

Australian Council of State School Organisations

In making these announcements, both the Prime Minister and the Health Minister have specifically noted the vitally important role of teachers and parents – a role that is as much about building a positive and supportive developmental environment for young people as about supporting those at risk. Prevention from the early stages being much better and more cost-effective than remediation further down the track.

The Australian Government identified the need for an effective parent and family led program drawing on these understandings – and in 2002 commissioned the national parent organisations to develop such a program building upon the learnings from our previous and current additional research – validating every step of the program's development across a range of school communities.

That program was launched in 2003 as "Families Matter: families & schools working together to ensure the emotional well-being of young people" – and was enthusiastically taken up by some 200 schools and their communities across the country.

The program ran effectively and successfully until 2006: when the then government and department decided – against all the evidence of an overwhelmingly positive external evaluation report and its recommendations for further continuance and embedding of the program – and despite the ongoing protests of those school communities that had proven the value and efficacy of this community partnership-building initiative – not to renew the funding arrangements beyond 2006.

The Australian Council of State School Organisations, and the Australian Parents Council, who jointly developed, ran and validated the effectiveness of "Families Matter" initiative to achieve parents and teachers working together to support young people's resilience, well-being and engagement in strong sustaining networked communities, are firmly of the view that a renewal of funding for this proven effective program should be a central element in the Government's strategies for schools and their communities.

Read more: <http://www.acsso.org.au/2010/07/young-people%E2%80%99s-mental-health-and-well-being/>

If you'd like to do some more browsing on the web, two good places to start are:

Commonwealth Department of Health & Ageing:

<http://www.health.gov.au/internet/main/publishing.nsf/Content/mental-progs>

HealthInsite: http://www.healthinsite.gov.au/topics/Mental_Health_of_Children

Both provide excellent sets of links.

Please send your comments and suggestions to <mailto:info@familyschool.org.au>

To unsubscribe from **Family School Partners**, click here:

<mailto:webmaster@familyschool.org.au?subject=unsubscribeFSP>