



# Whole School Matters

## Section 7: Getting started on the Whole School Approach

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MindMatters is funded by the Australian Government Department of Health and Ageing.



## Section 7 Getting started on the Whole School Approach



The Whole School Approach advocates long-term development strategies that galvanise all the structures and systems of the school as an organisation towards mental health and wellbeing. This enables a coordinated approach embedded in the work that schools already undertake (see Weare 2004, p. 55).

In building emotionally literate schools, MindMatters uses a seven-stage school cycle, below (see Section 3.1), to guide the school core team through the process of planning. MindMatters curriculum resources can be used by individual teachers. While this is useful for a short time for some students, teachers often lose energy if their work is not supported by their colleagues or school. A holistic planning approach is required to realise the possibilities for the sustainability of the initiative.

The school may focus on one action area from the MindMatters Implementation model.



Schools who have used MindMatters successfully have suggested the following ideas for beginning the process.

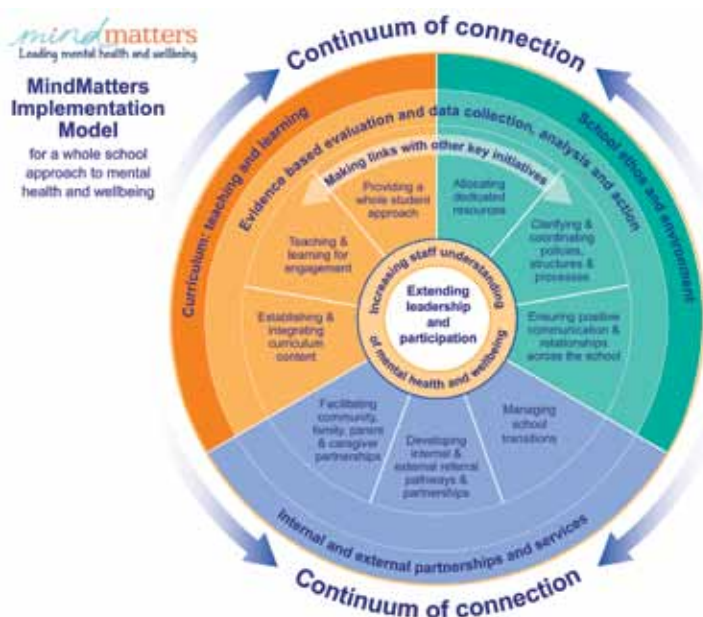
After making the decision to use the MindMatters resource and the Whole School Approach, the school leadership may consider the following suggestions:

1. Assess the level of commitment school leadership is able to provide.
2. Make links between MindMatters and other existing or other new initiatives in the school.
3. Clarify the resources which are available within the school over an 18-month to three-year time period.
4. Collect and analyse the existing school data on student mental health and wellbeing, including students experiencing high support needs in mental health.
5. Provide initial information on mental health and wellbeing and MindMatters to the whole staff, and engage in discussion with the school community.
6. Engage or reaffirm partnerships with the community, inviting involvement.
7. Undertake MindMatters Level One Professional Development or an internal school familiarisation with the MindMatters resource, with whole school or key teachers.
8. Establish a representative school core team for mental health and wellbeing (or use an existing group).

9. Incorporate the school core team operations into the structure of the school leadership and planning.
10. Utilise the seven-step MindMatters Planning Cycle Stage Two and accompanying questions, described in Section 3.1 and Appendix 4.
11. Plan further MindMatters Professional Development specifically for staff. This could include a staff mental health and wellbeing day, a student mental health and wellbeing day, or a community focus day as a means of signalling the start of the process.
12. Include young people in developing mental health and wellbeing initiatives in the school.
13. Invite allied health professionals to join the school core team and to participate in Professional Development with staff.
14. Utilise the MindMatters website to support the Whole School Approach – [www.mindmatters.edu.au](http://www.mindmatters.edu.au) – and use the school's intranet for information and support.
15. Adjust the school strategic plan to incorporate mental health and wellbeing as an aim, or as a key strategy.

Each section of this workbook has practical steps and Professional Development activities that can be used by individuals or whole school.

## MindMatters Professional Development



MindMatters has established that staff Professional Development is critical to building a Whole School Approach to mental health and wellbeing. The MindMatters Whole School Implementation model implies that Professional Development is needed in some way for each of its four key enablers and nine action areas. See adjacent model.

Professional Development for staff, students and mental health professionals working with the school, parents and community members may occur through:

1. planning together using data collection and analysis
2. selecting, trialling and evaluating resources
3. working with tertiary institutions
4. school meetings
5. inter-sectoral collaboration
6. more traditional individual and whole school Professional Development.



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Talk to staff about the qualities of the best Professional Development experience that they have had. Use this list as the criteria for Professional Development decisions or planning.

Professional Development for mental health and wellbeing which supports the Whole School Approach needs to be characterised by planning, consultation and involvement in delivery by the whole school community. The Professional Development needs to be strongly grounded in current research in both mental health and education, while engaging staff on personal and professional levels.

The MindMatters experience suggests that Professional Development can be one of the few ways that staff and other school community members experience mental health and wellbeing methodologies together. These methodologies can be used both in the staff room and the classroom. The way Professional Development is undertaken is therefore crucial. It is useful to provide an opportunity for professional reflection; empathy; recognition of prior knowledge; practical applications; opportunities to plan as well as discuss; activity; and humour. In addition, if these are carefully spaced, iterative and use outside and internal presenters working together, they can provide an opportunity to develop understanding and collegiality amongst staff.

The recognition process for becoming a MindMatters school involves the school core team participating in a Level Two Planning workshop and a selection of the nine focus modules and various extension workshops.

The school will be able to support its whole school approach to mental health and wellbeing through a strategic plan, integrated curriculum approaches and use of data.

Further information is available for each state and territory on the MindMatters website at <http://www.mindmatters.edu.au> (MindMatters Recognition). The following Professional Development activities relate specifically to the content of this booklet and may enable schools to undertake the process themselves, or in conjunction with the MindMatters Professional Development.

## Using the Professional Development activities

The following Professional Development activities are incorporated throughout Whole School Matters. Page numbers are provided so you can easily locate the activity in its context.

