

The wellbeing of all students

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SchoolMatters has in-depth information on schools' responsibilities for:

- policy
- critical incidents
- teacher preparedness
- staff mental health
- suicide prevention
- complementary information on mental health promotion.

CommunityMatters is concerned that schools take action to promote the wellbeing of all their students, and provides a number of resources that can be used to do this. These elements can be combined to provide a strong basis for schools to work from. So far we have explored:

- audit and process tools ('What does our school do now? audit' – page 9; 'Who is our community? database' – page 25);
- suggestions for how to strengthen students' protective factors ('Action inventory' – Appendix 8).

In this chapter we will be looking at:

- building protective factors ('The Protective Factors Process' – page 70);
- surveying students ('What do our students think? survey' – page 72);
- teaching and learning issues ('Teaching and learning' – page 77).

In the next chapter of the book we will be exploring in greater depth:

- suggestions for developing community partnerships ('Working together – community does matter' – page 81).



Enhancing Resilience 2: Stress and Coping and SchoolMatters have listings and explanations of protective factors.

Does every student have a staff member they know and trust well enough to talk to, and who can advocate on their behalf?

Considering students as groups according to the issues they face is useful as an analytical tool. What it does is allow matters for particular, individual students to emerge that can otherwise be overlooked. It gives a picture of where, and points to how, protective factors need to be strengthened. In actually dealing with the students, however, it is crucial not to focus on their 'difference' and thereby increase the extent to which they are already marginalised. For this reason, whatever strategies a school decides to put in place to meet the needs of particular groups, it must be done in the context of the whole school body.

Building protective factors

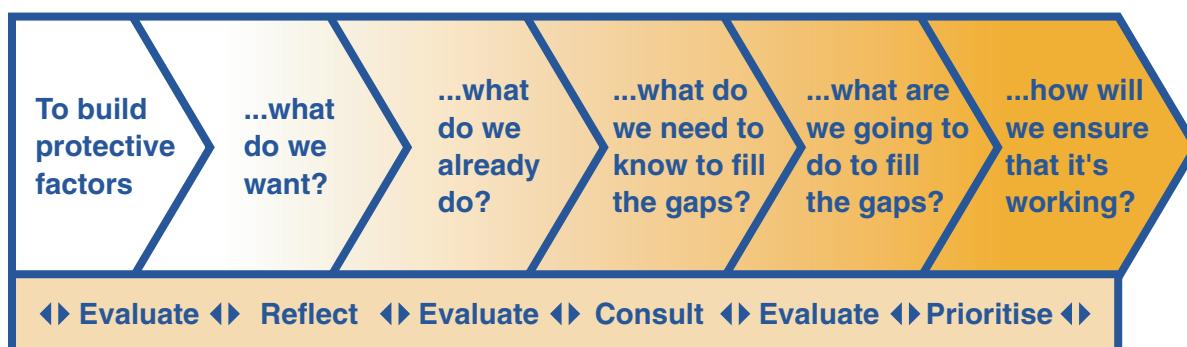
Promoting social and emotional wellbeing is about building and enhancing protective factors. These include:

- connectedness to family, friends and school;
- relationship with a caring adult – support, belonging and role-models;
- self-esteem;
- handling the demands of school;
- belief in one's own ability to cope;
- sense of control;
- individual disposition.

Schools need to establish a process by which they can identify the gaps, and plan to bridge them.

The Protective Factors Process

Schools may find the strategic process shown here useful. It has been developed specifically to focus on building protective factors. It is based on a number of community health and other process models, and reflects familiar, general good practice.



How do you know it's working?

Monitoring and addressing the outcomes is a vital part of any change process, and there are ways that this can be done effectively and simply. This can be achieved when a balance is struck between reliance on data and impressions, and more formal quantitative and qualitative methods.

New programs or approaches can be evaluated by gathering simple information on attitudes and behaviours, before, during and after they are instigated. Spend time considering the indicators that would most accurately show how change has been affected. Questions will then be able to focus on which particular strategies are being successful and in what particular circumstances.

The following points are worth considering:

- If respondents are involved in devising and conducting the research it is likely that they will feel more ownership of the whole project, because it will not just be happening 'to them'. This sense of ownership will be stronger if they are also involved in the collating, analysis and/or presentation of the data. A side benefit of this will be to have more people involved in what can be a very time-consuming exercise.
- In preparing an audit, limit the questions to those that will actually give you the information you need.
- Check that you have consulted all the stakeholders in your community. You can use a range of ways to contact people and consult with them.
- It is important how and to whom you report back your findings. It is also important to take some action on the findings within a few weeks.
- If you are using a sample of people for your research, be clear about how they are being selected.
- When designing a survey, provide a space at the bottom for people to add in any other comments not covered by the questions. Ask some questions to test the veracity of the responses. The same question can be asked in different ways (eg as a positive and a negative).
- It is not always possible to find out whether people have changed their behaviour (eg whether they are more resilient) because the particular situation may not have arisen. For this reason, you may need to look at auditing changes in understandings, knowledge and behavioural intentions, rather than actual behaviour.
- Understandings can be broadened by comparing data collected from a range of people and/or groups – from students, teachers and parents.
- Mental health professionals and education department research sections may be able to assist you in managing such research.

What do our students think? survey

Before looking at how protective factors can be developed across the school, it is important to have all the information about the issues and concerns of the students. Students are often overlooked in any consultation process, but what they are thinking and feeling is the essential complement to information that is gathered in other ways. The best people to talk about their own needs are the people themselves. It is critical to work with student-based data to discover students' issues and the strength of their protective factors. One way to do this is to conduct a survey of student opinion and experience.

Before conducting this survey, consider:

- if it needs to be adapted for your school and group of students;
- whether it would be valuable to add questions about the students' cultural, community and religious backgrounds;
- whether it could be conducted by students as part of the curriculum or by your students' representative group;
- how the results will be published;
- how the results will be used; and
- whether the survey could be conducted before and after a major initiative so that changes in the ways that students feel about and experience school can be measured (you will have data that will point to whether protective factors have actually been enhanced).

What do our students think? survey

Background information					
Are you female or male?	Female	Male			
Were you born in Australia?	Yes	No			
Questions	Strongly agree	Agree	Unsure	Disagree	Strongly disagree
1 Do you enjoy school generally?					
2 Have you skipped many days at this school?					
3 Do you like your teachers this year?					
4 Do you have a teacher who listens to you?					
5 Do your teachers teach you in a way that you can understand?					
6 Do you have a staff member or another adult in the school who listens to you?					
7 Are your lessons generally enjoyable?					
8 Do you learn something useful most days at school?					
9 Do you like your classmates?					
10 Do you work well by yourself?					
11 Do you work well within a group?					
12 Do you try hard at school?					
13 Do you find it easy to work at school?					
14 Do you find school interesting?					
15 Do you feel safe and secure at school?					
16 Do other students seem safe and secure at school?					

Questions	Strongly agree	Agree	Unsure	Disagree	Strongly disagree
17 Do you feel comfortable at school – like you're a part of the place?					
18 Do you think your parents/guardians feel like they're a part of the place?					
19 Do you answer questions from teachers in class?					
20 Do you feel successful at some part of your schoolwork?					
21 Are you up to date with schoolwork?					
22 Are you bored with schoolwork?					
23 Do you feel you work too many hours on schoolwork?					
24 Do your marks really show what you can do?					
25 Do you think you are up to date with homework?					
26 Do you find it easy to talk over problems with some teachers?					
27 Is high school as enjoyable as primary school?					
28 Do you feel you achieve as much at high school as you did at primary school?					
29 Do you have friends you can talk to at school?					
30 Do your friends enjoy school?					
31 Do your friends do well at school?					
32 Will you carry on and finish school?					
33 Are your friends likely to stay at school?					
34 Do your friends feel safe at school?					
35 Do your friends have teachers or staff at school who they can talk to if they have problems?					

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Questions	Strongly agree	Agree	Unsure	Disagree	Strongly disagree
36 Do your friends listen to you if you have problems?					
37 Have you been ignored by your friends at some time at school, so that it was a problem?					
38 Have your friends been ignored by the group at this school at some time?					
39 Have you had rumours spread about you at this school?					
40 Have you been called names at this school?					
41 Have your friends had rumours spread about them?					
42 Have you been teased at this school?					
43 Have your friends been teased at this school?					
44 Have your friends been called names at this school?					
45 Have you been physically hurt at this school?					
46 Have your friends been physically hurt at this school?					
47 Have you had things stolen at the school?					
48 Have your friends had things stolen at the school?					
49 Have you had your things damaged?					
50 Have your friends had their things damaged?					
51 Have you an adult or another person you could go to at this school if you need help?					
52 Do you think you have a friend or someone who listens and who understands you?					
53 Have you a friend or group of friends you can depend on?					
54 Do you think you will do well this year?					

Questions	Strongly agree	Agree	Unsure	Disagree	Strongly disagree
55 Will you do as well as last year?					
56 Have you felt successful at some task this year?					
57 Have you done something you like doing while at school?					
58 Have you moved house more than once while you have been at this school?					
59 Do you think what you are learning at school will help you get a job?					
60 Do you think people are friendly to new people at the school?					
61 When you leave school would you come back to meet classmates the following year?					
62 Do you find that there are big sections of some subjects you do not understand?					
63 Do you generally think that you are successful at school?					
64 Do you know what to do to stop feeling stressed out?					
65 Are you proud to be part of this school?					
66 Would you want to come to school if you didn't have to?					
67 Would anyone at school notice if you were feeling down?					
68 Would school be helpful if you were having troubles in your life?					
69 Do you look forward to your future at school?					
70 Do you look forward to your future once you finish school?					
71 How accurate do you think your answers in this survey have been?					

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Teaching and learning

Teaching and learning is fundamental school business, in which teachers are the professionals. Teachers know how difficult it is to include new initiatives into the curriculum, because of restricted time and mandated curriculum needs that have to be met. Although some aspects of mental health promotion do need special time to be allocated (eg home group/pastoral care), there are many ways in which it can be embedded in existing curriculum structures and practices. Appendix 5 provides a framework by which to do this, as well as some examples of how it can be done.

It should be clear that promoting mental health is not only about what is taught, it is also about how it is taught. The relationships that teachers establish with their students can have major impacts on how their students experience school. Relationships need to be mutually respectful, whereby teachers have a right to teach effectively and students have a right to be supported in their learning.

Some of the suggestions concern working in partnership with the 'out of school' community, while others concern the 'in school' community. The type and extent of the community partnership will depend on the scope and scale of the issue being addressed. There are many ways in which the promotion of wellbeing can be made more relevant, sensitive and useful by working with the community at key points in the process.

Curriculum issues

There are many curriculum issues for promoting mental health for all students that need to be dealt with by the whole staff. Some of these have been raised earlier; many others will emerge out of particular school contexts. Some are to do with every student; others are related to meeting the diverse needs of particular students or groups of students.

Apart from the daunting number of issues already explored in this book, there are some others that schools might work through. These include:

- using *MindMatters* content and themes to achieve curriculum outcomes within state/sector frameworks (see Appendix 5 for some examples);
- extending teaching methodologies that promote wellbeing for all students, including catering for different learning styles;
- making assessment and reporting procedures a constructive, success oriented experience for all students;
- normalising diversity and teaching for respect (see Appendix 6).



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Embedding
MindMatters in the
curriculum, p 95



WWW

Partnerships



WWW

Teaching and
learning sites



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Normalising diversity,
pp 97–98

There are also some curriculum issues to do with the *MindMatters* resource that need to be updated regularly, because of continuing research and experience. These issues particularly concern bullying and harassment, and loss and grief.

WWW

Bullying and harassment sites

WWW

Legislation

Bullying and harassment

Bullying is an issue that is getting increasing attention, both from researchers and practitioners, and understandings about it continue to develop. There are new ways of understanding it; what effects it has both on the bully and the victim; what it can be a symptom of; and how to deal with it.

Racism and 'having a sense of difference' are increasingly being seen as a significant basis of bullying and harassment. There is also a greater understanding of the dynamics of power, and what the long-term mental health effects of bullying can be, both for the target and the perpetrator. Because young people who bully tend to carry these behaviours into their adult world, the earlier that people who bully are dealt with, the better for them and society generally. Intervening effectively and early is also important for the targets of bullying.

There are also correlations being established between 'bully' and 'victim' behaviours at school, and the experience of violence at home. Ways of dealing with bullying are also expanding, with processes for peer mediation and restorative justice being developed. An important point to consider is whether the language of bullying and harassment can bring its own problems. Seeing oneself as a 'target' will be more positive than identifying as a 'victim'. Where appropriate, naming bullying as 'violence' or 'vilification' will help to focus on the behaviour rather than the person.

WWW

Loss and grief sites

Loss and grief

Loss and grief is an area that Australia has learned a great deal about in the last few years. Not only has the unresolved grief of groups like Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples and Vietnam veterans become apparent, but the very notion that grief is only an individual experience has been challenged. It is also being acknowledged that loss, grief and mourning are experienced in culturally specific ways, and that they are experienced by everyone at all stages of life, and not only as a result of a death or major family breakdown. For these reasons, the *MindMatters* booklet *Loss and Grief* needs to be used in conjunction with *CommunityMatters* so that:

- we accommodate the diverse nature of many school communities. The ways that loss, grief and mourning are experienced are culturally determined to a large extent;
- our focus is beyond bereavement, which reflects how fundamental loss is to human experience, and how complex it can be;

- we acknowledge that in some communities, loss and grief is as much a collective experience as it is an individual one. This is particularly relevant to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities.

It is advisable for schools to consult with their communities when dealing with issues of loss and grief, and to explore the issues in a more open-ended way. One of the results of grief can be the loss of feelings of safety and trust. In dealing with grief, schools can focus on re-establishing these essential protective factors. There are valuable lessons to be learnt from how well some schools build commemoration into the life of the classroom and the whole school, supporting individuals and the community as a whole.

Schools also need to closely monitor what counselling support is easily accessible, and whether the person's friends are able to balance providing support with not getting too caught up in the emotion themselves. The vast majority of people not only survive grief, but emerge having learnt a great deal about themselves. Presenting grief as a natural process through which all people go, and through which they grow and develop, will go a long way towards enhancing resilience. Schools also need to teach students about where and how to seek support and help, and to make this accessible.

Working together – community does matter



... leaders were the key factors in the process. Leaders must be skilled in the collaborative process, have vision and commitment, and according to several authors, this leadership should be shared.

Karasoff 1998

In this chapter, *CommunityMatters* looks at the development of partnerships so that, together with the community, its people and other resources, schools become places that do promote social and emotional wellbeing for all students.

Partnerships can be established in many ways with the different interests involved. This chapter:

- explores partnerships with parents, families and communities, the students themselves, local cultural and other community groups, and agencies and services;
- explores some partnership approaches;
- suggests both some of the issues that need to be taken into account and actions that could be taken;
- suggests a community forum as a strategy for establishing partnerships.

Partnership approaches

WWW

Partnerships

When recruiting members, organizers should look for people who will bring *clout*, *commitment*, and *diversity* to the table .

Melaville, Blank & Asayesh 1993

There are a number of approaches that will ensure high-quality outcomes in consulting with students, parents, community groups and service providers. These are basically commonsense and some or all of them are routine practice in many school communities. They are equally as applicable to the initial community consultation as they are to ongoing meetings of a structured group.

Face-to-face communication

When people meet face to face, their interactions are more likely to be sensitive and understanding. Written communication cannot replace face-to-face communication.

Open-ended problem-solving approach

An open-ended approach will encourage everyone to participate and contribute their understandings.

Jargon-free communication

Communication is more effective and less alienating when it is free from jargon. People will get along better if they all speak the same language.

Active participation

Active participation from all people will lead to better quality decisions and a firmer decision to act.

An external facilitator

An outside facilitator can assist in dealing with controversial issues, and allow key leaders to participate more actively.

Off-site activities

Meeting on neutral territory breaks down any negative reactions that people might have to 'the school' or 'the system'.

Positive climate setting

Teamwork and a positive approach can be facilitated by simple procedures such as name tags, personal introductions, humour, timed informal refreshment breaks, provision for child care and considerate timing of meetings.

Support from administrators

Support from the school administration is essential as it ensures that decisions will be acted upon.

Procedures guaranteeing interaction

Meeting procedures that guarantee frequent interaction and participation are more likely to lead to higher levels of participant commitment.

Belief in the value of stakeholder participation

Participation is encouraged when school leaders are convinced that people are capable of making significant contributions.

The above approaches are adapted from Nielsen, H 1995, 'Consultative processes to empower education', in School and Community Relations: Participation, Policy and Practice, eds B Limerick and H Nielsen, originally published by Harcourt Australia, reproduced with permission © Nelson Thomson Learning

Partnership issues

Good personal relationships make for good working relationships.

- The core group could be expanded to include key community people.
- Invite community members to take part in social functions, particularly informal ones.
- Invite community members to participate in and contribute to relevant staff professional development activities, and to talk to staff about their concerns about student wellbeing.
- People need to have a spirit of good intention.

Involving parents, families and community members

Parents and community members often feel intimidated by schools and need to be actively encouraged to become more involved in the school community. This can result from their own negative experiences of school, or their discomfort and anxiety from operating in what can be a quite alien culture. Schools can have attitudes, beliefs and ways of behaving that are very different from those of the parents and community.

These people will probably not feel comfortable in the school environment, and this needs to be taken into account in any planning. Respecting and working with diversity in the school community is basic to establishing any kind of meaningful partnership. Working with diversity will mean that the school community will have to work through issues of understanding and catering for all young people and families. This can be very sensitive when, for example, it involves issues such as same-sex attraction.

In the local community there will often be individuals and groups who, while they may have no direct connection to the school, may have much to contribute to the school's understandings and promotion of mental health.

The following suggestions are made for encouraging the involvement of parents, families and community members.

- Have the assistance of workers from cultural community groups to approach people from those groups. This will have a considerable impact on the establishment of partnerships.
- Consider holding meetings off-site to encourage involvement. Meeting in community centres encourages involvement of people from those communities.
- Involve community members, particularly parents, in the design and evaluation of the school's promotion of mental health for all students.
- Provide a room in the school as a parent meeting place, where information can be displayed, meetings can be held and issues discussed.
- Make provision for translation services at key meetings if necessary, and advertise the fact beforehand.
- Investigate setting up a mentoring system within the school where adults can form positive relationships with students (eg by working on projects together).
- Structure meetings in small, informal groups to encourage involvement.
- Make provision for someone on the staff to have time to establish and maintain links with the community.

- Celebrate important cultural events in the school.
- Invite community members to contribute positively to the school newsletter on issues that concern or delight them.
- Make some of the school's facilities available to the community for courses such as using the Internet and email.
- Run English literacy classes in the evenings where students, parents and community members can learn together.
- Organise cultural enrichment courses that can be presented by appropriate community members, for the whole community.
- Encourage involvement by utilising expertise from within the local community to present or co-facilitate sessions.

Particular strategies need to be employed to encourage some individuals and community/cultural groups to be involved. The following guidelines refer to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities, as an example.

How can we involve Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people?

It may take some time to find out who the appropriate people are to be involved in any consultation, but begin by talking to Indigenous members of the school and/or regional staff; parents involved with the school's Aboriginal Student Support and Parent Awareness (ASSPA) Committee; and administrators of local Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander community organisations. They will be able to advise about the community representatives, leaders and respected Elders who should be consulted. This may vary from issue to issue. It should not be assumed, for example, that the school's ASSPA Committee would be the appropriate consultative structure for mental health issues.

When arranging to meet with members of the local Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander community, it is very important to have the assistance of an Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander worker or community person, who will be able to guide your approach in the most constructive way. A personal approach will be more effective than letters, although an initial letter of introduction and telephone call may be important in establishing the background for the first meeting. Be guided in each case by the Indigenous person who recommended the contact. Take time and expand networks; invitations without a personal approach just will not work.

Similarly, when meeting with members of the community, always have an Indigenous person with you and be guided by them about where and when the meeting should take place. It is likely that a meeting held at an Indigenous community organisation or other community centre will be better attended than one held in a more formal location such as the school staffroom.

Participation can also be encouraged by utilising groups within the school (such as the ASSPA Committee) or outside the school (such as the local Aboriginal Community Controlled Health Service or Indigenous Education Consultative Body) to speak publicly and/or help disseminate information. Including cultural teaching within the curriculum where appropriate will be similarly encouraging.

Involving our students

Students need to be involved in any whole school approach to promoting student wellbeing. It needs to be recognised that some students have little or no community involvement or connection outside of school. In fact, some students have no adults at all in their lives who can encourage healthy feelings of attachment and connectedness. In these circumstances, the school community may be the only community to which the student feels connected.

Encouraging student involvement, however, goes beyond the scope of partnerships, and has to be considered in conjunction with the strategies suggested in the previous section for transforming schools into safe and respectful places generally. It is because so much of *CommunityMatters* has been about encouraging student participation and contribution that this list of suggestions is shorter than that of the other groups.

The following suggestions are made to encourage the involvement of students.

- Ensure that the school is a safe place for students – physically and emotionally. Survey students on safety and security and take actions on their recommendations.
- Find out what students are thinking and feeling, and what needs they have. Consult with students when setting agendas for mental health promotion.
- Conduct effective research on student attitudes, beliefs and behaviours at key times to evaluate mental health promotions.
- Establish a peer-education program in the school.
- Establish a peer-mentoring program in the school.
- Involve ex-students in social functions for a period of time after they leave school.
- Invite students to make presentations to staff and whole school forums and meetings on issues of concern or delight.
- Support students in offering activities at assemblies and lunchtimes.
- Invite ex-students back to the school to address student groups on matters of interest and concern.

Involving our community and specialist support services

The impetus for establishing partnerships between schools and support services is coming from many directions. Outside agencies are understanding that schools are central to the lives of young people and their families, and that they provide the obvious starting point for a coordinated approach. There is acknowledgement that schools and support services are all in the business of promoting the wellbeing of young people. There is also a general understanding that schools have to cope with an increasing number of health and welfare initiatives, and that a coordinated approach is necessary if they are to be successful. Although collaborative partnerships are ideal, they can take a great deal of time to establish. In the meantime, good working relationships to promote student wellbeing are essential.

There needs to be respect for everyone's profession and professionalism. Different sectors speak different languages (eg 'risk factors', 'barriers to learning', 'pathways to care'), and work will need to be done to ensure that everyone understands what is being said. The issue of confidentiality is crucial, and one that schools and the health sector tend to understand differently. This will almost certainly become an issue that will need to be worked through.

Clear, informed, engaged, understanding leadership is essential, and if a long-term partnership is developed, there will need to be a clear organisational structure and clear roles for all partners. This will need to be regularly revisited and updated.

As with any partnership, people must have a spirit of good intention, with good *personal* relationships being the key to effective *working* relationships.

Suggestions for encouraging involvement

- Spend time discovering what words and terms will cause confusion, and invite groups in to establish a commonly understood vocabulary.
- The various support services will be seen as more approachable and accessible within the school, if people get used to their presence.
- Invite individuals or agency workers to talk at staff meetings about their work and what they can offer teachers and the school community.
- Use professional development days to explore mental health issues (eg adolescent psychology, helping students who bully, understanding addiction), and invite appropriate agencies or individuals to help plan or run sessions.



- Encourage agencies and individuals to help plan and participate in classroom activities when areas of their specialisation are being dealt with. At the same time, they can explain to students what supports and services they can offer.
- Encourage agencies to address parent and community meetings (both formal and informal) on how their involvement in the school community can benefit them and their children.
- Good personal relationships make for good working relationships. Some members of staff within schools (particularly in small communities) do establish very good relationships with individuals within agencies, on a social level. This can be done both informally (Friday evening happy hour) and more formally (an invitation to a staff barbecue).
- Ask representatives of community-based organisations whether there are any other organisations or individuals they know of who should be consulted, and what services and programs each organisation provides. This information will be needed to fill any gaps in the audit.
- Meet with agency representatives, preferably as an intersectoral group, to discuss issues of mutual concern and ways of working cooperatively and possibly collaboratively. This could develop into the establishment of a regular meeting every two or three months and/or the setting up of more formal partnership agreements.

The community forum

‘When recruiting members, organisations should look for people who will bring *clout*, *commitment* and *diversity* to the table.’

Melville et al 1993

Holding a community forum is a suggested strategy for the initial development of relationships that could become more collaborative partnerships for promoting the social and emotional wellbeing of students. This approach is a guide, and should be considered together with the issues and ideas about involving support services, parents and community, and students. It may be appropriate to work on this together with an interested community agency or group.

Before the community forum

After completing the community database (Chapter 2), each of the people identified as being able to contribute to student wellbeing should be contacted by a member of the school staff. Remember that for some communities this is best done by a member of that community. The following process might be useful.

- Send an initial letter of introduction (signed by the principal or another recognisably authoritative figure in the school).
- Ask the Aboriginal Student Support and Parent Awareness Committee – or similar – to inform their local community.

CM

Who is our community?
database, p 25

- Follow up with a phone call within a few days, if possible.
- Arrange a one-to-one meeting about the need for community input to the whole school approach to mental health promotion.
- Arrange a forum for all interested people a few weeks later.
- Remind people the day before the meeting, by phone if possible.

Some tasks of the forum could be:

- to present the school's reasons for wanting to work in partnership for mental health promotion;
- to find out where people are coming from and what they have to offer;
- to explore different partnership structures (responsibilities, accountability, membership, numbers, decision-making processes) for ongoing whole school mental health promotion.

Circulate the agenda well beforehand so that people know what they are coming to. Make an effort to communicate in languages other than English where appropriate, and make it clear what translation services will be available.

The physical arrangements of the forum are crucial. Seriously consider holding the forum off-site, in a community centre or similar place, to encourage people to attend. It is important to choose a neutral venue in which people are most likely to feel comfortable. A neutral venue may be more appropriate than one normally used by only a small section of the community, such as sporting, religious or cultural groups.

Ensure that the venue is set up so that people are comfortable, can see each other and have a table in front of them. Model strategies to promote wellbeing.

During the forum

- Obtain a list of all participants which includes their contact details and the name of the group they represent, if applicable. Ask them to add to the list any other people they think might be interested in being involved in the future. Remind people of this again at the end of the forum – by then people will have a clearer idea of what it's all about.
- It may be most productive to have a well-known and respected community member (eg a GP, an Elder) chair the forum.
- Have one or two people take minutes so that a forum report can be prepared.
- A short presentation by a mental health professional could be valuable.
- Clarify early on what the structure of the forum will be, and what is expected of participants.

'Collaboration should not be seen primarily as a problem of getting professionals and human service agencies to work together more efficiently and effectively. This goal, though laudable, does not respond to the core problems ... Instead, the major issue is how to get whole communities, the *haves* and *have-nots*, to engage in the difficult task of community development.'

White and Wehlag 1995, pp 36-37

- Consider inviting students to present their perspectives to the forum, possibly through the Students' Representative Council.
- Provide refreshments during a break in proceedings, where people can debrief and return with more ideas and confidence. Having a parent or community group cater will encourage more participation.
- A dramatic student presentation on wellbeing issues would give the forum a context, as would a student poster display.
- Work in small groups where possible, to allow more individual voices to be heard and to encourage participation.
- Allow time for discussion and active participation.
- Ensure that by the close of the forum a decision has been made about what the next step will be, and that everyone is clear on what it is.



SchoolMatters has ideas for planning, promoting, delivering, monitoring and evaluating the promotion of student mental health and wellbeing.

After the forum

- Ensure that the forum report is circulated to participants and the community generally. Make use of the school newsletter, local newspaper, community radio station, shop windows, community group notice boards and newsletters. In some communities this may need to be done personally by community members.
- Ensure that the agreed action is carried out.
- Consider using the Protective Factors Process to guide your work (Appendix 7).