

Evaluation of MindMatters Professional Development Program

This evaluation was conducted by the Hunter Institute of Mental Health between July 2001 and July 2004.

It focussed on the roll-out across Australia of a program of Professional Development (PD) for teachers and others in the school community. The PD focussed on raising awareness of the underlying principles of MindMatters and to encourage schools to utilise the resources in a whole-school manner in an attempt to promote positive mental health in schools. Key success criteria for the PD program were set and three main research methods used to determine whether or not they had been met:

- A survey of participants in professional development training (PD Questionnaire);
- Key informant interviews (from education sectors and health departments in each state and territory); and
- A case study of fifteen schools randomly chosen from schools where teachers had attended PD.

The evaluation reached the following conclusions:

- The roll-out of PD across states and territories was done in such a way as to provide reasonable equity of access for all secondary schools, with special efforts made to overcome the barriers experienced by rural and remote schools.
- The roll-out of PD was planned and conducted in consultation with education sectors and health authorities in each state and territory and was rated highly by the majority of representatives of these sectors and authorities.
- A minority of informants believed that the model of PD was a centralised one and that greater gains may have been achieved had a more localised approach been taken.
- Participants who were surveyed rated the quality of training very positively.
- 88% of those participants who were surveyed PD reported that their school had decided to utilise the MindMatters resources.
- More than half of the participants surveyed (58%) indicated that their school had provided flow-on professional development to other members of the school community.

- Based on information provided by those participants who were surveyed, it is conservatively estimated that at least 35% of schools that attended the PD and decided to utilise the MindMatters resources, utilised a 'whole-school' approach to using the program.
- Around 80% of participants surveyed reported that their school was using the MindMatters curriculum resources in their school's teaching program.
- All of the schools involved in the case study reported some level of adoption of the MindMatters curriculum resources, and around three quarters also made other changes to policies and procedures.
- Case study schools showed evidence of positive changes in indicators of student wellbeing, as well as other positive impacts on staff and the school as a whole.
- Two thirds of participants surveyed indicated that their school's use of the MindMatters resources was likely to extend beyond three years. Of fifteen case study schools that commenced using MindMatters in 2001 or 2002, thirteen were continuing to implement the program after three years.