

MODULE 1.1

# GETTING STARTED

# Table of contents

|  |    |
|--|----|
| MindMatters – A mental health framework, not a program     | 4  |
| Whole school approach                                      | 5  |
| Leadership   | 6  |
| Executive leadership support is vital                      | 6  |
| Distributed leadership is necessary for sustainable change | 6  |
| Everybody is a leader for wellbeing                        | 7  |
| Planning and implementation overview                       | 8  |
| Plan   | 8  |
| Do   | 9  |
| Review   | 9  |
| Putting together an action team                            | 10 |
| The role of the action team                                | 10 |
| Forming an effective action team                           | 10 |
| First tasks of the action team                             | 11 |
| Writing an action team mission statement                   | 11 |
| Setting up sustainable practice                            | 12 |
| Gathering data   | 12 |
| Interpreting data  | 13 |
| Writing the implementation plan                            | 14 |
| Overview of the implementation plan                        | 14 |
| Establishing goals and strategies                          | 19 |
| References and key readings                                | 21 |

# Getting started

## Objectives

- School leadership understands the MindMatters framework and how they can lead MindMatters in their school.
- School leadership develops and implements strategies for integrating mental health and wellbeing into everyday policy and practice.

## Outcomes

School leadership:

- understands the MindMatters four component framework
- gains confidence and the knowledge and skills to begin, or continue with, a whole school approach to mental health and wellbeing
- understands and uses the three part planning process – ‘Plan, Do, Review’ – to guide planning and implementation of MindMatters
- puts together an action team to guide MindMatters implementation
- develops a data-informed implementation plan, including strategies to engage the school with the MindMatters modules
- considers how to market MindMatters to the wider school community.

## Key messages

A whole school approach to mental health and wellbeing generates better social, emotional and academic outcomes for students. Successful implementation requires:

- support from executive leadership for resourcing and sustainability
- a diverse, high performing action team to ensure all parts of the school community are represented
- a targeted, data-informed long term plan to ensure that mental health and wellbeing remains on the school agenda
- effective communication in order to gain sustained staff support.

# MindMatters – A mental health framework, not a program

**MindMatters is not a ‘one size fits all’ program. There is considerable and increasing diversity in school communities across Australia and no single mental health ‘program’ or resource will adequately address the needs of all schools. Instead, MindMatters is an organising framework for strengthening student mental health and wellbeing across the school community.**

MindMatters provides schools with systematic and comprehensive approach to supporting student mental health and wellbeing through the implementation of mental health promotion, prevention and early intervention strategies.

As with KidsMatter, MindMatters consists of four components:

- **Positive school community**
- **Student skills for resilience**
- **Parents and families**
- **Support for students experiencing mental health difficulties.**

Each component consists of a set of target areas and objectives. The target areas identify areas of focus and the objectives identify ‘school actions’ or ‘school staff skills or capacities’ that support student mental health and wellbeing. Although the objectives for MindMatters are defined, they are deliberately broad so that individual schools can identify and implement strategies that are meaningful and achievable to them.



## KidsMatter Primary

KidsMatter Primary ([www.kidsmatter.edu.au/primary](http://www.kidsmatter.edu.au/primary)), is a mental health and wellbeing framework for primary schools that provides proven methods, tools and support to help schools work with parents and carers, health services and the wider community, to nurture happy, balanced children. KidsMatter primary uses the same four component framework as the new MindMatters, ensuring a common mental health language from early childhood through secondary school.

# Whole school approach

Mentally healthy school communities are supported by cohesive, collaborative and sustained actions that have been strategically planned to improve outcomes across the entire school community. This requires:

- examining beliefs and perceptions about mental health across the school community
- building staff (and student and parent) understanding about mental health as well as their commitment to it
- distributing leadership for mental health promotion activity
- basing strategic plans on data and evidence
- using data to monitor impact
- building a focus on mental health into the very fabric of the school so that it becomes 'a way of working' for everyone.

Schools are encouraged to understand the whole school change process and commit to implementing MindMatters over time.



# Leadership

**Developing and implementing MindMatters across the whole school community will require leadership and an effective team to drive the initiative.**

## **Executive leadership support is vital**

It is vital the executive leadership team has an understanding of the MindMatters framework and a whole school approach to wellbeing. Executive leadership needs to support the action team in carrying out its plans in order to increase the chance of success.

Executive leadership support will help to effectively embed changes into the culture of the school and ensure they continue even during times of staff turnover or when there are competing demands.



## **Distributed leadership is necessary for sustainable change**

In addition to the support from executive leadership, it is important that leadership is distributed. An effective and diverse action team represents the entire school community. This ensures the school community feels a sense of ownership and input into the outcome.

## Distributed leadership

Distributed leadership reflects the current direction in leadership practices schools are taking. It is the result of the increased demands on schools and therefore a more efficient and effective way of meeting those demands. There is increasing evidence of the positive impact of distributed leadership on organisational structures and student learning.



## Everybody is a leader for wellbeing

A whole school implementation of MindMatters recognises that leadership is not just positional. Leadership needs to be demonstrated by every single person in a school community by how they role model, contribute, carry out their day-to-day duties and interact with others.

# Planning and implementation overview

MindMatters uses a continuous development cycle to guide schools through the three-part, planning and implementation process – **Plan, Do, Review**. The process is led by the action team and its views are reflected in the decision making processes and the plans developed to promote mental health and wellbeing across the school community. All plans for change are informed by school data, which is gathered from a range of sources. This provides a baseline from which to plan, act, measure change and plan continual improvement.

## What is an action team?

An action team, is made up of representatives from different groups across the school and must include a member of the executive leadership team. The distributed leadership of this model enables initiatives to be influenced by a diverse range of perspectives. Action teams are discussed in more detail below.

## Plan

The first planning activities involve collecting and interpreting data in order to understand the current position of the whole school community in relation to mental health and wellbeing. Surveys can be used to provide a snapshot of people's experience with the school and provide insights into the strengths, knowledge and good practice that is already present within the school. The analysed data is then used to identify areas that require more attention and will support the development of a clear and compelling vision and mission for enhancing mental health and wellbeing.

With a clear picture of the whole school context, the action team develops an implementation plan addressing each of the four components of the MindMatters framework. Within each component, the team identifies:

- focus areas that correspond to the specific needs of the whole school community
- goals that are achievable, measurable, and realistic within a specified time frame
- strategies to realise the goals
- measures to be used throughout the implementation process to indicate outcomes.



## Do

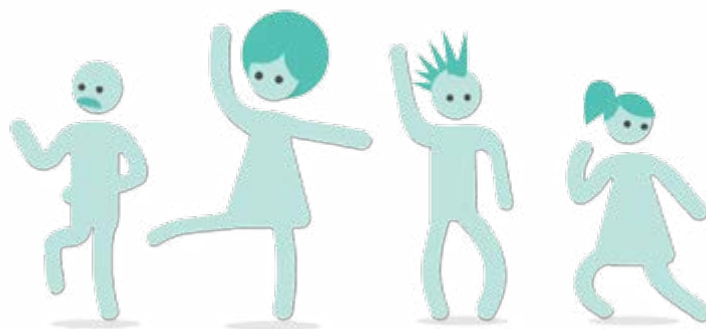
The action team leads the implementation process and communicates its vision and plan for change to the school community. Through continued communication, the action team guides and sustains development, working to embed the change into the culture of the school.

The implementation plan is used throughout the process of change for schools to document and track their progress. The plan enables the action team to maintain a record of its planning and implementation journey, and engage in a step-by-step cycle of continuous improvement.

### The importance of perseverance and communication

Proper communication will support the change process, as will involving a broad range of people in the initiative. Clear, accurate communication channels across the school will help ensure that new practices are met with understanding and a will to engage.

Doing things differently can present challenges in schools and it is important to recognise that perseverance through testing times is essential to achieve desired improvements.



## Review

At regular stages throughout the implementation process schools should review their progress and share and celebrate achievements. As part of the review process, the implementation plan may need to be adjusted to accommodate changing conditions in order to facilitate continuous development.

Collecting and analysing data to evaluate the effectiveness of the initiative, including its leadership, planning and communication strategy, is an important part of the review process as it indicates how far the school has progressed. This data confirms whether it is time for a new planning stage in the MindMatters continuous development cycle.

The MindMatters survey tool allows for annual reviews of progress. **See Module 1.2 Using data for planning and success** for more information about the survey tool.

# Putting together an action team

## The role of the action team

The role of the action team is to develop an implementation plan and guide the school community through a process of building the skills and knowledge needed to bring about whole school improvements in mental health and wellbeing. The implementation plan is discussed in more detail below.

## Forming an effective action team

An action team is a group that is interested in and passionate about mental health and is comprised of diverse roles and voices representing different groups in the school. Forming an effective action team is one way of ensuring leadership in the wellbeing area is distributed and sustainable. The team follows a process that is carefully planned and carried out and should have the authority to make decisions relating to the implementation plan.

**An action team is made up of approximately four to seven committed and passionate individuals from diverse roles in the school community. It is vital this includes executive leadership. Other members could be drawn from:**

- wellbeing/welfare
- teaching
- faculty heads
- education support or ancillary
- parent groups
- students (note: consider a separate student group, or more than one student, to ensure they feel comfortable in a predominantly adult team)
- community, health and mental health sector.

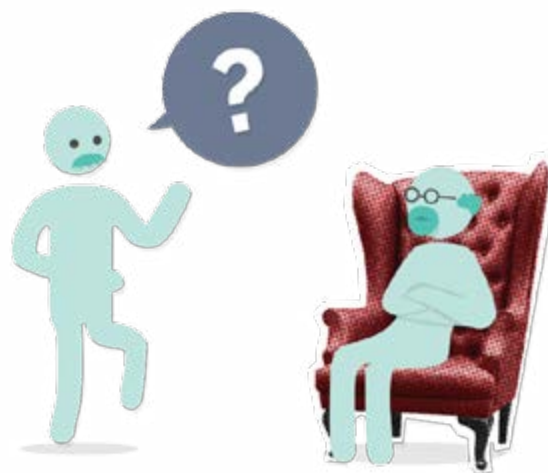
The following questions may help determine who would be best to include in the action team:

- Who are the school community members who are passionate about wellbeing and looking for opportunities for greater involvement at a whole school level?
- Who has the capacity to commit to regular meetings and whole school planning and engagement?
- Do you have representation from all areas of the school community? e.g. the quiet achievers, new staff, leaders without title, ancillary staff, parents, students
- What process will you use to select or invite team members?

# First tasks of the action team

Once the action team has formed, it may first like to consider:

- How do we operate as an action team?
- How do we see our role?
- What are the boundaries?
- Do we need to review action team membership?
- Are there other people who would be strategically useful to include?



## Writing an action team mission statement

It is helpful for communication and guidance for the action team to have a mission statement and 'purpose' for existence to other members of the school community. Ideally the statement will:

- clarify the parameters of the action team's role
- express the goals of the initiative
- define the target groups for the plan.

If the mission is stated clearly and concisely, it can be understood by everyone. The mission statement can be revisited regularly and adjusted depending on the focus of the action team at different times of the implementation journey.

## Setting up sustainable practice

Once a mission statement has been written, the action team can use the following questions to guide decisions about how to make its work productive and sustainable:

- How often will we meet?
- How will we structure meetings?
- What agreements do we need to have in place for working together?
- How often will we review progress?
- Have we considered what is realistic and achievable?



## Gathering data

### Perception wheel

To help start the conversations, it can be useful to discuss individual perceptions about the current progress of the school in relation to the MindMatters framework and a whole school approach to mental health and wellbeing. This process can capture the perceived strengths and good practice that are already present within the school and informs the action team of possible starting points and areas of focus for improvement.

### Instructions

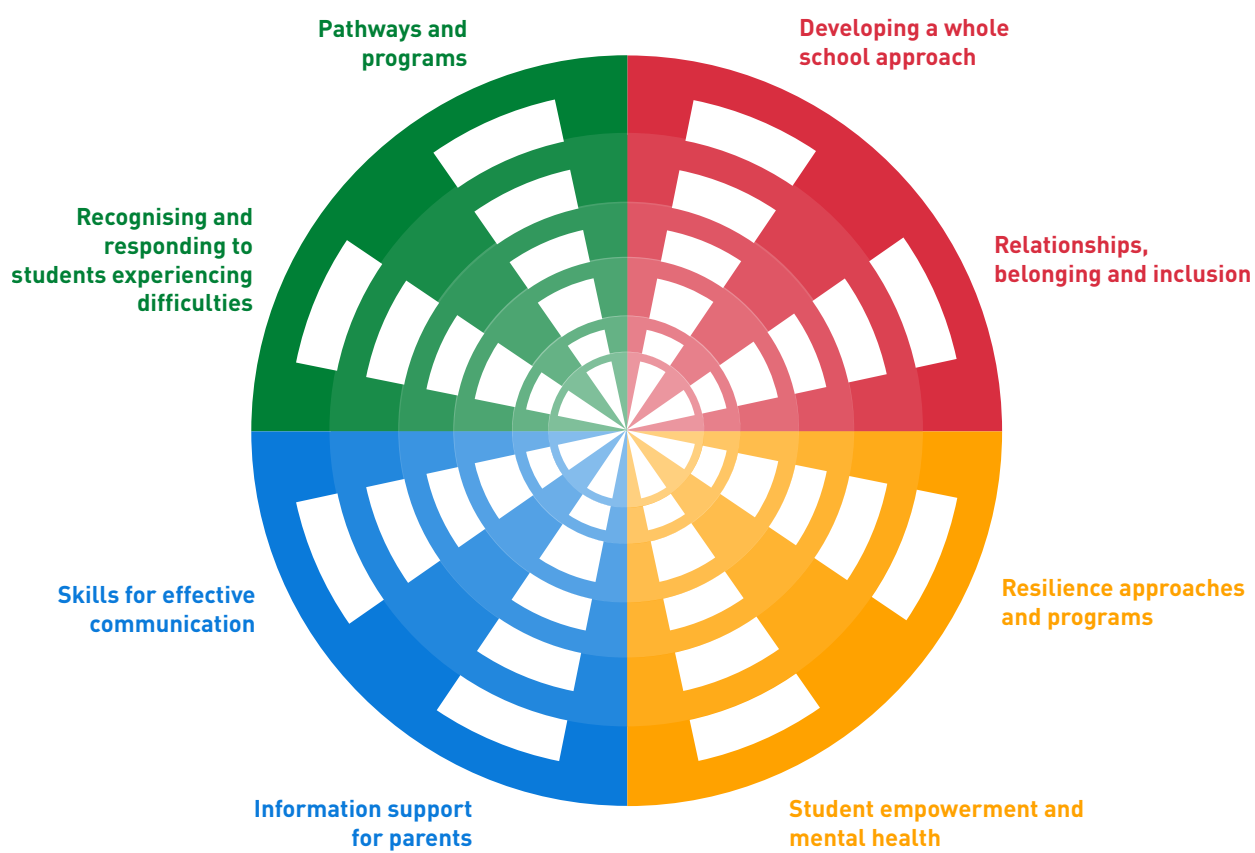
Using the perception wheel, consider the school's current position in the following target areas:

- Developing a whole school approach
- Relationships, belonging and inclusion
- Resilience approaches and programs
- Student empowerment and mental health
- Information support for parents (about mental health)
- Skills for effective communication (with parents)
- Recognising and responding to students experiencing difficulties
- Pathways and programs.

The colour coding of the wheel aligns to the four MindMatters components and the labels match the MindMatters target areas.

1. For each target area, use a scale of **1 to 6 – where 1 = low level of agreement (centre of the wheel) and 6 = high level of agreement (outside section of the wheel)** – to colour in the box that illustrates your perception of the school's current progress in that area.
2. Discuss your perceptions with those of others in the action team. Work towards finding a consensus of the current position for each target area.
3. Record areas of strength and areas for development.

## Perception wheel



## MindMatters surveys

The MindMatters survey tool includes four surveys, which can be used to understand the perceptions of the whole school community.

### School check-up survey

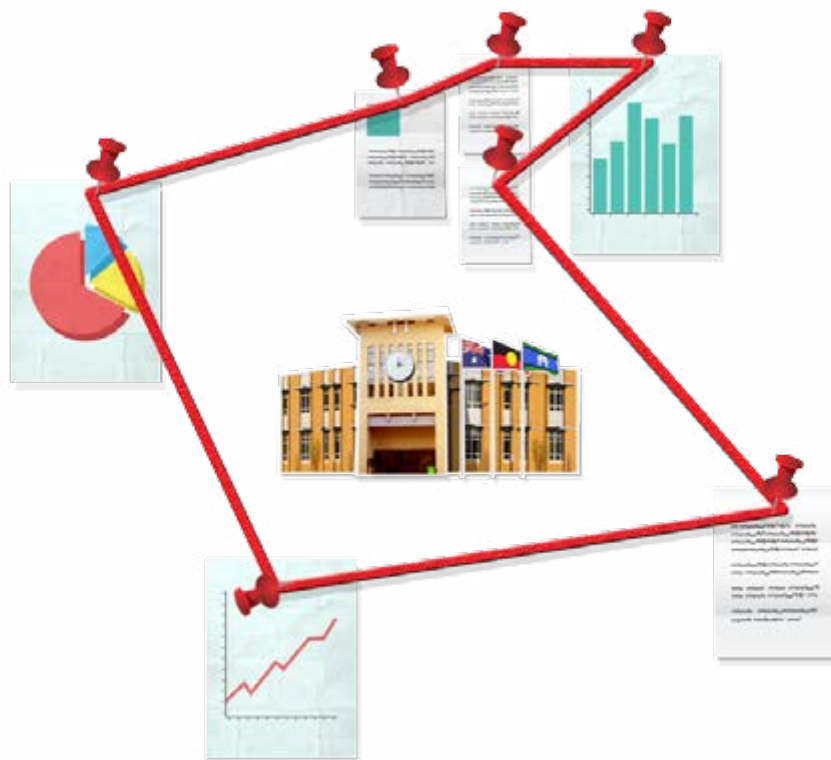
The school check-up survey provides an informed high-level snapshot of your school. It collates and identifies areas of strength and areas of development, based on the target areas, and is essentially a deeper look at the target areas on the perception wheel. The school check-up survey can be completed by the action team as well as other leaders within the school.

### Staff, student and parent-family surveys

The action team may also gather data using the three surveys of groups within the school community: staff, students and parents and families. The team uses the data to identify patterns and links. The survey tool collates the data into a report for each survey, which makes this job easy.

See **Module 1.2 Using data for planning and success** for information about the MindMatters survey tool.





## Interpreting data

The following steps can help the action team draw conclusions and establish priorities from comprehensive data:

- Name three interesting trends
- Identify three areas of strength
- Find three areas for improvement
- Clarify what other data would have been useful.

Data analysis will help the action team to prioritise a focus for planning and implementation and identify a well-informed starting point. Once identified, the action team will develop goals to aim for.

# Writing the implementation plan

After the action team is formed and has collected and interpreted data in order to understand the mental health picture of the whole school community, the next step is to write the implementation plan. This plan will guide actions, follow up measures and the continual improvement process.

## Overview of the implementation plan

The MindMatters implementation plan template outlines a structure for planning implementation actions relating to mental health and wellbeing. The implementation plan template covers the following areas:

- MindMatters framework overview
- School information and context
- Action team details
- Component planning
- Making it happen.

### Download the implementation plan template

To get started on writing your implementation plan, download the template.

<http://bit.ly/1CACldH>





## MindMatters framework overview

This section outlines the components, target areas and objectives of the MindMatters framework, which are used by the action team to plan the implementation.

| Components  | Target areas                          | Objectives  |
|---|---------------------------------------|---|
| <b>C1 Positive school community</b><br><br>Component 1 is all about the big picture. How do we define mental health? How do you develop an effective whole school plan to improve mental health and wellbeing? How can you use data to improve your decision-making? How do | 1. Developing a whole school approach | School leadership understand the MindMatters framework model and how they can lead MindMatters in their school.<br><br>School leadership develop and implement strategies for integrating mental health and wellbeing into everyday policy and practice.<br><br>School staff understand the importance of mental health and wellbeing, its impact on student participation, learning and academic outcomes and the contributions schools make to supporting student mental health.<br><br>School staff understand the value of a whole school community approach to addressing student mental health and wellbeing. |
|   | 2. Relationships, belonging           | School staff understand that positive relationships, a sense of belonging and inclusion are   |

## School information and context

This section is completed by the action team and includes relevant information about the overarching school vision or mission, strategic plan, school improvement plan targets and school policies linked to mental health and wellbeing. Making links with these aspects of the school context will strengthen and streamline implementation efforts.

|                            |
|----------------------------|
| School type                |
| Education sector           |
| State/territory            |
| MindMatters school contact |
| PAI project officer        |

## Action team details

In this section the action team can record who is represented on the team as well as its MindMatters mission statement. It is important for the whole school community to be aware of who is represented on the action team and its purpose (through a succinct action team mission statement).

The action team comprises key members of the school community who work collaboratively to lead, plan and implement MindMatters in the school. List action team members and their roles in the space below.

|                             |                 |
|-----------------------------|-----------------|
| Name of action team leader  |                 |
| Executive school leadership | Faculty leaders |
| School support staff        | Teachers        |

## Component planning

To help establish a baseline from which to plan, act and measure improvements, the action team members explore their own beliefs and perceptions relating to mental health and wellbeing. They examine school data that has been collected from a number of sources, especially the MindMatters school check-up and staff, student and parent-family surveys. The action team can use this data to identify trends, draw conclusions and establish priorities linked to the MindMatters target areas and objectives.

| C1 Positive school community   |  |                        |                               |            |            |   |
|--|--|------------------------|-------------------------------|------------|------------|---|
| TA1 Developing a whole school approach   |  |                        |                               |            |            |   |
| Target areas and objectives<br><small>Circle your priority objectives</small>  | MindMatters survey scores                              | Data summary statement | Specific implementation goals | Indicators | Strategies | Tracking progress of each goal  |
| School leadership understand the MindMatters framework and how they can lead MindMatters in their school.<br>School leadership develop and implement strategies for integrating mental | Check-up:<br>Staff:<br>Parents:<br>Students:<br>Other: |                        |                               |            |            | Not commenced<br>T1 T2 T3 T4<br><input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/><br>Progress stalled<br>T1 T2 T3 T4<br><input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/><br>On track |

## Making it happen

It is vital the whole school community feels involved in MindMatters implementation for its success and sustainability. This section of the implementation plan is about communicating and sustaining implementation. The action team determines how to communicate its implementation plan to the school community so that MindMatters implementation, school engagement and interest is sustained.

**SUSTAINING**

*How can we sustain engagement and interest? Use these questions to brainstorm ways to engage the school community.*

|                            |
|----------------------------|
| Why do we need to change?  |
| Who do we need to involve? |

## Establishing goals and strategies

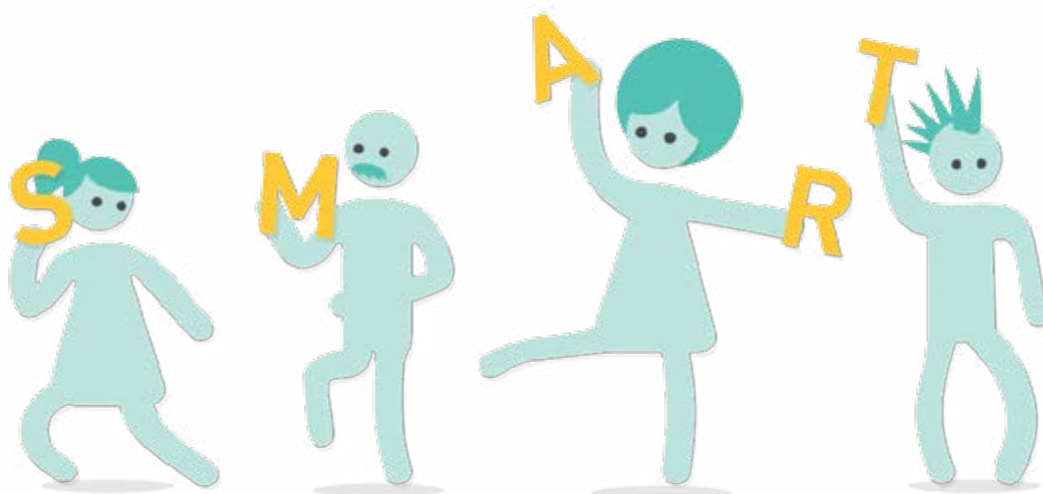
An implementation plan can be developed for each of the four components of the MindMatters framework. It is recommended schools begin planning around Component 1, although this is not mandatory. For each component:

- Identify a relevant target area to begin planning, based on the perception wheel, the MindMatters surveys or other school data (see **Module 1.2 Using data for planning and success** to learn more about other sources of data)
- Develop and record one or more specific implementation goals.

### SMART goals

When identifying goals it can be helpful to keep in mind the idea of SMART goals, which can be used to scaffold the process:

- **S** - Specific — What specifically will we see when this goal is reached?
- **M** - Measurable — How will this be measured? What will you be looking for in your data?
- **A** - Achievable — What competing demands do you need to consider when setting this goal?
- **R** - Realistic — Can you do it?
- **T** - Timely — By when would you like to have this done?



## SMART goal example check

**“By the end of the year, 80% of staff will meet and greet parents and carers for 15 minutes at the end of the school day at least once a week as measured by a short parent and staff survey”**

Is it **S**pecific? **(YES)** = ‘80% of staff’ and ‘end of the school day’ and ‘at least once a week’.

Is it **M**easurable? **(YES)** = ‘80% of staff’ and ‘measured by a short parent and staff survey’.

Is it **A**chievable? **(YES)** = it is only 15 minutes once a week.

Is it **R**ealistic? **(YES but may need adjusting)** = yes, once per week should be manageable with the current workload but can be adjusted in consultation with the broader staff group.

Is it **T**imely? **(YES)** = ‘by the end of the year’.

With specific implementation goals in mind, the action team decides on the strategies that will enable the school to achieve them. For each strategy, the action team establishes a set of indicators to know when it’s on its way to achieving its goals.

For example:

| Strategy   | Measure  |
|--|--|
| The action team will facilitate a one hour ‘Introduction to MindMatters’ session with staff using <b>Module 1.3 What is mental health?</b> | In week three. An attendance list will show that this goal has been reached (Indicator). |

To successfully implement the strategies within the implementation plan, the action team should:

- involve a broad range of people in designing and undertaking activities
- implement changes at a considered and planned pace
- establish and sustain clear and effective communication channels
- review and refine school policies to ensure they support the implementation plan’s goals.

It’s recommended that the action team takes six months to a year to implement actions around the first component. Once the team has achieved the majority of its goals it can work through the process for the next component and so on.

# References and key readings

Atkins, M.S., Hoagwood, K.E., Kutash, K. & Seidman (2010). Toward the integration of education and mental health in schools. *Administration and Policy in Mental Health and Mental Health Services*, 37, 40-47.

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NSW Commission for Children and Young People (2014). Support in tough times: *Encouraging young people to seek help for their friends*. Sydney: NSW Commission for Children and Young People; Mental Health Commission of New South Wales.

Rickwood, D. (2011). Promoting youth mental health: priorities for policy from an Australian perspective. *Early Intervention in Psychiatry* 2011; 5 (Suppl. 1): 40-45.

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MindMatters is a national mental health initiative for secondary schools developed by *beyondblue* with funding from the Australian Government Department of Health.

See more MindMatters resources at [www.mindmatters.edu.au](http://www.mindmatters.edu.au)