



4.2.5 Teaching and Learning - Mental Health Policy (Primary)

Introduction

South Coast Baptist College is committed to providing an excellent education program that enables students to develop the necessary knowledge, skills and understandings to achieve and thrive both academically and personally, during their formal schooling and beyond.

The promotion of positive mental health during a student's formal education is integral to the development of social and emotional learning, along with an understanding of student wellbeing. Promoting positive mental health is an essential component of the teaching and learning process at the College and is vital to the way students think about themselves and are engaged in the process of learning. Promoting positive mental health processes at South Coast Baptist College are consistent with the school's stated values and beliefs about learning and teaching in a safe and empowering environment.

Purpose

This Policy provides direction relating to the promotion of positive mental health at South Coast Baptist College. This policy recognises that to create a learning environment that enables students to thrive, it is essential that mental health practices are consistently integrated into teaching and learning processes in every year of schooling. Through this policy, accountability requirements can also be met at student, school and government levels.

Scope

The Mental Health Policy is intended to apply to all learning and teaching for which the College is responsible including learning and teaching undertaken by partner organisations where the school is responsible for quality assurance. In such cases, this policy serves as a guide for the expectations of South Coast Baptist College.

Definitions

At South Coast Baptist College our definitions for the terminology in relation to mental health are as follows:

Mental Health – The ability for children to cope with their emotions, to bounce back from problems, and to develop positive relationships

Social and Emotional Learning – Social and emotional skills promote children's ability to cope with difficulties and help to prevent mental health problems.

Risk and Protective Factors – Risk factors for children's mental health increase the chance of mental health difficulties developing. Protective factors for children's mental health decrease the likelihood of experiencing mental health difficulties.

Support Network – Children, parents, carers and families cope best when they have support. Support may be available through friends, extended family, schools, community organisations or professionals. Being able to draw on a network of support is especially necessary during challenging times.

Mindfulness– Mindfulness is a whole body-mind state of awareness that involves 'tuning in' to the present moment, with openness and curiosity, instead of 'tuning out' from experience.

Depression– A diagnosis of depression is made when the depressed mood has lasted more than two weeks, when it is intense, and when the symptoms of depression interfere with the person's ability to manage everyday things.

Belonging- Having a sense of belonging is about knowing you can seek support when you need it, that you will be listened to, and that you can work together with others to solve problems. Support may come from talking with staff or from making connections with other children or families.

Anxiety- Anxiety is a regular display of fearful and anxious behaviour. Anxiety is present when children struggle to cope with a range of normal fears and worries. Types of anxiety in children include: separation anxiety, phobia, social phobia, generalised anxiety disorder, post-traumatic stress disorder, obsessive compulsive disorder and school refusal.

Bullying- Bullying involves deliberately and repeatedly attempting to hurt, scare or exclude someone. It can include hitting, pushing, name calling, or taking someone's belongings.

Body Image- Body image is a broad concept that refers to the way people think and feel about their appearance¹. It encompasses ideas about size and shape, skin colour, birthmarks, scars, facial features, clothing and adornments related to personal religious beliefs, physical disabilities, and the use of equipment and aids like prostheses or wheelchairs.

Responsibility

South Coast Baptist College Board

The Board has a responsibility to:

- work with the Principal of the College to ensure this policy is implemented and monitored.

Principal

The Principal of South Coast Baptist College has a responsibility to:

- approve the implementation of this policy;
- allocate responsibility for developing and implementing the policy to School leadership positions;
- ensure that information about the policy and school action is accessible to and enacted upon by all members of the school community;
- ensure that teachers are supported to implement this policy effectively;
- show leadership in identifying and developing good practice;

- ensure that school assessment and reporting practices are regularly monitored, reviewed and evaluated;
- ensure that members of the school community are provided with opportunities to participate in the development and review of this policy
- ensure belonging and inclusion for all school community members is specifically addressed in the school strategic planning, policies and practices
- Ensure that school staff have an understanding of childhood mental health difficulties including common signs and symptoms, the impact on children and families, and factors that put children at risk.

Teachers

Teachers have a responsibility to:

- work with colleagues to contribute to a coordinated whole school approach to the promotion of positive mental health
- facilitate the implementation of this policy within their area
- Develop skills and understanding of the importance of mental health and wellbeing, its impact on learning, and the significant contributions schools can make to improving student mental health.
- School staff develop an understanding of their school community.
- School staff expect and model respectful and responsive relationships within the school community.
- Ensure that social and emotional learning is taught effectively, formally and regularly in a co-ordinated and supported way.
- School staff provide information to parents about the school's social and emotional curriculum and work collaboratively with parents to assist students' development of social and emotional skills.
- School staff communicate effectively with parents about their children in areas related to child development, learning and mental health and wellbeing.
- Provides an inclusive and accepting environment for community members who may be experiencing difficulties with their mental health.

Students

Students have a responsibility to:

- Contribute positively to discussions about mental health
- Students practise and adapt their social and emotional skills to new situations in the classroom, school and wider community
- Speak up if they identify a problem

Parents

Parents have a responsibility to:

- Communicate relevant information that may affect their child's mental health
- Develop support networks, and actively seek to minimise barriers to participation.
- Respond to issues raised by the student or the school through parent/teacher interviews, email or verbal conversations

Principles

Professional knowledge about student mental health is regarded as a key skill for teachers. Teachers at South Coast Baptist College are supported in developing these skills through initial and continuing professional development.

The following principles underpin all mental health practices at South Coast Baptist College:

1. The best interests of the children are paramount

This means that all staff will:

- Monitor and evaluate student's mental health and general well-being.
- Report issues of concern to the appropriate agencies and school leadership.
- Find child-focussed solutions in conjunction with parents, health care providers, law enforcement and other staff members.
- Identify risk and protective factors.

2. Respectful relationships are foundational

This means that the College will:

- Provide appropriate and balanced positive reinforcement and discipline.
- Seek to understand where students are coming from.
- Give students opportunities to speak, listening closely to their joys, concerns and challenges.
- Create a sense of belonging in the class.

3. Parents and carers are recognised as the most important people in children's lives

This means that teachers will:

- Provide feedback to parents regarding their child's progress.
- Provide support to parents in the way of information and advice to help parenting skills.
- Work with parents to help students experiencing mental health difficulties.

4. Students need to be active participants

This means that:

- Students are encouraged to make positive choices and manage their emotions.
- Social and emotional learning will be interactive and inclusive.
- Students are encouraged to have a sense of 'mindfulness' and speak up if they're experiencing difficulty.
- Students are encouraged to identify their support networks.

5. Schools, Health and Community organisations will work together with families

This means that:

- Relevant information will be shared between the appropriate group/s.
- The College will make recommendations and referrals.

Sources

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

Commonwealth Department of Health and Aged Care, 2000; Spence, 1996

Bronfenbrenner, 1977

Developing Good Mental Health

South Coast Baptist College has both formal and informal methods of helping foster good mental health in students. This is through promotion, prevention and early intervention.

A Positive School Community

- Student Focus Assemblies – exploring school values Hope, Love, Wisdom and Grit.
- Implementation of NaturePlay areas.
- Camps (Yr 5 and 6).
- Sport and club opportunities.
- The 'Fathering Project' group – supporting fathers to connect with each other and their children.
- Class Connect Parents – support the classroom teacher and other parents.
- School Facebook page and newsletter.
- Discipline system – focus on restoration.
- House rewards system.
- In class discipline and rewards system.
- Social events – eg – disco, run club, swim club.
- Welcome morning tea for new parents.
- School musical.
- Parents welcome to help in the classroom and attend carnivals, assemblies and special events.
- PD for teachers.
- Pulse Wellbeing Surveys.

Social and Emotional Learning for Students

- Peacewise curriculum (dealing with conflict).
- Protective Behaviours program K-6.
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- Positive Education Enhanced Curriculum.
- Student Focus Assemblies.
- Informal teacher direction to students during class and breaks.
- PD for teachers.

Working With Parents and Carers

- Class Connect Parents.
- Case meetings.
- Clear referrals to parents from the Wellbeing Support Team.
- Inviting input and support from parents regarding their child.
- Special parent education events eg – 'Boys in the Classroom'.
- Sharing advice and information with parents.
- Parent/Teacher meetings two times a year.
- Parent morning teas and other social events.

Helping Students with Mental Health Difficulties

- Teachers identifying students experiencing mental health difficulties
- Clear recommendations from the Wellbeing Support Team for action at school and at home
- Directed help from the Wellbeing Support Team for identified students in line with qualifications and capabilities. Listening to and involving students in the process.
- PD for teachers through the KidsMatter program

Review

This Policy will be reviewed annually as part of South Coast Baptist College's cycle of review of all Policies

Date Reviewed: 26/06/2022

Next Review Date: Term 2, 2024