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# *gatehouse project*

*Promoting emotional  
well-being:  
Team guidelines  
for  
whole school change*



*Promoting emotional well-being: Team guidelines for whole school change* is part one of the *Gatehouse Project* professional development materials, available through the Centre for Adolescent Health. It is used in conjunction with part two, *Teaching resources for emotional well-being*.

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The aim of the Centre for Adolescent Health is to improve the health and well-being of young people through integrated research, program development, advocacy, education and training, and clinical services.

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Continuing conceptual and practical contributions have been made by the broader Gatehouse Project team at the Centre for Adolescent Health.

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The Gatehouse Project is a recipient of two prestigious awards. These are the 2000 Victorian Public Health Award for Excellence in Innovation for Public Health Research, and 2001 VicHealth Excellence in Health Promotion Research Award.



## ***Preface***

Schools have long been used as settings for health education and health promotion, increasingly with a focus on mental health. Yet schools are themselves environments that have a significant effect on the emotional well-being of those within them. Connectedness to school has been identified as protective against a range of adverse health and education outcomes for young people. The Centre for Adolescent Health's Gatehouse Project is a school-based prevention program designed to build the capacity of school communities to understand and address the emotional and mental health needs of young people. It focuses both on promoting positive school environments that enhance a sense of connectedness for students, and on building individual skills and knowledge through the curriculum.

The Gatehouse Project team, established in 1995, has developed, implemented and evaluated a practical whole school strategy which can be adapted for individual school and systems contexts.

The strategy uses a conceptual framework which emphasises the importance of a sense of positive connection with teachers, peers and learning for student well-being. It therefore locates mental health promotion within the core business of the school: connectedness to school and engagement with learning. The project has identified three priority areas for action: building a sense of **security** and trust; enhancing skills and opportunities for **communication** and social connectedness; and building a sense of **positive regard** through valued participation in school life.

The Gatehouse Project provides a whole school strategy, co-ordinated by a broadly representative Adolescent Health Team, drawn from the school community. Recognising that our health and well-being is affected not only by our own decisions and actions, but also by our interactions with others within the context in which we find ourselves, it includes both individual-focused and environment-focused components. Drawing on the Health Promoting Schools framework, the strategy seeks to support schools to make changes in social and learning environments, introduce relevant and important skills through the curriculum, and strengthen the structures and processes that promote links between schools and their communities.

Team guidelines assist schools to plan, implement and evaluate a whole school strategy to reduce risk factors and enhance protective factors which affect student health and educational outcomes. Teaching resources provide teachers with teaching and learning strategies for working with students as individuals and in classes and small groups.

Evaluation of the Gatehouse Project has demonstrated effects of health and educational significance, and experience in implementing the strategy is now extensive. These materials have been used in a range of secondary schools in Victoria and New South Wales across government, Catholic, and independent systems.

Derived from the Gatehouse Project's work with school communities, the following components are now available for broader use in schools. Each is designed to be accompanied by professional development and training.

- The *Gatehouse Project: Promoting Emotional Well-being: Team Guidelines for Whole School Change* leads school teams through a five-stage process to examine policies, programs and practices in the school, and address identified issues within a whole school approach.
- The *Gatehouse Project: Teaching Resources for Emotional Well-being* provides curriculum materials designed to accompany the *Team guidelines*. The *Resources* use both environment-focused and individual-focused approaches, assisting teachers to explore teaching and learning strategies that develop positive classroom climates, and assist young people in dealing with difficult feelings and situations.
- The *Gatehouse Project Adolescent Health Survey* is designed to provide schools with a profile of their social and learning environment as perceived by students.

Further details can be found on the *Gatehouse Project Website*, which also provides information on project research and development, research findings, professional development options, and links to our other publications and related projects. [www.gatehouseproject.com](http://www.gatehouseproject.com)

## ***Introduction***

The Gatehouse Project offers schools a process and framework for responding to the increasing pressure they face to address the health needs of their students, particularly in relation to mental health and emotional well-being. It has been estimated that young people spend close to half their waking hours in school. Schools are therefore well recognised as important sites for the promotion of health and emotional well-being in young people. There is growing community awareness of the wide range of health issues affecting young people and the long-term effects when these issues are not addressed. Schools have already implemented a range of programs, policies and practices to address the needs of their students, and there is no shortage of new programs and services on offer. The challenge is to develop a whole school strategy which is founded in best practice, cohesive and co-ordinated, and fits the needs and context of the school community.

Responsibility for these issues in schools has traditionally been the domain of health education teachers and student welfare/student support staff. Often, the focus has been on providing health information or identifying students with particular problems, and providing them with support services. These continue to be important areas of focus. However, recent research suggests that the very experience of school impacts on health outcomes.

Health outcomes are compromised in situations when students feel victimised, socially isolated, bored, and when they do not feel noticed or valued. Health outcomes are likely to be improved when students feel connected to school and experience a sense of security, social connectedness and positive regard (Bond et al. 2001, Glover et al. 1998, Resnick et al. 1997). Moreover, educational outcomes are likely to be better when emotional well-being is enhanced (Zubrick 1997).

This research suggests that a positive and supportive school environment is of fundamental importance in promoting the health and well-being of all young people. The creation of such an environment requires the involvement of all members of the school community. The Gatehouse Project therefore promotes a team approach in which responsibility lies with the whole school community, with a range of its members participating in a strategy to bring about whole school change.

*Promoting Emotional Well-being: Team Guidelines for Whole School Change* introduces the school community to a five stage evidence-based process for promoting a positive school environment. The *Guidelines* are designed to be used by school teams to work systematically through the process, and perhaps to revisit the process in future reviews. Schools can use this process to strengthen existing and develop new policies, programs and practices for enhancing student connectedness to school. The process has been used by schools to co-ordinate the complex range of existing activities they have in place which impact on student well-being.

The *Team Guidelines* are in three parts. Part one provides information on the overall objectives and principles underlying the whole school strategy. Part two contains advice on implementing the strategy, and Part three contains research information, and materials for use in professional development.

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# ***Part One***

***An overview of the  
Whole School Strategy***

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## ***Purpose of the guidelines***

The purpose of these guidelines is to assist in the development of the whole school strategy for promoting the health and emotional well-being of young people in schools by enhancing their connectedness to school.

## ***Aims of the whole school strategy***

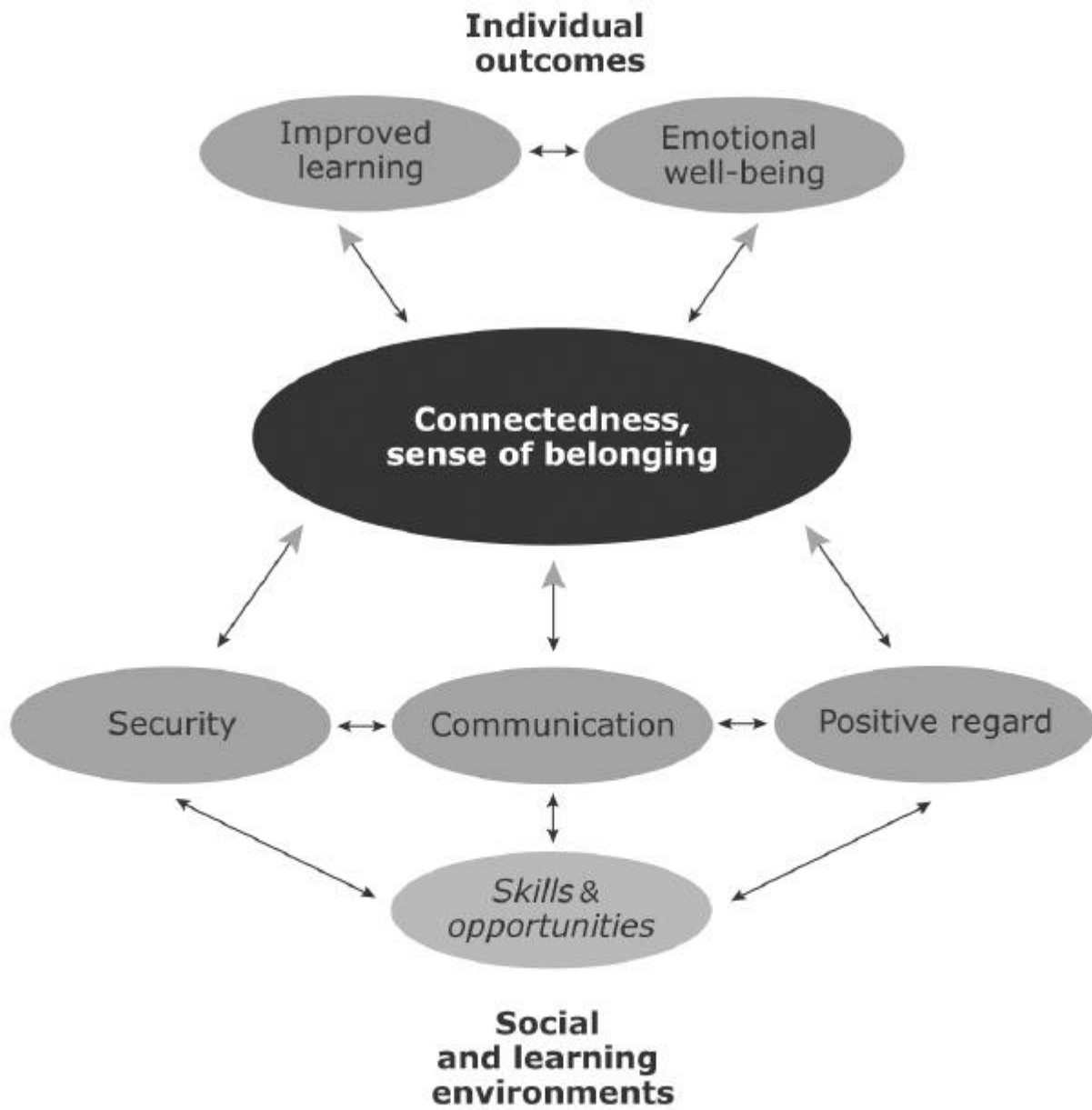
The whole school strategy of the Gatehouse Project provides schools with strong conceptual (page 10) and operational (page 15) frameworks to enhance understanding of adolescent health needs.

The aims of the whole school strategy of the Gatehouse Project are:

1. To enhance a young person's sense of ***connectedness*** to school and, in doing so, promote ***emotional well-being*** and ***improved learning outcomes***.
2. To address those aspects of the school's social and learning environments which enhance or reduce ***emotional well-being***.

## ***Conceptual Framework***

Figure 1, on the following page, shows the conceptual framework for achieving the aims of the Gatehouse Project. The framework highlights the importance of connectedness and belonging for the individual within the school community. The Project has identified three priority areas for action: building a sense of security and trust; enhancing skills and opportunities for good communication; and building a sense of positive regard through valued participation in all aspects of school life (Patton et al. 2000).



© The Conceptual Framework of the Gatehouse Project,  
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Figure 1: Conceptual framework for achieving the aims of the Gatehouse Project (Adapted 2002)

## ***Connectedness: Security, communication and positive regard***

In order to feel connected to others in the school environment and to schooling itself what do young people need? Research and conversations with young people suggest that connectedness to school can be developed by promoting security, communication and positive regard.

### **□ Security**

A sense of security and trust in others is fundamental to emotional well-being. Members of the school community need to feel safe, not just safe from physical harm, or threats of physical harm, but also safe to be themselves, whatever their gender, sexual orientation, ethnicity, family background and interests. They need to feel able to express a point of view, or take part in school activities without fear of being ridiculed, left out, or isolated.

### **□ Communication**

Communication is important for building social connectedness, and includes having the skills and opportunities to talk with others who are supportive. This is important for all young people, and particularly for those experiencing difficult times. While some staff in schools have particular responsibility for supporting students through difficult times, it is important for all staff and students to have strategies for communicating well with each other on a daily basis.

### **□ Positive regard**

Positive regard is related to perceptions of being able to participate fully in day to day school activities, and a sense that the contributions made are recognised, valued, and acknowledged. The potential for increasing participation and positive regard is large. Within the context of everyday relationships, many simple strategies can be implemented for engaging the whole school community.

## ***Principles underlying these guidelines***

The model proposed in these guidelines is built on the following principles:

- A sense of connectedness is a central element of adolescent well-being.
- School communities have a major role and capacity to promote a sense of connectedness.
- Systematic collection of data provides a framework for planning and action.
- A shared understanding of the risk and protective factors in social environments of students is essential as a basis for collaborative action.
- Promotion of security, communication and positive regard is best achieved by integrating feasible and effective, evidence-based strategies with current school policies, programs and practices.
- Strong linkages between a school and its community ensure continuity of care for young people.

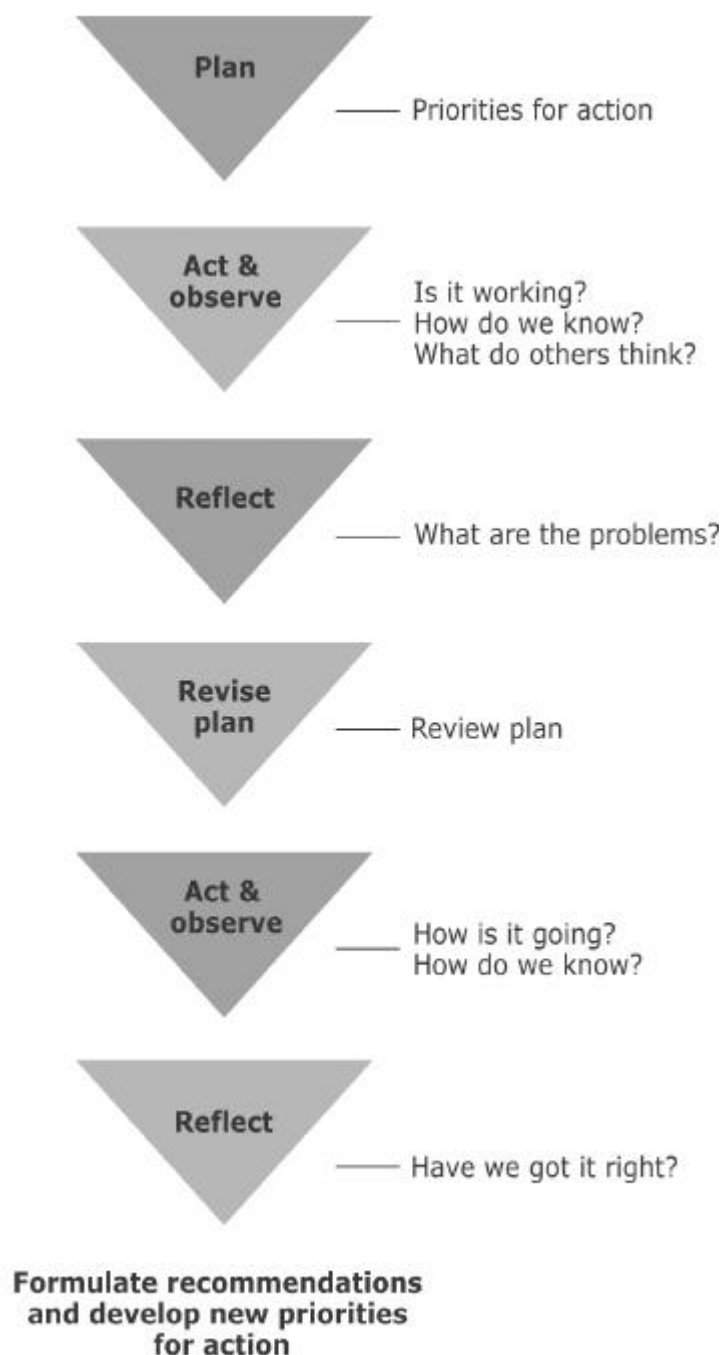
## ***Steps to health promotion in schools***

These guidelines provide an approach to health promotion as an ongoing process, linking information gained from members of the school community to current evidence to develop, implement and evaluate action. There are three important steps:

1. Identify relevant risk and protective factors that:
  - have strong associations with emotional well-being or sense of belonging at school
  - are common
  - are modifiable
  - are under the school's influence
  
2. Create an operational framework (see page 15) for implementation through:
  - classroom
  - whole school
  - school-community partnerships
  
3. Use evidence-based interventions which are:
  - feasible
  - effective

## Action research

The Gatehouse Project uses an action research model which recognises that school change to promote health and emotional well-being needs to be an ongoing process. The action research process shown in figure 2 facilitates initial planning and implementation, as well as ongoing review.



*Adapted from Kemmis and McTaggart 1998*

Figure 2: Change: a process of inquiry

## ***Risk and protective factors***

The program aims to address those aspects of the school's social and learning environments which enhance or reduce emotional well-being or sense of belonging at school.

### **Reducing risk factors**

- absenteeism
- alienation
- bullying and harassment
- disengagement
- isolation
- low academic achievement
- violence

### **Enhancing protective factors**

- positive relationships with peers and teachers
- close, confiding relationship with at least one adult
- feelings of positive regard
- involvement and participation in school and community activities
- involvement and participation in school decision making groups
- opportunities and skills for achievement
- opportunities and skills for communication
- recognition of contribution and achievements
- sense of security

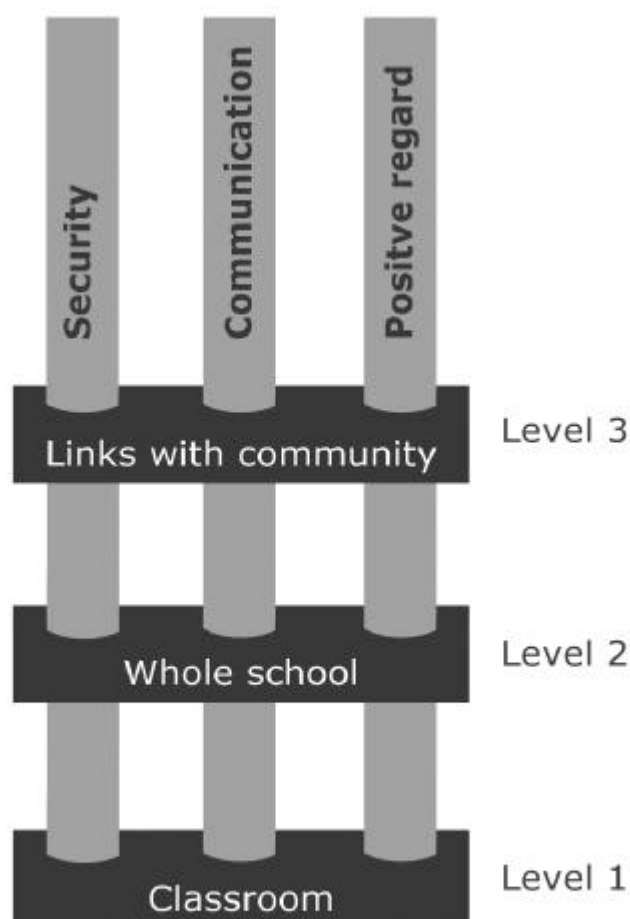
NOTE: There is a growing body of literature on risk and protective factors for health and educational outcomes. See for example, Butler et al. 2001; Glover, Burns et al. 1998; Hawkins & Catalano 1993; Resnick et al. 1997; Rutter 1979; Withers & Russell 1998.

## ***Developing a whole school strategy***

A whole school approach offers a way to address young people's health and social, emotional and intellectual development holistically. It recognises roles for all members of the school community. The *Gatehouse Project*, in adapting The Health Promoting School Framework, offers a strategy to examine all aspects of a school's environment for promoting young people's health. See figure 3 below.

The strategy operates at each of the following levels:

- **classroom** (including teaching and learning environments and relationships)
- **whole school** (including the policies, programs and practices of the school, and the physical and social environments)
- **links with the community** (including school, home, community organisations)



© *The Operational Framework of the Gatehouse Project*,  
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Figure 3: *The operational framework of the Gatehouse Project* (Adapted from, National Health and Medical Research Council 1997, *Health Promoting School Framework*, p.38).

## ***Using the Operational Framework***

The operational framework functions by examining the nature of the interactions and relationships within the three levels of classroom, school and community, in relation to **security, communication** and **positive regard**. The framework assists schools to determine the quality of the school's social and learning environments.

### **Level 1 Classroom**

These are interactions and relationships which occur as part of learning between students and teachers, and students and students.

- How might the classroom's organisation, teaching and learning strategies contribute to a student's low sense of belonging or connectedness?

*Conversely*

- How might the classroom's organisation, teaching and learning strategies enhance a student's sense of belonging or connectedness?

### **Level 2 Whole school**

These relate to the general climate of the school. For example, the openness of communication amongst staff, the interactions and relationships between staff and students in co-curricular activities, home groups and around the school, and the interactions and relationships between students during lunch-time and recess.

- How might the school's organisation, policies and practices contribute to a student's low sense of belonging or connectedness?

*Conversely*

- How might the school's organisation, policies, programs and practices contribute to enhancing a student's sense of belonging or connectedness?

### **Level 3 Links with the community**

Schools have a strong connection to the wider community. The interactions and relationships between parents, students and teachers are important in this regard. The collaborative links between the school and local organisations and other schools are also important.

- How might the school's communication processes with the wider community, including parent bodies within the school, enhance a student's sense of belonging or connectedness?
- How might the school strengthen its links with the wider community, improve the interactions and relationships between parents, teachers and students, and strengthen the integration with student/family support services in the community.

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# ***Part Two***

## ***Implementing the Whole School Strategy***

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## Stages of the whole school strategy

The process of implementing the whole school intervention strategy is coordinated by a team established from within the school. This enables schools to examine their policies, programs and practices, and identify priority areas for reducing risk factors and enhancing protective factors for positive health and educational outcomes. It allows schools to address these priorities systematically, and actively seek training for members of the school community. The strategy is developed in five stages, (see figure 4) with the establishment of the team as part of stage one.

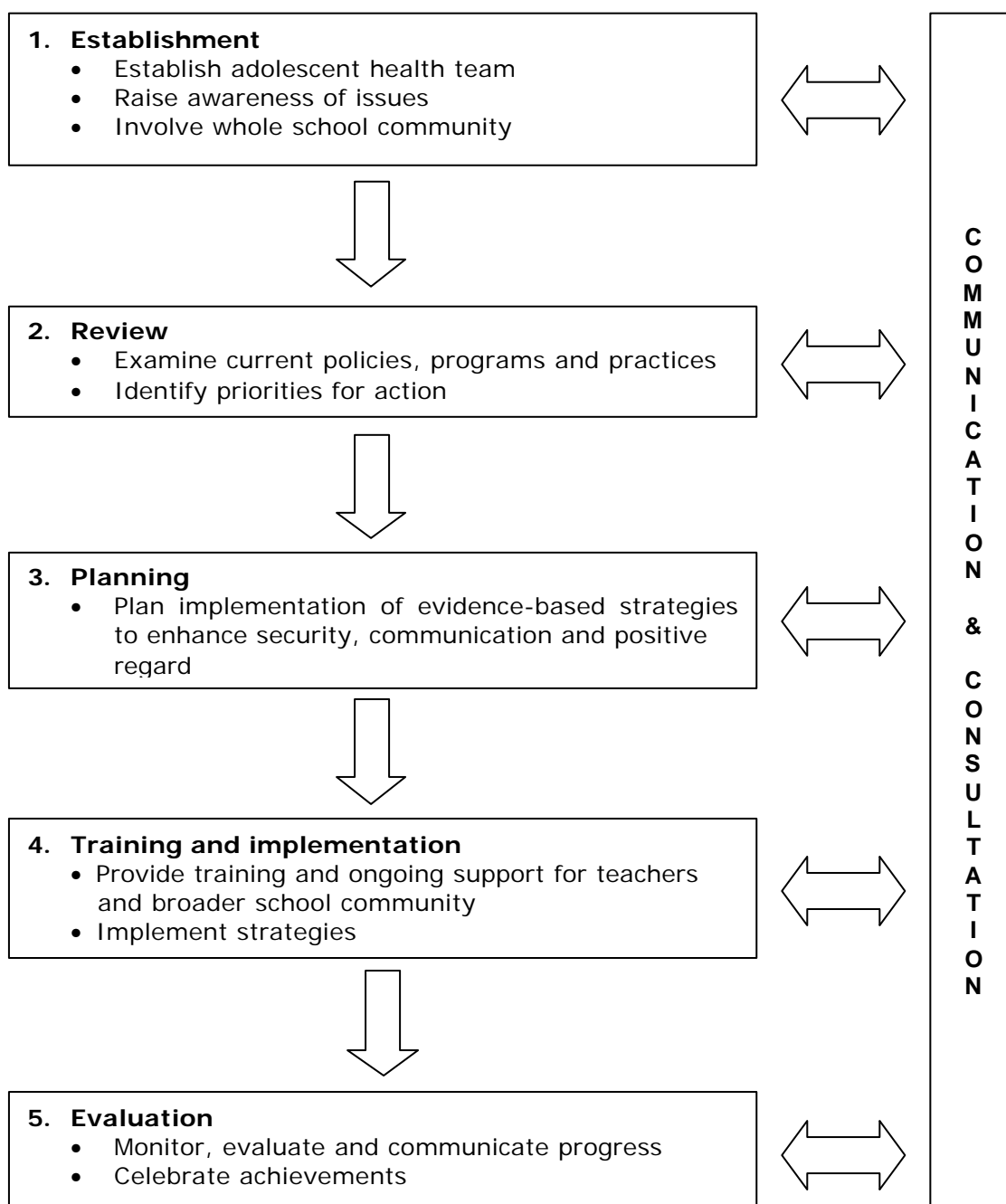


Figure 4: Stages of the whole school strategy

## Stage 1 Establishment

The tasks in this stage are to:

- Establish an Adolescent Health Team.
- Raise awareness and develop a shared understanding of the effects of school and social environments on a range of adolescent health issues.
- Actively seek the involvement of the whole school community.

### Establish an Adolescent Health Team

#### *What is an Adolescent Health Team?*

The Adolescent Health Team is a broadly representative team established by the school to co-ordinate the five stages of the whole school strategy, and bring about changes, over time, to enhance social and learning environments. It draws together people with expertise and interest from all areas of the school to work on issues relating to the health and well-being of young people at the school. Having an Adolescent Health Team in the school extends responsibility for student well-being beyond health education and student support staff, to members of the whole school community.

#### *Who will be in the Adolescent Health Team?*

Ideally, the Adolescent Health Team will be comprised of six to eight members representative of the whole school community, such as:

- Principal or assistant principal, or member of the leadership team
- Student support staff
- Sub-school co-ordinators or equivalent
- Professional development co-ordinator
- Director of studies, curriculum co-ordinator, faculty co-ordinator, or another curriculum focused representative
- Teachers
- Parents
- Students
- Community health workers, e.g. cluster guidance officer, local council youth services/community health centre worker, Department of Human Services health promotion or mental health promotion worker.

\* In developing the notion of an Adolescent Health Team, and its place in the school structure, we have valued the input of ideas from the *Turning the Tide (1998)* program, Brimbank College and Cleeland Secondary College.

Importantly, the team needs to:

- include members who have input into key decisions about curriculum, policy and student support
- be acknowledged and supported by the school administration
- be given a formal place within the school's organisational structure
- develop a shared understanding of the goals and tasks of the team
- have a nominated leader/chair and minute secretary

- have membership which ensures linkage with other groups in the school, such as senior management, school council, year level co-ordinators, student support teams, curriculum teams, parent and student bodies and outside agencies.

### **Checklist**

When establishing the team, consider the following:

- How the team will be formed. Will members volunteer or be elected?
- Is there an existing committee in the school which could form the basis for the team.
- Achieving a balance of skills through its members, e.g. expertise in curriculum and student support is represented.
- Commitment of team members to the values, cause and process.
- Including a member who is prepared to provide critical feedback for the team.
- Representation by a cross section of the whole school community.

### **What will the Adolescent Health Team do?**

Once established, the Adolescent Health Team oversees and co-ordinates the school's progress through the stages of the whole school strategy. Within these stages, the responsibilities of the team include:

- Advising other school committees, such as curriculum and student support, on matters relating to young people's health.
- Developing, implementing and monitoring whole health promotion approaches.
- Linking with community agencies and local support staff where appropriate.
- Facilitating professional development for teachers relating to adolescent health and well-being.
- Setting objectives and time frames.
- Providing recommendations to the school community as the work progresses.
- Overseeing and making links between a range of initiatives and programs which impact on adolescent health and well-being. See figure 5 below.

**Programs and initiatives**

Schools already offer and continually develop many programs and initiatives which enhance adolescent health and well-being, however the links between these programs and the staff responsible for them are not always explicit. Often few staff, students or parents have a view of the whole range of such programs and how they contribute to health and well-being. The Adolescent Health Team, as defined, provides the school community with structures and processes with which to co-ordinate and monitor these initiatives and to respond to the complex issues facing young people (see figure 5 below).

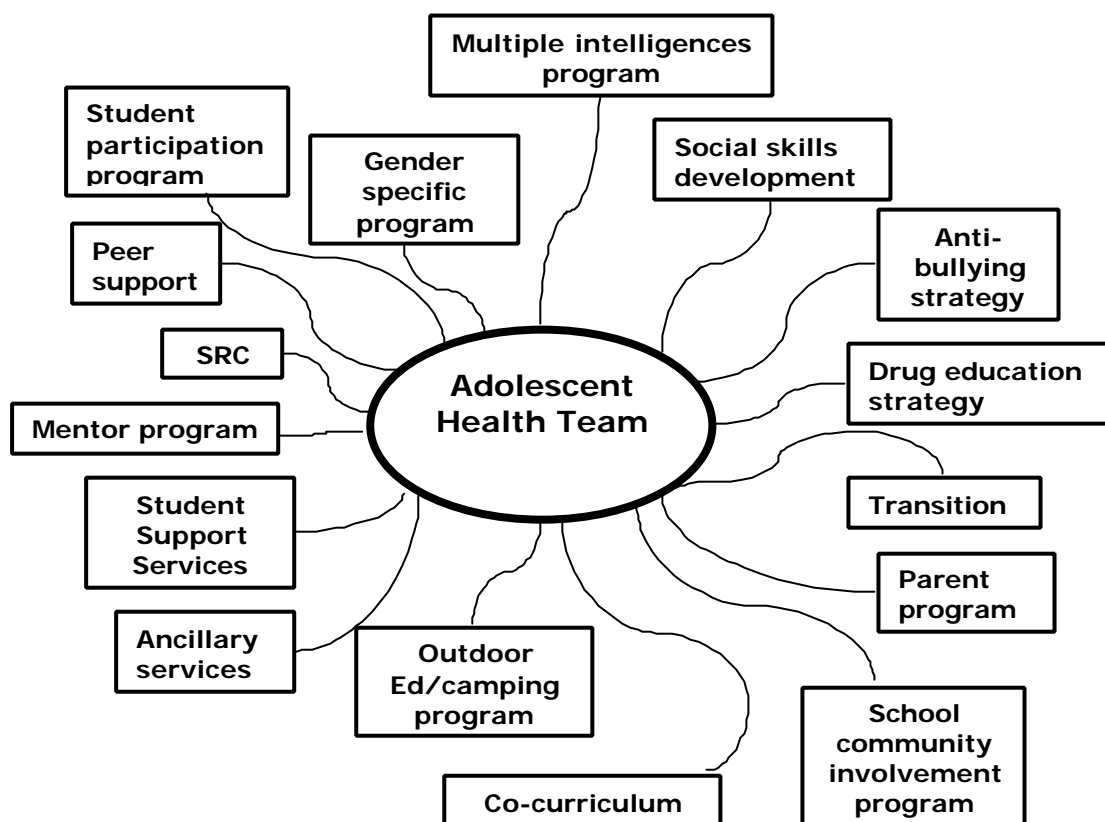


Figure 5: Linking programs and initiatives

**How does the Adolescent Health Team fit into the organisational structure?**

The Adolescent Health Team functions as another body within existing school structures. Whole school strategies developed by the team are discussed with student support and curriculum committees, student, staff and parent bodies, and the school's leadership team. The following diagram is an example of how an Adolescent Health Team can fit into a school's structure:

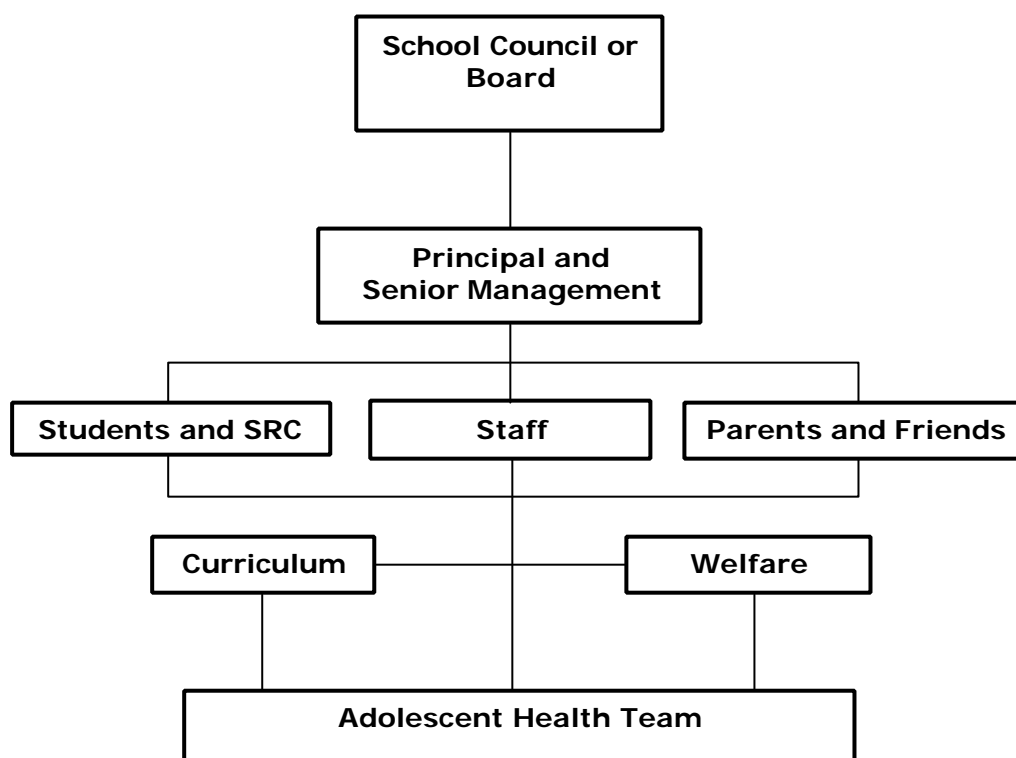


Figure 6: A sample school structure

***How do we start the work of the Adolescent Health Team?***

It is fundamental to the success of the Adolescent Health Team to have a clear understanding of the role, goals, and tasks of the team. At the completion of each meeting, members need to be clear about the action to be taken, by whom, and when.

**Initial Tasks**

- Decide on how meetings will be conducted.
- Decide on the roles of members. A team works well when each member is assigned a particular task. These may change as the team progresses.
- Appoint a co-ordinator. The co-ordinator confirms meeting times and venue, confirms and distributes agenda, and arranges refreshments (if required).
- Appoint a minute secretary. The minute secretary ensures distribution of minutes to team members, and other key groups and personnel.
- Arrange a schedule of meetings for each term, preferably within the existing meeting timetable. It is recommended that the team meets regularly - 3 or 4 times per term (See Appendix 4: Adolescent Health Team meeting proforma).
- Develop a shared understanding of the goals and tasks of the team.
- Become familiar with current theory, research and practice in promoting emotional well-being.
- Establish strategies and personnel responsible for communicating with the whole school community about the work of the team. For example, include items in the school newsletter or website, and brief updates to the school committees.

**Raise awareness and develop a shared understanding of the effects of school and social environments on a range of adolescent health issues.**

A key task of the Adolescent Health Team is to raise awareness within the school community about the impact of school and social environments on the health and well-being of young people. This will involve developing a shared general understanding of risk and protective factors for health outcomes in the school environment. This understanding of the general issues will help the school community to examine their own environment and identify particular areas on which to focus further planning and action. The Adolescent Health Team can use a range of resources for this task.

***What resources are available?***

- a. For raising awareness about the impact of school and social environments on health and well-being:
  - Research information about emotional well-being in adolescents is provided in Appendix 1.
  - General information about risk and protective factors can be found on page 14.
  - Some activities used to initiate discussion with staff or parents about everyday issues related to security, communication and positive regard are provided in Appendix 3.

- Guest speakers can provide presentations on adolescent health and well-being. Sources of advice on guest speakers include local community health agencies, the school's student support staff or professional development co-ordinator, and the Education and Training Unit at the Centre for Adolescent Health.
- Further information and links are available on the Centre for Adolescent Health's Gatehouse Project website: [www.gatehouseproject.com](http://www.gatehouseproject.com)

b. For information specific to your school:

Information about your own school environment can provide a powerful starting point for engaging interest of members of the school community, raising awareness and talking about risk and protective factors and health and well-being issues. Schools already have access to many sources of data, for example, relating to attendance and absenteeism, incidents of harassment and violence, academic achievement, student participation in curricular and co-curricular activities, and parent, teacher and student opinion surveys.

In Stage 2 of the *Guidelines*, dealing with the review of whole school policies, programs and practices, and other ways of gathering information about the school environment are outlined.

***How can the awareness raising process reach the whole school community?***

Forums for information sharing and discussion include:

- whole staff, year level and faculty meetings
- parent information meetings and meetings of parent groups
- meetings of student representative bodies
- school Council or Board meetings
- co-curricular groups
- articles and reports in newsletters.

**Actively seek the involvement of the whole school community**

Professional development in relation to health and well-being of students is often limited to teaching staff, but there are many people who have daily contact with students. They include, for example, parents and other caregivers, administrative staff (e.g. office staff), community workers (e.g. social workers, psychologists), visitors (e.g. emergency teachers, visiting teachers, student teachers) and other workers at the school (e.g. maintenance, cleaning). The quality of interactions between these groups and the students will affect the social and learning environments of the school.

These groups may not always be considered when planning professional development. Moreover, they may not be aware of the importance of their influence as significant adults in the lives of students. In raising awareness and developing shared understanding, it is important to include as many groups as possible within the school community. It is therefore helpful to invite them to participate in shared activities wherever possible, as well as providing information directly to particular groups. The involvement planner on page 25 ensures that the process of involvement is planned and inclusive.

### ***Involvement planner***

How can the whole school community be informed about the key issues, and involved in the consultation process?

<b><i>Group to be addressed</i></b>	<b><i>Strategy to be used</i></b>	<b><i>Where? In what forum?</i></b>	<b><i>When?</i></b>	<b><i>Team member responsible for organisation</i></b>
<i>Leadership team</i>				
<i>Level co-ordinators</i>				
<i>Faculty co-ordinators</i>				
<i>Curriculum committee</i>				
<i>Student support staff</i>				
<i>Teachers</i>				
<i>School Council/Board</i>				
<i>Administrative staff</i>				
<i>Parents</i>				
<i>Student Representative Council</i>				
<i>Students</i>				
<i>Others</i>				

Adapted from Department of Education, Victoria 1998, *Turning the Tide in Schools: Individual School Drug Education Strategy: Guidelines*, Community Information Service, Dept. of Education, p.29.

**Mapping existing programs and initiatives**

To acknowledge the expertise that exists within the school community and the contribution of all community members to health and well-being, a mapping exercise can be undertaken, based on the diagram in figure 5. This allows everyone to see where they, and the programs with which they are involved, fit within the 'big picture'. It also provides an opportunity to acknowledge that different people will be involved at different times and in different ways during the development and implementation of the whole school strategy.

## Stage 2 Review

- Critically examine current policies, programs and practices which impact on the quality of social and learning environments.
- Identify priorities for action.

In Stage 1, the Adolescent Health Team raised awareness of the range of initiatives, programs and people influencing the health and well-being of students. It was noted that all areas of school activity needed to be considered, not only those traditionally associated with student support.

In Stage 2, the team will co-ordinate a process of critically reviewing policies, programs and practices at the level of the classroom, whole school and community. This process enables the team to identify what is working well and areas of concern across the **three areas of action**:

- Increasing a sense of **security** and trust
- Enhancing **communication** and social connectedness
- Promoting **positive regard** through valued participation

The review process aims to identify both prevention and intervention strategies across these three areas of action. Prevention strategies aim to reduce risk factors and enhance protective factors in order to prevent problems occurring in relation to health and well-being (see page 14 Risk and protective factors). Intervention strategies are aimed at addressing problems associated with health and well-being as they arise, and will also include reducing risk factors and enhancing protective factors.

Following the critical review, the team will work on the identified areas of concern and prioritise areas for further planning and action.

### **Critically examine current policies, programs and practices which impact on the quality of social and learning environments.**

#### ***What do we need to know?***

It is necessary to develop a detailed understanding of:

- the policies, programs and practices already in place that enhance or reduce the quality of social and learning environments
- the prevention strategies in place, and their strengths and weaknesses
- the intervention strategies in place, and their strengths and weaknesses
- areas for action.

#### ***How can we do this?***

The three steps of the critical examination are to:

- Find out what policies, programs and practices exist.*

This requires the team to identify and document the policies, programs and

practices which already exist within the school and which impact on security, communication and positive regard. This information can be gathered using the following:

- The three audit charts on pages 30-32 provide a framework for identifying existing strategies. These charts are important tools for the team, and will be used throughout the review and planning process. They can be used at various times as starting points for discussion in school forums such as meetings of whole school staff, faculties, Year Level staff, parents and students.
  - The mapping exercise provided in Stage 1 (page 26) is also useful.
  - A Gatehouse Project School Background Questionnaire is available to aid in the collation of data related to school demographics, school structure, school policies, programs, and practices, student participation, and staff professional development.
  - School documents such as charters, faculty or subschool documents and handbooks.
- ii. *Assess the extent to which these policies, programs and practices enhance or reduce a sense of security, communication and positive regard.*

Having established the range of relevant policies, programs and practices, it is now important to consider their strengths and weaknesses. Information may be gathered through:

- formal evaluation of programs, policies and practices. Schools may undertake this through consultants or may have been involved in research programs which have provided data about their school.
- *The Gatehouse Project Adolescent Health Survey*. This has been designed to provide schools with a profile of the school's social and learning environments as perceived by students at a particular Year level in the school. (Information on how to access this survey, can be found at <http://www.gatehouseproject.com>).
- existing school records. Schools already have many sources of information which can inform the review process. This includes information about such things as attendance, student participation, academic achievement, and incident reports. Many schools collect information through surveys of members of the school community in relation to general satisfaction or particular issues. State education departments are an appropriate starting point for locating other survey instruments for use in schools.
- the three audit charts. Discussion of strengths and weaknesses of each policy, program and practice may be assisted by questions such as:
  - Where is it located within the school – is it accessible or relevant to the whole school community?
  - What documentation or evaluation exists?
  - On what needs, values, beliefs or principles is it based?
  - What needs, values, beliefs or principles does it fail to address?
  - Is it being implemented as intended?
  - Does it have any unintended consequences for students, staff or parents?
  - Are staff, students and parents aware of it?
  - What perceptions exist within the school community about its effectiveness?
  - Is it still appropriate?

- Are any changes needed to improve it?
- Is it supported by appropriate training for relevant staff?

*iii. Determine areas to address.*

As a result of brainstorming by the team and consultation with others within the school community, the final column of each of the audit charts will contain a range of areas identified as needing to be addressed. These may have a broad focus at this stage and might include:

- reducing the levels of victimisation that occur within classrooms and in the whole school community
- increasing student participation in school and community activities
- promoting better communication between teachers and students
- examining the nature and quality of feedback that students receive regarding their work and other contributions
- improving staff climate
- promoting staff well-being
- improving classroom climate
- improving student engagement in learning and achievement
- promoting better communication between parents and teachers
- developing 'real' partnership between parents and teachers
- developing pastoral programs appropriate to the needs of the students
- promoting close, confiding relationships between each student and at least one adult.

Addressing these areas may involve further developing an existing policy, program or practice or devising, developing and implementing a new policy, program or practice. Before planning a response, it is important to feed these findings back to the school community. Decisions about which areas will be addressed will have implications for whole school planning and allocation of staff and resources, therefore it is important to allow time for due consideration of priorities. This involves:

- collating the areas to be addressed in each of the three areas of action
- presenting these to various school forums and inviting discussion and reflection
- giving time for people to think about the areas they consider particularly important before the school decides on priorities for immediate action.

**Increasing security**

<p><b>Level</b></p>	<p><b>Security</b>                      What strategies are in place to promote a sense of security?</p>	<p><b>Prevention</b>                      What strategies are in place to prevent victimisation?</p>	<p><b>Intervention</b>                      What action is taken when incidents of victimisation or harassment occur?</p>	<p><b>Risk</b>                      What policies, programs and practices increase the likelihood of victimisation?</p>	<p><b>Areas to address</b></p>
<p><b>Classroom</b></p>					
<p><b>Whole school</b></p>					
<p><b>Links with the community</b></p>					

**Enhancing communication**

<b>Level</b>	<b>Prevention What opportunities do students have to communicate with teachers, students and other school-based personnel?</b>	<b>Intervention What action is currently taken when a young person's social isolation is recognised?</b>	<b>Risk What policies, programs and practices decrease communication opportunities for students?</b>	<b>Areas to address</b>
<b>Classroom</b>				
<b>Whole school</b>				
<b>Links with the community</b>				

**Promoting positive regard**

<b>Level</b>	<b>Prevention</b> <i>What action is taken to promote positive regard? Are any students excluded from this?</i>	<b>Intervention</b> <i>What action is currently taken when a young person is not regarded positively by peers and/or students?</i>	<b>Risk</b> <i>What policies, programs and practices decrease positive regard?</i>	<b>Areas to address</b>
<b>Classroom</b>				
<b>Whole school</b>				
<b>Links with the community</b>				

## Identify priorities for action

After members of the school community have had time to reflect on the areas identified as needing to be addressed, the next task is to prioritise what specific areas the school wants to improve within the three areas of action. It is necessary to establish a process for systematically addressing these areas, which will:

- order them according to criteria of urgency and feasibility
- allow input from the whole school community
- allocate responsibility for developing responses

A simple process is to present members of the school community with a list of the areas identified in the audit charts and ask them to number these in priority order. Some questions to keep in mind for this activity are:

- Which area will have the greatest impact now?
- Is there an area of greatest immediate need?
- What is feasible as a place to start?
- Which areas do we have the resources to address now?

The next step is to use the **Priority check** on page 34 to identify school priorities for action. Of course, the final decisions will need to be ratified through the school's normal decision-making processes.

### ***Developing formal proposals for policies, programs and practices***

Once decisions have been made about the areas to be addressed, the team needs to develop a plan for how this will be done. First, however, it is important to develop a brief proposal for each chosen area. The proposal should:

- be brief – one page
- build on the school's existing goals, priorities and mission statements
- outline the purpose or need for this action
- include underlying principles or values
- clearly state expected outcomes
- ensure that external policy requirements are addressed.

### ***Checking the evidence***

In selecting specific strategies to address identified priority areas, it is important to consider the evidence that this strategy works:

- Has this strategy been tried elsewhere?
- Has it been formally evaluated?
- What was the quality of the evaluation?
- Is information about the evaluation available? If not, can you speak to people who have implemented the strategy?
- What suggestions have evaluators, or those who have used this strategy, made about:
  - the essential elements of the strategy
  - the possible barriers to successful implementation
  - the factors which facilitated successful implementation.

**Priority check**

<i>Theme</i>	<i>Priorities</i>
<p style="text-align: center;"><b>Increasing security</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>◆ the classroom</li> <li>◆ the whole school</li> <li>◆ links with the community</li> </ul>	
<p style="text-align: center;"><b>Enhancing communication</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>◆ the classroom</li> <li>◆ the whole school</li> <li>◆ links with the community</li> </ul>	
<p style="text-align: center;"><b>Promoting positive regard</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>◆ the classroom</li> <li>◆ the whole school</li> <li>◆ links with the community</li> </ul>	

## **Stage 3 Planning**

- Plan the implementation of evidence-based intervention strategies to enhance security, communication and positive regard.

An implementation plan provides a co-ordinated approach to resourcing and managing change. A plan may seem like a lot of work at the outset, yet it is an important part of initiating, monitoring and sustaining change. It allows you to set priorities and goals, but more importantly it allows you to identify manageable steps towards their achievement.

This part of the process will take time and it would be helpful if the team can have some uninterrupted time to undertake this task - perhaps away from the school. The key is to break down the areas of concern into a step-by-step process. Break the broad focus into smaller, achievable components. Remember this is what you are **planning** or **intending** to achieve. Your evaluation processes will reveal your progress towards achievement.

### **The implementation plan will need to identify:**

- What is to be achieved?
- What needs to be done?
- Who is involved?
- What is the time frame?

On-going consultation with the school community is needed during the development of this implementation plan. When developed, this plan needs to be publicised.

### **In this publicity you need to:**

- present a clear, focused, and compelling case for your plan – you need to be able to present a convincing argument
- be realistic and feasible
- highlight benefits
- ensure strategies are communicated to all groups.

## ***Some strategies within the whole school approach***

The following are examples of strategies which schools might use to address the areas identified in the audit charts.

### **For the classroom**

- Security***
- Establish classroom agreements or agreed ways of managing the classroom for everyone
  - Maintain a classroom climate in which exclusion is avoided
  - Develop strategies for preventing and dealing with exclusion, teasing and put downs in class
  - Establish procedures to ensure the classroom is a place where privacy and confidentiality is respected
- Communication***
- Establish small working groups for students
  - Use teaching and learning strategies that foster discussion and positive interaction
  - Ensure that the physical organisation of the classroom facilitates communication and interaction
  - Use pro-active classroom management techniques to maintain student interest, create a good working environment, and positive student interactions
  - Foster student-teacher interaction through which students and teachers feel valued
  - Look for opportunities for integrated curriculum delivery where appropriate
- Positive regard***
- Provide regular verbal acknowledgement of student achievement and contributions
  - Undertake positive and constructive assessment, involving students and parents wherever possible
  - Create opportunities for different forms of contribution and achievement
  - Create opportunities for display of student work
  - Develop knowledge of decision-making processes and creating leadership opportunities
  - Involve students in peer education
  - Invite student input in planning and assessment activities

## For the whole school

Involve staff, students and parents in development and implementation of anti-bullying policy.

### **Security**

Ensure supervision of 'risk' or 'unsafe' areas during recess and lunchtime

Provide professional development to assist teachers to recognise and know how to intervene in victimisation situations

Train staff in methods of shared concern – a no blame approach

Establish confidentiality procedures

Review and enhance transition programs at various transition points

Implement peer mediation/peer support programs

Strengthen counselling and support for the whole school community

### **Communication**

Develop teacher teams working with student groups

Establish or enhance pastoral care/home group structures

Develop social skills programs

Enhance role of student support staff

Establish mentor program (adult/student)

Hold student forums

Develop and maintain structures and procedures for supporting all school staff in pastoral role

Share teaching strategies for communication

### **Positive regard**

Provide opportunities for public displays of student work

Provide support for student representation and participation in school decision-making committees

Involve students in co-curricular programs

Provide induction programs for teachers, including adolescent development and referral procedures

Train student leadership teams

Involve students in reviewing and rewriting policies

Extend the range of activities which receive public

acknowledgement

Review school assessment and reporting policy and practice

Review school discipline policies

## **For school community links**

### ***Security***

Hold parent/community forums on victimisation and bullying

Participate in after school safety programs

Create links between primary and secondary students

### ***Communication***

Develop and extend school-community involvement programs

Build clear and regular communication with parents, especially about positives and progress

Undertake joint planning and professional development with primary schools

Develop parent orientation events

Establish parent circles and parent forums

Use school newsletter to celebrate links with community

Strengthen links with community agencies via Adolescent Health Team

### ***Positive regard***

Foster participation of parents in school decision-making and activities, including involvement in curriculum

Create and maintain a welcoming atmosphere for visitors

Use local media to publicise student and school achievements

Create opportunities for integrated studies involving work in community

Undertake joint initiatives with community organisations

**Implementation Planner**

<p><i>What is to be achieved? Prioritise goals</i></p>	<p><i>What needs to be done?</i></p>	<p><i>Who is involved? Identify expertise within the school community</i></p>	<p><i>Year 1</i></p>	<p><i>Year 2</i></p>	<p><i>Year 3</i></p>

## **Stage 4 Training and implementation**

- Provide training and ongoing support for teachers and broader school community.
- Complete implementation.

### **Provide training and ongoing support**

Professional development of staff, students, parents and others in the school community is an integral component of the whole school strategy. At this stage, the team is in a position to target professional development and training to match identified priority areas. In bringing about whole school change it is often preferable to conduct professional development and training within the school community, drawing on internal and/or external presenters. This allows a range of expertise to be available to the whole school community. It withdraws responsibility from a small number of staff to obtain external training and bring it back into the school community.

#### ***For each priority area:***

1. Identify professional development and training needs for:
  - teachers
  - administration
  - welfare support staff
  - parents
  - students
  - other
2. Arrange workshops/seminar series in conjunction with the professional development co-ordinator.
3. Identify conferences on relevant matters and arrange for interested staff, parents, and/or students to attend.
4. Develop procedures for staff to obtain support and advice to trial new approaches.
5. Ensure appropriate resources/materials are in the staff handbook.
6. Develop procedures for new staff, students and families to be familiarised with the policies, programs and practices of the school.

***This training can be completed in two parts:***

- **Initial training**
- **Ongoing support**

## **Complete implementation**

Training constitutes a large part of the implementation plan. In completing the implementation, individuals and groups allocated responsibility for particular strategies will do so according to the proposals and planning completed in earlier stages. It will be important to document progress, in preparation for evaluation, by using the materials in Stage 5 and the meeting proforma in Appendix 4.

***Planning initial professional development and training***

- Identify professional development and training needs.
- Arrange workshops/seminar series in conjunction with the professional development co-ordinator.
- Identify conferences on relevant matters and arrange for interested staff, parents, and/or students to attend.

<b><i>Identified priority area</i></b>	<b><i>Who has responsibilities in this area?</i></b>	<b><i>What further skills and information do they require?</i></b>	<b><i>Who can provide information or training, both within, and outside the school?</i></b>	<b><i>Details of planning. When and where will it take place? Who will be involved?</i></b>
<b><i>Security</i></b>				
<b><i>Communication</i></b>				
<b><i>Positive regard</i></b>				

***Ongoing professional support and renewal***

- Develop procedures for staff to obtain support and advice to trial new approaches.
- Ensure appropriate resources/materials are available.
- Develop procedures for new staff, students and families to be familiarised with the policies, programs and practices of the school.

<b><i>Ongoing process/task required</i></b>	<b><i>Resources required</i></b>	<b><i>Whose responsibility is it to:</i></b> ▪ <b><i>develop</i></b> ▪ <b><i>maintain</i></b>	<b><i>Method of dissemination</i></b>	<b><i>Other suggestions/links</i></b>
e.g. handbook entry on in-school referral procedures for students who are isolated or victimised	Time to review	Adolescent Health Team?  Co-ordinators?  Student Support Staff?	Handbook  Workshop process with staff, parents, students	

## **Stage 5 Evaluation**

- Monitor, evaluate and communicate progress.
- Celebrate achievements.

### **Monitor, evaluate and communicate progress**

The purpose of Stage 5 is to complete the process by monitoring and evaluating the work of the adolescent health team, and to communicate progress to interested parties. The purpose of the program undertaken by the team has been to assist in the development of a comprehensive whole school strategy for promoting the emotional health and well-being of students and staff. This stage, therefore, necessitates reflection, analysis and communication of recommendations regarding the effectiveness of the program design in achieving that purpose.

### **Planning the evaluation**

It is essential to keep this simple and manageable. These questions need to be asked:

- Why do we want to evaluate? What was the intention of the strategic planning?
- What do we want to evaluate? What do we want to find out?
- What methods will we use?
- Who will do it?
- How will we analyse? Who will analyse?
- Who wants to know about the outcomes of the evaluation?
- What do we want to do with the evaluation?
- How will we report, and to whom?

There are three important areas for evaluating the effectiveness of the work undertaken. These are:

**i. Outcomes of promoting health and emotional well-being**

These outcomes will form part of the evaluation:

Development of a comprehensive whole school strategy for promoting the health and emotional well-being of the whole school community.

Observable links within a whole school strategy that bring together other programs such as middle years of schooling, health promotion, and drug education.

**ii. The process for reflection and reporting**

In this part of the evaluation it is important to draw a distinction between **what was planned or intended**, and **what is actually happening or being observed**.

To monitor the progress of the work, Wadsworth suggests the following evaluation questions. These need to be addressed as the team moves through the stages of the whole school strategy.

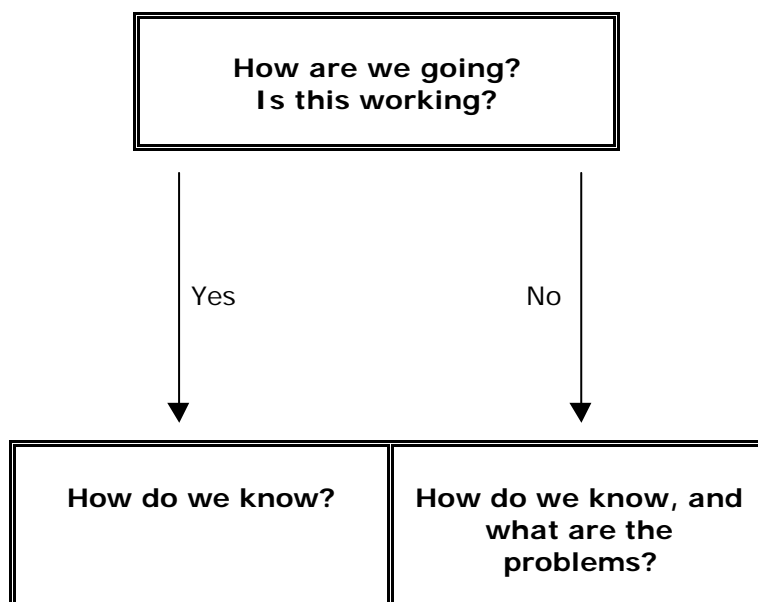


Figure 7: Process measures

Adapted from Wadsworth Y. 1997, *Everyday Evaluation on the Run*, Allen and Unwin, St Leonards, NSW, 2<sup>nd</sup> edn., p.40.

## ***Charting progress through the five stages of the whole school strategy***

Use this chart to evaluate your progress in the implementation of the five stages of the whole school strategy. It will be useful to complete this at various points throughout the team's work.

Date: _____	completed	well established	partly established	not at all
<b>Stage 1-Establish an Adolescent Health Team</b>  Appointed a leader/co-ordinator Kept regular records Team is acknowledged and supported by school administration Developed a shared understanding of the goals and tasks of the team Team members are representative of the school community Team members have designated roles A balance of skills is achieved through the team members Members are aware of current theory, research and practice in each area addressed				
<b>Stage 2- Review policies, programs and practices</b>  Examined policies, programs and practices Consulted with relevant sectors of the school community Conducted Gatehouse Project Adolescent Health Survey Completed Gatehouse Project School Background Questionnaire Completed audit charts across three areas of action Identified priorities for action Developed proposals for policies, programs and practices				
<b>Stage 3-Plan effective evidence-based strategies</b>  Set priorities and goals for implementation of effective evidence-based strategies Consulted with staff on implementation plan Publicised the plan				
<b>Stage 4-Train staff and implement strategies</b>  Identified training needs of staff and broader school community Undertaken training Implement strategies				
<b>Stage 5-Monitor, evaluate, and communicate progress</b>  Completed monitoring/evaluation process Reported to members of the school community Made recommendations based on experience				

### iii. Recommendations

For each stage of the whole school strategy, recommendations reflecting findings of the evaluation need to be communicated to the whole school community. Keep in mind the intended outcomes of the strategy. The team can use the following framework for documenting and reporting progress as each stage is completed. The collected documentation can form the basis of a formal report.

### **FRAMEWORK FOR REPORTING PROGRESS AND RECOMMENDATIONS**

<b>Stage 1 Establish an Adolescent Health Team</b>	<b>Stage 2 Review policies, programs and practices</b>	<b>Stage 3 Plan strategies</b>	<b>Stage 4 Train and implement</b>	<b>Stage 5 Evaluate</b>
1. Where are we up to?	1. Where are we up to?	1. Where are we up to?	1. Where are we up to?	1. Where are we up to?
2. Who participated?	2. Who participated?	2. Who participated?	2. Who participated?	2. Who participated?
3. How did it go?	3. How did it go?	3. How did it go?	3. How did it go?	3. How did it go?
4. Where to from here?	4. Where to from here?	4. Where to from here?	4. Where to from here?	4. Where to from here?
5. Achievement of outcomes: 1. 2.	5. Achievement of outcomes: 1. 2.	5. Achievement of outcomes: 1. 2.	5. Achievement of outcomes: 1. 2.	5. Achievement of outcomes: 1. 2.
6. Recommendation	6. Recommendation	6. Recommendation	6. Recommendation	6. Recommendation

## **Celebrate achievements**

Celebrating achievements, however big or small, can become a fundamental part of the process. Not only should achievements be recognised at the completion of a process, it is important to recognise achievements made in the implementation of the whole school strategy.

### **Ways to celebrate achievements**

- Insert regular notices in staff and student newsletters informing of the progress of the Adolescent Health Team.
- Hold morning/afternoon teas to launch programs such as a staff/student mentor program, or liaisons established between the school and the community.
- Hold parent forums.
- Use school assemblies as places for students to report on progress.

Recognising achievement at a whole school level can have a positive effect on self esteem.

A final word.....

In Part 1 of these Guidelines, it was recognised that school change to promote health and emotional well-being is an ongoing process. Completion of Stage 5 therefore completes one cycle of the action research model, and is the beginning of a new cycle, as shown in figure 2 on page 13. While change will have occurred, new priorities, planning and action await.

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# ***Part Three***

## ***Team Resources***

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## **Appendix 1 Emotional well-being in adolescents**

In the last two decades, adolescent mental health has become a major public health focus. Mental health problems in adolescence can have a profound impact on the development of social relationships, educational attainment, subsequent employment and health risk behaviours (Zubrick et al. 1997). Depression is the most frequently reported mental health problem in adolescents and consistently emerges as the largest single risk factor for suicide and suicidal behaviour (Shaffer et al. 1996; Patton et al. 1997).

Current rates of adolescent onset depression and youth suicide are certainly of concern. However, it is important to recognise that suicide and clinical depression are relatively rare in young people. More common, in young people as in adults, are depressive symptoms such as boredom, fatigue, worry, irritability, loss of appetite, low mood, sleep problems, and poor concentration. Recent reports indicate that between 15% and 40% of young people report some depressive symptoms, with higher rates in 15-24 year olds than in any other age group (NHMRC 1997). Many of these adolescents will fall short of meeting criteria for depressive disorder, but their symptoms will adversely affect their enjoyment of life and are indicators of risk for major depression, substance abuse and self-harming behaviours (Patton et al. 1997). Prevention efforts should therefore aim to reduce depressive symptoms for all young people not just those at highest risk. Furthermore, a growing body of literature highlights the importance of developmental appropriateness for prevention programs and point to early adolescence for the introduction of preventive interventions (See for example, Patton 1997; Sawyer & Kosky 1996).

### **The scope for enhancing the social environment in secondary schools**

Recently, attention has been given to the importance of a young person's sense of attachment or belonging in their social environments. A sense of connectedness to family is central to emotional well-being, but it is also clear that the school social environment can directly influence emotional well-being and health. Resnick and associates (1997), for example, found that a sense of belonging to both family and school are the major protective factors against health risk behaviours in young people.

The social environment of the secondary school assumes importance, not just because young people spend so much time there, but also because it provides the major setting in which young people develop new and different relationships with peers and adults. Rutter (1979), in an extensive study examining the effects of schools on emotional well-being and behaviour, confirmed that the quality of a school as a social institution was of paramount importance. Resnick and associates (1997) found that what mattered most to young adolescents was a school environment in which they felt that they were treated fairly, were close to others, and were part of the school.

The Gatehouse Project has addressed this need for prevention programs in early adolescence. It has brought together a team of professionals with backgrounds in education, health promotion, welfare, psychology, psychiatry and public health, managed by the Centre for Adolescent Health. It has developed and evaluated a

comprehensive whole school strategy to promote social environments in which young people feel secure, have a sense of belonging and feel positively regarded.

### **Security, communication and positive regard - what do we know?**

In 1997, 2,780 Year 8 students in 26 Victorian secondary schools took part in the Gatehouse Project computer survey covering important aspects of adolescent health and well-being, particularly those related to security, communication and positive regard. Early findings from the survey show that:

- over 50% of the students reported being victimised or bullied recently
- there is a strong association between victimisation or bullying and depressive symptoms,
- nearly a quarter of all young people surveyed felt they had no-one to talk to if they were upset,
- students reporting poor social connectedness have between 2 and 3 times the risk of having depressive symptoms compared with those who report satisfying social connectedness,
- there are clear links between emotional health and substance use.

### **Security and emotional well-being**

There are good reasons to think that feelings of security are related to emotional well-being. These include feeling safe from physical harm or threats of physical harm. Less obvious, but no less important, is feeling able to express a point of view without being put down or ridiculed or being able to take part in school and class activities without being left out or isolated.

Students were asked whether they had recently experienced teasing, having rumours spread about them, being left out, being threatened or physically harmed at school. Fifty two percent of Year 8s surveyed reported that they had recently been victimised in some form at school, with 16% reporting that they were experiencing this daily (see figures 1 and 2).

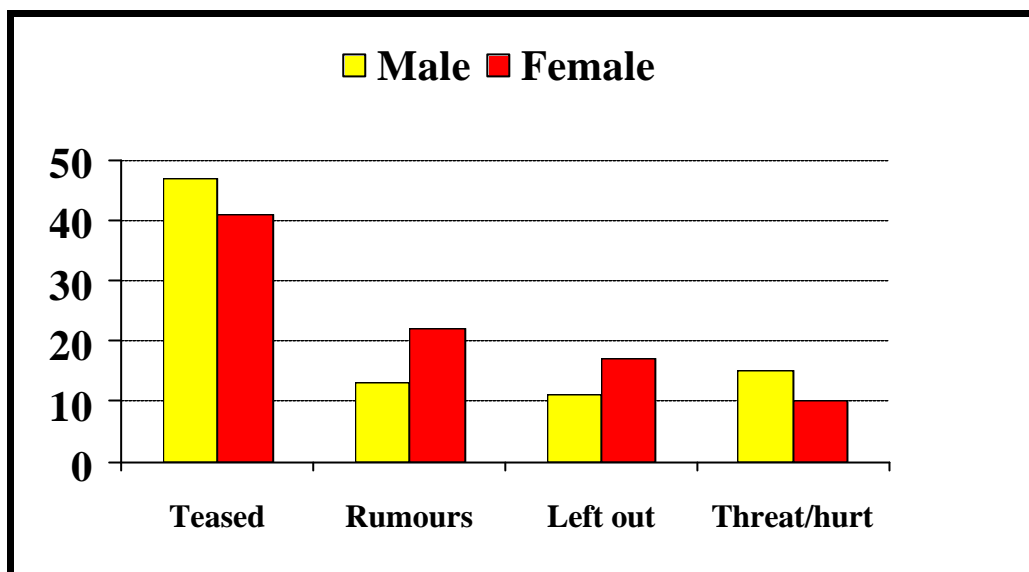


Figure 1: Security and victimisation

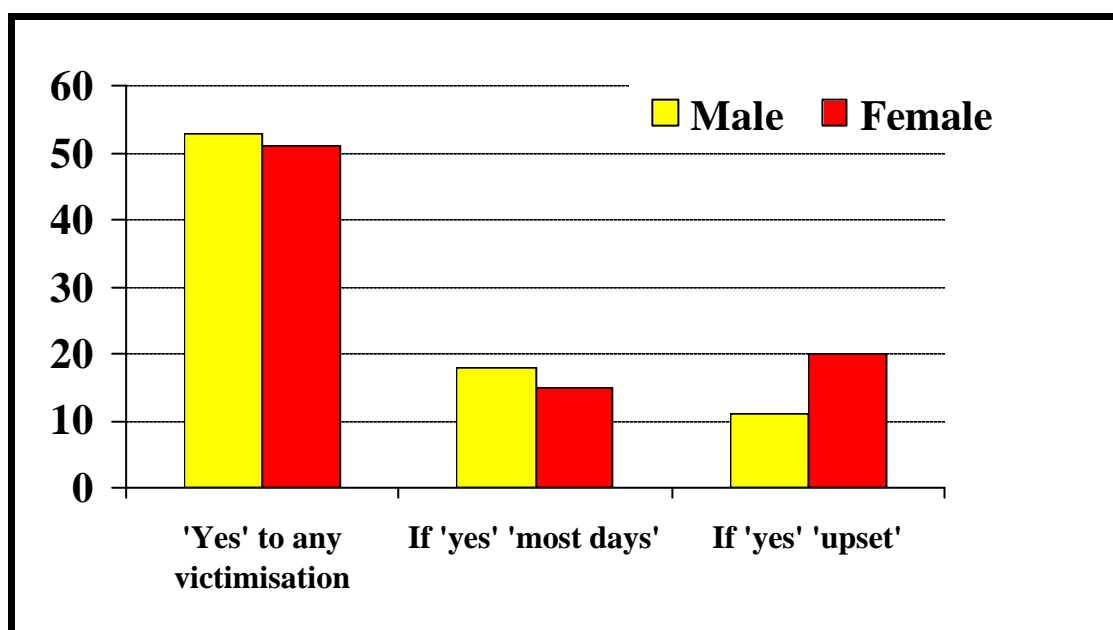


Figure 2: Students reporting 'yes' to: any victimisation; victimisation occurring most days; and finding victimisation upsetting

Students who report being victimised were three times more likely to be at risk of having depressive symptoms when compared with those not reporting such experiences (see figure 3). There is a marked association between a young person's perception of a secure and supportive social environment and emotional well-being.

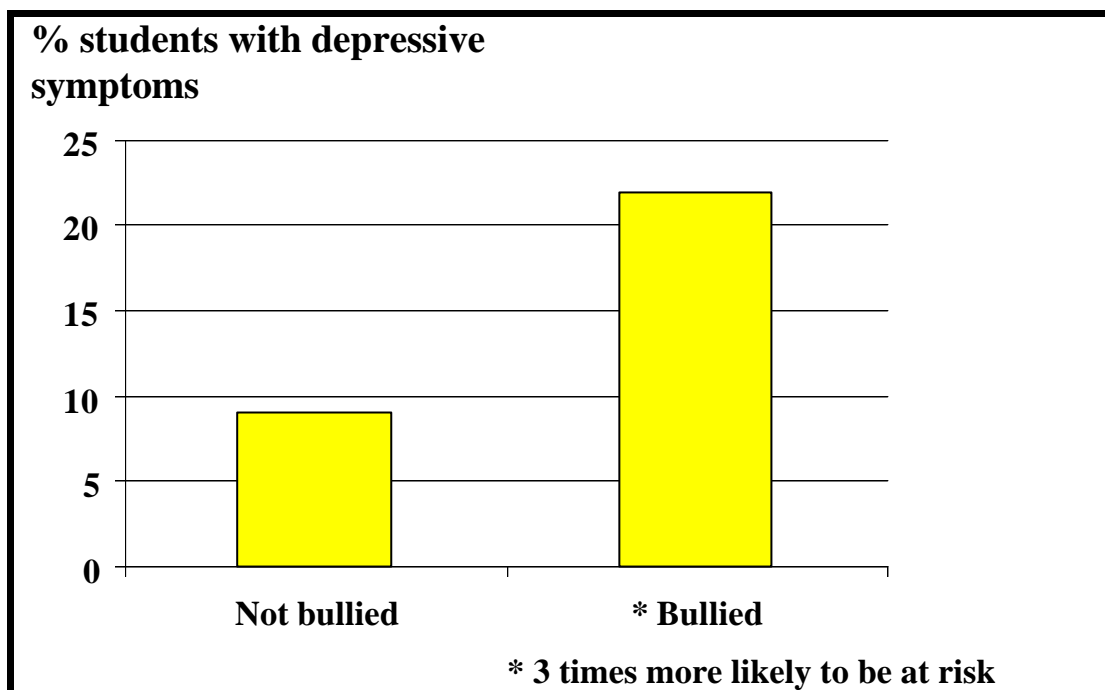


Figure 3: Security and emotional well-being

### Communication, social connectedness and emotional well-being

To gain an understanding of young people's feelings of connectedness or belonging to important others, students were asked several questions about communication and the relationships in their lives. Nearly a quarter of all young people surveyed, reported that they had no one to talk to if they were upset, no-one they could trust and no-one to depend on (see figure 4). Of particular interest is the significant difference between males and females in these perceptions.

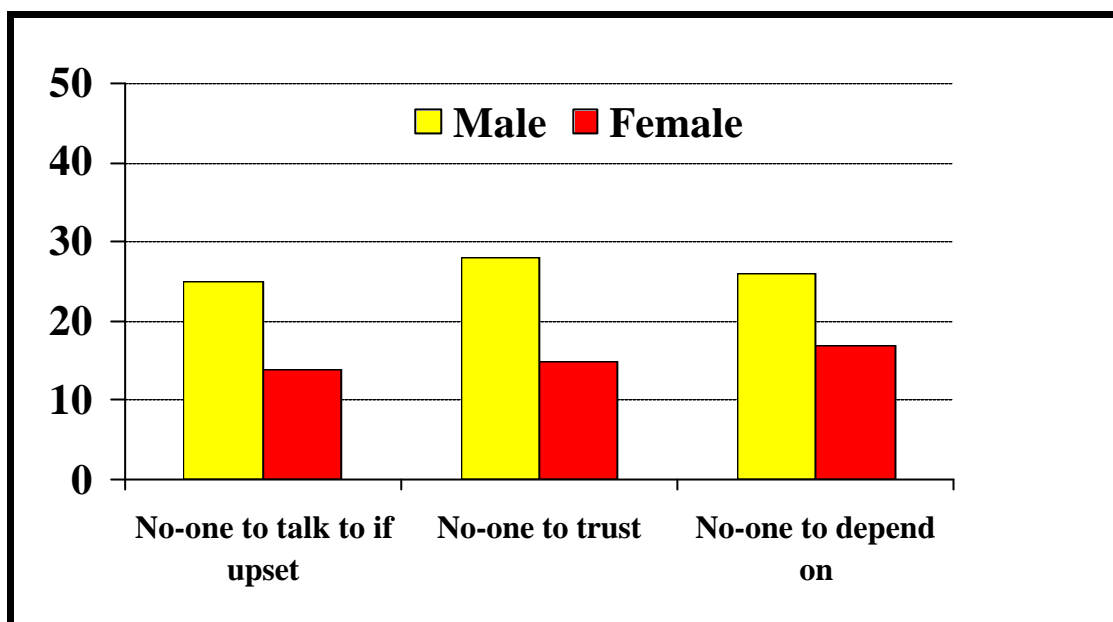


Figure 4 Social connectedness: perceptions of young people

### Temporal associations between victimisation, social connectedness and the onset of depressive symptoms

Looking across the time period of Year 8 to Year 9 we have found strong relationships between social connectedness and victimisation in Year 8 with the onset of depressive symptoms in Year 9. Young people who reported being bullied at both survey periods in Year 8 were twice as likely to report the onset of depressive symptoms in Year 9, compared with those who were not bullied. Similarly those who reported no available social attachments (no one to depend on, no one to talk to if upset and no one to trust) in Year 8, were twice as likely to report the onset of depressive symptoms. Importantly, those who reported having arguments with more than one person at either survey period in Year 8, were four times more likely to report the onset of depressive symptoms.

These findings suggest that a reduction in victimisation in schools, and improvement in the social environment for young people, has the potential to have a substantial impact upon the emotional well-being of young people (Bond et al. 2001).

### Positive regard and emotional well-being

A sense of being valued is connected to a young person's perceptions of the opportunities they have to make a contribution to the day to day activities of the school, and to what extent their contributions are recognised, valued and acknowledged. While nearly 80% of students perceived that they had opportunities to help plan things like school activities, events and policies, students reported that they were not always acknowledged for their contribution. When students were asked to respond to whether 'teachers notice when I am doing a good job and let me know about it', twenty-eight percent of students reported that teachers didn't notice them and let them know about it. These students were twice as likely to report depressive symptoms. In addition, positive regard was reflected in how young people perceived they were treated at school.

While over 90% of young people reported that they were generally treated in a friendly way at school, those students who perceived that they were not treated in a friendly way were four times as likely to report depressive symptoms.

Glover, S., Burns, J., Butler, H. and Patton, G. 1998, 'Social environments and the emotional well-being of young people', *Family Matters*, vol.49, pp. 11–15.

## **Appendix 2 A positive classroom climate**

When a positive classroom climate is in place, members of the group are more likely to feel that they:

- can express a point of view
- are valued members of the group
- will benefit from working as a team
- are comfortable moving out of their established friendship groups to work with other class members
- are able to ask and answer questions about each other's work
- understand the teacher's expectations about behaviour within the classroom
- can respect the confidences of others
- understand the agreed rules for conducting classroom conversations and other activities.

Important prerequisites for a positive classroom climate are that students have:

- a sense of a secure environment
- the skills to participate and contribute
- the opportunities to participate and contribute
- a sense that their contributions are valued.

Each school has its own culture and traditions, programs and priorities. Teachers also have differences in style, expectations of behaviour, and favourite teaching and learning strategies. For a variety of reasons, some classes are harder to work with than others and turning around a class which is negative, is often difficult (Rogers 1997). There is therefore no single formula for creating a positive classroom climate. However, a few observations may be made about how a safe and supportive classroom which is conducive to learning, might function with regard to:

- a. classroom organisation
- b. classroom agreements or 'operating' instructions
- c. teaching and learning strategies which facilitate classroom discussion
- d. managing the classroom
- e. opportunities for one-on-one conversations between the teacher and individual students
- f. recognition

### a. Classroom organisation

The physical organisation of the classroom is important in facilitating communication and interaction. Clearly, there are often constraints on the space and time available for teaching, but, where possible, attention needs to be given to providing teaching spaces and classroom organisation that facilitate discussion, role-play and other small group activities. Student grouping is of particular relevance.

Teachers might consider a range of groupings for different activities. These may include:

- single-sex groupings
- randomly selected groupings
- friendship groupings.

Some schools are adopting more permanent student work teams such as team small groups (e.g. Keim et al. (eds) 1999). These groups are designed to provide:

- a sense of belonging
- a first point of reference for help with class work
- clearly structured tasks
- clearly identified roles for each member.

Sometimes moving furniture is necessary to promote better communication, for example, through positioning exercises. This can be a means of learning and practising collaborative group skills. In the past I've been hesitant because I can't be bothered moving the furniture. But then when you've done it (the positioning activity) you can see how valuable it is.' (Teacher in Gatehouse Project Pilot program, in Patton et al. 1997, p. 47.).

## b. Classroom agreements or 'operating' instructions

The importance of establishing agreed classroom rules, particularly in relation to holding discussions, is well recognised (see, for example, Lewis 1997, Rogers 1997, Canfield and Siccone 1995):

*Student ownership of the class agreement has been central to its success. The process of arriving at the agreement took some time, but was time well spent. In the long run, it proved to be a very powerful tool for maintaining a positive classroom climate. On the occasions when students breached the agreement, it was easy to take them aside, ask them to read the agreement aloud, reflect on its contents, who wrote it, and why. The need to control their own behaviour and adhere to the established code became self-evident. It wasn't a matter of being told by a teacher how to behave; it was a matter of following what your peers had already set down and valued. A very different type of 'peer group pressure'.*

A teacher's view on negotiating a class agreement as part of the Year 8 Gatehouse Project classroom program., in Patton, et al. 1997.

Teachers will have different approaches to setting or negotiating these rules, but it can be helpful to:

- agree collaboratively upon rules or, at least, discuss the implications of teacher-set rules
- frame rules, where possible, in positive terms, e.g. 'Respect the views and feelings of others' rather than 'No put downs'
- discuss importance of confidentiality, and encourage careful consideration before disclosing personal information
- encourage respect for feelings, views and privacy of others
- allow the right to 'pass' when feeling uncomfortable
- emphasise importance of one person talking at a time and of listening to others.

### **c. Teaching and learning strategies which facilitate classroom discussion**

The importance of utilising strategies which facilitate participation and engagement has been particularly highlighted by recent work on the middle years of schooling (see for example, Australian Curriculum Studies Association 1996). The use of such strategies is particularly important when dealing with discussion about emotions in the classroom.

Teachers can:

- encourage students to set the parameters for discussions through developing a group agreement
- reflect on the teacher's own role in discussions - the one you take up as well as the one students expect of you
- maintain a 'not knowing stance' in classroom conversations, and help to generate many viewpoints
- value all student contributions and make this known
- use a range of questioning techniques which open up discussion rather than fish for the quick right answer
- recognise that some students may not feel comfortable sharing; explore ways of dealing with this
- recognise that some students may not have an opportunity to speak; explore ways of remedying this
- observe the class dynamics during discussion; make brief notes if possible on who is and who isn't participating.

### **d. Managing the classroom**

Some classes are harder to manage than others, but when creating a good working environment, it is important to have clear and positive strategies for interacting with others in the classroom.

Teachers can draw on their 'pile of goodwill'. Lewis (1997) talks of the 'pile of goodwill' which teachers can accumulate by taking opportunities to interact with students in less formal ways, showing interest in their students and conveying a sense that the students are valued.

Teachers can utilise clear strategies for planning lessons and monitoring students (Lewis 1997):

- keep the lesson flowing
- keep students interested - use a variety of teaching and learning strategies and, where possible, make content and assessment part of practical real world activities
- keep students accountable for learning
- use subtle signals such as eye contact to indicate awareness of behaviour, followed up by private conversations, if necessary.

#### **e. Opportunities for 'one-on-one' conversations between teacher and individual students**

Communicating 'one-on-one' can add to a student's sense of being valued and to the teacher's 'pile of goodwill'. Of course, it is often difficult to find time for each individual student in a context where large classes are common and there are increasing demands on teacher time. Some schools have reported benefits of reorganising the way teachers and students are grouped. Team teaching, in which teachers spend most of their teaching time with the same group of students, has created more opportunities for interaction with each student and has enabled teachers to know their students better (see, for example, Cumming 1996, p. 35). Use of small groups as work units, when they are working well, can free teacher time for work with individuals.

#### **f. Recognition**

Find as many opportunities as possible to notice student contributions and let students know that their contributions are valued:

- Develop opportunities for students to develop and demonstrate a range of competencies.
- Use, on a daily basis, simple strategies, for positive communication - smiles, simple thankyou words or notes, such as 'well done' or similar to acknowledge specific achievements, etc. This enhances self- esteem.
- Display student work as often as possible - allow students to select pieces and/or ask students for permission to display their work.
- Encourage students to contribute ideas to discussions, brainstorming and decision-making sessions; acknowledge contributions positively.

- Acknowledge students' contributions to class activities.
- Encourage other students to acknowledge the contribution to discussion and other activities by promoting student discussion and debate about each other's work.
- Provide a range of leadership opportunities for all students over the course of a term/semester.

***Checklist for a positive classroom climate***

1. Is the physical environment conducive to positive interaction?
2. Do students have the opportunity to work in different groupings - by themselves, in small groups, as a whole class?
3. Do students have the opportunity to take on different roles within the classroom?
4. Do students receive acknowledgment of their contributions to class activities?
5. Are there accepted operating guidelines for behaviour within this class? For behaviour in general? For conducting discussion in particular?
6. Are consequences for breaches of behaviour guidelines clear and well known?
7. Are there accepted and well-known strategies for maintaining and respecting privacy?
8. Are there well known procedures for following up difficult issues which might arise in the classroom?

## **Appendix 3 Raising awareness: Initiating interaction and discussion**

The following strategies can be used with staff and other members of the school community to encourage interaction and discussion about everyday issues related to security, communication and positive regard of adolescents. They are also used in the *Teaching Resources* to explore a range of issues with students.

### **1. Photolanguage**

Photographs or pictures can be used as prompts for discussion. Participants can be asked to choose a picture that represents a situation, a group of people, an emotion, themselves. Descriptive language often flows more easily with visual prompts than it might when presented with an abstract idea for discussion. This activity is particularly useful for work with participants who are shy, lacking in confidence, or are uncomfortable expressing personal opinions.

Arrange about 20 photographs on the floor. Make sure that the photographs are facing the viewers – a circular arrangement is helpful. Invite participants to walk around the photographs and silently select one or two photographs in response to one or more of the following:

- represents security
- represents communication
- represents positive regard
- can be interpreted as trust
- represents adolescence.

Invite different participants to share with the group the significance of their choice of photo: 'I chose this photo because...' Ask others for contributions about the same photo. In summing up, draw attention to the diversity of views and interpretations, similarities and differences. This activity is particularly useful in prompting discussion about risk – in a positive and negative light – and protective factors in adolescence.

### **2. Positioning activities**

Activities where participants physically place themselves on a continuum within the room, for example, where the extremes represent agree/disagree or like/dislike, can be useful for eliciting opinions and a range of viewpoints.

The purpose of this exercise is to demonstrate that:

- people see things in different ways
- there is a range of views on issues experienced by adolescents, and that it is okay to hold a view that is different from others

- holding a different point of view often requires you to justify that position to others
- you can take up a number of positions on an issue
- different points of view can often be contradictory.

Put the words AGREE and DISAGREE at either ends of the room. Stand in a position where you can clearly see everyone in the room. Ask participants to listen carefully with their eyes shut while you read out statements such as:

- ‘It was harder being a teenager in my day.’
- ‘Being a teacher is better than being a student.’
- ‘Friends are more important than family.’

Ask participants to open their eyes and move to the end of the room that best expresses their opinion. Encourage them not to be influenced by movements of others. Invite participants to share opinions with those on either side. Invite individuals to share their opinions. Have an escape route for those who do not wish to share, e.g. ‘Pass’. Debrief – remember to use open questions.

It can be illuminating to ask participants to change roles or perspectives and to reconsider their position, e.g. ‘Now imagine you are a Year 8 student, a grandparent, etc.’.

### 3. Post-it notes

Coloured post-it notes can be used as a way of collating opinions without the participants being identified. It is an effective way of quickly gathering a number of perspectives as a basis for further discussion/exploration.

Put the following four headings on butcher’s paper on the wall:

- Feeling secure
- Feeling connected
- Feeling valued
- Able to communicate freely

Give each participant four different coloured post-it notes, e.g. pink, yellow, blue, green. Ask each participant to write one thing on each that would help a teacher to:

- ‘feel secure’ (on the pink post-it);
- ‘feel they belong and are part of the group’ (on the yellow post-it);
- ‘feel valued’ (on the blue post-it);
- feel that they are ‘able to communicate freely’ (on the green post-it).

Ask participants to stick their post-its under the appropriate headings on the butcher’s paper. Share participants’ answers.

When working with teachers, it is possible to point out that many of their responses are the same as the ones students identify.

#### **4. Exploring everyday situations**

Use the following situations to explore everyday situations that may arise for students, and consider how apparently small crises can build into long term effects.

i. Today I'm still so upset. I thought Lana and I would always get on together. No! Even when me and Christy or Niki were fighting me and Lana stayed friends but now Lana is being really bitchy. In our English class she wrote a note to Christy saying something about me, something 'that I did', and then they both bitched about me for ages. I said I couldn't remember if I did it or not, but they both said it was me. Now Lana is being really bitchy, rude and unkind.

ii. There's been a teacher that I have had some difficulties with (I won't say who). He always tells me and Jo to stop talking and doesn't let us sit next to each other, and if we argue and say we didn't do anything, he sends us to the Coordinator. If we try to talk to him he ignores us and doesn't care. He always gives me a bad mark, even when I try really hard, which isn't often because he always gives me a bad mark, so now I don't bother.

iii. I'm in class now and feeling heaps better than I was at recess. Cam and Ang have sat down next to me. I can't wait till cricket training. I'm also really looking forward to Saturday when we play a match. I hope I make a few runs. I wish I had brought my own bat to training. I hope I can get in the A team. I'm playing cricket at lunch now, so that's better than walking around by myself.

(Later)

School was a lot better yesterday, but I didn't bowl very well at cricket training. Miss everyone at my old school so much. I'm not playing cricket at lunchtime anymore 'cause the other kids hate me, so I just walk around by myself.

**In each situation:**

- What is going on for this young person?
- What are some short term impacts?
- What are some long term outcomes?

**What is one thing that could happen to enhance the young person's:**

- sense of security
- ability to engage in communication
- sense of being positively regarded by self and others?

**Consider action at the level of:**

- individuals
- particular groups within the school
- whole school policies, programs and practices.

### **Appendix 4 Adolescent Health Team meeting**

<b>Record of meeting</b>		Date	Time
Present			
Apologies			
Purpose			
<b>Item/Action</b>		<b>Who</b>	<b>By when</b>
1			
2			
3			
4			
5			
6			
7			

**Next meeting** \_\_\_\_\_

## **Appendix 5 *Bullying, violence and harassment in schools***

While bullying in schools is certainly not new, in recent years, through media exposure, it has received increased public attention throughout the world. Can schools do anything to make a difference to what is a problem for society in general? Recent experience in Victoria would indicate that schools acknowledge that they have a responsibility to address these issues and are doing so.

Bullying is 'a form of aggressive behaviour which is usually harmful and deliberate; it is often persistent, sometimes continuing for weeks, months or even years and it is difficult for those being bullied to defend themselves. Underlying most bullying behaviour is an abuse of power and a desire to intimidate and dominate' (Sharp, S. & Smith, P., 1994).

Bullying, including sexual harassment, is an issue for all schools, single-sex and co-educational alike. It is not true to say that a single-sex setting is an environment which is free of such issues. Issues of religion, culture, sexuality, difference of any type have no boundaries. It is a reality that incidents of bullying, violence and harassment occur in all kinds of school settings.

Bullying behaviours are practised and experienced by males and females of all ages, with some students being both the perpetrators of and the targets for bullying behaviours. Bullying is no longer seen as the sole preserve of the male or the young boy at school. As more attention has been paid to issues of bullying and violence, this perception has shifted to an acknowledgment that girls can be bullies as well.

Students, parents and teachers can sometimes feel that bullying is an inevitable part of school life and that nothing much can change it. School staff, while concerned about bullying, often find it hard to detect because much of it is subtle. It is now recognised that bullying in schools is something which can and should be tackled by the whole school community. Schools need to work together with students and families to develop strategies for preventing bullying and dealing with it when it occurs.

Understanding the nature of bullying is one of the first steps in responding to and dealing with the issue. There has been a significant shift in definitions of bullying from ones about physical power and violence to ones describing a broader range of behaviours best summarised as 'Repeated oppression, psychological or physical of a less powerful person by a more powerful person or group of persons' (Rigby 1996, p. 16).

Using labels such as 'bully', 'victim' and 'bullying' may be less helpful than using language which describes and deals with particular behaviours. These behaviours can be expressed in:

- verbal ways, as in repeated teasing, name calling, 'put downs', because of gender, race, sexual preference (perceived or otherwise) and threats
- physical ways, as in hitting, tripping, poking, scratching, punching, kicking, throwing objects with an intention to cause harm and stealing, hiding or damaging possessions

- indirect ways, as in ignoring, ostracising and deliberately excluding someone from a social group, giving dirty looks and spreading rumours.

In 1997 the Centre for Adolescent Health's Gatehouse Project surveyed Year 8 students in a number of schools. Resultant data showed that 53% of students surveyed (13-14 year olds) reported experiencing some form of bullying recently, with 16% experiencing it daily. Teasing was the most common form, followed by rumours, deliberate exclusion, being threatened or physically hurt (Glover, S. et al; 1998, pp. 11 - 15). Research has shown that a young person's experience of bullying can affect their physical and emotional wellbeing, both at the time of and well after the bullying experience, which affects their ability to participate in the full range of activities offered at school.

Listed below are some suggested strategies for the whole school community to adopt in responding to and preventing bullying and violence at school.

Schools can:

- acknowledge that bullying happens and take a public stance on its unacceptability
- develop school policies and programs aimed at both preventing bullying and dealing with it when it occurs
- develop, maintain and review supportive curriculum approaches to give a message consistent with school policies
- provide opportunities in curriculum programs and classroom activities for students to experience a range of communication skills including problem solving, help seeking and assertiveness
- provide opportunities for effective and meaningful student participation
- develop, maintain and review clearly understood processes and opportunities for reporting incidents and concerns
- involve students, teachers and families in resolving problems
- provide for needs of both the students who are bullied and those who engage in bullying
- develop, maintain and promote a safe and supportive school environment in which it is understood that incidents of bullying, violence and harassment are unacceptable and will be responded to appropriately.

Students need to know that:

- lots of people have been bullied at some time in their lives and that if they are bullied then they are not the only ones and it is not their fault
- there is always someone, in their family, a trusted friend or teacher, who they can tell about being bullied. People who mistreat others keep their power when people say nothing
- they can call *Kids Helpline 1800 551 800*, if there is really no one else they feel they can talk to; this service is confidential and free
- they should try to avoid being a silent bystander when others are bullied
- there is help available to work out a plan of action – the solution may not be simple, but there are lots of things they and others can do to improve the situation.

The Gatehouse Project through *Promoting emotional well-being: Team guidelines for whole school change*, offers schools a way, based on surveys and observations of student behaviour, to review their policies, programs and practices, and to work towards a positive and supportive whole school environment in which all students feel safe and accepted.

## **Appendix 6 Conflict resolution**

Conflict is a part of everyday life that can occur in any environment. Given the complex composition of any school environment, conflict needs to be understood. While it is ideal to be free of conflict in our daily lives, it needs to be understood as an inevitable part of life, albeit it to lesser and greater degrees, that can arise from a range of situations. If we recognise it, rather than avoid it, or even prefer that it didn't exist, then we are part way towards managing conflict.

Part of the process of managing conflict means understanding that it arises for a variety of reasons. It can be caused by a disagreement concerning divergent interests, or misunderstandings evolving from differing views on the same issues, from differing purposes and backgrounds, or it may arise when needs are not met. Whatever the direct cause, conflict represents a different perspective which results in a wide ranging field of responses. The responses are often emotional and require input of an external nature to enable the parties involved in the conflict to move forward. While conflict can often be resolved, there are times when the solution is conflict management. Whether the conflict be resolved or managed, change occurs that will help the parties to communicate, or function reasonably in a common environment.

### **Moving forward from conflict in the school context**

The ability to move forward, in the school context, necessitates a policy and processes by which all involved can be guided through their responses. Within the Gatehouse Project framework of a whole school approach to emotional well-being, such a policy can be developed through the review and planning process. When a school has strategies in place to deal with conflict between members of the school community, it can function at a level of prevention and intervention that establishes constructive working environments.

Unit I of *Teaching resources for emotional well-being* plays an essential part in the prevention of conflict in the classroom. Student participation in establishing classroom agreements helps to create a sense of connection to, and hence ownership of, agreements which can be drawn on in times of conflict.

Conflicts occurring beyond the scope of the classroom agreements will require the intervention of a third party, in many cases a teacher, who is trained in a suitable form of conflict resolution. Selected methods of conflict resolution need to be fair, equitable, confidential, and address both the immediate issue, and the more extended background issues to the conflict. Those involved need to feel that their issue is valid, that they will have time to express their viewpoints/feelings/grievances, and be assured that they will have an equal opportunity to be heard.

When engaged in a conflict resolution process such as mediation, the parties are assured that the resolution will not be imposed on them by an external party, they know that time will be available to express their side of the story, and they know that what they say in the mediation session will be confidential. The resolution agreed to by the parties will be mutually acceptable, and decided on by the parties. The mediator guides the parties towards their decisions in an environment which is safe, secure, and non-adversarial.

A school implementing the Gatehouse Project's whole school approach to emotional well-being will involve members of the school community in professional development such as mediation training. Information on such training can be found at [www.gatehouseproject.com.au](http://www.gatehouseproject.com.au)