

beyondblue schools research initiative



The newsletter of the *beyondblue* schools research initiative in South Australia

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THE SOUTH AUSTRALIAN TEAM

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Welcome to our last newsletter for 2003

“Depression is a major problem and I believe people should listen to what teenagers have to say and to what they think would be good to help the situation. If they want to know how to help teenagers with depression, they should go to the source. They should go to the teenagers and ask how they can help teenagers with depression.”

Year 11 Student

We had such a great response to our last newsletter.

Thanks to all those who gave us feedback about it. We really value your comments.

This newsletter contains information about the Pathways component of *beyondblue*.

South Australia is responsible for this component and our team is working hard to develop resources to support schools in this area.

Pathways, within the *beyondblue* schools research initiative, can be for health and for education.

A teacher recently described his understanding of effective pathways for care and education in schools by using the phrase “a matrix of support”.

The teacher was participating in the Professional Learning day for the intervention schools, which was held at Hindmarsh Education Development Centre on the 13th

of November.

Participants spent the morning gaining more understanding about effective pathways for care and education. In the afternoon they discussed school organisation issues, including planning for 2004.

“A matrix of support” highlights the importance of everyone in the school taking responsibility for the mental health and well-being of students.

It neatly sums up the fact that developing and promoting effective pathways for care and education is not just a job for the student counsellor, the year level coordinator, the concerned teacher or the Assistant Principal. It is the responsibility of everyone in the school community.

The pathways component of the *beyondblue* schools research

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State Coordinator’s Report

On reflection a lot has been achieved this year.

All school communities have:

- Committed to the program (2003-2005)
- Identified a project contact person who has assisted in project implementation
- Ensured all staff are informed about the program
- Conducted staff and year 8 student surveys
- Commenced planning for their community forum.

Staff in the intervention schools have:

- Participated in the professional learning sessions
- Implemented the classroom program (Year 8 Classes)
- Participated in Pathways PD for School Action Teams.

I am currently visiting schools to finalise various aspects of the program and to acknowledge their efforts with certificates.

Community forums will be organised early next year and will be an important link between the program and the school community. We will negotiate an opportunity to offer information

and guest speakers to address the many questions and issues that may arise in relation to adolescent depression and issues of mental health and well-being.

The community forum may be a stand-alone event or it could be part of another school function such as an Open Day or Annual General Meeting.

It is expected that the schools will nominate a time and function so the *beyondblue* team can organise structures to support schools run to run forums.

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initiative explores how best to enable students to access support and professional services, within schools, health and community agencies. To establish effective pathways for care and education, partnerships will need to be forged between families, school staff, education support/welfare personnel and community-based health professionals.

Of course, schools, families and agencies have always worked together. However, the pathways component seeks to enhance and enrich these relationships, so that young people can have access to “a matrix of support”.

As well as developing the Pathways Resource Pack, we are supporting schools by

developing Professional Learning activities. The activities are designed to illuminate aspects of pathways and encourage adults and young people to explore what pathways will look like in their local setting. For example, at the Professional Learning Day on 13th November teachers worked in groups to frame questions in response to the 10 Principles of Effective Practice for pathways.

These questions will help schools to develop local responses to pathways for care and education.

Another activity will enable schools and agency staff to work together and discuss shared values and ways of working.

Community Forums, which will occur next year, will provide opportunities for an exploration of adolescent depression, mental

health and well-being and how parents, schools and local communities can work together and respond effectively.

“...schools, families and agencies have always worked together. However, the pathways component seeks to enhance and enrich these relationships, so that young people can have access to “a matrix of support”.

Young People ... Help Seeking ... Depression

“Overall the results showed young people feel that depression is a major issue. All but four of those surveyed thought they would go to the doctors more frequently if the doctors were supportive of them as young people. (However) young people understand ... counsellors can't always keep things confidential. This is especially so if a young person is in danger.”

(Year 10 student)

The Open Access College offers distance mode curriculum access to a wide range of students, including school-based students studying single subjects and students unable to attend a traditional face-to face school.

The Open Access College and the South Australian *beyondblue* schools research initiative team have formed a partnership to help achieve the research project's

objectives. One strategy has been to establish a semester-long unit of work, available to year 8-12 students and accredited under the South Australian Certificate of Education (SACE) Integrated Studies. Students are selected for this course from a range of SA metropolitan and rural secondary schools. They nominate to participate in this course which will advise DECS and *beyondblue* about service provision to enhance student well-being. Lessons are via teleconferencing and work is submitted to the College.

This year there have been 2 groups of students who have undertaken the course. The first group of students presented their report in July 2003 and the second presentation occurred in November 2003.

Working with Anne Hopkins, Assistant Principal, students developed, administered and analysed surveys about help seeking behaviour in young people.

The students then presented their findings to DECS personnel to advise policy and professional development.

The student reports highlighted priority issues for young people and the ways in which they believed schools and health services could support them.

On both occasions the DECS personnel who

attended were impressed by the young people's ability to articulate their own needs and those of young people in general in relation to their mental health and well-being.

Confidentiality was a major issue for all the young people and those whom they surveyed. This was also the conclusion of the recent Reach Out* survey which found that while young people were aware of services a significant barrier to using them was the perceived lack of confidentiality.

“When living in a small community, it is hard to look for help and not many things get kept a secret, not even from your best friends. I know ... because I had a really big secret and I needed help, so I went to one of my best friends and asked her if she would not tell any one, but she did.”

(Secondary student)

*Reachout is a website for young people
www.reachout.com.au

Resource News

Earlier this year an 8 part series entitled “Like it is” was shown on the ABC as part of their schools' programming. An excerpt of the first program was shown at a training day in Term 3.

“Like it is” explores issues that concern young people and presents strategies to help them manage their lives.

This series can be obtained from DECS Tape Services ph (08) 8241 5615.

Teacher Resource notes can also be downloaded from the website:
<http://www.abc.net.au/schoolstv/likeitis/default.htm>

