



STRATEGIES TO PROMOTE CHILD PARTICIPATION AND EMPOWERMENT

CHILD SAFE STANDARD NO 7

PURPOSE

Children spend a lot of time at school. After the family, school has the most significant influence on child development, so making students' time at school enjoyable and worthwhile supports their mental health and wellbeing. Part of this process involves supporting students to be active contributors to their own learning. The sense of belonging, positive relationships and improved self-esteem achieved when children are active contributors in their school community are significant protective factors that support their mental health and wellbeing now and in the future.

While listening to student voice is important, research shows that the benefits for students don't come from just hearing their own voices; it's more about how other people (students, teachers, schools) respond to students' voices and work with them to make ideas come to life. In other words, the opportunities for students to participate in shaping their experiences at school must be real rather than simulated.

Mandama Primary School has a whole school approach to the empowerment and participation of students. We empower our students by encouraging and valuing student voice and agency. Mandama values participation by providing opportunities for students to have a say about issues and concerns that affect them in a safe and inclusive environment. Our students know they will be listened to.

IMPLEMENTATION

Becoming a Child Safe school means developing strategies to communicate and engage with all children who are involved with our school. It is important to ask our children when they feel safe, and when they feel unsafe.

As 'Trusted Adults' we ensure that our children's voices are heard, respected and valued. We encourage, listen and support our children when they speak up about issues of safety and wellbeing.

By enabling the participation of our children in our school we are:

- Demonstrating our commitment to upholding the rights of children
- Strengthening the commitment of children in our school
- Building the communication and leadership skills of children – through our Student Leadership program, Student Voice committee, assemblies etc
- Building cultural understanding and respect
- Enhancing the safety of children

We teach our children about their rights and the school values, to support them to recognise what abuse is and understand it is not okay and that they can do something about it (age appropriate).

We talk to our children about safety; both physical (the environment around them) and psychological (feeling, valued, respected and cared for). Mandama Primary School ensures children feel safe and comfortable in reporting concerns or allegations of abuse. We have implanted a simple and accessible processes that help children understand what to do if they want to report abuse, inappropriate behaviour or concerns for their safety. All staff at Mandama Primary School will have an awareness of children's rights and adults' responsibilities regarding child abuse.

At Mandama Primary School our whole school approach in promoting the participation and empowerment of children comes through our delivery of a rigorous Essential Learnings Curriculum (aligned with the Victorian Curriculum), policies and procedures. We work on the premise of primary prevention in giving our children strategies through the following whole school programs/approaches/policies:

- Building Resilience – Bounce Back program
- Drug Education
- Buddies program
- Learning for Life program – physical/social /emotional health
- Transition processes
- Recess and Lunchtime activities
- Passive Play room run by the Student Welfare Officer
- Regular reference to the Positive Behaviour Matrix
- Brave Hearts program

- Anti bullying programs eg: Sticks and Stones, Bully Stoppers
- Student Welfare Officer
- Puberty program
- Passive play room run by the Student Welfare Officer
- Anti -bullying audits and other teacher devised surveys
- Student Attendance Policy
- Internet Use and Social Media Policy
- Inclusion and Diversity Policy
- Student Wellbeing and Engagement Policy

As a school, we implement strategies such as the following to promote the participation and empowerment of children:

- Providing children with child-appropriate and accessible information about what child abuse is, their rights to make decisions about their body and their privacy, that no one has a right to injure them, and how they can raise concerns about abuse
- Ensure information and processes for reporting concerns are accessible to all children, for example by having procedures that are able to be accessed and understood
- Ensure information and processes for reporting concerns are culturally appropriate for all children
- Consider access and culturally appropriate language, photographs and artwork for Aboriginal children, children from culturally and/or linguistically diverse backgrounds and children with a disability when drafting communications materials. Where required the school will engage with parents of Aboriginal children, local Aboriginal communities or an Aboriginal community controlled organisation to review information and processes
- Translating school information (including information about children's rights, child safe policies, statements of commitment and reporting and response procedures) into relevant community languages, including relevant Aboriginal languages if appropriate
- Gathering feedback from children through surveys such as teacher devised surveys and the Student Attitude to School Survey regarding their connectedness to peers, safety and wellbeing and implement improvements based on this feedback
- Enable children to express their views and make suggestions on what child safety means to them
- Provide professional learning for staff on methods of empowering children and encouraging children's participation
- Raising awareness in the community about children's rights, for example through staff conversations with families and communications such as our Facebook site and newsletters

Mandama Primary School is a 'Visible Learning' school, where children articulate what they are learning, how they know they will be successful, how well they are going and what their next steps are for learning. Students are involved in their education, engaged in their learning and assessment. Students are empowered to learn by setting individual learning goals. These goals are developed, reviewed and monitored in collaboration with the classroom teacher and the student (and/or with the PSD Coordinator/ Student Welfare Officer where applicable). The goals are directed at their specific learning needs, to enable them to grow and improve. Students are encouraged to learn through activities that are meaningful and relevant to them, driven by their interests, empowering students to influence their own path to mastery. By encouraging students to take initiative, their cognitive ability is enhanced to take control, increase motivation, and ensure students respond to their activities.

Our aim is to equip our students for the future – through the provision of:

- high expectations
- positive attitudes
- diverse opportunities
- an organisational culture of student safety and well being

Students and teachers refer to the school values when engaged in learning. These are as follows:

- Respect
- Responsibility
- Kindness
- Honesty
- Pride

Our five values are explicitly taught, are linked to lessons and recognised in student awards at Mandama Primary School. Standards of behaviour for developing healthy and respectful relationships will be delivered via our Respectful Relationships Program which will be included in our Learning for Life Program, and our daily Community Circle discussions.

RESOURCES

Engagement Policy <http://www.education.vic.gov.au/school/principals/spag/participation/Pages/policydev.aspx>

Safe Schools Hub for Students

<http://www.safeschoolshub.edu.au/home>

Healthy Together Achievement Program <http://www.achievementprogram.healthytogether.vic.gov.au/>

KidsMatter

<http://www.kidsmatter.edu.au/primary>

Building Resilience: A model to support children and young people

<https://www.education.vic.gov.au/school/parents/health/Pages/resilience.aspx>

Resources to support child abuse awareness and prevention

Daniel Morcombe Child Safety Curriculum

Government schools see: <https://fuse.education.vic.gov.au/pages/Teacher.aspx>

(Edumail password is required before searching Daniel Morcombe Child Safety Curriculum)

Parents see: <http://education.qld.gov.au/parents/school-life/child-safety-curriculum.html>

Child Wise Personal Safety Education Program

<http://www.childwise.org.au/page/21/wise-child-protective-behaviours>

REVIEW CYCLE

This document was last updated on August 27th, 2018 and is scheduled for review in August, 2020.