

Primary Welfare Officer Initiative

Purpose, Objectives and Outcomes

October 2013

The Primary Welfare Officer Initiative provides eligible schools with primary students with additional resources to improve whole school approaches to promoting health and wellbeing within the school community.

Purpose

The purpose of the Primary Welfare Officer initiative is to enhance the capacity of schools to develop positive and engaging school cultures and to support students who are at risk of disengagement and not achieving their educational potential. The Initiative complements and extends existing programs that enhance student health and wellbeing, engagement, retention, academic achievement and the acquisition of life skills.

Objectives

The objectives of the Primary Welfare Officer initiative are to:

- contribute to identified school and network priorities, particularly in tackling bullying and supporting students with behavioural, mental health or welfare issues
- work in partnership with schools and the broader school community, including families, to develop and promote a comprehensive Student Engagement Policy that recognises the centrality of a positive and engaging school culture in achieving student learning and development outcomes
- work in collaboration with schools, community-based services and networks to develop programs and strategies across the four service delivery levels that promote the health and wellbeing of all students, ensure smooth transitions and provide additional support to students who are at risk
- identify, document and respond to emerging whole school and student wellbeing needs and priorities through evidence-based strategies and supported by strong evaluation techniques
- support a case management approach to student interventions, including participating in Student Support Groups, conducting follow up with students, families, teachers, and other support staff
- facilitate and strengthen partnerships between schools, student support services, other health and wellbeing staff, early childhood services and community health, family, child, mental health and youth organisations, in order to provide more responsive, diverse and coordinated services for children, young people and their families.

Outcomes

Broadly, the desired outcomes for the initiative are focused on supporting schools and students to create a positive and engaging school environment that promotes the health, wellbeing and learning outcomes of students through improving resilience, coping skills, personal engagement, a sense of belonging and life skills.

Specifically, the Primary Welfare Officer initiative aims to achieve the following outcomes:

1. Positive school cultures and enhanced capacity of schools to support students who are at-risk of disengagement and not achieving their educational potential through:
 - positive whole school approach to the promotion of wellbeing
 - engagement of the school community, including students, parents/carers, families, teachers, student support services officers and other support staff
 - coordination of support for students and families
 - development of community partnerships, including with other schools and community service providers.
2. Improved likelihood of students remaining in school and achieving their educational potential, with students:
 - learning more effectively
 - demonstrating improvement in engagement and attendance
 - feeling healthy, safe and happy
 - developing positive attitudes and behaviours.

Schools should also develop tailored outcomes that are specific to the needs of the school community.

Primary Welfare Officer Role

Broadly, Primary Welfare Officers undertake the following roles, depending on the needs of the school and identified target areas of need:

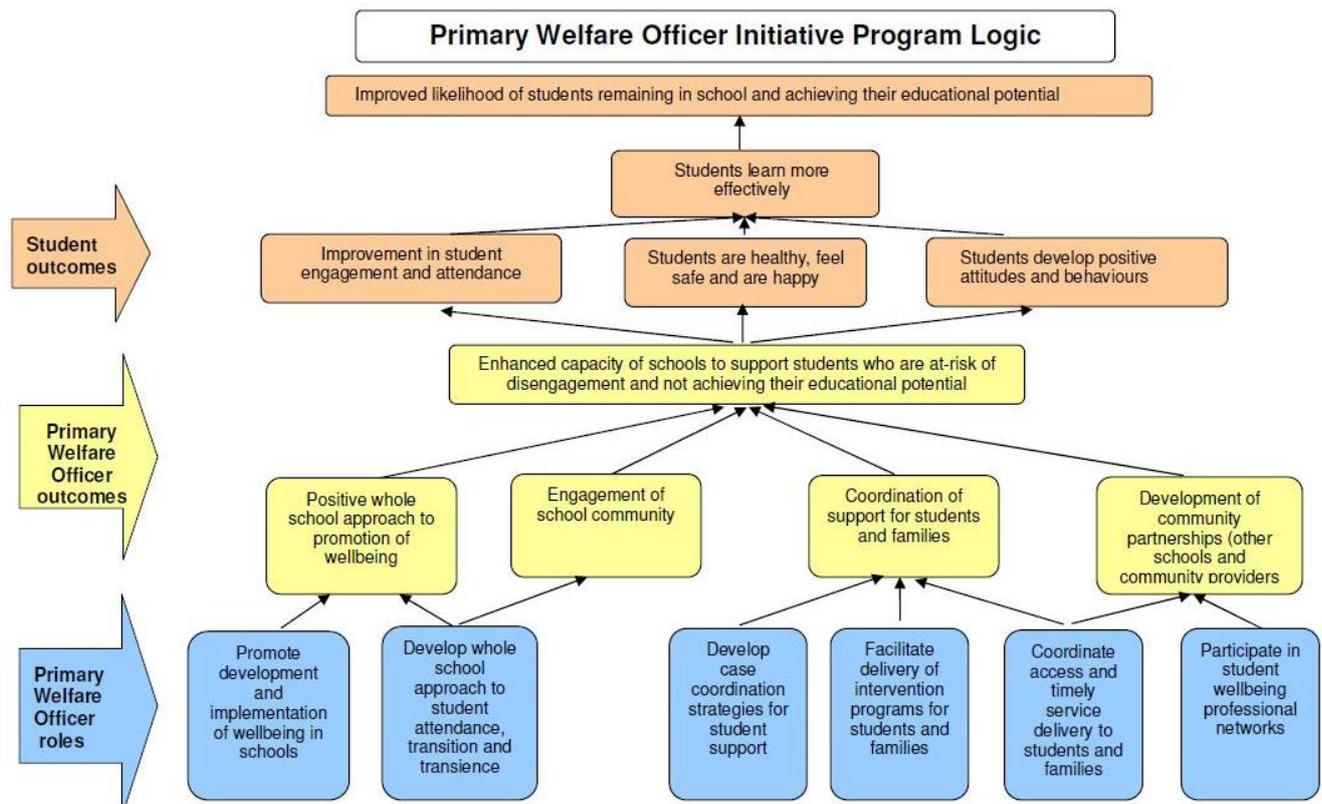
- promoting the development and implementation of wellbeing strategies in schools
- developing whole school approaches to student attendance, engagement and participation to support learning outcomes
- supporting case coordination strategies for student support

- facilitating the delivery of intervention programs for students and families
- coordinating access and timely service delivery to students and families
- participating in student wellbeing professional networks
- fostering relationships with community based service providers.

These roles span the four identified service delivery domains, with a focus on primary prevention and early intervention.

Program Logic

The Primary Welfare Office Initiative is underpinned by the following program logic:



Where can I obtain further information?

General information about the Primary Welfare Officer Initiative is available at:

<http://www.education.vic.gov.au/school/principals/health/Pages/welfareofficers.aspx>.