

South West LLEN

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Working together to lift student outcomes in small south west Victoria regional schools

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Communities of Practice pilot for rural schools

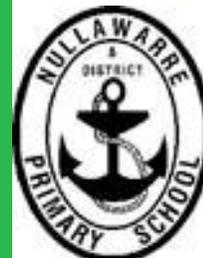
A new Communities of Practice pilot project is being developed that will help small rural schools in south west Victoria to build the capacity of vulnerable students and lift overall student outcomes.

There are 59 schools in Colac-Otway, Corangamite, Warrnambool and Moyne and 18 of these have enrolments of less than 100.

Due to budgetary constraints, and small staffing levels, some principals of small schools are challenged to adopt innovative ways to get the best results for their schools and lift student achievement.

In response, South West LLEN – which has a focus on vulnerable students – sought interest from some of our schools regarding development of a model for rural schools to build the capacity of their vulnerable students.

A conversation began with the principals from Cudgee,



Panmure
Primary School

What are our plans for our professional development day?

1 Introduction to trauma

Presenter: Kim Ryan, Paediatric occupational therapist

What is trauma?
What impact does trauma have on a young child?
What does this mean for children in a school setting?

Panmure and Nullawarre Primary Schools—three schools that are geographically located reasonably close to each other – resulting in a partnership of these schools and South West LLEN to develop and pilot a ‘new model’ for their schools.

The principals determined the elements of the model they want:

- a Communities of Practice approach to enable economics of scale
- a Communities of Practice approach that works with depth and precision, innovation and creativity
- a model that provides a consistent approach for vulnerable students
- an approach that supports all students, including vulnerable students, to have the skills to cope and solve problems
- an approach that supports the health, wellbeing, inclusion and engagement of all students, but particularly vulnerable students
- a whole-of-school approach, including business staff, and shared specialist teachers for music, art and library—that builds staff understanding of positive behaviour support and engagement practices, and which ensures all students have the tools and skills to develop positive and self-regulating behaviours
- high quality, relevant, accessible professional development with a focus on trauma informed practice.

The components of our model to date are:

Professional development: A joint curriculum-free day has been scheduled for professional development with a focus on trauma informed practice in schools. This will be a whole-of-school approach, including non-teaching staff, such as business managers and shared music and arts teacher, to build the capacity of all the staff in the schools to support their students.

Peaceful Kids training: Peaceful Kids is an eight-week program (one hour per week) delivered to groups of 6-8 students that covers mindfulness strategies and meditations, effective coping strategies and positive psychology exercises.

2 Trauma informed practice in schools

Presenter: Jay Robinson, Clinical psychologist

Stress and anxiety
Trauma and emotions
Trauma and stressful environments
Considerations for a whole of school approach and response to trauma

3 Case notes and strengths based language

Presenter: Kim Pringuer, Social worker

The how, why and where of case notes
Re-framing our language to diffuse the idea that a student is broken

The program is designed for anxious and stressed students. The fee for this training is \$685 and is usually provided in capital cities across Australia. However, School Focused Youth Services (Warrnambool and Moyne), has arranged to cover the costs of the training and for it to be delivered in Warrnambool. Staff from the three schools will undertake this training, enabling them to provide this program in their schools on an ongoing basis.

Nullawarre nurture room: Nullawarre Primary School has identified a need for a program to support students experiencing anxiety and stress. The school wants to pilot the *Nullawarre nurture room—where kids get to feel happy and safe*, which will be based on the model adopted by Warrnambool East Primary School—but contextualised to be practical for a small rural school.

Buddy mentoring: Panmure Primary School is trialling a buddy mentoring program.

South West LLEN is in the process of securing funding for this Communities of Practice pilot, and is organising the professional development day.

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