

Community Minded Kids Program

Community Minded Kids© is a program of Community Minds Incorporated, a not for profit organisation based in Sydney, Australia. We provide training and develop programs with the aim of strengthening community connections, citizen engagement and collective efficacy¹. More recently we have looked at innovative ways to provide accessible and engaging platforms and opportunities for children and young people to be included in community building.

We aim to instil and inspire community mindedness in children so that they can contribute today and grow to be adults that continue to contribute and care for their community.

Through the Community Minded Kids (CMK) program children learn about community building and participation, encouraging and empowering children (self-efficacy) to act, join others and participate in citizen-driven community efforts (collective efficacy). Underpinning their learnings and discoveries, the program interweaves important values and knowledge around social justice, inclusion and empathy towards others.

Ultimately, we want to cultivate a generation that thinks “WE” not “ME”. This shift requires conversations, learning opportunities and adults ensuring that learning about community and how we can contribute, is an integral part of children’s learning and development.

Program Aims

Community Minded Kids (CMK) is a primary school-based program that aims to foster community minded thinking in children.

More specifically the program aims to:

- Foster community minded thinking in children by linking important community themes to their education
- Introduce and open dialogue about important concepts such as social justice and equality, challenging limited views of community (charity V.s solidarity)
- Inspire children to be active citizens and positive contributors to their school and broader community
- Educate children and provide them with practical tools and ideas of how they can positively impact their school, neighbourhoods and communities
- Encourage and help forge collaborative relationships between the student, school, family and community to promote inclusion, cohesion and community well-being

Program Participants

- This program is designed for Stage 3 students (ages 9-12). We are looking to extend the program to students (ages 6-9). By 2020, we aim to run the program for all primary school levels. (ages 6- 12 years)

¹ Collective efficacy is the people’s shared belief in their collective power to produce specific changes. Collective efficacy is based upon the social capital of a community *and* a shared expectation for action, towards social change (Sampson, 2004).

- The program has been designed to include ALL children and is suitable for children with special needs and diverse abilities. It's a very flexible and adaptable program and schools/organisations can simplify or modify any lessons and activities provided in this program.
- Children who live in communities considered 'disadvantaged' and often negatively perceived can start to feel a sense of pride and connection to communities through developing a 'treasure hunt' mentality of seeking the positive aspects (assets) of their communities, their culture and their connections.
- Despite learning and literacy abilities, any child can be a Community Minded Kid – there is no competitiveness or ranking, rather this program promotes cooperation and collaboration.

Other Beneficiaries: the families of the students, the staff and school, as well as the broader community in which the school lives will benefit from this program, particularly if adopted as part of students learning post program. The program has positively impacted parents' perceptions and involvement in community, as well schools adopting more community minded practices and learning opportunities.

Schools/Organisations involved in the program will receive the following:

- A 'pre-program visit' to the school, to share information about CMK – initial meet and greet
- A 60-80-minute program induction and briefing session for the staff/teachers facilitating the program
- A student passbook, for each student participating in the program (the main resource required for community activities/out-of-class component)
- A teacher Manual /Resource, providing information about program, lesson plans, online links to resources and other information to support facilitators (teachers). Log Sheets for passbook activities are optional.
- We can run one class of any of the lessons provided below (optional)
- We can provide feedback and suggestions for in-class and out-of-class activities. (phone, email or virtual meeting)
- Graduation certificates (for Australian schools, we print the names on certificates)

International Support: For those operating overseas or in remote areas we are able to conduct Zoom/Skype meetings and/or phone conference to support staff. We are building an online resource (CMK toolkit) which will be made available by mid 2019. Email us for more information on how we support you in implementing the program

Program Components

The CMK program is a combination of in-class and out-of-class lessons and activities.

In-class component is a series of weekly based 45-minute lessons centred on themes of community development, citizen engagement and collective efficacy.

<i>What is community?</i>	Students explore the characteristics of communities; the reasons people live in communities and different kinds of communities.
<i>Belonging</i>	Students explore their sense of identity and places within the community and ways they can connect with and contribute to community places.

Citizenship	Students explore what it means to be a responsible citizen and ways they are responsible in their own communities.
Diversity	Students are exposed to different opinions and worldviews and gain a greater sense of respect and empathy for others.
Volunteering	Students gain an understanding of how volunteering benefits members of the community, as well as themselves.
People power	Students explore the power that comes from people working together to address an issue and the benefits of collective action.
Pay it forward	Students explore the impact a single action can make and consider the actions they can take to spread kindness in the community.
Social Justice	Students explore distinction between charity and social justice. They also learn about structural causes and acts of social justice.
Graduation and reflection	Students reflect on what they have learned about community, their role in it, and how they can work with others to create change. Students will graduate and receive a certificate in recognition of their achievements.

NOTE: Teachers have the option to develop their own community lesson plans or modify the lessons we provide.

Out-of class component: The purpose of the out-of-class element is to encourage students to be active participants in the community. The collaboration between students, school, family and community will foster positive relationships and create a safe environment that students can engage in. Students will feel a stronger connection and a greater sense of responsibility towards their communities.

Each week, students will “discover” and “do” by going out into the local community and identifying a positive aspect and contributing a positive action to their community. Discovering assets and strengths in the community will help instil community-mindedness in students and help them form an appreciative mindset².

We also aim to move children away from the vertical model of charity and educate them on the importance of building solidarity (collective efficacy) which is more empowering and produces more positive, productive and sustainable results for communities. ‘Doing’ community-minded activities will encourage students to recognise that they play an important role in contributing to community. Some may consider this an act of kindness or charity, but essence it is any initiation or act that benefits others, including caring for our environment.

Students will brainstorm “discover and do” activities during the CMK lessons, however, they are encouraged to come up with their own ideas. Students will then record their discoveries and actions in a CMK passbook and share them with their teacher and peers and can be used as great discussion points in CMK lessons.

For more information, please contact Community Minds
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² Having an appreciative mindset is seeking out positive and strengths, rather than deficits and what’s wrong. Whatever you appreciate in your reality will keep “appreciating” (growing) in your reality because whatever you give attention/focus to gets attracted into your experience.