



How important is this program for my school?

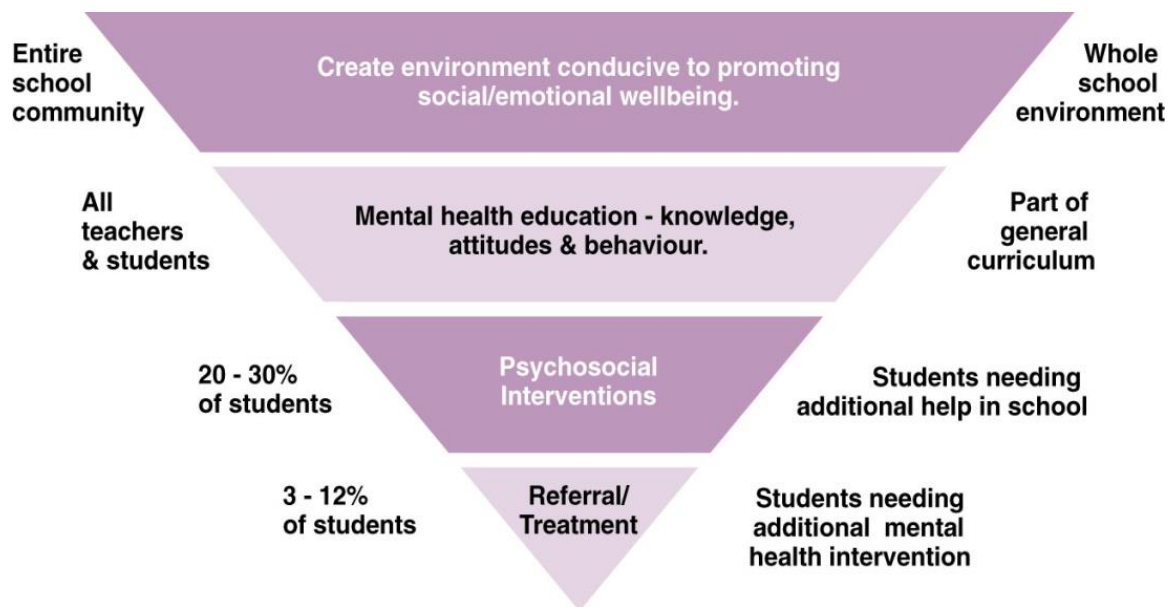
The mental health and wellbeing of students is critical to their ability to learn and interact positively with their peers. The World Health Organization (2014) describes wellbeing as a state of mental health 'in which every individual realises his or her own potential, can cope with the normal stresses of life, can work productively and fruitfully, and is able to make a contribution to her or his community.' Relationships are central to achieving such goals, and schools have been identified as critically important sites for fostering experiences of being cared for, valued and respected, which are key to wellbeing (Graham et al., 2014).

The rationale for the focus on schools as sites of wellbeing also includes:

- **almost all children attend school at some time**
- **school is an established, sustainable and strong social and educational institution**
- **school has a profound influence on children, families and community**
- **young people's ability and motivation to stay in school, to learn and to utilise what they learn is affected by their social and emotional wellbeing**
- **school can act as a safety net, protecting children from wider influences that can negatively affect learning, development and psychosocial wellbeing**
- **teachers have often received some training in child development, which makes them potentially well qualified to identify social or emotional difficulties in school-aged children; in addition, many teachers express a strong desire to better understand issues that impact on children and young people's wellbeing.**

The diagram on the following page is well known for the way it describes the layered responsibilities of schools regarding the mental health of students and staff.

Comprehensive school mental health program



Adapted from: Hendren, R., Birrell Weisen, R. & Orley, J. (1994). *Mental Health Programmes in Schools*. Geneva: World Health Organization

Seasons for Growth® is most successful when the culture of the school is open to and supportive of the program's implementation. Through the structures and processes of the school, students can learn that their experience of change and loss is shared by others and is a normal part of life.