


 Early childhood
Schools and
Community partnerships

Learnings in UK, US and Victoria
Judith Gray Uniting care
Daniel Leach: BSL

 About Broadmeadows UnitingCare


Early Childhood Services

- Cluster management: 18 kinders
- 5 Long Day Care, 1 Occasional Care
- NW Region: 150 children in Kinder Inclusion Support
- 300 staff (55 FT, 245 PT casual) 180 volunteers


Regional

- Emergency Relief, Financial Counselling
- Family Support Services


Best Start and Communities for Children funding
Facilitate Hume Early Years Partnership-local/state/federal

 NGO's as flexible, responsive

- Mobile kindergartens in rural Victoria
- School-based kindergartens
- Service integration: Community hubs Ballarat/Wendoree West: NR
- Broadmeadows: Meadows Early Learning centre: NR
- Four other school-based hubs
- Brotherhood of St. Laurence "Humming Hubs" project

 Overview

- Sure Start
- First 5 California US School Readiness initiative LEAPS
- Hume Early Years Partnership
- R.E. Ross Trust project
- Humming Hubs: places for family engagement
- Learnings

 Starting with Best Start
New ways of working with families

- Welcoming
- Inclusive
- Responsive to local needs and culturally relevant
- Collaborative and coordinated across agencies
- Work to an agreed set of objectives
- Link parents to each other and a full range of early years and adult learning programs
- (Source: Best Start Action Plan 2007)





Hume Early Years Partnership

Consortia Partners

- Dianella Community Health
- Broadmeadows UnitingCare, Orana Family Services
- **Community Partners (over 21)**
- Hume City Council, MRC, VICSEG, Primary schools,
- Broad Insight, Anglicare, Salvation Army,
- Brotherhood of St. Laurence, Melb. City Mission,
- Smith Family, VACCA, Neighbourhood House Network
- Enmaraleek Aboriginal Assoc.
- Aboriginal Partnership group
- Parent Advisory group

Established since 2003



Working together on common tasks

- Humming Hubs
- Playgroup hosting
- Kinder enrollment
- Evaluation
- Professional Development
- Global Learning Village Strategy

- Agency contribution



Emerging opportunities

- Broadmeadows Schools Redevelopment: the merger and rebuilding of primary schools in the local area onto five new sites by the Department of Education and Early Childhood Development



Strengths

Vulnerabilities

Vibrant multicultural diversity	Unemployment
Good place to bring up children	Socio-economic disadvantage
Emerg. relief support available	Low income
Regeneration of neighbourhoods	Housing disadvantage
People willingly help their neighbours	Lower participation in preschools
Neighbourhood stability- not planning to move away	AEDI results- developmental vulnerability across one or more domains
Strong network of services working effectively together	Newly arrived migrants- knowledge of access to services



Why community partnerships?

- Policy level: Educational Blueprint
- Early years -multiple players
- Agencies working together collaboratively
- Co-ordinated community engagement
- Intersecting parents and child needs and activities
- Working to strengthen relationship between school and community/early years sectors
- Community partnerships provide the momentum for change



Sure Start placed-based model

- coordinating early education, childcare, health and family support
- 10 year cycle to make significant change possible
- community involvement is needed to mobilise informal resources and networks of support and change at a local level, as an alternative to centralised government approaches.
- strengthen social environments for children/families
- partnership between home and early education being particularly important for more disadvantaged families
- Starting to influence the role of schools.



Social inclusion

- Relevant to families and to agencies
- Shared community engagement
- Contribution of families to educational success
- Mobilising all the agencies to work collaboratively
- No one organisation is the expert
- Provides opportunities for organisations to learn from each other
- Include large and small organisations, targeted and universal, spanning professional cultures



California First 5: LEAPS program

- School Readiness coordinator who works with schools and all early childhood services
- Valuing parents as first teachers
- “Mummy and Me” program - 1 hour program for ch under 3, parents must book in
- Focus on social and emotional devt. and relationships that are needed for school
- Focus on high number of children with speech and language concerns, problem of lack of coordinated approach to children learning English



California First 5: LEAPS program

- Optimising children’s preparation for school
- Strengthen relationship btw school and community sectors
- Improved systems that are integrated, high quality, consumer orientated, culturally appropriate, accessible
- Early years programs are key places for linking of families to training, employment, health, social security, and housing.
- Specific programs for children that did not attend preschool



“Humming hubs” Service integration around Primary Schools

- places for family engagement
- shared resources
- FAHCSIA Communities for Children fund project worker
- Partners fund the activities
- Schools fund community worker



School Readiness project R.E. Ross Trust

- Ready communities, ready schools, ready service systems
- Ensuring children are ready for school is now considered the responsibility of the social systems around the child; the family, the neighbourhood, community including informal networks, all working in partnership with early years services



Ready Schools

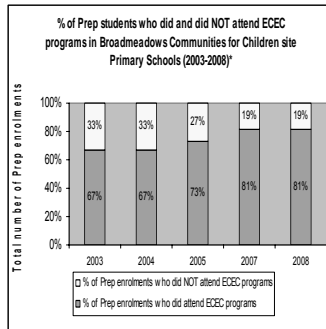
- Schools can be more effective in being “ready for young children” in the Prep year with better communication with parents and links community agencies
- Resources need to be in place before children arrive
- Continue parent/community partnerships that have evolved in 0-5 agegroup.



Results

New schools designed with preschools on site and places for family engagement

- AEDI: improvements starting to emerge in some neighbourhoods after 3 years
- Primary school Prep Survey: access to ECEC
- Best Start Parent Survey: access to playgroups, MCH, Library, Playgrounds
- Service Users Study: social connections between parents, social connections between children significant



Primary Schools in Broadmeadows

- Strong links to early childhood services
- Improved rates of participation in ECEC
- Sharing of preschool enrolments
- 4 yr. old Children's Portfolio shared with parents and schools
- Joint professional devt. forums



A Ready School common approaches in 5 schools

- Welcoming of younger children on site
- Promotion of play-based learning and socialisation
- Parent engagement
- Focus on oral language development
- Partnerships established between home and school, playgroups
- Access and enrolment in preschool and school encouraged



Evidence: partnerships

- More vulnerable families and communities are better served with an integrated approach. They have a range of needs (often health, social support and education related) that are difficult to deal with holistically in one service.
- Multi-sector solutions and problem-solving



Evidence: ECEC

- High quality preschool can combat social exclusion
- Culturally responsive programs can reduce social exclusion
- ECEC programs are most effective when they combine support for parents' participation in their children's early learning and development (McCain & Mustard 1999)



Evidence: School/Community hubs Canada

- Canadian Toronto First Duty initiative (TFD) found attitude, goodwill and leadership of principals is vital to success of these hubs (Valentine et al. 2007).

Local evidence

What are the benefits for agencies/schools?

Principal

- "Parents are feeling more connected to the school now that we can link them to supports and programs for their younger children."
- Principals leadership: "letting the community in and trusting we can work together to solve problems as they arise". (Primary Principal)

Preschool Manager

- "There is a shared understanding of the work we do and the difficulties we face, there has been a lot of support and patience given by partners." (Preschool manager)

Upfield PS

What do parents want in their neighbourhood?

- Local kinder programs
- Playgroups
- A local voice in the community/school
- Links to health, family support, adult education
- Children who perform well at school
- An understanding of the Victorian Education system

Strengths & limitations of partnerships

- Robust relationships: described as shared leadership and building trust versus competition in relationships
- A long-term commitment to relationship building was believed to support sustainability of actions
- Senior managers in the large agencies and school principals in particular making the time commitment to effect change
- Time pressures
- Easily resort to single agency agendas

Strengths

- The **MCH services** indicated flexibility in offering resources in hubs
- The **preschool sector** indicated that interagency partnerships offered a much wider focus than traditional early childhood services which has reduced their professional isolation.
- The **school sector** indicated that interagency partnerships improved their implementation of good ideas and increased the range of services working towards the same goals within their suburb.

New resources Hume City Library



Rise in community engagement

- Bilingual Storytelling: last 6 months: 10,850 parents and children attended
- National Playgroup Day in March
2007: 300 parents and children
2008: 400 parents and children



Collaboration: Trust

- the *most* critical element in developing multi-agency partnerships (Mattisich 2001)
- two types of trust are important and each plays a different role in relationship development
- 'Fragile' trust is when organisations agree to abide by their contracts and commitments
- 'Resilient' trust is when there is predictability, goodwill and an understanding that partners will not willingly harm each other. Ring (1997)

Achievements HEYP

Development of the evidence base

Interim Evaluation Report- final due in June 2009

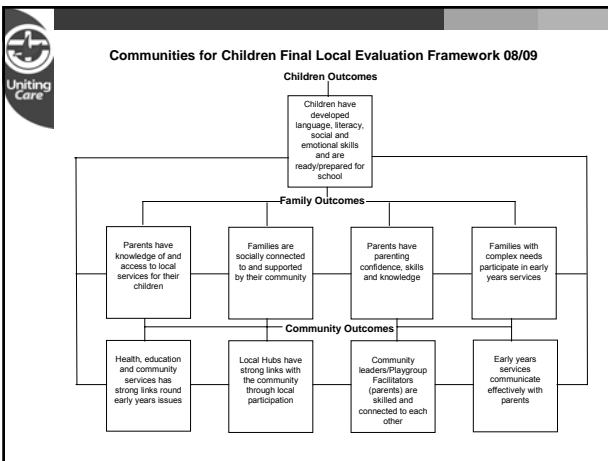
Projects accepted for the AIFS National Promising Practice Networks

Refereed Journal Articles

Commonalities

Sure Start, Best Start, Communities for Children

- Placed-based community development approaches
- Local priority setting and problem solving
- Intersection of child, family and community strategies joining with 'whole of government'
- It is the "intersection of family and community efforts that is the key to success of initiatives to support and nurture development in early life and beyond" (Elliot 2006).



Observations

- Hard to reach families = hard to reach programs/services
- Socially connecting parents improves parenting confidence
- Socially connecting children stimulates development and school readiness
- Strong connections between agencies improves program quality, challenges conventional thinking, helps new workers



Enablers

- Local decision-making about what works
- Place-based focus
- Leadership shared across health, schools, NGO, local government sectors
- Strong co-operation from local, state, federal govt. to join up funding and streamline processes



In summary

- The benefits of community partnerships offer a culture of shared responsibility for complex problems
- A commitment to act in ways that help, build on trust and strengthen the capacity of programs offered in a disadvantaged community.
 - Community partnerships are well-placed to integrate child, family and community approaches to improving outcomes for children 0–8 years
 - Alternative to single sector funding
 - More effective programs do not fit into traditional silos of funding



Early childhood Schools and Community partnerships References

- “Schools and Communities -working together to transform children’s lives”

(West Burnham, Farrar and Otero 2007)



Parent-led dancing in Arabic speaking playgroup



Thankyou

- Creswick Foundation,
- R.E. Ross Trust
- Colleagues at Broadmeadows Uniting Care

Hume Early Years Partnership team

Colleen Turner:
Cem Yuksel:
Fiona Alexander
Zeynep Yesilyurt

Contact: Judith Gray: bcarebs@vicnet.net.au ph. 9351 3673
www.besistart.vic.gov.au

Promising Practice Profiles - 44 now accessible on the CAFCA website:
<http://www.aifs.gov.au/cafca/index.html>

Further information about Broadmeadows Communities for Children is available at:
http://www.facs.gov.au/internet/facsinternet.nsf/aboutfacs/programs/sfscommunities_for_children.htm