Linking Schools and Early Years Services

Final Report

Prepared for:
The R.E. Ross Trust

Prepared by:
Centre for Community Child Health
Royal Children's Hospital, Melbourne

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Acknowledgements:

Project Manager
June McLoughlin

Project Team
Daniel Strachan
Associate Professor June Wangmann
Professor Frank Oberklaid
Cathy Archer

Editor
Anne Stonehouse

Linking Schools with Early Years Services

INDEX

Materials distributed at workshop

- Directions from the Evidence Summary

- Community Schools Models Summary

Linking Schools and Early Years Services

Section One: Overview

Table of Contents

Tables

1 Executive Summary

1.1 Premise

There is clear evidence that addressing the low literacy levels of many children from disadvantaged backgrounds requires identifying and removing barriers these children face when starting school. Doing this will require new ways of working and greater partnerships and collaboration between schools and early years services.

1.2 Directions from the evidence

Australia's changing social landscape has led to an increased number of families with complex needs. While the logic of integrated service delivery designed to meet these complex needs is recognised, progress is hindered by government departments working in 'silos'.

1.2.1 Early childhood development

Key findings from the early childhood development literature are that:
- Human development is shaped by a dynamic and continuous interaction between biology and experience.
- Culture influences every aspect of human development and is reflected in childrearing beliefs and practices designed to promote healthy adaptation.
- The growth of self-regulation is a cornerstone of early childhood development that cuts across all domains of behaviour.
- Children are active participants in their own development, reflecting the intrinsic human drive to explore and master the environment.
- Human relationships are the building blocks of healthy development.

(Source: Shonkoff and Phillips, 2000.)

Current evidence indicates strongly that children require the following for optimal development:
- structured, dependable, nurturing relationships with parents and other caregivers
- families with adequate resources to provide safe, nurturing environments that meet physical, emotional and educational needs
- practices in health care, developmental and education services that identify potential risks and address potential problems at the earliest possible time.
  (Halfon et al, 2004. p3)

1.2.2 School readiness

In order to create the conditions where children are most likely to be ready for school, the following is recommended:
- providing children with early educational experiences
- helping families provide learning experiences for their young children
- working to ensure fidelity in implementing model interventions
- building kindergarten teachers' awareness of the long-term impacts of differences in children's pre-academic skills when they enter school
- encouraging families to maintain their contact and involvement as their children move from child care or preschool environments to school
- providing a variety of supports to help ease children's transition to school

In order to meet the needs of students, schools need to:
- be involved in efforts to improve children's early learning environments and opportunities during the preschool years
- develop more effective strategies for meeting the learning and social needs of children who are functioning poorly during the first two or three years of schooling

- work in partnership with parents, developing ways of engaging parents in school management and in making use of school facilities for a variety of support services and functions
- establish partnerships with a range of other services that work with families in order to provide integrated and holistic services to families.

1.2.3 The concept of extended schools

An extended school is one that provides a range of educational activities and broader services, often beyond the school day, to help meet the needs of its pupils, their families and the wider community. The model is interpreted in a variety of ways depending on the local school and community context. Extended schools have the following key components in common:

- clear aims and purpose
- strong leadership
- administrative excellence
- consistent long-term funding from a variety of sources (both public and private)
- community and parent involvement
- effective publicity and dissemination
- an appropriate designated location
- opportunities for extended curricula and out-of-hours learning (Wilkins at al., 2003).

1.3 Policy directions

There are a range of services available to Australian children and their families. These cater for diverse needs, appear in a variety of locations and are funded, regulated and operated by a number of government and non-government organisations. Overall responsibility for children's services and education policy in Australia involves all levels of government.

The age children enter early childhood programs and school varies from state/territory to state/territory in Australia. The name used for programs, the hours they are available for attendance and the government department responsible for their provision also differs from state to state.

1.4 Review of international and Australian models

Six international and Australian models were examined as part of this project:
- Full Service Extended Schools (United Kingdom)
- Toronto First Duty (Canada)
- Schools of the 21st Century (United States)
- Coalition for Community Schools (United States)
- The Elizabeth Learning Center (United States)
- Schools as Communities (Australia).

Several key common features of the models were identified:
- offering programs that support parents
- engagement in the early years
- offering before and after school child care, vacation care (including programs in extended summer holidays) and weekend care
- co-locating services on school sites
- diverse educational programming
- adopting a collective philosophy
- promoting the development of positive relationships among services, families, communities and schools
- delivering a program that is responsive to local and emerging needs
- implementing a system of governance which seeks integration and local representation
- developing program logic and processes with a view to evaluation and program rollout in other locations.

Analysis of the models indicates that the development of a version that fits the Australian context would also need to consider:

- appropriate infrastructure
- appropriate flexible change management processes and implementation strategies
- strong leadership and governance
- the role played by local knowledge as well as high-level expertise
- effective planning for sustainability, which would include both securing ongoing funding and the engagement of community and parents
- the range of early intervention and prevention programs that would be needed
- professional development of staff.

1.5   Advice from the Victorian sector

Key stakeholders in the Victorian early years and school education fields emphasised the following in addition to the key points to emerge from the models analysis:

- the challenge of engaging hard-to-reach groups
- the need to take small steps initially as a change in philosophy and being able to demonstrate this change will take time
- dealing with the diversity of school infrastructure
- striking an effective balance between universal and targeted models
- the critical role to be played by the school principal and school council in the development of a collective philosophy
- the importance of clearly defined roles and responsibilities with a streamlined system of accountability
- the establishment of a committed team allowed the time to put in place structures and processes that will ensure the project's success
- the challenge represented by resistance to new notions of what schools can be and how services can be accessed
- the challenge of securing physical infrastructure funding and then collaborating with designers of proposed facilities about their use

1.6   The way forward

The next steps in a Victorian context are likely to involve activities that focus on tackling barriers to learning. These activities are labelled the enabling component in a three-part model which is explored in the Directions from the Evidence Section of this report. These activities focus on tackling the barriers to learning.

The first steps are likely to be:

- identifying and engaging communities and schools where such a program would be appropriate
- documenting their existing programs and the resources and services available locally
- gathering data on children's developmental progress
- working with communities and schools to develop new programs that tackle the barriers to learning.

2 Introduction

2.1 Background

The Linking Schools and Early Years Project is funded by The R.E. Ross Trust and undertaken by the Centre for Community Child Health in consultation with the Education Foundation. The project is made up of three components:

- an exploration of directions from the evidence
- a review of policy directions in early childhood services and schools across Australia
- a review of international and Australian community school models.

The three project components form sections 2, 3, and 4 of the report, respectively.

The current section of the report provides an Overview of material from the three components outlined above and includes a general background to the project. Also included are the findings from a project workshop and an exploration of the way forward in Victoria in terms of linking Schools and Early Years Services.

2.2 The current context

There is now overwhelming research evidence about the importance of the early years and the major impact they have on a person's developmental trajectory and life course. Adverse events in the early years, whether biological, nutritional, or environmental, can have lifelong consequences. Indeed, there is a growing body of evidence suggesting that many adult problems that pose challenges to the community – for example, crime, welfare dependency, mental health problems, poor literacy and school dropout, obesity and cardiovascular disease – may have their origins in the early years of life.

This renewed interest in the early years is accompanied by public policy initiatives designed to refocus service delivery systems on prevention, early detection and early intervention rather than waiting until problems become established before trying to address them. Treating established problems is expensive, generally not cost effective and ultimately unsustainable because of the resource implications. Governments and service managers are increasingly interested in a prevention and early intervention approach focused on early childhood, as the research suggests that this is both clinically and cost effective, and has long-term economic benefits for the community.

Australia has invested considerable resources over many decades in establishing and maintaining an infrastructure of health, education and other community-based services for young children and families. Commonwealth, state and local governments, together with NGOs, non-profit organisations, philanthropic trusts and corporate organisations fund an array of services which are generally accessible, affordable, and of reasonable quality on an individual level.

There is now a very strong international consensus based on emerging evidence that the best outcomes for young children and their families are achieved when local communities become the focal point for service delivery. In situations where local communities (including schools) are the driving force in striving for improved child and family outcomes, there is a much greater chance of improved co-ordination and integration of services. The development of partnerships between different levels of government, between professional groups, between primary and secondary level services, and between parents and professionals will result in services that are flexible and responsive to the needs of the members of a community. This is also a shift away from single focus interventions to more integrated and collaborative service provision. Schools are increasingly being seen as the core or hub of these important initiatives.

2.3 Linking Schools and Early Years Services

2.3.1 Rationale

There is clear evidence that addressing the low literacy levels of many children from disadvantaged backgrounds requires identifying and removing barriers these children face when starting school. Doing this will require new ways of working and greater partnerships and collaboration between schools and early years services.

The importance of links and partnerships between schools and early years services is supported for a number of reasons:

- Current thinking about the importance of adopting an approach to child development and education that focuses on the whole life course highlights the need to close the gap between the early years and school.
- Barriers to learning need to be addressed before a child starts school. These barriers include poor experiences in the early years, inadequate parenting, parents' own poor experience of school and unidentified developmental problems.
- Engaging parents as active partners requires schools to provide opportunities for them to become familiar and comfortable with the school before their children start attending.
- There is a need for a more holistic approach to supporting families to create the best possible environment for children to develop.
- Schools will benefit from having greater access to information about the implications of current research on the early years.

2.3.2 Purpose

The current Overview section of the Linking Schools and Early Years project outlines activity undertaken as part of a scoping study for a future project aimed at linking schools and early years services. It seeks to bring together the key ideas explored in the other sections and create the foundation upon which a proposal for a new community school project is based.

2.4 Structure of the section

The section begins with an overview of directions from the evidence including the current context for Australian families, school readiness and the role of schools in addressing barriers to children's development and learning. The way forward based on directions from the evidence is also discussed. Next, an overview is provided of key ideas from policy directions and from the review of International and Australian models. Finally, the findings from a project workshop are documented and the likely next steps for Victoria are discussed.

3   Directions from the evidence

Attention to the early years (the years prior to starting school) has reached unprecedented levels. Powerful new evidence from the neurosciences and other sources places increased emphasis on the importance of the early years in relation to children's future development (Heckman, 2006; Shonkoff, 2006) and the need to forge stronger links between the early years and school.   There has also been increased interest in school readiness, school reform and integrated comprehensive services for children and families prior to and during the early years of school.

Many children are already on a poor developmental trajectory when they begin school and lack skills necessary for success. The gap between disadvantage and advantage tends to persist and widen over time (Karoly et al, 2005). Consequently governments in many countries are beginning to see the early years as an opportunity to enhance developmental outcomes, particularly for vulnerable children. There is also a growing belief that the achievement of optimal development by all children will be made possible only by establishing multi-sector, multidisciplinary systems that offer integrated collaborative services that address the needs of individual children in the context of their families, schools and communities ("Building Bridges", 2004). Schools are increasingly being seen as the core or hub of these important initiatives (Edgar, 2001: xv-xvi).

3.1   The context

Social change impacting on families, difficulties faced by services and new information about child development form significant parts of the context for looking at schools and the early years.

3.1.1   Social change

Over the past two or three decades there have been major changes in the structure, diversity and circumstances of families in Australia. For example there are more working parents, particularly women, more parents doing shift work and working non-standard hours, increased unemployment and therefore more children being raised in poverty. The wider social conditions in which families are raising children have also changed. For many families there has been a partial erosion of traditional family and neighbourhood support networks. There has also been an increase in the number of parents whose own experiences of being parented were compromised, affecting their functioning as parents themselves. These factors have contributed to an increase in the number of families with complex needs. Many services, such as family support agencies, child care centres and schools are challenged by these changes and have difficulty meeting the complex needs of all young children effectively. Schools are increasingly calling on specialist service delivery to address the social, health, emotional and cultural needs of young people.

3.1.2   Service difficulties

Services for children and families are generally not well integrated and therefore unable to provide cohesive support. In the past there have been few mechanisms for agencies providing complementary services to children and families to work together. Dealing with each agency separately is not only time consuming and can lead to discontinuity, but it also demands organisational skills that some families do not have.

There is a trend towards well-integrated intervention programs that involve a number of components. Such programs, which focus on reducing risk factors in several areas, appear promising in reducing risk and strengthening pro-social behaviour (Marshall and Watt, 1999). The ideal is a 'seamless' continuum of interlinked programs and services for children and families which may or may not be located together but which have a single point of access, a high degree of communication and congruence between programs and services and flexible options for families in the timing of use of programs.

Integration of services is hindered by government departments working in 'silos' to plan, fund and deliver services with few links to other departments, networks and agencies. This results in considerable wasteful duplication, increased service delivery costs and support being provided in a non-integrated way. It also means that many initiatives are marginalised, fragmented, not known to families, limited in the numbers of people they serve and riddled with serious gaps.

3.1.3   Early childhood development

Shonkoff and Phillip's landmark report "From Neurons to Neighbourhoods" (2000) synthesises the growing body of research from child development, neuroscience and education. Key findings are:

- Human development is shaped by a dynamic and continuous interaction between biology and experience.
- Culture influences every aspect of human development and is reflected in childrearing beliefs and practices designed to promote healthy adaptation.
- The growth of self-regulation is a cornerstone of early childhood development that cuts across all domains of behaviour.
- Children are active participants in their own development, reflecting the intrinsic human drive to explore and master one's environment.
- Human relationships are the building blocks of healthy development.
(Source: Shonkoff and Phillips, 2000.

Risk factors are cumulative and their impact on individual children and families depends on the child's age and length of exposure (CCCH Policy Brief No 1:2006:2). Tables 1 and 2 provide a list of the risk and protective factors from the antenatal period to approximately five years of age.

Table 1 Risk factors – antenatal period to approximately five years

Child characteristics	Parents and their parenting style	Family factors and life events	Community factors
Low birth weight Prematurity Prenatal exposure to toxins or infections Poor maternal nutrition Prone sleeping position Birth injury Exposure to stress Disability Low intelligence Chronic illness Delayed development Difficult temperament Poor attachment Poor social skills Poor problem solving Disruptive behaviour Hazardous environment Unsupervised play Impulsivity Poor self esteem Alienation	Single parent Young maternal age Postnatal depression or other mental illness Drug and alcohol misuse Parental tobacco smoking Harsh or inconsistent discipline Lack of stimulation of child Lack of sensitivity, warmth and affection Criminality Separation from or rejection of child Abuse or neglect Poor supervision/ involvement Lack of parenting knowledge	Poverty Family instability, stress, conflict or violence Marital disharmony Divorce Disorganised Large family size Rapid successive pregnancies Absence of father Very low level of parental education Social isolation Long-term unemployment War or natural disasters Death of family member Family history of ADHD Frequent relocations	Socioeconomic disadvantage Housing and urban conditions—unhealthy cities Neighbourhood violence and crime Lack of support services Social or cultural discrimination Community behaviour norms

Table 2 Protective factors – antenatal period to approximately five years

Prenatal and child characteristics	Parents and parenting style	Family factors and life events	Community factors
Good antenatal care and maternal nutrition Breastfeeding established early Full immunisation	Maternal health and wellbeing is good Healthy lifestyle Reasonable awareness and use of health and	Family harmony and stability Consistency of primary carers Nurturing environment	Supportive social relationships and networks Participation in community activities

Social skills Secure attachment 'Easy' temperament, active, alert and affectionate At least average intelligence Attachment to family Independence, self-help Good problem solving skills Ambition Positive self concept Self efficacy	community services Competent stable care Positive attention from both parents Supportive relationship with other adults Positive communication between parent and child Father's involvement in parenting Mother's education and competence	Positive relationships with extended family Small family size Spacing of children (more than two years)	Family-friendly work environments and culture Cultural identity and pride

(Sources: Centre for Community Child Health, 2000; National Crime Prevention, 1999; Cohen et al, 1999; Zubrick et al, 2000; Shonkoff and Meisels, 2000. As cited in Consultation Paper: Towards the Development of a National Agenda for Early Childhood. Department of Family and Community Services, Canberra, 2003, pp15-16)

Current evidence indicates strongly that children require the following for optimal development:
- structured, dependable, nurturing relationships with parents and other caregivers
- families with adequate resources to provide safe, nurturing environments that meet physical, emotional and educational needs
- practices in health care, developmental and education services that identify potential risks and address potential problems at the earliest possible time.
    (Halfon et al, 2004. p3)

Educational outcomes in adolescence and even beyond can be traced back to academic skills at school entry. In turn, these can be traced to capabilities in the early years and experiences in the home and community (Shonkoff and Phillips, 2000). The earlier the intervention the more likely it is to be effective, as well as being less costly than later intervention. The general goal of early intervention strategies and programs is to change the balance between risk and protective factors, because development is shaped by their ongoing interplay.

3.2 School readiness

Factors known to influence a child's readiness for school include:
- socioeconomic background
- environmental stress
- health
- family background characteristics, particularly the mother's education, marital status and mental health
- participation in a preschool program and the quality of the program (Rouse et al., 2005; Boethal, 2004).

3.2.1 School readiness recommendations

An extensive review of research on school readiness (Boethel, 2004: p vii) led to the following recommendations concerning school readiness:

- Provide children with early educational experiences.
- Help families provide learning experiences for their young children.
- Work to ensure fidelity in implementing model interventions.
- Build kindergarten teachers' awareness of the long-term impacts of differences in children's pre-academic skills when they enter school.
- Encourage families to maintain their contact and involvement as their children move from child care or preschool environments to school.
- Provide a variety of supports to help ease children's transition to school

Although the age of the child is still the most commonly used criterion for school commencement (LaParo and Pianta, 2000; Boethel, 2004), the notion of readiness has shifted away from a focus on outcomes of developmental assessments towards more of a focus on an interactive process or set of relationships in which the child, his or her family, the community environment, and the school interact in ways that support, or fail to support, the child's physical, cognitive, and social-emotional development (synthesis 2004:13). Readiness is no longer defined solely in terms of academic achievement but rather includes and emphasises social and emotional readiness (Doherty, 1997; Hartup, 1992; Shonkoff and Phillips, 2000; Dockett et al, 2000).

The Early Development Instrument (EDI), developed in Canada (Janus and Offord, 2001) is an example of new ways of looking at readiness. The instrument focuses on physical health and wellbeing, social knowledge and competence, emotional maturity, language and cognitive development and general knowledge and social skills. The EDI has been adapted for Australia (AEDI) and will enable communities to understand how children are developing at the time they reach school age. In 2004 and 2005, 28 communities from five states and territories implemented the AEDI. In 2006, up to 32 communities will implement the AEDI, and preliminary feedback has been positive.

3.2.2 Early childhood programs: Links between quality early childhood programs and school readiness

Increased attention to the importance of the early years has led to a focus on outcomes for children attending early childhood programs such as preschool and child care services, particularly outcomes related to school readiness. The long-term effects of participation in good quality early childhood programs, particularly for disadvantaged children in model early intervention programs, have been well documented.

The Cost, Quality and Outcomes Study (Peisner-Fernberg et al., 1999), involving more than 800 preschool children, established a link between quality early childhood programs and school readiness. Children who attended high quality early childhood programs performed better on measures of both cognitive and social skills. The benefits extended through the first year of school and for some children the second year as well. Children who received poor quality early childhood programs were less prepared for school and tended to have less success in the early years of school. Children who have traditionally been at risk of not doing well in school are affected more by the quality of early childhood experiences than other children.

Quality of early childhood programs, a critical factor, is an interactive process which depends on the interactions between structuring and process components (Wangmann, 1995). Structural components are those that are generally dealt with in regulatory or licensing frameworks and include staff child ratios, group size, physical environments, health and safety and staff training. Determining components, the key to quality, include relationships between staff and children, staff and parents, staff stability and the nature of the curriculum.

3.2.3 Economic benefits of good quality interventions

Historically arguments for investing in disadvantaged young children have been based on equity. Increasingly economic efficiency is being used as a powerful argument by some of the world's leading economic experts (Heckman, 2006, p.2). Heckman argues that the benefits of early childhood interventions in cognitive learning, motivation and socialisation are likely to have long-term advantages in the labour market because of the cumulative effects of early improvements in ability.

The benefits of high quality early childhood programs which have been identified from the major longitudinal studies and which also translate into economic benefits include:
- higher levels of verbal, mathematical, and intellectual development
- greater success at school, including less grade retention and higher graduation rates
- higher employment and earnings
- less welfare dependency
- lower crime rates
- increased government revenues and lower government expenditure.

Belfield (2004) identified cost savings to the school system as well as long-term benefits to society of providing every child with good early childhood experiences.

3.3   Role of schools

For many children development and learning at school are hindered by the absence of comprehensive, multifaceted and integrated approaches to address the barriers to development and learning. These barriers can arise from such circumstances as family difficulties, lack of community supports and poor health. Heckman (2006) argues that families, rather than schools, are the major sources of inequalities in children's performance in school.

The growing trend to extend the role of schools to address barriers to learning has emerged primarily because of well-established links between socio-economic disadvantage and poor educational and other outcomes (Cummings et al, 2005). There is now a widespread awareness that teachers cannot provide all that is needed (Dryfoos, 1994).

Heckman suggests that the current structure of schools allows them to have little effect on reducing gaps in performance for disadvantaged groups. He argues that concentrating on such matters as curriculum, meeting standards and parent partnerships, while necessary, is not sufficient given the scope of the barriers experienced by many students. While much is being done within schools and communities to address school learning, efforts are often fragmented and marginalised.

3.3.1   The need to build bridges from birth to school

Schools need to build bridges with early years services in order to address barriers to learning and move towards more integrated delivery of services (Halfon et al., 2004). Halfon and his colleagues recommend building bridges by adopting principles based on scientific evidence and best practices. These principles are:
- Health and development can and should be optimised for all children.
- Families are a central focus of young children's health and development.
- All families can benefit from guidance and support.
- Child development is a shared public responsibility.
- Developmentally informed public policy and related investments must be sustained.
- Strong and innovative leadership is needed
- Systems should be accountable for outcomes.
- A complex and changing society will require diverse approaches to service delivery.

Halfon's report proposes five essential components for comprehensive early childhood systems: access to health care for all children, including those with special health care needs; enhanced prevention, identification and treatment services; support for child care, early care and education providers to promote young children's development; support for parents in their role as the prime educators of their children; and support for families in their efforts to beak the cycle of poverty and deal with other life stressors that negatively affect their ability to raise healthy children who are ready to learn at school entry.

3.3.2   Shift of schools to 'hubs'

There is a general consensus around the need for a continuum of inter-linked programs and services that include early education, child care and parenting supports as core services. The inclusion of health services that focus on health promotion and prevention but also provide early identification and intervention for children and families with special needs is also important (Toronto First Duty Evaluation, p.7). Schools are being seen as the ideal 'hub' or location for these services. The expectation is not that teachers in schools should take on additional responsibilities but rather that schools should transform their links with other community resources and change the way they operate so that a culture of learning permeates Australian society (Edgar, 2001:155).

3.3.3   The concept of extended schools

An extended school is one that provides an extended range of educational activities and broader services, often beyond the school day, to help meet the needs of its pupils, their families and the wider community. The model is interpreted in a variety of ways depending on the local school and community context. Extended schools have the following key components in common:

- clear aims and purpose

- strong leadership
- administrative excellence
- consistent, long-term funding from a variety of sources (both public and private)
- community and parent involvement
- effective publicity and dissemination
- an appropriate designated location
- opportunities for extended curricula and out of hours learning
  (Wilkins at al, 2003).

3.3.4   Examples of Extended Schools

A number of schools have implemented a variation of the full service extended school model. Some of the initiatives include the following:
- Full Services Extended Schools (FSES) (United Kingdom)
- Toronto First Duty Project
- Schools of the 21st Century (United States)
- Coalition for community schools (United States)
- Elizabeth Learning Centre (United States)

To date most of the initiatives have targeted vulnerable children and families; however there is a growing shift towards universal approaches. Generally the main cited objective of these programs is school readiness.

An Australian initiative, the NSW based Schools as Community Centres, is explored in a separate section of this report which looks at community school models. In addition to a more detailed examination of international community school models, details of individual initiatives at three primary schools in Victoria are also discussed.

The initiatives listed above share common components as well as each site reflecting its unique context. Common components include:

Infrastructure
- strong leadership
- leadership role of school principal essential
- administrative excellence with clear management structures
- steering committee representative of all key stakeholders.

Managing change
- role of leaders and change agents critical to developing and sustaining projects
- need for both a bottom-up and top-down approach to change that includes high level support from partner agencies as well as from grass roots practitioners
- need for leaders to be aware of and responsive to the impact of change at all levels.

Planning for sustainability
- community and parent support key factors
- security of ongoing funding essential.

Involvement of parents
- provision of guidance and support
- use as volunteers
- parent meetings
- parent education classes.

Early intervention and prevention programs
- provision of quality child care essential for vulnerable children
- health services
- home visiting
- counselling and referral
- transition programs.

3.4 The way forward

Changes are occurring within schools and communities in how schools conduct their core business. The Centre for Mental Health in Schools at UCLA produced a document to assist schools or authorities working towards the development of comprehensive, multifaceted and integrated approaches. (Adelman and Taylor 2002) It provides guidelines for re-thinking ways to address current barriers to student learning and development. The suggested approach reflects a fundamental commitment to a three-component framework for school improvement:

1.   instructional/developmental component for directly facilitating learning and development
2.   enabling component to address barriers to learning and development
3.   management component for management and governance.

Adelman (2002) argues that what is not addressed in standard school reform models is the barriers to learning and development (the enabling component). Many factors can cause barriers to learning, so schools and communities need to be prepared to use a diversity of responses. While the focus needs to be on responding to problems, providing effective intervention strategies to prevent problems occurring in the first place is critical.

Adelman (2002) provides an overview of a widely advocated evidence-based framework for understanding the range of interventions needed and outlines a model consisting of:
- systems for promoting healthy development and preventing problems
- systems of early intervention
- systems of care.

Adelman's framework and the core components of successful models that have emerged from evaluation of extended school models have much in common.

A second framework helps to organise thinking about these programs and services around six arenas of program activity to address barriers to student learning. These include:
- classroom-focused enabling
- support for transitions
- home involvement in schooling
- crisis assistance and prevention
- student and family assistance
- community outreach for involvement and support.

3.4.1   What are some of the first steps towards change?

The unique characteristics of each community must be acknowledged and respected. Each school and community must clarify how existing resources can be restructured and improved and connections with other agencies and community groups enhanced. Doing so can be more effective if the experience of others who may have implemented similar initiatives is used.

Adelman proposes six steps to undertake while acknowledging the unique context of each school and community (2002:4):
- Broaden the vision of those collaborating.
- Write a 'brief' to clarify the vision.
- Establish a steering committee to move the initiative forward and monitor the process.
- Start a process for translating the vision into policy.
- Develop a five-year strategic plan.
- Move the strategic plan to implementation.

An examination of the literature suggests that schools need to:
- be involved in efforts to improve children's early learning environments and opportunities during the preschool years
- develop more effective strategies for meeting the learning and social needs of children who are functioning poorly during the first two or three years of schooling

- work in partnership with parents, developing ways of engaging parents in school management and in making use of school facilities for a variety of support services and functions
- establish partnerships with a range of other services that work with families in order to provide integrated and holistic services to families.

These recommended changes involve all three components of Adelmans model.

All efforts to change the focus of schools raise some fundamental questions about how society views the role of schools within the broad socioeconomic context of the 21st century. Various approaches to school reform will need to be tried and many issues dealt with before a well-funded and sustainable model can be established.

A more detailed exploration of the evidence can be found in section two *Directions from the Evidence.*

4 Policy directions

There are a range of services available to Australian children and their families. These cater for diverse needs, appear in a variety of locations and are funded, regulated and operated by a variety of government and non-government organisations. Overall responsibility for children's services and education policy in Australia involves all levels of government.

The age children enter early childhood programs and school varies from state to state in Australia. The name used for programs, the hours they are available for attendance and the government department responsible for their provision also differ from state to state. The state or territory government department responsible for preschool education is not always responsible for school education. There are also variations across Australia's states and territories in the numbers of children attending different early childhood services[1].

Table 3 State and territory government department responsibility for preschool and school

State or Territory	Department responsible for preschool education	Department responsible for school education
Western Australia	Department of Education and Training	Department of Education and Training
New South Wales	Department of Community Services for preschools not located on school sites Department of Education and Training, mostly when preschools are located on school sites	Department of Education and Training
Victoria	Department of Human Services	Department of Education and Training
Queensland	Department of Education and the Arts – majority. Crèche and Kindergarten Association of Queensland – small number.	Department of Education and the Arts
South Australia	Department of Education and Children's Services	Department of Education and Children's services
Tasmania	Department of Education Tasmania	Department of Education Tasmania
ACT	Department of Education and Training	Department of Education and Training
Northern Territory	Department of Employment, Education and Training	Department of Employment, Education and Training

Long day care and outside school hours care services have been developed primarily in response to the needs of working parents. They do however also provide respite care and cater for parents who do not work

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[1] Tables which explore variations across Australia's states and territories can be found in Appendix A.

outside the home. Preschools provide sessional educational environments for children before the compulsory start to school, while occasional care services provide limited casual care for the children of parents at home and family day care services provide care for children in carers' homes (OECD, 2000).

The location of early childhood services varies. Long day care centres and family day care schemes may be neighborhood based, work based or located in the work area. Outside school hours care is often attached to schools but may also exist in other locations such as neighborhood centres. Preschools similarly may be located within schools or co-located on the same site as a school or long day care centre, exist as a stand-alone service, or be an integrated program within a long day care centre. Occasional care services may be located in neighborhood centres, shopping centres or as stand-alone services in neighborhoods.

Policies and practices related to school programs, curriculum and pedagogy, operations, accreditation and regulation are determined by government departments, statutory authorities, non-government school education authorities and individual schools. Policies and practices, operations, accreditation and regulation for early childhood services are determined by government departments, statutory authorities, non-government authorities and individual services.

A more detailed appraisal of the current policy directions in Australia's states and territories can be found in section three *Policy Directions.*

5 Review of International and Australian Models

5.1 Full Service Extended Schools

The Full Service Extended Schools (FSES) initiative is a school-based program in the United Kingdom which aims to deliver extended hours child care and additional services to local communities. FSESs are secondary or primary schools that provide additional services for young people, their families and the wider community. Often these services are available at the beginning and the end of the school day, on weekends and during school holidays. There is a particular emphasis on high quality child care between 8:00 am and 6:00 pm, although FSESs provide a range of other services.

The FSES initiative began in 2001 with an emphasis on before and after school hours care. The Department for Education and Skills (DfES) has specified the core services of the FSES program; that is the extended services that each school is expected to be able to offer its children, parents and wider community by 2010. These core services include:

- high quality child care provided on the school site or through local providers, available 8:00 am to 6:00 pm all year round
- a variety of activities such as homework clubs and study support, sport and music tuition
- parenting support, including information sessions for parents
- swift and easy referral to a wide range of specialist support services including speech therapy, family support services and child and adolescent mental health services
- wider community access to information and communication technology, sports and arts facilities and adult learning opportunities (DfES Teachernet website, 2006).

Outcomes at this point in the FSES program are largely based on anecdotal evidence and are not consistent across all programs. Outcomes include the following (Cummings et al, 2005):

- In some sites, schools were achieving high levels of multi-agency work. When this was happening schools reported considerable benefits in coordinating work with vulnerable children and families, improving access to services and targeting services more appropriately. Many schools, however, reported difficulties associated with improving interagency work and concerns about the amount of time it takes to work in this way.
- Most of the sites saw the provision of child care as important to their overall rationale. The evaluation report states: *They believed that there were potentially significant benefits for children, families and communities arising from such provision. These included impact on children's learning, more positive relationships between schools and families and support for parents in accessing services and in finding and maintaining employment… there was as yet no hard evidence of a positive carry over from child care provision to classroom learning.*
- There was emerging evidence of meaningful consultation with local communities, parents and students in decision making.
- Examples of the considerable amount of supportive anecdotal evidence includes assertions that student engagement with learning increased, trust in the school grew and there was greater support for families. The report states: *There were indications that full service provision might potentially intervene to break cycles of disadvantage in some cases. None of this yet amounts to robust evidence of 'effectiveness' but it suggests that longer term and more wide ranging outcomes may indeed be possible. It is possible that the benefits of these outcomes (calculated in returns to society) will outweigh the costs.*
- The evaluation report also indicates that *schools were able, to differing extents, to articulate coherent 'theories of change', setting out how their actions will bring about desired changes for children and young people, their families and communities.'*

5.2 Toronto First Duty

The City of Toronto's *First Duty Report* (1997), which advocated a municipal strategy for supporting children, took its title from a quote from 19th century British Social reformer John Ruskin (Bertrand, et al 2002). The quote states that the *…first duty of a state is to see that every child born therein shall be well housed, clothed, fed and educated, till it attain years of discretion.* The Toronto First Duty (TFD) Project, a universal early learning and care program, came out of this municipal strategy. It seeks to meet the developmental needs of children to ensure they reach their full potential and in addition supports parents in their parenting roles and with work and study. TFD was established in 1999 by the City of Toronto, the Atkinson Charitable

Foundation and the Toronto District School Board with the support of other community organisations. It presently operates in five communities of metropolitan Toronto with a school and a lead agency (all are child, family or community centres) operating in partnership in each instance (TFD website, 2006).

The overall aim of the TFD project is to develop working models of early childhood education, development and care leading to an integrated system of services for young children and their families (Bertrand et al, 2002).

The Bruce WoodGreen Project (BWP) in a Toronto neighbourhood is a collaboration between Bruce Public School (BPS) and the WoodGreen Community Centre (WGCC). The 2004 evaluation reported the following outcomes at the BWG TFD site (TFD, 2004):

1. *program, policy and services*: There have been increases recorded in levels of participation in all aspects of the programs. The majority of children in kindergarten are registered for the full- and extended-day programs. Child care use is increasing, parent participation in the parenting and family literacy centre ranges from 15-25 per day and the summer program was close to capacity for both full- and half-day programs.
2. *children and parents*: The children and families programs have increased and been well attended. The parenting and family literacy centre operates at almost full capacity during the school year and at half time in the summer, which gave greater flexibility for parents in making choices for themselves and their children.
3. *community and public awareness*: Increasing numbers of community programs are being incorporated into BWP. This is the result of specific outreach efforts, word of mouth and broad reported support for the integration of early years programs.

5.3   Schools of the 21st Century

Schools of the 21st Century (21C) is a community school model in the US that incorporates child care and family support services into schools. 21C promotes the growth and development of children by linking communities, families and schools with the aim of providing a continuum of support services beginning at birth (21C Yale University website, 2006). The 21C community school model re-thinks traditional models of schools and schooling and recasts them as year-round, multi-service centres providing high quality accessible services to children and families from early morning to early evening (21C, 2004, p. 2).

The 21C program has been implemented successfully in more than 1300 schools in a diverse range of communities all over the United States. Many schools supplement the core 21C services by adding new components appropriate in their local contexts or by developing relationships with existing services and involving them more closely with the school community. The 21C model was conceived by Yale University professor Edward Zigler, a principal architect of the federal Head Start program (21C Yale University website, 2006).

21 C aims to support 'the optimal growth and development of children beginning at birth (Yale University 21C website, 2006). 21C evaluated its model by tracking two of its schools in the second, third and fourth year of implementation and comparing their impact on parents and children with two schools not involved with 21C. They collected data from surveys of parents, children, staff and principals and from reviewing school records. The evaluation revealed that parents who used 21C child care spent less money on the service, missed less work because of child-care related problems and recorded significantly lower scores on a parent stress index. The preschool child care program was also reported as promoting early identification of children with special needs and increasing children's readiness for kindergarten (Blank, Melaville and Shah, 2003).

In addition, through both process and outcome evaluations at several 21C sites, the Yale University Bush Center in Child Development and Social Policy has gathered much evidence in support of these schools. The main findings include:

- Children participating in 21C for at least three years had higher scores in mathematics and reading achievement tests than children in a control non-21C school.
- Children who participated in 21C beginning at age three started kindergarten ready to learn, as evidenced by their scores on kindergarten screening tests.
- According to teachers, the 21C preschool program helped identify and address children's special learning needs early in the educational process.
- Availability of 21C child care services enabled parents to provide consistent adult supervision and high quality out-of-home care, vital factors in healthy child development.

(Yale University 21 C website, 2006)

5.4   Coalition for Community Schools

The Coalition for Community Schools (CfCS) in the United States is an alliance of governments and philanthropic organisations as well as national, state and local community school networks. The CfCS advocates for community schools as the vehicle for strengthening schools, families and communities so that together they can improve student learning (CfCS website, 2006).

The Institute for Educational Leadership (IEL)[2] staffs the CfCS. The IEL is supported by grants and contributions from corporate bodies; the Federal Government Departments of Labour, Justice and Education; foundations and individuals. The CfCS has its own steering committee that determines the CfCS's policies and strategies and also provides oversight of its activities (CfCS website, 2006).

The CfCS aims to mobilise the assets of schools, families and communities to create a united movement for community schools. Community schools strengthen schools, families and communities to improve student learning (Blank, Melaville and Shah, 2003).

The CfCS collated twenty evaluations of community school programs and concluded that the collective results confirm what had intuitively been known for a long time - that is, that community schools work (Blank et al, 2003). The results indicate that community schools impact positively on students in four main ways:

1. Community schools *improve student learning* (both academic and non-academic) by taking a holistic approach and addressing the physical, social and emotional as well as academic needs and development of children. Fifteen of the twenty initiatives in the study reported improvement in students' academic achievement as measured by improved marks in school subjects and scores in proficiency testing. More than half of the evaluations also found evidence of positive development as measured by a variety of non-academic indicators, such as improved attendance (eight initiatives), reduced behaviour or discipline problems (five initiatives), greater compliance with school assignments and rules (three initiatives), increased access to physical and mental health services (five initiatives), greater contact with supportive adults (three initiatives) and improvements in personal and family situations (three initiatives).
2. Community schools *promote family engagement with students and schools* by encouraging families to access services and providing opportunities to participate in the life of the school in a range of ways. More than half the evaluations reported specific benefits to families, such as improvements in communication with schools and teachers (four initiatives), family stability and ability to provide for children's basic needs (three initiatives), parents' ability to meet workplace obligations (two initiatives), confidence in their ability to teach their children (two initiatives) and attendance at school meetings (two initiatives).
3. Community schools *influence the overall running of schools positively* by promoting cooperation between parents and staff in the promotion of student learning. Almost three-quarters of the evaluations examined the school's overall environment and identified improved outcomes in many areas. For example, principals and staff affirmed the importance of on-site services (five initiatives), more parents participated in their children's learning (four initiatives), there was non-partisan support for public education and access to resources through community partnerships (four initiatives) and services were well-integrated into the daily operation of schools (two initiatives). In the classroom, evaluators found increased emphasis on creative project-based learning and more innovations in teaching and curriculum (two initiatives). The school environments were reportedly more cheerful and were more likely to be perceived as safe (two initiatives).

Community schools *add vitality to the communities they are part of* because when the community is engaged with the school, the flow of resources and benefits runs both ways. Community partners provide on-site supports and opportunities for students, their families and their neighbours. In turn, the school maintains an active presence as a community hub, providing opportunities for family involvement, tapping into the community as a resource for learning and serving as a centre for community problem solving. Eleven evaluations that looked at this aspect suggest that community schools play a powerful role in community building. Evaluators noted a variety of improved outcomes, including improved community knowledge and perception of the community school initiative (seven initiatives); increased use of school buildings, awareness of community agencies and access to facilities previously unknown or unaffordable (seven initiatives); improved security and safety in the surrounding area (two initiatives); and strengthened community pride and engagement in the school (two initiatives).

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[2] The Institute for Educational Leadership is a non-profit, non-partisan organisation, based in Washington DC that works to achieve better results for children and youth. The IEL aims to bring people together to identify and resolve issues across policy, program, and sector boundaries. Their website can be found at http://www.iel.org/.

5.5 Elizabeth Learning Center

The Elizabeth Learning Center (ELC) is a model site for the Urban Learning Centres (ULC), one of the eight designs of the New American Schools of the 21st Century. The centre is located in the Los Angeles Unified School District (LAUSD). The ELC serves over 3000 pre-k through to year 12 students. In 1991, the New American School's Development Corporation (NASDC)[3] launched a nationwide proposal to design the school of the future. The Los Angeles Educational Partnership, United Teachers Los Angeles and LAUSD formed a partnership to write a design for a twenty-first century school. The resulting design was one of only 11 proposals selected by NASDC for trialling and in 1992 Elizabeth Street School became the first Urban Learning Center (ULC) site (UCLA Center for Healthier Children, Families and Communities, 2006).

The Urban Learning Center (ULC) model re-structures the school around three key components: shared governance, innovative curriculum and instruction and comprehensive student and family support tackling barriers to learning (also known as Learning Support model). This third plank of the ULC school reform model, Learning Support, is the key point of difference from many other school reform models. It proposes that barriers to learning can be tackled best through collaboration between school, family and community and the integration of school operations and other community services (UCLA Center for Healthier Children, Families and Communities, 2006).

The vision of the ELC is to create an educational centre that focuses not simply on learning but on enabling children to learn. It does this by addressing children's educational, social, mental health and health needs in a comprehensive and integrated manner in collaboration with public, private and civic partners (UCLA Center for Healthier Children, Families and Communities, 2006). The ELC aims to design and implement a comprehensive urban school model that creates a learning environment where high-quality instruction is supported by strong connections to the community (UCLA Center for Healthier Children, Families and Communities, 2006).

Some outcomes from the ULC program at the ELC include:

- low drop-out rates
- 77 per cent of high school graduates attend college compared with previous figure of 30 per cent
- 94 per cent high school graduation rate
- high attendance rate
- strong community support and participation
- increasing number of parent volunteers
- 26 adult education classes operating weekly (including over the weekend).

5.6 Schools as Community Centres

The Schools as Community Centres (SaCC) program is a New South Wales (NSW) government-funded interagency program which is co-managed by the NSW Departments of Community Services, Health, Housing and Education and Training, with the Department of Education and Training acting as lead agency. The SaCC program was established to reduce the impact of disadvantage for children entering school by providing integrated services for families in severely disadvantaged communities. The focus of the program is support rather than intervention and its emphasis is prevention. The program represents a collaborative approach to the range of problems that parents face in the early years of their children's lives, particularly when they are isolated from their extended family and the community they live in and unaware of the services available to support families (Children's Services NSW website, 2006).

The SaCC program seeks to enhance educational and social outcomes for children and young people at risk by creating strong and effective working relationships between families, communities and their schools.

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[3] American business leaders created the New American Schools Development Corporation in 1991 to identify effective school-wide restructuring designs for the nation's public schools and fund their implementation (New American Schools website, 2006 www.naschools.org).

The SaCC evaluation report[4], produced after two years of operation, stated that the project had exceeded expectations and had achieved substantial success in supporting and strengthening families (Killiby, 2004). The centres have reportedly enhanced existing services by making them more accessible to disadvantaged families. Furthermore, they have facilitated the development of over 60 innovative new services to support families. The local management committee and facilitator continue to evaluate local projects against program outcomes.

5.7   Summary and analysis

Six community school models were looked at in detail in the accompanying community school models report. Although there are clear differences in the models and programs presented, they share a number of key commonalities.

Many of the differences stem from the original purpose of the programs and differences in the contexts in which they operate. The programs also have different funding sources and plans for sustainability. While examination of the models does not reveal consensus in relation to strategies for evaluating these programs, the identification of several key common features is possible:

- *offering programs that support parents.* This occurs in a number of ways, including guidance and support in parenting roles, engagement in the running of programs and involvement in adult education at learning centres designed to address barriers to learning.

- *engagement in the early years.*   This involves recognition of the value of schools engaging children and parents in the years prior to school. The programs acknowledge the benefits to students of greater involvement by schools in the years before children commence school. They have actively pursued ways in which this relationship can be developed, such as by involving early years workers in school governance, locating early years services on site and sharing information about children between early childhood and school staff to aid their transition.

- *offering before and after school child care, vacation care (including programs in extended summer holidays) and weekend care.* The benefits of the provision of this kind of service both for children and also parents are recognised.

- *co-locating services on school sites.* The models promote the co-location of services on school sites where possible and if appropriate. Co-located services have laid the foundations for greater levels of integration. Where co-location is not possible, the development of close relationships leading to integration of services is pursued.

- *diverse educational programming.* The models typically adopt a curriculum with a holistic and responsive focus across disciplines. Learning is promoted in both school and community settings. A key focus is enabling children to learn through either attention to their basic physical, social and emotional needs or providing programs that help them learn, develop and move towards reaching their full potential. A focus on addressing the barriers to learning is a key plank in some of the models.

- *adopting a collective philosophy.* For programs to be embraced it is considered important that their philosophy and guiding principles be absorbed and understood by the school, community and other services. An understanding of what the school can offer the community as a hub, as well as the educational, social and developmental opportunities the community offers to schools, needs to be promoted and recognised.

- *promoting the development of positive relationships among services, families, communities and schools.* All of the models act on strong awareness of the desirability of community involvement and building relationships. These relationships are supported through such initiatives as encouraging community use of facilities. Often the school is a focus or location for pulling together services and their ongoing development as well as a site for the implementation of new services. The aim is the development of an environment of mutual respect and collaboration between parents, families and school staff as well as members of the wider community.

- *delivering a program that is responsive to local and emerging needs.* All of the models emphasise the importance of being responsive to local issues and needs while working within a guiding model or structure. This leads to developing initiatives that are locally relevant.

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[4] Copies of evaluation documents were not available for the preparation of this paper.

- *implementing a system of governance which seeks integration and local representation.* This often involves the appointment of a program steering committee and local site management committees with representation from local organisations, parents and staff. The ELC for instance operates with the guiding principle of keeping the energy and work of the school community focused on student achievement. In this governance structure everyone with a vested interest in the success of students has an opportunity and a responsibility to be heard and to participate in the business of establishing school-wide policy that promotes student success.
- *developing program logic and processes with a view to evaluation and program rollout in other locations.* While this was not necessarily a key feature of all models it is a crucial consideration for new models. It is worth highlighting the value of the Indicators of Change tool from the TFD initiative. It breaks down the five key elements of the program into indicators and then rates their evolution on a scale from co-existence to integration. This tool allows for both evaluation of the existing programs and the design of future programs.

5.8 The way forward

While there is not currently consensus about the superiority of one evidence-based model, there are nevertheless common features which highlight promising practice. These features should guide further research that will be beneficial when considering future school-based programs and initiatives aimed at improving outcomes for children, parents, and communities.

If such programs or initiatives are to work in an Australian context they need to adapt to local conditions and emerging needs. Analysis of the models indicates that the development of a local model that fits the Australian context would also need to consider:

- appropriate infrastructure
- appropriate flexible change management processes
- strong leadership and governance
- the role played by local knowledge as well as high-level expertise
- effective planning for sustainability, which would include both securing ongoing funding and the engagement of community and parents
- the range of early intervention and prevention programs that would be needed
- professional development of staff.

In addition, local issues relating to the system of government, areas of departmental jurisdiction and regulation in the early years, as well as the will to adopt new, challenging and innovative practice also need to be explored. Through this process a community school model for Victoria may emerge.

A more detailed exploration of the six featured models can be found in section four *A Review of International and Australian Models.*

6 Workshop discussion

In April 2006 CCCH held a workshop where the knowledge gathered during the researching of the documents for the current project was shared with members of the Victorian early childhood and education fields (a full list of participants can be found in Appendix B). The aim of the workshop was to discover whether the key points that had been extracted from the research resonated with the experience of people in the field. Specifically CCCH wished to learn whether there was anything that had been omitted that could potentially be critical to the success of a Victorian community school venture.

The key points to emerge from the analysis of the six models outlined in the previous section were presented to the workshop participants. They were asked whether they agreed that these were indeed the key points and invited to add anything that they thought had been missed. The key issues the group raised were as follows:

- the challenge of engaging hard-to-reach groups
- the necessity for 'change management' processes to be in place to facilitate such a change in thinking in schools and the need for this to occur without adding to the already heavy workload of school staff
- the importance of sustainability in terms of both funding and the maintenance of new processes beyond the life of the proposed project
- the value of establishing links with tertiary training programs and exploring the possibility of student placements
- the need to take small steps initially, as a change in philosophy and being able to demonstrate this change will take time
- dealing with diverse school infrastructure
- striking an effective balance between universal and targeted models
- countering both intrinsic and extrinsic barriers to learning.

The workshop participants were also asked what they considered to be the most important features of the models. They emphasised:
- responsiveness to local and emerging needs
- support for parents and families and efforts to engage them with a clear sense of purpose and clear messages about the potential benefits of the program
- adoption of a collective philosophy and the critical role of the school principal and school council in the development of such a philosophy
- importance of leadership and project champions.

Participants were asked to identify key features that would be essential for successful implementation of the models. They identified the following:
- the importance of clearly defined roles and responsibilities with a streamlined system of accountability
- the establishment of a committed team allowed the time to put in place structures and processes that will ensure the project's success
- the challenge of encouraging schools to embrace the evaluation of their programs when school funding will continue regardless of whether or not they evaluate
- an ongoing revenue stream which would release considerable resources that would be otherwise used for applying for grants and securing funding
- the potential of religious and community groups as facilitating partners
- a complete conceptualisation of the way schools are configured in the community and perhaps the establishment of 'children's research zones'.

The workshop participants were also asked what they considered to be the main challenges and they thought these could be addressed. The key ideas to emerge were as follows:

- the division of responsibility between the Department of Human Services and the Department of Education and Training. The schools as 'hubs' model was considered a possible way in which this challenge could be addressed.
- development of a strategy for implementation. Short-term funding is not desirable because it takes time for such projects to develop, get traction, achieve outcomes and spread the philosophy. Long-term support for implementation is therefore required.
- resistance to new notions of what schools can be and how services can be accessed. Schools need to be more flexible and responsive. The possibility of mandating philosophical change was also put forward. Mandated programs that are locally responsive could be instituted with 'tight but loose controls' i.e. supports for *how* to do things but local determination of *what* is to be done.
- different and conflicting legal Acts concerning children's affairs. Reform is required to increase responsiveness and to act for all children.
- securing physical infrastructure funding and when it is granted collaborating with planners of new buildings about their purpose.

7   Considerations and next steps

Many children are both arriving at school not ready to learn and entering schools not prepared for them and able to meet their needs. These children are the most likely to experience poor outcomes in the future which has ramifications for them and their community. The traditional models of schooling therefore require re-thinking to make a difference for these at-risk children.

The literature tells us that there are a number of ways in which schools can be reconfigured to increase the likelihood of these children reaching school ready to learn and finding an environment which fosters learning upon their arrival. These ways can be grouped into the three key areas of curriculum, governance and enabling[5].

Curriculum and teaching strategies need to be developed which meet the diverse needs of all children. Governance structures need to be integrated to ensure that they are responsive to the views and needs of parents and other stakeholders. Critically, barriers to learning need to be addressed to increase the likelihood of children's readiness to learn at school entry and to be able to learn after they begin school. Core enabling strategies include fostering closer links between schools and early years services and promoting increased parental involvement.

7.1   A developing model

The aim of the **curriculum** arm of a proposed model would be to make education for each student as meaningful and flexible as possible within a framework that complies with the Victorian Curriculum and Assessment Authority (VCAA) standards and the principles of the '*The Blueprint for Victorian Schools*[6]. The aim is for curriculum to be developed thematically and holistically across disciplines. However some children will still reach school unprepared for what they encounter. A responsive and adaptable curriculum is essential in order to meet the needs of these children while not compromising the needs of their peers.

The **governance** arm of a proposed model would operate with the guiding principle of keeping the energy and work of the school community focused on student achievement. In this governance structure, everyone with a vested interest in the success of students has an opportunity and a responsibility to be heard and to participate in the business of establishing school-wide policy that promotes student success. In the pursuit of this aim integration of systems of governance is sought.

The **enabling** component of the model places an emphasis on the following program areas which are focussed on tackling the barriers to learning:

1. **classroom-focused enabling**. These are programs which seek to enhance classroom-based efforts to address barriers to learning such as accelerated reading programs, teacher-to-teacher support and conflict resolution programs.

2. **crisis emergency assistance and prevention**. This includes counselling, referral and financial assistance as well as immediate emergency response and follow-up care and the development of programs to prevent crises.

3. **support for transitions**. These are programs designed to welcome and support new students and families, provide before and after school activities and support for grade-to-grade moves. Some examples are a "Peer Buddy" program to welcome new students to school, a parent welcoming club and after school tutoring and clubs. This program area of the enabling arm of the model also seeks to reach back to the early years by developing stronger links to local early childhood services. This may involve the development of on-site early learning centres, child care and kindergarten. It will foster the development of relationships between early childhood and school staff and seek a greater level of integration between schools and local services. A key element of this area is the recognition

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[5] This three part model, based on the work of Adelman, is explored in more detail in section two Di*rections from the Evidence*. A case study of how one school, The Elizabeth Learning Center in Los Angeles, has developed in accordance with Adelman's three-part model is analysed in section four *Review of International and Australian Models*.

[6] Refer to section three - *Policy Directions* for a discussion of the 'The Blueprint for Victorian Schools'.

by schools of the importance of the early years in children's development and their preparation for school.

4. **home involvement in schooling**. These are programs to provide those in the home with opportunities to learn and also participate in the life of the school. Examples include adult education programs both on site and distance education, staff directly contacting parents and individual teachers and clusters of teachers working with parents on standards and classroom practices.

5. **student community outreach and volunteers**. These are programs designed to develop greater community involvement in schooling and support for efforts to enable learning. Examples include appointing a volunteer program coordinator, staff working as outreach workers and parent literacy programs.

6. **student and family assistance**. This involves the use of direct services, referral and care management for students and families in need of special assistance. Examples include school-based mental health services, the establishment of a health clinic, support groups, parenting classes and school site counsellors.

The next steps in a Victorian context will most likely involve elements of the enabling component of the three-part model described above. Any re-thinking of curriculum and governance would involve reform of current regulations and policy as well as a community and school culture willing to embrace a community school model.

The first steps are likely to be identifying and engaging communities and schools, documenting their existing programs and the resources and services locally available, gathering data on children's developmental progress and working with communities and schools in the development of new programs with the aim of tackling the barriers to learning. Taking these steps will:

1. allow a clearer picture of what is currently occurring to be developed

2. allow the construction of community maps which overlay availability and use of local resources with children's developmental progress

3. allow implementation of new programs to tackle barriers to learning and encouragement and support for the ongoing development of existing ones

4. promote increased awareness of and support for community schools, thereby increasing support for wider implementation of such programs in the future. This may also pave the way for discussions around re-thinking curriculum and governance

5. contribute to the development of a clearer picture of what is likely to work in Victoria.

It is anticipated that the knowledge gathered during the current project will guide the development of a proposal for new ways of working in a Victorian context.

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9   Appendix A - Summary tables

Table A i. - Comparison of ages for entry into programs[7]

NB: Entry ages refer to the year in which entry commences unless otherwise indicated.

State/Territory	Entry age into program two years before Year One	Entry age into program one year before Year One	Entry age into Year One	Compulsory starting age
Western Australia	4 by 30 June. Single entry point at beginning of school year	5 by 30 June. Single entry point at beginning of school year	6 by 30 June. Single entry point at beginning of school year	The beginning of the school year in which the child reaches the age of 6 years 6 months
New South Wales	4 by 31 July	5 by 31 July	6 by 31 July	6th birthday
Victoria	4 by 30 April	5 by 30 April	6 by 30 April	6th birthday
Queensland	4 by 31 December [in the preceding year]	5 by 31 December [in the preceding year]	6 by 31 December [in the preceding year]	6th birthday
South Australia	Continuous entry after 4th birthday	Continuous entry after 5th birthday	Single entry in January after 2-5 terms in Reception depending on initial entry	6th birthday
Tasmania	4 by 1 January	5 by 1 January	6 by 1 January	6th birthday
ACT	4 by 30 April in year of entry	5 by 30 April	6 by 30 April	6th birthday
Northern Territory	Continuous entry after 4th birthday	4 years and 6 months by 1 January	5 years and 6 months By 1 January	6th birthday

Table A ii. - Comparison of programs two years prior to entry into Year 1[8]

State/Territory	Name of program	Hours attended	Provider
Western Australia	Kindergarten	11 hours a week	Department of Education and Training
New South Wales	Preschool	12.5 hours a week	Department of Education and Training; Department of Community Services

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[7] Modelled on tables from the Government of Western Australia Department of Education and Training website. www.eddept.wa.edu.au).

[8] Modelled on tables from the Government of Western Australia Department of Education and Training website. www.eddept.wa.edu.au).

Victoria	Preschool or kindergarten	10 hours a week	Department of Human Services
Queensland	Kindergarten	Up to 12.5 hours a week	Department of Education and the Arts
South Australia	Kindergarten	11 hours a week	Department of Education and Children's Services
Tasmania	Kindergarten	10 hours a week	Department of Education
ACT	Preschool	10.5 hours a week	Department of Education and Training, Children's Services Branch
Northern Territory	Preschool	12 hours a week	Department of Employment, Education and Training

Table A iii. - Comparison of programs one year prior to entry into Year 1

State/Territory	Name of program	Days attended	Provider
Western Australia	Pre-primary	5	Department of Education and Training
New South Wales	Kindergarten	5	Department of Education and Training
Victoria	Preparatory	5	Department of Education and Training
Queensland	Preschool (becoming prep in 2007)	5 half days	Department of Education and the Arts
South Australia	Reception	5	Department of Education and Children's Services
Tasmania	Preparatory (compulsory)	5	Department of Education
ACT	Kindergarten	5	Department of Education and Training
Northern Territory	Transition	5	Department of Employment, Education and Training

Table A iv. - Departmental responsibility and curriculum framework/policy

State or Territory	Responsibility for preschool education	Responsibility for school education	Curriculum framework/policy	General comments
Western Australia	Department of Education and Training	Department of Education and Training	*Curriculum Improvement Program* (CIP) – Department of Education and Training	Shared curriculum between preschool and pre-primary promotes continuity of children's learning across the early years of school.
New South Wales	Department of Community Services (DOCS) for preschools not located on school sites Department of Education and Training (DET), mostly when preschools are located on school sites	Department of Education and Training – DET	Board of Studies NSW sets curriculum including K-6 educational resources *The Practice of Relationships -- NSW Curriculum Framework for Children's Services* (not mandated) for range of children's services, including non DET preschools	K- 6 provides 'foundation statements' which are 'short, clear descriptions of the knowledge and skills that each student should develop at each stage of primary school. They answer the question 'What must be taught?' in all schools. Continuity is problematic between preschool and kindergarten.
Victoria	Department of Human Services (DHS)	Department of Education and Training (DET)	Victorian Curriculum and Assessment Authority (VCAA) curriculum document (begins at school age)	Education policy starts at school entry age.
Queensland	Department of Education and the Arts – majority. Crèche and Kindergarten Association of Queensland – small number.	Department of Education and the Arts	*Queensland Studies Authority Curriculum Guidelines* (not mandated)	QSA curriculum guidelines span preschool to tertiary transition. Both DEA and C & K preschools follow the QSA curriculum guidelines.

South Australia	Department of Education and Children's Services (DECS)	Department of Education and Children's services (DECS)	*South Australian Curriculum Standards and Accountability Framework* (SACSA)	The SACSA framework covers the age range of 0– 12 and provides a framework for consistent programming.
Tasmania	Department of Education Tasmania (DET)	Department of Education Tasmania (DET)	*The Essential Learnings Framework* and Essential Connections (DET)	The *Essential Learnings Framework* provides continuity of curriculum from preschool through school transition.
ACT	Department of Education and Training (DET)	Department of Education and Training	*Contours of Learning. A Guide for Children's Learning in the Early Years* (not mandated).	ACT Government Preschool Strategic Plan 2005 designed to improve transition and links between preschool and other settings and the promotion of 'best practice' programming through the implementation of *Contours of Learning* framework
Northern Territory	Department of Employment, Education and Training (DEET)	Department of Employment, Education and Training (DEET)	*NT Board of Studies Northern Territory Curriculum Framework (NTCF)*	Board of Studies aims to develop and provide high quality curriculum, assessment, reporting and certification to students in the Northern Territory from preschool to Year 12. Curriculum framework spans preschool to Year 12. With preschools sometimes co-located with schools this works well but still problems with access and continuity gaps.

Table A v. - Number and percentage distribution of children attending by type of service (FaCS, 2004 Census)[9]

NB: Figures supplied are for those children captured by the census data gathered from questionnaires sent to Australian Government approved and funded child care services which were operational at 3 February 2004. There was an 88 per cent response rate to the surveys.

It is important to note that many children also attend different types of early childhood services.

| CHILDREN | STATE/TERRITORY | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | AUSTRALIA | |
| | NSW | | VIC | | QLD | | SA | | WA | | TAS | | NT | | ACT | | | |
	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%
Private Long Day Care Services +	77839	37	41536	29	76850	46	9076	16	19274	41	1529	9	917	12	2242	15	229263	34
Community Based Long Day Care Services +	38543	18	25244	17	14884	9	11479	20	8268	17	4911	27	1679	23	4396	29	109404	16
Family Day Care Schemes	28933	14	20624	14	17886	11	7983	14	5838	12	4582	26	884	12	1678	11	88408	13
In-home Care Schemes	820	0	403	0	943	1	118	0	350	1	417	2	0	0	54	0	3105	0

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[9] See Appendix 2 for a brief summary of the relevant Census data.

Outside School Hours Care	37317	18	39177	27	33026	20	16614	29	5983	13	3456	19	1798	24	5142	34	142513	21
Vacation Care	24183	11	14915	10	22008	13	11653	20	6091	13	2738	15	1344	18	1611	11	84543	13
Occasional Care	2733	1	2074	1	1121	1	86	0	919	2	220	1	5	0	201	1	7359	1
Multifunctional Services	83	0	268	0	209	0	227	0	155	0	0	0	123	2	0	0	1065	0
MACS	556	0	241	0	97	0	163	0	218	0	65	0	114	2	0	0	1454	0
Mobiles and Toy Libraries	859	0	612	0	695	0	121	0	136	0	0	0	388	5	0	0	2811	0
Aboriginal Playgroups	197	0	56	0	517	0	176	0	124	0	0	0	141	2	0	0	1211	0
TOTAL CHILDREN *	212063	100	145150	100	168236	100	57696	100	47356	100	17918	100	7393	100	15324	100	671136	100

* Note: Private and Community Based Long Day Care counts are not directly comparable to those reported in the census prior to 2002 due to definitional changes.
* Note: This data measures occurrences of care and will include some double counting where children attend more than one service.

10 Appendix B - Workshop Participants

Table B i. - Workshop 19.4.06 Participants

First Name	Surname	Organisation	Email
Kris	Arcaro	Office of School Education	arcaro.kris.f@edumail.vic.gov.au
Ros	Black	Education Foundation	ros.black@educationfoundation.org.au
Jenny	Brown	Education Foundation	jenny.brown@educationfoundation.org.au
Heather	Carr	Early Years Literacy Consultant	
Andew	Day	City of Maribyrnong	andrew.day@maribyrnong.vic.gov.au
Natalie	De Bono	CCCH	natalie.debono@mcri.edu.au
Don	Edgar		donedgar@optusnet.com.au
Alison	Elliot	Australian Centre for Educational Research	elliott@acer.edu.au
Sharon	Foster	CCCH	sharon.foster@rch.org.au
Sylvia	Geddes	The R.E. Ross Trust	sgeddes@rosstrust.org.au
Robert	Greenacre	Meadowbank Primary School	greenacre.robert.r@edumail.vic.gov.au
Deborah	Hennessey	Dinjerra Primary School	Hennessey.deborah.d@edumail.vic.gov.au
Ilan	Katz	University of NSW	ilan.katz@unsw.edu.au
Ellen	Koshland	Education Foundation	ellenkoshland@bigpond.com
Nellie	Kostiw	DE&T, Western Metropolitan Region	kostiw.nellie.l@edumail.vic.gov.au
Rebekah	Lautman	The R.E. Ross Trust	rlautman@rosstrust.org.au
Maureen	Leahy	Meadowbank Primary School	leahy.maureen.m@edumail.vic.gov.au
Gerard	Mansour	Kindergarten Parents Victoria	gmansour@kpv.org.au
Kay	Margetts	The University of Melbourne	k.margetts@unimelb.edu.au
June	McLoughlin	CCCH	june.mcloughlin@rch.org.au
Jeanette	Nagorcka	Department of Human Services	jeanette.nagorcka@dhs.vic.gov.au
Shannon	Newman	CCCH	shannon.newman@mcri.edu.au
Frank	Oberklaid	CCCH	frank.oberklaid@rch.org.au
Sophie	Patitsas	Moreland City Council	spatitsis@moreland.vic.gov.au
Fran	Press	Charles Sturt University	fpress@csu.edu.au
Jenny	Snelling	Royal Children's Hospital Education Institute	jenny.snelling@rch.org.au
Daniel	Strachan	CCCH	daniel.strachan@mcri.edu.au
June	Wangmann	University of Western Sydney	j.wangmann@uws.edu.au

Linking Schools and Early Years Services

Directions from the evidence

SUMMARY

Table of Contents

1. Background and introduction

This summary of directions of the evidence is part of a scoping study for a future project aimed at linking knowledge about the early years and early years' services with the role of schools. The project, funded by The R.E. Ross Trust and undertaken by the Centre for Community Child Health in consultation with the Education Foundation, includes four components: an exploration of directions from the evidence, a review of policy directions in early childhood services and schools across Australia, a review of international and Australian community school models and an Overview of recommendations for the way forward.

Attention to the early years (the years prior to starting school) has reached unprecedented levels. Powerful new evidence from the neurosciences and other sources places increased emphasis on the importance of the early years in relation to children's future development (Heckman, 2006; Shonkoff, 2006) and the need to forge stronger links between the early years and school. There has also been increased interest in school readiness, school reform and integrated comprehensive services for children and families prior to and during the early years of school.

Many children are already on a poor developmental trajectory when they begin school and lack skills necessary for success. The gap between disadvantage and advantage tends to persist and widen over time (Karoly et al, 2005). Consequently governments in many countries are beginning to see the early years as an opportunity to enhance developmental outcomes, particularly for vulnerable children. There is also a growing belief that the achievement of optimal development by all children will be made possible only by establishing multi-sector, multidisciplinary systems that offer integrated collaborative services that address the needs of individual children in the context of their families, schools and communities (Building Bridges, 2004). Schools are increasingly being seen as the core or hub of these important initiatives (Edgar, 2001: xv-xvi).

2. The context

Social change impacting on families, difficulties faced by services and new information about child development form significant parts of the context for looking at schools and the early years.

2.1   Social change

Over the past two or three decades there have been major changes in the structure, diversity and circumstances of families in Australia. For example there are more working parents, particularly women, more parents doing shift work and working non-standard hours, increased unemployment and therefore more children being raised in poverty. The wider social conditions in which families are raising children have also changed. For many families there has been a partial erosion of traditional family and neighbourhood support networks. There has also been an increase in the number of parents whose own experiences of being parented were compromised, affecting their functioning as parents themselves. These factors have contributed to an increase in the number of families with complex needs. Many services, such as family support agencies, child care centres and schools are challenged by these changes and have difficulty meeting the complex needs of all young children effectively. Schools are increasingly calling on specialist service delivery to address the social, health, emotional and cultural needs of young people.

2.2   Service difficulties

Services for children and families are generally not well integrated and therefore unable to provide cohesive support. In the past there have been few mechanisms for agencies providing complementary services to children and families to work together. Dealing with each agency separately is not only time consuming and can lead to discontinuity, but it also demands organisational skills that some families do not have.

There is a trend towards well-integrated intervention programs that involve a number of components. Such programs, which focus on reducing risk factors in several areas, appear promising in reducing risk and strengthening pro-social behaviour (Marshall and Watt, 1999). The ideal is a 'seamless' continuum of interlinked programs and services for children and families which may or may not be located together but which have a single point of access, a high degree of communication and congruence between programs and services, and flexible options for families in the timing of use of programs.

Integration of services is hindered by government departments working in 'silos' to plan, fund and deliver services with few links to other departments, networks and agencies. This results in considerable wasteful duplication, increased service delivery costs and support being provided in a non-integrated way. It also means that many initiatives are marginalised, fragmented, not known to families, limited in the numbers of people they serve and riddled with serious gaps.

2.3   Early childhood development

Shonkoff and Phillip's landmark report *From Neurons to Neighbourhoods* (2000) synthesises the growing body of research from child development, neuroscience and education. Key findings are:

- Human development is shaped by a dynamic and continuous interaction between biology and experience.
- Culture influences every aspect of human development and is reflected in childrearing beliefs and practices designed to promote healthy adaptation.
- The growth of self-regulation is a cornerstone of early childhood development that cuts across all domains of behaviour.
- Children are active participants in their own development, reflecting the intrinsic human drive to explore and master one's environment.
- Human relationships are the building blocks of healthy development.

Source: (Shonkoff and Phillips, 2000.)

Risk factors are cumulative and their impact on individual children and families depends on the child's age and length of exposure (CCCH Policy Brief No 1:2006:2). Tables 1 and 2 provide a list of the risk and protective factors from the antenatal period to approximately five years of age.

Table 1 Risk factors – antenatal period to approximately five years

Child characteristics	Parents and their parenting style	Family factors and life events	Community factors
Low birth weight Prematurity Prenatal exposure to toxins or infections Poor maternal nutrition Prone sleeping position Birth injury Exposure to stress Disability Low intelligence Chronic illness Delayed development Difficult temperament Poor attachment Poor social skills Poor problem solving Disruptive behaviour Hazardous environment Unsupervised play Impulsivity Poor self esteem Alienation	Single parent Young maternal age Postnatal depression or other mental illness Drug and alcohol misuse Parental tobacco smoking Harsh or inconsistent discipline Lack of stimulation of child Lack of sensitivity, warmth and affection Criminality Separation from or rejection of child Abuse or neglect Poor supervision/ involvement Lack of parenting knowledge	Poverty Family instability, stress, conflict or violence Marital disharmony Divorce Disorganised Large family size Rapid successive pregnancies Absence of father Very low level of parental education Social isolation Long term unemployment War or natural disasters Death of family member Family history of ADHD Frequent relocations	Socioeconomic disadvantage Housing and urban conditions—unhealthy cities Neighbourhood violence and crime Lack of support services Social or cultural discrimination Community behaviour norms

Table 2 Protective factors – antenatal period to approximately five years

Prenatal and child characteristics	Parents and parenting style	Family factors and life events	Community factors
Good antenatal care and maternal nutrition Breastfeeding established early Full immunisation Social skills Secure attachment Easy temperament, active, alert and affectionate At least average intelligence Attachment to family Independence, self-help Good problem solving skills Ambition Positive self concept Self efficacy	Maternal health and wellbeing is good Healthy lifestyle Reasonable awareness and use of health and community services Competent stable care Positive attention from both parents Supportive relationship with other adults Positive communication between parent and child Fathers' involvement in parenting Mother's education and competence	Family harmony and stability Consistency of primary carers Nurturing environment Positive relationships with extended family Small family size Spacing of children (more than two years)	Supportive social relationships and networks Participation in community activities Family-friendly work environments and culture Cultural identity and pride

Current evidence indicates strongly that children require the following for optimal development:

- structured, dependable, nurturing relationships with parents and other caregivers
- families with adequate resources to provide safe, nurturing environments that meet physical, emotional and educational needs
- practices in health care, developmental and education services that identify potential risks and address potential problems at the earliest possible time.
  (Halfon et al, 2004. p.3)

Educational outcomes in adolescence and even beyond can be traced back to academic skills at school entry. In turn, these can be traced to capabilities in the early years and the experiences in the home and community (Shonkoff and Phillips, 2000). The earlier the intervention the more likely it is to be effective, as well as being less costly than later intervention. The general goal of early intervention strategies and programs is to change the balance between risk and protective factors because development is shaped by their ongoing interplay.

3. School readiness

Factors known to influence a child's readiness for school include:
- socioeconomic background
- environmental stress
- health
- family background characteristics, particularly the mother's education, marital status and mental health
- participation in a preschool program and the quality of the program. (Rouse et al, 2005; Boethal, 2004).

3.1 School readiness recommendations

An extensive review of research on school readiness (Boethel, 2004: p vii) led to the following recommendations concerning school readiness:

- Provide children with early educational experiences.
- Help families provide learning experiences for their young children.
- Work to ensure fidelity in implementing model interventions.
- Build kindergarten teachers' awareness of the long term impacts of differences in children's pre-academic skills when they enter school.
- Encourage families to maintain their contact and involvement as their children move from child care or preschool environments to school.
- Provide a variety of supports to help ease children's transition to school.

Although the age of the child is still the most commonly used criterion for school commencement (LaParo and Pianta, 2000; Boethel, 2004), the notion of readiness has shifted away from a focus on outcomes of developmental assessments towards more of a focus on "an interactive process or set of relationships in which the child, his or her family, the community environment, and the school interact in ways that support, or fail to support, the child's physical, cognitive, and social-emotional development" (Boethel, 2004:13). Readiness is no longer defined solely in terms of academic achievement but rather includes and emphasises social and emotional readiness (Doherty, 1997; Hartup, 1992; Shonkoff and Phillips, 2000; Dockett et al., 2000).

There is growing acceptance that schools need to be responsive to the children they serve, with a growing focus on how well a community has prepared children for school. The Early Development Instrument (EDI), an instrument developed in Canada (Janus and Offord, 2001) is an example of new ways of looking at readiness. The instrument focuses on physical health and wellbeing, social knowledge and competence, emotional maturity, language and cognitive development and general knowledge and social skills. The EDI has been adapted for Australia (AEDI) and will enable communities to understand how children are developing at the time they reach school age. In 2004 and 2005, 28 communities from five states and territories implemented the AEDI. In 2006, up to 32 communities will implement the AEDI, and preliminary feedback has been positive.

3.2 Early childhood programs: Links between quality child care and school readiness

Increased attention to the importance of the early years has led to a focus on outcomes for children attending preschool and child care programs, particularly outcomes related to school readiness. The long-term effects of participation in good quality early childhood programs, particularly for disadvantaged children in model early intervention programs, have been well documented.[1]

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[1] Throughout this document the terms child care, preschool and early childhood services are used interchangeably. These formal arrangements are all environments in which young children grow and develop.

The Cost, Quality and Outcomes Study (Peisner-Fernberg et al., 1999), involving more than 800 preschool children, established a link between quality child care and school readiness. Children who attended high quality child care programs performed better on measures of both cognitive and social skills. The benefits extended through the first year of school and in some children the second year. Children who received poor quality child care were less prepared for school and tended to have less success in the early years of school. Children who have traditionally been at risk of not doing well in school are affected more by the quality of child care experiences than other children.

Quality of the child care, a critical factor, is an interactive process which depends on the interactions between structuring and process components (Wangmann, 1995). Structural components are those that are generally dealt with in regulatory or licensing frameworks and include staff:child ratios, group size, physical environments, health and safety and staff training. Determining components, the key to quality, include relationships between staff and children, staff and parents, staff stability and the nature of the curriculum.

3.3 Economic benefits of good quality interventions

Historically arguments for investing in disadvantaged young children have been based on equity. Increasingly economic efficiency is being used as a powerful argument by some of the world's leading economic experts (Heckman, 2006 p.2). Heckman argues that the benefits of early childhood interventions in cognitive learning, motivation and socialisation are likely to have long-term advantages in the labour market because of the cumulative effects of early improvements in ability.

The benefits of high quality child care and preschool programs which have been identified from the major longitudinal studies and which also translate into economic benefits include:
- higher levels of verbal, mathematical, and intellectual development
- greater success at school, including less grade retention and higher graduation rates
- higher employment and earnings
- less welfare dependency
- lower crime rates
- increased government revenues and lower government expenditure.

Belfield (2004) identified cost savings to the school system as well as long-term benefits to society as the result of providing every child with good early childhood experiences.

4. Role of schools

For many children development and learning at school are hindered by the absence of comprehensive, multifaceted and integrated approaches to address the barriers to development and learning. These barriers can arise from such circumstances as family difficulties, lack of community supports and poor health. Heckman (2006) argues that families, rather than schools, are the major sources of inequalities in children's performance in school.

The growing trend to extend the role of schools to address barriers to learning has emerged primarily because of well-established links between socio-economic disadvantage and poor educational and other outcomes (Cummings et al., 2005). There is now a widespread awareness that teachers cannot provide all that is needed (Dryfoos, 1994).

Heckman suggests that the current structure of schools allows them to have little effect on reducing gaps in performance for disadvantaged groups. He argues that concentrating on such matters as curriculum, meeting standards and parent partnerships, while necessary, is not sufficient given the scope of the barriers experienced by many students. While much is being done within schools and communities to address school learning, efforts are often fragmented and marginalised.

4.1   The need to build bridges from birth to school
Schools need to build bridges with early years services in order to address barriers to learning and move towards more integrated delivery of services (Halfon et al, 2004). Halfon and his colleagues recommend building bridges by adopting principles based on scientific evidence and best practices. These principles are:
- Health and development can and should be optimised for all children.
- Families are a central focus of young children's health and development.
- All families can benefit from guidance and support.
- Child development is a shared public responsibility.
- Developmentally informed public policy and related investments must be sustained.
- Strong and innovative leadership is needed
- Systems should be accountable for outcomes.
- A complex and changing society will require diverse approaches to service delivery.

Halfon's report proposes five essential components for comprehensive early childhood systems: access to health care for all children, including those with special health care needs; enhanced prevention, identification and treatment services; support for child care, early care and education providers to promote young children's development; support for parents in their role as the prime educators of their children; and support for families in their efforts to beak the cycle of poverty and deal with other life stressors that negatively affect their ability to raise healthy children who are ready to learn at school entry.

4.2   Shift of schools to 'hubs'
There is a general consensus around the need for a continuum of inter-linked programs and services that include early education, child care and parenting supports as core services. The inclusion of health services that focus not only on health promotion and prevention but also provide early identification and intervention for children and families with special needs is also important (Toronto First Duty Evaluation, p.7). Schools are being seen as the ideal 'hub' or location for these services. The expectation is not that teachers in schools should take on additional responsibilities but rather that schools should "transform their links with other community resources and change the way they operate so that a culture of learning permeates Australian society" (Edgar, 2001:155).

4.3   The concept of extended schools
An extended school is one that provides an extended range of educational activities and broader services, often beyond the school day, to help meet the needs of its pupils, their families and the wider community. The model is interpreted in a variety of ways depending on the local school and community context. Extended schools have the following key components in common:

- clear aims and purpose
- strong leadership
- administrative excellence
- consistent, long term funding from a variety of sources (both public and private)
- community and parent involvement
- effective publicity and dissemination
- an appropriate designated location
- opportunities for extended curricula and out of hours learning (Wilkins at al., 2003).

4.4   Models overseas

A number of schools have implemented a variation of the full service extended school model. Some of the initiatives include the following:

- Full Services Extended Schools (FSES) (United Kingdom)
- Toronto First Duty Project
- New Community Schools Program (Scotland)
- Coalition for Community Schools (United States)
- Schools of the 21st Century (United States)

To date most of the initiatives have targeted vulnerable children and families; however there is a growing shift towards universal approaches. Generally the main cited objective of these programs is school readiness.

An Australian initiative, the NSW-based Schools as Community Centres, is explored as part of a separate paper looking at community school models. In addition to a more detailed examination of international community school models, this separate report contains details of individual initiatives at three primary schools in the Hume region of Victoria.

The models listed above share common components as well as each site reflecting its unique context. Common components include:

Infrastructure
- strong leadership
- leadership role of school principal essential
- administrative excellence with clear management structures
- steering committee representative of all key stakeholders.

Managing change
- role of leaders and change agents critical to developing and sustaining projects
- need for both a bottom-up and top-down approach to change that includes high level support from partner agencies as well as from grass roots practitioners
- need for leaders to be aware of and responsive to the impact of change at all levels.

Planning for sustainability
- community and parent support key factors
- security of ongoing funding essential.

Involvement of parents
- provision of guidance and support
- use as volunteers
- parent meetings
- parent education classes.

Early intervention and prevention programs
- provision of quality child care essential for vulnerable children
- health services
- home visiting
- counselling and referral
- transition programs.

5. The way forward

Changes are occurring within schools and communities in how schools conduct their core business. The Center for Mental Health in Schools at UCLA has produced a document (Adelman and Taylor, 2002) to assist schools or authorities working towards the development of comprehensive, multifaceted and integrated approaches. It provides guidelines for re-thinking ways to address current barriers to student learning and development. The suggested approach reflects a fundamental commitment to a three-component framework for school improvement:

1. instructional/developmental component for directly facilitating learning and development
2. enabling component to address barriers to learning and development
3. management component for management and governance.

Adelman (2002) argues that what is not addressed in standard school reform models is the barriers to learning and development (the enabling component). Many factors can cause barriers to learning, so schools and communities need to be prepared to use a diversity of responses. While the focus needs to be on responding to problems, providing effective intervention strategies to prevent problems occurring in the first place is critical.

Adelman (2002) provides an overview of a widely advocated evidence-based framework for understanding the range of interventions needed and outlines a continuum consisting of:
*   systems for promoting healthy development and preventing problems
*   systems of early intervention
*   systems of care.

Adelman's framework and the core components of successful models that have emerged from evaluation of extended school models have much in common.

A second framework helps to organise thinking about these programs and services around six arenas of program activity to address barriers to student learning. These include:
*   classroom focused enabling
*   support for transitions
*   home involvement in schooling
*   crisis assistance and prevention
*   student and family assistance
*   community outreach for involvement and support.

6. What are some of the first steps towards change?

The unique characteristics of each community must be acknowledged and respected. Each school and community must clarify how existing resources can be restructured and improved, connections with other agencies and community groups enhanced. Doing so can be made more effective if the experience of others who may have implemented similar initiatives is used.

Adelman (2002, p.4) proposes six steps to be undertaken acknowledging the unique context of each school and community:
- Broaden the vision of those collaborating.
- Write a 'brief' to clarify the vision.
- Establish a steering committee to move the initiative forward and monitor process.
- Start a process for translating the vision into policy.
- Develop a five-year strategic plan.
- Move the strategic plan to implementation.

The literature reviewed suggests that schools need to:
- be involved in efforts to improve children's early learning environments and opportunities during the preschool years
- develop more effective strategies for meeting the learning and social needs of children who are functioning poorly during the first two or three years of schooling
- work in partnership with parents, developing ways of engaging parents in school management and in making use of school facilities for a variety of support services and functions
- establish partnerships with a range of other services that work with families in order to provide integrated and holistic services to families.

These recommended changes involve all three components of Adelman's model.

All efforts to change the focus of schools raise some fundamental questions about how society views the role of schools within the broad socioeconomic context of the 21st century. Various approaches to school reform will need to be tried and many issues dealt with before a well-funded and sustainable model can be established.

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Linking Schools with Early Years Services

Section Three: Policy Directions

Table of Contents

1. Introduction

1.1 Background

The current document forms Section 3 of the Linking Schools and Early Years Project report and is a *Review of Policy Directions in Early Childhood Services and Schools Across Australia.* The Linking Schools and Early Years Project was funded by The R.E. Ross Trust and undertaken by the Centre for Community Child Health, Victoria, in consultation with the Education Foundation. This document is part of a scoping study for a future project aimed at linking early years services and knowledge with schools.

This section of the report provides a brief outline of policy frameworks currently operating in each state and territory relating to early childhood and school services, as well as:

- entry ages
- nomenclature for services
- which departments have responsibility for provision
- the average number of hours children attend and
- policies or curricula that span early childhood and school services

1.2 Rationale

There is clear evidence that addressing the low literacy levels of many children from disadvantaged backgrounds requires identifying and removing the many barriers these children face when starting school. Doing this will require new ways of working and greater partnerships and collaboration between schools and early years services.

The importance of links and partnerships between schools and early years services is supported for a number of reasons:

- Current thinking about the importance of adopting an approach to child development and education that focuses on the whole life course highlights the need to close the gap between early years and school.

- Barriers to learning need to be addressed before a child starts school. These barriers include poor experience in the early years, inadequate parenting, parents' own poor experience of school and unidentified developmental problems.

- Engaging parents as active partners requires schools to provide opportunities for them to become familiar and comfortable with the school before their children start attending.

- There is a need for a more holistic approach to supporting families to create the best possible environment for children to develop.

- Schools will benefit from having greater access to information about the implications of current research on the early years.

1.3 Structure of the section

The current section of the report begins with an examination of the responsibilities of two key Australian Government Departments in terms of the provision of early childhood services and schools. Next, summaries are provided of the background and policy directions for each state and territory within Australia and the section ends with a general discussion of the national, state and territory policy directions.

2. Australian Government Departmental Responsibility

The Department of Families, Community Services and Indigenous Affairs (FaCSIA) and the Department of Education, Science and Training (DEST) are the two Australian government departments involved in the provision of early childhood services and schools. In addition, the Family Assistance Office (FAO) administers family and child care benefits to families.[1]

2.1 Department of Families, Community Services and Indigenous Affairs (FaCSIA)

The Australian government's Child Care Support Program, for which FaCSIA has responsibility, aims to aid families in their participation in community life and Australian society by providing child care to assist parents. FaCSIA, through the FAO, administers a fee subsidy, Child Care Benefit (CCB)[2], for eligible families accessing a range of child care services including family day care, long day care, and out of school hours care. FaCSIA also provides some funding to eligible Commonwealth-approved services for specific purposes (Press, 2006). It also funds The National Childcare Accreditation Council (NCAC) to administer the quality assurance systems for long day care, family day care and outside school hours care.

FaCSIA is also responsible for the development and implementation of the Stronger Families and Communities Strategy (SFCS), which is part of the National Agenda for Early Childhood. The SFCS focuses on early intervention, prevention and capacity-building programs that collaborate to support and strengthen families and communities. The budget for the SFCS is $365.8 million (2004-2008). Of this $110 million goes to the Communities for Children (CFC) program, which funds non-government organisations as facilitating partners in 45 community sites around the country. These organisations develop and put into practice whole-of-community approaches which promote better outcomes for children from birth to five years of age. The CFC program allows for local interpretation of the program goals to meet local needs.

There are many activities being implemented in CFC sites, including home visiting, early learning and literacy programs, support for development of social and communication skills in the early years, parenting and family support programs, child nutrition, community events to celebrate the importance of children, families and the early years as well as the development of schools as community hubs. The broad aims of the schools as hubs initiatives are to:
* enable parents to be aware of schools as a community asset
* build links between schools, early education and care services and families
* ensure that schools are accessible to families as a community hub, including families of preschool-aged children
* improve the transition to primary school.

2.2 Department of Education, Science and Training (DEST)

States and territories have primary responsibility for funding government schools and providing supplementary assistance to non-government schools. The Australian government is the primary

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[1] Throughout this document the terms child care, preschool and early childhood services are used interchangeably. These formal arrangements are all environments in which young children grow and develop.

[2] CCB is a fee subsidy payable to families using either registered care or approved services. Registered care is provided by individuals such as relatives, friends or nannies who are registered with the FAO. Some services, such as non-government and private preschools, are also eligible to become registered (FAO, 2005). Approved services include long day care centres and family day care schemes that are accredited by the National Childcare Accreditation Council (Press, 2006).

source of public funding for non-government schools and also provides supplementary assistance to government schools. Most non-government schools have some religious affiliation, and approximately two-thirds of non-government school students are enrolled in Catholic schools. Overall, state government schools enrol 68 per cent of students, while non-government schools enrol 32 per cent (DEST, 2006).

DEST is a major source of funding for Indigenous early childhood programs. The National Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Education Policy was endorsed by all Australian governments and is reflected in the Indigenous Education (Targeted Assistance) Act 2000.

The Australian government provides Indigenous-specific funding as a supplement to other mainstream funds. This funding is intended for strategic interventions which aim to accelerate learning outcomes for Indigenous students. The Australian Government also provides assistance directly to students (DEST, 2006).

3. States and territories

3.1   Brief summary of findings

The tables in Appendix 1 reveal a variety of differences among the states and territories, including the name used for programs, age of eligibility, hours they are available for attendance and the government department responsible for their provision. Additional variations include patterns of usage, availability, child to staff ratios, cost, location, management processes and regulatory frameworks. (Press, 2006)

As is illustrated in the following descriptions, preschools are in some cases the responsibility of education departments and in others departments of community services. It is important to note that while school is compulsory, preschool programs are not and therefore the age of entry of children in preschool applies only to those children who participate. Approximately 20 per cent of children attending preschool are three years of age, 62 per cent are four and 18 per cent are five years of age. Fifty four per cent of children who attend preschool attend between 10 and 19 hours per week. (Press, 2006)

The government department responsible for preschool education may differ from that responsible for school education. There is also variation in the approach the states and territories have taken with regard to curriculum.

3.2   Victoria

3.2.1 Background

In Victoria *kindergarten* is the term used for programs in the year before commencing school. *Preparatory*, commonly shortened to *prep*, is the name of the first year of school.
The Victorian Department of Human Services (DHS) regulates kindergartens in Victoria and the Department of Education and Training (DET) regulates schools. DHS provides for one year of kindergarten for every child in the year before school entry at either stand-alone kindergartens or kindergarten programs operating in child care centres. There is no prescribed curriculum for kindergartens.

The Victorian Essential Learning Standards are the responsibility of the Victorian Curriculum and Assessment Authority (VCAA) and apply to prep through year 10.

3.2.2. Policy directions

Premier's Children's Advisory Committee, Joining the Dots: a New Vision for Victoria's Children and Putting Children First … the next steps.

In August 2003 the Premier of Victoria established the Premier's Children's Advisory Committee (PCAC). The purpose of this committee was to provide broad advice on how the Victorian government could work to improve the lives of Victoria's children. In September 2004 the PCAC submitted their report titled *Joining the Dots: a New Vision for Victoria's Children* (PCAC, 2004). Two months later (December 2004) the government released their response: *Putting Children First … the Next Steps* (Office of the Premier and Cabinet, 2004).

This report outlines structural changes that the Victorian government either has made or is in the process of implementing. These changes impact on early childhood education, linking of early years services to schools and school readiness in general. They are as follows:

- appointment of a Minister for Children to advocate children's issues in a high-profile and consistent manner

- establishment of an Office for Children within DHS. The two main priorities of the Office for Children are:
    - managing universal services for children prior to school entry and their families, such as maternal and child health, child care and kindergarten services
    - responsibility for the special needs of vulnerable children in need of protection or care. The focus of the office in this context is on bringing together the major services provided to children before school commencement.

- establishment of a Victorian Children's Council to advise the Premier and Minister for Children on children's issues.

Changes to policy and services have also been made following the recommendations of the report. Relevant changes include:

- working towards the promotion of better service integration. This will happen in many ways, including bridging the current distinction made between child care and kindergarten to promote greater continuity and increase quality. The Office for Children will look at ways in which children can make smoother transitions from child care to kindergarten by examining how the option of onsite kindergarten can be extended to the majority of child care centres in Victoria.

- emphasis on the importance of a good transition and the availability of outside school hours care (OSHC)

- development of a state-wide plan for Victoria's children from the pre-natal period to school entry. This is considered by the government to be a major plank in the strategy towards integrated planning for these services. The state-wide plan will 'identify best practice in local planning, community involvement, service delivery and the transition to school, and ways in which the State Government can support this' (Office of Premier and Cabinet, 2004, p.9).

Best Start

Supported jointly by DHS and DET, Best Start is coordinated by various organisations, including local government and church groups.

The program aims to achieve

- stronger links within communities, including links between preschool and school
- improvements in access to child and family support, health services and early education for families and children

- improvements in parents' capacity, confidence and enjoyment of family life
- communities that are more child and family friendly (DHS, 2006).

There are currently 13 Best Start sites across Victoria. Funding for an additional 14 Best Start projects, including four projects targeting Aboriginal children and families, was announced in the 2005 Victorian state budget.

Some examples of the ways in which Best Start funding has been used in participating communities include:

- establishing playgroups
- establishing women's groups
- building partnerships with community, local government and service providers to identify issues and develop a local action plan.

Blueprint for Government Schools

The DET launched their Blueprint for Government Schools in November 2003. It outlines the strategic vision for improving educational outcomes for Victorian school students from prep to Year 12. The blueprint emphasises that the key to the successful achievement of these educational outcomes lies in forging effective partnerships. These partnerships may involve joint initiatives between schools and government but may also involve teachers, parents and other members of the wider school community. Indeed one of the blueprint's priority actions is to 'provide better links between schools, business and communities' (DET, 2003, p. 32). The blueprint recognises that while there has been a significant investment in resources by the government since 1999 there still needs to be a range of complementary measures implemented if there is to be an increase in quality outcomes for students.

One of the featured schools in the blueprint is Springvale South Primary School. The school is located in one of Melbourne's least affluent and most highly multicultural areas, and has a high proportion of students for whom English is their second language and who receive the Educational Maintenance Allowance. Students at Springvale South Primary School have performed academically above average for their school ranking (called the Like School Index) as well as achieving high attendance levels. These outcomes are attributed by the school to high levels of student engagement, committed leadership and staff, a philosophy that every child can succeed and should be engaged as well as strong parent-student partnerships focussed on student learning. The school has also been able to develop relationships with other local secondary colleges and preschools, which has led to the Springvale South preschool relocating to the school site.

Curriculum

The Victorian Curriculum and Assessment Authority (VCAA) identified a broad framework of essential learnings for all children in Victorian Schools in the DET's Blueprint for Government Schools (2003). The Victorian Essential Learning Standards (VELS) were launched in March 2005 (VCAA, 2006) and cover the years from prep to Year 10. The VELS are organised in three interrelated strands each with a number of domains. The three strands are:

1. *physical, personal and social learning.* Domains which appear in this strand include health and physical education, interpersonal development, personal learning and civics and citizenship. The interpersonal development domain is geared towards encouraging students to initiate, maintain and manage positive social relationships with a range of people in a range of contexts.
2. *discipline-based learning.* Domains that appear under this strand are traditional subject disciplines such as mathematics, science, English, humanities, the arts and languages other than English (LOTE).
3. *interdisciplinary learning.* Domains appearing under this strand are communication, design, creativity and technology, information and communications technology and thinking processes.

3.3 Australian Capital Territory (ACT)

3.3.1 Background

Preschool is the term used in the ACT for the year before school, and *kindergarten* is used for the first year of school (Walker, 2004). Preschool and school services are the responsibility of the Department of Education and Training (DET) in the ACT. Children's Services, the area that has responsibility for administering ACT Government legislation regarding the licensing of children's services in the ACT (including centre based children's services, school age care, family day care, independent preschools and playschools), sits within the Early Intervention area of the Office for Children, Youth and Family Support, within the Department of Disability, Housing and Community Services (Department of Disability, Housing and Community Services, 2006). Prior to 2004 Children's Services were located within the Department of Education and Community Services along with preschool services.

Children's Services administers ACT Government legislation in relation to the licensing of children's services in the ACT. Licensed children's services include centre-based children's services, school age care, family day care, independent preschools and playschools. Children's Services also manages a number of funding agreements, operates the Parents as Teachers Program and assists with the implementation of the ACT Children's Plan.

In established areas most preschools are stand alone and often not close to schools, while in newer areas preschools are increasingly being built on school sites along with child care centres.

3.3.2 Policy directions

ACT Children's Plan

In June 2002 Cabinet agreed to develop an ACT Children's Plan under the leadership of the Minister of Education, Youth and Family Services. This decision was part of the Government's response to the ACT Health Review.

The purpose of the Children's Plan is to

- articulate the ACT government's commitment to children and families
- provide a common policy framework for the provision of services
- set guidelines for the practical implementation of services across government, non-government agencies and the community. (ACT Government Office of Children, Youth and Family Support, 2004)

The ten-year plan (2004-2014) encompasses the antenatal period, infancy, the early school years and middle childhood (age range birth to 12 years) and addresses both universally provided services to families and services targeted to address the needs of specific groups. One of the eight priorities in the plan is to 'nurture children's development as the foundation for life-long learning' (ACT Government Office of Children, Youth and Family Support, 2004, p. 1).This priority requires a focus on critical transition points, including the transition to school. The plan also recognises the need for a coordinated approach to planning and service delivery.

Curriculum

The DET's Preschool Strategic Plan (2005) was designed to improve transition and links between preschool and other settings and to promote best-practice programming through the implementation of the *Contours of Learning* framework. *Contours of Learning* was developed as an initiative of the Children's Services Branch of the DET in partnership with Children's, Youth and Family Services and the Education and Training divisions.

The *Contours of Learning* framework (DET, 2001) is a curriculum for children from birth to eight years. It has reportedly contributed to the promotion of greater links as children move from a range of early childhood services, including preschool, to school because the professionals in both settings share priorities and orientation (Walker, 2004). It is not a mandated curriculum but rather a

framework for reference with the aim of providing greater consistency and continuity, smoother transitions as well as a common language about what is important in early childhood programs.

Some key aspects of this framework are that it:

- takes the perspective of the developing child as actively constructing knowledge in his or her social context through interacting with parents, family members, other children and educators
- takes a 'linked-up' approach to early childhood education as is evident through referring to all people who work with children birth to eight in early childhood and school services as educators
- provides a 'platform for reflection, thinking and planning in the focus areas of socialisation, literacy and numeracy. It is not intended as a day to day plan of activities but more as the basis upon which educators can make decisions about curriculum content'. (DET, 2001, p. 7)

3.4   New South Wales (NSW)

3.4.1 Background

The term *preschool* is used in NSW for the year before school and *kindergarten* for the first year of school (Walker, 2004). The Department of Community Services (DOCS) has responsibility for the regulation and licensing of over 1800 long day care services as well as the vast majority of preschools in NSW (numbering approximately 800) to which it also contributes funding. Preschools and long day care services in NSW are operated by both the private sector and local government or community-based non-profit organisations. There are also a number of preschools that are operated by the Department of Education and Training (DET). These preschools, numbering approximately 100, are located on government school sites. (NSW DET, 2005)

3.4.2 Policy directions

In 1998 the NSW Commission for Children and Young People was established. Three statutory principles govern the work of the Commission:

1. The safety, welfare and wellbeing of children are paramount considerations.
2. The views of children are to be given serious consideration and taken into account.
3. A co-operative relationship between children, their families and the community is important to the safety, welfare and wellbeing of children.

One of the key functions of the commission is to make recommendations to government and non-government agencies on legislation, policies, practices and services affecting children. Between October 2004 and February 2005 DET instigated the Futures Project, which aimed to secure information to help the Department develop priorities and strategies for public education and training for the next five to ten years. The commission's submission contributed to the recommendations about early years services and school that came out of the Futures Project (NSW DET, 2005). The recommendations were:

- Develop a shared vision of what constitutes quality teaching so that teachers have a common professional language for discussing, analysing and debating their practice.
- Promote universal access to preschool, such as increasing the number of government preschools, providing additional funding to current community-based preschools so that fees can be reduced and developing more culturally appropriate preschools, especially for Aboriginal families.
- Work toward better coordination in the provision of preschool services in order to promote:
    1. more opportunities to address issues relating to transition to school
    2. more straightforward identification of early learning difficulties

3. a continuum of learning from preschool to kindergarten.
   [A possible strategy suggested by the Futures Project to address these issues is DET assuming responsibility for all preschools.]

- Consider expanding the Schools as Community Centres program in areas of greatest need (refer to the accompanying *Linking Schools and Early Years Services: A Review of International and Australian Models* Volume 4 document for an account of this program).
- Conduct a review of early childhood curriculum with particular emphasis on the preschool and kindergarten years so that there is a clear continuum of learning.

Families First

Families First is an interdepartmental strategy of the NSW government aimed at prevention and early intervention. Its aim is to achieve improved health, developmental and social outcomes for children in NSW, targeting those families who are expecting a baby and those with children up to the age of eight (The NSW Office of Children and Young People, 2004). A number of initiatives have taken place as part of Families First including:

- family worker services
- schools as Community Centres
- supported playgroups
- universal home health visiting
- Volunteer home visiting services.

Curriculum

The *NSW Curriculum Framework for Children's Services - The Practice of Relationships* was published in 2001 (NSW DoCS, 2001) and was written for all children's services, including preschool. It is not a mandated framework but rather is intended as a significant professional development tool for professionals and services that elect to use it. The development of the framework had three main purposes:

- to catalogue and validate excellent practice where it wa already taking place
- to identify the commonalities in good practice across programs types as well as acknowledge program-specific elements
- to provide an endorsed framework that highlights the importance of the early years and consequently the importance of early childhood services.

The framework defines curriculum as 'the intentional provisions made by professionals to support children's learning and well-being' (NSW DoCS, 2001, p. 19). It advocates a holistic view of children's development and wellbeing and flexibility in approaches from professionals and services. It suggests that it and other such non-mandated curriculum frameworks should be used to develop curricula which is meaningful, promotes developmental learning and challenges and extends the way young people think about themselves and their society.

In the area of curriculum for kindergarten through year 6, the NSW Board of Studies, working with teachers, professional associations, school systems and authorities from across the state and all education sectors, has developed Foundation Statements (NSW Board of Studies, 2003). These have been written to help teachers manage the curriculum more effectively by describing clearly the state-wide common curriculum requirements and prioritising what needs to be taught in all primary schools. Rather than identifying particular outcomes as mandatory, the Board has developed a set of prescriptions for each stage in the education process (Eltis, 2003).

3.5   Northern Territory (NT)

3.5.1 Background

In the Northern Territory, *preschool* is the term used for the year before school and *transition* for the first year of school (Walker, 2004). The Department of Employment, Education and Training (DEET) has responsibility for preschools and schools in the Northern Territory. The Department administers 151 government schools with total enrolments of approximately 33,000 students. DEET employs over 3,700 full-time teachers and support staff.

In 1999 a review of Indigenous education in the NT (Collins and Lea, 1999) indicated that there were deteriorating outcomes from an already low base in terms of access to quality preschool programs for Indigenous children in the NT. Remoteness of communities and difficulties in recruiting and retaining staff adversely affected indigenous children's access to and engagement with preschool and school. Available places are unevenly distributed, with higher access levels in urban than in remote areas (NT Department of Health and Community Services, 2002).

3.5.2 Policy directions

Neither preschool nor transition is compulsory in the NT. Children can start preschool from the age of four (except in remote localities where children may start preschool when they are three). The age of entry to preschool and transition is currently under review. Independent private preschools are run by the Association of Independent Schools of Northern Territory and Catholic Education NT Diocese of Darwin.

Almost all government schools in urban centres have their own preschools (Preschool Operations Policy, DEET 1998). Primary schools currently provide for education from transition to year 7 (year 6 in Alice Springs) with preschools responsible administratively and educationally to the principal of the primary school to which they are attached. When children turn five years they can be enrolled in a primary school to enter transition in the next intake.

Between 2001 and 2003 the Departments of Health and Community Services (DHCS) and DEET, through the Education Advisory Council, engaged in community consultation in a range of child development, care and learning settings as well as inviting written submissions from the public. The aim was to develop a framework for action to support children's care, development and learning from birth to eight years. Focus groups were also held with a number of peak bodies, special interest groups and Indigenous people. The resulting document titled *All Children Have the Best Possible Start – a Framework for Action* (Education Advisory Council, 2003) identified key priorities as:

- ensuring that children can prosper as individuals and as an important group in a healthy society
- making sure that families and parents are adequately equipped to raise healthy, happy children and that they can get effective help when it is needed
- promoting supportive, healthy and optimistic communities.

A number of strategies were recommended to progress these focus areas, and a joint action plan is being used to guide shared effort.

Curriculum

The Northern Territory Board of Studies (NTBOS) was established in 1984. Since 2002 NTBOS has been made up of 16 members representing parents, employers, principals, teachers, post-school educators, unions, the non-government schools sector and the Indigenous community. NTBOS provides advice to the Minister for Employment, Education and Training and is responsible for the Northern Territory Curriculum Framework for transition to year 10. The Northern Territory Curriculum Framework (NTCF) is designed to encourage schools to select content and teaching methods appropriate in their context that will allow students to best achieve agreed outcomes. Current work is being progressed to provide an explicit guide to quality practice in curriculum and pedagogy for the early years, particularly preschool and transition (three to five year olds). This work will articulate with the NTCF and current standards for children's services.

3.6   Queensland

3.6.1 Background

Queensland currently does not have a preparatory (prep) year of school, although one is being introduced in 2007. *Kindergarten* is the term used currently for the program children are eligible for two years prior to school entry. *Preschool* is the term for the year before school. From 2007 the prep year will replace what is currently known as preschool (Walker, 2004).

The majority of preschools in Queensland operate as part of primary schools, are free and are the responsibility of the Department of Education and the Arts (DEA). There are also a small number of community kindergartens that are affiliated with the Crèche and Kindergarten Association of Queensland. These are usually stand-alone services within local communities and at least partially reliant on fees for their operation. Attendance in kindergarten and preschool is not compulsory. Community kindergartens are licensed by the Department of Communities under the Child Care Legislation 2002 and Child Care Regulations 2003. They receive some state grants managed by the Department of Education and the Arts. Funding equates to approximately 50 per cent of the total operating cost for a community kindergarten. Payment of fees by families is still required but is generally lower than commercial and private facilities. Community kindergartens, which are very popular, are non-profit organisations with all fees going towards the running of the centre and the facilities provided (DEA, 2006).

Kindergartens currently accept children from age three and some include children up to age five. Others have preschools for four to five year olds on the same premises. Primary schools provide the first seven years of compulsory education (DEA, 2006).

3.6.2 Policy directions
Preschool and school education are undergoing significant change in Queensland with the introduction of a preparatory year to increase the number of school years from 12 to 13, bringing it in line with all other states and territories. The introduction of the prep year in 2007 will be followed by increasing the starting age for students commencing year 1 in 2008 by six months (DEA, 2006). The changes in the first years of schooling are the most significant developments among a number of policy reforms in early childhood and education.

The introduction of a prep year was trialled in 2003, with 39 schools across the state introducing the year (the 'Bubhub' website, 2006). An evaluation report of the 2003 trial concluded that there was strong and consistent evidence that the preparatory year as implemented in 2003 was beneficial to children (DEA, 2005; Bridgstock, et al, 2004).

Some clarifying points:
- The preparatory year will replace state preschool programs and preschool programs currently operating at Catholic schools.
- Community kindergartens will move to provision of one year targeting children aged 3.5 to 4.5 years of age (the year immediately prior to prep). The state government's commitment to the community kindergarten sector will continue.
- The preparatory year is non-compulsory and available to all children of eligible age in every state school.

Curriculum
The Queensland Studies Authority (QSA) publishes curriculum guidelines which span preschool to tertiary transition. Both the DEA and the Crèche and Kindergarten Association preschools follow the QSA Preschool Curriculum Guidelines. The Guidelines aim to provide descriptions of ways in which teachers can promote play based learning rather than being prescriptive. They also seek to build a common vocabulary for teachers to communicate with each other and students. A further aim is the forging of stronger partnerships between other early childhood and school providers as well as parents, teachers and colleagues. The establishment of a flexible learning environment and the development of partnerships with parents, children and colleagues are also identified for their contribution to effective preschool learning (QSA, 2006).

Prep students from 2007 (and those at schools who are presently phasing in the prep year) will attend classes five full days a week and undertake play, creative and inquiry-based activities. Schools that are trialling the prep year are using the draft Queensland Early Years Curriculum. The final version of the Early Years Curriculum is yet to be published but is scheduled for distribution to schools in 2006 ahead of the implementation of the preparatory year in 2007. The draft version outlines a strategy designed to promote continuity of learning through understanding children, establishing flexible working environments, creating contexts for learning and development and exploring what children learn. The curriculum is not outcomes based but identifies descriptors of

children's learning in four phases. The phases represent the degree of adult support required by the child to demonstrate understandings (refer http://www.qsa.qld.edu.au for more information).

3.7   South Australia (SA)

3.7.1 Background

The terms *kindergarten* or *child-parent centres (CPCs)* are used in SA for the year before school. *Preschool* is also used as a generic term for both of these services. *Reception* is the term used for the first year of school. Kindergartens are stand-alone preschools in the community and are managed by parent committees, while CPCs are located on primary school sites.

Kindergartens constitute 75 per cent of preschools and CPCs make up the remaining 25 per cent. All preschools are regulated by Department of Education and Children's services (DECS). Both kindergartens and CPCs are funded and staffed by DECS, however stand -alone kindergartens come under the Children's Services Act legally, while CPCs come under the Education Act (DECS, 2006).

The different systems (kindergarten and CPCs) have presented challenges related to staffing, career pathways for workers, support processes, funding and structures. For example, fundraising by parents is required at kindergartens; at CPCs this funding is available through the school.

There are no fees for participation in kindergarten or CPCs but rather a system of voluntary contribution. There is provision in SA for Indigenous and children from diverse cultural and language backgrounds to access additional time at kindergarten or CPCs.

3.7.2 Policy directions

In 2004 the South Australian Government launched its strategic plan (Department of Premier and Cabinet , 2004) identifying six objectives for all departments to focus on. They are:

- Growing prosperity.
- Improving wellbeing.
- Attaining sustainability.
- Fostering creativity.
- Building communities.
- Expanding opportunity.

The plan is part of a broader aim to adopt a whole-of-government approach to delivering services to the community (Wright, 2005). Such an approach challenges the traditional way of working within clearly defined areas of responsibility and encourages greater levels of collaboration. The aim is to make services more responsive to the community's needs. (Wright, 2005)

In 2004 a Ministerial Inquiry into Early Childhood Services in South Australia began with the brief of examining the current service structure for children birth to eight years and their families and making a series of recommendations. The report from the Inquiry, titled *The Virtual Village: Raising a Child in the New Millennium,* was published in 2005 (Wright, 2005). All of its recommendations have been endorsed by the South Australian Government. Recommendations about integration of early childhood services from a previous review were noted in this report. These recommendations were that DECS work with the Department of Child, Youth and Family Services as well as other service providers to develop schools as Child and Parenting Centres (to become known as Early Childhood Development Centres [ECDCs]). These Centres were conceptualised as places where traditional school activities as well as additional programs such as playgroups, parenting education, outside school hours care and life skills programs could be offered (Wright, 2005). The 2004 Inquiry developed this concept in detail and recommended its implementation.

Some key features of ECDCs are as follows:

- Some will be located in child care centres, others in preschools, schools and community centres.
- Each centre will provide outreach as well as centre-based services.

- The Department of Health, Department of Education and Children's Services and Department for Families and Communities will support the Child and Family Centres.
- Governance of the centres will involve local stakeholders.
- A multidisciplinary approach will be taken to working with families and children up to eight years of age. Workers will both provide services and link families and children to other services where appropriate.
- Families requiring support will be allocated a worker to follow them through until the child leaves the centre. Families will receive copies of their case notes to take to their family doctor and other service providers outside the Child and Family Centre.

Other government-endorsed recommendations and changes contained in report of the Enquiry include:

- that a new whole-of-government framework for early childhood services be developed
- that a SA Children's Council be established to govern the implementation of the framework
- that the focus of early childhood service development be strengthening and integrating universal services.

Curriculum

In 1999 the then Department of Education, Training and Employment (DETE) commenced the process of overhauling the State Curriculum Guidelines. The result of this process was the development of the *South Australian Curriculum Standards and Accountability (SACSA) Framework* (DECS, 2006). The SACSA Framework claims to have both allowed for a greater level of discretion to be exercised by teachers and the maintenance of standards and accountability. It emphasises the use by educators of both key ideas and outcomes which make up the core elements of the program. The core elements provide the basis for educators to develop programs based on local needs and priorities while still offering a common curriculum. The implementation of the *SACSA* Framework therefore strengthens the links across early childhood education and care by providing educators with a guide for the consistent planning of programs for young children. The framework spans the age range of birth to year 12 and therefore covers the transitional years between early childhood services and school.

3.8   Tasmania

3.8.1 Background

Kindergarten is the term used in Tasmania for the year before school and *preparatory* is used for the first year of school (Walker, 2004). Since 1998 child care, kindergartens and schools have existed under the regulatory authority of the Department of Education. All kindergartens are located on school sites. Kindergartens are an integral part of the education system and are managed under the leadership of the school principal. The location of kindergarten programs within the school assists in ensuring that the transition to compulsory full-time school is smooth. Location within the school can foster the development of closer relationships between school staff, parents and students, increase familiarisation for young children with the school environment and its approach to learning, increase parents' interest in and valuing of education and highlight the importance of parents and children participating in the child's learning together from a very early age.

The Department of Education provides 10 hours of kindergarten per week for children who are at least four years old on January 1. Children can enter the preparatory year, the first year of compulsory full-time schooling, if they are at least five years old on January 1. The Department also provides through Early Learning Tasmania an education service to children with disabilities from birth or the time that the disability is detected. An added responsibility for the Department of Education is regulation of child care services. There are presently over 3800 licensed child care places being provided by 131 long day and occasional care services and play centres (Department of Education, 2006).

3.8.2 Policy directions

In 1998 the Department of Education began a review of early childhood education. As child care services had recently become the Department's responsibility, the review included issues relevant to both the education and child care sectors. Out of the review came widespread agreement that children's early experiences in child care and education are crucial for their later wellbeing and success, and there was a strong commitment to provide a quality start for all young children in Tasmania (Department of Education, 2006).

A number of policy announcements were made in 2004 by the Education Minister. A series of changes to the education system were announced which gave local communities more authority, flexibility and resources. One of the largest changes was replacing the then six school districts with three operational branches with a primary focus on the provision of inclusive educational practices to ensure better outcomes for high-needs students. This meant that by the end of 2005 there was a new model of service delivery operating in Tasmanian schools.

Curriculum

The Essential Learnings Curriculum Framework (Atelier Learning Solutions, 2004) applies to kindergarten to year 10. The framework guides what children are taught, how they are taught and the assessment and reporting approach used. According to the Department of Education, the framework has been introduced over time in all government and Catholic schools. Some independent schools have also adopted it (Department of Education, 2006). The development and support of the application of *The Essential Learnings Framework* is managed by the School Education Division of the department.

3.9   Western Australia (WA)

3.9.1 Background

Kindergarten is the term used for the year before school and *pre-primary* is used for the first year of school. These two years are not part of compulsory schooling (Walker, 2004).
In Western Australia the responsibility for kindergarten, pre-primary and primary school resides with the Department of Education and Training (DET). Outside school hours care and child care services are regulated by the Department for Community Development (DCD). School is compulsory between the ages of 6 and 16. Kindergarten and pre-primary are provided by the DET within an integrated school system (OECD, 2000). Kindergartens accept children from the age of three (if they are turning four by June 30) on a part-time basis, most commonly for two full days or four half days per week. Kindergartens are run on school sites or in close proximity to them. Kindergarten programs are also offered by community kindergartens, which are subsidised and supplied with staff by DET. Contributions from parents are sought in both school-based and community kindergartens. (DET, 2001)

In Western Australia providing adequate transport in rural and remote areas for children to get to kindergarten is a priority. Some communities have their own established transport programs, while some Indigenous centres operate a bus pick-up service, which has resulted in a significant increase in access for Indigenous children (Walker, 2004).

In rural and remote areas transport, the availability of buildings and finding and retaining appropriate staff are factors which reportedly inhibit access to high quality kindergarten (Walker, 2004).

3.9.2 Policy directions

There are currently no policies that link early childhood education and care services. There are no formal requirements (other than licensing regulations) about what constitutes a kindergarten except when provided in the education sector. Kindergartens can operate outside the School Education Act 1999 but must be licensed as a child care service. This raises concerns around consistency and quality of a service for kindergarten-age children provided in the child care sector compared with one provided in the education sector.

The Department of Education underwent a major restructure in 2000 and changes have been implemented slowly. Early childhood has not been the specific focus, and much attention has gone to secondary school.

Many schools are taking the initiative themselves, doing such things as holding forums that allow children and parents in transition from child care or home to school to meet. Principals are discussing the need for the development of policy around such issues as common understandings of linkages and shared curricula.

Curriculum

Western Australia has a curriculum framework that encompasses kindergarten (for children aged three) to year 12 (the final year of secondary school). Introduced in 1998, the framework is not considered to be prescriptive but rather is a tool to be used by schools to generate programs in the context of their students' needs (Western Australia Curriculum Council, 2006). The curriculum framework focuses on developmentally appropriate learning outcomes for students. It is divided into phases of development with early childhood considered to be between kindergarten and year 3. In this phase schools are encouraged to foster children's curiosity about their physical, social and technological worlds. The development of strong relationships with families and communities is also encouraged, as is providing opportunities for children to express themselves creatively, play and experiment.

3.10   Discussion of national, state and territory policy directions

There are a range of services available to Australian children and their families. These cater for a diverse range of needs, appear in a variety of locations and are funded, regulated and operated by a range of government and non-government organisations.
Overall responsibility for children's services and education policy in Australia involves all levels of government.

The age children enter early childhood programs and school varies from state to state in Australia. The name used for programs, the hours they are available for attendance and the government department responsible for their provision also differs from state to state. The state or territory government department responsible for preschool education is not always responsible for school education. There are also variations across Australia's states and territories in the numbers of children attending different early childhood services.

Long day care and outside school hours care services have been developed primarily in response to the needs of working parents. They do however also provide respite care and cater for parents who do not work outside the home. Preschools provide sessional educational environments for children before the compulsory start to school, while occasional care services provide limited casual care for the children of parents at home and family day care services provide care for children in carers' homes (OECD, 2000).

Early childhood services vary in where they are located. Long day care centres and family day care schemes may be neighborhood based, work based or located in the work area. Outside school hours care is often attached to schools but may also exist in other locations such as neighborhood centres. Preschools similarly may be located within schools or co-located on the same site as a school or long day care centre, exist as a stand-alone service, or be integrated within a long day care centre. Occasional care services may be located in neighborhood centres, shopping centres or as stand-alone services in neighborhoods.

Within the states and territories policies and practices related to school programs, curriculum and pedagogy, operations, accreditation and regulation are determined by government departments, statutory authorities, non-government school education authorities and individual schools. The policies and practices, operations, accreditation and regulation of early childhood services are determined by government departments, statutory authorities, non-government authorities and individual services.

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Appendix 1 - Summary tables

Table 1 -- Comparison of ages for entry into programs[3]

NB: Entry ages refer to the year in which entry commences unless otherwise indicated.

State/Territory	Entry age into program two years before Year One	Entry age into program one year before Year One	Entry age into Year One	Compulsory starting age
Western Australia	4 by 30 June. Single entry point at beginning of school year	5 by 30 June. Single entry point at beginning of school year	6 by 30 June. Single entry point at beginning of school year	The beginning of the school year in which the child reaches the age of 6 years 6 months
New South Wales	4 by 31 July	5 by 31 July	6 by 31 July	6th birthday
Victoria	4 by 30 April	5 by 30 April	6 by 30 April	6th birthday
Queensland	4 by 31 December [in the preceding year]	5 by 31 December [in the preceding year]	6 by 31 December [in the preceding year]	6th birthday
South Australia	Continuous entry after 4th birthday	Continuous entry after 5th birthday	Single entry in January after 2-5 terms in Reception depending on initial entry	6th birthday
Tasmania	4 by 1 January	5 by 1 January	6 by 1 January	6th birthday
ACT	4 by 30 April in year of entry	5 by 30 April	6 by 30 April	6th birthday
Northern Territory	Continuous entry after 4th birthday	4 years and 6 months by 1 January	5 years and 6 months By 1 January	6th birthday

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[3] Modelled on tables from the Government of Western Australia Department of Education and Training website. www.eddept.wa.edu.au).

Table 2 -- Comparison of programs two years prior to entry into Year 1[4]

State/Territory	Name of program	Hours attended	Provider
Western Australia	Kindergarten	11 hours a week	Department of Education and Training
New South Wales	Preschool	12.5 hours a week	Department of Education and Training; Department of Community Services
Victoria	Preschool or kindergarten	10 hours a week	Department of Human Services
Queensland	Kindergarten	Up to 12.5 hours a week	Department of Education and the Arts
South Australia	Kindergarten	11 hours a week	Department of Education and Children's Services
Tasmania	Kindergarten	10 hours a week	Department of Education
ACT	Preschool	10.5 hours a week	Department of Education and Training, Children's Services Branch
Northern Territory	Preschool	12 hours a week	Department of Employment, Education and Training

Table 3 -- Comparison of programs one year prior to entry into Year 1

State/Territory	Name of program	Days attended	Provider
Western Australia	Pre-primary	5	Department of Education and Training
New South Wales	Kindergarten	5	Department of Education and Training
Victoria	Preparatory	5	Department of Education and Training
Queensland	Preschool (becoming prep in 2007)	5 half days	Department of Education and the Arts
South Australia	Reception	5	Department of Education and Children's Services
Tasmania	Preparatory (compulsory)	5	Department of Education
ACT	Kindergarten	5	Department of Education and Training
Northern Territory	Transition	5	Department of Employment, Education and Training

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[4] Modelled on tables from the Government of Western Australia Department of Education and Training website. www.eddept.wa.edu.au).

Table 4 -- Departmental responsibility and curriculum framework/policy

State or Territory	Responsibility for preschool education	Responsibility for school education	Curriculum framework/policy	General comments
Western Australia	Department of Education and Training	Department of Education and Training	*Curriculum Improvement Program* (CIP) – Department of Education and Training	Shared curriculum between preschool and pre-primary promotes continuity of children's learning across the early years of school.
New South Wales	Department of Community Services (DOCS) for preschools not located on school sites Department of Education and Training (DET), mostly when preschools are located on school sites	Department of Education and Training – DET	Board of Studies NSW sets curriculum including K-6 educational resources *The Practice of Relationships -- NSW Curriculum Framework for Children's Services* (not mandated) for range of children's services, including non-DET preschools	K- 6 provides 'foundation statements' which are 'short, clear descriptions of the knowledge and skills that each student should develop at each stage of primary school. They answer the question 'What must be taught?' in all schools. Continuity is problematic between preschool and kindergarten.
Victoria	Department of Human Services (DHS)	Department of Education and Training (DET)	Victorian Curriculum and Assessment Authority (VCAA) curriculum document (begins at school age)	Education policy starts at school entry age.
Queensland	Department of Education and the Arts – majority. Crèche and Kindergarten Association of Queensland – small number	Department of Education and the Arts	*Queensland Studies Authority Curriculum Guidelines* (not mandated)	QSA curriculum guidelines span preschool to tertiary transition. Both DEA and C & K preschools follow the QSA curriculum guidelines.

South Australia	Department of Education and Children's Services (DECS)	Department of Education and Children's services (DECS)	*South Australian Curriculum Standards and Accountability Framework* (SACSA)	The SACSA framework covers the age range of 0– 12 and provides a framework for consistent programming.
Tasmania	Department of Education Tasmania (DET)	Department of Education Tasmania (DET)	*The Essential Learnings Framework* and Essential Connections (DET)	The *Essential Learnings Framework* provides continuity of curriculum from preschool through school transition.
ACT	Department of Education and Training (DET)	Department of Education and Training	*Contours of Learning. A Guide for Children's Learning in the Early Years* (not mandated)	ACT Government Preschool Strategic Plan 2005 designed to improve transition and links between preschool and other settings and the promotion of 'best practice' programming through the implementation of *Contours of Learning* framework
Northern Territory	Department of Employment, Education and Training (DEET)	Department of Employment, Education and Training (DEET)	*NT Board of Studies Northern Territory Curriculum Framework (NTCF)*	Board of Studies aims to develop and provide high quality curriculum, assessment, reporting and certification to students in the Northern Territory from preschool to year 12. Curriculum framework spans preschool to year 12. With preschools sometimes co-located with schools this works well but still problems with access and continuity gaps.

Table 5 -- Number and percentage distribution of children attending by type of service (FaCS, 2004 Census)[5]

NB: Figures supplied are for those children captured by the census data gathered from questionnaires sent to Australian Government approved and funded child care services which were operational at 3 February 2004. There was an 88 per cent response rate to the surveys.

It is important to note that many children also attend different types of early childhood services.

CHILDREN	STATE/TERRITORY																AUSTRALIA	
	NSW		VIC		QLD		SA		WA		TAS		NT		ACT			
	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%
Private Long Day Care Services +	77839	37	41536	29	76850	46	9076	16	19274	41	1529	9	917	12	2242	15	229263	34
Community Based Long Day Care Services +	38543	18	25244	17	14884	9	11479	20	8268	17	4911	27	1679	23	4396	29	109404	16
Family Day Care Schemes	28933	14	20624	14	17886	11	7983	14	5838	12	4582	26	884	12	1678	11	88408	13
In-home Care Schemes	820	0	403	0	943	1	118	0	350	1	417	2	0	0	54	0	3105	0
Outside School Hours Care	37317	18	39177	27	33026	20	16614	29	5983	13	3456	19	1798	24	5142	34	142513	21
Vacation Care	24183	11	14915	10	22008	13	11653	20	6091	13	2738	15	1344	18	1611	11	84543	13
Occasional Care	2733	1	2074	1	1121	1	86	0	919	2	220	1	5	0	201	1	7359	1

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[5] See Appendix 2 for a brief summary of the relevant Census data.

Multifunctional Services	83	0	268	0	209	0	227	0	155	0	0	0	123	2	0	0	1065	0
MACS	556	0	241	0	97	0	163	0	218	0	65	0	114	2	0	0	1454	0
Mobiles and Toy Libraries	859	0	612	0	695	0	121	0	136	0	0	0	388	5	0	0	2811	0
Aboriginal Playgroups	197	0	56	0	517	0	176	0	124	0	0	0	141	2	0	0	1211	0
TOTAL CHILDREN *	212063	100	145150	100	168236	100	57696	100	47356	100	17918	100	7393	100	15324	100	671136	100

 * Note: Private and Community Based Long Day Care counts are not directly comparable to those reported in the census prior to 2002 due to definitional changes.

 * Note: This data measures occurrences of care and will include some double counting where children attend more than one service.

Appendix 2 – Summary of FaCS 2004 census data relating to services and children

Services

- The total number of services asked to participate in the 2004 census was 8989. The overall response rate for the 2004 Census was 88 per cent, an improvement on the 2002 response rate of 85 per cent.
- The number of child care services increased. This growth in the number of services is reflected by an increase of 217 (8 per cent) in the number of private long day care services, and an increase of 15 (1 per cent) in the number of community-based long day care services. The number of outside school hours care services increased by 34 (just over 1 per cent). Since the inclusion of in-home care in 2002, the number of in-home care services has increased by 22 (44 per cent).
- In 2004 the average weekly fee in private long day care centres was $208, an increase from $184 in 2002. In community-based long day care, the average fee increased from $188 in 2002 to $211 in 2004.
- In 2004 the average weekly fee in family day care schemes (for 50 hours in care) was $185 compared to $163 in 2002.
- The average fee charged per session was $6.68 for before school care and $10.28 for after school care in 2004. This compares with $5.91 and $9.34 respectively in 2002.

Children

- There were an estimated 752,800 children attending child care at March 2004 (this includes an estimate for non-responding services). This compares with an estimated 732,100 children attending child care in 2002 (an increase of 2.8 per cent).
- At March 2004, 79 per cent of the children attending a long day care centre attended that centre for fewer than 30 hours a week. Fifty-eight per cent of the children attending a long day care centre attended for less than 20 hours a week. This is the same as in 2002.
- Family day care attendance declined over the period 2002 to 2004. In 2004 an estimated 89,300 children attended family day care during the reference week down from 95,630 in 2002 (a decrease of 6.6 per cent). In March 2004 an average of 80 per cent of the children attending family day care schemes attended for fewer than 30 hours a week.
- In-home care experienced a large increase in the number of children attending, an estimated 3,240 in 2004, up from 1,500 in 2002 (an increase of nearly 116 per cent). This increase reflected the steady take-up of places. Seventy four per cent of children attending in-home schemes attended for fewer than 30 hours per week.
- The number of children attending outside school hours care (before and after school care) in March 2004 was estimated to be 160,800, up from 148,040 in 2002 (an increase of 8.6 per cent).
- The proportion of children identified as being from a culturally diverse background increased to approximately 12 per cent in 2004. The proportion of children identified as having a disability remained at about 2 per cent.

Linking Schools and Early Years Services

Section Four: A Review of International and Australian Models

Table of Contents

1 Introduction

1.1 Background

The current document forms Section 4 of the Linking Schools and Early Years Project report and is a *Review of International and Australian Models.* The Linking Schools and Early Years Project was funded by The R.E. Ross Trust and undertaken by the Centre for Community Child Health, Victoria, in consultation with the Education Foundation. This document is part of a scoping study for a future project aimed at linking early years services and knowledge with schools.

The current document reviews six community school models. According to the Coalition for Community Schools, a community school is *both a place and a set of partnerships between the school and other community resources. Its integrated focus on academics, services, supports and opportunities leads to improved student learning, stronger families and healthier communities* (Blank et al, 2003, p. 2). *Using public schools as hubs community schools bring together many partners to offer a range of supports and opportunities to children, youth, families and communities -- before, during and after school, seven days a week* (CfCS website, 2006, FAQ section, para. 2).

This document explores the chosen community school models' origins, aims and establishment and how they work in practice, including, where appropriate, the use of case studies. The purpose is to explore how different community school models have responded to local needs and sought to achieve better outcomes for children and families. Common elements in these models are drawn together with the aim of providing the basis for a discussion of possible ways forward in Victoria.

1.2 Rationale

There is clear evidence that addressing low literacy levels that many children from disadvantaged backgrounds have requires identifying and removing the barriers these children face when starting school. Doing this will require new ways of working and greater partnerships and collaboration between schools and early years services.

The importance of links and partnerships between schools and early years services is supported for a number of reasons:

- Current thinking about the importance of adopting an approach to child development and education that focuses on the whole life course highlights the need to close the gap between early years and school.
- Barriers to learning need to be addressed before a child starts school. These barriers include poor experiences in the early years, inadequate parenting, parents' own poor experience of school and unidentified developmental problems.
- Engaging parents as active partners requires schools to provide opportunities for them to become familiar and comfortable with the school before their children start attending.
- There is a need for a more holistic approach to supporting families to create the best possible environment for children to develop.
- Schools will benefit from having greater access to information about the implications of current research on the early years.

1.3 Structure of the section

The current document reviews six community school models. It begins by providing detailed information about each model. What follows is an overview of several Australian school-based initiatives. The final section of the document draws together the common features of the models.

2   Community School Models

A detailed overview of six community school models follows. The models are:

- Full Service Extended Schools (United Kingdom)
- Toronto First Duty (Canada)
- Schools of the 21st Century (United States)
- Coalition for Community Schools (United States)
- The Elizabeth Learning Center (United States)
- Schools as Communities (Australia).

[A brief synopsis of each model is contained in Appendix 1 and contact details are in Appendix 2.]

2.1   Full Service Extended Schools (FSES)

2.1.1 Background

The Full Service Extended Schools (FSES) initiative is a school-based program in the United Kingdom which aims to deliver extended hours child care and additional services to local communities. FSESs are secondary or primary schools that provide additional services for young people, their families and the wider community. Often these services are available at the beginning and the end of the school day, on weekends and during school holidays. There is a particular emphasis on high quality child care between 8:00 am and 6:00 pm, although FSESs provide a range of other services.

The FSES initiative is evolving as results from evaluation emerge. The evaluation report of the first full year of the initiative (2003 – 2004 school year) was published in September 2005 (Cummings et al, 2005). Ongoing evaluation of the program is part of the government's plan to roll the initiative out across an increasing number of schools in the coming years, with the aim of all schools in the United Kingdom offering extended school services by 2010.

The FSES initiative began in 2001 with an emphasis on before and after school hours care. The addition of the 'full service' component came in part as a response to the proposals relating to childrens services contained in the 2003 government green paper *Every Child Matters* (Boateng, 2003) and the document *Next Steps* (Department for Education and Skills, 2004) which accompanied it. Together these documents proposed that the Departments of Health, Social Services and Education and Skills (DfES) work in a more integrated fashion in the interests of children. FSESs, as sites or hubs through which a range of services can be delivered to children and families, have become a focal point for delivery of this policy directive. In the school year 2003-2004 DfES aimed to fund at least one FSES in each Local Education Authority (LEA). LEAs are the bodies responsible for the local administration of government education services in England and Wales (UK government National Statistics website, 2006).

2.1.2 Vision
The vision for FSES is that

By 2010:
- All schools in the United Kingdom, either independently or through collaboration with other schools and child care centres, will provide child care all year round between the hours of 8:00 am and 6:00 pm. Half of the primary schools and a third of secondary schools will achieve this by 2008.

- All schools in the United Kingdom will offer access to the following services either themselves or by developing local community partnerships with service providers:
  - parenting support

- family learning opportunities
- straightforward and timely referral to multi-agency support
- community use of facilities.

(Eisenstadt, 2005)

2.1.3 Aims and objectives

DfES has specified the core services of the FSES program; that is the extended services that each school is expected to be able to offer its children, parents and wider community by 2010. These core services include:

- high quality child care provided on the school site or through local providers, available 8:00 am to 6:00 pm all year round
- a variety of activities such as homework clubs and study support, sport and music tuition
- parenting support, including information sessions for parents
- swift and easy referral to a wide range of specialist support services including speech therapy, family support services and child and adolescent mental health services
- wider community access to information and communication technology, sports and arts facilities and adult learning opportunities. (DfES Teachernet website, 2006)

2.1.4 Components of the model and structure of the program

Specific requirements were set out for the sorts of activities FSESs were required to offer (Cummings et al, 2005). However, directives were not given about how these activities should interact or what the overall aim of the collection of activities offered would be. Instead, local interpretation was allowed. As a result different models and activities have developed. One way in which schools differed was whether they saw their programs as tackling issues for the whole community or targeting particular vulnerable groups. Staffing and program size varied, depending on whether a targeted or universal approach was taken to the student population, parents and community and recruitment of staff.

For those schools that chose to focus on the whole community, there was commonly a focus on activities designed to open up the school's facilities to community groups and on providing opportunities for community education. Some of the activities were already in place, and the FSES funding has allowed for longer-term planning.

Those schools that targeted specific groups often took an early intervention approach in their use of the funding. For example, to tackle academic underachievement or unwanted behaviours that were thought to originate from community or social group influences, FSES funding was used to employ a family support worker to deal with issues involving individual families.

Despite this difference in the interpretation of the model, the DfES evaluation in 2005 (Cummings et al, 2005) noted that all schools consulted felt that the FSES activities put in place were complementary rather than detrimental to the effective operation of the core activity, namely teaching and learning. In fact many schools asserted that the FSES activities were critical to the running of the school and intertwined with core activities; in other words, that the development of students could not occur without the corresponding development of teachers, schools, families and communities.

Examples of the various ways that funding has been used include a focus on:

- students, some provisions for families and little emphasis on broader community initiatives
- students and families, without separating one from the other, and then extending the focus to the community.
- the community, with community defined as the children, parents and adults with disabilities using a FSE special school
- parents' involvement in their child's and their own development and learning
- parents, with an emphasis on the promotion of their achievements as an example to students and the broader community
- tackling barriers to learning and promoting awareness of services for the wider community. (Cummings et al, 2005)

In relation to the last focus, the evaluation report noted that in many communities social networks had been depleted by the closure of key industries (such as coal mines) that typically had offered social events for employees. A focus on re-connecting socially and accessing services in these areas was considered to be a top priority.

Activities have centred around eight specific areas (Cummings et al, 2005):

1. *Child care.* Child care has developed differently in various sites. Some common components include breakfast clubs, before-school clubs (such as special interest groups or study support), crèche provision for adult classes and nursery provision (more common at primary schools).

2. *Health and social care.* Many schools had staff other than educators, such as nurses and youth workers, working on site. There were also a range of activities for both students and adults run from or at school sites. These included sporting events, citizens' advice, day care for the elderly and counselling.

3. *Lifelong learning.* Almost all FSESs offered courses and other activities and supports for parents and in some cases other community members. Examples include internet cafes, adult education in association with local colleges and school-based adult education classes on subjects such as cooking, child care, driving and the English language.

4. *Family learning.* Many FSESs offered days and evenings where students and their families were encouraged to participate together in some kind of activity on the school site or go on a planned visit. Activities included 'dads and lads' sessions, family cooking sessions and community toy libraries offering opportunities for parents and carers to learn about the benefits of play.

5. *Parenting support.* Parenting support activities often overlapped with family learning and lifelong learning. Some specific activities included outreach work with Child and Adolescent Mental Health Services, employment of parents as classroom assistants and training sessions in parenting skills for families.

6. *Study support.* Study support was conceptualised in different ways, and generally was considered to be any kind of support which impacted either directly or indirectly on children's learning. Often this took the form of extra lessons but also involved forms of curriculum extension and enrichment, personal and social support or even parental support. Some specific examples were holiday study support, breakfast clubs and school-based learning support units.

7. *Sports and arts.* Sports and arts activities were used by many schools to address community cohesion issues and encourage greater awareness of other cultures. Some examples of activities were 'graffiti art' sessions, 'boxercise' classes, junior sports leadership schemes and opening up school facilities such as halls and swimming pools to community groups.

8. *Information and communication technology (ICT).* Frequently ICT facilities were developed at schools through the FSES program, while others already had well-developed facilities. Schools used ICT in a number of ways, including creating a website to map the extended services available to the community, exploring 'e-registration' to improve student attendance, and building information technology elements into planned curriculum activities.

In the evaluation the schools expressed an understanding that a multi-agency approach was required in order to work towards the aims of the FSES program. This understanding was reportedly accompanied by an awareness of both the value of working in this way and the challenges. The view was expressed that it takes time to develop links to services and therefore time to see tangible beneficial outcomes. The successful development of a multi-agency approach was thought to rely on effective processes of management and dealing with a range of workforce issues.

Restructuring staffing was seen as a key component of the FSES program. Many schools had already begun to develop initiatives with aims very closely aligned with the FSES program, and this involved bringing together a range of skilled professionals. Having an integrated service allowed sharing of knowledge among professionals, parents, students and other community members. The evaluation noted that having the professionals located on site at the school was essential for this to occur.

2.1.5 Implementation

Schools nominated by each LEA for FSES funding were required to undertake to provide a minimum set of services and activities (described above). In addition there were a number of conditions attached to the FSES funding (Cummings et al, 2005).

These conditions included the following:

- LEAs had to assess and be satisfied that the school put forward for FSES funding had sufficient leadership and organisational capacity so that teachers would not be given additional work in order to make the FSES program work.
- Nominated schools must be open outside school hours, including weekends and holidays.
- Services offered by FSESs must be available to students, parents and community members.
- Schools must demonstrate that they have undertaken appropriate community consultation to establish local need for the core services provided. Schools must also consider in the development of the services to be provided how best to create links between community members with different backgrounds.
- Funding must be used to meet costs associated with managing the new developments and not for staffing and maintaining the services themselves. It was anticipated that the services would be funded by the service providers. Incidental revenue expenses for the additional services such as rates, volunteer expenses, and transport costs for children were also anticipated to be covered by the FSES funding. However one of the key advantages of using schools as a focal point for the delivery of local services is the economies-of-scale opportunities they provide.
- FSESs must supply the required core services in extended times and make them available the broader community.

2.1.6 Management structure and leadership

The management structures in each FSES included the head teacher and often other members of the school's senior management team. Schools recognised that they needed to expand their management structures to address the issues presented by new initiatives. This expansion typically took two forms:

1. *the appointment of an FSES co-ordinator both to set up the infrastructure around the development of new initiatives and to manage their day-to-day running.* The appointment was external in some schools and internal in others.
2. *new management roles.* This was the main management change to come from the implementation of the FSES program and often involved assigning authority for the management of new initiatives to the lead service or agency. Where the personnel involved in the initiatives were co-located (such as in many sites where schools had adjacent sports and community centres under separate management) working partnerships were developed and regular meetings established.

According to the 2005 evaluation the management structure and leadership of FSESs varied enormously. The degree of support from the LEA had a significant impact on the ability to develop governance structures and establish strategic direction.

2.1.7 Level of involvement of parents

Getting parents involved in the program was challenging, more so in secondary than in primary schools (Cummings et al, 2005). Often there was resistance by parents to the notion that anything could be gained through participation in adult activities at schools. Some schools reported that some parents were glad for the school to take responsibility for their children and did not want to get involved. Primary schools reported that encouraging parental involvement was yielding results because it built on an existing culture of parental involvement and the fact that many parents came to school to collect children.

2.1.8 Evaluation

A survey to determine baselines for the provision of extended services in schools (DfES, 2005) collected information from almost 4000 maintained state schools (primary and secondary). Findings were that the vast majority were providing some extended services. The most common types of extended services were after school child care, provision of facilities and links to non-teaching professionals.

The evaluation of FSES at the end of the first year (Cummings et al, 2005) revealed that the schools involved in the project were keen to develop their extended services. There was also early anecdotal evidence that student attendance and motivation were improving in these schools, which was enabling teachers to refocus on teaching and learning.

The end of first year evaluation of the Full Service Extended Schools cautions against making assumptions about what brings about change. This refers to the fact that when significant actions are undertaken, often those responsible make assumptions about the outcomes their actions will achieve. However, often these outcomes have complex causes and are dependent on a variety of variables. There are multiple initiatives occurring in the FSES project, and it is often difficult to determine a causal relationship between the specific actions taken in the programs and short-term outcomes. A longer term evaluation may shed more light on the actual effect of the initiative (Cummings et al, 2005).

2.1.9 Outcomes

Outcomes at this point in the FSES program are largely based on anecdotal evidence (Cummings et al, 2005) and are not consistent across all programs:

- In some sites, schools were achieving high levels of multi-agency work. When this was happening schools reported considerable benefits in coordinating work with vulnerable children and families, improving access to services and targeting services more appropriately. Many schools, however, reported difficulties associated with improving interagency work and concerns about the amount of time it takes to work in this way.
- Most of the sites saw the provision of child care as important to their overall rationale. The evaluation report states: *They believed that there were potentially significant benefits for children, families and communities arising from such provision. These included impact on children's learning, more positive relationships between schools and families and support for parents in accessing services and in finding and maintaining employment… there was as yet no hard evidence of a positive carry over from child care provision to classroom learning.*
- There was emerging evidence of meaningful consultation with local communities, parents and students in decision making
- Examples of the considerable amount of supportive anecdotal evidence includes assertions that student engagement with learning increased, trust in the school grew and there was greater support for families. The report states: *There were indications that full service provision might potentially intervene to break cycles of disadvantage in some cases. None of this yet amounts to robust evidence of 'effectiveness' but it suggests that longer term and more wide ranging outcomes may indeed be possible. It is possible that the benefits of these outcomes (calculated in returns to society) will outweigh the costs.*
- The evaluation report also indicates that *[s]chools were able, to differing extents, to articulate coherent 'theories of change', setting out how their actions will bring about desired changes for children and young people, their families and communities.* (Cummings et al, 2005, p.iv).

2.1.10 Funding and sustainability

The 61 LEA's that implemented FSES programs in the academic year 2003 – 2004 received between £93,000 and £162,000 (approximately A$220,000 -A$383,000) which decreased annually for a further two years. In addition they received £25,000 (approximately A$60,000) to support the development of child care services.

The DfES evaluation of FSES (2005) reported that schools and LEAs saw the initiative as developing alongside a range of other initiatives (such as the location of Sure Start children's centres at FSESs) focusing on children, families and communities, particularly those at risk. They were encouraged and saw potential and opportunities for the development of more accessible, more coherent and more effective services.

2.2   Toronto First Duty

2.2.1 Background

The City of Toronto's *First Duty Report* (1997), which advocated a municipal strategy for supporting children, took its title from a quote from 19th century British Social reformer John Ruskin (Bertrand, et al, 2002). The quote states that the *…first duty of a state is to see that every child born therein shall be well housed, clothed, fed and educated, till it attain years of discretion* (Bertrand et al., 2002, p. 2).

The Toronto First Duty (TFD) Project, a universal early learning and care program, came out of this municipal strategy. It seeks to meet the developmental needs of children to ensure they reach their full potential and in addition supports parents in their parenting roles and with work and study. TFD was established in 1999 by the City of Toronto, the Atkinson Charitable Foundation and the Toronto District School Board with the support of other community organisations. It presently operates in five communities of metropolitan Toronto with a school and a lead agency (all are child, family or community centres) operating in partnership in each instance (TFD website, 2006).

2.2.2 Vision, aims and objectives

The vision for TFD is the delivery of a universal early learning and care program for every child that simultaneously:
- meets the developmental needs of children to ensure they reach their full potential
- supports parents to work or study
- supports parents in their parenting role.

TFD combines the three streams of kindergarten, child care and parenting supports into a single program designed to meet the learning needs of children at the same time as it meets the care needs of parents.

The overall aim of the TFD project is to develop working models of early childhood education, development and care leading to an integrated system of services for young children and their families (Bertrand et al., 2002).

The main aims of the TFD project are to:
- develop a program model that integrates services, takes all steps to be inclusive and addresses any barriers that could interfere with children and family's access to services
- demonstrate high quality, integrated and collaborative education, development and care practice
- demonstrate that a high quality, seamless program model can be developed in a variety of settings involving a variety of partners
- enhance partnerships and build participation.

The TFD project also aims to provide a comprehensive continuum of supports. The key features with requirements for each site are:
- *an integrated early years learning environment*. Requirement: Create a high quality learning environment that combines learning expectations, activities and routines from existing kindergarten, early childhood education/child care and parenting programs.
- *an early childhood staff team*. Requirement: Develop an early childhood staff team that works together to deliver and achieve program goals.
- *an integrated governance model*. Requirement: Form a local governance structure to determine the allocation of resources, service planning and monitoring, and program policies.
- *seamless access*. Requirement: Provide seamless access to an expanded and comprehensive early learning and care program providing a continuum of supports and services to all families and children.
- *parent Involvement*. Requirement: Increase parent participation in their children's early learning and development through direct involvement in programs, planning and decision making (Bertrand et al, 2002).

The key projected outcomes of the TFD project include:
- optimal child development and early learning
- service system development
- service delivery integration
- individual service use.

(Toronto First Duty website, 2006).

2.2.3 The TFD model: a case study
2.2.3.1 *Site background*
The Bruce WoodGreen Project (BWP) is a collaboration between Bruce Public School (BPS) and the WoodGreen Community Centre (WGCC). BPS provides kindergarten, parenting and family literacy, early literacy, nutrition and other programs while the WGCC provides child care and child development services, recreation and parent support programs and other programs. The participation of the WGCC adds to the project additional links to adult literacy, English as a second language training and youth services and employment. The BWP, in its initial planning when it joined the TFD project, articulated the vision of helping all children *to reach their full potential by bringing all sectors together in a community-based hub that will provide a seamless, integrated service model of education and care* (Bertrand et al., 2002, p. 54).
The BWP is located in an area of Toronto characterised by:
- low house prices
- many first home owners with young families
- many rental units occupied by new immigrants and families with subsidised incomes
- the highest teen-age birth rate, lowest average birth weight and highest number of single parent households in Toronto
- strong scores on the Early Development Index[1] (EDI) subscale for physical health and wellbeing, which is attributed to the schools' comprehensive food program
- low EDI scores on learning and development subscales.

BPS had 277 students (Bertrand et al, 2002), of which 175 are between kindergarten and grade 3. Over half of the students spoke a language other than English (40 per cent Chinese) (TFD, 2004).

2.2.3.2 .*Components of the model*
- By spring 2004 there were 64 children registered in the kindergarten program, of which 35-40 took part in full-or extended-day programs.
- Between 15 and 25 parents, each accompanied by one to four children, attended the parenting centre attendance each day. The centre, open between 9:00am and 3:30pm, was staffed by a health nurse who offered advice about the public health system.
- A hot lunch program was provided for children in full- or extended-day programs and at the parenting centre.
- A number of programs designed to promote social development were implemented. These include the Crèche Social Skills program and workshops on children's stress run for parents and children in the evenings by the public health nurse.
- As of the 2004 progress report summer programs for children were planned with capacity for approximately 20 children registered for full days and nine for half days. The summer program is intended to provide continuity and care for families using the early years services and prepare them for starting school. It seeks to provide a fun and safe educational environment for children. It was planned for the summer program to coordinate with other similar programs and join together with them for larger group days.
- A six-week summer nutrition workshop was also being planned at the time of the 2004 progress report.
  (TFD, 2004)

2.2.3.3 *Location of staff*
Staff from different programs are often located on the same site in the BWP while others are still located offsite. Regardless of their location they are increasingly integrated, according to the 2004 progress report. According to the 2004 evaluation the BWP has successfully implemented the principle of seamless access, meaning that the staff from the coordinated programs and agencies work together in the best interests of children and families. Programs share space, resources and a willingness to be flexible. According to the report the dual influences of outreach and word of mouth have resulted in an expanding range of programs that are being integrated into the overall project.

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[1] The Canadian Early Development Instrument (EDI) is largely based on the National Longitudinal Survey of Children and Youth (NLSCY) and other existing developmental tests. The EDI measures children's 'readiness to learn' in the school environment in relation to developmental benchmarks rather than curriculum-based ones along five general domains; emotional maturity; language and cognitive development; communication skills; and general knowledge. See http://www.offordcentre.com/readiness/files/EDI_Factsheet.pdf for more information.

2.2.3.4 *Management structure and leadership*
The coordination of the TFD program is overseen by a project Steering Committee with representatives from all the sites, the city, sub-committees and other stakeholders. The Steering Committee overseas a Research and Development (R & D) Committee whose responsibility is to coordinate the work on the development of integrated early learning environments (see section 2.2.3.8 *Indicators of Change* below) being led by the Atkinson Charitable Foundation (Bertrand et al., 2002). The R & D Committee also direct the R & D team whose core responsibility is the project evaluation. The Steering Committee, R & D Committee and R & D Team all communicate directly with the sites (Bertrand et al, 2002).

Each site has been encouraged to appoint a management committee and a program leader. Program leaders from the sites are also involved in communication and coordination groups with representatives from all other sites. The communication group is concerned with the development of the communication plan for the project while the coordination group provides a forum for the sharing of knowledge about project implementation across the sites (TFD website, 2006). At BWP the members of the management committee meet monthly, and are predominantly representatives of local involved organisations. As the head of the lead agency, the director of child care services at WoodGreen Community Centre is the chair of the management committee and the program leader (TFD, 2004). Other members of the management committee are:

- representatives from the parenting and literacy centre
- the principal from BPS
- the children's cervices advisor and the regional superintendent of education from the Toronto District School Board
- the local trustee
- a parent representative
- the program manager
- a representative from the research team
- a representative from the funding agency.

The committee has overseen the establishment of terms of reference for their operation, a governance framework and a partnership agreement. They have also overseen the development of a process that brought together the policies, procedures and practices of WoodGreen, parenting support services and Bruce School. Other achievements include the development of a media relations protocol for managing press attention and the development of a sub-committee to produce a brochure for community distribution (TFD, 2004)

2.2.3.5 *Level of involvement of parents*
Parents are very involved in the program. According to the TFD website (2006), parents who engage in the TFD program are more likely than parents in comparable sites to:

- participate in school events and activities
- feel responsible for talking to their child's teacher
- feel successful in helping their child prepare for school.

2.2.3.6   *Evaluation*
The TFD evaluation aimed to evaluate sites based on the development, implementation and impacts of the sites in three areas:

- program, policy and services
- children and parents
- community and public awareness.

(TFD website, 2006)
The TFD research team used the following methods in their evaluation:

1. Participant observation took place at both a TFD project level when the R & D team attended Steering Committee as well as Project Coordinator meetings. The Team also attended the BWP Management Committee meetings.
2. Site information sessions involved the R & D Team meeting with parents to discuss the evaluation and get parents' views of the program.
3. Program environment observations used an environmental rating scale (ECERS-R) and descriptions of time, space, people and materials in the program.
4. Children's focus groups were held in which children had the opportunity to discuss their TFD experiences and draw pictures to illustrate their feelings about them.

5. Focus groups were held with the TFD Steering Committee members to examine issues arising from the previous evaluation report.
6. Data were collected from focus groups at the BWP site and one other. These groups included management and parents. In addition more than a dozen individual interviews were conducted with staff and management.

(TFD website, 2006)

2.2.3.7 *Outcomes*

The 2004 evaluation reported the following outcomes at the BWG TFD site:

1. *program, policy and services*: There have been increases recorded in levels of participation in all aspects of the programs. The majority of children in kindergarten are registered for the full- and extended-day programs. Child care use is increasing, parent participation in the parenting and family literacy centre ranges from 15-25 per day and the summer program was close to capacity for both full- and half-day programs.
2. *children and parents*: The children and families programs have increased and have been well attended. The parenting and family literacy centre operates at almost full capacity during the school year and at half time in the summer, which gives greater flexibility for parents in making choices for themselves and their children.
3. *community and public awareness*: Increasing numbers of community programs are being incorporated into BWP. This is the result of specific outreach efforts, word of mouth and broad reported support for the integration of early years programs.

2.2.3.8 *Indicators of Change*

The TFD *Indicators of Change* document (TFD, 2005) is a tool designed to evaluate and assess each site's progress towards the achievement of the program's aims. A set of nineteen program indicators define specific activities and practices that are required across the five core elements of the program. Each indicator is ranked on a scale of 1 – 5 with each number representing an evaluated performance level as follows:

- A ranking of 1 describes practices in early childhood and family programs that are co-located and *coexist* in the same building or neighbourhood but operate as separate and distinct services.
- A level 2 rating describes individual programs that are sharing information with each other and *coordinating* around specific activities.
- Level 3 indicates *collaboration* through some specific joint TFD activities that merge human resources, space or materials to offer new program opportunities.
- Level 4 indicates *collaboration* through an expansion of joint TFD activities and a clear influence on the operation of the original core programs.
- A rating of 5 describes full *integration* of existing and expanded programs into a blended service delivery system within a defined neighbourhood or community[2].

2.2.3.9 *Funding and sustainability*

In 2003 a sub-committee of the TFD Steering Committee was formed to look into issues of sustainability. They produced an advocacy document to be used for lobbying and policy development (TFD, 2004). In 2005 the document *Beyond Pilot Projects: Sustaining Toronto First Duty: Integrating Early Learning, Child Care and Family Supports* was produced. It provides a snapshot of the current situation for kindergarten, child care and parenting support in the areas of accountability, availability, access, learning environments and parent participation. It also paints a picture of what TFD offers in terms of these factors and describes the projected next steps for the project. It suggests that the signs are positive for expansion of the project given the Canadian government's pledge to supply Canadian families with a system of early learning and child care supported by $5 billion (approx A$5.86-billion) over five years (TFD, 2005). But the sustainability document warns that the funding on top of a patchwork of services will not produce the desired outcomes. Rather it suggests that given the release of the Best Start Plan (Ministry of Children and Youth Services, 2005), which promotes schools as community hubs, and the creation of a ministry devoted to children and health, the time is ripe for the funded continuation of the TFD project.

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[2] See Appendix 3 for a summary of the TFD Indicators of Change key elements and program indicators.

2.3   Schools of the 21st Century

2.3.1 Background

Schools of the 21st Century (21C) is a community school model that incorporates child care and family support services into schools. 21C promotes the growth and development of children by linking communities, families and schools with the aim of providing a continuum of support services beginning at birth (21C Yale University website, 2006). The 21C community school model re-thinks traditional models of schools and schooling and recasts them as 'year-round, multi-service centres providing high quality accessible services to children and families from early morning to early evening' (21C, 2004, p. 2).

The 21C program has been implemented successfully in more than 1300 schools in a diverse range of communities all over the United States. Many schools supplement the core 21C services by adding new components appropriate in their local contexts or by developing relationships with existing services and involving them more closely with the school community. The 21C model was conceived by Yale University professor Edward Zigler, a principal architect of the federal Head Start program (21C Yale University website, 2006).

2.3.2 Aims and objectives

21 C aims to support 'the optimal growth and development of children beginning at birth' (21C Yale University website, 2006). 21C strives to achieve its vision through the application of its model, which is designed to be flexible enough to meet the needs of different communities. It enables schools both to establish new services and to pull together and strengthen what already exists. The model has six core components, which are as follows (Samburg and Sheeran, 2000):

1. *guidance and support for parents.* This typically includes home visiting, playgroups, and parent education workshops.
2. *early care and education.* This involves providing high quality, developmentally appropriate, full-day, year-round services for children aged three to five either at the school or at a school-linked site. These services seek to lay the foundations for positive relations between schools and families and children's later success in school.
3. *before-school, after-school and vacation programs for school-age children. either on site or at a linked site.* The school provides diverse supervised activities for children aged 5-12.
4. *health education and services.* In collaboration with community-based health care providers, 21C schools seek to provide a range of services including: health, nutrition and fitness education, physical health services, care for children with special needs, developmental assessments, dental assessments and mental health services.
5. *networks and training for child care providers.* With the aim of strengthening the quality of local child care, 21C schools offer workshops, training opportunities, support groups and newsletters to support community child care providers with a particular emphasis on family day care providers in the neighbourhoods served by the school.
6. *information and referral services.* 21C schools inform families about community options for child care as well as the criteria for high quality care. They also provide information about health care and a broad range of information relating to the wellbeing of children and families.

These core components are implemented in each school. The core components are tailored to the needs of each school's community and at the same time six 21C guiding principles are followed to promote the program's integrity and quality. The six guiding principles are as follows (Samburg and Sheeran, 2000):

1. *strong parental supports and involvement.* This is based on evidence that parental influence is important for the optimal development of children. 21C therefore aims to involve parents in schools as much as possible by creating friendly environments, engaging them in activities and planning and providing them with access to useful services.
2. *universal access to child care.* 21C subsidises child care for families on middle to low incomes on an income-based sliding scale. The program does not target families as it operates with the belief that all families can benefit from support.

3. *non-compulsory programs.* While programs are available to all families in the community, no one is required to attend. Families attending 21C schools decide which services they want to participate in.
4. *focus on the overall development of the child.* 21C schools adopt a holistic approach, focusing on all aspects of child development, including physical, social, emotional and intellectual. They do this by focussing on play, exploration and social interaction. School-age care programs provide a range of physical activities which promote exercise, participation and hands-on learning.
5. *high quality programming.* 21C schools aim to maintain high standards for services, including high staff-to-student ratios, qualified and trained staff, small groups of children, developmentally appropriate activities and supportive environments for employees with the aim of achieving low staff turnover.
6. *professional training and advancement opportunities for child care providers.* 21C child care programs recognise that child care programs usually have high rates of turnover due to low salaries, lack of benefits, low job status, often unpleasant working conditions and little opportunity for advancement. As the quality of care provided is influenced by high rates of staff turnover, 21C programs seek to pay staff appropriately and offer them professional development opportunities.

2.3.3 Description of the model: case study

The 21C model in practice will be illustrated here through the use of a case study.

2.3.3.1 *Site background*

Paragould School District (PSD) is a district in Arkansas with some 2700 students from kindergarten to grade 4 enrolled in three neighbourhood primary schools. The first 21C site in the state, Paragould's School of the 21st Century was established in 1992. Seeing 21C as a means to address the early care and education needs of all children in Arkansas in 2001, the Winthrop Rockefeller Foundation[3] (WRF) initiated a five-year partnership with Yale University to support the development of a state-wide 21C Network. Through the Arkansas 21C Network PSD schools participate in state-wide training activities and receive on-site technical assistance provided by Yale (21C, 2004).

2.3.3.2 *Components of the model*
PSD has implemented the following activities (PSD website, 2006):

- The Pre-School Child Care Program serves children from infancy to five years of age. The year-round program is developmentally appropriate and emphasises social interaction. The programs are state licensed and staff undergo continuous training to ensure that the content reflects current acceptable practices in the context of a healthy stimulating environment. Both pre-kindergarten classrooms have certified teachers.
- The foster grandparent volunteers provide friendship, support, interest, understanding, individualised attention, help and personal care to children.
- The before and after school programs at two of the schools offer child care for school-aged children any time school is not in session as well, including snow days, several school holidays and throughout the summer.
- The School of the 21st Century offers special education services for children aged three to five years through one of the school districts. The early intervention program involves screening children for possible developmental delays. Children are placed in an integrated setting appropriate to their needs at the School of the 21st Century. Individualised Educational Plans are implemented by classroom teachers, special education aides, an early interventionist and a speech-language pathologist.
- Information and referral services inform parents of their child care options and provide advice on criteria for choosing good quality child care. This service also provides information on health care, financial assistance for eligible parents and accessing other community services.
- Parents as Teachers (PAT) is an innovative home-school-community partnership for parents and young children birth to age three to promote children's development and learning. The

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[3] The WRF uses its resources to build and sustain strong communities in Arkansas by supporting and strengthening the organisations that serve them. Their program areas include economic development, education and economic, racial, and social justice (WRF website, 2006).

program involves home visits, group meetings of parents, developmental screening and assistance to access other services.

- Even Start Family Literacy is a family literacy program consisting of four components: adult education, children's education, Parents and Child Together Time (PACT) and parent meetings. The Even Start program allows parents to return to school to improve their skills and study to acquire a high school diploma, while the School of the 21st Century provides an excellent educational experience for the children (birth to school age) of the parents attending classes.
- The importance of nutrition and health as factors that directly affect a child's performance in school is promoted. This awareness permeates the program, which provides staff training, parent training and other activities associated with the physical welfare of children. The children are given breakfast, lunch and two snacks, all of which meet the guidelines provided by the state.

2.3.3.3 *Evaluation*

Information about the specific evaluation methodology used by the school district (PSD) is not available. However 21C evaluated its model by tracking two of its schools in the second, third and fourth years of implementation and compared their impact on parents and children with two schools not involved with 21C. They collected data from surveys of parents, children, staff and principals and from reviewing school records. The evaluation revealed that parents who used 21C child care spent less money on the service and missed less work because of child-care related problems and recorded significantly lower scores on a parent stress index. The preschool child care program was also reported as promoting the early identification of children with special needs and increasing children's readiness for kindergarten (Blank, Melaville and Shah, 2003).

In addition, through both process and outcome evaluations at several 21C sites, the Yale University Bush Center in Child Development and Social Policy has gathered much evidence in support of these schools. The main findings include:

- Children participating in 21C for at least three years had higher scores in mathematics and reading achievement tests than children in a control non-21C school.
- Children who participated in 21C beginning at age three started kindergarten ready to learn, as evidenced by their scores on kindergarten screening tests.
- According to teachers, the 21C preschool program helped identify and address children's special learning needs early in the educational process.
- Availability of 21C child care services enabled parents to provide consistent adult supervision and high quality out-of-home care, vital factors in healthy child development.
(21C Yale University website, 2006)

2.3.3.4.*Funding and sustainability*

21C programs typically have a variety of funding sources. They often require funds for capital works and also to finance the development of services and recruit employees. Some are able to fund child care components through fees, while typically in less affluent areas local, state and federal funds are used. Initial start-up grants often come from local businesses or foundations or from the school district's budget (Samberg and Sheeran, 2000).

The PSD sourced its initial start-up funding from local businesses in 1992. In the school year 2002-2003 the PSD program was supported by a combination of state and federal grants, business and private donations, in-kind and salary contributions from the school district and fees paid on a sliding scale by families according to income (21C, 2004).

2.4   Coalition for Community Schools (CfCS)

2.4.1 Background

The Coalition for Community Schools (CfCS) in the United States is an alliance of governments and philanthropic organisations as well as national, state and local community school networks. The CfCS advocates for community schools as the vehicle for strengthening schools, families and communities so that together they can improve student learning (CfCS website, 2006).

The Institute for Educational Leadership (IEL)[4] staffs the CfCS. The IEL is supported by grants and contributions from corporate bodies; the Federal Government Departments of Labour, Justice and Education; foundations and individuals. The CfCS has its own steering committee that determines the CfCS's policies and strategies and also provides oversight of its activities (CfCS website, 2006).

2.4. 2 Aims and objectives

The CfCS aims to mobilise the assets of schools, families and communities to create a united movement for community schools. Community schools strengthen schools, families and communities to improve student learning (Blank, Melaville and Shah, 2003).

The goals of the CfCS are to:
- share information about successful community school policies, programs and practices
- build broader public understanding and support for community schools
- inform public- and private-sector policies in order to strengthen community schools
- develop sustainable sources of funding for community schools.

(CfCS website, 2006)

CfCS works to achieve these goals through several types of activities:
- conducting research about community schools that demonstrates their effectiveness and explores the challenges involved in creating and sustaining them
- convening national, regional and local community schools forums
- maintaining a website and regular email newsletter that provides learning opportunities about community schools and promotes access to community schools resources
- promoting a policy framework at the federal, state and local levels that supports community schools
- nurturing community school networks at the local and state levels
- carrying out public education events and programs to promote community schools.

(CfCS website, 2006)

2.4.3 Overview of community schools

The Coalition for Community Schools is based on the premise, supported by evidence, that community schools produce better outcomes for children, parents and communities than traditional schools.

CfCS proposes that community schools, by linking to community resources, have the following advantages over traditional schools:

- They gather additional resources for the school and consequently reduce demands on school staff to cater for the holistic needs of students. This approach gives principals and teachers more time to concentrate on their core mission of improving student learning.
- They provide learning opportunities that develop both academic and non-academic skills. Community schools support the intellectual, physical, psycho-emotional and social development of young people with the understanding that assets in one area reinforce development in another. Opportunities for learning and exploration in school, after school and in the community help students mature in all areas.
- They offer young people, their families and community residents opportunities to build social capital. Social capital connects students to people and information that can help them solve problems and meet their goals. Community schools enable all students to forge networks and social skills through mentoring relationships with caring adults, school-to-work learning, community service and other experiences, while providing parents and other adults with similar opportunities to learn and assume leadership roles.

    (Blank et al, 2003)

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[4] The Institute for Educational Leadership is a non-profit, non-partisan organisation, based in Washington DC that works to achieve better results for children and youth. The IEL aims to bring people together to identify and resolve issues across policy, program, and sector boundaries. Their website can be found at http://www.iel.org/.

Community schools are in a superior position to traditional schools to create what the CfCS considers to be the five conditions necessary for children to learn (Blank et al, 2003).

These conditions are:
1. The school has a core instructional program with qualified teachers, a challenging curriculum and high standards and expectations for students.
2. Students are motivated and engaged in learning – both in school and in community settings, during and after school.
3. The basic physical, mental and emotional health needs of young people and their families are recognised and addressed.
4. There is mutual respect and effective collaboration among parents, families and school staff.
5. Community engagement, together with school efforts, promote a school climate that is safe, supportive and respectful and that connects students to a broader learning community.

2.4.4 Evaluation

The CfCS collated twenty evaluations of community school programs and concluded that the collective results confirm what had intuitively been known for a long time - that is, that community schools work (Blank et al, 2003). The results indicate that community schools impact positively on students in four main ways:

1. Community schools *improve student learning* (both academic and non-academic) by taking a holistic approach and addressing the physical, social and emotional as well as academic needs and development of children. Fifteen of the twenty initiatives in the study reported improvement in students' academic achievement as measured by improved marks in school subjects and scores in proficiency testing. More than half of the evaluations also found evidence of positive development as measured by a variety of non-academic indicators, such as improved attendance (eight initiatives), reduced behaviour or discipline problems (five initiatives), greater compliance with school assignments and rules (three initiatives), increased access to physical and mental health services (five initiatives), greater contact with supportive adults (three initiatives) and improvements in personal and family situations (three initiatives).
2. Community schools *promote family engagement with students and schools* by encouraging families to access services and providing opportunities to participate in the life of the school in a range of ways. More than half the evaluations reported specific benefits to families, such as improvements in communication with schools and teachers (four initiatives), family stability and ability to provide for children's basic needs (three initiatives), parents' ability to meet workplace obligations (two initiatives), confidence in their ability to teach their children (two initiatives) and attendance at school meetings (two initiatives).
3. Community schools *influence the overall running of schools positively* by promoting cooperation between parents and staff in the promotion of student learning. Almost three-quarters of the evaluations examined the school's overall environment and identified improved outcomes in many areas. For example, principals and staff affirmed the importance of on-site services (five initiatives), more parents participated in their children's learning (four initiatives), there was non-partisan support for public education and access to resources through community partnerships (four initiatives) and services were well-integrated into the daily operation of schools (two initiatives). In the classroom, evaluators found increased emphasis on creative project-based learning and more innovations in teaching and curriculum (two initiatives). The school environments were reportedly more cheerful and were more likely to be perceived as safe (two initiatives).
4. Community schools *add vitality to the communities they are part of* because when the community is engaged with the school, the flow of resources and benefits runs both ways. Community partners provide on-site supports and opportunities for students, their families and their neighbours. In turn, the school maintains an active presence as a community hub, providing opportunities for family involvement, tapping into the community as a resource for learning and serving as a centre for community problem solving. Eleven evaluations that looked at this aspect suggest that community schools play a powerful role in community building. Evaluators noted a variety of improved outcomes, including improved community knowledge and perception of the community school initiative (seven initiatives); increased use of school buildings, awareness of community agencies and access to facilities previously unknown or unaffordable (seven initiatives); improved security and safety in the surrounding area (two initiatives); and strengthened community pride and engagement in the school (two

initiatives).

2.4.5 Funding and sustainability

According to the IEC there are common elements which link the successful strategies employed by community schools (Melaville, 1998). These include:

- stable leadership and the establishment of long-term financing methods
- diversified funding sources, careful site selection, community awareness and stakeholder support for the program
- adoption and embracing of the initiative's guiding principles by schools, their partner institutions and neighbourhoods
- clear goals, good timing and sufficient funding and support to maintain essential program features during periods of rapid growth and expansion.

Community schools are financed most often through a variety of public and private funding streams that support specific services, for example after school care, mental health services, professional development and adult learning and initiatives to promote parent engagement. Because they operate as partnerships between schools and the community the challenge in community schools is not so much capturing the money as creating an environment in the school that encourages community groups to enter and become involved (Melaville, 1998).

According to the IEL the most critical use of funding for community schools is the payment for a Community School Coordinator. This individual is responsible for mobilising community resources and integrating them into the life of the school. The Coordinator can be employed by a school district, community-based organisation or public agency. The recommendation is that salaries for this position are at a professional level and competitive with those of people in similar roles in other fields in order to attract the desirable calibre of applicant (Melaville, 1998).

2.5 Elizabeth Learning Center (ELC)

2.5.1 Background

The Elizabeth Learning Center (ELC) is a model site for the Urban Learning Centres (ULC), one of the eight designs of the New American Schools of the 21st Century. The centre is located in the Los Angeles Unified School District (LAUSD). The ELC serves over 3000 pre-k through to year 12 students. In 1991, the New American School's Development Corporation (NASDC)[5] launched a nationwide proposal to design the school of the future. The Los Angeles Educational Partnership, United Teachers Los Angeles and LAUSD formed a partnership to write a design for a twenty-first century school. The resulting design was one of only 11 proposals selected by NASDC for trialling and in 1992 Elizabeth Street School became the first Urban Learning Center (ULC) site (UCLA Center for Healthier Children, Families and Communities, 2006).

The Urban Learning Center (ULC) model re-structures the school around three key components: shared governance, innovative curriculum and instruction and comprehensive student and family support tackling barriers to learning (also known as the Learning Support model). This third plank of the ULC school reform model, Learning Support, is the key point of difference from many other school reform models. It proposes that barriers to learning can be tackled best through collaboration between school, family and community and the integration of school operations and other community services (UCLA Center for Healthier Children, Families and Communities, 2006).

2.5.2 Aims and objectives

The vision of the ELC is to create an educational centre that focuses not simply on learning but on enabling children to learn. It does this by addressing children's educational, social, mental health and health needs in a comprehensive and integrated manner in collaboration with public, private and civic partners (UCLA Center for Healthier Children, Families and Communities, 2006).

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[5] American business leaders created the New American Schools Development Corporation in 1991 to identify effective school-wide restructuring designs for the nation's public schools and fund their implementation (New American Schools website, 2006 www.naschools.org).

The ELC aims to design and implement a comprehensive urban school model that creates a learning environment where high-quality instruction is supported by strong connections to the community (UCLA Center for Healthier Children, Families and Communities, 2006).

2.5.3 Description of model
2.5.3.1 *Shared governance and structure*

The ELC has developed a very structured yet integrated system of governance in accordance with the ULC model. It operates with the guiding principle of keeping the energy and work of the school community focused on student achievement. In this governance structure, everyone with a vested interest in the success of students has an opportunity and a responsibility to be heard and to participate in the business of establishing school-wide policy that promotes student success (ELC, 2006).

The ELC operates under a shared governance structure with decisions relating to local policy and planning directions (in contrast with to decisions concerning the day-to-day administration or execution of policy and plans) made by the Site Management Council (comprised of eighteen stakeholders). Decision-making responsibilities are often delegated by the Site Management Council to families and committees (ELC, 2006). The many committees at the ELC are grouped as follows:

1. management committees, including one each for the budget, scheduling and facilities concerned with logistics, security and maintenance and staffing
2. instruction committees, including one each for curriculum, technology, stakeholder development and co-curriculum
3. enabling committees, including six sub-committees that are aligned with the six programmatic areas: classroom focused enabling , student and family assistance, home involvement in schooling, support for transitions, community outreach and volunteers and crisis and emergency assistance and prevention.

(ELC, 2006)

There are also four managers at the site, one each for finance, the cafeteria, pland and office.

 (ELC, 2006)

Teachers and out-of-classroom personnel form 'families', which are large groups spanning responsibilities and age groups, across the school. Staff are integrated through cross-campus, department and discipline organisational and management structures which invite collaboration on decision making. The aim is to have a shared philosophy across all programs at the ELC. Families can initiate their own actions and plans within the school and inform the processes in the other school committees and the Site Management Council (ELC, 2006).

2.5.3.2 *Innovative curriculum and instruction*

The aim of the ULC model is to make education for each student as meaningful and flexible as possible within a framework that complies with the state standards. Curriculum is developed thematically and across disciplines in accordance with the holistic emphasis of the model. Students help direct their learning by following their interests, often through the pursuit of local projects (Education Source Online, 2006).

2.5.3.3 *Learning supports*

The ULC design places an emphasis on the following program areas which are focused on tackling the barriers to learning:

1. *Classroom focused enabling*. These are programs which seek to enhance classroom-based efforts to address barriers to learning, such as accelerated reading programs, teacher-to-teacher support and conflict resolution programs.
2. *Crisis emergency assistance and prevention*. These are immediate responses to emergencies and follow-up care as well as programs to prevent crises. Included are such services as health care, both primary and acute, counseling and referral and financial assistance.
3. *Support for transitions*. These are programs to welcome and support new students and families, provide before and after school activities and give support for movements from one class to another. Examples of services include a 'peer buddy' program to welcome new students to school, a parent welcoming club and after school tutoring and clubs.

4. *Home involvement in schooling.* These are programs to provide those in the home with opportunities to learn and also to participate in the life of the school. Examples include adult education programs, both on site and through distance education; ELC staff contacting parents directly; and individual teachers and clusters of teachers working with parents on standards and classroom practices.
5. *Student-community outreach and volunteers.* These are programs designed to develop greater community involvement in schooling and support for efforts to enable learning. Examples include appointing a volunteer program coordinator, ELC staff working as outreach workers and a welcoming club for new parents.
6. *Student and family assistance.* This involves the use of direct services, referral and care management for students and families in need of special assistance. Examples include school-based mental health services, the establishment of an ELC health clinic, support groups, parenting classes and school site counselors.

(ELC, 2006)

The services offered at the ELC are varied and no service is isolated from the rest. There is a culture as well as an organisational structure which supports the philosophy of integrating services while promoting the aims and objectives of the Urban Learning Centre design (UCLA Center for Healthier Children, Families and Communities, 2006; ELC website, 2006). Key components of the Learning Support model at ELC include:

- recognition of learning support as an integral part of the school infrastructure, including space, staffing and budget allocations for its maintenance and growth
- adult education at a family centre which serves over 600 adults daily on campus and additional adults at community sites and through distance learning
- an on-campus child care program which makes the extensive adult education program possible. The child care centre is adjacent to the adult education facility, costs parents $2 per day and is run by parent volunteers. Children between the ages of 1 and 14 can attend the centre, and the numbers are approximately 25 in the morning, 55-60 in the afternoon and 10-15 at night.
- establishment of a partnership with a local medical centre to provide an on-site health clinic which provides a range of health services including vaccinations, general consultations and both screening and care for acute and chronic illness. The clinic is free of charge for students and siblings and parents pay according to means. The family centre and health clinic are coordinated so that they share patient history and referral information.
- a school psychologist available five days a week, as well as the opportunity for students and families to make appointments with a social worker, a special education psychologist, a marriage and family counselling intern and a social work intern
- transition support services which aim to ease the difficulty of starting school for parents and students. New students and parents are given welcome packs and an official welcome and orientation.
- mental health services provided by university partners
- an integrated and shared case management system, including a collaborative referral review process
- strong community outreach, including over 1000 hours per month in parent and community volunteers. Parents have a high level of engagement with the program and the number of volunteers is high. According to the ELC website, volunteers contribute in excess of 1000 hours per month to various programs. Their roles are varied and often include assisting in classrooms, assisting with school safety and maintenance tasks and monitoring the lunchroom and the schoolyard.
- high school academies providing career and college guidance for students, including mentor and internship programs
- development of early literacy and additional early childhood programs located on site
- after-school tutoring programs
- extension of opening times for the school campus.

The ELC campus contains the school for pre-k through to year 12 as well as the family centre, clinic and nurse's facilities, library, sporting fields and counselling services (ELC website, 2006).

2.5.3.4 *Evaluation*

Some outcomes from the ULC program at the ELC include:

- low drop-out rates
- 77 per cent of high school graduates attend college compared with the previous figure of 30 per cent
- 94 per cent high school graduation rate
- high attendance rate
- strong community support and participation
- increasing number of parent volunteers
- 26 adult education classes operating weekly (including over the weekend).

2.5.3.5 *Funding and sustainability*

Early childhood programs at the ELC are funded by state preschool funds and school district integration funds plus grants and partnerships with Saint Francis Medical Centre in Lynwood, the Los Angeles County Office of Education – Head Start Division, the UCLA Centre for Mental Health in Schools, the UCLA Center for Healthy Children, Families and Communities, and the College and Education Resource Centres Initiative at California State University Dominguez Hills. California State University at Los Angeles, UCLA and the University of Southern California provide interns in social work and marriage, family and child counselling. Support from city government and state representatives is also considered to be critical (UCLA Center for Healthier Children, Families and Communities, 2006).

2.6   Schools as Community Centres (SaCC)

2.6.1 Background

The Schools as Community Centres (SaCC) program is a New South Wales (NSW) government-funded interagency program which is co-managed by the NSW Departments of Community Services, Health, Housing, and Education and Training, with the Department of Education and Training acting as lead agency. The SaCC program was established to reduce the impact of disadvantage for children entering school by providing integrated services for families in severely disadvantaged communities. The focus of the program is support rather than intervention and its emphasis is prevention. The program represents a collaborative approach to the range of problems that parents face in the early years of their children's lives, particularly when they are isolated from their extended family and the community they live in and unaware of the services available to support families (Children's Services NSW website, 2006).

The origins of the SaCC program lie in the 1989 Carrick report, which recommended a focus on early childhood and supporting families and communities (Killiby, 2004). A pilot project was established in four public schools in 1995 and was funded by the NSW Departments of Education and Training, Health, and Community Services. An evaluation of the pilot project in 1997 revealed positive outcomes and the project expanded into three additional schools in 1999, with additional funding and management provided by the NSW Department of Housing. In 2001 the program expanded again, with 29 new centres being set up with funding from the Families First strategy[6]. In the last few years additional sites have been established and more are anticipated with the continued funding from Families First.

2.6.2 Aims and objectives

The SaCC program seeks to enhance educational and social outcomes for children and young people at risk by creating strong and effective working relationships between families, communities and their schools.

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[6] *Families First* is an interdepartmental strategy of the NSW government aimed at prevention and early intervention for children.   Its aim is to achieve improved health, developmental and social outcomes for children in NSW, targeting those families who are expecting a baby and those with children up to the age of eight (The NSW Office of Children and Young People, 2004).

The SaCC program aims to:

- influence the planning and integration of service delivery to better meet the needs of families with children from birth to eight years with a focus on the years prior to school
- support families with children from birth to eight years with a view to ensuring that children have a healthy and positive start to school
- strengthen communities through inter-agency collaboration and community participation in decision-making processes relating to the provision of services.

The SaCC program seeks to achieve improvements in the following areas:

For children
- safety
- health
- a positive start to school
- learning at both home and at school.

For parents
- development of positive parenting skills
- support in their role
- connection to community and school
- awareness of and access to appropriate services

For the school community
- community members and service providers working collaboratively to support families
- partnerships that support students, families and the community
- families and students engaged with schools
- school as a focus of community activity.

(Killiby, 2004)

2.6.3 Description of model
The approach taken by SaCC is one of community development. A full-time facilitator located at the local public school manages each site. The facilitator works closely with the local management committee and community advisory committee to identify and respond to local service needs and issues for families with children from birth to eight years with a focus on the years prior to school entry. The development of partnerships with families, local agencies and the community promotes community ownership of the program and local initiatives. A range of initiatives evolves at each site and may include parenting education, playgroups, transition-to-schools programs or health screenings but is primarily guided by local needs.

Essential features of the model to come from early evaluations are as follows (Killiby, 2004):

- The centre is located in a school.
- There is a facilitator at each site who reports to the State Steering Committee.
- A local management committee has representation (regional or local managers) from the participating NSW departments.
- Local projects focus on families with children from birth to eight years with a focus on the years before school.
- A community development approach is adopted to implement the program.

Each program has a different profile and projects, reflecting the identified needs of the local population. Tasks for local projects include:

- developing a directory of local services for families with children five years of age and under
- analysing barriers to accessibility of existing services
- developing community awareness of services
- providing families with details of local services
- facilitating information sharing and collaboration between local services
- promoting the school as a community centre
- encouraging families to participate in programs to support them in their parenting role
- establishing processes for consulting with the community about the changing needs of families with young people.

2.6.4 Case study: Punchbowl SaCC

Punchbowl SaCC, which works with families and communities in the Punchbowl area, was established in November 2002 and began operation in March 2003 with Families First Funding. Its headquarters are in the grounds of Punchbowl Primary School in Sydney's inner west but also includes St. Jerome's Primary School (Families First, 2003). Punchbowl Primary School has a preschool, an early intervention unit and classes from kindergarten to year 6. Ninety eight per cent of the students have a language other than English as their first language (Punchbowl Primary School website, 2006). To cater for the needs of the children and families, the schools provide English-as-a-second-language support, as well as community language support for Arabic, Samoan, Vietnamese and Chinese students (Families First, 2003). Both schools are large, with 622 students at Punchbowl Primary School and 544 at St. Jerome's, and the local facilitator operates between both.

Construction and refurbishment have been carried out since the establishment of the program to transform a classroom at Punchbowl Primary School into a family-friendly community room. (Families First, 2003)

The range of activities operating for children and families at Punchbowl SaCC include the following:

- playgroup
- parent support group
- parent art class
- adult English class for beginners
- parenting courses and workshops for specific groups and needs
- connecting families to local services
- transition-to-school program (held in term 4, children from preschool meet school teachers)
- health promotion projects.

Further activities planned include the following:

- parent exercise class
- Triple PPP (Positive Parenting Program) parenting course.

(Families First, 2003)

2.6.5 Management structure and leadership

The NSW Department of Education and Training (DET) is responsible for the state-wide implementation of the program and reports on outcomes and financial issues to the State Steering Committee. The State Steering Committee consists of senior representatives from the four departments and reports to the Directors-General on the progress of the program. The State Steering Committee oversees the management, implementation and monitoring of the program across the state (Fowler and Newman, 2003).

The State Coordinator is responsible for the active coordination of program facilitators, the implementation and monitoring of the program and provision of executive support to the State Steering Committee. The coordinator is also responsible for the professional development of the facilitators and promotion of the SaCC program in the community. The facilitator works closely with the local management committee and community advisory committee to identify and respond to local service needs and issues for families with children from birth to eight years with a focus on the years prior to school entry (Fowler and Newman, 2003).

The management committee is a local inter-agency committee comprising the facilitator and senior local managers or delegates from the four participating departments. It is responsible for managing each project in consultation with a local community advisory group. The community advisory committee is an advisory group comprised of representatives from local agencies and community members. The committee works closely with the facilitator on the development and implementation of specific projects (Fowler and Newman, 2003).

District superintendents provide support for the establishment and ongoing management of the SaCC projects within their district. They are critical players in the development of the project from planning to implementation (Fowler and Newman, 2003).

School principals are relied on by the program to incorporate the SaCC project into the workings of the whole school community (Fowler and Newman, 2003).

2.6.6 Evaluation and outcomes

The SaCC evaluation report[7], produced after two years of operation, stated that the project had exceeded expectations and had achieved substantial success in supporting and strengthening families (Killiby, 2004). The centres have reportedly enhanced existing services by making them more accessible to disadvantaged families. Furthermore, they have facilitated the development of over 60 innovative new services to support families. The local management committee and facilitator continue to evaluate local projects against program outcomes.

The Punchbowl SaCC program is evaluated by the local management committee, which supports the development of the centre's work plan. At the time of publishing this report access had not been granted to either the local management committee evaluation of the Punchbowl SaCC program or the recently produced summary of the latest round of evaluations.

According to the facilitator of the Punchbowl SaCC, people are supporting each other through transitions, which is evidence that the program is working. She emphasised that the social links promoted in the program were critical to smooth transitions (Interview with Punchbowl SaCC local facilitator, 2006).

2.6.7 Funding and sustainability

In 2003-2004, an SaCC project with a full-time local facilitator cost $89,813.00 per year plus GST (Fowler and Newman, 2003).

Funding for the SaCC program comes from a range of NSW Government Departments, including:

- Department of Education and Training (SaCC sites receive $10,000 per year from the Families First program)
- Department of Community Services
- Department of Housing
- NSW Health
- NSW Premier's Department.

The Department of Education and Training also makes an in-kind contribution to the program in the areas of:

- program management
- accommodation for the programs, project staff and activities
- administrative supervision
- access to facilities and equipment
- security and cleaning.

The Departments of Community Services and Housing and NSW Health also make an in-kind contribution to the management and implementation of the program through the membership of their officers on the State Steering Committee and local management committees. Some SaCC sites have buses provided by councils and other beneficial arrangements without direct funding being allocated (Interview with Punchbowl SaCC local facilitator, 2006).

3. Programs in Australian schools

There are a number of school-based initiatives operating in Australian primary schools. Programs in Meadowbank Primary School, Upfield Primary School and Meadow Heights Primary School, three schools in the Hume region of Victoria,are summarised below[8].

Meadowbank Primary School

Meadowbank Primary School operates as a community school which is actively encourages parents' participation in school activities and children's learning. The school's Early Learning Centre acts as a school and community resource offering a range of programs including a pre-primary program, toy library program, parent meeting and information centre, toddler playgroup, community safety house program and fun-smart after school program.

The pre-primary program operates out of the Early Learning Centre. Its broad goals are to:

- provide a developmental program to cater for the emotional, physical and cognitive needs of pre-primary-school-aged children in a safe early childhood setting
- encourage the participation of families not accessing mainstream preschool facilities

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[7] Copies of evaluation documents were not made available for the preparation of this paper by Schools as Community Centres.
[8] Appendix 4 contains the full case studies.

- encourage active parental involvement and participation in the educational and social activities of their children
- provide appropriate activities to facilitate the positive transition of children from home to school
- value and explore the cultural diversity of the community
- provide a resource centre for parents and children which aids the exchange ideas and information in a supportive community environment
- provide a welcoming environment for families sharing a common life transition that encourages the development of friendship networks for parents and children.

The pre-primary program operates as a playgroup and is open for children aged between four and six years and their parents, with priority given to those children who will be attending the school in the following year. The majority of families who use the program are low income and from a broad range of culturally and linguistically diverse communities.

Children gain exposure to new activities, environments and social interactions which strengthen their cognitive and other developmental skills. Parents learn about the value of children's play. Staff at the centre can identify children with possible additional needs and refer parents to services. Children have the opportunity to familiarise themselves with the school environment, staff and school processes.

Parents are provided with opportunities to interact with other parents, find resources and information, become more aware of and connected to available local services and discover (and possibly advance) their own professional development opportunities.

The pre-primary program assists with developing trust between parents and the school and children's adjustment to the school environment.

No formal evaluation has been conducted. Parents, especially parents from non-English speaking backgrounds, report that they feel more comfortable allowing their children to attend a centre that they have a good knowledge of and one where they believe their children will be safe and well cared for.

Upfield Primary School

Upfield Primary School, which serves a culturally diverse community, has established a parents' room and school playgroup for parents of children attending the school, with a focus on including preschool children. Many children attending do so with little or no preschool experience, leading to issues around separation anxiety and poor literacy, numeracy and language skills as well as a lack of knowledge of and access to the school system and broader family and children's service sector.

Other initiatives include:
- regular parent meetings with speakers
- literacy and numeracy sessions with parents
- intensive English classes for recent migrants attending school
- a mobile playgroup.

Perceived benefits for parents include:
- having the opportunity to socialise with other parents and children
- having a place to take preschool children to play and use resources they may not have at home
- opportunities to build the foundations of their child's literacy and social skills
- becoming informed about how they can support their children's learning
- further integration into school processes
- familiarisation with staff.

Children benefit from the opportunity to familiarise themselves with the school environment and use school resources in their play, which will aid their transition to school.

Meadow Heights Primary School

Meadow Heights Primary School, which serves a culturally and linguistically diverse and low socio-economic population, has developed an innovative language program to help strengthen the oral language skills of prep students. The evaluation of the pilot program included teacher ratings which revealed that many outcomes for children in the program had improved, including increases in play, interactions, confidence and turn taking. The program uses a structured, direct instruction approach to teaching language.

Along with starting a number of additional programs, the school has also renewed and strengthened links with the local preschool. The school also has a prep orientation program where parents are

given information about school expectations and school readiness and children enrolled for prep have the opportunity to visit before starting school.

Improved levels of language, reading and auditory processing skills have been reported for children involved in the program. The program has a high level of collaboration among staff at the school, which has led to sharing knowledge and skills. Teachers' comments about the program are also positive, with teachers reporting that they enjoy the opportunity to focus on oral language development in the classroom and that they have been surprised by students' increasing use of oral language. Teachers' perceptions are that participation in the program has led to improvements in student engagement in the learning process, including increased confidence in communication, play and interaction skills, academic performance, attitude towards learning, listening skills and attention and social communication skills.

The school reports that parents are very enthusiastic about the program as they can see that their children have made progress with English language.

4. Summary and analysis

Six community school models have been presented in the body of this document. Although there are clear differences in the models and programs presented, they share a number of key commonalities. Many of the differences stem from the original purpose of the programs and differences in the contexts in which they operate. For example, the Full Service Extended Schools model (FSES) is a program that has built on earlier initiatives, has grown with increased funding from Sure Start and now has national aims and targets. The Toronto First Duty (TFD) model is an initiative based in one city that aims to provide universal benefits for children. Schools of the 21st Century (21C) is a model that has been adopted by over 1300 schools in the United States, while the Coalition for Community Schools (CfCS) is a collection of stakeholders in early childhood who advocate the benefits of community schools. The Schools as Community Centres (SaCC) program in New South Wales is a school-based initiative which, with the help of interdepartmental funding, seeks to promote better experiences in the first years of school by targeting children in the first eight years of life, with a particular emphasis on the years before starting school.

The programs have different funding sources and plans for sustainability, with some (FSES, TFD and SaCC) being funded by various government departments. The ELC, 21C and CfCS, on the other hand, are funded through a combination of government contributions, fees and grants from the private sector and academic and educational foundations. In addition, examination of the models does not reveal consensus about strategies for evaluating the programs.

Examination of the models allows identification of several key common features:

- *offering programs that support parents.* This occurs in a number of ways, including guidance and support in parenting roles, engagement in the running of programs and involvement in adult education at learning centres designed to address barriers to learning.

- *engagement in the early years.* This involves recognition of the value of schools engaging children and parents in the years prior to school. The programs acknowledge the benefits to students of greater involvement by schools in the years before children commence school. They have actively pursued ways in which this relationship can be developed, such as by involving early years workers in school governance, locating early years services on site and sharing information about children by early childhood and school staff to aid their transition.

- *offering before and after school child care, vacation care (including programs in extended summer holidays) and weekend care.* The benefits of the provision of this kind of service both for children and also parents are recognised.

- *co-locating services on school sites.* The models, where possible and if appropriate, promote the co-location of services on school sites. Co-located services have laid the foundations for greater levels of integration. Where co-location is not possible, the development of close relationships leading to integration of services is pursued.

- *diverse educational programming.* The models typically adopt a curriculum with a holistic and responsive focus across disciplines. Learning is promoted in both school and community settings. A key focus is enabling children to learn through either attention to their basic physical, social and emotional needs or providing programs that help them learn, develop and move towards reaching their full potential. A focus on addressing the barriers to learning is a key plank in some of the models.

- *adopting a collective philosophy.* For programs to be embraced it is considered important that their philosophy and guiding principles be absorbed and understood by the school, community and services. An understanding of what the school can offer the community as a hub, as well as the educational, social and developmental opportunities the community offers to schools, needs to be promoted and recognised.

- *promoting the development of positive relationships among services, families, communities and schools.* All of the models act on strong awareness of the desirability of community involvement and building relationships. These relationships are supported through such initiatives as encouraging community use of facilities. Often the school is a focus or location for pulling together services and their ongoing development as well as a site for the implementation of new services. The aim is the development of an environment of mutual respect and collaboration between parents, families and school staff as well as members of the wider community.

- *delivering a program that is responsive to local and emerging needs.* All of the models emphasise the importance of being responsive to local issues and needs while working within a guiding model or structure. This leads to developing initiatives that are locally relevant.

- *implementing a system of governance which seeks integration and local representation.* This often involves the appointment of a program steering committee and local site management committees with representation from local organisations, parents and staff. The ELC for instance operates with the guiding principle of keeping the energy and work of the school community focused on student achievement. In this governance structure everyone with a vested interest in the success of students has an opportunity and a responsibility to be heard and to participate in the business of establishing school-wide policy that promotes student success.
- *developing program logic and processes with a view to evaluation and program rollout in other locations.* While this was not necessarily a key feature of all models it is a crucial consideration for new models. It is worth highlighting the value of the Indicators of Change tool from the TFD initiative. It breaks down the five key elements of the program into indicators and then rates their evolution on a scale from co-existence to integration. This tool allows for both evaluation of the existing programs and the design of future programs (see Apendix 3 for more information).

The way forward

There is not consensus currently about the superiority of one evidence-based model, but the common features of the models highlight promising practice. They can guide further research that will be beneficial in considering future school-based programs and initiatives aimed at improving outcomes for children, parents, and communities.

If they are to work in an Australian context such programs or initiatives need to adapt to local conditions and emerging needs. Analysis of the models indicates that the development of a local model that fits the Australian context would also need to consider:

- appropriate infrastructure
- appropriate flexible change management processes
- strong leadership and governance
- the role played by local knowledge as well as high-level expertise
- effective planning for sustainability, which would include both securing ongoing funding and engaging the community and parents
- the range of early intervention and prevention programs that would be needed
- professional development of staff.

In addition, local issues relating to the system of government, areas of departmental jurisdiction and regulation in the early years, as well as the will to adopt new, challenging and innovative practice also need to be explored. Through this process a community school model for Victoria may emerge.

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APPENDIX 1—SUMMARY OF MODELS

MODEL	SYNOPSIS
Full Service Extended Schools (FSES) *A national program in the United Kingdom that builds on existing programs and has grown from an initial focus on before and after school hours care. The program now includes funding for initiating and maintaining programs established in response to emerging local needs.*	*Aims* By 2010: • All schools in the United Kingdom, either independently or through collaboration with other schools and child care centres, will provide child care all year round between the hours of 8:00 am and 6:00 pm. Half of the United Kingdom's primary schools and one third of secondary schools aim to achieve this by 2008. • All schools in the United Kingdom will be able to offer access to a range of core services tailored to local needs either themselves or by developing local community partnerships with service providers. *School provides:* • parenting support • family learning opportunities • straightforward and timely referral to 'multi-agency' support • community use of facilities. *Key strategies:* • Core services are tailored to local needs, and judgments are often made about whether the whole community or specific vulnerable groups should be targeted. • Relationships between schools, services and agencies are fostered and sharing information and knowledge is promoted. • A coordinator is appointed to manage and set up an infrastructure around new initiatives. • New management structures are developed that involve either schools, services and agencies collaborating or assigning management authority over to lead service or agency. *Results:* • Activities are unanimously reported as complementary to teaching and learning. • Anecdotal evidence indicates that student motivation and attendance have increased. • Outcomes are difficult to assess in part because the program follows and runs parallel with other programs, making isolating cause a challenge. No quantifiable evidence is available currently.
Toronto First Duty (TFD) *A Canadian city-based universal care program that seeks to assist children to reach their potential by engaging and supporting parents and the community*	*Aims:* To deliver a universal early learning and care program for every child that simultaneously: • meets the developmental needs of children to ensure they reach their full potential • supports parents to work or study • supports parents in their parenting role. Toronto First Duty brings together the three streams of kindergarten, child care and parenting supports into a single program designed to meet the learning needs of children at the same time as it meets the care needs of parents.

	School provides: • an integrated early years learning environment • an early childhood staff team • an integrated governance model • seamless access • parent Involvement. *Key strategies:* • A steering committee is appointed which coordinates sub-committees and site coordinators. On-site management committees comprised of representatives of local organisations, parents and staff are crucial. • Locally tailored programs are implemented to promote social engagement and parent involvement activities such as workshops. • Continuity of access to care is provided for families through the provision of summer program activities. • Parenting centres for adult education are established. • An Indicators of Change evaluation tool has been developed which documents the steps needed to achieve the program aims and also evaluates the progress of existing programs. *Results:* • Student and parent participation have increased. • There is increased flexibility and choice for families and parents report that the integrated system is working to provide seamless and integrated services for both them and their children. • Community awareness of what the school can provide has increased as well as children's awareness that their school is a place that links to their parents and the community. • The evaluation shows the complexity of bringing together services with different management systems, funding sources and regulations and the challenges of helping professionals from different disciplines to work collaboratively.
Schools of the 21st Century (21C) *An American community school model that has been implemented in over 1300 schools and incorporates child care and family support services in schools.* *The model conceptualises schools as year-round, multi-service centres providing high quality and accessible services to children and families.*	*Aims:* To support the optimal growth and development of children beginning at birth. *School provides:* • guidance and support for parents • early care and education • before school, after school and vacation care programs for school-age children • health education and services • networks and training for child care providers • information and referral services. *Key strategies:* • Strong parental supports and involvement are promoted. • Universal access to child care is provided. • Non-compulsory programs are provided. • The focus is on the overall development of the child. • High quality programming is developed. • Access to professional training and advancement opportunities for child care providers are provided. • 21C strives to achieve its vision through the application of its model which is designed to be flexible enough to meet the needs of different communities. It enables schools not only to establish new services but also to pull together existing services and work to strengthen them.

	Results: • Parents using 21C child care spend less money on child care, miss less work because of child care-related problems and record significantly lower scores on a parent stress index. • Smoother transitions for children are promoted. • Identification of children with special needs occurs earlier.
Coalition for Community Schools (CfCS) *An American alliance of stakeholders in K – 16 education that advocates for community schools as the vehicle for strengthening schools, families and communities so that together they can improve student learning*	*Aims:* To mobilise the assets of schools, families and communities to create a united movement for community schools. Goals are to: • share information about successful community school policies, programs and practices • build broader public understanding and support for community schools • inform public and private-sector policies in order to strengthen community schools • develop sustainable sources of funding for community schools. *School provides:* • a core instructional program and curriculum • an environment that promotes student motivation to learn in school and community settings • recognition of the basic physical, mental and emotional health needs of young people and their families and action to address them • an environment which promotes mutual respect and effective collaboration among parents, families and school staff • a focus on community engagement which together with school efforts promotes a school climate that is safe, supportive and respectful and that connects students to a broader learning community. *Key strategies:* • A community schools coordinator is employed. • A diversified funding stream is established. • Stable leadership is supported. • Every effort is made to ensure that the guiding principles of the community schools ethos is absorbed, understood and practised by the school as well as affiliated agencies, services and the community. *Results:* • Student learning improves. • There is increased family engagement with students and schools. • The overall running of the school is positively influenced through the promotion of collaboration between staff and parents. • The local community is enriched through the provision of a school as a community hub with on-site supports for students, their families and their neighbours.
Elizabeth Learning Center (ELC) *A Los Angeles (US)-based program developed at a single school site for students*	*Aims:* To create an educational centre that focuses not simply on learning but on enabling children to learn by addressing children's educational, social, mental health and health needs in a comprehensive and integrated manner in collaboration with public, private and civic partners To design and implement a comprehensive urban school model that creates a learning environment where instruction of high quality is supported by strong

	connections to the community.
from kindergarten to year 12. The program's philosophy of learning manifests itself in shared governance, holistic curriculum and a school based learning support centre which seeks to engage parents and break down the barriers to learning.	**School provides:** • shared governance and structure • innovative curriculum and instruction • learning supports. **Key strategies:** • Highly structured and integrated systems of management across all areas of the centre are implemented and involve parents, teachers and representatives from all areas in decision making. • The curriculum is flexible, responsive and developed thematically and across disciplines in accordance with the holistic principles of the model. • An on-site 'urban learning centre' is established which provides a wide range of adult education, community and health services. • Barriers to learning are tackled by promoting parental and community involvement and recognising 'learning supports' as an integral part of the school infrastructure. **Results:** • Drop-out rates are low. • 77 per cent of high-school graduates attend college. • 94 per cent of students graduate from high school. • Attendance rates are high. • There is strong community support and participation. • 26 adult education classes operate weekly (including over the weekend).
Schools as Community Centres (SaCC) *A New South Wales (Australia) based program focusing on the needs of children 0-8 and their families. The program focuses on the development of relationships between families, communities and schools to promote healthy and positive starts to schooling.*	**Aims:** • To enhance educational and social outcomes for children and young people at risk by creating strong and effective working relationships between families, communities and their schools. • To influence the planning and integration of service delivery to better meet the needs of families with children from birth to eight years with a focus on the years prior to school • To support families with children from birth to eight years with a view to ensuring that children have a healthy and positive start to school • To strengthen communities through inter-agency collaboration and community participation in decision-making processes relating to the provision of services. **School provides:** • a service which meets the needs of families with children from birth to eight years more effectively • support to families with children from birth to eight years with a view to promoting smooth school transitions • inter-agency collaboration and community participation in decision-making processes relating to the provision of services. **Key strategies:** • Programs are located in schools. • A State Steering Committee has been established for the coordination of the project. • A facilitator, who reports to the State Steering Committee, is based at each site. • The local management committee has representation (regional or local managers) from the participating state government departments. • Local projects focus on families with children from birth to eight years with a

	specific focus on the years before school.
	• A community development approach is taken in implementing the program.
	Results:
	• The project has exceeded expectations.
	• Substantial success has been achieved in supporting and strengthening families.
	• Centres have enhanced existing services by making them more accessible to disadvantaged families.
	• Centres have facilitated the development of over sixty innovative new services to support families.

APPENDIX 2 – CONTACT DETAILS FOR COMMUNITY SCHOOL MODELS

Full Service Extended Schools

DfES public enquiries TEL +44 8700 002 288

Info@dfe.gsi.gov.uk

Toronto First Duty

Pam Musson (Project Manager) firstduty@csd.toronto.ca

Julie Mathien (Research & Development) jmathien@toronto.ca

Kerry McCuaig (Communications Manager) kmccuaig@sympatico.ca

Jane Bertrand (Development Coordinator) jbertrand@acscd.ca

Bruce-WoodGreen Early Learning Centre

site coordinator: Penny Morris

phone: +1 416 393-0672 ext 20008

e-mail: penny.morris@tel.tdsb.on.ca

Schools of the 21st Century

Carole Weisberg, Program Associate

School of the 21st Century

Yale University

310 Prospect Street

New Haven, CT 06511 – 2187

Phone: +1 203 4432 9945

Email: carole.weisberg@yale.edu

Coalition for Community Schools

Suite 310 4455 Connecticut Avenue, NW

Washington, DC 20008

Tel. 202.822.8405 X156

Fax 202.872.4050

Email ccs@iel.org

http://www.communityschools.org/whatis2.html

Elizabeth Learning Center

4811 Elizabeth Street

Cudahy, CA 90201

United States of America

Fax +1 323 560 8412

Tel +1 323 562 0175

Email webmaster@eslc.k12.ca.us

Schools as Community Centres

Julie Killiby

State Coordinator, Schools as Community Centres Program

Primary Education Directorate

Department of Education and Training

Ashfield State Office

GPO Box 33 Sydney 2001

Mobile 0421 617 652

Fax 9246 5563

sacc@det.nsw.edu.au

APPENDIX 3 – TORONTO FIRST DUTY INDICATORS OF CHANGE

Summary of key elements and indicators

A unique set of program indicators defines specific activities and practice for each of the key elements. Indicators track the progress that First Duty sites are making towards implementing the five core elements. There are a total of nineteen program indicators.

1.0 Local governance
A local governance structure is responsible for program policies, resource allocation, service planning and monitoring, and human resource decisions.

Indicator 1.1	**Program mandate, policy, and practices**
Indicator 1.2	**Service planning and monitoring**
Indicator 1.3	**Allocation of financial resources**
Indicator 1.4	**Human resources**

2.0 Seamless access
Seamless access is available to an expanded and comprehensive early learning and care program, providing a continuum of supports and services to all families and young children prenatally to six years.

Indicator 2.1	**Capacity**
Indicator 2.2	**Child care provision and affordability**
Indicator 2.3	**Intake, enrolment, and attendance**

3.0 Learning environment
High quality learning environments combine learning expectations, activities, and routines from existing kindergarten, early childhood education/child care, and parenting/family support programs.

Indicator 3.1	**Curriculum framework and pedagogical approach**
Indicator 3.2	**Daily routines and schedules**
Indicator 3.3	**Use of space**
Indicator 3.4	**Children's development and progress**
Indicator 3.5	**Program quality**

4.0 Early childhood staff team
Develop an early childhood staff team that works together to deliver and achieve program goals.

Indicator 4.1	**Program planning and implementation**
Indicator 4.2	**Behaviour guidance/child management**
Indicator 4.3	**Roles and responsibilities**
Indicator 4.4	**Staff development**

5.0 Parent participation
Parent participation in children's early learning and development should be increased through direct involvement in programs, planning and decision-making.

Indicator 5.1	**Parent input and participation in programs**
Indicator 5.2	**Parenting capacity**
Indicator 5.3	**Relationships with families**

Benchmarks

For each of the program indicators, benchmarks track progress along a continuum of co-existence to coordination, collaboration, and integration. The benchmarks are organised on a five-point scale from 1 (co-existence) to 5 (integration).

Level 1: Coexistence
Benchmark level 1 describes practices in early childhood and family programs that are located in the same building or neighbourhood, but operate as separate and distinct services.

- programs located in same building or neighbourhood
- families make separate arrangements to participate.

Examples:
- child care, kindergarten, and family centre located in school building
- public health offers parenting programs in local school or child care facility.

Level 2: Coordination
Benchmark level 2 describes individual programs that share information with each other, and perhaps coordinate specific activities.

- share program plans and behaviour guidance strategies
- work together to reduce number of transitions he child makes in a day
- provide joint events for families.

Examples:
- joint family night and field trips
- early identification by public health takes place at schools' junior kindergarten registration.

Level 3: Collaboration A
Benchmark level 3 indicates some specific joint activities that merge human resources, space, and/or materials to offer new program opportunities.

- bring children and parents/caregivers together for joint activity
- children choose from activities across programs
- new program activity based on existing resources (for example, staff, space, or equipment) and expertise)

Examples:
- regular joint story time or music group
- community kitchen
- preschool curriculum planned by kindergarten teachers and early childhood development staff.

Level 4: Collaboration B
Benchmark level 4 describes an expansion of joint activities and a clear influence on the operation of the original partner programs (kindergarten, child care and family support).

- common activities expanded
- partner organizations influenced by collaborative activities
- joint roles and responsibilities emerge.

Examples:
- child care centre and kindergarten class merge in common space with a joint staff team (early childhood and kindergarten teacher)
- family resource program offers ongoing early childhood education program with option of regular or occasional non-parental care

Level 5: Integration
Benchmark level 5 describes full integration of existing and expanded programs into an integrated early learning and care program delivery system within a defined neighbourhood or community.

- single identity
- one curriculum and pedagogical approach

- common program policies and practices
- core staff team
- seamless participation
- full-time, half-day, regular part-time, and occasional
- child- and family-focused
- all children and families can participate
- single funding envelope.

Example:
- Toronto First Duty

APPENDIX 4 - CASE STUDIES: INDIVIDUAL SCHOOLS

1.   INTRODUCTION

This brief report outlines three examples of school-based programs in Victoria designed to assist children and families with the transition to school and enhance their learning following school commencement. Each school used different strategies to engage parents and children and increase collaboration both within the school and with early childhood and health professionals in the local area.

2.   BACKGROUND

These case studies were part of the Early Years Project, a major initiative designed to develop a framework and accompanying resources to be used by communities to improve outcomes for children (under eight years old) and their families. This project was conducted by the Centre for Community Child Health, Royal Children's Hospital, in partnership with Good Beginnings Australia. Funding for the project, which ran from 2001 to 2005, was provided by The R.E. Ross Trust.

The main messages that underpin the study are that:
* The early years are critically important.
* There is a need to develop more comprehensive coordinated early childhood service delivery systems at a local community level.
* The focus of service delivery should be prevention, early detection and early intervention.
* Services should embrace family-centred practice.

3.   TRANSITION TO SCHOOL

The Victorian Department of Human Services provides for a one-year kindergarten experience for every child in the year before school entry. Kindergarten services operate in a range of settings including stand alone-kindergartens, community based and private child care centres, community halls and state and independent schools.
However, a large number of children in disadvantaged areas of Victoria are not having a kindergarten experience. Such children often come to school ill prepared, with limited communication and social skills and other problems.

Current research in Australia and overseas has found that children who attend preschool have a better chance of succeeding at school and in later life[9]. Conversely, children with no preschool experience have been found to experience greater difficulty making the transition to school, including taking longer to settle into the routines of a classroom. In addition, a recent inquiry into national preschool education published by the Australian Education Union (AEU Inquiry) found that in Victoria children who do not attend a kindergarten program are also less likely to have been screened for particular hearing, sight and health issues. Preschool experiences appear to be a stronger influence in the lives of low income children in comparison with more advantaged children (Boocock, 1995).

4.   IMPETUS FOR THE CURRENT STUDY

Research commissioned by the Broadmeadows Best Start Partnership (2004) found that fewer than 50 per cent of eligible children of preschool age living in the Hume Region of Victoria were having a Kindergarten experience. Preschool programs with strong links with local schools had significantly higher rates of attendance. There was also a desire to find ways to make schools more supportive of parents and more family friendly.

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[9] Throughout this document the terms child care, preschool and early childhood services are used interchangeably. These formal arrangements are all environments in which young children grow and develop. 'Kindergarten' refers to a one year early childhood experience that occurs in Victoria the year before school entry.

The Centre for Community Child Health was asked to consult representatives from three primary schools in the area, (Meadowbank Primary School, Upfield Primary School and Meadow Heights Primary School) to learn more about their efforts. Interviews took place in August and September 2004. Information was gathered about the development and operation of the programs or strategies operating at each of the schools, target groups, estimates of program use, perceived benefits for parents, children and the school community (where known) and desired future improvements or changes.

5.   CASE STUDIES

What follows is a summary of the information gathered from each school.

5.1   Meadowbank Primary School

Meadowbank Primary School operates an Early Learning Centre which acts as a school and community resource, offering a range of programs including a pre-primary program, toy library program, parent meeting and information centre, toddler playgroup, community safety house program and fun-smart after school program.

The school was established in 1997 as the result of a merger between two schools. One of the schools that merged had operated a school-based preschool playgroup for almost 20 years because of social isolation of families and the large number of children in the area who were entering school without having attended a preschool program. The range of programs offered in the past 20 years includes a parents-as- tutors class to encourage parents to assist with reading and school-related activities with their children at home, afternoon-drop-in centres for parents to become familiar with the school and to see how teachers work with children, afternoon clubs where parents teach other parents skills that they can then teach their children (for example, sewing, crafts, and painting).

Social isolation is still an issue. Many families live in high-rise accommodation. The proportion of migrant families has increased to more than 50 per cent and there area a large number of low-income families.

Today a pre-primary program operates out of the Early Learning Centre (ELC), the facilities for which were allocated in 1998. The ELC also uses other school facilities, equipment and rooms. The broad goals or objectives of the pre-primary program are to:
- provide a developmental program to cater for the emotional, physical and cognitive needs of pre-primary school aged children in a safe early childhood setting
- encourage the participation of families not accessing mainstream preschool facilities
- encourage active parental involvement and participation in the educational and social activities of their children
- provide appropriate activities to facilitate the positive transition of children from home to school
- value and explore the cultural diversity of the community
- provide a resource centre for parents and children which aids the exchange ideas and information in a supportive community environment
- provide a welcoming environment for families sharing a common life transition that encourages the development of friendship networks for parents and children.

The Meadowbank Primary School Community Liaison Officer and the Multicultural Education Aide coordinate the program with assistance from integration aides, community volunteers and parents. The two staff are paid through the Department of Education's Student Learning Needs funding.

The ELC offers three morning sessions per week, two of which are activity-based sessions, while the third is strongly focused on supporting children's transition to school. It includes visiting classrooms and other school facilities, meeting school staff, and helping children become familiar with the school layout and procedures.

The ELC caters for 21 children, although attendance varies because of the transience of the population. Children aged between four and six years and their parents are eligible to participate, with priority given to children who will be attending the school in the following year. Parents are welcome to

bring along younger children, who can join in the activities. This allows the whole family to be involved and also gives children contact with children of different ages.

The majority of families who use the program have low incomes. The program attracts families from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds, including Samoan, Koori, Turkish, Arabic, Somali, Malaysian and East Timorese. The diversity requires careful consideration of the kinds of experiences offered for children. For example, in some cultures water is a very valuable commodity, and playing with it is viewed as extremely inappropriate.

The program is affiliated with Playgroup Victoria. Parents pay only the annual membership fee. In return, they are required to attend at least one session per week. Parents can choose the roles they want to play. As was true in the first playgroups, one of the aims is to provide ideas for experiences that parents can duplicate at home with their children.

Benefits to children include exposure to new activities, environments and social interactions, which strengthens their cognitive and other skills. Staff can help parents appreciate the value of children's play. Children with possible developmental delays can be identified and parents referred to appropriate services. Children familiarise themselves with the school environment, which makes the transition to school easier. Parents have the opportunity to learn about resources and get information, which allows them to be more aware and more strongly connected with other local services. Some parents discover or advance their own professional development opportunities.

The development of social networks between parents allows them to share experiences and concerns. As the Coordinator said:

> For some parents, even to come into the school would be too scary for them. But to see them at the end of the year and they are coming on the bus for an excursion with us and sitting and sharing a picnic lunch. They would have made huge leaps and bounds in that year: so that the next child goes to school as they [the families] are feeling more comfortable about it [school].

The ELC facilitator believes that parent-to -parent help and support is often more easily accepted by parents and better for them than professional advice.

The parents can have a social cup of tea in the school staff room between 9.00 and 9.30 each day. This gives the parents a chance have a chat, become familiar with staff and school facilities and ask questions. In return, parents can share what is going on in the local community.

Another strength of the program is that many of the volunteers have been involved previously with their own children or have been students themselves. The program promotes the development of trust between parents and the school in addition to assisting children to adjust to the school environment.

A large contributor to the success of the program is that the school operates as a 'community school' which is accepting of parents and actively encourages then to participate in school activities and children's learning.

The ELC has established links with a range of local community organisations in the area including the Children's Services section of the Council, which includes the Maternal and Child Heath Nurse Service, the Royal Victorian Institute for the Blind, the Department of Human Services, Early Childhood Services, Dianella Family Services and Orana Family Service. There are also links with a variety of local community organisations such as the Global Learning Centre. The majority of families accessing the ELC are also linked with other health, family and social support agencies.

5.2   Upfield Primary School

Upfield Primary School serves a culturally diverse community. Approximately 50 per cent of the students are from Turkish backgrounds and 30 per cent from Middle Eastern backgrounds, including families from Iran, Iraq, Syria and Lebanon. There are also an increasing number of Somali families moving into the area. In spite of the needs of families, the area lacks a range of services to support children and families.

Overall, children commencing at the school do so with little or no preschool experience. This means that the children face problems related to separation anxiety and poor literacy, numeracy and language skills as their families deal with lack of knowledge of and access to the school system and the broader family and children's service sector.

Language barriers are often present for children and for parents. Parents may not know how to access preschool programs or even be aware of their importance, and some parents may choose not to send their child to a program because it is not viewed as culturally appropriate. Furthermore, there are often a limited number of kindergarten places in the area, which recent migrants may miss out on because they do not put their child on the waiting list enough in advance.

The extent of schooling experience among parents varies, and this affects their views about their child's schooling. Differing school entry age in countries of origin may cause misunderstandings. Children from families that have recently migrated to Australia might never have attended school even though they are in the age range to attend. Also, it is quite common for children to experience interrupted schooling because of the family's travels. Where a child has attended school in their birth country, skills may need to be re-learned in the Australian setting.

The school currently offers a playgroup and a parents' room. It was perceived that families in the area needed a place to congregate and socialise that was suitable for children as well. The school had become aware that there were a lot of mothers congregating in and around the school premises in the afternoon waiting for their children to finish school. Younger siblings who came with these mothers were using school play equipment as there were no playgrounds or park facilities nearby.

The parents' room provides a place for parents to meet, and toys for younger children are provided. Parents are encouraged to use tea and coffee facilities at the school staff room (at designated times) to encourage interactions between parents and staff. The idea is that this space is a community room which parents feel comfortable using at various times of the day. The number of parents using the room varies from day to day, but several parents have formed an English language class which is run by one of the Arabic parents a few times each week.

Two parents of students at the school undertook playgroup training through the Victorian Cooperative on Children's Services for Ethnic Groups (VICSEG). One has been taken up a paid playgroup coordinator position.

The playgroup currently operates every Friday. It is run on a roster system organised by participants, to ensure that some mothers attend the playgroup with their children while others have the opportunity to take a break or meet with speakers or school staff members. Affiliation with Playgroup Victoria was required to cover the insurance costs associated with operating the playgroup. This affiliation requires parents to pay a cost of $15-20 per semester, which may prohibit some parents from attending. The school is investigating ways of contributing to this cost for some families.

Story reading is a part of every playgroup, to model for parents ways of promoting early literacy development in young children. Other initiatives which the school has been involved with include:
- parenting sessions with invited speakers
- literacy and numeracy sessions to help parents understand how to support their child
- language Outposts for new arrivals, a Commonwealth Government funded scheme that provides intensive English classes for recent migrants attending school.

The perceived benefits of the playgroup and parents room are firstly that parents have the opportunity to socialise with other parents and children and have a place to take their children to play and use resources they may not have at home. This provides the opportunity to build the foundations of literacy and social skills and to inform parents of how they can support their children's learning.

The benefit of having these activities located at the school is that by being there parents become familiar with the school. Preschool-aged children benefit from the opportunity to familiarise themselves with the school environment and use school resources in their play, which will aid their transition to school.

The principal would like to see the development of a community centre near the school offering a range of services including maternal and child health, a kindergarten program, a structured playgroup and also access to other services including immunisation and associated health services (for example speech pathologists and dental care). He believes that many parents have limited knowledge of children's services, how to access them and what these services can offer their family. He would like to see a DVD or video information pack developed in community languages, which could be promoted and shown in shopping centres, doctors' surgeries and schools and which would highlight the importance of children's learning and development and help parents understand what services to access, when to access them and why.

Best Start Broadmeadows Partnership held a Parents as First Teachers Literacy Expo in September 2004 at the Broadmeadows Town Shopping Centre. The principal of Upfield Primary provided the vision for and was a key coordinator of this event. The purpose of the Expo was to bring together a range of early childhood professionals, including maternal and child health nurses, speech pathologists, preschool teachers, and representatives from local primary schools to introduce local parents to a wide range of literacy-based activities for young children. The Expo provided parents with information on the activities that they could do at home with children to stimulate interest in reading and literacy. Other services provided parents with an introduction to the services offered by their organisation.

According to the principal, the progress with various initiatives and developing stronger links with local services and stakeholders has largely been a result of the involvement this school has had with the Best Start program operating in Broadmeadows. He believes that as a result the school has developed strong links with organisations like the Victorian Co-operative on Children's Services for Ethnic Groups (VICSEG) and established networks with the Uniting Church, the CEO of Dianella Health, Hume Council and the Department of Human Services. He sees continued opportunities for connections to grow and for Best Start to play a more critical role in school activities to further develop networks and discuss and move towards shared outcomes for the area.

5.3   Meadow Heights Primary School

Meadow Heights Primary School has developed an innovative language program to help strengthen the oral language skills of prep students. The school, established in 1992, has an enrolment of 725 students. It serves a low socioeconomic population with approximately 86 per cent of families from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds. Turkish, Assyrian and Arabic families represent the three main groups, with Vietnamese, Hmong and Samoan groups also living in the area. There is a commonly held view among several cultural groups that the school will teach their child with little involvement of the parents.

The school has assistants from the main cultural backgrounds who assist in classrooms and help children adjust to the school environment. Many of them are involved in the local community and often have ongoing contact with the parents. Children enrolled at Meadow Heights Primary School often have limited experience with English prior to entering school. Approximately 20 to 30 per cent of students have not attended kindergarten prior to formal schooling. Many of the children who do attend kindergarten may be absent for long periods as some families often return to their home country to visit. Also children who do attend kindergarten often have language barriers that limit their levels of interaction and participation in activities.

A number of children entering school have developmental delays across a range of areas (for example fine motor, self- help, cognition, play skills, social skills and language). There is concern at the school that some problems (for example, language disorders in the first language and intellectual disabilities) are not picked up until the child comes to school because of lack of awareness and different attitudes towards disabilities in some cultural groups. The majority of children entering the prep year had below average receptive language scores on a standardised test. In 2003, 60 per cent of prep students were identified as requiring remedial help with reading in Grade 1. Insufficient resources meant that many of these children ended up on a waiting list. The school was keen to offer an innovative program that would increase the level of English comprehension and language skills so that more students could participate in standard classroom-based curriculum.

Staff at the school have developed ways to identify children with additional needs through interviews. They have developed a specific language program called Prep Language Development Program (PLDP) to strengthen children's language skills in their first year of school. The PLDP, which uses a structured, direct instruction approach to teaching language, was piloted at the school in 2003 with support from the Leading Teacher Development Program to develop the program. Teachers reported that children who participated in the program had improved in play, peer interaction, confidence and turn taking.

The PLDP program is an 'in school' program which is part of the prep year curriculum, making it easy to reach the target audience. In 2004 the PLDP was offered to all prep students for the first two terms with the idea that all students would benefit from focused language instruction and that students with better language ability could model and support less competent students. It was also felt that the program could be better coordinated if all students were involved. In Term 3 only those identified by the school with receptive language skills below the average range stayed in the program, which they attended four days a week. Students were taught in groups of ten in the PLDP program, with each group receiving two lessons and two follow-up lessons. In 2005, due to staffing restrictions, students receive six PLDP sessions per fortnight. In the PLDP room students are taught by the PLDP teacher and multi-cultural aide. The PLDP room features a number of play-based centres and developmentally appropriate activities. Lessons are structured into three 10-15 minute blocks.

At the beginning of the 2004 school year, only 33 per cent of prep students had receptive language skills within the average range; however, by the end of the year, this figure had increased to 74 per cent. Further analysis revealed that five students qualified for funding support through the Program for Students with Disabilities (PSD) through the Department of Education and Training, with three identified as having an intellectual disability and two with severe language disorders. A further five further students had significant academic delays. Of the remaining 16 students, two students were assessed to have ESL as their primary cause of their language-learning difficulties, while the other 14 students were identified with significant language difficulties in their first language.

In 2004, 68 per cent of prep students were achieving their reading targets, representing an increase of ten percent in comparison to the 2003 result. This result was attributed in part to improvements in students' oral language skills acquired through their involvement in the PLDP.

Although increasing levels of auditory processing was not a set objective of the PLDP, a significant improvement in auditory processing occurred for the 2004 prep cohort in comparison with the 2003 cohort.

The program has benefited teachers by requiring a high level of collaboration between class teachers, multi-cultural aides, the ESL teacher and the speech pathologist, which has led to the sharing of knowledge and skills. In particular, prep teachers have learned new skills to teach oral language in the classroom. The program has created a better understanding between staff at the school of the links between oral language and early literacy and links between the child's first language and English.

Teacher perception as measured by surveys is that the PLDP program has contributed to improvements in student engagement in the learning process including increased communication confidence, play and interaction skills, academic performance, attitude towards learning, listening skills and attention, and social communication skills.

The school has had some feedback from parents who are very enthusiastic about PLDP as they can see that their children have made progress with the English language. The school sends home lists of the concepts and language targets that they are working on (printed in English and Mother Tongue Languages) to provide opportunities for parents to share the learning experience with their child. Students are also given a take-home sheet each session with the key concepts pictured.
Links with a nearby kindergarten have been renewed due to the involvement at the school with the Best Start program. Prep teachers have been over to the kindergarten to observe a morning of activities and kindergarten staff have visited the school. In addition, the kindergarten children also visited the school as part of the kinder-to-school transition program, spending part of a morning in a prep room. The kinder-to-school transition program also involved Grade 4 students from Meadow

Heights Primary School visiting the kindergarten and making contact with children who would become their buddies on entering prep in 2005.

Prep teachers at this school hold half-hour interviews with parents and children before they start school. During these interviews teachers get information from parents and also ask children to perform simple writing and drawing tasks. This assessment and information allows teachers to have an idea about each child's needs before the children start. The school also has a prep orientation program which involves discussions of what is expected at school and school readiness. In addition children enrolled for prep have the opportunity to attend prep three mornings.

REFERENCE

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