It’s not about programs: driving school improvement through a systemic & strategic approach to wellbeing & school-community partnerships

Look Out 2011 Partnerships for Learning Conference

Helen Thomas

on behalf of the CEOM Student Wellbeing Unit
“Most people locate wellbeing in a sense of belonging, of connectedness, of being a valued part of a whole larger than themselves, whether that is a family, a workplace, a friendship group, a football club or some wider community.”

(Don Edgar, 2001, The Patchwork Nation)
Catholic Education Office Melbourne

• Catholic Education in the Archdiocese of Melbourne represents the fourth largest education system in Australia.

• 2011
  - 256 primary schools
  - 66 secondary schools
  - 6 special schools
providing Catholic education to 144,581 students in Victoria.
A Multi-faceted Approach to Wellbeing and Learning Outcomes

Student-centred Learning

Leading Wellbeing to Enhance Learning

Safe and Effective Learning Environments

Creating Safe and Effective Learning Environments

Promoting School Community Partnerships for Learning

Evidence-based Research

Capacity-building

Data-driven Approach

Strategic Themes of Student Wellbeing

2011 – 2015
Schools As Core Social Centres (SACSC)

Project Partners

- Catholic Education Office
- VicHealth
- Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD)

Awards

- 2009 VicHealth ‘Systems for Health’
- 2005 National Award for Quality Schooling
OECD

• The concept of “Schools As Core Social Centres (SACSC)” comes from the OECD document Schooling For Tomorrow – What Schools for the Future? (2001).

• *Schools As Core Social Centres* is one of the two “Re-schooling” scenarios proposed.

• In this scenario schools are seen as high status community institutions providing a “**bulwark against social fragmentation and a crisis of values**”.
“The purpose of a school is to help a family educate a child.”

(Don Edgar)

“It is now widely acknowledged that involving parents in their children's education, especially during the early years of schooling, can significantly improve their learning (Sanders, 1997; Henderson, 1987; Villa-Boas, 1982). As Bastiani (1989); puts it, parents are their children's first educators.”

(Andy Hargreaves, 1999, Professionals and Parents)
SACSC Project Objectives

• To promote an understanding of the links between wellbeing and improved learning outcomes.

• To support the development of a whole-school approach to student wellbeing.

• To increase the capacity of schools and communities through the development of collaborative partnerships.
SACSC History

• In 2002 CEOM developed SACSC proposal
• VicHealth funding received
• SACSC Project Worker appointed
• SACSC Pilot Cluster initiated in 2002
• New SACSC clusters have been supported and developed over the 6 years
• 2011 - 8 SACSC clusters across Melbourne
• SACSC Framework: 4 Stages

Initiation ➔ Exploration ➔ Commitment ➔ Sustaining
“The theory of ‘overlapping spheres of influence’ (Epstein, 2001) improves our depiction of how home, school, and community affect children’s education and development.”

(National Network of Partnership Schools. 2006, Moving Forward)

“The evidence is consistent, positive, and convincing: families have a major influence on their children’s achievement in school and through life.”

“The first need is to shift the boundaries between school and family, school and community... schools have to be part of the community”

(Don Edgar, July 30 2006, Sunday Age)
What are the characteristics of community?
SACSC: Bayside Cluster
School-Community Partnerships: Core Principles

Schools are key sites in the community & play a critical role in the promotion of health and wellbeing.

Beyond the school, businesses, community organisations and agencies provide unique expertise and resources to support student outcomes.

Families are partners in their child’s education & are integral in supporting learning.

Characteristics of the SACSC approach

**Process Orientated**
- the process allows time for relationships to be established and priorities determined

**Clusters**
- 8 clusters across Melbourne of schools/communities

**Capacity Building**
- building the capacities of individuals (students, parents, teachers), school leaders, schools and communities by focusing on existing strengths and opportunities.

**Community Focused**
- school communities identify and include individuals, families, organisations in SACSC planning processes.

**Recognises Role Of Other Professionals**
- opportunities for other professionals to contribute to, work in, and work with schools, are created.
“Schools that improve and sustain improvement almost always have engaged the community and have built strong links with parents”

Harris, Andrew-Power, Goodall (2010) p3
## CEOM Student Wellbeing Strategy Plan 2011-2015: Key Components

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Why invest in School-Family-Community Partnerships?

The Evidence Base
Student Outcomes

- Improved social skills, emotional resilience, communication skills & wellbeing
- Higher self-esteem & confidence
- Improved attitudes and behaviour
- Increased enrolment in post-compulsory education
- Improved attendance & homework completion
- Smoother transition to & from school
- Improved connections to their culture and sense of pride
- Improved literacy & numeracy outcomes
- Increased engagement in learning

School Outcomes

• Improved capacity to communicate & collaborate with families from diverse backgrounds

• Improved staff morale

• Reduced feeling of “us” & “them”

• Service learning

• Learning at schools is enhanced by families supporting learning at home

• Networks allow schools to draw on resources, expertise & ideas in the community

• Schools raise their profile in the community

• Improved access to support services

• Increased knowledge of agencies & facilities

• Greater opportunity for curriculum diversity

Community Outcomes

• Strengthened community pride and identity

• Increased community capacity

• Strengthened of social & support networks within the community

• Enhanced connectedness and a sense of belonging

• Improved sense of security & safety

• Improved tolerance & understanding between religious, socioeconomic & racial groups

Family Outcomes

• A greater understanding of their children’s social, cultural, emotional and intellectual developmental needs

• Improved relationships with school & teachers

• Parent involvement demonstrates to children, the value & importance of education

• More information about children’s learning and development, career opportunities and pathways

• Strengthened capacity to support their child’s learning

• Increased confidence and belief in their own skills

• Improved access to services

• Capacity to address concerns more effectively

Discussion Dice