



Department of
Education & Training

Co-location and other integration initiatives: Strategic Evaluation

A summary report





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Introduction

Over the past decade, the Department of Education and Training (the Department) has developed and implemented major co-location and integration projects. These projects have brought together, often on one site, schools, early childhood services, vocational education and training services and providers, and community facilities.

Most are located in the Melbourne urban fringe or regional areas, and the overall budgets of the projects have ranged from approximately \$3m up to \$35m. In some places, co-location and integration initiatives were part of broader community regeneration or renewal programs.

Recently the Department conducted a strategic evaluation of co-location and integration projects. This document is a summary of the findings and focuses on the six study sites, which included:

- **Hume Central Secondary College**, which was part of the Broadmeadows School Regeneration Project
- **Sherbrooke Early Learning Centre**, an integrated children's centre
- **Moe PLACE**, incorporating an integrated children's centre
- **Yuille Park P-8 Community College**, part of a broader neighbourhood renewal
- **Frankston North**, an extended school services pilot site, including Aldercourt Primary School (PS), Mahogany Rise PS and Monterey Secondary College (SC)
- **Doveton College**, which grew out of the Doveton Regeneration Project.

Areas targeted for co-location or integration faced a number of issues including low participation and engagement in education and services, disconnected services, and poor, long-term outcomes for children, young people and families in education, employment and other opportunities.

Co-location and integration projects have aimed to produce a number of outcomes:

- effectively identify and address developmental issues in children
- improve early cognitive and social development in children
- create greater aspirations among young people, families and the community
- effectively use community resources and infrastructure.

While many co-location and integration projects are in early stages of implementation, broadly they have all been able to demonstrate their success, and are tracking towards achieving outcomes. They are delivering results, and are now sources of local community pride and achievement. The projects are positively helping to change communities, services and schools for the better and provide opportunities not previously available to children, students and families.



Co-location and integration Q and A

What is co-location?

Co-location involves placing two or more services or schools close to each other in a local area. The services can include early childhood education and care, family services, kindergarten, schools and higher education and training. Like integration, co-location includes several models or stages. At its least connected, co-location places services, schools or higher education facilities within easy walking distance of each other in a precinct. More connected models involve occupying the same building or site, and sharing resources. In a fully connected model, schools and early childhood services are on one site, sharing common rooms and services, infrastructure and equipment.

The co-location continuum has been represented as having five stages:

1. **No proximity** – services located at separate sites not in easy walking distance of each other
2. **Proximity** – services are located within easy walking distance of each other in a precinct or on a campus. There may be limited sharing of infrastructure or facilities
3. **Co-location** – services are physically housed in the same facility or on a site with some sharing of infrastructure or facilities
4. **Partial shared use** – services are physically housed in the same facility or site and use a range of shared resources
5. **Holistic shared use** – services are physically housed in the same facility or site and flexibly access most of the site. Some areas may be used simultaneously by different services.

What is integration?

Integration depends on the depth and type of relationship between or within services and schools. It has been usefully conceived as a continuum ranging from independent services through to the creation of a new organisation which completely integrates services. These stages of integration could occur regardless of whether services are co-located.

The integration continuum, based on a synthesis of the literature by Moore and Skinner,¹ covers five stages and needs:

1. **Co-existence** – services operating independently of one another, with no sharing of information or resources (for example, a physical co-location only)
2. **Co-operation** – low-intensity, low-commitment relationship in which the parties retain their individual autonomy but agree to share information (for example, networking)
3. **Co-ordination** – medium-intensity, medium-commitment relationship in which the parties retain their individual autonomy but agree to some joint planning and coordination for a particular time-limited project or service (for example, regional referral committee)
4. **Collaboration** – high-intensity, high-commitment relationship in which the parties unite under a single auspice to share resources and jointly plan and deliver particular services
5. **Integration** – a complete merging of services to form a new entity, including virtual service integration.



What is the evidence from the strategic evaluation?

The table below summarises the strength of evidence found from the evaluation focusing on the predetermined four outcomes that are commonly the intent of co-location and integration. It is important to note that the evidence demonstrated is for integration only and each of the approaches result in different mechanisms of change and as a result statements about the actual level of benefit or contribution to the outcome cannot result in substantial claims.

INTEGRATION TYPE	ADDRESSING DEVELOPMENTAL ISSUES	IMPROVING EARLY COGNITIVE AND SOCIAL DEVELOPMENT	GREATER ASPIRATION	EFFECTIVE USE OF RESOURCES AND INFRASTRUCTURE
VERTICAL INTEGRATION				
Early childhood education + kindergarten	Some evidence	Some evidence	Unclear	Some evidence
Kindergarten + primary	Strong evidence	Strong evidence	Unclear	Some evidence
Primary + secondary	Low evidence	Unclear	Some evidence	Some evidence
Secondary + higher education	Unclear	Unclear	Moderate evidence	Some evidence
SERVICES INTEGRATION				
Early childhood education/ kindergarten + family services + Maternal Child Health	Moderate evidence	Strong evidence	Unclear	Some evidence
COMMUNITY INTEGRATION				
Early childhood education/schools + community	Unclear	Unclear	Strong evidence	Moderate evidence

Vertical integration is considered education services that are sequential and across the life course.

Services integration includes education and other services provided at the same life stage.

Community integration incorporates education services with the broader community.

What are the benefits of co-location?

Co-location offers benefits by itself, as well as creating better outcomes for integrated services. By itself, co-location can lower capital, operating and marginal costs and improve the quality of infrastructure. Surplus assets can be sold, co-located services have potentially increased purchasing power and there are savings for community members using services including travel and convenience.

By itself, co-location offers benefits particularly to clients who need to access more than one service, who have complex needs, and for transitions between services such as kindergarten and primary school.

What are the benefits of integration?

Integration is able to effectively address problems in local communities and systems including underperforming or disconnected services and provide support to vulnerable families with complex needs. Integration can provide more efficient services and provide support, and a more connected experience for clients.



What kinds of local problems do integration and co-location address?

Co-location and integration projects have been developed to address a range of problems in local communities. These include:

- low levels of participation and engagement in early childhood services, kindergarten programs or schools by families
- low aspirations of families
- education services which are disconnected from the community and each other
- services that are not able to respond to complex problems in the community



Interview: co-location and integration in Doveton

‘Doveton is unique. Around 30 per cent of children and young people are from refugee families or families where English is the second language,’ said Greg McMahon, Principal of Doveton College.

‘Around 30 per cent are from families with intergenerational unemployment, trauma or other issues including links to the Department of Health and Human Services. And around 10 per cent are Aboriginal. In all, there are 52 nationalities and 42 languages spoken across the College.’

‘Our focus is to support children and young people and their families. We have developed a wrap-around approach with allied health and education services linked together so that children have a chance to get through school.’

‘If the College had been developed without a full rebuild onto an old site, one school would have been seen to take over another and there would have been hesitation and resistance [from staff and the community].’

‘Instead, there is enormous community pride in a stunning looking series of hubs with really useful areas to work in. There has been a uniform approach to infrastructure; and there is an entrance for the whole community, into a facility for the whole community.’



Interview: integration at Frankston North Extended School Services

The Extended School Services (ESS) success depends on collaboration and cooperation,’ said John Culley of Mahogany Rise, one of three schools in the Frankston North extended school service, a successful integration project.

‘We have a team of teachers working for Years 5-8. We have joint school council meetings twice a term. We have a joint sports day, around house colours.’

‘The commitment of each of the principals is essential. Five years ago we had a vision and it is now starting to enact major changes. The principals meet three times a term. That requires goodwill and it creates a really good opportunity to reap the rewards of the Parent Engagement Worker’s initiatives, and see them become a reality.’

‘There are lots of green shoots: the students’ needs are being catered for, there is consistency, and trust.’

‘Children with developmental issues are being identified earlier. Now that we have the early childhood group meeting three times a term, people have the opportunity to talk, there is a communication flow and there is lot more interchange of information. We are able to see those students earlier. From my school, we put a teacher into the kindergarten to run phonics program. A heresy but we were getting children in primary school who could have been more developed. Kindergartens and parents see great value in the project.’

‘The key focus is that we have to have high expectations of children as learners, and be clear about their learning capacity. We try to be aspirational in everything we do.’

‘I think we’ve achieved significant things here. We need to continually recharge the vision.’



How do co-location and integration contribute to community improvements?

Integration and co-location work to solve these problems by better linking services, families and communities. They make it less likely that families fall through the cracks; and that trust can be built between services and families through contact, support and communication. Hard-to-reach and at-risk groups appear more likely to participate in early childhood, education and family services that are integrated and co-located.

Working together, services can address the needs of disadvantaged families more effectively, and they can open up pathways between services for families (for example between kindergarten and school, or maternal and child health and kindergarten). The services can increase their own professional bonds and knowledge and increase their capacity to deal with complex family and community issues and needs. Broadly, the community can support services, and create a sense of collective purpose. Services can address the needs of infants and children in families, as well as teenagers and adults.

In local communities, three broad approaches have been used to solve a range of problems and provide a range of benefits:

- integrating education services including early childhood, primary school and secondary school
- integrating services for early childhood, kindergarten, family services and Maternal and Child Health
- integrating schools and kindergartens with the community.

Less intensive integration creates changes between services ‘at the boundaries’. More intensive integration acts on areas where services overlap. When services increase access or improve quality, programs and interventions are more successful. Both integrated early childhood services and extended school services (integrated networks of schools at different sites serving a community) have shown signs of delivering economic benefits over the longer term.

Integration helps to generate smoother transitions, knowledge transfer between educators, a broader range of programs, increased access to resources (for example by kindergartens or primary school libraries), alignment of curriculum (for primary and secondary schools or across a shared curriculum) and operational efficiencies.

Integration of early childhood, kindergarten, family services and Maternal Child Health Services (MCH) can help decrease time and travel costs for clients accessing more than one service, provide better referrals, increase opportunities to engage with families and increase attendance at MCH services, reduce the costs of professional interactions, and produce joint planning and operational efficiencies.

For schools and kindergartens, and the community, integration and co-location provide an opportunity to strengthen relationships between services and the community, deliver greater opportunities for experiential learning, build pathways to social inclusion and economic participation for parents and supports greater parental involvement with education. Community programs and services may benefit from school resources and facilities.

In responding to local community problems and issues, projects have developed a range of local approaches which are described in more detail in the case studies. Some are based on community development models and join up services and education on one site. Others focus more on transforming schools. An analysis of local problems and needs may include both approaches, focusing for example, on linked services to address developmental outcomes, then on learning and teaching to achieve improved educational and development outcomes.

All the approaches, however, contribute to the four outcomes of integration and co-location:

1. developmental issues
2. improving early development
3. greater aspirations
4. effective use of resources and infrastructure

Interview: Understanding the local community

Brett Shillito, Assistant Principal of Yuille Park Community Hub has been involved in identifying and responding to the problems and strengths of the local community and changing community perceptions, as part of a co-location and integration project.

‘For this project the way forward has been through involving parents and families in their children’s education, making sure that everyone shares the vision, and values creating greater opportunities for children,’ said Brett.

‘The community is a very proud community. You have to be able to work at their level. My focus has been on building relationships and trust, and on student-driven learning. Most schools are only concerned with content-driven, academic outcomes.

‘Often, for families, it means overcoming negative experiences of school in the past which have been a barrier to seeing how education can help change their lives for the better.

‘Some families are in the sixth generation of poverty and unemployment.

‘We have an engaging and inclusive approach. We work hard at connecting with parents, and eliminating barriers, really welcoming them and getting to know them. We’ve provided opportunities for parents to come into the school.

‘We have a Parent’s Circle which provides tutoring for parents through a mentoring program. We work through parents’ issues about education. Engagement is directly related to their child’s education. Teachers attend and outline class lessons. It’s open to all parents, and is run once a week. Parents support each other and share a bit about what their life is like.

‘School data for engagement and wellbeing had shown consistent and improved growth over a number of years. Children and families are connected to learning, and children are feeling safe and secure, so now it’s about pushing academic growth.’



Interview: Planning for integration and co-location

Karen Bowen, Director of the Sherbrooke Early Learning Centre which has involved co-location and integration, talked about the role of planning.

'We have been fully open for just 18 months. Last year we employed 26 new staff (out of 60 staff). We expanded our centre from one that catered for 35 children to 114.

'The family and community services model that we offer is relatively new so there are limited opportunities to model ourselves on other similar large community-based services.

'We are fortunate to have a full-time Education Leader, which is a new position in the profession. The Education Leader position is integral to driving and supporting early childhood educators' professional practice, especially building and nurturing relationships, curriculum decision-making, teaching and learning.

'We are still working out how everything works together, and bringing our staff together through consensus and change management.

'In planning for the project, there were a number of complex issues to resolve relating to Departmental licensing, topography and retention of trees on the site, and the services to include in the licensed area.

'Learning from this experience, we would reflect:

- If there are multiple licensed early childhood services on site, ensure there is only one license holder.
- Keep childcare room sizes as flexible as possible considering ratios across all ages and changing demand for age based programs.
- Embed Maternal and Child Health within the licensed services area to maximize integration opportunities for families and professionals.
- Include suitable space for playgroup including outdoor play space within the complex but outside the licensed area. The mixture of licensed places and unlicensed places in the same physical area holds too many risks around supervision.

'This year we are conducting a series of parenting sessions and a series of professional sessions for early childhood educators. We are also increasing our collaboration with the community-based preschool and the local primary school.'



What are the pre-requisites for effective co-location and integration projects?

Planning

Planning is crucial to successful co-location and integration. Effective planning requires a deep understanding of the local community, its services and systems.

To respond effectively to local community problems and issues, leaders and stakeholders need to build a comprehensive picture covering the nature of disadvantage, community strengths and resources, infrastructure, organisations and their workforces (including capacity and capability), and stakeholder and community relationships. Particularly the strengths of local communities will help to support sustainable change in the long term.

Understanding community needs

Within the community, the needs of different groups may require very different responses. Some communities, for example, have a high proportion of refugees and asylum seekers, and engagement, inclusion and learning activities may need to target that community. In other areas, low community aspirations may mean that integration to support social capital is likely to be productive. In areas with a high proportion of families with complex needs, a high level of service integration may be beneficial.



Some communities are quite closely defined, with distinct identities. Other communities are characterised by greater transience. Geography and urban development can play a part in defining a catchment for services or creating barriers to access.

Resources

An assessment also needs to be made of the capacity of the workforce in services and schools to collaborate. How willing are they to collaborate? What incentives are there to collaborate? These changes, sometimes involving significant shifts in organisational culture, require effort, and impose direct and indirect costs on services and schools, and their workforces.

Leadership

Leadership in the planning and implementation phases is of vital importance. Leaders or groups of leaders need to be able to work flexibly with stakeholders to achieve the best collective outcome, and drive and implement change.

Governance structures need to be able to support decision-making and accountability by local leaders and stakeholders, particularly when there are a large number of organisations involved. They also need to effectively address barriers between services and schools, and other organisations.



Interview: The role of leadership

Glenn Proctor, the Principal of Hume Central Secondary College, talks about his approach to leadership.

'I wanted to ready and fire as quickly as possible [after I arrived in 2008]. I was a directive leader rather than a consultative leader. People needed a vision and direction, and they needed to go forward.'

'It was difficult to bring the three most under performing schools in the state together. Aspirations were negative. The school didn't provide any hope or future. At best there was 60 per cent attendance at school. What hope did those kids have? By the end of Year 10 they had 2.25 years at school instead of four.'

'The facilities were the worst I'd ever seen.'

'We [the leadership team and school staff] had to be able to answer the question clearly: What are we here for? We're here for what we can do for the students. We need to make sure that students are here [at the school] to go to Year 12. Education is one of the greatest influences on a child's future. Our role is to improve the learning outcomes of students.'

'And you have to get the infrastructure to work. We've integrated it, we have shared facilities with local community.'

'Leadership is always on the agenda.'



What funding arrangements have been used by co-location and integration projects?

Integration and co-location projects often have many sources of funding. Funding has come from all levels of government, from private foundations, community donations and business partnerships.

Some funding sources will define and prioritise outcomes. These may not directly match the outcomes or priorities identified locally, and leaders and stakeholders may need to work out how to adapt. Some consideration should be given to funding cycles, and ensuring that there are sufficient resources to sustain the project over the long-term.

What types of integration are most effective?

Integration covers a range of activities from services communicating with each other, through to fuller integration where two or more services effectively function as one, sharing administration, buildings and other resources.

Communication and cooperation are able to create changes at the boundaries between services, for example kindergarten and schools sharing information around transition statements. Deeper forms of integration are able to make more significant changes within services, particularly where the services overlap. For example, in providing linked multiple services, such as Maternal and Child Health, long day care, kindergarten and adult education, to a family with complex needs.

When integration focuses on increasing service access and/or quality, the positive impact of effective programs and interventions for families and the community is greater. Broadly, more clients are able to access better services more easily.

Extended school hubs and services are also effective forms of integration because they are likely to drive sustainable change in community aspirations over the long term.

What helps integration to succeed?

Effective integration is built on a sound understanding of the local area, the community and its strengths. These strengths can be leveraged to support successful implementation and long-term sustainability.

Community, school and service leaders can play an important role in the success of these projects. Leaders need to be adaptable, able to lead complex change and create a sense of shared purpose beyond their own service or school.

Return on investment for integration is likely to be positive, as opposed to building stand alone facilities.

Co-location helps integration to succeed. It lowers the costs of integration, and while integration can arise spontaneously at co-located sites, the most successful co-location projects have funded integration programs. Overall, co-located services that are integrated may yield higher outcomes.



Interview: Working towards outcomes

'In the first two years of operation, Doveton College had to develop its own culture – that could not occur overnight,' said Greg McMahon, Principal of Doveton College.

'There were some issues in trying to balance demands and an element of dysfunction crept in. That got out to the community. The concept was new and various groups and interests had to come together. It was never going to be an easy transition.

'We have now resolved or are resolving many those issues and we have had pretty rapid gains in some areas. There is now a sense of the calmness in the college with students now settled, and now we expect positive growth in the children.

'There have been significant improvements in the social behaviour of children.

'Early learning is outstanding – a huge tick. It works as well as any other learning centre in Victoria. It has waiting lists and runs at a surplus. It uses play based-learning and has a clear instructional approach.

'Children who come through play-based early learning start Prep better positioned. The primary school is now focused on continuing the good work. NAPLAN results need to improve. Our focus is on what really matters to our students - developing literacy and numeracy. We expect to see growth in literacy and numeracy in the next two years.

'Being realistic, it will take years to change outcomes, but we are seeing signs of transformation. We have started the DEEP program – the Doveton Engagement and Enhancement Program - with students participating in sports, performance and multi-media programs after hours. Only 10 per cent of our students undertook formal activities in the community until DEEP was introduced. Now we are seeing 50 + students in each of the activities. Students need structure and the facilities provide the opportunity to initiate these programs.

'The negative self-talk has gone. There was a view: We're born in Doveton nothing positive can come out of it. But by having positive programs in place and new buildings which people take pride in, there's a shift. It doesn't matter where you come from you can be successful. Everyone is taking huge jumps.'



Which services should be co-located?

Co-location of early childhood services, including early learning, kindergarten and family support services, directly benefits clients who need to access multiple services. These clients often have complex needs, and they are reported to be more likely to access a range of services, and have referrals, particularly for developmental issues, when services are located together.

When kindergartens and primary schools are co-located, they provide easier transitions between kindergarten and Prep. They provide continuity of environment, social networks and learning and teaching. When kindergartens and primary schools are co-located with other early childhood services, they appear to influence a range of outcomes relating to early identification of development issues, and social and cognitive development in children.

When primary and secondary schools are co-located they deliver economic benefits, and for at-risk children in disadvantaged areas, there may be benefits related to aspiration, retention and wellbeing.

The evaluation primarily focussed on sites that either co-located or integrated early childhood and schools, however the Department also recognises the opportunity of co-locating and/or integrating with the higher education sector.



Interview: Developing trust between services and families

'We worked with a young mother who was referred to us. She had significant anxiety issues and panic attacks when she was with a group of people. She found it difficult to come into our early childhood centre with her child who was being assessed for a developmental delay.'

'In her previous experiences, the mother felt judged and unsupported by services.'

'We have worked across services, including Maternal and Child Health, community and other programs, to support the inclusion of the mother and child.'

'We have put in place a process to create trust and support. When the family arrives, the receptionist notifies a trusted educator who then accompanies the mother and child.'

'Management also worked with educators to identify physical barriers, and the layout of the children's room has been changed to create less anxiety for the mother.'

'Her child now settles in well, and the mother reports that she feels supported and welcomed by services and staff. She will now make eye contact and speak to staff.'

'The child has good attendance, despite the need for the family to use the limited public transport in the area.'

Case studies

Case studies can provide useful insights into the relationship between local context, community strengths and problems, the application of different approaches to co-location and integration, and the outcomes that have been achieved.

Two groups of case studies are presented in this section. The first group is based on six sites that were part of a strategic evaluation. These case studies include a brief description of the local context, the approach to co-location and integration that was used at the site, and the outcomes. Each site has developed its own response to local problems and conditions using different approaches to co-location and integration, and other initiatives and tools. These responses and approaches need to be taken into account when considering the site's co-location or integration achievements.



The six sites were:

- **Hume Central Secondary College**, which was part of the Broadmeadows School Regeneration Project
- **Sherbrooke Early Learning Centre**, an integrated children's centre
- **Moe PLACE**, incorporating an integrated children's centre
- **Yuille Park P-8 Community College**, part of a broader neighbourhood renewal
- **Frankston North**, an extended school services pilot site, including Aldercourt Primary School (PS), Mahogany Rise PS and Monterey Secondary College (SC)
- **Doveton College**, which grew out of the Doveton Regeneration Project.

The second group of case studies is based on the four outcomes for co-location and integration:

- Outcome 1: effectively identify and address developmental issues
- Outcome 2: improve early cognitive and social development
- Outcome 3: create greater aspirations among young people, families and the community
- Outcome 4: effectively use community resources and infrastructure

These case studies show how effective co-location or integration across all the sites have been in achieving these outcomes. While most study sites have not been operating long enough to show medium and long-term changes, they do show progress towards positive change.

Hume Central Secondary College

Hume Central Secondary College is located in Broadmeadows. From 2004, it became part of the Broadmeadows School Regeneration, along with four primary schools, early childhood services, a TAFE and community and family services. One of the largest projects of its kind undertaken in Victoria, the project merged 17 schools into ten, with seven gaining new facilities. Hume City Council regenerated local streetscapes, services, and biking and walking routes.

The area is highly disadvantaged, with high levels of school absenteeism, narrow subject choice at school, low retention rates, poor VCE outcomes, low literacy levels and few students completing VET or post-secondary study. Almost twice as many children were developmentally vulnerable as the national average.

Funding for the project came from a variety of sources including neighbourhood renewal funding from Department of Human Services (DHS); regeneration support funding from Department of Education and Training (formerly DEECD); other Commonwealth and state funding; Hume City Council; businesses and not for profit organisations. It totalled approximately \$35m.

Outcomes

Cognitive and social development

Short-term indicators relating to service use and the number of children in services has showed positive results. The proportion of children attending formal kindergarten has increased to 77 per cent from a baseline of 32 per cent before the project began.

Stakeholders noted the importance and role of co-location for transition programs not only between early childhood and school but also at other key points. Co-location has enabled older children to more easily work with younger children. For example, Year 9s work with Year 6s, and Prep students work with children in the early learning centre. Transition programs are also happening between the secondary school and TAFE. These transition activities help students to familiarise themselves with their new environment and reduce their anxiety.



Creating greater aspirations for the community, children, young people and families

Stakeholders report that community aspirations have been enhanced by the regeneration project giving the community access to high quality facilities. Co-location has enabled families to see the spectrum of education from birth to TAFE, giving parents and children the sense that continuing education is achievable.

Families now engage more in education. An induction program at Broadmeadows Valley Primary School has 80 per cent of parents involved. Around 60 per cent attend parent-teacher days.

Adult learning is also available at the primary school, along with employment programs, drivers license classes, and technology and food handling programs. Hume Central SC works with the Smith Family to run parenting classes. Stakeholders believed that there was a flow-on effect in children's engagement with education from seeing their parents' participation.

Indicators for young people's aspirations have shown significant improvement. In 2013-14 97 per cent of students finished VCE: 36 per cent went to university, 64 per cent to TAFE. The next year, 54 per cent went to university, 46 per cent to TAFE. Of those, one got into medicine at the University of Melbourne.

'I nearly cried when I knew how many students had gotten into higher education from Hume Central Secondary College in 2014,' said Glenn Proctor, Hume Central Secondary College Principal.

Infrastructure and resource use

Co-location has also enabled high use of shared facilities including arts, sports and community spaces. Partnerships have enabled external agencies to use these spaces and to offer classes which students attend.

There are also economies of scale for the Hume Central SC and the VCAL unit, including shared contracts for cleaning, telephones, canteens and electricity.



Sherbrooke Family and Children's Centre

The Sherbrooke Family and Children's Centre is located in the Dandenong Ranges south east of Melbourne. While it is not statistically a disadvantaged area, the centre is used by families who are vulnerable to disadvantage.

It co-located previously separated services on one site, along with a refurbished community hall. One reception desk oversees the entry points to on-site services and manages bookings. A long day care centre and preschool share the outdoor learning space. The local primary school is two minutes or 300 metres away.

The Centre includes:

- A 114 place long day care centre with a funded four-year old integrated kindergarten
- Family day care coordinating unit run by the Council which arranges home-based children's education and care across the municipality
- A two nurse MCH clinic
- A community toy library
- A commercial kitchen that services the children's program and caters to other community organisations
- An onsite occupational therapy (to identify motor skills and developmental delays)
- A community preschool with a sessional three and four-year old kindergarten.

Funding for the project included \$5.688m from the Yarra Ranges Council, \$1.6m from the Australian Government and \$0.5m from the Victorian Government.

Outcomes

Identifying developmental issues, and social and cognitive development

Because the centre has only been open for a short time, evidence for early identification of developmental issues, or social and cognitive development, is still emerging. Nevertheless, there have been positive changes which are linked to improved outcomes in both areas.

Stakeholders discussed the benefits of being able to easily communicate with other services. The long day care and integrated kindergarten emphasised information

sharing about children they were concerned about, and being able to pass that information on to MCH services. Conversations occurred informally and during more formal meetings and telephone calls.

Both the early learning and MCH services reported that they were more likely to pick up the phone than they had been when the services were separated. The Centre Director indicated that referrals into child care and early years education from the MCH services were growing, with 19 referrals into long day care from MCH in 2014. The relationships between services at the Centre enabled referrals to be more targeted, as there is now greater collective knowledge about appropriate services in the area.



Staff relationships with children made it more likely that developmental issues were being identified. Staff take a case-based approach to families, with several services meeting to discuss their perspective on families and children. This enables sharing of professional learning, and ensures that approaches to families are consistent and welcoming across services.

A 'one stop shop' helped families to familiarise themselves with the Centre's services and staff. This appeared to make vulnerable families less anxious about seeking help. It was suggested that strong family relationships with the Centre, rather than individual services, also made it easier to have difficult conversations, such as suggesting a child get assessed for a developmental delay or health condition. The central reception was viewed as crucial because it meant there was one familiar face, regardless of the service that families were accessing.

Stakeholders believed that co-location was facilitating improved professional learning. The Centre is developing formal professional development across services. Shared training sessions had occurred across the services.

The connected play space in the yard meant that children from the preschool and the integrated kindergarten were able to mix with children and supervising adults not necessarily in their kindergarten class. Stakeholders suggested that this had improved children's social skills, so that some children were now more willing and able to ask for help or permission from adults.



Infrastructure and community resources

The new building is a source of pride to the community. Stakeholders discussed the sense of ownership of the Centre in the community, having watched it develop from an idea into reality. The Centre also encourages families to get involved in activities. For example, the commercial kitchen and long day care encourages involvement from parents who come and share their knowledge and food culture. The cook also runs cooking classes for parents from the kitchen. The kitchen has provided opportunities for VCAL students to come and learn from the cook.

The space enables greater community participation than had been possible in separate facilities. For example, the courtyard area encourages families to stay, and play or read with their children instead of going straight home.

Apart from these observations, there were other positive changes. Stakeholders noted that there was high use of communal facilities at the Centre. The multipurpose room is hired out for local community events, such as the Blood Bank, parenting classes and yoga sessions, as well as for adult education courses.

The Centre anticipated a 20 per cent increase in revenue from venue hire and catering fees in 2014–15.

It has also had a significant impact on overhead costs for each service. The Council expect overall costs for the Centre to be approximately \$130,000 for 2014–15, compared to a Council contribution of \$380,000 the previous year. Staffing costs are reduced with shared administrative staff, cook and front-of-house reception role. The reception role in particular, was highlighted as one that enabled other staff to focus on their main roles of working with children.

There are also reductions in costs from shared administrative services. The close location of services means that there is less need to transport children elsewhere. Activities can also be shared between the integrated kindergarten and the preschool.

Moe PLACE

Moe PLACE (People, Learning, Activity, Community and Education) is an integrated children's centre in Moe, Gippsland, a town with some precincts that include vulnerable families. It was developed as part of the Southside Community Precinct Project that includes the Ted Summerton Reserve and the Moe South Street Primary School.

The facility has an early learning centre, a kindergarten, MCH service, a toy library, sports stadium, sports ovals, meeting rooms and a community kitchen. Moe South Street Primary School is located behind Moe PLACE and is connected by a walkway through the foyer.

The kindergarten, early learning centre and MCH service operate in the main building with one reception desk. Service users also access the stadium, toy library and meeting rooms from this area.

The kindergarten and long day care program operate from the early learning centre as one service. The kindergarten has a positive relationship with the school, and children use the school facilities including the library, stadium and play equipment.

The project began in 2010 and opened in 2012.

Funding for the project has come from the Department of Education and Training, an Integrated Children's Centre grant, Local Government and the Community Support Fund, totalling approximately \$11.7m.

Outcomes

Development issues

At Moe PLACE, there have been many achievements across the outcomes of co-location and integration. Stakeholders acknowledge the contribution of co-location and integration to the diagnosis of some children with developmental issues before starting school. These children have been able to access Program for Students with a Disability (PSD) funding from their first day of Prep, a result of their early diagnosis.

Communication with the kindergarten allows the school to put in place additional support for children with developmental needs from day one, even when they may not be eligible for funding.

Stakeholders recognised the value of co-location. It has made it easier for staff to speak to professionals from other organisations and gain their advice or perspective. Closer relationships have led to referrals where families and staff are familiar with one another. Stakeholders believed these referrals were more likely to lead to positive outcomes for families.

Co-location also makes accessing services easier for families. The MCH service has introduced walk-in appointments so that families who are already at the centre can see a nurse, without having to worry about the availability of appointments.



Cognitive and social development

Stakeholders recognised the strengths of integration in transition from kindergarten to primary school. Kindergarten children spent time at the primary school using facilities and getting to know the staff and students from early in the year. Discussions between kindergarten and school staff enabled the early development of individualised learning plans for children who had been at Moe PLACE. School staff believe that there is a marked difference in the ease with which children from the Moe PLACE kindergarten settle into school, and a consequential improvement in their learning.

Kindergarten staff also noted that more local families were able to access kindergarten as a result of co-location with the early learning centre, which made kindergarten attendance more convenient. The centre has also increased the number of kindergarten places, which in turn improved access. Good Beginnings runs playgroups at the primary school that focus on strengthening families' interactions and relationships with their children. These playgroups have also resulted in referrals into the centre.

Relationships across services have led to improved professional learning. The early learning centre staff feel that they are able to learn from the kindergarten teachers and that this professional development supports children's development. Key staff members are also able to drive a culture of improvement across the centre.

Greater aspirations among families and the community

Staff from all services noted that it was important to the community to have a brand new state of the art facility that made them feel valued by government and Council. The facility provides the opportunity for people to 'think bigger and better about what's possible'. Engagement in planning for the centre and participation through community activities gives groups ownership.

All staff noted that families were happy to engage with services and often socialised and spent time chatting with staff and other families during drop-off and pick-up. Staff felt that there was a significant difference in behaviour at the centre compared to other services in the area. At Moe PLACE, people had more respect for other families and staff. Better behaviour was attributed in large part to the welcoming nature of the new facility and the relationships between educators and families.

Stakeholders noted that the provision of before- and after-school care enabled families to re-engage with the workforce. An employment agency is run from the centre to help people with disabilities find work.

The co-located services are having a direct impact on the mothers attending the Kurnai College Young Mothers program. The program offers an alternative secondary schooling program for young mothers to finish school. Classes operate out of the co-located cricket club, which is across the oval from the childcare centre. Mothers attending the program have priority access to placing their children in the early learning centre. Staff noted that these young mothers were often anxious about being separated from their young children and that the locations close to the childcare service allowed them to feel close to their children, and reduced their anxieties.



Infrastructure and community resources

There was also improvement in the effective use of the facility and resources.

Staff noted that the facilities were very well used and all services gained value from having access to high-quality facilities.

The stadium and other community facilities are widely used outside school hours, with an activity run almost every night. Most organisations that use the facility are not for profit and are not charged hire fees. The centre does, however, charge local sports teams and event holders.

Because the facilities were purpose-built with additional space there is now more room to offer services and support community groups. For example, the school also uses the kitchen for a TV cooking show experience and the stage for music programs. The proximity with the school enables these relationships.

The Council noted that the sports stadium had been used, by agreement with the school, to temporarily locate kindergarten and childcare services during emergencies. Council staff noted that the childcare and kindergarten services would have been closed if the stadium had not been available.

The school also noted that co-location made the transition program cost-effective. They were able to walk the children easily between school or kindergarten, and timetabling was easier because of good relationships with staff. Stakeholders noted that the transition program would be prohibitively expensive without co-location.



Yuille Park P-8 Community College and Hub

The Yuille Park Community Hub is located in a regional suburb of Ballarat with significant disadvantage relating to community unemployment, education levels and children at risk. It provides educational, health and community facilities including occasional care for one to three-year-olds, three and four-year-old kindergarten, MCH services, a youth centre, a dental clinic, a wellbeing centre that promotes health and education, and a P-8 school, the Yuille Park Community College.

The Hub is on the redeveloped site of the old Grevillea Park Primary School which merged with Yuille Primary School and formed part of a neighbourhood renewal and school regeneration project.

The College works with the Uniting Church Kindergarten and the Wendouree West Community House as a partnership in the Wendouree West Community Learning Hub which provides a whole-of-life learning and community centre for children and the broader community.

Community consultation and planning for the project began in 2001, and the school and hub opened in 2008.

Funding for the project has been provided by the Departments of Education and Training and Health and Human Services, the community, Local Government and other organisations and totals approximately \$12m.



Outcomes

Identifying developmental issues

Stakeholders believed that progress was being made in identifying developmental issues. They highlighted the value of relationships across services for supporting families and children, and families trust the services to act in the interests of their children. For example, the dental program allows children to access dental services during the school day (with permission) and parents do not have to be there if they do not want to be. The Principal noted that meetings between families and services are often held at the school because families are comfortable in the school environment and feel supported. As a result, it often takes just a few days to settle children who have experienced trauma into the school environment, and once settled there is a low incidence of behavioural issues. Stakeholders highlighted the role of leadership in fostering strong relationships across services.

Cognitive and social development

The school has a strong transition program both for children that attend the onsite kindergarten and those coming from other kindergartens, or from home. Staff felt that having the kindergarten on site was beneficial in making transitions smoother for families. Parents are encouraged to come along to the school, a location they are already familiar with through co-located services they have already been accessing.

School-based staff have been able to learn from the co-located early childhood services, incorporating play-based learning into the curriculum to enable smoother transitions for children and enhanced learning opportunities for children who have not had broad early childhood experiences. Stakeholders at the kindergarten and Prep noted leadership that supported them to try new ideas, practically supported by IT, professional development and other resources.

Older children from the primary school go to the kindergarten to read to the children, building relationships with older children. Stakeholders discussed that this contributed to a sense of a 'common goal'.

Changing community and family aspirations

The school works hard to bring families into the educational environment and has had significant success with making families feel safe and welcome.

Engagement in activities, such as parent teacher nights and regular dinner events held by the school is high, and many families are repeat attendees. Staff report parents are more likely to inform the school of their child's absence than previously.

Several parents from the school community are employed at the school and spoke highly of the school's contribution to their learning and employment prospects. Stakeholders mentioned that the framing of the co-location as a regeneration project helped to provide the community with ownership over the College and pride in its activities.

The community cafe at the school provides affordable, nutritious meals to local families, while also providing school students with an opportunity to gain work experience in the kitchen and front of house.

School staff noted that compared to the level of engagement from families prior to the existence of Community College, significant improvements had been made. An Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) case study on Yuille Park found a 28 per cent increase in perceived levels of community participation.

Leadership was reported to be important in making the effort to bring parents into the school. It was of great value to the community to have a sense of a safe community connection with the school, which was a significant achievement.

Infrastructure and community resources

All the school facilities are well used and provide a focal point for the community. Community members often use the school facilities outside of hours. The youth group also takes advantage of the facilities, providing a safe focal point for adolescents in the community.

The school operates breakfast and dinner clubs, which operate outside of school hours using the onsite cafe facilities, and these are well attended by families and community members. Many staff noted the value to the community of having quality facilities onsite that were significantly better than previous schools in the area. This saves costs for the school on buses and travel time to other services, such as the welfare service.

The kindergarten and school share access to facilities, including the gym, library and playground. The College operates on shared contracts for IT, gardening, maintenance and cleaning.



Frankston North Extended School Services

The Frankston North Extended School Services (ESS) includes Monterey Secondary College, Aldercourt Primary School and Mahogany Rise Primary School. Although the sites are not co-located — with the furthest sites, Aldercourt and Monterey over two kilometres from one another — all campuses are situated within the distinct community of Frankston North and are integrated.

Frankston North is a disadvantaged area on the fringe of Melbourne.

Because Frankston North is an area of high need, the local schools identified the value in better connecting the community with the service system. A Hub Coordinator role has been complemented by the appointment of a Parent Engagement Worker (PEW). The PEW is a parent from within the school community employed as a peer worker, acting as a liaison point with the local community. The PEW provides a focal point for parents to come and discuss community issues, and learn about the services that are available for their children. Many of the families the PEW is working with have had a negative experience with schools and the government 'system'.

The aim of the ESS was to better connect the schools with the local community, leveraging school resources and resources in the broader community to provide the best educational and social support for children in the area. As part of Frankston North's approach, a Hub Coordinator was appointed to coordinate activities across the three schools, taking advantage of existing agencies working within the community to deliver services. Agencies were brought into the ESS when the schools identified a gap in what they could offer, or when an agency identified a need in the community and approached the ESS to work there.

However, the ESS also has a small pool of money available to directly fund some services in the school, to provide a top-up to other funding, or seed funding to start a project. For example, the school had withdrawn from the national chaplaincy program given uncertainty around its funding, but the ESS was able to provide funding to allow the Salvation Army to continue providing school chaplains.

The project opened as an extended school hub in 2010.

Funding for the project provided by the Department of Education and Training totalled approximately \$5 million under the National Partnerships for Low SES School Community funding and in kind support from the community, Local Government and other organisations.

Outcomes

Identifying development issues, and cognitive and social development

The population of Frankston North is highly transient, with a high proportion of children who have not attended kindergarten or early childhood care.

Nevertheless, there have been significant improvement in Australian Early Development Census (AEDC) scores in line with measures for cognitive and social development, with a reduced number of children who are developmentally vulnerable.

This change is attributed in part to the role of the ESS.

In its first few years, the ESS has focused on improving early years engagement, particularly through the establishment of an early years networking group. The group meets twice a term and staff from various services are able to talk about children in the community and listen to presentations from local community agencies to get an idea of what is available. The school principals suggested this gave them a clearer picture of where children were up to in their learning and how their needs could be best met when they moved to primary school. Network meetings provide staff with a chance to talk about children in a context other than a formal meeting, allowing informal conversations that may not have required a formal meeting.

Transitions have also become smoother between kindergarten and primary school and the model which has been applied there will also be applied to transitions from primary to secondary school.



Community aspirations

The school runs many programs that contribute to community aspiration, and parents report that they feel encouraged to become involved in the school. Programs included a crowd-funded trip to Europe for students, a 'try a trade' program, and other programs which contribute to student wellbeing and self esteem.

Infrastructure and community resources

The school principals expressed the hope that their schools could be more than just educational facilities, and function collectively as a community hub, which is 'never closed'. Where activities take place even when teaching is not. In this way, the holiday programs during the summer and winter holidays are held at one of the primary schools, supported by teachers and local community volunteers. The last holiday program was restructured so that children could do different age-appropriate activities, including older children visiting the secondary school. The Monterey bus has recently been shared with the other schools and has proved a cost-saver, as schools now do not have to pay commercial prices for transport. At Monterey Secondary College, the kitchen and conference room are now being used by community groups.

The Hub Coordinator was seen as vital to ensuring schools knew about, and were able to access, other agencies and programs working in the local area. The focus at the schools has been to access services that already exist in the area and the coordinator has been at the centre of that activity. The Coordinator commented that the funding for the ESS has primarily supported her role and that of the PEW.



Doveton College

Doveton College is an integrated facility for children from birth to Year 9 and their families located in a disadvantaged area on the south-eastern fringe of Melbourne. Before Doveton College opened, student outcomes across a range of indicators were comparatively poor.

Three primary schools and a secondary college closed to create Doveton College on a site bordering the Doveton Swimming complex. It includes early learning from 0-5 years, schooling from Prep to Year 9, adult education, community programs including allied health, administration services and reception. It provides wrap-around allied health and community services within a birth to Year 9 educational setting.



Services and facilities include:

- Multimedia studio for film making, animation and graphic design
- Performing arts theatre
- Music studio
- Gym and fitness centre
- Visual arts studio and design and technology studios
- Specialist science and language centres
- Rooms for playgroups, MCH sessions, health clinics and adult education classes
- Internet café
- Meeting spaces
- Early learning centre
- Classrooms
- Library.

Planning began in 2009 and the centre was built in 2011. Its first students started in 2012.

Funding for the project totalled \$28.4m from the Australian and Victorian governments, and \$1.8m from the Colman Foundation with ongoing funding of \$0.5m per year, totalling \$6.1m.

Outcomes

Identifying developmental issues

Staff believe that they are able to identify and address developmental delays much earlier as a result of their integrated, multi-disciplinary approach. Many services are on-site. They have specialist knowledge, and professional relationships have developed. Relationships have also developed with families, a result of having services in one location, which enables cross-referral based on knowledge of the family. A single enrolment form enables knowledge-sharing. Referral systems have improved.

Cognitive and social development

A research project showed that there was a noticeable improvement in children's social and cognitive development, especially oral language, as a result of attending early learning.

Families are also linked into parenting programs and additional services. These programs are likely to have had an impact on children's language development. An Access to Early Learning program which enabled additional support for families, was recognised by stakeholders for its benefits.



Community aspirations

The aspirations of the local community have changed significantly. Before the centre was developed, many had felt abandoned by local services. Parents have become actively involved in the school, with 17 volunteers supporting operations. Community leadership and education programs have also helped parents feel more comfortable in the school. Around 100 parents and local community members have enrolled in adult education.

One emerging issue was that some students were leaving at Year 7 to take up opportunities at other schools. The school was developing programs to encourage students to stay.

Infrastructure and community resources

There is high use of the facilities at the college, at least partly as a result of high levels of engagement with the school. An issue relating to the division of funding streams for early learning, the community and the school has meant that the areas have been reshaped to make them sustainable.



Outcomes case studies

This group of cases studies is based on the four outcomes of co-location and integration. It consolidates information from all the evaluation sites discussed in the previous section, and outlines the ways in which integration and co-location overall were able to support progress towards achieving each of the outcomes.

Outcome 1: Effectively identify and address developmental issues



The strategic evaluation identified that co-location and integration played a positive role in effectively identifying and addressing development issues earlier. They were able to achieve this outcome by supporting stronger relationships between services, enabling better development of professional knowledge and skills, and creating more opportunities for identifying issues.

Early identification of developmental issues

Sites that had a strong relationship between kindergarten and primary schools enabled primary schools to better prepare for children arriving in Prep with developmental issues. Generally, these children were identified earlier at co-located sites.

At co-located sites, there were also more opportunities for early, positive contact with families of children at risk. Co-located services created more touch points with families through MCH, playgroups, families services, early learning and kindergarten. These opportunities helped professionals to identify issues, provide support and develop trust with families. Services were able to better engage with families to address the issues on which they might be vulnerable.

Early detection depended on a knowledgeable and skilled workforce with a capacity to detect developmental issues and to act on those concerns. The workforce needed an understanding of their own skills, and formal or informal referral pathways, and inter-professional connections to enable them to identify, follow up and refer.

Co-located sites that had significant capital investment and a well-planned physical environment fostered better client engagement and interactions between staff. These activities cost less at such sites, and were less complex to carry out.

For disadvantaged families, at co-located sites there was greater familiarity with services and staff from increased contact, positive referral by services to each other, and reduced costs of access including time, travel and convenience.

These sites also reduced transport and time costs, and regulatory barriers (excursion permissions) enabling more frequent contact between kindergarten children and the school and teaching staff. When transition occurred, the process was more seamless, and created a more settled start to school.

There was also opportunity for sharing knowledge between different professionals and creating opportunity for individuals to broaden their understanding of developmental issues and to develop their skills in the area (which was seen to be an area of importance).

Transition to secondary school

At sites with co-located primary and secondary schools, students who were at risk during transition were felt by stakeholders to benefit from continuing their education in a familiar environment, with an existing network of peer and teacher support. There was a concern that children with developmental issues would have less support in other secondary schools.

Sites without co-location

At some sites without co-location, relationships were more tenuous and dispersed, and integration was based on programs (such as transition which required considerable time and exchange). Time, cost and issues in developing relationships were key barriers in these circumstances, which were not faced at co-located sites. These factors may inhibit early identification of developmental issues.

Integration, however, could strongly support early identification of developmental issues. A newly developed early years network (integration) linked to the extended school hub in Frankston North was reported to be likely responsible for a significant change in identifying children with a developmental vulnerability before they started school.

Interview: Moe PLACE improvements in identifying development issues early and, social development

Moe PLACE has begun to enjoy success in identifying children's development issues early, and improvements in children's social skills, which stakeholders attribute partly to co-located services. It has been noticeable in Prep at the South Street Primary School.

'At this point, none of the students in Prep that [are being followed up for]... cognitive testing are from Moe PLACE.

'...The [early learning] centre has a broad range of families, so ... that the difference [with these children] is [coming] from the centre.

'We are very, very happy with the cognitive skills of the children coming from Moe PLACE.

'Prior to the centre being built, transition was traumatic for many children. They really struggled with the social component... It's just a dream now because we both work at it all year to make it great.

'The library teacher is over the moon at the behaviour demonstrated by the new cohort of children, ...[particularly] how they are learning to manage themselves, sharing, self-regulation [and] taking care of things. It's really excellent and they've only been at kindergarten for such a short time this year.'



Outcome 2: Improvements in children's early cognitive and social development



The strategic evaluation identified that co-location and integration had an impact on improving children's early cognitive and social development. Changes in children's development were achieved by increasing families' access to and engagement with services, and improving the quality of services. Professional knowledge sharing and improving parenting skills were also part of the picture.

Access and engagement to services

Co-location increased access to services, and the range of services that families could use. Additional services could be offered where professionals thought that they would be of benefit; and families could familiarise themselves with the services available and seek them out because they were all in the same place. Active referral was, however, most likely to engage parents in service use. It built trust between service and families, and helped overcome barriers to participation.

Where integration was working effectively, pathways between programs and other services, offices and campuses were created to assist access and engagement.

Families using co-located services were able to access new services with less apprehension because all the services were located in one place and there was no new site to attend. It is likely that there was increased participation as a result of integration and co-location, and new high quality infrastructure, which translated to families being interested in services, and having a positive perception of services. Integrating community services into new facilities at co-located sites increased the touch points for families to engage with their child's learning, and impact on their cognitive and social development.

Some centres reported that 'new' families were enrolling in kindergarten who had not previously been involved. Two primary schools reported that the number of children who had attended kindergarten in the previous year had increased because of the co-located kindergarten.

At sites without co-location or integration, fewer and less diverse services made it more difficult to engage with parents, particularly with families which experienced complex disadvantage.

Developing parental skills

At one co-located site with integrated services (Doveton), families were able to develop parenting and leadership skills through supported playgroups and formal courses. There were also opportunities to socialise with each other. This site had a very high level of parent engagement through volunteering. Other sites also offered parenting programs.

Professional exchange

At co-located sites, primary and early childhood educators were benefiting from the insights of kindergarten teachers particularly around play-based learning.

In general, co-location helped with exchange around learning and teaching, and professional practice. Better understanding between professionals appeared to be contributing to easier transition for children, as well as more effective primary school teaching.

There were also transfers of practice and engagement between kindergartens and long day care centres. Co-location was particularly important in enabling this kind of knowledge transfer. Networking was also used at sites where there was no co-location. It meant that children who were undertaking a second year of kindergarten could engage with the Prep program, which was facilitated by co-location.

Professional relationships

At co-located Integrated Children's Centres (ICCs), there were better relationships between MCH nurses, early childhood educators and kindergartens. MCH nurses could identify and refer as part of these relationships.

Improving the quality of services

Service quality is affected by workforce efficiencies, better access to programs, better infrastructure and resources, and improved communication and co-ordination between services.

More efficient services could invest more time in working with children and professional activities. This occurred at co-located sites with shared administration and reception.

Stakeholders thought that better infrastructure and resources helped support better quality programs. These programs would not have been available in previous locations or sites, and were enabled by co-location. Co-location could deliver a scale of operation that made programs possible, or reduced marginal costs. There was also better knowledge transfer between professionals that led to better program design and delivery.

In some cases co-location enabled services to work together to critique their practices and develop new knowledge to support longer-term service improvement.



Outcome 3: Creating greater aspirations among young people, families and the community



The strategic evaluation identified that co-location and integration were helping to change the aspirations of young people, families and the community. This was a result of building high-quality integrated and co-located facilities that the community viewed with pride; and changing community, and family perceptions of education and the opportunities that education offered to them. New opportunities for engagement and employment were created for families (and other community members) through adult education. For school-aged children, out-of-school programs also provided opportunities for developing skills and engagement.

Developing pride and ownership

At all sites where there had been a significant capital investment, the local community had developed a strong sense of pride in the facilities. Symbolically, the visible investment also signalled to the community the importance of early development and education. Bringing services together on one site also increased their visibility in the community.

At sites where there had been a specific effort to bring in the local community as part of the planning process, to give them a sense of ownership, there was an enhanced sense of pride, and the feeling that the local community had helped make it happen.



Changing perceptions of education

By providing positive perceptions of education, co-location can act as a counterweight to negative community and family perceptions of education, which often stem from poor past experiences.

At sites with co-located early childhood services, kindergartens and schools, children were able to gain a positive experience of a school environment before they formally started school. This positive experience of school challenged other family members' earlier negative experiences of school. In communities where a large number of people had negative experiences education, the positive interaction with school that co-location provided for a new generation of children was particularly important.

Co-located sites also offered families a wide range of services and more families used the services more often. At these sites, there was greater opportunity for family interaction with school because they visited the site more often for other services.

Co-location and integration may also contribute to the perception that there are relatively smaller steps, and transitions, between educational settings (kindergarten, primary school, secondary school), and that it is a manageable progression. Where a TAFE campus was located on site, there was an even more long-term perception of continuity in education.

For co-located primary and secondary schools, educational pathways may be clearer to families because of the familiar physical environment, as well as increased opportunities for interaction with other students who are at a later point in the pathway. There may also be a sense of opportunity from having a greater range of specialised facilities, equipment and resources on site. Some of these issues are enabled by co-location but could be undertaken on separate sites, for example, by schools sharing facilities based at different sites such as kitchens or computer labs.

For refugee families, educational aspirations were affected by their experience overseas. Their priorities immediately after arrival in Australia were health, security and safety, rather than education. Stakeholders believed that if refugee families were provided with skilled support, their educational aspirations would change over time.

Workforce participation

As a result of adult learning programs, volunteering and extended or onsite child care, some families were better able to participate in the community and services, and to have a greater participation in the economy. Adult learning programs could lead to employment, volunteering could provide skills, and child care could enable workforce participation.

Integration of long day care and Maternal and Child Health (MCH) services also assisted parents to participate in the workforce, particularly parents with kindergarten-age children. One centre had reconfigured its books to enable families to visit MCH before childcare, or school drop off.

Adult learning and out-of-school opportunities for students

Co-location and integration created diversified learning opportunities for children, strengthening their self-esteem. There was an enormous range of opportunities, from international study tours, to 'try a trade' programs, to helping to run a community café and sports. Children who were exposed to a greater diversity of experiences in or beyond the school were reported to hold higher aspirations for their future achievement.

Co-location and integration have also created opportunities for parents and the community to become more involved in their own learning and professional development. For them, an equally broad range of programs was often available, including healthy eating, leadership training and adult education which could lead to a career in community services or aged care.

Stakeholders reported that some families who had access to education and training through co-located or integrated services, had subsequently pursued further education, employment and increased their social participation.

Outcome 4: Effective use of community resources and infrastructure



The strategic evaluation identified that co-location and integration made a positive contribution to the effective use of community resources and infrastructure. Co-location made increased use of facilities possible. When the facilities were being used effectively:

- more groups used the facilities more often than before
- a wider range of groups used the facilities
- revenue was raised from users of the facilities or services or there were social or other benefits from the use of the facilities
- there were cost savings through shared facilities.

Use of facilities and services

Facilities shared by multiple services, such as meeting rooms, libraries and gymnasiums, were used by more clients more often. Early years services co-located with schools, for example, accessed libraries, gymnasiums or sports facilities. Specialised facilities in secondary schools, such as art rooms and kitchens, were also used more often.

For small organisations or groups with few resources, co-location also enabled them to access school facilities out-of-hours, adding to the notional cost-effectiveness of school facilities. These organisations and groups also used specialised facilities more often because they were able to access them more easily.

Having a 'one stop shop' reduced the transport and time costs associated with users accessing multiple services, and reportedly helped families familiarise themselves with services and staff, making them less anxious about seeking help.

Overall, the benefits were probably greater for service users, rather than service owners, because service users saved costs such as transport hire as a result of co-location. Co-location also brought shared services and equipment within reach, including buses, and play and sports equipment.

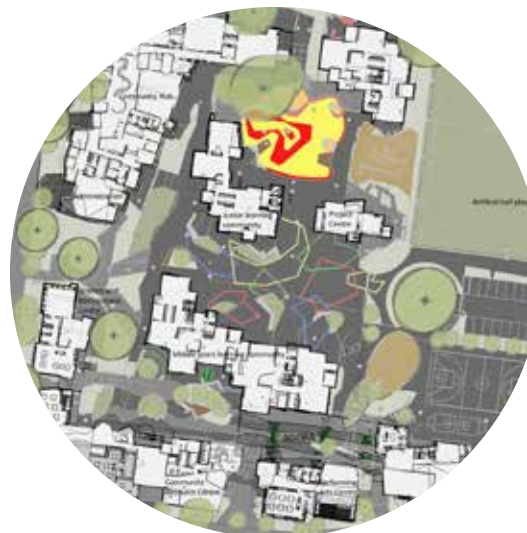
Productivity

Shared administrative services and single reception points for multiple facilities allowed more client time for professionals, including educators with children, particularly for early childhood services.

Co-location or proximity was highly likely to reduce the costs, both real and perceived, of integrating related services.

Co-location also allowed for increased interaction between professionals, providing formal and informal opportunities to exchange information, transfer knowledge and improve relationships. This enhanced their understanding of other professional's practice and perspectives, particularly in early years services.

Co-located and integrated services also developed more effective referral systems for service users.



Cost-benefits

Combining purchasing power allowed co-located services greater leverage for negotiating pricing on utilities and service contracts.

Cost-sharing between early childhood services and schools enabled economies of scale. Costs were shared for cleaning, maintenance, telecommunications and utilities, where there were similar requirements for services, and where there were no regulatory or funding barriers.

Co-location also reduced operating costs by allowing services to operate through a shared reception, as well as share administrative services and memberships of professional bodies.

Revenue, social or other benefits

New facilities such as function rooms allowed co-located services new revenue raising opportunities.

There were also benefits for programming. Early years services, for example, were able to offer a range of services that were based in their co-located primary schools, which they would not otherwise have been able to do.



Acronyms and notes

Acronyms

AEDC – Australian Early Development Census, previously the Australian Early Development Index.

BSRP – Broadmeadows School Regeneration Project

DET – Department of Education and Training.

DEECD – Department of Education and Early Childhood Development, the name of the Department of Education and Training from 2010-14

DHHS – Department of Health and Human Services.

DHS – Department of Human Services. In 2015, the Department of Human Services merged with the Department of Health to form the Department of Health and Human Services.

ECEC – Early childhood education and care.

ECED – Early childhood education and development

ESH – Extended school hub. An integrated network of schools serving a community.

ESS – Extended schools services. An integrated network of schools and other services including early childhood and family services.

ICC – Integrated children’s centre. A co-located centre, potentially including early childhood services, long day care, Maternal and Child Health, early learning and kindergarten.

LDC – Long day care

LGA – Local government area

MCH – Maternal and Child Health

NAPLAN – National Assessment Program, Literacy and Numeracy

OECD – Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development

PEW – Parent engagement worker

PS – Primary School

PSD – Program for Students with a Disability

ROI – Return on investment.

See notes for a discussion of the way in which ROI is calculated.

SC – Secondary College

SES – Socio-economic status

TAFE – Technical and further education

VCAL – Victorian Certificate of Applied Learning

VCE – Victorian Certificate of Education

VELS – Victorian Essential learning Standards

VET – Vocational education and training

YPCC – Yuille Park Community College

Notes

Strategic evaluation

The Performance and Evaluation Division of DET undertook a strategic evaluation of co-location and integration projects, sampling six sites and reviewing other sites which were not co-located or did not practice integration by way of comparison. This resource is a summary of this evaluation.

Return on investment

A return on investment analysis quantifies the value of outcomes on the basis of expenditure and return. Data for a return on investment analysis for co-location and integration projects was not always available and some outcomes were not readily quantifiable.

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