

**Department of
Education and Early
Childhood Development**

***Evaluation of the
Extended School Hub
Pilot Project***

**Final Evaluation Report:
Executive Summary
May 2013**



I & J Management Services

Department of Education and Early Childhood Development

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A. BACKGROUND

1. Introduction

Extended schools and the partnerships they bring ‘are seen as one of the most promising levers for systemic reform of the school system which is creative, enduring and based on measurable results’. Extended schools have been associated with a number of potential and proven school improvements, including better achievement for a large number of students, greater school capacity for innovation, improved provision and services, and a broader role for schools in their communities.¹

In 2010, as part of the Smarter Schools National Partnership for Low SES School Communities, the Department of Education and Early Childhood Development (DEECD) commenced a two-year pilot of extended schools – the Extended School Hub (ESH) Pilot Project. The Pilot Project aimed to improve learning and development outcomes in schools with low socio-economic status by providing resources to strengthen partnerships and connections between schools, families, community-based agencies and business. These partnerships were to provide a platform from which activities and services aimed at reducing barriers to learning, and thereby creating opportunities for improved student outcomes, could be delivered to students, their families and the local community.

Beyond the local benefits of trialing extended school approaches, the main purpose of the ESH Pilot was to better understand whether and how extended schools could improve student outcomes, and what factors in the school and community environment and the extended school model contributed to or impeded achievement of those outcomes. Testing and examination of these models was to provide crucial input for future development of strategic and sustainable extended schools.

The ESH Pilot was originally funded for two years, but this was later extended to three years. Participating schools are continuing to use outstanding pilot funds to support extended school approaches into 2013.

2. Context

There is strong consensus that schools cannot (and should not be expected to) do the work of improving student outcomes alone, and that this is particularly true in schools serving communities characterised by socio-economic disadvantage. Extended schools harness the full capacity of their community to collectively address the issues facing its children and young people.

“No school can prosper without drawing guidance and strength from the capabilities and needs of its community. Effective interaction, support and working together to find solutions must go beyond the school gates to the communities in which our schools operate.

“Through integration with parents, the local community, business, government and community organisations, schools can lift outcomes for their students. They can tap into expertise, facilities, resources and ideas, and open up pathways for students. Engaging with our schools also presents a wide range of opportunities for community partnerships.” Victoria as a Learning Community²

Consistent with this, the ESH Pilot was underpinned by a number of fundamental principles:

¹ Black, R. Lemon, B. & Walsh, L. (2011) *Literature review and background research for the National Collaboration Project: Extended Service School Model*, Foundation for Young Australians, 2011.

² *Victoria as a Learning Community*, Extended Special Lecture by the Minister for Education – Melbourne Graduate School of Education, 2011.

- extended schools are developed using a locally driven (or place-based) approach, which is ‘assets based’ in that it utilises the strengths already existing in communities to build the extended school
- the cornerstone of the extended school work is the collaborative partnerships formed with a wide range of government agencies, nonprofit organisations, educational institutions, businesses and members of the community
- parents, schools and community stakeholders are active and complementary partners in children’s learning
- extended schools build sustainability through strengthened partnerships, local commitment and leadership, and building capacity in the local community.

3. ESH Pilot Project

The ESH Pilot Project operated at four sites across Victoria. Extended School Hubs were established from the beginning of 2010 at Geelong North, Sandhurst and Wyndham, with Partnership Coordinators commencing between February and July 2010. Planning work at a fourth Hub in Frankston North commenced in mid-2010, however, Hub activities did not begin until a Partnership Coordinator was employed in February 2011. A total of nine schools were involved in the pilot (originally 17 schools before school re-generation projects and school mergers occurred).

ESH	Participating Hub schools
Frankston North	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Aldercourt PS ▪ Mahogany Rise PS ▪ Monterey SC
Geelong North	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Northern Bay College (formed in 2010 through re-generation of eight schools)
Sandhurst	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Eaglehawk PS ▪ Lightning Reef PS (opened in 2011 on the grounds of the former Comet Hill PS) ▪ Eaglehawk SC
Wyndham	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Wyndham Park PS (formed through the merger of Glen Orden PS and Glen Devon PS) ▪ Galvin Park Secondary College (from 2013 known as Wyndham Central SC)

The selection of each of the pilot sites was undertaken by the Department’s Education Partnerships Division (EPD) in conjunction with Regional Network Leaders and Regional Directors. The selection involved consideration of:

- the socio-economic status of the school community
- the capacity to connect significant government and non-government effort in the area (e.g. Neighbourhood and Community Renewal, Better Youth Services)
- the readiness of principals and the school to support the involvement of external agencies
- the willingness of the school to undertake community and/or family engagement initiatives.

Being from lower SES communities, the selected pilot sites share some common characteristics. Compared with state averages they tend to have relatively:

- | | |
|--|--|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ more low income families ▪ more families experiencing generational disadvantage ▪ more unemployed persons ▪ more one-parent families ▪ more people who left school at an early level | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ fewer people with formal qualifications ▪ more people with little training working in unskilled occupations ▪ fewer children who are developmentally on track (based on the Australian Early Childhood Development Index – AEDI) ▪ lower student learning outcomes (based on NAPLAN results). |
|--|--|

4. A dynamic environment

At the same time as the pilot was occurring, the extended school pilot sites were also (as it transpired) experiencing a number of other significant events. For example:

- a major school regeneration project in Geelong North with Northern Bay College bringing together five primary schools and three secondary colleges from 2011.
- the merger of Glen Devon PS and Glen Orden PS in 2010 to a new site at Wyndham Park PS.
- Uncertainty about a proposed school restructure at Eaglehawk PS.
- major flood-related structural damage to Galvin Park SC that closed parts of the school
- Galvin Park's 2013 re-launch as Wyndham Central SC
- appointment of new school principals at Northern Bay College (2010), Wyndham Park PS (2010), Galvin Park SC (2011), Eaglehawk PS (2012), Eaglehawk SC (2010) and Monterey SC (2010).

These events influenced the evolution of the Hubs and also contributed to the unique extended school models that emerged at each location.

5. Evaluation of the ESH Pilot Project

Evaluation was built into the ESH Pilot Project from the outset. A formative and summative evaluation commenced in January 2010 during project development and continued through the life of the project. The evaluation's objectives were to examine:

- What potential the extended school approach might hold for improving educational outcomes?
- What extended school models work, where and under what circumstances?

The key questions addressed through the evaluation have been:

- How can the planning process ensure the needs of school staff, families, students and the school community are inclusively identified?
- What are the characteristics and strengths of the partnerships formed between schools, business and community-based organisations? And how do they add value to the operations and results achieved by the pilot projects?
- What governance models are effective in supporting planning and operation of the extended school models?
- What are the impacts of the extended school on students, families, school and the community? That is, what are the intermediary factors that improve short and long term learning outcomes (for instance, attendance, student wellbeing, retention, behaviour) and the impact on short term gains for students evident in improved literacy and numeracy skills?
- What are the enablers, processes and key components/principles that are required to successfully implement an extended schools model?

The evaluation methodology included several integrated streams of activity including process evaluation, Social Network Analysis and impact analysis. These are described in more detail in the full final evaluation report.

B. PROCESS

6. Establishment and planning

In the early stages of the pilot, EPD established a planning process to assist the Hubs to inclusively identify the needs of school staff, families, students and the school community, and to define the staffing and operating models and governance structures to be adopted. Discussion papers were

prepared, community consultation workshops occurred, priorities were established and action plans were developed. Local governance structures were put in place to facilitate executive decision-making, in some cases leveraging existing forums.

While each of the Hubs developed their own set of priorities and expressed these in their own way, there was significant alignment between the priority areas identified for each of the Hubs. This has provided a unifying force across the Hubs over the last three years and a useful base from which to compare and learn from the activities and services delivered by the Hubs.

At the highest level, two essential features were identified for the Hubs:

- children, young people and their families have access to a broad range of learning, health and wellbeing opportunities
- young people, parents, schools and community are partners in lifelong learning.

The five specific priority areas that emerged from the Hubs' planning processes were:

1. Supporting school readiness/transitions
2. Enhancing student engagement in learning
3. Encouraging family and community involvement in student learning
4. Ensuring schools are friendly, inclusive and approachable
5. Providing increased opportunities that improve student health and wellbeing.

This is not to suggest that the Hubs placed equal emphasis on each of these priorities. One of the distinguishing characteristics of the Hubs is that they invested their resources in quite different activities and services – reflecting the distinct needs and priorities of their communities.

Hub Coordinators were recruited, and over time outreach workers and staff were added to the teams to meet specific implementation requirements. Geelong North and Sandhurst recruited staff to play critical roles in the direct provision of services to students and families. At Wyndham and Frankston North services are delivered largely through partner organisations and third parties, and the Hub team focuses on partnership development and service implementation.

Wyndham also varied from the other pilot sites in having employed The Smith Family (TSF) as a lead agency through a service agreement, whereas the other Hub Coordinators were employed through the DEECD Regional Office and reported to the Regional Network Leader.

The effectiveness of this establishment phase at each of the pilot sites has emerged over the last two to three years as the Hubs have evolved. Each pilot has its strengths and weaknesses in terms of strategic focus, governance, and school and community engagement.

Evaluation of the processes adopted during this stage of the pilot projects highlight a number of areas where processes were generally highly effective:

- care was taken to recruit the right people to the Partnership and Implementation Coordinator positions – this included ensuring Coordinators had the range of skills required for the job and the commitment and enthusiasm to drive the pilot projects
- the discussion documents produced by the Pilot Sites were valuable as an introduction to the idea of extended schools and how these might look in the particular community
- the original planning workshops were well promoted and attracted a diverse range of people from the community, with ample opportunity for participants to express their opinions and discuss issues

- the workshops delivered practical outcomes in terms of specification of Hub priorities and recommended governance structures.

The evaluation also suggests that with the benefit of hindsight it would be useful for any future extended school to consider the need in the establishment phase to:

- more strongly engage and lock in the support of all participating school principals for the extended school approach
- employ coordinators early so that they could have an active role in community consultation and priority setting activities, which would also have given them a head start in building community connections
- streamline and clarify coordinator and team employment and reporting structures to ensure that these support efficient development and implementation of the extended school approach
- ensure that extended school teams collectively possess or have access to knowledge and expertise in areas of specific importance to their work (e.g. partnership and brokering, community capacity building, community development, service implementation and innovation, strategic planning and evaluation)
- establish mechanisms for ongoing community consultation and feedback, which is important for ensuring that support offered by the extended school remains relevant to its community, whose needs may change over time
- recognise the need for flexibility in planning and delivery to allow for strategic, timely and opportunistic responses to a dynamic school and community environment while not resiling from necessary accountability requirements.

7. Forming collaborative partnerships

Following the formative stage, the Hub teams then set about the task of forming collaborative relationships with partner organisations, networks, Councils and other key stakeholders. They engaged with schools and school staff through onsite location, alignment of Hub activities with school strategies and plans, direct involvement of school staff in planning and delivery of Hub activities, and in one case becoming a member of the School Council. They engaged the community through activities and events that initially sought to promote the Hub and showcase the intent of the extended school. The strength and depth of partnerships formed by the Hubs (discussed below) is a testament to the effectiveness with which this was carried out.

C. THE FOUR PILOT SITES

8. Similarities and differences

To understand the roll-out of programs in each of the four pilot sites, the effectiveness of their governance and leadership structures, and the impact of the Hubs on students, families, communities and partner organisations, a few key features of each site should be noted.

Frankston North

The approach taken by the Frankston North Hub was to develop an environment (within the context of its strategic priorities and goals) in which extended school activities could flourish and develop in an organic manner. Since its inception the Frankston North Hub had a focus on community development and local ownership of Hub programs. This is reflected in the recruitment of a Hub Parent Engagement Worker who helps bring grass roots support to the work of the Hub and connects the community – especially parents – to Hub operations. Through this approach the Hub is aiming to support sustainable development of a stronger community, that is, one that is less fragmented and more coherent and connected.

Central features of the Frankston North Hub are the importance given to building on activities already happening in the community, including leverage of Community Renewal and Council initiatives and collaboration with organisations working in Frankston North prior to the Hub's commencement to align existing activities, and an emphasis on ensuring sustainability and best practice through networks such as the Early Years and Wellbeing Network.

The Hub has worked to improve the transition points for students, that is, early years' education settings to school, primary to secondary school, and secondary school to employment, further education or whatever comes next. Initial work has focused on early years' activities, with relationships later formed and strengthened through the Frankston North Early Years Network. The early years focus has been accentuated by the strong interest of the two primary schools in the extended school approach.

Geelong North

The underlying theme of the Geelong North Hub at Northern Bay College has been building aspirations and capability in parents, students, teachers and the local community. The work of the Hub has been organised around four key objectives – each of which links to the Hubs' priority areas.

1. improving school readiness for 'junior' students
2. assisting parents to become more involved in their children's early learning experiences
3. ensuring the College is student and family friendly
4. creating an aspirational approach across the College.

The Hub recruited staff, primarily with an educational background, but also with specialist skills in particular areas such as art and music, child development and parent engagement, and placed them in schools to play critical roles in the direct provision of services to students and families. The Hub also formed close connections with school staff to progress its initiatives. Over time the Hub became more active in developing partnerships with a wider range of organisations across Geelong, and of all the Hubs it now has the largest and most diverse partnership base. But still the main connector across projects has been the Hub Coordinator.

Sandhurst

The Sandhurst Hub can be characterised as having an education-based approach to extended school provision that is informed by a good understanding of and connection to community. The Hub Coordinator has worked as a principal in the Eaglehawk area and has well established relationships with principals at the participating schools and civic leaders.

A team of outreach workers, all with teacher qualifications and located in schools, play critical roles in the direct provision of services to students and families. They engage with, influence and develop partnerships between key stakeholders, and work with the principals and staff to identify and support extended school activities – which generally also attract funding support from the Hub. Support for Hub projects has at times been provided through part-time engagement of teachers at the schools.

The focus of the Hub has been on transition issues, raising school community aspirations, and providing support for young people disengaged from conventional school settings. A particular feature of the Hub has been the use of data to better understand these issues (e.g. primary school transitions) and inform conversations about how they might be addressed. The Sandhurst Hub has also sought to strengthen links with the local community. The 3556 magazine provided opportunities for student interaction with and involvement in community. The active business network in Eaglehawk and Bendigo also provided a platform for business engagement with the Hub.

One of the biggest challenges for the Hub has been the uncertainty around the amalgamation of the two primary schools and Bendigo North PS. Lobbying from the Eaglehawk community saw the decision to retain Eaglehawk PS in 2011 as an autonomous school with its own principal and school council.

Wyndham

Under the leadership of The Smith Family, the Wyndham ESH had a strong focus on opening up the school to the community, connecting with the community to tap into the rich networks that exist, and bringing community resources into the school. Development of collaborative partnerships and suitable governance structures to ensure the sustainability of the extended school has been central to the Wyndham approach. This focus emerged early on in Hub discussions and case study documents produced for the Wyndham Planning Workshop which argued:

- the critical importance of dedicated leadership structures to give time and status to the management of activities
- the value in having a lead agency that is recognised and trusted by the local community to coordinate program elements and broker the relationships among different stakeholders
- the importance of fostering strong partnerships where partners adopt a collective philosophy, share their resources and expertise, and work together to design community schools and make them work.

This thinking has guided the governance and partnership work of the Wyndham Hub, over and above any specific focus on particular programs or services.

9. Services, activities and programs

The Hubs have involved significant innovation in and transformation of service delivery to students and the school community. They have to varying degrees become an integral part of each school or cluster of schools that works through and for its community to contribute to improved student learning and wellbeing outcomes.

In the early stages the Hubs chose to conduct lots of relatively small scale activities – demonstrating a visible action orientation to engage students, families and partners, as well as delivering some ‘quick wins’ to establish momentum and buy goodwill to explore development of longer-term strategic initiatives. Over time the Hubs began to establish stronger community relationships and partnerships, to better understand their communities and the challenges they faced, and to improve their program planning and delivery processes. As this occurred the Hubs were able to more clearly define their priorities and expected results. This provided the context for a greater focus on ‘high-yield’ activities that would add value in the longer term.

Monitoring data captured by the Hubs shows that across the four pilot sites between July 2011 and September 2012 there were:

- around 90 different Hub programs and activities
- around 90 partner organisations who led or supported program delivery
- more than 100,000 student, family and community engagements with Hub programs
- more than 150,000 hours in participation.

On average, this represents 120 engagements and 160 hours of participation on every school day at each of the four Hubs over the last two years – students, staff, parents and families, community members and partner providers extending the schools into communities through a blend of instructional, developmental and enrichment activities designed to meet the needs of each local community.

Some activities were one-off, and lasted only an hour so. Some were sustained over 18 months and individual participants accumulated more than 50 hours of engagement. Some were whole school activities, while others targeted much smaller cohorts (e.g. Year 8 girls, Koorie students, Karen refugees, high potential students). There were relevant activities for students at all year levels, with school staff, families and carers and members of the local community having opportunities to actively engage with Hub projects – as participants, volunteers, leaders or an audience.

Some activities were primarily focused on academic outcomes or education pathways, while breakfast clubs (for example) directly supported students' health and wellbeing. Many programs were activity-based to encourage children to explore an interest and connect with one another, while others sought to build the capacity of families and carers. For example:

- Playing Together – structured play activities which develop educational concepts
- VICSEG Playgroup – playgroup for refugee families offered at the school
- Homework Club – homework assistance and building social engagement
- Try a trade – trade-based workshops in cooking, engineering and other fields
- Passions and Pathways – career education program facilitated with a range of business and industry partners
- Teddies on Tour – bus trips for pre-school age children and their parents to help break the cycle of social isolation
- Outreach programs – to help secondary students who are disengaged from traditional schooling return to formal schooling or other educational pathways
- SPIRE – supporting high achieving students to transition to university or other tertiary education.

Each pilot site determined its own priorities in response to local needs. For example, Frankston North provided relatively more opportunities to improve student health and wellbeing, and its approach to family engagement was a stand-out. Geelong North had a relative emphasis on school readiness and transition, while some of its more influential projects targeted engagement of high potential/high performing students. Transitions, raising aspirations and student engagement were a focus of activity in Sandhurst, while the Wyndham ESH had the strongest emphasis on community engagement in schools and improved student mental health.

The key point to be made from a summary review of the services, programs and activities that have been facilitated through the extended school pilot sites in the last two years is that they exhibit enormous diversity – in priority area, in activity type, in target audience, and in size, duration and frequency. They also exhibit enormous diversity in service delivery and resourcing models including:

- purchasing programs or equipment or directly contracting in service provision
- providing professional learning to school staff and/or training for community members
- initiating, seeding and proving start-up projects before regular financing was secured
- providing volunteer opportunities for families, community groups and businesses
- facilitating and/or brokering school-partner arrangements.

And through a mix of formal and informal approaches the Hubs established co-operative relationships with a variety of partner groups:

- service and community sector organisations and charities
- community organisations and centres
- service clubs
- sporting, recreational and special interest groups

- business and industry
- education providers and centres (e.g. universities, TAFEs, Learn Local providers)
- State and Commonwealth government departments, agencies and initiatives
- local government
- individuals.

D. MEASURING IMPACT

10. Partnerships, network and governance

The four Extended School Hubs have brought into collaboration a rich diversity of partners from across a range of sectors, opening up the possibility for enacting real change. By the end of 2012 the Social Network Analysis identified a total of about 300 people from 150 organisations working as partners with the Hubs. More than one third of these partners were involved in sharing strategic information and supporting day to day operations, providing a strong connection between the planning and development of services and their implementation on the ground.

Change over time

In the initial stages of the ESH Pilot Project the Hubs were focused on strategic establishment i.e. establishing priorities, plans and partnerships. In the later years there was a shift in focus towards day to day activities and implementation of extended school programs.

Mapping of the strategic and operational networks at each pilot site show that there has been significant growth over time in the number of connections between partners at both the strategic and day to day level.

All of the Hubs experienced significant turnover in individual and organisational partners, reflecting both the dynamic nature of the community sector and changes in Hub activities. This created a need for Hub staff to constantly introduce and induct new people into the extended school approach.

Hub staff continue to play a major role in supporting the Hubs' strategic and day to day operations. However, the maturing of the Hubs has also seen a strengthening of the pivotal roles played by individuals from other partner organisations – most often schools. In Sandhurst, Wyndham and Frankston North some school principals are now linking to a more diverse range of stakeholders, demonstrating greater connectivity between schools and from schools out to community-based agencies, local business and industry. An increase over time in the number of mutually reinforcing relationships in each Hub suggests increased network strength and resilience.

Schools are now beginning to value and see the importance of the partnerships formed through the extended school approach. In some of the Hub schools these partnerships are becoming an accepted part of the school community as principals encourage and empower others within the school to participate in the partnerships.

Network characteristics

The networks at each of the pilot sites are of a unique size, structure and composition. For example, the Wyndham ESH has an experienced well-connected not-for-profit organisation, The Smith Family, as a lead agency. The notable feature of the Wyndham Hub is the multiple layers of connections between many different people, organisations and sectors. The network displays strength through its breadth and diversity, but also through multiple and reinforcing connections that are independent of the Hub and not reliant on particular individuals. Over the last twelve months the Wyndham Hub has focused on strengthening relationships between partners who are central to the Hub's work.

At Geelong North and Sandhurst the number of organisations involved in the extended school work almost doubled over time. This is largely explained by a significant ramping up of activity from mid-2011 to the end of 2012. At Geelong North organisations added in this period include local businesses, neighbourhood houses and community centres, community service organisations and representation from the high profile G21 strategy group. At Sandhurst there has been growing partnerships with business and industry, TAFEs and schools outside those participating directly in the ESH.

At both Geelong North and Sandhurst much service provision is through the Hub's project officers and outreach workers located within the schools. Their educational backgrounds help to develop trust and confidence within the participating schools. However, this reliance on Hub staff means that many activities do not involve development of partnership between the schools and external partner organisations. There is then the potential for the Hub's work to fragment around a series of activities and less sustainability of the extended school approach when the pilot ends.

The Frankston North Hub is distinguished by its focus on community development and capacity building. Grass roots involvement in the Hub is encouraged, and the Hub is building on the community's strengths and assets, emphasising the central role schools can play in building stronger and more inclusive communities. The issue is that this type of work takes time and that intermediary outcomes are hard to measure

Governance structures and leadership

Appropriate governance models are necessary for place-based initiatives in identifying local priorities, providing a mandate to address these, and driving local coordination of service delivery. Effective governance supports ownership, transparency, accountability and sustainability.

Within the extended school model it was seen as important for the community to have a say in the design of governance structures and how the community would participate in decision-making. The community workshops held in the early stages of the pilot project provided one of the mechanisms for this to happen.

The pilots have examined governance structures that engage more people from outside the school in decision-making related to student engagement, well-being, learning and support. These structures have tended to be loose and operate more like a reference than a decision-making group – providing operational support for Hub initiatives and an information sharing forum. This has led to informal executive decision-making falling to the Hub Coordinator and a few stakeholders, such as the school principals. Consequently, community input to decision-making has occurred largely through involvement in individual Hub projects. The key issue with this approach is that decision-making is less transparent, there is reduced opportunity for community input into decisions, and there is limited shared responsibility for Hub outcomes.

An exception to this is the Wyndham ESH which established a governance structure based on recommendations of the community. The governance structure involves a small Executive Group and a Partnership Group (with wide ranging representation from partner agencies, schools and other stakeholders including parents) to represent the community and drive local engagement. While early on the Executive Group tended to adopt a more directive and initiating role, this started to change towards the end of 2012 with the Partnership Group now taking on the role of executive decision-making. There are expectations that this will provide greater opportunities for community input.

Key success factors

There is no perfect extended school network design. But the Social Network Analysis suggests that some of the processes adopted across the pilot sites have made a significant contribution to the effective development of extended school partnerships:

- linking to existing initiatives
- establishing partnerships with a purpose
- carefully selecting partners and identifying mutual benefits
- establishing good partnership processes
- building partnering capability.

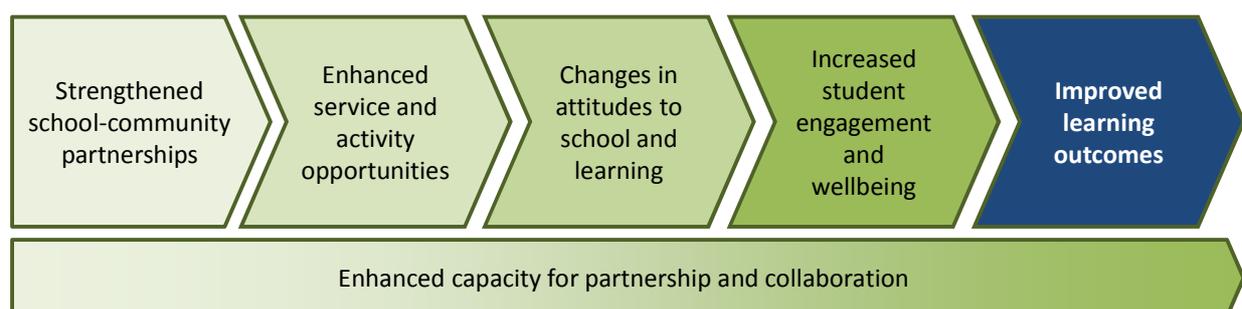
The challenges faced in successfully maintaining effective partnerships included:

- the long term nature of the work
- the constancy of change
- the complexity of cross-sectoral work and the need to establish shared agendas
- locking in principal support
- involving parents and the community in school activities.

11. Service impact

It takes time to have an impact in areas where there are complex, multidimensional and interconnected social and environmental challenges such as educational disadvantage and income inequity. As Tony Vinson puts it, “The consolidation of disadvantage over decades cannot be reversed in a year or two ... No absolute time limit can be set for that endeavour, but it will need to be nearer to seven or eight years than the standard two or three.” (2007: 100). Or in the words of a Hub community partner at Frankston North, “Generational poverty needs generational effort.”

The rationale behind the ESH Pilot was that strengthening local capacity for school-community partnerships and collaboration would provide a platform from which targeted activities and services could be developed and delivered that would progressively change attitudes toward school, increase student and family engagement, and ultimately improve student learning outcomes.



The Extended School Hubs have now been operating on average for about three years. In this time they have taken a step-by-step approach to developing activities and services that meet the needs in their communities. However, at this stage this does not represent a critical mass of services available to students and their families across the participating schools – services have tended to be provided for a particular cohort of students, or for a group of students that has a particular need or that share a particular interest.

The scope of the evaluation does not include an analysis of the individual projects that are being delivered in a school. Nor, despite endeavours to do so, has it been possible to quantitatively connect the impact of specific and targeted Hub activities to changes school-level data, and even changes in

school-level data for comparative schools. The significant drop in the proportion of developmentally vulnerable children in Frankston North from 2010 to 2012 (as measured by AEDI) in parallel with the growth of the Hubs' Early Years Network, and the 2012 increase in student motivation at Lightning Reef PS (as measured by the Student Attitudes to School survey) at the same time as the Passion and Pathways project are just two of several examples where these links might be made.

However, in general terms the evaluation has found that the Hub pilots have had a real impact on students, schools, families and communities.

- Students
 - improved school readiness
 - increased engagement in learning and student motivation
 - enhanced education and employment pathways
 - increased literacy and numeracy and VELS progression
- Schools
 - ensuring schools are student and family friendly
 - enriching school environments
 - building staff capability
 - changing attitudes and actions
 - enhancing the capacity to partner
- Families
 - increasing parent engagement in schools and in their child's learning
 - changing parents' attitudes to school
 - increasing opportunities for parent input
- Community
 - increasing community engagement in student programs
 - facilitating and moderating access for community partners to schools.

12. Building sustainability

The evaluation identified a range of practices across the Hubs that support sustainability of extended school activities beyond the duration of the Extended School Hub Pilot Project.

Actions to support sustainability	
Leadership and governance	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Encouraging Principals and other senior stakeholders to take a leadership role within the extended school's governance groups. ▪ Developing suitable governance structures that build the capacity of the members to continue the work of the Hub. ▪ Aligning the Hub's strategic and action plans to the strategies and goals of schools, school councils and partner organisations.
Services, program and activities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Ensuring that the roll-out of extended activities is consistently linked to community needs and complemented and supported the development plans of other service providers across the local area. ▪ Developing and/or strengthening of service networks within the community (e.g. the Early Years Network in Frankston North) that brings together people from different organisations. ▪ Embedding Hub activities back into the school. For example, the SPIRE program has been continued as ASPIRE through the Centre for Teaching Excellence at Northern Bay College. ▪ Creating a position within the school to develop and manage partnership activities. For example, Wyndham Park PS has an Assistant Principal role responsible for community partnerships.
Partnerships	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Building formal, stable and structured partnerships with strong leadership that are able to attract significant and sustained commitment from stakeholders.

Actions to support sustainability	
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Establishing user agreements to formalise partnership arrangements and create a sense of longitudinal commitment and sustainability. ▪ Making explicit the value and benefits of schools working with the community and local organisations in new and positive ways.
Building capacity	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Helping teachers gain experience in extended school approaches that they might carry forward. ▪ Opening up schools to having a wider range of non-teaching staff working in them. ▪ Encouraging community buy-in to the initiative through community participation in workshops, consultation processes and governance groups. ▪ Developing community capacity to partner with the extended school and be a contributor to learning opportunities. ▪ Cultivating strong community advocates who are aware of the Hub's capacity for impact and are able to argue the case for extended services.
Resourcing	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Identifying and securing alternative, stable, long-term, diversified funding and resource streams. In practice this means that an extended school: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – identifies a variety of financing strategies and streams to support its activities (e.g. program partners, operational efficiencies, philanthropy, government grants, user charges) – identifies high profile champions and key senior decision makers at community level who can work to influence and support access to funding – has a plan to pursue and secure this funding – monitors changes in the policy and program environment to see how it can support new directives and agendas.

However, these efforts have not always been successful, with some current programs lacking future funding or being overly reliant on a single individual. The evaluation has concluded that lack of sustainability of activities is more of an issue at the Sandhurst and Geelong North Hubs, where much of the service provision has occurred through the policy officers/outreach workers and has depended on Hub funding. This contrasts with the approach at Wyndham where there has been a major focus on ensuring sustainability of activities into the long-term by delivering these through partner agencies.

E. A BEST PRACTICE EXTENDED SCHOOL MODEL

DEECD's Extended School Hub Pilot Project tested the establishment, implementation and impact of an extended school model in four pilot sites. Within a broad Departmental framework the Hubs adopted a place-based community-led approach to meeting the unique conditions and needs of their local students, families and community.

Having observed and monitored the evolution of the Hubs over the last three years – the things that have worked well and those that have not – what can DEECD take out of the pilots to inform future policy and program decisions to support extended school approaches as a mechanism for improving student outcomes? What features and conditions have contributed to creation of improvement opportunities? And what factors have inhibited the achievement of the intended outcomes?

The short answer is that there is no single structure, form or focus of an extended school. It must be established and allowed to grow within the context of local school and community needs, priorities, resources, capabilities and possibilities.

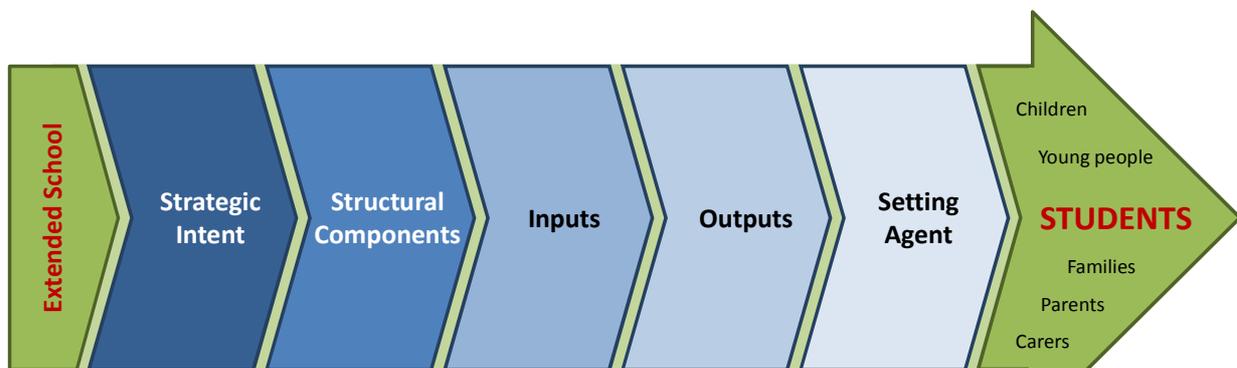
What matters is not the quantum of resources available to an extended school. Although a significant investment of funding is desirable, it is more important that key personnel have time to put in place the processes and infrastructure to allow an extended school to sustainably tap into the combined resources of a school and its community. What matters is not whether the extended school adopts a lead agency model or is led by staff located within a school or community agency. While each

approach has its pros and cons, it is more important that inclusive decision-making structures exist and the extended school has access to the right mix of knowledge, skills and experience. What matters is that the extended school approach be founded on and exhibit a set of key principles and characteristics.

The evaluation of the Extended School Hub Pilot Project suggests that a ‘best practice’ extended school model might incorporate six broad components (as shown in the following diagram and described more completely in the full Extended School Hubs Pilot Project Final Evaluation Report). The model does not describe any of the current Hub sites or schools – it would have been unrealistic to expect any pilot site to chance upon the best combination of governance, leadership, strategic, capability, service delivery, partnership and coordination arrangements. But at the same time, each Hub can claim to be an exemplar in selected aspects of the model.

‘Best Practice’ Extended School Model

An Extended School harnesses the full capacity of its community to improve student learning and wellbeing outcomes



- A clear strategic purpose – responsive to local needs, aligned with local priorities, known and understood by all stakeholders
- Whole community approach
- A range of services, programs and activities
- Systemic approach
- Partnerships
- Leadership and governance
- Effective coordination
- Time to plan, implement and reflect
- Policy and operational support
- Active engagement and participation
- Leverage of capacity and resources
- Mutual benefits
- Sustainability in governance, program delivery and funding

Student-centred focus

An extended school harnesses the full capacity of its community to improve student learning and wellbeing outcomes.

An extended school is **continually focused on students** – including students in school, children transitioning to school, and young people currently disengaged from school. Families and the community contribute to and are beneficiaries of an effective extended school.

The essential ingredient for an effective extended school is the right disposition – a willingness to look outward from the school and into the community to explore collaborative opportunities to improve student outcomes.

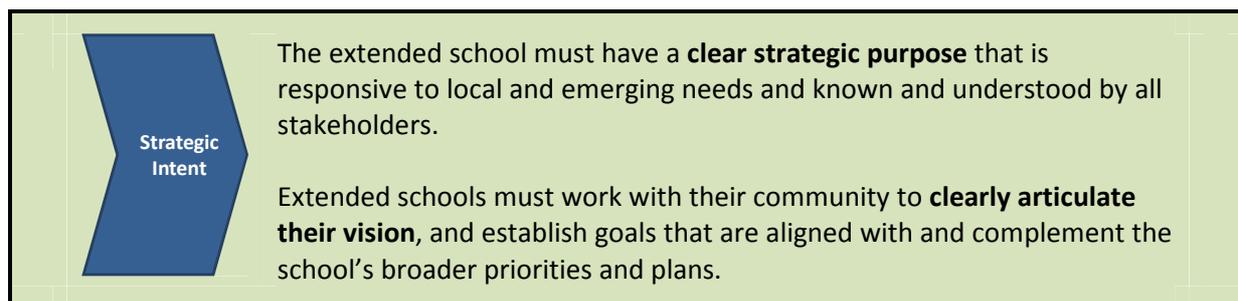
In an effective extended school approach students and their needs are centre stage, and the long-term goal is improving learning outcomes. There are many participants, stakeholders, contributors

and partners in an extended school who play critical roles and derive a range of benefits. But the students – and this includes students in school, children transitioning to and from school and young people currently disengaged from school – are always at the end of the benefit chain.

For example, a breakfast club or dance class directly supports student wellbeing, but among other benefits also encourages students to attend school (where the learning potential is greater than if they do not attend) and through improved nutrition or physical wellbeing leaves them better equipped to concentrate and learn. Similarly, having community and business partners involved in decision-making and service planning increases the school's knowledge, support and resource base, which in turn increases the school's capacity to deliver engaging and effective learning programs for its students.

Schools have not always been seen as welcoming places, but an extended school is not afraid to take a risk to change its approach and these perceptions. And in doing this Hub staff discovered that there is a high level of incumbent community goodwill toward any initiative that seeks to improve outcomes and opportunities for children and young people. The improvement of student learning and wellbeing outcomes was identified as a powerful unifying force. An effective extended school would harness this energy, goodwill, enthusiasm and resource to ensure that students have the best home, school and community environment in which to learn, achieve and grow.

Strategic intent



The extended school must have a **clear strategic purpose** that is responsive to local and emerging needs and known and understood by all stakeholders.

Extended schools must work with their community to **clearly articulate their vision**, and establish goals that are aligned with and complement the school's broader priorities and plans.

The experience of the Extended School Hubs reinforces the seemingly self-evident importance of having a very clear strategic purpose, sharing that purpose with stakeholders and using it regularly as a touchstone to ensure that the extended school and its partners remain focused on achievement of agreed goals. Principals, partners and Hub staff report that where there was a loss of momentum, wavering of commitment or uncertainty about progress this could usually be traced back to a loss of focus on or disagreement about the extended schools' aims.

Clear strategic purpose

DEECD's approach to the Extended School Hubs Pilot Project gave each of the Hubs the freedom to determine its own local priorities, and to do so with input from local stakeholders and consideration of local and emerging community and school needs. Yet the output from all of this localised consultation was a set of themes and priorities that looked similar across each of the four pilot sites and was broadly consistent with goals adopted by other national and international extended school initiatives.

1. Supporting school readiness/transitions.
2. Enhancing student engagement in learning.
3. Encouraging family involvement.
4. Ensuring schools are friendly, inclusive and approachable.
5. Providing increased opportunities that improve student health and wellbeing.

The emphasis at each pilot site may have varied but across the portfolio of programs, services and activities at each Hub there was a strategic intent to address three or four of these priority areas. The evaluation found that the extended school approach is not defined by a particular set of priorities, but by the extent to which the chosen strategic goals and objectives:

- demonstrate understanding of community characteristics, needs, challenges, risks and capabilities
- are formulated collaboratively with the community and authorised by an executive-level governance group, which must include the principals from participating schools, as well as senior community leaders
- address a small number of agreed priority areas (at least in the early stages of operation)
- complement and are connected to school improvement plans and goals (e.g. in areas such as literacy, numeracy, attendance, retention, wellbeing)
- identify expected impacts and performance measures.

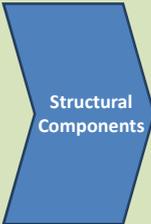
This stage cannot be rushed. It is worth investing time to consult widely and provide a range of ways for the community to have an input. Development of well-expressed and carefully considered discussion papers can be a useful way to get people thinking.

Clearly articulated goals and objectives

As the pilot sites learned from experience, it is not enough to agree on an extended school's strategic purpose. This vision must clearly articulate the extended school's strategic goals and objectives and it must be shared consistently and repeatedly. It should:

- be framed in language that can be communicated to and understood by different stakeholder groups
- outline the rationale for and the local approach to an extended school model
- show the vision responding to the learning and wellbeing needs of the students, children and young people in the local community.

Structural components



The evaluation identified four essential structural components that enable extended schools to more effectively achieve their aims.

1. A place-based asset-based **whole of community approach** that incorporates community capacity building.
2. A diverse **range of services, programs and activities** for students and families provided over extended hours and locations.
3. **A systemic approach** that articulates how these services, programs and activities are intended to bring about the intermediate changes leading in the longer run to improved learning outcomes
4. Effective **partnerships** with community, school staff, educational and business organisations.
5. Committed stable **leadership** and inclusive executive and operational **governance**.

Whatever an extended school's particular strategic priorities might be, the extended school model is built on a platform of four essential structural components that differentiate the contemporary extended school approach from a 'normal' or traditional school model.

Whole of community approach

The extended school model is based on the principle that improving student outcomes requires a whole-of-community approach involving families and carers, school staff, school leaders and the broader community. No person or institution is solely responsible for a student's learning and wellbeing outcomes. Many people and organisations have a role to play. To quote a familiar proverb – "It takes a village to raise a child".

The Hubs found that embracing this principle required all extended school partners to have both a sense of engagement and a sense of commitment. The following methods fostered this approach.

- The extended school tailors its governance structures and programs to embrace the diverse cultures, experiences, and economic and social capacities that exist within the local community.
- The extended school actively involves its community by:
 - including community members in planning, development and decision-making process
 - harnessing community resources and skills
 - delivering programs that build the capacity of community members.
- The extended school engages in restorative conversations to increase community cohesion.
- The extended school raises awareness of and expectations of mutual commitment by families, partners and community organisations.

While each of the pilot sites was in an area of low socio-economic status, this place-based asset-based approach would be appropriate for an extended school in any community context.

Services, programs and activities

An extended school provides, or facilitates provision of, a diverse range of services, programs and activities for students and families over extended hours and locations. There is no template for the exact shape of an extended service school.

What is not negotiable is that all extended school services contribute to achievement of its strategic goals. Therefore, the design and delivery of activities should display the following characteristics (with the Hubs providing numerous examples of these approaches). Extended school services, activities and programs:

- reflect the needs of local students and the community and any changes in this over time
- tackle the root-causes of problems faced by students and the community, not just the symptoms
- are evidence-based. They draw on local, national and international understanding of the effectiveness of programs in meeting students' needs.
- may be delivered: at any location; before, during or after school hours; by any organisation (e.g. school, partner organisation, contracted provider).
- may be targeted at specific student cohorts, members of the school community or community groups, and should involve participants in service design and delivery.
- may be delivered by school staff to encourage deeper impact on student outcomes and embedding of services into school operations.
- may be one off or recurrent, and are subject to regular review.

A systemic approach

The profile of services, programs and activities can change over time in response to the growth in partnerships and the growing maturity and community acceptance of the extended school model. While services may initially focus on practical activities that provide short-term results, and then leverage the engagement that follows from this, the aim is for later activities to address more systemic and complex issues that focus on the extended school's priorities and add longer-term value.

It is about ensuring extended schools are getting the outcomes they want and in the most cost-effective/high impact way.

As extended schools move to this more systemic approach they need to articulate how their actions – services, programs and activities – are intended to produce the intermediate changes (for instance attendance, student wellbeing, retention and behaviour) and short term gains evident in improved literacy and numeracy skills that contribute to improved learning outcomes.

This is about mapping the pathway to change or how extended schools plan to get where they want to go. It helps to get stakeholders to think critically and surface assumptions about how things will work.

Partnerships

An effective extended school fosters collaborative partnerships that are based on mutual engagement and commitment to support achievement of its agreed strategic objectives. The evaluation's Social Network Analysis demonstrated that the factors underpinning effective Hub partnerships were the same as widely accepted principles for creating and sustaining partnerships in any community context. For the Hubs this included:

- having a person responsible for brokering partnerships and coordinating activities
- partners participating in relevant planning and decision-making processes
- integrating the extended school with other local initiatives to avoid service duplication
- streamline existing 'ad hoc' relationships between schools and external groups.

Leadership and governance

Leadership and governance emerged as critical determinants of the relative success (or otherwise) of the pilots. In schools where the school principal was not engaged or had little engagement with the Hub there were some successful individual projects, but there is little sense of optimism that the pilot will have had a sustained effect on school culture, preparedness or capacity to pursue an extended school approach. Where the principal personally embraced the extended school model and sought to embed this way of working into the school culture there is a feeling that there will continue to be future exploration of collaborative opportunities with families and partners beyond the school gate.

Similarly, while sub-optimal governance arrangements did not prevent positive initiatives from occurring, over time the evaluation recognised the importance of providing structures which allowed for:

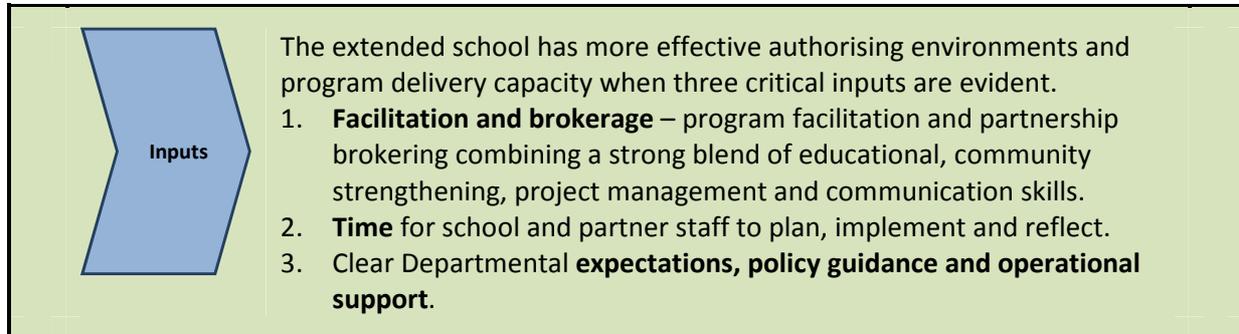
- executive decision-making and a clear authorising environment for actions and resource use
- informed input and advice from a wide variety of community members, organisations and stakeholders
- day to day management and implementation of Hub programs, services and activities.

The Hubs ran more effectively when there was clarity of roles, responsibilities, accountability and authority for decision making. The Final Evaluation Report describes the characteristics of committed stable leadership and inclusive executive and operational governance that school leaders, partners and Hub staff would have liked to have had in place to guide the work of the extended school.

The experience of the pilots suggests that the lead agency model as adopted by Wyndham ESH with The Smith Family has potential advantages (e.g. pre-existing and strong community respect, supportive organisational infrastructure and capability, avoids perception of 'ownership' by the school) and disadvantages (e.g. more resource intensive, additional layer of organisational oversight), and might not be appropriate in all communities. For example, in a community where there are many large agencies (e.g. non-government agencies, Council) already working with different community

groups and with their own established 'territory', it may be difficult to single out one of these as the lead agency for an extended school. In these communities an alternative model might be one where schools and community-based organisations shared lead responsibilities.

Inputs



With a solid extended school infrastructure in place the evaluation suggests that there are three key sets of inputs which enable the extended school to more effectively deliver on its stated intent – a coordination capability, time and operational support.

Facilitation and brokerage

The implementation of the Hubs at each pilot site was heavily influenced by the individual traits and experiences of the Hub Coordinators and staff. This has had both positive and negative consequences where skill sets and preferences variously created and constrained Hub opportunities and directions.

With the benefit of hindsight the evaluation suggests that the 'ideal' skill set the Hub team requires to coordinate, facilitate and support an extended school approach comprises:

- education experience with a solid understanding of the school education sector and the workings of schools
- community strengthening experience with a solid understanding of community development approaches, including community capacity building
- partnership brokering skills and the capacity to engage with a variety of potential stakeholders, including the capacity to work with executive and senior decision makers in the government and non-government sector
- a good understanding of relevant government policy and policy development
- effective project management and organisational skills
- high level liaison and communication skills.

The capacity of extended school staff to manage and coordinate activities was enhanced where:

- their primary role was to broker and facilitate partnerships, not to lead or deliver services
- they were clear about their reporting lines
- they were connected, collaborative and responsive to local needs and circumstances
- they actively sought out, accessed and leveraged partner and community resources and assets.

Time

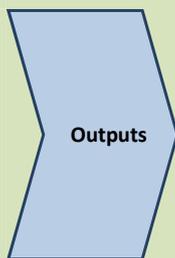
School leaders and staff say that they would like more time to take advantage of the partnership opportunities that exist for their students. The employment of Hub staff in effect bought time for someone to plan, seek out, broker and nurture partnerships – time that school staff would have struggled to find (even if they had the inclination and the right skills).

The findings from the Pilot Project are that time is a more important resource than funds (notwithstanding the obvious point that funds are a means of purchasing time). Many of the Hubs extended school activities did not require a significant direct cash investment. What they needed to get them up and going was time and effort.

Expectations, guidance and support

The pilot sites were at various times aided and abetted by the presence or absence of strategic support and a clear policy framework and guidelines from DEECD's central and regional offices. In an ideal scenario extended schools would operate within an overarching Departmental policy framework and operational guidelines that are based on up-to-date national and international evidence of extended school approaches.

Outputs



Three outputs were highly evident when extended schools were working well.

1. High levels of **active engagement and participation** among students, families, the wider community and partner organisations.
2. Increased **leverage of community capacity** and partner resources in delivery and support of extended school services, programs and activities.
3. **Mutual benefits** for schools, partners and all stakeholder groups.

There is no reason to assume that the types of outputs from the pilot Hubs would not also be generated by any well-functioning extended school.

Active engagement and participation

Students, families and the school community had an opportunity to actively participate in extended school activities, realising the following benefits (subject to the nature and duration of the activity):

- improved student learning outcomes
- improved student physical fitness, nutrition, health and wellbeing outcomes
- increased school attendance
- increased student engagement with learning
- increased student self-esteem and confidence
- improved school readiness and transition outcomes
- increased parental and family engagement with schools and with their child's learning.

It was found that desired levels of engagement and participation are more likely to be achieved where:

- extended school activities are promoted to target audiences (e.g. via school or community newsletters, websites and social media)
- students and the school community are actively encouraged (or incentivised) to participate in and support delivery of extended school activities
- extended school activities are linked to and/or support the curriculum
- extended school activities have the endorsement of school leaders and teachers
- participation profiles are tracked to ensure services are reaching the relevant target groups
- the impact of extended school activities is monitored and celebrated to maintain momentum.

Leverage of community capacity

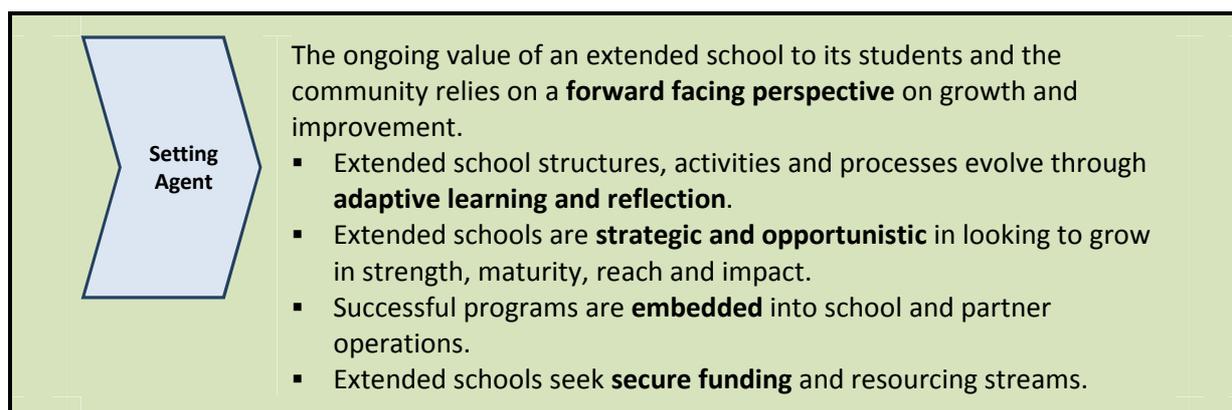
As noted above, the Hubs demonstrate that there is a high level of community goodwill toward any initiative that seeks to improve outcomes and opportunities for children and young people. This often extends to a commitment to ‘having a go’ and making an effort to support the work of the extended school. The Passions and Pathways project at Sandhurst, for example, was instigated by the refusal of local business people to accept that young people in their regional city should be living with a high level of disadvantage.

In an ideal scenario an extended school would be seeking to both enhance the capacity, strengths, and capabilities that already exist in the community and simultaneously leverage all available community resources to optimise the range, quality, volume and value of services offered through the extended school.

Mutual benefits

Schools, partners and stakeholder groups also derive benefits from an extended school approach. The primary benefits for schools are related to improved student learning and wellbeing outcomes, although they can also increase the pool of community resources that are available to support other schools’ objectives. Partners may benefit from being better able to meet their own key goals, objectives and performance indicators. This can occur through having access to new networks and links in the community, and more efficient service targeting, client access and service delivery.

Setting agent



The ongoing value of an extended school to its students and the community relies on a **forward facing perspective** on growth and improvement.

- Extended school structures, activities and processes evolve through **adaptive learning and reflection**.
- Extended schools are **strategic and opportunistic** in looking to grow in strength, maturity, reach and impact.
- Successful programs are **embedded** into school and partner operations.
- Extended schools seek **secure funding** and resourcing streams.

Four key attributes influenced the extent to which the Hubs were successful in maintaining a forward facing perspective concentrated on continuous improvement and program sustainability.

Learning and reflection

An extended school is a creative innovative place. It is shaped by its community and in turn shapes the community in which it exists. An extended school’s structures, activities and processes adapt and evolve through learning and reflection.

Monitoring and evaluation of extended school activities informs regular reporting of progress against goals to executive leaders and project partners. Achievements are celebrated by students, families and schools and demonstrated to current and potential partners to maintain the momentum of the extended school approach. Partnerships are periodically reviewed to ensure partners realise intended benefits. The learnings are a catalyst for incremental improvement and service transformation.

Strategic and opportunistic

In some cases significant change was an inherent feature of the Hubs’ local context (e.g. school regeneration at Northern Bay College). In others it was unexpected and forced upon them (e.g. structural damage at Galvin Park SC). The lesson for the Hubs was not to fight the change but to

accept it, not to lose sight of their goals but to hold them close and look for ways to support their communities. They found resilience in their communities and partners who wanted to get involved, leading to new avenues of engagement and an extension of the Hub network.

Embedded programs

As they looked to embed their activities into school and partner operations in 2012, the Hubs became more aware that an extended school is not a collection of programs and activities but a more inclusive approach to supporting student learning and wellbeing outcomes. Ensuring that a valuable activity was able to continue beyond the life of the pilot was an important outcome. But more important in the long-term was that there be a willingness on the part of school leaders, partners and the executive governance group to keep looking for opportunities.

An effective extended school is an incubator of ideas, programs, activities and partnerships. It brokers relationships, trials approaches, and if they are successful seeks to normalise and embed them into school and partner operations.

Secure funding

Financial resources are a key input for an extended school, especially for their capacity to purchase time to broker, plan and implement activities. As part of their push for sustainability effective extended schools seek to secure relevant funding and resource streams.