

Evaluating Schools as Community Hubs

Janet Clinton¹

¹ University of Melbourne

Contemporary research suggests that students achieve better outcomes when schools, families and the community work together and share responsibility for student learning. Building Connections Project is concerned with increasing social value within communities through understanding the development of Schools as Community Hubs. Understanding the merit, worth and significance of such an undertaking is an essential part of this process. As a community-based initiative, this involves understanding the multi-components that are implemented with diverse target groups across a range of community settings. Assessing the process of program implementation is critical in order to capture and document the realities of planning, development and implementation. This chapter outlines the development of an evaluation framework to document the process, impact and outcomes of SaCH. It argues the evaluation process is essential for not only development but also the ongoing sustainability and future of scaling the development approach.

An evaluation framework is outlined in this presentation that promotes an understanding of a way of working that builds evaluative capacity and sustainability of evidence use. The evaluation framework has its foundation on the premise of building a theory of action and takes into account the complexity and contextual nature of schools. This evaluation framework for Building Connections was developed through consultations with stakeholders, and a review of seminal literature on schools and community engagement and place-based initiatives.

The paper will not only describe the proposed model but also emphasise process, engagement and outcome and will explore the realities of implementation in complex contexts of Schools in order to explain outcomes.