

Beyond the School Gates

Beyond the School Gates aims to engage, build knowledge, skills and confidence to increase the employability and improve the quality of life for young people with intellectual disability and learning differences (15 years+) and their families. This will focus on out of school hours vocation, recreation, health and family support areas of activity. The initiative aims to break down the barriers that prevent these young people from inclusion in the community. For more information go to: <http://www.beyondtheschoolgates.org.au/>



Shrey is a participant in the Cafe Skills program. The picture is taken at Elanora Aged Care cafe, where students do their on-site training.

Governance

The Beyond the School Gates Pilot initiative is driven by Berendale School and coordinated by Bayside Glen Eira Kingston Local Learning and Employment Network (BGK LLEN). It is a Department of Education and Early Childhood Extended School Hub Field Trial, funded under the Smarter Schools National Partnerships initiative. The Pilot has been running since July 2012 and has moved beyond the formative stage to a phase primed to attract philanthropic support for the creation of a sustainable model. This case study focuses on the collaborative model that the project has developed and the approach they intend to take to seek such philanthropic support.

At the core of the Beyond the School Gates governance structure is the Committee of Management (CoM). A lead agency for each area of focus (vocation, recreation, health & wellbeing and family support) is represented on the CoM, which has a strategic intent. It's important, notes Berendale Principal, Paula Barnett, that these CoM members are senior enough to have "a bit of influence", so there are "key people around the table from all stakeholder perspectives". The lead agencies need to be central to the initiative at all times. Other stakeholders are pursued "on a situational basis", says Paula, "for example, if we focus on a specific vocational aspect that we don't currently cover then we might bring on a specific training organisation. A bit like School Council, where you have coopted members".

Parents were initially involved in the Committee, but their involvement became difficult to achieve because of the timing of meetings (when most parents would be working). As a solution to this, parents from schools or with connections to service agencies are encouraged to engage in parent workshops and take on the leading or forming of working groups around specific initiatives (e.g. cross-school discos and social programs). This allows parents to have active and empowered roles and become valuable partners in the initiative's development.

It's fundamental for the success of the program because you continually focus on what you need to achieve all the time. The Committee of Management really sets the stage for the Steering Committee. You can get lost doing this program and that program, so the CoM helps to keep steering, not doing. (Paula Barnett, Principal, Berendale School)

It's innovative because it brings a range of potentially competing lead agencies together to work on the one cause and the recognition that kids with disabilities are valued in the community. That wasn't always the case. And it's the first time that we've focussed on this issue from the school level. (Paula Barnett, Principal, Berendale School)

A Steering Committee also meets once a month to focus on operational matters. The BGK LLEN has been appointed to coordinate the Beyond the School Gates initiative and a representative from the LLEN attends both the CoM and the Steering Committee. This ensures that communication between the two levels is optimised.

Paula Barnett is a firm believer in a clear governance structure:

An important part of Beyond the School Gates is constant review (an evaluation is a key focus of the initiative) and continuous improvement. This includes a review of processes. To this end, Paula notes that at the outset, Beyond the School Gates did not build in the financial aspect of governance. This they are addressing

now through the creation of a finance sub-committee of the CoM, which will include looking at external funding opportunities and focussing on sustainability of the model.

Innovation

The principal, teachers and parents of Berendale School recognised there was a need to better address life and learning opportunities for students with intellectual disabilities and learning differences. Research they had read reported that unsuccessful transition from school (in the first seven years of transition) is an indicator of long term disadvantage.

A scoping study with key stakeholders identified by the school was undertaken by the Australian Council for Educational

Models over time

Guiding principles and practices Beyond the School Gates uses to engage effectively ...

First wave



(Berendale approaches not-for-profit community groups with the Beyond the School Gates concept)

- *Build authentic relationships:* Be clear about which organisations you need to connect with and why.
- *Work with groups who are ready to work with you and you are ready to work with:* Don't say an outright 'no' to interested groups; keep them engaged until such time as you are in a position to accept their help or establish a more collaborative partnership. For Beyond the School Gates, for example, some agencies were ready to come on board at the outset with specific programs, but the project team was not in a position to set up those programs at that stage. This year they are and the agencies are on board. *"It's easy to say 'everyone should come together', but if we brought them on board when we had nothing for them to do, we would have just lost them."*

Second wave (Current model)



(Schools and not-for-profit community groups work collaboratively toward a common goal)

- *Build trust:* Meet with stakeholders regularly and explore opportunities to expand 'the tentacles' of your activities by listening to and sharing ideas.
- *Stay focused on the common purpose:* You need to understand why an agency might want to come on board. Ensure that the lead agencies remain on track. *"We're not doing this to be famous, or to be used as a 'cash cow', every aspect must have a clear connection to the ultimate goal."*

Proposed future model



(School and not-for-profit community groups seeking collaboration and support from philanthropic foundations and introductions to other potential philanthropic supporters).

- *Be clear about what you need support for and why:* The Beyond the School Gates team are mapping their needs, both financial and in-kind, to develop a clear strategy for approaching philanthropic organisations. This will include a calendar of activities complemented by a grants calendar to help focus their energies on specific grants as required.
- *Build a strong foundation and compelling story with which to approach potential supporters:* Beyond the School Gates has invested in an evaluation of the pilot, both in terms of the model and the specific programs. This is helping to build an evidence base with which to demonstrate impact (both short and long-term).

Research, Tender Bridge team. The study provided information on current and potential services and support for students with intellectual disabilities. It also sought feedback from parents, students, teachers and other stakeholders, such as service providers on the perceived enablers and barriers to the development of an extended school model of service and support for students and their families. This led to the development of a proposal to the Department of Education and Early Childhood Development (DEECD). The proposal to DEECD was successful and secured three years of funding for a 'Beyond the School Gates – extended school hub' initiative.

Beyond the School Gates is a geographic hub that provides a platform from which partnerships with business and community based agencies can deliver activities and services across four areas of focus to students, their families and the local community. The hub encompasses the council areas of Bayside, Port Phillip, Kingston and Glen Eira.

For Paula, the innovation of the Beyond the School Gates initiative is pretty straightforward:

What is being created is a model seeking long-term benefits, not a 'quick fix'. For Louisa Ellum, CEO of the BGK LLEN, the strength of the Beyond the School Gates model is its potential transferability. "It was devised by a school," she says, "but it is not dependent on one school. It's beyond Berendale". The model is grounded in the local need but has a much broader applicability.

Model

For the Beyond the School Gates model, collaboration means that each agency takes responsibility for an area but they work together to create a collective impact. This ensures a focus on the specific purpose of Beyond the School Gates as a 'whole' rather than on individual programs alone.

At this stage, as indicated at the outset, the Beyond the School Gates model is focussed on collaboration between not-for-profit community organisations, government and schools. Philanthropy has not yet been drawn into the equation. Consequently, the table below presents a slightly different model to those outlined in last year's *LLEAP Guide*. However, what is indicated is the approach that has been

taken to date and what will be taken to engage with philanthropy.

Factors for effective engagement

(see all 10 factors on p. 22)

For Beyond the School Gates, building relationships is a really important aspect of effective engagement; "from the relationships comes trust".

For Beyond the School Gates, overall the most challenging factor for effective engagement is the building of capacity, as Louisa explains:

This is especially challenging when wearing the hat of sustainability and scalability. This comes from multiple directions and with different intensities. To develop a robust 'model' that has the potential to be replicable/ scalable, the capacity needs to be developed across the governance and operations groups and the key is engagement. Schools within all council regions need to be engaged and active under this Beyond the School Gates model and the building of their capacity to become partners in the initiative, become active and especially pro-active is key to the model's success. Finally, building the ongoing engagement and 'ownership' by parents and community of the model is paramount to its on-going nature and growth, especially becoming part of the 'landscape'. (Louisa Ellum, CEO, BGK LLEN)

Impact

What are the main outcomes?

The goal of Beyond the School Gates is to:

- Increase the access to employment, training and community participation opportunities for students with intellectual disabilities and learning differences to improve the quality of life for them and their families.

To achieve this goal, activities of Beyond the School Gates are being implemented through four interrelated areas of focus:

1. Vocation (e.g. work experience, short courses, accredited and non-accredited training)
2. Recreation (e.g. after-school or weekend programs; social outings)
3. Health and wellbeing (e.g. diet, fitness,

mental health)

4. Family support (e.g. parent support groups; respite; information sessions).

How is information gathered?

The Beyond the School Gate pilot was officially launched in July 2012 and will finish in December 2014. An evaluation is being conducted by ACER's Tender Bridge team throughout the life of the pilot. This is focused on the impact of the model as whole. Individual programs are being evaluated by members of the Beyond the School Gates team and information from this feedback will be used in the broader evaluation, where appropriate (e.g. student attitudes and learning outcomes).

To determine how the model has helped support the achievement of its goal, there are two aspects for the evaluation to address, namely **how** and **to what extent** Beyond the School Gates is:

- **Increasing access to** employment, training and community participation opportunities for students with intellectual disabilities and learning differences
- **Improving the quality of life** for students with intellectual disabilities and learning differences **and** their families.

The evaluation will also explore how and to what extent the **relationships governing and implementing** Beyond the School Gates activities are **functioning**.

Information is being gathered through stakeholder interviews (e.g. parents and agencies); observations at specific events; program data analysis; surveys around the perceived effectiveness of the 'relationships' (e.g. governance); and observations of the functioning of the CoM.

How do you share the information gathered and with whom?

Information around outcomes is shared at both the CoM and Steering Committee meetings and with DEECD, as a key learning relating to the School Hub Field Trial. The evaluation reports will also be used to identify areas in need of improvement and areas of strength as the initiative moves forward. With sustainability the ultimate goal, building an evidence base around impact will also help in approaching potential supporters, providing them with data with which to make informed decisions.