

Rosewall Best Start Local Evaluation

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Thanks to Leonie Dillon and all of the Best Start people

Methodology

- Document analysis, observation, and discussions held with 18 people involved in the Rosewall Best Start project.
- Presents the perspective of people involved as organisers and workers.
- Views of the families are presented in a DVD

Rosewall Best Start - Structure

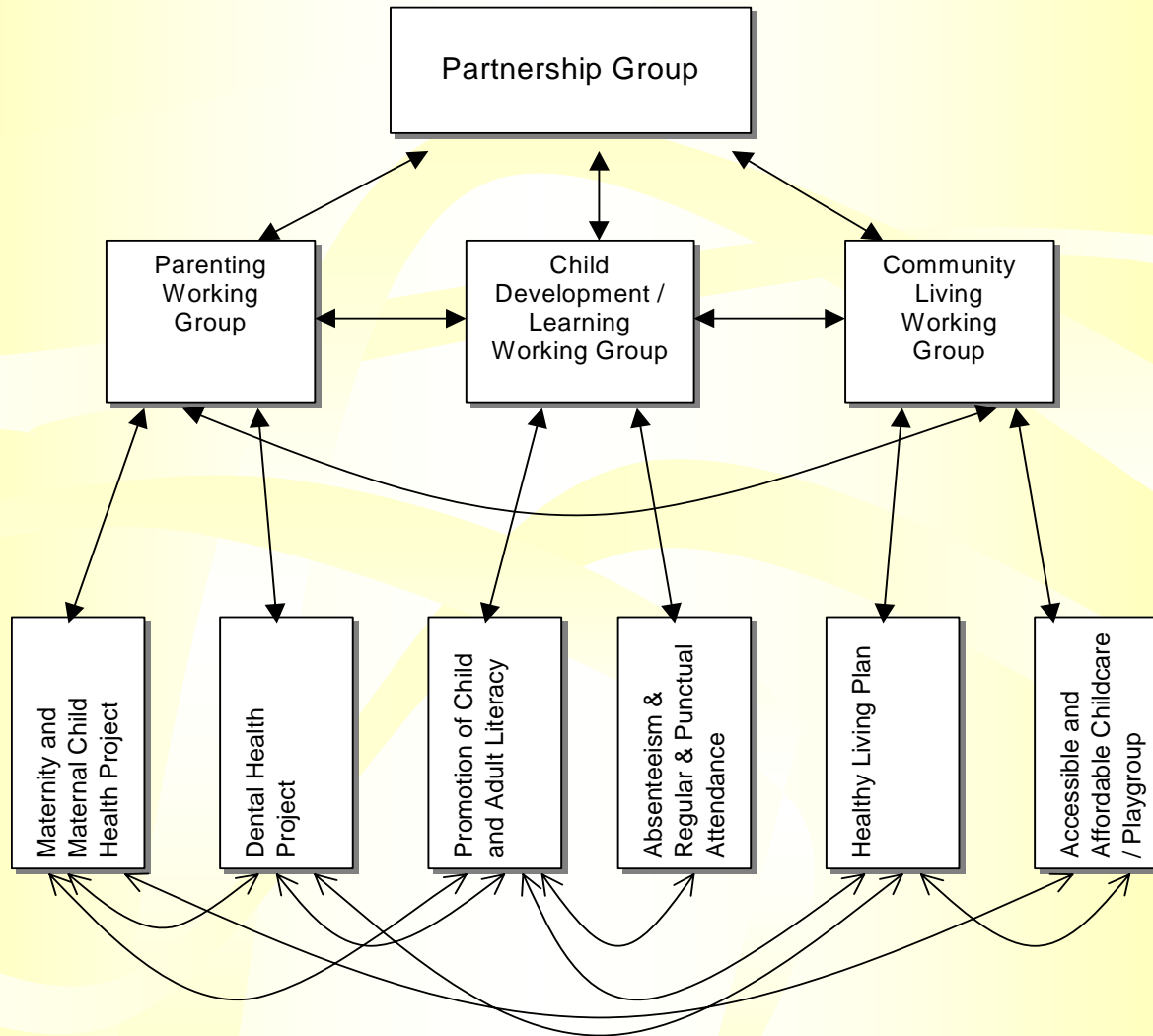
- The Partnership Group, and three Working Groups that report back to the Partnership Group:
 - Parenting Working Group
 - Child Development / Learning Working Group
 - Community Living Working Group

Rosewall Best Start - Partners

- The six Essential Partners of Rosewall Best Start are:
 - City of Greater Geelong
 - Department of Human Services
 - Department of Employment, Education and Training
 - Barwon Health
 - Service Providers (Glastonbury Family Services and Bethany Community Support)
 - Parents

Rosewall Best Start - Projects

- ROS01 Maternity and Maternal Child Health Project
- ROS02 Healthy Living Plan
- ROS03 Dental Health Project
- ROS04 Promotion of Child and Adult Literacy
- ROS05 Absenteeism and Regular and Punctual Attendance
- ROS06 Accessible and Affordable Childcare / Playgroups



Specific Projects

- Too many to describe all
- Four most often mentioned briefly described

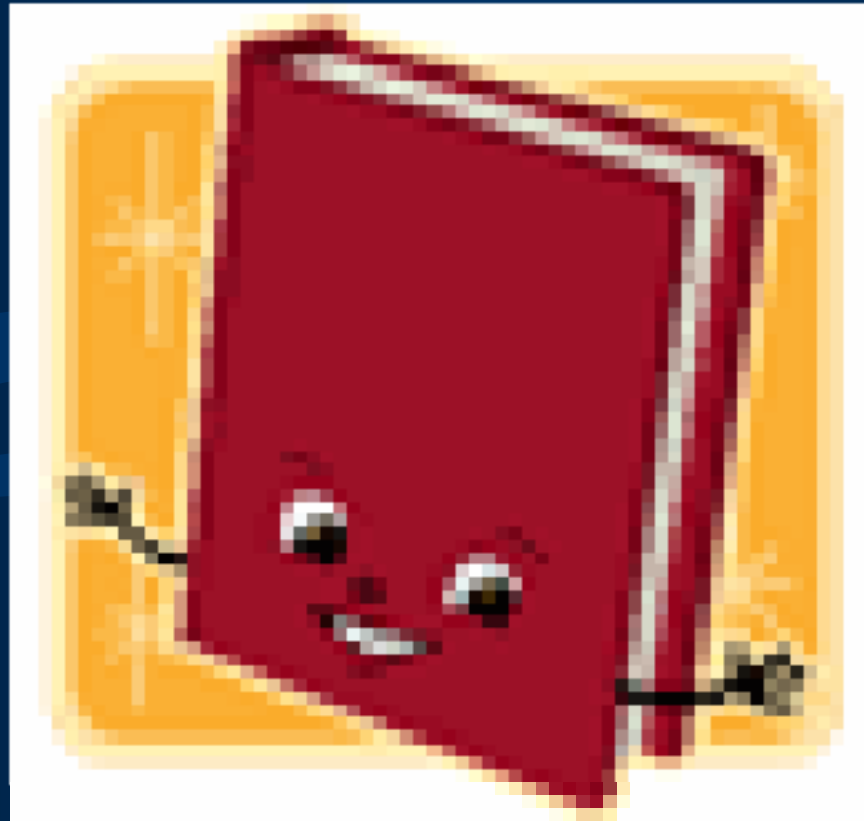
'Smiles for Miles'

- In conjunction with Dental Health Services Victoria and Barwon Health
- Access to treatment and health promotion focusing on the child the year prior to school
- Linked with immunisation visits
- Increased awareness of dental health
- Improved contents of children's lunch boxes



'Let's Read'

- An early childhood literacy initiative from the Murdoch Children's Research Institute's Centre for Community Child Health and The Smith Family
- Training was attended by 27 early childhood service providers in Corio
- 'Let's Read' kits distributed, DVD shown
- Survey of 29 parents - 83% reported that their family is reading together more at home



Playgroup Facilitator

- Paid playgroup facilitator working with families with children aged 0-4 years, mostly 2-4 years
- Works across 3 playgroups
- Co-ordinates Rosewall playgroup - responding to need in community
- Incorporates helping parents with parenting skills
- In 2005, Rosewall playgroup grew from 2-3 families in Term 1 to 8 families in Term 4
- In 2006, 12 families in Term 1, 20 in Term 2
- Role now includes community development component



Absenteeism project

- In conjunction with the Geelong Northern Network (Department of Employment, Education and Training)
- Various strategies to support parents
- Developed a 'School Be In It' kit
- Results variable – but across 3 Best Start schools a 36% increase in attendance in 2005
- Importance of ongoing support
- Spin-off from this project



Findings from Discussions

- Observed impact
- What helped Rosewall Best Start to work
 - Community facilitator
 - Partnerships between organisations
 - Linking services together
 - Concrete projects
 - Meetings
- Spin-offs
- Problems
- Challenges

Observed impact

- Increased sharing of resources
- Parents enrolling for kindergarten earlier
- Parents reading more to their children
- Improved health and hygiene for children
- Children drinking water at the kindergarten
- More children visiting the dentist
- Parents linking up with each other
- Families being more connected to their community
- An increase in community pride



What made it work: Facilitator

- Always mentioned first
- The role and the individual
 - *“the number one asset of Best Start”*
 - *“like gold”*
 - *“the best thing since sliced bread”*



What made it work: Facilitator

Functions of the role:

- Pull it all together, guide and oversee it all
- Provide a structure for people to get together
- Act as a go-between, pass information between different organisations
- Cross boundaries
- Analyse the needs of the community, and get professionals together to see how to meet those needs

What made it work: Facilitator

Characteristics of the individual:

- Networking between people
- Energy and drive, 'can-do' approach
- Highly organised, diligent, focussed
- Passionately committed to Best Start
- Never letting people down
- Keeping meetings on track and to time
- Visiting all sites regularly
- Not taking over
- Listening to people
- Feeding information out

What made it work: Partnerships between organisations

"This wouldn't have been possible on our own"

- A platform of connections
- Partnerships at senior & worker levels
- Put competition aside
- New networks created

What made it work: Linking services

“We have closer relationships now due to Best Start”

- Information passed on
- Personal contact important
- Agency staff see family at local venue

What made it work: Concrete projects

"Actually doing things, things actually happen".

- Practical and visible projects
- Useful resources
- Encouraged ongoing involvement

What made it work: Meetings

"The meetings were not a chore which is a good sign"

- Well organised
- Kept to time
- Convenient times
- Chance to network
- Share practice



Spin-offs

"A spin-off of Best Start"

- Other things happened because Best Start brought people together
- Adaptation of 'School Be In It' kit for aboriginal families – 'What's the Time? School Time!'

Challenges

- Sustainability
- Passing on the 'learnings'

Problems – What needs to be improved

“Three years is not enough”

- Hard to get people to think of any
- Need more than 3 years to achieve measurable outcomes
- Some concern about community representation, but agreed that it was community-focused
- Some questioned level of support given to Best Start by other organisations

Problems (cont)

One project not so successful -
Children of Parents With a Mental Illness
(COPWAMI)

- Identified as a barrier in relation to school attendance
- Identification of families very difficult
- Secondary service focus a problem – relied on others to identify families
- Funding was not continued
- Concept was valuable – there has been a spin-off

Conclusions

- Rosewall Best Start was rated as being highly successful in achieving its aims
- “It’s nice to see the early years recognised – and it’s working”

RECIPE

Ingredients:

- 1 brilliant facilitator
 - 6 – 8 partners who are committed and willing to work collectively
 - A fragmented service delivery system
 - \$\$
- Identify the needs of community
 - First 12 months - get all parties together to consider the best ways of achieving objectives
 - During the first 12 months, spend small amounts of money on highly practical and visible projects
 - Keep all parties informed, meetings to time etc
 - Use a fluid and adaptable participatory action approach
 - Develop projects in conjunction with others



Thank you