

four seasons in one day –

literacies in changing climates

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Inter-generational ICT learning and literacy in a multicultural setting

**Piloting an innovative learning strategy in a community
based
programme for parents.**

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(CHEC) Project**

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Introduction

In June 2002, the Care Health Education and Community (CHEC) Project commenced at Woodville Gardens Preschool and Ridley Grove School R-7. The two year community capacity building project was funded by the Department for Family and Community Services. The CHEC Facilitator was employed through DECS to work with the preschool and school, which are co-located in The Parks area of Adelaide's western suburbs. Australian Bureau of Statistics figures indicate that, in comparison to other districts in South Australia, The Parks has one of the largest local populations of people who have a language other than English as their mother tongue, has a higher than average proportion of indigenous persons, has a lower than average income and residents generally have lower than average education and non-school qualifications. The area also has one of the highest levels of crime in districts across Australia. In addition, a fifteen year urban regeneration project which commenced in 1999 is having an impact on residents. Community members display high levels of resilience and a strong sense of loyalty to the area and to their neighbours.

The idea for the CHEC Project came from a group of early childhood practitioners from care, education and community agencies. They believed that educational outcomes for children would improve if there was a person in the preschool/school setting who would build community capacity and develop social capital. It was anticipated that the project would present an opportunity to develop mutual understanding, dialogue and productive partnerships between levels of government, communities and individuals and that this would lead to more informed and 'joined-up' policy making.

Using a strengths approach and an action research model, the main goal of the CHEC project was to *improve children's wellbeing and learning by strengthening families and community.*

In addressing the following objectives:

- Identify strengths of, and issues for, families with children 0-12 living in the catchment areas of the Ridley Grove School R-7 and the Woodville Gardens Preschool.
- Develop effective working relationships and partnerships with agencies so that families and children have access to appropriate services
- Support families to strengthen local networks and to take positive actions in their lives and communities,

the role of the CHEC facilitator came to fall into three main areas, viz:

- Direct work with families
- Community capacity building programmes and projects
- Interagency partnerships

This paper describes one of the community building projects.

One of the strongest community groups in the preschool/school is the Vietnamese Parent Group. During the first few months of the CHEC project, this group said that they would like to learn computing skills so that they could better understand what their children were learning at school and also assist them with their homework. Initial attempts to link the parents into computing classes in the local area were unsuccessful. The parents made it clear that they only wanted to learn in an environment in which they felt comfortable - the preschool or school.

Consequently, a pilot ten-week basic computing course for adults was established at the school using funds from the CHEC Project. The course filled quickly with parents from a variety of backgrounds and a waiting list was established.

In line with the principles underlying the CHEC Project, the empowerment model and sound adult learning, the course was based on the following:

- Provide a safe and comfortable learning environment
- Recognise and value the skills and knowledge that individuals bring to the learning environment
- Provide opportunities for participants to learn more about local resources which can help to extend their learning
- Have a bilingual assistant present at all classes
- Provide child care on campus

Due to the enthusiasm of participants, the pilot course was extended by three weeks and an application was made to ANTA to provide more courses over the next twelve months.

Some of the outcomes of the first ten week course were:

- Recognition by Vietnamese Australian participants that they could learn English whilst learning computing
- Vietnamese Australians showing more confidence in using English
- Two participants volunteering to work in the school resource centre where the computing suite is based – one English speaking background and one Vietnamese speaking with little English
- For the first time, Vietnamese Australians making contact with friends and family in Vietnam via hotmail
- For the first time, parents and students exchanging emails within the school
- Students working alongside and assisting their parents during the class
- Social connections between class members, who come from different cultural groups within the community (Vietnamese, Indigenous, Russian, Anglo-Saxon) and have different abilities/disabilities
- Participants feeling comfortable to use a school computer during the school day
- Participants observing staff doing training and development after school hours
- Participants met workers offering IT courses at the local community centre and offered the opportunity to participate in their train the trainer courses

The ANTA project aimed to build on the above to provide the opportunity for more parents from the school and preschool to develop literacy and computing skills as well as Train the Trainer qualifications. The focus was on community development and intergenerational literacy.

The issues to be addressed included:

- i. increasing the confidence of parents in the Woodville Gardens Community to access IT services provided by local agencies, in particular The Parks Community Centre and TAFE
- ii. intergenerational literacy issues in a preschool/school in which there are 50% non-English speaking background parents, 7% Aboriginal parents and 80% of families are on School Card (support for low income families)
- iii. community capacity building and the development of social capital for the health and well-being of local families

The objectives were to

1. introduce parents with minimal or no computer experience to basic computing including Internet, email and the IT programs the school delivers, in an environment in which they already feel comfortable namely, the school and preschool.

2. enable parents to understand some elements of their children's information technology program, and therefore engage more effectively with their children's learning
3. develop parents knowledge of computer resources provided locally and increase their confidence to access these services
4. further build on the sense of community across the non-English speaking background, Aboriginal and English speaking background parent groups
5. provide Train the Trainer course for a smaller group of parents representing the NESB, ESB and Aboriginal communities to be able to tutor other parents in computer use in order to provide sustainability to the project
6. provide parents with information about options for purchasing home computers and related consumer issues
7. evaluate the program's success in terms of participants' increased confidence in computer use, literacy development and familiarity with community resources
8. produce a report of the process which can be adapted by other community based groups

This paper looks at how the project team and steering committee worked towards achieving the objectives, highlighting ways in which the program developed over the 18 months it was conducted, in the first 6 months through a pilot, then funded by ANTA Innovative Literacy Funds.

A number of themes and challenges emerge and these will be examined in relation to current discussions about partnerships; intergenerational literacy; course design and home literacy practices.

Participants Profile

In a period of 18 months, three short basic computing courses of 10-13 weeks each were conducted. Of the 44 students who attended, 29 were from a non English speaking background (mostly Vietnamese) and one was indigenous. The latter attended only a few times.

Although a number of efforts were made with the Aboriginal Education Teacher and direct approaches by the CHEC project officer to involve indigenous parents the program was not successful in this respect.

One parent who is the mother of indigenous children attended the first course and later gained employment, having upgraded some of her computer skills sufficiently to be able to mention that on her employment application.

There were 6 enrolments for the course to train volunteers to support children in the preschool/school with their computer work. Of these, five were from an English speaking background, and one from a Vietnamese speaking background.

Course development

In the first 10 week course which was run as a pilot prior to receiving funding from ANTA, there were approximately 15 participants. Of these, about half spoke English at home and half spoke another language (mostly Vietnamese). Of the participants who spoke

Vietnamese at home, there was some variation in English proficiency. Most of the group were around 0+ to 1+ on the ISLPR scale¹.

The course was advertised as a basic computing course but the perceptions of participants about the meaning of 'basic' meant varied widely. Some had no experience at all in using a computer, while others had their own computers at home or regularly used a computer at the local library.

The variety of skills/abilities within the group as well as the variation in English language levels was challenging. The course was being presented by an external ESL specialist with computing skills. She was assisted by one of the school's Vietnamese Bilingual School Services Officers, who was already well known to the Vietnamese speaking parents. The school's IT coordinator was available to assist for some of the time, although he was in staff meeting most weeks.

The course focussed on looking at some of the programs that the school uses with children and general applications such as Word, Internet Explorer and Hotmail.

From the beginning the ESL specialist provided sheets which provided the non-English speaking background participants with the English terms, where possible pictures and space to write in the Vietnamese (or other first language) terms for things such as parts of the computer. We found however that quite often there was no easily translatable direct equivalent.

As the project progressed we developed a number of resources that provided the participants with a more structured approach and some activities that could be taken away and practised between sessions. Participants identified that they valued being able to work at their own pace and to consolidate skills between sessions.

Some resources were used from other courses. Of particular use was a set of materials entitled *Jump on the Cyber Bandwagon*. These were used by participants who spoke and read English fluently. A package developed by the University of Queensland's Aphasia Unit was tried but we found that some of the icons illustrating aspects of the course were so different from the software used by the school that it was too confusing for the participants to follow. This had been successfully used about 18 months earlier, and it was disappointing to find a resource which had worked well in a similar context no longer could be easily used or adapted.

Another resource which a number of participants enjoyed using was *Issues in English*, a self paced CD ROM which has written and spoken English at several levels.

An issue we found difficult to resolve was how to teach email most effectively. In some courses we used Hotmail while in others we taught the program used by the school (Dingo Mail). For those participants who were confident enough to transfer the skills they had learnt in the classroom to other settings the latter program was suitable, but many participants were not confident in navigating around the computer and one session a week simply did not allow enough time for them to practise.

Sustainability- Working with Children on Computers program

Following the conclusion of the third round of basic computer training a course for parents who had expressed willingness to volunteer in the school was conducted. The aim of the

¹ ISLPR: International Second Language Proficiency Ratings used widely to assess second language skills.

course was to discuss ways in which parents could work with children on computers. A small group responded to the advertisement which was circulated through the school and preschool newsletters.

Four sessions were conducted with input from teachers from the preschool and the junior primary school.

The course gave participants an opportunity to explore some ideas about how children learn most effectively and how this relates to using computers.

Articles were selected by the ESL specialist and were provided to the participants for discussion along with the teachers' comments and discussion points. The key ideas revolved around how children can learn in different ways, the role of positive language and modelling and the variety of levels in skill and confidence which parent volunteers could be expected to encounter.

In the first session we met with the preschool teacher who talked about how children learn most effectively. She tied some of her points to learning experiences everyone has irrespective of age, and encouraged participants to reflect on their own experiences.

The course members then went into the computer room and worked on some activities the computer coordinator had copied from a range of Junior Primary computing activities, some of which can be viewed in Appendix 4. These activities assisted the participants to assess the skills children are developing in the early years, and to consider in a very practical way some of the design features which are incorporated into a task.

Each member of the group worked on developing a Powerpoint activity for use in the junior primary classes. This was an opportunity for the participants to learn a new program which they hadn't previously encountered, and to think about how to develop an age-appropriate activity while reviewing some of the skills they had developed in the earlier courses.

The implementation of the volunteer program is being completed as this paper is being written.

Observations

Reflections on computer course for parents at Ridley Grove School by Lynda Bignell, project team member ²

Examples of questions that could be reflected on when organising a course:

- Clientele – multicultural, language abilities, sex, level of ability on beginning. This may be vital if applying for funding and is certainly essential for planning.
- Women approach computers in a different way to men and are often more hesitant and need to be supported. The feedback sheet for the courses at Ridley Grove reflected that need and appreciation of the women in being made to feel confident.
- Working at their own pace, and having a lightly structured time was also seen by respondents as being valued.
- Number of people and division of labour of the facilitators can assist greatly in learning.

Personal Comments

² Lynda worked in the two ANTA funded courses when it was agreed that the pilot course had demonstrated a need for a higher ratio of facilitators to participants.

I greatly enjoyed working with these people, seeing them grow in confidence and ability. I think Jane's planning was excellent, being reflective on the needs of the students and flexible to those needs. I think that once a few courses have been done, there would be a format that could be a guide to general goals and purposes. I think that keeping that flexibility is important at this level, and this is reflected in the positive responses from the students.

It is so important with computing that people are not 'turned off' and I think that as a team we were successful in making people feel safe and ready to risk-take. The value of this course would also be the interaction between cultures and people that wouldn't otherwise happen. Even if it is a chat around the tea table, it is breaking down the barriers. Another thing I noticed was people helping each other, which as teachers, we know is a valuable and powerful tool for learning.

One major concern was the teaching of email. This really needs to be thought about. We can't use the school system as it is far too complicated and more complicated than they would use at home. Maybe we could help the students set up a hotmail address and use the last two or three weeks when confidence has grown. I believe it's valuable to learn about email and this aspect of the course needs to be thought through a little bit more given the difficulties.

I see this course more as a familiarisation rather than the students going away with specific skills. Having said that, I think they do go away with some specific skills, eg using the mouse, opening a program etc. It really needed a follow up course that was more structured and focussed more specifically on goals and perhaps started to link in with national accreditation. The course could also run multi-levels as in people at different stages of knowledge and ability. The facilitators would still be doing the same things but working with people at more varied levels. If this were to happen, in keeping with the self paced value of the course, work books could be put together that people can work through at their own pace. These workbooks could incorporate or reflect English learners.

In the first course, the school student helpers were invaluable. Having someone 'in charge' of them worked well and I believe the students really enjoyed the experience and some interesting interactions took place. The younger students learned what it was like to start at the beginning again. The older students really appreciated the help and worked well with the younger ones.

I believe the experience was a positive way for parents to be involved in the community and would hopefully lead to more interactions and interest.

Even though I only went on one of the visits to other learning establishments, I think they were a very useful way of showing what was on offer and encouraging those interested to extend themselves.

A useful thing to happen would be a report or piece in the school newsletter telling the wider school community what has been happening and perhaps encouraging the impetus that Ros has started, to carry on.

One of the most useful ideas was passing on written information for specific needs, eg what to look for buying computers etc. This could be extended to include digital cameras etc.

Themes and Challenges

Challenges in Course Design

In designing activities for such a diverse group the ESL specialist had to keep in mind several points.

- There were quite disparate levels of reading proficiency in the three groups. The classes were open to all parents in the school and preschool community.
- Activities need to have an element of self-pacing incorporated so that those with stronger reading skills could move along and practise the activity without waiting for the participants who need more support, whether that was in language or technical skills or both.

Two examples of activities specifically designed with these concerns in mind are included as Appendices

The sheet entitled 'About Me' retained its value and was used at a number of sessions and for people with quite different literacy levels. We used it in the first instance with Clip Art to practice inserting pictures and positioning and sizing them, using the mouse and some commands from the menus to achieve the effect each person wanted. Later when we taught using the digital camera and scanning, participants were encouraged to go back to their work and make another version of it, using either a photo from home which they scanned, or one from the school's camera.

In this exercise we were emphasising that work on a computer can be changed, updated, stored and reviewed and altered with a different appearance for a different purpose. This activity mirrored the kinds of work that the children of the participants would be doing in their classes.

When the third course was run and the class teacher planned to use some of the successful activities again it became evident that problems around the currency of websites had to be taken into account. The page used in the Budgeting activity had moved and other calculators, although available, had different features and therefore the worksheet had become almost useless.

In addition deciding how to teach email was difficult as the school's program was different from what is available on most public computers and home computers. Hotmail was taught in some courses with some success but there were issues around parents having difficulty remembering to login as frequently as needed to maintain their account and other problems such as losing passwords or not understanding the importance of case with passwords.

Partnerships

Partnerships were working at several levels in this project, with the CHEC officer working in one set of partnering arrangements and the ANTA project being conducted at another level to meet an identified need by clients of the CHEC project.

The CHEC project involved a partnership between school, pre-school and community and a number of government agencies who funded and informed the project.. The project officer, with qualifications in both education and social work, had an ideal mix of knowledge and skills to work with parents, children and school-based staff, as well as linking with a wide range of community organisations.

As part of her response to the need articulated by parents she engaged an ESL consultant who works mainly in the western suburbs of Adelaide to provide basic computing lessons in the school's computing room. The first 13 week course was funded

from the CHEC Project. Winning the ANTA funds allowed the community to continue sessions and meant that those who wanted to consolidate their first course were able to do so via another 10 week course.

Seddon and Billett's description of partnerships as 'project and movement' distinguishes between the 'centre' (the agency which funds the partnership as a response to policy) and the community members who are the beneficiaries of the partnership and are likely to be unaware of the project and its policy origins.

The partnership of this project included the CHEC officer, Protea Training, a private ESL/Adult Literacy provider, and the school and pre-school. The Steering Committee also had representatives from the DFEEST Adult Community Education unit and the Parks Community Health Service and parent members. The school was represented by the Bilingual School Services Officer (BSSO) and the IT Coordinator.

Clegg and McNulty(2002, 591) speak of the vital importance of the skills of partners in securing success 'including networking, programme and project development and management'.

They emphasize the importance of a client-centred focus in partnerships, which prioritizes outcomes for project beneficiaries. Secondary to these are the priorities identified by the members of the partnership. Their paper focuses on 'soft skills' (i.e partners' interpersonal skills) being as important in a partnership as the 'hard skills' of effective management. They quote Richards and Horder who identify 'the personal commitment of partners to be an important determinant of success: personal feelings, views and attitudes matter more than professional and agency structures'.

The project achieved a considerable impact on a number of participants in terms of confidence and social connection and exploration of other opportunities. We believe this was possible because of the skills and personal commitment of the members of the team and steering committee.

Intergenerational literacy

As well as parents gaining an understanding of some of the activities their children were involved in as curriculum a number of 'student experts' were involved in some of the classes. This was an opportunity for parents and students to work together and for the students to develop some skills in relating to other learners with confidence. This element of the program was introduced to provide extra support for a large group of parent learners and once some guidelines for the students, aged 11- 13, were developed after their first session, we found their assistance extremely useful.

A challenge for the project team related to the variety in parents' formal educational and literacy backgrounds. As Duran and Duran (undated) comment, 'parents varied considerably in their writing and reading practices in ways that were important to understanding how their children are expected to read, write and think in classrooms'.

Sustainability of the project

One idea which would have encouraged sustainability of the project was to purchase a computer from CHEC funds and to make it available to parents in the school's resource centre. Unfortunately the school management felt this may create a situation where parents were asking for help and that the school's human resources may not have been able to meet the demand. The school leaders considered such a proposal to fall outside its core business.

It had been anticipated that parent volunteers and 'student experts', a group of Years 6 and 7 students working at an advanced level with the IT coordinator, would be available to be rostered to assist less confident parents. This would have sustained community capacity which was built during the life of the ANTA Computing Project. When it was clear that the option to purchase a computer for parents was closed, it became important to look at ways of sustaining the project differently.

We designed and delivered a short course to parents who had been involved in the basic computing courses to develop some skills to work as classroom volunteers, 'working with kids on computers'. This element of the project has been described elsewhere in this paper.

Home Literacy Practices

Incidental information was gathered about the kinds of literacy tasks parents and children engaged in at home. Most parents expressed a desire to understand the kinds of activities and learning that their children were involved in at school using computers. As the children of the participants ranged from pre-school age to Year 7 (4 to 13) the types of computing activities varied widely (cf Duran and Duran, *ibid*) who comment on the variety of grades of children, and approaches of different teachers of those children).

A number of parents indicated they had felt very nervous about the first session and that they felt relief that they were able to manage the activities offered. Having a choice was important to several. A number wanted to ask about software they used at home. From comments in the evaluation sheets these needs were largely met.

Cairney and Ruge (vol. 2, 1998 pp 122,123) comment on the strong goal orientation of parents in their study and the importance parents placed on homework. This was also apparent in our participants, with a number wanting to purchase software to support their children's learning. A number had discussions with the IT coordinator about this topic over the course and were interested to know how to select appropriate items.

(The topic created some challenges for us as there is sometimes a difference in what parents readily recognise as an educational tool and how easily it can be assessed for suitability. Other questions around this relate to how to determine the value of a piece of software in relation to (for example) inclusivity, language levels, and cultural content.

Enabling non-English speaking background participants to work effectively in two languages

An interesting challenge for the ESL teacher was around how much interpreting was done in class. For some of the participants this was very important, and also the mixed nature of the group (NESB/ESB) meant that using ESL methodology was not appropriate for all participants however, the ESL teacher observes:

'I would have liked to work with the Vietnamese parents using ESL methodology more often, rather than having my words interpreted, but in the first course we were limited to two of us in the classroom. At times interpreting was the most efficient way of getting the message across.

However I believe that there are some instances when people who can speak a little of the dominant language – in this case English – would like to practise speaking with and listening to a sympathetic native speaker. While having an interpreter allowed us to achieve some aspects of the

objectives, it was important to ensure that NESB participants had an opportunity to increase their use of English.

My own experience as a speaker of lower intermediate level Greek while I lived in Greece was that I would always defer to a more competent speaker of Greek, for fear of making errors. However when I was alone, or the only person in the group with some Greek language knowledge I would happily try to communicate with a native speaker of Greek, not worrying overly about grammatical features that were out of my reach.'

Evaluation

Comments from a number of steering committee members have been included with those members' permission. They represented different perspectives on the project, including a parent, the school's IT Coordinator and the ACE (Adult Community Education) member of the Steering Committee.

Objective a.

To enable parents to understand some elements of their children's information technology program, and therefore engage more effectively with their children's learning.

The parents who participated in this programme were very grateful for the opportunity to learn :- how to use a computer, how to use the software that their children are learning to use and how the use of technology is incorporated into their children's schoolwork.

I observed successful adult lessons in which the parents gained confidence in using the technology and developed a degree of competence.

Some of the participants saw a lot of benefit in the technology, for their children and themselves, and chose to purchase hardware and software for their home use.

I liked how the programme was conducted in the school. Alicia enjoyed mummy learning at her school and we both enjoyed the fact that child care was close at hand. That was important to me. I liked sending the older kids in at the later part of the programme to help with our learning. It gave them a sense of responsibility and benefited them in having something to offer to us. It was like learning another language for us.

Objective b

To introduce parents with minimal or no computer experience to basic computing including Internet, email and the IT programs the school delivers, in an environment in which they already feel comfortable, namely the school and preschool.

Several other factors, I feel, contributed to the success of this programme. The number of participants was kept to a workable size and there were support presenters to provide more accessible help for the students. Having an interpreter was very important.

Providing learning opportunities for adults in a familiar environment such as their children's school creates a greater likelihood that they will decide at some future date to participate in further learning.

Measuring success in a project such as this should acknowledge that participation in itself is a breakthrough for disadvantaged groups.

We were able to take our own learning materials in to the teacher so she could show us how to do it on the computer. Eg. Someone wanted to send a recipe to a friend via the internet. We all wanted to learn how to do our weekly budget, I was typing poems and assignments while there. Others used the computer to further their need to speak and learn the English language.

A good indicator of the successful achievement of this objective was the parents using the internet to email messages to their children.

Objective c

To develop parents' knowledge of computer resources provided locally and increase their confidence to access these services.

I liked all the field trips we made to the various places. One of them I have taken up myself. I did not know so many computer courses that were affordable existed. Learning the computer can be a very lonely experience but with a course it need not be. You develop friendships that you did not have before.

Objective d

To further build on the sense of community across the non English speaking background, Aboriginal and English-speaking background parent groups.

Even though participation by parents of Aboriginal background was not as hoped for, there is the potential to build this through later opportunities. It will take time.

A one-year project is always a bit brief to achieve all of the outcomes that you would like to for a community.

Because I am English speaking I really can't comment on the non English speaking groups. But I have observed that some of the Asians that were doing the course have had a marked improvement in English as a result of it. Tiffanie, our translator, had to really translate everything when the course started. Through out the course her job at translating was becoming less and less Which was good for me as well because she was also able to help me use the keyboard.

Examples

The participants were beginning to offer support to each other during the workshop activities towards the end of the programme.

In the course we had to send emails to people of our choice. One Asian, Simon sent one to me. I sent some to others and others to me. Most of these people I couldn't pronounce their name! It gave you a chance to get to know everyone and joke around with everyone and learn what was important in their lives. One afternoon the course was set on a 36 degree day. Sometimes the heat was unbearable and the cold was as well. But whatever nationality people are they all have the same gripes, the same reasons for not turning up as the ones for turning up.

Objective e

To provide Train the Trainer course for smaller group of parents representing the NESB, ESB and Aboriginal communities to be able to tutor other parents in computer use in order to provide sustainability to the project.

This objective was reviewed in consultation with ANTA and parents trained to become volunteers working with children on computers.

Objective f

To provide parents with information about options for purchasing home computers and related consumer issues.

The school has helped me a lot with this area. I have had the option of welcoming a teacher into my home and answering my computer queries. I have had support over the phone and the course has been invaluable. I have had my needs met in this area 100%.

Participants were provided with relevant, update information.

They were made well aware of some of the issues to be aware of when making purchases.

They were given clear information about internet options and what to look out for when seeking a plan suited to their needs.

Objective g

To evaluate the program's success in terms of participants' increased confidence in computer use, literacy development and familiarity with community services.

In my opinion, the achievement of recognition of competence by even a small number of parents through this project provides a real breakthrough for this community.

These parents have now made a 'first step' along a further education pathway. Even if they don't immediately take any further steps, they have broken through from non-formal to formal learning.

They have now become role models of adults who are engaging in lifelong learning – for other parents in this community and for the children.

Excellent. I feel I know a lot more now. I can approach computer salesmen and have the confidence to approach the event the Ridley Grove teachers with my computer questions. When we bought our setup I was able to teach my husband how to use it. I could not have done that without the course. I know where to go now. I did not before.

Objective h

To produce a report of the process which can be adapted by other community based groups.

I would love to see a very practical approach to providing a report - perhaps in the form of a brochure or booklet – that can be distributed to other schools and community groups. It might include these elements:

- How the parents became involved in the project (engagement/ motivation)
- Barriers and challenges faced
- An outline of how the program was delivered

- Examples of individual participation – successes and those not-so-successful
A reflection from the perspective of the school, children and project officers.

Comments from the CHEC Facilitator:

This project went a long way towards supporting the overall goal of the CHEC Project which was *to improve children's wellbeing and learning by strengthening families and community*. It also supported the school vision of developing a community of lifelong learners.

The following comment from the CHEC project's summative evaluation exercise was recorded by a member of the staff (Dec 2003):

It's great that the community has asked for a computing course to better keep up with their child's learning. Because it is in the school, it is breaking down the barriers between home and school. It gives parents a comfortable way to come into the school and see how it operates especially for Vietnamese families who have come from a different education system. It opens up communication re schooling in the home.

There were many positive outcomes for individuals, the preschool, school and local community. These include:

- The development of new skills and abilities by people who may not been able to/chosen to achieve this otherwise
- Improved English skills in the Vietnamese speaking community
- Increased levels of confidence amongst participants as indicated by their willingness to try new things and to work as volunteers
- Children seeing adults as learners
- Children working alongside and supporting adults in their learning
- Stronger links between parent groups in particular ESB & NESB
- Parents more aware of local resources and hence more likely to access them
- Some parents have started to use local resources
- Parents have met workers from local agencies
- Parents helping other adults to learn
- Two parents interviewed by Radio Adelaide and their comments used on air to motivate other adults to become involved in learning new things

In summary, this project achieved much in building community capacity and developing social capital within the preschool/school community, a benefit that I anticipate will continue to be experienced by individuals and the community for some time into the future.

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