

Links between school buildings and the well-being of students and education professionals. What's happening in the Australian context?

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Well-being aligned with the WHO

Support for the health and well-being of school students and education professionals is increasingly recognised as critically important to achieving education goals.

The World Health Organization's (WHO, 2023) Health Promoting Schools program strives to increase the capacity of schools to promote healthy settings for living, learning, and working.

Built environments have an important role to play in this context.

School buildings can enable or constrain the provision of healthy environments for teaching and learning through:

- indoor environmental quality (IEQ – access to natural/artificial light, good air quality, thermal comfort, and conducive acoustic conditions);
- designs that mediate the delivery of health and well-being programs and services – including to students, teachers, and other members of local communities.

A focus on Australia

In Australia, school facilities are increasingly being developed with a well-being focus.

This is particularly true in low socio-economic areas, where the social networks and trusted relationships that tend to exist around schools can be leveraged to support child and community development.

This research paper highlights some of the current discourses and research activities in Australia that are addressing the role of school buildings in fostering the education, health, and well-being of children, teenagers, teachers, support staff, families/carers, and other members of local communities.

WHO definitions

Health: “... a state of complete physical, social and mental well-being, and not merely the absence of disease or infirmity” (WHO, 2021, p.3).

Well-being: “... a positive state experienced by individuals and societies. Similar to health, it is a resource for daily life and is determined by social, economic and environmental conditions” (WHO, 2021, p. 10).

“Well-being encompasses quality of life, as well as the ability of people and societies to contribute to the world in accordance with a sense of meaning and purpose. Focusing on wellbeing supports the tracking of the equitable distribution of resources, overall thriving, and sustainability. **A society’s well-being can be observed by the extent to which they are resilient, build capacity for action, and are prepared to transcend challenges**” (WHO, 2021, p. 10).

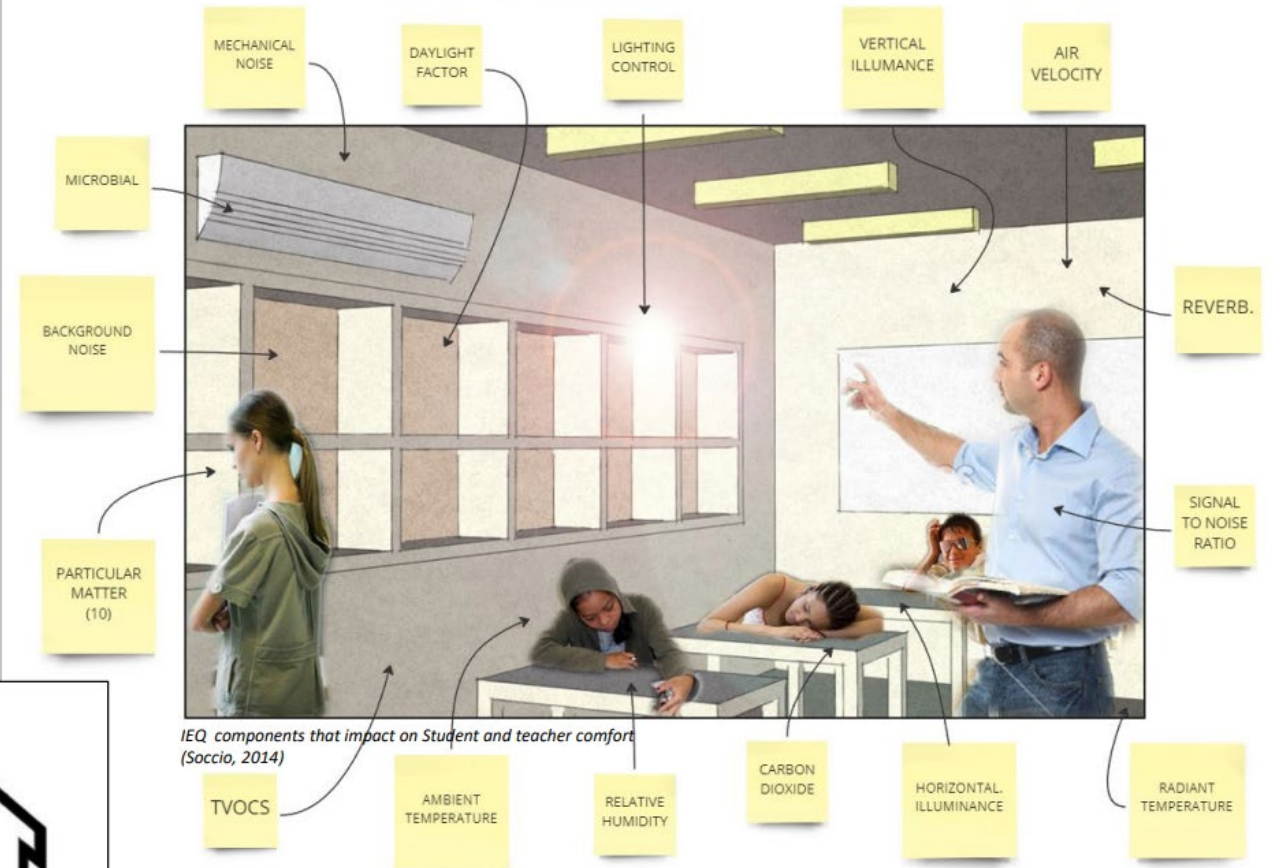
Schools must provide healthy environments

Indoor environment quality (IEQ):

- access to natural/artificial light
- good air quality
- thermal comfort
- conducive acoustic conditions.



OPTIMIZING IEQ FOR



IEQ components that impact on Student and teacher comfort (Soccio, 2014)

Soccio, P. & Cleveland, B. (2016). LEaRN Evaluation Module 2: The development of a tool for evaluating the indoor environment quality in learning spaces. <https://www.aare.edu.au/publications/aare-conference-papers/show/11171/learn-evaluation-module-2-the-development-of-a-tool-for-evaluating-the-indoor-environment-quality-in-learning-spaces>

Health Promoting Schools

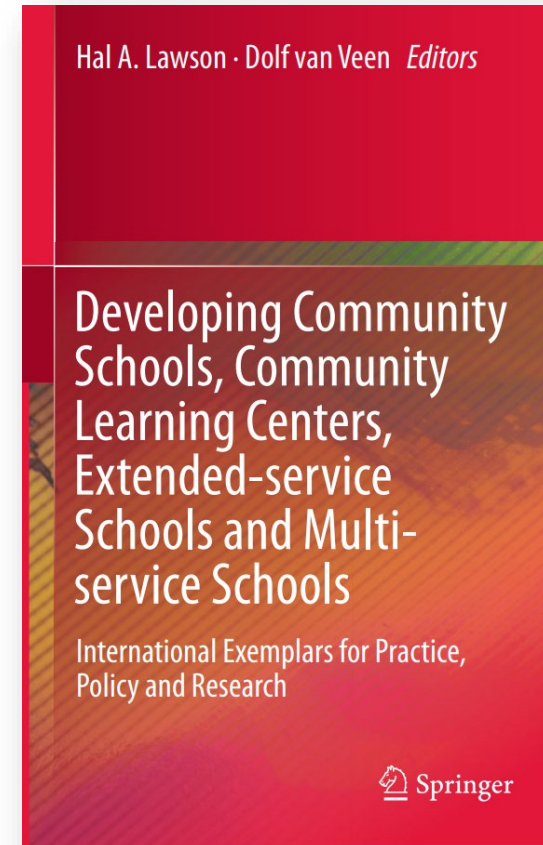
WHO (2023) suggests that Health Promoting Schools strive to provide:

- Healthy environment
- School health education
- School health services
- School/community projects and outreach
- Health promotion programmes for staff
- Nutrition and food safety programmes
- Opportunities for physical education and recreation
- Programmes for counselling, social support and mental health promotion.

Shift towards thinking of schools as ‘multi-service delivery platforms’

“A significant institutional change involving the nearly-universal model for “school” is underway world-wide, albeit differentially and with predictable stops, re-starts, and adjustments in diverse regional, national, provincial, state, and local contexts”.

(Lawson & van Veen, 2016, p. 23)

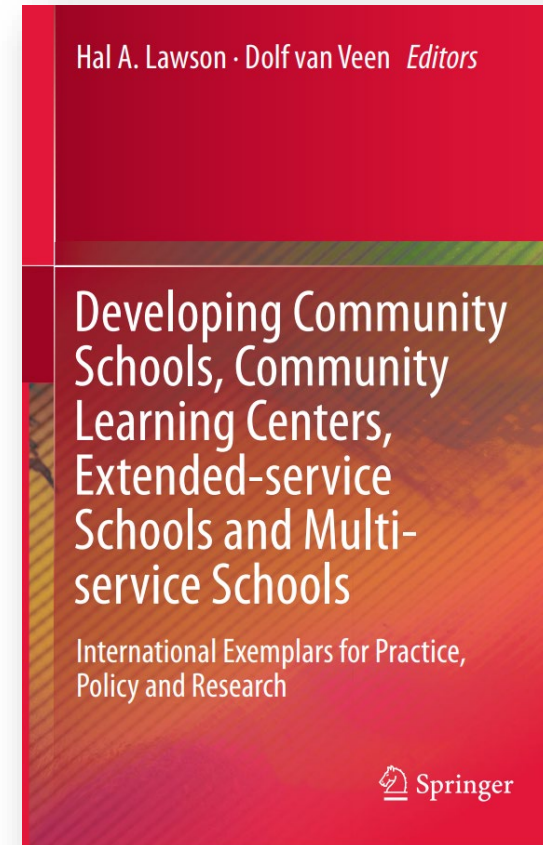


Shift towards thinking of schools as ‘multi-service delivery platforms’

This new design departs from an inherited model of the stand-alone school ...

“Although academic learning and achievement remain important outcomes, in this new design several related outcomes are equally important companions. These outcomes include **healthy child development and positive youth development, family support, community development and revitalization, and preparation for democratic citizenship**”.

(Lawson & van Veen, 2016, p. 7)





Building Connections

Schools as Community Hubs



Building Connections: Schools as Community Hubs

This project has been funded by the Australian Government through the **Australian Research Council (ARC) Linkage Projects scheme & Partners.**

The project investigated how best to **plan, design, govern and manage facilities** to enable schools to operate successfully as ‘more than a school’ and encourage the **development of thriving, resilient, and connected communities.**

Academics with backgrounds in Education, Urban Planning, Architecture, Human Geography, Educational Facility Planning, Evaluation.

Five Research Partners & Four PhD Candidates.

Building Connections: Schools as Community Hubs



Provide **policy guidance** to help state governments, non-government school systems, local councils, schools and community organisations overcome the obstacles that often limit community use of school facilities.

Provide **evidence-based advice** on school infrastructure provision and management, with a focus on programs and services that may be offered in addition to formal schooling.

Building Connections: Schools as Community Hubs



Yarrabilba Family and Community Place

Image: <https://communities.lendlease.com/queensland/yarrabilba/living-in-yarrabilba/groups-and-events/>

Policy development & social infrastructure

Since the mid-2010's, state governments across Australia have demonstrated interest in supporting improved relations between schools and communities, with a view to improving individual, community, and societal well-being (Government of South Australia, 2017; 2019).

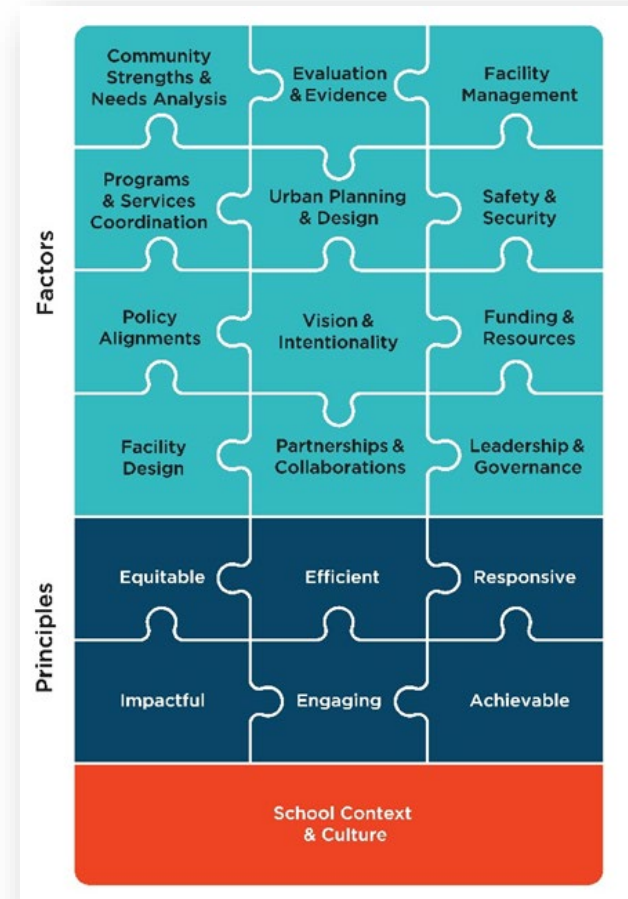
Initial policy development focussed on social change, including “personal safety, economic security, belonging and connection with people and places, and access to opportunities, support and resources” (Government of South Australia, 2017, p. 6).

Later, the delivery of policy through infrastructural developments became evident.

The Queensland Government established the Community Hubs and Partnerships (CHaPs) program in 2014 to “work with all levels of government, non-government organisations and the private sector to plan accessible and cost-effective social infrastructure to connect communities and support coordinated delivery of community services” (Lauer et al., 2023)—including in association with schools.

How to Hub Australia: A Framework for Building Schools as Community Hubs

Evidence and advice for policymakers, school leaders, and designers



Benjamin Cleveland · Sarah Backhouse ·
Philippa Chandler · Ian McShane ·
Janet M. Clinton · Clare Newton *Editors*

Schools as Community Hubs

Building 'More than a School'
for Community Benefit

Sections:
Partnering
Planning
Designing
Enabling

6 Editors

22 Chapters

34 Authors:

- Australia
- New Zealand
- Canada
- South Korea
- United States
- United Kingdom

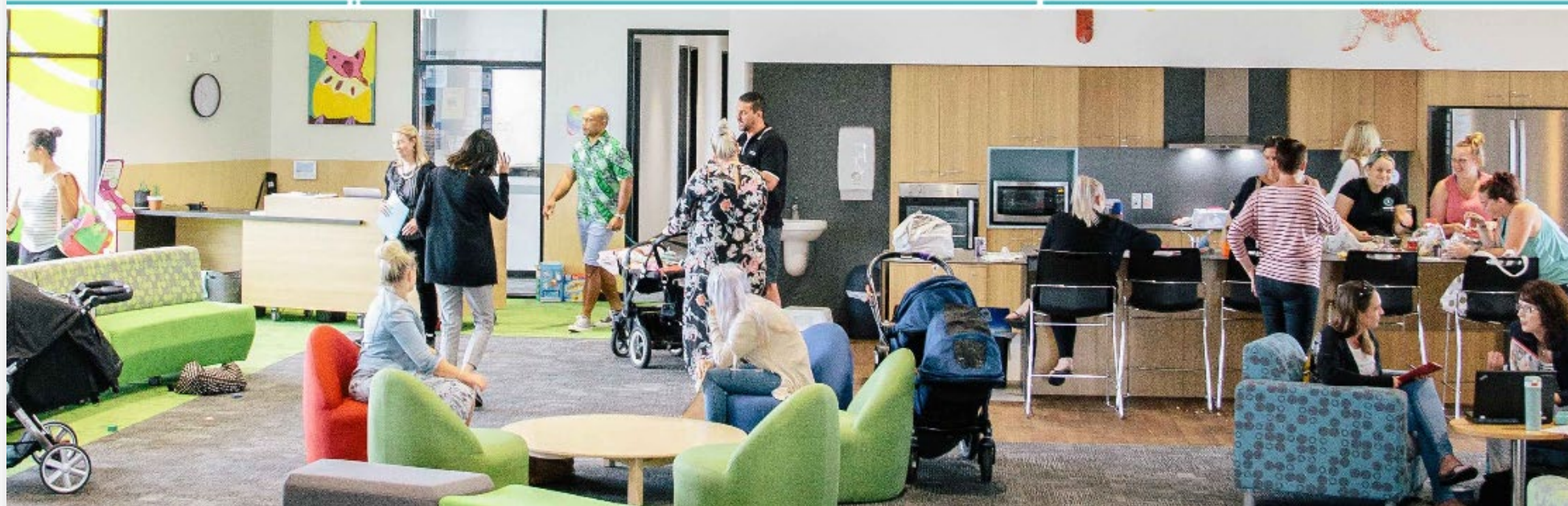
Exhibition: Sharing Schools, Building Communities





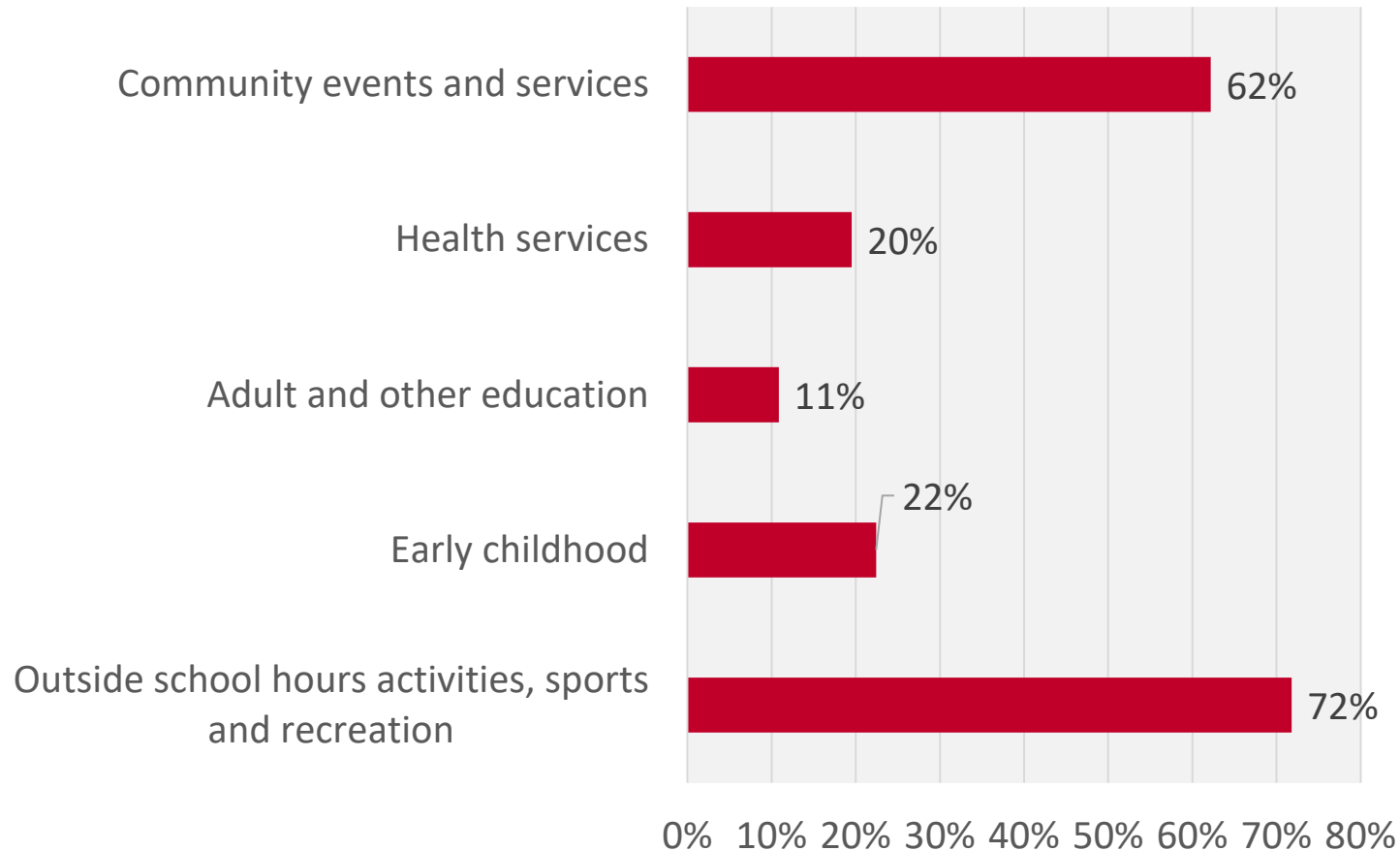
Sharing Schools, **Building Communities**

The e-book of the exhibition



[See eBook Link](#) for 'schools as community hubs' examples

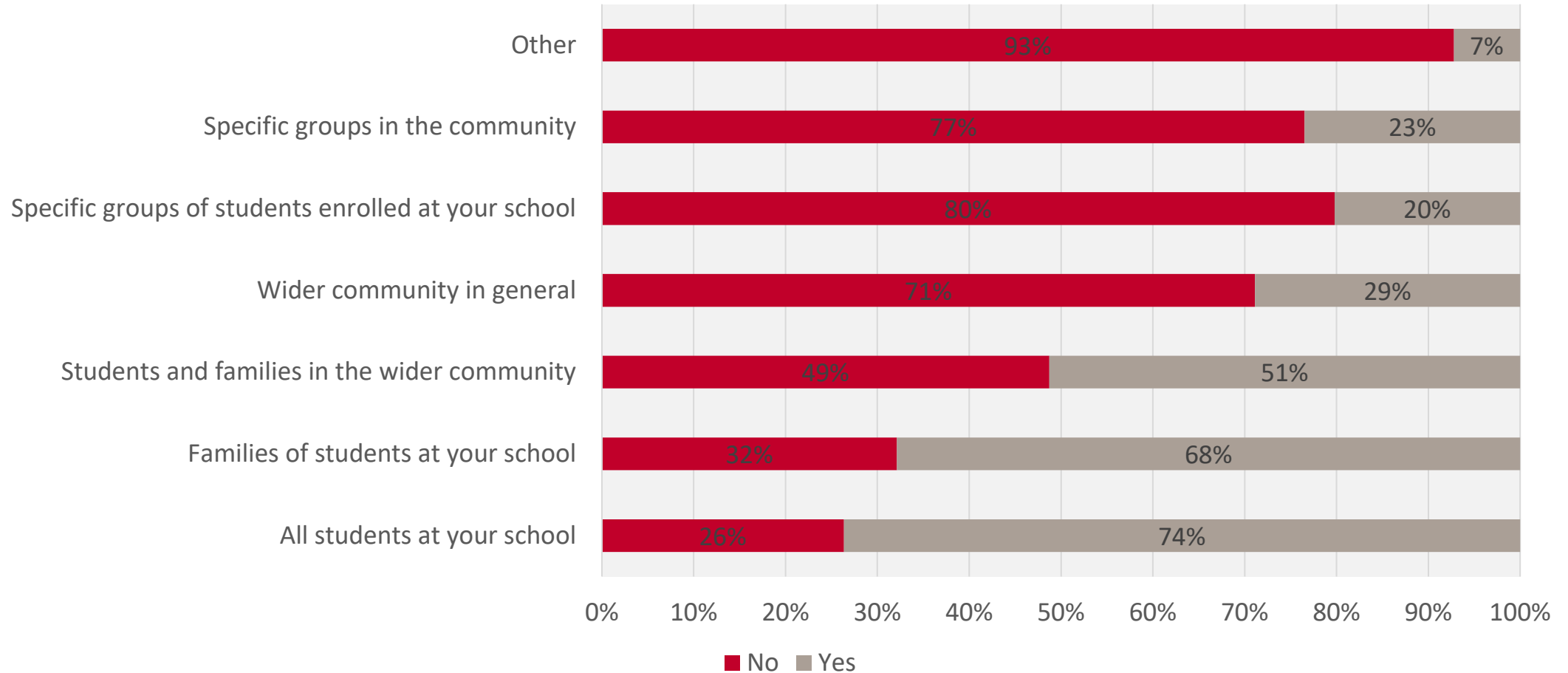
Connecting Schools & Communities Survey



Example: “Interchange is a disability service that run programs in our school on weekends and school holidays. This involves disabled teenagers and young adults participating in a range of activities on site. They utilise our assembly hall, kitchen and toilet facilities as well as our outdoor spaces” (survey respondent)

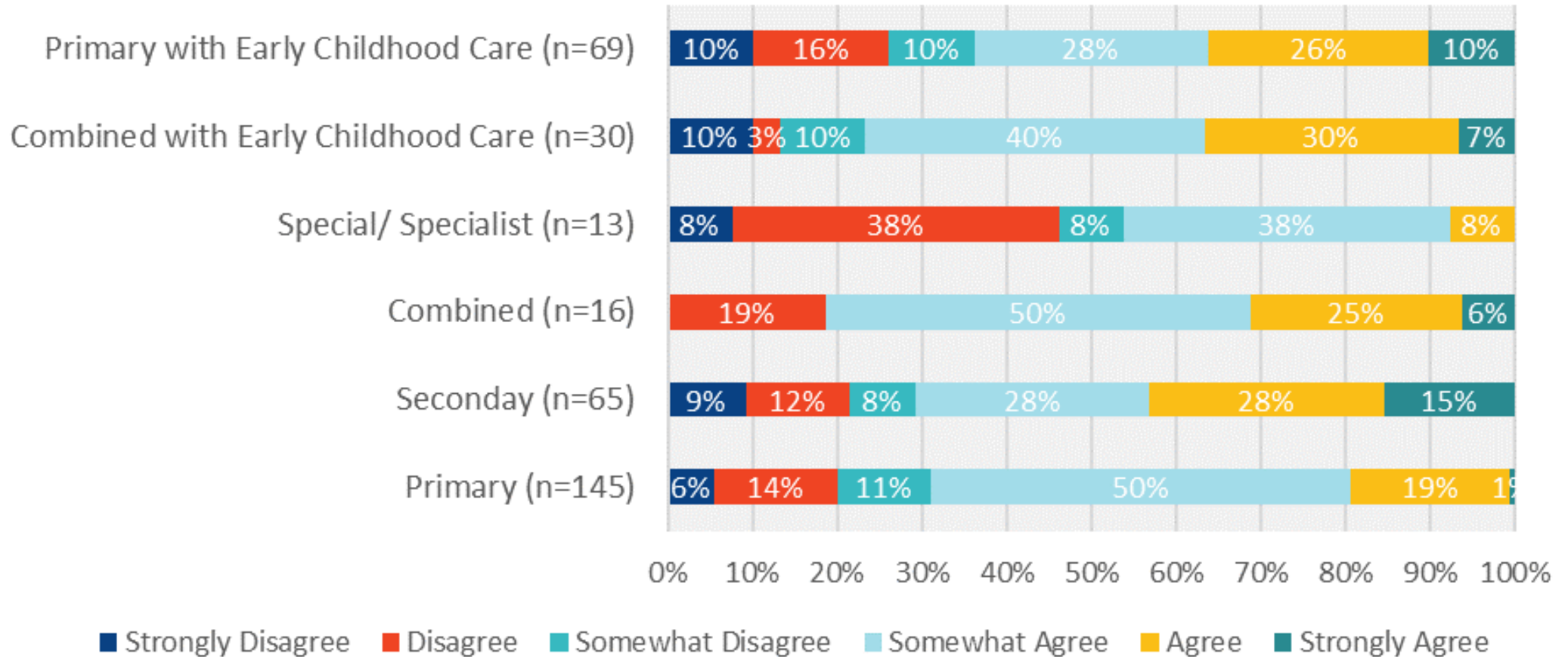
Proportion of respondents (n=415) reporting facility sharing for services and programs across one or more of the five areas*
 *respondents could select more than one service or program area

Connecting Schools & Communities Survey



Proportion of respondents reported they target programs, services, or activities to specific groups of students and community members

Connecting Schools & Communities Survey



Perceptions of community engagement in programs, services and activities delivered at on or off-site school facilities by school type

Conclusions

Improved **social infrastructure** in and around schools is critical to **community development** and fostering more supportive environments for **students to grow and learn**.

Educational equity will require schools to adopt an increasingly **civic outlook** and extend their capacity to work with **partner organisations** to deliver ‘more than a school’ **health and well-being programs and services** to those who need them!

Thank you for your attention

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