

## Literature review of research that supports -

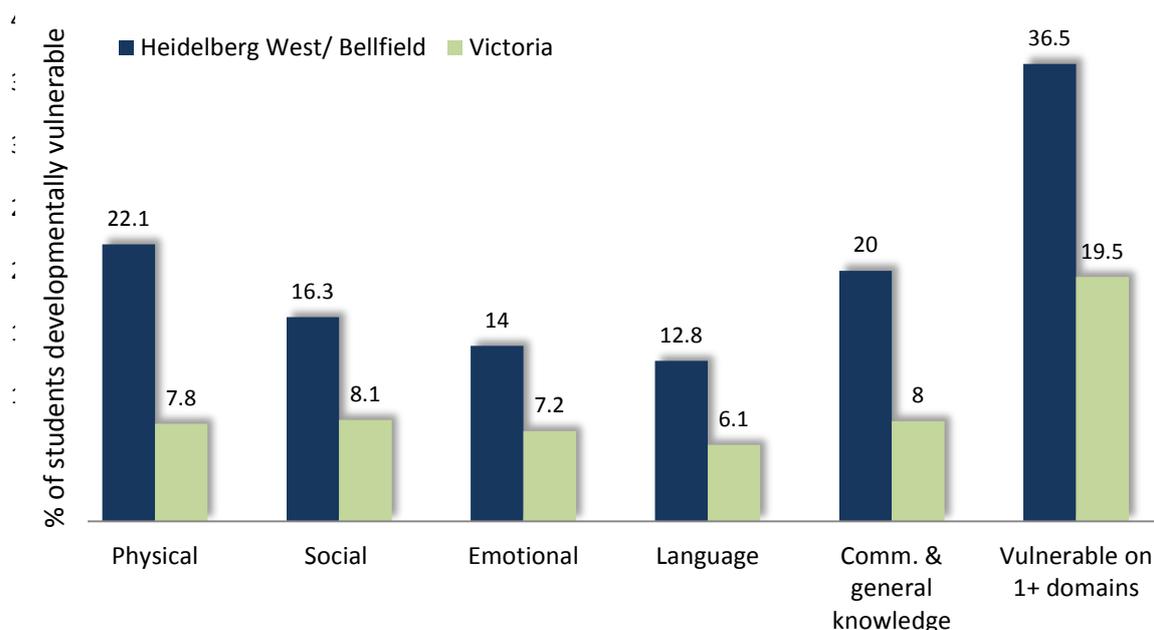
- aims and objectives of Baby Choir.
- the arts as a method for social connection & childhood development.
- evaluation questions and conclusions.

Although Banyule is ranked as the 13<sup>th</sup> most advantaged area in Victoria (SEIFA) some suburbs, such as ***West Heidelberg, are in the 95<sup>th</sup> percentile of advantage/disadvantage.*** (ABS, 2011).

***The Australian Early Development Index (AEDI, 2012)*** measures children's development when they start school. Information is collected by teachers in five domains; physical health and wellbeing, social competence, emotional maturity, language and cognitive skills and communication skills and general knowledge.

2012 AEDI data showed that children living in the most socio-economically disadvantaged Australian communities were twice as likely to be developmentally vulnerable in one or more, and two or more, domains compared to children in least disadvantaged communities. As a disadvantaged suburb, it is perhaps not surprising that similar figures were reported in West-Heidelberg compared to Victoria overall. ***36.5% of children living in West Heidelberg were vulnerable in one or more domains*** compared to 19.5% of children in Victoria. Developmental vulnerability amongst these children was notable at 16.3% and 14.1% in the areas of social competence and emotional maturity respectively. These figures are double that of all Victorian children who were considered vulnerable in both of these domains.

The graph below presents the ***percentage of all children starting school who are defined as developmentally vulnerable in West Heidelberg/Belfield compared to Victoria (i.e. scores ranked in the lowest 10%).*** Children are defined as particularly high-risk developmentally if their score indicates vulnerability on one or more domains.



Early years in public health is supported by the *National Preventative Health Taskforce (2009)* and the *Victorian Public Health & Wellbeing Plan 2011-15*.

### **Socio-economic disadvantage and social connection**

There is evidence to suggest that ***socio-economic disadvantage compromises the community and social connections that contribute to community cohesion.***

The Social Determinants of Health (Wilkinson & Marmot, 2003) attribute social and community connection to income, family situation, health, crime, culture and the built environment, amongst other factors (Kelly et al. 2012). From a social, economic and political perspective, researchers have argued that social connection is important to a resilient community and is necessary to “establish mutual expectations [with others] and trust that are the foundation for economic exchange and a healthy democracy” (Aslund, Starrin & Nilsson, 2010; Kelly et al. 2012, p.6).

### **Health and social connection**

It is apparent that social isolation can have a negative effect on an individual’s health.

***Social exclusion and stress, in addition to low socioeconomic conditions are recognised for the significant negative impact on health outcomes*** (WHO, Wilkinson & Marmot, 2003). In a study of Swedish adolescents, Aslund, Starrin & Nilsson (2010) found that low community social capital and low individual social trust were associated with higher rates of depression, psychosomatic symptoms and musculoskeletal pain. In a review of 148 studies about the links between social isolation and mortality, ***Holt-Lunstad et al. (2010) concluded that there was an equal risk of mortality as a result of social isolation as there is for smoking and alcohol consumption. Further evidence suggested that poor social connection posed an even greater risk to mortality than physical inactivity and obesity.*** It was concluded that people with stronger relationships had a 50% increased likelihood of survival than those with weaker social relationships (Holt-Lunstad et al., 2010; Kelly et al., 2012).

***Socio-economic disadvantage is related to social isolation which impacts on a person’s health. People living in West Heidelberg are considered disadvantaged and although there are health implications for adults, the needs of children warrant equal attention.***

### **Health promotion**

*Health promotion is the process of enabling people to increase control over their health and its determinants, and thereby improve their health.*

Health promotion is a practical approach to achieving greater equity in health. A major tenant is creating supportive environments.

### **Banyule Community Health**

Banyule Community Health (BCH) is a stand-alone community health service that works with people in Banyule and surrounding areas from centres in West Heidelberg and Greensborough, and multiple community based out-postings. Established in 1975 in the West Heidelberg Olympic Village, BCH has a strong culture of connecting with the diverse local community who are valued contributors at all levels of the organisation. With an operating budget of \$13 million, 170 staff and over 60 volunteers,

BCH is committed to addressing the Social Determinants of Health and provides services across the continuum of care; including health promotion, counselling, gambler's health, mental health nursing, dental, medical, allied health services and aboriginal health. In the last 12 months BCH had 13,800 registered clients.

Two BCH staff each hold a joint Community Midwife and Maternal & Child Health position. In partnership with Banyule Council the joint positions meet the needs of women who typically disengage with health services after they have left hospital with their new baby.

**Belonging, Being & Becoming. The Early Years Learning Framework for Australia (2009)**

Department of Education & Training for COAG

When children reach out to other children or respond positively to others they are showing that they feel "connected with, and contribute to their world" (p.25).

Baby Choir is based on evidence that music, singing, rhyming and movement bring about positive engagement between adults and children for effective childhood development.

Wellbeing is correlated with resilience, providing children with the capacity to cope with day-to-day stress and challenges. (2, p30)

The creative and expressive arts offer a medium for adults to interact with children. More specifically, singing and chanting rhymes, jingles and songs together (p.41&42) are known to impact on development of self-identity and communication.

"Children's learning is dynamic, complex and holistic. Physical, social, emotional, personal, spiritual, creative, cognitive and linguistic aspects of learning are all intricately interwoven and interrelated." (2 page 9)

Five learning outcomes that are broad and observable (2, p.19)

Achieving these outcomes is influenced by a "child's current capabilities, dispositions and learning preferences." "engagement with each child's family and community" (2, p19).

**Brain Development in Children** AEDC (2014)

1. Ages 0-3years are a "rapid period of brain development which can be fostered by
  - relationships with caregivers
  - Supported by optimal community environments for families and children
2. Ages 0-3 are where brain development is vulnerable to long lasting stress (depending on the length of time and number of stressors on the child).

Socio-economic disadvantage, amongst other factors, such as family violence, cause long lasting stress to children. Such stress can interfere with "brain development and lead to life-long problems in learning, behavior and both physical and mental health."

"Caring and positive relationships are essential to ensure stress levels promote resilience for babies and children."

## References

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