

AASE National Conference 2019

South Australia's Education
Works reforms: Inclusion via co-
location?

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Education Works

**“...greater school interaction though clusters”
(Government of South Australia, 2006a)**

Co-located “one stop shops”
(Government of South
Australia, 2006b, p.6).

“reshape the face of
public education in
South Australia”
(Lomax-Smith, 2006,
p. 1)



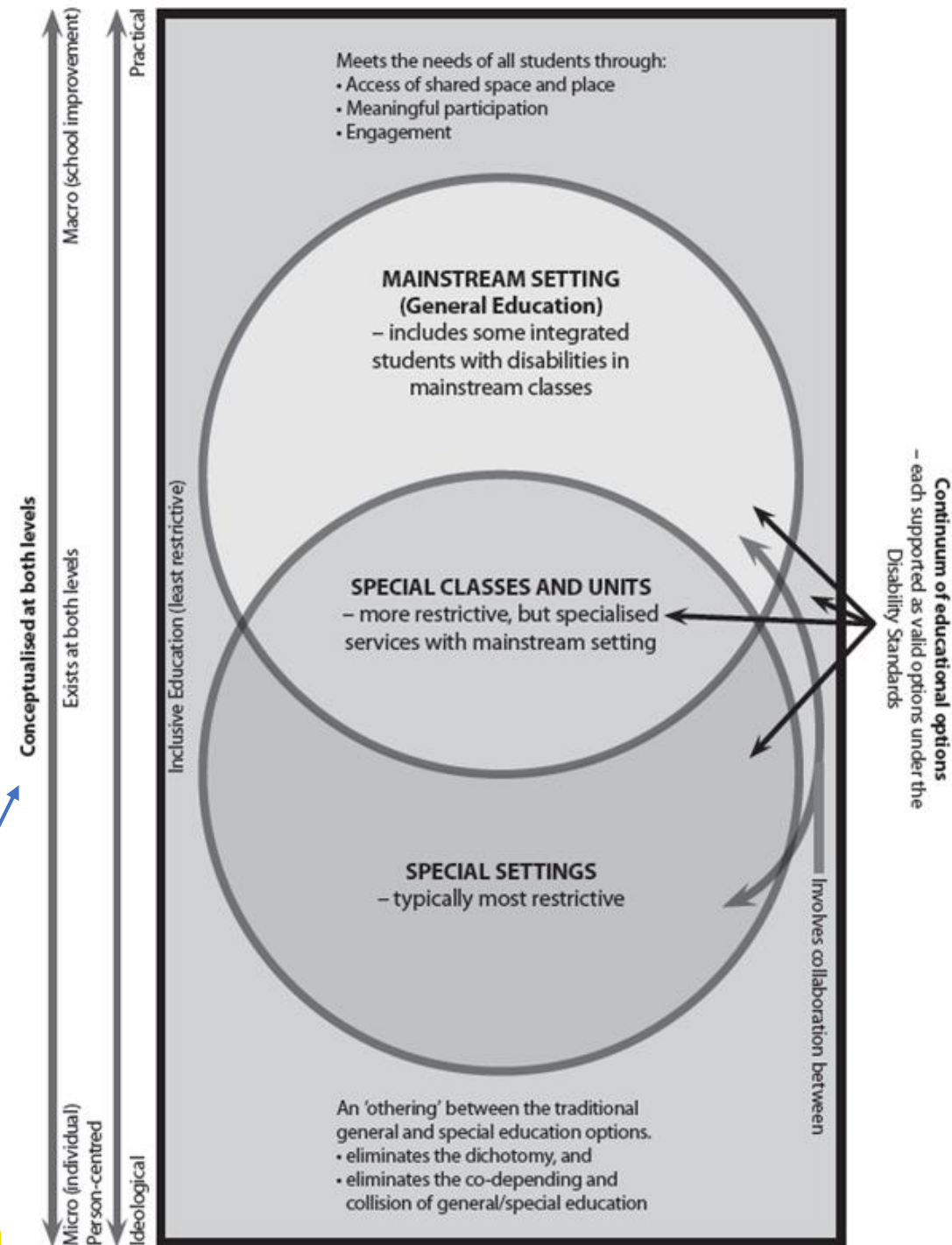
“Relocating these special
schools to mainstream schools
will allow children to be part of
the broader school community,
while still ensuring they have
the special supports they
need” Education Minister Jay
Weatherill (Hood, 2010, para.
6).

Thesis Aims

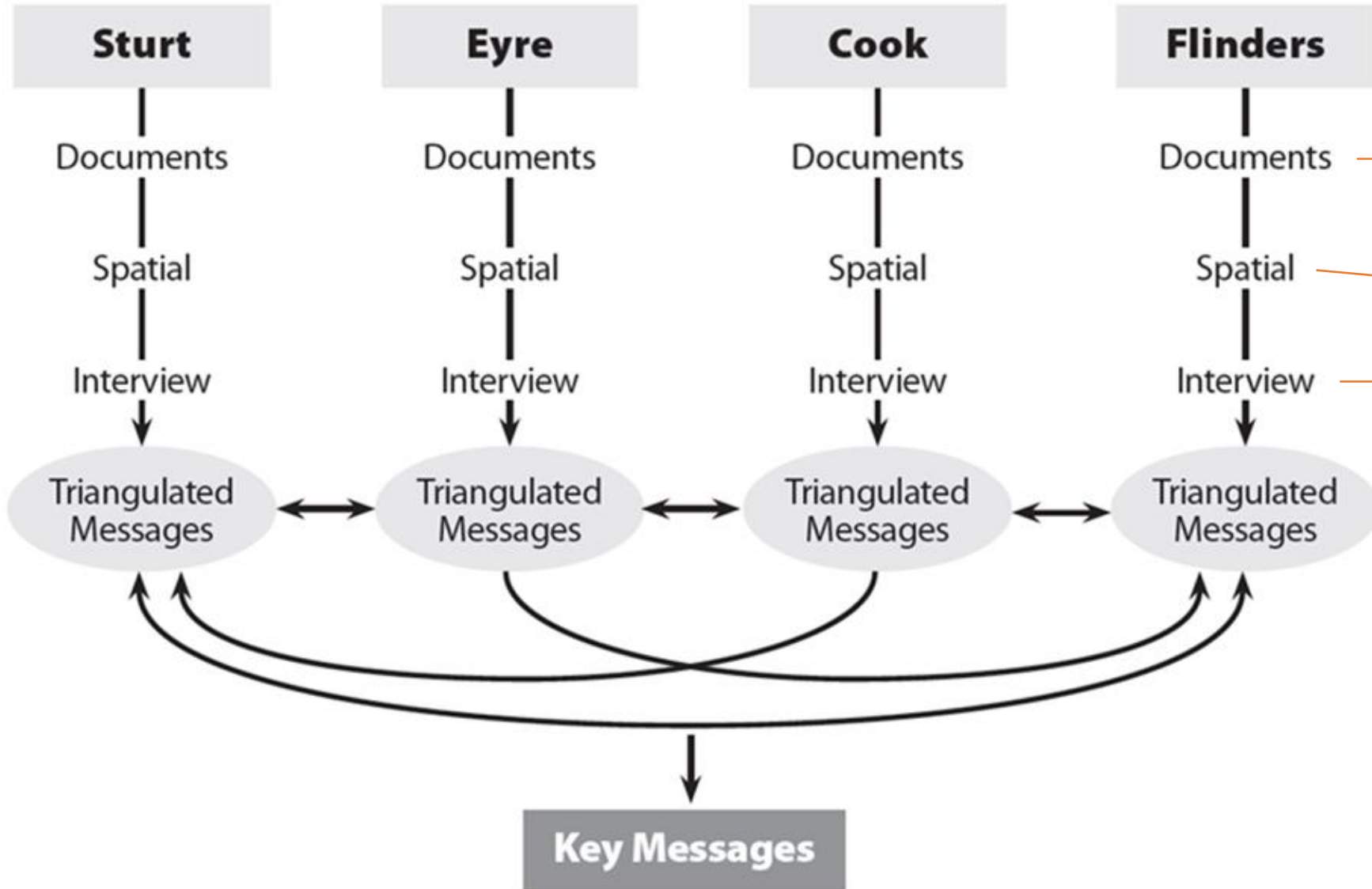
To identify the degree to which the *Education Works* reforms, involving the co-location of special schools, led to, or would likely lead to, increased inclusive practice within South Australian public schools.

- *How have the Education Works reforms changed the manner in which schools respond to the inclusive education agenda?*
- *How have attitudes towards inclusive education changed as a result of the reforms?*
- *What opportunities for inclusive education have been sought as a result of the reforms?*
- *What barriers continue to inhibit the realisation of Inclusive Education?*
- *Is the reform, overall, a successful approach to increasing inclusive education?*

Inclusion as an 'othering' to mainstream and special settings



OVERVIEW



Interpretive Case Study

- Four sites
- Open coding
- Soja's ThirdSpace
- Open coding

Trustworthiness

Member checking of initial themes arising from document and spatial studies.

Documents

- **Included:** general information, surveys, minutes, newsletters, surveys, partnership outlines, strategic plans, project briefs, curriculum folders, site maps, minutes from meetings, speeches, annual school reports, presentation slides, information pamphlets, site improvement plans and school context statements.

Major theme	Thick description
Shared programs have different expectations of students between schools.	<i>Sturt Centre had experienced great difficulties attempting to teach, with just two adults (one teacher and a school support officer), high quality inclusive physical education and health lessons to severely autistic students.</i>
Inclusion is interpreted as special education and therefore reproduction of segregation is occurring – some based on disability type.	<i>Inclusion framed as “-an approach where education services transform themselves in response to the broad spectrum of learning needs within a diversity of learners” (Public System doc).</i>

Major theme

Evidence of positive, changing practices are emerging, but align more with integration than inclusion.

Thick description

- the first time we came over we brought a lot of students with us but they were actually scared of the kids here but now they've got a really special bond together. We just all love them now.

I love Eyre Centre and when kids do things for the first time it melts my heart. It's amazing. I want to keep going right through High School. To me, the students at Eyre Centre are perfect – I remember them for their smile and their personality – not for their disability. They light up my life!

(Eyre)

Initial relationships between schools have been compromised due to contestation over car parking, interpersonal relationships, and loss of space/resources.

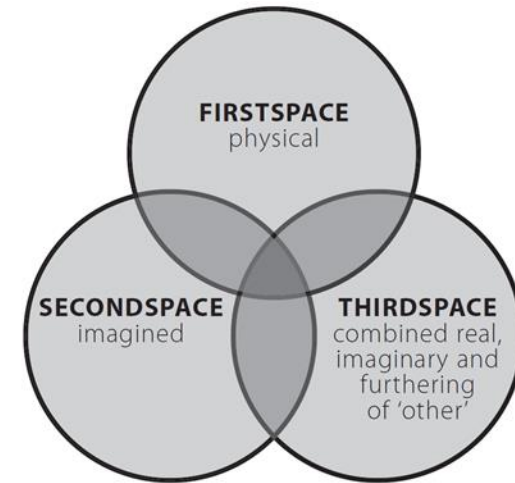
- I have strongly expressed my concern that this will further exacerbate the issues we have with traffic management in the streets and car parking both at [school name] and around the school. (Flinders)

- there appears to be no positive outcomes for them. The hall will become Sturt Centre's and there may be the opportunity to share some space with them where possible.

(Sturt)

Spatial

Soja's Thirdspace – conceptual framework



Major theme	Thick description
<p>Space is used to protect student safety, restricting them, and their opportunities to learn from risk taking.</p>	<p>- <i>we wanted to have a safe area where kids who were crawling or rolling could get out and not be fallen on by some of our other kids, so we put a fence around that grassed area –</i></p> <p style="text-align: right;">(Eyre)</p>
<p>Space between schools is not shared – in fact, spaces are already being tested and are locations of potential conflict.</p>	<p><i>So they haven't really gained any positive benefit from this big whiz-bang school being built next door, not really at all, except to lose some land and their hall, so I think that's been hard for them.</i></p> <p style="text-align: right;">(Sturt)</p>

Major theme	Thick description
<p>Spaces are used to hide and protect students because of their inappropriate behaviours.</p> <p>As a result, difference and segregation is reproduced.</p>	<p><i>It's - when the classroom is nice and quiet, everything's beautiful, and then occasionally one person may have that little meltdown, that sensory meltdown, and we're able to slide them into an area close to their class, or, maybe if they haven't got one we can find one, but generally the kids with behaviour problems, they do, we do have them closer to withdrawal rooms, and that segregates them, and you can't hear anything in the other room.</i> (Cook)</p> <p><i>"I don't like to call, it's got a, like a jail, but it's not, it's just got bars and you can get in and out-"</i> (Cook)</p> <p><i>Well they are seen, I mean, through the fence but as the shrubbery grows up they'll be less visible.</i> (Sturt)</p>
<p>Surveillance occurs as a panopticon, enabling leadership to surveil both students and teachers simultaneously, from a safe distance, and whilst silencing their voices.</p>	<p>- <i>you can also walk right down within thirty seconds and get a feel for what's happening and, visual, visual, because you can't hear it.</i> (Cook)</p>

Interviews

Major theme	Thick description
<p>Inclusion is faulty.</p> <p>It requires a shared philosophy (segregation does not?)</p>	<p><i>But I don't believe in inclusion for the sake of inclusion. It's actually got to benefit the students.</i></p> <p><i>Unless there's a shared philosophy then it can be tokenistic.</i></p> <p>(Flinders)</p>
<p>Wanted to debunk disability (it's normal!) whilst still spatially and visually othering.</p>	<p>- <i>we also want to teach them a level of understanding so that the [neighbouring school] students have an understanding and an appreciation of our students and what they stand for</i></p> <p>(Flinders)</p>

Major theme

Thick description

Inclusion – okay if not “full inclusion”, or a threat to status quo.

*My personal beliefs are that **inclusion is not a place.***
(Eyre)

*- in Canada they don't, they just put them in mainstream because they don't have special schools, so **I wouldn't believe in that sort of stuff.***
(Cook)

*“-both of us want sort of inclusion, **but not taking enrolments away from us.**”*
(Cook)

Increase in withdrawal spaces for physically moving students, even though aware of aesthetic issues.
(Believed it resulted in less aggression.)

*- they **all want more withdrawal rooms**, they all want bigger classrooms.*

*- we've put withdrawal rooms in. We've got eight classes, and four withdrawal rooms. A number of our students, especially the autistic students, some of them are, have got challenging behaviours, huge challenging behaviours, and **we're able to put them into those withdrawal rooms** next to their classrooms so it can be a lot more quieter.*

(Cook)

Sturt

- Peer Mentor Program was established and appeared sustainable. Positive relationships had emerged, resulting in play dates, sleepovers etc.
- Student voices were considered in the move to co-location.
- Socially unequal relationships produced by the Peer Mentor Program – students in paraprofessional roles, assisting teachers. Integration, not inclusion.
- Concrete walls constructed to protect student dignity. A visual ‘othering’.
- Mainstream already upset at loss of land/resources. More to come?

Cook

- Campaigned for benefits of co-location.
- Did best at capturing student voices prior to co-location.
- Leadership averted 'gatekeeping' of their own staff.

- Leader did not believe in 'full inclusion' – saw it as a threat to their school enrolments.
- Believed they were fully inclusive – yet no practices with the mainstream.
- Only physical connection was an unplanned one.
- Increased withdrawal spaces. Risk of increased seclusion?
- Some mainstream parents had already registered disapproval of the co-location.

Flinders

- Stated they were largely supportive of inclusion.
 - Recognised deficit labelling, and sought to correct it.
 - Created physical space providing opportunities for student independence and learning – not compliance and control.
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- Lack of funding = no shared Autism Learning Centre unrealised.
 - Creation of physical “buffer” between schools.
 - No gateways, pathways to the mainstream.
 - Tensions between communities over car parking spaces.
 - No student voice on co-location.

Eyre

- Shared excitement about benefits of proximity.
- Valued buddy program. Students learnt skills such as how to communicate with AAC devices.
- Mainstream students showed richer understanding of disability and diversity.
- One student had been placed w. mainstream for some education.

- Buddy program essentially 'reverse integration' – work placement for the mainstream.
- Health issues of Eyre students was confronting for mainstream.
- Segregation of own students due to safety considerations.

Education Works



“The one thing we will not be doing is institutionalising our children, segregating them off from the rest of the community” (Education Minister Jennifer Rankine, Channel Nine Adelaide, 2013).



Overall findings

“The language of inclusion is often deployed to shield the practice of exclusion” (Slee, 2013, p.14)

- Inclusion is misappropriated as integration/provision of special education.
- Little evidence that students would experience increased ‘interactions’ or be more a part of their ‘broader community’. Schools appeared in some ways more secure/segregated (increased withdrawal spaces) and barriers constructed as shielding mechanisms. (Who could see, who could not see, who could be seen, who could not be seen.)
- The status quo (binary of mainstream/specialised) appears protected against the ‘threat’ of full inclusion. More illusion than inclusion. A recommitment to segregation?

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AMBITIOUS

Thank you

Questions/Discussion



INSPIRING