



Schools as Community Centres (SaCC) Guidelines

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Introduction

The Schools as Community Centres (SaCC) program is an initiative of the NSW Department of Education to support families in their local communities to enhance the early learning and wellbeing of children from birth to 8 years.

The SaCC program contributes to the NSW Department of Education's [Strategic plan](#) and is coordinated by the Curriculum Early Years and Primary Learners (CEYPL) business unit within the Curriculum and Reform directorate.

SaCC programs are hosted by NSW public schools and led by a local facilitator who coordinates and manages a range of community engagement initiatives and programs supporting families with young children. There are currently 48 SaCC projects that run across NSW public schools, supporting children and families experiencing marked challenges of disadvantage.

The SaCC is designed to be universally accessed by all families in the community. Our aim is to provide soft entry points for vulnerable children and their families.

SaCC facilitators are responsible for managing a family-centred service model within their host school context. This includes coordinating a range of community engagement initiatives and activities to enhance the early learning and wellbeing of children. These activities are informed by the school, the Australian Early Development Census (AEDC) and other data, community needs, local context and evidence-based practices. SaCC facilitators work to:

- initiate activities and programs that are inclusive, responsive to families' needs, and support connection and a sense of belonging to the school community
- build relationships with local early childhood services to facilitate effective transition partnerships and support children's universal access to quality preschool education in the year before school
- engage and sustain partnerships with stakeholders to support the capability of the community to enhance early development outcomes for young children.

These guidelines are a key resource to support the planning, staffing and resourcing of SaCC programs.

Program outcomes

The SaCC program offers a holistic approach to early learning, development and wellbeing, and transition into early childhood education, and care services and schools across 4 interconnected key outcomes.

Key outcomes

- Children experience healthy and positive development in the early years
- Children experience a successful transition to school
- Families are active contributors to their child's learning journey
- Schools are engaged and partner with families, early childhood services and community support services

SaCC's build relationships and partner with stakeholders to identify local priorities that meet the needs of their community to enhance these 4 outcomes for young children and their families. The SaCC key outcomes contribute to overall outcomes for children.

Table 1 – four interconnected SaCC key outcomes



Program focus

The primary focus of the SaCC program is to enhance the early development outcomes of young children and their families through a holistic approach. The focus on the early development of children is based on well-established evidence that the first years of a child's life are crucial for setting the foundation for life-long health and learning outcomes.

Supporting the early development of children includes an emphasis on learning through play, learning at home, as well as key transitions such as starting playgroup, playgroup to preschool and preschool to kindergarten. [Belonging, Being and Becoming: The Early Years Learning Framework for Australia \(EYLF\)](#), the [First 2000 Days Framework](#) and the [Australian Early Development Census \(AEDC\)](#), along with other data, are key considerations in informing program planning and ensuring the provision of evidenced-based, developmentally-appropriate learning experiences that target areas of need. A list of program initiatives can be found in Appendix A.



Program management

The Early Learning team within the CEYPL business unit is responsible for the direction and guidance of the SaCC program.

The principal of the host school is responsible for 'on the ground' management of the program and is the facilitator's line manager. The principal recruits, supports, encourages, mentors, and supervises the facilitator to achieve the program outcomes and is responsible for supporting the facilitator's professional development. Consultation with the community is a key part of the program and can be managed through existing community engagement structures or through another process identified locally.

The days and hours of operation of the SaCC are to be determined by the principal, in consultation with the SaCC facilitator. The activities and programs of the SaCC are similarly to be determined by the principal, in consultation with the SaCC facilitator using a situational analysis approach. Analysing local data from the [Strategic Improvement Plan \(SIP\)](#), council websites (profile.id), census data and the [AEDC](#) can support SaCC facilitators to understand community needs, challenges and strengths.



Collaborative partnerships

Working with the school and local community will support SaCC facilitators to plan and design initiatives to meet the SaCC program outcomes.

Getting to know local stakeholders will support strong relationships and partnerships within the local community. Working in partnership with local stakeholders will strengthen the initiatives the SaCC program offers.

Working with local Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander community groups, including the local Aboriginal Education Consultative Group (AECG) or cultural groups is a key focus of SaCC initiatives. It is important that SaCC facilitators take time to help local community groups get to know them and discuss how they might work together.

Other key stakeholder partnerships can include local early childhood services and preschools, baby health clinics and nurses, early intervention and prevention services and local councils. Attending local interagency meetings can provide opportunities to build relationships and partnerships with local stakeholders. SaCC initiatives are designed to be facilitated in partnership with local child and family related stakeholders.



Roles and responsibilities

Clearly defining roles and responsibilities for SaCCs programs supports effective and efficient program delivery. Working together creates opportunities for children and families across NSW to experience improved outcomes through engagement with SaCC programs. This section of the guidelines calls out each stakeholder's roles and responsibilities and identifies contacts for other business units across the department to provide specialised advice to support SaCC operations, including Human Resources, Industrial Relations and Finance.

Role of Curriculum, Early Years and Primary Learners (CEYPL)

The Early Learning team within CEYPL provides policy advice and support for effective program operation and ensures programs align with the SaCC's outcomes.

Key responsibilities of the Family, Community and Engagement officer include:

- supporting SaCC facilitators and principals in program establishment, implementation and ongoing management
- coordinating professional development for facilitators including induction, networking and communication events
- offering recruitment support to find suitable facilitators, including being a panel member
- providing schools with annual operational funds
- preparing correspondence, briefings, reports and promotional material related to the SaCC program
- ensuring that planning, evaluation and reporting requirements are met
- collecting and using the data to improve support and evaluating the operation of SaCC programs
- providing a range of [early learning resources](#) to support facilitators in their role, including access to the Early Learning statewide staffroom.

Role of the principal

The principal of the host school is responsible for the implementation and management of the SaCC program at a school level. The principal works in collaboration with the SaCC facilitator to ensure appropriate use of funds to achieve program outcomes.

Key responsibilities of the principal include:

- recruitment and ongoing line management of the SaCC facilitator position as per the guidelines for employing a Clerk Grade 7/8 under the *Government Sector Employment Act 2013* (GSE Act)
- supporting the facilitator and other staff operating out of SaCC by providing appropriate administrative support and guidance
- consulting and engaging with the school community to identify relevant issues impacting young children and their families
- monitoring and managing the SaCC budget in collaboration with the facilitator and the schools' administration manager (SAM)
- ensuring all school staff understand the critical role that the SaCC plays in a successful transition to school for children and families
- meeting the department's code of conduct, [Human Resources](#) (HR) and [Industrial Relations](#) (IR) requirements if employing staff to support the initiatives of the program, noting the line management requirements.

Role of the SaCC facilitator

SaCC facilitators are responsible for coordinating and managing a whole school approach to a range of community engagement initiatives and programs to enhance the early learning and wellbeing of young children and their families.

Key responsibilities of the facilitator include:

- coordinating, managing and delivering a range of community engagement initiatives supporting young children and their families

- planning, evaluating and reporting on these initiatives and activities to enhance the early learning and wellbeing of young children in the early years and ensure planning aligns with school planning
- managing the operational funds from the department in consultation with their principal to ensure the best use of funds in line with program outcomes
- building partnerships with local early childhood services to support children's participation in high-quality early childhood programs, particularly in the year before school
- supporting parents as the first and most important educators of their child(ren) through the promotion of in-home learning strategies and guidance on being active participants in their child's learning at school
- establishing effective collaborative relationships with schools, early childhood services, support services, government and non-government agencies, including establishing service networks where appropriate
- participating in SaCC network, professional development and communication meetings planned by Early Learning
- preparing, sharing planning, evaluating and reporting documents and program data with Early Learning at the beginning and end of the school year
- participating in the on-going evaluation of the SaCC program initiatives, and collecting and maintaining program data to inform school planning and reporting processes.

Planning, evaluating and reporting

Effective SaCC operation hinges on good planning, implementation and evaluation of the impact of initiatives. SaCC facilitators collect and analyse information to inform their planning and delivery of initiatives aligned with program outcomes. Striving for continuous improvement of program operation and initiatives being offered is more likely to result in effective and efficient use of human and financial resources.

A planning, evaluating and reporting tool (Appendix B) has been developed to support facilitators to plan initiatives at the beginning of each school year and term that reflect the 4 SaCC program outcomes.

Planning

The planning, evaluating and reporting tool (Appendix B) is interactive and can be revisited and updated by SaCC facilitators as required. The tool has been designed to include drop-down links to the SaCC outcomes for ease of completion. Each section also includes a free text box to document other information if required.

The planning, evaluating and reporting tool includes a [situational analysis](#) of the community context. This is an analysis of the School Improvement Plan (SIP), AEDC data and local community demographics. Through the processes of 'looking inward', 'looking outward' and 'looking forward', a situational analysis answers the questions:

- Where are we now?
- Where do we want to be?
- How good can we be?

A situational analysis is an authentic and rigorous assessment of a school's current state. Completing the situational analysis will support facilitators to gather information for reporting purposefully and systematically across each term.

Evaluating and reporting

SaCC facilitators are required to evaluate and report on the impact of activities implemented throughout the year. This process should be conducted in conjunction with the principal, school staff and other key stakeholders.

Schools can use a range of strategies appropriate to the context to support evaluating and reporting, for example, case studies, surveys and observations. Reporting on SaCC initiatives should be based on valid and reliable data and analysis with the 4 program outcomes at the forefront.

The department has a range of resources on the [Evaluation resource hub](#) that can support SaCC facilitators in their planning, evaluating and reporting. For example, developing a logic model can support SaCC facilitators to design initiatives that are responsive to the needs of young children and their families.



Finance

The department provides funding for the 48 SaCC facilitator positions and the operational funds for each SaCC in NSW public schools.

SaCC facilitators manage the SaCC operational funds from the department in consultation with their principal and the school's administrative manager (SAM).

The funding allocation is provided to support each SaCC to achieve the program outcomes and is allocated to map equally across the 4 SaCC program outcomes. Operational funds may be used:

- to fund external providers to deliver initiatives in partnership with the SaCC facilitator
- for consumables, meeting expenses, office supplies, maintenance of quality resources and equipment that support quality early childhood programs
- for SaCC facilitator professional learning that supports their performance and development plan (PDP)
- to improve the physical environment of the school as a community centre
- for additional maintenance associated with the provision of the SaCC program, such as an additional general assistant.

Please note that where school administrative and support staff (SAS) provide administrative support for the program, an appropriate portion of the operational funds can be used to pay for the additional time required of SAS staff.

The SaCC operational funds are distributed via the Resource Allocation Model (RAM) and can be found within the **school budget allocation report**. To view the SaCC operational funds:

- open the schools' School Budget Allocation Report (SBAR) funding
- search for the **comparison of current allocations and previous allocations** form of the SBAR report
- locate the **site specific – School as Community Centre operational funds** (this is where the funds can be located)

- the funds will be displayed in a line labelled **SaCC cash grants**. The internal number will be the same – this is organised by the department.

The \$16,000 can be moved to **Schools as Community Centres** where SAMs can use these funds for SaCC expenses.

More information can be found under [strategic schools resourcing](#) on the [department's website](#).



Appendices

Appendix A SaCC program initiatives and activities

Appendix B Planning, evaluating and reporting tool

Appendix C Recruitment resources



Appendix A

SaCC program initiatives and activities

Please note that while the examples below have been grouped under the outcomes of the SaCC program, many initiatives contribute to the 4 key outcomes in interconnected ways.

- Children experience healthy and positive development in the early years.
- Children experience a successful transition to school.
- Families are active contributors to their child's learning journey.
- Schools are engaged and partner with families, early childhood services and community support services.

Key outcome: children experience healthy and positive development in the early years.

Playgroups

Many SaCC programs include both supported and community playgroups. In addition to this, SaCC programs also run playgroups responding to identified needs of children and families, including children with additional needs and chronic illness. Some examples include English as an additional language or dialect, early intervention, babies and toddlers, water safety and swimming programs, baby development, healthy eating, rhyme and music, social skills and play therapy. In some communities, Aboriginal languages and cultural playgroups operate through SaCC programs.

Some SaCC playgroups are designed with specific groups in mind, including young mums, grandparents and dads. SaCC playgroups also operate off-site, including in local parks and gardens and in partnership with sporting activities. A number of resources are also distributed through SaCC playgroups, including local playgroup directories.

Early literacy initiatives

SaCC programs may plan to be involved in a range of community-wide literacy initiatives such as [Paint the Town Read](#), Family Fun Reading Day, Born to Read, Reading Down Town and Let's Read. In many communities, books and literacy packs are widely distributed through SaCC initiatives. These types of initiatives may also extend to provide children with reading books in

'nooks around town'; in places frequented by families which generally involve waiting, such as doctors' surgeries. Books are replaced and updated regularly. Baby literacy packs are given out at hospitals for parents with newborns.

SaCC programs operate toy and/or book libraries. This may include reading clubs or lending a range of resources. These resources can include bilingual books, literacy packs, photo books made locally and books published through the SaCC program. Visits to school and community libraries are also arranged by SaCC facilitators and storytelling takes place under trees, in story circles and through the 'Imagination Library' ([Australia – Dolly Parton's Imagination Library](#)). Reading tips for families are published and distributed and activities to support children's oral language development are implemented across SaCC programs.

Positive parenting

SaCC programs support parents through a range of formal and side-by-side parenting initiatives. These programs are offered widely across SaCC programs. Some SaCC facilitators have undertaken training to deliver parenting programs, while other parenting programs are delivered in partnership with government and non-government agencies. There are also a number of private providers who offer training programs and resources in positive parenting for a cost.

Parenting programs for specific needs

These include programs addressing child safety in the home, parenting a child with additional needs, developing resilience in children, helping parents with new technology, supporting children with challenging behaviours and early language development. SaCC programs also offer context-specific programs, including parenting in a new culture and parenting programs in languages other than English. Some programs also offer parenting programs specifically for grandparents and other carers.

Side by side initiatives

These initiatives include diverse activities designed locally for target groups such as fathers or male carers, parents or carers under 21 years and grandparents or other carers. 'Drop-in' centres and parent café initiatives operate across some programs. Other SaCC initiatives support parents' or carers' social connections. Many SaCC facilitators use opportunities such as cooking and sharing a meal together to support families. A number of SaCCs lead, or are active in, their school's gardens which provide positive environments for families to connect in and learn new skills. Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander foods and medicine gardens have been established across some SaCC programs promoting cross-cultural understandings. In addition, many SaCC

programs are involved in information sharing, operating parent libraries and borrowing facilities and participating in local community events, including contributing to information stalls at local fetes.

Adult learning

A range of initiatives have been implemented to support adult learning. This includes partnerships with TAFE such as a Taste of TAFE; Safe Food Handling Cert III, Certificate IV in Education Support, TAFE Outreach and the Certificate in Spoken and Written English (AMES course). First Aid for Kids and Senior First Aid are offered across many SaCC programs and beginning English classes and English conversation groups have been set up for families from refugee and migrant backgrounds. Families are offered opportunities to develop their computer skills and money management initiatives are implemented through a range of activities.

Excursions are also widely implemented to demonstrate low-cost activities that can be undertaken with children (and in some cases to reduce location isolation) and partnerships with universities have been established. Other initiatives include craft groups, Centrelink information sharing, work skills workshops, Parents as Tutors, resume writing and career pathway activities and sewing workshops.

Key life transition

It is important that SaCC programs contribute to school and community key life transitions and a strong start to school.

A positive start to school is important and depends on everyone working together to make it happen – families, community, early childhood services and the school team.

The Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) [Starting Strong V: Transitions from Early Childhood Education and Care to Primary Education report](#) highlights the importance of engaging children, families, professionals, educators and the community as key to planning meaningful transitions. The SaCC program can support children's strong and successful start to school by connecting with schools, early childhood services and community-based services to implement a series of transition to school activities for any child starting kindergarten the following year.

Collaboration between families; early childhood services and schools is crucial to supporting children who may need early intervention and prevention services, including referrals to speech pathologists, occupational therapist and paediatricians.

To support a strong start to school, SaCC programs may lead healthy snack and lunch box initiatives and provide free resources delivered to each school. SaCC programs may also support initiatives such as Let's Read Early Literacy Packs, starting school magnets, Free Stuff for Big School, School Readiness Backpacks and Transition Backpacks. SaCC programs can contribute to school and community transition to school information expos and events.

Many SaCC programs also lead transition to school playgroups, including embedding social skills and literacy activities. The department has a range of [transition to school resources](#) and policy guidance to support SaCC facilitators to support transition to school.

Participation in early childhood education

In addition to a strong start to school, SaCC facilitators can support and promote all children's right to universal access to early childhood education. SaCC programs can partner with families to ensure that every child can participate in a quality preschool program in the year before school. SaCC programs can build partnerships with early childhood services that are delivered by a qualified early childhood teacher for 15 hours per week or 600 hours per year. These early childhood services may have a focus on programs for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander, vulnerable or disadvantaged children.

Safe, healthy and connected communities

SaCC programs work collaboratively with NSW Health to offer a range of screening activities, for example, [Statewide Eyesight Preschooler Screening – Pregnancy and the first five years](#). Early childhood, maternal, child and family health nurses, as well as occupational therapists, speech pathologists and physiotherapists operate clinics and/or visit playgroups.

Healthy eating and exercise programs for both children and adults operate throughout most SaCC programs, including breakfast programs, music and movement classes, healthy eating and cooking sessions, food safety information, yoga and Zumba classes and self-care initiatives.

Other local initiatives include Aboriginal Medical Service parent support, Mental Health First Aid courses, infant massage workshops, Keeping all Children Safe – protective behaviours information sessions, Women's Healing Circle – workshop for survivors of family and domestic violence, dietitian visits, Road Safety workshops and support for community-wide events, including the Festival of Ability and Harmony Day.

Appendix B

Schools as Community Centre's planning, evaluating and reporting tool

The SaCC planning, reporting, and evaluating template is designed to be used to record your program initiatives for the year. The template will provide you with a high-level overview of the proposed planned initiatives for the year with term plans. Some initiatives might span across the whole school planning cycle.

From Term 1 2024, the template will be finalised for use by all SaCC facilitators. SaCC facilitators will be encouraged to share the completed template with state office from Term 1 and at the end of the year in Term 4 2024 for reporting purposes.

The 4 key interconnected outcomes of the SaCC program and the department's commitment to give children the best start in learning is at the forefront of all planning. The SaCC outcomes are:

1. Children experience healthy and positive development in the early years.
2. Children experience a successful transition to school.
3. Families are active contributors to their child's learning journey.
4. Schools are engaged and partner with families, early childhood services and community support services.

Step 1 – complete a situational analysis

A situational analysis will support facilitators to develop a rich understanding of your school's community context. A situational analysis is an assessment of your school's current state and is used to support future planning to develop a rich and highly contextualised understanding of your

school’s current situation. Through a process of looking inward, looking outward, and looking forward, a situational analysis answers 3 questions: Where are we now? Where do we want to be? and How good can we be? For more information about situational analysis, visit the School Excellence in Action – [Situational analysis](#) webpage.

Use the table below to capture school and community needs and stakeholders that will inform the SaCC planning.

| Community Needs AEDC, school SIP, local community context (The why behind the initiative) | Where are we now? (What are we going to observe?) | Who do we need to engage? (Stakeholder engagement, partnerships, planned and actual cost) | Where do we want to be? (What will success look like?) |
|---|--|---|--|
| [Add your own community needs] | | | |
| [Add your own community needs] | | | |

Step 2 – plan initiatives

Use the table below to plan initiatives that address the community needs identified in the situational analysis and link to your school's Strategic Improvement Plan (SIP).

| Initiative | Links to SaCCs outcomes | Links to schools SIP | How will we know we have been successful? | Evaluation of the initiative |
|---|-------------------------|--|---|--|
| Description and related activities (including costs) | Choose an item. | Link to your school's Strategic Improvement Plan | What measures will you use? | Focus on known improved outcomes (feature both qualitative data and quantitative data), were funds expended in the best way and how we will know if we have been successful? |
| Description and related activities (including costs) | Choose an item. | | | |

| Initiative | Links to SaCCs outcomes | Links to schools SIP | How will we know we have been successful? | Evaluation of the initiative |
|---|-------------------------|----------------------|---|------------------------------|
| Description and related activities (including costs) | Choose an item. | | | |
| Description and related activities (including costs) | Choose an item. | | | |

Step 3 – evaluation and reflection

This is an opportunity to reflect on the SaCC program. What is the impact of the program (how are families and children better off)? and what would we do differently next time?

Please consider the following links when planning, reporting, and evaluating Schools as Community Centres initiatives.

- [School Excellence Framework Version 2 July 2017 \[PDF 292KB\]](#)
- [Transition to School – Strong and successful start to school](#)
- [The Wellbeing Framework for Schools \[PDF 165KB\]](#)
- [Australian Early Development Census \(aedc.gov.au\)](#)

Appendix C

Recruitment for new SaCC facilitator positions

SaCC facilitators are employed in the classification of Clerk Grade 7/8 in the NSW Public Service under the *Government Sector Employment Act 2013* (GSE Act). Recruitment of SaCC facilitators must comply with merit selection processes under the GSE Act. The role must be advertised externally and a 'comparative assessment' must be conducted to select the candidate most suitable to the role.

Early Learning is happy to support with program specific recruitment support, such as being involved in the panel. For all other generic information about recruitment please go to [Public service employee recruitment](#) or contact the school.

Recruitment support and advice

Table 2 – contact information

| Issue | Area of department | Contact details |
|--|----------------------------------|---|
| Recruitment | School Recruitment and Placement | Online query form sassrecruitment@det.nsw.edu.au 1300 32 32 32 |
| Payroll, leave | Corporate Payroll | EDConnect (nsw.gov.au) 1300 32 32 32 (select option 3, then 2) Log an online query Pay, leave and benefits |
| Rates of pay, employment conditions, flex, and leave, etc | Industrial Relations Directorate | Tel. (02) 78143510 Email: indrel@det.nsw.edu.au Industrial relations |

Comparative assessment

A comparative assessment for a role is the process of assessing an individual against the pre-established standards for the role (or role type) and the claims of other people for the role. For a comparative assessment, more than one assessor must be involved. The panel should be in line with the Public Service Commission (PSC) Recruitment and selection guidelines. The process includes:

- pre-screening for essential requirements such as a qualification or licence
- An application and resume review
- at least 3 capability-based assessments, one of which is an interview and can include role play, a presentation, a work sample activity and/or a case study
- referee checks against the pre-established standards for the role (or role type).

Sample pre-screening questions to address as part of the application process

These are examples of pre-screening questions to target the focus capabilities of the SaCC facilitator role and are aimed at supporting principals to recruit the most suitable candidate for the role:

5. The role of a SaCC facilitator involves working in partnership with families, school staff and the broader school community to implement programs and initiatives to support the early development of children from birth to 8 years of age. In 300 words or less, provide an example where you have demonstrated capacity to support parents or carers to enhance the learning and wellbeing outcomes of their children.
6. In 300 words or less, please give an example of your success, working both as part of a team and as an individual, to contribute to the work of the team. In your response, outline the key challenges that the team faced and how you worked with the team to overcome these challenges.

Sample task

This task could be emailed to short-listed candidates 48 hours prior to the interview:

You have 48 hours to prepare for a presentation of 5 minutes to the selection panel on the day of the interview. The presentation topic is (principal or hiring manager to choose one of the topics below or develop their own):

Example 1: conduct a workshop with a small group of parents or carers on supporting the development of early literacy at home.

Example 2: present to parents or carers at a transition to school workshop on strategies to prepare their child for kindergarten.

Sample panel questions

1. The principal has contacted you, outlining their concern about the number of children who are starting Kindergarten without having accessed pre-school, playgroup or other early learning environments. The 2012 and 2015 Australian Early Development Census results demonstrate that 30% of children in the community are vulnerable on one or more domain(s), with 16% vulnerable on 2 or more domains.

Outline for the panel:

- how you would respond to the principal
 - what actions you would take
 - what other information may be required
 - how you would respond if the request came from a neighbouring school
2. A young Aboriginal family, with existing strengths and some specific vulnerabilities and/or needs, comes to the school with a child in Year 4, Year 2, Kindergarten and a 3-year-old. The mother is unemployed and distressed about how she will support her family. She is seeking support from you as the SaCC facilitator. Please explain what you think you would do in this situation.

Please include:

- what you think your first steps might be
- any possible barriers to engagement with these types of families that might exist
- how you would successfully engage with these families

Sample referee questions

1. Are you aware of the application and can you verify the accuracy of its content to the best of your knowledge?
2. To your knowledge, is there any aspect of the applicant's behaviour, actions or activities that would make them unsuitable for working with children?
3. How well did the candidate work in their team?
4. What are the candidate's strengths and weaknesses?



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