

Case study: Epping Primary School

Learning Support Club

Refugee Education Support Program (RESP) 3: 2016 – 2017



Background and Identified Needs

Epping Primary School is located in the North of Melbourne, and has 453 students enrolled. Of these students, 49% come from a language background other than English. The predominant linguistic backgrounds of students attending the school are Arabic and Hindi.

As part of RESP the school identified that students from migrant and refugee backgrounds required additional support with English language development, including oracy and vocabulary, as well as the need to build stronger learning engagement and social connectedness.

The RESP Project

As part of RESP, the school partnered with Whittlesea Community Connections (WCC) to deliver a Learning Support Club targeted at students from migrant and refugee backgrounds. The project consisted of a weekly out-of-school-hours session and included on-going family consultation and exploration of ideas to build student engagement.

The project aimed to increase capacity of students to engage in learning, build social connections and

to increase student confidence to succeed at school.

WCC worked closely with Epping Primary School to coordinate weekly Learning Support Club sessions, recruit and manage volunteers and build capacity to deliver out-of-school-hours learning support.

WCC has strong expertise in a number of areas including settlement services and education. WCC runs a number of homework clubs in the City of Whittlesea with a strong focus on assisting students and families from refugee backgrounds to develop the confidence and skills needed to participate fully in the community.

Outcomes for Students

Learning outcomes

Project staff observed clear improvements in spoken English and vocabulary amongst students who attended the program. Providing hands on and interactive activities supported a safe learning environment for students to take risks and practice their English speaking skills.

Students who participated in the student focus group all agreed that the program had helped improve their English reading and writing skills. School staff noticed an increase in student learning

engagement and concentration in the classroom, particularly in the areas of spelling and reading.

Social and wellbeing outcomes

The Learning Support Club has played a significant role in supporting students to feel more confident in their learning. School staff and volunteer tutors observed an increase in social confidence, self esteem and enjoyment of learning, including a considerable increase in students asking questions and seeking assistance with learning tasks.

Many students also made new friends through participating in the project that they now play with at lunchtime in the yard.

“When I first came I felt scared, now I feel good...and feel more confident to ask questions in class.” - Grade 2 student

Outcomes for the School

Capacity to meet the needs of refugee students

The Learning Support Club has increased the capacity of school staff to engage with families whose children attend the project. Classroom teachers are subsequently more aware of their students’ learning and wellbeing needs.

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“First when you come you don’t feel so good, next time when you come you’re making new friends.”
- Grade 3 student

Work in partnership

The partnership between Epping Primary School and Whittlesea Community Connections developed positively as both parties were committed to the projects ongoing success.

From this project partnership the school now can provide students and families at the school with the opportunity to access other Whittlesea Community Connections services including asylum seeker legal assistance, utility support and involvement in community social events.

“The RESP project has been one of the most positive experiences we’ve had in terms of community partnerships.”
- WCC Settlement Services Manager

Lessons Learned

Supporting students with additional needs, both social and academic at learning club sessions was challenging. This was addressed by developing an

integrated process between the school and agency for coordinating student care, including individual student assessment and referral to external services.

Some volunteer tutors only attended a small number of sessions due to other commitments such as teaching placements. In response, the project will adopt a new volunteer recruitment strategy that ensures a mixture of volunteers including university students, retirees and others.

This resource was produced as part of the Refugee Education Support Program (RESP). RESP assists selected schools to identify and implement strategies to support the achievement outcomes, wellbeing and engagement in learning of students from refugee backgrounds.

To learn more visit: www.cmy.net.au

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