

Case study: Lalor North Primary School

Family Learning Club

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



Background and Identified Needs

Lalor North Primary School is located in the North of Melbourne, and currently has 335 enrolled students. Of these students, 255 are from an EAL background making up 87% of the student body, with the predominant cultural and linguistic backgrounds being Arabic, Farsi, Somali, Macedonian and Greek.

As part of RESP the school identified that students from refugee backgrounds required additional support to complete their homework and build their confidence to learn. There was also a need to build the capacity of families to support their children's learning at home and increase family engagement in the school community. Based on these needs, the school decided that students would most benefit from a project focused on both student and family engagement.

The RESP Project

The school partnered with Whittlesea Community Connections (WCC) to deliver a Family Learning Club. This consisted of a weekly family engagement session directly followed by a student and family session focused on homework completion.

The project aimed to increase the capacity of students to engage in learning and social connections at school, and to increase the capacity of families to support their children's learning at home and engage in their children's education.

WCC has strong expertise in a number of areas including education and settlement services, with a strong focus on assisting students and families from refugee backgrounds. WCC worked closely with Lalor North Primary School to support the Family Learning Club by coordinating weekly club sessions, recruiting and managing volunteers and building capacity of the school to deliver out-of-school hours learning support.

Outcomes for Students

Learning outcomes

Classroom teachers reported that students attending the Family Learning Club started completing their homework for the first time. The club coordinator observed how students felt a sense of achievement when they finished their homework and this had positive flow on effects for engagement in the classroom.

Having the opportunity to complete homework in a supportive environment with intensive learning and family support has increased student's

confidence to have a go at more challenging learning tasks. Parents reported how students are now more confident to share and talk about their homework with them.

"Students are borrowing books from the library more, are more settled in class and are accelerating in their learning."
- Classroom teacher

Social and wellbeing outcomes

Students participating in the Family Learning Club have developed new friendships through their participation in weekly sessions and feel a stronger sense of belonging at school.

According to classroom teachers, students participating in Family Learning Club are generally feel more confident to attend school and this has had a positive impact on student learning in the classroom.

"My Grade 4 student is excited for Tuesday afternoons and is proud to show me his homework; he has matured and is more focussed in class." - Classroom teacher

RESP is a partnership between CMY, Foundation House and the Department of Education and Training, delivered in collaboration with Catholic Education Commission of Victoria and the Association of Independent Schools Victoria. RESP is supported by the Victorian Government.



Education and Training



Case study: Lalor North Primary School

Family Learning Club

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



Outcomes for Families

Capacity to engage with the school and their child's education

Families reported that participating in the project helped them improve their English language skills, which in turn has helped them support their children's education. By learning specific English vocabulary and English phrases families can now communicate more effectively with the school for example, when their child is sick or when they need help filling out school forms. Classroom teachers have observed how families participating in the club are now more able and confident to speak to school staff members.

"The club is very useful for me, to help the kids doing homework, how to read with them."

- Parent

Outcomes for the School

Capacity to meet the needs of refugee students

As a result of Family Learning Club, the school is now more aware of the specific needs of students from refugee backgrounds. For example, the school supported students participating in Family Learning Club to attend swimming classes and school excursions, including support with filling out

forms and purchasing items such as bathers and googles. As a result of this extra support student participation rates increased.

Engagement with families

The assistant principal reported how relationships between the school and families participating in Family Learning Club have strengthened over the duration of the project. The school community's awareness and capacity to know and relate to families from refugee backgrounds has increased. School staff members are now aware of which students and families come from refugee backgrounds and understand that many families are likely to be experiencing difficulties. Every classroom teacher with students involved in Family Learning Club visited the Family Learning Club at least once throughout the year.

Work in partnership

The partnership between WCC and Lalor North Primary School was positive and productive. The club coordinator (WCC) and the school's EAL teacher developed a good working relationship with complementary skillsets in EAL teaching and social work. The club coordinator (WCC) has joined the school council as an advisor on the needs of refugee background students and families in the school community. WCC will continue to link

families in the school community to settlement services as needed.

Most notably, the Family Learning Club won a runner up award at the MY Education awards at the end of 2017 in the 'Outstanding School-based OSHLSP' category. This was a huge achievement for an OSHLSP in its first year of implementation and reflected positively on the partnership between Lalor North Primary School and WCC.

Lessons Learned

A high level of school engagement with the project, especially from school leadership and the school's EAL teacher was central to the smooth and effective running of the Family Learning Club. Having a multi-lingual club coordinator (WCC) who could communicate with parents in their first language also added significant value to the achievement of positive project outcomes.

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

RESP is a partnership between CMY, Foundation House and the Department of Education and Training, delivered in collaboration with Catholic Education Commission of Victoria and the Association of Independent Schools Victoria. RESP is supported by the Victorian Government.



Education and Training

