



Foundation House

The Victorian Foundation for Survivors of Torture
www.foundationhouse.org.au

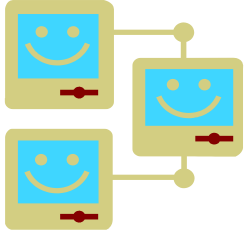
School's In Newsletter

School's In for Refugees

Edition 6

August 2009

SCHOOLS IN FOR REFUGEES ONLINE



What is it?

School's In for Refugees is an online community of teachers, schools and agencies who are working with students from a refugee background. Hosted by Foundation House and edna (Education Network Australia, a free network for educators), this online community extends our Refugee Action Networks and helps to maintain links for us all to share ideas, news and resources, particularly for those schools involved in our first RANs.

How do I become part of it?

To join our School's In for Refugees online community you'll first need to be registered with edna, www.groups.edna.edu.au where you'll find a whole lot of resources and networking opportunities. Then contact Freya Merrick, our group's moderator, to receive your enrollment key. Freya can be contacted at merrickf@foundationhouse.org.au or on (03) 9389 8937. Once you're enrolled you'll be able to find our community at www.groups.edna.edu.au or listed under 'my groups' on the edna groups page.

What's there?

Everything from discussion forums where you can ask questions and share ideas; to the latest news about issues and events relating to education and refugee background students; from an events calendar to a resource bank and useful web-links; and all the RANs around Melbourne can keep in touch through your own regional forums. Recent postings include the MEA Handbook, UN High Commission for Refugees resources for teachers, a range of ideas for celebrating Refugee Week (including a youth-led fashion event in Melton) and information about the Victorian ESL Conference in September.

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LOCAL SCHOOL SUPPORT NETWORKS

Primary Schools supporting refugee background students in the inner west.

A local network for those who work in & with primary schools has been established to share information, resources, good ideas and strategies to support refugee background students through the transition from English Language School to mainstream primary school. The first meeting held in May was hosted by Footscray City PS and was attended by 12 people representing 5 primary schools.

The network will meet once each term from 3:45 – 5:15pm and the venue is rotated; hosted by different local primary schools.

Anyone who works in primary schools supporting students of a refugee background is welcome to attend.

For information about the next meeting contact Gail Jessen (School Focused Youth Service Coordinator);

gjessen@mcm.org.au OR Ph: 9680 8238

This network is supported by the Western English Language School, School Focused Youth Services and the Victorian Foundation for Survivors of Torture.



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Supporting transition in Shepparton

The staff at Shepparton English Language Centre (SELC) participated in the "Schools In" 6 hour PD in January of this year. Then in March, the 6hr PD was offered to Shepparton schools at the Shepparton office of DEECD. From the Groups that attended these PD opportunities, a suggestion was made that the Groups continue to meet and network and support each other as they worked to support the learning and wellbeing of students of refugee background in their schools. The newly appointed Refugee Transition Teacher agreed to convene the gatherings of this new "Network" which now gathers in the SELC Staffroom once a month.

NEW REFUGEE ACTION NETWORKS LAUNCHED

The first half of this year has seen the launch of 5 new Refugee Action Networks around, and for the first time, outside Melbourne. Foundation House and a group of schools in a locally-based Refugee Action Network work together to support students and families from refugee backgrounds. Our new RANs are in the Latrobe Valley, Whittlesea (Epping



to Reservoir), Croydon-Ringwood, Melton and 'Southern Schools'.

As part of the expansion of the schools team's work into Victorian Regional and Rural areas, the first Refugee Action Network outside Melbourne has begun in the Latrobe Valley. There are 9 schools in the Latrobe Valley Refugee Action Network (LVRAN) and each was represented at one of two "Schools In" PD Days that were offered at DEECD's Gippsland Regional Centre in Moe in October 2008 and February 2009. Schools in the Latrobe Valley and indeed the School Support Service Officers have been required to offer much 'emotional first aid' following the impact in the area of the February Bushfires. Awareness of how families and students of refugee background may be faring in this context became a focus for the RAN during these months.

Each RAN school is beginning now to explore the "Schools In" Audit and to explore their "Whole School Approach" strategies.

LVRAN Schools:

Churchill Primary School
Liddiard Road Primary School, Traralgon
Traralgon College
Elizabeth Street Primary School, Moe
St Kieran's Primary School, Moe
St Vincent's Primary School, Morwell
Kurnai College, Morwell
Lowanna College, Newborough / Moe

The Latrobe Valley School Support Services Network has also joined the LVRAN.

The Melton Refugee Action Network was launched in March and has started its work by thinking about the things we are already doing in our schools to support students from a refugee background and it was great to see the innovative ways that schools are doing this.

A great example is where a school provided for an assisted transition in partnership with feeder primary school. This involved introductions, early visits to the new school, gradually building up the days. The new student attended the school with the support of primary school ESL teacher. There were also meetings with the ESL teacher and core teachers who provided information on areas of cultural sensitivity

Another school is running a girls group to provide a space to discuss issues relevant to this group; they have also visited community nurses in Melton. One school talked about how they are encouraging staff to be mindful of individual needs of students and responding accordingly whether it is being ready to provide lunch pass or breakfast or developing individual learning plans.

This is just a small snippet of the ways in which schools are working to support students from a refugee background and the next 18 months will see many more and most importantly better educational outcomes for these young people.

MRAN schools:

Coburn Primary School
Melton Primary School
St Dominic's Primary School
St Catherine's Primary School
Staughton College
Melton Secondary College
Catholic Regional College
Kurunjang Secondary College



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Also launched in March with teachers from 6 Secondary and 3 Primary schools gathering for a School's In for Refugees Professional development Day was the Southern Schools Refugee Action Network. This RAN has since had two workshops on Enrollment and Transition and Parent Engagement Strategies, in particular 'Talk's In', Foundation House's resource for schools connecting with families from refugee backgrounds.

SSRAN schools:

- Coomoora Primary School
- Wallarano Primary School
- St Anthony's Primary School
- Wellington Secondary College
- Westall English Language Centre and Secondary College
- St John's Regional College
- Nazareth College
- Killester College
- Dandenong High School

The Whittlesea Refugee Action Network (WRAN) was launched on 18 June at the City of Whittlesea's youth centre, the EDGE. Nine schools have joined the network and all of the schools were represented at the launch by their Refugee Action Teams. Foundation House will be working closely with these teams over the next 18 months, looking at implementing a Whole School Approach to working with young people and families from refugee backgrounds.

WRAN schools:

- Epping Primary School
- Lalor Secondary College
- Lalor East Primary School
- Lalor North Secondary College
- Merrilands College
- Ruthven Primary School
- St Catherine's Primary School
- St Monica's College
- Thomastown Secondary College

The Croydon – Ringwood Refugee Action Network was also launched in May at the Maroondah Federation Estate in Ringwood with the School's In for Refugees Professional Development Day. The CRRAN's first workshop will be hosted by the BELS Maroondah campus in early June.

CRRAN schools:

- Mullum Primary School
- Croydon Primary School
- Our Lady of Perpetual Help Primary School (Ringwood)

- Ringwood Secondary College
- Aquinas College
- Croydon Secondary College
- Great Ryrie Primary School
- BELS Maroondah campus
- Roberts McCubbin Primary School
- Croydon West Primary School

STORIES FROM LIDDIARD ROAD

The school community at Liddiard Rd PS in Traralgon has embraced their students of Refugee Background. During 2008, a project that encouraged the young students to tell their stories was implemented and the result has been an inspiration to many in the area. The children's stories are soon to be professionally published! We are pleased that Liddiard Rd PS shares its learning and insights within the LVRAN. Sharon Sandy, the School's Wellbeing Co-ordinator, spoke to the school community during Refugee Week, outlining the process and the outcomes of this venture! We acknowledge Sharon's generosity in allowing us to share her words here:

"At Liddiard Rd Primary School, we have had the honour and great privilege of working closely with our refugee students and their families.

As the children settled and became more comfortable in our school, they started to tell us little bits about their history, their lives in Africa, their journey to our beautiful country and their thoughts on Australia, our school and life in general.

We were soon completely in awe of these children, who had experienced so much in their short lives. They had experienced and witnessed events most of us could not imagine."

Steven the Donkey – by Sunday, aged 6

I was born in a refugee camp in Kakuma, Kenya. In the camp there were no pillows but we all had a blanket. My family also had a very special helper. It was a small donkey, named Steven.

It was always sad at the camp because there was usually no food to eat. When my family and the other families had no food, we would begin to starve. Starving feels like when you are so hungry your tummy hurts. It makes rumbling sounds inside you that can go for a long time. We had nothing really to feed Steven either.

When I was starving, I could not cry because I did not have enough energy to make the crying sound or to squeeze tears from my eyes. When we went to bed hungry, my Mum would try to make us feel better. She would say, "There is food growing right now while we sleep. It will be ready soon." She



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was right because we had been given some seeds to grow. There were carrot seeds and some other vegetables. I did not want to go to sleep while the food was growing. Sometimes I would drink from my mother. She made her own milk for me, but she needed to eat food to make the milk.

We did have a lot of water in the camp. I would climb on Steven and he would take me to collect the water for people. I could go on my own because the well was not too far away. It would take about twenty minutes to get there but I knew a short-cut and I could get there in five minutes. I always took the short-cut because I would have to gather water many times in one day. I would give water to people for drinking, for people who are starving and sometimes for cooking.



I tried very hard to always be back in the camp before it got too late. If I got home late my Mum would get cross with me because if you are a little girl on your own in the dark someone might kill you.

I liked to put the water that Steven and I collected, on to the vegetables to help them to grow. Everyone took great care of the growing vegetables.

When we came to Australia I had to leave Steven behind. Donkeys can't fly on planes. I miss him but now he is helping my cousin's family to collect water for the people in Kakuma. I hope that the people who have Steven remember to take the short-cut.

CELEBRATING INCLUSION IN CATHOLIC SCHOOLS



St Mary's Dandenong, St Anthony's Noble Park, Holy Family Doveton and St John's College Dandenong have been involved in a project called 'Celebrating Inclusion

within Catholic School Communities' in partnership with Foundation House. The project is working on strengthening the link between the primary schools and St John's to build supportive school environments, particularly for students and their families who may have experienced trauma and disruption in their lives.

Part of the project was a Sudanese Education Support program which included a highly interactive and informative day of workshops on topics such as 'enhancing the transition process', 'supporting young people with homework and study' and 'understanding the Australian education system'. The success of this program highlights the importance of building strong partnerships between schools and parents to enhance student wellbeing.



WELCOMING STUDENTS OF REFUGEE BACKGROUNDS IN SCHOOL

Beginning school in Australia is an opportunity for children, young people and families of refugee background to rebuild connections with peers, teachers and community. Most importantly, the process of enrolment, welcome, orientation and inclusion in the life of the school is ongoing, and reaches far beyond completing an enrolment form.

A good enrolment process:

- Is recognised by the school as an opportunity to welcome newly arrived students and families of refugee background
- Introduces families to school life (the noise & busyness of classrooms, what happens in the playground, what we wear to school, who can help families at school, breakfast programs, homework programs, etc)
- collects information that can be used to support students' wellbeing and learning needs.

A welcoming environment for new students and families needs interpreters. All schools can access interpreters at no cost through 'All Graduates' and advice on how to book and work with interpreters is available through the 'Talking in Tune' resource. While it may seem easier, using students to replace interpreters is unfair on the student and is never a good idea. Follow the link below for information about interpreters:

<http://www.education.vic.gov.au>



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Collecting information that can be used to support student's wellbeing and learning needs.

All English Language Schools/Centres provide an exit report for students enrolling in mainstream schools. The information in the exit report will outline the work with the student in the previous 6 – 12 months and includes information about the student's strengths that have been identified and observed in this time. It also includes strategies that have worked to support the students learning and wellbeing needs. As ESL is taught through the content of all learning areas at the ELS/C, information in an Exit Report about a student's strengths and learning needs can help all their teaching staff and the SWC continue to support their English learning as well as their overall learning and welfare. It may also be possible to ring the ELS/C and ask to speak with the student's previous teacher about the student's progress. The exit reports are usually held with the staff member responsible for enrolment and schools can maximise the value of this information by developing a process to share this information and use it to support students.

Extra questions can be asked at enrolment to find out more about a student's educational background, including whether their schooling has been disrupted through refugee experiences. While we don't need families to tell us everything about their journey and experiences, we can ask about student's school history and also use such information as visa numbers (see 'Schools In For Refugees page 49) to find out more about what support the students will need.

Questions may include:

- How long did you/your child go to school for?
- How many schools have you/your child gone to? In more than one country?
- Was there a time when you/your child couldn't go to school?
- Can you describe the subjects you/your child learnt at school?
- What do you/your child like doing/learning?

This information doesn't necessarily all have to be collected at the time of enrolment; some may be discovered as a relationship develops with the student and their family. It can be a good idea to arrange a later follow up interview with families to check on their progress settling in. If students have come from an ELS/C, a follow up visit and discussion with the Transition teacher, who provided the Exit Report, can be very beneficial.

Many mainstream schools use Individual Learning Plans and Socio – linguistic profiles as a way of supporting students of a refugee background. Building a picture of students

learning and wellbeing needs can be added to beyond the initial enrolment session and developed over time. Ideas for this can be found by clicking on the following link:

www.education.vic.gov.au/studentlearning

Pages 47 & 48 in 'Schools In For Refugees' outlines a step by step comprehensive enrolment process to support refugee background students.

Transition, Welcome and Orientation

ELC/S have a lot of experience supporting students & families through the transition process and their advice and suggestions can be very helpful for settling in transitioning students. There are many examples of welcoming transition processes being used in schools, such as:

- orientation day/s to welcome new students
- buddy systems at the mainstream school, extending past the first day. Buddies need skills in supporting their peers (see our article on Foundation House's Beaut Buddies program)
- activities that are integrated into the curriculum about classroom norms and behaviours & further orientation to school (eg. finding and using resources in the library – not just where the library is)
- teachers allocated to welcome & support refugee students (some schools form a Refugee Action Team made up of SWC, ESL & other teachers, assistant principal, etc) and students knowing who they can approach for help.
- employing Multicultural Education Aides (MEA's) from cultural and language backgrounds that are the same as newly arrived refugee communities at your school. These MEAs can be supported to organise parent welcome activities
- having clear information readily available, visible and translated about education costs (EMA, secondhand book/uniform supplies, low costs alternatives, breakfast and homework programs)

For more information and contact details for **English Language Schools/Centres, ESL support and New Arrivals programs in government schools** contact Kelly Juriansz:

phone: (03) 9637 2135

email: juriansz.kelly.k@edumail.vic.gov.au

for information about **New Arrivals programs and funding support in Catholic schools** contact Margaret Nutbean:

phone: (03) 9267 0228

email: mnutbean@ceomelb.catholic.edu.au



BEAUT BUDDIES SUPPORTING TRANSITION



Beaut Buddies is a Foundation House project funded by VicHealth Building Bridges, a scheme aiming to improve mental health and wellbeing by promoting positive contact and cooperation between people from a range of ethnic backgrounds. Beaut Buddies is a semester-long, school-based peer support program that supports students making the transition from English Language Centre/School to mainstream secondary school environment. It provides weekly structured opportunities for recently arrived students and established Year 9 or 10 students to create meaningful relationships through working together on a variety of student-directed activities.

The program is currently being successfully implemented in the Eastern region at:

- Croydon Secondary College
- Norwood Secondary College

At these schools, students are in the process of creating welcome "showbags" for future transitioning students, and organising whole-school multicultural celebrations. This collaborative process offers a wonderful opportunity for students to increase their communication skills, build mutual understanding, and improve their sense of social and emotional wellbeing. The program is very flexible and can be adapted to any school environment. If you would like more information about the program, please feel free to contact me.

Morag McKillop: Beaut Buddies Project Officer

Direct Line: 9389 8978

Mobile: 0458 350 144

Email: mckillopm@foundationhouse.org.au



HELPING THE TRANSITION FROM ENGLISH LANGUAGE SCHOOL

Peek into the Ucan2 classroom first thing in the morning and students may be watching a DVD on 'Getting to know your workmates', discussing what topics you can and can't talk about, or completing and role playing conversations in the lunch room at work. Then there might be discussion of what to do if you don't feel comfortable in a situation, and activities on 'helpful and unhelpful thinking'. After lunch it's a walk to a local café with volunteers, to practice workplace conversations and learn about the local community.

Ucan2 was developed in response to the increasing numbers of young people (16-24) from refugee backgrounds arriving in Australia with limited formal education, and having experienced significant trauma as a result of the refugee experience. Many of these young people find it difficult to maintain an education, training or employment pathway post completion of an on-arrival intensive English language program.

Ucan2 aims to increase opportunities in education, training and employment for these young people in the first 15 months of their resettlement and to increase the level of cooperation between the providers of education, training, employment and social support who are working with them.

It provides young people with education case management; an experiential curriculum which develops work skills and prepares students for part time work experience; a social support program and connections to mainstream through developing relationships with volunteers.

The program runs over a full day once a week for 16 sessions, with 4 fortnightly 'follow-up' sessions of 1-2 hours once the students have transitioned into their new setting. This facilitates additional support through the transition into mainstream.

Ucan2 was developed through a partnership between Foundation House, AMES (Adult Migrant Education Services) and CMY (Centre for Multicultural Youth). It was first piloted in 2007 by Noble Park AMES with students from Noble Park English Language School (NPELS) and AMES. Since then five programs have run in AMES settings. It is now running at Noble Park English Language School for



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the first time, where it is co-facilitated by NPELS, Foundation House and CMY staff.

NPELS restructured their language delivery classes to set up a class of 15 refugee background students, aged 15-18, with little or no formal education, who are in the pre-transition stage of their time at NPELS. The group has remained together for the 2 terms of the program. The students entered the program with middle to lower levels of English language acquisition, and generally, oral skills which were much better than their literacy skills.

A variety of English language learning methodologies particularly suited to young people with low literacy are used in the program. A group agreement, routines and predictability have created a safe environment which enables the group to share and support one another. There is often a lot of fun and laughter in the group.

The work skills curriculum, which NPELS teachers are further developing to suit English Language School students, has given a sense of purpose to student learning, with the achievement of attaining 'Safe at Work' Occupational Health and Safety Certificates and doing part time work experience being highlights for the students. Students have been placed in a variety of large retail outlets outside school hours. The pride and confidence observed in students as they share the achievements and challenges of being at work demonstrates the importance and value of contextual and experiential learning.

Students' understanding of, and connection to, mainstream Australia increases through their work experience. However the relationships with volunteers, who attend the program weekly, bring a connection and support that cannot be quantified. The volunteer component, facilitated by CMY, creates opportunities for interaction through a blend of fun and serious curriculum, formal and informal discussions, and activities and excursions. Students are always delighted when the volunteers arrive and have increasingly made use of their individual skills and personalities as they have got to know and trust them. The volunteers are learning a lot from the students in return.

The social support program has been carefully developed and facilitated by Foundation House to assist young people's settlement and to create a safe environment for mutual support and recovery from trauma. Students learn about emotional health and well-being, in particular ways to manage stress and emotions. They are given opportunities to integrate the past with the present, to share everyday experiences and to reflect on aspects of their lives prior to coming to Australia. A psycho social workshop opens up discussion about the refugee experience and normalises it for the young people. This increases student understanding of the role of Foundation House and the support it can offer.

The program is now finishing up the 16 full day sessions. All students have gained an enormous amount of confidence and English language competence as well as strategies to support them through the challenges that lie ahead. It is anticipated that they will continue with education and training, and some may find part time work over the next few years.

The majority of students are transitioning into secondary schools or TAFE next term. There will be four fortnightly follow-up sessions to support their transition from the English Language School to their new education environment. These sessions will provide an opportunity for the group to spend time with each other and discuss any issues they are having in their new settings and with settlement.



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FOUNDATION HOUSE SCHOOLS TRAINING, SEMESTER 2, 2009

School's In for Refugees

Comprehensive introductory training for those working with refugee background students in schools and other education settings at all levels. The training covers:

- The refugee experience for young people including their prior education experiences
- The impact of trauma on young people's learning and wellbeing
- Strategies that can be used in the classroom to support the recovery process
- A whole school approach to supporting refugee background students

One day course, including light lunch

BRUNSWICK

Foundation House
6 Gardiner St,
Brunswick

Term 4

Tuesday 27 October
9am – 4pm

CASEY

City of Casey Council Offices
Magid Dve, Narre Warren
Melway Map 110 D4

Term 4

Tuesday 13 October
9am – 4pm



Supporting the Individual: Refugee Background Students

Delivered by a Foundation House counselor, this workshop builds on the understanding of the impact of trauma on learning and wellbeing to explore case studies and develop strategies for handling difficult situations and supporting the individual in the classroom.

3 hour course, prerequisite: 'School's In for Refugees'

BRUNSWICK

Foundation House
6 Gardiner St, Brunswick

Tuesday 1 September
4pm – 7pm

Classroom Strategies and Resources to Support Recovery for Students of a Refugee Background

Showcasing a range of activities from the Foundation House resources and programs (Classroom Kaleidoscope, Healthwise, Taking Action and Rainbow) that help promote safety, dignity and identity for those who have refugee experiences, these activities also help build connections between new arrivals and the wider student body.

3 hour course, prerequisite: 'School's In for Refugees'

BRUNSWICK

Foundation House
6 Gardiner St, Brunswick

Tuesday 15 September
4pm – 7pm

Foundation House Schools Training is free, however registration is essential. Register early to secure your place. Download a registration form below

www.foundationhouse.org.au