



CMYI South East Homework Support Program

CMYI Best Practice Model 2
Centre for Multicultural Youth Issues
May 2002

Acknowledgments

CMYI and Francis Morcos would like to acknowledge and thank:

- Enza Calabro, Principal of the Noble Park English Language School and the school staff for their ongoing support for the program;
- Ninetta Santoro, Lecturer in the School of Social and Cultural Studies, Faculty of Education, Deakin University for supporting the recruitment of ESL student teachers and her understanding of the needs of CLD young people;
- Carmel Guerra, CMYI Director, for fostering the program through the years;
- Steve Francis, CMYI Policy and Projects Co-ordinator for his valuable assistance and support;
- All ESL student teachers who have contributed to the success of the program over the past five years.

Table of Contents

1. Introduction.....	
2. Background.....	
2.1 Origin of the Program.....	
2.2 Setting up the Program.....	
2.3 Needs Identified.....	
3. CMYI Homework Support Program Model.....	
3.1 Components of the Model.....	
3.1.1 Frequency.....	
3.1.2 Teaching staff required.....	
3.1.3 Facilities.....	
3.1.4 Content of sessions.....	
3.1.5 Consent.....	
3.1.6 Reimbursement/Payment.....	
3.2 Outline Strategies for Recruitment of Staff.....	
3.2.1 Personnel required.....	
3.2.2 Accessing Personnel and Approaching Institutions.....	
3.3 Strategies for Successful Operation.....	
4. Costs and Benefits.....	
4.1 Benefits for students.....	
4.2 Benefits for student teachers.....	
4.3 Benefits for participating organisations.....	
4.3.1 English Language Centres/Schools.....	
4.3.2 CMYI: Supervising Organisation.....	
4.3.3 Participating Tertiary Institution.....	
4.4 Costs involved.....	
5. Conclusions.....	

1. Introduction.

The *CMYI South East Homework Support Program* provides after-school tutoring support for young refugees and newly arrived migrants to assist them in successfully completing their education. Conceived, co-ordinated and operated by CMYI program officer, Francis Morcos, the program enables students to seek advice and support from three teachers, including two student ESL teachers, during the school term. The program principally offers participants intensive one-on-one support in completing areas of study with which they are having difficulty.

Participants accessing the program are enrolled at either English Language Centres, mainstream secondary schools or TAFE colleges. An average of 12 participants attend each session resulting in *CMYI's Homework Support Program* providing support to an estimated 800 units per year since 1997 (students usually attend more than one session).

2. Background.

This section provides an introduction to the processes involved in the initial set-up of the Homework Support Program.

2.1 Origin of the Program.

The program commenced in November 1997 at the Noble Park English Language School in the South Eastern Region of Melbourne. The program was originally initiated in the context of the work undertaken by CMYI's *Refugee Youth Pathways Program*, a job/education pathways program working with refugees and newly arrived young people. It is funded by the Department of Family & Community Services *Job Placement Employment and Training Program (JPET)*.

2.2 Setting up the Program.

In setting up the initial Homework Support program in 1997, CMYI liaised with a local university in order to recruit ESL student teacher volunteers and negotiated with local high schools and TAFE Colleges in order to secure an appropriate venue for the program. Finally, CMYI promoted the program to young refugees and migrants in schools.

2.3 Needs Identified.

The development of the Homework Support Program acknowledges the difficulties experienced by newly arrived refugees and migrant young people in the transition from English language centres (where they receive six months of English language tuition on arrival in Australia) to mainstream schools or TAFE colleges. CMYI identified this transitional time as a crucial period where students required support with school assignments and exams.

The difficulties experienced by refugee and newly arrived young people arise from two primary factors: the pre-migration refugee experience and the issues associated with resettlement in Australia. The educational impediments faced by newly arrived young people in the context of the refugee experience may include:

- a lack of any formal schooling;
- interrupted schooling;
- poor writing skills (refugees may arrive from cultures which value oral learning/skills over written skills);
- county of origin school environments which emphasise discipline and received learning in opposition to the Australian system which accentuates the individual's own role and engagement in their studies.

The impediments arising from the resettlement experience of young refugees include:

- classroom sizes which preclude teachers from assisting students individually or catering to the needs of refugee young people in particular;
- the difficulties associated with learning a new language;
- post-traumatic stress and other illnesses presenting once settlement has occurred and personal safety in Australia guaranteed;
- the impact of relationship problems within families which manifest themselves when family members, some of whom have been separated for many years, are reunited in Australia;
- the burden of unrealistic expectations placed on young people as parents/guardians push them to pursue VCE and university studies.

As a result of these varied factors, refugee and newly arrived young people have a decreased probability of completing their education. The *Homework Support Program* was envisioned as one approach designed to positively address this situation.

3. CMYI Homework Support Program Model

This section documents the primary elements of the homework support model and provides an overview of:

- the main components of the model;
- strategies for the recruitment of staff; and
- strategies for the successful operation of the model.

The goal in documenting CMYI's education support model is to enable service providers who wish to operate a similar program, an insight into the preparation required and basic procedures involved.

3.1 Components of the Model

3.1.1 Frequency

Homework support sessions are conducted twice a week during the school term. Sessions are held between 3.30 to 5.30pm and are designed to commence at the end of the school day.

3.1.2 Teaching staff required

Each homework support session is attended by at least three teaching staff who provide English, maths and science tuition up to Year 12 level. Sessions are organised and supervised by a fully qualified teacher (who is also a member of the *CMYI Refugee Youth Pathways Program* team). At least two ESL student teachers are recruited from the local university at the start of each semester as volunteers. Through their participation in the program, the student teachers receive credit towards their teaching qualifications. (Please note that as sessions are held on school premises, regulations require the attendance of a fully qualified teacher at all sessions).

3.1.3 Facilities

Homework support sessions are provided in a classroom supplied by the local English Language School. This location was identified as an ideal space in that the primary target group of the program (refugee and newly arrived young people) could attend the program at the end of their school day. This negates the need to organise transport for participants.

The classroom is also equipped with a range of facilities including a computer with a printer and internet access, as well as a photocopier for assignments.

3.1.4 Content of sessions

Homework support sessions focus primarily on providing refugees and newly arrived migrants, who are secondary-level school students, with one-on-one teaching assistance in relation to assignments, essays and other tasks set by classroom teachers. As a result, students attend on a needs-only basis and class numbers rise and fall according to student demand.

3.1.5 Consent

A consent form, providing permission for those under 18 years old to attend the sessions, must be signed by the parents/guardians of the students.

3.1.6 Reimbursement/Payment

Each volunteer teacher receives \$10 per session as a small contribution toward the transport costs associated with attendance at the session. CMYI meets the cost of this contribution.

3.2 Outline Strategies for Recruitment of Staff

3.2.1 Personnel required

Experience has proved that the most effective student teachers volunteering in the program are:

- those in the last year of teacher training with a major in *English as a Second Language* (ESL);
- those with a major in ESL undertaking a graduate diploma in education.

3.2.2 Accessing Personnel and Approaching Institutions

It is recommended that in accessing personnel for the program, the local university is the point of first contact. To begin, those organising homework support programs should contact the co-ordinators of the ESL program in the education faculty. Once contact has been established the following steps should be undertaken:

- arrange a meeting with the co-ordinator;
- pursue the concept of ESL student teachers participating in the Homework Support Program;
- enquire about the possibility of students gaining credit toward the practical component of their course through the hours contributed to the program;
- conduct a recruitment/information session for ESL student teachers highlighting the practical experience that they will gain in participating in the program, particularly the benefits associated with working with ESL students;
- undertake an orientation session for those ESL students who are recruited to the program.

3.3 Strategies for Successful Operation

Below are a list of strategies which have contributed to the successful operation of the CMYI Homework Support Program to date. These include:

- Ongoing promotion of the program and forward recruitment of ESL student volunteers (on a semester by semester basis);
- Consistent quality and quantity of sessions undertaken;
- Punctuality and reliability in the delivery of sessions;
- Continued flexibility in relation to the attendance of young people (who attend on a needs-only basis);
- Development of a consent form for the program;
- Development of a brochure promoting the program;
- Promotion the program in local high schools, TAFE colleges, Community centres, local papers and youth resource centres;
- Utilisation of teachers, Student Welfare Co-ordinators, and local youth workers in promotional activities;
- Ensuring a consistent and reliable reimbursement process for volunteers;
- Ensuring accountability through the use of a cash receipt book;
- Ongoing catering of amenities such as tea, coffee and milk;
- Securing free internet access for participants can be a major incentive for attendance;
- Wide ranging networking with ESL departments of universities, local high schools, TAFE colleges and community organisations is essential to the success of the program;
- Run police checks for volunteers.

4. Costs and Benefits

4.1 Benefits for students

The program provides free intensive one-on-one assistance to CLD young people in successfully completing their studies. This is a vital resource for a group of young people who face a range of obstacles such as the difficulties associated with learning a new language, settling in a new culture and who are overcoming previous experiences of interrupted or missed schooling. The social and economic benefits of the Homework Support program therefore impact positively at individual, family and community levels.

4.2 Benefits for student teachers

For student teachers who volunteer their time to the Homework Support Program, a range of benefits accrue including:

- achieving course credits for the teaching hours they contribute to the program;
- practical experience gained in working with CLD young people;
- personal satisfaction in contributing to a worthwhile program.

4.3 Benefits for participating organisations

For those organisations participating in the program, a range of benefits are also apparent.

4.3.1 English Language Centres/Schools.

For English Language Centres/Schools, the benefits arising include:

- higher completion/pass rate for ELC students;
- a student population with increased opportunities for success;
- a student population with access to extra learning pathways;
- extra support options for teachers;
- free access to a good practice model;

4.3.2 CMYI: Supervising Organisation.

For the organisation which supervises and maintains the program, benefits include:

- financial contribution, as the supervising body, from the universities which supply the student teachers;
- fulfilment of the organisational vision statement and service goals;
- increased opportunities for exploring the connections between service work and policy.

4.3.3 Participating Tertiary Institution.

For the tertiary institutions supplying student teachers to the program, the benefits arising from the program include:

- institutions presented with the opportunity to provide their students with practical experience working with ESL students;
- student teachers completing degrees with practical experience in working with ESL students;
- student teachers gaining valuable contacts and connections in a potential work environment.

4.4 Costs involved

While the benefits arising from the program are numerous (as outlined above), there are also a number of costs associated with the operation of the program.

These include:

- a financial cost per session which accounts for the payment of teachers (student and fully qualified) and for amenities such as tea and coffee;
- costs associated with time provided by paid and volunteer staff;
- extra time required of students in participating in the program.

5. Conclusions

Since 1997, CMYI, under the guidance of program worker Francis Morcos, has operated a successful Homework Support Program catering to the education needs of hundreds of refugee and newly arrived young people in the South East Region of Melbourne. This is a remarkable achievement given the low-cost base and requirement for volunteer support. CMYI will continue to play a leading role in providing homework support to refugee and newly arrived young people in Melbourne. It is hoped that this document will encourage other organisations and individuals to consider undertaking this important program.