

I wish it was every day...

**Out of School Hours Learning Support Programs (OSHLSPs)
Tutor Training Resource**

Participant notes

**An initiative of the Refugee Education Partnership Project
October 2007**



REFUGEE EDUCATION PARTNERSHIP PROJECT



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1. Introduction

1.1 The Refugee Education Partnership Project (REPP)

The Refugee Education Partnership Project aims to establish a more coordinated system to support refugee children, young people and their families across the community, education and government sectors so they experience improved wellbeing and educational achievement.

The partnership supporting the project consists of the Centre for Multicultural Youth Issues (CMYI), Debney Park Secondary College, the Department of Education and Early Childhood Development (DEECD), the Department of Planning and Community Development (DPCD), The Victorian Health Promotion Foundation (VicHealth), Foundation House – the Victorian Foundation for Survivors of Torture (VFST), and a private philanthropic trust.

REPP focuses on three areas:

- Out of School Hours Learning Support Programs (OSHLSPs)
- Refugee support in schools
- Policy and cross-sectoral coordination.

1.2 Definition

Refugees are defined by the United Nations 1951 Convention Relating to the Status of Refugees as:

... people who are outside their country of nationality or their usual country of residence and are unable to or unwilling to return to or to seek the protection of that country due to a well-founded fear of being persecuted for reasons of race, religion, nationality, membership of a particular social group, or political opinion.¹

In addition to those young people who enter Australia under visa categories that identify them as refugees, there are others of the same age and backgrounds who have been through similar experiences and whose profile is therefore like that of a refugee. They face identical challenges within the education and training system.

The focus of this resource is therefore young people aged between 5 and 21 years who are identified as refugees by their visa category or who are asylum seekers or humanitarian or family migration program arrivals who have gone through similar experiences.

Refugees come from diverse cultures and backgrounds but share common experiences of disadvantage that impact on their capacity and readiness to learn. They share this social disadvantage with others from culturally diverse backgrounds, but in the case of young refugees these factors of disadvantage tend to cluster together and be particularly acute.

¹ Adapted from: DE&T (2002), *Not A Matter of Choice: Information about Refugees for Schools and Teachers* [video], Department of Education and Training, Victoria.

1.3 Out of School Hours Learning Support Programs (OSHLSPs)

This manual is one of the key components of the REPP work on OSHLSPs. The two other major resources are *I wish it was every day ... Out of School Hours Learning Support Programs – Case Studies* and *I wish it was every day ... Out of School Hours Learning Support Programs – A Guide for Coordinators*.

Research and practice indicate that OSHLSPs can make a significant difference in assisting refugee background students to increase their connectedness to school and to achieve better learning outcomes.

OSHLSP coordinators from across the Melbourne metropolitan region were interviewed and surveyed by REPP in 2005 and case studies were developed. The results of the survey indicated that more than 1500 students from refugee backgrounds attended OSHLSPs.

Of the OSHLSPs surveyed, approximately 98% provide homework support. This includes homework tasks such as unfinished class work, practising reading, working on assignments and preparation for assessment tasks and exams. The homework provides the basis of the learning and allows tutors to get an indication of what level is expected of the student.

Approximately 74% provide tutoring. This includes assessing the students' needs and understanding of concepts, building up knowledge, developing study and organisational skills and focusing on developing learning strategies.

Approximately 36% provide structured or unstructured social activities. This includes mentoring, working in groups and playing games to promote social interaction and communication. These activities can develop students' conversational skills, confidence in speaking, social support and skills that transfer to the classroom.

The rationale for the content of this resource is based on:

- feedback from the 2005 REPP OSHLSP surveys;
- interviews with coordinators, tutors, students and families from OSHLSPs;
- the Victorian Government homework guidelines;
- the *Bringing Learning to Life Parent Information Handbook*;² and
- English as a second language (ESL) practice, in particular as it relates to the needs of refugee background students.

² DE&T (2006), *Bringing Learning to Life Parent Information Handbook*, Department of Education and Training, Victoria.

1.4 Tutor training in OSHLSPs

According to the 2005 REPP survey, 20% of OSHLSPs are staffed by skilled or trained tutors or teachers and a further 60% provide some training to their tutors. This ranges from a one-off induction session to ongoing support and training. However, 20% provide no training to volunteer tutors.

Programs need to have tutors with a range of skills to match student needs. At senior levels, particularly with maths and science, there needs to be some tutors with high-level specialised skills and knowledge. However, there are many ways that those with less expertise can support learners. All tutors can provide valuable input through social and homework support. This includes providing students with the type of support that a parent may offer, as refugee background families often are not able to help their children with their schoolwork.

Research and practice strongly support the need for training for tutors. In particular, training in understanding the impact of the refugee experience and how to support literacy development is important to maximise program effectiveness. One of the key issues identified by many OSHLSPs relates to training and supporting volunteer tutors. At SAIL, both coordinators and tutors commented on the need for tutor training. For example:

Many of the tutors didn't quite know how to best support students ... although some tutors were creative and intuitive, others struggled to come up with ideas and were unsure of the direction to take, especially to support the students' literacy development, as the students' literacy needs can be masked by their capacity to communicate orally. One tutor also commented on how she would like to know what was expected of children at different ages as she was unsure of the appropriateness of the work that she provided.³

The purpose of this resource is to:

- provide training to potential and existing tutors in OSHLSPs;
- raise awareness of the issues affecting the education of students from refugee backgrounds and provide practical strategies for tutors to support these students; and
- extend the skills and knowledge of tutors.

³ REPP (2006), Case Studies of Out-of-School Hours Learning Support Programs for School-Aged Students from Refugee Backgrounds (unpublished), p.31.



The materials can be used in a range of ways, including:

- by a presenter or trainer working with a group of tutors, preferably prior to them commencing their tutoring role;
- by small groups of tutors, working with or without a facilitator; and/or
- by individual tutors for self-study and reflection.

The title of this resource comes from a comment made by a refugee background student who said about the OSHLSP program she attended once a week:

I wish it was every day ...