

# Case study: The Grange P-12

## Learning Support Club

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



#### Background and Identified Needs

The Grange P-12 is located in the West of Melbourne and currently has 1,616 students enrolled. Of these students, 62 are from a refugee background and 372 are EAL students. The predominant cultural and linguistic backgrounds of enrolled students are Indian, Filipino, South Sudanese and Karen Burmese.

As part of RESP the school identified that primary school students from refugee backgrounds required more support to improve literacy outcomes, engage in the classroom and support learning in school and at home.

#### The RESP Project

The school partnered with The Huddle to deliver a Learning Support Club for primary aged students from refugee backgrounds. This consisted of a weekly homework club and a sports component aimed at engaging and retaining student participation.

The project increased the capacity of students to engage in learning and social connections at school, and increased the capacity of families to support their child's learning at home.

The Huddle works to improve social cohesion by systematically addressing the causes of disengagement amongst young people from a migrant and refugee backgrounds. The school and the Huddle engaged volunteer tutors (including community members and past school students) to support the Learning Support Club.

#### Outcomes for Students

##### Learning outcomes

Participation in the project has resulted in an increase in student confidence, social connectedness and engagement in learning. Teachers have given feedback about the positive changes they have observed among students who consistently attend Learning Support Club and commented that the club provided a fun and positive environment for learning.

The programs consisted of 'hands-on' activities in the classroom and a variety of games in gym sessions, to explore the concepts of leadership, cooperation, conflict resolution, critical thinking and teamwork, and did so by stimulating students' interests to spark learning. This played a significant role in engaging students in their learning. Teachers observed encouraging signs that students were becoming more proactive about their learning and were contemplating career paths.



*"Within the sessions, I have seen a real sense of team and togetherness within the group. They are supportive of each other and seem to enjoy coming to the sessions." - Coordinator*

##### Social and wellbeing outcomes

Significant improvement was displayed amongst students relating to engagement in the classroom, students participating in Learning Support Club showed an increase in sociability and confidence when interacting with staff and their peers. For example, students began running their own events, engaged in public forums and planned various extra curricular activities, such as cooking and sporting activities.

*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



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This was best demonstrated in the preparation and running of the parents' sports/cyber safety session. Over a two-week period the students worked with each other and Learning Support Club staff to develop the sessions they wanted to run. They took on leadership roles and prepared for them accordingly, taking on responsibilities beyond all expectations. They also organised a very well run event for parents and themselves.

A core group of students who attended the Learning Support Club regularly have benefitted from the club messages, such as the strong focus on how to interact with others in a friendly, polite manner. The activities worked to develop social awareness, empathy towards others and build self confidence around their abilities.

*"They (at the learning club) talk about respect, how we get better in what we do and pay attention on things that matter most. They also taught us how to handle conflict before it gets worse." - Year 6 student*

### Outcomes for the School

The Learning Support Club has been an effective additional platform for the school to solve problems relating to behavioural issues and

conflict resolution, communicate with students and improve overall student engagement. The school also increased its ability to provide out-of-school-hours learning support.

At Learning Support Club sessions there are staff present that take the roll and participate in the first 45 minutes of group activities. From the beginning of the project staff were highly committed and contributed consistently and effectively, while the school leadership was also highly supportive of the project.

#### Work in partnership

The partnership between the school and The Huddle was successful, due to the involvement of committed teachers in the project and the support of the school's leadership. The partnership will continue in 2018 on a different student project that focuses on leadership.

The Huddle developed a good rapport with students; the transition from the classroom to the learning program was well planned and the relationship between students and the project lead was based on mutual respect.

*"It was noted several of the students appeared more settled and focused in the classroom compared to previous years." - Year 6 teacher*

### Lessons Learned

One of the main challenges faced was the loss of interest that developed among some students, and furthermore a significant reduction in the number of assisting teachers who were willing to get involved. Teachers passed on to parents and students any positive changes noticed in the students, and being an active presence in the sessions meant the students saw the importance of them moving forward.

Most importantly, engagement among parents is crucial for achieving successful learning outcomes for students that require more work to build a good relationship with the school.

Overall a lack of consistency in students' attendance and reduction in numbers were the main challenges. Facilitating stronger engagement with the school through organising parent meetings would have helped provide greater support for the program.

***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](http://www.cmy.net.au)***