

Family Engagement Sessions and Family Information Videos in Arabic and Dari

Family Engagement Project



Background and Identified Needs

St Georges Road Primary School, Shepparton, has 443 students including 206 EAL students and 180 from a refugee background. The predominant language/cultural groups of the students are Arabic and Dari. The key support needs that the school identified for the families included information about roles and responsibilities of being a parent in Australia and the roles of the school and parents in their child's learning. Families were also keen to understand school rules and expectations.

The RESP Project

The school partnered with Liz Arcus Photography to deliver family information sessions and produce Family Information Videos in Arabic and Dari. The project focussed on providing access to information for Dari and Arabic speakers which is not always accessible in documents translated into home language script, as many of the families cannot read in their home language.

Liz Arcus is a Shepparton based professional photographer with extensive experience of working with Shepparton's multicultural communities.

The project aimed to increase family engagement in their child's education and increase the capacity of families to support their child's learning at home.



Outcomes for Families

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

Attending an information session at the school on how to read with your child allowed the mothers to learn simple strategies that can have a big impact for their child's learning.

"The reading session was a great help and I really know what to do now." "I will start doing this tonight"

Parent

The families that have attended the sessions are sharing information about them with other families and through this the value of what is on offer at the school is spreading.

Parents participated in making the school information videos in Arabic and Dari and provided feedback as they were made resulting in further editing to enhance their accessibility for future families at the school.

"New families will be very please to see the videos; it will make them feel confidence"

Parent

Outcomes for the School

Capacity to meet the needs of refugee students

Throughout the project the school has been working closely with the refugee background families to gain a better understanding of the families' needs and the needs of the students. As a result the school has deepened its understanding of what the families know about school and what they would like to know.

"We gained knowledge from the families about what they lacked and this provided the basis for the videos; this is how we tailored the content of the videos"

Assistant Principal

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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.
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Engagement with families

The family information sessions and the making of the videos has enabled the school to work together with the families and build an authentic relationship with them, rather than a formal one, leading to the families having more of a sense of belonging with the school.

St Georges Road Primary School will continue to engage with families through the development of a Community Hub at the school funded through the National Community Hubs Program. The Community Hub will provide a welcoming place where migrant and refugee families, particularly mothers with young children, can come to connect, share, and learn.

Work in partnership

The partnership between St Georges Road Primary School and Liz Arcus Photography was very strong throughout the project. In planning and implementing the project, staff from the school were very supportive particularly the MEAs who contacted the families and explained the project to them in their home language.

"The first hand information in the videos, the body language, and the voice tone, all of this instils confidence and trust in the school. Trust is huge for these families; the videos will deepen the trust between the families and the school and strengthen the relationship even more."

Liz Arcus Photography

Lesson's Learned

One of the major challenges of the project was being able to get everyone together at the right time, whether it was for an information session or for filming the videos, due to the families having competing demands for their time, including settlement issues, family commitments, English classes, Centrelink appointments and doctors appointments. Both the school and the project partner found that flexibility was a key lesson learned throughout the project and being able to work around the parents' availability.

One of the lasting benefits of the project will be the availability of the videos for future families coming to the school as they will be available on the schools web site and on a memory stick in and will be used in the school transition and enrolment process. The videos will be accessible to existing school families that may have forgotten what to do on a particular issue; they will now be able to refer to the videos.

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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

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