School’s In for Refugees

Whole-School Guide to Refugee Readiness

Produced by The Victorian Foundation for Survivors of Torture Inc.
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School’s In for Refugees – Whole-School Guide to Refugee Readiness

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This Guide is part of a series of school resources developed in the context of VFST’s work with schools. Other resources produced include:

- *A Guide to Working with Young People who are Refugees* (2000) (including the Kaleidoscope Program)

The resources are targeted at English as a Second Language Schools and Centres, primary and secondary mainstream schools and other educational settings.

Copies of these resources can be downloaded from [www.foundationhouse.org.au](http://www.foundationhouse.org.au) for use in the classroom.
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# Abbreviations

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Abbreviation</th>
<th>Description</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>AP</td>
<td>Assistant Principal</td>
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<tr>
<td>CMYI</td>
<td>Centre for Multicultural Youth Issues</td>
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<tr>
<td>DE&amp;T</td>
<td>Department of Education and Training (previously Department of Education)</td>
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<td>DIMIA</td>
<td>Department of Immigration and Multicultural and Indigenous Affairs</td>
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<td>DoHA</td>
<td>Department of Health and Ageing (previously Department of Health and Aged Care)</td>
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<tr>
<td>CLD</td>
<td>Culturally and Linguistically Diverse</td>
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<td>ELC</td>
<td>English Language Centre</td>
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<td>ELS</td>
<td>English Language School</td>
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<td>ESL</td>
<td>English as a Second Language</td>
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<td>FASSTT</td>
<td>Forum of Australian Services for Survivors of Torture and Trauma</td>
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<tr>
<td>LLEN</td>
<td>Local Learning and Employment Network</td>
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<td>LMERC</td>
<td>The Language and Multicultural Education Resource Centre</td>
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<td>MEA</td>
<td>Multicultural Education Aide</td>
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<td>MRC</td>
<td>Migrant Resource Centre</td>
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<td>SFYS</td>
<td>School-focused Youth Service</td>
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<td>SWC</td>
<td>Student Welfare Coordinator</td>
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<tr>
<td>TAFE</td>
<td>Tertiary and Further Education</td>
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<tr>
<td>VCAL</td>
<td>Victorian Certificate of Applied Learning</td>
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<td>VCE</td>
<td>Victorian Certificate of Education</td>
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<tr>
<td>VFST</td>
<td>Victorian Foundation for Survivors of Torture</td>
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<tr>
<td>Visa</td>
<td>Authorisation to enter and spend time in Australia</td>
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<tr>
<td>YLC</td>
<td>Year Level Coordinator</td>
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<tr>
<td>VETiS</td>
<td>Vocational Education and Training in Schools</td>
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In November 2003, I launched the Blueprint for Government Schools in Victoria, presenting a comprehensive reform program aimed at creating excellent educational opportunities for all our young people. The reform program recognised the importance of schools in underpinning the development of a nation’s economic and social life, and the primary importance of educational success for young people in the workplace and in their lives as full members of the community.

As a past member of the Commonwealth Immigration Review Tribunal, I am acutely aware of the horrific experiences of many refugee students and how those experiences might impact on their school life and their ability to achieve educational success. One of the flagships of the Blueprint is the recognition of and response to diverse student needs, and nowhere is this more important than in the education of refugee students who may have had little or disrupted education and few opportunities to learn English.

School’s In for Refugees is a resource to support schools in recognising and responding to the needs of their refugee students. It provides advice on how schools can identify refugee students and understand the impact of their experiences. It highlights the importance of creating a school setting which is welcoming and inclusive of parents of refugee students and the students themselves. It suggests policies and practices which a school might adopt in creating such a setting, and curriculum which supports the learning of refugee and other students.

As Minister for Education and Training in Victoria, I oversee 1618 government schools. To those schools enrolling refugee students, I recommend reading School’s In for Refugees and implementing the many worthwhile strategies. In this way, we will remove barriers to learning for refugee students and redress the many disadvantages they have experienced in their young lives.

Lynne Kosky, MP
Minister for Education and Training
Most Australians are only partially aware of the significance of refugee health, education and welfare in our country. The politicisation of refugee and asylum seeker issues over the past few years has created a situation in which many hold strong views, but few have real knowledge of the issues. Most Australians would not be aware that we have around 13,000 people with refugee backgrounds arriving here each year, or of the issues these people face upon arrival in Australia.

Refugees come to Australia from many countries and cultures, but all share a history of displacement and loss. Many have suffered years of conflict and violence, even torture, in their home countries and have been forced to flee, often at short notice, leaving behind family, social networks, homes, careers and aspirations. This is often followed by long periods in camps and other temporary accommodation, where living conditions are poor and opportunities scarce.

The effect of this experience on young people can be enormous and long lasting, even after arrival in Australia. Families may well have been separated by war, isolating children even more. For families with surviving parents here, the parents are likely to be traumatised, culturally and linguistically isolated and economically disadvantaged in Australia.

One of the first experiences for refugee children and young people arriving here will be entering Australian schooling. At best, these children will have had interrupted education; many will have had no formal schooling. Most will also have very little experience in speaking, reading or writing English. These are significant barriers to young people’s education in themselves, let alone when coupled with the psychological and physical harm that these young people have experienced.

Supportive environments are critical for the welfare, health, happiness and achievement of all students, but doubly so for children who have experienced trauma and disruption in their lives. Schools play a very important role in making resettlement a positive and productive experience for refugee students, for their families and for Australia as a society. All Australians benefit from being members of a more cohesive and supportive community, where inequalities and inequities are recognised, acknowledged and addressed.

International research has found that achieving meaningful education, health and welfare outcomes for our students involves taking action across a whole range of school operations, with a whole-school approach. Schools have the capacity to develop environments that are supportive of students’ learning and wellbeing. Schools can shape their curriculum, teaching and learning programs to maximise the
opportunities and outcomes for all students and have the opportunity to work productively with parents and the broader community in achieving these results.

Providing for the complex welfare and education needs of refugee students, including experiences of trauma and history of interrupted schooling, can be a challenge for any school and its staff. That's why this publication *School's In for Refugees* is so important. It gives us a picture of the experiences of refugee students, both in Australia and prior to arrival, and maps a clear pathway for school communities to strengthen their capacity to promote a supportive environment for refugee students and their families. It suggests how best to provide a supportive learning environment to refugee students, to engage parents in their children’s education and with the school, and, at the same time, to improve social connections, wellbeing and resettlement in Australia. Strategies and best-practice approaches are discussed at each critical contact point for refugee students throughout their schooling life. Self-assessment tools, based on the MindMatters audit tool, are included in each of the chapters related to school operations to help schools identify needs and set priorities for action.

I congratulate the Victorian Foundation for Survivors of Torture for this initiative. *School’s In for Refugees* is an important resource to support school communities in working with and for refugee students, who are often among the most disadvantaged groups in our education system.

Bernie Marshall
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Deakin University
President, Australian Health Promoting Schools Association
1.1 Introduction

Of the more than 20 million refugees and displaced persons globally, over half are children and young people. Australia is one of 16 countries with an established refugee resettlement program, which sees up to 6000 refugee children and young people arriving each year from war zones. Soon after arrival in Australia, school-aged children enrol in the education system.

In a multicultural society, most Australian teaching professionals will have had some contact with children and families from culturally and linguistically diverse (CLD) backgrounds. Refugee children are distinguished by their experiences of violence and other traumatic events prior to their arrival in Australia. Many will have lived through years of conflict and persecution before leaving their homelands. Many will have spent years in a first country of asylum, either in a refugee camp or in the general community. Often the education of refugee children will have been limited and disrupted, forming a barrier to their progress within the Australian education system. In addition, traumatic experiences may affect their capacity for learning in a range of ways.

Given this context, the Victorian Foundation for Survivors of Torture (VFST) believed it important to develop a resource for school staff that provided a range of tools and strategies for working with refugee students that complemented the best-practice standards and procedures currently used by teachers for all students in Victorian schools. The resource will be most relevant to schools in Victoria but can easily be applied to other state and overseas education systems. This is not a stand-alone resource, but should be used alongside other educational resources to guide schools providing an education to refugee students.
1.2 Purpose of this Guide

The Guide aims to strengthen the capacity of school communities, at both primary and secondary levels, to promote a supportive school environment for refugee students and their families, to nurture the mental health and wellbeing of refugee students and to enhance their educational outcomes. It also promotes social connectedness between refugee families and the school community.

The purpose of the Guide is to provide all staff (administrators, teachers and non-teaching personnel) with strategies to help refugee students overcome learning difficulties and adjust to a new environment. Intended for use at both primary and secondary levels, the Guide outlines strategies for the classroom and wider school programs. It has been designed as an easy-to-use reference tool, specifically tailored to enable schools to improve the delivery of education to these students.

Because there is a variety of school settings available to refugee students, and a range of experience among schools and staff in teaching refugee students, the format of the Guide has been developed in such a way as to allow schools to identify and implement the most appropriate policies, programs and structures for their particular school environment.

As a result of consultations undertaken as part of the VFST School Project and of the work of VFST staff within educational environments, the strategies contained in this Guide have been trialled and tested in a range of English Language Centres (ELC), English Language Schools (ELS), primary schools and secondary colleges across Victoria.

The Guide provides the necessary tools to enable schools to develop more effective policy and practice for their work with refugee students. These include:

- information on the background and context of refugee students' lives
- suggestions for structural, policy and procedural change to the school environment
- suggestions for the introduction of school procedures for the transition of refugee students into and out of the school environment
- information on other agencies that support young refugees.
1.3 Contents of this Guide

The Guide incorporates three main areas:

**Introduction to the Guide: Section 1**

This section provides background information on the Guide as well as an overview of the strategies discussed, the organisation responsible for the Guide and additional resources you may wish to use.

**The refugee experience: Sections 2 and 3**

These sections describe the journeys that young refugees take before they arrive in Australia, and the effect that these experiences have on their schooling.

**Strategies for working with refugee students: Sections 4–9**

Section 4 gives instructions on using the Guide, while sections 5–9 outline the five areas in a school where policies and practices can be used to support refugee students. These five areas represent a school framework as applied in the MindMatters resource, which is the National Mental Health strategy to introduce a whole-school approach to mental health promotion in secondary schools (DHAC 2000). There is an audit at the end of each section, and a full audit in the Appendix (see p.99).

1.4 Using this Guide

In using the Guide it is important that all sections are read because the examples and models presented may provide additional ideas or tools to improve current methods of working with refugee children, young people and their families.

It is vital that users of the guide read Section 2 ‘Mapping Refugee Student Journeys’ and Section 3 ‘The Refugee Experience: Implications for Practice’. These sections provide an insight into the traumatic experiences that many refugee students have undergone prior to their arrival in the classroom. These chapters also explain the effect of torture and trauma on refugee students and the likely behaviours that may result.

Finally, although this Guide is intended as a comprehensive resource, you may wish to seek out further information or resources or may require additional support in completing some of the policy or practice changes you have identified via the Audit.
1.5 About the VFST

The Victorian Foundation for Survivors of Torture (VFST) was established in 1987 to meet the needs of people living in Victoria who had been subjected to torture or experienced war-related trauma prior to their arrival in Australia.

From offices in Parkville and Dandenong, the VFST provides direct care to survivors of torture and war-related trauma in the form of health assessments, referrals to health services, health education, counselling, psychotherapy, advocacy, family support, group work, natural therapies and community development. These services are provided to individuals, families, groups or communities.

As well as providing direct care to survivors, the VFST plays an important developmental role with service providers, government and refugee communities. This role is grounded in the experience gained through direct contact with survivors. The VFST has a reputation for delivering high-quality developmental work, with a number of its programs receiving health-sector awards.

The VFST provides direct services and developmental activities in schools. It aims to promote:

- the mental health and wellbeing of children and young people who arrive in Victoria as refugees
- resettlement in Victoria following the refugee experience
- enhanced educational outcomes.

The VFST has adopted a range of strategies within a holistic approach to schools, including:

- counselling and case work with individual refugee students and their families
- group work with refugee students
- group work with parents
- classroom group work
- teaching resources for refugee students learning English
- human rights teaching resources for whole classrooms
- professional development for school personnel
- research on refugee students’ resettlement
- policy advice for schools.

The VFST is funded through a combination of State and Commonwealth governments, philanthropic trusts and non-government sources. It is a not-for-profit, non-denominational, politically neutral and non-aligned organisation. For more information about VFST, go to [www.foundationhouse.org.au](http://www.foundationhouse.org.au).

The VFST is also a member of the Forum of Australian Services for Survivors of Torture and Trauma (FASSTT), a coalition of eight agencies that are based in each state and territory of Australia. For more information about FASSTT, go to [www.fasstt.org.au](http://www.fasstt.org.au).

1.6 Whole-school approach: The education framework

While the Guide focuses on one particular segment of the school population, it has been designed to complement the types of services and supports provided by schools to all students. The Guide acknowledges that schools currently work within a framework that encourages teachers and student-support staff to ‘maximise all students’ access to teaching and learning and to help them to develop as healthy, secure and resilient people’ (Department of Education 1999).
The Framework for Student Support Services (1999) published by the Victorian Department of Education outlines a whole-school approach to student support that is based on the needs of students and the whole-school community. The Framework acknowledges that students bring with them a wide range of skills and experiences that may influence their potential to learn. The Department notes that all teachers have a responsibility to respond when students experience difficulty with their schooling. It is therefore important that teachers can identify and act on their concerns to enable early and effective intervention for students.

The Framework concludes that ‘a whole-school approach to student support should include strategies to help teachers identify students’ needs, take action to meet these needs within the school program and to monitor and review progress’ (Department of Education 1999). A key aspect of this process is enabling teachers to meet student needs by providing them with a ‘planned, sequential and detailed whole-school approach to student support with appropriate professional development to assist with the implementation of strategies’ (Department of Education 1999). This Guide represents one such strategic approach for a particular segment of the student population – refugee students. Figure 1.1 outlines the key points of a comprehensive, whole-school approach to student support in which the strategies from this Guide can be placed.
This section will provide the reader with an insight into the journeys that refugee children and young people take prior to their arrival in Australia, and the impact of these experiences on their transition through the education system. This discussion will be illustrated by a selection of stories related by young people with whom the VFST has worked.

2.1 The refugee student: A series of transitions

It is known that children who have experienced the trauma and disruption associated with war and civil strife can suffer psychological effects that can persist long after arrival in a safe country. These may be further compounded by the challenges involved in adjusting to a new country and its culture and school system. (Wraith, R. in The Rainbow Program for Children in Refugee Families, VFST 2002)

Adolescence is a time of transition from childhood to adulthood, from schooling to employment and from financial and emotional dependence to interdependence. It is also a time when young people begin to develop an adult identity involving their own values and beliefs. While most young people make this transition successfully, it may be stressful, involving rapid change in physical, emotional and intellectual development and in the expectations of the family and wider society. This transition has been associated with increased vulnerability to mental health and behavioural difficulties. (Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees 2002)

As shown in Figure 2.1, the journey for refugee children and young people from their places of birth to the classroom represents a series of transitions.

The first and most dangerous and traumatic of the transitions usually occurs before arrival in Australia. In the transition from a regular home life to the horror of the events that lead to refugee flight, to the dangers of the journey towards the refugee camp, refugee children will ‘all have experienced some degree of dislocation, deprivation, disruption and loss’ (Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees 2002). This will include the loss of home and friendships, as well as the loss of, or separation from, family. Many refugee children and young people will also have experienced years of living in camps with poor hygiene, meagre food supplies, little social or recreational outlets and inadequate education. As noted in the UNHCR’s Refugee Resettlement Handbook ‘refugee children and young people are likely to have endured changes unheard of in the lives of children in resettlement countries’ (Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees 2002).
A second series of challenging transitions begins for refugee students when they arrive in Australia and start the process of resettlement. For new arrivals, Australia represents a very different cultural environment, with unfamiliar customs, language, expectations and ways of doing things, as well as complex health, legal and education service systems. Resettlement is a difficult process for children and young people, given the effects of malnutrition, neglect of medical problems, loss of family and social support networks, hostility and discrimination and possible renewed conflict in their country of origin. Refugee families may also face practical difficulties in accessing housing, employment and income support.

Finally, refugee children and young people must make a series of transitions through the education system. This is a challenge on a number of levels. To begin with, it is likely that all refugee children and young people have had either disrupted educational experiences or, in some cases, no education at all. The Refugee Resettlement Handbook states that ‘schools are one of the first casualties of war’ (Office of the

**FIGURE 2.1: Transitions in the life of a young refugee**
United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees 2002, p.23). Teachers and the education system itself may have been specifically targeted for elimination in the conflicts that lead to refugee flight. For children in refugee camps, usually only basic education is available, and then only for a lucky few. Additionally, refugees may have limited entitlement to education in their countries of asylum.

While meeting the challenges of these transitions, refugee young people are also negotiating critical stages in their own social, emotional, physical and intellectual development. Although developmental changes occur for all young people, for refugee young people their difficulties are compounded by the trauma of their refugee experiences, forced migration and resettlement in a new country.

**Educational challenges**

Refugee children and young people who enter Australia usually have had one of three types of education:

- They may have had no formal schooling, are not literate in their first language and have limited numeracy skills.
- They may have had a disrupted education and have limited literacy and numeracy skills in their first language.
- They may have only had schooling in languages other than their first language.

In Australia, refugee children and young people must attempt to adjust to a new and challenging environment when entering the school system. The culture and structure of Australian schools is very different from what they are used to. Many refugees speak of the different teaching style in Australia, describing it as less formal, with an emphasis on experiential, self-motivated learning. In the classroom, refugee students can be very quiet because they may not be used to providing their own opinions or making judgements and may consider it inappropriate to ask questions.

For those who have not experienced any sort of formal education, the structured learning environment of the school can be alienating. These young people are likely to have very high anxiety levels. The progress of some students may be further slowed by the other impediments resulting from the refugee experience such as hearing impairment, poor vision, emotional trauma, malnutrition and poor short-term memory.

After arriving in Australia, refugee children and young people will begin schooling in one of the following:

- English Language Schools/Centres (ELS/Cs)
- mainstream primary and secondary government schools
- mainstream primary and secondary private schools
- Catholic schools
- Islamic colleges.

Most newly arrived refugees will initially attend an English Language School or Centre for two to four terms where they receive intensive English language tuition. DE&T also provides support for newly arrived students enrolling directly into mainstream schools with the following programs: ESL Out-posting, Isolated student support and In-school support. These programs are explained in more detail in Section 5, School Policies and Practices.

Although learning English in a language school or centre is challenging, and the experience of schooling itself is very new, the transition from this environment into a mainstream school is a particularly difficult and distressing event for young refugees. Students are leaving an environment where they have developed trust and a feeling of safety and comfort. The move to a larger school creates uncertainty for refugee students. Refugee students moving between the primary and secondary school systems also experience this form of dislocation. The transition is even more challenging when a young person...
enrols directly into a mainstream school on arrival without the more gradual transition into school from a language school.

The final transition for refugee young people takes place after secondary education – to further education, vocational education and training, employment, unemployment or other activities.
The journey to Australia

Moses was born in a village in southern Sudan. There are many tribes in southern Sudan, and Moses’ tribe was Dinka. In southern Sudan, a civil war between the government troops of northern Sudan and the liberation armies caused the death and wounding of many people, and young boys were often taken away from their families and forced to fight. Moses’ older brother was taken by the army, and the family never heard from him again. Life was very hard in the rural area where Moses lived, and there was not much food.

Moses’ father had two wives, which was a tradition in Sudan. His father lived with his first wife and her two sons and three daughters. He visited Moses’ mother, his second wife, every other week, and Moses looked forward to him coming. Dinka people value their cows, and when Moses was quite small, his father bought him and his mother a cow, which Moses looked after and loved. Moses’ mother had lost her leg to a landmine, so from a young age Moses had to work hard to ensure that the two of them had sufficient food and wood for cooking. Even so, Moses loved his life in Sudan. Each day he roamed around the village, chatting with his many uncles, helping aunties to carry their heavy loads of wood, herding cows, fishing in the river, climbing trees and hunting with friends.

When Moses’ father visited, he would talk with other men in the village of his opposition to the northern government of Sudan, and Moses loved to sit behind him and listen to his elders’ conversations. Moses’ father had twice been imprisoned and tortured for speaking out against the government, and Moses knew to hide in the forest when soldiers visited their village to look for his father. One time, a young soldier had caught Moses and badly beaten him. He was lucky to survive, because on the same occasion his close friend was killed in front of him for resisting the soldier. Moses escaped when the soldier was called away, but Moses has never forgotten the image of the soldier shooting his friend.

When Moses was 10 years old, his father talked about his decision to leave Sudan for Kenya, as he feared being arrested a third time. Moses’ father and mother talked through the night about whether she could manage the journey to Kenya, which would entail much walking and hardship. By morning, they told Moses that they had reached the decision that Moses should go with his father, but that his mother would remain in the village with her sister. Moses was devastated at the thought of leaving her, his uncles and aunties, his cow and the life he loved.
Moses’ mother promised that she would somehow see him again in the future, and gave Moses one of her bracelets to remind him of her. When night came, Moses and his father collected the first wife, whom Moses called stepmother, and the family set off on the journey to Kenya.

The journey was long and difficult. Moses now had two half-brothers and three half-sisters, and had to get used to being in his new family. His stepmother was very kind to him, but he cried each night, thinking of his mother. As they journeyed, they slept in the forest during the day, and travelled at night, walking long distances. Once they were attacked and beaten by local villagers, and their saucepans were stolen. When they arrived in Kenya they had few belongings left, and they were exhausted and malnourished. One of the things that made Moses happy in these difficult times was that he had managed to hold onto his mother’s bracelet to remind him of her.

For the next five years, Moses lived in a refugee camp in Kenya. The camp itself was dangerous, with thousands of people living closely together. There was fighting between the many factions in the camp, there was only a little schooling, and Moses felt that he never had enough to eat because his food allowance was small and the food was not always fresh. He and other boys spent their days getting up to mischief. After 5 years in the refugee camp, the family were interviewed by Australian government officials, and accepted for resettlement in Australia. Moses and his family arrived in Melbourne when he was 15 years old. After his village life in Sudan and the refugee camp in Kenya, Melbourne was very strange, with high buildings and many fast cars travelling down broad, tarmacked roads. After life in the refugee camp, Moses had grown used to the separation from his mother, but he still missed her, and wore her bracelet as a reminder of happier days in Sudan. He soon realised that the health services in Australia were better than those in Sudan and that his mother could see doctors who would give her an artificial limb and help her to walk. He felt angry that his mother had not been able to accompany him, and hoped that she could join him when he was older.

At school in Australia

On arrival in Australia, Moses and his family found a house that they could afford to rent, though it was too small for eight people – Moses and his two half-brothers had to sleep on the lounge floor. Many things in the house surprised Moses – that clean water came by turning a tap, that food was prepared on an electric stove. Moses often went out and walked around the streets, but was sad that he knew no-one and that he could not wander in and out of houses as he used to do in his village. He felt very isolated and alone, and was confused about who he was in this strange culture.

With his half-brothers and sisters, Moses attended the local language centre. He found it difficult to learn English. After a while, he moved to a mainstream school where he entered Year 9.

He found the classroom very restrictive. He couldn’t understand the teacher. He hated the school. There
were both boys and girls in the school, and they were treated as equals, whereas in Sudan, boys were regarded as more important. Studying was also difficult for Moses. He had experienced very little schooling in his life so far, and was not interested in reading and writing. He would much rather work on cars, because he was good at it. Teachers assumed that a student in secondary school had learnt reading and writing skills in primary school, and Moses was often in trouble for not concentrating and not doing his homework. Homework was difficult for Moses. There was little space at home for him to study, and the television was always on in the lounge room where he slept. His father spoke little English and his stepmother had never been to school to learn reading and writing. They did not understand the school system to discuss his problems with a teacher, nor could they help him with homework.

There were other problems at home too. Moses was having difficulty sleeping, partly because of the cramped and noisy conditions, but also because he had nightmares in which he saw his old friend being shot by the soldier. This reminded him of how bad the war was at home, and how much danger his mother was in. His father had also become very angry, beating the children when they annoyed him. His father often remembered the torture he had experienced in prison, and he was depressed because he had to leave Sudan. He also felt guilty because he had left Moses’ mother in dangerous conditions. All these problems made him feel angry and frustrated about his ability to change this situation.

As a result of his difficulties at home and school, Moses’ moods oscillated between anger and sadness, and he was unable to control his behaviour in the classroom, even though each day he resolved to concentrate hard. In Sudan, Dinka people were regarded as strong and proud, but in Australia Moses felt looked down on by other children, who teased him because he was so different from them. He was in trouble for fighting back when he was teased, and was occasionally suspended from school. Moses began to stay away from school because it made him so angry, and he started to hang around the shopping centre, making friends with some boys there. They admired him for his strength and daredevil attitude, which encouraged Moses to miss school.

One of the teachers at school noticed Moses’ difficulties, and he invited Moses to join the mechanics workshop he was running after school. From the first time he attended, Moses loved it. At the end of Year 10, Moses was told he had failed. He did not want to go on with school any more. A community worker at the school told him about a mechanics course being run at the local TAFE, and Moses jumped at the idea. His father didn’t agree at first, but once the school careers officer explained that it could lead to an apprenticeship and potentially a job, he agreed to let Moses try it. The worker also linked Moses into an after-school support program (an English language course) to help improve his English and suggested that he talk with a counsellor to deal with the nightmares he was having. From that moment, Moses began to enjoy his life in Australia. He liked the way Australians took such delight in cars, and felt proud that he could fix them. He began to make friends with others who admired his skills and, for the first time since he left the village, he felt as though he belonged.
The journey to Australia

Radhia is 11 years old and is in her final year of primary school in the western suburbs of Melbourne. She was born in Iraq, of a Shiite Muslim family. When she was growing up, Iraq was ruled by the Ba’thist Socialist party, which would not entertain any political opposition. Because of this, the human rights of Shiite Muslims were abused, and political activists were particularly at risk of detention, torture and even execution.

Until she was 7 years old, Radhia lived in Baghdad with her mother, father and younger sister. She had a large extended family, and her grandmother and two uncles shared her house. Radhia's father was a journalist, and her mother had trained as a science teacher, but stayed at home to look after the household after she was married. Radhia worked hard at school and had many friends.

When Radhia was 7 years old, her father left for work one morning, and did not return. The family never heard from him again, and although work colleagues, family and friends searched, there was no trace of him. Talking about her father became taboo in Radhia's household, as everyone was so upset by his absence. Radhia felt the family were trying to hide information about her father from her, and she heard her cousin whispering that he had been imprisoned, tortured and murdered, which made Radhia very unhappy. She found it difficult to smile any more. Radhia missed her father's laughter, his affectionate nature and the stories he told her as they sat together in the courtyard of their large family home. He had passed his love of writing to Radhia, and the two of them had planned that Radhia would go to university when she was old enough, and learn to be a journalist like him. Radhia had written simple stories to share with her father and her teacher, and she received high marks for her work at school.

After Radhia's father disappeared, life changed for the worse. The police often came to their house to interrogate Radhia's uncles about her father's absence, and Radhia witnessed them beating her favourite uncle. Radhia hated the feeling of fear in the family whenever the police visited. Now that her father was no longer the family's breadwinner, Radhia's mother had returned to teaching, and grandmother looked after the household. Radhia loved her grandmother, who talked about her village life as a little girl. One evening, the police visited the house and arrested Radhia's two uncles. During the night, Radhia's mother packed her and her sister into a truck that was going to Iran. Radhia had no time to say goodbye to her beloved grandmother and friends, and cried to go home as they drove. Her mother tried to comfort her, explaining that it was unsafe to stay in their home, and that she had been able to organise transport to Iraq by gradually selling her gold jewellery during the last year and paying bribes to Iranian officials.

Over the next year, Radhia, her sister and her mother lived in a refugee centre in Iran, where 5000 people lived in crowded conditions. Her mother struggled to provide food and safety for the family, often relying
on the generosity of others to survive. There was limited schooling for Radhia and her sister in the refugee centre, though their mother was able to tutor them. In desperation, her mother wrote to an old colleague of her husband who had fled to Australia a few years before, and he agreed to sponsor them to come to Australia. Gaining a visa to come to Australia was a difficult and complicated process for the family, but at last they arrived to find their friend waiting at Melbourne airport. On the bus from the airport, Radhia thought the country very odd. Colours and smells were different; traffic was fast and regulated. People were dressed differently from those in Iraq and Iran, and she saw women and girls of her age with bare legs, arms and heads.

The family moved into their friend’s small flat, but after three days, they all realised that there was not enough space and Radhia’s mother was uncomfortable in a flat with a single man. He asked the Department of Immigration to house them in accommodation that the government made available for refugees on arrival in Australia, and Radhia, her sister and mother moved to a flat where they could stay for four weeks. There, Radhia’s mother was told that her daughters must attend the local primary school which had a language centre for students to learn English, and within a week of arriving in Australia, Radhia and her sister had started school.

At school in Australia

Radhia was bewildered by school in Australia. In Iraq, the children sat in rows and were quiet and obedient to the teacher, who was respected as the source of knowledge for the students. In Australia, the classroom seemed noisy and chaotic, and there was a different style of teaching and learning. The students were encouraged to ask questions and challenge the teacher’s words. Worse, Radhia could not speak or write in English, and could not pursue her old enjoyment of writing stories to share with her teacher. At home, Radhia wrote stories in Arabic about her life in Iraq, remembering her father, her grandmother, her friends and her uncles, all of whom she missed terribly. Her mother wanted to help Radhia and her sister with their homework, but she was prevented by her own lack of English and knowledge of Australian schooling. Radhia often had stomach pains and had to miss school and stay home with her mother, but the doctor could not find anything wrong with her. Radhia despaired of learning English, making Australian friends, and of ever achieving her father’s dreams of university and a career. Her teacher noticed that Radhia often looked sad, that she never smiled, and that she was shy in the classroom.

Radhia also had problems socially. The Australian lifestyle was very different from that in Iraq, and she felt that she would never find Australian friends and fit in with their way of life. At home in Iraq, her family had a large house, a car, good clothes,
books and a comfortable lifestyle. In Australia, the family had second-hand furniture, clothes and books. They received money from Centrelink, but never had any to spare for the new clothes that Radhia longed for. For the three terms she spent at the English Language Centre, some other students in her class also wore a scarf, but when she moved into the mainstream school, there were fewer girls who dressed like her. She felt different from other girls of her age, and this made her feel lonely and isolated. She did not have a sense of belonging in Australia, and she felt it was not her place.

Radhia's mother was also saddened by her life in Australia. She herself was having to learn English, and could not pursue her teaching career. She had some casual work in a factory where her husband's colleague worked, but she had few friends and felt very isolated. With sole responsibility for her daughters, she became overprotective, and tried to keep them indoors at all times. Radhia's mother had never lost her fear of the police knocking on the door, and the family often stayed at home because she was fearful of walking in the streets where she may see a policeman. Because her mother often lay on her bed and cried with loneliness, Radhia increasingly took on the responsibility of housework and care of her younger sister. Radhia became very withdrawn, and her teachers worried about her ability to study. Radhia's family could only stay in their Department of Immigration flat for four weeks, having to search for another house. Luckily, a social worker helped them to find a flat on the tenth floor of a housing estate that was not too far from school. The family was pleased to find that there were other Iraqi families in the flats, and Radhia's mother slowly made some friends amongst the women, who introduced her to the local mosque.

There had been so many changes in Radhia's life, and she often sat and dreamed of all the things that had seemed so stable at home in Iraq. She thought of the many cultural and family celebrations there had been, when she had danced and sung with friends and relatives. She missed the sense of belonging that these celebrations had brought. In thinking of her friends in Iraq, she wanted to write to them, but feared that receiving a letter from Australia would place them in danger. She felt guilty that they were still living with the fear of persecution, and that they could not enjoy the peace that Australia offered.

At Radhia's new school, there was a homework program run by a woman from a local service to help students like herself. There, the woman who helped with her English recognised Radhia's interest in maths. She encouraged her to make use of the computers at the homework program and the maths tutor who attended every second week. After a year, the women encouraged her to enter a maths competition within the school. To Radhia's pleasure, she won a prize, and her confidence in her own abilities began to increase. Her English was improving, and she began to see that she might still be able to fulfil her father's dream of going to university. She began to make friends who had similar interests to her, and was thrilled to be invited to a birthday celebration of an Australian friend. Radhia's successes encouraged her mother to relax into her new country, and she was pleased to think that she and her children could live in safety, and hope for a stable and secure future in Australia.
3.1 Refugees in Australia

Currently the Commonwealth Government accepts 13,000 people per year from refugee backgrounds through its Humanitarian Program. Of this number, approximately 40% are children and young people (DIMIA Settlement database). The Humanitarian Program includes people formally identified overseas as refugees by the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) as well as people from ‘refugee-like’ situations.

A small number of people also arrive in Australia each year on a temporary visa (e.g. visitor visa) or without valid entry documentation. These people may subsequently seek the protection of the Australian Government under the terms of the United Nations Refugee Convention. If they seek such protection they are asylum seekers, and they may hold a bridging visa while their applications are under review. People arriving with valid documentation live in the community and are eligible for permanent protection if they are deemed to be refugees. People arriving without valid documentation are subject to a period of mandatory detention, from which they are released on a 3-year Temporary Protection Visa (TPV) if the government recognises their status as refugees. TPV holders may face repatriation, if at the time of applying for a subsequent protection visa they are no longer deemed to be refugees, owing to changed conditions in their country of origin. Depending on a complex range of circumstances, some TPV holders may only ever be eligible for temporary protection in Australia. (Please note that these policies are current at date of publication. Government immigration policies can and do change.)

Many other people with ‘refugee-like’ experiences are also sponsored to come to

The United Nations Convention defines a refugee as someone who has left their country of origin and cannot return to it ‘owing to a well founded fear of being persecuted for reasons of race, religion, nationality, membership of a particular social group or political opinion’ (Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees 1992). Refugee-like situations are characterised by persecution, conflict, war and forced displacement.
Australia by their relatives through the Family Migration Program. It is estimated that around one in eight of the 32,000 entrants through this program in the year 2000 came from countries from which Australia currently accepts refugees (DIMIA 2000).

Many new arrivals will have experienced years of conflict and persecution prior to leaving their homelands. One in four adults will have been tortured and had severe human rights violations (Iredale et al. 1996). Almost three in four will have been exposed to traumatic events such as forced dislocation and loss of, or separation from, family members in violent circumstances (VFST 1998). Their departure will usually have been unplanned and their escape perilous. Many refugee families will have spent years in a first country of asylum, either in a refugee camp or in the general community, before being offered permanent settlement in Australia. In these countries, their status will have been uncertain and they will have had only limited access to basic survival resources such as food and water, shelter, personal safety, health care and education.

Establishing background

A student’s ability to learn can be affected by their experiences before coming to Australia. These include disruptions to schooling due to conflict or lack of education and a range of traumatic events, which will affect the student’s learning in their new school.

To identify a student as a refugee, a number of unobtrusive questions can be asked of parents at enrolment or another appropriate time. These include the following:

- How many years of schooling has your child completed? (How many days per week? How many weeks per year?)
- Where did your child complete this schooling?
- In what language was the schooling?
- There is no need to tell me details of your experiences before coming to Australia, but has your child experienced disruptions to their schooling?
- Have you spent time in a refugee camp or lived in a country where your children did not have the usual rights to education?
- Is there anything we should know to enable us to make your child as welcome as possible or assist them with their learning?

Special needs of asylum seekers and TPV holders

The conditions of their visas mean that asylum seekers and TPV holders have limited access to financial support and no access to the Commonwealth-funded settlement services available to other refugees and migrants. As a result, they have difficulty getting access to English classes, job search assistance, further education and other services. Asylum seekers and TPV holders live with uncertainty and are unable to plan for the future. These families and students do not know whether they will be forcibly repatriated, granted permanent residency, or issued another TPV.
Schools need to be aware that TPV students or asylum seekers may have special needs related to their particular experiences. It has been well documented that extended stays in detention centres can have an extremely negative impact on the mental health of children and young people (Human Rights and Equal Opportunity Commission 2003). Detainees can be very anxious about the possibility of repatriation and the safety of their family upon return. A sense of security at school is therefore very important, as the home environment could be stressful. Additionally, changes in student behaviour might reflect an imminent decision about their residency status. Teaching staff may therefore need to offer asylum-seeking/TPV families and students a higher level of assistance with support and referrals.

### 3.3 The impact of trauma on children’s development and wellbeing

#### Conflict and persecution

People who arrive in Australia as refugees or from refugee-like situations have exercised little or no choice about leaving their homelands. Rather, their migration will have been forced as a result of war between or within countries or their persecution as members of an ethnic, religious or social group. Most refugee children and young people will have been subjected to or have witnessed horrifying and traumatic events. These include:

- war, bombing or shelling
- destruction of homes and schools
- violent death or injury of family or friends
- separation from family members
- sudden disappearances of family members or friends
- physical injury and limited medical attention
- deprivation of food, safe water and other resources essential for survival
- fear of discovery or arrest
- arrest, detention or torture
- forced conscription into armies or militias
- rape or sexual assault
- lack of opportunities for play.

All will have experienced some degree of loss of home, place and culture, as well as the profound losses of parents, siblings, friends and significant others through death or separation.

#### New challenges upon arrival

Refugee children and young people will also have endured a level of change unprecedented in the lives of most of their Australian-born counterparts. As well as changes in their families and family relationships, on arrival in a new country they are required to learn a new language, adapt to a new set of cultural norms, and orient themselves to a new and unfamiliar school system (Rutter 1994). The culture and structure of the education system in Australia is likely to be very different from that in their country of origin. In particular, teaching styles are likely to be less formal.

Adaptation to school may be particularly difficult for those students who have had limited or no school experience. These students may be facing the intellectual and behavioural requirements of a structured learning environment for the first time.

#### Gauging the impact of refugee experiences on students

The developmental impact of pre-arrival and settlement experiences will depend on:

- the nature and extent of exposure to traumatic events
- the age of the child at the time of maximum disruption to life
the degree to which the family has remained intact
• the quality of the post-trauma environment and opportunities for recovery.

For some refugee children and their families, the settlement stage may see the development of psychological problems requiring 'one-to-one' professional intervention.

Specific effects of the refugee experience on children and young people

Anxiety and fear
Anxiety and fear typically persist in a new country, well after actual or threatened violence has ended. Difficulties with concentration and memory, and disturbed sleep patterns, can impair the ability to learn and acquire new skills. Exploration through play, mastering new situations and the taking in of new information can also be inhibited. This is particularly problematic when adjusting to an unfamiliar and new environment.

Re-experiencing traumatic events
Re-experiencing the trauma is a characteristic reaction to traumatic events. This often occurs at night in the form of nightmares or during the day in the form of flashbacks and memories. Everyday stimuli can also trigger reminders of traumatic events. Common triggers are people in uniform, sirens, fireworks, sudden loud noises, and authoritarian and threatening behaviour.

All these experiences can cause overwhelming anxiety and the student may cope by 'shutting down' through numbing of feelings, restricting the amount of information from the outside world, and detachment from people and things. Shutting down can also manifest as social withdrawal, avoiding stimulation, looking blank and displaying limited imaginative activity. These mechanisms are a way for the mind to cope with fear but rarely operate all the time. There may be fluctuations in emotions and behaviours, reflecting periods of intense anxiety alternating with periods of withdrawal and emotional numbing. With the pressure of anxiety and tension (which cannot be controlled) the student may become highly irritable, unable to tolerate frustration, resulting in reduced control over impulsive and aggressive behaviour.

Connections with people
The connection with others is usually dramatically altered as a result of trauma and dislocation. A fundamental cause of this disconnection is the loss of others and prolonged isolation and separation from important figures such as parents or other important caregivers. This may be compounded or mitigated by the receptivity of the new environment, and the quality of nurturing and emotional support available. The age of a child or young person at the time of loss greatly influences the effects of that loss. As Rutter notes, 'in general, younger children seem to suffer the most adverse effects, while older children (especially those who had a previous history of family warmth and affection) often possess internal resources which help them better cope with the stress of family separation' (Rutter 1985).

Prolonged separation from parents at a young age interferes with the future development of relationships. A fundamental internal sense of security is destroyed unless a new permanent and nurturing relationship is fostered with a protective adult. Without such a new relationship, the child is at high risk of difficulties throughout life. The capacity to form close, trusting relationships and sociable peer relationships can be affected in various ways.

Impact of isolation and separation
Some children develop a pattern of anxious attachment in which they remain fearful of losing people who are important to them. This can manifest as clinging behaviour and jealousy. Anger is harboured when the attachment figure is unavailable but may not be expressed for fear of rejection. Other children develop an overly
self-sufficient style of relating and avoid close relationships. When developed early in life, such independence can interfere with the capacity to form mature relationships later on. It can easily be misunderstood as a healthy reaction because the child is self-reliant. Another pattern that develops is that of compulsive care-giving, where personal needs are denied in order to look after others. Again, this can appear as a healthy reaction because the child is helpful and accommodating, but this is at the expense of his or her own needs being met. It is also a form of relating that can easily be taken advantage of by others.

**Self-concept**

Throughout childhood, the sense of self and self-concept evolve, with identity formation being one of the central developmental tasks of adolescence. There are many different theoretical understandings of the self but most share the view that the self functions as an inner map of the person and their relationship to others and the world. The map can be of varying complexity, and consist of attributes and expectations, which can be predominantly negative or positive in value.

Sensitivity to failure is common among all children, but refugee children are especially sensitive because of the importance attached to success by the children and their families. The cumulative effect is that the acquisition of new competencies can be diminished, which ultimately influences the student’s feelings of self-efficacy and self-worth.

**Perceptions of the world**

Refugee and settlement experiences can also profoundly affect children’s perceptions of a secure world, notions of good and bad, and their sense of a future. The belief that home or community is a safe place can be destroyed. As Van der Kolk states, ‘the essence of psychological trauma is the loss of faith that there is order and continuity in life. Trauma occurs when one loses the sense of having a safe place to retreat within or outside of oneself to deal with frightening emotions or experiences’ (Van der Kolk 1987). Loss of safety also means a loss of trust in others to provide protection (Raundalen 1997). Raundalen has emphasised that should parents fail to protect their children from danger, the children will feel betrayed.

Refugee children have left behind a sense of place and belonging to a culture that would have provided them with a frame of reference through which to view the world and their future. Children whose recent life experience has been dominated by overwhelming violence and destruction and who may have witnessed the very darkest side of human existence, may struggle to conceive of a future that holds anything meaningful or positive for them.
Garbarino and colleagues, who are recognised leaders in the field of the effects of violence on children, capture well the impact of violence, and lack of support, on children:

…In the developmental process, the child forms a picture or draws a map of the world and his or her place in it. As children draw these maps, they move forward on the paths they believe exist. If a child's map of the world depicts people and places as hostile, and the child as an insignificant speck relegated to one small corner, we must expect troubled development of one sort or another: a life of suspicion, low self-esteem, self-denigration, and perhaps violence and rage. We can also expect a diminution of cognitive development and impediments to academic achievement and in-school behaviour. (Garbarino and Kostelny 1993)

Shame and guilt

The most invisible legacies of exposure to violence are shame and guilt. School-age children have reported ‘feeling bad’ for a number of things including being unable to provide help to others, being safe when others are harmed and for believing that their activities endangered others (Pynoos and Eth1993).

Even when nothing could have been done to change what happened, children imagine that they should have been able to do something; to the child, this is preferable to facing sheer helplessness. Manifestations of guilt and shame include fantasies of revenge to repair damage done by self-destructive behaviour to expiate guilt, avoidance of others due to shame and an inability to participate in pleasurable activities. Shame can also lead to aggression or defiance towards others as a way to defend against aggressive feelings towards oneself. Children can also feel considerable guilt for having left family members and friends behind.

Specific effects of the refugee experience on families

Families play an important role in helping their children meet the developmental tasks of childhood and adolescence and in protecting them from the effects of adverse life events. However, the refugee experience can affect the capacity of families to carry out this role, particularly when parents or caregivers have been exposed to torture and other traumatic events and be experiencing associated mental health difficulties. The feeling of guilt of being unable to protect their children from terrible events may serve as a barrier to acknowledging any adverse effects.

Family relationships and roles are often drastically altered by the refugee experience. In many families, children will have lost a parent through death or separation. Others may be rejoining families after long separations. In some cases, young people may be living as household heads, as members of their extended family or friends, or as unaccompanied minors. Children and young people often act as interpreters and negotiate with agencies such as Centrelink or the doctor on behalf of their parents.

Studies show that families who are well connected with the community are better able to meet their children’s needs (Watson 1988). However, having recently arrived, refugee families often have limited access to the protective effects of social support in either the newly arrived or wider communities. Further, as a result of persecution in their countries of origin, parents may be fearful of people outside the family and hence may resist forming supportive social relationships or discourage their children from doing so. Some parents may also fear the consequences of their children's contact with a new culture, particularly if there is a divergence of values between it and their own. This may not only affect children’s abilities to make connections with their new culture, but may also lead to intergenerational conflict and an overly harsh or overprotective approach to parenting.
While many refugee families place a high value on education, they often lack the language skills, knowledge and, in many cases, confidence to support their children to understand and settle into a new school system and culture. Significantly, most refugee families who have recently arrived in Australia are of low socio-economic status and encounter the stresses and difficulties associated with this. Refugee families experience high levels of unemployment, often reside in insecure and substandard housing and are over-represented among those on low and fixed incomes (Watson 1988; Francis and Price 1996; Collins 1998).

3.4 The role of teaching staff

Strategies for teachers

Traumatic experiences can affect the capacity for learning in a number of ways. Some common learning issues for refugee students include:

- ‘blocks’ to learning caused by the disruptive effects of trauma on cognitive, emotional and social functioning, which affect the ability of students to participate in the classroom (see Table 3.1, p.34)
- culture shock of being in a new country with unfamiliar systems
- concentration, lethargy and retention problems caused by poor sleep and nightmares
- learning difficulties caused by factors such as malnutrition and deprivation
- sight and hearing problems
- deficits in education caused by disrupted schooling
- learning a new language without prior literacy skills (van Kooten-Prasad 2001a).

There are many strategies that can be used in schools and the classroom to overcome blocks to learning. Some of these strategies are summarised in Table 3.1.

Dealing with disclosure

Children and young people re-enact trauma in their play, drawings, verbally when they ask questions or tell stories, and when they show their feelings. An adult’s usual response to such expression is to deny it as no longer appropriate because the trauma is in the past, or hastily reassure that ‘it is all right now’. Denying children’s distressing feelings and reassuring quickly are understandable because adults want to make things better for children and young people, and it is distressing to acknowledge that they are suffering. Activities that lead to the disclosure of trauma are usually of benefit if the disclosure is acknowledged by adults and is met with understanding and support.

It is unlikely that students will disclose traumatic material intentionally; if they do, it is important that they control the level of disclosure about past and current issues. When disclosure occurs in a group context it is important to be mindful of both the needs of the student concerned and of other students in the group. Do not be afraid to talk about the traumatic event; students do not benefit from ‘not thinking about it’ or ‘putting it out of their head’ (Petty 1995). If a student does disclose, don’t avoid discussion: listen to the student, answer questions and provide comfort and support on a one-to-one basis.

Children and young people can be afraid of upsetting adults by displaying fear, sadness and anger, and therefore may be reluctant to show their feelings. The best possible response is to:

- listen to what a student is saying without moving on to something else too quickly
- acknowledge that all children and young people feel sad or angry at times but that these feelings are all right
- appreciate that children mix fact and fantasy when they recall events and it is best not to correct fantasies.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Emotional blocks to learning and their features</th>
<th>Strategies</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Anxiety</strong>&lt;br&gt;• poor concentration&lt;br&gt;• memory problems&lt;br&gt;• restlessness&lt;br&gt;• going blank</td>
<td>• Provide a safe, structured and predictable environment.&lt;br&gt;• Explain changes, rules and expectations.&lt;br&gt;• Prepare students or explain alarming and strange noises.&lt;br&gt;• Provide an alternative quiet place to the schoolyard.&lt;br&gt;• Be flexible about participation.&lt;br&gt;• Writing, art, dance for expression of feelings.&lt;br&gt;• Ask students if something is troubling them.&lt;br&gt;• Allow a graded approach to unfamiliar activities.&lt;br&gt;• Allow exemptions from very difficult tasks.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Withdrawal, grief and depressed mood</strong>&lt;br&gt;• loss of interest&lt;br&gt;• anger&lt;br&gt;• lack of motivation&lt;br&gt;• lack of energy&lt;br&gt;• sadness</td>
<td>• Set achievable goals.&lt;br&gt;• Provide a caring and supportive environment.&lt;br&gt;• Show genuine interest.&lt;br&gt;• Provide for one-to-one discussions.&lt;br&gt;• Provide opportunities for pleasure, play and laughter.&lt;br&gt;• Enable opportunities for sharing.&lt;br&gt;• Encourage small group or paired learning environment.&lt;br&gt;• Praise effort.&lt;br&gt;• Invite people from different countries into the classroom.&lt;br&gt;• Facilitate language acquisition for communication.&lt;br&gt;• Promote physical activity.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Anger</strong>&lt;br&gt;• low frustration tolerance&lt;br&gt;• aggressive behaviour</td>
<td>• Explain limit setting.&lt;br&gt;• Discuss anger in one-to-one situation.&lt;br&gt;• Discover what is troubling student.&lt;br&gt;• Acknowledge legitimate problems or provocations.&lt;br&gt;• Address causes such as bullying.&lt;br&gt;• Allow for appropriate expression of difficulties by telling somebody, storytelling, drama.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Guilt and shame</strong>&lt;br&gt;• withdrawal&lt;br&gt;• anger</td>
<td>• Communicate respectfully, e.g. correct pronunciation of names.&lt;br&gt;• Provide attention.&lt;br&gt;• Respect privacy.&lt;br&gt;• Allow for gradual participation.&lt;br&gt;• Be a model of a caring adult who respects the strengths of students.</td>
</tr>
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The important thing is to acknowledge the associated feelings. This means saying things such as:

- ‘That must have been frightening.’
- ‘That must have made you feel sad.’
- ‘You feel there was more you could have done to stop it happening.’

To deal with children’s fears of being overwhelmed, offer your support. Tell them that they can come to you if they are feeling worried, sad or angry.

Responding to students disclosing traumatic information

When responding to the student:

- Acknowledge the feeling generated by the event (for example, that it must have been very sad or frightening).
- Affirm the student’s bravery in speaking about the event.
- Acknowledge that other students who experienced a similar event would have those feelings.
- Acknowledge that even though the circumstances of the event have passed and students are ‘safe’ in Australia, the memories can remain and may still be frightening or distressing.
- Tell the student that if they would like to discuss the issue further, you would be available.
- It may be appropriate to explore with the student or class as a whole (if part of a program) strategies for dealing with emotions (VFST 2002).

Activities suitable for classroom use

Teachers can help refugee students to express their feelings in the following ways.

**Letterbox:** Students can ‘post’ letters to their teacher; the teacher then writes back, ‘posting’ letters to their students.

**Logbook:** A logbook is a writing book with the student’s name in it. It is used to write personal things such as ‘what makes me sad’, with the teacher writing comments. The student can ask for their logbook at any time to convey messages. If a student desires, they should be able to write in their own language and translate some or all of it with their teacher.

**Story writing and diaries:** These can be integrated with artwork, photography and other media to express feelings and narrate personal history.

**Tapes:** Children can also tell stories into tapes, which are kept in a library for them to listen to.

**Art:** For students with language difficulties, artwork is extremely effective for expressing feelings and depicting aspects of life in the past, present or future.
Supporting staff

It is important that the school environment is supportive for school staff working with refugee students. Teaching with this group of young people is challenging and so it is essential that peer support and other support systems are set up at your school. Working with students who have survived horrific events can have an emotional impact on school staff. After hearing their stories and experiencing something of their lives, teachers may find that they are experiencing some of the same trauma responses as the students. These ‘vicarious traumatisation’ responses may include sadness, helplessness, guilt, anger, loss of pleasure in everyday activities, seeking to ‘make it better’ for children and avoiding discussion about student trauma issues and events (VFST 1998).

If left unmonitored by the school, the emotional effect of working with refugee students without appropriate support mechanisms may lead to staff burnout. Some of these burnout factors may be avoided or alleviated through professional development, internal organisational assistance and peer support. Managing staff should emphasise clarity of roles, responsibilities and boundaries. It is important that those working with refugee students and families support each other. A range of feelings can be evoked by working with refugee students, which can influence ways of responding to students and affect the worker’s personal life. Understanding such reactions and how to deal with them is vital for effective work.

Common reactions among those working with refugees

Helplessness: Feelings of helplessness can arise when confronting information about torture practices, other forms of state-sanctioned violence and war atrocities. This can lead to a loss of confidence in one’s skills and knowledge. It can also lead to an underestimation of the student’s resources and a tendency to rescue. Judgements about helping too much or ‘rescuing’ can be difficult to make. Nevertheless, it is vital to be aware of personal limits. Where an overprotective attitude or a need to solve all problems dominates, it is usual to simply become exhausted from doing everything. It can also lead to a reluctance to let others help because they cannot do it as well.

Guilt: Workers can experience guilt about being exempt from trauma and suffering, and about not taking enough action against the violation of others. Knowing what others lack can impair one’s own enjoyment of life. Guilt can also lead to workers viewing the survivor as extremely fragile and vulnerable, overlooking what they have done in order to survive. Therefore, one can do too much for them and take excessive responsibility. Another source of guilt stems from compromises that have to be made, such as not being able to provide the same level of attention for all in need.

Anger: Anger is another response to traumatic material. Anger can focus on the perpetrator, on bystanders, and towards society’s lack of responsiveness. Anger can readily be followed by dismay. A sense of mild hostility and alienation can develop as a sense of disappointment with friends and colleagues who do not seem to understand. Social activity can seem trivial and be declined. It is not unusual for workers to develop a lack of trust in others and cynicism regarding their motives.

Fear: Fear and a personal sense of vulnerability can be evoked by increased awareness of how human beings can violate each other. A sense of increased risk is readily evoked when knowledge of what can happen is brought to the fore. Fear can also be a response to the possibility of having personal painful memories brought back.

Avoidance reactions: Professionals can react to potentially overwhelming emotions associated with trauma by distancing themselves from victims. Denial, detachment and withdrawal are characteristic responses. All professionals are detached at times.
**Fulfilment:** Growth, a deeper awareness of the human condition, a valuing of closeness, increased sensitivity and the capacity for sharing and living fully can be the benefits of being exposed to survival amidst the horror of war and trauma. As a professional, one also experiences the privilege of witnessing the power of courage and the strength of compassion and renewed hope. Being able to do something is immensely satisfying.

**Implications for practice**

Many emotions are aroused by traumatic material and they can persist. People can respond by suppressing them, or becoming distracted from them, or looking at them further to see what they can tell us about students, their families or our own lives. Professionals predominantly engage in one of the following processes that reflect a wider position in regard to traumatic material:

- moving towards the traumatic material by learning more
- changing systems and accepting responsibility
- moving away from the traumatic material by neglecting issues or diminishing awareness of the severity of problems.

The most common pitfall is probably taking excessive responsibility. There are many reasons for this including the need to do something to overcome feelings of helplessness, the desire to protect the survivor from further abuse, and the need to restore hope and faith in humanity. Anyone with an awareness of the circumstances of refugees who have survived violence and displacement, could be tempted, in a helping capacity, to extend their efforts to improving systems they are part of and to increase community awareness. This is clearly desirable, but the limits of personal responsibility have to be constantly examined.

**Burnout**

At times, despair and disillusionment can outweigh spirited efforts and lead to ‘burnout’. The risk factors are:

- too high demands from self
- too high demands from others and the situation
- lack of resources, personnel and time
- lack of control over the situation
- lack of support from leaders, organisations and colleagues
- unrealistic expectations
- lack of acceptance and acknowledgement.

When work is emotionally intense, and where personal commitment is strong, the ideal position to adopt is a degree of detachment alongside empathy, which ultimately enables you to act in the best interests of students.

**Dealing with emotional reactions to traumatic events**

1. Recognise your reactions by developing awareness of the signals of distress and by trying to find words to express your inner experiences and feelings.
2. Contain your reactions by identifying the personal level of comfort, and by understanding that reactions are normal and unlikely to be overwhelming if their phasic nature is recognised.
3. To grow, accepting that being influenced is to be expected, and to share trauma-related work with others. Allow for relaxing self-expression.
4. In addition to the above, dealing with your reactions involves recognising that it is an ongoing process of thoughtfulness and acknowledgement of conflict.
Coping with stress

Most people have different ways of coping with stress. These include humour, relaxation, exercise, good nutrition and sharing emotions with close friends. The following professional methods are discussed by Yassen (1995):

- balance in the variety and nature of work
- pacing work
- keeping boundaries in relation to taking work home, understanding self-disclosure boundaries
- being realistic about the effect you have
- trusting professional relationships and peer support
- planning for difficult times
- professional training and replenishment.

Debriefing

The concept of debriefing arose from recognising that professionals can be personally adversely affected by exposure to demanding stressful work such as working with people who have been severely traumatised. The aim of debriefing is to reduce staff stress caused by such exposure. Debriefing is usually conducted in a group setting and facilitated by a debriefer. Debriefing processes include:

- information and understanding of workers’ emotional reactions and their ‘normalisation’
- reducing stress by sharing experiences of difficult situations in a group or team setting
- learning stress-management strategies
- reinforcing the value of one’s work
- gaining understanding of the causes of one’s difficulties and frustrations and learning what one can do by considering alternatives.

The person who acts as a facilitator of a debriefing group needs to be experienced in this area. He or she clarifies what is being said and elicits responses in order to increase understanding and generate alternatives. The facilitator should be someone who is not a staff member and who is entrusted with the role of guide.

It is crucial to anticipate the sources of stress because other strategies may be required. Often, the main source of stress for staff pertains to organisational issues such as problematic relationships and changing work conditions. If this is the case, boundaries for debriefing need to be set beforehand so that it is clear that it is seen as a forum to discuss stress emanating from work with students. Organisational issues will still need to be dealt with, but in another way.

Costs can prohibit the employment of an external debriefer on a regular basis. The alternatives are to have a number of structures and processes in place to deal with anticipated sources of staff distress. Suitable processes would include case conferences to discuss difficult situations in, say, the classroom, planning days, clear lines of accountability and ways to disseminate as well as gather information, and one-to-one consultations with a designated person for discussing problems.
Dealing with stress for teachers of refugee children and young people

There are different levels of stress:

- everyday, commonly occurring stresses such as accommodating the diverse needs of refugees in the classroom
- occasional, but very difficult, situations such as student disclosure of an extremely traumatic experience
- crisis or emergency situations.

There are various strategies for dealing with these situations, but the principal ones are described below.

1. Training in understanding the impact of refugee experiences on student wellbeing and learning. Ideally, all teachers and other staff benefit from this kind of training as it may provide a context for classroom situations that arise with some refugee students.

2. Providing the opportunity for staff to meet to discuss stressful situations. This process is supportive of staff and it provides an opportunity to learn more about 'what works'. Reinforcement and an opportunity to discuss and share useful strategies are important in maintaining levels of confidence and skill.

3. Developing protocols in advance. These can be developed for emergency situations. It is also necessary after an emergency incident to debrief – give staff an opportunity to talk about what happened and what will happen. The person responsible for organising such a session should be part of the emergency protocol.

4. Clearly outlining roles, responsibilities and boundaries within the school structure. Knowing when to refer a problem to someone else is critical, and requires anticipation of distressing situations that are likely to arise.

5. Provision of adequate information where there are gaps in knowledge or procedures. This initially requires a forum where gaps can be identified.
4.1 Introduction

Several key processes should be undertaken to enable your school to effectively implement and evaluate the strategies suggested in the Guide (see Figure 4.1, p.42):

1. Read *School’s In for Refugees: A Whole-School Guide to Refugee Readiness*.
2. Conduct an assessment of the refugee readiness of your school by filling out the Audit at the end of each of the principal chapters outlining strategies for working with refugee students (i.e. sections 5–9).
3. Identify and reflect on the changes indicated by the Audit.
4. Form working groups of relevant stakeholders and plan for change.
5. Document and implement changes to strategies, programs and policies.
6. Complete the Audit again at the end of this process (i.e. after a year or so).
7. Reflect on the outcomes of changes that have occurred since you implemented the strategies set out in the Guide and identify areas for further improvement.

4.2 The Refugee Readiness Audit

Overview

A supportive school environment is critical to the educational outcomes, mental health and successful settlement of refugee students. The Refugee Readiness Audit, located at the end of each of the principal sections and presented in full in the Appendix, has been designed to assist schools to assess their level of ‘refugee readiness’. It could usefully be applied alongside other audits such as MindMatters (MindMatters 2000).

The Audit is designed to enable quick identification of the strengths of schools in working with refugee students, and the weaknesses that may require a review of current policies and practices or the introduction of new ones.
Figure 4.1: A framework for implementing change

1. Read the Guide

2. Complete the Audit at the end of each section

3. Reflect on the need for change as identified in the Audit

4. Form working groups to plan for change:
   - School administration
   - Teaching staff
   - School Welfare Counsellor
   - Careers advisor
   - Students and parents
   - Other agency staff

5. Document and implement changes to policies, programs and strategies

6. Complete Audit again

7. Evaluate the outcome of changes made and identify any further need for change

Audits

Section 5: School policies and practices (p.58)
Section 6: School curriculum and programs (p.69)
Section 7: School organisation, ethos and environment (p.84)
Section 8: Partnership with parents (p.90)
Section 9: Partnerships with agencies (p.98)
Appendix: Complete Audit (p.99)

Consult stakeholders:
- School administration
- Teaching staff
- School Welfare Counsellor
- Careers advisor
- Students and parents
- Reception
- Other agency staff
Using the Audit

Read through sections 5–9, answering the Audit questions at the end of each section. Examine the results and reread the relevant portions of the sections for more information on how your school can more effectively work with its refugee students. The Audit asks schools to consider policies and practices across five areas:

(i) School policies and practices  
(Section 5, p.58)  
This section focuses on determining the extent to which your school has developed policies and practices that provide for full participation and adequate access to all of the resources, activities and learning opportunities offered by the school.

(ii) School curriculum and programs  
(Section 6, p.69)  
The curriculum represents both the formal and informal teaching and learning program offered by a school. This section is used to ascertain the extent to which the school’s curriculum promotes social harmony and an understanding of cultural diversity among all students, including an awareness of the backgrounds and needs of refugees and newly arrived migrants.

(iii) School organisation, ethos and environment  
(Section 7, p.84)  
This section allows you to gain an understanding of the culture of your school as revealed by how school policies, principles and values are put into practice in the school setting. It includes the relationships between school staff, students and parents, the general ambience of the school, the physical surroundings, the activities and support structures in place for students and the classroom environment.

(iv) Partnerships with parents  
(Section 8, p.90)  
This section seeks to identify the extent and methods by which your school encourages and develops a relationship with the parents and families of refugee students. These connections represent a vital component in the successful integration of refugee students into the school environment.

(v) Partnerships with agencies  
(Section 9, p.98)  
Finally, this section seeks to ascertain the level to which your school has developed meaningful connections and partnerships with community support and service agencies as providers of outside expertise, resources and services in working with refugee children, young people and their families.

The complete Audit comprising all five section audits can be found in the Appendix, p.99.

4.3 The planning framework

The planning framework (Figure 4.2) is designed to help schools plan for the implementation of the changes identified in the Audit. The framework also encourages schools to evaluate the changes undertaken by documenting strategies, programs and policies implemented.
**FIGURE 4.2: Planning framework**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Stage</th>
<th>Action</th>
<th>Personnel</th>
<th>Result</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1: Prepare</td>
<td>Identify staff members for a Change Process Working Group who will be involved in reading the Guide, planning and implementing necessary change.</td>
<td>School Principal, staff members, Refugee Welfare Committee (if applicable), external refugee support agency (if applicable)</td>
<td>Change Process Working Group formed</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2: Audit</td>
<td>Read Guide, reflect on school practices and conduct the Refugee Readiness Audit.</td>
<td>Change Process Working Group</td>
<td>Audit completed</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3: Review</td>
<td>Review Audit results to identify school practices that could be changed, and re-read sections of the Guide that might advise such change. Identify additional sources that might advise such change (e.g. LMERC, external agencies). Identify other school staff who should be involved in the change process.</td>
<td>Change Process Working Group</td>
<td>A documented understanding of changes that may be necessary</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4: Plan</td>
<td>Develop an action plan that identifies action and outcomes, stakeholders, resources and timelines.</td>
<td>Change Process Working Group</td>
<td>A documented plan for change</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5: Act</td>
<td>Implement the action plan, ensuring the processes are understood and owned by all stakeholders.</td>
<td>Change Process Working Group along with relevant stakeholders</td>
<td>The action plan is implemented and necessary changes are in place</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6: Evaluate</td>
<td>Evaluate the effectiveness of outcomes and adjust the action plan as necessary.</td>
<td>Change Process Working Group</td>
<td>Evaluation is completed and changes to the action plan are documented</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7: Act</td>
<td>Implement any changes identified as useful in the evaluation.</td>
<td>Change Process Working Group and other relevant stakeholders</td>
<td>Amended action plan is implemented</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8: Audit</td>
<td>Undertake Refugee Readiness Audit again.</td>
<td>Change Process Working Group</td>
<td>Second Audit completed</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9: Reflect</td>
<td>Compare the two versions of the completed Audit, assess the changes which have occurred and whether further changes are required.</td>
<td>Change Process Working Group</td>
<td>Final need for change identified</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10: Plan</td>
<td>Adjust the action plan for final change.</td>
<td>Change Process Working Group</td>
<td>Final adjustments for the action plan are made</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11: Act</td>
<td>Implement the final action plan.</td>
<td>Change Process Working Group and relevant stakeholders</td>
<td>Final changes are made</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
5.1 The enrolment process

Developing a comprehensive enrolment process

The enrolment process is an important opportunity to welcome refugee students and their parents to your school and to record useful personal background details about students that may better inform teaching staff about their needs. A positive and well-thought-out enrolment process will serve to make new students feel welcome upon their initial arrival at the school. This is a particularly anxious time for young people who are unfamiliar with the school system, which they may be accessing for the first time.

Enrolment presents an invaluable opportunity for schools to identify refugee students and collect information about their cultural background, educational experiences and support needs. As noted below, there is a range of ways in which this information may improve the educational outcomes for refugee students enrolled at the school.

Schools are required to submit a wide range of information about their students to DE&T at the annual census. Some of this information can be useful to individual schools to identify refugee students, aspects of their experience and possible needs.
Information required by DE&T

DE&T requires schools to provide information that can be of particular relevance to the schools in the context of working with refugee students:

- visa code and visa date (schools must keep a photocopy of student visas for the annual audit)
- number of years of disrupted schooling
- language spoken at home
- mother’s country of birth
- father’s country of birth
- date of first enrolment in an Australian school.

Additional information sources

In addition to the information collected at enrolment, there is a range of other sources of data that may provide vital support information about the refugee students enrolled at your school. These include:

- exit reports from English Language Schools/Centres (which provide information on each student’s educational progress and some detail on past educational experiences)
- an ESL student profile, which gathers information on the numbers of students who have:
  - the same amount of schooling in their first language as their Australian-born peers have in English
  - had severely disrupted schooling or no previous schooling in any country
  - been in Australia for more than 2 years but less than 7 years.

The information collected will reveal much about the refugee students attending your school. Identifying the country of origin will enlighten teachers about the backgrounds of students and provide some clues as to the nature of the journeys they have taken prior to arrival in Australia.

Most refugee young people will bring their visa with them to enrolment. Visa category will indicate whether students are refugees and the types of support they require, and which services they are eligible to access. Where there is no visa available, you could ask the student how long they have been in Australia. When linked with their country of origin (see Section 3.2 of the Guide), this is likely to indicate whether the student has refugee-related experiences. It is important to know what language is spoken at home when organising interpreters, while knowledge about previous levels of schooling is particularly crucial information for teachers.

Sharing information

It is important that enrolment information is accessible to teaching staff, Year Level Coordinators, SWCs and school guidance officers/educational psychologists. Enrolment information can guide the appropriate distribution of resources and allocation of programs to best support student needs. Sharing information in this way should also enable staff to be better informed about the situation of students, particularly those who may be ‘at risk’.

How to identify students who have a refugee background

When identifying a refugee student, two important things to consider are country of origin and visa number. Neither is reliable without a discussion with the student and their family – you must also take into account any life experiences that may affect the student’s ability to learn. The information in Table 5.1 on page 49 provides an overview of visa numbers that you will come across when enrolling refugee students in school. Please note that this information is a guide only.

1. The school administration should ensure that the DE&T recommended degree of confidentiality is maintained and then disseminate appropriate information to relevant teams in the school.
Recommended enrolment procedures

Preparation

- Allocate responsibility for enrolment interviews, e.g. Year Level Coordinator or Assistant Principal. Ensure that these staff are trained to conduct enrolments. Many schools ensure that the Student Welfare Coordinator (SWC) is present for enrolments of students with refugee backgrounds, disrupted schooling, general welfare concerns and special needs.

- Allocate the specific role of enrolment coordinator to ensure that one person is responsible for collecting and sharing important student information with relevant teachers. This could be taken on by the SWC, transition coordinator or Assistant Principal.

- Develop a process to ensure that information on refugee students is shared with other school staff (who, how much, how to deal with privacy issues).

- Become familiar with visa categories (see p.49), source countries where refugees come from and languages spoken. This information will later help to identify students who most likely have a refugee background.

- Prepare enrolment questions to gain relevant information from student and parent or guardian without being intrusive, and adopt these as standard procedure (see below).

- Have processes in place to include professional interpreters.

- Request a set interview time if prospective students come for enrolment without appointment. Ask them to bring their parent or guardian/caregiver, their visa and any documents on past education experience if they have them. Ask which language they would like to speak and book an interpreter.

The enrolment interview and determining a student’s educational background

Follow school procedures for the interview and include these questions where appropriate. Note advice for use of on-site interpreters on page 53.

1. Where did you go to school?
2. How many schools have you been to? Did you attend schools in more than one country?
3. For how long did you attend each school? (What hours each day did you attend school? How old were you when you started school?)
4. Were there times when you had no schooling?
5. Did you attend school in a refugee camp?
6. Can you describe the subjects you learnt at school?
7. What language(s) did you learn in?

continued over
Procedure for ensuring relevant information is shared with school staff

1. The enrolment coordinator (SWC, Assistant Principal or transition coordinator) reads all enrolment forms and identifies and summarises the number and nature of students with refugee needs at each year level by using visa codes and other enrolment information.

2. The enrolment coordinator informs classroom teachers of relevant student experiences and needs of all new enrolments at a staff meeting.

3. The enrolment coordinator/SWC maintains a confidential file on refugee students. The SWC discusses new enrolments with possible support needs at each Welfare Team Meeting (made up of visiting school psychologist, school social worker, integration coordinator, school nurse and teacher of principal class). Strategies for support and referrals (if necessary) can be discussed at this meeting. Follow-up discussions on student progress should occur until the student has settled in to the school. The file is maintained and passed to new teachers working with the specific students in the following terms and years.

4. The Welfare Team conducts a case meeting for classroom teachers of a particular student. Teachers are told about the particular learning or behavioural needs of the student and the best strategies to support that student. Teachers are also informed about the importance of debriefing; structures should be in place to provide for this process.

5. The Welfare Team coordinates invited speakers for the whole staff team, for example:
   - Multicultural Education Aides (MEAs) who may be able to speak about specific cultural groups
   - workers from refugee support organisations
   - members of local ethnic community groups
   - past students with refugee experience who may be interested in returning to their school and speaking to staff.

6. The enrolment coordinator/SWC coordinates workshops to support refugee students as part of a pastoral care or peer-support program.

Using information collected at enrolment

The information can be used in the following ways.

- Cultural and language background is used to help plan meaningful curriculum activities in some subjects as well as whole cultural celebration activities.

- Evidence of disrupted schooling is used to support proposals for transition programs and homework clubs within the school designed to support refugee students.

- The Welfare or Equal Opportunity Committees or Student Representative Council use this information to plan student support groups and activities.

- The Professional Development Coordinator uses the information to highlight appropriate training for staff to understand needs of new refugee groups and other issues that may arise to influence education.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Visa category</th>
<th>Visa No.</th>
<th>Context</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Refugee and Special Humanitarian Visas (permanent resident)</td>
<td>200, 201, 202, 203, 204</td>
<td>Holders of these visas applied and were granted their Humanitarian Entry Visas offshore. They are permanent residents upon arrival. People within this visa category may have lived in a war zone, experienced political persecution, torture or trauma and have probably been living in a refugee camp. The 204 Women at Risk Visa is issued to single women only. Women in this category who have children will have arrived as single parents (but may have re-united with their partner on shore).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Humanitarian Temporary Protection (3 and 5 years temporary resident) *</td>
<td>447, 449, 451</td>
<td>People with these visa numbers have applied for and were granted their Protection Visa offshore (e.g. in Indonesia). Upon arrival in Australia they are entitled to live in the general community for the duration of the visa. In the main, this group of people have been identified as refugees according to the UNHCR definition. The specific visa number they receive depends on the particular circumstances upon application for a PV. Changes introduced by DIMIA in August 2004 allow holders of 447 and 451 visas to apply for a permanent visa provided they arrived in Australia before 27 August 2004 and meet other relevant criteria. If they arrived in Australia after 27 August 2004, the 447 visa is a 3-year TPV with the option to apply for a subsequent TPV (not entitled to apply for a PPV). The 451 visa is a 5-year TPV with the right to subsequently apply for PPV, which entails permanent residency.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Humanitarian Temporary Protection (3 years temporary resident) *</td>
<td>785, 786</td>
<td>In the main, this group of people have been identified as refugees according to the UNHCR definition, but they are given only temporary protection until the situation in their homeland improves. They are entitled to apply for a subsequent PV but not for a PPV. People with a 785 visa number arrived in Australia without valid documents and applied for protection upon arrival. They have most likely been in detention in Australia since immediately after arrival. Once their application has been approved they are released to live in the general community. Changes introduced by DIMIA in August 2004 allow holders of 785 visas to apply for a permanent visa provided they arrived in Australia before 27 August 2004 and meet other relevant criteria. The 786 visa category (temporary safe haven) provides temporary protection only. People with this visa have not been detained and live in the general community.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bridging Visa (temporary resident)</td>
<td>010, 020, 030, 040, 041, 050, 051</td>
<td>People who arrived in Australia on a temporary visa, e.g. Visitor or Student Visa, and subsequently apply for another visa, are issued a Bridging Visa while the second visa is being considered. Holders of Bridging Visas can live in the general community whilst awaiting the granting of another visa. This can include some people who are seeking a Protection Visa.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Family Reunion Migrants (permanent resident)</td>
<td>100, 101, 102, 103, 105, 114, 115, 117</td>
<td>People who hold a visa from the family reunion category (Spouse 100, Child 101, Adopted child 102, Parent 103, Skilled Australia linked 105, Orphaned relative 117) applied and were granted their visas off shore. This category may include people who have had a ‘refugee-like’ experience, which may be identified by asking the country of origin and stages of their journey to Australia.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Family Reunion Onshore applicants (permanent resident)</td>
<td>801, 802, 803, 804, 831, 832, 835, 837, 838</td>
<td>Holders of these visas applied and were granted their family reunion visas inside Australia. As above, this category may include people who have had a ‘refugee-like’ experience, which may be identified by asking the country of origin and stages of their journey to Australia.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Permanent Protection (permanent resident)</td>
<td>866</td>
<td>People who hold an 866 visa were identified as refugees, were issued a PPV and are permanent residents. They arrived in Australia with valid documents and applied for a PPV. They were issued a BV (see above) and lived in the community until their application was approved.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Sources: DIMIA Fact Sheets 62 (Assistance for Asylum Seekers in Australia) and 65 (New Humanitarian Visa System); Australian Lawyers for Human Rights Refugee Law Kit 2003, Fact Sheets 1, 2: http://www.alhr.asn.au/refugeekit/
*For changes introduced by DIMIA in August 2004 refer to Fact Sheet 64b (Reintegration Package for TP, THV and Return Pending Visa Holders), 64d (New Onshore Visa Options for TPV and THV Holders) and associated Questions and Answers paper: www.immi.gov.au/settle/providers/service_providers_vic.htm.
5.2 Supporting students in transition

Section 2 of this Guide explored the many transitions in the life of a refugee student, both before and after arrival in Australia. The consequences for refugee students of transition may include:

- anxiety
- loss of self-esteem and confidence
- a feeling of lack of control and absence of social anchor points
- an absence of safety
- frustration and loneliness
- an inability to make sense of academic content.

When a refugee student experiences a poor school transition, and this is added to the other demands and barriers that all students face, significant problems can result, such as conflict within the family and non-attendance at school. Schools can play a major role in easing the student’s educational transitions, through implementing appropriate policies and practices. It is essential that the student is well informed about the school, including its expectations and support structures. Sections 6 and 7 look at ways in which the school can promote an inclusive environment for the students, and it is important that such processes are embedded in school programs and policies to ensure the refugee student feels valued from the start.

Liaison between English Language and mainstream schools can smooth the transition between schools. Student mentors and buddies who are trained in refugee issues and communication, or who themselves are refugee students who have settled into mainstream schooling, can welcome and ease entry for new students. A special orientation program might be provided to address refugee concerns (see Section 7.2 for advice on transition and orientation programs).

The inclusive nature of a school can be promoted through ongoing programs, thereby easing transition points. Through access and equity policies, the school can ensure that refugee students have equitable access to school resources, including teacher time, counsellors, welfare coordinators, interpreters, MEAs and ESL teachers. Curriculum and school events can also encourage a feeling of inclusion.

Language schools/centres and mainstream schools working together

Language schools and language centres are important sources of student information and strategies to support refugee children.
Supporting refugee students: Professional development day

The Blackburn ELS invited teachers from local primary and secondary schools to attend a professional development day on the needs of refugee students. Representatives from VFST and the ESL Unit at DE&T presented information on refugee experiences, effects on learning and strategies to support students in schools. This training day allowed teachers to establish links with their feeder language school and discuss transition issues, as well as providing the opportunity for students to meet the teachers from their future mainstream school.

Mainstream primary and secondary schools will be aware of any refugee student who has enrolled directly after arrival in Australia without accessing a language school. These schools must ensure that they have procedures in place to access English language school outreach coordinators, out-posting services and New Arrival Kits (funded by DE&T).

CASE STUDY

and young people as they enter mainstream schooling. These feeder schools provide an exit report for students enrolling in mainstream schools. Networks between schools should be developed to provide ongoing communication about student needs and strategies. Mainstream schools should have orientation days to welcome language school students. Professional development days with teachers from the feeder schools and the mainstream school can facilitate discussions on strategies for refugee students and allow a dialogue to begin between teachers of individual students to ensure a smoother transition process. The transition coordinator in ELS/Cs can assist with this process.

Mainstream primary and secondary schools will be aware of any refugee student who has enrolled directly after arrival in Australia without accessing a language school. These schools must ensure that they have procedures in place to access English language school outreach coordinators, out-posting services and New Arrival Kits (funded by DE&T).

ESL index funding

English as a Second Language index funding is provided to government schools to provide ESL programs and support. In 2004 students were required to meet the following criteria before being eligible for this funding:

• The main language at home is not English.
• Students have been enrolled in an Australian school for less than 7 years.

Schools should implement policy and programs to ensure that this funding is used to directly support their ESL students.
5.3 Interpreters, translations and Multicultural Education Aides

Working with interpreters

Many newly arrived refugee students and parents do not speak English. Therefore, schools need to book on-site or telephone interpreters for the enrolment interviews. The use of family, friends or untrained personnel as interpreters risks compromising confidentiality and the possibility of incorrect translation.

According to the Department of Education and Training, ‘all government schools are able to provide access to interpreting and translating services free of charge. This service for parents of students from non-English speaking backgrounds enables schools to provide interpreters for parent–teacher interviews and information sessions. Schools are also able to use the service to translate school notices’ (Department of Education 2003). For more information visit www.sofweb.vic.edu.au/lem/esl/einter.htm

Confidentiality is part of a professional interpreter’s code of ethics. Optimal communication reduces anxiety as well as facilitating the meeting or interview. Before booking an interpreter, establish the preferred language of the parent or guardian and the preferred gender and ethnicity of the interpreter (whether you are utilising a telephone interpreting service or an on-site interpreter).

It is important that your school develop a policy on the use of interpreters and train all school staff in booking and working with interpreters. The policy should also ensure that parents and students are informed about the availability of interpreters provided by the school should they require them (for parent–teacher interviews or at the time of enrolment).
Tips for using on-site interpreters

1. Arrange seating to facilitate communication between yourself and the parent/guardian and student. The ideal seating arrangement is a triangle, with participants at equal distances from each other, so that eye contact can be maintained at all times (if culturally appropriate).

2. Introduce everyone and establish roles.

3. Avoid private discussions with the interpreter.

4. Speak directly to the parent or student, on first-person terms.

5. Use short sentences.

6. Speak slowly and clearly but naturally. Avoid jargon if possible and do not raise your voice.

7. Allow the interpreter to translate in regular and short intervals.

8. If you feel that the interpreter and parent/guardian/student are speaking together and excluding you to the extent that you are not establishing communication with them, you should stop the interview. Restate the ground rules and start again.

9. Summarise your discussion periodically throughout the interview to ensure shared understanding of what is being said.

Multicultural Education Aides

For schools with a refugee student population, Multicultural Education Aides (MEAs) are another form of support. MEAs can usually speak a number of community languages and usually have an intimate knowledge of one or two cultural groups represented at your school (MEAs are usually from refugee or migrant backgrounds themselves). Their skills can be used in the following ways:

- providing cultural advice and information to other school personnel
- providing bilingual support for teachers and students in the classroom
- translating school notices and letters to parents
- acting as a cultural bridge for students
- assisting parents in their contact with the school.

MEAs are an invaluable resource to schools, particularly because of their wealth of knowledge that they can share with teachers and other school staff in relation to the refugee experience, the ongoing traumas associated with that experience and, more generally, the cultural backgrounds of refugee students.

Where possible, avoid using MEAs as interpreters. Students may reveal delicate personal information or confidential matters that could compromise both the MEA and the student (particularly if they are likely to be from the same cultural background as the student, or even from a rival clan or cultural group). Interpreters, on the other hand, while often from the same cultural background, are bound by a code of ethics (see previous section).
Translated information
There is a vast amount of translated information available to schools in a range of community languages. The DE&T website [www.sofweb.vic.edu.au/lem/esl/multi.htm](http://www.sofweb.vic.edu.au/lem/esl/multi.htm) contains a series of 29 translated school notices in 21 community languages including Albanian, Arabic, Bosnian, Khmer/Cambodian, Chinese, Croatian, Filipino/Tagalog, Greek, Italian, Macedonian, Persian, Polish, Russian, Samoan, Serbian, Somali, Spanish, Tamil, Tongan, Turkish and Vietnamese.

School notices available from the DE&T website

- Information regarding parent participation
- Participation in parent–teacher meeting
- Special events
- Prep intake
- Day excursion
- Parent–teacher meeting regarding school camps
- Notification of a school camp
- List of items required on a school camp
- Permission to attend school camp
- End of term
- No school
- Education maintenance allowance (EMA)
- Collection of education maintenance allowance
- Travel concession and cards
- Exit from English Language Schools/Centres
- Transition
- Medical condition
- Immunisation records
- Fees and levies
- Student absence
- Swimming program
- Student safety
- Consent form – head lice inspection
5.4 Professional development for staff

Professional development is important for all staff who deal with refugee students and their parents, including reception, administrators, ancillary staff, classroom teachers, school nurses, welfare coordinators and MEAs. Professional development will raise awareness of refugee issues, the teacher’s role in promoting recovery from trauma and strategies for addressing barriers to learning presented by the refugee experience.

It is important to provide information and professional development around refugee issues to new staff members at the time of their induction.

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**South Sudanese Curriculum Day**

A professional development session was organised at one school about the South Sudanese community. It was initiated after teachers from the school experienced difficulties with young people from this newly arrived community. The session was held on a school curriculum day. The event was organised and run with the assistance of the school’s South Sudanese MEA. An information resource was developed by VFST. The workers also provided a list of local referral points. The day was such a success that the school organised another professional development day, this time with all schools in the region. Below is an excerpt from the flyer for the program.

‘About South Sudanese Students’

_The workshop_

This workshop will address the cultural, social, education and settlement issues associated with the rapidly growing numbers of South Sudanese students entering local schools.

_The speakers_

- Victorian Foundation for Survivors of Torture
- South Sudanese Multicultural Aides from the English Language School
- ESL and Literacy Teacher from the English Language School

_The audience_

Principals, Assistant Principals, Welfare and ESL Coordinators, teachers and other professionals working with South Sudanese students and parents/guardians.
Some ideas for professional development

- Provide information on the refugee experience, including the trauma reaction and the process of recovery.
- Provide information on refugee health and welfare.
- Provide information about effective methods of gathering information at the time of enrolment.
- Invite guest speakers to staff meetings, e.g. workers from refugee support agencies, representatives from the communities to speak about their history and culture, local youth workers to talk about their programs.
- Consider strategies for teachers on vicarious traumatisation.
- Provide cultural background information on the key refugee communities represented in the school.
- Inform and support staff in the development and use of school procedures related to refugee students.
- Develop and ensure effective implementation of school policies that actively support the welfare and educational needs of refugee children and young people, e.g. antiracism, antibullying, welfare, crisis-management, attendance and parent policies.
- Support the effective use of MEAs.
- Ensure that professional development includes strategies for debriefing.

Professional development activities may take a range of forms including:
- formal professional development sessions
- information sessions at staff meetings
- mentoring
- resource development for teachers
- role-playing, e.g. of conducting meetings with refugee parents/guardians with teachers participating
- provision of information and literature
- support and advice from outside agencies
- upskilling for teachers on peer support and debriefing
- advice from MEAs.

RESOURCES

Literacy strategies for students with disrupted learning, including refugees

The Department of Education and Training has developed a four-unit professional development program including a video to provide ESL teachers with strategies for students with disrupted schooling: Moving in new directions: Literacy strategies for ESL learners with disrupted schooling (DE&T 2004).

The modules are:
1. The backgrounds of ESL students with acute literacy needs, monitoring and communication strategies
2. Literacy and ESL
3. Connecting with the curriculum
4. Developing and extending learner pathways from Prep to Year 12

The video offers practical strategies for developing literacy needs in two 30-minute programs.
Professional development on refugee-focused classroom strategies
This is an example of professional development provided by the VFST through the Rainbow Group Program. The program outlined below involves two 1.5-hour sessions.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Session</th>
<th>Title</th>
<th>Time required</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Session 1</strong></td>
<td><strong>Understanding the refugee experience and its impact on children and families</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Who is a refugee?</td>
<td>10 min</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Refugees in Australia/Identifying refugees in the school community</td>
<td>10 min</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Events characteristic of the refugee experience</td>
<td>15 min</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>The psychosocial impact of the refugee experience</td>
<td>20 min</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>The effect of trauma on children and the family</td>
<td>20 min</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Trauma and the resettlement process</td>
<td>15 min</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Session 2</strong></td>
<td><strong>Recovery goals and strategies</strong></td>
<td>60 min</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Recovery goals and strategies in the classroom and school context</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td><strong>Workers’ reactions to dealing with trauma</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Workers’ reactions</td>
<td>10 min</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Detecting and preventing burnout</td>
<td>10 min</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**CASE STUDY**

Refugee Readiness Audit:
Section 5

Having examined the material contained in this section, please fill out the Refugee Readiness Audit. The questions in the Audit reflect the issues, examples and ideas discussed in this section. As you read through sections 6–9 of the Guide, you will find subsequent versions of the Audit addressing the material in each of those sections. For more information on filling out the Audit, go to Section 4.2.
## Section 5: Refugee Readiness Audit

### School policies and practices

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>The enrolment process</th>
<th>Yes</th>
<th>No</th>
<th>Review</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>5.1 Do you use enrolment as an opportunity to welcome new refugee students and their families to the school?</td>
<td>☐</td>
<td>☐</td>
<td>☐</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5.2 Do you collect information at enrolment about new refugee students such as country of origin, education history and visa category?</td>
<td>☐</td>
<td>☐</td>
<td>☐</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5.3 Do you collect reports and information from feeder ELS/Cs regarding new enrolments?</td>
<td>☐</td>
<td>☐</td>
<td>☐</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5.4 Do you enable relevant teaching staff to access this information so they may be better informed particularly about the needs and issues of refugee students?</td>
<td>☐</td>
<td>☐</td>
<td>☐</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5.5 Do you have systems in place to enable and encourage teachers to access this information?</td>
<td>☐</td>
<td>☐</td>
<td>☐</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### Supporting students in transition

| 5.6 Has your school developed a comprehensive process to ensure successful transition of students between your school and feeder schools? | ☐ | ☐ | ☐ |
| 5.7 Does your school run an orientation program to welcome new students? | ☐ | ☐ | ☐ |
| 5.8 Does your school involve current students in orientation programs? | ☐ | ☐ | ☐ |
| 5.9 Do refugee students have equitable access to school resources, including teacher time, counsellors, welfare coordinators, interpreters, MEAs and ESL teachers? | ☐ | ☐ | ☐ |
| 5.10 Has your school established policies to ensure that refugee students know about school resources? | ☐ | ☐ | ☐ |
| 5.11 Does your school enable and support refugee students to access these resources? | ☐ | ☐ | ☐ |
| 5.12 Does your school access ESL index funding to support ESL eligible students? | ☐ | ☐ | ☐ |
| 5.13 Does your school ensure the ESL index funding is used to support the learning needs of ESL students? | ☐ | ☐ | ☐ |

### Interpreters, translations and MEAs

| 5.14 Do you use on-site interpreters? | ☐ | ☐ | ☐ |
| 5.15 Do you use telephone interpreters? | ☐ | ☐ | ☐ |
| 5.16 Do you have a system for booking on-site interpreters? | ☐ | ☐ | ☐ |
| 5.17 Do you ask students and parents about preferred gender and ethnicity of interpreters prior to booking? | ☐ | ☐ | ☐ |
| 5.18 Does your school have a policy on use of interpreters? | ☐ | ☐ | ☐ |
| 5.19 Are staff trained in working with interpreters? | ☐ | ☐ | ☐ |
| 5.20 Have you accessed the translated material on the DE&T website? | ☐ | ☐ | ☐ |
| 5.21 Does your school utilise MEAs to support and inform staff about refugee issues including country/culture-specific information? | ☐ | ☐ | ☐ |

### Professional development for staff

| 5.22 Does your school have professional development for all staff who interact with refugee students? | ☐ | ☐ | ☐ |
| 5.23 Do you involve other personnel in the school such as reception staff and MEAs in professional development activities? | ☐ | ☐ | ☐ |
| 5.24 Are your welfare staff well informed about refugee issues? | ☐ | ☐ | ☐ |
| 5.25 Does your school have specific professional development for school personnel who teach curriculum related to refugees and cultural diversity? | ☐ | ☐ | ☐ |
| 5.26 Has your school developed a support policy for staff working with refugee students? (see Section 3) | ☐ | ☐ | ☐ |
6.1 Curriculum review

An important aspect of improving your school’s capacity to effectively meet the needs of your refugee students is to review and update the content of your curriculum to increase understanding of refugee issues among the non-refugee student body. An appropriate curriculum can also provide direct support and opportunities for recovery for refugee students. It is useful to set up structures within your school that will enable you to bring together relevant staff in order to review and reflect on the curriculum program (see Section 7.2 for more discussion of appropriate school structures).

Curriculum and teaching resources can play an important role in supporting refugee students. This section focuses on the formal and informal curriculum content and additional support programs offered to the student population of the school. It also addresses ways to promote harmony, diversity, social connectedness and resilience through curriculum programs.

An examination of curriculum offerings at the senior secondary level could consider vocational education and training and/or VCAL. VCAL is a senior secondary qualification that broadens the options available to students in years 11 and 12. It is designed for students whose needs are not met by the traditional VCE program.

In the context of working with refugee students, key objectives of the curriculum should include the following.

For all students:
- cultural diversity, human rights, harmony and the effect of racial discrimination
- backgrounds and journeys of refugees
- the issues associated with settlement and the impact this might have on the refugee student
- positive contributions made by refugees to the community.
Curriculum tips for schools

- Provide students with an age-appropriate political understanding of the causes of war and refugee experiences to allay misconceptions and provide a framework for events in their own lives.
- Teach students about cultural diversity and cross-cultural harmony.
- Teach refugee students about their new country and its culture.
- Encourage refugee students to express their thoughts and feelings in written forms, e.g. diary writing.
- Provide opportunities for refugee students to process what has happened through visual art, story telling, drama and role-playing.
- Include modules on human rights and refugees within the school curriculum.
- Develop links with community agencies and undertake joint activities, such as peer-support programs, Kaleidoscope and Rainbow programs.
- Include modules which teach refugee students about health and wellbeing by using resources that have been developed for this purpose (e.g. see description of VFST’s HealthWize).
- Enable students who may have a low level of English literacy to have other forms of expression in the classroom context such as drama, drawing and painting.
VFST has developed curriculum resources that incorporate inclusive teaching strategies for the whole classroom based on successful group practices working with refugees (http://www.foundationhouse.org.au/publications.php).

**VFST general classroom resources**

*Kaleidoscope for the Classroom (2004)*

This ten-lesson unit is adapted for the mainstream classroom from the Kaleidoscope program initially targeted to young refugees aged 12–24 years. Suitable for years 7–10, this program is designed to increase students’ understanding of their own cultural background and the diversity of other cultural backgrounds in their classroom. It aims to break down social isolation, alienation and dislocation. Activities explore identity issues, promote an understanding of emotions and their influence on health and help develop trust and belonging through inclusive teaching approaches. This resource is suitable for CSF2 HPE levels 5 and 6 and National Goals for Schooling.


This eleven-lesson unit aims to develop attitudes and behaviours that promote human rights. The unit promotes participants’ understandings of the experiences and aspirations of refugees and asylum seekers in Australia. Targeted at the upper primary and middle secondary level, it is suitable for SOSE and HPE CSF2 outcomes but is a program that can work across all key learning areas to foster harmonious relationships and social connections between new arrivals and the wider student body.

6.2 Specific programs for refugee students

Programs for refugee students should incorporate a range of recovery strategies as outlined in Section 4. Classroom environment and teaching approaches are as important as program content to facilitate recovery, develop skills and set personal goals for the future. VFST has developed two early intervention group programs and a health literacy program designed for refugee students soon after their arrival in Australia.
VFST group programs for recently arrived refugee students

Group Program 1: The Rainbow Program (9–12 year olds and their families)

Produced by the VFST in 2002, the Rainbow Program for Children in Refugee Families is a school-based approach to providing support to refugee children and their families (http://www.foundationhouse.org.au/publications.php). It is an early intervention measure designed for delivery to children and their families soon after their arrival. The main aim of the Rainbow Program is to make a positive contribution to the settlement of children from refugee backgrounds.

Designed by the VFST in close collaboration with a number of schools and DE&T, the program is usually offered with the support of a counselling agency working with people from refugee backgrounds. The Rainbow Program is targeted at children aged 9–12 years attending ELS/Cs or mainstream schools with a significant enrolment of new arrival families. There are seven sessions, three of which include parents.

The program has three integrated components:

A. A core children's component recognising the importance of children's own understanding and personal skills and attributes in the settlement process

B. A component for parents that seeks to establish links with the school, provide an opportunity for parents to learn about their children's settlement experience and share any concerns they might have about their settlement in the new school

C. A teacher professional development component, the aim of which is to enhance a teacher's capacity to provide a supportive environment for refugee children and their families

The Rainbow Guide consists of five parts:

1. Background reading for teachers and counsellors facilitating the children’s and parents’ programs. It explores the impact of the refugee and settlement experiences on both children and their families

2. Information required for planning and implementing the program in a school community

3. Session outlines for each of the three components

4. Resources such as overheads, PowerPoint slides and CD-Rom for the teacher component

5. Additional support material
VFST group programs for recently arrived refugee students (cont.)

Group Program 2: The Kaleidoscope: Cultures and Identity Program (14–24 year olds)

The Kaleidoscope: Cultures and Identity Program (1996) is a six-session group program designed by the VFST for young refugees aged 14–24 years and currently in secondary school. The program seeks to:

• explore the impact of living in a new culture
• break down social isolation, alienation and dislocation
• build trust, bonding and an understanding of others
• promote self-esteem and identity
• integrate past experiences and build a vision of the future.

The program has three integrated components:

1. The first component seeks to break down social isolation resulting from previous trauma experiences through the restoration of trust and the acquisition of communication skills.

2. The second component aims to promote the development of self-identity through the integration of past experiences, and promoting an understanding of their influences on the present and on young people’s view of the future.

3. The third component seeks to identify emotions that influence everyday behaviour and to look at ways to deal with distressing emotions as well as to enhance emotions that promote wellbeing.

The Kaleidoscope Program provides a setting in which trust and communication can develop. It is a useful way for participants to discover that they are not alone and that others share some of their beliefs and feelings. Each individual is given the opportunity to talk about their past experiences, their present concerns and their view of the future in a variety of ways.
VFST literacy resource for the classroom

HealthWize – A health literacy teaching resource for refugee and other ESL students

HealthWize (http://www.foundationhouse.org.au/publications.php) is a teaching resource developed by VFST in partnership with a number of schools, and targeted at newly arrived young people from refugee backgrounds aged 12–18 years attending ELS/Cs. It was developed in response to the particular health issues faced by refugee students as a result of their refugee and resettlement experiences.

HealthWize uses language learning as a medium for refugee young people to develop health awareness and health literacy skills and teaches them how to access formal and informal health care and supports. HealthWize is also suitable for classes comprising other migrants and fee-paying international students as it has been designed for a whole-of-class approach.

The workbook specifically aims to:

• provide refugee young people with information about health services available to them
• enable young people to develop the skills in reading, writing, speaking and listening in English required to understand health issues and to access health and social support services
• increase refugee young people’s awareness of their own physical and mental health as well as improve their capacity to articulate mental and physical health issues
• enable refugee young people to learn about informal sources of support available to them to address health issues
• enhance young people’s ability and confidence to identify and access relevant formal sources of support through Australian health and social support systems (e.g. community health centres, settlement services, hospitals, counselling services and advocacy services)
• assist young people to develop an appreciation of the barriers they face in accessing health and support services and how these can be addressed.

The material is most suitable for students at Secondary 2 level or on the ESL companion to the English Curriculum Standard Framework 2. With modification and support, it could also be used for students at a lower level. The resource comprises eleven units requiring one or two school terms for teaching.

HealthWize consists of:

• a section for teachers detailing how to use the resource and providing information on the refugee experience, likely manifestations in students who have a refugee background and how to address these in the classroom
• a unit and activity overview
• teacher lesson plans
• student worksheets
• an audio tape containing the listening exercises
• useful resources: references, websites, web quests, videos.

The resource has been developed in the context of the Curriculum Standards Framework (CSF 2) for English as a Second Language but can also be used as a resource for health and physical education.

The resource can also be used in other teaching environments such as TAFE, mainstream schools with high numbers of refugee students and Adult Migrant English Services resource sheets.
Websites with links to school resources

**Australian**
Department of Education and Training, LOTE, ESL and Multicultural Education:

Human Rights and Equal Opportunity Commission

Global Education
http://www.globaleducation.edna.edu.au/globaled/go

Immigration Museum Victoria

Racism. No way! classroom activities

Rock and Water Program

Victorian Foundation for Survivors of Torture
http://www.foundaiionhouse.org.au

**International**

Amnesty International UK
http://www.amnesty.org.uk/education/index.shtml

Amnesty International USA
http://www.amnesty-volunteer.org/usa/education/educate.html

Doctors without borders/bracelet initiative
http://www.doctorswithoutborders.org/outreach/bol/

Amnesty UK and Ireland (Joint classroom initiative)
http://www.amnesty.org.uk/education/resources/index.shtml

Save the children/Peace education activities

Human rights resource centre/University of Minnesota, USA
http://erc.hrea.org/Library/

http://www.hrea.org/erc/Library/First_Steps/index_eng.html

A refugee camp in the city curriculum and virtual tour, Médecins Sans Frontières
http://www.msf.ca/refugeecamp/curriculum/index.htm

UNICEF online cartoons for human rights
http://www.unicef.org/crcartoons/flash.htm

A manual by youth to combat racism through education, United Nations Canada
http://www.unac.org/yfar/The_KIT.pdf

UNAC Refugees, A Canadian Perspective, Classroom activities
http://www.unac.org/learn/wrld/Refugees/FINAL%20ENGLISH%20GUIDE.pdf
6.3 Additional and alternative programs

Refugee children and young people will have received, at best, an interrupted education. The challenge for refugee students in learning to read, write and communicate in a new language competently enough to proceed through the primary and secondary school systems is very large. This is especially so for those students with no familiarity with English. In most cases, refugee students will require additional educational support to assist with language acquisition, content learning, homework, school and class procedures and routines.

Refugee Student Bridging Program

This program was developed by the Brunswick English Language Centre (BELC) and Brunswick Secondary College (BSC) based on the acknowledgement that most of the refugee students transiting from ELS/Cs to secondary colleges are not equipped to cope with the language and academic demands of secondary education. The length of time provided in ELSs (6–12 months) is insufficient for refugee students to learn English, familiarise themselves with new concepts and make up missed schooling. It was evident that students required additional literacy support if they were to succeed in secondary education or other vocational pathways.

Brunswick Secondary College entered into a partnership with the AMES literacy program for young adults. The VFST Counsellor Advocate convened a series of planning meetings between the BELC, BSC and AMES, which resulted in the development and piloting of the Bridging Program. The Program provided an additional year of teaching for Year 10 students with a focus on numeracy and literacy and introduction of academic subjects. Close contact was established with parents to familiarise them with the education system and discuss educational pathways for their children. After completion of the program, students could transit into Year 10, enrol in a secondary college providing VCAL or pursue other educational pathways such as TAFE.

The following issues should be considered when developing a bridging program.

- Establish a steering committee to develop, guide and review the program.
- Select students carefully for participation in the project.
- Provide for intensive parent contact to ensure students are supported by their families throughout the process.

In seeking to provide further educational support to refugee students, schools have developed an array of additional and alternative methods, often in collaboration with outside services, to further assist their students. Examples of the most common methods developed include:

- after-school homework support programs
- one-on-one tuition programs
- computer, homework and reading clubs
- intensive literacy and computer courses conducted within the school program during elective classes
- bridging programs

CASE STUDY

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The following issues should be considered when developing a bridging program.

- Establish a steering committee to develop, guide and review the program.
- Select students carefully for participation in the project.
- Provide for intensive parent contact to ensure students are supported by their families throughout the process.
Your school may wish to set up similar programs to support student needs. The most effective strategies to commence this process would be:

- contact the School-Focused Youth Service (SFYS) or Local Learning and Employment Network (LLEN) contact for your school
- contact a service agency currently working with young refugees in your school or in the local area
- contact other schools with refugee student populations and find out what programs they are running.

**CASE STUDY**

**Homework support**

One school set up an after-school homework support program through the aid of outside agency workers co-located at the school. Teaching staff and the community workers developed a program in which two paid tutors, supervised by a teacher, would provide two sessions of homework support per week for interested refugee students. The community workers paid the tutors via a small grants program operated by the local council. The program was well attended and continues to be offered at the school.

**ESL student teachers**

In a variation on this program, another school eliminated the need for payment through an arrangement with a local teacher training college in which final year ESL teaching students were encouraged to spend a term with the homework support program as a component of their final year assessment. This arrangement also required a qualified teacher to supervise the session.

**Victorian Certificate of Applied Learning**

The Victorian Certificate of Applied Learning (VCAL) is a senior secondary qualification which broadens the options available to students in years 11 and 12. It is designed for students whose needs are not met by the traditional VCE program. AMES is developing a model designed for young refugees with interrupted schooling. The four units have a heavy literacy and numeracy focus, with other topics providing outcomes that assist students to learn about government systems in Australia, basic science and workplace skills.

For further information, contact AMES, Level 3, 255 William St, Melbourne, telephone (03) 9926 4717. Website: www.ames.vic.edu.au
After-school activities

Many schools have also organised after-school activities designed in an early intervention context, to provide additional support to newly arrived children and young people during the early years of resettlement. These activities are social as well as educational and can include after-school sport and recreation programs, social clubs, computer and cooking clubs and even mechanics, woodwork and drama courses. These activities seek to build self-esteem and social connection and encourage participation and engagement in supervised social activities.

In a similar way to the additional educational support programs, the best way to set up these activities is to make contact with other schools that have already trialled these programs, access funds through the LLEN or SFYS program or enlist the aid of local service agencies, sports clubs, YMCAs or project workers already based in your school.

After-school sport and recreation program

One ELS developed an after-school sport and recreation program for their refugee students. The underlying philosophy of the program was that through increased participation in sporting and recreational activities, young people could improve not only their physical and mental health but also their ‘social health’. These program goals were realised through strategies designed to increase the social connectedness of young people with their families, friends, schools and local communities.

The program achieved these aims through the following means:

- linking secondary students from the ELS with after-school activities and programs during the school holidays
- increasing student awareness of the location of sport and recreation stadiums and venues (including travelling with students on public transport to the venue)
- linking students to local sporting clubs, junior competitions and their local community
- increasing students’ knowledge and confidence to use these sport and recreation programs during and after their stay at the ELS.

Throughout the life of the program, students participated in a variety of activities including soccer, volleyball, basketball, aerobics and teen fitness (Francis 2003).
6.4 Refugee Readiness

Audit: Section 6

Having examined the material contained in this section, please fill out the Refugee Readiness Audit. The questions in the Audit reflect the issues, examples and ideas discussed in this section. For more information on filling out the Audit, go to Section 4.2.

### SECTION 6: REFUGEE READINESS AUDIT

**School curriculum and programs**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Question</th>
<th>Yes</th>
<th>No</th>
<th>Review</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>6.1 Has your school undertaken a process of curriculum review and development with a view to incorporating refugee issues?</td>
<td>☐</td>
<td>☐</td>
<td>☐</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6.2 Does your curriculum provide opportunities for students to learn about refugees and cultural diversity?</td>
<td>☐</td>
<td>☐</td>
<td>☐</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6.3 Do you currently run any programs (such as HealthWize, Rainbow or Kaleidoscope) with the explicit aim of enhancing the social connectedness and wellbeing of your refugee students?</td>
<td>☐</td>
<td>☐</td>
<td>☐</td>
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<tr>
<td>6.4 Has your school developed a program of alternative or additional educational support for your refugee students?</td>
<td>☐</td>
<td>☐</td>
<td>☐</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6.5 Does your school offer after-school activities for your refugee students?</td>
<td>☐</td>
<td>☐</td>
<td>☐</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6.6 Have you sought funding for these programs?</td>
<td>☐</td>
<td>☐</td>
<td>☐</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6.7 Have you enlisted the support of local service providers or workers currently located at your school?</td>
<td>☐</td>
<td>☐</td>
<td>☐</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6.8 Have you collaborated with a local agency in order to undertake extracurricular support and activities for your refugee students?</td>
<td>☐</td>
<td>☐</td>
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</tbody>
</table>
Once you have read this section of the Guide, please fill out the Refugee Readiness Audit on page 84.

7.1 School structures: Refugee Welfare Committee

A useful way to best meet the needs of your refugee students is to create structures that enable you to strategically develop program and policy ideas as well as coordinate, review and evaluate activities. An effective structure of this type is the Refugee Welfare Committee. Smaller schools may incorporate this subcommittee into their student welfare committee.

A Refugee Welfare Committee may take on a number of roles depending on the size of the school, the size of the refugee student population and the particular needs of the refugee students. The primary roles played by such committees include:

- coordinating, reviewing and developing curriculum materials on refugee issues for inclusion in the broader teaching framework of the school
- coordinating professional development on refugee issues for school staff
- providing advice on effective strategies for working with refugee students to other members of the teaching and ancillary staff
- establishing referral protocols with outside agencies
- seeking information and advice on effective strategies for working with refugee students from outside agencies
- addressing the support needs of teachers working with refugee students
• coordinating additional educational support and after-school activities in relation to refugee students
• coordinating transition between schools
• providing advice on effective enrolment procedures for refugee students and their families
• ensuring effective flow of information in relation to critical data collected about individual students at the time of enrolment (particularly crucial in providing background information to teaching staff about the refugee students they are teaching)
• ensuring that on-site interpreters and translated materials are used in relation to refugee students and their families and that translated material is up to date
• regularly reviewing policies in relation to refugee students
• addressing welfare issues and processes that take into account the refugee experience.

CASE STUDY

Setting up a Refugee Welfare Committee

1. Organisation
One secondary college, with a co-located ELS/C, formed a Refugee Welfare Committee to support refugee young people and their parents. The impetus for the committee grew from the recognition that with such a large and ongoing intake of refugee students at both schools, some form of interschool collaboration and coordination was required. Rather than create a new structure, it was decided that every third meeting of the School Welfare Committee would be dedicated to refugee issues.

2. Role
The committee addresses welfare and discipline issues and develops processes that take into account the refugee experience. It reviews the curriculum, suggests new policy and programs in relation to refugee students, ensures that translated material is updated and liaises with outside agencies and relevant experts.

3. Membership
Membership of the committee should consist of a number of teachers with the relevant knowledge and skills to schedule meetings and coordinate with other teaching staff. It is also useful if a worker from an outside agency is also involved because they may organise outside expertise for the committee as well as for other activities such as professional development. Membership can include:

• secondary college Deputy Principal
• ELC Coordinator
• secondary college Year 10 Coordinator
• ESL/ELC Transitions Coordinator
• MEAs
• student careers support personnel
• a range of program and project staff from outside agencies such as VFST
• other interested teachers.
7.2 Transition and orientation

For refugee students, a new school can be a daunting environment, a place of risk, uncertainty and unfamiliarity. The size of the student population and the demanding academic environment of the school can overwhelm students. The consequences of the transition process for refugee students have been explained in Section 2, while Section 5 of the Guide provides advice for policies and procedures to better support students to deal with transition.

A welcome committee

Movement between school campuses and between schools at different stages of schooling can also be difficult for some students. Schools need to know in advance important information concerning the students and to have planned processes that welcome all newcomers into a socially supportive school community. (Department of Education 1999)

For refugees, settlement in Australia represents an ongoing set of adjustments to new and unfamiliar customs and systems. In this context, the first day at school is a particularly challenging experience and anything that schools can do to ease the fear and uncertainty of new refugee students will help the students and their families, as well as the schools. Welcoming new refugee students represents an excellent opportunity for schools to make a connection with students and their families, as well as to encourage the engagement, participation and attendance of students from the commencement of their school experience.

A welcome committee can involve members of the administration, teaching staff and school welfare workers. The committee would ensure that on-site interpreters are booked and that former students from the same cultural backgrounds greet the new arrivals. They would also ensure an up-to-date Welcome Handbook was available to guide the new students through orientation and transition.

Orientation days prior to enrolment

It is important to conduct an orientation day or days for students planning to enrol into mainstream schools. This allows the student to familiarise themselves with aspects of the schools and gives them time to prepare for the transition ahead. These days are vital for newly arrived young people who enrol directly into mainstream schools, to ease their transition.

Orientation Day

Orientation Day is held prior to the end of final term, enabling students to spend a few hours at the school they will attend in the following year. A bus is organised, and on the way to the new school, staff familiarise students with public transport options they may wish to utilise. A Welcome Committee made up of teaching staff and school welfare workers organises and coordinates the welcome to the school for the new students. The committee ensures that on-site interpreters are booked and that former students from the same cultural backgrounds greet the new arrivals. A tour of the school grounds and facilities helps students adjust to the new environment. Students are allocated to classes for a day, with a student buddy. They attend classes, meet their new teachers and get a feel for the new school.
First day at the new school

Ideas that have been implemented by schools in order to welcome new refugee students on their first day include:

- having older students from the same cultural backgrounds in the reception area to greet young people and their families when they arrive
- a multilingual welcome sign for the reception area of the school featuring a range of community languages while also inviting parents/guardians to ask for an interpreter if required

**CASE STUDY**

**Welcome Handbook**

One ELC has developed a Welcome Handbook for Parents & Guardians to give to students and their families on their first day at school. Developed by teachers and a VFST worker based at the school, the handbook has been translated into a number of community languages. The handbook contains the following sections:

- Welcome to the English Language Centre
- About the language centre
- Meet our staff
- The English language course
- Student progress and transition
- Communication with parents
- Food and nutrition
- A typical day at school
- Travel to school
- Financial assistance
- Supporting our students
- Student discipline
- Some useful local community services.

(Springvale English Language Centre 2003)

**Transition Kit**

Similar to the Welcome Handbook discussed above, a Refugee Welfare Committee from one ELC developed a Transition Kit, which was translated into a number of community languages for distribution to new refugee students. The Committee developed the idea in combination with VFST workers based at the school. Topics covered in the kit include:

- Who to talk to
- Settling into the secondary college
- What students learn at the college
- The school day – what happens during the school day
- Homework – why and how much
- Parents involvement at the school
- What to wear for school
- Getting on well together
- Staying healthy and happy at school
- Covering the cost of school.

(BSC-BELC Refugee Welfare Committee 2003)
• preparing translated material on school procedures, structures and expectations for students and their families. This could include school layout, subjects, timetables, extracurricular activities, homework expectations and exam requirements (see Section 5.3 for more information on translated material)
• booking a conference room and guiding new arrivals through information on school procedures, structures and expectations (with the aid of interpreters and translated material).
The transition process into a main school can take time. Schools need to ensure that strategies are in place to support students and their families over time. Refer to the box below for strategies to ease the process.

Using drama
One school developed a method of enhancing social connectedness and a feeling of dignity and purpose among its refugee student population (particularly those new to the school) by staging a drama production in which refugee students and students from the mainstream school population participated. This was viewed as a way of breaking down social barriers and building trust over a period of time.

Easing the transition process
• Place the student into classes on a gradual basis.
• Link the student with a classroom buddy, who speaks their first language if possible, in their first week.
• Give students time to settle into their new environment. There will be a lot of information, names, rules and systems to take in (all spoken in a second language).
• Ensure teachers can pronounce student names and get to know their students.
• Encourage parents to become part of the school community.
• Organise specific information sessions for parents using interpreters to outline school expectations including discipline and homework.
• Meet with new students on a formal or casual basis to see how they are finding their new school. This process can also provide valuable feedback for the school.
• Organise for students to pay a return visit to their ELS/C.
7.3 The school environment

The school environment is fundamental in supporting multiculturalism, diversity and harmony. Consider the following options:

Affirming diversity within the school

Students differ widely in their abilities, cultural and language backgrounds, interests, experiences and preferred learning styles. This diversity needs to be acknowledged, valued and incorporated in all school programs and activities. Opportunities to succeed are best provided when teachers:

- encourage students to understand themselves and others
- recognise the diversity among students and in relation to their family circumstances and cultural backgrounds
- acknowledge individual learning styles and interests. (Department of Education 1999)

The cultural environment: multiculturalism, diversity and harmony

Reflecting the culturally diverse composition of contemporary Australian society, it is appropriate that schools are at the forefront of promoting harmony, peace and empowerment among students of all cultural backgrounds. Schools represent a critical space within which the guiding principles and values of Australian multiculturalism may be conveyed and adopted. These principles state that:

All members of our society:

- must have equal opportunity to realise their full potential
- must have equal access to programs and services
- should be able to maintain his or her culture without prejudice or disadvantage
- should be encouraged to understand and embrace other cultures. (Jupp 2002)

Promoting an inclusive cultural environment

There a number of ways to encourage and engender a diverse and inclusive cultural environment among the student population:

- encouraging an ownership of, and responsibility to demonstrate, multicultural principles by all students
- presenting multicultural perspectives in the curriculum across all learning areas
- making culturally appropriate food such as halal meats available in your school canteen
- creating a quiet prayer or relaxation space for refugee students
- acknowledging and celebrating significant cultural and religious occasions
- involving students in painting or constructing a mural or making a sculpture celebrating diversity
- encouraging students to create a photography exhibition
- constructing a peace garden
- using role play and drama to develop empathy for others (one school class constructed a ‘refugee camp’ in which students lived for a short period to gain a brief insight into the refugee experience)
- allowing variations in the school uniform to cater for religious and cultural practices (e.g. for female Muslim students to wear head coverings and long sleeves with their uniform)
- running girls- and boys-only groups for certain physical education, sport and health topics.
Australian multiculturalism

The term Australian multiculturalism sums up the way we address the challenges and opportunities of our cultural diversity. It accepts and respects the rights of all Australians to express and share their individual cultural heritage within an overriding commitment to Australia and its democratic framework.

It also specifically refers to the strategies, policies and programs designed to:
- make Australia more responsive to the rights, obligations and needs of our culturally diverse population
- promote social harmony in our society; and
- optimise the benefits of our cultural diversity for all Australians. (DIMIA 2004)

The following case studies provide examples of how to encourage and engender a diverse and inclusive cultural environment among the student population.

CASE STUDY

Peace Garden

The students and staff at Cabramatta High School recently created a ‘Peace Garden’ in the grounds of the school as a project designed to counteract the negative image portrayed in the media about the local community. The aims of the Peace Garden were to:
- act as a symbol of the importance of peace, tolerance and goodwill
- provide a place for discussion and contemplation
- remember those who had suffered from the trauma of war and conflict
- highlight the peaceful and harmonious community at the school
- help in the promotion of peace initiatives.

An important aspect of the creation of the Peace Garden was to empower refugee students. The students were consulted on all aspects of the concept including selection of plants and the multi-faith opening ceremony held to open the garden (Cabramatta High School 2002).

CASE STUDY

A multicultural school holiday policy

One school developed a school policy regarding cultural holidays. This included the establishment of a list of key cultural and religious holidays, and the development of a procedure for negotiating with families in relation to absence or release of students during cultural holidays or religious occasions.
Acknowledging and celebrating ‘days’ with particular cultural and religious meaning for refugee communities can be fulfilling events for the entire school population. Opportunities for holding such days include:

- Refugee Week (October)
- UN World Refugee Day (20 June)
- National Youth Week (March)
- Religious celebrations such as Eid (the celebration that occurs for all Muslims to mark the end of Ramadan), Chinese New Year and Easter
- International Day for the Elimination of Racial Discrimination (21 March)
- International Day of Peace (19 September)
- Human Rights Day (10 December)
- Harmony Day (this is a Department of Immigration and Multicultural and Indigenous Affairs (DIMIA) event held in March and designed to promote diversity and harmony).
- Celebrate the Cultural Diversity Week, a Victorian government initiative to promote diversity and eliminate racism.

For events such as Harmony Day Week there is funding available from relevant government departments (for more information go to www.immi.gov.au/multicultural/harmony/index.htm).

7.4 The classroom environment

The ideal classroom for all students including those with refugee experiences provides a predictable and safe environment that is engaging and stimulating, with clear goals, boundaries and consequences for inappropriate behaviour. Teachers should model the attitudes and behaviours that they expect from the students in their care. The school must ensure that there are mechanisms in the school for debriefing, mentoring and professional development to support teachers in this role (see sections 3 and 5.4).

In developing a supportive classroom environment you should consider common learning issues for refugee students with disrupted education:

- difficulty adjusting to different education styles (e.g. problem-solving as opposed to didactic and rote learning styles)
- needing to learn personal organisation skills for the first time, such as the use of a diary, bringing correct materials to class, folder organisation, use and care of equipment and time management
- being challenged by school routines such as punctuality, attendance, timetables, school notices
- needing to adjust to classroom expectations such as routines, participation, completion of work and tasks, listening, following instructions, sharing, taking turns, cooperating, group work (van Kooten-Prasad 2001a).

Creating an ideal classroom environment

Table 3.1 provides a detailed list of strategies for teachers to assist refugee students in overcoming blocks to learning caused by the effects of trauma. This list is comprehensive and can guide staff with ideas for a range of teaching approaches, means of communication, classroom rules, responsibilities and guiding principles.

Some issues for refugee learners

Silence is often a natural reaction to a new situation, and learning will still occur through listening and observation. It is important, however, to get communication occurring in some form. In any communicative interaction, the student will need thinking time to process information and formulate a response (adapted from South Australia Independent Schools Targeted Programs Authority Inc.).
Positive reinforcement
A simple strategy for creating an ‘ideal’ environment for refugee students is to utilise positive reinforcement:
- Encourage and recognise achievement.
- Use positive reinforcement strategies and give praise and encouragement for small gains.
- Celebrate gains with announcements, rewards, house-points and certificates.
- Avoid negative feedback.
- Highlight success stories.

Establishing positive relationships with refugee students in the classroom
Some ideas for establishing positive relationships with refugee students include the following:
- Acknowledge that students have experienced great difficulties.
- Model and encourage relationships that rebuild trust.
- Develop a good relationship with your student, perhaps through an understanding of their culture and the difficulties experienced by the student, and talking regularly with the student.
- Provide students with appropriate responsibilities to improve self-confidence and reduce disciplinary problems.
- Encourage and solve problems.
- Organise excursions and activities that are fun for all involved.

CASE STUDY

Empowering refugee young people
Enabling refugee students to explore their needs and concerns in a safe space is a useful way of establishing a positive relationship with refugee students. In one school, the VFST worker learned that refugee students were concerned about options within the school system and their limited capacity to negotiate their needs with the school administration.

The VFST worker convened a series of discussions with the students to explore their concerns and needs for support from the school. Once students were clear about their needs, relevant teachers were invited to a meeting and students presented their concerns, which included interest in receiving additional literacy support. As a result, the school introduced the bridging program outlined in Section 6 of the Guide.
Promoting academic development in the classroom

In order to provide refugee students with the optimum classroom environment for academic development, there are a number of strategies you can adopt:

- Set learning goals that accommodate the blocks to learning and participation caused by trauma.
- Focus attention and revisit frequently.
- Allow breaks to relieve fatigue.
- Give students time in order to consolidate new language skills and strategies.
- Encourage students to work with their parents/guardians on setting realistic goals for their education and career ambitions.
- Use activities promoted in the HealthWize teaching resource (see Section 6.2).

Promoting emotional development in the classroom

There are a number of ways to promote the emotional development of refugee students in the classroom (see sections 6.2 and 7.4):

- Encourage storytelling, journal-writing and writing in first language.
- Creating a supportive atmosphere (see Section 6.2).
- Utilise group programs such as Rainbow (primary) and Kaleidoscope (secondary) (see Section 6.2).
- Use the HealthWize teaching resource, which provides opportunities to talk about causes of stress and ways to cope (see Section 6.2).

Referral

Identifying and referring students at risk of emotional and behavioural difficulties is also crucial for a stable classroom environment. Where problems of anxiety, grief, depression, anger and distrust are persistent and severely disrupt the student’s capacity to attend classes, learn or participate, it may be necessary to refer to the VFST or another service.

To determine a student’s suitability for referral and their interest in obtaining further assistance, you need to make time to discuss the student’s problem. Teachers have expressed concern about conducting such a discussion, mainly because they anticipate hearing about difficulties that they can do nothing about, or they fear that it is intrusive to probe. The suggestions in the following advice box may be used in most situations to discuss problems sensitively and to ensure that undue responsibility is not taken for a student’s emotional reactions.

Rights and responsibility documents

Students come from different educational systems with different disciplinary procedures and behaviour codes. Therefore, you need to explain the expectations of the school in relation to student behaviour towards staff and other students. Contact with parents and guardians and counselling of students are important aspects of the approach. (Many schools work together with their students to formulate a rights and responsibility document.)
### Guide for discussing sensitive issues with refugee students

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Teacher role</th>
<th>Action</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Share observation</td>
<td>In a one-to-one setting, share with the student your observations about what you have noticed in the classroom, e.g. 'I have noticed that it seems difficult for you to concentrate in the classroom'.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Ask about the issue</td>
<td>Ask if what you have noticed has anything to do with the tasks being set, other students' behaviour or what you are doing. At this stage, the student may reveal their concern or indicate, in some way, such as saying they are fine, that they do not want to discuss it further. In this way, the student is given an opportunity to control the amount of self-disclosure.</td>
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<tr>
<td>3. Discuss</td>
<td>Should they indicate directly or indirectly that they do not want to discuss it, let them know that other students in the past have shown similar behaviour. Even if the discussion goes no further, it is an opportunity to convey that there can be difficulties for the newly arrived in the classroom situation, especially if they have experienced hardships before coming to Australia.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. Offer time to speak about the issue</td>
<td>Time can be offered to speak with them again, should there be anything that would make things easier in the classroom.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. Determine whether the issue can be solved in the classroom or outside</td>
<td>Should the student articulate the problem, determine whether it is something that can be solved in the classroom situation. If it is not a problem that can be solved in the classroom, see if they are interested in speaking to another person at school such as the SWC or to involve parents.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6. Is behaviour connected to a physical ailment?</td>
<td>In the case of young people, a student may not be interested in talking further about difficulties, but may be interested in receiving medical or dental assistance. This is best established by asking if the behaviour you have noticed in the classroom may be connected to any physical ailment. Whatever the response, you can enquire whether the student has a GP they can go to should they need to, and if not, appropriate information could be provided.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Discipline in the classroom

A whole-school discipline policy can encourage teachers to provide a consistent and appropriate response to discipline issues within the school environment. A discipline policy is one aspect of a broader whole-school student management structure and can be an integral part of prevention and early intervention strategies for students at risk. An effective discipline policy should operate as a means to identify students who may benefit from other student support structures within the school. This is particularly relevant for refugee students who are angry. Anger is part of the psychological response to traumatic events and is also a secondary reaction to the experience of anxiety, helplessness, loss, injustice and shame. Therefore it is important to explore the causes of anger. Different causes will require different responses.

7.5 Refugee Readiness Audit: Section 7

Having examined the material contained in this section, please fill out the Refugee Readiness Audit. The questions in the Audit reflect the issues, examples and ideas discussed in this section. For more information on filling out the Audit, go to Section 4.2.
### School organisation, ethos and the environment

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<thead>
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<th>School structures</th>
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</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>7.1 Does your school have a Refugee Welfare Committee made up of key school personnel and workers from outside agencies?</td>
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<tr>
<td>7.2 Does your committee meet regularly?</td>
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<tr>
<td>7.3 Does it have input into the sourcing and development of curriculum materials and teaching resources in relation to refugee issues?</td>
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<tr>
<td>7.4 Does the committee provide strategic advice on school policy in relation to issues affecting refugee students, such as settlement issues and education pathways?</td>
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<thead>
<tr>
<th>School environment</th>
<th>Yes</th>
<th>No</th>
<th>Review</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>7.5 Does your school acknowledge significant cultural and religious occasions?</td>
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<tr>
<td>7.6 Does the school have a quiet prayer/relaxation space for refugee students?</td>
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<tr>
<td>7.7 Does the school have programs that empower refugee students within the school community?</td>
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<tr>
<td>7.8 Are you familiar with your school policy on cultural diversity?</td>
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<tr>
<td>7.9 Are you familiar with your school policy on racism?</td>
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<tr>
<td>7.10 Has your school organised antiracism activities?</td>
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<tr>
<td>7.11 Has your school organised activities to celebrate the cultural diversity of the student population?</td>
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<tr>
<td>7.12 Has your school celebrated diversity and harmony through artistic or creative displays such as a mural or a ‘peace garden’?</td>
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<tr>
<td>7.13 Does your school celebrate or acknowledge any key cultural or religious holidays?</td>
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<td>7.14 Has your school run a Harmony Day activity or Diversity Week activity?</td>
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<tr>
<td>7.15 Is culturally appropriate food available in your school canteen?</td>
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<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Classroom environment</th>
<th>Yes</th>
<th>No</th>
<th>Review</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>7.16 Do staff members act as role models in their interaction with refugee students?</td>
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<tr>
<td>7.17 Have your staff received professional development in understanding refugee experiences and supportive classroom strategies?</td>
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<tr>
<td>7.18 Do teachers in your school implement strategies to create an supportive learning and cultural environment for their refugee students?</td>
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<tr>
<td>7.19 Do teachers in your school implement strategies to promote positive relationships with refugee students?</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>7.20 Do teachers in your school have a good understanding of the learning barriers experienced by refugee students?</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7.21 Does your school have support mechanisms for school personnel who interact with refugee students, such as debriefing or peer-support groups?</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7.22 Have you sought to gain an understanding of how refugee students feel about your school?</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7.23 Does your school have strategies in place seeking to address feedback provided by refugee students about issues such as lack of safety, fear and insecurity?</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
8 Partnerships with parents

This section of the Guide focuses on the relationship between schools and the parents and guardians of your refugee students. Establishing good communication and rapport with refugee parents and guardians is crucial to the educational success of the refugee students at your school.

Once you have read this section of the Guide, please fill out the Refugee Readiness Audit on page 90.

Home-school partnerships create opportunities for the development of shared understanding of learning. With this shared view, the students’ home and school experiences can be brought together to be built upon for further success in learning. (Department of Education 1999)

8.1 The importance of partnerships

Partnerships between schools and parents or guardians should encourage greater communication within families about the schooling experience. This will help refugee students understand the education system in Australia, the role played by teachers and the expectations on students, which can vary between schools. Depending on their educational experiences (or lack of experience) in their countries of origin, refugee students can encounter problems if effective communication is not established. Good communication must occur if schools and parents are to reach a mutual understanding of the expectations and needs of both parties. Some of the issues that may arise include:

- a lack of understanding by parents about the school’s requirements concerning academic tasks, including homework
- unrealistic expectations about the level of academic achievement possible for their children due to culturally determined beliefs in relation to education (e.g. many refugee parents believe that their children will be able to attend university)
- a belief that schools and teachers alone must deal with any problems that arise in relation to education
- a lack of understanding about school structures and systems (see Section 6.3 for more information)
- parents being unable to support their children as expected as they struggle with settlement tasks and the trauma associated with their refugee experiences.
Common issues for refugee parents

Good communication between refugee parents and the school can negate some of these misunderstandings and incorrect assumptions. This necessarily involves repeated contact and consultation. For refugee parents, learning about new school systems is an ongoing process. Parents and guardians need to be both informed and involved in the many aspects of school life to overcome some of the issues faced.

Teachers and community workers have said:

‘Parents have no way of knowing about the Australian education system.’

‘Parents can be fearful of the school environment.’

‘Many parents have never experienced school structures before and they don’t initially comprehend the importance of exams and homework.’

‘Many parents don’t understand the transition between English Language Schools/Centres and mainstream schools.’

‘Some parents are particularly anxious about their children moving to the mainstream school.’

‘Parents are concerned about the influence of Australian friends on their children.’

‘Some parents are worried that their children may become involved in drug use.’

8.2 Informing and consulting parents and guardians

It is important to keep parents and guardians informed at all stages of a student’s education. Creating a Welcome Handbook and conducting an orientation and information session on the first day (as noted in Section 7.2) is a first step. Regular information sessions for refugee parents, as an integrated part of any communication strategy, may also be useful.

Group sessions with refugee parents and guardians are a useful way for the school to communicate. They can be used to explore parent’s expectations and their aspirations for their children and for themselves as well as providing a forum for parents and guardians to be heard. This type of information sharing will encourage mutual understanding between your school and the families of your refugee students.

Other approaches to enhancing your relationship with refugee parents and guardians include providing parents with a list of key school staff to contact if the need arises. This should be updated each year.

CASE STUDY

Arabic parent information session

One school conducted an information session with a statewide Arabic Social Service organisation for parents from Arabic-speaking backgrounds. Over 70 parents attended and a range of topics was discussed including building bridges between the two cultures and how parents can support each other.
Resources available on drug education

Creating conversations
This program is funded by DE&T and is designed to encourage conversations between young people and their parents. The program uses the peer-education model where years 9 and 10 students facilitate an interactive parent meeting to have discussions about drug issues in Australia. The program allows for training of students in their first language to allow presentation to specific cultural groups. Languages include Arabic, Cambodian, Chinese, Macedonian, Somali, Turkish and Vietnamese. Manuals to guide schools through this process are available in English and the previously mentioned languages (http://www.sofweb.vic.edu.au/wellbeing/druged/creating.htm).

School Community Drug Forums
Under the National Drug Education Strategy, funding has been allocated to implement School Community Drug Forums. This funding allows schools to engage in discussion and consultation with their local community about drug-related student wellbeing. The forums aim to assist schools to develop partnerships with members of their local community. A manual contains advice to assist schools in organising a forum and includes suggested activities (http://www.sofweb.vic.edu.au/wellbeing/druged/forums.htm).

Topics for information sessions
- Welcome and orientation (school curriculum, policies and procedures)
- Transition to mainstream schools
- The Australian school system, curriculum and assessment
- Study skills for students
- The role of the family in supporting the student at school
- Challenging issues in society and how schools and families can support the student (racism, bullying, drugs)
- School issues workshop: Provide interpreters to run small-group discussions to allow parents to share concerns and ideas and to develop a better understanding of school issues
- Post compulsory options such as VCAL, Vocational Education and Training in Schools (VETIS) (including school-based apprenticeships), VCE
8.3 Involving parents and guardians

Given the potential time involved, many schools put the involvement of refugee parents and guardians in the ‘too-hard basket’. However, if the school is proactive, parents of refugee students will become a crucial part of the school culture and be included in support structures such as school council, social and cultural events and the canteen and fundraising initiatives. As many schools have found, simply mailing notices to refugee families does not work. There is a range of strategies that have been successfully trialled in school settings that are designed to encourage participation by refugee parents and guardians in school meetings. These strategies are included in Table 8.1.

Parent information session

One ELC held an information session for parents from four small language groups. The session focused on welcoming refugee students to the Centre and providing parents with a forum for discussion. The aim of the session was to make parents feel comfortable at school. Approximately 20 parents and young people participated in the session, the participants being separated into the four small language groups represented. On-site interpreters were used in each of the groups. Parents were welcomed to the school and encouraged to talk about their aspirations. Dinner was provided.

Involving refugee parents

One school observed that no parents of refugee students were attending school social events, such as barbecues. The school became proactive in encouraging their attendance, forming a committee to reach out to refugee parents. As a result, refugee students felt included in the life of the school and the parents started to play an important role in the school canteen. Both students and parents felt valued and this eased aspects of their settlement.

Translated information available on bullying

Parental advice on dealing with bullies can be found at the following website (under the section Parenting/What parents should know about bullying): www.mhcs.health.nsw.gov.au. The information is available in the following languages: Arabic, Chinese, Croatian, English, Greek, Italian, Khmer/Cambodian, Korean, Lao, Macedonian, Portuguese, Russian, Serbian, Spanish, Thai, Turkish and Vietnamese.
Table 8.1: Strategies for involving parents

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Strategy</th>
<th>Action</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Sending notices</td>
<td>When sending notices to refugee parents/guardians, ensure that they have been translated (see Section 5.3 for a list of translated school notices available for download from the DE&amp;T website).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Follow-up calls</td>
<td>Make follow-up calls to parents/guardians about the session, using an MEA or telephone interpreter.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. MEA visits</td>
<td>Send an MEA, staff member or agency worker to meet parents and explain the purpose of the session (you may need to organise a telephone interpreter).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. Providing transport</td>
<td>Provide parents/guardians with taxi vouchers or bus fares in order to ensure attendance.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. MEA attendance at information sessions</td>
<td>Ensure that an MEA or a cultural liaison officer attends the session in addition to teachers’ principal.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6. Using interpreters</td>
<td>Book on-site interpreters in the relevant community languages.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7. Same language group work</td>
<td>Group parents of same language with relevant interpreters.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8. Allowing for questions and feedback</td>
<td>Do not 'over structure' the session and ensure that you allow time for parents to ask questions.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9. Providing childcare</td>
<td>Provide childcare to encourage attendance.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10. Providing culturally appropriate food</td>
<td>Consult MEAs and community representatives about providing culturally appropriate food.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11. Preparing for late arrivals</td>
<td>Prepare for late arrivals (advertise an earlier commencement time than your actual start time).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12. Invitations to be involved in school activities</td>
<td>Invite parents to be involved in special days, ask parents to assist or present in classes where they have skills, e.g. cooking, music, art.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13. Provide flexible meeting times</td>
<td>Offer meetings during the day and in the evenings to suit parent needs.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

8.4 Refugee Readiness Audit: Section 8

Having examined the material contained in this section, please fill out the Refugee Readiness Audit. The questions in the Audit reflect the issues, examples and ideas discussed in this section. For more information on filling out the Audit, go to Section 4.2.
## SECTION 8: REFUGEE READINESS AUDIT

### Partnerships with parents

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Yes</th>
<th>No</th>
<th>Review</th>
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#### Informing/consulting parents and guardians

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<table>
<thead>
<tr>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>8.1</td>
<td>Are refugee parents made to feel welcome and included in the school community?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8.2</td>
<td>Does your school have a policy on welcoming parents and guardians of refugee students to the school?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8.3</td>
<td>Does your school provide parents with an information booklet about the school structure and expectations at the time of enrolment?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8.4</td>
<td>Do you provide parents and guardians with an updated list of key school contacts?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8.5</td>
<td>Does your school hold information sessions for refugee parents?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8.6</td>
<td>Are refugee parents provided with information about the importance of the partnership between themselves and the school?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8.7</td>
<td>Do you send translated information to parents about school issues?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8.8</td>
<td>Do you have a translated consent form for parents?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8.9</td>
<td>Do you make phone contact with parents prior to information sessions?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8.10</td>
<td>Do you provide on-site interpreters at information sessions?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8.11</td>
<td>Do refugee parents understand their role, rights and responsibilities in supporting the student and the school?</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

#### Involving parents and guardians

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<table>
<thead>
<tr>
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<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>8.12</td>
<td>Are refugee parents encouraged to participate in and learn about school curriculum?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8.13</td>
<td>Are refugee parents encouraged to be involved in decision-making and policy development within the school?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8.14</td>
<td>Do you involve refugee parents and guardians in the organisation and development of school information sessions and special days?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8.15</td>
<td>Do you provide opportunities or forums for parents and guardians to ask questions about the education of their children?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8.16</td>
<td>Do you encourage refugee parents to be actively involved in school structures such as the School Council?</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Partnerships between schools and social support agencies are important in responding adequately to the complex needs faced by refugee students. As a consequence of their refugee experience, students may be confronted with the following problems:

- mental and physical health concerns
- continuing effect of torture and trauma
- learning difficulties and problems with language acquisition
- violent, disruptive and confronting behaviour
- conflict in the home, conflict with parents and guardians
- homelessness
- isolation and social disconnection
- limited resources.

It is important to be aware of the local services and agencies available to your school and to develop referral protocols that are understood by school personnel. The following sections provide information about services and referral protocols.
9.1 Knowledge of agencies and services

It is important that your school maintains an up-to-date directory of local and statewide services. If there are workers from outside agencies already based at the school, then they will most probably have developed networks with relevant service agencies or may be able to help the school compile a list of relevant contacts. Your local council’s Youth Services will also have a comprehensive resource outlining available services in your area.

There are a number of ways that support may be provided from an outside agency:

- direct casework with the refugee student and their family
- collaboration with other agencies in providing services to the student and their family
- involvement in a group program or curriculum development
- referral to another agency
- telephone advice to assist you in addressing the problem
- professional development with school personnel.

9.2 Referral protocols

It is important that an effective referral policy and system is developed before dealing with issues that arise among students. A number of schools have developed Refugee Resource Folders, including referral systems facilitated by their Refugee Welfare Committees. The types of structures required include:

- the development of comprehensive referral protocols (see case study, p.93)
- a referral form
- an internal policy on referral
- organisational structures within the school to support the referral process (i.e. SWC to coordinate and oversee process of referral)
- professional development for school personnel that enables them to identify refugee students who need the support of an external agency.

Referrals to support refugee children and young people can include issues relating to a range of resettlement factors. This section will focus on referrals for mental health issues; however, there are often direct links to broader settlement issues.

RESOURCES

Migrant Resource Centres

Refugee students and their families can experience a range of difficulties in their settlement in Australia. Migrant Resource Centres (MRC) are a useful local resource. Most cities with large populations of refugees and migrants have MRCs, which can provide support to refugees for a range of settlement-related issues. These include:

- housing
- accessing English language classes
- legal or migration matters (e.g. sponsorship)
- income-support payments through Centrelink
- establishing a household
- employment
- childcare and children’s services
- social isolation
- advocacy.
Student referral protocol

One ELS formed a Student Referral Committee to support the development of a student referral protocol to provide clear guidelines for the referral of students to outside support agencies. The Committee was made up of the SWC, the School Guidance Officer, the VFST School Outreach Worker and a teacher representative. The referral protocol developed by the committee is outlined below.

**Aim:** To provide a mechanism within the school through which students presenting with welfare, educational, psychological, social or behavioural issues can be identified, and a care plan involving assessment and referral as necessary can be formulated.

**Process for referral**
1. Students of concern are identified by class teachers and referred to the Student Referral Committee via the Student Welfare Coordinator using the designated pro-forma outlining background information, issues of concern and strategies already undertaken.
2. The Student Referral Committee meet once a week to discuss students of concern.
3. The class teacher may be asked to participate in formulating the care plan for the student.
4. Regular service is provided by local student support services.
5. The care plan may involve, for example, referral to the school psychological services for an educational assessment, to an outside agency for counselling or developing a classroom management plan and parent/family involvement.
6. Parental permission must be obtained for any referral from the Student Referral Committee in accordance with the care plan.
7. The Committee reviews all care plans regularly, seeks feedback from outside agencies, liaises with parents and keeps class teachers informed.

**Confidentiality:** Principles of confidentiality and privacy should be practiced at all times, and care should be taken with personal information regarding students and their families.
Indicators for a referral to counselling

It is important that school staff are able to recognise when a refugee student is showing signs of needing counselling and support. This can be difficult. Normally, it would be necessary to observe a student's behaviour over time to know if they are having difficulties that do not seem to improve. If any of the behaviours or student-reported difficulties outlined in Table 9.1 are persistent, this indicates the need for a referral. Where a staff member of the school believes there is a persistent problem, it should be discussed with the student first.

Discussing referral with the student

The two advice boxes on pages 95 and 96 contain guidelines for making a referral to counselling. Although as a teacher you may see the need for a referral, it may not be possible to achieve one for some time. Where an immediate referral is not possible plan future meetings to discuss the situation again.

For older students and parents of younger students, a successful referral always requires their agreement, except in circumstances where the student is at imminent risk of doing serious harm to themselves or others. Identifying such circumstances can usually only occur if problematic behaviours have been observed and followed up with the student.

Some students and families may not feel comfortable with discussing problems outside their traditional problem-solving channels, such as extended family members or community elders and leaders. Therefore, it may be necessary to explain that in Australia, many students receive assistance to help them cope with stress related to school and other issues, and that there are workers trained to help students. It is also important that refugee families understand that the service provided will be confidential.

### Table 9.1: Behaviour requiring specialised assistance

- Deterioration in school performance
- Frequent or extended school non-attendance
- Persistent pain such as headaches, stomach aches or other illness
- Regressive behaviours such as tantrums or clinging
- Aggression or reduced control over behaviour
- Risk-taking behaviour, e.g. sexual activity, drug and alcohol abuse
- Depression or withdrawal
- Sleep problems – too much or too little
- Frequent nightmares as an explanation for poor sleep
- Re-enactment of a traumatic event in play
- Very poor concentration
- Guardedness
- Strong emotional reactions to minor frustrations
- Uncontrolled frequent crying or other extreme emotional reactions to mild events
- Fierce self-sufficiency, rejection of help
- Easily startled by noise
### Approaching an older student about referral for counselling

For young people older than 15, approach them individually in private and express what you have noticed about their consistent behaviour (e.g. seeming very tired, aggressive, angry) and that you are concerned that they may be having difficulty with something at the moment.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Action</th>
<th>Approach</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Ask whether you can help</td>
<td>Ask what might make things easier and whether you can help in any way.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Reassure</td>
<td>Let them know that it is not unusual for young people to feel that way, particularly if they have experienced hardships and violence before coming to Australia.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Ask about pre-arrival experiences</td>
<td>Ask if they have had any bad experiences, prior to or since arrival, which they may not want to talk about but they think might be affecting them.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. Ask about problems sleeping or concentrating</td>
<td>Ask if they are having problems caused by not being able to concentrate or if they are having difficulty sleeping or if they are crying a lot when alone.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. Ask if they would like help</td>
<td>Ask if they would like some help with their problems.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6. Discuss possibilities</td>
<td>Discuss possibilities for help.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Facilitating referral for counselling for a younger student

For young people under the age of 15, consultation with parents or another carer is needed.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Action</th>
<th>Approach</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Inform student</td>
<td>Inform the student about what you have noticed in the way of a difficulty. Inform them that you would like to meet with their parent or guardian to discuss ways to help.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Noticed difficulties at home</td>
<td>Ask parents or guardians if they have noticed any difficulties at home — sleeplessness, irritability, anger, withdrawal, or crying a lot.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Connection with pre-arrival experiences</td>
<td>Ask them if they think these difficulties are connected to any bad experiences they or their child may have had before coming to Australia or since arriving in Australia.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. Outline possibility of help</td>
<td>Discuss the possibility of getting additional help.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. Outline referral options</td>
<td>If they are receptive, discuss the possibility of a referral to an appropriate agency. If a service specialising in torture and trauma is the most suitable referral point, tell them about the VFST. Ask if they would like to be assisted in making the referral.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6. Another meeting?</td>
<td>If it seems unlikely that they will pursue a referral with your assistance, plan another meeting with them in the future to discuss what is happening.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Communicating with parents and guardians of refugee children

For a child or young person aged under 16 years, communication with parents and guardians is a critical first step and should take place with the assistance of an interpreter. In this contact:

- discuss the school's concerns
- seek their perception regarding their own circumstances and offer the opportunity to discuss these further
- let them know there are services that support people who have been affected by trauma because of war, violence and political oppression
- let them know that there are also services that can support people in their settlement in Australia as well as special services to assist families with children
- reassure parents that these services are confidential
- discuss possible solutions for support including referrals
- work with the parent to identify a preferred option. (VFST 2002)
9.3 Refugee Readiness Audit: Section 9

Having examined the material contained in this section, please fill out the Refugee Readiness Audit. The questions in the Audit reflect the issues, examples and ideas discussed in this section. For more information on filling out the Audit, go to Section 4.2.
## Partnerships with agencies

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Knowledge of agencies and services</th>
<th>Yes</th>
<th>No</th>
<th>Review</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>9.1 Are school personnel aware of refugee-related services provided by community service agencies?</td>
<td>〣〣〣</td>
<td>〣〣〣</td>
<td>〣〣〣</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9.2 Does the school maintain an up-to-date database of appropriate support and referral agencies for refugees, with adequate contact details?</td>
<td>〣〣〣</td>
<td>〣〣〣</td>
<td>〣〣〣</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9.3 Do school personnel collaborate and consult with community service agencies providing services to refugees in your area?</td>
<td>〣〣〣</td>
<td>〣〣〣</td>
<td>〣〣〣</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9.4 Has your school invited service agencies with expertise in working with refugees to run an information session or undertake professional development with staff?</td>
<td>〣〣〣</td>
<td>〣〣〣</td>
<td>〣〣〣</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9.5 Has your school sought out local service agencies to resource and support your staff in their work with refugee students?</td>
<td>〣〣〣</td>
<td>〣〣〣</td>
<td>〣〣〣</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9.6 Are community service agencies consulted in the design and implementation of refugee-related curriculum?</td>
<td>〣〣〣</td>
<td>〣〣〣</td>
<td>〣〣〣</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9.7 Has your school invited workers with expertise in working with refugee children and young people to participate on your Refugee Welfare Committee?</td>
<td>〣〣〣</td>
<td>〣〣〣</td>
<td>〣〣〣</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

## Referral protocols

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Referral protocols</th>
<th>Yes</th>
<th>No</th>
<th>Review</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>9.8 Has your school developed a referral system for refugee students?</td>
<td>〣〣〣</td>
<td>〣〣〣</td>
<td>〣〣〣</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9.9 Has your school developed referral forms?</td>
<td>〣〣〣</td>
<td>〣〣〣</td>
<td>〣〣〣</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9.10 Has your school developed referral protocols with outside agencies?</td>
<td>〣〣〣</td>
<td>〣〣〣</td>
<td>〣〣〣</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9.11 Do you have a designated staff member to oversee the referral process and coordinate activities with outside agencies?</td>
<td>〣〣〣</td>
<td>〣〣〣</td>
<td>〣〣〣</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9.12 Are school personnel aware of referral protocols for refugee-appropriate community service agencies?</td>
<td>〣〣〣</td>
<td>〣〣〣</td>
<td>〣〣〣</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9.13 Are school personnel able to identify refugee students who should be referred to community service agencies?</td>
<td>〣〣〣</td>
<td>〣〣〣</td>
<td>〣〣〣</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
10.1 Refugee Student Readiness Audit

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Section 6: School curriculum and programs 101
Section 7: School organisation, ethos and environment 102
Section 8: Partnerships with parents 103
Section 9: Partnerships with agencies 104
## SECTION 5: REFUGEE READINESS AUDIT

### School policies and practices

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>The enrolment process</th>
<th>Yes</th>
<th>No</th>
<th>Review</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>5.1 Do you use enrolment as an opportunity to welcome new refugee students and their families to the school?</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5.2 Do you collect information at enrolment about new refugee students such as country of origin, education history and visa category?</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5.3 Do you collect reports and information from feeder ELS/Cs regarding new enrolments?</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5.4 Do you enable relevant teaching staff to access this information so they may be better informed particularly about the needs and issues of refugee students?</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5.5 Do you have systems in place to enable and encourage teachers to access this information?</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### Supporting students in transition

| 5.6 Has your school developed a comprehensive process to ensure successful transition of students between your school and feeder schools? |     |    |        |
| 5.7 Does your school run an orientation program to welcome new students? |     |    |        |
| 5.8 Does your school involve current students in orientation programs? |     |    |        |
| 5.9 Do refugee students have equitable access to school resources, including teacher time, counsellors, welfare coordinators, interpreters, MEAs and ESL teachers? |     |    |        |
| 5.10 Has your school established policies to ensure that refugee students know about school resources? |     |    |        |
| 5.11 Does your school enable and support refugee students to access these resources? |     |    |        |
| 5.12 Does your school access ESL index funding to support ESL eligible students? |     |    |        |
| 5.13 Does your school ensure the ESL index funding is used to support the learning needs of ESL students? |     |    |        |

### Interpreters, translations and MEAs

| 5.14 Do you use on-site interpreters? |     |    |        |
| 5.15 Do you use telephone interpreters? |     |    |        |
| 5.16 Do you have a system for booking on-site interpreters? |     |    |        |
| 5.17 Do you ask students and parents about preferred gender and ethnicity of interpreters prior to booking? |     |    |        |
| 5.18 Does your school have a policy on use of interpreters? |     |    |        |
| 5.19 Are staff trained in working with interpreters? |     |    |        |
| 5.20 Have you accessed the translated material on the DE&T website? |     |    |        |
| 5.21 Does your school utilise MEAs to support and inform staff about refugee issues including country/culture-specific information? |     |    |        |

### Professional development for staff

| 5.22 Does your school have professional development for all staff who interact with refugee students? |     |    |        |
| 5.23 Do you involve other personnel in the school such as reception staff and MEAs in professional development activities? |     |    |        |
| 5.24 Are your welfare staff well informed about refugee issues? |     |    |        |
| 5.25 Does your school have specific professional development for school personnel who teach curriculum related to refugees and cultural diversity? |     |    |        |
| 5.26 Has your school developed a support policy for staff working with refugee students? (see Section 3) |     |    |        |

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### SECTION 6: REFUGEE READINESS AUDIT

#### School curriculum and programs

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Question</th>
<th>Yes</th>
<th>No</th>
<th>Review</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>6.1 Has your school undertaken a process of curriculum review and development with a view to incorporating refugee issues?</td>
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<tr>
<td>6.2 Does your curriculum provide opportunities for students to learn about refugees and cultural diversity?</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>6.3 Do you currently run any programs (such as HealthWize, Rainbow or Kaleidoscope) with the explicit aim of enhancing the social connectedness and wellbeing of your refugee students?</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>6.4 Has your school developed a program of alternative or additional educational support for your refugee students?</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>6.5 Does your school offer after-school activities for your refugee students?</td>
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<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6.6 Have you sought funding for these programs?</td>
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<tr>
<td>6.7 Have you enlisted the support of local service providers or workers currently located at your school?</td>
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<tr>
<td>6.8 Have you collaborated with a local agency in order to undertake extracurricular support and activities for your refugee students?</td>
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</tbody>
</table>
### SECTION 7: REFUGEE READINESS AUDIT

#### School organisation, ethos and the environment

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>School structures</th>
<th>Yes</th>
<th>No</th>
<th>Review</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>7.1</td>
<td>Does your school have a Refugee Welfare Committee made up of key school personnel and workers from outside agencies?</td>
<td>☐</td>
<td>☐</td>
<td>☐</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7.2</td>
<td>Does your committee meet regularly?</td>
<td>☐</td>
<td>☐</td>
<td>☐</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7.3</td>
<td>Does it have input into the sourcing and development of curriculum materials and teaching resources in relation to refugee issues?</td>
<td>☐</td>
<td>☐</td>
<td>☐</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7.4</td>
<td>Does the committee provide strategic advice on school policy in relation to issues effecting refugee students, such as settlement issues and education pathways?</td>
<td>☐</td>
<td>☐</td>
<td>☐</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>School environment</th>
<th>Yes</th>
<th>No</th>
<th>Review</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>7.5</td>
<td>Does your school acknowledge significant cultural and religious occasions?</td>
<td>☐</td>
<td>☐</td>
<td>☐</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7.6</td>
<td>Does the school have a quiet prayer/relaxation space for refugee students?</td>
<td>☐</td>
<td>☐</td>
<td>☐</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7.7</td>
<td>Does the school have programs that empower refugee students within the school community?</td>
<td>☐</td>
<td>☐</td>
<td>☐</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7.8</td>
<td>Are you familiar with your school policy on cultural diversity?</td>
<td>☐</td>
<td>☐</td>
<td>☐</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7.9</td>
<td>Are you familiar with your school policy on racism?</td>
<td>☐</td>
<td>☐</td>
<td>☐</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7.10</td>
<td>Has your school organised antiracism activities?</td>
<td>☐</td>
<td>☐</td>
<td>☐</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7.11</td>
<td>Has your school organised activities to celebrate the cultural diversity of the student population?</td>
<td>☐</td>
<td>☐</td>
<td>☐</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7.12</td>
<td>Has your school celebrated diversity and harmony through artistic or creative displays such as a mural or a ‘peace garden’?</td>
<td>☐</td>
<td>☐</td>
<td>☐</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7.13</td>
<td>Does your school celebrate or acknowledge any key cultural or religious holidays?</td>
<td>☐</td>
<td>☐</td>
<td>☐</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7.14</td>
<td>Has your school run a Harmony Day activity or Diversity Week activity?</td>
<td>☐</td>
<td>☐</td>
<td>☐</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7.15</td>
<td>Is culturally appropriate food available in your school canteen?</td>
<td>☐</td>
<td>☐</td>
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</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Classroom environment</th>
<th>Yes</th>
<th>No</th>
<th>Review</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>7.16</td>
<td>Do staff members act as role models in their interaction with refugee students?</td>
<td>☐</td>
<td>☐</td>
<td>☐</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7.17</td>
<td>Have your staff received professional development in understanding refugee experiences and supportive classroom strategies?</td>
<td>☐</td>
<td>☐</td>
<td>☐</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7.18</td>
<td>Do teachers in your school implement strategies to create an supportive learning and cultural environment for their refugee students?</td>
<td>☐</td>
<td>☐</td>
<td>☐</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7.19</td>
<td>Do teachers in your school implement strategies to promote positive relationships with refugee students?</td>
<td>☐</td>
<td>☐</td>
<td>☐</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7.20</td>
<td>Do teachers in your school have a good understanding of the learning barriers experienced by refugee students?</td>
<td>☐</td>
<td>☐</td>
<td>☐</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7.21</td>
<td>Does your school have support mechanisms for school personnel who interact with refugee students, such as debriefing or peer-support groups?</td>
<td>☐</td>
<td>☐</td>
<td>☐</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7.22</td>
<td>Have you sought to gain an understanding of how refugee students feel about your school?</td>
<td>☐</td>
<td>☐</td>
<td>☐</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7.23</td>
<td>Does your school have strategies in place seeking to address feedback provided by refugee students about issues such as lack of safety, fear and insecurity?</td>
<td>☐</td>
<td>☐</td>
<td>☐</td>
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</tbody>
</table>
## SECTION 8: REFUGEE READINESS AUDIT

### Partnerships with parents

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Section</th>
<th>Question</th>
<th>Yes</th>
<th>No</th>
<th>Review</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Informing/consulting parents and guardians</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>8.1</td>
<td>Are refugee parents made to feel welcome and included in the school community?</td>
<td>☐ ☐ ☐</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8.2</td>
<td>Does your school have a policy on welcoming parents and guardians of refugee students to the school?</td>
<td>☐ ☐ ☐</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8.3</td>
<td>Does your school provide parents with an information booklet about the school structure and expectations at the time of enrolment?</td>
<td>☐ ☐ ☐</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8.4</td>
<td>Do you provide parents and guardians with an updated list of key school contacts?</td>
<td>☐ ☐ ☐</td>
<td></td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>8.5</td>
<td>Does your school hold information sessions for refugee parents?</td>
<td>☐ ☐ ☐</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8.6</td>
<td>Are refugee parents provided with information about the importance of the partnership between themselves and the school?</td>
<td>☐ ☐ ☐</td>
<td></td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>8.7</td>
<td>Do you send translated information to parents about school issues?</td>
<td>☐ ☐ ☐</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>8.8</td>
<td>Do you have a translated consent form for parents?</td>
<td>☐ ☐ ☐</td>
<td></td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>8.9</td>
<td>Do you make phone contact with parents prior to information sessions?</td>
<td>☐ ☐ ☐</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8.10</td>
<td>Do you provide on-site interpreters at information sessions?</td>
<td>☐ ☐ ☐</td>
<td></td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>8.11</td>
<td>Do refugee parents understand their role, rights and responsibilities in supporting the student and the school?</td>
<td>☐ ☐ ☐</td>
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<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Involving parents and guardians</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>8.12</td>
<td>Are refugee parents encouraged to participate in and learn about school curriculum?</td>
<td>☐ ☐ ☐</td>
<td></td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>8.13</td>
<td>Are refugee parents encouraged to be involved in decision-making and policy development within the school?</td>
<td>☐ ☐ ☐</td>
<td></td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>8.14</td>
<td>Do you involve refugee parents and guardians in the organisation and development of school information sessions and special days?</td>
<td>☐ ☐ ☐</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8.15</td>
<td>Do you provide opportunities or forums for parents and guardians to ask questions about the education of their children?</td>
<td>☐ ☐ ☐</td>
<td></td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>8.16</td>
<td>Do you encourage refugee parents to be actively involved in school structures such as the School Council?</td>
<td>☐ ☐ ☐</td>
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</tbody>
</table>
### Partnerships with agencies

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Knowledge of agencies and services</th>
<th>Yes</th>
<th>No</th>
<th>Review</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>9.1 Are school personnel aware of refugee-related services provided by community service agencies?</td>
<td>☐</td>
<td>☐</td>
<td>☐</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9.2 Does the school maintain an up-to-date database of appropriate support and referral agencies for refugees, with adequate contact details?</td>
<td>☐</td>
<td>☐</td>
<td>☐</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9.3 Do school personnel collaborate and consult with community service agencies providing services to refugees in your area?</td>
<td>☐</td>
<td>☐</td>
<td>☐</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9.4 Has your school invited service agencies with expertise in working with refugees to run an information session or undertake professional development with staff?</td>
<td>☐</td>
<td>☐</td>
<td>☐</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9.5 Has your school sought out local service agencies to resource and support your staff in their work with refugee students?</td>
<td>☐</td>
<td>☐</td>
<td>☐</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9.6 Are community service agencies consulted in the design and implementation of refugee-related curriculum?</td>
<td>☐</td>
<td>☐</td>
<td>☐</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9.7 Has your school invited workers with expertise in working with refugee children and young people to participate on your Refugee Welfare Committee?</td>
<td>☐</td>
<td>☐</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Referral protocols</th>
<th>Yes</th>
<th>No</th>
<th>Review</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>9.8 Has your school developed a referral system for refugee students?</td>
<td>☐</td>
<td>☐</td>
<td>☐</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9.9 Has your school developed referral forms?</td>
<td>☐</td>
<td>☐</td>
<td>☐</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9.10 Has your school developed referral protocols with outside agencies?</td>
<td>☐</td>
<td>☐</td>
<td>☐</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9.11 Do you have a designated staff member to oversee the referral process and coordinate activities with outside agencies?</td>
<td>☐</td>
<td>☐</td>
<td>☐</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9.12 Are school personnel aware of referral protocols for refugee-appropriate community service agencies?</td>
<td>☐</td>
<td>☐</td>
<td>☐</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9.13 Are school personnel able to identify refugee students who should be referred to community service agencies?</td>
<td>☐</td>
<td>☐</td>
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</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
10.2 Further information and useful contacts

Child and Adolescent Mental Health Services (CAMHS). Location and contact details are available from the Youth Mental Health Website at: 
http://www.youthmentalhealth.org/contact/

Centre for Multicultural Youth Issues (CMYI), Melbourne, Telephone: (03) 9349 3466. Location and contact details are available from: http://www.cmyi.net.au/

Victorian Cooperative on Children’s Services for Ethnic Groups (VICSEG) Melbourne, Telephone: (03) 9383 2533


Other relevant services are listed under in the White Pages under Local Government, Community Health Centres/Services and Crisis Lines.
10.3 References


— 2003, ESL Report, Office of School Education.


— 2004, Harmony Day Planning Guide. Canberra: DIMIA.


NSW Health Department 1999, Strategic Directions in Refugee Health Care in NSW. Sydney.


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