Targeted support for students from a refugee background Information for high schools – 2017

Section 1 | General information

Background
Many refugee students have experienced significant disruption to their education prior to enrolment in an Australian school. As a result, they face great challenges in education and training.

Some refugee students make a successful transition from their initial intensive English program to high school. However those with limited prior schooling and low levels of literacy in their first language can struggle to acquire the language, literacy, cultural knowledge and concepts required for academic success. In addition, refugee students may have limited understanding of the range of education and employment options available in Australia.

Schools enrolling refugee students receive resources through the Equity Loading for English language proficiency to provide English as an Additional Language support. Those schools with recently arrived refugee students also receive targeted (individual student) funding to provide targeted support for these students.

Targeted (individual student) funding
The targeted (individual student) funding provided for refugee students assists schools to provide additional support for refugee students in their first three years in Australia.

Resources can be used to provide ongoing EAL/D, literacy and numeracy teaching support or a range of other programs and strategies to meet students’ other wellbeing and learning needs.

Schools are required to plan and report on how they use the resources to support their refugee students, as part of the annual school planning and reporting process.

Targeted support for students
Schools enrolling refugee students should develop teaching programs and strategies to meet their identified needs. While these will vary, support for students could include a component in the following key areas:

- English language, and literacy skills
- Numeracy skills
- Curriculum concepts and skills
- ICT, study and organisational skills
- Educational and vocational pathways
- School and workplace cultures and expectations.

The focus of the support and the relative weight and amount of time allocated to each component will depend on the needs of students, their age and year group and their educational and vocational goals.

Teaching programs developed should be curriculum based, with an emphasis on helping students acquire the literacies, concepts and skills needed to participate in learning activities in order to meet mainstream curriculum outcomes.

The targeted support should complement, but not replace, the school’s existing EAL/D program - students receiving targeted support should continue to be supported through the school’s EAL/D program.

Student target group
The target group for transition support is refugee students who have:

- minimal schooling in their first language
- low levels of literacy in English
- low levels of numeracy
- been assessed as being at risk of not completing their education in mainstream schooling
• have been in an Australian school for less than three years, including time in an intensive English program
• have already received at least 12 months of intensive English language support.

Background information and assessment data about individual students should be used to determine their needs and develop personalised support.

Targeted students should be supported and monitored during their transition to high school by the school’s Learning and Support Team.

**Delivery models**

Each school should use the resources provided to deliver planned and integrated strategies and programs to meet the needs of targeted refugee students.

Schools will decide on the most appropriate model for their school, taking into account the needs of their students, their ages and school years and other EAL/D, literacy and social support programs available within the school.

To be successful, planning the targeted support for refugee students should be seen as an integral part of the school’s planning and reporting process and should be supported by the principal and school leadership team.

**Coordination of the targeted support**

A member of the executive team should have responsibility for coordinating the support by:

• helping to identify students to receive additional support
• coordinating the development of the content and timetable
• monitoring and reporting on strategies implemented to the school executive
• promoting the integration of these strategies within the school
• coordinating professional development for teachers about supporting refugee students
• coordinating the collection of data and evidence to report on student learning and wellbeing
• developing processes to ensure sustainability.

**Planning the support**

Each school should develop a plan which includes:

• intended outcomes
• targeted students, and year levels
• staff involved - roles and responsibilities
• support components and timetable
• assessment and reporting procedures
• procedures for monitoring student attendance, wellbeing and academic achievement.

The main aim of the additional support provided for refugee students is to assist them in their transition from intensive English programs into mainstream high school and to help them plan their transition from school to further education, training or employment.

**Additional teaching support**

Additional teaching support for targeted refugee students during their transition to high school is one strategy that can be implemented. Teachers who undertake this role should have:

• EAL teaching qualifications and experience
• a thorough understanding of EAL pedagogy
• understanding of and empathy for the needs of refugee students
• a strong commitment to improving refugee student wellbeing and learning outcomes
• capacity to build links with community organisations.

Teachers who undertake this role should be responsible for:

• assisting to identify student target group
• assessing student wellbeing and learning needs
• developing program content and timetable
• developing personalised support for targeted students
• monitoring students’ educational and welfare needs
• liaising with the school Learning and Support Team and other staff
• reporting on student wellbeing and learning
• liaising with external organizations.

More information to assist teachers in developing teaching programs is included in Section 2 of this document.

**Developing a personalised approach**

Planning should be done in consultation with EAL/D teachers, subject teachers, the Learning and Support Team, students and their families.

Teacher observations, oral and written work samples and other relevant wellbeing and assessment data should be collected to inform programming and enable staff to monitor and report on each student’s progress and achievements.

A template is available to support schools in developing personalised approaches to learning and wellbeing for students from a refugee background.
• Nominated staff should be responsible for collecting relevant information and data about the student’s educational and welfare needs. Initially, the following information should be collected:
  • visa class and subclass
  • amount of schooling prior to arrival in Australia
  • language/s spoken at home and level of literacy in home language/s
  • relevant refugee experiences
  • welfare issues that may impact on learning
  • family situation and responsibilities
  • English language proficiency

Details of the support to be provided, the timeframe and personnel to be involved in supporting the student should also be included.

Relevant information about the student’s learning and wellbeing goals established through this process should be communicated to all staff involved in teaching and supporting the student.

Staff involved should be aware of Departmental requirements regarding privacy and confidentiality of personal information.

Links to other school programs

**English as an Additional Language program**

Additional EAL/D support provided through this initiative should complement, but not replace, the school’s existing EAL/D program. Participating students should continue to receive support through the school’s EAL/D program.

**Vocational education programs**

Transition support provided through this initiative will also relate to the work of the school’s Career and Transition Team. Where a school has nominated a Transition Adviser, that teacher could assist with the educational and vocational pathways component of this program.

**Communication with parents / guardians**

Students and their parents/guardians should be informed, and where possible, involved in decision making about their child’s educational program and options in relation to educational and vocational pathways. It is suggested that schools organise meetings with parents to explain the purpose of support being provided.

Use of interpreters, translations and culturally appropriate methods of communication should be used to encourage parents’/guardians’ attendance at these meetings. Parents / guardians should be given the opportunity to ask questions and communicate any concerns they may have about their child’s wellbeing, educational progress and career plans.

Schools are encouraged to use interpreters to assist in communicating with parents or carers who do not speak or understand English well.


**Professional learning**

A number of professional learning programs are offered to executive staff and teachers of students from refugee backgrounds.

**STARS in Schools: Supporting students from refugee backgrounds**

This is a 5 hour professional learning course that raises awareness about refugee students and their experiences and assist schools to create learning environments which support their recovery. Participants will develop strategies for responding with sensitivity to behavioural issues that arise in relation to students’ emotional and learning needs.

**Teaching students from a refugee background**

This is a 20 hour registered professional learning program designed for classroom teachers, K-12. The course aims to develop participants’ understandings of the experiences, skills and knowledge that refugee students bring to school as well as the language related needs of refugee students with low levels of literacy. It assists teachers to develop skills, knowledge and understandings for effective teaching of students in the mainstream classroom. It also increases their awareness of external organisations and programs available to support refugee students.

**More information**

More information is available to assist schools in developing targeted programs and teachers in planning, programming and differentiating teaching and learning for targeted refugee students.

Section 2 | Further information for teachers

Personalised support for students

A personalised approach involves developing strategies to support each targeted student’s needs. A student learning plan template can be used to collect and record information about students and to coordinate the support provided.

An appropriate member of staff should be nominated to coordinate the development of learning plans for targeted students. Initially, the following information about students should be collected:

• amount of schooling prior to arrival in Australia
• language/s spoken at home
• level of literacy in home language/s
• English language levels (ESL Scales)
• numeracy skills
• relevant refugee experiences or welfare issues that may impact on learning
• IEC exit report
• teacher comments and assessment data
• NAPLAN results (if available).
• attendance data
• educational and vocational aspirations
• any previous or current employment
• family responsibilities.

All teachers are responsible for collecting relevant student learning data to determine student needs and inform their program planning. This information can inform the student learning plans.

Details of support to be provided and personnel to be involved should also be included.

Relevant information about students and learning goals established should be communicated to all members of staff involved in teaching and supporting the student. Staff should be aware of Departmental requirements regarding privacy and confidentiality of personal information.

Developing content of teaching programs

The specific aim of teaching programs is to assist refugee students to:

• develop English language and literacy skills
• develop numeracy skills
• develop curriculum concepts and skills appropriate to year levels
• develop study and learning skills, including ICT
• develop an understanding of available educational and vocational pathways and make decisions regarding appropriate pathways
• develop awareness of school and workplace cultures and expectations in Australia.

Teaching programs should include a component in each of these key areas. Given the limited time available, teachers should develop an integrated teaching program, where English language and literacy skills are developed through differentiated curriculum and vocational learning programs.

English language and literacy skills

The primary focus of the transition support provided will be on the continued development of students’ English language and literacy skills so that they are able to participate effectively in mainstream schooling and prepare for life after school. This should focus on both oral and written language and include:

• developing reading, writing, listening and speaking skills for a range of purposes, contexts and audiences, both formal and informal
• developing knowledge and control of language structures and features of a range of text types including the grammar, vocabulary and graphophonemic systems.

Numeracy skills

The numeracy skills component should be delivered by or developed collaboratively with members of the Mathematics faculty. Numeracy skills should focus on developing mathematical, measurement and visual numeracy skills and include:

• developing skills to perform operations with whole numbers, decimals, fractions and percentages both with and without a calculator
• developing knowledge and control of mathematical symbols and terminology
• developing skills to understand the measurement of time, temperature, length, mass and volume
• developing skills to interpret tables, graphs, charts and diagrams.

Curriculum concepts and skills, ICT skills

Teaching programs should be curriculum based with a strong emphasis on helping students acquire the literacies, essential concepts and skills needed to meet mainstream curriculum outcomes. Schools may choose to develop a bridging program which focuses on a limited number of curriculum areas.

Participating teachers are asked to explore ways of providing differentiated language and literacy support for refugee students in mainstream curriculum areas.
Support should also include an ICT component, as some students from a refugee background have limited access to computers outside school.

**Study and organisational skills**

Support provided for students across the curriculum should include a specific focus on students’ understanding of the requirements of learning and assessment tasks and activities that they will encounter in mainstream subjects.

These could include:

- the language of task instructions
- research skills
- test preparation, language of test items, questions
- explicit teaching of relevant text forms /types
- visual literacy, including reading charts and diagrams, interpreting visual images
- presentation of work and assessment tasks.

Some students may still be unfamiliar with Australian teaching approaches and school and classroom routines and will need practice and guidance in:

- understanding school organisation and procedures
- understanding teacher /student roles, relationships and responsibilities
- understanding expectations of student behaviour
- asking and answering questions in class
- working in groups –group roles and routines
- discussing issues; expressing opinions
- researching, developing and presenting projects
- working in practical classes e.g. – using equipment, routines and safety procedures
- different ways of teaching and learning
- reflecting on their own learning strategies.

Because of their educational backgrounds many students are still developing personal organisational skills and will need help in developing study habits and routines which will provide structure, both for school and the workplace. These may include organising books and folders, maintaining a personal dictionary, goal setting, developing study plans, using timetables and homework diaries, time management and strategies for revising work.

**Educational and vocational pathways**

Many refugee students have a limited understanding of the range of education and employment options available and workplace cultures and expectations in the Australian context. Support should include information on educational pathways and career options.

Many students and their families may be unaware of the range of education choices other than mainstream schooling, and may need to be informed about other alternatives. This should be planned and delivered collaboratively with the career advisor and school transition team. Information for students and their families may include:

- the structure of the Australian education and training system
- curriculum requirements for the Record of Student Achievement and Higher School Certificate
- vocational learning in school, including VET courses for the HSC
- workplace learning
- school-based traineeships and apprenticeships
- the Australian Qualifications Framework
- TAFE and university courses
- career research and choices
- job applications – writing resumes, interviews
- student financial assistance and scholarships.

Excursions to TAFE, universities and workplaces can give students and their families a greater understanding of how these organisations operate and help students make informed choices.

**School and workplace cultures and expectations**

Students will also need assistance to develop contemporary employability skills and understanding of the culture and expectations of both schools and Australian workplaces. These could include:

- working in teams
- communication skills, including communicating with teachers, colleagues and bosses
- expectations of men and women, gender stereotypes
- expectations regarding dress codes, personal hygiene, food and meal times
- expectations regarding attendance, punctuality, time management and notification of absences
- occupational health and safety
- employees’ rights at work.

Through a partnership with Job Quest Penrith, the Department provides a work readiness program for refugee students, called the **Ready Arrive Work (RAW) program**.

A RAW resource has been developed to assist school career and transition teams in implementing work readiness programs for newly arrived refugee students. The kit includes resources for teachers and students.