

Settlement and Compulsory Education

Goal five: Auckland Regional Settlement Strategy

Introduction

Participating and achieving in education brings social and economic benefits to individuals and their communities, including their host community. Schools, families and communities play an important role in resettlement by providing quality education and engaging families and communities in their children's experiences at school.

During the last decade, New Zealand schools have undergone drastic changes in terms of the make-up of the school population and school-related policies. Changes in the cultural and linguistic diversity of the student population, particularly in Auckland, have increased at a faster rate than similar changes in the teacher population. The national educational policy places a clear emphasis on bi-cultural issues in education arising from the country's explicit commitment to the Treaty of Waitangi, and espouses a strong commitment to inclusive education for all children in regular classrooms.¹

Migrant and refugee children are an identifiable and increasing group in our schools and particularly in Auckland.

Refugees are special because they have typically experienced both displacement and trauma. They now face the task of adapting to a new environment, which often involves learning another language. Many of the concerns regarding their effective inclusion into New Zealand schools and classrooms will be relevant to any migrant populations who have suffered in the same way. These populations of children are at risk of less than optimal outcomes at school and might have special needs and/or behavior problems. The challenge for schools is to work with refugees and their families to help them adapt and identify appropriate learning pathways to provide the foundation they need to participate meaningfully in New Zealand society.

This chapter discusses the barriers and challenges identified by migrants and refugees during the engagement process and provides the context for the provision of government support. It outlines current government provision and identifies opportunities for the government, schools and communities to work together to improve educational outcomes for migrants and refugees and reduce disparities.

¹ School, Family and Community Partnerships for Children's Learning: Responses to Class, Cultural, and Linguistic Diversity. Kaur and Gardiner, 2003.

Barriers and challenges: what migrants and refugees said

The vast majority of families from migrant and refugee backgrounds were very positive about their children's schooling. Migrants generally felt their children had settled well, their competence in English had improved and they were achieving academically without the competitive pressures imposed on them in their countries of origin.

'At early childhood, primary and secondary levels of education there is choice, it is relatively free and there is special support for English learning.'

A refugee parent

Refugees, in general, placed great importance on the educational opportunities offered by schools in New Zealand. However, they have expressed concerns in two main areas. The first area is refugee youth² leaving school without qualifications and insufficiently prepared for the workforce. This mainly applies to refugees who arrive in New Zealand as teenagers and have had a disrupted and/or little formal education³ and have poor English language skills.

The second area is the ability of parents of refugee children with poor English skills to become involved in their children's education. There were two key challenges for these parents:

- language barriers made it difficult for them to understand and support their children in the New Zealand school environment;
- unreal expectations of some refugee families on the immediate career opportunities available to school leavers with disrupted education and limited time in New Zealand schools.

'Some of our parents, who don't speak English and have limited education themselves, can't communicate with the school about the New Zealand approach to teaching. This can lead to dissatisfaction with the schooling and unrealistic expectations of children which creates conflict in the family.'

An Iraqi migrant working closely with refugee communities

Whilst many parents were pleased that their children had made friends with New Zealand children and other children in their schools, they felt that there was scope for schools to influence and increase acceptance of diversity in their environment.

² Youth covers the age range of 12- 24 years using the definition in the Youth Development Strategy, Ministry of Youth Development.

³ Many may also lack literacy skills in their first language.

'Young children in particular seem to settle quickly through making friends at school and their ability to pick up English quickly.'

A migrant parent

'The kids at school call me Osama. I don't like it and told my teacher but she just told me to ignore them. They haven't stopped, the teachers should do more.'

A 13 year-old Iraqi migrant

The context for supporting migrant and refugee schooling needs

Settlement is a two-way process between receiving communities and those coming to settle in New Zealand. Schools are the main point of contact for migrants and refugees with their new country and the host culture.

The most effective schools are those which include active leadership (boards and principals) and support for teachers. From a settlement perspective it is important to ensure school leaders and teachers are well informed and support the needs of children from migrant and refugee backgrounds. This includes gaining an understanding of the different and increased needs arising from refugee children's pre- and post-migration experiences.

As major socialising agents, schools play a vital part in helping the children of migrants and refugees understand their new country and connect with the wider host community. Given the multi-cultural nature of schools in the Auckland area, they have an important role in promoting the acceptance of diversity amongst student groups.

Access to appropriate language learning programmes is a crucial part of the settlement process and Auckland schools have over 75% of the total number of New Zealand-wide, ESOL-funded school students.⁴ However, at present, school provides refugee children and youth with a disrupted education, or little formal education and literacy, in their first language, to gain employment and socialise with the wider community.

Parental involvement in education has been found to positively influence student performance and behaviour in schools⁵. Communication between schools and parents makes this possible. If parents can increase their

⁴ This includes New Zealand born students (a significant amount of this group are Pasifika) and those from migrant and refugee backgrounds.

⁵ Keith, Reimers, Fehrmann, Pottebaum, & Aubey, 1986; Lee, 1993; Raywid, 1985.

knowledge and their level of comfort with the school and its procedures it helps them to become involved and to be realistic in their expectations of their children. This can enhance their relationships with their children and young people generally.

It is important to note that there are factors outside of the school and family spheres that can dramatically increase a student's resilience and ability to adapt to the new school environment. Others in the wider community such as health providers, government support services, refugee and other support services, career and vocational development services and housing authorities will all play an important part in creating a productive educational environment.

They can be encouraged by establishing successful school/community partnerships and collaboration between people from many different sectors and walks of life such as school leaders and boards, local and central government agencies, non-government organisations, community organisations and community development groups, business and civic and religious organisations. Appendix 1 provides a fuller description of the importance of community involvement.

Migrant and refugee community members can be assisted to understand and positively engage with schools through partnerships between schools and community-based organisations. These organisations include established community members from refugee and migrant backgrounds who are now themselves settled and part of the host community. They can play a key 'bridging role' helping schools and migrant and refugee communities to better understand each other and work together in the education of their children.

Government support for migrant and refugee schooling

Ministry's role

The role of the Ministry of Education is to work with parents, teachers and education managers to encourage, support and enable them to use their energy, motivation and skill to greatest benefit. It has a role in creating an education system that can respond quickly and effectively to wider social and economic impacts and the needs of different communities, society and employers.

The Ministry of Education focuses on three key outcomes which research and experience show make the greatest difference to raising student achievement and reducing disparity⁶. These are:

- effective teaching for all students;
- family and community engagement in education;
- development of quality providers.

Education providers play a vital role in raising student achievement through their governance, management and leadership. When providers build strong relationships with employers and communities they are better placed to identify and develop learner competencies for successful, lifelong learning.

Initiatives to raise refugee and migrant student achievement and reduce disparities are as follows.

Professional development, resources and programmes

School leaders and teaching staff

The Ministry supports the learning of migrants and refugees in schools through professional development initiatives and the provision of resources. These resources include: classroom teaching materials; advice on matters such as how to create inclusive school environments; the provision of ESOL in schools and improving the educational involvement of families and communities. These are provided for school leaders, teachers and teaching assistants.

In 2004, the Government boosted ESOL funding in schools to \$37.9 million over 4 years. Most notably, by 2006, all students with migrant and refugee backgrounds who are born outside New Zealand, and who score below the ESOL funding benchmark, will be entitled to receive ESOL

⁶ Ministry of Education, Statement of Intent 2005-2010.

funding for up to five years. Within schools, ESOL is provided in a variety of ways including withdrawal programmes, reception classes and support for students in mainstream classes.

The Ministry of Education funds some fees and scholarships for training in Teaching English in Schools to Speakers of Other Languages (TESSOL). This investment has been found to improve skilled ESOL teachers' professional capability and increase their cultural awareness which, in turn, helps them to become more effective teachers of ESOL to learners. The English Language Assistant professional development programme aims to enhance the expertise of teacher aides working in the classroom with NESB students.

The Ministry of Education provides a number of resources to support ESOL provision in schools⁷. The Ministry is also developing an English Language Learning Framework, ESOL Progress Assessment Guidelines (forthcoming). The Ministry will designate a small number of schools as training sites to demonstrate to school leaders and teachers of ESOL models of effective ESOL provision and practice for students with very high language learning needs and for those needing support for increased academic achievement.

Students

Schools have a responsibility to provide learning and career planning that tie in with subject choice and achievement levels. Refugee youth arriving in New Zealand with interrupted education are likely to need intensive support to establish appropriate learning pathways for the remainder of their compulsory schooling. A clear understanding of career options in New Zealand helps them to set long-term goals and these are best achieved when young people's families are involved in this process.

Parents, who themselves have had limited education, are likely to have a greater need for information and assistance to support their young people in this process.

This process includes:

- an on-arrival academic and ESOL assessment as outlined in Appendix 2. For refugees this begins at the Mangere Refugee Reception Centre (the Reception Centre) and for migrants, at school;

⁷ The Refugee Handbook for Schools, ESOL Funding Assessment Guidelines, NESB Students: a Handbook for Schools, the English Language Intensive Programme Years 7-13 Resource, the Selections series and Teachers' Notes.

- support for learning and career pathway planning as outlined in Appendix 2;
- additional study support programmes for students from refugee backgrounds as outlined in Appendix 3;
- support available to all New Zealand school leavers from low income backgrounds through tertiary scholarships;
- support available to all 'at-risk' youth in New Zealand through the Youth Transition Services outlined in Appendix 4 and referred to in the *Employment* chapter. In Auckland, the Services are currently operating in Waitakere City and Manukau City (Manurewa ward).

Involving families and communities in schools

For many migrant and refugee students, factors outside the classroom may have a huge impact on their learning at school. Schools have a crucial role in establishing and strengthening positive relationships with the families and communities of these children.

One of the most important factors is to increase parental involvement in the schooling of their children. This requires a range of approaches, some of which are outlined in Appendix 5. The Ministry of Education provides the following resources:

- Migrant and Refugee Education co-coordinators⁸ aim to assist schools in engaging migrant and refugee families in their children's learning;
- initiatives to facilitate the engagement process. Some of these initiatives are:
 - the Families Learning Together resource (which is published in nine languages);
 - the Computers in Homes initiative for refugees;
 - the Home School Partnerships Programme;
 - an integrated approach to ESOL learning through school and community education (see Selwyn College example in Appendix 3).

⁸See Appendix 6 for further information on the purpose of this role.

The way forward: *Auckland Regional Settlement Strategy*:

Compulsory education goals

The Auckland Regional Settlement Strategy's Education goals for migrants and refugees are to ensure:

- *access to quality education for refugee and migrant children and young people;*
- *that the relevant professional development needs for school teaching staff and managers are addressed in working with refugee and migrant students and their families;*
- *inter-agency collaboration and school community partnerships are promoted to effect successful settlement outcomes.*

Opportunities to enhance refugee and migrant educational outcomes

It is recommended that the Ministry of Education and other relevant agencies pick up the following immediate and longer-term proposals for improving migrant and refugee educational outcomes and reducing disparities in the Auckland region.

Managing cultural diversity in schools

- Schools and communities with students from refugee and migrant backgrounds should be actively encouraged and supported to understand, and effectively address, cross-cultural and refugee - specific issues.
- School staff with students from refugee and migrant backgrounds should be actively encouraged, supported and resourced to take advantage of available professional development programmes.

Learning and career pathways for students

- Families should be better assisted to actively engage in understanding and supporting their children to make, and sustain, realistic and positive education choices.
- Community-based orientation programmes should be available to families arriving under family sponsorship to join families from refugee backgrounds who are still grappling with their own settlement.

- Co-ordination and communication should be improved between schools, Career Services raupara and other contracted agencies in order to:
 - ensure all students from migrant and refugee backgrounds have access to professional career information and advice;
 - identify and channel high-need school students into appropriate learning and career pathways.
- Learning and career pathway support programmes (e.g. Designing Careers and the Youth Transition Services) aimed at 'high-risk' school students should, as a priority, include young people from refugee and migrant backgrounds who have had minimal or disrupted educational opportunities.

Family and community involvement in education

- Bi-lingual support and resources and materials should be provided in a range of mediums (video, audio and written) to help families understand and support their children to make and sustain realistic and positive education and career choices.
- The range of current good practice models for family and community involvement should be adopted and adapted to reflect local community needs including:
 - ensuring schools are aware of how the Home-School Partnership scheme can assist with involving people from migrant and refugee backgrounds in their children's education;
 - exploring how other school communities can develop and co-ordinate provision that encourages holistic family education, reflecting the needs of their communities;
 - ensuring that resources to support family involvement are available through a variety of mediums.

Community involvement in schools

- Successful international models of school/community partnerships, that address the wider determinants of education for migrants and refugees from cultural and language diverse backgrounds, should be explored and adapted for local conditions.
- Key stakeholders (such as schools, central and local government agencies, non-government organisations, migrant and refugee community groups) should be engaged about opportunities and methods for community involvement.

Appendix 1

Community involvement in schools

The adage 'it takes a village to raise a child' suggests that the involvement of communities in schools is very important in supporting academic achievement. School strategies that engage families and communities may involve partnering with community groups to capitalise on their connections with families, as well as their cultural expertise. Social and settlement agencies that are linked to these families are also a key resource for schools.

There are a range of models internationally aimed at strengthening schools, families and communities. A generic, encompassing description of such models is that they are 'both a set of partnerships and a place where services, supports and opportunities lead to improved student learning, stronger families and healthier communities.' Using public schools as a hub, inventive, enduring relationships among educators, families, community volunteers, business, health and social service agencies, youth development organisations and others committed to children, are changing the education landscape and transforming traditional schools into partnerships for excellence.

Successful school/community partnerships are initiatives that result from the dedication, innovation and collaboration of people from many different sectors and walks of life. There is a role for all members of a community to play in making them a reality. School leaders and board members, local and central government agencies, non-government agencies, community organisations and community development groups, business and civic and religious organisations all can bring leadership and resources to bear.⁹

Whilst they differ from each other in model and approach, school/community partnerships tend to be rooted in common tradition and share a core set of principles of fostering strong partnerships, sharing accountability for results, setting high expectations for all, building on the community's strengths, embracing diversity and avoiding 'one-size-fits-all' solutions. The one principle that stands out among others is *they foster strong partnerships*.

There are some useful examples from the United States on school/community partnerships serving language minority students, including immigrants and the U.S.-born children of immigrants, many of whom have to contend with a mismatch between the language and culture of their schools and those of their homes. To broaden the base of

⁹ Community Schools, Partnerships for Excellence, Coalition for Community Schools, Washington DC.

support for these students and to help address their academic needs appropriately, some schools have been partnering with community-based organisations - groups committed to helping people obtain health, education and other basic human services.

These arrangements are said to be promising, because they can connect the schools directly with the community and assist students in ways that lie beyond the schools' traditional methods.

There are differences in the types of community-based organisations that join with schools including:

- ethnic organisations serving as cultural brokers for the school, the students, their families and other community members;
- multi-purpose organisations providing more than one programme.

Partnerships linking schools and community-based organisations take on different configurations and different functions. Some provide highly integrated programmes with education programmes for students and families as well as comprehensive health and social services. Other programmes represent a distant, but still highly valued, connection between the school's academic programme and the partnerships supports for students' success.

The resources of schools are finite, and their primary focus is on academic achievement. Schools cannot take on all the work that is essential to supporting academic achievement and be the sole source of settlement support for migrants and refugees. Whilst there are some additional support services provided by the Ministry of Education for refugee and other high-need students, some may still flounder without wider settlement support.

Partnerships with other organisations should help broaden the base of support for migrants and refugees from diverse language and cultural backgrounds. They can also provide services that may traditionally have been viewed as secondary to academic achievement, such as health and social services. 'The partnerships understand that these services are not secondary at all; rather they are part of the base that students need to achieve academically. By sharing this broad view, schools can move toward greater success in retaining and educating refugee and migrant students who are at risk'¹⁰.

¹⁰ *Broadening the Base: School/Community Partnerships Serving Language Minority Students at Risk*, C. Temple Adger and J Lock, Centre for Applied Linguistics (2000).

Appendix 2

Learning and assessment pathways

On-arrival assessments for schooling placements

Academic and ESOL assessments are provided for migrants and refugees as follows:

- for migrants, this occurs at the school they enrol in and is initiated by schools, which can access School Support Services to assist with more intensive ESOL assessment;
- for quota refugees, an initial assessment is undertaken at the Mangere Refugee Reception Centre (the Reception Centre) by the Centre for Refugee Education and further developed within schools. Quota refugees are also offered an orientation programme on arrival at Mangere. This programme helps familiarise children and their families with the New Zealand education system.
- for families arriving under family sponsorship, there is an obligation on sponsoring families to assist with their integration, including into the school system. This is reasonable if the sponsoring families are settled and able to provide the necessary support. However, if host families are still struggling to settle themselves, this will affect those they are sponsoring. Where sponsoring families themselves have outstanding settlement needs, newly-arrived, sponsored families should receive community-based orientation with similar programme content to those run at the Reception Centre.

Support for learning and career pathway planning

Students from migrant and refugee backgrounds will benefit from a wide range of support mechanisms, available to all school age children and young people in New Zealand schools, to assist them with their learning and pathway planning.

All students from Year 7 are required to have general career education and guidance, with individual career planning required from Year 9, intensifying as the child progresses through the school system.

School-aged refugees, particularly those who arrived from Year 4 onwards, and have experienced a disrupted and/or minimal educational experience, will need additional help and support to maximise their remaining time in compulsory education. A range of systems are in place to address this issue. The pilot Secondary Home School partnership scheme provides bi-lingual support and should enable non-English speaking parents to engage in this process.

Career and transitions support services are available through Career Services raupara and other services. Career Services has a role to provide professional development to careers advisors and transitions teachers, employed by schools. Any senior school students, including those from migrant or refugee backgrounds, who are at risk of leaving without a clear career, training or education pathway, require additional time with a careers adviser to focus on their achievements and refine their planning.

Appendix 3

Additional study support programmes for students from refugee backgrounds

Students from refugee backgrounds may require additional support to make best use of the time they have in compulsory education in New Zealand. Thus, in addition to education delivered via the national curriculum, there are further study support programmes¹¹ available to students from refugee backgrounds. These include:

- after school study support programmes for students in Years 5-8;
- intensive academic programmes during the school holidays;
- bi-lingual tutors for in-class academic support;
- homework support programmes, managed by schools or the community for students in Years 9-13.

All of these initiatives can be supported by the Ministry of Education's Refugee Education Coordinators. Support provided by the Auckland Volunteer Tutor Scheme, managed by the Centre for Refugee Education at the Reception Centre, has also made a significant contribution to the academic success of many students from refugee backgrounds.

Support for students with high and complex needs

ON TRACC is an inter-sectoral service aimed at addressing the needs of children and young people with severe behaviour and/or mental health needs from refugee backgrounds living in Central Auckland. It employs clinical specialists, other professionals and trans-cultural workers who work in collaboration to address the needs of refugee children and young people up to 20 years of age who have severe mental health/behavioural issues.

The approach adopted includes considering the children and young people in their family and community setting, and addressing their needs in a way that recognises these dimensions of their lives. The service has operated as a pilot since October 2003 and is due to finish in September 2006. The aspects of ON TRACC that have shown to be effective will be integrated into the core responsibility of existing agencies under the leadership of the Department of Labour.

¹¹ All these programmes can be funded out of the discretionary Flexible Funding Pool, managed by the Ministry of Education's Refugee Education Coordinator.

Appendix 4

The Youth Transition Service

The Youth Transition Service is targeted at school leavers 'at risk' of not entering employment, including refugee youth. It will provide career training, job-seeking advice, information on educational opportunities and customised support for at-risk school leavers. The Youth Transition Service is a partnership between the Ministry of Social Development and 14 local authorities. It is contracted through Work and Income, providing funding for regional programmes which provide at-risk youth with:

- access to career planning and job-seeking help;
- encouragement and assistance to take advantage of educational and training opportunities;
- customised support and guidance to facilitate their pathway into work, education or training.

The services are currently operating in Waitakere City and Manukau City (Manurewa ward). Currently, school leavers from refugee backgrounds have not been explicitly identified as a priority group for this scheme.

Youth at risk are also a target group for Career Services rapuara and they are encouraged to access free career guidance and pathway planning through the use of local Career Centres, Kiwi Careers and the Careerpoint freephone service.

Appendix 5

Ministry of Education initiatives to support family involvement in schools

Families Learning Together

A series of booklets entitled *Families Learning Together* are published in English, Arabic, Somali, Farsi, Khmer, Hindi, Amharic, Chinese and Korean.

The booklets are designed to give families information about how to support their child at home and provide information about school expectations. It is available free to schools, who obtain copies to give to parents when their child enrolls at school.

Computers in Homes for Refugee Families initiative

The Computers in Homes for Refugee Families project aims to enhance educational opportunities for families through developing expertise in the use of information and communication technologies. The purpose of this project is to:

- provide digital opportunities for families from refugee backgrounds and help them access information through information and communication technologies;
- enhance learning outcomes for family members (children and parents); and
- support literacy gains and encourage families to actively engage in their children's learning.

Home-School Partnerships Programme

The Home-School Partnership programme aims to build positive relationships between primary schools, families and communities resulting in:

- much higher levels of contact between schools and communities;
- parents having a greater understanding of, and involvement in, their children's education.

The programme was originally targeted at schools with significant numbers of Pasifika students. Parent groups from migrant and refugee communities have also formed in some of these schools. From 2005, the programme is being offered to all primary schools who wish to develop more effective home-school partnerships. A home-school partnership model is also being developed for secondary school students and their families.

Integrated approach to ESOL learning through school and community education

The provision of adult ESOL classes on school sites, attended by children from migrant and refugee backgrounds, makes it readily accessible to parents in local areas. It also increases their familiarity and confidence with the school environment.

A few schools in Auckland include adult students in their day classes, either as part of their ordinary classroom programmes or in specialist ESOL classes funded through community education. There is currently no charge for adult students at schools if at least half of their programme consists of subjects for the National Certificate of Educational Achievement.

Two of the most challenging issues for refugees in accessing ESOL in the Auckland region are timing to fit with childcare arrangements and transport. In terms of location, schools are most often community-based and within walking distance. If they have the space on-site or there is suitable accommodation nearby, other agencies should be encouraged to work with schools to facilitate this approach through:

- providing responsive programmes for pre-school children. The Ministry of Education has funding available for early childhood programmes when there are significant numbers of children from refugee backgrounds attending;
- after-school ESOL classes for parents, timed to fit with Out of School Care (OSCAR) programmes and/or homework schemes so that school-age children are being cared for whilst parents attend their classes.

For this approach to be feasible, it needs to involve co-operation from the Tertiary Education Commission (fundere of ESOL), schools, the Ministry of Education (responsible for early childhood education and homework centre funding), the Ministry of Social Development and the National Association for OSCAR (OSCAR funding), along with relevant providers. A good example of this is the unique¹² Selwyn College family literacy/English educational programme in Auckland which has been a beacon for students from refugee backgrounds, in particular large groups from Kosovo, Burma and a group of unaccompanied minors from Afghanistan.

In addition to meeting the needs of school-age students, the college has developed programmes and successfully sought funding and property to cater for adults of the community and mothers and children, including an early childhood centre.

¹² A similar provision exists in Christchurch at Hagley College.

As well as supporting access to family literacy and English language programmes, this initiative is extremely effective in building parental confidence and in creating a sense of social cohesion in the community as the families feel supported and welcomed. It encourages inter-generational relationships, as parents become familiar with the New Zealand schooling environment in which their children and other young people are involved.

Appendix 6

Refugee and Migrant Education Coordinators

To co-ordinate and ensure access to quality education for migrant and refugee children, the Ministry of Education established Migrant and Refugee Education Co-ordinators' positions in all its regional offices, as well as at national level. There is one regional Refugee Education Coordinator and two Migrant Education Co-ordinators in Auckland. Some of their key tasks include:

- developing and implementing risk management strategies for all newly-arrived students;
- facilitating development and solutions for the integration of these students into New Zealand schools;
- working with schools to engage families in education, enhancing children's schooling and the education of parents;
- disseminating information to local schools and other local groups about government policies, e.g. new initiatives or support available for refugees;
- implementing and providing feedback on Ministry policies targeting students;
- enhancing the quality of education at all levels of the education system from early childhood (working with other teams within the Ministry) to tertiary education (working closely with the Tertiary Education Commission); and
- building strong, local, inter-agency networks with both government and non-governmental agencies at a regional level.