

RESEARCH DIRECTIONS

Supporting Refugee Students

Dr Tania Ferfolja and Dr Loshini Naidoo from the School of Education, along with partner investigators Mr Eric Brace and Ms Mary-Ruth Mendel from the Australian Literacy and Numeracy Foundation, are reviewing an innovative high school based program to establish how best to support refugee students. This research has been funded by the Australian Literacy and Numeracy Foundation (ANLF).

'Secondary school students from other countries who have come to Australia as refugees need a lot of support in school in order to develop academically, psychologically and socially' says Dr Ferfolja. 'The Refugee Action Support (RAS) program is a homework and study assistance program that aims to provide academic and literacy support to refugee students in western Sydney high schools. Supported by the University of Western Sydney, the Australian Literacy and Numeracy Foundation, and the NSW Department of Education and Training, the program uses university students who are studying the Master of Teaching degree as tutors. Most schools that use RAS have developed their own program designs and structures to suit the particular needs of the school and the RAS students.' As Dr Naidoo explains, 'we want to know how successful these designs are – are there things that work well, and components that don't work so well?'

Using case-studies and interviews with tutors, students, teachers and program co-ordinators, this research will explore what elements make up the various RAS programs in each school. It will review how these evolved and are implemented, and what program characteristics are most successful. The team will also study how the RAS program supports the students involved and what effects participation has on the academic achievement, acculturation and social development of the refugee students.



This project will provide vital information about how to best design and implement the RAS program in NSW secondary schools. By maximizing the benefits of the RAS program for all participants, this research could potentially improve the lives and future prospects of refugee high school students throughout Australia.

Project Title: Supporting Refugee Students through the RAS initiative: What works in Schools

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