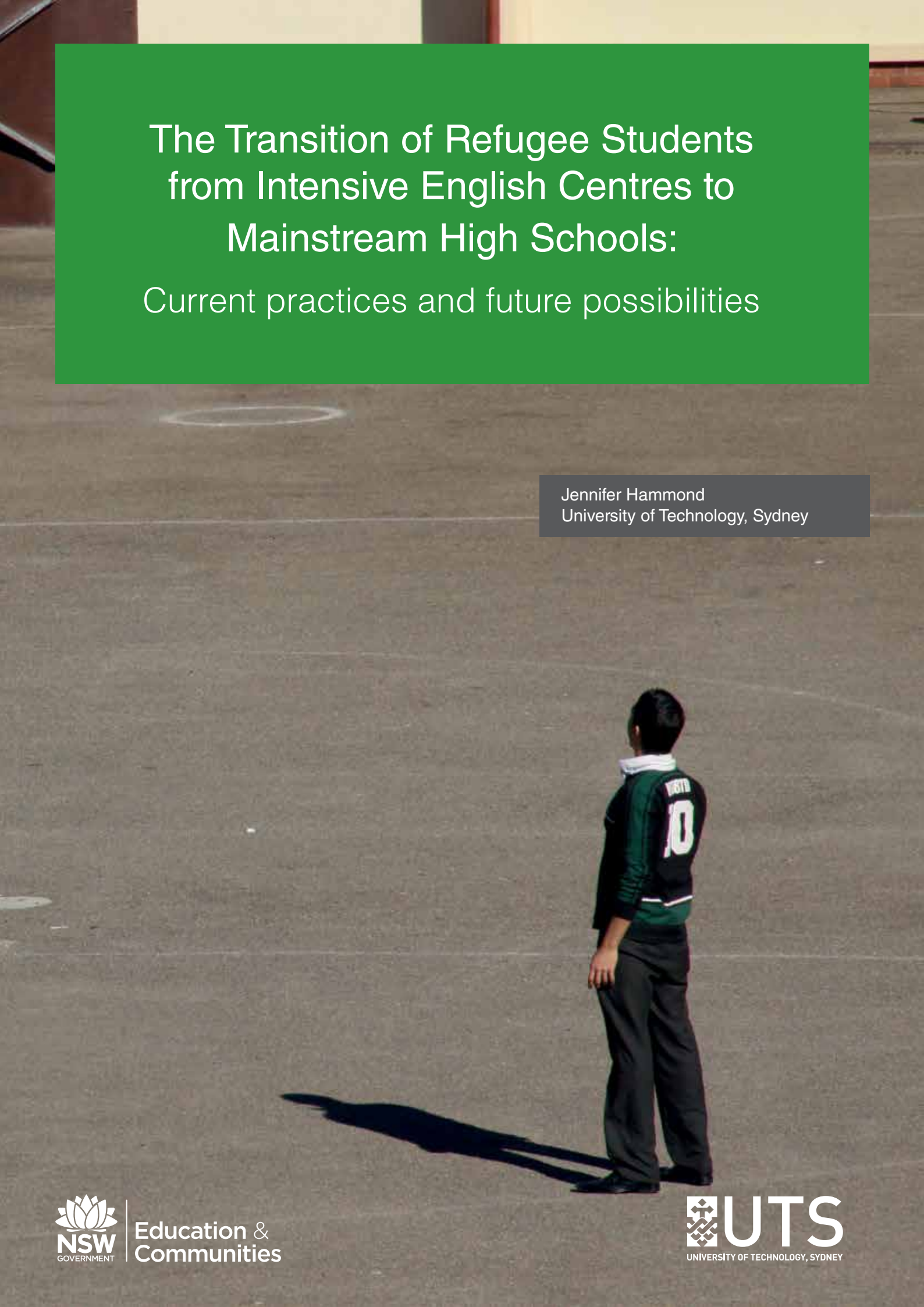
The Transition of Refugee Students from Intensive English Centres to Mainstream High Schools:

Current practices and future possibilities

Jennifer Hammond
University of Technology, Sydney



NSW GOVERNMENT Education & Communities

UTS UNIVERSITY OF TECHNOLOGY, SYDNEY

Jennifer Hammond
University of Technology, Sydney
Researcher and author of report

Equity, Learning and Leadership
NSW Department of Education and Communities

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1. Executive summary

This document reports on outcomes from a research project that investigated the transition of refugee students from Intensive English Centres (IECs) to high schools. This period of transition has been identified by researchers, consultants and teachers as a challenging time for refugee students and students with refugee-like experiences. The purpose of the research was to address this issue by developing a better understanding of the educational experiences and challenges that refugee students face in the transition. The project built on previous work into the social and welfare needs of refugee students, but differed from this work in its emphasis on students' teaching and learning experiences within IECs and high schools. It also built on previous work that has addressed the importance of English language and literacy development for English as an Additional Language (EAL) students — including refugee-like students, but differed from that work in its emphasis on analysis of actual lessons and the teaching and learning practices within those lessons.

The project consisted of a small-scale study in two IECs and two high schools. It concentrated on teaching and learning practices in the latter stages of enrolment in IECs and early stages of enrolment in high schools, and on the experiences of students aged around 14-16 who were typically entering high school in years 8 or 9. Schools were selected for the project on the basis that they already had substantial programs in place to support refugee students. Our purpose has been to draw on positive models provided by these schools, but also to identify possible areas for future improvement. Our intention is that other schools will be able to learn from the questions asked in the project and from research outcomes, in relation to their own programs and the ways they support refugee and other EAL students.

Data collection and analysis in the project included:

- focus group interviews with 41 teachers and 21 students in both IECs and high schools;
- observations and recordings of 32 lessons in core curriculum subjects in both IECs and high schools.

Analysis of lessons drew on outcomes from our previous research and on the NSW Quality Teaching Model (NSW DET, 2003; 2004). Analysis of interviews involved transcriptions and content analysis to identify major and recurring themes.

Ethics approval for the project was obtained from University of Technology, Sydney (UTS) and from NSW Department of Education and Communities.

Outcomes and key findings from the project

Outcomes from the project included:

- insights into the transition experiences of refugee students between IECs and high schools from both students' and teachers' perspectives;
- insights into the pedagogical experiences of refugee students and their teachers in IECs and high schools.

Key findings from the project

Two major general findings emerged from analysis of all data. These were:

- The overall resilience of the refugee students

  Despite their previous experiences, and the substantial challenges they face in adapting to life and schooling in Australia, the students overwhelmingly showed a positive attitude to their lives and to their futures in Australia. They were determined to do something substantial with their lives, and were perceptive and realistic about what this might entail. The students also revealed very positive attitudes to school. Despite their anxieties, both before and after the transition to high school, overall, they were very enthusiastic about being at high school and were enjoying the experience.

- The strength of research schools' programs in supporting students

  Analyses of all data from the project confirmed that the research schools had in place programs that were successful in addressing needs of their refugee students (and students recognise this). Schools were particularly strong in the following areas:

  - providing welcoming and supportive learning environments at whole school levels and within individual classrooms;
  - providing a range of innovative and creative programs at whole school level and within classrooms that specifically targeted students' emotional and educational needs, and supported them in their transition from IEC to high school.

A number of more specific, and at times overlapping, findings also emerged from analysis of data in the project. These are addressed under the following headings:

- the transition between IECs and high schools;
- well-being and welfare of students;
- pedagogical practices.

The transition between IECs and high schools

Outcomes from the research indicate that, at least in schools participating in the research, the transition overall was a positive experience for most students. Despite some anxiety and stress when they first arrived at high school, students were generally positive about the experience. As one student said: *You know, in IEC,…. they prepare you for going to high school, but this high school is preparing us for our life, you know, it's a different thing. It's preparing us for our future and giving us more information and inspiration for other things*.

As indicated, all participating schools were characterised by welcoming and supportive learning environments. IECs and high schools had programs in place to assist students both before and after transition. Educational support for refugee and other EAL students was a priority, and students felt they were progressing well. They were generally enthusiastic about their educational progress both at IECs and high school, and were insightful about ways in which teachers helped them learn. The personal commitment of many teachers who made themselves available to help individual students during and after school also contributed to welfare and educational support in all schools.

Despite the generally smooth transition between IEC and high school, both teachers and students had suggestions on how this process could be further supported. These suggestions included:

- more sharing of information about students between IECs and high school, and ensuring information sent to high schools from the IECs reached teachers who were working with students;

- providing IEC students with more high school 'taster' experiences prior to their transition to high school;
- 'doubling up' of curriculum content at IECs and high school to assist students in the early days of high school;
- where possible, enabling students to transit to high school at the beginning of the academic year rather than at the beginning of each term. (IEC teachers pointed out that this already happens if possible, but transition depends on the timing of initial IEC enrolment which occurs throughout the year.)

Wellbeing and welfare of students

In addition to the innovative and effective programs for their students both at whole school level and at the level of individual classrooms, outcomes from analyses of lessons confirmed that teachers consistently provided supportive and inclusive learning environments in their classrooms where students felt valued and respected. In interviews, students were conscious of the major differences between schooling (or lack of it) in their home countries and in Australia, and they compared Australian schooling experiences very positively with their previous educational experiences.

There were a number of factors evident in IECs and high schools that contributed to the overall wellbeing and welfare of students. Both settings provided support programs that were designed to address the specific needs of students. Amongst others, these programs included:

- parallel English/ EAL/D programs (that specifically support students' on-going English language development, while also engaging with study of the English curriculum);
- homework support programs (supported by university student volunteers);
- Refugee Transition Program: that provided additional language and literacy support for refugee students during their transition from intensive English programs into high school and helped them transition from school to further education, training or employment. Supported by a program coordinator, this program aimed to provide refugee students with access to high challenge academic work while also developing the language, literacy and study skills necessary to enable them to engage with this high challenge work;
- TAFE and university mentoring programs: to provide students with insights into possible post-school pathways;
- bilingual/bicultural support to assist students' settlement, orientation and learning.

The students themselves also contributed in positive ways to the school learning environments. Interviews pointed to a range of attributes that helped the students cope with school. These included students' resilience; their recognition of the importance of education and their enthusiasm for schooling; their strong work ethic and determination to succeed; and their insights into their own educational strengths and weaknesses.

> *For refugee students who are especially vulnerable, a safe and secure learning environment provides the essential foundation for their educational success — without this, little educational progress is possible.*

For refugee students who are especially vulnerable, a safe and secure learning environment provides the essential foundation for their educational success — without this, little educational progress is possible. The schools that participated in this project provide positive models of supportive learning environments, and of the kinds of programs and strategies that address the specific needs of refugee and other EAL students.

Pedagogical practices

The project offers insights into the nature of current pedagogical practices in IECs and high schools, and the extent to which they are supportive of refugee and other EAL students. These insights drew on analyses of lessons, and of teachers' and students' interviews.

Although there was considerable variation between lessons in both settings, the analysis showed quite a strong emphasis across lessons on intellectually challenging curriculum content. That is, students in most lessons from both IECs and high schools had access to quite high challenge curriculum work (Deep Knowledge). However, there was less consistency across lessons in ensuring students were able to understand and engage with that content. That is, there was less consistent evidence of Deep Understanding and Substantive Communication, especially in high school lessons.

Analyses suggested that while at IECs, refugee and other EAL students were generally able to engage quite deeply with their curriculum work. However, students' levels of understanding and engagement seemed to diminish, rather than increase, when they made the transition from IEC to high school. Outcomes from analyses of lessons were consistent with comments from high school teachers who spoke of conflicting pressures to 'get through' mandatory curriculum content while also trying to ensure all students were able to understand and engage intellectually with that work. This overall pattern is also consistent with outcomes from research undertaken by Miller and her colleagues (eg, Miller, 2009; Miller & Windle, 2010; Windle & Miller, 2012), in which high school teachers reported pressure to get through the curriculum and a lack of time and resources, with the result they were unable to support their refugee background students in ways that they would like.

Pressure to 'get through the curriculum' was further increased when teachers worked with students who had minimal or disrupted schooling prior to coming to Australia. Teachers spoke of the considerable pressure they faced when trying to work with students within the one class who have very diverse emotional, linguistic and educational needs. High school teachers, in particular, stated that they would like more information and support in their work with students who had experienced minimal or disrupted prior schooling.

Overall findings from both lessons and interviews point to a number of areas where pedagogical practices could be further strengthened. These include:

- further emphasis on planning for and implementing scaffolding and 'message abundancy' within schools to ensure teachers' existing awareness of effective pedagogical strategies (evident in their interviews) is translated into consistent and systematic provision of appropriate support across lessons;
- more support for teachers to further develop their own knowledge of language, and of ways of incorporating systematic and explicit teaching of academic language and literacy across the curriculum;
- more emphasis on making the purpose of learning explicit to students. This would involve more emphasis on WHY learning about specific topics and concepts is important and relevant, and HOW it is significant to people's lives in and out of school.
- more 'unpacking' and support for students with assessment tasks. This would address one of the areas of students' greatest sources of anxiety, and would help them with the challenge of trying to work out what was required in specific assessment tasks.

These areas are elaborated later in the report and are addressed in the Recommendations.

Summary of Recommendations

Recommendation 1: Further strengthen the process of transition between IECs and high schools by addressing a number of specific strategies

These include:

- Consider timing of transition between IEC and high school;
- Further strengthen connections between IECs and high schools.

Recommendation 2: Build on the model of transition support that is provided by the research schools

The IECs and high schools that participated in the research provide very strong models of supportive and welcoming learning environments that benefit refugee and other EAL students.

We recommend that other schools with significant numbers of refugee and other EAL students build on the models of support that are evident in the research schools.

Recommendation 3: Further strengthen classroom practices to ensure refugee and other EAL students are more systematically supported to engage with intellectually challenging curricula

The research provided evidence that refugee and other EAL students generally had access to high challenge curriculum content, but had less access to high levels of systematic support. We recommend the following:

- more attention to scaffolding;
- more systematic and explicit focus on academic language and literacy development;
- more focus on explicit goals and expected learning outcomes;
- more 'unpacking' of requirements and expectations in relation to assessment tasks and exams;
- more focus on needs of students who have experienced minimal or disrupted schooling (see also Recommendation 5).

Recommendation 4: Strengthen support for mainstream and EAL teachers who are working with refugee and other EAL students by providing ongoing access to targeted professional development programs

In order to achieve Recommendation 3, we further recommend that teachers who work with refugee and other EAL students have ongoing access to relevant professional support.

Recommendation 5: Provide further support for teachers working with students from minimal or disrupted educational backgrounds

A number of related strategies are necessary to provide appropriate ongoing support for teachers working with refugee and other EAL students who have had minimal or disrupted schooling. We therefore recommend:

- targeted professional development programs;
- development of appropriate teacher resources;
- building on models of successful interventions;
- follow up research to further investigate challenges and successes of working with low literacy students.

These Recommendations are elaborated at the end of the Report.

2. Background to the research

This document reports on outcomes from a research project that investigated the transition of refugee students from Intensive English Centres (IECs) to NSW government high schools. When high school age students with limited English first arrive in NSW, they are able to attend an IEC for the first 4-5 terms of their education in the country. They then make the transition to a local high school where they join the 'mainstream' education system. There is some flexibility in the system as to when students make the transition — in NSW students can spend up to five terms in an IEC. However, at that point, regardless of their educational progress students must make the transition to high school.

> *... a key aim of the research was to learn more about the nature of teaching and learning experiences of refugee students in IECs and in high school.*

The purpose of the research was to investigate the process of transition by developing a better understanding of the educational experiences and challenges faced by refugee students. The project built on previous work into the social and welfare needs of refugee students (eg Earnest, Housen & Gillieatt, 2007; Vickers, 2007), but differed from this work in its emphasis on the teaching and learning experiences of students both before and after their transition to high school. It also built on previous work that addressed the importance of English language and literacy development for refugee and other EAL students (eg, Brown, Miller & Mitchell, 2006; Chegwidden & Thompson, 2008; Dooley, 2009; Oliver, Haig & Grote, 2009), but differed from that research in its broader focus on educational experiences of refugee students in both IECs and high schools, and in its emphasis on analysis of actual lessons and the teaching and learning practices within those lessons.

Specific questions addressed in the project were:

- how do students, teachers and school executive staff perceive and experience the transition between IEC and high school? What positives and negatives exist for them in current practices?
- what implications can be drawn by teachers, schools and the NSW Department of Education and Communities for further facilitating the transition between IECs and mainstream high schools?
- what are the teaching and learning experiences of refugee students in IECs and in high schools?
- to what extent, and how, do teaching and learning practices construct learning environments that support and also challenge diverse groups of refugee students?
- what overall implications can be drawn for improving educational outcomes for refugee students?

2.1 Research design

As indicated, the major purpose of the research was to learn more of current practices before and after refugee students' transition to mainstream high school. Our aim, therefore, was to develop understanding and insights, rather than to implement change. The research was primarily ethnographic in orientation and was located in a small number of school research sites. It aimed to develop a detailed account of the students' experiences from the perspective of the students, but also from the perspective of teachers and bilingual support staff who worked with these students, and of school executive staff who were responsible for managing the schools. The research thus concentrated on teaching and learning practices in the latter stages of enrolment in IECs and early stages of enrolment in high schools.

Location of research

The research took place in two IECs and two high schools. Selection of research schools was undertaken in negotiation with educational advisors from the Multicultural Programs Unit, NSW Department of Education and Communities. Schools were identified and invited to participate in the research on the grounds that they already had a number of programs in place to support refugee students. Additionally, we selected one IEC that was physically located in the same grounds, and one that was not located in the same grounds as the high school into which the students were transferring.

The students

Students aged around fourteen to sixteen had been identified by educational advisors as being particularly vulnerable in the transition from IEC to high school, and hence the research focused on students who were in this age range and who were typically entering high school in years 8 or 9.

In collaboration with relevant executive staff and teachers, we identified appropriate classes in each of the selected IECs and also identified a small number of students (5 or 6) within that class for detailed study. Our aim here was to follow the same students from IEC to high school. As it turned out, logistical challenges (primarily of identifying the appropriate number of students who were intending to transit at the same time to the same high school) made this difficult. However, we were able to follow some students directly from IEC to high school.

2.2 Data collection and analysis

Major sources of data for the project were:

- interviews with school staff and students;
- observations and recordings of lessons in core curriculum subjects.

Interviews

Interviews were conducted with groups of refugee students, with groups of classroom teachers, with executive staff, and with bilingual support staff.

Student interviews

A total of ten focus group interviews were conducted with students in the project. These involved twenty-one different students. Four interviews, involving fifteen students were held at the IECs. Six interviews were held in high schools. These involved nine students, three of whom had already been interviewed at IECs.

Initial focus-group interviews with IEC students addressed questions about their learning prior to coming to Australia, their attitudes to school, their perceptions of their own academic progress in English, their expectations and aspirations and their hopes and concerns regarding the transition to high school. Second interviews with students, now in high school, addressed questions about students' experiences of high school, their perceptions of their own learning and academic progress in core curriculum areas, and their aspirations on completing school.

School staff interviews

A total of forty-one teachers and bilingual support staff were interviewed. Of these, five were executive staff, twenty-nine were subject teachers (including three head teachers); one was an EAL teacher; one was a Highly Accomplished Teacher; and five were bilingual support staff. The fourteen IEC teachers were also EAL teachers.

IEC 1: 10 subject teachers, including one head teacher, one executive staff
4 bilingual support staff

IEC 2: 4 subject teachers
1 bilingual support staff

High School 1: 8 teachers, including one senior executive, 2 head teachers,
3 subject teachers, 1 Highly Accomplished Teacher, and 1 EAL teacher

High School 2: 14 teachers, including 3 executive/teaching staff and 11 subject teachers

Interviews with executive staff and teachers, at the IECs and high schools addressed questions about their perceptions of the students' major strengths, their needs and overall progress; about current transition processes and practices and teachers' views of these practices. They also addressed questions about teaching practices. Interviews with bilingual support staff addressed perceptions of the students' major strengths, their needs and overall progress.

Analysis of interviews proceeded as follows. All interviews were transcribed and summaries from the transcriptions were made from each interview. These summaries then provided the basis for content analysis of student and teacher interviews to identify major and recurring themes. These themes provide the basis for presentation of interview outcomes.

Lesson observations and recordings

A total of thirty-two lessons were recorded and analysed. These were from IECs and high schools as follows:

IECs	High schools
IEC 1 (5 lessons)	High school 1 (10 lessons)
English x 3 lessons Maths x 2 lessons	English x 4 lessons Maths x 3 lessons Science x 3 lessons
IEC 2 (9 lessons)	High school 2 (8 lessons)
Maths x 3 lessons English x 3 lessons History x 3 lessons	Science x 3 lessons English x 3 lessons Geography x 1 lesson Maths x 1 lesson

Recordings were limited to the core curriculum subjects of English, Maths, Science and History (or Geography). Our original intention was to observe and record lessons from each curriculum subject over three days (one day per week over a three week sequence) in each IEC and high school. The complexity of school timetables and availability of teachers meant this was not always possible, and at times there was more than a week between observations of lessons.

However, three lessons were recorded for most subjects. Copies of relevant key teaching resources from both IECs and high schools, and samples of focus students' work were also collected.

Analysis of lessons drew both on outcomes of previous research (Hammond & Gibbons, 2005; Michell & Sharpe, 2005; Hammond, 2008, Gibbons, 2008) and on Dimensions and selected Elements within the NSW Quality Teaching Model (NSW DET, 2003; 2004) (see section 3.2.1 for details of approach to analysis of lessons). To ensure reliability, three researchers were involved in analysis of lessons. One was the chief investigator of the project; the second was an experienced academic whose research is widely acknowledged as having made a significant contribution to our understanding of the needs of refugee students; and the third was an experienced educational researcher and consultant who had previous experience working with the NSW Quality Teaching Model. The second and third researchers were only involved in analysis of lessons — that is, they had not been involved in the design and implementation of the research and hence brought an independent perspective to analysis of lessons.

The analysis of lessons involved the following procedures: working with recordings of lessons and observation notes, each of the three researchers independently analysed each lesson. The three researchers then met to compare their analyses. While consistently there was broad agreement between researchers, at times some differences were evident. In such cases, the researchers together reviewed the evidence from transcripts and agreed on the final analysis.

Ethics

Ethics approval was obtained from The University of Technology, Sydney and also from the NSW Department of Education and Communities. In line with consent approvals, students and parents were fully informed of the research purposes and procedures. Consent letters were translated into relevant languages; information sessions were provided for teachers, students, and where possible for parents; and bilingual support staff were involved in discussions with parents and students. Efforts were also made to ensure the implementation of the research made minimal disruptions on students' or teachers' time.

3. Findings from different sources of data

The purpose of this section is to present outcomes from the major sources of data. The section begins with a summary of findings from students' and school staff interviews. It then presents a summary of findings from analyses of IEC and high school lessons.

3.1 Interviews

3.1.1 Student interviews

As indicated, 10 focus group interviews, involving 21 students, were conducted during the project. Four interviews, involving fifteen students were conducted at IECs, and six interviews involving nine students were conducted at high schools. The high school interviews included three students who had previously been interviewed at an IEC.

IEC student interviews

Interviews with IEC students addressed students' learning prior to coming to Australia, their attitudes to school, their perceptions of their own academic progress in English, their expectations and aspirations and their hopes and concerns regarding the transition to high school.

Prior experiences of schooling compared with schooling in Australia

Although IEC students had very diverse experiences, all agreed that their prior schooling experiences were very different from those they had experienced since coming to Australia. Some had experienced disrupted schooling as they had been in refugee camps in Pakistan or Kenya. A couple of the girls had attended the Angelina Jolie school in Kenya (a selective school established in Kenyan refugee camps that is better resourced than other schools.) Consequently, these girls had a stronger educational base than some others. All had experienced some disruption in their schooling, and they spoke about the need to adjust when they began school in Australia.

Although students had very diverse experiences, all agreed that their prior schooling experiences were very different from those they had experienced since coming to Australia.

Despite this, all students spoke very positively about school in Australia. They mentioned a number of specific differences in general school atmosphere and environment: no corporal punishment in Australia; schools are much less regimented; they are more tolerant of students' behaviour; there is equality of treatment (that is, no sectarian differences); and there is political freedom. They commented on differences in teaching practices: a more diverse curriculum in Australia (with sport, music, dancing); smaller classes; the use of computers; the value of excursions, movies; their participation in group work and discussions. As one student explained: *the lesson is more like exciting, they connect to let you think, not like in (name of country), the teacher like one plus one equal two, yeah, you have to remember. But the teacher in Australia let you think, why one plus one equal two.*

How well students thought they were progressing at school and what particularly helped them in their study

Generally IEC students felt that they were 'going well' at school. Although they did not use the term, when discussing what helped them, students all referred in various ways to the importance of 'message abundancy' (see explanation of this term in *Summary of Findings* later in the report).

Examples of message abundancy identified by students included:

- teachers repeating tasks — for example, students were asked to write a story, the teacher checked students' drafts and provided feedback, students worked further on drafts, the teacher checked drafts again;
- teachers providing clear explanations — and then providing further explanations if students did not understand;
- teachers providing support for learning new words: as one student explained: *She say, you know what 'room' is? 'Room' is like this, and she write and she draw and stuff like this. So she explains without even asking her*;
- going on excursions where students can see 'real things'; ie, the process of seeing something, experiencing it, then talking and writing about it was helpful;
- using laptops and being able to work with the internet; being able to work online and do homework online so that they could go over the work a number of times.

When asked what they would do if they were experiencing difficulty at school, students replied that they would ask their teacher or year advisor for help, and they would also ask friends; some would ask parents first.

What helps them most with learning English

All IEC students who were interviewed had studied some English prior to coming to Australia. In regard to what helps them, students mentioned a number of strategies used by teachers. These included: providing opportunities for repeating words and phrases; providing clear explanations; talking clearly '*so we can understand*'; being available when students asked for help: teachers who '*are nice and kind to us*'; providing help with specific words. Students also identified other strategies that helped them: opportunities to borrow books for practice in reading; opportunities to watch English movies; and having friends from many countries so they have to speak English to each other (this is their common language).

Students' expectations about the transition to high school

No students had had prior visits to high schools, and so were not really sure what to expect. However, despite feeling slightly apprehensive, they were generally positive. One student said: *The important thing is, are you going forward or are you going back?* Another student explained *I feel really good because I see teachers there really help us to get more and to practice to have confidence before going to high school. And also we learn more things when we go to high school so we'll do it better.*

Students expected to have initial difficulties but to improve as time went by. As one student said: *first term I won't be very good, and maybe very upset because my English not very good, and others can't understand me*. However, IEC students also had a number of specific concerns about the transition to high school. These included: not being able to understand English well enough — as one student explained: *no one will teach you English and you must learn very well,*

you must practice your English; teachers may talk too fast and students may not understand the teachers' accents; having difficulty with reading; not having friends at high school; the possibility of being bullied by other students; and not being able to do assessment tasks.

Students' future aspirations

IEC students had high but clear aspirations. A number wanted to be doctors; others wanted to be a policeman; dentist; lawyer; accountant; dietician; pilot. One wanted to go into the army *because I want to save other people, like in Afghanistan*. In some cases there was pressure from families for specific vocations, in others not.

High school student interviews

Interviews with high school students addressed students' recollections of attending IECs, their experiences of the transition to high school, their perceptions of their own learning and academic progress in core curriculum areas and their aspirations on completing school.

Students' initial experiences and recollections of schooling at IECs in Australia

Interviews began with high school students reflecting on their IEC experiences. Most students said that when they arrived at the IEC they spoke little English, but they had substantial help from IEC teachers who *didn't talk too fast* and who *used easy language*. Students had generally enjoyed the opportunity to learn English at IECs, and they clearly recognised the care and respect provided by teachers there, and the supportive learning environment. They also liked the small classes where they were individually known and supported, and where teachers helped with library work and homework. One student said *I think we should stay longer time in the IEC, maybe one year or more*.

Generally students felt they had learned well at IECs. They noted the value of having opportunities to learn about subjects and topics that are later covered in high school. They said this gave them confidence and a bit of a head start. A number of students found the work at IECs quite easy, and felt they could have been intellectually pushed more. One student was very articulate about this *they should give more harder things to their children*. She said that her level at IEC was too low, and that while there, she should have been pushed more so that she was working at a higher level. She also argued that students should be very carefully placed in classes at their appropriate learning level when they get to high school: *because the level that I was doing in the IEC … was too low, … when I came to high school it was a different level, so what I learned in the IEC … Like in Maths, it wasn't the same things that we're doing right now (in high school). Or in Science. Or in History*. Consequently, she found the jump between IEC and high school was too big.

What is different/difficult at high school

Students spoke extensively about the transition to high school. Most had expected high school to be more difficult *because the high school is the main school and the IEC is just getting ready for high school*, and they agreed that high school is harder (only one student found high school easier and more fun than IEC). Most students agreed that everything is difficult when they first arrive. For example: *The teachers, you can't understand them properly and then when you get the assessment in front of your eyes you can't even, you read it but you don't even know what you're saying yourself*.

Students reported being scared when they first arrived at high school, and that *it was difficult to make new friends, especially with Australian students*. It helped if they already knew some students who were attending the high school.

Students found they needed to make significant cultural and behavioural adjustments at high school. One student explained that people from the Middle East and Africa are culturally different and that, in addition, they come from very different school systems. She said: *compared to the Australian schools, (we have) more discipline, you know, we can't talk that much in front of our teachers*. Students noted that Ramadan can be a challenging time, because they are tired and lacking energy; also there is a lot going on at home so it is difficult to complete their homework.

> *The teachers, you can't understand them properly and then when you get the assessment in front of your eyes you can't even, you read it but you don't even know what you're saying yourself.*

Students noted there is more emphasis on punctuality at high school than at IEC. They also commented that they didn't like some of the disruptive students at high school — this makes them anxious and scared, but they said there is a lot of support at high school if bullying occurs. One student commented that studying Australian history had helped her when she first came to high school as *it helped me to understand why there are things in Australia that are not in different countries*. Cultural adjustments that students spoke about included developing greater awareness of school expectations. Students generally agreed that, as they became familiar with high school procedures and expectations they progressed better. *It's really different (than when they first arrived at high school). Because when we first came it was everything, like another thing from another world but now, we're getting used to it and we're learning*.

The topic that generated most discussion amongst students was assessment tasks. At high school, *there are more assignments and assessment tasks*, and students saw these as the most challenging aspect of high school. As one student explained: *So it* (high school) *was hard at the beginning, because we came straight from the IEC, all this assessment things*. Part of the challenge involved being more aware of what was required with assessment tasks, and of the need to get going with them rather than leaving them until close to due dates. One student explained: *Before, when we get assessment tasks or tests, we're like, we always like learnt after*, (she means they did not begin work on their assessments tasks early enough) *everything after but now we're like, as soon as we get something* (that is, assessment tasks) *we start now*. Students generally agreed that assignments and exams are the most challenging and stressful aspect of high school — in terms of the curriculum content that they are expected to know, but also in terms of the challenge of how to go about doing assignments (that is, knowing what is required; text types etc). Students also expressed anxiety about doing exams and were concerned about the time it took them to read exam questions with the consequence that their time for responding was limited. Although they found written assignments and exams challenging, students said they preferred these to oral presentations: *I feel shy when I stand in front of the pupil, I can't talk*. They generally preferred assignments that could be done online.

English language at high school

Interviews included discussion of students' own language use. Most students use their first language at home but increasingly use English with their friends, especially when those friends are from different cultural/linguistic backgrounds than their own. However, they also 'learn bits'

of each other's languages. The majority of interviewed students speak three-four languages (typically English is their third or fourth language).

Students spoke extensively about the demands of academic English at high school. For them, English at high school is harder than at IEC, and they felt *the teachers use harder language than the IEC teachers do, and they talk faster*. Despite this, most students said they could generally understand their teachers, and that the teachers were helpful and went out of their way to support students in understanding assignment questions and preparing for exams. They also said that EAL teachers helped them to understand lesson content and assignments. However, even when students could understand English in their classrooms, they found it very difficult to participate in class interactions as they were too shy to speak. A frequent comment was that even if they knew the required answer, they didn't have the confidence to speak in front of others, and they were scared that they would be laughed at. They felt more confident speaking English with their peers in small groups where they could generally understand each other.

The issue of 'message abundancy' (see *Summary of Findings*) arose again and again in discussions about what helps students with their English. Examples identified by students included:

- prior reading and vocabulary work;
- explanations supported by visuals;
- watching Australian movies or TV;
- being able to ask teachers or other students for help;
- group work with talking to other students (*like everybody brings their own idea and then bring it together to make it strong. Not just one person*);
- preparatory work where teacher reads to students and explains words prior to students engaging with specific topics;

Students were quite specific about what helps them to learn and remember new words:

- teacher explanations;
- written definitions on board;
- writing the new words in a diary.

Students said they had developed their own techniques to help here. One student explained

> *Some students used their first language to help remember words, but quite a few were hampered by lack of literacy in L1, and many now feel their literacy is stronger in English than in L1...*

this: *Like, you should just like mark the word, but it's individual, yeah, everybody does it differently. Like I mark the word in a colour and then I write it in the side what it means. Write it in my language … that's what helps me but everybody does it different*. Other students had different strategies: *I just write the meaning from the board and I will remember it*. Some students used their first language to help remember words, but quite a few were hampered by lack of literacy in L1, and many now feel their literacy is stronger in English than in L1: *Because I can't write it in my own language. … I'm not really good at it. Because when I came from Afghanistan I was only in (year 4) so I wasn't studying at all … and we didn't went school a lot at that time*.

Students also identified reading at high school as a major challenge. They need to do extensive reading and find they sometimes read too slowly — this is especially difficult when they are under pressure to complete assignments and exams. Students explained that the difficulty is to read fast enough to get a sense of meaning, but not so fast that words get mixed. Students don't particularly like reading but they recognise its importance. Their teachers sometimes read difficult passages and this helps students to get the general sense and meaning of the paragraph: *If there's like a paragraph, like very important that we really need to understand, like a long one, not like a little thing when they ask us a question but a bigger paragraph, our teachers, they read that for us because they know that if one of us reads it the other ones might not understand … so they actually read it for us*. After this students can look more closely at specific meaning of words: *After we read something, after we read a paragraph or text, our teacher asks us if we don't understand anything or we don't understand any words and then she explains it to us or she writes it on the board and then she explains us until we understand*. Summarising what they have read is also very difficult for students: *Like after reading a book, like maybe just a page and then the teacher is like, okay, can you tell me what happened? ... Cos sometimes the words in the book is really, really difficult. It's really difficult to say*.

Although writing generated less discussion than reading, a number of students did comment on the value of prior learning of specific text types at IECs, and how this had helped them when they got to high school.

Students had considerable insights into their own gaps in academic English. One student explained that she didn't have appropriate academic language for assignments, and she hadn't quite learned this in IECs. She said this was especially the case in high school where students are expected to write science reports; she commented that they had not been prepared for this level of report writing while in the IEC. In some cases, students reported their teachers at high school provided constructive and specific help. In other cases, it appeared that students did not get enough help with written English (for example, how to write specific assignments). Students commented that if they had not already learned about specific text types (like science reports) while at the IEC, they may not get much help at high school. Students agreed that academic writing was one of the biggest challenges in doing assessment tasks, and that *the other (Australian) kids, they already know it because they were born here, they went to school here. But us, no-one's going to teach us*.

Most positive aspects of high school

Despite the demands of academic English and of assignments, students generally were very positive about being at high school. They spoke of their increased self-confidence and of a sense of making progress with their lives. In the students' words, high school *gives you more idea of how to go further and it makes you happy that you are in the main school; when I look at my books and whatever teachers give me, I see I learn more; I feel like a high school girl with uniform… I feel more responsible, you know, like I feel like a real student, high school student, … we are all pretty excited when we came to high school. …Yeah. I feel proud of myself.*

Students said they could now think about their future more realistically and they had a sense of future direction. They could make friends; they liked opportunities to choose subjects and liked the variety that is available (including drumming, dancing etc); they feel they are less monitored at high school than IEC — for example they could go to the school library to work independently. Students also commented on the positive aspects of work experience and of having opportunities for TAFE/university visits, as these encouraged them to think and plan

ahead for their lives. They commented on the value of access to a homework centre where they could go when they needed help. (This was supported by a program that involved university students who volunteered to help refugee and other students with tutoring and support in specific subjects.)

The overall response to being at high school was summed up by one student as follows: *high school is serious, quite serious. You know, in IEC, just, like it was serious as well, it was really serious. But (...) they prepare you for going to high school but this high school's preparing us for our life, you know, it's a different thing. It's preparing us for our future and giving us more information and inspiration for other things … Now we're thinking seriously, selecting our subjects. Before we used to talk about fashion, we used to talk about this, now we talk about serious, about subjects, about future, about planning to go to TAFE*.

In follow up interviews, students were asked about their progress and participation in specific core curriculum areas.

English

Students generally said they enjoyed English classes and felt they were doing quite well. However, they were very conscious of the demands of English literacy here. Some high schools organised parallel English classes for IEC students for the first year or so after transition from IEC. These parallel classes appeared to make it easier for teachers to provide the specific support necessary for students to continue to develop their academic literacy skills.

As in their general discussion of academic English, students highlighted the challenges associated with reading: *After we read something, after we read a paragraph or text, our teacher asks us if we don't understand anything or we don't understand any words and then she explains it to us or she writes it on the board and then she explains us until we understand*. Students found written English assessment tasks were very hard — they were unsure of the appropriate register. One student explained: *Like, write in the English the way you should write, it's pretty hard … I know the structure (required of English essays), Miss told us before, like how we should write it. But the way she describe it, it's hard*. Students also found extended writing to be very demanding: *Yeah, mine was, like, really long, I think it was two pages*'. Some students also said that spelling could be difficult.

Students noted that previous study of similar topics helped with the study of English at high school. Some students had previously studied narrative in English at their IEC and were now studying narrative at high school. They found this very helpful *because we studied a lot in the IEC, writing narrative reviews and stuff like that. It's not something new to me, so I have an idea for it*. Others had not had this prior learning and were finding narratives more difficult, although they were helped *because the way my teacher explained*. One student said that learning about text types at IEC had been hard at the time, but had really helped him at high school. In English classes, students were studying the structure of narratives (orientation, complications, climax and coda, as well as resolution); they were aware of the meaning of 'themes' of a narrative: *the message the story is trying to tell*; all of this they said helped them create their own narratives, which they enjoyed.

In terms of specific teaching strategies, students found group work helpful and enjoyable, and they liked opportunities to 'talk through' ideas/information in groups *cause we can share our ideas*. Students liked opportunities for class discussions and to participate in educational games. They said they participated in these activities, despite being rather shy. They thought English lessons were fun because *we always do discuss, oral discussion in the class*.

One example of group work that students enjoyed was making a poster about shelter and homelessness (students were studying the text *Dear Nobody* and related themes of change and homeless youth at the time). Another example was project work where students undertook research to prepare a guide for Sydney, which could be given to people who were new in the area. It appears that despite their reluctance overall to participate in whole class discussions, in non-threatening situations, they enjoyed the experience.

Maths

Maths was an interesting curriculum area in regard to the refugee students. At high school, students were typically placed in mainstream Maths classes (rather than parallel classes). Despite the high conceptual challenge of these classes, and at times, the speed of delivery, students were generally able to follow lessons and participate quite actively. The big factor here appeared to be the extent of 'message abundancy' that was available to students. In one classroom, students could cope with a rapid pace of lessons because the teacher supported explanations with *drawing, all that stuff and the way to do it*. Students felt they were able to ask for help and they felt supported. This teacher frequently used physical demonstrations, board work, and wall charts to remind students of key formulae, all of which were accompanied by explanations. He also worked with groups and provided additional explanations as many times as necessary for students to understand concepts. Evidence from lesson recordings indicated that the refugee students had mostly understood relevant maths concepts and explanations. Students also reported that they liked being able to work online and they found various online programs very helpful as it enabled them to review specific concepts and pace their own learning.

A specific cultural issue arose in regard to Maths classes. Quite often students were asked to do rapid free drawing that is required in geometry. A number of students commented on how hard they found this. They liked to be more precise and careful in their drawings so they were 'perfect', and hence the students were too slow during lessons. They found this kind of estimate very different from requirements in their previous cultures.

Science

> *"I love science; it's different, you have to learn, you have to know research, like, have to go deep, deep, deep into it and I really like it."*

Students' responses to Science were more varied than for other high school curriculum areas. Some students loved Science and others found the subject very difficult. One student explained: *I love science; it's different, you have to learn, you have to know research, like, have to go deep, deep, deep into it and I really like it*. Students said that, where they had previously studied specific topics at the IEC, they were better prepared for Science at high school. One student explained that she had previously studied evolution at the IEC so when she studied evolution at high school she found this work quite easy. Other students complained that they found Science very hard and boring. Responses appeared to depend on the extent to which students had opportunities to 'do' Science, by investigating problems and doing experiments, as opposed to learning about Science through completion of worksheets. One student whose dream was to become a dentist said she needed to reassess her dream because she felt she could not cope with Science at high school.

Even students who were very positive about Science found assessment tasks challenging. Students described how initially they were very stressed by science assignments and by trying to work out what was required. One student explained: *when I got my first assignment for Science I was crying, I didn't know what to do because I didn't understand it*. Another student described her stress: *I got a headache, because I was learning, I had to sleep at one o'clock every day because of the Science, for, maybe for one week 'cause of the Science and I got a headache every day when I came to school, I was tired, my eyes were red*.

Although students agreed that assessment tasks become somewhat easier over time, they continued to regard assignments as a major challenge. They felt that participation in experiments helped with assignments as they could understand purposes and procedures of experiments, and this helped when they were required to write up outcomes of experiments *because you see what happens then you write it*. In some classes, where students were struggling with assignments, they were given the option of a modified assignment but then they lost 20 marks because it was modified. Students felt they were in a no-win situation. Students also found Science exams very stressful. They were not sure how to prepare for exams adequately and felt that although they tried to study they were not assessed on what they had studied.

The issue of academic writing was significant in Science assignments and exams. This included knowing the required genre, but also the ability to learn and use appropriate scientific vocabulary. Overall Science seemed to generate more stress for students than other curriculum areas.

What teachers can do to help

> *It seems the factor of 'message abundancy' is one of the most consistent messages to emerge from student interviews.*

When asked what they thought teachers could do to help most, students had quite specific suggestions. A number said that teachers needed to control the class and restrict the level of noise so that they could focus (the issue of other students' behaviour was raised a number of times). Students also emphasised the importance of teachers giving clear explanations. Follow-up interviews reiterated the importance of clear teacher explanations and of the willingness of teachers to go over and explain work again and again as necessary. Although some students were resistant to group work, they all valued clear teacher explanations. It seems the factor of 'message abundancy' is one of the most consistent messages to emerge from student interviews.

Recommendations for other students

Finally, students were asked what recommendations they would have for other students who were making the transition from IEC to high school. Their advice was consistent and insightful. It included the following:

- work hard; don't put off doing assignments — get right into them;
- study very hard and don't treat school like it is a game because it is very, very serious;
- think about your future and decide what you want to do, then study to achieve this, and don't just choose subjects because your friends choose them;
- school is not just about socialising, it's education and you come here to learn;
- be prepared to ask for help: *Always ask, always ask if you don't understand something, yeah, always ask, and don't be scared*.

3.1.2 School staff interviews

A total of forty-one teachers, school executive and support staff were interviewed. These included five executive staff; twenty-nine subject teachers, including 3 head teachers; one EAL teacher; one Highly Accomplished Teacher (HAT); and five bilingual support staff. Of the interviewed teachers, fourteen were from IECs and twenty-two from high schools. Interviews at both IECs and high schools addressed teachers' perceptions of students' major strengths and challenges; available support for students, and specific teaching strategies that teachers found helpful.

IEC teacher interviews

Support available to students

The most consistent finding to emerge from interviews with IEC teachers was the level of support that is provided for students. From teachers' comments, it is clear that IECs make good use of human and other resources to support their students. They appear to be very successful here, and at least in part, this is because of the commitment of teachers who consistently go well out of their way to support and assist their students. Counsellors also play an important role in providing positive and supportive learning environments for refugee and other recently arrived students.

In interviews, teachers referred to the following kinds of support that are consistently provided by IECs:

- careful monitoring of students' adjustment to school in Australia and their emotional and physical well-being;
- providing financial support where necessary;
- focusing on cultural adjustment through explicit teaching of expectations of Australian schools (and of the kind of behaviours that are considered appropriate at Australian schools);
- providing students with study skills support and homework support programs;
- systematically focusing on language and literacy development across the curriculum;
- enabling students to participate in programs that link the IEC with the community, with work experiences, and with further study courses at university or TAFE.

Challenges for students and what helps them address challenges

IEC teachers were asked about the challenges faced by refugee and other EAL students enrolled at IECs. Some of the challenges identified by teachers were specifically relevant to students' academic progress: the most pressing challenge faced by all IEC students was English language development, including developing control of academic language and literacy relevant to different curriculum areas. While many students made good progress here, those who had experienced minimal or disrupted schooling prior to their arrival in Australia faced huge educational gaps in cultural adjustment, including learning how to 'do school', and conceptual gaps. They also faced the greatest challenges in developing academic literacy. For these students the challenges of participating in school in Australia were most extreme.

Teachers also identified a number of other challenges faced by students. Many students were affected by family stress. This could involve dealing with past trauma, experiencing financial difficulties, social isolation, poor housing and so on. Students were often required to take

on the role of mediator between the family, school and wider community. Such a role could involve assisting family members or carers with translation between languages and between cultures. In addition, as teachers explained, girls were often expected to do a lot of work at home, for example, cooking, cleaning, shopping; interpreting for parents, and to take on a lot of responsibility for younger siblings. Such responsibilities placed pressure on the girls and impacted on their academic progress. It took time away from study, often made homework difficult and impacted on students' abilities to engage academically.

Despite these challenges, teachers noted their students' resilience, their enthusiasm for life and their willingness to learn and to work hard. Teachers also commented on their students' recognition and appreciation of the support that teachers provided for them (this was confirmed in students' interviews).

Challenges for teachers

IEC teachers were asked what major challenges they faced in their work with refugee and other EAL students. In their interviews they nominated challenges that to a large extent mirrored those faced by students. Teachers' greatest challenge was working with students who had minimal or disrupted previous schooling. They explained that although such students were often orally fluent in a number of languages, they had little or no literacy in any language. These students also had substantial conceptual gaps in educational knowledge and often no real understanding of what was involved in school learning or behaviour. The difficulties of working with the students were compounded by the fact that some were still dealing with the consequences of trauma and torture.

A further challenge identified by teachers was that of working with classes where students had very mixed abilities and levels of educational knowledge. For example, in Maths, some students had no mathematical concepts, while others had an advanced understanding from their prior education.

Educational approaches

IEC teachers' approaches to education with their students were guided by the requirement to work with curriculum frameworks (provided by DEC). In line with these frameworks, they focused extensively on supporting students' language and literacy development across the curriculum. This included work on text types, as well as grammar and vocabulary development. Teachers also carefully monitored their students' learning outcomes and provided extensive feedback to students about their work. They described their need to use specific strategies that were appropriate for students who were in a process of cultural and educational adjustment. Such strategies included:

- providing carefully structured scaffolding;
- planning learning activities that involved small steps;
- providing multiple opportunities for repetition and practice;
- making learning concrete in order then to move to more general and abstract concepts;
- building cultural/Australian/school knowledge that can often be taken for granted with other students.

Assisting students in the transition from IEC to high school

IEC teachers had a number of suggestions for further assisting students in their transition from IEC to high school. These included:

- ensuring all IEC and high school teachers are appropriately qualified. Teachers suggested EAL qualifications should be compulsory for all IEC and high school teachers working with refugee and other EAL students;
- enabling refugee students to have additional time in IECs and enabling more flexibility in response to needs of individual students, especially those with little or disrupted schooling.

Teachers also had quite specific suggestions about what works best to make the transition to high school easier for IEC students. In the final stages of IEC (prior to transition) they suggested:

- consciously preparing students for high school;
- arranging for IEC students to visit high schools. This could be for one or more days where students are able to participate in lessons;
- working to ensure students are familiar with high school expectations. For example teachers could use some high school assessment tasks to give a grounded reality to high school standards;
- preparing IEC students for what they will experience when they arrive at high school. For example, IECs could introduce students to topics from the secondary curriculum that they will study when they first arrive at high school; and they could familiarise students with textbooks that they will use when they arrive at high schools;
- ensuring detailed information about specific students is available to high schools.

IEC teachers also had suggestions about how best to support EAL students in their first weeks at high school. They suggested:

- ensuring that information from IECs about individual students actually reaches teachers who will be working with refugee and other EAL students;
- providing bridging classes for all IEC students when they first arrive in high school;
- ensuring good orientation/transition programs are in place to ensure refugee and other EAL students feel welcome, and providing intensive support for at least the first six months to one year;
- collaboration between IECs and high schools to ensure follow-up on the progress of individual students once they are in high school.

Bilingual support staff interviews

Both IECs that participated in the research project employed bilingual support staff. The five support staff interviewed for the project had all worked very hard and had overcome considerable difficulties to get to their present positions. They were justifiably proud of their achievements and believed they provided very positive role models for the IEC students.

> *The major role of bilingual support staff in IECs is liaising between school, students, families and communities.*

The major role of bilingual support staff in IECs is liaising between school, students, families and communities. This liaison takes many forms: working with individual students and families; interpreting at parent meetings; initiating and maintaining community contacts; trouble shooting; explaining school procedures to parents, and so on. They are required to interpret and translate between English and the home language for all those groups. In addition, they support students by working in the classroom to interpret for teachers and students, and to help students with schoolwork and homework. Then, depending on the school and on specific demands at the school, they may be expected to take on other roles: for example, library support work; assisting with vaccination program; assisting teachers with progress reports or data entry.

Major challenges for students

Bilingual support staff had clear views on what constituted the greatest challenges for refugee and other EAL students at IECs. They pointed out that most refugee students had experienced disrupted schooling and some were still dealing with the consequences of war and other trauma. All were adapting to different cultural environments and education systems, including different class sizes where unlike in schools with big classes, the students 'could not hide'. Bilingual staff said that in many cases the families were experiencing financial stress, and although the school provides some assistance here, the students are affected by their family's stress. Despite all this, they said students make impressive educational progress, and they credited this success to the resilience of students, and also to the commitment of teachers who work with the students.

Suggestions for improvements

Support staff had a number of suggestions for improving the IEC/high school environment and transition process for refugee and other EAL students. These included:

- providing more time at enrolment at both IECs and high schools to address multiple things parents need to know about school in Australia;
- having a small school budget for emergency funding — to contribute to students' costs for excursions and other school activities where necessary;
- enrolling students in classes according to their educational abilities, not age (they pointed out that sometimes a student's listed age is not accurate);
- providing more support with homework programs by extending what is currently available;
- enabling students to spend more time at IEC before transition to high school if their educational progress would benefit;
- ensuring students are being followed up once they leave the IEC to make sure they are progressing well;
- ensuring all teachers have had access to appropriate professional development regarding the needs of refugee students. As one bilingual staff explained: *some teachers have no clue and they treat refugee students like any other student who has born in the country*.

Executive staff and high school teacher interviews

Interviews with executive staff at the high schools began with discussion of the support that is available to refugee and other EAL students once they have made the transition to high school. This discussion revealed that extensive efforts have been made in both participating high schools to facilitate the transition from IEC and to support students at high school.

Continuing support that is available to students

In their interviews, executive staff in particular emphasised the importance of welfare support for refugee and other students. Without a supportive and safe learning environment, they said, education is not possible. Both participating high schools had initiated a number of programs that were designed to provide such a learning environment — at the whole school level as well as in individual classrooms. Schools had also put in place specific structures, procedures and programs to support both students and teachers. To achieve this, schools have often had to modify previous practices.

Interviews with executive staff showed that both schools also placed considerable emphasis on supporting students into post-school pathways. They have initiated programs that connect students with workplaces and work experience with the aim of opening up work options in vocational education and providing information about possible university courses. Part of this involved negotiating with students in regard to realistic expectations of what is possible. This is not to say to students that they cannot become doctors, nurses, but that they may need to consider pathways, via TAFE or other vocational institutions that will make this possible. These programs also aimed to support students to deal with bullying or racism that they may experience in the broader community and at future workplaces.

Issues raised

Discussions with executive staff were quite wide ranging and a number of issues were raised during interviews. Some of these issues related to the complex question of what was appropriate placement for refugee and other EAL students in high school — and of the need to balance students' age versus their educational attainment when deciding on placement.

Discussion addressed:

- the perception that some IEC students are coming to high school too early when they are not ready for transition (especially students with disrupted/minimal formal schooling);
- the diversity of refugee students and their needs — primarily because of minimal or disrupted prior education, but also because of diverse cultural and linguistic backgrounds;
- the challenge of meeting requirements of the mandatory curriculum, while also meeting the needs of diverse groups of students;
- the fact that educational success is often related to students' own background — if their families had previous access to formal education, students were more likely to do well at school;
- the specific challenge of assisting students who arrive at high school in years 10 or 11 when they need to go straight into HSC mode. The transition was easier for students and their teachers if students arrived in earlier years.

Other issues related to the knowledge and experience of teachers who worked with refugee students. Executive staff said that especially in the early days, teachers had little idea of how to deal with refugee students who had minimal prior schooling. Teachers had had to modify their approaches to teaching quite substantially. They then needed to balance pressures to 'get through the curriculum' while also meeting the needs of very diverse students, and some teachers remained reluctant to have refugee students in their classes because they believed these students would affect the standard of class results. However, the overall commitment and hard work of many teachers has resulted in the success of current support programs.

The support programs however, raise an issue that was identified by both teachers and students as a particular challenge — that of balancing students' time in specific support programs with time in class on major curriculum subjects. The concern here is that students are taken out of their classes to participate in various support programs. This means the students miss classwork and assessments. While there are undoubted benefits to students in these programs, when they return to class they have missed work that their peers have completed with the result they feel they are constantly trying to catch up with other students. There appears to be no easy answer here, especially given the related issue of pressure on teachers to 'get though the curriculum' rather than spending time on deep learning/ understanding. (This issue is discussed further later in the report).

Community/family/parent non-involvement presented challenges for both high schools. Teacher interviews highlighted the importance of community involvement with schools to help refugee parents and guardians develop better understandings of the nature and expectations of Australian schools; of the concerns of students' families; of ways in which families can support their children at school, including the need for students to have study time/place at home in order to complete homework, and the need to reduce pressure on girls for home duties etc. Interviews also identified the need to address community/family expectations of students' educational outcomes in ways that are realistic — *not all students can become doctors, and families need to know about the value of TAFE and other vocational pathways for their children*. (This issue is also further discussed later in the report.)

Findings specific to high school subject teachers

Interviews with mainstream high school teachers began with discussions of teachers' own knowledge and preparation for working with refugee students. Two issues emerged here.

While quite a few of these teachers were themselves bilingual, relatively few had EAL qualifications. Most teachers said they were 'reasonably confident' in teaching language, but that they would like more knowledge of EAL specific strategies and language teaching.

> *Most teachers said they were 'reasonably confident' in teaching language, but that they would like more knowledge of EAL specific strategies and language teaching.*

In addition, although generally IECs do provide detailed exit reports regarding students' background and progress, quite a number of the interviewed teachers in both high schools said they received little information about the background of students they were teaching. They also said they learned about their students' refugee status and prior schooling experiences only through an ad-hoc process where they found out for themselves. Teachers recognised that there were privacy issues associated with who had access to information about students, but felt even general information about cultural background and educational abilities of their students would be helpful. The majority of teachers agreed they would *definitely like more support and more information about their individual students*.

Challenges for students

When asked what they regarded as major challenges for refugee and other EAL students, high school teachers, like IEC teachers, identified lack of prior formal schooling and resultant gaps in basic knowledge of literacy, numeracy and science as the greatest challenge for many students. Even with access to prior schooling, students often had substantial gaps in basic school knowledge. A consequence, teachers said, was that while students might be interested and keen when they first arrived at high school, they sometimes found the work too hard and lost interest.

Teachers were aware that students faced considerable pressure at home where they were frequently dealing with the impact of disrupted families; financial pressures; health issues within family, and, in some cases, also with post-traumatic stress. Consequently, many students were just trying to survive in Australia. In addition, students often experienced pressure from families who did not necessarily understand what was required for them to succeed at school, with the result that cultural and social obligations often prevented students from studying.

A related challenge for students was learning how to learn. Teachers explained that students were keen to try, but they did struggle, often they didn't understand the concept of being able to set aside extra time for study, at times because of demands on them at home.

Teachers felt that students experienced substantial culture shock when they first arrived at high school. Some students needed time and support to learn social skills that were appropriate for school. Some could be overly defensive and overly reactive, thereby giving offense without intending to. Teachers believed that many students needed support to adjust to high school, but that this support needed to be handled sensitively as students generally did not want to be singled out — and they felt shy and embarrassed to be asking for help. For some students part of the adjustment involved the need to contain their bodies, and sit still in classrooms. Such students were very physical and wanted to move. Some students were very good at dance or sport, and this could provide an avenue for helping them adjust to school. Students' adjustment was easier if they were able to make friends when they first arrived. This tended to be easier for younger (year 7) students than for older (year 11, 12) students, although all students benefited from structured social activities to help them in the initial phases of transition.

Teachers also nominated academic language and literacy as presenting particular challenges for refugee and other EAL students. They pointed out that students' oracy is often quite strong, but that developing control of discipline-specific registers and of reading and writing within these registers presented considerable challenges for all students. Choosing appropriate school subjects was a further challenge for students.

Students' strengths

Despite the challenges, teachers agreed their refugee and EAL students brought a number of substantial strengths to their learning. Students were determined to succeed; they had a hunger to learn; they were intellectually curious; they were highly motivated, enthusiastic; and generally had a high level of concentration in class. Most had good classroom behaviour, discipline and tenacity. They appreciated feedback and were responsive to it; and generally had a great work ethic.

> *Teachers said that students brought a wealth of multicultural knowledge and world experience to the classroom. They therefore contributed very positively to the cultural richness of classroom, and were able to educate other students, as well as teachers, through the breadth and extent of their prior world knowledge.*

Teachers said that students brought a wealth of multicultural knowledge and world experience to the classroom. They therefore contributed very positively to the cultural richness of classroom, and were able to educate other students, as well as teachers, through the breadth and extent of their prior world knowledge. Teachers also noted that refugee and other EAL students were especially sensitive to the needs and emotional wellbeing of others — perhaps because of the depth of their own prior experiences.

Support for students at school level

Teachers were asked about the kind of support that was available for refugee and other EAL students at high school. Their responses were similar to those of executive staff. Teachers described details of the extensive welfare support that is available in both schools for students. This support included: year advisors, community liaison officers; school counsellors; orientation programs. Personal support is also available from many teachers at recess and lunch. Much

of the focus of these support programs is on helping students look to the future and *to settle, be calm and have a sense of belonging and a sense that they can survive here*. There is also considerable focus on tolerance and intercultural harmony. Some financial support is also available when needed.

Both schools also offer specific support for students' academic progress. This includes:

- bridging classes, usually in English, for students when they first arrive at high school;
- the Refugee Transition Program: a program that provides additional language and literacy support for refugee students during their transition from intensive English programs into high school and helps them plan their transition from school to further education, training or employment. This program aims to provide refugee students with access to high challenge academic work while also developing the language, literacy and study skills necessary to enable them to engage with this challenge;
- a homework program where volunteer university students provide one-on-one assistance with homework for refugee students.

As with executive and bilingual staff, a recurring issue across interviews was the appropriate placement of students in class. The dilemma here is that students who have experienced minimal or disrupted schooling often struggle academically when placed in age appropriate classes. If placed in classes at a lower year level, they may have more time to develop their language and literacy abilities and to address the gaps in their educational knowledge. However, socially such placements are inappropriate and result in resentment and resistance from students. As with executive staff, teachers recognised the complexity of this issue.

Educational support in classes

Teachers were asked about the specific educational approaches and strategies that they used in their work with refugee and other EAL students. Their discussions addressed a number of common features.

Programs specifically designed to assist refugee and other EAL students

> *... both high schools offer programs that have been developed to meet the needs of students who have recently made the transition from IEC to high school. In terms of academic support, these include parallel English classes and bridging programs.*

As indicated, both high schools offer programs that have been developed to meet the needs of students who have recently made the transition from IEC to high school. In terms of academic support, these include parallel English classes and bridging programs. Teachers explained the advantage of parallel English classes is that they enable EAL teachers to focus on students who most need support in language and literacy development, and to pace the class to suit the students. These parallel classes have the further advantage of being coordinated in conjunction with specific programs like the Refugee Transition Program, thereby minimising the impact for students of missing lessons. The Refugee Transition Program thus functions as a kind of bridging program. Bridging programs also offered electives, such as Australian Cultural Studies, that were specifically designed for refugee and other EAL students to develop English language and literacy skills within Human Society and its Environment (HSIE).

Relevant pedagogical practices

Teachers spoke quite extensively about the kinds of pedagogical practices that they believed were appropriate and relevant for their work with refugee and other EAL students. However, they also reiterated the challenge identified by executive staff of needing to balance pressures to 'get through the curriculum' while also addressing the needs of students. Pedagogical practices they nominated included:

- the importance of building on what students already know:
  - starting with what students know, and linking back to their lives and experiences;
  - relating new concepts to what students know and to their concrete everyday life experiences;
  - building on things that have cultural significance for students (for example, music, drumming; encouraging students to bring in something that is of value to them and others in class) thereby showing respect and curiosity and providing a welcoming environment;
- working to develop students' background knowledge about the world and about specific educational concepts (*don't make assumptions about background knowledge*);
- simplifying instructions for tasks: complete one task before giving instructions for the next;
- sequencing tasks in ways that enable small steps in learning;
- making the logic of topic/concepts very explicit;
- providing careful explanations of concepts, and re-explaining a number of times if necessary.

The importance of 'message abundancy'

Although teachers did not use the term 'message abundancy', their discussions of relevant pedagogical practices frequently highlighted the significance of this concept. (See Summary of findings). Teachers' discussions specifically addressed the importance of the following:

- demonstrate as well as explain;
- model, model, model;
- provide structured tasks with explicit teacher guidance;
- provide strong guidance and support before expecting students to be able to work independently (very gradual handover);
- start with concrete examples that illustrate concepts;
- make systematic use of peer support;
- explore the same concept through different means and repetition (balanced against pressure to 'get through' curriculum);
- use technology to provide repeated exposure to the same concept; powerpoint presentations; use of smart board, internet; and in addition, visual support, physical demonstrations; and on-going discussion of the concept;
- very high levels of scaffolding: consistent highly structured modelling; very gradual handover; building in of success.

Building confidence/high expectations

Teachers spoke quite extensively about both teacher and students' expectations and the importance of developing students' confidence in their own abilities and of building in success for students. Their discussions included the following:

- the importance of high expectations across the whole school: teachers' expectations of students are generally high because of their very strong work ethic (although expectations for students with disrupted schooling are necessarily somewhat lower);
- the need to have the same high expectations for all students, but to differentiate tasks to meet diverse needs and abilities of students;
- the importance of being prepared to push students, but also to be aware of not putting too much pressure on students;
- the need to build trust in classroom: value and respect of students; and to be aware of potential emotional and conceptual overload;
- the importance of building students' confidence in their own academic abilities;
- the importance of building-in success through extensive scaffolding.

Academic language and support for assessment

Teachers acknowledged the need for explicit teaching of academic English across the curriculum. They also discussed the need for explicit support for students with assessment tasks. Their discussions included the following:

- most teachers regard themselves as teachers of English as well as teachers of Science, History etc. They consciously and explicitly teach relevant vocabulary, text types, structure of sentences and specific aspects of grammar. They aim to balance work on curriculum content and language, and to include lot of talk about language in their classes;
- a number of teachers explained the need to work systematically between concrete/every-day language and more technical/discipline specific language;
- some teachers deliberately encouraged students to use their first language as well as English when they were working with new concepts;
- teachers discussed the need to provide additional support and feedback for students with assessment tasks. Some of the strategies they reported using use here included feedback on drafts of assessment tasks prior to the due date thereby enabling students to check that they are on task; encouraging students to email drafts of assessment tasks to teachers so they can receive feedback on their progress; one-on-one assistance for students during recess or lunch. Teachers also highlighted the importance of homework programs where students have access to extra support — usually provided as one-on-one support.

Teachers overall were quite explicit about the kinds of pedagogical practices they felt were appropriate in their work with refugee and other EAL students. However, a number also stressed the importance of responding to all students equitably in their classes. They did not regard their refugee students as different in kind from other students. The important issue, they argued, was to recognise the specific needs and abilities of all students in their class, including their refugee students, and to respond in ways that addressed needs and built on abilities.

3.2 Findings from lesson observations and analysis

As indicated, a key aim of the research was to learn more about the nature of teaching and learning experiences of refugee students in IECs and in high schools. Lesson observations and recordings were thus an important part of the research. Equally important was our analysis of lessons. Our aim was to gain insights into the kinds of pedagogical practices that were typical of both IECs and high schools so that we were better able to understand the experiences of refugee students as they made the transition from IEC to high school. We therefore needed a system of analysis that was 'manageable' in the sense of time involved to analyse thirty-two lessons, but also that provided considerable detail of practices within lessons.

It is important to note that our approach to analyses of lessons implied certain assumptions about the nature of effective pedagogical practices for refugee and other EAL students. We drew on previous research, including our own (Hammond & Gibbons, 2005; Hammond, 2008; Gibbons, 2008) in the assumption that equitable education for all students, including refugee and other EAL students, requires access both to an intellectually challenging curriculum, and differential levels of educational support that recognise and address the specific learning needs of diverse groups of students. That is, we worked with the assumption that all students need access to a full high-challenge curriculum, but they also need differential levels of support to ensure they are able to participate fully in that curriculum. In analysing lessons we therefore sought to address not only the extent to which lessons provided socially and emotionally supportive learning environments, but also the extent to which students were challenged and educationally supported in their engagement with educational knowledge.

3.2.1 Approach to analysis of lessons

The approach to analysis of lessons in the project drew on two major sources. The first source was our own previous research (Hammond and Gibbons, 2005; Michell & Sharpe, 2005; Hammond, 2008; Gibbons, 2008). That research had focused in particular on the significance of high challenge, high support pedagogies for EAL students in mainstream classes. Outcomes from the research had highlighted the significance of a number of pedagogical features for EAL students: in particular, systematic and explicit teaching of academic language and literacy embedded in across-the-curriculum programs; the importance of targeted and differential levels of scaffolding to ensure EAL students were supported to engage in learning of curriculum concepts; and deliberate discussion of purposes for learning, at the level of Unit, Lesson and Task, so that students, including those from cultures where educational practices differed from those that were common in Australia, were clear about purposes and directions of learning. We were therefore keen to incorporate a focus on academic language teaching, scaffolding and explicit goals in analysis of lessons in this project.

The second source we drew on in developing an approach to analysis of lessons was that of the NSW Quality Teaching Model (NSW DET, 2003; 2004). This Model has a solid intellectual history that can be traced back to Newmann's work on Authentic Learning (Newmann & Associates, 1996); and the Queensland work on Productive Pedagogies (EQ, 2002). Like its predecessors, it is built around the notions of major pedagogical Dimensions — in the case of the NSW Quality Teaching Model, these are: Intellectual Quality; Quality Learning Environment; and Significance. Each of these Dimensions includes a number of Elements. The Model, with its Dimensions and Elements is summarised below.

Summary of the NSW Quality Teaching Model

Intellectual Quality	Quality Learning Environment	Significance
1. Deep Knowledge	1. Explicit Quality Criteria	1. Background Knowledge
2. Deep Understanding	2. Engagement	2. Cultural Knowledge
3. Problematic Knowledge	3. High Expectations	3. Knowledge Integration
4. Higher-Order Thinking	4. Social Support	4. Inclusivity
5. Metalanguage	5. Students' Self-Regulation	5. Connectedness
6. Substantive Communication	6. Student Direction	6. Narrative

In developing an approach to analysis of lessons, the NSW Quality Teaching Model provided the potential to address multiple factors that contribute to successful pedagogical practices. Our aim was to work with a comprehensive tool that acknowledged the importance of high

challenge and high support for all students, including refugee students, but in ways that provided quite nuanced and detailed insights into the nature of lessons. The Dimensions and Elements of the NSW Quality Teaching Model were of particular value as they provided systematic and comprehensive insights into strengths and limitations of lessons.

Our system of analysis thus incorporated Elements from the NSW Quality Teaching Model as well as pedagogical features that our previous research had highlighted as especially significant for EAL students, namely Academic Language Focus, Scaffolding and identification of Explicit Goals.

A challenge we faced was to ensure the system of analysis was manageable, and for this reason we selected only Elements from the NSW Quality Teaching Model that were considered most directly relevant to the principles of high challenge and high support in the education of EAL students. This process of selection was based on our own understanding of EAL education, and on feedback from groups of EAL teachers and EAL consultants (see also Coleman, 2011 for a similar approach to analysis of lessons with refugee students).

The Elements of the NSW Quality Teaching Model and EAL pedagogical features used in our system of analysis can be summarised as follows:

Elements of the NSW Quality Teaching Model and EAL pedagogical features used in lesson analysis

	Intellectual Quality	Quality Learning Environment	Significance
Selected Elements from NSW Quality Teaching Model	Deep Knowledge Deep Understanding Substantive Communication	Engagement High Expectations Social Support	Background Knowledge Cultural Knowledge Connectedness Inclusivity
EAL pedagogical features (from previous research)	Academic Language Focus	Explicit Goals Scaffolding	

In undertaking analysis of lessons, we drew on the system of coding and descriptors of Elements available from the NSW Quality Teaching Model: Classroom Practice Guide (see Appendix A). Previously, where the NSW Quality Teaching Model had been used in analysis of lessons, each lesson was coded from 1 (weak) to 5 (strong) in relation to each Element within the three major Dimensions. We followed this procedure in our analysis of lessons. We also developed equivalent descriptors for EAL pedagogical features: Academic Language Focus; Explicit Goals and Scaffolding (See Appendix B), and in our analysis, we used a summary coding sheet to code lessons from 1- 5 in relation to these features (see Appendix C). As indicated, three researchers independently analysed each lesson, then met to compare and, if necessary, review evidence to agree on final analysis.

3.2.2 Outcomes from lesson observations and analysis

A total of 32 lessons were analysed. These consisted of 14 IEC lessons (English 6; Maths 5; History 3) and 18 high school lessons (English 7; Science 6; Maths 4; Geography 1).

Major findings from both IEC and high school lessons are summarised in Table 1 below. Following the formatting of the NSW Quality Teaching Model, this Table is organised into sections that represent the three major Dimensions of *Intellectual Quality; Quality Learning Environment* and

Significance. Elements/ features relevant to each Dimension are listed on the left side of the Table, and findings from coding of lessons in regard to each Element/ feature are listed across the top of the Table. These findings are summarised in terms of the range of codings (from 1 to 5), indicating relative frequency of that Element/ feature within the lesson; most frequent code; average code; the percentage of lessons where coding was 4 or above (that is, where coding indicated that lessons were very strong in regard to that Element/ feature).

Table 1 shows codings from IEC lessons and Table 2 shows codings from high school lessons.

Table 1: Coding of IEC lessons

	range of codes (1-5)	most frequent code	average code	percentage coded 4 or above
Dimension 1: Intellectual Quality				
Coding using Elements of NSW QT Model				
Deep Knowledge	2 to 4.5	4	3.7	57%
Deep Understanding	1.5 to 4.5	3; 3.5	3.4	33%
Substantive Communication	2 to 4.5	3; 3.5	3.4	36%
Coding using EAL pedagogical features				
Academic Language Focus	1 to 4.5	4	3.6	50%
Dimension 2: Quality Learning Environment				
Coding using Elements of NSW QT Model				
Engagement	3.5 to 5	4	4.2	79%
High Expectations	2 to 4.5	3.5	3.7	50%
Social Support	4.5 to 5	5	4.8	100%
Coding using EAL pedagogical features				
Scaffolding	2.5 to 5	4; 4.5	4.0	71%
Explicit Goals	2.5 to 4	2.5	2.9	14%
Dimension 3: Significance				
Coding using Elements of NSW QT Model				
Background Knowledge	2.5 to 4.5	3	2.9	7%
Cultural Knowledge	1 to 2.5	1	1.4	0%
Connectedness	1.5 to 4	1.5	2.5	7%
Inclusivity	4 to 5	5	4.6	100%

Table 2: Coding of high school lessons

	range of codes (1-5)	most frequent code	average code	percentage coded 4 or above
Dimension 1: Intellectual Quality				
Coding using Elements of NSW QT Model				
Deep Knowledge	1.5 to 4.5	3; 3.5	3.4	33%
Deep Understanding	2 to 4	3	3	17%
Substantive Communication	1.5 to 4	2.5	2.9	17%
Coding using EAL pedagogical features				
Academic Language Focus	1.5 to 4	2	2.8	17%
Dimension 2: Quality Learning Environment				
Coding using Elements of NSW QT Model				
Engagement	2 to 4	3.5	3.3	22%
High Expectations	1.5 to 4.5	2.5	3.1	22%
Social Support	2.5 to 5	4	3.9	72%
Coding using EAL pedagogical features				
Scaffolding	1.5 to 4.5	3	3.3	33%
Explicit Goals	1 to 4	2	2.8	6%
Dimension 3: Significance				
Coding using Elements of NSW QT Model				
Background Knowledge	1 to 4	1.5	2.4	11%
Cultural Knowledge	1 to 2.5	1	1.2	0%
Connectedness	1 to 4.5	1; 1.5	2.2	11%
Inclusivity	1.5 to 4	4	3.5	50%

Variation between lessons across both settings

For brevity, the term 'element' is used in the following discussion to refer both to selected Elements from the NSW Quality Teaching Model, and to the EAL pedagogical features of Academic Language, Scaffolding and Explicit Goals.

Tables 1 and 2 indicate that there was considerable variation between IEC and high school lessons across all three Dimensions of Intellectual Quality, Quality Learning Environment and Significance. Elements in IEC lessons had average codings between 2.9 and 4.8 (Background Knowledge: 2.9; Social Support: 4.8), while elements in high school lessons had average

codings between 2.2 (Connectedness) and 3.9 (Social Support). However, the range of codes for each element across both settings was substantial. For example, in IEC lessons, coding for Deep Knowledge ranged from 2 to 4.5; and coding for Substantive Communication ranged from 1.5 to 4.5. In high school lessons, coding for both High Expectations and Scaffolding ranged from 1.5 to 4.5. Thus while some IEC and high school lessons were coded high for each element, others were coded quite low for the same element. Despite the considerable variation within and across IEC and high school settings, in terms of the frequency that selected elements were observed, some patterns of 'strength' and 'weakness' do emerge.

Areas of strength and weakness

In Table 3 below, the strongest elements are identified by the highest percentages of lessons that were coded as 4 or above. The weakest elements are identified by the lowest percentages of lessons that were coded as 4 or above. A high percentage of codings of 4 or above indicates strength, that is, this element was observed frequently, and a low percentage of codings of 4 or above indicates weakness, that is, this element was observed infrequently. On this basis, the strongest and weakest elements in IEC and high school lessons were:

Table 3: Strongest and weakest elements in IEC and high school lessons

IEC lessons (based on percentage of lessons coded 4 or above)	
Strongest elements	Social Support (100%)
	Inclusivity (100%)
	Engagement (79%)
Weakest elements	Substantive Communication (36%)
	Explicit Goals (14%)
	Background Knowledge (7%)
	Connectedness (7%)
High school lessons (based on percentage of lessons coded 4 or above)	
Strongest elements	Social Support (72%)
	Inclusivity (50%)
Weakest elements	Deep Understanding (17%)
	Substantive Communication (17%)
	Academic Language Focus (17%)
	Explicit Goals (6%)
	Background Knowledge (11%)
	Connectedness (11%)

As table 3 shows there were similarities and some differences between IEC and high school lessons in terms of the elements that were most frequently and least frequently observed. The areas of strength and weakness that emerged from the analysis of lessons point to more general patterns across schools that have implications for the education of refugee and other EAL students. In what follows, these patterns are highlighted and discussed in more detail.

Social support and learning environment

IEC and high school lessons had similar strengths in Social Support and Inclusivity — elements that reflect the overall level of support provided for students.

The finding that lessons in both IECs and high schools are strong in elements that contribute to a supportive learning environment is consistent with outcomes from both teachers' and students' interviews. Overall findings from analysis of all sources of data confirm that schools generally, and the research schools in particular, are very good at providing supportive, safe and caring learning environments for all students. Findings here are especially significant for refugee and other EAL students, who are dealing with major disruptions and trauma in their lives. Such learning environments provide the necessary basis for students' ongoing successful participation in school and engagement with educational learning.

Purposes and significance of learning

IEC and high school lessons were similar in that most received relatively low codings for Explicit Goals, Background Knowledge and Connectedness. These findings are consistent with our observations of lessons where there was generally some mention, usually at the beginning of lessons, of what students would be doing in that lesson (that is, there was discussion of the curriculum content that would be covered), and there was some connection to what students had learned in previous lessons. However, there was relatively little systematic discussion of why students were learning specific topics or concepts. There was also relatively little systematic building on students' prior experiences, or out of school knowledge; and few attempts to connect students' learning with broader world knowledge or with other disciplines.

> *... in both IECs and high schools, teachers could place more emphasis on explaining the overall purposes of studying specific topics to students. They could also be more explicit about the learning purposes of specific classroom activities and tasks ...*

The findings highlight an area that could be strengthened. More specifically, they suggest that in both IECs and high schools, teachers could place more emphasis on explaining the overall purposes of studying specific topics to students. They could also be more explicit about the learning purposes of specific classroom activities and tasks so that students are aware of what they are expected to learn and how each activity or task contributes to the educational purposes of larger units of work. In addition, the findings suggest both IECs and high schools could place more emphasis on the significance of educational knowledge and learning in connection both with students' prior learning and experiences, and with broader world knowledge.

Explicit discussions of learning purposes at the level of unit, lesson and classroom activity are important for all students, but are especially important for refugee and other EAL students who are experiencing major adjustments to education systems and practices that are very different from those with which they may be familiar. Equally important are connections to students' prior experience and prior knowledge, so that they are able to build on what they already know as they engage with new conceptual understandings and new ways of thinking about the world — processes that are central to their ongoing engagement with educational knowledge.

Intellectual Quality

The Dimension of Intellectual Quality emerged as a challenge for both IECs and high schools. Analyses of lessons indicated that overall, but especially in high schools, lessons were not as strong in Intellectual Quality as they were in the Dimension of Quality Learning Environment. In addition, for both settings, the lesson profiles across the Dimension were uneven. In both IECs and high schools, the element of Deep Knowledge scored higher than elements of Deep Understanding and Substantive Communication. Such findings suggest there was an emphasis within both settings on presenting students with demanding curriculum content, but less emphasis on ensuring they were able to understand and engage intellectually with that content.

The two settings (IECs and high schools) differed to some extent across the Dimension of Intellectual Quality. IEC lessons were coded as slightly stronger than high school lessons in all elements within or related to this Dimension (average scores for IEC lessons were 3.4 to 3.7; while average scores for high school lessons were 2.8 to 3.4). However the range of scores for each element indicates that lessons in both settings were quite variable. Despite the variation, outcomes suggest that while at IECs, refugee and other EAL students have some access to demanding curriculum work and that, at least in some lessons, they are able to engage deeply with that work.

> *... findings in regard to Substantive Communication ... suggest a need in both settings for more opportunities during lessons for students to engage in in-depth and on-going conversations about serious aspects of the curriculum content that they are studying.*

There is a further implication here. The somewhat higher codings for IEC lessons related to this Dimension indicate that it is certainly possible to engage refugee and other EAL students who are still in the process of learning English with challenging curriculum work. It is not the case that students need to learn English before they are able to engage with high challenge work. However, findings in regard to Substantive Communication are also relevant and suggest a need in both settings for more opportunities during lessons for students to engage in in-depth and on-going conversations about serious aspects of the curriculum content that they are studying. Findings also indicate that students' levels of Deep Understanding seemed to diminish, rather than increase, when they got to high school. They therefore raise questions about the level of systematic scaffolding that is available to students.

Scaffolding

Scaffolding is especially important for refugee and other EAL students as it addresses the kind of support that will enable students to engage with challenging curriculum content. Perhaps not surprisingly, IEC and high school lessons differed in codings for this feature (71% of IEC lessons, and 33% of high school lessons were coded as 4 or above for Scaffolding). One of the central purposes of IECs is to support students in their processes of learning English while at the same time introducing them to key curriculum areas. We would therefore expect Scaffolding to be a strength of IEC lessons. While not one of the strongest components, Scaffolding was coded as relatively strong in IEC lessons. However, the variation in coding for Scaffolding in IEC lessons was of some surprise (range 2.5-5), indicating that some IEC lessons were very strong in providing Scaffolding for students, but others were less so.

The relatively low coding for Scaffolding in high school lessons suggests the need for better understanding of ways of supporting EAL students to engage with curriculum concepts in the high school lessons. The variation between high school lessons (range 1.5-4.5) indicates that some lessons provided very strong support for students while others were weaker in this area.

Although there is some inconsistency in the findings from analyses of lessons in regard to Scaffolding, overall they point to the need for more focus on ways of supporting students' learning across the curriculum, and more professional development support for current and pre-service teachers in this area. This finding is consistent with outcomes from research undertaken by Miller and her colleagues (eg Windle & Miller, 2012; Miller, 2013).

Academic Language Focus

Perhaps not surprisingly, IEC lessons were coded higher than high school lessons in Academic Language Focus. However, given the importance of supporting the English language development of refugee and other EAL students, codings for this feature in both settings are low (only 50% of IEC lessons; and 17% of high school lessons were coded 4 or above). In addition, the range of codes for each setting was large (range for IEC lessons: 1 to 4.5; range for high school lessons: 1.5 to 4). The findings indicate there was considerable variation in the extent to which lessons from both settings, but especially high schools, systematically and explicitly incorporated and taught language across the curriculum.

> *... more support would be useful for teachers in extending their knowledge about language and of ways of incorporating language and literacy across the curriculum.*

The overall implication from analyses of lessons is that more support would be useful for teachers in extending their knowledge about language and of ways of incorporating language and literacy across the curriculum.

Cultural knowledge

One additional finding from the analysis of lessons warrants discussion. As Tables 1 and 2 show, both IEC and high school lessons were consistently coded as low for Cultural Knowledge. While this outcome appears to point to an area of weakness, as researchers involved in analysis of lessons, we believe the situation is more complex than this.

The process of lesson analysis raised questions about how we understand the notion of Cultural Knowledge and the nature of intercultural understanding. Findings from analysis of data point to considerable variation and confusion about this notion and how it can or should be embedded in lessons. As a result, we argue there is a need for further research and professional development to clarify what effective incorporation of Cultural Knowledge and intercultural understanding looks like in lessons across different curriculum areas. We believe such research would require a different focus to that of this project — hence we flag the need for further research, but do not address this need in our recommendations. We also point to the value of the recent report, *Rethinking Multiculturalism, Reassessing Multicultural Education* (Watkins, Lean, Noble & Dunn, 2013) as a first step in addressing this issue.

Differences across disciplines

Analysis of lessons indicated there were different patterns of strength and weakness across different curriculum areas. During our lesson observations, we became particularly interested in the teaching of Maths and students' engagement in Maths lessons. Although the knowledge that was addressed in lessons was very clearly high challenge, students seemed to be able to engage effectively with that knowledge.

In order to investigate this feature further, Table 4 presents combined codings for Maths lessons (9 lessons) across both IECs and high schools. (The details of outcomes highlighted in Table 4 are similar to those highlighted in Tables 1 and 2.)

Table 4: Coding of IEC and high school Maths lessons

	range of codes (1-5)	most frequent code	average code	percentage coded 4 or above
Dimension 1: Intellectual Quality				
Coding using Elements of NSW QT Model				
Deep Knowledge	4 to 4.5	4.5	4.3	100%
Deep Understanding	3.5 to 4	4	4	90%
Substantive Communication	3.5 to 4.5	3.5	3.8	44%
Coding using EAL pedagogical features				
Academic Language Focus	2 to 4	2.5; 3	2.9	22%
Dimension 2: Quality Learning Environment				
Coding using Elements of NSW QT Model				
Engagement	3.5 to 5	4	4.3	89%
High Expectations	4 to 4.5	4	4.2	100%
Social Support	4 to 5	4.5	4.6	100%
Coding using EAL pedagogical features				
Scaffolding	4 to 4.5	4.5	4.3	100%
Explicit Goals	2 to 3.5	3	3	0%
Dimension 3: Significance				
Coding using Elements of NSW QT Model				
Background Knowledge	2.5 to 3.5	2.5	2.8	0%
Cultural Knowledge	1	1	1	0%
Connectedness	1.5 to 4	1.5	2.6	33%
Inclusivity	3 to 4.5	4.5	4.3	89%

Table 4 points to a number of findings that are relevant for the education of refugee and other EAL students. In contrast to overall patterns, Maths lessons in both IECs and high schools were consistently coded high for most elements related to the Dimension of Intellectual Quality. Deep Knowledge and Deep Understanding were particular strengths across the lessons, although Substantive Communication was less so. In addition, Maths lessons were very strong in most elements related to the Dimension of Quality Learning Environment: Engagement; High Expectations; Social Support; and Scaffolding. However, they were less strong in Academic Language; Explicit Goals, and in Background Knowledge and Connectedness. Overall, a picture emerges of lessons that are challenging and intellectually engaging, where students are strongly supported, but where there is relatively little discussion of why they are learning specific concepts and how those concepts connect either to students' prior knowledge or to the outside world.

In contrast, lessons in other discipline areas were far more variable, and the overall level of intellectual challenge in other lessons was generally coded as lower than for Maths lessons. In part this appears to reflect the different kinds of knowledge that constitute different disciplines. Mathematical knowledge appears to be tightly bounded in that it is very clearly described and sequenced in curriculum documents and teaching resources, including text-books. Here, the nature of knowledge and the sequencing of teaching concepts appear to be relatively uncontested and unproblematic. Maths teachers know what mathematical knowledge is, and they are confident about how they should be teaching it.

In contrast, the knowledge that constitutes other disciplines is more diffuse. The example of English serves to illustrate this point. Ongoing questions about the nature of English as a discipline emerge every time new curriculum documents are produced (Hammond & Jones, 2012). Such questions reflect the very contested nature of the English curriculum — is the core discipline of English about the teaching of literature, of language (including grammar), of literacy (including spelling and punctuation); does it include all of these aspects, and if so in what proportions? The more diffuse nature of what constitutes the discipline of English was evident in lessons in our research schools. For example, some English lessons addressed aspects of literature and focused on specific literary texts; while others involved discussions of issues at school or beyond that were relevant to students at that particular point in time; and others again primarily taught aspects of grammar and language structure.

We suggest that differences between lessons in Maths and English (and other curriculum areas) raise broad questions about the nature of knowledge that is being constructed in different disciplines (Freebody, Maton & Martin, 2008). They also raise questions about what constitutes effective support within those disciplines, and of how aspects of this support might differ from one discipline to another. Overall, we suggest the findings point to the need for further research to address such questions, and their implications for teaching refugee and other EAL students.

4. Summary of project outcomes and findings

The purpose of this section is to draw together outcomes and findings from all sources of data from the project. These sources include:

- outcomes from interviews with students and teachers;
- findings from lesson observations and analysis of lessons.

Perhaps the first point to make is that the overall findings of the project tend to confirm what others have found: that the transition between IECs and high schools is a major event for refugee and other EAL students; that English language development is a key factor in students' educational success; that students with minimal or disrupted prior schooling face major challenges in adjusting and coping with school in Australia. However, through its focus on the educational experiences, both prior to, and after, the transition from IEC to high school, the project adds to previous work into the needs of refugee and other EAL students.

The research took place in two IECs and two high schools — with overall aims of developing insights into students' experiences of the transition between IECs and high schools, and of identifying patterns in current pedagogical practices. Our intention was to build on outcomes from the research to acknowledge strengths, and to draw on these as models for other schools, while also identifying areas that could be further strengthened. Although the relatively small scale of the research means that findings must be interpreted with some caution, there are a number of outcomes that can inform ongoing work into ways of better supporting refugee students within Australian schools.

Major outcomes from the project include:

- insights into the transition experience between IECs and high schools from both students' and teachers' perspectives;
- insights into pedagogical experiences of refugee students and their teachers in IECs and high schools.

This discussion of outcomes and findings from the project begins with acknowledgment of comments made by a number of teachers: refugee students are diverse in ways that other EAL students are diverse, and many of the issues faced by refugee students overlap with those faced by other EAL students. To varying degrees, all EAL students who make the transition to high school experience culture shock; disrupted schooling; challenges with English language development, challenges with academic literacy development, especially if they have had little access to literacy development in their first language. Where refugee students differ is often in the trauma associated with their journey to Australia, with the result that all these issues are magnified, but, as many teachers emphasised, there is no 'one size fits all' approach that will address the needs of all refugee students. Despite some commonalities amongst refugee and other students in welfare and educational needs, the school as a whole, and specific programs within schools, must recognise and be responsive to the individual needs of diverse students. This acknowledgement underpins the following discussion.

Findings from the project are discussed under the following headings:

- the transition between IECs and high schools;
- well-being and welfare of students;
- pedagogical practices in IECs and high schools;
- ways pedagogical practices could be strengthened.

4.1 The transition between IECs and high schools

A major aim of the project has been to address questions of how students and teachers perceive and experience the transition of refugee students between IEC and high school, and to identify what positives and negatives exist in current school practices. While discussions in all the following sub-sections are relevant to transition between IECs and high schools, this sub-section addresses, more specifically, issues that relate directly to the process of transition itself.

Outcomes from the research indicate that, at least in schools participating in the research, the transition overall was a positive experience for most students. Despite some anxiety and stress when they first arrived at high school, the positives in their experiences far outweighed any negatives.

Strengths in existing practices

As findings in regard to students' wellbeing and welfare confirm, all participating schools were characterised by welcoming and supportive learning environments. An example from one high school serves to illustrate this. In this school, the Head Teacher, Learning Support coordinated the welfare of refugee and other EAL students. This meant the students had a warm and caring human contact from their first day at high school. The teacher ensured that students were enrolled in appropriate classes and could find their way around the school. She coordinated support from other teachers and also ensured there was peer support within classes, especially in the early days following transition to high school. She developed a close professional relationship with students, and was aware of the pressures they faced both at school and home. In their interviews, students spoke very positively about the support provided by this teacher, and said they felt comfortable seeking advice or help from her. Other participating schools had equivalent highly organised programs in place to assist students. There was also ongoing welfare and educational support in all schools from the personal commitment of many teachers, above and beyond their responsibilities as teachers, who made themselves available to help individual students during and after school.

The available support programs for refugee and other EAL students addressed welfare aspects of students' experiences, while other programs addressed students' educational progress. Examples of these programs are listed in the following sub-section *Wellbeing and Welfare of Students*.

In their interviews, both teachers and students spoke positively about the benefits of students' participation in such programs in the stages before and after transition — work with small groups of students enabled teachers to address their specific educational needs and support their developing educational skills, including English language and literacy. Participation in these programs also helped build students' confidence that they could be successful learners. For students, assessment processes at IEC and especially at high school caused the most anxiety, and they were very positive about the opportunities to attend homework programs. Outcomes, especially from interviews, indicated all these programs played an important role both in preparing students for the transition to high school and in supporting students once they had arrived at high school.

Despite the benefits of such programs, teachers and students spoke of the dilemma they posed. Most were offered during school time, which meant that if students attended these programs, they missed their curriculum subject classes. For students who were often

struggling to keep pace with their peers, this led to further pressures, and they felt they were constantly playing 'catch up' when they returned to class. There appears to be no easy solution to this dilemma, although some schools minimised the disruption to students' timetables by providing this support through parallel English classes and/or Bridging classes. A further possible solution, suggested by some participants, might be to enable refugee and other EAL students to participate in a reduced curriculum of fewer subjects for the first year or so after transition. This would mean students enrol only in core subjects for their first year at high school so they have additional time for support programs.

Most homework support programs were offered after school. The advantage here was that students did not then miss other classes, but the disadvantage was that many students travelled quite long distances between home and school and were not always able to stay back after school to attend the programs.

Educational support for refugee and other EAL students was also positive. Students generally felt they were progressing well. They were enthusiastic about their educational progress both at IECs and high schools, and were also insightful about ways in which teachers helped them learn. As later discussion will indicate, there appear to be some areas in which pedagogical practices could be further strengthened, but overall, educational practices were strong.

Some gaps and challenges in the transition process

Despite the generally smooth transition between IEC and high school, both teachers and students had suggestions on how this process could be further supported.

More sharing of information about students

> *Teachers were aware of the need to respect students' privacy, but felt that they would be better placed to work with students if they knew more about them — both their personal histories and their educational experiences and abilities.*

There appear to be gaps in procedures whereby information about students is transferred between IECs and teachers in high schools. Teachers in both high schools said they received very little information about students before they turned up in their classes. Not surprisingly, where the IEC and high school were in different physical locations, this was more of an issue. A number of teachers said they would like more background information about all students who transferred from IECs, but especially about refugee students. Teachers also felt they would benefit from more specific information about what students have been studying in IECs prior to their transition to high school. Information about individual students' educational achievement and capabilities would help them know what they could build on, and would help them understand and address specific needs of students. Teachers said that some information became available during year/stage planning meetings where any problems with specific students are addressed, but they felt this was not enough and was not available soon enough. Although IEC teachers described making information available to high schools, it would appear that relevant information was not passed on to individual class teachers. Teachers were aware of the need to respect students' privacy, but felt that they would be better placed to work with students if they knew more about them — both their personal histories and their educational experiences and abilities.

Provide more high school 'taster' experiences

The transition is frightening for many students and they benefit from knowing as much as possible about what to expect at high school before they get there. Although both IECs systematically addressed the transition process with students, this was done primarily through class discussions. In their interviews, students and teachers suggested that more 'taster experiences', with visits to high schools prior to their transition would be helpful. Some schools had previously offered such experiences, but the amount of work involved in coordination had led to them being cancelled. Difficulties had arisen where students were transiting to different high schools or where students subsequently changed their choice of high school following in-school experiences. There appears to be a need for constructive approaches here: for example, visits to different high schools; sitting in on specific high school classes; and collaborative sporting activities between IEC and high school students. In addition, because of the level of work involved, there needs to be workload recognition for teachers who coordinate such experiences.

Ensure there is overlap between curriculum content at IEC and at high school

In their interviews, students commented on the value of studying a particular curriculum topic in IEC prior to studying the same topic at high school. They also spoke of the value of studying particular 'text types' at IEC that they would then be expected to know at high school (for example, how to write narratives, how to write science reports). This 'doubling up' enabled them to build on prior learning while they adjusted to the demands of high school and its assessment practices, and gave them confidence to participate in class as equals. The suggestion requires coordination between IECs and high schools, and is complicated by the fact that students often transit from IECs to many different high schools, but if these logistical challenges can be overcome, the 'doubling-up' of curriculum content would assist students in the early days of high school.

Timing of transition to high school

In their interviews, both teachers and students spoke of the major cultural and educational adjustments that students had to make when they arrived at high school. High school teachers and students suggested it would be preferable to make the transition to high school at the end of the academic year. This would enable students to start high school at the beginning of the academic year with their peers. It would be easier for them to make friends, and they would be better placed academically to participate in the work of specific subjects. Current practices of exiting IECs four times per year at the end of each school term meant that students had to join existing classes where friendship groups had already been formed, and where high school students were in the middle of academic programs.

The flipside of this suggestion is that having only one transition per year would not necessarily be in the best educational interest of IEC students. Students enrol in IECs throughout the year as they arrive in Australia, and are considered ready for transition at the point where they have completed their IEC program and have been assessed on ESL Scales as ready to begin learning in a high school setting. If their transition to high school was delayed, this would mean a further widening of the gap between IEC students and their high school peers which, in turn, would make it more difficult for IEC students to catch up with their high school cohort.

A possible compromise position could be that the timing of transition is reduced to mid- and end-of-year, although flexibility in arrangements needs to be maintained here.

Addressing some gaps in pedagogical practices

Although pedagogical practices in both IECs and high schools were generally strong, outcomes from the project point to some areas that could be strengthened to further benefit refugee and other EAL students. As per discussion in following sub-sections, these include:

- further strengthening the level of scaffolding, including 'message abundancy' that is available for students;
- strengthening the level of systematic and explicit teaching of language and literacy across all curriculum areas;
- placing more emphasis on why and how the learning of a specific curriculum topic is important and relevant to broader world knowledge;
- ensuring assessment tasks are 'unpacked' and very clearly explained.

In regard to the transition between IEC and high school, the findings point to the need in both settings, not necessarily for more challenging and demanding work, but for more systematic levels of support to ensure students can engage with and understand high challenge work.

4.2 Wellbeing and welfare of students

Schools that participated in the research were selected because they already had programs in place that supported refugee and other EAL students. A consistent finding from all sources of data within the project was that the welfare side of schooling for refugee and other EAL students was very successful, and that the schools offered innovative, strong and effective programs for their students. Students at both IECs and high schools reported feeling safe and supported at school. Outcomes from analysis of lessons confirmed that teachers consistently provided supportive and inclusive learning environments where students felt valued and respected in their lessons. In interviews, students were conscious of the major differences between schooling (or lack of it) in their home countries and in Australia, and they compared Australian schooling experiences very positively with their previous experiences.

There were a number of factors evident in IECs and high schools that contributed to meeting the overall welfare and educational needs of students. In IECs these included:

- availability of bilingual support staff to help mediate between students, school and community;
- availability of school counsellors to support students as necessary (especially important for students who had experienced prior and/or ongoing trauma);
- availability of staff who are willing to support students as and where this is needed;
- role models — successful ex-students who are invited back to school to talk to students;
- after school homework programs and mentoring programs (with support from university student volunteers);
- volunteers who work with individual students during class, especially to support students' literacy development;
- links with organisations outside of school: including local community support organisations;
- strategies to find some financial support to address emergencies experienced by students and their families.

In high schools there were a number of programs that were designed to address the specific welfare and educational needs of students. These included:

- orientation programs when students first arrive in high school: such programs make students feel welcome and teach them about the school and its culture; they support them during their first weeks at school; and they provide opportunities for students to voice any of their concerns;
- Learning and Support Team in the school: with responsibility for students' welfare and wellbeing. The team provides a point of personal contact that is especially important in the initial transition phase;
- EAL teachers on staff; and extra time for EAL staff to work with specific groups of students in response to needs;
- parallel English programs that specifically support students' on-going language development in the early stages after transition, while also engaging with study of English;
- homework support programs: including the Refugee Action Support program;
- Refugee Transition Program: providing additional language and literacy support for refugee students during their transition from intensive English programs into high school and helping them plan their transition from school to further education, training or employment. Supported by a program coordinator, the program aims to provide refugee students with access to high challenge academic work while also developing the language, literacy and study skills necessary to enable them to engage with this high challenge work;
- Social Inclusion Pathway for Refugee Youth (SIPRY) introduced students to post-secondary education and career options. It also supported students' developing IT skills (program partners have included Centrelink, Work Ventures, TAFE, and NSW Service for the Treatment and Rehabilitation of Torture and Trauma Survivors (STARTTS));
- university and TAFE mentoring programs that are designed to provide students with insights into possible post-school pathways;
- supported work experience programs;
- preparation for TAFE courses: students can enrol in these while at school; thereby giving them advanced standing for future TAFE courses once they have left school;
- school events, where students' diversity is celebrated, and their own cultural backgrounds are acknowledged.

Students recognised the benefit of participation in these programs.

Significantly, in all the research schools, supportive and positive learning environments were evident at a whole school level as well as in individual lessons. While executive staff members were pivotal in establishing and supporting many of the programs that operated at a whole school level, teachers and bilingual support staff contributed to the programs and more generally to the overall learning environment and supportive atmosphere in the school. Interviews with both teachers and students provided evidence of the extent of additional support provided by individual teachers: in extra homework support; in ensuring students had access to financial support for uniforms and excursions where necessary; in assisting with travel to and from excursions as necessary. Observation and analysis of lessons confirmed that teachers were highly supportive of students in their classrooms. They interacted in respectful and equitable ways with students, and they brought a level of humour and fun to their lessons. Students recognised that teachers were sympathetic and genuinely 'there' for them and they appreciated this. Although there were inevitably issues at times within schools in regard to bullying, racism, or tensions between groups, the schools had systematic procedures in place to handle these issues as they arose, and students were aware and appreciative of these procedures.

The students themselves also contributed in positive ways to the school learning environments. Interviews pointed to a range of attributes that helped the students cope with school. These included students' resilience; their recognition of the importance of education and their enthusiasm for schooling; their strong work ethic and determination to succeed; and their insights into their own educational strengths and weaknesses. In addition, students contributed in more general ways to a positive school atmosphere. As teachers explained, they had considerable empathy for other students and a willingness to help; they also brought knowledge of diverse cultures, thereby enriching the experiences of other students within the school.

The overall findings in regard to students' wellbeing and welfare are particularly significant. As previous work has consistently emphasised, without a safe and secure learning environment where students are supported, respected and encouraged to take risks in their learning, educational success for any student is difficult (UNICEF, 1999; Vickers, 2007). For refugee students who are especially vulnerable, a safe and secure learning environment provides the essential basis for their educational success, and without this foundation, little educational progress is possible. The schools that participated in this project provide very positive models of supportive learning environments, and of the kinds of programs and strategies that address the specific needs of refugee and other EAL students. They provide very strong models that are likely to be useful for other schools.

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4.3 Pedagogical practices in IECs and high schools

As well as providing insights into the overall educational environment in our research schools, the project offers insights into the nature of current pedagogical practices, and the extent to which they are supportive of refugee and other EAL students. Our findings in regard to pedagogical practices drew on analyses of lessons and on interviews with both students and teachers.

Outcomes from analysis of IEC and high school lessons, based on use of procedures outlined earlier in the report, indicated that while lessons were consistently strong in providing students with Quality Learning Environments, they were less consistent in providing Intellectual Quality. In regard to Intellectual Quality, the analysis of lessons showed quite a high emphasis across lessons in both IECs and high schools on intellectually challenging curriculum content, (although there were variations between disciplines and within settings here). That is, the level of intellectual challenge in curriculum content was generally quite high, with students in most lessons from both IECs and high schools having access to high challenge curriculum work (Deep Knowledge). However, there was less consistent emphasis within lessons on ensuring students were able to understand and engage with that content. That is, there was less consistent evidence of Deep Understanding and Substantive Communication, especially in high school lessons.

Overall, findings indicated that while at IECs, refugee and other EAL students had some access to demanding curriculum work and were generally able to engage quite deeply with that work. However, students' levels of understanding and engagement seemed to diminish rather than increase when they made the transition from IEC to high school. This overall pattern is consistent with outcomes from research undertaken by Miller and her colleagues (eg, Miller, 2009; Miller & Windle, 2010; Windle & Miller, 2012), in which high school teachers reported pressure to get through the curriculum, and a lack of time and resources, with the result they were unable to support their low literacy refugee background students in ways that they would like.

Findings from teacher interviews were consistent with those from analysis of lessons. High school teachers in particular spoke of conflicting pressures to 'get through' mandatory curriculum content while also trying to ensure all students were able to understand and engage intellectually with that work. Thus the challenge of ensuring that students were able to understand and engage with key curriculum concepts was substantial.

Students with minimal or disrupted prior schooling

Teachers reported that pressure to 'get through the curriculum' was further increased when they worked with students who had minimal or disrupted schooling prior to coming to Australia. They spoke of their uncertainty about the best ways of meeting the welfare and, in particular, the educational needs of these students who generally had low levels of literacy in either their mother tongue or in English, and who had substantial gaps in their knowledge of educational concepts. Teachers thus faced the considerable pressure of trying to juggle the needs of diverse students, who were at very different educational levels and who had very diverse emotional and educational needs, within the one class. High school teachers, in particular, agreed that they would very much like more information and help regarding ways of supporting students with minimal or disrupted prior schooling who were now in mainstream classes.

The considerable difficulties faced by students with minimal or disrupted prior schooling, and the challenges they pose for teachers who work with them, have been acknowledged by a number of others (eg Brown, Miller & Mitchell, 2006; Cranitch 2010; Dooley, 2009; Miller, Mitchell & Brown, 2005; Miller & Windle, 2010). We believe that further work in this area needs to be undertaken to assist students and their teachers.

4.4 Ways pedagogical practices could be strengthened

Overall findings from analysis of lessons and interviews point to a number of areas where pedagogical practices could potentially be further strengthened. These include:

- more work on scaffolding and 'message abundancy';
- more emphasis on systematic and explicit teaching of language and literacy across the curriculum;
- more focus on purposes and significance of learning;
- more emphasis on 'unpacking' of assessment tasks.

Scaffolding and 'message abundancy'

The nature of targeted and differential support that is available to refugee and other EAL students is crucial to their educational success. In their interviews, teachers were clearly aware of this, and highlighted the importance of specific strategies that contributed to such support. Their discussions pointed to the significance of the metaphor of 'scaffolding'. Despite the ubiquitous nature of this term in educational literature, here we use the term to refer to the specific kind of support that pushes students to work just beyond their current capabilities (eg, Maybin, Mercer & Steirer, 1992; Hammond & Gibbons, 2005). Our use of the term is also consistent with the descriptors that were used for analysis of lessons (Appendix B).

Outcomes from analysis of lessons indicated that although IEC lessons provided stronger and more consistent scaffolding for students than high school lessons, overall there was a lower level of scaffolding than we had expected. Data analysis appears to point to some discrepancy between teachers' awareness of the importance of high support for students, and the extent to which that awareness is translated into systematic and targeted support in classrooms. This finding is especially important for refugee and other EAL students as it points to gaps in the kind of support that is necessary to enable students to engage with challenging curriculum content.

In their interviews, students as well as teachers were articulate about the strategies that can best support refugee and other EAL students, and responses from the two groups in many ways mirrored each other. While neither group actually used the term 'message abundancy', this notion arose again and again. The term was introduced by Gibbons (2009), and refers to ways in which students can have access again and again to similar messages or concepts, via different modes of meaning (semiotic modes). It ensures that students who may not understand a concept the first time it is introduced, can visit and revisit the same concept via a range of activities and a range of modes. These may include hand-on activities, visual support, group discussion, working with multimodal texts, reading tasks, written charts, and so on. For refugee and other EAL students, this notion is especially important as it also enables them to engage with educational concepts while having time to visit and revisit the English language that is necessary for their developing understanding of those concepts, and for their abilities to talk about such concepts.

When discussing how they helped their students, teachers captured the notion of 'message abundancy' by describing strategies that enabled students to visit and revisit similar concepts. They referred to the need for:

- planning learning activities that involved small steps;
- providing multiple opportunities for repetition and practice;
- providing carefully structured support within activities;
- working between concrete and more general/abstract concepts; and
- never making assumptions about students' prior cultural/Australian/school knowledge.

When discussing what teachers do that most helps them, students identified similar strategies. These included:

- clear teacher explanations (and re-explanations as necessary);
- physical demonstrations;
- visual support for explanations;
- opportunities for observations and experiences through incursions and excursions;
- hands on activities in class (such as science experiments),
- support in learning vocabulary;

- online tasks that address similar concepts to those discussed in class;
- group discussions;
- prior reading;
- opportunities to ask for help where necessary.

The overall challenge here lies in ensuring that such strategies are systematically included in lessons and are linked with explicit teaching of language and literacy. Findings from the project indicate there is a need for professional development to support teachers in this area.

Such professional development could usefully build on outcomes from previous research. For example, Hammond and colleagues have investigated high challenge high support programs for EAL students in mainstream classes (Hammond, 2008; Gibbons, 2008; 2009). That research addressed the kind of knowledge required of teachers to clarify major learning goals, and design programs that were intellectually challenging and engaging, while at the same time ensuring students had access to high levels of targeted scaffolding and 'message abundancy'. Significantly, outcomes from that research provided the theoretical underpinnings for the ESL Pedagogy Project, a highly successful professional development program that was implemented within the NSW Department of Education and Communities over a ten-year period from 2002-2012. Miller and her colleagues have also completed relevant research in this area (Miller, 2009; 2013; Miller & Windle, 2010). Such projects provide positive models for future professional development programs.

The significance of explicit and systematic teaching of language across the curriculum

Findings in regard to teaching academic language and literacy are particularly relevant to questions about pedagogical practices and the extent to which they were supportive of refugee and other EAL students. While all school students face the task of engaging with the demands of academic language and literacy as they progress through high school, these demands are considerably greater for refugee and other EAL students who cannot build on prior knowledge of oral English.

As their interviews indicate, teachers and students were very much aware of the challenge of learning academic English. Analysis of lessons however, points to a more complex picture. The analysis suggests IEC lessons were somewhat stronger than high school lessons in language teaching. In itself, this is not surprising since most IEC teachers have EAL qualifications, and a major purpose of IECs is to support students in their initial stage of learning academic English language and literacy. However, overall there was considerable variation in the extent to which lessons from both settings, but especially high schools, systematically and explicitly incorporated and taught language across the curriculum.

Comments from teachers in their interviews were also relevant to this issue. They indicated that relatively few teachers in high school mainstream classes had EAL qualifications. In addition, teachers were mixed in regard to their confidence in teaching language. While many teachers said they were 'reasonably confident', most said they would like more knowledge of EAL specific strategies and especially of language teaching.

These comments are consistent with previous research findings (Hammond & Macken-Horarik, 2001; Macken-Horarik, Love & Unsworth, 2011; Jones & Chen, 2012). Such research provides consistent evidence that while teachers are aware of the importance of academic language and literacy education with their students, many lack confidence in their knowledge of language and in their knowledge of how to incorporate effective teaching of language and

literacy in their lessons. Findings from this project point to the need for further emphasis on language across the curriculum and further support, especially for high school teachers in regard to ways of systematically and explicitly teaching language and literacy across the curriculum.

The importance of building knowledge about language and knowledge of language teaching is acknowledged in recent Australian educational initiatives. For example, the English component of the new Australian Curriculum (ACARA, 2012), with its three major strands of Language, Literacy and Literature, highlights the role of language in learning, and points to the importance of teachers' understanding of increasing demands of academic language and literacy. The NSW English K-10 Syllabus (BOS NSW, 2012) for the Australian Curriculum similarly acknowledges the importance of language learning and teaching, and the Australian Professional Standards for Teachers prioritises supporting students' literacy and numeracy development (Standard 2.5). It is to be hoped that these initiatives will reinforce the need to address knowledge about language and language teaching in professional development programs, thereby equipping teachers to better support their refugee and other EAL students.

Findings from this project point to the need for further emphasis on language across the curriculum and further support, especially for high school teachers in regard to ways of systematically and explicitly teaching language and literacy across the curriculum.

Addressing purposes and significance of learning

Observations and analysis of lessons also addressed ways in which educational knowledge is cumulatively built and the significance that is attached to that knowledge in terms of its relevance to the broader world. Explicit Goals; Background Knowledge; and Connectedness were relevant here. These elements capture an important area for all students — one that enables them to understand that there is a broader purpose and significance in educational knowledge, and that schooling is about more than assessment and examinations. The area is also important for refugee and other EAL students who may be struggling to understand the relevance of specific topics that may seem remote from their own experiences and lives.

IEC and high school lessons were similar in that there was generally some explanation of what students would be doing in any lesson (that is, there was some explanation of what curriculum content would be covered in the lesson), and there were some connections to what students had learned in previous lessons. However, there was relatively little systematic building on students' prior experiences or out of school knowledge. There was also relatively little systematic discussion of why students were learning specific topics or concepts, and few attempts to connect students' learning with broader world knowledge or with other disciplines. Findings, overall, indicate that this is an area that could be strengthened.

A clearer emphasis on the purpose and significance of learning could be achieved by more explicit discussion of purpose of learning specific topics. This would include making unit and lessons goals more explicit; more discussion of expected learning outcomes from sequences of classroom activities and tasks; and more emphasis on the significance of educational knowledge and learning in connection both with students' prior learning and experiences, and with broader world knowledge. That is, there could be more emphasis on WHY learning about specific topics and concepts is important and relevant, and HOW it is significant to life in and out of school. Such an emphasis is of value to all students, however, for students who are undergoing a major cultural adjustment to educational practices and schooling in Australia, discussion of the why and how of learning is especially important.

‘Unpacking’ of assessment tasks

In their interviews, students consistently raised the issue of assessment tasks. This was the topic that generated most discussion amongst students, and they generally agreed that assessment tasks and examinations were the most challenging and stressful aspect of high school. Science assessment tasks in particular seemed to generate high levels of anxiety.

Part of the challenge involved the need to be sufficiently organised to begin assessment tasks early enough and to allow sufficient time for completion, rather than putting them off until close to the due dates. But the major part of the challenge involved working out what was required with assessment tasks — in terms of the curriculum content that they were expected to know, and also in terms of how to go about doing assignments, including working out the appropriate text types etc. Students also expressed anxiety about doing examinations and were concerned about the time it took them to read examination questions with the consequence that their time for responding was limited.

In their interviews, a number of teachers indicated they already had strategies in place to assist students with assessment tasks. For example, many teachers provided one-on-one support for students who were concerned about assessment tasks. Some teachers encouraged students to submit drafts of assessment tasks so that they could receive and respond to feedback prior to the due date of submission. While very helpful, such strategies depended on students being sufficiently organised to be able to spend time with teachers, or to submit their assessment tasks in time to receive feedback. Other teachers had provided alternative, less demanding assessment tasks for students, but in order to be fair to other students, they deducted a number of marks if students chose to do the alternative task. While students appreciated this option, they were concerned about losing marks.

Students’ concerns highlight the more general need for teachers to spend time ‘unpacking’ assessment task and examination requirements. This ‘unpacking’ may include working with students on timelines for completion of tasks, and details of how they should prepare in terms of prior research and reading (including strategies that show them how to undertake this prior work). But in addition, ‘unpacking’ would include very detailed discussion of what assessment tasks require of students: in terms both of knowledge of curriculum content, and of required text types. It would also involve providing ‘good’ models, and detailed discussion (more ‘unpacking’) of those models to increase students’ understanding of requirements of assessment tasks.

In many ways discussion of ‘unpacking’ assessment tasks overlaps with previous discussion of the need for more language teaching. Students’ comments point in particular to their uncertainty regarding the language requirements of assessment tasks. While the demands of assessment tasks are likely to continue to cause stress, by ‘unpacking’ the content and language requirements of these tasks, teachers, at least to some extent, will be able to alleviate their students’ anxiety.

Findings from the project have led to five Recommendations. These are addressed in the following section.

5. Recommendations

Recommendation 1: Further strengthen the process of transition between IECs and high schools by addressing a number of specific strategies

Although the process of transition between IEC and high school was generally a smooth one for refugee and other EAL students in the research schools, both teachers and students provided a number of constructive suggestions for how this process could be further strengthened. These suggestions included:

- Timing of transition between IECs and high schools
  - more flexibility regarding the time that IEC students are able to stay at the IEC; (especially important for students who have had little or disrupted schooling prior to arriving in Australia);
  - flexible arrangements regarding timing of transition to high school: these need to balance students' educational needs (of transitioning to high school in order to 'close the gap' with their peers) with challenges of academic and social adjustment in high school;
  - where possible, offer a reduced span of subjects in students' first year at high school (for example, through a bridging program) to facilitate transition and integration into high school.
- Further strengthening connections between IECs and high schools
  - more systematic sharing of information between IECs and high schools, and between high school executive staff, support staff and subject/classroom teachers regarding the welfare needs and educational abilities of refugee and other EAL students when they make the transition to high school;
  - provide IEC students with more 'taster' experiences of a range of high schools before they make the transition to provide students with a better sense of what to expect at high school (and support the coordination of such programs in IECs);
  - more liaison between IECs and high schools regarding the curriculum content, especially of core curriculum subjects, so that students become familiar with topics before studying them at high school;
  - plan specific strategies that would support further liaison regarding curriculum content between IECs and high schools. These could include:
    - in IECs, in the period prior to transition, work with curriculum topics that feed into specific high school curriculum topics; and focus specifically on text types relevant to future high school study;
    - in high schools, provide bridging classes that can build on specific curriculum topics that have been introduced in IECs;
    - more liaison between IECs and high schools regarding assessment requirements — both in regard to overall expectations and in regard to specific tasks and appropriate text types;
    - more emphasis on community involvement during and after transition to high schools so that students' families/carers have a better understanding of high schools and their expectations of students. Employment of bilingual support staff at high schools could facilitate this.

Recommendation 2: Build on the models of support provided by the research schools for transition between IECs and high schools

The IECs and high schools that participated in the research provide very strong models of supportive and welcoming learning environments that benefit refugee and other EAL students. These environments operate at whole school level and include a range of programs that address welfare and educational needs of students.

Relevant features in IEC research schools included:

- availability of staff to provide support, including bilingual support staff, school counsellors, and teachers who are willing to provide necessary support as and where this is needed;
- volunteers who work with individual students during class, especially to support students' literacy development;
- after school homework programs;
- role models (successful ex-students) who are invited back to school to talk to students;
- links with organisations outside of school: including local community support organisations; and post-school educational organisations;
- strategies to find some financial support to address emergencies experienced by students and their families.

Relevant features in research high schools included:

- orientation programs to ensure students feel safe and welcome when they first arrive in high school;
- Learning and Support Team in the school: with responsibility for students' welfare and wellbeing;
- parallel English/EAL programs;
- after school homework support programs;
- programs that support transition, for example, the Refugee Transition Program;
- programs that introduce students to post-secondary education and career options, and that make links between school, TAFE, university and work contexts;
- supported work experience programs;
- events that celebrate students' own cultural backgrounds and acknowledge their contributions to the school.

We recommend that other schools with significant numbers of refugee and other EAL students build on the models of support that are evident in the research schools.

Recommendation 3: Further strengthen classroom practices to ensure refugee and other EAL students are more systematically supported to engage with intellectually challenging curricula

The research provided evidence that refugee and other EAL students generally had access to high challenge curriculum content, but had less access to the high levels of systematic support that were necessary for them to engage intellectually with that curriculum content. We commend the high level of intellectual challenge, but, especially in high schools, we recommend the following:

- more attention to scaffolding, and especially to the way in which 'message abundancy' is incorporated into selection and sequencing of classroom activities;

- more systematic and explicit focus on academic language and literacy development across the curriculum;
- more focus on explicit goals and expected learning outcomes: that is, more emphasis on WHY learning about specific topics and concepts is important and relevant, and HOW it is significant to life in and out of school;
- consistent systematic 'unpacking' of requirements and expectations in relation to assessment tasks and exams;
- more focus on needs of students who have experienced minimal or disrupted schooling (see also Recommendation 5).

Recommendation 4: Strengthen support for mainstream and EAL teachers who are working with refugee and other EAL students by providing ongoing access to targeted professional development programs

A relevant finding from the project was that, despite variations between lessons in both settings (IECs and high schools), IEC lessons overall received higher codings than high school lessons in most Elements of the NSW Quality Teaching Model and features of EAL pedagogy. A possible relevant factor here is that the majority of IEC teachers have EAL qualifications. In acknowledgement of this, and in order to achieve Recommendation 3, we further recommend that all teachers who work with refugee and other EAL students have ongoing access to relevant professional support. We also highlight the importance of EAL education for all pre-service teachers, and the inclusion of EAL principles in the Australian Professional Standards for Teachers. Examples of how this recommendation could be achieved include:

- support teachers to extend their knowledge of academic language and literacy, and ways of incorporating that knowledge in different curriculum areas;
- ensure teachers have opportunities to work together and to talk to each other: in team meetings, in professional support programs at local and state levels;
- highlight the importance of high challenge, high support programs, as well as tools such as Rich Tasks and Essential Questions (Hammond, 2014), that enable implementation of such programs (thereby building on outcomes from previous research and from NSW ESL Pedagogy Projects);
- encourage teachers to obtain relevant EAL qualifications;
- implement the *Teaching English Language Learners across the Curriculum* (TELL) professional learning program (NSW DET, 2009), or equivalent, across the school;
- implement the *Teaching Refugees in my Classroom* professional learning program (NSW DET, 2010) across the school;
- work within the framework of educational initiatives such as the national Australian Curriculum (ACARA, 2012) and English as an Additional Language or Dialect: Teacher Resource (EAL/D) (ACARA, 2011); the National Professional Standards for Teachers (AITSL, 2011) to address implications for refugee and other EAL students;
- use the NSW Quality Teaching Model (Quality Teaching in NSW, 2003; 2004) in school based professional development programs to reflect on and analyse existing practices, especially in regard to implementation of Intellectual Quality, and to support teachers to address any identified gaps;

- include aspects of EAL pedagogy in all pre-service teacher training and in the National Professional Standards for Teachers.

Recommendation 5: Provide further support for teachers working with students from minimal or disrupted educational backgrounds

An area of particular challenge, consistently highlighted by teachers in IECs and high schools, is that of working with students who have had minimal or disrupted schooling, and who generally have very low levels of literacy in their mother tongues as well as English. Given the complex nature of this challenge we believe a number of related strategies are necessary to provide appropriate ongoing support for teachers. We therefore recommend:

- targeted professional development programs, for example, *Teaching Refugees in my Classroom* (NSW DET, 2010) that address the kinds of pedagogical practices that teachers could incorporate into their programs. Such practices would include:
  - working with hands-on activities that require use of oral language-accompanying-action;
  - working from concrete experiences, and building gradually to more general and abstract understandings of educational concepts;
  - building on students' oral language to develop understandings of literacy;
  - building on numerous small steps in learning;
  - highlighting the importance of 'message abundancy' in programs; and articulating ways of planning and implementing programs that are characterised by high message abundancy to address specific needs of students;
- development of teacher resources that demonstrate ways of incorporating appropriate pedagogical practices in programs across all curriculum areas;
- building on models of successful interventions to assist low literacy students and their teachers (eg Cranitch, 2010; Miller, Windle & Yazdanpanah, in press);
- follow up research to further investigate specific needs of low literacy students, and challenges and successes of working with such students.

We propose that these five Recommendations are addressed, as relevant, by the NSW Department of Education and Communities, and by individual schools to further assist refugee and other EAL students in their transition between IECs and high schools.

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7. Appendices

Coding scale overview of selected NSW Quality Teaching Model Elements used in analysis of lessons

Intellectual Quality

Deep knowledge	1 Almost all of the content knowledge of the lesson is shallow because it does not deal with significant concepts or ideas.	2 Some key concepts and ideas are mentioned or covered by the teacher or students, but only at a superficial level.	3 Knowledge is treated unevenly by teacher and students during instruction. A significant idea may be addressed as part of the lesson, but in general the focus on key concepts and ideas is not sustained throughout the lesson.	4 Most of the content knowledge of the lesson is deep. Sustained focus by teacher and students on central concepts or ideas is occasionally interrupted by superficial or unrelated ideas or concepts.	5 Knowledge is deep because focus by teacher and students is sustained on key ideas or concepts throughout the lesson.
Deep understanding	1 Students demonstrate only shallow understanding.	2 For most students, understanding of key concepts is shallow most of the time, with one or two minor exceptions.	3 Deep understanding is uneven. Students demonstrate both shallow and deeper understanding at different points in the lesson. A central concept understood by some students may not be understood by other students.	4 Most students provide information, arguments or reasoning that demonstrate deep understanding for a substantial proportion of the lesson.	5 Almost all students demonstrate deep understanding throughout the lesson.
Substantive communication	1 Almost no substantive communication occurs during the lesson.	2 Substantive communication among students and/or between teacher and students occurs briefly.	3 Substantive communication among students and/or between teacher and students occurs occasionally and involves at least two sustained interactions.	4 Substantive communication, with sustained interactions, occurs over approximately half the lesson with teacher and/or students scaffolding the conversation.	5 Substantive communication, with sustained interactions, occurs throughout the lesson, with teachers and/or students scaffolding the communication.

Coding scale overview of selected NSW Quality Teaching Model Elements used in analysis of lessons

Quality Learning Environment

Engagement	1 Low engagement or disengagement. Students are frequently off-task, perhaps disruptive, as evidenced by inattentiveness or serious disruptions by many. This is the central characteristic during much of the lesson.	2 Sporadic engagement. Most students, most of the time, either appear apathetic and indifferent or are only occasionally active in carrying out assigned activities. Some students might be clearly off-task.	3 Variable engagement. Most students are seriously engaged with key concepts in parts of the lesson, but may appear indifferent during other parts and very few students are clearly off-task.	4 Widespread engagement. Most students, most of the time, are on-task pursuing the substance of the lesson. Most students seem to be taking the work seriously and trying hard.	5 Serious engagement. All students are deeply involved, almost all of the time, in pursuing the substance of the lesson.
High expectations	1 No students, or only a few, participate in any challenging work.	2 Some students participate in challenging work during at least some of the lesson. They are encouraged (explicitly or through lesson processes) to try hard and to take risks and are recognised for doing so.	3 Many students participate in challenging work during at least half of the lesson. They are encouraged (explicitly or through lesson processes) to try hard and to take risks and are recognised for doing so.	4 Most students participate in challenging work during most of the lesson. They are encouraged (explicitly or through lesson processes) to try hard and to take risks and are recognised for doing so. The teacher encourages students to succeed academically.	5 All students participate in challenging work throughout the lesson. They are encouraged (explicitly or through lesson processes) to try hard and to take risks and are recognised for doing so.
Social support	1 Social support is low. Actions or comments by the teacher or students result in 'put downs' and the classroom atmosphere is negative.	2 Social support is mixed. Both undermining and supportive behaviours or comments are observed.	3 Social support is neutral or mildly positive. While no undermining behaviours are observed, supportive behaviours or comments are directed at those students most engaged in the lesson rather than those students who are more reluctant.	4 Social support is clearly positive. Supportive behaviours and comments are directed at most students, including clear attempts at supporting reluctant students.	5 Social support is strong. Supportive behaviours or comments from students and the teacher are directed at all students, including soliciting and valuing the contributions of all.

Coding scale overview of selected NSW Quality Teaching Model Elements used in analysis of lessons

Significance

Background knowledge	1 Students' background knowledge is not mentioned or elicited.	2 Students' background knowledge is mentioned or elicited, but is trivial and not connected to the substance of the lesson.	3 Students' prior background knowledge is mentioned, or elicited briefly, is connected to the substance of the lesson, and there is at least some connection to out-of-school background knowledge.	4 Students' background knowledge is mentioned or elicited several times, in connection with the substance of the lesson, and there is at least some connection to out-of-school background knowledge.	5 Students' background knowledge is consistently incorporated into the lesson, and there is substantial connection to out-of-school background knowledge.
Cultural knowledge	1 No explicit recognition or valuing of other than the knowledge of the dominant culture is evident in the substance of the lesson.	2 Some cultural knowledge is evident in the lesson, but it is treated in a superficial manner.	3 Some cultural knowledge is recognised and valued in the lesson, but within the framework of the dominant culture.	4 Substantial cultural knowledge is recognised and valued in the lesson with some challenge to the framework of the dominant culture.	5 Substantial cultural knowledge is recognised and valued throughout the lesson and this knowledge is accepted as equal to the dominant culture.
Inclusivity	1 Some students are excluded, or exclude themselves, from lesson activities throughout the lesson.	2 Some students are excluded, or exclude themselves, from the majority of lesson activities except for minor forms of inclusion in one or two instances during the lesson.	3 Students from all groups are included in most aspects of the lesson, but the inclusion of students from some groups may be minor or trivial relative to other groups.	4 Students from all groups are included in a significant way in most aspects of the lesson, but there still appears to be some unevenness in the inclusion of different social groups.	5 Students from all groups are included in all aspects of the lesson and their inclusion is both significant and equivalent to the inclusion of students from other social groups.
Connectedness	1 The lesson has no clear connection to anything beyond itself. Neither the teacher nor the students offer any justification for the lesson beyond the school.	2 The teacher or students try to connect what is being learned to the world beyond the classroom, but the connection is weak and superficial or trivial.	3 Students recognise some connection between classroom knowledge and situations outside the classroom, which might include sharing their work with an audience outside the classroom, but they do not explore implications of these connections which remain largely abstract or hypothetical.	4 Students recognise and explore connection between classroom knowledge and situations outside the classroom in ways that create personal meaning and highlight the significance of the knowledge. There might be an effort to influence an audience beyond the classroom.	5 Students recognise and explore connections between classroom knowledge and situations outside the classroom in ways that create personal meaning and highlight the significance of the knowledge. This meaning and significance is strong enough to lead students to become involved in an effort to influence an audience beyond the classroom.

Coding scale overview of additional EAL pedagogical features used in analysis of lessons: Coding scale overview (following NSW Quality Teaching Model)

Intellectual Quality

	1	2	3	4	5
Academic language focus	There is no evidence of attempts by the teacher to incorporate language teaching into the lesson. That is, there is no teaching of strategies for reading, text structure, paragraph organisation, grammar, vocabulary, spelling or punctuation. There is no systematic discussion of the language of curriculum content.	There is some discussion of meaning of specialised vocabulary in the lesson, but little systematic focus on strategies for reading, text structure, paragraph organisation, grammar, vocabulary, spelling or punctuation. There is only occasional or incidental discussion of the language of curriculum content.	Language teaching occurs occasionally, although somewhat unevenly. The teacher includes some teaching of various aspects of speaking, reading or writing relevant to curriculum content, and addresses some strategies for reading, text structure, paragraph organisation, grammar, vocabulary, spelling or punctuation. There is some talk about language during the lesson, but this is not systematic.	There is at least one systematic and sustained instance of academic language teaching during the lesson. This language teaching includes, as relevant, strategies for reading, text structure, paragraph organisation, grammar, vocabulary, spelling or punctuation. There is regular ongoing talk about academic language in the lesson where students are encouraged to analyse their own and others' use of language.	There is evidence of systematic and sustained academic language teaching during the lesson. This includes, as relevant, aspects of speaking, reading or writing. It makes connections to previous lessons and builds students' knowledge about language in systematic ways. There is regular ongoing, talk about language in the lesson, and students are consistently encouraged to take an analytic approach to understanding their own and others' use of language.

Coding scale overview of additional EAL pedagogical features used in analysis of lessons: Coding scale overview (following NSW Quality Teaching Model)

Quality Learning Environment

Explicit goals	1 There is no discussion of the purpose of lessons, (beyond 'this is what we are doing today') either in regard to curriculum content or to language. There are no explicit statements, beyond technical or procedural criteria, about expected quality of students' work.	2 There are only general statements regarding the purpose of the lesson, and of specific tasks. There is little discussion of where the lesson fits within the overall curriculum and units of work. Discussion rarely addresses language learning goals. Only general statements are made regarding the expected quality of students' work.	3 Some statements are made regarding the purpose of the lesson and of specific tasks. There is some discussion of the purposes of the (science, history) curriculum and of expected language learning outcomes. Criteria regarding the expected quality of students' work are made explicit during the lesson, but there is little evidence that students are using the criteria to examine the quality of their work in regard to curriculum content or language.	4 There is frequent discussion of the purposes of the lesson and tasks, and of where they fit within the curriculum and within units of work. This discussion addresses both curriculum content and language. Detailed criteria regarding quality of students' work for both curriculum content and language are made explicit or reinforced during the lesson and there is some evidence of some students examining the quality of their work in relation to those criteria.	5 There is regular and consistent discussion of purposes of lessons and tasks in relation to the overall curriculum and unit of work. Classroom discussion of purposes and goals addresses both curriculum content and language. Detailed criteria regarding quality of students' work for both curriculum content and language are made explicit or reinforced throughout the lesson. There is consistent evidence of students examining the quality of their work in relation to these criteria.
Scaffolding	1 There is no evidence of systematic pre-planned and point of need support that recognises and responds to groups or individual students' language and learning needs. Selection and sequencing of tasks appears somewhat random and does not reflect the sequential steps necessary to support students in their developing understandings of curriculum knowledge.	2 There is occasional evidence of pre-planned and point of need support that recognises and responds to groups or individual students' language and learning needs, but this is not consistent. Selection and sequencing of tasks takes some account of the sequential steps necessary to support some students, but this is not consistent. There is little evidence that students are becoming more capable as learners.	3 There is some evidence of pre-planned and point of need support that recognises and responds to groups or individual students' language and learning needs. There is some attempt to support students' developing curriculum understandings through sequencing of whole class, group and individual tasks and through provision of differential support to meet some students' needs in language and learning. There is occasional evidence of handover, although not necessarily evidence of students becoming more capable as learners.	4 There is frequent evidence of pre-planned and point of need support to address the language and learning needs of most groups or individual students. This support is evident in sequencing of tasks and in support for most groups and individuals in response to their language and curriculum learning needs. There is evidence of handover and of some students becoming more capable and independent as learners.	5 There is strong evidence of systematic pre-planned and point of need support in the lesson. This support explicitly and consistently recognises and addresses all students' needs in their developing understandings of curriculum knowledge and of language and literacy. Careful selection and sequencing of whole class, group and individual tasks within lesson enables differential levels of support for groups and individual students. Support within the lesson also provides opportunities for handover, and there is evidence that students are become more capable and independent as learners.

Appendix C

Coding sheet used in analysis of lessons

(combining selected Elements from NSW Quality Teaching Model and additional EAL Pedagogical Features)

Stage/Year **KLA/Subject** **Unit/Lesson**

Intellectual Quality

Element	Evidence: coding notes	Score (1-5)
Deep Knowledge		
Deep Understanding		
Substantive Communication		
Academic Language Focus		

Quality Learning Environment

Element	Evidence: coding notes	Score (1-5)
Engagement		
High Expectations		
Social Support		
Explicit Goals		
Scaffolding		

Significance

Element	Evidence: coding notes	Score (1-5)
Background Knowledge		
Cultural Knowledge		
Connectedness		
Inclusivity