

AK: Hi everyone this is Anne from VicTESOL and today I'm with Debbie, Jamabi, and Julie from Springvale Rise play group and I'll pass it over to Debbie to introduce everybody.

DC: hi everybody as Anne said I'm Debbie Cottier I'm the current principle of Springvale Rise primary school and our primary school is actually a community hub. So, we have lots of early years opportunities including our play group and with me today is our hub leader.

JR: Hi everyone my name Julie Riciti and I'm the community hub leader here at Springvale Rise primary school.

JAM: Hi everyone my name is Jamabi and I work at Springvale Rise primary school in multicultural education.

AK: Thank you. I was curious to know how you're building a community in your setting for the newly arrived refugee families.

DC: Sure. So, as I said before we genuinely see ourselves as a community hub and Springvale in general terms is very multicultural and diverse community. Currently in our school we've got about 460 children representing maybe 40 different countries speaking about 35 different languages. Our largest group in our families at the moment are our families from Myanmar so they're both Burmese and Rohingya. Many of those are from a refugee type background. And we also have a large group of Vietnamese families who've been in Australia a couple more generations, a bit longer, but very diverse and very exciting. So we really have that chance to build relationships with all our families and I think that we really think about relationships being the foundation work. The work that we do with families and making sure that we really mindful of culture. I have a phrase called cultural mindfulness which I've actually picked from somebody else and that's really thinking about being mindful of the cultural differences in our community not just of our students and our families but also our staff as well. We intentionally build opportunities for community to engage with our school or in our schools so building those relationships between children and other children between children and adults whether that's with their mothers or fathers or with the staff members and also building relationships between adult and adult. So, mothers and

other mothers, or mothers and our staff members and the two girls with me today are the two gems that help us do that.

JR/JAM: yes, that's us yeah. And like Debbie mentioned earlier we really believe that hub is the heart of our school and community, so we really take the time to invest in those relationships and building on those relationships and anyone that comes through our school we always welcome everybody into our community. We welcome new families into our community hub programmes. There are so many programmes at our school. So, we have English class, playgroup, community class and the garden club and friendship group. I think one of the best things about our programme is word of mouth as well because we're so lucky that a lot of mums then share with their friends. "Oh, have you been to English class" and speak to other mums. Jamabi in general is the key link in helping us connect those families.

DC: yeah so, our multicultural education assistants are absolutely worth their weight in gold. so in this instance Jamabi is really that link, that genuine link, between us -the school and between mothers who speak Rohingya or Burmese and actually Jamabi speaks a little bit of Malay as well so she's able to really forge those, help us forge, those relationships with our families whether it's the adults or the kids as well she's a gem.

AK: Jamabi, could you tell us a little bit about the play group that the school has?

JAM: The playgroup is very good for the mother very good for the children and for very good for the children to come to the program. Very easy for them and for the teacher or mum they set up, so very good, and then mom come to our children who support play group. I can see the home, I can see the classroom, I can see the playgroup and this area is very different. (and people who started coming from playgroup, the children are very good, and the mum is very good.)

JR: especially as they settle into prep.

DC: yes settling prep. now I was going to say I guess that one of the things that's really important that we intentionally plan for is to help Jamabi learn about research around early childhood development or oral language development and the importance of talk and we

actually have her in our playgroups where she actually is able to model for the mothers about how to use language when they play or for example how to talk their way to a book chat with their children even if they don't actually read English so that they can do the first languages and that opportunity for her to be that model is absolutely amazing. And we can see not only Jamabi's knowledge and skills changing overtime but obviously the way that our mothers engage with their own children at play group at home has changed enormously over time and actually, I'll say to you Julie, how excited we were when we have been running virtual play group and what we've actually been seeing whilst these mums and dads have actually been at home.

JR: ah absolutely and yeah just saying our families engage in virtual play group every week logging in on zoom and participating in our songs our stories. We'll go for shape hunts and colour hunts around and you can see the families trying to help their children find a shape or whatever it is that engages everyone in Zoom has been amazing. That they've continued with this interaction and playgroup even though we're online and it's COVID. So that's been really wonderful and to add on to what Deb was saying, even our parents that have children that are school aged so some parents have decided volunteer into our play group programs and you can just see the interest changing and you know, "Julie, you know, Jamabi why did you set up the activity?" and we explain all this is a fine motor activity or you know this is a role play and we want children to talk. Or if it's selling ice cream perhaps, we want that language to come out and you can see volunteers playing with the children in playgroup and modelling so that's been really amazing to see. We have interaction.

DC: Obviously capacity building of our MEAs is important but obviously then identifying key women in the playgroups to also take that leading role and share and learn with other mums and bubs as well.

AK: It's really breaching that divide between time in school and beginning to teach that school language and school culture through the play group and the early childhood notion of learning through play.

DC: Absolutely and really trying to make those links clear between what happens in our play group classrooms, for want of the right phrase, or playgroups and then how that looks at

kinder and then how that looks in our prep classroom as well and obviously Julie is actually is a teacher with a real strength in the early years so having her facilitate the playgroups on our site has really leant slightly different picture I suppose, so we're really thinking about the way that we prepare our sessions and the provocations that we provide.

AK: OK and what about the use of, you talked about the women speak Rohingya and Burmese and maybe others as well so how do you draw on those rich linguistic resources that they bring to the play group?

DC: I might say that that's become a real feature as our playgroups changed over time. so for us it was understanding that relationships are important and building confidence with the women was important so that they could actually learn to share and converse in richer language so actually building that richness in their own language and then advocating for that when they talk with children. And Julie, you and I've actually talked about that relatively recently actually, about how you've almost put a press on the adults' language for that to be replicated with the children.

JR: yes so through our English classes that Jamabi I facilitate we have a Rohingya and Burmese English class -conversational class where we were just you know reading a simple text with pictures and or asking a lot of comprehension inferential questions and I was asking Jamabi to gain some answers in their own language and we found that that a lot of our families weren't really able to, I suppose, answer those questions even in their own language would cause simply perhaps they just never been exposed to that type of thinking before. So we've been really working on reading books together and asking questions "why is this happening" and "why is mum sad in the store and what's happening" and at first we found that the questions with the answers were very limited and now as we've progressed they know that Jamabi and I are looking into thinking so they really thinking about "what I'm looking at here in the pictures" an answering to Jamabi in their own language wherein courage in that same process even reading their own children so we really encourage our parents to read with their child even in your own language ask what's happening look at the pictures and trying to model what are the type of questions or what are we looking for

when we are reading that text to build their confidence in being confident in their own language.

AK: You are growing that sort book language what about oral storytelling and oral language?

DC: Julie is it Julie is a bit of a gem at that. She loves them to tell a Story and certainly loves to provide opportunities for singing as part of that as well so that crossing the cultural divide there so when I talk about cultural mindfulness it's really important for us to hear our families stories and value our families stories and sometimes attempt to record some of those stories whether it's orally or written as well and almost that language experience approach that we would use in our early years classroom you can potentially be using that with our families whether it's in play group for English language classes as well. But valuing talk in its whole entirety is key. Absolutely.

AK: OK so can you give us any examples of the types of other things that you do at playgroup?

JR: Well, I guess hanging on our song and oral accounting, we've implemented the parent/child boost programme and taking it back to do you know just you know song and stories but no props. Just yourself and the other children and mothers and we have tried to, we have implemented the programme into play group as well and it has been great to see children and their mums just kind of be really engaged that were not looking or picking up a toy we're just looking at me, or we're singing along or listening to a story reactions and having that time I think for them to bond but it's really it's that oral language you know and we're constantly using our hand actions when we're singing a song and up and down and expressions and you know every week, singing their songs and it's just has been a real joy, I suppose to see our families singing songs.

DC: Lots of sensory activities too, Anne, so obviously those opportunities as we said before. Fine motor/gross motor opportunities and a little bit of a special activity every now and then. So, we do go on excursions and we do have incursions, and the parents and the children love those don't they Jamabi? We went to the beach a couple of years ago and there were families there that just absolutely were so joyful, and we've been to the zoo with

them and been to Science Works. The list is long. So, often we can get a little grant to help us with that stuff so usually these activities are also free but that provides fabulous chances to develop language and to simply have some fun.

AK: So Jamabi it sounds like a wonderful programme happening for the mothers and the young children. I was wondering what do the communities, the women and the families want for their children in terms of language? Would they like them to keep the Rohingya and the Burmese and other languages that they speak as well as learn English?

JAM: Not all understand English, but speak English, yes. Rohingya, Burmese, no.

JR: but it's very important for them to keep their home language.

JAM: for them yeah.

DC: And we are interested in that Anne, because I know even recently that we were having a conversation with a mum and a dad and we're actually talking about possibly then having to move schools not because they want to because of some other federal government overlays and they were talking about whether we could actually be running Burmese or Rohingya classes after school so that those opportunities to keep first language was provided. So, I do think there is, our families really want their children to learn English but as time goes by, we can hear now more that they're also really keen to keep their own first languages as well.

AK: Where do you see the programme going from here?

DC: Julie and Jamabi and myself and other people that have been involved in the in the programme previously or currently are always looking for new wide and wonderful ways of engaging with families and to add even greater value to what we do. A thing that comes to my mind is that we do have some dads come to play group but it's probably not as many dads as mums and we do have some deliberate intentional decisions around that. So for example the Father's Day we have a kind of a dads only play days so everybody can come in play with their children so in my mind there's really a nice opportunity for us to kind of demonstrate the value of fathers in parenting and the importance of them being engaged with their children. We just need to add this year was a bit of a plan for that but that didn't go ahead but that we just need to make some time and energy to try and pull that together.

So, I like the idea of that I'm sure there will be some dads who will come along very quickly but we might have to coerce a few others to attend but that should be right.

JR: They did enjoy the virtual Father's Day play group for that we had this year. That was great and we made it work it was at home and it was nice to see the dads come online but yeah that was good to see the dads coming in and joining.

AK: Thank you very much joining us today and I have to come visit the play group again soon once you're back.

DC: absolutely yes you will have had a lovely time so more than welcome anytime, Anne.

JR: and we have got a lovely new hub on the other campus.

AK: OK thank you, bye.