H.E.A.L.
(Home of Expressive Arts in Learning)

2011 Report
Milpera State High School, 2 Parker Street, Chelmer, Brisbane, Queensland, Australia.

www.healcreativetherapy.com

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H.E.A.L. Report 2011
About HEAL

Refugee young people would usually prefer to be living in their country of birth.

Wouldn’t you also prefer to be living where the language is your mother tongue, where the food is delicious, the customs are familiar, the geography is known, and you have your family and friends nearby?

They left because to stay was impossible. They left because they were risking death by remaining where they were.

For example, some refugees belonged to a minority group which was being targeted by the forces of evil, such as the Hazaras of Afghanistan who are hunted and killed by the Taliban.

Some refugees fled from war in their homeland, such as the people of Somalia.

Others have finally been allowed access to the freedom of Australia after their parents were displaced from home, so they were born and brought up in the confines of refugee camps, like those experienced by the Rohingya people on the Burmese/Bangladesh border.

And here they find themselves amongst the green trees, Western customs and material comforts of Brisbane, with little or no English, without friends, often without family, and coping with adolescence as well.

Any steps which are taken towards assisting their settlement and sense of belonging are steps which assist them in becoming happy and healthy future Australian citizens. Such assistance is essential.

HEAL assists by offering a creative, popular and caring service using Music Therapy and Arts Therapy within Milpera State High School to our newly arrived refugee students.

In the HEAL building, we offer them a safe and welcoming space in which to rest, meet and practice relationship skills. We assist class teachers with students encountering learning challenges due to trauma. We help the young people process the traumatic events of the past, make sense of the present, and look to the future. We allow space to think about identity, culture, and dreams; to repair hurts, form relationships, mourn losses, and build on strengths. In this way, we increase the young peoples’ availability for learning, and help improve their chances of success in their new culture.

This is privileged work indeed, and in HEAL we see the results in improved well-being, more capacity for happiness, and personal growth in our young people.
HEAL Mission Statement

HEAL’s Vision:

Milpera is a school that is committed to the well-being of its students, and which understands the challenges faced by newly arrived adolescent youth. The school offers early intervention to address mental health challenges, and actively strives to improve the quality of life of its students, in order to maximise their learning and life potential. It is HEAL’s intention to support the school in this through the creative arts therapies.

HEAL’s Mission:

To provide therapeutic services, research and education which increase the possibility of culturally diverse refugee adolescents experiencing the good mental health necessary to participate fully in the learning experience, and to enjoy life without barriers.

HEAL’s Priorities:

1. Support refugee students by providing early intervention, and responding to mental health needs as they arise, via the creative art therapies in HEAL.

2. Support teachers of refugee students with challenging behaviours and attitudes, through informal and formal appointments in HEAL for those students.

3. Through the HEAL service, ensure that newly arrived refugee adolescents experience school as a safe place in which they can seek help, and assist them to learn to settle in their new country with dignity and independence.

HEAL’s Principles for Action:

- Respect for human rights and dignity
- Strong school community involvement, understanding and support
- A holistic, person-centred approach
- Recognition of culturally and linguistically diverse needs
- A coordinated and collaborative approach
- Provision of advocacy services with a humanitarian focus
- An evidence based approach, with a commitment to ongoing research
- Sustainable action
The Need for the HEAL Program

In the HEAL program an art teacher, art therapists and music therapists work in the school setting, to enhance the well-being of newly arrived refugee students, to aid in settlement and ultimately improve learning outcomes. HEAL utilises the creative arts, that is, Art Therapy, Music Therapy, and “Art for relaxation”.

As an intensive English language preparation centre and settlement service for newly arrived immigrant and refugee students, Milpera State High School prepares students for transition to mainstream high schools. The Milpera school population includes a majority of refugee students, mostly from the Middle East, Africa and East Asia. In 2011, Milpera usually had around 220 students enrolled. Due to the unique system of continual enrolment and five or ten weekly student departures to mainstream high school, the school population varies, but is around 180 to 200 students.

Davidson, Murray & Schweitzer (2008) suggest psychological adjustment in the resettlement phase is impacted by a number of factors. The process of adaptation during resettlement is influenced by systemic and socio-political factors: there are complex influences on mental health and wellbeing outcomes, seen prior to displacement, after displacement, and during resettlement. Systemic factors, such as holding newly arrived refugees in detention, when they are already experiencing psychological upset, also contribute to distress (Davidson et al, 2008). Certainly HEAL therapists have seen first-hand the distress and worry caused by the detention system, and by the long waits for decisions concerning whether young people will be returned to the dangers of their home countries or not.

Research has found that living through traumatic events does not necessarily lead to post-traumatic stress disorder (Fletcher, 2003). It depends on various contributing factors. Reicherter and Aylward (2011) note the variety of psychological issues which may not necessarily be labelled “disorders”, but which have grave impacts upon people’s well-being and behaviour: extremes of war-related grief, for example, can result in anguish and influence social function; similarly, personal injuries and violations can cause anger, disillusionment, and inability to trust... (Reicherter & Aylward in Chhang, Reicherter & Schaack (Eds), 2011).
Milpera students often arrive with significant gaps in their education, having received no schooling at all, or only intermittent school. These students without age-equivalent education are particularly at risk, as they must become adjusted to the new country and the new high school environment, while gaining English language skills in order to move on to their local mainstream high schools. Failure to progress through the school at the same pace as their peers can lead to feelings of hopelessness, family conflict and low expectations for the future. The refugee experience can also make it very difficult to study and engage in the cognitive demands of school life, as concentration is impacted by traumatic stress symptoms.

In 2011 there were many Milpera students who had one or both parents missing or deceased due to war, and there were a number of unauthorised boat arrivals, mostly boys who fled danger unaccompanied by parents. The ensuing grief and lack of significant connections, are further complications along the path to well-being, which can interfere with the ability to learn and settle well.

The observation made at Milpera is that the adolescent refugee’s need for psychological support increases along with the complexity of circumstances. Research reveals the negative impacts of childhood exposure to violence and maltreatment, and the detrimental impact upon neurobiological development as well as social and psychological functioning (Schecter & Willheim, 2009).

According to a recent US report, there is increasing concern about the worth of possibly ineffective and irrelevant current mental health programs offered to refugees. Interventions offered tend to rely on individualistic western approaches and focus on single personal identity trauma, rather than recognising the complexity of cumulative trauma with a personal and collective focus (Kira, Ahmed, Mahmoud & Wassim, 2010).

While offering multi-component creative methods to improve outcomes for children of trauma, HEAL recognises the need to work with a cultural lens; that is, the HEAL therapists value the young person’s unique world view. HEAL therapists also follow evolving ideas about well-being. Research shows that it is possible to positively impact well-being, with a focus on engagement, relationships, achievement, meaning, and positive emotion. (Seligman, 2011). The anecdotal evidence seen with our clients supports this finding, and these focus areas all loom large in HEAL’s work.
The following Recovery Framework forms the goals for HEAL therapy.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Framework for recovery</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Violence and persecution</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
| Killings, assaults | Chronic fear and alarm | Anxiety | **Restore safety**
| Liow threats, threats of harm | Liow threats, threats of harm | Feelings of hopelessness | **Enhance control**
| **Disappearances** | **Lack of shelter, food, health care** | Loss of control | **Reduce the disabling effects of fear and anxiety** |
| Death | Disruption of connections to family, friends, community and cultural beliefs | Relationships changed | **Restore attachment**
| Separation | Liow distress | Grief | **and connections to others who can offer emotional support and care** |
| Isolation, dislocation | Liow distress | Depression | **Restore meaning and purpose to life** |
| Prohibition of traditional practices | Liow distress | Shattering of previously held assumptions | **Restore dignity and value**
| Liow distress | Liow distress | Loss of trust, meaning, identity and future | **Reduce excessive shame and guilt** |
| **Deprivation of rights** | **Killing on mass scale** | Liow distress | Guilt |
| Killing on mass scale | Exposure to boundless brutality | Shaming | Shame |
| Liow distress | Liow distress | **Restore dignity and value** | simultaneous | **Reduce excessive shame and guilt** |
| Liow distress | Liow distress | Shaming | Shame |

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How clients come to HEAL:

Students are referred to HEAL by classroom teachers who use a HEAL referral form, (see Appendix 4) or students may self-refer, by talking to Music or Art Therapists. Milpera has a fortnightly Welfare Meeting which identifies and discusses support for “at-risk” students and recommendations to HEAL. Once a term there is a meeting of the Milpera Mental Health Interagency Group, chaired by QLD Health, with which HEAL engages. A new system being trialled is that in which on arrival at Milpera, all students from particular backgrounds are screened by the HEAL Co-ordinator. These include those who are waiting to receive their visas, those who are seeking asylum, those who are unaccompanied minors, and orphaned children in particular.

Referrals are also received from outside agencies which have contact with the school, such as Mercy Family Services, who assist unaccompanied minor refugees; MDA (Multicultural Development Agency), ACCESS and Multilink, refugee settlement agencies; Harmony Place, multicultural mental health service; QPASTT (-QLD Program of Assistance for Survivors of Torture and Trauma); Life Without Barriers; and other services. Referrals are also made to these agencies from HEAL, as appropriate, and often when a client is soon due to exit Milpera.

We were fortunate to have the services of MDA worker Eli Moore during 2011, delivering workshops in partnership with John Rohrig, Creative Arts Therapist. A number of young people benefited from the creativity, learnings and action provided in those activities.

The BRITA (Building Resilience In Transcultural Adolescents) program, written by QLD Health’s Transcultural Mental Health Service (TCMH),is run at Milpera in HEAL. Feedback is positive and the sessions are enjoyed by participants. It is anticipated that this work will continue.

NAYS (Newly Arrived Youth Service) is active at Milpera, and in 2011 Jane Griffin, HEAL Co-ordinator was happy to assist in research for a paper concerning refugee homelessness.

During 2011, ACCESS joined with HEAL one afternoon per week, allowing Viviana Henrique to assist with settlement and well-being work at Milpera, and
students of Milpera located in Logan made use of The Hub, the ACCESS run youth homework space.

Another successful partnership has been with QLD University of Technology, Department of Psychology, who introduced “The Tree of Life” Program to Milpera. In 2011 HEAL also assisted a QUT School of Psychology student, Sierra Van Wyk, with a research interview concerning therapy with refugee young people.

University of QLD also interacts with HEAL. A member of HEAL was invited to attended the University of QLD Youth Leader’s Forum in April, and assisted students and past students in attending. Plans are now on the drawing board for a research project to be run by University of QLD’s researcher Melinda Chiment and Zlatko Skribis, the Dean of the UQ Graduate School.

Another research project HEAL is participating in is the PhD research of Joanne Kelly, of Southern Cross University, NSW, researching “Interventions in the Art Therapy Encounter”.

Visitors often come to HEAL to learn about this unique service, and this year they included Maxine McKew, Therese Rein, and teachers from Adelaide secondary school. All were interested to learn about HEAL’s methods and successes.

2011 also saw a connection formed with St Vincent de Paul, in which they responded to a request from HEAL to put on a social event for our unaccompanied minors. A picnic was held at Southbank, and was well attended by both St V d P and Milpera students. We look forward to further socialising contact with that group.

HEAL therapists are always keen to spread the word about the good work done in HEAL, and 2011 saw a number of presentations and participations. For example, Jane Griffin presented an Art Therapy workshop at The MHS (The Mental Health Services) Conference in Adelaide. Tania Balil presented at an international Music Therapy Conference in Spain. The work of HEAL was also shared at Logan, at “The 3rd Mental Health Promotion, Prevention & Early Intervention: from Infancy to Youth Conference”. Adele Rice and Jane Griffin also spoke to a group of Guidance officers about Milpera, HEAL, about working with refugee youth, in Brisbane.

With other school staff, HEAL Co-ordinator Jane Griffin also participated in a documentary made at Milpera by award-winning film-maker Megan Doneman in 2011.
How the HEAL Program Came to be:

**Music therapy (MT)** started in 2003 at Milpera via a practicum placement for MT students studying at University of QLD. In 2004 a grant was received from the Queensland Gambling Community Benefit Fund to conduct a research project to investigate the benefits of short-term music therapy on the classroom behaviours of refugee students. Positive findings led to the establishment of a part-time position in 2005.

Music therapy is the creative and planned use of music and musical experiences to attain and maintain health and wellbeing (Australian Music Therapy Association). It focuses on meeting therapeutic aims and may address physical, psychological, emotional, cognitive or social needs.

**Arts Therapy (AT)** commenced at Milpera in 2004. It began when ESL teacher and trained art therapist, Jane Griffin, introduced creative therapy to Milpera, working with whole class groups in various classrooms. It was soon decided that some individual and small group work would also be useful, and so a dedicated therapy space was needed. A major achievement for the HEAL program was the development of a partnership with private enterprise (including major sponsorship by Brisbane Developer, OPD) to secure a demountable building specifically for the HEAL program, placed on the school grounds.

Art Psychotherapy is the focused use of visual arts and play activities within the therapeutic relationship to meet developmental, emotional and psychological needs, and is based on the understanding that the creative process is healing and life enhancing. In HEAL psychotherapeutic methods are combined with art therapy practice.

**Art for Relaxation** evolved from the original whole class Art Therapy groups. While the focus in AT became small groups and individuals, the benefits of Art for relaxation with whole class groups had been observed and so was maintained in HEAL. An art teacher provides relaxing and enjoyable art activities for various class groups in the HEAL building, two days a week.

Art has been used for sharing, for relaxation, enjoyment and healing over the centuries since cave man and woman first drew bison on a cave wall.
Art for relaxation provides self-expression, focus, and relaxation through directive art activities, with outcomes including the satisfaction of creativity, team-work, and fun.

Some Music Therapy activities used in sessions:
- Lyric analysis
- Song-writing, song-parody
- Instrumental/vocal improvisation (with percussive instruments, drums, keyboards, guitar, vocal sounds)
- Rapping and musical games
- Recording original songs onto a CD
- Learning how to play guitar or keyboard
- Listening to musical favourites
- Sharing songs from their original culture or religious background
- Dancing
- Performance during exit parades/ school year events

Some Art Therapy activities used in sessions:
- Sculpture using clay, play-doh, plasticine.
- Painting with acrylics & water-colours
- Sand-play using symbols
- Collage on paper, boxes, and so on
- Construction using wood, fabrics.
- Drawing with pencil, charcoal, crayons, etc.
- Photography, digital art
- Doll, puppet and mask making
- Creating group murals
- Story-telling, acting, singing
- Autobiographical story and poetry-writing

Volunteers:
While it would be unethical to have volunteers in therapy (due to the confidential nature of the work), the HEAL Program welcomes community volunteers in the “Art for relaxation” classes, where their gentle guidance helps create the friendly and safe space needed for taking risks in art-making.

HEAL lunch room
Every day, the HEAL room is open for student drop-in during recess and lunch. It is well utilised by students for meeting friends, drawing, dancing, eating and reading, establishing the HEAL room as a safe place to be. For three months a register of attendees was maintained, and 442 young people signed in on those days. On average there would appear to be about 150 young people a month dropping in to HEAL in the breaks.
Outreach Service
In 2011 HEAL again offered an outreach service to meet the needs of schools wishing to access Art and/or Music Therapy for refugee students. The offer was picked up by Redbank Plains State High School, with three students participating, and they engaged well in the program.

Outcomes
Music and Art Therapy at Milpera form an integrated, supportive program that has been found to enhance students' availability for learning, and to support class teachers, via:

1. Enhanced well-being of students:

   - Building confidence, self-esteem, sense of identity and assertiveness through gaining a sense of mastery and pride in a creative product or performance
   - Improving social skills & peer relationships across cultures by working creatively in groups
   - Reducing the symptoms of trauma such as aggression, hyper-alertness and anxiety (among others) by providing a vehicle for self-expression & creativity
   - Further building English language skills within and outside the classroom through song writing, song singing, story writing, story-telling and performances
   - Improving fine and gross motor skills while learning to hold pencils, paint brushes, sculpting, dancing, and playing instruments
Developing impulse control and improving attention through a safe therapeutic relationship using creative activities which are highly attractive to adolescents

Supporting students through transitions between rooms/ teachers/ school cycle changes

Offering a safe and quiet space for self-reflection

Providing the HEAL classroom as a supervised recreational space during daily breaks

Assisting students in their process of individual and collective closure when leaving Milpera to transfer to local high schools

Creatively exploring issues of adjustment, loss, and identity, and building resilience as well as providing time for fun and relaxation.

2. Support to staff within the school:

Offering a safe place and relief for distressed students who teachers need to have removed from class due to inappropriate or non-compliant behaviour.

Making mental health resources and information available to teachers as needed

Raising staff awareness of specific needs that can be effectively addressed through Music or Art therapy

Providing feedback concerning students’ needs, issues and progress

Collaborating in their learning process as part of the school curriculum

Participation in mental health week and provision of activities.

Assisting with acceptance of the closure process when students are due to leave Milpera.
Evidence Regarding Outcomes:

Coming to HEAL is a popular activity. Although the art and/or music making can be enjoyable, psychotherapy may sometimes involve some painful and uncomfortable feelings for the participant, and yet it has been observed that students are willing to attend, and express disappointment if they miss an appointment.

The time spent in HEAL is obviously appreciated by the participants who often request extra time and express gratitude for gains made and relationships formed.

HEAL School Survey

In 2011 the whole school survey regarding HEAL showed that HEAL is a successful program which is appreciated by students and staff alike.

Doing a whole school survey in a school of second language learners is a difficult task, and therefore a survey sheet was administered by teachers in classes, using simple language and concepts, with symbols circled as rating markers.

While this was aimed at the whole school, on the day, some students were unable to participate due to excursions and so on, and of course not every student in the school had attended HEAL during the year. (Those who had not were excluded).

The graph below (Figure 1) indicates a pleasing level of positive response to HEAL from the majority of students, in the realms of feelings of happiness with school, improved behaviour, feelings about attending HEAL, and help received through the therapeutic relationship.
Figure 1: Student Participant Responses.

**Student HEAL Survey 2011**

- **HEAL, Art Therapy & Music Therapy make me feel happy with school**
- **HEAL helps me know how to behave in a good way**
- **Going to HEAL is good**
- **HEAL people (e.g., Ms Jane and Ms Tania) help me with my life**

Legend:
- Blue: Fully Agree
- Red: Somewhat Agree
- Green: Don't Know
- Purple: Somewhat disagree
- Blue: Fully Disagree
The staff survey was completed by a total of 14 teachers, and once again the responses were positive, as seen in Figure 2:

**Figure 2: Staff survey responses.**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>How I feel about:</th>
<th>Very happy</th>
<th>Happy</th>
<th>Still Deciding</th>
<th>Don't Know</th>
<th>Not Happy</th>
<th>Very Unhappy</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. having HEAL at school</td>
<td>14</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. relationships between students/HEAL therapists</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>2</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. communication between therapists/self</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>4</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. my understanding of trauma</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. my knowledge of what happens in MT/AT</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>2</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Total teachers who responded = 14

There were also two final questions asked of teachers, which required written answers: *What is the main benefit of having HEAL at Milpera for your students?* and *What is the main benefit to you personally?*

A selection of answers supplied is presented below:

**What is the main benefit of having HEAL at Milpera, for your students?**

Students get assistance I haven’t expertise or time to give; to have a safe place where they will be listened to, understood and supported; positive therapy assists students; provides necessary support service for the students; students who are having a “rough “day need a safe haven to escape to; supports the students and helps me to begin to teach them; facilitates the settlement process; it helps them to cope with life and settles them; good social and behavioural health for students so that they can begin to learn; giving therapy and space to deal with whatever is making the students unavailable for learning; shared understandings that enhance the whole school’s capacity to meet students at risk’s needs; being proactive and helpful to students...
**What is the main benefit of having HEAL, to you personally?**

Personally and professionally proud of this service and the therapists; sounding board for student issues; we get students who are in a position to be in a class and learn; get help with the most traumatised students; it helps me understand why they are presenting with the symptoms they have; students supported in HEAL are more likely to learn and focus in class, and to have better relationships with others; support has been beneficial both personally and professionally; invaluable service to the school; support mechanism for the students; HEAL is a time out place before things escalate; with a class full of students it is hard to find time to deal with the emotional highs and lows and HEAL helps with these issues; I can see the effects on the students; helps behaviour management in class; I can discuss freely about students’ emotional needs with HEAL; the more integrated kids are, the easier my job is...

As well past students attend Milpera at the annual “Back to Milpera Day”, and on this day, past HEAL attendees are asked to respond to a short interview regarding their contact in HEAL.

100% of respondents so far have stated that coming to HEAL helped them. All stated that HEAL should happen in schools.

*Four examples of two of the question responses follow (as written)*:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Two sample Questions</th>
<th>Person</th>
<th>Answers</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. (In HEAL) what were the kinds of issues you dealt with?</td>
<td>1 (MA)</td>
<td>Family problems</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>“</td>
<td>2 (MY)</td>
<td>Family and feelings problems</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>“</td>
<td>3(ZS)</td>
<td>Feelings, living in Australia, family and health.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>“</td>
<td>4(MS)</td>
<td>Family, Australia, friends, feelings, housing.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. How did coming to HEAL help you (why was it helpful?)</td>
<td>1(MA)</td>
<td>Because it’s the only person who can listen to me and help me to solve my problems.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>“</td>
<td>2(MY)</td>
<td>I needed someone to talk to.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>“</td>
<td>3(ZS)</td>
<td>It was helpful because they listened to me, help me and they was so kind</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>“</td>
<td>4(MS)</td>
<td>Talk to someone who can I trust, and feel special</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Review of Arts Therapy at Milpera for 2011, by Arts Psychotherapist, Jane Griffin.

2011 started with a flood which completely submerged the HEAL rooms and most of Milpera School, leaving us with a huge mess! Luckily with others’ help, we were able to find and save more than half the HEAL sand play figurines, which are so useful in therapy. Many bottles of paint were also salvaged from the mud.

In 2011, there were three part-time positions in art therapy, and these were held by Arts Psychotherapists Jane Griffin (4 days per week), John Rohrig (one day), and Claudje le Compte (one day per week until June), followed by Bethany Mahadeo (returning one day per week after August). Work was usually done with individuals or small groups.

The majority of students were seen due to teacher or agency referral, and the six main countries of origin of participants were Afghanistan and Africa, followed by Burma, Iran, Kurdish peoples and Iraq. (See Figure 3)

![Figure 3: Countries of Origin of Arts Therapy Participants.](image-url)
Approximately 88 participants were seen in Arts Therapy, as well as those who came occasionally, and Outreach students. The most commonly cited referral reason was that a child was “Sad/ distressed”, but many referrals included more than one reason. For example, a child may be sad but also having conflict with peers. In 2011, a number of referrals came from outside agencies seeking support for young people. See Figure 4, which shows the top five referral reasons. Figure 5 shows the family situations of participants, who are often here without parental support.

Figure 4: Top Five Referral reasons.

![Figure 4: Top Five Referral reasons.]

Figure 5: Family Situation of Participants.
The work done in Arts Therapy in 2011 was focused on building strengths in the face of grief and loss, but also on managing symptoms of stress, such as difficulty concentrating, or sleeping. A great deal of psychoeducation about trauma was used to assist the young people who arrived as maritime arrivals seeking asylum, many of them boys, and those still awaiting visas, in particular.

Review of Music Therapy at Milpera for 2011, by Music Therapist, Tania Balil

Music therapy services have been delivered mostly in groups throughout the year, with the exception of four students seen individually during the last term of the year. MT was offered two days weekly for the first 3 terms by Tania Balil, and 3 days weekly during the last term by Tania Balil and Jasmin Roberts.

Group sessions were mostly designed to target ethnic specific issues of: identity; peer support; collective exploration of their journey to Australia from country of origin, traumatic events and the impact of these on their ability and success at integrating into Australian society; behaviour management/conflict resolution; group cohesion and team work; creative means of self-expression; and gaining a collective voice for their people.

The ethnic groups targeted during 2011 have been: Somali girls & boys (13), Afghani (30) & Iranian Boys (9), Afghani (14) & Iranian girls (13); Iraqi girls & boys (6); Kurdish boys & girls (13); Rohingya boys & girls (7); Burmese/Karen/Chin boys & girls (15); Congolese girls (10); Liberian girls (5); African girls (6 from Togo, Ivory Coast, Burundi, Eritrea) in the following %:
Of these, most of them have had an opportunity to showcase some of their outcomes in MT during calendar events throughout the year, as well as exit parades. The groups that have featured in these are:

- **INTERNATIONAL WOMEN’S DAY**: Afghani/Iranian girls and Somali girls composed a song each, with the theme of Freedom as a main focus, in which they were able to express their wishes for a better situation for the women in their respective countries.

- **BOYS TO MEN day**: two groups performed; the first one being the Afghani young men, with a song they composed in honour to their mothers in acknowledgment of the contributions their mothers have made for them to grow into adulthood informed by wisdom and compassion; and one of a combination of Somali, Eritrean, Iraqi, Iranian, Lebanon, and Kurdish boys who had also composed a celebratory song of some of the aspects of being boy-men.

- **COMMUNITY INVOLVEMENT**: the African girls were invited to perform at the end of July at the Queen Street Mall as a feature for the launching and preparation of the new Australian Census. The Afghani boys also were part of composing a song which was entered into a song-writing competition about the Story Bridge.

- **EXIT PARADES**:

  - The African girls group featured twice in exit parades (Term 2&3) as some of their members exited to high school, performing a song parody in
honour of the important people in their lives back in Africa, and a song they choreographed a dance for.

- **Afghani boys** performed an exiting song (term 2) they composed to show their gratitude to the school as some of the members were leaving

- **Somali girls** prepared another exiting song (term 2) praising the value of education and their gratitude for the help and support they received at Milpera

MT has also been offered to **whole class groups**:

- Throughout the year the **foundation class** (Rm12 early language learners) was seen on a weekly basis (altogether 16 students) to: support their acquisition of literacy skills; provide a creative means for self-expression in a non-verbal manner; foment healthy peer interaction and group cohesion; provide opportunities for choice to promote sense of agency and self-esteem; share their skills and musical talents with peers. This class was on several occasions invited to do MT with other beginners classes to promote social interaction and inclusion within students of different stages of learning

- Throughout the year another 5 classes were offered MT as a way to promote group cohesion, sharing, creative expression, and support in their learning

- During the second half of the last term of the year MT service was solely offered to **whole class groups**, the focus changing from ethnic based
groups to offering MT services to as many students in the school as possible. Thus all but two classes in the entire school were serviced, of which 5 prepared a song in the lead up to their exit at the end of the year, with a performing song during exit parade. The remaining 9 classes had MT service to them to assist in: their learning in creative ways; addressing racist behaviour that was being identified among particular students; gaining better understanding of the language of emotions; group cohesion; opportunities for creative self-expression.

**Individual** intervention during last term focused on grief exploration, behaviour management, settlement issues and rehabilitation from medical condition.

Art for Relaxation Classes at Milpera for 2011, by art teacher Susan Whiting

The year of 2011 in Art for Relaxation was a busy one, with plenty going on.

**Term One** focused on the theme of colour. The learning points within the theme included lessons inspired by special events:

- **Australia Day** - students designed thongs and painted a map of Australia;
- **Chinese New Year** - “rabbit” was drawn using calligraphy in ink, pastels and water colour.
- **Valentines Day** - colours and names for love decorated a box and key ring made by students. Wonderful portraits in pastel of friends were drawn.
- **Autumn** - colours were painted in washes to form leaves of an autumn tree. Coloured inks were straw-blown onto graded blue and white wash backgrounds.
- **Easter** - celebrated by drawing chickens as cartoons and using coloured pencils in different shadings of yellows. These were placed in origami boxes with Easter eggs as gifts.
We also had a visit from well known kite maker, Tony Rice, who led a kite making workshop enjoyed by all. The kites flew well, and some were saved for wall displays.

Other activities involved:
- making fun faces, different emotions and facial expressions were created with felt and hessian
- doll making using fabrics created in the image of the students were sewn after exploring body proportions, clothes and skin colours.
- body collage were made, using magazine pictures
- good foods were drawn in coloured pencils using cross hatching and collage with a woven background.

In **Term Two** the theme focused on line.
- Mother's Day was celebrated with a discussion about women who care for us and a heart key ring and beaded bracelets were made focusing on pattern
- lines to show movement were discussed and bodies in action constructed. Lines were used to draw profiles and figures traced in their favourite action pose. Fabric clothes and shoes were made and attached to the figures and these were mounted and displayed around the school.
- Room 12 used line drawing, observing a chilli plant, and made a colourful large card as a farewell gift for Ms Cathy.
- radiating, parallel and spiral lines were used to 'Let the sunshine in' as students discussed what they liked to do outside in the sun and used hot colours to paint a sun with crayons.
- peace candles were printed using soft foam, using line and ideas from different countries. These were placed on a cool background of torn tissue paper to create thick and thin lines.

There was some focus as always on our different cultural backgrounds, for example:
- masks were discussed, and decorated with varied patterns and coloured in tints and tones of one colour
- homes around the world were examined, and suitable mediums to depict homes were chosen and used.
- roosters were discussed, and created using magazine collage and pastel backgrounds.
- the concept of peace was discussed especially referring to the dove in the Milpera logo. Paintings by Picasso and other images of doves were enjoyed and used as inspiration to paint dove images on canvas.
Term 3 was soon upon us, and the focus theme was texture. Art-works centered on:

- different textures and colours of the seasons
- insects, foods, birds and other features
- Room 10 painted a large canvas mural of a landscape and drew something from their culture as art work for the school offices.
- favourite Australian animals were drawn with lead pencil to create fur effects
- kangaroos were drawn in coloured pencils to create fur and shape with shading and placed on painted boomerangs.
- “my backyard” in home countries or Australia led to making dioramas in boxes.
- to celebrate Spring students used mosaic-ed magazine pieces to make butterflies, birds and insects and painted huge colourful flowers in hot colours

There was also some focus on journeys: outside school, away from home, and around the place. For example,

- in preparation for a visit to the Torres Strait Island exhibition by two of the classes we made turtles out of clay and decorated them with patterns
- classes who visited the masks on exhibition at the Goma Gallery created their own versions out of white card, feathers and beads
- story telling of the students own journeys were inspired by looking at symbols of the Australian Aboriginals to show their journeys.
- students created symbols of their own for cars, houses and feet, and showed journeys following the idea of Aboriginal dots.

Term 4 saw classes involved in exploring shape. Organic shapes were of the most interest, with activities which included:

- differently shaped bodies of water, like lakes, rivers, and ponds led to making some landscapes.
- the lotus flower shape inspired construction of lanterns using cane and painted, which were then carried in MDA’s Lantern Parade.

Once again, special events were celebrated with art:

- for Melbourne Cup Day, horses were drawn and origami hats made
- Room 12 made beautiful decorations for the Christmas tree for the Brookfield Festival
- For Mental Health week, Mandalas were explored
As Susan was on leave for four weeks, Jutta took the classes with themes based on the beach as students were then learning about beach safety. They also made Christmas cards together. It was another great year in “Art for Relaxation”

Funding

The HEAL Building was donated to the school via private philanthropy, and while the therapists’ salaries sometimes include some government contribution, this is in the form of payment of a teaching salary to Jane Griffin (HEAL Coordinator and Registered teacher), and one-off gifts at other times.

Therefore funding of salaries for the other therapists is sought continually, and it is necessary to acquire some financial sustainability for HEAL. Salary funding to date has come from various sources at different times. For example, the successful submission to the Community Gambling Fund paid for Music Therapy during the year of the UQ Music Therapy Project, 2004. The HEAL Program was entered in the Education QLD Showcase Competition in 2005, and received recognition for “improving student outcomes”, plus winnings of $20,000, which was applied to therapist salaries in HEAL in 2006.

In 2007 some State Government funding was used, such as funds from DETA Central Office to employ a half-time AT, and this was supplemented by private philanthropy from organisations such as the P & C of a local Catholic Primary School, Christ the King, and a donation from Fednav Limited.

In 2008, some funding came from HTM Wilson. In 2009 and 2010, funding was generously provided by Ceres Capital in the form of salary for the initial HEAL Coordinator, (Bethany Mahadeo) two days per week, and a gift of money towards building a Healing Garden.

Bill Griffin of OPD generously provided an amount of funding in 2010, and a one-off payment was received from Education QLD. A large number of individuals from the school’s volunteer force gave donations to assist with salaries.
In 2011 we were fortunate to receive some donations of materials and moneys from various people and organisations who came to our aid after the flood. The P & C of Milpera State High School was generous in their support, as were a number of volunteers, friends and family members of staff.

The source of salary money for the therapists is still unsure for the future. A sustainable model of salary funding needs to be sought, to continue the employment of art and music therapists, so newly arrived students can continue to be aided in reaching their potential.

Fundraising at the Fete: thanks Graceville State School!

Recommendations
1. That the HEAL Program be continued in the present format at Milpera, offering both Arts Therapy and Music Therapy, and including a HEAL Coordinator.

2. That we continue seeking financial sustainability for therapist salaries to ensure continuity of the program for 2012 and onwards.

3. That the HEAL Program continue to be extended to other schools which have high numbers of refugee students, by continuing the Outreach Service; and continues contact and partnerships with community services.
References


Commonwealth of Australia (2010), National Standards for Mental Health Services 2010


Ncube, N (2006). The Tree of Life Project; Using narrative ideas in work with vulnerable children in Southern Africa. *The International Journal of Narrative Therapy and Community Work, 1, 3-16*


**Appendix 1**

**Link to Government policy:**

HEAL aligns well with the nation’s mental health service delivery plans. An example is *The Fourth National Mental Health Plan* (NMH Plan) - *Commonwealth of Australia, 2009.* This plan provides an agenda for collaborative government action in mental health 2009-2014. In reading the summary of priority areas, outcomes and actions, it is clear that HEAL relates closely to *Priority area 2: Prevention and early intervention.*

This Priority includes:

- Work with schools, workplaces and communities to deliver programs to improve mental health literacy and enhance resilience.
- Implement targeted prevention and early intervention programs for children and their families through partnerships between mental health, maternal and child health services, schools and other related organisations.
- Develop tailored mental health care responses for highly vulnerable children and young people who have experienced physical, sexual or emotional abuse, or other trauma.

The Fourth National Mental Health Plan (Commonwealth of Australia, 2009)

HEAL is an early intervention mental health service for highly vulnerable newly arrived young people of refugee background. HEAL understands the importance of having staff in areas outside health with skills to recognise mental health...
problems, with knowledge about the mental health system, who are able to
access support through advice and referral, as recommended in the NMH Plan.
HEAL offers on-site therapy, in the school, where, for the refugee students,
learnings about their new life are unfolding.

The NMH Plan suggests that all transcultural mental health services should make
use of professional interpreting services; HEAL therapists certainly use
interpreters as required, and are also well aware of the impact of exposure to
traumatic events, grief and loss on the young people who are referred. This
includes issues related to gender sensitivity, religious difference and questions of
culture. The bilingual workforce are partners in HEAL, as are the school
community including Nurse, Guidance Officer, Home Liaison Teacher and School
Administration, along with outside agencies who provide community and support
services to new arrivals, with whom HEAL works when accepting referrals,
consulting, or making referrals.

HEAL aligns well with the National Mental Health Policy, 2008, as it offers
service delivery which is culturally safe for CALD (culturally and linguistically
different) clients, appropriately-tailored, evidence based, and respectful.

HEAL also links closely with the National Standards for Mental Health
Services, 2010, particularly Standard 4 which requires mental health services to
consider the cultural/social diversity of clients and meet their needs, and those of
their careers and community, throughout all phases of care, to be responsive to
diversity.

HEAL also adheres to Department of Education and Training, QLD policy,
which emphasises the importance of social and emotional learning. A particular
policy of interest is SMS-PR-035: Supporting Students' Mental Health and
Wellbeing, (QLD State Govt, 2010) which is concerned with students’ social and
emotional well-being in the school environment, and recognizes the importance
of an inclusive learning environment which provides early intervention, skills for
emotional good health, and links to helping agencies. Other important Education
QLD Policies, such as SMS-PR-012: Student Protection, and CRP-PR-
009:Inclusive Education, also inform the work done by the HEAL therapists.
Appendix 2

Referral Form Used by Teachers

HEAL PROGRAM: REFERRAL FORM FOR REFUGEE STUDENTS

Milpera student’s name:………………………………………………..Sex: M/F
Referring adult:……………………………..Class-room……………………………………..
Date:…………………………………………

Reasons for referral (please tick one or more): Please note these are not definitive
diagnostic categories but simply your observations or feelings about what you see.

☐ Sad/ distressed  ☐ Worried  ☐ Fearful
☐ Attention seeking  ☐ Slow to learn
☐ Disengaged from school work  ☐ Difficulty maintaining attention to task
☐ Difficulties with language skills  ☐ Shows little interest in others
☐ Poor impulse control  ☐ Quick to anger
☐ Aggressive, often in conflict  ☐ Taunts/ threatens other students
☐ Unable to get along with peers  ☐ Withdrawn, socially isolated
☐ Possible family issues  ☐ Somatic symptoms
☐ Self-harming  ☐ Other…………………………………………………

Comments- e.g: regarding background; daily physical appearance; any known
physical/medical issues; particular strengths; work in class; etc:

________________________________________________________________________________

Please write on back of form if more space needed.

To be completed by Therapist:

D.O.B:……………………………..Ethnicity:…………………………….Home Language:……………………………

Other factors: ……………………………………………………………………………………………………………

Other support services known to be accessed by the student (eg:QPASTT, MFS):

______________________________________________________________________________________________

Intervention recommended:

Music Therapy with………………………… Art Therapy with…………………………

Both ……………………………………. Outside referral to…………………………

Signed:…………………………………… Date:…………………………………………
Appendix 3
2011 HEAL STAFF

Tania Balil, Music Therapist

Claudje LeCompte, Arts Psychotherapist, (to mid-year).

Jane Griffin, Arts Psychotherapist, HEAL Founder, HEAL Co-ordinator

John Rohrig, Creative Arts Therapist

Susan Whiting, “Art for Relaxation” teacher

Bethany Mahadeo, Arts Psychotherapist, (returned from leave mid-year)
Queries

Contact: Milpera State High School Principal,
Adele Rice : (07) 3270 3222.
Or HEAL Co-ordinator,
Jane Griffin: jgrif190@eq.edu.au

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