Case Study – Meadows Primary School

Background
The Meadows Primary School is a newly merged multi-cultural primary school in Broadmeadows that is inclusive of families from a wide range of cultural backgrounds. The merged schools have a history of engaging and working with newly arrived and established multi-cultural families and communities.

The school includes an onsite kindergarten that is run by Uniting Care as a result of the school’s long-term relationship with Uniting Care as part of their involvement in the Meadows Early Learning Centre.

Situation
The cultural diversity of the school has changed over the years. There is currently a large Arabic speaking population (85% of the Prep intake), as well as Turkish, African, Samoan and Cook Islander groups. The school has sought to continue to recognise the need to nurture positive family relationships irrespective of cultural background.

What did you do?
The school and the kinder have responded to the emerging needs of their large Arabic speaking community by increasing the number of 3 and 4 year old playgroups.

A Turkish Women’s Group meets fortnightly. This group starts in kinder and continues with school age parents and they focus on literacy learning for children (i.e. reading books in Arabic and doing finger plays) and family members can observe literacy practices and join in. In this way, families teach other families.

The school has a purpose-built ‘welcome area’ for families. It also offers the staffroom as a hub for families. Protocols around family involvement in the classrooms have been developed and families are encouraged to participate in the life of the school. There is also family-run breakfast club and a multicultural garden where families grow a wide range of vegetables.

Cultural groups are valued for the diversity that they bring to the school community. In fact, the school recently won a music/percussion award for their African student group.

Results
The teachers believe the children are demonstrating school readiness at an ever-increasing level. The relationships and synergy between teachers and families is evident within the school. Family members are ‘visible’ around the school and tangibly valued as partners in their children’s learning.

Families have also been making a seamless transition from the kinder into the school.

Note: see www.familyschool.org.au/news0905.htm for an interview with the Principal, outlining the steps he took in creating such strong family-school partnerships.