



## Raising Engagement and Enhancing Learning: School Community Partnerships That Work for Students at Promise

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### Author(s)

David Zyngier

### ABSTRACT

This paper reports on a pilot study that investigates the widely reported issue of underachievement of students from Culturally Linguistically and Economically Diverse (CLED) backgrounds. It involves 15 university education faculty student volunteers and over 40 students and their families in primary (elementary) schools situated in disadvantaged communities of Victoria whose students come from 40 different nationalities, speaking 36 languages and with 75 per cent of its student cohort coming from Non English Speaking Backgrounds. A partnership was formed to focus on the problem of CLED children's disengagement from their academic learning. We focus on how a productive partnership between schools and a university impact on inclusive teaching and learning practices both at the school and the university level. We investigate whether such an intervention can have an impact on engagement levels and the learning and social outcomes of students from refugee, migrant and working class families. Privileging participant voice we analyze data from interviews, surveys and focus groups with students, teachers and parents to argue that such a program has the capacity to re-engage underachieving students at a minimal cost to the community as an alternative model to other expensive and unsuccessful intervention programs. We conclude that at the core of this successful program is the need for both participants to feel they are empowered in the process. We know that student outcomes can be enhanced when the students feel connected to and involved in their community. Through this project, the students have the opportunity to experience greater community engagement leading to improved school attendance and retention, as well as better academic outcomes.

### KEYWORDS

Community Partnerships, Culturally Linguistically and Economically Diverse Students, Student Engagement

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