

# Working with Refugee Children in Western Australia

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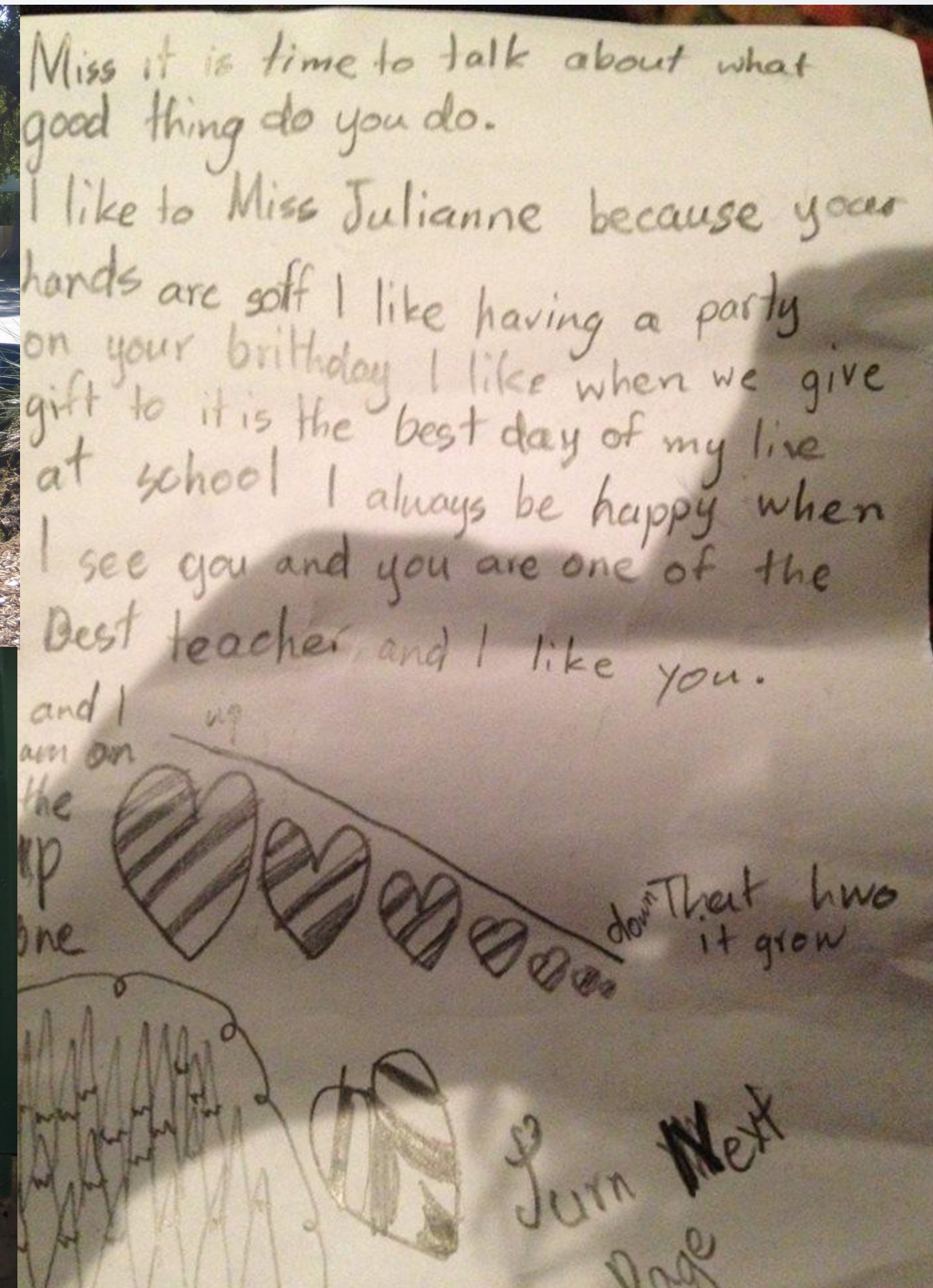
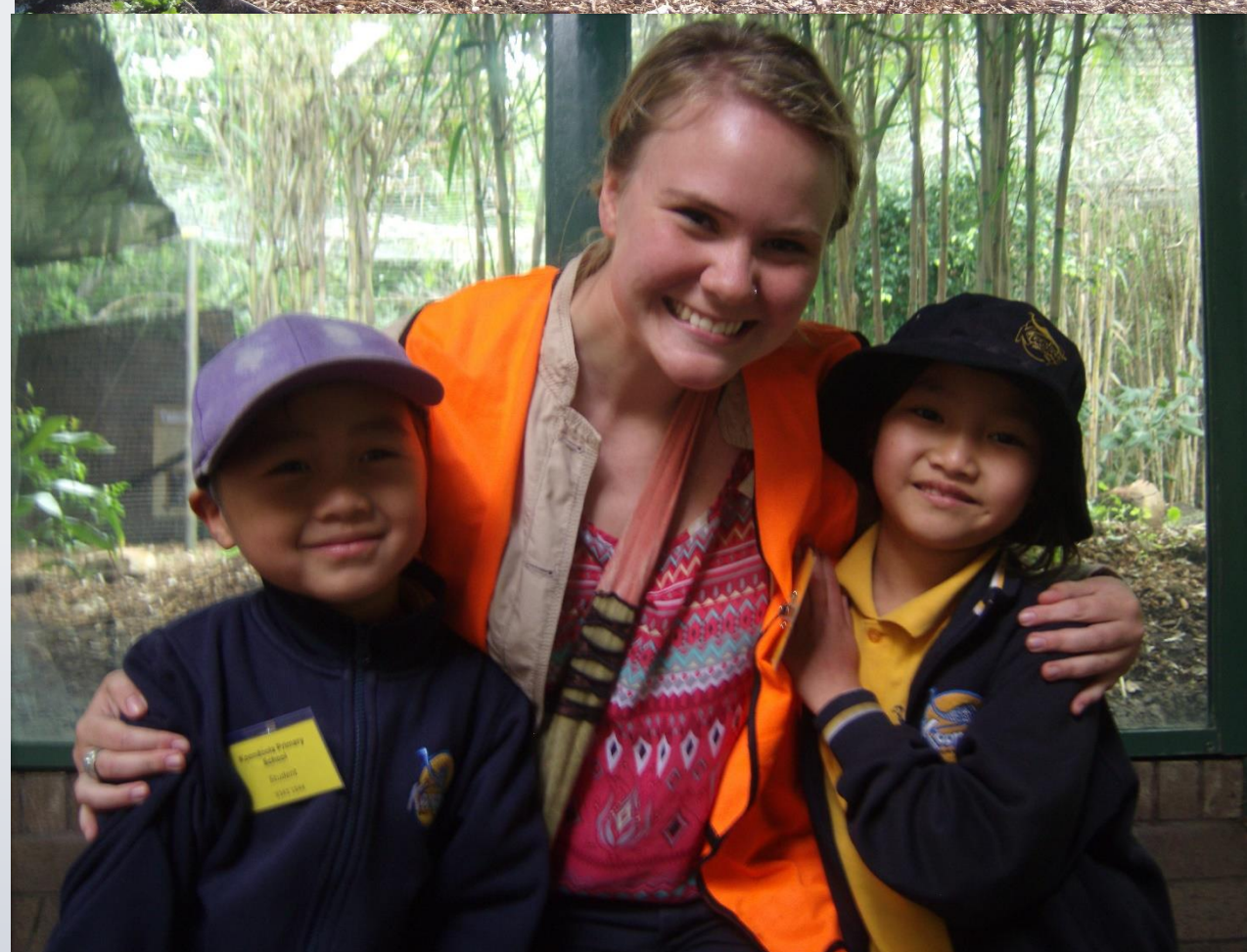
## Location and Agency Information

- Koondoola Primary School- located approximately 17 kilometres from Perth in the city of Koondoola.
- Koondoola Primary School has an Intensive English Centre which caters for the needs of recently arrived migrant and refugee children who have a limited or no understanding of English.
- The school has a rich multicultural environment that is built to show how different groups can work and play together in harmony.
- Teachers are trained to be trauma informed, with many having migrant backgrounds and proficient in multiple languages.
- CHOICE- To gain experience working with children in a unique trauma informed environment and to observe some of Australia's programs for refugee children.



## Placement Description

During my time at Koondoola primary school I worked as an assistant teacher in a Phase 2 classroom, and a pre-primary classroom. Phase 2 classrooms are for refugee children who have been in Australia for 1 year, and range between the ages of 8-12. Pre primary classrooms have children who are ages 5 and 6 who's parents first language is not English. In addition, I co-facilitated a therapy group with the school social worker, called Rainbows for refugee children who have been in Australia for less than 1 year. The English Intensive classrooms use activities to develop language. I spent a lot of time gardening, doing arts and crafts, cooking, baking, and going on excursions with the children.



## Classroom Connections

Knowledge guides experience. I was able to immerse myself in a high stress environment and draw from prior class learning. Specific relevant classes were all Interpersonal Practice required courses, particularly SW 625 IP with children and youth . In addition, having taken SW 790 Trauma and Treatment before leaving was vital.

*4 weeks, that's just not long enough  
What is long enough I ask?  
4 weeks, long enough to grow and to change  
4 weeks, long enough to make connections and build relationships  
4 weeks, long enough to witness various acts of compassion and hospitality  
4 weeks, long enough to hold the hands of children, who's touch extended to my heart  
4 weeks, long enough to make a difference in the life of a child  
The length of time has nothing to do with the power and impacts of moments*

## Skills Learned/Aquired

- Using empathetic listening while interacting with children who have experienced trauma
- Avoiding counter transference
- Facilitating group therapy on life transitions across countries
- Rapport Building
- Utilizing reflective supervision
- Professional boundary setting
- Increase competency in non-verbal communication

## Advice

- Take advantage of this amazing opportunity
- Be aware of your own American privilege, especially while aboard.
- Open your mind and heart
- Seize each moment
- Acknowledge that everyone you met knows something you do not
- Utilize all your free moments
- Represent yourself, U of M, and SSW with humility, integrity, and pride



## Acknowledgements

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