

# LIFE SKILLS

## ACFA REPORT 2018

Beyond the bell learning  
support for children in transition  
from primary to secondary  
school

Atherton Gardens, Fitzroy

Report by Education Leader,  
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Program overseen by Ary Lyimo ACFA Chair,  
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## Eating healthy

Each week the students attending the program now understand the importance of helping prepare the food or table for their meal or snacks.



## Understanding the importance of healthy eating habits and use of the kitchen.

As the year progressed the students became more involved in food preparation as well as becoming aware of the importance of eating well after school. They tried new foods out and have learnt to appreciate wholefoods as delicious and healthy alternatives to junk food. Eg: boiled eggs, hummus, carrots and celery sticks and almonds. They have also experienced more vegetarian meal options such as beans and taco's, lentils and rice and vegetarian pasta.

## Alternative spaces for discussion & journal writing

To take students away from the academic experience of sitting at tables, we sometimes try discussions and tasks outside in the courtyard, on the floor on yoga mats or in the foyer. We do our best to engage the students and let them feel like this is different from school and school work by allowing them more freedom in their work environment.



# Varied spaces supporting the learning of interpersonal relationships - mindfulness around siblings & peers.

## Foyer space

The informal nature of this setting allowed the students to discuss how they might better connect with their siblings and we ended our session singing some songs to the baby Athien who had just been picked up from childcare. The baby immediately stopped crying and connected to the students to the delight of the students, as they could see the music as therapy, and the smiles and the eye contact helping them connect.



Ayel community leader brings baby Athien at conclusion of the class sometimes

# Varied spaces & peer relationships

(continued from previous slide)

The weather encouraged us to take an outdoor classroom approach in the gated courtyard which still provided a secure space for the students to eat their meal and to discuss experiences of racism in the schoolyard. We reflected on how students felt and then trouble-shot on strategies to manage conflict and how best to understand people who bully or discriminate, looking at where these peers might be learning racism. Providing space and time for compassion and empathy around big topics in a somewhat relaxing environment has become the norm in this program.

## Courtyard space



# Yeni Kuti mentorship class

Students were fortunate to have an empowering and inspirational international guest presenter Yeni Kuti, eldest child of the late Fela Kuti, who founded Afrobeat genre of music and dance. Yeni Kuti facilitated a movement based workshop followed by a talk on the history and relevance of the meaning of Afrobeat culture in Nigeria and then the influence over the whole world of African jazz music and dance from 1960's to today. Yeni also answered the students questions and was very warm and generous with her time staying back for photographs despite her busy tour schedule.



# The Yeni Kuti workshop

this session was unique as it is a rare experience to have such a famous and highly successful cultural ambassador of African music and cultural history provide a personal dance workshop in Melbourne Australia, and coming all the way from Nigeria. The students had a wonderful experience and it opened their eyes to how they can also be cultural ambassadors and leaders in their own right.



## The students represented South Sudan Culture at Spensley Street Primary School for National Diversity week 2018

As part of their writing program a small portion of the students were invited to address the whole school community of Spensley Street Primary school including staff, principal and students and talk to them in the microphone about South Sudan and the culture, history and their identity as Australian students with a cultural background from South Sudan. Ayel the community leader mentored them with their preparations for this and they went extremely well in their presentations. They also performed a dance and then invited the whole school to participate in the dance. They also received a small pocket money for their performance. They had a positive experience sharing their culture.



## The 'knock on effect' from inspiring Yeni Kuti leadership & mentorship session..

Following the Yeni Kuti session and further reflection on leadership, the students take time out to attend the junior dance class on Friday evening to help the junior girls learn their dance for the performance at Federation Square. Normally the senior girls pride themselves to be in their own exclusive dance group but the girls who are attending the life skills program are taking on the responsibilities of leadership here and helping the junior class. This is progress from the beginning of the year when they would have nothing to do with the junior class.



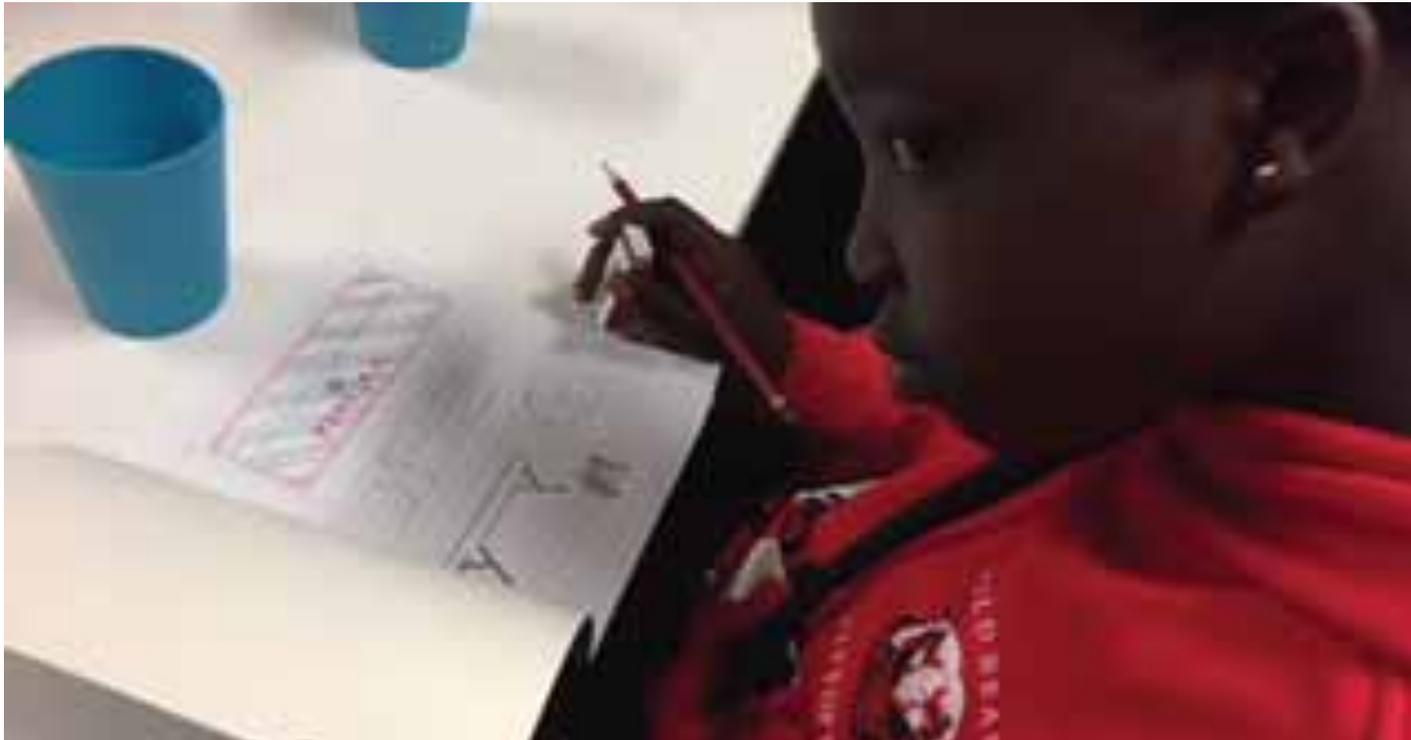
## Yr. 6 celebrations

kicked off in December with the Yr6's performing their African dance at their own school. The life skills program is very mindful of taking any opportunity to support the students rite's of passage and recognising recreational or artistic achievements and bringing them to the frontline to commemorate the transition from Primary to Secondary. Therefore we arranged for Ary Lyimo to be in attendance for graduation dance performance at the Grade 6 students Primary School, Sacred Heart primary School in December 2018. Here is a pic that was taken after the girls had already left the building but we still thought it was nice to take a photo to remember the occasion and very much appreciated Lyimo to attend.



## Weekly journal writing

For at least 10 minutes each week the students have an opportunity to write in their journals. Sometimes the work is focused on a particular style of writing such as persuasive text, or reflective writing. Students are also encouraged to share their writing with each other. Discussion is encouraged and usually class runs overtime as the students enjoy pondering on their work and drawing illustrations to accompany their writing.



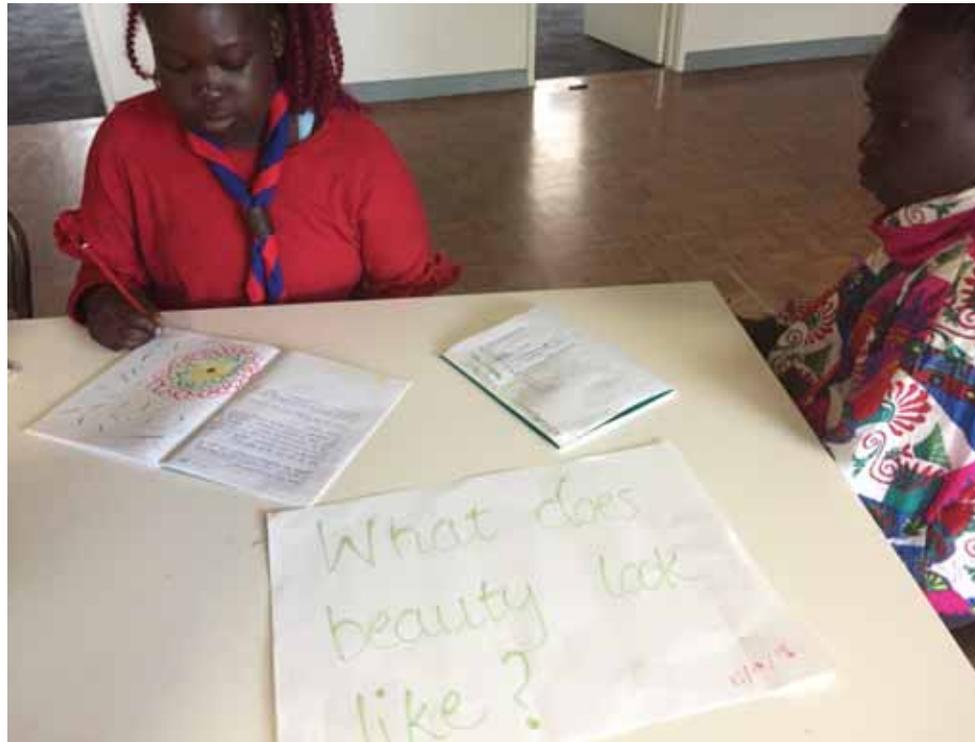
# Regular yoga practice

For 5 – 10 minutes each week the students bring out a mat from the store cupboard and we just focus on the breathe, centering the body and mind, becoming aware of ourselves in the space and we do some invigorating salute to the sun positions to get the blood flowing. We are fortunate that the education leader also has been practicing yoga for 30 years and is happy to guide the yoga practice. Skills like this help the students to see how regular practice of exercise or meditation can help to relax after a stressful day or to calm the mind and contribute to mental health and physical and emotional well being.



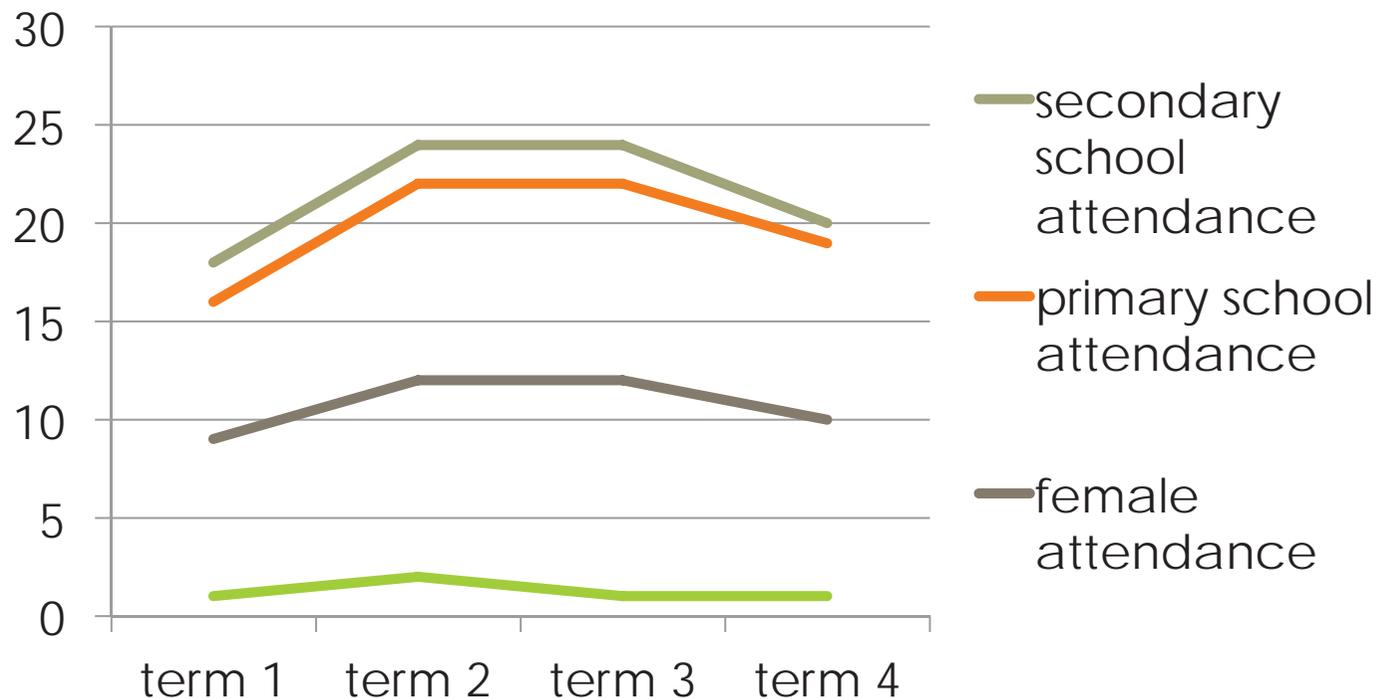
# Themes & topics explored

The main themes and topics explored in 2018 have been personal identity, relationship with self and others. Lots of activities to support their reflective writing and to develop their awareness of themselves at home, at school and in the wider community. The programs and tasks assist them to “check in” with how much they are reaching their greater potential, to become leaders of their own learning, and being able to manage good routines, eat well, fit in homework and fun recreational hobbies as well as relaxing time with family and friends. The programs will look to build on the students learning skills such as mindfulness and ‘growth mindset’ which can open minds to learning and support the development of literacy skills.



## Attendance male female ratio &

**Primary / secondary ratio** We have now consolidated funding to execute some marketing of the Life skills program in 2019 to increase male students attending as well as increase overall attendance. The graph shows that attendance was reasonably consistent over the year however we still need to increase overall numbers.



## Aligning with cultural arts activities

The students were working towards an end of year performance for the African Music and Culture Festival at Federation Square 2018. The life skills program became a vital source of support for helping the girls to meet and arrange their activities and rehearsals and costume meetings with families etc. for this event. The program can be flexible and organic to a degree to allow for a more holistic approach to learning and support of learning by adapting its program to support the students within the program and provide a space, guidance, and some resources to help them to achieve their goals and pursuits within the local community and within themselves.



# Award ceremony 2018

Students of the program alongside students from the dance club on Fridays combined forces and students and staff were offered acknowledgments. Trophies with special awards engraved on their base were presented to the students from life skills program, and flowers and presentations to community members who supported the program throughout the year.



# Acknowledgement & recognition for students & leaders 2018



What does beauty look like?  
It looks like self confidence, pride and being grateful. Also accepting yourself, for who you are.

Who do you look up to and why?  
I look up to a book character called Salva because at first no-one knew words and as he started to grow older he started to believe in himself and he achieved something he never thought would happen.

What are the things you like to focus on?

I would like to focus on taking some time to think if I'm as grateful as I think I am.



## A Program Report ACFA 2018