

Literature Review

Topic: Refugee Students with Limited Formal Education

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For the Calgary Board of Education

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Refugee Education Partnership Project (2007). *The Education Needs of Young Refugees in Victoria*. Retrieved April 20, 2010 from <http://www.survivorsvic.org.au>

The purpose of this document is to assist the government of Victoria to develop a policy for improving educational outcomes and the emotional well-being of young refugees in Victoria. The report states that refugee student population are “*failing to attain a level of education that will ultimately allow for their successful integration into the Australian community*” (p. 2).

While the majority of refugees in Australia in the 1990’s came primarily from Former Yugoslavia, the trend since 2000 has seen a marked increase in arrivals from Western, Central and Eastern African countries, with the intake growing from 30% to almost 70% in 2005. 2005-2006 saw an increase in new arrivals from the Middle East, South West and South East Asia. (p. 11).

The profile of recent young refugee arrivals in Victoria includes:

- have had minimal formal schooling in their first language
- have low levels of literacy in English
- may have lived in insecure societies where civil order and services have broken down
- have experiences extreme violence
- may be suffering the after effects of trauma, and in some cases, torture
- may be affected by the loss of family and be without parental support
- may have disrupted schooling due to movement within and between countries so that literacy skills are not consolidated in any one language
- may have spent long periods in refugee camps or first country of asylum with minimal or no education
- may have come from a language background where writing is relatively a new phenomenon. (p. 10)

The report cites the lack of specific data on the educational needs of students with disrupted schooling as differentiated from the broader migrant population of students receiving ESL support. In response to the changing demographic population of refugee families in schools in Victoria, this report

aims to identify ways that the Australian government can increase their understanding the challenges of this new population of refugee students. The aim of this knowledge is to assist in the development of more cohesive and holistic approaches for their educational success by local schools and communities.

The report identifies that a whole community/whole school approach which would increase public-private sector coordinated partnerships would also greatly enhance services and therefore outcomes for refugee students. It proposes that the current funding allotted for ESL students is insufficient for the refugee population as many refugee students have had interrupted and limited schooling, while many ESL students arrive in Australia with a strong educational background.

The report puts forth eighteen recommendations as a means of responding to the identified challenges:

1. Develop a coherent refugee education strategy that meets the learning, welfare and family support needs of refugee students.
2. Develop a procedure that would track and analyse student refugee progress throughout their education.
3. Increase funding reflective of the longer period of time that students with interrupted schooling require support in English language skills before transitioning into mainstream programs.
4. Increase accountability mechanisms to ensure that funding is used in the most effective ways for refugee students.
5. Analyse the effectiveness of schools to meet the needs of refugee students through existing funding options should be carried out.
6. A state-wide professional development strategy for teachers to increase their skills for developing language and literacy support across the curriculum should be designed.
7. A state-wide strategy be designed that would assist schools in developing a whole-school approach to supporting refugee students.
8. Pre-service teacher education institutions should develop curriculum for teachers on the linguistic and emotional needs of refugee students.
9. Develop transition programs that foster connectedness for refugee students based on successful models.
10. Engage families in joining and supporting the transition process for their children and participating more fully in the educational system.
11. Evaluate and identify exemplar existing bridging models and programs for refugee students.
12. Develop a common assessment tool that includes both the education and welfare of young refugee students that can be used during transition periods.
13. Track and report on refugee student transitions within programs, into mainstream settings and beyond.

14. Develop a coordinated approach to Out of School Hours Learning Support programs.
15. Identify and reporting on schools that demonstrate good practice of engaging refugee parents.
16. Develop formal linkages between schools and agencies to support refugee families.
17. Develop an accredited training course for Multicultural Educational Aides (MEA's).
18. Fund an initiative that would bring together different sectors to develop more appropriate career and educational pathways for refugee students of post-compulsory education age.

Dooley, K. (2009). Rethinking pedagogy for middle school students with little, no or severely interrupted schooling. *English Teaching Practice and Critique*. 8 (1) 5-22. Retrieved May 1, 2010 from

<http://education.waikato.ac.nz/research/files/etsp/files/2009v8n1art1.pdf>

This paper seeks to make the case for a different approach to teaching and educating refugee students in secondary schools. This approach would require all teachers to extend their pedagogical skills to include teaching language and literacy alongside subject area content. It suggests that ESL teachers, as well as content area teachers, need to find ways of linking the conceptual knowledge of refugee students with that of other students in their classes through an approach that addresses their unique literacy needs and builds upon students' prior life experiences before and after their resettlement experiences.

The author differentiates the needs of a majority of refugee students who arrive in Western countries and those of other immigrant students. While many immigrant students require support in learning English in order to be successful in their new academic environment, many refugee students often need to learn new concepts and academic language forms alongside a new language. The author proposes that pedagogies which have been effective for other ESL students have been shown to be inadequate for a large number of refugee students (Sidhu & Taylor, 2007).

The four resources model (Freebody & Luke, 1990) is presented to highlight some of the differing literacy needs of refugee students. This model described the four sets of resources that literate people use to read and understand texts:

1. code breaking resources (i.e. spelling patterns)
2. resources for participating in textual meanings (i.e. vocabulary, grammar)
3. text use resources (i.e. understanding the purpose of the text)

4. resources for critical textual analysis (i.e. being able to understand an author's worldview)

The author describes the specific literacy needs of refugee students,

“From the literature it is clear that many African middle school students have high level needs for code breaking and text participation resources in English. Some of the students are acquiring these resources for the first time, while others are extending repertoires of resources they began to develop in Arabic, Kirundi, French and other languages.... Beyond beginning literacy, there is a need for vocabulary and complex grammar resources that enable participation in the meanings of middle-school content area texts. Code sources for spelling and technical vocabulary are also needed. These are resources unlikely to be picked up with everyday English in a Tanzanian camp or learnt with foreign language English in a classroom in Cairo, that was described by one of the Sudanese mothers as being more about keeping young refugees off the streets than academics” (Dooley, p. 8)

Dooley found that successful teachers of refugee students described continually building upon their students' experiences to introduce new academic concepts. These teachers did not view their students from a strong deficit position (inferring a lack of conceptual knowledge as the differences in content area background). In other words, teachers who approached their refugee students as bringing knowledge and life experience to the learning context were found to be more successful than those who viewed their students as 'missing' knowledge. The author proposes that literacy has traditionally been seen as the work of primary schools and subject matter or content the work of secondary schools. In order to meet the needs of refugee students these lines must be blurred, as well as those separating the work of subject area teachers from that of ESL teachers. In other words, the work of the school should be re-conceptualized along with the traditional pedagogies of teachers, as well as acknowledging the critical *“place of the school in the post-resettlement pathways of refugee youth with little, no or severely interrupted schooling”* (p. 16).

Woods, A. (2009). Learning to be Literate: Issues of Pedagogy for Recently Arrived Refugee Youth in Australia. *Critical Inquiry in Language Studies*, 6 (1-2) 82-101.

In this paper, the author suggests that there are three roles required of schools to provide socially just education for refugee students. These three roles include:

- Education – including high quality teaching and learning of print literacy, ESL and academic foundational knowledge
- Developing citizenship and access to social and cultural capital for refugee students. This includes creating ‘a tolerant space for refugee young people to reconcile their culture and values with those of Australia’ (p. 98).

- Providing spaces for welfare – addressing issues of stress, trauma, violence or disengagement that refugee students may bring with them on their journeys to Australia.

The author states, *“To achieve a high quality and high equity system for all students - more specifically for this paper for those students who have recently arrived in a new context after some profess of forced migration- there is a need to balance the provision of basic literacy and language, discipline content, and cultural content along with a space where reciprocal leaning of the dominant and marginalized cultures is accessible to all students”* (p.82).

The paper then goes on to describe the importance of schooling in the resettlement process, the changing context of refugee young people in Australia - increases since 2000 of refugees arriving from African countries who have spent long periods of time in refugee camps and have resettled in three or more countries prior to arriving in Australia. Many of these new young refugees have spent much of their lives in a transient existence.

The paper describes that belief that western educational systems are founded upon a premise that all students have a shared schooling experience and have been involved in continuous, print-based educational contexts throughout their lives. This assumption has enabled a deficit construct to be attributed to those who enter the system with a different educational history. The author argues that it is imperative for Australian schools to adapt an approach of ‘recognitive justice’ (Lukje, Weir & Woods, 2008) which would move towards recognizing *“the very different language competencies; the cultural, literacy, and relationship understandings; the educational backgrounds and approaches to education of this heterogeneous group of young people; and their resultant educational needs”* (p.90). These educational needs are further identified as the need to understand how to ‘do’ school in Western countries. The author identifies the need for all teachers to address literacy across subject areas, especially in high schools, and the need for schools to develop systems of social integration for their refugee students. The author calls for a redistribution of resources in order to fully address these issues and specific needs of young refugee students in Australian schools.

Report to the Ministry of Education (2000). *Literature Review: Interventions for Refugee Children in New Zealand Schools: Models, Methods, and Best Practice.* Auckland Uniservices Limited, University of Auckland. Retrieved April 12, 2010 from www.educationcounts.edcentre.govt.nz/reserach/index.html

This document is a very thorough review of the literature on the factors effecting refugee children in New Zealand. It is noted that although New Zealand has the highest number per capita of refugees accepted into the country of the ten counties that regularly receive refugees, it rates lowest in post-arrival support. The purpose of the report is to assist in the development of a comprehensive, school-based refugee support system for schools and families. The report states, *“While*

there is a large and diverse body of literature around refugees addressing social, medical, political, linguistic and educational issues, there is a paucity of material specifically concerned with refugee children, and only a small proportion of this is about school-based interventions and programs” (p. 2).

The key issues identified in this report and divided into separate chapters are:

- Mental health issues focused on trauma, grief and loss
- Issues of migration and displacement
- Language, culture and identity
- Risk factors and resilience

In order to address the needs of refugee children, the report develops a model to conceptualize the process of adaptation for refugee children and schools. This model aims to consider the task faced by refugees, the factors that can deliberately put in place to assist this process, and the possible outcome of these interventions.

The following is a copy of this model: (p.85-86).

Critical Issues Related to Refugee Education:

What They Bring (premigration factors)

Risk and Protective Factors	language (L1 and L2) health, displacement and loss, grief and trauma
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<i>The Task</i>	to adapt to a new environment
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Indicators:

- | | |
|---|---|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Extent of trauma • Degree of family cohesion • Nature of separation • Prior or lack of education | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - literacy – L1 & L2 proficiency - mental health status - coping styles - resilience |
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Factors That Are (postmigration and moderating factors)

Ongoing risk/resilience factors including barriers/facilitators	in the individual in the family to adaptation at School the community/ school (Including policies and services)
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Indicators:

- extent of loss and bereavement

- extent of trauma
- degree of family and community cohesion
- parental depression
- social and community networks
- immigration status and family unification
- socio-demographic variables (residence and employment status, ages, religions, etc.
- L2 proficiency
- Availability of community services
- government policies and initiatives
- school structure and policies\teacher experience and attitudes
- NZ student attitudes

What Can Be Done (*Interventions in schools – “Best Practice” may include planned interventions in other settings and/or the availability of systems and policies at a national level*)

School-based interventions:	Directed at: Individual, families
Referrals/treatment	whole schools, community
Promoting resilience	

Indicators:

- Teacher and principal receptivity to and support for interventions
- Positive and supportive school environment
- Increased teacher skills and awareness
- L1 and L2 support
- Coordinated support plans which could integrate child, family, school and community
- Targeted induction process
- Increased communication between schools and families
- Coordinated interagency support

What Happens

Outcomes:

Individual adaptation – as evidenced by:	Child Behaviour, Learning, Peer Relations and Health
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Whole School Adaptation – as evidenced by	School Polices and Procedures Teacher Development
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A summary of some of the best practices identified to meet the needs of refugee children in schools have been divided into seven areas. A summary of these interventions follows (p. 89- 93):

Psychological and Therapeutic Needs:

- Assessment needs should include awareness of culturally specific symptoms of trauma and stress, so that symptoms do not go unrecognised
- Consideration of pre- and post-migration significant events for children and families
- Understand coping strategies used to survive traumatic experiences
- Use narrative therapeutic strategies that externalize the problem – separating *the problems of child* from the child
- Restore a sense of safety for the child within classrooms and schools
- Use systemic and strategic family interventions that assist the family in operating as a unit within their cultural frames of reference
- Therapeutic strategies that consider the students' cultural values related to the healing and grieving process
- Allow for the children to have input into creating and defining goals for the healing process
- Increase positive liaison between schools and families - these should include programs which invite parents to participate in school activities and forums that foster cultural diversity and communication
- Teacher development activities related to refugee education and the effects of trauma in children. This also would include training for key staff in identifying cases where they need to seek assistance from outside support workers, as well as where to seek this kind of assistance
- The creation of supportive settings for teachers to discuss sensitive issues and anxieties of working with refugee children
- Strong leadership from the principal and other administrators in supporting teachers to adapt to teaching refugee students
- Increased cross-cultural curricular topics and projects that foster understanding, acceptance and mutual respect among all students
- Focusing on human rights and refugees within the school curriculum that will inform home country students and validate the experiences of the refugee students
- Avenues for seeking and acquiring specialist support for students who are traumatized should be made available to schools

Language Needs:

- Assessment of L1 and L2 language skills at appropriate intervals is crucial for developing educational experiences for the refugee child

- Inclusion with mainstream students should occur for refugee students to increase their opportunities for interaction with native English speaking children and to decrease stigmatisation
- Develop pull-out courses for refugee students that focuses on their linguistic and academic needs through content courses linked to mainstream curriculum
- Develop a buddy system to provide refugee students with L2 peers
- Opportunities for refugee students to raise issues that are important to them within the whole school community
- Responsibility for the success academic integration of refugee students is help by all teachers, not just ESL teachers.

Fostering Resilience:

- Ensure there is a caring adult available to refugee children
- Create a secure, nurturing and accepting climate in the school which promotes social interaction
- Offer programs that foster self-esteem and other personal resources such as social skills and internal locus of control
- Teach the host language to both children and adults to support the family unit and to develop social networks of support
- Organize whole school activities which also support social support networks and allow refugee families to meet locals, as well as each other
- Counsellors and teachers are made aware of refugee students' needs
- Utilize group processes to facilitate the development of friendships for refugees
- Access to information on local services made available to refugee families to assist in relocation and settlement
- Understand that punishment may not be an appropriate response to maladaptive behaviour in refugee students, but rather recognising that it may be an indication that therapy is needed.

Easing the Transition to a New Country and Culture:

- Provide comprehensive support for refugee families when they arrive in their new country (help-care, employment, counselling services and interpreters, language training)
- Encourage and foster L1
- Involve all parties in the design and delivery of support services and programs for refugees. Refugee parents should be involved in school committees as soon as possible
- Train teachers on issues of diversity

- Make pluralism and acceptance an overall goal, rather than assuming assimilationist ideologies.

Structure of Schools, School Policies and Teaching Practices:

- Ensure effective communication channels between the school and family
- Active participation of families in the school
- Have a clear and effective induction process for refugee children with special regard to those with limited or interrupted schooling
- Effective programs in place that combat racism and bullying
- Strong leadership by the principal and administrators in supporting teachers and programs that assist refugee children
- Teacher knowledge and understanding of the issues of refugee students
- Professional development for teachers to increase their skills for teaching traumatised children and for understanding the signs that further interventions and supports are needed
- Students from the host country should expand their knowledge of different countries, human rights, the experiences of refugees. It is suggested that the most appropriate approach would be the development of a human rights and cultural diversity curriculum.

Facilitating School Change and Teacher Development

- Gain an understanding of the benefits of having refugee students in the school community – teachers gain skills, students gain understanding
- Assist teachers to adapt new methods and strategies for teaching refugee students into their classrooms, teaching styles and content
- Provide mechanisms and forums for teachers to express their concerns and have those concerns addressed
- Include teachers in the decision making process about how to best teach refugee students in their classrooms
- Publicly support initiatives for teaching and supporting refugee students/families within the school and in the greater school community.

Inclusive Education

- Implement curriculum-based and performance of “portfolio-based” assessment processes that are focused on growth and identify obstacles to effective learning
- Teacher training on culturally responsive teaching for all children including expertise on inclusive assessment and teaching strategies

- Programs and interventions for refugee students developed in collaboration with schools at local levels
- Employ professionals who can help teachers and schools to change their practice to support refugee children.
- There needs to be extensive school-wide and class-wide support for teachers in adapting curriculum and teaching strategies
- An inclusive approach that involves parents in all aspects and decision making processes for programs and for refugee students.
- Teachers need to develop consensus building strategies to assist in building partnerships with families, community members, students and peers
- Consultants and teachers need to learn to think, explain and act according to the predominant metaphors and theories of the cultures of the refugee students they teach in order to develop effective teaching and learning strategies for them
- National education resourcing needs to provide for the needs of individual refugee students and to change the knowledge and understanding of teachers, parents and communities
- Pre-service education needs to help pre-service teachers to develop greater understanding of cultural differences and the plight of refugee students
- Policy makers need to provide ongoing support and professional development for schools and teachers throughout the country to become more skilled in inclusive educational practices that focus on refugee students.

Arnot, M, Pinson, H. & Candappa, M. (2009). Compassion, caring and justice: teachers' strategies to maintain moral integrity in the face of national hostility to the "non-citizen". *Educational Review* 61 (3), 249-264.

This paper describes a study that seeks to identify the role schools and teachers have played in addressing the needs of children of families identified as asylum seekers or refugees (ASR). These children are often placed in schools while awaiting their immigration status in the United Kingdom to be confirmed. The authors report that since 2002, approximately 900 unaccompanied children under 18 arrived in the UK seeking asylum. While the "asylum crisis" is perceived to be a problem of immigration control, schools often "left with the micro-social costs of immigration policy" (p.251). How schools and teachers address the needs of this population is the focus of a small-scale project involving three case study secondary schools in the UK.

The authors conclude that the teachers in the study see refugee children as children first and migrants second. They are frustrated by the lack of support for these children whose needs often go unnoticed by the state. The study tells the

stories of teachers and administrators who often work compassionately towards for the best interests of ASR children through humanising their situation, combating racist stereotypes and promoting citizenship through education.

While specifics of how teachers and schools meet the needs of this unique population are never identified in practical terms in this study in terms of programming or teaching strategies, this paper offers an interesting perspective of the ways that schools and teachers “*represent the front-line of a compassionate society both in terms of showing compassion, creating conditions for compassion to flourish within the school, and offering the ASR child the chance by their actions to gain confidence, self-esteem and a sense of agency in taking control of their future world*” (p.262).

Effective Programs for English Language Learner (ELL) with Interrupted Formal Education. Office of English Language Learning & Migrant Education, Indiana Department of Education. Retrieved March 20, 2010 from www.doe.in.gov/englishlanguagelearning

This brief online resource offers a concise summary of some of the best pedagogical practices and programming from the literature on English Language Learners (ELLs) with interrupted schooling. The report highlights that challenges faced by these students described as “the highest risk of high-risk students” (Walsh, 1999).

The features of a well-designed program for ELL’s with interrupted formal education (SIFE) are presented as:

- Literacy and content courses that are thematically coordinated and encourage transfer of learning across content areas
- Follow-up on thematic content and skill development provided by double-period ESL classes,
- Small classes that allow for individualized attention from teachers
- Common planning periods that give bilingual and ESL teachers an opportunity to coordinate their work,
- Course structure that allow students to learn at their own pace.

(In addition, many SIFE students may need extensive or long-term remedial instruction and tutoring)

The following summary of features of instruction for SIFE students was put together by a group of educators during the 2008 National Refugee and Immigrant Students conference:

- Intensive English language development instruction teaching social and academic language



- Recognize ESL teachers' schedules; English language instruction in a double period/block scheduling format
- Intensive literacy development
- Sheltered content instruction
- Flexibility in curriculum development. Creating a curriculum for SIFE students based on academic standards, concentrating on essential knowledge and skills only. Teachers' collaboration to modify curriculum
- Modified scheduling
- Condensed remedial courses that can catch students up to their grade levels in Math, Science and Social Studies
- Thematically organized curriculum. Fewer topics, more time
- Team teaching
- Provide training in ESL techniques for mainstream teachers
- Collaboration of ESL and mainstream teachers, common planning and discussion, ongoing communication via email about weekly language and content development planning
- Newcomer programs within a school aimed at building academic foundation for students with interrupted formal education: access to literacy development, English acquisition and core curriculum
- Explicitly teaching SIFE students studying skills
- Extended day opportunities
- After school tutorials and programs
- Stipends for teachers and instructional assistants for after school work/tutoring
- Extended high school experience (5-6 years)
- Individual tutoring: inviting volunteers to be tutors for SIFE students: college students, high school students, teachers, community volunteers
- Work with the businesses and colleges in the community
- Recruit native language tutors
- Have a single counsellor working closely with SIFE students
- Establish "buddy" system (peers as "buddies")
- Establish a mentoring system for SIFE newcomers (teachers as mentors)

A report of research-based recommendations for Serving Adolescent Newcomers from Center on Instruction 2006 suggests the elements of effective instruction for SIFE students:

- Explicit instruction in word-reading skills
- Content-based literacy approach
- Instruction in academic language
- Reading comprehension instruction

- Intensive instruction in writing for academic purposes
- Effective assessment systems to inform instruction

Studies have shown that becoming literate in a second language depends on the quality of teaching, intensity/thoroughness of instruction, methods used to support the special language needs of second language learners, how well learning is monitored, and teacher preparation. (p. 6). Word-level skills such as decoding, word recognition and spelling are usually taught well enough for ELLs, however, text-level skills such as reading comprehension and writing may need to be more explicitly taught to ELLs. These skills include knowledge of vocabulary, sentence/phrase structure skills, listening comprehension, and oral language skills.

“The most successful literacy instructional practices for SIFE ELLs are programs that provide instructional support of oral language development in English, aligned with high-quality literacy instruction” (p.7).

In addition to explicit instruction in literacy skills, Dreshler (2001) suggests that subject area teachers need to be able to present information in a way that is comprehensible for SIFE ELL students. Dreschler suggests that these teachers must ensure learning by:

- Actively engaging students in the learning process
- Transforming abstract content into concrete forms
- Structuring or organizing information to provide clarifying
- Ensuring that the relationships among pieces of information are explicitly discussed
- Tying new information to prior knowledge
- Distinguishing critical information from less critical information

It is suggested that these practices support the development of vocabulary and conceptual knowledge and will lead to enhanced literacy outcomes (p.8).

Vincent, C & Warren, S. (1999). *Responding to Diversity? Refugee Families and Schools*. ERIC document ED 434971.

This paper identifies the gap between the rhetoric of the importance of involving parents in the educational processes for their families, and the reality of school practice in the United Kingdom. This small, qualitative project sought to find out what factors promote or inhibit home-school contact and communication between schools and refugee families.

The authors find that refugee families in Britain often find themselves in disabling social, political and economic contexts. *“They then enter a school*

system which, by and large, caters for a stable, monolingual population” (Power et al 1995 in Vincent & Warren, 1999).

The refugee parents in the study reported that often the questions they had about the way the school operates and how their children are doing remain unanswered and frequently, unasked. The managerial practice of school administrators was identified as having a great impact on home-school relationships – if the headteacher was more focused on performance and achievement rather than on pastoral issues for their students, then this orientation was often reflected in the involvement (or lack there of) of refugee parents and families in the school.

It is suggested that the problems refugee parents face (i.e. not sharing a common language with the teacher) are reflective of challenges of parents from other visible minority groups, and therefore impact a large rather than small population. The authors suggest that more care should be given to balance both the academic and pastoral needs of students and that the nature of home-school communication will reflect the important relationship between the two. Improved communication and greater access to school life would allow refugee parents to become more equal partners in the educational process and therefore, provide a context in which all children in the school can achieve to their maximum potential.

Kanu, Y (2008). Educational Needs and Barriers for African Refugee Students in Manitoba. *Canadian Journal of Education*. 31 (4), 915-940.

This paper identifies the economic, academic and psychological challenges faced by African refugee students in Manitoba schools. The students in this study were primarily from Sudan, Ethiopia, Afghanistan, Sierra Leone and Somalia.

African refugee youth are more likely than other refugee children to have been forced into becoming a child soldier, have lingering memories of committing or incurring terrible atrocities, or to have become sex slaves. These students carry the scars of their experiences with them to Canada (p. 917). Because of their race, ethnicity and countries of origin, they are more likely to have spent longer periods of time in refugee camps, experience economic and physical disadvantages, and have greater periods of disrupted schooling. *“These experiences suggest that this group of students may experience greater difficulties adjusting to and integrating into a new society and may be slower in learning academic concepts, skills, and a new language”*(Prairie Centre of Excellence on Immigration and Integration (PCEII) and Population Research Laboratory, 2001; MacKay & Tavares, 2005).

Other research by Thomas & Collier (1997) suggests that students with low literacy, interrupted schooling, and traumatic experiences may take up to ten

years or more to catch up to average levels of cognitive and academic language. (in Kanu, 2008). This contrasts the research of other immigrant ESL students who were shown to take five to seven years of English language support before ‘catching up’ with their native English-speaking peers (ibid).

To learn more about this highly at-risk population of students in Manitoba schools, this study interviewed forty African refugee students, two principals, eight teachers, four parents and four community leaders. The interviews provided the following data as reported by the students:

Academic challenges:

- lack of academic support at home
- separation from family
- cultural dissonance, including academic dissonance - differences between expectations of school in Canada and home country
- acculturation stress; difficulty with academic skills (note-taking, academic writing, critical thinking, literacy, numeracy and organizational skills;
- limited English proficiency
- academic gaps due to interrupted schooling
- fast-paced curriculum
- fear and distrust of authority figures like teachers
- fear of speaking out in class
- grade placement based on age and English language assessment tests rather than academic ability (Kanu, p. 924)

“Among these factors, separation from family and grade placement were ranked highly on the students’ list of frustrations. Separation from family not only created acute loneliness for many of the students but also robbed them of the role models who had provided the example, stability, and structures needed to thrive academically. Several of the students reported living with single parents or on their own, having lost their parents and coming to Canada as ‘unaccompanied minors’. Others were living in reconstituted families consisting of friends they had made while in transition in refugee camps. Some students hoped the school would provide the boundaries and structures they lacked at home. That hope, however, quickly vanished when they found out that “Here (Canada) the school system is really slack (lax); nobody asks or cares if you did not do your homework”. Without the structures to which they were accustomed, many of the students reported becoming lost in the Canadian academic culture” (Kanu, 2008, p. 924).

In a Prairie Centre of Excellence study of Kosovar refugees (2001) it was revealed that over 50 % of refugee children aged 15-18 in Northern Alberta were placed in inappropriate grades (in Kanu, 2008). Ten percent of the students reported that they were in grades that were too easy, and twenty percent of these students reported that they felt they were in classes that were too difficult. The students call for better ways for schools to assess refugee students’ academic

abilities by perhaps giving them more time and support to acquire English language proficiency before testing and placing them into classes.

The teachers interviewed for this study called for greater systemic support for refugee students throughout the school systems. Although the teachers recognized that their student population was changing with the influx of greater numbers of refugee and immigrant students, many did not change their approach to teaching, curriculum, assessment and interaction patterns in their classes. The teachers expressed the need for extended support for ESL classes, professional development opportunities so that they could learn more about their African refugee students and how to best teach them. The study also identifies the need for teacher preparation institutions to better equip teachers to respond more successfully to an increasingly diverse student population.

One principal reported the ways that his school had responded to the needs of refugee students:

- opening of a refugee transition centre where refugee students were taught Canadian life skills
- funding for teachers to attend workshops on war-affected refugee students
- introduction of a flexible program to provide workplace preparation for refugee students
- the development of after-school programs for parents, students and other community members
- hiring two Arabic-speaking Sudanese Educational Assistants
- support for a Sudanese students' community centre in the school
- hiring a fulltime psychologist and part-time social worker
- school working with the Needs Centre for Refugees and the International Centre for New Immigrants
- opening the drama, choir and basketball programs to interested refugee students

(Kanu, 2008)

The principals reported that they were able to make these initiatives available because of resource re-allocation rather than new funding. They principals suggested that policy makers on the provincial level need to be aware of the unique needs of refugee students so that new funding could be make available. They suggest that funding to support the adjustment and academic success of refugee students could be utilized for:

- professional development for school administrators and teachers of refugee students
- smaller ESL classes
- extended English language programs
- ESL resource centres where students could go for immediate help with academic writing

- hiring more ESL assistants
- expansion of after-school and community programs
- Specialized curriculum for bridging academic gaps (developed at the school level)
- hiring specialised staff members to liaise between the school and the ethnic communities

The school principals felt that improvements to the school's community in general in terms of out-reach programs are crucial and should be funded beyond the scope of educational resources because *“these skills build parents’ confidence, strengthen family and community capacity, and directly support the schools efforts to bridge refugee students’ educational gaps, they should be part and parcel of welcoming refugees to our city and not loading it (financial responsibility) off to the schools”* (High School Principal in Kanu, 2008, p. 928).

The parents in the study identified some personal barriers to their ability to assist their children to be academically successful in Canada. Some of these barriers cited by the parents are their preoccupation with economic survival (carrying down two or three menial jobs in order to pay bills), the slower pace of their own acculturation and adaptation to the new society compared to their children, their limited English language proficiency, and the cultural differences in expectations of parental involvement in their children's schooling. Because of their cultural backgrounds, most of these parents felt that it was inappropriate for them to be involved in what they see as the work of the teachers in schools. This perspective is contrary to western views of “parents as partners” in the educational process. The author suggests that there is need for clearer dialogue between parents and teachers of refugee students to better understand *“what the other party is equipped to provide to support the learning of African refugee students”*. (p. 929).

The research data overwhelmingly pointed to the lack of economic resources available to refugee students and families that poses a serious challenge for these students to find academic success in schools. More than half of the forty students participating in this study reported to hold down fulltime jobs to support themselves and to their surviving family members in Africa, or to repay or help parents to repay loans given to the families for their airfare, housing and other refugee resettlement programs. Teachers report a direct correlation between poor academic performance and long hours spent in fulltime work.

Traumatic memories are also identified as having a negative impact on the psychological well-being of refugee families. According to McBrien (2005 in Kanu, 2008), after five years in Canada, nearly 70% of refugees from war-affected backgrounds had stressful memories of the war and flight from their homeland, and over 80% still worried about family members still in Africa. Another factor causing stress was the low status jobs that refugee parents often had to take to survive economically and the reversal of roles between parents and children which contradicted traditional roles in their home countries. This paper

reports that neither the children nor the families since arriving in Canada had received any psychological counselling or treatment for any of these issues. These issues were found to be vivid in the refugee students' minds and often interfered with their learning. Adults of refugee children were often ill-prepared to provide emotional support or to be the positive models their children need to foster academic and social success in schools.

The students in this study made suggestions directed at improving the educational contexts for refugee students from war-affected backgrounds. These suggestions are:

- Please tell to teachers to slow down the pace and curriculum content
- Access to culturally appropriate sports/recreation programs
- Access to culturally appropriate psychological counselling
- Patience and academic support from teachers
- Academic peer coaching by more capable African students
- Extended English language support
- Less racism from some teachers. Administrators and Canadian-born students
- Better practices in regards to grade placements

“Clearly, untreated pre- and trans-migration psychological stresses and post-migration academic, economic, and psychosocial challenges affected the ability of the African refugee students to adapt and acculturate into their host country and cope with school world. When these challenges are compounded by perceived, or real, attitudes of prejudice, marginalization, and racism from fellow-students, teachers, and administrators, refugee students’ confidence and self concept are severely challenged and the stage is set for feelings of rejection, inadequacy, frustration, and dropping out even when dropping out is not intended. Parents’ beliefs about parenting and authority and the parents’ own acculturation and economic survival become obstacles to the school success of their children. Lack of sufficient resources available to schools and isolation among the various service providers – educators, housing and family services, and healthcare personnel – can severely impair the ability of these agencies to provide the services needed to support war-affected refugee students”.

(Kanu, 2008, p. 935)

Implications for schools suggested from this study:

- Expand the cultural bases of the school’s recreational sports and cafeteria food line to include a variety of cultures
- Offer prayer rooms for Muslim students
- Better practices in assessment and placement of refugee students as well as regular monitoring of placements

- Better understanding of the refugee parents' home life and economic situations
- Desegregation of ESL students from Canadian-born peers
- Professional development for teachers on refugee students needs and ways to develop a broader vision of teaching that encompasses multifaceted teaching goals and beliefs about subject matter and students
- Efforts by the school to collect and disseminate accurate information and cultural knowledge about African refugee students

MacKay, T. & Travares, T. (2005). *Building Hope: Appropriate Programming for Adolescent and Young Adult Newcomers of War-affected Backgrounds and Manitoba Schools: A Preliminary report for Consultation and Discussion* (2005). Manitoba Education, Citizenship and Youth.

This report summarizes a study aiming to gain meaningful information about the educational and social needs of adolescent refugee students from war-affected African countries in Manitoba. As this population increases in Manitoba schools, surveys of current educational practices in Manitoba reveal that there is a lack of services and interventions for these students and their families. This lack of services often leads these students to “fall out” of the school system and to greatly limit their opportunities for economic and academic success. Implications from the findings of this study offer suggestions for best practices in programming and instruction for this unique population.

Summary of findings:

- The number of adolescent and young adult learners with ESL needs and refugee/war-affected experiences and interrupted schooling in our schools and community is growing.
- Increasingly, these learners are coming from difficult situations where multiple incidents of trauma may have been experienced and have resided for extended periods in refugee camps with extremely poor supports.
- Research from Alberta, other parts of Canada suggest that beginning ESL learners who enter the system at the junior high and high school level are likely to “fall out” or “drop out” of school.
- In many provinces, students face many challenges related to graduation requirements due to lack of flexibility, compulsory course requirements, and limitation on ESL course credits that may be used to meet graduation requirements.
- There is a clear need for improving current programming and supports.
- Schools understand and recognize the need for more specialized supports.

The most frequently reported programming supports in need of enhancement were, in order of priority, literacy development, extended and intensified ESL programming addressing significant academic gaps.

- Current programming and educational supports are inappropriate and not well matched with learner needs.
- Both schools with small and large refugee/war-affected populations recognize the need for specialized supports.
- Early identification and program planning is critical.

Adolescent learners of refugee and war-affected backgrounds are more likely to experience mental health and socio-emotional issues in comparison to other immigrants. Increasingly, there is evidence that the effects of war can be significant and, if untreated, can severely affect the socio-emotional well-being of learners and reduce their capacity to learn.

- We need to recognize that in spite of the challenges and limitations of current programming and supports, many teachers and schools often demonstrate compassion for these learners and individual teachers and communities often dedicate significant time and effort in helping these learners and their families.
- Increased attention, creativity, and resources need to be focused on these learners and on developing more appropriate programming at the school, divisional, and provincial level.

School divisions should consider clustering students and explore inter-divisional cooperation to provide specialized intensive programs such as 'bridging' or 'newcomers' programs, An innovation grant specifically focused on learners of refugee origins with interrupted schooling and ESL learning needs would assist schools in addressing the issue and stimulate development of specialized programming.

- Better pathways and transition opportunities are required that will articulate well with adult education programs, training opportunities, and post-secondary institutions.

Leong, M & Collins, L. (2007). *Bridging the Gap: A Framework for Teaching and Transitioning Low Literacy Immigrant Youth*. Bow Valley College, Alberta Employment and Industry.

This manual provides the necessary information for creating and sustaining a literacy program for immigrant youth who have exited high school but are still in need of literacy training in order to transition to further education or workplace training programs.

Some of the main ideas from a review of the literature on this topic are:

- Four in ten Canadians fall into the low literacy range of Level 1 & Level 2 (ABC Literacy Foundation, 2006)

- Sixty percent of immigrants have low literacy, compared to thirty-seven percent of native born Canadians (CIC, 2002).
- Those with low literacy are twice as likely to be unemployed as those with high literacy (ABC Literacy Foundation, 2006).
- The high school dropout rate for young ESL students is considerably higher than that of native English speaking peers (Watt & Roessingh, 2001).
- Learners respond positively when they are offered social support as well as academic support (Dann-Messier & Kampits, 2006). This support could be in the form of counselling or child care.

Some of the main ideas from the chapter on Teaching and Transitioning Learners (p. 113- 154):

- Instructors in literacy programs may need to take on additional components to their traditional role as teacher to include that of a counsellor and/or social worker.
- A learner-centred classroom is vital to a successful literacy program. This classroom provides multiple opportunities for student success based on active engagement and a degree of learner autonomy in the classroom. In this type of classroom, learned background experiences and knowledge are honoured, discussions are encouraged and the content and goals of the program match the readiness of the learners.
- Literacy skills are taught in context through thematic content that is relevant, age-appropriate and connected to the real-world. Thematic units focus on teaching language skills through content.
- Grammar and vocabulary skills are taught within the context of the thematic units of study.
- The nine Essential Skills incorporated into a successful literacy program are: reading texts, writing, oral communication, thinking skills, numeracy skills, computer use, document use, continuous learning, and working with others.
- Curriculum for successful literacy programs is based upon specific reading and writing outcomes measured through performance based assessments. Essential skills are outcomes are also taught – these can include numeracy, college readiness, vocabulary and real-world skills needed in professional contexts.
- Chosen outcomes provide the structure of the content and focus of the program. These outcomes are made explicit to the learners at all times.
- There is meaningful, explicit teaching of cognitive and metacognitive strategies (Meltzer et al., 2001).

- Reading instruction combines reading for pleasure with explicit teaching of reading comprehension skills in before, during and after reading activities (Meltzer et al, 2001).
- Project-based learning is incorporated to enhanced reading and learning outcomes.
- Instructors create environments that are safe, welcoming and supportive. Teachers have high expectations for their students.
- Students are encouraged to take responsibility for their learning. This is achieved self-assessment checklists, reflective journals and goal-setting activities.
- Language, skills and outcomes are recycled within and across thematic units and projects.
- Assessment includes rubrics, portfolios, and self-evaluation tools and it is used to guide and improve instruction.

Magro, K, (2009). *Building Bridges to Social Inclusion: Researching the Experiences and Challenges of the Lost Boys and Girls of Sudan Community in Winnipeg*. Prairie Metropolis Working Paper Series WP01-09. Retrieved March 20, 2010 from <http://pcerii.metropolis.net/WorkingPapers/WP0109.pdf>

This paper provides insights into the backgrounds, experiences and challenges faced by a group of refugee students from the Sudan. The study looked at their integration into Canadian life, pre and post migration issues and programming suited at addressing their unique educational and social needs. The participants in this study were mostly from the Dinka Tribe in the south Sudan, who are commonly referred to in the literature as ‘The Lost Boys and Girls of Sudan’. These refugees initially arrived and settled in Winnipeg, however, many moved to Brooks, Alberta and other Albertan cities of Edmonton and Calgary in search of jobs. The study uses a narrative inquiry methodology which seeks to interpret the participants’ experiences and feelings from their own perspectives.

Some of the challenges faced by these African refugees from this war-affected country were cited as, “*they have been deprived abruptly and often quite violently of what was most meaningful in their lives, starting with their motherland and the inability to use their language*” (Freire, as quoted in Magro, 2006). They also sometimes experience a clash between their expectations of life in Canada and their actual experiences which are more stressful than they imagined. Parental roles may be challenged through the process of migration. Youth and adults who have lived through war and traumatic experiences can have memory or other learning problems. Other symptoms of post-traumatic stress disorder may be reoccurring nightmares, memory loss, feelings of guilt, learning

difficulties, and depression or anxiety. The author recommends, *“In particular it is important for service providers, teachers, and counsellors to understand “cultural bereavement” and the impact of being uprooted from a familiar social structure and culture”* (Magro, 2009, p.12).

Another researcher (Frater-Mathieson, 2004) recommends that therapeutic interventions need be culturally sensitive – art, music, dance poetry, or story telling relating to the cultural heritage of the individual can help psychological and social integration. Herman (1997 in Magro, 2009 p. 12) suggests, *“recovery from trauma can only take place through relationships; it cannot occur in isolation”*.

Other recommendations from this study for educators of refugees from war-affected countries such as the Sudan:

- Understand that recent arrivals from Africa have difficult barriers to overcome
- Require more financial resources, more intensive mentoring, more EAL support during settlement and more counselling
- English language instruction should be integrated with cultural literacy and citizenship education
- Greater collaboration and coordination between schools, refugee agencies, and other community service providers would help clients to gain access to vital information and services
- Instructors and teachers should acknowledge that their roles are more complex when teaching refugees from war-affected countries – they become co-learners, advocates, challengers, guides, mentors, counsellors and facilitators
- Each student should be seen as an individual for their strengths and areas of need and not simply as a member of a group
- Teachers need to organize the classroom in a way that integrates the personal needs of the learners with that of authentic, holistic English language learning
- Teachers need a forum and opportunities to discuss the challenges of working with newcomers
- Mentoring programs can be valuable for families for inclusion and remove barriers to learning and participation. Topics in mentoring programs can include the school system, parenting styles, gender roles, raising a teenager in Canadian society, cultural comparisons, financial management and preparing for the future.
- Counselling and literacy mentoring programs can help prevent feelings of disconnect and alienation in refugee students.

(Magro, 2009, p. 21-24)

Macksoud, M. (2000). Helping Children Cope with the Stresses of War: a manual for parents and teachers. United Nations Children's Fund Programme Publications retrieved March 15, 2010 from http://www.unicef.org/publications/files/Helping_Children_Cope_with_the_Stresses_of_War.pdf

The nine most typical types of experiences children may face in war-affected countries that may impact their development are:

- **Parent or close relative's death** – if the child perceives the death as a heroic act that the child strongly identifies with, the event will be less traumatic than if the child perceives the death to be accidental or unfair. Exposure to the violent death of someone close, especially if the child witnesses the death can cause severe stress and depressive reactions in the child
- **Exposure to combat** – the effects of violence (the destruction of homes or huts destroyed, civilians killed or injured parents seeking refugees) all of these increase children's anxiety levels. Children can develop phobias or other fearful reactions.
- **Having to live as a refugee** – having unanticipated and forced displacement can cause students to become very vulnerable and insecure. They can develop phobias, psychosomatic conditions and sleeping problems. Some children become nostalgic and need to mourn their old homes; others reject their new homes and become aggressive or disruptive.
- **Long-term separation from parents or primary care givers** – most children reported kidnapping of parents as the main reason for separations caused by war. This is very stressful for children – it is better for children to remain with parents even though they may witness destruction or deprivation
- **Exposure to violence as a witness** – viewing violent acts can leave children with intense feelings of fear, mistrust and anger in many children.
- **Exposure to violence as a victim** – children can be victims of war themselves – they can be kidnapped, arrested, detained or tortured. These children develop severe stress reactions and need to be treated by qualified child care specialists
- **Suffering physical injuries** – children exposed to war may have to deal with amputations, serious burns or loss of hearing. These children require

a multitude of services such as physiotherapy, rehabilitation and vocational training in addition to psychological interventions.

- **Participation in armed forces** – some children are forced to participate in combat directly. This can sometimes be combined with indoctrination programmes that glorify violence. These children sometimes exhibit feelings of revenge and aggression.
- **War-caused poverty** – severe deprivation such as limited access to food or water may negatively impact children’s development. There is documentation of the relationship between chronic malnourishment and psychological distress in children.

The following is a summary of how to deal with children’s reactions to the experiences they have encountered during war:

- Determine the child’s own assessment of the nature and intensity of his or her own reactions.
- Identify the war experiences causing a child’s stress is crucial to providing help
- Begin with the child’s judgment about which experience has caused the most stress
- Find the source of a child’s distress by determining when the behaviour changed
- Some children may not exhibit distress because they are “accustomed” to violence

Reactions and Behaviours of Young Children aged 2-5:

- Very young children often show no obvious reactions to stressful events
- Elements of a stressful event often show up in a very young child’s play
- Very young children often become highly fearful following stressful experiences
- Very young children do not understand the concept of death – they will expect the dead person to return
- Behaviours to watch for – anxious attachment, separation anxiety, regressive behaviour, loss of new skills, nightmares, night terrors

Reactions and Behaviours of Children aged 6-12:

- Young children are able to understand the meaning of stressful experiences
- Young children use fantasy and play to deal with very stressful experiences
- Young children can understand that death is final and irreversible.
- Young children feel fearful and vulnerable following stressful experiences
- War distorts young children's' moral and social concepts and behaviour
- Problems common at these ages – poor concentration, restlessness, learning disorders, anxiety, 'aches and pains'

Reactions and Behaviours of Adolescents aged 13-16

- Adolescents feel hopeless about the far-reaching consequences of war
- Adolescents need assistance from adults to handle stressful war experiences
- Following stressful events, adolescents may seem more adult than they are
- Peers are an important source of support for adolescents
- Problems common for adolescents – self-destructiveness, risk-taking, withdrawal, psychosomatic complaints

How teachers can help children cope with the stresses of having lived through a war:

- Remember how important school is in providing children the stability they need in their lives
- Allow children to share their feelings
- Reassure children that their reactions are normal
- If only a few students have been affected, hold a discussion group for them after class
- Use class assignments to help children gain a sense of control over their experiences by expressing them
- Promote involvement in extracurricular activities as a means of relieving stress
- Initiate discussions on moral issues
- Stress the importance of learning to resolve conflicts without violence

- Maintain a structured class environment that allows students to focus on their schoolwork
- Identify students with specific learning or emotional problems and help out them and their parents in touch with relevant support services
- Use the classroom as an environment in which adolescents can share reactions to war
- Suggest projects – like the formation of a discussion group on the effects of war – that help empower adolescents
- Be ready to offer guidance on practical matters, such as managing study time and also on emotional matters for your students

Advice for teachers on specific problems:

- Clinging – constantly reassure the child, prepare the child in advance when you have to leave, try to find out why the child fears separation, allow the child to express anxieties through play, allow parents into the classroom, gradually decrease the amount of time the parent spends in the child's class
- Schoolwork – work with the parents to monitor progress, place the child in the front row, give one-to-one attention, allow short breaks, reward improved behaviour, help the child talk through problems, and provide comfort
- Anxieties – deal patiently with anxious behaviour, anxious children do not cope well in the classroom, reward desirable behaviour and ignore undesirable behaviour, provide children with a sense of self-mastery by gradually reinforcing desirable classroom behaviour, use class assignments and play activities to help anxious children express their fears
- Aggression – teaching methods, classroom discipline and the teacher's behaviour all have an influence on children's aggression, aggression, aggressive behaviour should not be permitted in the classroom, use a 'time-out', model and reward good classroom behaviour. Withdraw attention as punishment for aggressive behaviour, provide opportunities for physical exercise, work closely with the child's family.
- Depression – build self-esteem and self-confidence, help the child rejoin the community, allow time for normal grief following a death, try to identify depressed children and encourage them to participate in class, give one-to-one attention to the child, identify and reward the desired classroom behaviour, work with the family and offer emotional support in class

- Grieving – prepare the class in advance for grieving, briefly explain the normal reactions to someone’s death, don’t focus on a bereaved child but offer emotional support in class
- Risk-taking – risk taking often masks anger and depression, be firm in opposing unacceptable behaviour, be in class before students arrive, have each lesson fully prepared, speak clearly and enthusiastically, use brief questions, intervene when problems arise, make sure material is appropriate, show interest in students, be a role model for students and an advisor for their families, help students stay in school
- Aches and Pains – aches and pains for which there is no medical cause are signs of anxiety or depression, help child put fears into words, make sure a doctor sees the child, don’t allow the child’s complaints to be a way of getting sympathy or attention

Make sure the child sees a child care specialist when:

- The child feels sad all the time and cries a lot
- Does not eat and is getting thinner
- Is tired all the time and wants to stay in bed
- Is unable to sleep at night
- Feels so hopeless that he/she talks about ending his/her life
- Demonstrates over activity
- Gives indications of an addiction problem
- Displays post traumatic stress disorder

Thomas, A. (2004). *Meeting the needs of secondary ESL learners with disrupted schooling – Planning bridging programs*. Victoria Department o Education and Training retrieved April 22, 2010 from http://www.eduweb.vic.gov.au/edulibrary/public/teachlearn/student/lem/Planning_bridging_progs.doc

This paper describes how schools or clusters of schools can develop transitional programs for refugee learners with disrupted schooling. These students are often in need of intensive literacy instruction before they are able to be successfully integrated into mainstream classes.

The guiding principles of these programs:

- For new arrivals who are at early stages of literacy development
- Not designed to replace existing ESL programs, but to complement them

- Flexibly designed to meet individual student needs
- Parents should be included in the program at all points

A description of the learners:

- Have had minimal schooling in their native language and/or periods of disruption in their education
- Have low levels of literacy in English
- Have been assessed as being at risk of not completing school in a mainstream setting
- May be suffering from the effects of trauma or torture and/or loss or suffering of family members
- Come from a background where writing is a new phenomenon

Program Models:

- Fulltime, offering at least twenty hours of instruction in class of 15 students
- Part-time, a combination of intensive small group instruction, mainstream classes and supplementary ESL classes.
- Additional components of the program include small group or individual literacy sessions
- Provisions for ESL teachers to work aside mainstream teachers in mainstream classrooms to support literacy learners
- Parallel or sheltered classes of low literacy students that follow mainstream curriculum content

Considerations for developing curriculum for a bridging program:

- Developing literacy skills should be the primary focus of the curriculum as well as continuing to develop the students' spoken English
- Curriculum should be designed to help students acquire the concepts and skills to be successful in mainstream classes.
- Study skills, or 'learning how to learn' skills should be embedded in the curriculum. Examples of these skills include the language of instructions, research skills, organizational skills, how to work in cooperative groups, etc

Pedagogical approaches:

- Integrated content themes helps students to make links between curricular areas

- Tasks need to be broken down into achievable activities with clearly understood outcomes
- Portfolio assessments allow students to see what they have achieved and build upon prior learning
- Learning outcomes need to be explicitly explained and referred to during instruction so that students can see learning as a continuum
- Always establish prior knowledge and link new knowledge to prior learning
- Skills should be taught in a developmental sequence
- Students need to be able to work at different levels in a group and to meet a range of different outcomes. There should be personalization in the learning tasks
- Learning tasks should be concrete, experiential and involve ‘hands-on’ tasks
- There should be explicit teaching of language structures and features needed to understand spoken or written texts
- There should be recycling and revision integrated throughout the units of study
- Provide visual support for learning. For example, the use of video, images, diagrams, etc
- Incorporate modeling of tasks and writing activities
- Use resources that are at the appropriate level and explicitly teach learning strategies that allow students to approach more challenging texts
- Integrate technology as a teaching tool
- Integrate native language support where possible
- Integrate peer support and mentor programs with mainstream students
- Link students to community-based homework or tutoring programs
- Incorporate a variety of assessment strategies both for and of learning. Examples of these assessment procedures are portfolios, oral reading, rubrics, self-evaluation, peer assessment, tests, projects, performance tasks, assessment of social skills and strategy use

Parent Communication and Involvement

- Ensure that interpreters are available for parent meetings and translate important school notices.

- Use native language interpreters for non-literate parents/guardians
- Have an extended initial interview with parents in the first few weeks of the program – share information about the program and add to the students’ socio-linguistic profile
- Build contact with a community member who can liaise with families. Involve parents in this process to ensure cultural sensitivity
- Hold regular parent information sessions on topics of need and interest – for example, school programs, the local school system, parenting skills, educational pathways, homework policies, community supports, using technology, etc
- Involve parents in decision making on student pathways and in orientation visits to other educational programs
- Involve parents in existing programs – parent councils, art, craft and culture programs, etc

Community Links

- Ethnic community support agencies
- Migrant Resource Centres
- Volunteer reading tutors
- Youth mentors, often older students who have the same language and cultural background
- Legal networks offering information sessions for students about youth rights
- Police in Schools Program
- Community Health Centres focused on ethnic communities

Student Welfare

Many refugee students and their families will experience an ongoing need for support beyond the classroom. This may include financial hardship, housing and homeless issues, the effects of trauma, behavioural issues, absenteeism and physical health issues. Students with issues such as these will need ongoing monitoring and support within the school’s existing welfare structures.

Whole School Awareness:

- There are a number of videos and resources from UNHCR that may be appropriate for staff development

- Cultural background information sessions on particular ethnic groups from Community Centres
- Review school policies and practice to ensure they are inclusive of the needs of all students – prayer rooms, food provided, multilingual signage, etc

ESL/Literacy-Informed Teaching in Mainstream Classes

Professional development opportunities for mainstream teachers can include:

- Mainstream teachers shadowing Bridging Program students in their mainstream classes
- Intensive ESL literacy teachers shadowing their students in mainstream classes
- Mainstream and ESL literacy teachers planning together and developing units of work and materials for different levels of students
- Professional development on middle years literacy and ESL in the mainstream
- Attending meetings with other teachers in other schools running similar bridging programs
- Observing ESL schools and centres to observe classroom strategies

Program Coordination:

Overall coordination of the program needs to take into account:

- How to disseminate information about the program to the greater school community
- Development of individual learning plans for students and monitoring progress
- Communication of important students information (non-confidential) to other teachers in the school - ie year level coordinators, mainstream subject area teachers, career teachers, counsellors
- Ensuring students are included ins school programs that will address their needs and have access to resources and information
- Program evaluation