

## Stages of Adjustment

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| <p><b>Stage One</b></p> <p>Often called the “honeymoon stage”</p> <p>Occurs during initial arrival when newcomers feel excited and hopeful about their new life, especially those of refugee background who have arrived safely.</p> | <p>Students:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• are curious about their new culture and dedicated to learning the new language</li> <li>• Are enthusiastic about becoming familiar with school routines and making friends</li> <li>• somewhat anxious about the future</li> <li>• Are optimistic and idealistic about their new surroundings, new country and new opportunities</li> <li>• Demonstrate unmistakable foreignness</li> <li>• Make superficial attempts to adjust and fit in</li> </ul> <p>Even though families experience the greatest stress following their initial move, they are also provided the greatest amount of resources and support at this time.</p> <p>School staff can:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• learn about students’ backgrounds and cultures</li> <li>• provide orientation information about schooling and services</li> </ul>   |
| <p><b>Stage Two</b></p> <p>Often called the “hostility stage”</p> <p>Occurs between 4 and 12 months after moving to a new country when culture shock becomes evident</p>   | <p>Students:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Have begun to manage and speak English</li> <li>• begin to notice significant differences between their own culture and Canadian culture and often experience homesickness</li> <li>• enter a period of confusion, loss and disorientation that often results in depression</li> <li>• often feel that they don’t understand their new country and their new country doesn’t understand them</li> <li>• feel frustrated, and possibly depressed, anxious, irritable or angry</li> <li>• demonstrate withdrawal, alienation and, in some cases, erratic or aggressive behaviour</li> <li>• may avoid contact with the mainstream culture or community.</li> </ul> <p>In some instances, students become less competent academically and socially, compared with their initial arrival, and tend to withdraw. They may reject anything associated with their new culture (food, language, etc.)</p> <p>School staff can:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Show compassion and understanding</li> <li>• Help students understand this phase as normal</li> <li>• Help students and families set realistic goals and expectations</li> </ul> |

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|   | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Create opportunities to build students’ self esteem and highlight successes</li> </ul>  |
| <p><b>Stage Three</b></p> <p>Often called the “humor stage”</p> <p>Occurs over time as newcomers work towards resolution and reconstruction</p> | <p>Students:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• have more constructive attitudes and feel less anxious</li> <li>• speak better English and understand more</li> <li>• try new behaviours and test limits</li> <li>• work toward resolution of their feelings and their sense of being torn between the new and the old.</li> </ul> <p>Families become more stable as members find employment and learn more English. Parent-teen conflict may be at its worst.</p> <p>School staff can:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Help students see the value in their original culture as well as their new one</li> <li>• Present opportunities for students to communicate about their past</li> <li>• Offer opportunities for students to become mentors and role models</li> </ul>                     |
| <p><b>Stage Four</b></p> <p>Often called the “home stage”</p> <p>May be years in coming and for some will never take place</p>                  | <p>Students:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Have more proficiency in English</li> <li>• feel that their emotional equilibrium is restored</li> <li>• appreciate aspects of both original culture and Canadian culture</li> <li>• participate in school and community activities</li> <li>• have friendships with people from different backgrounds</li> <li>• are able to value both old and new cultures</li> <li>• feel that Canada is their home and accept they are here to stay.</li> </ul> <p>Students may still respond in unexpected ways to situations or events.</p> <p>School staff can:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Support each student’s unique process of adjustment and identity-building</li> <li>• Promote opportunities to engage in full life of community</li> </ul> |

adapted from: The Ontario Curriculum, Grades 1-8: English as a Second Language and English Literacy Development: A Resource Guide (p. 8)

and Students from Refugee Backgrounds: A Guide for Teachers and Schools (p. 14-15)

