

Webinar Series:
*Addressing the Needs of Adolescent EL
 Populations in a MTSS Framework*

**Webinar #2: Refugee Students in a
 MTSS Framework**

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Pennsylvania Training and Technical Assistance Network

PaTTAN's Mission

The mission of the Pennsylvania Training and Technical Assistance Network (PaTTAN) is to support the efforts and initiatives of the Bureau of Special Education, and to build the capacity of local educational agencies to serve students who receive special education services.

**PDE's Commitment to Least Restrictive
 Environment (LRE)**

Recognizing that the placement decision is an Individualized Education Program (IEP) team decision, our goal for each child is to ensure IEP teams begin with the general education setting with the use of supplementary aids and services before considering a more restrictive environment.

Outcomes

Participants will

- Identify the unique needs of refugee English Learners
- Familiarize themselves with effective strategies to respond to the challenges of educating refugee students
- Identify resources to support students and their families

Why do refugees leave their countries?



Refugees / Asylees



Refugees and asylees leave their countries because of war or persecution due to their nationality, race, religion, political opinion, or membership in a group.

What is Persecution?

While there is no universally accepted definition of persecution, threats to life or freedom are always considered persecution when they occur because of a person's:

- Race
- Religion
- Nationality
- Political opinion
- Membership in a particular social group



Persecution



Other serious violations of human rights also constitute persecution, including:

- Slavery
- Prolonged detention without a charge or trial
- Torture
- Overwhelming discrimination

Note: Not all unfair or unjust treatment is considered persecution. Assessments of persecution are made on a case by case basis.



By nature of their situation, refugees have to leave their homelands behind.

What would it feel like to leave YOUR homeland behind?

During their escape, refugees may experience:

- panic
- shock
- fear
- danger
- hunger
- fatigue
- separation
- fear of victimization
- fear of being detected or caught in the crossfire



The REFUGEE CAMP EXPERIENCE is characterized by:

- boredom
- shock
- depression
- anger
- hope mingled with disappointment
- adjustment to new living conditions
- hopelessness
- fear of the unknown
- culture shock
- survivor's guilt
- helplessness
- powerlessness
- self-doubt
- struggle to meet survival needs
- confusion



Interview for Resettlement

The United Nations officials interview people to determine if their situation "qualifies" them as refugees. Only those who can prove they are escaping persecution and are unable to return home are eligible to request to go to another country.

If they ask to go to the U.S., refugees are then interviewed by the U.S. Refugee Program officials and U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services officials to determine if they meet our eligibility requirements. The U.S. is stricter than the U.N. For instance, fleeing due to famine is considered economic migration, not persecution by the U.S.



Approval and Flight



Refugees who are approved to come to the U.S. are given a health screening and cultural orientation.

Refugees sign a **travel loan document**, agreeing to pay back the cost of the flight.

Arrival in the U.S.

As refugees come to the U.S., they are assigned to a Refugee Resettlement Agency where they receive assistance and guidance as they begin their new lives.



The Voluntary Resettlement Agencies (VOLAGs) accredited to resettle refugees provide **30** days of service through the Department of State and then provide after-care services.

Ongoing services may include public assistance, medical assistance, housing, job training, mental health, and education.

When refugees are resettled, they may face:



- the fact of never going home
- loss of family and friends
- loss of familiar culture
- anxiety over discrimination in host country
- concern over cultural adaptation
- concern for economic survival
- daily survival issues
- language barriers

Refugee Students

- School leaders are in a key position to create an environment that welcomes refugee students.
- As students resettle in their new communities, they will need assistance in learning English and adapting to school procedures.
- Teachers and other staff will need professional development and support as they strive to meet the needs of refugee students.
- Partnerships with parents, refugee centers, and community groups will be essential in helping refugee students acclimate to their new schools.

Refugee Students

Refugee students are often scared and confused when they first attend school.

- Until students adjust, they will have difficulty to understand and respond to academic information. However, their adaptation is often surprisingly swift.
- Keep in mind that some refugee students are experiencing for the first time:
 - freedom to express opinions in public
 - access to textbooks, literature, and art supplies
 - teachers, counselors, and administrators who are engaging and supportive
 - in-depth presentation of subject matter
 - access to a wide range of activities

Tips for Administrators and Teachers

"I want the refugee students in my building to know that they are contributing to our school, not just adapting to it."



New York Bureau of Immigrant and Refugee Assistance, Welcoming Refugee Students: Strategies for School Administrators

Refugee Students

- Refugee children have left behind:
 - their belongings
 - family members, friends and neighbors
 - familiar weather, foods, and traditions.
- They are torn between maintaining family cultural traditions and “fitting in” to the new culture.

Give them time and encouragement as they find their way.



Refugee Students

“The biggest concerns we have observed with refugee students in our school are:

- *personal hygiene*
- *purchasing lunch*
- *appropriate clothing that fits*
- *use of restrooms*
- *finding classrooms*

Tackle these issues immediately and you will see refugee children relax and begin to enjoy themselves in school.”

New York Bureau of Immigrant and Refugee Assistance. Welcoming Refugee Students: Strategies for School Administrators





- It may take a while for some refugee students to grasp the concept of time. Many have never experienced schedules, clocks, and required school attendance.
- Review expectations with families and students, but understand that it will take a few weeks for routines to be established.

- It is not advisable to ask refugee students about their past history. They may be grieving, or experiencing post-traumatic stress disorder.
- Help them concentrate on their new school activities and making friends.



Communication

- Post signs in many languages around the school. This is a great way for every student to learn about another language!
- Find out immediately how you can engage interpreters at your school.
- Begin with the school district administration office and ask if they have a list of **qualified** interpreters.

It is not recommended that children interpret for their peers under any circumstances.

Communication

- Refugee students may not trust adults, particularly law enforcement officials, who attempt to speak to them in the hallways.
- Explain school rules to the refugee students and demonstrate appropriate responses.



- School calendars are very confusing. Half days? Holidays? Vacation breaks?
- Make sure teachers remind refugee students about changes in the routine.
- Too many refugee students have shown up for school on a snow day!
- Alert families, the school nurse, or the Refugee Resettlement Center if a student is not appropriately dressed for the weather.

School Building

*“Loud **noises, alarms, and yelling** may mean danger to a refugee student.”*



New York Bureau of Immigrant and Refugee Assistance. Welcoming Refugee Students: Strategies for School Administrators

What might frighten refugee students?

- Fire and lockdown drills
- Health examinations
- Changing clothes for physical education
- Police officers in schools
- School transportation
- Crowded cafeterias and hallways

Prepare refugee students for these school activities and make sure that they are assisted by peer mentors and faculty as they become familiar with them.



- Restrooms should be clearly marked with pictures.
- Include them during school tours.
- Refugee students identify this problem as their biggest concern about navigating a new school.
- Explain when students are allowed to have access to restrooms.

- Provide teachers with information about the cultural background of refugee students.
- Inform them about Bridging Refugee Youth and Children's Services (www.brycs.org), a valuable source of instructional materials.
- Support alternative instructional strategies for refugee students, including the use of cultural frames of reference, differentiated instruction, and social immersion.

- Recognize that teachers may be frustrated and occasionally uncomfortable when responsible for teaching refugee students, especially in subject areas that require considerable amounts of reading and writing.
- Make sure instructional support, ESL instruction, tutors, and other arrangements are not only available to the students, but also providing support to faculty.

Watch attendance records closely. Fear can cause refugee students to stay home.

They may be afraid of being teased or looking foolish, or something basic like confusion about using the restroom, buying lunch, or lunch choices.

The Classroom

Don't make assumptions based on the appearance or cultural background of the student.

Find out their level of English comprehension and educational background and the academic goals of the student.

Remember that for the first few weeks in America, refugee students are not only learning how to navigate a new school, they are trying to adjust to new:

language/register
housing
transportation
foods
clothing
weather
protocols

school routines
customs
expected behaviors

The Classroom

- Refugee students have to figure out how to build quality friendships and protect themselves from bullying.
- View the classroom experience as social immersion.
- Focus on helping refugee students learn school rules and procedures, meet fellow students, and become comfortable with teachers and administrators.
- Once they start to adapt to their new American school, they can tackle academic work, grades, and assessments.

The Classroom

Develop the “whole” child by looking for unique skills and talents, encouraging interests, and exposing refugee students to subjects and activities that they may never have experienced before.



It is important that refugee students become familiar with textbooks and other instructional materials, even if they can't use them immediately.

Assessing students has become routine in American schools. Some refugee students will experience test-taking before they even understand how to fill in the answer sheet.

Guidance counselors, ESL teachers, and interpreters should be involved in determining when and how refugee students should be tested.

The Classroom

Be aware of signals that refugee students are floundering, experiencing bullying, or developing unhealthy relationships.

Many refugee students will not talk to anyone about these problems.

Assessment

“For any assessment, start by finding out exactly what language the refugee student speaks, and then engage an interpreter.”



New York Bureau of Immigrant and Refugee Assistance, Welcoming Refugee Students: Strategies for School Administrators

Assessment

- Keep in mind that some refugee students are not literate in their own languages, and some may have undiagnosed learning disabilities.
- Engage ESL and Special Education teachers in planning for students, but don't make final decisions about educational programming until the students have had the chance to acculturate to the school and become familiar with school routines.

Assessment

- Students can be confused about the many varieties of tests (e.g., exams, quizzes, multiple-choice questions, midterms, finals).
- Make sure that teachers model how tests are completed, especially assessments with bubble answer sheets.
- Inform students and families about the importance of tests without stressing achievement.
- Explain that tests are administered to determine what the students have learned, and what needs to be reviewed.

Technology

- Refugee students quickly become aware of the use of technology through interaction with American students and teachers.
- Many refugee students are highly motivated to learn about technology (e.g., smartphones, internet, iPads),
 - allowing them to participate in social media
 - providing them with opportunities to expand their knowledge
 - remaining current regarding their native countries

ESL Instruction

- Refugee students must be supported in the transition process from the schooling received in the refugee camps to the American educational system.
- ESL teachers and classroom teachers must know that in most cases, these children do not bring school records or other documentation to prove their schooling history. Sometimes they do not even have a birth certificate.
- It is important to establish communication with these families to be able to create a file with information about the child's schooling history. This information will help educators make the best decisions regarding the student's educational program.

ESL Program Recommendations

- Refugee students can be tested to enter the ESL Program after they have been in school for at least one week. Meanwhile, they can be in the ESL classroom learning some survival vocabulary and school routines.
- Depending on the level of English language proficiency, the student will be placed in the appropriate ESL class.
- If students have had limited and/or interrupted education or never been schooled, then, in addition to daily ESL instruction, these students must receive a targeted educational plan to close their academic gap.

ESL instruction alone cannot close that gap.

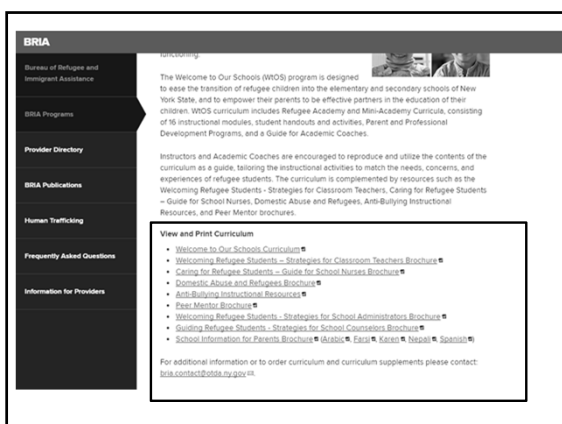
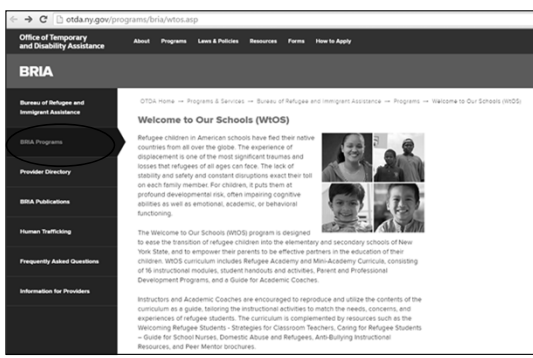
RESOURCES



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Bureau of Refugee and Immigrant Assistance (BRIA)
www.otda.ny.gov/programs/bria/wtos.asp

→ otda.ny.gov/programs/bria/wtos.asp



BRYCS (Bridging Refugee Youth & Children's Services) www.brycs.org



Bridging Refugee Youth and Children's Services Toolkit

- Facilitate information-sharing among school personnel and others working with refugee children in the schools on a national level
- Provide information on frequently asked questions in the form of brief "tools" that may be used in the professional development of teachers and other school personnel
- Raise awareness of the refugee children's needs in U.S. schools

www.brycs.org/publications/schools-toolkit.cfm

Resources

Helping Immigrant and Refugee Students Succeed: It's Not Just What Happens in the Classroom: Welcoming and Orienting Newcomer Students to U.S. Schools
www.brycs.org

New York State Education Department: Educating the Whole Child – Engaging the Whole School: Guidelines and Resources for Social and Emotional Development and Learning (SEDL) in New York State, 2011.
www.p12.nysed.gov/sssedl/SEDLguidelines.pdf

A Guide for the Placement of Students Presenting Foreign Transcripts
www.healthinschools.org

Resources for Interpretation and Translation
 Language Line www.language-line.com
 Pacific Interpreters www.pacificinterpreters.com
 TransACT www.transact.com

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