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A Review of the Literature on The Educational Situation of Syrian Refugee Students With a Focus on Refugee Education Best Practices

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UNIVERSITY OF CALGARY
WERKLUND SCHOOL OF EDUCATION

**A Review of the Literature on
The Educational Situation of Syrian Refugee Students
With a Focus on Refugee Education Best Practices**

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The research team has written a review of the literature on Syrian Refugee Education focussing on refugee education best practices around the world. We have focused our review on four (4) key topic areas. Some relate directly to Syrian refugees, however research written about other refugee groups or refugees in general was included in order to summarize full extent of the variety of practices available. We attempted to capture broader debate around refugee education with this broad approach.

Due to the recent nature of this topic and difficulty in documenting a vulnerable population, a large range of literature was surveyed. Included in this literature review are peer-reviewed academic journals, books, government reports, reports from non-profit organizations and online materials. While the effort was made to summarize authors' work and research with precision, readers who have an interest are advised to read the original labours. Naturally, when working on a summary of such a complex topic, some details had to be left out.

We would like to thank the University of Calgary for the PURE Award (Program for Undergraduate Research Experience) to Anja Dressler which provided us the means to complete this literature review. This literature review uses the format from *A review of the literature on rural and remote pre-service teacher preparation with a focus on blended and elearning models* (Eaton, Dressler, Gereluk, & Becker, 2015), so many thanks to the Rural Education Research Team for their work. We also offer our gratitude to those colleagues who have supported us in this current work and offered us guiding advice in this research.

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Executive Summary

1. Background Context for Refugee Students

- Refugee children face many unique challenges such as, trauma, displacement, PTSD, anxiety, lack of literacy, interrupted physical and emotional development.
- Many refugee students can be classified as SLIFE (Students with Limited or Interrupted Formal Education). While fleeing, students have no access to schooling and familial needs, such as working to provide food for money, frequently take precedence over going to school. Girls often do not attend school due to cultural expectations of women and entering marriages at a young age.
- Refugee camps often face funding challenges which make providing necessities for children difficult. Children often go without proper nutrition and education, as well as not feeling secure enough to develop normally as children.
- School enrollment in countries neighbouring Syria and in refugee camps is low and frequently is without accreditation. International legal frameworks, such as within the 1951 Convention Relating to the Status of Refugees, ensure the right of all children to education. However, due to limited resources to support refugees, education is severely lacking and international communities are unlikely to step in to enforce the expectations.
- All of the above challenges separate refugee students from economic immigrant students and necessitate that the education for refugee students treats them as more than merely English Language Learners.

2. Community and Partnership Support for Alternative Education Programs for Refugee Students

- Community and partnership support serves to bring together the refugee population and those in the area in which they have settled. By creating personal relationships with refugees, the people involved in the organizations gain an understanding of the realities for refugees and are able to act as advocates and fight negative stereotypes.
- Refugee families involved in alternative education programs gain social capital to help their family and are empowered. Families learn how the host society functions, how to navigate the culture, and can therefore better make decisions to guide their family.
- Community and alternative education programs can fill in gaps of the public education system when serving refugee students and provide more individualized support for the whole family. In cases where there is no education opportunity for refugee students, the alternative education organizations may provide the only schooling currently feasible for the children.
- Partaking in informal education organizations can provide important experience for those who will later be able to utilize specialized knowledge of refugees. This includes pre-service teachers, who are frequent volunteers in such programs. They will later be able to support refugee students in their classrooms.
- Organizations are best when they are culturally responsive and do not place refugees in the position of victims. This includes providing language support whenever possible, and including refugees in the organization to empower them and to act as cultural brokers.

3. International School Systems and Responses to Refugee Students

- Common amongst various countries is placing new refugee and immigrant students into intensive language classes, which do not follow the typical curriculum for a short period of time, to give students a chance to acclimatize. Unfortunately, these programs can serve to physically and racially isolate the newcomers, sometimes making it harder for them to fit in.
- Despite the benefits of an intensive language program to start, small budgets mean that students frequently are transitioned into mainstream classes before they are fully prepared. In mainstream classes the students receive significantly less support and typically struggle.
- Many programs and schools utilize some form of language or cultural broker. These support staff typically serve the families by acting as translators or explaining the system as needed. Some literature looks at programs that do not have access to such service, but instead indicates a desire for that support.
- Many programs choose to use either a Trauma-Informed Practice approach, a culturally response approach, or a blend of the two. All programs designed specifically for refugee students attempt to address trauma, language, and cultural differences in some way.
- Whenever possible, schools try to connect refugee students and families to extra education experiences and support in the greater community. Whole school and whole community approaches are common and emphasize integrating the refugees into a bigger whole to prevent isolation. Homework help and enrichment opportunities also enhance the refugee students' learning.
- Schools often partner with mental health services to provide clinical help to support the refugee students suffering from and working through trauma.

4. Best Practice Suggestions for Refugee Educational Support

- Overall, teachers feel overwhelmed and under-prepared to teach refugee students. Facing children with limited English and academic skills, at the same time as dealing with trauma, leaves teachers desiring professional development to help them best serve the refugee students in their classrooms.
- Refugee students differentiate themselves both from regular Canadian students, but also from immigrant students because they need to learn the language, culture, academic content, and trauma coping skills simultaneously. Frequently these refugees also are Students with Interrupted or Limited Formal Education (SLIFE).
- Refugee students need culturally relevant pedagogy. This is teaching that takes the culture differences into account and works to bridge the gap in order to respect Syrian culture while still teaching about Canadian culture.
- A caring environment that is supportive and secure is important for refugee students. Unfortunately, this is becoming more difficult to provide due to strenuous curriculum expectations and increasingly tighter budgets.
- Refugee students need to have environments and teachers that are capable of addressing their trauma and helping them work through it. One such method to do so is Trauma-Informed Practice. This method focuses on safety, connections, and emotional self regulation so that students are properly supported.
- Relationships are crucial to the success of refugee students. Teachers must form meaningful and trusting relationships with students, families must be included in their children's education, and the community surrounding the school has to be given positive experiences with refugees.

- Due to the turmoil of transitions the refugee students experienced before resettlement, schools must provide an environment where expectations are explicit, routines are steady, and students are addressed using a strength-based approach.

This report provides an overview of the current literature relating to the refugee education of Syrian and other refugee groups across a variety of themes:

1. Background context for refugee students
2. Community and partnership support for alternative education programs for refugee students
3. International school systems and responses to refugee students
4. Best practice suggestions for refugee student support

First the Syrian crisis as it pertains to refugee education and education in refugee camps is detailed in section one (1) to provide the background information necessary to understand this unique population. Afterwards the community and partnerships organizations working to provide alternative education for refugee students is outlined in section two (2) because they typically act as a middle ground of informal education that is not yet at the same level of education provided by governmental school boards. How different countries are integrating Syrian refugee students into their school systems is contained in section three (3) because this is where refugee teaching practice is generated and tested. Finally, section four (4) details the frameworks and models current researchers feel are valuable to be implemented in classrooms with refugees to best support them.

This report is funded by the generous support of a PURE Award in Summer 2017.

The intent of this report is to provide a general overview of the key themes, but the review of the literature is neither exhaustive nor exclusive.

Background on the Syrian conflict and Refugee education

The concept of refugees is important to begin with because of how they are differentiated from immigrants. Unlike immigrants, refugees,

owing to well-founded fear of being persecuted for reasons of race, religion, nationality, membership of a particular social group or political opinion, is outside the country of his nationality and is unable or, owing to such fear, is unwilling to avail himself of the protection of that country; or who, not having a nationality and being outside the country of his former habitual residence as a result of such events, is unable or, owing to such fear, is unwilling to return to it. (UNHCR, 2010, p. 14)

Refugees settle into a country not by choice, but by necessity. They come to Canada after a long journey of hardships and trauma, in need of a safe place to live and raise their families. One such group coming to Canada are the Syrians fleeing conflict in their country. A brief outline of this crisis is outlined next.

Starting in 2011, a governmental backlash against citizens demanding democracy led to a civil war in Syria. Fleeing this war, Syrians became the world's largest refugee population (Warner, 2017). A civil war between different groups broke out and has been fought primarily in urban centres, leading to devastating damage to the infrastructure. Various international stakeholders backed the different sides of the conflict and as the fighting continued, millions of refugees fled Syria to seek refuge in surrounding countries such as Lebanon, Turkey, Iraq, and Jordan. Many refugees have applied to be resettled in a third country, which led to the Canadian government pledging to accept 25,000 Syrian refugees (Skidmore, 2016). A large number of these refugees are school-aged children and need quality education ("Research by Selcuk Sirin finds Syrian refugee children encountering significant trauma and education disruptions," 2015; Skidmore, 2016; Zong & Batalova, 2017). By the time Syrian refugee children settle in a country, they are likely to be missing years of schooling and will have witnessed and been the victims of brutal violence and abuse before fleeing Syria (O'Rourke, 2014).

The right of refugee children to education is written into international agreements. The 1951 United Nations Convention on the Status of Refugees states that countries "shall accord to refugees the same treatment as is accorded to nationals with respect to elementary education"

(UNHCR, 2010, p. 24). The 1948 Declaration of Human Rights also includes the right to education for refugees (O'Rourke, 2014). This important educational right is essential to the support of Syrian refugees during this conflict (Ficarra, 2017; McCall & Vang, 2012; O'Rourke, 2014; Warner, 2017). While the legal right to education only calls for the same treatment as nationals of the country receive, the best practice for refugee students includes attending to their specific unique needs. For example, "all students have a legal right to an education in order to succeed in life without requiring them to relinquish their cultural identity" (McCall & Vang, 2012, p. 33).

The aim is that Syrian refugee children need to be supported and educated so that at some point they would be able to resettle the country from which they fled and be successful despite the situation they were born into. Refugee students need help with trauma, language, and culture in their new country. Different countries around the world have responded to educating Syrian refugee children with various frameworks and methods. These international responses are detailed in section 3, and the best practices identified in the literature in general are outlined in section 4.

1. Background Context for Refugee Students

This section surveys literature focused on the situations and realities of Syrian refugees in refugee camps, the countries neighbouring Syria, and the emotional and physical challenges of these children. Commonalities between refugee populations are included to provide breadth.

- Refugee children face many unique challenges such as, trauma, displacement, PTSD, anxiety, lack of literacy, interrupted physical and emotional development.
- Many refugee students can be classified as SLIFE (Students with Limited or Interrupted Formal Education). While fleeing, students have no access to schooling and familial needs, such as working to provide food for money, frequently take precedence over going to school. Girls often do not attend school due to cultural expectations of women and entering marriages at a young age.
- Refugee camps often face funding challenges which make providing necessities for children difficult. Children often go without proper nutrition and education, as well as not feeling secure enough to develop normally as children.
- School enrollment in countries neighbouring Syria and in refugee camps is low and frequently is without accreditation. International legal frameworks, such within the 1951 Convention Relating to the Status of Refugees, ensure the right of all children to education. However, due to limited resources to support the refugees, education is severely lacking and the international community is unlikely to step in to enforce the expectations.
- All of the above challenges separate refugee students from economic immigrant students and necessitate that the education for refugee students treats them as more than merely English Language Learners.

Bircan, T., & Sunata, U. (2015). Educational assessment of Syrian refugees in Turkey. *Migration Letters*, 12(3), 226–237. Retrieved from http://search.proquest.com/resources.library.brandeis.edu/docview/1718580495?rft_id=info:xri/sid:primo

This article focuses primarily on identifying the state of education for Syrian refugee children in Turkey as of July, 2015. Data for the educational assessment were gathered from the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees, Syrian Regional Refugee Response, and Turkey’s Disaster and Emergency Management Authority. Nearly 40% Syrian refugees in Turkey are under 18 years of age and half of these are estimated to be out of school. This becomes important when one realizes that, “international legal framework [includes the] right to education for all persons of school age around the world, regardless of their migrant status, . . . protected by the related state” (p. 228). Syrian refugee children in and out of refugee camps have access to school through various means, however, 70% of Syrian children living outside the refugee camps in 2014 did not have access to basic education. High school-aged children are seen to be the most vulnerable, as they are the hardest to integrate into schools and face pressures to work long hours to get married young. This article identifies Syrian children with special needs (including, importantly, mental health) as needing immediate support, due to the fact that there is currently a shortage of options for them. The authors suggest that partnerships with local institutions and pedagogy supporting varying needs are crucial next steps for Syrian refugee students in Turkey and refugee camps.

Clark-kasimu, N. (2015). Serving refugee students and unaccompanied minors: More than just learning english. *Voices in Urban Education*, 41, 20–25.

Coming from the perspective of nonprofit in San Francisco, called Refugee Transitions, which partners with area high schools to serve immigrant and refugee students, this author details the challenges and issues of educating refugee students. This article serves to educate as to the nuanced and multifaceted nature of refugee students. Refugee students are more than English as an Additional Language Learners; they have unique needs far beyond the language component of their education. Refugee students bring with them trauma and abuse which led them to need to flee. Many are unaccompanied minors without regular parent support and have experienced

interrupted or no formal education. Due to these and other issues, "our traditional model of how we expect families to access schooling . . . is rarely the case for these students" (p. 24). In order to properly support refugee students, schools must find a new and unique way of addressing these students in order to meet their needs.

Jabbar, S. A., & Zaza, H. I. (2014). Impact of conflict in Syria on Syrian children at the Zaatari refugee camp in Jordan. *Early Child Development and Care*, 184 (February), 1507–1530. <http://doi.org/10.1080/03004430.2014.916074>

This article looks at the negative effects of living in a refugee camp on Syrian refugee children. The camp studied is the Zaatari refugee camp in Jordan with over 80,000 refugees. When children are displaced, teaching and schooling are interrupted, which results in poor school performance in the future. Unfortunately, only 2% of humanitarian aid in emergencies goes to education. In refugee camps, only 45% of children are enrolled in school. Overall, "the provision of support for the psychological and social well-being and recovery of children (psychosocial support) has been inadequate" (p. 1512) during the Syrian refugee crisis. This study looked at 120 Syrian refugee children ages 7-12. Jabbar and Zaza found that children in this camp suffered from depression and anxiety, with older children possessing worse symptoms. The difficult reality is that "for many children the right to grow in safety, the right to nutrition, water, the right to play and development as healthy allround individuals are all rights that are daily denied to the refugees in camps" (p. 1523). With Syrian refugee students coming from such a difficult background in camps, it means that they require extensive support when they settle into a subsequent country.

Lăzăroiu, G. (2015). The educational status of refugee youth from Syria. *Educational Philosophy and Theory*, 47 (13–14), 1383–1384. <http://doi.org/10.1080/00131857.2015.1108608>

This response details the great issues surrounding the education of Syrian refugees. In refugee camps what little educational opportunities are available are all without accreditation and thus ensuing negative consequences occur. The educational setback of refugee students with limited or interrupted formal education often bars them from post-secondary and career opportunities. In regions most affected by violence, where educational institutions no longer stand, children are pushed into child labor, premature marriage, and radicalized groups. Education for refugee students must respond to the various unique needs: "various education levels, language demands,

and psychosocial matters both within and outside the schoolroom” (p. 13). This response concludes that access to education is essential for refugee students.

Mareng, C. D. (2010). Reflections on refugee students’ major perceptions of education in Kakuma Refugee Camp, Kenya. *Intercultural Education*, 21(5), 473–481.
<http://doi.org/10.1080/14675986.2010.521392>

This article contains the perspective of a Canadian researcher on the education in an African refugee camp. The obstacles to refugee camp education are well documented, and serve to be virtually universal across various refugee camps. There are common physical barriers to education in refugee camps, such as a lack of physical buildings, or students needing to walk very long distances to arrive at school. Curriculum is often a disputed topic: it is in question which country’s curriculum should be taught and why. Due to language and qualification issues, finding appropriate teachers to teach the programs can be difficult. Education can be a highly valued commodity, but at times survival in refugee camps and having food to eat must come first. In many cases young girls are denied access to school because of cultural and familial beliefs.

O’Rourke, J. (2014). Education for Syrian refugees: the failure of second-generation human rights during extraordinary crises. *Albany Law Review*, 78(2), 711–738.

From an international law perspective, O’Rourke details the obligations of nations surrounding the education of refugee students and the reality of the situation in the countries neighbouring Syria. By the time Syrian refugee children settle in a country, they are likely to be missing years of schooling. These children both will have witnessed and been the victims of brutal violence and abuse before fleeing Syria. Despite not taking part in the 1951 Convention Relating to the Status of Refugees, the countries surrounding Syria took in large numbers of refugees, to the strain of their social systems. Half of Syrian children are out of school. These host countries all have dealt with the influx of refugee students in their systems in similar ways. The situations include: strained educational systems, equivalency tests to combat missing documentation, scarcity of familiar languages for refugee students, and low school attendance rates for refugee children. Arguably, a generation lacking education could be one of the most damaging aspects of the Syrian civil war. Even though the right to education is enforceable through certain international agreements, “the human right to education is merely an aspirational right” (p. 730),

because it is rarely enforced. While Syrian refugee children in neighbouring countries are not being educated in the highest quality, there are definite efforts to accommodate them to the best of the countries' abilities and it is unlikely that the right to a better education will be enforced.

Ostrand, N. (2015). The Syrian Refugee Crisis: A Comparison of Responses by Germany, Sweden, the United Kingdom, and the United States. *Journal on Migration and Human Security*, 3(3), 255–279. <http://doi.org/10.14240/jmhs.v3i3.51>

This empirical studies examines the financial contributions and resettlement statistics to explain the various roles countries have played in alleviating the effects of the Syrian refugees worldwide. Overall, countries in the region surrounding Syria (i.e. Jordan, Lebanon, Egypt, Iraq, and Turkey) bear the mass majority of the burden. These countries have opened their social services to the refugees and are suffering adverse social and economic costs, especially in the case of trying to provide education for Syrian refugee children. Countries outside the region surrounding Syria have only pledged to take roughly 2% of refugees living in the region, which has little overall impact. Wealthier countries have contributed significant amounts of financial aid; however, it still was not enough to keep humanitarian services running smoothly and various organizations have been forced to periodically shut down providing help. Overall, it is necessary that countries outside of the region commit to more resettlement opportunities or financial support in order to alleviate the burden off of the mainly poor communities which are currently housing the majority of the refugees.

Research by Selcuk Sirin finds Syrian refugee children encountering significant trauma and education disruptions. (2015). Retrieved May 17, 2017, from <http://steinhardt.nyu.edu/site/ataglace/2015/10/research-by-selcuk-sirin-finds-syrian-refugee-children-encountering-significant-trauma-and-education-disruptions.html>

This short news article from NYU Steinhardt briefly outlines the new findings from researchers Sirin and Rogers-Sirin about the status of Syrian refugee children. Of more than four million refugees, 40% are children under twelve. Of these children, many have disrupted education and only half are enrolled in school. Girls are less likely than boys to go to school as refugees, and those children who are enrolled face a myriad of challenges. Overall, Syrian refugee children have encountered much trauma and 45% display symptoms of Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder. Meeting the educational and emotional needs of Syrian refugee children will require significant

resources and must follow culturally appropriate means so that children can both embrace their new host culture, but also keep their Syrian identity intact.

Tavares, T., & Slotin, I. (2012). Effects of war and resettlement. In *Life after war: Education as a healing process for refugee and war-affected children* (pp. 15–40). Winnipeg: Manitoba Education.

This chapter details the common challenges and experiences of refugee children before and during resettlement. Most refugees have experienced war and other atrocities, leading to chronic traumatic stress. Symptoms of a chronic traumatic situation include, but are not limited to, low academic performance and troubles with relationships. Resilience is affected by factors such as duration and intensity of trauma, the age and personality of the child, as well as the quality of care. Access to love and care is crucial in the development of a child. In the process of resettlement children will have frequently been without basic necessities and will have experienced a range of “disruption, trauma, and stress” (p. 20). During their time in refugee camps, families will have suffered due to camps only “offer[ing] minimal services and support” (p. 20), which includes lacking adequate education. Once refugees have settled in Canada, it is common for them to feel responsibility and grief for those they had to leave behind. In general, the four common challenges to refugee children coming to Canada are: interrupted schooling, exposure to trauma, loss, and difficult transitions. It is important to keep all of these factors in mind when thinking about Syrian Refugee children.

Warner, J. (2017). *No lost generations: Refugee children and their human right to education, from the holocaust to the Syrian civil war* (Order No. 10261472). Available from ProQuest Dissertations & Theses Global. (1886442883). Retrieved from <http://ezproxy.lib.ucalgary.ca/login?url=http://search.proquest.com/docview/1886442883?accountid=9838>

This recent master’s thesis proposes education as a “4th pillar of humanitarian aid” and uses the case studies of Jewish children after the Holocaust, Syrian refugee children, and current refugee students in the United States to discuss important themes in educating refugee children. These three themes are: accessibility, teacher training, and community benefit. A program for refugee children is only considered successful if these factors are in place. The 1948 Declaration of Human Rights, article 26, states that every child has the right to education, however this plays

out in different ways in different situations. For example, there should be a focus on the refugee students' resilience instead of trauma in order to propel them forward in life.

After World War II, Jewish Displaced Persons created their own classes in camps to educate their children. There was high attendance and the programs were successful. These programs were easy to get to, had great benefit to the community, however many of the teachers were untrained. In contrast to the past, one third of Syrian refugee children in Jordan are not in formal education. To combat this, schools are running two shifts a day, and children out of school for three years or more previously can enroll in intensive "catch up classes". However, inside the refugee camps themselves, many students do not attend school due to a long commute, familial duties, or young girls marrying and boys needing to work. All teachers in Jordan must be citizens and in order to meet demand undertrained people teach. However, recently the Ministry of Education has started allowing Syrian educational aids into classrooms to support the Jordanian teachers.

Even though less than 1% of world refugees are resettled into a third country, such as Canada or the United States, quality education is important there as well. One such example is the partnership between the International Rescue Committee and the Tukwila School District in Washington. Their School Readiness Program supervises children walking a short distance to school, trains teachers and volunteers in diversity, and after completion of the program, refugee students can begin to contribute to the community meaningfully. Aspects of the problem solving present in this example and others can serve to inform ways to support Syrian refugee students in Alberta schools.

Williams, R. (2007). The psychosocial consequences for children of mass violence, terrorism and disasters. *International Review of Psychiatry*, 19 (3), 263–77.

<http://doi.org/10.1080/09540260701349480>

In this article, Williams discusses the effects and strategies for children impacted by disaster, to which the Syrian refugee children belong. Two types of trauma from disaster include event trauma and process trauma, process trauma is "continuing exposure to enduring stress such as war and abuse" (p. 270). Traumatic events can greatly impact a child's worldview and result in effected development, depression, and Post Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD). In addition, school performance is frequently impacted. The resilience of a child is important to minimize the

damage of psychosocial consequences; to be resilient a child needs intelligence, a good temperament, strong family relationships and support, and external and institutional support. When disaster occurs, the whole family must be supported. While more negative effects are associated with process trauma, certain interventions can be put into place. Such interventions suggested by the article include: a culturally sensitive approach, promoting resilience (through school-based social and education interventions), and psychological first aid. Though the damaging effects of the situation in Syria can be severe, proper and thoughtful intervention can help the refugee children in Canada.

Wolmer, L., Hamiel, D., Ph, D., Laor, N., & Ph, D. (2011). Preventing children's posttraumatic stress after disaster with teacher-based intervention: A controlled study. *JAAC*, *50*(4), 340–348.e2. <http://doi.org/10.1016/j.jaac.2011.01.002>

This study describes the effects of a teacher-based preventative intervention plan implemented with Israeli students before a traumatic event compared to those without the intervention. It is noted that for large scale events, teachers are the best administrators of help for children. Following the research that dealing with previous stressors help with handling future stress, half of the 1488 grade 4 and 5 students had received intervention before the rocket attacks. These students' intervention included help with emotional reaction and control, restoring interpersonal communications, and "encourag[ing] full function and activity" (p. 343). This group of students was better able to deal with the traumatic event as well as typical stressors when compared to the control group. Fewer students in this group exhibited PTSD. This article recommends focusing on building resiliency and resources instead of merely processing events as they occur, a strategy which can be implemented in the case of Syrian refugee students.

2. Community and Partnership Support for Alternative Education Programs for Refugee Students

This section surveys literature focused on partnership organizations between the community, the refugee population, and official departments. These organizations serve a variety of purpose but all work towards bettering the lives and education of refugees in their communities

- Community and partnership support serves to bring together the refugee population and those in the area in which they have settled. By creating personal relationships with refugees, the people involved in the organizations gain an understanding of the realities for refugees and are able to act as advocates and fight negative stereotypes.
- Families involved in alternative education programs gain social capital to help their family and are empowered. Families learn how the host society functions, how to navigate the culture, and can therefore better make decisions to guide their family.
- Community and alternative education programs can fill in gaps of the public education system when serving refugee students and provide more individualized support for the whole family. In cases where there is no education opportunity for refugee students, the alternative education organizations may provide the only schooling currently feasible for the children.
- Partaking in informal education organizations can provide important experience for those who will later be able to utilize specialized knowledge of refugees. This includes pre-service teachers, who are frequent volunteers in such programs. They will later be able to support refugee students in their classrooms.
- Organizations are best when they are culturally responsive and do not place refugees in the position of victims. This includes providing language support whenever possible, and including refugees in the organization to empower them and to act as cultural brokers.

Cairo, A., Sumney, D., Blackman, J., & Joyner, K. (2013). Supporting Refugee and Migrant Children with F.A.C.E. Time. *The Education Digest*, 79(2), 61–65. Retrieved from http://search.proquest.com/docview/1440071234?accountid=8555%5Cnhttp://vp9py7xf3h.search.serialssolutions.com/?ctx_ver=Z39.88-2004&ctx_enc=info:ofi/enc:UTF-8&rft_id=info:sid/ProQ%3Aeducation&rft_val_fmt=info:ofi/fmt:kev:mtx:journal&rft.genre=article&rft.jtit

This brief article chronicles a support program set up for immigrant and refugee children in Kentucky. This F.A.C.E. (Families And Communities Educating) program is meant to counteract the loss of family, home, and identity that many refugee children face and support families during the stressful transition. The program is supported by the school district and the local university. Programming goals include: language, academic, cultural, social, family, and community support. Music, academic, and social classes are provided throughout the week to students in kindergarten to grade 8, all supported by volunteers from the nearby university and high school. An example includes the summer reading program, where, “[t]he books were read by a storyteller and then discussed with help from a facilitator” (p. 64). There were even “[t]hree translators interpreted [who] the readings and discussions as necessary in Spanish, Kirundi, Swahili, French, and Arabic” (p. 64) to include everyone. The authors conclude that ongoing changes to the program, proximity to the refugee population, and consulting teachers results in a successful population. A similar program would be equally beneficial if made for Syrian refugee families specifically.

Erden, O. (2016). Building bridges for refugee empowerment. *Journal of International Migration and Integration*, (18), 1–17. <http://doi.org/10.1007/s12134-016-0476-y>

Erden examines an informal community organization with the intent to aid Syrian refugee women and children. This woman’s-only organization, the members are local Turkish women and the Syrian women, aims to increase social interaction, improve language proficiency, and register refugee women and children in school. While education is not the sole mandate of the organization, it does have a positive impact on the education of refugee students through various means. By providing families with social knowledge through this network, the educational success of refugee students is improved. Some refugee students in the organization are homeschooled by a member, as well. Importantly, the organization tracks the educational

progress of refugee students within the organization and act as mediators between the local schools and refugee families. This level of grassroots care could be greatly beneficial to Syrian refugees in Canada as well, and could help to improve the negative stereotypes of refugees in general.

Ferfolja, T., & Vickers, M. (2010). Supporting refugee students in school education in Greater Western Sydney. *Critical Studies in Education*, 51(2), 149–162.

<http://doi.org/10.1080/17508481003731034>

This article documents a program intended to supplement public education for refugee students in Australia. The Refugee Action Support program operates in high schools in Sydney and supports the transition between the year-long intensive ESL program to the mainstream classroom. Refugee students face many difficulties in mainstream classes and frequently lack the academic support supplied by many local parents. In this program, pre-service teachers act as literacy and numeracy tutors, and a community liaison officer supports school/home communication. This tutoring is a safe space where refugee students can receive scaffolded support at their level. Students participating in this program improved their writing, confidence, social knowledge and capital. Overall this program is successful in supporting refugee students in Australia.

Global alliance institute; Global alliance institute unveils its girls truth seekers education project for Syrian refugee girls. (2016). *Politics & Government Business*, 29. Retrieved from <http://ezproxy.lib.ucalgary.ca/login?url=http://search.proquest.com>.

This article documents an education initiative between the United States of America and the countries bordering Syria. This project connects American Girl Scouts, Syrian Refugees, and the HP LIFE program. With the support of the Global Alliance Institute and HP, the American Girl Scouts and Syrian refugee girls are connected to help and learn from each other. The laptops and classes are provided by HP and the girl scouts involved will earn a Truth Seekers badge. The program is also a result of coordination between Global Alliance and the UNHCR. This program is aimed at refugee girls both in refugee camps as well as those integrated into the local populations in countries neighbouring Syria. This alternative education program is aimed specifically at girls, which is well needed because of their disadvantaged status.

Hos, R. (2016). Education in Emergencies: Case of a Community School for Syrian Refugees. *European Journal of Educational Research*, 5(2), 53–60. [http://doi.org/10.12973/eu-
jer.5.2.53](http://doi.org/10.12973/eu-
jer.5.2.53)

This article chronicles a school set up in Turkey especially for Syrian refugees in the 2014-2015 school year. There are over 90 schools that specifically target Syrian refugees in this manner in Turkey. This school was created because outside of the refugee camps there are very few children attending school in Turkey, in part due to working as child labourers or the language barrier. Less than half of Syrian children are currently attending formal schooling overall. While Syrian children with residence permits in Turkey may attend public schools, those without permits may only visit and receive no official credit. In addition, there is a lack of language support for the refugee children to learn Turkish in public schools. This school from the study ran from grade 1 to grade 8, had over 700 enrolled students, and all supplies and expenses were covered by the municipality. The teachers and curriculum was Syrian, and class sizes were large (up to 50 students). By providing Syrian curriculum, the administration hoped to have the smallest disruption possible in the education of the refugee children, however there was no changes made specifically to aid refugee children. Students at this school also received no formal credit. As stated by the researcher, “there was not any psychological support at the school,” (p. 58) for either the refugee teachers or refugee students. The article concludes that to make the school more effective, long-range planning, a more modern teaching approach, and emotional support should be added to the school.

Lai, C. (2017). Strands of support. *Education Canada*, 10–15. Retrieved from [http://www.cea-
ace.ca/education-canada/article/strands-support](http://www.cea-
ace.ca/education-canada/article/strands-support)

This article in Education Canada details a program in British Columbia meant to help newcomers, such as refugees, settle into their new lives. Surrey’s School District’s English Language Learner Centre has programs for both parents and students, one of which is a bridge program for students with difficult educational pasts. This program, among others, is funded by the government and focuses on a comprehensive approach to supporting newcomers. When students register at a school in the district, a Multicultural Worker is called in to assist the family in their native language and that registration is sent to the Welcome Centre. At the centre, students are assessed through tests and interviews to determine the child’s strengths and barriers

for school. This bridge program provides a safe place where students can develop new attachments, goals, and work on preserving their cultural identity. In this program, “a sense of safety, and relationships are the first priorities when supporting refugee students and families” (p. 12). Overall, this program and centre provides the means to support newcomers during their transition to Canada, even when they come from refugee backgrounds.

Tran, D., & Hodgson, B. R. (2015). Meeting the needs of refugee and immigrant students and families in a culturally responsive way. *Voices in Urban Education*, (41), 7–15.

This article explores the experiences of the director of a program where there is a partnership between the district and a community organization in Lowell, Massachusetts. This program serves the social and academic needs of refugee youth and other English learners and their families in that area. In addition to an academic summer program there is a focus on building relationships with refugee families and supporting them. The director of the program notes that refugee students are under many stresses (i.e. balancing language learning, curriculum and financial burden; possessing limited or interrupted formal education), which make adjusting to school a feat. Community involvement is crucial because there cannot be just school in their lives. Relationships with the families are key, because for the parents, "losing the power of being able to take care of everything can be depressing". These parents must hear positives about the situation, so phone calls saying how the student is progressing well is important. Lastly, Tran and Hodgson stress that culture differences are common and it is difficult to assume the intentions around specific actions of the family.

UNICEF. (2017). No Lost Generation Initiative: January to December 2016. Retrieved from <http://www.wvi.org/syria-crisis/publication/2016-no-lost-generation-report>

This report details the most current results of the No Lost Generation Initiative, a framework for response to the Syria and Iraq crises. Among other, smaller, partners, this initiative is supported by UNICEF, Mercy Corps, Save the Children, and World Vision. This initiative supports children in and around Syria using three pillars: education, protection, as well as adolescent and youth. There is an attempt made to work through existing mechanisms to support children and ensure that there is no lost generation in the region. This initiative has the “goal of ensuring access to education for all out-of-school children and youth inside Syria and all Syrian refugee children and youth in the five host countries” (p. 3). In 2016 the No Lost Generation Initiative

was able to ensure that more children were enrolled in school and provided more protection than in years previous in both Syria and bordering countries. This initiative has long term goals and continues efforts to support Syrian children and youth to combat the effects of the Syrian crisis. This serves as one example of the informal education efforts to support Syrian refugee children.

3. International School Systems and Responses to Refugee Students

This section surveys literature focused on how countries around the world have attempted to support Syrian refugee students. Different countries have made different accommodations and programs to support refugee students, such as intensive language programs or employing translators.

- Common amongst various countries is placing new refugee and immigrant students into intensive language classes, which do not follow the typical curriculum for a short period of time, to give students a chance to acclimatize. Unfortunately, these programs can serve to physically and racially isolate the newcomers, sometimes making it harder for them to fit in.
- Despite the benefits of an intensive language program to start, small budgets mean that students frequently are transitioned into mainstream classes before they are fully prepared. In mainstream classes the students receive significantly less support and typically struggle.
- Many programs and schools utilize some form of language or cultural broker. These support staff typically serve families by acting as translators or explaining the system as needed. Some literature looks at programs that do not have access to such service, but instead indicates a desire for that support.
- Many programs choose to use either a Trauma-Informed Practice approach, a culturally response approach, or a blend of the two. All programs designed specifically for refugee students attempt to address trauma, language, and cultural differences in some way.
- Whenever possible, schools try to connect refugee students and families to extra education experiences and support in the greater community. Whole school and whole community approaches are common and emphasize integrating the refugees into a bigger whole to prevent isolation. Homework help and enrichment opportunities also enhance the refugee students' learning.
- Schools often partner with mental health services to provide clinical help to support the refugee students suffering from and working through trauma.

Alisic, E. (2012). Teachers' perspectives on providing support to children after trauma: a qualitative study. *School Psychology Quarterly*, 27(1), 51–59.
<http://doi.org/10.1037/a0028590>

This article documents teacher perspectives in the Netherlands on supporting children with traumatic pasts in their classrooms. Trauma can interfere with a child's ability to learn, but teachers can help facilitate recovery. Through interviews, core themes arose regarding teachers supporting traumatized children in their classrooms. First, teachers were unsure of what their role in the trauma support was and what exactly they were required and responsible to do. Secondly, teachers had trouble striking a balancing between the various needs. They struggled to balance the child's needs with the overall group needs, focusing on the trauma or the resilience of the child, and giving extra attention to the child without causing them to be outcasts. Teachers also identified that they felt a need for professional knowledge and help. They wanted to know how to talk about the trauma, when to involve professionals, and when extra help was needed, who to contact. Finally, the emotional burden of working with traumatized children affected the teachers. They brought the issues home with them at time, the trauma of the children sometimes awoke previous trauma in the teachers, however they said that their colleagues frequently were supportive and helped. Although some teachers identified dealing with trauma as external from their core job, those teachers who view it as integral are better able to support children in that position than those who do not. These needs and issues of teachers need to be taken into account when supporting Syrian refugee children in Canadian classrooms.

Ayoub, M. N. (2014). "An Investigation of the Challenges Experienced by Somali Refugee Students in Canadian Elementary Schools". Electronic Theses and Dissertations. Paper 5120.

This dissertation includes an in-depth multiple case study approach to document the experience of young Somali refugee students in grades 6-8 in Canadian schools. This is valuable research to this topic because of the similarity between the refugee populations and the Canadian context. The literature review covers how refugee students worry about loss, money, and frequently experience mental health issues. Refugee parents find it hard to provide for their children in

refugee camps and as a result children often go without basic necessities such as food, water, and schooling. Once in Canada, students struggle in school for a variety of reasons such as frustration, fear, and bullying.

The study results came from 40 minute interviews from 7 different Somali refugee students. The results were categorized into six different themes: Pre-migration; Family challenges with integration; School socialization; Learning challenges; Behavioural challenges; and Resilience and Passion for Learning. The situation before the children came to Canada was characterized mainly by violence, abuse, lack of education, and struggling with the necessities of life. Upon integration into Canada, families had troubles with the Canadian system from paying for field trips, to fearing social services taking their children away. When it came to school socialization, the refugee students characterized their experience with troubles making friends, communicating with teachers, being afraid of ridicule or beatings from adults, and bullying from fellow students. As a whole, the students had difficulty with numeracy and literacy, found their parents were frequently unable to help, and transitions from ESL to regular classes occurred too quickly. Behavioural challenges in school meant that boys would attempt to solve issues physically like they had in refugee camps. Despite all of this, students felt a passion for learning in Canada and felt happy at their successes.

Students identified certain support systems which they felt helped them. Refugee students appreciated friends and peers who shared their language and could keep them up to speed on what was happening. Physical education class and hands-on activities tended to be their favourite because they could bond with others and participated easier than in lecture-style classes. Sports teams were important to the students for making friends as well. Outside of school the refugee students were happy to make use of homework and tutoring programs to help with academics, especially in light of the difficulties with getting help at home.

From this study, recommendations were generated to help refugee students succeed in Canadian schools. First, schools need to create a welcoming, multicultural, environment for the students with various backgrounds and unique needs. However, each child is different and every student needs to have their specific needs met. Especially at the beginning, refugee students need extensive literacy, numeracy, emotional, and mental support. Whenever possible, schools should utilize students and teachers who share languages in common with the refugees to enhance their

experience. Teachers should have professional development targeted at teaching refugee students and be encouraged to listen to what the refugee students need to say. Lastly, participation in extra-curricular activities needs to be encouraged so that refugee students can make friends and integrate.

Block, K., Cross, S., Riggs, E., & Gibbs, L. (2014). Supporting schools to create an inclusive environment for refugee students. *International Journal of Inclusive Education*, 18(12), 1337–1355. <http://doi.org/10.1080/13603116.2014.899636>

This paper is the result of analyzing the School Support Programme operating in schools in Victoria, Australia and its successes in helping refugee students. Block, Cross, Riggs and Gibbs admit that while schools are in the perfect position to combat the negative realities of being a student of refugee status, there is little evidence that schools naturally achieve this outcome. Refugee students come from backgrounds of trauma, little formal education or literacy, and need to focus on learning, as well as their social and emotional needs. While this paper stresses that "non-intervention can result in significant disadvantage," there are identified tactics this program implements which increase success. Factors that this study found to create a meaningful, positive impact were: a holistic, whole-school approach; the ethos of inclusion and cultural diversity celebration; close partnerships with the community; supports targeting all students; interpreters and parental involvement; and a raised awareness among staff. This program in Australia serves as a successful example of how refugee students can be supported in schools.

Cacciattolo, M. (2013). Fostering collaborative partnerships: One school's approach. In *Engaging the Disengaged: Inclusive approaches to teaching the least advantaged* (pp. 143–158). Port Melbourne: Cambridge University Press.

This book chapter details efforts made by an Australian elementary school to support their large refugee and disadvantaged population. Keeping in mind that disadvantaged students are more likely to leave school and face unemployment, schools must consider the historical and cultural backgrounds of students and use a "whole school and community approach" (p. 155) to learning. The families of refugee students can have troubles working with institutional structure and need programs to create positive resettlement experiences. At Richmond Grove Primary School, where two thirds of families have a refugee background, they make efforts to support the whole family and create strong family/school partnerships. Each year there is a Parent Program. This

program involves parent-chosen seminar topics to aid in the struggles that they are going through, such as finances, form filling, or literacy skills. Additionally, an art session for mothers and relatives is hosted weekly where they socialize and gain connections. Young children are provided an early childhood education program, free of charge, using pre-service teachers so that families who are unable to afford preschool can still give their young children a head start to school. Various professionals also assist the school. There are Multicultural Education Advisors to support the families in communicating with the school, and a team of medical professionals works to ensure the physical and mental well-being of students. This school realizes that success in school means much more than just what happens within the classroom walls and have developed various supports for the whole human experience to help their disadvantaged students. This method certainly would be useful in supporting Syrian refugee students.

Due, C., Riggs, D. W., & Mandara, M. (2015). Educators' experiences of working in Intensive English Language Programs: The strengths and challenges of specialised English language classrooms for students with migrant and refugee backgrounds. *Australian Journal of Education*, 59(2), 169–181. <http://doi.org/10.1177/0004944115587365>

As is common in migrant and refugee support systems, refugee children in South Australia first go into an Intensive English Language Program to start school. This article presents research where 14 teachers in this program were interviewed to identify strengths and challenges associated with this type of program. It is common for teachers with refugee and migrant students to view language learning as they only obstacle these children face, however the experienced teachers in this program look at many more issues in their day to day teaching. Through the interviews the following strengths of an Intensive English Language Program were identified: developing a whole-school approach, students feeling a sense of community, smaller class sizes, and having a “safe” space for students who need it. There were also, however, challenges associated with such a program. These include: the administration of the program, policies leading to inequity between students, short length of time in program, transitioning into mainstream classes, and students with learning difficulties. Although there are numerous, ever-evolving, challenges in the Intensive English Language Program, all of those interviewed concluded that the benefits outweighed the negatives. Similar programs in Canada with similar benefits can be used to support Syrian refugee students.

Ficarra, J. (2017). Comparative international approaches to better understanding and supporting refugee learners. *Issues in Teacher Education*, 26(1), 73–85.

Ficarra brings together multiple approaches and information about refugee learners in this article. The countries and situations examined include: refugee camps, Kenya, Australia, The United States, and Canada. The educational impact of the Syrian conflict reverbs both inside and outside its borders. Within Syria the percentage of children enrolled in school went from 97 in 2011 to less than 30 in 2013, with many children fleeing the country entirely. Despite the 1951 United Nations Convention stating that nations must educate the school aged children residing in their country, different nations find this mandate difficult. Refugee children of visible minorities in their new countries find themselves facing prejudice and special programming can leave them feeling racially and culturally isolated. However, this article does summarize steps different countries are making to use best practices while teaching refugee students which include both that families and parents be involved in the process, and that schools use a multicultural social justice approach to education. Existing teachers need to be taught about the specific refugee groups they will have in their classes and it is important for pre-service teachers to engage and volunteer with refugees as a part of their teacher preparation. Overall, there needs to be a comprehensive approach to education; all the different stakeholders need to be brought into account and especially people from Syria itself must be used within the ranks whenever possible.

Rasheed, R. A., & Munoz, A. (2016). Higher education and peacebuilding – a bridge between communities? *Journal of Peace Education*, 13(2), 172–185.

<http://doi.org/10.1080/17400201.2016.1205003>

This article focuses on Syrian refugees gaining access to post-secondary education and how that could lead to a population being able to sustainably create peace in Syria. Through interviews and focus groups, Rasheed and Munoz use the Duhok region of Iraq as an example as to the barriers and opportunities for Syrian post-secondary education. When wanting to go to post-secondary, refugee students face many barriers, such as finances, adapting to a new language, and struggles with proper documentation. Many Syrian refugees are interested in pursuing higher education, but find it difficult due to needing paperwork they cannot obtain and the negative views from the local population. University officials agree finding a solution is important, but also are unable or unwilling to determine who should enable easy access for Syrian refugees to

post-secondary education. The authors, however, end the article with recommendations moving forward. These include: using current resources more efficiently, clarifying processes and communication, as well as planning for the long term including of refugee students.

Schroeder, J. (2012). Insecure identities: Unaccompanied minors as refugees in Hamburg. *Bulgarian Comparative Education Society*, 81–86. Retrieved from: <http://bc-es-conference.org/onewebmedia/BCES.Conference.Book.Vol.10.2012.text.pdf>

This article discusses the unaccompanied child and youth refugee population in the German city of Hamburg. Over 100 young refugees were in the study and it was found that the most difficult part of their life in Germany was dealing with their uncertain legal position and institutional exclusion. As asylum seekers, these young people found they were not eligible to attend school, however, there is some informal education open to them. These young refugees indicated they had troubles making German friends due to social rejection and language barriers. When they are in an educational setting, they are frequently in a class made up entirely of other foreigners, and have little contact with Germans. Unfortunately, “schooling, vocational training and work permit[s] are refused to them on the grounds of legal status, or access to these things is made difficult” (p. 85). This example in Germany shows that asylum seekers and refugees frequently face almost insurmountable obstacles to education.

Stewart, J. (2017, March). A culture of care and compassion for refugee students: Creating a state of nhân đạo. *Education Canada*. Retrieved from <http://www.cea-ace.ca/education-canada/article/culture-care-and-compassion-refugee-students>

This article focuses on ways that Canadian schools and educators can support refugee students in an inner-city school noting that “barriers such as discrimination, limited employment opportunities, poverty, lack of appropriate housing and low educational achievement are just a few of the issues” (p. 1). Teachers need to be properly prepared for having students with traumatic pasts in their classrooms. The focus of this successful inner-city school is one of care and compassion, they “aim to provide a welcoming and safe space [for] refugee youth and their families” (p.2). To create meaningful relationships and monitor students, the same group of teachers follows students from grade seven to grade nine. Importantly, A trauma-sensitive school “creates universal supports that are sensitive to the unique needs of each student, while being attentive to avoiding the possibility of re-traumatization,” (p. 3). This is a necessary attribute of a

school with refugee students. To create a trauma-sensitive school, one must: know the students; know and build the community; know the signs; know who can help; and know one's self. This school supports refugee students well and can be used as a model for supporting Syrian refugee students throughout Canada.

Timm, M. (2016). The integration of refugees into the German education system: A stance for cultural pluralism and multicultural education. *eJournal of Education Policy*, (special issue), 1–8. Retrieved from <http://nau.edu/COE/eJournal/Forms/2016SpecIssue/Timm/>

This article documents the situation of Syrian refugee students in Germany and makes recommendations. The mass movement of refugees in the Syrian Refugee Crisis lead to Germany receiving a record number of new refugees, meaning numerous new students with unique needs in their schools. These refugees, driven by conflict, are placed into a school system focused on test scores rather than a well-rounded education. Primary aged refugees are placed directly into regular classrooms, and secondary aged refugees first attend language prep classes before being integrated into the regular classrooms. This situation does not address the students' unique needs and rather focuses on an assimilation model which can prove to be damaging. This article concludes with proposing changes to the current system: shifting to multicultural education where refugee students are valued, integrating Syrian educators and Arabic-language content instruction, as well as creating teacher preparation courses to educate on the needs of refugee students.

4. Best Practice Suggestions for Refugee Educational Support

This section surveys literature focused on the methods and frameworks suggested within research and practice that is meant to best support refugee students. Major models include culturally relevant pedagogy, trauma informed practice, and strength-based views.

- Overall, teachers feel overwhelmed and under-prepared to teach refugee students. Facing children with limited English and academic skills, at the same time as dealing with trauma, leaves teachers desiring professional development to help them best serve the refugee students in their classrooms.
- Refugee students differentiate themselves both from regular Canadian students, but also from immigrant students because they need to learn the language, culture, academic content, and trauma coping skills simultaneously. Frequently these refugees also are Students with Interrupted or Limited Formal Education (SLIFE).
- Refugee students need culturally relevant pedagogy. This is teaching that takes the culture differences into account and works to bridge the gap in order to respect Syrian culture while still teaching about Canadian culture.
- A caring environment that is supportive and secure is important for refugee students. Unfortunately, this is becoming more difficult to provide due to strenuous curriculum expectations and increasingly tighter budgets.
- Refugee students need to have environments and teachers that are capable of addressing their trauma and helping them work through it. One such method to do so is Trauma-Informed Practice. This method focuses on safety, connections, and emotional self regulation so that students are properly supported.
- Relationships are crucial to the success of refugee students. Teachers must form meaningful and trusting relationships with students, families must be included in their

children's education, and the community surrounding the school has to be given positive experiences with refugees.

- Due to the turmoil of transitions the refugee students experienced before resettlement, schools must provide an environment where expectations are explicit, routines are steady, and students are addressed using a strength-based approach.

Bath, H. (2008). The three pillars of trauma-informed care. *Reclaiming Children and Youth*, 17(3), 17–21. Retrieved from: <https://s3-us-west-2.amazonaws.com/cx1/backup/prod/cx1/gklugiewicz/media/507188fa-30b7-8fd4-aa5f-ca6bb629a442.pdf>

This article outlines the three necessary components of trauma healing for children. Although professional help is often necessary, not all trauma healing must happen in a clinical setting; schools and teachers can also play an important role. The most damaging form of trauma is complex trauma. This trauma involves ongoing, extended exposure and leads to the breakdown of internal state regulation as well as making children focusses primarily on safety instead of growing and learning. This complex trauma is the kind from which most refugee children suffer. The core of trauma healing includes: the development of safety, the promotion of healing relationships, and the teaching of self-management and coping skills. Before healing is to occur, children need an atmosphere of safety with “consistency, reliability, predictability, availability, honesty, and transparency” (p. 19). Children also need to “develop positive emotional responses with some adults and . . . learn to accurately distinguish between those who threaten harm and those who do not” (p. 20). Finally, any approach that has rational processing and works on reflecting upon feelings and impulses helps children learn self-regulation. These three pillars of trauma-informed care are necessary in caring for traumatized children, especially in cases such as the refugee children from Syria.

Brewer, C. A. (2016). An outline for including refugees in Canadian educational policy. *Canadian Journal for New Scholars in Education*, 7(1), 133–141.

Brewer proposes the information necessary to create an educational policy for the Syrian refugee students in Canada. The political landscape was negative towards the Syrian refugees until the Liberal government pledged to resettle 25,000 refugees, however even after that the educational details needed to be finalized. The federal government pledged to receive the refugees, however the educational policy for these children is created at the provincial level. Brewer identifies key themes for supporting Syrian refugee students. These include that they must be treated specifically as refugees, not just immigrants, and an asset approach must be utilized so that refugee students are not seen as victims. Additional themes for Syrian refugee support include: promoting academic success through language learning, addressing academic barriers, recognizing identity issues and addressing discrimination, recognizing power imbalances, and always considering each student as an individual. All the above themes must be addressed, states the author, in order to create a supportive educational policy for the Syrian refugee students in Canada.

Brunzell, T., Stokes, H., & Waters, L. (2016). Trauma-informed positive education: Using positive psychology to strengthen vulnerable students. *Contemporary School Psychology*, 20(1), 63–83. <http://doi.org/10.1007/s40688-015-0070-x>

Brunzell, Stokes and Waters outline the “Trauma-Informed Positive Education” (TIPE) model of education which bridges the fields of traumatology and positive education. Students with trauma face many challenges. They “may attend school with the best of intentions, . . . but despite their best effort, they find themselves defiant, frustrated, demanding, and without any hope at the end of the day” (p. 63). Trauma refers not to the damaging event, but rather how an individual reacts to it and those who experience multiple, ongoing sources of trauma, such as refugees, have complex trauma. Trauma negatively impacts students’ abilities at school and brain development. The TIPE model is one method for supporting and helping refugee students. The three components of the model are: repairing regulatory abilities, repairing disrupted attachments, and increasing psychological resources. This means fostering strong teacher/student relationships to combat disrupted attachment styles, classroom exercises to build self-relation, and focusing on positive experiences using the students’ strengths. The unique part of this model is that there is a focus on the positive, students are not seen as being deficient, but rather seen in terms of how they are resilient and their strengths can help them succeed.

DeCapua, A. (2016). Building bridges to academic success through culturally responsive teaching. *MinneTESOL, Spring*(1). Retrieved from <http://minnetesoljournal.org/spring-2016/building-bridges-to-academic-success-through-culturally-responsive-teaching>

This article presents one framework for culturally responsive teaching, the Mutually Adaptive Learning Paradigm. This framework is based upon the understanding that struggling ELL learners are not necessarily lacking, which is viewing them with a deficit model, but rather operate on systems that the school system does not, and that teachers and students both need to meet in the middle to bridge the gap into North American school systems. These struggling refugees may lack formal education, have low or no literacy skills, be missing grade-level content knowledge, or not even see themselves as learners in the formal context. Culturally responsive teaching for this group must deal with differing views in literacy and orality, individualism and collectivism, and formal education. The Mutually Adaptive Learning Paradigm stresses that teachers must provide lessons with immediate relevance and interconnectedness, combined oral and written tasks, shared and individual responsibility, and balance concrete tasks with abstract knowledge. By balancing these elements, teachers are better able to support the transition for struggling ELL students, such as the Syrian refugees, into their classrooms.

DeCapua, A., & Marshall, H. W. (2011). Reaching ELLs at risk: Instruction for students with limited or interrupted formal education. *Preventing School Failure: Alternative Education for Children and Youth, 55*(1), 35–41.
<http://doi.org/10.1080/10459880903291680>

This article analyzes a teacher's math lessons of students with limited or interrupted formal education (SLIFE) using the concept of Mutually Adaptive Learning Paradigm (MALP) to show culturally responsive pedagogy. An issue with teaching refugee students is that educators rarely have the explicit knowledge of their own culture to be able to successfully navigate the transition for their students. SLIFE are different from mainstream students because they need to learn the culture and academic ways of schooling in addition to content. SLIFE face challenges such as: western-style schooling, adjusting to individualism, and unique pedagogy and culture. The article explains how Ms. Lopez's MALP classroom addresses these challenges in a math lesson on exponents. She shows that she is genuinely caring and creates a classroom community by

devoting time to greetings at the beginning of class. She makes the content relevant by explaining how exponents are a shortcut, just like cutting through a field. She eases their transition to literacy by always reading written instructions aloud as students read along. The students are scaffolded into individualism by having a combination of group and individual work, including tasks where groups present their combined work in a cohesive manner. Also, only one of the following aspects is ever new at a time so that students are not overwhelmed: task, language, or content. Overall, teachers who use strategies such as these are better able to ease the transition of SLIFE, such as refugee students, into the North American classroom.

Decapua, A., & Marshall, H. W. (2015). Reframing the conversation about students with limited or interrupted formal education: From achievement gap to cultural dissonance. *NASSP Bulletin*, 99(4), 356–370. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0192636515620662>

Decapua and Marshall examine why English learners who are also students with limited or interrupted formal education (SLIFE) are among the groups most likely to do poorly and drop out of school. These students are not only lacking the educational background from their previous countries, but rather “[do not] understand the expectations, discourse styles, and modes of school-based ways of thinking and learning in . . . educational institutions” (p. 357). These students may have been acting as adults previously, and only known informal education, therefore being treated as minors again and going to school comes as a shock. Culturally responsive teaching sees these students as culturally different, not culturally deficient, and, coupled with the MALP (Mutually Adapted Learning Paradigm, as outlined in DeCapua, 2016) seeks to ease SLIFE into being successful in the North American Classroom. Culturally responsive teaching consists of five key components: cultural competence, culturally relevant curriculum, supportive learning community, cultural congruity, and effective instruction. Culturally relevant teaching creates “a learning environment that will enable them to grow and develop intellectually with the freedom to acculturate gradually into their new school settings” (p. 361). Teachers must: combine individual and group responsibility, alternate between oral and written tasks, and introduce school-thinking explicitly. Through doing this, classrooms can combat typical barriers for SLIFE, such as the credibility of future reward, classroom routines emphasizing individualism, and the focus on standardized testing. Introducing culturally relevant

teaching and MALP can support Syrian refugees in their transition to the North American school system.

Due, C., Riggs, D. W., & Augoustinos, M. (2016). Diversity in intensive English language centres in South Australia: Sociocultural approaches to education for students with migrant or refugee backgrounds. *International Journal of Inclusive Education*, 3116(12), 1–11. <http://doi.org/10.1080/13603116.2016.1168874>

Using a sociocultural learning approach, Due, Rigg, and Augoustinos documented primary schools with students of migrant and refugee backgrounds in Australia. These schools recognize that diversity, a whole-school approach to learning featuring social and emotional support is crucial for these students. Shared communication between home and school is also important because the gap between these two worlds can be very big for refugee students. Within this study the researchers identified opportunities and challenges with using a sociocultural learning approach in this diverse setting. The challenges found were that the numerous demands within a classroom can be difficult for teachers and that the extremely diverse setting sometimes exacerbates student distress upon starting the program. However, this approach also has important benefits. By valuing everyone's contributions from their own backgrounds, "diverse classrooms can create spaces for children to share their knowledge and experiences" (p. 1289), such as traditional food and customs. Also, by valuing everyone's contributions and backgrounds equally, diverse classes can help combat bullying and foster positive interactions within the school community. Though valuing and sharing diverse backgrounds has many benefits, the researchers do admit that sharing can be sometimes problematic with children coming from a trauma background. Overall, using a sociocultural learning approach is a beneficial tool for classrooms with refugee and migrant children.

Hos, R. (2016). Caring is not enough: Teachers enactment of ethical care for adolescent Students with Limited or Interrupted Formal Education (SLIFE) in a newcomer classroom. *Education and Urban Society*, 48(5), 479–503. <http://doi.org/10.1177/0013124514536440>

Students with Limited or Interrupted Formal Education (SLIFE) have a particularly difficult time in high school compared to the average and require special care and attention. That is the focus of this article. The dropout rate for SLIFE is three times higher than for their English-speaking

counterparts. That makes these students the “highest of high risk students” (p. 481). These refugee students typically live in poor neighbourhoods and also have poor mental health. When such a student comes to the United States they typically are placed in Newcomer programs. These programs have the goal of transitioning the student to the mainstream classroom and care within these initial classrooms should be central. How examined one such Newcomer Classroom and the way in which its teacher enacted caring. This high school has a high ELL population, is in a poor neighbourhood, and the newcomer classroom is segregated in a corner of the school. The class has 19 students, from various countries around the world, and the students have an average of 4.5 years of schooling, despite ranging from 13 to 18 years of age. The teacher acted with great kindness and caring to her students, and her care can be classified into the following themes: patience/flexibility and empathy for students, appropriate ESOL pedagogy for SLIFE, advocacy, and building students’ self-confidence through confirmation. Even though this teacher was caring and sought to do everything possible for her students, they still had obstacles to their success. Students within the program needed psychological support that was not available to them and they were not receiving credit for their time in the program, barring them from graduating as they expected. This lesson of the importance of caring for refugee students can easily be transferred to Syrian students in Canada.

Kia-Keating, M., & Ellis, B. H. (2007). Belonging and connection to school in resettlement: Young refugees, school belonging, and psychosocial adjustment. *Clinical Child Psychology and Psychiatry*, 12(1), 29–43. <http://doi.org/10.1177/1359104507071052>

This article investigates how the past trauma of refugee adolescents and the current level of school belonging interact to determine the emotional well-being of refugee students. As the authors remark, “schools are one of the first and most influential service systems that young refugees come into contact with after resettlement” (p. 30), therefore knowing the impact it has is important. Belonging and connection to school is related to positive academic, behavioural, and psychological outcomes, so a variety of tests were used to determine how this occurred in Somali refugee students aged 12-19. The tests administered included: War Time Trauma Screening Scale, Psychological Sense of School Membership, a PTSD test, Depression Self-Rating Scale, and the Multidimensional Scales of Perceived Self- Efficacy. All of the had experienced various forms of trauma, however, the higher their sense of belonging meant that they also had lower

rates of depression and a better sense of self-efficacy. Belonging had little effect on PTSD, however, which depended upon previous levels of trauma. Overall, this research is important because it shows the positive effect that a good school experience can have on refugee children, which is important when addressing Syrian refugee students in Canadian schools.

MacNevin, J. (2012). Learning the way: Teaching and learning with and for youth from refugee backgrounds on Prince Edward Island. *Canadian Journal of Education*, 35(3), 48–63.

MacNevin's article focuses on the teacher perspective and professional development on refugee students in Prince Edward Island (PEI), Canada. In Canada, refugee students face racism, discrimination, and poverty while also dealing with trauma, a lack of literacy, and being unlikely to trust authority. These challenges are now part of an ever more diverse classroom for PEI teachers. Teachers have discovered that they must be sensitive to students' backgrounds and experiences, and that what worked for one group in the past, may not work for the current refugee students in their classrooms. In order to best support refugee students, teachers must be better prepared through professional development. This study included 7 experienced middle and high school teachers working with refugee youth in PEI. The teachers in this study felt that there as a lack of professional development available to them pertaining to refugee students, especially that which focuses on education. Professional development which teachers thought would be useful to them included the topics of: "how to work with students who have experiences trauma", "how to include students from refugee backgrounds in the classroom", "how to teach basic reading to youth", and "information regarding students' (educational) backgrounds".

McCall, A. L., & Vang, B. (2012). Preparing preservice teachers to meet the needs of Hmong refugee students. *Multicultural Perspectives*, 14(1), 32–37.

<http://doi.org/10.1080/15210960.2012.646847>

This article documents how pre-service teachers can be trained using Sleeter and Grant's (2009) multicultural social justice approach to a diverse classroom. In this case the focus is on Hmong refugee students, however this approach can be applied to any refugee group. A multicultural social justice approach includes various cultures in the curriculum, addresses issues of inequality, and fight against stereotypes. This practice acknowledges that "all students have a legal right to an education in order to succeed in life without requiring them to relinquish their cultural identity" (p. 33). To embrace the cultural identity of refugee students, teachers must be educated

in these cultures and include them in the classroom. Teachers must be cognizant that moving to a new country can create cultural dissonance, such as values clashing and students needing to forge a new, hybrid identity. During teaching, it is important to use authentic cultural texts and provide refugee students with materials that are otherwise difficult for them to obtain. As a mandate of the multicultural social justice approach, pre-service teachers and teachers must use their position of power to influence negative dynamics and views of the refugee population in their classroom.

Ogilvie, G., & Fuller, D. (2016). Restorative Justice Pedagogy in the ESL classroom: Creating a caring environment to support refugee students. *TESOL Canada*, 33(10), 86–96.

Ogilvie and Fuller explain how Restorative Justice Pedagogy (RJP) is used in an ESL class to support refugee students. With the surge of Syrian refugees in Canadian classrooms, the authors argue that more than the typical ESL pedagogy must be used to break down barriers of trauma and displacement. Restorative justice pedagogy comes from indigenous ways of knowing where it is believed that everything is interconnected and crime is a “violation of people and relationships” (p.88). While restorative justice itself is usually used in schools for assuming responsibility during punishments, RJP focuses on the needs of students to help teachers adopt a caring perspective. Authentic conversations, such as drinking tea together and using a talking stick to take turns sharing, “address[es] student needs and foster[s] community as a means to promote a state of healthy balance” (p. 92). An additional strategy for using RJP in the classroom is using dialogue journals. In “morning pages”, one author has his students free write on what living in Canada is like and instead of correcting grammar, he creates an ongoing conversation where he gets to know his students.

Roxas, K. (2011). Creating communities: Working with refugee students in classrooms. *Democracy and Education*, 19(2), 1–8. <http://doi.org/10.7748/nop.27.1.41.s22>

Roxas argues for the importance of creating community in public school classrooms with refugee children. This can be difficult because teachers need to balance “packaged, scripted curriculum” (p. 2) with creating community with students from diverse backgrounds. Using culturally responsive pedagogy to create community has positive impacts on refugee students: their motivation, value on school, and preparedness for civic engagement rises with a sense of classroom community. Using the case study of Patricia Engler in a Denver school, Roxas shows

how she aided her refugee students by addressing their lived experiences head-on, intentionally building classroom community, and engaged with the outside, broader community. These strategies helped ease the transition for new students, settle fights between traditionally conflicting cultures, and situated students in a position to give back. These techniques and strategies can be used in any situation with refugee students, such as in Alberta classrooms with Syrian refugees students.

Skidmore, J. (2016). From discord to harmony: How Canadian music educators can support young Syrian refugees through culturally responsive teaching. *Canadian Music Educator*, 7–13.

Within the context of the 25,000 refugees Canada recently pledged to resettle, Skidmore uses this article as a call for the importance of music education for Syrian refugee students in Canada. As is well documented, refugee students bring with them various emotional, psychological, and educational challenges. Integrating into a whole new school culture after possibly being away from school for a long period may be one of a refugee child's biggest concerns. Coupled with teachers not being able to treat the intake of these children with the same past educational review and communication, it is a tricky situation for everyone involved. Music and music education can have a positive impact during this difficult time. Music transcends the language barrier, supports students emotionally, socially, and cognitively, and gives Syrian and Canadian children the opportunity to interact and collaborate. Language learning also benefits from music education, as it can aid in phonemic awareness, concepts of print, and idiomatic expressions. By blending musical styles and adding a focus on different styles and genres of music an educator can bring cultural awareness into the classroom, but must also be careful not to isolate refugee students as "culture bearers". Overall, music education is an important tool for Canadian educators to support Syrian refugee students in school.

Szente, J., Hoot, J., & Taylor, D. (2006). Responding to the special needs of refugee children: Practical ideas for teachers. *Early Childhood Education Journal*, 34(1), 15–20.
<http://doi.org/10.1007/s10643-006-0082-2>

This article combines the experiences and advice from various stakeholders in refugee children's education to provide strategies to best supporting this population in classrooms. Through multiple individual and group interviews, these stakeholders (such as, parents, teachers, social

workers, counselors, and one principal) provided data to generate three important themes to be considered in refugee education: helping children cope with trauma, supporting academic adjustment, and establishing positive parent/teacher relationships. Strategies for helping children adjust to the new environment and cope with trauma included teaching emotions, American Sign Language, art, dance, and social skills activities. Since many refugee children come into school after spending time out of school, adjusting to North American school is difficult. Strategies to help this academic transition include, not grading refugee students with traditional methods, utilizing translators, and recommending alternative extra educational programs. Creating a positive relationship between school and family is crucial to the success of refugee students. Strategies to achieve this include: translators; written communication that can be translated at leisure; home visits, and; teachers keeping the difficult situation of families in mind. These strategies can be utilized with any refugee population and can certainly aid teachers with Syrian refugee students.

Tavares, T., & Slotin, I. (2012). Supporting student success in the classroom. In *Life after war: Education as a healing process for refugee and war-affected children* (pp. 40–54). Winnipeg: Manitoba Education.

This book part, published by Manitoba Education, details the supports necessary and beneficial to educating refugee students in the Canadian classroom. First, both boys and girls need support from family and school, however girls specifically need to be supported as girls gaining an education. A strength-based approach is better than a deficit approach when dealing with refugee students because it encourages their resiliency and success. Students must have safety, goals, reliability, and clear communication. Teachers should not be afraid of discussing the events that traumatized the children, and be willing to refer to students to extra professional help when necessary. Within the classroom students need to opportunity to play for the development and storytelling can be a useful tool. Schools in general must have an appreciation for diversity and the contributions of the refugee students need to be valued. Finally, after school and summer programs are a “critical strategy for improving educational opportunities and helping develop positive social networks for refugee youth” (p. 50); combined with regular classroom activities these extra programs can have a great effect on the success of refugee students. As written by

Canadian authors for the Canadian context, this book is useful also in conjunction with the current influx of Syrian refugees.

Taylor, S., & Sidhu, R. K. (2012). Supporting refugee students in schools: What constitutes inclusive education? *International Journal of Inclusive Education*, 16(1), 39–56.
<http://doi.org/10.1080/13603110903560085>

Taylor and Sidhu analyzed the policies and best practices for supporting refugee students of four different schools. They see that “schools have a critical role to play in the settlement of refugee young people and in facilitating transitions to citizenship and belonging” (p. 39) and therefore the best practices of these schools should be shared and built upon. Unfortunately, many countries have policies which “facilitate their [refugee] slide into the lower class” (p. 41) and school systems do not make up for the exclusion and marginalization refugee students faced in the educational systems of asylum countries. To combat this, the four schools become examples of best practice when education refugee students. These schools have targeted policies and system support for refugees, a commitment to social justice, and use a holistic approach to education and welfare. The leaders of these schools advocate for the refugee population and show them that they are welcome. Each school has adopted an inclusive approach and ethos, which includes support for all the needs of the students, both academic and psycho-social. Finally, these schools partner with community organizations to provide the help that the school itself is not able to provide, such as mental health services. By incorporating these best practices into the support systems in Canadian schools, the Syrian refugee students would certainly benefit.

Wolmer, L., Hamiel, D., Barchas, J. D., Slone, M., & Laor, N. (2011). Teacher-delivered resilience-focused intervention in schools with traumatized children following the second Lebanon War. *Journal of Traumatic Stress*, 24, 309–316. <http://doi.org/10.1002/jts.20638>

Wolmer et al introduce a “teacher-delivered intervention focusing on resilience enhancement, designed to relieve trauma symptoms in children” (p. 314). Teachers are trusted figures in children’s lives and therefore, “schools have several advantages as sites for implementation of postdisaster interventions” (p. 310). In this study, over 900 Israeli children, aged 8-12, were assessed using a variety of questionnaires on their stress, mood, and PTSD level. Parents and teachers also participated and provided data. The intervention program was successful in

providing improvements in the students' stress and mood, as well as lowering their PTSD symptoms. However, the more traumatic events in the child's past meant they had worse symptoms and it was recommended that they were referred to clinical intervention in addition to the teacher intervention. Overall, the potential of teachers supporting their traumatized students shows promise for supporting Syrian refugee students in Canadian classrooms.

Conclusion

All of the four (4) report sections bring together summarized research that can be used to inform various stakeholders, such as educators, policy makers and others interested in the topic of Syrian refugee education and refugee education in general. We believe that Syrian refugee education is both a difficult and multifaceted venture, but also a very necessary and rewarding one. Canada is among one of the countries best situated to support Syrian refugee students and it is our hope that this report will help consolidate much of the current research that aims to facilitate support for Syrian refugee children.

Syrian refugee students come from a traumatic past defined by fleeing their country amidst war and loss. Once in a refugee camp, these families work to survive and many children do not have the opportunity to go to school. Various informal organizations work to provide refugee children with education and support families as a whole. These organizations Syrian refugee families with social capital and help them adjust to their new reality. Throughout the world where Syrian refugees have settled, different international school systems have made efforts to accommodate the refugee students. Systems with the funding to do so typically offer intensive language programs and language support for families.

The literature suggests many best practices for supporting refugee students based upon the specific needs of Syrian refugees, but also from other refugee groups. A Trauma-Informed Practice is beneficial to refugee students because it provides the safe place for them to form meaningful attachments and learn self-regulation. Due to refugees existing in more than one culture upon resettlement, a culturally responsive pedagogy is important to support their shifting identities.

It is our hope that this literature review provides a foundation of the issue that will benefit all those who work with the Syrian refugee population. This relevant and timely topic is especially useful for those in Canada who are currently working with the Syrian refugees who have been settled here.

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