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The Impact Of Trauma And Refugees: Resources For Educators

Deanna Taylor
Hamline University

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THE IMPACT OF TRAUMA AND REFUGEES: RESOURCES FOR EDUCATORS

by

Deanna Taylor

A capstone submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Master of Arts in English as a Second Language.

Hamline University

Saint Paul, Minnesota

August, 2017

Laura Halldin, Faculty Advisor
Susan Manikowski, Faculty Advisor
Melissa Beal, Peer Reviewer
Ann Roehl, Peer Reviewer
To my family and friends who have encouraged me through every step of this journey. To my students who inspire me every day. They are a constant reminder of how obstacles can open new doors. This would not have been possible without the commitment and dedication of my professors and peer reviewers.
“One who gains strength by overcoming obstacles possesses the only strength which can overcome adversity”.

- Albert Schweitzer
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CHAPTER ONE

Introduction

Background and Purpose

In October, 2017, I met Rahim (a pseudonym), a refugee student from Iraq, for the first time. He clung to his dad, tears rolling down his face. I can only imagine what was going through his mind; it was heart wrenching. Rahim had never attended school before and had been isolated from the world while in Iraq. After about two days with him, I knew something was not quite right. He was showing signs of trauma and possibly Post-traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD). I, immediately, consulted my school’s administrator, and mental health therapist, and set up a meeting with the family. Finally, Rahim was going to get the help he needed. However, weeks later I was told he could not receive therapy at school because of his language barrier and the need for an interpreter. My administrator went to the district to get approval for an Arabic interpreter, but the district denied the request. To my knowledge, Rahim never received therapy; there were no resources to assist the classroom teacher to help him. It is obvious that schools and educators need resources, but what specific resources are needed to help students with trauma or PTSD? Which leads me to my research question: How can professional development be provided to assist educators in working with refugees and immigrants who have experienced trauma?

When compared to other first grade English Language Learners (ELLs) I have worked with the past, Rahim is making very little progress, and his distracting and aggressive behaviors are increasing. What is preventing Rahim from learning? Is it a psychological disorder such as, PTSD? Is it due to his limited formal schooling? Is it
because of a language barrier? The answer could possibly be one or a combination of many factors. How can I help a student like Rahim?

Schools and teachers struggle with meeting the needs of children like Rahim who are considered students with limited or interrupted formal education (SLIFE). This young boy lacks focus in what seems to be the desire to learn. I am not sure if he even knows why he is at school. Through observations, Rahim seems to function emotionally and socially as a three- or four-year-old child. Here are some examples: during math centers, the student throws materials and then laughs. He has destroyed at least six name tags on his desk by cutting them with scissors. He has little sense of ownership, views all things are his and his alone, and many times Rahim will copy what other students are doing, good or bad. What is especially troublesome is that some of his peers are afraid of him, which is justified due to the numerous occasions of aggressive and inappropriate behavior. For example, one day while at recess, he tightened a student’s scarf to the point where the student started to cry. Another incident was when Rahim gave a threatening gesture to a student; he took his finger and made a motion of slitting his throat. The administrator and social worker developed some interventions. The interventions seem to be working, but now Rahim feels sad and feels as if he has no friends. I discovered his deep sadness while we were reading a book together. Rahim pointed to a picture about friends and said, “me, no.” What do you do for students who truly need help, emotionally and psychologically, yet there are no resources or training for teachers to effectively teach and meet the many needs of students like Rahim?

My goal is to provide teachers and my school district with sufficient background information on refugees and immigrants so they can gain an understanding of this
growing population of ELs and the trauma some of these students may exhibit. The intended outcome of this project is to provide resources to fill a void of what has been missing and wanted by teachers for some time – essential information that they can rely on that will help educators work with refugee and immigrant students. The intent is not that teachers diagnose students with PTSD or social concerns, but rather, offer resources for use within the classroom to build relationships, as well as teaching techniques to help educate and support these students as they enter an unfamiliar school system. Throughout my career as an ESL teacher, I have worked with a vast number of ELs with varying degrees of educational experiences; some with little or no education. It is important to understand the impact a student’s educational or literacy experience may have on their success in and out of the school. In my 14 years as an ESL teacher, I have felt as though the school system has failed to meet the needs of refugee students. In this context, refugee is defined as someone who resides outside of the United States, but not yet established in another country, who is unable or unwilling to return in fear of persecution due to the race, religion, nationality, political opinion, or membership in a particular social group (U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services, 2017). Not only does the school system frequently fail these students, but the system also fails to meet the training needs of classroom teachers. Through my college education and years of experience, nothing has prepared me for working with refugee students. I am astonished, that there is very little training for teachers, and a marked lack of support to meet the academic, social, and emotional needs of these students. According to the U.S. Department of Education and U.S. Department of Justice (2017), all children in the United States are entitled to equal access to a basic public education regardless of their race, color, national origin,
citizenship, immigration status or the status of their [parent]/guardian. Federal law states, that we educate all students, but we are failing these students in particular (U.S Department of Education, 2017). It is these reasons listed above that lead me to my research question: How can professional development be provided to assist educators in working with refugees and immigrants who have experienced trauma? Throughout the world, the numbers of immigrants, refugee students with trauma, and SLIFE are on the rise (Hos, 2016; DeCapula, et. al 2011). Previous research indicates teachers have limited experience in working with refugees and trauma, and; there are a lack of resources and training to support these students (Hurley, et al, 2014).

**National Immigration and Refugees**

These days, you can’t help but hear news about immigration and refugees; these are two topics of high interest in the United States and around the world. The numbers of refugees and immigrants coming into the United States are reaching an all-time high. According to the analysis conducted by Pew Research Center and the American Immigration Center, 84,955 refugees were admitted into the United States in the 2016 fiscal year. This is the highest number reported since 1999. With these large numbers of refugees, schools can expect a growing number of students, especially those from war-torn countries, to show up in U.S. classrooms. As a result, schools can expect to see an increase in students arriving with some type of trauma.

**Immigration and Refugees in Minnesota**

A deep understanding of the countries and cultures of those who have immigrated to Minnesota can help schools understand the impact they may have on and the resources needed for incoming immigrants or refugee children. While Minnesota has fewer
immigrants than the U.S. as a whole (8% compared with 13% nationally), the state’s foreign-born population is actually increasing faster than the national average (Minnesota Compass, 2017). In Minnesota, the numbers have tripled since 1990. About 428,000 residents are foreign-born including many refugees who have fled from their home countries. Nearly one in six children (aged 0-19) in Minnesota has at least one immigrant parent. Among our state’s youngest children (aged 0-4) nearly one in every five is a child of an immigrant (Minnesota Compass, 2017).

In Minnesota, there are Voluntary Agencies (VOLAGS) who have cooperative agreements with the State Department to provide reception and placement for refugees arriving in the United States. The Refugee Consortium in Minnesota is comprised of five resettlement agencies: International Institute of Minnesota, Arrive Ministries, Lutheran Social Service, Minnesota Council of Churches, and Catholic Charities. According to the Refugee Consortium of Minnesota or Voluntary Agencies, the expected number of refugee settlements in Minnesota from October 1, 2016 through September 30, 2017 was 2,130 individuals. As of December 18, 2016, 647 individuals have arrived. Ramsey County and Hennepin County have had the largest percentage of resettlements. The largest populations of refugees are: Somali (51%), Burma or Karen (17%) and Iraqi (6%) (Refugee Consortium, 2016).

Schools must be more prepared for the realities of servicing and teaching ELs, especially refugees who may suffer from trauma, violence, and chronic stress. My research will uncover various programs and approaches to teaching refugees in the United States as well as in other parts of the world. Teaching refugees is so rewarding, but training and resources are needed.
The reasons for this research go beyond the classroom; a change needs to be made at the collegiate level with courses developed to train our future and current teachers. Furthermore, changes need to be made at the district level. Districts need to be proactive and listen to teacher’s needs by offering on-going professional development, providing resources, and creating a team to work with immigrants and refugees in the schools. It is also important to point out the number of refugees and asylum seekers are on the rise, both in the United States and around the world, yet schools are not equipped to recognize and respond to the multiple challenges of these students (UNHCR, 2015). My hope is that, this research project will help provide schools and teachers the necessary resources and background information that will immediately support students who are immigrants and refugees. The importance of providing resources for teachers to immediately use is crucial. My experiences and observations lead me to pose the following questions: How does trauma affect student learning? What are the different types of trauma? What are the social and emotional needs of a child in trauma? How are other schools or institutions working with their refugee populations? As the ESL teacher, how do I support the classroom teacher? What is my role? What are some immediate resources or tools teachers can use to meet the needs of these students? What impact does limited or interrupted formal schooling have on refugee students? These questions will inform and guide my research.

Chapter Summary

In my research project, I will be focusing on refugee children in trauma because I want to find out how trauma affects student learning in order to help educators understand the impact it has on a student and the immediate resources which are needed
to meet their needs. I will include information on SLIFE, as well as, share my own personal experiences and observations on the impact SLIFE can have on student learning. I will be using secondary research, data published from refugee centers, personal experiences and observations, and staff development/training in this area. My research project will outline the different types of social and emotional trauma students’ encounter, and the impact it can have on their brain and learning. I will focus on one of the most common psychological disorders among refugees: PTSD (Lopez-Quintero, et al, 2012 and Refugee Health Technical Assistance Center, 2017). I will reiterate that PTSD is a growing concern among children and discuss the signs and behaviors of PTSD, educational implications of PTSD, and provide information about Secondary PTSD. My research will also address culturally responsive teaching, a Mutually Adaptive Learning Paradigm (MALP), trauma-informed teaching, and schools with an inclusive environment for refugee students. My research will also guide me in preparing a list of recommended resources based on best practices found in my research, so teachers, and others working with refugee children in trauma, will be better able to address their needs. Upon completion of this research project, I will use this information to further educate school personnel with recommended resources based on best practices, so teachers and other staff working with refugee children with trauma can address their needs.

Chapter Overviews

In Chapter One, I established the rationale for this paper, noted its significance, provided a glimpse into my own professional observations and experiences, and explained issues associated with the lack the resources for teachers and schools who work with refugee and immigrant students. In Chapter Two, I will review the literature
relevant to refugees and immigrant groups, SLIFE; trauma and effects on the brain and learning, PTSD; Secondary PTSD, educational programs for refugees; challenges in U.S. school systems, educational approaches to teaching refugees; and resources, centered on “best practices”, for teachers to use with refugee and immigrant students. This research will help in answering the following question: How can professional development be provided to assist educators in working with refugees and immigrants who have experienced trauma? In Chapter Three, I will include a description of the method/tools used to compile the research needed for my project. Chapter Four presents what I have learned through this project as a whole and what the necessary and needed next steps are in continuing professional development as they relate to refugees and trauma.
CHAPTER TWO

Literature Review

Overview

Trauma and refugees are topics of conversations for many ESL teachers and schools. The number of immigrants and refugees is growing around the world, especially those with trauma or who have experienced trauma. It is important for teachers to have an understanding of trauma and be able to answer the following question: How can professional development be provided to assist educators in working with refugees and immigrants who have experienced trauma? How do I, as the teacher, meet the needs of an immigrant or refugee? The purpose of my research project is to present educational practitioners background information on refugees and immigrants so they can gain an understanding of this growing population of ELs and the trauma some of these students may exhibit. Ultimately, the goal is to provide resources to fill a void which has been noted by educators for some time – a voice that needs to be addressed if we want to help our refugee population to succeed. These resources are necessary in order to be able to work more successfully with refugee and immigrant students. My research will help answer: How can professional development be provided to assist educators in working with refugees and immigrants who have experienced trauma? This chapter presents an overview on refugees and immigrants. The chapter will explore Students with Limited Interrupted Formal Education (SLIFE); define and describe the different types of trauma; effects of trauma on the brain and learning; Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD) and educational implications; and secondary PTSD and how it affects children. This chapter will also present educational programs for refugees and immigrants, challenges of the
United States school system, and educational approaches to teaching refugees and immigrants. Finally, this chapter concludes with some suggested resources for educators to use with refugee and immigrant students.

**English Language Learners/Immigrant Groups**

An English Learner (EL) is someone who is learning the English language in addition to his or her first language (colorincolorado.org, 2017). ELs can be further identified within a specific immigrant group: those born in the United States/U.S. citizen, asylee (see definition below), refugee, immigrant, migrant, and undocumented or illegal.

Something important to keep in mind that it is not the district’s, the school’s, or the teacher’s job to make assumptions about the immigration status of a student or family. According to the U.S. Department of Justice, Civil Rights Division and the Office of U.S. Department of Education, Office of Civil Rights (2017), a school district may not ask about a child’s citizenship or immigration status to establish residency within the district.

Before moving on to the educational challenges and trauma refugees and immigrants may face, it is important to provide some terminology on immigration terms.

**Asylee.** An asylee, like a refugee, comes to the United States seeking protection because they have suffered persecution or fear they will suffer persecution due to race, religion, nationality, or political opinions (USCIS, 2017). People who are granted asylum may apply for legal permanent residence (a green card) one year after being granted asylum. According to U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services (2017), asylum is an immigration benefit, for certain immigrants, who fear persecution to remain in the United States both legally and indefinitely. In general, and with some exceptions, an asylum
application must be filed within one year of the applicant’s entry into the United States (Immigration Equality, 2017, April 21).

**Refugee.** U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services (USCIS) defines a refugee as someone who resides outside of the United States, but not yet established in another country, who is unable or unwilling to return in fear of persecution due to the race, religion, nationality, political opinion, or membership in a particular social group.

**Refugee resettlement process.** Millions of refugees around the world are forced to leave their homes due to violence, war and persecution. At the end of 2015, there were 21.3 million refugees, over half of whom are under the age of 18. (UNHCR: UN Refugee Agency, 2015). Once refugees cross a border to seek safety, there are three possible solutions: integrate into their country of asylum, return to their home country, or resettle to a third country. Resettlement is the last option for only the most vulnerable refugees who cannot stay where they are or return home. Once a refugee arrives in the United States, he or she receives a one-time grant of $925 which is dispersed by resettlement agencies upon arrival. This grant is meant to help secure housing and other basic needs. Refugees are also eligible for public assistance, which varies by state. After arriving as refugees, resettlement agencies assist them for up to 90 days, providing case management and assistance settling into their new communities.

**Refugee: educational concerns.** The current U.S. school system is failing refugee and migrant children. In fact, according to Moinolnolki and Han (2017), refugee children have a higher dropout rate. This is not surprising when you consider some of these children are faced with many challenges, such as acculturation stress, poverty, poor housing, and psychological disorders. In general, high school dropout rates are declining
in the United States, but for immigrants and refugees this rate is increasing (Moinololki et al, 2017).

**Immigrant.** In her book, *Supporting Refugee Children: Strategies for Educators* (2011), Jan Stewart defines an immigrant as a person who becomes a permanent resident of another country which is not his or her native land. She further defines an immigrant as, someone who moves for economic reasons. It is important to make the distinction between a refugee and an immigrant. People often assume there is no difference between immigrants and refugees, but the difference is important for economic, social, and legal reasons. Refugees are forced to leave their home countries because of war, environmental disasters, political persecution, and/or religious or ethnic intolerance.

**Migrant.** A migrant is a person who makes a conscious choice to leave his/her country to seek a better life elsewhere. According to Merriam-Webster (2017), a migrant is a person who moves regularly to find work especially in harvesting crops. Before leaving, migrants can seek information about homes, study the language, and explore employment opportunities. Migrants are free to return to their home country at any time and for any reason (Settlement Services International, 2017). Among educators, there is a more familiar understanding of what a migrant is; a person who moves regularly to find employment, especially during harvesting times of the year.

**Undocumented or Illegal.** Undocumented immigrants in the United States are also referred as “illegal immigrants,” and also known as illegal aliens (American Immigration Center, 2017). According to the Migration Policy Institute (2014), there are around 11 million unauthorized/illegal immigrants living in the United States.
Unauthorized immigrant population profiles (2014), estimate there are 85,000 unauthorized immigrants in Minnesota and 66% are employed.

Undocumented immigrants can be individuals who were visiting a country not of their origin, a college student who decides to stay after graduating, or an immigrant who overstayed his/her Visa. These immigrants live in fear of deportation. The United States Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) shares responsibility for enforcing the Nation’s immigration laws with United States Customs and Border Protection, and United States Citizenship and Immigration Services. ICE focuses on identifying and apprehending criminal aliens and detention and removal of those apprehended inside the United States (U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement, 2017). ICE conducted 235,413 removals in 2015 and of those, 96,095 were non-criminal immigration violators. The United States Homeland Security reported they apprehended 462,388 unauthorized aliens (United States Homeland Security, 2015). The top three countries with the most apprehensions were Mexico, Guatemala, and Honduras. Below is a table displaying the top three countries with apprehensions.

Table 2.1 Apprehension by Country: Fiscal Year 2015

<table>
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<tr>
<th>COUNTRY</th>
<th>Total</th>
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<tr>
<td>Mexico</td>
<td>267,885</td>
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<tr>
<td>Guatemala</td>
<td>66,982</td>
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<tr>
<td>Honduras</td>
<td>42,433</td>
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While the immigration status information may not be available to teachers, it can be helpful to have this background information. Immigration can be a long process for the students and their families, so whether a student is an asylee, refugee, immigrant, migrant, or undocumented or illegal, such a student may come into a classroom with little to no literacy skills in their first language, or be considered SLIFE (Student with limited or interrupted formal education) student. I will address SLIFE and the educational experiences of immigrants and refugees in the next section.

**Educational Experiences of Immigrants and Refugees**

Immigrants and refugees bring a breadth of history into the classrooms of the United States. They come from all over the world with many different ethnic, political, religious, socioeconomic, and linguistic backgrounds. The path of each refugee’s journey may vary and be unique, however, most refugees experience extended amounts of time in refugee camps where schooling is limited or almost non-existent. As Dryden-Peterson (2015) points out, that these previous experiences affect the way they experience school and the relationships they form with teachers and peers. These pre-settlement experiences can have a profound impact on academic performance, psychosocial needs, and skew their sense of belonging in school. Many refugee children often experience frequent or limited schooling and as a result, fall behind academically and are below their age-appropriate grade level. According to Dryden-Peterson (2015), refugee children are frequently exposed to different languages of instruction over the course of their migration, resulting in language confusion and difficulties in mastering academic content.

As the numbers of refugees continues to climb in the United States, there will be a continuing increase in SLIFE. In the next section, I will discuss and explain SLIFE in
more depth, as well as discuss the challenges it brings for not only the student, but for the school and its teachers. The impact of refugee SLIFE can be significant, so I will also discuss some ways to support these students.

**SLIFE.** Although much of the research on SLIFE is directed towards secondary students; it is a growing concern in elementary schools. According to MDE (Minnesota Department of Education, 2017), SLIFE make up an important subgroup of English learners. The Minnesota Learning English for Academic Proficiency and Success (LEAPS) Act and WIDA (World-class Instructional Design and Assessment, 2015) defines SLIFE as an English Language Learner with interrupted formal education who is new to the United States school system and has had interrupted schooling. They may be refugees or migrants or any student with limited or interrupted schooling. The student has limited background in reading and writing skills or may be preliterate in the English Learner’s native language or L1 (First Language). SLIFE students are expected to learn academic English and content-knowledge simultaneously. Many of these students function at least two years below expected grade level in reading and mathematics (Minnesota Department of Education, 2016). SLIFE students require support in oral language and basic literacy skills, an understanding of the norms of school culture, and in some cases, in the academic content in which their age-level peers were exposed to in earlier years of schooling.

Throughout the world, the number of immigrants, refugee students with trauma, and SLIFE is on the rise (Hos, 2016; DeCapula, et. al 2011). Previous research indicates teachers have limited experience in working with refugees and trauma; there is a lack of resources and training to support these students (Hurley, et al, 2014). Educators play an
essential role in providing support to help immigrant and refugees adjust. SLIFE are not only learning English language, they must learn how to read, learn how to follow a schedule; how to complete assignments and follow instructions; how to use school supplies; how to take a bus; and how to interact with students from different cultures all while trying to adjust to a new country (Robertson & Lafond, 2017). Hos (2016) explains, that with so many challenges coupled with the lack of English proficiency, it is difficult to succeed, and the dropout rate for ELs or SLIFE in the United States is three times higher than it is for young native-born English speakers. For these reasons, it is essential that for teachers to empower these students and provide positive classroom experiences. To help achieve these goals, school educators can support immigrants and refugees by creating an environment which is caring and empowering. Hos (2016) and Robertson & Lafond (2017), all agree and recommend that building a caring, supportive environment is the foundation on which to begin. To begin building a supportive environment, educators must find out the needs and backgrounds of their students, and understand and appreciate their challenges and experiences (Hos 2016). Knowing the students allows an educator to adapt lessons based on these needs and increases ability to clearly model social and academic expectations (Hos, 2016). His research suggests the need for different pedagogical practices to help EL SLIFE acquire English language and content. Specifically, he suggests the following pedagogical practices: use of routines, integration of literacy, cooperative learning, and use of technology (Hos, 2017, p. 492). In addition, he points out (cited in August & Shanahan, 2006), that oral language proficiency is critical in aiding the development reading and writing. When working with refugees and immigrants, the classroom teacher should plan lessons which cover the
following components of literacy development: phonemic awareness, oral language development, vocabulary, building background, and comprehension (Hos, 2016). These skills can be best practiced through the four domains of reading, writing, listening, and speaking.

Another way in which schools and educators can help immigrant and refugee students is including implementation of a newcomer center or program. These programs are designed for newly arrived refugees and immigrants to allow time to adjust to the U.S. education system, and learn the basic procedures of school and academic content such as the alphabet, how to hold a pencil and other basic skills, and learning academic language and concepts. The goal of these programs is to help transition refugee or immigrant students so they can be mainstreamed into the classroom. Later in this chapter, I will focus on and give more information on specific newcomer programs in Minnesota, as well as the benefits and challenges of such programs.

As refugees and immigrants continue to arrive in our school systems, it is important to address the mental health issues some of these students may experience. Refugee children and adolescents are faced with many challenges and one of those challenges is, trauma. In the next section I give an overview of trauma, the stages and types of trauma, and the effects on the brain and learning.

**Trauma in Refugees and Immigrants**

**Overview and Definition of Trauma.** Experts explain that, trauma is not an event itself, but rather a response to one or more devastating and stressful events where one’s ability to cope is dramatically compromised (Cole, 2009). Refugee children and adolescents are often exposed to experiences of war, violence, torture, killings and
emotional loss which can lead to mental health diagnoses, including major depression, PTSD, generalized anxiety, panic attacks, and adjustment disorder (Refugee Health Technical Assistance Center, 2017). Susan Cole, among others, agrees these experiences can lead to social, emotional and academic difficulties (2009).

Stages of Trauma During Immigration. Trauma can affect anyone, but I will focus on trauma of refugees and immigrants. Trauma can be seen throughout the immigration process at any of the following stages: pre-flight, flight, and resettlement, or sometimes referred to as post-flight.

Pre-flight. This stage comes before an individual or family leaves their country of origin, often resulting from political turmoil, civil war, and life-threatening circumstances. This is a time where there is great fear and uncertainty. Many refugee children are greatly impacted by what they witnessed or directly experienced, often having to leave their possessions and friends behind. Families may leave abruptly, which can impact children emotionally (Barowsky & McIntyre, 2010).

Flight. This stage marks the beginning of an immigrant’s uncertain journey to a new destination. This journey, for some immigrants, can last only hours on an airplane. However, for others, this experience can last years in refugee camps or detention centers. Children and adolescents are often separated from their family and depend on others for help; one of the many challenges in which immigrants and refugees face is loss of culture, community and language (Refugee Health Technical Assistance Center, 2017). The experiences and challenges individuals face during this stage may play a role in developing a mental health condition.
Resettlement (post-flight). U.S. Citizenship Immigration Services (2017) defines resettlement or post-flight as a permanent location of refugees outside their country of origin to allow them to establish residence and become productive members of society. Refugee resettlement or post-flight is accomplished with the direct assistance of private voluntary agencies (VOLAGS) who work with the Department of Health and Human Services Office of Refugee Resettlement.

As individuals or families transition to their new home during the resettlement process stressors can occur. In fact, one of the stressors is the time spent in resettlement or refugee camps. Kielsmeier-Cook (2017) describes the following: refugees crowding around a bulletin board, everyone jostling and waiting to see their name and then a date and time of an interview. Some wait week after week, year after year, and for some, decade after decade in search of their name. This interview date is the first of many in the refugee resettlement process. Among the many other stressors, a refugee resettlement case may cease due to medical reasons or when something in the interview did not check out (Keilsmeier-Cook, 2017). However, for those who finally receive their final date of departure from the camp, it is a chance to begin a new life, in a new home where they can feel safe.

Types of Trauma Among Refugees

Refugee children may feel a sense of relief when they are finally resettled in the United States. However, the difficulties they face do not end upon their arrival. Once settled in the United States refugee children may face stressors such as traumatic stress, acculturation stress, and isolation stress. In the following section I will explain each one of these stressors in more detail.
**Traumatic Event.** Prior to flight, refugee children can experience a number of different traumatic events (U.S. Department of Veteran Affairs-National Center for PTSD, 2017). A traumatic event is triggered as soon as a child experiences an intense event which threatens or causes harm to his or her emotional and physical well-being. As a result, traumatic stress sets in and can be related to war or persecution, displacement from their homes, migration, and poverty (National Child Traumatic Stress Network, 2017). A traumatic event may cause a person to experience symptoms related to PTSD. Symptoms of PTSD can occur at any point during the immigration process, but symptoms can also be seen in those who are non-immigrants.

**Acculturation.** Lustig et al (2004) defines acculturation as the transition from one country to another, often encompassing changes in almost every aspect of daily life, from the language one speaks to the ways in which individuals and groups interact. It includes major life events, such as the loss of social networks and changes in work status, as well as ongoing daily hassles, for instance communicating in a new language, and encountering discrimination. There are many stressors as immigrants go through this process of immigration, but the stress does not stop even after an individual or family is resettled. Instead stress continues to build. Families must now try to adjust to a new culture. According to National Child Traumatic Stress Network (2017), there are stressors in which refugee children and families experience as they navigate between their new culture and their culture of origin. For example, there may be conflicts between children and parents over new and old cultural values; there may be cultural misunderstandings; the necessity for translating for family members who are non-English speakers; and problems fitting into school environment. For parents, acculturative stress
can be generated by the necessity to learn the rules and expectations of new school systems, which are often very different from rules and expectations of schools in their home country (Vera, et. al, 2017).

**Isolation.** Prior to flight, refugees experience loss, challenges and many changes during resettlement. Having left their homes, refugees are now often confronted with isolation, hostility, violence, and racism in their new locations. According to The National Child Traumatic Stress Network (2017), isolation is a stressor refugee children and families experience as minorities in a new country. For example, some individuals may feel a sense of loneliness and loss of social support; discrimination; experiences of harassment from peers, adults or law enforcement; loss of social status; and fear of not fitting in. Language barriers can cause families to be isolated outside of their community and even within their own families. As the children go off to school and progress in their English proficiency, family members begin to rely on them to be the spokesperson and translator for the entire family, which creates communication barriers between parents and their children.

As I have discussed previously, refugees can experience trauma at any point during their immigration experience, but how does trauma affect children and their learning? In this next section I will explore the effects of trauma, and trauma-related symptoms and behaviors of both preschool and elementary-aged students. I will also consider how their education might be affected.

**Effects of Trauma**

**Overall Effects.** A range of mental health and developmental consequences are associated with child and adolescent exposure to trauma, including PTSD, depression,
anxiety, behavioral problems, and sleep disturbances (American Psychological Association Task Force, 2009). The experience of trauma will not affect every child in the same way and some children may be asymptomatic and do well in school. However, for those children who are unable to cope with their experiences, trauma may have a profound and lasting effect on their daily functioning. Exposure to traumatic events can cause symptoms in children of all ages, such as: stomachaches, headaches, crying, nightmares, fear or anxiety, sadness or grumpiness, trouble managing behavior or emotions, trouble paying attention, and trouble falling asleep or getting too much sleep (National Child Traumatic Stress Network, 2017). However, the impact of exposure to traumatic events for children may be different depending on the child’s age and stage of development. The National Child Traumatic Stress Network (2017) suggests there are age-specific effects on trauma for preschool students and elementary students.

**Effects on Preschool Students.** Preschool children may lose recently acquired developmental milestones and may experience an increase in behavioral issues, such as bed wetting, thumb sucking, and regression to simpler speech. They may also become more irritable and throw temper tantrums and have trouble calming back down. Some students may experience withdrawal, difficulties with sleeping, nightmares, and trouble with separating from their parents.

**Effects on Elementary Students.** Elementary students may show signs of distress through somatic complaints such as increased irritability, aggression, and anger. Their behaviors may be inconsistent. These students may also exhibit impaired attention and concentration and a change in school performance. There is also the possibility of more school absences. They may also experience trouble at school, academically and
socially, with their peers, fear separation from a loved one, have unreasonable fears of something bad happening, and demonstrate sadness.

**Effects on the Brain and Learning.** Trauma is a serious issue which can impact how a child learns. From the moment we are born and through adolescence, the body’s biology develops. Normal biological function is partly determined by environment. When a child develops under a constant amount of stress or there is a significant amount of fear, the immune system and the body’s stress response systems may not develop normally (National Child Traumatic Stress Network, 2017). Why is this significant? As time goes on and a child or adult experiences a normal level of stress, the individual’s body responds as if it were under extreme stress. For example, as an educator you might observe a child who is out of control- in this situation, there is a marked increase in the levels of breathing; or a complete “shut down.” The National Child Traumatic Stress Network (2017) explains that when this happens, the body is adapting to the stressor which is perceived as a significant threat, but in reality it is overreacting to a normal context of stress.

The National Child Traumatic Stress Network (2017) and Lane, et al (2017) both agree, that the brain can physically change by experience and trauma can impact the overall size of the brain and/or different areas of functioning. As the National Child Traumatic Stress Network (2017) explains, that in a stressful environment, the brain’s development is impaired and these experiences can limit the brain from reaching its full potential. During a stressful event, the sympathetic nervous system activates the fight-or-flight response. The stress hormone cortisol is released. Normally, when the stressor has diminished, the parasympathetic nervous system responds and returns the body to
normal. However, in a traumatic event, excess cortisol is released in the body. Gromisch (2015) points out (as cited in Nixon, Nishith and Resick, 2004), large amounts of cortisol have been found to have negative effects on the brain, damaging neurons in the hippocampus.

For educators, it is important to understand the effects of trauma and the manifestations it can present. Being aware of these symptoms may help in understanding the deep impact trauma can have on traumatized students, specifically refugees and immigrants. A traumatic event can have lasting effects on a child and can interrupt school routines and the process of learning (National Child Traumatic Stress Network, 2017). Children who experience trauma may have difficulties in thinking clearly, reasoning, and problem solving. When children are exposed to traumatic experiences, their bodies and minds have learned to be in chronic stress-response mode, and as a result, they may have problems acquiring new skills or taking in new information. According to the National Child Traumatic Stress Network (2017), the effects of trauma can produce a high level of emotional upset, disruptive behavior or an increase in absences. Trauma can produce extreme stress and can impede concentration, cognitive functioning, memory, as well as the manifestation of physical symptoms (National Association of School Psychologists, 2015). As discussed earlier, children may display physical symptoms and, as a result, require more referrals to the nurse’s office. There is little a teacher can do to prevent this from occurring; however, the one thing teachers can do is be supportive and create a safe and caring classroom environment.

Children may have different emotional responses to trauma and may internalize or externalize stress reactions and, as a result, exhibit anger or present with symptoms
related to mental health conditions such as depression, anxiety, or PTSD. In the next section I will focus on PTSD, one of the mental health disorders highly associated with the exposure to traumatic events.

PTSD

As stated earlier in this paper, PTSD is Post-traumatic Stress Disorder which is a psychiatric disorder that can occur in people who have experienced or witnessed a traumatic event such as a natural disaster, a serious accident, a terrorist act, war/combat, rape or other violent personal assault (American Psychiatric Association, 2017). According to the Refugee Health Technical Assistance Center (2017), there have been over 600,000 refugees resettled throughout the United States since 2000. Refugees leave their countries for many different reasons and for some the journey is fearful, traumatizing and long. This process of resettlement can increase the risk for refugees to suffer from a variety of mental health issues. For many refugees, witnessing extreme traumatic events such as death or serious injury is a common experience. The most common mental health diagnoses associated with refugee populations includes PTSD, major depression, generalized anxiety and panic attacks (Refugee Health Technical Assistance Center, 2017). According to a variety of studies, the rate of PTSD and major depression in settled refugees ranges from 10 to 40%. Higher rates of PTSD have been seen in children and adolescents ranging from 50-90% and major depression 6-40% (Caswell, Blackburn, & Barker, 2011).

Manifestations. Minnesota Association for Children’s Health (2017) states that children or youth who have witnessed a traumatic event are at risk for developing PTSD. Children with PTSD often have persistent, intrusive frightening thoughts and memories
of the experience. They may exhibit some of the following symptoms or behaviors: nightmares, flashbacks, headaches, stomach aches, irritability, impulsiveness, anger and hostility, difficulty concentrating, fear of certain places, avoidance, overwhelming sadness or hopelessness, and a fear of certain places, things, or situation which remind them of the event. According to Minnesota Association for Children’s Health (2017), PTSD is diagnosed if the symptoms last more than one month. Symptoms usually begin within three months of the trauma, but occasionally not until years after.

**Educational Implications/Learning Difficulties**

The severity and persistence of symptoms varies greatly among students affected by PTSD. Symptoms can come and go and a child’s mood can change drastically which can make it difficult for teachers to intervene or refer students. Some students may act younger than their age and exhibit clingingness, impulsivity, aggression, and impatience (Minnesota Association for Children’s Mental Health, 2014). Students with PTSD will often regress and are unable to perform previously acquired skills. Their capacity for learning may decrease. According to Tull (2017), individuals with PTSD struggle with memory and attention problems. He also explains that they tend to have problems remembering words (verbal memory), facts, and specific details of past events. He further states that the individual may also have difficulties with concentrating and can be easily distracted making it hard for the individual to pay attention when doing a task. Individuals with PTSD can also exhibit high levels of anxiety and can be a contributing factor of learning difficulties (Tull, 2017). Tull explains that when a person is feeling very anxious, it can interfere with the way his/her brain encodes information into their memory, thus making it harder for them to remember even the smallest of details.
As I have discussed, PTSD can directly impact a child’s learning. It is important for educators to be aware of these symptoms and establish instructional strategies or classroom accommodations. Minnesota Association for Children’s Mental Health (2014) offers the following suggestions: establish a feeling of safety and acceptance within the classroom, provide consistent and predictable routines, try to eliminate stressful situations from the classroom, and incorporate large-muscle activities into the day. PTSD can impact an individual directly, as well as, impact family members. A transformation then begins called Secondary PTSD or Secondary Traumatic Stress (STS).

**Secondary PTSD**

Secondary PTSD has specific manifestations, implications, and if left untreated, it can have a direct impact on children (Price, 2017). Secondary PTSD is not a diagnosis and it is not recognized by the Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders. However, secondary traumatic stress is the emotional duress which results when an individual hears about the firsthand trauma experiences of another (National Child Traumatic Stress Network, 2017). Gewitz, Forgatch and Weiling (2008) states that family consequences of exposure to traumatic stress includes a decreased ability to parent. Individuals with PTSD are more likely to be more reactive, more violent and more withdrawn in relationships with a spouse or children (Gerwitz, Polasny, DeGarmo, Khanylis & Erbis, 2010). According to Ballard, Wieling and Solheim (2017), (as cited in Stover, Hall, McMahon & Easton, 2012), research shows that parental PTSD can significantly affect parent-child relationships.

**Manifestations.** Individuals who experience secondary PTSD or secondary traumatic stress have symptoms which mimic those of PTSD. Those who are affected by
secondary stress may have an increase in arousal and avoidance reactions, changes in memories, and a disruption in their perceptions of safety, trust, and independence (National Child Traumatic Stress Network, 2017). Some of the symptoms or behaviors individuals of secondary PTSD may exhibit are: anger, sleeplessness, chronic exhaustion, guilt, hopelessness, avoidance, insensitivity to violence, social withdrawal, poor boundaries and the inability to listen (National Child Traumatic Stress Network, 2017).

**Implications of Untreated Family Members with PTSD.** The American Psychological Association (2017), indicates that if left untreated, PTSD is unlikely to disappear. Instead, individuals may experience chronic pain, depression, drug and alcohol abuse, and sleep disturbances, job loss, and problems with keeping or establishing a relationship. When a person is affected by PTSD, the individual is often in a state of high arousal which can have damaging effects on the brain (PTSD Treatment Help, 2017).

**Effects on Children.** Individuals who have PTSD often re-experience traumatic events through vivid memories or dreams which can occur suddenly and without intention. This can have a direct impact on a child which can be frightening (U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs: National Center for PTSD, 2017). Children often do not understand what is happening or why it is happening; children may begin to worry about their parent. One of the common symptoms of PTSD is avoiding people, places or experiences which could trigger upsetting memories. The U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs: National Resource Center for PTSD (2017) explains, that when a parent avoids places like restaurants, stores or movie theaters, children may feel their parent does not care about them, when in reality the parent is avoiding places which are just too much for them to handle emotionally. How does this directly impact children? When a parent
avoids a particular situation or place and has trouble with feeling “positive emotions,” children may inaccurately interpret as the parent not loving them (U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs: National Resource Center for PTSD, 2017). Children can respond to this in various ways. For example, a child who needs and wants a connection with their loved one may exhibit some of the same behaviors or actions of the parent. Another response could be that the child takes on the adult role to fill in for the parent with PTSD and will often not act his or her own age. The child who is unemotionally attached or seems removed from the situation often does not respond outright, but rather, may exhibit problems at school, depression, anxiety, and problems with relationships later in life (U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs: Resource Center for PTSD, 2017).

The number of children who have experienced trauma is on the rise. Are schools and administrators prepared to meet the educational needs of these students? How are some existing programs addressing them? In the next section, I will explore some educational programs for refugees and immigrants, focusing on culturally-sensitive schools, and the refugee and immigrant programs of St. Paul Public and Rochester Public schools.

**Educational Programs for Refugees and Immigrants**

According to the U.S. Department of Education, the Office of Civil Rights, a school district may not ask about a child’s citizenship or immigration status to establish residency within the district. Families can share their immigration status with the school or teachers, so whenever possible, it is helpful to know the education background and immigration status of a student which can help a teacher gain insight into a student’s academic performance and behavior. In addition, it can alert teachers to potential trauma.
Knowing the connections between immigration and trauma, as well as those between trauma and learning helps teachers provide learning experiences for their students. (McHugh & Sugarman, 2015).

**Trauma-Sensitive Schools.** According to Trauma and Learning Policy Initiative (2017), a trauma-sensitive school is one in which all students feel safe, welcomed, and supported. The educational mission of a trauma-sensitive school is addressing trauma’s impact on learning on a school-wide basis. Trauma-sensitive schools place emphasis on inquiry-based process. Inquiry-based learning is a research-based strategy which actively involves students in the exploration of the content, issues, and questions surrounding a curricular area or concept (Lane, 2007). Such an approach allows for necessary teamwork, coordination creativity, and sharing responsibility for all students among all staff. Cole, et al (2009), among others, suggests learning be continuous for all educators and students.

Research shows that a child’s ability to learn, form relationships, and function appropriately in classrooms is affected by trauma. According to Susan Cole, et al, (2009), trauma-sensitive schools promotes an education which enables schools to become supportive environments where children can focus, behave appropriately, and learn. The goal in helping traumatized children is, to ensure they succeed in school.

Cole, et al (2009) suggests that schools partner with parents and guardians and give teachers the support they need to teach children how to regulate or calm their emotions and behavior. The authors further explain, that this will help students master both academic and social skills which are essential for the healing process and as a result increase teaching and learning, but reduce the time spent on discipline.


**Trauma-Sensitive – Framework.** The action plan for such schools is based on a framework on six key elements: schoolwide infrastructure and culture, staff training, linking with mental health professionals, academic instruction for traumatized children, nonacademic strategies, and school policies, procedures and protocols (Cole, et al, 2009). According to Cole et al, (2009), this framework helps schools establish an environment to help traumatized children with relationships, regulate emotions and behaviors, and achieve high levels of academic success. When a school works together and has a better understanding of trauma, they can form effective partnerships with mental health professionals who are able to advocate for new resources and interventions which directly impact students.

When refugees and immigrants arrive in American schools, time is not on their side. These students are expected to learn English, within as few as four years, master academic content, and adapt to American culture. According to Maxwell (2012), there are a small number of programs around the United States with promising practices for teaching refugees and immigrants. The impact these programs can have on students should be explored by more schools who are working with refugee and immigrant populations. In the following section I will explore two refugee programs in Minnesota, located in Rochester and St. Paul.

**Rochester Refugee Program.** Rochester’s refugee program has many resources and programs for newcomers; however, most are focused on the middle or high school levels. Unlike many other districts that use language-line services for interpretation, Rochester’s refugee program has the availability of 19 interpreters representing 11
different languages. Interpreters spend time in the Newcomer Centers to support students in their native language.

Rochester’s EL program goal is to help students achieve at their highest levels, both in their ability to use the English language and in their academics. Rochester’s district services a large number of refugees and as a result, the program components are designed with refugee students in mind. One of the ways the district supports its refugee population is through newcomer centers. Bridging Refugee Youth and Children’s Services (2017) reported Rochester Public Schools have several newcomer centers (five elementary, one middle school, and one high school). These centers provide service to students with interrupted formal education and those who need intensive English instruction. Typically, a student stays in the program for about one year. The newcomer centers are not located in separate schools, but “schools within schools.” This allows for students to gradually transition to the mainstream classrooms. A unique quality of this program is that students learn English and also receive an introduction to the academic culture of the schools. This gives them an opportunity to see how schools operate, learn about school expectations, and all while helping them navigate their way through the school day (Bridging Refugee Youth and Children Services, 2017). According to BRYCS (Bridging Refugee Youth and Children Services, 2017), one of the successful programs at the middle school newcomer center is chess. This program gives newcomers a chance to learn something new that does not require English, while also teaching learning skills such as planning ahead, making decisions, and good sportsmanship at the same time.

Rochester Public Schools supports an after-school tutoring program called the “Homework Assistance with Peers Program (HAPP)”. This program is offered three
days a week to high school students. All students may take advantage of this program; however, refugee students are often tutored by their high-school peers, some of whom are former ELs. Each session begins with a 15-minute “cultural conversations,” which has been a very successful component of the program. When students arrive, they are given a topic or question to discuss. An example of a cultural conversation can be, “How do you celebrate Eid?” These conversations have been beneficial for both the newcomer and American-born students in creating relationships. In addition to this after-school tutoring program, the district offers high-school preparation courses in math to assist newcomers with the acquisition of the language of mathematics.

**Parent Involvement.** Rochester Public Schools have made efforts to increase parent involvement. They created extra-curricular heritage language schools led by parent volunteers and district staff. This language school invites parents to school with their children, and while the children are learning their native language, parents are learning tips on how to support their children in school. The district also makes a great effort to increase parent involvement through heritage and cultural nights to focus on the diversity the students bring to school (Bridging Refugee Youth and Children’s Services, 2017).

There seems to be many great qualities to this program. In the next section I will examine another refugee program in St. Paul and outline similarities and/or differences between the two programs.

**St. Paul Refugee Program.** The EL department in St. Paul Public Schools (SPPS) is a program which offers content-based EL instruction to promote English language proficiency and mastery of academic content. This program stands out because
of its successful outreach to EL families and communities, providing opportunities to learn, grow and participate inside and outside of school through family involvement activities, and hold district-wide parent meetings and classes. The goal of this program is to promote and increase parent involvement in the education of ELs; therefore, childcare, food, and transportation are provided to parents for all family involvement activities (Bridging Refugee Youth & Children’s Services, 2017).

Unlike some other districts and programs, all new students, whether American-born or foreign born, register through the district’s “Student Placement Center” to determine school and class placement. The center is staffed with individuals who speak Hmong, Karen, Somali, and Spanish and interpretation in other languages is provided as necessary. There are different programs available to ELs depending on their language and academic needs.

**El programs.** Students with interrupted formal education, which includes many refugees, participate in EL programs that are designed for them. The SPPS EL department provides the following programs and opportunities to students of Saint Paul Public Schools.

*Language Academy program.* The Language Academy Program is for newcomer students in grades 1-6 for both ELs and native English speakers. Each classroom is taught collaboratively by mainstream and EL teachers. All students are taught the same academic materials; however, ELs are provided with scaffolding from their teachers and bilingual educational assistants. Most students attend this program for two years (Bridging Refugee Youth & Children’s Services, 2017).
*English language center (ELC).* SPPS also offers an English Language Center (ELC) which is a program available to older newcomer students in grades 7 through 12. All classes are taught by ESL teachers. Students in the ELC spend approximately 75% of their time in intensive language classes and 25% in mainstream elective classes. Students spend about two years in this program and then are transitioned to mainstream courses.

*Alternative programs.* There are also alternative programs available for newcomer students such as International Academy –LEAP (Learning Education & Pathways), dual language, Hmong Enrichment and programs for Karen and Somali populations. All of these programs are possible due to the vast number of EL students. Funding for programs and services is provided by Title III funds. Parent involvement activities for Hmong and Somali families are partially funded by a Refugee School Impact Grant from the Office of Refugee Resettlement (Bridging Refugee Youth & Children’s Services, 2017).

St. Paul Public Schools serves the largest population of refugees and immigrants in Minnesota. According to Minnesota Department of Education (2016), SPPS services around 1200 ELs and of these, 500 to 1000 are resettled refugees. Although there has been a recent decline in EL enrollment numbers in large urban areas like St. Paul Public Schools, numbers are growing in large suburban districts (see Figure 2.1). This is also the case for Olmsted County where Rochester Public Schools services around 100 to 500 resettled refugees (see Table 2.2).
Table 2.2: Large Suburban School Increases in English Language Learner Enrollment

Despite the fact these two programs both support a large number refugees, there are some similarities and differences. The similarities between these two programs will
be considered first. The overall objective of both programs is to increase English language proficiency and academic excellence while increasing parent involvement. Both Rochester and St. Paul School Districts provide programs to support their newcomers, including a newcomer center, language academy or English Language Center. Among other similarities are the availability of interpreters and the importance of increasing parent involvement through workshops or extra-curricular activities. There are some distinct differences between these two refugee programs. The first big difference is the type of programs or courses available to ELs. SPPS offers more programs for all ages, whereas the Rochester district provides programming and courses designed for middle and high school-aged students. Another difference between these two districts is the amount of time an EL remains in the program before transitioning to the mainstream. For ELs in the Newcomer Center in Rochester, ELs remain in the program for one year, whereas in the Language Academy or English Language Center, in St. Paul, ELs remain in the program for up to two years.

I would strongly encourage other districts around Minnesota to take a closer look into these two programs. The next section focuses on the challenges in the United States educational school system.

**Challenges for United States Educational School Systems.** United States school systems are facing a shift in educational models. States and local districts are struggling to address the diverse linguistic, academic, and socioemotional needs of ELs who have experienced significant disruption and trauma, while at the same time trying to avoid segregation (Sugarman, 2015). One of the many challenges facing United States school systems is that the needs of students are increasing, both academically and
socioemotionally. The term social and emotional development refers to the following components: development of the capacity of the child from birth to five years of age to form close and secure adult and peer relationships; regulation, and expression of emotions in socially and culturally appropriate ways; and exploration of the environment and learning – all in the context of family, community, and culture (Artman, et al, 2017). School systems are trying to adjust, providing more tailored supports to meet the needs of students, especially those populations that are linguistically and culturally diverse. Sugarman (2015) states that, because of this shift, school systems need to develop more intensive professional development for all teachers, not just language teachers. Furthermore, she indicates that training must go beyond the application of instruction; school systems need to focus on intercultural communication, language, content integration, and appropriate responses to students who have experienced trauma.

The enrollment of children with migrant backgrounds, children of immigrants and refugees is growing, as noted previously. This brings challenges, and unique opportunities for United States school systems. Success is possible by creating a welcoming environment; supporting the dreams and aspirations of students with diverse backgrounds, by filling educational gaps; and by helping those students who lack strong literacy skills to acquire them. The biggest challenge for school systems is providing instructional support for culturally diverse students while at the same time providing access to grade-level content. According to McHugh and Sugarman (2015), too often, immigrants fall behind their United States native born peers, which results in an increase in school dropouts.
What are some ways in which educators can reach and educate refugee and immigrant students? There are many different approaches to teaching refugees and immigrants. In the next section I will explore some approaches in teaching and meeting the needs of refugee and immigrant students: Culturally Responsive Teaching, MALP, and an inclusive learning environment for refugees.

Educational Approaches to Teaching Refugees, Immigrants and SLIFE

Culturally Responsive Teaching, Gay, (2000, p. 29) defines culturally responsive teaching connects students’ cultural knowledge, prior experiences, and performance styles to academic knowledge and intellectual tools in ways that legitimize what students already know. It is essential to develop an understanding of the beliefs, values, norms, and ways of thinking and learning of refugee and immigrant to have effective instruction (DeCapua, 2016). It is important to point out that some of our refugees and immigrants have informal ways of learning; for some it is oral based learning and mentoring, and not learning from a textbook. For example, when children learn to weave, they are not given lessons in and readings on the parts of the loom or pattern design, but instead they learn how to weave by observing and engaging in the weaving process. This is important because we as educators need to be aware of the different learning experiences and styles of their refugee and immigrant students in order to be able to develop and plan lessons that are culturally responsive (DeCapau, 2016). Refugee students arrive with knowledge, skills, literacy experiences, and ways of thinking that differ from those expected and assumed in classrooms today. Culturally responsive teaching encourages teachers to embrace and build on what these students bring to the classroom, thus culturally and educationally supporting academic
achievement. Culturally responsive teaching is based on five concepts: 1) teachers become culturally competent, 2) teachers use their cultural understandings to develop and refine culturally responsive curriculum incorporating elements to make it more meaningful to students, 3) students having a supportive learning environment, 4) there must be a cultural congruency in the classroom, and 5) there needs to be effective classroom instruction (DeCapua, 2016). According to the author, this is no easy task. She describes two frameworks to help teachers develop and manage culturally responsive teaching: 1) the Intercultural Communication Framework for developing and creating a greater cultural awareness, and 2) the Mutually Adaptive Learning Paradigm” (MALP) which is designed to transition SLIFE to formal education.

MALP. Teachers are eager for ways to improve the achievement of their ELs. Teachers scaffold lessons, have visuals, supply bilingual dictionaries or glossaries, and graphic organizers and outlines, but this just not enough to meet their educational needs. MALP is an instructional model designed to improve achievement of ELs through a mutually adaptive approach. It is a way to implement culturally responsive teaching (DeCapua & Marshall, 2015, p. 49). MALP is intended to transition these learners from their accustomed ways of learning to a “Western-style formal education (DeCapua & Marshall, 2015). MALP consists of three components: conditions, processes, and activities. Conditions are those elements which must be present in the classrooms before learning can take place. For example, it is essential for a strong relationship to occur between educators, ELs, and their families. Also, learning needs to be relevant to students and activating background knowledge of the content is essential (DeCapua & Marshall, 2015). The MALP model focuses on language and content, using familiar vocabulary,
sentence structures, and prior knowledge. According to DeCapua and Marshall (2015), this allows students to concentrate on the academic task.

The second component of MALP is “processes.” These processes are how students expect to interact with new material and develop their understanding. This provides opportunities to move frequently between individual accountability and sharing of knowledge of responsibilities. In our schools today, individual accountability is exemplified by standardized tests, but some refugees and immigrants may be generally more accustomed to working together. MALP activities integrate oral and written modes, providing learners with appropriate scaffolding to develop literacy (Mutually Adaptive Learning Paradigm, 2014).

The third component of MALP is the focus of new activities for learning. Students are expected to demonstrate mastery of a subject matter. These activities are tasks where students implement different ways of thinking, either concretely or in immediately provable tasks. Selling goods at a street market and practicing math skills is a good example of an activity for learning.

How many times have educators focused on what refugees and immigrants lack? MALP is a model that brings educators a deeper appreciation of who these students are and what they bring to their new educational setting. Educators provide a pathway towards school success.

**Inclusive Learning Environment for Refugee Students.** As I have documented throughout my research and described above, there are an increasing number of refugees and immigrants across the United States and around the world, yet schools lack the programs and are ill-equipped to recognize and respond to the growing needs of these
children. Block, Cross, Riggs, and Gibbs (2014), evaluated a School Support Program in Victoria, Australia. This program brought partnerships between schools and agencies and provided a holistic model that was focused on learning as well as the social and emotional needs of refugee students. According to Block, et al (2014), this program is a “feasible” model which supports the capacity of schools to provide an inclusive education for refugees. To create an inclusive learning environment, curriculum must be developed to accommodate diverse student voices and perspectives, so that all children feel they belong and can contribute (Taylor and Sidhu, 2012). A few of the programs objectives were to raise awareness and understanding within the schools; build capacity through sharing information; establish sustainable and mutually supportive networks; develop resources; facilitate conversations between stakeholders; and promote good practice and provide specialist support (Block, et. al, 2014, p. 1341). One of the reasons this program had success was the commitment by all to recognize and embrace diversity as a strength of the school (Block et al, 2014). Unlike many schools in the United States, this program included professional learning workshops, as well as consultation, referral assistance, newsletters and free access to resources. Much of the program’s content was supported by an online resource, called “School’s in for Refugees” which was available biannually to all schools in and outside of the program (Block, et. al, 2014). The implementation of this program was successful and attributed to the involvement of school and departmental leadership which, according to Block, Cross, Riggs, and Gibbs (2014) was vital. According to United States Department of Education, Office of Special Education and Rehabilitation Services (2008), United States Department of Education is always constantly working on ways to improve educational access and ensure that all students
gain knowledge and skills necessary to succeed in today’s increasingly competitive world. There are barriers that continue to divide our country; we must try to break down seek to learn more about the cultures of other nations, sharing information on policy and best practice can only help to make our work more effective (United States Department of Education, Office of Special Education and Rehabilitation Services, 2008). If this is true, the United States Department of Education should begin investigating the successful School Support Program in Australia that brought partnerships between schools and agencies, and provided a holistic model that was focused on learning as well as the social and emotional needs of refugee students.

As explained earlier, there is an increasing number of refugees and immigrants coming to the United States and districts and schools need to be prepared to educate these students. Therefore, having an instructional and learning approach is crucial, especially if schools want to foster academic engagement and success. Culturally Responsive Teaching, MALP, and inclusive learning environments are just a few different approaches or learning models to use with refugees and immigrant children. To provide an inclusive learning environment, schools should select a specific educational approach with a solid teaching and learning model; however, it is also important that teachers have strategies and resources for the classroom to assist them in working with these students. The next section focuses on strategies and resources educators can utilize in their classrooms to meet the needs of refugees and immigrants.

**Strategies and Resources for Schools/Educators**

Kovinthan (2016), as well as others, agrees that the demographics and needs of our schools are changing rapidly as refugees and immigrants continue to arrive in the
United States. Through most of my research, reported in this project, which has been on educational programs and learning and teaching practices, it can be concluded that schools need to provide all students with a safe and welcoming classroom environment, which especially important for refugees and immigrants.

The literature summarized above suggests that trauma is a growing concern among schools across the globe and there is little information on how to teach these students. Adams (2013) discusses the need for trauma-informed teaching. In the next section I will explore the training and research on trauma-informed teaching in California.

**Trauma-Informed Teaching.** Trauma-informed teaching is an intervention and is meant to improve school culture and provide a new approach to school discipline (Adams, 2013). Trauma-sensitive teaching uses strategies, such as, Positive Behavioral Interventions and Supports (PBIS) which is a framework to support students affected by trauma. PBIS is a schoolwide discipline framework that uses schoolwide systems of support including proactive strategies for defining, teaching, and supporting student behaviors to create positive school environments. (OSEP, 2010). Schools using PBIS are found to be most effective when these strategies are used consistently and universally. PBIS strategies are important tools to decrease disruptions, increase instructional time, and improve student social behavior and academic outcomes (OSEP, 2010). PBIS is implemented in classrooms and non-classroom settings, such as hallways, buses, and restrooms.

Research shows that trauma can impact a child’s ability to learn, form relationships, and function appropriately in the classroom (Cole, et. al, 2009). The
number of students from trauma-based backgrounds is increasing in our schools, so it is vital for plans and strategies to be in place. In California, schools are beginning to address the effect of severe trauma on the health and achievement of their students. The move to create trauma-sensitive schools is to bring an understanding of trauma to all systems who deal with youth, including juvenile, justice, foster care, mental health, and education.

According to Adams (2013), trauma is about the lack of safety, so effective interventions focus on restoring safety first. Adams reports, that staff in various districts in California are being trained on how to recognize students’ explosive anger, classroom outbursts, habitual withdrawal, and self-injurious behaviors as signs of traumatic stress. Some of the strategies involve teaching students how to self-regulate and calm down by taking a break, taking a deep breath and becoming aware of their surroundings. An important element in this training is to build rapport with students by praising progress and speaking kindly.

It is important for schools to have programs, plans and strategies in place to support all students. In the next section, I will focus on strategies, modifications and accommodations to meet the needs of refugee and immigrant students.

**Modifications and Accommodations for English Language Learners.** Schools frame and build programming and policies for ELs based on their home languages, countries of origin, rate of English language development, and performance on state assessments. While all this is helpful information, there are ELs who have experienced or are experiencing high levels of trauma. When I think back to Rahim’s first day, we as a school, were not prepared to meet all of his needs, academically and emotionally.
Teachers need to have strategies and resources to use within the classroom. The following are some steps and strategies educators and schools can use.

**Strategy: Pre-arrival of EL.** To ensure that the EL and family feel welcomed when they arrive, it is important to learn and gather as much information about the student’s educational and cultural background (Hos, 2016). EL teachers are great sources and may be able to provide some information and assistance that content teachers may need. It is important to develop a collaborative team of counselors, social workers, teachers and support staff in order to have a school and learning environment that is based on the personal, social, cultural and world experiences of ELs. It is also helpful to prepare your class for the arrival of a new EL. For example, sharing information about the language he or she speaks, the country he or she is from or even brainstorming with the class ways they (natives of the United States) might feel if their parents took them to another country to live (Trenton Public Schools, 2017).

**Strategy and Accommodations: Arrival of EL.** As teachers begin to know new students, it is important to draw their strengths and provide modeling and ample opportunities for them to practice. Hos (2016) suggests implementing predictable classroom routines and practices and separating learning tasks into smaller steps; doing so will provide students more processing time and make the tasks more manageable. She also suggests, providing a model of expected behavior for both small and large group activities. To increase exposure to English, simple English phrases and pictures can be posted around the room and classroom objects can be labeled. It is important to keep students engaged, appropriate resources and support activities should be identified to support students while their English skills are still very limited. Learning time can be
more meaningful by providing opportunities to participate in group work with students who speak the same language. For older students who need to develop beginning literacy skills, the EL teachers or other staff should have resources with age-appropriate materials that allow students to practice their developing English language skills. Trenton Public Schools (2017) suggests establishing an English Language Learner (ELL) Center filled with activities for new language learners. Here is a list of items teachers may want to include in their ELL Learning Center, however remember to start small and add to it as the needs of the student change (see Figure 2.2).

**Figure 2.2: English Language Learner Center Items**

- A picture dictionary
- Laptop or iPad with headphones
- Copies of activity pages (sequencing, sight words, alphabet, etc.),
- Crayons, scissors, pencil, erasers, and paper
- Notecards (great for flashcards or concentration games)
- Beginning phonics books
- Picture books or beginning readers
- Nonfiction books (preferably picture books that cover the same content material you are teaching), and books in the students’ home language.

For an extended list of items go to: www.trenton.k12.nj.us/Downloads/ESL_Modifications_2.pdf

The entry-level (or newcomer) EL should have materials that allow them to work independently on activities suited to their specific needs. The materials can include: pictures to learn classroom vocabulary, alphabet, colors, numbers, shapes, number words, days of the week, months of the year, body parts, and survival vocabulary (Haynes, 2017).

It is important to keep in mind that entry-level (or newcomer) ELs have limited or no understanding of English; however, they can process, understand, produce or use such
materials as pictorial or graphic representations of content area language, words, phrases or chunks of language when presented with one-step commands; directions; WH-choice or yes/no questions; or statements with sensory, graphic or interactive support (WIDA, 2007). Teachers need some quick ideas to teach an entering level EL. When possible, teachers should use manipulatives, visuals, realia, props, and games. In addition, teachers may also require physical response to check comprehension; display print to support oral language, use bilingual students as peer helpers; adjust their rate of speech to enhance comprehension, ask yes or no questions, ask students to show/point/draw, and teach content area. It is also helpful for students to create a vocabulary notebook complete with words, phrases and pictures (WIDA, 2007).

Remember that ELs need to be a part of your class and should be engaged in learning, not sitting and drawing. Instead students should be encouraged to work on these activities when they cannot follow the work being done in the classroom. However, it is important not to isolate the student from their peers with separate work all day long. These students need to be part of your class and should be integrated as much as possible (Trenton Public Schools, 2017).

Classroom or Lesson Modifications. Trenton Public Schools (2017), explains that there a number of modifications teachers can employ in their classrooms to support ELs. Modifications can be made in the environment, assignments, materials, assessments, lesson presentation and classroom management. For example, in the environment teachers can assign preferential seating, assign a peer tutor, and provide visual charts or use objects or manipulatives. Teachers also may modify assignments and assessments, such as shortening assignments, providing oral prompts and allowing oral versus written
responses, providing a model, reading a test aloud, modifying format or length of the test,
and providing glossaries in the native language. Modifications to lessons and materials
can be made by using simplified language, visuals, individual or group discussions,
graphic organizers, pre-teaching vocabulary, or providing recorded text language
(Trenton Public Schools, 2017).

Gaps in Current Research

Based on the literature reviewed, one can conclude, that there is an abundant
amount of research on trauma experienced by refugees and immigrants which has a great
impact on their education and mental well-being. We understand that the journey of a
refugee or immigrant is long and trauma can be experienced at any stage of the
immigration process. With the research presented, we know pre-settlement experiences of
refugee children can impact their post-settlement academic performance, mental health
needs, and sense of belonging in school. However, despite these significant implications,
there is very little research on the education of refugee children in the United States
which focuses on post-arrival experiences, and little attention to educational experiences
of these children in their countries of origin. In addition, we know schools are poorly
equipped to recognize and respond to the multiple challenges faced by children who must
learn a new language while grappling with unfamiliar educational and social systems.
There are so many challenges, yet evidence for effective interventions in schools that
promote an inclusive learning environment are scarce. Educators and all who work with
refugees and immigrants with trauma need resources, so it is my aspiration to close this
gap in current research and create resources that provide effective interventions and
strategies so that teachers can utilize them in their classrooms immediately.
Conclusion

When I first set out to do my research, I was hoping to learn how to better support refugees and immigrants, especially those in trauma. The research clearly shows a strong and critical need for all educational stakeholders to understand the needs, struggles, and the trauma of refugees and immigrants. Our job as teachers is to educate all students who walk through our doors. Throughout the world, there are a growing number of immigrants, refugee students with trauma, and SLIFE. Previous research indicates educators’ experiences in working with refugees and trauma are limited and there are a lack of resources and training to support these students. Through my own observations, conversations, and research, it is evident that many education practitioners lack the experience and training to adequately meet the needs of immigrant and refugee students. Furthermore, the research offers very few suggestions about to best meet the needs of this growing population. Through many conversations with colleagues, it appears that there is a strong desire for professional development on the topic of educating children in trauma. As the literature suggests, trauma can affect a child’s education and, if as educators we do nothing, these children can and may develop mental health disorders. At this point, I can’t help but think about my student Rahim, and ask myself, can I meet his educational and socioemotional needs any differently after all of my research? I can say with confidence that, this research has made an impact on me professionally, and I have acquired additional knowledge, tools and resources to use with my students. With all that I have gained through my research, I am equally eager to share all what I have learned with colleagues. Chapter three will present my project design and the research framework used to answer my research question: How can professional development be provided to
assist educators in working with refugees and immigrants who have experienced trauma? My project is based on the literature and will be used to create professional development workshop for my school. I will be creating a Power Point which includes background information on refugees, immigrants, trauma, PTSD, trauma-sensitive schools, and teacher resources. This will give teachers some of the tools and strategies needed to impact the learning of these students.
CHAPTER THREE

Project Description

Introduction

In this capstone project, I have investigated how trauma affects student learning and the impact it has on refugee and immigrant children. There was a substantial amount of literature available on trauma and how it affects the brain and the process of learning in children. After analyzing the literature presented in Chapter two, I have a better understanding of trauma and the effects on the brain and learning. This impacts me professionally as I am better able to address the needs of students in my school. Although educators need a solid understanding of trauma and its effects, there is a vital piece missing. The literature I have reviewed offered suggestions; however, there were no practical resources or strategies for teachers to use in their classrooms. My research helped me to fill this gap and answered the question: How can professional development be provided to assist educators in working with refugees and immigrants who have experienced trauma? To fill this gap, I created a professional development workshop for schools and teachers that contain strategies and resources they can use with their students.

In this chapter, I will describe my research project, research framework, adult learning, the setting and audience, and timeline. Throughout my research process, I gathered and read literature on trauma and refugees. Many resources describe how trauma affects learning and provide a few suggestions on how to help these children. However, there are very few practical examples or resources that teachers could utilize in their classrooms. Although giving teachers the resources they need is of utmost importance, first they need some background knowledge on the different types of
immigrant groups. Teachers also need to gain an understanding of the experiences and challenges faced by refugees and immigrants who experienced trauma. My goal is to create a practical and useful professional development workshop with resources and strategies for not only the mainstream and EL teachers, but for the entire staff. School staff will then be able to use these resources and strategies to assist traumatized students with their learning.

My project relied on secondary research, results obtained from the literature review presented in Chapter two along with, data published by refugee centers, personal experiences and observations, information gleaned from staff development, workshops and trainings, and finally observations made by teachers which have been shared with me. I will prepare a list of resources, strategies, accommodations, and modifications based on best practices found in my research, so that teachers, or anyone working with refugee children in trauma will be better able to address their needs. In the next section I will explain my project and how I will incorporate my research and give background information to teachers through a professional development workshop.

**Project Description**

I have created a professional development workshop for my school which included five sessions. The first session included a PowerPoint to give background information on refugees and immigrants, trauma and the effects on the brain and learning. The second session focused on how to create a trauma-sensitive school. This session included a video on why we need a trauma-sensitive school. The video was easily accessible through Google Drive and included a set of guiding questions (see Appendix B) as well as through my blog. I created a blog for staff to use as a platform for the
discussion as well as a place to ask questions. The third session was devoted to brainstorming and creating a trauma-sensitive school; developing the steps and training we needed to make a difference in the lives of our students. The fourth session focused on PTSD, and the educational implications for refugees and immigrants. To impact student learning, teachers had a fifth session devoted to strategies and resources.

As a final step in this project, which was an optional component for teachers and staff, the staff was presented with a list of recommended texts to read about the journeys and experiences of refugees and immigrants from various cultures. Teachers were also provided with a link to a website that includes resources to aid the creation of a trauma-aware classroom and school environment. This website serves as a cultural profile and resource tool. Users may learn more about a specific population within our district with tips to support the refugee and immigrant students they serve. This website was designed by Christine Houstman, an EL teacher in Anoka-Hennepin School District and it serves as an extension with my project.

To be proactive and knowing how important the information is for teachers, I secured permission from my principal and presented my professional development workshop to the staff. To assess the effectiveness of each professional development session, school staff completed an “Anoka-Hennepin Professional Development Feedback Form” (see Appendix A), to provide me with feedback and suggestions to improve future trainings. In the next section I will discuss the research framework and how it related to my project.
Research Framework

Boyd (2017) explains that critical theory in education questions our education system and asks: how can we best offer education to all people? She further explains that seeking answers to this question offers opportunities and understanding of the different perspectives of disadvantaged members of society. For example, with the increasing number of refugees and immigrants entering our school systems, there are additional and unique challenges to meet. Most districts and schools have not prepared their staff to meet the needs of these children, especially those with trauma. This problem needs to be addressed with professional development for teachers and school staff. In order to construct and plan out an effective professional development workshop, I researched adult learning.

Adult Learning Theory

In my professional journey as an EL (English Language) teacher, I am continually reflecting on my teaching and the impact it has on students. According to Knowles et al. (2005), adults need to know why they need to learn something before beginning to learn it. As the facilitator of this workshop, I need to make sure the adult learners are aware of its importance and the impact it can have on them as educators and as adults (Knowles, 2005, p.64). Knowles et al. (2005) defines adult learning as the process of adults gaining knowledge and expertise. Knowles et al. (2005) suggests that adults learn best when they are in an informal, comfortable, flexible, and nonthreatening setting. Knowles et al. (2005), suggests using an andragogy model. The andragogy model (see Table 3.1) is a process model based on eight elements: 1) preparing the learner; 2) establishing a climate conducive to learning; 3) creating a mechanism for mutual planning; 4) diagnosing the
needs for learning; 5) formulating program objectives (the content), 6) designing a pattern of learning experiences; 7) conducting learning experiences with suitable techniques and materials; and 8) evaluating the learning outcomes and rediagnosing learning needs (Knowles et al., 2005). There are four phases of the adult learning planning process: need, create, implement, and evaluate (Knowles, et al., 2005, p. 174).

As the facilitator of this workshop I went through all four of these stages. I began phase one “Need” as I embarked on my capstone journey and before creating my workshop. I first determined what learning was needed in order to achieve my goal, which led me to my research question, how can professional development be provided to assist educators in working with refugees and immigrants who have experienced trauma? Now that I had a goal in place I was ready for phase two “Create”. I created a strategy and the resources needed to help me achieve the goal. With the goal, strategies and resources in place, I was ready for phase four “Implement” and I implemented my professional development workshop for school staff. In order to determine the success of the workshop and to assess the attainment of the learning goal, I completed the fourth phase “Evaluate.” After completing each workshop session all school staff who participated were asked to complete the district feedback form (see Appendix A). After analyzing all of the feedback I determined to what degree my desired goal was obtained and what further professional development and training did our staff need. After analyzing the feedback, I realized that our staff needed time to implement the strategies and resources, so a survey was created to check on the progress throughout the year. A blog was also created, a platform where staff could have conversations and ask questions.
Before beginning the journey of completing this project, I observed and taught in a school where there are a growing number of refugees and immigrants. As an EL teacher, I can help English Learners (ELs) acquire English and teach them the academic language. However, optimal learning cannot take place when children have other obstacles and challenges that prevent them from doing so. This is especially true for many refugees and immigrant children. As I reflected on my experiences and observations of teaching this year, it was clear that there was a significant problem. The problem is that my school and I lack the knowledge and training to work with students in trauma. I saw this problem as an opportunity to begin my research and answer the question: How can professional development be provided to assist educators in working with refugees and immigrants who have experienced trauma? To answer this question based on the research outlined in Chapter two and what has been shared with me informally by my colleagues, along with what I learned in workshops, I am creating a professional development workshop for schools and teachers. Within this workshop, a PowerPoint will be presented and will include background information on refugees and immigrants, trauma and the effects on the brain and learning, Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD) and educational implications, and strategies and resources providing teachers and school staff with this training will provide teachers with a beginning set of tools they need to impact the learning of ELs.

Setting and Audience

My research project and professional development workshop were based on my observations and experiences in a suburban elementary school, in addition to the researching findings I have described in my literature review. This elementary school is
located in the northwest suburbs. There are 504 students enrolled, and of those, 189 (45.1%) qualify for free and reduced priced lunches which makes this a Title I school. Based on October 2016 enrollment, 43 students (11.7%) are ELs, 80 students (19.1%) are special education students, and 15 students (3.6%) are homeless (see Table 3.2).

Table 3.2: Suburban Elementary School - Minnesota Report Card

![Table 3.2](http://rc.education.state.mn.us/#demographics/orgId--10011414000_p--3)

After English, our top two home languages are Spanish and Arabic. Our newest ELs are from Iraq, Afghanistan, and Moldova. Although not documented, I believe our refugee students from Iraq have the highest rate of trauma. Nearly every teacher in the building works with students who have some type of trauma or mental health concerns. So it is essential to provide training and resources that allow teachers to be prepared to
work with these students. In the next section I will discuss my professional development workshop timeline.

**Session Timeline**

My research project includes a professional development workshop for my school staff. The workshop contains five sessions. I will present the first session before school resumes in the fall. Session two through five will be completed by the end of trimester one. To evaluate the workshop, participants will complete a district professional development feedback form for each session. Immediately following each session all feedback forms will be analyzed and used to improve the next session or the overall workshop.

The school year is busy, and time is always a factor in most schools. The impact of trauma is seen school wide so it is essential that all staff are trained. As a result, additional training sessions will take place throughout the year for the non-teaching school staff including: secretaries, nurses, and support staff. By the end of the school year, the workshop will be presented to additional elementary schools within the district.

**Summary**

In this chapter, I have outlined my research project which included the research framework. I gave a description of adult learning and the andragogy model as well as described how the four phases of the adult learning planning process which was employed in this project. I discussed adult learning and the andragogical model which is key for planning and developing appropriate professional development that educators can utilize. This chapter also captured the intended audience the project was designed for and included a detailed description of my project. I concluded this chapter with a timeline of
my professional development workshop which includes all five of the professional development workshop sessions presented to my school staff. The goal of this research was to help answer: *How can professional development be provided to educators in working with refugees and immigrants who have experienced trauma?* In Chapter Four, I will discuss what I have learned through the capstone process as a researcher and what has been the most valuable or important piece in my project and why. I will also discuss my next steps and where my research and information will go next.
CHAPTER FOUR

Conclusion

Overview

As educators we are always learning. Learning for educators is a reflective practice which leads to developmental insight. This chapter is a reflection on the capstone process and will include what I have learned as a researcher, writer, and learner. I will also revisit some important key points from my literature review which led me to new connections. Through what I have read and learned about the research process, there are certainly limitations to almost any research. As a result, I will explain some limitations of my project as well as present what future recommendations I would have to keep my project moving forward to benefit educators and students. The chapter will end with a summary to emphasize the key points and learning of this chapter and where my research and information will go next.

Reflection

In thinking back before this journey began, it was Rahim, an English Learner (EL) who was my inspiration for this project and he will be sketched in my memory forever. This is a student who must have felt all alone, scared and unsure of what to expect. His sadness and tears touched my heart in a way that could not be ignored. Rahim came to our school not knowing any English, no previous schooling experience, and was illiterate. This one boy along with many others, inspired me and led me to my research question: How can professional development be provided to assist educators in working with refugees and immigrants who have experienced trauma?

Going through the capstone process has opened my eyes as an educator, researcher, writer, and learner. This process has newly defined perseverance for me. There were many times
where I just wanted give up, but I remember what I tell my students, never give up, keep trying and anything is possible. I also kept in mind that this was not just for me, it is for educators who work with refugees and immigrants on a daily basis, struggling to find ways in which to help them. More importantly, I am doing this for the students like Rahim.

What have I learned? Better yet, what haven’t I learned from this process? To be perfectly honest I was scared of the idea of writing a thesis or capstone. I avoided it for quite some time. What could I possible research and write about that in the end would be as a long as a book? The truth is, the capstone process is just that - a process. This process is full of phases, some more challenging than others. The phases are completed through readings, conversations and feedback from professors and colleagues, research and writing, editing, revising and more writing. I remember the day I went to the writing center with chapters one through three in my hand. I placed it on the table and I couldn’t believe what was right there in front of me. I had to pinch myself and ask, “Did I actually write all this.” What I thought was impossible and unimaginable was now a reality right in front of my eyes. In a way I feel lucky to have had the opportunity to partake in a process that would lead me to new ways of thinking, learning and writing. As a learner in this process, I feel I have opened a new door for creating curiosity, a learning process that will continue to grow. As an educator, I can teach my students to learn by creating curiosity so that they too will continue growing in their learning process. The next section focuses on the connections I made as a learner and educator.

Connections

In looking back at the many and great sources I have read throughout this process, as well as talking with other educators, there is a definite consensus that this population of students is growing, yet so many schools are not prepared to meet their needs. For many schools there is a
strong need for change, training and resources to meet the needs of an increasing number of refugees and immigrants. Block, et al (2014), describes how schools are ill-equipped to recognize and respond to multiple challenges faced by children who must learn a new language while grappling with unfamiliar educational and social systems. In many articles I have read, the same is said to be true – the demographic composition of schools and the needs of students are rapidly changing as more refugees and immigrants resettle in the United States and around the world. Kovinthan (2016) as well as many others, support the need for training, develop new skills, and information to effectively meet the needs of refugee students.

Through my research I found that one of the vital components of teaching refugees and immigrants is understanding trauma and how it can affect children and their learning. The National Child Traumatic Stress Network (2017) and Lane, et al (2017) both agree that the brain can physically change by experience and trauma can impact the overall size of the brain and/or different areas of functioning. It is important for school staff to know and understand the deep impact that in a stressful environment can have on a child, specifically a child’s brain’s development. Stressful experiences can limit the brain from reaching its full potential. According to the National Child Traumatic Stress Network (2017) and the National Association of School Psychologists (2015), trauma can produce extreme stress which can impede concentration, cognitive functioning, memory, as well as the manifestation of physical symptoms. It is important to realize that there is not much a teacher can do to prevent this from occurring, but rather be supportive and create a safe and caring environment.

In thinking about my student, Rahim, he exhibits many of the symptoms associated with trauma. However, teachers and staff were quick to conclude that a lot of his behaviors and academic performance were due to his lack of English and schooling experience. When reading
through my research on trauma, it is likely that this young boy has experienced trauma and is showing signs of Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD). Hart (2017), explains that the literature on PTSD suggests that between 15% and 90% of children exposed to traumatic incidents go on to develop PTSD, and that the rates for children developing PTSD are higher than those reported for adults. While teachers are not psychologists, understanding trauma and how it affects a child can better equip them to recognize the symptoms and refer the child to appropriate social or psychological services.

What do educators need in order to help students like Rahim? As educators, we know building trusting relationships is key in working with students like Rahim. However, DeCapua (2016) explains, despite the literature pointing to the importance of strong relationships between schools, teachers, students, and their communities, such relationships remain the exception rather than the rule. So, if we know that building relationships is important, and it is backed by research, why does it continue to be an issue? DeCapua (2017), found that teachers care about there students, but it is simply not enough. I can’t help but agree with DeCapau (2017) that educators need a deep cultural understanding of students and how their cultural values, belief, and norms impact their behaviors, attitudes toward academic success, and literacy practices.

In my conversations with educators and administrators there is a deep concern that refugees and immigrants do not have a school or refugee program devoted to acquiring English skills. Having this will allow the factor of time in order for them to adjust to a new environment and culture. I know from my research that there are effective programs. In the literature I reviewed, I found a few different educational programs for refugees and immigrants: Trauma and Learning Policy Initiative – “Trauma Sensitive School”, Culturally Responsive Teaching, Mutually Adaptive Learning Paradigm (MALP), and an inclusive learning environment program,
called “School’s in for Refugees. One of the programs I would like my district to pursue is, creating a trauma-sensitive school. This program addresses trauma’s impact on learning on a school-wide basis and the importance of forming relationships. According to Hos (2016), teachers play an essential role in providing support to help refugee students adjust and patience, flexibility and empathy are needed. In the next section I will discuss adult learning and how it impacted the creation of my professional development workshop.

**Professional Development Workshop - The Development and Process**

After so many conversations with my colleagues and working closely with refugee and immigrant students I realized I needed to create something that would be useful. Most districts and schools have not prepared their staff to meet the needs of these children, especially those with trauma. This problem needs to be addressed with professional development for teachers and school staff. As I thought about how to construct and plan out an effective professional development workshop, I researched adult learning. When I began the process of creating the workshop I went through what Knowles (2005) calls the four phases of the adult learning planning process: *need, create, implement, and evaluate*. As the facilitator of this workshop I went through all four of these stages. I learned that the adult learning is a process of adults gaining knowledge and expertise. According to Knowles et al. (2005), adults need to know why they need to learn something before beginning to learn it. In moving through the four phases of adult learning, I determined the need, identified a goal, selected the topics needed, used the literature to create the information and resources, implement the workshop to the school staff, and last evaluate whether or not I met my learning objectives of the workshop. The adult learning theory and framework was effective in guiding me through the four stages
of developing my professional development workshop. So why did I create this workshop? The next section discusses the need and value of this workshop in the education profession.

Knowing how compassionate teachers are and their desire to do all they can to help these students succeed, I created my professional development workshop. This workshop was designed to help build background knowledge on refugees and trauma and provide resources which educators and school staff can utilize. It was developed to help educators and school staff to meet the needs of refugees and immigrants, but also address the critical need for creating a trauma-sensitive school which will impact all students. This workshop will not only impact students but it will benefit educational practitioners and school staff. As a school staff there will be less time spent on discipline and more time developing the much needed relationships which in the end will bring success for students. The workshop I created includes five sessions. The first session included a PowerPoint to give background information on refugees and immigrants, trauma and the effects on the brain and learning. The second session focused on how to create a trauma-sensitive school. This session included a video on why we need a trauma-sensitive school. To integrate technology, I created a blog for staff to use as a platform for the discussion as well as a place to ask questions. The third session was devoted to brainstorming and creating a trauma-sensitive school; developing the steps and training we needed to make a difference in the lives of our students. The fourth session focused on PTSD, and the educational implications for refugees and immigrants. To impact student learning, teachers had a fifth session devoted to strategies and resources (see Appendix C). As I was thinking about what more I could do to assist educators and
school staff, I thought about the literature I reviewed that discussed the attitudes, misconceptions and knowledge level of what a refugee or immigrant experience. I wanted to create a list of books that captured the experiences and journeys of refugees and immigrants. This list includes book titles for young adults, as well as for children and can serve as a valuable resource for teachers (see Appendix D). For example, it can be used when a school and the teacher learn of a new refugee student enrolling at the school. The teacher has the opportunity to select one of the children’s book to read to her class so that the students will have some understanding of their new classmate’s experiences as a refugee.

As an extension, teachers were also provided with a link to a website that includes resources to aid the creation of a trauma-aware classroom and school environment. This website serves as a cultural profile and resource tool. Users may learn more about a specific population within our district with tips to support the refugee and immigrant students they serve. This website serves as an extension with my project which leads me to explain how I came up with my project topic and workshop.

Coming up with a topic for my capstone project was no easy task and it took time. When the idea for my topic finally came to me, I was filled with so much excitement that I had to share it with my ESL colleagues. I immediately inspired an ESL colleague, Christine Houstman, who was in the process of selecting a topic for her capstone. She was so moved by the topic, need and its relevance to our profession, that she asked if we could coordinate our efforts. I shared with her my plan for presenting a workshop and she immediately thought of creating a website resource to support all teachers and staff. We shared our ideas, research, and subtopics so that this would be an immediate extension to my professional development workshop. This website
includes resources to aid the creation of a trauma-aware classroom and school environment. This website serves as a cultural profile and resource tool. Users may learn more about a specific population within our district with tips to support the refugee and immigrant students they serve. In coordinating our projects, we felt it was vital to connect the information and resources with that of my workshop to her website. Both the workshop and website were created to assist educators and administrators connect with information and resources that contains comprehensive information about traumatized refugee and immigrant students.

**Limitations**

A key theme throughout the literature is the need for effective interventions in schools to promote an inclusive learning environment. However, very few programs exist throughout the country. Due, et al (2015), Kovinthan (2016), and Block et al (2014) and Lane (2007), all have reviewed and analyzed refugee programs or school support programs, many who reside outside of the United States. These programs have challenges, but considered successful. Due et al (2015) concluded that the Intensive English Language Program (IELP) used in Australia is seen by teachers as the best approach to educating young refugees and immigrants. This program facilitates partnerships between schools and agencies and provides a holistic model for a whole-school approach focused on the learning, social and emotional needs of refugee students. IELP is a program similar to two refugee programs in Minnesota and one in Arizona. These refugee or newcomer programs help these students adjust to a new school environment and provide English and content instruction, and are introduced to the culture of the United States. The overall goal of these refugee or newcomer programs is to transition these students into the culture of the school and prepare them for a mainstream classroom.
I do not understand why some districts are not using similar programs which have had success. I wonder what could be holding them back. When refugees and immigrants arrive, time is not on their side. I feel that when a district “throws in” a non-English speaking student into a mainstream classroom, a crucial amount of time is wasted. When observing these students in the mainstream classroom, too many times I see students coloring and completely disengaged. So, I strongly believe that these refugee and newcomer programs are essential for acquiring English and building background knowledge, fostering relationships, and the time they need to adjust to a new culture in a less stressful environment.

Moving Forward/Next Steps

The reality is, I have only touched the surface of what is really needed to assist this growing population of students in our schools. There is so many more things that can and need to be done. One person cannot do it alone; it must be a collaborative effort by the school district, school administrators and the school staff. Next, I will discuss two other possible extensions to this project.

In chapter two of my literature review I discussed new educational programs for refugees and immigrants: Trauma and Learning Policy Initiative – “Trauma Sensitive School”, Culturally Responsive Teaching, Mutually Adaptive Learning Paradigm (MALP), and an inclusive learning environment program, called “School’s in for Refugees.” Creating a trauma-sensitive school is a program that stood out the most for me in helping not only refugees and immigrants, but all students. Adopting this program is a necessary step for our district to address the increase in students with trauma. As we know trauma can impact learning, behavior and relationships at school. Trauma-sensitive schools can help children feel safe to learn, but requires a whole-school effort. Adopting this program requires an action plan and is based on a framework of six key
elements: schoolwide infrastructure and culture, staff training, linking with mental health professionals, academic instruction for traumatized children, nonacademic strategies, and school policies, procedures and protocols (Cole, et al, 2009).

Do we really have an understanding of what refugees and immigrants experience? Though a refugee’s journey is unique, many face similar challenges along the way. To help schools and staff experience and understand the challenges refugees face while waiting for entry to the United States, I would create a half-day workshop (3 to 4 hours) where the participants would be taken out of their comfort zone and take part in a refugee simulation experience. For three to four hours the participants are asked to walk in the footsteps of a refugee and experience what they have experienced. The participants would assume roles of actual refugee families who have resettled in various states. Each group would be given a bag and a story of the family they are representing. There would be four simulation stations: language acquisition class, medical screening, visit with immigration officials, and a feeding station. To wrap-up the half day workshop, participants come back together to reflect on the experience. This simulation definitely would impact the participants and give them an understanding of the many difficult choices families face to be free and be part of a peaceful community.

Summary

One of the important takeaways from of the literature is that having an instructional and learning approach is crucial, especially if schools want to foster academic engagement and success. It is surprising to me, with all the literature I have reviewed suggest that numbers of refugees and immigrants are growing, many schools, districts, and teachers are ill-prepared to meet their needs. It is time for schools and educators to rise up and voice the concern and need for training. School districts are often so worried about standards, curriculum, and test scores, but
yet they are forgetting the most important aspect of teaching and that is the children. A school and its district can have offer the best curriculum, resources, and have the best staff, but if we are not meeting the needs of the whole child, even the best curriculum and school staff does not ensure these children succeed in school.

I have a strong passion to help others so the most valuable aspect of this process was in creating the professional development workshop. This workshop is just the beginning of the much needed training educators and schools need. There is a sense of hope that this workshop will open new doors to more training as well as open the eyes of many who make the important decisions for our students.
Bibliography


### Table 3.1: Process Elements of Andragogy

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Element</th>
<th>Pedagogical Approach</th>
<th>Andragogical Approach</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1 – Preparing Learners</td>
<td>Minimal</td>
<td>Provide information</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Prepare for participation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Help develop realistic Expectations</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Begin thinking about Content</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2 – Climate</td>
<td>Authority-oriented</td>
<td>Relaxed, trusting</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Formal</td>
<td>Mutually respectful</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Competitive</td>
<td>Informal, warm</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Collaborative, supportive</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Openness and authenticity</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Humanness</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3 – Planning</td>
<td>By teacher</td>
<td>Mechanism for mutual Planning by learners and Facilitator</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4 – Diagnosis of Needs</td>
<td>By teacher</td>
<td>By mutual assessment</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5 – Setting of Objectives</td>
<td>By teacher</td>
<td>By mutual negotiations</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6 – Designing Learning Plans</td>
<td>Logic of subject matter</td>
<td>Sequenced by readiness</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Content units</td>
<td>Problem units</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7 – Learning Activities</td>
<td>Transmittal techniques</td>
<td>Experiential techniques (inquiry)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8 – Evaluation</td>
<td>By teacher</td>
<td>Mutual re-diagnosis of needs</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Mutual measurement of Program</td>
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Appendix A
Anoka-Hennepin Professional Development Feedback Form

### Anoka-Hennepin Professional Development Feedback Form

1. In the code table below, please indicate your session number (provided by presenter).

<table>
<thead>
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</table>

<table>
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<th>MARKING INSTRUCTIONS</th>
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<tr>
<td>1. Use a No. 2 pencil or a blue or black ink pen only.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Do not use pens with ink that soaks through the paper.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Make solid marks that fill the response completely.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. Make no stray marks on this form.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CORRECT: ⬜ INCORRECT: ✖ ☐ ☐</td>
</tr>
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Session name ___________________________ Date _____________

2. Select your level of agreement with each statement.

<table>
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<tr>
<th>Statement</th>
<th>Strongly agree</th>
<th>Agree</th>
<th>Disagree</th>
<th>Strongly disagree</th>
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<tr>
<td>Today's session achieved its objectives.</td>
<td>☐</td>
<td>☐</td>
<td>☐</td>
<td>☑</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>As a result of today's session, my knowledge has increased.</td>
<td>☐</td>
<td>☐</td>
<td>☐</td>
<td>☐</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>As a result of today's session, I have new/enhanced skills.</td>
<td>☐</td>
<td>☐</td>
<td>☐</td>
<td>☐</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>As a result of today's session, I plan to try something new.</td>
<td>☐</td>
<td>☐</td>
<td>☐</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Participation and interaction were encouraged.</td>
<td>☐</td>
<td>☐</td>
<td>☐</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Content was organized and easy to follow.</td>
<td>☐</td>
<td>☐</td>
<td>☐</td>
<td>☐</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Materials were pertinent and useful.</td>
<td>☐</td>
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<tr>
<td>The presenter was knowledgeable.</td>
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<tr>
<td>The quality of instruction was good.</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>The topics were relevant to me.</td>
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<td>☐</td>
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</table>

3. What is your overall rating of today's session?  

<table>
<thead>
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<th>Rating</th>
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<th>Good</th>
<th>Fair</th>
<th>Poor</th>
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<tbody>
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<td>☐</td>
<td>☐</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

4. Please respond to the following questions below.
Write your answer inside of the box, otherwise it will be not scanned.

What was most valuable about this session?

How would you improve this session for future presentations?

What support would you need to utilize this information in your work?

Thank you for responding!
Appendix B

Guiding Questions - Creating a Trauma-Sensitive School

Video Discussion Guide

• What are your initial thoughts after watching the video? What is your understanding of trauma-sensitive schools?

• This video highlights the importance of leadership—superintendents, assistant superintendents, principals, and educators—in creating the understanding and infrastructure that can support the team work among staff needed for all children to be successful. How is this reflected in the video?

• George Donovan, Assistant Principal of the Baker School, talks about establishing a “culture of awareness” of the many factors that students bring into school that impact learning, self-regulation and relationships with peers and other adults in the school. How is this a trauma-sensitive practice? How might you go about establishing a “culture of awareness” in your school/district?

• For schools to embody trauma-sensitivity, a whole school effort is required. How is this reflected in this video?

• Diane Chase, 4th Grade Teacher, says that “trauma sensitivity has to be at the forefront of any instruction throughout your day.” How do trauma-sensitive /safe and supportive practices help accomplish the goal of academic success?

• June Saba-McGuire, Director of Learning and Teaching, Pre-K-5 says “helping adults understand that they have the most powerful influence on student behavior” is a result of this work. How might this understanding lead to a shift in the way educators think about student behavior? What might be the result(s) of this shift?

• In the video, one administrator comments that “you don’t always know and you don’t need to know” what a student’s history involves and suggests employing best practices for all students. Discuss why this is important in a trauma-sensitive school. How might this be done in a school?

• A trauma-sensitive school is a school where an on-going inquiry-based process allows for teamwork, coordination, creativity, and sharing of responsibility for all students, and where continuous learning is for educators and students. How is this reflected in this video?

• What insights or new knowledge did you gain from this video? How might you use this knowledge in your own work? How might your school use this knowledge?

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Trauma and Learning Policy Initiative (Retrieved from https://traumasensitiveschools.org/
Appendix C
Classroom Strategies and Resources

Suggestions for Supporting K-12 Newcomer ESL Students in the Classroom

1. **Sensitize mainstream students to the newcomers’ challenges.** Prepare English speaking peers for the arrival of a newcomer. Ask your students to imagine that their parents took them to another country to live. Brainstorm with them how they would feel.

2. **Be aware of the effects of culture shock.** Children may demonstrate physical ailments or display a wide variety of unusual behavior such as tantrums, crying, aggression, depression, tendency to withdraw, and sleeplessness.

3. **Create a nurturing environment.** Give lots of encouragement and praise for what the students can do, and create frequent opportunities for their success in your class. Be careful not to call on them to perform alone above their level of competence.

4. **Establish a regular routine for newcomers.** At first, everything will be chaotic to your newcomers. Give them help in organizing time, space, and materials. Give them a copy of the daily schedule. Tape it to their desks, or have them keep it at the front of their ESL notebooks. Send a copy home so that parents can help their children feel more connected to the classroom.

5. **Engage newcomers in language learning from the beginning.** Here are some ways to actively engage your newcomers in language learning.
   - **COPY WORK** Have students copy alphabet letters, numbers, their name, your name, the names of other students in the class, and beginning vocabulary words. Have them draw pictures to demonstrate comprehension of what they are copying.
   - **ROTE LEARNING** While this is not popular in American schools, it is common in many other countries. Initially, parents and students often feel more comfortable if they can see some kind of end product. You may wish to have students learn sight words, poems, chants, songs, lists, and spelling words through rote learning.
   - **THE CLASS AUTHORITY.** Each newcomer has many strengths that he or she can share with the class. When appropriate include them as resources so they too can be seen as important members of the group. Areas of expertise might be computers, math, origami, or art work.

6. **Recruit volunteers to work with newcomers.** At first, many students will not speak at all. It is critical to provide students with plenty of aural input in order to familiarize them with the sounds of the English language.

7. **Use recorded material.** A word of caution about the use of recorders. The student using headphones is isolated from the rest of the class. Audacity, Voice, Voice Recorder are some great technology software tools to use.
Appendix C
Classroom Strategies and Resources

12 Things for K-12 Teachers to Consider when Teaching Newcomers to Read

1. **Read to newcomers every day.** You can arrange to have a volunteer read to the student, check with your volunteer coordinator. Appropriate reading material for beginning English Learners (EL) should include at least some of these characteristics.

   - Numerous illustrations that help clarify the text
   - Story plots that are action-based
   - Little text on each page
   - Text that contains repetitive, predictable phrases
   - High-frequency vocabulary and useful words
   - Text that employs simple sentence structures

2. **Use reading strategies to increase students’ comprehension.** When you read to beginning ELs, be sure to make language comprehensible to them.

   - Point to the corresponding pictures as you read the text.
   - Act out, dramatize, and provide models and manipulatives for students to handle.
   - Read sentences at a slow-to-normal speed, using an expressive tone.
   - Allow time after each sentence or paragraph for students to assimilate the material.
   - Verify comprehension of the story by asking students to point to items in the illustrations and to answer yes/no and either/or questions.
   - Read the same story on successive days. Pause at strategic points and invite students to supply the words or phrases they know.
   - Point to the words in the text as you read them. This is particularly useful for students who need to learn the left-to-right flow of English text.
   - When students are familiar with the story, invite them to “read” along with you as you point to the words.
   - If appropriate for younger students, use Big Books, as both text and illustrations can be easily seen.

3. **Teach the alphabet.** Preliterate students and literate newcomers who speak a language that does not use the Roman alphabet need direct instruction in letter recognition and formation as well as beginning phonics.

4. **Use authentic literature.** Begin with materials that have easily understood plots, high frequency vocabulary and few idiomatic expressions.

5. **Teach phonics in context.** Using authentic literature, you can introduce and reinforce letter recognition, beginning and ending sounds, blends, rhyming words, silent letters, homonyms, etc. Phonics worksheets are not generally useful to the newcomer since they present new vocabulary items out of context.

6. **Make sure students understand the meaning.** Your students may learn to decode accurately but be unable to construct meaning out of the words they have read. Teach newcomers to reflect on what they have decoded and to ask questions to be sure they understand.
Appendix C
Classroom Strategies and Resources

7. **Check comprehension through sequencing activity.** Check student comprehension with one or more of the following activities.

- Write individual sentences from the text on separate sheets of drawing paper; then read or have the students read each sentence and illustrate it.
- Informally test students’ ability to sequence material from a story: print sentences from a section of the story on paper strips, mix the strips; have students put them in order.
- Check students’ ability to order words within a sentence; write several sentences from the text on individual strips of paper; cut the strips into words; have students arrange each group of words into a sentence.

8. **Integrate technology.** If a computer or laptop is not available for audio, set up a tape recorder and record stories as you read. Newcomers then have the opportunity to listen to a story, and read along, as many times as they wish.

9. **Encourage reading outside of the classroom.** Stock your classroom library and encourage newcomers’ parents to join the public library and check out picture books, books with read-along tapes, and home-language books, if available.

10. **Encourage newcomers to explore creative writing in English.** Students will learn to write faster when they have real reasons to write. Motivate students to write by providing them with meaningful reasons to write. Have familiar photos or pictures available.

11. **Establish and English Language Learner Center.** Fill the ELL Center with activities for your new language learners. Here are some of the items you may want to include in your ELL Learning Center. It is not necessary to put everything in at once. Add to the Learning Center a little bit at a time.

- CD or tape recorder and headphones
- Copies of appropriate activity pages, and keep them in a loose-leaf binder, a large envelope, or a folder with pockets.
- Crayons, scissors, pencils, erasers, and paper
- An ESL notebook
- An ESL folder for Dictionary pages
- Labels for classroom objects
- A picture file (class-made or commercial)
- Well-illustrated magazines for cutting out pictures
- Blank 3"x 5" index cards to be used for flash cards or concentration games
- A picture dictionary
- Nonfiction picture books from the library that cover the same content material you are currently teaching
- Beginning phonics books with tapes
- Picture books and well-illustrated beginning-to-read books with tapes or cd’s
Appendix C
Classroom Strategies and Resources

- Simple games: dot-to-dot activities, word searches, concentration games, sequencing activities, and jigsaw puzzles. An "object" box containing small manipulative objects for beginning vocabulary or phonics learning.

12. **Make up individualized Starter Packs for your newcomers.** The Starter Pack enables entry-level students to work independently on activities suited to their specific needs. Encourage students to work on these activities when they cannot follow the work being done in the classroom. Remember, however, not to isolate the newcomers from their peers with separate work all day long. They, too, need to be a part of your class and should be integrated as much as possible.
Appendix C
Classroom Strategies and Resources

Accommodations for English Learners
General Classroom and Content Areas

MATH
- At the beginning to expanding levels of proficiency, ELs should be shown examples of a completed assignment to model the correct format.
- Assignments and directions should be available on the board.
- Students should have access to counters, number lines, and other types of manipulatives.
- Rewrite story problems in simpler English for lower proficiency levels as well as teach the key vocabulary in various word problems.

SOCIAL STUDIES
- Allow beginning to developing levels of proficiency to use drawings to demonstrate knowledge of concepts.
- Teach key concepts of the lesson and limit the amount of vocabulary. Use visual aids during instruction, i.e. maps, graphic organizers, videos, etc.
- Record or give test orally to student.

READING
When making accommodations for ELs in the area of reading, it is important to remember that there is a difference between listening and speaking and reading and writing. Some students may be advanced in speaking, but functioning at a beginning instructional level when it comes to reading fluency or comprehension. Place emphasis on the student’s instructional level in reading.
- ELs at all proficiency levels should have reading materials provided at their instructional level.
- ELs should be taught vocabulary in context and try to connect their background knowledge. Limit the amount of vocabulary words taught in each unit to only the key words. As comprehension increases, increase the number of words.
- Let student act out the story to demonstrate understanding.
- Provide the background knowledge necessary in order to understand the material or content.
- Teach ELs reading strategies that enable them to predict, connect, question, and visualize the story.

SCIENCE
- Students should work in groups when possible to solve problems or conduct experiments.
- Show ELs completed project or assignment.
- Use hands-on experiential activities that do not rely on academic language for understanding.
- Prepare visuals or large charts that summarize the steps involved in experiments.

WRITING
When making accommodations for ELs in the area of writing, keep in mind that some students may be considered advanced in other domains such as: reading, speaking and/or listening, but at a beginning level in writing.
- ELs may not be familiar or recognize cursive.
- Provide student with a list of basic sentence patterns or words (with pictures) most frequently used in their classroom to use when writing independently.
- Allow ELs to write about topics in which they have background knowledge.
- Allow ELs to work together when possible to brainstorm and to begin the writing process.
- Provide a model of the finished writing assignment.
Appendix C
Classroom Strategies and Resources

**Strategies for Non-literate Learners**

We are teaching many students and no two are the same. Some Els may be able to communicate at an advanced level and communicate their needs orally, but may not be able to read or write in English. Others may be a beginning level in all skills; we need to find out who our students are and what their educational background is and their experiences with the written word. Every student is going to have varying experiences and this affects the materials you select, your instructional focus, and the rate of your students’ progress. Beginning literacy can be viewed as a continuum.

PRE-LITERATE: Students from an oral language tradition, native language is not written.

NON-LITERATE: Non-literate students come from a culture with a written language, but they have had little or no exposure to literacy in their first for second language.

SEMI-LITERATE: Semi-literate students have some but minimal literacy in their own language. They may be very nervous, hesitant and lack confidence in their literacy skills.

NON-ROMAN ALPHABET LITERATE: Students are fluent in literacy in a language that does not use a Roman Alphabet.

**Some Differences**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Literate Learners</th>
<th>Non-Literate Learners</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Learn from print</td>
<td>Learn by doing and watching</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tend to be visually oriented</td>
<td>Tend to be aurally oriented</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Make lists to remember</td>
<td>Repeat to remember</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Spend years learning to read</td>
<td>Have limited time for learning to read</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Know they can learn</td>
<td>Lack confidence in their learning ability</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Learn best when content is relevant to their lives</td>
<td>Learn best when content is relevant to their lives</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Can distinguish between important and less important print</td>
<td>May accept all content as being of equal value</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Strategies**

1. **Needs Assessment**

   Use photos/pictures of real places for familiarity or building background knowledge. When possible, conduct a needs assessment.
   - Can the student write his/her name in English?
   - Can the student identify any basic sight words from cards?
   - When pointing to letters of the alphabet, does the student have the concept of letter name and letter sounds?
   - Can the student copy a sentences in English?
   - Can the student read simple sentences in English?
   - Can the student write a simple dictated sentence?
   - Can the student hold a pen, make shapes, know the place to start on the paper?
Appendix C  
Classroom Strategies and Resources

Assessment on Concepts of Print  
Give the student a book and ask the following questions:

Can you show me:
- a letter?
- a word?
- a sentence?
- how many words are in this sentence?
- a period or question mark?
- the front of the book?
- the back of the book?
- where I should start reading the story?
- how I should hold the book?
- the title of the book?

2. Begin with Listening and Speaking  
Students need to be able to express some personal information and simple needs in very short learned phrases or sentences.

3. Start with Real Words  
Use words students would find in their environment or in forms/documents.

4. Create a System to Record and Recycle New Sight Words  
Create a literacy rich environment of words your student can read, such as a sight word wall. Develop a system for individual students to record their new words, record the words on a list or et of index cards for frequent review.

5. Teach Word-Attack Skills  
Students need to learn the sounds that letters make so eventually they will be able to read words that are not sights words. Start with some consonants and short vowels. Build into word families, for example: -an
/a/+/n/= an, /c/+/a/+ /n/=can, /m/+/a/+ /n/=man, etc.

6. Help students apply and recognize literacy in the world around them  
It is exciting to see the word “the” or other words, letters, or short phrase in a real world example such as on a poster or sign. Help students apply their learning and celebrate success.

7. Teach study skills and spend time organizing paper work  
Non-literate students have little experience organizing paper work. Work on numbering, dating pages, color coding important handouts, and sorting paper work regularly.

Appendix C
Classroom Strategies and Resources

SIOP Model

Making content comprehensible for students by:
- Connecting students’ backgrounds and prior knowledge to content area concepts
- Explicitly teaching content vocabulary, academic language, and language structures of the content area
- Presenting cognitively demanding information and tasks in context-embedded ways (e.g., graphic organizers, visual representations)
- Using cooperative learning to facilitate content understanding and promote language development through language use
- The use of alternate assessments to accurately determine what students know about a content area regardless of their English proficiency level

Mathematics

Although math is often assumed to be an easy content area to teach to English learners ("It's just numbers, right?"), teaching math through sheltered instruction is more complicated than some may think. First, when it comes to connecting students' background knowledge and prior experiences to the math curriculum, teachers need to remember that English learners may have learned to add, subtract, multiply, and divide using different computational methods than those taught in U.S. schools. Some may have learned to use commas where we use decimal points (e.g., $15,00 instead of $15.00) and vice versa (e.g., 10,000 instead of 10,000 for ten thousand). Chances are also good that English learners will not be familiar with the U.S. system of measurement (inches, feet, cups, ounces, pounds, etc.), having learned the metric system instead. When approaching the explicit instruction of vocabulary, teachers need to pay close attention to the various types of math vocabulary students need to learn:
- Words specific to math, such as divisor and quotient, as well as common English words that, when used in math, take on a particular meaning, such as table, tree, cone, face, positive, and negative
- Math synonyms or different terms that indicate the same operation, such as add, plus, sum, and combine
- Functional vocabulary that students will use to interpret math problems and communicate their mathematical thinking and ideas, such as solve, graph, and compare.

Teachers must also consider the syntax of math. First, there is not always a one-to-one correlation between something written using math symbols (e.g., 18 > 7) and the words used to write or say it (e.g., eighteen is greater than seven). Another challenge when translating math symbols into spoken or written words is word order. For example, the numerical sentence (3x)2 may be read as “the square of three times x.” English learners also need to understand the language structures used in math, such as comparatives (e.g., greater than), prepositions (e.g., two into four), and structures that signal logical connections (if . . . then). Word walls, sentence strips, and charts or dictionaries that include visuals specific to the lesson vocabulary can help make math lessons comprehensible for English learners. The sentence strips should include math phrases commonly written with math symbols (e.g., > for greater than, = for equal to) and their spelled-out versions. Useful manipulatives include a protractor, a hundreds cube, and fraction strips.

Teachers should also teach and encourage the use of non-math phrases that support group work, such as Can you please repeat that? and Can you show me what you mean? When placing students in groups, teachers should consider each student’s ability in language and math and, if possible, partner students at lower levels of English proficiency with classmates who share their native language.

Appendix D
Recommended Reading List for Educational Practitioners

Books about Refugees and Immigrants

Young Readers/Adults


Colorin Colorado Suggested Books for children on the Refugee Experience

These books capture the triumphs and the resilience of children who are refugees. They also convey the hardships that refugees face as they flee war and persecution. Please use these stories as a resource in informing yourself or your students about the challenges that refugees may face in their new lives.

  Age Level: 9-12
  "Drawing on his own experience as a child refugee from Cuba, Flores-Galbis offers a gripping historical novel about children who were evacuated from Cuba to the U.S. during Operation Pedro Pan in 1961. Julian, a young Cuban boy, experiences the violent revolution and watches mobs throw out his family’s furniture and move into their home. For his safety, his parents send him to a refugee camp in Miami, but life there is no sweet haven... (T)his is a seldom-told refugee story that will move readers." — Booklist

  Age Level: 9-12
  Garang is eight years old when war comes to his village in southern Sudan. He soon joins the thousands of other boys who must flee their country by walking hundreds of miles to Ethiopia and then Kenya. Along the way, the boys care for each other and help each other survive the hardships of famine, drought, and war. Based on the true stories of the Lost Boys of Sudan, Mary Williams and R. Gregory Christie have brought a powerful and unforgettable story to young readers.

  Age Level: 9-12
  This novel, written in free verse, tells the story of Kek, an eleven-year-old boy from the Sudan who arrives as a refugee to Minnesota in the middle of winter. In moments both amusing and heartbreaking, it is possible to see through Kek’s eyes what it is like for new immigrants who come to this country and to think about the scars that war leaves on its youngest victims. Teacher’s Guide available.
Appendix E
Recommended Reading List for Educational Practitioners


  **Age Level:** 9-12

  Shortly before the fall of Saigon in 1975, Hà’s family flees war-torn Vietnam. When they arrive in Alabama more than 3 months later as refugees, they struggle to adapt to a new life. Yet slowly Hà and her family begin to find their way, making friends in unexpected places and helping each other survive. Based on the childhood experiences of the author, this compelling novel won the 2011 National Book Award for Young People’s Literature.


  **Age Level:** 9-12

  Mai Ya’s Long Journey follows Mai Ya Xiong, a young Hmong woman, from her childhood in Thailand’s Ban Vinai Refugee Camp to her current home in Wisconsin. Mai Ya’s parents fled Laos during the Vietnam War and were refugees in Thailand for several years before reaching the United States. But the story does not end there. Students will read the challenges Mai Ya faces in balancing her Hmong heritage and her adopted American culture as she grows into adulthood.


  **Age Level:** 9-12

  Product Description: Since 2006, hundreds of thousands of Iraqi refugees have fled to other countries. This book provides, in words and pictures, a glimpse of what life was like in Iraq before they left, why they were forced to flee, and how they feel about life as a refugee. Their stories are set against background information about Iraq, Saddam Hussain’s rule, the invasion, and the subsequent civil war. The role of the United Nations High Commissions for Refugees (UNHCR) is outlined, and ideas for using the book in the classroom are also included.


  **Age Level:** 9-12

  Product Description: First-grader Hassan has only recently arrived in the United States after he and his family were forced to flee Somalia, and he deeply misses the colorful landscape of his former home in Africa. But with the help of his parents, an understanding teacher, and a school art project, Hassan finds that by painting a picture of his old home and sharing his story, his homesickness and the trauma of leaving a war-torn country are lessened.


  **Age Level:** 3-6

  The Journey recounts a refugee boy’s story as he travels from his war-torn country to a new home. Sanna writes that the book began when she met two young girls at an Italian refugee center, then “began collecting more stories of migration and interviewing many people from many different countries.” The striking result, in a setting that is not specified, is a simple yet powerful illustration of the anxiety, exhaustion, and heartbreak a family faces when displaced by war and conflict, as well as the courage and hope of their journey. 2017 Ezra Jack Keats Book Award honor winner.
Appendix E
Recommended Reading List for Educational Practitioners


Age Level: 6-9

This stunning photo essay takes a look at the thousands of children around the world who have been forced to flee war, terror, hunger and natural disasters, young refugees on the move with very little left except questions. It’s hard to imagine, but the images here will help unaffected children understand not only what this must feel like, but also how very lucky they are. The final message is that children, even with uncertain futures, are resilient and can face uncertainty with optimism. With images from the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees.

**For more books for children on the refugee experience go to:**
http://www.colorincolorado.org/booklist/refugee-experience-books-children