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INFORMING EDUCATORS ON BEST PRACTICES FOR FORMER REFUGEE
ENGLISH LANGUAGE LEARNERS

By

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

Hamline University

St. Paul, Minnesota

Summer 2018

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This is dedicated to my family, friends who have become family, and students.

To my family, thank you for your ceaseless support of all my endeavors. Thank you for letting me adventure far from home and trusting God to guide my way. Thank you for your example of loving people and inviting the lonely to family dinners. I would not be the person I am today without you.

To my friends who have become like family. Sahro, thank you for opening your home to me when I was a stranger. Thank you for trusting me quickly and letting me become part of your family. I am more grateful than you know.

To my students, you are the most resilient people I know. Thank you for teaching me something new everyday and keeping me young. You are my inspiration for this project. This is also dedicated to all the students I have not yet met and all of the educators who will teach them with understanding and passion.

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CHAPTER ONE

Introduction

It was Halloween night 2008 in downtown Minneapolis. I mingled with all of the children and their families at the university sponsored Halloween party, passing out stickers and smiles freely. I had moved into the city three months prior and was looking forward to meeting many new people. Up to this point I had never met a refugee. I had seen the effects of poverty on people in rural Wisconsin, Europe, and Central America, but I had never known people who had been forced to uproot from their family of origin and move to a foreign land. That night I met my first Somali friend, Sahro, and my adventure into East African culture began. It was not until years later that I realized how much my friendships and places of interest had impacted my career choice and field of study.

Rationale

In this chapter readers will begin to understand how refugee experiences may have impacted students. This capstone will better equip educators to teach students who have come from refugee situations. My hope is that more educators will become informed in the experiences of their refugee students, know best practices to teach them, and feel confident enough to lead a training for educators of former refugee students. In this capstone I will explore the question: *How can I inform educators about best practices for teaching former refugee English Language Learners?*

Refugee Crisis Around the World

Turn on the news, read a BBC article, scroll through Twitter. It is impossible to not hear of war, natural disaster, and violence based on discrimination. Our world has become a global community, largely due to the increase in access to technology and social media. Prior to that, Americans may not have known about the bombings in Aleppo, the famine in Somalia, and the killing of Coptic Christians in Egypt. Now we have become aware of these events and cannot turn a blind eye. Since the Refugee Act of 1980, nearly 3 million refugees have resettled in the United States. In 2016 alone, 84,995 refugees came to the U.S. (Pew Research, 2017). Whatever your political stance may be, this is a global crisis and many nations are responding to the need for countries to host these displaced families and individuals.

One Educator's Response

Now that the refugees are here, how should we, as educators, respond? My question remains, *How can I inform educators about best practices for teaching former refugee English Language Learners?* In my workplace, an inner city school, we have received refugee students that have gone through a variety of life experiences. Many of our students are ethnically Somali, but they have never been to the home of their ancestors; they have grown up in the refugee camps of Kenya and Ethiopia. Some were able to go through schooling while waiting to move to the United States or another country, others did not attend school.

I am an educator of English Language Learners (ELLs), and I will never forget my first year of leading English language groups at my inner city school. I had a group of

first grade students who proved to be more challenging than I could handle at times. When it was time to line up, fights would often ensue. One student would push another, then pushing quickly turned into fighting and verbal outbursts. It was not until later on that I learned that many of these students were new to the country and that they had lived their whole lives in refugee camps. For some of them, they grew up in constant crisis. They were not used to order and routine. If someone pushed them, they believed they needed to defend themselves. They did not know the comfort routine and order could give; as a new teacher I was not providing that for them. I quickly learned that the simplest routines needed to be in place, including a daily line order that was posted near the door.

Previous Employment

Before I became a teacher, I worked as a special education assistant in an inner city school and was enrolled in the English as a Second Language (ESL) licensure program at Hamline University in St. Paul. In my ESL licensing classes I learned how to use state standards to plan lessons, theory for second language acquisition, and the basics of being a teacher. In my job as a special education assistant (SEA), I quickly learned that theory and practice must go hand in hand. An instance of this came about through a training on ACEs, or Adverse Childhood Experiences. Examples of ACEs are having a parent or guardian who has died, being a witness or victim of violence in their neighborhood, witnessing an adult in their household being beat up, or experiencing economic hardship (Child Trends, 2014).

Through this training, I began to understand why many of my students had emotional eruptions so easily when they were given simple instructions or had conflict with a peer. According to my training, students who have experienced more trauma are constantly at a higher heart rate. In other words, they are constantly on edge and more likely to react in an outburst when experiencing conflict or discomfort. I saw the effects of this every day as students would run away or have physical outbursts. I am thankful for that SEA training that gave me more understanding of my students who had experienced trauma.

Family Ties

Before I get into my research question *How can I inform educators about best practices for teaching former refugee English Language Learners?* I want to share one more piece of my own life that has impacted my decision to study this question. I grew up with a father who has symptoms of post-traumatic stress disorder, or PTSD. He served in the United States Army in Vietnam during the Vietnam War. He was a very young man and experienced death and the cruelty of war firsthand. Since his return, he has experienced anger, risky behavior, and depression. By the grace of God, he is now healing and learning from the experiences he had. Throughout my childhood, I saw firsthand how trauma from war can affect a person for years to come. My father was in the army for two years and amongst the last of the combat force in the war. This leads me to question how much more my students are impacted by war, when it has shaped some of them at a very impressionable age. This capstone is not a reflection on war, refugees,

and the effects of trauma, but rather a message of hope that there are ways that educators can help former refugee students.

Success Stories

My hope is that educators will come away from reading this capstone feeling empowered to be better teachers to former refugee students and to inform their colleagues in best practices for these students. Since my humble beginnings with the first grade small group, I have learned strategies for teaching ELLs who are newer to the country and who have come from refugee camps. These are a few of my current best practices: using Guided Language Acquisition Development (GLAD) strategies, letting students share their immigration stories, being informed on students' cultures and personal stories, knowing students' families and empowering them to be involved, and culturally relevant teaching. In my research I would like to learn more about trauma-informed teaching.

A look into my classroom

It's nearing the end of the day and my five ELLs are working hard on their personal narrative immigration stories. I began the mini unit by talking about the short time I lived in Zimbabwe. I showed them pictures of the people I met, the food I ate, and the grassy countryside. For a moment I gave them a look into Zimbabwe, a country north of South Africa. After students saw my mentor paragraph, I told my students about their opportunity to write about their immigration story. The eight and nine year old students pored over this work for over a week. They talked to their families about their experiences before moving to the United States and they openly shared about their emotions while riding the airplane for the first time. One student talked about how he

cried and how much he missed his home in Africa. Since doing this writing project, I have noticed an increase in my students' interest in talking about the world, learning about different countries, and expressing their own emotions, whether they be positive or negative. It was a great community builder. Their finished work hung proudly in our hallway for weeks.

Rationale Revisited

I am researching this question *How can I inform educators about best practices for teaching former refugee English Language Learners?* because these students matter, their education is now in our hands, and many educators are sitting in frustration without many relevant strategies. Many teachers feel overwhelmed and do not know how to best teach refugee students who are entering our mainstream classrooms. Students who have experienced trauma in refugee camps or in our own American cities are struggling to adjust in mainstream content classes, especially when co-teaching is not available. I propose to design a training for educators, ESL educators, and mainstream educators. Our refugee students need better literacy and language instruction (Lee, 2016). Educators need to walk into their classrooms feeling empowered to teach these students who bring so many positive and negative life experiences to our classrooms. Educators also need to be informed on the effects of trauma and how to teach students in a culturally and trauma-sensitive way (Ogilvie & Fuller, 2016; Milner IV, 2011). I want to bring relevant English language instruction training to educators teaching students who have immigrated due to refugee situations.

In the next chapter I explore the process of students coming to the United States, the impact of trauma on students, and best practices for teaching ELLs who have moved because of refugee situations. Chapter 2 is a literature review where I inform readers about students with refugee experiences, trauma informed education, best practices for ELLs who have had refugee experiences, and how to best inform other educators on these subjects.

CHAPTER TWO

Literature Review

Introduction

As stated in the introductory paragraph this capstone addresses the question *How can I inform educators about best practices for teaching former refugee English Language Learners?* In this literature review, various scholars and educators are compared that have studied students who have had refugee experiences. These areas are specifically addressed: the refugee status and immigration process, strengths of the students, and challenges of the students. Trauma-informed teaching is also addressed, with hopes that the reader will have a better understanding of Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder, Adverse Childhood Experiences, and training that accompanies a trauma-informed teaching philosophy. I also examine the best current practices for former refugee English Language Learners such as culturally relevant pedagogy, Guided Language Acquisition Design, and Collaborative Strategic Reading. At the end of this chapter I briefly give my opinion of how I have connected this research to my own teaching practice. This literature review allows educators to better understand former refugee students and the best ways to educate this important group of students.

Defining Refugee

In 1951, the United Nations Convention defined what a refugee is: a person who has left their country due to “well-founded” fear of persecution based on religion, nationality, race, political party, or social group. If the individual is unable to receive

protection from their country, they are a refugee (Harris, 2011). The United Nations Refugee Agency (2017) claims that currently there are the most displaced people in the document history of the world. Displaced people have been forced to move from their home, but they may still be in their home country (Refugees, 2017). As the graphic shown below indicates there are 22.5 million people who are now refugees in the world. Half of those people are children, under the age of eighteen. According to the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) less than half the children under UNHCR's care are in school; 50 percent are not attending primary and only 25 percent are attending secondary. The United States is home to more than 250,000 refugees. Over half of these refugees are under the age of eighteen (Bouton, 2016). According to the *Refugee Act* originated in 1980, there must be availability of private and public resources for refugees. That includes public and private schools (Refugee Act, 2012). All educators should be ready to serve former refugees (He, Prater, & Steed, 2011).

UNHCR Displaced People and Refugees

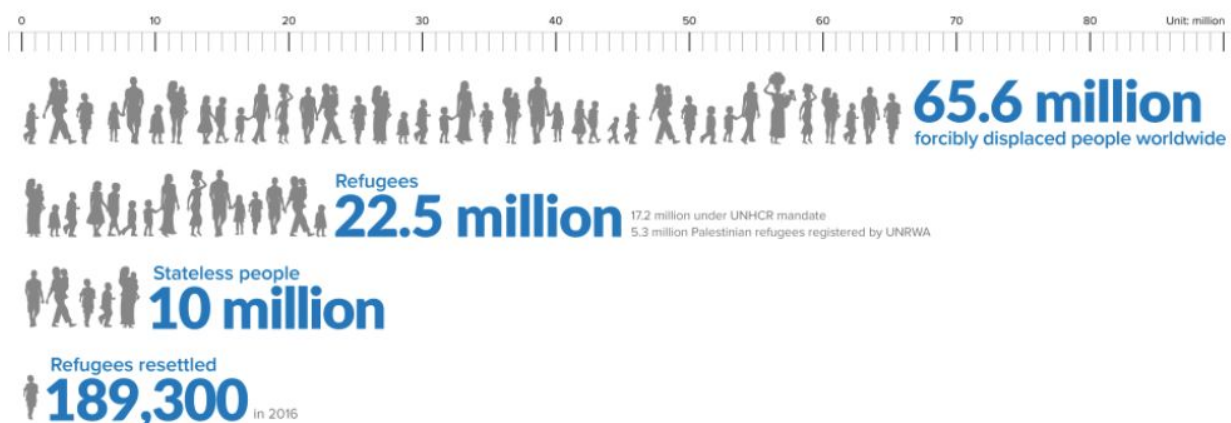


Figure 1. This graphic shows the amount of people in the world displaced in the year 2017. (Refugees, 2017).

Students with Refugee Experiences

Gardner (2017) honored refugees through this statement, “To be called a refugee is the opposite of an insult; it is a badge of strength, courage, and victory” (p. 9). Many papers about refugee students have been written that have a deficient outlook about these students (Ellis, MacDonald, Lincoln, & Cabral, 2008). There is also research that shows the great strengths these students bring wherever they go (Elfers, Lucero, Stritikus, & Knapp, 2013).

. This section will compare both sides. Before reading this section, one must realize that each student is unique. Students have varied experiences during their transition period to the host country. Their age, family’s work and educational background, culture, past experiences, and the child’s unique personality all affect how the child will adapt to major life transitions (Suárez-Orozco, 2017).

Strengths. Students who are from families of refugees or who have been refugees themselves have strengths that educators should recognize. Common characteristics of immigrant children are setting higher goals, the ability to reference schema from two cultures, positivity, work ethic, and a cultural value of family support in learning (Hos, 2016; Suárez-Orozco, 2017). Another study adds that these students are likely to have fewer conflicts with their parents (McBrien, 2005). Hos (2016) claims that refugee children are more resourceful and curious, which fosters learning. Bajaj, Argenal and Canlas (2016) and Lee (2016) recognize that youth who immigrate have a higher dropout rate in high school, but newcomers who do persevere through their education have a higher level of completion than their native-born peers. When working with immigrant

students, educators need to recognize the strengths these students bring to the classroom.

Multilingual. Many students who have immigrated to the United States come speaking a language other than English. Some students are already exposed to and utilizing multiple languages in communication. For example, a Somali student may be fluent in Somali, learning Arabic, and learning the local language from the transitional camp or country they stayed in while waiting to come to the United States. This makes students multilingual, meaning they can use multiple languages, as opposed to their monolingual, English speaking peers. As research shows (Bialystok, 1999; Petitto et al., 2011; Kambanaros et al., 2013, Carter & Nunan, 2001), being bilingual can help individuals have more creative thinking that allows people to see the world in multiple ways. McBrien (2005) discloses several benefits of being bilingual, including: having higher test scores, the lowest rates of depression, an unmatched level of self-esteem, and the highest educational and career goals (p. 343).

Bal (2014) researches the lives of Ashiska students who were living near the Turkish border and then transitioned to Russia. They later moved to the U.S. These Ashiska families were used to learning new languages, often for global capitalism. They spoke their Ashiskan language and had learned Russian to be successful in school and to be a part of the working community. Many Ahiska people are Sunni Muslims and recite the Qur'an in Arabic. When they moved to the US they learned English to be successful. The Ashiska people are an example of refugees persevering in times of transition and using their multilingualism to succeed.

Resilience. Resilience is also a strength that many students with refugee

experiences possess (Hos, 2016; Steward & Martin, 2018; Suárez-Orozco, 2017).

Resilience according to Hos (2016) is “the manifestation of competence in children although they have been exposed to stressful events” (p. 482). The fact that the student arrived to the host country shows that they have had to endure difficult experiences, such as leaving extended family, possible malnutrition while in a refugee camp or traveling, and exposure to violence (Stewart, 2018; Bal, 2013; Park, 2016). Families had to be resourceful during times of transition (Bal, 2013). Students with refugee experiences are coming with many life experiences that have taught them how to survive and be resilient.

Difficulties. While studies have identified strengths of students with refugee experiences, a plethora of research shows difficulties these students may have. All educators, including community leaders, school leadership, teachers, guidance counselors, social workers, special education assistants, and other school staff, should be aware of these difficulties and how they may affect students at school (Park, 2016).

English language learners. Many recently arrived students do not speak English as their first language (Hos, 2016). While the benefits of being bilingual were mentioned earlier, research shows that it takes five to seven years to become fully bilingual in academic English if the student has a strong handle of their first language and literacy skills (Robertson & Ford, 2009). It may take seven to ten years if those first language and literacy skills are not strong (Robertson & Ford, 2009). Becoming bilingual does not happen overnight. When newly arrived students, or newcomers, are placed in their new school district they are considered English Language Learners or ELLs after qualifying with an intake survey and english language proficiency (ELP) test (National Research

Council, 2011). Most American schools use English as their language of instruction and students may struggle to access the new learning due to the language barrier. It can be very stressful to learn a new language (Hos, 2016), anyone who has tried to become bilingual or lived in a foreign country with a new language can attest to that. Students desire to share their feelings and ideas both inside and outside of class, but are often left frustrated with their inability to be understood in English (Park, 2016).

Trauma. Students who have come from areas of war or refugee camps, or are transitioning in areas of poverty or violence may have experienced traumatic events (Cook-Cottone, 2004). It is important for educators to be aware of this and for schools to have mental health care professionals ready to address the emotional and mental needs of the students (Cavanaugh, 2016). Educators should be aware that trauma can continue in the students' new U.S. school due to poverty, racism, bullying, and violence in the community (Ogilvie & Fuller, 2016). Trauma is further discussed later in this chapter.

Loss of family support. Many students with refugee experiences have been separated from family members in the process of fleeing their home country (Farid & McMahan, 2004; Lee, 2016; Stewart & Martin, 2018). According to Farid and McMahan (2004), who wrote a book for educators of Somali students, the separation of families impacts children. Immigrants may heavily rely on their family and value their communal living. When families are forced to separate due to war, poverty, and famine they lose the support of their community and must become more self-reliant. This goes against the cultural norms for many immigrants who live communally with large extended families. This individual responsibility is another stress on the former refugee (Faird & McMahan,

2004).

Students with limited informal and formal education. Students who have had limited amounts of school or an interrupted schooling are often called SLIFE, or Students with Limited Informal or Formal Education (Hos, 2016). Many students with refugee experiences fall into that SLIFE category. Often times these students have gaps in their education due to pre-immigration experiences, such as quality of education that was available in a refugee camp or their home country. Other reasons SLIFE students may have gaps in their education are due to war, poverty, political turmoil, natural disaster, or lack of transportation and resources (Salva & Matis, 2017). Some SLIFE students have moved to the U.S. seeking asylum or refuge (Salva & Matis, 2017). This is a relatively small group of ELLs, 10% to 20%, but they are important to understand as they lack literacy skills in their first-language, have gaps in educational skills, and greater social and emotional needs (Custodio & O'Loughlin, 2017).

SLIFE students may be from a country like Somalia where some families are nomadic (Farid & McMahan, 2004), and are unable to maintain consistent schooling. Within the camps the focus is primarily on meeting physical needs such as a lack of food, health care, and safety (Hos, 2016). Education may not be a top priority when those basic needs are not always met (Stewart, 2018). Some children are born in refugee camps or during times of travel. This also affects the quality and quantity of education they have received (Hos, 2016).

Within many refugee camp schools, the class sizes are much bigger than what is accepted in the U.S., thus making it harder for all students to receive a quality education.

Refugee camp schools in Kenya have very large class sizes: in Dadaab seventy students to one teacher and in Kakuma eighty students to one teacher (Custodio & O'Loughlin, 2017). Not all teachers have had formal teacher training (Custodio & O'Loughlin, 2017). According to Custodia and O'Loughlin (2017), Parents reported other reasons they may not send their students to school in refugee camps including: “violence and harassment en route to school and between students at the school, corporal punishment, insecurity about leaving their families even for a few hours, having to help at home or work to earn money, the distance to school, and the lack of appropriate toilets” (p. 47).

The quantity of time that the student was or was not in school should also be considered (Lee, 2016). One must also understand that due to the lack in schooling, students are not always literate in their first language (Hos, 2016). If a student cannot read or write in their first language, they will have a harder time with those skills in their second language. They have pre-emergent literacy skills or underdeveloped literacy skills (Farid & McMahan, 2004). Teachers of SLIFE students need to be ready to teach content and language to “maximize English language development” (Salva & Matis, 2017, p. 13). When working with former refugees, educators should be aware of the gap in education SLIFE students have.

Challenges in the host country. One may assume that once refugees arrive in their host countries all problems are fixed. That is not the case, but rather many new challenges may be found in the host country (Karanja, 2010; Bal & Arzubiaga, 2014). Karanja (2010) studied refugee students in Nairobi, Kenya and found that many faced prejudiced refugee policies. Similarly in the U.S., Bal and Arzubiaga (2014) say that

there are institutional and structural barriers refugees face. Immigrants of all kinds often face discrimination and xenophobia, or the fear of people from another country (Karanja, 2010). Students may be discriminated against for a variety of reasons: their language, clothing, skin color, and their food (Chuang & Moreno, 2010). Worse yet, some refugees have experienced exploitation through human trafficking in their new country (Karanja, 2010). All of these difficulties only compound on the trauma refugees have already experienced in their home country and transition period.

Harris and Marlowe (2011) discuss the problem of *forbearance* among African immigrants in Australia. This is when students do not inform their teachers of problems they have faced or are currently facing because they do not want to question or bother the teacher (Harris & Marlowe, 2011). Those working with immigrants should be aware of this factor and seek ways to help their students adjust and feel safe in their new home (Harris & Marlowe, 2011). New immigrants often settle in poorer urban areas (Bajaj et al., 2017; Bal & Arzubiaga, 2014; Karanja, 2010) as was found consistently with all research in the U.S., Canada, Kenya, and Australia. These areas often have a higher concentration of poverty and crime (Hos, 2016). Newly arrived students may experience challenges which stem from living in neighborhoods with violence and struggling schools.

Acculturation. The Merriam Webster dictionary (as cited in Acculturation, 2018) defines acculturation as “cultural modification of an individual, group, or people by adapting to or borrowing traits from another culture”. Warriner (2007) gave an example about the loss of national identity that Sudanese women faced. Refugees who came with

a specific culture are often lumped into one, more general, race when they come to the U.S. Many U.S. citizens do not take the time to learn about their specific home country and culture. Educators who teach Somali students may want to reference Farid and McMahan's (2004) book: *Accommodating and Educating Somali Students in Minnesota* so that they can better understand the Somali culture and be helpful in the delicate acculturation process.

Trauma and Education

According to the American Psychological Association (as cited in Cavanaugh, 2016) trauma is “an emotional response to a terrible event” (p. 41). Students who are coming to the US as refugees have most likely experienced traumatic events such as war, violence, and malnutrition (Lee, 2004; Stewart & Martin, 2018). Trauma is not unique to refugee students though, 68% of all children have experienced some form of trauma (Cavanaugh, 2016). Many educators are familiar with the acronym EBD, standing for Emotional Behavior Disorder. Most students identified with EBD have experienced trauma through abuse or neglect (Cavanaugh, 2016). Traumatic experiences which students may have experienced are: war, terrorism, natural and man-made disasters, exposure to violence, physical or sexual abuse, neglect, and suicide (Cavanaugh, 2016). The following paragraphs will discuss Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACEs), Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD), and practices for “trauma-informed” education.

Adverse Childhood Experiences. The Center for Disease Control (CDC) did a major study on adverse ACEs in the 1990s and their research is still used widely today (Cavanaugh, 2016). ACEs can be broken up into three categories: abuse, neglect, and

household dysfunction (Cavanaugh, 2016). Brian Cavanaugh, a researcher of trauma-informed schools said, students with higher ACE scores often struggle in school with “aggression, attendance problems, depression, inattention, anxiety/withdrawal, and delayed cognitive development” (Cavanaugh, 2016, p. 41). People with higher ACE scores have a faster resting heart rate. It is easier for them to have their heart rate quickly increase, putting them into a stressful fight or flight mode more often (Kiiskila, 2014). School leaders, social workers, and educators should seek ways to be more informed on working with all students who have higher ACE scores (Cavanaugh, 2016). ACEs are one way to assess traumatic experiences.

Post Traumatic Stress Disorder. Students who have experienced violence and war carry those memories with them to their new host countries in invisible suitcases. Some students develop post-traumatic stress disorder or PTSD. Farid and McMahan (2004) describe PTSD as anxiety brought on by “having been exposed to life-threatening situations or intolerable danger, where the victim has been helpless to act” (pp. 52-53). Children who have been around war may be more irritable, unable to tolerate frustration, and have less impulse control (Farid & McMahan, 2004). Students suffering from PTSD have a lower concentration level and may have trouble connecting with peers (Chuang, 2011). Below is a summary of the effects associated with anxiety related to PTSD:

Summary of Effects Associated with Anxiety
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Intrusive and recurrent distressing recollections of the traumatic event ● Impaired in ability to think, concentrate, and remember ● Conditioned fear response to reminders, places, things, and people’s behavior, leading to: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● The avoidance of fearful situations ● The restriction of imaginative play

- Emotional withdrawal
- Generalized fear not directly related to trauma:
- The fear of strangers
 - The fear of being alone
 - The fear of dark places
 - Hypervigilance or watchfulness:
 - “Being on guard for danger”
 - Startle responses: reacting with startle to sudden changes in environment such as noise
 - Capacity to manage tension and frustration is reduced
 - Emotional numbing
 - Re-enactments of traumatic events in play
 - Psychosomatic complaints, e.g. headaches
 - Regressive behavior, e.g. tantrums

Figure 2. The summary of effects associated with anxiety. (Farid & McMahan, 2004, p. 53).

PTSD is often undiagnosed and untreated (Stewart & Martin, 2018). Stewart and Martin (2018) encourage educators and health care professionals to pay more attention to students’ reactions to events rather than just looking at potential symptoms. Educators should question if that student is reacting to a situation the way children typically do (Stewart & Martin, 2018). Students with PTSD may react to a stressful situation by withdrawing, avoiding the situation or people, lacking interest and have trouble with attachment (Stewart & Martin, 2018).

Trauma-informed education. Students who have experienced a variety of trauma, such as former refugee students have, need to be in a school with educators who are trauma-informed (Cavanaugh, 2016). This means they are aware of the students’ trauma and they use strategies that work best for teaching these students (Stewart & Martin, 2018). One simple strategy is understanding that students need to experience a certain level of success (Cavanaugh, 2016). Trauma informed education would benefit

students who have been in refugee experiences, but also students who have received different adverse childhood experiences (ACEs), such as abuse in the home, homelessness, and poverty (Cavanaugh, 2016).

Several researchers have done studies on different trauma informed pedagogies for schools. One of those is Positive Behavior Intervention and Supports (PBIS). PBIS is a positive school wide engagement program that a whole school would implement (Stewart & Martin, 2018). PBIS stresses the importance of students needing to feel like they belong. Students who have gone through trauma, such as war, or have had interrupted schooling may be more often in the fight, freeze, or flight mode (Stewart & Martin, 2018). Students need to have a feeling of belonging to lower their guard and truly learn. One outcome of PBIS is fewer expulsions (Bradshaw, Mitchell, & Leaf, 2010), which is a benefit many school leaders would value. One downside to using PBIS is that the whole school should use the strategies to truly see change (Bradshaw et al., 2010). Not all educators at a school may want to implement a brand new program, so school leaders would need to provide adequate supports and reinforce the importance of the PBIS program. There are resources to learn more about PBIS.¹

Schools with students who have experienced trauma should be working with community partners to assess the social, emotional, mental, and physical needs of their students (Stewart & Martin, 2018). It is important that students learn how to express their emotions. Stewart and Martin (2018) encourage schools to teach “stress management, relaxation, mindfulness, and expression of anger” (p. 34).

¹ Those who may want to learn more about PBIS can go to the government supported website: <https://www.pbis.org/>

A tool to teach students how to self-regulate their emotions is by using Zones of Regulation.² Zones of regulation categorizes emotions into colors to help students better understand their own emotions and how to regulate them (Kuypers, 2011). Those interested in teaching mindfulness for anger management and meditation can look into classes for educators at the University of Minnesota (Mindfulness, 2015). Both of these social-emotional practices are used in my large urban district where we have newcomers and many ELLs. Lessons for life management are important to teach former refugee students.³ Educators and school leadership should see the student holistically and to recognize that their physical, emotional, and mental needs may need to be met before they can truly learn in an academic setting (Stewart & Martin, 2018).

Best Practices

Best practices for English Language Learners benefit all students (Kiiskila, 2018). The strategies and teaching styles found for this literature review are from the United States, Canada, Australia, and Kenya, but they are used around the world (Elfers, Lucero, Stritikus, & Knapp, 2013; Jallo, 2017; Lee, 2016)). The strategies to follow would benefit all students in language learning across the globe.

As said at the beginning of this chapter, there are more than 250,000 refugees in the US and half of them are under eighteen years old (Bouton, 2016). Schools need to be ready to address the needs these students will have (Stewart & Martin, 2018). In my

² Interested educators can read and implement practices from *The Zones* by L. Kuypers (2011).

³ A new resource for teaching refugees, SLIFE, and students who have experienced trauma is *Bridging Two Worlds: Supporting Newcomer and Refugee Youth* by Jan Stewart and Lorna Martin (2018).

experience, teaching students with more ACEs can actually be more enjoyable as it challenges you to be a more flexible and creative educator. The rest of the chapter is dedicated to tried and true practices that will allow students to increase their language skills and build classroom community. While these practices were researched with former refugees in mind, these practices will benefit all students.

Culturally relevant pedagogy. Educators and all school staff should take the time to understand the cultures that their students come from (Bal & Arzubiaga, 2014). Cummins, professor of ELLs language and literacy development believed “no matter what language is used for instruction, if the language, culture and personal experience of the student is not valued, the result is an alienated student who does not feel empowered to learn” (Project, G.L.A.D., p. 5). Students come in with a many aspects that affect their identity including their personal, familial, and cultural backgrounds (Bal & Arzubiaga, 2014). It is important to know the strengths that come from their cultural identity and personal background and to educate with those strengths and backgrounds in mind (Milner IV, 2011). It is beneficial for students to see themselves in the curriculum and the reverse, that students can discuss when their culture and history is not represented (Milner IV, 2011). One resource for Somali students is the Somali Bilingual Project.⁴ Another great resource for teachers’ is *Students with Interrupted Formal Education*.⁵

⁴ The Somali Bilingual Project is a collection of Somali folktales that are traditionally shared in an oral tradition to share values. Minnesota Humanities Center along with the Minnesota Somali community worked in collaboration in 2006 to make these bilingual children’s books (Minnesota Humanities Center).

⁵ At the end of chapters two and three of *Students with Interrupted Formal Education* are great resources about students coming from various countries such as Somalia, Sudan, and Syria (Custodio & O’Loughlin, 2017).

Connecting with families. Families bring a large support system to children (Farid & McMahan, 2004). While sometimes families will be separated during their transition to their host countries, many immigrant families unite and step in for siblings and extended family (Farid & McMahan, 2004). Educators should not be afraid of language barriers. A smile and a relaxed, welcoming demeanor go a long way in connecting cross culturally (Stewart & Martin, 2018). Districts and schools should prioritize hiring bilingual staff and translators for family meetings, events, and phone calls (Stewart & Martin, 2018).

Guided Language Acquisition Design. All teachers working with ELLs should be trained in guided language acquisition design (GLAD) strategies to some degree. GLAD is an instructional model that can be used in a general education classroom to teach English (Elfer et. al 2013). Several teacher-researchers support the use of GLAD, including Jallo (2017), Deussen, Autio, Roccograndi and Hanita (2014), Elfers, Lucero, Stritikus and Knapp (2013), Calif. Fountain Valley School District (1991).

GLAD is a marketed language development pedagogy teachers are trained in. GLAD strategies allow language to be taught through a subject area such as social studies or science (Elfers et. al., 2013). Brechtel is the founder of GLAD (1998). Brechtel developed many of these strategies while teaching in a refugee camp in Afghanistan (Kiiskila, 2017). Before GLAD was marketed, she wrote a book called *Bridging the Whole Together: an Integrated Whole Language Approach for the Multilingual Classroom* (1998). In this book readers can understand the foundation of the GLAD

strategies. The table below shows the “give me five” strategies instructors encourage educators to first use after their GLAD training.

“Give Me Five” GLAD Strategies	
Graphic Organizer Input Chart	This is a “Big Picture” of the unit information. It is visual syllabus.
Pictorial Input Chart	This gives students schema for the upcoming week’s lessons.
Expert Groups	These reinforce the schema taught in the pictorial input chart and allows students to specialize in one subject area within their group.
Process Grid	This shows the big ideas of the unit a grid format. It is used in review at the end of a unit, week, or lesson.
Cooperative Strip Paragraph	Students collaboratively work with their table teams to create a detail sentence that work with a pre-made topic sentence.

Figure 3. The five best strategies to start with when introducing GLAD into your classroom. (Kiiskila, 2017).

Educators are also encouraged to use the seven “hip pocket tools” that could be integrated during any lesson, and in any content area (Kiiskila, 2017).

Seven “Hip Pocket Tools”	
“Say it with me”	Used when teaching pronunciation of new vocabulary. Instead of having students repeat after you, students repeat with you. <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Teachers says the word. 2. Teacher says “say it with me” Teacher and students say it the new vocabulary together.
10/2 Discussion	This is the principal that once a teacher has taught for ten minutes consecutively, they should give students a chance to process this by talking, writing, or expressing

	in some way. Teachers should never give input for more than ten minutes without giving students this two minute break.
Sketch It or Picture Cards	Teachers should use visuals whenever possible. They could sketch the new vocabulary or the visual of a narrative or idea. Teachers can also use premade picture cards to give students a visual.
Hand Gesture	Teachers should teach hand gestures with repeated definitions of vocabulary or major concepts in a unit. Teachers can use sign language or invent their own hand gestures. This pairs well with James Asher's Total Physical Response theory.
"Prove It"	When students give an answer, tell them to "prove it". This allows students to give a more thoughtful response and use evidence from a text or their schema.
Color Coding	Whenever possible teachers should use the same color for a term or unit section. For example, if a teacher is teaching parts of speech, they could use blue for nouns, red for verbs, and purple for prepositional phrases.
Neurological Imprinting	This is when a teacher makes an input poster in front of the students. Research says that you are more likely to remember something if it is drawn or written in front of you. Teachers can first create the input poster in pencil before class and then trace it with marker when teaching in front of the students.

Figure 4. The seven GLAD strategies teachers should use most often. (Kiiskila, 2017).

Whole language approach. These GLAD strategies use the whole language approach that has been supported by Goodman, Flores, and Ada (Fountain Valley School District, 1991). In the whole language approach language is learned through content (Fountain Valley School District, 1991). Krashen, a linguist and educational researcher, found that "language is acquired most effectively when the emphasis is on a meaning and the message... language learning is easy when it is whole, real, and relevant; when it

makes sense and is functional” (Fountain Valley School District, 1991, p. 3). A whole language classroom approach does two things. First is values the student’s cultures, which was discussed in a previous section. Second, listening, discussion, reading, and writing are all viewed as “interrelated and integrated throughout the subject areas” (Fountain Valley School District, 1991, p. 4). Both of these whole language approaches are used in GLAD teaching strategies (Kiiskila, 2017). For our former refugee ELLs language learning and literacy are important for success in school.

Collaborative strategic reading. Kent Lee (2016) is an educator for SLIFE adolescents and young adults who have immigrated to Canada, many as refugees. He saw that lack of literacy training was negatively affecting many students in the upper grades. Literacy-heavy classes, such as English and social studies, were prerequisites to many other classes students need to take. Lee (2016) saw that “explicit reading strategy instruction” need to be taught (p. 99). Collaborative Strategic Reading (CSR) uses psychologist Vygotsky’s Zone of Proximal Development (Lee, 2016). In this strategy students are challenged to do something slightly out of their independent reading level in a mixed group setting. Students work together, hence “collaborative”, to understand a text. The teacher instructs on five specific reading strategies: previewing, monitoring comprehension, finding the main idea, summarizing, and questioning (Lee, 2016). In a mixed level group, students then take on expert roles for each of those five roles. Together the students read the text and deconstruct it based on their expert role. Schools that have used CSR have seen an increase in reading scores (Lee, 2016). Educators who would like more information on CSR can look at Klingner, Vaughn, Boardman, and

Swanson’s work for details and printable worksheets (Lee, 2016).

CSR is broken into three sections: pre-reading, during reading, and post reading. In pre-reading students are taught to preview the text. While students are reading they use the “click and clunk” strategy, which is when they notice what they understand or what “clicks” with them and what they do not understand, the “clunk” (p. 102). Below are the strategies used when students “clunk” in a reading passage:

“Click and Clunk” What to do when the reading does not make sense:
a. Reread the sentence with the clunk and look for clues (e.g., appositives) to figure out unknown vocabulary.
b. Reread the sentences before and after the clunk for other contextual clues.
c. Look for affixes and root words in the clunk for clues.
d. Determine parts of speech to aid understanding or look for similar words in your first language (cognates).

Figure 4. This table shows the four strategies teachers can explicitly teach students to use when they come across a difficult section of reading. (adapted from Lee, 2016).

To work on comprehension students use the “getting the gist” strategy while reading to find the main idea of each section (Lee, 2016). To simplify the “getting the gist” strategy, students ask who or what is the most important part of that passage and then write a sentence about what that person or thing does. The “wrap-up” strategy is used during post reading where students create questions. Sentence stems could be used such as “What is _____? How are _____ and _____ the same? Why do you think _____?” (p. 103). After the teacher explicitly teaches these strategies to students the class would then do a whole class reading with teacher modeling. The next step is a whole class reading, but unlike the previous step the students are the leaders and experts. This pairs

well with the gradual release model that many teachers are familiar with as a best practice (Levy, 2007). After this step, the teacher creates mixed ability groups of four work together using the CSR process. CSR can increase refugee students ability to monitor their own understanding of a text and give them strategies to understand difficult sections. Kent's research (2016) states that students began to use the reading comprehension strategies in other units and content areas. Students also enjoyed the collaborative piece and the ability to practice their oral English (Kent, 2016). CSR is a reading comprehension strategy educators can use with students who are former refugees (Kent, 2016).

Conclusion

In conclusion, I have come to recognize that students who have experienced trauma learn differently than students who have experienced less trauma. Students who have had refugee experiences have experienced a high level of trauma. Many of the ELLs I work with have come from the east African countries such as Somalia, Kenya, Ethiopia, or Djibouti. As I have learned in this research, I cannot assume all students have experienced the same level of trauma. Working with social workers, school leadership, and other teachers I can help understand student needs based on their adverse childhood experiences and be better prepared to help them succeed in school. The large, urban school I work at has partnerships with psychologists, social workers, nurses, and doctors to makes sure students have what they need. This district also focuses on social-emotional learning. It is not uncommon for social workers to come in and teach short lessons on dealing with anxiety, anger, and bullying.

Knowing best practices for ELLs who have had refugee experiences is important to me. Teaching is a public service and I believe anything you do for others should be done to the best of your ability. When I use culturally relevant practices in my classroom, I see students more engaged and excited to be in class. Community is more deeply built. Students appreciate when I am willing to learn about their culture and family. The large urban district I work in uses a company called “language line” that allows educators to make three way calls with a translator and family member. Educators have greatly benefited from a closer connection to families through this phone interpreter service. When I recognize their experiences as important they feel honored and more accepted in my class. When I started using Guided Language Acquisition Design (GLAD) I saw how quickly the students were learning and how they were able to become elementary level experts in the language and subject area. Since I have been GLAD trained I have seen an increase in my students’ interest in new units, students taking ownership of their learning, and memorizing new content more quickly. As I have studied best practices I have found new strategies that I want to use, such as Kent Lee’s Collaborative Strategic Reading (CSR). This is a strategy I would like to try in my ELL small groups. Students can become experts on a text through close reading and collaboration.

In the following chapter I discuss *How can I inform educators about best practices for teaching former refugee English Language Learners?* Now that the research on refugee students, trauma, and best practices has been done I cannot stop. To hold on to this information would not greatly benefit others. My goal is to share this new understanding with other educators and school leadership. In Chapter three I study the

best ways to teach adults and lead Professional Development at my school and other educational venues.

CHAPTER THREE

Project Description

Introduction

In this chapter I give a detailed explanation of my capstone project, including research about adult education, my audience, and the professional development style chosen. The question I have been asking is *How can I inform educators about best practices for teaching former refugee English Language Learners?* After I have written my reasons for studying this question and doing a literature review I am now ready to plan my project. I will be designing professional development for educators about teaching English language learners with refugee experiences.

Overview

This professional development (PD) will be spanning four separate occasions within the 2018-2019 academic year. Sixty-two percent of students in the target school are English Language Learners (ELLs) (E. Loichle, personal communication, April 26, 2018). The target school has been a host school for many students who are new to the United States. A portion have lived in refugee camps and their families are originally from East Africa or Asia. Another portion have moved from Central and South America. Our school offers programs that make it more attractive for ELLs to attend including bilingual classrooms and sheltered classes for East African newcomers.

The first session will be all about refugee experiences and schooling in host countries, the next PD is about trauma informed education, the third PD is about best practices for ELLs, and the fourth and final is about collaborative planning time. More details about the PD plan can be found in Appendix (1).

Teacher Education

There is direct correlation between teacher learning and student learning (Condon et al., 2016). Teachers who participate in professional development often make changes in their practices that positively affect students (Condon et al., 2016). There are several different types of professional development for educators, including formal faculty development, intentional, self-directed improvements in teaching, routine faculty development, and connecting faculty learning with student learning (Condon, et. al., 2016). This project will be using formal faculty development or professional development (PD) to inform and train teachers.

Multiple speakers. Knowles is a often noted expert in adult education. In this professional development, I will be using several of Knowles' practices. Knowles is often noted as one of the greatest resources in adult education (L. Halldin, personal communication, March 31, 2018). In a large meeting, one speaker is the least interesting option (Knowles, 1992). To keep it more interesting I will have visuals, multiple speakers, and audience participation. Knowles also talks about having at least two people on stage to keep the presentation engaging. Multiple speakers will be present to keep our staff engaged. I will be doing interviews with colleagues on a panel for two of the sessions. One panel member will be a fellow English as a Second Language (ESL)

teacher who also taught in Kenya and is Somali. I am going to interview him about the experience he had in Kenya of teaching and what the school was like that he taught at. I will also interview the school's Somali cultural liaison. The focus of the interviews will be on common experiences that families have in transitioning to the United States and the education system. At this professional development, I would also like to interview a few parents with the help of a staff translator. This first professional development is all about the educators becoming more aware of experiences some of our students have been through. At the next professional development, I will interview school social workers and a school psychologist to talk about causes and signs of trauma. This would essentially be an overview of my Chapter Two section on trauma.

Reaction Team. Another method Knowles (1992) suggests is bringing members of the audience up onto the stage to ask questions. These audience members would serve as the "reaction team". The reaction team would give their reactions and questions during the presentation. They could ask questions about unfamiliar terms and interrupt the presentation to ask clarifying questions (Knowles, 1992). The reaction team should represent the group in terms of age, gender, job, and interests (Knowles, 1992). I love this idea and I already have some people in mind who would do a great job of making sure the presentation is relevant to this group of educators. Knowles (1992) does not discuss how he would pick the reaction team, however, I would pick the initial people and then allow others to come trade places with them as the discussion went on. That way anyone would have an opportunity to ask a question throughout the presentation if they go to the reaction seats. Having this team will also keep our staff more engaged and feel like all

voices are better heard and represented. A reaction team would be especially helpful at the session we would talk about trauma. The third session will be on best practices for English Language Learners, those who have experienced a higher level of trauma, and former refugees. For this presentation I would like to allow teachers to lead break-out sessions. They would teach the strategies through visuals and pre-recorded videos where they use the strategies with their students.

Questions. Another point that Knowles (1992) discusses is the need for interaction among members of the audience (1992). I agree that this is an extremely important part of the presentation. Knowles suggests small groups write down questions before the presentation begins (Knowles, 1992). I would then open up for those questions at the end of the presentation if we had time. The questions could be written on sticky notes on the middle of a table and collected afterwards as well. Those questions could become the outline for a future PD (Knowles, 1992), or they could be answered at the beginning of the next PD. Staff asking questions will keep them engaged and it will help them reflect later.

Team jobs. To keep audience members engaged, Knowles (1992) also encourages the presenter to section off parts of the room and give each section jobs. Instead of audience members being passive listeners, they would be engaged (Knowles, 1992). One section of the room could be the clarification team. They could come up with points that may require more clarification. Another team could be the rebuttal team. Their task would be to come up with points they did not agree with. A third team would be the elaboration team and ask for any points that needed more elaboration or a more thorough

explanation. The fourth and final team would be the application team. They would ask the speaker to talk about any problems that may occur in the actual application of the new learning. Even though Knowles specializes in adult learning, giving jobs is a method I implement with children also. I have found that when people become active members of their learning, they are more engaged and learn more.

Project Details

Participants. My audience will be educators from the urban school where I currently teach. The majority of our students in our school are English Language Learners (ELLs). We have been a host school for many students who are new to Minnesota. We offer programs that make it more attractive for ELLs to come to our school including bilingual classrooms and sheltered classes for East African newcomers. Our staff are used to working with ELLs, but not all of them feel or are equipped to teach students who have lower English language levels or have experienced high levels of trauma. We had an all staff trauma training during the 2017-2018 school year, but staff have expressed they want more training on this.

At this school there are teachers for early childhood education through eighth grade. In addition to these classroom and content teachers, we have special education teachers, English as a Second Language (ESL) teachers, educational coaches, specialist teachers, associate educators, special education assistants, social workers, and administrators. We have 112 full time and part time licensed staff. This is the general overlook of the demographics of our staff. Total full time employed licensed staff are about 87. Twenty-three are male and 64 are female. Twenty-eight are teachers of color

and 70 are white. The majority of our students are students of color. About 48 have their bachelors degree and 35 have their master's degree (MDE, 2017). I would like to create professional development for all of the educators. We have all school meeting time set aside for full time educators every Tuesday from 2:15-3:30 pm. I will be proposing these professional development plans to our administration team and instructional leadership team.

Setting. The target school is part of a large midwestern metropolitan school district. The school is a K-8 building housing 985 students. 915 of those students receive free and reduced lunch, roughly 93%. The ethnic makeup of our students is 55% Latino, 23% Somali, 14% African American, 5% Native American, 2% White, 1% Asian. Our students speak many different languages including English, Spanish, Somali, Oromo, Vietnamese, Amharic, Arabic, Nepali, and Cambodian. 62% of our students are designated as English Language Learners (ELLs).

Outline of Professional Development

This Professional Development (PD) would happen over the course of four all staff meetings in one academic school year. The PDs will correlate with the three sections of my literature review: refugee experiences, trauma informed education, best practices, and the final PD being a planning and application time (Appendix A). Teachers participating in the four PDs will be expected to do a reflective video at the end of every PD. Specifics of the reflective videos are included in the project.

Opening. As the discussion leader, at the start of each PD, I would want to warm up the room a bit. Knowles would often speak to groups of fifty to one hundred people.

The school I will be presenting to is one of the largest in our district. There are roughly 150 people who work at this large, urban school. One thing that Knowles suggested was to get a feel for the room by asking people to raise their hand for what jobs they do (1992). Such as *Who teaches 3rd grade? How about 5th grade? Where are the specialist teachers?* Even though I teach at this school, I think it is a good practice and an easy way to get people engaged right away without thinking too hard. At the second session I will have teachers walk around and find someone they do not know. I will then have them share one student highlight from the last seven days. Teachers generally come into these meetings very tired, so I think doing something light at the beginning is appropriate.

Topics and Objectives. As stated earlier, this PD would take place over four different meetings. The first PD's topic is the experiences of former refugees. By the end of this PD educators will be able to define what a refugee is. Educators will also better understand what some of our students and staff have experienced in their time as a refugee. The topic of the second PD will be on trauma informed education. Topics discussed will include adverse childhood experiences, post-traumatic stress disorder, positive school behavior and intervention, and Zones of Regulation. At the end of this PD educators will be able to list examples of trauma students may have experienced or are currently experiencing and educators will be able to pick out one strategy they can use with their grade level team. The third PD will be about best practices including culturally relevant pedagogy, partnering with families, Guided Language Acquisition Design (GLAD), and collaborative strategic reading. During this PD educators will be able to learn from their peers about best practices for former refugees. Also, educators will plan

one lesson using a new strategy they learned. The fourth and final PD will be a time of application and co-planning time. Teachers will use their new knowledge and strategies to plan together with their grade-level co-teachers. During this PD educators will work with co-teachers (content, special education, and ELL) to plan part of a unit using best practices learned over last three PDs.

Speakers. Earlier I stated that having more than one speaker is much more engaging for adult learners (Knowles, 1992). One of the goals for all of these PDs is to model collaboration and to let experts share their knowledge. Throughout these PDs I will be asking many colleagues and community experts to speak on panels or teach. Those wanting to replicate these PDs may need to reach outside of their school and rely on other professionals and experts in their community. For the first PD I will be asking these people to speak on a panel. I will be presenting information via my Prezi slide before I interview them. This panel will talk about their own experiences and student experiences: ESL Teacher, Family Liaison, parent leader of family organization at school, refugee resettlement agency worker, and possibly a former student from our district. The second PD will be around the topic of trauma. On this panel I will have: school social workers, school psychologist, and a teacher. The third PD will be break out session led by teacher-experts: GLAD trained ESL and content teachers, teacher using culturally relevant practices, and a teacher using the collaborative strategic reading strategy. The final PD will be more teacher led. Teachers will be trusted and treated as professionals to meet with their co-teachers to plan for a future unit using the background

knowledge and strategies they now have to improve students learning. It is important in teacher training that educators be treated as professionals (Kiiskila, 2018).

Assessment reflection. At the end of each PD, participants will be given time to reflect on the PD and also to inform the PD leaders of benefits and changes needed. Instead of doing written reflections, video reflections will be done. Flipgrid will be the online platform used. I will share a video of myself asking the reflection questions. Educators will respond with a video. They may do the reflection video with a co-teacher, especially after the third and fourth PDs as these have more collaboration time. Teachers will reflect on their learning and also show any work they have completed, such as a GLAD poster they make during the third PD. It is important that I reflect on my PD development and presentation to improve future PDs.

Training room setting. The location of my school's professional development for large group meetings is in a former lunch room. This is the location we use when we all meet in one place. We have round tables to encourage and enable easier discussion. When we meet to study data and student trends within grade level bands (ie. Kindergarten through third grade teachers come together to look at reading levels), we meet in classrooms and normally sit with our grade level teams. Our ESL team meets in a classroom for a professional learning cycle (PLC) once a week in a classroom. This is a separate meeting from our all staff meetings on Tuesdays. The professional development I will be planning is for all educators, so it would most likely happen in our large meeting space with round tables over the course of several Tuesday afternoons. For those wanting to replicate this training I would suggest using a large meeting space for the first two

PDs. Make sure their tables and chairs are set up in a way that participants can easily see and hear the panel, but also set up in a way they small groups may talk.

Presentation Method. I will be choosing to design my presentations through Prezi. Prezi allows the presentation designer to add text, visuals, and videos. Knowles (1992) talks about the need for visuals to keep the presentation more engaging. My presentation will be shown on a screen behind me.

For my presentation I want to show videos of various students, community experts, and educators. Using the presentation of Prezi will allow me to upload videos. On Prezi I can also post discussion questions for the small groups to talk about. One thing I need to remember to do is to make the font big enough. Many times I have seen presentations at our school where the font is far to small and people are not able to read the screen. Another technical detail is the need for a sound system. Our professional development room has poor acoustics and people often have a hard time hearing each other. I would like to make sure people have access to microphones.

Conclusion

The above PD plan is ambitious as it spans over four different meeting times and involves coordinating with many other working adults. Efforts as educators should be ambitious though. Students are the future and they are worth all the time, energy, and advanced training educators put in. This PD will inform educators on former refugee experiences, trauma informed education, and best practices for English language learners who have refugee experiences. This training will positively impact all students, as teacher training improves students learning (Condon, et al., 2016). For a sample timeline and

schedule of what this PD will look like, see appendix A. In the following chapter, I reflect on the project I created.

CHAPTER FOUR

Conclusion

Overview

When I first started this capstone project, I wanted to find out how I could inform educators on best practices for former refugee English language learners. I studied refugee immigration processes and the strengths and weaknesses that many of these people have. I also looked at the effects of trauma and how they affect a student, especially in school. Other scholars have researched these areas. I wanted to take it to a new level by also looking for tools and strategies teachers could use to work with these students. In my third chapter I also researched how adults best learn and how I could assist educators in learning these different areas of my literature review. All of this research was used to design my project, which is four professional development sessions that encapsulate all of the above learning.

In this fourth and final chapter, I explain what I have learned and reflected on in creating four professional development sessions. This professional development was created for all educators who work at an urban school with a diverse population of immigrants. In this chapter I discuss how my researched literature impacted my professional development. I also review the literature on adult education for professional development. In the end I leave notes for those who want to do further study on this topic.

My Learning

Working as an educational assistant, English as a Second Language (ESL) Teacher, and being involved in the local Somali community, I realized that one key to student learning is teacher understanding. Educators need to know the standards, but they also need to know the students. When it comes to working with students who have been through a high level of trauma, are new to learning English, and are transitioning to a new country, teachers must have more education. That is why I planned four separate professional development sessions. The first two bring more awareness to refugee and immigrant experiences and trauma informed education. The last two are for learning best practices for English Language Learners (ELLs) and planning practical lessons and units. The last two are just as important as the first two because teachers need time to implement their new learning into planning so it can truly benefit the students.

In writing this capstone and creating this project I have been a learner, researcher, reader, brainstormer, writer, analyzer, and reflector. At the beginning of this process, I was reminded of how important it is to be interested in the subject matter. I chose to study refugees and trauma because of relationships in my own life and my desire to help others grow. Much of the research was very interesting to me, and I constantly looked for ways to apply the learning to my own practice or share it with colleagues. Learning is meant to be shared and I cannot wait to share my project with other educators.

At first I was nervous that my question may be lacking originality and a replica of other research. After reading other capstones, I realized my approach was different.

While the other studies were largely focused on the refugee students, I wanted to focus on how to educate educators. I think many people have studied the effects of trauma and SLIFE students, but I have not seen as many true resources on teacher training for these students. It was this realization that pushed me to focus not only on the students, but also on the educators.

I used to think that doing research was just doing an assignment for a class. Now I see how research really validates the work I do. If I want to encourage others to teach in a similar way, I better know that it works. My opinion is not strong enough when I am trying to persuade my principals and staff. The following section focuses on the literature I reviewed to create this project and answer the question *How can I inform educators about best practices for teaching former refugee English Language Learners?*

Revisiting the Literature Review

The literature review was essential to the understanding and completion of this project. Each major finding in my literature review became a professional development session including: students with limited education, refugee experiences, post traumatic stress disorder (PTSD), adverse childhood experiences (ACEs), trauma informed teaching, best practices, culturally relevant teaching, guided language acquisition development (GLAD), collaborative strategic reading, family involvement, and adult education. Below are some sources that influenced my project.

I always knew my English language learners were intelligent and that being bilingual was a benefit, but my research showed me even more. Some of the benefits of being bilingual are having higher test scores, the lowest rates of depression, an

unmatched level of self-esteem, and the highest educational and career goals (McBrien, 2005). I also learned more about it what it means for these students to be resilient. Many of the former refugee students have experienced the loss of family, malnutrition, violence, and poor living conditions in a refugee camp or while traveling (Hos, 2016).

Along with learning about these students, I learned about the trauma students face when coming to the U.S. Poverty, racism, bullying, and violence in the community are all examples of trauma that students may continue to face (Ogilvie & Fuller, 2016). Students may face prejudiced refugee policies (Karanja, 2010), institutional and structural barriers (Bal & Arzubaiaga, 2014), xenophobia (Karanja, 2010), and discrimination based on language, clothing, skin color, and food (Chuang & Moreno, 2010). I was a little surprised by these findings and want to be more aware and educated in how to be an advocate for my students.

In the section about trauma I also learned a lot about what my students may be feeling. Cavanaugh, (2016), stated that students with higher ACE scores often struggle in school with “aggression, attendance problems, depression, inattention, anxiety/withdrawal, and delayed cognitive development” (p. 41). Children who have been around war may be more irritable, unable to tolerate frustration, and have less impulse control (Farid & McMahan, 2004). I have also learned how to help these students. Students need to feel they belong according to Positive Behavior Intervention and Supports (PBIS) (Stewart & Martin, 2018). Through a school wide system of supports, students with higher levels of trauma may be more successful. The

findings in my literature review were important to the foundation of my project:
informing educators on best practices for former refugee english language learners.

Implications and Limitations

Implications. As educational leaders are making decisions about students who are coming from refugee situations, immigrating to the U.S. and having limited education they need to keep these laws in mind. According to the Supreme Court decision of *Plyler v. Doe* from 1982 “school districts must not consider a child’s immigration status a factor for enrollment” (Custodio & O’Loughlin, 2017, p. 32). Also because of the *Refugee Act* originated in 1980, there must be availability of private and public resources for refugees. That includes public and private schools (Refugee Act, 2012). We are here to serve all children who come through our doors regardless of immigration and educational background. We should inform ourselves on their culture, history, and best practices.

My recommendations to state and federal policy makers is to have students with limited or interrupted formal education (SLIFE) on their minds when they are making policies about immigration and education. Those who have listened to someone who has left their country that they love, you know that it was not an easy decision to leave their home, culture, family, and way of income. Especially for those who risked their own safety, it is obvious that their need and desire to move to a land of more opportunity was necessary for survival.

Instead of incriminating immigrants, policy makers should have empathy in understanding and wisdom in planning for a better future. Almost all residents of the U.S. are related to immigrants, looking to leave difficult situations from their home country

and also the hope of better future. Today's immigrants come with many of the same hopes. Immigrants and children are often the most vulnerable in our society. I recommend policy makers financially support schools that are supporting the SLIFE immigrants and fund research on best practices for these valuable students.

Limitations

As I write this, our policies towards immigrants and refugees have drastically changed. We may be getting less refugees to the U.S. as a whole, but the focus on refugees and other immigrant groups still applies. In a conversation I had with Bob Oehrig, Executive Director of Arrive Ministries he said that many families migrate to Minnesota after having first been settled in a different state (personal communication, Oehrig, B., June 28, 2018). They migrate to Minnesota after their initial first state placement because Minnesota has some of the lowest unemployment rates, so many people want to come here. Many people also want to come because we have strong communities of Somali, Hmong, and Nepali people.

In writing the first three chapters, my focus was on students who had been in refugee situations. While finishing my third chapter, planning the final project, talking with a refugee resettlement agency (personal communication, Oehrig, B., June 28, 2018), and reading *Students with Interrupted Formal Education* (Custodio & O'Loughlin, 2017), I realized I need to expand the focus of my first professional development. Instead of focusing my first professional development on students who had the legal status of being a refugee, I needed to expand to all students who have immigrated to the U.S., including those seeking refuge from conflict and poverty in latin America. Instead of refugees in

the legal term, I needed to expand to students with interrupted formal education (SIFE) or students with limited informal and formal education (SLIFE). For example, this includes the students from my school coming from East Africa and Nepal, but also some students from Mexico, Honduras, and Ecuador (Custodio & O'Loughlin, 2017).

My first professional development reflects those changes in my focus. Some of the panel questions are more directed toward Latin American SIFE students, others are connected more to refugee SIFE students, and others relate to both groups of students. The first section of my literature review is focused on refugees, not latin American immigrants. There are many push and pull for families and unaccompanied minors from latin America, meaning there are reasons individuals are being pushed out of their home countries and pulled to the U.S. for more opportunities (Custodio & O'Loughlin, 2017).

Recommendations for Future Research & Use Communicating Results and Benefits to the Profession

Implementing the Professional Development

In order to implement this four session professional development (PD), educators will need a team of educators and community experts supporting them. First, the vision must be cast. The need for this type of PD must become a priority at the school. Those who have trouble gaining access to the administration's support may change this PD to focus on English language learner (ELL) teachers. If the PD is seen as useful, there may be more support to implement it for all educators at the school.

Once support is received from other educators, I recommend meeting with a team of educators who will plan the PD. For the first PD on SLIFE students educators, community experts, and families should be involved to have a truly well rounded panel.

For the second PD on trauma, mental health experts should be on the panel. If counselors or psychologists from the school are not available, one may contact their local community health office or a mental health professional at a new immigrant organization. The third PD on best practices will need four to ten teachers willing to lead break out sessions, depending on the size of the school. Again this PD is meant to be planned and implemented as a group initiative. Those looking to lead these PDs should be willing to cast vision and build a team of education, community, and family leaders.

Future Research

For future research I would like to better understand second hand trauma or how traumatic experiences can be passed down to others. Many of my students have not experienced war themselves, but they have heard about it from family members (Farid & McMahan, 2004). I also want to know how trauma affects caregivers. I believe that the effects of trauma can be passed on to others, including family members and educators.

I would also like to better understand and know how to implement positive behavior interventions and supports (PBIS). SLIFE students need consistency in standards, supports, and discipline policies across a school, not just in one teacher's classroom. Research done by Steward and Martin (2018) in *Bridging Two Worlds: Supporting Newcomer and Refugee Youth* would be a starting point educators wanting to learn more about PBIS.

Future Goals

In the future I would like to train teachers outside of the United States. I would like to serve in an area where students have had limited or informal education. I may

work in an area where refugees have been arriving more often than they have lately in the United States. Currently, I am talking with people in Lebanon. There has been an influx in Syrian refugees and a great need for teachers. My dream would be to help educators feel more capable and encouraged to work with students with these unique needs. One difficulty in many refugee camps is the lack of teacher training. In a refugee camp in Dadaab, Kenya only 142 out of 1,933 teachers were trained (Custodio & O'Loughlin, 2017).

Creating this capstone is one of the first tangible steps to seeing this dream of training other educators of former refugees. For the purposes of this capstone project, I put most of my focus on my current urban school in the United States. In a year or two I would like to live abroad. I would like to use my education background to help develop a community and bring more opportunity and hope to people. I am interested in doing a few things when going abroad: learning the language, teaching English, and training teachers in best practices. If possible I would like to do this in an area with refugees so I believe my current research will have a positive impact for years to come. This is what I reminded myself of when the hours of research and writing grew long. This research is not only for myself, it will impact many people.

Benefits

This professional development will greatly benefit the educators who are a part of the four professional development sessions. It will benefit the staff as a whole because everyone will be able to more information to have deeper conversations and learnings about students with interrupted education and how trauma affects students. The adult

learners will also benefit from choosing their own best practice break-out session. Those include guided language acquisition development (GLAD), culturally relevant teaching, collaborative strategic reading, or family involvement. This professional development will also encourage leadership and collaboration. Speakers on the panels will be empowered to be experts. Educators leading break-out sessions will become teacher educators. Grade level teams will collaborate to create units they will use with their students. This professional development on *informing educators on best practices for former refugee english language learners* will greatly benefit the educational community.

Conclusion

In conclusion, teachers need to be equipped to understand students with limited education due to refugee and immigration experiences. Educators need strategies that will allow them to teach literacy to students who may be lacking in their educational backgrounds. There are a plethora of resources available, but educators may not know where to begin looking and how to learn the strategies. This four session professional development is based on a literature review that focuses on experiences of refugee english language learners, trauma informed teaching, and best practices for these students. The professional development was created with adult learners in mind and used many of Knowles practices (Knowles, 1992). All of these findings will greatly impact my practices with students and educators. All students need to be taught. All educators need effective professional development. This capstone and project inform educators on best practices for former refugee English language learners.

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Appendix A
Timeline and Schedule

Best Practices for Former Refugees Professional Development						
Time	Location	Objective	Topic	Speakers	Outline of Schedule	Supplies Needed
Tuesday 2:15-3:30	Cafeteria A	-Educators will be able to define what a refugee is. -Educators will better understand what some of our students and staff have experienced in their time as a refugee.	The Experience of Former Refugees	Panel to talk about experiences, strengths, weaknesses: -ESL Teacher -Family Liaison -Parents of students -Community members -Refugee Resettlement Agency Worker -Student	-Warm-up: meet with someone new and tell a highlight -Rationale for this PD and future PDs -Give group roles - "Home" poem by Warsan Shire -Interview with Panel -Time for questions -Online survey	-Microphones -Laptop with Google Slides -Questions for Panel -Screen -Projector with extension cord - "Home" lyrics by Warsan Shire -Flipgrid Reflection for educators
Tuesday 2:15-3:30	Cafeteria A	-Educators will be able to list some examples of trauma students may have experienced -Educators will be able to pick out one strategy they can use with their grade level team.	Trauma Informed Education: Adverse Childhood Experiences, Post-traumatic stress disorder, Positive School Behavior and Intervention, Zones	-School Social Workers -School Psychologist -Classroom teacher or ESL teacher	-Warm-up: Who' in the room? -Revisit rationale -Give group roles -Google Slides with trauma facts & panel questions -Interview with Panel -Time for questions -End with	-Microphones -Laptop with Google Slides -Screen -Projector with extension cord -Flipgrid Reflection for educators

					group Mindfulness -Online survey	
Tuesday 2:15-3:30	Cafeteria A	-Educators will be able to learn from their peers about best practices for former refugees -Educators will plan one lesson using a new strategy they learned	Best Practices: Culturally Relevant Pedagogy, Families, GLAD, Collaborative Strategic Reading	Break-out session leaders: -GLAD trained ESL and classroom teachers -Teacher using culturally relevant practices -Teacher using collaborative strategic reading strategy	-Warm-up: -Revisit Rationale & explain break-out sessions -Break-out sessions (show videos of strategy in action) -Time to plan a lesson with a co-teacher using a best practice strategy	-Microphones -Laptop with Google Slides -Screen -Projector with extension cord -Flipgrid Reflection for educators **give breakout session listing before PD and have teachers select their session before this PD
Tuesday 2:15-3:30	Classrooms chosen by grade level teams	-Educators will work with co-teachers (content, special education, and ELL) to plan part of a unit using best practices learned over last three PDs	Application: Grade level teams will have time to plan best practices lessons	-I will share a short video on "flipgrid" that will give directions to the teachers -I will be available in the A Cafeteria for any teams who want more resources.	-Teachers will have time to plan. -Teachers will reply to the flipgrid video with their own team response	-Poster paper rolls in Cafeteria A -Physical copies of lesson materials available in Cafeteria A -Flipgrid Reflection for educators