

# EL CONSIDERATIONS FOR REFUGEE STUDENTS

By

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## Capstone Project Summary

The goal of this project was to provide a framework for educators who are faced with the task of teaching English Learners to refugee students. In the previous chapter, three key components of the refugee experience were analyzed through the review of literature in each area. The three themes determined to be essential to this project were poverty, trauma, and SLIFE (students with limited or interrupted formal education). Within each theme, two factors were considered. These factors were the effect each theme has on language acquisition, mainly second language, and effective practices argued to be most effective in teaching language skills. By analyzing research in each area stated, this project should be able to answer the question: *What are the effective practices for meeting the unique educational needs of refugees as EL learners?*

### Project Description

#### *Project*

The overall goal of the project was providing a framework for teachers to utilize in teaching ESL to refugee students. This framework contained the three themes considered are poverty, trauma, and SLIFE, all of which have been determined as key factors within the refugee experience. In order to determine the effective practices for teaching refugee students a second language with those three factors in mind, the project first summarized the findings from the literature review focused upon the effective practices for each theme. Those findings were then analyzed to determine overlapping components, that is, effective practices which are common in two separate themes and ideally all three. Those practices listed across all three themes together provided the framework.

#### *Framework*

The specific framework chosen for this project was staff development. Since the ultimate goal of this project was to provide educators themselves with an effective method to teach English to refugee students, it needed to be accessible to them. While curriculum might provide some tools, what was more

essential for these purposes was to provide a workable framework teachers could take back to their classroom and build upon to meet their specific classroom needs. Staff development also provides a more personal and interactive experience for teachers allowing them to participate in its key components.

## **Audience and Setting**

### ***Audience***

This project was initially designed for a midwestern school district in a small town about thirty minutes from suburbs surrounding a larger city. The purpose behind the use of this district included the motivation behind the entire project. This school district underwent massive challenges and changes several years ago when the small town surrounding it was resettled by Somali refugees. Information gathered from census reports between 2005 and 2017 showed that 78% of the residents there were white, followed by 10% Hispanic and 8% black. Economically, 44% of the household income remained under \$50,000 and 20% of children under 18 years of age were considered below the poverty line. Of particular interest to this study was that by 2017, only 75% of children between five and seventeen years old spoke English-only at home. This was most likely due to the fact that 10% of the population was foreign-born, 45% of them born in Africa (Census Reporter, 2017). This would reflect the influx of Somali refugees experienced by this district. Data from the 2019-2020 school year Public School Review (2019) reported almost half of the current enrollment consisted of minority students while 24% of the total student population was Hispanic and 21% was Black.

It was the ultimate goal of this project to provide a framework available to the educators and staff in current systems experiencing influxes of refugees in their community. Having information upfront, before all the trials and troubles begin in this situation, enables the staff to develop a common pedagogy and culture amongst themselves. This platform also gives teachers a solid foundation and confidence when it comes time to prepare curriculum, develop the classroom setting, and interact on a daily basis

with the new refugee students. With confidence comes positivity. Students quickly pick up on the optimistic and welcoming emotions coming from the staff and most likely respond positively themselves.

### ***Setting***

The setting of this project takes place during staff development workshops. Ideally this workshop would take place at the beginning of the school year allowing teachers and support staff on the same initial page rather than making changes in the middle of the year. However, if need be, this could take place during another workshop opportunity. For example, if a large number of refugees settled in the community over the fall, there could be a workshop in between semesters.

Since the information contained in the project is most likely new to most of the staff as well as broad, the ideal workshop would take place over three days. This allowed the teachers and staff to learn material in sections and bring that new knowledge to the next section. It would also allow time for reflection and assignments. Day One of the workshop offered an introduction and review of the three basic components of the project: poverty, trauma, and SLIFE. Day Two then started building the framework using diagrams plotting how effective practices for the three components intersect. A final framework was also developed and outlined. The final day, Day Three, provided a review of each framework element as well as specific methods and tools used to implement it. During this time, groups developed a method or tool for one aspect of the framework and shared it with everyone.

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## Project Outline

**PowerPoint Presentation Link:** [https://1drv.ms/p/s!AngjhdWbth0\\_jUzws1iBtCC03Fre](https://1drv.ms/p/s!AngjhdWbth0_jUzws1iBtCC03Fre)

- I. Day One:
  - A. Starter: Handouts given as participants arrived with instructions
    1. Prior-knowledge assessment: a brief quiz which assesses how much the audience already knows about the topic and activates their thinking (Handout)
    2. Personal attitude evaluation: a brief survey revealing individual emotions concerning the topic such as fears, concerns, bias, etc. (Handout/ Preconference Assessment)
  - B. Introduction: Introduce speaker and topic: Folders containing remaining handouts are distributed to tables as assessments are collected  
(PP/ Slide 1) (Handout/ Answers to Assessment)
  - C. Rationale: Provide reasons for the presentation
    1. Current district/community situation: influx of refugees (PP/ Slide 2)
    2. The refugee as a unique student
      - a) Unique needs and experiences compared to other ELs (PP/ Slide 3-4)
      - b) Unique educational approach (PP/ Slide 5)
  - D. Today's goals: (PP/ Slide 6)
    1. Obtain a general understanding of each factor as well as how it affects secondary language acquisition.
    2. Obtain a clear understanding of practices recommended for each factor.
  - E. Three areas of consideration (PP/ Slide 7) (Handout/ Day 1: Notes)
    1. Poverty: Define and provide statistical data (PP/ Slide 8-10)
    2. Trauma: Define and provide statistical data (PP/ Slide 11-13)

3. SLIFE: Define and provide statistical data (PP/ Slide 14-16)
- F. Poverty (PP/ Slide 18)
1. Effect on secondary language acquisition (PP/ Slide 19)
  2. Effective practices recommended (PP/ Slide 20-21)
- G. Trauma (PP/ Slide 22)
1. Effect on secondary language acquisition (PP/ Slide 23)
  2. Effective practices recommended (PP/ Slide 24-25)
- H. SLIFE (PP/ Slide Slide 26)
1. Effect on secondary language acquisition (PP/ Slide 27)
  2. Effective practices recommended (PP/ Slide 28-29)
- I. Review and Preview
1. Review key components of the presentation: have participants share what they learned (PP/ Slide 30) (Handout/ Feedback Form: Day 1)
  2. Preview: give a brief overview of tomorrow's presentation (PP/ Slide 31)

## II. Day Two

- A. Starter Activity: Participants receive a small colored circle and are divided into groups with the same color. (Handout/ Template for Day 2)
- B. Today's Goals: (PP/ Slide 32)
1. Determine areas of commonality between the three themes
  2. Develop a working list of effective practices in teaching English to refugees
- C. Use of Graphic Organizer: Introduce the circle diagram, colors used, and how it reveals areas of commonality (Power-Point) (PP/ Slide 33)
1. Circle One: Poverty/ Color: Yellow

The Yellow groups will work to create a list which summarizes the effective practices recommended for students from low-socioeconomic backgrounds.

2. Circle Two: Trauma/ Color: Red

The red group will work to create a list which summarizes the effective practices recommended for students from traumatic backgrounds.

3. Circle Three: SLIFE/ Color: Blue

The blue group will work together to create a list which summarizes the effective practices recommended for students from traumatic backgrounds.

4. Groups share their list which is added to the Power Point (PP/ Slide 34-36)

D. Putting it Together (Handout and Power-Point)

1. Overlap circles to find the common practices

- a) Find the sweet spot: the practices that are recommended for all three
- b) Use this to create the working list

2. Give groups time to fill out chart (Handout/ Chart: Day 2)

3. Go over chart and common areas found: Create list (PP/ Slide 38) (Handout/ List of Practices: Day 2)

E. Review and Preview

1. Review key components of the presentation: have participants share what they learned (PP/ Slide 39) (Handout/ Feedback Form: Day 2)

2. Preview: give a brief overview of tomorrow's presentation (PP/ Slide 39)

### III. Day Three

- A. Starter: Give each participant a paint can with one of the following words on it and instruct them to break up into groups with the same word (Communication, Background, Safety & Freedom, Skills, Methods) (Handout/ Template: Day 3)

- B. Today's Goals (PP/ Slide 40)
1. Create a detailed framework for teaching English to refugee students
  2. Develop and share specific strategies for the classroom
- C. Framework: The working list created on day two is used to create the framework with a house analogy and visual (PP/ Slide 41)
1. Supplies/ Components: Basic parts of the house being built representing various practices
  2. Tools: Specific tools used to build the house representing specific strategies of implementation.
- D. Build a house: Each practice is reviewed along with suggested strategies. Groups will be given time to review strategies for their given practice and add their answers to the power point. (Handout/ Paint can Notes: Day 3)
1. Practice one: Know and use their background (PP/ Slide 42)
    - a) Review: Understand reasons behind behavior, build upon prior knowledge, and promote individual cultures
    - b) Implement: the specific methods recommended
      - (1) Home language
      - (2) Home visits
      - (3) Use of students' communities
  2. Practice two: Provide safety and freedom (PP/ Slide 43)
    - a) Review:students need environments of safety as well as freedom
    - b) Implement: the specific methods recommended
      - (1) Allow mistakes/ learn from them
      - (2) Allow choice with assignments, timing, and self-control

3. Practice three: Communication (PP/ Slide 44)
  - a) Review: communication and therefore language become powerful tools
  - b) Implement: the specific methods recommended
    - (1) Listening and awareness
    - (2) Collaboration/ dialog
    - (3) Ability to express themselves
    - (4) Relationships with parents and communities
4. Practice four: Content (PP/ Slide 45)
  - a) Review: specific content needs to be explicitly taught
  - b) Implement: the specific methods recommended
    - (1) Formal register/ vocabulary
    - (2) Abstract concepts
    - (3) Rules of school
    - (4) Academic skills/ thinking skills
5. Practice five: Methodology (PP/ Slide 46)
  - a) Review: certain methods are known to be effective across the three areas considered in this project
  - b) Implement: the specific methods recommended
    - (1) Collaboration
    - (2) Access language through oral skills, use of visuals, and projects
    - (3) Focus upon struggles in design and success in feedback
    - (4) Individualized instruction
    - (5) ZPD, scaffolding, and modeling

- E. Culminating activity: groups share strategies they came up with during brainstorming to develop with detailed information of application (PP/ Slide 47) (Handout/ Paint can Group Notes/ Day 3)
1. Group work time
  2. Group share: each group presents their specific strategy with details. The audience is encouraged to take notes (Handout/ My Notes/ Day 3)
  3. Question, answer, participate: all participants are given time to ask questions to the presenting group and offer positive input
- F. Final Comments
1. Thank the audience for participation (PP/ Slide 48)
  2. Provide them with contact information as well as reference list and link to the presentation Power-Point (Handout/ Reference list)
  3. Have them complete a feedback sheet before leaving (Handout/ Feedback Final)

### Pre-Conference Assessment

**Part 1:** Answer the following questions to the best of your knowledge

- 1) Which statement below is true concerning the cost of refugees over the past decade?
  - a) Refugees have only cost our government 63 million dollars.
  - b) Refugees have actually brought in 63 million dollars of revenue.
  - c) The data differs drastically depending on which country the refugee is from.
  - d) The revenue brought in by refugees is more than 63 billion.
- 2) Which of the following statements is NOT true regarding the security process for refugees admitted to the US
  - a) Refugees go through at least 8 security “check points” before being admitted.
  - b) The process for security screening after referral can take two years.
  - c) Between 1980- 2019, no refugees have been involved in terror-related murders.
  - d) If there is doubt about a person possibly posing a threat, he/she must pass through three more checkpoints before being admitted to the US.
- 3) Which of the following is a common misconception concerning refugees.
  - a) Refugees and immigrants are the same thing
  - b) Most refugees end up in a developed country such as the US
  - c) Resettlement of refugees is fairly easy.
  - d) None are misconceptions because they are all true statements
  - e) They are all common misconceptions
- 4) When it comes to the education of refugees in the US
  - a) The same considerations and practices recommended for immigrants in general are equally effective with refugees.
  - b) They should be taught entirely separate from other students for their first year.
  - c) Unique consideration and practices should be given to refugees.
  - d) It depends upon the country they came from as well as the language they speak.

**Part 2:** List the first five words that come to your mind when you hear the following:

- 1) English as a Second Language:
- 2) Immigrant:

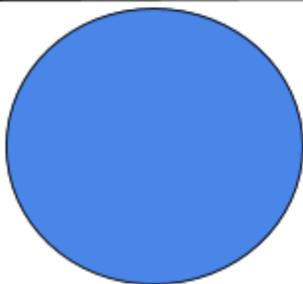
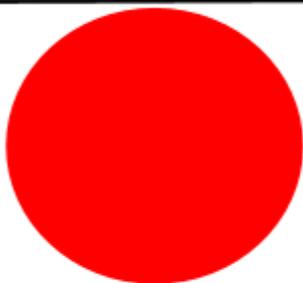
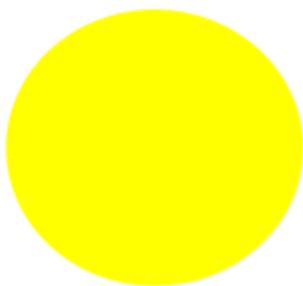
- 3) Resettlement
- 4) Refugee:
- 5) Equity:

### **Answers and References to Assessment:**

- 1) The revenue brought in by refugees is more than 63 billion.  
Hirschfeld, Davis & Sengupta, Somini, "Trump Administration Rejects Study Showing Positive Impact of Refugee", *The New York Times*, Sept, 18, 2017.
- 2) If there is doubt about a person possibly posing a threat, he/she must pass through three more checkpoints before being admitted to the US.  
This is false. This person is NOT admitted into the US.  
U.S. Committee for Refugees and Immigrants, "Security screening of refugees admitted to the United States"
- 3) They are all common misconceptions:
  - Refugees are defined as a subset of immigrants (Source from paper)
  - Most refugees actually end up in undeveloped countries. The UN's Refugee Agency estimate is 8 out of 10
  - Resettlement of refugees is NOT easy. By 2016 only 1% had been resettled.
 All three misconceptions:  
Alexander, Sadof, "8 dangerous myths about refugees debunked", June 18, 2018, (<https://www.one.org/us/blog/dangerous-myths-refugees-debunked/>)
- 4) Unique consideration and practices should be given to refugees.  
This presentation will address much of this.

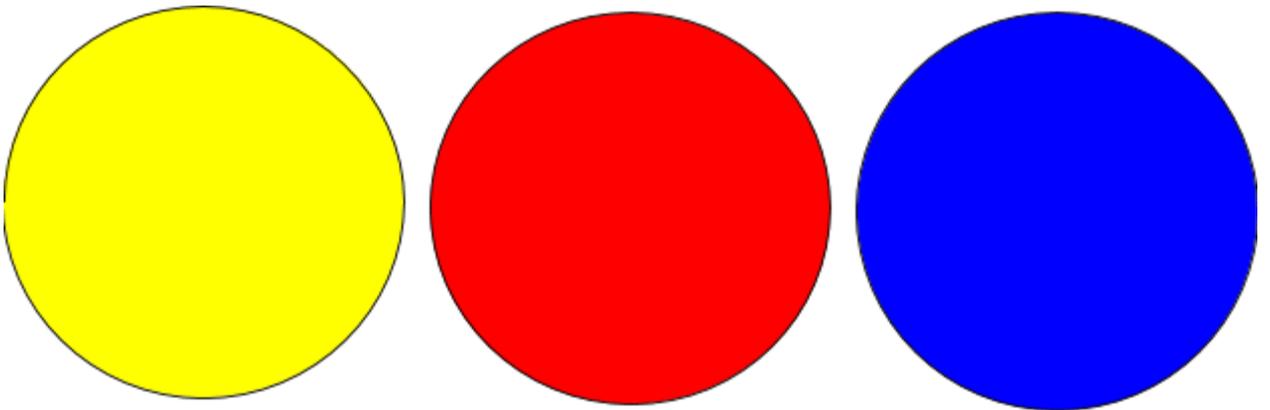
## Day 1: Notes

Use this page to take notes on each of the three topics covered

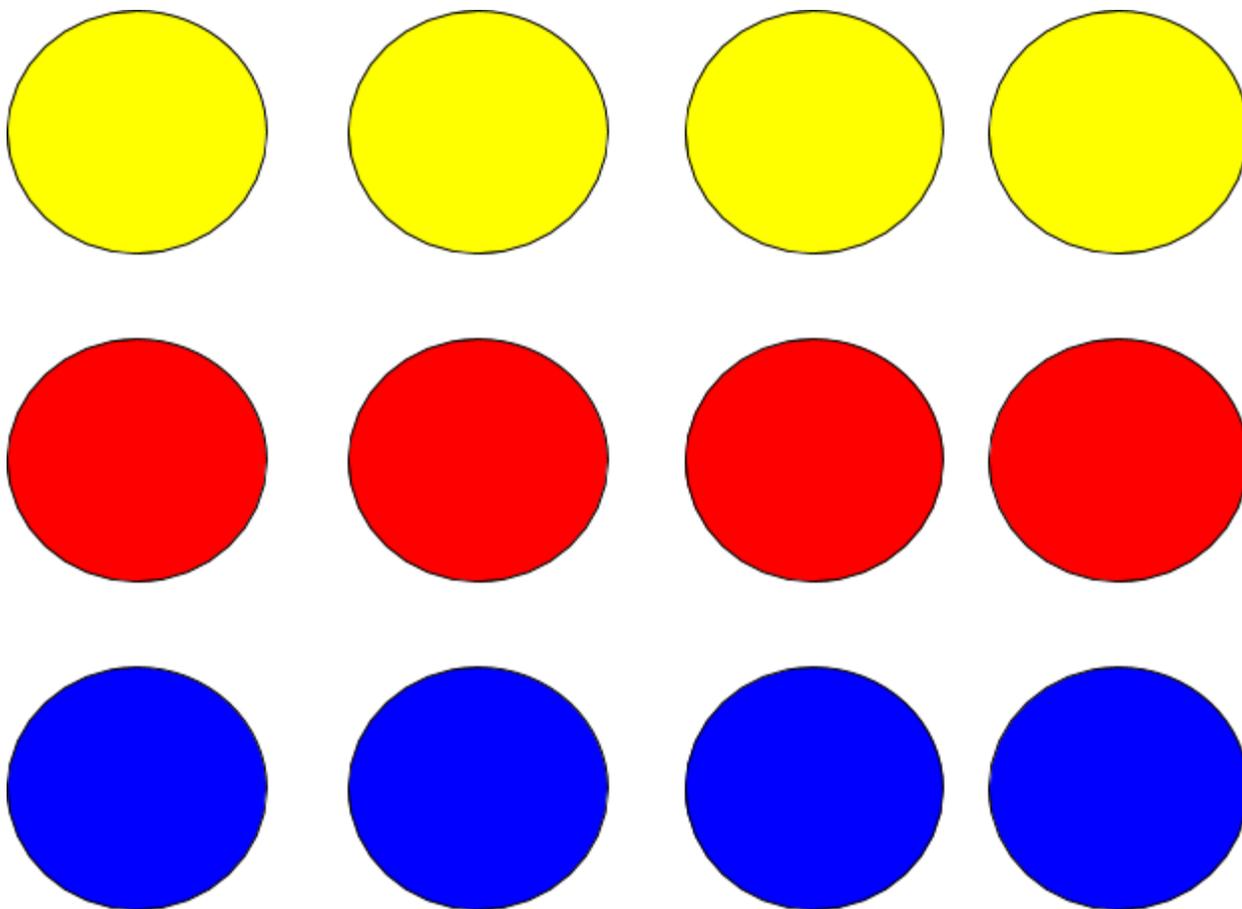


### **Day 1: Feedback Form**

- What was an important or interesting thing you learned about each topic?

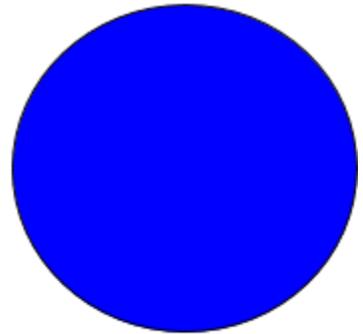
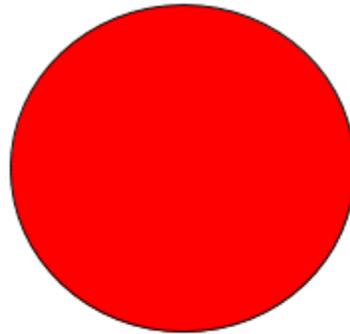
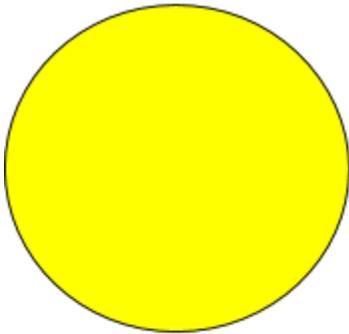


- What questions do you have for tomorrow?

**Day 2: Template of Circles**

**Day 2: Worksheet for recommended practices**

Use this to come up with common practices and  
take notes on those suggested



**Day 2: Notes on Five Practices:**

Use this to take notes about each of the 5 practices recommended

1)

2)

3)

4)

5)

## **Day 2: Feedback Form**

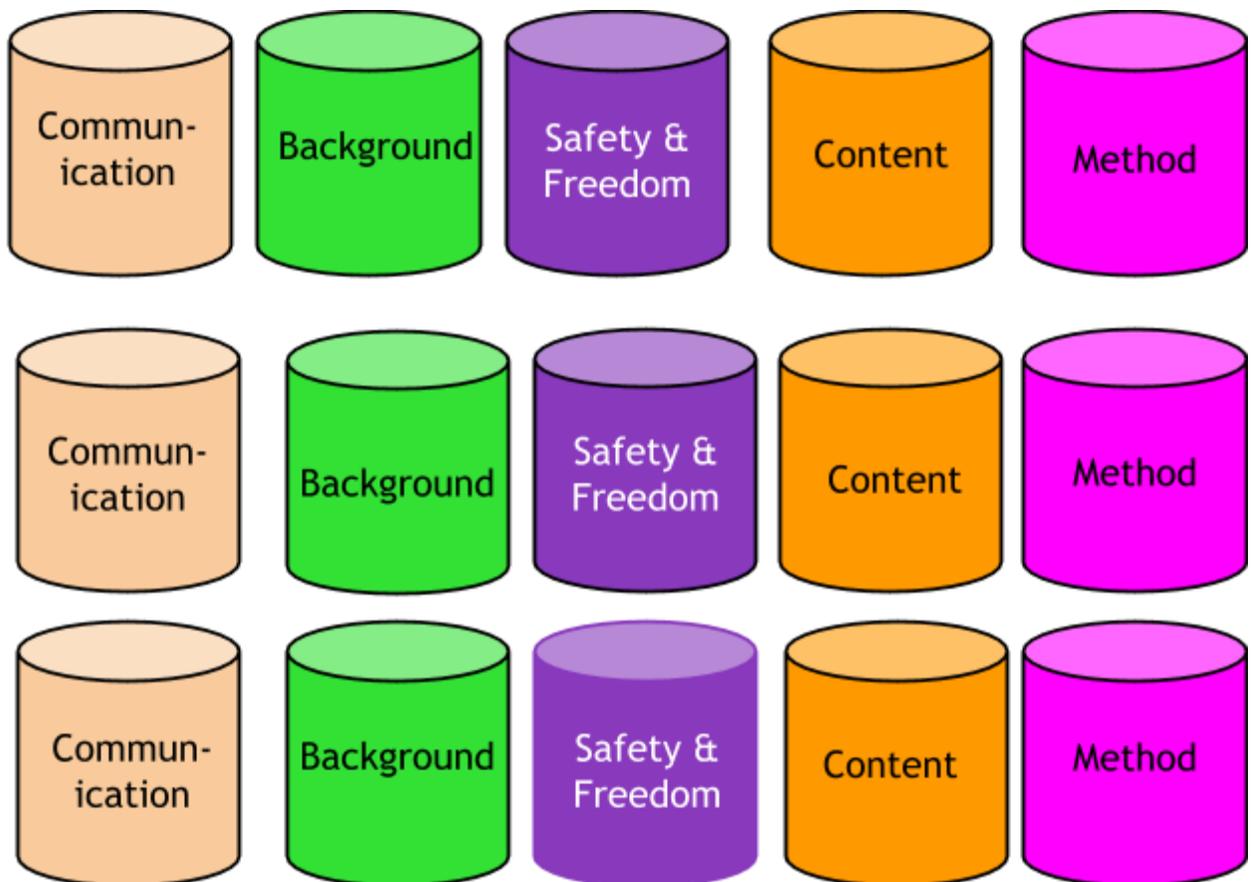
Can you remember the five practices suggested at the end of today's presentation? List them here without looking at your notes:

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.
- 4.
- 5.

Tell me about something important or exciting you learned today:

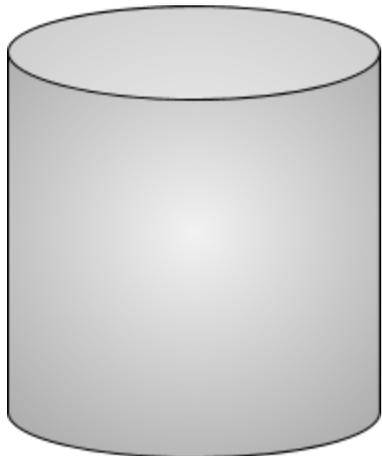
Questions?

### Day 3: Template for Paintcans



### Day 3: Paintcan Notes

**My Group:**



**Supplies/ Practices**

**Tools/ Methods**

**Our Amazing Strategy:**

### Day 3: Final Feedback

Please share something from each day that you learned:

How do you plan on using the practices, methods, and strategies from this presentation?

Please rate the presentation on the following

Rating Scale: 1=Not at all

2=A little bit

3=Right in the middle

4=Quite a bit

5=Absolutely

- |   |   |   |   |   |   |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| 1) I understand the reason for this staff development topic               | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 2) I agree that this is an important topic concerning all staff           | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 3) I learned about how poverty, trauma, and SLIFE effect refugee students | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 4) I saw how recommended practices from the three topics overlapped       | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 5) I felt that listed methods and practices                               | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |

together was an effective way to learn					
6) I loved hearing all the strategies	1	2	3	4	5
7) I will use this in my classroom	1	2	3	4	5
8) I would recommend this to other districts	1	2	3	4	5

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