

Supporting the **Mental Health** of **Alberta's Refugee Students**



The Alberta
Teachers' Association



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The Alberta
Teachers' Association

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Introduction

As a teacher, you have the privilege of developing relationships with Alberta's refugees—families who have experienced forced migration and have settled in our province. Each day you have a unique and tremendously important opportunity to make a significant impact in the lives of refugee students and their families. Working with students with diverse needs brings its own rewards.

Supporting the Mental Health of Alberta's Refugee Students is intended to

- build your understanding of the refugee experience;
- help you understand trauma and its role in the refugee experience, including the emotional and cognitive impacts of forced migration and other traumatic experiences;
- build your capacity in attending to the needs of refugee students and their families, using practical strategies and tools;
- provide suggestions for creating responsive programming that ensures an equitable and inclusive educational experience for all learners; and
- inspire you to take action to engage with refugee students and their families at a deeper, more empathetic level.

As you read, reflect on what you are already doing in your practice that makes a difference in the lives of the refugee students in your classroom. Think about how you create safe spaces, establish predictable routines and differentiate activities based on learner needs. Consider how you can be more intentional in your choices; make changes to your practice; extend your learning; and share your knowledge with colleagues, administrators and other staff.

This resource provides background information about the refugee experience, trauma and how the two are connected. It outlines key indicators of trauma that can easily be misread as misbehaviour or as signs of a learning disability, and shares ideas for creating a culturally sensitive trauma-informed learning environment. It also offers strategies for supporting refugee students and their families in their journey to overcome past and current trauma and to lead happy and productive lives in our communities.

Remember that although teachers can be effective at prevention and noticing symptoms, they are not trained medical professionals. It is important that teachers recognize their limitations and when to involve other professionals.

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The Refugee Experience

Forced Migration

Migration is the movement from one location to another. We all have stories of migration. What is yours? Perhaps you or your ancestors made the journey to Alberta from afar. Perhaps the migration was from a rural area to an urban one within the province. Or maybe it was a smaller-scale move across town. Across generations and time, migration stories usually have a number of commonalities. How does your migration story compare with those of your refugee students?

Refugees are people who have been forced to migrate. (See the infographic on page 5.)

Who Is a Refugee?

The Canadian Council for Refugees (2010) defines *refugee* as “a person who is forced to flee from persecution and who is located outside of their home country” and *immigrant* as “a person who has settled permanently in another country.” It also notes that “once a refugee has

become a citizen of another country (such as Canada) they are no longer a refugee.”

No one predicts that they will become a refugee. Imagine that you are going about your daily routines just like any other day. Suddenly you become aware that your life and safety are in imminent danger and you must flee. You have 24 hours to leave or risk the worst. Communication is down. Banks are closed. Travel on main roads may be dangerous. Airports are closed. You have to travel by foot. Where will you go? How long can you stay there? What will you pack? Those who are forced to flee rarely have time to make arrangements, gather important documents or say goodbye to loved ones. In fact, depending on the situation, they may have to leave their home without knowing the fate or the whereabouts of their family members. Scenarios like this play out every day for tens of thousands of people around the world. If you are reading this resource, you likely have a student who knows this scenario intimately.

Each refugee’s journey is unique. Although the experiences of refugees are diverse and no two stories are the same, they all have one commonality: life became so difficult at home that they had to escape.



Tip for Working with Refugees

Be Curious

Take time to learn about the pre-migration stories and the cultures of your newcomer students and families. Many cultures value privacy, so be careful not to bombard them with questions. Try saying, “This is how we do it in Canada. How do you do it in your home country?”

Did You Know?

Once someone is granted Canadian citizenship, they are no longer considered a refugee.



REFUGEES

are people who have been forced to migrate.



In 2018,

70.8 million people were **FORCIBLY DISPLACED** as a result of persecution, conflict, violence or human rights violations. (In 2009, this number was 43.3 million.)



An average of

37,000 people were **NEWLY DISPLACED** every day.



111,000 unaccompanied and separated **CHILD REFUGEES** were reported.



About **50%** of the **refugee population** was made up of **CHILDREN**.



92,400 REFUGEES were resettled in **25** COUNTRIES, including Canada.

28,100 REFUGEES were taken in by **CANADA**. 

Source: United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR 2019)

The Three Lives of a Refugee

At the end of his novel *Refugee*, Alan Gratz (2017, 336–37) writes,

Beverly Crawford [2017], a professor emerita at the University of California, Berkeley, has written that refugees live three lives. The first is spent escaping the horrors of whatever has driven them from their homes. . . . Those who are lucky enough to escape their homes begin a second, equally dangerous life in their search for refuge, trying to survive ocean crossings and border patrols and criminals looking to profit off them. Most migrants *don't* end up in refugee camps, and their days are spent seeking shelter, food, water, and warmth. But even in the camps, refugees are exposed to illness and disease, and often have to exist on less than fifty cents a day.

If refugees manage to escape their home and then survive the journey to freedom, they begin a third life, starting over in a new country, one where they often do not speak the language or practice the same religion as their hosts. Professional degrees granted in one country are often not honored in another, so refugees who were doctors or lawyers or teachers where they came from become store clerks and taxi drivers and janitors. Families that once had comfortable homes and cars and money set aside for college and retirement have to start all over, living with other refugees in government housing or with host families in foreign cities as they rebuild their lives.

“An immigrant leaves his homeland because the grass is greener; a refugee leaves because the grass is burning under his feet.”

Barbara Law and Mary Eckes, *The More-Than-Just-Surviving Handbook* (2010, 86)

THE THREE LIVES OF A REFUGEE

LIFE 1

PRE-MIGRATION

Period in the home country before forced migration

- Experiences of violence, persecution, war, starvation, or the death or disappearance of family members



LIFE 2

MIGRATION

Period between leaving home and resettlement

- Limited formal schooling or interrupted schooling
- Dangerous migration, economic hardship and discrimination
- Separation from family members
 - Time spent in refugee camps in transition countries (note that not all refugees live in camps)

Common Stressors Experienced by Refugees

Although refugees may be happy to have reached a place of safety, excited about learning about a new place and culture, determined to build a new life, and hopeful about new opportunities, many stressors are inherent in the refugee experience (Huminiuk and Vancouver Association for Survivors of Torture 2016, 5; Ontario Centre of Excellence for Child and Youth Mental Health 2016, 4; Wilson, Murtaza and Shakya 2010, 48):

- Worries about family left behind
- Grief and loss (related to people but also to places and to one’s social roles, status and dreams)
- Parental psychosocial distress
- Poverty
- Difficulty finding employment and housing

- Family instability and intergenerational conflict
- Stress related to acculturation (such as language barriers; difficulty maintaining one’s cultural and religious identity; and the need to navigate different norms, values, social customs, politics, health care, food, transportation, clothing, climate, education standards and so on)
- Bicultural stress from trying to develop a new identity that incorporates both one’s ethnic culture and the new culture, and a sense of being out of place
- Bias, discrimination and racism (from individuals and institutions)

Not every refugee experiences every stressor, and stressors may occur at varying times throughout resettlement.

LIFE 3 POST-RESETTLEMENT

Period during which a refugee adjusts to and integrates into the new community

- Adverse experiences during pre-migration and migration—combined with post-resettlement fear, sadness, anger or frustration—may intensify mental health issues
- Acculturation issues or stressors



Tip for Working with Refugees

Be Flexible and Creative with Time

When possible, take a fluid approach to start and end times. Many refugees have a different orientation to timeliness than we do in Canada. Be sensitive to any logistical constraints that can affect timeliness, such as transportation, large families or language barriers.

Trauma and Trauma-Informed Practice

Who Experiences Trauma?

As the Klinik Community Health Centre (2013, 6) trauma tool kit states,

Traumatic events happen to everyone; it is part of the human experience. . . . However, how a person responds to these circumstances is unique to that individual's social history, genetic inheritance and protective factors that may be in the person's life at the time.

Moreover,

It is not the event that determines whether something is traumatic to someone, but the individual's experience of the event and the meaning they make of it. Those who feel supported after the event (through family, friends, spiritual connections, etc.) and who had a chance to talk about and process the traumatic event are often able to integrate the experience into their lives, like any other experience. (p 9)

It may not surprise you that many refugee students have experienced traumatic events. But did you know that trauma continues for many of these students long after they arrive in Canada? As Stewart (2011) notes, refugees typically endure a series of traumas and losses over time, rather than one traumatic event. These events can occur throughout the three periods in the refugee experience (pre-migration, migration and post-resettlement) and often have profound impacts on learning.

Did You Know?

"Trauma is the Greek word for 'wound.' Although the Greeks used the term only for physical injuries, nowadays *trauma* is just as likely to refer to emotional wounds."¹

The Many Sources of Trauma

Trauma can result from any of the following experiences:



WAR



POVERTY



ABUSE



LOSS OR
GRIEF



DISCRIMINATION
OR RACISM



ACCIDENT OR
ILLNESS



NEGLECT



VIOLENCE²

Signs of Trauma

Each person (including refugees) is unique. Some people show many signs of trauma, some show few signs, and some do not show any signs at all. Signs of trauma can be evident in the areas of health, cognitive impairment, relationships and behaviour.

Health

- Compromised immune system
- Difficulty sleeping
- Depression
- Increased physical or mental stress
- Weight loss or gain
- Psychosomatic symptoms (mental health difficulties that present as physical difficulties, such as headaches or stomach aches)

Cognitive Impairment

- Anger
- Constant alertness
- Difficulty paying attention
- Difficulty understanding cause and effect
- Difficulty self-regulating
- Forgetfulness
- Hyperarousal or hypervigilance

- Lack of self-understanding
- Nightmares, flashbacks and troubling thoughts
- Post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD)
- Suicidal thoughts

Relationships

- Attachment difficulties
- Tendency to avoid engaging with others
- Clinging and compliance
- Conflictual relationships
- Difficulty building relationships
- Social isolation
- Distrust and suspicion of others

Behaviour

- Aggression (against self and others)
- Compliance (robotic, detached)
- Defiance
- Disassociation (doesn't react, seems "spaced out")
- Tendency to startle easily
- Impulsive and destructive behaviours
- Irritability
- Rigid or chaotic behaviour
- Tantrums

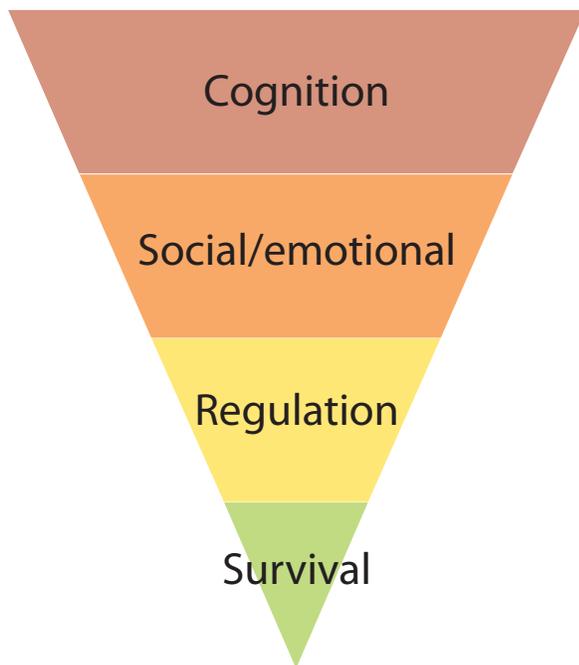
"Many problems of traumatized children can be understood as efforts to minimize objective threat and to regulate their emotional distress. Unless caregivers understand the nature of such re-enactments they are liable to label the child as 'oppositional,' 'rebellious,' 'unmotivated,' and 'antisocial.'"

Bessel A van der Kolk, "Developmental Trauma Disorder" (2005, 403)

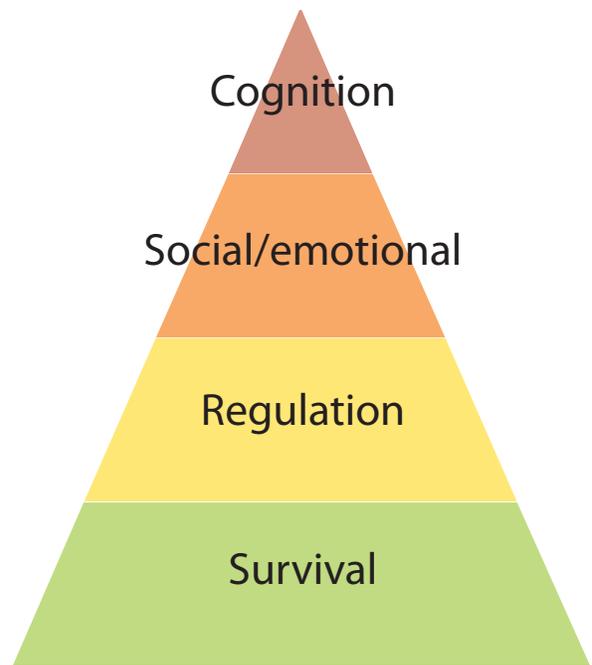
The Effects of Trauma on Memory, Learning and Behaviour

Traumatic experiences have a profound impact on several areas of functioning. Childhood trauma affects the organization of the brain, and prolonged activation of stress hormones in early childhood can reduce neuroconnections in the areas of the brain dedicated to learning and reasoning at the time when new connections should be developing.

Typical Development



Developmental Trauma



Adapted with permission from Mary Beth Holt (The Buckeye Ranch) and Emily Jordan (Ohio Department of Education).

Teachers are not mental health practitioners, yet schools are often the first place the mental health needs of students are identified.

After a series of traumas and losses, refugee students may be functioning at a primal level in fight–flight–freeze mode.

Many signs of trauma can be misread in the classroom as misbehaviour or as signs of a learning disability. Ask yourself the following questions:

- Why is this student acting this way?
- What is this student reacting to?
- What does this student need?
- How can I connect with this student before correcting the behaviour?

Trauma-Informed Practice

Teachers are not mental health practitioners, yet schools are often the first place the mental health needs of students are identified. As Clinton (2015) explains, if we want our refugee students to feel valued and to have a sense of belonging in our classrooms, we must engage in trauma-informed practice.

The heart of trauma-informed practice is providing a safe, welcoming and respectful environment for both learners and staff. As the Klinik Community Health Centre (2013, 16) states,

A trauma-informed service provider, system and organization:

- Realizes the widespread impact of trauma and understands potential paths for healing;
- Recognizes the signs and symptoms of trauma [in students, staff and others involved in the school]; and
- Responds by fully integrating knowledge about trauma into policies, procedures, practices and settings.

Teachers are not therapists, and being a trauma-informed teacher does not mean that you must treat your students' symptoms of trauma. Rather, being a trauma-informed teacher means that you are aware of the prevalence of trauma among students and how trauma can affect them. It means that you are able to recognize the signs and symptoms of trauma, as

Teachers are not therapists, and being a trauma-informed teacher does not mean that you must treat your students' symptoms of trauma.

well as trauma responses. It means that you seek to understand the unique needs of your students affected by trauma in a compassionate way and that you can integrate your knowledge of trauma into your teaching practice to create a safe, supportive and regulated learning environment.

The checklist for trauma-informed practice in Appendix A is a tool to help you identify the elements of trauma-informed practice you excel in, as well as potential challenges and areas for growth. It covers the following areas: understanding trauma, classroom strategies and assessment, social-emotional learning and relationship strategies, communication, family and community partnerships, and self-care.

Creating a Culturally Sensitive Trauma-Informed Classroom

Cultural Considerations Related to Mental Health Support

Cultural differences may affect how mental health support is received. People from other cultures may view mental health differently. When talking about mental health with refugee students and their families, try to be sensitive to these cultural differences.

Consider the following factors (Greenberg and Fejzic 2019):

- Different views about the causes of and how to cope with mental health issues
- Distrust of authorities and systems of care
- Lack of information about the growing awareness of and response to mental health in Canada
- Shame associated with mental health (for example, diagnostic labels used in our education system may evoke shame, embarrassment and fear of stigma)
- Lack of knowledge of mental health services and how to access them
- Lack of access to mental health services that are culturally sensitive and offered in the first language (or with an interpreter)

The Resilience of Refugees (Strengths-Based Approach)

Resilience is the ability to overcome serious hardship. Despite the trauma they may have experienced, refugee students and their families show incredible resilience (Greenberg and Fejzic 2019). This resilience is a significant protective factor against psychological suffering.

Acknowledge that your refugee students' experiences have been extraordinarily difficult, but focus on their resilience and ability to persevere; their rich cultural backgrounds; and their assets, skills and strengths. Ask yourself the following questions:

- What do I identify as my students' strengths?
- What would my students identify as their own strengths?
- What would their families or friends identify as their strengths?
- Is there a way to acknowledge and incorporate these strengths throughout the school day?
- How can I use this information to support refugee students in my classroom?

Resilience is the ability to overcome serious hardship.

10 Strategies for Working with Students with Trauma

Strategies that address the need for safety, control and choice benefit students who have histories of trauma. You probably already incorporate many of the following strategies in your classroom and school:

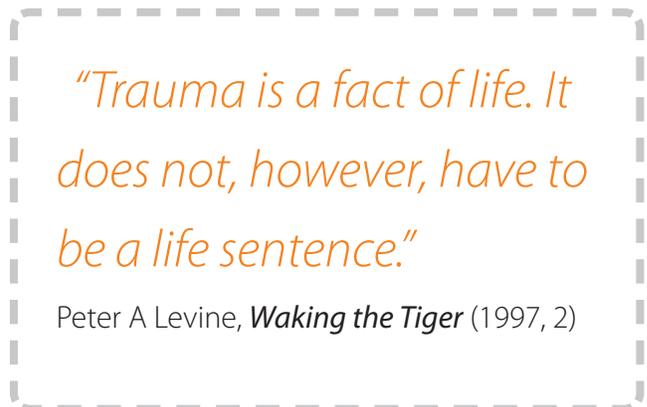
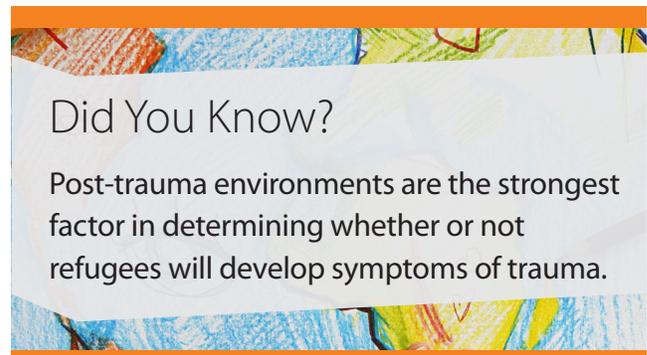
- Remember your role
- Check your assumptions
- Shift your language
- Establish safety and predictability
- Build trust and foster connections with social supports
- Foster post-traumatic growth
- Empower students
- Use positive behaviour supports
- Teach stress management and relaxation skills
- Celebrate stories of success

Remember Your Role

Supporting students who have experienced trauma requires a multifaceted approach and should involve a team of professionals and various services.

Learn about the refugee experience and how to recognize signs of trauma, but remember that teachers are not therapists. Our job as educators is not to diagnose or treat students.

- You are just one person in a web of support for refugee students and their families.
- It is OK that you do not have all the answers—you are not a mental health expert.
- You may need to reach out beyond the school for support.



Check Your Assumptions

You have likely seen the images—bombed-out buildings and the wounded being rushed away on make-shift gurneys, difficult conditions in refugee camps, child soldiers, hunger. These images, while showing the reality for many, depict children and families as victims. They evoke feelings of fear and sadness, and they present us with a fixed view in which the hope and resilience of these people can easily be overlooked. What if most of the images in the media showed families walking together, the moments of enjoying calm and taking comfort in loved ones?



Take time to reflect on your own biases and assumptions about refugees. Ask yourself,

- What might be their reasons for doing what they're doing?
- What do I not know?
- What assumptions am I making about the other person, the situation and myself?
- Are my assumptions false? What are some alternative explanations?
- What was I expecting (and what is the root of this expectation)?
- Who can I consult to learn more so that I can better understand the full picture?
- What role might culture play in how they are reacting?
- What questions can I ask to better understand their perspective?³

Shift Your Language

Words have power and can help shape the educational experiences of refugee students. Profound meaning can also be found in silence and nonverbal communication. Sometimes a small shift in our language can alter our perspective and that of our refugee students.

- Use positive language to help students and staff build a vocabulary of hope and empowerment.
- Use neutral and respectful language, and avoid labelling people as victims.
- Use language that matches your students' level of understanding.
- Avoid jargon.
- Acknowledge nonverbal communication. Some people communicate more through behaviour than through words.

| Instead of ... | Try ... |
|-----------------------------------|---|
| "This person is sick." | "This person is a survivor of trauma." |
| "They are weak." | "They are stronger for having gone through the trauma." |
| "They should be over it already." | "Recovery from trauma is a process and takes time." |
| "They are making it up." | "This is hard to hear, and harder to talk about." |
| "They want attention." | "They are crying out for help." |

Reprinted with permission from Klinik Community Health Centre (2013, 112).

People from other cultures may view mental health differently. When talking about mental health with refugee students and their families, try to be sensitive to these cultural differences.

- Acknowledge silence as a way of communicating.
- Shift your thinking “away from ‘What is wrong with you?’ to ‘What has happened to you?’” (Klinik Community Health Centre 2013, 108), and from “How can I manage this kid’s behaviour?” to “How can I connect with this student and help him or her regulate?” The Klinik Community Health Centre’s trauma tool kit provides many more examples of how you can shift your language (p 112).

Establish Safety and Predictability

An environment that is safe (physically and emotionally) supports positive change for students who have experienced trauma. Familiarity increases their sense of safety.

- Establish yourself as a safe person, and help students create a safety net by identifying internal and external people and places that are safe.
- Teach students how to ask for help.
- Talk about safety and the processes in place to help students feel safe.
- Minimize the number of surprises for students during the school day.
- Send students the message that they are not alone.

Build Trust and Foster Connections with Social Supports

Building trusting relationships with refugee students fosters a sense of belonging. Incorporate trust-building strategies into your classroom intentionally and often. These strategies will cultivate trusting relationships between you and your refugee students, as well as between refugee students and their peers.

- Take an interest in your students’ lives outside of school, and create opportunities during class time for students to learn more about each other, even if language is a barrier. For example, incorporate play-based activities into instruction.
- Intentionally connect refugee students with peers with similar interests. Find at least five people in the

Did You Know?

In some cultures, sharing information without being asked is considered disrespectful.

“All students, but particularly refugee students, need to see themselves in the learning environment—they need to feel that they are welcomed and have a place in the life of the school.”

Ontario Ministry of Education, *Supporting Students with Refugee Backgrounds* (2016, 4)

school to be anchors for each student.

- Teach social skills and emotional intelligence, including how to identify and label emotions.
- Use scales (1–10) or a “thermometer” to measure emotional intensity.
- Identify coping skills to help decrease emotional intensity.
- Foster mentor–mentee relationships (peer, parent or community mentors for refugee students, and parent or community mentors for refugee parents).
- Make an effort to reach out to refugee parents to build informal relationships. A simple hello goes a long way, especially if you say it in their first language.

Foster Post-traumatic Growth

Post-traumatic growth differs from resilience or bouncing back from adversity. According to Tedeschi and Calhoun (2004, 4), post-traumatic growth is

the experience of individuals whose development, at least in some areas, has surpassed what was present before the struggle with crises occurred. The individual has not only survived, but has experienced changes that are viewed as important, and that go beyond the status quo.

Post-traumatic growth is an ongoing process and may not occur for everyone affected by trauma. However, you can use strategies that nurture post-traumatic growth in your students.

- Listen without judgment.
- Help students get involved in activities that will help them feel like they are contributing positively to the class, the school or the greater community. This helps them gain control over their thoughts and feelings and begin thinking about the future again.
- Plan low-risk activities where students work together to create and build. This creates an environment in which refugee students can feel genuinely accepted by their peers.



Tip for Working with Refugees

Welcome Use of the First Language

Remind students and parents that growth in their first language is important for learning English and academics.

“Many of the refugee students that I work with do not readily seek assistance from a counsellor, psychologist, or social worker; in fact, many of the students confide in a teacher whom they trust.”

Jan Stewart, *Supporting Refugee Children* (2011, 193)

Empower Students

Refugees have often been deprived of control over many aspects of their lives, which may result in a sense of disempowerment. You can do several things to support your students in this sensitive matter and reinforce that they and their families are capable of helping and healing themselves.

- Work to create genuine relationships with students and their families.
- Seek input from students and their families.
- Encourage active involvement in the school.

Use Positive Behaviour Supports

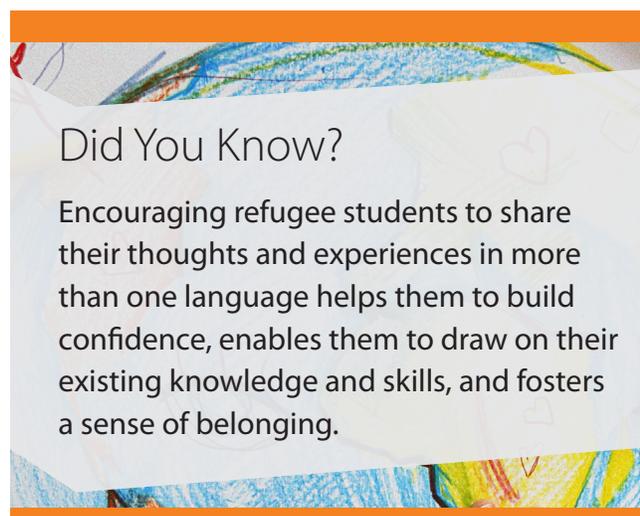
- Be specific when praising students, such as saying “You did a great job paying attention in class today” instead of “Good job today.”
- Use a ten-to-one ratio of positive to negative statements.
- Shift your lens from thinking “What is wrong with you?” to “What has happened to you?” (Klinik Community Health Centre 2013, 108).
- Maintain consistent expectations and behaviour plans based on reward systems, not punishments.

Teach Stress Management and Relaxation Skills

- Teach deep belly breathing (box breathing).
- When students are disengaged, try activities such as movement breaks, walking, yoga and mindfulness.
- When students are emotionally heightened or agitated, try activities such as self-calming techniques, mindfulness and paying attention to the five senses, breathing, and listening to music.

Celebrate Stories of Success

- Reflect on what you are already doing that's working. Enrich and extend your repertoire of instructional and assessment strategies to meet the needs of refugee students by scheduling time to collaborate with colleagues.
- Invite students to share their successes with you and with each other. The following are some ideas:
 - Daily or weekly class meetings or affirmation circles, with prompts like "Today I . . .," "I can . . .," "I will . . .," "I am proud of . . .," "Something good I (or someone else) did today was . . ." and "Did you know . . .?"
 - Opportunities for students to showcase their identity through art



- Journal writing or drawing
- Time for students to show partners something they've been working on (can be visual or oral)
- An accomplishment box to help refugee students track and celebrate their growth over the school year (help students draw or write about things they're proud of, things they've improved at, things they've worked hard at and so on)

Dealing with Triggers in the Classroom and School

A trigger is a reminder of a past traumatic experience. Triggers are very personal, and what is a trigger for one student may not be for another. Further, something that triggers a student in one situation may not in another, depending on the student's emotional or physical state at the time.

What you think of as an everyday school routine or event can be a trigger for a student who has experienced trauma. When triggered, the student may quickly become overwhelmed and go into fight-flight-freeze mode, and the student's academic and social development will be disrupted.

Potential Triggers for Students

- Loud sounds or activities (school bells, whistles, fire alarms, shouting, "teacher voice")
- Uncertainty in the classroom, in the lunchroom, in other areas of the school or outside at recess
- Safety drills (fire drills, lockdown)
- Physical touch
- Authority figures

Potential Triggers for Parents

- Involvement of authority figures, such as teachers and school administrators
- School environment

Minimizing Triggers

You cannot eliminate many of these triggers, but being aware of them will help you minimize them. The following are key things you can do:

- Connect with your students and respond sensitively.
- Simplify your environment. Less is more.
- Have discussions about school bells, alarms and drills. Warn your students about and prepare them for these events, and give them a chance to ask questions.
- Teach students self-regulation strategies and allow them to practise.
- Integrate brain breaks into the school day. These are short mental breaks for unblocking stress and activating different brain networks (Willis 2016). Waters and Brunzell (2018) describe two types of brain breaks: escalating and de-escalating. Use an escalating brain break when students need a boost in positive emotions and a de-escalating brain break to help students focus and find calm. De-escalating brain breaks can also help students feel a sense of safety. Examples of brain break activities can be found in Appendix B. Teach students how to recognize when they need a break, and encourage them to advocate for themselves by asking for a break when needed.
- Be aware of body language or behaviour that may indicate that a student is in fight–flight–freeze mode:
 - Fight—engaging in loud or disruptive behaviour; causing a distraction; being the class clown
 - Flight—engaging in avoidance behaviours (such as asking to leave the room); misplacing or forgetting materials, assignments or homework
 - Freeze—exhibiting body language such as a bowed head, retreated posture or lack of eye contact; trying to be invisible



Tip for Working with Refugees

Share Food

Sharing food communicates welcoming, care and human commonality.

“In many . . . cultures, teachers are highly respected and considered to be experts in their field. Teachers may be viewed as being of a higher status and as always right. In these societies, it is often disrespectful to question a teacher or interfere in their work in any way. Thus, in many countries, parents rarely visit their children’s schools or talk with their teachers.”

Bridging Refugee Youth and Children’s Services, “Involving Refugee Parents in Their Children’s Education” (2007)



Adapted with permission from the Ontario Ministry of Education (2016, 8).

It Takes a Village: Where Can You Go When You Need Help?

When working with refugee students and their families, you can access support in your school, in your school jurisdiction, from the Alberta Teachers' Association (ATA), from the provincial government and from your community. Also, try to determine whether your refugee families are connected to settlement, mental health and primary health services, as well as whether they are familiar with the community services in your area.

Who Can Support You in Your School?

School Administration

Your principal and vice-principal(s) are an important part of your support network. Don't wait for them to ask how things are going—let them know. Your administration can support you in developing a plan with specific strategies for individual students and link you to resources in your school jurisdiction.

ESL Designate or ESL Lead Teacher

Many schools have an English as a second language (ESL) designate or an ESL lead teacher who can provide support.

School Counsellor

In Alberta, school counsellors are certificated teachers who have received additional professional

development or graduate-level training to help students with their personal and social development, academic progress, and health and well-being. School counsellors can provide the following supports for classroom teachers and for refugee students and families:

- Teacher consultation
- Mental health education for teachers, administrators, parents and students
- Individual or group counselling
- Screening or assessments to identify at-risk students for program development or referral purposes
- Coordination of services in minor and major crises
- Coordination of wraparound services with outside agencies
- Links to other families and to school and community resources
- Career decision-making facilitation

Who Can Support You in Your School Jurisdiction?

Learning Supports Personnel

Every school jurisdiction in Alberta has supports in place for newcomers to Canada and for those affected by trauma. Your school jurisdiction may have specialized staff, such as the following:

- Diversity and learning support advisors (DLSAs)

- Interpreters and translators
- English-language learning (ELL) coordinators
- Intercultural consultants
- ESL consultants
- Learning support teachers
- Learning assistance coordinators (LACs)
- Family–school liaison workers
- School-based settlement support workers

Speak to your school administration to find out the best way to access the support of your school jurisdiction’s learning supports personnel. These specialized staff in your school jurisdiction can support you in a variety of ways, including the following:

- Providing professional learning on culturally responsive practices
- Identifying, developing and sharing inclusive programming strategies
- Assisting with the Alberta K–12 ESL Proficiency Benchmarks
- Conducting classroom consultations or specialized student assessments
- Organizing coordinated services with school-based services, health professionals and community partners, including Regional Collaborative Service Delivery (RCSD)

ESL Reception Centres

Many school jurisdictions have ESL reception or intake centres to support refugee students and their families when they first arrive. During a family interview (usually in the family’s first language), information is gathered about a student’s background, learning experiences, and strengths and abilities. The student’s language abilities are also assessed. This information can help you support your students.

Ask parents if they have visited a reception centre. If they haven’t, speak to your school administration about helping the family arrange an appointment.

Other Professionals

Your school jurisdiction may employ or have access to other professionals, such as the following:

- Educational psychologists
- Social workers
- Speech–language pathologists and assistants
- Occupational therapists

Talk to your school administration to find out about referral procedures for accessing the services of these professionals for your students.

Outside Service Providers

Many school jurisdictions partner with outside service providers that offer school-based support for refugee students. Staff at these immigrant-serving agencies may include the following:

- In-school settlement workers
- School-based settlement support workers
- Family liaison support workers
- Multicultural workers or intercultural liaisons
- Educational cultural brokers

Ask your school administration or central office staff about which agencies your school jurisdiction collaborates with and how to access supports for refugee students and their families.

Who Can Support You Provincially?

The ATA

Specialist Councils

The ATA’s Council of School Counsellors (CSC) and English as a Second Language Council (ESLC) offer useful information and resources that can support

your work with refugee students. Visit their websites at www.ataschoolcounsellors.com and <https://eslc.teachers.ab.ca>, and attend their annual conferences, workshops and seminars.

The ESLC has published a series of pamphlets on working with ESL learners. See Appendix C: Additional Resources for more information.

Active membership in the ATA includes one no-cost membership in a specialist council of your choice. To choose your membership, log in at www.teachers.ab.ca and click on the Specialist Council Membership link under Your ATA Tools.

Workshops and Presentations

The ATA has developed several workshops and presentations for teachers that can support their work with refugee students affected by trauma. See Appendix C: Additional Resources for descriptions.

To book a workshop or arrange a presentation, please contact Professional Development, at 780-447-9485 (in Edmonton), 1-800-232-7208 (toll free in Alberta) or pdworkshops@ata.ab.ca. For more information, go to www.teachers.ab.ca > My ATA > Professional Development > Workshops, Courses and Presentations.

DEHR Committee

The ATA's Diversity, Equity and Human Rights (DEHR) Committee promotes diversity, equity and human rights in Alberta schools. The DEHR Committee produces many resources relevant to working with refugee students and their families.

For more information, go to www.teachers.ab.ca > My ATA > Professional Development > Diversity, Equity and Human Rights. Printed copies of publications can be ordered, free of charge, by e-mailing the request form to pd@ata.ab.ca.

Publications

The ATA has published several resources related to working with refugee students and their families, such as *Here Comes Everyone: Teaching in the Intercultural Classroom* (2010); a series developed in partnership with the Canadian Multicultural Education Foundation (CMEF) on working with immigrant students and

families; and *Learning Together: Public Education in Alberta* (2009), which is available in 14 languages. For more information on these publications, see Appendix C: Additional Resources.

ATA Library

The ATA library has a wealth of resources related to the topics of refugees and trauma-informed classrooms. For more information, go to <http://library.teachers.ab.ca> or e-mail library@ata.ab.ca.

Alberta Government

Alberta Education provides a variety of information and resources on its website, such as the Safe and Caring Schools section (www.alberta.ca/safe-and-caring-schools.aspx), the Diverse Learning Needs section (www.alberta.ca/diverse-learning-needs.aspx) and a number of publications (see Appendix C: Additional Resources).

The Alberta Community and Social Services publication *Welcome to Alberta: Information for Newcomers* (<https://alis.alberta.ca/tools-and-resources/content/products/welcome-to-alberta-information-for-newcomers/>) provides contact information for a broad range of community services for newcomers.

Who Can Support You in Your Community?

Refugee Resettlement Agencies

Refugee resettlement agencies across Alberta provide support to refugees in the form of interpretation, translation, information, referrals, cultural brokering, paraprofessional counselling and more. These agencies can also provide you with information on how to best support refugee students. To find refugee resettlement agencies in your region, visit the Alberta Association of Immigrant Serving Agencies (AAISA) directory of member agencies at <https://aaisa.ca/membership-directory/>.

Alberta also has six Resettlement Assistance Program

(RAP) providers that offer supports to refugees in Canada's Government-Assisted Refugees (GAR) Program:

Brooks

Brooks and County Immigration Services
403-362-0404

Calgary

Calgary Catholic Immigration Society
403-262-2006

Edmonton

Immigration and Settlement Service, Catholic Social Services
780-424-3545

Red Deer

Central Alberta Refugee Effort (CARE)
Immigration and Settlement Service, Catholic Social Services
403-346-8818

Lethbridge

Immigrant Services, Lethbridge Family Services
403-320-1589

Medicine Hat

Saamis Immigration Services Association
403-504-1188

Interpreter Services

The Multicultural Mental Health Resource Centre provides a listing of interpreter services in Alberta at www.multiculturalmentalhealth.ca/en/services/find-an-interpreter/interpreter-services-in-alberta/.

RCSD

Alberta's Regional Collaborative Service Delivery (RCSD) is a partnership between Alberta Education, Alberta Health (including Alberta Health Services), Alberta Children's Services, and Alberta Community and Social Services to better meet the needs of children, youth and families at the local and regional levels. There are 17 RCSD regions across the province. For more information, go to www.alberta.ca/regional-collaborative-service-delivery.aspx.

How Can You Learn More?

Professional Learning Opportunities

In addition to the ATA's workshops and presentations and its other resources, exceptional professional learning opportunities are available that will help you deepen your understanding of trauma and its role in the refugee experience, as well as provide you with practical strategies to use in your classroom. Consider workshops, conferences, professional reading, webinars and online courses. See Appendix C: Additional Resources for ideas.

CRISIS PHONE NUMBERS (24/7)

Health Link

Alberta Health Services
811

Mental Health Help Line

Alberta Health Services
1-877-303-2642

Addiction Help Line

Alberta Health Services
1-866-332-2322

Kids Help Phone

1-800-668-6868
www.kidshelpphone.ca (online chat)

Appendix A: Checklist for Trauma-Informed Practice

The following checklist is a tool to help teachers identify the elements of trauma-informed practice they excel in, as well as potential challenges and areas for growth.

| Understanding Trauma | Yes | Somewhat | Not yet |
|--|------------|-----------------|----------------|
| Am I aware of the high prevalence of trauma, and can I recognize common trauma-related symptoms? | | | |
| Do I recognize and avoid practices that may be retraumatizing? | | | |
| When working with students, do I consider the question “What happened to you?” rather than “What’s wrong with you?” | | | |
| Do I understand the function of students’ challenging behaviours (such as rage, self-injury or substance misuse)? | | | |
| Am I comfortable with not knowing everything about trauma? | | | |
| Classroom Strategies and Assessment | Yes | Somewhat | Not yet |
| Do I encourage my students’ strengths and interests and incorporate them in my teaching? | | | |
| Do I offer choice and control to students by involving them in the design of their program plans? | | | |
| Are the goals for the achievement of my students who have been affected by traumatic experiences consistent with my goals for the rest of the class? | | | |
| Do I communicate expectations to my students in clear, concise and positive ways? | | | |
| Do I present information and assess learning using multiple approaches? | | | |
| Do I create opportunities for my students to learn how to plan and follow through on assignments? | | | |

| Social-Emotional Learning and Relationship Strategies | Yes | Somewhat | Not yet |
|--|------------|-----------------|----------------|
| Do I structure activities in predictable and emotionally safe ways so that students feel safe to express emotions and are encouraged to take risks to try something new? | | | |
| Do I encourage and model self-regulation? | | | |
| Do I create opportunities for my students to practise self-regulation and tempering of behaviours? | | | |
| Do I know how to build authentic, caring and trusting relationships with students? | | | |
| Am I willing to connect emotionally with students and understand where they are coming from? | | | |
| Do I create opportunities for my students to learn how to interact effectively with others? | | | |
| Do I provide opportunities for students to form and strengthen relationships with their peers? | | | |
| Communication | Yes | Somewhat | Not yet |
| Am I an active listener? | | | |
| Am I able to talk openly with students if they bring up a topic? | | | |
| Do I respond to my students with nonjudgmental language? | | | |
| Do I show my students compassion and empathy rather than pity? | | | |
| Am I willing to allow students to participate in coming up with solutions or ideas? | | | |
| Am I willing to learn from students? (“What can this student teach me?”) | | | |
| Family and Community Partnerships | Yes | Somewhat | Not yet |
| Do I use a variety of ways to engage and build relationships with families? | | | |
| Am I flexible when selecting times and places for meeting with parents? | | | |
| Do I access the services of my school jurisdiction’s cultural consultants to help with interpreting and translating materials? | | | |
| Self-Care | Yes | Somewhat | Not yet |
| Am I aware of compassion fatigue and its symptoms? | | | |
| Am I aware of when I am feeling emotionally overwhelmed, and do I take steps to mitigate the feeling? | | | |
| Do I have different strategies to alleviate stress? | | | |
| Do I have a network of support (such as family and close friends)? | | | |

Appendix B: Brain Break Activities

Escalating

Partners

Rock–Paper–Scissors

Players begin with closed fists and recite, “Rock, paper, scissors!” On “scissors,” they each deliver a hand signal:

- Rock (fist) wins against scissors.
- Paper (flat hand) wins against rock.
- Scissors (fist with index and middle fingers forming a V) win against paper.

Thumb Wars

Players hook their fingers together and stick up their thumbs. The first player to hold down the other’s thumb for four seconds wins.

Hand Slap 21

Players face each other with their hands out and palms up. Partner A uses their right hand to slap Partner B’s right hand and counts by one or two. The players alternate turns. The first player to reach 21 wins.

Large Group

5–4–3–2–1

Students stand up, and the teacher instructs them to do five movements, with a descending number of repetitions (for example, “Do five jumping jacks, spin around four times, hop on one foot three times, walk around the classroom two times and give your neighbour one high-five”).

Classroom Workout Circuit

Students do a series of movements, each for 20–60 seconds. A series may include the following:

- Jogging on the spot
- Arm circles
- Jumping on one foot
- Squats
- Jumping jacks

High-Fives

Give students 30 seconds to move around the room and give everyone else a high-five. As variations, try double high-fives, windmill high-fives and so on.

Handshakes

Students move around the room and shake the hands of three classmates and introduce themselves (even if they already know each other).

De-escalating

Partners

Cave Time

Each student sits under a desk or table with another student and chats about something from the lesson.

Mirror Image

Partners face each other. Partner A does a series of actions, such as leaning forward or backward, crouching, or hopping. Partner B mimics the actions. They switch roles after one minute.

Large Group or Individual

Thumb and Pinky

On their left hand, students have their thumb up and their fingers tucked in.

On their right hand, they have their pinky finger out and their thumb and other fingers tucked in.

They then switch so that their left hand has the pinky finger out and the thumb and other fingers tucked in, and their right hand has the thumb up and fingers tucked in.

They repeat this, trying to increase their speed.

As a variation, students put their fists together, point the index finger on one hand and stick out the thumb on the other hand. They then switch and repeat.

Ear/Nose Touch

With their right hand, students touch their nose, and their left hand touches their right ear. They then switch

so that their left hand touches their nose, and their right hand touches their left ear. They repeat this, trying to increase their speed.

Thinking Caps

Students use their thumb and index finger to gently tug and unroll the outer part of their ear, starting from the top and slowly moving to the lobe. They then pull the lobe gently. They repeat this three times with each ear.

Cross-Crawl

Students touch their left elbow to their right knee while their right arm sways behind them. They then touch their right elbow to their left knee, swaying their left arm behind them. Cross-crawls can be done standing or sitting.

See Appendix C: Additional Resources for links to more brain break ideas.

Appendix C: Additional Resources

Working with Refugees and Newcomers

Publications

Caring for Syrian Refugee Children: A Program Guide for Welcoming Young Children and Their Families
CMAS, 2015

www.cmascanada.ca/2015/12/12/caring-for-syrian-refugee-children-a-program-guide-for-welcoming-young-children-and-their-families/

Welcome to Alberta: Information for Newcomers
Alberta Community and Social Services, 2014
<https://alis.alberta.ca/tools-and-resources/content/products/welcome-to-alberta-information-for-newcomers/>

Welcoming Refugee Students: Strategies for Classroom Teachers
Bureau of Refugee and Immigrant Assistance (BRIA),
New York State Office of Temporary and Disability
Assistance, 2017
www.ciscentraltexas.org/wp-content/uploads/2017/06/Welcoming-Refugee-Students.pdf

Articles, Blog Posts and Tip Sheets

Tip Sheets for Supporting Refugees
CMAS
<https://cmascanada.ca/category/supporting-refugees/supporting-refugees-tip-sheets/>

Organizations and Initiatives

How You Can Help—Teachers
UNHCR Canada
www.unhcr.ca/how-you-can-help/teachers/

Teaching Refugees with Limited Formal Schooling
Calgary Board of Education
www.teachingrefugees.com

Professional Learning Opportunities

Working with Newcomer Families
Online tutorials, webinars and e-courses
CMAS
<https://cmascanada.ca/cnc/learning-centre/online-learning-centre/working-with-newcomer-families/>

Trauma and Resilience

Publications

Calmer Classrooms: A Guide to Working with Traumatized Children
Child Safety Commissioner (Victoria, Australia), 2007

Child Trauma Toolkit for Educators
National Child Traumatic Stress Network (NCTSN), 2008
www.nctsn.org/resources/child-trauma-toolkit-educators/

Helping Students Deal with Trauma Related to Geopolitical Violence and Islamophobia: A Guide for Educators
Islamic Social Services Association (ISSA) and National Council of Canadian Muslims (NCCM), 2016
www.issacanada.com/wp-content/uploads/2016/09/ED-GUIDE-ENGLISH-BOOK-WEB-SEPT-15-2016.pdf

RIRO Resiliency Guidebook
Reaching In . . . Reaching Out (RIRO), 2017
www.reachinginreachingout.com/resources-guidebook.htm

The Resilience Guide: Strategies for Responding to Trauma in Refugee Children
CMAS, 2018
<https://cmascanada.ca/2018/02/05/the-resilience-guide-program-strategies-for-responding-to-trauma-in-refugee-children/>

Trauma-Informed: The Trauma Toolkit (Second Edition)
Klinic Community Health Centre, 2013
<http://trauma-informed.ca>

Articles, Blog Posts and Tip Sheets

Books for Kids and Adults on Promoting Resilience
RIRO
www.reachinginreachingout.com/resources-booksKids.htm

10 Tips for Building Resilience in Children and Teens
American Psychological Association (APA)
www.apa.org/helpcenter/resilience/

Organizations and Initiatives

ChildTrauma Academy
www.childtrauma.org

Crisis and Trauma Resource Institute
<https://ca.ctrinstitute.com>

Professional Learning Opportunities

Being Trauma Aware
Online course
Calgary and Area Child Advocacy Centre
<https://calgarycac.ca/education/being-trauma-aware/>

Mental Health

Publications

Culture, Context and the Mental Health and Psychosocial Wellbeing of Syrians
UNHCR, 2015
www.unhcr.org/55f6b90f9.pdf

The Educational and Mental Health Needs of Syrian Refugee Children
Migration Policy Institute (MPI), 2015
www.migrationpolicy.org/research/educational-and-mental-health-needs-syrian-refugee-children/

Working Together to Support Mental Health in Alberta Schools
Alberta Education, 2017
www.education.alberta.ca/media/3576206/working_together_to_support_mental_health.pdf

Organizations and Initiatives

Addiction and Mental Health: Teachers and Schools
Alberta Health Services (AHS)
www.albertahealthservices.ca/amh/Page2674.aspx

Immigrant and Refugee Mental Health Project
<https://irmhp-psmir.camhx.ca>

Professional Learning Opportunities

Brain Story Certification
Online course
Alberta Family Wellness Initiative
www.albertafamilywellness.org/training/

Children's Mental Health Learning Series
Online learning series
Government of Alberta
www.alberta.ca/childrens-mental-health-learning-series.aspx

Mental Health Online Resources for Educators (MORE)
Online modules
AHS
www.albertahealthservices.ca/info/Page9167.aspx

Self-Regulation and Social-Emotional Learning

Publications

Calm, Alert and Happy

by Stuart Shanker

Government of Ontario, 2013

www.edu.gov.on.ca/childcare/shanker.pdf

Articles, Blog Posts and Tip Sheets

"30 Games and Activities to Teach Self-Regulation"

by Claire Heffron

The Inspired Treehouse (blog), February 10, 2017

www.theinspiredtreehouse.com/self-regulation/

Toolkit: Self-Regulation

Society for Safe and Caring Schools and Communities

www.safeandcaring.ca/resource/toolkit-self-regulation/

Organizations and Initiatives

Center on the Social and Emotional Foundations for Early Learning (CSEFEL)

<http://csefel.vanderbilt.edu>

Classroom Support

Publications

Supporting Behaviour and Social Participation of All Students

Alberta Education

www.learnalberta.ca/content/insp/html/index.html

Toolkits for Diversity

Education Authority (Northern Ireland)

www.eani.org.uk/school-management/intercultural-education-service-ies/newcomers/toolkits-for-diversity/

Supporting Positive Behaviour in Alberta Schools Series

Supporting Positive Behaviour in Alberta Schools: A Classroom Approach

Alberta Education, 2008

www.education.alberta.ca/media/464617/supporting_positive_behaviour_classroom.pdf

Supporting Positive Behaviour in Alberta Schools: An Intensive Individualized Approach

Alberta Education, 2008

www.education.alberta.ca/media/464616/supporting_positive_behaviour_individual.pdf

Supporting Positive Behaviour in Alberta Schools: A School-Wide Approach

Alberta Education, 2008

www.education.alberta.ca/media/464618/supporting_positive_behavior_schoolwide.pdf

Organizations and Initiatives

Diverse Learning Needs

Alberta Education

www.alberta.ca/diverse-learning-needs.aspx

Safe and Caring Schools

Alberta Education

www.alberta.ca/safe-and-caring-schools.aspx

Society for Safe and Caring Schools and Communities

www.safeandcaring.ca

Brain Breaks

Publications

Active Play, Active Learning: Brain Breaks Guide
2014

<https://sph.uth.edu/content/uploads/2014/06/APAL-Brain-Breaks-Guide.pdf>

Articles, Blog Posts and Tip Sheets

“50 Brain Breaks to Engage Students in the Classroom”
by Carrie Wisehart

Blog post, January 9, 2015

<https://carriewisehart.com/2015/01/09/teachupsidedown-50-brain-breaks-to-engage-students-in-the-classroom/>

“Brain Gym: Simple Brain Gym Exercises to Awaken the Brain for Learning Readiness”

Integrated Learning Strategies, January 19, 2017

<https://ilslearningcorner.com/2017-01-brain-gym-simple-brain-gym-exercises-to-awaken-the-brain-for-learning-readiness/>

“Energy and Calm: Brain Breaks and Focused-Attention Practices”

by Lori Desautels

Edutopia (blog), January 14, 2015

www.edutopia.org/blog/brain-breaks-focused-attention-practices-lori-desautels

Literature for Children and Youth

Elementary

La Frontera: El viaje con papá/My Journey with Papa

by Deborah Mills

Barefoot Books, 2018

Ages 4–10

Marwan’s Journey

by Patricia de Arias and Laura Borràs (illustrator)

Minedition, 2018

Ages 5–7

One Green Apple

by Eve Bunting and Ted Lewin (illustrator)

Clarion Books, 2006

Ages 4–7

Refugee

by Alan Gratz

Scholastic, 2017

Ages 9–12

Stepping Stones: A Refugee Family’s Journey

by Margriet Ruurs and Nizar Ali Badr (illustrator)

Orca, 2016

Ages 6–8

The Day War Came

by Nicola Davies and Rebecca Cobb (illustrator)

Candlewick, 2018

Ages 6–9

Leaving My Homeland Series

Crabtree Publishing

Ages 8–11

www.crabtreebooks.com/products/by-subject/social-studies-titles/leaving-my-homeland

A Refugee’s Journey from Afghanistan

by Helen Mason

Crabtree, 2017

A Refugee’s Journey from Bhutan

by Linda Barghoorn

Crabtree, 2018

A Refugee’s Journey from Colombia

by Linda Barghoorn

Crabtree, 2018

A Refugee’s Journey from the Democratic Republic of the Congo

by Ellen Rodger

Crabtree, 2017

A Refugee’s Journey from El Salvador

by Linda Barghoorn

Crabtree, 2018

A Refugee’s Journey from Eritrea

by Linda Barghoorn

Crabtree, 2018

A Refugee’s Journey from Guatemala

by Heather Hudak

Crabtree, 2018

A Refugee’s Journey from Iran

by Heather Hudak

Crabtree, 2018

A Refugee's Journey from Iraq
by Ellen Rodger
Crabtree, 2017

A Refugee's Journey from Myanmar
by Ellen Rodger
Crabtree, 2018

A Refugee's Journey from Nigeria
by Ellen Rodger
Crabtree, 2018

A Refugee's Journey from Somalia
by Linda Barghoorn
Crabtree, 2018

A Refugee's Journey from South Sudan
by Ellen Rodger
Crabtree, 2018

A Refugee's Journey from Syria
by Helen Mason
Crabtree, 2017

A Refugee's Journey from Ukraine
by Ellen Rodger
Crabtree, 2018

A Refugee's Journey from Yemen
by Heather Hudak
Crabtree, 2018

Leaving My Homeland: After the Journey Series

Crabtree Publishing

Ages 8–11

www.crabtreebooks.com/products/by-subject/social-studies-titles/leaving-my-homeland-after-the-journey/

Returning to Afghanistan
by Linda Barghoorn
Crabtree, 2019

Returning to Colombia
by Linda Barghoorn
Crabtree, 2020

My New Home After the Democratic Republic of the Congo
by Ellen Rodger
Crabtree, 2020

Hoping for a Home After El Salvador
by Linda Barghoorn
Crabtree, 2020

Returning to Guatemala
by Heather Hudak
Crabtree, 2019

My New Home After Iran
by Heather Hudak
Crabtree, 2020

My New Home After Iraq
by Ellen Rodger
Crabtree, 2019

Hoping for a Home After Myanmar
by Ellen Rodger
Crabtree, 2019

Hoping for a Home After Nigeria
by Heather Hudak
Crabtree, 2020

My New Home After Somalia
by Heather Hudak
Crabtree, 2020

My New Home After Syria
by Linda Barghoorn
Crabtree, 2019

My New Home After Yemen
by Heather Hudak
Crabtree, 2019

Junior High and High School

A Land of Permanent Goodbyes
by Atia Abawi
Penguin, 2019
Ages 12–17

Homes: A Refugee Story
by Abu Bakr al Rabeeah, with Winnie Yeung
Freehand Books, 2018
Ages 14+

Illegal

by Eoin Colfer, Andrew Donkin and Giovanni Rigano
(illustrator)

Sourcebooks, 2018

Ages 10–14

Sea Prayer

by Khaled Hosseini

Riverhead Books, 2018

Ages 10+

The Unwanted: Stories of the Syrian Refugees

by Don Brown

HMH Books, 2018

Ages 14–17

ATA Resources

ATA Workshops and Presentations

The ATA offers to members various workshops and presentations that are relevant to working with refugee students and their families. To book a workshop or arrange a presentation, please contact Professional Development at 1-800-232-7208 (toll free in Alberta), 780-447-9485 (in Edmonton) or pdworkshops@ata.ab.ca. For more information, go to www.teachers.ab.ca > My ATA > Professional Development > Workshops, Courses and Presentations.

Fostering Effective Relationships

Building Mentoring Relationships in Schools

This workshop was developed in collaboration with the Alberta Mentoring Partnership (AMP) to support the implementation of school–community mentoring initiatives for students, with a focus on building mentoring relationships in schools between adults and students.

Here Comes Everyone: Teaching in the Culturally Diverse Classroom

This workshop explores approaches for examining beliefs, attitudes, policies, structures and practices to enable schools to effectively work cross-culturally.

Participants will develop a greater capacity to engage in cultural self-assessment and become more conscious of the dynamics of intercultural interactions. (Also available in French.)

Increasing Student Resilience

How can teachers build resiliency in themselves to develop and maintain positive, supportive and caring relationships with students from at-risk environments? Participants will consider approaches for integrating a strength-based resiliency perspective into teaching practice; examine personal perspectives and paradigms that foster positive relationships with students; and gain ideas, resources and strategies consistent with research-based practices that increase students' ability to succeed in school and in life. (Also available in French.)

Trauma-Informed Practice: Safe, Supportive and Self-Regulated Classrooms

Participants in this interactive workshop will receive information and tools to help them provide safe, supportive and self-regulated environments for students who have experienced trauma. They will be provided with background information on trauma and its effects on the child and adolescent brain, how to create trauma-informed environments, and how to build resiliency and self-regulation skills in students.

Working with Parents to Promote Student Success

How can teachers nurture and sustain positive relationships with parents to reinforce their mutual goal—to ensure that all students are successful in school? This session will focus on the many ways to build strong relationships with parents, and participants will learn successful approaches for communicating with and involving parents, gain an understanding that varied parenting styles exist, and learn strategies for reframing interactions with challenging parents.

You've Got to Connect! Building Relationships to Motivate, Engage and Encourage Students

Positive and effective relationships between teachers and students are the foundation on which good teaching and learning occur—you can't teach them if you can't reach them. What are some strategies you can implement to develop strong and powerful relationships with your students? This session covers techniques that are easy to integrate into your everyday

interactions with students: communicating positive expectations, giving feedback in a constructive way, developing pride, demonstrating caring, and creating safe and happy environments for all to grow and thrive in.

Establishing Inclusive Learning Environments

Mental Health 101

Similar to first aid training, this workshop will give teachers the basic information they need to identify and help students who may be experiencing mental health issues. Lessons learned in this workshop are not confined to the classroom, however, and the skills acquired will also help teachers understand the feelings their colleagues, and even themselves, may be experiencing at times. Participants will leave with practical strategies and interventions to promote positive mental health.

Let's Talk About Identity, Power and Privilege

Understanding race, racism, privilege and oppression requires concerted effort toward uncovering the daily hierarchies and power structures that surround our complex identities. For educators, promoting social justice is central to our daily work with students. Addressing issues like privilege is difficult and uncomfortable for most people, for a variety of reasons. This workshop will help teachers explore these issues and provide them with ideas for student exercises and activities.

Recognizing and Addressing Anxiety in Schools

School staff are increasingly challenged to support students with all levels of anxiety and related behaviours. This workshop will provide information about the most common anxiety disorders, examine how these disorders affect people, and provide participants with strategies to help those affected to cope and manage.

Supporting Positive Behaviour

Behaviour issues in schools can interfere with learning, instruction and a positive school climate. This workshop, based on current research and best practices, provides teachers with information, strategies and tools for systematically teaching, supporting and reinforcing positive behaviour.

Winning Strategies for Classrooms

Alberta schools are founded on the concept that all students can learn, regardless of ability. When teachers plan for and use effective learning strategies designed to help struggling learners, they also support many other students. This workshop will provide teachers with tools and strategies that can be used at any grade level with all types of students. Engaging, interesting and active, this session will give participants ideas to incorporate into lessons immediately for positive results.

Leading a Learning Community

Creating Inclusive Learning Environments

This workshop is intended to guide and support participants in working collaboratively to develop learning-friendly environments that support inclusion in their schools. It reflects the collegial and collaborative culture of Alberta schools and encourages school staff to work together to consider the academic, social and emotional needs of students. Participants will look at managing resistance, breaking down barriers, and reviewing tools and strategies that have proven successful elsewhere.

ATA Publications

Here Comes Everyone: Teaching in the Intercultural Classroom

ATA, 2010

www.teachers.ab.ca/SiteCollectionDocuments/ATA/Publications/Human-Rights-Issues/MON-3%20Here%20comes%20everyone.pdf

This resource is designed to help school staff establish educational practices that honour and reflect intercultural perspectives. It provides practical advice for teachers, tips for administrators and a list of community resources.

Learning Together: Public Education in Alberta

ATA, 2009

www.teachers.ab.ca/SiteCollectionDocuments/ATA/Publications/Albertas-Education-System/PE-48%20English-Learning%20Together.pdf

This publication provides information about

Alberta's public education system to newcomers to

the province. It is available in 14 languages: Arabic, Chinese, English, French, Hindi, Korean, Punjabi, Russian, Spanish, Tagalog, Thai, Ukrainian, Urdu and Vietnamese. An order form is available at www.teachers.ab.ca > News and Info > Publications (scroll down to Alberta's Education System).

Understanding ESL Learners Series

The following English as a Second Language Council (ESLC) pamphlets are available at www.teachers.ab.ca > News and Info > Publications (scroll down to Specialist Councils).

Understanding ESL Learners: Distinguishing Between Basic Interpersonal Communicative Skills (BICS) and Cognitive Academic Language Proficiency (CALP)
ATA, 2010

Understanding ESL Learners: Meeting Needs in the Classroom
ATA, 2010

Understanding ESL Learners: Teaching in the Content Areas
ATA, 2010

Understanding ESL Learners: Assessment
ATA, 2010

Understanding ESL Learners: Differentiating Instruction
ATA, 2010

Understanding ESL Learners: Moving Toward Cultural Responsiveness
ATA, 2010

Working with Immigrant Students and Families Series

The following resources were developed by the Canadian Multicultural Education Foundation (CMEF) in partnership with the ATA. Go to www.teachers.ab.ca > My ATA > Professional Development > Diversity, Equity and Human Rights > Resources (scroll down to Working with Immigrant Students and Families).

Promoting Success with Arab Immigrant Students: Teacher Resources
CMEF and ATA, 2016

Promoting Success with Indian Immigrant Students: Teacher Resources
CMEF and ATA, 2020

Teaching Filipino Immigrant Students: Resources for Success
CMEF and ATA, 2019

Teaching Pakistani Immigrant Students: Resources for Success
CMEF and ATA, 2017

Teaching Somali Immigrant Children: Resources for Student Success
CMEF and ATA, 2012

Working with Karen Immigrant Students: Teacher Resources
CMEF and ATA, 2015

Working with South Sudanese Immigrant Students: Teacher Resources
CMEF and ATA, 2012

Notes

1. *Merriam-Webster.com Dictionary*, sv “trauma,” www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/trauma#other-words (accessed April 2, 2020).
2. See <https://impactnw.org/news/how-trauma-clouds-brain-infographic/> (accessed April 2, 2020).
3. Adapted from page 4 of a handout from a Refugee Awareness Alberta workshop, Centre for Race and Culture, 2019.

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