

USCRI

From Arriving to Thriving:

Supporting Refugee Youth Success in School

Refugee Youth Resource Center



Who Are We?



- Refugee Services
- Policy and Advocacy
- Legal Services
- Trafficking Services
- International Programs
- Children's Services

**Note: USCRI is a Non-Governmental Organization (NGO)*



Who Are We?



Refugee Youth Resource Center

- National Training & Technical Assistance (TTA) initiative
- Part of USCRI Children's Services
- ORR grant-funded program
- Focus on building provider capacity to foster refugee youth resilience, integration, and child safety

LEARNING OBJECTIVES

By the end of the webinar, you will be able to...

- ① Recognize how challenges newcomer students face before and after arriving in the U.S. can affect their adjustment and success in school
- ② Explain educational rights, responsibilities, services, and supports available to refugee youth and their families
- ③ Identify practical strategies to support the social adjustment and academic success of refugee youth in school



The Global Story

WHO ARE REFUGEE YOUTH?

- A displaced young person of any age, from birth through 24 years old
- In the U.S., refugee youth may also be referred to as:
 - Resettled youth
 - Newcomer youth
 - Cross-Cultural Kids (CCKs)
 - Third Culture Kids (TCKs)
 - English Learners (ELs)
 - Emergent Multi-Linguals (EMLs)



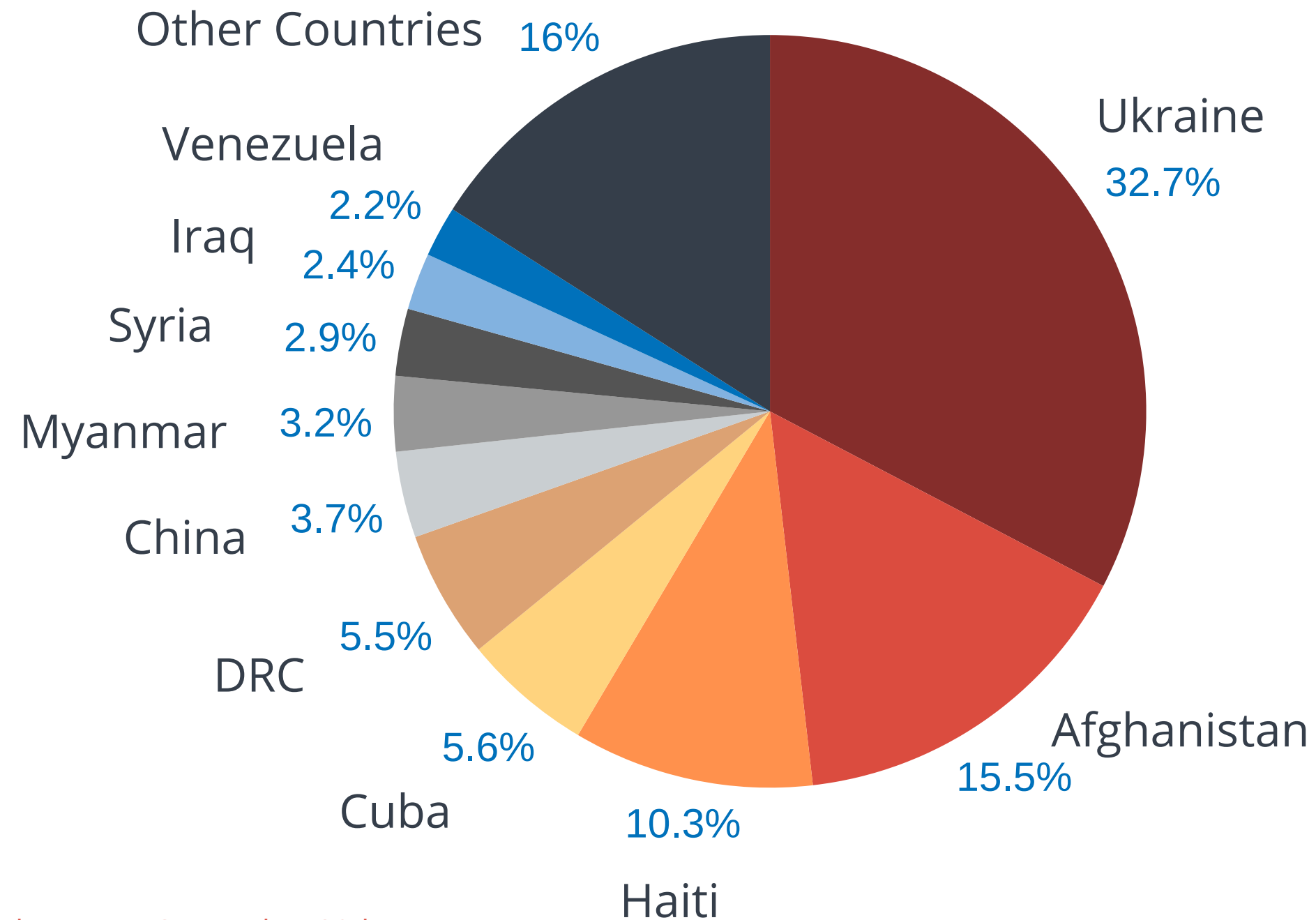
Source: AI Generated



Countries of Origin

Refugees, Asylees, Special Immigrants & Parolees

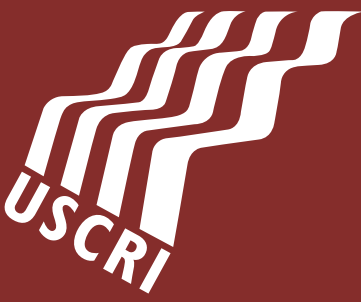
Top 10 Countries of Origin between FY2015-2025*



* A fiscal year runs from October 1st to September 30th

Source: [Refugee Processing Center](#)

Education Around the World



Source: director muuh



Source: Tima Miroshnichenko



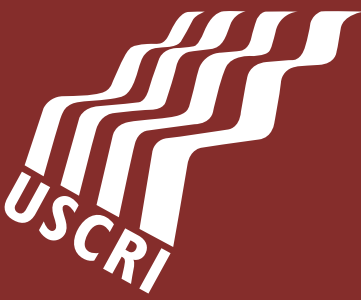
Source: kimmi jun



Source: khezez

- Students encounter various educational systems, teaching methods, and technologies
- Some teachers may use physical discipline
- Access to education is often limited in rural areas
- Girls and minorities may face exclusion or pressure to conform to the dominant culture
- Students may endure disruptions in schooling due to conflict, political instability, or economic challenges

Education Around the World



Host Nations & Refugee Camps

- Education access varies significantly by location
- Over half of refugee children worldwide are not in school
- Legal status in host countries can impact educational opportunities
- Financial challenges often lead to student dropouts
- Language barriers can obstruct learning
- Refugee students may face bullying in classrooms with national peers



Source: Ahmad akacha



Interactive Discussion

What strengths have you witnessed refugee youth exhibit in the school setting?

Strengths of Refugee Youth

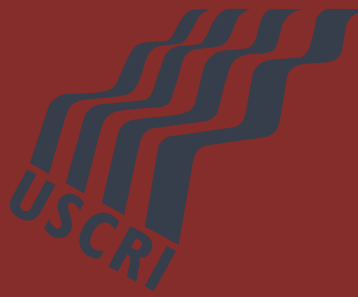


- Multilingual Communicators
- Expanded Worldview
- Cross-Cultural Awareness
- High Adaptability & Mobility
- Observant
- Global Connectedness



Refugee Youth in U.S. Schools

Challenges for Refugee Youth in U.S. Schools



- Adjusting to a new school system and its requirements
- Lack of resources and expertise to support refugee students' needs
- Knowledge gaps related to grade level
- Hesitation to engage due to past experiences
- Language barriers that could impede learning
- Impact of trauma and disrupted education

Academic Impacts of Trauma on Newcomer Students



Difficulty focusing, remembering, or processing new information



Hypervigilance or startle responses that disrupt learning



Fatigue from poor sleep that limits attention



Low confidence or fear of failure that reduces classroom participation



Difficulty completing tasks or following multiple instructions



Learning progress that fluctuates day to day

Behavioral Impacts of Trauma on Newcomer Students



Anxiety or withdrawal (may be misread as uninterested or unmotivated)



Distracted or easily triggered (may be misunderstood as misbehavior)



Mistrust of authority leading to conflict or increased discipline referrals



Difficulty with transitions (may appear oppositional)



Multiple unexplained or unexcused absences



Avoidance of new or unfamiliar activities, missing out on learning opportunities

Social Impacts of Trauma on Newcomer Students



Struggling to trust peers or adults in school



Isolating or connecting only with peers from the same background



Clinging to parents and trusted adults



Feeling different or ashamed about their refugee experience



Misreading social cues or overreacting to them



Hesitant to ask for help or advocate for oneself

Vlad's Story



Vlad's Story
USCRI Children's Services



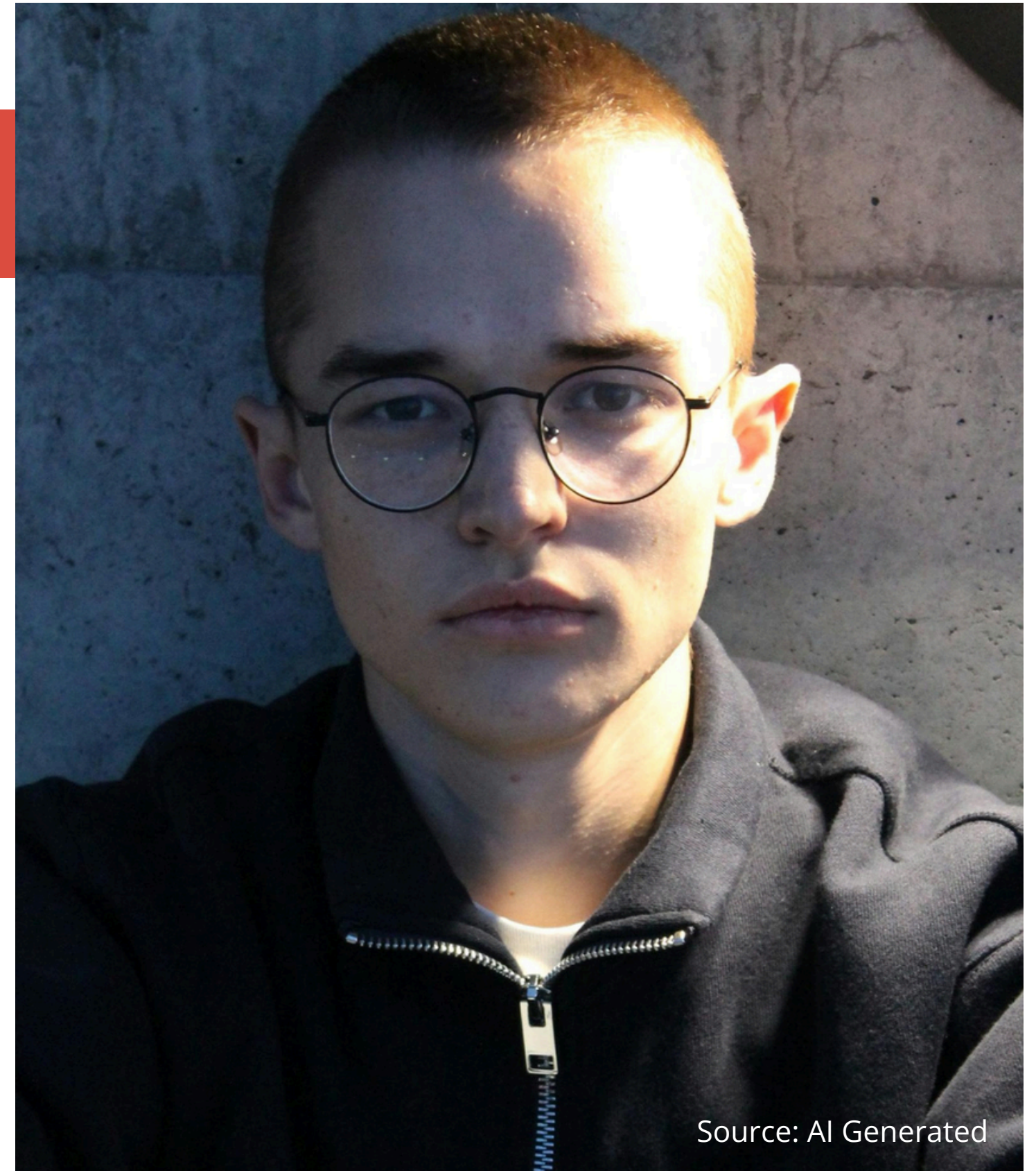
She says I am depressed from seeing my country burning,

Watch on  YouTube

Discussion

What are some ways Vlad's history of trauma and forced displacement may be impacting his educational success here in the U.S.?

What strengths do you observe?



Source: AI Generated



Educational Rights & Services for Refugee Youth

Role of Resettlement Agencies



Services offered to newcomer youth and their families include:



Enrollment in school for all school aged children



Coordination of initial medical appointments and care



Cultural orientation, including the U.S. school system

Student Enrollment & Rights



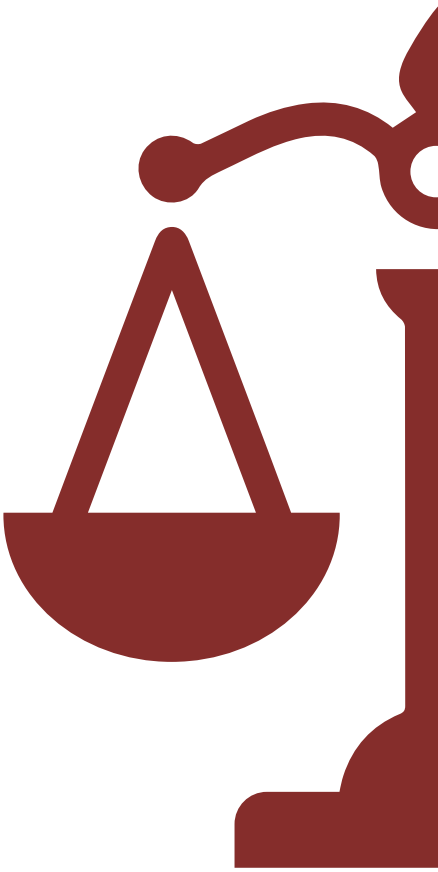
Plyler vs. Doe (1982)

- Every child has the right to free public education, regardless of immigration status.
- Schools cannot deny enrollment or discourage participation based on immigration status.
- Schools cannot request immigration documentation from students or families.



McKinney-Vento Act

- Establishes educational rights for youth without a fixed nighttime residence
- McKinney-Vento services for students include:
 - Immediate school enrollment
 - Transportation to their local school or school of origin
 - Free school meals
 - Fee waivers
 - Referrals to community services



Student Enrollment & Rights



Title VI of Civil Rights Act of 1964; Lau v. Nichols (1974); Equal Educational Opportunities Act of 1974

Schools must:

- Identify potential English Learners (ELs) in timely, valid manner
- Take appropriate action to ensure ELs can access the same content as students fluent in English
- Place ELs in classes with students their age and avoid unnecessary segregation



Title VI of Civil Rights Act of 1964; Executive Order 13166 (2000); Every Student Succeeds Act 2015

- All federally funded agencies and their subgrantees must provide language access services
- Schools must translate all information they provide to parents



Orienting Newcomer Students & Families



What to Expect

- Student/teacher interactions
- Class schedules & changes
- Class selection & electives
- Homework & tests
- Lockers
- Changing clothes for gym/PE
- Parent engagement
- Student & parent responsibilities



Services

- Transportation
- Free & reduced lunch
- ESL
- Counseling
- Tutoring
- Special education & IEP
- Early childhood education
- After-school programs & extra-curriculars
- Adult education

ORR FUNDED YOUTH PROGRAMS



Refugee School Impact

Helping refugee youth and families...

- Adapt to the U.S. school system
- Succeed academically
- Access childcare
- Aid social adjustment

Youth Mentoring

- Adult or peer mentors
- Individual or group sessions



Discussion

What ways have you seen Refugee School Impact and Youth Mentoring implemented to support refugee youth success in schools?



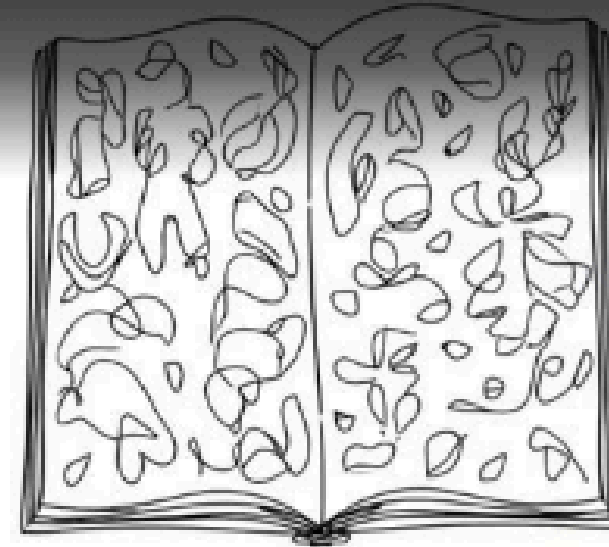
Dashnia's Story



Dashnia's Story

USCRI Children's Services

My school in America



My classes are feeling hard



My school



Watch on  YouTube

Discussion

What are some of the challenges Dashnia faces in adjusting to schooling in the U.S.?

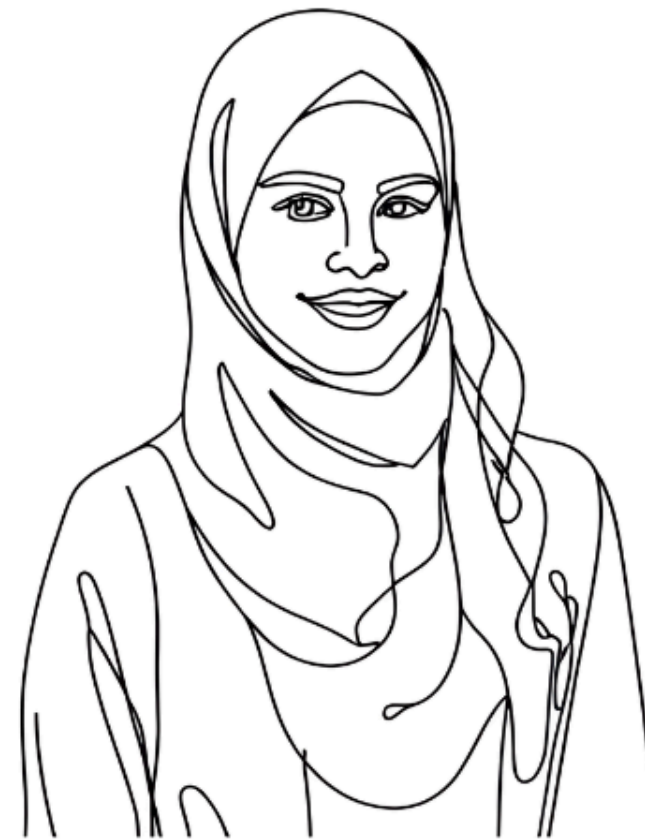
What services would you recommend to support Dashnia in achieving her educational goals?

My home of Iraqi Kurdistan



We came through the Special Immigrant Visa program

My father worked with U.S. Military



Dashnia



I love telling stories



I help my family a lot



My school in America



My classes are feeling hard



My school is far away



My father has health problems



I really love to cook

Knowledge Check

Which of the following are potential impacts of trauma that refugee youth may display in the school setting? (select all that apply)

- Becoming easily distracted
- Difficulty remembering or processing new information
- Misreading or overreacting to social cues
- Struggling to trust adults in school
- None of the above

Knowledge Check

What services are all publicly funded schools required to provide newcomer youth, no matter their immigration status? (select all that apply)

- Classes for only refugee students
- Educational content that is accessible for all English Learners (ELs)
- Free public education
- Free transportation for students without a fixed permanent residence
- Classes for newcomer parents to attend with their children



Knowledge Check

True or False: No refugee student has access to high quality education before arriving in the U.S.?

True or False: According to the Civil Rights Act of 1964, resettled youth should be placed in classes with students their age?



Coming Alongside Newcomer Students in School Settings

Adjusting Our Perceptions



Source: Power with and power over by Yuval Saar-Heiman, Children and Youth Service Review, Vol. 145, February 2023, 106776

Supporting Newcomer Students' Safety



Creating a safe and supportive environment
(includes psychological safety)



Preventing & responding to bullying



Staying informed & connected with community resources



Planning for youth's safety at home, in school, and in the community

The ABCs of Newcomer School Success



Assist with school enrollment for resettled families and youth



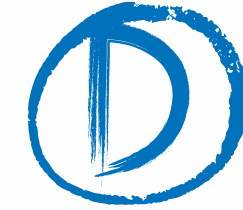
Build individualized academic assistance plans to meet students where they are



Create a space where all students feel a sense of belonging



The ABCs of Newcomer School Success



Dedicate time to get to know newcomer students & support them in getting to know their peers



Establish & communicate routines, while making room for the spontaneous



Frame setbacks as opportunities for growth

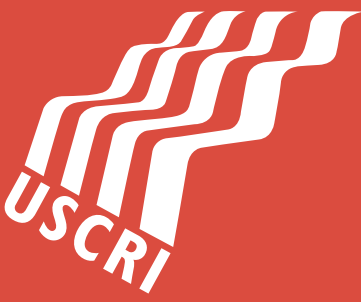


Interactive Discussion

What are some ways you have supported refugee youth school success inside and outside of the educational setting?

Culturally Responsive Strategies

In the Educational Setting



Support use of heritage languages and translation tools



Use visual aids, props, & demonstrations to reinforce language development



Include projects in the curriculum that celebrate cultural differences



Provide cultural sharing opportunities, with interpretation as needed



Decorate the school & display posters that showcase different cultures



Engage parents & provide opportunities for their involvement

Supporting Newcomers' School Success

Outside of the Educational Setting



Helping newcomer families know what to expect in U.S. schools & establish consistent routines



Educating newcomer families about their educational rights and responsibilities



Sharing back-to-school and other resources in the local community



Exploring careers and educational pathways with older youth



Helping families address basic needs



Supporting newcomers' exploration of and enrollment in extracurricular activities

Supporting School Success: Educating Newcomer Students on Their Responsibilities



- Eat & sleep well each day
- Follow school dress code
- Attend school regularly & be ready to learn
- Arrive to school on time
- Help maintain a safe and healthy school environment
- Establish good study habits & complete all homework
- Respect others & use respectful language
- Avoid fighting or bringing weapons or drugs to school



Supporting School Success: Educating Parents/Caregivers on Their Responsibilities



- Ensure your child gets enough sleep, eats well, & feels supported
- Ensure your child attends school daily
- Notify the school about any absences
- Respond to school staff & reach out if there are concerns
- Stay informed about your child's attendance & grades
- Provide a quiet space for studying, encourage good study habits, & ensure homework is complete
- Reinforce respect, responsibility, and engagement in school
- Attend parent/teacher conferences and school events, & volunteer when possible



Idris's Story



Idris' Story
USCRI Children's Services



Three years ago, my family and I were able to come to America through the
Refugee Admissions Program.



Watch on  YouTube

Discussion

How might you support Idris's integration and success both in and outside of the classroom?

What other strategies have not been mentioned that you have seen or used in support of newcomer student success?





Conclusion & Resources

PRESENTATION TAKEAWAYS



Increased awareness of how newcomer youth's experiences before and after arriving in the U.S. may impact their adjustment and success in school



Knowledge of educational rights, responsibilities, and services/supports available to refugee students and families



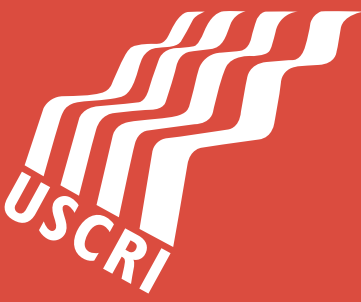
Practical strategies to help refugee youth integrate and succeed in the U.S. school system and beyond

Reflection

Share one strategy or new piece of information that you are taking away from this training that you will implement to support a refugee youth/family you are currently working with.



refugee-youth.org



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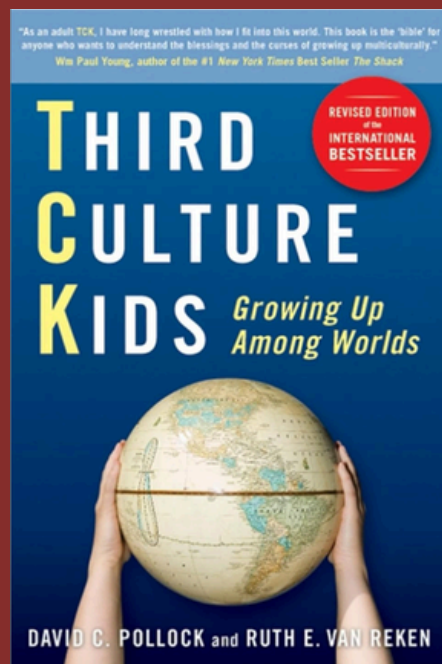
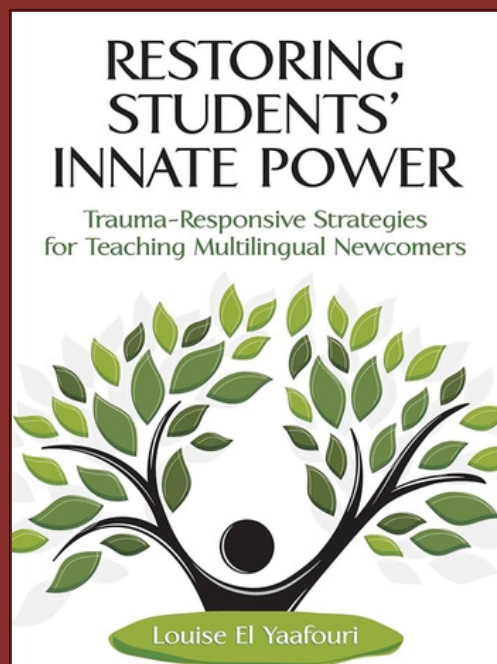
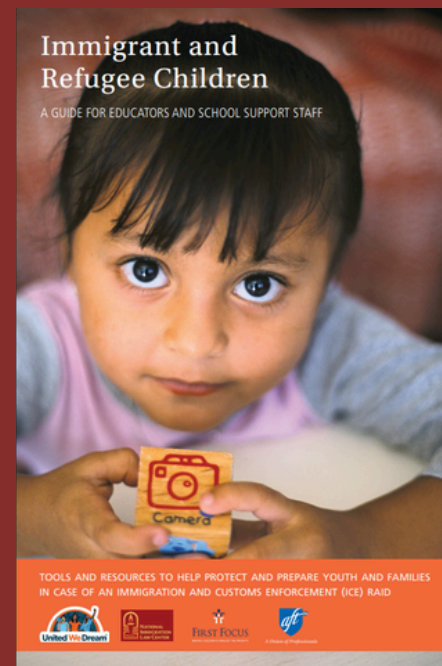
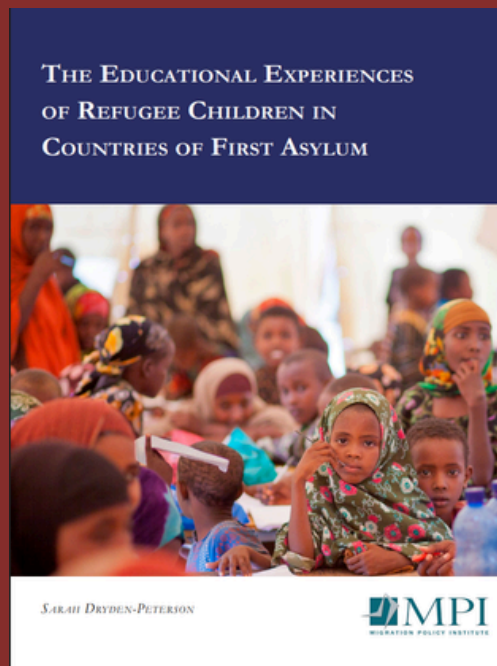
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REFUGEE YOUTH RESOURCE CENTER



Improving outcomes for refugee children, youth, and their families through resources, education, and provider support

Books, Toolkits, & Guides



[Welcome to Our Schools - Refugee Services | New York State](#)

[Refugee Students in U.S. Schools: A Toolkit for Teachers and School Personnel | BRYCS](#)

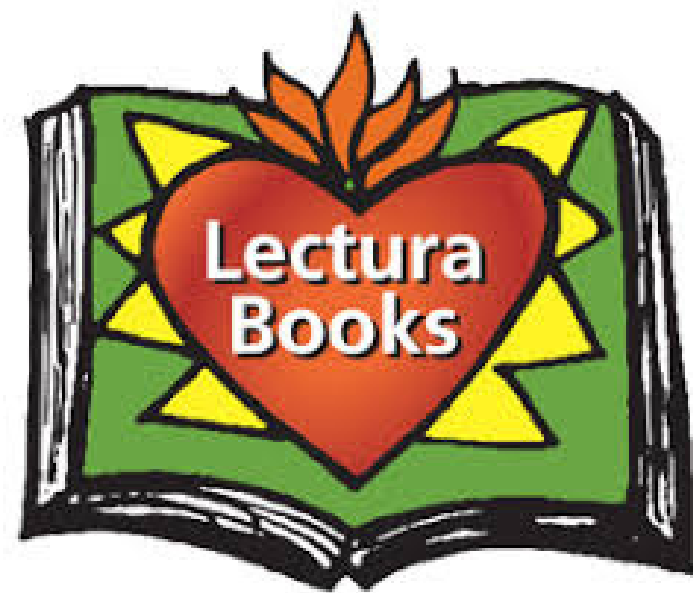
[Welcoming Immigrant Students in School - Infographic | International Development Research Association](#)

[Progression of Language Proficiency - Teacher Moves | Hudson Valley Regional Bilingual Education Resource Network](#)

[Classroom Practices for Multilingual Learners and English Language Learners and The Next Generation English Language Arts Learning Standards | New York State Education Department](#)

[A Handbook for Teaching English to Afghan Women | University of San Francisco](#)

Multilingual Materials



Additional Resources



[Education & English Learning Resources | Switchboard](#)

[Communities of Practices | Switchboard](#)

[What to Know About Refugee Education and Why It Matters | UNHCR](#)

[FAQ for Educators on Immigrant Students in Public Schools | American Civil Liberties Union](#)

[Refugee School Impact Program | Office of Refugee Resettlement](#)

[Youth Mentoring | Office of Refugee Resettlement](#)

[Supporting Students from Immigrant Families | Learning for Justice](#)

[English Language Learners | Edutopia](#)

[ELL Support Slides | Hudson Valley Regional Bilingual Education Resource Network](#)

[English with Newcomers | SIL Global](#)

[Promoting Cultural Competency in Teaching | University of Delaware](#)

[Beyond Teaching English: Supporting High School Completion by Immigrant and Refugee Student | Migration Policy Institute](#)



Thank You!

Contact Us:

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