

Refugee Students: Educational Challenges and Strategies for Leaders Working with Third World
Populations

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ABSTRACT

Thomas Collins Cooper III: Refugee Students: Educational Challenges and Strategies for
Leaders Working with Third World Populations
(Under the direction of Kathleen Brown)

Each year, the United States resettles more refugees than any other country in the world. These students are placed into foreign learning environments where they are forced to adapt to new academic settings while also adjusting to a new culture. Often times, these students are escaping a violent past and are placed with teachers who have limited training in dealing with such issues. The passage of the No Child Left Behind Act (NCLB) of 2001 was intended to identify failing schools, however it has also lead to potential gaps that students can fall through. In this dissertation, third world refugee students who come to the United States and may not meet the minimum requirements to be counted in the NCLB accountability demographic are identified, their challenges are examined, and strategies are presented for school leaders to utilize for the benefit of refugee students. This mixed methods study explores a school devoted to newly arrived students in the United States. Through the use of interviews, observations, and data analysis, a framework was created that will aid social justice minded leaders as they create learning environments that can help third world refugees succeed. This document provides school leaders with intentional implementation strategies within a three-tiered framework that can be used to guide districts towards a more comprehensive and culturally responsive educational setting. Future research would be beneficial in the areas of students' feelings of school belonging, self-awareness, nationality equating to academic achievement, and the impact entry age has on academic success.

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CHAPTER I – INTRODUCTION

The No Child Left Behind legislation passed in 2001 exposed gaps in the achievement levels between different groups of students in the American classroom. Refugees are one of the groups prone to being “left behind,” given their past experiences, sparse populations across the country, and the unique challenges they face resettling in a new country. Additionally, many of these individuals bring a traumatic past with them, and, without a school staff that understands and adjusts to their needs, they will most likely not make it to high school graduation.

Since World War II, the United States has had a growing number of refugees in the American education system. While this number peaked in the 1980s with the passage of the Refugee Resettlement Act of 1980, the United States has had an average of 50,000 refugees enter each year and a total of around three million entering the country since 1975 (U.S. Dept. of State, 2013) and make up roughly 10% of the immigrant population entering the United States. Just under half of those admitted into the United States are under the age of 18 and are entitled to education services. As they only make up a small percentage of the population and do not necessarily create an achievement gap that is identifiable to districts using current accountability measures, these students face the potential of being left behind by schools.

Currently, over 45 million refugees around the world—a 20-year high—await resettlement opportunities in Kenya, Pakistan, India, and more camps around the Middle East and Africa. As the United States resettles more refugees than any other country in the world, the influence of refugees in the school setting is not going to go away. Ignoring the needs of refugee

populations would be a disservice to those individuals and could potentially become a larger political and economic issue for the American population if they are not educated.

After providing a broad history for this demographic, this study looks to identify educational challenges refugees face as they enter school systems across the United States. It also provides strategies that could help schools meet the needs of refugee populations in their community. While it may be difficult to make generalizations about all refugee communities, including their financial and language obstacles, it is apparent that many groups must work to overcome cultural differences. These shared challenges are the subjects that will make up the focus of this research.

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this study is to identify a population within the American school system that typically does not make up a large enough subgroup in most school districts to warrant changes to the schools' culture but whose educational needs are potentially not understood or met. For many refugees, refugee agencies serve as a life support for living in the United States and these groups rely on grants to provide their services. Statistics from global-, national-, and state-level databases will be used to illustrate just how large this population is and how this influx of individuals could change the educational landscape of some districts.

Refugees make up a unique population whose needs districts may have limited experience and resources. As such, these students face multiple challenges as they enter the classroom. Many of these refugees are coming from countries that are facing challenges including war, disease, famine, or other destabilizing conflict; as a result, educational opportunity is either not a priority or is nonexistent. Refugee children coming to America may be poorly equipped for traditional schools. Couple this with the differences of culture, the

classroom can be a daunting place for such a child. In addition, the child's psychosocial obstacles and discrimination from other students may add to the challenge of providing a suitable classroom environment. This study also provides solutions for school leaders that could help refugees succeed within the American classroom. Proposed solutions include language access, parental involvement, equity and excellence, and professional development for educators. While this is not an inclusive list, they are the most common components found within the research compiled for this paper and provide the theoretical background for this paper.

By identifying these challenges and possible solutions, I have created Cooper's Framework for Educating Refugees in the United States, which can be employed by districts with an increase in refugee students to help them acculturate more quickly and succeed academically. Although not created as a one-size-fits-all for all districts with regard to refugee education, it can serve as a starting point or add to the current resources districts can employ.

Research Questions

To better understand what refugee education looks like in the American education system, the following questions have been developed to guide this research and create Cooper's Framework for Educating Refugees in the United States:

- 1) What are the major challenges for refugee students in a large, metropolitan district?
- 2) What can leaders do to create positive learning environments that will help these individuals overcome traumatic life experiences and succeed in a large, metropolitan public school system?

These questions are explored by identifying specific strategies that schools with a high refugee population incorporate on a daily basis. This study identifies challenges that refugee students face as they enter public school systems in America and also provides solutions in the

form of a framework that can be implemented in schools in the United States who have refugee populations.

Conceptual Framework

This research study addresses the unmet needs of the refugee population in the United States. These students are some of the 50,000-plus refugees that resettle in the United States each year and enter the school systems across America with limited knowledge of the language and cultures that make up the United States' education system. Many of these refugees are placed in resettlement cities (Denver, CO; Fort Wayne, IN; Minneapolis, MN; Greensboro, NC; Chapel Hill, NC; and New York, NY) where there are community supports in place to aid in the resettlement. Because of this grouping, not a lot of research has been done on a national level as to the impact these students are having on the education system as a whole or in areas that are not designated as resettlement sites. Equally as absent from the research are suggested strategies that could potentially help schools meet the needs of refugee students. With continuous conflict in various places around the world, it is not likely that the refugee population in our schools will decrease, and therefore, research on the topic is needed.

Utilizing global and national research, as well as case studies of refugee education programs in Australia (Pugh, Every, & Hattam, 2012; Taylor & Sidhu, 2012), this study proposes a Framework for Educating Refugees in the United States to serve as a potential guide for districts experiencing an increase in their refugee populations. The nine parts of the framework (hereafter referred to as Cooper's Framework for Educating Refugees in the United States) range from financing and policies to relationships and professional development. While each of the nine parts of Cooper's Framework for Educating Refugees in the United States can be utilized by district leaders who see a rise in their refugee populations, it is intended to be used

by districts with pre-existing community supports in place that can support the school district in educating their refugee students.

Research Design Overview

A critical ethnography was used to view the challenges refugees face as they enter the American classroom and develop a tool that can be used by districts to help these students overcome these obstacles and succeed in their educational journey. The study aims to identify the students who fit this demographic, challenge current practices when dealing with students from these backgrounds, and make recommendations schools can follow to help these students succeed. Critical ethnography is used to discover what works when working with refugees, with an understanding that the current system is potentially failing to meet the individual needs of refugee learners.

The district used for this research is Welcome County, which is located in the central part of a large southeastern state and is its third largest city in terms of population (NCpedia, 2013). This county is located within 90 miles of the four other largest cities in the state. According to the state's Department of Health and Human Services, this county resettles 27% of the refugees who enter the state, the second highest, behind the state's largest city. This county was chosen as a resettlement site in 1986 by a Cambodian delegation. Since then it has become more diversified and includes Russians, Bosnians, Africans, and other refugee groups (L. Roughton, personal communication, August 23, 2013). In response to this influx of refugees, Welcome County's public transit system, government body, and school district have implemented systems to enable these refugees to acculturate more quickly and make their resettlement in the county easier. For example, a low-priced bus pass and route has been created to get refugees to and from resettlement agencies, psychology support programs offered by a local university, and a

separate school, Welcomers School, created for newly arrived refugee students' first year in American schools.

A variety of data collection strategies were used to complement the current research and Cooper's Framework for Educating Refugees in the United States. Interviews with teachers, district leaders, site-based leadership, and community supports provide first-hand experience and expertise from professionals who are involved in the day-to-day interactions of the Welcomers School and Welcome School District. Observations were also utilized, as interactions between teachers and their refugee students could serve to be just as important as the content they teach. As there were no student interviews, observations of student interactions with peers, teachers, and the curriculum provide the researcher with the refugee's perspective in the classroom. In addition, analysis of documents including curriculums being used, school improvement plans, and annual goals created by the Welcomers School provides insight as to how the district and school leadership adapt to the needs of refugee students. This analysis yields key ideas that are used by the school that may be different from the other schools in the district but serve a purpose for teaching refugees.

Limitations and Anticipated Outcomes

The major limitations for this study involved access to the subjects necessary to add tested strategies and support for this research. Because Welcome County has been referred to as the best refugee education model by multiple sources around the state (state DHHS, HIAS, New Arrivals Institute), I have focused most of this study with the understanding that research will be completed at this site. In addition, the Welcomers School in Welcome County is a small school with grades 3-12 and has a staff numbering just over 20 teachers. With such a small potential pool of interview candidates and observation sites available, I needed school and district staff

participation to be high in the Welcomers School. Lack of access to the students was also a limitation. It was assumed that, as most of the students have been in the country less than a year, their English abilities would not warrant an adequate interview; therefore, they were not included in the interview process.

Access to the district leaders was also a limitation, as these individuals have very demanding schedules and other focuses that limited their availability for the research. It was anticipated that many of the teachers and leaders at the Welcomers School would embrace the research topic as this is their chosen profession and, according to first principal, they were recruited to come to the school. However, it was expected that district leaders may not share this sentiment and proved to be a bit harder to gain entry on a face-to-face basis.

A final limitation is that this research was conducted within a district that has already committed resources to refugee education. Schools that choose to use this framework in the future may not have the same supports in place to ensure its success. While the framework is written as a guide for schools within the United States that experience an increase in refugee populations, there are additional components necessary for it to function successfully. Thus, this study may represent a best-case scenario that is difficult for other school systems to replicate.

This research seeks to make available first-hand experiences, ideas, and strategies that are currently being employed by high refugee population schools. Through the interview process, personal experiences and specific details that the teachers of the Welcomers School emerged that added to the research. By observing the teachers, I was able to identify strategies they incorporate into their lessons that come second nature to them and may not be included in the interviews they provide. Each of these collection techniques helped to create a practical framework that can be utilized by schools across the United States who experience an increase in

their refugee populations. This framework can also be used by districts to update or simply revamp current plans they already have in place for their refugee populations.

Rationale for the Study

The American public education system requires states and communities to offer a free, quality education to all residents. Despite No Child Left Behind's shifts to focus on accountability for students and teachers, it is possible that certain demographics of students are possibly falling through the cracks. As previously discussed, with an average of 50,000 refugees entering the United States each year, schools are faced with making a place for students who have experienced traumatic upheaval and/or limited educational access, putting them at a potentially significant disadvantage. Identifying the challenges these students must overcome within the school setting and providing strategies that may help them will allow teachers to reflect on their teaching and adjust as needed to meet the needs of these students. This can only occur if the resources are in place to support their efforts and a commitment is made at the leadership level.

The study sheds light on a potential student demographic within our country that is not receiving the type of education they are entitled under current education policy. In turn, they could have a harder time contributing to society since they lack simple education skills.

Definitions of terms

- *Refugee*: Someone who is unable or unwilling to return to their country of origin owing to a well-founded fear of being persecuted for reasons of race, religion, nationality, membership of a particular social group, or political opinion (Convention and Protocol, 1951/1996, p. 3). This definition excludes individuals who have come the United States in search of higher education or more prosperous lifestyle.

- *Resettlement Agency*: An agency, or group, created to help meet the needs of refugees as they arrive in the country and provide “new populations with the opportunity to maximize their potential in the United States” (“What We Do,” 2013). These agencies are usually contracted to work with refugees from their first 30 days up to citizenship, depending on the grant and the goals of the agency (L. Roughton, personal communication, August 23, 2013).
- *Community Support*: An agency, or group, that advocates for refugees after the resettlement agency’s time has expired. This could also include community governance and public services such as transportation, community colleges, ESL instruction and testing, police, etc.
- *Acculturation*: The process of an individual changing to become culturally similar to the groups they are interacting. (McBrien, 2005)
- *Assimilation*: Commonly understood to be a process in which individuals give up their old culture, exchanging it for the culture of their new society. (McBrien, 2005)
- *Inclusion*: Opportunities where refugee students are integrated into the mainstream learning environment in order to learn the culture and routines of the traditional classroom that are absent from their separate setting environment.

Conclusion

Each year, refugee students enter public school systems across the country, bringing with them unique experiences and stories. For some of these students, these experiences include violence, rape and even murder and can inhibit their learning if not provided with the proper supports and learning environment. They may also experience culture shock and discrimination. The mainstream approach to education offered by many American schools does not allow for

personalized instruction, which may benefit refugee students looking to successfully enter society through education. This study looks to identify the challenges refugee students face as they enter the American education system and provide solutions that districts can use to increase their chances of success. Using a refugee-focused school in a southeastern state, this research aims to produce a framework that can be utilized by districts within the United States who have either an increase in their refugee population or are districts that are looking for strategies to better meet the needs of their current refugee populations.

CHAPTER II – LITERATURE REVIEW

The education of refugees in America is not a highly researched topic and, thus, many of the resources available are, like the students they research, global. This chapter briefly explores the history of refugee entry into the United States by looking at policies the government has put in place, agencies that support these individuals, and current statistics of the refugee landscape. This paper then describes a few of the challenges currently facing the education of refugee students, both academically and culturally. The study also briefly touches on the psychosocial obstacles refugee students must overcome in order to be successful in the American education system. Then, based upon the current literature, solutions are offered that could help refugee students acculturate more quickly and better access their rights as American students. The theoretical framework outlines Cooper's Framework for Educating Refugees in the United States. This framework describes nine steps that schools with a high refugee population could implement to help these students address challenges and achieve scholastically and socially.

Background of Refugees in America

History and definitions of refugees in America. Since its creation in 1950, the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) has helped tens of millions of people restart their lives ("UNHCR," 2013). Currently there are 14 countries that serve as sites for third-country resettlement: Argentina, Australia, Brazil, Canada, Chile, Denmark, Finland, Iceland, Ireland, the Netherlands, New Zealand, Norway, Sweden, the UK, and the US ("HIAS," 2013). According to the UNHCR, the United States accepted more people for resettlement in 2012 than any other country in the world.

Generally speaking, refugees have made up the social fabric of the United States since its founding; however, refugees as a separate immigrant group were not officially recognized until 250,000 Europeans were admitted into the country at the conclusion of World War II. Since then, the United States has passed multiple laws that have allowed entry into the country. The most recent, Refugee Resettlement Act of 1980, officially included the United Nation's criteria of refugees as:

Someone who is unable or unwilling to return to their country of origin owing to a well-founded fear of being persecuted for reasons of race, religion, nationality, membership of a particular social group, or political opinion (Convention and Protocol, 1951/1996, p. 3). Since the passage of this act, the United States has invited over 1.8 million refugees into the country ("Refugee 101," 2013), including 58,179 in 2012, according to the *2012 Yearbook of Immigration Statistics* created by the Office of Immigration Statistics.

Various theorists (McBrien, 2005; Ogbu & Simons, 1998) have provided and referenced theories to describe the position and acclimation process refugees go through upon arrival in their host country. Ogbu and Simons' (1998) Voluntary Spectrum provides a model for identifying immigrant minorities and understanding why they left their home country. On one end are the voluntary minorities, who purposefully leave their home for reasons including economic and educational opportunities. At the other end are Involuntary minorities, who are described as someone being brought to the new country against their will. Refugees are placed in the middle of this spectrum and are identified as Semi-voluntary minorities who are not necessarily coming to the United States to improve their status (Ogbu & Simons, 1998) but out of fear.

McBrien (2005) identified the process of acculturation as a difficult and often-confusing

experience for refugees. Acculturation is the process of an individual changing to become culturally similar to the groups with which they are interacting. McBrien explained that one method of acculturation, assimilation, is “a process in which individuals give up their old culture, exchanging it for the culture of their new society” (p. 331). Supporters of cultural pluralism, on the other hand, have argued that refugees adapt quicker if they retain their homeland values while adding on the language and customs of the host country (McBrien). Other terms related to cultural pluralism include biculturalism, transculturalism, and additive assimilation.

As Semi-voluntary minorities in their host country, refugees face acculturation with a history of traumatic experiences and displacement (McBrien, 2005). Because this differs from the voluntary minority status that other immigrants hold, this study focuses on the challenges refugees encounter upon entry to the United States and strategies to help them succeed in the educational system. While many of the challenges and strategies presented in the research are applicable to refugees and immigrants, this study focuses on the specific needs of refugees and the experiences they have prior to entering the education system.

Government policies. Following the conclusion of World War II, the United States admitted 250,000 Europeans as refugees. This number increased with the passage of the Displaced Persons Act of 1948, which allowed 400,000 more Europeans into the United States. This legislation led as well to the inclusion of refugees from Communist countries (China, Cuba, Hungary, Korea, Poland, and Yugoslavia) in the 1950s and 1960s with the passage of the Refugee Relief Act of 1953 and the Fair Share Refugee Act of 1960 (“Office of Immigration Statistics,” 2013). The modern refugee influx stemmed from the 1975 admission of over 100,000 Southeast Asian refugees under “Refugee Task Force” resettlement programs. Although the United States allowed refugees into the country prior to 1975, they did not align

with the policies of UNHCR. This alignment occurred with the passage of the Refugee Resettlement Act of 1980 when the government began to include the wording and terms used by the United Nations and standardized the resettlement process and services provided for refugees who are being admitted to the U.S. (“Refugee Council USA,” 2013).

Grants. Various organizations and offices provide grants for refugee hosts to support families coming to the United States. The Office of Refugee Resettlement (ORR) created the Refugee School Impact Grant (RSIG) in 1998 (“Information for Refugee School,” 2013) to support school systems with high numbers of refugees within their district. Numerous project grants are also available to support school systems and can be found in the Catalog of Federal Domestic Assistance (www.cfda.gov). These grants include the Refugee and Entrant Assistance Discretion Grant (USDHHS), U.S. Committee for Refugees and Immigrants’ (USCRI) Matching Grant Program, and the Individual Development Account program (IDA). Others are also available to help support the acculturation process of refugees within the United States.

The common goal of these grants and programs is self-sufficiency for refugees. Both the Refugee and Entrant Assistance and the Matching Grant program explain that any newcomer’s success is tied to their ability to achieve and sustain self-sufficiency (“USCRI,” 2013). The IDA program helps individuals find housing, start businesses, or buy vehicles for employment purposes in order to become more financially stable. Each of these grants is utilized by the resettlement agencies and host groups identified in the next section and provides a large portion of the resources they use to help refugees with resettlement. ORR, for example, awards \$2 for every \$1 raised by the various agencies (“ORR,” 2013). The Refugee School Impact program provides funding for activities that lead to the education and integration of refugee children (“School Impact,” 2013); the state in which Welcome County is located was awarded \$437,488

as part of this grant in 2012.

Resettlement agencies and host groups. The United States has a multitude of resource agencies that help newly arrived refugees acculturate into the United States. Some of the more prominent agencies include Church World Service (CWS), Ethiopian Community Development Council (ECDC), Episcopal Migration Ministries (EMM), Hebrew Immigrant Aid Society (HIAS), International Rescue Committee (IRC), Lutheran Immigration and Refugee Service (LIRS), U.S. Committee of Refugees and Immigrants (USCRI), and United States Conference of Catholic Bishops/Migration and Refugee Services (USCCB), also known as Voluntary Agencies (volags) or Resettlement Agencies. This is not an all-inclusive list of the resource agencies available in the United States and globally; however they are the most frequently referenced agencies on the U.S. Office of Refugee Resettlements website with regard to the state's matching grant opportunities.

These agencies offer a range of services and supports to refugees. The most obvious is assistance with resettlement, but other kinds of assistance are available as well. CWS, for example, will make arrangements for refugees to be contacted by one of their participating local churches to help provide a connection to the community. HIAS assigns staff members to help refugees in orienting to life in the United States. Legal services are another area of assistance provided by these groups. Refugees entering the country often need help with employment documents or petitions and paperwork to bring additional family members into the United States

Most of these groups are members of the InterAction network, whose mission is to eliminate extreme poverty and ensure that poor and vulnerable populations in the United States are able to advance in their communities ("InterAction," 2013). To that end, many agencies utilize the Individual Development Account (IDA) program. The Office of Refugee

Resettlement funds these programs and provides matched savings accounts programs designed to help refugees save for specific purchases (“About Individual Development Accounts,” 2013) including home purchases, small business development, or post-secondary education or training. Each of these agencies was founded around times in America’s history that saw an influx of refugees into the country and thus participate with the countries from which those refugees came. While all agencies have worked with refugees from around the world, a few of the agencies have actually had offices in other countries. For example, CWS has an office in Nairobi, Kenya. The USCRI has partnerships in Thailand, Haiti, and Morocco, while the HIAS has an office in Argentina. Many of these agencies have offices around the country as well. The CWS, for example, has 37 “sister churches.” In addition, many American churches (The United Methodist Church, Moravian Church in America, etc.) have sites around the country that serve as the host groups for refugees, providing the resources and help that refugees need to be successful. According to the state’s DHHS website, Welcome County’s state has 10 agencies that are contacts for refugees in four of the state’s biggest cities.

Statistics. Globally, 80% of the world’s refugees live in under-developed countries, with 42 million displaced people worldwide (Anselme & Hands, 2010). The number of refugees admitted into the United State declined each year between the passage of the Refugee Resettlement Act of 1980 and 2012, but the annual numbers have fluctuated greatly over the last 32 years. In 1980, the United States admitted over 207,000 refugees, whereas 2012 saw 58,179 people admitted.

Of those 58,179 refugees admitted in 2012, 32% were children under the age of 18. Anselme and Hands (2010), through their research into higher education for refugees, have found that, according to the Inter-Agency Network for Education in Emergencies (INEE), the

number of young people between the ages of 12 and 24 years make up approximately 35% of refugees in the world today. As the national population of the United States becomes more ethnically and culturally diverse, policy makers at local levels are pushed to create policies to prepare for the inclusion of these students into the school systems they lead.

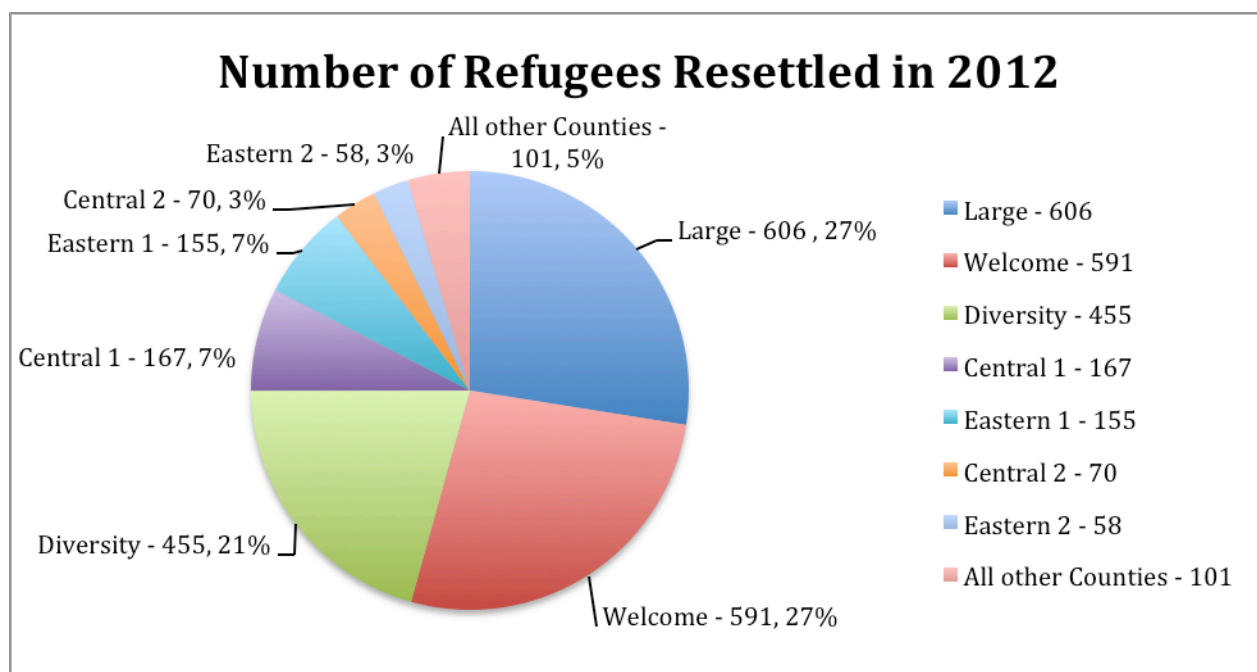
One of the many hurdles for policy makers is that, around the world, nearly 90% of displaced persons went without access to education (Anselme & Hands, 2010). This influx of students with limited formal education creates challenging situations for American schools. Couple this with the fact that approximately 20% of the English Language Learner (ELL) population in the United States speaks one of 400 or so languages (Field, 2008), and it is clear that major changes are needed in order to educate these students and have successful schools for all. Field (2008) also found that the state in which Welcome County is located is one of six states that have seen more than 300 % growth in the ELL population. Although a large majority of this growth is Hispanic immigrants, there are still numerous refugees as well.

In 2012, this state had the 10th largest refugee resettlement population by state, with 2,110 individuals (ORR, 2013), and 3rd in the southeastern United States. Table 1, on next page, illustrates the top five refugee groups relocated to the state in the fiscal year 2012 as reported by ORR (2012). Chart 1, on next page as well, shows the breakdown by county of the state's DHHS' findings.

TABLE 1: State Top Five Refugee Population 2012

Nationality	Total Number Admitted in 2012	Percent of the state's 2012 Refugees
Burma	785	37.2%
Bhutan	639	30.3%
Iraq	148	7.0%
Somalia	93	4.4%
Dem. Rep. Congo	76	3.6%

Figure 1: County Resettlement Sites of the State Refugees Admitted in 2012



*Adapted from chart on NCDHHS website

This figure illustrates the way refugees are dispersed in the state as well as the large refugee population that Welcome County has compared to the other districts in the state.

Challenges to Educating Refugees

Academically. The UNHCR definition of a refugee states that refugees leave their home countries for “fear of being persecuted.” Pugh, Every, and Hattam (2012) have found in their research on Australian primary schools with high refugee populations that refugee students face additional barriers to schooling their classmates may not: violent experiences, long stays in refugee camp, limited access to education. They have concluded that unrealistic expectations in a foreign setting, coupled with lack of access to prior education, create additional burdens for these students to overcome as they seek educational opportunities.

Upon coming to the United States, the most glaring obstacle that refugees face, with regard to academics, is the language barrier. Some refugee students may have had access to

education in their home country; however, their language abilities are holding them back here. This does not take into consideration how long they were in the refugee camps with limited educational access. Identifying the needs of the students as quickly as possible is extremely important to the success of the refugee student; however, educators need to be careful not to group all refugees together, as refugees are not a homogenous group (Kaprielian-Churchill, 1996) and therefore should not be treated as such.

The challenge of learning English is another hurdle for refugee students to overcome as they develop the language and one that may not be as clear-cut as it appears. McBrien's (2005) review of literature found that students may be competent at spoken English yet be considerably behind their classmates in academic English. This divide between spoken and academic English is a grey area that could potentially put refugee students at a greater disadvantage if not addressed and understood. Teachers must be aware of their students' actual academic English abilities rather than making assumptions based on what they hear from students' conversations. Field (2008) has found in her work with administrators and teachers working with English Language Learners in various states across the country that many educators see linguistic and cultural diversity as problems to overcome rather than as resources to develop. By embracing these differences, schools not only allow their refugee students to feel included, but they also increase the cultural awareness of the other students in the class.

As students become overwhelmed by the language barrier, or misidentified as being able to use academic English, they become more prone to failure and giving up. Kaprielian-Churchill's (1996) work with refugees in Canada found that such students may leave school because they think they are too far behind academically, and they will never be able to catch up.

Others may leave school because they must work to help their families survive

economically. Refugees in the United States often face a marked change in socioeconomic when they flee their home country, leaving behind careers and income. This shift may create an academic barrier as the normal routines for these individuals have completely changed. Refugees are often seen as poor because of their living conditions, the clothes they wear, or their language abilities, creating a stereotype that follows them into the classroom setting. Kiche (2010) argued that poverty's association with low education aspirations has been discounted by evidence of high educational aspirations and expectations among immigrant youth who are disproportionately represented in low-income brackets.

Along those same lines, one of the false narratives associated with refugee students is that they are academically behind, just because they may not speak the language. According to the LIRS Immigration Myths vs. Facts sheet ("LIRS," 2013), more than 11% of foreign-born workers in the United States have advanced degrees but are unable to use them either because the United States does not recognize them or because they have a limited language base that prohibits entry into their fields of study in America. So, to say that refugees are unable to succeed in American schools, or that poverty among refugees is a reason that they fail academically, is an overly broad statement. Poverty may prevent these students from focusing solely on school if these students may have a more involved role in assisting the family (Fuligni, Tseng, and Lam, 1999), but it is not a sole factor in their success or failure.

Class placement is also an area where refugees may find obstacles that could hinder their academic success in the American classroom. McBrien's (2005) idea of cultural misunderstandings applies when refugee parents do not understand the education system or the steps involved in gaining access to higher-level classes, resulting in students' being tracked incorrectly. Kiche (2010) warned that if English Language scores are used as placements,

refugee students could suffer, as they will be sorted to lower-ability tracks that could interfere with interpersonal relationships within the school setting. This can affect students academically as well. Field (2008) found higher drop-out rates among English language learners than English speakers. Kiche also observed that students tend to conform to the educational expectations of the ability group they find themselves placed. Placing refugee students who have limited English abilities and school experiences with their lower-ability American counterparts could have a negative effect on their view of education and cause them to fail. In this scenario, regardless of their actual ability, these students are not being given the opportunity to excel to their full potential. Instead, they are being labeled because of their language abilities.

Culturally. As refugees are leaving their home out of fear and not necessarily out of desire to live in America, the possibility exists that there could be a resistance to the host country's culture or a longer process of accepting their new culture as part of their own. This is especially true of older students or adults. McBrien (2005) found that cultural crossings among refugee students contributed to identity confusion for adolescents and that this crossing can create tensions between students' academic and social lives as well as their home lives with parents. Schools are often the sites where culture and family traditions of refugees are challenged the most and where refugee children begin to acculturate to American values and customs (Garrett, 2006). As refugee students struggle for acceptance in a foreign country, they adapt to what they see. This adaptation may conflict with their home culture and create conflicts within the family.

The OIS report for 2012 found that refugees are, on average, younger in age than the U.S. native-born population, which could add to the disorientation of the refugees as to where they fit in culturally outside of the home, and within it with their family members. These

younger refugees may not have the connection with their home country that their parents have, especially if they moved to their host country at an earlier age. With such a young population coming into the United States and the social pressures that go along with being a student in today's classroom, schools need to be aware of these differences and respect them. Kaprielian-Churchill's (1996) research on Ontario's refugee population and their special needs found that an approach that combines the culture of the home with the culture of society in a respectful way is the most efficacious in the adaptation and learning process. There also needs to be a willingness by both family and school to accept the concept of a dual heritage to help the refugee child maintain a solid foundation in the home and branch out in the new culture they are in.

One area that is often referenced with regards to refugees in education is that of perceived lack of parent support in the school (Bhattacharya, 2000; Garrett, 2006; McBrien, 2005; Ogbu & Simons, 1998). This cultural difference could potentially alter a teacher's perception of a student and create yet another wall for the refugee student to overcome. Teachers need to keep in mind that there are differences in cultures and potentially other obstacles that hinder a parent from being more involved in the student's academics. Battacharya (2000), in her research on refugees and their access to higher education, found that parents' self-consciousness about their inability to speak "correct" English and conflicting work schedules were the most common reasons for not attending school functions. Garrett (2006) found that refugees value English as a Second Language instruction and see their lack of English proficiency as a barrier to a better life. This report also found that the priority for refugee families when coming to the United States is to find work and to support the family financially, which could mean working multiple jobs and not providing the flexibility for parents to attend school-based meetings. Without flexible scheduling on the teachers' part, such meetings are nearly impossible.

Psychosocially. As refugees enter the public school sector, many of them do so with external factors that hinder their educational success, including being academically behind, learning a new culture that is different from their own, and violent, traumatic past experiences. Couple these with the long relocation times that many refugees endure, and these individuals are clearly at risk for academic disadvantage. These are issues that refugees bring into the classrooms with them and must be attended to for them to be able to adjust to “normalized” life. Not only are they coming to a new country with its own unique, and foreign, set of cultures, but these students have to filter this information to see where they fit in and how it connects to their home country and way of life. McBrien (2005) identified several things as essential to the psychosocial well-being of refugee students: a need for a sense of safety, a sense of self, and an adjustment to the cultural expectations of a new country while maintaining a connection to their heritage.

While all students should be held to a high standard in the classroom, consideration needs to be taken as to what the refugee student is capable of. If not, McBrien (2005) suggested, refugee students can experience trauma from the classroom teacher who is expecting the student to perform complex skills and demonstrate cultural understanding in a language that is not native to them. Kaprielian-Churchill (1996) argued that educators need to allow refugee students to be the master of their own “rhythm” of schooling. This could mean that students need longer to finish school than the typical four years of high school. The potential need for longer periods in school should be acknowledged by teachers and the school system instead of forcing the students out before they have mastered the skills and knowledge they need.

Garrett (2006) suggested that the biggest strain on refugee families is the gap between refugee children and their parents, as children tend to acculturate much more quickly. When

students adapt more quickly than their parents, they are caught between the challenges of finding their identity within the host country and their parents' desire to retain the culture of the home country from which they fled. This potential conflict between parent and child can add to the adjustment period for refugees and even add more trauma to their lives outside of the relocation and the school transition. McBrien (2005) found that a bicultural identity is psychologically beneficial for some refugee students. Either way, it seems that different refugees experience aspects of acculturation differently, and the process causes added stress such as depression and anxiety that refugees have to overcome on top of being in a new country (Kanu, 2008).

Discrimination and Stereotypes. Through the country's actions and policies, America has supported the idea that it is the great "melting pot" by opening its doors to nearly two million refugees. However, widespread acts of discrimination against immigrants challenges the ideal presented by those policies. As welcoming as the United States has been, there are still fears, concerns and actions that affect many citizens' perceptions of refugees. Another area of public fear is the push in some regions for the exclusive or primary use of the English language, which McBrien (2005) found to be a response to the public's fear of an increasingly diverse U.S. population.

Schools provide an arena for racial undertones and beliefs to be present and American fears to be displayed with regard to refugees and other immigrants. In *Living in America: Challenges Facing New Immigrants and Refugees*, the researchers found that Arab parents tended to blame schools for undermining their traditions and religion (Garrett, 2006). Refugees are stateless people (Waters & LeBlanc, 2005) and therefore are more apt to accept a new culture as their own, especially younger refugees who feel the social pressures of fitting in and this fear of social or individual rejection could lead students to deny their home culture and create

animosity within the family unit.

American schools must also be aware of hidden racism. McBrien (2005) found that not only attitudinal racism but also structural racism placed immigrant students on the margins. Policy makers are guilty of structural racism, as laws are sometimes written to reflect the mood of the country at the time. Examples include the recent push for English to be made the official language of the United States and the lack of allocation of resources to help ELL students in the public schools. McBrien (2005) found that politicians play a role in shaping people's lives and attitudes toward new comers.

Strategies for Educating Refugees

Article 22 of the Conventions and Protocol of 1951/1967 states that "Contracting States shall accord to refugees the same treatment as is accorded to nationals with respect to elementary education" (p. 15). In her review of literature surrounding refugees and American education over a 25-year period, McBrien (2005) found that schools can serve as centers for acculturation for refugee students who are often adapting to a new language, culture, and home. She also found that many researchers have warned against rapid acculturation in dealing with refugee students. Schools are not only legally bound to provide educational services, but the role they play on the acculturation process is critical essential for the refugee student development.

Unfortunately, there is no one-size-fits-all approach for teaching refugee students in public schools. However, Field (2008) described three "essential components" for English language learners: comprehensible, standards-driven, grade-level content; standards-based ESL instruction that emphasizes academic language proficiency; and primary language support. The need for ESL teachers in schools who can support refugee students through standards-based instruction that emphasizes academic language in the mainstream classroom is high; however, in

the more rural districts these positions are not available. Primary language support needs to be present in order for students to develop their English skills where their primary language is their reference point for understanding English.

Language access. One of the biggest hurdles that most refugees have to overcome when coming to the United States is learning English. In a study of Arizona refugees, the Women's Refugee Commission (2009) found that the lack of English language skills was identified by those who were interviewed as the single greatest obstacle to quick and successful integration in their host society. Most refugees believe they cannot improve their lives and get better employment opportunities until they have a better grasp of the English language (Garrett, 2006). With the experiences that refugees are entering the country with and the obstacles they face with basic needs, schools need to be patient and consistent with their instruction. Kaprielian-Church's (1996) study on schooling provided in refugee camps found that, depending on their age of immigration, refugee children require 5 to 6 years in an English as a Second Language setting to reach the level of English language proficiency required for academic competence in the classroom.

Ogbu and Simons' (1998) minority classification research found that refugees bring pre-existing cultural and language differences with them to their host country and are able to adopt the "tourist" attitude toward learning the culture and language of their host society. This is different than the immigrant mindset where they are considered to be Voluntary minorities as they choose to come to the United States specifically. This tourist attitude toward learning the language could be fostered within the classroom and school and could equate to success and potentially quicker language acquisition. Bhattacharya (2000) found that early intervention for language development promoted educational success, enhanced necessary life skills for the host

country, and reduced the likelihood of dropping out. Therefore, refugees need to be identified early in order to get the language services they need.

While teachers need to be patient with refugee students, they also need to be aware of the students' actual abilities in order to prevent delaying their academic success. Maxwell (2011) found that the longer students are classified as English-language learners, the greater the possibility they would drop out of school. She referenced research that found drop-out rates for ELL students were 10% higher than that of their peers. Maxwell also noted that the likelihood for drop-out increased as the student progressed to higher grade levels. In addition to refugee students' needing to be accurately identified and given the support they need, they require regular reevaluations. Kaprielian-Churchill (1996) found that initial placement usually becomes permanent placement for refugee students. A lack of reevaluation could hinder refugee students' growth and lead them to drop out of school due to various factors. Educational leaders also need to be aware of policies that could increase cultural disconnect and cause children to lose not only their native language but also to fall short of acquiring full proficiency in English (McBrien, 2005).

The British Council has created a reference guide titled *Innovations in English Language Teaching for Migrants and Refugees* ("British Council," 2012) for English-language societies where refugee or migrant students are receiving educational services. This collection of articles provides resources for teaching English in a variety of ways. For the focus of this document, two pedagogies align with Cooper's Framework for Educating Refugees in the United States: *Writing bilingual stories: developing children's literacy through home languages* (Dakin, 2012) and *Developing vocabulary in a multilingual classroom* (Davis, 2012). Each of these utilizes the

unique attributes each refugee child brings into the classroom and builds upon these skills instead of trying to push them aside to focus on English only.

In Writing bilingual stories, Dakin (2012) explains the importance of language and how it allows us to define our life in our own words, not through stereotypes. Dakin's research is based on a study with 8-10-year-olds in an English primary school in which students were instructed to write a story in both their home language and in English to add to the library's bilingual book collection. Dakin found that the project provided children with the opportunity to maintain language skills and identity from their home country that they felt they were losing while building their English skills. Davis' (2012) study found that although children may know the words in English, using them in an academic setting is often more difficult. The teachers in this research developed students' academic language by using teaching opportunities to practice these new words in the academic setting. Davis suggested that multilingual students need to be taught four broad types of vocabulary: synonyms for words they already know, multiple meanings for words they already know, literary metaphor and imagery, and academic vocabulary (subject-specific). The researcher found that successful teachers planned explicitly for vocabulary development with their language learners.

Parental involvement. In 2012, 32% of the refugees who came to the United States were dependents; therefore, the role of parental support needs to be addressed as well in this type of research. Data from the Children of Immigrants Longitudinal Study indicate that refugee students are positively affected by parental support, even though that support is not necessarily what American teachers consider as typical, such as parental involvement in the schools in volunteer roles (McBrien, 2005). Because the typical kind of parental support in the United States may not match the refugee parent's idea of support, schools should adjust their

expectations and cultural biases in order to keep these differences from impacting student learning. Limited language ability seems to be the likely reason for parents' lack of involvement in schools; however, Garrett (2006) found that in some cases, it is not so much the language barrier but also the lack of education of the parent and their feelings of intimidation regarding interacting with school officials. In these cases, Anselme and Hands (2010) argued, schools should consider providing livelihood training and other opportunities for parents of their refugee students, which could open the schools up for these parents and foster conversations that could benefit the child in a non-threatening or non-intimidating way. These livelihood trainings could take the form of American school expectations for parents, what parent conferences look like, and suggestions for ways in which parents can be involved in the school setting.

As refugee parents are likely trying to deal with necessities of jobs and financial stability, it is important that schools and communities offer social support that would allow parents the opportunity to focus on their child's schooling. Communication is important with regards to refugee education, and the success rate for students increases as parents and children work together. Research has shown that refugee parents want their children to succeed academically and are frustrated that their children do not succeed in the American classroom, that schools lack bilingual teachers and support, and they are unable to help their children succeed (Garrett, 2006). Effective communication is critical to bridging that divide. This is the point where community supports become the bridge between the parents and the schools. Resettlement agencies in Welcome District, for example, offer daycare services for families, tutoring for school-aged students after school in their apartment complexes, and provide a community resource center to help with day-to-day assistance. The resettlement agencies and schools need to open the lines of communication to not only help refugees get settled in a home, but also succeed academically.

Support could come in the shape of refresher courses, basic skills courses, or even accelerated learning during holiday breaks or weekends. With students at various academic levels, refugee host groups could offer such programming to fill this void and help these families acculturate more quickly.

In her research, Epstein created *Epstein's Framework of Six Types of Involvement* (Epstein et al., 2002) that outlines types of involvement schools can utilize in order to increase parent participation in the school. Comer created *The Comer Process* (Comer, 1996) where he focuses on developing the whole child through holistic strategies that include action by administrators, teachers, and parents alike to come together and foster both educational and social components of the students' life. Both Epstein and Comer have challenged schools to assist, communicate, involve, and provide resources for parents to help with the educational process. Just as refugee students are new to the American classroom, their parents also face a learning curve, and their views of education may be different than the schools'. Epstein and Comer provided examples of these processes in urban school districts around the country to show their success with high-need populations, which could also translate to refugee families. Facilitating communication and providing parents with skills to help their child succeed in the American classroom will increase the likelihood of their involvement in the school, and the chances their child will succeed may also increase.

The Virginia Department of Education has also created a document for their schools to utilize to increase parent involvement, entitled *Improving Student Achievement and Outcomes through Parent and Family Involvement: Tips and Strategies for Increasing Parent and Family Involvement in Virginia Schools*. This document, informed by a State Department of Education questionnaire completed by over 450 parents, teachers, and administrators, describes specific

ways in which schools can interact with parents by providing a list of examples schools can take and put into action. There are several overarching themes between this document and Epstein and Comer's work (i.e., communication, parenting support at home, etc.); however, each adds their own dynamic to the research. While Epstein and Comer works provide more of a theoretical document aimed at providing research for parental involvement, the Virginia document is more of a practitioner's manual for providing ideas that could easily be implemented to support refugee families immediately.

According to the Family Background Obligations Theory (FBOT), refugee students' time is based on family needs, background experiences, and priorities and thus must be taken into consideration when working with students from various cultures. Kiche (2010) explained that family background factors (i.e., education, income, ethnicity, etc.) affect students' beliefs and behavior. By understanding the background factors and potential obstacles that refugee students must overcome, teachers can work with these influences instead of responding to them inappropriately. While there may be barriers that keep the parents from being involved in the academic process (long hours, language barrier, etc.) in the formal sense of engagement (volunteering, conferences), their encouragement and the aspirations they hold for their children's education can be very important and influence the view of education for the refugee child (Fuligni, 1997).

Equal access. By signing the Refugee Resettlement Act of 1980, the United States has declared its commitment to U.N. conventions and thus is obligated to offer equal access to education to refugees it admits, as stated in Article 22 of the Conventions and Protocol. The 1989 Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC) also states that elementary education be available for everyone. Indeed, Anselme and Hands (2010) argue that "being uprooted does not

deny refugees their right to education, nor remove states' responsibility to provide it" (p. 90). These rights are recognized in Bhattacharya's (2000) study of 6-17 year-old refugees within the New York public school system. She found that all of the immigrant parents in her study acknowledged that the American educational system ensured all children an equal opportunity to benefit from public school instruction, a right generally not available in their home countries. However, there may be a disconnect between this sentiment and the parents' outward actions, such as their attendance at school meetings.

In order for refugee students to feel comfortable in their learning environment and focus on their education, schools need to be aware of whether school culture is welcoming to immigrants or not. In other words, schools need to address the concept of what it is to be "American" and must challenge the notion that "Whiteness" is the means to being American (McBrien, 2005). As mentioned earlier, political and social pressures can guide people's ideals and unconsciously shape the learning environment. Schools need to work with community support groups to maximize the resources available to help refugee students succeed to their highest potential, while also being aware of the obstacles their refugee students are facing outside of school. McBrien (2005) found in her review of literature that connections are needed between school and the refugee community. By finding these ties and utilizing them to connect with students, teachers can relieve some of the pressure placed on students and potentially opening channels for conversation to take place so that student needs are met more effectively. Without this knowledge of the students' background, refugee students are denied the needed support and acknowledgment of their non-mainstream identities (Roberts & Lock, 2001).

One particular area that is often overlooked in refugee education is the role gender plays in the home culture. Numerous refugee cultures are male-dominated, and as such, females are

given little to no educational opportunities, especially if the family does not have the financial resources to send each child to school. Mareng's (2010) experience as a participant observer within the Kakuma Camp in Kenya found that, in many refugee communities, parents often favored education for their male children over their females. For this reason, Anselme and Hands (2010) argued that interventions in refugee education must be gender-specific so as to offer females the opportunity to prosper in their host country.

The Norwegian Agency for Development Cooperation uses their review of literature on issues of gender equality to suggest changes in the curriculum and classroom that would allow more opportunities for female participation as well as a breaking down of cultural hierarchies that exclude girls. While this research was based in Norway, the authors contended that gender bias looks similar across all continents (Tanner, Antonowicz, & Postles, 2013) and so could be applicable to refugees in America. Many of these recommendations put the responsibility back on the teacher to know their students' lives and cultures. State and district leaders also should be involved in evaluating materials and policies. At the state level, textbooks should be examined to eliminate male-dominated language and biased portrayals of females. At the district and school level, policies and information that is disseminated to the public should also be carefully looked at in order to prevent gender-biased situations within the school setting. The theme of Equity and Excellence is one that is gaining traction with the release of the Common Core State Standards. Organizations such as the National Association for Gifted Children (NAGC), the National Urban League, the National Academy of Education, Stanford University's Center for International Security and Cooperation (CISAC), and the Center for Urban Education have conducted research and/or created conferences that focus on student equality in education.

In 2009, The National Academy of Education (www.naeducation.org) created an education policy brief that highlights some of the history of the American education system and provided recommendations for the federal government to follow when implementing equity and excellence for all students. While these briefs are geared toward the federal government, they can just as easily be applied to the district level in response to equity and excellence for their populations. The policy brief states that our nation's education system cannot truly be excellent if it is not equitable and it is the aim of the education system for all children to learn and acquire needed skills to survive, which requires continuous demonstration, evaluation, and improvement of policy by leaders ("Policy Brief," 2009). While No Child Left Behind increased the federal government's role in education, it also pinpointed areas where sub-groups of students were failing because they were previously masked in the overall numbers of the school. This brief pinpoints areas where changes could be made to further increase awareness of students' ability levels and potential areas where they could possibly fail. For refugee students who are not even recognized as a subgroup within the databases of the state, this could ensure they are given the resources they need to succeed.

In 2011, U.S. Secretary of Education (Arne Duncan) appointed 28 members to the Department of Education's Equity and Excellence Commission. This commission was created to examine the impact of school resources on educational opportunity and recommend ways that school finance can be improved to increase equity and achievement ("US Secretary of Education," 2011). In 2013, this committee presented a report to the Secretary of Education to ...provide advice to the secretary of the U.S. Department of Education on the disparities in meaningful educational opportunities that give rise to the achievement gap, with a

focus on systems of finance, and to recommend ways in which federal policies could address such disparities. (“U.S. Department of Education,” 2013)

From this brief, four recommendations were made to help schools meet the needs of students in high-poverty communities: parent engagement and education, working with communities to meet health needs, extended learning time, and at-risk student populations. Commission members contended that families play critical roles in their children’s cognitive, social, and emotional development and acknowledge that family engagement is one of the strongest predictors of education success for children (“US Department of Education,” 2013). With families more involved in the school, students have a better chance at succeeding and schools can become more involved in the community, creating a revolving door of parents in the school and schools out in the community. Another recommendation that would benefit refugees is extended learning time. As refugee students are often behind in education, these extensions would allow them the opportunity to catch up to their peers, or provide them a safe environment to go their own pace in order to be successful.

Cultural sensitivity for teachers is a must in the potential conflict areas mentioned above. Teachers need to understand that some interactions that occur within the school building are due to the differences in culture. For example, parents not being as active in the school may be due to their culture’s view of education. The female’s place in society can also be an area of conflict between home cultures and school cultures that teachers need to be aware of. Family expectations are another area where parents and students may disagree and create conflict that can filter into the learning environment. Parents of refugee students may have a stronger conviction to hold on to their home language and customs, where as refugee students who are assimilating in the school setting, may adapt to their American peers in order to fit in. These

topics, along with others, are areas where teachers need to be trained for cultural sensitivity purposes.

An example of a school in the same state as Welcome County with a large refugee population that has committed to focusing on equity and excellence is Diversity Elementary School in Diversity City. In their latest School Improvement Plan (SIP), the school leadership focused on equity and excellence by including it in the title. Diversity City has a large Burmese population, and this population is visible in this school with Burmese/Karen being one of the three primary languages spoken in the school, along with English and Spanish. For the 2012-2013 school year, this school committed to equity and excellence by implementing Sheltered Instruction Strategies (SIOP), which supports teachers in delivering high-quality instruction. The school also including equity as a focus for teachers' individual professional development plans (PDP). Diversity Elementary supports their immigrant population through translation and interpretation services. This school has made equity and excellence a priority and utilized research-based programs and processes to ensure their students' needs are being met.

Professional development. As refugees continue to enter school systems in the United States, each with their own unique story and background, teachers need to be trained to help these students acculturate and receive the education they are entitled (Anselme & Hands, 2010; Kaprielian-Churchill, 1996; McBrien, 2005; Pugh, Every, & Hattam, 2012). Through professional development that addresses this particular group, teachers can better understand the histories, ability levels, and needs of the refugee and ESL student. Pugh, Every, and Hattam's (2012) ethnography of an Australian primary school using the whole-school approach contended that continual professional development is a critical part of developing effective teachers who are teaching refugees. Such professional development can take several approaches. For example,

The Victorian Foundation for Survivors of Torture (www.foundationhouse.org.au) offers workshops on working with students with disrupted educations, provides in-depth refugee background seminars, and will also come to schools where teachers are working with refugee populations. Shriberg et al. (2010) found in their research of Colorado Refugee Education Programs that many community agencies are qualified and available to offer informal trainings and should be sought out and utilized. They also found that teachers wanted to share practices with one another across the district, which also serves as a form of professional development that would not require outside resources.

In order for schools to be successful in converting techniques learned in professional development into practice, this training should be imbedded in their value system, mission statements, and School Improvement Plans on an annual basis. Pugh, Every, and Hattam (2012) argued that refugee students within the schools are not the only ones who will be adapting, and that teachers and classmates will also need to adapt to the learning styles and needs of their new classmates. As with native-born American students, the more awareness the teachers have of refugee students' backgrounds, the more effectively they will be able to help them integrate into mainstream society (Kaprielian-Churchill, 1996).

In addition to teacher access to outside professional development, Pugh, Hattam, and Every (2012) advocated for targeted funding that allows teachers to get together with their colleagues one afternoon twice in each term to meet in inquiry groups. Such meetings allow teachers to network and potentially change the school culture into one that encourages the integration of refugees into the mainstream and builds support for new arrival programs from within. Through this networking, each staff member is responsible for helping refugee students succeed and is held accountable by the professional learning communities. The school leaders

promote inclusivity, distribute leadership so all members of the staff are involved, and engage parents.

While professional development opportunities will help their students, teachers should also utilize parent and community support. McBrien (2005) argued that school staff should be instructed in cultural sensitivity and Cheng (1998) called for teachers to learn about the cultures and experiences of their international students in order to facilitate their acquisition of language and academic skills. Cultural sensitivity could be as simple as outside professional development training that teaches the staff about the cultures, histories, or individual stories of some of the refugee students and how American actions might unintentionally create awkward situations for students.

Professional development not only helps teachers to become better educators of refugees but also increases the chances of success for the students inside and outside of the classroom. Battacharya (2000) identified three factors that reduce the risk of refugee drop-out: having a life goal, valuing education as a way to accomplish that goal, and believing in the positive role of school. Adding cultural sensitivity and home culture training about the students they teach, teachers are better prepared to understand the impact of the various experiences refugees have on their education. Through professional development that focuses on refugee student needs and obstacles they are overcoming, teachers are able to help refugee students create a life goal, show them that education is a valuable way to reach that goal, and provide a positive educational experience for the student to succeed in to reach these goals. Ogbu (1982) further explained that teachers can provide a positive educational experience by building trust between students and host country adults. These relationships could result in culturally responsive instruction, explicitly dealing with opposition/ambivalence, serving as role models for these students, setting

high standards while holding them accountable, and promoting parent and community involvement within the educational experience. Each of these strategies are ways in which school staff members can change the life of refugee students and help them succeed in the American education system.

Conclusion

The literature regarding refugee education in America is lacking when compared to other minority populations that make up the American education system. Generally, the research found was based on specific refugee regions and camps (Kenyans, South Pacific Asians, etc.), the backgrounds of the individuals being resettled, and some of the specific struggles these individual groups had to overcome in their journey to resettlement. Australia and Canada had research that dealt with school culture and meeting the individual needs of refugees. Two of these articles, Pugh, Every, & Hattam (2012) and Taylor & Sidhu (2012), make up the foundation of the framework that this project aims to create.

Theoretical Framework

The Refugee Resettlement Act of 1980 officially opened the United States' borders to refugees from around the world. Using language from the United Nation's 1951 Conventions and Protocols, the Act established certain rights for refugees, one of which is the right to state-funded K-12 education.

In schools, refugees face both external and internal issues that have the potential to make education harder. Not only do most of these students have to overcome the language barrier, but many are leaving violent situations in their home country. Some have experienced extended absences from formal education. The special circumstances they bring with them need to be addressed within the American public school setting. The No Child Left Behind legislation

brought to light some of the educational inequities within the school system; however, there are populations of students, including many refugees, that are still not getting the education they deserve.

Cooper's Framework for Educating Refugees in the United States will be based on a combination of three approaches to educating refugee youth. The Whole School Approach to refugee education, as researched by Pugh, Every, and Hattam (2012) in the Australian Primary School system, makes up the backbone of Cooper's framework, and it is supported by Taylor and Sidhu's (2005) research on inclusive education models. The Whole School Approach was initiated by the researchers looking at the United Primary School located in Southern Australia, a unique school in that 80% of the students within the school are from non-English-speaking backgrounds. In their research, the authors interviewed school leadership (principal and assistant principal) as well as teachers, completed observations in classrooms and staff meetings, and analyzed school documents. From these interviews, observations, and documents, the research team was able to identify areas that made this school successful in educating refugee students.

The whole school approach to refugee education is one that examines every level of education with regard to refugee populations, from funding and governmental policy down to the classroom teacher's instruction. The whole school approach involves an examination of the policies in place, strong leadership, and inclusion of refugee students in the mainstream. Curriculum and professional development are also targeted as areas that need to be discussed when considering the whole school approach to refugee education and students' success within the larger school dynamic. Taylor and Sidhu's (2005) research on inclusive education with regard to supporting refugees in schools supports much of what Pugh, Every, and Hattam (2012) present in their whole school approach.

Cooper's framework will also include Ogbu and Simons' Voluntary/Involuntary Spectrum (1998). The Voluntary/Involuntary Spectrum identifies categories for immigrant populations based upon how they came to the United States. Voluntary immigrants came to the United States by their own choosing for a variety of reasons, whereas Involuntary immigrants were forced into the United States, often as slaves. Refugee populations are unique in that they fall in the middle of this spectrum and are categorized as Semi-Voluntary immigrants. In most cases, refugees did not choose to leave their home country; however, they were also not forced to come here, so this makes refugees unique to Ogbu and Simons' spectrum. For Cooper's Framework for Educating Refugees in the United States, Ogbu and Simons' model will be used to identify refugees in the immigrant spectrum.

Each of these theories acknowledges the presence of potential obstacles regarding refugee education and provides ideas that may help schools meet the needs of their refugee populations by understanding not only what their needs are but also what refugee-specific challenges they face. Cooper's Framework for Educating Refugees in the United States identifies nine areas necessary for the successful education of refugee students. These areas include: funding, targeted policies and system support, site-based leadership, professional development, school-level support staff, curriculum, inclusion, relationships, and status. Figure 2 indicates how each of these areas is interconnected and overlapping to form Cooper's Framework for Educating Refugees in the United States. Each component serves a vital role in creating a successful learning experience for refugee students. Figure 3 delineates the research base and key factors for each aspect of the framework.

Figure 2: Cooper’s Framework for Educating Refugees in the United States

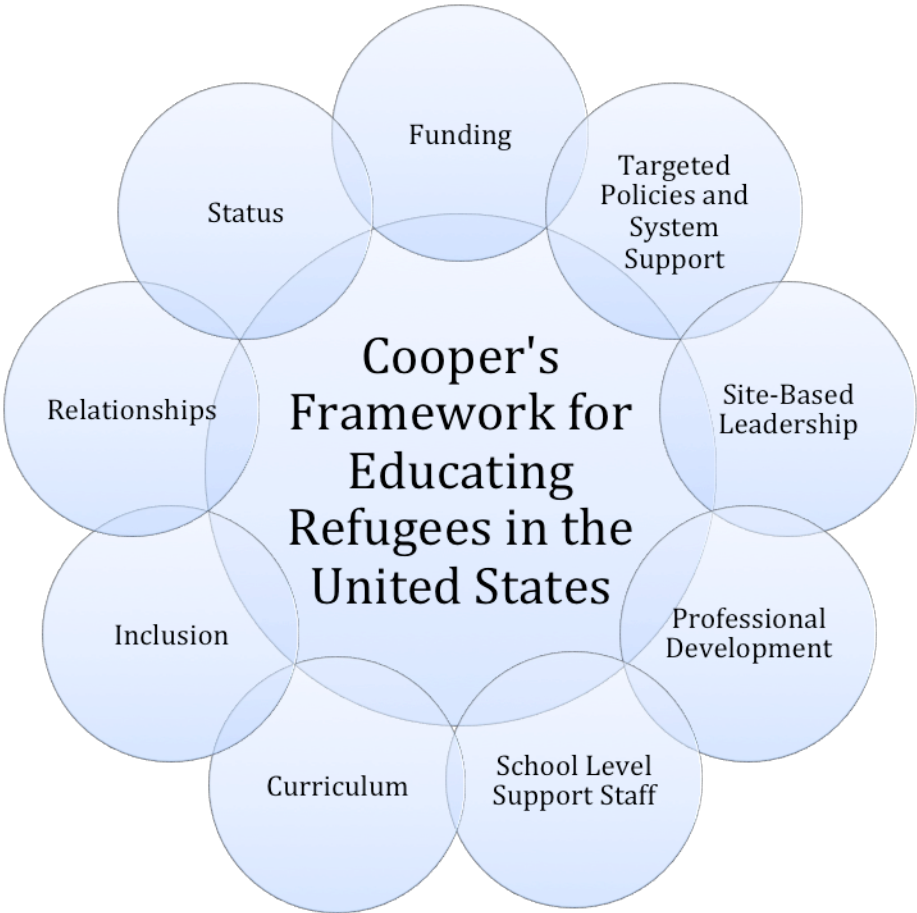


Figure 3: Cooper’s Framework for Educating Refugees delineated by source

<i>Cooper’s Framework for Educating Refugees</i>	
<i>Pugh, Every, and Hattam (2012)</i>	1 - Funding <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Target funding 3a – Site-based Leadership <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Distributive Leadership 4 – Professional Development <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Focused on educating refugee (ESL) student • Time devoted each quarter to meet and have inquiry groups 5a – School Level Support Staff <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Push-in/Pull out ESL support 6 – Curriculum <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Include aspects of living in a new country (life skills) but linked to genres being taught
<i>Taylor & Sidhu (2005)</i>	2 - Targeted Policy and System Support <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Refugee Strategic plan (specifically addresses the educational disadvantages of refugee students) 3b – Site-based Leadership <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Strong advocates for Refugees 5b – School Level Support Staff <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Contributors to key learning ar 7 – Inclusion <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Provide intensive language and learning support • Positive and welcoming attitude • Mainstream integration ASAP
<i>Ogbu and Simons (1998)</i>	9) Status <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Refugees are Semi-Voluntary minorities in the United States

Funding. In education, funding is a critical component for system support. Not only does funding provide resources, but it also shows a commitment by the governing body (either nationally or at the state or local level) to help refugees get access to a quality, public education. Title I funding is an example of federal funding and support put in place to help a targeted population overcome obstacles and succeed in the public schools. According to the federal government (www.ed.gov), there has been improved performance from year to year as a result of this direct funding. While refugees typically fit under the Title 1 criteria, there is no direct

funding for refugees in particular, and data specific to them cannot be disaggregated from the overall data set. This direct funding is a necessary first step in helping refugee students succeed.

One of the most obvious funding tools that would help refugee students succeed in education is a safe school setting (e.g., Welcomers schools, separate classrooms within the school) for these students to adjust from the conditions in their home countries/refugee camps into the mainstream of America's public schools. Currently, strict fiscal environments are requiring districts to stretch budgets and, with a lack of resources being allocated to support refugee students, access to practical learning environments geared to meet the needs of refugees is inhibited, setting these students up for failure (Anselme & Hands, 2010). However, school districts in Denver, Colorado; Boston, Massachusetts; New York, New York; and Greensboro, North Carolina have devoted funding and support to create specialized newcomers' learning environments for newly arrived refugees. The willingness of these districts to fund designated spaces for these students has demonstrated their commitment to helping these students succeed.

Staffing is also an area in need of funding in order to support the acculturation efforts of refugee students. Hiring bilingual educators and support staff and providing access to professional development geared toward working with refugee students are two ways districts can support refugees from a funding standpoint. Hickey (2013) provided insight on the Fort Wayne, Indiana, school district where in 2007 the cap was lifted on the number of refugees permitted into the area (G. Hickey, personal communication, 2013). The number of refugees increased exponentially, and the resources were not in place to support this influx and the school system was not prepared. Pugh, Every, and Hattam (2012) acknowledged the creativity in managing funds at the school level in their research of Australian Primary schools, but they also suggest change at the policy level in order for whole school reform to occur.

Targeted policies and system support for refugee populations. In their work with refugee students in the Australian school system, Taylor and Sidhu (2012) identified gaps in policy and practice. In their study, they found:

...the particular needs of refugee students have been ignored by education policymakers and by research...These exclusions – from public policy and academic research – establish the context for a lack of targeted policies and organizational frameworks to address the significant disadvantages confronting refugee youth. (p. 4)

Davis (2008) added to this argument by claiming that the policy itself must help refugee students recover from the lack of educational opportunities they have likely faced as they fled their home countries.

An example of a policy that schools could incorporate is a strategic plan created by the school, or the district, geared toward refugee student education that will help site-based leaders identify and aid these students in their learning. This strategic plan should include detailed guidelines that not only identify the potential gaps in learning abilities but also provide support for a variety of learning styles and attending to the social needs of the refugee students (Taylor & Sidhu, 2012). These strategic plans need support from district leadership in order to become an important component to the schools' overall goals. Lee (2011) found that the "U.S. government's policy of treating refugees as legal immigrants seemed to contribute significantly to the refugee students' general perception of being welcomed" (p. 60). This is a positive step in the process of meeting the social needs of refugee students.

Another example of targeted policies and system support for refugee populations is changes in the standards for newcomers in their first years in the schools and the standard that they are measured against. Szente, Hoot, and Taylor (2006) found this idea of mandatory

assessment and standards to be a common negative opinion of the teachers they interviewed in the Buffalo Public School system, with these teachers feeling some sort of modification was needed for these students. To help these students adjust and evaluate them more appropriately, more ESL services need to be in place to offer refugee students more time in a pull-out setting to grow at their pace and on measures that are suitable for their abilities. On a school level, teachers and administrators should “establish meaningful policies for grading and testing refugee students’ academic achievement” (Szente, Hoot, & Taylor, 2006, p. 18).

There also needs to be a policy change to capture data from refugee students that will allow them to be identifiable within the district. Currently, these students are typically identified as refugees as they enter the system, but they are mixed in with other demographics with regard to data capture. Large District is an example of a local school district that has no policies in place specifically for refugee student data collection. They simply group refugees with ESL students if they qualify.

With this, school districts and schools also need to create policies that respond to racist bullying and harassment (Blaire et al., 1998). Looking different, having a different culture and potentially lacking English language abilities can open refugee students to bullying. In order to keep the “tourist” mentality that Ogbu and Simons (1998) described as thriving in these students, districts need to protect refugee students from harassment and mistreatment by fellow students.

Site-based leadership. Pugh, Every, and Hattam (2012) argued, “Active and supportive leadership, which promotes inclusivity through employment of the discourses and practices of the refugee national groups and through implementing inclusive policies and programs, is a vital part of good practice for refugee education” (p. 32). In their research, they found distributive leadership to be useful in meeting the needs of refugee students. With this concept, teachers

were encouraged to be involved with the decision making process within the school building by explaining what they felt was working well and what they thought could use some improvement in their day-to-day interactions with students. Distributive leadership also requires the inclusion of parent and student voices. While students are visible on a daily basis and the opportunity to speak with them is much easier than with parents, the principal must use any opportunity to speak with parents and to develop a relationship that encourages input from their perspectives as well.

Taking these various perspectives into consideration, leaders also need to take on the role of advocates for these students. Given the variety of experiences refugee students bring into the school, the principal needs to be aware of these backgrounds in order to fully understand their needs (Bogner, 2005; Pugh, Every, & Hattam, 2012; Taylor & Sidhu, 2012). Of the principals interviewed in Taylor and Sidhu's (2012) research, both expressed strong support for the refugee students by addressing stereotypes and media representations in the school's newsletter. One principal was quoted as saying, "Schools must play a role as people are so disempowered" (Taylor & Sidhu, 2012, p. 11).

Professional development. Teaching is a reflective and ever-changing field. To meet these changes, districts employ the use of professional development. For refugee education, the need is the same. Teachers need continual professional development to meet the needs of their refugee students (Pugh, Every, and Hattam, 2012). Along with curriculum-based professional development, educators need to receive "training to replace their stereotypes with accurate images based on relationships that they had built," which could create a more culturally responsive staff (McBrien, 2005, p. 355). In their interviews with teachers, Szente, Hoot, and Taylor (2006) found that it was best to have no assumptions about a refugee student's past

experiences. The development of such cultural awareness could include workshops with outside resources and experts detailing student needs and stories, as well as time for teachers to meet and reflect about what they see occurring in their classes. Providing the opportunity for teachers to talk to co-workers on a less formal platform about successful strategies they are employing within their classrooms would not only allow teachers to hear multiple perspectives but would also help them become a more positive influence in the building. Pugh, Every, & Hattam (2012) argued that “teachers who do not yet value diversity in a positive way tend to travel with the majority” (p. 134), which often carries a negative mindset with regard to diverse cultures.

Professional development for teachers working with refugee students also needs to include an understanding the difficult histories of refugee students’ backgrounds. In their interviews of Buffalo public school teachers, Szente, Hoot, and Taylor found that teachers “do not feel prepared to address the emotional stress experienced by refugee children” (2006, p. 16) and therefore, more training is needed. For example, National Football League athlete Tamba Hali, a Liberian-born refugee who came to the United States at the age of 10, recently shared in an interview that, when he was in Liberia, planes flying overhead meant shots were being fired on his village. When he first came to the United States, he recalled, he would hear a plane and immediately run for cover (Le Batard, 2013). If teachers do not understand the trauma refugee students may have encountered, their reactions to these types of situations will not help the student.

One type of professional development that could be used is teaching teachers to incorporate picture books, modeling, and role-play into their instructional strategies. Although refugee students may not be able to understand the words that are being read, for example, the pictures on the pages could enable the student to interpret the message of the story (Szente, Hoot,

& Taylor, 2006). As their English skills develop, these experiences could serve as ways for refugee students to communicate through pictures and simple words. These are especially important in routines and everyday class procedures (Szente, Hoot, & Taylor, 2006).

School-level support staff. While not all refugees are in need of these kinds of support, the majority of students who would benefit from added support personnel. Pugh, Every, and Hattam (2012) found inadequate support staff to be a major obstacle for classroom teachers when dealing with refugee students. This support could come in the form of ESL support teachers pushing in to classrooms to aid the classroom teacher pulling students out for more intensive, one-on-one help. Having support personnel working with these students on a more personal, individual basis gives refugee students a trusted “go-to” person, more time to think about materials, or even simply a safe area to ask questions they may be afraid to ask in the larger class setting.

Taylor and Sidhu (2012) identified the importance of support staff roles that were not solely academic in nature. These non-academic roles include being interpreters for parents, helping with the registration of new students, and being a community liaison for families. There is also a need for specially licensed counselors to help meet the emotional needs of refugee students in coping with the adjustment to the American classroom and society.

Curriculum. The curriculum described in the whole school approach by Pugh, Every, and Hattam (2012) is prescribed and based on a combination of genre-themed learning goals as well as aspects of life in the new host country. Waters and Leblanc (2005) supported this style of curriculum as a way to understand the citizenship of the host country and found that, by combining the two, the learning curve for academic and non-academic subjects is potentially shortened. In their separate research, Hattam and Every (2010) found it useful if teachers

understood the global dynamics that were affecting their refugee students and what their individual students were working to overcome. Having a better understanding of their individual students allowed teachers to come up with more effective curriculum topics and strategies.

Cultural sensitivity within the curriculum is also needed. Blair et al. (1998), in their research of 19 schools in the United Kingdom with over 10% of the student body from an ethnic minority, found that the curricula in place were “sensitive to the identities of students and made efforts to include in the curriculum, their histories, languages, religions and cultures” (p. 5). The authors also found that these cultural inclusions in the curriculum encouraged positive interaction and inquiry within the school. Some schools in the study also encouraged the use of the students’ first language both for “settling in” and throughout their educational careers. With refugee students, promoting their sense of cultural identity within the curriculum in this way could allow them to feel the home they left is still an important part of who they are and that coming to America has not pushed them farther from their identity but has helped them embrace it.

Friedlander’s (1991) research of newcomer programs within the United States found that these programs should include refugees’ having access to “regular academic curriculum as mainstream” students (p. 14). They found that while there is no consensus for what the primary language of instruction should be with regard to these students, successful programs across the country (Long Island, NY; Hayward, CA; and Los Angeles, CA) relied on “innovative student-centered teaching methodologies” (p. 14) including whole language instruction, integration of language and content, using music and imagery, and cooperative learning (Friendlander, 1991, p. 14).

Inclusion. The idea of inclusion within this framework is more than just for increased academics. For refugee students, inclusive education also involves the environmental interactions in which they are learning. Providing a welcoming attitude is one way that schools can promote diversity and positive images of refugees within the school building and embrace the unique heritage they bring to the school (Pugh, Every, & Hattam, 2012), while also helping them feel comfortable in this new setting. For many of these students, there has been limited formal education, if any, and these students are desperately behind.

Taylor and Sidhu (2012) argue that mainstream incorporation is critical, assuming refugee students are provided with intensive language and learning support. Pugh, Every, and Hattam (2012) examined schools that separated their refugee students academically until students had a firm base but brought them together with their host-country peers for whole-school functions to provide them with positive, social interactions. In each of these studies, refugee students receive focused language and learning support to help them adjust and catch up to their host country peers as quickly as possible. As Kiche (2010) concluded, “The availability of classroom resources and an environment conducive to learning produces better educational outcomes, which ultimately push students ahead” (p. 15). For Cooper’s framework, an environment conducive to learning is one where staff and other students accept their refugee classmates, express interest in their heritage, and embrace the opportunity to learn together.

Relationships. Refugee students come from various cultures, backgrounds, and personal experiences. In order to reach them and meet their individual needs, teachers need to form a relationship with the student that goes beyond teacher-student and instead resembles that of a mentor-student relationship. Ways in which teachers can build relationships with students is to talk with students outside of the classroom setting, allow wait time for refugee students to

process questions within the lessons, and adjusting the way in which they perceive refugee students' responses in the classroom setting. According to Cheng (1998), delays or hesitations in responses, poor topic knowledge, short direct responses, soft-spoken voices, and lack of participation are areas where refugees differ from the typical American student and this wait time can provide the refugee student the opportunity to succeed in the classroom. In Lee's (2011) research, she suggested that teachers be seen as an avenue of site-based support for the students, rather than just an instructor. Although not specifically geared toward academics, these relationships are important for students who have such a fractured history.

Status. Ogbu and Simons' minority spectrum classifies refugees as Semi-Voluntary. It clarifies that refugees do not freely choose to come here or do so to improve their status. This is in contrast to the immigrants entering the United States in order to improve their status. The biggest difference between immigrants and refugees is that refugees are escaping violent situations, which make them unique cases and provides an opportunity to foster what Ogbu and Simons (1998) called the "Tourist attitude"(p. 165). With this mentality, refugees bring with them a positive and interested behavior towards the language and cultural differences. Schools that incorrectly identify refugee students as Voluntary or Involuntary and treat them as immigrants, miss out on the opportunity to foster their eagerness to learn: if refugee students are treated as a Voluntary immigrant, they may be set up to fail by the schools in that their actions will be misunderstood, their gaps in learning will be misrepresented, and they may be placed in classes that do not foster their learning; if they are misidentified as Involuntary immigrants, they may be placed in classes that are below their learning level and stymie the tourist mentality they enter with, essentially squashing the energy they bring to the new learning environment. Interestingly, Kaprielan (1996) argued that refugee youth "do not always comprehend their own

status and condition and cannot articulate their experiences and their needs” (p. 358). If these students are unaware of their own status, they may misinterpret teachers’ actions towards them as well. It is important that teachers understand their refugee students’ backgrounds and what their specific needs are instead of grouping them in with other diverse populations.

Conclusion

As America’s classrooms become more diverse and accountability models expose holes in the education systems, school districts need to take steps to ensure that their principals and teachers are prepared for the challenges of teaching all students. Cooper’s Framework provides a series of steps to help districts prepare for teaching refugee students. These top-down initiatives use elements of the whole school approach (Pugh, Hattam, & Every, 2012) including funding, targeted policies, and strong leadership. Taylor and Sidhu’s (2012) work supports the whole school approach while adding the element of inclusion. Finally, Ogbu and Simons’ (1998) Voluntary/Involuntary spectrum helps districts identify where the refugees are on the spectrum, which lends itself to teaching practices that would help to meet their needs. While this framework is not all-inclusive, these nine steps are intended to be used as a whole, not separately, in order for successful teaching and learning for refugee students to take place.

CHAPTER III – METHODOLOGY

Rationale for Research Design

The purpose of this study is to raise awareness of the challenges of teaching refugee students in the American education system and to provide districts with strategies to help these students succeed. With an average of more than 50,000 refugees entering the country each year, 21,000 of which are children (“OIS Report,” 2012), the impact of refugees within schools is an important issue. This study examines the refugee resettlement community in Welcome County, in which Welcome is the county seat and largest city, to investigate some of the strategies the county school district undertakes to help their refugee students succeed. Highlighting these steps and applying research from around the globe, the study culminates in Cooper’s Framework for Educating Refugees in the United States, which can serve as a model of implementation strategies for districts across the country with an influx of refugees to their schools.

As previously examined, the unique histories of refugee students make their lives different from their American counterparts and presents challenges to their successful integration and education in American schools. As data in national polls do not disaggregate scores to recognize refugee populations, intensive quantitative theories are inappropriate for the purposes of this study. Instead, this study looks at the Whole School Approach (Pugh, Every & Hattam, 2012) of policies, leadership, professional development, and so forth through a qualitative lens. Through the use of observations and interviews, this research identifies strategies and policies proven to be successful within one school district to help refugee students acculturate and succeed in school.

While there is a lot of research on the lives of refugees within certain refugee camps and on specific refugee populations in other countries, little research was found that focuses on the climate and learning environment that students experience when immigrating to the United States. McBrien (2005) suggested that helping refugee children succeed should be important to school leaders, not only for the refugee children but for “the stability of society as a whole” (p. 358). She argued that the education system within a country sets the cultural norms, meaning inclusion in schools is essential to refugees’ acculturation and adjustment. McKinney (2004) concurred, noting that “unwritten regulations” learned in the classroom setting create and support the social power structure within the outside culture (p. 352).

This study uses a critical ethnographic lens to identify what works well with refugee education in the American classroom and where potential holes may be. A majority voice (Lincoln & Guba, 2000; Marshall & Rossman, 2011) is often one that overshadows the true lived realities of others. This study uses the voices of those individuals who are typically silenced because of the notion of power (McKinney, 2004). These individuals often include leaders and teachers working with refugees and through this research, they are able to be heard and drive the research and resources that are created from this study.

Research Design

Madison (2005) stated that “critical ethnography begins with an ethical responsibility to address processes of unfairness or injustice within a particular lived domain” (p. 5). Looking at an underrepresented population based not only on their ethnicity but also on their language and cultural heritage, the critical ethnographer’s role is to identify these injustices, challenge the status quo, and make recommendations for change. This paper aims to do this by looking at students who fit the refugee demographic in the American education system and identifying

systems that are working to meet their needs. While this study looks at a race within the public school setting and a critical race theory could be employed for this research, the researcher does not address the refugee students directly. For that reason, the study lends itself more to a critical ethnography of the system. A phenomenological approach allows the researcher to “explore, describe, and analyze the meaning of individual lived experiences” (Marshall & Rossman, 2011, p. 18), in this case the educational experiences of refugee students as they transition to life in the United States.

This study aims to hear from educators who are helping refugees succeed, focusing on the positive instead of the negative. Using the voices of the individuals working with those that are often silenced in this culture allows the researcher to engage in the topic more personally and add depth to the research (Marshall & Rossman, 2011). The individuals being researched are also able to tell their own personal experiences and stories rather than being represented by what the majority voice perceives them to be. For deeper understanding, the researcher utilized metaphors for data analysis in an attempt to find common themes among the interviews and observations that serve as foundations for the framework. As Coffey and Atkinson (1996) explained, metaphors are part of a wider use of linguistic symbols and can create shared cultural meanings. Given the potential lack of linguistic understanding by refugees, these metaphors can serve as shared cultural meanings or connect two phenomena that may not normally be characterized together but are not meant to be taken literally (Goodall, 2000; Noblit, 2013).

Interviews. In this study, interviews followed the topical approach (Marshall & Rossman, 2011) to questioning, as the interview subjects had a fairly structured schedule that did not allow for impromptu discussions. With this approach, a formal, scheduled time for interviews was made with the subjects. Given the specialized school environment, the topical

approach allowed more time for the subject to process the questions and reflect on instances that could potentially be passed over as unimportant if not thought about in advance given the line of questions. Using Patton's model, interview questions included background questions, knowledge questions, experience questions, opinion questions, feelings questions and sensory questions (Fraenkel & Wallen, 2009; Madison, 2005). (See Appendix 1 for interview questions.) While interviews were planned in advance, alternative availability before school or after their lessons was made to teachers in order to get more informal details that may have evolved (Luttrell, 2010; Patton, 2001) from the interactions of the lessons. Madison (2005) argued that the ethnographic interview can lead to meanings that permeate beyond communicated information. Such meanings added depth to this study and helped strengthen the framework for educating refugees.

As interviews were done with administrators and teachers who work with refugees rather than the refugees themselves, it was important to make the subjects feel their views were useful to this study (Marshall & Rossman, 2011). From the research and statistics available, it seems that refugee education is not a top priority nationally, so it would be easy for school leaders and teachers of refugees to feel their voices are not being heard. Therefore, it was important that the researcher create an environment where the interviewee felt their perspectives would add to the overall discourse of refugee education. Knowing that there may be apprehension on the part of the interviewee with this topic, preparation for these interviews and anticipating how the researcher would be received (Marshall & Rossman, 2011) as an outsider was an important aspect of the interviews. With limited public data and the fact that most of the teachers working at the Welcomer school are former ESL teachers, immigrants, or advocates in the community, there was reliance by the researcher on the teachers' willingness to discuss this topic. In essence,

the researcher attempted to create a partnership (Madison, 2005) with the interview subjects to gain deeper meaning and understanding about their association with refugees.

Observations. Marshall and Rossman (2011) contended that observations are the systematic noting and recording of events, behaviors, and artifacts of a school setting. While the personal voices of the refugees are absent from this research, their actions are not. The researcher observed these students interacting with teachers trained to work with them in schools designed to meet their unique needs. While interviews could have been used to get a picture of the learning environment, immersion offered the researcher the chance to learn directly from the learning environment (Marshall & Rossman, 2011) and allowed the researcher to describe what was seen (Patton, 2001). This opportunity to learn directly from the educators' own experiences, notably absent from the larger body of literature on American schools, is the purpose of the observation within this study.

McKinney (2004) argued that observations within the classroom and school setting provide a glimpse of the hidden curriculum and the meanings of interactions that, out of context, could be misunderstood. In this way, the researcher's observations and experiences of the day-to-day lessons provided depth to the framework with regard to professional development, relationships, and strong leadership components. In observing the interactions between staff members and students, the researcher was able to articulate the value the relationships between both parties rather than relying on the staff members' interpretations during interviews. Finally, observing the interactions between staff members within the learning environment and the role this interaction could play in the bigger picture of educating refugee students added specific depth and support to the framework. Adding the successful practices of American school

systems to the body of research on educating refugee students may make American schools more likely to apply them to their own districts.

Document analysis. An analysis of the curriculum being used within the Welcomers School was conducted to determine if there were variances from the state mandated curriculum geared toward helping refugees succeed. Pugh, Every, and Hattam (2012) found in their research that adherence to a set curriculum could limit the amount of time refugee students receive from their teachers. The school improvement plan for the Welcomers School and other schools in the district were also analyzed in an effort to identify any areas the Welcomers School targets differently than other schools in the district. This analysis brought to light some of the challenges that high-refugee schools face that may not be identified in a school with a smaller number of refugees.

Research Questions

The questions of this research center around the challenges refugees face within the education system as well as identifying some specific strategies to help them succeed.

- 1) What are the major challenges for refugee students in a large, metropolitan district?
- 2) What can leaders do to create positive learning environments that will help these individuals overcome traumatic life experiences and succeed in a large, metropolitan public school system?

Table 2 illustrates a crosswalk that identifies the alignment of the research questions with the interview questions found in Appendix 1 and the observation protocols found in Appendices 3 and 5 respectively.

TABLE 2: Research Question Cross Walk

Question	Interviews			Observations		Data	
	Teacher	Admin.	District	Classroom	School	School	State Assess.
Q.1. What are the major challenges for refugee students in a large, metropolitan district?	X	X	X	X		X	X
1.a. What, if at all, challenges do refugees face in large, metropolitan district classrooms?	X	X	X	X		X	X
1.b. In what ways, if any, are schools creating internal challenges for refugees to overcome?	X	X	X	X	X		
Q.2. What can leaders do to create positive learning environments that will help these individuals overcome traumatic life experiences and succeed in a large, metropolitan public school system?	X	X		X	X	X	X
2.a. What, if any, programs are currently in place in schools to help refugees?	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
2.b. What classroom strategies, if any at all, are being utilized in the classroom to help refugee students?	X	X		X		X	X
2.c. What, if any at all, community supports are in place to help schools meet the needs of their refugee students?		X	X		X		

Role of the Researcher

My work in the Japanese public school system as an Assistant Language Teacher (ALT) sparked my interest in researching how the American education system meets the needs of its English language learners who are new and unaware of the culture and language. In the position

of ALT, I was surrounded by non-English speakers and I had to fend for myself in most of my daily routines. This included daily transportation, navigating the supermarket to identify unknown foods with foreign labels on them, and teaching my students my first language with a limited skill set of Japanese to explain tasks, examples, or expand on answers. While my experiences were vastly different than those of incoming refugees, there were areas where I faced some similar challenges. I was dependent on the school system that had employed me to find me housing, set up my insurance, and find me a job. The days of solitude and a lack of skills to communicate allowed me to think about my experiences and the style of education that was leaving students behind in the United States.

For this study, the role of the researcher was that of observer and interviewer. Representing others is a complicated undertaking (Madison, 2005, pp. 3-4), and every attempt was made for impartiality and objectivity so that the observed actions, not researcher assumptions, drove the findings. Adjustments for observer perceptions were made within these findings. Every effort was made to present the materials in an unbiased way. The aim of this research is to provide a resource to help school leaders adjust educational environments to better meet the needs of refugee students.

Site Selection and Participants

The site for this study was chosen after contacting agencies around the state. The search began by contacting the State Department of Health and Human Services' refugee department by email. Specific contacts included the state Refugee Health Coordinator, the Executive Director of the Refugee Resettlement Agency, and leaders in the refugee resettlement areas of the state. Contacts in the Diversity, Large, and Welcome districts made references to Welcome County's model, with many noting that several of the district's leaders had been personally involved in its

development. As a result, the Executive Director of Welcome County's local resettlement agency was contacted. This agency is unique because of their connections to the community, which are lacking in other communities across the state. They partner with local churches, transportation services, and the community college in their work with refugees.

Welcome County provided the most opportunities to add to the research. Not only do they have the Welcomers School already in place, with community support and resettlement agencies that work cooperatively with them, but according to the state's DHHS, they have the second-highest number of total refugees admitted in the state in 2012, with 591. The only district with more refugees is Large District, and a resettlement agency director based in Large City referred me to the Welcome County model as their "personal" choice.

While the Welcomers School serves the needs of both immigrants and refugees, the focus of this study will be on how they work with their refugee populations. The Welcomers School was created to meet the needs of their refugee students and is the only free-standing site in the state, however, as immigrants have entered the district and met the criteria to attend the school, they have been included. The site has been in operation for nearly a decade, and the school has been the focus of multiple dissertations and master's thesis research. Geographically and economically, this school made the most sense for the parameters for this research and, given the reputation the school holds in the region, it was a suitable site for this study.

The participants of this study were leaders at the district and school levels, teachers and members of resettlement agencies in the district who work with newly arrived refugees (defined as having less than 3 years of experience in the United States). The samples were small, given that the site for this research is a specialized school, and thus does not allow for generalizations to be made for a larger population (Fraenkel & Wallen, 2009). Although smaller sample sizes

may not lend themselves to generalizations, single cases can be used to prove that important phenomenon can occur (Piotrkowski, 1978).

Students were not interviewed for this study for multiple reasons. The first being the obvious language barrier between the researcher and the students considering English is not the first language for most, if not all, of the students at the school. While the school has interpreters on staff and they could have been utilized for these interviews, often times when translating, word meanings have to be changed to fit the language. As I would not have been the translator, I could not truly understand the interpreter's translation and could potentially not get accurate results from the interviews. The same could be said for the interpreter's translation of the students' responses. Finally, the strictness of IRB with regard to student interviews was also a deciding factor when determining whether or not to include student voices in this research.

Establishing Trustworthiness

Given the lack of research on the whole school approach to teaching refugees in the United States and the fact that the teachers working with these students are likely highly invested in the population's outcomes, adequate participation by staff members was anticipated. Of the 24 teachers based at the Welcomers School, at least half of the teachers were needed to participate in the study. While leaders at the district level were a bit harder to gain access to due to other district obligations, the teachers allowed more flexibility. Upon initial inquiry, staff at various resettlement agencies, the executive director of the NAI and one of her staff members seemed to be eager to assist with this research. One commented, "The more people that know about the needs of these students, the better" (L. Roughton, personal communication, September 26, 2013).

Spradley (1979) stated that one way to get good ethnographic interviews is to get people talking about what they know. Attempts were made to make teachers comfortable by talking about shared experiences in the classroom as well as the purpose of the study. In order to relieve some of the anxiety of the teachers, interviews were conducted in a setting in which they felt the most comfortable (i.e., the library, classroom, conference room, etc.) and at times that were convenient for them. For the district and site-based leadership in this project, interviews were done in their offices. As these individuals are the experts in their districts with regard to teaching refugees, every effort was made to treat them as though their input was of value and useful to the study (Marshall & Rossman, 2011).

While this study aims to be a framework for teaching refugees within certain parameters, its success is in part contingent on factors in the larger community of Welcome County as well. These community supports include transportation, resettlement agency support and a commitment from the district leadership to meeting the needs of their refugee citizens.

Data Collection

This research study examined the various strategies in place in a high-refugee district, which was then compared to the Whole School Approach (Pugh, Every, & Hattam, 2012) to create Cooper's Framework for Educating Refugees in the United States. Multiple sources were utilized to add depth to the framework, as well as American input to the global discussion. These sources included field notes of interactions within the classroom, observations of lessons (see Appendix 5), interviews with district leaders (Appendix 3), interviews with site-based leaders (Appendix 2) and teachers (Appendix 1), and observations and interviews with refugee resettlement support agencies (Appendix 4) within the district. Triangulation was used to improve the quality of the data collected in order to add better accuracy to the researcher's

interpretation (Fraenkel & Wallen, 2009). In this study, triangulation was used to compare what was seen during observations to what was heard in interviews for validity purposes, ensuring researcher bias was minimalized.

My presence as an observer had the potential to influence the environment and actions of the participants (Fraenkel & Wallen, 2009; Marshall & Rossman, 2011). This risk was especially high so given the obvious differences between the students and the researcher and needed to be taken into consideration as it had the potential to influence the study's findings. Although felt in the setting, my presence was not seen as a negative influence for this study as immersion within the observed setting was important to understanding the subjects and the setting where they were learning. This experience provided me with the subject's lived realities. Knowing the impact my presence as a researcher had on the environment, a professional distance was critical for proper observation to occur (Fraenkel & Wallen, 2009; Marshall & Rossman, 2011). As Noblit (2013) explained, it is hard to collect data as a participant; therefore, an audiotaping device was used.

While observations and interviews make up the majority of this study's data, the researcher's field notes and understandings of the environment were utilized as well. Patton (2001) found that the physical environment was commonly taken for granted by the observer. Similarly, Galman (2013) noted that researchers focus a lot of time on the words they hear and not the images they see. As the Whole School Approach created by Pugh, Every, and Hattam (2012) served as the source of Cooper's framework, it looked at the school in its entirety, the physical environment of the school setting (hallways, lunch room, media center, front office, etc.) was also examined.

Ethics

Participation in this study was on a voluntary basis with names changed to ensure anonymity. As this study utilized a social justice leader theory, where it was assumed that improvements should be made, the end result of this research was discovering successful strategies and creating a framework that others can follow and make use. Therefore, experimentation with the participants was minimal (Marshall, 2012), and their voices were used only to add specific details to the findings. Participants were provided interview questions (see Appendix 1) prior to their interview and informed that they could stop the interview at any time. Per Institutional Review Board processes, teachers and district leaders were given pseudonyms and all files (consent forms, interview notes, observation notes, and audiotapes) were kept in a locked safe during this research study. All research was collected and analyzed by one researcher and kept on a password-protected, private computer. Using these processes kept the identities of the participants of this study confidential.

Data Analysis

According to Geertz (1973), data is a construction of what people and their peers are up to. This study is a reflection of how leaders and teachers who work with large refugee populations view refugee education and incorporate strategies and processes to help them. The results of their interviews are based on their own experiences and interpretations of interactions they see on a daily basis. Their voices add a realistic glimpse of working with refugee students that will contribute to the research in the field.

Subjects were asked for their permission to use an audiotaping device to record their interviews. Using Microsoft Word, the audiotaped interviews were transcribed manually by the researcher. The data were then be coded by hand, with a focus placed on common themes found

in Cooper’s Framework for Educating Refugees in the United States. Potential responses for coding are found in Figure 4, below. As Galman (2013) explained, coding is a way that researchers transform things from one thing to another in order to make sense of findings. Using the framework with themes presented in the research, deductive sorting will confirm and/or contrast from the themes present in the global research to add needed depth from an American perspective.

Figure 4: Potential Coding Responses

<i>Cooper’s Framework main points</i>	<i>Potential responses for coding</i>
1) Funding	Money, Funding, Resources, Targeted
2) Targeted Policies and System Support	Resources, Policy, District Leadership, Strategic Plan, School Improvement Plan
3) Site-Based Leadership	Principal, Assistant Principal, Support, District Leaders, Superintendent, Distributive Leadership
4) Professional Development	Professional Development, Training, Outside Resources, Inquiry groups
5) School Level Support Staff	ESL Teacher, Support Staff, Push-in/Pull-out
6) Curriculum	Common Core, Lessons, Objectives, Life Skills
7) Inclusion	Language Support, Mainstreaming
8) Relationships	Relationships, Friendships, Trust
9) Status	Refugees, ESL, Immigrants, Minorities
10) Other	

Research Limitations

With this study’s focus on a community that was set up for a specific population with supports in place (i.e., agencies, support groups, etc.) to meet their needs, variance in refugee

populations and potential experiences is a research limitation. The research will be based solely in this southeastern state, and there are only a few school districts in the state with the agencies and supports in place to help refugees succeed in the school setting. As refugees are only a small part of the districts' demographic makeup, it stands to reason that their focus is not on identifying and improving refugee student abilities, especially given the strained finances of the state and districts serving these students. For this reason, options for finding a district that met the necessary criteria were limited.

Given that the district being investigated for this study only has a few teachers and leaders that fit the criteria of what is being examined, the potential responses that are accessible for the researcher are minimal. In the case of this study, turnout resulted in over 50 percent of the staff participating in the study. Buy-in and support from district and site-based leaders was necessary in order to get this high participation rate.

In addition, the potential impact of the researcher—a White, male researcher from a University setting—on the environment was a limiting factor. Serving as the example of “White America” (Ogbu & Simons, 1998), sometimes seen as oppressors, required patience in building trust with the interviewees. The researcher's mentality as an educational leader, accustomed to making classroom observations the purpose of evaluating teachers, was inappropriate and potentially counter-productive in this setting. The researcher's experiences of living abroad also have the potential to be a limitation, as the lens used by this researcher may not be the same as an observer without the experience of living in another country.

Research Assumptions

The biggest assumption of this research is that all sites with high-refugee student populations have community supports similar to Welcomers School in place. While there are

several areas across the country with districts that fit this mold (Denver, Fort Wayne, New York), many districts do not have these structures in place and would need to develop these supports in order for Cooper's Framework to be successful.

This purpose of research is to support refugee students, with limited past education access and potentially parents with limited resources. The assumption is that the refugees targeted by this framework come from similar experiences prior to coming to the United States. While a majority of refugees come from war-torn areas and resettlement camps with limited exposure to education, there are refugees who come to this country with advanced degrees from their home countries. These refugees may benefit from the findings of study but are not the focus of the research.

Conclusion

This study adds to the current research of educating refugees by creating a framework schools can follow when they have an increase in the number of refugees within their district. Using a social justice leader theory approach to complete observations, interviews and field notes, data were gathered from within a district that serves refugee students. Using this theory, an assumption was made that there are challenges in doing so and that, through the use of constant critique, leaders look for and recommend solutions. The results of this study seek to add specific experiences and examples from the United States to the current global research. The end result is Cooper's Framework for Educating Refugees in the United States.

The research design for this study consisted of a combination of current research and the observations and interviews completed by the researcher. As the observations and interviews made up a large portion of the research design, the honesty of the individuals within the study to provide specific American data for application purposes was necessary. The lens chosen to view

this research, as well as researcher's perceptions during the observations and interviews, make up part of the findings; however, an awareness of personal biases that these bring to the study were considered. This is especially so in a situation where the observer is obviously different (language, looks, etc.) from the individuals being studied, which could influence the findings. For this reason, positionality was an important part of this study, and the researcher was wary of its impacts on the study environment.

Using these opportunities to explore successful strategies, this study details what actions are currently occurring within the Welcome District and allow teachers at Welcomers School the opportunity to add their success stories and concerns for refugee education in the United States. As refugees are typically not identified as a high-needs population under accountability standards set forth by state and federal governments, this study presents a rare opportunity for teachers to share their viewpoints and expertise on this subject.

CHAPTER IV – SITE DESCRIPTION

State and District Description

According to *Rankings and Estimates Report* (NEA Research, March 2014) compiled by the NEA in 2013, the state in which Welcome County is located ranked 10th nationally in student enrollment. This report also indicated that the state had the highest national percentage change in student population from the fall of 2011 to the fall of 2012, with a 4.1% increase in student enrollment. At the time of the report, the state was made up of 115 school districts varying in size from only two schools in the state's smallest district to 169 schools in the state's largest district, which was the 16th largest school district in the nation.

Welcome County is the third largest district in the state and one of the top 50 largest districts nationally. This metropolitan area started as a textile mill town, which led to a growth in population. Welcome County is home to eight colleges and universities, and the district comprises 129 public schools and serves over 72,000 students speaking 117 languages. Welcome District also includes a number of alternative and early high schools/middle colleges. One of these alternative schools is the Welcomers School, which was created to serve newly arrived immigrant and refugee students.

School Description (for 2013-2014)

The Welcomers School was created in 2007 to meet the needs of the growing refugee and immigrant populations in Welcome County. In 1986, the Cambodian delegation chose Welcome City as their refugee resettlement site, and since then there has been a constant flow of refugees into the county. The increase in the refugee population in the district led the ESL director and

the school's first principal to design a school setting that meets the newly arrived student's unique educational needs. The district had cluster sites housed in schools around the district, but in the spring of 2007, these sites were collapsed and students returned to their home schools. In the fall of 2007, the Welcomers School opened its doors.

The school is located on the same campus as Western Welcome High School in a small building set up for a maximum of 300 students in third through eleventh grade. The school generally starts the year under the enrollment cap, but, as new immigrant students who come to the district must go to Welcomers, the capacity is usually exceeded by year-end. The main building is made up of six "pods," with three classrooms connected to a center multi-purpose room that usually serves as storage or pull-out space for small-group instruction. There are bathrooms connected to each of these pods as well. There are also eight mobile units connected to the school, with six other mobile units serving the county's pre-K exceptional child needs. The school has a media center, cafeteria/auditorium, community garden, and playground. The property is not a big piece of land and does not fit the traditional model of other schools in the district.

Demographics of the student body. The students at Welcomers School are a varied group. As of the 2013-2014 school year, there are Montagnard, Vietnamese, Karen, Karenni, West African, Burmese, Cambodian, Jordanian, Syrian, Iraqi, Central American, South American, Chinese, Pakistani, Nepali, and Bhutanese students enrolled. Ninety percent of the students are brought to Greensboro through the various resettlement agencies in the district, most coming through Church World Service, Lutheran Family Services, African Family Services, and/or World Relief. The other 10% of students have registered at their home school and were sent to the Welcomers School because they fit the criteria for this setting.

Welcomers operates under mandatory enrollment for any students who have not previously attended a school in the United States and assigns students into third through eleventh grades according to their age. While most students coming to the school have limited to no English experience, some students did receive English as a second language instruction in their home country. While these students may be proficient in English, they have been sent to the Welcomers School as a transition site during the acculturation process of the American school. Enrollment is scheduled for Tuesdays, and new students are added each week. As most of these students are coming from third-world countries with limited financial stability, this school qualifies as a Title I school and gets resources from the federal government from this qualification.

Due to laws regarding segregation in the educational setting by the Office of Civil Rights, students are limited to one year in the Welcomers School. In rare cases where students are struggling and need more time in a controlled setting, their time at Welcomers can be extended for another six months at the principal's discretion. For a majority of the students, transitions to their traditional school typically occur at two points during the school year. If students are acculturating more quickly to the American system of education and seem to be on a path where they could be successful in the traditional school on their own, they are transitioned into their home school after the first semester. This break is a convenient time, as most middle and high schools are starting their second semester and refugee students are able to enter the setting on day one of the new semester. Students who enter the school year before the end of the first quarter and have been in the Welcomers School for most of the year typically transition to their traditional school for the start of the fall semester. According to the principal, the best time to transition is at the beginning of the school year as this is usually when procedures are put in

place, the refugee students aren't the only "new students" in the room, and the process is just smoother. Unfortunately, this is not always possible, and students are transitioned at various times of the year to comply with Civil Rights laws.

Elementary, middle, high school. The Welcomers School is unlike other new-arrival schools around the country. One difference is the fact that the school is a separate building within the district that does not integrate students into the mainstream until they have been in the country for about a year. Denver's New Arrival Institute (<http://colorado.newamericaschool.org>), for example, integrates their refugee and immigrant students on the same campus as their traditional classmates. While newly arrived students are separated from the mainstream, they still have to face the transition into the traditional American classroom with the added stress of being non-English speakers and facing the influence of those peers.

Another difference between the Welcomers School and other new-arrival schools around the country is that the school is tailored to meet the individual needs of elementary, middle, and high school students in one building. While the numbers collected by the county and the state reflect the total number of students at the school on the 20th day of classes, they are not indicative of the school's population by year-end. The 20th-day numbers for 2013-14 can be found in Table 3, below, which indicates the breakdown for each grade, the projected total for the year, and the actual total at the end of the year. This table not only reveals the numbers used to establish funding for the year but also the allocation of teachers needed. For the 2013-2014 school year, there were 53 elementary students, 62 middle school students, and 91 high school students on the 20th day. This equates to five elementary teachers, five middle school teachers, and eight high school teachers for the school year.

TABLE 3: 20-day counts for Welcomers students

Grade	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	Projected Total	Actual Total
# of Students	12	17	24	13	25	24	67	11	13	235	301
# of ESL teachers	2	-	2	-	2	-	3	-	-	-	-
# of Math Teachers	-	2	-	-	2	-	-	3	-	-	-
# of Science Teachers	-	1	-	-	1	-	-	2	-	-	-
# of English Teachers	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	1	-	-	-

The elementary students' class schedule is typical for most schools, except students change classes for math. The "homeroom" teacher is responsible for English (ESL), science, and social studies, with a 45-minute elective during the day. The middle school is set up on a six-period day with students rotating between their ESL homeroom class (English and social studies) and their math class. The students have one elective a day and have a Science lab and/or focused reading on Friday afternoons.

The high school schedule mirrors the schedules the students will see when they transition into their home schools. The goal is to assist the students by getting some of the core courses out of the way prior to moving to the traditional school. The students work on a four-period "block" schedule that focuses on one elective, ESL, math and science. As with the elementary school, social studies is wrapped in with the English courses the students are taking as part of the RIGOR (Reading Instructional Goals for Older Readers) program, explained in more detail below. The core courses include Earth Science, English I, Common Core Math I, Common Core

Math II, and Art I. Because students are typically in the school for only up to one year, the school can be selective in the courses they offer (i.e., those that will help the students transition to their traditional schools).

The electives offered at the school are minimal, but with such a small student population, funding is also minimal. The elementary and middle school students have a Media, Physical Education/Health, Art, and Reading elective. The school also has a technology assistant for teachers to utilize. The high school has an Art elective so that it can meet one of the graduation requirements. With a population that is highly changeable from year to year, the school offer courses that will immediately benefit their students' unique needs and help give them a solid foundation once they transition out to their traditional school.

Observations. The entrance to the school reflects the diversity of the population inside: the school's sign says "welcome" in a number of languages; a mural on the front of the building shows an ethnically and culturally diverse population; and the globe logo for the school on a floor mat immediately upon entering the school recognizes the international origins of students. In the hallway outside the main office is a board for parents to read important information and upcoming calendar events, a picture of the entire staff, and another globe mural. Sitting at the front desk of the office are office staff who also serve as translators to assist parents, volunteers, and students as they enter the building. Posters displaying the expectations for student behavior through pictures are scattered throughout the hallways. These posters include how to prevent the spread of diseases (covering your mouth, washing your hands, etc.) and how to walk safely and respectfully in the hallways.

The main hallway of the school is lined with murals, student work, informational boards for the students, and lesson extension activities for students. The biggest mural includes

drawings of books, foreign locales, and students dressed in traditional dress for those countries. One of the mottos for the school is also included: “Welcomers, a place where everyone has a wonderful story.” Another mural at the cafeteria features words, pictures, and flags from around the globe. Display cases in several locations showcase artifacts (pictures, dolls, tea sets, etc.) from countries around the world that represent the student body.

Bulletin boards outside of the pods show examples of student work. Samples range from something as simple as the students filling in the blanks and creating a poster out of torn paper to illustrate photosynthesis, to artwork the students have completed or the use of the periodic table to write Valentine’s cards. The work displayed on the walls indicates a mix of curriculum and also self-expression, indicating the staff provides students with learning opportunities that meet them where they are academically and allows them to work with classmates to increase social interaction as well as language skills.

Another feature of the school’s focus on acculturating immigrant and refugee students is the prominence of student-created information boards. One bulletin board is devoted to the five translators in the building, with their pictures, names, and languages spoken listed for students and parents to see. During one site visit, the researcher observed boards related to alcoholism, smoking, and prescription drug addiction—hot-topic issues that the school recognized as a potential pitfall for the students and had them address them via writing, posters, and even a mentoring program (S.M.A.R.T., or Student Mentoring Awareness Resource Team) to help students who may be facing these issues outside of the school. Students are also given the opportunity to practice their English through the use of interactive lesson extensions. During one observation, the students were working on prefixes and suffixes. Hanging from the walls were commonly used prefixes and suffixes, and there was an answer sheet provided for students to

work through. One of the high school classes had students work in small groups to work through this activity. While they were working, a middle school class came through and commented how they already knew those and used it as a teachable moment to refresh the students' minds about root words, prefixes, and suffixes.

The media center and cafeteria were also covered with materials that help the students learn about their new home and school. The first thing that is seen in the media center is the sign saying "Read" on 32 index cards in different languages that create a border around a poem about reading. Along the walls of the media center are posters of Welcomers students standing in recognizable locations around the school. There is a poem spread over five quilts that highlight the word "Welcome" with various translations. There were eight globes around the media center, student-created stories that were bound and on display, and 13 language dictionaries (e.g., Myanmar, Hindi, Arabic, Nepali, etc.). The room was relatively small and seemed a bit cramped but was set up like a traditional library. One side was dedicated to fiction, and the other was dedicated to non-fiction. There was a bulletin board created as a guide to help students find materials in the non-fiction section using pictures and single words. Along with the media center are two computer labs that teachers can sign up for and utilize with their lessons.

The cafeteria also contained posters demonstrating proper rules. Food and nutrition posters also lined the walls, with a different fruit or vegetable displayed in its season (for example, April was strawberries, May was Blueberries). The cafeteria is smaller than a typical cafeteria (10 tables) but fits the size of the school. The students come in waves based on their age and, while the students were observed sitting with their own ethnic and linguistic group, there was a bit of mingling between the ethnicities.

What stood out most about Welcomers School during the researcher's visit was the welcoming attitude. The teachers all smiled and said hello, and so did the occasional students who are confident enough in their language skills. There is a lot of student interaction, and students have the opportunity to express themselves in ways that do not necessarily require high academic English abilities.

Staff description and Breakdown

In 2013-14 the school employed 37 staff members, including an administrator, 21 teachers, 5 community liaisons (interpreters), and 10 support staff. Of these teachers, 11 were ESL teachers, 6 were content-certified teachers (Math, Science, English), and 4 were specialists (Art, PE, Media, Reading).

Teachers. The teachers mirrored the demographics of most other schools across the United States: they were of mixed ages, and the majority were white and female. When asked if they came to the school specifically to work with refugee students, the ESL teachers and teachers who had connections to the local refugee assistance groups said yes. The other content area teachers (Math, PE, Art, etc.) said they chose the school due to position availability or displacement at their other schools.

Support staff. As Welcomers is a Title I school in Welcome District, it has a full-time social worker. The social worker is responsible for reaching out to parents, working with the resettlement agencies in the county to transition students into the school, getting students the materials and supplies they need to be successful in school, and setting up psychological support, funded by a federal grant, in conjunction with a local university's School of Psychology. The social worker has been at the school since its inception and has started a clothes closet, food pantry, and school supply area designed to supplement the financial support provided by the

government. This area is supported by area Churches and volunteer groups from the community where they bring in and organize donations to ensure students have clothes, food, and school supplies as they acclimate to their new community. The school also has a full-time counselor to provide in-school support for students. This position is much like the traditional counselors the students will see when they transition to their home schools. The counselor is responsible for the day-to-day counseling needs of the students, if they do not require more intensive support through the local university's psychology program. The counselor is also responsible for helping the students transition to their home schools once they have met their goals at Welcomers. This could be as simple as making sure the paperwork is in order in the cumulative folders to send to the school or as difficult as finding proper courses for high school students. What makes this position different than that of the traditional school counselor is that the students are not going to one or two feeder schools, they are going to a multitude of schools that changes every year. There is no consistency in this part of the job and thus, each year the counselor has to work with new schools, new structures, and new people, which could make their job that much harder.

According to multiple staff members interviewed, one particular area of strength, believed to be unique to the school, is the translators who serve as staff members. For the 2013-2014 school year, the Welcomers School employed five translators: Spanish, Arabic, Nepali, Vietnamese, and Burmese. (There was also the need for a French translator, but due to funding structures and 20-day counts, this position was not funded until the start of the next school year.) These translators are both part- and full-time employees, work in the front office as clerical staff, and also serve as community liaisons for refugee families. Their daily tasks include translating materials, serving as interpreters for parent-teacher conferences, and getting newly arrived students through the enrollment process. These individuals were observed to be visible and

readily available throughout the school to meet the needs of administration, teachers, students, and parents. Translators are trained by the district and are provided workshops because, according to one interpreter, the county is so large that not all employees are aware of the services that are available in the district to help the ESL population.

Another important aspect to the Welcomers School is the Curriculum Facilitator position. The facilitator works closely with the principal to create an in-house language arts program tailored to meet the needs of the refugee students at their level. This position works with all grade level teachers in the school and creates modified units based on Common Core Standards and Welcome County curricula.

Curriculum

As with other southeastern states, the Welcomers School adheres to the Common Core Standards. These standards set the curricula for all subjects taught at Welcomers. The variation in instruction comes with the ESL programs that are put into place at the various levels as well as Saturday tutoring that is made available to students and parents. Some of the programs overlap grade levels and were observed in the different classrooms. This section describes some of the programs being utilized at the different levels of the school.

The program used at the elementary level is called Foundations, created by Wilson Language Training. According to the company's website, this language learning program is a phonological/phonemic awareness, phonics, and spelling program for the general education classroom that develops skills from basic letter sounds to parts of words. Foundations is not intended to replace the core curriculum being used but rather is intended to serve as a complement to what is being taught. The program is designed for kindergarten through third grade, but considering the language level of the students at Welcomers, it has been implemented

in third through fifth grades. The reading specialist for the school uses this program as an extension to support what the teachers are doing in the classroom. As students develop language skills and become more proficient, the groups are adjusted.

The small-group reading instruction program that provides quantitative data for the school is created Fountas and Pinnell, and published by Heinemann. This program utilizes guided-reading strategies to improve literacy among elementary and middle school students. The students are given assessments to test their literacy when they enter the school and after each quarter.

The spelling program put into place in 2013 for middle school students is Just Words by Wilson Language Training. According to the company's website, Just Words is a highly explicit, multisensory decoding and spelling program for fourth through twelfth grades as well as adults who have gaps in their decoding and spelling proficiencies. The program is a study of word structure and is intended to teach "how English works." The program is broken up into 14 units and provides a multi-tiered system of support through targeted intervention for immigrant students. This program was not specifically designed for refugee students, but, due to the targeted literacy set-up of the program, it meets the language development needs of the students at the school.

To complement the spelling program, the school has also instituted a reading program for middle and high school classes this year. RIGOR (or Reading Instructional Goals for Older Readers) is a reading intervention program that teaches phonics and basic reading comprehension skills through social studies and science topics. RIGOR is intended for pre-literate and early-grade reading level English learners and is intended to develop phonemic awareness, increase vocabulary and reading comprehension and fluency through a two-level, 32

“skill bag” (unit) process. Because it was developed in Texas, the content of program is focused more on Latin American culture. In the lesson observed for this study, two of the four books being used in the unit dealt specifically with the Latin American culture. A teacher noted that many of the Asian students frequently asked why they always studied about Hispanics and their culture and not their own.

While RIGOR is used in high school classes for literacy support, the Common Core standards are the focus of instruction. In order to support the students and get them as much of a solid foundation as possible, Welcomers offers Common Core courses that will help the students once they transition to their traditional schools. Students take an English course, a math course, earth science and art. While at Welcomers, the students are provided with the necessary support to help them successfully complete these courses that count towards their graduation requirements and set them on the road towards receiving a diploma once they leave the Welcomers school.

Data

When requesting access to the district for research approval, I was informed that EOG and EOC data would not be made available to the researcher for these students. In order to find quantitative data for these students, I was directed by the principal to the Fountas and Pinnell program that tracks student growth over the course of the year. Students are tested as they enter the program for placement in the Fountas and Pinnell level of instruction and then the students are tested again each quarter. These assessments are given to students in third through eighth grades. Due to the transient nature of the population, a majority of the students did not complete all four assessments.

Of the students who were in the school in 2013-14 for all four assessments in third through eighth grades, the average growth for the year was from illiterate levels (Preschool) to an early second-grade reading level. At the end of the year, the students had made over a year's worth of growth, into the early/fluent developmental level. When broken down by grade level, third, seventh, and eighth grades made the largest gains, growing almost two grade levels each. Fourth and fifth grades both grew one grade level. These scores only reflect one year, the 2013-14 school year; data is not kept from year to year. (See Table 4, below.)

TABLE 4: Fountas & Pinnell data for the 2013-2014 school year

	Assessment 1 (Average Score)	Assessment 2 (Average Score)	Assessment 3 (Average Score)	Assessment 4 (Average Score)
Grade 3	0.4	2.8	4.8	7.2
Grade 4	3.5	6.1	6.4	7.0
Grade 5	4.2	6.1	7.2	--
Grade 6	4.1	7.3	--	--
Grade 7	4.0	9.4	--	--
Grade 8	3.7	8.3	--	--
Grades 3-8	3.2	6.6	6.3	7.1

A second source of data that I was shown, but not given complete access, was the WIDA/W-APT test scores that the state collects. According to their website, WIDA (World-Class Instructional Design and Achievement) was designed to advance academic language development for diverse students. This program was created in response to Title III (ELLs) in the No Child Left Behind Act and was first put into use in 2003. The state put these standards in place for the 2008-2009 school year. To assess students' language abilities, the W-APT is given to students as they enter the educational setting for the first time. W-APT (WIDA Access Placement Test) is the tool the State Board of Education requires to be used in order to identify students as limited English proficient (LEP) and receive services. This test measures four areas:

speaking, listening, reading, and writing. This program, according to the state Department of Public Instruction, has three purposes: identify students who are LEP, determine their English-language proficiency level, and guide the assignments of students identified as LEP.

The data that I was able to access, which is public information that is disseminated by the school, is the growth made in the four subtests (speaking, listening, reading, and writing) and can be found in Table 5 below. The state sets the annual measurable achievement goal as an increase of one proficiency level in at least one of the subtests. Welcome County is held to the same expectations, according to their ESL department. In the last five years, students who spent a minimum of six months at the Welcomers School have met or exceeded that goal in each of the subtest areas. The principal noted that many of the students who enter the school are illiterate but after six months in the school they grew an average of 1.5 grade levels in reading. Over the five-year period, the students have averaged a growth of 1.5 in reading and writing, 1.7 in listening, and 1.1 in speaking.

TABLE 5: WIDA/W-APT Test data

Subtest	State Goal	Welcomers 08-09	Welcomers 09-10	Welcomers 10-11	Welcomers 11-12	Welcomers 12-13	Average
Listening	1	1.7	1.8	1.7	1.5	1.7	1.7
Speaking	1	1	1.2	1.1	1.0	1.4	1.1
Reading	1	1.5	1.5	1.5	1.5	1.4	1.5
Writing	1	1.5	1.5	1.5	1.5	1.7	1.5

Conclusion

Welcomers School is a unique school, not only to Welcome District, but also to the state. From the students who attend the school to the staff who teach them, Welcomers looks vaguely like other schools in terms of student body population. The uniqueness of this school creates challenges that leaders must understand and adapt to in order to create a successful learning

environment for their students. Classroom set-up, grade level departments, staffing concerns, and curriculum are all areas that must be addressed. Each year, the leadership of Welcomers School must examine what they have done in the previous year and adjust to meet the need of their ever-changing student population.

CHAPTER V – DATA ANALYSIS

I had a boy from Sudan about three years ago. He came from Sudan and he knew the word ‘yes,’ that was all he knew. He was a very tall, gangly, all arms and legs adolescent, probably around 11 or 12, tallest boy in my class but very, very shy and very scared. You could just tell this was the first time he had ever been in a school anywhere. It gave me goose bumps the progress that he made here. I ended up advocating that he stay another semester, typically they can stay about a year, but because he came with so little background, no education, I found out he didn’t go to school at all in Sudan. His father was murdered in front of the family. He was here with the mom and they had six kids. She didn’t speak English and they were from an area in Sudan we had no one that could interpret for them, nobody spoke their language. There were a lot of people that helped the family, a lot of people from different churches that helped them out. And he lived in an apartment complex where there were a lot of other different refugees living around there so I know they did get some support in terms of helping this family kind of cope and figure out how to live in America. But as far as education, he was probably the lowest student I have ever had. But to see how much progress he made, he came for a year and by the end of the year he was reading, but very limited. He was still reading on a kindergarten reading level. And the next year he came back, and I still remember this, I was sitting at my desk, and I gave him a list of sight words that he had to read. When he first came here he didn’t know any words at all, zero. He came back in August of the next year, we were sitting there and I was 25 words on a page and I am pointing at the words and he is just zipping them off, I mean as fast as I could point he is reading them. And we got to page six and I looked at him because I thought he had had tutoring or something over the summer, and I said ‘where did you learn all of this, where did you learn to read?’ and he looked at me with the most innocent face and said ‘you taught me.’ (Participant 6)

The role of education in the acculturation of refugees has been expanded since the United States began accepting refugees into the country in the 1980s. Welcome District was one of a handful of districts in the state to be chosen as a resettlement site, but, unlike most of the other districts in the state, the community in which it is located began creating support networks early. Kingdon (1984) identified three processes that Welcome District used (either knowingly or not) that led to their providing this educational setting for refugee students. These three processes include problems, policies, and politics that lead to policy creation. While the obvious challenge

was the influx of refugees into the city that needed to be factored into the demographic of the community and how their influence would be felt, it took nearly two decades for a policy window (Marshall & Gerstl-Pepin, 2005) to open that led to the creation of the Welcomers School.

While there are a handful of refugee schools around the country, the principal of Welcomers School noted there few are structured as a separate school designed to meet the needs of immigrant and refugee students. Most schools around the country devoted to refugees are housed within another traditional school building, or deal with only certain levels (elementary, middle, high) of refugees. This structure has created both advantages and challenges as the population has grown over the last decade. For this study, “success” is not an objective measurement; rather, it is more of a subjective approach documenting the unique and innovative strategies being utilized in the Welcomers School as it prepares students to acculturate to the American educational setting and achieve academically.

The design for this chapter is outlined in Figure 5 and focuses on five emergent themes. Each of these themes encompasses several framework components found in Chapter II and is further expanded by the strategies named during staff interviews at Welcomers School. Each section focuses on the strengths uncovered during interviews and observations and concludes with some of the challenges and concerns presented during this research.

Figure 5: Emergent Themes

Emergent Themes	Framework Components	Framework Strategies	Challenges and Concerns
Support and Commitment	Financial	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Title 1 monies ○ Separate building ○ District resources & programs 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Focus ○ Support ○ Resources for ○ mainstream

		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Tutors 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> neighborhood ○ schools ○ Financial strain on community resources
	Community	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Resettlement Sites (Resources) ○ Church Groups (PTA, Funds) 	
	Policy	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ District policies ○ District ESL plan ○ Physical to psychological ○ Federal and state accountability 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Lack of teacher Autonomy ○ More time in the school ○ Testing ○ School not the right fit
	District and Site-based Leadership	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Understanding of potential gaps ○ Support for school and students 	
Training	Professional Development	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Teacher training and Cultural Sensitivity ○ Interpreter and Support Staff 	
	Cultural Training	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Need for district training ○ Knowing the students ○ Parental differences 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Lack of training with traditional schools ○ Capable students ○ Bullying
	Curriculum	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Common Core and ESL ○ Spoken language vs. academic language 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Common Core's lack of ESL ○ Lack of refugee centered materials ○ Frustration
Specialized Help and Support	Support Staff	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Social Worker ○ Guidance Counselor 	

		○ Interpreter	
	Inclusion	○ Full-year inclusion program	
Understanding the Group	Status	○ Different lived experiences ○ Ability grouping and Isolation	
	Tourist vs. Immigrant	○ Eager learners ○ Safe environment	
	Relationships	○ Trust ○ Compassionate learning environment ○ Academic expectations	○ Pitying students ○ Low expectations from teacher
	Parent Role	○ Lack of awareness of American education system	
Students	School Belonging	○ Welcoming environment ○ Personal touches	
	Self-Awareness	○ Students awareness of what they are leaving ○ Isolation allows for personal development	
	Resilience	○ Student resilience in a new country	

Support and Commitment

Here, I mean, this is a whole school designed to help them [refugees] and what district around the country is going to put that much money into a school specifically for them? I mean, it is great that WDS is willing to do that. Few districts are willing to do that, we just had a strong leader, and they fought for this and got it. It is great, they come here for a year and they are in a nest of love and care and they learn English before they go out into the schools and have to face all the problems that come with being a refugee in an American school. (Participant 8)

Support for solid education for refugee students comes from many sources, including community support, policies that support refugee education, and also strong leadership. According to the literature (Friendlander, 1991; Pugh, Every, & Hattam, 2012; Taylor & Sidh, 2012) and the findings of this study, each of these forms of support is needed in order for refugees to be ready to succeed in the American education system. This section expands on the financial policies and strong leadership components of the theoretical framework discussed in Chapter 2.

Financial.

Title I. Title I money is allocated to schools who have a high percentage of children from low-economic families. This money is provided in order to help these students overcome the disadvantages they enter school with and provide the resources to help them catch up and have access to in order to succeed. Since Welcomers is made up predominantly of students who qualify as Title I students, the school opened with a plethora of resources that schools with smaller low-income populations do not have access to. While abundant at the beginning, worsening economic conditions have limited this flow of resources and forced the school to rely more on district and outside resources for support.

We started being a Title I school and had more resources than a school that doesn't have as much low-income families...Starting out, the library was bare, there was nothing in the media center. We had hand-me-down textbooks. Over the years, some of those things that we can use have been funneled down to us, supplies, and resources.
(Participant 6)

What makes it easy? I mean, we have gotten funding through Title I and priority to get materials...that really serves the needs of a lot of these refugee populations (Participant 9)

Separate school building. The area of spending that has the largest impact on the Welcomers School is the fact that the school is housed in a separate building from programs for

other students. Having a separate school building allows the students to have a year of intensive instruction at their academic level before moving into their mainstream schools. While this distinction was not discussed in the literature for a student body this diverse, the interviews and observations done in this study made apparent the importance of having a separate space for these learners.

To be thrown into a new culture right away, especially in the middle school or high school environment, would just be overwhelming, and I think we help ease that transition... There is no way to prepare them for it 100%...but for them to not only have a year of schooling and a year of English immersion, but socially they are able to get acclimated to the American culture outside of school before they are, you know, in a mainstream school. (Participant 1)

Just the creation of the program is a step forward because no one else does it. It is just one of those things, it's sink or swim, and the fact that we made it 8 years I think we are doing a pretty good job. (Participant 7)

District resources and programs. Outside of providing a separate building for the refugee students, Welcome District's leaders provide support that supplements federal Title I and state funding. For example, the district has paid for two ESL programs that supplement the standard Common Core curricula with refugee-specific materials. This shared material helps students with continuity across the various classes and has all the teachers "speaking the same language" in terms of instruction throughout the building.

I think that I didn't realize that there were so many ESL libraries across the county, which I was excited about. I think that we have a lot of good financial resources that we are able to use. (Participant 12)

Well, considering we are one of the few districts or states really, or few schools in the entire country,...what else can you ask for? To be able to have an inclusion program for a year before they are mainstreamed, I think that is wonderful. I mean, I don't know what else can be provided outside of this. You know, and this is a great program that [the district] has allowed us to do. (Participant 1)

Tutors. Another area of support the teachers at the Welcomers School enjoy is the availability of tutors in the core classrooms. While this would typically go under the umbrella of

Support Staff, the number of teachers who referenced the importance of tutors warranted their inclusion as a sub-heading. The role of these tutors is clear throughout the building, and each is utilized in effective ways around the school. Tutors' roles include helping the classroom teacher in whole-class instruction, leading small-group instruction, and pulling students out for individual help. Essentially these tutors are an extension of the core teacher and are just as important in the education process. They also lower the student-to-teacher ratio, which benefits the students.

We have paid tutors this year, and they are extremely helpful. (Participant 3)

They have already provided us funds as far as Title I goes with being able to have tutors in here and paid positions that can help out in the classroom. Like I have 3 days a week with two teachers in here, myself and someone else. That has been more than I can even express how beneficial that has been. (Participant 1)

Challenges and concerns. The biggest funding concern staff members expressed is the lack of appropriate resources at the traditional schools refugee students will attend when they transition out of Welcomers. Meeting the unique needs of refugee populations puts a strain on communities and, given the recent increase in minority immigrants into the United States, any allocated funds are stretched thinner and thinner. Providing the support and services that these students need is a big undertaking and there has to be more of a focused outreach to ensure that traditional schools have the funding in place in order for refugee students' needs to be met.

At my mainstream school we had this issue where there was only funding for a certain number of students to be tutored and they decided to tutor the students who were borderline going to pass the End of Year tests. The vast majority of my students were actually below that threshold and so I was told last year that my students were too low to be in this tutoring program. And as a teacher you are like 'what in the world does that mean? That there is a child that is too low to be helped?' And so that was really frustrating for me because it wasn't just the tutoring program. This program provided children with snacks in the afternoon, it provided them with transportation to their homes, I mean this was a funded tutoring program and I was told that my students were too low to be tutored. (Participant 3)

Community

Because the Welcomers School is housed in a district designated as a national resettlement site and has welcomed thousands of refugees over the last 35-plus years, community support networks already exist to help refugees. These groups, which include churches, resettlement agencies, and federally funded organizations make an impact within the walls of the Welcomers School as well. For example, the PTA of the school is actually made up of members of a church in the district.

I believe Welcome District was a strong home base for refugee resettlement because we have a lot of churches here and most of these resettlement agencies are church-based. We also were a big textile industry so people were able to come and find work easily and gain self-sufficiency quicker than in some parts of the country. (Participant 14)

The organizations work with them, the case managers have huge case loads and can't meet the needs adequately, in my opinion. The community needs to step up and there are some church groups that are involved, or just individuals, not necessarily church groups but any group, but there are a lot of families that come that don't have that support [to have their basic needs met]. (Participant 5)

I know there is an African services group and there are church groups like one of our teachers has an independent church has a Tuesday night tutoring program that meets the need of a lot of our students. (Participant 9)

Policy

District policies. As a national resettlement site, Welcome City has created policies to help support refugees, such as a reduced-rate bus pass and a bus line that runs to one of the agencies that helps educate adult refugees. Policies that help refugees get to and from school, including refugees in district initiatives, and other policies that support refugee education were evident in the Welcomers School.

I think that the county has done a great job in making sure that the transportation is not an issue. I normally don't have to worry about that, especially since we bus kids in from all over the county. Some of my kids take two buses to get here and usually that is one thing that I don't have to deal with. That has made my life easier. (Participant 15)

Well, I think being included in what is going on in the rest of the county. You know like we have this new tablet program (where all students will be given a tablet to use in the classroom being launched next year and being able to be included in that as far as that goes, because at first we were not going to be included in that. Being able to get the resources that other schools have is always nice and not to be kind of left out is good. (Participant 1)

District ESL plan. One area that is geared toward the Welcomers School population is the district ESL plan that includes the maintenance of the Welcomers School, providing for smaller classes that allow the teachers and students to work on a more intensive level. The plan has also created a safe, physical environment for refugee students who might otherwise be vulnerable.

A lot of students have heard about the Welcomers School within their communities. My refugee students specifically really like coming to this school. The school really focuses on celebrating where you are from and who you are and understanding what you have gone through, or trying to understand. (Participant 3)

I think they are doing good. I really, at least I see it here in the ESL department. It is in the district plan, if you read it, it is very inclusive. (Participant 13)

Physical to psychological. Since its creation, the Welcomers School has seen a shift in the needs of the students and families who come to the school. While the school was set up for educational purposes, leaders quickly discovered there was a physical need (clothing, hygiene materials, food, etc) that had to be attended to first in order for education to take place. Over the past decade, focus has come to include students' psychological needs as well. This shift represents the flexibility that is needed in order for a school of this nature to succeed. Each year, students enter the school with different backgrounds than the previous years and, therefore, the leadership needs to frequently reassess what resources (materials, tutors, etc.) and policies students will need to acclimate quickly. The following quotes address the noticed shift in students' needs at Welcomers School

In years past, it seemed there was more of a need to help them acclimate in terms of resources, we need clothing, we need food, we need housing. And it seems that there has been a slight shift, not necessarily so much of a need with their physical, but more so with their emotional and psychological services and things like that. (Participant 4)

I linked the mom to local university Psychology clinic, which we have a grant with them, and they provide free therapy to our students and families. (Participant 14)

Federal and state accountability. Of course, the district has little control over federal and state policies, and the staff and students at the Welcomers School are facing changes under recent policy decisions including increased testing at the state level and the one-year separate setting limitation set by the federal Office of Civil Rights. Both of these policies create unintended difficulties for refugee students. The following quotes from the interviews address testing at Welcomers School.

I am not sure if it is the county's fault but because we are required to test all students, the testing is unattainable that first year, and that is a challenge for them. The expectations are that you are teaching grade level. (Participant 5)

The amount of testing. It seems like, and I am totally fine with it, I realize the kids need to be tested and looked at to find out where they are. If a kid has certain needs, that definitely needs to be identified. But it seems like a lot of pulling from classes for this test and then two weeks later another test and then a few weeks later another test. It just seems like we are in a testing society, every other week it seems like there is another test. (Participant 7)

The Office of Civil Rights policy dictates that students cannot be in a separate educational setting for more than a year. While the basis of this law is understandable, as it seeks to prevent segregation of students by various measures, this law places newly arrived students in learning environments where they do not have the basic skills to succeed. Several teachers referred to research suggesting that it takes five to seven years to learn a language well enough to work with it academically. While keeping refugee students at a separate school for five to seven years may seem unrealistic, these teachers suggested, when looking at the growth the students make in a single school year, one could only imagine the growth from two years.

It's my understanding that when the school started, they were only allowed to stay here one year because it is considered a segregated situation so the NAACP had some hand in saying that this school only needed to be for one year. But you know, you have had parents in the past who have wanted their kids to stay, they wouldn't feel like it is segregation, they feel like it would be a helpful thing to allow the students to stay longer and that is not, except in rare exceptions, that is not really possible. (Participant 6)

It is a difficult place to work because we get them just at the point where they are ready to learn and then they go out to their regular schools. (Participant 10)

Challenges. While the teachers at Welcomers School were very complimentary of the work that the district is doing in terms of local policy, they were also aware of pitfalls. The biggest complaint came from the lack of alternative assessments and teacher autonomy in the classroom. They noted that a certain percentage of the student body falls behind because the teachers have to follow a scripted lesson and have little room to deviate from these program scripts.

Testing, testing, testing. Just holding us to the same standards, testing. You know and having us to go and follow through my curriculum and my...sometimes I could do more with them if I could develop something on my own. (Participant 1)

Our reading program is designed for immigrant students and it was made in Texas. So it's pretty much designed for Hispanic, immigrant students. It doesn't really take anyone else into consideration. And so, you have students from Asia who always ask me 'why do we always read about Hispanic people' in our book program? (Participant 3)

The school has also found that sometimes Welcomers is not the right fit for all refugee students..

There are many times when our school is not a fit for every family. Whether it is the student who has already studied English in their country, but this is a new experience for them, and we are not able to offer the courses that they need and that we have to direct them to go straight to their district school in order to be able to graduate. (Participant 4)

District and site-based leadership

Understanding of potential gaps. The district's commitment to the Welcomers School over the last decade indicated that their leadership core understands the needs of the population

they serve. The board of education has also been supportive of the school and makes sure to recognize it in the public forum as well.

It is kind of, it is not just a school in a community, it is all of the community members that are involved in it and I think it is just exponential as far as Welcome District, it goes beyond the school district because everyone wants to be a part of it. I think it helps to advocate for the school system and the refugee population. (Participant 11)

I would say we feel supported up to the superintendent level. You know when they come there are rave reviews for what is happening here and they see that it's a good fit this first year. (Participant 5)

Our principal does a phenomenal job. She is very supportive and always willing to listen and I can't think of anything she could do better than she already does. (Participant 14)

Support for school and students. There are instances where the school is such an anomaly that the staff feels they are on an island and that, with few schools like the Welcomers School in the region, it is difficult to get proper support. The teachers at the Welcomers School face unique challenges such as cultural sensitivity, students with various backgrounds and emotional experiences that require different types of professional development that the district leaders may not see in other classrooms across the district. In certain cases, they allow the school to have more flexibility in order to meet the needs of the students.

I think if they were just more understanding. The two-edged sword is I think if they would come out and visit, then I think they would have a better grasp of some of the things that were going on here, not saying that we are terrible or destitute, but it's just some of the challenges that are faced by me and my teachers. I think then they would have a better understanding of how they could possibly support. (Participant 16)

Training

Say for example, the Montagnard population was discriminated against in Vietnam so there was this problem between the Montagnards and the Vietnamese but here, when they get to be friends and they are sitting right next to each other in the same class, all those prejudices fall away because now they have a friendship with someone that before, they didn't trust and were enemies with. I mean that is the really great thing, we are just like a little world where a world should be. Where all the countries are working together and making friends. That is the way the world should be. (Participant 8)

Education is a reflective process and in order to meet the needs of the 21st-century student, teachers need constant opportunities to learn and reflect on their craft. In education, this comes in the form of professional development and curriculum training. following section focuses on these two components of the theoretical framework

Professional development

Teacher training and cultural sensitivity. As with any program in the education system, without trained teachers to put these programs in place, the program will most likely fail. Working with refugees is no exception. As they come from a variety of backgrounds, often with horrific experiences, teaching them is challenging. For that reason, professional development at Welcomers School includes cultural sensitivity training, book studies that focus on working with refugees, and dealing with bullying in the school and classroom.

I have been trained to know from observation what they are doing and what that means...I follow the curriculum and what they are doing but I am able to look at where they are and look at what they need to get to for grade level. (Participant 10)

Expand education. Expand the cultural awareness. It is just misunderstandings. I would love to see a book about misunderstandings because I use a lot of examples and when I use examples, you get what I mean by misunderstandings. Sometimes I talk to people about one day this happened to me and I was understanding 'this' and the other person was understanding 'that.' It was more because of cultural difference. (Participant 13)

I called in the ESL department and they did some training for our teachers. They also gave some support to several teachers that had low expectations for kids and now they come back in once a week to monitor the teaching so I don't have to do all of it by myself. It is a partnership with us working together. (Participant 15)

While the resources the district employs have been beneficial in aiding in the educating of refugee students, there are still gaps in the resources available that are tailored to refugee students.

There has yet to be a book that I have found that is about teaching the ESL to read but it might have the Spanish population, it doesn't have ALL of our populations and all is just

a little bit different. I keep thinking we could write a book here, this school is like a lab honestly, it is like a working lab. (Participant 10)

Interpreter and support staff training. Welcome District also includes trainings for their interpreters and support staff. This training not only consists of how to translate effectively for the population but also how to be the community liaison within the school for the incoming families. Training also deals with how support staff can aid in helping the families acculturate into the school system.

To be an interpreter you have to get a training. They help us to be a good interpreter and how to be a very good community liaison. They do a lot of workshops also in the county. (Participant 13)

The county provides a lot of ESL training and professional development, they also provide, even for our school, not so much sensitivity training, but professional development that allows us to...make this experience the best for them and still watch them grow academically. (Participant 14)

Cultural training

I think we all are learning, this is a process, we are never right, we are never wrong
(Participant 2)

Need for district training. The Welcomers School has a staff that has been in place for several years, has been trained to work with refugee students, and understands the populations they are working with culturally. Their fear is that the students will not receive these same considerations once they enter their traditional schools. The teachers for this study were aware of the abundance of cultures in the building but still felt that cultural awareness training on a broader district level would make an impact on student learning. As ESL students move into high school, their drop-out rate is very high, and when coupled with the traumatic experiences that refugees bring with them to school, their risk of drop-out is potentially higher.

[The district] does so much professional development ...But I also wish there was some diversity in maybe refugee students or their experiences because a lot of [traditional] teachers they see a [refugee's] name on a roster and...their immediate response is 'UGH',

and they don't know how to pronounce their name, or what language they speak and they don't know anything about their culture. (Participant 3)

I think we are doing a relatively good job with our first year students, I think our ESL teachers in the [traditional] schools are trained and are helping in lots of ways, but I think that we have not educated the regular schools well enough to know how to relate to them. (Participant 5).

I think that we have not educated the regular schools well enough to know how to relate to [refugee students]. (Participant 11)

I wish the district would do more stuff like [professional development] through workshops or having outsiders go in [to traditional schools], even students. It would be nice to have students do workshops about cultural differences in a way that is more simple and [traditional teachers] can digest the concept. (Participant 13)

Knowing the students. Another essential component to cultural training is the teachers' efforts to connect with their students' experiences in their home country. Teachers at Welcomers School were observed learning to say their students' names correctly, learning a simple greeting in their students' home languages, having students write papers or complete research projects that deal with their home culture. Teachers' understanding where their students came from and the potentially terrorizing situations they experienced and reaching out to gain their trust goes far in terms helping these students succeed academically. Ultimately, teachers have to win the students over, which is not a small feat given the history of distrust, violence, and pain that many of these refugee students have faced.

It is a very giving job, we have to keep giving. (Participant 14)

I think that sometimes [traditional] teachers get really frustrated with these students but if they had a little bit more knowledge or background knowledge about what this child has been through to get to this point, I think that it would be helpful to them to be more empathetic. (Participant 3)

Well, I try to get to their level with the language speed bump, or obstacle and I try to learn some of their language. In my interview for the job actually, the same question kind of came up, I answered the question about the 'one thing I would do to make them feel more welcome' and my response was to learn the 'how do you do's' in their languages. You know, thank you, goodbye, hello, how are you. That is one thing I do

personally just to make them feel a little more at ease. I get looks of ‘how did you know that’ and then they proceed to try to teach me more. That is not why I am doing it, I am doing it just to give them a sense of comfort that ‘hey, even though this teacher is an American, he is trying to communicate with me on some level.’ (Participant 7)

Parental Differences. Teachers must also be prepared to address differences in parental culture. Teachers work with parents who speak a different language, have different educational experiences and expectations, and potentially have odd work schedules that do not allow them the flexibility to attend conferences and open houses. New parents coming to the Welcomers School are often unsure of aspects such as mandatory attendance, immunization requirements, and so forth and could even be afraid of the school’s “brainwashing” their child. The teachers for this study gave the following examples from their experiences in Welcomers School.

Our parents, you know there is so much diversity amongst our parents, some are very educated and some have never been to school in their lives. Some are torture survivors and they have fear of any kind of government or agency setting and they don’t trust so it really depends on which population group you are working with. Generally, our parents are very supportive of anything that we do here. If we have a conversation with them, they will usually accept what we are presenting to them and support us full-heartedly. There is a lot of appreciation for what we do. What I see from that is great success with our kids as they grow. (Participant 14)

I think our biggest challenges are setting common goals between the teachers, the support staff such as myself, the counselor and the parents...I don't want to say they don't value education but it is not on their top list of priorities in life and a lot of the families believe that it is better for a teenager to work, even if it is for minimum wage than go to school. So we have to do a lot of educating on that end and it is challenging, especially for families who are living in extreme poverty and they really need everybody to work. It is hard to get families to buy in to a little sacrifice now will pay off in the future. (Participant 14)

Curriculum

Common Core and ESL. One of the biggest obstacles the teachers at the Welcomers School face is the fact that the “Common Core does not accommodate for ESL students” (Participant 15). Language Arts teachers are required to use the Language Arts Standards, which are not tailored to meet the needs of ESL students. The standardization of a curriculum that

could meet the needs of refugee students would not only help the students in the Welcomers School but would also help as they transition into their traditional schools as well. The difficulty with this issue is the wide range of ability levels of the students. Some refugee students come from refugee camps in countries that have educational structures in place that allow students to come to the United States and succeed, while other refugee students come from countries without any formal educational structures in place. This variation in ability levels makes a standardized curriculum very difficult to create but something that is needed for ESL populations.

I think just as I look at what is happening overall in our district with ESL, I think we need a curriculum. We struggle with ‘what is it that ESL teaches?’ and we have gone from our focus used to be grammar and now this is content and supporting the students in the content areas. (Participant 8)

The biggest challenge I would say is the diversity in their levels and trying to address that in one classroom. It’s challenging to bridge those gaps, especially from a content area. ELL is, the classes are targeted by level, so you’re going to have similar ability grouping, but with content areas, Science and Math, not so much. (Participant 5)

We are currently using the Language Arts CCSS for our curriculum guide. For me that is language arts, that is not ESL and nobody quite understands the difference between Language Arts and ESL. Now ESL is teaching the language, just like our kids out there are learning Spanish, there is an emphasis on the language and the structure of the language and the vocabulary of the language. Whereas the Language Arts from the CCSS emphasizes something totally different. I just think ESL needs a really, really good curriculum to follow, which is going to serve the needs of our refugee students and give them language as opposed to content area. (Participant 8)

Spoken language vs. academic language. A major curriculum concern present with refugee students is the difference between spoken language and academic language. Often times, students will grasp spoken language in schools and teachers assume that their students comprehend academic language, creating a false sense of abilities for the teacher and frustration for the student. Teachers need to understand that there is a steep learning curve for students to

learn academic language and just because the student can speak English in the classroom, it does not necessarily equate to success academically.

It is definitely, from a teacher's point of view, a struggle because the expectations are just so high for these students who are learning English and it takes a lot... They come and they learn the language so quickly but the academic language does take a lot longer. Nothing really prepares them for actually being there and how fast the teachers talk. (Participant 6)

When you are saying language proficiency, [refugees] have lower language proficiency. And not just language proficiency but the rate of time it takes to get them speaking on the same level or the amount of time it takes to get them to understand or retain information because of the fact that they have not had schooling. Really, nationality has nothing to do with it. I really think it has to do with how long you spent in formal school setting. (Participant 9)

Sometimes I wonder if we are forgetting that these students need five years to actually [adapt] themselves in a content level, not in a social level, but in a content language. (Participant 2)

The subject of math is one area where student's frustration levels seem to be the most evident. This may be counterintuitive, as math is a global subject where addition and subtraction across the world give you the same answer. However, frustration occurs where the student may be able to complete the numerical portion of the problem yet struggles to verbalize the answer to the class or the teacher.

It's hard to watch them be frustrated because they know what they are doing, even with the word problems they can figure it out, but watching the frustration of not being able to express themselves is the hardest part of the day by far. Especially our students who are really proficient mathematically, but not the English language. (Participant 1)

Specialized Help and Support

I can recall one particular family where the two children that were here were physically disabled. When we met them, one sibling walked on her knees, her bare knees, because her bones were deformed and her legs folded up behind her. The brother was not able to walk at all and the mother carried him, a middle school student, on her back into the enrollment appointment. In fast forwarding through their story, by the time they left the Welcomers School and we had worked with several different partnerships, the girl left walking on her feet. We had contacted different doctors that volunteered their services to perform operations to correct their disabilities. So that, I think it was last year, we took a

tour to a local community college and that student had finished high school and was there studying and she walked up to me and said 'hello' because she remembered me. So it is instances like that that I know had they been in a regular environment, their life may not had been affected as much as being here. (Participant 4)

As this interview participant suggests, refugee education creates unique challenges that traditional schools may overlook or be unequipped to address. . Most refugees coming to the United States are coming with few possessions, have limited English skills, and are escaping traumatic experiences. Schools looking to meet the needs of refugee students need to make a conscious effort to provide supports for these students, which in this economic climate makes for difficult decisions regarding spending. In the theoretical framework of this study, these challenges fall under the umbrella of support staff and inclusion.

Support staff

Social worker. With a school serving a large population of high-need students, a social worker is a critical part of the fabric of the school. The social worker must work with the entire family, not just the students. As previously discussed, a federal grant allows the social worker at Welcomers School to connect family members with the Psychology department of a local university. The social worker at the Welcomers School has also organized donations of clothes, school supplies, groceries, and other resources in the school to help students and their families meet the basic needs of survival so that they can be in the position to learn.

I just communicated with two of our former students this morning who are both graduating from a local university next week and I asked them if they were having a graduation party and they said no because one starts his PhD candidacy May 20 and the other got a scholarship to Boston University for graduate school so they have to leave right away. They were two of seven children in a single-mother household and the mother had developed Schizophrenia. She is fine now but she was a two-time genocide survivor, she survived two genocides. When they left Africa, her husband was lost and he is blind and they couldn't find him. So I spent a year trying to find him. They were closing camps left and right in that part of the world so he kept moving and they kept losing track of him. So we found him and I petitioned homeland security in Tanzania to let him come here and they approved. So we picked him up from the airport one night

and it seemed like the mom was magically healed from that day. The oldest son, who is going to Boston, he worked full-time, third shift, and would get on the bus and come to school every day. He would sleep about two to three hours a day at the most.
(Participant 14)

Guidance counselor. As with the social worker's role the role of the guidance counselor at the Welcomers School is a more intensive than the typical counselor. Not only is the guidance counselor the first stop for student concerns and issues within the school, but she is also in charge of transitioning all of the students from the Welcomers School to their traditional schools. This transition includes the emotional challenges that come with a new learning environment where they are truly the minority, as well as academic concerns. Given that the Welcomers School receives students from all over the county, this counselor works with up to 128 schools. Because every student is a different case, the counselor works with the classroom teachers to ensure the students will have a plan of study in place at their traditional school that will enable them to graduate on time.

One of [the counselor's] roles is to see that the transition is smooth for the students. Every child is a different case. So you have to make sure that the child will have the plan for the studies they are going to take at the other school and will be able to graduate because the goal of the school is that the students graduate. (Participant 13)

Interpreters. Interpreters are the communication connection between the school and the students' families, as well as serving as the community liaison. Any document that is to be sent home must be translated into at least five languages, which most teachers are unable to do. The interpreter's role is to help the school enroll new students, call parents for teachers, and serve as translators for parent conferences. The interpreters also help in those instances where the parents may not know how to write in their home language. The interpreter is able to communicate, address questions, and introduce them to what the American education system is about and be the resource at the school the parents can comfortably look to for assistance.

Interpreters make my life easier. If it is translating documents or providing someone to physically be here while enrolling students, that means the world. I could very easily print enrollment documents and hand them to the family and say ‘here, fill this out and I’ll get your child in school’ but knowing they have never done anything like this before, that this is all foreign, that it helps to comfort them to have someone explain ‘what is this I am signing.’ (Participant 4)

Without [interpreters] we would not be able to accomplish much at all, honestly, because we wouldn’t have any way to communicate with parents and students. (Participant 14)

Inclusion

Full-year inclusion program. The Welcomers school, like the few schools around the country devoted to teaching refugee students, is an anomaly among traditional public school systems and even more usual in that it serves as a full-year inclusion program housed in a separate building from other schools in the district. Most other refugee schools around the country house their students in the same building as their traditional school peers, allowing for mainstreaming and push-in for refugee students, an option that is not present at the Welcomers School. While the literature on this subject focused on mainstreaming and getting the students access to the traditional population in an effort to acculturate refugee students in the school, no previous research explored a site that like the Welcomers School. By having a separate building, the class sizes are smaller, the students are surrounded by classmates who are all facing similar social and psychological issues, and are facing the American classroom for the first time together. To prepare their students for the transition to their traditional schools, the Welcomers School takes their refugee students to their traditional schools prior to their move.

Understanding the Group

One important aspect that we tend to forget is that this school is full of amazing people. Amazing teachers. But I think because these people, most of the people in this school here, have got the heart to be here. You have to have the heart to be here. The job that we have ahead of us is difficult. The challenges of putting these kids on this path of education is difficult. And people who are doing this they do it because they love what

they are doing. Because of the results, because of the love we receive back from the students. (Participant 2)

When considering refugee education, school leaders and staff need to be aware of who they are teaching and the backgrounds these students bring with them when they arrive. Refugee schools across the country, like the Welcomers School, are set up as schools for newly arrived non-United States citizens. Any student in Welcome District who is entering a United States classroom for the first time will go to Welcomers School. While a majority of these students are from resettlement areas across the world, immigrant students from Central and South America are also enrolled there. One teacher noted that the experiences that refugee and immigrant students enter the school with, and the needs they require, are almost synonymous and so they do not separate the two in terms of their status. The students are placed in the Welcomers School in order to learn and to make a new beginning for their family. The key to working with these students is building working relationships. Many of these students come from such a turbulent past that teachers can serve as the one constant they have in their new life and this starts by building a relationship of trust and understanding in the classroom. In order to understand their students and help them acclimate more quickly, schools need to be aware of students' immigration status and develop relationships that allow the students to grow, both academically and socially.

Status

Different lived experiences. When working with refugees, it is important to understand that all refugees come with different experiences and a history in their home country. Often this means escaping violence or moving beyond stints in overcrowded refugee camps. One similarity that all refugees share is that they most often are leaving everything they have ever known behind. Sometimes this means that they are leaving situations where they had better jobs, better

education, and were respected individuals but were forced by war or political upheaval to leave their homes. Teachers of refugee students must understand that these students come with difficult past experiences that they must overcome in order to focus on education.

I just really look at our kids as a whole and think of the incredible things they have experienced. They just seem like every other teenager in the entire world but they have so much more lived experience behind them and sometimes that is not positive experiences, but they are doing their best. (Participant 12)

What they have come from and what they have viewed as a normal part of life...when they tell their stories, and some of them can be pretty graphic, and it can be pretty horrific what they have had to go through, really puts a perspective on the luck that I have had on my life really. (Participant 1)

I think refugees are this new entity in education that is not well shaped or known. People don't see it, they don't know what it is. In fact, sometimes and in some very few cases, there are families that I wonder if they were much better where they were with the skills that they have. Because what we are trying to do I think is very tough. We are trying to re-educate people that, in their country, were successful. (Participant 2)

I grew up in a very safe, white, middle class environment so I have very little in common with the backgrounds of these students, of refugee students. And so sometimes I am kind of at a loss for what to say if they are having issues because I have never had issues like that before. (Participant 3)

They could have left trauma or war or violence, or any number of things so the first day I don't know their history or their stories, so I just keep an eye on them to see what they seem to be doing. I have had some kids that step right in and act like they didn't skip a beat, but most of them are nervous for the first few days or weeks. (Participant 6)

Ability grouping and isolation. In order to help students at their academic level, the Welcomers School groups students according to their instructional levels. This means students tend to move around from class to class in these “blocks,” which usually lends itself to students spending time in the comfort of their personal cultural groups. The few times students get to interact with others include classroom changes in the hallway, lunchtime, or the multiple bus rides to and from school. While block scheduling is seen as necessary given the varied levels of

English proficiency, some teachers worry that it inhibits the students from reaching out to other groups and seeking social interactions.

Usually what will happen is we will have like our cultural groups will kind of stick together. (Participant 1)

Because we have so many various levels of English and the students tend to move in the blocks, according to instructional levels, they become more aware of who knows more than they do, and that intimidates them a lot. And so it takes longer. (Participant 2)

Tourist vs. immigrant

Eager learners. Ogbu and Simmons (1998) contend that refugees come to the United States with a “tourist” mentality where they are eager to learn a new culture. At Welcomers School, teachers’ descriptions of their students’ work ethic, lack of discipline issues, and the generally content nature of the students in the classroom gives support to that finding. The staff at Welcomers were quick to point out that they had minimal discipline issues at the school and noticed that only when the refugees were exposed to their American classmates did they start becoming disciplinary issues.

Try to see the children for what they possess, which is a really hard work ethic, a respect for school, a respect for teachers, try to be thankful that you have a child in your room that really respects you and thinks the world of you and who will do anything that you put in front of them. (Participant 3)

I mean, I don't think I face nearly the amount of challenges the traditional classroom teacher faces teaching middle school students. I would not be a middle school teacher in another building. (Participant 6)

Remember, refugees [and] immigrants suffer a lot of loss and grief and here, it is a healing process too. The school helps them with that. (Participant 13)

They adapt very quickly, which is amazing to me, how fast they adapt and how fast they seem pretty happy. (Participant 1)

Safe environment. Welcomer School aids in this “tourist” mentality by creating a safe environment that is educationally tailored to students academic level. Another reason refugees

have a tourist mentality is because many refugee students have an end goal of returning home in mind. Several staff members mentioned that students they had did not necessarily want to be here but could not be at home because of political issues. Welcomer School provided that safe environment for them to foster the “tourist” mentality and learn without fear of violence. Their goal was to get an education so they could go home and “fix” their home country and unite their homeland again.

I have students tell me when they graduate from high school they are going to go home. They are just here because their parents brought them and they have no intention of staying here. Not everybody. I guess I expected refugee people to be really thrilled to be here, but I have met, I would say at least 50% of refugee people that I know feel neutral about being here, they’re not really excited, they would rather be at home. But home right now has genocide issues so they are going to live here. (Participant 3)

Relationships

Trust. The key to creating a relationship with refugee students is understanding that they are scared when they enter the school and they have a need for teachers that are willing to earn their trust. When working with refugees, the teacher’s role is not only to educate them, but also to help them acclimate to the traditional classroom setting. To do this, teachers need to develop relationships with their students and truly know their students’ histories and needs. Students need to know that they are not only going to be safe physically but also emotionally safe as well. This is where housing the Welcomers School in a separate building helps the students develop.

That’s the big thing with refugee kids, you have to prove to them that they can trust you. Because when they believe that they can trust you then they will open up. Until they think that they can trust you, they will not talk...Once you win them over, you can help them grow. It is a lot like politicians, you have to win them over. (Participant 3)

And safe not only in terms of nothing wrong is going to happen to me, but emotionally safe. (Participant 2)

Compassionate learning environment. In understanding the potentially traumatic experiences that these refugee students experienced and the lack of education they may have

received, it is important that teachers create compassionate learning environments for the students. Through cultural training and experiences at the Welcomers School, teachers understand the importance of relationships among peers within their classrooms. In order to do this, lessons include group work, interactive lessons, and activities that encourage acceptance and diversity amongst the students. These interactions allow the students to see that their experiences of being new in America will allow them to make friendships across cultural heritage groups. It is imperative that the teacher create a learning environment that encourages effort and understands that mistakes are part of the learning process. The underlying message is that these students do not need to be pitied, they should not be treated based on the situations that are occurring in their countries.

I think they see people that care. And they learn to respect care very easily (Participant 2)

You know, the thing I like about the students, and that I was pleasantly surprised is, once they get here, the commonality of their experiences of being new in America, makes them friends across their cultural heritages. (Participant 5)

Academic expectations. Teachers of refugee students also need to believe in what their students are capable of academically. While the students may lack the language skills to complete the tasks to typical standards, the students work extremely hard to succeed. This may lead to frustration, especially in math, because the students are able to complete numerical problems but explaining their answer in a second language is difficult. Just because there is violence in their country does not mean that these students should be viewed as a threat or cannot learn; on the contrary, these students need to be viewed as resilient and needing support.

Try and be patient and understand that as frustrated as you might feel, they feel just as frustrated as you. Because two people feeling frustrated, is that ever going to work? Probably not. So maybe try to release the frustration, try to focus on empathy. (Participant 3)

They're going to be scared, they're going to be nervous, they're going to maybe not even understand what is being taught, you know, but we have to, and I hope that is what I provide, is that that's okay for now. That's all right while they are getting acclimated, and just to be, have high expectations of them academically, but still to know that it's okay to make mistakes. (Participant 1)

Parent Role

Lack of awareness of American education system. Schools working with refugees must also address limitations in the parents' understanding of how American schools function. Teachers of refugee students need to realize that a majority of refugee parents have moved to this country with nothing and do so out of fear with their family's safety at the forefront of the move. Many work multiple jobs at odd hours in order to make ends meet, which could inhibit their participation and presence at the school.

Our parents, you know there is so much diversity amongst our parents, some are very educated and some have never been to school in their lives. Some are torture survivors and they have fear of any kind of government or agency setting and they don't trust so it really depends on which population group you are working with. (Participant 14)

Students

Another student that sticks out in my mind, he is my success story, my baby that I tell everyone about. He came from El Salvador. It was pretty bad over there, it was just him and his mom. His mom is a single mom, I think his dad was killed and there was a lot of drama and a lot of corruption. So they were basically fleeing for their lives as well. He came during my first year, I should say I came during his first year because he was one of those students that was going to transition mid-year in January. So he transitioned to a local high school in Welcome District [and when graduated], he earned over \$200,000 in scholarship money at a local college. He is an awesome young man, student body president. I always said we are all going to end up working for him because he has that drive and passion but I think one of the times when I was carting him around to his many appointments, we were talking and he said he wanted to go back to his country and help because he said it was so terrible and so corrupt and he said 'I need to go back and help.' And so to me, I am sitting there, and I think well how many other children have that same dream to go back home and make it better? For me, it is one of those things that we have to support the family and the kid. His mom is a sweet lady and we support her as much as we can but we also looked out for him. We especially looked out for him and made sure the whole unit was okay.

Stories like the one above were a common, unexpected theme that emerged during this research and that warrant inclusion in the literature on refugee students. Interview participants shared stories of students' school belonging, self-awareness, and resilience that aid in their acculturation. Being in a separate building has allowed the Welcomers staff to really dive into these students' lives and encourage them to take ownership of their learning. The following themes are absent from the original literature review, but this research has shown that they are crucial in the success of refugee students.

School belonging

Welcoming environment. Above all, the Welcomers staff tries to create a welcoming environment that they hope can alleviate a lot of the stress from the students' lives. From translators working in the front office to a staff that has been trained to work with refugee populations, the Welcomers School has worked hard to create an environment where students feel safe and belong. Refugee students share the same academic fears as their traditional classmates and worry about succeeding in the classroom once they are able to overcome obstacles from their past.

They all have that same fear: whether I can do this, or can't do this, they are all terrified. And I think having the community that we have here really helps them...we have experienced that, sometimes within days upon coming to our school, some of those anxieties are released. They immediately realize that they are in a nurturing environment where there are tons of other children just like them. Whether they speak the same language or not, they know that they are new and they know that they are learning together. So I think that is just huge and that is what is making an impact on our students.(Participant 4)

So I think it all depends on the kid and everything else, but I know for the most part, they are welcomed and they will see a smiling face from somewhere. (Participant 15)

Personal touches. In order to give the students a sense of belonging, there are posters around the school that show where they are in the world, maps of the state, and informational

posters that include pictures of the students demonstrating proper protocol of school procedures. The walls of the library are lined with posters of students in various areas around the school, which allows the students the opportunity to see someone like them on the walls of the school. This is contrary to what these students will see in most traditional schools whose mass-produced items include only minimal diversity.

Self-Awareness

Student awareness of what they are leaving. As students enter the Welcomers School as a newly arrived student, they enter a classroom of 20-30 students who are most likely more proficient in English than they are. Conversations can be held that the refugee student does not understand and routines are in place that may be confusing to a newly arrived student. The staff at the Welcomers School realize this and allow the students time to acclimate, either through pairing up or just letting them sit and observe for a week in order to find their place in the school and see how things run. Some of these students may be seeing diversities they have never seen before. One interview participant noted the importance of allowing new students to observe and develop an understanding of routine.

I will typically, and I am not ashamed to say this, I will let them watch. I will let them get comfortable enough to moving, to the atmosphere of not only seeing me as an American teacher, but also different cultures. Some of them may be seeing an African American for the first time in their lives. It is just a matter of comfort to me is really important. (Participant 7)

Isolation allows for personal development. Many of the refugee students in America's classrooms have escaped violent areas that do not necessarily represent the culture they claim as their own. They may come to the Welcomers School with mixed ideas of who they are and can be easily manipulated by their peers in order to fit in.

Not having the American kids as an influence on our [refugee] kids is different. And not having our kids dealing in the American culture and seeing what happens in the

American high school with the Americans is different. We are isolated here. (Participant 8)

The isolation of the Welcomers School allows the students to develop a stronger sense of self before being thrust into the American school culture. They also strengthen their identity by telling their stories to students in traditional schools. Each of the students has a story to tell and the Welcomers School encourages them to be themselves and be aware of the uniqueness that each of them brings.

When our kids learn enough English, we take them to other schools to speak and give other student populations information about people from other countries. (Participant 14)

Resilience

Student resilience in a new country. Each teacher interviewed for this research shared a story about a refugee coming to the school with a difficult personal history, succeeding in the school, and moving on to be a successful student in the traditional setting. One theme that was repeatedly brought up by the teachers was the idea of resilience among these students. Teachers mentioned the motivation that these students have for learning and the desire they all share for acquiring knowledge.

I would much rather have my refugee and immigrant students who are sweet and kind and appreciative that they are getting an education versus someone who takes it for granted and doesn't want to be there. (Participant 6)

You know, they are all just really sweet and willing to learn and try their best and somehow they usually make it through to graduation from high school. (Participant 8)

My point is that we should not look at refugee families as helpless and suffering. We should look at them as strong, resilient survivors. We should push these kids as much as we can in the area of academics. (Participant 14)

The ability, the resilience they have for trying. They have the motivation for learning, the desire for acquiring. They hardly ever give up. (Participant 2)

Refugee students bring various heritages and behaviors into the classroom. These students are resilient survivors who have overcome great odds and should be challenged academically and encouraged to get involved in their community in order to establish a connection to where they live.

Conclusion

The refugee population across the country continues to grow, even as educational funding overall is shrinking. In such situations, policy makers and leaders of schools such as the Welcomers School must get creative in ensuring that the sufficient and appropriate resources and support are in place for refugee populations. The literature identifies nine areas critical to refugee education. Nearly every interview participant in this study mentioned how important support was in the success of the Welcomers school. The types of support mentioned varied, but each was equally as important in the eyes of the staff of the school. While available funding has decreased in recent years, there is still a commitment from the top down to keep Welcomers School in place and support the newly arriving refugee students that the district receives each year. Policies that support and promote refugee learning, along with strong leaders who believe in the education process for these students, have helped this school endure and successfully meet its mission of preparing refugee students for success in their traditional schools. The heart of education lies with the teachers, and refugees require caring, nurturing teachers who understand their unique needs, are willing to make the relationships necessary to help them grow, and have the support staff to ensure that these needs are met. While financial support, appropriate policies, and strong support staff are important, through this research, students' sense of self-belonging and awareness was found to be just as important.

The next chapter of this study focuses on recommendations from the findings for school districts interested in developing a refugee education program based on the literature around refugee education and time spent in the Welcomers School.

CHAPTER VI - RECOMMENDATIONS

The growing diversity in the American education system has created challenges educational leaders must address, including the unique needs of refugee students. With the emphasis placed on accountability standards, the achievement levels of refugee students, formerly an invisible minority, are becoming more transparent. Theoharis (2007) argued that social justice leadership prioritizes addressing an issue and eliminating marginalization in schools. Welcome District has taken steps to address the risk of marginalization of refugee students by creating policies and teacher-training opportunities that, as this research shows, help these students succeed. The findings of this study validate the need for focused leadership in schools working with refugee populations if they are to acculturate quickly and succeed academically.

This study was created to identify challenges that refugee students face in the United States and also to identify what educational leaders can do to create positive learning environments in which refugees can succeed. This study began by exploring the relevant history of refugees in the United States and the global literature addressing refugee education. From this literature, a framework was created that identified nine components identified by researchers as important to refugee education. These nine components guided the creation of interview questions and observation protocols during the study. During the collection of research, additional aspects were identified, while some existing components identified in the literature review were found to be less relevant.

While this research was conducted at a single school, the uniqueness of its programming and the timeframe for this study made Welcomers School a sufficient choice for deeper inquiry. The school is one of only a handful of schools across the country set up specifically to meet the needs of refugee students. According to the principal, this school is unlike any other school in the country in that it houses newly arrived students separately for their first year in the country. The uniqueness of the Welcomers School allowed for more direct teacher input from a majority of the staff and led to confirmations from and additions to the literature about refugee education.

Recommendations Based on Findings

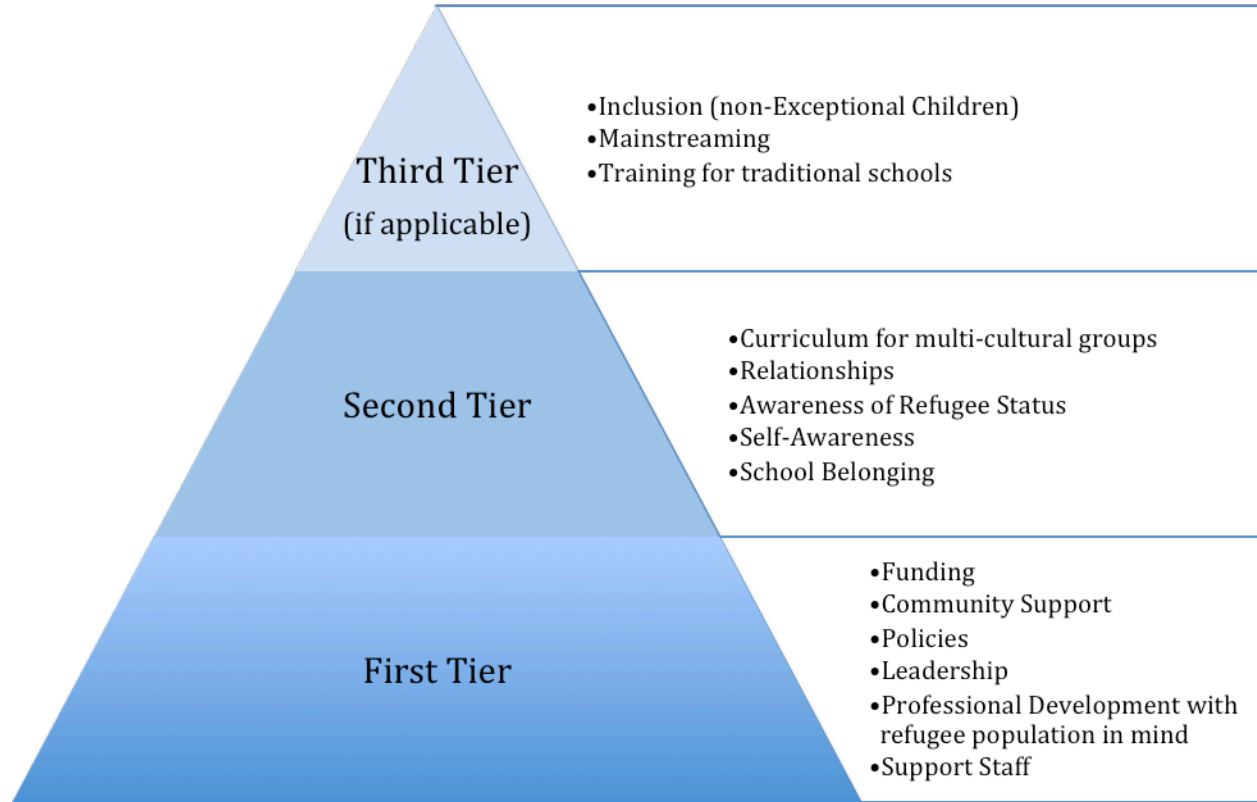
Throughout the research process, it was clear that Welcome District had utilized research-based practices in the school's founding and day-to-day operations. Several staff members noted that the school was always evaluating and modifying its approach to meet the changing needs of their students. Many of the framework components presented in the literature review were easy to see in action, while some were not as prevalent. This section compares and contrasts the findings of the research at the Welcomers School with those studies examined in the literature review. It also includes additions to the literature that were not present in the review but were deemed relevant after time spent in the field.

Available research on refugee education typically focused on individual refugee groups. Little has been done to look at the education of refugees as a whole in the United States and how the school climate that refugee students are learning in affects their success. Pugh, Every, and Hattam (2012) and Taylor and Sidhu (2005) provided most of the literature for the framework of this research, but even they only focused on small pieces of the equation for educating refugees and failed to identify school climate and culture as a variable in the acculturation process.

This section includes recommendations by the researcher based on both the literature on refugee education and data collected from the field. These recommendations include specific recommendations for funding, professional development ideas and guidance, and suggestions for specific roles in the school (social worker, tutors, interpreters, etc.). While not all schools and refugee situations are the same, these suggestions should serve as a starting point if districts face an influx of refugee students.

For districts looking to establish a refugee-centered educational setting, Figure 6 identifies priorities for the successful acculturation of refugee students. The first tier represents the necessary foundations for a school district to be successful in educating refugees in a separate learning environment. Components of the second tier are dependent on the foundation of the first tier, but are important in order to see growth. The third tier identifies outlier items that would benefit refugees but are not essential to their success. Each of these items is expanded in the following section.

Figure 6: Tiers of implementation by importance



Funding. One of the most common themes of this study, present both in the literature and the research gathered at Welcomers School, was the impact of funding for schools working with refugees. This funding comes from various levels (local, state, and federal) and impacts the school in different ways. For the Welcomers School, this financial support took the shape of tutors in the classrooms, instructional resources to help teach students, and building and maintenance of a separate facility for students at the school. The concern at this point is whether or not this funding will continue to flow as resources become scarcer and districts receive less from state and federal sources. As Pugh, Every, and Hattam (2012) contend, creativity in maintaining quality programs with less funding will become a necessary skill for school leaders.

In light of the current economic conditions and other issues affecting feasibility within a district, a separate school for immigrant students may not be practical. However, the results of this study clearly support the argument that refugee students should have a location in the district designed specifically for their acculturation process. This location could be a wing in a school, but it should house all of the refugees in the district so that resources can be channeled to one area rather than multiple areas across the district. This setting would allow students to develop their sense of self-awareness with students who are sharing the same anxieties and facing the same obstacles, without the influence of their American classmates. Buy-in from district leaders at this stage would be a necessity as funding would likely be pulled from other area schools.

Districts looking to strengthen their refugee education also need to focus on channeling resources to teaching aides and supplemental materials that allow the teachers to accurately assess the refugee students' academic level and build from there.

In summary, major components of funding include:

- Separate setting where all refugee students in the district can be housed (school building, section of a school, etc.)
- Students should be separated by age groups (elementary, middle, and high school)
- ESL trained teachers hired to work with these populations
- Money for resources (books, reading programs, instructional supplies, support staff)
- Funding for transportation to get students to the refugee center

Community Support. Community support typically means money and policies that are favorable towards a certain cause. In the case of refugee education, it goes a bit deeper. First of all, refugees are spread out in small pockets around the country, so any funding and policies decisions that are made are only impacting a small portion of the population. With resources

being scarce, support from various places (schools, neighborhoods, churches, lawmakers) needs to be in place before creating this type of separate education setting. Parents and leaders in the district need to have a clear understanding of the implications of not educating these students and the social injustice that is occurring with their exclusion. Teachers and school leaders also need to be educated about the needs of these students and why the district is choosing to commit resources to their refugee populations.

For leaders trying to garner support and address the ethical issue of equitable refugee education, one way to demonstrate the issue is to group the students together. By having a larger mass where data can be tracked and the impact can be felt will allow for community supporters and policy makers to see the issue at hand and the need for support with these students. With No Child Left Behind, a subgroup below 40 is not recognized on standardized test, but if the group is above 40, it is hard to ignore. This strategic placement of refugees prevents them from going unseen to outsiders and allows the district leadership to pinpoint an issue with data, thus giving them more support for making changes.

Another strategy for leaders wanting to make change is using scare tactics. While not fully supported by the researcher, it can be used as an effective agent of change. In the case of refugee education, connections can be made to the negative impact these students could have in the community if they are not educated. Using crime numbers and tax dollar reform programs that would be required if nothing is done could be a motivating factor for district leadership to use. The negative effect of this strategy is that it reifies stereotypes of particular groups in a community and perpetuates biases and discrimination. This would lead to other struggles that leaders would have to deal with and, goes against the core of the research of helping refugees overcome these stereotypes in order to acculturate.

- Garnering grassroots support from the community level up to policy makers
- Needs a champion of the cause; ethical decision
- Inform teachers and school leaders and let them be your voice to the community
- Involve community leaders and gather their input in the process
- Explain to parents and political leaders “why” there is this need

Targeted policies and system support. Targeted policies created for the refugee community within the district were also a common theme in this study, although they identified by the staff in an indirect manner. The most evident policy is the mandatory attendance at Welcomers School for newly arrived students in Welcome District. By creating this policy, district leaders are providing students with an educational foundation before they join the mainstream setting of the traditional school. To support this policy, district leaders have taken on the challenge of ensuring the students have transportation to and from the school, which removes the logistical and financial challenges on both school leadership and refugee families.

The district has also made ESL education a key component by developing a “very inclusive” (Participant 13) ESL district. This plan includes training opportunities for ESL teachers across the district, including teachers within the Welcomers School. It also focuses on supporting the Welcomers School by allowing it to be a separate building for refugee students. The creation of a plan and the support in its implementation demonstrate the level of commitment to refugee education in this district.

While district policy support is obvious, there are other policy issues that are out of the district’s control. The mandate by the Federal Office of Civil Rights that limits the time refugee or other minority students can spend in a separate setting has the potential to handcuff school leaders, as certain refugee students may benefit from another year of specialized curriculum.

Another area where school leaders are hindered by policy is with the accountability standards and high-stakes assessments required by state and federal governments. This policy, which Taylor (2006) addressed as problematic, was a frequent topic of concern and frustration for the staff at the Welcomers School. Alternative assessments need to be considered for refugee students, especially given the stress and feelings of inadequacy refugee students experience when forced to take a foreign, formative assessment.

Community support is another essential component for districts looking to provide appropriate educational opportunities for refugee students. As discussed, Welcome District has benefited from such support over the last 20-plus years, but those conditions will not necessarily be present in districts creating refugee schools from scratch. Buy-in from the community and community leaders is a key component of a successful refugee school. Policy makers must take steps to help the community understand the need for this type of setting for newly arrived refugee students and build support for the district plan.

To sum up, the issue of targeted policy includes:

- Mandatory attendance policy for newly arrived students to attend refugee school for acculturation period
 - This period can vary based on need (English language, schooling experience, etc.)
- Policies that provide transportation to get refugees from around the district to the refugee school
- ESL district plan that supports and encourages refugee student development
- Flexibility in accountability measures (specifically EOC/EOG scores)

- Work with community to create policies that exist in the district as well as in the schools (strategic plan for housing and transportation within the district, resources for parents and adult refugees, etc.)

Site-based leadership. Strong leadership that is “active and supportive” (Pugh, Every, & Hattam, 2012) of refugee students’ education is also important to the success of high-refugee population schools. During the interviews, staff members mentioned how demanding the job was and that it includes both students and their family members. If the needs of the student and family are not met, education will not be a priority for students and the acculturation process may take longer. A strong leader must be aware of the risks of marginalization that can occur from misunderstanding the student population.

Along with support from state, district, and community leaders, educational leaders working with refugee students need to be flexible. State and federal accountability demands and the requirements of the Common Core curricula can put added stress on schools with ESL populations. Principals who understand this and have support from their districts can be more efficient with their time and utilize data that more accurately depicts their students’ growth. Welcomers School administration used WIDA data instead of End-of-Course testing data as a measurement tool. In this way, educational leaders in the Welcomers District serve as advocates for their refugee students. The students are still held accountable, but leaders use a different lens that “levels the playing field” and gives a more accurate representation of their students’ abilities.

Characteristics of site-based leadership include:

- “Social justice” (Theoharris, 2007) leaders who understand the needs of refugee students and are willing to advocate for them

- Experience working with Title I populations and funding structures
- Respect from the community and school system and an understanding of the role of community groups and resettlement agencies
- Familiarity with teaching ESL students
- Ability to identify and communicate the needs of the school clearly to other schools and district leaders

Professional Development. As with any specialized population or program, professional development is a critical component for teachers working with refugee students but it is also very complex. Just as Pugh, Every, and Hattam (2012) found, continual development is a key part of developing effective teachers. The Welcomers District has created multiple opportunities for their teachers to learn about working with refugee students and to build the skills necessary to help them succeed. Training opportunities can come in the form of program trainings (such as reading and spelling) or cultural sensitivity training. These trainings need to focus on the lives and cultures of the refugees in the building, as well as the traumatic and violent histories these students enter the school with. These experiences separate refugee needs from their immigrant classmates and should be taken into consideration when planning professional development. Teachers are not the only staff members who need to be included in these trainings. The Welcomers District requires specific trainings for interpreters, for example, before they are allowed to take on an interpreter role in a school.

The difficulties of professional development for such a complex group are the various types of training that are needed. In some settings, teachers of refugee students are working with more than 10 different cultural groups and getting training for each of these groups would be nearly impossible. For professional development in this setting to be successful, professional

development has to be broad and overarching, not limited to the shallow descriptions of dress, dance, and diet. Good professional development for staff in a refugee school setting includes: understanding the basic constructs of bilingualism, language proficiency, role of first language and culture in learning, demands that mainstream education places on culturally diverse learners, needs and characteristics of students with limited formal schooling, and belief in students as individuals and limited English proficiency is not a deficiency (Antunez, 2002). Ultimately, teachers are being trained to have a heightened awareness of their students' needs, as well as a profound respect for the differences in the room. Teachers also need to be trained to utilize the resettlement groups and apply their experiences and first-hand knowledge in their classroom setting.

Many of the students who will be entering these types of classrooms will have limited English skills and will therefore need teachers who understand language development. While continual training by ESL personnel would be preferred, at minimum these trainings should occur at least twice a year, once in the fall when new students enter the school and again in the spring when students are transitioning in and out of the school. These trainings should focus on ESL needs and strategies as well as language development programs the district chooses to utilize. Companies such as the National Coalition Building Institute would be a starting point for identifying resources for diversity trainings in schools.

In addition, summer trainings should occur each year with an emphasis on what new refugee populations the school will serve. These trainings should be done by resettlement agencies in the area who work specifically with the incoming refugees. Since refugees arrive at various times in the year, this type of training should also be provided for teachers anytime there is an influx of more than 10 students from a particular region, as those numbers will make an

impact on classroom instructional needs and possibly change the dynamic of the school.

Therefore, teachers will need to be trained on their specific cultural differences and possible needs. Along with the cultural sensitivity, teachers need to understand the impact that poverty has on refugee students' success. Refugee students often enter this country with little resources and have to face the various aspects of poverty: lack of resources, parents with multiple jobs, government housing, etc. These nuances are things that teachers also need to be aware of when working with refugee students.

One concern that was raised during this study was professional development opportunities for teachers outside of the ESL umbrella, in particular for cultural sensitivity and bullying training. The refugee students who enter the traditional classroom have personal histories that are different from what most classroom teachers have encountered. Cultural sensitivity trainings for those teachers allow refugee students to enter into a safe environment with a teacher who is more aware of the atmosphere they are creating in their classroom. Bullying is a big concern for refugee students entering the traditional school as well. Being of a different ethnicity, background, and appearance can make them targets of bullying from their American classmates. Teachers from this study have seen their students "become targets" (Participant 1) at their traditional schools and feel that sensitivity training for teachers and students would raise an awareness that could potentially limit the number of bad experiences their students face.

Principle 1: Professional development programs should help teachers understand the complex characteristics of

Important elements of professional development include:

- Banks, Cookson, Gay, et. al. (2001) offer the following design principles to aid district leaders in creating successful professional development for teachers:
 - Training for teachers on the complex characteristics of ethnic groups within U.S. society and how these interactions influence student behavior
 - Creating equitable opportunities for students to learn and meet high standards
 - Utilizing a curriculum that helps students understand that knowledge is socially constructed
 - Instituting extracurricular opportunities that allow for an increase in academic achievement and foster positive interracial relationships between students
 - Training on how to use group activities that improve intergroup relations within lessons
 - Incorporating stereotyping and other biases into lessons
- Summer trainings:
 - Cultural sensitivity training (National Coalition Building Institute)
 - Programs for teachers
 - Faces and Voices of Refugee Youth: A Curriculum Guide for Teachers and Counselors Grades K-6 (Salt Lake Education Foundation, 2002)
 - Incoming students and their lived experiences (resettlement agencies)
 - Anti-bullying trainings (Violence Prevention Works, US Education department)
- Continual training throughout the year (Fall and Spring at minimum) trainings:
 - Literacy and language development (State and Local ESL departments)
- As needed throughout the year:

- Training on newly arrived refugee groups as they enter (10+ at one time)

School-level support staff. Just as important as the teachers leading lessons within the classroom are the support staff who work toward the emotional and physical well-being of refugee students. These individuals took on various roles in the Welcomers School including interpreter, social worker, and tutors. The interpreters also serve as parent and community liaisons within the school. These positions are critical for the success of a refugee school due to the high number of languages and cultures present. In the study, interactions with support staff positions were repeatedly referenced by leadership and classroom teachers as well as testing and admissions coordinators. The impact of these interpreters is critical in the success of a refugee school setting.

Important issues for interpreters:

- Native speakers with a connection to the community
- Will vary each year based on the refugee populations the school serves
- Should be fluent in both written and spoken language
- Resettlement agencies may be a resource for finding these individuals and also help in training
- Should go through training on how to be an effective interpreter (provided by State Department of Public Instruction and district)

In light of the hardships and disadvantages facing refugee students entering the education system, the social worker plays a very important role in their adjustment as well, supporting not only the student but the family as well. At Welcomers School, the social worker's role included reaching out to parents who had not met immunization requirements, connecting refugees with family members still in resettlement camps, and securing access for students to get basic

supplies. The social worker in a refugee school needs to have experience working with low-income families and the various needs they may have.

Important issues for social worker:

- Experience working with low-income families and refugees in the district
- A working relationship with resettlement agencies and district health services
- Good grasp of the resettlement process and how to navigate the system
- Ability to work closely with administration to ensure students are meeting state requirements (immunizations, attendance, etc.)

The final support staff position identified in this study was classroom tutors. Tutors provide opportunities for small-group pull-out lessons and lower teacher-to-student ratios, allowing students more of an individualized education. The Welcomers School classes are already typically smaller than the traditional school, and, with the added tutors in the classrooms, direct contact between students and teachers is maximized.

Important considerations for tutors:

- At least one available for each core teacher to assist
- Available to work with teachers 2-3 times a week
- Experience working as a pull-out teacher and small group lead instructor
- Should have ESL training or experience, teaching experience, and also go through professional development opportunities offered to teachers, especially cultural sensitivity
- Be in place at the school prior to the start of the year

Curriculum. An area with limited attention in refugee-centered schools is curriculum. The Common Core curriculum adopted by the state in which Welcome District is located does not accommodate ESL learners with a specially designed curriculum, forcing it and other states to

use approved materials that are usually above the ability levels of newly arrived students. In its earlier years, the Welcomers School focused on the acculturation of students and their adjustments to the American classroom. With the networks in the community in place to help ease these transitions, the Welcomers School has focused more on curriculum. Their strategies have included hiring a curriculum facilitator for the school and utilizing programs geared toward ESL students that break down language development to the students' level.

In order to help teachers meet the requirements of teaching the Common Core at a level their students can understand, the Welcomers School has employed a curriculum facilitator. The study findings suggest this “right hand” position is a valuable asset to the teachers. Not only does having that position filled take the creation of curriculum off of teachers' workload, but it ensures that all students at the various levels are receiving the same educational themes at a similar pace.

Pugh, Every, and Hattam (2012) and Waters and LeBlanc (2005) both advocated for the use of prescribed, genre-themed learning goals with refugee students. The Welcomers School has made use of such materials; however, teachers reported that the available programs typically reflect Hispanic backgrounds that refugee students from other parts of the world are unable to relate to. The teachers also noted that they do not see this program as effective for lower-achieving students and often have to “push through” the topics even if all students are not capable of mastery. Development of a broader curriculum that touches on themes from various cultural backgrounds, rather than just Hispanic cultures, will likely provide more benefit to refugee students in the United States.

In summary, recommendations for curriculum include:

- Incorporate prescribed, genre-themed programs as a supplement to state-mandated curricula (see Table 6 for examples)
- Provide a structured setting (Naidoo, 2011)
- Challenge students with the curriculum, but do so realistically without getting frustrated by a lack of language understanding
- Incorporate students' cultures into lessons

TABLE 6: Curriculum Resources and Suggestions

Focus	Resources
The American Education System	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Welcome to Our Schools (New York State)
Reading Programs	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ RIGOR (Reading Instructional Goals for Older Readers) ○ ColorinColorado.org ○ Wilson Reading System
Spelling and Word Structure Programs	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Just Words ○ ColorinColorado.org ○ Wilson FUNdations ○ Spelling Connections
Professional Resources for School Staff	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ 102 Content Strategies for English Language Learners: Teaching for Academic Success in Grades 3-12 (Prentice Hall, 2008) ○ Academic Language for English Language Learners and Struggling Readers: How to Help Students Succeed Across Content Areas (Freeman and Freeman Heinemann, 2008) ○ Differentiation Instruction and Assessment for English Language Learners: A Guide for K-12 Teachers (Caslon, Inc, 2010) ○ Teaching English Language Learners Across the Content Areas (ASCD, 2010)

Inclusion. The Welcomers School provides a unique setting in which students acculturate and develop skills in a separate school from their established American peers. The research in the literature review, however, focused on schools in which refugee and other immigrant populations

were mainstreamed with other students. As such, they discussed the importance of inclusion with refugee populations. Ideally, a separate setting would be the best setting for refugee students to adjust to life and education in the United States; however, a separate setting is likely to strain finances, leading to inclusive programs that may not fully meet refugee students' needs. In many cases, there are not enough refugees to justify the expense of a separate setting. In the refugee setting, social inclusion can be a good practice to ensure that students are getting the exposure to their traditional classmates and the routines of their school. This exposure will help them in their transitions out of the separate setting into the mainstream population. For academic purposes, it is also beneficial to the refugee student to get exposure to a traditional interactive classroom environment. The teachers in these classrooms will not necessarily be ESL teachers, will have a set curriculum they must follow, and be filled with native speaking English students, which may encourage the refugee student to acculturate quickly.

One of the drawbacks of the inclusive setting is the potential negative interaction between refugee students and their American classmates. Newly arrived refugees are often timid and do not understand the culture, which makes them targets of bullying and negative American influences (bad language, confusion, etc.). To prevent this, Naidoo (2009) suggests creating an after-school tutoring program that allows students to have positive interactions with classmates prior to entering the mainstream. This not only allows the refugees to have a way to engage with native students, but it also allows them to build positive friendships that they can build upon once entering the mainstream.

More research needs to be completed in the United States regarding inclusion versus exclusion of refugees in the American classroom. Most of the research on this topic stems from Canadian or Australian researchers.

Relationships. While building relationships with students is a good practice for all teachers, the research shows that refugee students need that connection even more. The relationship between teacher and refugee student needs to go beyond the classroom interactions, to include understanding the refugee's family and the experiences they bring with them into the classroom. Knowing a student's past, especially that of a refugee student, allows the teacher to understand their hesitations in responses or the lack of prior knowledge the students may have on a particular topic. Cultural differences between teacher and student could also lead to a misinterpretation of reactions to certain daily classroom functions. One interview participant described a situation where a student from the jungles of Vietnam would occasionally take off his shoes and climb trees all day. The other students picked on this student, but the teacher took the time to know this particular student's history and realized it was part of who he was and what he had known from childhood.

While the staff at the Welcomers School each had their own stories of students and discussed the importance of their relationships with them, one critical aspect of relationship is absent: the district does not follow up with students once they have left Welcomers. They no longer receive the structured support provided at the Welcomers School. This lack of continued oversight creates a significant crack in the system of support for refugee students and is something that districts working with refugee students must address, especially given the investment that goes into their resettlement and initial education.

Significant considerations of teacher relationships include:

- Teachers interested in teaching ESL students or have ESL teaching experience
- Teachers willing to put in the time to learn about their students' histories
- Teachers who have experience working with refugee populations

- Flexible teachers who understand the transiency of the position

Immigration status. While this issue is not on the radar of most research used for the literature review, Ogbu and Simmons (1998) argued that understanding the immigration status of refugee students allows educators to better understand individual students' mentality about being in a new host country. The spectrum of Voluntary versus Involuntary immigrant attaches traits in which newly arrived Americans view their new life in the United States and may respond to various situations. Refugees fall in the middle of this spectrum and possess a unique viewpoint on education and life in the United States. The success stories the participants in this study shared revolved around students who were trying to make a better life for themselves so they could return home and effect change in their native land. This is a powerful dynamic that many in this country do not understand and often resent.

Looking at the Welcomers school, it may be difficult to delineate between the immigrant and the refugee student. The teachers themselves had a difficult time distinguishing between the two in their interviews; however, this distinction needs to be made. Refugees and immigrants all come to this country for a reason and they are considered new and in need of special support to succeed. Most third-world refugees and immigrants have a limited language ability that also requires support in the educational setting. What sets refugees apart is the traumatic and violent lived experiences these students bring with them and the fact that most of them did not choose to come to the United States, they were placed here. Understanding these two things is pivotal to reaching the students and helping them to reach their full potential in the classroom by incorporating their stories and cultures into lessons and knowing where they want to end up. This study looks at the impact that lived experiences and cultural differences have on the

students' learning environment and how an understanding of this from the leader's perspective can lead to success for these students.

Educating communities about refugees' status as immigrants is likely to improve relationships. Many refugee students are not here because they wanted to come here; on the contrary, many refugees know nothing of the United States except for what they see on television and would rather go somewhere else in the world. These individuals are here because they are escaping atrocities in their homeland that risk them losing their lives. They are brought here by resettlement agencies and often want to go home. Refugees are not here to steal jobs or cause problems; they just want the opportunity to survive. Districts working with refugees have to inform their constituents of these facts in order to provide a safe place for refugees to enter without fear of being further oppressed. Likewise, teachers need to understand that many of these refugee students are very eager to learn and that everything they are facing is new and exciting. Tapping into this mentality can enable refugee students to thrive academically and acculturate more quickly so as to continue to develop.

Important considerations regarding immigration status:

- Semi-voluntary immigrant = tourist mentality (everything is new and they are interested in learning the differences)
- Understanding that not all refugees want to be in the United States and most plan on going home
- Every refugee comes from a culture different from the United States and these differences will most likely be seen in the classroom

- Many refugees are coming from war-torn areas and have experiences that require the teacher to be aware of when planning lesson topics (genocide, roles of the various sexes, etc.)

School belonging, self-awareness, and resilience. Topics that were absent from the literature but evident in this study and in need of further research are the concepts of school belonging, self-awareness, and the resilience that refugee students bring with them into the classroom. The lived experiences of refugees are in constant fluctuation and they are susceptible to losing their sense of who they are and how they fit in in their new home. School belonging is a way in which schools can help such students adapt to their learning environment by making it comfortable for them. Telling their stories, seeing artifacts from their country, or even something as simple as seeing their flag and native language written for them shows the students that even though they are in another country, they do not have to forget where they came from. Students who are comfortable in the setting they are in are more likely to do better and acculturate more quickly. While this topic has been the focus of a quantitative study in a local university's psychology department, more needs to be done to hear the students' voices and their stories on a qualitative level. In that study, Thibeault (2013) examined the relationship between students' traumatic experiences and sense of school belonging, with the outcome being that school administrators could identify students at risk of acculturation difficulties.

Two other areas that need further research are the ideas of self-awareness and the resilience that refugee students bring into the schools with them each day. Each of these students has an identity created by their past experiences and their home culture that should not be demonized or ignored. These students need to understand that their identity is important and schools need to be careful not to try and downplay this importance. Fear of difference is the

biggest threat against this self-awareness, and a lack of understanding often forces them to change their behavior to fit what is comfortable to them. When this happens, students are being broken down and having to create an identity in a new country, which will take precedence over their education and extend the time it takes for acculturation to occur.

Refugee students enter schools with varied lived experiences that can hinder their acculturation in schools. In order to boost their students' self-awareness, schools teaching refugees need to focus on Maslow's hierarchy of needs. Most refugee students are initially focused on needs at the bottom of the pyramid, which is physiological, or basic needs. When students are faced with choosing between feeling safe and learning, safety takes precedence. Once these more basic needs are met, refugees are "capable and [have] the desire to move up the hierarchy...Unfortunately, progress is often disrupted by failure to meet lower-level needs" (McLeod, 2007). These same disruptions keep students from acculturating into the American system quickly as well.

The one quality that most of the teachers at the Welcomers School identified in refugee students was resilience. The interview participants noted that their refugee students want to learn, are not discipline problems, and experience exponential academic growth in the short time they are in the school. Several researchers found that refugees have a passionate belief that they will use the opportunities offered in school to develop successful lives and are able to achieve even in the face of severe stress (Kanu, 2008; Karanja, 2010; Krahm & Taylor, 2005). This is a testament to the culture created by the Welcomers School that promotes self-awareness and allows the students' resilient nature to be channeled towards learning. By creating a safe environment that celebrates self-awareness and provides social and family support (Schweitzer,

Greenslade, & Kagee, 2007), schools allow refugee students to channel their energy toward learning and fostering resilience.

School Belonging, Self-Awareness, and Resilience Bullet Points:

- School Belonging:
 - Use current students in posters (directions, promotions, motivational)
 - Place maps around the school telling students where they are in the world, country, and state
 - Include decorations (maps, artifacts, books) that represent the student body
 - Have students write stories to fill the library
- Self-Awareness (Maslow's hierarchy of needs)
 - Make sure the family feels supported and safe sending their child to the school
 - Incorporate students' stories in lessons/school themes (cultural festivals and events within the school)
 - Create a safe learning environment in the classroom where they can be themselves (culturally sensitive)
 - Include group work that allows students to socialize with other cultures and students who share their past experiences
 - Set realistic goals that they can achieve
- Resilience
 - Hold students to high academic standards
 - Do not pity them because of their past
 - Support their high aspirations (Krahn & Taylor, 2005) by building relationships and understanding their goals after school

- Provide social and family support (Schweitzer, Greenslade, & Kagee, 2007)

Digging Deeper: What needs to be added to the literature?

First of all, more research needs to be completed on a broad level that sheds light on the obstacles and pathways that refugees take as they transition from the refugee camps to the structured refugee classroom and then as they mainstream into the traditional classroom. This study focuses solely on the refugee-centered classroom; limited data prevented the researcher from being able to determine the continued effects of this program once students enter the mainstream school setting. Therefore, there is no way to definitively quantify the success rate of refugees in Welcome District once they leave the Welcomers School. A larger longitudinal research project that tracks these students over a series of years would allow researchers to pinpoint the long-term effects of the programs at the Welcomers School and make broader generalizations regarding refugee education. On the other side of this conversation is an improved understanding of the drop-out rate of refugees in the system. Understanding why these students are dropping out and what potentially led to their dropping out could help educational leaders develop strategic plans to keep refugee students in school through graduation.

While Welcomers School does not provide such an environment, inclusion, when feasible, is frequently cited as a necessary component of refugee education. The Welcomers School invests a year to give students a solid foundation that will enable them to succeed both academically and socially in their traditional schools. They have created a balance of curriculum and focused intervention that allows the students to develop without the distractions of their American classmates. In districts that do not have the luxury of a separate school, inclusion offers an alternative that creates a balance for refugees where as they are not being separated from other students and allowed exposure to standard curriculum.

The concepts of school belonging and self-awareness, while researched quantitatively by a local university for a psychology study, need to be examined on a qualitative level. Given the target population and their potentially limited understanding of the questions being asked, more intensive interviews need to be conducted with these individuals. While similar results may be found, refugee first-hand perspectives may open doors to understanding the feelings of incoming refugees and educators can address issues in order to help them acculturate more quickly.

The impact of the teacher-student relationship in the refugee school setting needs to be further explored as well. This relationship is similar to the role of advisor-advisee in the traditional school programs, especially with at-risk populations, and allows students to have an advocate at the school they can approach safely. Building these relationships would also lend itself to informal follow-up after the students leave the school. According to the interviewed teachers for this study, Welcome District does not conduct follow-up with their students once they have transitioned out, potentially leaving them to fend for themselves without support. Following up with these students would allow Welcomers School to examine their practice and structure the school around the needs of the students in order to prepare them for their traditional school.

The final recommendation is for a comparison study that investigates programs from across the country to consider which aspects of programs work better than others. Being dispersed as they are, staff at these schools are engaging in only limited conversations, if at all, so ideas and successful strategies are not being shared. While these programs may be vastly different in organization, there are components of each that could be added to the overall discussion and lead to reforms that help students.

The organizations found in Figure 7 can be used as starting points for collecting resources and finding information on supporting refugees:

Figure 7: Starting Point Resources

National Organizations	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Bridging Refugee Youth and Children's Services (www.brycs.org) ○ International Rescue Committee (www.rescue.org) ○ Refugee Council USA (www.rcusa.org) ○ US Committee for Refugees (www.refugees.org)
Resettlement Agencies	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ African Family Services (www.aafs.net) ○ Carolina Refugee Resettlement Agency (www.carolinarefugee.org) ○ Church World Services (www.cwsglobal.org) ○ Lutheran Immigration and Refugee Service (www.lirs.org) ○ North Carolina African Services Coalition (www.ascafrica.org) ○ World Relief (www.worldrelief.org)
Annual National Conferences	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ National Refugee and Immigrant Conference: Issues and Innovations ○ Alliance for Refugee Youth Support and Education Conference ○ National Migration Conference

Questions for Further Research

Many interview participants presented areas in need of further research that did not fit the parameters of this study. These areas would add greatly to the literature and enable educators to better meet the needs of their refugee students. The first area addresses the success rates of refugee students at the various levels of education and whether or not the age at which they enter the American education system has an impact on their academic success. While this answer

would depend on many variables, it could potentially start the conversation of what services are needed to meet the needs of certain grade levels.

Another research area that surfaced during this study was the impact of nationality equating to academic success in the American classroom. An example of this was seen in this study where a student from Togo had a stronger understanding of math concepts than a student from Vietnam. Was this because this student was exposed to these concepts in his home school prior to being resettled, did the resettlement camps have a better education system, or were there other factors that could have present? Like the question above, a deeper understanding of this topic would allow for schools working with refugees to better meet the needs of their students given a more accurate picture of their abilities.

Similar to the previous topic, further research needs to be completed on the role of the refugee resettlement camps and whether they help or hinder the success of the refugee student in the American classroom. Understanding where the students are coming from and what qualities they possess prior to their entry into the school would enable educational leaders to progressive plans of action rather than reacting to what they see on the first days of school.

Finally, more research needs to be conducted on the transitions refugees make into the traditional school. With a school such as the Welcomers School for example, follow-up and tracking needs to take place to see how first-year exclusion impacts student learning. In schools that house refugee populations on a traditional school campus, the impact of inclusion needs further review. These transitions are the next steps of this research because more needs to be done to see not only the impact of refugee settings like the Welcomers School, but also to identify what services are needed once these refugee students transition into their traditional schools.

APPENDIX 1: POTENTIAL TEACHER INTERVIEW QUESTIONS

Based on Patton's Model (Fraenkel & Wallen, 2009, Madison, 2005)

Background

How long have you worked at ABC School?

Did you come to work at ABC School specifically to work with the refugee population?

Knowledge

What can you tell me about the refugee population in ABC district?

What can you tell me about the outside community sources in place and their role in the lives of the refugee student?

Experience

What is your experience working with ESL or refugee students in ABC School?

What is one experience you have had with a refugee student at ABC school that has stuck out to you as an educator?

Opinion

What are some of the challenges you face on a daily basis working with refugee students?

What are some of the things in place by the county that make your job easier when working with refugee students?

What are some of the things in place by the county that make your job difficult when working with refugee students?

What specific things could the district or site-based leadership do to help you in teaching the refugee students in your classroom?

Feelings

How do you feel ABC district is doing with teaching its refugee students?

How do you think the refugee students feel when they come to ABC school?

(Follow up) Do you think the school or district could do anything differently to help refugee students feel more comfortable?

Sensory

When a refugee student enters your class, what do you think they see or feel?

How is your class at ABC school different than other classrooms you have had at other districts or schools?

APPENDIX 2: POTENTIAL SCHOOL LEADER INTERVIEW QUESTIONS

Based on Patton's Model (Fraenkel & Wallen, 2009, Madison, 2005)

Background

How long have you worked at ABC School? Been a school leader at ABC School?

Did you come to ABC School because of the refugee population?

Knowledge

What can you tell me about the refugee populations in ABC district?

What can you tell me about the outside community sources in place and their role in the lives of the refugee student?

How do these outside community sources and populations affect your role and decision making as a principal?

Experience

What is your experience working with ESL or refugee students in ABC District?

What is one experience you have had with a refugee student at ABC school that has stuck out to you as an educational leader?

Opinion

What are some of the challenges you face on a daily basis working with refugee students?

What are some of the things in place by the county that make your job easier as a leader when working with refugee students?

What are some of the things in place by the county that make your job difficult as a leader when working with refugee students?

What specific things could the district do to help you in your leadership role when working with refugee students?

Feelings

How do you feel the district is doing with regard to teaching the refugee students it serves?

How do you think the refugee students feel when they come to ABC school?

(Follow up) Do you think the school could do anything differently to help refugee students feel more comfortable?

Sensory

When refugees enter your school, what do you think they typically see and how do you think they feel?

How are the classes at ABC school geared towards helping refugees succeed?

APPENDIX 3: POTENTIAL DISTRICT LEADER INTERVIEW QUESTIONS

Based on Patton's Model (Fraenkel & Wallen, 2009, Madison, 2005)

Background

How long have you worked at ABC district? Been a school leader in the district?

Have you worked directly with refugees in any of your roles in the district?

Knowledge

What can you tell me about the refugee populations in ABC district?

What can you tell me about the outside community sources in place and their role in the lives of the refugee student?

Do these outside sources and populations affect the district's decisions with regards to refugee students? If so, how?

Experience

What is your experience working with refugee students in ABC District?

What is one experience you have had with refugees in ABC district that has stuck out to you as an educational leader?

Opinion

What is an example of some of the challenges you face working with refugee students?

What are some of the things in place by the county that make your job easier as a leader when working with refugee students?

What are some of the things in place by the county that make your job difficult as a leader when working with refugees?

What specific things could the district do to help their leaders and teachers who are working with refugee students?

Feelings

How do you feel the district is doing with regard to teaching the refugee students it serves?

How do you think the refugee students feel when they come to ABC district?

(Follow up) Do you think the district could do anything differently to help them feel more comfortable?

Sensory

How are the schools at ABC School different than other classrooms you have had, or seen with regard to teaching refugee students?

APPENDIX 4: POTENTIAL COMMUNITY SUPPORT INTERVIEW QUESTIONS

Based on Patton's Model (Fraenkel & Wallen, 2009, Madison, 2005)

Background

What is your history with refugees in ABC District (if any)?

Knowledge

What can you tell me about the refugee populations in ABC district?

What can you tell me about the outside community sources in place and their role in the lives of the refugee student?

How do these outside sources and populations impact the district's decisions with regards to refugees?

Experience

What is your experience with ESL or refugee students?

What is one experience you have had with a refugee student in ABC district that has stuck out to you?

Opinion

What is an example of some of the challenges you face working with refugee students and ABC district?

What are some of the things in place by the county that make things easier for refugees?

What are some of the things in place by the county that make things more difficult for refugees?

What specific things could the district do to help their leaders and teachers who are working with refugee students?

Feelings

How do you feel the district is doing with regard to teaching the refugee students it serves?

How do you think the refugee students feel when they come to ABC district?

(Follow up) Do you think the district could do anything differently to help them feel more comfortable?

Sensory

How are the schools at ABC district different than other classrooms you have seen with regards to refugee students?

APPENDIX 5: POTENTIAL CLASSROOM OBSERVATION PROTOCOL

Setting:

Individuals:

Classroom Arrangement:

Classroom Environment (posters, wall hangings, etc.):

Teaching Strategies Observed:

Classroom Interactions:

Unexpected Events:

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