

Practical Ideas for Helping Refugee Students Integrate into the School Setting

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learning | as unique | as every student



**Calgary Board
of Education**

Kingsland Reception Centre



What is Integration?

- Two-way
- Complex
- Long-term
- Individual choice

“A long-term, dynamic, two-way process through which, ideally, immigrants would achieve full equality and freedom of participation in society, and society would gain access to the full human resource potential in its immigrant communities” (OCASI, 1991).

School Supports

School leaders are in a key position to create systems and processes that increase resilience and facilitate successful integration of refugee students into their schools and Canadian society in general. This includes:

- Creating an environment for understanding, acceptance and integration of these students
- Forging connections with families
- Supporting teachers' professional learning
- Developing an enhanced learning support team to meet individual needs
- Utilizing community agencies to foster enhanced services

Tips for Administrators...

- Learn about your refugee population: language, culture, experiences
- Build relationships with immigrant and refugee communities
- Partner with agencies and align services
- Create a welcoming environment through intake and orientation practices, parent advisory meeting, parent workshops
- Provide resources to students and families like school supplies, hygiene kits, winter clothing, etc.
- Strengthen communication and understanding through interpreters, settlement workers, cultural liaison workers, etc.
- Support staff through trauma-informed practice, teacher self-care, etc.

Practical Ideas

Translate materials

Learn some phrases in other languages, post greetings in multiple languages

World Map in reception

Recruit diverse staff & volunteers

Potlucks

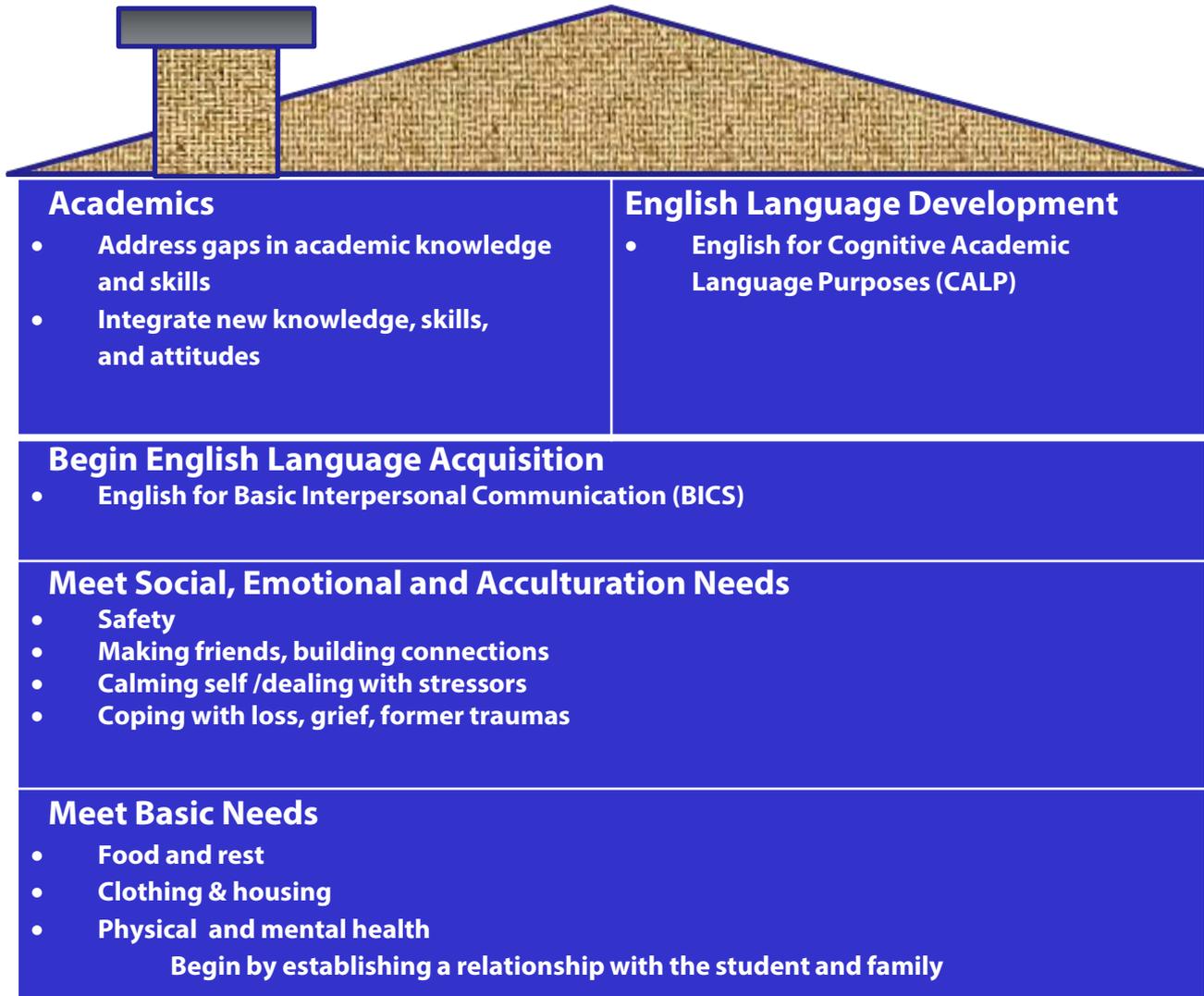
Host a community multicultural event

Diversity calendars

ESL conversation clubs

Create a diversity committee

Where to Start?



Create Safety and Routines

- Routines are the easiest way to communicate safety to students who have experienced trauma.
- Create predictable environments and responses. Use routines to assist students to know what will happen next.
- Establish regular activities throughout the day with consistent greetings and good-byes, transition point markers, calming activities, etc.
- Choose important routine events to celebrate (birthdays, holidays, re-occurring school events like assemblies, etc.)
- Anticipate unexpected and unusual events and plan for dealing with these (field trips, fire drills, locks downs, substitute teachers, etc.)
- Recognize and avoid triggers

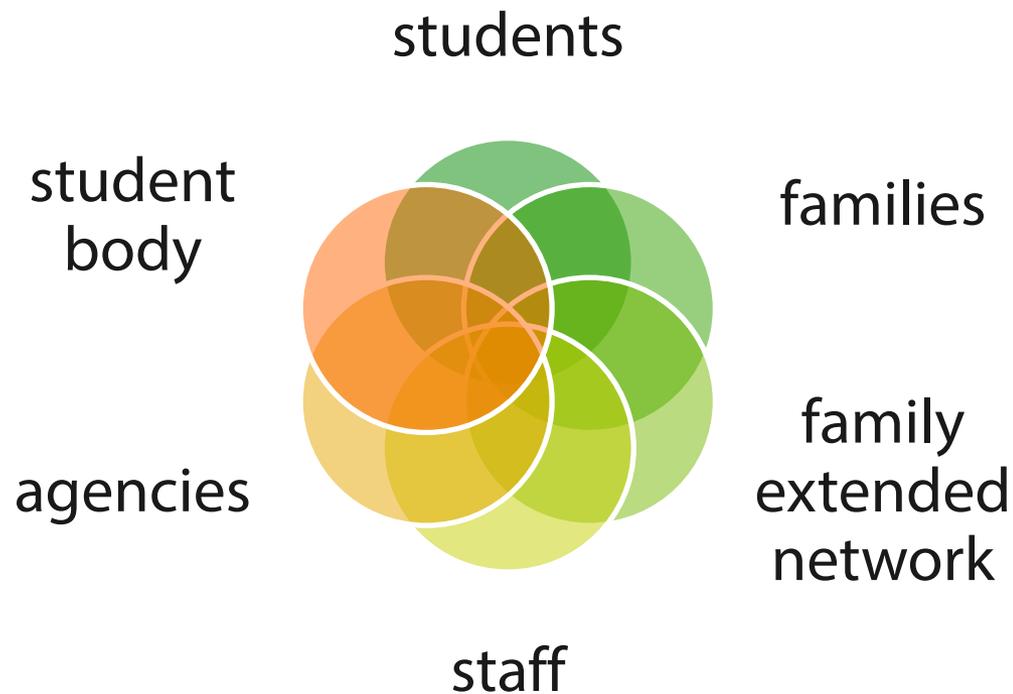


Tips from other teachers...

- Establish routines as a priority in the classroom
- In any given day avoid surprises for students – ensure consistency and predictability
- Use the same type of activity at the beginning of each day
- Allowing for choice of work blocks helps students feel control and safety
- Use visual aids, post pictures of activities, expected behaviour, vocabulary, etc.
- Pair students for activities, use buddy system with other classes
- Hands-on activities
- Use a friendly tone of voice and calm facial expressions

Build Connections

Building safe connections for students with refugee backgrounds is foundational to success in the classroom and in the school system.



Tips from other teachers...

- Greet students at their bus
- Humour
- Praise
- Positive Encouragement
- Let each child shine
- Learn basic words in the students' language



Foster Emotional Skills

Students whose normal development has been interrupted may not have had the chance to learn how to manage their feelings.

Many behavioural issues are the result of limited emotional skill development.

Teachers can assist students to

- develop basic skills of naming feelings
- develop techniques for “getting to calm”
- develop strategies for managing conflict



Tips from other teachers...

- Watch movies that portray feelings and then talk about the emotion
- Make word walls for emotions/feelings in English and the students' native language
- Teach descriptive language associated with feelings and relationships
- Create visuals of "feeling faces" and post in the classroom calming area
- Create "safe zones" or "calming zones" in the classroom or school

Practice Teacher Self-Care

Working with students with refugee backgrounds exposes teachers and other professionals to very difficult situations and heart-wrenching first-hand stories. Self-care is key to remaining healthy while working with students with a history of loss, grief, stress and trauma.

Teachers need to practice strategies for

- regaining and maintaining calm
- gaining a sense of personal balance between work and home
- remaining hopeful



Tips from other teachers...

- Develop a support network
- Talk and share with colleagues
- Find calm – walk, cup of tea
- Colour with a student
- Eat, sleep, spend time with family
and friends



More Information....

Teaching Refugees website

www.teachingrefugees.com



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