

Preparing Early Interventionist and Early Childhood Special Educators to Work in a Refugee Resettlement Community

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- The University of Vermont is located in a Refugee Resettlement Community. Between 2005 and 2009 over 1,150 refugees joined the community from countries of origin including Bhutan, Burma, Burundi, the Dominican Republic of Congo, Ethiopia, Iraq, Kenya Somalia and Sudan (Office of Refugee Resettlement, 2010).
- Refugees are people, many of them children, who have been displaced by violence or natural disasters from their native countries. If they stay in their country they will likely be condemned to ongoing and extreme hardship and many will experience otherwise preventable deaths (United Nations Refugee Agency, 2010).
- Many refugees are infant toddler and preschool aged children who with teachers who have little or no preparation to work with refugee children and families (Tadesse, Hoot & Watson-Thompson, 2009).
- Cultural dissonance between the home and school is a contributor to poor educational outcomes (Cartledge & Kourea, 2008).
- Teachers want personnel preparation to support cultural competence. We must make the development and support of cultural competence a higher priority in teacher preparation programs (Hurley, Medici, Stewart & Cohen, in press).

Activities for trainees designed to increase knowledge and skills for serving children and families who are Culturally and Linguistically Diverse:

Course Content (ECSP 202, 310 and 311)

- Readings:
 - Shireen, P. (2001). Developmental delay or cultural difference? Developing effective child find practices for young children from culturally and linguistically diverse families. *Young Exceptional Children*, 4 (4), 2-9.
 - Barrera, I. (2004). Honoring differences: Essential features of appropriate ECSE services for young children from diverse sociocultural environments. In Horn, E., Ostrosky, M. M. & Jones, H. (Eds.), *Young Exceptional Children: Monograph Series No. 5*. (pp. 27-38). Sopris West: Missoula, MT.
 - Tabors, P. O. (1997). Getting started in a second language. In *One Child, Two Languages: A Guide for Preschool Educators of Children Learning English as a Second Language*. (pp. 39-57). Baltimore: Brookes Publishing.
 - Ohtake, Y., Santos, R. M., Fowler, S. A. (2000). It's a three way conversation: Families, service providers and interpreters working together. *Young Exceptional Children*, 4 (1), 12-18.
 - Hurley, J.J., Medici, A., Stewart, E. & Cohn, Z. (in press). Supporting preschoolers and their families who are recently resettled refugees. *Multicultural Perspectives*, 13 (3), 1-7.

- Country of Origin Fact Sheet
 - On the first night of class each student will select a country. You are to take the country and conduct literature and web research. Using multiple resources you need to develop a two or more page fact sheet for your country of origin. At a minimum the fact sheets should include:
 - A brief overview of what life was like in the country before the people became refugees (e.g., typical housing, food, occupational options, education and other points of interest).
 - What natural or human made disaster has led to people having to flee their country?
 - What was the exodus like? Have the refugees from this country stayed in camps? What might a typical journey to the U.S. have looked like?
 - What languages are spoken by the refugees who come from this country?
 - Approximately how many refugees have arrived from this country and are there any trends in their rate of arrival?
 - Are there any important rules of etiquette that a service provider should know before visiting a families home?
 - Provide all other information that would be helpful for service providers to know about the culture of the refugee families (e.g. social stratification, gender roles and status, marriage, family, kinship, child raising, education, religion, medicine and healthcare).
 - You should make enough copies for all your class mates and instructor.
 - Here is the list of countries of origin to be divided: Thailand, Sudan, Iraq, Somalia, Dem. Rep. Congo, Burundi, Bhutan

Book Club

- On-line discussions and one in person meeting. Everyone reads the book together with a new book selected each semester. Books are selected that will hopefully lead to a better understanding of the refugee experience, a variety of cultures and the dilemmas of cross cultural service provision. In the spring of 11 all trainees read *What is the What* by Dave Eggers about the experience of a refugee from Sudan and the transition to American culture. During the fall all candidates will read *The Spirit Catches You and You Fall Down* by Anne Fadiman about a Hmong family and the cultural challenges encountered around their daughter's epilepsy.

Some Trainees Participate in The Preschool Refugee Children with Special Needs Project at UVM (ECSP 397)

- Hurley, J. J., Medici, A., Stewart, E. & Cohn, Z. (in press). Supporting preschoolers and their families who are recently resettled refugees. *Multicultural Perspectives*.
- “*What Every Teacher Needs to Know: Lessons from Cultural Liaisons in a Refugee Resettlement Community*” Trainees are collecting qualitative interview data from cultural liaisons who are working in EI, ECSE and ECE programs in the community. The purpose is to gain information to inform educators on how to collaborate more effectively with cultural liaisons and refugee families and children experiencing disability.
- “*Early Childhood Special Education Services for Preschool Children in a Refugee Resettlement Community*” Trainees are collecting qualitative interview data from ECE, ECSE and administrators about the ECSE services for preschool refugee children.
 - Hurley, J.J., Medici, A., Stewart, E. & Cohn, Z. (in press). Supporting preschoolers and their families who are recently resettled refugees. *Multicultural Perspectives*, 13 (3), 1-7.

Internship (ECSP 386)

- A semester long full time internship in a placement that includes children and families who are refugees who may or may not have disabilities. Vermont early childhood practitioners are serving large numbers of young children who speak over 60 different languages (e.g. Maay Maay, Somali, Swahili, Arabic, Vietnamese, Congolese and more).

Assessment of Cultural Competence

Project Measure: Program graduates will complete a post-post “Assessment of Student Knowledge and Skills for Serving Children and Families who are Culturally and Linguistically Diverse” and achieve ratings of 4 or 5 on a 5-point rating scale.

Crosswalks Assessment of Knowledge, Skills and Instructional Strategies (CAKSkIS)

- Eight trainees provided post and pre test assessments using the Crosswalks Assessment of Knowledge, Skills and Instructional Strategies (CAKSkIS) instrument which is comprised of 45 questions divided into three sections with a total of ten focus areas (<http://www.fpg.unc.edu/~scpp/crosswalks/pdfs/CAKSkIS-FINAL.pdf>). The 8 Program graduates participated in a retrospective pretest and were asked to report their self-assessment ratings when they started the Program and when they finished the Program (Nimon, Zigarmi & Allen, 2011). All 8 completed Sections 1 – 9, while only 4 completed Section 10 of the instrument.

Section of the Instrument	Post Self-Assessment Mean	Pre-Self Assessment Mean	Mean Difference
1. General Knowledge	4.40	3.30	33.33%
2. Knowledge: Supporting Child Learning	4.53	2.63	72.38%
3. Knowledge: Families	4.38	2.90	50.86%
4. Knowledge: Assessment	4.23	2.10	101.19%
5. Knowledge: Collaboration	4.33	2.21	96.23%
6. Skill: Child Learning	4.63	2.63	76.19%
7. Skill: Families	4.41	2.47	78.48%
8. Skill: Assessment	4.46	2.21	101.89%
9. Skill: Collaboration	3.94	1.69	133.33%
10. Knowledge & Skill: Instructional Strategies & Resources	4.06	2.75	47.73%

- Data represents pre-post measures for 8 respondents, Sections 1 through 9, and 4 respondents for Section 10 of the instrument.
- The overall mean for all 8 students for Sections 1 – 9 increased by 74% from a score of 2.5 (self-assessment at the start of the Program) to 4.4 (self-assessment at the end of the Program).
- The largest improvements as represented by the student scores were in the following three sections: Knowledge: Assessment, Skill: Assessment and Skill: Collaboration. All three improved by 100% or higher.