



DM&E Tips for Refugee Youth Academic Enrichment Programs

Definition of Academic Enrichment

"Immigration has had such a profound effect on our society....And no where is that impact more obvious than in our schools."
— Monica Friedlander (1)

Academic Enrichment includes highly interactive activities that expand on students' learning in ways different from methods used during school.(2) These activities often are interactive and enhance a student's education by promoting new concepts or use old concepts in new ways. Academic enrichment activities impart knowledge in a fun way and use skills stressed in school to real-life experiences.

Understanding Refugee Youth

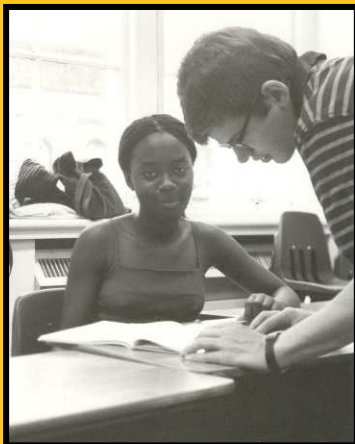


Refugee youth come from a wide diversity of backgrounds, beliefs, education and social classes. It is critical to assist educators in acquiring skills to avoid stereotypes, recognize cultural and individual differences, and work to develop cross-cultural communication for refugee youth and the host population. (3) When designing academic enrichment programs, staff must be aware of:

- Cultural differences
- Language ability
- Literacy level
- Logistics (time, transportation, etc.)

Key Components of Academic Enrichment

Academic enrichment programs should address the needs of recently arrived refugee youth with possible limited English proficiency (LEP) that may need an adjustment period to better adapt to school and society. These youths may be longing for an emotionally safe atmosphere in which to make these adjustments. Ultimately refugee academic enrichment programs should focus on helping these youth to rapidly learn English, become acculturated, while strengthening their self-esteem.



Refugee and Family Integration

Education is closely linked with refugee families' integration. Helping families to get involved with school enables them to reinforce learning at home and better adapt to their environment. By involving all families within the school it facilitates a multicultural perspective that builds self-esteem by recognizing the cultures of all students in the classroom. Parent involvement is associated with children's academic success in the short and long term. (4)



Key Outcomes of Refugee Youth Academic Enrichment Programs

Academic enrichment programs can increase parent involvement in the school, enhance parent-teacher communication and help in the family's overall cultural adjustment.

Examples of parent Involvement:(5)

- Volunteering at school
- Communicating with teachers and other school personnel
- Attending school events, PTA meetings, and parent- teacher conferences
- Assisting with academic activities at home

Other refugee youth academic enrichment key outcomes include:(6)

- School retention
- Increased attendance
- Understanding of education systems
- Acquiring/Reinforcing basic academic/cognitive skills
(reading, writing, and mathematics)
- Enhanced oral and interpersonal communication skills
- Improving English language proficiency skills
- Developing student/teacher relationships
- Technology skills
- Motivation



Key Partners of Refugee Youth Academic Enrichment Programs

Successful academic enrichment programs involve various partnerships. Working relationships with refugee and host community parents is critical to acculturation, eliminating stereotypes and increasing multicultural perspectives.

Partnerships with teachers, school administrators and parent groups allow staff to take advantage of pre-existing infrastructure and organization. It is also critical to develop partnerships with the refugee youth as well as youth within the community to increase peer networks.



Data Collection

Examples of data collection methods that can be used by academic enrichment program staff include:

- Reviewing academic transcripts
- Reviewing attendance sheets
- Teacher and parent focus groups
- Surveys (for parents, educators, youth)



Examples of Refugee Youth Academic Enrichment Programs(7)

The following are examples of academic enrichment programs and activities that have been utilized with youth:

Children's Theatre Workshop

Students learn about theatre while rehearsing and later performing one-act plays - many of which deal with character education.

Country Study

Participants use themes to study different countries. They study the culture of these other countries by reading stories, learning songs, listening to music, learning about and playing games, learning about food, etc.

Dance a Story

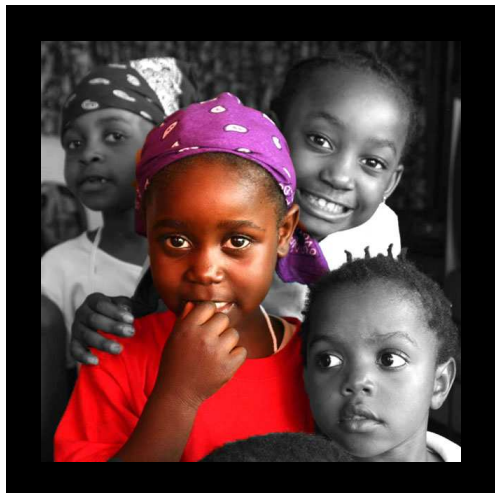
Every person tells a story through dance. By exploring their own story and to create their own dance, children will learn about expression.

Family Fun Night

Parents take part in the program activities with their children. Students select an activity that both they and their parents can share in.

Family History Cooking Project

Students read and check out books on food to take home and read with their parents. They then pick out a favorite family dish and discuss the history with their parents.



Reading Buddies

Students who need help reading are paired with sixth- and seventh-grade students who can sit with them and read a book of their choosing out loud for 20 minutes.

Reading Rally

College students read to elementary age students. The college students assist the elementary students in creating their own books.

School Newspaper

Middle school students write, edit, and design a school newspaper. The newspaper should be produced and distributed to all students and faculty in the school as well as placed in various businesses in the area.

Scrap Book

Students generate a scrap book about the after school program. They can write about the program's activities, take pictures and present photo samples of what they have been doing.

West African Drum Club

The West African Drum Club is an activity in which children learn the history of West African music and instruments. The main focus is drums. Fourth to sixth graders usually participate in this activity.

Youth Entrepreneurial Training

This activity involves creating a concession stand to allow participants to learn inventory, customer service skills, cashier skills, and business planning.





References

1. Northwest Regional Educational Laboratory (NWREL). "Meeting the Needs of Immigrant Students." *Improving Education for Immigrant Students: A Resource Guide for K-12 Educators in the Northwest and Alaska*. 2007. <http://www.nwrel.org/cnorse/booklets/immigration/5.html#overall>
2. Learning Point Associates. *Academic Enrichment Activities*. 2007. <http://www.learningpt.org/promisingpractices/list.php>
3. Northwest Regional Educational Laboratory (NWREL).
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5. Bridging Refugee Youth and Children's Services (BRYCS).
6. Child Trends. *Division A. Educational Achievement and Cognitive Attainment*. The Edna McConnell Clark Foundation, 5.
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