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Examining Experiences of English Literacy Development (ELD) Program from Multiple Stakeholders' Perspectives

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Examining Experiences of English Literacy Development (ELD) Program from

Multiple Stakeholders' Perspectives

by

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THESIS

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Abstract

The present study, conducted in collaboration with a public school board in southern Ontario, Canada, focused on stakeholders' perspectives of an English Literacy Development (ELD) program offered in secondary schools within this particular board. The purpose of this research was to identify resources that would help address school absenteeism, credit accumulation and graduation needs of ELD learners, as well as to learn which factors in ELD better assist students who are refugees with school integration and in reaching their academic potentials. The research objectives were (i) to identify factors that influence integration of refugee students in school and (ii) to seek better understanding of programs and services designed to support refugee youth, as perceived by students and administrators. An ethnographic case study design of one secondary school in an English-speaking city was used. Six students between the ages of 16 and 20, and two key informants (who served in the role of teacher, principal, or department head) participated in this study. Semi-structured interviews were conducted with key informants. Students participated in both interviews and focus groups. Findings revealed that students were unclear of the behavioural norms and disciplines used in Canadian schools, experienced language difficulties that served as barriers to participation and academic achievement, and instigated or participated in fist fights as a response to anti-immigrant racism. Findings have implications for continued support (both academic and social), school organized activities and leadership opportunities for adolescent students who are refugees.

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from these instrumental players in my life that got me to where I am today

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Problems in Supporting Refugee Students in Ontario, Canada

With a growing number of newcomer students in Canadian schools, education systems

need to adapt in order to meet the changing needs of their population, but this system is not well

informed, in part, due to limited research in this area In cases where change has been attempted

and research has been conducted, discrepancies have been found between what is known to be

effective instruction and actual practices being implemented (Freeman, Freeman, & Mercuri,

2002) Ineffective programs and teaching practices in schools partly contribute to and hinder

refugee students' ability to integrate successfully The integration of newcomer students into a

new and different environment requires knowledge and understanding of the settlement

experience Not only do refugee students go through regular settlement and development

processes, they must do so while overcoming traumatic experiences Challenges faced in the

settlement process include but are not limited to issues such as personal adjustment, language

acquisition and possible mental health concerns, and these factors contribute to students'

inability to concentrate on their studies Research shows a relationship between education and

settlement success for refugee youth (Wilkinson, 2002) and therefore, both should be considered

when implementing programs that serve them

In order to discuss education systems and refugee youth in Canada and southern Ontario,

this paper is divided into three general sections education and immigration, settlement and

academic challenges faced by refugee youth, and best practices in terms of school interventions

After the literature review there is a description of a local program that helps newcomer students

with literacy and English proficiency In the education and immigration section, the value of the

education system and how it is affected by immigration is discussed The second section reveals

some of the common challenges refugee youth experience in the settlement process and

the education system The relation between these two process is discussed, as it is important to

understand the settlement experiences of students that may conflict with educational Then, a

description of an English Literacy Development (ELD) program in southern Ontario follows

Value of Education Systems

The United Nations Children's Fund states "education is the most direct way a country

can promote its own economic and social welfare and lay the foundation for a democratic

society" (UNICEF, 2000, p 47) In most cases, economic welfare is highly dependent on the

knowledge and skills commonly obtained through formal education Socially, education exposes

individuals to the cultures and norms of the host country The education setting provides

students with opportunities to obtain formal exposure and training of the cultural norms and

behaviours on which the society operates Therefore, education systems should be periodically

critically analyzed due to the important role they play in the economic success of a country and

the social welfare of its people

At an economic level of analysis, Wilkinson (2002) identifies academic success as an

important precondition for occupational success in later life Most refugee youth have had

limited to no exposure to formal education and upon arrival in Canada they are excited to

subscribe to this novel system Once, and if, schooling is completed, they will have

opportunities to contribute to Canada's economy by entering the workforce and generating an

income When in the workforce, refugees are likely to be self-reliant contributing citizens, as

they will no longer be dependent on government support The occupational success of

newcomers and the economic success of the country as a whole depend on education, therefore

society should be engaged and concerned with how it operates

At an individual level of analysis, education settings are considered to be one of the most valuable socializing activities as it is one of the first sites where Canadian culture is introduced and learned (Wilkinson, 2002) In school, youth are exposed to students, teachers, and cultures different from their own Public schools are a setting where many of the acculturative struggles of immigrant children unfold (Birman, Weinstein, Chan, & Beehlher, 2007) and are also where integration into Canadian society takes place (Wilkinson, 2002). For these reasons, academic success is often seen as a key indicator of settlement success (Wilkinson, 2002)

Academics, researchers and school personnel, among other professionals, should be concerned with the structure, content and operation of the education system because it has significant implications for the wellbeing of individuals and society Across the United States, Canada, and France, immigrant students are marginalized and show lower rates of high school completion and integration as compared to non-immigrants (Akkari & Loomis, 2009) Although this fact of differential school success is evident research that examines educational issues involved in the resettlement experiences of refugees is largely lacking (Tadesse, Hoot, & Watson-Thompson, 2009) More research is needed to identify the challenges that refugee youth face in the education system and at the same time attend to a range of youths' diverse experiences, which are often ignored, that can be used as resources to enrich school settings (Birman et al , 2007) With the growing number of newcomer students in Canadian schools, it is time for educational systems (public and private) that serve refugee students to change to better meet their needs Before discussing the challenges and needs of refugees, it is best to understand the definition, status, and process of being a refugee

Who is A Refugee?

The process of coming to a new country is immigration and those individuals emigrating

from one culture to another are generally referred to as immigrants. In this paper, I distinguish

between those who immigrated to Canada by choice or lack of choices using the terms

immigrant and refugee, respectively. The reasons and legal status of movement across countries

differs substantially by immigrants and refugees. In 1976 Citizenship and Immigration Canada

(CIC) introduced policies that distinguished refugees from other immigrants based on the reality

that reasons for and different experiences of immigrating lead to different settlement outcomes.

According to CIC, immigrants in general are people who were born outside of and have been

accepted as permanent residents in Canada with a temporary, student, or work visa. The

immigration process for immigrants is voluntary, in most cases, and includes economic

incentives such as better employment and educational opportunities. Furthermore, immigrants

relocate with the freedom to return to their countries, whereas refugees come from a country

other than their own because of being forced out and they cannot return to it. Differences in the

legal terminology and immigration process that separate immigrants from refugees are important

in understanding the unique experiences of individuals within each group.

Although refugees are immigrants, they comprise a subgroup whose experiences set

them apart. Immigrants in general have often researched and chosen a country into which to

immigrate. In contrast, refugees have fled their home countries due to perceived, sometimes

immediate, danger and often have no control over the country in which asylum is sought.

Refugees are forced to relocate due to fear of persecution and do not have the liberty that

immigrants have in selecting a destination country because it is decided by the United Nations

during the process of establishing a legal status The international community makes

decisions for refugees based on various factors including security In sum, important distinctions

between immigrants in general and refugees in particular include, but are not limited to,

experiences prior to leaving their home county and choice of country of asylum

Prior to 2002, Canada offered two programs through which a refugee status could be

obtained The Refugee Protection program or The Refugee and Humanitarian Resettlement

program The Refugee Protection program, also referred to by CIC as the domestic asylum

system, could only be applied by people claiming refugee protection from within Canada and

who feared returning to their homeland People who lived outside of Canada applied through the

second program, The Refugee and Humanitarian Resettlement program, which involved the

collaboration of Canada and international partners In both cases, CIC would make sure that the

person did not have another resettlement option, could not go home, or could not stay in the

country where they initially sought asylum (Citizenship and Immigration, 2007) prior to

accepting one as a refugee

The growing number of refugees entering Canada introduced new, unknown challenges

that prompted Citizenship and Immigration Canada to make drastic changes to refugee

resettlement programs in 2002 Some of the challenges that surfaced were changes in source

countries, increased time spent in exile by refugees and the number of protracted refugee

situations (Sadiq, 2008) In the late 1990's to early 2000's, the country of origin of refugees

began shifting In 1996, the majority of resettled refugees (55%) were of European decent,

whereas other ethnicities accounted for the remainder, and in 2006, the majority (45%) were of

African and Middle Eastern decent (Sadiq, 2008) Changes within the international arena, such

as the increase in the average time spent in exile from nine years in 1993 to 17 years in

2003 (Sadiq, 2008), and increased number of protracted refugee situations began affecting the

needs of the refugee population as more and more were living in extreme poverty, had

significant mental health and physical concerns, and lacked physical security (Sadiq, 2008)

These changes led CIC to focus more on protecting and addressing the needs of refugees from

protracted situations as they differed from previous populations (Sadiq, 2008)

To better address and accommodate the change in needs of the refugee population,

Canada introduced two different refugee resettlement programs in 2002 One type of assistance,

the privately sponsored refugee (PSR) program, was designed for individuals who have a family

member already based in Canada who can provide settlement support This program is family

driven and used primarily for reunification Another type of assistance from the government

assisted refugee (GAR) program aids refugees who do not have a private sponsor and are

referred by the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) for resettlement in

Canada Upon arrival, the federal government provides an income and settlement assistance for

up to 12 months These two refugee resettlement programs have been introduced in Canada to

reconcile family reunification and protect those most in need (Sadiq, 2008)

Youth who have arrived to Canada via the GAR program will be the focus of this study

because they make up approximately 45% of refugees settling in Canada (Kappel Ramji

Consulting Group, 2007) as reported by the Immigration and Refugee Protection Act (IRPA) and

because there has not yet been a focus on resettlement assistance programs in a region in

southern Ontario The present study focuses on this population in this location because research

has shown that GAR youth have complex needs (such as personal adjustment, language and

literacy acquisition and mental health concerns) that challenge the settlement process as

they leave their home countries with much more dire and difficult living situations (Kappel

Ramji Consulting Group, 2007), they face developmental changes as youth and settlement

challenges as refugees, neither of which is trouble-free A rationale for focusing on resettlement

assistance programs available to GAR youth is to improve services so that these may better meet

the settlement needs of youth, which is likely to have a positive impact on educational and

community outcomes Next, the focus is narrowed to the English Literacy Development (ELD)

program offered by a public school board in southern Ontario, and provincial and national

influences are briefly mentioned to provide a demographic context of the region

Literacy is imperative to discuss because refugee students have specific literacy learning

needs that may be challenging for schools to accommodate These students' needs may pose a

challenge for schools because in many cases refugee students are learning how to understand

printed material for the first time, in a language different from their oral language(s) and in a

foreign school system The implications that basic understanding of and competence in literacy

have on learning a new language is significant and affect students' ability to comprehend content

in other subjects due to the complexity of terminology and vocabulary involved (Woods, 2009)

A recommendation that can be gathered from research in this area is that bilingual instruction

strategies in the classroom promote competence among language learners from socially

marginalized groups (Cummins, 2007) such as students who are refugees Allowing students to

use their first language to learn the language of instruction enables and engages them

confidently with literacy and other academic work (Cummins, 2007)

Immigration in Southern Ontario, Canada

The increased prevalence of global population mobility has allowed individuals the ability to move across international borders for reasons varying from employment to residency Population mobility is affected by many factors desire for better economic conditions, a constant flow of refugees from conflicts between groups, and oppression of one group by another or environmental disasters in countries of origin (Cummins, 2001) The contemporary existence of civil conflicts outside of Canada such as tribal wars and political instability worldwide make Canada an ideal country in which to seek refuge

Canada is among the top three resettlement destinations for refugees (Sadiq, 2008) from war-torn countries and has welcomed 13% of globally resettled refugees since 2005 (Citizenship and Immigration, 2007) Ontario receives the most refugees relative to other provinces, which may be attributed to the fact that Ontario advertises itself to newcomers to be the hub of the Canadian economy, consequently it is the most multicultural province in Canada (Ontario Immigration, 2005) Between 1992 and 1997, 55 8% of refugees were reported to have settled in Ontario, 24 4% in Quebec, and 7 0% in British Colombia (Wilkinson, 2002) Although newcomers relocate following initial settlement, Kapreilian-Churchill (1996) reports that three quarters of those who immigrate to Canada settle in the province of Ontario within the first 12 months

Settlement Process and Challenges for Refugee Youth

The process of settlement involves past trauma, family disruption, and new location, language and culture For GAR youth, this is further compounded by emotional and physical changes commonly experienced during the adolescence period Not only do they have to go

through the regular settlement and development process, they must do so while

overcoming traumatic experiences, and with little to no parental or family support in a

completely foreign country Self-discovery, growth, and maturation are typical processes

experienced during adolescence and throughout these experiences, mistakes are made, lessons

are learned and identities are formed For a majority of refugee youth, previous living conditions

include refugee camps, violence, war, trauma, and interrupted education When such living

conditions are experienced in adolescence, it has the potential to negatively impact the overall

development of the individual and create challenges to settlement

Settlement for refugee youth is complex as it is compounded with a multitude of factors

ranging from personal, to psychological and physical adjustment In settlement contexts where

the English language is used (such as in southern Ontario, Canada) youth develop academic

literacy in English to make the transition from schooling to the labour force or into other

educational programs (Freeman, et al , 2002) They must also become socialized into western

society during adolescence, a time of major emotional, physical, and psychological change

(Freeman, et al , 2002) Therefore, it is important to understand that educational needs will differ

across individual students when these factors are compounded by traumatic living conditions

and difficult resettlement experiences Some of the common challenges GAR youth face during

settlement include personal adjustment (Freeman, et al , 2002), comprehension of the language

of instruction (Cummins, 2000), and mental health concerns (Birman, et al , 2007)

Difficulties Associated with Personal Adjustment

The settlement process connotes psychological, social and economic adjustments to the

realities of the new cultural and social context for refugee youth The process involves leaving

behind social networks, routines and family for a new destination. For some, these

changes result in migration stress, which occurs when one is removed from a familiar

environment. These youth may also experience cultural bereavement, referring to the loss of

past lives, cultural context, and friends and family left behind (Eisenbruch, 1988, Eisenbruch,

1992). Refugee youth struggle to adjust to foreign surroundings while at the same time discover

and define new identities.

In addition to migration stress, GAR youth face acculturative stress. This stress

accumulates with daily struggles involved in learning a new language and culture, and the

difficulty of integrating aspects of two (or more) cultures into their own personal identity.

Developing a positive ethnic identity is psychologically important (Phinney, 1990) and should

therefore be attended to with care by teachers and school staff working with GAR youth. The

period of self-discovery is critical to a youth's development because acquiring competence in a

new culture is beneficial to school success (Vedder, Bpelaerts, & Seegers, 2005). It is naive to

expect academic or social success when youth are unsure of their personal and ethnic identities.

To cope with this, GAR youth require social support within schools, otherwise they may

experiment with various conflicting identities in the struggle to define themselves.

Challenges with Language Acquisition

In addition to migration and acculturative stress, refugees have yet another obstacle to

overcome to integrate successfully in schools. Among the refugee population – young and old –

the greatest obstacle and most overwhelming topic of investigation is identified to be language

acquisition (Stevens, 2009). Not only does the existence of a language barrier inhibit cultural

exchange and understanding (Qin, Way, & Mukherjee, 2008), but it also has an impact on

academic placement within schools In education settings where the language of

instruction is English, language proficiency is often equated with academic performance

Therefore, language is the medium as well as content of instruction, and provides the

pedagogical means by which that instruction is realized (Carson, 1999)

It is frustrating for refugee students to comprehend instructions in school when they are

given in the very language they struggle to understand, which affects their academic

competence In fact, in education settings where English is the language of instruction,

researchers agree that, depending on the age of children when they start learning English refugee

children need seven to nine years of English as a Second Language (ESL) to reach the level of

English language proficiency required for academic competence (Cummins, 2000) The pressure

to learn a foreign language can be overwhelming and stressful for GAR youth, which may

exacerbate the difficulties associated with personal development

Mental Health Concerns

Many personal adjustment and language challenges mentioned thus far can easily be

noticed through interaction with refugee students Challenges refugee youth face in schools that

cannot easily be detected and observed are those pertaining to mental health and traumatic

stress, which sometimes manifest as behavioural problems Lack of mental health knowledge on

behalf of school personnel is potentially dangerous as there could be a tendency to erroneously

attribute negative behaviour to personal dispositions This is not to say that every violent or

aggressive refugee student has a mental health problem, but that past experiences may

contribute to behaviours that are sometimes deemed inappropriate in a western school

environment These problems are sometimes evident in daily interactions at school but are often

not recognized or addressed as a mental health concern (Birman, et al , 2007) due to

cultural differences and stigma surrounding mental health

School personnel interact with students on a daily basis and are therefore in the best

position to detect mental health problems However, because they are primarily trained to

identify and remedy problems of an academic nature (Ney, Colbert, Newman, & Young, 1986),

school personnel may not be educated and trained to recognize and understand emotional and

other non-academic difficulties, particularly those related to depression and anxiety (Cécile,

Aline, & Ellen, 1996) This absence of skills leaves school authorities ill equipped to identify

and to deal with mental health issues that some refugee children may experience Given the

exposure school administrators have to the student population, refugee or otherwise, they should

be adequately trained and well prepared to identify and deal with mental health concerns, should

there be any

Personal adjustment is also influenced by the type and severity of the trauma endured

Research has distinguished the different effects that acute and chronic trauma have on refugees

Acute trauma is a reaction to a highly stressful incident marked by features of anxiety which last

a few days (Boothby, 1994) whereas chronic trauma is referred to those endured beyond the time

of the incident and includes debilitating symptoms similar to Post Traumatic Stress

Disorder(PTSD) (Boothby, 1994) Research has also found that chronic trauma alters one's

personality, behaviour, beliefs, and moral development among child victims (Boothby, 1994,

Carbello, Smajkic, Zeric, et al , 2004) Chronic trauma therefore, plays a potentially negative

role in the adjustment period for youth as they may appear to have adapted to the trauma, which

creates far reaching effects (Carbello, Smajkic, Zeric, et al , 2004) In conclusion, chronic

trauma is important to consider when working with refugees in school as the effects can

determine students' capacity to integrate in school

Refugee youth differ from mainstream students as they face stress from traumatic events

prior to or during flight from their homeland (Birman, et al , 2007) They are also likely to have

experienced war-related trauma or torture (Halcón, et al , 2004) Health and social services tend

to be underutilized by refugee populations (Beiser, 1988), which may increase the possibility of

long-term psychological and psychosocial difficulties such as PTSD, depression, sleep

disturbances, and other problems that negatively affect coping (Halcón, et al , 2004) However,

this does not automatically lead to a physical or mental dysfunction as even the most

catastrophic losses may lead to growth (Eisenbruch, 1988) In fact, despite increased trauma,

extreme hardships or deprivation, resilience researchers have found that many children and

adolescents recover from such life events (Halcon, et al , 2004) Resilience can provide youth

with the strength to re-define their new identity, which may be conducive to success in

settlement Therefore, effort is needed to identify and address mental health issues to improve

adaptability and integration of refugee youth in the education system

Challenges in the settlement process, such as personal adjustment, language acquisition

and possible mental health concerns, prevent refugee students from concentrating on or applying

themselves fully to educational studies While some refugee youth may be intrinsically

motivated and eager to actively participate in school for the first time in their lives, they are

limited in language, experience with education settings, mental health stability and stress

associated with settlement Some of these students never had the opportunity to attend school

before, so the classroom setting is a novel and foreign experience When placed in Canadian

classrooms, GAR youth are neither taught nor informed about the procedures and

functions of a classroom (Freeman, et al , 2002), and consequences for certain behaviours, and

yet are expected to abide by the norms Their perception of what constitutes as normal may be

significantly different from that of Canadian school officials, which can partially explain

behaviour differences in their actions from those of other students In other words, refugee

students lack an understanding of how schools in a settlement context are organized and how

students are expected to act in schools (Freeman, et al , 2002)

The Need for Effective Intervention

If the purpose of an education system is to provide students with the best education

possible to succeed in the real world, then intervention is needed because refugee students are

deprived of opportunities to excel academically and integrate successfully in schools When

students struggle, schools should make appropriate accommodations to help them by any means

possible Similarly, when GAR youth struggle in school, intervention is required and changes

need to be made In fact, school boards receiving a large number of newcomers, both

immigrants and refugees, are obligated to make continual efforts to improve services in order to

meet the changing needs of the student population (Kaprielian-Churchill, 1996) These changes

especially need to occur for struggling refugee students as they are most at risk with respect to

declining school performance and general well-being, whether they are considered within the

refugee cohort or within the secondary school population as a whole (Kaprielian-Churchill,

1996)

The intervention this paper advocates for is the implementation of evidence-based

effective practices at three ecological levels the micro, meso and macro levels, in order to better

support the integration of struggling refugee students into Canadian schools The micro

level consists of the immediate network surrounding the individual such as the classroom The

meso level incorporates the roles, norms, and functions of the school and its procedures The

macro level is most distant from the individual and affects the individual indirectly through

policies When developing an intervention for an issue as complex as that of successful social

and academic integration of refugee youth, "it is imperative to consider the different ecological

levels of analysis because it helps shift the focus from individualist explanations that are prone

to victim-blaming towards more holistic, system-oriented models of explanation" (Nelson &

Prilleltensky, 2005, p 355)

Effective Practices

I will use a modified version of the Four Keys for School Success model outlined by

Freeman and colleagues (2002) (see Figure 1) to accommodate for the age difference and to

incorporate action on the three mentioned ecological levels However, I suggest a modified

version of the model (see Figure 2) based on my personal interpretation and understanding of

what is required to successfully integrate refugee students, and incorporates the ecological levels

of analysis for a younger population Modifications were made to more accurately reflect the

developmental differences and needs of youth from adults as the current project focuses on

English learners who are in middle or late adolescence

Figure 1   **Figure 2**

Four Keys to Success for Older English Learners (Freeman, Freeman, & Mercuri, 2002)	**Guidelines for the Successful Integration of Refugee Students in Secondary Education**
Engage students in challenging, theme-based curriculum to develop academic concepts	1 Promote individual well-being through self-determination and empowerment in classrooms
Draw on students' background – their experiences, cultures, and language	2 Create a school environment that respects diversity through the promotion of inclusivity and collaboration
Organize collaborative activities and scaffold instruction to build students' academic English proficiency	3 Challenge policies that hinder or obstruct the attainment of the first two
Create confident students who value school and value themselves as learners	

The first guideline in Figure 2 promotes the enhancement of individual well-being because it is seen as an integral component of one's personal development Well-being in this case is used to refer to a state of being with others, where human needs are met, where one can act meaningfully to pursue ones goals, and where one enjoys a satisfactory quality of life (Copestake, 2008) Well-being requires supportive relationships and networks, and participation in social events that are usually affected by and obtained simultaneously through multiple ecological levels The next few paragraphs will briefly outline how macro, meso and micro level situations affect the overall well-being of refugee students

Inclusivity and Collaboration

At the macro level, the streaming process under which Ontario schools operate and the provincial age restrictions on secondary school admissions affect students' self-esteem and self-confidence by creating barriers to integration and academic achievement The streaming process

in Ontario schools affects the self-confidence of students as a significant number of

immigrants are placed in lower level programs (Kapriekian-Churchill, 1996) than is normal for

someone their age group (Freeman, et al , 2002) Unfortunately, Ontario schools perpetuate the

placement of students in lower level classrooms by operating on a streaming process that

separates high school students into three broad tracks technical and vocational programs,

general-level programs and university entrance programs This contributes negatively to

students' learning and could deter further efforts as it affects self-esteem and self-confidence

(Kapriekian-Churchill, 1996) In contrast, the ELD courses offered by the school board

collaborating on this project are open classes meaning that any student may enrol This open

admission helps explain the broad age range of the students in these classes as enrolment is

based on literacy proficiency rather than age In summary, the streaming process under which

Ontario schools operate complicates the opportunity for refugee students to advance since only

those streamed within the highest academic tracks can obtain credits that enable them to go to

university

Age restrictions outlined in Ontario's education policies is another factor that restricts

opportunities for newcomer students to excel academically because the policy affects timing and

graduation Students arriving in high school tend to be placed in classes with much younger

students based on their level of academic performance and comprehension This restriction

combined with the fact that most provinces in Canada, including Ontario, end public funding for

secondary education (Kapriehan-Churchill, 1996) at the age of 21, makes completing secondary

school prior to the cut-off age a rather challenging task The limited time frame students have

sometimes creates frustration and panic because not only are they years behind their classmates,

but now they have only a few years (depending on their age and literacy level) to close

the achievement gap before they must meet high school graduation requirements (Freeman, et

al , 2002) The ELD program offered by the public school board in southern Ontario is credit

bearing, meaning that students accumulate credit towards graduation while attending ELD

courses This feature is unique to this school board because other boards offer "K" credits that

are not considered for graduation Furthermore, students have the option of obtaining a high

school diploma through adult education in the province of Ontario at no charge Although this

option is funded by the province, the change in environment, institution and population can take

students back a step or two as they would need to adjust to yet another educational institution

Students would also risk losing the social network and support that they have established,

potentially affecting integration and academic performance

Due to barriers of streaming and age restrictions schools are often seen as places where

failure is consistently experienced (Freeman, et al , 2002) This consequently affects students'

confidence level and desire to learn There is one caveat Instructors have the possibility to

circumvent the possible negative implications of the streaming process in that they have a

certain degree of flexibility in their accountability when working with the curriculum Although

the content of the curriculum is established at the ministry level, its application depends on

instructors' interpretation and consequently, application of it within the classroom In summary,

the educational policies create barriers for refugee students and increase the likelihood of

refugees devaluing themselves as students and individuals (Freeman, et al , 2002), however

teachers may ameliorate this problem in their interpretation and implementation of the

curriculum

One way students' well-being can be enhanced at the macro level (i e , at the

policy making level) is through inclusivity and collaboration The Ontario Ministry of Education

identifies creating a welcoming and inclusive environment as a whole-school activity that

requires the commitment of leaders within the school community (Ontario Ministry of

Education, *Many Roots, Many Voices,* 2005) I would extend that to include policy makers and

community organizations Olsen and Jaramillo (1999) encourage ongoing collaboration between

school personnel and others working with newcomers in sustaining professional development

and situating advocates at school sites to help implement changes in assessment and curriculum

Community organizations and members may also be able to provide policy makers with the

information and knowledge necessary to establish an inclusive and well-rounded policy that

addresses the social and academic needs of refugee youth Then, policy makers can incorporate

resources and policies with more accurate and complete knowledge This partnership can serve

to educate school personnel about the complexities of the refugee student population and

provide school personnel with the knowledge and skills needed for teaching and learning that

would help to close the gap and maximize academic potentials (Olse & Jaramillo, 1999) In

summary, intervention at the macro level can be enhanced by incorporating collaborations with

community organizations to create inclusive policies and curriculums

Empowerment and Self-determination

At the meso and micro levels, research reveals that schools and classrooms marginalize

students by restricting their power to shape or change the programming of which they are the

targets (Freeman, et al , 2002) Furthermore, students are given passive roles with little

opportunity for advancement The structure of classes and the courses offered sometimes

marginalize refugee youth by excluding them from obtaining the highest level of courses

and requirements needed for graduation Although alternative courses are available, these are

neither similar in credentials nor effective in implementation as they are sometimes under

resourced Oppression and marginalization in schools and classrooms affect the overall well-

being of refugee students by placing them in a downward mobility that is difficult to escape

Freeman and colleagues (2002) found discrepancies between what is known to be

effective instruction and actual practice being implemented in courses and programs serving

refugee students, which can be attributed to unequal distribution of power in society Most

schools provide courses or programs such as resource centres, ESL, and after school homework

clubs to help struggling students, however, these programs do very little to achieve their purpose

(Freeman, et al , 2002) Refugee students generally come from social groups that lack the power

to shape social institutions, such as schools, to accommodate their needs (Freeman, et al , 2002)

They have little say in the structure or format of the programs that aim to serve their needs and

are often not given the opportunity to vocalize areas they wish to learn or improve on As

Cummins (2000) argues, an important determinant of school success or failure is the relative

status of various groups and their perception of their position in the social hierarchy (Freeman,

et al , 2002)

Literature documents that not only are some programs poorly implemented, they are

also ineffective in teaching the intended skills Programs, such as ELD, are implemented to

assist students with becoming literate in printed material expanding oral learning of the English

language as well as developing related academic skills such as reading and writing However,

these skills are rarely obtained effectively by newcomers   One explanation for a lack of skill

development by newcomers is that these students have been placed in passive roles

(Berman, 1992) Students in these programs are expected to accomplish requirements with little

interaction with peers Once this expectation is met, they are limited in advancement and often

remain stagnant due to the repetitiveness of the class It has been found that because students

struggle, they are given basic skills and repetitive drills rather than activities to build the high-

level content knowledge, language and comprehension skills (Garcia, 2000, Hughes, 2000)

Therefore, studies show that the passive roles students are given, the lack of opportunity to

express personal goals, and their social standing relative to others in the school environment,

place refugee youth in a downward mobility that may render them even more powerless than

before

Intervention at the meso and micro level is best captured by the first guideline in Figure

2, which is through empowerment Empowerment refers to the process by which people gain

control over their lives through participation (Rappaport, 1981) Currently, programs do not

allow space for refugee students to shape the content of their learning, but research shows that

by involving students in choosing and developing curriculum content students become the

'experts' while acquiring the requisite academic skills (Freeman, et al , 2002) Belief in student

potential on behalf of classroom teachers has also been shown to empower students Gersten and

Jiménez (1994) observed how teachers supported English language learners and concluded that

effective instruction included encouraging involvement of students by providing opportunities

for success and access to content (Freeman, et al , 2002) In another study, Moran, Tinajero,

Stobbe, and Tinajero (1993) have shown that students thrive in environments where they are

given opportunities to be in charge of their own learning

The next section briefly outlines the English Literacy Development (ELD)
program and research questions that the present study explored

Present Research

The present study is from one secondary school within a larger project (still in progress) of several secondary schools within a public school board in southern Ontario, Canada The focus is on refugee students enrolled in the English Literacy Development (ELD) program within one school board The purpose of the overall project is to identify resources and effective practices within schools that will help address school absenteeism, credit accumulation and graduation needs of ELD learners The rationale for the present study is that the findings will lend insight into these domains by gaining a clear understanding of the program as perceived by students and administrators, as well as identifying factors that influence integration into schools Knowing how the program is perceived and implemented, what students experience day-to-day and challenges involved stakeholders encounter will help inform the mobilization of necessary resources across schools and in the local community This information will help school boards modify, improve and/or create new programs that are effective in addressing the needs of refugee students In summary, this thesis examined an ELD program at one education setting chosen based on the number of ELD students enrolled because it will help meet the overall goal of the larger project (which is to address school absenteeism, credit accumulation and graduation needs of ELD learners)

English Literacy Development (ELD) Program

English Literacy Development (ELD) programs are similar to but different from English as a Second Language (ESL) programs Though both types of programs aim to increase English language proficiency, these programs differ in content and instruction According to the Ministry of Education in the Ontario Curriculum (grades 9-12), the ELD program is for students to learn the language of instruction at the same time as they are learning curriculum content (e g , history, mathematics, etc) ESL, on the other hand, is geared toward students whose first language is that other than English, or in some cases, of an English variety that is significantly different from that used for instruction in Ontario schools For example, people from the Caribbean Islands speak English that is grammatically different than that used for instruction in Ontario schools Furthermore, ESL students have age-appropriate literacy skills in their first language, whereas ELD students have limited prior formal literacy learning experience ELD students have had limited access to education and opportunities to develop literacy skills in any language As mentioned earlier, in some cases refugee students are learning print for the first time in a language other than the first one they learned and this learning occurs in a foreign school system Basic understanding of and competence in literacy affects students' ability to comprehend content in other subjects due to the complexity of terminology and vocabulary involved (Woods, 2009) In summary, the two main differences between ELD and ESL students are that ELD students (a)have had significant gaps in their education and lack of literacy in any language and (b) need more intensive support for a longer period of time than ESL students

There are four main categories under which a curriculum content and expectations fall in order to increase proficiency in the English language (1) listening and speaking, (2) reading, (3)

writing, and (4) socio-cultural competence and media literacy The first category builds

on students' ability to understand, interpret and communicate spoken English using appropriate

language structures The second category, reading, helps students understand a variety of texts

and reading strategies In the writing category, students are taught to write in a variety of forms

for different audiences and organize their ideas in a writing form using correct English grammar

conventions The last category is unique as it aids with the use of non-verbal communication

strategies and helps students understand Ontario's education system The overall expectation of

the ELD program includes the knowledge and skills that ELD students are expected to obtain

and demonstrate by the end of each course

The Ministry of Education allows for flexibility in the delivery of ELD programs in

individual schools The three common models under which ELD programs are offered include

the local school, congregated school, and resource support models The local school model is

implemented when schools have a sufficient number of students to warrant full-service

programs These schools would have ESL or ELD departments with qualified ELD instructors

and offer a range of credit courses adapted to the needs of English language learners The

congregate school model is similar to the first but the number of students is not sufficient to

sustain a full-service program Therefore, students are sent to magnet schools that serve

language learners from the surrounding geographical areas These magnet schools have ELD

programs and departments similar to the local school model The resource support model is

implemented when there are insufficient numbers of students within school boards or

surrounding geographical areas to warrant ELD credit courses In these cases, schools provide

qualified ELD teachers who offer regularly scheduled individual assistance on a resource basis

and provide support to classroom teachers

The school board with whom this project is collaborating offers four ESL magnet sites with ESL and ELD courses at the secondary school level Students can register for ESL or ELD English classes as well as other subjects like ESL math, ESL science, ESL geography and more Schools identified as magnet sites in the selected southern Ontario Region offer up to five ESL and ELD courses (if the number of students enrolled and available instructors allow), each one at a different skill level In order to accurately place newcomer students in programs designed to meet their learning needs, they are assessed at the Welcome Centre Students new to Canada whose first language is not English, or who have been in Canada for less than five years and are new to the area are assessed at the Welcome Centre The assessment includes a review of mathematic and English language skills of students to make recommendations for appropriate placements in schools A first language assessment is conducted at the centre, which helps illustrate the literacy competence of the student A thorough background is also completed, not only in education but pre-migration and health The Welcome Centre then equips students and families with school system pertinent information, which is available in twenty languages In summary, the school board with whom this project is collaborating has programs and procedures in place to assess newcomer students and position them in courses appropriate to their identified education needs

Research Objectives and Questions

The research objectives of the present study are

1   To identify factors that influence integration of refugee students in schools and,

2   To seek better understanding of programs and services designed to

support refugee youth as these resources as perceived by students and

administrators

The research questions of the present study are

1   What factors hinder and/or facilitate the integration of refugee students in

schools?

2   What resources are available and used by students and administrators

(teachers, department heads, and principals) to help students' transition into a new

education system?

3   How can school programs and services be designed to effectively respond

to the needs of refugee students?

Methodology

Standpoint

I am a 24 year-old Muslim female of Ethiopian decent My family immigrated to Canada

in 1993 and I spent the majority of my life in and across Canada My identity has been and

continues to be a complicated topic for me to decipher because I grew up in a religious and

cultured environment that is not reflected in the mainstream Canadian society in which I live

and where I spend most of my time This experience has allowed me the flexibility to adopt the

identity that seemed to best fit with the context I was in at any particular moment I was also

able to gain insight of the oppression and privileges associated with whichever identity I choose

to identify

I struggle to describe the privileges I have within the Canadian society because not only

are they limited they are also associated with oppression and struggle For example, I am

fortunate and privileged to have had the opportunity to attend school because this was a rarity

for my parents I am privileged to not only have a high school diploma (which is a privilege in

and of itself) but also a Bachelor's degree, and with time, a Master's degree Education is a

public right in Canada, I value my education dearly In spite of my deeply held appreciation for

education it has not been obtained without oppression and social and relational conflict There

were times when I was discouraged by family members and relatives who hold strong traditional

views on education from continuing my academic studies because of my field of interest or level

of degree Views on education differed among my family members and this made it difficult to

pursue as doing so sometimes meant defying tradition

A second example of a privilege that I have that can sometimes be oppressive is my

experience with immigration This privilege exposed me to situations and life events unique to

that process I consider this a privilege because it protected me from experiencing violence and

political unrest from which my parents escaped This privilege has also exposed me to

oppressive situations in schools growing up both academically and socially due to my limited

English skills or clothing that I wore upon arriving to Canada In summary, my experiences can

be identified sometimes as privileges and other times as oppression

My position can be seen as both advantages and disadvantages in the context of this

research An advantage is that my educational achievements may serve as a beacon of hope for

youth who are new to Canada However, the same privilege can be a disadvantage with the key

informants as my age and limited professional experience within the field of Education may

discredit my level of education relative to theirs Furthermore, my experience with immigration

may work as an advantage as it could present me as a credible advocate for refugee

youth However, this privilege may also be a disadvantage because I cannot relate to their status

as refugees because I have not experienced the trauma that some of the research participants

may have I believe it is valuable to recognize and acknowledge the privileges that serve as both

advantages and disadvantages as it explains how my insights were constructed Although I

personally struggle to label or classify the education that I have obtained as a privilege, I

understand that where I stand on the educational continuum is more advanced relative to the

status of my student research participants

The insights I possess as a result of my experiences as an immigrant and a Muslim

female of colour have led me to believe that individuals experience and perceive the world

differently The same situation can have different effects on individuals where one is no more or

less significant than another My membership in several groups who have experienced systemic

oppression has forced me to view social issues from a macro level perspective As an immigrant,

I have been exposed to the systematic barriers to equal opportunity to employment and access to

services (ranging from physical health to customer services) As a Muslim in a post-911 era, I

have seen various misrepresentations that encourage hatred toward my people As a female, I

have experienced pity, sympathy and discouragement each and every time I expressed a desire

for something that deviated slightly from the traditional role of a Muslim woman As a person of

colour, I have learned to portray aspects of my personality that would satisfy others and debunk

negative stereotypes No matter which label(s) others view me through, I have to work that

much harder to portray myself in such a way that would support my fellow co-members because

my membership to these multiple oppressed groups contributes to my identity

During my undergraduate studies in Peace and Conflict Studies I was exposed to

an ecological approach for understanding oppression, which has influenced my choice of

research population and issue Through my undergraduate courses, I learned that the social

problems individuals face can be traced to larger social-political issues This knowledge helped

clarify my personal confusion by forcing me to identify its source Once I was comfortable with

my identity, I vowed to assist others who have similar group memberships as myself and may be

experiencing what I have This personal commitment helped shape and narrow my research

interest to the immigrant youth population

As with all research, one's privileges and oppression, advantages and disadvantages, and

various group memberships exists and should therefore be acknowledged My subjectivities, as

noted earlier, were likely to be present during data collection and analysis as I engaged

participants to think on multiple ecological levels and categorized findings into familiar themes

While I challenged myself to allow the participants to guide the research and themes, my

identity and standpoint are important to incorporate as they may have influenced participants,

data collection and/or data analysis

Bracketing Interview

It is not possible for researchers to maintain complete objectivity and it is erroneous to

assume so, particularly in qualitative studies such as this one Therefore, a bracketing interview

was used as a means to understand my standpoint more thoroughly and how it might bias and

enhance the research process and findings This process is a persistent effort researchers employ

to not impose their own understanding or personal assumptions on the data (Ahern, 1998) This

method was used to recognize and embrace my personal experiences with immigration and a

variety of education systems as they may or may not relate to the student population of

the present study Ahern (1998) reveals that by doing so, not only would I be acknowledging and

making explicit any potential biases, but also be minimizing their influence on the study

The interview was unstructured and conducted by a close and trusting friend of mine

who helped me discuss my childhood and adult experiences with perspectives and thoughts on

immigration, education, and resettlement The process has been valuable because it helped me

come to terms with the events that make me who I am today The interview helped me reflect on

and become aware of my experience as a former ESL student, with a history of family

relocations and the support that was given to me as a newcomer (see Appendix G for exerts)

Resurrecting the experiences I had growing up in different cultures, countries and schools

allowed me to connect with students on a personal level and empathize with their situations

Furthermore, as a graduate student, it has given me the opportunity to critically analyze and

understand how schools programs are run The bracketing interview may have helped obtain

valuable data from students and administrators, as I was able to empathize in a sincere and

genuine manner and understand the structure and justifications of school programs

Validity and Threats to Validity

To establish validity, respondent validation or member checks were used This was

important to establish and articulate with focus group participants as language barriers might

have obscured interpretation During the procedure of member checks, the researcher rephrased

comments that participants made for clarification and confirmation During individual

interviews this was used when participants struggled with responses or when the researcher was

unclear Member checks were used throughout the focus groups to ensure that what the

researcher was writing accurately reflected what was being said Feedback to respondents allowed them to verify if their comments have been correctly interpreted Therefore, this process was a good way of avoiding misinterpretation

To attend to questions of applicability and validity, trustworthiness criteria have been employed when and where possible, such as prolonged engagement and persistent observation (Lincoln & Guba, 2007) as well as member checks as mentioned earlier The researcher was present in the ELD classrooms long before data collection to establish rapport and contact with potential participants during which observations were made and documented This approach is similar to and reflective of the process by which to establish credibility, transferability, reliability and objectivity (Lincoln & Guba, 2007) often employed in quantitative studies

Despite the prolonged engagement, persistent observation and use of member checks to establish validity, it is possible that reactivity or the influence of a researcher on the setting or individuals might have served as threats This may have been more evident in focus groups with refugee students To address these threats, facilitators disclosed appropriate information about themselves, the purpose of the focus group and study in general at the start of every session Facilitators also communicated how the information was going to be used and disseminated.

Method

Design

This research used an ethnographic case study research design of one secondary school

in an English speaking city in Ontario to explore the everyday customs and conventions that

govern the behaviours of persons and sub-groups within a culture (Cohen & Court, 2003) This

method was selected because it best described the behaviours, beliefs and values of participants

within a particular setting The school, here on out referred to as *Southwest High* to maintain the

confidentiality of the participants in this study, opened during the 1960s and has a diverse

community of learners It has approximately1, 600 students and 125 staff *Southwest High* (a

pseudonym is an ELD Magnet school with approximately 300 students, speaking at least 50

different languages, enrolled in the ESL/ELD program

This method has been used to describe the behaviours, values and beliefs of research

participants in selected cultural settings (Cohen & Court, 2003) and as a tool for providing an in-

depth understanding of a program from the perspective of multiple stakeholders Refugee

students in the ELD program served as the participants and the school, *Southwest High,* served

as the 'case' in this ethnographic case study This research design was selected because it was

able to provide a holistic account that contextualized the meaning of lived experiences of

refugee students in the ELD program

Participants

In total, six refugee students between the ages of 16 and 20 and two administrators

(drawn from teachers, principals, and department heads) volunteered to participate in this study,

the exact role is not specified to provide anonymity Table 1 below reports the demographic

information of the student participants

Table 1

Demographic Information of Students

Name (Pseudonym)	Arrived in Canada	Age	Sex	Grade	ELD Level	Reasons for Leaving Home Country	Where From	Refugee Camp	Prior Schooling
Nancy	Mar 9, 2010	19*	Girl	11	B	Better life	Kenya - born in Somalia	YES (10 yrs)	Up to grade 9
Adam	Oct 27, 2009	20	Boy	12	C	Safety/ security	Palestine - born in Iraq	YES (4 yrs)	Yes
Marcus	Oct 24, 2008	16	Boy	10	B	Safety	Colombia	NO	Yes
Stephanie	Dec 24, 2009	16	Girl	10	C	Better life	Kenya - born in Sudan	YES (10 yrs)	Boarding school
Lucy	Oct 20, 2009	20	Girl	12	C	Better education	Ethiopia	---	Up to grade 10
Alex	2007	17	Boy	11	C	Education	Egypt - born in Somalia	---	Language School

- arbitrary date given during immigration

Ethical Considerations

Participants were informed about the nature of the study and the right to withdraw at any

point in the interview or focus group If participants chose to withdraw from the study, their

responses were not transcribed They had the right to omit or withdraw their responses to any

questions or procedure without penalty, and if they did their recordings were not transcribed

Consent and Confidentiality

All participants were given an information letter describing the study Those who

accepted were asked to sign a consent form prior to the interview, consent was obtained prior to

involvement in focus group discussions and interviews

It was anticipated that student participants might experience discomfort as they recall

challenging or negative experiences associated with a refugee status, therefore, a list of

community and school services were made available to participants if needed, but students did

not request this information The names of the participants were not associated with any of their

interview responses On the transcripts, individuals were identified by pseudonyms Information

was not included in any quotes that could be used to identify the person

Interviews and Focus Groups

Eight individual semi-structured interviews were conducted with students and

administrators to find patterns of experience with the ELD program The goal of these

interviews was to provide participants the chance to share their experiences in their own words

Interviews were also used to identify the commonalities in experiences and perceptions from

involved stakeholders (Dilley, 2000), which could create a bridge between person and report.

Responses from individual interviews provided a holistic understanding of the adequacy of the

ELD program

Six student participants were invited back for a one-hour semi-structured focus group

interview separated by gender Individual interviews with students were conducted before focus

groups to establish trust and rapport and not to overburden students in one session, as it could

have been overwhelming Furthermore, when individual interviews are conducted first, they

help generate focus group discussions (Morgan, 1997) This approach was used to

accommodate the possibility that limited exposure to the focus group process and English

language may require familiarity of the process and setting before they became fully

comfortable Focus groups were separated based on gender to allow students a comfortable

environment to share and discuss experiences that may be gender specific

Interviews and focus groups were used as complementary techniques (Morgan, 1997) for

the potential benefits they would bring to students and the study One-on-one interviews were

completed first as a way to build rapport and gain the trust and comfort of student participants in

sharing their personal stories It served as an opportunity for students to get to know the

researcher prior to displaying their experiences Focus groups were selected as the second

session so as to provide students with the opportunity to hear similar stories from their peers and

gain comfort and support in the process Focus groups have a synergistic effect especially in a

homogenous group who share common but varying experiences as refugees This means that

data shared in groups is likely to be rich as the group will most likely add to the information and

experiences of one another Focus groups also provide a sense of normalcy to participating

students when others express personal challenges and struggles with settlement or integration

similar to their own Focus groups are advantageous when participants have lower literacy

levels, such as in this study, as they are provided with the opportunity to help one another and

confirm their contributions in ways individual interviews cannot Focus groups also relieve them

of having to answer every question and provide the option of building on responses instead

Instruments

Interview Guides. In total there were eight individual interviews (six with students and two with administrators) and two focus groups (with three female and three male students) Interviews and focus groups were semi-structured and included open ended questions consistent with the research questions and objectives of the study Individual and focus group interviews with students began with getting to know them by asking them to talk about themselves, their typical day, challenges they experienced, and programs or activities that they were involved with Following this, student participants were asked about their experiences with the ELD program Interviews with administrators began with them sharing their overall experiences with the ELD program including their role, challenges, and frustrations, as well as the benefits, and advantages of the program in the school Administrators were also asked to reflect on the type and number of programming and school activities that are available and utilized by ELD students For more examples of the specific types of questions used during the interviews, please refer to appendices D through F

Individual interviews and focus groups allowed participants the opportunity to share stories about immigration, settlement, and the education system They also provided them with the chance to share their perspectives, concerns and suggestions based on their lived experiences as providers and participants of the ELD program During these interviews, the researcher probed for both positive and negative experiences associated with social and academic integration challenges within the context of the ELD program The discussion questions used also probed for strength and weaknesses on each level of analysis –macro, meso and micro

Researchers' Field Notes

Data were collected by me (Hany Ibrahim) through participant observation I was involved with the ELD program as a classroom volunteer and observer prior to interviewing participants in order to build rapport This was used as a means to gain trust and also provide students with the opportunity to get involved by asking questions about my interests and goals pertaining to this study The notes that were produced throughout my involvement were incorporated as data These notes included interactions observed in the classes, number of students present, informal conversations with students and teachers as well as notes on the school atmosphere and events

Analysis

Data were obtained from individual interviews and one focus group Some interviews and focus groups were audio recorded while others were not Participants objected to having their voices recorded despite having read and understood the ethical procedure that would be taken to ensure the confidentiality of the data Reasons for objections shared off the record included lack of security of the stored recording amongst both students and administrators, previous experiences associated with negative political influences for students from war torn countries and job security for school administrators Therefore, in cases where audio recorders were not used, accurate handwritten notes were taken to the best of my ability that reflected their voices Recorded interviews were transcribed by myself and two research assistants from our research team

Data in this qualitative study were analyzed using the grounded theory approach (Patton, 2002) Constant comparative analysis was also used, which is a method that codes information

into emerging themes (Hewitt-Taylor, 2001) Grounded theory is a systematic and

inductive way of collecting and analyzing qualitative data to construct theories that are

"grounded" (Charmaz, 2000) in and based on observations from the data themselves (Crotty,

1998) This method differs from those used in quantitative research in that it does not test a

hypothesis but rather seeks to find the theory that accounts for the collected data In other words,

it is believed that there is a theory concealed in the data Using this data analysis method

allowed for participants' accounts to construct and build on one another While grounded theory

can be used to formulate new theories, this study used this method to verify existing ones

Notes from individual interviews and focus group transcripts, and field (observation)

notes were coded by attributing an appropriate code to sections, paragraphs and/or sentences of

the transcript and field notes that best captured the essence of the data In some cases, this meant

that certain sections, paragraphs and sentences had one, several or no codes at all These codes

were then gathered under a common theme and compared to one another to ensure consistency

For example, the code bullying was attributed to data that suggested physical altercations, verbal

or emotional abuse, and repetitive jokes or teasing that made people uncomfortable This

process allowed for more codes to emerge when and where necessary For example, the code for

bullying was further broken down into fights and anti-immigrant racism Once this was

completed, codes with similar elements were merged under one category Next, the categories

were matched with the best fit research questions In summary, codes were generated solely

from data and coded and managed using Nvivo (computer program software that manages

qualitative data)

Procedure

Participants were recruited with the help of a Learning Services Consultant using the

following criteria

Criteria Selection for students

    a) Students ages 16 to 20 who had arrived in Canada within the last five years (or

    at/after the age of 10),

         • The rationale for the age criterion was chosen for practical reasons

        because students 16 and over were not required to have parent/guardian

        (i e , care providers) consent Recruiting participants under the age of 16

        would have been challenging for students who are refugees due to

        language and comprehension issues of care providers

         • The criterion for having had arrived within the most recent five

        years was to ensure that students were recent newcomers

    b) Students enrolled in an ELD program at Level B, C, or D were selected to ensure

    an adequate level of language ability to participate in the study (Level A is an

    introductory level, Level E is advanced, however, there were no Level E courses

    offered at the time the study was conducted)

Criteria selection for administrators

    a) Teachers specialized as ELD instructors or responsible for implementing ELD

    programs,

    b) Educators who have direct contact with refugee youth (i e , educational assistants

    and classroom teachers),

      c)   Principal who oversees implementation of the ELD program in the school

Findings

This section reveals the findings that were obtained in the present study from students and administrators Student participants are identified through the use of pseudonyms and administrators through names that are gender neutral in Canada Quotations from interviews that were not audio recorded are marked with asterisks (*) at the end of the quote This notation is to indicate that the voices of these participants were written in first-person form by the researcher (Hany Ibrahim) While these quotes may not be exact words, they are close approximations and reflect their voices as best as could be transcribed by hand

ELD Program

This section provides an overview of the context in which the English Literacy Program operates from the perspective of the participants Administrators provided descriptive information about the program in general while student participants shared from their personal experiences from within the program

School Description. Below is a description of the school, its population and how the ELD program was developed by school administrators

> "Well, we're about   we're a school of about 1600, and about 300 are ESL students "
> *Chris*

> "We've had ESL students at *Southwest High* for a very long time When I was   here in the mid 90's it was already an ESL school at that point Again the same issue occurred when the ESL students first started showing up at our board They just went to their home school But again you didn't have an opportunity to create specialized classes to help them with the English language development You didn't have enough students in any one school So the decision was then to pool together in certain areas so that's why they picked one in the north which [was the site of this research] " *Chris*

The concept of magnet schools has been reported to be effective and beneficial to

Southwest High as it allows for variety of ELD level courses and options for students

"So again it allows us to get enough students to be able to offer a whole variety of courses Right, and when I look at the program that we have to offer, we've got a fairly good selection Pretty much every grade 9 and 10 core course or optional course that you want, we can offer it as a segregated ESL package that allows you to have smaller class sizes and reinforce the language acquisition " *Chris*

"And so we basically start with them from scratch in terms of learning English and that particular point in time So while they are learning their English they have the opportunity to earn their credits So we do we set up courses for both sets of groups, in terms of having the opportunity to take math and science and all the other subjects that you would normally take in the high school setting " *Chris*

Since the inception of magnet schools and *Southwest High* being selected as one, many

changes and modifications had to be made at the school to accommodate the ELD program in

terms of students and instructors

"I think when I look at where we are now I think we've grown quite a bit from where it was before It was a smaller program   partly because of our student population Even though our ESL population is going up, our overall population is going down So we've lost about 300 students over the years and so as a result, in order to keep people teaching in their subject area, then I had to look at ways in dealing with that One of the ways was to expand their ability to work in their subject areas students in the ESL program And I think that's been a good fit in that point in time to deal with our decreasing population as well as increase in population So I haven't had to go out and hire brand new people to teach ESL students because I have the expertise here in terms of the subject area We just needed to provide some support for those teachers in terms of some of the things " *Chris*

"I think that we've had better opportunity over the last three years expanding the types, the contact that teachers have with the ESL students When I was   , I had the impression that it was just a small group of teachers that work with ESL students I've taken the opportunity over the last three years to expand dramatically the number of teachers working with ESL students I think it important that they have the opportunity to not just work with the same 5, 6 ,and 7 teachers but that they have the ability to interact with teachers that are knowledgeable in their subject area And also for those teachers to get an appreciation for what an ESL student is working with " *Chris*

Description of the ELD program. When asked to describe the program,

administrators provided the following responses

> "ESL program that we have is about 300 students There are 2 groups of students that are basically in the program one are the ESL students, those are the students that are just finishing off their English language proficiency courses in order to be able to handle any regular course that we have here, and the ELD programs are students who basically come into the school with very little language English language at all " *Chris*

> "The way that we work [is that] we have an ESL department which has a head They basically are responsible [for] the English language portion of the curriculum and then subjects like math and science and history, geography, the phys-ed, the family studies Students take ESL designated courses and those subject areas and the subject specialists in that area teaches them So as a result then, that gives, from our perspective, the opportunity for students to interact with all the teachers in the building not just a quarter of the ESL teachers who are focused just on the English language That gives them again some opportunities to start to look at what courses [they] want to go into down the road and etc at that point in time " *Chris*

> *Available ELD courses.* The ELD program offers a variety of standard high school

courses for students of all grades at various levels to better accommodate their literacy skills

> "When they are entering into grade 9, they would take one of their English language courses and they range from ELD a,b,c,d,e and ESL a,b,c,d,e So that's the sequence of events So theoretically a student could start if they have no language what so ever they would start in ELD a then the go to b, c, d, e Sometimes they jump depending upon how fast they learn the things So, but that is the curriculum that is set up in terms of the English language part And then they have to take the same courses that any other grade 9 students would take So you have to make sure you have a math, you have to have a science, you got to have a geography, and you have to take some of your optional subjects So they have the same diploma requirements as anybody else " *Chris*

> "The difference though in grade 9 and grade 10 is that we have class sizes that are dedicated to ESL students, with a smaller class size So rather than a geography class with 26, there will be a class with the maximum of 17 or 18 students And then we get to reinforce the language So for example with the geography you are going to spend a little more time on terminology, so that they understand what the terminology means Whereas in a regular class you may just go over that quickly because some of the students may be familiar with that already So the main difference is that in grade 9 and 10 we got the smaller class sizes to reinforce the language part But they do have to meet the same expectations as if they were in the mainstream geography and/or math or science class " *Chris*

Once ELD students enter their senior years in high school, the dynamics and requirements of available courses change slightly as they are gradually integrated into mainstream courses

> "Grade 11 and grade 12 they then select their level they're going to work at whether it is the college level or the university level whatever it is And at that point they are graded with all of the other students at that point " *Chris*

> "Most of the courses are in grade 9 or 10 in terms of the ESL courses By the time we get to grade 11 and 12, they [students] are pretty much integrated into regular courses We have tried, last year we listed a vote 8 or 9 courses they could take in grade 11 which is [an] ESL congregated class and we didn't have enough students to sign-up for them Once they get to grade 11 and 12 courses, they want to be in the regular main stream environments So they can get ready, they are working at in terms of college, university etc But again even though they are in a segregated class in grade 9 or 10 for math or history or whatever, they still have to follow the same expectation that you would in a regular class It's just that you are able to go a little bit slower not do quite as many expectations and to also continue to reinforce the language acquisition " *Chris*

Current courses in which students are enrolled. Students shared the courses in which they were currently involved and shared their interests and concerns in each of them The participants were enrolled in

> "English, Geography, Technology and Science " *Adam**
> "English, Science, Careers, and Gym " *Stephanie*
> "English, Math, Drama, and Gym " *Marcus*
> "English, Art, Family Studies, and Math " *Nancy**
> "English, Science, Math and Powerfit [gym] " *Alex*

Students expressed varying interests and concerns for the courses they are taking Math and English were selected as favourites because one requires less talking while the other teaches the language that is most spoken

> "I like math because it's just formulas You don't have to read a lot It is helpful in different ways " *Stephanie*

"[English] is the most important thing to learn because English is needed for everything and it is helpful " *Lucy*

"Like math because it is important to be a nurse Also, science such as Biology and Chemistry " *Nancy*

Some students find that some classes are too easy or boring

"Some classes too easy, boring, because we do the same work all the time " *Adam**

An example being

"Ok in my ESL class the teacher said that you need to name things like your fingers, eyes, hair That's easy for me " *Marcus*

Among the least favourite courses were Art and Business due to their novelty to ELD

students

"I don't like Science "*Adam*

"I don't Art because I have never taken it before I am neither good at it nor enjoy it I asked to take Gym or something else in place of it, but was told that I had to take Art by my counsellor " *Nancy**

"I don't like Business because it is difficult I don't know how to use the computers to make brochures and newspapers, which the class heavily relies on, because I did not learn this in Ethiopia " *Lucy**

Lucy and Nancy find it depressing to be in classes in which they are struggling because they become their lowest mark of all classes which is unusual for them *Focus Group*

Students find classes that are not ELD or aren't taught by ELD instructors to be

challenging as it becomes difficult to interact with the teacher and non-ELD students

"I have gym, yup and it's not ESL But gym is very hard It's hard when he talking, and I need [to write] what he talking That's really hard [There's no writing in that class] That's good because the gym is more, is talking about for muscles And you will do, how do you say   ya, exercising They didn't talk too much about the writing That's why But if him, he talking about muscle and you needed to write and you need [to] know all about muscles That's pretty hard for me I think I [would] fail this class " *Marcus*

"I don't like Business class because the teacher talks too fast I have troubles understanding the Business teacher When I ask for help or questions, the teacher is usually not helpful The teacher is sometimes good, but sometimes doesn't understand me very well I don't like skipping classes but I didn't go to that class for 3 days Now I only go for tests You know, because sometimes it is also difficult to be with academic people " *Lucy**

She clarified that,

" It is not the teacher's problem, I think it is mine because I don't know computers " *Lucy*

Other reasons why students did not like some of their classes were the number of people

in them

"There are too many people in Southwest High, the hallways They make a lot of noises and push or bump me " *Stephanie*

Student placements. Before ELD students are placed in classes, they are assessed at the

Welcome Centre where the assessment results inform placement decisions

"What happens is every new Canadian that comes to this area they go to what's called the Welcome Centre They have settlement workers, they're all the support systems in that area and they do an assessment of their language and mathematical abilities and we get the results of those assessments from that and that determines what level we start them at So students can come in and have to start right from the very beginning Because they might not have any English and they may not have any schooling from the point in time that they come into high school based on where they are at before depending on the circumstances in their country Other students who come in they go to the Welcome Centre and even though they come from another country their language needs may be just very minor things that we need to work on in that point of time again and again that depends on the age too what we can provide for them" *Chris*

"What will occur at that point is the Welcome Centre does an assessment, we look back to see if they have any high school credits from where ever they're coming from at that point in time " *Chris*

Flexibility to move between/across levels. Once the Welcome Centre provides a

recommendation to the school, schools place students in levels A, B, C, D, or E

"So what happens after is the teachers get familiar with the student and their strengths

and weaknesses We then make recommendations each semester where they
should go So a student who may start off in a basic English course may jump 4 levels
because of what we've seen Again those also depend again on what type of formal
schooling they've had in the past Students who've had formal schooling in the past tend
to be able to catch onto the routines and those types of those things of what it's like
Students who have never experienced that before have a little bit of a challenge to start to
adjust to that type of environment " *Chris*

While there is the possibility for students to switch levels as deemed appropriate by the

instructors, many students found it difficult to move between or across levels as they personally

saw fit

> The teacher of this class believes some students are misplaced in her class Teacher
> thinks student A should be moved up and student B down as the first is more than
> capable of doing the work while the latter requires constant guidance from other students
> who speak the same language The teacher has made several requests to the department
> to make the appropriate changes at which point the department required proof of the
> students' work to warrant the move Unfortunately the teacher did not have anything to
> show as the student A stopped handing in assignments long ago and student B received
> adequate marks (with the help of classmates) [Field notes - Oct 28, 2010]

"Ya I'm learning at ELD because before I did not go to school and it's difficult to go
like, the high level, so right now I'm learning ELD and after I am going ESL " *Alex*

During a focus group, one student said that she successfully completed grade 10 in her

country but is in ELD C in Canada

"I am losing a lot of years " Nancy feels she should be in a higher level instead of C She
asked to be moved up, but was refused because they said she must complete this level
before moving up Nancy does not like this and sees this as hindering her ability graduate
within the 2 years that she is allotted (currently is 19 years old) " *Focus Group*

"On the first day of school, I was placed in ESL I met and got to know the students and
teachers, but then I was moved to ELD I did not like the change and I could not say no
to the change I don't like that they changed my class in the middle of the year I also do
not like where I am now because now I am stuck because they took me back Now I only
have 2 years to graduate but I am not in the right class, not where I belong " *Adam**

Adam used the analogy of stairs to paint a picture of how he felt this change affected

him academically

"It is hard to go up on stairs and easier to go down I feel I was taken down a step and now I only have 2 years to graduate I don't understand how they expect me to graduate in 2 years " *Adam**

Age cut off. The lack of funding for ELD students arriving in grades 11 and 12 has been identified as a struggle and barrier by key informants and older students

"The biggest thing that we struggle with is sometimes we get 18 and 19 year old students coming in with very little language and we are starting them in classes where they are sitting with people who aren't even close to the same age And again because the way the funding works once you turn 21 you can't go to a regular day school you have to move to an alternative program at that point So we have some struggles, from my perspective, how to deal with those students who are coming in at 18, 19, and 20 We can't give them a program that allows them to finish and get through at that point in time So that's the one area that I know our board is looking at some alternative method of providing an opportunity for those students to be able to start in one spot and be able to finish all the way through " *Chris*

Students directly affected by this policy shared their concerns

"They think that I am 19 years old now, here in Canada but is not true They give me the birth date January 1st, 1991 during immigration like everybody else Now I have to clarify this with the school so I will show my birth certificate because I want to stay longer at *Southwest High* I am worried that once I am 21 they will tell me to go to St Louis Adult Learning Centre " *Nancy**

The limited timeline puts students under severe pressure to meet all academic requirements for graduation before having to relocate

"I finished grade 10 in Ethiopia and now I am in grade 12, or they tell this anyway But the classes I am in is like grade10 level " *Lucy**

The resulting dilemmas from this age rule imposed by the province of Ontario is recognized and acknowledged by students, staff and the board

"Again we do what we can here in terms of providing them a program We know that it is not necessarily the best sometimes because again a 19 year old sitting in a class with a 14 year old And you know their interests and the things that they think about are matching up at that point But again we don't have a large enough number that I can create separate pocket for them at that point in time " *Chris*

ELD instructors. ELD instructors come from various education training and

experiences, but have specialization in one or more areas and are flexible in teaching

different groups of students They may or may not have specific training in working with

refugee or ELD students

> *Selection process.* ELD instructors are chosen by the department head based on an

interest to teach ELD students and availability

> "What happens is the department head every year gets a certain number of sections So if
> they look at science, for example, they might have eight sections of ESL science You
> know four in grade nine and four in grade ten And at that point the department head
> would make decisions based on the input from that staff that they have of who wants to
> teach those particular courses That's the same with any type of course whether its grade
> 12 chemistry or grade 11 physics You get a feel from your department of who wants to
> teach what And then the department head makes recommendations and puts that into me
> at that point in terms of being able to timetable that aspect of things " *Chris*

This process allows for instructors in the various disciplines to gain experience working

with ELD students and also to expose ELD students to the different teachers in the school

> "We try here as much as possible to get as many teacher involved in our ESL program
> That's why our geography and our math and our science and our optional subjects are
> taught by teachers who also teach our academic, applied program also So that they have
> some opportunities to work with ESL students With 300 students I think that it's
> important that they are a vital part of our community and that the majority of the teachers
> should have experiences working with ESL students " *Chris*

> While this process has its positives, it proved to be challenging for both instructors and

ELD students as one would not know how to approach or interact with the other, and vice versa

> "Depending upon whether they're [students] brand new to school or never been to school
> before You have expectations of what you would think students would do So for most
> of us, we've never had any experience teaching students who really have no concept of
> what school is and how to do it So I think that's the important part, is to learn and know
> what the differences are in terms of when you are working with an ESL student " *Chris*

> It is important to learn and know how to teach ELD students because they have different

needs and experiences in education than mainstream students as illustrated in the example

below

> "So for example, I remember talking to X who is one of our ESL teachers in the math class She has to remind them about the fact that writing may be on both sides of the paper So she has to remind them about turning the paper over So just basic things that you would expect how to put some paper into a binder Some of them have never seen a binder before so they have no idea what to do And then she indicated the first two, three weeks usually involve a lot of people getting pinched with the binder because there not use to how it works etc " *Chris*

Therefore, given the large population of ELD students, the school administrators initiated

informative workshops to educate instructors on some of the situations that are unique to ELD

students

> "So one of the first things I did my first year is we had a work shop that was lead by some of the members of the ESL department in terms of what to do And one of the things we did for example to kick it off is that we had one of the teachers teach a lesson to the teachers in her own native language So she spoke Romanian for the first 15 minutes as she was teaching something and of course it gave the opportunity for the teachers to really feel what it was like when you're sitting there and someone is speaking a language that you don't understand So I thought that that was a very effective way of enforcing what it's really like and what you need to do differently in order to be effective in that type of environment It's funny because you could see some people were very uncomfortable to start with Then they started okay maybe I can do this, I can kind of understand a few things here But again the teacher had a good job of, you know, having visuals having all sorts of things So by the time the 15 minutes were done, the majority of us kind of got what was going on but we certainly couldn't have gotten the nuances of what was happening So it really gave us a good insight into that " *Chris*

This workshop was offered, because it was made apparent that many instructors of ELD

courses did not have specific training in working with ELD students While instructors did not

have specific training, many gained experience through exposure which allowed them

successfully manage an ELD class by continually modifying the curriculum and content

> "In total I have about seven or eight years of experience working with the ESL students Was I ever given a course on how to be a[n administrator] in ESL? No, not at all It's just you treat people like you always do regardless of what culture they're from and being sensitive to the cultural identities as well as the behaviours and or customs I think that it is important that you keep those in mind as your working with that " *Chris*

"Obviously then, teacher-centred activity should be ideally kept to a minimum The more
the kids can work in small groups, do projects and hands-on activities together, the
better Since this is my first year at ESL, I can tell you U would radically change my
approach if I were to do this a second time I would have the kids listening less to me and
more to each other However, (and I know you haven't seen this much in your Thursday
visits) we have developed quite a rapport in our little class, and a lot of that did stem
from the times I had them figuring things out in pairs and groups, and writing dialogues "
Vick

As a result, some instructors took it upon themselves and got their ESL qualifications

when they started working within a school with ELD students

"A number of staff, because they're here, have gotten their ESL qualifications They've
gone after the fact to take courses through the Ministry of Education relating to how to
work with and teach and be an effective teacher in an ESL classroom If you are teaching
a section of ESL science, the key aspect is that you wanna be able to make sure the
students have the same basic knowledge of that grade nine science course that any other
student would have So again, a lot of teachers in order to be better prepared, have taken
it on themselves to get those qualifications either during the summer or online courses
etcetera So that they're better prepared when they work with ESL students " *Chris*

The qualifications that teachers sought were additional qualification courses that were

offered by universities who have teaching facilities

"Those are what are called additional qualification courses and there offered through the
various universities that have teaching facilities for teacher education They are optional,
you don't have to do that The only stipulation is that if you're teaching ESL language,
you have to have your ESL qualifications if you're going to teach more than one section
of that It's because they are a little more specialized training if you're going to be
teaching people who have never spoken English before, how to write and speak and
communicate in English " *Chris*

While these instructors have taken it upon themselves to seek additional qualifications

after being exposed and working with ELD students, more needs to be done to integrate this

population into the curriculum earlier on in Teachers College

"I think what probably needs to occur is that in teachers college, an environment where
you're learning the craft in teaching, teaching the ESL students should be part of the
curriculum I don't think that's necessarily the case at all in teachers colleges So in order

to become a teacher you have to go to teachers college to do that So part of the training that you should be receiving in teachers college is ESL students and how to work with them, and have some actual experience teaching, because it is different, it's not the same than teaching a regular class I think that's going to be important because, you know from all stats, everything indicates that our level of immigration is going to be increasing as opposed to decreasing over the years So I think it's more and more important that teachers have some experience and some background in teaching ESL students and some of the nuances and differences relating to a regular class in terms of more specifically the language part " *Chris*

Social aspect of the ELD program. Students spoke about the social aspect of the ELD program such as the support they receive, the rules they encounter and how helpful they find the program in general

Supportive/helpful Many students expressed satisfaction in the amount and type of support they receive in this program They found it to be helpful and beneficial to their learning and settling in

"The ELD program is a good program " *Adam*

"ELD program is not too hard, not too easy I am learning a lot and the teachers are very helpful/supportive " *Lucy**

"Yeah this program helped me [so] much " *Marcus*

One student provides an example as to how the ELD helped him

"When you're not speaking, when you can't speak English, that helped so [much] Do you know why? When you can't speak the teacher helps edit papers that way you know what works When you don't know something that teacher explains to you Yeah it helps [so] much " *Marcus*

The same student tries to imagine school without the ELD program

"And you didn't have ESL class, it's too hard for you " *Marcus*

English Only Rule. Students mentioned that teachers do not like it when students speak or communicate with one another in their native language and so enforce the English only rule

The students seem to accept that and find it helpful as it forces them to learn English

"Teachers don't like it when students speak different languages but that is a good thing for students, because you practice English " *Lucy*

"It's a good thing [because], is many people here right, it's Spanish and you think if you want to speak with other people you got to learn English as well " *Marcus*

" when I was going to [name of school], my first semester I didn't learn nothing in English All time I was speaking only Spanish That's why I moved to *Southwest High* because I think [name of school] too [many] people are Spanish and you can't learn because you all time talking in Spanish " *Marcus*

"Yeah, in the classroom, people speak English and I understand Since I come here, I didn't talk my language to anybody I'm just always speak English " *Stephanie*

"Yeah Some know my language, and they talk to me and I just talk English because like in the school you need to talk English because if there is something, maybe if this person talk to you something, is talking something bad in the language the teacher will ask 'why [are] you talk[ing] this language?' We are not allowed to talk language and the teacher is like we are not allowed to talk language " *Stephanie*

Lack of understanding from some teachers. While students report that their ELD teachers are helpful and supportive, they don't find other teachers as understanding

"Sometimes I am scared to express myself or ask questions in Business class I am comfortable in other classes because teachers understand me and what I am trying to express Some teachers are able to understand and know 'what is in the heart' but some don't know " *Lucy**

Differences in Education System

All student participants have had some sort of exposure to education before coming to

Canada The experiences with the education system in their home lands and that of the Western

setting were reported to be significantly different in some cases and challenging to comprehend

"It's very different The language is different the people [are] different, everything is different " *Alex*

Discipline One significant difference that ELD students had to adapt to was the type of

discipline enforced in Canada and how that differed from their previous education institutions

In their home lands,

"Teachers could hit students when they bad or don't do homework " *Adam**

"In Kenya, when students misbehave or don't do their homework, teacher punishes them immediately " *Nancy**

"In Kenya, it is ok to hit back when you are bullied, but here you can get in trouble for hitting back but other students don't get in trouble a lot of the time if they make fun of you " *Nancy*

This differs from how students are disciplined in Canada

"In Canada when students misbehave, teachers do not do much other than talk to them " *Nancy**

For these reasons, newcomer students do not involve teachers when they are bullied or

are involved in fights

"I don't know why That's like a rule here [not telling teachers] Because if you tell the teacher, they only [give] detention " *Marcus*

"The principal come[s] and ask[s] you, "why [did] you say that? Please, don't say that to him " And that's it And when they [the bullies] see you again they say "you are an immigrant " *Marcus*

"The teachers and the principal give you only detention And they can't do any more Sometimes they give suspension And when this guy coming back, you make him pretty angry The Canadian people call, they continue calling you immigrant, immigrant, that's why If you told the principal [nothing happens] [but] when we fight, that's it When you fight, [it] is finished, it stops No more fighting " *Marcus*

In some cases, police get involved if students approach teachers or principals, and so

choose not to approach them for fear of receiving a record

"Because you turn to teacher, right and the teacher contact Police And the Police coming and maybe arrest you That's why " *Marcus*

Opportunity. Schools in Canada were said to provide more opportunities than schools in

students' respective home lands

"I think I'm not sure but I think ah, in Canada the school is better Ya, it's more chance

Like, here you learn good You learn more   like, the language, English language [inaudible] " *Alex*

"Here there is the opportunity to learn about different cultures " *Stephanie, Lucy, Alex*

Diversity in population and content. Students noticed that schools here housed diverse

students and also offered a variety of classes that was different from what they experienced

"I would just go to school to learn the Arabic language That's it But here, like, math and everything This is like real high school but that [school in Egypt] is not like high school, it is a different one Just with one language " *Alex*

Structure of classes. Some students noticed a difference in the structure and routine of schools

"School in Iraq is different There students stay in class and teachers switch (as opposed to in Canada where students switch classes at the end of each class block) *Adam**

"Because here in school, people are, people they eat in school, and they eat together in the cafeteria, and they also, they make noise " *Stephanie*

Class times. School hours also differ for students as they are longer in Canada than as

experienced

"Ok, you know in my country people they start school at 6 35 in the morning and the classes end at 11 30 That's for people, for children And for high school they start at 6 30 and the class ends at 12 30 Then the oldest students start at 12 30 and end at 5 00 at night " *Marcus*

Challenges and Benefits of Coming to Canada

Students shared both the positive and negative experiences that they have encountered

during settlement or which have resulted from the process The identified benefits of settlement

were the types of support and opportunities made available to them during and after the process

"We c[a]me to Canada because [this] is where there is space, and where people help each other And where also there's people who love each other and care about each other " *Stephanie*

"Education, going to school [and] learning " *Alex*

Upon arriving in Canada, students shared the following seven areas in which they

experienced difficulties in terms of adaptability

Leaving family behind. Whereas support and education were recognized as the best

parts about coming to Canada, some students had to leave family members behind which made

immigration very difficult for them

> "The hardest part was leaving my brother in Syria, and an aunt and grandma in
> Baghdad " *Adam**

Weather Canadian winters and the frigid temperatures were among the difficulties that

students found challenging to adjust to as it differed drastically from what they were accustomed

to in their respective homelands This also sometimes affected the walk to school

> "The weather in Canada is very different and it was hard for me " *Lucy*

> "When I came to Canada, it's very cold The weather is different " *Alex*

> "Sometimes I walk to school and it is like, if it is snow, to come to school it take you too
> long because you coming, you fall down, you wake up It's like the hardest, it's like to
> walk There's no any hardest thing Just to come to school when it is snowing " *Stephanie*

Commute to school. The commute to school was a challenge for students because they

relied on others for rides Furthermore, lack of familiarity with street and crossing signs affected

the commute

> "I live in[a town 40 kilometres away] with a family that sponsored me through a church
> A sister of a family member works [near the school] so she drives me to school in the
> morning on her way to work and back home whenever she is done Sometimes I get
> picked up at 4 00pm, and other times 5 00pm " *Adam**

> "Ya, sometimes I take the bus, sometimes my family drive me here Sometimes I walk,
> walking 10 minutes " *Alex*

> "I take the bus, sometimes I walk to school Sometimes it is difficult [for] me
> Sometimes I don't have [a] bus ticket and I walk Sometimes to come and the place of
> stop and you press the light to [cross] Yeah to show if   because if you want to cross the
> road and you press theres something you do there, [laugh] you press and the sign is
> taking too long And sometimes the road is [busy], there's a lot of people driving and

yeah it's like confusing And the first time I come, I don't know if it showing, I don't know any colours that show you going The guy is pressing and I'm like going And I don't know but they teach me that if there   if the road is like you press and if you show a leg of person walking, and you cross " *Stephanie*

Comprehending forms of discipline. Understanding the disciplinary approaches employed by staff in western education settings was different and unclear to many newcomer students

"I did not know the rules of high school before coming to Canada " *Focus Group*

"The most challenging experience coming to Canada was seeing the difference in how students behave and schools discipline Forms of punishment and consequences were different here than in Kenya where I went to school In Kenya, when students misbehave or do not complete their homework, the teacher punishes right away whereas in Canada punishment is always verbal In Canada when students misbehave, teachers do not do much other than talk to them " *Nancy**

Anti-immigrant racism. Another challenge mentioned by students during settlement was anti-immigrant racism Newcomer students reported being the targets and sometimes instigators of bullying in their schools based on their clothing, accents and status as "immigrants" Students reported that rate of this was high and that it occurred quite frequently which made settlement very difficult

"Life is better in Canada, like housing, food, but bullying in school makes it difficult " *Nancy*

"The hardest part about Canadian schools is the amount of bullying that happens and how often they get away with it " *Nancy**

The following quote comes from a student who has experienced a lot of bullying within her first few months at the school

"I got bullied so many times by people because of my marks or how I dressed For example, this one time I received a mark of 95% in English class and people made fun of me saying "ha ha you didn't get 100% " The next time we had a test, I got a lower mark and they still made fun of me Also, one time people didn't like the clothes I wore That

day I wore the traditional Muslim clothes which is a long robe and a long hijab "
*Nancy**

Lack of understanding of the forms of discipline coupled with discrimination

experienced by newcomers, made it difficult for many students to settle in school

"I kept going to the office and teacher to complain about the bullying, but eventually I
grew tired of it as they did not help with my situation So, I started hanging out with
other Somali girls and boys That was good because the boys would help the girls when
we were getting bullied by scaring off the bully For example, they say "if you make fun
of her one more time I will   " and then the bully goes away " *Nancy*

While newcomer girls sought protection from boys within their ethnic circle, boys

physically defended themselves and their friends from the discrimination

"The last time I was fighting was because this guy offended me and used bad words I
don't like when people offend me I get pretty angry I lose control " *Focus Group*

School Procedure. The next challenge that students mentioned was understanding school

routine and procedures such as washrooms, hand washing sinks and lockers The girls in the

focus group interview shared some of the challenges they experienced with school procedures

"I accidentally walked into the boys washroom and was embarrassed The boys made fun
of me and the maintenance worker didn't say anything, so I cried I wish they had shown
me the bathroom during her school orientation " *Stephanie**

"I had a hard time figuring out how the hand washing sink worked at school I did not
know how to start the water, so I watched the other girls and tried on my own after "
*Lucy**

All three students had a hard time with lockers One would ask people/teachers in the
hallway for help which sometimes caused other students to laugh at her (for one it took 2
months, another 2 weeks to understand the process) *Focus Group*

Language. The last challenge mentioned was that of language This was mentioned by

every participant and affected every domain of interaction in school ranging from extra-

curricular participation to academics

"The language is very hard when I come to Canada " *Alex*

"To me it, many people are speaking Spanish and when I come to *Southwest High* I couldn't even speak English Like "Hi, how are you " That's all I know It's very hard " *Focus Group*

"Language was the biggest challenge for me " *Lucy**

(a) Affects academic performance Lack of English proficiency affects the ability of

many students to academically succeed as well as they did in their home lands or as they hoped

"In Colombia I worked hard   best student in the school, but now I don't know what happened with me My mark is not good here Maybe my English Because I think I can't speak good, very good and I can't understand all what teacher say " *Marcus*

" but now it just my English, I can't read books because I don't know what words are saying   that's why " *Marcus*

(b) Makes communicating/interacting difficult Students found their inability to speak

English affected their communication and interaction with other students and teachers by being

unable to express themselves and their thoughts as well as they want

"In Math class, I know what the teacher is teaching because I already learned it in Ethiopia, but I cannot express myself in English, and it is hard for the teacher to understand me Some teachers are able to understand me and know "what is in the heart" but some don't know " *Lucy**

"The hardest part of school is English When I first moved to Canada, I could not even say "hello", this made math especially hard because I could not understand anything " *Adam**

The inability to express oneself manifests in many areas for newcomer students such as

in stores, while making friends and participating in extracurricular activities

"Oh when I go into stores, you know I can't understand the language and I cannot speak So it used to be like very hard to understand what they saying to people Ya Now, right now it's very better because I used   Before I wasn't speaking any English when I come to here but when after, I learned, you know, with my friends, you know? I learn after, but still I am learning it " *Alex*

"I was, I was scared And I don't know, I don't know I don't have any friends the first time And if people are talking, because I don't know English very well that time And it's like, if people talking and --- I don't like a lot of noise And if people are talking and laughing, I cry because I think they talking on me And its like I cry " *Stephanie*

" I want to get involved in extra-curricular activities but I am not comfortable because I cannot express myself well because I speak broken English and no one will understand I want to get involved but will wait until I am able to express my thinking " *Lucy**

Current Challenges. While interviewing participants, they shared some of the

difficulties they are currently facing such as housing condition, employment and the search for

homework clubs

Housing. One student had to move several times within his first year in Canada and is

currently living outside of school region, which affects his commute, employment, and

participation in extra-curricular activities at his school

"When I first moved to Canada, I lived with my brother and his wife It was difficult living with them, so four months later, I moved in with a family from Pakistan After a while, this family kicked me out of the house because they said they didn't want 'trouble' after the police came to the house searching for me due to a fight I had had on the last day of school So I moved to[another region about 70 kilometres away] to live with a friend over the summer for two weeks I didn't like [it there] so I moved in with the family that sponsored me   It is difficult to go to school in [this area] and work here when I [live in another town] So now I am looking for someone to live within [the school area] " *Adam**

Employment. One student was interested in finding employment She was able to stop by

a local grocery store to pick up the application form, but needed assistance in completing it

At the end of Nancy's interview, she asked me if I could help her fill out the application form she picked up I agreed that I would look over it the next time I would be at her school if she still needed me to [Field notes- Nov 30]

Homework club. While still interested in seeking employment, the same student was

looking to be part of a homework club

"I am looking for a homework club that I can go to My brother has a heart problem and

my sister is also in high school and therefore need more assistance with homework I tried a homework club at a community centre (Chandler- Mowatt) but was told the program was only for residents of the community I don't understand why they said no to us because we are students too and had valid student ID This location was also the closest to where we live so I don't understand how they can say no The other option is a homework club located on Victoria and Westmount but that is only on Thursdays and is too far for the where we live " *Nancy**

Living Arrangements

Students spoke about their life situations in their home land and here in Canada While they differ on many aspects, the differences were both positive and negative in many ways

Before coming to Canada. Students were very descriptive when they spoke about their life situations back home Students also briefly shared their experiences with refugee camps

"I was born in Iraq but grew up in Palestine In 2006, we moved to Syria where we stayed in [name of camp] refugee camp for 4 years " *Adam**

"I lived in a refugee camp in the Kenya called [name of camp] near the Somali and Kenyan border I lived at that camp for ten years A major difference I noticed between the life in [camp] and Canada is that in [camp], food is supplied by the UN on a monthly basis and here, there is access to everything " *Nancy**

"Ok, our situation there [Kenya] was difficult and is like foods, to get food to eat is difficult Sometimes people stay without eating food Three days, and there's not enough water There's no medical care, good health care The situation is like, the situation there is very difficult Yeah, because we stayed there like refugees and there, its like if it is raining there are so many diseases because a lot of water like Cholera, Cholera sick people and lot of people die " *Stephanie*

Stephanie was born in a village in Sudan, but grew up in Kenya where she spent ten years in a refugee camp When asked if she attended school she replied,

"Yes, the school is called, yes it is in [refugee camp] it is called Artesan " *Stephanie*

Other participants also explained the type of schools they attended

"You sleep there, and they wake up you, they woke you at night, they wake up you at night to do its like all the students go to class and you read books, and they [inaudible] because in Africa they beat people They beat people badly But it's like the teacher

needs you to understand and the teacher needs your life to be better [inaudible] so
you can have better life " *Stephanie*

"I went to school in or near the refugee camp (was unsure of the actual location) where I
was staying I remember we had to walk 20 -25 minutes to get to school While in
school, teachers were allowed to hit students when they misbehaved or did not do their
homework " *Nancy**

Nancy showed me her middle finger during the interview while she was talking about
her experience with schooling in Kenya I saw that her middle finger was shaped
differently than the others, which she attributes to the beatings she received in school in
Kenya [Field Notes- Nov 30]

Today The living situations for all participants changed as they moved to Canada and

left family members behind

"I currently live with a sponsor family (through a church) in New Hamburg Both my
parents passed away prior to moving to Canada " *Adam**

"I am the oldest girl of 8 children and I live with my family " *Nancy**

"I live with my mom and my two brothers I am the only girl and I have two brothers
My father is dead and, is like, [when] we were living in Africa " *Stephanie*

"Oh, like, right now we're like three Me, my mom and my brother My other brother he
moved, he was like   he get job and he's old, he moved on his own And I have two
other sisters " *Alex*

"I live with my younger 17 year old brother since June (for 6 months) " *Lucy**

Lucy grew up with her step father and mom in Ethiopia When she moved to Canada, she

lived with her step mom, and father but found that hard as she didn't grow up with them She

now lives with her 17 year old brother

"Responsibility is different For example, there, if clean, it will get dirty right away
Where I am now, if I clean, it will last for a while since it is only me and my brother I
also want to go to school and work, which is not easy to do at home " *Lucy**

Lucy told me that wasn't the only reason she moved away from home She did not wish
to go into any more detail as to why she no longer lives with her father and step mother
[Field Notes – Dec 6]

Domestic Responsibilities The female participants all mentioned a responsibility or two which they had within the home that needed to be attended to after school These responsibilities include domestic chores, as explained below

> "I am the oldest girl in a family of 8 children My daily routine is wake up, pray, make food for school, go to school, come home, cook, clean and do homework " *Nancy**

> "For me, my routine is school, home, library sometimes, and when I am home, cook and clean " *Lucy**

> "I wake up early I wake up at 6 I prepare for my brothers school – their foods for school and I prepare mine I take my bag and I come to school And I come sometimes I come at 7 and I get my teacher here " *Stephanie*

> "On the weekends, we, just play with my brothers, and it's like I wake up in the morning, I put breakfast [for] my brothers and mom on the table and when they finish I put the cup there and wash all the dishes, and -- [P A Announcement]-- [I] clean also and do what my mom tells me to do, I do it And also be honest to my mom because she is the one borne me and I need to respect her " *Stephanie*

Stephanie volunteers to help her mother whenever she can because her mother attends school at St Louis

> "Yes, and after the last class, people go home, and I go home I help my mom If she is tired, I just, I will just say, "Mommy you are tired? Let me just do " *Stephanie*

> "It's like, my mom because my mom go to St Louis Its like if she comes, because she walk[s] to school, and even if it's snowing and if she comes back she is tired, and it's like I need to help her to cook, to clean and to wash the laundry and I want to do my homework I'm just, if I go home, I am just at home, doing my homework, helping my mom And sometimes my little brother because [he] is little and [he] does not know how to take shower, I help [him] " *Stephanie*

Fights

The male participants in this study mentioned being involved in a physical altercation or two while arriving to Canada However, they did not want to elaborate it further other than saying that they were involved

Adam mentioned during the interview that he had gotten into "trouble" on the last day of school last year The police went to his house which caused the family he was staying with to kick him out When I asked Adam if he wanted to talk more about the fight, he said no [Field notes – Dec 1]

During the first interview with Marcus, he mentioned that he was involved in a

"problem" at his school which caused him to change schools, but did not wish to talk about it

"Yeah, before I was going to [name of school] and then left because there was something, a problem But I don't want to talk about it It was bad " *Marcus**

However, Marcus opened up about other fights that he was involved in at *Southwest*

High later in the interview and during a focus group a month later

"So when I came to [*Southwest High]*, I also have some trouble Ok, you know some guys offend me I break his face You know he called me he using bad words to me I don't know [why] he said that He's from Serbia I was speaking to my friends, he bullied me and I bullied him Yeah And he was saying "ooh shut the fuck up" and I sa[id] "what the fuck man?" and he [offended] my mom He [said] "you son of a bitch, something, something, something " I said "oh man, after school "" *Marcus*

A month after the original interview, Marcus said that he was not directly involved in

these fights as much, but that his friends were and that it happens frequently

"At [*Southwest High]*, I have only been in one fight but I see a lot of people fighting Like five in the, September to December " *Marcus*

Reasons for fighting. When asked why he and his friends fight he provided several

reasons Marcus said that he and his friends fight because they get bullied by mainstream

students for being immigrants

"Why, I don't know Maybe, Canadian peoples so stupid People Canadian is stupid Some guys, some guys call one of my friends immigrant That's why That's why we fight And they put money That's why we fight They use bad words too Call us mother fuckers that's why we [get] pretty angry " *Marcus*

Marcus does not quite understand why immigrants get picked on at school because many

Canadians are themselves immigrants

*"*And the teacher say, "Hey, why you fighting? We all are immigrants Why we,
why we fighting That's so stupid That's true We are all immigrants But, but the
Canadian people, I don't know, that's so stupid That's stupid " *Marcus*

Marcus said that maybe it had something to do with power However, he did not want to

talk about it while the interview was being recorded

"I don't know [why students make fun of immigrants] Because maybe they   I don't
know That's so stupid Ya Maybe they didn't, they don't like immigrants I don't know
Maybe they want to have the power in the school That's why they call us immigrant
No, I don't want to talk about that " *Marcus*

As Marcus talked about the fights, he mentioned that students would rather fight

discretely when they are bullied rather than inform teachers or principals because sometimes the

bullies do not get punished and the police will likely get involved

"Nope That's like a rule here No, no, for all schools When people fighting, they hide it
I don't know why That's like a rule here Yup [I like that] because you turn to teacher,
right and the teacher contact police and the police coming and maybe arrest you That's
why People are scared " *Marcus*

Furthermore, Marcus explained that approaching bullies directly is more likely to resolve

the problem than approaching authority

"The principal coming and asking you "Why you said that? Please don't say that to
him " And that's it And when they see you again they say, "You're an immigrant,
immigrant " That's why we keep fighting It's better to fight Okay, it's better to fight
because you tell him, okay we are going to fight, and he   says yes And you go yup
And when you go to fighting, I don't know who win If they win, you stop   I don't
know how to explain that   When they go to fight and kick their ass, when the fight is
finished, they do a peace Ya They can even say, "Okay, I'm not going to do that
anymore, I'm not going to call you immigrant " Because they kick, kicked those guys "
Marcus

While fighting bullies resolves the issue, Marcus admits that it does not always work

"No not all Sometimes, [they were] fighting, I don't know why, and we   I don't know
I think the white people to black people And they kicked - the black people kicked the
white people The white people [got]so freaking mad The next day, they call more
friends And when the black guy see that, they call more friends and holy crap Yup And

they fighting " *Marcus*

When immigrants fight back they not only do it to defend themselves but also to instil

fear, establish respect, gain power and protect one another

Instil fear. The more one is willing to fight, the less he/she is bullied because others fear

him/her The willingness and readiness to fight back instils a sense of fear in others and deters

them from bullying This always works best when one threatens to fight others while they have

the support and back up of their friends present

> "I sa[id] 'you wanna fight? Ok lets go ' I push[ed] him [and] he was scared He was
> saying something he talk too much then the next day he did to me this   [gave the
> middle finger] Yeah I push[ed] him and he didn't fight I said 'let's go fight man don't
> get scared ' You know why because my other friend is here " *Marcus*

> "Nobody say[s] anything [to me] because I have like 150 friends from St Mary's,
> Eastwood This guy he was so scared, he cried He said 'sorry man, sorry '" *Marcus*

> "I call my cousin right, and my cousin com[es] and he bring[s] like twenty people And
> he like call[s] friends from Southwest High and I think, too, too many people coming
> And these friends, Southwest High call be friends from other school right? And I called
> my friends from Facebook and I say to tell 'Hey you got to fight here,' and they call and
> they call my friends from St Mary's, Eastwood It's good " *Marcus*

> "You know, all people know me They can't bully my friends " *Marcus*

Establish respect. Students are less likely to bully those they respect Marcus mentioned

respect several times in the interview and explained that he is not bullied as a result of it

> "No They know me and they give me respect Ya, they respect me Ah, they didn't call
> me immigrant They didn't push me but I'm fun guy They know, ah, they respect me
> right? But I like playing, I go "Hey what's up'?"And the people like me I like playing
> with them right?" *Marcus*

Power and protection. Immigrant students get bullied quite frequently and they learned

to associate more closely with other immigrants because they help defend, or protect, one

another from the discrimination in the school This means of protecting one another also gives

them the power within the school to stop the discrimination

> "When they [immigrant students] stay with me, they feel like they have protection
> Why? Because   I have a lot of friends, too [many] friends And when, they know when,
> when these people   is good guy alright, and when one guy come and kick him, I'm
> pretty angry, I come and "What the fuck, why you push him?" And I kick him because
> this guy is good boy That's why, that's why when, when this guy be my friend, when I
> think that guy, I keep going, turn around, kick me and he give me protection Because
> you know, ah, immigrant people Ya When they come to school, they know no body and
> some guys in *Southwest High*, he maybe kick him and say, "go do that," and bully the
> guy That's why And, I don't know I like to, I like be, have good friends   But I don't
> like to have bad friends " *Marcus*

Consequences. Students are well aware of the fact that police might get involved, but

that does little to deter them from fighting

> "You know, when there was fighting, I was so scared because maybe police coming and
> the problem is mine, not that guy That's why I was so scared but I know, and I don't care
> this guy is calling me, we go to fight, I was scared Okay okay, I don't care what's going
> to happen but   " *Marcus*

What needs to done to stop fights. In order for students not to fight, racism needs to

stop Marcus was trying to explain this to me but his language skills limited his response

> "Racist, when people are racist " *Marcus*

When asked how the school can help students, Marcus said that the only the students

have the power to stop it

> "The school can't help It can't The students, they have the power The students, they
> have people They protect him He can't stop that But if the student can't stop the
> fighting, he can't stop, all other people bullying him, because they didn't have friends in
> *Southwest High* And the other people, they have too much people over here Yup, the
> school can't do anything " *Marcus*

Apologies can also prevent fights from taking place and should be made on behalf of the

bullies

> "How? I think they [the white guys] say, "sorry and I'm not going to do that " That's
> what because when they say sorry, they don't fight So when the white guys say sorry to
> the black people, [then], it's okay No fighting The Canadian people, you know, they

need to say sorry If they say sorry, my friend didn't fight But if they didn't say sorry, my friend going to fight " *Marcus*

"Canadian" Identity

Several students mentioned that "Canadian students" bully them and that classes do not discuss culture because students in those classes are "Canadian " So, during the interview they were asked to explain what it meant being a "Canadian" and how they knew other students were "Canadian"

"I know they are Canadian because they tell "I'm Canadian, you F-- immigrant " *Marcus*

"No, they're just Canadian, Canadian Ya, they're like, it's not ESL classes, or they're just born here, that [don't] come from other countries " *Alex*

Interaction

Participants shared their experiences in regards to how they interact with one another and with their instructors

"Teachers are nice, most students are nice, but I get bullied by the same people " Nancy*

With teachers. The interaction with teachers is positive for the most part Students feel that the ELD teachers understand them and so find this interaction comfortable (More about this interaction can be found under "support")

"Some are helpful " *Marcus*

"If you are perfect, [some] teachers want to help you, if you don't understand some teachers don't want to help you " *Focus Group*

"Sometimes teachers rush them when they ask for help " *Focus Group*

With other students. Interaction with some students is positive while others aren't so much

"I enjoy helping out other students in English class "*Nancy**

"Some are nice, others are mean " *Adam**

"Yeah, and to me to say to each other to talk to speak to each other is like to me friends, and to know people and to help yeah, in the, in the small way, in the small way it will grow bigger and bigger and bigger And will bring it's like, it's like the seed maybe you grow flowers And the flowers will grow You put everyday water And the water is like you say "hi" they say "hi, where you from?" you work together And some people will come and come and come And it's like the seed grow, and grow, and grow big and the seed is the like the people or friends we make and the people you make and it's like you grow bigger and bigger and it will just be a flower " *Stephanie*

Language as barrier. As mentioned before, language serves as a major barrier when

students interact with instructors and one another

"I find it difficult to interact because I cannot express myself the way I want If I am interacting one on one with someone I know, I am comfortable in expressing myself and am able to talk But when I am in a group of three to five people, and I don't know them, I become shy, and don't talk much because I am scared that I will make a mistake " *Lucy**

Support

Students seek support from a variety of sources in their school, neighbourhood and

family when they are struggling in school or community

Teachers. Teachers were among the most mentioned support systems by students   In a

focus group, students agreed that their ELD teachers were most helpful

"Ms X understands us, and has helped us from the first day She showed us around the school and took time out of her schedule to help us anytime She made us feel comfortable and safe " *Focus Group*

"When I first moved here, a teacher gave me her number and said that I can call her anytime if I had any questions about anything, not just school related *Lucy**

"Ya at the school I get help Ya, from my teachers, they helped me " *Alex*

"I do by myself or sometimes my teacher, to tell me how to do the homework " *Stephanie*

Students found teachers helpful because they help clarify and understand the content

"Teacher explains to you what to do, and the teacher help you because the teacher knows you can't speak very good English They explain how do you know to read and write She gives me examples [For example] we ha[d] to do work about where you want to live, in the city or [village] Yeah so I [said] 'can you explain this to me?' and the teacher c[a]me and explain[ed] it all to me and I g[o]t it " *Marcus*

While students found teachers very helpful, they also felt that at times they didn't receive their full attention as the teachers were too busy

"If you are perfect, [some] teachers want to help you, if you don't understand some teachers don't want to help you " *Focus* Group

"Sometimes teachers rush you when you ask for help " *Focus Group*

Neighbours. Two students mentioned asking their neighbours for help on school work

"I ask my neighbour who is in college right now And it's like because I am in high school and I am in grade 10, and he is in college, he know[s] because he pass[ed] high school to college and he know[s] how high school is And I just ask him He tell[s] me how to do, and how to work this thing How to study very hard, to work very hard in school Yeah And he gives me advice " *Stephanie*

"There is an 11th grader neighbour who I ask for help and he helps me The two older boys go to a different high school " *Nancy**

Relatives. Some students mentioned approaching relatives for help regarding school and community matters such as transportation and directions

"My uncle was in Kitchener since 92/93 so he helps me and my family a bit with where things are and by driving us places " *Nancy**

"I have two classes with my brother so I ask him sometimes when I have questions " *Lucy**

"My mother one time came to the school and spoke to students in the hallway who knew my language and asked them to help me This was helpful " *Focus Group*

Friends. Many students mentioned their friends as supportive resources In some cases, these friends were also in ELD and some were not

"I can't speak   I can't speak nothing that's what was very difficult because can't

understand me I make new friends from my language and they help me " *Marcus*

"No one helped me but my friend I used to speak with my friend that had so many friends speaking just English That's how I learned But still, I want to learn, I am not that good " *Alex*

"Ya, ya, if I need help, they [classmates] helping me If they need help I helped them We get help Ya, we help each other " *Alex*

Community Centre. One student found a local community centre very helpful in many

ways They provide homework clubs where he goes to do his homework and they also provide

him with resources (such as bus tickets)

"Ya they're helping me with my homework, everything, giving me the best thing, you know? They help me a lot Ya If I have homework I just go to that place, and they help me right away " *Alex*

Reception House/YMCA/Pathways. These organizations offer several programs and

services to newcomer students to help with integration and settlement Students are connected

with these services through the Welcome Centre

"It's all based on the Welcome Centre and those students that have come into the country since the last time school started up So any students that come in now, between now and the end of June, will be referred to that program where they have the option of participating in So the last couple years we've had a program called the Now program which operates the week before school starts, where students come in They get into a routine of what happens at a school which they get their locker, they get all those things done ahead of time before the regular student population come in so it not quite as overwhelming " *Chris*

Students who participated in this orientation upon arriving to Canada shared their

experiences in the focus group

"Orientation was community based for some (how to find places/where to go for groceries, how to bus) and procedures in school for others Some students were shown their classrooms, teachers and lockers before starting school All students found the orientation helpful for the most part " *Focus Group*

The reception centre also connects students with settlement workers

"I was at Eastwood before coming to *Southwest High* and had a Somali worker from the

reception centre show me around the school (teacher, classroom, cafeteria) "
Focus Group

Not only do students benefit from these services and resources, but schools as well

"They're many support again the Y[MCA] with the settlement workers We also have a program called Pathway So, those are the two main programs that are here in our building which we utilize on a regular basis to help students, not only just coping and getting into the routine of school but they're also the agencies that we go to if we feel the families need some support with whatever in terms of settling into the community etc So those happen automatically when people come in, when they go to the assessment centre We make also referrals to the settlement workers and the Pathways group to do work with them And the Pathways basically provide academic support for the students " *Chris*

Settlement workers. Settlement workers serve to fill the gap between students (and

families) and the school Both sides report that the settlement worker is useful and of great

assistance

"We have one person who's assigned to our school, and that's the person we go to for anything that we need And they're involved in our meetings If there is a student who's having some challenges then we also talk to those two individuals to talk about what supports that may or may not be needed And conversely, if they have issues or concerns that are being raised by either the student or by the parent then they are also the one that will bring that to our attention so that we can look at whatever the issue is to try and resolve it for them [For example] It could be a student struggling at math class, and then the teacher and the department head of the ESL department and the Pathways worker can look at 'ok what are some of the things this student need to work on in order to be more successful in a specific unit?' And then they would provide, the pathways people will provide homework support and tutoring to help the student be more prepared for the math class because they need a little more work then what is being don't in the class room " *Chris*

"The settlement workers are more with the social environment and working at things And they are also the ones that develop a variety of programs that help newcomers " *Chris*

"I talk to Ablah who gives me bus tickets and whatever I need She helps me a lot " *Nancy**

"I have someone looking after me and I can ask questions and she give me bus ticket, this women I think if, I don't know if you know her but they call Ablah She come[s] to Southwest High If I [have] a question, I just call her and ask her And if I have problems [with] school I just tell her everything Ya she, she come[s] to *Southwest High* to give bus

tickets to kids and ah they just ask like, what you doing, if you're failing, if you're passing " *Alex*

Self. Sometimes students do not ask for help but make a solo attempt

" because last semester I didn't speak English but I learned it slowly, and I think [to self] "Marcus you need to speak English, don't speak Spanish," ya that's why " *Marcus*

"I do it by myself, I just try because when the teacher is not here " *Marcus*

Extracurricular Activities

Some students have shown interest participating in extracurricular activities and have

succeeded in following through with their interests Students participate in activities both in

school and outside of school

In school. *Southwest High* provides a number of opportunities for ELD students to get

involved with during and after school

> "ESL students can be involved with any of the regular clubs, sport teams etc, that we have and we do have students that do that Again they do gravitate sometimes towards those things they are familiar with so for example soccer is kind of the universal sport that most countries play so you see a lot of the ESL students out doing that part If you look at our intramural program which we offer at lunch, you will see majority of the students that are in there are ESL students It gives them again an opportunity for the students to try a variety of things that they may perhaps they haven't tried before at that point These are the programs which are open to anybody in the school it doesn't matter We also have some specific nights where we have ESL sport night where people can come " *Chris*

> A student volunteered to participate in the study but it was difficult for us to set a time for the interview as he was involved in intramural activities during lunch time [Field notes – Dec 14]

Intramural and sports activities that are available during lunch are very well attended by

ELD students However, boys tend to dominate in these activities more so than females

> "[Attendance] is very good Again we have more boys than girls because again depending on the culture sometimes girls aren't necessarily allowed to go to a school outside of the regular school time and those types of thing, right So those are opportunities that are there So they can certainly engage in any activity, which anybody

can have access, which allows for integration " Chris

The multicultural show. Aside from sports, the school also puts on an annual

multicultural show where the majority of the participants are ELD students This also provides

girls with a chance to get involved in the school

> "So one of the big things that we have is our multicultural show which we've had the
> last two or three years and that's been a very, very positive experience for where it's just
> students from the ESL program getting together providing some   showing some of the
> talents from there   and some of the traditions from their culture We're at a point now
> where we can't quite get everybody into the cafeteria for the show So we had to go We
> went to two days, this year, because of that " *Chris*

> "I participated in multicultural show I did a Somali dance called Nicco from Mogadishu
> and a fashion show with 3 other girls People said it was the first time this country was
> represented in the multicultural show at *Southwest High* Teachers and classmates went
> up to me to tell me how cool it was the next day in school Even people in the Somali
> community talked about it and invited us out to dance at a wedding in a couple of weeks
> (because most Somali students in Canada do not know much about this dance) " *Nancy**

Not only does the show attract a wide audience, but also a wide selection of students who

are interested in participating While some shared their experiences with the show, one student

was disappointed when she was unable to partake in the show due to time lines She was too late

signing up and preparing for the show

> "The multicultural show I want to do it I wanted to show my culture How, what they
> do But the teacher said no And I say, 'can I sing?' And she's like 'there's nobody who
> will play the piano ' I just, I just go home and cr[ied] because all of my friends, all of
> people they doing But I didn't do I just go home and cry and my mom is like "why do
> you cry?" I say because multicultural show people doing and I am not there And I just
> quiet, I didn't do anything At multicultural show I didn't do anything I just stay at
> home " *Stephanie*

While Stephanie was too late signing up for the multicultural show, she still participates

in other programs in school such as drama Other students were involved in organized sports

such as soccer and wrestling

"I have drama And I have two drama The first part and the other one is like every Thursday And it's like little – I learn also new things and I learn how to work with others I learn a lot of things " *Stephanie*

"Yeah, [I played] soccer last year [at Southwest High] " *Marcus*

"Ya I used to do, I used to go wrestling here at *Southwest High [last year]*, ya " *Alex*

Outside of school Some students are also involved in activities outside of school In some cases these are leisure activities within the home or community and in others, programs that provide academic assistance such as a homework club at a local community centre

"After school sometimes I go to homework place Ya, to help me what I learned in school Four days a week Like, the community centre beside my house [Chandler] Mowat Community Centre " *Alex*

"I go to church sometimes " *Marcus*

"I go home and do my homework and then I play Play games, yeah " *Marcus*

Students do not participate in extracurricular activities. However, while some students get involved in and outside of school, there are some that do not partake in extracurricular activities because they rely on others for rides, work or cannot speak the English language enough to communicate appropriately One student was interested in playing on the soccer team at school but couldn't because he depends on others for rides

"I do not participate in any after school activities because I depend on somebody else for a ride and therefore do not have a choice as to the time of pick up or drop off " *Adam**

Another reason Adam cannot join in any after school sports or activities is because he works

"I work Thursdays, Fridays, Saturdays, and Sundays at [a local meat shop] from 4 00 pm to 10 00 pm " *Adam**

For others, it is difficult to get involved when they feel they don't have the English

language proficiency to communicate effectively

> "I would like to get involved but I am not comfortable because I cannot express myself well due to her limited English skills I speak broken English and no one will understand I want to get involved but will wait until I am able to express my thinking, the way I want to " *Lucy**

Another reason why Lucy is not involved in the school is because the programs and

activities that are currently available are not of interest to her

> "I would like to participate in activities or groups such as planting, or go to events such as HIV awareness (examples of what she was involved with in Ethiopia) *Lucy**
> Alex participated in activities offered by the school in previous but has decided to take a

break from it to focus more on school this year

> "Not this year See I don't want to go this year because I want to focus, focus on school "
> *Alex*

What can schools do to help integrate ELD students?

Homework help during lunch. Many students expressed concern with limited, or lack

of, homework help and think this could be one area in which the school can help ELD students

> "ESL or ELD I think they need more help Like you know the student[s], they [are] new, they [don't] know how to speak English So some of them they get their homework, and no one help them and they [don't] know how to do it So it's difficult They need like sometimes, someone to look after [them] because if they go home, their parents, they [don't] know English and no one helps [them] at home and they [don't] have enough help Outside of school, or after school, you can make a little program after school Like homework program Or you can do it at the University you go You can do program inside So like Tuesday or Wednesday, like day like that Ya, you can come guys to do homework, and for sure I know they will come " *Alex*

Establish a Peer Helpers group. During the focus group, the girls spoke of creating a

peer helper group This group should comprise newcomer students who have been at the school

for a semester or more These students will help newer students with homework, translation and

orientation The students also said that the hours that volunteers put in as peer helpers should

contribute towards the 40 hour community service that all high school students need for

graduation

Homework Students said that for some it is easier to understand instructions while not so much for others Those who find it easy are always willing to help others and are already helping others Therefore if this could be counted toward the volunteer hours that is needed for graduation, more students would be willing to volunteer *[Focus Group*

For example Two students in Nancy's sewing class did not understand and were unable to follow the teacher's instructions but even though Nancy hasn't sewed before, she understood the instructions Therefore, she took it upon herself helped the newer students understand *Focus Group*

Translation Students said that this peer helpers group can also help students of different cultures with translating The girls in the focus group can speak 7, 4 and 3 languages, so they are able to help a large range of newcomers One student though said that helping students by translating is not always the best option because they will never learn English and always fall back on their native tongue *Focus Group*

Orientation Students suggested having older new students show newer students the ropes This "orientation" would allow students who have been at the school for more than one semester partner up with new students to show them how the school works These girls said that they would all do it as volunteers and that other students would also be willing They think other students would be interested in participating because all students need 40 hours of community service to graduate and that this would be a very good way of providing worth-while service and gain hours *Focus Group*

For example Lucy helped Stephanie as she cried a lot Lucy helped by talking to her even though she herself found it funny that Stephanie cried a lot Lucy thought "oh I wish somebody would tell her not to worry, not to cry a lot and that people are only joking or feeding her because they find it funny " Therefore, Lucy helped Stephanie *Focus Group*

Offer a central location for newcomer students ages 18 or older. Participants

mentioned that a major struggle and obstacle of the ELD program at Southwest High is the age

cut off rule imposed by the province of Ontario that ends public funding for secondary education

at the age of 21

"What I would probably indicate is that the students coming in new to the country at 18 or 19 or 20, we probably should set up a spot where they all go regardless of where they

[initially arrive] So, so let's assume it's here for example So rather go [this
school or another one nearby], if you're 18, 19, 20 then you all come to one school so
that we have enough of the students so that they can work together in similar peer groups
because right now we just spread them over all the schools at this point So [around here
there are at least three schools] probably we should kind of bring them together to kind
of put that   and [some other schools] still struggle with a low number of [refugee]
students   The other option is to have a central site where everybody can come to, not
necessarily at a high school itself" *Chris*

Discussion

To reiterate, the objectives of this study are (1) to identify factors that influence

integration of refugee students in schools, and (2) to seek better understanding of the programs

and services serving refugee youth as perceived by students and administrators Factors that

hinder integration include anti-immigrant racism, challenges associated with settlement such as

language acquisition and learning social norms pertaining to discipline and school procedures

Current living conditions that some students face affect school integration Factors that seem to

facilitate and encourage integration are social and academic support both in school (teachers and

school programs such as the multicultural show and homework help) and out of school

(extracurricular and school orientations) Discussions of the ELD program reveal that

experience with previous school systems affect students' comprehension and expectations of the

current one, such as forms of discipline and interaction

The present study lends valuable insight into the ELD program from students and

administrators within the program based on personal and professional experiences respectively

Findings show that students lack an understanding of, or do no not agree with, the disciplinary

approaches used in Canadian schools, as they are ineffective in alleviating problems that they

experience such as anti-immigrant racism Findings also reveal that age restrictions and class

placements affect the self-confidence in and motivation of older age students The major

theme that dominates the findings is the affect and implications that English language skills have

on academic performance and social interaction of students This study also lends insight into

the root causes and reasons of school fights from the perspective of students who have been

involved, which is a finding this study did not anticipate The following sections further interpret

these findings

Understanding and evaluating effectiveness of disciplinary measures. While some

youth report that they have had school and community orientations, they are not taught about

school etiquette and discipline, which means that they lack an understanding of how students are

expected to act in schools, also identified by Freeman and colleagues (2002) Woods (2009) also

has noted that refugee students who have had no prior exposure to formal and/or Western

education have limited conceptual understanding of the discipline system Not knowing how to

behave in schools makes consequences difficult to predict for students, as they do not have the

experience to comprehend the cause and effect of certain behaviours Furthermore, the general

understanding that yelling, for example, implies anger in Western culture might be interpreted

differently by students whose culture normalizes yelling as an ordinary component of everyday

conversations Disciplinary approaches, such as verbal warnings, are not taken seriously among

the refugee youth in this study because of cultural misinterpretations and lack of knowledge of

Western social norms Disciplines are used to deter negative behaviours, but are ineffective

when those being disciplined do not understand the reasons and implications

An important point is that students seem to expect disciplinary measures similar to those

used where they grew up, and they evaluate Canadian discipline as ineffective, both from their

experiences and observations Another reason why students in the ELD program do not

understand the disciplinary measures of schools such as warnings, detentions and suspensions in

extreme cases, may be because these strategies are ineffective in deterring negative behaviours,

such as anti-immigrant racism For students, a verbal warning from an upset teacher does little

to deter them from engaging in negative behaviours and bullies do not stop upon being spoken

to by school authorities Students in this study are used to immediate physical or corporal

punishment when misbehaving or when they do not do as instructed To them, this immediacy

and physical aspect of discipline serves as a deterrent and reminder of how to behave Indirect

discipline used in Canadian schools, such as verbal warnings and suspensions, do not have the

same deterring effect on this group of ELD students (nor on their bullies)

This group of ELD students has been in Canada longer than a year and at Southwest

High for at least one year, therefore, students have experiences with the various types of

discipline employed by their school and understand the consequences of certain behaviours, if

not all Reasons why students continue to select alternative means of settling problems, such as

through fights, may be attributable to previous successes with physical and immediate discipline

they have experienced before coming to Canada as some students say that this form of discipline

is more effective It should be noted that if students do not agree with the types of disciplines

that schools use, it is because they have seen and experienced their ineffectiveness first hand and

that there may be other underlying issues worth exploring

Reasons for Fighting. ELD students are targets of anti-immigrant discrimination in

school and often respond by fighting or forming social cliques with others of similar cultural

backgrounds For these students, fighting back is seen as self-defence and the formation of

social cliques as protection Furthermore, students view these responses to the anti-

immigrant discrimination as rational, appropriate, and effective in comparison to those taken by

school authorities, as mentioned above While some studies, such as Kapreilian-Churchill

(1996), found that refugee boys are more prone to fist fights than other newcomers, this study

has identified the reasons to be for protection, power and respect Students fight to defend

themselves upon being targets of anti-immigrant discrimination, regain power that they believe

is established through lack of fear, and obtain the respect of their peers, both refugee and

mainstream students

The need for ELD youth to establish and regain power in school reflects the unequal

distribution of power that exists in society (Freeman, et al , 2002) that is transferred into the high

school setting Students in this study recognize and understand that being called "immigrants"

by mainstream students in a demeaning tone, bullied for the clothing they wear, and picked on

for having heavy accents means less power in school Less power in school to them means

increased vulnerability of being targets for bullies and decreased ability to stop the anti-

immigrant discrimination In summary, the status of various groups and their perception of their

position within the hierarchy are important determinants of school success and failure (Freeman,

et al , 2002) and provide a deeper understanding into the factors that provoke refugee youth to

instigate or participate in fist fights

One may conclude differently from the above interpretation by attributing the reasons

why students, especially boys, engage in fist fights to the experiences they have had with

violence in, or during flight from, their home lands In other words, violence is the only way

students know how to resolve conflict (Kapreilian-Churchill, 1996) because it is the means by

which they casually and often used prior to moving to Canada While this view may have

some validity to it, it places blame on the students If instead these students are seen as resilient,

it can provide them with the strength to re-define their new identity, which can be conducive to

success in settlement This study's findings echo the sentiments of resilience researchers who

conclude that refugee youth are highly resilient Students in this study report that they fight only

when they are bullied and personally targeted, not every time they encounter conflicts in school,

as the alternative view would imply Therefore, despite the unthinkable hardships they have

endured at a young age prior to coming to Canada, this study and other resilience researchers

(Halcón, et al , 2004) are of the view that youth do recover from such life events

It is also worth noting that the root causes of the fights are related to anti-immigrant

racism and discrimination Several of the mentioned conflicts that involved the police and

suspensions included groups of individuals from separate ethnic groups compared to conflicts

such as teasing based on grades that occur in classrooms among ELD students These

comparisons help clarify and distinguish bullying from racism and discrimination as race related

conflicts occur off-site, in groups, and are ethnically motivated (blacks vs whites, mainstream

students vs "immigrants") while bullying occurs in class, discretely and by individuals

Findings suggest that for the fights to stop, racism needs to be stopped first This shows that

students equate bullying with racism and lack of awareness of the "other" by mainstream

students

Age Restriction and Class Placements. This study reveals that older student

participants are dissatisfied and frustrated with the age restriction of public education ending at

the age of 21 and the lack of flexibility to move across levels These findings resonate with

widely recognized issues that shorten the time line for ELD students to graduate

(Freeman, et al , 2002, Kapriekian-Churchill, 1996) In the present study we see that students

ages 19 and up are frustrated because they will soon be required to leave their school, to which

they have arrived within the past year or two This is stressful for them because students believe

that they have the ability and potential to graduate should they be given the time ELD youth are

concerned with the timing of their graduation because they will soon reach the cut off age and

be asked to leave their school This finding validates Freeman and colleagues' (2002) finding

that the streaming process, under which Southwest High operates, affects students' chances of

graduating before the age of 21 Furthermore, students in this study believe they are wrongfully

placed in lower level courses, which makes graduation before the age cut off a more challenging

task These findings complement what previous research has shown (Kapriekian-Churchill,

1996), which is that refugee students are placed in lower level programs

Although the age restriction shortens the time frame in which students have to graduate,

an alternative view is that it is conducive to their learning environment A classroom with a

mixture of older and younger students will make it difficult to accommodate and attend to the

needs of the various age levels and skills Similarly, students arriving in high school are placed

in classes based on their assessment results of their academic performance If students are placed

in what they think is a lower level than where they should be, it would be a direct result of their

doing (although arguments can be made about the cultural appropriateness of these tests)

In order to advance, students must show the appropriate work ethic and academic

performance, which they often do not as reported by teachers Teachers are aware of the fact that

some students are misplaced in classes and make recommendations to the department to relocate

them based on their competences However, teachers do not have sufficient student work

to warrant the recommendation because students stop handing in assignments Lack of effort on

behalf of students who are misplaced in lower classes tends to limit their chances of advancing

as they decrease their academic participation While students have the opportunity to advance, in

some cases they do not understand what is required of them to begin the process and therefore

limit the effort made in those classes Findings from this study show that lower level class

placements affect the self-confidence of students as they feel stuck at one level This contributes

negatively to their learning and deters further effort (Freeman, et al , 2002, Kapreilian-Churchill,

1996) as teachers have seen in their classes

ELD program vs. ESL program. Another finding worth discussing is the distinction

between the ELD and ESL programs that is not clearly made by school administrators in this

study While describing the ELD program, there are several instances in which administrators

refer to it as the ESL program This is a finding worth discussing because ELD and ESL are in

fact not the same programs As mentioned earlier in this document, the main differences

between these two programs are that (1) ELD students have had significant gaps in their

education and (2) need more intensive support for a longer period of time than ESL students

Furthermore, ESL students have age-appropriate literacy skills in their first language compared

to ELD students who have limited prior formal literacy learning experiences It is not clear if

this confounding of the two programs reflects an inability to distinguish one program from the

other or if administrators simply lump these two types of programs together for linguistic ease,

or perhaps for another unknown reason No matter the cause, not distinguishing ELD from ESL

can create a potential risk in terms of curriculum implementation, programming and instruction

Language Acquisition Difficulties. Every student in this study mentions language as the biggest, most challenging obstacle they face and continue to face during settlement. This is in agreement with several sources in the literature that have identified language as the greatest obstacle for refugee and immigrant populations, both young and old (Cummins, 2000, Qin, Way, & Mugherjee, 2008, Stevens, 2009) As Qin and colleagues (2008) show, this obstacle inhibits cultural exchange and understanding. For ELD youth, this manifests through the social transactions taking place in stores, while making friends and participating in extra-curricular activities. Students recognize that their marks (or grades) are not as good, they are not as involved and that they are less articulate than they were in their home-lands. They realize that this not only deviates from their personal characteristics, but that it is also not conducive to their integration. These students are able to pin point the reasons to the lack of ability to express themselves through the English language. The associated difficulties discourage refugee youth from interacting with students of different cultures for fear of incorrectly expressing themselves. Learning the English language has been the greatest challenge for these students and while they notice improvements, they still wish to ameliorate their skills so they are able be who they were in their home-lands

Human and Material Resources. The purpose of this thesis is to serve as a pilot study for the overall project that seeks to identify human and material resources within schools that will help address school absenteeism, credit accumulation and graduation needs of ELD learners. Fortunately, this study does provide insight into these needs. Firstly, school fights for boys, amount of domestic responsibilities for girls, and lack of English language skills for both sexes help explain school absenteeism. Boys in this study share experiences of having to change

schools as a result of "problems" that had occurred These fights occur off-campus and

students do not inform teachers, but when the tension is transferred to campus, students face

suspension For girls, responsibilities within the home, such as preparing food for siblings and

domestic chores, take up so much time that they are sometimes late for school Such

responsibilities also limit the amount of time they are able to attribute to school work Lack of

English skills is also another reason students 'skip' classes The struggle to understand teachers

and their instructions discourages students from attending classes It is possible that other

explanations exist that help address school absenteeism among the ELD population of students,

but participants in this study identify fights, domestic responsibilities and lack of English

language proficiency as their reasons

Secondly, older aged students mention challenges they experience with credit

accumulation While the exact number of credits is not identified, students express concern with

challenges associated with the accumulation of such credits and the implications this has on

their ability to graduate in a timely manner This study finds that the placement of students

within the different ELD level affects credit accumulation because when students are placed in

lower classes, (relative to where they think thinks they ought to be) their ability, or perception of

the possibility, of accumulating enough credits to graduate is hindered In other words, if

students are where they think they belong, they are likely to put effort into their studies, but if

they are not, they tend to put less effort and therefore jeopardize the accumulation of further

credits necessary for graduation

Lastly, ELD students identify the need for further homework support within the school

and community in order to graduate Students in this study acknowledge that they do not have

the necessary academic resources at home and make an effort to seek homework help

elsewhere, such as lunch times at school and in homework clubs in nearby community centres

However, despite their involvement in such clubs, they express the need for more of these

opportunities and more frequently

Generalizability and Limitations

The findings obtained from this ethnographic case study are not generalizable but

provide valuable insight for the specific case examined The goal of using a single case study is

to seek particularity, which is different from the search for generalizability (Stake, 2003) in that

the purpose is toward understanding what is important about the specific case within its own

world (Stake, 2003) Therefore, the findings lend valuable insight to understanding refugee

students ages 16 or older in Ontario, Canada enrolled in ELD programs but cannot be

generalized to students in other contexts A limitation of an ethnographic case study is that it

lacks breadth because it focuses and provides in depth knowledge of only one particular context

or culture (Myers, 1999) and therefore cannot be generalized

The purposeful sampling of older students, who have experiences to share that span over

a year or two, limited the population within classes from which to draw the sample Another

limitation was the exclusion of students who have been in Canada a minimum of five years and

are in ELD level A Although this was part of the research design to ensure participants had

sufficient English language skills to articulate their experiences, we cannot say that students'

early years in settlement are similar to those in the study While these criteria are useful in

meeting the intended purposes of this study, they exclude younger students who may be

articulate in the English language from participating

Sample. A sign-up sheet, which is used in this study with student participants, limits the opportunity for all students to apply as some may be absent when the sheet is circulating. Self selected volunteers also present a volunteer bias because research (Gravetter & Forzano, 2009, Rosenthal & Rosnow, 1975) shows that volunteers have certain characteristics that differ from the population who do not volunteer. Recruiting key informants is also a challenge as staff members were involved with the production of the multicultural show, had to deal with a recent suicide of a student and student expulsions. Results are also from a small number of ELD students and key informants and may not be representative of all members (Gravetter & Forzano, 2009). Therefore, findings from a small self selected group of volunteers is not generalizable to the larger population of ELD students and staff as the characteristics of these participants may not be representative of others within the same social groups. In order to avoid selection bias and small sample sizes, future studies can allow interested students to participate and then acknowledge the demographics of the sample.

Time Restraints. Further limitations include time restraints such the Master's degree time frame and school time constraints. Firstly, because this thesis is for a Master's degree, it needs to be completed within a specific time frame. This may rush data collection and time to build rapport among students and staff. Secondly, this study had to work within the constraints of the school such as school hours. Lunch time is the only class-free hour in school for students and so they tend to socialize and participate in intramural activities during that period, making it difficult for them to remember their scheduled interviews. Different strategies such as waiting for students at their lockers, posting the sign-up sheet in the class and sending reminders to students through their teachers have been helpful.

Implications

These findings will help schools and school boards, the newcomer population as well as community/settlement organizations that work with refugee youth. Findings from the present study will provide evidence-based information that will aid mobilization of necessary resources across schools to better assist ELD students. Schools with ELD programs can use this information to modify the program by incorporating the findings in order to obtain and provide the maximum potential benefit to ELD students and staff. Likewise, schools with an interest or need of establishing ELD programs can also use this information to assist with the implementation process.

Voices of newcomer students who have had experience with the ELD program will be of value to other newcomer students as they serve as lessons learned. The present study can bridge the gap between recent newcomers and newcomers who have been here longer by sharing and circulating experiences, challenges and suggestions. Although recent newcomers may not have access or the ability to comprehend this study, they will be impacted by the influence this may have on the Board, school and staff that service them.

This study can also be useful for community organizations that work with settlement and newcomer populations. The study's findings are equally applicable to organizations that provide programs and services to refugee youth, such as homework help, settlement workers and school/community organizations.

Dissemination Plan

Findings from this study will be disseminated to the school board to help inform the mobilization of necessary resources across schools and the community to better assist refugee

students reach their academic potentials and succeed in school Participants will also have

access to the results upon request

Recommendations

Findings from this study show that students and administrators can benefit from learning

and applying the first language policy, establishing an integration procedure and providing

leadership opportunities for students who are refugees Research show (Brandsford, Brown, &

Cocking, 2000, Cummins, 2001) that supporting students with their pre-existing knowledge in

their first language can promote strong literacy development A first language policy would also

allow students to be comfortable with the process of learning a new language, which could

prevent them from skipping classes as was reported in this study and help address school

absenteeism Students may be more inclined to attend classes in which they struggle if they find

comfort in using their first language to better understand and conceptualize classroom

instructions In summary, a first language policy would not only build strong literacy

development but it would also address school absenteeism by comforting students with the

option of using both English and their first language to understand in classrooms

Secondly, the Ontario Ministry of Education recommends that schools implement a

welcoming and inclusive environment as a whole-school activity While the Welcome Centre

does an excellent job of this, the essence gets lost if schools do not pick up from there

Therefore, individual schools should also have a welcoming procedure of its own to include

newcomer students as well as to educate mainstream students of the new population This study

also recommends that leadership opportunities, such as the multicultural show, be created and

provided for newcomer students Leadership opportunities will allow students to thrive as they

create environments where students are given the opportunity to be in charge (Moran, et

al , 1993) and empowered (Rappaport, 1981) An inclusive environment and leadership

opportunities could also address school absenteeism by providing students with a safe and

welcoming space in which to integrate and excel as individuals In conclusion, this study,

alongside others, encourage the implementation of a first language policy that builds on pre-

existing knowledge and literacy, integration procedures to welcome newcomer students and

educate mainstream students, and leadership opportunities to empower ELD students be

provided

A first language policy, welcoming and inclusive environment and leadership

opportunities create a safe and welcoming school students would not hesitate to attend

Therefore, if implemented, these can help decrease school absenteeism among refugee students

The fewer classes students miss, the more credits they accumulate therefore increasing their

ability to graduate Furthermore, homework support is needed among refugee students to assist

with graduation Student participants in this study made it clear that they could benefit and

would appreciate more homework support as this could further address graduation needs The

recommendations suggested here can be conducive in addressing the needs of refugee students if

implemented

Future Research

Future research in this area is highly recommended because, and as this study shows,

ELD stakeholders are willing to share and voice opinions on programs and services targeted at

students who are refugees to better meet their education needs While some of the above

mentioned limitations cannot be avoided, such as language skills and researcher's standpoint,

future studies may have the flexibility to manoeuvre around others

To understand the program as a whole, it would be worthwhile for researchers to observe and send out research invitations to students and instructors in other ELD courses besides English This would be valuable because according to the findings of this study, most non-English ELD instructors are not specialized in working with this population and ELD students share different experiences with these teachers Multiple perspectives from stakeholders in various positions and experiences within the ELD program would provide a richer and more holistic understanding of its participants and program

Future studies should tap into more social factors that influence students' lives because it seems that what happens outside the class influences how students behave and work in class This study focuses on academic and some social aspects including extracurricular involvement and social support that is available to them Throughout the interviews it was evident that social factors such as school fights, domestic responsibilities and interacting with "Canadian" students affect self confidence and academic performance Therefore, looking into the social factors of participants would help explain the different needs of individuals, which would in turn provide insight into the non-academic resources that would help address school absenteeism and graduation needs

Another suggestion for future research is to explore culture and diversity further Participants in this study identify ignorance from the "Canadian" students as the cause of many fist fights and bullying, and that this affects interaction Sharing about diversity allows ELD students to be comfortable with whom they are within a diverse population of students Exploring the diversity within a school of students from various cultures would be beneficial in

understanding not only the school demographics and atmosphere, but also the

relationships that it produces and the nature of the interaction that occurs amongst them

This study is in agreement with the findings from Freeman, et al , (2002) that show that

the perception of where students are positioned within the social hierarchy affects school

success or failure Therefore, the perception of other students within the school who are in

contact with ELD students would be worth examining Students within the ELD program also

take courses that are not designated ELD courses such as Gym, Business and Art, which place

them in direct contact with non-ELD students Insight into how non-ELD students (such as

classmates and friends of ELD students) view this population will provide a two-sided

understanding of the distribution of power among students

Conclusion

The ELD program is one that has positive effects on the involved stakeholders and

supports the settlement process for students While this program is continually achieving

positive results, such as increased English literacy, and making modifications, such as offering

high school level courses in modified versions to accommodate the needs of refugee students, it

does have its shortfalls as recognized by both students and key informants, such as the widely

agreed upon ramifications of the age restriction of public education funding This study hopes to

have provided some encouraging findings and recommendations for future modifications to the

program because schools play an important role in exposing students to the dominant culture of

the host country and integrating students Effort is continually being made on behalf of schools,

settlement workers and organizations that work with newcomers to help ease the transition for

ELD students, which have their advantages and disadvantages based on the experiences of the

involved stakeholders At school, adolescent students who are refugees need continued

support (both academic and social), school organized activities, and leadership opportunities

Likewise, key informants require training, information and resources specific to this population

of students

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Appendix A
INFORMED CONSENT STATEMENT

[Name] Region District School Board
Wilfrid Laurier University
INFORMED CONSENT STATMENT

Study on *Examining Experiences of English Literacy Development (ELD) Programs from Multiple Stakeholders' Perspectives*
Ms Sharon Newmaster (RDSB) Learning Services Consultant
and
Dr Colleen Loomis & Hany Ibrahim
Wilfrid Laurier University, Department of Psychology

You are invited to participate in a research study examining programs available for English language learners The purpose of this study is to gain an understanding through your perspective of your experiences of the English Literacy Development (ELD) program The principal investigators are Sharon Newmaster, a Learning Services Consultant at the [school board name], Colleen Loomis, a professor in the Psychology Department at Wilfrid Laurier University and Hany Ibrahim, a Masters of Community Psychology student at Wilfrid Laurier University Altogether, 8-10 English language learners will participate in focus groups and 2-3 teachers and principals will participate in interviews

INFORMATION

This study will be completed in collaboration with the [school board name] at *Southwest High* You might have been made aware of this study by your ELD teacher, school principal or Sharon Newmaster, a Learning Services Consultant at the WRDSB Youth will be involved in two separate one-hour interviews The first is an individual interview with one of the primary investigators and the second is a focus group session with approximately 7-9 other English language learning students in your school Other stakeholders will participate in one one-hour interviews These interviews are intended to provide stakeholders the opportunity to share ideas, experiences, and perspectives about the type of resources they find useful in helping English language learners succeed in school

After the interviews, Hany Ibrahim or Sharon Newmaster will contact you to hear your feedback and advice regarding the main themes and findings from the group and one-on-one interviews At this second meeting, you will also be asked permission to use certain quotes from your interviews in reports and write-ups

The entire amount of time required to commit for students is 2 hours and 1 hour for other

stakeholders The time required for the follow up session is 30 minutes

During the interview, the researcher will ask you a number of questions about your life, beginning with your life before you entered school and continuing up to today We will give you the questions in advance so you have a chance to think about them You are free not to answer any question or to pass on any question that is asked With your consent, the researcher will tape-record the interview There is no deception involved in the research

Participants have been selected based on their involvement in the ELD program at the selected school in [region name]

RISKS

We do not believe that you will experience any major risks to your well-being by participating in the study It is possible that if you have had a negative experience in your life, that you may find yourself becoming upset recalling such an experience If this occurs, resources are made available to you through the Social Work department at Wilfrid Laurier University

BENEFITS

We envision benefits to participating student First of all, students may find it interesting to reflect back on their life and some of the experiences that they have had It might also normalize their experience with other students as the express similar life experiences
For other stakeholders, it might challenge them to reflect on their role and experience with the ELD program which could be useful in improving school programs and services for newcomer students
Finally, the results of this study will help schools in [region name] meet the needs of its struggling students, and provide an encouraging and supportive educational environment for all students and staff It is also expected to increase understanding and eliminate stigma and stereotypes surrounding ELD students

CONFIDENTIALITY

Your responses to the interview questions will be kept completely anonymous That is, your name will not be associated with anything you say during the interview We will keep everything you say confidential and private The transcription of the interview will be identified by code number and stored in a locked filing cabinet to protect the confidentiality of your responses Please note that your name will not be associated in any way with your responses Once data analysis is completed, the audio recording will be deleted by Colleen Loomis Quotations from you may be used in write-ups /and or presentations on this research However, the quotations will not contain any information that allows you to be identified Should you consent to the use of your quotations, they may be used in write-ups on and/or presentations on this research Interview transcriptions will be stored in a locked filing cabinet in Dr Loomis's research room and the digital recordings of the interviews will be erased by April, 2017 by Dr Loomis
PARTICIPATION

Your participation in this study is purely voluntary and you have the right to decide that you do not want to take part in the research If you withdraw from the study, we will not transcribe any of your responses to the interview, upon your confirmation You have the right to omit or withdraw your response to any questions or procedure without penalty, and if you do your recording will not be transcribed

FEEDBACK

Results from this study will be used for Hany Ibrahim's Masters thesis and the RDSB as part of a larger project The results may also be submitted to peer-reviewed journals for publication The results of the research will be available in approximately March 2011

CONTACT

If you have questions at any time about the study or the procedures, or if you experience adverse effects as a result of participating in this study, you may contact Dr Colleen Loomis at cloomis@wlu ca, Hany Ibrahim at ibra@wlu ca, or at 519-884-0710, ext 2641, or Sharon Newmaster at sharon_newmaster@wrdsb on ca

This project has been reviewed and approved by the Wilfrid Laurier University Research Ethics Board If you feel you have not been treated according to the descriptions in this form, or your rights as a participant in research have been violated during the course of this project, you may contact Dr Bill Marr, Chair, rbasso@wlu ca, University Research Ethics Board, Wilfrid Laurier University, (519) 884-0710, extension 2468

Appendix B
RESEARCH CONSENT FORM

[School board name] & Wilfrid Laurier University
RESEARCH CONSENT FORM

I have received a copy of the INFORMED CONSENT STATEMENT I have read it or had it read to me and understand it It describes my involvement in the research and the information to be collected from me

I agree to participate in the interview for this research

Yes_____   No_____

I agree to have the interview tape-recorded

Yes _____   No _____

I understand and agree that quotes of things that I say may appear in published reports, but only in an anonymous form, so that I cannot be identified as the source of these quotes

Yes_____   No _____

Participant's signature_____

Date _____

Site researcher's signature_____

Date _____

Appendix C
INFORMED CONSENT FORM (PARTICIPANT COPY)

[School board name] & Wilfrid Laurier University
RESEARCH CONSENT FORM
(Participant Copy)

I have received a copy of the INFORMED CONSENT STATEMENT I have read it or had it read to me and understand it It describes my involvement in the research and the information to be collected from me

I have read and understand the above information I have received a copy of this form I agree to participate in this study

I agree to participate in the interview for this research

Yes_____   No_____

I agree to have the interview audio-recorded

Yes _____   No _____

I understand and agree that quotes of things that I say may appear in published reports, but only in an anonymous form, so that I cannot be identified as the source of these quotes

Yes _____   No _____

Participant's signature_____

Date _____

Researcher's signature_____

Date _____

Appendix D
GUIDE FOR YOUTH FOCUS GROUP
AND INDIVIDUAL INTERVIEWS

Thank you for participating in this study As you know, the purpose of this research is to examine the ELD program from the perspective of multiple stakeholders This session will take approximately one hour Please feel free to let me know if at any time you need a break or would like to stop Do you have any questions before we begin? If it's ok with you, I will start the recorder now

1 Let's start by your telling me about yourself
2 What sort of challenges have you experienced or are experiencing at school?
3 What does your typical day look like? (Describe to me the journey/trip you make to get to school)
4 What school programs are you involved in?

ELD Program

5 Tell me about your experiences within the ELD program
6 Tell me about a time when you needed help and what you did

Those are all the questions I have Do you think there are some questions I should have asked but didn't? Do you have any questions for me?

Thank you once again Okay, now I am stopping the recorder Do you have any questions you would like at ask me, or comments you would like to make "off the record" now that the recording has stopped (e g , how we can improve this study)?

Appendix E
GUIDE FOR TEACHER INTERVIEWS

Thank you for participating in this study As you know, the purpose of this research is to explore

the ELD program from the perspective of multiple stakeholders This session will take

approximately one hour Please feel free to let me know if at any time you need a break or

would like to stop Do you have any questions before we begin? If it's ok with you, I will start

the recorder now

ELD program

      1   Let's start by your telling me about the ELD program

      2   Okay, let's move from the program to your classroom Tell me about that

      3   Considering your experience in the classroom, what recommendations do you

         have for how future teachers should be trained/educated?

Those are all the questions I have Do you think there are some questions I should have asked

but didn't? Do you have any questions for me?

Thank you once again Okay, now I am stopping the recorder Do you have any questions you

would like at ask me, or comments you would like to make "off the record" now that the

recording has stopped (e g , how we can improve this study)?

Appendix F

GUIDE FOR PRINCIPAL AND
DEPARTMENT HEAD INTERVIEWS

Thank you for participating in this study As you know, the purpose of this research is to explore the ELD program from the perspective of multiple stakeholders This session will take approximately one hour Please feel free to let me know if at any time you need a break or would like to stop Do you have any questions before we begin? If it's ok with you, I will start the recorder now

ELD program

1   Let's start by your telling me about the ELD program

2   Okay, let's move from the program to your classroom and/or school   Tell me about that

3   In terms of non-academic programs and opportunities, both inside and outside the school, what are students in this program involved in?

4   Considering your experience in the classroom/school, what recommendations do you have for how future teachers should be trained/educated?

Those are all the questions I have Do you think there are some questions I should have asked but didn't? Do you have any questions for me?

 Thank you once again Okay, now I am stopping the recorder Do you have any questions you would like at ask me, or comments you would like to make "off the record" now that the recording has stopped (e g , how we can improve this study)?

Appendix G
Exerts from Bracketing Interview

Part 1: Researcher's experience with ESL

Interviewer	Coming here or to Quebec, and going to a French school, did you find any difficulties learning the languages?
Hany	Not that I remember I was always keen I loved – like I was very social so I was hanging out with people and socializing a lot And I think that way it just came naturally I just picked up the languages quickly Having lived in Poland and completing grade 1 in Italy, I had to learn the language and quick, so learning the language was not difficult for me at all
Interviewer	So, did you like going to school then?
Hany	Ye-um-well—sure I liked the social and the learning aspect of going to school, yeah, but not the homework and stuff like that What was difficult though, was when I moved to an English speaking town and we had to learn English 'cus by then I was 7 years old and could speak up to 4 languages So, I had all these other languages that I knew but then now I had to learn English and so I was put in ESL, and that felt-- I didn't like it because it was like this different class all the time I was in ESL and I wasn't with the kids So I wasn't learning English with people anymore I was learning English one-on-one with the teacher and I didn't like that
Interviewer	So, you like the idea of learning in groups?
Hany	On my own, yeah At my own pace You know socializing, and then your friends teach you, or you pick it up You pick it up When you hear people talking, you say "oh this is that, this is this " But for English, when I learned English, I think it was structured You had to be in ESL, you had to learn English *this way,* grammar first and then I also socialized on the side
Interviewer	So in a way you would prefer an environment where you feel like you have friends with whom you can interact?
Hany	Personally, that's how I learn better But I understand the value behind that Because English is – but any language is difficult to comprehend too, but I mean they wanted you to learn grammatical structure and that is not something you would learn from your friends
Interviewer	So, do you think that you have benefited more from learning with your peers and with your friends or did you --
Hany	It's not the learning part, it's just how I felt 'Cause ESL, it was like I felt alone or with my sister, and brother So, and I was with people that I didn't – not that I didn't want to be with but people like me so there was no way I can ameliorate my language skills because I would be with people sometimes

older and younger, but we couldn't socialize I couldn't learn from them because they were like me, they were learning English at the same time So I always learned better with people who actually knew the language So if I was with them more often, I learned better that way And it's more of a competition It's a challenge It's like you want to be like the rest of the people in your class or even better So you try to learn even – I did anyway – to try even better That way when I was with people, as opposed to one-on-one with a teacher when I just wanted the class to be over I just gave them what they wanted

Part 2: Researcher's experience with moving.

Interviewer	So, how did you feel about the transitions from school?
Hany	-- I moved so often, it was the normal thing for me It's like I knew at the end of the year, when school finished it meant that I was moving It meant that we were going to a different school It was normal, I have grown accustomed to it
Interviewer	Ok, so it's normal, but how about making friends?
Hany	--it was fun I mean making friends every year? I *loved* that part And I would tell my friends when I – actually when I was in grade 6, I remember when we first moved out to Vancouver Grade 6, when I went, I started making friends, I told them, I'm like "If you guys want to be my friends, just so you know, I will be moving at the end of the year so you will only be my friends for one year Are you sure you want to be my friend?" And they were like, "I don't care, sure " But for me it was normal I knew at the end year, we were going to move
Interviewer	How about emotionally?
Hany	One year is not long enough for me to grow-- attach to them And I think because I learned to move a lot I learned to distance myself from people So, not get too attached Not willingly, like not out of my own will but I think naturally it's what I ended up doing And I always focus on the future The prospects of making new friends, moving to a new place instead of what I am leaving behind
Interviewer	All right, other than school, how did you feel about your environment? Like moving from Quebec to Ottawa, and then Ottawa to Vancouver?
Hany	In Ottawa, I felt ok because the classrooms were diverse But when we moved out west in '97, it was grade 6 when I was in Burnaby The first thing I did when I was put in a class was look around to see if there was anyone of my colour And in a class of 30 there was 0 That was the only time I felt uncomfortable in a class And mind you my English wasn't good at that time

either because it was grade 6 so 3 years I mean it was better than the first year but it still wasn't perfect So, I'm looking around the classroom to find somebody of my own colour, or even closest colour But no, I didn't find anyone and I just – that's the only time that a move made me feel uncomfortable because I went to a place where it was, literally, all white

Part 4 – Support in school

Interviewer	Ok, so who did you feel has helped you out the most?
Hany	I've always, always been an athlete So every single gym teacher I ever had, helped me more than being just my gym instructors They were my coaches, and they were the only teachers I think that ever came to my house, met my mom, my family They always encouraged me to do something further But in high school, what I discovered was that they were only encouraging me in athletics Like go to this sports camp here, go to this sports camp there So it felt like I had to do just sports in my life
Interviewer	If you could go back in time, would you wish to have done something--- or change something, even in your community, something that you wish that could be done to help you progress better?
Hany	I just wish I had someone push me academically And that is what happened in grade 7, when I moved again Grade 7 I was in Vancouver and there I was put in this enriched program in psychology and that is when I started liking school They would take like 2 – 3 people outside of class and we would go to a different school Tuesday afternoons and we would learn really neat things about psychology and that is what got me started in psychology

Appendix H
Summary of Research Questions & Objectives with Findings

Research Objective	Research Questions	Interview Questions	Findings
To seek better understanding of the programs and services serving refugee youth as perceived by students and administrators (teachers, department heads, and principals)	How can school programs/services be designed to effectively respond to the needs of refugee students?	Tell me about your experiences within the ELD program (S)	ELD program
		Let's start by your telling me about the ELD program (A)	
		Okay, let's move from the program to your classroom (A)	
		Considering your experience in the classroom, what recommendations do you have for how future teachers should be trained/educated? (A)	
	What resources are available and used by students and administrators to help students transition into a new education system?	What sort of challenges have you experienced or are experiencing at school? (S)	Differences in Education System Living arrangements Fights "Canadian" identity
		What does your typical day look like? (Describe to me the journey/trip you make to get to school) (S)	
		Tell me about a time when you needed help and what you did (S)	Interaction Support
To identify the factors that influence integration of refugee students in schools	What factors hinder and/or facilitate the integration of refugee students in schools?	What school programs are you involved in? (S)	Extracurricular involvement
		In terms of non-academic programs and opportunities, both inside and outside the school, what are students in this program involved in? (A)	What schools can do to help integrate ELD students into school?

S = Students   A= Administrators (teachers/principals/department heads)