



SCHOOL-RELATED RESOURCES FOR REFUGEE FAMILIES

HIGHLIGHTED RESOURCES

1. **7 Resources for Parents & Schools.** Washington State Office of the Education Ombudsman. This resource is available free on the web at: <http://www.governor.wa.gov/oeo/publications/> This collection of multilingual (Cambodian, Chinese, Korean, Russian, Somali, Spanish, and Vietnamese) family guides includes: Resolving Conflict at School; Parent and Student Rights; Participate in Your Child's Education; Make the Most of a Parent-Teacher Conference; Bullying at School; & How Does a School District Work?
2. **A New Day: Refugee Families in the United States.** Center for Applied Linguistics (CAL) 24 minutes. Washington, DC: Center for Applied Linguistics (CAL) 2006. This resource is available for purchase from the publisher's Web site at: <http://calstore.cal.org/store/topics/refugeeres.aspx>. Illustrates the challenges facing new refugee families as they adjust to the realities of living in the United States, by using a short video with scenes and conversations from their daily life. Families from Burma, Somalia, Liberia, Iran, Armenia, and Russia describe the oppression, violence, and fear they faced in their native countries. Each family expresses a tremendous desire to improve their children's lives by taking advantage of educational and economic opportunities. Yet, one man describes life in America as "better, but difficult". Resettlement professionals discuss the stress caused by changing roles that upset the traditional balance of power in the family, such as when the wife becomes the bread winner or the children learn English quickly and become translators for their elders. Learning to speak English is a dominant topic, and scenes from English as a Second Language classes are included. Teens emphasize that knowledge of the language is the key to academic and social success. Different Western parenting approaches, especially in the areas of discipline and physical punishment, as well as tolerance of clothing and hair style trends, are explained. The clash between the image of American life and the reality - with many refugees living in low-income neighborhoods with high crime rates - can be disheartening, but the families remain confident that their choices were correct and hold dreams for their future generations.
3. **Anna Goes to School.** Teague, KAti. 26 pages. Stamford, CT: Longmeadow, 1991. This resource can be purchased from Open Communications, Inc. at: <http://www.opengroup.com/>. "When it is time for Anna to start school, she is not too happy. But after her first day there, she is ready for more." This resource is available in Somali, Bengali, Chinese, Greek, Hindi, Punjabi, Turkish, Urdu, and Vietnamese.
4. **Be Who You Are: Refugee Youth in the United States.** Center for Applied Linguistics (CAL) 9 minutes. Washington, DC: Center for Applied Linguistics (CAL) 2006. This resource is available for purchase from the publisher's Web site at: <http://calstore.cal.org/store/topics/refugeeres.aspx>. Presents a short video on topics for teen refugees and resettlement workers that focuses on the realities of integrating into American society and provides a snapshot of what to expect as a new member of the U.S. population. Teen refugees from several families and different cultures talk candidly about daily life. Not speaking English is described as a frightening and isolating experience, and each teen emphasizes that learning the language paves the way to educational achievement and new friendships. School settings make bright, interactive environments with helpful teachers and offer a variety of ways to learn such as through physical education, art, and music. Religious and cultural differences place high expectations on academic achievement as well as create different dating and friendships rules. One teen advises new refugees to just be themselves and they will find friends that accept them. Many teen refugees take on family responsibilities, such as helping with younger siblings and preparing meals.

5. **Bullying - We Can All Help Stop It.** Ontario Ministry of Education. 8 pages. 2009. All languages of this resource are available on the web at: <http://www.edu.gov.on.ca/eng/safeschools/bullying.html> (Under "Bullying Prevention Resources", click on "Help in 22 Languages.") This multilingual guide for parents of elementary and secondary school students defines what bullying is and provides information for parents on what to do if their child is being bullied. It is directed at parents in Ontario, Canada, but most of the information is applicable to those in other areas. It is available in Arabic, Farsi, Greek, Hindi, Tagalog, Punjabi, Italian, Polish, Portuguese, Russian, Spanish, Tamil, Ukrainian, Urdu, Korean, Chinese, French, and Gujarati.
6. **Creating a Refuge From Bullying.** Swain, Lauren. 22 minutes. Denver, CO: ECDC/African Community Center & Mind's Eye Productions, 2006. This DVD can be purchased from the African Community Center at <http://www.africancommunitycenter.net/youthprogramnew.htm> Provides examples of bullying experiences from teen refugees and explains steps they take to protect themselves while also sensitizing American teens to the struggles of their refugee peers. This 22-minute video was created by the Refugee Education for Awareness, Change, and Hope program (REACH), based in Colorado, as part of a curriculum designed to educate America's youth about refugee experiences and issues. Many young refugees experience trauma and fear in their native lands and then are taunted by their American classmates as they enter the schools because of their limited language skills, unique dress or food customs, and lack of knowledge about popular culture. Parallels are drawn between global leaders who oppress their people and school bullies who frighten classmates. Amjaad and Il Gude, an Iraqi boy and a Somali Bantu girl, describe being called a "terrorist" or "ugly" by classmates. American students provide dramatizations about bullying situations. Teachers and counselors describe steps for young newcomers to avoid situations where bullying can occur and encourage them to talk with trusted adult leaders if they feel threatened.
7. **Educational Handbook for Refugee Parents.** International Rescue Committee. 82 pages. 2006. This resource is available in Spanish, French, Burmese, and Somali in the [BRYCS Clearinghouse](#). Acquaints refugee parents with the U.S. school system; school grade levels; expectations of students at each level in terms of academics and personal conduct; and parents' responsibilities in ensuring that their children meet the school system expectations. The International Rescue Committee encourages parents to meet with their children's teachers and frequently talk with their children about their schoolwork, as well as urge their children to pursue college. Step-by-step instructions clarify the procedures for choosing a college, the application process, and securing financial aid. An appendix details resources that address parents' specific needs: finding an interpreter; scheduling meetings with teachers or administrators; obtaining permission for a child's absence or late arrival; requesting a fee waiver or free lunch; and requesting resources for families learning English.
8. **Emergency and Community Health Outreach.** Emergency and Community Health Outreach (ECHO) This resource is available free on the Web at: <http://www.echominnesota.org/index.cfm>. ECHO is a collaborative Web site providing health and safety information during emergency and non-emergency times to people with limited English language skills. BRYCS audiences may be interested in topics covered such as: Back to School Immunizations, Calling 9-1-1 in an Emergency, Child Safety Seats, Early Childhood Screening, Lead Poisoning, Mental Health Help, How to Talk to Kids About Crisis, and more. Each topic is covered in video format and is available in Spanish, Hmong, Somali, Vietnamese, Lao, and Khmer. Click the language of your choice at the top of the Web page and the whole page (including the videos) will be in the language selected.
9. **Family Involvement Tools.** Seattle, WA: Neighborhood House, This resource is available free on the web at: <http://www.nhwa.org/gethelp/community-resources.php>. This is a collection of multilingual audio clips for newcomer parents that address parent involvement in the schools. The clips discuss getting involved with children's education through volunteering, home school communication, learning at home, collaborating with the community, and parent/teacher conferences. Though they were created for Washington state, they may be useful in other parts of the country. Available in Amharic, Cambodian, Oromo, Somali, Spanish, Tigrinya, and Vietnamese.
10. **A Guide to Your Children's Schools: A Parent Handbook.** Adult Learning Resource Center, Des Plaines, IL. 37 pages. Des Plaines, IL: Adult Learning Resource Center, February 2002. This resource is available free on the web at: http://www.isbe.state.il.us/bilingual/htmls/refugee_services.htm Presents general information about the school system in the United States for newcomers to the U.S. Parents and guardians of immigrant or refugee children can peruse a question-and-answer format to learn about: (1) the organization and

types of schools in the U.S., including the relationship between school districts and school boards as well as alternative schooling for children who do not finish high school; (2) procedures for enrolling children in school, including required medical forms and examinations; (3) the school calendar and school day; (4) transportation options; (5) school procedures, including policies regarding illness, absence, and fees for activities such as field trips; (6) the roles of administrators, teachers, and support staff; (7) instructional programs, including English as a second language (ESL) and bilingual classes, basic curricula for elementary, middle, and high school, and special-needs programs; (8) parents' roles in their children's education and learning, including participating in parent-teacher conferences, parent workshops, family learning activities, and volunteer programs as well as engaging children in discussion about and helping them with their homework; and (9) adult education, including English and literacy classes. Parents and guardians who understand how the U.S. school system works are better able to help their children succeed. Available in Arabic, Bosnian, Russian, Spanish, and Vietnamese.

11. **A Guide to Your Children's Schools: A Parent Handbook to Boise Schools.** Boise School District. 45 pages. This resource is available free on the web at: <http://www.boiseschools.org/ell/index.html> This multilingual parent handbook is based off of the guide created by the Adult Learning Resource Center in Illinois, but is specific to Boise. Available in Arabic, Bosnian, Burmese, Dari, French, Russian, Somali, and Spanish.
12. **Illinois' Refugee Children School Impact Grant Video Tool Kit: In Our Country: Educating Newcomers in America and Welcoming New Learners: A Professional Development Tool.** Illinois' Refugee Children School Impact Grant (RCSIG) Partnership Illinois State Board of Education (ISBE) Illinois Department of Human Services Chicago Public Schools. Guide is 49 pages. Springfield, IL: Illinois State Board of Education, 2005. This resource is available free on the web at: http://www.isbe.net/bilingual/htmls/refugee_services.htm Schools struggle with the challenge of welcoming and adjusting to this entering population. Teachers and administrators must search for ways to make these new students feel safe and secure while instilling the standards of behavior and achievement expected from all. The new arrivals and their parents have no understanding of the American educational process, the school policies and resources, or what to expect from the classroom experience. Both school personnel and refugees have a profound need to understand one another. In order to help facilitate the integration of refugees into the classroom, the Illinois State Board of Education and the Illinois Department of Human Services/Bureau of Refugee and Immigrant Services have created these two videos.
13. **Limited English Proficient (LEP) Parent Involvement Project: A Guide for Connecting Immigrant Parents and Schools.** Minnesota Department of Education. 171 pages. Roseville, MN: Minnesota Department of Education, 2001. The full text of the English version of this resource is available in the [BRYCS Clearinghouse](#). The other language versions (Russian, Spanish, Vietnamese, Lao, Hmong, and Cambodian) are available at: <http://www.eric.ed.gov/> "The LEP Parent Involvement Project was developed to be used in various adult education settings such as ESL classes, community-based organizations and parent groups for the purposes of helping parents and caretakers with limited English see themselves as active participants in their children's learning.
14. **PACER Center's National Center for Bullying Prevention.** Pacer Center, Inc. Bloomington, MN: Pacer Center, Inc. 2007. This resource is available free on the Web at: <http://pacer.org/bullying/index.asp>. This Web site provides free handouts for English, Spanish, and Somali speaking parents. Topics include talking to your children about bullying, talking with school administrators, record-keeping and bullying, and IEPs and bullying. PACER has also created an animated anti-bullying Web site for elementary school students at www.PACERKidsAgainstBullying.org.
15. **Parent Curriculum: Module 1.** Cotton, Jessica, and Lutheran Social Services of Michigan. 34 pages. Southfield, MI: Lutheran Social Services of Michigan, October 2007. This resource is available in English, Bosnian, and Arabic in the [BRYCS Clearinghouse](#). This manual was created by Lutheran Social Services of Michigan's Senior School Impact Specialist as a part of their Refugee School Impact Program. It was designed for refugee parents to provide them with information they need to prepare their children for school and to be involved in their education.

16. **Parent Outreach Publications (Brochures and Handouts)** Pacer Center. 2008. This resource is available in Hmong, Russian, Somali, Spanish, and English at: <http://www.pacer.org/ec/news.asp#sig> Advises parents of young children to contact the Pacer Center and their school districts to learn about districts' early childhood intervention and special education services. These services can help parents better understand their children and identify how to best meet individual children's needs. Services can also identify if a child has special needs, which parents should determine as soon as possible because early intervention will allow for the child to be better helped and more ready to learn upon entering kindergarten. Schools will provide service coordinators to individually plan with parents of special needs children for the support services and therapies their children will need, offer tips on how to help their children develop skills at home, and help locate effective community resources and services outside school systems. Lists benchmarks of typical developmental milestones and encourages parents to monitor their child's early development and to seek help immediately if concerns arise. Consultations are free and parents have final decision-making power in application and use of all services.
17. **Raising Children in a New Country: An Illustrated Handbook.** Bridging Refugee Youth and Children's Services (BRYCS) 36 pages. Washington, DC: United States Conference of Catholic Bishops/Migration and Refugee Services (USCCB/MRS). September 2007. This resource is available in full text in the BRYCS Clearinghouse at <http://www.brycs.org/documents/RaisingChildren-Handbook.pdf>. This booklet was created for agencies serving refugees in order to support their efforts to ensure that newcomer parents have the basic information they need about U.S. laws and parenting practices. Although newcomers may find the booklet useful by itself, it is primarily intended for case managers and other service providers to use together with their refugee clients. The booklet is targeted to newcomer parents with low levels of English proficiency and/or low literacy levels. Since the often complex concepts illustrated here are necessarily simplified, the resource section (pages 28-31) provides easy-to-access information for service providers to supplement the basic points in this booklet. For best results, BRYCS recommends using this booklet in culturally appropriate parent support groups, preferably run by at least one experienced newcomer parent of the same ethnicity and one U.S.-born parent, where refugee parents can ask questions, try out new behaviors, and find positive support to help ease their transition.
18. **Registering Your Child For School.** Welcoming Center for New Pennsylvanians. 2 pages. This resource is available in English at: <http://www.welcomingcenter.org/documents/SchoolRegistration.pdf>. This resource is available in Chinese at: <http://www.welcomingcenter.org/documents/RegisterSchoolCHINESE.pdf>. This resource is available in Spanish at: <http://www.welcomingcenter.org/documents/RegisterSchoolSPANISH.pdf>. This resource is available in Arabic at: <http://www.welcomingcenter.org/documents/RegisterSchool%20ARABIC.pdf>. Provides parents with a brief overview of the records required to enroll a child in school and the time requirement that schools must adhere to, in order to register a child. Records include proof of a child's age; proof of address; and immunization records, and at the time of registration, parents must sign a sworn statement as to any disciplinary records. Schools may not require other records such as photo identification, Social Security numbers, or immigration documents.
19. **Sam's First Day.** Mills, David, and Finlay, Lizzie. 24 pages and in audio format. London: Mantra Publishing, 2000. This resource can be purchased from Language Lizard, LLC, <http://www.languagelizard.com>. "Sam loved to talk. On his first day at school he talked and talked all the way there. But when Sam got to school, he stopped talking. Sam enjoyed writing. He enjoyed playing games. He enjoyed reading. But he just would not talk! Until... A gently told tale for all children new to school or the newcomer to the classroom." This resource is available in Albanian, Arabic, Chinese, Czech, English, Farsi, Portuguese, Somali, Spanish, Tamil, Turkish, Urdu, Vietnamese, Gujarati, French, Bengali, and Serbian-Croatian.
20. **Tom and Sofia Start School.** Barkow, Henriette, and Lamont, Priscilla. 32 pages. London: Mantra Publishing, 2006. This resource can be purchased from Language Lizard at <http://www.languagelizard.com/>. This book goes through a school day through the eyes of two young children - including circle time, art, snack, bathroom, lunch, recess, games, and clean up. The illustrations are diverse and include Muslim and Jewish students as well as those with disabilities. Some of the English words used are British (such as "Mum"), but is otherwise appropriate for students in the U.S. It is available in Albanian, Arabic, Bengali, Chinese, Farsi, French, German,

Greek, Gujarati, Hindi, Italian, Japanese, Kurdish, Malayalam, Polish, Portuguese, Punjabi, Russian, Somali, Spanish, Tagalog, Turkish, Urdu, and Vietnamese.

21. **ToolKit for Hispanic Families: Resources to Help Students Succeed in School.** U. S. Department of Education. Washington, DC: U. S. Department of Education, This resource is available on the Web at: <http://www.ed.gov/parents/academic/involve/2006toolkit/index.html>. Through The Early College High School Initiative, small high schools are developed from which students leave with a high school diploma and a two-year Associate of Arts degree. Early College High Schools focus on students for whom a smooth transition into postsecondary education is now problematic: low-income students, students of color, English Language learners, and first-generation college goers.
22. **Tukwila School District Parent Handbook.** International Rescue Committee - Seattle. 67 pages. 2007. This resource is available full text in the BRYCS Clearinghouse at http://www.brycs.org/documents/STUDENT_PARENT_HANDBOOK_06_07_REVISED.pdf. This handbook includes basic information about schools through simple text and photos. Though some pages are specific to the Tukwila School District, many pages include photos that would be useful to refugee parents with children in any school in the U.S.
23. **Welcome to Our Schools Kit.** New York State Office of Temporary and Disability Assistance, Bureau of Refugee and Immigrant Assistance. 2007. Limited copies of this resource are available at: <http://www.otda.state.ny.us/MAIN/bria/programs/rsig.htm> The Welcome to Our Schools Kit is designed to ease the transition of refugee children into the elementary and secondary schools of New York State, and to empower their parents to be effective partners in the education of their children. This kit includes: 1) Curriculum for the Refugee Academy, Parent Programs, Professional Development, and Mini-Academies; 2) Welcome to Our Schools posters for posting and distribution to students; 3) USA puzzles for use in Module 4; 4) Beach ball for use in Module 1; 5) Bus Number stickers for use in Module 3; 6) DVDs for use in all Modules; 7) Handouts for use in all Modules; and 8) Pencils, crayons, and colored pencils for use in all Modules. The DVDs are available in Burmese, Karen, Maay Maay, Arabic, Swahili, Russian, Vietnamese, and English. Each include 5 segments: 1) A Day in Elementary School; 2) A Day in Middle School; 3) A Day in High School; 4) Student Interviews; and 5) Parent Interviews
24. **Working with your Child's School.** Christensen, Sandy. Info-U Brief. St. Paul, MN: University of Minnesota Extension Service, 2000. This resource is available in Somali and Hmong at: <http://www.extension.umn.edu/titles.html?areaid=2&categoryID=16>
25. **You Can Help Your Child in School.** Minnesota Department of Education. Roseville, MN: Minnesota Department of Education, 2001. This resource can be ordered at: <http://www.comm.media.state.mn.us/bookstore/bookstore.asp?page=category&category=&CatID=215> and the Bosnian version is at <http://www.focus-stl.org/prog/initiatives/edu-natf.cfm> This instructional video is designed for schools, teachers, community groups, etc. as a tool for use with refugee and immigrant parents. The video serves as a brief overview to the many facets of school which might be new or different for refugees and immigrant parents, including suggestions for what parents might do at home to support school learning.
26. **You Can Talk to Your Child's School.** Minnesota Department of Education. Roseville, MN: Minnesota Department of Education, 2001. This resource can be ordered at: <http://www.comm.media.state.mn.us/bookstore/bookstore.asp?page=category&category=&CatID=215> and the Bosnian version at <http://www.focus-stl.org/prog/initiatives/edu-natf.cfm> This instructional video is designed for schools, teachers, community groups, etc. as a tool for use with refugee and immigrant parents. The video focuses on the willingness of school personnel to talk with parents. Sample conversations between parents and school staff are portrayed.

Do you know of a resource that you think should be added to this list? Please email info@brycs.org with your resource suggestions!

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