

# iDecide



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## Refugees, Asylum Seekers and Unaccompanied Minors



Erasmus+

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## Refugees, Asylum Seekers and Unaccompanied Minors



### Classroom-based tips (focus on instructional methods)

1. **Promote therapeutic interventions given that refugee pupils often suffer from post-traumatic stress disorder;** these may include activities that help them in externalising their painful experiences through writing, story-telling, poetry, dance, music, drama, or any art form from the pupils' own culture and heritage.

[Reference: Eisenbruch, M. (1991). From post-traumatic stress disorder to cultural bereavement: diagnosis of Southeast Asian refugees. *Social Science & Medicine*, 33(6), 673-680.]

2. **Avoid making references to issues that might cause pupils to recall traumatic experiences,** such as war, violence, family separation, bombs, guns.

[Reference: Eisenbruch, M. (1991). From post-traumatic stress disorder to cultural bereavement: diagnosis of Southeast Asian refugees. *Social Science & Medicine*, 33(6), 673-680.]

3. **Avoid separating younger pupils from older brothers and sisters,** especially if they are of close age. This is additionally important for unaccompanied minors.

[Reference: Rutter, J., & Jones, C. (1998). *Refugee Education: Mapping the Field*. Sterling: Stylus Publishing.]



### School-based practical tips (focus on instructional methods)

#### Curricular Adaptations

1. Put special emphasis on teaching the pupils' native language and the English language as well as the language of the host country through extra personalised teaching and remedial teaching.

#### School Uniform

Provide pupils with any material support they may need, including clothes, school uniforms, stationery, schoolbags and books.

## Pupil Support

1. Provide pupils with any material support they may need, including clothes, school uniforms, stationery, schoolbags and books.
2. Put special emphasis on teaching the pupils' native language and the English language as well as the language of the host country through extra personalised teaching and remedial teaching.
3. Ask for the help of school psychologists or other relevant professionals for addressing extreme cases of refugee pupils suffering from loss, grief and trauma.
4. Appoint experienced teachers as mentors of these pupils, with the main responsibility of representing their best interests and monitoring their academic progress and social adjustment.

[Reference: McBrien, J. L. (2005). Educational needs and barriers for refugee students in the United States: A review of the literature. *Review of educational research*, 75(3), 329-364.]

5. Collaborate with the parents' association so as to find families volunteering to offer interim care (even for a few hours per week) to these children as foster parents (**refers to unaccompanied minors**).
6. Use school psychologists for interviewing unaccompanied minors to help reveal their traumas and support them in overcoming these experiences (**refers to unaccompanied minors**).

[Reference: Rutter, J. (2001). *Supporting Refugee Children in 21st Century Britain: A Compendium of Essential Information*. Sterling: Stylus Publishing.]

## Class Divisions / Arrangements

Group unaccompanied minors coming from the same region together where possible to attend the same school (**refers to unaccompanied minors**).

## Community

1. Collaborate with the parents' association so as to find families volunteering to offer interim care (even for a few hours per week) to these children as foster parents (**refers to unaccompanied minors**).
2. Collaborate with local authorities, agencies, the church or charities and relevant NGOs, so as to help provide these pupils with a safe and caring domestic environment (**refers to unaccompanied minors**).

## Food (Canteen / Visits / Camps / Trips)

Ensure that these pupils get nutritious meals during school mealtimes (**refers to unaccompanied minors**).

## Other (Health Provisions)

1. Regularly check the health of these pupils. Immunisation must be arranged for all unaccompanied minors (**refers to unaccompanied minors**).

## Parents / Parents' Associations

1. Collaborate with the parents' association so as to find families volunteering to offer interim care (even for a few hours per week) to these children as foster parents (**refers to unaccompanied minors**).

## Supportive literature

### Definition of Refugees:

According to the 1951 U.N Refugee Convention, which is the key legal document that outlines the status and the rights of refugees, signed by 144 state parties, "a refugee is someone who owing to a well-founded fear of being persecuted for reasons of race, religion, nationality, membership of a particular social group, or political opinion, is outside the country of his (her) nationality, and is unable to or, owing to such fear, is unwilling to avail (himself) of the protection of that country".

According to article 22 of the same Convention:

1. The Contracting States shall accord to refugees the same treatment as is accorded to nationals with respect to elementary education.
2. The Contracting States shall accord to refugees treatment as favourable as possible, and, in any event, not less favourable than that accorded to aliens generally in the same circumstances, with respect to education other than elementary education and, in particular, as regards access to studies, the recognition of foreign school certificates, diplomas and degrees, the remission of fees and charges and the award of scholarships.

### Definition of Asylum seekers:

According to U.N Refugee Agency an asylum-seeker is someone whose request for sanctuary has yet to be processed. At the end of 2014, there were approximately 1.8 million people around the world waiting for a decision on their asylum claims.

### Definition of Unaccompanied minors:

An unaccompanied minor is a person who is under the age of eighteen, unless, under the law applicable to the child, majority is attained earlier and who is separated from both parents and is not

being cared for by an adult who by law or custom has responsibility to do so (UN, “Refugee Children: Guidelines on Protection and Care”, p.121).

### Literature review

Schools play significant roles in pupils’ socialisation processes. For a refugee child this process is often violently disrupted in the home country, until the child’s education begins again with a new socialisation process in a school in the host country; this process is frequently at odds with the child’s home environment and previous experience of school. For example, there may be differences in discipline, school culture and processes of learning, which place additional pressure on a child who has already experienced multiple changes, trauma and loss.

One of the main tasks for refugee pupils within the school environment is adapting and developing socialisation skills in a new cultural and social context. Refugee flight almost always disrupts this process in two ways; first it breaks the continuity of the socialisation process, and second it prevents the child from progressing normally in learning information and skills (Ahearn & Athey, 1991).

Schools additionally have a part to play in this process by:

- Helping refugee pupils to feel less invisible through creating a safe, validating environment, where they feel supported and understood;
- Orchestrating learning experiences within the school curriculum that include refugee pupils’ experiences and reinforce positive ways of handling problems;
- Offering therapeutic and social support so as to help these pupils to acculturate and become a part of the school, without losing their own cultural identities.

In terms of refugee pupils’ classroom behaviour and teacher response, it is important for teachers:

- Not to pathologise responses to multiple loss and change.
- To be responsive to the ways refugee pupils may be affected as well as the ways in which their trauma, loss and grief may appear within the classroom setting.
- To participate in appropriate training and in-service activities related to refugee education and the effects of trauma on pupils within the classroom.

Restoration of a sense of safety is a top priority for refugee children. The school needs to create a safe environment within the school and the individual classrooms. One approach within classrooms is the use of small groups, so pupils can learn from each other in an intimate and supportive environment. In addition, the implementation or strengthening of cross-cultural curricular topics and projects within schools could help increase levels of understanding, acceptance and mutual respect. Also, integrating a focus on human rights and refugees will both inform all pupils of the needs and experiences of the refugee children, and validate the importance of their experiences.

Finally, increased positive and culturally appropriate liaisons between schools and families, which includes programmes for parents participating in school enterprises or school forums are needed in order to foster cultural diversity and communication among the school community. Parental involvement is critical to ensuring the academic success of refugee children.

[Reference: Adapted from “Interventions for Refugee Children in New Zealand Schools: Models, Methods, and Best Practice” accessed at <http://www.educationcounts.govt.nz/publications/schooling/5463/chapter-1>]

## Websites and EU Reports

The U.N Refugee Agency website includes interesting teachers' materials, toolkits and other resources for Refugee Education: <http://www.unhcr.org/education.html>

The International Network for Education in Emergencies website: <http://www.ineesite.org/en/>

Report on the global trends of refugee education. UNHCR, 2011: Refugee Education: a Global Review

The website of the Alberta Government in Canada including multiple resources and ideas for refugee education: <http://teachingrefugees.com/>

Report prepared for the Ministry of Education of New Zealand entitled "Literature Review: Interventions for Refugee Children in New Zealand Schools: Models, Methods, and Best Practice": [http://www.educationcounts.govt.nz/\\_\\_data/assets/pdf\\_file/0016/12139/interventions.pdf](http://www.educationcounts.govt.nz/__data/assets/pdf_file/0016/12139/interventions.pdf)

Report prepared by the International Committee of Red Cross containing guidelines for working with unaccompanied and separated children: <http://www.unhcr.org/protection/children/4098b3172/inter-agency-guiding-principles-unaccompanied-separated-children.html>

Report prepared by the Office of the U.N High Commissioner for Refugees in Geneva containing guidelines on Policies and Procedures in dealing with Unaccompanied Children Seeking Asylum: <http://www.unhcr.org/publications/legal/3d4f91cf4/guidelines-policies-procedures-dealing-unaccompanied-children-seeking-asylum.html>

## Useful Journals

Race, Ethnicity and Education: <http://www.tandfonline.com/loi/cree20#.Vo5mHfeTVIU>

Intercultural Education: <http://www.tandfonline.com/loi/ceji20#.Vo5oMPeTVIU>

Diaspora, indigenous and minority education: <http://www.tandfonline.com/toc/hdim20/current>

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