Supporting the Mental Health of Refugee Students

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INTERNATIONAL RESCUE COMMITTEE

Healing Schools & Classrooms Self-Guided Tour

Healing Schools & Classrooms Strategies

CHEAT SHEET

Enter

Strategies that foster

- Sense Control
- Sense of Belonging
- Sense of Self-Worth
- Positive Relationships
- Intellectual Stimulation

Peace corner resources

Peace Cards are a tool for teachers and students to teach, learn, and engage with positive coping strategies such as breath or muscle activation exercises, drawing, visualization, and other techniques.

Resources can include a short-span, visual timer, an ooze tube, journal paper and pencils, puzzle, coloring books and pencils, and more. Have students help design and resource your Peace Corner!

Instances of harm that can be resolved without formal intervention are to be expected. Restorative questions foster conversations between students and between students and staff that teach and empower students to repair relationships.

Characteristics supported
- Meeting students' emotional needs
- Positive, empowering group management
- Spatial design to support trauma-informed care principles

Promotes
- Sense of control
- Sense of worth

- **Task:** Work with 2-4 neighbors to peruse the Healing Schools & Classrooms Strategies Cheat Sheet. As a group, identify **2** strategies that you would like to start (or continue) implementing in the classroom, and **2** strategies that you have questions or are uncertain about.

- **Time:** 15-20 minutes

Healing Schools & Classrooms Strategies

CHEAT SHEET

Enter

Strategies that foster

- **Sense Control**

- **Sense of Belonging**

- **Sense of Self-Worth**

- **Positive Relationships**

- **Intellectual Stimulation**

Positive Routines / Rituals

Routines can meet some initial resistance and take a while to stick, but once they've been established, students will commit to them. A positive routine (or ritual) is a way to get all the students in your classroom – whether or not they're English learners – to consistently engage in something that makes them feel seen, supported, and safe.

Fearlessness is crucial in establishing these routines. They may be silly, and your students may respond to them with cynicism – but by committing 100% to positive routines, you are sending the message that **you** feel safe in an openly supportive environment. If you feel safe, eventually, the students will too.

Examples:

- Teacher(s) stand by the entrance at the beginning of class; as students are coming in, each one gives the teacher a hi-five or fist bump

- At the beginning of class, students have 2 minutes to find their seats and get settled. After two minutes, a timer (or bell, or anything else) sounds and all students, now seated, engage in one minute of deep breathing

- Each desk or table at which students sit has a set of index cards with adjectives indicating how the student is feeling (e.g. *tired, hungry, confused, excited,* with photos / translations for early English learners). As students come in (or at other transitional moments throughout the class), all students are given 30 seconds to lift their cards.

- Whenever the class splits into pair or group work, all members of each pair / group must shake hands with each other, or fist-bump, or salute, or bow, or nod

- Whenever a student presents in front of the rest of the class, all classmates must snap/clap in applause

Consistent Expectations & Consequences

Examples:

- Set expectations for behavior and participation at the beginning of the year / term. You may have students co-create a "contract" that everyone signs establishing rules and expectations

- Rearrange seating to minimize repeated disruptions. Pivot from collaborative work to independent work if students are repeatedly going off-task

- Enter weekly grades for "classroom performance." These can be assigned to the whole class or small groups (if students work in groups). Communicate when students are behaving in a way that may negatively **and** positively affect "classroom performance" scores

- If time or productivity is lost due to lack of effort or focus, consider holding students during lunch or after school to keep pace with learning goals.

› As ALL students grow, develop, and learn how to socialize, collaborate, and self-regulate, it is important for the classroom itself to feel well-regulated. This means setting clear expectations for behavior and engagement, and sometimes, if expectations are not met, implementing consequences.

› "Consequence" may feel like an aggressive word, but a consequence should by no means be implemented with anger. The purpose of consequences is to reinforce a sense of stability in the classroom. Consequences should be implemented calmly, and only when you see that behavior is threatening the ability of the class to function smoothly or preventing your students from learning and/or feeling safe.

› Avoid yelling, calling out specific students, or shaming the class as a whole when behavior starts to get out of control. Instead, leverage your inherent authority as the teacher and adult in the room, and explain why you feel the consequence is necessary.

Group Work

> Group work gives all students – again, not just English learners – the opportunity to practice producing academic language. It also gives students crucial practice collaborating and managing social dynamics.

> English learners should be grouped in such a way that they are able to feel safe **and** integrated into the classroom community. This may mean sometimes grouping ELs with other ELs who share the same language, and sometimes grouping them with classmates who are not ELs

> Group work functions most smoothly when each member has a distinct role, so that the participation of each is necessary. For instance, one student in a group might be responsible for reading aloud, one for taking notes, one for sharing out to the whole class, one for designing a poster, etc. English Learners should be given roles that are both attainable **and** substantive

Example:

- A small mixed group is given a social studies text about the Ottoman Empire. One student reads the text out loud. A second fills out important dates on a timeline tracing the events in the text. A third shades in two maps tracing the territory of the empire at two different points in its history (again, based on the text). The fourth answers a series of multiple choice questions about the text. **Which role(s) would best be filled by entering-level English learners?**

Finding Allies

In order for English learners to feel that they are members of the classroom community, they must be seen and respected not only by their fellow English learners and ESL teacher, but by the other teacher(s) and students. Find allies in the classroom who will not be prevented by prejudice or insecurity from befriending and supporting their classmates who are English learners. These may be students with whom English learners can work in mixed groups.

Every class has its tone-setters. These students play an important role in establishing the culture of the classroom. If you can identify some students who do set the tone and are respected by their peers, consider speaking with them one-on-one and encouraging them to help make the English learners in the class feel welcome. It can be as simple as saying hello, redirecting hostile conversations, or demonstrating support during share-outs. These small gestures can be an important starting point from your tone-setters if English learners in the class are currently being ignored, isolated, and/or bullied

Accessible Learning

> If a student frequently demonstrates discouragement or detachment from learning, it may be because lesson content and/or delivery is not currently responsive to their English proficiency level, learning style, or prior experience. Making learning accessible is about finding ways to help students become more active in the learning process while still challenging them intellectually and giving them access to the same content as everyone else.

> Scaffolding is the practice of breaking up learning into chunks and building in supports that help students access the content from where they are at.

> Differentiating is the practice providing choice and alternatives in how students receive, process, and produce.

Examples:

Differentiation
- **Options for how students demonstrate mastery (e.g. spoken vs. written vs. visual, in English vs. in more comfortable language)**
- **A bilingual or leveled version of the same text used by other students**
- **Opportunities for student choice (e.g. in reading materials, prompt options)**

Scaffolding:
- **Sentence starters & sentence frames**
- **Models of final product**
- **Connections to students' prior knowledge**
- **Pre-viewing text & pre-teaching key vocabulary**

Accessible Learning: Commanding English

> This is an example of a prompt for students at grade-level proficiency in English in a unit about rhetorical appeals.

Rhetorical Appeals

Prompt: In **3** short paragraphs, explain the rhetorical appeals and how they can be used. Refer to the advertisement below for specific examples of the devices that support each appeal.

"Burger King: Satisfries"	"Lay's United"	"Coca-Cola: Open Happiness"

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

Accessible Learning: Emerging English

This is an example of the same prompt differentiated and scaffolded so that it can be more accessible to multilingual students in the early stages of learning English. Note that although there are more supports in this version, **the student needs to arrive at the same content understandings: what are the rhetorical appeals and what devices do advertisements use to make them?**
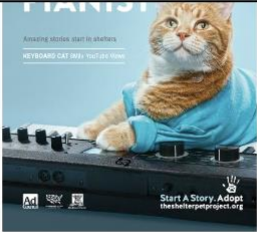
Rhetorical Appeals

Prompt: In **3** short paragraphs, write about what rhetorical appeal you see in each advertisement below. Explain what devices are used in each example.

"Burger King: Satisfries"   "Lay's United"   "Coca-Cola: Open Happiness"

1: The advertisement _____ appeals to _____ (logic, credibility, feeling). It does

this by using the device of _____ (see **Device List**). For example, _____

_____. This appeals to _____ (logic, credibility, feeling)

because _____. The advertisement is appealing to

_____ (logic, credibility, feeling) because it wants us to _____.

Device List

Images	*imágenes*	
Words	*palabras*	
Celebrities	*celebridades*	
Statistics	*estadística*	

Relevant Learning

> Toxic stress and detachment from learning can be significantly exacerbated when students are asked to function in a class whose content does not reflect their proficiencies, cultures, backgrounds, interests, or lived experiences. When none of the above are present, students are more likely to feel invisible and irrelevant. "What does any of this have to do with me?"

> To mitigate these effects, actively incorporate students' cultural, linguistic, and lived experiences into the learning process. Research shows that when students' cultural backgrounds are incorporated into the curriculum, they are more likely to feel connected to the content and motivated to learn.

Examples:

- In your novel study or short story unit, find authors and narratives that reflect the lived experiences of your English learners.
- In your social studies unit, highlight the role that your English learners' countries/regions of origin played
- In your unit on food webs, use an ecosystem from your English learners' countries/regions of origin as an example
- In your unit on graphs and linear equations, incorporate examples that reflect sports or culture that you know your English learners are interested in (e.g. cricket)

Seating and seating arrangements

> Varied seating options and arrangements can also help teachers meet individual student needs such as for peer and teacher proximity, field of vision, and personal boundaries. Pod- seating classroom arrangements promote collaboration and cooperation, while a horseshoe classroom design promotes democracy, discourse, and dialogue.

> Alternatives to standard chairs and desks such as balance balls and standing pads can help students who benefit from additional stimulation in order to stay focused.

> With any seating arrangement, a clear and easy flow of traffic and access to learning materials promotes predictability and routine.

Peace corner

> All students can experience difficult emotions, or have difficulty concentrating or attending to the task at hand. Peace Corners provide a physical or virtual space for students to step away and reset – whether they need to calm down, re-energize, or refocus.

> Peace Corners should be away from the group, offer some privacy, and feel warm and comfortable.

> Teachers should teach students how to use Peace Corners, including recognizing when they need to use it, how to communicate that, and how to use the Peace corner resources.

> Established non-verbal cues, like showing the educator two fingers, can help students communicate their needs to educators, who can respond affirmatively in kind.

Peace corner resources

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Identity mirrors

> Permanent or rotating installations of student photos, items from home, or student work, which authentically represent students' individual and cultural identities through inclusion of artifacts communicate a sense of individual mattering as well as a collective sense of belonging in the learning community.

> A wall of "I am from…" poems written by students can be accompanied by their portraits.

Linguistic supports

Multilingual labels have many benefits: they promote fluency with the language of the learning environment, and empower students to access it. They also increase interaction with language and message that bilingualism is valued.

Visual aids such as posters and bulletin boards, word walls, and translations tools (bilingual glossaries, dictionaries, tablets loaded with translation apps)

Using interpreters for important conversations

For more check out our e-learning modules:

Toxic Stress and Well-Being for Students Affected by Forced Migration

Well-Being for Educators of Students Affected by Forced Migration
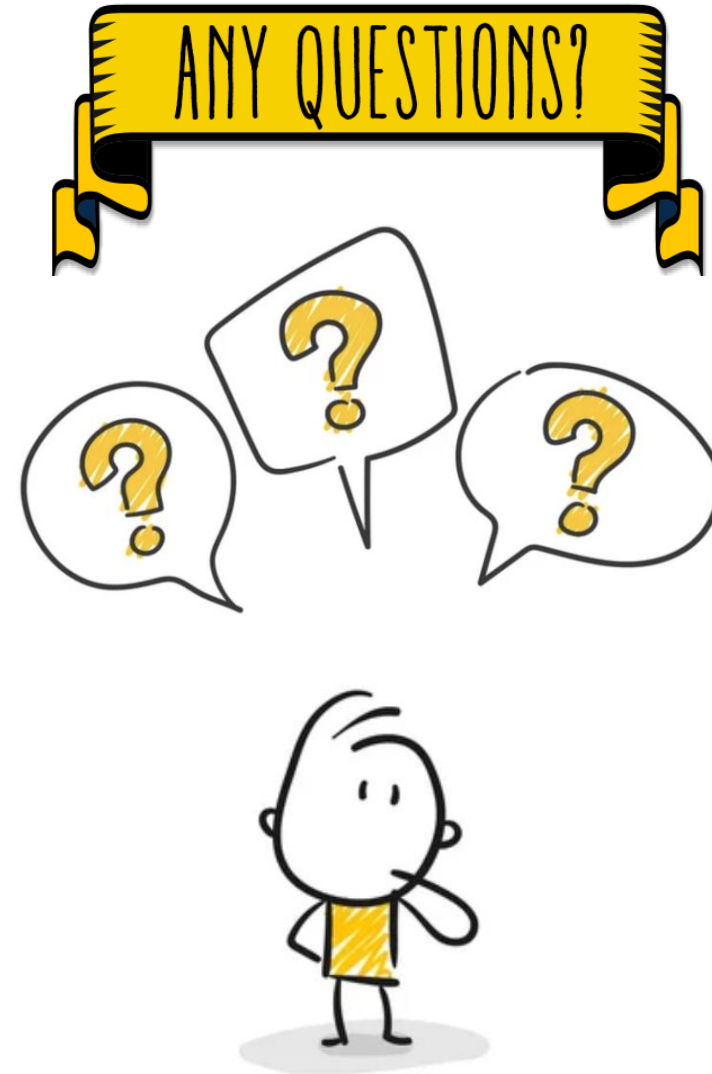
Dakota Conference (Nov 2024): HC Training - Post-Survey