Key messages to support refugee background English language learners

What is important to know to support ELLs from a refugee background?

English language learners, ELLs, from a refugee background have unique and complex needs. In addition to requiring support for their English language development they and/or their families are highly likely to have experienced trauma before being resettled in New Zealand. They require much support in many areas.

Who is a quota refugee?
The three main categories for refugee resettlement in New Zealand are:
1. Quota refugees
2. Family reunification
3. Asylum seekers

The majority of ELLs arriving in New Zealand schools would have arrived under the quota refugee programme. Once a quota refugee arrives in New Zealand he/she is given permanent residency and associated rights and benefits. They are New Zealand residents. For more information refer to the Immigration New Zealand Resettlement factsheet here.

What information is available to the school?
Those arriving as quota refugees will generally spend their first six weeks in New Zealand at the Mangere Refugee Resettlement Centre. Here they have an introduction to New Zealand education as well as orientation programmes and health assessments. The Auckland University of Technology (AUT) is contracted to provide the educational programmes – see here for details. All students receive a report at the end of their time with AUT. It is recommended that your school requests this report from the family or support volunteer for enrolment. It includes valuable data on the reading, writing, speaking and listening ELLP stages of the ELL as well as recommendations for class placement. A copy of the report can also be requested from your regional MOE Refugee Education Coordinator - contact details here. Generally each family has a Red Cross trained support volunteer and it can be helpful to have regular contact with them.

Interpreting Services
It is important that a trained interpreter is employed at enrolment and when required to ensure all relevant information is able to be given to, and received by, the student and their family. These services include: Language Line here and Interpret New Zealand here.

The following links provide information and support
- Bilingual Assessment Service
- Refugee Background Students
- Refugee Handbook for Schools
- ESOL funding
- ESOL Professional Development
- ESOL Resources
- NZ Red Cross Refugee Services
- UN Refugee Agency
- Teaching Refugees with Limited Formal Schooling

For further information and support - National Secondary PLD Facilitators for ELLs and Home School Partnerships
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