

Conversational English and Occupational Therapy

Local Initiatives to Improve Community Access for Senior Refugees

Marisa Hart MS, OTR/L, PTA
Boston University

INTRODUCTION

InterFaith Works, is a local faith based refugee resettlement organization with the collective mission to maintain “the dignity of each person and every faith community through education, service and dialogue”, while working to create relationships and understanding among the community (InterFaith Works, n.d., p. 1).

Senior programming provided within the organization, works to interrupt feelings of solitude and seclusion, which many refugees face once resettled (InterFaith Works, n.d.).

Gather Around, one of the many senior services provided within the organization is a conversational English class, which facilitates confidence and improves independence, while navigating and accessing imperative community resources (InterFaith Works, n.d.).



GOALS & OBJECTIVES

Primary goals included:

- Occupational therapy (OT) consultative services, provided to plan and develop cognitive programming in order to supplement the conversational English class.

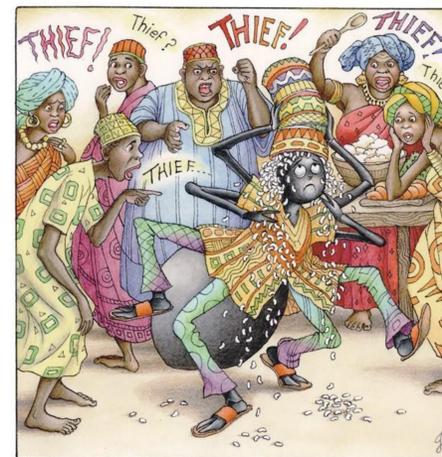
Secondary goals include:

- OT services used to supplement within the classroom, on a more individualized basis in order to meet the needs of each adult client's learning style.
- Carry out programming for the duration of the English class, spending 2 hours a week on Wednesdays working with refugees to implement various cognitive strategies.
- By the end of the course, senior refugees should have an improved understanding of the English language in order to access available community resources.
- Methods to measure outcomes are to be determined. Strategies with shift based on outcomes following the course.



OUTCOMES

- Literature reviewed in order to gain additional perspective into teaching and learning styles of senior refugees.
 - I. Diversity in familial beliefs on learning (Yaafouri - Kreuzer, 2017).
 - I. Stigmatization surrounding resettled refugees who are *adult learners* (Yaafouri - Kreuzer, 2017).
- Identification of cognitive strategies which guide successful learning.
 - I. Use of a culturally traditional fable, provide basis to relate to (Sampson & Condy, 2016).
 - II. Use of photos to supplement words.
- Identification of theoretical framework to guide successful program development.
 - I. Socio-Constructivist theory
 - II. Building on family and kinship ties to reinforce “communities of practice formed by people who engage in a process of collective learning in a shared human endeavor” (Sampson & Condy, 2016).



RELEVANT SOCIAL POLICY & SYSTEMS FACTORS

- Trump Administration
 - I. Refugee resettlement program cap
 - II. Decreased from 110,000 refugees in 2017 to 30,000 in 2019 (Sands, Alvarez & Atwood, 2019).
- National Impact
 - I. Non-humanitarian actions during worst global displacement and refugee crisis since WWII (Sands, Alvarez & Atwood, 2019).
 - II. Now compromising critical strategic interests, breaking commitments to allies (Sands, Alvarez & Atwood, 2019).
- Local Impact
 - I. Local business struggle to find employees following restriction and cuts to refugee acceptance.
 - II. Refugees are hardworking, loyal individuals here to work and make a life for themselves (Smith, 2019).

RECOMMENDATIONS

Master occupational therapy students at Le Moyne College will participate in the experience, in small groups each week to continue programming. Faculty oversight and supervision will be provided by myself. This service learning experience will be built into their occupational justice course.

Future programming to include interprofessional education for professional healthcare students at Le Moyne College satisfying the following core competencies for interprofessional collaborative practice:



- “Embrace the cultural diversity and individual differences that characterize patients, populations, and the health team” (IPEC, 2016, p. 11).
- “Engage diverse professionals who complement one's own professional expertise, as well as associated resources, to develop strategies to meet specific health and healthcare needs of patients and populations” (IPEC, 2016, p. 12).
- “Listen actively, and encourage ideas and opinions of other team members” (IPEC, 2016, p. 13).

KEY REFERENCES

- InterFaithWorks.(n.d.).Retrievedfrom <https://www.interfaithworkscny.org/programs/senior-services-program-2-2/>
- Interprofessional Education Collaborative. (2016). Core competencies for interprofessional collaborative practice. Washington, DC: Interprofessional Education Collaborative.
- Sampson, C. and Condy, J. (2016). One teacher's experiences of teaching reading in an urban multi-grade foundation phase class. *Perspectives in Education*, 34(2), 83-96.
- Sands, G., Alvarez, P. & Atwood, A. (2019). Trump administration weighs allowing no refugees into US next year. CNN Politics. Retrieved from <https://www.cnn.com/2019/07/19/politics/trump-admin-zero-refugees/index.html>
- Smith, B. (2019). Decline in refugees leaves void in CNY businesses. Spectrum News. Retrieved from <https://spectrumlocalnews.com/nys/central-ny/news/2019/06/20/decline-in-refugees-leaves-void-in-workplace>
- Yaafouri – Kreuzer, L. (2017). How home visits transformed my teaching. *Educational Leadership*, 62, 20- 25.