



The **OHIO** Journal of  
Teacher Education

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Fall 2018. VOLUME 32. NUMBER 2

# The **OHIO** Journal of Teacher Education

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PUBLISHED BY THE OHIO ASSOCIATION OF TEACHER EDUCATORS

Dr. D. Mark Meyers, Xavier University  
EDITOR

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## A MESSAGE FROM THE EDITOR

Welcome from the The OHIO Journal of Teacher Education Editorial Team. We are honored and privileged to shepherd this journal for the educational community of Ohio

The OHIO Journal of Teacher Education (OJTE) is an online journal. We invite all forms of article formats, as seen in the publication and manuscript guidelines included inside the journal. However, we do invite authors to utilize the online format. The use of links and other interactive devices will allow the online journal to be more than simply a pdf of articles that you can print at your own workstation. In the future, the hope of the editorial team is to develop a truly functional online journal experience which can open the world of practice to our readership.

We will strive to build upon the solid foundation left by the previous editorial teams and move the OHIO Journal of Teacher Education forward as a resource for pre-service teachers, in-service teachers, and all with an interest in teacher education.

Dr. Mark Meyers, Editor



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## A CALL FOR EDITORIAL BOARD MEMBERSHIP

The Ohio Journal of Teacher Education (OJTE) is looking for interested individuals to join the Editorial Board of the journal. We are looking to establish a board that represents the Colleges and Universities of Ohio as well as offers a broad spectrum of content expertise.

If interested, please submit a one page letter of intent that includes your College or University, your educational background, and your content area of interest to the co-editors.

Dr. Mark Meyers at  
[oatejournal@gmail.com](mailto:oatejournal@gmail.com)

We look forward to hearing from you.



# Reflection or metacognition: What are teachers really thinking about?

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## *Abstract:*

*With the continual desire for teachers to effectively examine their practices, this qualitative study was conducted to learn how teachers self-analyze their practices. Rodgers' (2002) definition of reflection and Bransford's (2000) explanation of metacognition were used as the theoretical frameworks for the study. Four teachers participated in an interview. The results of the study showed the teachers all used elements of reflection in their self-examination. In addition, teachers also employed metacognition.*

## Introduction

Under the premise of a reflective teacher is a more effective educator (Dewey, 1910; Schon, 1983; Schon, 1987; Adler, 1990; Mezirow, 1990; Hargreaves & Shirley, 2012), a presumption can be made that teachers examine methods to improve their teaching ability and practices. With teachers presumed to desire personal improvement and the benefits of reflection in mind, this study examined if teachers were employing reflection when examining teaching practices. If they were not using reflection, what were the teachers using to examine teaching practices.

## Literature Review

### Reflection

The idea of reflection was established as an important part of the thinking process with Dewey's *How We Think* (1910). In the text, Dewey defined reflective thought as "Active, persistent, and careful consideration of any belief or supposed form of knowledge in light of the grounds that support it, and the further conclusions to which it tends" (1910, p. 6).



In addition, Dewey depicted two clear elements of reflective thinking: 1. There has to be a problem and 2. There has to be an investigation/evaluation to discover facts to support or nullify the belief (Dewey, 1910). Unfortunately, the success of Dewey's ideas of reflection caused it to be overused and often misunderstood and/or practiced incorrectly for many decades (Kompf & Bond, 1995). This caused a large misunderstanding by educators and theorists in application of his theories over the years.

From this point, Schon (1983, 1987) entered the conversation concerning reflection. Schon pointed out two types of reflection: reflection-on-action and reflection-in-action (Schon, 1983; Finley, 2008). In Schon's (1987) reflection-on-action, the individual comes across an unexpected outcome. The individual thinks back upon what he or she did in order to determine how his/her knowing-in-action, "...the sorts of knowhow we reveal in our intelligent action- publicly observable, physical performances like riding a bicycle and private operations like instant analysis of a balance sheet" (p. 25), affected the outcome to provide an unexpected result (Schon, 1987). The key aspect is the fact the situation or unexpected outcome happened in the past and the individual is revisiting it in the present and the reflection has no bearing or direct connection to present actions. Reflection-in-action occurs in the present or a time close to present where the reflection is able to affect the situation at hand. The thinking and reflecting effectively affects what the individual is doing at a time when he/she is able to make a difference in the outcome (Schon, 1987).

Building upon Schon's ideas, Zeichner and Liston (1996) delineated five levels of reflection taking place during teaching. First is rapid reflection which is instantaneous and automatic action by the instructor. Second is repair where a teacher makes adjustments and decisions in response to cues from the students. Third is review where a teacher thinks about,

discusses, or writes about some aspect of his/her teaching. In essence, teaching and learning at this level is driven by justice and equity. The teacher puts thoughts to the written word to examine the fairness of what he/she is producing, exhibiting, teaching, and demonstrating (Adler, 1990). Fourth is research where a teacher engages in a systematic and sustained thinking over time typically by collecting data or analyzing research. Last is retheorizing and reformulating where a teacher critically examines his or her own theories and practice in regard to academic theories (Zeichner & Liston, 1996). The key aspect being related is reflection can occur in the subconscious but in realizing the thought or action needs to be consciously evaluated so the thinker can decide what he or she will or will not do (Boyd, Keogh, & Walker, 1985).

One issue with reflection is the inability of individuals to remove their own personal bias when examining events, thoughts, and practices (Mezirow, 1990). It is for this reason Rodgers (2002) required reflection to be done in community of others and following scientific inquiry. By adding others in the reflection process it is easier to lessen the individual bias. Ultimately, collaboration or a learning community will allow others to help the individual critically analyze his/her own behavior (Osterman & Kottkamp, 1993; Van den Bossche & Beausaert, 2011). Also, the scientific inquiry's reliance on data to inform the accuracy, or lack thereof, of the hypothesis will address the personal bias. In addition, the use of a hypothesis and testing the hypothesis should be ongoing (Schon, 1987). Also, the use of a classroom for the acquisition of data is ideal as the researcher and reflective educator is able to control many variables: time, random assignment of participants, lesson content, and evaluation criteria (Cruickshank, 1985).

Another concern with the reflective process as noted by Johns (2009) was the issue that just because an individual is able to understand the meaning of data does not mean he or she can easily change his/her practices. From the lack of ease in ability to change practices, Johns (2009)

described three basic inhibitors to use of the reflective practice due to culture: tradition, force, and embodiment. Tradition is adhering to predetermined customs, norms, and prejudices that existed prior to the reflection process. Force is the way normal relationships are maintained and created through force or power. Embodiment is the way people normally think about the world prior to the reflective process (Fay, 1987).

Collier (1999) found in her study with student teachers, the importance of the individual in the process. The individual's constantly changing world view and beliefs on teaching and learning will directly affect the level at which the individual will be able to reflect (Collier, 1999). This leads directly to the understanding of metacognition in the process of reflection.

### **Metacognition**

Upon reviewing the results, metacognition appeared as a method of self-evaluation; however, the two are different but not completely remote from each other. Rodgers' (2002) definition used even referred to reflection as a "...disciplined way of thinking" (p. 845). As metacognition was typically defined as "a conscious and deliberate mental activity" (Martinez, 2006, p. 697) there was a clear relationship between the two ideas. Metacognition is traditionally broken down into two distinct areas: monitoring/self-regulation and metacognitive knowledge (Flavell, Miller, & Miller, 2002; Zonar & David, 2009). Metacognitive knowledge is then further broken down into two sub groups: persons and tasks/strategies (Flavell et al., 2002; Zonar & David, 2009). Finally, successfully mastering tasks and strategies leads to meta-strategic knowledge which is the when and how of thinking (Flavell et al., 2002; Zonar & David, 2009). In essence, metacognition begins with individuals being able to monitor themselves and regulate their learning. Also, there is a base knowledge for metacognition that requires an understanding of people and tasks/strategies. As an understanding of people is self-explanatory, the

understanding of tasks and strategies refers to the thinking process. Does an individual have or possess the mental ability to solve a problem in front of him/her and know the tasks or strategies to accomplish the tasks to solve the problem? Having mastered the tasks/strategies will allow the learner to know when and how to solve particular problems. This area was evaluated within this study as cooperating teachers were required to demonstrate their meta-strategic knowledge as they participate in reflection and collaboration with student teachers (Flavell et al., 2002; Zonar & David, 2009; Zull, 2004) concerning teaching practices and pedagogical choices within the classroom. The reflection period was qualitatively evaluated to measure meta-strategic knowledge and its appearance within these reflection and collaboration periods.

As metacognition is applied to the educational setting, it takes on three foci. First, educators need to understand students arrive with a preconceived notion based on previous experiences. Educators must draw upon the previous experiences to connect the education to the material the student must learn. Without a clear connection, the student will not learn the material or will learn the material for the assessment and then discard the information (Bransford, 2000).

The second aspect of metacognition as it applies to the educational setting is students need a base of knowledge, understand facts and figures, and organize material in their brains to develop skills in a particular area (Bransford, 2000). Efklides (2014) called this aspect the control which is general task rules that keep processing from interference.

As Bambrick-Santoyo (2010) explained previously, the ability to use and understand data is paramount in improving student achievement. The student teacher's ability to understand and use the data provided by the cooperating teacher will be essential in his/her success. Also, Richardson, Kalvaitis, & Delparte's (2014) description of reflection among professionals

providing significant teacher improvement depends on both participants knowing and understanding the content and pedagogy behind its delivery.

The third aspect of metacognition as it applies to education is the ability for learners to be more active in their own education. Learners will be able to define personal educational goals and monitor their own progress in achievement of the specified goals (Bransford, 2000). Learners learn best when they are interested in the material being taught (Zull, 2004). In addition, metacognition rests on the belief that if a learner does not know something, he/she will proactively prepare to understand the lacking element (Pintrich, 2002).

Interestingly, there is a key area which may cause a failure for metacognition to effectively exist. The aspect is lack of base knowledge. Learners who are incapable of providing correct answers in a specified area do not have the ability to participate in metacognition (Dunning, Johnson, Ehrlinger, & Kruger, 2003). This requires a need for basic educational foundations for student teachers and cooperating teachers. In addition, Efklides (2014) found a lack of basic knowledge causes metacognition to fail. The surprising element was overconfidence of correctness which caused individuals to believe their answer was correct and they were not able to identify the actual correct answer even when provided. Since the students had a firm belief their answer was correct, they were unable to see the correct answer despite it being provided.

Despite the possibility of failure for metacognition to fully develop, there seemed to be a constant benefit of using metacognition. Most importantly, metacognition improves the role of the individuals in the classroom as that of the learner and as a teacher (Liu, 2014). Interestingly, the most successful setting for metacognition to improve and develop was in one-on-one situations rather than large group settings (Alder, 2013).

## Methodology

### Research Design

The study was developed as a qualitative design to analyze the reflective practices of cooperating teachers and how they employ these practices. In addition, if reflection was not used, the study attempted to ascertain what teachers used to self-analyze their practices.

### Research Question

1. What method does a teacher employ when self-analyzing his/her practices?

### Theoretical Framework

Carol Rodgers' (2002) definition of reflection was used as a theoretical framework for the reflective aspect of the study. She delineates the criteria of reflection into four distinct areas:

1. Reflection is a meaning-making process that moves a learner from one experience into the next with deeper understanding of its relationships with and connections to other experiences and ideas. It is the thread that makes continuity of learning possible, and ensures the progress of the individual and, ultimately, society. It is a means to essentially moral ends.
2. Reflection is a systematic, rigorous, disciplined way of thinking, with its roots in scientific inquiry.
3. Reflection needs to happen in community, in interaction with others.
4. Reflection requires attitudes that value the personal and intellectual growth of oneself and of others. (p. 845)

In addition, the above definition was not only the theoretical foundational for this study but also the framework from which the collected qualitative data was coded.

In addition, Bransford's explanation of metacognition was used. A preconceived notion was defined as the importance of learners to draw upon the previous experiences to connect the

education to the required material to be learned. The second aspect of metacognition as it applies to the educational setting is students need a base of knowledge, understand facts and figures, and organize material in their brain to develop skills in a particular area. Lastly, progress toward a goal was defined as learners will be able to define personal educational goals and monitor their own progress in achievement of the specified goals (Bransford, 2000). As with Rodgers' definition, Bransford's definition of metacognition was used to code the interview data.

### **Participants**

Subjects were restricted based on teaching grades 6-12 in a school from a radius of 40 miles from the small, private institution in Northwest Ohio. From the possible teachers, four teachers agreed to participate in the interview. The convenience sample of teachers responding to the letter was used for the study to allow ease of access by the researcher to conduct the interviews in person.

As the interview of the participants allowed for a more detailed description of the participants, each participating teacher was assigned a letter and he/she will be referred to as Teacher A, Teacher B, Teacher C, or Teacher D. This was completed in an effort to maintain confidentiality as names could lead to identification by readers of this study.

Teacher A was a male history teacher of 11 years employed at a rural high school. Teacher B was a male history teacher of 6 years in a rural middle school setting. Teacher C was a male history teacher of 16 years in a split middle school and high school rural setting. Lastly, Teacher D was a female science teacher of 4 years in a rural middle school setting.

### **Instrumentation & Data Sources**

There was an interview used to gather data. In addition, the questions in the interview were grounded in Rodgers' (2002) foundation and definition of reflection and Bransford's (2000) explanation of metacognition.

### **Data Collection Procedures**

The interview was arranged at the participant's school at a time convenient for the participant. The interview was conducted in a semi-structured interview process to allow for follow-up questions to be asked and ideas further explain by the participants (Drever, 1995; Fraenkel, Wallen, & Hyun, 2014). The interviews were taped and recorded. Upon completion of the interview, the responses of the participants were transcribed by the researcher using Rodgers' (2002) definition of reflection and Bransford's (2000) explanation of metacognition as the qualitative codes.



## Results

### Reflection and metacognition

#### Teacher A

Type	Number described	Example
Reflection- meaning making	2	“Mine is just looking at the overall understanding. Did the students get what we were trying to get across? What are the questions that they asked? What are areas that they need help in? And basically, just what can you do better?”
Reflection- scientific inquiry	1	“What would the results have been? [...] What were the results?”
Reflection- community	1	“Would you do this in the future? What are your thoughts?”
Reflection- growth of self and others	1	“...if you’re not growing professionally I think you are kind of missing out on the boat of the whole experience.”
Metacognition- preconceived notions	0	N/A
Metacognition- base of knowledge	2	“Test taking is always changing a little bit so if you can’t learn especially in an environment like this where you are trying to help someone learn, you have to learn for yourself.”
Metacognition- progress toward a goal	3	“We’re always trying to make sure that you can do as good [sic] as possible.”

**Teacher B**

<b>Type</b>	<b>Number described</b>	<b>Example</b>
Reflection- meaning making	3	“You know you see the kids responding to something that you would do and you are like, ‘Wow, that wasn’t very good at all.’ And so, it really starts to make you think about your own practice and your own craft.”
Reflection- scientific inquiry	1	“I like, I definitely reflect on, I think the, the lesson delivery to find out if it was successful. When I look at kids’ results when I formative assess them, what did I do well and what can I improve.”
Reflection- community	0	N/A
Reflection- growth of self and others	0	N/A
Metacognition- preconceived notions	1	“It was a challenge [...] to reflect at first, because I came in having everything figured out.”
Metacognition- base of knowledge	0	N/A
Metacognition- progress toward a goal	0	N/A

**Teacher C**

<b>Type</b>	<b>Number described</b>	<b>Example</b>
Reflection- meaning making	3	“What works and what doesn’t.”
Reflection- scientific inquiry	0	N/A
Reflection- community	0	N/A
Reflection- growth of self and others	0	N/A
Metacognition- preconceived notions	0	N/A
Metacognition- base of knowledge	2	Teacher C felt these experiences improve the classroom and come directly from his experiences or personal base of knowledge. Teacher C spoke about how he was able to bring these experiences into the classroom to “improve” the lessons and units.
Metacognition- progress toward a goal	0	N/A

**Teacher D**

Type	Number described	Example
Reflection- meaning making	1	“Did the kids really grasp it? Or do we need to go back and a lot of times it was the brainstorming after we taught the lesson.”
Reflection- scientific inquiry	1	“I’ll look at the growth that I have seen from my kids from the beginning to the end with those formative assessments.
Reflection- community	3	“I am a super reflective person so I think if anything though it was just nice to have another person to bounce the reflections off.”
Reflection- growth of self and others	0	N/A
Metacognition- preconceived notions	0	N/A
Metacognition- base of knowledge	2	“But they have like, ah, lower level, higher level, like highest level questioning and they have to pull from the text to find evidence. So, we talked about how she put that together and so that was one thing that I did like that I am going to start to incorporate more, so.”
Metacognition- progress toward a goal	0	N/A

**Discussion****Reflection and metacognition used to reinforce each other**

Clearly, all four teachers employed aspects of reflection in the interviews. However, they also exhibited elements that were not directly related to reflection when analyzing and coding their responses. In the coding process, metacognition was found to be used by the teachers in addition to reflection. As shown above, all four teachers described differing elements of metacognition when asked to describe their reflective practices.

Metacognition and reflection seem similar on the surface but after careful examination, a distinction began to occur. While Rodgers (2002) discussed reflection as a four pronged process involving meaning making, scientific inquiry, community, and growth of self and others, Bransford (2000) depicted metacognition as three areas for growth of self: preconceived notions, base of knowledge, and monitoring progress toward a goal. Both metacognition and reflection are organized for long term growth of the teacher. Additionally, Liu (2014) explained how the role of both the teacher and learner is improved with metacognition and Alder (2013) explained how working in one-on-one situations through the steps of metacognition showed the most personal growth. Thus the question of how are they distinctively different began to arise.

As explained by Rodgers (2002), one of the pillars is meaning making where an individual makes meaning of a situation or problem and once accomplished it becomes part of the theory from which the educator works from in the classroom. The second pillar is scientific inquiry where the educator creates hypotheses and tests them based on the theory. The educator collects data and uses this data to validate or invalidate the working theory from which he/she operates. The third pillar is that of community. Here, the educator is able to accurately depict what happened and understand its implications with another person in an effort to eliminate bias. The final item is growth of self and others. Ultimately, the educator has to have a desire for personal growth or the information learned in the meaning making process and scientific inquiry with not be taken into consideration as the educator looks to inform his/her working theories. Also, the individual helping in the community aspect must desire the growth of the person with whom he/she is helping in the reflection process. Otherwise, the information provided and the analysis will not help the reflective individual improve or inform his/her theory effectively.

Metacognition has three important elements. First, preconceived notions referred to the idea an educator must draw upon his/her previous experiences and those of the learner to connect these to the material or information being presented to the learner (Bransford, 2000). Secondly, metacognition involved a base of knowledge. This aspect focused on what the educator and the learner actually knew (Bransford, 2000 & Efklidas, 2014). Here, the expectation is for the learner to understand basic concepts and theories for items to be built upon it. Simply explained, a person is unable to complete basic algebra without an understanding of multiplication. Lastly, the educator and learner must be active in his/her own learning and monitor his/her progress toward a goal (Bransford, 2000). This may be in the form of goal setting and evaluated progress toward mastering an educational approach.

From the above explanations, it was apparent there was distinction between the two approaches of reflection and metacognition; however, it was also apparent how metacognition helped inform the reflective process for the educators. Preconceived notions from metacognition or an understanding of preconceived notions helped the teacher in the meaning making process. Here a teacher must draw upon his/her previous experiences to make meaning of an unexpected situation or a problem.

When referencing the metacognitive aspect of preconceived notions, Teacher A stated, "And then some other things where it made me think, 'Hey this is how I would do it.'" Here, Teacher A is drawing upon his previous experiences on how he would teach a lesson and examining it in his own brain in relation to his colleague's teaching of a lesson. While not reflective as he was not evaluating it against the theory from which he makes his meaning as an educator, it does provide a framework from which he could potentially begin to evaluate with the

colleague his own theory as compared to the colleague's when there is an unexpected occurrence or problem.

The second aspect where metacognition could inform reflective practices is base of knowledge. As base of knowledge discussed what the learner or educator actually knew (Bransford, 2000 & Efklides, 2014), this directly informed the meaning making and scientific inquiry aspects of reflection. If a learner or educator does not possess the basic skills in an area, it will be extremely complicated for him/her to conduct the meaning making process or scientific inquiry of reflection. Teacher A explained, "Test taking is always changing a little bit so if you can't learn especially in an environment like this where you are trying to help someone learn, you have to learn for yourself." Here, Teacher A is referring to his base of knowledge in regard to test taking. He explained the importance for him to be constantly learning about test taking in order to keep an up-to-date base of knowledge on the subject. Without the up-to-date base of knowledge, it would be complicated for him to make meaning of a problem or unexpected occurrence when reflecting on a test taking problem. In addition, not being up-to-date in his base of knowledge on test taking would complicate his scientific inquiry process of reflection. A hypothesis he created on test taking would not include the most current methods and approaches and likely would not lead to a successful scientific inquiry process.

Teacher D also described the aspect of base of knowledge in her interview. She stated, "But they have like, ah, lower level, higher level, like highest level questioning and they have to pull from the text to find evidence. So, we talked about how she put that together and so that was one thing that I did like that I am going to start to incorporate more, so." Here, Teacher D described how her colleague provided her with a growth of her base of knowledge by exposing her to a three-pronged level of questioning to address multiple

levels of learners in the same classroom. This new information is not a part of her reflective process; however, it will be able to inform her in her meaning making and scientific inquiry process in future reflective moments.

The last aspect of metacognition is monitoring progress toward a goal. Monitoring progress toward a goal may directly connect with growth of self and others. This connection assumed the progress toward a goal was connected to growth of self and others. The implication was a person monitoring progress toward a goal would inherently desire a goal to improve him or herself.

Overall, the connection between metacognition and reflection was apparent as metacognition with its thinking about thinking impacts an individual's ability to reflect. Without a sound metacognitive foundation, an individual will find it hard to reflect effectively. As both metacognition and reflection are important in the improvement of teacher and their educational practices, mastering metacognitive and reflective practices should positively impact the educational practices of all teachers. In an era of high stakes testing and the connection of these tests to teacher performance, understanding and using both metacognition and reflection in educational practices should provide positive rewards in teacher effectiveness.

### **Conclusion**

The participants were not provided a working definition of reflection at any point before or during the interview. This may have impacted the responses as the participants would provide their own working definition of reflection that may have led them to inappropriately identify personal items as reflection.

This study provided an interesting opportunity to move forward by using metacognition and reflection in tandem when examining teacher self-analysis. Providing teachers with training

on the items required for reflection and metacognition and the benefits of both programs would provide an opportunity to measure for a possible increase in teacher effectiveness.

In addition, there was no mention or connection to school climate or administrative support for reflection and metacognition in the school district. A study examining the impact of a supportive administration for providing time and educational support for teachers to implement reflection and metacognition in their classrooms would be pertinent.

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## *Emotional Disturbance Label: A Social Justice Catastrophe*

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### *Abstract:*

*The Individuals With Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) delineates categories of disabilities. Each disability category has a definition and criteria for the identification, labeling and placement of students into special education. These disabilities are assigned to students when a team of individuals, through their observation and assessments, determine that the disability is present and preventing the student from learning. Specially designed instruction is deemed as required and can only be facilitated, allegedly, through the special education system. It is the purpose of this paper to uncover the social injustice that is inherent in these processes and to provide alternative ideas to ameliorate the injustices contained in the existing model. (Oakes, Lipton, Anderson & Stillman, 2015) provide a social justice framework to analyze these systems. All of the definitions and the means with which they are determined to be “within the child”, are questionable at best and serve to sort, label and often segregate children from their typically developing peer group. The most problematic category within the IDEA legislation is that of Emotional Disturbance (ED). The definition for this category is vague, unclear and serves to identify students with the disability that is the least understood, the least researched and manifests some of the worst outcomes in all of special education.*

### **Introduction**

The Individuals With Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) 2004 identifies 13 education related disabilities including emotional disturbance (ED). As with all of the other federal definitions, this act is meant to identify circumstances that must be met in order for the student to be eligible for special education services under the ED category. The federal definition for ED is as follows:

**Emotional disturbance means a condition exhibiting one or more of the following characteristics over a long period of time and to a marked degree that adversely affects a child's educational performance: (A) An inability to learn that cannot be explained by intellectual, sensory, or health factors. (B) An inability to build or maintain satisfactory interpersonal relationships with peers and teachers. (C) Inappropriate types of behavior or feelings under normal circumstances. (D) A general pervasive mood of unhappiness or depression. (E) A tendency to develop physical symptoms or fears associated with personal or school problems. Emotional disturbance includes schizophrenia. The term does not apply to children who are socially maladjusted, unless it is determined that they have an emotional disturbance under paragraph (c)(4)(i) of this section (Federal Register, 2006, p. 46756).**

It is the purpose of this paper to deconstruct the vague and unclear portions of this definitions and to document how it's shortcomings result in the over identification of certain individuals with this damaging and debilitating label. A social justice perspective will be used to underscore the inequities that this definition encourages. To analyze the social justice issues that arise with the use of this definition the (Oakes & Lipton, Anderson & Stillman, 1999) framework will provide a social justice lens to analyze the outcomes created by use of this definition. This framework contains the following objectives:

- 1) To uncover, examine, and critique the values and the politics that undergird the use of this definition
- 2) To challenge educational common sense (status quo) to ask important questions about why we do the things we do in school and who benefits from them?
- 3) To attend to the ways in which the ED definition and outcomes contribute to the creation, maintenance and reproduction of inequalities, so we can construct more empowering alternatives and ways of thinking. Social Justice is concerned with questions of power and decision-making. It also involves a consideration of the economic and cultural resources available to individuals and to particular communities and sectors within those communities.

Deconstruction is part of the process of dialectical analysis. Furthermore:

“Dialectical analysis works on the basis of deconstructing a socio-historically specific entity, revealing its essential nature (as an oppressive process) and reconstructing an analytic account on the basis of this revealed essence. The critical process that enables deconstruction and reconstruction is the dialectical shuttling between part and whole, abstract and concrete, past and present.”  
(Royle, 2000, p 1-15).

The ED definition was originally coined in 1982 and it has remained unchanged in the 36 years since. States, who have the ability to modify the administrative definitions of their state, also have not changed this definition (Wery & Cullinan, 2013). The federal definition has several parts that are vague and un - measureable and leave the door open for bias in the decision making process. The first point of deconstruction appears in the first sentence:

**Emotional disturbance means a condition exhibiting one or more of the following characteristics over a long period of time and to a marked degree that adversely affects a child’s educational performance.**

How long is “a long period of time”? What exactly is “ a marked degree”? This is the fundamental criterion of the definition. Identification of only one of the characteristics is required for identification. Leaving these phrases to be interpreted by the team is dangerous and has led to misidentifying children and over identifying under represented students (Bornstein, 2017). Perhaps a more “knowable” criterion is preferable?

The question must be asked as to why the definition remains this vague? The social justice implications are obvious. If the definition is based upon criteria that are vague and unknowable, any child can be identified with this disability. The broadness of the definition will allow an administrator or teacher, who is frustrated by the behavior of a

particular child, to refer for identification. The educators, given the pressures of testing, are motivated to identify and place students who disrupt their learning environment and this definition allows them to do so almost at will. This vagueness also leaves open the possibility of racial and gender bias, which will be addressed later in the paper.

Additionally, what does “**adversely affects the child**” actually mean in practice? Allegedly there are criteria that are established and measured over time during the intervention process. However, it has been well documented that when it comes to behavioral interventions, teams are less likely to invest their time in intervening on a child’s behavior as compared to a child’s deficit in reading or math (Knestrict, 2015). There is also the danger of a Fundamental Attribution Error (FAE). Fundamental attribution error is defined by (Harman, 1999) as the error of ignoring situational factors and overconfidently assuming that the distinctive behaviors are due to an agent’s distinctive character traits. FAE has been shown to affect intervention development and contribute to the perception that the behavioral issue is a “within child” problem as opposed to an ecologically caused issue like lack of engagement, poor teaching, or poor management (Knestrict, 2017).

**An inability to build or maintain satisfactory interpersonal relationships with peers and teachers.**

What exactly is a “**satisfactory relationship**?” How do we measure this and is there a set of behaviors that can adequately define “satisfactory relationships” given the diversity of human beings? In the case of this characteristic the team could simply agree that the relationship this specific child has with children and adults in the school is not satisfactory. No data is required other than the opinion of the team. “I know it when I see

it” was the quote of Justice Potter Stewart in his Supreme Court ruling on *Jacobellis vs. Ohio* in 1964. He was referring to pornography. But the same thing has been said about the student who has been labeled with emotional disturbance. Teachers and administrators see disruptive or assaultive behavior through a single lens. Their concern is achievement and obedience. When a student is disobedient and disruptive there is little effort to remediate these behaviors is the preferred intervention (Fenning & Rose, 2007; Zhang & Katsiyannis, 2004).

**Inappropriate types of behavior or feelings under normal circumstances.**

In the case of section C of the definition it must be asked “why is this part of the definition and who benefits from its inclusion”? There is no one definition for “inappropriate behavior or feelings” They are so contextual as to not warrant just one definition. So, when you have a teaching and administrative workforce that is predominantly white, female and middle class (Bornstein, 2017); (Knestrict, 2016) and a student body that that is not; there will be a conflict as to what “it” is when they see it. The power relationship that is created places the educators in a position of power over the students often resulting in decisions that impact the student’s life for a very long time (Knestrict, 2015). In addition, the achievement focus of schools further pressures educators to remove disruption when it occurs. This definition is a way to remove students who are seen as disruptive. It is no coincidence that the majority of students removed are poor, black and under represented (Fenning & Rose, 2007).

What are “**normal circumstances**”? The judgment of what is normal in a child’s life is also highly contextual and up for broad interpretations (Wagner, Newman, Cameto, & Levine, 2006). Given the power relationship created by the structure of interventions and

the special education process the labeling of a child using this particular descriptor is highly susceptible to bias and interpretation and again, often results in certain students being identified and removed more often than others (Fenning & Rose, 2007).

**A general pervasive mood of unhappiness or depression.**

The American Psychiatric Association (DSM V, 2013) defines depression or Major Depressive Disorder as a highly complex condition that is identified by the presence of five of nine behavioral identifiers, over a two week period of time, clinically significant distress or impairment of social, occupational or other areas of functioning and it not being attributed to another medical condition of substance use. It is a condition that is diagnosed only by a medical doctor and/or psychologist. Yet, in the pseudoscience of special education unskilled and untrained teachers and administrators are labeling students with the ED label because they seem depressed or unhappy for some amount of time? The perception that special education is a highly specialized and unique and therapeutic practice is a myth and this misconception is cited as one of the reasons why regular educators are reluctant to intervene upon “special” students (Knestrict, 2017). It is also credited with maintaining the medical model (Magg, & Katsiyannis, 2008) that props up special education practice and maintains the Special Education Industrial Complex (Knestrict, 2017).

**Emotional disturbance includes schizophrenia. The term does not apply to children who are socially maladjusted.**

Experts cite that 3% to 6% of students in the public schools are in need of special education services under the label of ED (Costello, Egger, & Angold, 2005). Unfortunately,



because of the dysfunction caused by this controversial definition some students are left out and do not receive services because this portion of the definition excludes them. Social maladjustment is differentiated in this definition from ED. In 1982, (Bowers, 1982) and later (Maag & Howell, 1992) suggested that the definition was written in this way so as to differentiate between students with legitimate emotional disturbance and those who are merely, what they describe as “prelinquents”. These exclusions have been called “indefensible and arbitrary” (Forness, et al, 2011). Again there is a situation where teachers and administrators are asked to formalize an opinion about the mental state of a student when they are not trained to do so. This is also the case with the inclusion of schizophrenia, which is also a condition that is diagnosed by doctors and defined precisely in the DSM 5. The inclusion of these qualifiers within the definition of ED lead people to believe that there is some medical and scientific weight behind special education and the identifying and labeling of students. However, there is little science involved and the variability with which identification occurs from place to place is startling. Even more startling are the outcomes for students labeled with ED.

### **Outcomes for ED Label**

The outcomes for students labeled with ED are not encouraging. The Special Education Elementary Longitudinal Study (SEELS) followed 11,000 students for a period of seven years and found that only 50% of students with ED receive any type of behavioral supports or mental health assistance once they are identified (Bradley, Doolittle & Bartolotta, 2008). It was also discovered that there was a high degree of comorbidity between substance abuse and the ED label (Bradley et al, 2008). Post School outcomes for

students labeled with ED have been historically bleak and assessments show that these students have not developed the prerequisite social skills to be successful in adjusting to adult life (Bradley, et al, 2008). (Wagner, 2003) also found that:

- 55% of students identified with the ED label dropped out of school
- 40% did not obtain a high school diploma or equivalent
- 75% were below expected grade level in reading
- 97% lower in expected grade level in math
- Only 1 in 5 youths identified with ED label pursue any type of post high school education or training.
- 3 years after leaving school only 50% of youths were employed; some studies find the level lower, as low as 30%.
- Show higher rates of involvement with the justice system
- 43% have been identified as arrested at least once

Additionally, (Quinn, et al, 2005) found that 47.5% of incarcerated youth were identified as emotionally disturbed. Within that group 66% reported as manifesting a significant learning disability as well. It is clear by these statistics that being labeled with ED is not a beneficial occurrence and at the very least, not helpful. When we look at this fact alongside of the over representation of black males in this category we can clearly see the social justice perspective and the need to remedy the situation and rethink the definition altogether. (Bornstein, 2017) also identifies this group as being in the “school to prison pipeline” and cites the lack of alternative supports and options for students displaying difficulty with their behavior and impulse control. He cites the systems ability to intervene

successfully on students with academic deficits but denotes less energy to address behavioral issues leaving these students unsupported and statistically more likely to be removed from school altogether. (Knestrick, 2015) calls for the development of a new, more responsive behavioral intervention system and calls for the current PBIS mode to be dismantled.

### **Social Justice Perspective**

(Oakes, et al, 1999), provide a framework for analyzing educational phenomenon from a social justice perspective. Using this framework there are three crucial points to be made in the context of deconstructing the definition of Emotional Disturbance.

1) The federal definition of Emotional Disturbance has remained exactly the same since 1982 when it was written. There have been more recent efforts to re-define this disability grouping but they have gone nowhere. It has been demonstrated that there is a lack of clarity in its tenets and the vagueness of its qualifiers. Social justice thinkers would immediately ask who is benefitting from this definition? Who gains power by keeping the definition vague and flexible? How does the system maintain itself through the use of these words? (Knestrick, 2016) described a phenomenon called the “Special Education Industrial Complex”:

**In his 1961 farewell address Dwight D. Eisenhower warned the citizens of the United States of America of the military industrial complex (MIC). It has been referred to as the monetary relationship that existed between legislators, the armed forces and the industry that supported and sustained the power structures in American life in the 1950's (Higgs, 1995). Knestrict (2017) posits a similar phenomenon called the Special Education Industrial Complex (SEIC). Like the MIC the SEIC is based in capital that is created by an imaginary difference between “special” education and the regular teaching that occurs everyday. Because of this pseudo-scientific model,**

**based in the medical and empirical models, labels and segregates programs, teachers and students and creates capital supported by millions of federal dollars, it recreates itself as a separate and unequal area of public education. However, it continues to thrive because of the capital infusing its framework and the belief that there is an inherent difference in the way special education is delivered. It survives even though it is not successful at educating students and has created a separate and unequal educational silo (Knestrict, p. 1).**

The maintenance of the ED definition and its continued use reflects what is described in the above quote. The identification of students with ED provides teachers and principals the power to exclude and segregate students who disrupt the learning environment and risk the lowering of test scores and prevents raising the ire of parents, at the same time.

Politically it is a powerful tool for them to hold onto. It maintains a power relationship that teachers and administrators are reluctant to let go of. The only people not benefitting from the maintenance of this process are the students.

2) The continued use of this definition and process is culturally driven and racially biased. It has been well established that middle class, white men and women predominantly run schools. Because of this there is a cultural bias and blind spot that contributes to the over representation of minorities within this category (Ferri & Connor, 2005). Because the outcomes are so dismal for this label it is a glaring social injustice that we continue to use it and have yet to even challenge its legitimacy in any meaningful way.

3) The economic and cultural costs of this definition and its continued use are dramatic as well. Statistics have shown that 30% to 50% of students identified with it are unemployed after leaving school. It was also found that 40% of these students don't graduate from high school (Bradley, et al, 2008). It is reported that there are higher rates of involvement in the justice system, lower reading and math abilities (Wagner, 2003). How much does this cost

our economy and how damaging is this to our culture? We continue to segregate these students even after they leave our schools. It affects poor, black people most dramatically and this is a social justice calamity and a crisis that is being largely ignored by education and the greater culture at large (Bornstein, 2017).

### **Conclusion**

It has been demonstrated that the definition for Emotional Disturbance is both vague and un-measurable and affects poor, brown skinned males more dramatically than others (Bornstein, 2017). It has also been demonstrated that the labeling of individuals with emotional disturbance produces negative outcomes as compared to those not identified and labeled (Bradley, et al, 2008; Wagner, 2003). This practice can be located within a larger process that devalues students and has been seen as being unjust, unfair and causing harm to those identified under what has been called the Special Education Industrial Complex, (Knestrict, 2016). Yet this label and definition endures and continues to negatively impact the lives of those identified, labeled and placed within the very restrictive and demonstrably ineffective special education environments designed to contain them. This amounts to a social justice catastrophe and it goes largely unnoticed and unchanged since its inception in 1982.

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## Providing meaningful feedback to student math samples using the Mathematical Practices

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### *Abstract:*

*Bolstered by recent efforts towards encouraging teachers to use frequent formative assessment to inform and revise teaching, the edTPA assessment for pre-service teachers requires candidates to demonstrate the ability to collect student work and provide constructive feedback to the students. Within the mathematics classroom, providing feedback, especially on correctly completed problems, can be a challenge to novice teachers. The Common Core Standards for Mathematics' eight Mathematical Practices can offer a framework for providing this feedback. Using examples from released Ohio tests, this article provides examples of feedback that can teachers may give to student work that are framed in the context of the eight practices. Using this practices as a guide can help teacher candidates construct both positive feedback and suggestions for future strategies.*

In the last decade, several pedagogical studies and trends have emphasized the importance of formative assessment in the teaching process. (Collins, 2011; Thomas & Sondergeld, 2015; <http://portal.battelleforkids.org/FIPOhio/what-is-fip>) The process of teaching no longer just involves preparing class demonstrations and student activities, but also includes preparing ways to collect frequent evidence of learning. The earlier that data is collected in the teaching process, the more informed the teacher is while modifying instruction to meet the needs of the learners. Also as important is providing individualized guidance to the learners and to “praise the process” when students are choosing good strategies or providing specific suggestions when they need help.



The edTPA assessment requires pre-service teachers to demonstrate this ability to provide meaningful feedback to learners. Many states require pre-service teachers, typically during their student-teaching experience, to complete the edTPA assessment which involves documenting the planning process of a unit, documenting evidence of good teaching through video vignettes of the implementation of the unit, documenting evidence that the whole class has learned the objectives, and finally documenting evidence that they are able to provide meaningful feedback to both low-achieving and high-achieving students. Specifically, the edTPA says to the teacher candidates: “Explain how the feedback provided to the 3 focus students addresses their individual strengths and needs relative to the learning objectives measured.” And, “Describe how you will support each focus student to understand and use this feedback to further their learning related to learning objectives, either within the learning segment or at a later time.” (edTPA Secondary Mathematics Assessment Handbook, September, 2016).

In assessing the edTPA, evaluators score each response on a scale of 1 to 5, with 3 being the average response. A pre-service teacher who excels beyond the average can earn a 4 by being able to “Provide a strategy or address an individual learning need” or “Make connections to prior learning or experience to improve learning”. Teacher candidates completing the edTPA are encouraged to go beyond simply writing “Correct” and “Good job” to student responses and to identify specific strategies that the students has used or can use that will be useful to the student in the future. All teachers need to be able to demonstrate that they are able to respond to student work in ways that will help students who have not achieved mastery be able to move in that direction and also to help students

that have shown mastery understand why their work met the criteria and then challenge them to the next level.

### A Strategy for the Mathematics Classroom – the Math Practices Framework

Within the math classroom, the edTPA encourages mathematics pre-service teachers to demonstrate conceptual understanding and procedural fluency in their teaching and from their students. The associated assessments may require solutions, but may also require student explanations. The assessment items are always aligned to the state standards which are often (in most states) aligned to the Common Core State Standards for Mathematics. The Common Core's *Mathematical Practice Standards* can be used as a framework for choosing appropriate and meaningful feedback when evaluating a student response.

The eight Mathematical Practices are shown in Table 1. These Math Practices identify the “habits of the mind” that we want students to demonstrate in all grade levels and in every area of math. These habits or practices were discussed in the NCTM Principles and Standards of School Mathematics (2000) as “process” standards as opposed to the “content” standards of the grade level mathematics.

**Table 1**

MP1	Make sense of problems and persevere in solving them.
MP2	Reason abstractly and quantitatively.
MP3	Construct viable arguments and critique the reasoning of others.
MP4	Model with math.
MP5	Use appropriate tools strategically.
MP6	Attend to precision.
MP7	Look for and make use of structure.
MP8	Look for and express regularity in repeated reasoning.

The word “process” or “practice” can be kept in mind while evaluating. The evaluator may ask, “Even though the mathematics is correct in this problem, what were the mathematical practices that the student used in getting there and how can I show these to him/her?” Or “Even though the response to this item is incorrect and I can identify the misconception or miscalculation that got him/her to this point, does this error fall into a larger category of math thought-processing?”

For example, consider this response to a state 6<sup>th</sup> grade assessment item. (Ohio Department of Education, Spring 2017 Released Test Items.) (See Figure 1.) The item is a 2 point item, but the guidebook explains that this student’s response should only earn 1 point because, even though the answer is correct, the student does not provide an explanation.

**Figure 1**  
**Sample Response: 1 point**

The table shows the average monthly low temperatures, in degrees Celsius ( $^{\circ}\text{C}$ ), in Alaska from November to February.

Month	Average Low Temperature ( $^{\circ}\text{C}$ )
November	$-8.6$
December	$-10.4$
January	$-11.6$
February	$-10.1$

Which month has an average low temperature that is colder than December's? Explain your answer using mathematical reasoning.  
 Type your answer in the space provided.

January because  $-11.6$  is a lower temperature than  $-10.4$  [december]

# Words 10/4000, # Chars 67/2000

#### Notes on Scoring

This response earns partial credit (1 point) because the student identifies the correct month but does not explain why  $-11.6^{\circ}$  is a lower temperature than  $-10.4^{\circ}$

The teacher may provide feedback such as, “You need to give an explanation.” However, the framework of the Mathematical Practices can guide the teacher to more process-specific responses. Considering MP1 problem-solving, the student appears to have used good problem-solving strategies, but did not explain them. Using variables or operations was not necessary here, so MP2 may not be easy to apply. In all of these short answer items, MP3, which requires students to articulate a mathematical argument, is an overarching process. An MP3 comment may be, “Support your answer by explaining and clarifying how you arrived at it.” Using the Modeling practice, MP4, the teacher may

respond, “Can you think of other situations where something is smaller when the absolute value gets larger?” Or “How could you draw a picture for another student to explain how you got that answer?” Using MP5, the Tools practice, the teacher may respond, “What type of tool may be best to explain how you know that  $-11.6$  is colder than  $-10.4$ ?” (The teacher is hinting at plotting the values on a number line.) MP7, Seeing Structure, would prompt the teacher to ask, “explain what you know about negative numbers and how they behave on the number line.” MP8, Repeated Reasoning, could prompt the teacher to ask, “What pattern do you see when it comes to negative numbers on the number line. Talk about that in your answer.”

It may not always be easy to find a mathematical practice that fits every error, and in this situation, feedback focused on the content error would be more beneficial. However, it may be the case that there is a mathematical practice that fits every *correctly* completed problem. The correct problems sometimes cause teachers more challenge in knowing what type of feedback to provide. Table 2 shows some possible feedback prompts based on each Mathematical Practice.

Table 2

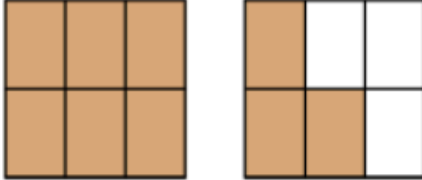
<b>Math Practice Standard</b>	<b>Sample Comments for Evidence Shown</b>	<b>Sample Comments for Evidence Missing</b>
MP1: Persevere in problem-solving	"Great job recognizing that the problem was asking for volume and not area."	"Does your answer make sense? Make an estimate of what you think the answer should be and compare them."
MP2: Reason abstractly & quantitatively.	"I like the way that you set up that equation."	"Take another look at this equation, can you demonstrate your answer with base ten blocks?"
MP3; Articulate Arguments	"Your reasoning is sound and logically written."	"Interesting result, tell me how you got it?"
MP4: Modeling	"I like that you chose to diagram the multiplication using an array."	"Can you think of another way to represent the fraction?" "Can you think of a way to model this?"
MP5: Using Tools	"Your use of the table to organize your data was a great choice!"	"Have you considered using a number line to show how you get the solution?" "I had a difficult time seeing which data point belonged to which trial, is there a tool you can use to align it?"
MP6: Precision	"Nice job using the correct geometric terms."	"Nice calculation of perimeter, what are you measuring this in? cm, inches, feet, meters, etc.?"
MP7: Seeing Structure	"I'm so impressed that you saw that the place value of the 6 digit could be reconstructed."	Is there a way that you could break this problem into two smaller problems that may be easier for you to solve?"
MP8: Repeated Reasoning	"Great work finding the pattern."	"Is there a pattern that can help you solve the problem?"

Consider the following third grade problem from a state assessment and a full-credit response to the problem. (See Figure 2.) It is a 2 point problem and is aligned to the Common Core standard 3.NF.A.1.

Figure 2

**Sample Response: 2 points**

A fraction model is shown.



A. What fraction represents the shaded area of the fraction model?

B. Explain how you found your answer.

Type your answer in the space given.

1 and a half because the first model shows that it is six sixths which is one whole and the second one is 3 sixths that is 1 and a half so the model represents 1 and a half. Also you could tell that it is 1 and a half because there are three squares shaded and there are three squares left that are not shaded.

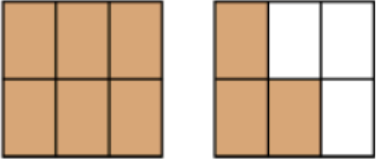
Of the eight Mathematical Practices, the student is using a good explanation (MP3) and referring specifically to the model (MP4) when referencing the parts of the square. The student attends to precision (MP6) and makes use of structure (MP7) through their identification that a whole is six sixths. With this knowledge they use repeated reasoning (MP8) by identifying both quadrilaterals are divided into 6 even parts and that three shaded boxes represents half of the second quadrilateral. A teacher supports the student's response by saying, "Your use of structure identifying that six sixths is the same as a whole is great. This reasoning allowed you to support your conclusion the model represents 1 and a half." With this student's understanding of the mathematical model (MP4), the teacher

may look for future opportunities for the student to reason more abstractly (MP2) with fractions.

Figure 3 and 4 show an incomplete response to the same problem:

**Figure 3**  
**Sample Response: 1 point**

A fraction model is shown.



A. What fraction represents the shaded area of the fraction model?  
B. Explain how you found your answer.

Type your answer in the space given.

First I counted all the squares on the first model > I counted 6. I know that denominator is 6. Then I counted the shaded squares. I counted 8. That's the numerator the fraction is 8/6.

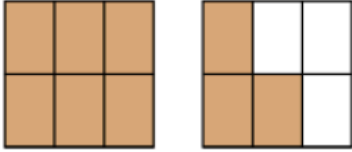
In this case, the student does look for and make use of structure (MP7) by identifying the quadrilaterals are composed of 6 boxes, but is lacking precision (MP6) by miscounting the shaded area. Their feedback could be, "Nice use of structure to identify each shape is made of 6 boxes, but watch your precision when counting each box in the shaded area."



Figure 4

## Sample Response: 1 point

A fraction model is shown.



A. What fraction represents the shaded area of the fraction model?

B. Explain how you found your answer.

Type your answer in the space given.

The fraction that represents the shaded area is  $6/6$  and  $3/6$

**Notes on Scoring**

This response earns partial credit (1 point) because it correctly identifies the fraction represented by the shaded area of the fraction model but omits an explanation.

In this problem, the student is able to look for and express regularity in repeated reasoning (MP8) through the identification of each quadrilateral as their own fraction, but the student didn't make sense of the problem (MP1). They did not identify that the question was asking them to identify one fraction, not more than one fraction. This student needs to go on to recognize that  $6/6$  is the same as one. The teacher could coach the student to try to recognize and see the structure of mathematics (MP7) to take the answer one step further.

The following problem (Figure 5) is taken from a high school geometry state assessment. The course standards include Statistics and Probability. The assessment item is aligned to standard S.CP.5 (Understand independence and conditional probability and use them to interpret data.) In this problem, the student is asked to determine if going to bed by 10:00 p.m. or after has an effect on arriving late to school or not.

Figure 5

### Sample Response: 2 points

During a 90-day semester, a student records whether he arrives at school on time and whether he goes to bed by 10:00 p.m. the night before. The results are shown in the table.

Number of Occurrences		
	Arrives at School on Time	Arrives at School Late
Goes to Bed by 10:00 p.m.	72	8
Goes to Bed After 10:00 p.m.	9	1

Does the student arriving at school on time depend on whether the student goes to bed by 10:00 p.m.? Justify your reasoning.

Type your answer in the space provided.

No, it doesn't because based on the information provided, the probability that the child will show up when he or she goes to bed before 10:00 is 90%. But if the student doesn't go to bed at 10:00, they still arrive to school on time 90%, meaning that the time that this student goes to bed doesn't have any effect on their attendance.

# Words 63/400, # Chars 333/2600

This student earns a full-credit response by correctly determining that the percentage of arriving on time when going to bed by 10:00 is the same percentage as the nights when he goes to bed late. The student is able to correctly calculate (MP1 – problem-solving) and then is able to compare and interpret the results (MP2 – reasoning). Next steps for this student may be supporting their answer with a model (MP4) or using this structure (MP7) to see if their conclusion would support other students' bed times.

The following example (Figure 6) shows partial credit for the same problem.

Figure 6

### Sample Response: 1 point

During a 90-day semester, a student records whether he arrives at school on time and whether he goes to bed by 10:00 p.m. the night before. The results are shown in the table.

	Number of Occurrences	
	Arrives at School on Time	Arrives at School Late
Goes to Bed by 10:00 p.m.	72	8
Goes to Bed After 10:00 p.m.	9	1

Does the student arriving at school on time depend on whether the student goes to bed by 10:00 p.m.? Justify your reasoning.

Type your answer in the space provided.

No the student arriving on time does not depend on whether or not the student goes to bed by 10 p.m. The student arrived at school late just as many times as when he went to bed at 10 p.m.

# Words 40/4000, # Chars 100/2000

#### Notes on Scoring

This response earns partial credit (1 point) because it shows the correct statement ("No...") but provides an incorrect justification for the statement. The student may have confused the number of occurrences of the two events with the ratio of the events.

The student is counting the number of occurrences in the data rather than computing ratios and percentages. The student needs to see the structure of data (MP7). The teacher can comment, "You counted the times that the student was late, but you need to consider all the days of school and then think about the part of those days that the student was late. That's a fraction which can be also be written as a percentage."

When evaluating student work in mathematics, using the eight Mathematical Practices as defined by the authors of the Common Core Math Standards gives another approach to providing feedback. By referring to evidence of the practices in their responses and positively reinforcing it or even pointing out where it could have been used in inaccurate responses, teachers may be helping students to proactively consider and recall these more frequently and then use them as their own framework in future problem-solving.

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## Refugee Students & Trauma: Looking Inside Two Ohio Primary Schools

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### *Abstract:*

*Thousands of refugee families enter the US every year, expecting that their children will successfully adapt, attend school, and learn English. Yet many refugee children experience trauma: acute mental and emotional distress, before and after they enter the US. Such trauma affects their mental wellbeing and consequently, their abilities to perform at school (Henley & Robinson, 2011). Educators need information and training to understand and support the emotional health of their refugee students. Because of behavioral issues associated with trauma, refugee students may be misdiagnosed as having learning disabilities. This article describes behaviors that teachers, administrators, and staffs in two Akron, Ohio primary schools observed in potentially traumatized refugee children. It then addresses how school educators responded to support these children emotionally.*

According to the United Nations High Commission on Refugees website, the numbers of refugees, and refugee students, are increasing globally. The website officially defines refugees as people forced to migrate from their homes and homelands. In 2017, UNHCR requested that over 75,100 refugees be considered for resettlement in countries around the world (<http://www.unhcr.org/resettlement.html>).

According to the Pew Research Center, in 2016, the largest refugee populations came from the Democratic Republic of Congo (16,370), followed by those from Syria (12,587), Burma (aka Myanmar, with 12,347), Iraq (9,880) and Somalia (9,020). The Akron Beacon Journal reported in early 2016 that 110,000 refugees came to the US. Likewise, the website *Cleveland.com* reported in 2016: “Last year, between 500 and 700 refugees arrived in Cleveland.

Since 2008, Northeast Ohio has received more than 2,500 refugees, with most coming from areas of conflict in Africa, Southeast Asia and the Middle East.” Many of these refugee families have children who have experienced trauma in their homes and in refugee camps; they may experience further trauma during resettlement.

Refugees face huge challenges: linguistic, cultural, economic, and social. They also may encounter emotional challenges due to trauma. School administrators and teachers are often insufficiently informed and unprepared to welcome and support traumatized children. Consequently, refugee students are misunderstood, and often over-diagnosed with learning disorders. Unless teachers and administrators can identify and support the emotional needs of refugee children, language and content learning will not be effective (Allodi, 2010).

### Refugees in Ohio

Bhutan	1,070 refugees	35.8%
Somalia	489 refugees	16.4%
Iraq	404 refugees	13.5%
Burma	296 refugees	9.9%
DR Congo	228 refugees	7.6%
Sudan	82 refugees	2.7 %
Eritrea	75 refugees	2.5%
Burundi	55 refugees	1.8%
Ukraine	50 refugees	1.7%
Syria	48 refugees	1,6%
Other	192 refugees	6.4%

*Table 1.* Number of refugees entering Ohio in 2016; from: September 18, 2016, *cleveland.com*

## Historical Overview of Refugees

Historically, Ohio, and specifically, Akron, has welcomed immigrants and refugee populations. In the 1800s German immigrants and New Englanders arrived first. Officially founded in 1825, Akron grew due to the nearby overland canal system connecting settlers and farmers with larger waterways. This led to thriving trade and more settlers. Local industries: clay, oats, flour, and rubber brought more immigrants. In the twentieth century, refugees fleeing the two World Wars settled around Akron.

Akron's North Hill neighborhood became home to many early immigrants. In the 1920's Italian, Polish, Central and Eastern Europeans, and Irish settled in this area. Locals estimate that the neighborhood is still 30% Italian-American. Thanks to city planning and special funding, newer immigrants and refugees, predominately Nepali and Congolese, purchase homes in North Hill. These families send their children to neighborhood schools. North Hill schools have up to 67% non-English speaking students, all communicating in a multitude of languages. The International Institute stated that Bhutanese, Mon, Karen, and Nepali peoples started settling in Akron around North Hill in 2007, as Thai and Nepali refugee camps run by the UN shut down. According to the International Institute's 2016 report, 328 Bhutanese, 197 Congolese, and 117 Afghani families resettled in Akron. In addition to these groups, Mr. Greg Blondheim, a primary school principle, told me that North Hill is home other refugees; Central Americans, Nepali, Thai, Chinese, Lebanese families, Syrians, Saudi Arabians, and others (Personal communication, Jan 4, 2018).



## Defining Trauma

**Pre-arrival trauma.** Many refugee children have experienced trauma in their homes and in refugee camps. Traumatic events abroad include extreme violence, (sexual) abuse, hunger, and neglect. Such trauma causes cognitive and emotional and behavioral changes, which impacts children's abilities to learn and perform successfully in school settings (Kaplan et al., 2016). Kristy Johnson, a literacy coach, told me that in Akron teachers have reported that some refugee children may display poor memory, are inattentive or listless, and/or are unable to effectively perform abstract reasoning tasks (Personal correspondence, September 11, 2017).

Pre-arrival trauma includes pathological conditions, often chronic, resulting from past acute trauma. For example, living through bombing raids can generate ongoing nightmares despite being resettled in a safe and quiet environment. Or a child may be more prone to infection because constant stress has lowered the child's immune system (Shah, Siddharth, & Yun, 2014). Thus, refugee children may experience several types of trauma before resettlement.

**PTSD.** Refugee children may have post-traumatic [stress](#) disorder - a common anxiety disorder that develops after exposure to a terrifying event or ordeal in which grave physical harm occurred or was threatened. Family members of victims also can develop the disorder. PTSD can occur in people of any age, including children and adolescents (<http://www.medicinenet.com/script/main/art.asp?articlekey=18779>).

Among traumatized refugee youth there is a direct correlation between traumatic events and cognitive functioning (Kaplan, Stolk, Valibhoy, Tucker, & Baker, 2016). Refugee

children may suffer from varying levels of depression and anxiety, and their family members may also suffer as well (Heptinstal, Sethna, & Taylor, 2004).

**Post-arrival trauma.** Trauma has a developmental impact over time: A child might become chronically anxious and depressed from being exposed to traumatic events before and after resettlement. In the new country, children may show no interest in learning or interactions with peers at school. (Nykiel-Herbert, 2010).

How a child's family functions or does not function in the new country can also create post-arrival trauma. Dysfunctional family units influence a child's ability to adjust and learn at school, because negative/harmful coping behaviors within the family unit directly impact children, whose emotional and mental states are connected to their family's emotions, attitudes, and beliefs and actions (McBrien, 2005).

### **The Study**

With the growing influx of refugees throughout the world, understanding how to help refugee student youth to succeed is a pertinent and timely question. This study examines how North Hill educators serve their refugee children. For this vulnerable population making school a positive emotional experience is the first requirement for creating learning (Allodi, 2010, p. 91). To answer this question, two research questions are posed:

1. What traits do potentially traumatized children exhibit in school?
2. How do educators respond to support potentially traumatized children to help them succeed at school?

## **Sites**

### **North Hill 1.**

Originally constructed in 1914, this K-5 school was rebuilt in 2008. Teachers generally have an average of 22 years of experience, with 81% holding a master's degree or higher. The school has many academic after school programs, summer reading challenges, and community partnerships with the local library. The school PTA encourages parental involvement. School personnel include a part-time child psychologist, school counselor, principle, student dean, and various administrative staffs. There are also 16 K-5 content teachers, three intervention staff, four tutors, a full time ESL teacher, and a literacy coach. In 2017, the total school population was 373 children, with 39.3% non-native English speakers. Refugee students speak the following languages: Nepali, Karen, Myamasa, Burmese, Farsi, Spanish, Chen, Arabic, Swahili, and French.

### **North Hill 2.**

This K-5 school opened in August 2017 to help meet the growing needs of the community. Many teachers came from other schools; according to their website, over 67% of the teachers hold a master's degree, and many have taught for over 19 years. The school is committed to engaging the families of students, and to engaging with the local community. The school has a child psychologist, school counselor, principle, student dean, various administrative staffs, along with six ESL team members and an intervention team. There are also seventeen content teachers, six tutors, and a full time literacy coach. In 2017, the school's total student body consisted of 570 students, with 26% being non-native English speakers. Refugee students at this school speak the following languages: Nepali,

Arabic, Spanish, Myamasa, Swahili, Pushto, Vietnamese, Yoruba, Bosnian, Kumba, Zou and Khmer.

### **Data Collection and Analysis**

Data collection took place over four months inside two North Hill K-5 schools, as each had high percentages of refugees and immigrants - both sites are located in North Hill. I have good rapport at these schools, having visiting them regularly for over two years, to place student teachers, and to collaborate with the schools in presenting professional development workshops related to ELLs and refugee students. Ongoing cordial relations with schools, administrators, and teachers enhanced data collection. (Note: All quotations are from teachers, unless specified otherwise).

Via a sociocultural lens and a social-constructivist view of learning, this study illustrates how history, culture, economics, and politics impact refugee children, and how learning is co-constructed. Only within a safe and welcoming context can these children successfully learn (Yates & Hattie, 2013).

### **Research Question 1: What traits do potentially traumatized children exhibit in school?**

Teachers reported that refugee children, coming from different areas of the world, and being different ages and genders, all displayed similar behaviors indicative of trauma. Stress and trauma impacts a child's brain, hampering neurocognitive and social-emotional skills (Blair & Raver, 2015). Among the behaviors indicating potential trauma that teachers observed were hoarding/stealing food and objects; lack of eye contact; inability to self-regulate emotions or behavior; poor concentration and poor memory. Some refugee

children at school seemed apathetic and disengaged, even exhausted: they often refused to participate in activities; ignoring directions (personal communication, February 4, 2018).

<b>Behavior</b>	<b>Number of Mentions</b>
Food Hoarding	17
Food Theft	11
Object Theft	5
Outburst of Anger	13
Apathy	14
Withdrawal	4
No eye contact	5
Refusal to Participate	7
Unwilling to leave sibling(s)	3
Sadness	16
Other – crying uncontrollably because of fire drill	1

*Table 2.* Chart of Observed Behaviors

**Food hoarding.** Teachers at both schools observed refugee children hoarding or stealing food and objects; this could be indicative of trauma (Birman & Tran, 2015).

“He always stuffs something in his shirt or pants before he even sits down for a snack. I think I watched him for over two years in the cafeteria before he stopped doing that.”

Teachers suggested having more than enough food for snacks, and encouraging children to go for seconds at the cafeteria by walking with them. Another teacher explained that she always had snacks available in her class. An interpreter explained that people did not starve in the camps, but neither did they get fat. “Many times, I felt hungry,” he said.

In regard to object theft, a teacher explained: “My classroom delegated responsibility for attendance and maintenance of objects; marbles, pencils; etc. If children took something without permission it was public knowledge. I would call them on it and explain that we all used these things. Children always returned things, and I’d thank them.”

**Lack of eye contact.** Another indicator of trauma is eye contact. Certainly, how we look at each other varies from culture to culture, but children who have witnessed harm or even death of family members may avoid eye contact with others (Birman & Tran, 2015).

- “Sometimes a child will glance at me, then glance away. It is as if she is assessing me, but these glances are not meant to create interaction. I don’t feel that she quite trusts me yet,” said an ESL teacher, adding; “I’ve had others like her and it takes time to develop trust. The relationship must be on the child’s time.”
- “I used to think that a child was ashamed or embarrassed, because that is why I avoid looking at someone. I was shocked when the interpreter told me that the child was afraid of me, because adults represented danger.”

Sam Roman, a multicultural specialist, advised teachers to accept a child’s limited eye contact, address the child gently, and to move slowly around the child (personal communication, April 6, 2018).

**Anger/aggression to sadness/apathy.** Traumatized children may swing from apathy to aggression (Blair & Raver, 2015); this behavior was observed at both school sites among several children.

- “Even when I know the child’s story, I’m uneasy if the child becomes disruptive or aggressive. But unless I set boundaries the behavior is going to continue and maybe even spiral.”
- “It’s important to connect with the family when anger and aggressive behavior starts occurring. Interpreters help – the family may feel bad if they are told their child is misbehaving.”

Refugee children may suffer from varying levels of depression and anxiety, and their family members may also suffer as well (Heptinstal et al., 2004). When aggression occurs, take the child out of class. Wait until the child calms down, find out what is going on internally, and then reassure the child.

**Fear of being separated from a sibling.** Teachers reported that some students feared leaving their sibling(s). If a child is separated from family and caregiver(s) under traumatic circumstances, this disrupts the children’s ability to emotionally self-regulate. Without a consistent caregiver, especially when encountering traumatic events, a child may feel great distress, anxiety and anger (Henley & Robinson, 2011).

“We’ve had a few children, siblings, who needed to check on each other all day at school. If they are separated for too long they become anxious and even aggressive. After several months they usually let go, but these children are closer than most kids I deal with on a daily basis,” said a literacy coach.

Children may feel anxious if separated from loved ones because they may have lost family members or known of others who suffered losses (Heptinstal et al., 2004). During the school day these children were frequently reunited with their sibling; in one case, an older child was placed in the same level as her younger sister, due to interrupted schooling and the children’s need to be close to other.

**Exhaustion.** Refugee children who have witnessed harm to their parents may become overwhelmed with fear; both the adult and the child are severely traumatized (McBrien, 2005). Anxiety and fear take up much vital energy; this, in addition to trying to decode a new language and understand a new culture, can cause a child to feel constantly exhausted. An Akron School translator, Saraswati, reported that children's exhaustion may also be nutrition based: many refugee children were undernourished in the camps, arriving to their new countries anemic (personal communication, March 6, 2018).

- "I looked at the boy and knew he was completely wiped out, so I just let him rest."
- "I asked the school nurse if we could ask the family to take her to get some tests; maybe she had a virus. She couldn't stay awake. I didn't realize it was trauma related."

A refugee counselor suggested that teachers allow exhausted children to have timed naps. Tell the class: "He's tired, so we're going to let him sleep for 5 minutes." Constant exhaustion indicates a possible nutritional problem or home problem; call or visit the home to investigate.

### **Discussion**

Trauma comes in many guises, causing cognitive and emotional and behavioral changes, which impact children's abilities to learn and perform successfully in school settings (Kaplan, Stolk, Valibhoy, Tucker & Baker, 2016). Children experiencing trauma have trouble learning at school (Beers & De Bellis, 2002). Traumatized children lack self-confidence; they do not want to try new things. They do not feel secure and comfortable, nor do they have a sense of personal agency. According to the website, <https://www.tolerance.org>, educators must create environments that support self-esteem and security so students feel physically and emotionally safe.



**Research Question 2: What can we do as educators to help potentially traumatized children to succeed at school?**

It would be a mistake to state that there are consistent ways to define refugee children's behavior. Their needs and wants are going to differ from individual to individual, with personalized interventions for each child. However, refugee students have primary needs that must be met before any academic learning takes place. Participant data elicited four suggestions to meet these needs.

First, refugee children need time to adjust psychologically. Traumatized children need time to feel emotionally safe; only after feeling secure can they learn to 1) self-regulate emotional or impulsive behavioral responses; 2) think about multiple concepts simultaneously/ move easily between concepts; 3) retain new information, process it, and retain information (Barr, 2018).

When a child feels comfortable she can start gaining language and content knowledge. Learning is a social activity (Hausfather, 1996); a positive, safe classroom helps children to interact with and trust others again, and to learn from each other. Traumatized children can better perform at school, if they feel accepted by their peers; they also become more resilient (Sleijpen et al., 2017). Likewise, teachers need to set boundaries of acceptable and unacceptable behaviors at school, and help these children experience justice and equity in the classroom.

Refugee students need adults who speak their languages. Interpreters not only clarify communication issues: they offer comfort to children via language and shared experiences. Refugee children need others who understand their prior experiences, especially the conditions of refugee life, and the conditions of their current lives.

Finally, we need to view the refugee child holistically, as a child, and as a family member. Each potentially traumatized child and family has individual needs. Researchers cannot correlate age and gender, or ethnicity and identity groups, with differing degrees of behaviors exhibiting trauma. Confounding factors exist, such as: age at the onset of adverse events, age of migration, and “age related policies for education accommodation and the decision making processes for asylum” (Fazel, Reed, Panter-Brick & Stein, 2012, p. 270). We must transform our schools into platforms that positively integrate the children and their families with the school’s activities and events, and with the local community.

**Adjustment is more than communication skills.** Adjustments include supporting the teacher as well as the refugee child: the process is two-way. Teachers need to know their children’s history. Observe and monitor a child’s behavior without judgment. Be patient. Literature on refugee youth emphasizes how important it is for these children to feel accepted by their peers, by the adults, and by their community (Fazel, 2015).

- “If I see a teacher who needs a time out herself, that’s where I step in. I’m there. I’d rather lose a little content teaching time to give a stressed teacher a break.” (Literacy coach)
- “I think that we as teachers need to provide safety, stability, and routine in our classrooms for these (refugee) children. They have suffered God knows what. Our job is to protect them from bullying, provide a safe space.”

School psychologists recommend exploring stress management techniques; teachers can positively reinforce student strengths, and focus on appropriate classroom behaviors. To support traumatized children, advocate consistency via routines, delegate duties to all members to build a classroom culture, and employ multilingual/multicultural visuals.

**Trust and safety issues.** Children must feel safe and comfortable in order to learn (Yates & Hattie, 2013). Sociocultural adaptation takes time. Consider refugee children with disrupted or minimal education who are suddenly immersed into a new education system: They may face bullying and discrimination, or challenging economic circumstances in addition to trauma. Refugees have fewer coping strategies than their mainstream counterparts (Fazel et al., 2012).

- “I always try to speak clearly and slowly, and I never move fast. I create easy routines and we do the same times at the same times.”
- “You can’t teach a child who doesn’t trust you but don’t expect that child to trust you instantly, either.”

Teachers can foster a sense of safety in their classrooms by adopting a “zero-indifference” policy. Teach students to process their feelings. Model empathy and active listening skills and build a routine for children to conduct “check-in with your partner.”

**Linguistic comfort: interpreters.** In Akron, interpreters are underpaid and overworked but highly regarded. They are vital to children’s emotional well being. “Feeling connected to their neighborhood and having people of the same ethnicity, speaking the same language, has a protective effect against anxiety for refugee children” (Fazel et al., 2012, p. 276).

- “The interpreters, who go from school to school, are keys to these kids hearts.”
- “If you can communicate in the same language, it’s so powerful.”

Encourage administrators to ask their interpreters to present workshops on culture, language, and communicative behaviors. Host interpreters from outside the school system: Catholic Charities, ASIA Inc., etc., to give talks on culture, refugee camps, and trauma.

## Understanding the Refugee Child Holistically

In order to support a refugee child, the phrase “knowledge is power” says it all.

- “Boy, the day I learned to say ‘Hi my friend’ in Nepali I got a smile like a 1000 watt bulb!”
- “Watching a movie about life in the camps horrified me, but it also educated me. I understand more now.”
- “We learned to use melodies from Nepali culture to build a lesson, using jazz chants.”

Educators can become involved in Indigenous community events: religious holidays, neighborhood celebrations, and schools can also sponsor activities that celebrate the cultures represented in their student body.

Additionally, we must view the refugee child as an individual, and as a family member. Caregivers, siblings, and extended family impact how refugee children behave. For example, if caregivers are experiencing financial difficulties, or discrimination, or anxiety/PTSD – this all creates stress on children. Dysfunctional family units influence a child’s ability to adjust and learn at school - negative/harmful coping behaviors within the family directly impact children. Children’s emotional/mental states are connected to their family’s emotions, attitudes, and beliefs and actions (McBrien, 2005).

Involving the entire family with the school helps refugee children to adjust and thrive (Sleijpen, 2017). Look for common ground to help everyone contribute meaningfully in class. Learn about your refugee students/families; participate in cultural activities with them. School administrators can create professional development related to the identity groups their school serves, collaborate with neighboring schools and institutions, and connect with relevant community organizations. Teachers recommend using Google Earth to highlight understanding and to embrace similarities and differences. Many teachers

regularly access culture websites to find appropriate, updated information and images that represent their student populations.

### **Discussion**

When I first began researching, teachers would ask me for strategies to better “manage” their diverse classrooms. My perception, however, was that teachers needed trauma training. Their students had complex life histories, which profoundly impacted their emotional well-being and consequently, their behavior. Emotional support became the first priority. When children feel safe at school they display less trauma-induced behaviors. “If children feel accepted their levels of stress and anxiety are greatly reduced. This sense of connectedness and security promotes more effective learning” (Fazel et al., 2012, p. 273); classroom management issues then decrease. Only by first creating a safe and positive social environment can refugee children thrive academically in school (Allodi, 2010).

Educators conceded that they needed information regarding trauma and refugee children/families. Finding enough funding and child-trauma experts to fill these needs is challenging. But schools hosted workshops featuring child psychologists from Cleveland Clinic and Catholic Charities. With training, teachers understood more concerning the impact of refugee experiences, ranging from involuntary displacement to horrific loss.

Schools continue hosting in-service training addressing trauma and behavioral issues, via focus groups with school interpreters, who explain and act as culture brokers by offering their mainstream colleagues a vivid picture of refugee camps.

At the sites, teachers and staff periodically review ways create an environment promoting safety and acceptance for all. They consciously act as models for the entire

student body; they post positive cultural symbols (flags, pictures, signage); many learn greetings and small talk in other languages; all enforce a zero tolerance for bullying; and they publicly acknowledged their interpreters during in-service workshops.

School staffs all understood that integrating refugee family members into the school via special events, such as Literacy Night, Pot Luck Get Togethers, and other events, is equally important. More activities welcoming the entire family are being organized. The two schools in this study also had created strong ties with the neighborhood library, which offered free ESL classes for adults and special summer reading programs for refugee children. Additionally, both schools make use of experienced school counselors and child psychologists. School sites also have close working relationships with agencies serving refugee needs: Catholic Charities; ASIA Inc.; International Institute, and churches/mosques.

### **Implications and Limitations**

Globally, the number of refugee children attending schools is increasing, but information on multi-cultural trauma: how to define it, how to treat it, and how to overcome it, is lacking. Teachers need resources and training on trauma. For refugees, successful adjustment and acculturation is slow, continuous and gradual. Educators often measure this process quantitatively through state test scores. From a sociocultural perspective success equates with feeling safe and accepted, but more work analyzing how refugee populations negotiate peer acceptance is needed. Research on young refugee students is sparse; more research addressing youth trauma for all identity groups is needed.

On behalf of the author, the corresponding author states that there is no conflict of interest.

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|--------------------------|--|
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