

Welcome to Our Schools Curriculum

The CCSD ELL Division is grateful for the generosity of The New York State Office of Temporary and Disability Assistance for providing us the rights to share their *Welcome to Our Schools* curriculum with our teachers. This curriculum was developed for New York Teachers of Refugee students. With this in mind, there are a few lessons that we will be offering adaptation suggestions to address the needs of Newcomer students living in Clark County.

When deciding what modules to teach, keep in mind who your students are and what they need to learn about being in a U.S. school. As they state in their materials, “Instructors should review the Modules and select the materials that would be most relevant to the refugee students (CCSD Newcomers) enrolled in their school system, and most useful when designing lesson plans and classroom activities.” Also, you may have English-speaking students who do not qualify as ELLs who could benefit from the acculturation pieces of this curriculum. A student coming from England speaks a different English and can experience culture shock as they begin living in the U.S. Please use these materials, as they seem appropriate for these students as well.

Please review pages 4-8, Background for Instructors. As you read any of these materials, remember that the authors are in New York, and programs mentioned do not align to CCSD programs. Reading considerations are also attached for you to review before reading each module. We are providing these materials as a starting point for you to be able to develop lessons to meet the acculturation needs of your Newcomer students. Thank you for looking at these materials. The CCSD ELL Division welcomes your feedback on this curriculum as we are offering it to our schools for the first time this year. If you have any questions or need additional supports for your Newcomer students please reach out to our Division at (702) 799-2137. Also, please look at the materials and links specifically provided to address newcomer needs found on our website at ell.ccsd.net. Most schools have an ELL Student Success Advocate. These staff members receive additional training from the ELL Division and can also act as a resource for you.

CCSD CONSIDERATIONS

Module 14: Coping With Stress

In this reading...

When it says ...	Think...
Refugee	newcomer
Refugee Academy	school site
academic coach	mentor

- Other Vocabulary:
 - Counselor
 - Trauma
- Videos are not available at this time.

WELCOME TO OUR SCHOOLS



BUREAU OF REFUGEE AND IMMIGRANT ASSISTANCE

**NEW YORK STATE OFFICE
OF TEMPORARY AND DISABILITY ASSISTANCE**

**REVISED 2011
ANDREW M. CUOMO, GOVERNOR**

The Refugee School Impact Grant (RSIG) *Welcome to our Schools*, which includes Refugee Academy and Mini-Academy Curricula, Parent and Professional Development Programs, a Guide to Academic Coaches, a Guide to the Videos, and the videos *Refugee Student Interviews*, *Refugee Parent Interviews*, *A Day in Elementary School*, *A Day in Middle School* and *A Day in High School*, was developed by the New York State Office of Temporary and Disability Assistance, Bureau of Refugee and Immigrant Assistance (OTDA/BRIA).

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MODULE 14
COPING WITH STRESS

MODULE 14: Coping with Stress

PURPOSE

The purpose of Module 14 is to assist students in developing strategies to cope with stress.



OBJECTIVES

Students will:

- Understand the signals of stress
- Understand the causes of stress
- Understand and apply coping strategies
- Understand that school personnel and Academic Coaches are available to assist students in coping with stress



SUPPLIES

***Handout 14 – 1:
Show How You
Feel***

Examples of hobbies:
jigsaw puzzles; stamps;
collections

3 x 5 cards

Funny Video

A dozen silly jokes
(see Activity #1 and
check with translators)

Video:
***Refugee Student
Interviews***



MODULE 14: Coping with Stress

VOCABULARY

Elementary Vocabulary

Nervous
Stress
Relax
Worry
Tease
Cry
Write
Confide

Secondary Vocabulary

Nervous
Stress
Relax
Worry
Harass
Cope
Patience
Tease
Cry
Write
Confide
Trust
Reaction



Key Points – Coping with Stress



1. ***Stress is defined as tension in the body or mind and is an automatic reaction to anxiety, fear, or danger.***

Module 14 is included in the Refugee Academy because it is stressful for students of any age, under any circumstances, to be new in school. Add on the major adjustments that have to be made when refugee students have to adapt to a new *country* and a new school. They have to learn a new language, cope with past experiences and changes in family structure and responsibilities, and achieve academically.

The first thing the students will need to know is that it is normal to feel nervous and anxious as they prepare to enter their new school. Define stress and reassure them that everyone feels stress at one time or another. Some days will be more stressful than others, and students will cope differently, but they should not be alarmed if they feel a combination of excitement and nervous tension.

One of the purposes of the Refugee Academy is to ease the stress of the students and help them feel relaxed and prepared for school. Many of the students will feel disoriented. Everything will be new to them, including foods, language, traffic, clothing routines, and the way that students behave in school. The purpose of Module 14 is to provide the students with tips about how to identify and handle stress, and what to do if they are feeling anxious and afraid.

The signals of stress will vary with students, but they generally emerge as opposite behaviors: withdrawing or acting out. Some students will feel depressed and will become quiet and withdrawn. They may lose interest in eating or socializing, may not be able to sleep, and may suffer from physical ailments such as stomachaches and headaches. They may try to hide physical disabilities and may be experiencing post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD) or other mental health problems.



Other students may try to mask their anxiety by acting overconfident, drawing attention to themselves by being loud and rude, or silly and inattentive in class. They may lose their temper or tease and bully other students. They may join groups that break school rules or break the law.

Adults who experience stress may show it by losing patience quickly, becoming defensive or aggressive, complaining, or crying. Children may demonstrate similar behaviors, but adults may not recognize that the children are stressed. They may see the child as a discipline problem with a “bad attitude.” The instructors should reassure the students that teachers, guidance counselors, and Academic Coaches are aware of the stress of refugee students, will recognize the symptoms of stress, and are available to help them as they cope with adjusting to a new life.

Regardless of the types of stress-related behaviors, the students will be basically trying to figure out how to function in a brand-new environment. They may feel pressured to adapt quickly and succeed academically. They may be frustrated with themselves for not adjusting as fast as they think they should be, or they may think that they are being judged for being “different” and not looking or acting like their peers. The reactions can vary and students will handle pressure in different ways. As long as they know that they can apply strategies to ease the pressure, they can start to manage their stress.

Instructors should be aware that some students in the Refugee Academy are so relieved and happy to be in a safe, stimulating environment that they will not consider themselves to be stressed at all. It is important that the instructors discuss how stress varies for everyone, and no student should feel that they *should* have a lot to stress about. In fact, after participating in the Refugee Academy, the students may not feel nearly as stressed, and will feel prepared to handle any anxious moments.

Note: Module 14 should not be introduced until students in the Refugee Academy have had the chance to talk about the topics in the other Modules, and are comfortable with the instructors and other students. Refugee students have a number of physical and mental health concerns. Instructors should be alert for signs of severe stress, fear, depression or sadness, or the inability of students to cope. Be prepared with the names of school personnel who can be contacted to meet individually with students who appear to be particularly stressed.



2. Daily coping strategies can ease stress.

Stress management takes a variety of forms, but for the students in the Refugee Academy, instructors should recommend daily coping strategies that are easy to carry out.

Instructors can recommend the following that may seem obvious, but may be new concepts to the Academy students:

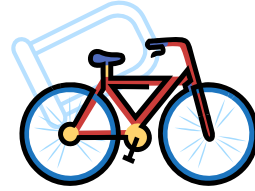
- *Participate in school clubs and extracurricular programs* to stay busy, to meet new friends, and to experience new activities. This recommendation is especially important for students in middle and high schools, as they are often stressed about relationships in school and need opportunities to connect with their peers.



- *Eat a healthy diet.* Students may get pulled into eating fast foods and unhealthy snacks, not only because it is a tempting, new experience, but because the foods are easy to eat and can satisfy hunger and emotional needs. Students may feel like they fit in because they join their new friends at a fast-food restaurant. They may feel content to have a fattening meal, even if it is not the best food for their health. Instructors should discuss how *feeling healthy and fit can contribute to positive attitude and self-esteem*. Recognize that for many refugee students, being able to eat a variety of foods is a significant experience

for them. They may have very little knowledge of a healthy diet and will need guidance. (See *Module 6: Stay Healthy* for more information.)

- *Exercise routinely.* Refugee students may have discovered the infinite variety of forms of entertainment that do not require moving from the couch. Explain that exercise will help students “burn off” stress, and will help with strength and confidence.



Participation in exercise programs and team sports can help with physical and emotional well-being and can result in new friendships and a positive sense of teamwork and accomplishment.

- *Get organized.* Students will have more sense of control of their new environment if their desks and lockers are neat, their school papers at home are in a central location and organized, and if they write down their assignments. Teachers notice dramatic improvements in student behavior when they have organized their time and schoolwork. The Academic Coach can help students become more organized. (See *Module 3 Transportation and Time* and *Module 9 Study Skills*.)
- *Get assistance* when stress seems to be dictating social activities, choices about the future, and feelings about personal worth. Students should be encouraged to talk to the Academic Coach, the school nurse, the guidance counselor, a teacher, or another trusted adult if they constantly feel sad or worried.

ACTIVITIES

ACTIVITY #1: TALKING ABOUT WORRY

Grades K-5 (60 minutes)

In this activity:

Students will have the chance to talk about what worries them.

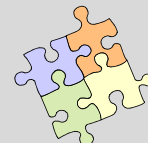
Instructors should not introduce this activity unless the students are comfortable with the adults and students in the room.



- Draw 3 pictures on a board or poster board, with sad, happy, and worried faces.



Discussion Questions



When do you feel sad?

As students answer the questions, suggest possible stressors such as loss of family and friends in native countries, changes in living conditions and family membership and structure, unhappiness of loved ones, and financial and social strains. Remind students that they are not alone, there are others who are coping with the same issues, and the purpose of the Academy is to build support and friendships for the school year.

Allow students to express their feelings. Do not let one person dominate the discussion, but be prepared to listen to students who want to tell their stories. Take the time to let everyone share their concerns, always emphasizing the things that they have to look forward to, and the people who will help them.

When do you feel worried?

The students will indicate that they are worried about many aspects of their new environment.

Highlight specific worries that they may have about school, followed immediately by information that will ease their minds. It is important to mention the worries so that students will not think that they are the only ones with concerns.

Express confidence that they will be able to handle most situations and will eventually not worry about them, but when they need help they should not hesitate to ask for it.

Possible worries that are typical of refugee students in a new school:

- Getting lost or missing the bus
- Being embarrassed and feeling stupid in front of peers
- Experiencing harassment, teasing, and bullying
- Saying the wrong words or doing the wrong thing in class
- Disobeying rules unintentionally
- Undergoing academic pressure from home and school



- Fearing teacher criticism or corporal punishment, based on previous educational experiences
- Feeling insecure about conditions at home
- Coping with health problems, disabilities, developmental or academic lags that make students feel as if they cannot “fit in”

Students in middle and high schools may also worry about:

- Keeping family history private for fear of misunderstandings or repercussions
- Wearing the wrong clothes
- Falling behind in schoolwork or failing classes
- Experiencing rejection by peers or the opposite sex
- Managing family life; being embarrassed by family members
- Being liked by peers while maintaining cultural traditions

When do you feel happy?

- Give students a chance to talk about what they are enjoying about their new lives in America and what they look forward to. It is important to end with this question so that the students can identify the positive aspects of their new lives in America. Point out what they can look forward to in school.

Distribute *Handout 14-1: Show How You Feel*.

- Ask students to illustrate when they are worried and when they are happy.
- Discuss how worries may appear as signals of stress. (See Key Point 1.)
- Discuss possible ways of coping with worry.
- Discuss *specific* individuals in the school and how and when students can contact them.
- Conclude the discussion by exercising in class. Do jumping jacks to burn off stress, practice breathing to calm down, and tell silly jokes to get everyone laughing and relaxed. (Check with the translators about jokes that the students would appreciate.)



ACTIVITY #2: WHAT SHOULD YOU DO?

Grades K-5 (60 minutes)

In this activity:

Instructors will role-play typical student dilemmas that could cause stress.



As the instructors are reacting to situations, their responses should be over-the-top, dramatic reactions. Then repeat the scenario with calm, stress-reducing reactions.

Ask students to pick the best way to handle the situation without getting “stressed out.”

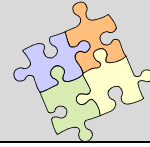
- Two instructors should act out each situation. One instructor is a student or teacher who initiates the situation, the second instructor is a refugee student who reacts. Most of the role playing can be done nonverbally.
- The first reaction should be very dramatic and loaded with signals of stress (yelling, defensiveness, irritability, crying, etc.).
- The second reaction should be a demonstration of how to handle the situation with calm and confidence, and should provide ideas about how to get help.

The situations should be familiar to the students:

- A fellow student steals a ball on the playground.
- A student is called upon by the teacher and is unprepared.
- A student misses the bus.
- A student is unclear about the teacher’s directions and the bell is ringing.
- A student does not have a lunch card or money for lunch.
- A student is teased about her/his clothing.
- A student cannot participate in an activity because of religious reasons.
- A student wants more trustworthy friends.



Discussion Questions



What should you always remember when you are starting to worry and get stressed?

- Friends and teachers will help.
- Students who are mean and insensitive do not represent the entire student body and should be ignored or reported.
- Simple stress-reduction techniques can help alleviate stress.
- If students think ahead of time how they are going to handle situations, they will feel less stressed. For example, students may decide to walk away from students who are bothering them, or to approach a teacher to discuss problems with class work. Once those plans are in place, students should begin to relax.
- Encourage students to have patience. When they meet with their Refugee Academy instructors and classmates later in the school year, they will discover that a lot of what they worried about is no longer concerning them.

Grades 6-8, 9-12 (60 minutes)

In this activity:

Instructors will role-play typical student dilemmas that could cause stress.

As the instructors are reacting to situations, their responses should be over-the-top, dramatic reactions. Then repeat the scenario with calm, stress-reducing reactions.

Ask students to pick the best way to handle the situation without getting “stressed out.”



- Two instructors should act out each situation. One instructor is a student or teacher who initiates the situation, the second instructor is a refugee student who reacts. Most of the role playing can be done nonverbally.
 - The first reaction should be very dramatic and loaded with signals of stress (yelling, defensiveness, irritability, crying, etc.).

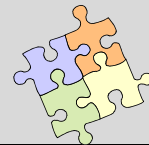
- The second reaction should be a demonstration of how to handle the situation with calm and confidence, and should provide ideas about how to get help.

The situations should be familiar to the students:

- A student is called upon by the teacher and is unprepared.
- A student's locker will not open.
- A student misses the bus.
- A student is unclear about the homework assignment and the bell is ringing.
- A student does not have a lunch card or money for lunch.
- A student is asked a question about their native country that shows lack of knowledge or respect.
- A student is teased about his or her accent or clothing.
- A student cannot participate in an activity because of religious reasons.
- A student wants more trustworthy friends.



Discussion Questions



What should you always remember when you are starting to worry and get stressed?

- Friends and teachers will help.
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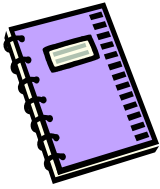
ACTIVITY #3: VIDEO

Grades K-5, 6-8, 9-12 (15 minutes)



Show the video ***Refugee Student Interviews***.

Use the ***Guide to the Videos*** for introducing the video and for follow-up discussion.



JOURNAL TOPIC

Grades K-5

Draw or write about people you can talk to about your worries.

Grades 6-8

Draw or write about how you will handle problems that cause you to be worried. Who can you talk to about your worries?

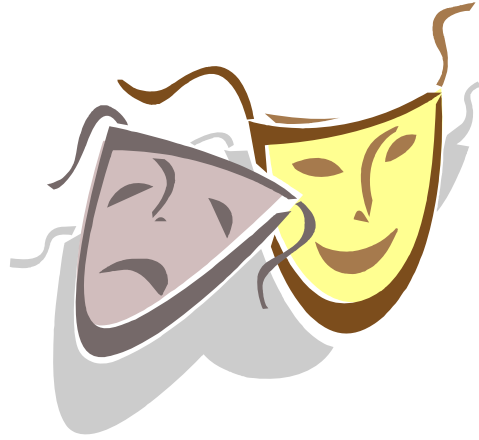
Grades 9-12

Draw or write about how you handle stress and whether you need to change your behaviors. Who can you talk to about your worries?



SUGGESTED ADDITIONAL ACTIVITIES

- Participate in outdoor or gymnasium stress-reducing physical exercises (tai chi, yoga, dancing).
- Invite refugee students who have been in the school for over a year to talk about their experiences in adapting to the new school, and how they handled stress.
- Show the students an entertaining movie (or video cartoon) that is relaxing and funny. Encourage them to select entertainment that is not going to give them added stress.
- Invite a yoga or meditation instructor (or a qualified student in the class) to teach students how to sit quietly to calm down and focus.
- Play music that is soothing and relaxing and encourage students to draw, dance, sculpt, or participate in other forms of art that are focused on creativity and relaxation. If possible, take students to a pottery studio or ceramics shop to work on an art project.
- Discuss the importance of laughter in coping with stress and finish with the Ha Ha exercise. One student says “ha.” The second student says “ha ha.” The third student says “ha ha ha” and so forth. Keep going around the room, encouraging students to speed up. Laughter is guaranteed.



WHAT MAKES YOU HAPPY?

WHAT MAKES YOU SAD?