

# SYRIA

SYRIAN REFUGEES – A GUIDE FOR EDUCATORS (Spring 2016)

# REFUGEE VS MIGRANT

- A refugee is someone who "owing to a well-founded fear of being persecuted for reasons of race, religion, nationality, membership of a particular social group or political opinion, is outside the country of his nationality, and is unable to, or owing to such fear, is unwilling to avail himself of the protection of that country."
- Refugees have to move if they are to save their lives or preserve their freedom and they have no protection from their own state.
- Migrants, especially economic migrants, choose to move in order to improve the future prospects of themselves and their families.

Adapted from the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees, <http://www.unhcr.org/pages/49c3646c125.html>



Vs



# SYRIA CRISIS: PAST FACTS



- The government struggles to address the effects of international sanctions, widespread infrastructure damage, diminished domestic consumption and production, reduced and high inflation.
- During 2014 the number of people in need inside Syria increased from 9.3 million to 12.2 million, and the number of Syrian refugees increased from 2.2 million to more than 3.3 million.
- Most Syrian refugees remain in the Middle East, in Turkey, Lebanon, Jordan, Iraq, and Egypt; about 10 % of Syrian refugees have fled to Europe.
- Since the Syrian civil war began in 2010, more than 250,000 people have been killed.

Adapted from the World Book On Line @: <http://worldbookonline.com/student/article?id=ar543520&st=syria#tab=homepage>

# GEOGRAPHY

- Syria and Canada are more than 10,000 kilometers apart.
- Syria is in southwest Asia in the heart of the Middle East.
- The Mediterranean coastal plain is backed by a low range of hills, followed by a vast interior desert plateau.
- Most people live near the coast or near the Euphrates River—which brings life to the desert plateau.
- Damascus, capital of this desert country, was built on an oasis and is said to be the world's oldest continuously inhabited settlement.





Mountains



Steppe



Bedouin Tent in the Desert



Mediterranean Coastline



Capital of Damascus



Aleppo Pre War



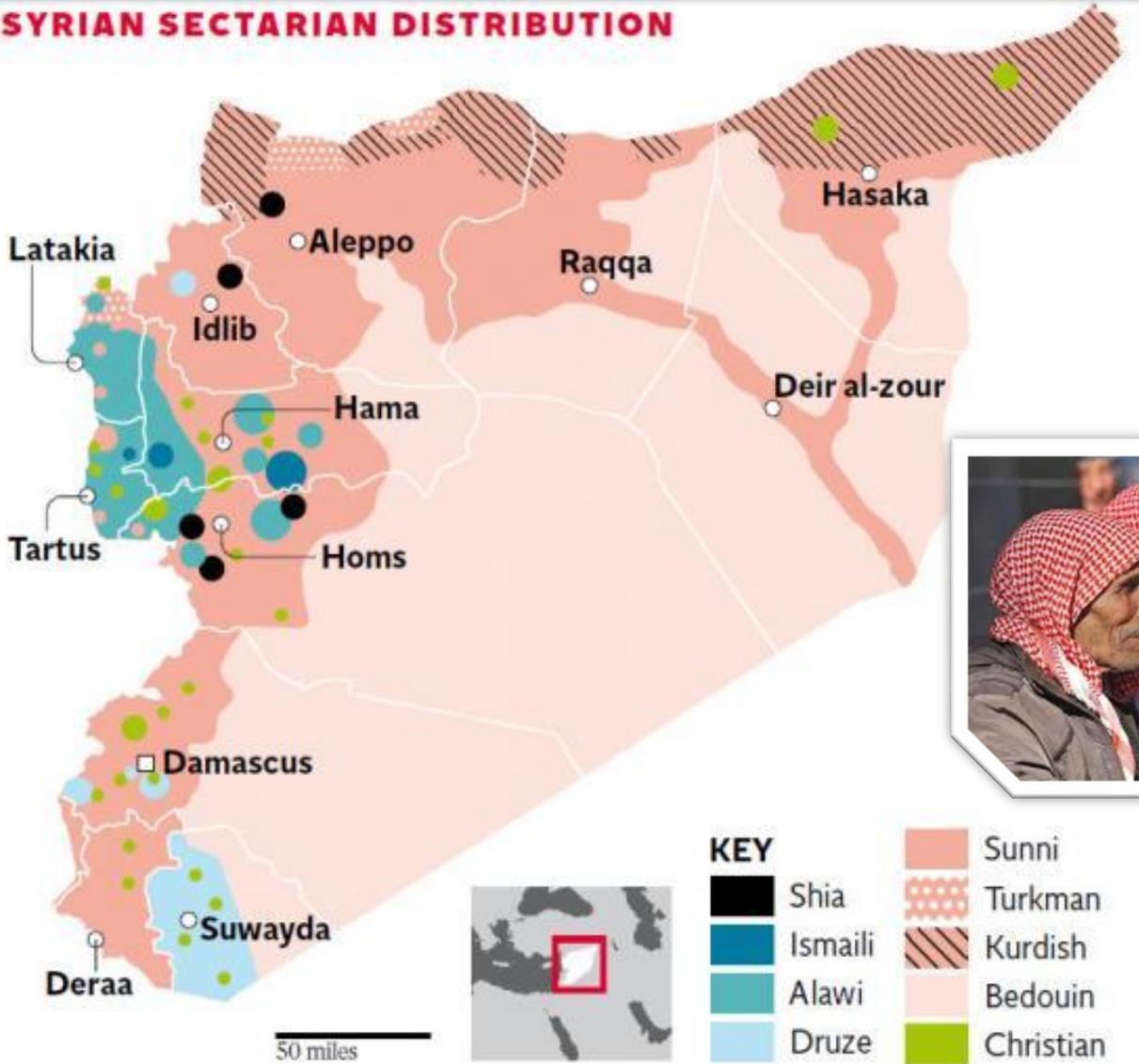
Aleppo Now

# DIVERSE CULTURE & SOCIETY

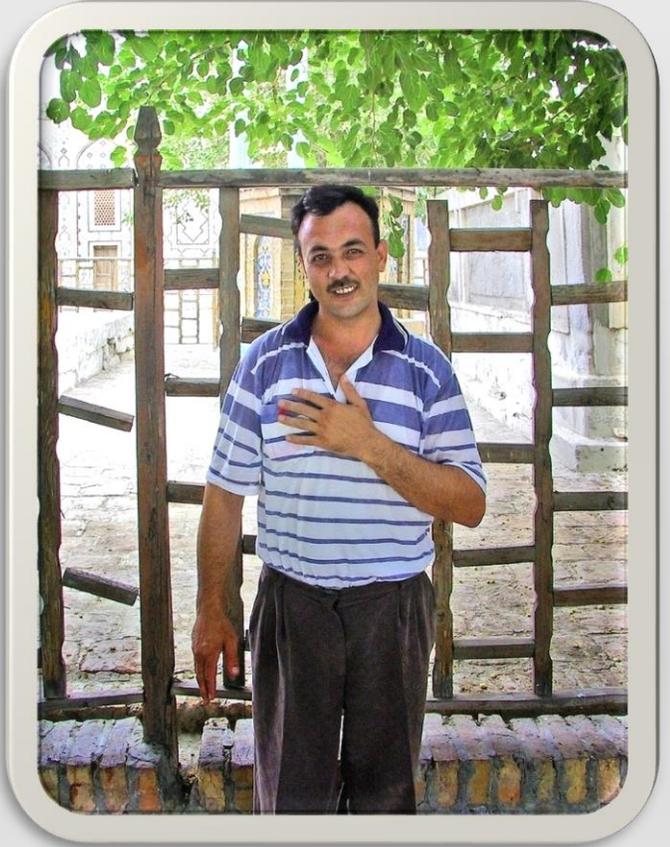
- According to *Global Affairs Canada*,
  - 75 % of Syrians are Muslims, 13 % are Christian and 12 % are of different religious sects.
  - 90% of Syrians are Arabs. Other ethnic groups include Kurds, Armenians and Assyrians
- Although Syria is a Muslim country, Islamic law does not govern it. Syrians are more connected with their Arab heritage rather than their religion.
- In Syria, men and women have equal access to the labour market and they receive equal pay.



# SYRIAN SECTARIAN DISTRIBUTION



THE WASHINGTON INSTITUTE FOR NEAR EAST POLICY

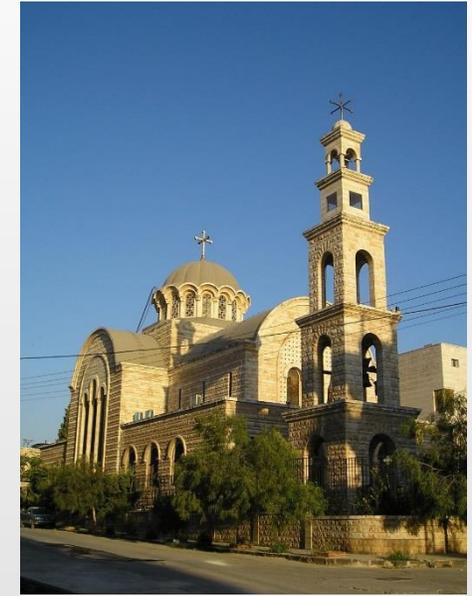




Pre/Post War Mosque in Aleppo



Mosque in Damascus



Greek Orthodox Church in Hama

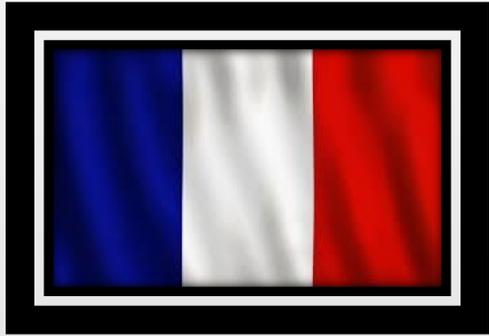


Crusader Castle in Homs Gap



Syriac Christian Church in Damascus

# Political Change



1918-1945

Syria under French Control



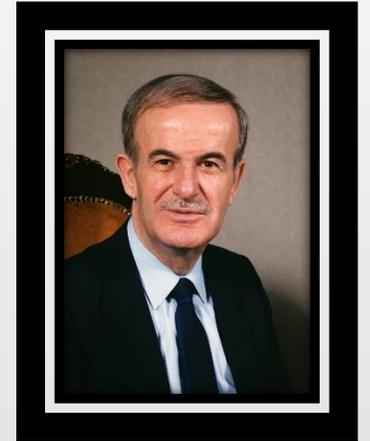
1946

Syria declared its independence



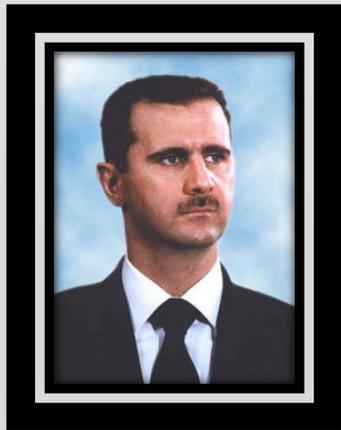
1963

Socialist Arab Republic Established



1970

Hafez al-Assad becomes Syria's President



2000

Bashar al-Assad follows his father as Syria's President



2010

Arab Spring Uprising begins



Current

# SYRIA'S ECONOMY

## Pre War:

- Prior to the turmoil Syria implemented liberalized economic policies.
- Agriculture employed 15% of Syria's work force growing: wheat, barley, cotton, lentils, chickpeas, olives, sugar beets; beef, mutton, eggs, poultry, milk
- Syria's most valuable natural Industries were agriculture and petroleum.
- Service industries accounted for approximately 50% of Syria's economy. These included wholesale and retail trade, tourism, and government services.



## Post War:

- Syria's economy declined by 62% from 2010 to 2014.
- Syria's economy continues to deteriorate amid the ongoing conflict.



# FAMILY LIFE

- Syrian life centres on the extended family, with several generations living together.
- An older male, usually the father or grandfather, has the ultimate authority in the family.
- Children are highly valued as a blessing from God. The more children one has, the more fortunate one is considered,
- The bond between mother and son (especially the oldest son) is particularly strong.



Adapted from U.S. Library of Congress, <http://countrystudies.us/syria/29.htm>

Adapted fro World Culture Encyclopedia @ <http://www.everyculture.com/Sa-Th/Syria.html#ixzz48ZdW0MVM>



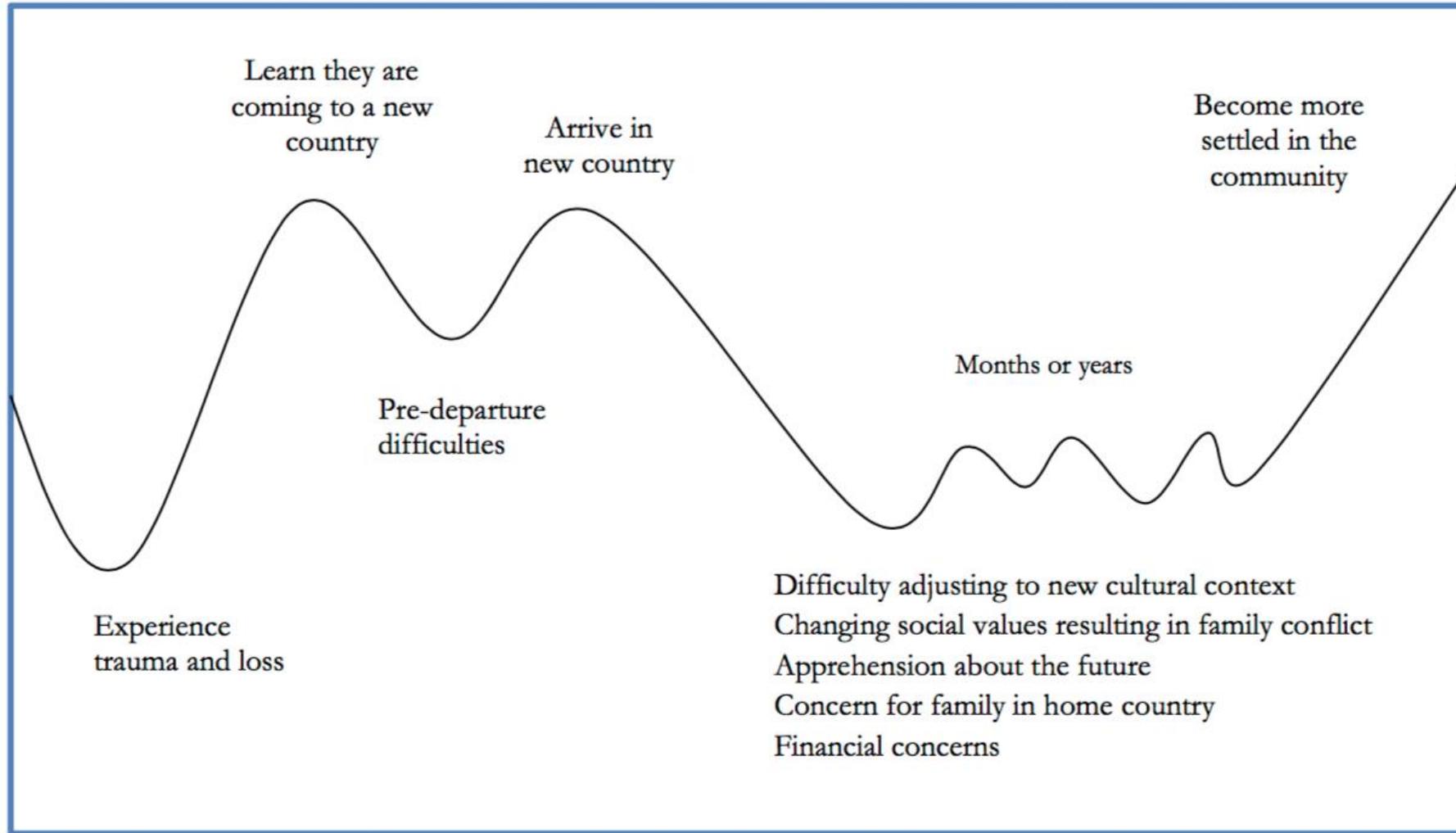
# EDUCATION

- The first six years of Syrian education are mandatory and free.
- Three years of general and/or vocational secondary schooling education are offered though not mandatory.
- Post secondary education is rigorous and free, though fees may be charged for some courses.

Adapted from *Special Report from World Education Services* (2016), <http://www.wes.org/ca/SyriaProfile/SyriaCountryProfile.pdf>



The course of adjustment during resettlement is filled with a series of highs and lows:



Source: Adapted from "Count me in!: A resource to support ESL students with refugee experience in schools," Minister for Education, Literacy Secretariat, Government of South Australia, 2007.

Source: Students from a Refugee Background – A Guide for Teachers and Schools, 2015/09 p.15

# STAGES OF CULTURE SHOCK FOR REFUGEES

Stage 1: Optimism, excitement

Stage 2: Culture shock

Stage 3: Superficial Adjustment

Stage 4: Frustration, depression

Stage 5: Acceptance of and identification with host culture leading to integration



# WHAT SCHOOLS CAN DO TO HELP?



Photos courtesy of VSB

# ROLES OF SCHOOL STAFF: PRINCIPALS

*To provide leadership that:*

- creates a safe and caring place,
- links students with community resources,
- celebrates diversity,
- Invites family/sibling participation,
- promotes inclusion, and
- facilitates individualized instruction.



# ROLES OF SCHOOL STAFF: COUNSELLORS

- Support refugee students dealing with trauma/social/emotional issues as required.
- Assist with referral/access to youth mental health services and other community support agencies.



# ROLES OF SCHOOL STAFF: TEACHERS/SUPPORT STAFF

ELL/Classroom Teachers, and Support Staff help refugee students:

- adjust to a new way of life and a new country,
- learn English, and
- achieve success in school.



# SETTLEMENT WORKERS IN SCHOOLS (SWIS) & MULTICULTURAL LIAISON WORKERS (MCLW)

## **SWIS:**

- Provide information and support service to refugee students, families, and school staffs.
- Smooth refugee transition into a new school and new community.

## **MCLW:**

- Help refugees bridge linguistic and cultural differences.
- Liaise between school, family, and community.



# A FEW CAUTIONS:



Some school activities may not be appropriate for new refugees due to the trauma/chaos they may have experienced.

- Show and Tell or Current Events topics may cause a painful reminder of what was experienced or lost.
- For some refugee students words like “detention” or “summer camp” may have a different connotation than that intended.
- Volunteer interpreters and/or buddies are essential but may at times be manipulative.
- BC’s re-designed curricula focuses on cooperative learning and critical thinking and differs greatly from Syrian educational practices.
- Family life curricula will be a sensitive topic.

Adapted from: Students from Refugee Backgrounds: A Guide 2009, p.24



Show and Tell



Detention



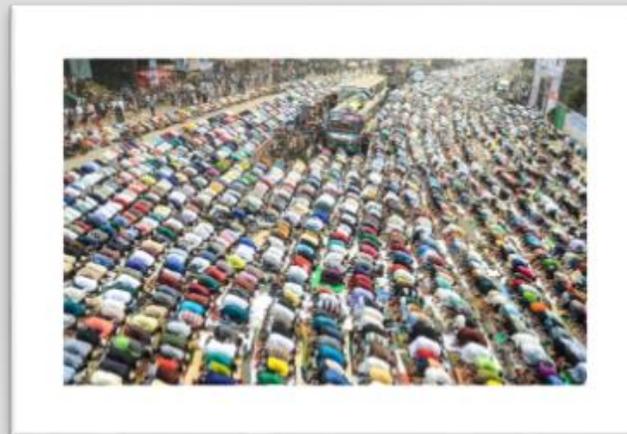
Camps



Buddies

# INTERESTING THINGS WE HAVE LEARNED ABOUT OUR NEW REFUGEES...

- Dietary differences
- Prayer practices
- Code of Conduct
- Notices going home



# DID YOU KNOW THAT...

- girls may be required to wear a hijab,
- girls may be held back from co-ed PE classes,
- boy and girls may be sensitive re assigned co-ed seating,
- boys may be allowed more freedom than girls,
- music classes may be prohibited.

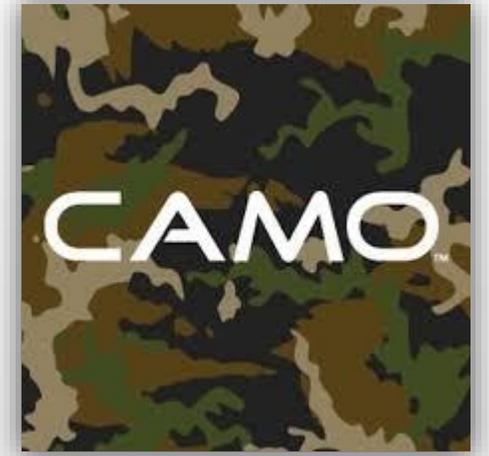


# POSSIBLE SCHOOL BASED TRIGGERS:

- adults in uniform,
- bells, buzzers and safety drills,
- loud, harsh language,
- cultural differences in body language,
- festivals and celebrations.



Adapted from: Students from Refugee Backgrounds: A Guide 2009, p.19



# IN YOUR CLASSROOM...

- Be welcoming.
- Choose seating carefully.
- Avoid spotlighting a new refugee.
- Help build bridges.
- Create hope.



Adapted from: *The ESL Kids in My Class*, Delta School District, 2008, p.8

# SOME TIPS FOR TEACHERS

- Get to know your refugee's story as they are ready to share it.
- Speak slowly and clearly.
- You may want to use school based assessments in addition to those from the DRPC.
- Allow time for social, emotional academic adjustment.
- Avoid making assumptions about a refugee's skills, knowledge or attitudes.
- New refugees may be shy about asking to use the washroom.
- Look for non-verbal cues re anxiety, fear etc.
- Use your settlement/multicultural liaison workers for support.



# SOME RED FLAGS

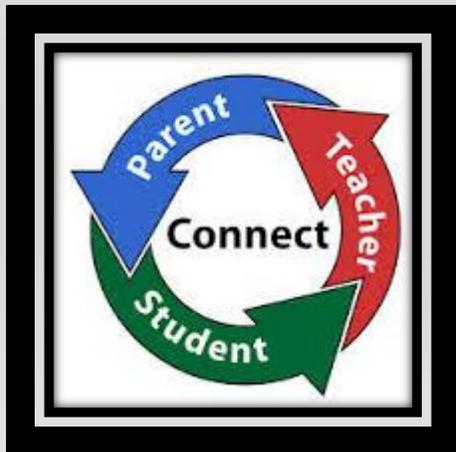
Be sensitive to:

- physical isolation behaviour,
- cognitive disengagement,
- frequent tardiness, absences, or complaints of feeling sick, or
- a lack of academic progress.



# SUSTAINING SUPPORT – WHAT NEXT?

- check-in frequently
- use buddy activities
- encourage participation
- communicate home



# USE THE REFUGEE EXPERIENCE AS AN ENRICHMENT OPPORTUNITY

Explore and compare Canadian/Syrian :

- weather
- holidays
- plants and animals
- historical timelines
- customs and traditions
- governments
- Economies
- Honoring and understanding the local histories of the three host nations: Musqueam, Squamish and Tsleil-Waututh



# SHARE FAMILIAR WORDS AND PHRASES

Hi	السلام عليكم	Al Sah-lahm Alaykum
Good-bye	مع السلامة	Ma'a salama
Thanks	شكراً	Shukran
You're welcome	أهلاً بك	Ah-lan bek
Washroom	مرحاض	Merhad
How are you?	كيف حالك؟	Kayf haalak?
Food	طعام	ta'am
Teacher	مدرس \ مدرسة	Mudarris (male) Mudarrisa (female)



# ENSURING SUCCESSFUL TRANSITION

*Consider using:*

- *welcome-wagon* strategies,
- an assigned “point person”,
- school specific strategies/structures,
- targeted Pro D for Staff,
- extended ELL service
- shared existing ELL time, and
- the few Arabic learning materials available within the DRPC.

*Acknowledge and appreciate the personal:*

- time
- effort, and
- rewards

that will be required and realized in making your student's transition a success!



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