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**AN INVESTIGATION OF THE EXPERIENCES OF SYRIAN REFUGEE STUDENTS IN  
CANADIAN ELEMENTARY SCHOOLS: A MIXED-METHODS STUDY**

by

**Mohamad Ayoub**

A Dissertation  
Submitted to the Faculty of Graduate Studies  
through the Faculty of Education  
in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements for  
the Degree of Doctor of Philosophy at the  
University of Windsor

Windsor, Ontario, Canada

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An Investigation of the Experiences of Syrian Refugee Students in Canadian Elementary  
Schools: A Mixed-Methods Study

by

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April 13, 2020

## **DECLARATION OF ORIGINALITY**

I hereby certify that I am the sole author of this thesis and that no part of this thesis has been published or submitted for publication.

I certify that, to the best of my knowledge, my thesis does not infringe upon anyone's copyright nor violate any proprietary rights and that any ideas, techniques, quotations, or any other material from the work of other people included in my thesis, published or otherwise, are fully acknowledged in accordance with the standard referencing practices. Furthermore, to the extent that I have included copyrighted material that surpasses the bounds of fair dealing within the meaning of the Canada Copyright Act, I certify that I have obtained a written permission from the copyright owner(s) to include such material(s) in my thesis and have included copies of such copyright clearances to my appendix.

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## ABSTRACT

The purpose of this mixed-methods study is to investigate the experiences of Syrian refugee students in elementary public schools in a southwestern region of Ontario, Canada. This region has experienced an influx of Syrian refugee families since 2015 as a result of the war in Syria. Article 12 of the Convention on the Rights of the Child, which states that children have the right to express their opinions on matters that affect their lives and for those opinions to be considered, was used as a frame to guide this study. Students and parents were given an opportunity to share their views about the children's education in Canada.

Data collection consisted of two types: a questionnaire completed by the students (quantitative component) and a semi-structured one-on-one interview with students and parents (qualitative component). Students completed 75 questionnaires, and I conducted 10 one-on-one interviews with students and 10 one-on-one interviews with parents. Data from the questionnaire was analyzed using descriptive and inferential statistical techniques, and data from the interviews was analyzed using an open-coding technique to identify themes and patterns. The results from data analysis were then merged to compare and examine.

Most of the students in this study had their education interrupted or missed years of education prior to resettlement in Canada. Most students are experiencing some difficulty with learning due to a gap in their education as a result of missed school opportunities prior to resettlement in Canada. The students are having positive socio-cultural experiences in school in Canada and are happy with educators' welcoming and supportive approach. The parents are doing their best with school involvement and parental engagement to make meaningful contributions to their children's education. Based on the findings, this study proposes recommendations to support the educational experiences of Syrian refugee students.

**Key words:** Syrian refugee students; resettlement; Canadian school experience

## DEDICATION

I dedicate this dissertation to all my former, current, and future students that I have had the honour of working with and supporting. I also dedicate this dissertation to all the refugee children in the world who are struggling with their basic human rights and needs, including formal education. All children, regardless of any background or social difference, deserve an education program that facilitates their growth and that is reflective of their everyday experiences. My vision of a successful program is one that provides inclusive education and supports students with their educational, social, and emotional aspirations.

I also dedicate this dissertation to all the educators and professors who taught me, supported me, and believed in me. I am grateful for the opportunities they provided me to grow as a student, researcher, and professional.

I am honoured to dedicate this dissertation to my amazing parents Najib and Aziza Ayoub. Although my parents experienced many pre-migration and post-migration challenges and never had the opportunity to continue their education, they held high hopes for my education in Canada and were dedicated and committed to supporting me with my school experiences and a professional career. Although they were unable to provide educational support, my parents provided the necessary encouragement and educational resources needed, and they taught me resilience and dedication.

I am honoured to dedicate this dissertation to my wonderful wife Mouna Chami, and our beautiful young daughters Batoula, Rayhana, and Yasmina. Without their support, encouragement, and love it would not have been possible to successfully complete this dissertation. They have been by my side the entire journey and I am very grateful for all their love and support!

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## **LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS**

Amnesty International Canada (AIC)

Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC)

English as a Second Language (ESL)

Government of Canada (GC)

Government of Canada Department of Justice (GC JUS)

Government of Ontario (GO)

Letter of Information (LI)

Research Ethics Board (REB)

Settlement Workers in Schools (SWIS)

Tri-Council Policy Statement 2 (TCPS2)

United Nations (UN)

United Nations Committee on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC)

United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR)

United Nations International Children's Emergency Fund (UNICEF)

United Nations Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights (UN OHCHR)

World Culture Encyclopedia (WCE)

## CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION

### Introduction

Due to armed conflicts and natural disasters, thousands of people worldwide are forced to flee their homes in search of safety and protection. According to the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR), there are currently 70.8 million refugees worldwide living in dire conditions after displacement from their homes (UNHCR Canada, 2020, Home section). Defined by the United Nations (UN), a refugee “is a person who has fled his or her country of origin and is unable or unwilling to return there on account of a well-founded fear of persecution for reasons of race, religion, nationality, membership of a particular social group, or political opinion” (UN, 2014, Historic Archives section, para. 11).

The world’s major refugee populations include Palestinians, Afghans, Iraqis, Somalis, and most recently Syrians, due to the Syrian refugee crisis (UN, 2015, Refugees: The Numbers section). An ongoing war in Syria that started in 2011 has forced millions of Syrians to flee their homes leaving them internally and externally displaced and in search of refuge (Amnesty International, 2019; UNHCR Canada, 2015).

Canada holds a humanitarian tradition on the global stage and sponsors thousands of refugees every year to resettle in Canada. By doing so, Canada “saves lives and provides stability to those fleeing persecution who have no hope of relief” (Government of Canada [GC], 2015, Refugee System section, para. 5). In recent years, Canada has sponsored, and continues to sponsor, thousands of Syrian refugees to resettle in Canada. According to the GC (2018), Canada admitted 56,260 Syrian refugees between 2015 to 2018.

The province of Ontario has welcomed thousands of Syrian refugees and is one of Canada’s leading provinces/territories in welcoming Syrian families (Ontario Citizenship and Immigration, 2018). Ontario takes more refugees than other Canadian provinces/territories for

two main reasons. First, Ontario's diversity provides social and economic strengths. According to the Minister of Citizenship and Immigration of Ontario, "Ontario was built on immigration, and diversity has always been an important part of our culture, heritage and economic success. In the years to come, immigration will continue to play a critical role in our future prosperity" (Government of Ontario [GO], 2018, Our Foundation for Tomorrow: Ontario's Immigration Strategy section, para. 1). Second, Ontario plays a strong role on the international stage in welcoming newcomers and works in partnership with Canada's federal government to bring in immigrants and refugees to Ontario. According to the GO (2018), Ontario and the federal government have developed a new Canada-Ontario Immigration Agreement (COIA). This agreement "provides a framework that will permit a more collaborative partnership" with the federal government and allow the province of Ontario "to respond to the current geopolitical climate and its effect on patterns of immigration" (para. 4).

During 2015-2018, the province of Ontario welcomed 24,715 Syrian refugees (GC, 2018). Hundreds of Syrian refugee families resettled in a city in the southwest region of Ontario where this research took place (Southwest Ontario Community Services Database, 2017). According to the GC (2018), a total of 1,525 Syrian refugees resettled in this city between 2015 to 2018. Due to this large influx, the Syrian Canadian population in this particular city is on the rise.

Once resettled and attending school in Canada, Syrian newcomer students begin a challenging process of integration and adapting to the school system. This dissertation research investigated the experiences of Syrian refugee students as they navigate this process in elementary English public schools in this Canadian city that has experienced a recent influx of Syrian newcomer families. As reported by this board of education in the city in question, by June

2019, the total number of Syrian newcomer students who meet this study's selection criteria (Grades 4-8) in this board was 425 (IT Department systems analyst, personal communication, August 15, 2019).

### **An Overview of the Syrian Context**

With millions of Syrians displaced from home internally in Syria and millions externally displaced after forced migration to other countries, including Canada, it is important to elaborate on the Syrian context.

**Demographics.** Syria is a country located in Western Asia in the Middle East, and Damascus, the largest city in Syria, is the capital city. Syria has one of the oldest civilizations on earth, and Damascus is home to one of the world's oldest inhabited cities (Cultural Atlas, 2018). Syria's area of 71,000 square miles (183,900 square kilometers) is mostly desert, with hot, dry summers, and mild winters (World Culture Encyclopedia [WCE], 2018).

Syria's population is just over 18 million people (Worldometers, 2018), and there are approximately 1,000,000 Iraqi refugees and 500,000 Palestinian refugees living there (Global Research, 2018). Syria's population is 90.3% Arab and between three and nine percent Kurd (WCE, 2018). There are also many ethnic minorities including Armenians, Greeks, Assyrians, Circassians, Mandeans and Turkomen (Cultural Atlas, 2018). Syria's official language is Arabic, which is spoken by approximately 90% of the population; however, due to colonial influence, French and English are used by some Syrians in interactions with foreigners and tourists (WCE, 2018).

**Religion.** Islam is the main religion followed by the majority of Syrians, and Islamic values play a major role in societal customs, culture, and everyday life (Cultural Atlas, 2018; WCE, 2018). According to WCE (2018), 74% of the Syrian population is Sunni Muslim, 16% is



Alawite, Druze, and other Muslim sects, 10% is Christian, and small Jewish communities are located in Damascus, Al Qamishli, and Aleppo.

**Family tradition.** The importance of family, both immediate and extended, is everywhere visible in the lives of Syrian people. The family structure is the main source of support and provides family members with a sense of belonging. Usually within this family structure, young Syrians live with their parents until marriage, and the elderly are taken in and cared for by their children (WCE, 2018). Parents provide their children with a great deal of affection and there is usually a strong bond between mother and elder son (WCE, 2018). A great deal of respect is held for the elderly, and in social interaction, the elderly are given precedence and are highly regarded (Cultural Atlas, 2018). Syrian people try to help their friends, trusting that their friends will return the favour when they need support (Cultural Atlas, 2018).

**Politics and the Syrian crisis.** Concerning politics and the complex Syrian conflict, after revolts in Egypt and Tunisia known as the Arab Spring, protests broke out in Syria in 2011 against the Syrian regime (History, 2018; Nations Online Project, 2018). Protestors were “protesting against alleged human rights violations committed by the government” (Cultural Atlas, 2018, Syrian Culture section, para. 13). By the summer of 2011, the Free Syrian Army (FSA) formed to fight for Syria’s liberation from the Syrian regime led by Bashar Al-Assad, Syria’s president (Cultural Atlas, 2018). Taking advantage of the instability, “Islamist extremists have also joined in the conflict, fighting both the government and the FSA at different times” (Cultural Atlas, 2018, Syrian Culture section, para. 13). This has contributed to the escalation, violence, and complexity of the Syrian war that is still ongoing.

The Syrian war has had devastating effects on the Syrian people, especially Syrian children. On a daily basis, “millions of Syrian children are living with the chaos of war. Innocent

boys and girls are growing up in fear for their own lives and the lives of those they love” (Save the Children, 2019, Syria section, para. 3). Because of the war, some sources have reported that tens of thousands of people have died, 1.2 million people injured, more than 6.3 million people internally displaced in Syria, and 4.9 million people registered as refugees (The World Bank, 2018). According to Amnesty International (2019), the Syrian war has “caused the deaths of more than 400,000 people and displaced more than 11 million people within and outside Syria” (Syria 2017/2018 section, para. 1).

The impact of the Syrian war on the country’s civilians has led to an international humanitarian and refugee crisis (History, 2018). While millions of Syrians were forced by the circumstances to relocate within the country, millions of refugees escaped the conflict to neighbouring countries Turkey, Jordan, Lebanon, Iraq, and Egypt, and thousands have sought refuge or have been sponsored for resettlement in Europe and other countries including Canada (GC, 2018; History, 2018). By September 2018, “5.6 million Syrians have taken refuge outside the country, the majority in neighboring countries” (Human Rights Watch, 2019). Syrian children have been largely impacted by this refugee crisis. According to the United Nations International Children’s Emergency Fund (UNICEF; 2019), “an estimated 2.6 million children remain displaced inside Syria, while some 2.5 million children are living as refugees, in neighbouring countries” (Syrian Crisis section, para. 2).

**Education.** Primary education is mandatory in Syria. Most schools in Syria are operated by the state and there are some schools operated by the UN relief program (WCE, 2018). Syria also has universities in Damascus, Aleppo, and Latakia, including teacher training and education programs (WCE, 2018).

The war in Syria has had a devastating effect on education. Many children and post-secondary students are unable to access education, and many children have suffered major educational setbacks (The World Bank, 2018). The destruction of many schools as a result of the war, combined with the displacement of thousands of Syrian children, has led to the disruption of education for millions of Syrian children, and currently, “55% of school-age children are out of school” (Save the Children, 2019, Syria section, para. 4). As described by Save the Children (2018), “On a daily basis children [Syrian] are being forced to drop out of school because their classrooms have been attacked, their teachers have fled, or they have been forced to move to areas without access to education” (Our Response in Syria section, para. 2). This has resulted in missed years of education or interrupted education for many of Syria’s children, and approximately two million Syrian children are currently out of school (Save the Children, 2019; UNICEF, 2019).

### **Statement of the Problem**

As an educator and vice-principal who has worked in a very diverse and multicultural public school in this southwestern city of Ontario, I worked with many refugee students and families who arrived at our school from different countries. Between 2015-2019, we had a significant influx of Syrian refugee families and welcomed many Syrian newcomer students to school. The current public school I work at as a vice-principal – in the same public board of education – has started to welcome Syrian refugee families as well.

Many of the Syrian newcomer students I have worked with so far lived in a refugee camp for a prolonged period or were born in a refugee camp before resettlement in Canada. They arrive with little or no formal education experiences due to limited schooling and education resources in refugee camps. Some students have also had traumatic experiences from the war and displacement from home leading to life in a refugee camp. These experiences align with the

literature that discusses the many challenges refugee children face related to health, well-being, traumatic experiences, and educational setbacks (Ayoub & Zhou, 2016; Ferfolja & Vickers, 2010; Segal & Mayadas, 2005; Vongkhamphra, Davis, & Adem, 2011).

I learned from students and educators that some of the Syrian newcomer students are experiencing challenges as it relates to their learning and adapting to the expectations of formal school here in Canada. Some of the educators working with the students are not familiar with the refugee experience and are facing difficulties in understanding and meeting the students' needs.

In addition, a number of Syrian newcomer parents, having limited English proficiency and school experiences themselves, told me that it is difficult for them to support their own children's learning. The parents also lack the understanding of how the school system in Canada works, which makes it difficult for them to participate in their children's education program and make meaningful contributions unless guided and supported by the school. The parents also spoke about their own challenges with adapting to and integrating into Canadian society, learning a new language, and finding a job. These stressors, combined with the children's needs, create a challenging and difficult situation for the parents to navigate and overcome. The challenges Syrian newcomer parents are faced with in Canada also confirm findings in the literature that document the challenges faced by refugee families related to settlement, integration, post-traumatic stress, and education in the host country (Ayoub & Zhou, 2016; Ehntholt & Yule, 2006; Pine & Drachman, 2005; Roxas & Roy, 2012; Segal & Mayadas, 2005; Taylor & Sidhu, 2012).

With many Syrian refugee students attending elementary English public schools in this city, educators are faced with the challenge of providing an education program that is responsive to the newcomer students' needs. After dealing with pre-migration challenges and traumatic

experiences, Syrian refugee students also face additional challenges in Canada related to settlement, integration, and school-related learning.

My daily school work experience with the newcomer students and educators working with them put me in a position to learn about the children's challenges with integration and learning as well as the challenges faced by educators to provide a program that meets the needs of the students. Also, my work with the children's parents put me in a position to understand the things that are working well for them as well as the aspects they are finding challenging in terms of supporting their children's education. This research allowed me to formally and systematically investigate the experiences of Syrian refugee students in elementary English public schools in this city and shed light on those experiences in order to help better meet their needs.

### **Purpose of the Study**

The experiences of Syrian refugee students in Canada need to be explored in order to hear their perspectives and help advance the education programs offered to them so they can experience educational success. The purpose of this mixed methods research is to investigate the experiences and challenges of Syrian refugee students in elementary English public schools. This study was guided by a children's human rights participatory framework articulated in Article 12 of the UN's Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC) that is ratified by Canada. Article 12 states that children have the right to be heard and the right for their perspectives and views to be considered and to have weight on matters and decisions that affect their lives. Based on Article 12, newcomer students have the right to participate in their education with aspects relating to curriculum, policy, and education programs. Therefore, this study aims to provide Syrian newcomer students with an opportunity to share their views, perspectives, stories, and school experiences.

Guerrero and Tinkler (2010) and Smyth (2013) emphasized that in order to help assess the performance of an education system, it is important to hear from newcomer students because refugee children's voices are rarely heard and there is limited research on the perspectives of students from cultural minority groups. The findings from this study have elucidated students' successes, challenges, and difficulties with learning. The findings have also led to a deeper understanding of the participants' school experiences.

Since the students have experienced some challenges with learning and other aspects of school, by participating in this research, it was hoped that they would be empowered by learning how to advocate for themselves and by developing essential self-advocacy skills. It was also anticipated that this research would empower the students by examining their strengths and resiliency. Despite the many challenges they encounter, refugee students are often resilient and have the capacity to succeed with their learning (Weekes, Phelan, Macfarlane, Pinson, & Francis, 2011). However, as pointed out by Ogilvie and Fuller (2016), the resilience of refugee students is not always considered:

It is commonly assumed that refugee students will have suffered trauma associated with displacement and developmental delays related to interrupted access to education; however, it is often not considered that refugee students have developed strategies and resilience to cope with difficulties. (p. 90)

I also know, from my personal experiences of immigration and resettlement in Canada, that even though I faced many challenges, there were opportunities to develop resiliency and coping skills. By analyzing the students' strengths and resiliency, this study will help educators and other professionals to see them through a different lens and will provide a useful resource.

Syrian refugee parents were also empowered by sharing their perspectives related to their children's education in Canada.

Based on the research findings, this study offers recommendations and strategies for educators and the school community to support and further enhance the educational experiences of Syrian newcomer students in Canada.

### **Research Questions**

Choosing a good research question(s) helps guide the study in the right direction to understand the research problem. Luker (2008), notes that “a good research question, properly answered, advances the state of play in one or more intellectual conversations that are already going on in some part of the scholarly world that matters to you” (p. 65).

To gain insightful information on the students' experiences, the following overarching mixed methods question and sub-questions guided this study:

What are the educational experiences and challenges of Syrian newcomer students in elementary English public schools in a southwestern city in Ontario, Canada?

- a) What was the school experience like for Syrian newcomer students before coming to Canada?
- b) What was the settlement experience in Canada like for Syrian newcomer students?
- c) What are the learning experiences of Syrian newcomer students in Canada?
- d) What are the socio-cultural experiences of Syrian newcomer students in Canada?
- e) What are the extra-curricular activities experiences of Syrian newcomer students in Canada?
- f) What are the experiences of Syrian newcomer students with staff support in Canada?
- g) What are the goals and aspirations of Syrian newcomer students for their future in general?

- h) What are the perspectives of Syrian newcomer parents in relation to their children's education?

### **Researcher Positionality**

Researcher positionality in relation to the participants and the field of study is a significant constituent of the research process. The positionality taken by a researcher is determined by “where one stands in relation to the participants of the study” (Merriam, Johnson-Bailey, Lee, Kee, Ntseane, & Muhamad, 2001, p. 411). After determining the purpose of this study, I began to reflect on my positionality as a researcher. I reflected on the following questions: How do I position myself as a graduate student, school educator/administrator, and researcher in this study? Do I position myself outside or inside the social setting or field of study? How will my identity and lived experiences affect this research? What is the rationale behind identifying my positionality? What impact will my positionality have on the research process? How will I address my positionality with the participants?

Researchers who adopt an outside position approach detach themselves from the participants they are trying to study. By positioning on the outside, the researcher conducts the study from a distance and has less direct involvement with the participants, and thus minimizes the influence of the researcher's presence on data collection. On the other hand researchers conducting their study with an inside position approach attach themselves to the participants they are studying. With an inside approach, the researcher is more directly involved with the environment and participants. The researcher may share an identity with the participants or have had similar experiences, thus increasing the level of attachment to them (Chavez, 2008). These connections will have an impact on the researcher's relationship with the participants and will inevitably influence the research environment.



**My personal journey and identity.** To identify my positionality in this study, I reflected deeply on my identity and my own lived educational experiences in Canada as an immigrant student. As emphasized by Alzbouebi (2004), the researcher's "location in specific historical contexts of race, gender, and class" needs to be explicitly examined in order to determine the "influence this may have on the research process" (p. 4). As a graduate student conducting education research, the motivation factors that led me to undertake this research are my previous elementary and secondary school experiences in Canada as an immigrant student, as well as my experiences as a teacher and administrator working with many refugee newcomer students and parents.

My family immigrated to Canada from Lebanon when I was 12 years old to escape the conflicts, instability, and lack of educational and employment opportunities. My parents left their house, personal belongings, and family members behind, and they were searching for peace and future opportunities for the children here in Canada. Upon arrival to Canada, I was enrolled in a Grade 7 English as a Second Language (ESL) class to learn English in the same school where I later became an educator and administrator for almost ten years before recently moving to a new school for a new administrative experience.

For a few years after resettling in Canada, I experienced many difficulties with settlement and integration into Canadian society and the school system. I still have vivid memories, feelings, and clear images of those experiences. At that time, I only spoke Arabic and a little bit of French, which made it very difficult for me to communicate with the teachers and develop friendships at school. This led to feelings of loneliness and isolation. As a result, I vividly remember walking home crying from school on several occasions. I still remember when I was

in grades 7 and 8, and later in my secondary school days, I often wrote about my family's struggles with immigration for my school projects.

At the same time when I was experiencing challenges in school, my parents and siblings were experiencing their own challenges with settlement and integration into Canadian society. My parents did not possess English language proficiency or any Canadian job-related skills, which made it difficult for them to find jobs and contribute to the family and community. However, they did attend an adult learning school to learn English. My father was eventually able to find a job, support the family, and he became more fully a participant in Canadian society. My parents' only hope and dream was for the children to live in a safe place, receive proper education, and establish a professional career in Canada. However, they were unable to contribute or participate in my school career because they were dealing with their own challenges with integration, and they lacked the academic background and understanding of the education system in Canada. Although it was difficult for my parents to participate meaningfully in my education, they gave me compassion and moral support, always believed in me, and instilled a love for education in me.

In my professional career as an educator and administrator, I have the privilege of working with many refugee students and families on a daily basis. Although schools have more support systems in place now than when I first immigrated to Canada, our newcomers still experience some challenges with settlement and integration. For example, we now have Settlement Workers in Schools (SWIS) who speak different languages and help families with translations and school related dealings; however, SWIS workers have a limited weekly schedule and they are only available in some schools. Refugee students still face challenges with adapting to the school culture, managing their emotions and distress, and meeting the demands of their

academic programs. Refugee parents are also still challenged to understand the school system and need teachers' guidance and support in order to make meaningful contributions towards their children's education. My work with refugee students and families at school gives me the opportunity to reflect on my personal experiences, connect directly with the students and parents, and reflect on ways to improve and enhance our services and programs. Providing school support to newcomer families to Canada gives me a great feeling of satisfaction and is the one of the most rewarding aspects of my job.

**Inside attached position.** After a careful reflection on my identity, my lived experiences as an immigrant student and career as an educator/administrator, I expected to make direct connections with the newcomer students in this study. It was inevitable that I was going to be directly involved with the research since some of my previous experiences were likely going to be similar to those of the participants. Because of this expected attachment, I approached this research from an inside position. As described by Chavez (2008), insider researchers can be “total insiders and share multiple identities (e.g., race, ethnicity, class) or profound experiences (e.g., wars, family membership)” with the participants, or they can be “partial insiders who share a single identity (or a few identities)” (p. 475).

Being a Canadian with Lebanese heritage, and having immigrated to Canada with my family, I shared several things in common with the participants in this study. In terms of identity, I shared the Muslim faith and the Arabic language with most Syrian refugee students and parents. This helped me with the research methods and data collection for this study. I created the Letter of Information (LI) describing the study, consent forms, and correspondence about the research with the students and their parents in English and Arabic. Students had the option to

complete the questionnaire and the interview either in English or in Arabic. Parents had the option to complete the interview in English or Arabic.

Regarding lived experiences, the participants and my family both escaped conflicts and instability in our countries of origin at different times and resettled in Canada with the hope of living in peace and realizing our dreams of a better future. We both also shared some challenging experiences with resettlement, integration, and adapting to Canadian society and the school system. These commonalities helped me with developing a positive rapport with the students and understanding their educational experiences in Canada.

**Addressing my research positionality.** The positionality a researcher takes, in relation to the participants, has an impact on the research process and data collection. The approach to establishing connections with the participants will influence the data they will share. As explained by Thorstensson Dávila (2014), positionality grants the researcher “access to people and spaces of interest,” allows the researcher to “ask difficult questions of research participants,” and influences “data collection and analysis” procedures (p. 27). In addressing my positionality, I considered my motives for conducting this study, achieving transparency with participants, and the positives and negatives involved in approaching this research with an insider approach.

To establish mutual understanding and trusting relationships with the participants, it is crucial for a researcher to be transparent with them about the motives for conducting the research. Bourke (2014) emphasized the importance for a researcher to be clear with participants about the motives for collecting data in order to foster greater understanding and openness before entering the research field. With respect to positionality, he stressed that researchers not only need to be cognizant of the influence of their positionality on the research process, but they also need to be “forthright and transparent in communicating that positionality and the intents of the

research to the participants” (p. 7). To foster mutual trust, openness, and understanding about the research process, I approached the students and their parents with transparency and clarity about my motives, positionality, and intent of this study. Students and parents also had opportunities to ask any questions or for any clarifications during the research process.

For a researcher, it is important to be cognizant and sensitive to the positives and negatives involved with taking inside positionality in relation to the participants. Approaching this research with inside positionality, increased my involvement and level of attachment to the participants in the study. This provided me with an opportunity to build trusting and respectful relationships with the participants. By volunteering during the Saturday program, doing sports activities during the children’s breaks, and getting to know the students and their families, it helped a lot with building a rapport with the students before any data collection took place. Establishing connections with the participants increased their comfort level, and thus they become more open to sharing their opinions and perspectives about their school experiences. This increased level of trust and understanding led to a rich and insightful data collection process.

However, I had to be sensitive to the influence of my presence and the impact my approach would have on the participants and the research process. Although I shared with the participants in general terms that I experienced difficulties with certain aspects of schooling when I first immigrated to Canada, I did not share specific personal stories or experiences in order to not unduly influence participant responses. I was also careful to not ask any leading questions based on my personal experiences and I focused solely on the experiences of the participants and their personal journeys. I did not put any pressure on the students and parents to participate; the decision to participate was solely in their hands and left up to them.

As an education graduate student and educator/administrator, I embarked on this research to investigate the experiences of Syrian refugee students in elementary English public schools in Canada using Article 12 of the CRC as a framework. What motivated me to undertake this research are my previous challenges as an immigrant student to Canada and my experiences as an educator and administrator working with many refugee students and their families. Sharing multiple identities with the students and parents and similar experiences led to connections with them and direct involvement with the research environment. With a better understanding now of the students' and parents' experiences using their own views and perspectives, educators and the school community should be in a stronger position to enhance the students' educational programs and school experiences.

## CHAPTER 2: REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE

In this chapter I will focus on the literature on refugee students and parents, particularly Syrian refugees. This review covers the experiences of refugees not only from the Syrian background but also from different countries of origin and cultural backgrounds. This chapter is organized into three themes that emerged from the extant literature: (1) pre-migration experiences, (2) post-migration resettlement experiences, and (3) post-migration school experiences.

### **Pre-migration Experiences**

The refugee experience has a significant impact especially on young children who suffer from lack of basic life necessities, exposure to traumatic events, and inadequate formal education (Ayoub & Zhou, 2016; Ferfolja & Vickers, 2010; Vongkhamphra et al., 2011). With the influx of Syrian and other refugees to Canada, it is important to understand these pre-migration experiences to be able to support them and meet their daily needs. In this theme, I focus on world refugee crises – specifically the Syrian context – and the impact of the refugee experience on children and families.

**World refugee crises.** The 21<sup>st</sup> century has witnessed many armed conflicts and natural disasters in different regions worldwide that led to major refugee crises. The United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) has been at the forefront in dealing with these refugee crises and safeguarding the rights of refugees. As described by Mthethwa-Sommers and Kisiara (2015), “refugees are people who are forced to migrate to other countries due to sociopolitical instability, often caused by wars, in their home countries” (p. 1). According to the United Nations (UN; 2015), “unlike migrants who choose to move in order to improve their lives, refugees are forced to flee to save their lives or preserve their freedom” (Refugees: Overview of Forced Displacement section, para. 15). Children make up about “41 percent of the

world's refugees" and about "half of all refugees are women" (UN, 2015, Refugees: The Numbers section, para. 6).

One of the world's major refugee crises is the Syrian refugee crisis in recent years. Owing to the devastating war in Syria that started in 2011, Syrian people experienced and continue to experience a humanitarian crisis. They have and continue to suffer prolonged sieges, blockage, restriction, and interference in aid delivery, without having access to humanitarian and medical aid, which violates international humanitarian law (Amnesty International, 2019; Human Rights Watch, 2019). Many Syrian children and their families are living in areas where basic human needs and services, such as food, water, healthcare, education, and hygiene services, are almost non-existent (Save the Children, 2019). According to the United Nations International Children's Emergency Fund (UNICEF; 2019), "more than 5.5 million children (in Syria) still require some form of humanitarian assistance, including nearly half a million in hard-to-reach areas" (Syrian Crisis section, para. 3), and "14.6 million people require access to safe water" (para. 5).

The war in Syria has also had devastating effects on the Syrian economy and infrastructure. Millions of Syrians are living in poverty and are unemployed due to lack of access to food, housing, and health care. The war has caused massive destruction and damaged infrastructure destroying hospitals, medical facilities, schools, water treatment facilities, and civilian residences (Amnesty International, 2019; Human Rights Watch, 2019; UNICEF, 2019). The destruction of infrastructure has created major challenges for Syrian people, especially children. For instance, "the essential infrastructure they [Syrian children] rely on - such as healthcare, education, water, and hygiene services - has been decimated" leaving the children in dire need of basic human services (Save the Children, 2019, Syria section, para. 4).



Additionally, parties to the war violated international humanitarian law by using unlawful and internationally banned weapons in attacks in which civilians were killed and injured (Amnesty International, 2019; Human Rights Watch, 2019). Also, “after several reported chemical attacks during the first half of the year (2018), in an unprecedented step, the Organization for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons (OPCW) was authorized to attribute responsibility for attacks in Syria” (Human Rights Watch, 2019, Syria: Events of 2018 section, para. 2). This took place in June 2018, where “states parties to the Chemical Weapons Conventions granted the OPCW permanent authorization to investigate and assign responsibility for chemical weapons attacks” in Syria (Human Rights Watch, 2019, Syria: Events of 2018 section, para. 11).

The devastating war in Syria has left millions of Syrians displaced internally and externally. This has resulted in a Syrian refugee crisis on a global level and the world’s most recent largest humanitarian emergency. The destructive war has left Syria in ruins, and about 6.5 million Syrians are internally displaced by violence inside the country and living in dire conditions (UNHCR Canada, 2015, Syrian Refugee Crisis section). According to Amnesty International Canada (AIC; 2015), the conflict in Syria has produced more than 4 million Syrian refugees who have fled their country in search of refuge.

Many Syrian refugees are faced with the “impossible choice between remaining in desperate conditions or making terrifying journeys and risking their lives to escape endless suffering,” making the Syrian refugee crisis a “global crisis” (AIC, 2015, The Syrian Refugee Crisis section, para. 1). From the millions of Syrian refugees registered by the UN Refugee Agency, “4 in 5 Syrian refugees are women and children” (UNHCR Canada, 2015, Syrian Refugee Crisis section, para. 3).

**Lack of basic life necessities.** As a result of war, conflict, or hunger, thousands of refugees worldwide are forced to flee their homes to neighbouring countries or refugee camps to meet their basic life necessities and save their lives. For example, according to the World Food Programme (2014), “the ongoing conflict in Somalia and the Democratic Republic of Congo has contributed significantly to the level of hunger in the two countries” (Hunger section, para. 13), forcing thousands of families to flee their homes. These families end up living in refugee camps for months or years where they face many challenges as they await their chance for resettlement in a host country (Segal & Mayadas, 2005).

Because of the ongoing war in Syria, Syrian people have been experiencing a humanitarian aid crisis. Without access to humanitarian and medical aid due to prolonged sieges and restriction in aid delivery (Amnesty International, 2019; Human Rights Watch, 2019), many Syrian people, including children, are living in difficult conditions with limited or almost non-existent resources and services to meet basic human needs, such as food, water, and healthcare (Save the Children, 2019). The destruction of water systems and water treatment facilities, and the use of informal refugee camps lacking water services, has created a major challenge accessing safe water for millions of Syrian people (Save the Children, 2018).

This humanitarian crisis has resulted in many Syrian children suffering from malnutrition. As reported by Save the Children (2019), “85% refugee children (Syrian) are living below the poverty line and 28% of children suffer from stunting due to malnutrition” (Syria section, para. 4), and “nearly 20,000 children (Syrian) under five are suffering from severe acute malnutrition (SAM)” which is the most serious type of malnutrition (UNICEF, 2019, Syrian Crisis section, para. 5). As described by Action Against Hunger (2018):

Decreased food consumption, increased energy expenditure, and illness result in a poor nutritional state known as malnutrition (or undernutrition). Malnutrition is associated with increased illness and death, reduced educational achievements, productivity and economic capacity. Poverty, inequality, and malnutrition are often passed from one generation to the next. (What is Acute Malnutrition? section, para. 3)

Acute malnutrition is a devastating epidemic. Worldwide, some 55 million children under the age of five suffer from acute malnutrition, 19 million of these suffer from the most serious type – severe acute malnutrition. Every year, 3.1 million children die of malnutrition. (para. 1)

Additionally, the journey to a safe location such as a neighbouring country or a refugee camp is a very difficult one and full of hardships. Vongkhamphra et al. (2011) assert that during the journey to a safer place or a refugee camp, families run out of food and water, and they have to squeeze whatever moisture they could from the muddy ground to keep from dying of thirst. Once they arrive to a safe location, additional challenges await refugee families. For example, Skidmore (2016) described how Syrian refugees who fled Syria and are living in neighbouring countries “found their rights and freedoms restricted; they are unable to work legally, their children are unable to access consistent education, and their families have limited access to water, food, and medical aid” (p. 7). Life in refugee camp is also difficult as those who reach a camp struggle with having adequate access to clean water, food, clothes, shelter, and medical assistance.

**Exposure to traumatic events.** The refugee experience also puts young children in their country of origin or refugee camp at a high risk of exposure to traumatic events such as violence, abuse, and the loss of their home and family members. For most people who escape war or

conflict to a neighbouring country or refugee camp, even though they survive, they lose their shelters, belongings, and connection with most of their relatives (Beltekin, 2016).

Refugee children who are exposed to these traumatic events will inevitably experience emotional challenges that need to be addressed (Ehnholt & Yule, 2006; Miles & Bailey-McKenna, 2016). In their study on supporting schools to create an inclusive environment for refugee students, Block, Cross, Riggs, and Gibbs (2014) note that “young people with refugee backgrounds have frequently been exposed to mental and physical trauma and violence” (p. 1338). In a study completed on Somali youth and schooling in the United States, Watson (2014) emphasized that many Somali refugee youth have been exposed to or experienced traumatic events throughout their lives as a result of escaping violence and political situations, as well as from difficult living conditions in refugee camp.

Because of the war in Syria, Syrian refugee children have experienced, and continue to experience, traumatic events that have a psychological impact on them. UNICEF (2019) emphasized that the war affects children the most severely:

After eight years of conflict, the Syria crisis continues to have a huge impact on children inside Syria, across the region and beyond. Every Syrian child has been impacted by the violence, displacement, severed family ties and lack of access to vital services. This has had a huge psychological impact on children. (Syrian Crisis section, para. 1)

Save the Children (2018) also highlighted how Syrian children are paying the heaviest price of the crisis:

Children are bearing the brunt of the crisis in Syria, and are at risk of injury, trauma and death. Children have witnessed conflict up close, have lost friends and family, and

experienced sudden displacement with increasing numbers forced to move on multiple occasions. (Our Response in Syria section, para. 2)

Due to these traumatic experiences, Syrian children who survived or escaped the conflict suffer from chronic stress. As reported by Save the Children (2019):

The war in Syria has hit hardest those who are least responsible – children. Tens of thousands of innocent children have been killed or injured in the eight-year conflict.

Those children who have survived are experiencing chronic stress due to violence, loss and instability. (Syria section, para. 6)

Miles and Bailey-McKenna (2016) explained that “trauma can be understood as an experience that overwhelms an individual’s ability to cope, and can include acute (discrete) or chronic (over and over again) events. Refugee students may have experienced one or both types of trauma” (p. 118). These traumatic experiences may lead to psychological, post-traumatic, and mental health challenges for newcomer students in the host country and educators working with them will need to know the best strategies and support systems available to meet their needs.

**Little or no formal education.** In addition to exposure to traumatic experiences and immense tragedies, young refugee children receive little or no formal education while living in conflict zones, neighbouring countries or refugee camps. As described by Melton (2013), displaced people who make it to a refugee camp in neighbouring countries and spent most of their lives there “are typically offered little or no educational opportunities” (p. 3). Wartime especially affects children with special education needs or who are disabled because they are almost completely out of school (Beltekin, 2016).

If schools do exist in refugee camps, there are many contributing factors to the shortcomings of the education offered. Many schools in refugee camps lack a conventional

school building, the children are often sent home due to heavy rain, wind, or dust, resulting in many school interruptions and the shortage of resources has a negative impact on students' progress (Mareng, 2010). Large classes, fewer materials, and parents' inability to cover the cost for uniforms and school materials, are among other reasons why many refugee children are not able to attend school in refugee camps (Courtney, 2015). Miles and Bailey-McKenna (2016) highlighted some other factors that contribute to the limited formal school experience with many refugee newcomer students to Canada:

For a variety of reasons, many of these children have limited formal schooling. They may have encountered disruptions resulting in little or no literacy in either English or their home language. Some have attended schools that focused primarily on religious training, were poorly resourced, or were staffed by underqualified teachers. Some have only experienced school in refugee camps, while others have been denied the opportunity to attend school altogether because they were unable to afford the fees, belonged to a lower status ethnic group, or needed to work to support the family. In certain countries, gender might also have been a factor limiting the opportunity to attend school. (p. 111)

As a result of all these challenges, refugee children receive little to no formal education in refugee camps, and they do not improve or even develop literacy and numeracy skills (Courtney, 2015). It is possible that “many resettled refugee students may arrive to their host country having no past experiences with schooling at all” (McBrien, 2011, p. 76).

In her study on a community school for Syrian refugees in Turkey, Hos (2016) found that “Syrian refugee children are receiving basic education under difficult conditions” (pg. 59). In her recent study on the school experiences of recently arrived Syrian refugees within the Ottawa

public school system, Nofal (2017) described her experience with her visits to Syrian refugee camps and witnessing the limited educational resources available for Syrian refugee children:

In my four visits to Syrian refugee camps in Syria (Idlib and Aleppo in 2013), Turkey (Reyhanelli in 2014) and Lebanon (Tripoli in 2014 and 2015), where I worked in assisting with the education and psycho-social support of children, not only did I witness the emotional disorder of children, but I was struck by the limited resources available for formal and non-formal education programs. (p. 1)

Nofal (2017) also explained that pre-migration experiences with limited formal schooling continue to challenge Syrian refugee students who resettle in a host country:

At a basic level, schools are unable to accommodate the number of students; moreover, schools do not offer the specific educational curriculum that meets the needs of students who have experienced war, trauma and displacement. Students who eventually move to more permanent resettlement countries, and have access to better educational experiences continue to be challenged by their past experiences of war, as well as temporary transitional through fragile countries. (p. 6)

### **Post-migration Resettlement Experiences**

In this theme, I focus on Canada's refugee resettlement program, the challenges with resettlement, post-traumatic stress, and the culture shift for children and parents.

**Canada's refugee resettlement program.** Canada plays a key humanitarian role on the international stage by sponsoring thousands of refugees to resettle in Canada every year. For example, since the war started in Syria in 2011, Canada has responded by providing humanitarian assistance and sponsoring thousands of Syrian refugees to resettle in Canada. The Government of Canada (GC) worked with Canadians, including "private sponsors, non-governmental organizations, provincial, territorial, and municipal governments", to welcome

“25,000 Syrian refugees” by 2016 (GC, 2015, Global Affairs Canada section, para. 4). This was in addition to the “23,218 Iraqi refugees resettled as of 2015, and the 3,089 Syrian refugees who have already arrived in Canada in 2014 and 2015” (para. 4).

Although Canada has welcomed thousands of Syrian newcomer families, there are organizations and Canadian citizens who believe Canada can do more in terms of accepting more refugees. According to the Canadian Council for Refugees (2019), “Canada welcomes only a tiny percentage of the world’s refugees” (How generous is Canada towards refugees? section, para. 1). In addition, Canada and the world’s wealthiest countries are only welcoming a small percentage of refugees since “the vast majority of the world’s refugees are in the Global South and only a tiny minority of refugees are found in Canada and the rest of the wealthiest countries” (para. 3). The Canadian Council for Refugees (2019) also pointed out that “Canada has fewer refugees per capita than many other countries” (para. 5).

The Canadian Council for Refugees (2015) stresses that Canada can do more and must welcome more refugees and emphasizes that “refugees and their families make significant positive contributions to Canadian society, economically and socially, as leaders, artists, community workers and elders” (Frequent questions about Syrian refugees and Canada section, para. 13). The Council also recommends that “in responding to the urgent needs of Syrian refugees, the needs of other refugees must also be met” (para. 20).

With the Syrian war still ongoing, and millions of Syrians internally and externally displaced or taking difficult journeys and risking their lives to escape the conflict, Amnesty International Canada (AIC; 2019) also stresses the importance for Canada to welcome more Syrian refugees:



With no immediate end in sight to the crisis in Syria, and ongoing resettlement needs of refugees from other world regions, the government (Canadian) must develop longer term plans for substantial resettlement efforts in the coming years. In order to meet these needs, significant resources are needed to ensure that resettlement is done successfully, sustainably and on a non-discriminatory basis. (Canada: Welcome Refugees section, para. 3)

In addition, Citizens for Public Justice (2019) recommend that the Canadian government increase the targets for refugees welcomed into Canada. Given Canada's capacity and the need for immigration, "the government ought to take on further responsibility in at least matching the efforts of private sponsors (Canadians), if not spearheading resettlement themselves" (Citizens for Public Justice, 2019, Canada can support more refugees section, para. 5). In addition, Citizens for Public Justice (2019) stress the importance for the Canadian government to recognize the skills that refugees can bring to Canada to fill skills gaps.

**Challenges with resettlement.** After resettlement in a host country, refugee children and their families begin a complicated and difficult settlement and integration process (Ayoub & Zhou, 2016; Nofal, 2017; Roxas & Roy, 2012; Segal & Mayadas, 2005; Taylor & Sidhu, 2012). Even those who were not traumatized in their country of origin before resettlement may experience trauma in their host country due to the challenges that come with resettlement and adapting to a new life in a new country (Wilbur, 2016).

As explained by Block et al. (2014), in addition to adjusting to a new way of life and a new language and culture, "settlement challenges for refugee children include overcoming disrupted or minimal prior education, disruption to family networks, insecure housing, poverty,

negative stereotypes and discrimination” (p. 1338). Skidmore (2016) adds that the newcomers also experience “social, emotional, economic, and educational challenges” (p. 7).

Another cause of stress for some refugee youth is the ongoing pressure to support their families financially in their host country. Ehntholt and Yule (2006) reported that, in some cases, refugee children struggle with mental health or depressive symptoms as a result of severe family financial difficulties. In a study that explored the experiences of refugee students, Roxas and Roy (2012) found that a recently arrived young refugee man was working late hours to support his family financially while attending school at the same time.

School can play a significant role in supporting the successful transition and integration process of newcomer children in their host country. Nofal (2017) discussed how education in the host country could bring stability to the lives of newcomer students especially due to the many life disruptions and transitions they have experienced. Stressing the important role school can play, Nofal (2017) emphasized that:

Education holds the potential to minimize the likelihood of marginalization, neglect and ghettoization of newcomers, by providing social connections and aiding in community development. Schools as institutions present ideal reception conditions for refugee students and can contribute to the settlement of refugees. (p. 8)

**Post-traumatic stress.** The literature indicates that some refugee children experience post-traumatic stress resulting from traumatic events they had to deal with. After resettlement, refugee children who witnessed or were exposed to traumatic events in their country of origin or in a refugee camp are at risk of developing psychological challenges including Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD), anxiety, and depression. A PTSD is characterized by exposure or experience of an extremely violent or stressful event (Ehntholt & Yule, 2006).

De Haene, Grietens, and Verschueren (2007) described the process of forced migration as a “pervasive and adverse long-term experience” (p. 233). They also explained that stressors related to forced migration – including losses and transitions – causes mental health challenges for refugees from the chronic stress:

Minor refugees face the manifold stressors of war, violence, deprivation and cultural adjustment all of which may affect their development. In this chronically stressful and disruptive life period, many refugee children may have to deal with decreasing intra-familial support, the loss of family members or separation from caregivers. These stressors relating to forced migration affect the refugee children’s well-being. (p. 235)

Baker (2013) examined the effects of racialized name-calling on refugee students in Canada and highlighted that experiences with racism in the host country, whether perceived or real, creates undue stress in the lives of refugee students and “accumulation of racism-based stress can have the most devastating effect” (p. 82). Baker also discussed the impact of persistent racism on the social, mental well-being, and integration of refugee students into Canadian society:

Moreover, persistent racism can significantly impact the social and mental well-being and development of youth by influencing their ability and willingness to trust, to form close relationships, and to be part of a social group ... Indeed, the effect that racism can have on the mental health of these refugee youth is immense and can seriously impact their integration into Canadian society. (p. 82)

The post-traumatic stress experienced by many refugee children and youth puts them at a risk of exhibiting frustrations, withdrawal symptoms, and difficulties with sleeping and concentrating on schoolwork, which in turn negatively affects their educational experiences.

Schools could play a key role in supporting refugee students in dealing with post-traumatic stress. For example, Stermac, Brazeau, and Martin (2008) studied the educational experiences and mental health among war-zone immigrants in Toronto, Canada. They compared the educational experiences and the health outcomes of immigrants – students and non-students – who lived in war-zones or areas of civil unrest prior to resettlement in Canada and have experienced pre-migration traumatic events resulting in psychological symptoms. The results from this study suggest that education programs help newcomers in developing coping abilities and strategies for dealing with post-traumatic symptoms. Stermac et al. (2008) suggested that “educational engagement may represent or encourage a positive coping response that facilitates post-traumatic adjustment” (p. 376).

**A culture shift for children and parents.** Immigration to a new country and exposure to a new society and culture can cause conflict between children and their family (Nilsson, Barazanji, Heintzelman, Siddiqi, & Shilla, 2012). The children go through a culture shift, often shifting towards the dominant culture of the host country. During this culture shift, as described by Oikonomidoy (2007), “the worldviews and cultural ways of being for individuals are often threatened when they come into contact with the dominant culture in their host country” (p. 15). This creates a divide between the children’s school lives and home lives where cultural norms and expectations between both places may differ (Ogilvie & Fuller, 2016).

At the same time, refugee parents have their own challenges associated with adapting to a new culture and environment, including learning a new language, going to school, and difficulty finding jobs. For example, Nofal (2017) found that Syrian refugee parents in Ottawa were “not able to gain employment as a result of language barriers, lack of credentials, job market and the absence of experience and knowledge of the Canadian society and culture” (p. 55).

According to Nilsson et al. (2012), refugee women in their study were concerned because they felt their children began to lose respect for adults and they were losing traditional forms of conflict resolution with them. In the same study, refugee mothers felt at a loss for how to best support their children and restore a strong family bond (Nilsson et al., 2012). In another study, Somali refugee parents worried that Somali youth were “forgetting their culture, their language, and, most important, their religion” (Courtney, 2015, p. 23). Despite the challenges, there is a growing concern that many immigrant and refugee parents do not seek extra support if needed for their children and family unless the problems become significant and someone outside the family expresses concern (Segal & Mayadas, 2005).

### **Post-migration School Experiences**

In this theme, I discuss the newcomer students’ post-migration learning experiences at school, experiences with inclusion, the parents’ experiences with school involvement, and educators’ experiences.

**Learning experiences at school.** As a result of living for long periods of time in conflict zones or refugee camps and receiving little or no formal education, refugee students face challenges in their host country with “adapting to the expectations and culture of formal education” (Ferfolja & Vickers, 2010, p. 152) and suffer educational disadvantages (Taylor & Sidhu, 2012). Based on the findings of Abdi (2012), the majority of Somali students in the Toronto District School Board perform at lower levels and do not meet the provincial standard; in other words, the students are often not demonstrating their grade level knowledge and skills. Li and Grineva (2016) looked at the academic and social adjustment challenges experienced by refugee youth at a high school in Newfoundland and Labrador, Canada; the newcomer students in their study faced many difficulties with their learning in Canada:

Newcomer students encountered many difficulties trying to keep up with their native-born peers in academic achievement. Limited proficiency in English and interrupted formal education strongly affected their ability to negotiate and manage the development of their academic competence at school. The participants indicated that lack of vocabulary was their greatest concern with regard to language. (p. 59)

In exploring the experiences of refugee students in United States public high schools, Melton (2013) found that many of the students are arriving to the United States and starting high school without any prior formal educational experiences, challenging the school to “provide them 12 years of education in a mere four years” (p. 4). The author explained that this responsibility is sometimes shifted to community colleges offering adult education programs, a process the students do not feel good about since they want to graduate on time with their high school peers (Melton, 2013).

In her research on the educational experiences of Syrian refugee students in Ottawa, Nofal (2017) shared some of the factors affecting the children’s educational performance:

Evidently, shifting family roles, low language proficiency and a lack of proper information and knowledge regarding the education system affected the ability of Syrian refugees to have confidence in their educational performance. It has also meant an uncertain future for them in terms of their educational plans. Coupled with lack of available resources inside schools, parents and students both stated their need for more assistance and support. (p. 56)

For refugee students to experience school success in their host country they need extensive support in learning the new language (Oikonomidou, 2007; Watson, 2014). However, many of them face difficulties in acquiring a new language (L2) since they often lack literacy

and numeracy skills in their mother tongue (L1) and have had limited school experiences. In other words, they may not have age appropriate knowledge even in their own language (L1). As highlighted by Weekes et al. (2011), many refugee students have limited prior school experiences resulting in low literacy in their first language (L1) and leading to complex learning needs; the authors attribute these learning complexities to missing out on key milestones in literacy, numeracy, and subject-specific content.

**Experiences with inclusion and bullying at school.** With limited language, and also having a different set of social skills that may not serve them well in the host country, some refugee students may struggle with establishing social connections at school, resulting in social isolation and negative feelings about themselves (Loerke, 2009). This social isolation, Ehntholt and Yule (2006) suggest, is a post-migration factor in the host country that places refugee children at risk of psychological distress.

According to Li and Grineva (2016), refugee youth in their study at a high school in Newfoundland and Labrador, Canada, experienced difficulties with social adjustment. Most of the students felt more comfortable being friends with other newcomer students and had low participation in extracurricular activities. Li and Grineva (2016) outlined a few factors accounting for the participants' lack of friendships with Canadian-born or local students:

First, their limited English language proficiency and unfamiliarity with the local students' accent decreased their chances of gaining social success. Second, negotiating between different cultures and religious beliefs also posed a great challenge in developing peer social capital. Newcomers had trouble understanding their local peers' behaviours and were uncertain if and how they could negotiate a comfortable space of mutual respect. (p. 63)

Some of the research on refugee students in their host country has shown that the newcomers also struggle with bullying at school. Refugee newcomer students are “vulnerable to bullying due to a myriad of reasons, including nationality, race, religion, and different cultural norms” (Mthethwa-Sommers & Kisiara, 2015, p. 1). For example, Smyth (2013) found that Somali students in a New Zealand primary school were challenged mostly by bullying in the form of verbal teasing at school. Baker (2013) examined the effects of racialized name-calling by peers on visible minority refugee youth from Newfoundland and Labrador, Canada. The findings from his study show that the students experienced peer racism which had a negative effect on their social integration. The students recognized that “racism was having a negative effect on their lives, and was creating an environment where they did not feel welcome” (Baker, 2013, p. 82). Baker expressed concern that some of the interviewees (refugee students) became quiet when discussing their experiences and worried about students choosing not to seek out support:

One of the observations made by the researcher was that the interviewees generally became quiet and withdrawn when describing their experiences. This can become problematic if these experiences begin to occur on a regular basis, especially for the younger respondents (i.e., younger than sixteen), if they choose not to discuss their experiences, or if they choose not to seek out peer or family support. (p. 82)

Baker (2013) called for increased efforts by educators and school administrators to combat peer racism and support refugee students’ integration.

Guo, Maitra, and Guo (2019) explored Syrian refugee students’ integration experiences in schools in a city in Western Canada. The findings show that the students faced many challenges with social integration, and they raised concerns over “feelings of isolation, separation and not belonging in Canada” (Guo et al., 2019, p. 94). The authors identified three



factors that contributed to the students' social isolation: difficulty making friends with local students, bullying and racism, and attitudes of discrimination from some teachers. For example, some of the students reported that they were ridiculed and beaten by other students when they were praying, and they were told to go back to their country. The authors pointed out that "lack of religious accommodation in many schools coupled with the pressure to "fit in" thus threatened children's sense of religious and cultural identities, thereby posing further barriers to their socio-cultural wellbeing" (Guo et al., 2019, p. 98). The students in this study were looking for support from educators in establishing positive connections with other local students.

In a study that examined how refugee students in urban high schools in the United States were coping with bullying and victimization, Mthethwa-Sommers and Kisiara (2015) cautioned that just because bullying is not reported does not mean that it has not occurred:

Participants suggested that teachers and school administrators should not assume absence of victimization when students from refugee backgrounds do not report instances of bullying. Data from this study revealed that students rarely reported bullying incidents because they: (a) lacked command of the English language to be able to confidently tell their story, (b) did not want to appear to be a nuisance, (c) thought it was pointless as no action would be taken, (d) feared not being believed, or (e) did not want to confront the students who bullied them. (p. 6)

In another study that explored the experiences of Somali newcomer students in Minnesota high schools, Moriarty (2015) found that "assumptions were made by American born peers and adults about the cleanliness and subjugation of Somali females wearing the hijab (headscarf worn by Muslim women)", and that teachers were sometimes as curious as the students "but did little to curb questions from American born students that veered into territory

that was disrespectful” (p. 226). In the same study, Somali newcomer female students reported that they have been spit at, crowded by boys into a corner of the hallway, tripped and fallen, and taunted with pictures of pigs and pork products, which they are prohibited from eating in their Muslim religion (Moriarty, 2015). Isolation and discrimination from some students, and in some instances from some educators, “place refugee students’ self-esteem, social competence, and academic achievements at risk, hindering the student’s social, economic, and political integration in the receiving society” (Ratković, Kovačević, Brewer, Ellis, Ahmed, & Baptiste-Brady, 2017, p. 3).

Since emotional well-being will have an impact on refugee newcomer students’ success in education (Nofal, 2017), it is important for schools to have strategies and programs in place to help the newcomers feel welcome, safe, and included. To support refugee students with their well-being, safe spaces can be created in schools to provide opportunities for them to express their experiences, feelings, or concerns they have (Ratković et al., 2017). To assist the students in dealing with socio-cultural and emotional challenges, as well as social isolation and bullying, Kilbride and Anisef (2001) emphasized the importance of developing programs to help the newcomers in dealing with stress and frustration associated with cultural adjustment. Ratković et al. (2017) recommended art-based programs to support refugee students with their learning and social integration:

These art-based programs foster solidarity, tolerance, and resilience. Moreover, these programs create a playful atmosphere, encourage respectful negotiations among peers, and develop relationships among students, as well as between students and teachers. Such relationships can compensate for the loss of social and family networks caused by forced migration, and support refugee students’ learning and social integration. (p. 3)

Based on their study of high school refugee students in the United States, Mthethwa-Sommers and Kisiara (2015) made some recommendations for teachers and school administrators and discussed the need for a school environment that accepts and values refugee students:

Teachers and school administrators with students from refugee backgrounds should be aware of the high likelihood that these students will experience bullying. Such awareness can place teachers and administrators in a position to be proactive, not reactive, in addressing the problem ... Mitigation of bullying among students from refugee backgrounds is essential in ensuring that students find school a refuge from victimization, which many of them have already endured in their home countries. Most importantly, schools need to be a place where students, especially students from refugee backgrounds, feel accepted and valued. (p. 7)

Other students in the school could also play a positive role in supporting refugee newcomer students' school experiences. Smyth (2013) stressed that a significant support system for newcomer students is having strong friendships and supportive peers at school. Educators could play a key role in facilitating this support by building a classroom and school community that acknowledges, models, celebrates, and encourages peer support.

**Parents' experiences with school involvement.** Refugee parents hold high hopes for their children's education and future success in the host country. In their research on the experiences of refugee women, Nilsson et al. (2012) found that the mothers' greatest hope was for their children to get an education. Nofal (2017) learned from Syrian refugee parents in Ottawa that they chose to come to Canada mainly for their children's educational and future opportunities and that "their understanding of success in this new life depends largely on their

children's ability to succeed in school" (p. 55). Nofal (2017) emphasized the value and importance placed on education by refugee parents:

A common sentiment often voiced among refugees is their hope their children will have better futures through being given better educational experiences. The dream of a better life for the children motivates many of these families, and consequently they view their children's educational attainment and success as the goal of their difficult journey. Their risks and sacrifices become worthwhile if their children are able to succeed in their new lives. (p. 9)

However, although refugee parents want to support their children with their education, they face several challenges. Li, Doyle, Lymburner, and Ghadi (2016) explored parental support for newcomer students in a smaller urban centre in Atlantic Canada. Although most parents wanted to be involved and engaged with the school, the findings indicate that the parents – particularly from refugee background – faced difficulties with school engagement and supporting their children. Despite their appreciative comments about educators and school supports, the parents were confused about the school system and what their children were learning, they had misunderstandings of support programs, and they had limited engagement with the school community (Li et al., 2016). Additionally, the data suggests that parents were receiving the same school notices as other English-speaking parents, rather than communication using simple language. The authors identified factors that contributed to the parents' lack of engagement with the school, which included linguistic barriers, personal circumstances (e.g., school, work, childcare, and health), and cultural differences and assumptions (Li et al., 2016, p. 8)

Many refugee parents/caregivers are also "unable to provide educational assistance to their children as they possess limited or no English, and parental illiteracy in the mother tongue

is common” (Ferfolja, 2009, p. 398). Those who are literate in their mother tongue, mostly only have primary school level education (Gahungu, Gahungu, & Luseno, 2011). This makes it difficult for many refugee parents to provide academic support to their children, especially when they do not speak, read, or write the native language in the host country.

Another challenge for refugee parents that impedes their school involvement is due to their lack of understanding of the school system; for example, knowledge of the curriculum, what their children are learning, and ways for communicating with educators. Bitew and Ferguson (2010) learned in their study on the involvement of Ethiopian-Australian parents in their children’s secondary school education in Australia that the majority of the students did not receive support with their learning from their parents because the parents had limited educational experiences. In the same study, Bitew and Ferguson also learned that most parents had little exposure to the education system in Australia and had no contact with the school. A concern brought up by Guo et al. (2019) is that “children can feel distanced from their parents who lack English language skills and may not be familiar with the Canadian school system” (p. 92).

Since refugee parents may not initiate contact with school educators, the educators should take it upon themselves to initiate contact with parents to help them understand the school system and invite them to participate or engage in their child’s education program. However, this does not always happen. For instance, in a qualitative study that investigated immigrant parents’ involvement in their children’s education, the parents noted that it was up to parents to initiate communication with their child’s teacher if they were interested in being involved (Nderu, 2005). For refugee students to experience success in school, Ogilvie and Fuller (2016) stressed the importance of integrating and engaging their parents in their education because it forms a strong school-home support system; for example, educators could initiate contact or meetings

with parents to explain to them what their children are learning, how they are progressing, how they can support children's learning at home, and how to maintain ongoing communication with their child's teacher regarding any questions or supports needed.

**Educators' experiences.** Canadian and United States public schools continue to experience a significant influx of immigrant and refugee students. Not only must the newcomer students adapt to their new learning environment in the host country, educators also need to adapt to their diverse student population (Guo et al., 2019). Roxas (2011) stressed the importance of providing newcomer students with an educational program that is responsive to their needs. Hos (2016) also emphasized that the newcomers need specialized programs that meet their academic and psychological needs.

However, some educators may not have specialist knowledge or an understanding of refugee students' prior school experiences and their learning needs (Weekes et al., 2011). For example, Li and Grineva (2016) learned that none of the teachers in their study were trained on working with newcomer students, and instead, relied on the day-to-day learning from their work with the students and consultation with one another. Consequently, planning and programming for refugee students presents difficulties and challenges for some educators (Miller, Windle, & Yazdanpanah, 2014), especially if they have never received any training or professional development in this area.

A starting point for educators would be to become familiar with both the pre- and post-migration challenges experienced by newcomer students. Educators working with the newcomers need to understand the reasons why refugees are forced to flee their homes and the barriers to successful integration to be in a good position to meet their needs (Taylor & Sidhu, 2012). If educators, or those working with refugee students, do not understand the students'

realities or previous experiences, as well as their current situations, it will be difficult for them to meet their emotional, social, and educational needs (Wilbur, 2016).

A challenge for educators, as emphasized by Roxas (2008), is finding the best ways to meet the unique needs of the newcomers who come with limited formal school experiences, while still effectively teaching other students in the same classroom. Educators may also not be prepared nor have the proper training to deal with the post-traumatic stress and other emotional challenges often experienced by refugee students. For example, in their research with teachers working with refugee students, Szente, Hoot, and Taylor (2006) found that “teachers did not feel prepared to address the emotional stress experienced by refugee children” (p. 16).

Providing teachers with professional development and training opportunities geared towards meeting the needs of refugee students will help the newcomers to integrate successfully (Loerke, 2009). Ratković et al. (2017) highlighted that providing educators professional development opportunities would help them develop an understanding and knowledge on how to best support refugee students to overcome socio-psychological challenges. To best support the mental health of immigrant and refugee students from diverse backgrounds, the Ministry of Education of Ontario (2013) stressed the importance for schools to develop their cultural competence and explore programs for teaching social and emotional skills. In addition, recognizing the need for training teachers, the Ministry of Education of British Columbia (2015) emphasized the importance of presenting teachers and school staff with professional development opportunities geared toward understanding and developing the necessary skills for working with refugee students. With global refugee crises and the impact on immigration and resettlement in a host country, Kopish (2016) also expressed the need for teacher candidates to be provided with “more authentic opportunities to develop global competencies” (p. 93).

Some schools use a whole school trauma-sensitive schools' approach to support students who have had traumatic experiences. The Trauma and Learning Policy Initiative (2019) explains:

Many students have had traumatic experiences. Trauma can impact learning, behaviour and relationships at school. Trauma-sensitive schools help children feel safe to learn. Trauma sensitivity requires a whole school effort. Helping traumatized children learn should be a major focus of education reform. (Helping Traumatized Children Learn section, para. 1)

To ensure that all children who have experienced trauma succeed in school, trauma-sensitive schools involve trauma sensitivity to be a regular part of how schools operate and “require everyone – parents, educators, administrators, behavioural health providers, advocates, and more – working, learning, and advocating together” (para. 1).

The findings from the literature reveal that the refugee experience creates pre- and post-migration challenges for young children and youth, including the impact on health, well-being and schooling experiences. Yet, refugee children's perspectives and views are rarely heard in their host country with respect to their educational experiences, particularly at the elementary school level. There is limited research that explores the experiences of young refugees as told by their own stories and from their own perspectives (Ayoub & Zhou, 2016; Guerrero & Tinkler, 2010; Prior & Niesz, 2013; Smyth, 2013). In Canada, there are limited studies on the transition of refugee children from war-torn countries to Canadian schools (Ratković et al., 2017). There is especially limited research on the experiences of Syrian refugee students in Canada since they started to resettle in Canada in recent years, mainly starting in 2015.



### CHAPTER 3: CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK

This study was guided by a children's human rights participatory framework articulated in Article 12 (1) of the United Nations' (UN) Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC). The CRC international human rights legal instrument was adopted in 1989 by the States parties present at the adoption of the convention and entered into force in 1990. Canada, a member State of the UN, is one of the countries that adopted and ratified the CRC. Article 12 (1) of the CRC (1990) states:

1. States Parties shall assure to the child who is capable of forming his or her own views the right to express those views freely in all matters affecting the child, the views of the child being given due weight in accordance with the age and maturity of the child (United Nations Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights [UN OHCHR], 2018, Convention on the Rights of the Child section, article 12).

Article 12 emphasizes that children have the right to express their views and opinions on matters that affect their lives, and that those views should be considered. In this chapter, I will examine Article 12 in the Canadian context, provide a rationale for using Article 12 as a framework, and discuss how Article 12 guided this research.

#### **A Deeper Look at Article 12**

The UN and member States that ratified the CRC provide additional information on Article 12 of the CRC. This information provides a deeper explanation of Article 12. For example, the United Nations International Children's Emergency Fund (UNICEF; 2018) provides the following summary on Article 12 of the CRC:

Article 12 (Respect for the views of the child): When adults are making decisions that affect children, children have the right to say what they think should happen and have their opinions taken into account. This does not mean that children can now tell their

parents what to do. This Convention encourages adults to listen to the opinions of children and involve them in decision-making – not give children authority over adults. Article 12 does not interfere with parents' right and responsibility to express their views on matters affecting their children. Moreover, the Convention recognizes that the level of a child's participation in decisions must be appropriate to the child's level of maturity. Children's ability to form and express their opinions develops with age and most adults will naturally give the views of teenagers' greater weight than those of a preschooler, whether in family, legal or administrative decisions. (Summary of the Convention on the Rights of the Child section, article 12)

From a Canadian context, UNICEF Canada (2018) provides the following description of the CRC and article 12 in child appropriate language for Canadian children:

Every child in Canada and around the world from birth to 18 has rights. Rights are what you should have or be able to do to survive, thrive, and meet your full potential. All rights are equally important and are connected to each other. You are born with these rights, and no one can take them away. (The Convention on the Rights of the Child: Child Friendly Language section, para. 1)

More specific to Article 12: “You have the right to give your opinion, and for adults to listen and take it seriously” (article 12). The above shows that Article 12 (1) has two main elements: First, children have the right to freely express their views in all matters affecting their lives, and second, children have the right to have those views considered and taken into account (Perry-Hazan, 2015).

Furthermore, Article 12 of the CRC affirms that children's involvement in making decisions about their lives and future is a non-negotiable human right (Lundy, 2007), and that

consulting with children is not simply a preferred procedure or model, but rather a requirement for professionals working with children (Dunn, Niens, & McMillan, 2014). For the education system, this means that children have participatory rights and should be consulted in all aspects of schooling that affect them such as curriculum development, policy, and education programs offered to them.

The CRC provides a human rights code that outlines the rights of children, and as described by Lake (2015), “advanced the status of children by promoting children as unique individuals, not simply members of a family” (p. 39). Article 12 confirms children’s right in voicing their opinions in matters that affect them and having those opinions and views taken seriously.

### **Canada’s Progress with Article 12**

Since Canada has ratified the CRC, it is important to take a closer look at Canada’s progress to date with Article 12 in an educational context, in order to be able to advance the work with Canadian children and enhance their school experiences. According to the Government of Canada Department of Justice (GC JUS; 2017), the United Nations Committee on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC) has “advised that Canada needs to do more to promote and protect children’s participation rights” (Research and Policy Development section, para. 1).

The GC JUS (2017) reported that in Canada’s education system, children are too often not included in decisions that affect their education and school experiences, and it stressed that “most decisions about children and their education are made by principals, school boards, and administrative tribunals” (Rights in Education Proceedings section, para. 2). It is clear that there is room for growth and improvement regarding children’s participation rights in the Canadian educational context, and as concluded by the GC JUS (2017), these rights under Article 12 of the CRC need to be enhanced in Canada.

The GC JUS and the UN make several recommendations to improve children's participation in matters that affect them, especially those that affect them directly such as education. The GC JUS (2017) emphasized the need for further research and policies to involve children in curriculum, policy, and educational programs development:

There is also a need to provide children greater opportunities to participate in processes that involve decision-making in the education and schooling context, both in regard to making decisions about their individual lives and in developing policies, programs and student codes of behaviour. In order to encourage participation of children in various processes and to promote their rights, school curricula also need to address issues of children's rights. (Promoting Children's Participation in Judicial and Administrative Proceedings section, para. 9)

The UNCRC (2009) recommended that State parties to the CRC create opportunities for children and youth to share their opinions and views and for those opinions to be given consideration, and stressed that "education authorities have to include children's and their parents' views in the planning of curricula and school programmes" (p. 24).

### **Rationale for Using Article 12 as a Framework**

There are several reasons why I chose Article 12 of the CRC to guide this study as a human rights' participatory framework.

First, my previous school experiences in Canada, particularly those associated with my settlement and integration after immigrating to Canada with my family, motivate me to support other newcomer students to Canada who may have experiences and challenges similar to mine. I did not have opportunities to express my experiences and views, and therefore I did not participate in any matters or decisions that had direct impact on my school experiences. With this study, I aim to provide newcomer students to Canada with an opportunity to share their views

and perspectives, give them serious consideration, and work towards enhancing their school experiences.

Second, as an educator and vice-principal working with many newcomer students, I am interested in empowering newcomer students because they are from a marginalized and vulnerable group, and their voices need to be heard.

Third, from a children's human rights perspective, it is imperative that educators and researchers give Syrian newcomer students the opportunity to discuss their school experiences in Canada. Krappmann (2010) notes that the CRC emphasizes the importance of respecting the child as a human being who has views, perspectives, and the right to be heard and for those views to be given weight. Recognizing the children's right to be heard and to participate in their own education program, it is legally and morally essential to comply with Article 12 and ask them about their school experiences (Huus, Granlund, Bornman, & Lygnegård, 2015; Lundy, 2007; UNCRC, 2009).

Fourth, by giving Syrian refugee students an opportunity to participate in this study and voice themselves about their education, it is hoped they would learn about their rights in educational matters and develop self-advocacy skills. Lake (2015) emphasizes the importance of a children's human rights framework for children's self-advocacy as well as developing their collaborative skills that will ultimately enhance their participation in society.

Fifth, and lastly, by using Article 12 of the CRC, this study examines not only the students' perspectives, but also children's rights in general, which will help to develop or encourage a children's rights culture in schools. Article 12 can contribute to the development of a school culture that embraces and respects children's rights (Lundy, 2007).

### **An Article 12 Model to Guide this Research**

Lundy (2007) emphasizes that children's involvement in decisions that impact their lives is legally and morally essential and points out that Article 12 can contribute to a school culture that embraces children's rights. However, she argues that common phrases such as 'pupil voice', 'the voice of the child', 'the right to be heard' and the 'right to participate' address only specific elements of the right and do not convey the full extent of the obligation in Article 12 (Lundy, 2007, p. 941). After looking at these barriers to meaningful implementation of Article 12 in education, Lundy proposed a model for conceptualizing Article 12 to ensure a full implementation of the right.

Lundy's (2007) model for conceptualising Article 12 has four key elements: Space, Voice, Audience, and Influence. This proposed model "conceptualises the distinct facets of Article 12 in a legally sound yet user-friendly format" (Lundy, 2007, p. 941). Lundy explains these four elements in the model as follows to ensure there is a full implementation of Article 12:

Space: Children must be given the opportunity to express a view

Voice: Children must be facilitated to express their views

Audience: The view must be listened to

Influence: The view must be acted upon, as appropriate

Lundy (2007) further explains that the first two elements – space and voice – deal with the first strand of Article 12, the right to express a view. And elements three and four – audience and influence – deal with the second strand of Article 12, the right to have views given due weight.

Starting with space, this study provided Syrian refugee newcomer students with an opportunity to express their views and perspectives on their educational experiences. I conducted this research in a Syrian community Saturday school program where the students attended every

Saturday. After presenting the research to the parents and children in the school, I invited and encouraged the students to participate. I explained to them that their input and perspectives are important. The students had the choice whether they wanted to participate or not; therefore, the decisions were ultimately theirs. I also made sure the students had a safe space to participate by conducting the research at the Saturday school program – a place they felt comfortable with – and following ethical procedures to ensure their safety and well-being. The space provided to the students was also inclusive, and everyone who expressed interest in participating in this study had the opportunity to participate without excluding anyone.

Regarding voice, this study provided the students with an opportunity to express their views and perspectives freely. This was done using an anonymous questionnaire and one-on-one interviews about their educational experiences. Once I explained the research to the students and their parents, they were given sufficient time to reflect on the study and to ask any questions or about any concerns they had. The information shared with the students was in child-friendly English language and was also translated to Arabic. The students had the option to complete the anonymous questionnaire and one-on-one interview in English or Arabic. During the interviews, I relied on English and Arabic language to assist the students with communicating their perspectives. Recognizing that some children may need their parents' support during the interview, the students had the option to have a parent present when they were interviewed.

With respect to audience, Article 12 stipulates that children have a right for their views to be listened to. I explained to the students in this study that their perspectives are important and that I wanted to listen to them. I carefully thought about the topics for the questionnaire and interview, and developed these instruments using age-appropriate language, to ensure they meet the students' level of understanding. During the data collection stage – especially one-on-one

interviews – I was an active listener and focused on trying to understand the students’ views. I also paid attention to any non-verbal cues that may be used by children in some instances to express themselves. I also respected the students’ preferred language for communication; for example, the students had the option to complete the interview in English, Arabic, or a mix of both.

Lastly, I considered the influence that the students’ views could have on their educational experiences. Rather than approaching this study as simply a consultation with the children, I started this research with a mindset and belief that the children are capable of forming their own views and perspectives, and that their input should have influence on their educational experiences. I shared with the students that I will respect their views, take them seriously, and act upon them. I explained to them that I will share the final report with educators that work with them. I also shared with them that I will be making recommendations to their educators and schools based on their perspectives and educational needs. My goal was to empower the children by giving them an opportunity to share their views and by potentially enhancing their educational experiences as a result of sharing the final report and recommendations with their educators and schools. The students and their parents were also provided with a summary final report of the study findings and recommendations.

I used Lundy’s (2007) model for conceptualising Article 12 – Space, Voice, Audience, and Influence – to guide this study and to ensure meaningful implementation of the right. The four elements of the model were used when designing and conducting this research. They were also used as reflection points while moving through the different stages of the research as well as writing the final report to ensure full implementation of Article 12.



## **Ethical Considerations with Article 12**

Professionals and researchers working with children and youth need to be aware of certain ethical considerations to ensure children are safe and that their rights are protected when participating in research. Issues such as informed consent, confidentiality, and power are all-important ethical aspects of research, and especially important when doing research with children (Cousins & Milner, 2007). For example, Lewis (2010) pointed out that researchers who give children and youth an opportunity to be heard may unintentionally put pressure on the children to participate (e.g., the use of incentives, not providing enough info about the research, not doing enough to ensure participants know their rights, not considering language proficiency). Krappmann (2010) emphasized that “those who are responsible for the hearing (researchers) must make sure that the child is protected against negative consequences and not beset with avoidable worries” (p. 507).

For children and youth, the experiences with research or being heard by professionals will vary. While some children feel it is worth the effort and want to share their views and be listened to, others feel it is worthless because they feel their views are not considered and nothing comes out of it (Sinclair & Boushel, 1998). For this study, although I was cognizant that the final responsibility for making decisions will remain with the adults, I was hopeful that using Article 12 of the CRC would not only provide an avenue for the students to be heard, but also for their views to be seriously considered and potentially have an impact on the decisions that affect their school experiences in Canada.

Lewis (2010) notes the importance of paying attention to student silence, and keeping in mind that “listening better includes hearing silence and that silence is not neutral or empty” (p. 20). Lewis (2010) also stresses the importance for researchers to be flexible, reflective, interpret silence, and to make these characteristics a part of the analysis.

Article 12 of the CRC has also generated a discussion around the rights of children and rights of their parents. Cousins and Milner (2007) pointed out that this comes into play, when we have children involved in research who are listened to, and represent different cultures, ethnicities, religions, and disabilities that need to be acknowledged. Krappmann (2010) asked the following question that helps guide this discussion: “Does the provision that the child’s views are given due weight constrain the rights of parents to decide on wellbeing and development of their children?” (p. 508). Although parents and children may have different views on certain aspects of the children’s lives, parent’s lawful rights (which under international law must be consistent with respect for children’s basic rights) are not constrained by supporting and guiding their children to exercise their right to be heard and to participate. Lake (2015) highlights how the “CRC emphasizes the role of the family in guiding children and the child’s right to his or her culture” (p. 68). Krappmann (2010) also explains how parents’ rights and cultural values are not constrained by children’s rights:

Interestingly the Convention stipulates a right of children to direction and guidance by their parents and, this way, underlines parents’ responsibility for their children’s wellbeing and development. However, parents have to provide direction and guidance in view of the rights of the child, which are recognized in the Convention ... Thus, they are not constrained in their rights by children’s rights, but encouraged to promote a process, in which they should be most interested ... The right in article 12 is formulated in a way that its implementation in the practice leaves room for adaptation to diverse contexts as long as the child is recognized as a human being who has a personal perspective on matters of shared concern and whose best interests have to be taken account of in a changing social world. From this angle of view it is crucial that the right to be heard is

not only interpreted in an individualistic way, but also as the right of children, who are members of families, groups, neighbourhoods and local communities. (p. 508-510)

Article 12 obligates States Parties to the CRC to ensure that children's basic human rights are protected and not infringed, including the child's right to be heard and have his or her views duly considered in decision-making. To the extent that those children's fundamental human rights are respected, parents are able to exercise their responsibilities of guidance and caregiving and in educating their children for instance in cultural traditions.

To ensure children's rights and safety are protected and not compromised, the UNCRC (2009) provided the following requirements that must be integrated into research and all other procedures dealing with the implementation of Article 12 to ensure meaningful participation:

All processes in which a child or children are heard and participate, must be:

- (a) Transparent and informative - children must be provided with full, accessible, diversity-sensitive and age-appropriate information about their right to express their views freely and their views to be given due weight, and how this participation will take place, its scope, purpose and potential impact;
- (b) Voluntary - children should never be coerced into expressing views against their wishes and they should be informed that they can cease involvement at any stage;
- (c) Respectful - children's views have to be treated with respect and they should be provided with opportunities to initiate ideas and activities. Adults working with children should acknowledge, respect and build on good examples of children's participation, for instance, in their contributions to the family, school, culture and the work environment. They also need an understanding of the socio-economic, environmental and cultural

context of children's lives. Persons and organizations working for and with children should also respect children's views with regard to participation in public events;

(d) Relevant - the issues on which children have the right to express their views must be of real relevance to their lives and enable them to draw on their knowledge, skills and abilities. In addition, space needs to be created to enable children to highlight and address the issues they themselves identify as relevant and important;

(e) Child-friendly - environments and working methods should be adapted to children's capacities. Adequate time and resources should be made available to ensure that children are adequately prepared and have the confidence and opportunity to contribute their views. Consideration needs to be given to the fact that children will need differing levels of support and forms of involvement according to their age and evolving capacities;

(f) Inclusive - participation must be inclusive, avoid existing patterns of discrimination, and encourage opportunities for marginalized children, including both girls and boys, to be involved. Children are not a homogenous group and participation needs to provide for equality of opportunity for all, without discrimination on any grounds. Programmes also need to ensure that they are culturally sensitive to children from all communities;

(g) Supported by training - adults need preparation, skills and support to facilitate children's participation effectively, to provide them, for example, with skills in listening, working jointly with children and engaging children effectively in accordance with their evolving capacities. Children themselves can be involved as trainers and facilitators on how to promote effective participation; they require capacity-building to strengthen their

skills in, for example, effective participation awareness of their rights, and training in organizing meetings, raising funds, dealing with the media, public speaking and advocacy;

(h) Safe and sensitive to risk - in certain situations, expression of views may involve risks.

Adults have a responsibility towards the children with whom they work and must take every precaution to minimize the risk to children of violence, exploitation or any other negative consequence of their participation. Action necessary to provide appropriate protection will include the development of a clear child-protection strategy which recognizes the particular risks faced by some groups of children, and the extra barriers they face in obtaining help. Children must be aware of their right to be protected from harm and know where to go for help if needed. Investment in working with families and communities is important in order to build understanding of the value and implications of participation, and to minimize the risks to which children may otherwise be exposed;

(i) Accountable - a commitment to follow-up and evaluation is essential. For example, in any research or consultative process, children must be informed as to how their views have been interpreted and used and, where necessary, provided with the opportunity to challenge and influence the analysis of the findings. Children are also entitled to be provided with clear feedback on how their participation has influenced any outcomes. Wherever appropriate, children should be given the opportunity to participate in follow-up processes or activities. Monitoring and evaluation of children's participation needs to be undertaken, where possible, with children themselves. (p. 29-31)

With thousands of refugees resettling in Canada every year, including thousands of Syrian refugees, there is a need to hear from newcomer students about their educational experiences in Canada. I used Article 12 of the CRC as a conceptual frame in this study to give Syrian refugee

students an opportunity to be heard, as a means of enhancing their own educational experiences.

This study was designed to meet the requirements and ethical considerations discussed in this chapter, ensuring meaningful participation and protection of the children's rights, safety, and well-being.

## CHAPTER 4: METHODOLOGY

In this chapter I discuss the research design, participant recruitment, data collection, instruments, and data analysis.

### Research Design

Research is a systematic attempt to investigate certain pre-defined issues or problems using a rigorous and methodical approach (Usher, 1996). The purpose of this research was to investigate the experiences of Syrian refugee students attending elementary English public schools in a southwestern city of Ontario, Canada. I framed this study with a children's human rights participatory framework articulated in Article 12 of the UN's CRC. The study aimed to provide Syrian newcomer students with an opportunity to share their views, perspectives, stories, and school experiences. The study also gave Syrian refugee parents an opportunity to discuss their experiences in relation to their children's education in Canada.

Given the complexity of the research problem and purpose, this research used a mixed-methods design. As emphasized by Savin-Baden and Howell Major (2013), "adopting a research approach that fits with the research paradigm will make the research design stronger" (p. 41).

The study followed the following steps:

1. Identify a rationale for a mixed methods design.
2. Determine the data collection strategy and specific type of mixed methods design.
3. Data collection – both quantitative and qualitative.
4. Data analysis – quantitative and qualitative data are analyzed separately.
5. Merge the findings from both quantitative and qualitative data.

**Mixed-methods rationale.** A mixed methods research design uses a mix of quantitative and qualitative methods to collect and analyze data to understand the problem (Creswell, 2012; Gay, Mills, & Airasian, 2011). The purpose of using a mixed methods design "is to build on the

synergy and strength that exists between quantitative and qualitative research methods to understand a phenomenon more fully than is possible using either quantitative or qualitative methods alone” (Gay et al., 2011, p. 481).

The quantitative survey in this study yielded numeric data that was statistically analyzed. Although the data from “survey research cannot answer what is causing a certain problem, it can, however, identify traits that are seen in people” (Kiess & Green, 2010, p. 20), and it provides useful information that can help describe the study, the frequency and magnitude of certain trends with large groups of people (Creswell, 2012; Nardi, 2006). The data from the questionnaire provided a broad picture of the students’ experiences.

The qualitative interviews provided the participants an opportunity to share their views, perspectives, and experiences. This method of data collection aims at investigating the experiences of individuals using their own words and perspectives (Berg & Lune, 2012; Creswell, 1998, 2012; Luker, 2008; Savin-Baden & Howell Major, 2013). The open-ended nature of the interviews yielded actual words of participants and provided a “complex picture of the situation” (Creswell, 2012, p. 535).

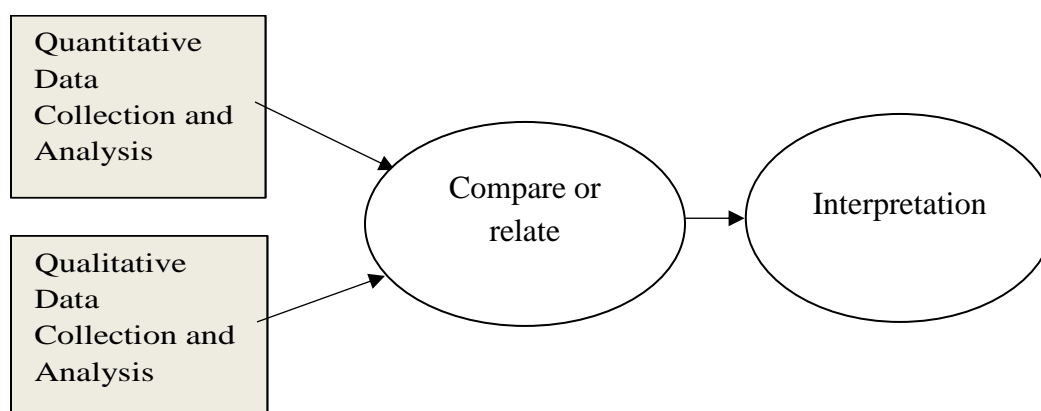
When combined, quantitative and qualitative methods yield several advantages and benefits. First, data collected from one source could be used to support, elaborate, or enhance data from the other source. Second, as described by Creswell (2012), the general results from the quantitative component combined with the detailed results resulting from the qualitative component provide a full picture of the research problem. Third, the quantitative results can be explained in-depth and in more detail through the use of qualitative methods.

**Mixed methods design type.** This research was conducted using a convergent parallel mixed methods design (Creswell, 2012). As shown below in Figure 1, in this design: researchers



collect and analyze quantitative and qualitative data separately, merge the data together to compare and relate, and use the findings to understand the research problem (Creswell, 2012; Gay et al., 2011). The questionnaire (students) and interview (students and parents) covered similar topics. By collecting both quantitative and qualitative data, both types of data will compensate for one another, and make up for any weaknesses in both types (Gay et al., 2011). In addition, by combining both types of data, a more detailed understanding of the research problem was made possible. While the quantitative data provided a general picture of the students' experiences, the qualitative data helped explain or clarify this picture and provided a fuller understanding of the research problem.

**Figure 1**  
**Convergent Parallel Mixed Methods Design**



*Source:* Creswell, 2012.

Creswell (2012) summarized the role of the researcher in a convergent parallel mixed methods design:

The researcher gathers both quantitative and qualitative data, analyzes both datasets separately, compares the results from the analysis of both datasets, and makes an interpretation as to whether the results support or contradict each other. The direct

comparison of the two datasets by the researcher provides a “convergence” of data sources. (p. 540)

## **Participants**

This section describes the research site, participant recruitment, and the consent process.

**Research site.** To ensure the students were provided space – the first of four key elements in Lundy’s (2007) model for conceptualising Article 12 – this mixed methods research was conducted in a Syrian community Saturday school program offered to Syrian newcomer children in a southwestern city in Ontario. This research site ensured that the students had a safe space to participate in, where they felt comfortable and included.

The Saturday school program started approximately a year and a half ago by the program president (key informant in this study) – a member of the Syrian community in this city – and is supported by the school board and community volunteers. The program operates out of one of the local schools for five hours every Saturday. The children who attend the program are at an elementary school level – Junior Kindergarten to Grade 8 (4-13 years old). All Syrian newcomer children in this city are welcome to attend the program. The number of children registered in this program is approximately 100. The children all attend local elementary schools in this city, mainly the English public board of education that this study focused on, on a full-time basis during the weekdays. The program provides the children with Arabic, French, religion, craft, and gym classes. The students have two nutrition breaks during the school day. The program president and volunteers in the community organize and teach the classes.

After an initial meeting with the Saturday school program president, I began to visit and volunteer in the program every Saturday. This helped me to learn about the different activities that took place and to start building a rapport with students and parents. Building a respectful and positive rapport with the students and parents was beneficial, especially for the qualitative

component (interviews) of this study. Qualitative researchers, Berg and Lune suggest, should immerse themselves in their field of study to examine some phenomena as perceived by the research participants and as told by their own stories and perspectives (Berg & Lune, 2012; Creswell, 1998, 2012).

**Participant recruitment.** The selection criteria for the students was based on cultural background, duration of time in Canada, location, age, grade level, gender, and language. Participants had to be Syrian refugee newcomer students who arrived to Canada at any time since the ongoing war in Syria and conflict started in 2011. The students had to attend elementary English public schools in the southwestern city of Ontario where this study took place. The target age group was 9-13 years old (grades 4-8). Both girls and boys were invited to participate. The students needed to be comfortable enough to complete the questionnaire alone or with a parent in English or Arabic as well as to complete the interview in English and/or Arabic.

With the help of the Saturday program president, I identified all the students in the program who fit this selection criteria. The total number of students who fit the selection criteria was 45. Therefore, all of the identified students were invited to complete the questionnaire. The students were provided with a package that included an invitation letter to consider completing the questionnaire (see Appendix B: Letter of invitation to participate in student questionnaire), letter of information (see Appendix C: Letter of information for student questionnaire), and the student questionnaire (see Appendix A: Student questionnaire). Syrian newcomer parents who attended the Saturday program with their children were also provided with an invitation letter to consider participating in the semi-structured one-on-one parent interview (see Appendix K: Letter of invitation to participate in parent interview).

However, to reach the desired number of questionnaires (75 students), the Saturday school program president and parents who attended the program with their children shared questionnaire packages with other Syrian newcomer families in the city who did not necessarily have their children registered in the Saturday school program. This student questionnaire package was the same one that students in the Saturday school program received, but just had an additional cover page to explain participation rights and the process of returning the questionnaire (see Appendix P: Student questionnaire cover letter for student packages outside Saturday school). The total number of questionnaires handed out to students and families (inside and outside program) was 160. This helped in reaching 75 completed questionnaires, the desired number for this study. Therefore, the response rate was 47%.

To preserve anonymity, and even the perception of anonymity, whether students at the Saturday school program completed the questionnaire or not, they (or their parents) were asked to return the questionnaire anonymously by dropping it off in a sealed box (Questionnaire box) in the main office during the Saturday program. For families who received questionnaire packages but their children did not attend the Saturday school program, whether the children completed the questionnaire or not, they were instructed to return the questionnaire in a sealed envelope provided by the researcher (me). We asked them to return the questionnaires either to me during the Saturday school program hours or to the individual from the Saturday school program who provided the package (school president or parent).

In the questionnaire package that was shared with students during the Saturday school program, students had the option to complete a separate student card (please see student card below) with their parents' contact information if they were interested in participating in the

interview. When students dropped off the questionnaire, they dropped off this student card in another sealed smaller box labeled ‘Interview box.’

<b><u>بطاقة الطالب Student Card</u></b>	
<p><b>I am interested in doing the interview. أنا مهتم بالمشاركة بالمقابلة.</b></p> <p>First Name (الاسم): _____ Last Name (اسم العائلة): _____</p> <p>Grade (الصف): _____</p> <p>Parent Telephone 1 (رقم هاتف الأهل 1): _____</p> <p>Parent Telephone 2 (رقم هاتف الأهل 2): _____</p>	

For the student interview (qualitative component), seven students completed the student card and were invited to participate in a semi-structured one-on-one interview. To recruit an additional three students, a nonprobability sampling technique known as purposive or judgmental sampling was used, and three students were invited and selected to participate in the semi-structured one-on-one interview. Purposive or judgmental sampling is often used by qualitative researchers to purposely select a group of people to study because of certain characteristics they have, traits they are interested in studying, or because they believe they will contribute to the understanding of the research problem (Gay et al., 2011; Nardi, 2006). A total of 10 students participated in the interview. Students had the option to have a parent present during the interview if they wished.

For the parent interview (qualitative component), 10 Syrian newcomer parents accepted the invitation to participate and expressed interest in doing the interview, and were selected to participate in the semi-structured one-on-one interview. Eight of the parents had their children attend the Saturday school program and two of the parents were recruited from the community

using purposive sampling with the help of the Saturday school program president and parents. The parents were interviewed about their perspectives in relation to their children's education in Canada.

**Consent process.** For the student questionnaire, every student in the Saturday school program who fit the selection criteria as well as other Syrian newcomer families in the city (with the help of Saturday school program president and parents) received a questionnaire package that included an invitation letter, Letter of Information (LI), and student questionnaire. The LI included background information about me (researcher), purpose of the study, research procedures, potential risks and benefits, confidentiality, participants' rights, subsequent use of data, and any important dates. Since it was explained in the LI, it was understood that by submitting the questionnaire, both child and parent had consented for the child to participate in the study.

For the student interview, students who were eventually selected to participate in the interview received the following forms that included background information about me (researcher), purpose of the study, research procedures, potential risks and benefits, confidentiality, participants' rights, subsequent use of data, and any important dates:

- Student Interview: Letter of invitation to participate in student interview (Appendix E)
- Student Interview: Letter of Information for Consent to Participate in Research (Appendix F)
- Student Interview: Consent to Participate in Research (Appendix G)
- Student Interview: Assent to Participate in Research Elementary School Children (Appendix H)

For the parent interview, parents who were selected to participate in the interview received:

- Parent Interview: Letter of Information for Consent to Participate in Research (Appendix L)
- Parent Interview: Consent to Participate in Research (Appendix M)

The goal was to provide students and parents with adequate information about the study so that they were able to arrive at a voluntary and informed decision about participation. The invitation letters, LI, consent forms, assent forms, and any communication with students and parents was done in English and Arabic to ensure full understanding of the study, its procedures, and participation rights.

Since the students were between the ages 9-13 years old, they needed their parent(s)/guardian(s)'s consent to participate in the research. However, since they were old enough to understand the purpose of the research and procedures, they also needed to provide their assent to participate. Only students who had parent consent and provided their own assent participated in completing the questionnaire and the interview.

## **Data Collection**

To ensure full implementation of Article 12, this study gave the students an opportunity to share their voice – the second of four key elements in Lundy's (2007) model for conceptualising Article 12 – by means of a student questionnaire (quantitative data) and student interview (qualitative data). Data collection took approximately four months to complete in 2019. During the data collection stage, I attended the Saturday school program and provided any additional information needed as well as answered any questions that came up from students or parents.

Creswell (2012) stressed that researchers in a mixed method study need to consider the “priority, sequence, and specific forms of quantitative and qualitative data” to be collected (p. 555). In considering priority, the quantitative and qualitative data in this mixed methods study were of equal weight, and there was no priority for one data type over the other. For the sequence of data collection, since this study was conducted using a convergent parallel mixed methods design, quantitative and qualitative data were collected and analyzed separately. Quantitative and qualitative data were then compared and merged together as grouped data to provide a deep understanding of the research problem.

**Quantitative data.** The quantitative data collection method in this study was an anonymous questionnaire completed by the students. Out of a total of 160 questionnaires handed out to students and families, 75 were completed and returned, making up a 47% response rate.

As described by Gay et al. (2011), quantitative research is the collection and analysis of numerical data, and is used to describe or explain a current condition or phenomena of interest. The questionnaire was available for the students to complete in English or Arabic, depending on the language they were more comfortable or familiar with, and with parental support if they wished. It was used to collect data about the students’ feelings and attitudes related to their education. The questionnaire yielded numeric scores that were analyzed using descriptive and inferential analysis techniques, and interpreted to help describe the students’ educational experiences.

Once the questionnaire was shared with the students, they began to complete it and returned it by placing it in the questionnaire box. After two weeks, I followed up with a friendly reminder to the students during the Saturday school program to consider looking at the questionnaire package with their parents in order to increase the response rate.



To avoid affecting results and raising other ethical concerns, instead of providing an incentive only to students who completed the questionnaire, all the students at the Saturday school program from Grades 4-8 received unadvertised children books whether they participated or not.

**Qualitative data.** The method of qualitative data collection was a semi-structured one-on-one interview with students and with parents. In qualitative research, an interview is a conversation between the researcher and the participant, where the researcher asks a set of preset questions and the participant responds, with the focus being on meaningful stories and perspectives brought forward by the participant (Savin-Baden & Howell Major, 2013). The semi-structured approach to the interview, as explained by Savin-Baden and Howell Major (2013), allowed for some flexibility during the interview to add or remove questions based on the information provided by the participants. The interviews with participants yielded words and text data that was organized, analyzed, and interpreted.

All the interviews with students and parents were conducted during the Saturday school program. An interview protocol was used to encourage good time management and completeness of responses. Gay et al. (2011) pointed out that in qualitative research, the researcher acts as the primary data collection instrument, and therefore, I conducted all the interviews with students and parents using an interview protocol. The students and parents had the option to complete the interview in English and/or Arabic depending on their language comfort. When students wished, their parent(s) joined them during the interview.

Before the interview, students and parents were reminded of their rights as participants, including: the right to skip any question(s) that makes them feel uncomfortable, the right to stop the interview at any time without any judgment or consequences, and the right to withdraw from

the study at any time. During the interviews, I was an active listener making sure I understood the students' views, and ensuring the students had audience - the third of four key elements in Lundy's (2007) model for full implementation of Article 12.

The original plan was to ask students and parents for their permission for the interviews to be audio recorded for the purpose of transcribing the data after the interview (see Appendix I: consent for audio recording student interview and Appendix N: Consent for audio recording parent interview). However, due to the students and parents' sensitivity to collection and recording of information, it was determined not to audio record the interviews, and instead, answers were transcribed on a computer by the researcher (myself) during the interview. This created a more suitable and desirable environment for the students and parents where they felt comfortable sharing their experiences and perspectives.

Students and parents provided their own confidential pseudonym that was used for data transcription during the interview to protect their identity. A codebook – electronic word document – that includes whose identity is associated with the pseudonyms for the participants in this study was developed and kept confidential in a password-protected computer with access only to the researcher (myself) and my supervisor.

Instead of providing an expected incentive, all students and parents who completed the interview received an unexpected token of appreciation gift, enabling the researcher to avoid affecting results and raising other ethical concerns. Every parent who participated in the interview received a \$20 Tim Hortons' gift card and every student who participated in the interview received a small gift bag with snacks and a small children's toy.

***Student interviews.*** I interviewed a total of 10 students at the Saturday school program. Gender consisted of five female students and five male students. Student age ranged from 10-13

years old: two students were 10 years old, three students 11 years old, one student 12 years old, and four students 13 years old. Student grade ranged from Grades 4-8: two students were in grade 4, four students were in grade 5, three students were in grade 7, and one student was in grade 8. On average, each interview took 35 minutes to complete, with the longest interview taking 45 minutes and shortest interview 25 minutes. Most of the students completed the interview alone, with the exception of two students who had a parent present during their interview. Eight of the interviews were completed using a mix of English and Arabic language as preferred by the participants; one interview was completed in Arabic, and one interview in English. On average, the participants have been in Canada for 2.5 years, with the shortest time in Canada four months, and longest time four years.

Although all the participants were born in Syria, with the exception of one student who came directly from Syria to Canada, the rest of the students lived either in Lebanon (three students) or Jordan (six students) before resettlement in Canada. From the nine students who lived either in Lebanon or Jordan before Canada, six students lived in a house or apartment building, while three students lived in a refugee camp. Some of the students who lived in a house or apartment building in Lebanon or Jordan lived in a refugee camp prior to moving to the house or apartment. On average, the students who lived outside Syria in Lebanon or Jordan were there for four years before resettlement in Canada, with the longest period being seven years and shortest period two years.

***Parent interviews.*** I interviewed 10 parents at the Saturday school program. Gender consisted of five female parents and five male parents. Five out of the 10 students who were interviewed had their parents as participants in the parent interview. On average, each interview

took 35 minutes to complete. All the interviews were completed in Arabic language as preferred by the participants.

Although the participants were all Syrian, due to the war in Syria most of them had fled Syria to neighbouring countries Jordan and Lebanon where they lived in refugee camps or a city before resettlement in Canada. On average, the participants have been in Canada for 3.5 years, with the shortest time in Canada 2.5 years, and longest time 4.5 years. The following is a breakdown of the highest level of education completed as reported by the participants for themselves and their partners (husband or wife): Elementary school level (Kindergarten-Grade 8): 14 parents; Secondary school level (Grade 9-Grade 12): two parents; and post-secondary level education (College or University): four parents. All the participants said they speak Arabic with their children at home. With the exception of two parents who said their children speak a mix of Arabic and English at home, the rest said their children speak Arabic.

**Reliability and validity of data.** This study used several methods to ensure credibility and trustworthiness of the data collected. First, the student questionnaire and interview protocols for students and parents were developed with guidance from literature and reviewed by the research committee to make sure the questions were meaningful and clear. Second, after each interview with students and parents, member checking was used to ensure participants were comfortable with the data they provided. This process involved reviewing the interview data with participants after each interview. To ensure the participants were fully comfortable with the information they provided, they had the opportunity to make changes, adjustments, add something they forgot to mention during the interview, or to offer further explanations on the responses they provided. Third, this study applied the concept of triangulation, which focuses on “the use of multiple methods, data collection strategies, and data sources to get a more complete

picture of the topic under study and to cross-check information" (Gay et al., 2011, p. 427). By relying on multiple types of data (quantitative and qualitative) and multiple sources and methods of data collection (student questionnaire, student interview, and parent interview), this study applied triangulation by crosschecking the different sets of data. This process contributed to the trustworthiness of the data collected from the participants.

## **Instruments**

I used a researcher-designed student questionnaire to collect quantitative data and a researcher-developed interview protocol for semi-structured one-on-one interviews with participants to collect qualitative data.

**Quantitative data.** A questionnaire is usually either a standardized instrument or a self-developed instrument. I found a limited number of questionnaires relating to refugee newcomer students' experiences in their host country. However, they focused on high school students, mental health, and other contexts such as Turkey and did not fit this study and its purpose. Therefore, I developed my own questionnaire that was more appropriate for this study and helped in understanding the research problem. Gay et al. (2011) pointed out that "at times, constructing your own instrument will be necessary, especially if your research topic and concepts are original or relatively unresearched" (p. 153).

The questionnaire was organized into the following themes: family background; school experiences before coming to Canada; settlement experiences in Canada; and school experiences in Canada related to learning, socio-cultural, extra-curricular activities, and staff support. I used Article 12 of the CRC as a guide to develop the questionnaire and kept the focus on the students' own experiences. During the process of developing the questionnaire, I received feedback from my supervisor, my research committee, the ESL coach at the school where I worked, and the

ESL lead at the board of education that this research focused on. I incorporated all of their valuable comments and suggestions into the final draft.

When developing the questionnaire, I applied certain procedures and design concepts to ensure the instrument was reliable and valid. I followed Nardi (2006) recommendation to provide brief and clear instructions to guide the participants when completing the questionnaire. I paid particular attention to the format and organization of the questionnaire. The questionnaire was organized into themes to encourage memory recall and each theme had its own set of questions. I worded the questions carefully using language that is sensitive and appropriate for the age of the children and their language skills. I also carefully thought of the ordering of the themes and questions to ensure flow and consistency. The questionnaire consisted of mainly closed-ended questions (e.g., likert scales, rating scales, etc.). The questions asked the students to choose from standardized answers to help in measuring their perceptions and attitudes about certain aspects of their educational experiences. The final draft of the questionnaire was user friendly and easy for the children to read and navigate. Nardi (2006) stated that “creating a readable, visually pleasing, and comprehensive questionnaire helps the respondent flow through it smoothly” (p. 87). I translated the questionnaire to Arabic and students had the option to complete it in English or Arabic.

**Qualitative data.** For the student interview, I also had difficulty finding a standardized interview protocol that would be appropriate for this study and the stated research questions. Therefore, I developed an interview protocol for this study to guide the student semi-structured one-on-one interview (see Appendix D: Student interview protocol). I used Article 12 of the CRC as a guide when I developed the interview protocol and kept the focus on the students’ own views and perspectives with matters that affect their educational experiences. I organized the

student interview protocol into themes, similar to the themes in the questionnaire, and each theme had its own set of questions. The questions were open-ended in nature to provide the students with an opportunity to explain and elaborate on their views and perspectives. I worded the questions carefully using language appropriate for the age and language skills of the children and with sensitivity to avoid any discomfort to them. The themes and questions were ordered in a way to ensure there is flow and consistency. I arranged the interview protocol using the following themes: family background; school experiences before coming to Canada; settlement experiences in Canada; school experiences in Canada related to learning, socio-cultural, extra-curricular activities, and staff support; and future goals and aspirations. While I developed the interview protocol, I received feedback from the dissertation research committee, the ESL coach at the school where I worked, and the ESL lead at the board of education that this research focused on. I incorporated all of their valuable comments and suggestions into the final draft.

For the parent interview, I also developed an interview protocol to guide the semi-structured one-on-one interview (see Appendix J: Parent interview protocol). The interview protocol focused on the parents' perspectives in relation to their children's education in Canada (e.g., student progress, homework support, school-home communication, etc.). I used open-ended questions to provide the parents with an opportunity to elaborate on their views and perspectives.

## **Data Analysis**

The data analysis was guided by the second, third, and fourth elements of Lundy's (2007) model for Article 12 – voice (focusing on the students' own views), audience (ensuring their views were listened to and presented), and influence (presenting any challenges or gaps with the students' learning that could lead to recommendations). During data collection, I began to carry out data analysis, analyzing quantitative and qualitative datasets separately. While the

quantitative data provided a descriptive general picture of the students' experiences, the qualitative data provided deeper meanings, explanations, and clarity. I then merged the analysis results from both types of data (quantitative and qualitative) to compare and relate students' responses.

**Quantitative.** I organized and analyzed the data collected from the student questionnaire using descriptive and inferential statistics techniques. With such analysis, the statistics derived from the sample may be generalized to the larger population (Kiess & Green, 2010). The pre-coded or numbered responses for each closed-ended question in a questionnaire facilitates statistical analysis when transferring the data from the questionnaire to a computer program (Nardi, 2006). After I entered all the data collected from the questionnaires into a computer program, I analyzed and interpreted the data. I used descriptive analysis to present summaries of the data and to describe the students' experiences related to the topics measured. I used inferential analysis, using two-sample t-test for proportions assuming unequal variances, for comparisons of means between groups of students on different topics to determine any variances or significant differences in the data. I then presented the results from the data analysis using tables to help describe the students' experiences.

**Qualitative.** I analyzed the data collected from the semi-structured one-on-one interviews with students and parents separately using a content analysis approach. The specific approach I used was an open coding technique that helped to identify themes and patterns that emerged from the data. Gay et al. (2011) noted that "one of the most frequent data analysis activities undertaken by qualitative researchers is coding, the process of categorically marking or referencing units of text (e.g., words, sentences) with codes and labels as a way to indicate patterns and meaning" (p. 469). I began this coding process with open coding – the process of



reviewing the entire data collected from each participant and marking units of text with codes. I then looked for similar codes and grouped them together to form themes. With themes identified, I organized some of them using subcategories. The process of open coding and then grouping similar codes together helped reduce the large amount of data to a small set of identifiable themes. The results from interview data analysis are limited to the participants, and “generalizing to the entire population is not possible, regardless of the sample size” (Nardi, 2006, p. 122).

As described by Gay et al. (2011), I then merged the results from quantitative and qualitative data analysis in the form of grouped data to compare and to find points of intersection and discrepancies. Comparison in the form of grouped data of each type (quantitative and qualitative) ensured there is no link between individual quantitative and qualitative profiles, thus protecting the participants’ anonymity. When I combined and merged both types of data, a detailed picture emerged that helped to understand the research problem. Creswell (2012) summarized this process when using a convergent parallel mixed methods design; he noted that “the researcher gathers both quantitative and qualitative data, analyzes both datasets separately, compares the results from the analysis of both datasets, and makes an interpretation as to whether the results support or contradict each other” (p. 540).

Using a convergent parallel mixed-methods research design, this study explored the experiences of Syrian newcomer students attending public schools in a southwestern city of Ontario, Canada. I collected and analyzed quantitative and qualitative data separately. I then merged both sets of data analysis together to compare, relate, and interpret the findings. In the next chapter, I present the quantitative results from the anonymous student questionnaire.

## CHAPTER 5: QUANTITATIVE RESULTS

In this chapter, I analyze the quantitative data from the student questionnaire using descriptive and inferential analysis techniques. I use descriptive analysis to present summaries and descriptions of the students' experiences, and inferential analysis, using two-sample t-test for proportions, to compare the means between groups of students on different topics. This data analysis provides an overall general picture of the students' experiences.

Out of a total of 160 questionnaires handed out, 75 were completed and returned by students, representing a 47% response rate. 56% of the students were female, and 44% male. The students' age ranged from 9-13 years old (Grades 4-8). As seen in Table 1, 7% of the students who completed the questionnaire were 9 years old, 16% were 10 years old, 27% were 11 years old, 17% were 12 years old, and 33% were 13 years old. Some of the students completed the questionnaire alone, some with their parent present, and some students received parent support. Some of the students completed the questionnaire in English and some in Arabic.

Table 1						
<i>Age</i>						
	<u>9 years</u>	<u>10 years</u>	<u>11 years</u>	<u>12 years</u>	<u>13 years</u>	<u>Total</u>
Students	5	12	20	13	25	75
Pct (%)	7%	16%	27%	17%	33%	100%

### Demographics

Table 2 indicates that the responding students have all been in Canada from two to four years, while slightly more than half of the students have been in Canada for three years.

Table 2						
<i>Numbers of Years in Canada</i>						
	<u>1 year</u>	<u>2 years</u>	<u>3 years</u>	<u>4 years</u>	<u>5 years</u>	<u>Total</u>
Students	0	13	40	21	0	74
Pct (%)	0%	18%	54%	28%	0%	100%

*Note.*  $N = 75$ . Missing data = 1 (1.3%).

Although all the students were born in Syria, almost all of them had fled Syria to neighbouring countries due to the war and later resettled in Canada. As seen in Table 3, the vast majority of the students lived in Jordan or Lebanon, and followed by Turkey.

Table 3

*Country you Lived in Before Resettlement in Canada*

	<u>Students</u>	<u>Pct</u>
Egypt	1	1.5%
Jordan	28	43%
Lebanon	28	43%
Saudi Arabia	1	1.5%
Turkey	7	11%

Total responses: 65

*Note. N =75. Missing data = 10 (13.3%).*

Almost half of the students (53%) reported that they lived in a refugee camp before resettlement in Canada, while 47% reported that they did not live in a refugee camp. For those who lived in refugee camps, as seen in Table 4, the average numbers of years were four.

Table 4

*Number of Years in Refugee Camp*

	<u>Students</u>	<u>Pct</u>
1 year	5	15%
2 years	1	3%
3 years	7	20%
4 years	5	15%
5 years	6	18%
6 years	8	23%
7 years	1	3%
8 years	1	3%

Total responses: 34

In responding to what language was most often spoken at home, Arabic was selected most by the students (82%), followed by English (17%), and only one student reported another language spoken at home, and that was Kurdish.

*Average number of years in refugee camp: 4**Note. N =40. Missing data = 6 (15%).*

### **Theme 1: School Experiences before Resettlement in Canada**

Out of 74 respondents, 66 students (89%) reported that they went to school before resettlement in Canada, while eight students (11%) did not go to school. From those who went to school (66 students), 62% reported that their education was interrupted, and they missed school years as shown in Table 5. On average, those students missed three years of school before resettlement in

Table 5

*Interrupted Education before Resettlement in Canada*

	<u>Yes</u>	<u>No</u>	<u>Total</u>
Students	41	25	66
Pct (%)	62%	38%	100%

Canada, and the highest concentration of grades missed was between Grades 2 to Grade 5. Most students who went to school before resettlement in Canada reported that they had difficulties and did not benefit from learning in school, or they just benefited a little, as shown in Table 6 below.

Table 6 <i>Benefiting from Learning in School before Canada</i>						
	<u>Not at all</u>	<u>Little</u>	<u>Fairly benefited</u>	<u>Much</u>	<u>A great deal</u>	<u>Total</u>
Students	24	22	7	5	4	62
Pct (%)	39%	36%	11%	8%	6%	100%

*Note.* N = 66. Missing data = 4 (6.1%).

## Theme 2: Resettlement Experiences in Canada

Slightly over three quarters of the respondents (80%), reported that people in the city where they resettled are “Very” or “Extremely” friendly towards their family as shown in Table 7 below. None of the students reported that people in this city are not friendly towards their family. This is a positive experience for the students and their families especially due to the traumatic experiences they have been through before resettlement. Feeling welcomed and treated with friendliness by others in Canada supports the students with resettlement and integration in Canada.

Table 7 <i>Friendly Approach Towards Your Family in Canada</i>						
	<u>Not at all</u>	<u>A little</u>	<u>Fairly friendly</u>	<u>Very</u>	<u>Extremely</u>	<u>Total</u>
Students	0	4	11	24	34	73
Pct (%)	0%	5%	15%	33%	47%	100%

*Note.* N = 75. Missing data = 2 (2.7%).

In terms of providing support to their parents with aspects related to resettlement (translating, appointments, reading letters, etc.), nearly half of the respondents (46%) reported that they “Often” or “Very often” provide support to their parents, while 32% indicated “Sometimes” (see Table 8 below). This is probably because the students’ parents do not possess

English skills yet, and since the children are learning English at a faster rate than the parents, they are providing any support they can to their parents with translations.

Table 8

*Helping Parents with Translations or Appointments*

	<u>Never</u>	<u>Rarely</u>	<u>Sometimes</u>	<u>Often</u>	<u>Very often</u>	<u>Total</u>
Students	6	10	24	22	12	74
Pct (%)	8%	14%	32%	30%	16%	100%

*Note.*  $N=75$ . Missing data = 1 (1.3%).

The students placed significant importance on maintaining their Syrian culture; out of 74 respondents on a 5-point Likert scale, 89% of the students reported that Syrian culture is “Important” or “Very important” to them. At the same time, the students placed significant importance on learning about Canadian culture; out of 75 respondents, 81% of the students indicated that learning about Canadian culture is “Important” or “Very important”. This demonstrates that the students understand the importance and want to integrate into Canadian society and learn about Canadian culture, but they also want to maintain their Syrian heritage and culture.

### **Theme 3: School Experiences in Canada: Learning Experiences**

**ESL and regular homeroom classroom.** I asked the students about their learning experiences in Canada in the English as a Second Language (ESL) program where they spend half of their school day and in the regular homeroom class where they spend the other half of the school day. Regarding the ESL program, the majority of the respondents (87%) reported that the program is either “Helpful” or “Very helpful” as seen in Table 9 below. Also, out of 71 respondents on a 5-point Likert scale, slightly over three quarters of the students (79%) reported that they are/were “Very” or “Extremely” interested in the learning in the ESL program. The fact that the students were interested in learning in the ESL program shows they are engaged in the learning and this may explain why they believe the program is helpful to them.

Table 9

*Experience with ESL Program*

	<u>Not helpful</u>	<u>A little helpful</u>	<u>Fairly helpful</u>	<u>Helpful</u>	<u>Very helpful</u>	<u>Total</u>
Students	2	4	3	26	36	71
Pct (%)	3%	6%	4%	36%	51%	100%

*Note.*  $N=75$ . Missing data = 4 (5.3%).

Almost half of the respondents (49%) reported that the teachers in the ESL program “Often” or “Almost always” ask for their (students’) feedback to help them learn, 34% “Sometimes”, and 17% indicated that teachers in ESL “Rarely” or “Not at all” ask for their feedback (see Table 10 below). While the rate of asking the students for feedback on their learning is encouraging, this suggests the need for more conferencing or meeting times with students to ask for their feedback on their learning to help identify their areas of need and to help determine the next steps with their learning.

Table 10

*Student Feedback in the ESL Program*

	<u>Not at all</u>	<u>Rarely</u>	<u>Sometimes</u>	<u>Often</u>	<u>Almost always</u>	<u>Total</u>
Students	7	5	23	20	14	69
Pct (%)	10%	7%	34%	29%	20%	100%

*Note.*  $N=75$ . Missing data = 6 (8%).

In relation to learning in the regular homeroom class (non-ESL class), three quarters of the respondents (75%) reported that it is “Important” or “Very important” for newcomer students to Canada to learn in this class (see Table 11 below). However, out of 72 respondents on a 5-point Likert scale, 32% of the students reported that learning in regular homeroom class in Canada is “Very” or “Extremely” difficult, 33% “Fairly difficult”, and 35% indicated that learning is a “Little” or “Not at all” difficult. One explanation for this difficulty is that the students are in their early stages of English language development, in addition to having limited school experiences before resettlement in Canada which created a gap in their learning. This

reinforces the importance for teachers in regular homeroom class to differentiate instruction for the students and to teach to their levels.

Table 11

*Importance of Regular Homeroom Class for Newcomers*

	<u>Not</u> <u>important</u>	<u>A little</u> <u>important</u>	<u>Fairly</u> <u>important</u>	<u>Important</u>	<u>Very</u> <u>important</u>	<u>Total</u>
Students	1	5	12	24	29	71
Pct (%)	1%	7%	17%	34%	41%	100%

*Note.*  $N=75$ . Missing data = 4 (5.3%).

Slightly over half of the respondents (57%) reported that the teachers in regular homeroom class “Often” or “Almost always” ask for their (students’) feedback to help them learn, 25% “Sometimes”, and 18% indicated that teachers “Rarely” or “Not at all” ask for their feedback (see Table 12 below). Similar to the ESL class, student feedback in regular homeroom class is also an area of growth and could be used more by educators. With more conferencing or meeting times with students, teachers will be able to learn more about student learning needs and levels, which will help in differentiating instruction for meeting individual student needs. Since 32% of the students reported that learning in regular homeroom class in Canada is “Very” or “Extremely” difficult (out of 72 respondents on a 5-point Likert scale), meeting with individual students to gain their feedback about their learning will help with differentiating instruction and teaching to individual student levels.

Table 12

*Student Feedback in Regular Homeroom Class*

	<u>Not at all</u>	<u>Rarely</u>	<u>Sometimes</u>	<u>Often</u>	<u>Almost</u> <u>always</u>	<u>Total</u>
Students	3	10	18	25	16	72
Pct (%)	4%	14%	25%	35%	22%	100%

*Note.*  $N=75$ . Missing data = 3 (4%).

By comparing the students’ experiences in ESL class and regular homeroom class, there appear to be some similarities and differences. The similarities focus on the students’ perception

that both classes are helpful, and they are interested in learning in both. Also, in both classes, more feedback could be sought from students about their learning by their teachers to help in differentiating instruction and teaching to their levels. One of the differences was that students felt the learning in regular homeroom class was more difficult than ESL class.

**Learning English and Math.** With regard to difficulty learning English in Canada, as seen in Table 13 below (All Students), 18% of the respondents reported it has been “Very” or “Extremely” difficult, 48% “Fairly difficult”, and 34% indicated it has been a “Little” or “Not at all” difficult.

A comparison of the means between students with prior school experience and students with interrupted or no prior school experience showed that the scores varied for the two groups (students with prior school experience— $M = .47$ ,  $SD = .16$ ; students with interrupted or no prior school experience— $M = .59$ ,  $SD = .19$ ). At an alpha of .05, the analysis indicated a statistically significant difference among the groups,  $t(57) = -2.88$ ,  $p = .0056$ , effect size = .69  $SD$ . Students with interrupted or no prior school experience before resettlement in Canada are experiencing greater challenges in learning English than students who had school experience prior to resettlement. Only 4% of the students (out of 25 respondents) with prior school experience reported it has been “Very” or “Extremely” difficult to learn English in Canada, in comparison to 25% of the students (out of 48 respondents) with interrupted or no prior school experience who reported it has been “Very” or “Extremely” difficult to learn English (see Table 13).



Table 13  
*Difficulty Learning English in Canada*

<b>All Students</b>						
	<u>Not at all</u>	<u>Little</u>	<u>Fairly difficult</u>	<u>Very</u>	<u>Extremely</u>	<u>Total</u>
Students	8	17	35	10	3	73
Pct (%)	11%	23%	48%	14%	4%	100%
<b>Students with Prior School Experience</b>						
	<u>Not at all</u>	<u>Little</u>	<u>Fairly difficult</u>	<u>Very</u>	<u>Extremely</u>	<u>Total</u>
Students	4	9	11	1	0	25
Pct (%)	16%	36%	44%	4%	0%	100%
<b>Students with Interrupted or No Prior School Experience</b>						
	<u>Not at all</u>	<u>Little</u>	<u>Fairly difficult</u>	<u>Very</u>	<u>Extremely</u>	<u>Total</u>
Students	4	8	24	9	3	48
Pct (%)	8%	17%	50%	19%	6%	100%

*Note.*  $N = 75$ . Missing data = 2 (2.7%).

With regard to difficulty in learning Math in Canada, as seen below in Table 14 below, 32% of the respondents reported it has been “Very” or “Extremely” difficult, 26% “Fairly difficult”, and 42% indicated it has been a “Little” or “Not at all” difficult. A comparison of the means between students with prior school experience and students with interrupted or no prior school experience showed that the scores did not vary for the two groups (students with prior school experience— $M = .57$ ,  $SD = .25$ ; students with interrupted or no prior school experience— $M = .59$ ,  $SD = .27$ ). At an alpha of .05, the analysis indicated a statistically non-significant difference among the groups,  $t(52) = -0.38$ ,  $p = .7061$ , effect size = .09  $SD$ .

Table 14  
*Difficulty Learning Math in Canada*

<b>All Students</b>						
	<u>Not at all</u>	<u>Little</u>	<u>Fairly difficult</u>	<u>Very</u>	<u>Extremely</u>	<u>Total</u>
Students	11	20	19	12	12	74
Pct (%)	15%	27%	26%	16%	16%	100%

<b>Students with Prior School Experience</b>						
	<u>Not at all</u>	<u>Little</u>	<u>Fairly difficult</u>	<u>Very</u>	<u>Extremely</u>	<u>Total</u>
Students	5	4	8	6	2	25
Pct (%)	20%	16%	32%	24%	8%	100%

<b>Students with Interrupted or No Prior School Experience</b>						
	<u>Not at all</u>	<u>Little</u>	<u>Fairly difficult</u>	<u>Very</u>	<u>Extremely</u>	<u>Total</u>
Students	6	16	11	6	10	49
Pct (%)	12%	33%	23%	12%	20%	100%

*Note.*  $N = 75$ . Missing data = 1 (1.3%).

Since many of the students had interruptions to their education and limited school experiences before resettlement in Canada, they are likely to have gaps in literacy and numeracy skills even in their mother tongue Arabic, which leads to longer time to develop literacy and numeracy skills in English school system in Canada.

**Favourite subjects.** Math was the students' favourite required subject, with 61% of the students selecting Math, and Art came second at 40% (see Table 15 below). Math was also ranked highest by the students in terms of subject(s) they thought they were best at in school in Canada – 52% of the students selected Math as a subject they felt they were best at. 40% of the students selected Art and Language Arts as subjects they felt they were best at in school in Canada. Although most students indicated difficulties with learning English and Math in Canada, both subjects were ranked in the top subjects the students favoured and thought they were best at.

This shows that even though the students may be struggling or having difficulty with the learning in these two subjects, they are still enjoying the learning process and the activities. Students also ranked art high in terms of their favourite subjects and subjects they thought they were best at. Teachers can encourage students' creativity and provide opportunities to express their thoughts and feelings through engagement in art.

Dance and Drama were ranked lowest in terms of the students' favourite subjects in school in Canada – 12% of the students selected Dance and

8% of the students selected Drama (see Table 15 above). The students may have difficulty relating to the subjects Dance and Drama due to cultural reasons or not having prior school experiences with these subjects. Further encouragement and support by teachers for these two subjects (Dance and Drama) could play a role in inspiring and providing the students with opportunities for communication, creativity, and language development.

**Peer support with learning.** I asked the students about receiving peer support with their learning, including peer support from Syrian or other newcomer students as well as Canadian-born peers. Table 16 below (All Students) shows that 36% of the respondents reported that they “Often” or “Almost always” receive support from their peers with their learning, 36% sometimes, and 28% indicated that they “Rarely” or “Not at all” receive peer support.

Table 15

*Favourite Subject(s) in School in Canada*

	<u>Students</u>	<u>Pct</u>
Art	30	40%
Dance	9	12%
Drama	6	8%
French	26	35%
Health and Physical Education	19	25%
Language Arts	27	36%
Math	46	61%
Music	14	19%
Science	23	31%
Social Studies / History / Geography	14	19%
Total responses: 75		

A comparison of the means between female and male students showed that the scores did not vary for the two groups (female students— $M = .61$ ,  $SD = .22$ ; male students— $M = .65$ ,  $SD = .21$ ). At an alpha of .05, the analysis indicated a statistically non-significant difference among the groups,  $t(68) = -0.68$ ,  $p = .4966$ , effect size = .16  $SD$ . 38% of female respondents reported that they “Often” or “Almost always” receive support from their peers with their learning and 32% indicated that they “Rarely” or “Not at all” receive peer support. This is in comparison to 34% of male respondents who reported that they “Often” or “Almost always” receive support from their peers with their learning and 22% who indicated they “Rarely” or “Not at all” receive peer support (see Table 16).

Table 16

*Peer Support with Learning*

<b>All Students</b>						
	<u>Not at all</u>	<u>Rarely</u>	<u>Sometimes</u>	<u>Often</u>	<u>Almost always</u>	<u>Total</u>
Students	4	16	26	17	9	72
Pct (%)	6%	22%	36%	24%	12%	100%
<b>Female Students</b>						
	<u>Not at all</u>	<u>Rarely</u>	<u>Sometimes</u>	<u>Often</u>	<u>Almost always</u>	<u>Total</u>
Students	3	10	12	11	4	40
Pct (%)	7%	25%	30%	28%	10%	100%
<b>Male Students</b>						
	<u>Not at all</u>	<u>Rarely</u>	<u>Sometimes</u>	<u>Often</u>	<u>Almost always</u>	<u>Total</u>
Students	1	6	14	6	5	32
Pct (%)	3%	19%	44%	19%	15%	100%

*Note.*  $N = 75$ . Missing data = 3 (4%).

This data indicates there is a need for more opportunities for group work or working with a partner for both female and male students to facilitate learning with peers in the classroom.

With more peer support, Syrian newcomer students will have greater opportunities to learn not only from their teachers but also from other students in the classroom.

**Asking for support with learning.** The survey also yielded data on levels of student comfort asking their teachers for help with their learning. Table 17 below reveals that, 56% of the respondents reported that they feel “Very” or “Extremely” comfortable, 17% “Fairly comfortable”, and 27% indicated that they feel “A little” or “Not at all” comfortable.

Table 17						
<i>Comfort in Asking Teachers for Help with Learning</i>						
	<u>Not at all</u>	<u>A little</u>	<u>Fairly</u> <u>comfortable</u>	<u>Very</u>	<u>Extremely</u>	<u>Total</u>
Students	4	15	12	21	18	70
Pct (%)	6%	21%	17%	30%	26%	100%

*Note.*  $N=75$ . Missing data = 5 (6.7%).

62% of the students reported that they receive “Much” or “A great deal” of support from their teachers with their learning, 28% “Some” support, and 10% indicated that they receive “Little” or “Not at all” support from their teachers with their learning (see Table 18).

Table 18						
<i>Receiving Teacher Support with Learning</i>						
	<u>Not at all</u>	<u>Little</u>	<u>Some</u>	<u>Much</u>	<u>A great</u> <u>deal</u>	<u>Total</u>
Students	4	4	20	23	22	73
Pct (%)	5%	5%	28%	32%	30%	100%

*Note.*  $N=75$ . Missing data = 2 (2.7%).

This data suggests that some of the Syrian newcomer students possibly need more encouragement and support in asking for help with their learning. Use of regular check-ins with all students and providing ongoing support, as well as the use of available translators (students, volunteers, staff) will encourage the students to ask for support with their learning when needed.

**Homework.** Out of 74 respondents (using a 5-point Likert scale), 35% reported that their parents/older siblings “Often” or “Almost always” discuss their school experiences and

homework with them, 35% “Sometimes”, and 30% indicated that their parents/older siblings “Rarely” or “Not at all” discuss their school experiences and homework with them. This data is promising and shows that Syrian newcomer parents and children place high importance on the children’s education experiences. It also suggests, however, that some Syrian newcomer parents may need guidance or communication from the teacher about the importance of discussing school experiences with their children every day when they go home from school (e.g., learning, homework, favourite part of the day, challenges, etc.).

As seen in Table 19 below, 15% of the respondents reported that when they receive homework it is “Very” or “Extremely” difficult to complete it in English on their own, 38% “Fairly difficult”, and 47% indicated it is a “Little” or “Not at all” difficult. A comparison of the means between students who reported that they speak Arabic most often at home and students who speak English most often at home showed that the scores varied for the two groups (students who speak Arabic at home— $M = .52$ ,  $SD = .2$ ; students who speak English at home— $M = .38$ ,  $SD = .17$ ). At an alpha of .05, the analysis indicated a statistically significant difference among the groups,  $t(19) = 2.59$ ,  $p = .018$ , effect size =  $.76 SD$ . Students who speak Arabic most often at home are having more difficulty in completing homework in English than those who speak English most often at home. 17% of the respondents who speak Arabic most often at home reported that it is “Very” or “Extremely” difficult to complete homework in English on their own, in comparison to only 8% of the respondents who speak English most often at home who indicated it is “Very” or “Extremely” difficult (see Table 19 below).

Table 19

*Difficulty Completing Homework in English*

<b>All Students</b>						
	<u>Not at all</u>	<u>Little</u>	<u>Fairly difficult</u>	<u>Very</u>	<u>Extremely</u>	<u>Total</u>
Students	14	21	28	10	1	74
Pct (%)	19%	28%	38%	14%	1%	100%
<b>Students who Speak Arabic at Home</b>						
	<u>Not at all</u>	<u>Little</u>	<u>Fairly difficult</u>	<u>Very</u>	<u>Extremely</u>	<u>Total</u>
Students	10	14	27	9	1	61
Pct (%)	16%	23%	44%	15%	2%	100%
<b>Students who Speak English at Home</b>						
	<u>Not at all</u>	<u>Little</u>	<u>Fairly difficult</u>	<u>Very</u>	<u>Extremely</u>	<u>Total</u>
Students	4	7	1	1	0	13
Pct (%)	30%	54%	8%	8%	0%	100%

*Note.*  $N=75$ . Missing data = 1 (1.3%).

When assigning homework, teachers should consider that the students are in the early stages of English language development and assign homework to their level that they are able to complete. In addition, it is important for teachers to keep in mind that many Syrian newcomer parents may not be capable of providing homework support to their children due to language barriers or lack of familiarity with the subject area and the content of the assigned work.

#### **Theme 4: School Experiences in Canada: Socio-cultural Experiences**

**Making friends at school.** Table 20 below indicates that 22% of the respondents reported that it has been “Very” or “Extremely” difficult to make friends at school in Canada, 22% “Fairly difficult”, and 56% indicated that it has been a “Little” or “Not at all” difficult. A comparison of the means between female and male students showed that the scores did not vary for the two groups (female students— $M = .5$ ,  $SD = .25$ ; male students— $M = .52$ ,  $SD = .23$ ). At an alpha of .05, the analysis indicated a statistically non-significant difference among the groups,

$t(67) = -0.44, p = .6644$ , effect size = .1 *SD*. For female students (41 respondents), 22% reported it has been “Very” or “Extremely” difficult to make friends at school in Canada and 61% reported it has been a “Little” or “Not at all” difficult. This is in comparison to male students (31 respondents) where 23% reported it has been “Very” or “Extremely” difficult to make friends at school in Canada and 48% reported it has been a “Little” or “Not at all” difficult (see Table 20 also).

Table 20

*Difficulty Making Friends at School in Canada*

<b>All Students</b>						
	<u>Not at all</u>	<u>Little</u>	<u>Fairly difficult</u>	<u>Very</u>	<u>Extremely</u>	<u>Total</u>
Students	15	25	16	10	6	72
Pct (%)	21%	35%	22%	14%	8%	100%
<b>Female Students</b>						
	<u>Not at all</u>	<u>Little</u>	<u>Fairly difficult</u>	<u>Very</u>	<u>Extremely</u>	<u>Total</u>
Students	9	16	7	5	4	41
Pct (%)	22%	39%	17%	12%	10%	100%
<b>Male Students</b>						
	<u>Not at all</u>	<u>Little</u>	<u>Fairly difficult</u>	<u>Very</u>	<u>Extremely</u>	<u>Total</u>
Students	6	9	9	5	2	31
Pct (%)	19%	29%	29%	16%	7%	100%

*Note.*  $N = 75$ . Missing data = 3 (4%).

Having limited English and being in a new environment in Canada could be contributing factors to some difficulty in making friends at school for Syrian newcomer students, especially in the initial stages of resettlement. The students will need teacher and school staff support to develop friendships at school.

**Experiences with Canadian-born or English-speaking students.** The students reported that they spent almost equal time at school playing with newcomer students to Canada and



Canadian-born or English-speaking students. This could be play time during nutrition breaks or recess program, or other school programs where the students have opportunities to play together. Out of 75 respondents on a 5-point Likert scale, 60% reported that they spend “Much” or “A great deal” of play time with newcomer students to Canada. On another question, out of 73 respondents on a 5-point Likert scale, 56% reported that they spend “Much” or “A great deal” of play time with Canadian-born or English-speaking students.

I also asked the students if they had the choice with their learning, whether they prefer to work with newcomer students to Canada or Canadian-born students for their group work or team project. Out of 73 respondents, 66% preferred to work with Canadian-born or English-speaking students for their group work or team projects, in comparison to 34% of the students who preferred to work with newcomer students to Canada.

These findings demonstrate that the students want to play and learn with Canadian-born or English-speaking students and not just newcomer students to Canada. They may feel this helps them with inclusion, integration, learning English, and adapting to their new environment. In addition to working with newcomer students to Canada in ESL class, these findings also highlight the importance for Syrian newcomer students to be integrated into regular homeroom class since they want to play and learn with Canadian-born or English-speaking students.

**Getting along with other students.** 14% of the respondents reported that they “Often” or “Almost always” have conflicts with other students, 18% “Sometimes”, and 68% indicated that they “Rarely” or “Not at all” experience conflicts with other students (see Table 21 below). A comparison of the means between female and male students showed that the scores did not vary for the two groups (female students— $M = .42$ ,  $SD = .25$ ; male students— $M = .4$ ,  $SD = .22$ ). At an alpha of .05, the analysis indicated a statistically non-significant difference among the groups,

$t(69) = .44, p = .6578$ , effect size = .1 *SD*. 15% of female students (41 respondents) reported that they “Often” or “Almost always” have conflicts with other students and 63% reported that they “Rarely” or “Not at all” experience conflicts. This is in comparison to 12% of male students (32 respondents) who reported that they “Often” or “Almost always” have conflicts with other students and 75% who indicated that they “Rarely” or “Not at all” experience conflicts (see Table 21 also).

Table 21

*Conflicts with other Students*

<b>All Students</b>						
	<u>Not at all</u>	<u>Rarely</u>	<u>Sometimes</u>	<u>Often</u>	<u>Almost always</u>	<u>Total</u>
Students	31	19	13	7	3	73
Pct (%)	42%	26%	18%	10%	4%	100%
<b>Female Students</b>						
	<u>Not at all</u>	<u>Rarely</u>	<u>Sometimes</u>	<u>Often</u>	<u>Almost always</u>	<u>Total</u>
Students	18	8	9	4	2	41
Pct (%)	44%	19%	22%	10%	5%	100%
<b>Male Students</b>						
	<u>Not at all</u>	<u>Rarely</u>	<u>Sometimes</u>	<u>Often</u>	<u>Almost always</u>	<u>Total</u>
Students	13	11	4	3	1	32
Pct (%)	41%	34%	13%	9%	3%	100%

*Note.*  $N = 75$ . Missing data = 2 (2.7%).

Overall, less than 15% of the respondents reported that they “Often” or “Almost always” experience conflicts with other students, which may be due to pre-migration experiences, language barriers, being in a new school system and environment in Canada, and/or some Canadian-born or English-speaking students may bring some of their own issues to the interaction thus creating problems. Considering the students’ pre-migration and limited formal

school experiences before resettlement, these promising findings show that the students are doing well in Canada with peer relationships and getting along with other students.

### **Theme 5: School Experiences in Canada: Extra-curricular Activities**

Levels of participation in extra-curricular activities at school often reveals valuable information about the extent of integration. 86% of the respondents reported that they participate in at least one extra-curricular activity at school in Canada (see Table 22 below).

Table 22

*Number of Extra-Curricular Activities at School*

	<u>None</u>	<u>1</u>	<u>2</u>	<u>3</u>	<u>More than 3</u>	<u>Total</u>
Students	10	20	16	11	13	70
Pct (%)	14%	29%	23%	16%	18%	100%

*Note.*  $N=75$ . Missing data = 5 (6.7%).

Out of 71 respondents on a 5-point Likert scale, 59% reported that extra-curricular activities at school are “Important” or “Very Important” for newcomer students to Canada, 24% “Fairly important”, and 17% indicated that extra-curricular activities at school are “A little important” or “Not important”.

Table 23 indicates that most students chose soccer or band for their extra-curricular activity. The students are doing well in trying to participate in extra-curricular activities, and most of them participate in at least one. This is beneficial for the students’ inclusion and well-being as they adapt to a new culture

Table 23

*Extra-Curricular Activities You Participate in at School*

	<u>Students</u>	<u>Pct (%)</u>
Art club	1	3%
Badminton	2	7%
Band	8	27%
Basketball	3	10%
Chess club	3	10%
Media club	2	7%
Soccer team	13	43%
Talent show	1	3%
Track and Field	2	7%
Volleyball	2	7%
Total responses: 30		

and school system in Canada. School staff and teachers could support the students and encourage

them for further participation in extra-curricular activities since it is a great way for the students to develop friendships, English language, and social skills.

Out of 71 respondents on a 5-point Likert scale, 79% reported that they participate in at least one extra-curricular activity when they go home from school (1, 2, 3, or more than 3 activities) and 21% reported that they do not participate in any extra-curricular activities. Most students selected soccer or swimming for their extra-curricular activity. Some of the children and their parents may not be aware of extra-curricular activities or programs in the community since they are new to Canada. The potential cost to join these outside of school activities may also be a challenge for some of the families. When staff are aware of extra-curricular activities in the community that the students can benefit from, they could share those opportunities with Syrian newcomer children and parents for consideration (e.g., sports teams, music opportunities, arts, etc.).

### **Theme 6: School Experiences in Canada: Staff Support**

The study addressed students' levels of comfort consulting staff about problems they may be having at school. 58% of the respondents reported that they are "Very" or "Extremely" comfortable talking to school staff about their problems, 21% "Fairly comfortable", and 21% indicated that they are a "Little" or "Not at all" comfortable (see Table 24 below). A comparison of the means between female and male students showed that the scores did not vary for the two groups (female students— $M = .74$ ,  $SD = .24$ ; male students— $M = .67$ ,  $SD = .25$ ). At an alpha of .05, the analysis indicated a statistically non-significant difference among the groups,  $t(61) = 1.28$ ,  $p = .2065$ , effect size = .31  $SD$ . 61% of female students (41 respondents) reported that they are "Very" or "Extremely" comfortable talking to school staff about their problems and 17% indicated that they are a "Little" or "Not at all" comfortable. This is in comparison to 53% of male students (30 respondents) who reported that they are "Very" or "Extremely" comfortable

talking to school staff about their problems and 27% who reported that they are a “Little” or “Not at all” comfortable (see Table 24 also).

Table 24 <i>Talking to School Staff about Problems</i>						
All Students						
	<u>Not at all</u>	<u>Little</u>	<u>Fairly comfortable</u>	<u>Very</u>	<u>Extremely</u>	<u>Total</u>
Students	5	10	15	23	18	71
Pct (%)	7%	14%	21%	33%	25%	100%
Female Students						
	<u>Not at all</u>	<u>Little</u>	<u>Fairly comfortable</u>	<u>Very</u>	<u>Extremely</u>	<u>Total</u>
Students	2	5	9	12	13	41
Pct (%)	5%	12%	22%	29%	32%	100%
Male Students						
	<u>Not at all</u>	<u>Little</u>	<u>Fairly comfortable</u>	<u>Very</u>	<u>Extremely</u>	<u>Total</u>
Students	3	5	6	11	5	30
Pct (%)	10%	17%	20%	36%	17%	100%

*Note.*  $N=75$ . Missing data = 4 (5.3%).

Out of 72 respondents on a 5-point Likert scale, 62% reported that they receive “Much” or “A great deal” of support from school staff when they need help with a problem, 18% “Some” support, and 20% indicated that they receive a “Little” or “Not at all” support.

Some of the students may not be comfortable asking teachers or school staff for support with their problems especially in the initial stages of resettlement due to language barriers and pre-migration challenges with school prior to resettlement. Building trust and using a caring approach with the students will increase their confidence level, trust, and likelihood to ask for support. Students may also not know who to ask for support during breaks and when they are playing outside on the field or playground, and therefore, showing them staff who can support

and guide them during these unstructured times of the school day will help the students in getting the support they need.

## CHAPTER 6: QUALITATIVE RESULTS

In this chapter, I analyze qualitative data from the student and parent interviews. This data analysis provides a deeper understanding of the students' experiences as well as their views and perspectives.

### Student Interviews

The analysis of data from student interviews resulted in seven themes that emerged concerning the students' educational experiences:

**Theme 1: Educational challenges prior to resettlement in Canada.** Most of the students experienced educational setbacks and had their education interrupted before resettlement in Canada. Most of the students had limited access to education and missed school years, and in some cases the students attended school for the first time when they resettled in Canada. Those who attended school prior to resettlement experienced difficulties with treatment and reported that they did not benefit from attending school. Below are some examples shared by the students with respect to their experiences with school prior to resettlement in Canada:

Samer: I did not go to school in Syria. I missed grade 2, 3, 4. I went to school in Lebanon. School in Lebanon I did not learn a lot. I had challenges. I liked when my friends be nice to me. I don't like it when students said bad things to me and I told the teacher and the teacher tried to talk to them. The teacher hit me I did not like that.

Hayat: I went to school just in Jordan, a little. I missed grades 2, 3, and 4. Bad school experience because everyone there is so disrespectful and mean to other people who are new to their country. There the teacher they hit and if you understand or not they don't care. I came to Grade 5 in Canada.

Mourad: In refugee camp in Jordan I did not go to school. They did not register me. Just before we came to Canada 20 days they register me in school. It was difficult. They used to hit if you make a problem. I did not learn a lot.

Wasim: I was in Grade 1 in Syria. Then we left after war. In Jordan, I did not go to school. I did not like life there, they talk to you with no respect. I did not try to go to school.

Fatima: I did not go to school before coming to Canada, I was too young, they did not have kindergarten. First time went to school in Canada, I was in grade 1.

Mohamad: In Syria I was little I did not go to school. I went to school in Jordan in refugee camp only for 9 months and I told my dad I did not like it. If you stay in school, they hit you. I told my dad I am finished I am not going to school and I stayed home. I missed two years of school. I did not like it. I did not learn a lot, it was difficult.

**Theme 2: Family resettlement experience in Canada.** The students reported that their families are having successful resettlement experiences in Canada. All the students said that people in this city where they resettled are friendly and welcoming to them and their families. Wasim described his family's experience when they first arrived in Canada and were at the hotel. He stated that "when we first came people came to welcome us at the hotel, they asked us if we need any help." Hala also mentioned that "everyone is helping us in Canada." According to Samer, he is happy about the smiles his family receives from people, "when we go outside people always smiling to us." Describing the way people in Canada interact with his family, Mohamad said "they speaking nicely, kind, respectful."

All the students said that they help their parents with translations if they receive a letter in the mail or if they attend a doctor's or other appointment. Below are some examples the students shared:

Lara: I help my parents. I help father with phone calls to doctor if he doesn't understand English. We help Mom as well.

Hala: When my parents go to appointment sometimes, they take me and I help them with English.

Samia: I help my parents with English with letters.

Mourad: If someone comes to us to the house, I help my parents translate. I go to hospital with my parents and I help them.

Wasim: When my dad wants to talk to the landlord, I help him. When he goes somewhere, he takes me or my older brother to help him.



Mohamad: When my dad went to the hospital and to the doctor and when we go to the market, I translate for my parents.

All the students discussed the importance of keeping their Syrian culture while at the same time learning about Canadian culture. Wasim described this by saying “I want to keep Syrian culture because it is nice. Everything was nice there if it comes back it will be nice. I like to learn English language and about Canada, it is nice, beautiful.” Recognizing that Canada is now her new home, Hayat expressed the importance of learning about Canadian culture by stating that “it is very important to keep Syrian culture. Canadian culture is very important also because like I will be here my whole life.” Samer shared his perspective on the importance of showing Canadian people that he respects Canadian culture; he noted “Syrian culture is important to me. Canadian culture important as well, when I grow up, I have to understand Canadian culture and show them [Canadians] I respect their culture.”

**Theme 3: Learning experiences in school in Canada.** The school day model for newcomer students to Canada in this board of education involves the students attending ESL class for half of the school day with other newcomer students mainly to learn English and Math and attending regular homeroom class for the other half of the day to learn the other school subjects.

***Learning in ESL class.*** All the students in this study have been involved in the ESL program. Most of the students are still in ESL program (half of school day) and attend regular homeroom class (half of school day), with the exception of a couple of students who were demitted from the ESL program and are now in regular homeroom class for the full school day.

All the students expressed interest in learning in ESL class because they benefit a great deal and described their experiences as being successful. Mourad liked the fact that ESL class had lower number of students, which meant the teachers could provide more individualized

support to students; he noted that “in ESL, we don’t have a lot of students and we can learn.”

Mohamad felt the ESL class was a good starting point to learn about new aspects of school in Canada and how to speak English; he mentioned “when you come and you don’t know anything, in ESL they help you learn new things and how to speak and learn.” Hayat spoke about how her ESL teacher did a very good job helping her understand everything, “ESL help us a lot especially at the beginning. When I was in grade 7, the ESL teacher was so good she help us understand everything.” For Hala, ESL class is enjoyable because she has the opportunity to learn with other newcomer friends, “I like ESL because there was my friends and I get to learn English and something new.”

Most students said that ESL teachers ask for their opinions about their learning. For example, Hayat explained her monthly meetings with her ESL teacher: “like every month she [teacher] do meeting with me, and I sit with her like one hour and we just talk about our learning. And I tell her what I think and what I need.” This instance suggests that seeking feedback from ESL students is an integral part of the learning process.

For the students, the best part of the ESL program is the support they receive from their teachers in learning new things about the school system in Canada. They also really enjoy and are interested in learning Math in ESL due to the supportive manner in which the teachers guide the learning and help them with understanding; Hayat explained why she likes Math period:

I liked Math period. When teacher explains the Math, she explains it in a way that is so easy to understand. Like I don’t get bored. And if I don’t understand something, I go to her and she explain it again and again.

***Learning in regular homeroom class.*** All of the student interviewees valued the time in a regular homeroom class for half of the school day, rather than being in ESL class for the

majority of the school day. The students pointed out that in regular homeroom class they have the opportunity to work with both Canadian-born students and newcomer students to Canada, as well as have the experience of learning with different teachers. Fatima expressed why she thinks regular homeroom class is important, “homeroom class is important there are other students and teachers who help you, ESL it is same teacher.” Hayat recalled her experiences with the change of model for the amount of time spent in ESL class for newcomer students, “I remember when I first came [to Canada] it was all day in ESL, but now three periods in ESL and three periods in homeroom and that help me a lot. Because I have more friends and I speak more English.”

While some of the students described their experiences with learning in regular class as not difficult, others highlighted some of the challenges they are having. Samer explained some of his challenges in regular homeroom class; he stated that “in homeroom class, it’s kind of hard with science and geography. They give us a big book and sometimes you don’t get what they are doing.” Fatima emphasized the importance of teacher support in regular homeroom class for newcomer students to be successful; she shared her experience with this by saying “the teacher in homeroom class she is so nice she always help me. If I don’t understand a thing, she just call me to her table, she says if you need help just come.” Hayat stressed the importance of not only teacher support, but also peer support for newcomer students to experience success in homeroom class:

Homeroom class can be hard sometimes if you don’t have anyone to help you, but in my class, everyone help everyone and the teacher helps us too. When you first come you will not talk to anyone because you will be shy, and people won’t talk to you a lot because they think you are new, and some students know English only not Arabic.

Students were evenly divided on the frequency with which regular homeroom teachers sought feedback from them to help them learn. Five students said that teachers who work with

them in homeroom class ask for their opinions about their learning, while five students reported that teachers do not often seek their feedback.

***Literacy and numeracy skills.*** When discussing their progress with learning English, all the students felt that their oral communication is coming along well. While some of the students thought their reading and writing skills are improving, others reported that reading and writing are still areas of growth for them. To help newcomer students understand the English language, Hayat suggested for school staff to use small words with their communication; she explained that “sometimes they [school staff] use hard words that I don’t understand, I wish if they use more small words for those people who are coming new to Canada who don’t know English.”

When discussing their Arabic language skills, all the students said they can speak Arabic; however, most of them said they cannot read or write in Arabic. Mourad described the lack of opportunities for him to learn Arabic literacy skills, his mother tongue, before resettlement in Canada; he noted “I can speak Arabic. No reading or writing in Arabic because in Syria I did not complete class and in Jordan they did not put me in school.” Wasim explained how he began to learn how to read and write in Arabic in Canada after resettlement; he said “I can speak Arabic. Reading a little I learned here in Canada, and writing a little. I know enough to get by. I learned it here in Canada in this Saturday school.”

All the students said they enjoy learning Math in their school in Canada, but most of them expressed some areas of difficulty in Math. Wasim finds it difficult when learning with big numbers, “I like Math. I am learning Math. When it is big numbers it is hard for me.” Samer discussed the importance of peer support with learning Math:

When we get Math. My partner who sits next to me, if I don’t understand something, they explain to me. I like Math because when you grow up and you want to work in a mall or something you have to know how to give back money and stuff.

Some of the students shared examples that demonstrate resilience and determination to do well with learning Math in Canada:

Mohamad: I like Math. Because when I was in Jordan, I was not good, but here [in Canada] I said to myself I have to be good in Math, so I am trying my best all the time.

Hayat: My Math is good especially the last two years in grades 7 and 8. I was not that good but now I help everyone in my Math. Sometimes I help the ESL teacher explain the math to the other students.

***Group work and peer support.*** All the students emphasized the importance of group work and the opportunity to learn with other students in both ESL and regular homeroom class because of the opportunity for communication with other students, peer support, and simply the enjoyment of learning with their classmates. Lara welcomes the opportunity and enjoys working with both Arabic-speaking and English-speaking students:

I like to work in group. I work with my friend, she is Arabic. Sometimes my teacher put us in group, two English students, and one Arabic. I like to work with students who speak English because I learn a lot. I work with English and Arabic students.

Hayat believes that working in a group, especially in regular homeroom class, is important for newcomer students because they can work with more students and practice speaking English; she explained, “we will learn more together especially in homeroom because there you will have more friends and you will speak more in English and you will have more fun.”

Mohamad appreciates working with other students in both ESL and regular homeroom class because of the support the students can provide to one another; he shared examples of these types of supports:

In homeroom class, they [peers] help me with reading, if I don’t know how to read something, they read it to me. In ESL class, they [peers] help me learn, when the teacher writes cursive, I tell them what is this word? and they tell me.

Fatima looks forward to working with other students in a group because of peer support, being able to research together, and the ability to share ideas about their learning; she described her experience by saying “they [peers] help me if I didn’t understand a thing. We research together. When we work together in the same group, we share ideas together, it is nice group.” Hala also appreciates the support she receives from her group members when she needs support or does not understand a question; she stated, “I like group work because if there is a question you don’t know they [students] can help you with it.”

***Learning support.*** All the students said they are comfortable asking their teachers for support when they need help with their learning and that the teachers provide them with the support they need. Some of the students mentioned that they tell their parents at home when they are having difficulties with their learning. Some of the students also said that they ask their peers in their classroom for support with their learning if the teacher is busy with other students; for example, Mourad explained, “I ask teacher and she helps me. If teacher is helping someone, I ask my friend sitting next to me.” Hayat described her way of getting support from the teacher, and at times, utilizing peer translators to translate to her teacher if she is not able to convey her thinking in English:

If I don’t understand anything especially Math, language, and science, these are the hardest subjects, I usually ask the teachers, or I ask someone to translate for me to the teacher if I don’t know it in English and the teacher will help me.

When needed, Hayat also gained the support of her school’s SWIS worker to help her with translating her learning needs to her teacher; she shared, “I ask the teacher, if I don’t understand I go down to the office and I ask a SWIS worker and they tell the teacher if I cannot say it.” Bassam pointed out that although he asks all his teachers for support with his learning, it is a little bit easier for him to communicate with his ESL teacher because the teacher speaks in a

slow manner; he said, “ESL, my teacher talks slow. Regular class, my teacher talks so fast. In regular class, teachers speak too fast, I don’t understand some words. It is easier to ask for help in ESL class, teacher speaks slow.”

***Students’ reflection on their progress.*** All the students believe they are experiencing growth and success with their learning. Bassam is happy with his progress with his learning, “I am doing good because I learn a lot in Math and when we write a story, I write a lot of stories in school.” Wasim is also proud of his progress with learning English; he noted, “I know how to speak now in English, I can read a little, I can write. When I first came to Canada I did not know anything, now I am better.” Mohamad believes he is doing well and becoming comfortable in answering questions in class; he said “when the teacher ask question, I raise my hand and I say answer, so I know I am doing good.” Hayat discussed how it took her a couple of years in Canada to adjust and to start enjoying learning; she stated, “I’ll say the truth, the first two years I don’t like to learn anything. But when I go to grade 7, I started talking to everyone more and the teacher and I tried harder and I liked it.”

***Homework completion.*** Most students said they are able to complete their homework in English on their own. A few students explained how they gain support with their homework when it is difficult for them to complete on their own. Lara gets support with her homework from her brother; she explained, “my brother helps me, older brother. If easy I can do on my own. Harder stuff my brother helps me with it.” Hayat uses Google and other websites as well as ask a friend when she needs help understanding her homework:

Sometimes I used Google help and some other website if I don’t understand homework. Sometimes I ask my friend. Sometimes I go to school without doing it and I tell the teacher I tried and couldn’t do it and the teacher helps me with it.

Most students suggested that their teachers need to assign more homework because they wanted to do more practice at home. Hayat suggested that homework should match individual student needs; she mentioned, “in my class the teacher doesn’t give homework sometimes to some people because she thinks it is hard for them. They [teachers] should give homework to every student at different level. Like levels 1, 2, 3. Something they can do.”

**Theme 4: Socio-cultural experiences in school in Canada.** The students discussed aspects of school related to social and cultural experiences. They shared about their experiences with making friends, acceptance by others in the school, and dealing with behaviour situations.

***Making friends.*** All the students said it was difficult to make friends when they first arrived at school because they were in a new environment and could not communicate in English. However, most students said it got easier and they were able to make friends by being nice to the other students, helping them, and playing together with them. Some of the students also said that working in a group in class helped them make friends. Bassam explained how speaking English helps him make friends:

When I came, some kids they are doing something awesome, I want to be friends with them, but I couldn’t say it because I don’t speak English. Talking English helps me make friends at school now. I have a lot of friends at school, a lot of them speak Arabic, and a lot speak English. It is easier now to make friends who speak English because I know English.

Most students said that during breaks, they play and spend time with both newcomer students and Canadian-born or English-speaking students. Few of the students said they spend a little more time playing with newcomer students who also speak Arabic because they can communicate with them. Hayat shared her perspective on the importance for newcomer students and Canadian-born or English-speaking students to play together so they can get to know each other:



For me, newcomer students and Canadian-born friends we all get together and we play. It is fun. That is important because the newcomers they will learn English more and Canadian-born students will learn how Arab think about them. A lot of people think Arab think about them in a bad way, but this way they can see that we think about them nicely and that we want to play with them.

Mohamad described how he invites everyone at school to play soccer with him and how his school principal plays a role in participating and encouraging the children to play together regardless of their background:

When we play soccer, I invite students to play with us it doesn't matter if they are newcomer or not. Sometimes my principal he plays with us, I like that, because he is good at crossing, it is good for the kids, because they say the principal plays with us, and they really enjoy it. I think that makes them like school more.

***Acceptance by other students.*** All the students said that other students in the school treat newcomer students fairly. They said that other students are nice to them, talk to them, help them if they have a problem, play with them, and show them around the school when they first arrive. Here are some examples the students shared:

Mourad: Other students show us class, washroom, where to go, and what we have after music.

Fatima: The students help the new students. Like help them if they are in the same class. If they don't have friends, they help them until they find new friends.

Wasim: When they [newcomers] first come to Canada they [other students] help them. If somebody talks about them, they go tell the office that someone is saying something bad about them or things like that.

Hayat wants newcomer students to know that other students in the school want to be nice to them and treat them well; she mentioned that “the newcomers sometimes for them they think no one like them and no one want to talk to them but in real life they treat them in a very good way.”

All the students feel accepted and supported by other students in the school. Samer enjoys how other students joke with him and say good things about him; he said “they [other

students] always joke with me and say like good stuff about me.” Hayat appreciates the support she receives from other students when she is unable to communicate something to her teacher; she explained how “sometimes you go to the teacher and want to ask for help but you can’t say it in English, but then someone comes and helps you.”

***Dealing with behaviour situations.*** All the students reported that they have not had major conflicts with other students. Although most of the students said they do not have any conflicts or behaviour problems with other students at school, some students discussed minor conflicts related to teasing, name calling, or not giving them an opportunity to play with them. Samer did not like it when other students made fun of him; he shared, “when I be alone, three people make fun of me and I don’t like this, I tell the teacher and they don’t stop.” Mohamad wants other students to give him opportunities to play with them; he mentioned, “I don’t like especially if they are playing with other people and they don’t want to play with me.” Bassam shared how he is learning about school rules and expectations in Canada:

I run in the hallways and it is not fair Ms. said I can’t do that, and I get in trouble. I get in a lot of troubles because the teacher says you can’t run. I was running to catch up to my friends.

The students like most about students in Canada the fact that they treat them nicely, help them, and play with them. Here are some examples the students shared about students in Canada:

Lara: They help me. If I am sad, they tell me come play with us.

Mourad: They play together, they don’t fight.

Mohamad: They invite you to play. I invite them to my house. They are friendly and nice to me and they always teach me new sports like floor hockey.

**Theme 5: Experiences with school extra-curriculars.** Although many of the students reported that they play soccer and other games during breaks, most of them do not participate in organized extra-curricular activities at school (e.g., sports team, band, media club, chess club,

etc.). Some of the students said that they are not comfortable participating in such activities because they are not familiar with them and because some of them are after school hours and they were not able to stay after school. Fatima, one of the few students who participated in organized extra-curricular activities at school by joining the school choir, described how this experience was enjoyable:

I do music, I do the choir and I sing in front of the school. It was so much fun and most of my friends they were with me, so we help each other. And teachers they appreciate us, and they were so nice.

Even though most of the students did not participate in organized extra-curricular activities at school, they all recognize the importance for newcomer students to participate in these activities to make friends, learn how to play, to be happy, and to learn English. Lara believes that extra-curricular activities can help newcomer students to learn English and how to play games; she stated, “it is important [extra-curricular activities] because they [newcomer students] do not know anything about school. The students who are there can teach them how to talk or play.” Fatima explained how being on the school choir helped her develop her English language skills and confidence to sing with her sister with the choir to the entire school:

Students can learn from these stuff [extra-curricular activities], they can learn so much, I learned so much. Like there is a word in this song I did not know it and I asked and then they told me what it means and then I tried it and I kept practicing it until I learned it. Me and my sister we were on the same team, when we came home, we put on the song and we kept singing it until we learned it and then we sing it with big group in front of the school.

After school, when the students go home, most of them reported that they do not participate in organized extra-curricular activities (e.g., sports team, swimming, etc.). However, most of them said they play soccer, basketball, tag, ride their bike, and with their siblings or parents. Samer shared that he participates in swimming after school and explained why he thinks

it is important to learn how to swim; he said “I do swimming once a day. It is important because say you are in a boat and you fall in the water you have to save yourself.”

**Theme 6: Experiences with staff support.** All the students feel accepted and welcomed by their school staff. They believe that school staff treat newcomer students fairly because they are nice, helpful, meet their needs, and communicate with them in a kind way. The students appreciate how the teachers utilize available translators (school volunteers, other students who speak Arabic, other teachers who speak Arabic, SWIS workers) to help them with communication. They also appreciate the support they receive from their teachers with their learning. Here are some examples the students shared:

Bassam: The teachers they don't yell, they be nice to them [newcomer students]. The people that came here, the teacher put someone who is older person [volunteer] who speaks Arabic to help newcomer students to translate in Arabic ... When I ask them [teachers] a question they be nice and help me and they don't leave me until I understand.

Hala: The teachers help them [newcomer students] with everything and if there is someone who speak Arabic and the teacher only speak English, she goes to get someone who can translate like other students or teachers.

Samia: When someone just speaks Arabic, they get a translator who speaks Arabic. Because if they only speak English newcomer students will not understand.

Wasim: The teaches help them [newcomer students]. If something is hard, they make it easier.

Hayat: They [teachers] talk to them [newcomer students] in a kind way and they let them sit beside someone who speak the same language they speak ... they tell us if someone don't treat you in a good way come talk to me [teacher], or if you feel nervous or something you can come talk to me [teacher]

Fatima: They [teachers] are good, nice, treat me so good. Like they let me learn, mostly the teachers they say if you don't understand thing just ask.

Mohamad: When I came to school the first day, the principal called on the system on the school speaker [announcement system] that we have a newcomer student today and ESL students stood outside their class and started saying hi to me and smiling. I like that, it was good.

The students said they are comfortable talking to their teachers or school staff if they had a problem because they feel they are listened to and supported. Hayat believes if she has a problem it is better to tell her teacher about it to prevent it from getting bigger; she shared, “if I don’t talk to the teacher it will be a big problem maybe. If I talk to her, she will solve it.” Samia prefers to tell her teacher if she had a problem because she will feel more comfortable, “if I keep thinking about it [problem] I will not be comfortable, if I tell the teacher she will help me.” Wasim likes to tell his teachers even if he caused the problem so they can help them fix it; he stated, “if I made a problem, I like to tell them [teachers] so they can help me.” Fatima appreciates how her teachers help her so much when she has a problem; she noted, “if there is a problem, I talk to them [teachers] and they solve it. They make sure students say sorry to each other. They help me so much to solve the problem.”

The students like the most about teachers in Canada the fact that they are nice to them, kind, helpful, they try their best, fair, and create fun school environment. Here are some examples the students shared about their favourite things about their teachers:

Lara: I like the most if I tell them [teachers] I am sad, or somebody bothered me, they help me.

Samia: I like how they [teachers] help me when I am new, I like how they let me do fun stuff.

Wasim: They [teachers] don’t hit you; they don’t yell at you.

Hayat: They are so kind and caring and they don’t say any hurt words to us that will hurt our feeling.

**Theme 7: Students’ advice and future aspirations.** The students gave advice for refugee newcomer students to Canada to be successful in school. They emphasized it is important to listen to their educators, be nice to other students, not hurt others, follow the school

rules, not make problems, do homework, and talk not only with Arabic-speaking students but also Canadian-born or English-speaking students to make more friends and learn more.

The students gave advice for other students in the school to help newcomer students to Canada. They noted that they should be nice to newcomer students, communicate with them slowly so they can understand, show them things around the school, help them with learning, play with them, help them with translating, give them positive energy, and help them enjoy school.

The students also gave advice for teachers and school staff to help newcomer students to Canada. They mentioned they should use translators, hear what they have to say, help them if they have a problem, help them make good choices, give them more homework so they can practice, and use easy words when explaining something to them.

The students shared many examples that demonstrate resilience, grit, and determination. They are determined to do well in school and be successful members of Canadian society. They are caring, compassionate individuals who want to help others, especially those in need of support. The students all have future goals and aspirations, which for the most part revolve around helping others:

Lara: I want to be a doctor so I can help poor people. Or I want to be a teacher to teach students how to read and protect people.

Bassam: I want to be a doctor because the doctor brings money a lot, like 1 million dollars. If somebody is sick, and I am a doctor, I can have money and give him money to go to the hospital.

Hala: I want to be a doctor to help people.

Samia: I want to be a police officer. Because I like police because if there is a problem they help.

Samer: I want to be soccer player. I want to be a teacher too because teach like little kids.

Hayat: I like to be a diplomat. I like that.

Mourad: Doctor. Because I want to help people.

Mohamad: I want to be a pilot or a soccer player.

Wasim: I want to be a mechanic. Since I was young, I like to fix everything, cars.

Fatima: I want to be a doctor because I like to help people to make them back to life. It is nice to be a doctor, to be helpful.

## **Parent Interviews**

The analysis of data from parent interviews resulted in two themes regarding the parents' perspectives on their children's education:

**Theme 1: Children's school experiences prior to resettlement in Canada.** Although a couple of the parents said their children's education was not interrupted before resettlement in Canada, most parents reported that their children missed school years either in Syria or in neighbouring countries. The number of missed school years ranged from 1-5 years. The parents explained the different reasons why their children had their education interrupted and missed years of school. Mr. Sam pointed out that his children were unable to go to school in Lebanon because they lived far from UN operated schools, the only schools the children could have attended:

Due to war in Syria, three of my children missed four-five years of school. They went to school two months only. I tried my best in Lebanon to get them to school, but only schools following UN can take Syrian students, and we were far from those schools.

Ms. Samira explained that her children missed almost four years of school due to a combination of war in Syria and treatment of her children in school in neighbouring country:

My children didn't go to school almost four years. They did not go to school in Syria because of the war. They only went two months in Jordan. Seven of my children went to school for the first time in Canada. In school in Jordan, they used to hit the students, make them clean up, not good. My children stopped going in Jordan because school was not good.

Mr. Ayman's children missed about one year of school in Lebanon; he explained the difficult conditions the students had to endure at school:

My children missed one year of school in Lebanon, school was not good. For example, I know a relative who used to face the wall a lot. Treatment was not good, emotionally and psychologically it was not good for children. They used to hit the students. It was not like Syria and children keep asking why is it like this? And we have to keep calming them and supporting them and saying hopefully we will go back to our country Syria. They do that because it is Syrian children.

Ms. Sham described how her children missed approximately four years of school and stopped going to school in Jordan due to mistreatment and problems they were having:

My children missed four years of school approximately in Syria and Jordan. In Jordan, they went for half a year and stopped because of too much mistreatment, hitting, and they did not benefit from the learning. One time my daughter was hit in face with pencil. Even though school schedule was different for Syrian students and Jordanian students, they used to wait for Syrian students at the door and made a problem with them.

Mr. Mustafa said although his children missed one year of school in Lebanon, they went to school in refugee camp (Lebanon) set by the UN and he was happy with the treatment but wished there was more learning involved; he mentioned, "my children missed one year of school in Lebanon. They went to school in refugee camp in Lebanon set by UN. The treatment was good, but they used to just play."

**Theme 2: Children's school experiences in Canada.** The parents shared their perspectives on their children's school experiences in Canada.

*Experience with children starting school in Canada.* All the parents reported that their children had a good experience with registering and starting school in Canada. The schools welcomed the students, provided lots of support, and were helpful in meeting their needs. The parents also said that their children were very excited to go to school in Canada, especially after they started school and the staff were kind and supportive to them. Mr. Bilal described his children's experience starting school in Canada:



We had excellent experience starting school in Canada. Everyone was very supportive and welcoming. The children just wanted to go to school, they don't want to be absent. It is due to teachers helping them. A lot of things in school here motivate students, like activities, games, learning, etc. When I was in school back in the day I used to want to run away from school [says it with a smile].

Some of the parents shared some difficulties their children faced when they had to change schools due to address change. Ms. Samira voiced the difficulties her children had when they had to change schools in Canada due to their address; she stated, "we were asked to change school due to our address after three years. This is very difficult for our kids because they went through a lot and this makes it more difficult with more changes."

***Progress with learning.*** All the parents were happy with the progress their children are making in school in Canada; however, a few of the parents had some concerns over their children's slow progress especially in English and Math. They understood it will take a little longer for their children to develop the necessary skills in these subjects since they had interruptions to their education prior to coming to Canada. The parents shared that their children will tell them if they need support with their learning or a specific subject. Ms. Sham explained how she usually knows if her children are having difficulties with their learning:

Usually I know from report cards or my children let me know. For example, they tell me they have homework and they do not know how to do it. Or they tell me they missed a lesson and do not understand the material they are learning. Also, I know from teacher meetings, or sometimes the teacher calls and tells us your child is struggling with a subject.

When the children need help with their learning or are struggling with a topic or subject, most parents reported that they try to support them at home, their siblings try to help them, they try to utilize computer programs, and the parents also tell the teacher about the supports the children need. Mr. Ayman discussed the way his family tries to support the children with their learning; he explained, "I try to help my child, then my wife tries. Sometimes the children

depend on using phone programs for help. And then the children help each other. And then we ask teacher for support.” Ms. Sham shared that her children try to help each other and try to use Google for support with their learning; she noted, “my older daughter helps the younger ones. The children try to help each other with the knowledge and strengths they have. Because honestly, we [parents] cannot help them. Sometimes they also get help using Google.”

***Student homework.*** All the parents reported that their children want to complete homework at home on the days it is assigned. Some of the parents shared that some of their children need encouragement or support in completing their homework. Some of the parents also said that their younger children rely on older siblings at home to support them with their homework or assignments due at home. Mr. Ahmad said his older children support their younger siblings; he noted, “the children help each other; the older ones help the younger ones. Me and my wife are not capable of helping with homework. But they help each other. They always do their homework.” Mr. Bilal also said his children support each other with their homework, and added that the children sometimes go to the New Canadians’ Centre to receive homework support; he shared, “the older children help the younger ones. If things are hard, they go to the New Canadians’ Centre and they help them with school work.”

***Extra-curricular activities.*** Most of the parents reported that their children play soccer or basketball when they go home after school, or go to the park, or do home activities like drawing, Legos, or puzzles. Some of the parents register their children in organized extra-curriculars such as soccer, swimming, and gymnastics.

## **CHAPTER 7: DISCUSSION, CONCLUSION, AND IMPLICATIONS**

In this chapter, I focus on comparing and relating the results from the data analysis (convergence of datasets) and interpreting the findings. I also situate the findings from this study in the existing literature on refugee children's educational experiences. This chapter also offers recommendations to schools for consideration based on the research findings.

### **School Experiences before Resettlement in Canada**

All the students who participated in this study were born in Syria. However, the majority of them lived in neighbouring countries Jordan, Lebanon, or Turkey before resettlement in Canada. Almost half of the students lived in refugee camps with their families in those countries, while the other half lived in the city. The average number of years lived in refugee camp was four years.

Although the majority of the students reported that they went to school before resettlement in Canada, they missed, on average, three years of education. Their education experienced many interruptions, and the students reported many difficulties and hardships with school before coming to Canada. The majority of the Syrian newcomer parents said that their children missed years of education prior to resettlement in Canada and shared stories and examples of negative school experiences when their children had the opportunity to attend school.

These findings align with the existing literature that documents the many challenges faced by refugee children to receive proper education. Melton (2013) described how people who escape their country and seek refuge in a refugee camp in a neighbouring country typically receive little or no education. Beltekin (2016) added that children with a disability or have special education needs are almost completely out of school in refugee camps. Because they receive little or no formal education in refugee camps, refugee children's development of literacy

and numeracy skills is negatively impacted (Courtney, 2015). It is also possible that many refugee students may arrive to their host country having no prior school experiences at all (McBrien, 2011). In her study on recently arrived Syrian refugees within the Ottawa public school system, Nofal (2017) discussed her visits to Syrian refugee camps in Syria, Turkey, and Lebanon, where she worked in assisting with education and psycho-social support of children, and described witnessing “the emotional disorder of children” and the “limited resources available for formal and non-formal education programs” (p. 1). Nofal (2017) also emphasized that past experiences with war and having limited school experiences continue to challenge refugee children, especially in school, when they resettle in a host country.

Overall, the majority of the students in this study and their parents voiced negative experiences about the children’s education prior to resettlement in Canada. They were not happy about interruptions to education, missing many years of school, and children not benefiting from the learning. They also shared examples of mistreatment from school staff in the countries they were in prior to resettlement in Canada.

These findings were not surprising because many of the Syrian newcomer parents and students I have worked with expressed – to me and other educators – educational challenges prior to resettlement in Canada. Since the majority of the students missed several years of education, or experienced interruptions with their education, it is inevitable that major efforts are needed by educators, parents, and the students themselves to bridge the gaps in learning and experience educational success in Canada.

### **Family Resettlement Experience in Canada**

The literature documents challenges that refugee families face after resettlement in a host country. For example, Block et al. (2014) explained several settlement challenges for refugee children, including adjusting to a new language, culture, and way of life; overcoming having

limited or no prior education experiences; leaving relatives behind; and discrimination. Skidmore (2016) also added that the newcomers experience “social, emotional, economic, and educational challenges” in the host country (p. 7). However, the students and parents in this study had overall positive and supportive resettlement experiences in Canada. Although the resettlement process has presented its difficulties, especially with moving to a new place and having to adapt to a new culture and way of life, the students and parents shared stories and examples of positive experiences.

The participants expressed that people in this city are welcoming and friendly towards their family. They also receive support from community agencies with aspects related to resettlement (housing, school, health, etc.). Owing to these positive experiences, the participants are shaping positive thoughts and feelings about Canada and their resettlement process. For instance, the students noted that Syrian culture is important for them to maintain, while also expressed interest in learning about Canadian culture because they were aware this is their new home.

Although they were nervous and not sure what to expect from school in Canada, and despite minor challenges, students and parents were overall happy with the support they received with school registration in Canada. They said the registration process was good and that schools were organized and had supports in place. They appreciate the support they received, and continue to receive, from the schools with translations for any school related matters. Parents did say that at times, when there is no translators available at school, it is difficult for them to handle school matters. This could be due to the fact that not all schools have translators available throughout the school day and every day of the week. It would be beneficial for schools

with Syrian newcomer families to have a plan in place for translations which could include a translator at the school or available through telephone to help with communication.

The students and parents also spoke of the caring and supportive approach staff had towards them, which made them comfortable and happy about school in Canada. The one challenge a couple of the parents had was not having the option to register their children in a school they preferred, and having to register in the home district school based on their address. This is due to school boundaries and regulations around registering at the home school – the school in the district area. These families may have wanted to register at a specific school because they knew other families or friends at that particular school, and believed it would make their children's transition to school easier.

These findings point to several factors that are contributing to the students' and parents' positive resettlement experiences. First, Syrian newcomer families in this study seem to be receiving supports from community agencies with resettlement services. Second, the students and parents feel accepted and welcomed in their community and there was no indication of any acts of discrimination or racism towards them. Third, the positive experiences described by the parents with school enrolment shaped positive thoughts and views about school in Canada. Fourth, due to the influx of Syrian refugees to this city where the participants reside, the families are forming connections and support systems with other Syrian newcomer families.

Nofal (2017) emphasized that schools can play a significant role in supporting the settlement and integration of newcomer students in their host country by bringing stability, providing education, and helping in developing social connections. Based on the findings from this study, particularly the positive examples and views shared by the students and their parents

regarding school enrolment and educators' supportive approach, the schools the children are attending are playing a key role in supporting the families resettlement experiences in Canada.

### **School Experiences in Canada: Educational Domain**

In this section, I focus on the students' experiences in the educational domain in Canada.

**ESL/Regular homeroom class split model.** The board of education that this study focused on implements a model that has newcomer students to Canada spend 50% of the school day in an ESL classroom mainly to learn English and Math and the other 50% of the school day in regular homeroom class for integration purposes with other school subjects. The 50% ESL/50% regular homeroom class arrangement varies from school to school depending on the school's timetable schedule; however, it is generally a morning/afternoon split, and in some cases, the periods are spread out during the school day and students move back and forth between ESL and regular homeroom class.

Overall, the students prefer this model over the board of education's previous model that had newcomer students to Canada attend ESL class for the majority of the school day and then gradually integrate into regular homeroom class as they are ready for integration. The students prefer the current school day model (50% ESL / 50% regular homeroom class) because it gives them options to learn with different students and teachers as well as the opportunity to socialize with English-speaking students as they integrate into the school system. The students also reported that the ESL program is very helpful and that they are interested in the learning that takes place. One of the areas that teachers in ESL class could utilize more is seeking feedback from the children in order to help them with their learning needs. On-going conferencing with the students about their learning and asking them what they need will enable educators in the ESL class to provide learning opportunities geared towards meeting the students' needs.

More than three-quarters of the students believe that being in regular homeroom class is important for newcomer students to Canada. The students did express, however, that the learning in homeroom class is more difficult than ESL class. This is due to challenges with English language, working on tasks that are too difficult for them to complete, or having less one-on-one support from the teacher since regular homeroom class has higher number of students than ESL class. This suggests that homeroom teachers should consider further efforts to seek feedback from the children about their learning and supports they need, as well as to ensure accommodations and modifications are in place to meet the learning needs of the students. This also indicates that in-service training and PD sessions focusing on understanding and pedagogical approaches for working with newcomer students would be beneficial for teachers.

**Literacy and numeracy skills.** Nearly half of the students reported that it has been difficult to learn English and Math in school in Canada. One of the main reasons for this difficulty is the missed years of education or interrupted education with the majority of the students before resettlement in Canada. The students, however, emphasized on the importance of learning English and Math, and said that they are trying their best with their learning and will continue to work hard to achieve success.

These findings pertaining to the students' educational challenges in Canada are similar to other research findings and align with existing knowledge in the body of literature that discusses the learning difficulties faced by refugee children in their host country. Because of limited or no educational opportunities in refugee camps, refugee students face challenges in school in their host country with adapting to a formal education system (Ferfolja & Vickers, 2010). Taylor and Sidhu (2012) concluded that since refugee students may lack literacy and numeracy skills, as well as age appropriate knowledge even in their own language, they suffer educational



disadvantages in their host country. Melton (2013) also found that many of the refugee students in the United States public high schools arrived without any prior formal education, and it is difficult for the school to provide them with 12 years of education in just four years.

Many refugee students, including Syrian refugee students in this study, arrive to Canada with limited literacy and numeracy skills not only in English, but also in their mother tongue. Owing to their limited literacy and numeracy foundational skills, the newcomer students require longer time to develop strong literacy and numeracy skills in school in Canada. They need extensive support at school to develop these foundational skills – literacy and numeracy – to be able to achieve success with their education in Canada.

Although nearly half of the students in this study expressed that they have difficulties learning Math, they chose Math as their favourite subject in school, followed by Art. The students also ranked Math the highest in terms of subjects they thought they were best at, followed by Language Arts (English) and Arts with the second highest ranking. Some of the students shared examples of why they think Math is important for their everyday lives and expressed that they like the way Math is taught in their school. This may explain why Math was their favourite subject.

**Group work and peer support.** The students discussed the importance of learning and working together with other students in their class – both ESL and regular homeroom. They pointed out that by learning with their peers, they can share ideas with one another, learn from each other's knowledge, communicate with other students, and in the process, make new friends. This is an area that teachers (ESL and regular homeroom) could utilize further by facilitating more group work opportunities and peer support, especially since this is something that helps the students with their learning. This is particularly important in regular homeroom class since there

is a higher number of students in comparison to ESL class and the students tend to have less one-on-one support from the classroom teacher. Group work will facilitate opportunities for the newcomer students to share their ideas and thoughts and learn from other students.

**Learning support.** About seventy-five percent of the students said they are comfortable asking their teachers for help when they have difficulties with their learning. Also, about seventy-five percent of the students said they usually receive support from their teachers with their learning. The students also explained during the interviews that they tell their parents at home when they are struggling with their learning and they try to obtain peer support from their classmates. Although about three-quarters of the students feel comfortable asking their teachers for support with their learning, there are still some Syrian newcomer students who could use additional encouragement from their teachers to ask for support when needed. This may be due to a language barrier, not sure how to ask for help, or not having a comfort zone yet to ask the teacher for help with learning. With ongoing encouragement, communication with the students about their learning, and using available translators, teachers could help those students who are not comfortable yet asking for support with learning to develop a comfort level that would allow them to ask for help when needed.

**Homework completion.** Although all the students and parents recognize the importance of doing homework and asked for homework every day, some students shared that it is difficult to complete their homework in English on their own, especially those who reported that they speak Arabic at home. The parents reported that they ask their children if they have homework every day when they come home from school. The parents also said they check the younger children's backpacks to see if there are any books to read or other homework or communication

from the teacher. Even when the students do not have homework, some of the parents mentioned that they try to read stories or work on other learning activities with their children at home.

Some of the parents said they are unable to provide homework support due to limited English skills and background knowledge on the subject matter. However, all the parents reported that they discuss homework with their children, provide the necessary resources needed, and do their best to facilitate support through siblings, library, computer programs, or asking the teacher for support.

The parents highly emphasized the importance of homework and wished for their children to do some kind of a learning activity every day after school at home because most of them were aware that their children missed years of school and they had to catch up to close the learning gap. The students also expressed that they would like to do learning activities every day at home to increase their learning and for additional practice. These findings suggest that giving consistent homework or a fun learning activity to complete at home, based on the children's level, would give the students additional practice and learning opportunities.

### **School Experiences in Canada: Socio-cultural Domain**

The literature discusses socio-cultural challenges experienced by refugee students in school in their host country. For instance, Loeke (2009) explained how refugee students might struggle with social connections at school owing to limited social and language skills, resulting in isolation and negative feelings about themselves. Ehntholt and Yule (2006) emphasized that social isolation of refugee children in the host country places the children at risk of psychological distress. According to Mthethwa-Sommers and Kisiara (2015), newcomer students are vulnerable to bullying due to having a different cultural background, religion, or nationality. Smyth (2013) found that Somali students in a New Zealand primary school were bullied in the form of verbal teasing at school. In another study that investigated the experiences of Somali

newcomer students in Minnesota high schools, Moriarty (2015) found that Somali newcomer female students were bullied, and they reported bullying incidents due to their religion and cultural background.

However, the students in this study described overall positive school experiences in Canada with inclusion, making friends, and acceptance by other students and staff. Although some of the students shared that it was difficult to make friends when they first started school in Canada, they said it became much better with time simply by being nice to other students and by receiving support from staff and other students to establish friendships. The majority of the students explained that other students in the school (newcomer and Canadian-born students) treat them nicely and fairly, and that they rarely experienced any conflicts with other students. In addition to strong staff support, the students have good friends and supportive peers, which according to Smyth (2013) is a significant support system for newcomer students.

The students reported that they spend almost equal time playing with newcomer students to Canada and Canadian-born students (or English-speaking students). For group or team projects at school, almost two-thirds of the students prefer to work with Canadian-born or English-speaking students. The students explained that they like to work with newcomer students, but they spend a lot of time together after school since their families know each other, and by working with Canadian-born or English-speaking students in class they can learn English and make more friends at school. This shows that the students are making efforts to establish social connections with all the students in the school, not only newcomers.

The findings from this study indicate that the students are having success with social aspects of the school and feel included by other students and staff. There are several factors that contribute to these positive experiences with social inclusion. First, educators' efforts are having

a positive impact and helping the students establish friendships and social connections. Second, other students' supportive and caring approach is contributing to a welcoming environment where the newcomer students feel accepted and included. Third, Syrian newcomer students' own efforts to establish social connections at school are having successful outcomes in terms of making friends and being included by other students. These encouraging experiences with inclusion have a positive impact on the students' social and emotional well-being as well as their perceptions of the school system in Canada.

### **School Experiences in Canada: Staff Support**

Both students and parents felt supported by school staff (teachers, support staff, administration, SWIS). Students reported that school staff are friendly, supportive, and kind towards newcomer students to Canada. Nearly three-quarters of the students stated they are comfortable talking to school staff if they have a problem at school and need support. In addition, nearly three-quarters of the students said that they receive support from school staff if they have a problem and need help resolving it.

Although nearly three-quarters of the students feel comfortable talking to school staff if they have a problem and need help, some of the students are still developing this comfort level and are not as comfortable yet sharing their problem or a challenge with school staff. As the students develop English language skills and continue to receive support from school staff, they seem to be on track to developing this comfort level and self-advocacy skills. School staff could play a supportive role in helping those students develop a comfort level that would allow them to share their challenges or problems and receive the help they need.

All the parents felt that Syrian newcomer parents are always welcomed at school and treated fairly and respectfully. They appreciate the schools' supportive approach, ongoing communication, translation services, and supports with aspects related to their children's

education. These findings indicate that the educators have been committed with their efforts to support Syrian newcomer students and families with their resettlement and transition to schools in Canada.

### **Resilience and Future Aspirations**

The students and parents in this study shared many examples of resiliency in dealing with their pre-migration challenges in Syria, neighbouring countries, or refugee camps, as well as the post-migration challenges after resettlement in Canada. Despite the learning gaps with most students due to missed years of education before resettlement, they are determined to close these learning gaps in Canada. They are focused on doing well in school and on becoming successful members of their community. Because many individuals have helped the students with their challenges, they are eager to help others, especially those in need of support. The students are optimistic about their future in Canada and they have future goals and aspirations. These goals revolve mostly around professions related to public and health services because they want to help other people (e.g., Doctor, police officer, teacher).

Syrian newcomer parents in this study are working hard to make the most out of the opportunity for a new life in Canada. They are attending school, looking for employment, and doing their best to support their children with their education. The number one goal for all the parents is for their children to be successful in school and to become productive members in Canadian society.

The findings from this study about the students' and parents' high hopes for their children's education in Canada, as well as the determination to be successful members of Canadian society, validate the literature that discusses refugee parents' hopes and expectations for their children to be successful in school and society in their host country. For example, Nilsson et al. (2012) found in their research on the experiences of refugee women that the

mothers' greatest hope was for their children to be successful in their education. Nofal (2017) also learned from Syrian refugee parents in her study in Ottawa that they chose to come to Canada mainly for their children's education and future.

### **Recommendations for Schools**

Students and parents are happy with the education program and the supports they are receiving from schools in the board of education that was the focus of this study. They shared positive examples and stories about the children's education in Canada. Their views and perspectives helped me to identify areas of growth and further development that is needed to advance the children's education program. To ensure full implementation of Article 12, the students' views must have influence - the fourth of four key elements in Lundy's (2007) model for Article 12. To support the educational experiences of the students, the following 12 recommendations based on the study findings are proposed for schools' and educators' consideration:

- **Provide Students and Parents with School Orientation:** Since the majority of the students missed years of schooling before coming to Canada, and for some, attended school in Canada for the first time in their lives, it is important for schools to give the students and their parents an orientation to prepare them for formal school experience in Canada (e.g., schedules, routines, school map, safety procedures, support systems in place, etc.).
- **Invest the Time to Learn about Pre-migration Experiences:** Since the students have experienced learning, emotional, and even psychological challenges due to the traumatic events they witnessed or lived, it is imperative for staff working with them to understand those experiences to provide support that is responsive to the needs. As

emphasized by Ms. Farah, one of the parents in this study, by understanding these experiences teachers will be able to help the students cope with their challenges after resettlement.

- **Utilize a Multidisciplinary and Interdisciplinary School Approach:** To support the children with their learning, as well as their social, emotional, and psychological domains, a school-based team approach linking a group of school professionals together (teacher, support staff, principal/vice-principal, educational coordinator, educational psychologist, speech and language pathologist, social worker) is important to draw on the knowledge and expertise of all the team members. When supporting Syrian newcomer students, or newcomer students from any other country, this school-based team, as needed, can provide consultation, expert advice, assessments, as well as strategies for best support.
- **Continue with Extensive Literacy and Numeracy Support:** Since the majority of the students missed education opportunities prior to resettlement in Canada, their literacy and numeracy skills in Arabic are weaker, which makes it more difficult for them to learn a second language. The students and parents feel that English and Math are very important for the children's educational success in school in Canada and asked for the children to have extensive support in these two subjects. For refugee students to experience educational success in their host country, they need extensive support in learning the new language in that country (Oikonomidou, 2007; Watson, 2014).
- **Ongoing Conferencing with Students about their Learning:** Ongoing individual meetings with children about their learning in both ESL and regular homeroom class



is crucial to receive their feedback, understand their learning needs, and to provide instruction and learning opportunities responsive to those needs.

- **Encourage Students to Ask for Help:** Although about three-quarters of the students said they are comfortable asking their teachers for help with their learning or a problem they have, some of the students are still developing this comfort level. With teacher encouragement, support, and ongoing check-ins, the students will gain confidence and begin to develop self-advocacy skills and ask for help when needed.
- **Tailor Learning Opportunities to Individual Profile:** Although the students enjoy being in regular homeroom class, some of them expressed that the learning is difficult for them. Understanding every student's profile and setting individual learning goals would be most beneficial and will provide the best learning opportunities for each student.
- **Facilitate Group Work and Peer Support Opportunities:** The students emphasized that they learn a lot from their peers at school. They expressed that they like to learn with newcomer students as well as Canadian-born or English-speaking students. By providing opportunities to work in a group as a team or facilitating peer support, the students will be able to share their ideas, learn from each other, and establish social connections at school.
- **Encourage more Participation in Extra-curricular Activities:** Although more than three-quarters of the students reported they participate in at least one extra-curricular activity at school (e.g., sports team, school band, chess club, media club, etc.), this is an area the students need more involvement in, especially since extra-curricular activities provide opportunities for inclusion, communication, and making friends.

Teachers and school staff may want to encourage the students to participate in extra-curricular activities since the students may be too shy or not have enough confidence in the initial stages of resettlement to take this step on their own.

- **Tap into the Resiliency and Determination:** The students have been resilient in dealing with their pre- and post- migration challenges and are doing their best to do well in school in Canada. They all have future goals and aspirations and are determined to reach those goals. It is important to believe in them and to give them opportunities to be successful. Setting high expectations for the students and seeing them through a capable lens will encourage them to believe in themselves and will create opportunities for growth.
- **Support Parents' School Involvement:** Syrian newcomer parents in this study are doing their best to support their children's education in Canada. They are happy with the supports they are receiving from the schools, especially with translations (SWIS translators and other staff who speak Arabic) and school personnel keeping them informed about their children's education. They attend all meetings and parent events, maintain ongoing communication with teachers, and try their best to support their children with learning at home. However, the parents need support with ongoing communication, notices about parent engagement events and school parent council, consistency in sending correspondence home in English and Arabic, ongoing meetings to discuss children's progress, and strategies on how to best support their children with learning at home.
- **Provide Educators with Professional Development Opportunities:** Providing educators with professional development opportunities geared towards understanding

the pre-migration and post-migration challenges faced by refugee students and families, as well as best strategies and approaches to meet the specific needs, will strengthen their understanding of the refugee experience and boost their confidence level in being able to provide an education program responsive to the children's needs.

### **Study Significance and Implications**

**Giving refugee students a voice.** The significance of this research is that it uses Article 12 of the CRC as a frame to provide a group of Syrian newcomer students at the elementary school level in Canada an opportunity to share their perspectives, experiences, and have their voices heard about their education. It is important to hear from the students about their educational experiences since there is limited research in this area that utilizes refugee children's own views and perspectives (Ayoub & Zhou, 2016; Guerrero & Tinkler, 2010; Prior & Niesz, 2013; Smyth, 2013). The review of the literature chapter in this study illustrates the lack of refugee children's voices in studies regarding their educational experiences at the elementary school level. Most of the studies or articles I found and relied on revolve around the experiences of refugee students using perspectives other than the children's themselves.

For instance, Beltekin (2016) studied Turkey's progress toward meeting Syrian refugee's educational needs using interviews with school personnel and observation techniques. Hos (2016) reported results of a study that focused on administrators, teachers, and a parent's experiences in a community school for Syrian refugees in Turkey; data collection in this study involved field notes as well as interviews and a focus group with the school personnel mentioned. From a Canadian context, Wilbur (2016) looked at how LINC (Language Instruction for Newcomers to Canada) instructors in British Columbia understood trauma based on data from a study that used interviews with LINC instructors. In one of the more valuable studies I

relied on for this research, Nilsson et al. (2012) interviewed Somali women using focus groups regarding their children's adjustment in the United States, but the children's voices about their own experiences were missing. In another study that I found valuable, Taylor and Sidhu (2012) studied four Australian schools regarding their approach to supporting refugee students by conducting informal interviews with school personnel (principals, ESL teachers) and examining school prospectuses and newsletters; however, the study did not include the students' perspectives about their educational experiences.

In addition to the important contributions made by the above mentioned studies and other similar ones, this current study on the experiences of Syrian refugee students in elementary schools in Canada contributes by helping to fill a gap in the literature that lacks refugee students' voices regarding their educational experiences in their host country, especially at the elementary school level. By participating in this research and sharing their views, the students played an active role in their education program and they may have become more aware about their rights in educational matters. They were also provided with an opportunity to develop self-advocacy skills such as talking about their challenges and frustrations and asking for things that they need. This experience proved to be positive, supportive, and self-affirming for the children. This will be important for the students as they prepare for secondary school and become active members in Canadian society.

**Exploring the experiences of Syrian newcomer students.** Another significance of this study is that it contributes to the limited literature on the experiences of Syrian newcomer students in Canada. As evident from the literature review chapter in this study, there are limited studies and articles on the experiences of Syrian newcomer students in Canadian schools since Syrian refugees started resettlement in Canada mainly starting in 2015.

One of the few scholarly works I was able to rely on and found central to this study is Nofal's (2017) research on Syrian refugees' schooling experiences in Ottawa, Ontario. Nofal (2017) conducted a qualitative study using an acculturation framework and drew on narrative methodology to explore the educational experiences of Syrian children, youth and families who recently arrived in Ottawa, Ontario. The students attended elementary, middle and high school. Data collection involved 10 individual interviews with parents, children, and youth, and two focus group discussions.

Nofal's study made important and valuable contributions to the literature, especially since there is limited research in this area due to the recent resettlement of thousands of Syrian newcomers in Canada. Some of the findings from my study align with Nofal's findings regarding Syrian newcomer students' school experiences in Canada. In both studies, most students shared they are having positive resettlement experiences, they had positive experiences starting school, they feel included and not isolated by other students, they are determined to be successful in school in Canada, and shared positive views about educator's supportive approach.

In contrast, Nofal's findings indicate a lack of available resources in schools and that students and parents are asking for more assistance and support, while most students and parents in my study were satisfied with school supports (e.g., available translators most times, school correspondence, ongoing communication). Some of the parents in my study did mention that, at times, when there is no available translators at their children's school, it is more difficult to carry out school matters.

The few scholarly works on the experiences of Syrian newcomer students in Canada have begun to fill a gap in this area in the literature. However, with thousands of Syrian refugees resettling in Canada in recent years, there is a need to explore and hear from the children about

their educational experiences. This study has contributed by helping to fill this gap in the literature that lacks the experiences of Syrian newcomer students in Canada. This study also offers a mixed-methods research design – a mix of quantitative and qualitative data – that utilizes a researcher-developed anonymous student questionnaire and student and parent interview protocols (in English and Arabic) that may be useful for other scholars and researchers interested in conducting research with Syrian newcomer students in Canada.

**Enriching the students’ school experiences.** An important element of this research was also to empower educators working with the students. The findings and recommendations could potentially shed light on what contributes to a positive school climate for Syrian newcomer students and their families and on successful strategies that educators can and in some cases are already implementing. This is important for educators to validate the positive things they are doing that are making a difference with the students as well as to help them realize what could be done better.

To support school programs and the work of educators with Syrian newcomer students, this study offers strategies and recommendations based on the research findings. It is hoped that these recommendations will lead to enriching the educational experiences of the participants and to informing future programs at school and board of education levels.

### **Ethical Considerations in this Study**

This study addresses several ethical concerns based on the Tri-Council Policy Statement 2 (TCPS2; 2014). The first and most important ethical consideration in this study was to minimize the risks to participants. The study was designed in a way that minimized the risks involved with participation. To be consistent with the direction of the TCPS2 (2014), to “minimize the risks associated with answering any given research question” (p. 8), I carefully designed and worded the questions in the questionnaire and interview protocols (students and

parents) in a way to minimize any social or emotional distress. I informed the participants and reminded them about their right to skip any question(s), to stop answering the questionnaire or stop the interview at any time, as well as to withdraw their participation from the entire research without any consequences or judgment. In case there was going to be any unanticipated stress caused to students and/or parents arising from participating in the questionnaire or one-on-one interview, I provided a list of social work services to all students and parents (see Appendix O: List of social work resources). I reassured the students and parents that no untoward effects were anticipated from the study and the list of social work supports was being provided as a useful resource if needed. None of the families indicated they wish social work contact or support.

The second ethical aspect was informed and voluntary consent. As emphasized by the TCPS2 (2014), the participants should have a complete understanding of the purpose of the research, and the risks and benefits involved with participation, to be able to provide informed and voluntary consent. The invitation letter, LI (letter of information), and consent forms that I shared with participants, provide a detailed explanation about the purpose of the study, procedures involved, and potential risks and benefits. The forms were all in English and Arabic to make sure the students and parents had the option to choose the language they are comfortable with. I was also available during the Saturday school program on a weekly basis during the data collection stage to provide additional information and to answer any questions from students and parents. This helped to ensure that participants had all the information they need to be able to make an informed and voluntary consent to participate.

Third, this study addressed reciprocity and beneficence to the participants. This research had several potential benefits to the students. One of the benefits was giving the students an opportunity to be heard and to share their views and perspectives. This experience might have

helped the students gain self-advocacy skills in terms of talking about their challenges, sharing their frustrations with their education, and asking for things they need to be successful. By participating in this study, the students might have also felt encouraged to personally reflect on their own educational experiences creating the possibility of greater self-awareness. Educators working with the students could use the study findings to deepen their understanding of the students' experiences and to provide an education program responsive to their needs. The recommendations from this study aim to enhance the education programs provided to the students. Parents who participated in this study also had an opportunity to voice their views and perspectives on their children's education and on the supports they need from educators and the school.

Fourth, and lastly, is the aspect relating to confidentiality and anonymity. The student questionnaire was anonymous and no one, including myself, knows who answered the questions. During data collection, I locked all hard copies securely, and I stored all electronic files in a password-protected computer. Once the data was compiled, I shredded the hard copy questionnaires. The data compiled from the questionnaires, as well as interview transcriptions, will be retained on the password-protected computer for five years and will remain confidential with access available only to me and my supervisor. After five years, I will delete all the data that is in electronic form. I took the following measures to blind or mask the participants' identity: I did not use the participants' names in data transcription of interviews and I replaced each name by a pseudonym that was provided by the participants; I wrote this dissertation report in aggregate format without the possibility of any information to be traced back or linked to any participant; and lastly, the name of the research site, its location, and the name of the city where



this research took place was not identified in this dissertation report, and will not be identified in any future publications or presentations.

### **Study Limitations**

This study has potential limitations. First, it is difficult to determine if the participants who completed the questionnaire expressed their true attitudes, feelings, and experiences. Gay et al. (2011) explained that one of the common problems with administering a survey is the “tendency of an individual to select responses that are believed to be the most socially acceptable, even if they are not necessarily characteristic of that individual” (p. 159). Another potential problem with a questionnaire is that some respondents continually respond Yes, True, or Agree to questions because they may feel that is what the researcher desires (Gay et al., 2011). However, to assist in hopefully overcoming this problem, the questionnaire was anonymous to encourage the students to express their true views and attitudes.

A second potential limitation dealt with the accuracy of the data that was collected using semi-structured one-on-one interviews. Since the interviews aimed to explore the experiences of the students and parents from their own perspectives, some of the participants may have been reluctant to share aspects of their experiences related to sensitive topics such as pre-migration educational experiences and school challenges in Canada.

A third limitation dealt with the generalizability of the results. Since the participants in this study may have their own unique experiences, it is not possible to generalize the results to a larger population or beyond the scope of this research. However, some of the qualitative findings may resonate with refugee newcomer students and their teachers in other educational settings in Canada.

The fourth potential limitation is that some of the students and parents may have been aware of my administrative position as a vice-principal with the public board of education.

Consequently, I took some precautions to mitigate the impact of potential implicit parental/child perceived pressure to participate in the study. I conducted this research in a community Saturday school program offered to Syrian newcomer students that had no connection to my job or the board of education where I am employed. I also did not put any pressure – before or during the study – on any student or parent to participate, or to continue participating, in the study.

### **Future Research**

Since thousands of Syrian newcomers recently resettled, and continue to resettle, in Canada, there are many areas that could be explored in future research. This study focuses on elementary school students (Grades 4-8: 9-13 years old). A future study could focus on the experiences of Syrian newcomer students at the secondary school level (Grades 9-12: 14-18 years old) to give them an opportunity to share their experiences, views, and perspectives, as well as to determine their progress in school in Canada. A second area of research could be a longitudinal study with the same student participants from this study to see how they are progressing over the years in Canadian schools. Since this study focuses on the experiences of Syrian newcomer students, a third area of research could be to compare the experiences of the students in this study to other newcomer students' experiences from different cultural backgrounds in Canada. A fourth area of research could be to compare the experiences of the students in this study to other Syrian newcomer students' experiences in other Canadian cities and provinces, and perhaps to other Syrian newcomer students' experiences in other countries where Syrian newcomer families resettled.

### **Conclusion**

Before resettlement in Canada, the majority of the Syrian newcomer families in this study fled the war in Syria and lived in neighbouring countries either in refugee camps or in different cities. The majority of the students missed, on average, three years of education before

resettlement in Canada. The students and parents also reported negative school experiences prior to resettlement related to learning and treatment of the children.

Regarding the resettlement process in Canada, the students and parents shared positive experiences. They described people in this city where this research took place as welcoming and supportive. The families received, and continue to receive, support with resettlement from community agencies (housing, school, healthcare, etc.). The students and parents are also happy with the school registration process and the supports they receive from schools, especially with Arabic translation.

The students like the ESL/Regular homeroom class split model implemented by many schools in the board of education that this study focused on. With this model, newcomer students to Canada spend 50% of the school day learning in an ESL classroom and the other 50% of the school day learning in regular homeroom class for integration purposes.

Nearly half of the students reported difficulties in learning English and Math in school in Canada. This is a result of the learning gaps they have due to interrupted or missed years of education prior to resettlement. However, the students and parents are determined to keep working in collaboration with the school to close this learning gap. Although nearly half of the students expressed difficulty with learning Math, they chose Math as their favourite subject in school because they enjoy the way it is taught by their teachers.

The students reported positive socio-cultural school experiences in Canada in relation to friendships, inclusion, and acceptance by others. Having supportive peers and positive friendships at school has created a strong support system for the students. The students also expressed that they like to play with both newcomer students to Canada as well as Canadian-born or English-speaking students.

Both students and parents feel supported by school staff (teachers, support staff, administration, SWIS). They expressed that school staff are welcoming, friendly, and supportive. All the parents are doing their best to support their children's education by attending school meetings, parent events, supporting their children at home with learning to the best of their ability, and maintaining ongoing communication with teachers.

The students in this study shared many examples of resiliency in dealing with their pre-migration and post-migration challenges. Despite the learning gaps with most students due to missed years of education before resettlement, they are determined to close these learning gaps in Canada, to do well in school, and to become successful members of their community.

Overall, both students and parents expressed that they are happy and comfortable with all the supports they are receiving from the Canadian schools studied in this research. They shared many poignant examples and ways the schools are supporting children's learning and parent involvement. The results from this study also revealed areas of growth which led to recommendations that I proposed to support the students' educational experiences.

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## APPENDICES

## APPENDIX A



University  
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STUDENT QUESTIONNAIRERESEARCHER: MOHAMAD AYOUB

An Investigation of the Experiences of Syrian Refugee Students in Canadian Elementary Schools: A  
Mixed-Methods Study

Age: \_\_\_\_\_ Grade: \_\_\_\_\_ School: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_

Thank you for taking the time to complete this questionnaire. If possible, it is best for the child to complete the questionnaire alone. If a child needs parent presence or assistance in completing the questionnaire, a parent may be present or may assist the child in filling out the questionnaire.

[Please **circle** your choice for the questions below]

You and Your Family

1. Gender: \_\_\_\_\_
2. How many years have you been in Canada? \_\_\_\_\_
3. Were you born in Syria?  
a) Yes      b) No: In which country? \_\_\_\_\_
4. Before coming to Canada, where did you live?  
a) Syria      b) Other country: \_\_\_\_\_
5. Did you live in refugee camp?  
a) No      b) Yes: In which country? \_\_\_\_\_; How many years? \_\_\_\_\_
6. What **language** do you speak most often at home?  
a) Arabic      b) English      c) Other language: \_\_\_\_\_

Your School Experiences Before Coming to Canada

7. Did you go to school *before* coming to Canada?  
a) Yes      b) No (skip to question 11)
8. Did you **miss any school** years before coming to Canada?  
a) Yes: How many years of school did you miss overall? \_\_\_\_\_; What grades did you miss? \_\_\_\_\_  
b) No

9. How much did you **benefit from learning** in school *before* coming to Canada?  
 a) Not at all      b) Little      c) Fairly benefited      d) Much      e) A great deal
10. How much **difficulty** did you have in school before coming to Canada?  
 a) Not at all      b) Little      c) Some difficulty      d) Much      e) A great deal

### Your Settlement Experiences in Canada

11. How **friendly** are the people in this city to your family?  
 a) Not at all      b) A little      c) Fairly friendly      d) Very      e) Extremely
12. How often do you help your parents with: translating, appointments, reading letters, etc.?  
 a) Never      b) Rarely      c) Sometimes      d) Often      e) Very often
13. How important is **your culture** to you?  
 a) Not important      b) A little important      c) Fairly important      d) Important      e) Very important
14. How important is learning about **Canadian culture** to you?  
 a) Not important      b) A little important      c) Fairly important      d) Important      e) Very important

### Your School Experiences in Canada: Learning Experiences

15. How helpful is/was the **English as a Second Language (ESL) program**?  
 a) Not helpful      b) A little helpful      c) Fairly Helpful      d) Helpful      e) Very helpful
16. How **interested** are/were you in the learning in ESL class?  
 a) Not at all      b) A little      c) Fairly interested      d) Very      e) Extremely
17. How often do/did the teachers in **ESL program** ask for **your feedback** to help you learn?  
 a) Not at all      b) Rarely      c) Sometimes      d) Often      e) Almost always
18. How important is it for newcomer students to be in **regular class** (non-ESL class)?  
 a) Not important      b) A little important      c) Fairly important      d) Important      e) Very important
19. How **difficult** is regular class in Canada?  
 a) Not at all      b) Little      c) Fairly difficult      d) Very      e) Extremely
20. How often do the teachers in **regular class** ask for **your feedback** to help you learn?  
 a) Not at all      b) Rarely      c) Sometimes      d) Often      e) Almost always
21. How difficult has it been to learn the **English language** in Canada?  
 a) Not at all      b) Little      c) Fairly difficult      d) Very      e) Extremely
22. How difficult has it been learning **Math** in Canada?  
 a) Not at all      b) Little      c) Fairly difficult      d) Very      e) Extremely

23. Please circle your **favourite subject(s)** in school in Canada.

- a) Art      b) Dance      c) Drama      d) French      e) Health and physical education  
f) Language Arts      g) Math      h) Music      i) Science      j) Social studies / history /geography

24. Please circle the **subject(s) you are best at** in school in Canada.

- a) Art      b) Dance      c) Drama      d) French      e) Health and physical education  
f) Language Arts      g) Math      h) Music      i) Science      j) Social studies / history /geography

25. How often do your **peers (classmates) help you** with your learning in school in Canada?

- a) Not at all      b) Rarely      c) Sometimes      d) Often      e) Almost always

26. How **comfortable** are you asking your teachers for help with your learning?

- a) Not at all      b) A little      c) Fairly comfortable      d) Very      e) Extremely

27. When you need help with your learning, how much **support** do you get from your teachers?

- a) Not at all      b) Little      c) Some      d) Much      e) A great deal

28. How often do your parents/older siblings discuss your **school experiences and homework** with you?

- a) Not at all      b) Rarely      c) Sometimes      d) Often      e) Almost always

29. When you receive homework, how **difficult** is it to complete it in English on your own?

- a) Not at all      b) Little      c) Fairly difficult      d) Very      e) Extremely

### Your School Experiences in Canada: Socio-cultural Experiences

30. How difficult has it been to **make friends** at school in Canada?

- a) Not at all      b) Little      c) Fairly difficult      d) Very      e) Extremely

31. When you are at school, how much play time do you spend with **newcomer students** to Canada?

- a) Not at all      b) Little      c) Some      d) Much      e) A great deal

32. When you are at school, how much play time do you spend with **Canadian-born students**?

- a) Not at all      b) Little      c) Some      d) Much      e) A great deal

33. If you had the choice, which students do you prefer to work with for your group work or team project?

- a) Newcomer students to Canada      b) Canadian-born students

34. How often do you experience **conflicts** with other students?

- a) Not at all      b) Rarely      c) Sometimes      d) Often      e) Almost always

35. How **fair** are other students towards newcomer students to Canada?

- a) Not fair      b) A little fair      c) Sometimes fair      d) Fair      e) Very fair

### Your School Experiences in Canada: Extra-curricular Activities

36. How many **extra-curricular activities** do you participate in **at school** in Canada (sports, band, media club, chess club, etc.)?

- a) None    b) 1    c) 2    d) 3    e) More than 3

Please list the extra-curricular activities you participate in: \_\_\_\_\_

37. How important are **extra-curricular activities** for newcomer students at school?

- a) Not important    b) A little important    c) Fairly important    d) Important    e) Very important

38. How many **extra-curricular activities** do you participate in **when you go home** from school (soccer, basketball, swimming, music, etc.)?

- a) None    b) 1    c) 2    d) 3    e) More than 3

Please list the extra-curricular activities you participate in: \_\_\_\_\_

### Your School Experiences in Canada: Staff Support

39. How **friendly** are the school staff with newcomer students to Canada?

- a) Not at all    b) A little    c) Sometimes friendly    d) Very    e) Extremely

40. If you have problems at school, how **comfortable** are you talking to school staff about them?

- a) Not at all    b) Little    c) Fairly comfortable    d) Very    e) Extremely

41. When you need help with a problem, how much **support** do you get from school staff?

- a) Not at all    b) Little    c) Some    d) Much    e) A great deal

42. I have completed this questionnaire:

- a) Alone    b) With my parent present with me    c) My parent helped me

✚ **Thank you very much for your time and sharing your educational experiences. Whether you completed the questionnaire or not, please drop the questionnaire in the big sealed box labelled “Questionnaire Box” in the office during the Saturday school program.**

✚ **Your voice is very important, and your answers will be helpful to this research. Your answers will be kept confidential. Please make sure to not write your name on the questionnaire. In the final report, publications, or presentations, it will not be possible for anyone to know who shared the information.**

✚ **INTERVIEW: If you are interested in participating in a one-on-one interview about your educational experiences, please use the student card in the envelope attached to the questionnaire to provide your contact information. When you drop off your questionnaire, please drop your student card in the smaller box labelled “Interview box”. This box will be next to *Questionnaire box* in the Saturday school program. The interview will be conducted by me and you can choose to have a parent present during the interview. If you are interested, and selected, you will be invited for the interview.**

Student card to be placed in an envelope and attached to the questionnaire.

**بطاقة الطالب Student Card**

**I am interested in doing the interview. أنا مهتم بالمشاركة بالمقابلة.**

First Name (الاسم): \_\_\_\_\_ Last Name (اسم العائلة): \_\_\_\_\_

Grade (الصف): \_\_\_\_\_

Parent Telephone 1 (رقم هاتف الأهل 1): \_\_\_\_\_

Parent Telephone 2 (رقم هاتف الأهل 2): \_\_\_\_\_



University  
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استطلاع الطلاب الباحث: محمد أيوب

بحث في تجارب الطلاب السوريين اللاجئين في المدارس الابتدائية الكندية: دراسة بحث مندمج

العمر: \_\_\_\_\_ الصف: \_\_\_\_\_ المدرسة: \_\_\_\_\_ التاريخ: \_\_\_\_\_

شكراً لملئكم هذا الاستطلاع. من الأفضل للولد أن يملأ هذا الاستطلاع بمفرده إذا أمكن. نزولاً عند رغبة الولد، يمكن تواجد الأهل أثناء ملأ الاستطلاع، أو مساعدته بملئه.

[الرجاء وضع دائرة حول الأجوبة عند الإمكان]

### أنت وعائلتك

١. الجنس: \_\_\_\_\_
٢. عدد السنوات في كندا؟ \_\_\_\_\_
٣. هل أنت مولود في سوريا؟ (أ) نعم (ب) كلا: ما هو مكان ولادتك؟ \_\_\_\_\_
- ٤- أين كنت تعيش قبل مجيئك إلى كندا؟ (أ) سوريا (ب) بلد آخر: \_\_\_\_\_
٥. هل عشت في مخيم للاجئين؟ (أ) كلا (ب) نعم: بلد اللجوء \_\_\_\_\_ عدد السنوات \_\_\_\_\_
٦. ما هي اللغة التي تتحدثون بها غالباً في المنزل؟ (أ) العربية (ب) الإنكليزية (ج) لغة أخرى: \_\_\_\_\_

### تجربتك المدرسية قبل مجيئك إلى كندا

٧. هل ذهبت إلى المدرسة قبل مجيئك إلى كندا؟ (أ) نعم (ب) كلا (إذا أجبت بكلا انتقل إلى سؤال رقم ١١)
٨. هل أضعت سنوات مدرسية قبل مجيئك إلى كندا؟ (أ) نعم: عدد سنوات غيابك عن المدرسة \_\_\_\_\_؛ الصفوف التي أضعتها: \_\_\_\_\_ (ب) كلا
٩. كم استفدت من التعليم الذي تلقيت في المدرسة قبل مجيئك إلى كندا؟ (أ) قليل جداً (ب) قليل (ج) متوسط (د) كثير (هـ) كثير جداً
١٠. درجة الصعوبة التي واجهتها في المدرسة قبل مجيئك إلى كندا؟ (أ) قليل جداً (ب) قليل (ج) متوسط (د) كثير (هـ) كثير جداً

### تجربة استيطانك في كندا

١١. هل تشعر أن أهل المدينة مرحبين بعائلتك؟  
 (أ) قليل جدا (ب) قليل (ج) متوسط (د) كثير (هـ) كثير جدا
١٢. هل تساعد أهلك في: الترجمة، قراءة الرسائل، أو أثناء المواعيد، إلخ ...  
 (أ) قليل جدا (ب) قليل (ج) أحيانا (د) كثير (هـ) كثير جدا
١٣. ما أهمية المحافظة على ثقافتك بالنسبة لك؟  
 (أ) غير مهم (ب) مهم قليلا (ج) مهم بعض الشيء (د) مهم (هـ) مهم جدا
١٤. ما هي أهمية تعلم الثقافة الكندية بالنسبة لك؟  
 (أ) غير مهم (ب) مهم قليلا (ج) مهم بعض الشيء (د) مهم (هـ) مهم جدا

### تجاربك المدرسية في كندا: التجارب التعليمية

١٥. هل تعتقد أن برنامج تعلم "الإنكليزية كلغة ثانية" ESL فعال؟  
 (أ) قليل جدا (ب) قليل (ج) متوسط (د) كثير (هـ) كثير جدا
١٦. ما هي/كانت درجة اهتمامك بالتعلم ضمن برنامج تعلم "الإنكليزية كلغة ثانية" ESL؟  
 (أ) قليل جدا (ب) قليل (ج) متوسط (د) كثير (هـ) كثير جدا
١٧. هل سألك معلمو برنامج تعلم "الإنكليزية كلغة ثانية" ESL عن رأيك للتعلم بشكل أفضل؟  
 (أ) قليل جدا (ب) قليل (ج) أحيانا (د) كثير (هـ) كثير جدا
١٨. برأيك، ما مدى أهمية أن يحضر القادمون الجدد الصفوف العادية (Regular Class)؟  
 (أ) غير مهم (ب) مهم قليلا (ج) مهم بعض الشيء (د) مهم (هـ) مهم جدا
١٩. ما هي درجة صعوبة الصفوف العادية (Regular Class) في كندا؟  
 (أ) سهل جدا (ب) سهل (ج) متوسط (د) صعب (هـ) صعب جدا
٢٠. هل شعرت أن المعلمون يأخذون رأيك بعين الاعتبار لمساعدتك في التعلم في الصفوف العادية؟  
 (أ) قليل جدا (ب) قليل (ج) متوسط (د) كثير (هـ) كثير جدا
٢١. ما هي درجة صعوبة تعلم اللغة الإنكليزية في كندا؟  
 (أ) سهل جدا (ب) سهل (ج) متوسط (د) صعب (هـ) صعب جدا
٢٢. ما هي درجة صعوبة تعلم الرياضيات؟  
 (أ) سهل جدا (ب) سهل (ج) متوسط (د) صعب (هـ) صعب جدا
٢٣. ضع دائرة حول المواد المفضلة لك في المدرسة في كندا  
 (أ) فنون (ب) رقص (ج) مسرح (د) الفرنسية (هـ) تربية صحية وبدنية  
 (و) اللغة الإنكليزية (ز) رياضيات (ح) موسيقى (ط) علوم (ن) علوم اجتماعية/تاريخ-جغرافيا



٢٤. ضع دائرة حول المواد التي تحقق فيها نتائج جيدة في المدرسة في كندا  
 (أ) فنون (ب) رقص (ج) مسرح (د) الفرنسية (هـ) تربية صحية وبدنية  
 (و) اللغة الإنجليزية (ز) رياضيات (ح) موسيقى (ط) علوم (ن) علوم اجتماعية / تاريخ-جغرافيا
٢٥. هل يساعدك أصدقائك في المدرسة الكندية بالدرس؟  
 (أ) قليل جدا (ب) قليل (ج) متوسط (د) كثير (هـ) كثير جدا
٢٦. هل ترتاح للطلب من المعلمين المساعدة في دروسك إذا احتجتها؟  
 (أ) قليل جدا (ب) قليل (ج) متوسط (د) كثير (هـ) كثير جدا
٢٧. ما هي درجة الدعم الذي تتلقاه من معلميك عند احتياجك المساعدة في الدرس؟  
 (أ) قليل جدا (ب) قليل (ج) متوسط (د) كثير (هـ) كثير جدا
٢٨. هل يناقشك أهلك أو إخوانك/تك الأكبر سنًا في دروسك أو الأحداث اليومية في المدرسة؟  
 (أ) قليل جدا (ب) قليل (ج) متوسط (د) كثير (هـ) كثير جدا
٢٩. ما هي درجة الصعوبة في إنجاز كل الدروس المنزلية باللغة الإنكليزية بمفردك؟  
 (أ) سهل جدا (ب) سهل (ج) متوسط (د) صعب (هـ) صعب جدا

### تجاربك المدرسية في كندا: التجارب الثقافية والاجتماعية

٣٠. ما كانت درجة صعوبة مصادقة الطلاب الآخرين في المدرسة في كندا؟  
 (أ) سهل جدا (ب) سهل (ج) متوسط (د) صعب (هـ) صعب جدا
٣١. هل تمضي وقت في اللعب في المدرسة مع الطلاب الآخرين من القادمين الجدد؟  
 (أ) قليل جدا (ب) قليل (ج) متوسط (د) كثير (هـ) كثير جدا
٣٢. هل تمضي وقت في اللعب في المدرسة مع طلاب مولودين في كندا؟  
 (أ) قليل جدا (ب) قليل (ج) متوسط (د) كثير (هـ) كثير جدا
٣٣. إذا أعطيت الخيار مع من تفضل العمل في التمارين الجماعية أو البرنامج الجماعي في المدرسة؟  
 (أ) الطلاب من القادمين الجدد إلى كندا (ب) الطلاب المولودين في كندا
٣٤. هل تتصادم مع الطلاب الآخرين؟  
 (أ) قليل جدا (ب) قليل (ج) متوسط (د) كثير (هـ) كثير جدا
٣٥. هل تعتقد أن الطلاب الآخرين يعاملون القادمين الجدد جيدًا؟  
 (أ) قليل جدا (ب) قليل (ج) متوسط (د) كثير (هـ) كثير جدا

### تجاربك المدرسية في كندا: النشاطات الإضافية

٣٦. كم عدد النشاطات الإضافية التي تشارك فيها في المدرسة في كندا مثل: الرياضة، الفرقة الموسيقية، نادي الإعلام، نادي الشطرنج، إلخ.

أ) 0 (ب) ١ (ج) ٢ (د) ٣ (هـ) أكثر من ثلاثة  
الرجاء تسمية هذه النشاطات:

٣٧. برأيك، ما مدى أهمية النشاطات الإضافية للقادمين الجدد في المدرسة؟  
أ) غير مهم (ب) مهم قليلاً (ج) مهم بعض الشيء (د) مهم (هـ) مهم جداً

٣٨. هل تشارك بنشاطات إضافية عند ذهابك إلى البيت (كرة قدم، سباحة، كرة سلة...)?  
أ) 0 (ب) ١ (ج) ٢ (د) ٣ (هـ) أكثر من ثلاثة  
الرجاء تسمية هذه النشاطات:

### تجاربك المدرسية في كندا: دعم العاملين

٣٩. هل تعتقد أن عاملي المدرسة يعاملون القادمين الجدد جيداً؟  
أ) قليل جداً (ب) قليل (ج) متوسط (د) كثير (هـ) كثير جداً

٤٠. هل تترشح لمشاركة مشاكلك مع معلميك أو العاملين بالمدرسة؟  
أ) قليل جداً (ب) قليل (ج) متوسط (د) كثير (هـ) كثير جداً

٤١. هل تشعر أن معلميك يتفهمونك ويدعمونك عندما تشاركهم مشاكلك؟  
أ) قليل جداً (ب) قليل (ج) متوسط (د) كثير (هـ) كثير جداً

٤٢. لقد أكملت هذا الاستطلاع:  
أ) بمفردي (ب) بحضور أهلي (ج) بمساعدة أهلي

- شكراً جزيلاً لمشاركتنا تجاربك الدراسية. سواء ملأت الاستطلاع أم لم تملأه، الرجاء وضعه في الصندوق المغفل الموضوع عليه ملصق "صندوق الاستطلاعات" وذلك أثناء برنامج المدرسة في يوم السبت.
- رأيك يهمنا وأجوبتك ستكون مفيدة جداً لهذا البحث. سنحفظ كل أجوبتك بسرية تامة. الرجاء عدم كتابة اسمك على الاستطلاع. لن يمكن لأحد أن يتعرف على هوية المشاركين بالاستطلاع سواء في التقرير النهائي، المنشورات، أو العروض.
- **المقابلة:** إذا كنت مهتم بالمشاركة في مقابلة فردية مع الباحث للتحديث بعمق عن تجاربك المدرسية، الرجاء مشاركتنا بمعلوماتك على بطاقة الطالب في الملف المرفق بالاستطلاع لكي نتواصل معك. عندما تسلم الاستطلاع، ضع بطاقة المقابلة في الصندوق الملصق عليه "صندوق المقابلات". هذا الصندوق سيكون بجانب صندوق الاستطلاعات ضمن برنامج مدرسة السبت. ستتم المقابلة معي ويمكنكم أن تطلبوا حضور أهلكم. إذا كنت مهتم وتم اختيارك ستتم دعوتك إلى المقابلة.

## APPENDIX B



### Letter of Invitation to Participate in Research Student Questionnaire

Dear Students and Parents/Guardians,

I am writing to invite your child to participate in a research study conducted by me, Mohamad Ayoub, a PhD in education candidate, from the Faculty of Education at the University of Windsor. The title of the study is: **An Investigation of the Experiences of Syrian Refugee Students in Canadian Elementary Schools: A Mixed-Methods Study**. The results from this study will be contributed to the PhD in education dissertation.

The purpose of this study is to investigate the experiences of Syrian refugee students in elementary public schools. This study will explore the students' experiences related to: prior schooling, settlement, learning, socio-cultural experiences, extra-curriculars, and staff support. The goal is to provide Syrian newcomer students with an opportunity to have their voices heard and provide input into their education program.

If your child volunteers to participate in this study, he/she will need to complete an anonymous questionnaire. The questionnaire will ask questions about your child's school experiences. It will take about 30 minutes to complete. Your child is encouraged to complete the questionnaire alone at home, or with your assistance if your child requires support.

Your child's name will not be on the questionnaire. No one, including myself, will know who completed the questionnaire. All questionnaires will be locked safely and will be shredded once the data is compiled. All data collected from the questionnaires will be kept in a password protected computer with access only to me and my supervisor and will be deleted after five years of completing the study. Your child's identity will not appear and will not be identifiable in any reports, publications, or presentations.

You can choose if you would like your child to participate in this study or not. If your child participates in this study, you have the right to withdraw your child before the questionnaire is submitted without any consequences. Your child can also choose to not answer any questions he/she does not feel comfortable with and remain in the study. Once the questionnaire is submitted, it will not be possible to withdraw the data anymore since the questionnaire is anonymous and it will not be possible to identify and withdraw the questionnaire.

Thank you for considering participation in this study. If you have any questions or concerns about the research, please feel free to contact me:



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## رسالة دعوة للمشاركة في الدراسة

### استطلاع للطلاب

حضرة الطلاب والأهل/أولياء الأمور الكرام،

ولدكم مدعو للمشاركة في دراسة بحثية يجريها محمد أيوب، طالب دكتوراه في التربية من كلية التربية في جامعة وندسور. وستساهم نتائج هذه الدراسة في أطروحة الدكتوراه بعنوان: **بحث في تجارب الطلاب السوريين اللاجئين في المدارس الابتدائية الكندية: دراسة بحث مندمج.**

الغرض من هذه الدراسة هو البحث في تجارب الطلاب اللاجئين السوريين في المدارس العامة الابتدائية. سوف تستكشف هذه الدراسة تجارب الطلاب المتعلقة بما يلي: التعليم السابق، الاستيطان، التعلم، الخبرات الاجتماعية والثقافية، المناهج الدراسية الإضافية، ودعم الموظفين. الهدف هو تزويد الطلاب السوريين الجدد بفرصة لسماع أصواتهم وتقديم تحسينات في برنامجهم التعليمي.

إذا تطوع ولدك للمشاركة في هذه الدراسة، فسوف يحتاج إلى إكمال استطلاع مجهول. لن يكون اسم ولدك وارد في الاستطلاع. لن يعرف أحد، بمن فيهم أنا، من أكمل الاستطلاع. سوف يطرح الاستطلاع أسئلة حول تجارب ولدك الدراسية وسوف يستغرق حوالي ٣٠ دقيقة للإكمال. نفضل أن يكمل ولدك الاستطلاع بمفرده في المنزل، أو بمساعدتك إذا كان بحاجة إلى المساعدة.

تبقى أي معلومات يتم الحصول عليها فيما يتعلق بهذه الدراسة والتي يمكن ربطها بولدك سرية. سيتم كتابة كل التقارير في بيانات مجمعة. لن تظهر هوية ولدك ولن تكون قابلة للتعريف في أي تقارير أو منشورات أو عروض تقديمية. سيتم تأمين سلامة جميع الاستطلاعات وسيتم تمزيقها بمجرد تجميع البيانات. سيتم الاحتفاظ بجميع البيانات الإلكترونية التي تم جمعها من الاستبيانات في جهاز كمبيوتر محمي بكلمة مرور وسيتم حذفها بعد خمس سنوات من انتهاء الدراسة.

يمكنك اختيار ما إذا كنت ترغب في أن يشارك ولدك في هذه الدراسة أم لا. إذا اخترت عدم مشاركة ولدك، فلن تترتب على ذلك عواقب. إذا شارك ولدك في هذه الدراسة، فيحق لك سحب ولدك في أي وقت قبل تقديم الاستطلاع دون أي عواقب. يمكن لولدك أيضًا اختيار عدم الإجابة عن أي أسئلة لا يشعر بالراحة بالإجابة عنها والبقاء في الدراسة في نفس الوقت. بمجرد تقديم الاستطلاع، لن يكون من الممكن سحب البيانات لأن الاستبيان مجهول ولن يكون من الممكن تحديد وسحب الاستطلاع.

شكرا لكم على أخذ المشاركة في هذا البحث بعين الاعتبار. إذا كان لديكم أي أسئلة الرجاء الاتصال بي:

## APPENDIX C



### LETTER OF INFORMATION FOR CONSENT TO PARTICIPATE IN RESEARCH (Student Questionnaire)

Title of Study: **An Investigation of the Experiences of Syrian Refugee Students in Canadian Elementary Schools: A Mixed-Methods Study**

Your child is invited to participate in a research study conducted by me, Mohamad Ayoub, a PhD in education candidate, from the Faculty of Education at the University of Windsor. The results from this study will be contributed to the PhD in education dissertation.

If you have any questions or concerns about the research, please feel free to contact me:

#### PURPOSE OF THE STUDY

The purpose of this study is to investigate the experiences of Syrian refugee students in elementary public schools. This study will explore the students' experiences related to: prior schooling, settlement, learning, socio-cultural experiences, extra-curriculars, and staff support. The goal is to provide Syrian newcomer students with an opportunity to have their voices heard and provide input into their education program.

#### PROCEDURES

If your child volunteers to participate in this study, he/she will need to complete an anonymous questionnaire. Your child's name will not be on the questionnaire. No one, including myself, will know who completed the questionnaire. The questionnaire will ask questions about your child's school experiences. It will take approximately 30 minutes to complete. Your child is encouraged to complete the questionnaire alone at home, or with your assistance if your child requires support.

#### POTENTIAL RISKS AND DISCOMFORTS

There are no potential anticipated risks to participants. Your child may skip or not answer any question(s) he/she does not feel comfortable with. In case there is any unanticipated stress caused to your child from participating in the questionnaire, a list of social work services will be attached to this letter as a useful resource. These resources are only provided in case they are needed, and I can assist with them.

#### POTENTIAL BENEFITS TO PARTICIPANTS AND/OR TO SOCIETY

By participating in this study, students will be empowered by having their voices heard. They will have an opportunity to participate and provide input towards their education program. The findings will shed light on their school experiences and will lead to recommendations to the school and board of education for advancing their education programs. The findings from this research will also help in filling a gap in the education literature that lacks students' voice and the experiences of Syrian newcomer students in Canadian schools.

#### CONFIDENTIALITY

Any information that is obtained in connection with this study and that can be identified with your child will remain confidential. Any reports will be written in grouped data. Your child's identity will not appear and will not be identifiable in any reports, publications, or presentations. However, it is important to mention that the only exception to revealing the identity of a child in this study is in the case where I have the duty to report – If I have reasonable grounds and information to suspect that a child needs protection. All questionnaires will be locked safely and will be shredded once the data is compiled. All data collected from the questionnaires will be kept in a password protected computer and will be deleted five years from the time the study is complete.

## PARTICIPATION AND WITHDRAWAL

You can choose if you would like your child to participate in this study or not. If you choose not to have your child participate in this study, there are no consequences that will flow from that decision. If your child participates in this study, you have the right to withdraw your child at any time before submitting the questionnaire without any consequences. Your child can choose to not answer any questions he/she does not feel comfortable with and remain in the study without any consequences. Your child can also choose to not answer all questions and not be in the study without any consequences. Your child's participation is entirely voluntary. The researcher may withdraw your child from this research if circumstances arise which warrant doing so. Once the questionnaire is submitted, it will not be possible to withdraw the data anymore since the questionnaire is anonymous and it will not be possible to identify and withdraw the questionnaire. Whether your child completes the questionnaire or not, please return the questionnaire by dropping it off in the sealed box (Questionnaire box) in the main office during the Saturday school program.

## FEEDBACK OF THE RESULTS OF THIS STUDY TO THE PARTICIPANTS

A summary report of the results, in a hard copy, will be made available to you and your child in August 2019. If you wish to have access online to the summary report and/or complete dissertation, the links will be shared with you to access the reports.

Date when results are available: August 2019.

## SUBSEQUENT USE OF DATA

These data may be used in subsequent studies, in publications, and in presentations.

## RIGHTS OF RESEARCH PARTICIPANTS

You may withdraw your child from this study and discontinue his/her participation at any time before the questionnaire is submitted without any penalty or consequences. Once the questionnaire is submitted, it will not be possible to withdraw the data anymore since the questionnaire is anonymous and it will not be possible to identify and withdraw the questionnaire. If you have questions regarding your rights or your child's rights as a research participant, contact: Research Ethics Coordinator, University of Windsor, Windsor, Ontario N9B 3P4; Telephone: 519-253-3000, ext. 3948; e-mail: [ethics@uwindsor.ca](mailto:ethics@uwindsor.ca)

## CONSENT TO PARTICIPATE

The submission of this questionnaire implies your consent, as well as your child's consent, to participate in this study.

## SIGNATURE OF INVESTIGATOR

These are the terms under which I will conduct research.

---

Signature of Investigator

---

Date



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## رسالة معلومات للموافقة على المشاركة في البحث (استطلاع للطلاب)

عنوان الدراسة: بحث في تجارب الطلاب السوريين اللاجئين في المدارس الابتدائية الكندية: دراسة بحث مندمج

ولدكم مدعو للمشاركة في دراسة بحثية يجريها محمد أيوب، طالب دكتوراه في التربية من كلية التربية في جامعة وندسور. وستساهم نتائج هذه الدراسة في أطروحة الدكتوراه. إذا كان لديكم أي أسئلة أو استفسارات حول البحث، فلا تترددوا في الاتصال بي:

### هدف الدراسة:

الغرض من هذه الدراسة هو البحث في تجارب الطلاب اللاجئين السوريين في المدارس العامة الابتدائية. سوف تستكشف هذه الدراسة تجارب الطلاب المتعلقة بما يلي: التعليم السابق، الاستيطان، التعلم، الخبرات الاجتماعية والثقافية، المناهج الدراسية الإضافية، ودعم الموظفين. الهدف هو تزويد الطلاب السوريين الجدد بفرصة لسماع أصواتهم وتقديم تحسينات في برنامجهم التعليمي.

### إجراءات:

إذا تطوع ولدك للمشاركة في هذه الدراسة، فسوف يحتاج إلى إكمال استطلاع مجهول. لن يكون اسم ولدك وارد في الاستطلاع. لن يعرف أحد، بمن فيهم أنا، من أكمل الاستطلاع. سوف يطرح الاستطلاع أسئلة حول تجارب ولدك الدراسية. سوف يستغرق حوالي ٣٠ دقيقة للإكمال. نفضل أن يكمل ولدك الاستطلاع بمفرده في المنزل، أو بمساعدتك إذا كان ولدك بحاجة إلى المساعدة.

### المخاطر والإشكالات المحتملة:

لا نتوقع وجود مخاطر محتملة للمشاركين في هذه الدراسة. يمكن لولدك أن يتخطى أو لا يجيب على أي سؤال (أسئلة) لا يشعر بالراحة بالإجابة عنه. في حال وجود أي ضغوط غير متوقعة نتجت عن مشاركة ولدك في الاستطلاع، سيتم إرفاق قائمة من خدمات العمل الاجتماعي بهذه الرسالة كمورد مفيد لاستخدامه إذا لزم الأمر حصراً. كما أنني سأكون متاحاً لأي دعم تحتاجه.

### الفوائد المحتملة للمشاركين و/أو المجتمع:

ستتيح المشاركة في هذه الدراسة إلى تمكين الطلاب عبر إعطائهم فرصة للتعبير عن آرائهم. سيكون لديهم فرصة للمشاركة وإعطاء رأيهم في برنامجهم التعليمي. ستسلط النتائج الضوء على تجاربهم المدرسية وستؤدي إلى توصيات للمدرسة ومجلس التعليم لتطوير برامجهم التعليمية. ستساعد نتائج هذا البحث أيضاً في سد الفجوة في الأدب التربوي التي تفتقر إلى صوت وخبرات الطلاب السوريين من القادمين الجدد في المدارس الكندية.

### السرية:

تبقى أي معلومات يتم الحصول عليها فيما يتعلق بهذه الدراسة والتي يمكن ربطها بولدك سرية. سيتم كتابة كل التقارير في بيانات مجمعة. لن تظهر هوية ولدك ولن تكون قابلة للتعريف في أي تقارير أو منشورات أو عروض تقديمية. ومع ذلك، من المهم الإشارة إلى أن الاستثناء الوحيد للكشف عن هوية ولدك في هذه الدراسة هو في الحالة التي يتوجب فيها علي الإبلاغ - إذا

كان لدي أسباب ومعلومات تشير إلى أن الولد يحتاج إلى الحماية. سيتم تأمين سلامة جميع الاستطلاعات وسيتم تمزيقها بمجرد تجميع البيانات. سيتم الاحتفاظ بجميع البيانات التي تم جمعها من الاستطلاعات في جهاز كمبيوتر محمي بكلمة مرور وسيتم حذفها بعد خمس سنوات من انتهاء الدراسة

#### المشاركة والانسحاب:

يمكنك اختيار ما إذا كنت ترغب في أن يشارك ولدك في هذه الدراسة أم لا. إذا اخترت عدم مشاركة ولدك، فلن تترتب على ذلك عواقب. إذا شارك ولدك في هذه الدراسة، فيحق لك سحب ولدك في أي وقت قبل تقديم الاستطلاع دون أي عواقب. يمكن لولدك أيضًا اختيار عدم الإجابة عن أي أسئلة لا يشعر بالراحة بالإجابة عنها والبقاء في الدراسة في نفس الوقت. مشاركة ولدك طوعية بالكامل. يمكن للباحث سحب ولدك من هذا البحث إذا كانت هناك ظروف تبرر القيام بذلك. بمجرد تقديم الاستطلاع، لن يكون من الممكن سحب البيانات لأن الاستبيان مجهول ولن يكون من الممكن تحديد وسحب الاستطلاع. سواء أكمل ولدك الاستطلاع أم لا، يرجى إعادته عن طريق إسقاطه في صندوق مغلق (صندوق الاستطلاعات) في المكتب الرئيسي خلال برنامج مدرسة السبت.

#### إطلاع نتائج هذه الدراسة للمشاركين:

سيتم توفير تقرير موجز بالنتائج، في نسخة ورقية، لك ولولدك في أغسطس 2019. إذا كنت ترغب في الوصول إلى التقرير الموجز و / أو الأطروحة الكاملة عبر الإنترنت، فسيتم مشاركة الروابط معك للوصول إلى التقارير. تاريخ توفر النتائج: أغسطس 2019.

#### الاستخدام الفرعي للبيانات:

يمكن استخدام هذه البيانات في دراسات لاحقة ومنشورات وعروض تقديمية.

#### حقوق المشاركين في البحث:

يمكنك سحب ولدك من هذه الدراسة وإيقاف مشاركته في أي وقت قبل تقديم الاستطلاع دون أي عقوبة أو عواقب. بمجرد تقديم الاستطلاع، لن يكون من الممكن سحب البيانات بعد ذلك لأن الاستطلاع مجهول ولن يكون من الممكن تحديد وسحب الاستطلاع. إذا كانت لديك أسئلة بخصوص حقوقك أو حقوق ولدك كمشارك في الأبحاث، فاتصل بـ: منسق أخلاقيات البحث بجامعة وندسور، وندسور، أونتاريو

N9B 3P4؛ Tel: 519-253-3000 EXT: 3948 Email: [ethics@uwindsor.ca](mailto:ethics@uwindsor.ca)

#### الموافقة على المشاركة :

يتضمن تقديمك لهذا الاستطلاع موافقتك الضمنية، وكذلك موافقة ولدك، على المشاركة في هذه الدراسة.

توقيع الباحث

هذه هي الشروط التي بموجبها سأجري البحوث.

التاريخ

توقيع الباحث



## APPENDIX D



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### STUDENT INTERVIEW PROTOCOL

#### SEMI-STRUCTURED ONE-ON-ONE INTERVIEW

RESEARCHER: MOHAMAD AYOUB

#### An Investigation of the Experiences of Syrian Refugee Students in Canadian Elementary Schools: A Mixed-Methods Study

Interview number: \_\_\_\_\_ Interview date: \_\_\_\_\_ Interview location: \_\_\_\_\_

Interview start time: \_\_\_\_\_ Interview end time: \_\_\_\_\_ Interview Length (minutes): \_\_\_\_\_

Presence of family member(s) during interview? Yes / No

Student name: \_\_\_\_\_ Gender: \_\_\_\_\_ Age: \_\_\_\_\_ Grade: \_\_\_\_\_

Preferred pseudonym: \_\_\_\_\_

#### You and Your Family

1. How long have you been in Canada?
2. Were you born in Syria? If no, in which country?
3. Before coming to Canada, were you in Syria or refugee camp? If refugee camp: country? how long?
4. What language do you speak at home?

#### Your School Experiences Before Coming to Canada

5. Did you go to school before coming to Canada?
  - If no, how many years did you miss? What grades did you miss?
  - If yes, please describe your experiences with that school: Where was it? Did you benefit from the learning? Did you have difficulties?

#### Your Settlement Experiences in Canada

6. Are people in this city friendly and welcoming to you and your family? Please explain.
7. Do you help your parents with adjusting to life in Canada (translating/appointments)? Please explain.
8. How important is keeping your culture to you? How about learning about Canadian culture?

#### Your School Experiences in Canada: Learning Experiences

9. Describe your experience in the ESL program in Canada:
  - Is the program helpful?

- Are/were you interested in learning in the ESL program?
  - Is/was your feedback used by teachers to help you learn?
  - What is/was the best part of the ESL program?
10. Describe your experiences in regular class:
    - Do you think it is important for newcomer students to be in regular class? Please explain.
    - Is regular class difficult?
    - Is your feedback used by teachers to help you learn in regular?
    - What is the best part about regular class?
  11. Have you had difficulties with your learning? English? Math? Science? Music? Social studies? History? Geography? Other subjects? Please explain
  12. Can you speak, read, and write in English? Please explain.
  13. Can you speak, read, and write in Arabic? Please explain.
  14. Tell me about your Math skills and learning Math.
  15. Do you enjoy working with a team in a group?
  16. How do your peers in regular class help you learn? How about ESL class (if applicable)?
  17. When you need help with your learning, what do you do? Do you receive teacher support?
  18. Are you comfortable asking your teachers for support with your learning?
  19. Do you think you are successful in your learning?
  20. What helps you with your learning?
  21. What are your favourite subjects in school?
  22. What subjects do you think you are best at?
  23. Are you able to complete your homework in English on your own?
  24. What suggestions do you have for making homework more effective?

#### **Your School Experiences in Canada: Socio-cultural Experiences**

25. Have you had difficulties making friends at school? What helps you make friends at school?
26. During breaks, do you play and spend time with other newcomer students? with Canadian-born students?
27. Have you experienced conflicts with other students? Please explain.
28. Do other students treat newcomer students fairly? How?
29. Do you feel accepted by other students? Please explain.
30. What do you like most about students in your school? What do you like least?

#### **Your School Experiences in Canada: Extra-curricular Activities**

31. Do you participate in extra-curricular activities at school (sports, band, media club, chess club, etc.)? why yes or no? If yes, what activities? Do you enjoy and learn from the activities?
32. Is it important for newcomer students to participate in extra-curricular activities at school? Explain.
33. Do you participate in sports or extra-curricular activities when you go home (soccer, basketball, swimming, etc.)? why yes or no? If yes, what kinds of activities? how often?

#### **Your School Experiences in Canada: Staff Support**

34. Do you believe school staff treat newcomer students fairly?
35. Do you feel accepted and welcomed by the staff? Please explain.
36. Are you comfortable talking to your teachers about your problems? Why yes or no?
37. Do you feel supported with your problems at school? Explain.
38. If you had a serious problem at school, who could you talk to about it?
39. What do you like most about teachers and school staff in Canada? What do you like least?

40. How else can teachers and school staff help you?

Future Goals and Aspirations


41. What are your future goals? What do you want to be when you grow up?

42. What advice do you have for refugee newcomer students coming to Canada to be successful?

43. What advice do you have for teachers and school staff to help newcomer students?

44. What advice do you have for other students to help newcomer students?

45. Is there anything else you would like to add?

 **Thank you very much for your time and sharing your educational experiences. Your voice is very important, and your answers will be helpful to this research. Your answers are confidential, and your name will not appear anywhere. In the final report, publications, or presentations, it will not be possible for anyone to know who shared the information.**



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### بروتوكول مقابلة الطالب

#### مقابلة فردية شبه منظمة

الباحث: محمد أيوب

#### بحث في تجارب الطلاب السوريين اللاجئين في المدارس الابتدائية الكندية: دراسة بحث مندمج

رقم المقابلة: \_\_\_\_\_ تاريخ المقابلة: \_\_\_\_\_ مكان المقابلة: \_\_\_\_\_

ساعة بدأ المقابلة: \_\_\_\_\_ ساعة انتهاء المقابلة: \_\_\_\_\_ مدة المقابلة (دقائق): \_\_\_\_\_

حضور فرد من العائلة أثناء المقابلة؟ نعم / كلا

اسم الطالب: \_\_\_\_\_ الجنس: \_\_\_\_\_ العمر: \_\_\_\_\_ الصف: \_\_\_\_\_

اسم مستعار مفضل: \_\_\_\_\_

#### أنت وعائلتك

1. متى أتيت إلى كندا؟
2. هل ولدت في سوريا؟ إذا كان جوابك كلا، ففي أي بلد ولدت؟
3. قبل المجيء إلى كندا، هل كنت تعيش في سوريا أو في مخيم للاجئين؟ إذا عشت في مخيم اللاجئين: في أي بلد؟ كم سنة؟
4. ما هي اللغة التي تتحدث بها في المنزل؟

#### تجاربك المدرسية قبل قدومك إلى كندا

5. هل ذهبت إلى المدرسة قبل المجيء إلى كندا؟
- إذا كانت الإجابة كلا، فكم سنة فاتتك؟ ما الصفوف التي فاتتك؟
- إذا كانت الإجابة نعم، فيرجى وصف تجاربك مع تلك المدرسة: أين كانت؟ هل استفدت من التعلم؟ هل واجهت صعوبات؟

#### تجارب استيطانك في كندا

6. هل الناس في هذه المدينة ودودون ومرحبون بك ولعائلتك؟ يرجى التوضيح.
7. هل تساعد والديك في التكيف مع الحياة في كندا (ترجمة / المواعيد)؟ يرجى التوضيح.
8. ما مدى أهمية الحفاظ على ثقافتك لك؟ ماذا عن التعلم عن الثقافة الكندية؟

### تجاربك المدرسية في كندا: التجارب التعليمية

9. صف تجربتك في برنامج ESL في كندا:

• هل البرنامج مفيد؟

• هل أنت مهتم أو كنت مهتمًا بالتعلم في برنامج ESL؟

• هل يستخدم أو استخدم معلميك ملاحظاتك لمساعدتك على التعلم؟

• ما كان أفضل جزء لديك في برنامج ESL؟

10. صف تجربتك في الصف العادي (regular class):

• هل تعتقد أنه من المهم للطلاب الجدد أن يكونوا في الصف العادي؟ يرجى التوضيح.

• هل تجد الصف العادي صعب؟

• هل يستخدم معلميك ملاحظاتك لمساعدتك على التعلم في الصف العادي؟

• ما هو أفضل جزء لديك في الصف العادي؟

11. هل واجهت صعوبات أثناء تعلمك؟ الإنجليزية؟ الرياضيات؟ علوم؟ موسيقى؟ الدراسات الاجتماعية؟

التاريخ؟ جغرافية؟ مواد أخرى؟ يرجى التوضيح

12. هل يمكنك التحدث والقراءة والكتابة باللغة الإنجليزية؟ يرجى التوضيح.

13. هل تستطيع التحدث والقراءة والكتابة باللغة العربية؟ يرجى التوضيح.

14. أخبرني عن مهاراتك في الرياضيات وتعلم الرياضيات.

15. هل تستمتع بالعمل مع فريق في مجموعة؟

16. كيف يساعدك الطلاب في الصف العادي على التعلم؟ ماذا عن صف الـ ESL (إن وجد)؟

17. عندما تحتاج إلى مساعدة في تعلمك، ماذا تفعل؟ هل تتلقى دعم من المعلم؟

18. هل تتراح لطلب المساعدة من المعلمين لمساعدتك في التعلم؟

19. هل تعتقد أنك ناجح في تعلمك؟

20. ماهي الأشياء التي ممكن أن تساعدك في تعليمك؟

21. ما هي المواد المفضلة لديك في المدرسة؟

22. ما هي المواد التي تبرع فيها؟

23. هل أنت قادر على إكمال واجبك في اللغة الإنجليزية بمفردك؟

24. ما هي اقتراحاتك لجعل الواجبات المنزلية أكثر فعالية؟

### تجاربك المدرسية في كندا: التجارب الاجتماعية والثقافية

25. هل واجهت صعوبات في تكوين صداقات في المدرسة؟ ما الذي يساعدك على تكوين صداقات في المدرسة؟

26. أثناء الفرس، هل تلعب وتقضي وقتاً مع الطلاب من القادمين الجدد الآخرين؟ مع الطلاب المولودين في كندا؟

27. هل واجهت مشاكل مع طلاب آخرين؟ يرجى التوضيح.

28. هل يعامل الطلاب الآخرون الطلاب من القادمين الجدد بإنصاف؟ كيف؟

29. هل تشعر بالقبول من قبل الطلاب الآخرين؟ يرجى التوضيح.

30. ما الذي يعجبك أكثر شيء في الطلاب في مدرستك؟ ماذا يعجبك أقل شيء؟

### تجاربك المدرسية في كندا: النشاطات الإضافية

31. هل تشارك في الأنشطة اللامنهجية في المدرسة (الرياضة، الفرقة الموسيقية، النادي الإعلامي، نادي الشطرنج، إلخ)؟

لماذا نعم أو لا؟ إذا أجبت نعم، ما هي الأنشطة التي تشارك بها؟ هل تستمتع وتتعلم من الأنشطة؟

32. هل من المهم للطلاب القادمين الجدد المشاركة في أنشطة خارج المناهج الدراسية في المدرسة؟ يرجى التوضيح.

33. هل تشارك في أنشطة رياضية أو أنشطة خارج المناهج الدراسية عندما تعود إلى المنزل (كرة القدم، كرة السلة،

السباحة، وما إلى ذلك)؟ لماذا نعم أو لا؟ إذا كانت الإجابة بنعم، ما هي أنواع الأنشطة؟ عدد المرات؟

### تجاربك المدرسية في كندا: دعم العاملين

34. هل تعتقد أن العاملين بالمدرسة يعاملون الطلاب الجدد بشكل جيد؟

35. هل تشعر بالقبول والترحيب من قبل الموظفين؟ يرجى التوضيح.

36. هل تشعر بالراحة عند التحدث مع معلميك حول مشاكلك؟ لماذا نعم أم لا؟

37. هل تشعر بدعم عند مواجهتك مشاكل في المدرسة؟ يرجى التوضيح.

38. إذا وقعت بمشكلة خطيرة في المدرسة، فمع من يمكنك التحدث؟

39. ما الذي يعجبك أكثر شيء في المعلمين وموظفي المدارس في كندا؟ ماذا يعجبك أقل شيء؟

40. ما هي الطرق الأخرى التي يمكن للمدرسين وموظفي المدرسة مساعدتك فيها؟

### الأهداف والطموحات المستقبلية

41. ما هي أهدافك المستقبلية؟ ماذا تحب أن تكون عندما تكبر؟

42. ما هي النصيحة التي تقدمها للطلاب من القادمين الجدد إلى كندا لكي ينجحوا؟

43. ما هي النصيحة التي تقدمها للمعلمين وموظفي المدرسة لمساعدة الطلاب من القادمين الجدد؟

44. ما هي النصيحة التي تقدمها للطلاب الآخرين لمساعدة الطلاب من القادمين الجدد؟

45. هل هناك أي شيء آخر تود إضافته؟

شكراً جزيلاً على وقتك ومشاركتك خبراتك التعليمية. صوتك مهم للغاية، وستكون إجاباتك مفيدة لهذا البحث. إجاباتك سرية ولن يظهر اسمك في أي مكان. لن يكون من الممكن لأي شخص معرفة من شارك المعلومات سواء في التقرير النهائي أو المنشورات أو العروض التقديمية.

## APPENDIX E



### Letter of Invitation to Participate in Research Student Interview

Dear Students and Parents/Guardians,

I am writing to invite your child to participate in a research study conducted by me, Mohamad Ayoub, a PhD in education candidate, from the Faculty of Education at the University of Windsor. The title of the study is: **An Investigation of the Experiences of Syrian Refugee Students in Canadian Elementary Schools: A Mixed-Methods Study**. The results from this study will be contributed to the PhD in education dissertation.

The purpose of this study is to investigate the experiences of Syrian refugee students in elementary public schools. This study will explore the students' experiences related to prior schooling, settlement, learning, socio-cultural experiences, extra-curriculars, and staff support. The goal is to provide Syrian newcomer students with an opportunity to have their voices heard and provide input into their education program.

If your child volunteers to participate in this study, he/she will be invited to participate in a one-on-one interview. The interview will ask questions about his/her school experiences. It will take about 60 minutes to complete. The interview will be completed during the Saturday school program offered to Syrian newcomer students. Your child will have the option to have a parent present during the interview. The interview will be audio recorded and will be conducted by me.

Any information obtained in this study and that can be identified with your child will remain confidential. All audio recordings will be deleted once the data is transcribed and verified. All data transcriptions will be kept in a password protected computer with access only to me and my supervisor and will be deleted after five years of completing the study. Your child's identity will not appear and will not be identifiable in any reports, publications, or presentation.

You can choose if you would like your child to participate in this study or not. If your child participates in this study, you have the right to withdraw your child at any time without any consequences. Your child can also choose to not answer any questions he/she does not feel comfortable with and remain in the study. Participants have the option of removing the data from the study at any time before the data analysis stage is complete.

Thank you for considering participation in this study. If you have any questions or concerns about the research, please feel free to contact me:



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## رسالة دعوة للمشاركة في الدراسة (مقابلة الطالب)

حضرة الطلاب والأهل/أولياء الأمور الكرام،

ولدكم مدعو للمشاركة في دراسة بحثية يجريها محمد أيوب، طالب دكتوراه في التربية من كلية التربية في جامعة وندسور. وستساهم نتائج هذه الدراسة في أطروحة الدكتوراه بعنوان: بحث في تجارب الطلاب السوريين اللاجئين في المدارس الابتدائية الكندية: دراسة بحث مندمج.

الغرض من هذه الدراسة هو البحث في تجارب الطلاب اللاجئين السوريين في المدارس العامة الابتدائية. سوف تستكشف هذه الدراسة تجارب الطلاب المتعلقة بما يلي: التعليم السابق، الاستيطان، التعلم، الخبرات الاجتماعية والثقافية، المناهج الدراسية الإضافية، ودعم الموظفين. الهدف هو تزويد الطلاب السوريين الجدد بفرصة لسماع أصواتهم وتقديم تحسينات في برنامجهم التعليمي.

إذا تطوع ولدك للمشاركة في هذه الدراسة، فسوف يحتاج إلى إكمال مقابلة فردية. سوف تطرح المقابلة أسئلة حول تجارب ولدك الدراسية وسوف تستغرق حوالي ٦٠ دقيقة للإكمال وستكون ضمن مدرسة السبت للقادمين الجدد إلى كندا. يمكن للولد طلب حضور الأهل للمقابلة. سأجري المقابلة بنفسى وسيتم تسجيلها (صوتياً).

تبقى أي معلومات يتم الحصول عليها فيما يتعلق بهذه الدراسة والتي يمكن ربطها بولدك سرية. كل التسجيلات الصوتية ستحذف بعد تجميع البيانات والتحقق منها. كل المعلومات المدونة ستُحفظ في كومبيوتر مزود بكلمة مرور أملكها مع المشرف وسيتم محو المعلومات المدونة بعد خمس سنوات من تاريخ إكمال الدراسة. لن تظهر هوية ولدك ولن تكون قابلة للتعريف في أي تقارير أو منشورات أو عروض تقديمية.

يمكنك اختيار ما إذا كنت ترغب في أن يشارك ولدك في هذه الدراسة أم لا. إذا شارك ولدك في هذه الدراسة، فيحق لك سحب ولدك في أي وقت دون أي عواقب. يمكن لولدك أيضاً اختيار عدم الإجابة عن أي أسئلة لا يشعر بالراحة بالإجابة عنها والبقاء في الدراسة في نفس الوقت. يمكن للمشاركين سحب بيانات المقابلة في أي وقت قبل عملية تحليل البيانات.

شكراً لكم على أخذ المشاركة في هذا البحث بعين الاعتبار. إذا كان لديكم أي أسئلة أو استفسارات حول البحث الرجاء الاتصال بي:



## APPENDIX F



### LETTER OF INFORMATION FOR CONSENT TO PARTICIPATE IN RESEARCH (Student Interview)

Title of Study: **An Investigation of the Experiences of Syrian Refugee Students in Canadian Elementary Schools: A Mixed-Methods Study**

Your child is invited to participate in a research study conducted by me, Mohamad Ayoub, a PhD in education candidate, from the Faculty of Education at the University of Windsor. The results from this study will be contributed to the PhD in education dissertation.

If you have any questions or concerns about the research, please feel free to contact me:

#### PURPOSE OF THE STUDY

The purpose of this study is to investigate the experiences of Syrian refugee students in elementary public schools. This study will explore the students' experiences related to: prior schooling, settlement, learning, socio-cultural experiences, extra-curriculars, and staff support. The goal is to provide Syrian newcomer students with an opportunity to have their voices heard and provide input into their education program.

#### PROCEDURES

If your child volunteers to participate in this study, he/she will be invited to participate in a semi-structured one-on-one interview. The interview will ask questions about his/her school experiences. It will take approximately 60 minutes to complete. The interview will be completed during the Saturday school program your child attends. Your child will have the option to have a parent present during the interview. The interview will be audio recorded and will be conducted by me.

#### POTENTIAL RISKS AND DISCOMFORTS

There are no potential anticipated risks to participants. Your child may skip or not answer any question(s) he/she does not feel comfortable with. In case there is any unanticipated stress caused to your child from participating in the interview, a list of social work services will be attached to this letter as a useful resource. These resources are only provided in case they are needed, and I can assist with them.

#### POTENTIAL BENEFITS TO PARTICIPANTS AND/OR TO SOCIETY

By participating in this study, students will be empowered by having their voices heard. They will have an opportunity to participate and provide input towards their education program. The findings will shed light on their school experiences and will lead to recommendations to the school and board of education for advancing their education programs. The findings from this research will also help in filling a gap in the education literature that lacks students' voice and the experiences of Syrian newcomer students in Canadian schools.

#### CONFIDENTIALITY

Any information that is obtained in connection with this study and that can be identified with your child will remain confidential. The written student questionnaire in this study is anonymous and cannot be linked to the in-person interviews. Each participant in the interview will have a corresponding pseudonym which will be used in the audio recording, data transcription, and any reports. Any reports will be written in grouped data. Your child's identity will not appear and will not be identifiable in any reports, publications, or presentations. However, it is important to mention that the only exception to revealing the identity of a child in this study is in the case where I have the duty to report – If I have reasonable grounds and information to suspect that a child needs protection.

All audio recordings will be saved in a password protected computer and will be deleted after data transcription and verification. Every participant has the right to review/edit the audio recording from his/her interview. The audio recording

will be made available to any participant who wishes to review/edit the recording. The researcher (myself) and my supervisor will be the only people with access to the audio recording. The audio recording will be used only for the purpose of this study and will be deleted after data transcription and verification. All data transcriptions from the interviews will be kept in a password protected computer and will be deleted five years from the time the study is complete.

## **PARTICIPATION AND WITHDRAWAL**

You can choose if you would like your child to participate in this study or not. If you choose not to have your child participate in this study, there are no consequences that will flow from that decision. If your child participates in this study, you have the right to withdraw your child at any time without any consequences. Your child can choose to not answer any questions he/she does not feel comfortable with during the interview and remain in the study without any consequences. Your child can also choose to not answer all questions and not be in the study without any consequences. Your child's participation is entirely voluntary. The researcher may withdraw your child from this research if circumstances arise which warrant doing so. Participants have the option of removing the interview data from the study at any time before the data is analyzed.

## **FEEDBACK OF THE RESULTS OF THIS STUDY TO THE PARTICIPANTS**

A summary report of the results, in a hard copy, will be made available to you and your child in August 2019. If you wish to have access online to the summary report and/or complete dissertation, the links will be shared with you to access the reports.

Date when results are available: August 2019.

## **SUBSEQUENT USE OF DATA**

These data may be used in subsequent studies, in publications, and in presentations.

## **RIGHTS OF RESEARCH PARTICIPANTS**

You may withdraw your child from this study and discontinue his/her participation at any time without any penalty or consequences. Once the interview data is analyzed, it will not be possible to withdraw the data from the study anymore. If you have questions regarding your rights or your child's rights as a research participant, contact: Research Ethics Coordinator, University of Windsor, Windsor, Ontario N9B 3P4; Telephone: 519-253-3000, ext. 3948; e-mail: [ethics@uwindsor.ca](mailto:ethics@uwindsor.ca)

## **SIGNATURE OF INVESTIGATOR**

These are the terms under which I will conduct research.

---

Signature of Investigator

---

Date



University  
of Windsor

## رسالة معلومات للموافقة على المشاركة في البحث (مقابلة الطالب)

### عنوان الدراسة: بحث في تجارب الطلاب السوريين اللاجئين في المدارس الابتدائية الكندية: دراسة بحث مندمج

ولدكم مدعو للمشاركة في دراسة بحثية يجريها محمد أيوب، طالب دكتوراه في التربية من كلية التربية في جامعة وندسور. وستساهم نتائج هذه الدراسة في أطروحة الدكتوراه. إذا كان لديكم أي أسئلة أو استفسارات حول البحث، فلا تترددوا في الاتصال بي:

### هدف الدراسة:

الغرض من هذه الدراسة هو البحث في تجارب الطلاب اللاجئين السوريين في المدارس العامة الابتدائية. سوف تستكشف هذه الدراسة تجارب الطلاب المتعلقة بما يلي: التعليم السابق، الاستيطان، التعلم، الخبرات الاجتماعية والثقافية، المناهج الدراسية الإضافية، ودعم العاملين. الهدف من وراء هذا البحث هو إعطاء فرصة للطلاب السوريين القادمين الجدد لإبداء رأيهم وتقديم تحسينات في برنامجهم التعليمي.

### إجراءات:

إذا تطوع ولدتك للمشاركة في هذه الدراسة، فسوف يحتاج إلى إكمال مقابلة فردية. سوف تطرح المقابلة أسئلة حول تجارب ولدك الدراسية وسوف تستغرق حوالي ٦٠ دقيقة للإكمال وستكون ضمن مدرسة السبب للقادمين الجدد إلى كندا. يمكن للولد طلب حضور الأهل للمقابلة. سأجري المقابلة بنفسي وسيتم تسجيلها (صوتياً).

### المخاطر والإشكالات المحتملة:

لا نتوقع وجود مخاطر محتملة للمشاركين في هذه الدراسة. يمكن لولدك أن يتخطى أو لا يجيب على أي سؤال (أسئلة) لا يشعر بالراحة بالإجابة عنه. في حال وجود أي ضغوط غير متوقعة نتجت عن مشاركة ولدك في المقابلة، سيتم إرفاق قائمة من خدمات العمل الاجتماعي بهذه الرسالة كمورد مفيد لاستخدامه إذا لزم الأمر حصراً. كما أنني سأكون متاحاً لأي دعم تحتاجه.

### الفوائد المحتملة للمشاركين و/أو المجتمع:

ستننتج المشاركة في هذه الدراسة إلى تمكين الطلاب عبر إعطائهم فرصة للتعبير عن آرائهم. سيكون لديهم فرصة للمشاركة وإعطاء رأيهم في برنامجهم التعليمي. ستسلط النتائج الضوء على تجاربهم المدرسية وستؤدي إلى توصيات للمدرسة ومجلس التعليم لتطوير برنامجهم التعليمية. ستساعد نتائج هذا البحث أيضاً في سد الفجوة في الأدب التربوي التي تفتقر إلى صوت الطلاب وخبرات الطلاب السوريين من القادمين الجدد في المدارس الكندية.

### السرية:

تبقى أي معلومات يتم الحصول عليها فيما يتعلق بهذه الدراسة والتي يمكن ربطها بولدك سرية. استطلاع الطلاب في هذه الدراسة مجهول وبدون اسم ولا يمكن ربطه بالمقابلات الشخصية. كل مشارك سيكون له اسم مستعار سيستعمل في التسجيلات الصوتية، تسجيل البيانات، وكل التقارير. كل التقارير سيتم كتابتها في بيانات مجمعة. لن تظهر هوية ولدك ولن تكون قابلة للتعريف في أي تقارير، منشورات، أو عروض تقديمية. ومع ذلك، من المهم الإشارة إلى أن الاستثناء الوحيد للكشف عن هوية ولد في هذه الدراسة هو في الحالة التي يتوجب فيها علي الإبلاغ - إذا كان لدي أسباب ومعلومات تشير إلى أن الولد يحتاج إلى الحماية.

سيتم حفظ كل التسجيلات الصوتية في كومبيوتر مزود بكلمة مرور وسيتم حذفها بعد تدوين المعلومات والتحقق منها. لدى كل مشارك الحق في مراجعة وتغيير التسجيل الصوتي من المقابلة ولذلك سيكون التسجيل متوفراً لفعل ذلك. يمكن فقط للباحث والمشرف الوصول إلى التسجيل الصوتي. سيتم استعمال التسجيل الصوتي لغرض هذا البحث فقط وسيحذف بعد تجميع البيانات والتحقق منها. كل المعلومات المدونة ستُحفظ في كومبيوتر مزود بكلمة مرور وسيتم محو المعلومات المدونة بعد خمس سنوات من تاريخ إكمال الدراسة.

#### **المشاركة والانسحاب:**

يمكنك اختيار ما إذا كنت ترغب في أن يشارك ولدك في هذه الدراسة أم لا. إذا اخترت عدم مشاركة ولدك، فلن تترتب على ذلك عواقب. إذا شارك ولدك في هذه الدراسة، فيحق لك سحب ولدك في أي وقت دون أي عواقب. يمكن لولدك أيضاً اختيار عدم الإجابة عن أي أسئلة لا يشعر بالراحة بالإجابة عنها أثناء المقابلة والبقاء في الدراسة في نفس الوقت دون أي عواقب. يمكن لولدك أيضاً اختيار عدم الإجابة عن جميع الأسئلة وعدم المشاركة في الدراسة دون أي عواقب. مشاركة ولدك طوعية بالكامل. يمكن للباحث سحب ولدك من هذا البحث إذا كانت هناك ظروف تبرر القيام بذلك. يمكن للمشاركين سحب بيانات المقابلة في أي وقت قبل تحليل البيانات.

#### **إطلاع نتائج هذه الدراسة للمشاركين:**

سيتم توفير تقرير موجز بالنتائج، في نسخة ورقية لك ولولدك في أغسطس 2019. إذا كنت ترغب في الوصول إلى التقرير الموجز و / أو الدراسة الكاملة عبر الإنترنت، فسيتم مشاركة الروابط معك للوصول إلى التقارير.

تاريخ توفر النتائج: أغسطس 2019.

#### **الاستخدام الفرعي للبيانات:**

يمكن استخدام هذه البيانات في دراسات لاحقة ومنشورات وعروض تقديمية.

#### **حقوق المشاركين في البحث:**

يمكنك سحب ولدك من الدراسة وإيقاف مشاركته في أي وقت من دون أي عواقب. لن يكون من الممكن سحب البيانات من الدراسة بعد تحليل البيانات. إذا كانت لديك أسئلة بخصوص حقوقك أو حقوق ولدك كمشارك في البحث، فاتصل بـ: منسق أخلاقيات البحث بجامعة وندسور، وندسور، أونتاريو

Tel: 519-253-3000 EXT: 3948 Email: [ethics@uwindsor.ca](mailto:ethics@uwindsor.ca)، N9B 3P4

#### **توقيع الباحث:**

هذه هي الشروط التي سأجري بموجبها البحث.

التاريخ

توقيع الباحث

## APPENDIX G



University  
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### CONSENT TO PARTICIPATE IN RESEARCH (Student Interview)

Title of Study: **An Investigation of the Experiences of Syrian Refugee Students in Canadian Elementary Schools: A Mixed-Methods Study**

Your child is invited to participate in a research study conducted by me, Mohamad Ayoub, a PhD in education candidate, from the Faculty of Education at the University of Windsor. The results from this study will be contributed to the PhD in education dissertation.

If you have any questions or concerns about the research, please feel free to contact me:

#### PURPOSE OF THE STUDY

The purpose of this study is to investigate the experiences of Syrian refugee students in elementary public schools. This study will explore the students' experiences related to: prior schooling, settlement, learning, socio-cultural experiences, extra-curriculars, and staff support. The goal is to provide Syrian newcomer students with an opportunity to have their voices heard and provide input into their education program.

#### PROCEDURES

If your child volunteers to participate in this study, he/she will be invited to participate in a semi-structured one-on-one interview. The interview will ask questions about his/her school experiences. It will take approximately 60 minutes to complete. The interview will be completed during the Saturday school program your child attends. Your child will have the option to have a parent present during the interview. The interview will be audio recorded and will be conducted by me.

#### POTENTIAL RISKS AND DISCOMFORTS

There are no potential anticipated risks to participants. Your child may skip or not answer any question(s) he/she does not feel comfortable with. In case there is any unanticipated stress caused to your child from participating in the interview, a list of social work services will be attached to this letter as a useful resource. These resources are only provided in case they are needed, and I can assist with them.

#### POTENTIAL BENEFITS TO PARTICIPANTS AND/OR TO SOCIETY

By participating in this study, students will be empowered by having their voices heard. They will have an opportunity to participate and provide input towards their education program. The findings will shed light on their school experiences and will lead to recommendations to the school and board of education for advancing their education programs. The findings from this research will also help in filling a gap in the education literature that lacks students' voice and the experiences of Syrian newcomer students in Canadian schools.

#### CONFIDENTIALITY

Any information that is obtained in connection with this study and that can be identified with your child will remain confidential. The written student questionnaire in this study is anonymous and cannot be linked to the in-person interviews. Each participant in the interview will have a corresponding pseudonym which will be used in the audio recording, data transcription, and any reports. Any reports will be written in grouped data. Your child's identity will not appear and will not be identifiable in any reports, publications, or presentations. However, it is important to mention that the only exception to revealing the identity of a child in this study is in the case where I have the duty to report – If I have reasonable grounds and information to suspect that a child needs protection.

All audio recordings will be saved in a password protected computer and will be deleted after data transcription and verification. Every participant has the right to review/edit the audio recording from his/her interview. The audio recording

will be made available to any participant who wishes to review/edit the recording. The researcher (myself) and my supervisor will be the only people with access to the audio recording. The audio recording will be used only for the purpose of this study and will be deleted after data transcription and verification. All data transcriptions from the interviews will be kept in a password protected computer and will be deleted five years from the time the study is complete.

## PARTICIPATION AND WITHDRAWAL

You can choose if you would like your child to participate in this study or not. If you choose not to have your child participate in this study, there are no consequences that will flow from that decision. If your child participates in this study, you have the right to withdraw your child at any time without any consequences. Your child can choose to not answer any questions he/she does not feel comfortable with during the interview and remain in the study without any consequences. Your child can also choose to not answer all questions and not be in the study without any consequences. Your child's participation is entirely voluntary. The researcher may withdraw your child from this research if circumstances arise which warrant doing so. Participants have the option of removing the interview data from the study at any time before the data is analyzed.

## FEEDBACK OF THE RESULTS OF THIS STUDY TO THE PARTICIPANTS

A summary report of the results, in a hard copy, will be made available to you and your child in August 2019. If you wish to have access online to the summary report and/or complete dissertation, the links will be shared with you to access the reports.

Date when results are available: August 2019.

## SUBSEQUENT USE OF DATA

These data may be used in subsequent studies, in publications, and in presentations.

## RIGHTS OF RESEARCH PARTICIPANTS

You may withdraw your child from this study and discontinue his/her participation at any time without any penalty or consequences. Once the interview data is analyzed, it will not be possible to withdraw the data from the study anymore. If you have questions regarding your rights or your child's rights as a research participant, contact: Research Ethics Coordinator, University of Windsor, Windsor, Ontario N9B 3P4; Telephone: 519-253-3000, ext. 3948; e-mail: [ethics@uwindsor.ca](mailto:ethics@uwindsor.ca)

## SIGNATURE OF RESEARCH PARTICIPANT/LEGAL REPRESENTATIVE

I understand the information provided for the study **An Investigation of the Experiences of Syrian Refugee Students in Canadian Elementary Schools: A Mixed-Methods Study** as described herein. My questions have been answered to my satisfaction, and I agree for my child to participate in this study. I have been given a copy of this form.

\_\_\_\_\_  
Name of Parent(s)/Guardian(s)

\_\_\_\_\_  
Signature of Parent(s)/Guardian(s)

\_\_\_\_\_  
Date

## SIGNATURE OF INVESTIGATOR

These are the terms under which I will conduct research.

\_\_\_\_\_  
Signature of Investigator

\_\_\_\_\_  
Date



University  
of Windsor

## رسالة موافقة على المشاركة في البحث (مقابلة الطالب)

### عنوان الدراسة: بحث في تجارب الطلاب السوريين اللاجئين في المدارس الابتدائية الكندية: دراسة بحث مندمج

ولدكم مدعو للمشاركة في دراسة بحثية يجريها محمد أيوب، طالب دكتوراه في التربية من كلية التربية في جامعة وندسور. وستساهم نتائج هذه الدراسة في أطروحة الدكتوراه. إذا كان لديكم أي أسئلة أو استفسارات حول البحث، فلا تترددوا في الاتصال بي:

### هدف الدراسة:

الغرض من هذه الدراسة هو البحث في تجارب الطلاب اللاجئين السوريين في المدارس العامة الابتدائية. سوف تستكشف هذه الدراسة تجارب الطلاب المتعلقة بما يلي: التعليم السابق، الاستيطان، التعلم، الخبرات الاجتماعية والثقافية، المناهج الدراسية الإضافية، ودعم العاملين. الهدف من وراء هذا البحث هو إعطاء فرصة للطلاب السوريين القادمين الجدد لإبداء رأيهم وتقديم تحسينات في برنامجهم التعليمي.

### إجراءات:

إذا تطوع ولدك للمشاركة في هذه الدراسة، فسوف يحتاج إلى إكمال مقابلة فردية. سوف تطرح المقابلة أسئلة حول تجارب ولدك الدراسية وسوف تستغرق حوالي ٦٠ دقيقة للإكمال وستكون ضمن مدرسة السبب للقادمين الجدد إلى كندا. يمكن للولد طلب حضور الأهل للمقابلة. سأجري المقابلة بنفسني وسيتم تسجيلها (صوتياً).

### المخاطر والإشكالات المحتملة:

لا نتوقع وجود مخاطر محتملة للمشاركين في هذه الدراسة. يمكن لولدك أن يتخطى أو لا يجيب على أي سؤال (أسئلة) لا يشعر بالراحة بالإجابة عنه. في حال وجود أي ضغوط غير متوقعة نتجت عن مشاركة ولدك في المقابلة، سيتم إرفاق قائمة من خدمات العمل الاجتماعي بهذه الرسالة كمورد مفيد لاستخدامه إذا لزم الأمر حصراً. كما أنني سأكون متاحاً لأي دعم تحتاجه.

### الفوائد المحتملة للمشاركين و/أو المجتمع:

ستننتج المشاركة في هذه الدراسة إلى تمكين الطلاب عبر إعطائهم فرصة للتعبير عن آرائهم. سيكون لديهم فرصة للمشاركة وإعطاء رأيهم في برنامجهم التعليمي. ستسلط النتائج الضوء على تجاربهم المدرسية وستؤدي إلى توصيات للمدرسة ومجلس التعليم لتطوير برنامجهم التعليمية. ستساعد نتائج هذا البحث أيضاً في سد الفجوة في الأدب التربوي التي تفتقر إلى صوت الطلاب وخبرات الطلاب السوريين من القادمين الجدد في المدارس الكندية.

### السرية:

تبقى أي معلومات يتم الحصول عليها فيما يتعلق بهذه الدراسة والتي يمكن ربطها بولدك سرية. استطلاع الطلاب في هذه الدراسة مجهول وبدون اسم ولا يمكن ربطه بالمقابلات الشخصية. كل مشارك سيكون له اسم مستعار سيستعمل في التسجيلات الصوتية، تسجيل البيانات، وكل التقارير. كل التقارير سيتم كتابتها في بيانات مجمعة. لن تظهر هوية ولدك ولن تكون قابلة للتعريف في أي تقارير، منشورات، أو عروض تقديمية. ومع ذلك، من المهم الإشارة إلى أن الاستثناء الوحيد للكشف عن هوية ولد في هذه الدراسة هو في الحالة التي يتوجب فيها علي الإبلاغ - إذا كان لدي أسباب ومعلومات تشير إلى أن الولد يحتاج إلى الحماية.

سيتم حفظ كل التسجيلات الصوتية في كومبيوتر مزود بكلمة مرور وسيتم حذفها بعد تدوين المعلومات والتحقق منها. لدى كل مشارك الحق في مراجعة وتغيير التسجيل الصوتي من المقابلة ولذلك سيكون التسجيل متوفرًا لفعل ذلك. يمكن فقط للباحث والمشرف الوصول إلى التسجيل الصوتي. سيتم استعمال التسجيل الصوتي لغرض هذا البحث فقط وسيحذف بعد تجميع البيانات والتحقق منها. كل المعلومات المدونة ستُحفظ في كومبيوتر مزود بكلمة مرور وسيتم محو المعلومات المدونة بعد خمس سنوات من تاريخ إكمال الدراسة.

#### **المشاركة والانسحاب:**

يمكنك اختيار ما إذا كنت ترغب في أن يشارك ولدك في هذه الدراسة أم لا. إذا اخترت عدم مشاركة ولدك، فلن تترتب على ذلك عواقب. إذا شارك ولدك في هذه الدراسة، فيحق لك سحب ولدك في أي وقت دون أي عواقب. يمكن لولدك أيضًا اختيار عدم الإجابة عن أي أسئلة لا يشعر بالراحة بالإجابة عنها أثناء المقابلة والبقاء في الدراسة في نفس الوقت دون أي عواقب. يمكن لولدك أيضًا اختيار عدم الإجابة عن جميع الأسئلة وعدم المشاركة في الدراسة دون أي عواقب. مشاركة ولدك طوعية بالكامل. يمكن للباحث سحب ولدك من هذا البحث إذا كانت هناك ظروف تبرر القيام بذلك. يمكن للمشاركين سحب بيانات المقابلة في أي وقت قبل تحليل البيانات.

#### **إطلاع نتائج هذه الدراسة للمشاركين:**

سيتم توفير تقرير موجز بالنتائج، في نسخة ورقية لك ولولدك في أغسطس 2019. إذا كنت ترغب في الوصول إلى التقرير الموجز و / أو الدراسة الكاملة عبر الإنترنت، فسيتم مشاركة الروابط معك للوصول إلى التقارير.

تاريخ توفر النتائج: أغسطس 2019.

#### **الاستخدام الفرعي للبيانات:**

يمكن استخدام هذه البيانات في دراسات لاحقة ومنشورات وعروض تقديمية.

#### **حقوق المشاركين في البحث:**

يمكنك سحب ولدك من الدراسة وإيقاف مشاركته في أي وقت من دون أي عواقب. لن يكون من الممكن سحب البيانات من الدراسة بعد تحليل البيانات. إذا كانت لديك أسئلة بخصوص حقوقك أو حقوق ولدك كمشارك في البحث، فاتصل بـ: منسق أخلاقيات البحث بجامعة وندسور، وندسور، أونتاريو

Tel: 519-253-3000 EXT: 3948 Email: [ethics@uwindsor.ca](mailto:ethics@uwindsor.ca)، N9B 3P4

#### **توقيع المشارك في البحث أو ولي الأمر:**

أنا على علم ودراية بالمعلومات الموفرة في هذه الدراسة بعنوان "بحث في تجارب الطلاب السوريين اللاجئين في المدارس الابتدائية الكندية: دراسة بحث مندمج". تم الإجابة عن أسئلتي بطريقة مقبولة وأوافق على مشاركة ولدي في هذه الدراسة. لقد تلقيت نسخة من هذا الملحق.

اسم الوالدة أو ولي الأمر

التاريخ

توقيع الوالدة أو ولي الأمر

#### **توقيع الباحث:**

هذه هي الشروط التي سأجري بموجبها البحث.

التاريخ

توقيع الباحث



## APPENDIX H



### **ASSENT TO PARTICIPATE IN RESEARCH ELEMENTARY SCHOOL CHILDREN (Student Interview)**

I am a student researcher from the University of Windsor, and I am doing a study on the experiences of Syrian refugee (newcomer) students. You are invited to be in the research by answering some questions about your school experiences.

#### **PURPOSE OF THE STUDY**

This study will look at Syrian refugee students in elementary schools. It will look at the students' learning, making friends at school, extra-curricular activities, and working with staff. It will give Syrian newcomer students a chance to talk to someone about their learning and school experiences.

#### **PROCEDURES**

If you would like to be in this research, you are invited to do an interview. The interview will ask questions about your school experiences. The interview will be at the Saturday school you attend and will take about 60 minutes. If you wish, you have the option to have your parent with you during the interview. The interview will be taped (just audio) and will be done by me.

#### **POSSIBLE RISKS**

There are no risks of harm to you expected from this study but just in case you feel sad or have any sad memories during the interview, I will share supports with you and your family to help you with your feelings and I can assist with arranging for the supports. Also, during the interview, you do not have to answer any questions you do not feel comfortable with.

#### **POSSIBLE BENEFITS TO YOU AND SOCIETY**

By doing the interview, your stories and opinions will be heard. When I am finished gathering all the information from the students, I will write a report on what I have learned. I will make suggestions to the schools for making your education even better. The report I write might be put in a book or journal but your name will never be mentioned and no one but my supervisor and I will know you chose to participate in this research.

#### **PRIVACY**

I will not be telling your teachers/volunteers or parents or any other children what you answered or that you participated in the study. My supervisor and I will be the only people who will be able to see your answers. You can choose a false name for yourself that will be used for this study, so no one knows your real name. This false name will be used in the interview that will be recorded. After the interview, I will listen to the recording and type your answers and then delete the recording. I will keep your answers that I type in a computer that has a password for five years after the study is done and then I will delete them. Your real name will not be in any reports or presentations. I want you to know that the only time I would tell your name to someone is if you tell me that someone has been hurting

you. If I think that you are in need of protection, I will need to tell your parents or someone else who can help you. Otherwise, I promise to keep everything that you tell me private.

### **PARTICIPATION**

You can choose if you would like to do the interview or not. If you do not wish to participate in this study, you do not have to participate, and you won't get into any trouble if you say no. If you decide to answer the questions you can stop answering them at any time without any consequences. You can choose to not answer any questions you do not feel comfortable with and remain in the study without any consequences. You can also choose to not answer all questions and not be in the study without any consequences. You also have the right to stop being in this study at any time and you won't get into any trouble. Your participation is entirely up to you. I want you to know that when I analyze the answers from the students it will not be possible any more to remove your answers from the study.

### **FEEDBACK OF THE RESULTS TO YOU**

When I finish this study, I will share a summary of the results with you. My goal is to have this summary to you by August 2019. If you wish to see the summary report or complete study report on the computer, the links will be shared with your parents.

### **USING THE DATA IN THE FUTURE**

The data from this study may be used in future studies, in reports that go in journals, and in presentations.

### **YOUR RIGHTS AS A RESEARCH PARTICIPANT**

You may stop being in this study at any time and you will not get into any trouble. When I analyze the answers from the students, I will not be able to remove your answers anymore from the study. If you have questions about your rights as a research participant, contact: Research Ethics Coordinator, University of Windsor, Windsor, Ontario N9B 3P4; Telephone: 519-253-3000, ext. 3948; e-mail: [ethics@uwindsor.ca](mailto:ethics@uwindsor.ca)

### **SIGNATURE OF STUDENT**

I understand what I am being asked to do to be in this study. Any questions I had have been answered and I agree to be in this study. I have been given a copy of this form.

\_\_\_\_\_  
Name of Student

\_\_\_\_\_  
Signature of Student

\_\_\_\_\_  
Witness

\_\_\_\_\_  
Date

\_\_\_\_\_  
Date

### **SIGNATURE OF RESEARCHER**

I will respect all the above information when I do this research.

\_\_\_\_\_  
Signature of Investigator

\_\_\_\_\_  
Date



University  
of Windsor

## رسالة موافقة على المشاركة في البحث طلاب المدارس الابتدائية (مقابلة الطالب)

أنا طالب باحث من جامعة وندسور أقوم بدراسة حول تجارب الطلاب السوريين (القادمين الجدد). أنت مدعو للمشاركة في البحث من خلال الإجابة على بعض الأسئلة حول تجاربك في المدرسة.

### هدف الدراسة:

الغرض من هذه الدراسة هو البحث في تجارب الطلاب اللاجئين السوريين في المدارس الابتدائية. سوف تبحث هذه الدراسة في تعلم الطلاب، وتكوين صداقات في المدرسة، والأنشطة الخارجية عن المناهج الدراسية، والعمل مع الموظفين. سوف يمنح الطلاب السوريين الجدد فرصة للتحدث مع الباحث حول تجاربهم التعليمية والمدرسية.

### إجراءات:

إذا تطوعت للمشاركة في هذه الدراسة، فسوف تحتاج إلى إكمال مقابلة فردية. سوف تتضمن المقابلة أسئلة حول تجاربك الدراسية في كندا. سوف تستغرق هذه المقابلة حوالي ٦٠ دقيقة للإكمال وستكون ضمن مدرسة السبت. إذا أردت يمكنك جلب أحد من أهلك لحضور المقابلة. سأجري المقابلة بنفسني وسيتم تسجيلها (صوتياً).

### المخاطر المحتملة:

لا نتوقع وجود مخاطر محتملة للمشاركين في هذه الدراسة ولكن إذا أحسست بالحزن أو راودتك ذكريات حزينة أثناء المقابلة سأشارك معك ومع أهلك موارد لمساعدتك بالتعامل مع مشاعرك وسأساعدكم بالوصول إليها. يمكنك أيضاً عدم الإجابة عن أسئلة لا تريد الإجابة عنها أثناء المقابلة.

### الفوائد المحتملة لك وللمجتمع:

عبر المشاركة في هذه المقابلة يمكنك مشاركة قصصك وآرائك معي. عندما أنتهي من جمع المعلومات من كل الطلاب، سأكتب تقرير بالذي تعلمته. سأشارك اقتراحاتي مع المدارس لجعل تعليمك أفضل. يمكن أن ينشر التقرير الذي سأكتبه في مجلة أو كتاب ولكن لن يرد اسمك في أي مكان ولن يعرف أحد بمشاركتك بالبحث غير مشرفي وأنا .

### السرية:

لن أخبر أساتذتك أو المتطوعين أو أهلك أو أي أولاد آخرين بما أجبت عنه أو أنك شاركت في الدراسة. سيكون مشرفي وأنا الأشخاص الوحيدين القادرين على رؤية إجاباتك. يمكنك اختيار اسم مستعار لك وسيتم استخدامه لهذه الدراسة، لذلك لا أحد سيعرف اسمك الحقيقي. سيتم استخدام هذا الاسم المستعار في المقابلة التي سيتم تسجيلها. بعد المقابلة، سوف أستمع إلى التسجيل وأكتب إجاباتك ثم احذف التسجيل. سأحتفظ بإجاباتك التي أكتبها في جهاز كمبيوتر به كلمة مرور لمدة خمس سنوات بعد الانتهاء من الدراسة وبعد ذلك سأحذفها. لن يكون اسمك الحقيقي في أي تقارير أو عروض تقديمية. أريدك أن تعرف أن المرة الوحيدة التي أخبر فيها اسمك لشخص ما هي إذا أخبرتني أن شخصاً ما كان يؤذيك. إذا كنت أعتقد أنك بحاجة إلى الحماية، فسوف أحتاج إلى إخبار والديك أو شخص آخر يمكنه مساعدتك. خلاف ذلك، أعذك بالاحتفاظ بكل شيء تخبرني به بسرية.

**المشاركة:**

يمكنك اختيار ما إذا كنت ترغب في أن تشارك في المقابلة أم لا. يمكنك أن ترفض المشاركة في هذه الدراسة ولا شيء سيحدث. يمكنك أيضًا اختيار عدم الإجابة عن أي أسئلة في أي وقت تريد من غير أية عواقب. يمكنك أيضًا عدم الإجابة عن أي أسئلة لا تريد الإجابة عنها والبقاء في الدراسة من غير أي عواقب. لديك أيضًا خيار عدم الإجابة عن كل الأسئلة وترك الدراسة كلها من غير عواقب. لديك أيضًا الحق في التوقف عن المشاركة في هذه الدراسة في أي وقت ولا شيء سيحدث. مشاركتك طوعية بالكامل. لكن أريدك أن تعلم أنه حين أحلل البيانات لن يمكنني سحب أجوبتك من الدراسة.

**اطلاّع على نتائج هذه الدراسة:**

عندما أنتهي من هذه الدراسة سأشارك خلاصة النتائج معك. هدفي هو مشاركة هذا الملخص معك في أغسطس ٢٠١٩. إذا كنت ترغب في الوصول إلى التقرير الموجز و / أو الدراسة الكاملة عبر الإنترنت، فسيتم مشاركة الروابط مع أهلك.

**استخدام البيانات في المستقبل:**

يمكن استخدام بيانات هذه الدراسة في دراسات مستقبلية ومنشورات وفي العروض التقديمية.

**حقوقك كمشارك في البحث:**

يمكنك الانسحاب من هذه الدراسة وإيقاف مشاركتك في أي وقت من غير أي عواقب. بمجرد تحليل الإجابات من الطلاب، لن أتمكن من إزالة إجاباتك من الدراسة. إذا كانت لديك أسئلة بخصوص حقوقك كمشارك في البحث، فاتصل بـ: منسق أخلاقيات البحث بجامعة وندسور، وندسور، أونتاريو

Tel: 519-253-3000 EXT: 3948; Email: [ethics@uwindsor.ca](mailto:ethics@uwindsor.ca) ; N9B 3P4

**توقيع الطالب:**

أنا أفهم ما يطلب مني القيام به لأكون في هذه الدراسة. تم الإجابة عن أسئلتي وأوافق على أن أكون في هذه الدراسة. لقد تلقيت نسخة من هذا الملحق.

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اسم الطالب

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التاريخ

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توقيع الطالب

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التاريخ

---

الشاهد

**توقيع الباحث:**

سأحترم جميع المعلومات الواردة في هذه الرسالة عندما أجري البحث.

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التاريخ

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توقيع الباحث

## APPENDIX I



**CONSENT FOR AUDIO RECORDING  
(Student Interview)**

Student Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Title of the Project: **An Investigation of the Experiences of Syrian Refugee Students in Canadian Elementary Schools: A Mixed-Methods Study**

I consent to the audio recording of the interview with my child.

I understand that this is a voluntary procedure and that I am free to withdraw my child at any time by requesting that the audio recording be stopped. I also understand that my child's name will not be revealed to anyone and that audio recording will be kept confidential.

Digital audio recordings will be deleted after the data is transcribed and verified.

I understand that confidentiality will be respected and that the audio recordings will be for professional use only.

This research has been cleared by the University of Windsor Research Ethics Board.

\_\_\_\_\_  
Name of Parent(s)/Guardian(s)

\_\_\_\_\_  
Signature of Parent(s)/Guardian(s)

\_\_\_\_\_  
Date

I understand that this is a voluntary procedure and I do not have to agree to audiotaping of my interview unless that is something I wish to happen. I understand also that I am therefore free by myself, as a child, to withdraw at any time by asking that the audio recording be stopped and there will be no consequences for me.

\_\_\_\_\_  
Signature of Student Participant

\_\_\_\_\_  
Date



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## رسالة موافقة للتسجيل الصوتي (مقابلة الطالب)

اسم الطالب: \_\_\_\_\_

عنوان الدراسة: بحث في تجارب الطلاب السوريين اللاجئين في المدارس الابتدائية الكندية: دراسة بحث مندمج

أوافق على التسجيل الصوتي للمقابلة مع ولدي.

أدرك أن هذا إجراء تطوعي وأنني حر في سحب ولدي في أي وقت ويمكنني طلب إيقاف التسجيل الصوتي. أنني على دراية أيضاً أن اسم ولدي لن يتم الكشف عنه لأي شخص وأن التسجيل الصوتي سيظل سرّياً. سيتم ترقيم ملفات التسجيلات الصوتية وحفظها في جهاز كمبيوتر محمي بكلمة مرور.

سيتم حذف التسجيلات الصوتية الرقمية بعد نسخ البيانات والتحقق منها.

أدرك أنه سيتم احترام السرية وأن التسجيلات الصوتية ستكون للاستخدام المهني فقط.

تمت الموافقة على هذا البحث من قبل مجلس أخلاقيات البحوث بجامعة وندسور.

اسم الوالدة أو ولي الأمر

التاريخ

توقيع الوالدة أو ولي الأمر

أدرك أن هذا إجراء تطوعي وليس من الضروري أن أوافق على التسجيل الصوتي للمقابلة إلا إذا كان هذا أمراً أرغب في حدوثه. أفهم أيضاً أن عندي كامل الحرية، كولد، في الانسحاب في أي وقت من المقابلة عبر الطلب بإيقاف التسجيل الصوتي ولن تكون هناك عواقب بالنسبة لي.

التاريخ

توقيع الطالب المشارك

## APPENDIX J



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### PARENT INTERVIEW PROTOCOL

#### SEMI-STRUCTURED ONE-ON-ONE INTERVIEW

RESEARCHER: MOHAMAD AYOUB

#### An Investigation of the Experiences of Syrian Refugee Students in Canadian Elementary Schools: A Mixed-Methods Study

Interview number: \_\_\_\_\_ Interview date: \_\_\_\_\_ Interview location: \_\_\_\_\_

Interview start time: \_\_\_\_\_ Interview end time: \_\_\_\_\_ Interview Length (minutes): \_\_\_\_\_

Parent name: \_\_\_\_\_ Preferred Pseudonym: \_\_\_\_\_

#### Background

1. How long have you been in Canada?
2. What language do you speak with your child(ren) at home?
3. What is your highest level of education completed? (elementary/secondary/post-secondary)
4. Tell me about your child(ren)'s school experiences before coming to Canada.
5. Tell me about your experience with your child starting school in Canada. Any challenges?

#### Communication with Teachers

6. Do you communicate with your child's teacher about his/her learning or any school related matters?
7. What do you do when you need to communicate with your child's teacher?
8. What have been the challenges with school communication?
9. What is the most effective way for you to communicate with your child's teacher? (phone conversation, meeting, online communication)

#### Attending School Events

10. Do you attend parent-educator interviews?
11. Do you attend parent engagement events at school (e.g., Math event, Language event, school assemblies, etc.)? Why yes or no?
12. Do you take part in school council?
13. What are the successes with school involvement? Challenges?
14. Do you feel Syrian newcomer parents are treated fairly and welcomed at school? How?
15. What do you think helps Syrian newcomer parents with school involvement?


#### Home Support

16. Do you discuss with your child his/her school experiences when they go home from school?
17. When homework is assigned, does your child complete it? Please explain.
18. Are you able to help your child with his/her homework or assignments at home?
19. What suggestions do you have for making homework more effective for your child?
20. How do you know when your child needs help or is struggling with his/her learning?
21. When your child needs help with his/her learning, what do you do?
22. What are the successes with supporting your child(ren)? Challenges?
23. What helps you in supporting your child with his/her learning?

24. Does your child(ren) participate in extra-curricular activities after school when he/she goes home? (soccer, basketball, swimming, etc.)? If yes, what activities? How often?

**Your Advice**

25. What advice do you have for teachers and school staff to help Syrian newcomer students?  
26. What advice do you have for other students to help Syrian newcomer students?  
27. What advice do you have for Syrian newcomer students new to Canada to be successful?  
28. What advice do you have for Syrian newcomer parents new to Canada to be successful with school involvement?  
29. What are your future goals and aspirations for your child?  
30. Is there anything else would you like to add?

 **Thank you very much for your time and sharing your experiences with school involvement and supporting your child with learning. Your voice is very important, and your answers will be helpful to this research. Your answers are confidential, and your name will not appear anywhere. In the final report, publications, or presentations, it will not be possible for anyone to know who shared the information.**





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of Windsor

### بروتوكول مقابلة الأهل

#### مقابلة فردية شبه منظمة

الباحث: محمد أيوب

#### بحث في تجارب الطلاب السوريين اللاجئين في المدارس الابتدائية الكندية: دراسة بحث مندمج

رقم المقابلة: \_\_\_\_\_ تاريخ المقابلة: \_\_\_\_\_ مكان المقابلة: \_\_\_\_\_  
ساعة بدأ المقابلة: \_\_\_\_\_ ساعة انتهاء المقابلة: \_\_\_\_\_ مدة المقابلة (دقائق): \_\_\_\_\_  
اسم الوالدة أو ولي الأمر: \_\_\_\_\_ اسم مستعار مفضل: \_\_\_\_\_

#### الخلفية

1. متى أتيت إلى كندا؟
2. ما هي اللغة التي تتحدث بها مع ولدك (أطفالك) في المنزل؟
3. ما هو أعلى مستوى تعليمي وصلت إليه؟ (الابتدائي / الثانوي / ما بعد الثانوية)
4. أخبرني عن تجارب ولدك (أطفالك) المدرسية قبل المجيء إلى كندا.
5. أخبرني عن تجربتك مع ولدك في بدء الدراسة في كندا. هل واجهت أي تحديات؟

#### التواصل مع المعلمين

6. هل تتواصل مع معلم ولدك حول تعليمه أو أي أمور متعلقة بالمدرسة؟
7. ماذا تفعل عندما تحتاج إلى التواصل مع معلم ولدك؟
8. ما هي تحديات التواصل مع المدرسة؟
9. ما هي الطريقة الأكثر فاعلية للتواصل مع معلم ولدك؟ (هاتف، اجتماع، تواصل عبر الإنترنت)

#### حضور المناسبات المدرسية

10. هل تحضر المقابلات بين الأهل والمعلمين؟
11. هل تحضر أحداث مشاركة الأهل في المدرسة (على سبيل المثال، حدث الرياضيات، حدث اللغة، المدرسة الجمعيات، وما إلى ذلك)؟ لماذا نعم أم لا؟
12. هل تشارك في مجلس المدرسة؟
13. ما هي النجاحات في مشاركتك بالأحداث المدرسية؟ التحديات؟
14. هل تشعر أن أولياء الأمور السوريين الجدد يعاملون معاملة عادلة ويتم الترحيب بهم في المدرسة؟ كيف؟
15. برأيك، ماذا يمكن أن يساعد الأهل السوريين الجدد على المشاركة في الأحداث المدرسية؟

#### الدعم المنزلي

16. هل تناقش مع ولدك تجاربه المدرسية عندما يعود من المدرسة؟
17. هل ينجز ولدك الواجبات المدرسية المعطاة له؟ يرجى التوضيح.

18. هل تستطيع مساعدة ولدك في أداء واجباته المنزلية؟
19. هل لديكم اقتراحات لجعل الواجبات المنزلية أكثر فعالية لولدك؟
20. كيف تعرف متى يحتاج ولدك إلى مساعدة أو يواجه صعوبة في تعلمه؟
21. ماذا تفعل حين يحتاج ولدك للمساعدة في تعليمه؟
22. ما هي النجاحات أو التحديات في دعم ولدك (أولادك)؟
23. ماذا يمكن أن يساعدك في دعم ولدك في تعليمه؟
24. هل يشارك ولدك (أولادك) في أنشطة خارج المناهج الدراسية بعد الذهاب إلى المدرسة؟ (كرة القدم، كرة السلة، السباحة، إلخ)؟ إذا كانت الإجابة بنعم، ما هي الأنشطة؟ كم مرة؟

### نصائحكم

25. ما النصيحة التي تقدمها للمعلمين وموظفي المدارس لمساعدة الطلاب السوريين من القادمين الجدد؟
26. ما النصيحة التي تقدمها للطلاب الآخرين لمساعدة الطلاب السوريين من القادمين الجدد؟
27. ما النصيحة التي تقدمها للطلاب السوريين الجدد في كندا للنجاح؟
28. ما هي النصيحة التي تقدمها للآباء والأمهات السوريين من القادمين الجدد إلى كندا ليكونوا ناجحين في المشاركة المدرسية؟
29. ما هي أهدافك وتطلعاتك المستقبلية لولدك؟
30. هل هناك أي شيء آخر تود إضافته؟

شكرًا جزيلاً لوقتكم وعلى اطلاعنا على تجاربكم مع المشاركة المدرسية ودعم طفلك في التعلم. رأيك مهم جدًا وستكون إجاباتكم مفيدة لهذا البحث. ستكون إجاباتكم سرية ولن يظهر اسمك في أي مكان. لن يكون من الممكن لأي شخص معرفة من شارك المعلومات سواء في التقرير النهائي أو المنشورات أو العروض التقديمية.

## APPENDIX K



### Letter of Invitation to Participate in Research

#### Parent Interview

Dear Parent/Guardian,

I am writing to invite you to participate in a research study conducted by me, Mohamad Ayoub, a PhD in education candidate, from the Faculty of Education at the University of Windsor. The title of the study is: **An Investigation of the Experiences of Syrian Refugee Students in Canadian Elementary Schools: A Mixed-Methods Study**. The results from this study will be contributed to the PhD in education dissertation.

The purpose of this study is to investigate the experiences of Syrian refugee students in elementary public schools. This study will explore the students' experiences related to prior schooling, settlement, learning, socio-cultural experiences, extra-curriculars, and staff support. The goal is to provide Syrian newcomer students with an opportunity to have their voices heard and give Syrian newcomer parents an opportunity to share about their experiences with participation in their child's education in Canada.

If you volunteer to participate in this study, you will be invited to participate in a semi-structured one-on-one interview. The interview will ask questions about your experiences with participation in your child's education in Canada. It will take about 60 minutes to complete. The interview will be completed during the Saturday program your child attends. The interview will be audio recorded and will be conducted by me.

Any information obtained in this study and that can be identified with you will remain confidential. All audio recordings will be deleted once the data is transcribed and verified. All data transcriptions will be kept in a password protected computer with access only to me and my supervisor and will be deleted after five years of completing the study. Your identity will not appear and will not be identifiable in any reports, publication, or presentations.

You can choose if you would like to participate in this study or not. If you participate in this study, you have the right to withdraw your participation at any time without any consequences. You can also choose to not answer any questions you do not feel comfortable with and remain in the study. Participants have the option of removing the data from the study at any time before the data analysis is complete.

Thank you for considering participation in this study. If you have any questions or concerns about the research, please feel free to contact me:



University  
of Windsor

## رسالة دعوة للمشاركة في البحث

### مقابلة الأهل

حضرة الأهل/أولياء الأمر الكرام،

أنتم مدعوون للمشاركة في دراسة بحثية يجريها محمد أيوب، طالب دكتوراه في التربية من كلية التربية في جامعة وندسور. وستساهم نتائج هذه الدراسة في أطروحة الدكتوراه بعنوان: **بحث في تجارب الطلاب السوريين اللاجئين في المدارس الابتدائية الكندية: دراسة بحث مندمج.**

الغرض من هذه الدراسة هو البحث في تجارب الطلاب اللاجئين السوريين في المدارس العامة الابتدائية. سوف تستكشف هذه الدراسة تجارب الطلاب المتعلقة بما يلي: التعليم السابق، الاستيطان، التعلم، الخبرات الاجتماعية والثقافية، المناهج الدراسية الإضافية، ودعم الموظفين. الهدف هو تزويد الطلاب السوريين الجدد بفرصة لسماع أصواتهم وتقديم تحسينات في برنامجهم التعليمي.

إذا تطوعت للمشاركة في هذه الدراسة، فستتم دعوتك للمشاركة في مقابلة فردية شبه منظمة. سوف تطرح المقابلة أسئلة حول تجاربك مع تعليم ولدك في المدرسة في كندا. سوف تستغرق المقابلة حوالي 60 دقيقة للإكمال. ستتم المقابلة خلال برنامج السبت الذي يحضره ولدك. سيتم تسجيل المقابلة صوتياً وسيتم إجراؤها بواسطة.

سيتم حفظ كل المعلومات المجموعة من هذه الدراسة والمتعلقة بك بسرية تامة. ستُحصى كل التسجيلات الصوتية بعد تدوين والتحقق من المعلومات. كل المعلومات المدونة ستُحفظ في كومبيوتر مزود بكلمة مرور يملكها المشرف على الدراسة وأنا. وسيتم محو المعلومات المدونة بعد خمس سنوات من تاريخ إكمال الدراسة. لن تظهر هويتك ولن تكون قابلة للتعريف في أي تقارير أو منشورات أو عروض تقديمية.

يمكنك اختيار ما إذا كنت ترغب في أن تشارك في هذه الدراسة أم لا. إذا اخترت عدم المشاركة فلن تترتب على ذلك عواقب. إذا شاركت في هذه الدراسة، فيحق لك سحب مشاركتك في أي وقت قبل تقديم الاستطلاع دون أي عواقب. يمكنك أيضاً اختيار عدم الإجابة عن أي أسئلة لا تشعر بالراحة بالإجابة عنها والبقاء في الدراسة في نفس الوقت. يحق للمشاركة سحب البيانات في أي وقت قبل انتهاء تحليل البيانات.

شكراً لكم على أخذ المشاركة في هذا البحث بعين الاعتبار. إذا كان لديكم أي أسئلة الرجاء الاتصال بي:

## APPENDIX L



### LETTER OF INFORMATION FOR CONSENT TO PARTICIPATE IN RESEARCH (Parent Interview)

Title of Study: **An Investigation of the Experiences of Syrian Refugee Students in Canadian Elementary Schools: A Mixed-Methods Study**

You are invited to participate in a research study conducted by me, Mohamad Ayoub, a PhD in education candidate, from the Faculty of Education at the University of Windsor. The results from this study will be contributed to the PhD in education dissertation.

If you have any questions or concerns about the research, please feel free to contact me:

#### PURPOSE OF THE STUDY

The purpose of this study is to investigate the experiences of Syrian refugee students in elementary public schools. This study will explore the students' experiences related to prior schooling, settlement, learning, socio-cultural experiences, extra-curriculars, and staff support. The goal is to provide Syrian newcomer students with an opportunity to have their voices heard and give Syrian newcomer parents an opportunity to share about their experiences with participation in their child's education in Canada.

#### PROCEDURES

If you volunteer to participate in this study, you will be invited to participate in a semi-structured one-on-one interview. The interview will ask questions about your experiences with participation in your child's education in Canada. It will take approximately 60 minutes to complete. The interview will be completed during the Saturday school program your child attends. The interview will be audio recorded and will be conducted by me.

#### POTENTIAL RISKS AND DISCOMFORTS

There are no potential anticipated risks to participants. You may skip or not answer any question(s) you do not feel comfortable with. In case there is any unanticipated stress caused to you from participating in the interview, a list of social work services will be attached to this letter as a useful resource. These resources are only provided in case they are needed, and I can assist with them.

#### POTENTIAL BENEFITS TO PARTICIPANTS AND/OR TO SOCIETY

By participating in this study, parents will have an opportunity to share their experiences about their participation in their child's education. By participating in this study, students will be empowered by having their voices heard. Students will have an opportunity to participate and provide input towards their education program. The findings will shed light on the students' school experiences and will lead to recommendations to the school and board of education for advancing their education programs. The findings from this research will also help in filling a gap in the education literature that lacks students' voice and the experiences of Syrian newcomer students in Canadian schools.

#### CONFIDENTIALITY

Any information that is obtained in connection with this study and that can be identified with you will remain confidential. Each participant in the interview will have a corresponding pseudonym which will be used in the audio recording, data transcription, and any reports. Any reports will be written in grouped data. Your identity will not appear and will not be identifiable in any reports, publications, or presentations.

All audio recordings will be saved in a password protected computer and will be deleted after data transcription and verification. Every participant has the right to review/edit the audio recording from his/her interview. The audio recording

will be made available to any participant who wishes to review/edit the recording. The researcher (myself) and my supervisor will be the only people with access to the audio recording. The audio recording will be used only for the purpose of this study and will be deleted after data transcription and verification. All data transcriptions from the interviews will be kept in a password protected computer and will be deleted five years from the time the study is complete.

## **PARTICIPATION AND WITHDRAWAL**

You can choose if you would like to participate in this study or not. If you choose not to participate in this study, there are no consequences that will flow from that decision. If you participate in this study, you have the right to withdraw your participation at any time without any consequences. You can choose to not answer any questions you do not feel comfortable with during the interview and remain in the study without any consequences. You can also choose to not answer all questions and not be in the study without any consequences. Your participation is entirely voluntary. The researcher may withdraw your participation from this research if circumstances arise which warrant doing so. Participants have the option of removing the interview data from the study at any time before the data is analyzed.

## **FEEDBACK OF THE RESULTS OF THIS STUDY TO THE PARTICIPANTS**

A summary report of the results, in a hard copy, will be made available to you in August 2019. If you wish to have access online to the summary report and/or complete dissertation, the links will be shared with you to access the reports.

Date when results are available: August 2019.

## **SUBSEQUENT USE OF DATA**

These data may be used in subsequent studies, in publications, and in presentations.

## **RIGHTS OF RESEARCH PARTICIPANTS**

You may withdraw from this study and discontinue participation at any time without any penalty or consequences. Once the interview data is analyzed, it will not be possible to withdraw the data from the study anymore. If you have questions regarding your rights as a research participant, contact: Research Ethics Coordinator, University of Windsor, Windsor, Ontario N9B 3P4; Telephone: 519-253-3000, ext. 3948; e-mail: [ethics@uwindsor.ca](mailto:ethics@uwindsor.ca)

## **SIGNATURE OF INVESTIGATOR**

These are the terms under which I will conduct research.

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Signature of Investigator

---

Date



University  
of Windsor

## رسالة معلومات للموافقة على المشاركة في البحث

### (مقابلة الأهل)

عنوان الدراسة: بحث في تجارب الطلاب السوريين اللاجئين في المدارس الابتدائية الكندية: دراسة بحث مندمج

أنتم مدعوون للمشاركة في دراسة بحثية يجريها محمد أيوب، طالب دكتوراه في التربية من كلية التربية في جامعة وندسور. وستساهم نتائج هذه الدراسة في أطروحة الدكتوراه في التربية. إذا كان لديكم أي أسئلة أو استفسارات حول البحث، فلا تترددوا بالاتصال بي:

#### هدف الدراسة:

الغرض من هذه الدراسة هو البحث في تجارب الطلاب اللاجئين السوريين في المدارس العامة الابتدائية. سوف تستكشف هذه الدراسة تجارب الطلاب المتعلقة بما يلي: التعليم السابق، الاستيطان، التعلم، الخبرات الاجتماعية والثقافية، المناهج الدراسية الإضافية، ودعم العاملين. الهدف من وراء هذا البحث هو إعطاء فرصة للطلاب السوريين القادمين الجدد لإبداء رأيهم كما أنها تهدف لإعطاء الأهل فرصة لمشاركة تجاربهم مع تعليم ولدهم في كندا ومساهماتهم فيها.

#### إجراءات:

إذا تطوعت للمشاركة في هذه الدراسة، فسوف تحتاج إلى إكمال مقابلة فردية. سوف تتضمن المقابلة أسئلة حول تجارب ولدك الدراسية في كندا ومساهمته فيها. سوف تستغرق هذه المقابلة حوالي ٦٠ دقيقة للإكمال وستكون ضمن مدرسة السبب التي يحضرها ولدك. سأجري المقابلة بنفسني وسيتم تسجيلها.

#### المخاطر والإشكالات المحتملة:

لا نتوقع وجود مخاطر محتملة للمشاركين في هذه الدراسة. يمكنك عدم الإجابة على أي سؤال (أسئلة) لا تشعر بالراحة بالإجابة عنها. في حال وجود أي ضغوط غير متوقعة نتجت عن مشاركتك في المقابلة، سيتم إرفاق قائمة من خدمات العمل الاجتماعي بهذه الرسالة كمورد مفيد لاستخدامه إذا لزم الأمر حصراً. كما أنني سأكون متاحاً لأي دعم تحتاجه.

#### الفوائد المحتملة للمشاركين و/أو المجتمع:

ستتيح المشاركة في هذه الدراسة إلى تمكين الأهل عبر إعطائهم فرصة للتعبير عن آرائهم. سيكون لديهم فرصة للمشاركة وإعطاء رأيهم في برنامج أولادهم التعليمي. كما ستتيح تمكين الطلاب من خلال إعطاء رأيهم ببرنامجهم التعليمي واقتراح تغييرات وتحسينات. ستسلط النتائج الضوء على تجارب الطلاب المدرسية وستؤدي إلى توصيات للمدرسة ومجلس التعليم لتطوير برامجهم التعليمية. ستساعد نتائج هذا البحث أيضاً في سد الفجوة في الأدب التربوي التي تفتقر إلى صوت وخبرات الطلاب السوريين من القادمين الجدد في المدارس الكندية.

#### السرية:

تبقى أي معلومات يتم الحصول عليها فيما يتعلق بهذه الدراسة والتي يمكن ربطها بك سرية. كل مشارك سيكون له اسم مستعار سيسعمل في التسجيلات الصوتية، تسجيل البيانات، وكل التقارير. كل التقارير سيتم كتابتها في بيانات مجمعة. لن تظهر هويتك في أي تقارير، منشورات، أو عروض تقديمية.

سيتم حفظ كل التسجيلات الصوتية في كومبيوتر مزود بكلمة مرور وسيتم حذفها بعد تدوين المعلومات والتحقق منها. لدى كل مشارك الحق في مراجعة وتغيير التسجيل الصوتي من المقابلة ولذلك سيكون التسجيل متوفراً لفعل ذلك. يمكن فقط للباحث

والمشرف الوصول إلى التسجيل الصوتي. سيتم استعمال التسجيل الصوتي لغرض هذا البحث فقط وسيحذف بعد تجميع البيانات والتحقق منها. كل المعلومات المدونة ستُحفظ في كومبيوتر مزوّد بكلمة مرور وسيتم محو المعلومات المدونة بعد خمس سنوات من تاريخ إكمال الدراسة.

#### المشاركة والانسحاب:

يمكنك اختيار ما إذا كنت ترغب في أن تشارك في هذه الدراسة أم لا. إذا اخترت عدم المشاركة، فلن نترتب على هذا القرار أية عواقب. إذا شاركت في هذه الدراسة، فيحق لك سحب موافقتك في أي وقت دون أي عواقب. يمكنك أيضاً اختيار عدم الإجابة عن أي أسئلة لا تشعر بالراحة بالإجابة عنها في المقابلة والبقاء في الدراسة في نفس الوقت. يمكنك أيضاً ترك الإجابة عن كل الأسئلة أو ترك الدراسة بأكملها من غير أي عواقب. مشاركتك طوعية بالكامل. يمكن للباحث وقف مشاركتك في هذا البحث إذا كانت هناك ظروف تبرر القيام بذلك. لدى المشاركين الحق بسحب بيانات المقابلة في أي وقت قبل تحليلها.

#### إطلاع نتائج هذه الدراسة للمشاركين:

سيتم توفير تقرير موجز بالنتائج، في نسخة ورقية لك في أغسطس 2019. إذا كنت ترغب في الوصول إلى التقرير الموجز و / أو الدراسة الكاملة عبر الإنترنت، فسيتم مشاركة الروابط معك للوصول إلى التقارير. تاريخ توفر النتائج: أغسطس 2019 .

#### الاستخدام الفرعي للبيانات:

يمكن استخدام هذه البيانات في دراسات لاحقة ومنشورات وعروض تقديمية.

#### حقوق المشاركين في البحث:

يمكنك الانسحاب من هذه الدراسة وإيقاف مشاركتك في أي وقت من غير أي عقوبة أو عواقب. بمجرد تحليل بيانات المقابلة، لن يكون من الممكن سحب البيانات من الدراسة بعد ذلك. إذا كانت لديك أسئلة بخصوص حقوقك كمشارك في البحث، فاتصل بـ: منسق أخلاقيات البحث بجامعة وندسور، وندسور، أونتاريو

Tel: 519-253-3000 EXT: 3948 Email: [ethics@uwindsor.ca](mailto:ethics@uwindsor.ca)؛ N9B 3P4

#### توقيع الباحث:

هذه هي الشروط التي سأجري بموجبها البحث.

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التاريخ

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توقيع الباحث



## APPENDIX M



### CONSENT TO PARTICIPATE IN RESEARCH (Parent Interview)

Title of Study: **An Investigation of the Experiences of Syrian Refugee Students in Canadian Elementary Schools: A Mixed-Methods Study**

You are invited to participate in a research study conducted by me, Mohamad Ayoub, a PhD in education candidate, from the Faculty of Education at the University of Windsor. The results from this study will be contributed to the PhD in education dissertation.

If you have any questions or concerns about the research, please feel free to contact me:

#### PURPOSE OF THE STUDY

The purpose of this study is to investigate the experiences of Syrian refugee students in elementary public schools. This study will explore the students' experiences related to prior schooling, settlement, learning, socio-cultural experiences, extra-curriculars, and staff support. The goal is to provide Syrian newcomer students with an opportunity to have their voices heard and give Syrian newcomer parents an opportunity to share about their experiences with participation in their child's education in Canada.

#### PROCEDURES

If you volunteer to participate in this study, you will be invited to participate in a semi-structured one-on-one interview. The interview will ask questions about your experiences with participation in your child's education in Canada. It will take approximately 60 minutes to complete. The interview will be completed during the Saturday school program your child attends. The interview will be audio recorded and will be conducted by me.

#### POTENTIAL RISKS AND DISCOMFORTS

There are no potential anticipated risks to participants. You may skip or not answer any question(s) you do not feel comfortable with. In case there is any unanticipated stress caused to you from participating in the interview, a list of social work services will be attached to this letter as a useful resource. These resources are only provided in case they are needed, and I can assist with them.

#### POTENTIAL BENEFITS TO PARTICIPANTS AND/OR TO SOCIETY

By participating in this study, parents will have an opportunity to share their experiences about their participation in their child's education. By participating in this study, students will be empowered by having their voices heard. Students will have an opportunity to participate and provide input towards their education program. The findings will shed light on the students' school experiences and will lead to recommendations to the school and board of education for advancing their education programs. The findings from this research will also help in filling a gap in the education literature that lacks students' voice and the experiences of Syrian newcomer students in Canadian schools.

#### CONFIDENTIALITY

Any information that is obtained in connection with this study and that can be identified with you will remain confidential. Each participant in the interview will have a corresponding pseudonym which will be used in the audio recording, data transcription, and any reports. Any reports will be written in grouped data. Your identity will not appear and will not be identifiable in any reports, publications, or presentations.

All audio recordings will be saved in a password protected computer and will be deleted after data transcription and verification. Every participant has the right to review/edit the audio recording from his/her interview. The audio recording will be made available to any participant who wishes to review/edit the recording. The researcher (myself) and my supervisor will be the only people with access to the audio recording. The audio recording will be used only for the

purpose of this study and will be deleted after data transcription and verification. All data transcriptions from the interviews will be kept in a password protected computer and will be deleted five years from the time the study is complete.

## PARTICIPATION AND WITHDRAWAL

You can choose if you would like to participate in this study or not. If you choose not to participate in this study, there are no consequences that will flow from that decision. If you participate in this study, you have the right to withdraw your participation at any time without any consequences. You can choose to not answer any questions you do not feel comfortable with during the interview and remain in the study without any consequences. You can also choose to not answer all questions and not be in the study without any consequences. Your participation is entirely voluntary. The researcher may withdraw your participation from this research if circumstances arise which warrant doing so. Participants have the option of removing the interview data from the study at any time before the data is analyzed.

## FEEDBACK OF THE RESULTS OF THIS STUDY TO THE PARTICIPANTS

A summary report of the results, in a hard copy, will be made available to you in August 2019. If you wish to have access online to the summary report and/or complete dissertation, the links will be shared with you to access the reports.

Date when results are available: August 2019.

## SUBSEQUENT USE OF DATA

These data may be used in subsequent studies, in publications, and in presentations.

## RIGHTS OF RESEARCH PARTICIPANTS

You may withdraw from this study and discontinue participation at any time without any penalty or consequences. Once the interview data is analyzed, it will not be possible to withdraw the data from the study anymore. If you have questions regarding your rights as a research participant, contact: Research Ethics Coordinator, University of Windsor, Windsor, Ontario N9B 3P4; Telephone: 519-253-3000, ext. 3948; e-mail: [ethics@uwindsor.ca](mailto:ethics@uwindsor.ca)

## SIGNATURE OF RESEARCH PARTICIPANT

I understand the information provided for the study **An Investigation of the Experiences of Syrian Refugee Students in Canadian Elementary Schools: A Mixed-Methods Study** as described herein. My questions have been answered to my satisfaction, and I agree to participate in this study. I have been given a copy of this form.

\_\_\_\_\_  
Name of Parent/Guardian

\_\_\_\_\_  
Signature of Parent/Guardian

\_\_\_\_\_  
Date

## SIGNATURE OF INVESTIGATOR

These are the terms under which I will conduct research.

\_\_\_\_\_  
Signature of Investigator

\_\_\_\_\_  
Date



University  
of Windsor

## رسالة موافقة على المشاركة في البحث

### (مقابلة الأهل)

عنوان الدراسة: بحث في تجارب الطلاب السوريين اللاجئين في المدارس الابتدائية الكندية: دراسة بحث مندمج

أنتم مدعوون للمشاركة في دراسة بحثية يجريها محمد أيوب، طالب دكتوراه في التربية من كلية التربية في جامعة وندسور. وستساهم نتائج هذه الدراسة في أطروحة الدكتوراه في التربية. إذا كان لديكم أي أسئلة أو استفسارات حول البحث، فلا تترددوا بالاتصال بي:

#### هدف الدراسة:

الغرض من هذه الدراسة هو البحث في تجارب الطلاب اللاجئين السوريين في المدارس العامة الابتدائية. سوف تستكشف هذه الدراسة تجارب الطلاب المتعلقة بما يلي: التعليم السابق، الاستيطان، التعلم، الخبرات الاجتماعية والثقافية، المناهج الدراسية الإضافية، ودعم العاملين. الهدف من وراء هذا البحث هو إعطاء فرصة للطلاب السوريين القادمين الجدد لإبداء رأيهم كما أنها تهدف لإعطاء الأهل فرصة لمشاركة تجاربهم مع تعليم ولدهم في كندا ومساهماتهم فيها.

#### إجراءات:

إذا تطوعت للمشاركة في هذه الدراسة، فسوف تحتاج إلى إكمال مقابلة فردية. سوف تتضمن المقابلة أسئلة حول تجارب ولدك الدراسية في كندا ومساهمته فيها. سوف تستغرق هذه المقابلة حوالي ٦٠ دقيقة للإكمال وستكون ضمن مدرسة السبب التي يحضرها ولدك. سأجري المقابلة بنفسني وسيتم تسجيلها.

#### المخاطر والإشكالات المحتملة:

لا نتوقع وجود مخاطر محتملة للمشاركين في هذه الدراسة. يمكنك عدم الإجابة على أي سؤال (أسئلة) لا تشعر بالراحة بالإجابة عنها. في حال وجود أي ضغوط غير متوقعة نتجت عن مشاركتك في المقابلة، سيتم إرفاق قائمة من خدمات العمل الاجتماعي بهذه الرسالة كمورد مفيد لاستخدامه إذا لزم الأمر حصراً. كما أنني سأكون متاحاً لأي دعم تحتاجه.

#### الفوائد المحتملة للمشاركين و/أو المجتمع:

ستتيح المشاركة في هذه الدراسة إلى تمكين الأهل عبر إعطائهم فرصة للتعبير عن آرائهم. سيكون لديهم فرصة للمشاركة وإعطاء رأيهم في برنامج أولادهم التعليمي. كما ستتيح تمكين الطلاب من خلال إعطاء رأيهم ببرنامجهم التعليمي واقتراح تغييرات وتحسينات. ستسلط النتائج الضوء على تجارب الطلاب المدرسية وستؤدي إلى توصيات للمدرسة ومجلس التعليم لتطوير برامجهم التعليمية. ستساعد نتائج هذا البحث أيضاً في سد الفجوة في الأدب التربوي التي تفتقر إلى صوت وخبرات الطلاب السوريين من القادمين الجدد في المدارس الكندية.

#### السرية:

تبقى أي معلومات يتم الحصول عليها فيما يتعلق بهذه الدراسة والتي يمكن ربطها بك سرية. كل مشارك سيكون له اسم مستعار سيسعمل في التسجيلات الصوتية، تسجيل البيانات، وكل التقارير. كل التقارير سيتم كتابتها في بيانات مجمعة. لن تظهر هويتك في أي تقارير، منشورات، أو عروض تقديمية.

سيتم حفظ كل التسجيلات الصوتية في كومبيوتر مزود بكلمة مرور وسيتم حذفها بعد تدوين المعلومات والتحقق منها. لدى كل مشارك الحق في مراجعة وتغيير التسجيل الصوتي من المقابلة ولذلك سيكون التسجيل متوفراً لفعل ذلك. يمكن فقط للباحث

والمشرف الوصول إلى التسجيل الصوتي. سيتم استعمال التسجيل الصوتي لغرض هذا البحث فقط وسيحذف بعد تجميع البيانات والتحقق منها. كل المعلومات المدونة ستُحفظ في كومبيوتر مزود بكلمة مرور وسيتم محو المعلومات المدونة بعد خمس سنوات من تاريخ إكمال الدراسة.

#### المشاركة والانسحاب:

يمكنك اختيار ما إذا كنت ترغب في أن تشارك في هذه الدراسة أم لا. إذا اخترت عدم المشاركة، فلن نترتب على هذا القرار أية عواقب. إذا شاركت في هذه الدراسة، فيحق لك سحب موافقتك في أي وقت دون أي عواقب. يمكنك أيضاً اختيار عدم الإجابة عن أي أسئلة لا تشعر بالراحة بالإجابة عنها في المقابلة والبقاء في الدراسة في نفس الوقت. يمكنك أيضاً ترك الإجابة عن كل الأسئلة أو ترك الدراسة بأكملها من غير أي عواقب. مشاركتك طوعية بالكامل. يمكن للباحث وقف مشاركتك في هذا البحث إذا كانت هناك ظروف تبرر القيام بذلك. لدى المشاركين الحق بسحب بيانات المقابلة في أي وقت قبل تحليلها.

#### إطلاع نتائج هذه الدراسة للمشاركين:

سيتم توفير تقرير موجز بالنتائج، في نسخة ورقية لك في أغسطس 2019. إذا كنت ترغب في الوصول إلى التقرير الموجز و / أو الدراسة الكاملة عبر الإنترنت، فسيتم مشاركة الروابط معك للوصول إلى التقارير. تاريخ توفر النتائج: أغسطس 2019 .

#### الاستخدام الفرعي للبيانات:

يمكن استخدام هذه البيانات في دراسات لاحقة ومنشورات وعروض تقديمية.

#### حقوق المشاركين في البحث:

يمكنك الانسحاب من هذه الدراسة وإيقاف مشاركتك في أي وقت من غير أي عقوبة أو عواقب. بمجرد تحليل بيانات المقابلة، لن يكون من الممكن سحب البيانات من الدراسة بعد ذلك. إذا كانت لديك أسئلة بخصوص حقوقك كمشارك في البحث، فاتصل بـ: منسق أخلاقيات البحث بجامعة وندسور، وندسور، أونتاريو

Tel: 519-253-3000 EXT: 3948 Email: [ethics@uwindsor.ca](mailto:ethics@uwindsor.ca)؛ N9B 3P4

#### توقيع المشارك في البحث:

أنا على علم ودراية بالمعلومات الموفرة في هذه الدراسة بعنوان "بحث في تجارب الطلاب السوريين اللاجئين في المدارس الابتدائية الكندية: دراسة بحث مندمج". تم الإجابة عن أسئلتي بطريقة مقبولة وأوافق على المشاركة في هذه الدراسة. لقد تلقيت نسخة من هذا الملحق.

اسم الوالدة أو ولي الأمر

التاريخ

توقيع الوالدة أو ولي الأمر

#### توقيع الباحث:

هذه هي الشروط التي سأجري بموجبها البحث.

التاريخ

توقيع الباحث

## APPENDIX N



**CONSENT FOR AUDIO RECORDING**  
**(Parent Interview)**

Parent/Guardian Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Title of the Project: **An Investigation of the Experiences of Syrian Refugee Students in Canadian Elementary Schools: A Mixed-Methods Study**

I consent to the audio recording of the interview.

I understand that this is a voluntary procedure and that I am free to withdraw at any time by requesting that the audio recording be stopped. I also understand that my name will not be revealed to anyone and that audio recording will be kept confidential. Digital audio recordings are saved by number only in a computer that is password protected.

Digital audio recordings will be deleted after the data is transcribed and verified.

I understand that confidentiality will be respected and that the audio recordings will be for professional use only.

This research has been cleared by the University of Windsor Research Ethics Board.

\_\_\_\_\_  
 Name of Parent(s)/Guardian(s)

\_\_\_\_\_  
 Signature of Parent(s)/Guardian(s)

\_\_\_\_\_  
 Date



University  
of Windsor

## رسالة موافقة للتسجيل الصوتي (مقابلة الأهل)

اسم الوالدة أو ولي الأمر: \_\_\_\_\_

عنوان المشروع: بحث في تجارب الطلاب السوريين اللاجئين في المدارس الابتدائية الكندية: دراسة بحث مندمج

أوافق على التسجيل الصوتي للمقابلة. أدرك أن هذا إجراء تطوعي وأنني حر في الانسحاب في أي وقت ويمكنني طلب إيقاف التسجيل الصوتي. أنني على دراية أيضًا أن اسمي لن يتم الكشف عنه لأي شخص وأن التسجيل الصوتي سيظل سرّيًا. يتم ترقيم ملفات التسجيلات الصوتية الرقمية وحفظها في جهاز كمبيوتر محمي بكلمة مرور.

سيتم حذف التسجيلات الصوتية الرقمية بعد نسخ البيانات والتحقق منها.

أدرك أنه سيتم احترام السرية وأن التسجيلات الصوتية ستكون للاستخدام المهني فقط.

تمت الموافقة على هذا البحث من قبل مجلس أخلاقيات البحوث بجامعة وندسور.

اسم الوالدة أو ولي الأمر \_\_\_\_\_

التاريخ \_\_\_\_\_

توقيع الوالدة أو ولي الأمر \_\_\_\_\_

## APPENDIX O

### Social Work Services

#### Non-Urgent Counselling:

##### **Windsor Women Working with Immigrant Women**

Main Office\_Hours: 9:00 am to 5:00 pm – Monday to Friday

Phone: (519) 973-5588 x302

Fax: (519) 973-1534

Email: [info@www.wiw.org](mailto:info@www.wiw.org) :

1368 Ouellette Avenue

Windsor ON Canada N8X 1J9

- We provide support services for newcomers experiencing crisis situations related to settlement
- Direct counselling services and group sessions available
- Access services over 15 languages including French, Arabic, and Spanish
- Our team offers mental wellness service training sessions to service providers in the community. For more information, please contact Naomi Levitz, Newcomer Health Initiative Coordinator at [naomi@www.wiw.org](mailto:naomi@www.wiw.org).

#### Immediate Support/Counselling:

##### **Hotel-Dieu Grace Healthcare – Regional Children’s Centre**

Hours: Monday-Thursday (8:30 a.m.-8:00 p.m.), Friday (8:30 a.m.-4:30 p.m.)

Address: 3901 Connaught Street | Windsor, ON | N9C 4H4

Phone: 519-257-5215

- Children and youth 6-18 years of age
- Exhibiting social, emotional, or behavioural problems within the home and school or community
- Languages: If you speak a different language and have difficulty communicating, we can provide an interpreter through our Language Line on site.

##### **Community Crisis Centre**

519-973-4435

Walk-In Services

Community Crisis Centre


736-744 Ouellette Ave.

8:00 a.m. to 8:00 p.m. 7 days/week

- Crisis counselling 24 hours a day 7 days a week

#### Additional Programs and Support:

Programs and support for newcomers including newcomer youth:

 **YMCA:** 519-258-9622

 **Multicultural Council of Windsor Essex:** 519-255-1127

## APPENDIX P



## Student Questionnaire: Cover Letter for Student Packages Outside Saturday School

Dear Parents/Guardians,

Please find attached an information package on a doctoral dissertation study I am working on about the experiences of Syrian refugee students in Canadian elementary schools, as well as a questionnaire to be completed by your child if you and your child wish for her/him to participate in the study.

If you **do not** wish for your child to participate, please return the blank questionnaire in the envelope sealed so that no one will know if your child chose not to participate. If you **do want** for your child to participate, please place their completed questionnaire in the envelope, seal it so no one can see their answers, and return it. Please return the envelope either to me during the Saturday school program or the individual from the Saturday school program who provided you the package.

Your child's participation is totally **voluntary** and the choice to participate or not will have no influence on your family's relationship with the Syrian Community Center of Windsor Saturday School program or anyone associated with the program.

Lastly, please disregard the last paragraph in the questionnaire that discusses student interview. This portion is not necessary for your child.

If you have any questions or concerns about the research, please feel free to contact me:

Thank you,

Mohamad Ayoub  
PhD in Education Candidate  
Faculty of Education  
University of Windsor

الأهل وأولياء الأمور الأعزاء،

ستجدون حزمة معلومات مرفقة هنا تتعلق بأطروحة دكتوراه أعمل عليها حول تجارب الطلاب السوريين اللاجئين في المدارس الابتدائية الكندية، وكذلك مرفق استطلاع يجب أن يكمله ولدك، إذا كنتم ترغبون المشاركة في الدراسة. إذا كنت لا ترغب في مشاركة ولدك، فيرجى إرجاع الاستطلاع الفارغ في الظرف المغلق، وختمه، حتى لا يعرف أحد ما إذا كان ولدك قد اختار عدم المشاركة. إذا كنت تريد مشاركة ولدك، فيرجى وضع استطلاعك المكتمل في الظرف المغلق، وختمه، وإعادته حتى لا يتمكن أي شخص من رؤية إجاباته. يرجى إعادة الظرف إما لي خلال برنامج مدرسة السبت أو الشخص من برنامج مدرسة السبت الذي قدم لك ظرف المعلومات. مشاركة ولدك طوعية تماماً ولن يكون لخيار المشاركة أو عدمه أي تأثير على علاقة عائلتك بالنادي الاجتماعي السوري في وندسور برنامج مدرسة يوم السبت أو مع أي شخص يرتبط بالبرنامج. أخيراً، يرجى تجاهل الفقرة الأخيرة في الاستطلاع التي تناقش مقابلة الطلاب. هذا الجزء ليس ضرورياً لولدك. إذا كان لديك أي أسئلة أو استفسارات حول البحث، الرجاء الاتصال بي:

شكراً لكم،

محمد أيوب  
مرشح دكتوراه في التربية  
كلية التربية، جامعة وندسور



### **VITA AUCTORIS**

Mohamad Ayoub was born in Kuwait in 1981. He then lived in Lebanon – his family’s country of origin – before moving to Windsor, Ontario, Canada with his family.

Mohamad earned a Bachelor of Applied Science: Honours Electrical Engineering (Co-operative Education) in 2006, and a Bachelor of Education in 2007, from the University of Windsor. In 2014, he earned a Master of Education from the University of Windsor. In 2020, he earned a Doctor of Philosophy in Educational Studies from the Joint PhD in Educational Studies Program, University of Windsor.