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Redefining Success: Refugee Education and Oakland  
International High School

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Refugees enter the United States to escape humanitarian abuses. Refugee youth education and methods for youth resettlement have been under examined considering that each year over 25,000 new refugee students enter the U.S. public education system.<sup>1</sup> The purpose of this literature review is to gain an understanding of the unique needs of adolescent refugees in high school and the contrasting interventions taking place in political and social fields to facilitate their transitions into American life. This literature examines the current social service methods being used to extend the right to education to adolescent refugees, socialization practices of schools, and the normative version of success expected for adolescent refugees in the public school system. Currently, literature on refugee resettlement and education lacks evaluation of school and social service dual support programs, such as the International Model’s approach to adolescent newcomer students. Understanding the historical, political and social theories and practices at play in refugee public education will create the basis for exploring the state of adolescent refugee high school education in California, and contextualize the existing structural barriers to adolescent refugee academic success.

## **I. The History and Current State of Refugee Resettlement in the U.S**

The Refugee Act of 1980, the current legislation of refugee services and practices for the

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<sup>1</sup> Lynn McBrien, “Educational Needs and Barriers for Refugee Students in the United States: A Review of the Literature”, *Review of Educational Research* 75, no.3 (2005): 331

U.S., delegated responsibility and resource control for resettlement to the public sphere for the first time.<sup>2</sup> This shift placed control of resettlement support for newly arrived families in the hands of federally funded volunteer agencies (VOLAGs), rather than privately funded agencies contracted by the government.<sup>3</sup> Volunteer agencies (VOLAG) are privately operated volunteer organizations that are contracted by the government to deliver all government-mandated social services to refugees, in place of an active government arm of assistance on the ground.<sup>4</sup> Today, the only universal form of support of refugee families in the U.S. comes from the federally funded VOLAG contracted to retrieve them from the airport, find them housing and other necessities, and support their employment search during their first eight months in the country.<sup>5</sup>

In 2008 the U.S. received 70% of the world's refugee population, about 60,190 individuals.<sup>6</sup> Since nearly half of the world's refugees are children under age 18, the U.S. school system accepts over 25,000 new students each year.<sup>7</sup> Managing this population is crucial for public education and federal refugee assistance programs, to ensure these new entrants are welcomed into these systems without conflict.<sup>8</sup> School is a central social service institution for refugee youth, offering a long-term, constant support system and platform for socialization, emotional support, adult mentors, and learning. Under the Refugee Act, youth refugee services are limited in scope and are not embedded in public school systems, despite schools being the most frequented and stable source of support for refugee families.<sup>9</sup>

One of the greatest resettlement challenges, argues Kate Brick in a review of U.S.

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<sup>2</sup> Deborah Anker and Michael Posner, "The Forty Year Crisis: Legislative History of the Refugee Act of 1980", *San Diego L. Review* 19 (1981): 11

<sup>3</sup> Sargent and Hohms "A Qualitative Comparison of the Effectiveness of Private and Public Refugee Resettlement Programs", *Sociological Perspectives* 42 (Autumn 1999): 405

<sup>4</sup> Kate Brick, *Refugee Resettlement in the U.S: Challenges and Proposed Solutions*, Columbia University SIPA (2010): 7

<sup>5</sup> Qingwen Xu, "A Child-Centered Refugee Resettlement Program in the United States." *Journal of Immigrant & Refugee Studies* 5, no. 3 (2007): 38

<sup>6</sup> Brick 2010, 1

<sup>7</sup> United Nations High Commissioner on Refugees, *The UNHCR Global Report*, (Oxford University Press 2000): 18

<sup>8</sup> McBrien 2005, 357

<sup>9</sup> Brick 2010, 11

resettlement processes, is the increasing level of refugee diversity making resettlement programs difficult to apply successfully to such a wide range of humanitarian needs.<sup>10</sup> Diversity includes differences of origin, age, and experiences before entering the country. Adolescent refugees have fallen through the cracks due to the inflexibility of resettlement programs to accommodate their specific needs within one broad system. Much analysis of the resettlement process advocates for improved pre-departure training to decrease the wide range of newcomers' needs that challenge the effectiveness of U.S. resettlement, including introductions to American culture, institutional processes and English.<sup>11</sup> Adolescent refugees especially would benefit from pre-departure English and socialization to prepare them for the systematic pressures of the public education system.<sup>12</sup> Other critiques argue that the current resettlement structure is too one-sided, resulting in refugees being seen as passive recipients, removed from decision-making processes.<sup>13</sup> Brick shares the view that the government, refugees, and VOLAGs must communicate and collaborate when forming policies and methods of resettlement, and be open to alternatives to the traditional resettlement program approach. Currently this level of communication is missing in refugee policy and practice, causing conflict between resettlement actors that slows refugee integration.<sup>14</sup> Evidence of mismatched goals for these actors interrupting positive resettlement practices will be highlighted in Chapter 5 when examining the relationships between OIHS, Oakland's main VOLAG (International Rescue Committee), and various other actors involved in refugee support services in Oakland.

Following arrival to the U.S., refugees receive comprehensive services including medical

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<sup>10</sup> Brick 2010, 7

<sup>11</sup> Brick 2010, 10; Rowena Fong, "Pathways to Self-Sufficiency: Successful Entrepreneurship for Refugees", (2007): 135; Chambon, "Refugee Family Experiences: Three Family Themes – Family Disruption, Violent Trauma and Acculturation", *Journal of Strategic and Systemic Therapies* 8 (1989): 9

<sup>12</sup> Xu 2007. 39

<sup>13</sup> Gold 1993. *Refugee Communities a Comparative Study*, 142

<sup>14</sup> Brick 2010, 14

and cash assistance for their first 8 months in America.<sup>15</sup> The Office of Refugee Resettlement (ORR), the federal branch in charge of all resettlement programs, does not directly provide services, but rather contracts with voluntary agencies to operate resettlement programs nationally. These VOLAG operations include pick up from the airport, transportation to health appointments, employment training, and all other practical means of assistance.<sup>16</sup> Funding for these programs within local VOLAG offices, such as the International Rescue Committee in Oakland, comes from the Office of Refugee Resettlement.<sup>17</sup> Money is closely tied to specific programs, and today the primary focus of ORR funding is directed towards employment programs for adults, with little attention directed towards youth specific programs or assistance.

Since the dominant discourse of resettlement is firmly adult-employment-based, vulnerable refugee youth are a second-thought when assistance programs are designed.<sup>18</sup> Mott, Brick and other resettlement researchers argue that employment-based discourse detracts from the other crucial resettlement factors including education, psychological adjustment, health care, and language acquisition.<sup>19</sup> Those in political power argue against this perspective, promoting employment as the key to gaining self-sufficiency, and that resettlement should remain employment-based for adults.<sup>20</sup> The logic behind this argument is that once the head of household is employed, they will support their families and the transition away from reliance on their VOLAG. However, Brick (2010), Mott (2010), and Lynn McBrien (2005) reveal that the negative impact of this discourse on adolescent refugees has greatly contributed to the low rate of refugee graduation. This discourse denies that refugee students require additional support to

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<sup>15</sup> Brick 2010, 7

<sup>16</sup> Brick 2010, 8

<sup>17</sup> Sargent and Hohms 1999, 405

<sup>18</sup> Ibid. 405

<sup>19</sup> Tamar Mott, "African Refugee Resettlement in the U.S.", *Journal of Geography* 27 (2010): 16; Brick 2010, 10; Mary Farrell and Bret Barden "The Evaluation of the Refugee Social Service and Targeted Assistance Formula Grant Programs", (2008): 19

<sup>20</sup> Fong 2007, 135

survive within the public school system and has caused refugee youth issues to fall to the backburner in funding. Whether responsibility for this support belongs to the refugee's school or their VOLAG is up for debate and addressed by this project.

Finally, the current adult-focused resettlement system causes communication to be poor between schools with refugees and local VOLAGS that have the knowledge of how to best assist this population.<sup>21</sup> VOLAGs are not given direction from the ORR to pursue relationships with schools and districts responsible for educating refugees, despite education being the key to a successful American life; and, districts are not encouraged to make these connections to strengthen their school model's or teacher styles for this vulnerable population.<sup>22</sup> This contributes to the low achievement levels of refugees and increasing levels of volunteer dependency in schools. These qualities of resettlement, poor communication and lack of attention for youth issues, endanger the opportunities adolescent refugees receive in school.

## **II. Theories of Education for Adolescent Refugees: Class, Power and Culture**

Education is commonly seen as the gateway to American mobility and school is viewed as the great equalizer. In reality, school is a tool to reproduce existing class and social hierarchies by helping individuals accept their placement within wider society as given.<sup>23</sup> Educational policy currently stacks the odds of success against refugee and English language minority students, due in part to the standardization of school success through testing by No Child Left Behind (NCLB) and California's English-only mandate Proposition 227.<sup>24</sup> Policy makers and advocates of NCLB argue that a standardized model of education ensures equality of experience and opportunity in

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<sup>21</sup> Xu 2007, 38

<sup>22</sup> Ibid. 40

<sup>23</sup> Emile Durkheim, *Moral Education*, Courier Dover Publications 2002 (Originally published 1973): 59-60

<sup>24</sup> Diane Ravitch, *The Life and Death of the Great American School System*, Basic Books, (2011): 245; Rumberger and Gándara, "Seeking Equity in the Education of California's English Learners", (2004): 2036

public schools.<sup>25</sup> However, by understanding that the dominant rules of school are set by the dominant social class, it is clear that the idea of standardized learning and success under NCLB do not include underprivileged groups like adolescent refugees that need alternative educational paths.<sup>26</sup> Adolescent refugees must struggle to integrate and socialize themselves into a new country while attempting to survive in this standardized school system, with a strict timeline and testing schedule.<sup>27</sup> Success within the current education system varies by race, class and origins depending on how well students can integrate into the dominant social environment, a near impossible task for adolescent refugees placed directly into high school upon arrival.

Public education was standardized by the NCLB law of 2002, which implemented bureaucratic methods of testing to identify failing schools and better them through structural changes.<sup>28</sup> The NCLB public school standard model is highly limited by its inability to make exceptions for language minorities or poor districts.<sup>29</sup> In California, this has been combined with the 1998 passing of Proposition 227, which outlawed bilingual education, forcing all tests and resources to be in English only, including for English Language Learners (ELLs). Peter Noguera and Andrew Gitlin argue that this contributes to the social marginalization that refugee students experience at schools where they are a minority, because they are institutionally left out of the educational process due to possessing socio-cultural backgrounds that are not cohesive to the dominance class norms.<sup>30</sup> Prop 227 is still in place, after gaining immense support from voters in 1998, causing public schools to operate on an English immersion platform with no native

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<sup>25</sup> Russell Rumberger and Patricia Gándara 2004. "Seeking Equity in the Education of California's English Learners", 2035; Bowles and Gintis 1976. *Schooling in Capitalist America*, 227

<sup>26</sup> Samuel Bowles and Herbert Gintis, *Schooling in Capitalist America: Educational Reform and the Contradictions of Economic Life*. Haymarket Books, (1976): 104

<sup>27</sup> McBrien 2010, 336

<sup>28</sup> Wayne Wright, *Evolution of Policy and Implications of No Child Left Behind for Language Minority Students*, Education Policies Study Laboratory, (Arizona State University, 2005): 3

<sup>29</sup> Ravitch 2011, 259

<sup>30</sup> Andrew Gitlin et al, "The Process of Marginalization and Center", *American Educational Research Journal*, 40:1 (2003): 102; Pedro Noguera, "Social Capital and the Education of Immigrant Students" *Sociology of Education* 77, (2004): 180



language support to ease learning for newcomers. The lack of structural support for refugee children in public schools, and the lack of teacher preparedness to educate diverse language classrooms due to inadequate training, has led to systematic disparities between refugee students and native peers.<sup>31</sup> Dominant English-only discourse can hide the need for discussions about diverse classrooms or teaching styles since it is assumed all students learn in the same way. This has resulted in low graduation rates for refugees and systems of exclusion in communities, at home and in schools that negatively impact refugee students' future achievement.<sup>32</sup>

Annette Lareau, a prominent sociologist, argues that class and cultural capital greatly influence educational attainment.<sup>33</sup> Cultural capital is a resource of understanding and inclination that allows an individual to participate with ease within the institutions that the dominant class controls, such as school. Lareau argues that cultural capital shapes school organization and teacher expectation of new arrivals, because newcomer socio-cultural backgrounds often conflict with the dominant model held by teachers and schools.<sup>34</sup> This sociological disconnect can lead to the placement of refugees into low tracks, such as vocational or Special Ed rather than pre-college classes.<sup>35</sup> Lareau's argument stems from Pierre Bourdieu's theory that combinations of direct and indirect exclusions based on class and culture produce power in school pedagogy, resulting in refugee disparities.<sup>36</sup> Schools consist of power relations that are dependent on cultural capital that refugees often do not possess, resulting in structural exclusion from mainstream classes and success.<sup>37</sup> When there is a conflict of *habitus*, or socio-cultural

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<sup>31</sup> Lisa Delpit, *Other People's Children: Educational Conflict in the Classroom*, (2006): 25; Annette Lareau and Michele Lamont, "Cultural Capital: Allusions, Gaps, Glissandos in Recent Theoretical Development", (1988): 156; Alejandro Portes and Ruben Rumbaut, *Immigrant America: A Portrait*, (Univ. of California Press, 2006): 72

<sup>32</sup> McBrien 2005, 349

<sup>33</sup> Lareau and Lamont 1988, 154

<sup>34</sup> Ibid. 156

<sup>35</sup> Maureen Hallinan, "Tracking: From Theory to Practice", *Sociology of Education* 67, (1994): 82; Annette Lareau, *Unequal Childhoods*, (UC Press Books, 2011): 362; Lareau and Lamont 1988, 167

<sup>36</sup> Pierre Bourdieu, "The Forms of Social Capital", *Handbook of Theory and Research for Sociology of Education*, (1986): 242

<sup>37</sup> Ibid. 247

orientation, students often are blamed for being insolent or unintelligent, or come to see this as true and give up. Others disagree with Bourdieu's theory of embedded culture and class disadvantaging students, claiming he overstates the influence of class on reproducing power relations, and misses the critical factors of gender and other categories of difference.<sup>38</sup> Nevertheless, the influence of culture and social background greatly influences students' ability to succeed within traditional models.

### **III. Evaluation of School-Based Resettlement and Barriers to Achievement**

School is an essential element of humanitarian response to crises.<sup>39</sup> School for refugee youth after arriving in America is an essential element of their rehabilitation of mental and physical health, trauma coping, and the ability to become self-sufficient. Sinclair's (2001) study of refugee trauma services for youth concluded that school for a refugee student becomes central to their psychological and social needs during resettlement, both to overcome the traumas of war or indirect violence abroad and to raise their self-esteem and identity acceptance. Since trauma impedes learning ability, Sinclair advocates for school-based psychological screenings for refugee students to be assessed and cared for in a practical manner.<sup>40</sup> Much research advocates for the integration of school into the resettlement process in order to better assist refugee youth.<sup>41</sup> However, the current federal resettlement process has no school-based element, and even limits social networking and mobility by stressing job acquisition over other essential needs.

Important to note is that refugee youth have often had very few years of structured

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<sup>38</sup> S. Lee, "The Road to College: Hmong American Women's Pursuit of Higher Education", *Education and Urban Society* 34, (2002): 238

<sup>39</sup> Margaret Sinclair, "Planning Education in and After Emergencies", (n.d., 2001): 2

<sup>40</sup> Ibid. 4

<sup>41</sup> Bridget O'Shea et al., "A School Based Mental Health Service for Refugee Children", *Clinical Child Psychology and Psychiatry* 5 (2000): 191; Patricia Shannon et al., "Screening for War Trauma, Torture and Mental Health Symptoms Among Newly Arrived Refugees", *Journal of Immigrant and Refugee Studies* 10 (2012): 393

education or none at all before entering high school in America.<sup>42</sup> This increases the cultural capital distance between school and student, causing conflicts in the classroom where the teacher sees the student as incapable or disruptive rather than unadjusted to the culture of power that is expected in the classroom.<sup>43</sup> Much educational research notes the importance of family support to increase achievement including Lareau's research on how social class greatly influences school performance.<sup>44</sup> Portes and Rumbaut (2001), researchers on U.S. immigration, describe that without parental support during school, newcomer students will continue to dropout even if they earn decent grades due to a lack of investment in the premium of education. The role reversal that many resettled families experience, with the child having to pay bills and speak for the family at meetings, generates conflict that further causes refugee youth to disinvest in school success.<sup>45</sup> The common occurrence of cultural dissonance between families discouraging refugee school achievement calls for greater examination of how school-based resettlement programs would help mediate dissonance between families. Involving parents in the educational process also generates social networking for adults to build support systems that provide for families in the long-term, a necessary element of resettlement for self-sufficiency, happiness and mobility.<sup>46</sup>

Educators and school environment are thus crucial to facilitating socialization and self-sufficiency for adolescent refugees. Theilheimer (2001), Crosnoe (2009) and Lopez (2011) stress the importance of teacher training to understand refugee experiences in order to be helpful and non-judgmental partners in resettlement and education. This attitude of teachers as team members rather than experts aligns with the integrated school-based resettlement model. When

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<sup>42</sup> Brick 2010, 5

<sup>43</sup> Delpit 2006, 45

<sup>44</sup> Lareau 2011, 239; Robert Crosnoe, "Family-School Connections and Transition of Low Income Youth and English Language Learners from Middle to High School", *Developmental Psychology* 45 (2009): 1071; Claude Goldenberg, "Unlocking the Research on English Language Learners", *American Educator* (Summer 2013): 5

<sup>45</sup> McBrien 2005, 330

<sup>46</sup> Crosnoe 2009, 1074

teachers are trained to work with specific refugees experiences they are better able to establish a mutual learning environment between teacher, student and community, which Mott and McBrien both promote in the adolescent refugee classroom.<sup>47</sup> This begins with constructing welcoming governmental and social institutions for refugees to easily facilitate mutual learning and respect.

A mutual form of learning in schools with refugees has the potential to benefit refugee achievement and future goals, as students see the school as one their side and a safe space to discover what it means to be American. McBrien's 2003 study of 18 refugee girls from 8 countries in high school revealed how beneficial school-based support can be for refugees, many of whom reported teacher and peer discrimination as a reason to skip school. School-based support through strong parental support, students' pride in their culture and family, refugee peer support, and outside tutoring from VOLAGs helped 4 of these girls to enter college.<sup>48</sup> Valuable connections between VOLAGs, teachers and peers are seen here working to mediate the negative socialization refugees experience in class with mainstream students. Further exploration of the connections between school-based refugee youth programs is required to design resettlement policy in a way that benefits adolescent refugees.

Qingwen Xu (2007) explores the idea of child-based resettlement programs focused on increasing soft social services like family counseling, cultural orientation, and identity and bilingual programs at school in place of the employment-focused federal program. Child-centered programs, Xu argues, provide stability to children to maximize social interaction, peer support, parental involvement and broaden knowledge of their local community. VOLAGs structured like this would work closely with school districts and staff to build trusting relations with students and families in familiar environments. This is beneficial in that after the initial 8

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<sup>47</sup> McBrien 2005, 330; Min Zhou and C.L Bankston, *Growing Up American: How Vietnamese Children Adapt to Life in the U.S.*, Russel Sage Foundation (1998): 112; Mott 2010, 22

<sup>48</sup> Lynn McBrien, "A Second Change for Refugee Students", *Educational Leadership* 61:2 (2003): 77

months of cash assistance, strong social ties to the community and the child's school will remain a stable support in the long-term. In contrast, Rowena Fong advocates for employment, adult-based resettlement to prepare adult refugees to be self-sufficient and then help their children, an opposite view of Xu's child-focused program.<sup>49</sup> These do not need to be mutually exclusive, but currently funding and political attention towards youth issues are completely lacking and thus hurting resettlement for youth and the abilities of schools to provide for refugee students.<sup>50</sup> Lacking in Xu's analysis is an evaluation of funding limitations for public schools to provide these services for a minority population and exploration of class and cultural power relations at play. Studies of partnerships between VOALGs and schools with refugee youth must be completed in order to evaluate the success of this school-supported model of resettlement. Oakland International High School currently operates through a partnership of resettlement assistance provided by an outside VOLAG and a newcomer specific curriculum, offering great sociological and public policy insights into school-resettlement partnership.

#### **IV. Refugee Integration and Exclusion in the English Language Learning Classroom**

Central to refugee education in the resettlement process is the intensely heated debate over bilingual education. Claude Goldenberg, in an analysis of many ELL classrooms across the country, reveals that the foundation of current English language education policy is based on myths rather than reality.<sup>51</sup> Goldenberg compares ELL literature to his case studies in many ELL classrooms to discover best practices for English education. His findings include: teaching children to read in their first language promotes higher levels of achievement in English; curriculums do not need to be altered for refugees because good teaching is enough to overcome the language gap; and that when instructing ELLs in content classes, teachers must modify their

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<sup>49</sup> Fong 2007, 156

<sup>50</sup> Brick 2010, 11

<sup>51</sup> Goldenberg 2012, 3

instruction to fit their student's language limitations. The Goldenberg best practice model takes the practical form of dual language immersion programs, where children learn in two languages through the day equally. This is rare, with only 7% of California public schools designed in this model, because students have to waive their legal right to English-only education as constructed by Prop 227 to enroll in these schools.<sup>52</sup> Also, parental opposition is strong to dual immersion programs, as they believe their child will become disadvantaged in comparison to children who spend all day learning in English.<sup>53</sup> Other comparative studies also advocate for dual language programs, and analyze how tracking ELLs as separate than mainstream students reproduces social inequalities and the negative social and mental effects of discrimination.<sup>54</sup> Nonetheless, policy remains uninfluenced by the consistent reporting of higher reading and math skills from students who enroll in dual immersion programs and have home language support, seen in the small number of dual language immersion programs currently operating in California.<sup>55</sup>

In another analysis of English teaching best practices, Gebhard (2003, p.36) compares three methods of ELL teaching in California, comparing verbal and written activities with group projects, and teacher facilitation versus bilingual specialist presence in the classroom. The conclusion of this study was that an integrated immersion approach to English teaching is best, as it give less English-proficient students opportunities to converse with and learn from native-born students in a welcoming environment. This differs from Goldenberg's perspective of dual language programs, as it promotes English-only learning rather than dual learning. However, both acknowledge that native language support is crucial during the initial learning process.

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<sup>52</sup> Rachel Slama, "A Longitudinal Analysis of Academic English Proficiency Outcomes from Adolescent ELLs in the U.S.", *Journal of Educational Psychology* 104 (2012): 273

<sup>53</sup> Jason O'Brien, "The System is Broken and it's Failing these Kids: High School Social Studies Teachers' Attitudes towards Training ELLs", *Journal of Social Science Research* 35 (Spring 2011): 28

<sup>54</sup> Aida Walqui and Leo van Lier, *Scaffolding the Academic Success of Adolescent Language Learners*, San Francisco WestEd (2010); Wayne Tomas and Virginia Collier, "The Multiple Benefits of Dual Language", *Teaching All Students* 61:2 (2003): 159; Slama 2012, 266

<sup>55</sup> Therese Sullivan Caccavale, "Cognitive Benefits of Learning Language", *American Council on Foreign Languages*, (2007): 2

Further analysis of these two programs is necessary to understand which language technique is best to pursue for the benefit of refugee achievement and positive experiences at school. OIHS represents an English-only immersion program like Gebhard prescribes, but without fluent English speaking peers. Rather, OIHS is dependent on ELL peers to support each other's language acquisition process, and on outside volunteers to serve as the English mentors. The OIHS model provides English-only immersion without the negative experience of exclusion from mainstream classes, since all students are ELLs; however, is also associated with negative perceptions of ability causing low expectations of success. Evaluations of this method in CA will speak to the possibilities of school-based resettlement for adolescent refugee education.

#### **Chapter 4 – Redefining Success**

One of the only school models addressing these crucial issues, Oakland International High School (OIHS) is struggling to serve its students as well as possible under state school accountability measures.<sup>56</sup> Socio-economic disadvantages for newcomers, mismatched social and cultural capital, and an education system designed against the needs of adolescent students have all contributed to the low graduate rates of Oakland International. However, this is not the full story and does not capture the complete image of how OIHS supports refugees. OIHS has redefined the idea of success for their students to be more flexible to the realities of adolescent newcomers in high school, and has created partnerships and organizational structure meant to promote this version of success. To define this version of success, that both supports student during in the path towards a stable independent life and socialization, we must deconstruct the inaccurate metrics of evaluation currently being applied to OIHS. Reformulating these metrics to appreciate the realities of adolescent newcomer pathways and learning strategies will create a

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<sup>56</sup> These include graduation rates, Academic Performance Indexes, and Standardized Testing (STAR)

better platform of analysis of the abilities of the International model in Oakland to support its students despite the unsupportive and challenging context of Oakland and the public school system.

## **I. Inaccurate Metrics**

### **A. Graduation Rates**

Through the existing metrics to measure school performance in California, Oakland International seems to be clearly failing its students. However, the state’s system of evaluating is not aimed to adequately measure immigrant or refugee students, as it does not account for secondary migration, school movement, or the extra struggles refugee students face, highlighted earlier in this chapter. Understanding this, the rates in graduation Table 6 misrepresent the success that OIHS can offer its students and effectively misdirects funding towards school restructuring and other accountability measures rather than incorporating extended learning time, flexible graduation timelines, such as the 5<sup>th</sup> year program, and better support for ELL teachers.

Table 6 below highlights that low graduation rates for ELL students, which includes all refugees, is not unique to OIHS, as only 62% of California’s the 2011 ELL cohort graduated.<sup>57</sup> In that statewide cohort, 23.5% dropped out before graduation and 13.2% remained enrolled, possible through programs similar to the OHIS 5<sup>th</sup> year program or by holding students back.<sup>58</sup>

**Table 1: 2011-12 California Graduation Rate Cohorts for English Language Learners. Source: California Department of Education – CA Longitudinal Pupil Achievement Data System (CALPADS)**

<b>Population</b>	<b>Cohort 4th year Students</b>	<b>Cohort Graduates</b>	<b>Cohort Graduation Rate (%)</b>	<b>Cohort Dropouts</b>	<b>Cohort Dropouts Rate (%)</b>	<b>Cohort Still Enrolled</b>	<b>Cohort Still Enrolled Rate (%)</b>
<b>Statewide</b>	99,753	61,885	62	23,471	23.5	13,155	13.2

<sup>57</sup> California Department of Education Data Reporting Office, “Cohort Outcome Data for the Class of 2010-11”

<sup>58</sup> California Department of Education Data Reporting Office, “Cohort Outcome Data for the Class of 2010-11”



<b>Alameda</b>							
<b>County</b>	3,209	2,035	63.4	720	22.4	412	12.8
<b>OUSD</b>	703	321	45.7	230	32.7	139	19.8
<b>OIHS</b>	81	32	39.5	32	39.5	17	21

<http://dq.cde.ca.gov/dataquest/CohortRates>

Graduation cohort data for ELLs and immigrants is difficult to report due to the constant arrival and exiting of immigrant and refugee students, either arriving in the middle of the year and not being considered a part of the cohort or switching schools due to secondary migration.<sup>59</sup>

California data reports for public school graduation cohorts do not include all students that graduated in a given year because students that have earned their diplomas outside of the four-year period are not accounted for, a major flaw when attempting to evaluate OIHS through these traditional metrics, since the 5<sup>th</sup> year program is an important element of the structure that encourages refugee achievement. In 2011, instead of only 39.5% of the cohort<sup>60</sup> benefiting from OIHS in the form of graduation, a total of 60.5% of students graduated or remained enrolled. This is an important difference that completely reframes the accountability of OIHS towards its students, as now it is clear that the majority of students in 2011 were supported by OIHS in differing pathways to success. Instead of assisting less than half of the 2011 4<sup>th</sup> year cohort, OIHS served roughly 2/3rds due to the school embracing alternative pathways to graduation in its organization and structure. With these flaws in the graduation metric, impact analysis of Internationals and other schools with large English learner programs is very difficult because the students constantly arrive and depart, and these numbers are not recorded or adequately incorporated into CA's accountability measures.

There is no record in California for the graduation rates of students that remain enrolled after 4 years or transfer into a school after the first year of high school elsewhere. The New York

<sup>59</sup> Ibid. & Nathaniel Dunstan, interview with author, February 3 2014

<sup>60</sup> This cohort entered the school in 2007 and does not include any transfers or later arrivals

City Department of Education has a more accurate system of evaluating graduation rates, broken down by semester and by fourth or fifth year.<sup>61</sup> This system includes what the current CA system does not, the graduation rates of the part of the cohort that remains enrolled after four years and students who arrived after the 9<sup>th</sup> grade. Neither CDE<sup>62</sup> nor NYCDE have an accessible record of when ELL students move to more rigorous schools. Students leaving OIHS by transfer to more competitive schools (an example of OIHS successfully teaching a newcomer the English skills needed to learn) is considered a success by the school.<sup>63</sup> Keeping track of transfers could help determine how well OIHS serves as a stepping-stone in a refugee's academic path and inform whether more access to transfer information would better assist students.

Despite having a smaller population, OIHS's dropout rate was over 10% higher than OUSD in 2012 largely because of the challenges immigrants and refugees face in the public school system and as a poor youth in Oakland.<sup>64</sup> These may include the pressure to earn adequate money to pay rent and support the family outweighing the future benefits of having a high school graduate in the family, or needing to take care of younger siblings while the parents work because daycare cannot be afforded, or stress from living in a violent neighborhood. To increase the difficulties of evaluating the impact of OIHS on refugee youth resettlement, the CA Department of Education (CDE) has no specific record of refugee school progress, graduation rates or California High School Exit Exam scores. Refugees are represented in the English Learners category of CDE data reports, with no direct data on how refugee students fair in the public education system.<sup>65</sup> This means there is no way to discern refugee graduation rates from

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<sup>61</sup> See Appendix 3 for a full table of Brooklyn International graduation rates

<sup>62</sup> CDE: California Department of Education

<sup>63</sup> Ms. Loraine, interview with author; Kajal Shahali IRC Education Liaison, interview with author, March 19, 2014

<sup>64</sup> California Department of Education Data Reporting Office, "Cohort Outcome Data for the Class of 2010-11" (Table 6)

<sup>65</sup> California Department of Education Data Reporting Office

other ELL students who may face lesser challenges than PTSD, family separation or significant gaps in education. Without extending metrics of success and evaluation categories to examine refugees, these issues will continue to be misunderstood. The Internationals model provides refugee students with support for newcomer issues and challenges that traditional public schools are not able to; however, until the metrics of success for refugee students and their schools are redefined to more adequately represent the refugee schooling experience, these schools will be seen as failing abysmally and lose support and potential for helping many students in the future.

### **B. No Child Left Behind: Academic Performance Indexes (API), Testing, and Cultural Bias**

The Academic Performance Index (API) is the main measure of school accountability and performance for California, mandated by the 2001 No Child Left Behind (NCLB) legislation.<sup>66</sup> Here, accountability is understood as the school fulfilling its responsibility to provide well for its students. In 1999, California passed the Public School Accountability Act (PSAA) as the first steps to numerically “hold students, schools, and districts accountable for improving student performance.”<sup>67</sup> PSAA in California now includes a student testing system, Standardized Testing and Reporting (STAR) and the CA High School Exit Exam (CAHSEE). By using STAR and CAHSEE results combined with school API scores, California meets the school reporting and accountability provisions of NCLB. The API is currently calculated using the results of STAR testing and the CAHSEE results and reflects school-testing results only, instead of including attendance, graduation rates and school climate surveys. Thus, the idea of a “successful” school lies entirely in test scores, despite refugee status or gaps in education, inherently disadvantaging schools like OIHS that cannot test well when 100% of students are adolescent newcomers with limited English and previous schooling experience.

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<sup>66</sup> Heilig and Darling-Hammond 2008, 78

<sup>67</sup> California Educational Data, “Understanding the API”, <http://Ed-data.ca.k12.us>

Schools in poor urban areas with vulnerable populations, including adolescent newcomers, tend to perform less well on standardized tests due to the discrepancy of resources and the non-academic issues faced by the students in poor schools.<sup>68</sup> The negative impact of NCLB's standardized testing regime on refugee students is seen clearly in the story of Wheeler Elementary School in Virginia, where 37 of 39 fifth graders are recently arrived refugees.<sup>69</sup> In 2010, due to low-test scores, the district was forced to remove Wheeler's extremely beloved principal as a part of NCLB's accountability measures. The low-test scores that demanded the principal resign so that 3 million dollars of federal restructuring money could flow into the school were a result of "a testing system that's totally inappropriate for Wheeler's children."<sup>70</sup> Standardized testing laws require a refugee student that arrives one-day before the state mandated tests to take the same test as students that have grown up speaking English and learning in American classrooms. As a result, only 5% of students tested proficient at Wheeler that year.<sup>71</sup> Similarly, in 2012 at OIHS 26% of 9<sup>th</sup> grade students tested "below basic" on the CA Standardized Testing English-Language Arts, and 74% ranked "far below basic".<sup>72</sup> These 9<sup>th</sup> graders presumably have had no previous English experience, with 36% having significant schooling gaps, and yet are taking the same test as native English speakers.<sup>73</sup>

The testing experience of Oscar, a 5<sup>th</sup> grade refugee student at Wheeler, also highlights this problem refugee students face under NCLB's standardized testing system:

Oscar needed 20 minutes to read a passage on Neil Armstrong landing his Eagle spacecraft on the moon; it should have taken 5 minutes, she [Wheeler's Principal] said, but Oscar was determined, reading out loud to himself. The first question asked whether the passage was fact or fiction. "He said, 'Oh, Mrs. Irvine, man don't go on the moon,

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<sup>68</sup> Heilig and Darling-Hammond 2008, 81

<sup>69</sup> Michael Winerip, "A Popular Principal, Wounded by Government's Good Intentions", NY Times (2010)

<sup>70</sup> Ibid.

<sup>71</sup> Ibid.

<sup>72</sup> California Department of Education, "2013 STAR Test Results – OIHS", [star.cde.ca.gov](http://star.cde.ca.gov)

<sup>73</sup> Oakland International, *Survival Packet*, (2013): 3

man don't go on the back of eagles, this is not true," she recalled. "So he got the five follow-up questions wrong — penalized for a lack of experience."<sup>74</sup>

Oscar understood the text but was penalized for lack of exposure to American media and culture, since the standardized test required a certain level of cultural understanding for students to be successful. These socio-cultural issues of discrimination currently go unaddressed in both funding and federal/state organization of tests and curriculum:

Standardized assessment disadvantages, even among native-born students, those from non-middle class backgrounds.<sup>75</sup> Students from migrant backgrounds and from linguistically and culturally diverse backgrounds are further disadvantaged. Despite all the evidence and all the research, standardized assessment and the idea that it means quality spreads like a cancer from one educational system to the next.<sup>76</sup>

Using standardized tests to calculate the API puts a large disadvantage on schools for adolescent refugees that are not accounted for anywhere in school performance evaluation statewide.

Without flexibility to determine success using tests that adolescent newcomers can actually comprehend it is difficult for the Internationals to highlight their positive impacts on students or garner political support to extend their programs and better their outcomes.

The API is given as a number between 200 and 1,000, with 200 being the lowest possible accountability ranking for schools. The CDE demands a minimum score of 800 to deem a school accountable.<sup>77</sup> The API score for OIHS, since its founding in August of 2007, has grown slightly from an original score of 308 in 2008 with only 93 enrolled students, to an API of 374 in 2013 with over 370 students. Since 2007, OIHS has consistently been ranked as group 1, the lowest possible school ranking in California.<sup>78</sup> Without alternative testing for ELL students or inclusions of non-testing factors into school accountability rankings, OIHS will continue to rank

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<sup>74</sup> Ibid.

<sup>75</sup> Mac Ruairc, "Children's Experiences of Standardised Testing: a Socio-Cultural Analysis" *Irish Educational Studies* 28 (2009): 47-66

<sup>76</sup> Ingrid Piller, "Refugee Children Left Behind as Eagle Lands on Moon," *Language on the Move*, (June 2010)

<sup>77</sup> California Educational Data, "Understanding the API", <http://Ed-data.ca.k12.us>

<sup>78</sup> Ibid. The school rank group is given by the California Department of Education on a scale of 1 to 10, with 10 being the best-ranked schools

low because students enter high school without any English abilities. This is an unequal system of measurement that sets alternative school models like OIHS up to fail when trying to address the problem of disadvantaged adolescent newcomers.

Another major flaw in the API as the main measure of school success is that only continuously enrolled students are incorporated into the Academic Performance Index. This means that any student that has a gap of education for more than 30 consecutive days are not included in the API score. Refugee students are continuously entering and exiting school systems in their resettlement destination as a result of secondary migration or move between schools to find the right fit.<sup>79</sup> At OIHS, each month up to 20 new students can enroll or exit to either attend another school closer to home, dropout of high school for work, or move cities to relocate with their families.<sup>80</sup> These students are unaccounted for in an API for a given school year, just as they are unaccounted for in the graduation rates. This has negatively impacted the API for OIHS, and assumedly other schools with refugee students because it does not consider the positive impact the school had on these students leaving or entering half way through a school year.

When a school is given a poor API score, districts are negatively impacted as well, with funding changes, limited organizational autonomy and threats to teacher contracts.<sup>81</sup> Thus, the number-obsessed quality of the CDE when evaluating accountability for schools can endanger all students within a school district, especially schools with adolescent refugees; meaning alternative measurements of adolescent refugee school success must be formulated beyond testing.

Alternative forms of evaluation beyond testing and quantitative analysis are necessary to truly evaluate the success OIHS and the International model can offer refugee students and the benefit the school has for the newcomer community of Oakland.

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<sup>79</sup> Kajal Shahali IRC Education Liaison, interview with author, March 12 2014

<sup>80</sup> Shahrzad Makaremi, interview with author, March 2014

<sup>81</sup> Heilig and Darling-Hammond 2008, 79

## Chapter 5 – Interventions: Solutions to the Refugee Achievement Gap

### IV. The Struggle for Resources: Equity Versus Adequacy

OIHS is a small school, with a small population of 374 students; however, these students are extremely high need, and need more resources than schools with large populations that have had years of education and parental support before entering high school. Schools like OIHS, built to be small and to benefit a specific population, often lack adequate resource allocation from the district because other schools with larger populations are given priority.<sup>82</sup> Recently, OIHS and the non-profit Soccer Without Borders have partnered to demand the district to provide an all-sport outdoor facility for OIHS.<sup>83</sup> OIHS has a baseball field on their property, but are often barred from using the field, as it is the property of nearby Oakland Tech High School. This means, 5 to 7 months out of the year Physical Education classes and soccer must happen on concrete, which is dangerous and discouraging. During baseball season, OIHS students are not allowed to use the field, and then during the off-season the field is re-seeded and OIHS students again are not allowed to use the field. This lack of a safe and equitable physical activity space for OIHS impacts student perspectives on how the district and community views them, as less important than other students. One female 18-year-old refugee student supports the OIHS campaign against the district:

"I grew up in a refugee camp in Thailand. They only had boys' soccer there. I learned to play soccer here starting in 9th grade. I want to improve my skills. Now we don't have a place to practice."

Another refugee student, a male 18-years-old from Eritrea, also supporting the campaign describes how important soccer is to the students and community at OIHS:

"I love soccer. I love it so much I can't describe. 95% of the world loves soccer. We have

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<sup>82</sup> Gitlin, Andrew et al. "The Production of Margin and Center: Welcoming-Unwelcoming of Immigrant Students." *American Educational Research Journal*, 40:1 (2003): 113

<sup>83</sup> Oakland International, "Students For a Soccer Field", <http://OIHSfield.org>

immigrants from all the countries. Soccer makes us a big family. We are on the same team here."

The access for refugee students to safe, high-quality recreational facilities is crucial for positive emotional, physical, and academic outcomes for dealing with trauma, stress, and socialization. This petition against the district shows how deep the supportive partnerships of OIHS with Soccer Without Borders and community partners truly are, and how highly valued community involvement is by the OIHS administration and the students.<sup>84</sup> However, this issue also highlights how the isolation of students from traditional schools can cause inequalities and 'us versus them' debates between newcomers and native-born students. By separating newcomers into OIHS rather than integrating refugees into public schools this conflict over a limited commodity has arisen, and the traditional school with more students has won rights to the good.

Of the schools structure, Kajal believes that even though OIHS students have fun at OIHS and are comfortable there, they should be integrated, not isolated, to complete the IRC's and the government's idea of the resettlement process.<sup>85</sup> The addition of a multi-use community and school recreational facility at the OIHS campus would greatly promote this mission and correct some of the negative impacts that isolation can cause for refugees, such as the failure to interact with mainstream society or distrust of non-immigrant communities. The field would become a community asset, and be open to all, integrating OIHS students with the wider Oakland neighborhood. Soccer Without Borders also accomplishes this by funding OIHS refugees to form teams that play against other teams in the district and the East Bay.<sup>86</sup>

The principle of equity, even distribution of resources based on the proportion of

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<sup>84</sup> The petition is endorsed by OIHS, Soccer Without Borders, East Bay Refugee Forum, Albany-Berkeley Soccer Club, Senda Athletics, Bridgelux Lighting, Monclair Soccer Club, Life Academy, Alternatives in Action, Colliseum College Prep Academy

<sup>85</sup> Kajal Shahali, interview with author, March 12 2014

<sup>86</sup> Shahrzad Makaremi, interview with author, March 2014



students, applied to schools gives schools with more students more resources. This results in OIHS receiving fewer resources, such as no soccer field for the 374 students, and giving Oakland Tech, with 2,000 students, the power to kick OIHS off of the field on OIHS's campus at any moment.<sup>87</sup> Adequacy on the other hand, promotes the idea of allocating the necessary funds and resources to schools based on individual or group education needs. Recent policy developments in California school funding promote adequacy over equity, meant to positively impact schools with large populations of disadvantaged students, which would help CA's adolescent refugees. The Local Control Funding Formula (LCFF) passed through the CA state senate in 2013, and is changing the California public school funding system for the first time in 25 years.<sup>88</sup> This new formula admits for the first time in CA educational financial policy that inequality of spending is necessary to make schools more equal, an adequacy formula rather than an equity formula for financing schools. LCFF ended categorical funding (where funds were tied to specific spending categories decided on by state officials rather than localities), and gives localities increased control of funding distribution.<sup>89</sup> The following graphic details how this new funding system gives OIHS greater control of larger than ever funds to directly support their high needs students:

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<sup>87</sup> California Educational Data, "School Profile", <http://ed-data.k12.ca.us>

<sup>88</sup> California Department of Education, "Local Control Funding Formula Overview", 2014

<sup>89</sup> Ibid.

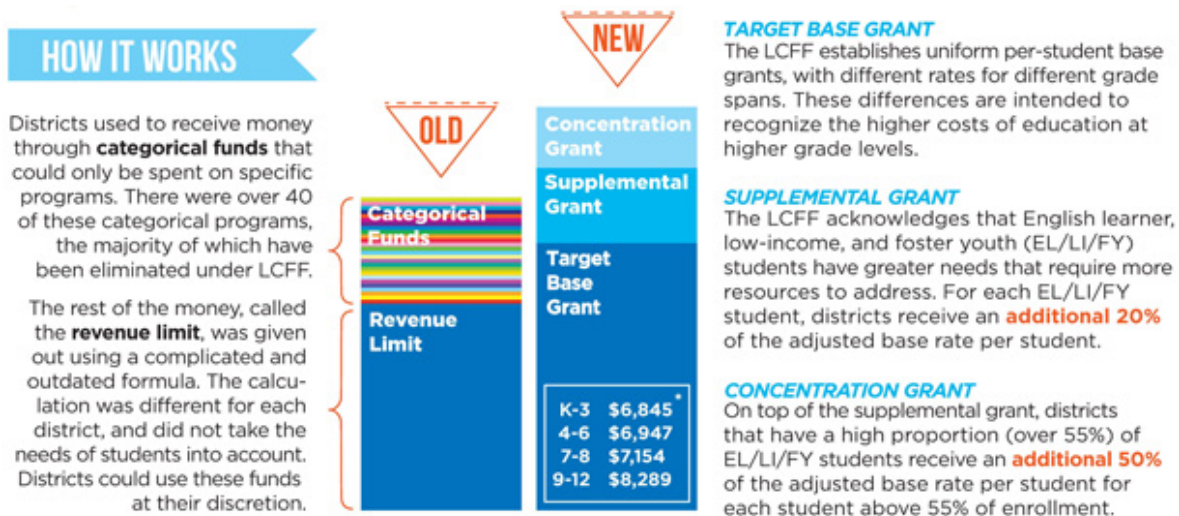


Figure 1: California Teachers Association Graphic (2014). Source: [cta.org/Issues-and-Action/School-Funding/Local-Control-Funding-Formula](http://cta.org/Issues-and-Action/School-Funding/Local-Control-Funding-Formula)

The implementation of this financial policy hopes to increase budgets for schools with more disadvantaged students, to proactively decrease educational inequalities facing low-income and vulnerable students. Disadvantaged students are defined as foster students, English language learners or students that qualify for free and reduced lunch, or any combination of these three categories.<sup>90</sup> The results of this change in the funding policy will be about 50% more funding for schools with large numbers of disadvantaged students, including OIHS and schools with refugees.<sup>91</sup> Under this system, it will be easier for OIHS to advocate for additional resources, like a sports facility, or other necessities. However, money will be distributed based on community input, which can mean political gridlock on a local level or monopolization of money by parents with high levels of social capital. In this way, despite the positive efforts of adequacy funding by LCFF, OIHS with its entirely immigrant and refugee population will continue to struggle to generate community support and equal access to educational resources.

<sup>90</sup> Ibid.

<sup>91</sup> UC Berkeley Professor Lisa Garcia-Bedolla, Lecture “Politics of Educational Inequality”, April 3 2014

This system, being newly implemented, will take time to show its impact on evening the achievement gap between advantaged students and ELLs, low-income, and foster students. Educational policy Professor Garcia-Bedolla believes that the LFCC will lessen the negative trend of immigrant and refugee students being stuck in ELL classes despite being ready for content classes because having ELL students gives schools additional funding.<sup>92</sup> Now, Professor Garcia-Bedolla argues, this should occur less often because LCFF stresses that “any combination of the three” disadvantaged categories qualifies schools for larger grants.<sup>93</sup> This means CA’s students will not need to be kept in unnecessary ELL classes to earn funding, since immigrants usually qualify for free or reduced lunch as well and will benefit the school’s funding whether or not they are a part of an ELL program. This element of the LFCC, as well as the admission by the state government that unequal spending is necessary to provide adequately for all students, should prove beneficial in the coming years for schools with high levels of adolescent newcomers. The adequacy focus shows greater political understanding of the large need to account for the disadvantages facing poor and newcomer students, and will show as LCFF is implemented over the next few years if it truly can work to create more equitable opportunities for refugee students in California’s schools.

## **Chapter 6 – Conclusion**

Refugee students who attend OIHS receive multiple benefits from school-community collaboration with the International Rescue Committee, Refugee Asylee Student Assistance Program, Soccer Without Borders, and Refugee Transitions; however, the continuing low achievement levels highlight how this alone, and in the context of the socio-economic barriers to

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<sup>92</sup> UC Berkeley Professor Lisa Garcia-Bedolla, interview with author, March 13 2014

<sup>93</sup> California Department of Education, “Local Control Funding Formula Overview”, 2014

achievement of Oakland, cannot be the crux of refugee public school education. This is because 1) this technique is not publicly administered or implemented across the nation for all refugee students, and is rather a result of luck on the student's behalf on whether or not they have access to a school like OIHS with the abilities to foster these relationships, and 2) strengthening community-school relationships do not address the curriculum or pedagogy issues disadvantaging adolescent newcomers in the public school system.

Refugees in Oakland enter a resettlement network of community partners that runs deeply, allowing the International model of OIHS to be successful at managing resettlement for youth: a VOLAG is assigned to a refugee family; the IRC connects that family to their school district; OUSD's RASAP (Refugee Asylee Student Assistance Program) advises them on the best schools to attend; the IRC education liaison takes them to OIHS on their first day; they join Soccer Without Borders afterschool; they find an internship with a local business; a Refugee Transitions tutor comes to their home; and eventually, refugees graduate or dropout, pursuing an independent life with the tools OIHS and its partners have provided. When assistance from resettlement agencies ends, the most logical centralized support network for refugees during the socialization process is their child's school. School-based resettlement partnerships can serve as multiyear supports for refugee families, easing adolescent refugees' socialization and transition into the public school system. With this, all layers of the redefined success model for adolescent newcomers can be addressed, including learning English, building social networks, emotional support, and academic achievement aiming towards college attendance.

Research and interviews on the refugee experience in Oakland, CA with OIHS have shown the lack of institutional support for adolescent newcomers in the American public school system. This case study has revealed the importance of a school being able to focus on teaching,

not resettlement or socialization, to properly serve their students. ELL programs, required by federal law to be offered at schools with newcomer students, currently highlight socialization over academic preparedness or wholesome learning. School-community networks for families should be bolstered and grown to support refugee students, so that teachers and the school's organization can focus on education rather than other important resettlement issues.

There are currently no appropriate assessments to measure adolescent newcomer achievement, gauge their learning needs or to hold the system accountable for their progress. This project has shown the flaws in the standard CA school performance evaluation methods and highlighted how for adolescent refugees greater understanding of contextual challenges, socio-economic levels, and resettlement issues is necessary to fully understand how a school is serving its students. Understanding these alternative metrics of success evaluation, further studies comparing the post-high school trajectories of adolescent refugees in Internationals and in traditional schools with ELL programs should be conducted to determine which model best suits adolescent refugee students.

As OIHS matures and approaches its 10<sup>th</sup> year of operations in 2017, their accommodating school structure, like the 5<sup>th</sup> year system, will continue to grow and offer support to their students, increasing the opportunities for graduation and success for adolescent refugees that require additional learning time. Alternative models, such as the Internationals, allow students to complete their education at a more feasible pace, but this is only available to students with these resources near where they live—unlucky adolescent refugees in districts without supportive models like OIHS tend to drop out or fail out of high school instead.<sup>94</sup> This is what the founder of OIHS, Carmelita Reyes cites as her motivation to begin OIHS, to attempt to

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<sup>94</sup> McBrien (2005), 344

counterbalance the significant lack of adolescent newcomer support in Oakland.<sup>95</sup> However, no model can completely overcome the institutionalized disadvantages of culturally biased testing systems or unreasonable timelines for adolescent refugees to graduate high school. It is against these overwhelming odds and unaccommodating system that OIHS is working to redefine success for adolescent refugees and offer refugees the support needed to graduate through community partnerships, integrated English learning in content classes, and supportive services.

I believe that strengthening community-school relationships, focusing on phonetics and decoding for refugees with no English experience, and better working relationships between VOLAGs, the district, community organizations, and schools to support refugee needs is necessary to create a space in the public education system for adolescent refugees to succeed. I also believe that with these additional elements OIHS will continue to increase graduation and college attendance rates as the school matures beyond its 8<sup>th</sup> year of operations, seen in the success of Brooklyn International High School. Exploration of these proposals is outside of the scope of this thesis and demands individual studies to determine their impact on refugee students in public schools. Clarifying the relationships and responsibilities of resettlement actors, schools, districts, community organizations, and federal agencies, would benefit OIHS and their students, and would benefit all refugees in the U.S. public school system by defining where academic or emotional services are coming from. This addresses the problem of OIHS becoming the *de facto* supportive service provider for students and having to direct attention and funds towards these needs rather than advancing academic attainment. It is not fair to force schools to become the main supportive service providers for students, and yet by ignoring the status of refugee youth during resettlement the government effectively places this responsibility in the hands of schools, which OIHS is willing and able to accept but others let fall through the cracks.

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<sup>95</sup> Carmelita Reyes Guest Lecture Video, UC Berkeley Center for Latin American Studies (12 June 2012)

By allowing entry to refugee families, the U.S. does offer them a respite from persecution, war or other crises by affording them housing, education, and employment assistance after their arrival. However, the current state of the public education system, and the large distance between resettlement organizations and schools, has left a structural support gap for refugee youth, causing low refugee achievement rates. The Internationals model is a valiant attempt to provide refugee students the support necessary to succeed in school and later in life, supporting a positive socialization process and addressing the needs of adolescent refugees in a way that no other institution is prepared to do. While isolation is not the best choice for adolescent refugees, because OIHS offers a plethora of benefits and opportunities not available at traditional schools through its redefined idea of adolescent refugee success, it is currently the best choice for adolescent refugee students. Using the knowledge discussed in this project, we must work to better this option so that refugees receive the benefits of an education no matter their age upon entry to the U.S., ensuring an independent future for all refugee youth.