



**A Report on Engaging Boys for Success ~
Academic Success for Afghan Boys
in the Thorncliffe Park Community:**

A Shared Responsibility

October 2012



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ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

We would like to thank our collaborators in this study for their commitment to this study and for their passionate concern about the learning needs of Afghan boys in Thorncliffe Park Schools.

Thorncliffe Neighbourhood Office

- Bill Pashby, Chair of the board and
Co-lead of the Corporate Team in this study
- Jehad Aliweiwi, Executive Director and
Co-lead of the Community-based Team in this study
- Ahmed Hussein, Director of Programs and Services

The administrators and staff of:

- Thorncliffe Park Public School
- Valley Park Middle School, Nickolas Stefanoff, Principal and
Co-lead of the School-based Team in this study
- East York Collegiate Institute
- Greenwood Secondary School
- Marc Garneau Collegiate Institute
- Monarch Park Collegiate Institute
- Sir Wilfrid Laurier Collegiate Institute

Gerri Gershon, Toronto District School Board Trustee, Ward 13, Don Valley West and
Co-lead of the Community-based Team in this study

Dr. Julia O'Sullivan, Dean, Ontario Institute for Studies in Education and
Co-lead of the Research Team in this study

CONTEXT

This study was initiated by Jehad Aliweiwi, Director of the Thorncliffe Neighbourhood Office. Mr. Aliweiwi had anecdotal information that suggested that Afghan boys in neighbourhood schools were performing considerably below the level of Afghan girls in the same schools. He was also concerned about the relatively high number of Afghan boys who were not graduating from secondary school.

Thornccliffe Park is a densely populated, culturally diverse Toronto community. Challenges facing students in this neighbourhood can include language barriers, parent/community engagement, economic stresses, lack of role models and educational services. These are not challenges unique to this community. It is, rather, a local representation of a larger national concern: the dropout rate among boys and certain minority groups remains unacceptably high.

In October 2011, Jehad Aliweiwi, Director, Thornccliffe Neighbourhood Office, approached Veronica Lacey, President and CEO, The Learning Partnership, with concerns about a trend he was seeing in the Thornccliffe Park neighbourhood: boys from Afghanistan were struggling in school and frequently not completing their secondary education. As a follow-up to that discussion, The Learning Partnership offered to coordinate a dialogue with the community, bringing together people who shared an interest in supporting Afghan boys and their families in the area.

METHODOLOGY

An initial meeting was held at The Learning Partnership office to begin exploring the concerns that had been raised and ways in which they might be addressed.

On December 19, 2011, the first meeting of the *Engaging Boys for Success ~ Academic Success for Afghan Boys in the Thornccliffe Park Community* steering committee was held, hosted by The Learning Partnership. Four working groups were established at this meeting. Participants at this initial meeting were asked to suggest the names of other community members and educators who might wish to participate (see Appendix 1 for the team membership).

The Learning Partnership hired Dr. Sylvia Solomon as project coordinator of the initiative and, shortly following the initial meeting, Dr. Solomon met with the co-leads to assist in planning work over the winter months. In early January 2012, she also met with many of the staff of the Thornccliffe Neighbourhood Office to provide them with an opportunity to share both their observations and concerns about the progress of Afghan boys in Toronto schools.

Also in January, a team meeting was held with additional community and school participants. Each working group presented a draft work plan for gathering more information over the winter. A process was approved for focus groups involving students, parents and community members.

Each working groups addressed the following three questions:

- 1) What works to support success for Afghan students?
- 2) What are the barriers faced by Afghan students and their families?
- 3) What would improve success for Afghan students?

A final team meeting was held in June 2012. The results of the focus groups and the first two case studies were shared with the full team who then worked in smaller groups to review the findings and generate a set of recommendations for next steps that would support improved success for Afghan boys.

The Toronto District School Board (TDSB) Research Department provided the research team with relevant student success data. Four key achievement indicators were identified: Grade 6 Education Quality and Accountability Office (EQAO) mathematics results, first-time eligible Ontario Secondary School Literacy Test (OSSLT) results, graduation results, and 17-year old post-secondary data.

For this study, the Toronto District School Board (TDSB) identified Afghan students on the basis of their country of birth as well as those students or families who spoke Dari and/or Pashto.

In order to gain deeper understanding of both the successes and challenges that Afghan students are facing, a series of nineteen focus groups were held with students, parents and teachers in one elementary school, one middle school, and four secondary schools over winter 2012.

Focus groups in Dari/Pashto, were organized and conducted by the Thorncliffe Neighbourhood Office. When translation was required, both a translator and a note-taker attended. Notes were taken at all focus groups and transcripts with all personal indicators removed were analyzed by The Learning Partnership. A total of 164 people (students, parents, and teachers) participated.

TABLE 1: FOCUS GROUP PARTICIPATION

LOCATION	BOYS	GIRLS	PARENTS	TEACHERS
	Valley Park Middle School	7	6	4
Thornccliffe Park PS	7	4	7	3
Marc Garneau CI	9	6	6	6
Monarch Park CI/Greenwood SS	33	-	7	-
East York CI	8	-	-	-
Sir Wilfrid Laurier CI	14	14	8	9
TOTALS	78	30	32	24

Four case studies were also conducted in order to better understand the experiences of families who are immigrants to Canada. (Appendix 2 – four case studies)

RESULTS

The student success data provided by the TDSB indicated achievement differences between Afghan students and the total TDSB population as well as gender differences.

Analysis of the focus group transcripts identified a number of themes that appeared in the comments of students, parents, and teachers. These themes recurred in discussions about challenges Afghan students are facing, exploration of what has been helpful to Afghan students and their families, and what additional elements could be more helpful in the future. A summary of the focus group feedback is found in Appendix 3 (*What are the Recurring Challenges/Issues*), Appendix 4 (*What Has Been Helpful in Making You and Your Children Feel Comfortable at School*), and Appendix 5 (*What Would Help Students*).

Eight key themes identified were:

1. Language
2. Prior schooling
3. Social-emotional issues
4. Culture
5. Expectations
6. Pedagogy/school approaches
7. Engagement
8. Resources

A brief analysis of comments – by themes – and suggestions that arose from both the analysis of the focus group findings and the case studies follows.

1. Language

Students, parents and teachers all identified the lack of English language skills as a significant challenge for Afghan students. It is not simply that students do not have adequate English language skills; they often do not have any background regarding the concepts being taught. Afghan students who enter Ontario schools in the primary grades have the advantage of being able to learn the language sufficiently to support further academic learning. For students who enter in late elementary school or secondary school, the language barrier appears to be almost insurmountable.

Suggestions related to language include:

English language proficiency is a key element in success and more could be done to enable students to build towards the required proficiency for success. This could include:

- 1.1 Access to reception centres – with continuous intake – that can assess students' English language proficiency and recommend strategies for learning English;
- 1.2 Providing opportunities/mechanisms/resources that enable students to continue learning and communicating in their own language as English language skills develop;
- 1.3 Revising the English Language Learner funding model so that it is based on actual student need rather than the overall number of ESL/ELD learners
 - 1.3.1 Both the federal and provincial government should be approached for adequate funding.

2. Prior schooling

For most Canadian students, war and civil unrest are abstract concepts and schooling is constant from kindergarten through high school and beyond. Students from Afghanistan have a very different experience. Many reported having no/little/broken educational histories.

Most of the secondary students participating in this study were born in Afghanistan but their journey to Canada includes a variety of countries and experiences. Each move meant entering a school that (a) may have taught in a language unfamiliar to them, and (b) had a new set of expectations and methodologies. Most of the elementary students participating in this study were born “en route” to Canada. Many of these students experienced traumatic events in Afghanistan and during their journeys to Canada

Before leaving Afghanistan, parents indicated that their children had not had access to schooling for extended periods of time because of the political situation in the country. Girls were even less likely than boys to have received ongoing education in Afghanistan.

Even when schooling was available in the countries they traveled through, many students were unable to attend regularly. Political issues in these countries often made it unsafe for them to attend school. Students as young as ten were often required to help their families financially and this meant they could not attend school or that their attendance was irregular.

If the family spent time in Pakistan en route to Canada it is likely the children did not have any schooling. If they were fortunate enough to have schooling, it would be up to Grade 10 and the language of instruction would be either Urdu or English – languages they likely did not know.

If the student spent time in Russia en route to Canada they were provided with access to education through UNHCR (United Nations High Commission for Refugees). School went to Grade 12 with an emphasis on sciences, and instruction was in Russian.

If the family stayed for a short period in Uzbekistan and Tajikistan, they had no schooling because they would have to stay more than a year to be accepted in school.

Hong Kong and Denmark were generally short stops en route, and there was likely no access to education in those countries.

If the family traveled through Syria they were able to attend school but the language of instruction would be Arabic which the students would have to learn.

Students had access to schooling in India only if they were there for a length of time. If they could go to school they would be taught in English – again, a new language for them.

If the student spent time in Iran en route to Canada their access to education was limited. They could attend if they had the money to pay high school fees.

Suggestions related to prior schooling include:

- 2.1 Work with schools and community partners to provide more readiness for school programs;
- 2.2 Assess and consider prior learning in determining placement of students and support services required;
- 2.3 Communicate with parents – in their home language – so they understand the learning requirements and expectations of the Ontario school system.

3. Social/emotional issues

Afghan students arriving in Ontario schools often have a history of extreme physical and emotional stress. It seems reasonable to assume that many of them are suffering the effects of post traumatic stress.

As well as dealing with the direct effects of their previous experiences, parents have lived through enormous stress. Many of these parents began their lives in middle-class families engaged in business. They were able to attend school and often graduate high school and planned on pursuing successful careers. By the time they arrived in Canada, many had been out of the mainstream workforce for some time and were finding it difficult to find meaningful work in Toronto. In addition, the families – who most often lived in extended family relationships with a great deal of support for child-rearing and income-generating – were quite isolated.

Suggestions related to social/emotional issues include:

- 3.1 Ensure that students who have experienced trauma are provided with adequate psychological support;
 - 3.1.1 Develop materials for “Psychological First Aid” for refugee students;
 - 3.1.2 Engage more community support to work with students/families who are struggling with social/emotional issues upon arrival in Ontario;
 - 3.1.3 Establish lunch-time programs where students who speak the same language can make friends and build support;
 - 3.1.4 School boards consider developing a contact list of agencies that can support newcomer families; this list needs to be developed in a range of languages;

- 3.2 Establish a community group of successful young Afghans who could provide ongoing support and mentorship;
- 3.3 Approach the federal and provincial governments to provide needed funding for programs that address the social/emotional needs of refugee/newly-arrived parents and students as part of their overall strategy for successful immigration.

4. Cultural issues

There are two ways in which culture becomes a significant issue for Afghan students and their families.

The first is the culture shock they experience upon arrival in Canada. Although the initial period may seem exciting and positive, a sense of dislocation and general unease soon follows. Many of the symptoms of culture shock were noted in the focus group responses: anger, confusion, frustration, withdrawal, negative feelings about the culture of the host country, and an inability to concentrate or work effectively.

The second issue identified around culture was the sense that the Afghan culture is not respected. Students and parents reported feeling “pre-judged” by their culture and students report being bullied because of their cultural background. This disrespect for their culture was also noted when students and parents talked about the difficulties in maintaining their own cultural standards (e.g., attendance at daily prayers, dressing modestly).

Suggestions related to cultural issues include:

- 4.1 Review materials being used in class, and the school environment, to confirm that they are inclusive
- 4.2 Curricular and extra-curricular activities should reflect the interests of the community (e.g., choirs in their own languages, sports teams such as soccer or cricket).

5. Expectations

Students overwhelmingly reported that they don't understand what is expected of them in school. This was corroborated by parents, who expressed that they had few opportunities to really learn about the educational system in Ontario and what the school expectations here are. Fear and intimidation were the most commonly noted forms of “encouragement” students had experienced in schools prior to arriving in Canada.

Afghan parents expressed the same kinds of overall expectations for their children as all parents would express; they wanted them to study hard, do what they are asked to do, and succeed in school. Parents often indicated that they had hopes that their children would graduate from high school and go on to post-secondary education.

Suggestions related to expectations include:

- 5.1 Provide both students and parents with sufficient information – in their home language – to understand the expectations of the Ontario school system;
- 5.2 Expand the availability of settlement workers, translators and interpreters so that students and parents can access information on an ongoing basis.

6. Pedagogy/school approaches

Students and parents both indicated that they are not familiar with the pedagogic approaches of schools in Ontario. Prior schooling was based much more on rote learning. Participatory learning is new for them.

Notions of appropriate standards of discipline were raised repeatedly. Parents expect more discipline from schools and often suggested that introducing school uniforms would be helpful. Students felt that they could not access enough help from teachers/schools to support their learning.

Suggestions related to pedagogy/school approaches include:

- 6.1 Develop resources that compare expectations, pedagogy and school approaches in Ontario to those in other countries;
- 6.2 Support pilot projects in schools that address the needs of Afghan students and assess these projects for their effectiveness.

7. Engagement

Students, parents and teachers concurred that there were not enough opportunities for students to become involved in the extracurricular activities that would make them feel like a part of the school community. Parents expressed frustration regarding their contact/communication with schools, most frequently citing that the lack of interpreters as a significant barrier for them.

Suggestions related to engagement include:

- 7.1 Work with parents and communities to find more ways to engage students at school, developing more consciousness about the community and how the school structure has an impact on families
- 7.2 Provide opportunities for school boards and agencies that provide services/supports to Afghan refugees to collaboratively develop strategies for engaging parents in the education of their children;
- 7.3 Provide more opportunities for students across cultures – including Afghan students and other refugee/immigrant students – to become involved with leadership activities.

8. Resources

The most common concern about resources was the lack of material in the students' home languages. Students, parents and teachers all indicated that more access to dual-language resources would be helpful. The need for more review sheets (with feedback), more access to technological supports, and more opportunities for supported learning were all identified.

Suggestions related to resources include:

- 8.1 Develop or acquire more resources in students' home languages
- 8.2 Work with community partners to establish an online service for homework where students could get help in their home languages.

What happens if nothing changes?

Refugee students and their families have been, by definition, the target of repeated violence, discrimination, and trauma in their countries of origin.¹ It is therefore reasonable to assume that information/insight gathered through both the focus groups and case studies indicate that there are significant issues of concern regarding Afghan boys in Thorncliffe Park schools but that these issues/concerns are not limited to this particular geographical location or to this particular group of refugee students. Research indicates that “the legacy of trauma is superimposed on the already complex acculturation and adjustment process. Numerous studies and literature suggest that multiple stressors impact refugee children in resettlement: trauma, migration and loss of the familiar, acculturation and ensuing difficulties between generations.”²

¹ DeCapa, A., Smathers, W. & Tang, I.(2007). Schooling interrupted. *Educational Leadership*, 64(6), 40-46.

² Joyce, A., Earnest, J., deMori, G. & Silvagni, G. (2010). The Experiences of Students from Refugee Backgrounds at Universities in Australia: Reflections on the Social, Emotional and Practical Challenges. *Journal of Refugee Studies*, 25(2). <http://jrs.oxfordjournals.org/content/23/1/82.full>

A recent report by the OECD indicates that “The economic crisis is damaging labour market conditions in OECD countries more rapidly and severely than initially thought. It is likely to hit immigrants and their families particularly hard, threatening most of the progress accomplished in recent years in terms of labour market outcomes.”³ It is reasonable, therefore, to assume that meeting the needs of Afghan students – and indeed all refugee students – requires a concerted effort that involves the participation of schools, school boards, faculties of education, and provincial and federal governments.

RECOMMENDATIONS FOR ACTION

1.0 Equitable and Inclusive Schools

1.1 Flexibility and individualization of teaching and learning

Support a flexible school year and school day to provide students with more programs in the summer and to meet individual student needs on an ongoing basis such as the development of an online service for homework support where students could get help in their home languages.

Develop or acquire more resources in students’ home languages, including dual-language resources and review materials being used in class to ensure they are unbiased.

Provide more access to translators/interpreters during the school day so that students have opportunities to learn in their home languages.

Provide more opportunities for students across cultures, including Afghan students, to become involved in co-instructional and leadership activities that match their interests and prior learning experiences.

1.2 Professional development and materials

Provide professional development on understanding the needs of refugee students and their families so that schools can more effectively address a range of educational and emotional needs. These include the assessment of prior learning, cultural understanding, and methodologies for working with refugee students.

Provide more opportunities for staff members across schools to meet and explore ways in which they can support these students.

³ OECD. *International Migration and the Economic Crisis: Understanding the links and shaping policy responses*. <http://www.oecd.org/dataoecd/45/18/46292981.pdf>

1.3 Parent and community partnerships

Provide students and parents with sufficient information in their home languages to understand curriculum, pedagogy and school approaches.

Work with parents and communities to find more ways to engage students.

Engage in discussions with various agencies that provide services/supports to Afghan refugees so they can develop collaborate ways of engaging parents in the education of their children.

2.0 Federal and provincial governments:

Support English language learners up to a provincially established standard of proficiency.

Expand the use of settlement workers in schools to support students with significant prior learning gaps.

Expand the availability of settlement workers, translators and interpreters so that students and parents can access information on an ongoing basis.

Fund programs for the successful integration of newcomers, including those that meet the social/emotional needs of Afghan parents and students.

Ensure that Afghan parents and students have access to ongoing primary medical care.

3.0 Partnerships

Meeting the needs of Afghan and other refugee/newcomer students needs to be a collaborative effort, involving all partners in education. As such, the following recommendations are made for engaging both communities and Faculties of Education in supporting success.

3.1 For the community:

Establish a community group of successful young Afghans who could provide ongoing mentorship and support.

Work with the Toronto District School Board to provide additional access to translators/interpreters and materials in home languages.

Provide support for the development of a contact list of resources, agencies and religious leaders that support Afghan families and make available in several languages.

Work with schools to provide mentorships for Afghan students having difficulties learning as well as those that have experienced significant trauma.

3.2 For Faculties of Education:

Provide opportunities for all students to learn more about the history and needs of Afghan students and other groups of refugee students.

Include pedagogy and resources that address the needs of refugee students in teacher training programs.

**APPENDIX 1: LIST OF PARTICIPANTS IN
ENGAGING BOYS FOR SUCCESS ~ ACADEMIC SUCCESS FOR AFGHAN BOYS
IN THE THORNCLIFFE PARK COMMUNITY**

Community

Bill Pashby, Chair of the Board
Thorncliffe Neighbourhood Office

Jehad Aliweiwi, Executive Director
Thorncliffe Neighbourhood Office

Ahmed Hussein
Director of Programs and Services
Thorncliffe Neighbourhood Office

Risa Abella
Manager, Family Child & Youth Services
Thorncliffe Neighbourhood Office

Tabassum Dana
Community representative
Thorncliffe Park neighbourhood

Afreen Idrees
Community representative
Thorncliffe Park neighbourhood

Nissar Ahmad
Community representative
Thorncliffe Park neighbourhood

Yama Abdul Rashid
Community representative
Thorncliffe Park neighbourhood

Sayed Wadood Saydy
Community representative
Thorncliffe Park neighbourhood

Toronto District School Board

Rauda Dickinson
Superintendent, NE6 Region

Gerri Gershon
Trustee, Ward 13, Don Valley West

Schools – Principals and Representatives

Kevin Battaglia, Principal
Thorncliffe Park Public School

Nickolas Stefanoff, Principal
Sandra Larosa, Vice-Principal
Valley Park Middle School

Ricky Goldenberg, Principal
Chris Sharp, Vice-Principal
Cathy Naphin, Guidance Counsellor
Marc Garneau Collegiate Institute

Paul Ambrose, Principal
Ahmad Tariq Fahimi, Teacher/CASSI Coordinator
Sir Wilfrid Laurier Collegiate Institute

Karen Hume, Principal
East York Collegiate Institute

Cynthia Abernethy, Principal
Monarch Park Collegiate Institute

Catherine Ure, Principal
New Kindergarten School (Thorncliffe Park PS)

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The Learning Partnership

Veronica Lacey, CEO and President

Gerry Connelly, Director, Policy and Research

Dr. Zahra Bhanji, Manager, Policy and Research

Dr. Sylvia Solomon, Project Coordinator

APPENDIX 2: FOUR CASE STUDIES

Following the focus group process, families were selected for in-depth interviews that would help us understand their experiences prior to arriving in Toronto. The case studies were conducted at the Thorncliffe Neighbourhood Office with an interviewer, a translator, and a note-taker. The names of the family members have been changed and there is no information to identify the schools these students attend. These family stories help us to better understand the extent of trauma, violence, and adversity these families – and many of our students – have endured.

Family #1

Father – Ali

Mother – Malia

Son – Abdul

Son – Haroon

Son – Zabi

Daughter – Rubina

Ali and Malia were both born in Afghanistan. Ali grew up in a middle-class family in Kabul, where he lived with his parents and five siblings. He attended school until Grade 12 and after graduation went into his father's business as a shopkeeper. Malia also grew up in Kabul in a higher class family with government connections – her grandfather was vice president for the King. When the government was overthrown her family was persecuted and she was no longer allowed to attend school, despite the fact that she had only completed Grade 7.

Ali, Malia and their children lived in a house, owned a car and were doing fairly well. Both Abdul and Haroon attended school in Kabul, leaving in the middle of Grade 2. By 1998 conditions had worsened considerably for the family as the Taliban became more powerful. Women weren't allowed to work or go to school, had to dress in burkas, and were threatened if they didn't comply. The family left Kabul and went to Mazar e Sharef in northern Afghanistan where they lived for 10 months. While there, the two older sons went to school for several months, entering in Grade 3. When the Taliban arrived in Mazar e Sharef the family fled to Russia. En route to Russia they stopped briefly in Turkmenistan and then moved on to Moscow where they lived for the next nine years.

Life in Moscow was extremely difficult, both because they did not have proper documents and because Afghans were persecuted by the Russian police. Ali would often be arrested at the end of a work day and taken to prison where he was sometimes beaten and his earnings for the day confiscated. The older two sons were also frequently arrested and beaten.

Finding living accommodations was also difficult because Russians didn't want to rent to illegal immigrants. When they were able to find a place to rent (generally a room or two) the rent was double what it would have been had they been in the country legally. The family struggled against homelessness and were only able to earn enough to pay for basic food needs and rent. The UNHCR did provide some assistance in the way of food supplies (rice, flour, sugar) but these were only sufficient for a few days. If an Afghan family joined the Communist party they were given somewhat better treatment.

Rubina was born while the family lived in Russia. The boys were allowed to attend an Afghan school in Moscow, but their attendance was very irregular since they were often helping their father to earn money. They were placed in age-appropriate classes regardless of their lack of prior learning but they were able to complete Grade 5 and 6 respectively. The sons complained that life in Russia was too hard and they wished they were back in Afghanistan even with the difficulties presented by the Taliban. Zabi began attending a Russian government school in Moscow and then transferred to the Afghan school. Rubina, because she was born in Russia, attended a government school and completed Grade 3.

Ali applied, through the UNHCR, to leave Russia. They were given no choice in where they would go and knew very little about Canada before coming here. The family was initially sent to Quebec City in November 2006 where they had access to school. However, instruction was in French, a language they didn't know. In late 2007, the family made the decision to move to Toronto where they knew a larger Afghan community existed. Ali had a friend in Toronto and so he initially went on his own, rented an apartment, and then brought the rest of the family from Quebec.

The family was initially glad to be in Toronto where they were part of a larger Afghan community. A friend helped them apply for social assistance and Ali subsequently received funds from the Ontario Disability Support Program (ODSP) because of poor health (asthma, problems with his knees, the effects of the medication he is taking) that resulted both from working outdoors in Russia in minus 40 degree weather and the repeated beatings he received. The children were 19, 17, 15 and 8 when they arrived in Toronto and began attending a school in the east end of the city where, once again, they were placed age-appropriately. The older son attended adult ESL classes and the three younger children were registered in public schools. Before long the boys were getting into fights with Pakistani boys in their schools and Haroon quickly stopped attending school. All of the children were afraid when they went to school, fearing being attacked by Pakistani boys.

Currently Zabi is in Grade 9 but does not attend school regularly. There are daily family arguments about his need to study and do well in school but they have little impact and it is not unusual for him to attend school no more than one or two days every week. There seems to be little his parents can do to motivate him to do better in school. This has become another major stressor for the family and there is little positive communication between Zabi and his parents. This is also the case for the older two sons who are apparently working but not contributing to the family. Ali commented that if he knew this was what he was going to have to deal with – family breakdown, disrespect of parents – he would not have come to Canada.

Ruhima is currently in Grade 7 and doing well at school. She is helpful at home, trying her best to take care of her parents and do her school work.

The two older boys spent a number of years involved with a group of friends. They began drinking alcohol with their friends and frequenting clubs in the evening. They have since become quite strident in their practice of Islam and frequently argue with their father about his not being a “good Muslim,” challenging him for not having a beard and following stricter Muslim practices. They put a great deal of pressure on Ruhima to be a “real” Muslim and Ali is concerned about how this will affect her in the years ahead. The two older sons are generally at the mosque all night, coming home in the morning and sleeping through the day. It is clear from the anecdotes that Ali shared with us that the parents do not see any way to influence their children and – in his words – put them “on the right path”.

Ali reported that he has never been given any information about how the Ontario school system works, and he thinks that his children have only a little more understanding of the expectations of schooling in Toronto. He believes that if they had perhaps understood more about the school system and how it works the boys might have remained in school longer. Ali attends school whenever he is asked to come. However, as there are rarely interpreters available, there is little value in his attendance. When he was registering his daughter for school there was an interpreter who spoke Farsi, a language that he does not understand. He has received some support from settlement workers who have occasionally been able to interpret for him at parent-teacher interviews and curriculum nights.

This is clearly a family in distress. The numerous traumatic transitions they have endured and the years of only intermittent schooling, combined with the frustrations of living in a fairly isolated environment (compared to the extended family living arrangements in Afghanistan where Ali still has a mother, three brothers and a sister) have taken a toll on everyone. The years of turmoil have had a negative impact on the parents’ relationship as well and this adds to the unhappiness and stress at home.

“We left Afghanistan so that our children could have a better life,” Ali commented. He worries that his older sons are becoming extremists and that he has no way to change this course of events. He believes that nothing would be more valuable than his children knowing how to live a better life, understanding both their rights and responsibilities. He holds little hope for the future of his family.

Family #2

Father – Mohammed (47 years old)

Mother – Zarmina (42 years old)

Son – Wakil (21 years old)

Son – Reza (16 years old)

Daughter – Amina (18 years old)

Daughter – Saeeda (7 years old)

Mohammed and Zarmina were both born in Kabul in middle-class families (their fathers were both businessmen) and lived what they called “a simple life.” Mohammed grew up with his parents, five sisters and two brothers (who were both killed during the civil war), and Zarmina was raised in a household containing 18 people – parents, grandparents, aunts and uncles. They both completed high school (Grade 12) before the civil war began although going to school was not easy for them as they had to walk 45 minutes each way and there was a lack of resources available to them at school. During the years of the civil war it was not possible for either Mohammed or Zarmina to pursue a post-secondary education. Indeed, Zarmina’s father was afraid that if she left her home she might be killed.

The years between 1986 and 1996 were difficult ones for their families as conditions changed dramatically. There was a shortage of food and no sense of safety. In 1992, two and half years after marrying, Mohammed, Zarmina and their first child left Kabul to seek refuge in Baghlan (north of Kabul) where the situation was somewhat better. The family remained in Baghlan for six years during which time they had two more children. Mohammed opened a photography business and their older son attended school in Baghlan, the younger children were not old enough to go to school.

When the Taliban arrived in Baghlan in 1998 they killed most members of the Hazarah tribe⁴ and since both Mohammed and Zarmina were Hazarah they had to escape. First Mohammed left Baghlan, then Zarmina, her three children and her two sisters-in-law had to flee with whatever they could carry. They traveled mostly on foot through the mountains between Afghanistan and Pakistan for five days. On the way they saw bodies and Zarmina would cover her children's eyes so they would not get frightened. Zarmina only had one box of chocolates in her purse and a small bag of flour to feed them. She made dough and they accessed water whenever they could. After five days of walking they were told that the Taliban had taken over Baghlan and announced that no women or children would be harmed if they returned. Zarmina returned with her children but her husband was still at risk so did not return. Life was different when they returned to Baghlan, Zarmina had to wear a burqa and could not work. Her father-in-law stayed with them for two months.

A month after returning, Zarmina found out that her husband had been shot seven times by the Taliban and had been left for dead at the side of a road. He was found alive and carried him back to Baghlan on a donkey. Their neighbour was a doctor and took care of Mohammed in his home since it was too dangerous to take him to a hospital. However, the neighbour was Pashtoon and was putting himself at risk caring for Mohammed.

A month later her father-in-law found someone who would, for a price, smuggle the family into Iran and provide false passports. They began with about 20 people in the back of a pick-up truck and the smuggler picked up others – for a fee – along the way. After a brief (five or six hour) stop in Zahidan they traveled on to Mashhad – exhausted and very cold (it was snowing already). From Mashhad they took a bus to Tehran where Zarmina had a brother and a cousin. They lived with their family in Tehran for about a week while Mohammed received treatment at a hospital for his injuries. They had an aunt who lived in Germany and she sent them some money. They found an inexpensive place to live in Sabdasht, a village about an hour's travel from Tehran, and stayed there for about a year and a half. They then returned to Tehran, where the family found an inexpensive basement apartment and Mohammed was able to find work as a carpenter. They stayed in Tehran until 2011.

⁴ The Hazāra are a Persian-speaking people who live mainly in central Afghanistan and Pakistan. They are overwhelmingly Shia Muslims and comprise the third largest ethnic group of Afghanistan,, forming about 9% (or, according to some sources, up to 18%) of the total population

There was a school close to where they lived in Tehran but because it was a private school run by an Afghan businessman, only Wakil, the oldest son, was able to attend because of the high cost of tuition. They were taught in Dari but print material was in Farsi. Wakil was able to complete Grades 1 through 7 in Tehran. Slowly their lives improved; Mohammed continued working five days a week as a carpenter and worked two days a week cleaning homes in a wealthy area of the city. During this time they had to apply for – and pay for – maintaining their refugee status every six months.

One of Zarmina's sisters lived in Toronto and wanted to sponsor the family to join her. Sponsorship was easier from Pakistan than from Iran, so the family moved to Pakistan. They rented a house in Rawal Pindi (near Islamabad) and Zarmina found work as a teacher's assistant in a Montessori nursery school – she had already learned some Urdu and some English. The school offered to provide accommodation to the family and gave Mohammed a job as a caretaker.

In August, 2011, they came to Canada. From the time the family left Iran and arrived in Toronto, none of the children had attended school. In Pakistan, Wakil did not want to go to school and it was not possible for the younger children to attend. The children had learned a little English while living in Pakistan. When they arrived in Toronto, Amina was placed in Grade 12 and Reza was placed in Grade 11. Reza is doing fairly well in school and likes playing soccer. Amina is struggling and their family physician suggests that she might have a developmental disability. Zarmina has spoken with Amina's ESL teacher about this and requested an assessment. It has not yet been done. Saeeda is doing well in Grade 2.

No one from the school has ever explained to Zarmina and Mohammed how the school system in Ontario works. Fortunately, her sister has been able to provide them with a lot of basic information and Zarmina is not hesitant to ask questions to understand more. Zarmina and Mohammed are both attending ESL classes themselves and are hoping their children will be able to graduate from high school and go on to post-secondary education. Mohammed says that he will do what it takes to support his children's education. They are looking to the schools for more support in disciplining and motivating their children to continue with their education.

FAMILY #3

Father – Kassam

Mother – Zahra

Son – Matin (15 years old)

Son – Karim (11 years old)

Son – Wahid (three months old)

Daughter – Sadia (13 years old)

Daughter – Zohra (six years old)

Both Kassam and Zahra were born in Kabul and both grew up in middle class families with fathers who were shopkeepers. Zahra grew up living with her parents, four sisters and two brothers, while Kassam grew up living with his parents, three brothers and six sisters. Kassam was able to graduate from high school and attend a university engineering program for two years before the Taliban took control of Afghanistan. Zahra was able to complete Grade 11 before restrictions made it impossible for her to continue. She then studied at home and was able to take her final exams – and pass – enabling her to graduate from high school. She had hoped to go on to university and become a teacher but was not able to pursue this dream. She was married when she was in Grade 8.

Because of his ability to speak English, Kassam was employed by the Canadian forces in Kandahar. Zahra and the children left their own home in Kabul and moved to a suburb of Kandahar (Paghman) where they lived in two rooms with Zahra's family while Kassam lived with the Canadian army. Life in Paghman was difficult due to the restrictions imposed by the Taliban, but Zahra's parents had a large garden where they were able to grow food and Kassam was working so they had money to live on. The children attended school, although the "school" was a tent with dirt floors and there were frequently no teachers in attendance. The girls sometimes had a teacher because women weren't allowed to do any other jobs. It is worth noting that a full-time teacher earned \$50 a month and rent alone would be \$100 a month. The boys almost never had teachers since men were able to get other kinds of work and didn't want jobs with such small salaries. The children were interested in school and had a lot of encouragement from their mother. However, with little or no instruction they did not learn very much and even the oldest son was not able to read or write in his own language when they left Afghanistan.

Zahra had to hide the fact that her husband worked for the Canadian army because if where to become common knowledge she and her family would be subject to attack. They lived in Paghman for six years. While living there, they experienced three suicide bombings in which many people were killed. As well, a bridge under construction near their home was bombed and the children watched many people die.

It became known what Kassam did for a living and they had to flee to Kajumarash, a small village near Kabul, where they were not known. They lived in one small room in an old building infested with mice and scorpions. They had to stay inside because of the risk of being “found out” again and the children had no access to school. Any money they had been able to save was used to buy food and survive in Kajumarash. To buy food for the family Zahra would cover herself in a burqa and travel into Kabul, hoping that she wouldn’t get caught. Finally, in 2011, the family was able to immigrate to Toronto. Their relatives remain in Afghanistan.

When they arrived in Toronto, Matin (who was then 14 years old) was placed in a LEAP program.⁵ Matin is having difficulties in school which is not surprising since he has almost no prior formal schooling. He is particularly having problems understanding the social expectations in school here. Women in Afghanistan are often accosted by men who inappropriately touch them and Matin has had several incidents where he, too, has inappropriately touched girls here. The change in social/moral standards has – and continues to be – difficult for him. Zahra reports that although he attends the LEAP program and attempts to keep up with the work, it is frustrating for him. Sadia (currently in Grade 8) is also trying her best but is also finding school difficult. She is being recommended to enter a LEAP program next year when she starts high school. Karim was placed in Grade 5, he was in Grade 2 when he last attended school. He is experiencing great difficulties. He has been able to learn enough English to communicate with his peers but finds it very hard to learn in English. Karim spends most of his time in the regular classroom and is receiving some ESL support. Zahra (currently in Grade 1) is doing quite well. She is the one her mother relies on for translation when she goes into the community. She was able to attend LINC classes for a few months before she gave birth to Wahid three months ago.

Nobody has ever explained the Ontario school system to either parent. Kassam is the parent who generally talks to teachers since he is able to speak English. When Zahra tries to interact with teachers there is sometimes an interpreter available, although that interpreter speaks Urdu which is not Zahra’s first language. Zahra very much wants to have more interaction with the schools her children attend. She tries her best to help them with homework – as does Kasam when he can – but finds it frustrating that the only understanding of what goes on at school, and what the expectations are, is through her children. It is often hard to get the children to go to school because they are struggling both academically and socially. They are comfortable with other students from Afghanistan but quite uncomfortable with the rest of the students who often tease and bully them.

⁵ LEAP (Literacy Enrichment Academic Program) is a special program for students aged 11- 18 who did not have the opportunity to attend school regularly before arriving in Canada. LEAP offers these students a chance to gain English language, literacy, and mathematics skills so that they can catch up to other students their age.

The parents are both very concerned about the placement of their children in school, feeling that without the ability to speak English well and without prior schooling they are not likely to succeed even if they work hard. Often the children have difficulty sleeping, worrying about what will happen at school the next day.

In concluding the interview, Zahra said that she wished there was a transition class for her children to attend which would enable them to focus on learning English and some of the basic skills for school success that they are lacking. She thinks that the LEAP program is a good beginning, but that it still isn't enough to build the skills they need to be successful in school and isn't available at the elementary school level. She knows that it is likely too late for her own children, but she hopes that for a better situation for children who come to Toronto in the future.

FAMILY #4

Father – Akbar (killed in an explosion in Kabul in 1992)

Mother– Sadia (50 years old)

Son – (killed in an explosion in Kabul in 1994 when he was 13)

Son– Zaki (26 years old)

Son – Wakil (20 years old)

Son – Wali (18 years old)

Daughter– Aziza (28 years old)

Daughter – Rabia (24 years old)

Sadia was born in Mazar e Sharif, a city in the north of Afghanistan. Her father was a civil engineer and the family lived comfortably for many years. She grew up with four brothers (one graduated from university as an engineer and is currently working in Afghanistan, three graduated from Grade 12 but were not able to enter university and went into business), and three sisters (one completed medical school in Iran, one completed Grade 8 and one completed Grade 4). Sadia herself was only able to complete Grade 4. At the age of 16 a marriage was arranged to Akbar and they moved to Kabul where Akbar became the chief of security. After her husband and 13-year-old son were both killed in explosions in Kabul, she was afraid to remain in Afghanistan.

In 1995, Sadia left Afghanistan and moved to Iran, where she had family. Because she had entered Iran illegally, she had no identification papers and lived in fear that she would be sent back to Afghanistan. After five months she was granted refugee status through the UNHCR and was able to register all but her youngest child in schools. The children had a hard time in Iran because they were harassed by other children and struggled to adapt to the rules (e.g., wearing of hijab) that they had to follow.

The family lived in Iran for approximately a year, after which they moved to Paris, France, where Sadia's brother-in-law lived. He was able to sponsor her and provide her with a home. All of the children attended school in Paris for the three years they lived there. Sadia applied for refugee status but was turned down so she applied to come to Canada as a refugee and was accepted. The family relocated to Montreal, where they lived for eight years. Fortunately for the family, they all had some familiarity with French.

In Montreal, Sadia's two daughters and her older son were able to complete high school. After they moved to Toronto three years ago, her two daughters enrolled at York University, the older studying nursing and the younger studying pharmacy. Zaki (the oldest surviving son) dropped out of high school for a year so that he could earn money and buy a car but after a short while he realized that he could not afford the insurance and that is when he decided to pursue vocational training. He is now in an apprenticeship program in Montreal and hoping to find work.

Wakil graduated from high school in Toronto in 2011 and will be attending Ryerson University in September 2012. He hopes to become an engineer. Wali will be graduating from high school in June 2012.

Her sons were subject to a significant amount of bullying at school. They didn't tell their mother but she found out when she overheard their conversations. Despite this, Wakil was able to function well in school. Wali, on the other hand, has been reticent to go to school because of the bullying. Both have spoken about the gang situation at their high school. Wali was recently involved in a classroom altercation with boy who was bullying him. When Sadia went to talk to the vice principal about the incident there was no interpreter available and Wali had to translate. Sadia requested that Wali be transferred to another school because she feared for his safety, but the vice principal assured her that the other boy would no longer be attending the school. Even though Sadia knew about the bullying she was hesitant to approach the school because of the language barrier.

Sadia and Aziza visited Afghanistan in 2011 where an arranged marriage for Aziza took place. She married a young man who had once worked for her father. Her husband is well-educated and currently works for an Afghan television station, hosting a political talk-show. Aziza recently gave birth to a daughter and is taking a year off school but intends to continue her studies. Sadia will be taking care of the baby until Aziza's husband is able to emigrate from Afghanistan.

Sadia suffers from mental health issues and migraine headaches. She has been able to attend some group support sessions through the Afghan Women's Association but she requires more support. However, because of the lack of Dari-speaking mental health workers there are few alternatives for Sadia. Without the mental health resources that she requires, Sadia continues to be isolated even within her own community.

In spite of living in five places (Afghanistan, Iran, France, Montreal, Toronto) the family has been able to function fairly well and education is highly valued. At no point has anybody explained the Ontario educational system to Sadia and language continues to be a major barrier for her and she worries about son's safety. She does not have much interaction with the school because there is no one available to interpret.

**APPENDIX 3:
FOCUS GROUPS – WHAT ARE THE RECURRING CHALLENGES/ISSUES?**

STUDENTS	PARENTS	TEACHERS
THEME: LANGUAGE		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Learning English is one of the biggest challenges - Often don't understand concepts - Students who enter the lower grades can catch up with language. Students who start later don't have enough time to catch up 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Learning English is one of the biggest challenges 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Language holds students back - Language is the biggest obstacle
THEME: PRIOR LEARNING		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Many report having little/no/interrupted prior schooling - Don't know how to study and learn 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Each move meant another system - Many have little/no prior schooling and don't know how to "do" school - Expectations in each place are different 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Many have gaps in their prior learning - Lack of background in experiential learning
THEME: SOCIAL/EMOTIONAL		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - So much to overcome when they first arrive (adversity, language, culture shock) - Often feel bullied - Feeling a lack of trust in a system they don't understand and teachers who don't seem to care 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - No/little support for addressing trauma students have experienced - Students are being bullied - Often have few friends - Easily drawn into groups of "bad" students (drinking, drugs) - Students see well-educated parents unable to find work – so don't see the value of education - More recognition of student successes - Teachers don't seem to care about their students 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Afghan students may be bullied - Social and cultural adjustment to living in Canada; they need to understand Canadian social norms - The issues/challenges that come with poverty need to be addressed - Students have difficulty dealing with authority - Difficulty adjusting to western beliefs and traditions - Feeling neglected - Dealing with their parents struggles (economic and social/cultural)

STUDENTS	PARENTS	TEACHERS
THEME: CULTURAL		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Lack of cultural awareness or understanding - Boys have to attend mosque before school and arrive tired - Often have to attend mosque or Koran studies in the evening which leaves little time for homework - Feel pre-judged because of their culture - They don't have a shared "history" or background that is often needed (e.g. they haven't learned anything about western ancient civilizations) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Sense that little is expected from Afghan students - Loss of own culture and language - Teachers don't know enough about the culture of the students - More respect for the culture of the students 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Lack of contextual information when learning new concepts - Living with "old" values in a "new" country - View Afghan students as having an oppressive home life - Stigmatizing stereotypes are attached to Afghan students, especially boys - Parents' religious expectations
THEME: EXPECTATIONS		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Don't really understand what is expected of them - Everything "before" was based on fear (punishment, if you don't pass the test you don't pass the grade) - Feel threatened that they have to "drop" to applied courses if they aren't doing well 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Don't understand the Ontario educational system - Lack of discipline in schools - Having to pay for post-secondary education 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Expect Afghan students to do as well as any other students - Students are working as hard as expected - Irregular/poor attendance - Afghan students may have to work to help support families - Students expected to translate for their parents - Low parental expectations
THEME: PEDAGOGY / SCHOOL APPROACHES		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Teachers move into complex ideas too quickly - Yelling, detentions and suspensions don't help - Used to rote learning and not participatory learning - Teachers not strict enough - Teachers don't expect enough - Often feels like teachers don't care about them - Don't feel safe asking for help - Often have three or four tests on the same day - Can't get help at home with homework 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - School uniforms would be better - Not enough Afghan teachers 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Many students don't have time for homework because they have to work - Lack of experience with school methods and expectations

STUDENTS	PARENTS	TEACHERS
THEME: ENGAGEMENT		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Can't get involved in extra-curricular activities because they have to work or go to the mosque 		
THEME: RESOURCES		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Not enough access to technology - Not enough dictionaries and materials in their languages 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Not enough interpreters are available; parents often asked to bring their own interpreters to meetings - Students need interpreters in the classroom - Need school planners in home languages - Need information sent home in home languages 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Need resources to support home language.

**APPENDIX 4:
FOCUS GROUPS – WHAT HAS BEEN HELPFUL IN MAKING YOU AND YOUR
CHILDREN FEEL COMFORTABLE AT SCHOOL?**

STUDENTS	PARENTS	TEACHERS
THEME: LANGUAGE		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - ESL support - Doing cooking in the ESL class - Half day ESL classes where they can feel safe 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - ESL support 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Same language buddies - Interpreters
THEME: PRIOR LEARNING		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Teachers who don't penalize for past "unlearned" material 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Effective remediation; they often don't feel that they can help their children with school work 	
THEME: SOCIAL/EMOTIONAL		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Teachers who show that they care and who treat them respectfully - Teachers who address inappropriate behaviour as a learning opportunity - Teachers who help students stay focused - Teachers who get to know the students and then incorporate that knowledge into their teaching methods - "Project Respect" periods (one-on-one attention to build self concept) - Teachers with a lot of patience 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Welcoming environment - Friendly staff - Teachers who communicate that they care about the children 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Not clouding student behaviour with their abilities - Positive instead of negative attention - Giving them more responsibility in the classroom
THEME: CULTURAL		
		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Ensuring that students feel that their culture is respected
THEME: EXPECTATIONS		
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - School is enjoyable and happy 	

STUDENTS	PARENTS	TEACHERS
THEME: PEDAGOGY / SCHOOL APPROACHES		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Teachers who help until you “get it” - Individual attention - Incentives for working hard and doing well - Teaching in small steps - Teachers who teach beyond the curriculum - Teachers who use different teaching styles and incorporate the interests of students - Teachers who let them use technology - Teachers who let them explain things to each other during work time - Having the same teacher for more than one year - Self-contained support versus integrated model - Teachers who relate all learning to real life - Opportunities to work with different groups of students - Homework that makes us think - Recess - Working in small groups 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Student-peer learning - The school calls when a child is absent 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Giving the boys “choice” in the classroom - Strategic seating - Oral and visual cues when teaching - Use of technology (it’s easier to write on the computer) - Small groups where students teach each other - Handing out notes instead of having students copy them - Opportunities for students to present information to the class (or to smaller groups) in their own languages - Strategic seating
THEME: ENGAGEMENT		
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Being able to communicate directly with teachers - A suggestion box - Newcomer meetings - Access to teacher’s email - Teachers who communicate regularly 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Responsibility and leadership opportunities in the classroom
THEME: RESOURCES		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Extra resources/materials that reinforce concepts 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Interpreters and translators - School settlement workers 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Proximity to settlement workers

APPENDIX 5: FOCUS GROUPS – WHAT WOULD HELP STUDENTS?

STUDENTS	PARENTS	TEACHERS
THEME: LANGUAGE		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - More ESL help 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - More ESL/ELD support (both since limited prior schooling is an issue) - Need more opportunities to speak English in a safe environment 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Students need more opportunities for learning English - Help in overcoming language barriers through the use of study buddies - More ESL programs
THEME: PRIOR LEARNING		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Teaching study skills 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - More teaching of study skills - More remediation for students with little prior schooling 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - More understanding of prior schooling experiences students have had - More support to fill gaps - More ELD programs for students with little prior schooling
THEME: SOCIAL/EMOTIONAL		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Teachers need to work with the entire family - More recognition of student successes - Teachers need to communicate that they care about the students - More time focusing on developing positive self-concept - Schools need to be more sympathetic and understanding of each student's situation 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - More recognition of student successes - Teachers need to understand the effects of trauma on students - Knowing that teachers care about their children is very important - Teachers need to know the students and their families - Compulsory after-school tutoring - Open communication between schools and families - Having more "advocates" for Afghan students 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Afghan "buddies" for newcomers - Provide more positive feedback - Teachers need to understand more about their students' histories and challenges - Afghan students need to feel they are equal to the other students and capable of achieving - More support for families so students know schools care about them - Empower parents to take responsibility and be engaged - Boys need to view school as more than a social activity - Girls need more confidence to state their

STUDENTS	PARENTS	TEACHERS
		opinions and make independent choices - Focus on individual needs first, curriculum second
THEME: CULTURAL		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - More cultural awareness 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Teachers need to have more awareness of the cultural backgrounds and needs of students - More counsellors with cultural understanding and sensitivity - Talk about the history of all countries 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - More professional development for teachers - Presentations by Afghan students - Staff meetings that focus on cultural awareness - Explicitly teach life and organizational skills - Improved understanding of home countries/ cultures and students previous experiences
THEME: EXPECTATIONS		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Parents need to have higher expectations and encourage students - Give Afghan students more opportunities 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Teachers need to challenge students more 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Awareness that expectations need to be modified to meet student needs. - More discipline if students aren't meeting expectations - Higher expectations for real support from home
THEME: PEDAGOGY / SCHOOL APPROACHES		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Newcomer classes where nobody bullies - Need more help with doing homework (after school homework clubs with teachers assistance) - Tutors - Having more Afghan teachers - Later starting times and different hours for students who have to support families - Less homework since there's often nobody at home to help - More review sheets - More real life examples - More humour in class - Teach at a slower pace when needed - Variety of questions on assignments and tests 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Uniforms for students - More homework - More clear and consistent discipline at school - More help with homework - More homework clubs - More direct teaching - More Afghan teachers 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Strategic seating - Give more choice in assignments - More oral and visual cues - Distribute notes rather than have students copying them - Collaborative groupings so students can help each other - Pair struggling students with more successful students - Study groups - Teach life skills - Teach organizational skills - Smaller teacher-student ratios - Team teaching - Extra time to complete

STUDENTS	PARENTS	TEACHERS
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Use different teaching styles - Allow students to move around more in class - More separate classes rather than integrated classes - Tutoring in subjects (like math) - Smaller classes - Allow room for creativity and originality - More class discussions to encourage participation - More time for students to work on assignments and homework in class with teacher support. - More teacher feedback as work is being completed - Let students work in small groups and help each other - Tell stories and use drama to solve problems - More review tests before final tests 		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> tests and assignments - More support from teachers for tests and assignments - More peer support - Sharing best practices - Students should seek more help in different subjects when needed and help should be available - More tutoring from Afghan tutors or students who speak both English and the home language - Explain terminology and methodology in home languages or in simple English - More emphasis on reading and writing in kindergarten - Students being able to spend time with older siblings at school, especially in their first weeks - More interaction between classroom teachers and ESL, special education, guidance
THEME: ENGAGEMENT		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - More opportunities for students to talk about their experiences in and out of school - Allow students to help each other more - More opportunities for extra-curricular activities during the day - House leagues at lunch time - Homework support at lunch time - More guidance support 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - More access to extra-curricular activities, especially during the day - Parents need more opportunities to come into the school and talk with teachers (the focus groups gave them a chance to feel heard and understood) - More communication with parents - Suggestion boxes in the school - Meetings for newcomer students and families to 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Provide more leadership opportunities for Afghan students - More information available in the students languages - More follow up with families when students are struggling - More communication with families in general to keep them current on what is going on at school - Opportunities for Afghan students to help and support each other - Have “ambassadors” to

STUDENTS	PARENTS	TEACHERS
	explain the educational system - Frequent updates on how students are doing	help newcomers - Involve Afghan parents in providing extra help for students - More activities like focus groups so schools understand families better - Afghan girls' groups to build confidence
THEME: RESOURCES		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - More ESL classes - More access to guidance - More manipulative - More technology supports - More review sheets 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - More interpreters available - Students need interpreters during the day - School planners in the home language - Send more information home in home languages - More ESL programs - More settlement workers in schools - More Afghan staff 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - More resources in home languages and dual-languages - More materials translated into home languages - More availability of high-interest books at a low or moderate reading level, especially for teens - More settlement workers in schools to help families address concerns and anxieties and to help them deal with stress and trauma - An Afghan community and cultural centre where Afghan students can go for extra academic help - An organized study hall - More classroom assistants, who speak home languages - Extra help during lunchtime/after school - More administrative support for teachers - More professional development opportunities for teachers