

Welcome to School: Refugee Week in Educational Settings

Emily Miller, Migration Museum

With Melanie Hadida, Schools of Sanctuary Leeds and Hassan Al-Mousaoy, Activist, Photographer and Student Ambassador

The workshop started by discussing the importance of educational activities which are appropriate and which do not convey common prejudices. Often material that is for younger pupils is appropriate to be adapted for older pupils, you just need to be creative. There are many useful resources, including:

- Simple Acts, Into Film (previously Film Club), City of Sanctuary (Schools of Sanctuary pack), Welcoming a Refugee Visitor (pack from the Employability forum)

The conversation turned to focus on how a school can welcome a refugee. Some ideas included:

- Create a welcome project or gift from the school – e.g. video, banner, letter of welcome signed by pupils, cards sent by individual pupils to individual child refugees
- Encourage children to think what they would need if they were on their own overnight
- Sanctuary garden – a place of welcome
- School choir could record a song to sell in order to raise money for a charity
- Invite parents to come in and introduce their own culture and food
- Start a class by explaining key words and definitions
- Use music from other cultures
- The importance of a 'safe space' in the classroom
- Highlighting the skills that young refugees have

The discussion also included things that don't work and should be avoided:

- 'Outing' pupils without prior warning and consent – e.g. encouraging a Buddhist pupil to discuss their religion
- 'Mining' for sad stories from refugee pupils – especially without prior warning
- Resources which are inappropriate for the age group
- Do not expect immediate change

A question arose about how to approach a student who is resistant to refugees. The response was to ask the student what a refugee is, to find the root of the feeling of resistance and to challenge perception through continuous measures.

Participants also introduced further resources, including:

- Passages – UNHCR (requires a trained representative)
- 2 Billion Steps – Channel 4 (for older students with some facilitation)
- Refugee Council – short animated videos which feature voices of refugee children
- Carly – film
- EAL nexus @ British Council resource pack (working with parents and pupils)