Teaching Technology and Tolerance in Tandem: Culturally

Responsive Classroom Guidance Interventions

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Abstract

Twenty-first century schools are characterized by increasing diversity and use of technology. An opportunity exists for school counselors to utilize technology to create novel and innovative classroom guidance lessons designed to facilitate cultural exploration and promote cultural understanding. This article provides a rationale for how the integration of technology in classroom guidance can be particularly beneficial to immigrant and refugee students. The purpose is to feature three technology tools for use at the elementary, middle, and high school levels. Lesson plans are provided.

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An influx of immigrant and refugee families within the past decade has contributed to the growing diversity of our nation's schools (Department of Homeland Security, 2016). Although united by the commonality of identifying as relative newcomers to the United States, individuals' backgrounds as immigrant and refugee students reflect ethnic, cultural, and linguistic distinctions impacting the transition and resettlement processes. Schools play a pivotal role in helping students and families adjust to life in the United States (Suárez-Orozco, Abo-Zena, & Marks, 2015). This is especially true amidst the current political landscape, as recent policies involving immigration and deportation have brought increased attention to students from underrepresented backgrounds and have led to growing safety concerns and fear of family separation (Grantmakers Concerned with Immigrants and Refugees ([GCIR], 2017). School counselors have knowledge and training in culturally responsive approaches, identification of mental health needs, and implementation of social-emotional skills training and are uniquely poised to support the needs of diverse learners.

A hallmark of 21st century schools is the increasing use of technology to facilitate learning (Vockley, 2007). Digital learning objectives and multicultural school counseling standards are often delivered independently; however, considering these foci in tandem may provide school counselors with a novel approach to meet the academic, career, and social/emotional needs of immigrant and refugee students. Technological tools can be used to promote cultural understanding and empathy towards the immigrant and

refugee experience. The purpose of this article is to introduce classroom guidance lessons at the elementary, middle, and high school levels showcasing three distinct technological resources.

School Counseling Program Approaches for Immigrant Students

The ability for school counselors to anticipate the needs of immigrant and refugee students is paramount when designing school counseling interventions. The American School Counselor Association ([ASCA], 2017) identifies stressors faced by the population of immigrant students with undocumented status such as disruption of the family unit, difficulty navigating bicultural identities, and potential for re-traumatization. In order to appropriately intervene and advocate for these student populations, school counselors must consider pre- and post-resettlement experiences, trauma history, cultural and linguistic backgrounds, educational experiences, and acculturative stress (Williams & Butler, 2003).

The transition and resettlement experiences are impacted by where newcomers resettle geographically. Factors such as proximity to peers speaking the same language, access to community and resettlement resources, availability of career and educational programming, and other supports can play crucial roles in how quickly immigrant and refugee students and families are able to acclimate (Suárez-Orozco, Qin, & Amthor, 2008). Unfortunately, many families resettle in rural areas or in locations where there are limited resources or fewer individuals sharing cultural and linguistic backgrounds (Villalba, 2009), compounding feelings of isolation and stress. Fortunately, schools are one sociocultural context that can positively impact the experiences of

immigrant and refugee students and their families (Suárez-Orozco, Onaga, &

de Lardemelle, 2010).

Culturally Responsive School Counseling Approaches

Changes in demographics have highlighted the need for professional school

counselors to examine the extent to which they are prepared and competent to offer

services to culturally and linguistically diverse populations (Burnham, Mantero, &

Hooper, 2009). The ASCA professional standards underscore the school counselor's

role in advocating for the elimination of barriers related to academic and college/career

success for immigrant and refugee students. ASCA has developed a position statement

highlighting the school counselor's role in providing counseling support to students who

are undocumented and/or face other immigration stressors (ASCA, 2017). Culturally

responsive interventions should move beyond strictly teaching students about

differences between groups of people and extend to how school counselors can

facilitate cultural understanding among students of different backgrounds. As such,

ASCA's professional ethical standards (A.10) stipulate that we "strive to contribute a

safe, respectful, and non-discriminatory school environment in which all members of the

school community demonstrate respect and civility" (ASCA, 2016).

Promoting a school environment supportive of diversity may be facilitated by the

implementation of interventions across the three tiers of the response to intervention

(RTI) model. Counselors have implemented Tier 3, individual counseling interventions,

and Tier 2, group counseling interventions, to meet the needs of immigrant and refugee

students (Chen, Budianto, & Wong, 2010; Watkinson & Hersi, 2014; Williams & Butler,

2003). Individual counseling offers an important opportunity for students to process

trauma and learn adaptive coping mechanisms (Morrison & Bryan, 2014); whereas, group counseling has been recommended to normalize the transition experience, decrease stress, and increase emotional support (Kataoka et al., 2003).

There are limited references within the school counseling literature related to the implementation of Tier 1 interventions designed to facilitate cultural exploration for newcomer students and for students from majority-culture backgrounds. This is surprising for several reasons. First, effect sizes for classroom guidance interventions are comparable to other responsive counseling services (Whiston, Tai, Rahardja, & Eder, 2011). Second, most of the time spent in the direct services to students occurs through the delivery of classroom guidance lessons in many school counseling programs (Leuwerke, Walker, & Shi, 2009). Third, from an ecosystemic perspective (an interaction between an individual or family and a larger social context such as a school) many of the challenges faced by immigrant students are a result of systemic barriers such as racism and discrimination. For example, many immigrant students report feeling extremely isolated at school and are the targets of bullying and other forms of harassment (GCIR, 2017).

Tier 1 classroom guidance lessons can be delivered to the entire school population directly impacting the overall school climate and culture. Students from majority backgrounds have an opportunity to acquire empathy and understand multiple perspectives related to experiences of newcomers to the United States. These opportunities are similar the ASCA standards related to demonstrating empathy, social responsibility, and social maturity (ASCA, 2014). For immigrant and refugee students, curricula that highlight the challenges of immigration provide an opportunity to normalize

their experiences. Allowing an opportunity to explore and showcase cultural identities has numerous benefits for immigrant and refugee students related to ASCA standards on the development of the whole self, connection to the school environment, and managing transitions (ASCA, 2014).

Culturally responsive interventions have the potential to impact not only the social-emotional well-being of immigrant and refugee students, but also to support their success in the classroom. A large body of research substantiates the link between positive ethnic identity and academic outcomes (Fuligni, Witkow, & Garcia, 2005). For example, in schools with predominantly European American students, school communities characterized by valuing and promoting diversity are associated with improved immigrant student academic performance and attitudes towards school (Brown & Chu, 2012). In addition, large group guidance interventions offer an opportunity for students to work together towards common goals and can contribute to an increased sense of belonging to the school community (Tyrer & Fazel, 2014).

Technology as a Culturally Responsive Tool

Incorporating technology in the delivery of classroom guidance lessons has the benefit of addressing common core standards related to technology, while simultaneously delivering professional school counseling standards. The ability to use technology to customize curriculum, foster student engagement with guidance lessons, and provide access to resources beyond those present in the physical school environment suggests that technology might be particularly beneficial in helping school counselors design interactive lessons that address the needs of immigrant and refugee students. In addition, technology can be an important pedagogical tool, especially

considering that many immigrant and refugee students are English language learners (ELLs) and benefit from information displayed in multiple formats (Hung, 2015).

<div align="center">**Classroom Guidance Interventions**</div>

Digital Storybooks in Elementary School

Elementary students can benefit from the use of technology to enhance cultural and ethnic identity exploration. For example, Chen, Charger, and Smith (2017 found that newcomer ELL students quickly acclimated to using mobile devices to improve their narrative writing skills (story writing) and found the use of technology engaging and beneficial when navigating language challenges. Digital storybooks are a creative and developmentally appropriate tool to facilitate student engagement. Further, the creation of a digital story aligns with the *funds of knowledge* (González, Mall, & Amanti, 2005) framework, in that students may customize the content to represent their unique cultural backgrounds and life experiences. Engaging in the creative expression of personal narratives is linked to benefits including increased self-esteem, conflict resolution, and problem solving (Tyrer & Fazel, 2014). In addition, school counselors may use digital storybooks to promote 21st century technology and writing skills while delivering school counseling specific content. For example, improved writing skills was evidenced as a result of using cultural writing prompts with students on *iPads* (Chen et al., 2017). Several digital storybook platforms exist and most feature customization that uses different templates as well as written and voice narration (see Appendix A).

Enhanced benefits of technology in a multicultural classroom can be obtained by engaging all students in a task simultaneously, allowing the school counselor to move from student to student to provide support and scaffolding. As such, a lesson was

designed so that students could customize their storyboard based on identified prompts. Included in the lesson is a gallery walk, providing an opportunity to view classmates' storyboards and provide positive feedback. Assessment information is gathered using a "what I know" (K), "what I want to know" (W), and "what I learned" (L) chart. The lesson ends with discussion prompts that facilitate interpersonal communication and language skills and foster a sense of belonging. One adaptation of the lesson (or potential follow-up activity) would be to create a classroom storyboard reflecting all the cultures in the classroom to enhance the classroom community.

Technology Simulation of the Refugee Experience in Middle School

Exposure to different life experiences is particularly beneficial in building empathy skills for middle school students. A middle school lesson was designed to promote higher-order thinking skills and facilitate "perspective-taking" about the pre-resettlement and transition experiences of refugee students (see Appendix B). One way for students to encounter novel experiences is through digital simulation gaming that can replicate a new environment or situation. The use of games such as these (i.e., Oregon Trail) have been documented in education for over four decades and used effectively with middle school students (Devlin-Scherer & Sardone,2010).

Developed in 2006 for the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR), *Against All Odds* is a free, Internet-based game that simulates the experience of having to flee the home country and acclimate to life in a new one. In the interactive online platform, players must make choices with corresponding consequences on the challenges of navigating a different cultural environment. Players move through three learning modules designed to increase awareness about

circumstances associated with fleeing the home country, seeking safety in a border country or refugee camp, and transitioning to life in the resettlement country. Along the way players encounter barriers and challenges similar to those that refugee students face, including discrimination. Reflection opportunities integrated after each module allow students from the majority culture to consider what awareness they may lack about the refugee journey and to identify strengths and resources that students and families must use to negotiate challenges faced during each stage. For immigrant and refugee students, the simulation offers the opportunity to contextualize their journey and learn more about the refugee experiences of individuals from other countries. When using this technology tool in classes with immigrant and refugee students it would be important to preview each module and anticipate how the content may trigger an unhealthy reaction from refugee and immigrant students with trauma in their backgrounds. It is recommended that school counselors anticipate how individual screening with students might be important to help students prepare for the content that they may encounter and to determine whether they wish to participate.

A closing activity helps students analyze what they have learned and create a product that expresses the different challenges of arriving in a new country, ways students must adapt to the new country, and how contextual variables such as discrimination are faced. Students will construct posters in small groups that help them share what they learned with each other, critically reflect on their preconceived notions, and consider how the information they learned may have changed their perceptions about the resettlement experience.

Virtual Pen Pals in High School

In the high school lesson, students use an online platform to correspond with students from another country. This cross-cultural pen pal exchange can be facilitated using educational technologies and requires pre-planning on the part of the school counselor to identify international partners. Given the time needed to facilitate a relationship with the virtual pen pal, the lesson is designed to be delivered as a four-part unit (see Appendix C). Depending on the languages spoken in the classroom, the primary language of the partnership country may need to be English; however, an opportunity exists to partner with a language teacher and select a country that corresponds to the language being learned in the language class.

Before establishing the relationship with the virtual pen pal, the school counselor helps students identify and describe what personal information they wish to share with their pen pal and what things they would want them to know about the United States and the town/city in which they live. One way to facilitate thinking about this would be to have students pretend they are writing a guide book entry about their town and indicate what descriptions they would include (e.g., recommendations for food, areas to visit, and activities).

One of the objectives is to have students interact with a student living in another country about cultural similarities and differences in the two cultures. In addition, the intent is to bring awareness, through journal reflections and activities, about the personal culture identities of the pen pal pair. Through discussion and dialogue each member of the pair may engage in critical self-reflection about their culture and ways personal identities are promoted or silenced by certain cultural values. Through

engaging with virtual pen pals, students will demonstrate knowledge of technological communication skills that can translate into those needed in future careers, as well as expand their global perspectives. In addition, pen pal programs have been linked to improvements in reading habits for adolescents (Gambrell, 2015).

Discussion

Schools may have varying access to digital technology resources. For example, some schools have a plethora of technology resources including tablets, laptops, and interactive whiteboards; whereas, other schools are challenged to provide students with opportunities to engage with these tools. In schools with less access to technology, the lessons could be adapted by having students share a computer or tablet. In addition, rather than using personal technology devices, the lessons could be facilitated using an interactive whiteboard or classroom teaching station. Another consideration is that students may have varying degrees of comfort with technology. The availability of smartphones has increased the likelihood that newcomer students would have access to the Internet and other online resources. In addition, researchers have found that newcomer students often quickly adapt to technology tools and have capitalized on the usefulness they provide in order to maintain connections with the home country (Suárez-Orozco et al., 2015).

Given the importance of a contextual and systemic approach outlined in this article, it is important for school counselors to reflect and incorporate a discussion of how access to technology can become a *digital divide,* potentially disadvantaging students with lesser access and serving to elevate students with greater access to technology. School counselors are encouraged to consider how technology available at

school might be made more accessible to students and families. For example, some schools have established open hours for the school library in which family members can utilize the computer and other resources during this time (Suárez-Orozco et al., 2015).

Practical Applications

School counselors may differ in their familiarity and comfort with technology. An important resource when designing and implementing technology-based culturally responsive lessons is the school's digital lead teacher. Digital lead teachers offer a wealth of knowledge on the technology standards associated with each developmental level and how to adapt lessons using technology to meet the needs of diverse learners. We encourage school counselors interested in using these lessons to collaborate with their digital lead teacher, or other technology support staff, to customize and adapt the lesson to the specific digital learning goals at your school. Additional collaboration opportunities exist with the school's ELL teacher. Partnering with the ELL teacher in the development and/or presentation of the lesson may offer ideas for improving accessibility of the content for ELL students.

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Biographical Statements

Dr. Lucy L. Purgason is an assistant professor at Appalachian State University and is in her fifth year as a counselor educator. She earned her doctoral degree in counseling and counselor education from the University of North Carolina at Greensboro and is a licensed school counselor, nationally certified counselor, and a certified clinical supervisor. She spent nearly 5 years working as a school counselor in elementary and high school settings in Virginia and North Carolina including diverse school environments in both urban and rural communities, Title I schools, and a school specifically for newly arrived refugee and immigrant students. Her research interests focus on understanding the importance of relationships for immigrant and refugee students, and students of other underrepresented groups, in both K-12 and higher education settings. She is particularly interested in exploring the agentic processes that first- and second-generation immigrant students use to negotiate intersecting cultural and ethnic identities and how social media is implicated in this process.

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Appendix A

Elementary School Lesson Plan

Activity: *Cultural Identity Exploration*

Grades 4-5

ASCA Mindsets and Behaviors

M 1.   Belief in development of whole self, including a healthy balance of mental, social/emotional and physical well-being.

M 3.   Sense of belonging in the school environment.

B-LS 5. Apply media and technology skills.

B-LS 2. Demonstrate creativity.

B-SS 2. Create positive and supportive relationships with other students.

B-SS 5. Demonstrate ethical decision making and social responsibility.

B-SS 7. Use leadership and teamwork skills to work effectively in diverse teams.

Learning Objectives and Competencies

1. Create a digital story representing your personal cultural identity.

2. Participate in working with a diverse group and reporting your perceptions of the event.

3. Provide positive support to classmates.

4. Summarize a written text read aloud or information presented in diverse media and formats, including visually, quantitatively, and orally about the importance of a strong cultural identity.

Materials/Technology Tools

Digital Storyboard Programs (select from the following):

1. Storybird (http://storybird.com): A free online program that can be used on both laptops and iPads. Includes a range of multicultural pictures and books for students to read and create.

2. Storyjumper (https://www.storyjumper.com): Ideal for younger students this free tool contains preloaded templates and the option to print in black and white. There is a blank template that allows students to upload props and backgrounds as well as personal pictures and contains a feature for voice-recording.

3. PBS Learning Media (https://uctv.pbslearningmedia.org/tools/storyboard/new/): This free tool provides an option to create a classroom storyboard or individual storyboards. The resource is designed for classroom use.

Procedure

Hook (Introduction):

- Start with a chart with three columns to solicit what students know about cultural identity (K), what they want to learn about cultural identity (W), and what they have learned (L).

- Pass out two sticky notes to each student. Instruct students to use one note to write down what they know about cultural identity and the other note to record what they want to learn about cultural identity and then invite them to place these on the chart.

- After students complete the introductory activity invite them into a circle to discuss what is posted on the chart.

- A definition of culture can be read to enhance the information generated by students.

Independent Activity

- Students will create a digital story that reflects their cultural identity using one of the digital storyboard programs. Below are suggestions for prompts students can use to construct their stories.

- On the first page draw a picture of your family. Draw them as you see them. Add writing to tell what is happening in the scene.

- On the second page draw pictures representing aspects of your culture (i.e. foods, dress, traditions, etc.).

- On the third page draw what your culture means to you.

- On the final page draw and narrate what you want people to know about your culture.

Group Activity

- After students have created their digital storyboard invite students to complete a gallery walk to view each other's storyboards and post a positive sticky note on an aspect of their storyboard. You can set the expectation that each student will write at least one positive note for each storyboard.

- After the walk, ask students to share at their comfort level some of the sticky notes they received.

Closure

- Ask students to complete a sticky note about what they have learned about cultural identity from the storyboards and include this on the KWL chart.

- Have students discuss what surprised them about this experience.

- Instruct students to complete a perception exit ticket about what they learned and reactions to the activity.

Evaluation

Processes: All fourth and fifth graders will be presented with a lesson on cultural identity.

Perceptions: Narrative responses recorded on the exit ticket and statements written on the positive sticky note can capture student perceptions.

Outcomes: What they learned on the KWL chart.

Appendix B

Middle School Lesson Plan

Activity: *Refugee Awareness*

Grades 6-8

ASCA Mindsets and Behaviors

B-LS 5.   Apply media and technology skills.

B-SMS 6.   Demonstrate ability to overcome barriers to learning.

B-SMS 10.   Demonstrate ability to manage transitions and ability to adapt to changing situations and responsibilities.

B-SS 4.   Demonstrate empathy.

B-SS 5.   Demonstrate ethical decision making and social responsibility.

B-SS 9.   Demonstrate social maturity and behaviors appropriate to the situation and environment.

Learning Objectives and Competencies

1. Students will use virtual simulation to gain increased understanding about the refugee experience.

2. Students will employ decision making skills when faced with challenging situations relevant to the experience of resettling in a new country.

3. Students will identify barriers that refugees face and coping skills used to deal with these barriers.

Materials/Technology Tools

Digital Simulation Game *Against all Odds* (UNHCR, 2005)

Procedure

Hook (Introduction):

- Students will engage in a pre-assessment addressing the following topics:

- How would you define discrimination?

- What types of discrimination have you experienced?

- What are some reasons people might have to flee their home country?

- What barriers might refugee students encounter when resettling in the United States?

- What resources and supports would help overcome challenges faced during resettlement?

Independent Activity

- Students will complete the refugee simulation Against all Odds to help bring understanding to what refugees go through to survive and relocate. After each module, allot time to answer process questions about what was learned. This can be done in a whole group format or by creating a reflection sheet for students to complete.

- Students will start with the War and Conflict section working through phases 1-5. Students may not pass through each level on the first attempt and it may be helpful to walk around the room to assist students who need support or encourage students to work in pairs.

- Students will respond to discussion prompts based on the War and Conflict section. What did you already know? What did you learn from this section?

- Students will start the second module, Border Country, and will work through phases 1-5. The students will learn how to find shelter, food, etc. once escaping their home country.

- Students will respond to discussion prompts based on the Border Country section. How did your character find shelter? What barriers were there to finding shelter, food, and other resources?

- Students will start the third and final module, A New Life, and work through phases 1-5. In the final module the character must deal with challenges such as finding a job, obtaining a phone, and dealing with prejudice.

- Student come together for a final discussion using the prompts: What barriers did you encounter? What was it like to experience the barriers? What coping resources might help individuals deal with these barriers?

Closure

- As a closure activity the students will be split up into 3 groups. Each group will create an informational poster based on one of the modules. War and Conflict will make a poster based on different opinions/thoughts that might lead to imprisonment in some countries. The Border Country group will make a poster

based on barriers encountered when resettling in a new country. The New Life Group will create a poster focusing on stereotypes that exist about refugees. All students will complete the questions distributed at the beginning as a post-assessment.

Evaluation

Processes: All middle school students will have the opportunity to participate in the lesson.

Perceptions: A pre- and post- assessment is used to determine perceptions and awareness before and after the lesson.

Outcomes: Learning objectives will be assessed based on information contained on the descriptive poster and from the pre/post assessment.

Appendix C

High School Lesson Plan

Activity: *Connecting Across Cultures*

Grades 9-12

ASCA Mindsets and Behaviors

M 1.   Belief in development of whole self, including a healthy balance of mental, social/emotional and physical well-being.

M 3.   Sense of belonging in the school environment.

B-LS 5.   Apply media and technology skills.

B-SMS 3.   Demonstrate ability to work independently.

B-SS 1.   Use effective oral and written communication skills and listening skills.

B-SS 2.   Create positive and supportive relationships with other students.

B-SS 5.   Demonstrate ethical decision making and social responsibility.

B-SS 7.   Use leadership and teamwork skills to work effectively in diverse teams.

Learning Objectives and Competencies

1.   Students will identify what their cultural identity looks like.

2.   Students will communicate with students from a different nationality/culture.

3.   Students will participate in working with a diverse group and reporting their perceptions of the event.

4.   Students will report the similarities and differences between the two different cultures, identities, and nationalities.

Materials/Technology Tools

1. Video Platform – Skype in the Classroom (https://education.microsoft.com/getstarted) is a telecommunications application software tool for educators that is part of the Microsoft Educator Community. The platform contains built-in lesson plans, learning activities, and opportunities for global collaboration. There is a collaboration specifically around geography and culture.

2. Virtual Pen Pal Sites (select from one of the following)

   a. Pen Pals who Write (http://penpalswhowrite.weebly.com): This site was started by a classroom teacher interested in establishing a virtual pen pal program in the classroom. It has expanded to over 100 established partnerships with teachers across the United States and countries including South Korea, Australia, Spain, and Canada.

   b. Pen Pal Schools (https://www.penpalschools.com): This site offers structured ways to collaborate with students across the globe through project based online lessons. The responsibility of finding pen pals is done by the organization.

Procedure

Hook (Introduction)

- Before engaging in the virtual pen pals project select which tool you will use to identify a partnership high school and the video platform for communication.

- Begin with a model to demonstrate how to use the platform and anticipate common questions students might have.

- Have students identify what they want to share about themselves and their city/town with their pen pal by having them prepare two small narratives on their personal identity and a travel guidebook entry for their town.

Independent Activity

- For the independent activity the students will participate in either written or video correspondence with their international pen pal.

- The following prompts can be used for each of the weekly interactions:

  ➢ Week 1: What is your favorite thing about your culture that you would like to share with your pen pal? What have you heard about the culture of your pen pal and what do you want to learn?

  ➢ Week 2: What part of your culture does not match with your personal identity? What strategies do you use to reconcile these differences?

  ➢ Week 3: What do you dislike about your culture? or What part of your culture would you like to change?

  ➢ Week 4: What are the similarities between your culture and that of your pen pal? What has this experience been like?

Group Activity

- The school counselor can facilitate whole group discussion each week about what the students learned in corresponding with their virtual pen pals. The following prompts might facilitate each dialogue.

  ➤ Week 1: What did you learn about your pen pal's culture?

  ➤ Week 2: What dimensions of personal identity did you and your pen pal discuss?

  ➤ Week 3: How does your personal identity conflict with messages you hear in your culture? How can you still use these traits in a positive way?

  ➤ Week 4: Create a Venn diagram about the similarities and differences between the culture here and the culture of your pen pal. Students will share their experiences in a whole class discussion.

Closure

- Final discussion: What was the experience like for you?

- What did you learn about yourself?

- What did you learn about cultural similarities and differences?

Evaluation

Processes: The number of students and classrooms participating in this experience.

Perceptions: Perception data is obtained from the group discussion and reflections.

Outcomes: The Venn diagram product created during the final week can be used to assess what students learned about their culture and the culture of their pen pal.