

Augmenting Relationships Among Families With Refugee Backgrounds and Their Children's Teachers Using a Meeting Protocol: A Pilot Study

Shana J. Haines, Cynthia C. Reyes, and Gabriel T. McGann

Abstract

A necessary move to dismantle educational injustice for historically marginalized populations is to create equitable family–school partnerships built on trusting relationships. Inequitable practices and implicit norms and biases must be intentionally counteracted to establish trusting relationships. The meeting protocol described in this article, RAFT, was born through community-based participatory action research to instigate and provide time for structured, student-centered conversations to build relationships between families with refugee backgrounds and their children's teachers. This article describes the qualitative pilot study and the community-based iterative process for designing RAFT. All 12 families and 16 school professionals who implemented RAFT expressed satisfaction with it, and teachers without exception expressed eagerness to implement RAFT with more regularity and with more participants. Themes that emerged include: (a) the importance of focusing on the child/student and the care and commitment expressed by taking the time to focus on developing a relationship between educators and families; (b) the flexibility and freedom of RAFT not being tied to required parent–teacher conferences which have a rushed timeframe and set location; (c) the increased appreciation and knowledge of the student and each other, paving the way for further collaboration; and (d) the effectiveness of elements drawn from restorative practices. We include implications for practice and further research, including measuring RAFT's outcomes and scaling up its use to determine its effectiveness.

Key Words: family–school collaboration, partnerships, engagement, home visits, parent–teacher conferences, refugees, meetings, multilingual learners, families

Introduction

Although collaboration and negotiation between families and their children’s teachers are built into the structure of the U.S. educational system, the roles of families and educators in these relationships are not explicit (Harry & Ocasio-Stoutenburg, 2020), and institutional norms that have resulted in historic marginalization shape educational practice relating to families (Herrera et al., 2020; Ishimaru, 2020; Ladson-Billings, 2021; Park & Paulick, 2021). The crux of the matter is that collaboration between families and teachers has the potential to increase equity in the education system, but educator practice geared towards families is typically based on mainstream cultural and implicit institutional norms and therefore often perpetuates and deepens inequity (Greenfield et al., 2000; Harry & Ocasio-Stoutenburg 2020; Ishimaru, 2020; Tadesse, 2014). In Ladson-Billings’ (2021) call for a “hard re-set” of the U.S. educational system post-pandemic, she states that “families will occupy a central role in teaching and learning. This means that schools will need to negotiate with families and caregivers about roles and responsibilities for teaching and learning” (p. 75).

A necessary move to dismantle educational injustice for historically marginalized populations is to create equitable family–school partnerships. Building off Turnbull et al.’s (2022) definition of “trusting family–professional partnerships” (i.e., a relationship “characterized by an alliance in which families and professionals confidently build on each other’s word, judgment, and wise actions to increase educational benefits for students and themselves,” p. 9), we (the researchers writing this article) define family–school partnerships as reciprocal relationships between families and school personnel aimed at supporting student growth. We use “school” rather than “professional” in recognition that developing partnerships with families is a systemic school (rather than an individual professional) responsibility and the conditions for creating such partnerships must be fostered systematically. Actively strengthening family–school partnerships with historically marginalized populations is one step towards transforming the educational future to be more sustainable, holistic, and just (Haines et al., 2017; Haines et al., 2022; Harry & Ocasio-Stoutenburg, 2020; Ishimaru, 2020, Ladson-Billings, 2021).

In previous community-engaged research investigating the relationships between families with refugee backgrounds new to the United States and their children’s teachers in New England, we found that participating teachers

and families had limited relationships (Haines & Reyes, 2023; Haines et al., 2022). Reasons for the limited relationships included schoolcentric practices shaped by rigid institutional norms, language differences, familial and teacher role construction, and assumptions about each other's priorities. The implicit institutional norms around appropriate and expected communication and responsibility/role construction emerged as impediments to family–school partnership formation. The findings of that exploratory study pinpointed the need to instigate organized meetings between teachers and families with refugee backgrounds—meetings that were dedicated to relationship building as well as discussing preferred communication methods and potential roles and responsibilities in schooling. To meet this need, we partnered with local educators to collaboratively design and pilot a tool to guide explicit conversations between teachers and families with refugee backgrounds as a step towards establishing family–school partnerships.

The purpose of this article is to describe the process through which we created this tool, RAFT (Relationships Among Families and Teachers), and then answer the research question: How do participants perceive RAFT? We first explore perspectives on the multifaceted dynamics of family–school partnerships related to families with refugee backgrounds. Then we describe our community-based participatory action research process (Maiter et al., 2008; Minkler, 2005) through which we developed and piloted RAFT. Afterwards, we share the results of the pilot study of RAFT by presenting participants' perceptions of its implementation. Finally, we discuss implications for practice and research stemming from this study.

Literature Perspectives

Understanding the phenomenon of refugee resettlement is crucial for developing intentional family–school partnerships with families who have experienced it. Refugee status is based on external circumstances that force individuals to flee, resulting in displacement from their homes (UNHCR, 2020). After the required paperwork for resettlement has been processed and assessment of families completed, resettled refugee families are permanently relocated to another country (UNHCR, 2020a). The determination of location occurs with little input from the individual or family unless they have family in a resettlement country (Mott, 2010). The resettlement process directs refugees to specific inviting municipalities who receive relatively significant numbers of newcomers into their communities (Bose, 2021). Once resettled, families with refugee backgrounds must navigate myriad new systems, including resettlement agencies, personal networks, social service agencies, and education systems. Understanding and appropriately navigating the education system is critical for

families with refugee backgrounds, yet resettlement agencies typically end their support within this system upon initial school enrollment. The move to U.S. schools is a significant transition for families with refugee backgrounds and one in which the implicit norms can be confusing (McBrien, 2011).

Developing meaningful relationships with families is a way schools can help families navigate the education system (Isik-Ercan, 2010). For such partnerships to blossom, they must be centered, appreciated, and attended to, and the conditions for partnership must be cultivated (Haines et al., 2022; Haines et al., 2015). A requisite step in creating partnerships is fostering an environment where educators and families get to know each other and appreciate each other's strengths. Simply put, families and educators need to build a relationship to effectively partner in support of students (Haines et al., 2017).

Although families with refugee backgrounds, like most families experiencing a new school system, are motivated to learn about U.S. school systems (Birman et al., 2001; Dachyshyn & Kirova, 2008; Haines et al., 2015; Tadesse et al., 2009; Walker-Dalhouse & Dalhouse, 2009), such partnerships are still underdeveloped among this population. The most glaring reason for this lack of partnership is that the educational system has implicit expectations of families' roles, responsibilities, and linguistic and navigational skills that may differ significantly from the norms to which families with refugee backgrounds are accustomed (Haines et al., 2015; Koyama & Bakuza, 2017; Kupzyk et al., 2015; McBrien, 2005, 2011; Perry, 2009; Tran & Birman, 2019). In addition to varying conceptualizations of family-school partnerships (Haines et al., 2015; Lawson, 2003) and construction of roles in children's education (Georgis et al., 2014; Hoover-Dempsey & Sandler, 1995), competing demands on educator time (Haines et al., 2015), lack of preparation for family-school partnerships (Francis et al., 2021; Kyzar et al., 2019), and the lack of intentionality around creating such relationships (Haines et al., 2022) also hinder family-school partnership development.

Educational policy in the U.S. articulates the rights of families to be involved in the educational planning for their children, but the operationalization of this policy is highly variable, and too often schools do not adequately plan or prepare to implement this policy with families who are not aware of or do not understand their rights (Haines et al., 2022; Mandarakas, 2014). Barriers to partnership exist for both educators and families. Studies have shown that teachers have minimal preservice training on how to develop relationships with families (Francis et al., 2021; Kyzar et al., 2019). Due to this lack of training and preparation, teachers often lack the confidence and capacity to partner with families (Haines & Reyes, 2023; Mapp & Bergman, 2021). There is also a historical lack of clarity around what a family-school partnership can

or should look like (Haines et al., 2017). This leads to a misunderstanding of expectations for both families and school professionals (Blue-Banning et al., 2004). Ambiguity around the expectations of family–school partnership may impact families’ motivation to invest time and energy in partnering, and the hierarchical power dynamics of family–school relationships create barriers to partnership (Koyama & Bakuza, 2017).

Families with refugee backgrounds may seek to be more involved in their children’s formal education, but their efforts may not be recognized by the school system. Koyama and Bakuza’s (2017) ethnographic study of refugee students in the Northeastern U.S. explored how their families and schools interacted. Through 230 semi-structured interviews with refugees, resettlement agency and support staff, school personnel, and community members, they found families with refugee backgrounds were engaged in their children’s educational success through advocacy for their children and seeking collaborations with school and community members to understand the local educational system and culture. Participants also helped create safe spaces and policies, improving educational outcomes for students.

Walker-Dalhouse and Dalhouse (2009) studied Sudanese refugee families and their children’s teachers. They found that participating families, who were low-income and Black, believed teachers held prejudices against them and wrongly assumed that they were disinterested in their children’s academic experience. Furthermore, Cun (2020) found that Burmese refugee families struggled to understand teachers and materials sent home but also sought and expected opportunities to be involved in school activities. Georgis et al. (2014) demonstrated that collaborating with families with refugee backgrounds in school improvement efforts surrounding family–school partnerships was a great way to strengthen family–school partnerships for participating families and others.

Theoretical Foregrounding

This project was grounded in Bronfenbrenner’s (1979) ecological systems theory with a focus on the mesosystem, Paris and Alim’s culturally sustaining pedagogies (2017), and community-based participatory action research (Maiter et al., 2008; Minkler, 2005). Bronfenbrenner’s (1979) ecological model of human development provided us with a holistic framework for examining interactions between families and schools, especially with their children’s teachers. We expand on this ecological model by emphasizing asset-based approaches when working with families with refugee experiences, emphasizing the opportunities and resources that families bring into conversations about their children’s schooling.

We drew upon culturally sustaining pedagogies because the concept promotes asset-based approaches for recognizing heritage practices of nondominant communities (Paris & Alim, 2017). Reframing the way some researchers viewed the literacy practices of youth of color, Paris and Alim (2017) asserted that educational research has mostly created an overly deterministic narrative of the ability of children of color, framing “access” and “equity” from a deficit perspective that focused on teaching working class and children of color how to speak and write like their White middle-class peers. Drawing upon Paris and Alim’s envisioning of what scholarship and practice could look like by reexamining traditional pedagogies, we aspire to describe culturally sustaining family–school partnerships with families within refugee communities that is humanizing and embraces the perspectives of the families (Reyes et al., 2021).

In their community–university partnership study, Campano et al. (2016) made explicit the agreed-upon norms directing the ethical protocols of their study and the relationships that informed those protocols. They described a *professional* stance underlying their work that acknowledged the boundary crossing nature of community-based research and community organizing that “require a specialized theoretical and practical knowledge base that informs responsible, wise, and selfless judgement for the betterment of a greater good in the face of [uncertainty]” (p. 117). A similar principle guided the meetings in this study between community members and university partners as we developed a mutual understanding to support community wisdom and knowledge production.

Several fundamental assumptions drove the collaborative development of the RAFT protocol and pilot study. These included: (a) stronger relationships between families with refugee backgrounds and teachers can increase educational equity for students with refugee backgrounds; (b) a tool to guide conversations can ensure the conversation stays culturally sustaining and strengths-based since the questions are scripted collaboratively with a diverse stakeholder group; (c) the training provided to teachers, interpreters/liaisons, and families prior to using the tool can increase equity in participation as all participants know what to expect and their role in the process; (d) the elements of restorative practices embedded in the tool can increase equitable opportunities for participation because everyone has equal opportunity to share; and (e) the student’s participation in the conversation can deepen the results.

Methods

Overview of Project

We partnered with two school districts to collaboratively design the tool to build stronger relationships between families with refugee backgrounds and

their children's teachers, which was a stated goal for both districts. We worked with school administrators and home-school liaisons to assemble an Advisory Council, which consisted of 10 school personnel (i.e., two administrators, three English learner (EL) teachers across grade levels, one general education teacher, and four home-school liaisons who were also refugee community leaders) from our partner districts. All Advisory Council meetings took place in a school after school hours.

Before meeting with the Advisory Council, we put together a draft protocol as a starting point. We modified the McGill Action Planning System (Vandercook et al., 1989), also referred to as Making Action Plans or MAPS. MAPS is a research-based person-centered planning tool that increases student self-advocacy and self-determination and builds trust between families and professionals as they learn about the student's background, family and student perceptions and expectations, and cultural variances between families and professionals (Haines et al., 2018; Vandercook et al., 1989). We also drew upon restorative practice, an Indigenous and First Nation's practice that emphasizes "justice philosophy and practice" (Mirsky, 2004, p. 1) and uses conversation circles to create an inclusive and relational community (Kervick et al., 2019; Pranis, 2005; Thorsborne & Blood, 2013). These conversation circles are designed to promote equitable participation through the use of a talking piece, which each participant uses to indicate explicitly whether he or she wishes to speak. Holding on to the piece means the person wants to talk; passing the piece to the next person means they decline to talk. Using a talking piece in this manner enables a participant to choose to pass on speaking rather than needing to initiate entry into the conversation in order to share.

At our first Advisory Council meeting, we modified MAPS into a relationship-building tool appropriate for use with families with refugee backgrounds, which we later named RAFT. We drew upon the knowledge and expertise of the Advisory Council for deeper understanding of the cultural and linguistic heritages of the families to ensure that the tool was culturally sustaining (Paris & Alim, 2017). School-based partners expressed concern about time for implementation; paradoxically, we knew the tool had to be efficiently implemented in less than two hours in order to be successful, but we also know building relationships takes time. Therefore, the specific purpose of using RAFT was to begin to develop these relationships by enabling the teacher to learn about the family and the family's hopes and dreams for the student and for the family to learn about the teacher and the teacher's relationship with their child without taking up too much time.

The final version of RAFT, shown in Figure 1, involves bringing together a student, family members, and key educators to engage in a relaxed yet

structured conversation through which families can get to know their children's teachers and teachers can learn a tremendous amount about students and their families, including how values inherent to the U.S. educational system and processes may conflict with family expectations and experiences. All participants, including students, received training in RAFT before the meeting. Participants sat in a circle. A facilitator started the RAFT with an overview of agreed-upon norms. The facilitator made sure the interpreters had ample time for interpretation. Ideally, families chose a talking piece to be used. The facilitator, who did not participate in the discussion, asked each prompt. Each prompt was followed by as many rounds of the talking piece, which was passed around the circle, as desired by participants. Home-school liaisons participated as interpreters (interpreting so the family can understand what others say in English and also voicing the family's contributions in English) and also as participants themselves since they usually knew the families and students well. The facilitator took notes and provided a summary at the end of the RAFT meeting.

We used a community-based approach with a qualitative case study design to develop, refine, and pilot RAFT (see Table 1 for details). As explained above, the documented need for this project came from our longitudinal research within the two partner school districts (Haines & Reyes, 2023; Haines et al., 2022; Reyes et al., 2021; Reyes et al., 2023). The Advisory Council reviewed our initial protocol, provided input via survey, and participated in a structured discussion of each component of RAFT. We modified RAFT according to their feedback. The school administrators on the Advisory Council recruited three EL teachers to implement RAFT. In one school district, each of the three teachers (one elementary, one middle level, and one high school) implemented RAFT with three different families with a refugee background at three different points in the year (i.e., November, January, and March or April), and in the other school district, the three teachers implemented RAFT only once, in March or April, with three families with a refugee background. Of the 12 families, 11 chose to hold the meeting in which RAFT was implemented at their home. One family chose to hold RAFT at the school. After each round of implementation, we presented a case built around each participating student to the Advisory Council and sought their feedback on modifications to RAFT. This iterative process resulted in a refined tool after three revisions.

Figure 1. RAFT Procedure and Norms

<p>Pre-meeting: Train teachers, liaisons, and families on tool use</p> <p>Implementation Meeting:</p> <p>Time: 1.5 hours total Location: Where families prefer (home, school, or community location)</p> <p>Norms:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Talking Piece and Flag: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ We will use a talking piece, but the order of speakers might vary. ○ The talking piece will go around the circle clockwise. ○ Families or facilitators decide what to use for the talking piece. ○ Whoever holds the talking piece is the one who speaks. Everyone else listens. ○ When appropriate, interpreters will interpret, using the flag when speaking. This notifies everyone that the words are interpretations of what someone else has said. ○ Liaisons will participate in the discussion as individuals, as well, and will use the talking piece for that activity. • Child Role: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Family decides if child is present, and we strongly encourage it. ○ If present, child participates. • Responses: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Everyone has the opportunity to respond to all prompts, but they can pass if they choose. ○ A different person starts each response, so the responses are staggered (moving the talking piece each time). ○ At any point in time, any participant can withdraw from the study and process. • Facilitations: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ If disagreement occurs, facilitators will amend the questions to seek resolution. ○ For this round, researchers will facilitate the process. ○ Facilitators will summarize the meeting before closing. • Notes: For this round, a researcher will take notes. <p>The purpose of RAFT is to build relationships so we can work together to support this child's success.</p> <p>RAFT Prompts:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Who is _____? 2. Who should be involved in _____'s education and how? 3. What are your hopes for _____ in general, long-term? 4. What are your hopes for _____ this year? 5. How can we work together this year to make these hopes come true? <ol style="list-style-type: none"> a. What can the teacher do? b. What can the family do? c. What can the student do? d. What can others do? 6. How should we continue this conversation? 7. End with a summary of responses and ways forward.

Table 1. Major Activities and Methods

Activities	Participants	Objectives
Meeting w/ School District Reps.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Principal Investigators ○ School district administrators 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Plan project ● Generate sampling grid
Advisory Council Meeting	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ 5 members of the refugee community, including 4 home-school liaisons ○ 2 school administrators ○ 3 teachers (2 EL and 1 gen. ed.) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Design Tool
Pre-implementation interview	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ 3 families ○ 3 EL teachers ○ 3 home-school liaisons (all members of the Advisory Council) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Understand relationships and history ● Learn about their goals for the student/child
Pre-implementation trainings (separate for all families; conducted in dominant language; conducted as groups for liaisons and teachers)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ 3 families (including children) ○ 3 EL teachers ○ 3 home-school liaisons (all members of the Advisory Council) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Explain norms and process
Implementations	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Each implementation was led by a researcher, had a researcher observing, and included: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ 1 family and child ○ 1 home-school liaison ○ 1 EL teacher 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Conduct the actual relationship-building conversation
Post-implementation interview	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Separate interviews with: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ 3 families and children ○ 3 home-school liaisons ○ 3 EL teachers 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Understand participants' experiences ● Solicit feedback on improving RAFT
Write up interim case studies	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Researchers 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Analyze experiences
Advisory Council Meeting	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Advisory Council 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Explain experiences ● Seek feedback for tool revision
RAFT Revision #1	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Researchers 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Respond to feedback from participants and Advisory Council
Pre-implementation interview	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ 3 families (including children) ○ 3 EL teachers (same as previous) ○ 2 general education teachers ○ 3 home-school liaisons (2 same as previous) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Understand relationships and history ● Learn about their goals for the student/child

Table 1, continued

Pre-implementation training	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ 3 families (including children) ○ 2 general education teachers ○ 1 home-school liaison 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Explain norms and process
Implementation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Each implementation was led by a researcher, had a researcher observing, and included: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ 1 family and child ○ 1 home-school liaison ○ 1 EL teacher ○ 1 General education teacher (w/1 exception, as the student was not in gen. ed. classes) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Conduct the actual relationship-building conversation
Post-implementation interview	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Separate interviews with: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ 3 families (including children) ○ 3 EL teachers ○ 2 general education teachers ○ 3 home-school liaisons 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Understand participants' experiences ● Solicit feedback on improving RAFT
Write up interim case studies	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Researchers 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Analyze experiences
Advisory Council Meeting	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Advisory Council 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Explain experiences ● Seek feedback for tool revision
RAFT Revision #2	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Researchers 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Respond to feedback from participants and Advisory Council
Pre-implementation interview	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ 6 families (including children) ○ 5 EL teachers ○ 4 general education teachers ○ 6 home-school liaisons 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Understand relationships and history ● Learn about their goals for the student/child
Pre-implementation training	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ 6 families (including children) ○ 4 general education teachers ○ 3 home-school liaisons 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Explain norms and process
Implementation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Each implementation was led by a researcher, had a researcher observing, and included: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ 1 family and child ○ 1 home-school liaison ○ 1 EL teacher ○ 1 General education teacher (w/2 exceptions, as 2 students were not in gen. ed. classes) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Conduct the actual relationship-building conversation

Table 1, continued

Post-implementation interview	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Separate interviews with: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ 6 families (including children) ○ 5 EL teachers ○ 4 general education teachers ○ 3 home-school liaisons 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Understand participants' experiences ● Solicit feedback on improving RAFT
Write up interim case studies	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Researchers 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Analyze experiences
Advisory Council Meeting	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Advisory Council ○ Researchers 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Explain experiences ● Seek feedback for tool revision ● Plan future use of RAFT ● Present summary and analysis of activities to be included in report
Publish final RAFT on website and make training materials in multiple languages	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Researchers 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Make RAFT publicly available
Compile data	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Researchers 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Receive transcripts of 62 interviews, all implementation sessions, and all Advisory Council meetings ● Enter transcripts and field notes in NVivo
Conduct initial coding	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Researchers 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Code data with emergent themes ● Refine and define codes
Conduct second-level coding	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Researchers 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Code all original data with revised codebook
Condense codes into themes	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Researchers 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Clump codes into themes
Present themes to Advisory Council and participating school districts	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Researchers 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Check accuracy and completeness with Advisory Council

Note. We also met as a research team every other week and additional times as needed.

Research Methods

Table 1 shows all data sources used in this study. In addition to implementing RAFT with each of the 12 families with a refugee background, we

conducted trainings and pre- and post- interviews with all involved. We conducted a total of 62 interviews; Please see Table 2 for student participant details. We conducted all interviews in English, and, when interviewing families and students, interpreters relayed the questions and responses in the appropriate languages in the moment. Pre-implementation interviews were aimed at understanding participants' backgrounds and relationships that existed between families and educators. These were typically carried out before the training in RAFT and lasted from 15 to 45 minutes. We audiorecorded all RAFT implementation meetings. We conducted interviews with all participants after implementation; typically, these interviews with families took place immediately following the implementation, while we were still in their homes or they were still at school. We sought to understand their perspective on participating in RAFT and how they suggested improving it for future use. These interviews included the students and families together and lasted between 10 and 30 minutes. Post-implementation interviews with educators and liaisons took place on a separate day. Due to time constraints, some teachers who participated in multiple implementations emailed us the answers to our interview questions after conducting a RAFT meeting.

In addition to these interviews, data collection included transcriptions from the RAFT implementation and Advisory Council meetings and field notes (Emerson et al., 1995) and jottings (Agar, 2005) from all events. Three undergraduate students served as research assistants and wrote observation notes during all meetings and interviews. We also collected the chart papers on which we took notes during the RAFT meetings.

Data analysis was ongoing and recursive. We met biweekly as a research team for case analysis meetings (Miles et al., 2014), which included a discussion of the trainings, pre-implementation interviews, implementation sessions, and post-implementation interviews. We referred to our fieldnotes during these meetings (which we recorded), and a research assistant took notes to ensure we captured salient discussions. We drew upon these notes to form interim case studies (Miles et al., 2014) of each participating student, which we presented to the Advisory Council. The within-case analysis we conducted for these examples informed our Advisory Panel's understanding of RAFT in process, and the Advisory Council deepened our analysis by asking questions and bringing forth new ways of interpreting data.

Table 2. Participants

Implementation	Site	Name (pseudonym)	Grade (age)	Dominant Language
First Round of Implementation: Fall	A	Sara	3 (8)	Kirundi
	A	Faneel	3 (8)	Nepali
	A	Sejum	7 (13)	Nepali
Second Round of Implementation: Winter	A	Anas	3 (9)	Arabic
	A	Ooma	4 (10)	Swahili
	A	Winona	5 (12)	French
Third Round of Implementation: Spring	A	Suleyman	7 (13)	Mai-Mai
	A	Johari	4 (10)	Swahili
	A	Rayon	10 (16)	Swahili
	B	Ping	10 (16)	Vietnamese
	B	Juddah	10 (15)	Nepali
	B	Abiral	9 (16)	Nepali

Professionals or research assistants transcribed all audio files, including the Advisory Panel discussions. After the conclusion of the pilot study, we compiled the transcriptions, field notes and jottings, and research team and Advisory Council meeting notes into a database in NVivo. The first author reread all transcripts, coding all instances where participants explained their perceptions of RAFT implementation with the broad “Perceptions of RAFT” category to reduce the data. Next, she reread all data in this code and open coded it into child codes. After leaving the coding for a few weeks, she reread the child codes and their definitions and merged them into four broader themes in second-cycle coding (Miles et al., 2014). The second author then read all data and agreed with the codes. The resulting coding corresponds to the themes presented in the following section in response to the guiding question: How did participants perceive RAFT implementation? We presented these themes to the Advisory Council and wrote a summary report for the partner school districts with a request for feedback; no changes were requested but requests for follow-up implementation ensued.

Findings

RAFT’s purpose was to instigate and provide time for structured, student-centered conversations to build relationships between families with refugee backgrounds and their children’s teachers, and the pilot resulted in

positive perceptions by participants. All liaisons, teachers, and families who implemented RAFT expressed satisfaction with it, and teachers without exception expressed eagerness to implement RAFT with more regularity and with more participants. Themes that emerged include: (a) the importance of focusing on the child/student and the care and commitment expressed by taking the time to focus on developing a relationship between educators and families; (b) the flexibility and freedom of RAFT not being tied to required parent–teacher conferences which have a rushed timeframe and set location; (c) the increased appreciation and knowledge of the student and each other, paving the way for further collaboration; and (d) the effectiveness of elements drawn from restorative practices. Please note that all names used are pseudonyms.

Focus on Child and Family

Participants underscored the importance of taking the time to shine a caring light on the child (from the families' perspective)/student (from the teachers' perspective; hereafter referred to as "youth"). The mutual commitment to the youth's success helped them to feel seen and the adults to form relationships. Judy's (a teacher) statement summarized how many participants felt:

I think this meeting helped to build our relationship a little more. This meeting with his parents helped me see how much Anas's parents value education. They commented on how lucky Anas is to have the educational opportunities in this country and wanted him to take advantage of it. I felt a tremendous amount of support from them. I hope they also felt that we wanted to work with them as a team, home and school, to help Anas learn the most he could learn. This meeting helped us become more of a team working together.

Youth were struck by the amount of time everyone spent focusing solely on them. Anas "was proud that we had come to his house." Constantine (Central African community home–school liaison) reported that "having the RAFT team to come in their [Winona's family's] home, that was uplifting for them. They felt like, hey, I think now my child is going to be successful." When talking about Sara, a quiet and unassuming 10-year-old, her teacher expressed seeing this. The teacher stated: "I think it was one of those experiences [when] the kids are like, 'Whoa!...Like who are these people in my house?'" Juddah explained that he felt the support and commitment from the adults involved in RAFT, and that the process "gave me a lot of boost, because they all support me to do work. I'm thankful for everyone to be here and help me." Johari was able to understand what his teacher had been trying to tell him in school when she told him at his house during RAFT implementation. He said:

I remember what my teacher said—that I wasn't focusing, and I was going from different places instead of focusing—when she was talking to my dad. So, I just got that, and I am going to change that... Making sure that I follow her direction for what she wants me to do when we are reading, when we are writing.

Families were also impressed by the care and commitment teachers and liaisons expressed by the act of implementing RAFT. One father reflected:

What's striking me the most is the fact that you just left everything which you have to do today. You wanted to come here to talk to us, and that shows how much you care about these children. You want to know how they are doing. How are we going to help them? That is important for us.

This focus was also appreciated by the home-school liaisons, who are often rushed by the urgency of multiple tasks and too little time. Sinh (Vietnamese-speaking community home-school liaison) explained that he loved having the time allotted to focusing on just one specific youth. He stated:

There's a focus on Ping, and we have, we had over an hour to talk about Ping and to hear from everyone...and I think it's really powerful, also, the way that everyone gets a turn. And that there's no interrupting. And nothing gets missed.

Later in the interview, he came back to talking about the ability to have such a "deep conversation" focused on just one student. He said:

We know really well about Ping and his goal. And somehow with them, other students too, if we have another interview for all those students—you know? We can see them more, you know? Sometimes we're guessing more than interacting. We see Ping, his hope, very clear now. We can see his future pretty clear, and we see he's eager to reach to that goal.

Understanding teachers' commitment to the youth increased families' trust in them. One father explained:

In this process I just...see how much she loves, you know, my child. And I came also to learn that she is a good person. By speaking, by talking, you can feel that she is a good person. She cares.

Interviewer: Would you say you trust her more now?

Father: Yes.

Families felt that RAFT was an important use of their time, in addition, because they formed a relationship with the teachers through the spotlight on just their child and their family. After RAFT implementation, Suleyman's mother asked the teacher and home-school liaison several questions about another

one of her children, demonstrating that she felt more comfortable and trusting of them. Sinh stated that the RAFT implementation could help others understand the importance of the connection between home and school: “We care about the relationship between families and staff at school... This project will help other people see it’s very important, the connection between school and families. So important.” At the end of the implementation for Sara, her father spoke to the home–school liaison with enthusiasm. Constantine stated that the father was “sincerely happy,” felt that he had an important role to play in communicating with teachers (instead of relying on the home–school liaison to communicate with teachers on behalf of the family), and invited us to come back to do RAFT again in the near future. In the past, this father wanted Constantine to attend school events on his behalf because he did not see the point in participating. Constantine further explained:

You don’t say come back just to make somebody happy. You know you could just say a thank you, but you know when he said come back, he was sincere, and this is a guy who remind me every time when we have parent–teacher conference—hey, Constantine, you are there for us; I am not there, you are there. You have to help the children so that they can learn, and if there is a problem, please, ask the teacher to invite me.

Flexibility in Time and Place of RAFT

Families had a choice of where and when RAFT implementation occurred. Of the 12 families, 11 chose to conduct RAFT at their homes, and all RAFT implementations occurred either after school or on the weekend. Family members said things like, “I like it at home. It’s more comfortable for me.” As mentioned above, youth and families were impressed by the care and commitment teachers expressed by making the trip to their home. Furthermore, we scheduled a starting time but not a finishing time for the RAFT implementations, enabling them to continue until finished and minimizing the pressure of time.

Teachers also expressed that meeting with families in their homes was helpful or “more beneficial” than meeting in the schools. A teacher explained that she thought Ooma was “very pleased to have me in her home... This home visit and interaction will help me next year when I have her brother in my room—this is a beginning!” Another teacher explained that she learned so much more from the meeting because it occurred in the youth’s home:

I greatly enjoyed sitting in Johari’s home talking with him and his family. It is so worthwhile and enlightening to sit in their home, chat about Johari, and see Johari from a different perspective. I had no idea he wants to be a pastor! It was time very well spent, and I wish I could do it for all.

Teachers and liaisons also expressed that going into families' homes for RAFT affected the dynamic of the meeting to be more family-centered. Kate (EL teacher) said, "It really is different when we come into the home." Constantine explained that youth may be more forthright in their own homes:

Winona was kind of quite clear. "I don't like reading." And that was important. If she can be upfront saying that I don't like reading, that was something to show the teacher that, hey, maybe you couldn't get this answer if we had to meet in school.

Participants also expressed that RAFT enabled them more time to engage in deeper discussions. One participant stated, "The time at the home was not rushed, like it normally is at parent-teacher conference time." Judy (third grade teacher) commented:

I really enjoyed this experience with RAFT and Anas's family. It was great being in their home and having time to hear ideas from all sides. We have met only during parent conferences this year, and the time is limited so I do most of the talking because they want to know how Anas is doing. I heard some of their concerns at that time, but this RAFT time provided so much more time to hear from them. This is important.

The deeper, multi-way discussion during RAFT implementation enabled participants to build on each other's thoughts. One participant observed that:

People who were, "Oh you said that, and I agree with that, and I see that too." Or the teacher saying, "Oh he's quiet with these kids, or he's loud at school" and the families ask "What do you mean?" So I think just having it kind of organic...and just letting it unfold was helpful too.

Participants could ease into the RAFT process, facilitating their participation in the deeper discussions. Amina mentioned that Anas "said he was nervous at first, but as we all talked, he started to feel better and liked that we wanted to hear his ideas."

Increased Appreciation and Knowledge

RAFT resulted in increased understanding of youth, families, liaisons, and teachers. In addition, participants better understood dynamics between individuals. Participants shared examples of how their appreciation for each other grew through the RAFT process of relationship building. They also discussed that RAFT paved the way for further collaboration, and they expressed hope that collaboration would continue to grow.

Educators developed a deeper understanding of the youth by interacting with them within their family unit. One teacher stated that RAFT was "very

insightful into the quiet personalities of the family and that reflects so much on Ooma's personality and behavior." Serena (middle school EL teacher) noted that it was "very valuable for me to have the whole family here together. Because you get, I get to see how the family interacts with each other, and that also helps me get to know Sejum better." It was also insightful to learn how families talked about youth and how they expressed their hopes and dreams for their child's education.

Understanding the youth within the family context also highlighted important aspects of the youth's development. According to Serena, Sejum often appeared too playful and unfocused for the seventh grade. She reported he did not connect well with others at school, including his peers and teacher. During RAFT implementation, which was the first time both of his parents were present, Serena said that she had never seen Sejum "interacting eye to eye" with anyone the way he did with his parents. She "appreciated that perspective of him." Beth (high school EL teacher) commented on seeing how hard it was for Rayon, a 16 year-old, to self-reflect, especially when his parents were there with him. Commenting on the "Who is..." opening prompt of RAFT, Beth said:

Hearing Rayon say I don't have anything good or bad to say...was, you know, that shows me...hmm...maybe we need to work more on that self-reflection piece, like being able to, you know, think about who I am as a person. And if I need to work on...or even be able to say something positive, like he couldn't even say anything positive about himself, which, you know, he has a lot of positive attributes.

Anas benefitted greatly from the increased appreciation and knowledge his family and educators gained through RAFT. He was described during RAFT as "quiet and sometimes argumentative, talkative, trying to figure out where to put down his feet." School professionals explained that he seemed tired and disengaged during school. Although he sometimes talked to the teachers in the morning, he did not often talk to other students, would stop talking during academic times, and did not complete most of his work. The liaison described him as lacking self-determination and only focusing on schoolwork when she sat with him and forced him to focus. During the RAFT implementation at the family's home, it emerged that Anas sometimes stayed up all night playing video games for "8–10 hours" with friends who were still living in Iraq (in a different time zone). We also learned that culturally, children are not perceived as needing as much freedom as they have in the U.S. and, in addition, his family had experienced so much danger during their time in Iraq and Jordan that they wanted Anas to stay safe inside, not playing outdoors or interacting with other children unsupervised. His dad said, "He is always quiet at home and always really busy with his Xbox and playing games, [we] don't see him when he

comes back [from school] from 3:30 until next morning, no one sees Anas.” Amina (Arabic-speaking home-school liaison) continued:

When they came here, its more secure to stay inside because he has no language, he has no friends, and it’s kind of a pattern now: He has no friends. So, all dad does, really [is] buy him games, and he likes Anas to be inside of the house.

After the RAFT implementation, all participants remarked that Anas was a drastically different student both in school and at home. His family set a two-hour per day limit on his Xbox time and required that he read for 30 minutes before he was allowed to play. Anas worked with educators to set goals for himself, and he stayed motivated to reach those goals. He took ownership of his work and made significant progress. His educators worked with his mother and communicated via a home-school notebook. After RAFT, the literacy work educators started at school continued at home: “I have been doing that with Anas like since beginning of the year. We could see little change. But when the family [got] involved, that’s when we make a big change.” Three months later, Amina updated us:

He take [sic] it seriously after the meetings, and we sit and we talk how to improve his academic and socials. And how important [it is] to listen to the teacher and to Mom and Dad. And they feel like, even so, during his meeting, one of us talk about it’s really important to like what you want but to hear adults and consider their opinion. Because, “Mom and Dad don’t talk English, I’m not going to listen to them. They don’t understand anything here.” But during the meeting we give Mom and Dad a big window to talk and say what they like for their child, and he is kind of, start listening to his parents more. It’s really affect that part a lot, and he start sitting with his mom, daily hour.

Families also learned a lot about the youths through RAFT. Constantine highlighted that Winona’s family members were surprised to discover her desire to learn more about mechanics: During RAFT implementation, “she ask Dad all these questions around, you know, mechanics...so [the] parent was learning her role.” Suleymaan’s mother stated, “It’s great gift to get together this morning. It’s through this interview, I know my son better. I know his goal clearly.” Faneel’s father also appreciated learning about the teacher’s ideas for his son through RAFT. He said, “The consciousness about the children’s attitude and behavior...the teachers were giving more suggestions about the child’s future.”

Participants expressed such positive outcomes associated with RAFT that they wanted to continue it and include more people. Constantine stated: “We need to do this project to every kid who is new to U.S. Even those who have

been here with us for three years, four years, we should do this...the families... are really comfortable. They are happy.” Rayon’s father expressed: “I want God to bless a person who is going to do a follow-up on this project.” Johari’s father exclaimed, “It’s like God loves me, because he just sent you guys here.” Sinh explained that he wanted more school personnel to participate. Specifically, he said, “I think if advisor here, I think it’s good too. One more people. I think, to me, advisor is—or counselor...he should be here to see...who the real Ping is.”

Elements Drawn from Restorative Practices

The elements from restorative practices we adopted included sitting in a circle, using a talking piece, being able to pass on responding to the prompt, having a facilitator, having a drawing done by the youth that included their picture at the center of the circle, and making the norms explicit. After the first round of implementation, we decided to make the drawing and picture of the youth optional because it caused some participants stress, which detracted from the process.

Sitting in a circle and passing the talking piece numerous times proved very helpful for inviting everyone to contribute to the conversation. Several educators expressed that they typically communicated only with the father of the youth. Especially when gender affected the women’s participation, having the talking piece passed to them meant that, if they did not want to participate, they needed to take the initiative to pass on participation rather than sit passively. In other words, the talking piece served as an equalizer to enter the conversation. Constantine explained that, culturally for the families from central Africa, the mothers needed to yield to the fathers to talk with the teachers. However, we heard mothers’ voices when we used the talking piece and could see the mothers become more and more comfortable talking as the conversation continued. Furthermore, using a talking piece resonated with some participants’ cultures, as Sara’s older sister, who was part of the RAFT implementation for Sara, explained. She commented that her father enjoyed the talking piece. She said that “in Africa we use the tool...like the same thing, like we did, in the elders meeting.”

The circle format and ability to pass the talking piece numerous times enabled deeper discussion and brought participants together. The circle format kept the group focused on the student. Noni (elementary EL teacher) said, “And to have a circle that is focused just around one student, just around Juddah, I think it was really powerful. And helpful for the student, for the families, the teacher, liaison, everyone involved. And I really enjoyed it.” Mary, an undergraduate student researcher, commented, “We went around the circle maybe like four times with that one question, and each time it changed a bit, and it got a little more in depth.”

Discussion

RAFT's purpose was to instigate and provide time for structured, student-centered conversations to build relationships between families with refugee backgrounds and their children's teachers, and the pilot resulted in positive perceptions by all participants. Themes that emerged include: (a) the importance of focusing on the child/student and the care and commitment expressed by taking the time to focus on developing a relationship between educators and families; (b) the flexibility and freedom of RAFT not being tied to required parent-teacher conferences which have a rushed timeframe and set location; (c) the increased appreciation and knowledge of the student, paving the way for further collaboration; and (d) the effectiveness of elements drawn from restorative practices. This study demonstrates that RAFT is a promising practice for building relationships with resettled families with refugee backgrounds, a ubiquitous population whose needs should be addressed in an ongoing manner. Furthermore, RAFT holds potential as a tool for forming family-school partnerships with any family.

Family-school partnerships start with relationships and can lead to transformational change towards more equitable systems (Ishimaru, 2020), and home visits are a promising strategy (Sheldon & Jung, 2018) that must be thoughtfully designed to support the cultural and linguistic strengths of diverse families (Park & Paulick, 2021; Paulick et al., 2022). RAFT represents what Park and Paulick (2021) call for: "home visits that *are* culturally sustaining so that educators can have models" (p. 24). RAFT made norms and goals explicit, interrupted typical power dynamics by incorporating aspects of restorative practices and using an outside facilitator, and amplified family and student voice. Participants appreciated the time dedicated to building relationships and focusing on a specific student and family. RAFT successfully instigated relationships among the participants in our pilot study, and relationships are the foundation of family-school partnerships (Turnbull et al., 2022). The home visits also fostered conditions that enabled teachers to authentically and humanly engage with families. Both families and teachers were able to share a collective and more expanded awareness of the knowledge and strengths they perceived in the student. RAFT is significant in its potential to increase equity in the way schools and families relate to support student success.

RAFT is a promising part of what must be a comprehensive systematic change in how we conceptualize power, relationships, and outcomes of family-school partnerships. Participants in this study craved a follow up and wanted to include more participants. To effectively promote sustained partnerships between families and teachers, RAFT must be a part of a coherent system that

prioritizes collaboration and seeks to dismantle implicit deficit-thinking and power dynamics. As Mapp and Bergman (2021) assert:

Such power dynamics have persisted because our sector has never prioritized authentic, solidarity-driven engagement. The vast majority of educators in America have never been exposed to equitable family engagement practices that emphasize the humanity and wellness of families and communities. Without training and exposure, many educators unsurprisingly do not see this type of practice as realistic. Thus, we have an education sector where many cannot imagine a world in which their work is inextricably tied to authentic partnerships with families. Models for effective family engagement have not been baked into our educational system. (p. 9)

As a relationship-building tool, RAFT is a perfect fit for building the “process conditions” specified in the Dual Capacity-Building Framework for Family–School Partnerships (Version 2) because it is “relational, built on trust; linked to learning and development; asset-based; culturally-responsive and respectful; collaborative; and interactive” (Mapp & Bergman, 2021, p. 11). The “organizational conditions,” however, must be in place. Specifically, family–school partnerships must be systematic, integrated, and sustained. Family–school partnership initiatives must take into account that relational trust takes time, and building it must be part of teachers’ explicit workloads (Mapp & Bergman, 2021). There also must be a stronger focus on professional learning and preservice teacher preparation in family–school partnerships (Francis et al., 2021; Kyzar et al., 2019; Mapp & Bergman, 2021).

Although models of family engagement and family partnerships abound, there is limited research on specific strategies, protocols, or scripts to guide meetings with families, especially those who have refugee backgrounds. Specific strategies or protocols must ensure enough flexibility to be effectively nimble in a variety of circumstances yet have essential elements that can be implemented with fidelity in order to conduct research on their effectiveness. One such strategy is the Parent Teacher Home Visit model. This model has been widely implemented and has promising results (McKnight et al., 2022; Sheldon & Jung, 2018), yet it does not incorporate the elements of restorative practices or participant training that aim to level power dynamics, and it also does not follow a set protocol or make norms explicit. We propose that RAFT could potentially work within, and enhance, a home visit model that schools already have in place. Furthermore, although we piloted RAFT with resettled families with a refugee background, it could be a useful tool when working with any family, especially immigrant families whose children may feel resentful of or alienated from their families (Vasquez-Salgado et al., 2015).

RAFT represents a budding strategy of building relationships between families and educators that can be an important part of comprehensive family–school partnerships. More research is needed to determine how well it works, how it works best, and the feasibility of its implementation. Future research should also explore how schools make time for such rich conversation to occur. This study is limited by its small size of only 12 participating families and its reliance on only qualitative data. Future research should focus on developing an outcome measure for RAFT that can enable measuring its effect and determine how it fits into systematic family–school partnership initiatives.

References

- Agar, M. H. (2005). *The professional stranger: An informal introduction to ethnography* (2nd ed.). Academic Press.
- Birman, D., Trickett, E. J., & Bacchus, N. (2001). *Somali youth report*. The Maryland Office for New Americans. <https://springinstitute.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/03/17-marylandreport.pdf>
- Blue-Banning, M., Summers, J. A., Frankland, H. C., Nelson, L. L., & Beegle, G. (2004). Dimensions of family and professional partnerships: Constructive guidelines for collaboration. *Exceptional Children, 70*(2), 167–184. <https://doi.org/10.1177/001440290407000203>
- Bose, P. S. (2021). Refugees and the transforming landscapes of small cities in the U.S. *Urban Geography, 42*(7), 958–978. <https://doi.org/10.1080/02723638.2020.1785202>
- Bronfenbrenner, U. (1979). *The ecology of human development: Experiments by nature and design*. Harvard University Press.
- Campano, G., Ghiso, M. P., & Welch, B. J. (2016). *Partnering with immigrant communities: Action through literacy*. Teachers College Press.
- Cun, A. (2020). Concerns and expectations: Burmese refugee parents' perspectives on their children's learning in American schools. *Early Childhood Education Journal, 48*(3), 263–272. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s10643-019-00983-z>
- Dachyshyn, D., & Kirova, A. (2008). Understanding childhoods in-between: Sudanese refugee and children's transition from home to preschool. *Research in Comparative and International Education, 3*(3), 281–294. <https://www.doi.org/10.2304/rcie.2008.3.3.281>
- Emerson, R. M., Fretz, R. L., & Shaw, L. L. (1995). *Writing ethnographic fieldnotes*. The University of Chicago Press.
- Francis, G. L., Kilpatrick, A., Haines, S. J., Gershwin, T., Kyzar, K., & Hossain, I. (2021). Special education faculty decision-making regarding designing and delivering family–professional partnership content and skills in the U.S. *Teaching and Teacher Education, 105*, 103419–103429. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.tate.2021.103419>
- Georgis, R., Gokiart, R. J., Ford, D. M., & Anas, M. (2014). Creating inclusive parent engagement practices: Lessons learned from a school community collaborative supporting newcomer families with refugee backgrounds. *Multicultural Education, 21*(3/4), 23–27.
- Greenfield, P. M., Quiroz, B., & Raeff, C. (2000). Cross-cultural conflict and harmony in the social construction of the child. *New Directions for Child and Adolescent Development, 87*, 93–108.

- Haines, S. J., Francis, G. L., Kyzar, K. B., Aldersey, H. A., & Adams, N. B. (2018). Family–professional partnerships with refugee families of children with disabilities. *International Review of Research in Developmental Disabilities*, 54, 5–70. <https://doi.org/10.1016/bs.ir-dd.2018.07.002>
- Haines, S. J., Francis, G. L., Mueller, T., Chiu, C. Y., Burke, M., Holdren, N., Shepherd, K. G., Aldersey, H. A., & Turnbull, A. P. (2017). Reconceptualizing family–professional partnership for inclusive schools: A call to action. *Inclusion*, 5(4), 234–247. <http://www.doi.org/10.1352/2326-6988-5.4.234>
- Haines, S. J., & Reyes, C. C. (2023). Teacher perspectives on fostering collaborative relationships with families with refugee backgrounds. *Teachers and Teaching: Theory and Practice*. Advance online publication. <https://doi.org/10.1080/13540602.2023.2212359>
- Haines, S. J., Reyes, C. C., Ghising, H. T., Alamatouri, A., Haji, M., & Hurwitz, R. (2022). Family–professional partnerships between resettled refugee families and their children’s teachers: Exploring multiple perspectives. *Preventing School Failure*, 66(1), 52–63. <https://doi.org/10.1080/1045988X.2021.1934375>
- Haines, S. J., Summers, J. A., Turnbull, A. P., & Turnbull, H. R. (2015). Family partnership with a Head Start agency: A case study of a refugee family. *National Head Start Research Association’s Dialog*, 17(4), 22–49. <https://journals.uncc.edu/dialog/article/view/168/354>
- Harry, B., & Ocasio-Stoutenberg, L. (2020). *Meeting families where they are*. Teachers College Press.
- Herrera, S. G., Porter, L., & Barko-Alva, K. (2020). *Equity in school–parent partnerships: Cultivating community and family trust in culturally diverse classrooms*. Teachers College Press.
- Hoover-Dempsey, K., & Sandler, H. (1995). Parental involvement in children’s education: Why does it make a difference? *Teachers College Record*, 97, 310–331.
- Ishimaru, A. (2020). *Just schools: Building equitable collaborations with families and communities*. Teachers College Press.
- Isik-Ercan, Z. (2010). In pursuit of a new perspective in the education of children of the refugees: Advocacy for the “family.” *Educational Sciences: Theory and Practice*, 12(4), 3025–3038.
- Kervick, C. T., Moore, M., Ballysingh, T. A., Garnett, B. R., & Smith, L. C. (2019). The emerging promise of restorative practices to reduce discipline disparities affecting youth with disabilities and youth of color: Addressing access and equity. *Harvard Educational Review*, 89(4), 588–610.
- Koyama, J., & Bakuza, F. R. (2017). A timely opportunity for change: Increasing refugee parental involvement in U.S. schools. *Journal of Educational Change*, 18(3), 311–335. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s10833-017-9299-7>
- Kupzyk, S. S., Banks, B. M., & Chadwell, M. R. (2015). Collaborating with families with refugee backgrounds to increase early literacy opportunities: A pilot investigation. *California Association of School Psychologists*, 20, 205–217. <https://www.doi.org/10.1007/s40688-015-0074-6>
- Kyzar, K. B., Mueller, T. G., Francis, G. L., & Haines, S. J. (2019). Special education teacher preparation for family–professional partnerships: Results from a national survey of teacher educators. *Teacher Education and Special Education*, 42(4), 320–337. <https://www.doi.org/10.1177/0888406419839123>
- Ladson-Billings, G. (2021). I’m here for the hard re-set: Post pandemic pedagogy to preserve our culture. *Equity & Excellence in Education*, 54(1), 68–78.
- Lawson, M. A. (2003). School–family relations in context: Parent and teacher perceptions of parent involvement. *Urban Education*, 38(1), 77–133. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0042085902238687>

- Maiter, S., Simich, L., Jacobson, N., & Wise, J. (2008). Reciprocity: An ethic for community-based participatory action research. *Action Research*, 6(3), 305–325.
- Mandarakas, M. (2014). Teachers and parent—school engagement: International perspectives on teachers' preparation for and views about working with parents. *Global Studies of Childhood*, 4(1), 21–27. <https://doi.org/10.2304/gsch.2014.4.1.21>
- Mapp, K. L., & Bergman, E. (2021). *Embracing a new normal: Toward a more liberatory approach to family engagement*. Carnegie Corporation. https://media.carnegie.org/filer_public/f6/04/f604e672-1d4b-4dc3-903d-3b619a00cd01/fe_report_fin.pdf
- McBrien, J. L. (2005). Educational needs and barriers for refugee students in the United States: A review of the literature. *Review of Educational Research*, 75(3), 329–364.
- McBrien, J. L. (2011). The importance of context: Vietnamese, Somali, and Iranian refugee mothers discuss their resettled lives and involvement in their children's schools. *Compare*, 41, 75–90.
- McKnight, K., Venkateswaran, N., Laird, J., Dilig, R., Robles, J., & Shalev, T. (2022). *Parent Teacher Home Visits: An Approach to Addressing Biased Mindsets and Practices to Support Student Success*. RTI Press Publication No. OP-0077-2209. RTI Press. <https://doi.org/10.3768/rtipress.2022.op.0077.2209>
- Miles, M. B., Huberman, A. M., & Saldaña, J. (2014). *Qualitative data analysis: A methods sourcebook* (3rd ed.). Sage.
- Minkler, M. (2005). Community-based research partnerships: Challenges and opportunities. *Journal of Urban Health: Bulletin of the New York Academy of Medicine*, 82(2), ii3–ii11.
- Mirsky, L. (2004). Restorative justice practices of Native American, First Nation, and other Indigenous people of North America: Part one. *EForum: Restorative Practices*.
- Mott, T. E. (2010). African refugee resettlement in the US: The role and significance of voluntary agencies. *Journal of Cultural Geography*, 27(1), 1–31. <https://doi.org/10.1080/08873631003593190>
- Paris, D., & Alim, H. (2017). *Culturally sustaining pedagogies*. Teachers College Press.
- Park, S., & Paulick, J. H. (2021). An inquiry into home visits as a practice of culturally sustaining pedagogy in urban schools. *Urban Education*. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0042085921998416>
- Paulick, J., Park, S., & Cornett, A. (2022). Power dynamics and positioning in teacher home visits with marginalized families. *American Journal of Education*, 129(1), 53–78.
- Perry, K. H. (2009). Genres, contexts, and literacy practices: Literacy brokering among Sudanese refugee families. *Reading Research Quarterly*, 44(3), 256–276. <https://doi.org/10.1598/RRQ.44.3.2>
- Pranis, K. (2005). *The little book of circle processes*. Skyhorse.
- Reyes, C. C., Haines, S. J., & Clark/Keefe, K. (2021). *Humanizing methodologies in educational research: Centering nondominant communities*. Teachers College Press.
- Reyes, C. C., Haines, S. J., & Ghemari, A. (2023). Examining community cultural wealth of multicultural liaisons during COVID-19. *Voices in Urban Education*, 51(1), 122–133. <https://doi.org/10.35240/vue.23>
- Reyes, C. C., Haines, S. J., Ghising, H. T., Alamatouri, A., Hurwitz, R., & Haji, M. (2021). “Your eyes open and so do your ears”: Centering knowledge of families with refugee backgrounds during a follow-up interview. *Journal of Family Diversity in Education*, 4(1), 1–19. <https://familydiversityeducation.com/index.php/fdec/article/view/157>
- Sheldon, S. B., & Jung, S. B. (2018). *Student outcomes and Parent Teacher Home Visits*. Johns Hopkins University. <https://pthvp.org/wp-content/uploads/2022/03/student-outcomes-and-parent-teacher-home-visits.pdf>

- Tadesse, S. (2014) Parent involvement: Perceived encouragement and barriers to African refugee parent and teacher relationships. *Childhood Education, 90*(4), 298–305. <https://doi.org/10.1080/00094056.2014.937275>
- Tadesse, S., Hoot, J., & Watson-Thompson, O. (2009). Exploring the special needs of African refugee children in U.S. schools. *Childhood Education, 85*, 352–356.
- Thorsborne, M., & Blood, P. (2013). *Implementing restorative practices in schools: A practical guide to transforming school communities*. Jessica Kingsley.
- Tran, N., & Birman, D. (2019). Acculturation and assimilation: Qualitative inquiry of teacher expectations for Somali Bantu refugee students. *Education and Urban Society, 51*(5), 712–736. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0013124517747033>
- Turnbull, A., Turnbull, R., Francis, G., Burke, M., Kyzar, K., Haines, S., Gershwin, T., Shepherd, K., Holdren, N., & Singer, G. (2022). *Families and professionals: Trusting partnerships in general and special education* (8th ed.). Pearson.
- UNHCR. (2020). *UNHCR - What is resettlement?* <https://www.unhcr.org/publications/brochures/5fe06e8b4/unhcr-what-is-resettlement.html>
- UNHCR. (2020a). *Global trends in forced displacement – 2020*. <https://www.unhcr.org/statistics/unhcrstats/60b638e37/global-trends-forced-displacement-2020.html>
- Vandercook, T., York, J., & Forest, M. (1989). The McGill Action Planning System (MAPS): A strategy for building the vision. *Journal of the Association for Persons with Severe Handicaps, 14*, 205–215.
- Vasquez-Salgado, Y., Greenfield, P. M., & Burgos-Cienfuegos, R. (2015). Exploring home-school value conflicts: Implications for academic achievement and well-being among Latino first-generation college students. *Journal of Adolescent Research, 30*(3), 271–305.
- Walker-Dalhouse, D., & Dalhouse, A. D. (2009). When two elephants fight the grass suffers: Families and teachers working together to support the literacy development of Sudanese youth. *Teaching and Teacher Education, 25*(2), 328–335.

Authors' Note: Funding for this study was generously provided by the Braitmayer Foundation.

Shana Haines is an associate professor in the College of Education and Social Services at the University of Vermont. Her main area of research is studying family-professional partnerships between educators and families of children with disabilities or families with refugee backgrounds. Correspondence concerning this article may be sent to Dr. Shana Haines, 446 Waterman, Burlington, VT 05405, or email Shana.Haines@uvm.edu

Cynthia Reyes is professor and associate dean for academic and faculty affairs for the College of Education and Social Services at the University of Vermont. Dr. Reyes's responsibilities focus on ensuring the integrity and quality of undergraduate education curricular and academic affairs processes, supporting faculty progression through rank-mentoring-RPT programming, and other related tasks and initiatives. Her research and service passions include diversity, equity, and inclusion; family and school professional partnerships; digital literacies; and educational policy and language.

Gabriel McGann has recently completed doctoral work in the Department of Education at the University of Vermont. His research interests include school-family partnerships, the interactions of the U.S. education system and refugee resettlement,

community integration, and service learning education, as well as measuring relational outcomes between school personnel and families with refugee backgrounds.