The Dallas Independent School District (Dallas ISD) Refugee Program was designed to help school administrators and teachers face the challenge of helping refugee children acquire the English language, prepare them to achieve the State performance standards expected of all children, and address their physical and mental health needs. The underlying principle of the program is to improve the academic performance of children from refugee families so that they may have a rewarding and productive life.

The program staff spend significant time focusing on guiding refugee students and their families to make a successful transition from their diverse backgrounds into the Dallas school community. In this effort, the Refugee Program staff collaborates with community organizations and area resettlement agencies such as Catholic Charities, International Rescue Committee (IRC), and Refugee Services of Texas, Inc.

Dallas ISD serves refugees who present with unique academic, linguistic, cultural, physical, and behavioral health needs. These needs include: (1) limited or no formal education, (2) country of origin dialects, (3) regional and/or political discord, (4) cultural and socially different norms, and (5) preexisting medical conditions including limited or non-existing immunizations. Currently, approximately 3,000 refugee students have resettled with the City of Dallas.

Implementation
The 2005-06 plan of operation included providing services at eight schools within Dallas ISD. These schools included:

- Hexter Elementary School
- Hotchkiss Elementary School
- McShan Elementary School
- Rodgers Elementary School
- Vickery Meadows Elementary School
- Franklin Middle School
- Bryan Adams High School
- Hillcrest High School

Services were also provided at the Gilbert Herrera Intake Center, which is the new-comer center.

The Dallas ISD Refugee Program received referrals from the Dallas ISD Herrera Intake Center and assisted the students and their parents with transition and educational placement within the school district’s campuses. Students and parent were assisted with requisite forms (e.g. emergency contacts, school schedules, attendance requirements, student code of conduct, educational history, free priced lunch eligibility, social and cultural norms, etc.) and related school-entry information. As necessary, students were referred to community clinics for immunizations and/or medical needs.

In addition to the services outlined above, the program provided other types of services. These services included providing translation and interpreter services as necessary to facilitate transition and educational entry to parents and students. Within the realm of translation services, Refugee Program and school personnel were also allowed to request translation services for school notices and letters, parent teacher letters, school news, referral notices, student code of conduct, and educational and medical referral notices.

Students were also provided with individual and small group instructional support services to help meet their academic and social needs. All students meeting refugee eligibility criteria were eligible to receive these services. Those
students who were referred were served on a first come first served basis.

A four-week summer enrichment program was also offered to students to provide literacy, math, language development, and cultural lessons for refugee students. These students were referred by school staff or parents and were served on a space availability basis.

The Dallas ISD Refugee Program also partnered with IRC to provide instructional support. Services offered in this partnership were literacy, math, personal self-help, nutrition, and recreational activities for students. Again, students were served on a space availability basis.

To address presenting problems related to preexisting behavioral and psychological needs, the Dallas ISD Refugee Program provided service coordination and intervention services. Students with significant problems were referred to the local campus Student Support Team. These students were then referred to the Youth and Family Centers for services.

The program also provided school orientation services for parents. These orientation meetings were intended to provide educational awareness and assist refugee families with transition into the public school system. The sessions were provided in coordination with Dallas ISD’s Truancy Department, Health Services Department, Psychological and Social Services Department, Dallas ISD Police Department, the Youth and Family Centers, International Rescue Committee, and Catholic Charities.

**Personnel**

Program staff included a program specialist, an interpreter, five summer school enrichment officers, and five part-time English as a second language teachers.

**Budget and Expenditures**

The program’s budget for the 2005-2006 school year was $161,944. Staff salaries ($125,021) accounted for the largest portion of the expenditure categories. Fringe benefits ($16,886), supplies ($11,000), and travel ($5,037) accounted for the remainder of the expenditure categories. The budget allocated $4,000 for the program’s evaluation.

**Demographics**

The program served 201 students from 28 countries across the globe. The majority of these students came from Liberia (15.9%), Afghanistan (10.9%), and Somalia (10.9%).

The students served by the program spoke 31 languages. The top three languages spoken were Krio (12.9%), Somali (12.9%), and French (9.5%). Thirty percent of the refugee students were in the ninth grade and 52.7% were male. Although services for the refugee students were provided on eight campuses, the students were enrolled on 21 campuses across the district. However, the majority of campuses on which refugee services were provided had the largest proportion of the refugee student population. Hillcrest, Hotchkiss, and McShan had the largest portion of refugee students; 25%, 22%, and 20%, respectively.

**Program Outcomes**

The program provided:

- Transition and educational placement services to 134 students and 136 families.
- Translation for 15 documents for students and five documents for parents.
- Two hundred and seventy-one tutoring contact hours; serving 74 students.
- Twelve school orientation seminars for parents. Three sessions were provided
with both IRC and Catholic Charities and served 127 participating parents.

- Thirty-five counseling sessions at the Youth and Family Centers; serving 110 students.