



## **Best Practices in Immigrant Education**

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**Name of Community College:** Pima Community College.

**Title of Program:** Refugee Education Project

**Type of Program:** ESL program

**Primary Division(s) or Department(s) involved:** Pima Community College Adult Education

### **1. Need for Program**

The Refugee Education Project (REP) has been in place since 1978. The program focuses on acquisition of the English skills necessary for obtaining and maintaining employment, and that are consistent with the National Teaching English as a Second Language (TESOL) Standards.

REP is located in Tucson, Arizona, and receives one of the biggest numbers of resettled refugees in Arizona. Newly arrived refugees have English skills from Pre-Literate through Advanced. The primary goal of refugee resettlement is employment as soon as possible. Lack of English skills prevents refugees from getting employment to support themselves and their families.

In the last two years, REP has served more than 500 refugee students.

### **2. Brief Description of Program (Briefly explain the purpose of your program, including whether it is an academic program [credit or non-credit] or student service.)**

REP provides English Language Training (ELT) to adult students who hold refugee status as defined by the U.S. Department of Homeland Security – U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services (USCIS). REP offers English Language Acquisition for Adults (ELAA) classes at three (3) levels: Pre-Literacy, Beginning, and Intermediate.

The classes are held Monday through Thursday. Each class is two (2) hours long. REP also provides Vocational English as a Second Language (VESL) for higher level refugee students.

REP is a non-credit program.

### **3. Specific Population Served**

Eligible refugees

**4. Goals and Objectives** The goal of REP is to provide English Language instruction to refugees, with an emphasis on English as it relates to obtaining and retaining employment. This includes identifying and assessing the instructional needs of eligible refugees needing to become conversant and literate in the English language.



REP provides English language survival skills in the lower levels, and vocational language skills in more advanced levels. The classes cover all language skills: reading, writing, listening, and speaking.

## **5. Outcomes**

REP improves students' language acquisition. They learn to communicate both orally and in writing to be able to function on the job, fill out various employment forms, and do other employment-related tasks as needed.

## **6. Collaboration**

REP closely collaborates with volunteer agencies that resettle refugees in Tucson. Some of these are the International Rescue Committee, Lutheran Social Ministries, and Catholic Community Services. REP also is a program within Pima Community College Adult Education, and receives in-kind service from Pima Community College such as building space, facilities maintenance, use of IT equipment and classroom equipment, IT services, and books and materials that are used in other programs as well.

## **7. Success Factors**

Close cooperation with Volunteer Resettlement Agencies has been critical to the success of the program. REP and volunteer agencies keep track of students' attendance, thereby helping to increase retention, which in turn increases English language acquisition. Job development services at volunteer agencies help REP instructors select materials necessary for students to get into the job market faster and more successfully.

## **8. Challenges Faced and Overcome**

The main challenge REP is facing is an increasing number of refugee students arriving in Tucson. Funding has not kept up with this increase. To support the increase, low-enrollment classes have been eliminated and high-enrollment classes have been expanded. REP is housed in a facility with three (3) other Adult Education programs. All programs work together to ensure classrooms and schedules are appropriate to all students' needs.

## **9. Funding and Sustainability**

The program is funded by the Arizona Department of Economic Security, Community Services Administration, Refugee Resettlement Program. It is a contract which will be renewed for the coming year. After that, we are planning to reapply. We also are looking for other grants, community partners, and funding sources to support the REP program, financially and/or in-kind.

For more information, contact:

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