

A WEBSITE TO HELP TEACHERS PROVIDE EFFECTIVE CAREER-READINESS
INSTRUCTION FOR HIGH SCHOOL IMMIGRANT AND REFUGEE ENGLISH
LEARNERS

By

Jessica Wright

A capstone project submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of
Master of Arts in Teaching English to Speakers of Other Languages

Hamline University

Saint Paul, Minnesota

Primary Advisor: Julianne Scullen, Ed.S.

Secondary Advisor: Mike Shomion

During my student teaching experience in a town with a meat processing plant that attracted many immigrant and refugee families, I noticed that many immigrant and refugee students didn't seem to have a lot of knowledge about the different types of work that are available in their new country. Further, often they seemed unenthusiastic about their futures or had goals for the future which seemed to be based not on their own reality, but on what they thought they should say their goals were. Conversations with and observations of these students made me realize that the potential exists for educators to play a huge role in informing immigrant and refugee LEP students of the possibilities that exist for them to choose jobs that will allow them to utilize and build upon their own personal, cultural, and language-based assets.

Immigrants and refugees with limited English proficiency experience a number of serious career-related linguistic, cultural, and socioeconomic barriers. As an English language teacher who is passionate about doing all I can to support students in their goals, my research question is: *what do effective high school career-readiness teaching practices look like for refugees and immigrants with limited English proficiency?* In order to answer this question, I pursued research in the areas of career readiness education initiatives, the specific employment and career-related challenges faced by immigrants and refugees, and career counseling theories.

The culmination of my research is a website with lesson plan ideas for teachers working with this population. The website is located at <https://teachtransitionresources.wordpress.com>, and features highly customizable lesson ideas for teachers working with high school immigrant and refugee English learners. The lessons are written in consultation with the WIDA Can Do Descriptors Key Uses Edition Grades 9-12 (Board of Regents of the University of Wisconsin System, on Behalf of the WIDA Consortium, 2016), which provide examples of what English

learners can do at different levels in reading, writing, listening, and speaking. Another key document referenced often while putting together the lesson plan ideas was the Universal Design for Learning Guidelines graphic organizer 2.2 (CAST, 2018). This document offered concrete lesson building ideas that inspired me to include many options for teachers to provide multiple means of engagement, representation, action, and expression in their classrooms.

Because every English language classroom is different due to student interests, strengths, and needs, I did not create rigid lesson plans, but instead offered a discussion of possible instructional materials and strategies. My inspiration for providing lesson ideas in this way was my love for what I've come to call "teacher conversations," which is when two teachers who are passionate about their work discuss ideas and, within the conversation, build instructional ideas which are far superior to what either teacher could have produced alone. I wanted to make suggestions that would excite teachers to choose lesson topics that would be relevant to their particular students, fun to teach, and easy to customize.

The lesson ideas fall under five broad categories, which I discovered through my research are critical for high school refugee and immigrant English learners in the area of transition and career development. These categories are:

- **Building Soft Skills:** Sending Professional Emails, Telephone Conversations, Making and Responding to Requests, Requesting and Providing Clarification
- **Exploring Jobs and Careers:** Personal Assessments, Career Clusters, Informational Interviews
- **Building Experience**
- **Applying for a Job:** Applications, Resumes, Cover Letters, and Interviews

- **Employee Rights Instruction:** Decent Work, Employee Rights Resources

Because the area of career development instruction is infinite, these categories and subcategories do not in any way represent the totality of instructional opportunities for teachers working with these groups of learners. I plan to continue to develop the website, and plan to add, for example, additional Soft Skills lessons such as Negotiating Conflict at Work. However, I do believe that the lesson ideas I have provided are more than enough to fill an entire high school term. My hope is that I will receive feedback from teachers on the Contact tab and this will allow me to add lesson ideas in the future as well.

The front page of the [website](#), with a green mountain to represent determination and commitment in overcoming obstacles:



REFERENCES

Board of Regents of the University of Wisconsin System, on Behalf of the WIDA

Consortium. (2016). *WIDA can do descriptors key uses edition grades 9-12*.

<https://wida.wisc.edu/sites/default/files/resource/CanDo-KeyUses-Gr-9-12.pdf>

CAST (2018). Universal design for learning guidelines version 2.2 [graphic organizer].

Wakefield, MA: Author.

Wordpress.com. (n.d.) *Get going fast: a checklist*. Wordpress.com Learn.

<https://wordpress.com/learn/quick-start-guide/>

Wright, Jessica. Teach Transition Resources. (2020).

<https://teachtransitionresources.wordpress.com>