



## Developing Social and Emotional Skills in Refugee and Immigrant Youth: Challenges and Strategies

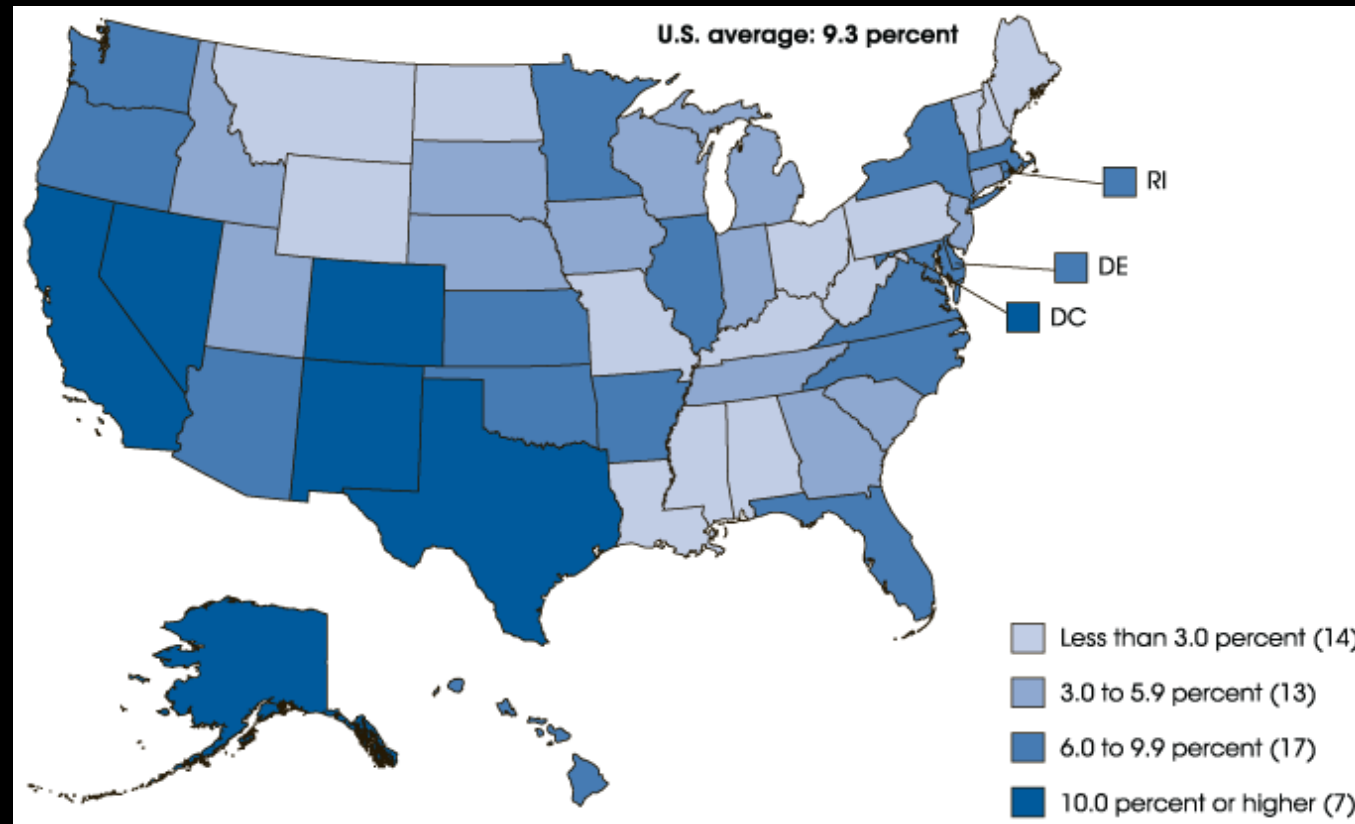
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Who's an immigrant? Who's a refugee?

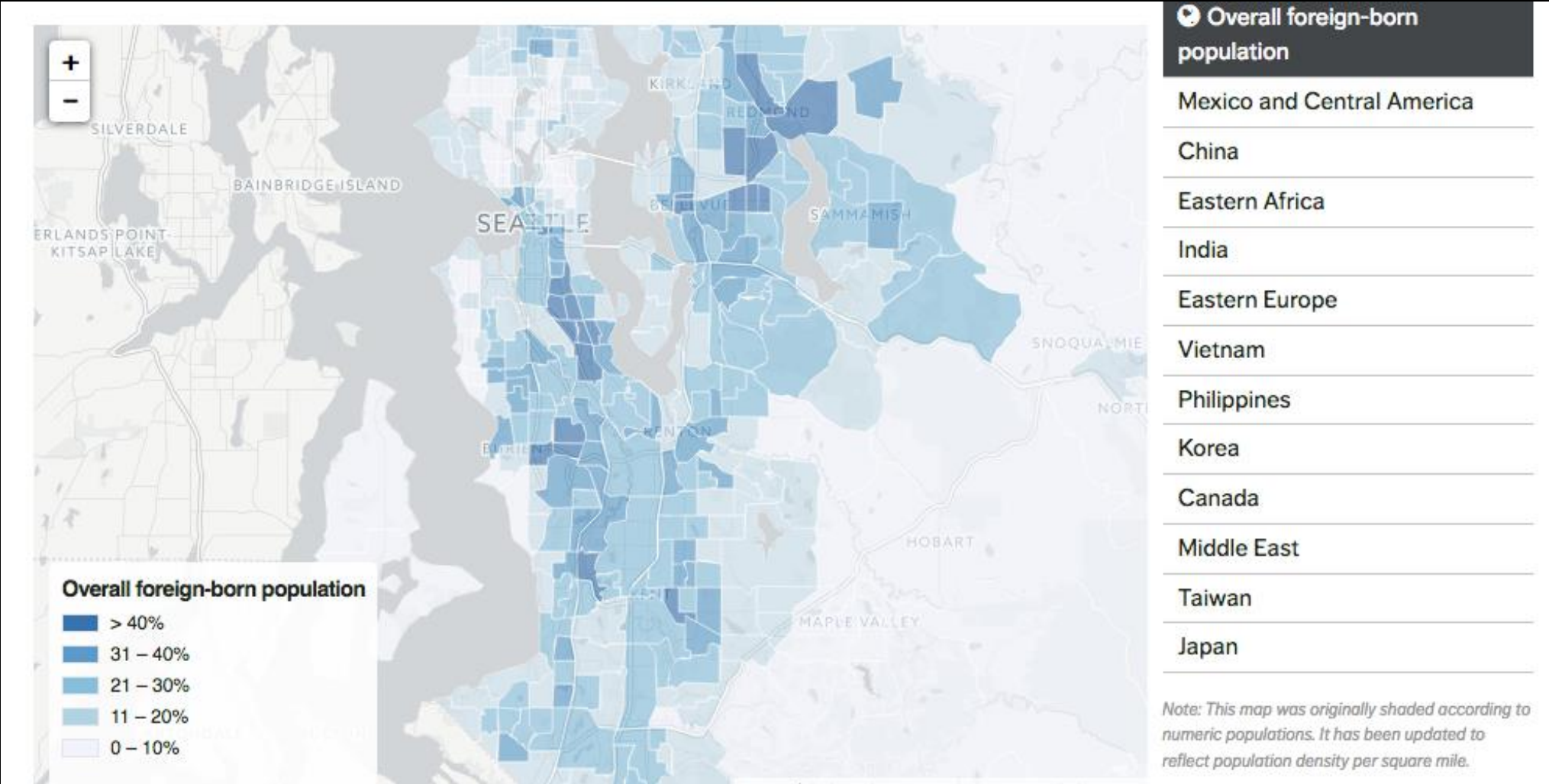


# Immigrants and Refugees



- Over 9% of public school students in the US are English language learners (ELL). This number is growing.
- 20% of the US population speaks a language other than English at home.

# King County's Foreign-Born Communities





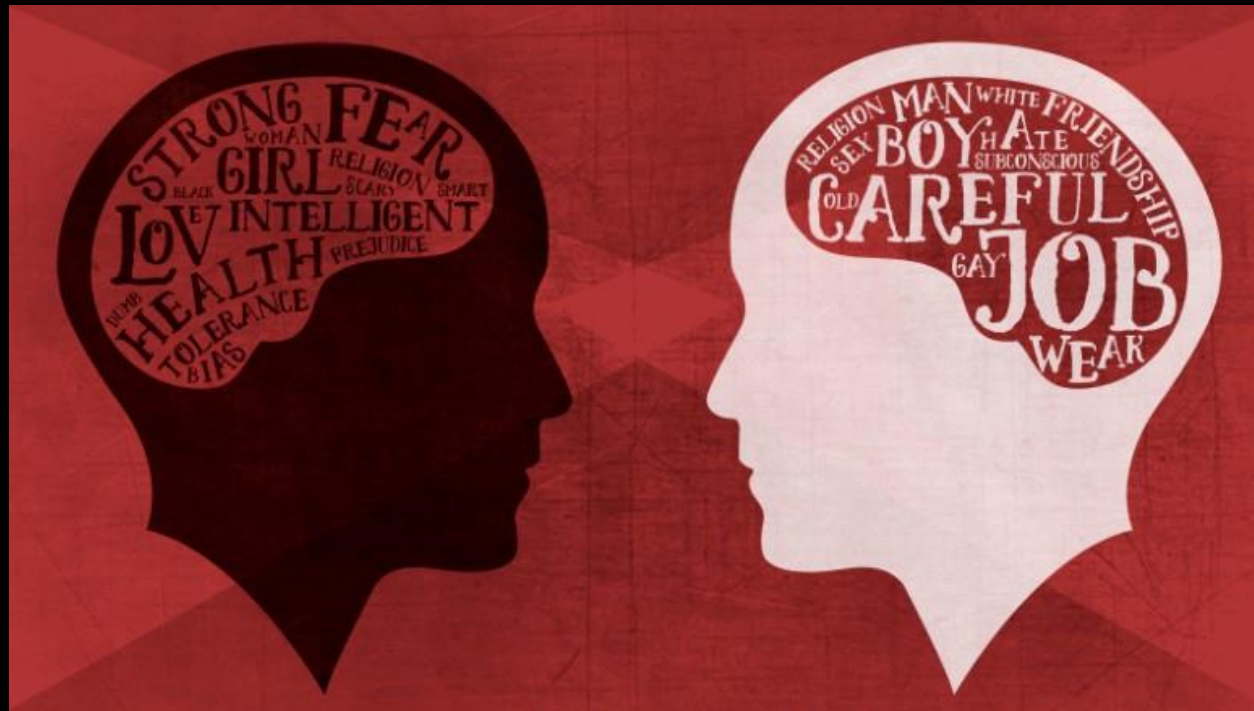
# Challenges to Youth Workers



- Retaining youth workers who can relate to youth from a broad range of backgrounds
- Developing capacity among youth workers to serve as cultural brokers and community leaders

# Implicit Bias

- Attitudes or stereotypes that affect our understanding, actions, and decision-making in an unconscious manner.



# Activity: Implicit Bias

*Allison and Penelope are talking on the phone.*

ALLISON: We just got home from the pediatrician.

PENELOPE: Oh yeah? Are you still seeing Dr. Nielsen?

ALLISON: It's so sad. He retired last year. Now we see this Indian doctor. But she's really nice.

PENELOPE: Do you think it'll be hard for the kids to understand her? There's this Indian boy at Freddy's school, and whenever I see his parents, I can't figure out what they're saying.

PENELOPE: The kids didn't seem to mind. I think they were just happy she gave them candy at the end.

# Activity: Implicit Bias

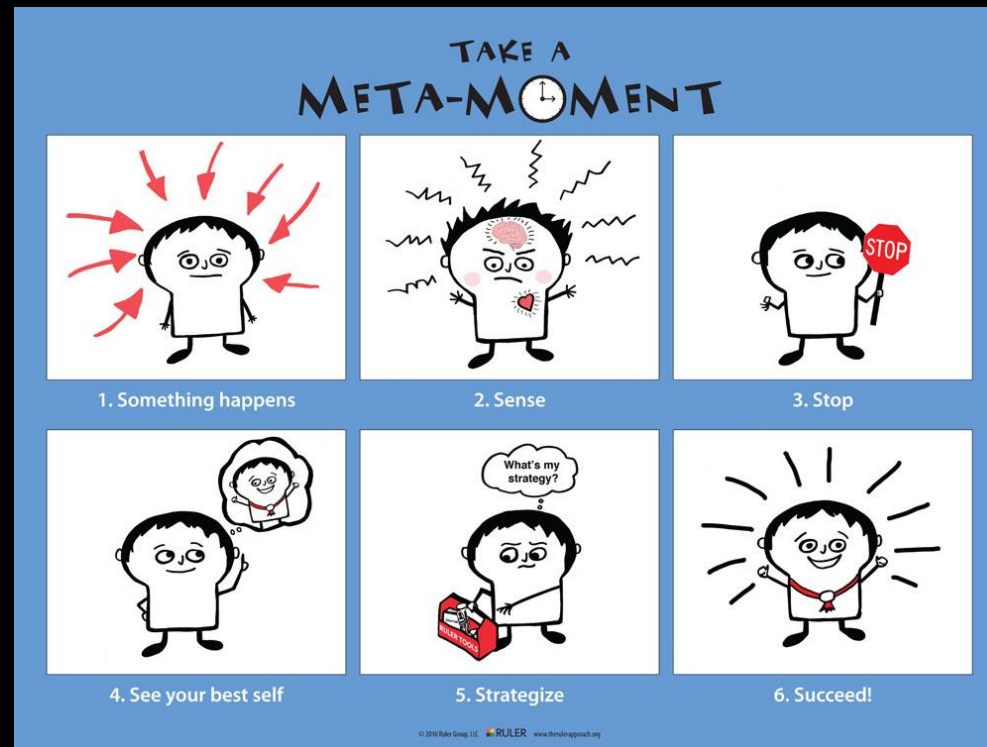
- What stereotypes are implied in this conversation?

It's not just Allison and Penelope. All of us have implicit biases. We tend to feel comfortable with those who are like us, who are part of our group. But if we want to achieve equity in our increasingly diverse society, we all need to work to overcome our biases.



# What is social emotional learning?

A process through which people build awareness and skills in managing emotions, setting goals, establishing relationships and making responsible decisions, leading to success in school and in life.



# Social Emotional Standards (Washington State)

- 1) Self-awareness: ability to identify and name one's emotions and their influence on behavior
- 2) Self-management: ability to regulate emotions, thoughts, and behaviors
- 3) Self-efficacy: ability to motivate oneself, persevere, and see oneself as capable
- 4) Social awareness: ability to empathize with others from diverse backgrounds
- 5) Social management: ability to make safe and constructive choices about personal behavior and social interactions
- 6) Social engagement: the ability to consider others and a desire to contribute to the well-being of school and community

What are the risks and challenges that can burden refugee and immigrant youth?

# Challenges of Migration

- Loss of predictable context (community ties, work, customs)
- Separation from extended family members, friends, and neighbors
- Trauma prior to migration or during “crossing”
- Feelings of guilt about escaping while leaving others behind



\*Refugee/Immigrant parents might be emotionally unavailable to support their children as a result of all these stresses

# Other Family-of-Origin Issues

- Poverty
- Undocumented Status
- Limited Experience with Education





# Youth-Level Issues

- Interrupted education
- New language and educational system— many refugee/immigrant youth attend segregated and underfunded schools
- New family structure: migration might reunite children with parents and siblings they haven't seen for years (or ever)
- Additional responsibilities at home: taking care of younger siblings, translating for parents
- Navigating two cultures: home culture and mainstream American culture
- Confronting racism and xenophobia in the new society

# How home culture shapes us



# How does your home culture shape your views about

- Education?
- Mental health?

What is youth development?

# Youth Development: Key to Developing Social Emotional Skills

- Youth Development: An intentional, deliberate process of providing support, relationships, experience, resources, and opportunities to promote positive outcomes for young people





# Role of Educators/Providers

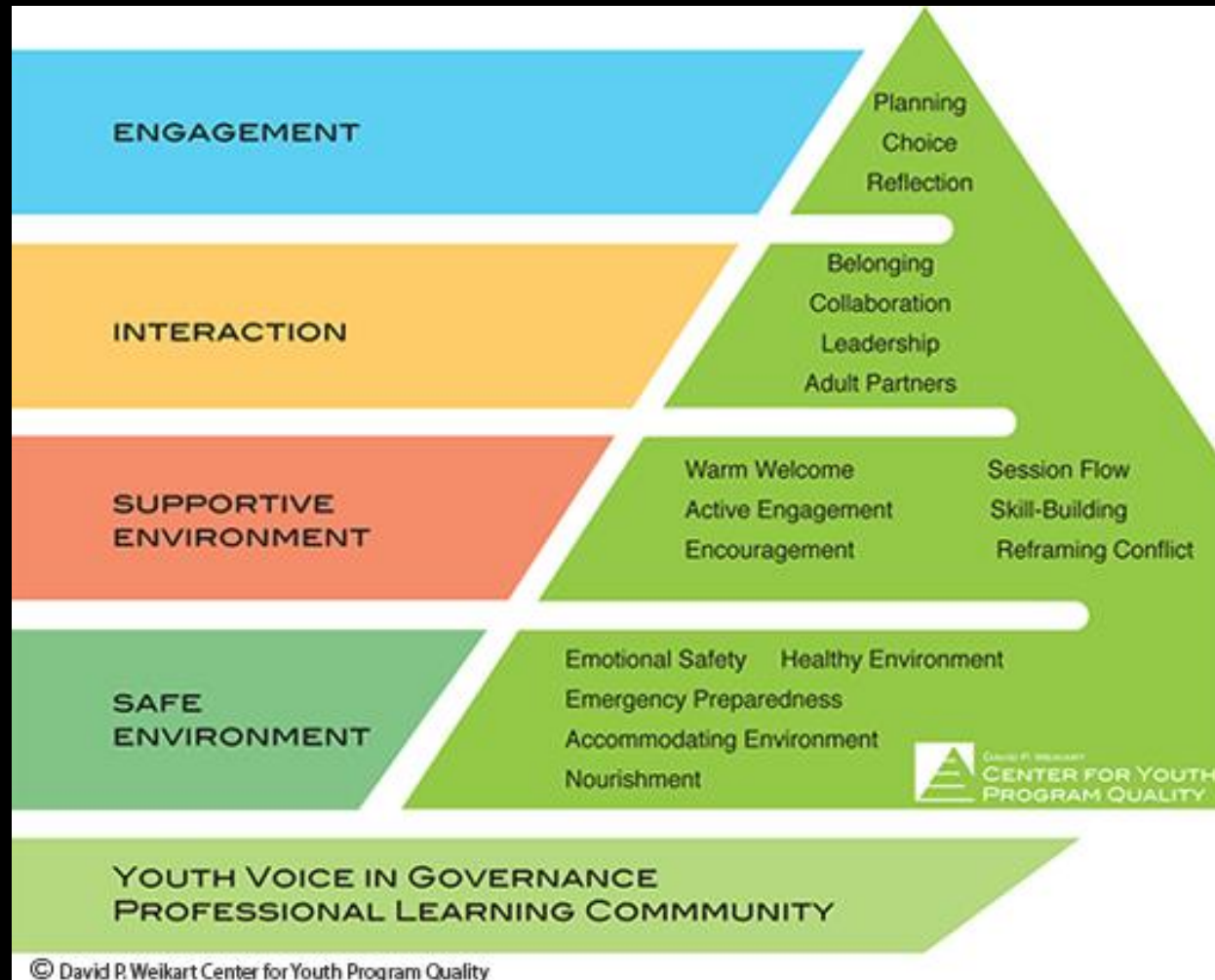
- To enhance protective factors for youth
  - Connectedness to parents and family
  - Connectedness to other adults and organizations
  - Connectedness to school
  - Spirituality
  - Optimism, a sense of possibilities
- To inform, not control, youth choices and help youth develop resilience
- To guide exploration of identity
  - Who am I?
  - Who am I in relation to others?



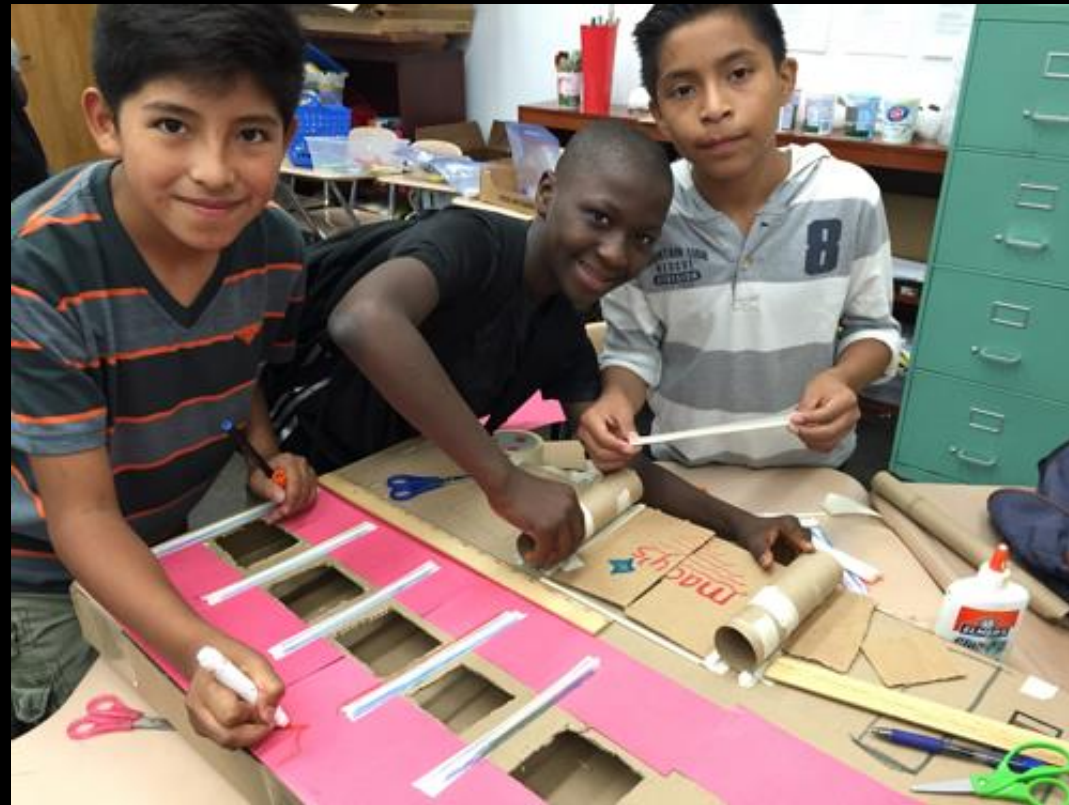
# Key Principles of Youth Development

- Positive outcomes
- Youth voice and choice
- Strategies to engage ALL youth
- Community involvement and advocacy
- Focus on collaboration

# Youth Program Quality Initiative



How do we engage youth with refugee/immigrant backgrounds in social and emotional learning?



By respecting their cultural beliefs and practices.

# Establish a Culture of Trust and Openness

- Encourage staff working with youth to learn about the home cultures of youth in the school/program
- Find ways in class/program to celebrate and explore home cultures of youth
  - Youth Showcase
  - Multicultural Night
  - Recognizing special holidays





# Establish a Culture of Trust and Openness



- Use community agreements and a youth contract to set program expectations from Day 1.
- Use weekly community circles to check in and reinforce program culture.
- Establish contact with parents and families as much as possible— and not only to report a problem!

# Provide Opportunities for

- Community Service
- Community Engagement
- Recreation
- Advocacy

The poster is hand-drawn on a light-colored background. At the top, 'ReWA Youth' is written in large, bold, blue letters, with 'present' in smaller, pink letters below it. The central focus is the title 'Art for Earth' in large, green, block letters. The word 'Art' is at the top, 'for' is in the middle, and 'Earth' is at the bottom. To the right of 'Art' are three blue water droplets. Below 'for' is a drawing of a green tree with a brown trunk, a small red house, and a green bush. To the right of the tree is a green 'X' over a brown stick figure. Below 'Earth' are two stick figures, one holding a yellow square and the other holding a purple square. To the left of the central drawing is a vertical stack of four green boxes containing the text: 'Fun for KIDS!', 'face painting', 'games', and 'treats'. To the right is a green box containing 'And it's FREE!'. Below the central drawing, the text reads: 'VISUAL ART SHOWCASE', 'Tuesday August 15, 2017', 'Rainier Vista Central Park', and '1:00 - 2:00 pm'. At the bottom left is a drawing of a blue and green globe. At the bottom right is a drawing of a purple flower with a green stem and leaves, and a purple apple with a yellow slice. A green box at the bottom center contains the text: 'Sponsored by: ReWA, Coyote Central, and City of Seattle Office of Arts & Culture'.

ReWA Youth  
present

Fun for KIDS!  
face painting  
games  
treats

And it's FREE!

Art  
for  
Earth

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