

Dr. Kara Kavanagh, Provost Diversity Grant, The C.A.R.E. Program and Partnership

Program Description:

The C.A.R.E. program (Creativity and Reading Education) is a four-way partnership between James Madison University (JMU), Church World Service Refugee Resettlement Agency (CWS), Harrisonburg City Public Schools (HCPS), and families in the refugee community. This 6-credit immersion engages JMU education students in course preparation followed by them facilitating a summer program for children (and their parents) from the local refugee community. This program integrates creative arts and literacy development by utilizing community-based field trips for real world connections and applications.

Graduate students actively engage in intensive course sessions to examine theories, pedagogies, and curriculum for intentionally supporting English Language Learners (ELLs) and refugees in elementary classrooms. Faculty and guest speakers develop students' understanding of how to develop a safe and welcoming classroom through community-building rituals, routines, and spaces, trauma-informed classroom practice, Morning Meetings, and theater games. Faculty prepare students with content and methods to develop fun, experiential activities that integrate creative arts, literacy, TESOL strategies, and content standards focused on fieldtrip experiences.

HCPS (Spotswood Elementary) provides classrooms, free breakfast and lunch, and supplies to integrate our children into their summer school theme. CWS works with HCPS to identify children to be served, registers and drives newly arrived refugee families, and provides a translator and context and expertise. CA.R.E. JMU faculty write grants for funding, recruit families through home visits, recruit JMU students, facilitate all aspects of CARE, organize program logistics, teach and assess coursework, mentor students, and collect research data. This is an exemplary, award winning, university-school-community partnership that meets the needs of all stakeholders equitably.

Community

Yearly, our town welcomes 100-200 refugees who have fled their countries because they fear death or persecution due to their race, religion, or political views. Our rural schools serve these culturally, linguistically, and religiously diverse children whose schooling was interrupted due to a long wait in refugee camps. As such, many children fall behind or struggle. Parents on the Refugee Council wanted more opportunities and enrichment for their children in the areas of English language and literacy (reading, writing, and speaking) and asked JMU faculty to help create a program for this specific purpose.

The refugee community and JMU's education students share a zip code, but there are few opportunities for meaningful interactions. Despite providing diverse practicum, classes on diversity, and opportunities to work with all families, most of our education students report feeling anxious and ill-prepared to work with diverse families. Students' fears about language barriers, unfamiliar customs, and stereotypes strongly influence where, who, and what they will teach, and who they will advocate for. Refugees comprise a culturally, religiously, ethnically, linguistically, and socioeconomically diverse population that help our education students

cultivate a nuanced understanding of our globalized world and the interconnectedness of our community. We see this program and partnership as an exemplar of how universities can partner with their local refugee families and community agencies, so the articulated needs of the community are met, but also, our students are prepared to advocate for and meet the needs of refugee families in the communities where they will teach.

Research

The self-identified needs of the community, which were English and literacy development, meant we focused on sociocultural perspectives of literacy (Bakhtin, 1986; Gee, 1996; Krashen, 1982; Lewis, Enciso & Moje; 2007). Second, literature on refugees, immigrants, and English Language Learners transitioning to a new country, community, and school (Igoa, 1995; IRC Website, 2016) informed course content and program design. Third, we needed to address college students' anxieties around diverse families (Sleeter, 2005). We identified literacy pedagogies and informal opportunities for reading, writing, speaking, and listening such as morning meetings that invited conversation as well as repetitive, call and response activities (Kriete & Davis, 2013). We identified place-based education field trips that became themes for each week's activities, read alouds, and integrated stations to maximize community and literacy enjoyment (Kellet, 2009; Smith & Sobel, 2010; Vera, 2011)

Creativity allowed all students to access content, so JMU students planned integrated lessons using music, movement, drama, visual arts, and open-ended materials; we know these pedagogies are great for children in poverty, refugees, English Language Learners, and ALL students (Basch, 2011; Fahlman, Hall, & Lock, 2006; Gorski, 2013; Kellett, 2009; Pogrow, 2006; Wetz, 2004). To address xenophobia, we identified content and guest speakers to unpack students' biases and emphasized family engagement, families' strengths and their resiliency (Epstein & Salinas, 2004; Robinson, 2007.)

Research and Scholarship

We have disseminated our research findings through a book chapter and conference presentations (international, national, and state). The following 3 presentations at different regional, state, and national conferences in Fall 2018 showcased different strengths of C.A.R.E.

Kavanagh, K. & McCartney, H. (November, 2018). Responding to our refugee community while combating xenophobia and nativism with radical love and C.A.R.E. Paper presented at the National Association of Multicultural Education Conference, Memphis, Tennessee.

Kavanagh, K. (October, 2018). Beyond crafts: Utilizing the creative arts to engage and enrich emergent bilinguals. Paper presented at the Virginia Chapter of the Teachers of English as a Second Language State Conference, Charlottesville, Virginia.

Kavanagh, K., McCartney, H., & Sprague, R. (November, 2018). We didn't know what we didn't know: Constraints, obstacles, and considerations on the path to developing a

university- school –community partnership. Paper presented at the Engagement Conference, Harrisonburg, Virginia.

Book Chapter

Kavanagh, K. & McCartney, H. (2018). James Madison University sowing the seeds of C.A.R.E. (Creativity and Reading Education) within the Harrisonburg refugee community. In E. Sengupta and P. Blessinger (Eds.) *Refugee Education: Integration and Acceptance of Refugees in Mainstream Society*, Emerald Group Publishing.

Conference Presentations (2016-2017)

Kavanagh, K. & McCartney, H. (September, 2017). *Integrating community, creativity, and literacy to support refugees transitioning to our schools and community*. The 34th Annual International Academic Conference, Florence, Italy.

Kavanagh, K. (2017, April). *James Madison University partnering with refugee families through community and C.A.R.E. (Creativity and Reading Education)*. Paper presented at the Institute on Education Diplomacy by the Association of Childhood Education International, Washington, D.C.

Kavanagh, K., Sprague, R., Gebretsadik, D., Feichtinger McGrath, L. (2016, September). *Planting seeds, growing connections, reaping rewards: Processes for refugee community engagement*. Paper presented at the annual meeting of Virginia Teachers of English to Speakers of Other Languages, Harrisonburg, Virginia.

Kavanagh, K. (2016, November). *Partnering with refugee families through community and C.A.R.E (Creativity And Reading Education)*. Paper presented at the biannual conference of the International Conference on Urban Education, San Juan, Puerto Rico.

Outcomes, Impacts, Lessons Learned, and Next Steps

In 2016, we piloted the CARE program for 30 children, 16 graduate students, and 11 parents. In 2017 we had 24 children and 13 graduate students. We capped it at 20 children due to space limitations and wanting a low teacher to student ratio. While recruiting children for the pilot was challenging in 2016, in 2017 we had to cut off registration in less than 30 minutes of starting door to door recruiting because word of mouth spread quickly throughout the apartment complex. Children and parents loved the program, the free books, and experiential learning. The schools benefit because the children who are newly arriving get experience with American schooling structures and emerging English skills while the current students get added enrichment over the summer when academic learning can regress.

In 2018, we went a completely different approach to recruiting for CARE. Our newly arrived refugees were mostly Congolese and Eritrean. The Church World Service leaders identified families with young children (ages 3-9), and I went door to door with a translator to sign children up for the program. We did not use school geography this time because they wanted to specifically identify children who had little to no schooling experience.

Graduate students reported this was the best part of their JMU experience and wanted every education student to experience the power of CARE. Some decided to teach in local schools that serve refugees because they were transformed by CARE. All graduate students referenced their previous misunderstandings and biases against Muslims and refugees and how this program helped them step out of their comfort zones and humanize those they had dehumanized previously due to stereotypes and xenophobia. Their future students will benefit from their experience. Importantly, 6 JMU students who were a part of the CARE program have been hired in local schools where they serve students in the refugee community. The administrators cited this experience as reasons for hiring them.

Based on our pilot and research, we evaluated and revised pieces for 2017 C.A.R.E. We extended students' preparation and reflection time, provided better guidance and standards for literacy inclusion, incorporated guest speakers in STEAM, Theater, and Trauma-Informed Care, and utilized mentor ESOL teachers. We incorporated an additional week of preparation, so that JMU students received more content related to English Language Learners and refugees. CWS came in to provide more background information on refugees, and we required more practical readings explicitly related to educating refugees. As faculty, we over-estimated our students' abilities in conducting interactive read alouds, incorporating movement throughout the day, and differentiating lessons for multi-ages and abilities. As such, for this year's program, we put a lot more focus on preparing, modeling, and practicing interactive read alouds. To incorporate more movement and music into our JMU students' understanding of teaching and learning, we invited a Theater professor to teach theater games as well as a community member who teaches children's music classes. We noticed JMU students complaining about the older boys' behaviors as they became bored and disinterested in stations. They did not use what they knew about STEM, differentiation, or teaching older children to engage them. For 2017, we brought in a guest speaker to focus on designing and differentiating STEM activities for children. The need for more intentional collaboration with community partners was a major implication for C.A.R.E. from 2016-2017. For example, HCPS' summer school schedule changed at the last minute, so the cost of transportation to and from school as well as the last field trip and all lunches for the final week came from our nominal grant budget. For 2017 and 2018, we were in constant communication about schedules and program alignment. The success of the program and partnership has helped us build the trust needed in each other as partners committed to serving marginalized children and preparing the teachers who serve them.

2018 changes:

In addition to the previous guest speakers in previous years, in CARE 2018 I focused a lot more on literacy and drama pedagogy. The additional guest speakers included 2 TESOL speakers (1 a professor and 1 a local TESOL teacher), 1 theater professor who is an expert in drama pedagogy, and 3 literacy professors. It was really exciting to see the JMU students incorporate EVERY single activity and lesson they learned from all the guest speakers. Instead of borrowing items from family and friends, I used grant funds to purchase dramatic play costumes, recess materials, art supplies, and children's books that reflected experiences and families in the refugee and immigrant communities. In addition to paying for children's books for all the children in CARE, each of the JMU students were allowed to buy books at the book fair, too.

One of the most exciting changes for 2018 was our new location and partnership with Spotswood Elementary. The faculty and administration embraced us with open arms and were very eager to include us and integrate with us. Our children became buddies with older students in summer school meaning they read together, did drama activities together, ate lunch together, and played on the playground together. It was a truly beautiful experience and partnership. We didn't know about this new partnership and location until a few weeks prior, so we had very little time to plan and integrate our students. However, we are excited about the endless possibilities to collaborate for 2019.

Finally, a group of students from another department created a website and marketing materials to help us recruit JMU students and explain to administration, funders, and stakeholders in the community about our program and partnership. CARE was just awarded the Association of Teacher Educators University/School Partnership Award 2018. We were also nominated for the ESC/s National Engagement Excellence Award this past year. We hope that state and national recognition through programs such as ESC and ATE, will help us achieve our 2018 goal of soliciting permanent funding for CARE by our university. Please check out our website at [CARE PROGRAM](#).

2019 Changes:

Recruiting JMU students for the 6 credit experience remained our biggest challenge again and changes needed to be made. The pool of students who needed the 501 elective was very small and most students don't want to stay in Harrisonburg over the summer when CARE has to occur due to the HCPS school calendars. In addition, the cost of 2 graduate classes during the summer is cost prohibitive. As such, I worried I wouldn't be able to recruit the minimal numbers of students to run the program. I decided to run it as 2 separate courses instead of the 6 credits. While this is not ideal, it was a revision that was needed to sustain the partnership and big picture of this program. I'm working on putting some of the materials online while protecting the integrity of what makes this a unique preparation for JMU students and meets the needs of the children. My prediction was correct that I wouldn't have the numbers without this change since only 1 person signed up for both.

Our partnership with Spotswood Elementary that began last year has grown immensely. Our communication is easy and ensures that we are working together to partner in ways that provides professionalizing and mentorship opportunities for our JMU students. In addition, we are looking at ways to integrate our children from CARE and the regular summer school in ways that support our purpose of preparing the children for entering American school in the fall.

Our partnership with CWS is strong as ever. At the COE Partnership Awards, Rebecca Sprague said that out of all the partners they work with in the community, this one is her favorite partnership/program and the easiest for them. They appreciate the work I put into it as well as my flexibility and understanding.

Grant funds have paid for transportation to and from fieldtrip, books for children and teachers from the Green Valley Book Fair, fieldtrip to Back Home on the Farm entrance fees, Lakeshore

supplies (creative arts materials, dramatic play costumes, listening center materials, snacks, diverse children books, etc.)

Importantly, I have secured most of the materials that I will need for this program in the future. For the next program in 2020, I will only need money for transportation.