



**2023 NSPRA Award Entry  
Special Communication Project / Campaign**

**Bowling Green Independent School District  
1211 Center Street  
Bowling Green, Kentucky 42101**

4,424 Students in Preschool - 12th Grades  
Size of Communication Department: 1

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# SYNOPSIS

By 2025, one in four U.S. public school students will be English language learners, but for refugee and newcomer students who often enroll with little or no prior school experience, assigning them to age-appropriate, mainstream classrooms is not equitable education.

Bowling Green, Kentucky, with a population of approximately 72,000 citizens, is among the top four refugee resettlement hubs in the United States. The community has two public school districts, with Bowling Green Independent School District (BGISD) the smaller of the two with approximately 4,400 students. BGISD is among the most diverse school districts in Kentucky with a majority-minority student population that is over 20% multilingual, and speaking more than 55 different languages.

In 2022, BGISD partnered with Fugees Family, Inc. to launch a program called Teranga Academy, from the Senegalese word for hospitality and community.

The Fugees Family, Inc. has a 15-year track record of working with refugee students in school settings, and is the only network of U.S. schools dedicated to refugee education. The Fugees model emphasizes holistic English acquisition, a trauma-informed approach to education, and uses the universal language of soccer as an educational tool.

**The Bowling Green Independent School District is the first public school district in America to partner with the Fugees Family, Inc. as they expand their model across the country.**

In developing the Teranga Academy, Bowling Green Independent Schools and the Fugees Family, Inc. designed a support system to prepare teenage newcomers for high school and beyond. The Teranga Academy is open to students in grades 6-10 who have been in the United States for three years or less, are multilingual, and have had their formal education interrupted.

Teranga students are enrolled in competency-based courses aligned with the district's curriculum to learn foundational skills before mainstreaming and progressing to earn a high school diploma. Opportunities at Teranga also include music, art, yoga, martial arts, and recreational soccer to build community among the students.

## English Language Learners

By 2025, 1 out of 4 children in classrooms across the nation will be an English language learner (ELL) student.

National Education Association  
<https://www.nea.org/resource-library/english-language-learners>

***We believe it is unjust to enroll newcomer students in age-appropriate middle and high school classes with no foundational English language, reading, or math skills.***

**- Gary Fields, Superintendent**

# RESEARCH

BGISD Director of Instructional Programs Elisa Beth Brown spent two years searching for research-based curriculum and professional development to better support multilingual students, specifically newcomers enrolling as teens to the district.

While many public school districts in America have comparable or higher percentages of multilingual learners, few have similar percentages of refugees and newcomers with limited or interrupted formal education. BGISD has participated in the WIDA Consortium, reviewed the What Works Clearinghouse, and the National Literacy Panel, only to find few professional resources.

Efforts to support multilingual students in BGISD in recent years have included hiring and training more teachers and Cultural Liaisons, and investing in teacher and administrator training for [Sheltered Instruction and Observation Protocol \(SIOP\)](#). However, overall the achievement gap for students remained. Middle and high school teachers and administrators consistently shared challenges of serving multilingual newcomers, working to differentiate content and teach foundational reading and math skills while also meeting secondary content standards.

Multilingual students in grades 6-12 with limited or interrupted formal education (SLIFE) were not performing on the same academic level as their age/grade-level peers. Despite the efforts, iReady scores consistently showed most multilingual/SLIFE middle and high school students performing below second grade reading and math.

Throughout the 2020-2021 school year, teachers and principals also shared concerns about the disproportionate impact of the COVID-19 Pandemic for multilingual students and families. While providing online and hybrid school options, teachers reported a lower level of engagement, language barriers with families, and a limited ability to support online learning. For multilingual students beyond grade 5, in 2020-2021, English language proficiency attainment [declined](#).

According to [research by the University of California](#) oral proficiency in English takes 3 to 5 years to develop, and academic English proficiency can take 4 to 7 years. American public schools must teach foundational skills before students should enroll in courses for high school credit. Unless we change the system, students are graduating high school not prepared for life as an adult in America.

**There is no shame in being a beginner learning English, reading or math, and in BGISD, we want to help all students acquire the skills necessary to thrive in our community and in society.**

## Meet Ana

Ana moved to Bowling Green, Kentucky from Honduras as an unaccompanied minor living with an “uncle.” She first enrolled as a freshman with very little elementary schooling from Honduras. As a sophomore in 2021, she was learning to speak English and read, however on a first or second grade level. She could do single digit addition and subtraction, but due to her age, was required to take the same classes that her same-aged peers were taking such as English 1 and 2, Algebra 1, and Geometry.

Beyond traditional learning and EL services, Ana needed many wraparound supports. Her school feared she was being trafficked, and focused on assessing her personal safety. She also experienced trauma as a child and continues to require professional social and emotional support.

## School Year 2021 - 2022

1,766 Students Enrolled Grades 6-12

402 or 22% Multilingual Learners

285 Newcomers

*Living in the United States less than three years and also a subset of the English language learner population called SLIFE, Students with Limited or Interrupted Formal Education.*



# RESEARCH

Between 2015-2019, Bowling Green, Kentucky was ranked third per capita, as a top resettlement hub in the United States. The #1 resettlement hub during the same time frame was located in Clarkston, Georgia, home of the Georgia Fugees Academy Charter School. A footnote in an email about professional development from the Catholic Charities International Center connected BGISD with the Fugees Family, and their Founder and CEO, Luma Mufleh.

## The Fugees Family, Inc.

Since its founding in 2006, Fugees Family, Inc. has provided over 15 years of education to refugee and immigrant youth new to American life and culture. Their model is designed to meet the unique needs of English language learners and young people who have experienced traumatic events and displacement from their home countries. As of the 2019-2020 school year, Fugees Family, Inc. was looking to expand their charter network to schools in St. Louis or Indianapolis, but then the COVID-19 pandemic began, shifting the focus of education for all schools.



In early 2021, [Luma Mufleh](#), and the Fugees Family decided that opening more schools would not solve the problem for the growing number of refugee kids across America. They began plans to expand their proven model of education to public schools through an initiative called Teranga.

Bowling Green Independent Schools hosted Luma Mufleh for a school visit on December 10, 2021. Following the visit, the Fugees Family agreed to partner with the district to better support the district's students.

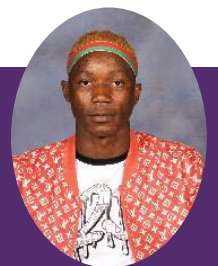
## Fugees Family Model

- [Fugees Schools](#) operate on a student-to-teacher ratio of 1:20 or fewer.
- Teachers begin with foundational English and math skills, or primary grades materials, without regard to the age of the students
- The Fugees model emphasizes holistic English acquisition, a trauma-informed approach to education, and uses the universal language of soccer as an educational tool.
- As described in [Luma Mufleh's 2017 TED Talk](#): Fugees Schools do not feel sorry for refugees, they believe in them and prepare them for their futures in America.

The Fugees Family schools are English-immersion schools, and students speak only English at school. However, when communicating with student's families, the school will use interpretation services to ensure that everyone feels welcome, and to communicate important information clearly.

## Meet Michake

Michake came to the United States from the Congo, enrolling at Bowling Green High School as a Freshman in January 2017. He had no formal schooling and did not speak English. Michake worked for three semesters to earn enough credits to finish his freshman term. He was learning quickly and had goals of attending college. However, because it took so long to learn foundational skills, he was not able to exit the English language services within four years in public schools.



# PLANNING

## OVERALL GOAL:

**Partner with the Fugees Family, Inc. to create a replicable competency-based English immersion program for up to 120 newcomer teens in grades 6-10 by August 2022.**

## KEY MESSAGES:

- We believe it is unjust to enroll newcomer students in age-appropriate middle and high school classes with no foundational English language, reading, or math skills.
- There is no shame in being a beginner.



## BRANDING

Teranga is a Senegalese word that means hospitality, respect, community, solidarity, and sharing. Teranga is the name of the Fugees Family initiative to scale their model across the country. Senegal is not a country in conflict, and thus does not represent current refugee student's native language or home.

As the first public school district to partner with the Fugees Family, BGISD adopted the name Teranga Academy for its new local program.

The logo is also adapted from the Fugees Family logo, with BGISD's colors and Statue of Liberty, representing hope, freedom, and justice.

## BGISD READINESS FOR FUGEES FAMILY MODEL

- *District curriculum aligned K-12 with "power standards" determined by teachers, across content,*
- *Existing school building with available classroom space,*
- *Community partnerships to support wraparound services,*
- *Willingness to challenge and change the existing system for better student outcomes.*

## COMMUNICATION ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES

| DISTRICT LEADERSHIP                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                    | COMMUNICATIONS                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                               | FUGEES FAMILY                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                           | SCHOOL LEADERSHIP                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                |
|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| <b>Superintendent<br/>Gary Fields</b><br><b>Director of Instructional Programs<br/>Elisa Beth Brown</b><br><br>Multilingual Learner Research & Data Studies<br><br>Establishing Expectations and Evaluations<br><br>Overall Budget<br><br>Job Descriptions & Hiring<br><br>Key Communicators for Districtwide Programs | <b>Director of Communications<br/>Leslie McCoy, APR</b><br><br>Strategic Advisor for Public Relations<br><br>Branding (collaboration with Fugees Family, Inc.)<br><br>Photography<br><br>Graphic Design<br><br>Social Media<br><br>Media Relations<br><br>Website Management | <b>Founder and CEO<br/>Luma Mufleh</b><br><b>Chief Impact Officer<br/>Emily Futransky</b><br><br>Professional Resources and Research<br><br>Professional Development<br><br>School Design Advisor<br>- Monthly Site Visits<br>- Weekly Calls<br><br>Branding (collaboration with BGISD) | <b>Instructional Coach<br/>Leigh Anne Littlefield</b><br><b>Instructional Coach<br/>Angie Ford</b><br><b>Lead Teacher<br/>Kristi Costellow</b><br><br>Student Recruitment and Retention<br><br>Instructional Support for competency-based model<br><br>Staff Development<br><br>Coordination of Student Support Services<br><br>Daily School Operations and Family Communication |

## BUDGET

Minimal district funding was used to meet communication goals. \$2,500 was budgeted specifically for Teranga Academy family communication during 2021-2022. Of that, \$1,410 was spent on an informational event for students and families, including catering of three different cultural foods, translation services, branded items such as cups and stickers, and printed materials. An additional \$1,000 was used to add Teranga Academy logos and signage to the school building.

## COMMUNICATION OBJECTIVES, STRATEGIES, & TACTICS:

| AUDIENCE                           | OBJECTIVES                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                 | STRATEGIES & TACTICS                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                               |
|------------------------------------|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Kentucky Department of Education   | Obtain approval to proceed with competency-based model and Fugees Family, Inc. by February 28, 2022.                                                                                                                                                                                                                       | Meet with the Commissioner of Education and members of the Leadership Cabinet. Present qualitative and quantitative data to demonstrate need and preview the Fugees Family Model.<br><b>SPECIFIC QUESTIONS:</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>May BGISD create a model with Fugees Family incorporating competency-based courses?</li> <li>May we utilize elementary-trained teachers to teach high school age students, and</li> <li>May we permit students to attend high school beyond 18 years of age to complete courses?</li> </ul> |
| BGISD Board of Education           | Obtain approval to proceed with school design partnership with Fugees Family, Inc. by March 14, 2022.                                                                                                                                                                                                                      | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Develop and present Memorandum of Understanding for partnership.</li> <li>Create and present job descriptions and determine program funding need.</li> <li>Create and present plan to repurpose former elementary school for Teranga classrooms.</li> </ul>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                 |
| Employees of BGISD                 | <p>Inform employees of need and plans to support multilingual teens by April 1, 2022. Build support for new efforts.</p> <p>Recruit internal staff, specifically seven elementary and middle school certified teachers by April 15, 2022.</p>                                                                              | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Meet with teachers of multilingual learners and Cultural Liaisons to discuss plans for support and preview Fugees model;</li> <li>Meet with faculty and staff of all schools to share about partnership with Fugees Family and plans for future programming.</li> <li>Host Meet and Greet with Fugees Family.</li> </ul>                                                                                                                                                                                    |
| Multilingual students and families | <p>Recruit a minimum of 80 students in grades 6-10 with commitment to participate in Teranga Academy by May 1, 2022.</p> <p><i>Eligible students would not be required to attend the Teranga.</i></p>                                                                                                                      | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Work with teachers of multilingual learners to identify eligible students.</li> <li>Develop consistent talking points for Cultural Liaisons (also interpreters) to share about Teranga with multilingual families.</li> <li>Host Informational Family Night</li> <li>Cultural Liaisons follow-up with personal phone calls and home visits.</li> </ul>                                                                                                                                                      |
| Citizens of Bowling Green          | Inform community for awareness and support with initial sharing the week of March 18, 2022, using press releases to local media, social media, and the district website.                                                                                                                                                   | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Announce partnership with Fugees Family, share summary of plans for supporting multilingual teens.</li> <li>Share importance of change in programming.</li> </ul>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                           |
| Community Partners:                | <p>Identify and connect with four key community partners to assist with additional supports for new programming by July 1, 2022.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Refuge BG</li> <li>Parks and Recreation</li> <li>Stuff the Bus Foundation of Southern Kentucky</li> <li>Be Happy Yoga and Salt Cave</li> </ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Meet with Directors of Refuge BG to assist with family engagement and rec. soccer.</li> <li>Meet with Director of Parks and Recreation for daily use of the park for soccer.</li> <li>Meet with Board of Directors for Stuff the Bus to submit classroom grants for startup costs and students supplies.</li> <li>Contact Owner of Be Happy Yoga and Salt Cave to contract for yoga courses, and trauma-informed daily movement for students.</li> </ul>                                                    |

# IMPLEMENTATION



Upon approval from both the Commissioner of Education and local Board of Education to move forward with a competency-based program to support newcomer teens, implementation focused on opening the Teranga Academy with staff, students, and supports.

First, the district prioritized communication with our internal audience: teachers and staff working directly with multilingual learners, and then all faculty and staff. This served to both inform about the district's plans, answer questions and hear concerns, but also to recruit staff to teach at the Teranga Academy.

Next, the district utilized staff support to begin recruiting students and families, including personal conversations with families and a Family Night event to introduce plans as well as to answer questions.

The third effort included publicly announcing and sharing about the program for community awareness and finally, leveraging community partners for specific support and needs.

## Teranga Academy Communication Samples

- [Presentation to Commissioner of Education and to Employees of BGISD](#)
- [Announcement Press Release](#)
- [Announcement Social Media Samples](#)
- [BGISD Meet and Greet Promo Graphic](#)
- [Meet and Greet Social Media](#)
- [Update email to Commissioner of Education & Cabinet](#)
- [Talking Points for Families](#)
- [Family Night Social Media](#)
- [Summer Teacher Development Social Media](#)
- [Block Party Social Media](#)
- [Orientation Social Media](#)
- [First Day of School in BGISD Social Media](#) (Not specific to Teranga)

[www.bgreen.kyschools.us/teranga](http://www.bgreen.kyschools.us/teranga)

## TIMELINE TO OPENING

**December 10, 2021:**  
Luma Mufleh visits BGISD

Begin weekly calls between Fugees Family, Inc and BGISD

**February 2022:**  
BGISD consults with Kentucky Department of Education

**March 2022:**  
BGISD Board of Education approves MOU with Fugees

**March 2022:**  
Meetings with all district faculty and staff across eight school buildings.

**March 15, 2022:**  
Public Announcement of Teranga Academy

**March 28 and 29, 2022:**  
Meet & Greet event with Fugees Family

**April 2022:**  
Recruit and hire teachers

**April 2022:**  
Recruit students and families

**April 18, 2022:**  
Teranga Family Night

**May & June 2022:**  
Staff Training with Fugees Family

**July 28, 2022:**  
Teranga Block Party

**August 2022:**  
OPEN TERANGA ACADEMY

**December 2022:**  
Commissioner of Education Visit

**January 2023:**  
Review Data with Board of Education

# EVALUATION

## TERANGA ACADEMY STAFF

The district received applications from some of the best teachers in the area. Six teachers from BGISD and one from a neighboring district were hired to open the Teranga Academy. The district selected a Lead Teacher with elementary and multilingual language experience, three elementary classroom teachers specializing in foundational reading and math, an elementary literacy coach, and two middle school teachers with experience teaching multilingual learners.

Additionally, a certified music teacher moved to Teranga for 3/4 of her contract time, and the school hired seven Cultural Liaisons to work in classrooms and to connect and assist with translating for families.

Community partnerships have helped the school to hire part-time soccer coaches (Refuge BG), a part-time Yoga Instructor (Be Happy Yoga and Salt Cave) and a part-time Martial Arts Instructor.

## STUDENTS ENROLLED

**Of the 108 eligible students, 102 enrolled in August 2022.**

Teranga students are from eight different birth countries; all with limited or no formal education (SLIFE) prior to enrolling with BGISD.

98 of the 102 students began in Level One courses at Teranga, on Kindergarten-2nd grade reading and math levels four were in Level Two, or equivalent of grades 3-6.

## COMMUNITY PARTNERSHIPS

Beyond partnerships to hire part-time staff, Stuff the Bus Foundation donated to provide initial classroom resources and supplies, and Bowling Green Parks and Recreation permitted daily use of parks for recreational soccer.

## TRADITIONAL MEDIA COVERAGE: COMMUNITY AWARENESS

- [Academy Teaching English Language Immersion Set to Open](#)
- [New Program Coming to City Schools for Immigrant Students](#)
- [Teranga Academy Coming to Bowling Green August 2022](#)
- [BGISD Holds Meet and Greet Teranga Academy](#)
- [English Immersion School Looking for Teachers](#)
- [Teranga Academy Hosts Family Night](#)
- [Stuff the Bus Live Event TV Special](#)
- [Teranga Academy Hosts Block Party for Incoming Students](#)
- [Teranga Academy Kicks Off Inaugural Year](#)
- (Kentucky Educational Television) [Teranga Academy First Day](#)
- (Kentucky Teacher) [BGISD Meets Refugee and Migrant Families where they are with Teranga Academy](#)

## EDUCATIONAL PODCASTS

- Kentucky Association of School Administrators: [Think Like a Charter School](#)
- Kentucky Advising Academy: [Diversified Support Podcast](#)
- edWeb: [How We Can Welcome and Provide a Just and Robust Education for Refugee and Immigrant Students](#)

## QUOTES FROM TERANGA

*"Thank you. I see her more motivated in learning. Thanks to all of you for everything you are doing for all the students, not only for her."*

- Parent of Teranga Student to Teacher

From article in [Kentucky Teacher](#)

*"This is my favorite school I've been in," said student Hassan Bisengo, who just started learning English when he enrolled at Teranga.*

*"At the junior high, it was frustrating sometimes because I knew that the way classes were arranged and structures in place meant students weren't getting what they needed," said teacher Madeline Allen. "When they started talking about Teranga, I knew right away it was what our kids needed."*

Commissioner Jason Glass: *"I saw wonderful examples of how a school system shifted its entire instructional approach to meet students where they were," Glass said. "What Bowling Green has really done here is think about how they can meet the students where they are and really provide them all the wraparound support needed to be successful. The kids were happy, the staff was happy to work with the students."*

*"They are really loving learning and, for some of them, for the first time they are gaining foundational skills that are allowing them to learn. It was fun to see the world open up for these students."*



# SUPPLEMENTAL MATERIALS

## IS IT WORKING?

YES! Students at Teranga Academy Bowling Green are thriving! 102 students enrolled in August 2022, with 98 students beginning in Level One courses, or between a kindergarten and second grade level. By mid-year 2022, 24 students moved to Level Two in reading and 42 moved to Level Two in Math. Nine students are planning to transition to Bowling Green High School beginning in August 2023.

## WHAT'S NEXT FOR TERANGA?

### Teaching and Learning

- Customize Learning: Revise the daily schedule based on student needs
- Scaling up? How do we expand as students arrive?

### School Culture

- Build a culture where students start to take ownership
- Onboarding New Staff: Culturally Responsive Teaching and Trauma Informed Care

### Intentional Transitions

- Prepare BGJHS and BGHS for students to transition back
- Create transition plans for Level 3 students for the fall aligned with their college and/or career goals

## FUTURE DISTRICT COMMUNICATION NEEDS:

- Secure partnerships and funding to sustain programming;
- Develop an adjacent program to support older teens (over 16 years of age) with modified graduation requirements;
- Support families of students through district employment opportunities with waivers for GED/Diploma.

## EXPANDING ACROSS THE UNITED STATES:

BGISD's partnership with Fugees Family, Inc. will continue through 2025. The Fugees Family, Inc. will soon announce the next district partners to begin in 2023-24.

BGISD and Fugees Family have been accepted to present at the **2023 Making Schools Work Conference** in Orlando Florida, July 18-21. Session Title: **Welcoming Refugees and Newcomers through Equitable Education**

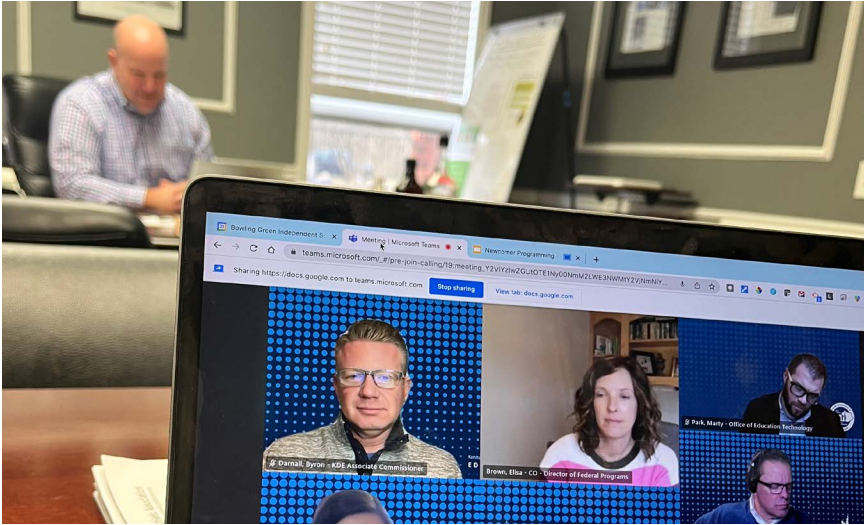
Philanthropist **MacKenzie Scott** has donated **\$10 million** to the **Fugees Family, Inc.** to help expand the model to 50 school districts over the next five years.

<https://fugeesfamily.org/mackenzie-scott-makes-historic-gift/>

The Fugees Family, Inc. has been awarded an **Education Innovation and Research (EIR) grant of \$4 million** to fund Project Teranga, which will include validation of the model with data from BGISD.

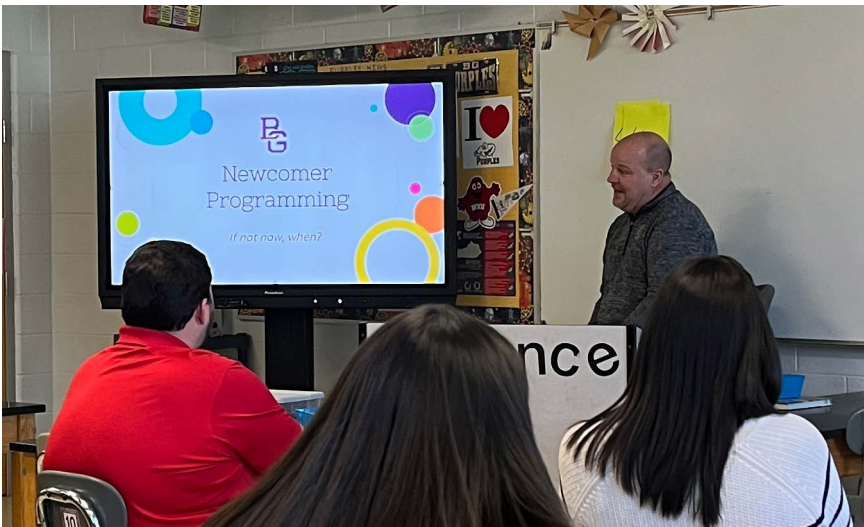
<https://oese.ed.gov/offices/office-of-discretionary-grants-support-services/innovation-early-learning/education-innovation-and-research-eir/awards/>

# SUPPLEMENTAL MATERIALS



Before BGISD could open the Teranga Academy, the Kentucky Department of Education had to assist with three big questions:

- May BGISD create a model with Fugees Family incorporating competency-based courses?
- May we utilize elementary-trained teachers to teach high school age students, and
- May we permit students to attend high school beyond 18 years of age to complete courses?



Superintendent Gary Fields, Director of Instruction Elisa Beth Brown, and Director of Communications Leslie McCoy met with the Commissioner of Education and members of the Department's Leadership Cabinet before proceeding with a Memorandum of Understanding between the BGISD Board of Education and Fugees Family, Inc.



After approvals were completed, the first to hear about the new partnership in our schools was faculty and staff. Superintendent Gary Fields, Director of Instruction Elisa Beth Brown, Instructional Coach Leigh Anne Littlefield, and Director of Communications Leslie McCoy met with all faculty and staff in the district's eight school buildings to discuss plans for better serving multilingual students.

Then to also support communication and to continue to build trust with faculty and staff, a series of Meet and Greets were scheduled to encourage staff to meet with leaders of the Fugees Family, Inc: Luma Mufleh and Emily Futransky.

# SUPPLEMENTAL MATERIALS

March 15, 2022

## PRESS RELEASE

### **TERANGA ACADEMY BOWLING GREEN: Opening August 2022** Bowling Green Independent Schools partner with Fugees Family, Inc.



Bowling Green Independent Schools, in partnership with the Fugees Family, Inc. will open **Teranga Academy Bowling Green** in August 2022. The Teranga Academy will support teens and their families who are new to the United States and to American schools by providing up to three years of competency-based English immersion programming.

The Fugees Family, Inc. has a 15-year track record of working with refugee students in school settings, and they are the only network of U.S. schools dedicated to refugee education. Fugees Family schools are built for and by refugees and immigrants, and they have refined a successful model— centering students and their families in their approach to education. On March 9, 2022, the organization received its largest single donation, a \$10 million gift from philanthropist MacKenzie Scott to help expand the Fugees' nationally recognized school model to 50 U.S. school districts over the next five years. In opening Teranga Academy, Bowling Green Independent Schools will become the first public school district in America to partner with the Fugees Family, Inc. for this expansion.

In secondary schools across the United States, refugee teens are not given equitable access to education based on a one-size-fits-all-model practiced in grades 6-12. Fugees Family Founder and CEO Luma Mufleh says, "Giving our sixth grade students sixth grade textbooks that they couldn't possibly understand wouldn't be compassionate or a vote of confidence. It would be setting them up for failure. Teaching them that there is no shame in being a beginner and that acquiring a complex skill requires starting with the basics is a way to show belief in our students."

Starting in August 2022, the Teranga Academy will be open to Bowling Green Junior High and Bowling Green High School students who have been in the United States for three years or less, are multilingual, and have had their formal education interrupted. The students will participate in one of three levels at the academy for a maximum of three academic years. The Teranga Academy will be an English immersion program, focused on transitioning to a new country with trauma-informed practices and culturally responsive teaching. Courses will also include music, art, American culture, and the program will use recreational soccer to build community among the students.

The goal of the Teranga Academy Level One will be for students to reach at least a third grade proficiency level in reading, writing, math and English language. The students will be taught by elementary-certified teachers, with fundamentals of reading and writing and early math skills. Level Two will be for students to reach at least a sixth grade proficiency level, and Level Three reaching eighth or ninth grade proficiency, including the intentional transition to Bowling Green Junior High or Bowling Green High School.

Superintendent Gary Fields says, "Our school district has been working for several years to support our refugee students, but we have not been able to do this to a level we believe is best for students. Our

teachers have had extensive training, we've increased student access to multilingual teachers, and we have researched across the United States and not found another model that would work with the cultural and language diversity that we have in Bowling Green. After learning about the Fugee Family, Luma Mufleh visited the district on December 10, 2021, and has agreed to partner with us in doing this important work."

Teranga Academy teaching positions are currently posted on the district website. Training for these teachers will be provided throughout the summer by the Fugees Family, Inc. The district is also currently working to identify potential BGHS and BGJHS students who may choose to participate in the Teranga Academy in the fall. Enrollment will be optional for current students, and an event will be scheduled in April to introduce families and students to new opportunities provided.

For more information about the Fugees Family, visit <https://fugeesfamily.org/>.

###

**Teranga** is a Sengalese word that means hospitality, respect, community, solidarity, and sharing. The logo is adapted from the Fugees Family logo, with the BGISD's colors and Statue of Liberty, representing hope, freedom, and justice.

***Luma Mufleh** is the founder of Fugees Family, with schools now in Georgia and Ohio and an expanding footprint bringing educational equity to refugee resettlement communities across America. Her TED Talk on educational justice for refugee families has been viewed more than 1.7 million times. Her book, Learning America, will be released on April 5, 2022.*



# SUPPLEMENTAL MATERIALS



**Bowling Green Independent School District**

Published by Leslie McCoy · March 15 at 3:00 PM ·

Bowling Green Independent Schools, in partnership with the Fugees Family, Inc. will open TERANGA ACADEMY Bowling Green in August 2022. The Teranga Academy will support teens and their families who are new to the United States and to American schools by providing up to three years of competency-based English immersion programming.

The Fugees Family, Inc. has a 15-year track record of working with refugee students and with the opening of Teranga Academy, BGISD will become the... [See more](#)



14,967  
People reached

1,304  
Engagements

↑ +3.0x higher  
Distribution score

Boost post

148

17 Comments 79 Shares

Like

Comment

Share

All comments ▾



Comment as Bowling Green Independent ...



**Mae Mefford**  
This has been badly needed for many years. Congratulations BGPS.

Like Reply Hide Send Message 1d



**Terri Sheldon**  
LOVE THIS! Thrilled to learn more.

Like Reply Hide Send Message 21h



**Michele Jessie**



**Fugees Family**

@fugeesfamily

Remember all those exciting things we said were happening?? Proud to share @BGISD as Fugees Family's first partnership of 50 over the next 5 years!

**Bowling Green Independent Schools** ✓ ...

**NEW** BGISD, in partnership with the @fugeesfamily will open TERANGA ACADEMY in August 2022. Teranga Academy will support teens and their families who are new to the USA by providing up to 3 years of competency-based English immersion programming.

More:

[bgreen.kyschools.us/News/terangaac...](https://bgreen.kyschools.us/News/terangaac...)



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# SUPPLEMENTAL MATERIALS

## Update to Department of Education: March 29, 2022

It has been a really great week in BGISD. While we have been hearing about Charter Schools in the General Assembly, we thought we should also update you on our progress with the Fugees Family, Inc.

Our last two days have included planning meetings, but also hosting a district meet and greet for employees to have the chance to meet Luma and Emily, plus two Q and A sessions, first with our multilingual teachers (ESL) and then our translators. These two groups had a lot of questions, understandably as they work most closely with our refugee population, but they are completely bought-in and excited to begin the work of recruiting students for the Teranga Academy.



One great story from today. Remember Michake from our initial presentation? Michake came to our district as a [high school](#) student and he is now employed as a translator. When he came to the meeting today, he was completely starstruck. He shared that one of his own soccer coaches was a graduate of a Fugee Family Academy, and since 2017, Michake has followed the Fugees Family and Luma on social media. He was thrilled to meet Luma, and she was equally thrilled to meet him. As we make plans to

incorporate cultural brokers to the content work, we feel our translators like Michake, who are already in place, will play key roles in helping us engage families and our community.

Luma's book, *Learning America* comes out on Tuesday, April 5. She has several virtual book visits, and radio interviews scheduled, including NPR. She has also pitched the partnership with our district to national markets, including CBS Sunday Morning, but we have not confirmed anything with them yet.

Our district will be on spring break next week, but have plans to begin hiring Teranga Academy teachers the week of April 11. As of today, we have 16 applicants for (tentative) 6 teaching positions, including some of the very best teachers in our district.

Student recruitment will also begin the week after spring break. We are working to identify a key list of students, (this list started at 70 students last week and after school visits, has grown to over 90). We will invite all students to a family night event the week of April 18th, and may have some follow-up events to accommodate different family work schedules.

# SUPPLEMENTAL MATERIALS

## FAMILY NIGHT: APRIL 18, 2022

### WHO:

BGISD invited 108 eligible Bowling Green Junior High and Bowling Green High School students and families to learn about the new Teranga Academy.

Multilingual Teachers and Cultural Liaisons worked to personally call, make home visits, and follow-up with all eligible families.

### WHAT:

The event featured language-specific presentations about the new Teranga Academy, including translations for Spanish, Swahili, Pashto and Dari.

Multilingual teachers and Cultural Liaisons assisted with securing catering from local restaurants and families to provide featuring foods traditional to student cultures. The event took place during Ramadan, therefore the schedule allowed families to both eat upon arrival, or take a meal to eat after the event.

Transportation with school buses was provided as an option for families.

The high school soccer team volunteered to host soccer activities near the meeting area for students or younger children.

### WHERE:

The district utilized a local park to host the Family Night, including an area that included a pavilion with picnic tables and an adjacent turf soccer field.



## Competency Learning and Acceleration Based on Student Data

| Reading        | Sept 9th | Nov 14 |
|----------------|----------|--------|
| Level 1<br>K-2 | 98       | 74     |
| Level 2<br>3-6 | 4        | 28     |

*After 7  
weeks of  
instruction*

| Math           | Sept 9th | Nov 14 |
|----------------|----------|--------|
| Level 1<br>K-2 | 98       | 56     |
| Level 2<br>3-6 | 4        | 46     |

*In 7 weeks, 24 students moved from Level 1 to Level 2 competencies in reading and 42 in math.*

Mid-Year data shared with the Bowling Green Board of Education, Kentucky Commissioner of Education, and Department of Education, December 2022, one year after BGISD partnered with the Fugees Family, Inc. to better support multilingual teens and their families.

### Reading Growth by Grade Equivalent

| Level 1         | Starting Grade | Mid Year Grade |
|-----------------|----------------|----------------|
| JHS             | .06            | 1.1            |
| HS              | .82            | 1.2            |
| Level 2 HS only | 4.5            | 6              |

### Math Growth by Grade Equivalent

| Level 1         | Starting Grade | Mid Year Grade |
|-----------------|----------------|----------------|
| JHS             | 1.2            | 2.1            |
| HS              | 1.5            | 3.8            |
| Level 2 HS only | 4              | 7.5            |

