

# Increasing Refugee Enrollment in Early Childhood Education



**Sarah Ventre, MD, MPH**  
**Community Partners: Action for a Better Community (ABC),  
 Catholic Family Center (CFC)**

**Faculty Mentor: Andrew Aligne, MD, MPH**



## PROJECT SUMMARY:

The goal of this Community Health and Advocacy Resident Education (CARE) project is to better prepare refugee children for school by decreasing barriers to enrolling in high quality early childhood education, such as Head Start. Through increased collaboration among existing organizations in Rochester, we hope to improve access to Head Start and subsequently increase refugee 3- and 4-year-old enrollment in early education.



<https://challenges.openstax.org/challenge/refugee-education/research/three-surprisingly-easy-techniques-that-help-refugee-kids-learn>

## BACKGROUND:

High quality, early childhood education (HQECE) programs result in improved:<sup>1-3</sup>

- Math and language skills
- Cognition and social skills
- Interpersonal relationships
- Behavioral self-regulation

Their effects persist into adulthood:<sup>1-4</sup>

- Decreased need for special education services
- Greater school success
- Higher graduation rate
- Lower juvenile crime
- Lower adolescent pregnancy rates

Effects of early education are magnified for children from disadvantaged situations, such as refugees.<sup>2-3</sup> Despite this, refugee children are not systematically being enrolled in HQECE. The Peace Inc program in Syracuse offers a national model to follow (see figure).

## OBJECTIVES:

To better prepare refugee children for school through increased access to high quality early childhood education.

### Primary Measurable Outcome:

- Increase enrollment of refugee children in high-quality early childhood education, including Early Head Start and Head Start programs in Rochester.

### Other Objectives:

- Improved communication between education agencies and refugee organizations, such as refugee resettlement agencies
- Promote awareness of refugee populations among early childhood education programs
- Enhance understanding of specific needs of refugee children among early childhood education teachers

## METHODS:

### 1. Contact resettled refugee families regarding enrollment of their children in Head Start.

- Refugee resettlement agency (CFC) collects contact information of refugee families with children under age 5
- ABC Head Start enrollment staff utilize this contact information to call families to inquire about enrolling their child

### 2. Organize Head Start enrollment days through various refugee groups in Rochester.

- Catholic Family Center (CFC)
- Jordan Health
- Mary's Place

### 3. Coordinate an educational seminar for Head Start staff regarding refugee acculturation.

- Refugee representative in the community visits ABC Head Start to give an educational seminar

## PROGRESS:

### Increasing enrollment in Head Start

1. ABC Head Start has created a Refugee Committee, composed of 5 ABC enrollment staff. Catholic Family Center is obtaining background checks and organizing a list of refugee families with children under the age of 5. Once the background checks are complete and the list has been compiled, ABC's Refugee Committee will call these families to assist in Head Start enrollment, if the family is interested.
2. Currently, ABC is working with Catholic Family Center and Jordan Health to organize Head Start enrollment days for refugee children.

### Promoting awareness and enhancing understanding of refugees among early childhood education programs

3. ABC has approved of an educational seminar for Head Start staff regarding refugee acculturation. The development of the seminar is in progress.

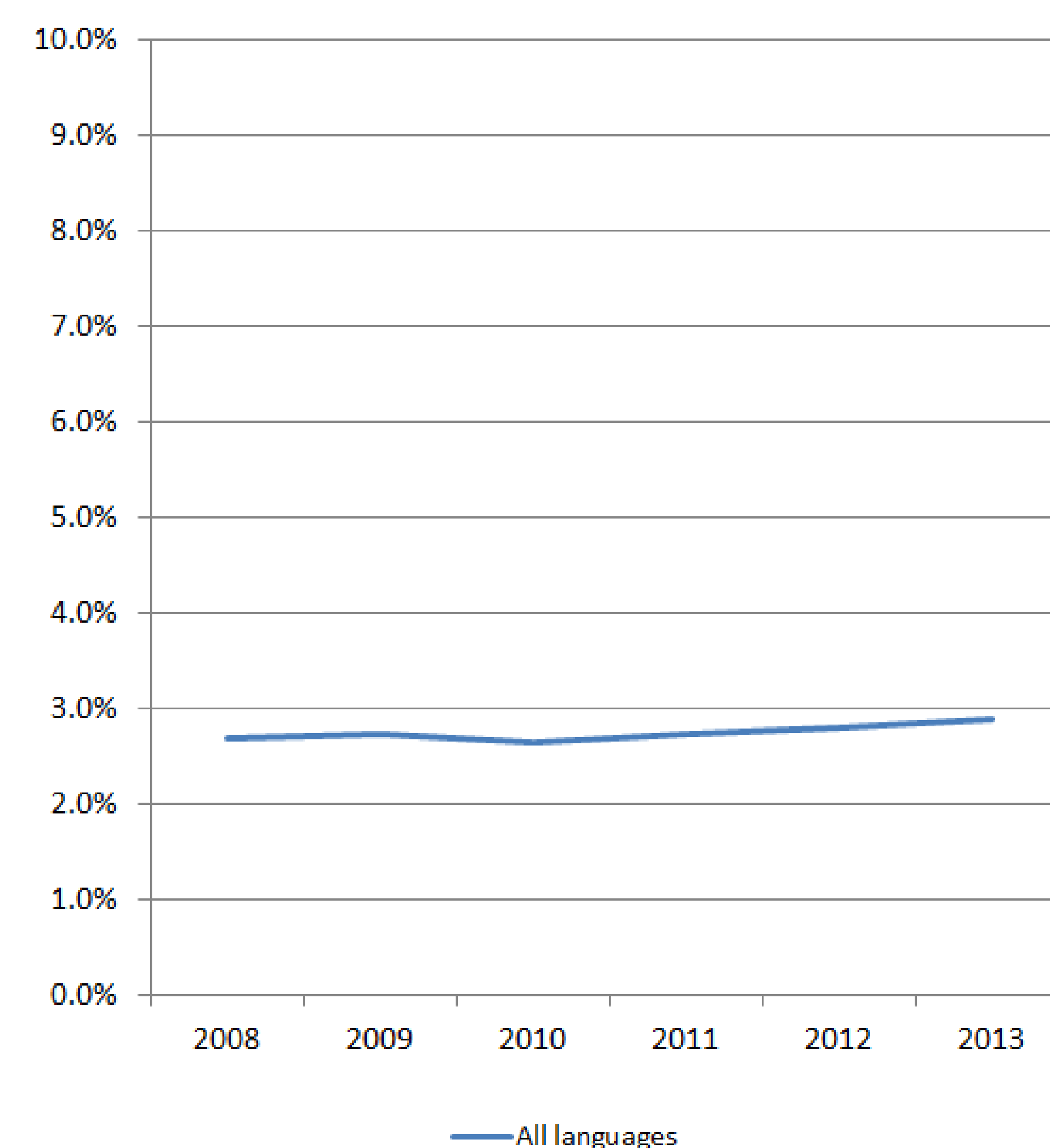
## FUTURE DIRECTIONS:

- Expand Head Start enrollment days to additional organizations, such as Mary's Place and Refugees Helping Refugees.
- Complete the development of an educational seminar for Head Start.
- If the number of refugees being resettled increases, we may work toward enrolling refugee children in Head Start upon arrival to Rochester.

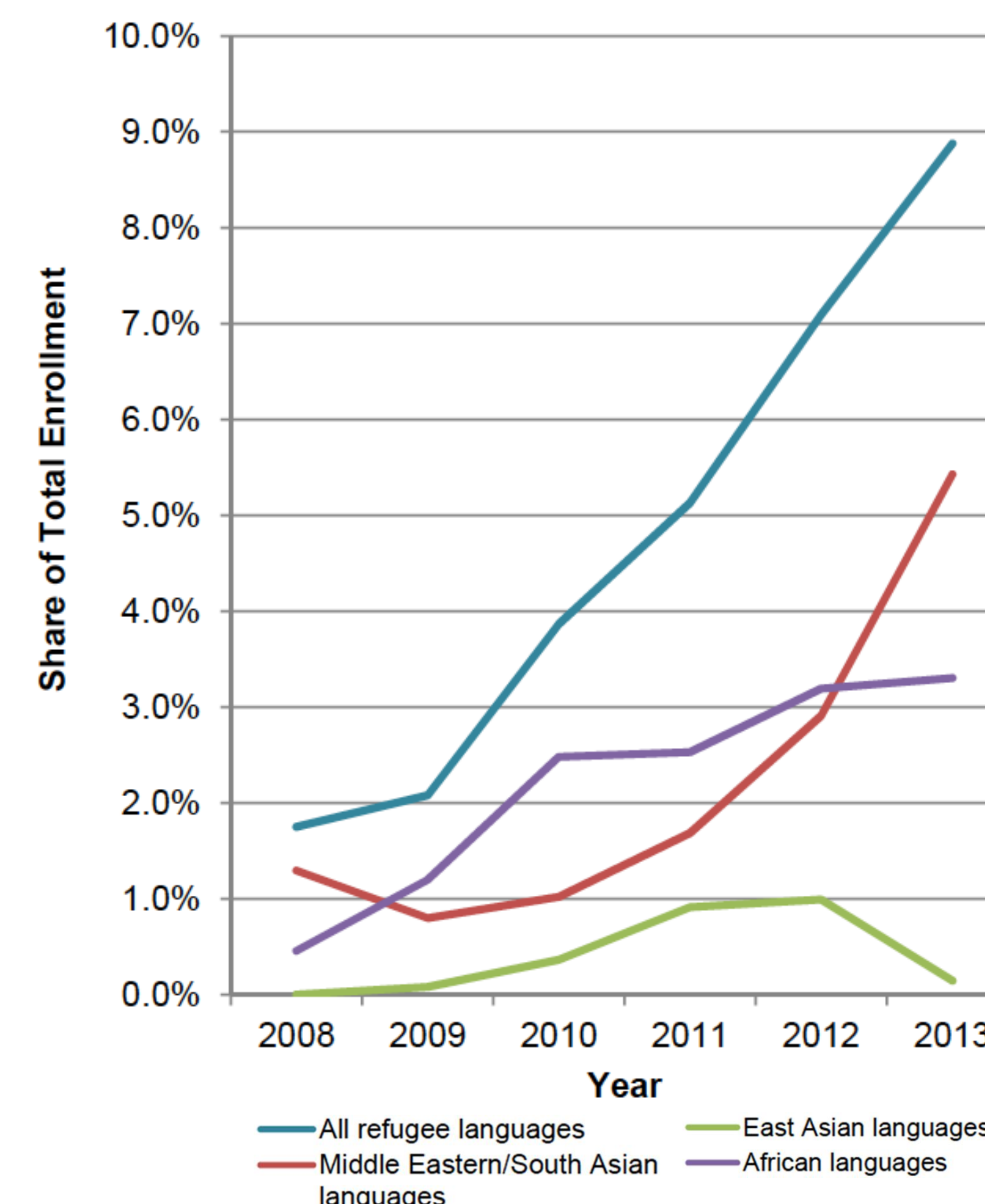
## REFERENCES:

1. Ramey CT, Campbell FA, Burchinal MR, et al. Early Learning, Later Success: The Abecedarian Study: Executive Summary. Chapel Hill, NC: Frank Porter Graham Child Development Center, University of North Carolina; 1999.
2. National Institute of Child Health and Human Development Early Child Care Research Network. The relation of child care to cognitive and language development. *Child Dev.* 2000;71:960-980.
3. NICHD Early Child Care Research Network. Nonmaternal care and family factors in early development: an overview of the NICHD Study of Early Child Care. *J Appl Dev Psychol.* 2001;22:457-492.
4. Campbell, F. A., Ramey, C. T., Pungello, E., Sparling, J., & Miller-Johnson, S. (2002). Early childhood education: Young adult outcomes from the Abecedarian project. *Applied Developmental Science, 6*, 42-57.
5. Morland L, Ives N, McNeely C, Allen C. Providing a Head Start: Improving Access to Early Childhood Education for Refugees. Migration Policy Institute. 2016.

National EHS/HS Enrollment, 2008-13<sup>5</sup>



EHS/HS Enrollment in Syracuse, 2008-13<sup>5</sup>





<https://challenges.openideo.com/challenge/refugee-education/research/three-surprisingly-easy-techniques-that-help-refugee-kids-learn>.

The photo was taken from an article on OpenIDEO called "Three surprisingly simple techniques that help refugee kids learn". This is the

website: <https://challenges.openideo.com/challenge/refugee-education/research/three-surprisingly-easy-techniques-that-help-refugee-kids-learn>.