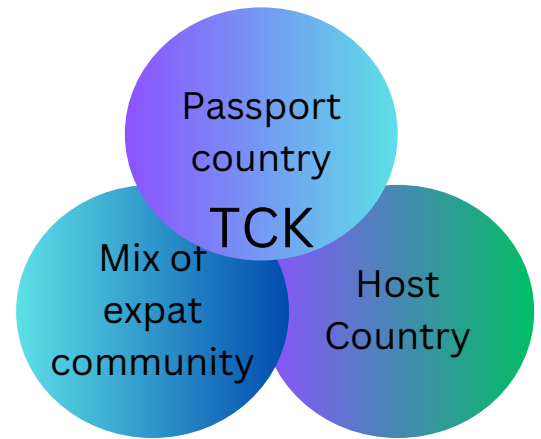


TIPS FOR TEACHERS ON THIRD CULTURE KIDS

Who are Third Culture Kids?

A Third Culture Kid (TCK) is someone who lives outside their passport country as a child, usually because their parent's work initiated a family move. The "significant part" of childhood is at least a year or two but it could be their entire childhood.



As teachers, what do you need to be aware of?

- **Impact of sudden transition-** Transition is a part of normal life but for a TCK this can happen fast and suddenly. When they get on that plane, they are often saying goodbye to their childhood. Depending on whether this was a planned move or a sudden relocation, they may have been given plenty of warning beforehand or they may have not been given any. For these reasons, the TCK entering your classroom may exhibit behaviour issues caused by the loss and grief they are still experiencing. These behaviours could look like intense negative emotions (depression, anxiety), identity issues and unresolved grief.
- **TCK become Chameleon:** TCK's can be known as a cultural chameleon they take on the colours of their social surroundings to try and gain acceptance. They will be feeling very different from their classmates as they are trying to catch up on the childhood, they missed but may choose not to show it. They want to be a part of the life now. But TCKs may still have some questions regarding the way in which things are done in their new education and country experience.
- **Concept of Home-** Avoid using language such as welcome home. For some of these TCK's they feel like they have left their home and have 'not come home' Home maybe full of mixed emotions as their family resettles, grieves, and adjust to new jobs, location, and new culture.
- **Not understanding the culture-** Their passport may say they belong to this country but for many of them they have never lived in this country/ They are like new immigrants they need to understand the culture.
- **Changing Curriculum-** Schooling is often different in the countries these young people have been. The curriculum could have been locally based or an international system such as the IGCSE or IB. They may spell or do maths differently so may need a bit more help in these areas. The class content for subjects like HASS or languages may have been totally different and they may have had less access to specialised practical subjects. Many TCKs have teachers from a range of cultural backgrounds so may be used to ROTE learning or less collaborative forms of education than what we usually do in Australia. TCKs often come from highly educated families and are expected to uphold the norms of the organisations they worked with in their host country. This often leads to students struggling with perfectionism and academic anxiety.
- **Learning Support:** TCKs also often grow up in contexts where neurodivergence and learning support needs cannot be supported with the same sort of allied health resources as here. And parents who have been out of the country may have no idea how to seek support or navigate the Australian health system. As a result, there may be learning difficulties that have been missed up to this point. Please be aware of this as you work with the TCKs.

TIPS FOR TEACHERS ON THIRD CULTURE KIDS

Some tips to helping support a TCK in your classroom.

1) Get to know them.

Ask them about themselves - What country did they live in and have come from ? Have they lived in other countries ? How long were they there for ? What are they missing about their lives in that country ? What are some of their hobbies and interest? Some students will be happy to share this with their whole class, others will be reluctant to share things that make them stand out as different more.

2) Pay them extra attention and support in the first couple of weeks.

Scaffold all information about the school clearly. Give them easy access to timetable information and what the school expectations are. Check in with them to see if the content you are covering is familiar or presented in a familiar way. * Remember they may appear to look like they know what they are doing but they are often not sure.

3) Help them connect with others

Pair them up with someone that has similar interests. Having a buddy to support them with understanding school and culture is important in the first month or so.

4) Help them understand the culture they are entering.

One of the biggest changes can be PE lessons as they may not be familiar with Australian sports like netball, AFL, or Cricket! Clearly explaining aspects of culture in all your lessons can help them to catch up on “common knowledge” that they have missed such as sporting teams, food, the history of the country and even music, movies, and clothing choices.

5) Mental health

All this change and learning can cause huge amounts of emotional stress and even trauma. TCKs are more prone to experiencing mental health challenges. Please keep an eye on the TCK in your class for signs of social anxiety, depression, generalised anxiety, self-harm, disordered eating etc. and connecting with the school counsellor or other wellbeing supports if needed. Again, parents may appreciate support navigating GP appointments and understanding things like mental health plans.

6) Communicate with parents.

The whole family is going through several big changes and there may also be things like ill-health, mental health episodes or relationship breakdown which was the catalyst to them coming back to their passport countries. The parents are likely also anxious and struggling with many different emotions. Keeping clear communication about how their child is going – even if they are going great- will help the parents navigate their first few months back too. The Australian school system is probably new for them too!

If you need any more information or any training please don't hesitate to contact
Interwoven@missionsinterlink.org.au

