Textured Dialogues:
A Tapestry of Immigrant Perspectives on the Meaning of Education
Creating the Tapestry:
Goal of the Project

• The goal of this project is to encourage dialogues about the beliefs, practices, experiences, and aspirations of immigrant and refugee families surrounding the meaning of education. Through the process of sharing ideas about the meaning of education, we hope traditional U.S.-based educational practices can be improved.
Tapestry Project Partners

• The Coalition for Diverse Language Communities (CDLC) at The University of North Carolina at Greensboro
• The North Carolina African Services Coalition (NCASC)
• The Association of United Liberians
• The Center for New North Carolinians (CNNC)
• The Latino Community Coalition
• The New Arrivals Institute (NAI)
• UNCG School of Education
Creating the Tapestry: Textured Dialogues

• This project reflects collaboration between community members, non-profit organizations, and university faculty and students who wanted to create an opportunity for immigrant and refugee community members to share their stories about the meaning of education through the arts.
Creating the Tapestry: About the Artists

• The tapestry includes the representations about the meaning of education from 18 different immigrant or refugee community members.

• Contributors came from the following countries/ethnic communities:
  • Africa: Burundi, Ethiopia, Liberia, Niger, Sudan, and Zimbabwe
  • Asia: Bhutan, Burma (Myanmar), Cambodia, and Vietnam
  • Latin America: Colombia, Dominican Republic, Honduras, Mexico, and Panama
Creating the Tapestry:
Putting the Tapestry Together

A total of 18 squares were sewn together to create the tapestry.
Tapestry Book

• The tapestry book was created to share information about the tapestry project and the artists’ thoughts about each square.
• The book contains an overview of the project.
• It also includes individual photos of each square along with their description. This information is presented in the artist’s home language followed by the English translation of how the artwork depicts the meaning of education and information (including an optional photo) about the community member who contributed the square.
In my painting I would describe that the meaning of Education for me is GROWTH. With its roots well founded we can have a robust path with a fructiferous future. I decided to symbolize education with a tree, since from the beginning of our species we decided to eat from the tree of knowledge, therefore opening our eyes to the difference between good and evil, subsequently the digestion of the fruit was responsible for the acquisition of “knowledge.”

The other components in my painting are family, school, church, technology, news, and books. They are the roots to our growth. Since the family is the first to give us knowledge from birth, in my perspective, they are fundamental in our education. They teach us how to speak, how to eat, how to walk, how to behave socially and many other meaningful things. In school we are educated in science, math, language, history, physical education and so many other important subjects. School is the most vital form of education that we will have since it is the base of our knowledge that will lead to successful careers and in consequence a bright future. Religious education is given by the church; this institution is in charge of our spiritual guidance and the growth of our faith. The other three elements, technology, news or newspapers and books, are also very important in our education since from them we can learn about politics, local and international affairs and news, fashion, entertainment, sports, we can even educate ourselves online these days, earn different kinds of degrees and courses of all types; and lastly from books we can develop our imagination, it is from them that we can individually experience whatever the author wants us to feel, the sky is the limit to all the knowledge we can take out from reading a book.

In conclusion, when we have a strong root, a strong base of our family, teachers, mentors, discipline, motivation to be better, we will grow each day in our daily education and become the best version of ourselves and make a better society that can improve the world.
Celebrating the Tapestry: What Does Education Mean to You?

• When the tapestry is displayed, viewers are asked to answer this question, “What does education mean to you?” Sample responses are:

- Education is like food, water, air, and sunshine...it is essential for all of us.
- To me, education is a way to inform people about our surroundings. It's a way to keep people "in the loop." It's not about learning math or science, but so much more. We as a society need to embrace everything around us.
- Education is a way to share the world with every single person. It allows for an individual to become enlightened and to enlighten others.
- Education is the path out of poverty.
- Education opens doors and windows to life!
- The key to life.
- Options.
What is the Meaning of Education to You?

• We encourage you to consider these questions for critical thought as you view the tapestry and read through the artist’s statements in the book.
  • How do you define education?
  • What suggestions do you have for teachers in the US to better serve immigrant and refugee families?
  • How does this work invite us to reimagine education?
Thank you for your interest in the tapestry project!