Presented by:
Rebecca Grappo, Educational Consultant, Founder of RNG International
Ryan Haynes, High School Counselor, International School Bangkok
So Why are We Here?
Goals for Today

- What do we know about TCKs?
- Why do some kids thrive while others struggle?
- What can we do to encourage resilience and get them pointed in the right direction?
Possible signs of adjustment and signs we see

• Friends
• Affluence means that things often look good on the outside
• These kids are often socially put together
• They are flying under the radar
What are Factors in Adjustments/Successful Transitions?

- Family conversations about upcoming move - ongoing, checking in with one another
- Preparation prior to the move - putting in the work, i.e. figuring out curriculum, activities, visiting the school, registering for school, finding out about future/summer assignments in classes, finding out about try-outs, auditions
What are Factors in Adjustments/Successful Transitions?

• Conversations about timing of the move - will the family be open to temporary separation?
• Home-stays with another family - keeping in mind visa and liability, guardianship issues
• Being aware of emotions, how to express them, give words to them
• Mature coping skills - tools in the toolkit
• Proper closure, goodbyes - RAFT - Pollack model
• Circumstances of the move - positive or negative?
School Fit is Important Factor

- Can the school meet the student’s needs?
- Undiagnosed differences
- Another population at risk that flies under the radar, Gifted and Talented, Learning Difference, or Twice Exceptional
• When parents are thinking about the next assignment, are they considering school fit?
• How would they even know?
• Proactive- find out about clubs, activities, classes, curriculum, social language, academic rigor
• Appropriate peer group
People Who Assist the Student Outside the Family

- Teachers
- School counselors
- Teachers and counselors are on the front lines
- Therapists - Educating the therapist is important, maybe about TCK issues, maybe about additional challenges working with GT kids
- Educational consultants
Some Challenges Especially Present in International Schools

- Many kids or staff members are new, so they don’t really know the baseline of what’s normal for that child
- Lack of resources for special ed
- Hard to get good testing, evaluations
- Finding qualified therapists, psychiatrists
- Finding physical therapy, occupational therapy, speech & language therapy
What are the Warning Signs?
Early Warning Signs

- Mood instability – more intense, bigger swings, outside what would be considered normal for teenagers
- Loss of interest in school
- Social connection or lack of social connection
- Change in grades
- Change in grooming habits
- Mood instability – more intense, bigger swings, outside what would be considered normal for teenagers
TCK Strengths

- Adaptable
- Flexible
- Three-dimensional view of the world
- Resilient
- Can make new friends easily
TCK Strengths

- Keen interest in cultural and current affairs
- Appreciation of diversity and tolerance for differences
- Many are used to transitions and making new friends
- May be bilingual or trilingual
- Use strengths to build resilience
- Expanded, 3-dimensional world view
- They and everyone in their world may be highly mobile
Possible Downsides of Being a TCK

• Rootless and restless
• Internal clock is ticking - time to move on
• When things aren’t going well, just move on
• Sometimes make quick but superficial friendships - attachment issues?
• Finding others with whom a TCK can relate can be tough
• Fitting in
• Being far from home - if you know where “home” is
Risk Factors in Transition:

• Fitting in and feeling at home
• Relating to other students
• Finding a group to hang out with that gets you
• Might be first time living in country of passport, re-entry, or parents may move overseas
• Where will you go on long breaks if you can’t go home?
More Risk Factors

• Another factor on adjustment is transition fatigue – how many moves have they made, i.e. Ryan’s student.
• Cultural resistance to therapy, mental health issues
• Cultural attitudes – cultural mores, what’s acceptable in one culture may not be in another, i.e. conversation with John Evans
• Really hard for kids with limited social and communication skills
College Applications Can Be a Trigger

• College process and expectations
• College students who want to transfer – is it a way of dealing with frustration, poor coping skills?
What We See:
Some Kids Move and Some Kids Don’t

- Emotions for those who move include:
  - Excitement
  - Sadness
  - Fear
  - Loss
  - Reluctance to make new friends
Those Left Behind

- Sadness
- Loss
- Indifference
- Don’t get the excitement that comes with being the one who is moving
Loss and Grief

- Frequent goodbyes to friends, teachers, places, household help, places, smells, foods, and everything familiar to you.
- These losses can result in sadness and even a sense of grief over losing something that you’ve loved.
Loss and Grief

• Important to give comfort before you give encouragement: Ruth Van Reken
• “Grief is the price we pay for having loved.”
• Very important for kids to understand how to express their emotions
Confusion about identity - not only national identity but “who child is no matter where he is” - Ruth Van Reken

Rootlessness and restlessness
What Seem to Be Insulating Factors

- Having a strong family
- Being able to express emotions in a healthy way – need tools
- Most behavior we see is a form of expressing emotions when they don’t know how else to do it
- Having a portable talent, interest, skill so that they can join a group after they move (sports, music, theater, clubs, religious communities, etc.)
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<th>Some Risky Behaviors We See</th>
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Education Has to Fill Not Only Academic But Social Needs
If Something Gets in the Way
How Can Schools Help Foster Resilience?
Making Connections

• Islands of Competency - Dr. Robert Brooks
• Ability to forge new strong social connections
• “Charismatic adult” - mentor, advisor, teacher, coach, etc.
Factors in Resilience

- Kids need to be able to tell their story
  - *Rebecca Oden*
- Who will hear it? Do they know it? Can they tell it?
• Having a sense of control over that which is developmentally appropriate
• Language of emotions - Julia Simens
• In which language do they best express their emotions?
• Is that the same language shared by all family members?
• Help kids to identify, understand new country, culture, cues
• Kids who can’t navigate this often retreat
• Build on strengths as a TCK, CCK
• Identity - don’t have to choose
• Know who you are no matter where you are
• Sense of pride, self-worth
• Kids with fragile sense of self often find friends who are the least discerning
At School/Community Resources May be Limited

- Different school, boarding school
- More academic support
- Appropriate group of peers
- More opportunities to pursue special interests
- More personal freedom
- Therapeutic support – community based counseling, outdoor behavioral health programs, therapeutic boarding schools, residential treatment, good assessment
Ideas from the International School Bangkok
What the International School Bangkok is Doing

- During new student intake, looking for clues.
- Establishing new student program with ambassadors/buddy system to help new students adjust. Counseling team can touch base with them.
- Instead of asking the question, “Where are you from?” ask them, “What did you leave behind?”
- Do you have someone to eat lunch with is as important as how are your classes going?
- Follow up - see them all in 1st weeks of school. 1:1 meetings
- Intentional work around transitions
- Student Support Team – meetings to discuss students as needed
Parents Need to be Aware

- Strong families
- Build family traditions with intentionality
- Listen, provide comfort
- Love, security, emotional safety
Parents Need to be Aware

- Parents need to explain TCK issues to counselors, even in international schools
- Explaining to therapists how TCK issues might impact mental health
- Difficulty transitioning them to college life without parental, family support
- College mental health support – don’t know what this is all about, especially large, state public institutions
Kids Who Have Successful Transitions Seem to Have...

- Strong families
- Families that build traditions with intentionality
- Families that listen, provide comfort
- Love, security, emotional safety
Humans Need Belonging, Recognition, Connection, Identity
Additional Resources

- Articles – all found on www.rnginternational.com
- Email me at rebecca@rnginternational.com
- www.rnginternational.com/blog
- http://rnginternational.com/third-culture-kid/
- http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=0rcWaSzaxZg&feature=player_embedded
- http://www.djiboutijones.com/2013/03/1-things-i-want-to-tell-my-third-culture-kids/
Thank You and Best Wishes!