

Leadership for Welcoming Newcomer Students: 6 Steps to Take



As a school leader who welcomes asylees, refugees and other newcomer students, there are immediate steps you can take to create a supportive school environment. Here are six recommended steps from Internationals Network's school leaders:

1 Foster collaboration

- Collaboration is a core practice in Internationals Network schools and programs, making our approach to educating newcomers effective. Allow students to collaborate in classrooms to support each other in learning both content and language.
- Internationals Network leaders benefit from regular collaboration about broad-ranging topics, from evaluating an Afghani student's high school transcript to supporting Latinx students to develop biliteracy. Connect with other school leaders to learn from their practices and expand your knowledge. Consider a [Success Analysis Protocol](#) to exchange ideas and strategies for welcoming newcomers.
- [View family members and guardians as collaborators](#) as they possess valuable information about their children's academic history and hope for their academic success.
- Forge partnerships with community organizations and agencies. Asylee and refugee resettlement agencies, community-based organizations, and legal aid providers can provide insight and additional support.

2 Establish meaningful multilingual communication

How can your school engage newcomers and their families right away? Provide [home language support](#) including translated school announcements and resources. Collaborate with district and state multilingual learner departments to access translation services. Explore staff members' and community partners' language skills and consider calling on them for translation support. Ensure that parent meetings and community events draw on these resources to ensure that all school community members feel welcomed.

3 Learn about your newcomer students

Some people choose to migrate, and others do so because they have no other option. The United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees reports that as of 2019, there were approximately [79.5 million people globally who were forced to leave their homes](#), including asylees, migrants, internally displaced persons and refugees. [School-aged children who are newcomers](#) to public school arrive in the U.S. for a range of different reasons. As a school leader, develop your awareness of global issues that push students and their families to emigrate from their home countries. Hold a workshop for staff members to introduce them to the cultures of students coming to your school, and provide students with opportunities to share information about where they are from. Ask your staff members to share reasons they immigrated to the US or investigate why their ancestors emigrated so that you can build a community that is empathetic to people who migrate.

4 Provide training for a unified welcome message

Ensure all staff members understand the legal basis for enrolling newcomer students. Title VI of the Civil Rights Act of 1964 prohibits discrimination based on race, color, or national origin in public schools receiving federal assistance. Familiarize staff with the responsibilities of educators concerning newcomer students and [US government guidance and resources](#) available to help educate all immigrant students. Engage staff in a training activity to answer the question, What specific processes and structures in our school might we need to modify to welcome newcomers?

5 Review registration & English learner identification processes

- Examine [your school's intake, registration and English learner \(EL\) identification procedures](#). Translate and tailor intake forms and registration information to accommodate newcomer students and their families. Distinguish between official information and documents legally required by state and federal laws and other optional information that families may not have. Ensure that staff facilitating registration are clear about procedures and have access to translators.
- Once you have learned that a newcomer's home language is not English, you must determine their English language proficiency level to determine eligibility for EL services. Some districts also have Spanish proficiency tests.
- Remember that ELs must be placed with students of the same age and have access to [curricula at their grade level, regardless of their age](#); even if students' skills are at the middle or elementary school level, they should be placed with their age peers at grade level.

6 Advocate for your newcomer students

- Schools are, first and foremost, places of learning, so take a learning stance as you welcome newcomers. Make your learning stance visible and audible. Embrace newcomers' unique perspectives and multiculturalism to enhance all students' learning across subject areas.
- Advocate for each newcomer student individually, assigning an adult advocate - a teacher advisor, counselor, community partner - someone who checks in regularly with the student, communicates with parents in their preferred language, and ensures the student's sense of belonging.

Internationals Network transforms education for immigrant and refugee multilingual learners by partnering with schools and districts to better serve those students. We design new schools and programs within existing schools, coach leaders, teachers, and school staff, and provide access to an invaluable network of support and learning for those who work with us. Internationals Network remains the only school development and support organization specifically addressing the educational needs of the multilingual learner immigrant and refugee population.

By implementing these steps, you can create a welcoming and inclusive environment for newcomer students, fostering their academic success and overall well-being.

For more information about any of these recommendations, contact us at info@internationalsnetwork.org. Learn more about us by visiting: <https://www.internationalsnetwork.org/>.

Welcoming Newcomers Resources

The following online resources were curated to help you build your knowledge and inform the structures and processes you build at your school to welcome newcomers. While some resources are about education in a particular state, we recommend that you explore them all for promising practices to consider adapting for your school's specific context.



Country Information & Global Issues

- [Global migration](#)
- [Statistics about immigration in the US](#)
- [Country-specific resources](#)



Legal Right to Education in the US

- [Protecting access to education for unaccompanied children](#)
- [Protecting access to education for migratory children](#)
- [English Learner toolkit](#)
- [Newcomer toolkit](#)
- [Sample registration process & legal rights guide for families & schools](#)



English Learner Assessment & SLIFE Resources

- [SLIFE resources from NY State](#)
- [WIDA Consortium resources for member states & territories](#)
- [MA state literature review of practices across the country for educating students with limited or interrupted formal education \(SLIFE\)](#)

