

Newcomer Welcome Kit

By School Leaders For School Leaders



Introduction

As schools in the United States are currently responding to growing enrollment of newcomer students, including immigrants, asylees, and refugees from all over the world, Internationals Network for Public Schools presents this Newcomer Welcome Kit curated by school leaders for school leaders. [Internationals Network](#) has over 35 years of experience serving 10,000 multilingual learner (MLL) students in 31 schools and academies in California, the DC metro area, New Jersey, and New York. For any group of MLLs who enter Internationals Network schools, more graduate high school than their peers across the U.S. by 4% points on average. Of those graduates, more Internationals Network graduates enroll in college than their peers by more than 12%. They stay, succeed, and complete college at rates above their peers who also attend low-income, high-minority schools. Internationals Network is well-positioned to provide guidance and growth opportunities for leaders to analyze and modify their school procedures and guide their teachers and staff to create inclusive learning environments for newcomer students.

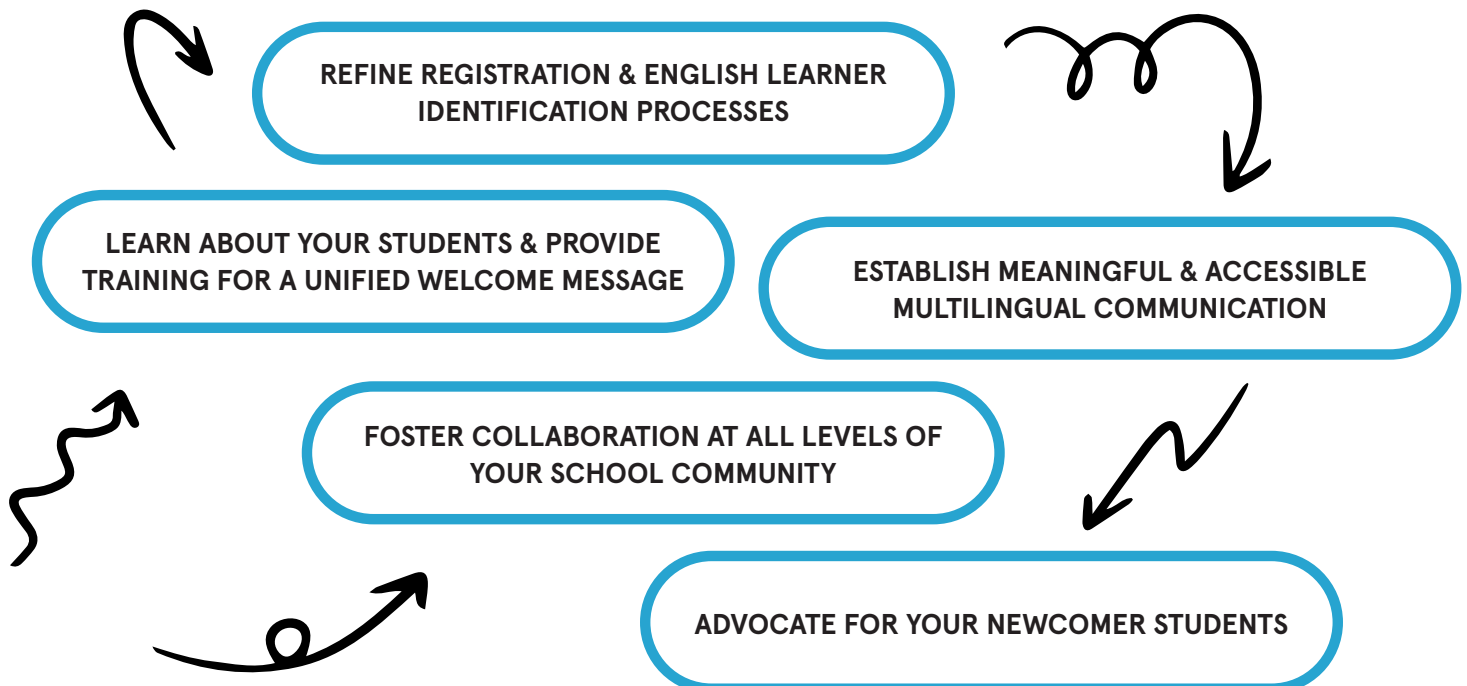
The Newcomer Welcome Kit is a companion to our explainer: [Leadership for Welcoming Newcomer Students: 6 Steps to Take](#). The kit is divided into five sections; together, they address the need to register and enroll students appropriately, learn about

and understand newcomers, establish accessible communication with students and families, foster meaningful collaboration at all levels of the school community, and advocate for newcomers.

The kit includes **strategies** and **resources** that were developed and vetted by leaders across Internationals Network to aid you, your staff, and community partners as you welcome newcomer students and their families to your school. Internationals resources include customizable **samples** as well as **tip sheets** about how to implement strategies. Resources that proved helpful to Internationals Network leaders in their experience with newcomers are also included.

Keep in mind that not all newcomers are English Language Learners. Among those who are, school leaders will find a range of terms in local, state and federal policy guidance, including Multilingual Learner (MLL), ELL, English as a New Language Learner (ENL) and the more outdated term Limited English Proficient student.

Select any section to get started!





The strategies and tools in this kit are foundational to the [Internationals Approach](#) to educating multilingual students. The Internationals Approach is a set of five core principles based on proven practice and research. It provides school leaders, teachers, and staff with strategies that lead to better educational and social-emotional outcomes for newcomer students.

The core principle of **Heterogeneity and Collaboration** is fundamental to the Internationals Approach. We know from current research that individuals learn best from one another in collaborative groupings of people with different experiences, viewpoints, and skills. This perspective enables us to view the opening of the doors of our school community to students from all over the world as an opportunity and an asset rather than as a problem.

As you implement the strategies and use the tools in the Newcomer Welcome Kit, notice how students and adults learn and work together to accomplish objectives in their professional and instructional practices.



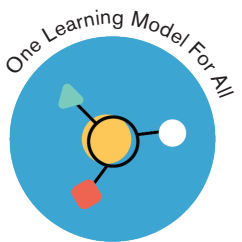
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- + Support in customizing your district's resources
- + Support in customizing your school's resources
- + Leadership coaching services



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Internationals 5 Core Principles





Ensure all school staff members understand the legal basis for enrolling newcomer students in public schools in the United States. Title VI of the Civil Rights Act prohibits discrimination based on race, color, or national origin in schools that receive federal assistance. The Elementary and Secondary Education Act provides funding and guidance for educators regarding their responsibilities with newcomer students. Supreme Court rulings *Plyler v. Doe* and *Lau v. Nichols* affirm that all students, regardless of immigration status, have the right to free public education and access to instructional content in their home language.

Equally crucial to following the law during the new student registration process is seizing the opportunity to begin building relationships at this first meeting among students and family members, and school staff. Keep in mind that in addition to adapting to the language and culture of your community, newcomer students and families are living in new housing, navigating transportation and shopping, finding health care, and weighing who to trust and how to communicate the sometimes

sensitive details about the journey that led them to your school with their child. In addition, parents and family members are likely looking for employment or working in a field that is different from what they did in their home countries. Together, these are monumental changes that can feel quite destabilizing for the entire family.

The importance of communicating to newcomers through words and actions that they belong in your school cannot be overstated. Your interactions with newcomers and their families from this first meeting will leave an impression about whether your school is an inclusive environment that values them. Select staff to facilitate registration who are clear about procedures and have access to interpreters or are bilingual. Also, ensure they have a warm and welcoming disposition, keep sensitive information confidential, and appreciate the complex emotions newcomers might experience at this first meeting. As a leader, use the following strategies to study and modify your registration and English learner identification processes to impress upon students and families that your school will support them.

Strategies	Resources
Familiarize staff with the responsibilities of educators concerning newcomer students and US government guidance and resources available to help educate all immigrant students.	Web Resources <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Fact Sheet: Educational Services for Immigrant Children & Those Recently Arrived to the United States from ed.gov ▪ Protecting access to education for unaccompanied children ▪ Protecting access to education for unaccompanied migratory children ▪ English Learner toolkit ▪ Newcomer toolkit ▪ NY state school registration process and legal rights
<p>Examine your school's intake, registration, and English learner (EL) identification procedures. 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.</p> <p>Translate and tailor registration forms and information to receive newcomer students and their families. Distinguish between official information and documents legally required by law and optional information that families may not have.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Tips: Registering newcomer students at your school ▪ Student registration paper form ▪ Internal student registration tracker ▪ Math foundations diagnostic ▪ Spanish foundations diagnostic Web Resources <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ We Speak NYC video series for improving English skills & learning about newcomer rights. Season 1: Episodes 1 Welcome Parent & 2 Stay in School ▪ NY state English & multilingual learner assessment & testing accommodations ▪ 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) ▪ Tools & Resources For Identifying All English Learners from ed.gov
Interrogate your procedures for assigning newcomer students to courses. Remember that ELs must be placed with students of the same age and have access to curricula at their grade level, regardless of their English language proficiency; even if students' skills are at the middle or elementary school level, they should be placed with their age peers at grade level.	Web Resource <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Tools and Resources for Providing English Learners Equal Access to Curricular and Extracurricular Programs from ed.gov English Learner Toolkit



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Migration has been central to human history since the beginning of known human existence. Currently, due to economic shifts of globalization, climate change, and political unrest, it is at an all-time high all over the world. The United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees reports that as of 2019, approximately [79.5 million people globally were forced to leave their homes](#), including asylees, migrants, internally displaced persons, and refugees. [School-aged children who are newcomers](#) arrive in the U.S. for a range of reasons. Regardless of their reasons for migrating and the circumstances of their journey, a welcoming environment is essential in communicating to newcomers that they truly belong at your school.

Once you know where your newcomers are coming from, broaden your knowledge about their regions. Research their history, politics, economics, culture, social customs, values, languages, religious practices, traditions, and any other factors that hold importance to your newcomers. Build an empathetic community with a growing appreciation of the complex histories and circumstances that influence migration - and do so collaboratively so diverse perspectives are heard and embraced.

Strategies	Resources
Hold a workshop for staff members to introduce them to the cultures of students coming to your school. When available, partner with agencies and representatives of the local immigrant community to include their voices as you bring nuance to staff members' understanding of newcomer experiences.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Where are our students from? A Way to Better Understand Our Students• What I Wish My Teachers Knew About Me: Training Activity by Students <p>Web Resources</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Global migration• Statistics about immigration in the US• Country-specific resources
Engage staff in a training activity in which they explore their cultures.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• My Culture Presentations for school staff
Provide students with opportunities to share information about where they are from.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Migration Unit Project? with I Learn America?• Slides for planning student-led community walks



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How can your school engage newcomers and their families right away? Communicating meaningfully with parents and family members of newcomers starts with language access provided by interpretation and translation services. Like their children, parents are new to the U.S. education system and the prevailing culture of your school. They will need opportunities to explore how your school operates, who the players are, and your school's expectations for parental

participation to weigh this information with their own viewpoints about the roles of students and parents in the school. ([Anthony-Newman, 2018](#)) As a school leader, you can use the following strategies to help parents and family members begin navigating their children's new education experience and support newcomer students as they join your school community.

Strategies

- Contact your district and state multilingual learner departments to **access interpretation and translation** services that are mandated when state and local education authorities receive federal education funding. Newcomers may have home languages that your district has not yet encountered, so keep your district informed of your actual interpretation and translation needs. They might need to find new service providers who speak your families' home languages.
- Explore **staff members' and community partners' language skills** and consider calling on them for interpretation and translation support. Keep a log of staff members' languages and pay them for translation services outside their workday.
- Assign an **adult advocate for each newcomer** - a teacher advisor, counselor, or 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.

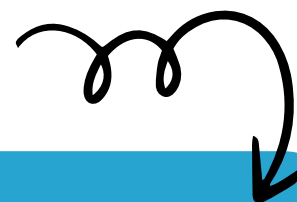
Resources:

- [Advisory Program](#)
- [Social Work Intern Program](#)

- Designate one or more **parent advocates** who can create a bridge between school and home and ensure that newcomer parents have access to the same family engagement activities as English-speaking parents. This parent advocate can help in connecting you with resources in the community and identifying needs.

Resources:

- [Esperanza Parent Workshop Series](#)
- [Parent Acculturation Presentation](#)



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Collaboration is a central practice in Internationals Network schools and programs and is one of the core principles that make our approach to educating newcomers effective. For collaborative learning, diversity is used as an asset for learning: students are grouped heterogeneously with respect to their English proficiency level, academic background, native language, and literacy level. Grouping students in this way addresses the myriad of individual needs and skill levels that are present and in constant flux in a classroom of students from diverse backgrounds. When students engage in collaboratively structured projects, they benefit from the diversity their classmates bring. They can study a problem in depth and work in an environment in which diversity of thought and work product is expected. (WIDA, 2020)

Similar benefits can result when adults in the school community collaborate. To best welcome newcomers to your school, look for ways to bring people with different perspectives together to share ideas, learn from each other, and make decisions. For example, math teachers of newcomers could consult with language teachers, social workers could have regular check-ins with teachers of newcomers, and teachers could reach out directly to newcomers' parents to welcome them and learn about their children. The following strategies and tools can help foster collaboration among all members of your school community as you strive to provide equitable access and a supportive welcome to your newcomers.

Strategies	Resources
Provide time on a weekly basis for teachers to learn with and from each other to create curriculum that integrates language and content instruction and collaborative activities and to address the academic and social needs of students they teach in common.	<p>Student Collaboration</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Tips: Instructional practices to engage newcomers • Collaborative discussion structures • Reading role cards • Student activity guide for high school world history course • Video: Teacher curriculum share about using collaborative group roles in health class <p>Staff Collaboration</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Teams and community building snowball activity • Speed tuning protocol for curriculum planning • Kid talk protocol
Connect with other school leaders to learn from their practices and expand your knowledge. Internationals Network leaders benefit from regular collaboration about broad-ranging topics, from evaluating an Afghani student's transcript to supporting Latinx students to develop biliteracy.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Success analysis protocol 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.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Tips: Bridge differences in expectations about the role of parents in your school • Host school events for multilingual parents & families • Online newsletter for parents • Monthly parent newsletter
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.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Tips: Offer services through your school to engage families • Mental health services resource sheet • Monthly field trips for parents



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Schools are, first and foremost, places of learning, so take a learning stance as you welcome newcomers. When you encounter an existing practice that doesn't seem quite right for your newcomer students, like course content delivered as a lecture or school discipline policies that result in your newcomers receiving more suspensions than other student groups, investigate why this practice has taken hold.

- **What are you noticing about the school environment that newcomers are joining?**
- **How do school community members receive newcomers? How do your newcomers respond? How do you learn about how newcomers feel?**
- **How do you act upon what you notice and learn?**
- **What about your school procedures, policies, and people are leading to these outcomes?**
- **How can you help the people in your school analyze any assumptions and biases?**

Demonstrate your commitment to ensuring newcomers have equitable access to high-quality education at your school. Join staff members as they implement the strategies and tools in this welcome kit and make your inquiry stance visible and audible. Embrace your newcomers' unique perspectives and multiculturalism as you advocate with school stakeholders for their full participation in your school community. When you improve the educational experience of newcomers - particularly by teaching via projects and collaborative learning - you enhance the education of all students.



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