

# Creating New Futures for Newcomers



LESSONS FROM FIVE SCHOOLS  
THAT SERVE K-12 IMMIGRANTS,  
REFUGEES, AND ASYLEES







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## Foreword

The Center for Education Equity at MAEC is pleased to release this report, *Creating New Futures for Newcomers: Lessons from Five Schools that Serve K-12 Immigrants, Refugees, and Asylees*. We initiated this effort in response to a critical need articulated by principals, staff, resettlement organizations, and families. In this report, we provide information from five schools demonstrating effective practices addressing the multiple and complex needs of newcomers. The report shares the experiences and expertise of educators who teach and nurture our newest Americans. The report was written for MAEC by BethAnn Berliner, Principal Researcher at WestEd.

Given the influx of immigrants and refugees over the past several years, newcomer students are found in the classrooms of small towns, suburbs, and big cities across the country and they bring with them a world of culturally diverse experiences and knowledge. Newcomers face myriad challenges to adapt and succeed in their new home and schools. They must learn how to navigate a new culture socially, master a new language, and adjust to a new, and typically different, educational system. Many of these students enter our schools with little or no formal education or fluency in English. Some have fled terrible conditions in their homelands. Others are here without their families. Despite these challenges, all share dreams of being successful students and productive members in our communities, while remaining linked to their cultures and native languages as they become first generation Americans.

To help make these dreams come true, we searched for “bright spots,” schools that offer promising and effective strategies for newcomers in K-12 classrooms. In this report, we focus on five very different schools that serve newcomers, each offering promising strategies, proven approaches, and fresh ideas that can benefit all educators, but especially those who work with immigrant and refugee students. We discuss curriculum and instruction, professional learning, school orientation, social-emotional and health support, and ways to partner with newcomer families and communities. We learn how newcomer schools assist students to adjust and thrive.

This report frequently uses the term “we” — a reflection of MAEC’s theory of action to increase educational equity. If we co-create an environment that enables teachers and administrators to develop a common aim and work collaboratively, then we can create optimal conditions for teaching and learning.

**Maria del Rosario (Charo) Basterra**  
**Vice President, MAEC**



PART 1:

# **Newcomers & Newcomer Schools**

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**“Being in school is where children should be. It’s safe. People take care of you. You learn things. And it’s where you go to have a good future.”**

*—12th grader, Iraqi refugee*

# Newcomers & Newcomer Schools

Newcomer students are recently-arrived immigrants to the United States who attend school in grades K-12. They bring a range of languages, cultures, school experiences, literacy skills, and immigration circumstances to classrooms. Many speak little or no English, and may lack any formal education in their native countries. Educators at school, district, and state levels need to be prepared to meet the unique academic, social, and emotional needs of these students so school success is within reach. The descriptions of real-world examples of promising practices from five newcomer schools are to focus attention on educating newcomer students and to inspire and inform educators.

## Newcomers

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The reasons for immigrating to the United States are as diverse as the people arriving themselves. Many leave their native countries out of desperation to escape crushing poverty. Some flee from the cruelty of violence or persecution. Others are displaced by devastating wars or natural disasters. For “newcomers,” a comprehensive term used to include all recently-arrived immigrants, rebuilding their lives in the United States holds the promise of safety, stability, and opportunity. Nearly all have endured a difficult journey to seek a better future for themselves and for their children.

About 44 million immigrants resided in United States in 2016. That’s 14% of the country’s population. Over half arrived since 2000. Since then, global crises have resulted in a record high number of displaced

people. Immigration has reemerged as a political wedge issue worldwide. Newcomers have become central to impassioned national discussions about labor demands, global competitiveness, domestic security, and human rights. The influx of young newcomers has had far-reaching effects on how public schools are organized, how teachers teach, and how students learn.

Newcomer families are settling in established immigrant destinations and, increasingly, in small towns and mid-sized cities that haven't traditionally attracted newcomers. All children living in this country, regardless of immigration status, have a right to a free, public education. Many educators and policy leaders view reaching these newcomers as an equity issue. They seek to provide specialized educational opportunities and supports to meet the academic and personal needs of their newcomer students.

## Key Terms

**Asylee or Asylum seeker** - is a person who is forced to flee his or her country of nationality because of persecution or a well-founded fear of persecution on account of race, religion, nationality, membership in a particular social group, or political opinion and is already present in the United States or is seeking admission at a port of entry.

**Immigrant** - is a person who voluntarily chooses to leave his or her country of nationality to come to the United States.

**Newcomer** - is a comprehensive term for a recently-arrived immigrant, refugee, or asylee. A newcomer student is a recently-arrived student in grades K-12 who is not proficient in English and may or may not have received a formal education in their country of nationality or any other country during their immigration journey to the United States.

**Refugee** - is a person outside his or her country of nationality who is unable or unwilling to return to his or her country of nationality because of persecution or a well-founded fear of persecution on account of race, religion, nationality, membership in a particular social group, or political opinion.

**Student with Limited or Interrupted Formal Education (SLIFE)** - is a student who had limited or interrupted schooling in their native country and, as a result, has limited literacy in reading and writing in his or her native language and is behind grade level in academic knowledge and learning-to-learn skills. The reasons for the interruptions in schooling include poverty, geographic isolation, lack of transportation, expectations for school attendance, work responsibilities, natural disasters, war, community violence, and persecution.

**Unaccompanied minor** - is a refugee or asylee under the age of 18 who is separated from both parents and is not being cared for by a guardian or another adult who by law or custom is required to do so.

From state departments of education to city halls and classrooms, educators and policy leaders are asking for assistance to meet the needs of this diverse student population. For the first time, many are now responsible for teaching students who've recently arrived from across the globe. Many bring with them challenges related to their immigration journey. These students may not have attended school in their native countries or learned to read and write in their native languages. They may have survived traumatic experiences that likely affected their social and emotional development. They may have arrived knowing little or no English.

Established newcomer schools can provide real-world experience on how they educate and support their students. These “bright spots” can offer promising practices for superintendents, directors of English Learners, principals, classroom teachers, and student support. From a practical perspective, most educators and policy leaders cannot visit an established newcomer school in person. We wrote *Creating New Futures* for educators and policy leaders both to focus attention on K-12 newcomer students and to better understand how the schools featured are making a difference in the academic and personal lives of America's newest students. We take a broader view than most other published descriptions of newcomer schools to incorporate the entire K-12 perspective.

## Newcomer Schools

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Recently-arrived immigrant, refugee, and asylee students must learn English, bridge academic gaps, and develop learning-to-learn skills all while adjusting to a new life in the United States. Education will prepare them for future success. A number of school districts have responded to these needs by offering an alternative, relatively self-contained learning environment specifically for newcomer students. Newcomer schools are designed to help these students become successful learners because traditional schools are not organized to meet the needs and challenges that newcomer students face. Newcomer school characteristics vary by a given district's vision, economic resources, teacher talent, approach to supporting English Learners, facilities, and trends in the numbers and circumstances of newcomers. All of these schools serve newly-arrived immigrant English Learners, have voluntary enrollment, and generally share the following goals to:

- Acculturate students to American schools,
- Help students acquire foundational academic English language skills,
- Provide remediation or grade-level instruction in the core content areas,
- Encourage further development of native language literacy skills, and
- Promote student success through access to wide-ranging and culturally-appropriate academic, health, social, emotional, and family supports.

Most are transitional schools designed for newcomer students to attend for 1-2 years, with clear entry and exit points. They aim to prepare students to transition to traditional schools, which then provide additional English language development supports in grade-level classes. Other newcomer schools provide options for students to either remain enrolled for additional years before transferring to another school or through graduation. These are mostly newcomer high schools that have developed a curriculum pathway for newly-arrived English Learners to earn the required credits to receive a diploma.

There are three general types of newcomer schools:



### **Programs-Within-A-School**

These newcomer schools are embedded programs co-located at a traditional school. While English language and core content area instruction is self-contained, newcomer students may participate in recess, meal time, physical education, elective courses, after-school programs, or sports activities with the students attending the hosting traditional school. Newcomers who exit these programs may have the option to stay at the hosting school but generally transfer to a school zoned for their neighborhood or another school that accommodates their language development and learning needs.

### **Transitional Newcomer Schools**

These newcomer schools use a standalone facility in a district or county to exclusively serve newcomer students from across a wide geographic area. Upon exiting these schools, newcomers generally transfer to a school zoned for their neighborhood or another school that accommodates their language development and learning needs.



### **Comprehensive Newcomer Schools**

These newcomer schools use a standalone facility and serve exclusively newcomer students from across a district or county. They are usually configured by Grades K-12, 6-12, or 9-12. Students can enter at any grade level and transition to a traditional school after a limited period of time but usually have the option to remain until they're promoted from elementary school to middle school or from middle school to high school, or until they complete high school. Most of these are high schools and students typically enter as a cohort in Grade 9 and matriculate together.

In their various forms, newcomer schools are organized around safety, fairness, accessibility, inclusivity, and removing barriers to educational success. They also are often championed by education and civic leaders as an integral part of local resettlement support services.

## Selecting Newcomer Schools to Learn From

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The Center for Education Equity (CEE) at MAEC assists schools and school districts addressing problems related to educational equity. CEE’s region includes the 15 states and territories in the Northeast, Puerto Rico, and the Virgin Islands. In response to the growing number of newcomer students, we searched within our region for schools that were already educating newcomers and doing so successfully. Initially, we identified 116 newcomer schools through a combination of research and recommendations. Our research included examining published research describing a school as a model newcomer school or a school using promising practices; and searching web-based databases, specifically Education Research Complete, Google Scholar, and Google using the search strings “immigrant education,” “immigrant school,” “newcomer education,” “newcomer school,” “refugee education,” “unaccompanied minor education,” and “students with limited or interrupted education.”

We solicited recommendations from the United States Department of Education, state departments of education in our region, and key organizations focused on assisting immigrants. These organizations included: Bridging Refugee Youth & Children’s Services at the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops, Center for Applied Linguistics, Dorcas International Institute of Rhode Island, Hebrew Immigrant Aid Society of Pennsylvania, Immigrant Resource Center of Maine, International Rescue Committee, Internationals Network for Public Schools, Jewish Family Services of Delaware, Lutheran Immigrant Refugee Services, Migrant Policy Institute, Organization for Refugee and Immigrant Success, Refugee and Immigrant Center for Education and Legal Services, Refugee Center Online, Refugee Transitions, Refugee Trauma and Resilience Center at Boston Children’s Hospital, Somalia Bantu Youth Association of Maine, and West Virginia Interfaith Refugee Ministry.

We excluded most of these schools for one or more reasons:

- There was insufficient publicly available descriptive information about the school’s instructional and student support practices;
- The school had been well described in other reports, such as those listed in this report under Part V: Resources;
- Staff at organizations or state departments of education opposed the school’s selection due to concerns about quality or stability of the school; or
- The school was part of a network of similar schools or located in the same town or city as another nominated school of interest.

Of the 116 newcomer schools, we selected 13 for additional screening. We conducted telephone interviews with the school principal, district director of English Learners, or other district administrators to confirm preliminary information and a basic review of the school’s publicly available reading and math achievement or graduation data. From this list of 13, we selected five schools based upon the following final criteria:

- Variation in newcomer school type, representing programs-within-a school, transitional newcomer schools, and comprehensive newcomer schools;
- Variation in location, representing small towns, medium-sized cities, and large cities;
- Variation in grade-level configurations;
- The school was continuously open for at least five years; and
- The principal and a district administrator agreed to participate in a two-day on-site visit and wanted to share and learn more about promising practices.



The five newcomer schools are:

- Lewiston High School, Lewiston, Maine;
- Newcomer Academy, Louisville, Kentucky;
- Rochester International Academy, Rochester, New York;
- The Manhattan International High School, New York, New York; and
- Winooski School District Newcomer Program at John F. Kennedy Elementary School, Winooski Middle School, and Winooski High School, Winooski, Vermont.



Collecting detailed descriptive information from these schools was central to understanding promising practices. Each school participated in a two-day on-site visit in May 2018. During these visits, we interviewed key staff using guiding questions developed from the best practices literature, and we observed classroom instruction. We also reviewed materials, such as mission statements, schedules, handbooks, student work, and newsletters. For the interview questions, see Appendix.

Kentucky

Maine

New York

Vermont

## The Five “Bright Spots”

Table 1: Summary Description of the Five Newcomer Schools, 2018

Characteristics	Lewiston High Newcomer Program in Lewiston High School	Newcomer Academy	Rochester International Academy	The Manhattan International High School	Winooski Newcomer Program in Winooski School District
Location	Lewiston, ME	Louisville, KY	Rochester, NY	New York, NY	Winooski, VT
Community Type	Small town	Mid-sized city	Mid-sized city	Large city	Small town
Founded	2001	2006	2011	1993	2012
Grade Levels	9-12	6-10	K-12	9-12	K-12
School Size	59	669	393	340	49
Newcomer School Type	Program-Within-A-School	Transitional	Transitional	Comprehensive	Program-Within-A-School
Newcomer Definition	3 years or less in the U.S.	2 years or less in the U.S SLIFE 2 years	3 years or less in the U.S	4 years or less in the U.S	1 year or less in the U.S
Years Enrolled	1-2 years	1-2 years SLIFE 2 years	Elementary and middle school 1-3 years, high school 2 years with the option to stay, SLIFE 4 years	4-6 years	1-2 years
Entry Criteria	Lowest level score on English and literacy screener and a family, student educational, and health and well-being survey	Lowest level score on English and literacy screener and native language interview	Lowest level score on English and literacy screener	Lowest level score on English and literacy screener	Lowest level score on English, literacy, and math screener
Exit Criteria	English proficiency assessment score and teacher input	English proficiency assessment score and teacher input	English proficiency assessment score and teacher input, high school graduation	High school graduation	English proficiency assessment score and teacher input



These schools illustrate both similarities and variations in newcomer school characteristics. The Lewiston High School and Winooski newcomer programs-within-a-school are located in small towns, both of which have seen dramatic social changes to their communities. In the past, the influx of newcomers was largely African refugees; recently, other refugee groups have come in waves, like the Bhutanese Nepali in Winooski. Newcomer Academy and Rochester International Academy are both located in large school districts in mid-sized cities that are growing refugee resettlement sites. Each district supports one newcomer school that is filled to capacity. Newcomer Academy just outgrew its three separate facilities and for the 2018-19 school year they combined at one larger school site. Rochester International Academy serves all newcomer students though most of the Spanish-speaking newcomers choose to attend one of the districts many bilingual schools. The Manhattan International High School is one of many diverse newcomer high schools in the city, and one of 27 in the Internationals Network for Public Schools. It draws expansively from across the five city boroughs and provides students with free MetroCards for transportation. Except for Winooski, which is primarily a walking district, the other newcomer schools provide school bus transportation since they aren't neighborhood schools.

The schools range in size from 49 to 669 students, with the two programs-within-a-school in Lewiston and Winooski having the smallest enrollments. Throughout the school year the number of students in these newcomer schools change. "Every day is the first day of school for someone here," explained a principal, who added, "and the fragile and unstable lives of some of our students means they can leave us at any time." Enrollment is voluntary, and the schedules are for a traditional full day with optional after-school programming. At the transitional newcomer schools, most students attend for 1-2 years. In Lewiston and Winooski, the newcomer students are integrated into the hosting schools through advisory periods, elective courses, physical education, shared meal times,

and after-school programs, and they transition into grade-level classes. For students at Newcomer Academy, most transfer to a neighborhood school that offers language development supports to bridge the transition. At The Manhattan International High School, students stay enrolled until they graduate, and increasingly at Rochester International Academy students request to stay as long as permissible, including through graduation. For students who unsuccessfully transitioned to another high school, they have the option to return to Rochester International Academy to complete their graduation requirements.

Students come from across the globe. They were born in 103 different countries and speak 197 languages other than English. (See tables 2 and 3 for detailed listings.) Upon entering the newcomer schools, all students are screened for English language proficiency and other basic academic and learning-to-learn skills. None can read, write, or speak in English, many have no or limited formal schooling in their native countries and are illiterate in their native languages, and some have an undocumented immigration status or live with undocumented family members or are unaccompanied minors. Some of the unaccompanied minors are reunited with family members but most live with foster families, sponsors, or in groups with other unaccompanied minors. The large majority of the students enroll in these schools are refugees or asylees who spent many years living in war torn countries or refugee camps outside of their native countries before arriving in the United States. Students who immigrated with their families are more likely to have received a formal education and be literate in one or more native languages.

The schools profiled in this report are viewed as "bright spots." They carry out practices that others have found to be helpful, and they innovate practices to respond to changing political contexts and student needs over time. These descriptions aren't endorsements for practices or products but are ideas to learn from.

**Table 2: Countries of Origin = 103**

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- Afghanistan
- Albania
- Angola
- Austria
- Bangladesh
- Belgium
- Benin
- Bhutan
- Bolivia
- Bosnia
- Brazil
- Bulgaria
- Burkina-Faso
- Burma
- Burundi
- Cambodia
- Cameroon
- China
- Colombia
- Costa Rica
- Croatia
- Cuba
- Cyprus
- Czech Republic
- Democratic Republic of the Congo
- Djibouti
- Dominican Republic
- Ecuador
- Egypt
- El Salvador
- Eritrea
- Ethiopia
- France
- French Polynesia
- Gabon
- Gambia
- Georgia
- Germany
- Ghana
- Guatemala
- Guinea
- Guinea-Bissau
- Haiti
- Honduras
- Hungary
- India
- Iran
- Iraq
- Italy
- Ivory Coast
- Jamaica
- Japan
- Jordan
- Kenya
- Kosovo
- Laos
- Lebanon
- Liberia
- Libya
- Liechtenstein
- Luxembourg
- Macedonia
- Malawi
- Mali
- Mauritania
- Mexico
- Moldova
- Mongolia
- Montenegro
- Myanmar
- Nepal
- Netherlands
- Nicaragua
- North Korea
- Pakistan
- Palau
- Palestine
- Panama
- Paraguay
- Peru
- Philippines
- Poland
- Republic of the Congo
- Rwanda
- Senegal
- Serbia
- Slovakia
- Slovenia
- Somalia
- South Korea
- Spain
- Sri Lanka
- St. Vincent and the Grenadines
- Sudan
- Switzerland
- Syria
- Tanzania
- Thailand
- Togo
- Uganda
- Ukraine
- Venezuela
- Yemen

**Table 3: Native Languages = 197**

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• Acholi	• Estonian	• Kanarese	• Norwegian	• Sukuma
• Afrikaans	• Ewe	• Kannada	• Nyanja	• Swahili
• Afroasiatic	• Fanti	• Kanuri	• Oneida	• Swazi
• Akan	• Farsi	• Karen	• Oriya	• Swedish
• Albanian	• Finnish	• Karenni	• Oromo	• Tadjik
• Amharic	• Flemish	• Kashmiri	• Ossetian	• Tagalog
• Amoy	• Fon	• Kazakh	• Palauan	• Tamazight
• Arabic	• Fijian	• Khmer	• Papimento	• Tamil
• Araucanian	• French	• Khoisan	• Pashto	• Telegu
• Arawak	• Fulani	• Khowan	• Polish	• Thai
• Armenian	• Ga	• Kikuyu	• Portuguese	• Tibetan
• Assamese	• Galician	• Kinyarwanda	• Provençal	• Tigre
• Aymara	• Galla	• Kirundi	• Punjabi	• Tigrinya
• Azerbaijani	• Garifuna	• Korean	• Quechua	• Tonga
• Balante	• Georgian	• Kpelle	• Quiche	• Tuareg
• Balinese	• German	• Krio	• Rajasthani	• Turkish
• Baluchi	• Grebo	• Kurdish	• Romanian	• Turkman
• Bambara	• Greek	• Lao	• Romansch	• Twi
• Basque	• Guarani	• Latvian	• Rundi	• Ukrainian
• Belorussian	• Gujarati	• Lithuanian	• Russian	• Urdu
• Bemaba	• Gurma	• Loma	• Rwandan	• Uzbek
• Bengali	• Haitian	• Luba	• Samoan	• Vietnamese
• Bhili	• Creole	• Luganda	• Sanskrit	• Visayak
• Bihari	• Hausa	• Lunyankole	• Scottish	• Welsh
• Bosnian	• Hebrew	• Luo	• Seneca	• Wolof
• Brahui	• Hindi	• Macedonian	• Serbo-Croatian	• Yiddish
• Breton	• Hmong	• Mai Mai	• Seri	• Yonba
• Bulgarian	• Hungarian	• Malagasy	• Sesthoto	• Yoruba
• Burmese	• Ibo	• Malay	• Setswana	
• Catalan	• Icelandic	• Malayalam	• Shan	
• Cebuan	• Ilocano	• Malinke	• Shina	
• Cham	• Indonesian	• Maltese	• Shluh	
• Chechen	• Irish	• Mandarin	• Sidamo	
• Chinese	• Italian	• Mandinka	• Sinhalese	
• Chuukese	• Jamaican	• Marathi	• Slovak	
• Czech	• Creole	• Mohawk	• Slovenian	
• Dagomba	• Japanese	• Moldavian	• Somali	
• Dangme	• Johkha	• Mongolian	• Soninke	
• Danish	• Kabre	• Mossi	• South Arabic	
• Dari	• Kabyle	• Nahuatl	• Spanish	
• Dejula	• Kachi	• Ndebele	• Sudanese	
• Dutch	• Kafiri	• Nepali		
• Dzongkha	• Kamba	• Niger		

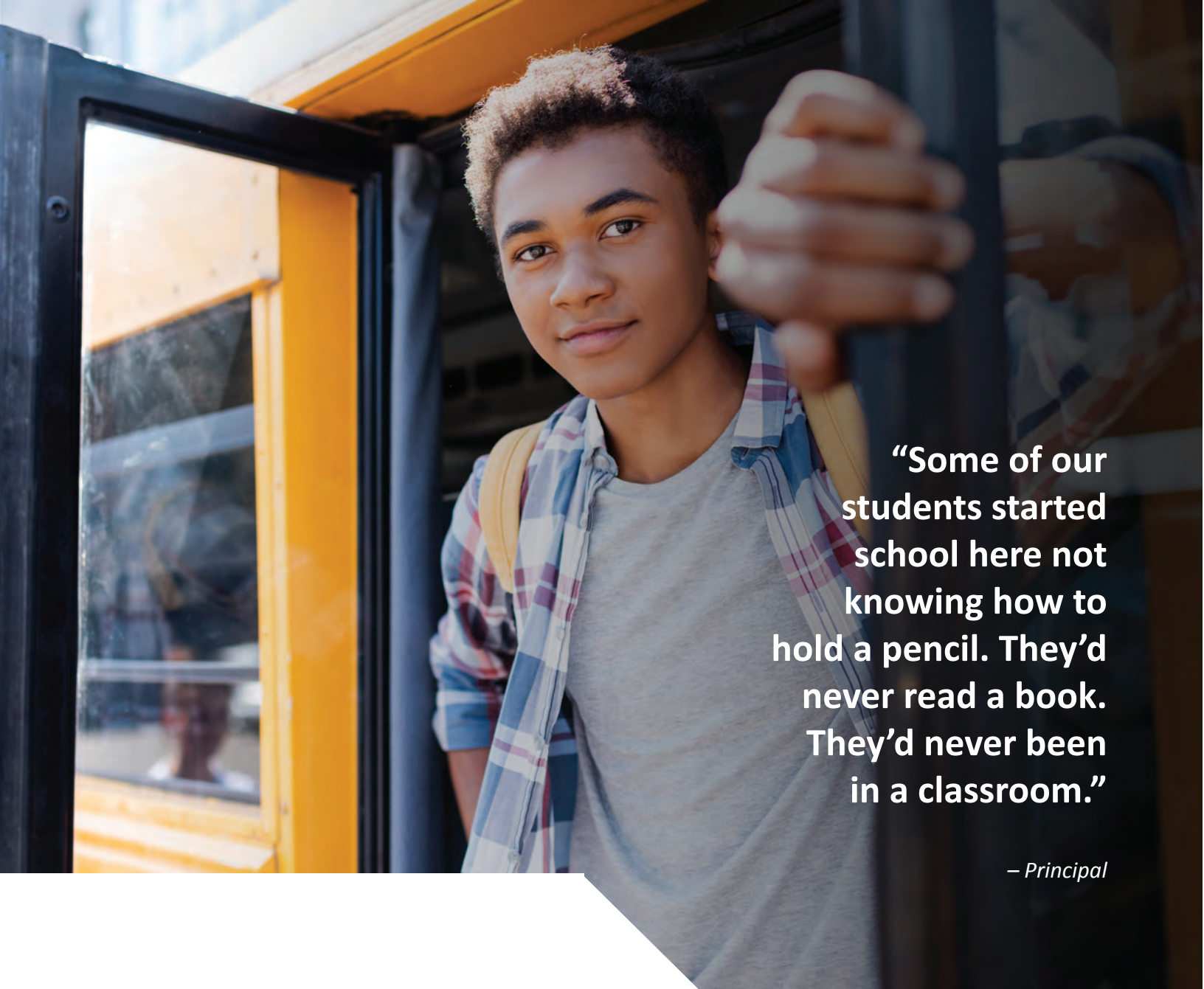
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PART 2:

# **Eight Promising Practices**

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**“Some of our students started school here not knowing how to hold a pencil. They’d never read a book. They’d never been in a classroom.”**

*– Principal*

## Eight Promising Practices

The newcomer schools described in this report are accomplishing their missions. We see this from the engagement and progress of their students and the growing size and scope of their schools. They help newcomer students acculturate to school, become proficient in English, and fill critical knowledge gaps. They provide supports to students and families, and form partnerships with community

resources that can provide additional help for students to succeed in school. These schools are part of their community’s network for helping newcomers to build their new American lives.

Eight promising practices emerged across the bright spots. The following descriptions include selected examples of these practices in action.

## 1. Teach newcomers to be students.

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*I cried because I didn't know how to be a student and had to spend an extra year learning English. But I learned, and I'm graduating! – High school student, Syrian refugee*

At most newcomer schools, any day can be a student's first day of school. Families don't necessarily arrive to the United States and settle into a community in time for their children to attend school at the opening of a school year. Some newcomer students enter school with a well-grounded understanding of schooling and past experience as a student. Many others enter with only a vague sense of what it means to be a student in the United States and with few practical classroom skills, including missing some of the basics like holding a pencil, writing on paper, sitting at desks, and participating in lessons.

The five bright spot schools welcome students "into our family" by orienting them to be a student. "When they arrive, we don't assume they know anything about being a student that we haven't

taught them." Orientations vary by school but generally aim to help students make initial social connections with teachers and classmates; to navigate school facilities, including the cafeteria and restrooms; and to understand basic school expectations. Newcomer students, across the grades, are familiarized with a number of school norms and practices, among them:

- Daily attendance and punctuality;
- Riding a school bus or using other transportation;
- Following the school calendar, including minimum day, snow day, holiday, and vacation schedules;
- Dress code;
- Meals;
- Physical exams and immunizations;
- Sitting still at desks;
- Raising hands;
- Participating in lessons independently and in groups;
- Co-education classes;
- Using textbooks and personal computers;
- Grading and report cards;
- Homework completion;
- Expected school behavior and discipline;
- After-school programs, sports teams, clubs, and other optional enrichment opportunities; and
- Emergency procedures.

Most of the schools conveyed this information to recently-arrived students through a combination of site administrators, teachers, cultural liaisons, and classmates at the opening of the school year and on a rolling basis as new students are added. The starting line for orienting adolescent SLIFEs to school was "wherever they're at" since these students are virtually unaccustomed to all aspects of school life.



**“I was scared to be at school  
because I didn’t know  
what it was.  
Now I’m happy.”**

*– Elementary school student, Somali refugee*

Newcomer Academy initiates its new students with a “week of welcome.” Students follow a school-wide structured orientation before they fully join the daily school routine. It’s designed both to convey belonging at the school by making personal connections with staff, classmates, and others who speak the newcomer’s native language and to start strong by addressing “a checklist of practical matters.” The checklist includes everything from obtaining a photo identification badge to learning how to access free meals and transportation to creating a student-family learning compact and completing medical forms and immunization requirements. Students are taught to write with a pencil and use a binder, to turn on a computer and use a keyboard, to use a locker, to participate in a restorative circle in order to understand how conflicts are addressed, and to say their name, phone number, and address in English. They’re also taught basic classroom vocabulary and given a personal strengths and interests inventory and other assessments needed to make appropriate grade-level and class placements.

The Manhattan International High School’s orientation is directly embedded in the Grade 9 foundations curriculum. This practical approach acculturates students to school norms and practices since students enter as a cohort; and while many at this school attended Grade 8 in the United States, they needed to continue developing learning-to-learn skills for meeting the high school curriculum requirements, such as following instructions, thinking creatively, identifying essential information, managing time, and seeking help.





## School Leaders

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They are visionary.

They are visible and available.

They are consistently supportive.

They build teams.

They routinely communicate about schoolwide issues with students and teachers.

They innovate.

## 2. Lead with skill, purpose, and vision.

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*There wasn't a really good map for us to follow to get started, so our school has gotten better through thoughtful experimentation. – Principal*

The five bright spots have skilled and purposeful leaders who are instrumental to realizing the vision of student success. At Lewiston High School and in the Winooski School District, programs-within-a-school, instructional leadership was centered at the district level with the directors of English Learners. At the larger standalone schools, it was centered with the principals and leadership teams. Some of the current principals were the original visionaries of their schools, and led the effort to open a new kind of school in their districts to respond to pressing needs. At The Manhattan International High School, the current principal is also an alumna of the school and personifies the vision of producing successful, college-ready newcomer students. All of the school leaders have deep expertise in curriculum and instruction for English Learners and continuously focus on strengthening teaching and learning. They also share a number of other characteristics:

**They are visionary.** The newcomer school leaders shape a clear and ambitious vision of student success, and they build their newcomer schools to support it. Across the schools, their visions are similarly focused on students becoming proficient in English, capable of mastering grade-level content, and skilled to transition to a traditional school or to college.

**They are visible and available.** The newcomer school leaders know their students by their name and their personal immigration story. They routinely observe classroom instruction and spend considerable time interacting with teachers in various professional learning communities and governance meetings.

**They are consistently supportive.** The school culture is welcoming, caring, and reinforces the school's vision, and the norms of operation are reliably inclusive, equitable, and fair. School leaders make sure that the personal needs of students are met to reduce barriers to learning. "Kids don't fall through the cracks here. We make sure of it. We know that if one of ours were to fall it'd be a hard climb back up."

**They build teams.** Delivering instruction and overseeing professional learning are shared responsibilities. For example, at Newcomer Academy, the school is structured into multiple interdisciplinary and content-area professional learning communities for co-planning, co-teaching, and co-learning; similarly at the Winooski School District and Lewiston High School, content-area and English as a second language teachers are paired for co-planning, co-teaching, and co-learning; and at The Manhattan International High School each grade level has a cluster of interdisciplinary content-area teacher teams that also has an assigned literacy teacher to facilitate integration of language development into the curriculum and instruction.

**They routinely communicate about schoolwide issues with students and teachers.** School leaders share and solicit information from students and teachers in multiple ways. For example, Rochester International Academy holds twice weekly morning meetings conducted by teachers using a common set of talking points prepared by the principal on issues such as test preparation and after school and summer school options. The school also holds monthly town hall meetings that organize students by native language groups to discuss more personal issues such as bullying and acculturation. Every Monday, all teachers and advisory board members receive an online newsletter that includes the upcoming week's schedule and special events, the names of all the newly admitted students, articles, announcements, photos of the week, a data corner, and staff and student appreciations.

**They innovate.** The newcomer school leaders openly try different approaches to strengthen their school's programs. Their schools are described by teachers as safe places to learn, to experiment, to make mistakes, and to try new ideas. At Newcomer Academy, the principal encourages staff to be "bubble thinkers" and to "put ideas out there." For example, to provide more and varied enrichment opportunities for students, the school experiments with club days, student-generated mini-classes that are now integrated into the schedule and meet weekly for six weeks and then rotate to other topics. The school is also testing an idea for a "fast forward" instructional track for their overage, under-credited newcomers who won't likely earn a diploma before aging out. At The Manhattan International High School, experimentation led to the reconfiguration of the Grades 10 and 11 programs by adding instructional looping. A successful trial run, initiated by the teachers and supported by the principal, resulted in more time for students to master grade-level content, deeper and more differentiated instruction, and strengthened ties between students and teachers.

**“Success is really  
all about our  
amazing staff.”**

– *Principal*



### **3. Cultivate a qualified and supported workforce.**

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Quality teaching is key to student learning. It’s especially critical in newcomer schools, which require teachers to possess additional knowledge, skills, and competencies beyond preparation to serve English Learners. Most teachers certified in English as a second language have little or no experience with newcomers since the majority of English Learners in schools are born in the United States but don’t speak English as the first language at home.

The learning needs of newcomer students differ from those of second generation English Learners. At the same time they are adjusting to a new culture and learning a new language, they are also absorbing a large amount of missed content needed to transition to traditional grade-level classes. Teachers at newcomer schools need a combination of competencies in order to be successful—the mastery of content, the ability to use multiple kinds of instructional and diagnostic skills, and the facility to communicate to diverse students whose language proficiency and prior academic knowledge is far below their other classmates and varies widely. These teachers also need to understand how culture, trauma, and resilience are expressed in the classroom, and how to partner with others inside and outside of the school to care for comprehensive student and family needs. “Teaching here is really different than my experience in a traditional school. You’re not trained to teach kids like ours. You

have to develop specialized skills and expertly carry out your craft.”

The bright spot schools carefully staff their schools with quality teachers. In addition to having strong English as a second language instructional skills, teachers demonstrate cultural competence, caring about the personal lives of students, and a collaborative and reflective approach to teaching and learning. To ensure that they have a quality workforce, some newcomer schools adopt a “grow your own” teacher pipeline.

Like many school districts across the nation, the Lewiston School District struggles to recruit nonwhite, multilingual teachers. To address this challenge, it built a local pipeline for growing a qualified and diverse teacher corps. For example, it offers education technicians, paraprofessional educators who provide supportive services in the classroom, cost reimbursement for earning an English as a second language certificate, and provides the instruction via a blended online and in-person format delivered by a partnering university at the district office on Saturdays. It also launched an Educator Diversity Initiative,

which teamed the district with a university to offer a free, 3-unit introductory course about the teaching profession held locally during the summer. The course was open to anyone with an interest in a career in education and expressly aimed to attract nonwhite, multilingual prospective teachers, including immigrants and refugees who were teachers in their home countries but weren’t certified to teach in the United States. Newcomer Academy encourages its bilingual associate instructors to advance their careers; some pursue preservice training and, once certified, are rehired as teachers, bringing additional skills they acquired as cultural liaisons to the classroom. One third of the school’s teaching staff had previously been bilingual associate instructors. Rochester International Academy and the Winooski School District program partnered with local colleges to expand and diversify the pool of well-qualified teachers. By placing student teachers and interns at these schools, these soon-to-be teachers gain direct experience with newcomer students while being supervised by experts. School leaders observe their mastery of the program, instructional growth, and student engagement skills before making a hiring decision.

Another shared characteristic of the bright spots is that professional learning is “normalized into the DNA” of the schools. Teachers need to learn sophisticated forms of instruction to teach newcomer students who have far to go to catch up to their grade-level classmates. The schools offer conventional forms of workshops, networks, courses, and online communities. They also invest in peer-based learning activities that are:

- Based on effective adult learning principles;
- Built into the school’s schedule so there is designated time and it is an institutionalized practice;
- Embedded in real problems of classroom practice such as integrating multi-tiered academic supports, developing performance based assessment tasks, adopting and adapting new curriculum, integrating technology, accelerating SLIFE instruction, or team teaching;
- Grounded in subject matter;
- Collaborative so that teachers share ideas and expertise;
- Designed for co-planning curriculum, modeling instructional practices, and time for feedback and reflection; and
- Planned as continuous rather than one-time school-based teacher support.



Both Newcomer Academy and The Manhattan International High School built their instructional programs around teachers working and learning together. At Newcomer Academy, teams of 5-6 teachers are organized into 10 professional learning communities (PLCs). Each teacher is a member of a vertical PLC comprised of teachers in the same content area and a horizontal PLC comprised of an interdisciplinary team. These learning communities set student learning goals; co-develop curriculum; model, align, and evaluate instructional practices; review student data; and engage in peer-based professional development activities. A team lead and a goal clarity coach guide the PLCs to ensure quality professional development. Similarly, The Manhattan International High School is configured around four grade-level clusters, each with an interdisciplinary team of English, social studies, math, and science content-area teachers plus a literacy teacher to facilitate integration of language development. The clusters co-plan curriculum, co-teach, co-monitor student progress, and co-facilitate professional learning activities. All beginning teachers have a mentor to assist in planning lessons, reflecting on practice, and

improving strategies. The mentor also supports teacher growth more generally such as coaching the social studies team to rewrite the curriculum to better align with the learning objectives.

Other newcomer schools pair English as a second language experts with other teachers to strengthen the language development aspects of the curriculum and instruction. For example, both Rochester International Academy and the Winooski School District newcomer program arrange for English as a second language teachers to co-plan and to co-teach with grade-level and content-area teachers, modeling specialized language development strategies and helping teachers to master effective instructional skills. At Lewiston High School, an instructional coach offers opt-in training for teachers such as modeling English as a second language instructional strategies, customizing instructional solutions, jointly reviewing student data, or supporting teachers with a particular need such as delivering a push-in lesson or assessing student understanding. This support includes videotaping instruction and coaching teachers to reflect on their practice.

#### 4. Deliver effective English language and content instruction using multiple approaches.

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**“All day, every day it’s reading, writing, speaking, and listening in everything we do.”**

– *Teacher*

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Teaching newcomer students is a complex activity. It requires special knowledge and skills for teachers to know how to engage and accelerate student learning on all fronts simultaneously – developing English language proficiency, filling in knowledge and learning-to-learn gaps, building toward mastery of grade-level content standards, and preparing adolescent students for college and career. Across the bright spot schools, instruction is informed by evidenced-based conceptual frameworks, uses materials and practices vetted for English Learners, and relies on teacher expertise and resourcefulness. Quality instruction is instrumental to providing newcomer students with an equitable and excellent education.

The five schools share core beliefs about instruction for newcomer students, namely that it should:

- Be culturally responsive and value the diversity of student languages, cultures, and life experiences. The teachers recognize that despite limitations in English proficiency and content knowledge, students bring an accumulation of other kinds of knowledge, skills, and interests that can be leveraged to promote new knowledge and to make rigorous academic content comprehensible.
- Meet students at their various levels of knowledge and skill while at the same time providing them with increasingly high-challenge, high-interest, and high-support learning opportunities. Instruction aims for students to reach grade-level standards over time.
- Provide meaningful opportunities for students to continuously practice reading, writing, speaking, and listening in English and in core content-area classes. The teachers understand that academic language is best acquired in tandem with learning content.
- Incorporate multiple learning modalities. The teachers motivate students through visual, auditory, kinesthetic, and tactile instructional strategies to receive, process, and make meaning of content by learning through different senses.
- Use data to guide instructional decision-making. Assessing teaching and learning in-the-moment is viewed as a strategy for providing teachers with information to adjust instruction for reteaching and promoting student growth and for providing students with meaningful opportunities to reflect on learning.
- Be collaboratively planned and delivered by teachers. Co-teaching or working in clusters or professional learning communities facilitates ways for English as a second language teachers and content-area teachers to share expertise and to thoughtfully embed explicit language instruction into content lessons and content material into English development lessons.

Grounded in these beliefs, the teachers at the bright spot schools plan their instructional programs with skill and intentionality, and adjust the content and delivery “to check, recheck, and check again” for understanding. Instruction involves pre-teaching, teaching, and re-teaching, and incorporates a number of instructional practices that in combination contribute to student success. Highlights include:

### **Leveraging native languages**

None of the bright spot schools are bilingual programs since their student populations are linguistically diverse. However, all of them encourage the use of native languages in school and the continued development of literacy in first languages more generally. What this looks like in practice varies by school. The Manhattan International High School requires seniors to produce a graduation portfolio of their best work showing the skills and content that they mastered in all of the main subject areas plus a creative piece and a cultural project using their native language. To support the use of native languages, the school offers conversation clubs in Chinese, French, and Spanish and uses Rosetta Stone, a computer-based picture- and sound-based language development program. Schools also use native languages to help develop English proficiency. At Newcomer Academy, when students struggle to pronounce the “sh” sound teachers develop mini-lessons that compared the English sound to sounds in multiple other native languages. Similarly, the teachers at Rochester International Academy examine the grammar and language patterns in students’ native languages to better understand common mistakes, such as Nepali students dropping the “s” sound in plural words. When possible, the Winooski buddy mentors match secondary students with elementary students who speak the same native language to provide acculturation support while practicing their first language. Lewiston High School offers five options for its foreign language requirement – French, Latin, and Spanish as well as Arabic and Chinese – to additionally support its newcomers and English Learners.

### **Building upon SIOP (Sheltered Instruction Observation Protocol)**

Across the grades, teachers are trained in and routinely implement SIOP. Within schools, it is a common and structured approach for developing lessons and further supporting language development and making grade-level academic content comprehensible, following the steps in the model. Lesson planning requires considerable skill, and for each lesson delivered in the newcomer schools the expectation is that content and language objectives are transparent, are listed on poster paper or smart boards, and are reviewed during instruction. The objective statements further embed academic vocabulary using words such as “identify,” “rank,” and “analyze” for content objectives and words such as “read,” “listen,” and “discuss” for ways students can use language in the lesson. At Lewiston High School, teachers meet monthly to calibrate the use of the SIOP model, including aligning practices with the feeder middle school. Winooski elementary newcomer classes integrate the multisensory program Foundations with SIOP, focusing instruction on phonics and spelling. While the SIOP lesson plan template “is the backbone of every lesson plan” at Newcomer Academy, the school additionally integrates the Fundamental 5 Model to “inspire more purposeful talk” and to expand instructional approaches. Similarly, The Manhattan International High School uses SIOP as a base plus “a combination of multiple other effective instructional approaches.”

### **Differentiating and scaffolding instruction**

The instruction at the newcomer schools provides varying kinds of supports for students to develop confidence as learners and to master increasingly challenging content. Given the range of languages, cultures, prior sources of knowledge, ages, and life experiences of newcomer students, differentiation

also takes many forms. In classrooms, teachers differentiate the content of what students need to learn and how to convey that information; the learning activities; the products students develop to practice and apply the content; and the learning environment. Specific examples of these instructional strategies observed in the bright spot schools include:

- Introducing ideas using multiple modalities, especially combining auditory and visual approaches;
- Presenting content with tiered levels of support and complexity;
- Rotating through learning stations that included reading text, making art, watching a videotape, and discussing a prompt;
- Using videotapes, audiotapes, infographics, manipulatives, journaling, think-pair-share discussions, and creative expression and performance to demonstrate knowledge;
- Project-based learning individually and in groups;
- Reteaching in ways that provide access to content for struggling students and extended learning for more advanced students;
- Applying concepts to real-world examples; and
- Giving students voice and choice about ways they want to learn more deeply.

Teachers are intentional about the use of scaffolds to help students push beyond their current language and knowledge base and adjust materials, instruction, and student groupings to support them moving toward more independent levels of performance. Specific examples of these instructional strategies observed in the bright spot schools include:

- Connecting students' own experiences and prior knowledge to the lesson before introducing new content;
- Preteaching vocabulary by introducing words using visual cues and developing student dictionaries, pictionary, and flash cards;
- Showing visual aids such as graphic organizers like T-charts and Venn Diagrams, infographics, photographs, and charts; and
- Using techniques such as classroom word banks or word walls, sentence or paragraph frames, think-alouds, paraphrasing, anticipatory and compare and contrast activities, oral rehearsals, demonstrations, different groupings like pairs or teams, jigsaw text reading, questioning strategies that probe for thoughtful responses, and mini-lessons to prepare for engagement in the full lesson.

### **Integrating technology**

The newcomer schools made the digital leap. They routinely use various forms of technology to support instruction and to jointly develop and share lessons, to store grades, to display student work, and to record student assessment results. All schools use a smart board, which generally functions as an interactive projected computer screen but also incorporates file sharing, images of worksheets and text, videos, and game-based activities. Students have access to one or more forms of technology such as iPads, Chromebooks, Kindles, laptop or notebook computers, and digital voice recorders, and at Rochester International Academy they have a 3D printer to use for special projects. Some schools use supplementary online curriculum, such as DreamBox, Reading A-Z, Reading Plus, Symphony Math, and Lexia Core 5, as appropriate, in Winooski; Reading A-Z at Newcomer Academy; Imagine Learning at Rochester International Academy; and Reading Plus at The Manhattan International High School, and most of the schools used IXL for independent practice. Beyond that, technology opens opportunities for



students to learn at their own pace; to access high interest content in multiple languages, formats, and ability levels; to play learning games, to engage in mixed-modal activities that require reading, writing, speaking, and listening; to prepare documents without handwriting; and to produce creative content through art, music, digital storytelling, and other web-based material.

### **Continuously using formative assessment**

At the newcomer schools, monitoring in-the-moment learning is an essential feature of instruction. Students receive timely and useful feedback as part of a learning activity and teachers receive evidence of progression and information for instructional decision-making. Across the schools, formative assessment takes many forms. To engage students in reflecting on their own understanding, teachers routinely use quick and informal “exit tickets” at the end of a class period or a lesson. Examples include thumbs up-thumbs down ratings; posting a question; listing a few new vocabulary words or adding a flash card to their personalized deck; 3-2-1 things they learned, questions they have, and a “wow!”; or verbally sharing with the class an idea or challenge. At Rochester International Academy and The Manhattan International High School, teachers and students also “gamify” formative assessment. Examples of software that is used to help teachers check for understanding and for students to reflect on performance include Popplet, for mind mapping activities; Quizlet, for customizing flashcards; Kahoot!, for playing and creating group games linked to learning activities; and Magic Box, Flipgrid, and iMovie for demonstrating knowledge through voice recordings and mini videos.

### **Mentoring for graduation**

Among the bright spot schools, The Manhattan International High School is the only standalone high school. Its students typically enter in Grade 9, progress as a cohort, and remain through graduation, with 75% earning a diploma in four years and 90% in 6 years. To earn a diploma, all seniors prepare a graduation portfolio. This is a collection of work that shows mastery of knowledge and skill in English, math, social studies, science, and native language arts, and also includes a creative piece, a resume, and a self-evaluation essay. Upon completion, students defend it to a panel of teachers. To accomplish this, each student meets weekly with a mentor teacher to revise, edit, and rewrite work to reflect their highest level of achievement. The mentor’s academic support is highly personalized, and the instructional strategies fit the particular learning needs, interests, aspirations, and backgrounds of the students. “My mentor helped me with everything. She taught me how to think outside my own perspective and to organize my thoughts. She helped me manage time and to prepare all parts of my portfolio, even talking about what I learned.”

### **Fast-tracking for SLIFEs**

All of the newcomer schools enroll SLIFEs, a relatively small but growing number of newcomer students. Secondary SLIFEs especially have the farthest to go to catch up to their classmates. In general, these students are grouped together for a period of time to receive accelerated and intensive instruction in learning-to-learn skills and basic content. Educating SLIFEs incorporates the same promising instructional and student-support practices newcomer schools use with its other students. What varies is the instructional starting point and the fast pace. Some especially beneficial considerations for older SLIFEs are year-round and flexible class schedules; high interest content in native languages, formats, and ability levels; academic supports that leveraged prior knowledge and skills; and offering various pathways to reach academic goals before aging out of the K-12 system or through other education systems.



## 5. Use liaisons to build cultural understanding and student success.

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*Without them, we don't have a newcomer school. – District Director of English Language Learners*

Teachers and school administrators don't necessarily have the knowledge, skills, and lived experiences for addressing some of the barriers to learning that newcomer students face. Understanding native cultures and languages, and the experiences of refugee displacement and resettlement, and the isolation and fear of having an undocumented status, are key to supporting the academic success of newcomer students. To address this, newcomer schools typically supplement their student support teams with "cultural liaisons," a general term used to describe designated staff who serve as a cross between paraprofessional educators and social workers. They represent their local immigrant communities, speak multiple languages, and are assigned to build bridges to connect schools, students, families, and community organizations. At the bright spot schools, most of the cultural liaisons had, prior to immigrating, successful careers in their native countries as teachers, nurses, lawyers, business owners, farmers, and scientists.

Cultural liaisons go by various titles: “bilingual associate instructors” at Newcomer Academy, “language facilitators” at Lewiston High School, “language coaches” at Rochester International Academy, and “liaisons” at the newcomer program in the Winooski School District. A key responsibility is providing language translation and interpretation. This includes facilitating communication between teachers and students in classrooms, and between schools and families more generally, as well as participating in more sensitive exchanges such as parent-teacher conferences, special education or disciplinary meetings, and shuttle diplomacy to redress cultural misunderstandings. Beyond that, their positions are both much broader and more personal in scope. Among their roles at the newcomer schools, cultural liaisons:

- Help students and families understand the school system including the newcomer curriculum and school transition requirements, immunization policies, transportation and food services, homework agreements, dress codes, and student academic, health, social-emotional, and after-school enrichment supports;
- Locate and mobilize community resources to address specific family needs, including resettlement support, housing, legal assistance, food and clothing, and medical and dental care;
- Assist with day-to-day family functioning such as making sense of the mail, signing up for support services, paying bills, and understanding American cultural norms about parenting;
- Conduct home visits to assist vulnerable families. In the Winooski School District this sometimes includes also bringing the principal and a teacher to strengthen ties to the school, and at Rochester International Academy all staff are expected to join the liaisons in home visits;
- Develop culturally-responsive family engagement strategies;
- Coordinate cultural celebration events at school; and
- Mediate racial or ethnic tensions in the school or community.

The liaisons at the newcomer program in the Winooski School District and the language coaches at the Rochester International High School describe 24/7 responsibilities. They are a first point of contact for immigrant families who need connections, information, and cultural understanding in order to navigate the complexities in their new lives.

The cultural liaisons are also regularly in the classroom. For example, they:

- Assist classroom teachers by providing English as a second language push-in and pull-out instructional supports;
- Exercise the use of native languages to promote language retention;
- Work one-on-one with students struggling with cultural adjustment issues;
- Tutor students for personalized or catch-up instruction;
- Teach teachers about diverse cultures, including comprehending cultural misunderstandings, as well as key native language phrases for building relationships with students and families;
- Partner with counselors, social workers, health care providers, and other student support staff to provide wraparound student interventions; and
- Provide professional development for teachers and staff on topics such as diverse cultures, language acquisition, the immigrant and refugee experience, acculturation challenges, and family engagement.



**“Our students have experienced things in their lives you can’t imagine. It affects who they are at home and in school. We try to ease their burdens so when they’re with us they can be learning.”**

*– Teacher*

## **6. Support the whole child.**

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Newcomer students come to the United States with complicated personal stories based on tragedy and promise. Students may bring memories of loss and fear; they may feel sadness, anger, and confusion; and they may be overwhelmed by adjusting to a new culture, a new language, and a new school experience. Their personal circumstances and childhood experiences affect the way they learn, develop, and behave inside and outside of the classroom; and for that reason, the bright spot schools are organized around achieving academic goals and nurturing the whole child. Meeting their daily living needs, physical safety needs, and social-emotional needs is foundational for newcomers to achieve in school.

On the most basic level of caring for the whole child, all of the newcomer schools provide students with food, seasonal clothing, personal hygiene products, and school supplies. Some have no-cost “stores,” especially for older students, to select what they want and need. In addition to providing meals and snacks during the day and take-home dinners for students attending after-school programs, some of the schools supply food during weekends and holidays. For example, on Fridays in the Winooski School District, students are offered backpacks with food for the weekend. During the summer break, when Newcomer Academy is not in session, food trucks go to neighborhoods with large numbers of refugees to provide children with a healthy lunch.

The newcomer schools also provide other forms of whole child supports. Students receive health, dental, and mental health care either through school-based services or through referrals to partnering community-based organizations. Similarly, the schools offer students enrichment and extended learning opportunities to keep them safe and engaged after school hours, including tutoring, mentoring, college and career preparation, and art, music, dance, drama, sports, technology, and other clubs and positive youth development opportunities.

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Beyond that, all of the bright spot schools nurture the whole child by focusing on:

**A positive school culture and climate**

Each school is decorated with signs and posters in multiple languages welcoming students from around the world to their school community. The hallways have flags from native countries, maps locating where students are from originally, student art work that introduces themselves and describes their personal immigration stories, and examples of student work to mark their academic progress. School staff know each student by name, and together with assistance from the cultural liaisons, they develop personal relationships with students and families and try to find solutions to barriers to learning or to attending school daily. “I think because the teachers get to know us and treat us with respect it’s easy to make friends here because it’s a place where students are expected to be helpful and kind.” “The personal touch we get from teachers gives me confidence in my potential because I was lost before.” Also, for many students, the newcomer schools are orderly, dependable, and safe havens from family poverty and, in some communities, from dangerous neighborhoods. “It’s a close knit community. It feels like our school is family.”



**Cultural identity**

Student identities—who they are, what they believe, the languages they speak, the foods they eat, the things they do, their roles in families—are formed before they arrive in the United States and are affected by becoming new Americans. Acculturation can be a stressful process for students, and on their relationships with parents, as they develop new identities that blend their native cultures with their new one. This was evidenced in the newcomer schools in a number of personal ways, for example: girls not wearing hijab, boys opting for college over employment, teens selecting partners to date without parental permission or being unchaperoned while with friends, and students challenging traditional rites of passage or strict dietary or religious habits. Teachers, counselors, and especially the cultural liaisons, help students to navigate changes in identity and self-concept. In the Winooski School District, the liaisons “modeled and mentored what it looks like to not lose who you are but to take on new parts of yourself as you Americanize.” To discuss complex issues in a safe and facilitated way, Rochester International Academy holds weekly peace circles in several grades, and monthly it organizes secondary students who speak the same native languages into groups to discuss shared concerns, including identity and acculturation issues. At Lewiston High School, students symbolically celebrate the blending of traditional and new cultures through an annual international fashion show where students display homemade versions of hybrid clothing.



### **Social-emotional learning**

Across the bright spots, schools integrate the basic principles of social-emotional learning into the way the schools function, and there is an explicit focus on teaching social-emotional skills. Specifically, the schools teach students to: recognize and manage personal feelings, regulate emotions and behaviors to make good choices, empathize and appreciate diverse perspectives, communicate and collaborate with other students and teachers, and believe in their potential to reach personal goals. These skills are taught through modeling, coaching, facilitated student meetings, restorative circles, therapeutic interventions with counselors, and in-class teamwork. There is no tolerance for bullying, racial slurs, or disrespect on the campuses, and when incidents arise, such as tribal tensions between ethnic groups with historically deep divisions, they are addressed fairly and treated as teaching opportunities. For example, at Newcomer Academy and Rochester International Academy, restorative practices, such as facilitated circles, are routinely used to minimize punishment and to promote resolution and healing.



### **Trauma-informed practices**

Students at the bright spot schools all experienced the deep loss of leaving their native countries and everything that was familiar to them. Some had witnessed family members being tortured, murdered, or raped. Others experienced war, hunger, homelessness, extreme poverty, or years in resettlement camps. Others still were trafficked as soldiers or for sex. Many of the newcomer students also experienced different kinds of traumatic events once resettled in the United States. For example, they or family members experienced mental health crises related to the stress of immigrating and resettling; they lived in poverty and in dangerous neighborhoods; or they became “parentified,” additionally burdened with adult responsibilities such as managing medications, interpreting meetings and translating documents, and negotiating with landlords and others to help their families survive. “There’s no question that 100% of our students experienced traumatic events in their lives. But most of our students are resilient, and they’re doing well. We build their resilience.” At the bright spot schools, trauma-informed practices are infused into school operations. Schools are safe, routines are predictable, caring relationships between students and adults are cultivated in the classroom and beyond with full-service supports, academic expectations are high and learning supports are intensive, student voice and contribution is valued, and the culture of the schools conveys that all students belong.

## 7. Help parents to support student success.

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The parents of newcomer students want their children to thrive in the United States. Many left their native countries and everything familiar to them to secure a brighter future for their children, one that is safe and filled with opportunities, starting with receiving a good education. At newcomer schools, parents, as well as other primary caregivers such as legal guardians, relatives with undocumented immigration status, foster parents, or sponsors, are all “parents” for purposes of supporting academic success. While wanting their children to do well in school, supporting them as students could be challenging for parents who may have never attended school themselves and are also adjusting to a new culture and learning a new language, and are unfamiliar with the functioning and expectations of schools in the United States.

Newly-arrived parents are often in survival mode. They are concerned with housing, food, clothing, employment, accessing a range of services, their immigration status, and dealing with the emotional toll of rebuilding their lives. Meeting these basic needs comes first before parents have the time and confidence to partner with schools. At the bright spot schools, cultural liaisons, parent coordinators, teachers, and principals build personal relationships with the families and work with partnering community-based organizations to help address these needs. They welcome parents into their school communities, and explain, using native languages, when possible, how they can contribute in important ways to their children’s education. The basic orientation typically includes information about:

- The curriculum, what students learn;
- The instructional program, how students are taught;
- Books, computers, and other school supplies;
- The daily schedule and annual calendar;
- Translation and interpreting services, which are routinely used for written and in-person communication with parents;
- School procedures, such as immunizations, attendance, sick days, emergency plans, grading, report cards, and homework;
- Behavior norms and disciplinary procedures;
- Meals, transportation, school-based health care services, after-school programming, and extracurricular activities;
- English as a second language, special education, and other specialized services; and at the high school level,
- Graduation expectations and college and career preparation.

**“It’s more than information sharing. It’s all about building trusting relationships.”**

– Liaison



Beyond that, the newcomer schools encourage parent engagement and nurture a two-way partnership. There are a number of ways the schools create opportunities for meaningful participation. For example, parents are invited and supported by the cultural liaisons and teachers to help in the classroom, to share information about their native cultures, to make decisions about their children's education, to advocate for their children's education, to contribute to school decision making, and to practice speaking native languages with students. Each site had its own version of international potlucks and cultural days, where families showcase their native dress, food, music, and dance. For example, Newcomer Academy holds an annual global homecoming exposition, which is integrated into a schoolwide, year-long project-based learning activity focused on acculturation, such as preparing responses to the question "What is home?" Students make posters, videos, and interactive booths about what home means to them, and along with their families and the community they celebrate with traditional dress, food, and performances, and a parade of nations.

The newcomer schools also offer parents a range of free classes aimed at helping them to support student success. For example, at the Winooski School District program, English as a second language, nutrition, parenting, and computer classes are offered at the school library. Once a year, the district invites newcomer parents to meet with local leaders such as police officers and firefighters to learn skills such as responding to a fire alarm and seeking emergency services, and collaborates with other agencies to teach parents life skills such as managing a bank account. Newcomer Academy also offers English as a second language classes for parents through a partnership with neighborhood libraries, and reaches out to parents to encourage participation in classes and engagement in their children's education in places they frequent such as flea markets, churches, mosques, and temples. At some schools, parents are invited to teach classes for the school staff, sharing their personal experiences and strengths, such as native cooking and crafts, which also nurtures relationships.

Parenting support at The Manhattan International High School, like the other schools with high school programs, primarily focuses on topics related to adolescent issues. This includes understanding developmental milestones and managing typical struggles between parents and teens around issues such as dress, friends, dating, online behavior, unsupervised time, completing school assignments, and college and career planning, all of which was compounded by cultural differences between the traditional expectations of parents and the new lifestyle norms of adolescents in the United States.

At the newcomer schools, the cultural liaisons also conduct home visits to support family learning and acculturation and to help parents navigate schools and other unfamiliar systems. For example, the language coaches at Rochester International Academy provide personalized support to parents around holistic family issues. "We play detective, and figure out whatever it is they need." By way of example, a common parent dilemma is making sure that their children completed their homework assignments when the parents do not read or write in English or know the content. "We don't tell parents what to do. We offer them strategies to try, and then we follow up to see if they're working." Home visits are also conducted to explain cultural misunderstandings or to assist families with acculturative stress, such as when children challenge their parents' native traditions and adopt new traditions in diet, dress, language, or religious practices.





**“We really count on our partners to enrich what our school is already offering.”**

*– School Social Worker*



## **8. Partner with community resources.**

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Newcomer schools don’t educate students alone. In addition to partnering with parents, the bright spot schools develop an extensive network of supports for newcomer families and extended learning experiences for students by partnering with community-based organizations. These organizations bring additional resources and expertise to help newcomers adjust to and enrich their new lives.

Most of the schools closely partner with local refugee resettlement agencies, faith-based organizations, and ethnic associations to help meet the basic needs and support the cultural adjustment of immigrant families. These partners provide comprehensive assistance to families with housing, furniture and appliances, clothing and food, job training and referrals, legal services, managing essential paperwork, and links to a range of health, education, and other support services. Through these partners, unaccompanied minors also receive specialized case-managed services.

The newcomer schools also have many other partners. Examples of some of the services offered through partnerships include:

### **Food**

Providing free meals to students is standard practice at most of the newcomer schools: breakfast, morning snack, lunch, afternoon snack, and a bag dinner for those who attended after-school programs. At the Winooski School District program, the Foodbank’s VeggieVanGo sponsors a twice monthly, no-cost farmers market with fresh produce, which is held on campus during the week for parents and school staff to grocery shop together.

### **Medical and dental care**

Lewiston High School, The Manhattan International High School and the Winooski School District program host school-based health clinics on their campuses. In Winooski, there is van service for off-site dental care for students. At Newcomer Academy, student health services are provided through partners that provided on-campus free clinics throughout the year for immunizations, physical exams, vision screenings and glasses, dental cleanings and exams, and sports physicals for students transitioning to traditional high schools.

### **Behavioral and mental health care**

Parents and students at the newcomer schools often experience traumatic life events before, during, and after their flight to the United States. Some suffer from depression, anxiety, confusion, acculturative stress, and poverty that interfere with their functioning at school and at home. The schools typically refer them to partnering local clinicians to provide culturally competent and therapeutic care.

### **Arts and recreation activities**

The Manhattan International High School taps a broad set of partners to provide enrichment and youth development opportunities for students. The local YMCA offers the students free membership and services, including additional special after-school programming such as tutoring, SAT preparation, and college and job fairs; weekend programming such as bicycle trips and city excursions; and summer programming such as sports and recreation activities and supervised paid internships. The school also partners with organizations that offer students classes in cooking; photography, video, animation and web-based production; building and design; and computer coding. An off-Broadway theater company integrates dramatic arts into the Grade 9 English curriculum, and also leads an after-school theater club. In Lewiston, K-12 students have access to Tree Street Youth Center, a partnering community-based organization located near the middle school and high school that provides daily drop-in creative arts,

movement, and sports programs for newcomers, and is a hub for students needing assistance with housing, food, clothing, academics, language development, and postsecondary planning.

### **Mentoring**

Lewiston High School partners with AmeriCorps and a local college to recruit young adults to provide additional personalized instruction to students, especially to mentor seniors in high school to ease the postsecondary transition. The Manhattan International High School partners with Big Brothers/Big Sisters and places students in Grades 10-12 with mentors. It also partners with L.O.V.E. (Latinas on the Verge of Excellence), an organization that recruits university students to guide and be a role model for students during high school.

### **Leadership and community service**

The Manhattan International High School partners with several organizations that sponsor after-school leadership development classes and community service opportunities. One organization is New York Cares, where students volunteer to participate in several of its community service activities, such as helping to clean up city parks and playgrounds. In partnership with the Rotary Club, Rochester International Academy sponsors a service club for students to grow sunflowers from seed and to sell them at a market, managing the microenterprise and donating the profits to a charity of their choice. In a related effort with a local food bank, the students grow over 5,000 seedlings of edible plants and donate them to families living in poverty to grow healthy food.

### **Career preparation and employment**

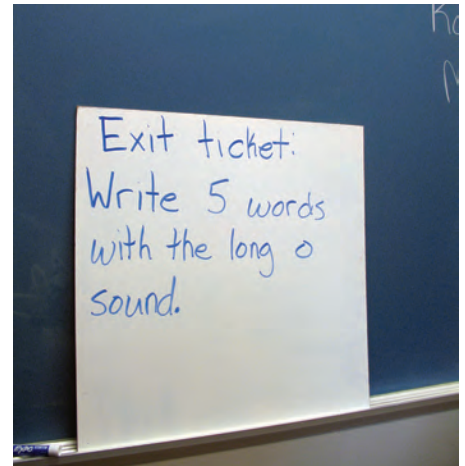
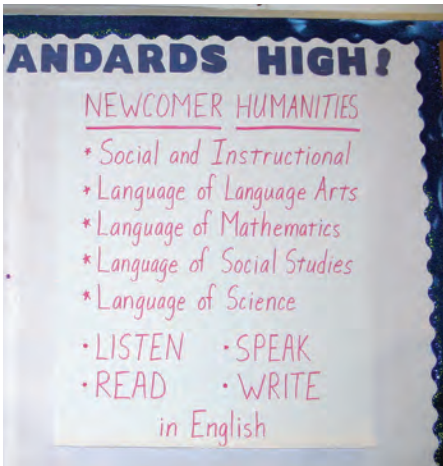
Newcomer Academy has an annual parent night. A local employer, United Parcel Service, has a large processing facility. It recruits newcomer parents for jobs and job training and acquaints students with potential career paths. Through other partnerships, the school sponsors summer engineering internships and vocational field trips for students to learn about various careers.

PART 3:

# Profiles

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# Lewiston High School



**WEBSITE:** <http://lhs.lewistonpublicschools.org/>

## Lewiston, Maine

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Nestled between the coastline and the mountains, and between the state's capital and its largest city, the small former manufacturing town of Lewiston is home to about 36,200 residents. Half of the state's population lives within a 30 mile radius of town. Until the arrival of the first wave of Somali refugees in 2001, there was virtually no racial, ethnic, or linguistic diversity in town other than the descendants of the 19th century French-speaking Canadians who immigrated to work in the textile mills. Currently, about 5% of the town is foreign born and about 20% speaks a language other than English at home. Until 2015, when Lewiston began attracting refugees from Angola, Djibouti, Kenya, Rwanda, and other countries, nearly all of its newcomers were from the Muslim ethnic Bantu group of Somalia. Many of these first arrivals are secondary migrants from high-poverty, high-crime cities in the United States where they had initially resettled. They relocated to Lewiston for its affordability, welcoming schools, and quiet neighborhoods, and to contribute to the redesign and revitalization of the downtown following decades of its economic decline. Today, there are about 7,500 East African residents.

Lewiston Public Schools serve 5,503 students pre-K-12, and 28% are designated English Learners. All district schools provide language and learning support for these students, and the middle school and high school host newcomer programs. The middle school program is a push-out support program and the high school program is a self-contained program. In 2018, Lewiston High School had 1,294 students in Grades 9-12, with 26% designated English Learners. Its full-day, transitional newcomer program-within-a-school served 59 students who resided in the United States for no more than 3 years.

The district centralizes intake of English Learner and newcomer students. It assesses them using multiple measures including the WIDA (World-class Instructional Design and Assessment) ACCESS screener; NWEA (Northwest Evaluation Association), a family, student educational, and health and well-being history; and teacher input. Clear cut points are used to determine student placement in one of three levels of language and academic classes, both at entry to the program and over time as English proficiency improves. Newcomers who are SLIFEs (Students with Limited or Interrupted Formal Education) or test at the lowest levels are designated Level I students. These students are taught by an English as a second language teacher in self-contained English, language arts, science, math, and social studies classes. Using SDAIE (Specially Designed Academic Instruction in English), teachers use academic content to develop English proficiency. Level II students test at the next level of proficiency, and are in self-contained classes but teachers use sheltered instruction to introduce and accelerate mastery of grade-level content to prepare for a full transition to regular high school classes. Level III students are mainstreamed into traditional grade-level content classes and student learning and teacher instruction are both supported by an English as a second language teacher. English Learners at all levels participate in a weekly advisory period and electives with all of their classmates. Students not enrolled in grade-level core classes earn elective credits but don't earn requisite credits toward graduation.

Lewiston High School has a broad range of supports for newcomer students and their teachers. Students have access at school to counselors, social workers, "aspirations lab" staff who assist with postsecondary planning, dropout prevention staff, a nurse, a school-based health center, and free food, clothing, and personal hygiene supplies. They also have the option for targeted academic intervention classes after school and during winter "ice week," spring "mud week," and summer. Through strong ties with a network of community-based partnering organizations, newcomer students receive immigration, acculturation,

adolescent health and mental health, family, and housing support as well as access to sports and recreation. Partnering organizations provide case management of unaccompanied minors. The district has a community relations coordinator who belongs to the local immigrant community and serves as a cultural broker, systems navigator, translator, and interpreter, and participates with local leaders in a cross-sector community-building coalition that addresses pressing issues that affect students and immigrant families.

Given the relatively large number of newcomer students and English Learners at Lewiston High School, teachers receive specialized support as well. Education technicians are paraprofessional educators who support classroom teachers; language facilitators provide translation, interpretation, and cultural brokering supports; an English Learner case manager monitors the academic progress of each newcomer and Level I and Level II English Learner, and instructional coaches work with individual teachers or small groups of content teachers. An English Learner instructional coach provides opt-in development for secondary teachers who want additional support such as modeling of promising sheltered instructional practices or co-planning and co-teaching a scaffolded lesson as well as topical workshops for professional learning.

The students at Lewiston High School celebrate their diversity in a number of ways. They have an active international club that hosts festivals of food and performance and holds an annual fashion show of creative displays of native dress. The school's multicultural varsity soccer team is recognized for winning championships and for uniting the community's racial divide.

# Newcomer Academy



WEBSITE: <https://www.jefferson.kyschools.us/schools/profiles/esl-newcomer-academy>

## Louisville, Kentucky

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Situated on the Ohio River, Louisville is a growing mid-sized city of about 600,000 in a metro area of over one million residents. It's certified as a "Welcoming City," part of a network of American cities committed to economic growth by building inclusive communities for newcomers. More than 65,000 newcomers live in Louisville, a 42% increase in foreign-born residents between 2009-2014. Many of these are secondary migrants who initially resettled in other communities but relocated. While attracting newcomers from across the globe, Louisville is home to a sizable number of Cuban, Bosnian, Somalian, and Sudanese residents.

Newcomer Academy is the only standalone newcomer school in the Jefferson County School District. As the nation's 27th largest school district, it serves over 100,000 students, including nearly 9,000 English Learners who speak 137 different languages. Until the 2018-19 school year when Newcomer Academy centralized at one site, it was located at multiple satellite campuses, cobbling together space for its expanding program. Its 2018 school population was 646 students, with 279 students enrolled in Grades 6-8 and 367 students enrolled in Grades 9-10. The school population typically doubles in size from the opening day of school.

Newcomer Academy is a full-day, transitional school for students who arrived in the United States no more than two years before enrollment. Its mission is to acculturate students to school and to help them become proficient in English. It serves English Learner students in Grades 6-10 and aims to transition them in 1-2 years to a traditional middle or high school with one English as a second language class as additional support at the receiving school. With a surge in older, mostly Central American SLIFE (Students with Limited or Interrupted Formal Education), the district has opened a separate program-within-a-school especially for them at a different high school site.

The district centralizes intake of newcomer students. It assesses them using the WIDA (World-class Instructional Design and Assessment) screener and a home language survey, and makes a school placement determination within a day. Qualifying students who don't read, write, or speak English enter Newcomer Academy anytime of the year. When they arrive at school, they experience a "week of welcome," a comprehensive orientation where new students are introduced to students and staff; assessed using nonverbal math assessments, native language assessments of teachers reading aloud, and native language conversations; informed about topics such as class rules, the bus schedule, immunizations, and accessing free school meals; and taught how to use a locker and a computer, and say their name, address, and phone number in English. To transition to a traditional school, Newcomer Academy staff helps students and parents make transfer decisions based on student academic progress and interests, and organize school tours, match transitioning students with other native speakers at the receiving schools, and share photo stories of how classmates successfully transitioned.

All of the teachers at Newcomer Academy have an English as a second language endorsement and speak at least one language other than English, and half were born outside of the United States. Many were immigrants or refugees. The diverse teaching staff is additionally supported in the classroom by 13 bilingual associate instructors, paraprofessional educators who speak the native languages and come from the cultures and countries of the newcomer students. Bilingual associate instructors also provide direct support to students and families by translating print information, interpreting conversations, counseling, brokering community resources, conducting home visits, explaining American norms and systems and



native norms and beliefs, assisting with acculturation, and building bridges between the school and families. School leaders encourage bilingual associate instructors to become trained teachers and, when possible, rehire them once they're certified.

Teacher development and support, and ongoing strengthening of the instructional program, is conducted through a professional learning community (PLC) process. There are 10 PLCs, one for each team of 5-6 teachers. Each teacher is a member of one vertical PLC comprised of teachers in the same content areas, divided by middle and high school, and one horizontal PLC comprised of an interdisciplinary team. The team lead guides the process by meeting monthly with a designated staff member who serves as a goal clarity coach. The PLCs set learning goals, develop curriculum, align instructional practices for consistency, evaluate instructional practices, offer professional development, integrate PBIS (Positive Behavioral Interventions and Supports) and RtI (Response to Intervention), and review WIDA benchmark results. Students are assessed three times yearly and results are used to rate student progress into three categories: needing interventions, on target, or needing enrichments, and instruction is modified accordingly.

The academic program focuses on early literacy and numeracy taught through content area instruction and on basic learning-to-learn and classroom skills. Across classes, the curriculum is built upon a combined foundation of instructional strategies from SIOP (Sheltered Instruction Observation Protocol) and the Fundamental 5, and "all lessons in all content areas hit on reading, writing, speaking, and listening." In addition to the five periods of English as a second language and the core content classes, one day a week students also take a life skills class and participate in an advocacy period, where students and advisors who speak the same native language meet to discuss issues of their choice and to practice native language skills. Once a week is a club day period where students design their own clubs such as ACT practice, babysitting skills, and soccer. These run for six weeks and then students select a new set of clubs. Each year, the school also sponsors a culminating project-based global homecoming exposition as a way to showcase academic progress and cultural pride, and to involve the entire community in celebrating student diversity.

The school partners with a number of community-based organizations to address the whole child needs of its students. It works closely with organizations that resettle refugees and oversee the case management of unaccompanied minors. Services for health physicals, immunizations, vision screenings, mental health screenings and therapy, and basic needs such as food, clothes, and school supplies are available at the school.

# Rochester International Academy



**WEBSITE:** <https://www.rcsdk12.org/RIA>

## Rochester, New York

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Located on Lake Ontario, Rochester is a mid-sized city of about 210,000 in a metro area of over one million residents. Once a booming manufacturing hub, the inner city is rebounding after decades of economic hardship as flagship companies like Kodak, Bausch & Lomb, and Xerox phased out or reduced their workforces. Over 15% of residents live in extreme poverty. As a resettlement site for refugees and a destination for immigrants, Rochester is 44% White and 42% African American or African, with the local Asian and Latinx populations more than doubling over the past two decades. About 58% of its foreign-born population arrived since 1990, and until the 2018 national downturn of arrivals, the city had a steady increase in refugees. Rochester is also a designated city for providing specialized foster care services for unaccompanied minors.

When the struggling former Jefferson High School closed, the district replaced it with Rochester International Academy, a reconstituted school dedicated to teaching newcomer students. It's the district's only stand-alone newcomer school. It initially opened with just 38 students in Grades 6-12; given demand, by the second year, enrollment quadrupled and it expanded to Grades 3-12. With continued growth, the school needed to add 15 new teachers in the middle of the 2016 school year. In 2018, its K-12 student population was 393, with 168 in elementary school, 63 in middle school, and 162 in high school. Given the large number of Spanish-speaking native-born children and newcomers in the city, the district, which serves about 26,700 students, also has several Spanish bilingual and dual-immersion schools.

Rochester International Academy is a full-day, transitional program for students who are newly arrived to the United States. Its mission is to help them to acculturate and to transition to a traditional school through academically rigorous language instruction and interdisciplinary learning in partnership with families and the community. Most students in Grades K-8 transition in 1-3 years; high school students who enter in Grade 10 and attend for two years have the option to stay through graduation. All students are individually assessed at the end of each school year to determine readiness to transition to another school, and many SLIFEs (Students with Limited or Interrupted Formal Education) remain in the program for longer than two years. High school students who unsuccessfully transitioned to another school may return to earn a diploma. Older SLIFEs who are credit deficient and unlikely to graduate can attend half-day while concurrently enrolled in a local trade school to develop job skills.

Most refugees arriving in Rochester are sponsored through a community-based organization that contacts the district to assess and enroll newcomer students. If a student qualifies and selects to enroll in Rochester International Academy, the school assigns them a "rolling" grade placement and class schedule and reassesses them using multiple measures and then may make placement and class changes. In Grades 7-12, students are placed in middle or high school classes at SLIFE, low, medium, or high levels of proficiency. Three times yearly the entire instructional staff meet to prepare a "data wall," a chart by student, by class, by grade that has color-coded Post-its representing student assessment results in reading, decoding, and comprehension, and students may be moved to different level classes according to growth. Multiple curriculum-embedded measures, and teacher input about social-emotional development, are used to determine student readiness to transition to another school and to develop a transfer plan for the receiving schools.

The instructional program integrates the development of language, literacy, and grade-level content knowledge. All students attend multiple intensive content-based English classes daily. They also receive English language arts, math, science, and social studies instruction co-planned and co-taught by elementary and English as a second language teachers who push in to self-contained grade-level K-6 classes and by content and English as a second language teachers who push in to departmentalized classes in Grades 7-12. School leaders described their program as completely “ESOL’ized,” meaning that all instruction is geared to facilitate academic and social language development. Schoolwide, teachers use SIOP (Sheltered Instruction Observation Protocol) and Benchmark’s Early Explorers (Grades K-2) and RIGOR (Reading Instructional Goals for Older Readers) (Grades 3-12). All students are given Benchmark’s Oral Reading Records 3 times a year, which are used for monitoring progress. Secondary students have a common advisory period and all students have twice weekly facilitated morning meetings to focus on acculturation, life skills, and information sharing; and electives. Foundational learning-to-learn skills are taught across grades.

Skilled and dedicated teachers are keys to the success of the school. They work together, providing a collegial environment for thoughtful experimentation and professional development during joint planning time, including learning to integrate instructional technologies. The co-planning and co-teaching approach facilitates the clarification of language objectives and the use of instructional approaches such as scaffolding, differentiation, leveraging native languages, and various formative assessment practices, and enables for push-in ability group instruction. Given the specific knowledge, skills, and understanding of diverse cultures needed to work with newcomer students, Rochester International Academy works closely with local colleges to grow the number of well-prepared prospective newcomer teachers. Preservice teachers are assigned to the school during their student teaching or internship placements, mentored to learn the instructional program and school norms, and considered for possibly joining the staff.

Core to the school are three language coaches who serve the district through the Refugee School Impact Grant but are located at Rochester International Academy. They were all refugees and English Learners. These coaches support students and families by translating print information, interpreting conversations, counseling, brokering community resources, conducting home visits, explaining American norms and systems and native norms and beliefs, assisting with acculturation, and building bridges between the school and families. They also work alongside teachers to assist newcomer students in the classroom. And they provide professional development for teachers and staff on topics related to acculturation, the refugee and newcomer experience, language development, and ways to engage and support various newcomer communities in education. They are leaders in their communities and serve as ambassadors to the district and to refugee families.

Student academic and personal support is extensive and grounded in an understanding of diverse cultures and the effects of trauma on learning and well-being. The school offers individual and group counseling, including early intervention and student support teams; facilitated peace circles to explore feelings; home visits and family support; Saturday sessions to prepare for the Regents exams (New York State’s standardized examinations in core high school subjects required to graduate); summer academic programming; school-based and community-based tutoring; homework help; and access to clothes, food, and basic health care from a nurse. The afterschool program for students in Grades 5-12 is open enrollment and free and offers drama, ballet, arts and crafts, open gym time, swimming, and drumline

and provides transportation home as well as a snack and a take-home dinner. The Rotary Club's after school Interact Club is a weekly gardening and microenterprise activity that raises flowers for selling and the funds are donated by the students. Every month the school hosts a town hall meeting, dividing students into native language groups to discuss schoolwide issues such as bullying and the importance of daily reading. The school has strong ties to local community-based organizations that provide wide-ranging supports to immigrants and refugees, including specialized case management for unaccompanied minors. The school's advisory board develops and supports these ties. It meets monthly and comprises members affiliated with community agencies that work with and/or advocate for immigrants and refugees. Each year these partnerships and families are celebrated at an International Extravaganza that honors the school's cultural diversity.

# The Manhattan International High School



**WEBSITE:** <http://www.mihsnyc.org/>

## New York, New York

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A few blocks from a busy street and subway station in New York City's upper east side is the Julia Richman Education Complex. It houses four separate high schools, a K-8 school, a special education program, an infant-toddler program, and a school-based health clinic. The coming and going of students is energetic but orderly. In 2018, the 340 Grades 9-12 newcomer students who attended The Manhattan International High School occupied most of the top two floors of the building. These students are immigrants, refugees, asylum-seekers, and unaccompanied minors from across the globe who lived in neighborhoods from across the city's five boroughs. They qualified for enrollment because they've lived in the United States for less than four years and scored in the lowest quintile on the LAB-R (Language Assessment Battery – Revised) screener, which is used statewide and is administered at district enrollment centers to recommend school placements and intervention services.

The Manhattan International High School is a full-day, comprehensive newcomer high school. Its students typically enter in Grade 9, progress as a cohort, and remain through graduation, with 75% earning a diploma in four years and 90% in six years. Most of the incoming students had attended Grade 8 in the United States. It's one of more than 1,800 schools in the nation's largest school district, and one of the 27 schools and academies nationwide in the Internationals Network for Public Schools. High schools in this network operate independently but all serve newcomer students and share a core set of beliefs about learning and principles of effective second language instruction for adolescents and SLIFEs (Students with Limited or Interrupted Formal Education).

The main governing body of the school is a coordinating council that includes the principal, all cluster leaders, a guidance counselor, and a teacher union representative. A school leadership team also meets monthly, and includes parent representatives. All faculty and staff have additional leadership duties, such as coordinating portfolio presentations or professional development and other meetings with the Internationals Network of Public Schools. Teachers drive the professional development agenda, deliver most of the support, and embed peer-learning into a weekly schedule, with content-area teams also meeting weekly.

The academic program uses a content-based English as a second language approach whereby language acquisition is taught in the context of the core grade-level classes. The curriculum is aligned to the research-based instructional principles that guide the Internationals Network of Public Schools: using heterogeneity and collaboration, experiential learning, language and content integration, localized autonomy and responsibility, and the same approach to learning in all classes to accelerate mastery of grade-level content.

The school structure has evolved over time, adjusting to maximize learning. It has four clusters, one for Grades 9, 10, 11, and 12. Within each cluster are three strands and these groupings of students take all of their classes together. Each cluster has an interdisciplinary team of English, social studies, math, and science content-area teachers plus a literacy teacher to facilitate integration of language development. The clusters co-plan curriculum using a common lesson planning template, co-teach, co-monitor the progress of its students using data and student work, and provide peer-based professional development. All clusters have a block period for English language development instruction. The Grade 9 cluster orients students to school, and builds the language and learning-to-learn foundation for grade-level learning.

The Grades 10 and 11 clusters focus on the themes of innovation transformation and conflict, action, and resolution, and students are looped with the teacher teams to allow for deep grade-level instruction. And the Grade 12 cluster focuses on achievement, completing requisite course work, postsecondary preparedness, and passing the English Language Arts Regents exam and graduation portfolio.

The Manhattan International High School is part of the New York Performance Standards Consortium. Instead of students taking all five state Regents exams, they take teacher-developed performance-based assessment tasks (PBATs) and only the English Language Arts Regents exam to meet graduation requirements. It also uses a mastery-based grading process. This is an annualized approach to grading that reflects the sum of five grading periods based upon clear learning outcomes aligned with the state and Common Core standards, and mastery is demonstrated rather than earned through seat time or points for a marking period. To graduate, students must also produce a written portfolio of their best work in English, social studies, math, science, and native language arts as well as including a creative piece, a resumé, and a self-evaluation. A year-long mentor is assigned to each student to prepare for the process, and students present their portfolios to a panel of teachers.

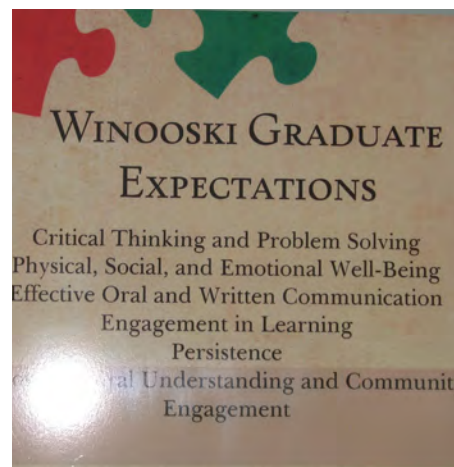
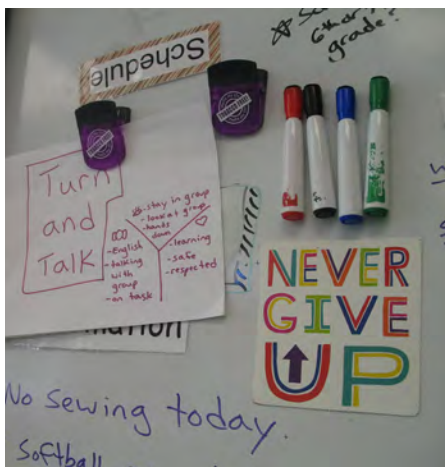
Students receive health and well-being support through counselors, social workers, a parent coordinator, facilitated restorative justice and social-emotional circles, and the school-based health clinic. As adolescent newcomers, issues related to friendships, trauma, identity, acculturation, selecting pathways to adulthood, and tension with families are common. The school provides extensive academic support through portfolio mentors, homework help, after-school tutoring, and a Saturday academy for Regents exam remediation. Students can participate in a number of after-school enrichments including sports teams and swimming; cooking, photography, theater, and technology classes; English, Chinese, and French conversation clubs; Big Brother/Big Sister; and leadership, community service, and paid summer internships with a partnering YMCA. The school also has an affiliation with some local colleges that enables students who've sufficiently progressed to concurrently take college courses.

Diversity is honored through the curriculum, instruction, and school climate. An annual culture day celebration brings families to the school to share native foods, dress, music, and dance.



# Winooski Newcomer Program

at John F. Kennedy Elementary School,  
Winooski Middle School, and Winooski High School



WEBSITE: <http://www.wdschools.org/>

WEBSITE: <https://www.wdschools.org/english-language-learners/>

## Winooski, Vermont

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Located along the Winooski River, the former mill town of Winooski is just 1.5 square miles in size and home to about 7,200 residents. With the arrival of the first wave of Lost Boys of Sudan in 2001, the residential makeup of this small town began to shift. It has since become a resettlement site and a hub for refugees from over 25 countries. The foreign-born population in Winooski is 3.5 times greater than the state's rate and over 15% of its residents speak a language other than English at home. Together with other local organizations, the Winooski School District is at the center of support for newcomer families.

The Winooski School District is a pre-K-12 system that houses all of its schools and the embedded newcomer program in one central facility. The total district student population in 2018 was 888, with 476 students in pre-K-5, 160 in Grades 6-8, and 252 in Grades 9-12. Among these students, 32% received English as a second language services and 13 students in Grades 3-5, 19 students in Grades 6-8, and 17 students in Grades 9-12, totaling 49 students, are also enrolled in the newcomer program. Student mobility in the district is high, with 18% transferring in or out of the system yearly, and 21% of the students receive special education services, rates largely attributable to the effects of poverty, trauma, and spending formative years in refugee resettlement camps.

The Winooski newcomer program is embedded as a program-within-a-school. It started in 2012 as a full-day high school program for students who arrived in the United States within the last calendar year, and two years later it opened a half-day newcomer program for Grades 2-5, which developed into a full-day program for students Grades 3-5. With a surge in SLIFEs (Students with Limited or Interrupted Formal Education), in 2015 the district added a full-day newcomer program for the middle school. Enrollment is capped at the elementary and middle grades due to space and staff limitations and there can be a waitlist to enroll. To qualify to enter the newcomer program, students are assessed using district and WIDA (World-class Instructional Design and Assessment) screeners and receive a score of less than 2.0. To transition out of the program, students demonstrate through multiple measures growth in English proficiency and math. Most students stay in the newcomer program 1-2 years and then transition at the start of a new semester to traditional classrooms that provide ongoing English language development support based on student needs.

The mission of the newcomer program is to facilitate the successful transition of newcomer students to the traditional classroom by orienting them to be a student, helping them acquire basic English language skills and content area knowledge, and supporting their social-emotional well-being. The program in the elementary and middle grades is self-contained, with a focus on early literacy and numeracy and basic learning-to-learn and classroom skills. The program in the high school grades includes similar self-contained instruction but also offers sheltered foundational math, science, and social studies classes and mainstreamed electives and advisory classes. More generally, given the high percentage of English Learners across the grades, the district uses a co-teaching model. A corps of English as a second language teachers co-plan and co-teach with grade-level and content-area teachers, bringing specialized expertise in effective instructional practices such as scaffolding and universal design strategies, formative assessment, and screening for progress, and can deliver individualized push-in and pull-out instructional supports for students. Districtwide, in all classes, there's a focus on student-centered and project-based learning, and starting in the middle grades this extends to personalized learning plans and integrating the design principles of expeditionary learning.

The state of Vermont doesn't have an age cap for attending school, so the high school program can have students older than age 21. The district's secondary SLIFE are typically overage and behind in content and credits for their grade level. These newcomer students are supported through graduation or guided to enroll in an alternative adult education pathway to high school completion, community college, or job training.

The district offers wide-ranging student and family supports for its newcomer and other vulnerable students. This includes native language mentoring of younger students by high school students; academic tutoring; school- and community-based physical health, behavioral health, and dental care; after-school and summer enrichment programming; college and career counseling; school supplies, seasonal clothing, and food; and social-emotional help through educational support teams and school social workers and counselors.

At the heart of the district's support system for newcomer students and their families are six liaisons. They were all English Learners themselves with firsthand experience as newcomers or coming from newcomer families. Together, they form a multicultural, multilingual support network. These liaisons provide direct support to students and families in a number of ways including translating print information, interpreting conversations, counseling, brokering community resources, conducting home visits, explaining American norms and systems and native norms and beliefs, assisting with acculturation, and building bridges between the school and families. They work alongside teachers to assist newcomer students and English Learners to facilitate success in the classroom. They also provide professional development for teachers and staff on topics related to acculturation, the refugee and newcomer experience, language development, and ways to engage and support various newcomer communities in education. They serve as district ambassadors to the community and, as leaders in their own immigrant communities, they serve as community ambassadors to the district.



PART 4:

# Conclusion

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## Conclusion

In a growing number of communities across the United States, classrooms are filled with students who literally bring the world with them. They come as immigrants, as refugees, and as asylees, leaving behind everything they've ever known to follow dreams of a brighter future.

Newcomer schools are key to newcomer students rebuilding their lives. These schools offer an alternative learning environment for students to acculturate; to learn English; to bridge academic and learning-to-learn gaps; and to receive a broad set of academic, health, social, emotional, and family supports. Their purpose is to help students build a strong foundation so that succeeding in school and beyond is within reach.

The five newcomer schools offer real-world examples of promising practices that benefit students. While the schools are similar in many ways, they serve different types of communities and use various strategies. They're bright spots to learn from because they've successfully dealt with common newcomer school operational challenges of securing adequate facilities, sufficient resources, and a highly-qualified staff, and because their students thrive. "I don't know where I'd be without this school, but I know I wouldn't be going to college," reflected a newcomer school graduate.

This report describes many instructional, leadership, and student support practices that educators can learn from, and that can be adopted or adapted in your schools, districts, or communities. We firmly believe that newcomer students are full of promise and potential, and that when schools provide a quality education to match newcomers' unique needs, these young, new Americans can contribute to the nation's prosperity and to its cultural richness.

PART 5:

# Resources

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## Resources

What follows are the main go-to resources for the knowledge base about promising practices for newcomer schools and newcomer students, and they were instrumental in informing this work. It is a curated set of key documents and organization websites that host large repositories of additional relevant materials, instead of a comprehensive listing of resources.

### Reports

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Bridging Refugee Youth & Children's Services. (2018). *Raising teens in a new country: A guide for the whole family*. Washington, DC: United States Conference of Catholic Bishops/Migration and Refugee Services. Retrieved July 20, 2018, from [https://cmascanada.ca/wp-content/uploads/2018/07/1525718491\\_Raising\\_Teens\\_New\\_Country.pdf](https://cmascanada.ca/wp-content/uploads/2018/07/1525718491_Raising_Teens_New_Country.pdf).

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Farris, A., & Fuentealba, M. (2006). *Educational handbook for refugee parents*. New York, NY: International Rescue Committee. Retrieved July 20, 2018, from <https://brycs.org/2018site/wp-content/uploads/2018/09/Educational-Handbook-English.pdf>.



Francis, D., Rivera, M., Lesaux, N., Kieffer, M., & Rivera, H. (2006). *Practical guidelines for the education of English language learners: Research-based recommendations for serving adolescent newcomers*. Portsmouth, NH: RMC Research Corporation. Retrieved July 20, 2018, from <https://www2.ed.gov/about/inits/ed/lep-partnership/newcomers.pdf>.

Short, D., & Boyson, B. (2012). *Helping newcomer students succeed in secondary school and beyond*. Washington, DC: Center for Applied Linguistics. Retrieved July 20, 2018, from <http://www.cal.org/resource-center/publications-products/helping-newcomer-students>.

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Sugarman, J. (2017). *Beyond teaching English: Supporting high school completion by immigrant and refugee students*. Washington, DC: Migration Policy Institute. Retrieved July 20, 2018, from <https://www.migrationpolicy.org/research/beyond-teaching-english-supporting-high-school-completion-immigrant-and-refugee-students>.

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U.S. Department of Education. (2016). *Newcomer tool kit*. Washington, DC: U.S. Department of Education. Retrieved July 20, 2018, from <https://www2.ed.gov/about/offices/list/oela/newcomers-toolkit/ncomertoolkit.pdf>.

U.S. Department of Education. (2015). *Resource guide: Supporting undocumented youth*. Washington, DC: U.S. Department of Education. Retrieved July 20, 2018, from <https://www2.ed.gov/about/overview/focus/supporting-undocumented-youth.pdf>.

## Websites

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Bridging Refugee Youth & Children's Services, a project of the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops/Migration and Refugee Services.(2018).Retrieved from <http://www.brycs.org/>.

Center for Applied Linguistics. (2018). Retrieved from <http://www.cal.org>.

Internationals Network of Public Schools. Retrieved from <http://internationalsnps.org/>.

Migration Policy Institute. (2018). Retrieved from <https://www.migrationpolicy.org/>.

National Clearinghouse for English Language Acquisition. (2018). Retrieved from <https://ncela.ed.gov/>.



## Appendix

Collecting detailed descriptive information from these schools was central to understanding promising practices. Each school participated in a two-day on-site visit in May 2018. During these visits, we interviewed key staff using guiding questions developed from the best practices literature, and we observed classroom instruction. You will find the protocols we used in this section.

### In this section

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- Newcomer School Overview Protocol
- Instruction Protocol
- Professional Learning and Teacher Support Protocol
- Student Supports and Extended Learning Protocol
- Partnering with Families and Community Agencies Protocol
- Student Protocol

## Newcomer School Overview Protocol

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I'd like to start our conversation with a set of questions to better acquaint me with your school/newcomer program.

1. Let's start with your students:
  - a. How many are enrolled elementary, middle, and high school?
  - b. What countries do they come from?
  - c. What languages do they speak?
  - d. Are they immigrants, refugees, asylees, and/or unaccompanied minors?
  - e. While respecting privacy, how do staff get to know students and their needs? How do staff learn about their culture, family history, migration journey, traditions?
  - f. How do families hear about your school/program?
2. What year did your school/program start?
  - a. What was the inspiration for opening, and are some of the same people still on staff?
  - b. Has the vision changed over time, and who are the keepers of the vision?
  - c. Is the school/program growing given the uptick in immigrant students?
  - d. What does district support for the school/program look like?
3. While newcomer schools/programs vary in structure, they tend to focus on four goals: helping students acculturate, strengthening native language skills, developing English language skills, and delivering content area instruction.
  - a. What are the goals of your school/program?
  - b. Does your school/program have a set of principles or beliefs that guide working with newcomer students, and if so, what are they?
4. I have a number of questions about the structure of your school/program.
  - a. I want to check for understanding: your school/program is:
    - i. A program within a school and most students transition to the co-located school.
    - ii. A program that serves area schools, and students transition to their zoned or another conventional school.
    - iii. A separate school that students can stay at until completion.
  - b. How long do students stay, e.g., short-term transitional, long-term, through graduation?
  - c. How is the school/program structured: block schedule, double-period ESL, extended days, smaller classes, teacher looping from grade to grade, students integrated into the conventional school classes/activities?

5. I would also like to better understand how students enter and exit the school/program.
  - a. How are grade placements and academic learning needs determined, given gaps in past education and low/no proficiency in English?
    - i. Which reading, English language, content area assessments are used? Others?
  - b. How does the school/program determine when a student is ready to exit to a conventional school?
    - i. What criteria are used e.g., assessed level of language proficiency, teacher recommendations, class performance?
    - ii. What supports are in place when they exit e.g., ESL, bilingual, sheltered instruction, pull-in/pull-out?
    - iii. What helps ease these transitions e.g., class/school visits, field trips, student mentors/shadow students, cross-school/program teacher meetings?
    - iv. Are exiting students monitored, and for how long?
  
6. Closure and Advice
  - a. What do you think are the key school/program characteristics that promote student success at your school/program?
  - b. What continues to be especially challenging?
  - c. How does the school/program define student success, and what evidence shows progress? Do you have any data that documents their success?
  - d. What advice do you have for educators who are developing programs for newcomer students?
  - e. Finally, is there anything I haven't asked that you'd like to comment on?

## Instruction Protocol

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Newcomer education is super complex. It requires both the development of English language proficiency and grade-level content and skills. Instruction is explicit, intensive and extensive, and designed to accelerate learning. I have a number of questions about how the school/program delivers instruction.

1. Just so I'm clear, is the goal for students to become proficient in English, bilingual, or both?
2. This is a big question that I'd like you to unpack. How is English language taught?  
What approaches do you use, and why?
  - a. ESL/ELD – Push in, Pull out, sheltered English immersion, Collaboration between General Education Teachers and ESL/ELD teachers?
  - b. What instructional methods do you use? Cognitive Academic Language Learning Approach (CALLA), Specifically Designed Instruction in English (SDAIE), Sheltered Instruction Observation Protocol (SIOP), Quality Teaching for English Learner (QTEL)? Other?
  - c. Bilingual – what does this look like, please describe in detail e.g., transitional, two-way immersion?
  - d. Are native language skills leveraged and developed in English language instruction, and if so, how?
  - e. What are key instructional strategies used to develop students' academic English?
    - i. For teaching the basics: e.g., alphabet, vowels, phonemic awareness?
    - ii. For teaching academic vocabulary e.g., word parts, classroom and school-based words?
    - iii. For teaching reading comprehension e.g., questioning, clarifying, predicting, summarizing; comprehension monitoring, think alouds?
    - iv. For teaching writing e.g., write for meaningful, academic purposes, opportunities for feedback; pre-writing, drafting, revising?
    - v. For teaching oral language proficiency?
    - vi. How is scaffolding (instructional supports for greater understanding and independence in learning) used, e.g., visuals (e.g., charts, graphs, timelines), collaborative learning, project-based learning, demonstrations, comprehension checks?
    - vii. How is technology used e.g., interactive software for language practice, web-based learning units, interactive whiteboards?
  - f. How is a literature-rich learning environment created for students, and used to build their confidence with books and other print material, especially for older English Learners?
3. This is another big question that I'd like you to unpack. How is content-area instruction taught?
  - a. How is literacy and language instruction embedded in math, science and social studies, while also instructing students in content-area knowledge and skills?
    - i. What specialized sheltered instructional methods and/or strategies are used to make lessons comprehensible e.g., SIOP, QTEL?
  - b. How is instruction aligned with grade-level standards?
  - c. Are native language skills leveraged and developed in content-area instruction, and if so, how?
4. What kind of formative assessment practices do teachers use to monitor student learning, adjust instruction, and provide students with feedback and support?
  - a. What evidence do teachers use to assess the effectiveness of instruction for English Learners/the newcomer program?

5. What are the main instructional challenges teaching newcomer students?
6. I also have a set of questions about two groups of newcomer students: students who may have a disability and students with limited or interrupted formal education in their country of origin.
  - a. We know that linguistic and cultural differences as well as exposure to trauma can sometimes lead English Learner newcomers to be diagnosed with disabilities, or vice versa (that for these same reasons disabilities can be overlooked). How are newcomers designated in special education, and how are their needs met?
    - i. What does the evaluation process look like?
    - ii. How are newcomer parents of children with disabilities helped to understand special education provisions in the IEP, including their rights and responsibilities?
  - b. Another particularly vulnerable group of newcomer students are those whose life circumstances prohibited attending school, especially those who entered U.S. schools as adolescents and are several years below age/grade level in school. As you know, they lack understanding of basic concepts and content knowledge, and may not read or write in their home language and need a lot of additional assistance.
    - i. What specialized coursework and additional instructional interventions are used to fill gaps and accelerate learning?
    - ii. How are the particular needs of older students addressed? Are they mixed with younger students?
    - iii. Is there flexible scheduling for older students also balancing work, caregiving, and other adult responsibilities?
    - iv. Are they on an individualized graduation plan?
    - v. For those who are too old to graduate in 4 (or more) years, or by the time they age out in your state, are there options and pathways for them to continue to earn a diploma? A GED?
7. Closure and Advice
  - a. Overall, which instructional strategies have been most effective in promoting English Language proficiency? Academic achievement?
  - b. What continues to be especially challenging?
  - c. What instructional advice do you have for educators who are developing programs for newcomer students?
  - d. Finally, is there anything I haven't asked that you'd like to comment on?

## Professional Learning and Teacher Support Protocol

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Recruiting and retaining qualified teachers is key to student learning, and teaching newcomer students is especially challenging. These students are learning a new language and culture at the same time they are filling in gaps in content knowledge at an accelerated pace. This is heavy lift for both teachers and students. I'd like to learn more about how your teachers are trained and supported.

1. Let's start by you describing the teacher workforce. What specialized knowledge, skills, and life experiences do they bring to the classroom?
  - a. About what percentage of the ESL teachers are certified?
2. What does ongoing support look like for teachers of English instruction?
3. How are content-area teachers supported e.g., understanding language acquisition, teaching strategies to connect language development and culture to subject matter instruction, scaffolding strategies?
4. Are there opportunities for English language teachers to prepare with content-area teachers, and how do they collaborate?
5. How does the school/program build a multicultural, multilingual teacher workforce?
  - a. Does it use bilingual paras-professionals? How does it build their capacity, and is there a pathway for becoming a teacher? Describe.
  - b. Does it partner with a local university to grow teachers specifically for working with English learners and newcomer students? Describe.
6. Closure and Advice
  - a. What do you think are key professional learning practices that schools should adopt to support teachers promote student success?
  - b. What about professional learning and supporting teachers continues to be especially challenging?
  - c. What advice about teacher recruitment and support do you have for educators who are developing programs for newcomer students?
  - d. Finally, is there anything I haven't asked that you'd like to comment on?

## Student Supports and Extended Learning Protocol

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Educating newcomers entails more than classroom learning. Making sure they have access to a range of health and well-being supports is correlated to better attendance, achievement, and motivation and a stronger sense of belonging. Newcomer students may also need help adjusting to school routines, making friends, and acculturating. I'd like to learn more about the range of student supports at your school/program.

1. Let's start with the basic support – an orientation to school. Once enrolled, students have to adjust to a new education system, a new peer group, and a new language and to different cultural norms, expectations and demands about school work. How do you help them adjust to school?
  - a. How do you communicate all students are welcome?
  - b. How do you address enrollment barriers e.g., lack of documents or previous school records, age of enrollment, legal guardianship issues (verification of release from Office of Refugee Resettlement, sponsor care agreement)?
  - c. How do you explain school norms: sitting still for long periods of time, raising hands, co-ed classes, dress codes, attendance, course schedules, homework, extracurriculars, lockers, emergency drills, etc.
  - d. How do you create a culture that communicates high expectations for all students?
2. What kind of enrichments or extended learning opportunities are available?
  - a. Clubs, sports, after-school programs?
  - b. Summer programs to mitigate learning loss; Saturday, evening, and vacation school to accelerate learning?
  - c. In what ways do students benefit: making friends, practicing conversational English, exercising, having a creative outlet, connecting to school?
3. What does the safety net of support look like at your school/program?
  - a. Please describe:
    - i. Medical and dental support, e.g., clinic?
    - ii. Mental health and emotional support, e.g., counselors, social workers, other clinicians?
    - iii. Academic support, e.g., tutors, mentors, credit recovery?
    - iv. Reunification support for dealing with challenges that families can face after years of separation (e.g., feelings of abandonment, accepting parental authority)?
    - v. Legal support?
  - b. How does your school/program integrate social-emotional learning (SEL), helping students deal with conflict, self-concept (knowing oneself), emotional regulation (self-management, impulse control), relational skills (empathy, cooperation, problem solving skills, persistence/motivation? Describe.
    - i. In particular, newcomer students can struggle with identity and belonging issues, retaining their sense of self while establishing a new identity. How is cultural adjustment eased?
  - c. How is diversity appreciated at your school, and how are students encouraged to celebrate their cultural and linguistic individuality? How is positive self-image affirmed?
  - d. How are stereotypes, discrimination, bullying, racial slurs, xenophobia, and other cultural tensions addressed?



4. Many newcomer students face different types of trauma and emotional stress. They experience a triple whammy: traumatic reasons for fleeing (pre-flight), the harrowing journey waiting for permanent relocation (flight), and traumatic displacement once they arrive and try to resettle (post-flight).
  - a. How is trauma addressed for individual students?
  - b. How does the school/program use trauma-informed practices to alleviate stress e.g., predictable and consistent routines, safe spaces, helping students regulate emotions, minimizing triggers, creating opportunities for students to feel successful and to build age-appropriate independence and responsibilities?
  
5. I also have a set of questions about how the school/program supports two groups of newcomer students: those planning for postsecondary options and unaccompanied minors.
  - a. What does postsecondary preparation look like for newcomer students?
    - i. What does career exploration look like for newcomer students?
    - ii. What are the 4 year, 4+ year graduation rates? Dropout rate?
      1. Do you track if newcomer students stay in school and graduate? What do you know about these rates?
    - iii. What proportion of school/program graduates go to college?
    - iv. Where do exiting (non-graduate) newcomer students go? GED program, technical/trade school, adult basic education program, community college, work?
    - v. How are students who age out of school supported?
    - vi. How are students reengaged after dropping out?
  - b. Unaccompanied refugee minors are especially vulnerable, having fled without family. Do you know which of your students are unaccompanied?
    - i. In what ways does the school interface with the foster family, the resettlement agency?
    - ii. In what ways is the school involved in family reunification supports?
    - iii. Are there special supports for unaccompanied minors and, if so, what are they?
  
6. Closure and Advice
  - a. Overall, what do you think are key high-quality student support strategies that promote student learning and well-being?
  - b. What continues to be especially challenging?
  - c. What advice do you have for educators who are developing programs for newcomer students?
  - d. Finally, is there anything I haven't asked that you'd like to comment on?

## Partnering with Families and Community Agencies Protocol

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We all know that schools don't educate students alone. Involving immigrant families is critical for student success. So is partnering with the community, which brings additional resources to schools to help newcomer students and their parents/guardians navigate the complexities of their new lives.

1. I'd like to learn about how the school/program engages with and supports parents/guardians.
  - a. Is there a staff position that serves as a cultural/linguistic broker and, if so, what does s/he do?
  - b. How are parents/guardians made to feel welcome?
  - c. How does the school/program communicate with parents/guardians e.g., translated handbooks, newsletters, videos, texts, in-person meetings at school and at other community locations?
  - d. How are parents/guardians oriented to school norms and expectations, to their rights and responsibilities, and to ways to help their children succeed?
  - e. How are parents/guardians encouraged to participate in school programs, practices, or decisions, e.g., student-family-teacher conferences, PTA?
  - f. Are classes offered for parents/guardians and, if so, which ones e.g., family literacy, ESL, native language literacy, computer skills, legal rights of English Learners and their parents, parenting support?
  
2. Which agencies does the school/program partner with, and what kind of services do they provide to students and families?
  - a. Social service agencies?
  - b. Faith-based organizations?
  - c. Resettlement agencies?
  - d. Universities and colleges?
  - e. Others?
  
3. Closure and Advice
  - a. Overall, what do you think are key family engagement and support strategies that promote student learning and well-being?
  - b. What works for partnering with community agencies?
  - c. What continues to be especially challenging?
  - d. What advice about partnering with immigrant families and community agencies do you have for educators who are developing programs for newcomer students?
    - i. Finally, is there anything I haven't asked that you'd like to comment on?

## Student Protocol

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I'm visiting your school to learn more about how it helps students who arrived from other countries and don't speak English at first.

### Younger and older students

1. What do you like most about your school?
  - a. Socially
  - b. Academically
  - c. Sports/extracurriculars
2. How do your teachers help you to:
  - a. Understand how U.S. schools work, and what's expected of you as a student?
  - b. Learn to speak, read, and write English?
  - c. Catch up on missed school?
3. How does your school help you and other students with personal problems?
4. (Younger students only) What do you think schools should do to help students new to the U.S.?
  - a. What would help make learning easier and better?

### Older students only

5. How is your school helping you to meet graduation requirements?
6. What do you want to do after high school, and how is your school helping you to do that?
7. What do you think schools should do to help students new to the U.S.?
  - a. Adjust to a new culture
  - b. Stay connected to their home language and culture
  - c. Learn and succeed academically





