Welcoming Newcomers

Guidance for Schools to Welcoming and Supporting EL Newcomer Students
Office of English Learner Services
Alexandria City Public Schools

Rationale

When immigrant students feel safe and welcome at school, they can focus on learning and on adjusting to a new culture and new school (MAEC, Inc., 09/08/2021). Schools can use a variety of strategies to get to know newcomers and let them know they are welcome in the school community. Sharing these messages of support can strengthen relationships, make communication and problem-solving more effective, and impact student attendance and family engagement (Making Students and Families Feel Welcome | Colorín Colorado, 09/08/2021).

Student survey data from our own newcomer students enrolled in Alexandria City High School confirm the importance of a welcoming community. Students said they need to feel connected, have caring teachers and counselors that encourage them, have teachers that believe in them when they don't believe in themselves, an environment where they feel comfortable asking questions, their voice to be heard, and time and opportunities to understand other students' cultures.

Who Are Our Newcomers?

Newcomers is an umbrella term that encompasses a heterogeneous group of immigrant student populations. Below are 4 examples of common newcomer terms:

Refugee	SLIFE	Asylee	Unaccompanied Minor
A refugee is a person who has fled his or her country of origin because of past persecution or a fear of future persecution based upon race, religion, nationality, political opinion, or membership in a particular social group (U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services, 2015).	A Student with Limited and/or Interrupted Formal Education (SLIFE) is an English learner who: ● enters or re-enters any school in the United States at or after the age of eight; AND ● is identified at English Language Proficiency (ELP) Level 1 or 2; AND ● has at least two years less schooling than similar-age peers. (Virginia Department of Education)	Asylees are individuals who, on their own, travel to the United States and subsequently apply for or receive a grant of asylum. Asylees do not enter the United States as refugees. They may enter as students, tourists, or businessmen, or with "undocumented" status (U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, n.d.a).	Children who come into the United States from other countries without an adult guardian (U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, n.d.b).

Suggested School-Wide Protocols

☐ EL Instructional Lead/Chair receives EL Intro Letter (see page 4 of this document) from EL Office & notifies SST of newcomer arrivals (especially note those who have a check in the field "Newcomer EL Services.")

☐ SST team notified. Goals of the SST team with newcomers should include: providing a welcoming onboarding process, monitoring student progress, developing intervention plans, referring students to intervention services, and maintaining a schedule of opportunities for regular check-ins with the newcomer student over the first 6 weeks

☐ All teachers and support staff (school counselor, nurse, etc.) are notified of newcomer students; welcoming procedures are in place (i.e., using a locker, changing clothes for PE, rotating classes, working independently, etc.)

☐ All teachers and staff get to know the context of students' backgrounds, cultures/customs, language and country of origin

Spotlight on Welcoming Protocols	
William Ramsay	**International Academy at FCH**
Registration Process: Once a student is registered, the registrar sends an email to all personnel (nurse, Admin., EL leads, school counselor) with the starting date of the student's arrival, which grade level he/she will be in, the name of the student and ID number, and the EL level of the student. **Classroom Preparation:** Once the student is assigned a classroom, the EL Instructional Leads forward student information to grade level teachers, so they can prepare for the student's arrival. **Student's First Day:** When the student arrives at school for their first day, they are typically greeted by a member of the EL team (with families prior to Covid-19 health protocols) and taken on a tour of the building and shared important information about routines/procedures of their school day.	**Entry Meeting with Counselor:** When families register at school, the registrar invites the counselor so families have an immediate point of contact with someone who will be working with their child on a daily basis. **Newcomer Advisory:** Before being placed in their permanent advisory class, students attend Newcomer Advisory and engage in a brief curriculum to introduce them to the school. **Same Language Buddy:** Students are immediately connected with same-language buddy to show them around school. **Specialized Scheduling:** Students are scheduled into a cohort with a language partner that can support them in their home language.

Classroom Tips (adapted from [Colorin Colorado](#))
For more information, visit [How to Create a Welcoming Environment for ELs](#)

- Learn how to pronounce your students' name correctly.
- Understand the context of your students' immigration.
- Lay the foundation for a strong personal relationship with your students.
- Establish contact with students' family or guardians.
- Assign a buddy in the classroom & ask the class how they can welcome newcomers.
- Help newcomers understand the expectations of the classroom.
- Keep an eye out for culture shock and accept students' potential silent period.
- Reach out to the EL teacher specialists at the school for support.
- Look for ways in which students can share information about their experiences, language and culture in creative and meaningful ways.
- Understand your students' strengths and challenges.
- Offer your students opportunities to use their home language.
- Educate yourself about the experiences of students, their country of origin and home culture/languages.

General Resources for Supporting Newcomers

- [ACPS Best Instructional Practices for Emergent ELs](#)
- Harvard Graduate School of Education Usable Knowledge: [Welcoming Newcomers](#)
- [Using a Strengths-Based Approach with ELs: Supporting Students Living with Trauma, Violence and Chronic Stress](#)
- [USDOE Newcomer Toolkit](#)
- [About Refugee Populations with Specific Country Briefs](#)
- [Office of Refugee Resettlement](#)
- [CAL: Immigrant & Refugee Information](#)

Supporting Afghan Newcomers

- [Cultural Information Cultural Background Resources: Afghan Students](#)
- EdWeek Article: [12 Ways to Support Afghan Refugee Students (Opinion)](#)
- [BRYCS: Bridging Refugee Youth and Children Services](#)
- Share My Lesson: [Talking & Teaching About Afghan Refugees and the Fall of Kabul](#)
- UNHCR: [Teaching About Refugees](#)
- [Afghan Culture For Educators.pdf](#)
- https://welcome.us/

Supporting Central American Newcomers

- [10 Things Educators Need to Know about Unaccompanied Minors](#)
- Teaching for Change: [Teach Central America](#)
- [Root Causes of Central American Migration: An Examination of Conditions in the Region](#), Recorded ACPS PD

Alexandria City Public Schools - EL Office			Student ID Number		

School		Registration Date:		Release Date:	

Student's Full Name			Current Term:		

Student's Preferred Name

Fall Grade Placement Term 20   - 20

Grade:

Gender	Date of Birth		Age: 0 Yrs 0 Mos	Schooled in Native Language?	

Parent's Native Language		Parent's Preferred Communication Language	Student's Native Language	Student's Other Language Spoken	

Country of Birth	USA	Other Countries of Residence	

Most Recent U.S. Entry Date	Total Time in the U.S. (Including...)		End of EL [SOA] Date	

Semesters in U.S. Schools		Newcomer EL Services	Semesters in VA Public Schools	0

Record of Prior Schooling

Documented by School Records?	Beginning/Ending of Each School Year	Grade	Dates Attended	Place - (City [County] /State [Province, etc.] /Country)	In EL?

Screening and Placement Information

6-12 Course Recommendation:

   Language Arts _____

   Mathematics _____

Assessment:

  WIDA SCREENER _____ **ACCESS** _____

     MODEL _____ **W-APT** _____

Kindergarten Oral Raw Score _____

Grades 1-12 Composite Proficiency Score _____

Grades 1-12 ___ _____

Logramos Reading Level (Gr. 4-12): _____

        SLIFE: _____

Comment: _____

_____ Flag student if Levels 1-5 and will not receive EL services

Parent signed waiver form on: _____

Screening Results: **Not Screened** _____

     EL _____   **Not EL** _____

Monitored Former EL _____   **Former EL** _____

English Language Proficiency Level

Level 1 - Entering	**Level 2 - Beginning**
Level 3 - Developing	**Level 4 - Expanding**
Level 5 - Bridging	**U - Undefined**
Level 6-1 - Reaching	**Level 6-2 - Reaching**
Level 6-3	**Level 6-4**

Monitoring Completed (T) _____

Checklist
Creating a Welcoming Schoolwide Environment
for ELs and Their Families

Directions: Review each of the following action steps to decide if these are strategies that you are currently using at your school or not. Determine possible action steps for creating a more welcoming environment for parents of ELs.

Strategy At our school, do we…	Yes	No	Possible Action Step
1. Display student work and photos on the walls?	◯	◯	_____
2. Have signs in multiple languages?	◯	◯	_____
3. Display maps and flags of students' home countries?	◯	◯	_____
4. Have a multilingual greeter to welcome students and parents?	◯	◯	_____
5. Provide staff opportunities to learn some common phrases in parents' home languages and key information about parents' cultures?	◯	◯	_____
6. Have multilingual staff and volunteers that are visible throughout the building and classrooms?	◯	◯	_____
7. Provide parents with information about their and their children's rights and responsibilities in their language?	◯	◯	_____
8. Have books in our ELs' home languages in the school library and classrooms?	◯	◯	_____
9. Connect new families with a contact person who speaks their home language and offer tours of the schools in home languages?	◯	◯	_____
10. Host events specifically for EL parents (e.g, back-to-school events, events to help parents learn more about the school and school leaders) and address challenges to parent participation?	◯	◯	_____

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