

5 Ways to Support Newcomers in Your Classroom



Recommendations from Internationals Network Teachers

Are you a classroom teacher welcoming recently arrived immigrant students? Here are some recommendations to support your newcomers that will benefit not only them, but your entire school community. At Internationals, we know that implementing supportive practices for newcomer students benefits all of the young people in the classroom, their families and school staff. We know from experience that involving all members of your school community in supporting newcomers will ensure their success.

1 Create a welcoming space that is inviting, inclusive, safe & predictable

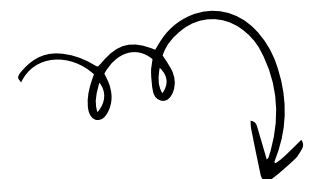
- **Show your welcome**
All students need to feel a sense of safety and belonging in order to learn. A smile transcends oral language and goes a long way to making a student feel welcome. Learn to say hello in your students' languages so you can welcome them visibly each day. Post signs of welcome in the languages spoken by students and families. Learn to pronounce your students' names correctly and encourage students to learn each other's names to help to contribute to a space of belonging.
- **Create structure**
Stability and predictability are critical in helping your newcomers transition to a new environment. Create routines for your students to help them learn about and navigate the classroom experience. Use a similar lesson structure each day to help students through transitions and expectations for each part of the lesson.
- **Build community**
Pair students with a buddy in the classroom or school who ideally speaks their home language, and/or is kind and welcoming in nature. Create space in your classroom for young people to just talk about what it's like to be in a new place. Find a staff member who can bring your newcomers together in a more informal space like in an advisory setting so students can connect with a caring adult and other students like them.
- **Reflect their experience**
Every student comes with stories that they want to share about who they are. Make your classroom into a place where they can see themselves and see their own stories and languages reflected, where they help to make the classroom their own: the walls, the space, and the routines.

2 Promote Meaningful Multilingual Communication

- **Harness all language resources**
Take advantage of the multilingualism among your students and staff to build connections and community. Start by finding out what languages are spoken among students in your classroom, families, staff, and the broader community. What languages do students, families, and partners speak, write, and read? Who among students and staff speaks the languages of your newcomers and could provide some support? Which area organizations support new immigrants? Create a shared document of languages and resources to which all staff members can contribute that can be a resource for all staff to use.
- **Capitalize on your students' native language skills**
Support the use of your students' native language in your classroom for learning. Embrace translanguaging, which allows students to use all of their linguistic cognitive resources to learn academic content. Help them to understand that their ability to speak another language is valuable and viewed as an asset in the school and community.
- **Tap into district resources**
Many districts have translation and interpretation offices that can help with family communication. Find out what resources are available and use them with your students and families.
- **Utilize technology**
Google Translate and ChatGPT can help to communicate with families and translate prompts for students. While not perfect, their ability to translate has gotten much stronger than in the past and can help get the main ideas across.

3 Get to Know Your Students

- **Educate yourself on the context from which your students arrived**
Factors that lead to migration are complex and not easily reduced to a few simple reasons. Better understanding the context from which your students arrive will not only support your instruction but will make students feel welcome and cared for because you are showing interest in them and their experience; it will also help to build on students' assets, rather than simply focusing on their perceived deficiencies.
- **Let yourself be vulnerable with your students**
Don't be afraid to take a risk and try something new in a lesson, make an adjustment to your teaching practices, or try to communicate with students in their language in order to support them. Your efforts won't be without mistakes, but more importantly, you are modeling the learning process for students.
- **Connect with students' families**
Invite families into the school to help them understand the structures and culture of the school. Leverage local community organizations and connect with staff members who speak families' languages. Ask students and families about their expectations of school. Find out what resources and skills your families have that they can share with the community.



4 Foster Collaboration

- **Build a team of support**
Collaborate with educators in your building to support your recently arrived students; they are integral to your school community and the work of supporting them cannot fall on one person alone. Start a newcomer welcome team with counselors, teachers, administrators, students, families, and other staff members to craft a comprehensive plan of support in the building. View family members and guardians as collaborators as they possess valuable information about their children's academic history and hope for their academic success.
- **Forge partnerships with community organizations and agencies**
Asylee and refugee resettlement agencies, community-based organizations, and legal aid providers can provide insight and additional support for you, your students, and their families.
- **Connect your students**
Allow students to collaborate in your classroom on their work. This helps students to develop both their social and academic language skills while providing an opportunity for them to build relationships in the classroom. Use your non-newcomer students as peer support, creating community across language and background.
- **Commit to routines with other teachers**
Connect with other teachers to help choose and commit to a set of classroom routines that are implemented consistently across different classrooms. This will create structure and promote positive student experiences. Find out what is working in the classrooms of your colleagues and replicate those routines in your own.

5 Be an Advocate

- **Be an ally for your students**
Classroom teachers are often the first to know of their students' needs. Newcomer students and families often don't voice their needs and concerns because of a lack of familiarity with U.S. school systems. Students and their families benefit from allies and advocates who can help identify and give voice to their needs and guide them to pathways of success. Being an advocate will also help you to build strong relationships with students and families that can support their learning.
- **Check-in on how students are adjusting**
In addition to individual check-ins, help students connect with adults in the school community who speak their language(s). Check-in with adult mentors to find out how each student is adjusting as they transition to your classroom and to the larger school community. Partner, make shifts, and advocate as necessary.
- **Cultivate outside opportunities and student voice**
Newcomers are often left out of broader school opportunities and programs. Help students get involved in extra-curricular and other community opportunities. Find out their interests outside of school and support them in getting involved and their voices heard. Reach out to club advisors and community organizations to offer support in working with newcomers. Address barriers to participation including language, transportation, lack of familiarity with activities, and expectations.
- **Understand the political context**
Local, national, and international policies and politics related to immigration have a strong impact on students' experiences and needs. Educate yourself on what is happening locally and more broadly to help colleagues, students, and families separate fact from fiction and to support all students' educational journeys.



Internationals Network Students

Internationals Network transforms education for immigrant and refugee multilingual learners by partnering with schools and districts to better serve those students. We design new schools and programs within existing schools, coach leaders, teachers, and school staff, and provide access to an invaluable network of support and learning for those who work with us. Internationals addresses issues of educational equity for a population of young people who have been systematically overlooked and under-served in public education settings.



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Internationals Network Educator & Student

